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Can you tell us about your Service in the Armed Forces?

I joined the forces at a very young age, just about to turn 16, back in 2003. I had a real passion at that time to do something good with my life, and being an infantry soldier was something I was very passionate about. Going through training after signing my oath of allegiance to my country was a massive eye-opener, but it was something I found myself very relaxed with, and it made me grow up extremely fast.

The training lasted nearly a year, including my Phase 1 and Phase 2 training, before I joined my unit. When I passed out of training, I was ready to join my unit, but since I wasn't yet 18, I couldn't join them in Cyprus. So, for the first few months after passing out, I was attached to the training team in Ayr to assist with recruitment until I turned 18. Once I turned 18, I was flown out to Cyprus, where I met my regiment and began my long 12 years of service.

During my time in Cyprus, we carried out numerous training exercises and operations. We worked with the US, securing the runway for their spy planes, and provided internal security at key locations in and around Cyprus. I was based in Cyprus for roughly three years, during which time

I was deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Belize, and other locations for various tasks.

After my time in Cyprus, our regiment moved back to the UK and was based in Canterbury for about eight years. From there, we conducted further training and operations across the UK, as well as in places like Northern Ireland, France, and many others. Most of my service time was spent in Canterbury before we moved back to our homeland in Scotland and were based in Edinburgh. I left the army in the middle of 2014.

What was your primary job after training?

My primary job in the forces after passing out was as an infantry soldier, and I was also trained to drive various vehicles, from cars to HGVs, and other vehicles like quad bikes.

Where did you serve the majority of time in service?

I was based in mainly three locations: Cyprus, Canterbury, and then Edinburgh. From these locations, I was deployed to various places, including: Iraq (1 time) France (1 time) Kenya (1 time) Belize (2 times) Afghanistan (2 times) Falklands (1 time) Northern Ireland and various locations all over the UK

What rank are you most proud to have earned and why?

For the first couple of years, being an infantry soldier was all I ever wanted, and it was the only job I wanted. Progression wasn't something I was interested in at that point, as I always loved getting involved in all the dirty jobs while on tour, and I thoroughly enjoyed that role. It wasn't until later in life that I decided to push further and progress my career. However, after coming back from my third tour, my body was not in a condition that allowed me to progress due to a couple of injuries I had sustained during my time away from home.

What has been your proudest moment in your career related to your Military Service?

The day I joined the forces was only a week after 9/11, so for me, my proudest moment was getting my first medal from Iraq and being part of something that I felt I needed to be a part of. Coming home to my family and friends always gave me excitement and a sense of relief, transitioning from places like that to the unknown and seeing family and friends that I had not seen for up to nine months of the year.

What skills do you think you developed whilst in the Forces that you have utilised most during your career

Throughout my 12 years in the forces, I gained a number of skills that I use to this day and will never lose: - Motivation - Willingness to overcome and adapt to life - Professionalism - Communication

- Problem-solving - Good listening - Passion in what I do - Risk-taking

The list of skills you can gain from serving is extensive, and these skills will last a lifetime, whether they are good or bad.

Are there any veteran networks or charities you attend/socialise with / support which you would recommend to other Veterans?

I have a large network of people I still keep in touch with, many of whom have now left the military. Some work with charities, while others rely on their military connections in their day-to-day lives. For me, I believe that anyone needing help or support can rely on organizations like SSAFA or their local regiment association to assist during difficult times.



How did your military experience affect your life today?

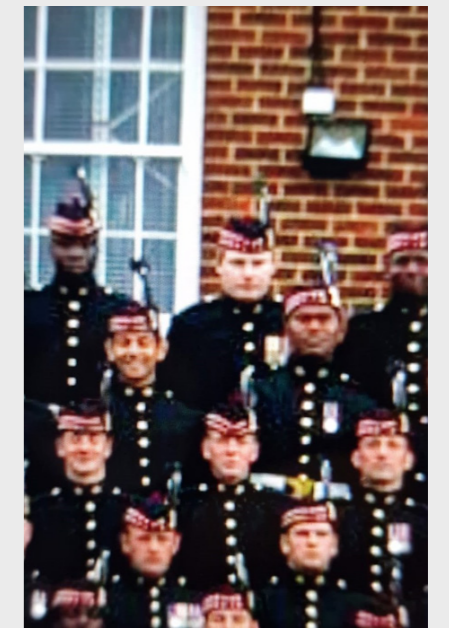
Leaving the forces and starting life from scratch was an incredibly challenging transition for me. Moving into a job where I had no prior experience and learning from colleagues who had no understanding of my military background, experiences, or what I had been through was daunting. Simple interactions and communication with civilians presented unexpected challenges that could significantly impact one's life, especially when faced with scepticism or misunderstandings about military life.

I often found myself feeling misunderstood or challenged for who I was as a person, without the support network or understanding that I had grown accustomed to in the military. Adjusting to civilian work environments was tough, and finding a role where I could fit in was a journey in itself. However, when I did find a job where my skills were valued and understood, the transition to civilian life became much smoother.

Having the opportunity to work alongside other ex-service members made a tremendous difference. They understood the unique challenges of transitioning from military to civilian life, providing a supportive environment that helped bridge the gap. The skills I gained during my military service—such as motivation, adaptability, professionalism, communication, problem-solving, and passion—have been invaluable in pushing my career forward.

Over the years since leaving the military, I've learned that having a supportive network, whether through organizations like SSAFA or connections with fellow veterans, can make a significant

difference in navigating civilian life successfully. Finding that initial support and understanding from employers and colleagues has been crucial in my journey of rebuilding and thriving after military service.



What was the best and worst 'military' food you were served, and why?

I couldn't even begin to describe the highs and lows of army life, especially when it comes to the food—it often leaves much to be desired, whether on base back home or overseas on operations. However, you always manage to find ways to make it taste a bit better. For me, hot sauce was an absolute lifesaver. One of my favourite meals that I still enjoy to this day is something I frequently made while on tour in Iraq and Afghanistan: pasta with ham chunks and sweet chili sauce.