

## War Hero Explains Life Since Black Hawk Down

By Cameron Moist

On October 3, 1993, in the middle of the hot and sweaty city of Mogadishu, Somalia, this Lieutenant Colonel was faced with a mission that he will never forget.

Lt. Col. Danny McKnight was on a mission to capture Somalian General, Mohammad Farrah Aidid, when he and the rest of Task Force Ranger captured three of the five most important people that answer to Aidid.

“I knew it would be difficult because we were in their city, in the worst part of town and it was the middle of the day” McKnight said. “We had our hands full, we knew it; but we knew we could pull it off.”

McKnight eventually got the call for his convoy to assist in rescuing American soldiers trapped in a Black Hawk helicopter that was shot down by Somali soldiers. The convoy was eventually stopped by roadblocks set up by Somali soldiers. McKnight and his convoy were caught in the middle of the most brutal raid since the Vietnam War.

McKnight’s book, “Streets Of Mogadishu: Leadership At Its Best, Political Correctness At Its Worst!” explains some things that the general public didn’t know. Many people didn’t know that the military originally had 550 soldiers ready to go on this mission. Thirty hours before departure the number was capped to 450 soldiers. This was a political decision to keep people from thinking that the mission was similar to the Vietnam War. McKnight had to leave 46 of his Rangers behind that he felt could have significantly helped on that day.

They were also supposed to receive support from the Air Force's AC-130 Gunship, but that was also called off due to fear of collateral damage.

"Those two decisions, in my opinion, cost the lives of the 5 guys that were part of that aircraft, McKnight said. "Those guys that were taken away and died would still be alive if those two decisions were not made."

At the same exact moment in sunny Florida, Jim McKnight, Danny's brother, was fighting his own battle with his emotions from home.

"The hardest part was not knowing what was going on," he said. "Obviously I was emotional, but I was trying to protect my Mom and Dad and help them get through it."

By the end of the stressful night and into early morning hours after the gunfight, 19 American soldiers were killed, thousands of Somalis were dead, and Aidid was killed in a battle with a rival group.

After returning home to America, many people explained their thoughts on what happened saying that it (the mission) was an enormous failure. Lt. Col. McKnight had different feelings on the subject.

"I object to that violently," McKnight said "It wasn't a failure because we did exactly what we were supposed to do that day."

McKnight was eventually promoted to Colonel, but was passed over when there was an opportunity for him to become Brigade Commander. He didn't achieve it (Brigade Commander) because of what occurred in Somalia. McKnight explained that it was because people didn't understand what happened at the time, which was why he was passed for that opportunity. It

wasn't until the book and movie "Black Hawk Down" was released when people began to understand.

After being passed for Brigade Commander, McKnight retired as a Colonel from the Army on January 1, 2002, after 28 ½ years of service and now resides in Rockledge, Florida with his wife, Linda.

Since he retired in 2002, McKnight's first job was as the first Homeland Security Coordinator for Brevard County, Florida. After 18 months he then took accepted a job at the Criminal Justice Center at Brevard Community College in Melbourne, Florida, as the Homeland Security Training Coordinator for the next 15 months.

McKnight also traveled across the nation as a motivational speaker, where the No. 1 subject of his speeches is about leadership, but found it difficult to speak and perform his job at BCC. After discussing some options with his wife, Linda, they now travel full time performing his motivational speeches.

"I thought it was a great idea!" Linda said.

He is currently finishing up his paperwork to teach again at Brevard Community College, which is now known as Eastern Florida State College.



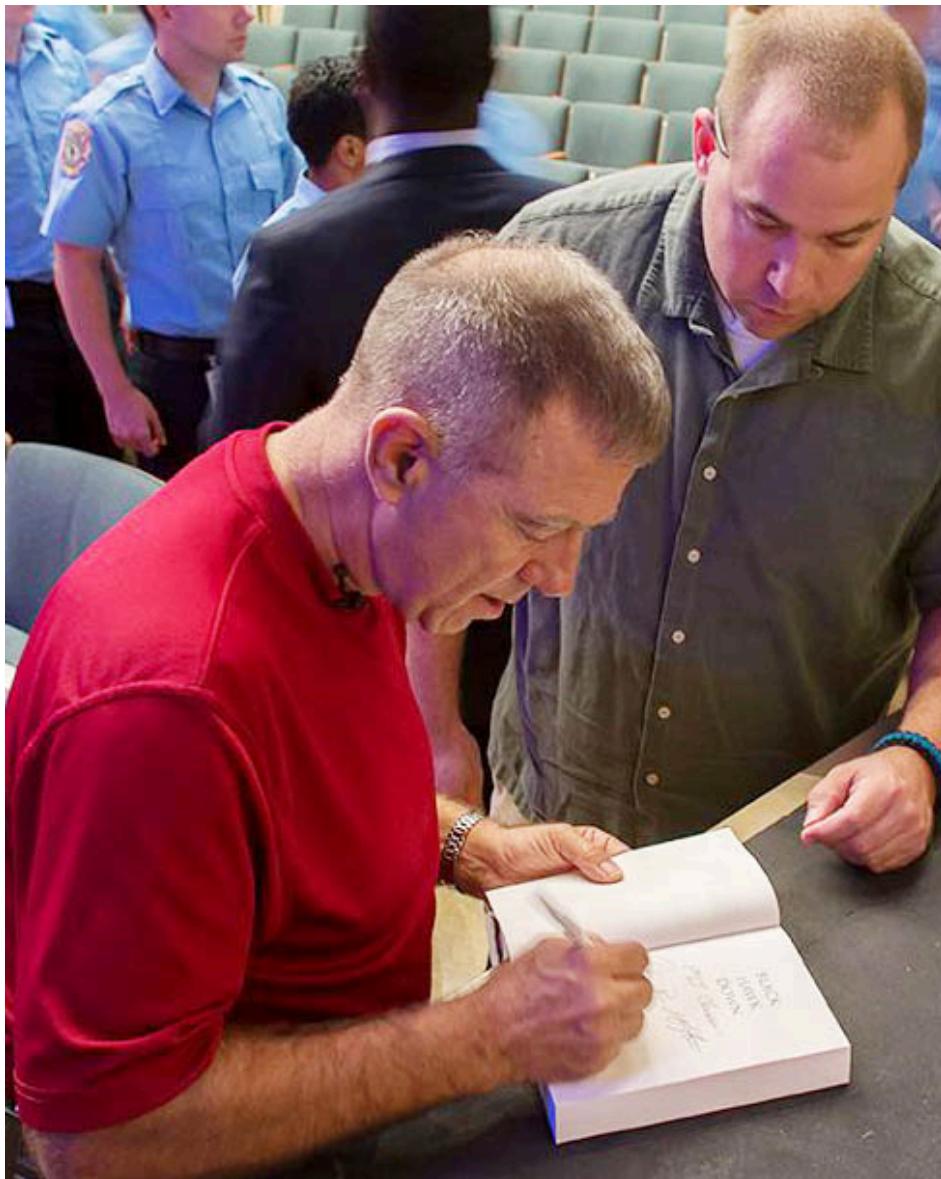
Lt. Col. Danny McKnight poses for his Army profile picture.

COURTESEY OF DANNY MCKNIGHT



Lt. Col. Danny McKnight getting ready to come home to America from Somalia.

PHOTO COURTESEY OF DANNY MCKNIGHT



Col. Danny McKnight autographing a copy of his book for a fan.

PHOTO COURTESEY OF SPACE COAST DAILY

Sources:

Col. Danny McKnight, U.S. Army (Retired), 321-759-6475

Linda McKnight, Wife of Danny, 321-631-5758

Jim McKnight, Rockledge City Manager and Danny's Brother, 321-698-1317