

Kyle Walton USMA '01 to Receive 2025 Nininger Award

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COL KYLE WALTON '01 SELECTED FOR 2025 NININGER AWARD

West Point, NY: The West Point Association of Graduates is pleased to announce that COL Kyle Walton, Class of 2001, has been selected to receive the 2025 Alexander R. Nininger Award for Valor at Arms, which will be presented at West Point, New York on November 21, 2025.

On April 6, 2008, in Afghanistan's desolate Skok Valley, then-CPT Walton was serving as the ground force commander of Operation Detachment Alpha 3336, 3d Special Forces Group (Airborne), Special Operations Task Force-33, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan when his unit encountered machine gun, sniper, and Rocket Propelled Grenade fire in all directions from a numerically superior Hezebela Islami Gulbadin (HIG) insurgent group. Walton and his unit were on a mission to kill or capture a Joint Priority Effects List target of HIG. After inserting via CH-47 into the objective area at nearly 10,000 feet, Walton led his element through a fast-moving stream and began the climb up the ice-covered mountain toward the objective. Approximately halfway up, the insurgents engaged, critically wounding one ODA 3336 member and several Afghan commandos and killing the detachment's interpreter. With disregard for his own personal safety, Walton exposed himself to deadly fire in order to pull his critically wounded teammate back to a semi-covered position and then continued to maintain effective command and control of five different maneuver elements while repeatedly engaging numerous HIG fighting positions. Despite being impacted by two rounds to his helmet, Walton courageously continued to identify targets for other soldiers to engage, leading to 150 insurgents killed. As the



Kyle Walton '01

situation deteriorated and the casualties mounted, Walton realized that his entire element was in danger of being completely overrun and relayed this information to his headquarters, authorizing the use of 2000-pound bombs to be dropped almost directly on top of his position to prevent insurgent forces from overrunning the American and Afghan elements. His audacious decision allowed just enough freedom of maneuver to evacuate all casualties down a 60-foot cliff in preparation for medical evacuation. For his actions during the six-and-a-half-hour Battle of Shok Valley, Walton received the Silver Star, the United States Armed Forces' third-highest military decoration for valor in combat.

About the Nininger Award for Valor at Arms

The West Point Association of Graduates Nininger Award is presented annually to a graduate who is an exemplar of heroic action in battle. The Nininger Award is named in honor of Lieutenant Alexander R. "Sandy" Nininger Jr. '41, the first recipient of the Medal of Honor in World War II. On January 12, 1942, Nininger voluntarily attached himself to another company in his Philippine Scouts regiment that was under heavy attack by Japanese forces near Abucay, Bataan. Wounded several times, he continued to advance in a counterattack and destroy enemy positions until he was killed. The Alexander R. Nininger Award is funded by a generous endowment from E. Doug Kenna '45 and his wife, Jean.

About the West Point Association of Graduates

WPAOG is among America's oldest educational alumni associations. Founded in 1869, WPAOG is a non-profit corporation whose Mission is to Serve West Point and the Long Gray Line, and Vision is to be the most highly connected alumni body in the world by serving and supporting more than 56,000 living West Point graduates. Its philanthropic pursuits maintain a Margin of Excellence for cadets attending the United States Military Academy. For more information see www.WestPointAOG.org.

About West Point

The U.S. Military Academy at West Point is a four-year, co-educational, federal service academy located 50 miles north of New York City. It was founded in 1802 as America's first college of engineering and continues today as the world's premier leader-development institution, consistently ranked among top colleges in the country. Its mission remains constant—to build, educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets to be commissioned leaders of character committed to the Army Values and ready for a lifetime of service to the Army and Nation. For more information, go to WestPoint.edu.

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