

Michael Durant

Master Pilot, Inspiration for the Movie Black Hawk Down

Little did retired Chief Warrant Officer Four, Michael J. Durant, know when he entered the United States Army in 1979 that one day he would be the target of a Somali-fired grenade launcher, a prisoner of war (POW), and the subject of an acclaimed book and a major motion picture, *Black Hawk Down*. Durant was the pilot of Black Hawk helicopter Super Six Four that was fired upon and subsequently brought down during a combat operation in Mogadishu, Somalia, on October 3, 1993. After a horrific street battle, he was overrun by a crazed mob, captured, and held prisoner for 11 days. He was badly injured, suffering from gunshot wounds and a broken back, leg, and face. His image as a POW was seen around the world on the cover of *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *US News and World Report*, and all other television and media outlets. The events of that day were recounted in Mark Bowden's best-selling book, *Black Hawk Down*, and Ridley Scott's Academy Award-winning movie of the same name. Today, Durant is the *New York Times* best-selling author of the books, *In the Company of Heroes* and *The Night Stalkers*, and the chairman of the board at Pinnacle Solutions.

The story of *Black Hawk Down* is a tense one, but Durant, exclusively represented by [Leading Authorities speakers bureau](#), turned his experiences into a powerful story of survival and motivation. He talks vividly about his experience as a soldier and as a hostage and what it has taught him about being an American and a leader. Durant takes the unique lessons he learned and turns them into compelling insights for personal and professional growth and shows companies and individuals how they can succeed through better planning, motivation, and adaptation despite the obstacles they may encounter. An inspirational speaker, he illustrates the power of teamwork, leadership, and change through awe-inspiring stories, captivating visuals, and heart-racing accounts of life in the line of fire.

One Of A Few Good Men. Following basic training, Durant attended the Defense Language Institute, and got assigned to the 470th Military Intelligence Group in Fort Clayton, Panama, as a Spanish voice intercept operator. He then completed helicopter flight training at Fort Rucker, Alabama. Upon appointment to Warrant Officer One in 1983, he completed the UH60 Blackhawk Qualification Course and was assigned to the 377th Medical Evacuation Company in Seoul, Korea. His next assignment was with the 101st Aviation Battalion, where he performed duties as an instructor pilot, and he learned the importance of leadership at an early age. Durant joined the 160th Special Operations Group in 1988. Assigned to D company, he performed duties as Flight Lead and Standardization Instructor Pilot. He participated in combat operations Prime Chance (Persian Gulf in 1989), Just Cause (Panama invasion in 1989), Desert Storm (Liberation of Kuwait in 1991), and Gothic Serpent (Somalia in 1993).

Leading & Motivating From Experience. A master aviator and a highly decorated soldier, his awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, Bronze Star with Valor device, Meritorious Service Medal, three Air Medals, one with Valor device, the POW/MIA ribbon, the Army Commendation Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Purple Heart. Durant was also inducted into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame in 2008.