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NEWS

Michael Durant Of 'Black Hawk Down' To Keynote At CorrWeek

BY SUSAN RILEY

Some might not remember the details surrounding the Battle of Mogadishu fought nearly 30 years ago, but most have seen or at least heard of the 2001 war film, "Black Hawk Down."

Former U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter pilot Michael Durant, who was one of the inspirations behind the Oscar Award-winning movie, was asked to deliver his powerful message of teamwork and survival for the closing keynote address at Corrugated Week 2022 in San Antonio, Texas.



Michael Durant, former U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter pilot and an inspiration for an Oscar-award winning movie, will deliver the closing keynote address at Corrugated Week 2022 in San Antonio, Texas.

Durant and his crew on the Super Six Four were shot down by a Somali-fired grenade launcher on October 3, 1993. All were severely injured in the crash as a Somali crowd advanced towards them and opened fire. Only Durant survived. He was captured and held prisoner for 11 days. Upon his release, the image of a battle-scarred Durant was broadcast around the world and plastered across magazines. From his stretcher, he captured people's hearts as he gestured a thumbs up.

Despite the trauma of the experience, over time Durant was able to learn from it, heal, help others and become a successful author and businessman. While the interest in his story initially came from military organizations as a kind of after action and best practices review, Durant said that it has evolved into talking about the mission and sharing his insights with a general audience.

"I think most people will walk away with a better understanding of what happened on the mission but also take away some things that they could possibly apply in their own lives whether it's professional or personal," he said.

He will talk about how he recovered physically, psychologically, professionally and spiritually. As for the professional part, Durant said he is a lot like his fellow soldiers.

"Every wounded warrior I've ever met, me included, wants nothing more than to go back and be back in the unit that they were in when whatever happened happened," he said. "I'm sure there are exceptions, but everybody I've met that's one of the first things they say, 'I wanna get back,' and it's a commitment thing.

"You're part of a team, you feel like you know you need to get back on the team, so getting back in the cockpit was very important to me and I was able to do that."

There are a few things people might not know about Durant. He loves to climb mountains despite his prior injuries. He's also a private person who prefers to stay in the background.

"I've always felt that this is a unique story that people are interested in hearing and need to hear," he said. "In hindsight, it actually has helped me because the more we talk



Michael Durant, right, is presented with the Honorable Order of St. Michael in 2001.

about the challenging things that we dealt with in life I think the better we're able to deal with them emotionally and psychologically."

But as far as he has come, Durant says there's always room to grow. That's why he has approached his business life much the way he did flying. "Don't ever think you know it all or that you've learned everything you can learn. There is an opportunity to get better every day and that's certainly true in business," he said.

For the past 14 years, Durant has owned his own business, Huntsville, Alabama based Pinnacle Solutions, a defense and aerospace products and services company.

"It's very different today running a company of 500 people versus starting it with two people," he said. "Certainly, for any of us in business having just gotten through COVID and all the legislative changes and labor issues and supply chain. You've got to learn every day to figure out how you can overcome all those challenges that never go away."



In an iconic photo that was broadcast and published around the world, Michael Durant gives a 'thumbs up' upon his release as a prisoner of war.

Durant counts himself among the fortunate. He didn't lose a limb. He didn't lose mobility. Amazingly, he isn't dealing with PTSD.

"You see many, many people who never lose the will to keep moving forward, trying to maximize their life experiences and their fullest potential. Those are the kind of people that inspire me. They're facing real challenges head on and refusing to be held back."

Count among them all the people he flew with. They're a tight group and stay in touch regularly. They know the Michael Durant who loved the music of AC/DC as a young pilot. That's why it was blasted from the sky so Durant could hear it when he was in captivity.

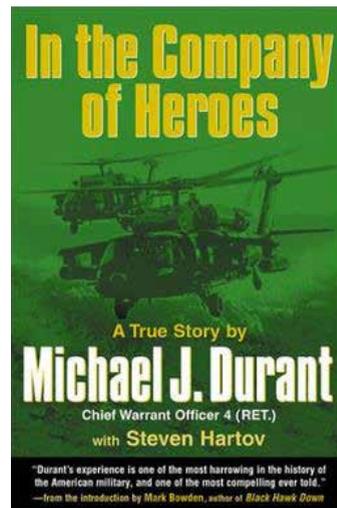
"There was also one of my very good friends who was calling to me from a loudspeaker from the sky, and it still sends a chill up my spine when I think about it," he said.

As an insider, Durant will talk about what the movie got right and didn't get right. This was a poignant moment the movie got right.

Best Selling Author And CEO

In addition to his military experience and speaking accomplishments, Durant is the New York Times best-selling author of "In the Company of Heroes" and "The Night Stalkers: Top Secret Missions of the U.S. Army's Special Operations Aviation Regiment."

Prior to his time in Somalia, he took part in combat operations in the Persian Gulf, Panama and Kuwait. Currently, he is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Huntsville, Alabama based Pinnacle Solutions. Durant is the recipient of many awards including the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Service Medal. Most recently, he ran for U.S. Senate to represent Alabama but lost in the primary.



The cover of Durant's New York Times best-selling book.



A poster from the movie, 'Black Hawk Down,' a 2001 war film directed and produced by Ridley Scott and co-produced by Jerry Bruckheimer from a screenplay by Ken Nolan.

He looks forward to sharing his inspiring message of survival, teamwork, and achievement with Corrugated Week 2022 attendees on Wednesday, September 21.

Visit corrugatedweek.org for more information.