

Somerset West marine honoured for bravery

JAMEY THOMAS

“The true heroes are the ones that made the ultimate sacrifice.”

These are the words of the very modest royal marine Craig Buchanan (26) from Somerset West, who has recently been awarded a military cross signifying bravery after saving the lives of five colleagues under fire.

Buchanan joined the Royal Marines in January 2010 and was on his first operational tour of Afghanistan when the incident occurred.

The brave and selfless marine was serving with 40 commando royal marines in Nehr-e-Saraj when he was confronted with a rogue Afghan policeman who began shooting at the eight-man patrol, killing two and badly wounding another.

In a media statement released by the Royal Navy Buchanan explained that they were on their way to give low-level first aid and improvised explosive device (IED) training at a checkpoint. And, as they were patrolling through an area of open ground, he simply “had a feeling that something was wrong”.

“Then one of the patrol men said he had two men approaching him and then they started firing on the patrol at close range. There were two immediate casualties to the rear and then my friend got shot.

“It all happened so quickly – there was dust everywhere and I couldn’t see what was going on and



Royal marine Craig Buchanan (26) from Somerset West has recently been awarded a military cross signifying bravery after saving the lives of five colleagues under fire.

I couldn’t get a clear shot. I went to a low wall and could see my friend on the floor and the attacker advancing on him with his weapon on automatic fire. I stood up and managed to get a clear line of sight and then opened fire,” said Buchanan in the report.

Buchanan did not only put himself into the line of fire, waited for a clear line of sight to avoid injuring his colleagues, and killed the attacker with a single shot, he also

immediately attended to his colleague – who had been shot in the chest, shoulder and leg – and provided him with life-saving first aid, despite the threat of further attack from a second gunman.

In an interview with *DistrictMail* earlier this week the marine said that there were a million things rushing through his head, but he took a deep breath, tried to remain calm and attempted to make the best decision in the situation.

“I realised that it was either I shoot the attacker or he continues shooting my mates. And, so the top-class training that we received kicked in,” Buchanan said.

According to the Royal Navy a military cross is granted in recognition of exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy on land, and Buchanan says he is very humbled to be presented with the prestigious award.

“It is completely unexpected. I am proud, but wish it was under better circumstances – if I could

give my medal back for my friends who passed away that day I would in an instant.”

Buchanan, who was born in Mutorashanga, Zimbabwe, has been a marine for four years and he says that no matter what he has never regretted his decision.

“We all understand the pros and cons of war. How do you bounce back from such events? You rely on your friends, both civilian and military, and of course your family.”