

# Special Operations Dog Posthumously Awarded Top Bravery Honour

A military working dog has been awarded the Dickin Medal for his remarkable actions in Afghanistan.

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*Kuga who received the medal posthumously (Picture: Australia Department of Defence).*

A hero dog who served with the Australian Special Air Service Regiment has received the animals' Victoria Cross for his remarkable actions while on duty in Afghanistan in 2011.

Special Operations Military Working Dog Kuga was posthumously awarded the PDSA Dickin Medal at a special ceremony at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.



Kuga in Afghanistan (Picture: Australia Department of Defence).

Kuga is the first Australian dog to receive the prestigious medal in its 75-year history.

Belgian Malinois, Kuga has been posthumously recognised for his actions during Operation Slipper. He indicated the presence of an enemy ambush, concealed among trees alongside a river. He swam into the river to apprehend the enemy and was shot five times.

Despite his injuries, Kuga swam back across the river when recalled by his handler, who gave him emergency first aid and requested a helicopter medical evacuation for him.



Kuga is the 71st recipient of the Dickin Medal (Picture: Australia Department of Defence).



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11th October 2018

Kuga was subsequently treated in Afghanistan and Germany, before returning to Australia for further treatment and rehabilitation.

Kuga passed away in 2012 back home in Australia and although inconclusive, it was believed that his body succumbed to the stress placed upon him due to the injuries sustained in the incident. Kuga's death is officially recorded as 'Died of Wounds'.

PDSA Director General Jan McLoughlin said:

"Kuga's actions undoubtedly saved the lives of his patrol. He took on the enemy without fear, saving his comrades despite suffering serious injury, and is a thoroughly deserving recipient of the PDSA Dickin Medal."



Military working dog Odin wearing the medal on behalf of Kuga at the ceremony (Picture: Australia Department of Defence).

The medal was formally presented to Kuga's canine colleague, retired Military Working Dog Odin.

Corporal Mark Donaldson, the recipient of the Victoria Cross for his actions in Afghanistan, received Kuga's medal on behalf of the regiment. He said:

"Kuga's actions that day in Afghanistan were heroic. There's no doubt in anybody's mind that he saved lives. He just wouldn't give up on his mates and doing his job.

" Kuga's PDSA Dickin Medal is for the all military working dogs who worked alongside us in Afghanistan and every day since."

The world-renowned Dickin Medal was introduced by PDSA's founder, Maria Dickin CBE, in 1943. It is the highest award any animal can achieve while serving in military conflict.

Kuga is the 71st recipient of the medal. Other recipients include 34 dogs (including Kuga), 32 World War II messenger pigeons, four horses and one cat.