

100,000

ANNUAL EXPEDITED SHIPMENTS



STAFF PROFILE LEANNE BARRY

TEAM LEADER

DEPARTMENT: LOGISTICS
SECTION: CUSTOMER SOLUTIONS
OFFICE: DOVER
START DATE: JULY 2014

The clock is ticking, and in the control room, Captain Leanne Barry knows the next few minutes will mean success or failure. She will need to call on every ounce of her experience, after all - 'failure is not an option' - as dozens of people are relying on her to deliver within a tight deadline. As a veteran of five tours of duty - including two in Iraq and two in Afghanistan - she's used to pressure.

But today, after 12 years' distinguished Army service, the decorated former Royal Logistics Corps officer is at the heart of a sophisticated civilian operation, as a team leader tasked with moving high-value payloads around the globe on behalf of major manufacturers and suppliers.

Priority Freight specialises in solving critical logistics problems all over the world, particularly when a missed deadline for a delivery could cost a client tens of thousands of pounds. Her role at the expert logistics firm may not compare to the dangers of working on the front line, but Leanne admits there are times when she still feels the heat.

She said: "Everything is on a time constraint here. As tensions rise, it can remind me of being in the army because it is so fast and furious. We have to ensure everything is delivered on-time and in pristine condition, because our clients rely on us to deliver the military precision they have come to know."

Leanne's role tests her skills to the limit, often calling on her to juggle the movement of up to 100 vehicles during a single shift, and although she's no longer sleeping in ditches while on manoeuvres, this civilian job often requires her to work late into the night.

"You need a certain level of command, which has been a fabulous part of my transition - that's why it's gripped me so much. As a team leader here, the challenges may be to do with money rather than lives, but you still strive to do every single job as well as you can, on time, every time. And in the Army it's the same, you always have to try and hit the checkpoint at the right time. At least in civvy street I get to go home at night!

"I joined the Army in 2001 and served for 12 years, initially in the ranks but after four years I was commissioned as an officer in the Royal Logistic Corps."

Within months of completing her basic training, Leanne found herself serving her country in a logistics role in Bosnia, responsible for the movement of

passengers on to aircraft. This was in 2002, just after the Twin Towers attack, and she remembers watching the first troop movements over the line in Iraq whilst being in Zagreb.

After the outbreak of the Second Gulf War, Leanne's logistics skills were tested on the front line for the first time. As a junior soldier, she was deployed to Basra and tasked with moving troops in and out of the conflict zone.

Her talents were quickly spotted by her superiors and within three years she was fast-tracked for a possible leap up the ranks to take a commission and become an officer. In 2004 she was one of only

three soldiers without a university degree to make it through the tough selection process for a place at the Military Academy Sandhurst.

This was a turning point in her career, and one that would also deliver an unexpected brush with Royalty. Leanne recalls: "Prince Harry arrived at Sandhurst in juniors when I was in the senior term. He actually saluted me, and I'm never letting that one go!"

Surviving Sandhurst is a huge achievement for any cadet, but for Leanne it meant promotion to Second Lieutenant and an inevitable return to the front line; this time in Afghanistan, attached to the Medical Corps as an ambulance troop commander.

Leanne's final deployment was in 2013 when she was responsible for aiding the withdrawal of British troops from the war zone. It was a tough decision to leave her career after 12 years, but she soon found her home with Priority Freight, where she became the first person to enter the company at the level of team leader. Although she acknowledges that she worked with some amazing people in the military, she finds life inside a civilian logistics operation like Priority Freight far more welcoming for high-flying women.

"Coming into this environment, everyone is wonderfully friendly. It's pretty damn tough being a woman in the Army. If you're the only female in the room, someone's asking you to make a brew - yet you might be about to take control of the room.

"I'd recommend Priority Freight to any of my old colleagues. Making the decision to leave a career you love is difficult, but there is a life after the Army and the skills I learned in my 12 years are invaluable in a commercial environment where the customer comes first and the pressure to deliver is on."