

How Walton Was Captured

On May 8, 2020, the Office of Special Investigations captured Airman Basic Damien Walton, who had been placed in deserter status April 7, 2020, after fleeing Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, to avoid prosecution for use/distribution of a controlled substance, government travel card fraud, unlawful use of a government computer, unauthorized use of a debit Card via an access device, wire fraud and identity theft.

All crimes prior to desertion were being investigated by Security Forces.

OSI Detachment 632 at Eielson took the lead in coordinating the apprehension of the subject. Special Agents tracked the deserter to Jersey City, N.J. However, due to that location being the epicenter for COVID-19 in that state, neither local law enforcement nor OSI Det. 307 at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JBMDL), N.J., could risk searching for him there at the time.

Fast forward to April 14, 2020, when Walton turned himself in at JBMDL. During his 14-day mandatory COVID-19 quarantine before being escorted back to Eielson, he fled again and was placed in deserter status again.

From April 23 to May 8, 2020, OSI Special Agents used various investigative techniques to establish a life pattern for the subject.

While Det. 307 SAs were conducting surveillance, Det. 632 SAs used advanced law enforcement tools to confirm Walton's location. Det. 307 SAs stopped and apprehended Walton and conducted a search. They then escorted him to JBMDL where he's in confinement.

Next, Walton will be confined in a county jail, then taken to the Navy brig in Chesapeake, Va. From there, an armed escort from Eielson Security Forces will return him to Alaska for pre-trial confinement in Fairbanks.

The collaboration among OSI SAs from Detachments in Alaska and New Jersey, coupled with local law enforcement, captured Walton. This joint policing effort demonstrates that even during the COVID-19 pandemic and despite the long distance geographical separation, OSI stands ready to protect the Department of the Air Force and the Nation against threats.