

Michael D. Steele is a Colonel in the United States Army. He was a company commander in the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment during the Somalia mission Operation Gothic Serpent, which resulted in the now famous book and movie *Black Hawk Down*, where he was portrayed by actor Jason Isaacs. He briefly appears in the documentary *I Am an American Soldier*.

Colonel Steele is from the small northeast Georgia town of Statham. He attended and was an offensive lineman for the University of Georgia Bulldogs football team, during the Vince Dooley era. In 1980, the Bulldogs were crowned national champions. Upon graduation, Steele was commissioned as an infantry officer through Army ROTC in 1983. His first assignment was to the Berlin Brigade in West Berlin. Later he received a Master's Degree from Central Michigan University. His military education includes the following: Airborne School, Ranger School, Joint Power Control School, Army Command and General Staff College, Armed Forces Staff College and the United States Army War College.

In August 1993, Steele deployed to Mogadishu, Somalia, with his Ranger company as part of Task Force Ranger, which was tasked with capturing Somali warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. Task Force Ranger also included a deployment package from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Night Stalkers) from Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

On the afternoon of 3 October 1993, Task Force Ranger received intelligence that two leaders of Aidid's militia were at a residence in central Mogadishu. In response, the task force sent 19 aircraft, 12 vehicles, and 160 men to arrest them. During the mission, one of the Rangers fast-roping from an UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, missed the rope and fell 70 feet to the street below, badly injuring himself. The two leaders were quickly arrested, and the prisoners and the injured ranger were loaded on a convoy of ground vehicles.

At 1542 hours, in Mogadishu, Captain Steele fast-roped into the Bakara Market with 120 Rangers, led by Lt. Colonel Danny McKnight, and approximately 40 Delta Force operators. The raid was to take 30 minutes and was meant to capture Omar Salad and Abdi Hassan Awale, two top advisors to Warlord Mohammed Farrah Aidid. However, with the downing of two Black Hawk helicopters, Super 61 (CW4 Cliff Wolcott) and Super 64 (CW3 Mike Durant), the mission changed dramatically and for the worse.

After 15½ hours of intense fighting, the Rangers and Delta operators, including Captain Steele, were rescued and brought to the Pakistani Stadium, just north of the Bakara Market. The outcome of the raid was 18 Rangers, Delta, and 160th SOAR personnel KIA and 89 WIA. Durant was held captive for eleven days. Anywhere from 700-1500 Somali militia were killed. Abdi Hassan was captured. Captain Steele was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor Device for his actions as a commander during the fight.

He currently holds the rank of Colonel and is the former commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team/187th Infantry Regiment (Rakkasans) of the 101st Airborne Division, which returned from a tour of duty in the Salah ad Din province in Iraq in the autumn of 2006.

Colonel Steele commanded the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Rakkasans) from June 2004 through November 2006. During his command, he oversaw the transformation of the unit from a traditional three battalion infantry brigade into a six battalion infantry brigade combat team composed of two infantry battalions, a reconnaissance squadron, a field artillery battalion, support battalion, and special troops battalion.

Colonel Steele and his brigade deployed to Iraq the fall of 2005 and conducted operations primarily in Salah ad Din province. In March 2006, the brigade planned and executed Operation Swarmer, which was a joint U.S.-Iraqi air assault operation targeting insurgents in the desert area to the northeast province of Samarra. According to the US military, it was the largest air assault in Iraq since the start of Iraq War in 2003. In addition to Operation Swarmer, the brigade conducted numerous other brigade and battalion sized operations including Operation Katrina, Operation Rita, Operations Red Light I, II and III, Operation Swift Sword, Operation Starlight, and Operation Iron Triangle.

In November 2006, Colonel Steele successfully completed his command with the 3rd Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division and was assigned as the Deputy G3, Training, United States Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) at Fort McPherson, Georgia, where he coordinates the training for CONUS based Army forces.