

STEVE HEANEY MC

Steve Heaney joined the British Army in 1986 initially as a boy soldier serving as a Junior Parachutist before completing adult training at Depot Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces. In 1987 he was posted to 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment. During his time in 3 PARA he saw active service in Northern Ireland being awarded a GOCs commendation for locating terrorist arms caches and trained overseas in US, Cyprus and Kenya.

In January 1990 he undertook selection for X Platoon more formally known as the Pathfinders and aged only twenty became the youngest soldier ever to pass the rigorous selection process.

Trained in the skill sets required of an operator in this highly specialised and secretive unit including weapons and tactics, covert surveillance and reconnaissance, high frequency and satellite communications, combat medical techniques and trauma management, advanced demolitions and sabotage and resistance to interrogation.

Heaney was regarded as one of the most accomplished parachutists in the military and was at the leading edge of high altitude parachuting helping to advance most of the techniques that are employed by Special Forces today such as High Altitude Low Opening (HALO), High Altitude High Opening (HAHO) and the High Altitude Parachutist Life Support System (HAPLSS) program, this insertion method was designed to allow operators to jump from altitudes well above 30000 feet. Heaney was also responsible for the initial trials and development of the Military Tandem Master system and became one of a very select few to qualify in this technique.

During his decade long service in the Pathfinders, Heaney led training teams around the world to instruct foreign forces in the tactics, techniques and procedures required to operate as an advance force. He worked alongside and in conjunction with the Special Forces of every one of the UKs partner nations and was instrumental in the forging of relationships and the development of standard operating procedures.

Heaney saw active service in Kosovo in 1999 and was the commander of the battle groups most demanding patrol during the initial liberation of the country. His patrol was the first team to cross the border from Macedonia into Kosovo operating beyond the reach and support of the remainder of the battle groups assets tasked with reporting on the movement of both Russian and Serbian forces.

In 2000 Heaney was the Pathfinder Platoon Sergeant as 26 men of X Platoon were deployed to Sierra Leone as part of a task force responsible for the evacuation of entitled personnel from that country in the face of certain massacre at the hands of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) a murderous rebel organisation famed for their brutality and signature atrocity of amputating the limbs of men, women and children. During this deployment the Pathfinders were tasked to stop the RUF advance towards the country's airport and then to its capital Freetown. X Platoon positioned in the village of Lungi Lol were deliberately exposed with the aim of enticing the RUF, believed to number 2000 fighters to attack their position, the aim being to inflict such a blow that they would think twice about continuing their assault on to the capital. Originally planned to last just 48 hours the mission mutated into a 16 day siege, the Pathfinders working with the local villagers had managed to construct some hasty defences, consisting of battle trenches and rows of sharpened bamboo stakes, they forged homemade claymore mines from old food tins and shrapnel scrounged from the village.



On the 17 May 2000 the village was attacked by a significant rebel force, the Pathfinders engaged the rebels during a vicious close quarter battle. Steve Heaney was awarded the Military Cross (MC) for his actions in taking control of the battle, becoming the first non-officer in the unit's illustrious history to receive this decoration.

The heroic actions of X Platoon at Lungi Lol stopped the RUF advance in its tracks and helped to restore peace to Sierra Leone.



Steve Heaney took the decision to leave the Pathfinders in 2001 and having trained as an Executive Close Protection Officer he went to work for an extremely high profile business man in London. His role was to provide security and close protection to the principal and his immediate family whilst in the UK and holidaying abroad.

In 2002, Steve Heaney became a military and security advisor to the government of the United Arab Emirates his role was to provide advice and training solutions across the full spectrum of both combat and internal security operations, a position he held for 13 years.

Heaney now uses his very unique and proven experiences to both design and deliver bespoke training packages on topics including leadership and management, support, strategies and decision making, team building and cohesion, motivation and morale and discipline for organizations wishing to improve or build upon their own existing procedures.

Steve is also an established motivational and after dinner speaker who delivers corporate speeches applying his military values to the business environment, his speeches are full of inspirational tales of hardship, dedication, adversity, risk and high adventure as well as invaluable business lessons that demonstrate by having determination you can beat the odds. His speaking style is amusing, informal, interactive, passionate and story telling.

Steve Heaney has written about the operation in Sierra Leone in his bestselling book Operation Mayhem, his second book titled X Platoon, which describes his early life, entry into the Parachute Regiment and then selection and service with the British Army's elite Pathfinders was published on 24th September 2015.

