

Freedom Alliance Announces 1st Lt Andrew Kinard, USMC as Defender of Freedom Award Recipient

Contributed by Jared Pierce
Monday, 08 December 2008
Last Updated Thursday, 05 February 2009

“Four days after being blasted to pieces by an IED in Iraq, Andrew Kinard was in the intensive care unit at the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland, with his family around his bedside, and still praying. By the time I returned from Iraq, just before Christmas 2006, Drew, as his Marine and Naval Academy friends call him, had already endured more than two dozen surgeries, and was fighting for his life.”

So explained Oliver North as he presented the 2008 Defender of Freedom Award to First Lieutenant Andrew Kinard, a Marine and an American hero, at the annual Freedom Alliance Defender of Freedom Dinner. Radio host and author, Laura Ingraham, joined in the salute to Andrew with her keynote address.

The Edward J. Bronars Defender of Freedom Award is presented each year to an outstanding individual who, in the face of adversity, exemplifies faith, courage and fidelity to the Constitution and the principles of freedom.

Along with First Lieutenant Kinard, the award was presented to the U.S. Marines deployed with First Platoon, Alpha Company, Second Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion to Operation Iraqi Freedom in August 2006. During their deployment, they showed extraordinary heroism, immeasurable courage, and dedicated service.

Andrew Kinard is a native of Spartanburg, South Carolina, and a 2005 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. In August, 2006, he deployed to Iraq with his unit. During his deployment, First Lieutenant Kinard was severely injured resulting in the loss of both legs. He would eventually undergo nearly 60 surgical procedures. Remarkably, Andrew continues to serve his country as an active duty Marine.

In presenting the Award, Colonel North Shared Andrew's Remarkable Story

“On October 29, 2006, Lieutenant Kinard was leading his Marines on a foot patrol in Rawah, Iraq — searching for a terrorist bomb factory — when a command-detonated IED exploded directly next to his left leg. The blast blew him into the air — and he landed almost 20 feet from the crater. Three other Marines were wounded.

“He was airlifted to the Marine Air Base at Al Asad, then to the Army trauma hospital at Balad, north of Baghdad. By the time he was flown to Landstuhl, Germany, he had gone into cardiac arrest — and been resuscitated — twice. Emergency surgeries went on nearly non-stop to plug the seemingly innumerable holes punched in his body. The family was alerted, and a prayer vigil held. Hundreds of people half a world away went to their knees and begged God for a miracle. Some miracles happen immediately. This one took awhile.

“When I walked into his hospital room, his mother and his sister Katherine were with him. His dad, a doctor in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and two younger siblings, Courtney and Will, were all enroute to spend Christmas with their badly battered Marine. His abdomen was an open hole. And he was smiling. “God is good,” he said in greeting.

“Over the next eleven months of hospitalization, Andrew was living proof of that statement. When I would ask him or his family, “How can I help you?” The inevitable response would be: “Just pray for recovery.” And so, he also became evidence of the power of prayer.

“His recovery will continue for years to come. But on one of my visits to him in the hospital the man who had once played rugby at the Naval Academy said, “I don't need legs. I have my arms. I learned discipline at the Naval Academy. I have my faith — and a desire to serve. Maybe I'll go to law school.”

“Andrew has all of that — and more. He also has a great sense of humor. He has a T-shirt with the words “Marine For Sale” printed on the front. On the back it reads: “40% Off — Some Assembly Required.”

Laura Ingraham Salutes Andrew Freedom Alliance was honored to have best-selling author and radio and TV host, Laura Ingraham as the keynote speaker at the Award Dinner. She praised Andrew’s dedication and sacrifice, noting his ability to keep on smiling despite the horrific events he has endured. She noted that America needs to remember a virtue, that in the self-centered, sensationalist culture we live in today has been long forgotten: sacrificial concern. Andrew hasn’t forgotten, but applies this virtue to his everyday life. She said, “I’m not worried one bit about what might or might not happen in America in the coming years. You know why? Because I heard Andrew tonight, and I believe in America. Period.”