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First Lt. Daren Hidalgo buried at West Point

The Dallastown high school graduate was killed in Afghanistan.

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West Point Supt. Lt. Gen. David Huntoon Jr., left, presents an American flag to Andrea Hidalgo as her husband, Jorge, right, stands with her during a graveside service Monday for their son, First Lt. Daren Hidalgo, in West Point, N.Y. The 2009 West Point graduate, also a 2005 Dallastown Area High School graduate, was killed Feb. 20 in Afghanistan. His brothers, Army Capt. Miles Hidalgo, left, and Marine Capt. Jared Hidalgo, look on. ((AP Photo/Mike Groll))

York, PA - York County Director of Veterans Affairs Phil Palandro said he's not surprised that First Lt. Daren Hidalgo was buried Monday in West Point's cemetery.

There are a number of options for veterans from the York County area. There's Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, or Veteran National Cemetery at Fort Indiantown Gap for wartime veterans. And, of course, families can opt for any private cemeteries they want.

But graduating from West Point is such a distinction that families almost always choose to bury fallen alumni there.

"It's highly prestigious," Palandro said. "It's very dignified."

Hidalgo, 24, was a 2005 graduate of Dallastown Area High School. He was killed Feb. 20 near Mama Kiriz, Afghanistan, after insurgents attacked his unit with an improvised explosive device.

Hidalgo graduated from West Point in 2009. He was following in the footsteps of his father, who graduated from West Point in 1981, and a brother who graduated in 2006. Another brother is a captain in the Marines. "They've got a pretty strong military connection," Palandro said.

The graveside service took place at West Point Monday afternoon under clear, cold skies.



Daren Hidalgo (SUBMITTED)

Palandro said graduating from West Point puts Hidalgo in the company of other graduates such as George Patton and Norman Schwarzkopf.

"He was destined for greatness," Palandro said. "It's a shame."

Palandro attended a memorial service for Hidalgo held at Dallastown Area High School. Faculty and students all described him as likable and dedicated.

"It was a great tribute to a great kid," Palandro said.



Carmen Spellman, center, sprinkles water on a container with the remains of her brother, First Lt. Daren Hidalgo, during a graveside service in West Point, N.Y., Monday. Also pictured, are his brothers, Army Capt. Miles Hidalgo, Marine Capt. Jared Hidalgo, and parents Andrea and Jorge Hidalgo. ((AP Photo/Mike Groll))

The Associated Press contributed to this story.