

# Enlisted Hero Walk Lackland AFB



## Senior Airman Zachary J Rhyner



*Air Force Cross*

*Afghanistan*

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, takes pleasure in presenting the Air Force Cross to Senior Airman Zachary J. Rhyner, United States Air Force, for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States while serving with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, at Nuristan Province, Afghanistan on 6 April 2008. On that date, while assigned as Special Tactics Combat Controller, Airman Rhyner executed a day rotary-wing infiltration with his Special Forces team to capture high-value insurgents in a village on the surrounding mountains. While climbing near vertical terrain to reach their objective, the team was attacked in a well-coordinated and deadly ambush. Devastating sniper, machine gun, and rocket-propelled grenade fire poured down on the team from elevated and protected positions on all sides, immediately

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pinning down the assault force. Without regard for his life, Airman Rhyner placed himself between the most immediate threats and provided suppressive fire with his M-4 rifle against enemy fire while fellow teammates were extracted from the line of fire. Airman Rhyner bravely withstood the hail of enemy fire to control eight United States Air Force fighters and four United States Army attack helicopters. Despite a gunshot wound to the left leg and being trapped on a 60-foot cliff under constant enemy fire, Airman Rhyner controlled more than 50 attack runs and repeatedly repelled the enemy with repeated danger close air strikes, several within 100 meters of his position. Twice, his actions prevented his element from being overrun during the intense 6 and a half hour battle. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Airman Rhyner reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.