

Remarks by  
Donald C. Winter, Secretary of the Navy  
USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109) Naming Ceremony  
Scio Central School  
Scio, New York  
Friday, March 23, 2007

Superintendent McArdle, members of the Dunham family, members of the Scio Central student body, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for hosting me at today's naming ceremony.

There is a long tradition in the United States Navy of naming our warships after heroes.

The hero would no longer be with us, but his name would live on—honored by generations of Sailors who proudly serve in the ship carrying his name.

Indeed, there is no higher honor in the Navy than to have a ship named after you.

Today I am pleased to announce that the United States Navy's next guided missile destroyer, DDG 109, will be named

. . . USS JASON DUNHAM.

As everyone here knows, the Jason Dunham who passed through these hallways less than a decade ago was a very special person.

The friendly, kind-hearted, gifted athlete who decided to follow his star in the United States Marine Corps went on to become one of the most courageous, heroic, and admired Marines this great country has ever known.

His destiny led him to dangerous lands far from home, to a small town in Iraq in al Anbar province, situated along the Euphrates River near the Syrian border.

A stronghold of Baathist insurgents, it was one of the most strategically significant battlefields of the war.

That is where Corporal Jason Dunham was assigned—at the very heart of the insurgency.

On 14 April 2004, while leading a patrol to investigate an attack on a Marine convoy, Corporal Dunham found himself in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy.

Suddenly, one of the enemy fighters released a live hand grenade, putting Dunham and his team in mortal danger.

His entire life came down to one moment, a moment where he was faced with a terrible choice—try to save himself or save the lives of his men.

All the influences on his character during the course of his journey on earth—his parents, his teachers, this community, his training, his fellow Marines, his patriotism, and his faith in a merciful God—produced the choice that he made in that split-second.

He put the lives of his fellow Marines above his own and jumped on that grenade.

For that act of conspicuously gallantry in combat, with the lives of his men on the line, Corporal Jason Dunham was taken from us.

We mourn his loss.

But we honor his sacrifice.

President Bush recognized that sacrifice in a White House ceremony in January, personally presenting the award to Jason Dunham's family on his behalf.

And now today, his name will be forever associated with DDG 109—the 55<sup>th</sup>

Arleigh Burke class destroyer, and a member of the most powerful class of surface combatants ever put to sea.

May those who serve in her always be inspired by the heroic deeds of Jason Dunham, and may all of us strive to be worthy of his sacrifice.

May God bless the warship and crew of USS Jason L. Dunham, and may God bless America.

Thank you.