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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**RECOGNIZING THAT I VOLUNTEERED
AS A RANGER**

by

Bryan C. Cercy

December 2019

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Kalev I. Sepp
Robert E. Burks

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RECOGNIZING THAT I VOLUNTEERED AS A RANGER

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Major, United States Army
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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from the

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ABSTRACT

The 75th Ranger Regiment has one of the most distinguished lineages in the United States Army that predates the American Revolutionary War. From the beginning, Rangers have proven themselves as an elite light infantry force capable of gathering actionable information to strike with violence and precision against the nation's enemies. Although there is no shortage of publications on the lineage or storied history of the American Ranger or the modern-day 75th Ranger Regiment, there is little available that describes how some of the most elite members of the United States Army are selected and how or why those programs and processes have evolved over time. Through extensive interviews with former and current Ranger leaders and the comprehensive research of literature, relevant data, and applicable documents in the Regiment's historical archives, this thesis is the first to present the evolution of assessment and selection programs and processes of United States Army Rangers and the 75th Ranger Regiment from 1675 to 2019.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

1SG	First Sergeant
APFT	Army Physical Fitness Test
CPT	Captain
COL	Colonel
CSM	Command Sergeant Major
EUSAK	Eighth United States Army Korea
FECOM	Far East Command
LRP	Long Range Patrol
LRRP	Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MACV	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
POI	Program of Instruction
PT	Physical Training
RASP 1	Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 1
RASP 2	Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 2
RCO	Regimental Commanding Officer
RFS	Release for Standards
RICA	Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne)
RIP	Ranger Indoctrination Program
ROC	Ranger Operations Company
ROP	Ranger Orientation Program
RPFT	Ranger Physical Fitness Test
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
RSTB	Regimental Special Troops Battalion
RSTC	Regimental Selection and Training Company
RTD	Regimental Training Detachment
RTU	Return to Unit

SF	Special Forces
SFC	Sergeant First Class
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SSG	Staff Sergeant
TO&E	Table of Organization and Equipment
US	United States
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USMA	United States Military Academy
USSOCOM	United States Special Operation Command

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I. INTRODUCTION

The 75th Ranger Regiment has one of the most distinguished lineages in the United States Army that predates the American Revolutionary War. From the beginning, Rangers have proven themselves as an elite light infantry force capable of gathering actionable information to strike with violence and precision against the nation's enemies. Across the nation's history, Ranger volunteers have demonstrated that they are specially selected and well-trained Soldiers. They have embodied a Soldier who is mentally alert, physically strong, and morally straight. They have recognized that their country expects them to move further, faster, and fight harder than any other Soldier. They have continuously set the example for others to follow. Although many have tried to argue that any well-trained infantry unit could accomplish such feats, there is a reason that the United States Army has continuously called upon Ranger units to defeat the nation's enemies on the field of battle.

Whether fighting on the American frontier with Robert Rogers in 1756 or parachuting from an aircraft in 2001 over the mountains of Afghanistan to spearhead operations in the Global War on Terrorism, the assessment and selection of Rangers has always been a demanding responsibility. Since the beginning of American Ranger history in colonial America and moving through the American Revolution, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, and the Global War on Terrorism, the methods and programs to assess and select Rangers have evolved. The length or duration of the assessment, standards, psychological testing, and training methods have all grown and adapted with the organizational and operational demands of Ranger units throughout history. Senior leader's priorities, unit manning requirements, and significant operational influences are just a few contributing factors that have impacted the assessment and selection of volunteers for service as U.S. Army Rangers.

While there is no shortage of publications on the Ranger Regiment's lineage or storied history, there is little available that describes how some of the most elite members of the United States Army are selected and how or why those programs and processes have evolved. Current and former members of the Regiment hold much of this undocumented

knowledge. Therefore, through extensive interviews coupled with the comprehensive research of publications on Ranger history and available data and documents in the Regiment's organizational archives, this thesis presents the evolution of the assessment and selection of Rangers from 1675 to 2019. Moreover, this thesis aims to capture the efforts of former Ranger unit members and serve as a reference for future cadre and leaders of the assessment and selection process within the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Although Ranger units have continually assessed and selected Rangers who rank from Private through Colonel and represent nearly 60 military occupational specialties, to protect the sensitivity related to the selection of senior leaders above the rank of Staff Sergeant, this thesis primarily focuses on the assessment and selection of junior enlisted personnel. While there are references throughout this thesis on how senior leaders are selected, the specific details related to the methods that support the selection process for senior leaders are intentionally omitted. However, even though the circumstances surrounding these processes are left out, regardless of rank or specialty, the one thing that has remained consistent throughout history, with only a few exceptions, was the expectation that every member of a Ranger unit met the same exacting standards.

Based on the facts presented in this thesis and through intermittent and parallel analysis of other elite and specialized forces, the assessment and selection programs and processes of Rangers have evolved with wartime demands and have emphasized the importance that every Ranger is a Ranger first.

II. THE GENESIS OF THE RANGERS: 1675–1865

A. INTRODUCTION

Ranger units of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were all-volunteer forces that were viewed by many as specialized and elite soldiers.¹ From the beginning, Ranger operations required precision and coordination; thus, without the proper selection and training of personnel, the latter would likely fail. Historical documents produced by the 75th Ranger Regiment in 1999 recognized that “the early Rangers received little formal training. The most successful units were those that were composed of men who were familiar with living and working in the forests, on the prairies, or on the plains. Such men were very independent, and only good leaders could secure their best performance.”² In the early formation of Ranger units, no Ranger cadre, training centers, or consolidated program existed that produced Ranger personnel. Although these findings are generally accurate, it is not to say that there was no assessment, selection, or training that aided in the generation and development of Ranger personnel or units.

According to the official history of the 75th Ranger Regiment published in 2019, Colonel Benjamin Church and Major Robert Rogers played a significant role in organizing, training, and employing some of the first official Ranger units to fight in King Phillips War and the French and Indian War.³ A brief overview of the actions of these iconic Rangers as well as those who served during the American Revolution and Civil War helps establish a baseline of the attributes, general standards, level of discipline, and quality of character required for service in a Ranger unit. Although the life experiences of Rangers in the early twenty-first century vary from that of their predecessors, many of the individual characteristics and attributes of Ranger unit members have conceptually remained

¹ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present: In Memory of Our Fallen Comrades—Our Lineage and an Overview of the 75th Ranger Regiment* (Fort Benning, GA, 1999), 11.

² 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 12.

³ “75th Ranger Regiment History,” United States Army Special Operations Command, accessed July 29, 2019, <https://www.soc.mil/rangers/history.html>.

unchanged over the past several hundred years. Additionally, by covering only a select few Ranger units and leaders during a period that spans nearly two centuries, this chapter identifies the attributes of early American Rangers and the ways those have influenced the future evolution of assessment and selection procedures.

B. COLONIAL RANGERS

As English colonies and settlements expanded across North America, the demand for elite light infantry forces to provide protection against Native Americans and daring brigands became a pressing concern. With the evolution of warfare and weapon systems, especially after the Hundred Years War in Europe from 1337–1453, the concept of elite light infantry forces was not only evolving in the British Army but was also becoming more popular amongst other field commanders.⁴ However, despite earlier origins of elite light infantry forces, the origin of the American Ranger can be traced to the need for specialized units by early British colonists in the New World.⁵ Thus, “much like his Old-World counterpart, the colonial Ranger was tasked with combat and reconnaissance patrols—to ambush the dreaded, marauding Indians whenever and wherever possible.”⁶

Colonel Benjamin Church was a colonial-era Ranger who established early Ranger heritage. According to the *2018 Ranger Knowledge Handbook*, published by the 75th Ranger Regiment, Church “is considered the father of American ranging and was the captain of the first Ranger force in America.”⁷ While serving as the aide to Governor Josiah

⁴ Jack Owen, “The Influence of Warfare in Colonial America on the Development of British Light Infantry,” *U.S. Army History*, no. 44 (Spring 1998), 20–21, <https://history.army.mil/armyhstory/AH44newOCR.pdf>.

⁵ David Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry?: The Changing Role of the U.S. Army Rangers from Dieppe to Grenada*, Contributions in Military Studies 128 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 1.

⁶ Mir Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors: A History of the U.S. Army Rangers*, 1st ed. (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2005), 11.

⁷ 75th Ranger Regiment, *75th Ranger Regiment: Ranger Knowledge Handbook* (Fort Benning, GA, 2018), 43.

Winslow of Plymouth Colony in 1675, Church was commissioned to form the first Ranger company to counter Native American raids during King Phillip's War from 1675–1678.⁸

When selecting those that would serve in his formation, “Church personally selected his men and demanded the highest levels of discipline”⁹ According to Church, during King William's War from 1688–1697, he received orders in July 1692 from Sir William Phips Knight, Captain General and Governour [sic] in Chief in and over their Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, that stated:

You are therefore Authorized and Required in their Majesty's Names, to discharge the duty of a Major, by Leading Ordering and Exercising the said several Companies in Arms, both Inferiour [sic] Officers & Souldiers [sic], keeping them in good Order & Discipline, Commanding them to Obey you as their Major: And diligently to intend the said Service, for the prosecuting, pursuing, killing and destroying of the said Common Enemy.¹⁰

In 1696, Church received official instructions from Isaac Addington, Lieutenant Governour and Commander in Chief, Province of the Massachusetts-Bay, that stated: “good order and command be kept up & maintained in the several companies, and all disorders, drunkenness, profane cursing, swearing, disobedience to Officers, mutinies, omissions or neglect of duty, be duly punished according to the Laws Martial.”¹¹ This higher-level influence and expectations of discipline coupled with the actions of Church's Rangers through not only King Phillip's War, but also King William's and Queen Anne's Wars, established the foundation for future expectations of American Rangers.

Church arguably selected an elite class of frontiersmen that were physically and mentally strong, reliable, team-oriented, and possessed unique skills in forest tactics, hunting, marksmanship, and survival. Church not only recruited white frontiersmen but

⁸ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Ranger Knowledge Handbook*, 43.

⁹ Benjamin Church, *The History of the Eastern Expeditions of 1689, 1690, 1692, 1696, and 1704 Against the Indians and French* (Boston, MA: J. K. Wiggin and W. P. Lunt, 1867), 4–6; Jerome Haggerty, “A History of the Ranger Battalions in World War II” (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1982), 7.

¹⁰ Church, *The History of the Eastern Expeditions*, 83–84.

¹¹ Church, *The History of the Eastern Expeditions*, 97.

also recruited blacks and friendly Native Americans to serve as Rangers.¹² Church's unorthodox approach to recruiting and warfare not only established the expectations of serving as a Ranger, but also created an initial persona of a Ranger leader: intelligent, physically fit, aggressive, innovative, adaptive, and team-oriented.

Following the contributions of Church's Rangers and other Ranger-type units across early American colonies, it was nearly a century until America saw the establishment of another Ranger unit. However, during this time, several outfits emulated the individual and organizational characteristics of Church's Rangers. Units such as Gorham's Rangers, who conducted strikes against hostile Native Americans in Nova Scotia, and the mounted Rangers employed by Governor James Oglethorpe of Georgia "to keep an eye on Spanish movements during his defense of St. Simon's Island in July 1742," are just a few examples of Ranger units that succeeded Church's Rangers.¹³ Although other units carried the "Ranger" name during this period, it was not until the French and Indian War that Ranger units reappeared in North America under the command of Major Robert Rogers.

In the mid-1700s, following several near disasters in the bloody war against France, British generals became convinced that success in North America was not possible without Rangers.¹⁴ The generals needed a corps of Rangers that were capable of quickly striking against the enemy with the utmost violence and precision. Robert Rogers, a frontiersman and native of Massachusetts, was just the person the generals were looking for to lead such a force. Rogers was described by most as a "strong, well-knit figure" whose "services were invaluable" during wartime.¹⁵ However, some have also described Rogers as someone

¹² Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 13.

¹³ David Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983" (PhD Diss., Duke University, 1986), 20–21.

¹⁴ Robert Rogers, *Reminiscences of the French War: Containing Roger's Expeditions with the New-England Rangers under His Command, as Published in London in 1765* (New York: Luther Roby, 1831), 3.

¹⁵ Francis Parkman, *The Battle for North America*, 1st ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 582–83; Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983," 21–23; Ross Hall, *The Ranger Book: A History 1634 - 2006* (Charleston, SC: Book Surge Publishing, 2007), 18.

who “had never received any formal military training,” was “beyond control,” and at times was devious and revealed a “shady side of his character.”¹⁶ While both descriptions, although contrasting, were warranted, some historians and analysts, such as Mir Bahmanyar, have attempted to defend and even justify Rogers’ strong but wild character as being necessary for the Rangers.¹⁷ However, even though Ranger tactics and operations were considered unorthodox at the time, such arguments do not lend justification to the selection of unorthodox leadership.

However, despite these adverse claims against his character, Rogers gained a positive reputation for his actions near Lake George in 1755 and on March 23, 1756, Governor William Shirley, the chief command of all his Majesty’s forces in North America, commissioned Rogers as a Captain to raise an independent corps of Rangers.¹⁸ According to the *Journals of Robert Rogers*, his orders “were to raise this company as quick as possible, to enlist none but such as were used to traveling and hunting, and in whose courage and fidelity I could confide: they were, moreover, to be subject to military discipline and the articles of war.”¹⁹ The corps of Rangers was an all-volunteer force that consisted of sixty privates, three sergeants, an ensign, a lieutenant, and a captain [Rogers].²⁰ According to Rogers’ journals, his Rangers were “officered by the most hardy, intelligent, and enterprising partisans of that day.”²¹

The training program established by Rogers and his group of cadre aimed to perfect the skills the recruits already possessed. According to military historian Chris McNab, those that entered the Ranger service were already experienced outdoorsman and had above

¹⁶ Haggerty, “A History of the Ranger Battalions in World War II,” 17; Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry?*, 3; Burt Loescher, *Genesis: Rogers’ Rangers: The First Green Berets: The Corps & the Revivals, April 6, 1758-December 24, 1783*, 2nd ed., A Heritage Classic (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2000), 160.

¹⁷ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 14.

¹⁸ Rogers, *Reminiscences of the French War*, 18.

¹⁹ Robert Rogers, *Journals of Major Robert Rogers: Reprinted from the Original Edition of 1765* (New York, NY: Corinth Books, 1961), 11.

²⁰ Rogers, *Journals of Major Robert Rogers*, 11.

²¹ Rogers, *Reminiscences of the French War*, 4.

average marksmanship skills; therefore, there was no need for them to receive the entry-level training of an average redcoat recruit.²² McNab also found that the initial training program included training in waterborne operations, movement of personnel and equipment through mountainous terrain, bush-fighting tactics, and the employment of grenades.²³ Recognizing that Ranger operations pushed men beyond their physical and mental limits, Rogers trained his men to ensure they would be ready for anything. Regardless of terrain or weather conditions, Rogers trained his men in live fire exercises and privation events over hundreds of miles.²⁴ These techniques were likely employed to determine whether Ranger recruits possessed the grit, determination, and commitment that was required to serve in such an elite unit. Recruits who could not keep up with the training or “those who began limping or complaining during the first few days on the trail,” were sent away by Rogers.²⁵

²² Chris McNab, “Robert Rogers and the Early Ranger Warriors,” *The History Reader*, March 27, 2013, <http://www.thehistoryreader.com/modern-history/robert-rogers-early-ranger-warriors/>.

²³ McNab, “Robert Rogers and the Early Ranger Warriors.”

²⁴ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 13.

²⁵ McNab, “Robert Rogers and the Early Ranger Warriors.”



Figure 1. Rogers' Rangers Marksmanship Training²⁶

Throughout the French and Indian War, Rogers recruited, selected, trained, and employed numerous Ranger companies, all of which dissolved after the war. Some historians and military analysts, such as James Dunnigan, have argued that the outcome of the war “was in no small part due to the activities of Major Rogers and his Rangers.”²⁷ While this may be a valid claim, it is also essential to recognize Rogers' contributions to the regular army. Although almost hypocritical to earlier claims of Rogers' character, his training standards, expectations, and most notably his “rules of discipline” established a legacy that influenced future Rangers and Ranger units.

²⁶ Source: McNab, “Robert Rogers and the Early Ranger Warriors.”

²⁷ James Dunnigan, *The Perfect Soldier: Special Operations, Commandos, and the Future of U.S. Warfare* (New York, NY: Citadel Press, 2003), 34.

C. REVOLUTIONARY WAR RANGERS

On June 14, 1775, nearly twenty years after the French and Indian War, the 1st Continental Congress authorized the formation of companies containing expert riflemen spread across Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.²⁸ In a letter written to President John Hancock in 1775, General George Washington, commander in chief of the Continental Army from 1775–1783, recognized the importance of building light infantry forces that were “sufficiently strong, to oppose any force which may be brought against us.”²⁹ Yet, some historians have claimed that there was a misconception that riflemen won the American Revolutionary War. Historians, such as David Hogan, argued that European style warfare put the rifleman at a disadvantage.³⁰ Others, such as Jerome Haggerty, argued that even though expert riflemen and Ranger units “were an asset to the regular American forces during the Revolution, it was the Continentals under excellent leadership who eventually decided the outcome of the war.”³¹ While there is no argument against superior leadership, and despite the disadvantages posed to the eighteenth-century riflemen, battles like the one at Cowpens in January 1781 would have ended much differently had it not been for irregular actions of Daniel Morgan’s riflemen to halt the advance of British Army Colonel (later General) Sir Banastre Tarleton and his forces. Thus, the forethought of General George Washington to support the formation of light infantry units proved insightful in the end.

Similar to their colonial-era predecessors, the expert riflemen and Rangers recruited during the American Revolution were experienced outdoorsman who were more physically and mentally capable than the average recruit. Despite the limited information available on the selection and training of the men who filled the ranks of these companies, the actions of leaders such as Daniel Morgan, Thomas Knowlton, Francis Marion, Israel Putnam, John

²⁸ United States Army Special Operations Command, “75th Ranger Regiment History.”

²⁹ George Washington, *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War 1 (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 137.

³⁰ Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry?*, 3.

³¹ Haggerty, “A History of the Ranger Battalions in World War II,” 28.

Stark, and Benjamin Whitcomb provide valuable lessons toward the selection of Ranger leaders.

One of the most notable and often cited Ranger leaders of the American Revolution was Captain (later Colonel) Daniel Morgan, who raised and commanded Morgan's Rangers.³² Even though Morgan was poorly educated and had a history of drinking and gambling, he was a natural leader who possessed superior tactical abilities.³³ According to historical records from the 75th Ranger Regiment, "in 1777, this force [Morgan's Rangers] of hardy frontiersmen provided the leadership and experience necessary to form the organization George Washington called 'The Corps of Rangers.'"³⁴ The Corps of Rangers initially recruited 180 volunteer riflemen and quickly grew to over 600.³⁵ Under the command of Colonel Morgan, the Corps of Rangers operated from 1775 to 1781, and according to the remarks of British General John Burgoyne, "Morgan's men were the most famous corps of the Continental Army. All of them crack shots."³⁶

However, despite this positive perception and the successes in the Battle of Saratoga, Freeman's Farm, and Cowpens, Morgan's Rangers nearly gained a reputation off the battlefield that lacked the same discipline bestowed on Rogers' Rangers.³⁷ Leading men such as these was no simple task, but Colonel Morgan possessed the grit and selfless commitment to duty to keep his men from going astray. Had it not been for the hardy and persistent leadership of Colonel Morgan, the Ranger reputation may have quickly deteriorated in the eyes of the entrusting American public.

Another well-known Ranger leader of the American Revolution was Colonel (later Brigadier General) Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox. In his book, *Sua Sponte: The Forging*

³² United States Army Special Operations Command, "75th Ranger Regiment History."

³³ Dick Couch, *Sua Sponte: The Forging of a Modern American Ranger* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 20.

³⁴ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 10.

³⁵ Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983," 24.

³⁶ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 10.

³⁷ Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry?*, 4.

of a *Modern American Ranger*, military historian, Dick Couch recognized that “much of early Ranger lore seems to be tied to noted unconventional and charismatic military leaders, and the person of Colonel Francis Marion is no exception.”³⁸ Through his unconventional tactics and emphasis on maneuver warfare, Marion provided a proven model for leadership and military innovation. Marion joined the South Carolina militia in 1756 and later organized a guerrilla unit known as Marion’s Partisans in 1780. In a study of Marion’s leadership, Scott Aiken found that when Marion began to raise his force, he generally recruited leaders that had already established themselves in the local community while the average Soldier was of a lower or less experienced class.³⁹ Marion’s Partisans initially contained only a dozen or so men but later grew to a few hundred.⁴⁰ Throughout the war, Marion and his forces operated as a small guerrilla force that raided British supply lines and observation posts to support the Continental Army in South Carolina. Despite their relatively small numbers, Marion’s Partisans effectively harassed and disrupted British operations through the battle of Eutaw Springs in 1781.⁴¹

Throughout the remainder of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Mexican-American War from 1846–1848, several other Ranger units continued to patrol the American frontier. Again, despite the successes of Ranger units up to this point, the reputation of Ranger units continued to suffer from unorthodox warfare techniques, their wildness of character, and a lack of discipline off the battlefield. However, even though some did not maintain a positive view of Rangers and their operations, it was not long until Rangers were called upon and entrusted by higher authorities to conduct Ranger operations once again.

³⁸ Couch, *Sua Sponte*, 21.

³⁹ Scott Aiken, *The Swamp Fox: Lessons in Leadership from the Partisan Campaigns of Francis Marion* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 6.

⁴⁰ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 24; Aiken, *The Swamp Fox*, 5–7.

⁴¹ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 26–27; Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 34–35; 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 10–11.

D. CIVIL WAR RANGERS

According to Ranger history and lineage documents from the 75th Ranger Regiment, “in 1862, the Confederate government authorized the formation of Partisan Ranger bands to reconnoiter, raid, and ambush behind Union lines.”⁴² There were units on both sides during the Civil War that were either officially designated as “Ranger” by the state or unofficially self-identified as “Ranger.” According to Hogan, he found that over 400 units spread across both sides during the Civil War carried the name “Ranger.”⁴³ Former Ranger and military historian Ross Hall argued that the Rangers or “Partisans” of the Civil War were unfortunately not well trained and lacked general respect and discipline.⁴⁴ The lack of training and lack of discipline was likely a result of the informal formation of Ranger units combined with a lack of centralized recruiting and training standards. The widespread and negative perception was also likely the leading cause in the decision of the Confederate Congress to quickly rescind the Partisan Ranger Act in February 1864, only two years after being passed.

Despite the negative publicity after the Civil War, Rangers such as General John Hunt Morgan, and Colonels John Singleton Mosby and Turner Ashby left a legacy that was more aligned with select Rangers of the past and Rangers of the future. A review of their leadership qualities and the selection criteria for those that served under their commands provides a foundation for the assessment and selection of future Rangers.

John Singleton Mosby, the Gray Ghost, was one of the most well-known Ranger leaders who fought during the Civil War. Mosby, a native of Virginia, enlisted in the Confederate Cavalry in the winter of 1861. Mosby was known as a well-educated family man who had an intimate desire to learn.⁴⁵ Most did not recognize his potential as a military leader early in his career. In 1861, William Blackford, a former member of the

⁴² 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 12.

⁴³ Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry?*, 5.

⁴⁴ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 41.

⁴⁵ Jeffrey Wert, *Mosby's Rangers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 25–26.

Virginia Cavalry, said that “there was nothing about him [Mosby] then to indicate what he was to be.”⁴⁶ However, under the direct mentorship of General James E. B. “Jeb” Stuart, and the influence of Francis Marion, Mosby’s reputation developed into one that arguably represented a man of tactical ingenuity who had an unwavering commitment to the discipline and standards of his Rangers.



Figure 2. Mosby’s Rangers⁴⁷

In 1863, Mosby was granted authority by Robert E. Lee and Jeb Stuart to recruit and raise a company of Rangers under a Virginia cavalry unit in the Confederate Army known as Company A of the 43rd Battalion. After receiving General Lee’s initial approval and guidance to raise a new company, General Stuart advised Mosby on the recruitment

⁴⁶ William Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart* (New York: Scribner, 1945), 14.

⁴⁷ Source: “Mosby’s Rangers,” Mosby Heritage Area, accessed October 17, 2019, <https://mosbyheritagearea.org/mosbys-rangers>.

and selection of his men and said that Mosby could select all of his officers and soldiers “provided no unworthy man be so chosen” and that he “ought to be very fastidious in choosing your men, and make them always stand the test of battle and temptation to neglect duty before acceptance.”⁴⁸ Mosby personally hand-selected his officers and quickly formed what became known as Mosby’s Regulars or Mosby’s Rangers. Differing from previous Ranger commanders, Mosby self-imposed a requirement that the selection of all Ranger officers must also be endorsed by the other members of the unit, thus being unanimously elected.⁴⁹ This process was not directed to Mosby; instead, it was something that he thought was important and continued the process throughout his command.

Mosby’s reputation in combat and the fascinating life of a Ranger attracted recruits from all over. Over 28 months, approximately 1,900 Rangers served under Mosby’s command.⁵⁰ According to several historians, the Rangers were a mixture of regulars from the Army, convalescents, and deserters aging from as young as fourteen to some who exceeded fifty.⁵¹ Similar to Ranger units preceding the Civil War, as long as a recruit had access to his own equipment, which was a minimum of a horse and a weapon, and had the desire to serve, he was generally welcomed as a member. However, once selected, recruits quickly learned that Mosby enforced a strict standard and expected his Rangers to act in a professional manner. If a Ranger recruit failed to uphold the expectations and standards, Mosby sent them back to the regular service.⁵²

Due to the higher standards that were set by Mosby in the selection, training, and retention of his men, his Rangers quickly became very effective in conducting raids behind Union lines in Virginia. Additionally, according to most historians and military records, Mosby’s men were so well trained that their skills allowed them to conduct night raids,

⁴⁸ Wert, *Mosby’s Rangers*, 69.

⁴⁹ Wert, *Mosby’s Rangers*, 73.

⁵⁰ Wert, *Mosby’s Rangers*, 12.

⁵¹ Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry?*, 5; Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 31–32; Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 43.

⁵² John Alexander, *Mosby’s Men* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1907), 27.

which was a more aggressive and generally a non-standard tactic used during the Civil War.⁵³ Some authors and historians, such as Jeffry Wert, go as far as claiming that Mosby led “probably the most renowned combat unit of the Civil War.”⁵⁴

To summarize the character of Colonel John S. Mosby, General Stuart wrote a letter to Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson in 1862 describing Mosby as a “bold, daring, intelligent, and discreet” leader who was reliable and got desired results.⁵⁵ Additionally, in the *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Grant said, “Since the close of the war, I have come to know Colonel Mosby personally, and somewhat intimately. He is a different man entirely from what I had supposed. He is slender, not tall, wiry, and looks as if he could endure any amount of physical exercise. He is able and thoroughly honest and truthful.”⁵⁶ Little did Mosby know at the time, but arguably his character, actions as a leader, attention to detail, and unwavering commitment to standards and discipline not only created a favorable reputation of Rangers during the Civil War but also influenced the future assessment and selection standards established by William O. Darby in World War II.

E. CONCLUSION

Rangers of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were among some of the best soldiers and leaders of their time. Whether intentional or not, Rangers served as a role model for the rest of the early American military forces. In the beginning, American Rangers scouted, patrolled, and raided the American frontier to protect those that they served. As an all-volunteer force, they fought for the same values that the United States of America was found on during the American Revolution. The same values that Rangers continued to fight for moving into the twenty and twenty-first centuries.

⁵³ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 28; 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 12–13; Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 43.

⁵⁴ Wert, *Mosby's Rangers*, 11.

⁵⁵ Wert, *Mosby's Rangers*, 30.

⁵⁶ Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, vol. 2 (New York: Digital Scanning & Publishing, 1998), 142.

In the beginning, despite some of the negative perceptions associated with the Rangers, successful Rangers and Ranger leaders were experienced outdoorsmen who could hunt, trap, and were experts with their weapon. They were physically and mentally fit. They possessed the strength, grit, and courage to endure the hardships of Indian and guerrilla warfare. These Rangers were led by charismatic, intelligent, and adaptive individuals who had the experience and utmost confidence to lead such a group. Together, they were often tasked to go places that others did not dare and were relied upon, as a team, to complete missions that regular infantry units could not accomplish. These were the qualities and attributes of early American Rangers, and any Ranger who failed to uphold these standards or expectations was not selected or was released from the unit. Through these qualities and the enforcement of strict standards, the Ranger lore was established.

Even though there may not have been an assessment and selection program for the early American Ranger, various standards enabled the selection and retention of Ranger volunteers. Some examples include “Robert Rogers Rules of Discipline” developed late in the 1700s, George Washington and other senior leaders’ expectations of elite light infantry forces during their conception, and the specific manning guidance given to Colonel Mosby from General Stuart on the selection criteria of Rangers in 1863. Although some of these standards or expectations evolved into the twenty and twenty-first centuries, most have conceptually remained the same. Ranger units of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the modern-day Ranger Battalions after 1974 continued to recruit the very best while also demanding the same of those that were selected.

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III. WORLD WAR II RANGERS: 1942–1945

A. INTRODUCTION

While Ranger leaders and units of the past established a Ranger lore that projected an image of a more elite Soldier, the Rangers of World War II not only capitalized on that image but also established a reputation on the field of battle where “Rangers Lead The Way!”

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the United States forcefully entered World War II. As a result of World War I, the Great War, senior military leaders were focused on conventional and mass warfare strategies and initially failed to consider specialized or elite units. To further compound the issue, military schools and training centers around the country at the time focused on mobilizing large military forces. Consequently, unconventional operations and the formation of specialized military units required to support more extensive operations in the coming years was a foreign concept for most military leaders. Despite these actualities, General George C. Marshall Jr., U.S. Army Chief of Staff, directed the formation of several special operations units during World War II, one of which was the U.S. Army Rangers in 1942.

Six Ranger battalions and the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), also referred to as Merrill’s Marauders, were temporarily activated during World War II. Even though the 29th Ranger Battalion was also activated during the war, historical collections from the 75th Ranger Regiment and other reputable studies do not list the battalion within the Regiment’s lineage.⁵⁷ During the war, Rangers participated in operations across North Africa, Europe, the Mediterranean, the Philippines, and Burma.

The assessment and selection procedures, unit standards, and training techniques of Rangers during World War II are primarily a product of the British Commandos. After the activation of 1st Ranger Battalion in 1942, the other five battalions activated during the war, intentionally or coincidentally, modeled and revised their assessment and selection processes off those employed by the Commandos and Colonel Darby. As a result of

⁵⁷ “75th Ranger Regiment History,” United States Army Special Operations Command, accessed July 29, 2019, <https://www.soc.mil/rangers/history.html>; 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*; Haggerty, “A History of the Ranger Battalions in World War II,” 127–30.

operational lessons learned and observations from similar assessment and selection programs in the U.S. military, there were few modifications to subsequent programs throughout the war. The only exception was Merrill's Marauders, as they had no assessment and selection program and formed from the Chindits, a group of fighters under the command of British Major General Orde Wingate.⁵⁸ This chapter covers the assessment and selection of British Commandos, Darby's Rangers, and the other Ranger Battalions of World War II.

B. BRITISH COMMANDOS

The recruiting techniques, training methods, physical standards, and tactics of the British Commandos during World War II offered a combat-proven model for the soon to be U.S. Army Rangers. Similar to the activation and deactivation of U.S. Army Rangers across history, the British Commandos formed during a time of war for a specific and timely purpose. In April 1940, following Hitler's invasion of Norway, Great Britain required a force to defend the long and vulnerable coastline from German occupation. Although the Royal Marines were attempting to raise such a force, it was not yet operational.⁵⁹ As a result, volunteers from the Territorial Army were hastily recruited and trained by specially selected officers to form ten independent companies to conduct raids in support of the Norwegians.⁶⁰

On June 4, 1940, following a near annihilation in Dunkirk, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was pressed with the urgency to generate an offensive spirit across the Army. In Churchill's memoirs, he recognized "a darker side to Dunkirk," and thereby, "forming and re-equipping the Regular Army" became one of his top priorities.⁶¹ He

⁵⁸ Ross Hall, *The Ranger Book: A History 1634 - 2006* (Charleston, SC: Book Surge Publishing, 2007). 221.

⁵⁹ Charles Messenger, *Commandos: The Definitive History of Commando Operations in the Second World War*, 2016 paperback edition. (London: William Collins, 2016), 19.

⁶⁰ *Combined Operations: The Official Story of the Commandos* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), 3.

⁶¹ Winston Churchill, *Memoirs of the Second World War: An Abridgment of the Six Volumes of The Second World War* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990), 295–96.

further stated that “when so much was uncertain, the need to recover the initiative glared forth... we should immediately set to work to organize raiding forces.”⁶²

On the evening of June 4, 1940, Lieutenant Colonel Dudley Clarke, a member of the Imperial Staff, generated a proposal advocating for guerrilla units. After receiving the proposal, Churchill produced a memorandum for the War Cabinet that stated, “Enterprises must be prepared with specially trained troops of the hunter class, who can develop a reign of terror... I look to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to propose measures for a ceaseless offensive against the whole German-occupied coastline, leaving a trail of German corpses behind.”⁶³ Consequently, with Clarke appointed as the commander, the ten independent companies, raised just months earlier, became the forerunner and primary recruiting source for what became known as the Commandos.

After the authorization passed to form Commando units, a memorandum from the Director of Military Operations and Plans on June 13, 1940 detailed the initial selection procedures for the organization. An excerpt from the memorandum stated that “one or two officers in each Command will be selected as Commando leaders. They will each be instructed to select from their own Commands a number of Troop Leaders to serve under them. The Troop Leaders will, in turn, select the officers and men to form their Troop.”⁶⁴ As Commando leaders at every echelon traveled to find the best people for their organization, recruiting circulars sought volunteers for special duties who were physically fit, intelligent, and immune to seasickness.⁶⁵ Beyond what the circulars publicized, Clarke was seeking men with “a dash of Elizabethan pirate, the Chicago gangster and the frontier tribesman, allied to a professional efficiency and standard of discipline of the best regular soldier.”⁶⁶

⁶² Churchill, *Memoirs of the Second World War*, 308.

⁶³ Russell Miller, *The Commandos*, vol. 31, World War II (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1981), 21.

⁶⁴ Messenger, *Commandos*, 28–29.

⁶⁵ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 47.

⁶⁶ Miller, *The Commandos*, 22.

Candidates interested in volunteering for the Commandos had to first submit an application packet that listed their experience, qualifications, and desires. Once their packet made it through an initial screening process, the candidate's chain of command conducted a series of interviews or boards to endorse their application before being sent to an interview with a Commando leader for final determination. Although not employed by Darby or any other American Ranger unit, retired Colonel Robert Black, a past Ranger and military historian, found that "British Commando officers had on occasion required their candidates to report for interview naked, thus having a better opportunity to stress the man while observing his mental bearing."⁶⁷ Ken Phillott, selected for duty in No. 4 Commando, recalled some of the final interview questions with a lieutenant colonel from the Commandos. Interview questions included: Can you swim at least 500 yards in full kit? Can you drive a car and ride a motorcycle? What were your pre-war hobbies? Have you ever done any climbing? Can you stand plenty of bloodshed?⁶⁸ Once selected for possible service in the Commandos, a recruit was required to then pass a rigorous assessment and training program before being considered an official member. If recruits failed to meet the standards of the unit, they were returned to unit or "RTU'd" without the opportunity to ever return.⁶⁹

Until February 1942, the selection and training of Commandos was an individual responsibility of the unit. There were no centralized standards or processes to assess, select, and train Commandos. According to one source, in July 1940, it was suggested to form a School of Special Warfare that would be responsible for the selection and training of Commando cadres, but it failed to gain traction.⁷⁰ However, despite the lack of a centralized selection and training program, Commando units upheld a high physical standard and demanded strict discipline. Geoffrey Appleyard, a Commando from B Troop of No. 7 Commando, described daily assessment and training in 1941:

⁶⁷ Robert Black, *Rangers in World War II* (New York: Presidio Press, 1992), 14.

⁶⁸ Messenger, *Commandos*, 31.

⁶⁹ Messenger, *Commandos*, 32; *Combined Operations*, 7–8; Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983," 47.

⁷⁰ Messenger, *Commandos*, 38.

Today's programme [sic] has been typical. Reveille 6.30, training run 7 (about a mile) followed by PT, breakfast 8, parade 9, inspection, route march 8–10 miles (with arms, in battle dress, belts, etc.) at a fast pace, including cross-country work, map reading, compass work, moving through cover, etc. Lunch 1, swimming parade 2.30 for 1 ½ hours' swimming, running, exercising etc. Tea at 4.30. Lecture by M-P [Sergeant March-Phillipps] for three-quarters of an hour at 5. Free for the evening at 6. A fairly full day and hard work, but makes one feel grand, even though a little stiff! Later on, of course, there will be weapons training, range practice, cross-country runs, hare and hounds, treasure hunts, mock operations, night operations, etc. The training programme [sic] can and will be made very fascinating.⁷¹

Another account from a Commando in No. 51 ME (Middle East) Commando highlighted that the training was the same for all ranks and said that “much more important was the fact that all officers took part in such training and were seen to be as fit, tough and aggressive as the men they were commanding.”⁷² He also recalled a “50-mile cross-country endurance test” that started at 2 pm during the heat of the day and all personnel were only authorized to carry one full bottle of water; the average completion time was 18 ½ hours with the best time falling under 16 hours.⁷³

In February 1942, the Commando Depot, later known as the “Commando Basic Training Centre” in Achnacarry, Scotland, was established to centralize the standards for the selection and training of every Commando recruit.⁷⁴ According to Hogan, the Commando training program was six weeks long and consisted of “physical hardening, weapons training, range firing, fieldcraft, climbing, an assault course, unarmed combat, bayonet fighting, an obstacle course, elementary demolitions, and boat work”⁷⁵ Speed marches in full kit and pack were a well-known and dreaded part of the course. The course standard was 15 miles fully equipped in three hours or less, and if a recruit fell out or failed to meet the standard, they were

⁷¹ Messenger, *Commandos*, 38–39.

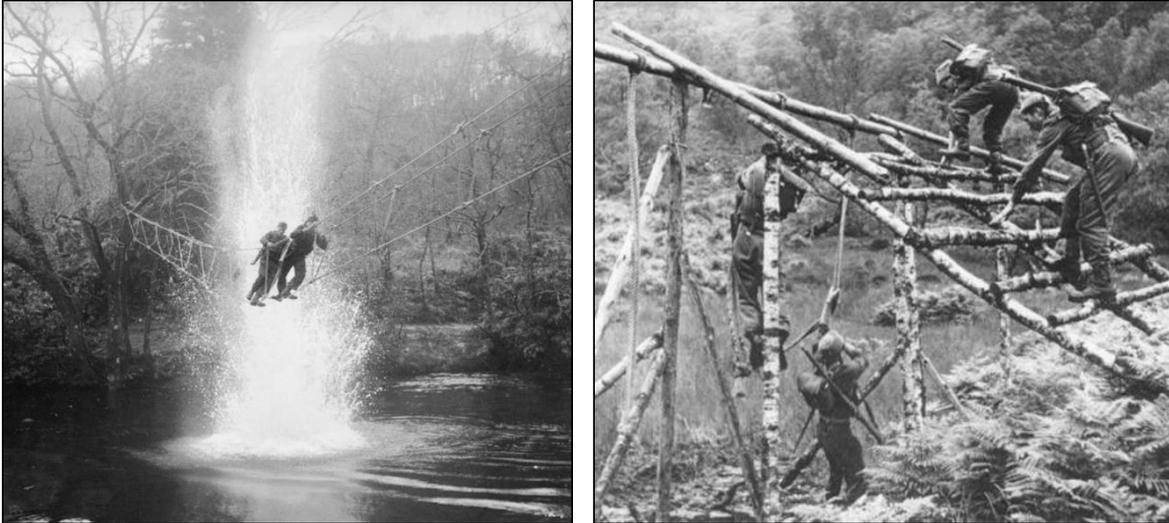
⁷² Messenger, *Commandos*, 72.

⁷³ Messenger, *Commandos*, 72.

⁷⁴ Messenger, *Commandos*, 123.

⁷⁵ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983,” 47–48.

RTU'd.⁷⁶ Realism, initiative, endurance, courage, self-confidence, and teamwork were all assessed through live fire obstacle courses, a “bullet and bayonet course,” an assault course called “Me and My Pal,” and an exercise called the “death slide.”⁷⁷



British Commandos cross a toggle bridge during an obstacle course with simulated artillery (left). Commandos work in teams of two to get over an obstacle in the “Me and My Pal” obstacle course (right).

Figure 3. British Commando Training⁷⁸

Commando cadre designed each event to assess specific attributes in a recruit. Captain Joe Nicholl, one of the first recruits to go through the Commando course, said that “everything had a purpose.”⁷⁹ Upon completion of Commando training, Commandos arrived to their units “already hard men, physically and morally able to perform considerable feats of endurance.”⁸⁰ It was this type of Soldier that General Marshall

⁷⁶ Messenger, *Commandos*, 125.

⁷⁷ Messenger, *Commandos*, 124–28.

⁷⁸ Source: “Commando Training,” Commando Veterans, accessed November 2, 2019, http://gallery.commandoveterans.org/cdoGallery/v/Commando+Training/?g2_page=2.

⁷⁹ Messenger, *Commandos*, 124.

⁸⁰ *Combined Operations*, 7.

envisioned, and it was this training that the future U.S. Army Rangers were about to receive.

C. THE NEED FOR AMERICAN COMMANDOS

Following the Battle of Bataan, the Doolittle Raid, and operations in the Pacific, the United States needed the support of the citizens and its Allies. Several months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt wanted to “strike back at the enemy and restore confidence in the American Military.”⁸¹ In April 1942, with the president’s approval, General George C. Marshall generated what became known as the “Marshall Memorandum,” proposing a strategy for a British-American cross-channel invasion against Germany.⁸² Marshall presented the memorandum in London and also expressed his desire for American troops to gain combat experience before the invasion. While in London, General Marshall met Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, chief of combined operations, who introduced Marshall to the concept and recent successes of the British Commandos. General Marshall saw a unique raid capability in the Commandos that was absent from the U.S. Army, and it was through the Commandos that he envisioned the potential to expose American Soldiers to elite training and combat operations.

Upon his return from London, General Marshall assigned Colonel (later Lieutenant General) Lucian K. Truscott Jr. (then serving as the commander of the 5th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division) and Major Theodore J. Conway (then serving as an instructor at West Point) to the Commando headquarters in London to arrange for the training and battle experience of American soldiers through Lord Mountbatten.⁸³ According to Colonel Truscott, after a brief interview with General Marshall, he received a letter of instruction from Major General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the assistant chief of staff and chief of the operations division, War Department (ODWD), that prescribed his duties. A summary of his instructions was to study commando

⁸¹ Mir Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors: A History of the U.S. Army Rangers*, 1st ed. (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2005), 33.

⁸² George C. Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 3 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 158.

⁸³ Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 167–68.

training and operations and provide recommendations that exposed American soldiers to raids and combat operations to then spread to the rest of the Army in preparation for a cross-channel invasion against Germany.⁸⁴

Before heading to London, General Eisenhower cautioned Colonel Truscott against proposing recommendations to form any new units. However, if Truscott were to make such a proposal, he recalled a discussion with Eisenhower that highlighted the history of Ranger units, the criteria and expectations of Ranger personnel, and foreshadowed a new beginning for what was to become the Rangers of World War II.

Before leaving Washington, I had discussed with General Eisenhower the organization of American units along Commando lines. In one of our discussions, General Eisenhower had said: "If you do find it necessary to organize such units, I hope that you will find some other name than 'Commandos' for the glamor of that name will always remain—and properly so—British." Accordingly, when the organization of such a unit was decided upon, we sought a designation more typically American. Many names were recommended. I selected "Rangers" because few words have a more glamorous connotation in American military history. In colonial days, men so designated had mastered the art of Indian warfare and were guardians of the frontier. In Revolutionary days, others so designated were noted for desperate ventures and many military formations among the Continentals wore the name proudly. Some of the oldest units in the Regular Army were originally organized as Rangers, and have carried the tradition into every war in which the nation has been engaged. On every frontier, the name has been one of hope for those who have required protection, of fear for those who have lived outside the law. It was therefore fit that the organization destined to be the first of American ground forces to battle the Germans on the European continent in World War II should have been called Rangers, in compliment to those in American history who exemplified such high standards of individual courage, initiative, determination, ruggedness, fighting ability, and achievement.⁸⁵

On May 26, 1942, not even a month after Colonel Truscott's arrival to the Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ) in London, he submitted a proposal to form an American unit similar to the Commandos. Truscott proposed a concept in which

⁸⁴ Lucian King Truscott Jr., *Command Missions: A Personal Story*, 1st ed. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1954), 23–24.

⁸⁵ Truscott Jr., *Command Missions*, 40.

personnel would temporarily join a Ranger force, receive training and combat experience through the Commandos, and return to their original unit to share their experiences.⁸⁶ The proposal for a “training and demonstration unit” was approved at various levels, and on May 28, 1942, the War Department authorized immediate implementation of the plan.⁸⁷ Although the American-Commando unit was initially intended to be a “training and demonstration unit” whose members would return to their sending unit to spread their experiences, the concept eventually faded and resulted in the establishment of the 1st Ranger Battalion.

D. THE 1ST RANGER BATTALION (1942)

In search of someone to raise what would become known as the 1st Ranger Battalion, Major General Russel P. “Scrappy” Hartle, Commanding General of United States Army Northern Ireland Forces (USANIF), recommended his aide-de-camp Captain William O. Darby for the job. According to Colonel Truscott, Darby “was outstanding in appearance, possessed of a most attractive personality, and he was keen, intelligent, and filled with enthusiasm.”⁸⁸ These characteristics, along with concurrent testimonies of Darby during WWII, were similar to the charismatic qualities and attributes of Rangers and Ranger leaders in the past.

On June 8, 1942, Darby received orders to organize the 1st Ranger Battalion in Carrickfergus, Ireland. According to Darby, he was directed to recruit volunteers who “possess natural athletic ability and physical stamina and, insofar as possible, be without physical defect.”⁸⁹ In addition to these qualities, all officers and noncommissioned officers

⁸⁶ David W. Hogan, *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*, 50th Anniversary Commemorative Edition, CMH Pub 70-42 (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1992), 12.

⁸⁷ Truscott Jr., *Command Missions*, 38; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 10.

⁸⁸ Truscott Jr., *Command Missions*, 39.

⁸⁹ William Orlando Darby and William Henry Baumer, *Darby's Rangers: We Led the Way* (New York: Presidio Press, 1993), 24.

must “possess leadership qualities of a high order with particular emphasis on initiative and common sense.”⁹⁰

Similar to Robert Rogers and several other previous Ranger commanders, Darby did not have ample time to organize this new unit. In less than two weeks, Darby and a group of hand-selected officers screened and interviewed over 2,000 volunteers. A diverse group of volunteers representing various ethnicities, specialties, and branches of the U.S. Army were recruited from V Corps in Ireland. Although the majority of Ranger volunteers came from infantry branch, James Altieri, a former Ranger of World War II, found that “some of the very best men came from the rear-echelon outfits.”⁹¹ Although there was no age requirement, volunteers aged from about seventeen to thirty-five with the average age being around twenty-five.⁹² Thus, the average fitness and medical standards were based on the physical expectations of a twenty-five-year-old male.⁹³ On June 19, 1942 the 1st Ranger Battalion was activated with an authorized strength of 473 officers and enlisted (26 officers and 447 enlisted personnel) and a ten percent overage to compensate for injuries as well as those who failed to meet the standard during assessment and training.⁹⁴

James Altieri, in *The Spearheaders: A Personal History of Darby's Rangers*, describes the multi-step process to become a member of the 1st Ranger Battalion in the summer of 1942. According to his experience, initial selection into the Rangers required a volunteer to submit an application, pass a series of internal unit interviews, pass a stiff physical and medical examination, and pass a final interview board with Darby or one of his appointed leaders.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 24.

⁹¹ James Altieri, *The Spearheaders: A Personal History of Darby's Rangers* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014), 26.

⁹² Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 28; Mir Bahmanyar, *Darby's Rangers 1942–45*, Warrior 69 (Oxford, UK: Osprey, 2003), 24.

⁹³ Michael J. King, “Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II” 11 (1985): 6.

⁹⁴ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 26; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 12.

⁹⁵ Altieri, *The Spearheaders*, 16–19.

Former Army officer and military historian Michael King found that the medical examinations screened for volunteers who had 20/20 vision and had normal hearing and blood pressure readings for a man of twenty-five.⁹⁶ King also found that “men with cardiac defects, slow reaction time, removable dentures, night blindness, or evidence of psychological disorders were disqualified.”⁹⁷ Additionally, similar to the initial interviews conducted by the Commandos, interviews for the 1st Ranger Battalion were held by a board of at least two of Darby’s officers in a secluded room on an individual basis where volunteers were asked questions to include: “Why do you want to join this outfit? Have you ever been court-martialed? What sports have you been active in? How far can you swim? Have you ever been in any fights? Do you think you would have guts enough to stick a knife in a man’s back and twist it?”⁹⁸

Interviews conducted by Darby and his appointed leaders, although intimidating for the volunteer, were conducted in a professional and stoic manner. According to Darby and several testimonies of World War II Rangers, the board members were merely attempting to weed out those who lacked a genuine desire to serve in the unit as well as the “braggarts” and undisciplined “swashbuckets.”⁹⁹ Altieri recalled that one of the Captains who conducted his board did not reveal any emotion on whether Altieri’s answers were satisfactory and after leaving the interview, Altieri said, “If I made any impression on him, he did not show it... I began to doubt that I had measured up to the requirements.”¹⁰⁰

Once a volunteer was initially selected, recruits had to undergo several weeks of assessment in Ireland before follow-on assessment and training with the Commandos. Private First-Class Thomas S. Sullivan “Sully” recalled that the assessment in Ireland was a “ten-day trial” where volunteers were confined to camp without weekend passes and

⁹⁶ King, “Rangers,” 7.

⁹⁷ King, “Rangers,” 7; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 14.

⁹⁸ Altieri, *The Spearheaders*, 21–22.

⁹⁹ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 58; Darby and Baumer, *Darby’s Rangers*, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Altieri, *The Spearheaders*, 23.

testing composed of more medical examinations, physical hardening, and speed marches.¹⁰¹ James Altieri recalled similar instances as well as orientation lectures, equipment distribution, sports, and more speed marches. Altieri said that speed marches increased in length and speed each day until volunteers were completing twelve miles in under two hours.¹⁰² Whether it was the speed marches, interviews, medical screening, or other physical examinations, the intent of the initial assessment in Ireland was to weed out those that lacked the discipline, physical stamina, desire, and grit to be in the organization. In the first three days, the majority of the volunteers either quit or were RTU'd by Darby's cadre, and only 575 of the initial 2,000-2,500 volunteers (approximately 25 percent) remained at the end of the three weeks and moved on to assessment and training with the Commandos in Scotland.¹⁰³

Once the 1st Ranger Battalion arrived in Northern Scotland, they were greeted by British Army Lieutenant Colonel Charles Vaughan, the commander and commandant of the Commando Depot. Upon their arrival, the volunteers of 1st Ranger Battalion, along with Vaughan, his cadre, and a detail of bagpipers briskly marched an unknown distance (which ended up being about seven miles) to Achnacarry Castle where the Commando Depot was located. For the next month, Darby and the volunteers of 1st Ranger Battalion were assessed and trained by Vaughan and his cadre, who were men from the British Special Services Brigade. Each of Darby's companies, consisting of roughly sixty to seventy personnel, were assessed and trained by one Commando officer and at least two Commando noncommissioned officers.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the cadre-to-candidate ratio was approximately one cadre for every twenty Ranger candidates.

¹⁰¹ Bahmanyar, *Darby's Rangers 1942-45*, 16-17.

¹⁰² Altieri, *The Spearheaders*, 29.

¹⁰³ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 26; Bahmanyar, *Darby's Rangers 1942-45*, 17; Altieri, *The Spearheaders*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 21, 325-32.



“(1) The 1st Ranger Battalion member holds an M1 Thompson sub-machine gun with a drum magazine. He still wears the old style M1917 helmet, soon to be replaced by the new M1 steel pot (2) 60mm M2 mortar (3) Boys .55 antitank (British); this weapon was only used in training and at Dieppe by the Rangers (4) M-1 rifle (5) M1919 A4 light machine gun (6) M1911 A1 automatic pistol (7) M1903 A1 rifle w/grenade (M9 Anti-tank) on an M1 launcher (8) M1918 A2 Browning automatic rifle (BAR) (9) 81mm M1 mortar (9a) Mortar rounds (10) Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife; this Commando knife was issued to / bought by the 1st Ranger Battalion upon graduation (11) Four-foot toggle rope; a series of them interlaced would make rope bridges for river crossings (12) A Ranger is leaping off a 20-foot obstacle (13) Achnacarry Castle—home of the Commandos and Rangers”¹⁰⁵

Figure 4. A Ranger at the Commando Depot in 1942¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Bahmanyar, *Darby's Rangers 1942–45*, 60.

¹⁰⁶ Source: Bahmanyar, *Darby's Rangers 1942–45*, 33.

Training at Achnacarry closely resembled the Commando program; however, instead of a six-week program, Ranger assessment and training was condensed to four weeks. Over the month, the men of 1st Ranger Battalion lived eight men to a tent, bathed in an ice-cold stream nearby, and ate a “rough British fare” of fish, beef, beans, and tea.¹⁰⁷ The four-week program consisted of physical conditioning, weapons orientation and familiarization, battle preparedness and small unit tactics, or any combination of the above.

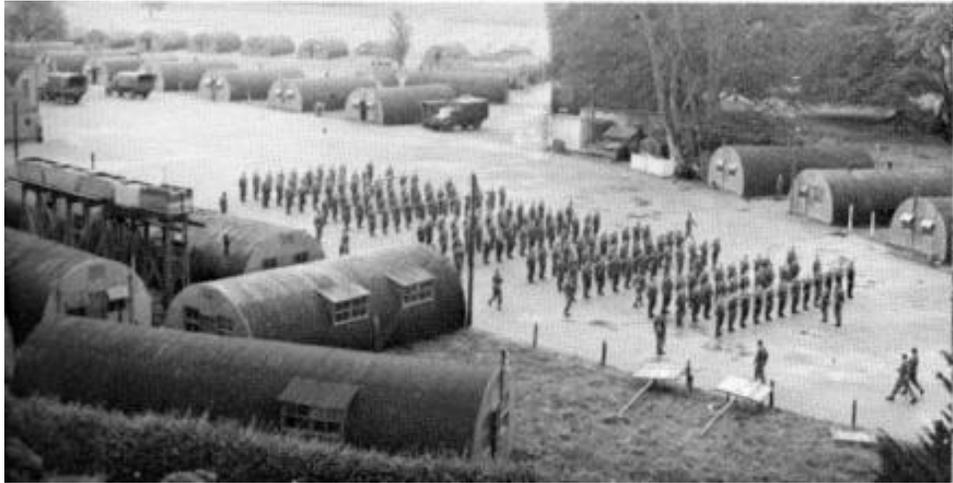


Figure 5. Parade Ground at the British Commando Depot¹⁰⁸

Darby recognized the realism and simplicity of the training and that “from early morning till late at night, seven days a week, he [Vaughan] accounted for every minute.”¹⁰⁹ Darby ensured that every Ranger and Ranger officer, regardless of rank or military specialty, to include himself, received the same assessment and training put on by Vaughan and his cadre.¹¹⁰ The only exception that was found to this standard or expectation was with the cooks who were brought in later to supplement the “rough British fare” and also

¹⁰⁷ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Source: Commando Veterans, “Commando Training.”

¹⁰⁹ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 29.

¹¹⁰ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 29.

assist with other support requirements.¹¹¹ However, Darby ensured that those men had a training plan and met all the physical standards required of the other volunteers.

The initial phase of the Commando course focused heavily on physical conditioning. Events included obstacle courses, swimming, sports, all-day hikes, varying terrain endurance runs, speed marches, and teambuilding log exercises. Obstacle courses were grueling and pressed Rangers to their mental and physical limits. In addition to obstacle courses, Darby's and various other testimonies mention speed marches and log exercises as a ritual throughout the Ranger's time at Achnacarry. Speed marches not only increased physical stamina, but also weeded out those who lacked determination, will power, and grit. Speed marches steadily increased from three to twenty-five miles at the required pace of four miles per hour or fifteen minutes per mile while carrying up to sixty pounds of combat equipment.¹¹² If a Ranger candidate failed to meet the four miles per hour standard, they were dropped from the course and RTU'd.



Figure 6. Teambuilding Log Exercises¹¹³

¹¹¹ Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 23.

¹¹² Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 31; Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 69.

¹¹³ Source: Commando Veterans, "Commando Training."

The next phase of the course, while not losing focus on physical conditioning, focused on weapons familiarization and small unit tactics. Rangers became intimately familiar with not only Allied weapon systems, but Axis weapons as well. During this phase of the course, every Ranger candidate was continuously moving and training under the direction and assessment of the cadre. According to Altieri, and confirmed through other testimonies, “the training schedule resembled a well-coordinated assembly line” that included assault landings, small boat operations, map reading, navigation, fieldcraft, first aid training, weapons ranges, hand-to-hand combat, cliff and rock climbing, patrolling, bayonet training and fighting, and assault courses with live ammunition.¹¹⁴

Events designed by the Commandos assessed specific attributes in Ranger candidates and attrited those that did not have what it took to be a Ranger. Such events included the “bullet and bayonet” course, which forced Ranger candidates to move as buddy teams through challenging obstacles while engaging enemy targets with live ammunition. The end of the obstacle course presented a steep climb that Rangers had to quickly maneuver under fire and despite the exhaustion at the top had to thrust their bayonet into a mock enemy. If candidates failed to complete the course, they were “washed out.”¹¹⁵

The “me and my pal” course was similar to the “bullet and bayonet” course in that it reinforced the “buddy system” or concept of the “Ranger buddy,” where candidates executed a buddy-team live fire that tested judgment, decisiveness, confidence, and endurance. Another event that tested a Ranger’s courage was the “death slide,” which later became known as the “slide for life.” To execute the death slide, candidates had to climb a forty-foot tree and slide down a single rope that traversed a raging river to reach the other side.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Altieri, *The Spearheaders*, 42; Bahmanyar, *Darby’s Rangers 1942–45*, 20–22; Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 61; Hogan, *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*, 13.

¹¹⁵ Darby and Baumer, *Darby’s Rangers*, 32.

¹¹⁶ Darby and Baumer, *Darby’s Rangers*, 32.

Another critical and high attrition event conducted during assessment and training at Achnacarry was a three-day stress exercise that included continuous operations, long marches, tactical scenarios, and obstacle courses under varying conditions. The thought behind a three-day exercise was that “Commandos believed the average soldier could march one whole day, the good soldier two whole days, but it took the best soldiers to march three days and fight at the end of the trek.”¹¹⁷ According to Darby, the attrition rate after the first three-day exercise had brought what was a ten percent overage in men that started the course to a ten percent deficit.¹¹⁸ Darby never mentioned a second field exercise with this type of attrition; however, other field exercises conducted throughout the Ranger assessment and selection process exposed Rangers to stress and realism that ultimately prepared them for duty with the Rangers.

Before completing the course at the Commando Depot, Ranger candidates went through a final interview with the Commando cadre. Although there was more training after Achnacarry, a recruit was officially selected for service in the Rangers after completion of the four-week program at the Commando Depot. At the graduation ceremony, the Rangers of 1st Battalion were the only ones that received a Fairbairn-Sykes knife as a token of their time spent under the British Commandos.¹¹⁹ Additionally, the completion of the Commando assessment and selection program at Achnacarry “afforded those Rangers the right to wear the British Commando green beret and the tartan of the Clan Cameron of Lochiel,” however, Darby and the U.S. Army never authorized it.¹²⁰

Following their time in Achnacarry, the Rangers of 1st Battalion conducted a month of amphibious training with the Royal Navy in Argyll, Scotland, and following the Dieppe Raid did another month of coastal raid training in Dundee. Through this additional training, Rangers continued to attrite for various reasons. According to a report from Darby to the commanding general of II Corps, he summarized further attrition over the summer of 1942

¹¹⁷ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 69.

¹¹⁸ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 31.

¹¹⁹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 68; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 20.

¹²⁰ Bahmanyar, *Darby's Rangers 1942–45*, 22.

stating that “the battalion had returned twenty-seven enlisted men to their original units as undesirable, sent six enlisted men and two officers back to their units as physically unfit, and lost two men killed and three injured in training.”¹²¹

Following the initial assessment and selection and two months of additional training, the men of 1st Ranger Battalion were specially selected and well-trained Soldiers who were ready to prove their worth in combat. Despite the initial intent of the Rangers as a training and demonstration unit or the lack of purpose as a specialized unit or elite line infantry, operations in North Africa not only justified Ranger’s existence in the war but also validated the request to form additional battalions. General Terry Allen, Commander of 1st Infantry Division from 1942 to 1943, recognized the Rangers as “a specially trained unit of high combat value” after their performance in El Guettar, Tunisia.¹²² Major Richard Fisk, Assistant Adjutant General ETOUSA, highlighted that specially selected and trained units with the character of the Rangers was invaluable.¹²³ In light of these observations and the future demands of the war, the U.S. War Department authorized the formation of five additional battalions during the war.

E. THE 2ND – 6TH RANGER BATTALIONS

Using the assessment and selection methods of the Commandos and the 1st Ranger Battalion as a baseline, subsequent Ranger battalions modified future programs based on operational demands and lessons learned. The 3rd and 4th Battalions, also formed under Lieutenant Colonel Darby, used similar methods adopted from 1st Battalion’s training with the British Commandos. The 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions, not formed under Darby, modeled their programs from various other sources. However, even though their programs were not direct replicas of the other battalions, many of the events, standards, and assessment and selection methods were parallel with those of Darby’s Rangers. Lastly, 6th Ranger Battalion, the only Ranger Battalion to operate in the Pacific Theater during the

¹²¹ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 63.

¹²² Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 78–79.

¹²³ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 88.

war, developed a model that unintentionally replicated a combination of the other battalion's programs.

In the summer of 1943, the 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions were activated under Lieutenant Colonel Darby in preparation for the invasion of Sicily, Italy. Despite asking for fifteen battalions, Darby was only authorized two and had to recruit, assess, select, and train its future members in just six weeks.¹²⁴ Instead of trusting units to send him their best or most qualified men, Darby aggressively sought young and physically fit volunteers for the new battalions. According to Michael King and other historical accounts, Ranger recruits "had to be white, at least five feet six inches tall, of normal weight, in excellent physical condition, and not over thirty-five years old."¹²⁵

Rangers from 1st Battalion formed the nucleus of the 3rd and 4th Battalions; however, approximately fifty-two officers and one thousand enlisted men were still needed to fill the ranks.¹²⁶ Darby hung posters at replacement depots, delivered dozens of speeches, and hosted demonstrations to recruit volunteers. Darby and select leaders searched for "red-blooded Americans" at bars and recreation centers, believing that you had to actively select those you needed because sometimes the "best men don't always volunteer."¹²⁷ Despite these efforts, Darby said that "when I spoke to one thousand men, I got one hundred volunteers; when I spoke to two thousand, I got two hundred."¹²⁸

As volunteers came in, they were sent to Nemours, Algeria, where Major Herman Dammer, Darby's Executive Officer in 1st Battalion and future Commander of 3rd Ranger Battalion, ran them through a six-week selection and training program. Dammer, with the assistance of NCOs and cadre from the 1st Ranger Battalion, modeled the selection and training program around what they had experienced at the British Commando Depot the

¹²⁴ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 83.

¹²⁵ King, "Rangers," 21; Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 83; Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942-1983," 103.

¹²⁶ Haggerty, "A History of the Ranger Battalions in World War II," 102.

¹²⁷ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 83.

¹²⁸ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 83.

summer before. According to Darby, the program “was a combination of what we had learned from the Commandos and of combat experience at Arzew and in Tunisia.”¹²⁹ James Altieri, serving then as a cadre member, said that “we old-timers poured it on relentlessly; we were even tougher than the Commandos had been with us because now the stake was much more personal... we were determined to eliminate as many of the weak ones as we could.”¹³⁰



Figure 7. Ranger Training in 1943¹³¹

Training consisted of physical conditioning, weapons training, and battle readiness training. While speed marches and obstacle courses remained a staple of Ranger assessment and selection, Darby and his cadre expanded the course from four to six weeks to include additional training on climbing, night training, and amphibious operations.¹³² Live fire exercises also increased with each new iteration of the course. Additionally, a

¹²⁹ Darby and Baumer, *Darby's Rangers*, 83–84.

¹³⁰ Altieri, *The Spearheaders*, 247.

¹³¹ Kenneth Finlayson and Robert Jones, “Rangers in World War II: Part II, Sicily and Italy,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* 3, no. 1 (2007), https://www.soc.mil/ARSOF_History/articles/v3n1_rangers_wwii_page_1.html.

¹³² Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 90.

600-foot vertical cliff slide was added to the course to assess physical and mental courage.¹³³ At the completion of selection and training, Darby hosted a ceremony with all three battalions and according to Altieri, “you couldn’t tell the difference between the new Rangers and the handful of old-timers sprinkled through each company.”¹³⁴ As combat operations continued, Darby formed G Company to select and train Ranger replacements.¹³⁵ The 1st, 3rd, and 4th Ranger Battalions spearheaded operations in the Mediterranean up until the fateful battle in Cisterna, Italy, in 1944.

In addition to the activation of 3rd and 4th Ranger battalions in 1943, the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions were also activated. The two battalions conducted initial recruitment, selection, and training in the United States at Camp Forrest, a remote training area in Tullahoma, Tennessee. The 2nd Battalion was activated on April 1, 1943 and after a series of interim commanders, Major James E. Rudder took command on June 30, 1943.¹³⁶ The 5th Ranger Battalion was later activated on September 1, 1943 under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Max F. Schneider, an original member of 1st Battalion in 1942 and former Executive Officer of 4th Ranger Battalion.¹³⁷

Organizationally, the two battalions modeled their formation off of the other three battalions and again required “volunteers of above-average physical endurance and ability and had to come from units which had completed unit training.”¹³⁸ Mystique and fame of Darby’s Rangers caused recruits to come eagerly knocking at the door for an opportunity to serve with an elite force. According to the experiences of Sergeant Antonio J. Ruggiero, also known as “Ruggie” or “Rugg,” a Ranger of D Company, 2nd Battalion, volunteers

¹³³ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 90.

¹³⁴ Altieri, *The Spearheaders*, 248.

¹³⁵ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 42.

¹³⁶ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 17; Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 121.

¹³⁷ Darby and Baumer, *Darby’s Rangers*, 184; Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 48.

¹³⁸ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 121; David W. Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry?: The Changing Role of the U.S. Army Rangers from Dieppe to Grenada*, Contributions in Military Studies 128 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 46.

desiring to be part of the Rangers underwent a similar application process as Darby's Rangers where they had to get an endorsement from their chain of command, meet specific physical and medical requirements, possess a higher than average level of intelligence, and pass an interview or board with several leaders from the Rangers.¹³⁹ Medical assessments and physicals disqualified dozens of recruits as well as a five-mile run that sent recruits back to their units if they could not meet the standard.¹⁴⁰ Once selected through the initial application process, "before earning the honor of being called a Ranger, they [volunteers] would have to engage in grueling training that would test the limits of human endurance."¹⁴¹

According to historian Ross Hall, the selection and training program used by the 2nd and 5th Battalions was closely modeled after the U.S. Marine Corps Raider training program conducted at Camp Pendleton, Virginia, as well as training conducted at the Second Army Ranger School.¹⁴² However, the Marine Raider program was modeled after the British Commando Course and a further review of the program, especially after Lieutenant Colonel Rudder took over in June 1943, identified more similarities than there were differences to the program introduced by the British Commandos and later modified by Darby a year earlier.¹⁴³

The program employed by 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions was six weeks long and contained physical conditioning, hand-to-hand combat, weapons and demolition training, land navigation, and patrolling. Similar to some of the themes employed by Darby, competition and teamwork were also part of the 2nd and 5th battalion's programs.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Dog Company: The Boys of Pointe Du Hoc - The Rangers Who Accomplished D-Day's Toughest Mission and Led the Way Across Europe* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2012), 18–20.

¹⁴⁰ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 123–25.

¹⁴¹ O'Donnell, *Dog Company*, 1.

¹⁴² Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 122.

¹⁴³ John F. Wukovits, *American Commando: Evans Carlson, His WWII Marine Raiders, and America's First Special Forces Mission* (New York: NAL Caliber, 2009), 46–49.

¹⁴⁴ O'Donnell, *Dog Company*, 9.

Physical conditioning was achieved through daily calisthenics, speed marches, log drills, fighting in a sawdust-filled pit, and obstacle courses that were often conducted under live fire conditions. The countless speed marches ranged from a few quick miles each day to seventy miles over three days.



Figure 8. 2PndP Platoon, C Company, 2PndP Ranger Battalion in 1943¹⁴⁵

The heat and humidity of Tullahoma, Tennessee, got the best of Ranger recruits. Herman Stein, a member of 2nd Ranger Battalion in World War II, recalled that recruits “dropped like flies” due to heat exhaustion and that “dehydration was rampant.”¹⁴⁶ Physical events, demanding standards, and weather conditions contributed to high attrition of Ranger recruits; however, others quit or went absent without leave (AWOL).¹⁴⁷ The battalion policy during selection and training stated: “If you don’t want to belong, transfer

¹⁴⁵ “Some Ranger Pix,” *ShadowSpear Special Operations* (blog), December 10, 2013, <https://www.shadowsppear.com/vb/threads/some-ranger-pix.5567/>.

¹⁴⁶ Douglas Brinkley, *The Boys of Pointe Du Doc: Ronald Reagan, D-Day, and the U.S. Army 2nd Ranger Battalion*, 1st ed. (New York: William Morrow, 2005), 40; O’Donnell, *Dog Company*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ O’Donnell, *Dog Company*, 6.

out.”¹⁴⁸ Ralph Goranson, a 2nd Battalion Ranger during World War II, said, “At any time during training, you could volunteer out, because of the physical requirements, mental requirements, or just the fact that you just plain didn’t fit. We had a high turnover in the beginning.”¹⁴⁹ After just two weeks, over thirty percent of the recruits quit or were dropped for a failure to meet physical standards.¹⁵⁰

Beyond the training regime, Lieutenant Colonel Rudder improved daily living conditions for his and the 5th Battalion Rangers. Even though Darby and the Commandos exposed Ranger recruits to arduous living conditions, Rudder did not believe in such methods. Rudder tore down “tent city” and built wooden barracks, constructed indoor latrines, trained soon-to-be Rangers as cooks to improve nutrition, supplied mosquito netting to prevent disease, and occasionally granted weekend passes if conditions permitted.¹⁵¹ Although some of these changes likely increased morale and enabled recruits to maximize their training efforts, it also removed some of the realism and grit-seeking techniques used by the Commandos. While there are valid and sound arguments that either support or challenge the improvement of daily living or training conditions, Rudder created a balance and was able to expose his Rangers to realistic training conditions through night operations and three to five-day exercises while also providing an environment that encouraged success.

The 5th Battalion trained as Rudder’s Rangers did. However, their initial training was condensed to approximately three weeks to meet the demands of operational requirements overseas. Prioritized training consisted of intense physical conditioning, weapons training and qualifications, hand-to-hand combat, navigation exercises, and combat exercises from the squad to the company level.¹⁵² Before the end of 1943, both battalions moved to Great Britain to conduct cliff training, navigation exercises, and night

¹⁴⁸ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 127.

¹⁴⁹ Brinkley, *The Boys of Pointe Du Hoc*, 39.

¹⁵⁰ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 125.

¹⁵¹ Brinkley, *The Boys of Pointe Du Hoc*, 38–39; O’Donnell, *Dog Company*, 15–16.

¹⁵² Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 128.

maneuvers.¹⁵³ On June 6, 1944, both battalions participated in D-Day where the saying “Rangers Lead The Way” was coined on Omaha Beach. Throughout the rest of the war, the Rangers of 2nd and 5th Battalions led the way through five campaigns and operations throughout Europe and the Mediterranean until their deactivation back in the United States by October 1945.

As the 1st through 5th Ranger Battalions operated in Europe and the Mediterranean, the 6th Ranger Battalion was the only Ranger battalion activated to operate in the Pacific Theater. General Douglas MacArthur and General Walter Krueger, 6th Army Commander, identified a need for an elite reconnaissance and amphibious raid-type force to counter Japanese forces scattered all over the Pacific islands.¹⁵⁴ Dissimilar to the other five battalions, the 6th Ranger Battalion was formed from an existing unit. The 98th Field Artillery Battalion was activated in Fort Lewis, Washington in January 1941, operated in the Pacific Theater of Operations as a mule-drawn pack artillery battalion armed with 75mm guns, and was later re-designated as the 6th Ranger Battalion in September 1944 at Port Moresby, New Guinea.¹⁵⁵ In 1944, as the 98th Field Artillery Battalion was in transition to become the 6th Ranger Battalion, the mules and some of its’ members were transferred to the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), Merrill’s Marauders.¹⁵⁶

Before the official re-designation, members who were not already transferred out were offered a chance to leave. According to Leo Strausbaugh, who served as a lieutenant with B Company, 6th Ranger Battalion in 1944, “Most men were big because they wanted big men as muleskinners and a lot were farm boys... I feel most of the men were tired and fed up with the mule pack and bored and the Rangers offered a new challenge. Most of the good men stayed and a lot of eight balls wanted out. So they either got the boot or were

¹⁵³ Hogan, *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*, 40.

¹⁵⁴ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 202; Haggerty, “A History of the Ranger Battalions in World War II,” 249.

¹⁵⁵ Haggerty, “A History of the Ranger Battalions in World War II,” 249–50.

¹⁵⁶ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 206.

asked to leave.”¹⁵⁷ Those that stayed were required to go through interviews and pass medical and physical examinations before the training began.¹⁵⁸

Lieutenant Colonel Henry A. Mucci was appointed as the commander of the 6th Ranger Battalion on February 1, 1944. Mucci was a 1936 West Point graduate who commissioned as an infantry officer and was known for his athleticism and experience in judo and boxing.¹⁵⁹ Mucci immediately established a training program to attrite the battalion from roughly 1,000 artillerymen to about 500 Rangers.¹⁶⁰ Similar to the other battalion’s programs, Mucci designed a selection and training program to weed out those that failed to uphold the Ranger standards and also prepared them for the operational requirements ahead.

Training began in March 1944, consisting of physical conditioning, individual skills training, and tactical maneuvers. Physical conditioning was similar to other battalion’s programs in which speed marches, endurance runs, obstacle courses, and swimming were standard events. Part of the conditioning program included a five-hundred-foot hill called “Misery Knoll” that Ranger candidates were required to carry their Ranger buddy up and down every day.¹⁶¹ Beyond physical conditioning, Mucci’s training regime arguably focused more on individual infantry skills since most of his members were former artilleryman. Mucci also viewed that “marksmanship was an important part of the program.”¹⁶² After their training at Port Moresby, New Guinea, the battalion conducted unit training in Finschafen, New Guinea, and received its first mission in October 1944 for the invasion of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. The 6th Ranger Battalion is most notably remembered for their efforts in the freeing of 513 American Prisoners of War on January

¹⁵⁷ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 207.

¹⁵⁸ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 182.

¹⁵⁹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 204.

¹⁶⁰ Dick Couch, *Sua Sponte: The Forging of a Modern American Ranger* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2013), 34; Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 206.

¹⁶¹ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 183.

¹⁶² Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 183.

30, 1945, from a Japanese Prison Camp at Cabanatuan, near Cabanatuan City in the Philippines.¹⁶³ The 6th Ranger Battalion was deactivated in December 1945.

F. CONCLUSION

The United States military underwent a demobilization process after the war. By the end of 1945, the Ranger Battalions that had been raised and fought throughout the war were all deactivated. Most of those who served beside Rangers in World War II were left with an almost heroic impression. Ralph Ingersoll, an Army officer who served alongside the Rangers in Africa, described a Ranger as “the perfectly trained infantryman, tough and well-coordinated physically, skillful with any weapon he can carry, an aggressive fellow, conditioned to hate his country’s enemies.”¹⁶⁴

Selecting men, such as those highlighted by Ingersoll, to serve as Rangers in World War II was a demanding and essential responsibility. It required insightful and innovative leaders who enforced discipline and established standards expected of an elite unit. It required leaders who fostered teamwork and empowered subordinates to achieve their objectives. Above all, it required the commitment and expertise of Ranger cadre who walked every step of the way with Ranger volunteers. From assessment and selection centers to the cliffs and fields of combat, Rangers and Ranger leaders demonstrated that they were the most elite light infantry unit in the world.

There are two key conclusions to take from the Rangers who served during World War II. The first is that, through the influence of the British Commandos, the assessment and selection programs used to generate and sustain the Ranger battalions of World War II established a foundation for future programs. Obstacle courses, log exercises, long and fast-paced foot marches with combat equipment, endurance runs, multiple-day stress exercises, extensive medical evaluations, and strenuous interviews were a legacy that World War II Ranger veterans carried into future formations.

¹⁶³ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 21.

¹⁶⁴ Ralph Ingersoll, *The Battle Is the Pay-Off* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), 126.

The Ranger assessment and selection programs of World War II focused primarily on the physical and mental capabilities of a Ranger recruit. It was not until after World War II that the psychological methods and findings published by the OSS Staff in the *Assessment of Men* were integrated into assessment and selection programs of Ranger and other elite or specialized units. Events such as the “death slide” or the numerous live fire exercises aided in the psychological and cognitive assessment of a Ranger recruit. However, while these events revealed psychological tendencies and attributes, the primary purpose of such events was to assess the mental fortitude, grit, and physical stamina of Ranger recruits. These attributes proved critical as Rangers spearheaded ground operations throughout the war.

The second conclusion is that every Ranger was selected as a Ranger first. With very few exceptions, every Ranger, whether cook or infantryman, private or captain, went through the same training and was required to meet the same exacting standards. The physical conditioning was demanding, the field exercises were arduous, and the attrition was well over 50 percent. However, every Ranger, regardless of rank or specialty, went through it together and if a volunteer did not meet the standard, they were gone.

While Ranger leaders and units preceding World War II established a “Ranger lore” that projected a more elite Soldier, the Rangers of World War II not only capitalized on that image, but also established assessment and selection procedures, organizational standards, and training techniques that enabled much of their successes throughout the war. Although the Ranger battalions faced a period of inactivation, it was short-lived. In 1950, at the outbreak of the Korean War, U.S. Army Rangers were called back into action.

IV. KOREAN WAR RANGERS: 1950–1953

A. INTRODUCTION

Only five years since the deactivation of the Rangers at the end of World War II, Ranger units were resurrected in the summer of 1950 after North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel to invade South Korea. Even though the war lasted through July 1953, the Ranger story was short-lived and only lasted until the fall of 1951.

At the outset of the Korean War, Rangers were called back into action despite resistance from select military leaders and the perception that Rangers stole the Army's best fighters to do a job that any well-trained infantry unit could perform.¹⁶⁵ The all-volunteer Ranger companies formed during the war served as organic elite infantry units that conducted reconnaissance operations and raids deep into enemy territory. The operations undertaken by Korean War Rangers were comparable to past Ranger units such as Rogers' Rangers and Merrill's Marauders.

To meet wartime demands, the United States Army needed a specially selected and well-trained force. Instead of the United States Army re-establishing independent battalion-sized Ranger units, fifteen Ranger Infantry Companies (Airborne) (RICAs) and the Eighth Army Ranger Company were activated during the Korean War beginning in 1950. RICA "Able" and RICA "Baker" were two additional Ranger units activated during the Korean War; however, as of 2019, their lineage falls under the Airborne Ranger Training Brigade (ARTB) and not the 75th Ranger Regiment. The formation of these two additional RICAs supported future Ranger training after the deactivation of 1st through 15th RICAs and the Eighth Army Ranger Company.

The assessment and selection methods used by the Eighth Army Ranger Company and the fifteen RICAs, although varying from past Ranger units as well as each other, still used some of the same methods and themes employed by their forbearers. Physical

¹⁶⁵ Ross Hall, *The Ranger Book: A History 1634–2006* (Charleston, SC: Book Surge Publishing, 2007), 256; David W. Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1986), 277.

conditioning, strict discipline, and teamwork were, once again, the central components of Ranger assessment and selection. Except for the Eighth Army Ranger Company, Rangers also added airborne assault to their collection of skills.

Veterans from the 1st Special Service Force, the Office of Strategic Services, Merrill's Marauders, and World War II Rangers assisted with the selection, training, and formation of Ranger Companies in the Korean War. This chapter covers the methods, processes, standards, and challenges associated with the assessment and selection of Rangers who served in the Eighth Army Ranger Company and across the fifteen RICA's. The programs and methods used to assess, select, and train Rangers during this time ultimately led to the establishment of the Ranger Department, and what eventually became known as the U.S. Army Ranger School.



Figure 9. United States Army Ranger Companies of the Korean War (1950–1951)¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Adapted from Eugene Piasecki, "The Sixth Ranger Company: Look Sharp, Be Sharp, Stay Sharp," *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* 10, no. 1 (2014): 33.

B. EIGHTH ARMY RANGER COMPANY

On June 29, 1950, General Douglas MacArthur, Commander, Far East Command (FECOM), traveled to Korea to assess the overall situation of his forces. He acknowledged that “in past wars, there was only one way for me to learn such things. There was only one way now. I decided to go to Korea and see for myself.”¹⁶⁷ With over fifty years of service spanning from World War I through World War II and the occupation of Japan, General MacArthur quickly assessed that air and naval forces alone could not hold off North Korean forces. Ground forces were required. He submitted his assessment and recommendations to President Harry Truman and within twenty-four hours had approval to mobilize Eighth United States Army Korea (EUSAK) stationed in Japan.

Lieutenant General Walton “Johnny” Walker commanded EUSAK that was comprised of the 7th, 24th, and 25th Infantry Divisions, and 1st Cavalry Division. General Joseph Lawton Collins, United States Army Chief of Staff, described General Walker as a leader with “toughness, drive, and determination.”¹⁶⁸ In World War II, General Walker led the XX Corps of General Patton’s Third Army where he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and Distinguished Service Medal. Having just took command on July 13, 1950 of a force that was thirty percent understrength, General Walker quickly mobilized EUSAK to establish a defense around the southern port of Pusan.¹⁶⁹ Further complicating matters, EUSAK was trained to fight the Soviets in Europe and was not physically or mentally prepared to fight in mountainous terrain against an enemy that operated unconventionally and fielded commando-like units to conduct guerrilla operations. General Walker’s men were quickly pressed with their backs to the sea, lacking supplies, and in need of offensive capabilities. As a result, it was not long until the American Ranger was called back into action.

¹⁶⁷ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 1st ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 332.

¹⁶⁸ Joseph Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 89.

¹⁶⁹ Collins, *War in Peacetime*, 89; MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 335.



Figure 10. Lieutenant General Walton “Johnny” Walker (left) and General Douglas MacArthur (right) in North Korea in 1950¹⁷⁰

General MacArthur, a proponent of special operations units, having ordered the activation of 6th Ranger Battalion in World War II, sought a specialized unit to counter North Korean guerrilla forces operating around Pusan.¹⁷¹ General Collins and General Walker were also proponents for the reactivation of Ranger units in Korea. The immediate

¹⁷⁰ Source: Eugene Piasecki, “Eighth Army Rangers: First in Korea,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, ARSOF in the Korean War: Part I, 6, no. 1 (2010): 34.

¹⁷¹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 237; David W. Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry?: The Changing Role of the U.S. Army Rangers from Dieppe to Grenada*, *Contributions in Military Studies* 128 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 105.

concern of General Walker for his forces and the need for an elite force capable of conducting reconnaissance and combat patrols led to the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel (later Brigadier General) John H. McGee. McGee, a former World War II Japanese prisoner of war (POW) and commander of the 169th Infantry, 43rd Infantry Division, was brought to EUSAK by General Walker to lead a “Miscellaneous Section.” His primary task was to raise an experimental unit for special operations behind friendly and enemy lines.¹⁷²

McGee was well suited for this new assignment as he was no stranger to guerrilla operations. After his escape as a POW in June 1944, McGee joined a guerrilla force fighting in the Philippines until he was evacuated by the USS *Narwhal*, an American submarine, in September of the same year.¹⁷³ Additionally, he possessed detailed training notes from his brother George who was a battalion commander in Merrill’s Marauders in World War II.¹⁷⁴ With a Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) of a World War II Ranger Company in hand, McGee’s first task was to find someone to lead what would become known as the 8213th Army Unit or Eighth Army Ranger Company.

Second Lieutenant Ralph Puckett Jr., a 1949 graduate of United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, was in his first week of jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia, when the North Koreans invaded South Korea. As a newly commissioned Infantry officer who was too young to serve during World War II, Puckett was determined to serve his country and not miss out on the action. Puckett originally had orders for Okinawa, Japan; however, after the completion of Airborne School, he requested orders to Korea. Puckett recalled, “I was going to get my war.”¹⁷⁵

Upon his arrival to Camp Drake, a replacement depot in Japan, in the summer of 1950, Puckett received orders to the 24th Infantry Division. However, before shipping out, Puckett heard his name called over the public address system ordering him to report to the

¹⁷² Ralph Puckett and Daniel Crosswell, *Ranger: A Soldier’s Life*, American Warrior Series (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 33–34.

¹⁷³ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 34; Eugene Piasecki, “John H. McGee: Soldier, Leader, Trainer,” 2012, https://www.soc.mil/ARSOF_History/articles/v8n2_mcgee_page_1.html.

¹⁷⁴ Piasecki, “Eighth Army Rangers,” 37.

¹⁷⁵ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 31.

headquarters building. Second Lieutenant Puckett reported to Lieutenant Colonel John H. McGee, who informed him that he was “selecting volunteers for an extremely dangerous mission behind enemy lines.”¹⁷⁶ McGee mentioned that the unit was going to be a Ranger unit, but he had already selected the two required platoon leaders. Second Lieutenants Charles Bunn and Barnard Cummings Jr., both classmates of Puckett at USMA, were already selected to lead first and second platoon respectively. Puckett, eager to be a Ranger, told McGee “Sir, I volunteer! If you will take me into that company, I volunteer to be a squad leader or a rifleman.”¹⁷⁷



Figure 11. Camp Drake Replacement Depot¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 32–33.

¹⁷⁷ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 33.

¹⁷⁸ Source: Piasecki, “Eighth Army Rangers,” 36.

After dozens of interviews with potential candidates, McGee did not select Puckett to be a squad leader or a rifleman. Instead, he selected Puckett to be the Company Commander of the first Ranger company since World War II. Despite Puckett's lack of military experience and only holding the rank of Second Lieutenant, a member of McGee's staff informed Puckett that McGee had boxed as a cadet at USMA and the fact that Puckett had captained the USMA boxing team had "struck a chord with McGee."¹⁷⁹ McGee also listed Puckett's eagerness to serve in the Rangers, his excellent physical condition, and his belief that "an officer with no combat experience might prove more aggressive than a combat veteran from World War II" ultimately led to Puckett's selection.¹⁸⁰

After Puckett, Bunn, and Cummings were selected to recruit, select, train, and lead the company, McGee continued to play a critical role by assisting them as they screened hundreds of service records in search of potential candidates. However, due to the lack of veteran riflemen available at the time, Puckett and his team were restricted in their recruiting efforts and were ordered to only recruit cooks, mechanics, typists, and other service and supply personnel to fill over seventy infantry billets.¹⁸¹ Volunteers came from a variety of specialties and represented a melting pot of race, ethnicity, and religion. Private First-Class William Judy was a mechanic when he volunteered for the Rangers. Wilbert Clanton and Allen Waters were the first African American Rangers. Sergeant Billy Walls volunteered because he remembered his platoon sergeant in basic training was a Ranger, and he too wanted the opportunity to "fight with the best."¹⁸²

As candidates were identified through the recruiting efforts, McGee and Puckett informed them of the job they were being considered for and told them that "If you are not interested, you may leave now."¹⁸³ Over half of those that were interested left, but those who remained were interviewed. For three days, working well beyond daylight hours,

¹⁷⁹ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 33.

¹⁸⁰ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 33.

¹⁸¹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 238; Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 35.

¹⁸² Piasecki, "Eighth Army Rangers," 42; Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 35.

¹⁸³ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 34.

Puckett and his two platoon leaders interviewed interested candidates to fill seventy-four enlisted positions. Charles Bunn later stated that “we began interviewing men for the company the very next day after joining. The three of us [himself, Cummings, and Puckett] were responsible for picking the men and training them. I remember getting only two or three hours of sleep each night the entire time we were at Camp Drake.”¹⁸⁴ Puckett also recalled how busy they were and also reflected on his criteria for selecting candidates. When selecting suitable volunteers, Puckett said that they considered a man’s previous experiences and “since there was no time for physical training (PT) tests, made calculated guesses on their physical condition. We had little to go on and generally based the decision on the impression the interviewees made.”¹⁸⁵ All recruits that were initially selected were under the age of twenty-six and all but one was unmarried. Additionally, unlike other Ranger companies formed during the war, the Eighth Army Ranger Company was the only Ranger unit that was not designated as an airborne unit.

With the initial selection complete and Sergeant Charles Pitts selected as the Company First Sergeant, the Eighth Army Ranger Company was provisionally activated on August 25, 1950. Following their activation, seventy-six Ranger recruits moved from Camp Drake, Japan to the newly dubbed “Eighth Army Ranger Training Center,” better known as “Ranger Hill” near Kijang, South Korea. The assessment and training program was initially intended to be six weeks long but was cut short on October 1 to support combat operations. The training was not only designed to serve as a phase in the selection process but was also intended to turn service and support personnel not only into infantrymen but also into Rangers. Of the seventy-six recruits that were selected at Camp Drake, sixty-six walked off Ranger Hill as Rangers, an eighty-six percent selection rate.¹⁸⁶

Training on Ranger Hill was a product of Puckett’s experiences at USMA, the Infantry Officer Basic Course, and Airborne School at Fort Benning. Blocks of instruction came from either Army doctrine or the experiences of Lieutenant Colonel McGee and his

¹⁸⁴ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 253–54.

¹⁸⁵ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 35.

¹⁸⁶ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 41.

brother.¹⁸⁷ The training was centered on physical conditioning and focused on fundamentals (shoot, move, communicate), leadership, and teamwork. Jess Anderson, a Ranger who served under Puckett in 1950, later stated that “the training phase molded individuals into a close-knit team.”¹⁸⁸ In a letter written by Puckett in 2004, he said that “there was nothing brilliant about anything we did, nothing particularly innovative.”¹⁸⁹

At the outset of training, Puckett published a memorandum with four training objectives for the company:

1. Each Ranger would be in outstanding physical condition. Every Ranger would be a Tiger.
2. Each Ranger would be highly skilled in the tactics and techniques of the individual soldier.
3. Each squad, platoon, and the company as a whole would smoothly function as an efficient fighting machine.
4. Each Ranger would exude confidence in himself, his fellow Rangers and his leaders, and exhibit the esprit that motivated him to volunteer and work toward the aim of making his Ranger company the best that the United States Army could produce.¹⁹⁰

Officers trained as the men did and were not granted any special programs or privileges. Puckett said that “the officers never sat around and supervised; they led by example, shared the hardships, taught the classes, and ran the company.”¹⁹¹ Ranger recruits trained six days a week and a half-day on Sundays. For nearly six weeks, Ranger recruits endured intense physical hardening, hand-to-hand fighting, weapons training, received classes on

¹⁸⁷ Piasecki, “Eighth Army Rangers,” 37.

¹⁸⁸ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 256.

¹⁸⁹ Piasecki, “Eighth Army Rangers,” 37.

¹⁹⁰ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 37.

¹⁹¹ Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 39.

leadership and fieldcraft, and conducted combat scenario exercises that increased with difficulty each week. The training was always performed by the book, and Puckett made every attempt to enforce strict discipline and exacting standards. Puckett said that “no Ranger should die because he was not physically fit, could not shoot, lacked the discipline to follow orders, no matter how difficult, or did not know what to do amid the chaos of a firefight.”¹⁹²

After only a month of starting the program, Puckett received a request from Colonel John Dabney, G-3 of EUSAK, to be operational as soon as possible and mentioned the potential of an upcoming operation in Inchon.¹⁹³ After seeking input from his platoon leaders and senior noncommissioned officers, Puckett submitted a request to McGee to cut the selection and training program short and claimed that the Eighth Army Rangers were ready to conduct combat operations. McGee concurred with Puckett’s assessment and emphasized the Ranger’s high degree of physical fitness and leadership ability.

The Eighth Army Ranger Company was the first Ranger unit to fight in Korea and fought in four major campaigns, spending several months fighting on the front lines. However, after the bloody battle for Hill 205 in November 1950, Puckett and his Rangers dwindled to a force that was combat ineffective. According to a report from First Sergeant Charles Pitts on the morning of November 26, 1950, only 10 of the 51 Rangers who fought on Hill 205 remained; 27 were wounded, ten were missing, and four were killed in action.¹⁹⁴

No longer able to command the company due to his combat injuries, Puckett was replaced by Captain John Paul Vann, a leader who would later become known for his service in Vietnam.¹⁹⁵ Vann made every attempt to rebuild the company; however, operational demands limited the ability to use the initial selection and training process

¹⁹² Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger*, 40.

¹⁹³ Piasecki, “Eighth Army Rangers,” 37–38.

¹⁹⁴ Piasecki, “Eighth Army Rangers,” 43.

¹⁹⁵ Vann and Puckett would later work together in the Ranger Department at Fort Benning, Georgia.

developed by Puckett and his team. Replacements were directly assigned to the company from replacement depots without the formal training regime that the original Eighth Army Rangers completed. Despite the company's efforts to revive itself into a capable elite unit, it was eventually disbanded and replaced by 5th Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) in March 1951.

Despite their contributions to Ranger history, as of 2019, the Eighth Army Ranger Company has never been recognized with official lineage to the 75th Ranger Regiment. However, when discussing Ranger history in the Korean War, the Eighth Army Rangers are most commonly referred to, likely a result of the leadership and contributions of Lieutenant Ralph Puckett. Colonel (Retired) Ralph Puckett later served as the Honorary Colonel of the 75th Ranger Regiment from 1996 to 2006.

C. RANGER INFANTRY COMPANY (AIRBORNE)

While the Eighth Army Rangers began their selection and training program in the summer of 1950, the concept and desire for creating additional Ranger units existed among select senior leaders and officials in the United States Army. General Joseph Lawton Collins, United States Army Chief of Staff, was in search of a solution to counter the North Korean guerrilla threat. On August 29, 1950, following the completion of a directed study on guerrilla operations and several trips to Korea himself, Collins published a memorandum that directed the formation of "Marauder Companies." Within the memorandum, he stated that "one of the major lessons to be learned from the Korean fighting appears to be the fact that the North Koreans have made very successful use of small groups, trained, armed and equipped for the specific purpose of infiltrating our lines."¹⁹⁶ The memorandum further directed the establishment of a training section at Fort Benning, Georgia, that would organize and train an experimental unit. Despite the initial designation of "Marauder Companies" that eluded to the capabilities of Merrill's Marauders in World War II, the experimental unit soon became fifteen Ranger Infantry

¹⁹⁶ Kenneth Finlayson, "Rebirth of the Rangers: The Ranger Infantry Companies in Korea," *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, ARSOF in the Korean War: Part II, 6, no. 2 (2010): 3.

Companies (Airborne) that, instead, adopted their lineage from the Rangers in World War II.

In search of someone to lead the newly designated training section at Fort Benning, Collins selected Colonel John Gibson Van Houten. Although Van Houten was not Airborne qualified and had no experience in Ranger units, he was a well-respected leader who had combat experience and was known to be a strict disciplinarian.

While Van Houten and his staff were working to establish a program of instruction for the selection and training of Ranger companies to fight in the war, a call went out for volunteers. Van Houten formed selection teams that went out to U.S. Army Infantry divisions to screen and recruit potential candidates. Similar to recruiting methods of the past, the officers and senior noncommissioned officers that were selected to lead or command one of the respective Ranger companies were then responsible for selecting the men that would serve under them.

According to the memorandum by General Collins, recruits must have already completed basic training, been parachute qualified, and have a score of 90 or above on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT).¹⁹⁷ Additionally, a volunteer must have been between the ages of nineteen and thirty-six, been in excellent or above-average physical condition, passed a strict medical evaluation, and received recommendations and approvals from his current chain of command.¹⁹⁸ Once selected through the initial screening process, every volunteer was required to sign the following contract:

I volunteer for Ranger Training and duty. I further volunteer to perform frequent aircraft flight, glider flight, parachute jumps, and to participate in realistic combat training while receiving Airborne and/or Ranger Training and performing Ranger duty. I understand that I will continue to be eligible for parachutists' pay.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983," 226.

¹⁹⁸ Robert Black, *A Ranger Born: A Memoir of Combat and Valor from Korea to Vietnam* (New York: Presidio Press, 2002), 53–55, 67.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Black, *Rangers in Korea* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), 54.

Rangers were considered four-time volunteers having volunteered for the Army, for jump school, for Rangers, and for combat.²⁰⁰ Due to the mystique and heroic perception of the myriad of special operations units activated in World War II and the legacy of past Ranger units, there was no shortage of volunteers. Even though several reports state that over 5,000 volunteered, not all were selected as a Ranger.²⁰¹

In September 1950, Van Houten and his staff established the Ranger Training Center in a secluded area on Fort Benning, known as Harmony Church. The cadre team responsible for the selection and training process consisted of twenty-two officers and thirty-four enlisted personnel.²⁰² Together, Van Houten and the cadre team developed a six-week selection and training program that, unlike the one developed by Puckett and with less emphasis on amphibious operations, closely resembled the one developed by British Commandos and later revised by Darby in World War II. The program's intended purpose was to weed out those that did not have the physical or mental capabilities to be a Ranger and also prepare those that did for war.

With an average attrition rate of approximately 30 percent, the newly established six-week program consisted of intense physical conditioning, weapons training and marksmanship, demolitions, first aid, map reading and land navigation, escape and evasion procedures, intelligence gathering, and various techniques to conduct guerrilla operations.²⁰³ However, as the desired capabilities of the Rangers grew, six 48-hour training weeks quickly grew to 60-hour training weeks. Directives from Army Field Forces proposed tactical air support training and additional direct and indirect fires employment be added to the list of Ranger capabilities.²⁰⁴ Due to wartime demands and the high

²⁰⁰ Black, *A Ranger Born*, 59.

²⁰¹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 276.

²⁰² Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 276; Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983," 229.

²⁰³ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 276–78; Black, *Rangers in Korea*, 25; Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry?*, 232–33.

²⁰⁴ Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983," 228.

expectations of the Rangers, the course was expanded to eight weeks with three weeks of follow-on training in the mountains surrounding Camp Carson, Colorado.

The selection and training program at the Ranger Training Center was split into three phases that progressed from individual to collective assessment and training.

 Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) 			
The Ranger Training Center Fort Benning, Georgia 1950 – 1951			
	Phase 1 (Weeks 1-2)	Phase 2 (Weeks 3-4)	Phase 3 (Weeks 5-6)
Key Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical conditioning • Individual skills training • Marksmanship • Map reading • First aid • Hand-to-hand combat training • Swim test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical conditioning • Advanced individual skills • Demolition training • Land navigation • Intelligence gathering • Patrolling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical conditioning • Collective unit training • Combat reaction courses • Live fire exercises • “Hell week” • “Washout boards”

Figure 12. RICA Assessment and Selection Model (1950–1951)²⁰⁵

The first phase of the course, or the first two weeks, was primarily focused on physical conditioning and individual skills. Events that took place during the first phase of the course included daily running and calisthenics, log drills, long-distance speed marches, obstacle courses, marksmanship and weapons familiarization, map-reading and first aid classes, and hand-to-hand combat drills.²⁰⁶ Similar to their World War II predecessors,

²⁰⁵ Adapted from: Kenneth Finlayson, “‘Cold Steel Third’ The 3rd Ranger Infantry Company,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, ARSOF in the Korean War: Part II, 6, no. 2 (2010): 7.

²⁰⁶ Finlayson, “‘Cold Steel Third’ The 3rd Ranger Infantry Company,” 7.

the Ranger recruits during the Korean War were assessed beyond their mental and physical limits. Colonel Van Houten firmly believed that physical fitness and discipline led to success on the battlefield and thus formulated his intent to prepare every Ranger company “to move from 40 to 50 miles cross-country in 12 to 18 hours depending on the terrain.”²⁰⁷ Private First Class (later Colonel) Robert Black, a former Ranger in Korea and Vietnam, recalled that “the day began with a five-mile run and calisthenics. Long-distance marching with full equipment was routine.”²⁰⁸ Black said that

a quarter-ton truck with a white flag attached followed close behind the sweating Rangers. If a man felt the training was beyond his capability, he had only to go sit in the vehicle—no questions were asked or comments made... No one was forced to be a Ranger, the desire had to come from within.²⁰⁹

In addition to the multitude of miles put on the feet of a Ranger candidate, Black stated that “every Ranger had to be able to swim” and vividly remembers a cold Georgia winter where cadre made them strip to their undershorts to “swim Victory Pond while its edges were rimmed with ice.”²¹⁰ Major Jesse Morrow, a cadre member at the Ranger Training Center, was detailed to give swim instructions during weeks one, three, four, and five of the course for those that were identified as weak swimmers so that they could pass before graduation.²¹¹ Near the end of the first phase of the course, Ranger recruits built on their individual skills in the second phase.

The second phase of the course shifted to more advanced individual skills and began to integrate small unit collective training. Events conducted during the second phase or weeks three and four of the course included advanced marksmanship training, demolitions training, land navigation, intelligence gathering, and patrolling.²¹² Robert

²⁰⁷ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 276.

²⁰⁸ Black, *Rangers in Korea*, 25.

²⁰⁹ Black, *Rangers in Korea*, 25.

²¹⁰ Black, *A Ranger Born*, 64; Black, *Rangers in Korea*, 51.

²¹¹ Piasecki, “The Sixth Ranger Company,” 26, 34.

²¹² Finlayson, “‘Cold Steel Third’ The 3rd Ranger Infantry Company,” 7.

Black favorably remembers demolitions training. While blowing things up with C4 resulted in several missing outhouses scattered around Fort Benning, Black said that their instructor, Major Herman Zimmerman, or “Powder-Happy Herman,” a World War II engineer, was a famed favorite who never hesitated to welcome recruits to his class by setting off explosive charges around them.²¹³ As training became more advanced in the second phase, the physical conditioning also became more demanding. First Lieutenant (later Brigadier General) Joseph Ulatoski, company executive officer for 5th Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne), highlighted that “physical training and fieldwork was emphasized as was the ability to force march and immediately react to enemy encounters.”²¹⁴ While much of the course was designed around preparing a Ranger company for war, the individual efforts that contributed to the overall team were where most would succeed, but others would fail.

The third and final phase of the course focused on collective training. Those that did not have what it took to be a Ranger had already quit or been dropped from the course and sent back to their original units. While the average attrition rate for the course was roughly thirty percent, the only attrition that typically occurred in the final phase of the course was due to injury or a “washout” board. A “washout” board was a panel of Ranger officers and cadre that reviewed a recruit’s packet and “eliminated those that did not measure up to Ranger standards.”²¹⁵ Training events during the final weeks of the course included patrolling, combat reaction courses, and live fire exercises.²¹⁶

Before graduation, Ranger recruits went through a culminating exercise unofficially referred to as “Hell Week.” Formally known as an Operational Readiness Test (ORT), the five-day exercise kicked off with a low-level nighttime parachute insertion over

²¹³ Black, *Rangers in Korea*, 25; Black, *A Ranger Born*, 58.

²¹⁴ Troy Sacquety, “‘Travel Light and Freeze at Night’ The 5th Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) in Korea,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, ARSOF in the Korean War: Part II, 6, no. 2 (2010): 40.

²¹⁵ Black, *A Ranger Born*, 59.

²¹⁶ Finlayson, “Cold Steel Third,” 7.

Lee Drop Zone on Fort Benning.²¹⁷ Ranger recruits exited an aircraft less than 800 feet above the ground with a T-7 parachute on their back and Griswold weapons container on their side.²¹⁸ Over the following five days, recruits conducted continuous platoon and company operations with all required equipment, food, and supplies carried on their backs.

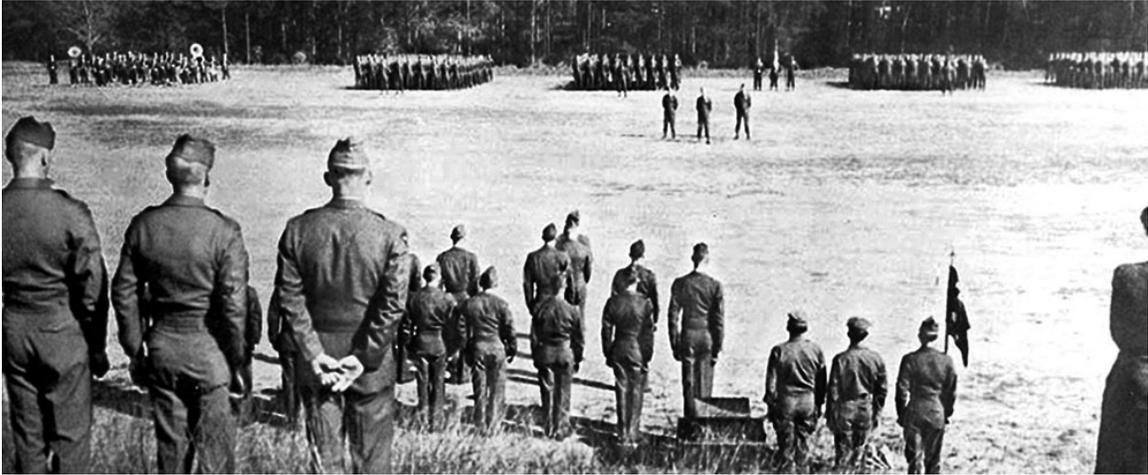


Figure 13. RICAs 1–4 Graduation Ceremony at Fort Benning, Georgia in November 1950²¹⁹

Only those that made it through the course earned the black and gold Ranger tab along with the Ranger insignia worn by the Rangers of World War II. The Ranger tab was approved by Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) on November 6, 1950, and awarded to the first class of graduates on November 13, 1950.²²⁰ Additionally, as Ranger companies completed the course, they were awarded their unit guidons at their respective graduation ceremony held on French Field at Fort Benning. The first cycle of Ranger recruits graduated from the Ranger Training Center in November 1950 and formed the 1st

²¹⁷ Black, *Rangers in Korea*, 52–53; Piasecki, “The Sixth Ranger Company,” 26.

²¹⁸ Black, *Rangers in Korea*, 52–53.

²¹⁹ Charles Briscoe, “The 2nd Ranger Infantry Company: ‘Buffaloes’ in Korea, 29 December 1950 - 19 May 1951,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, ARSOF in the Korean War: Part II, 6, no. 2 (2010): 22.

²²⁰ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 565.

through 4th RICAs. While the 1st, 2nd, and 4th RICAs went to fight the war in Korea. 3rd RICA remained at Fort Benning to assist with the second cycle of selection and training and was eventually replaced by 7th RICA, which became a training and replacement unit for the Rangers.²²¹ However, as Ranger companies continued to cycle through the Ranger Training Center and provide support where ever they were called into action, their existence in the war only lasted for a little over a year. By the end of 1951, all Ranger companies were deactivated.

D. CONCLUSION

A Ranger, whether in the colonial-era or serving in the Korean War, possessed above average intelligence, was physically and mentally fit, demonstrated the potential to become a master of soldier fundamentals, and was trainable. Historical records from the 75th Ranger Regiment in 1999 recognize that “When United Nations’ forces numbered over 500,000 men, there were fewer than 700 Airborne Rangers fighting in front of every American division engaged in combat.”²²² During the first year of the Korean War, Ranger companies were activated to support wartime demands and they went into battle by land, sea, and air. However, in July 1951, when the front lines had stabilized, several studies conducted by FECOM and Department of the Army determined that Ranger companies were no longer needed and in August 1951, orders approved by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Administration came down for all U.S. Army Ranger companies to deactivate.²²³

Major General Reuben Jenkins, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Training, is one of several leaders who supported proposals for the deactivation of Ranger companies in 1951. Jenkins argued that well-trained conventional infantry units could accomplish the same mission as the Rangers.²²⁴ Additionally, perceived as an anti-elitist, Jenkins, along with other Army officers, reportedly labeled the Rangers as “prima

²²¹ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 246.

²²² 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 26.

²²³ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 284–92.

²²⁴ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 246.

donnas.”²²⁵ Despite the Ranger’s proven reputation in combat, which a 1951 Washington Post article described as “destruction specialists,” Rangers, once again, struggled with disciplinary issues.²²⁶

The problem, as First Lieutenant Ulatoski, executive officer from 5th RICA, described was leaders “turning a blind eye” to smaller issues which he further articulated the opinion held by his company commander that, “if the troops wanted to do it, if it made them feel good, they could do it.”²²⁷ Some Ranger units authorized Mohawk haircuts while others permitted a short-lived fad of gold earrings. At the time, some of these actions set the unit apart from others and established an internal esprit-de-corps. However, these actions also likely created negative barriers between the Ranger companies and the units they were attached to during the war. Another example of disciplinary issues and the development of negative perceptions occurred in 1951 when the Camp Commander of Camp Carson, Colorado, restricted 5th RICA to the barracks as a result of too many complaints from the locals of fighting, drinking, and other unwanted behaviors or actions.²²⁸ Even though a World War II veteran used the impending war as an ill excuse to “enjoy themselves,” the undisciplined conduct inevitably earned the Rangers a bad reputation.²²⁹

While positive perceptions of the Rangers also existed, the selection and training programs developed by the Eighth Army Ranger Company and the Ranger Training Center at Fort Benning made every attempt to weed out volunteers that were likely to cause trouble. Through strict standards and an intensive pre-selection and screening process, the two programs attempted to avoid former issues where misfits made their way into the organization and gave the Rangers a distasteful name. The enforcement of standards,

²²⁵ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 246; Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 273.

²²⁶ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 263.

²²⁷ Sacquety, “Travel Light and Freeze at Night,” 40–41.

²²⁸ Sacquety, “Travel Light and Freeze at Night,” 41.

²²⁹ Sacquety, “Travel Light and Freeze at Night,” 41.

attention to detail, and the various training methods used in the two programs expanded upon past Ranger legacies and also contributed to the future of Ranger assessment and selection programs as well as the U.S. Army Ranger School.

Critical to a successful selection and training program and also essential to an elite and reputable unit is the selection of its leadership. Individuals chosen to select, train, and lead Ranger units in Korea were characteristically no different from former or future Ranger leaders. Similar to their predecessors, Ranger leaders were selected for their high level of intelligence, physical fitness, reputation as a team-oriented individual, and their overall capability as a leader. Small and unique circumstances, such as Puckett captaining the USMA boxing team, played a small part in his selection, but most importantly, Puckett and many others were selected because they were the right person for the job. Even though a Ranger company was intended to be commanded by a captain, Second Lieutenant Puckett was selected for the position. Even though the right person to stand up the Ranger Training Center would appear to have been someone with Ranger or Airborne experience, Van Houten had neither but was ultimately selected for the job. There were also more apparent selections such as First Sergeant Joseph Dye, Sr., First Sergeant of 6th RICA, who was chosen due to his prior Ranger assignments and combat record in World War II from Dieppe, France through Cisterna, Italy.²³⁰ Van Houten, Puckett, Dye, and countless others were simply the right people with the desired leadership ability and appropriate level of discipline to lead Rangers.

Regarding the overall process to become a Ranger during the Korean War, with the exception of the Eighth Army Ranger Company, a typical Ranger recruit completed basic training, jump school, and the Ranger assessment and selection course. Later, when mountain training was added to the process, a Ranger volunteer spent nearly six months in training or selection courses before arriving to his company. Those that were unsuccessful were sent back to their conventional units. While the process or sequence evolved for a Ranger volunteer in 2019, the length of the overall progression was nearly the same.

²³⁰ Piasecki, "The Sixth Ranger Company," 25.

Whether a volunteer was going into the Eighth Army Ranger Company or one of the numbered RICAs, each unit only had one program and one standard. Volunteers for the Eighth Army Rangers went through Ranger Hill, and those hoping to join one of the RICAs went through the Ranger Training Center. Regardless of rank or military specialty, anyone that desired to be a Ranger went through the respective selection program and proved they could meet the Ranger standard. In a letter written by Puckett in 2004, Puckett called his training methodology “quite simple” and stated that “I established high standards and required all to meet those standards.”²³¹ This methodology, being nearly identical to Colonel Darby’s in World War II, established the demanding expectation to be a Ranger and also fostered a unique culture among Ranger units.

The legacy of the Korean War Rangers lives on through their lineage to the 75th Ranger Regiment and their future contributions to the United States Army. In recognition of the capabilities that Rangers brought to the formation, senior leaders throughout the Army sought to spread the Ranger concept. In October 1951, the course developed at the Ranger Training Center became the nucleus of what eventually became the U.S. Army Ranger School. After the deactivation of Ranger companies, many Ranger veterans went on to serve as cadre within the Ranger Training Command or the Ranger Department to train students in Ranger tactics and further develop them into better leaders for the Army.²³²

²³¹ Piasecki, “Eighth Army Rangers,” 37.

²³² Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 315.

V. VIETNAM AND COLD WAR ERA RANGERS: 1961–1974

A. INTRODUCTION

Except for training units in the Ranger Department at Fort Benning, Georgia, the United States Army went without Ranger units for much of the 1950s and 1960s. After forming in 1952, U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) began to take responsibility for Ranger-type operations in the absence of a more suitable force. Furthermore, in 1960, the lineage of Ranger units who fought in World War II and Korea was assigned to the Army Special Forces.²³³ Nevertheless, as a legacy from the Korean War, the U.S. Army continued to place a premium on Ranger qualified leaders produced through the U.S. Army Ranger Course. In 1962, the Department of the Army published Field Manual 21-50 for *Ranger Training and Ranger Operations*, which outlined Ranger training programs for implementation at the unit level and defined the “Ranger Imprint” as “pride, confidence, self-determination, and the ability to lead, endure, and succeed regardless of the odds or obstacles of the enemy, weather, and terrain.”²³⁴ As long as the Army could implement such training programs and continue to develop Ranger qualified leaders through the Ranger Course, there was no need for Ranger specific units.²³⁵

Similar to World War II and the Korean War, the United States Army activated and experimented with both official and ad hoc special operations and elite units throughout the Cold War and Vietnam. In the near two-decade absence of Ranger units since the Korean War, various units emerged or expanded to fill a capability gap that arguably belonged to Rangers. Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRPs), Long Range Patrols (LRPs), United States Army Special Forces, Military Assistance Command Vietnam

²³³ David Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1986), 391.

²³⁴ Department of the Army, *Ranger Training and Operations*, FM 21-50 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1962), <http://cdm16635.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/pageflip/collection/p16635coll8/id/55571/type/singleitem/pftype/pdf>.

²³⁵ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 358–59.

(MACV), and the various “Greek” projects (DELTA, OMEGA, SIGMA, and GAMMA) were just a few examples of elite or specialized units that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s.

Additionally, President John F. Kennedy’s desire for elite military units, especially the U.S. Army Special Forces, in an era of counterinsurgency influenced other U.S. military services to form elite units in the early 1960s. In 1962, the Air Force was reestablishing the Air Commandos, the Navy was activating its first two SEAL teams on opposing coasts of the United States, and the Marines were not far behind with their Force Recon elements or Raiders to fulfill long-range reconnaissance and strategic strike capabilities.²³⁶

However, whether it be the deep reconnaissance capabilities of Roger’s Rangers, the “shock troop” capabilities of Darby’s Rangers, or the long-range reconnaissance and raid capabilities of Merrill’s Marauders during World War II and the Ranger companies from the Korean War, the United States Army lacked a capability that specially selected and well-trained Rangers had accomplished in wars past.

Differing from historic Ranger units who were typically raised from the ground up, the fifteen Ranger Companies formed during the Cold War and Vietnam were more of a re-designation than a re-activation. As the United States faced an emerging nuclear threat and aimed to deter Soviet aggression, the need for operational long-range reconnaissance arose to support battlefield intelligence requirements.²³⁷ Similarly, as the United States became more militarily involved in Vietnam, the demand for elite units became critical to support operational requirements.²³⁸ Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol units were provisionally formed in the 1950s and 1960s to support the needs of the units to which they were assigned. Eventually, these units and their capabilities evolved to support more than just reconnaissance operations and spread from Europe to Vietnam.

²³⁶ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 364.

²³⁷ Shelby Stanton, *Rangers at War: LRRPs in Vietnam* (New York: Ivy Books, 1992), sec. Reconnaissance on the Eve of the Vietnam War; Michael Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs: Rangers in Vietnam* (New York: Ivy Books, 1988), chap. A Different War, Different Rangers: The Beginnings; Ross Hall, *The Ranger Book: A History 1634–2006* (Charleston, SC: Book Surge Publishing, 2007), chap. LRP Foundation-Cold War Europe.

²³⁸ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 333.

As LRRP capabilities extended beyond reconnaissance operations, eventually the second “R” was dropped and became known as Long-Range Patrol units.²³⁹ Finally, in 1969, the Department of the Army, in recognition of LRP capabilities being similar to Ranger capabilities of the past, re-designated the existing LRP companies to Rangers with lineage to Merrill’s Marauders and the 75th Infantry.²⁴⁰

The methods and programs to assess and select LRRP, LRP, and Ranger unit members differed across the many units that established them. No training center ran an assessment and selection program and there was no centralized program that unified the fifteen dispersed units. In some cases, there were no programs at all. This chapter provides insight into the selection and formation of those who served in LRRP or LRP units before their designation as Rangers. Despite almost all fifteen Ranger companies being deactivated in 1972, the “Ranger Imprint” left by Cold War and Vietnam Ranger veterans eventually influenced the activation of modern-day Rangers in 1974.

B. THE COLD WAR

The concept of long-range reconnaissance was not an innovation of the United States Army during the Cold War. Long-range reconnaissance was more of an evolution of past units such as Rogers’ Rangers of colonial America, the Lovat Scouts of the British Army in World War I, and the U.S. Army Alamo Scouts, British Special Air Service (SAS), the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) or Merrill’s Marauders, and the 6th Ranger Battalion in World War II. Similar to their predecessors, LRRP or LRP units formed in the mid-twentieth century not only served as an intelligence asset, being the eyes and ears for the units they were assigned, but eventually evolved into an offensive capability that demanded specially selected and well-trained personnel.

As warfare and technology began to evolve in the twentieth century, the threat of nuclear warfare and a new era of counterinsurgency emerged in the early 1960s.²⁴¹ The

²³⁹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 334.

²⁴⁰ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Ranger, 1942–1983,” 464–66.

²⁴¹ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Ranger, 1942–1983,” 358.

realization of these global threats influenced U.S. strategies as well as the need for specialized units. Beginning in 1961, V and VII Corps of the 7th Army in Germany experimented with long-range reconnaissance patrols. These experiments and capabilities were an evolution of the past and were developed to increase readiness against Soviet aggression and the detection of nuclear weapons.²⁴²

In 1961, Army Major (later Colonel) Edward Maltese was serving as the operations officer in the G-2 (Intelligence) section of the 7th Army Headquarters. Before his service in the 7th Army, Maltese served with the 82nd Airborne in World War II, jumped with the 187th Infantry in Korea, and briefly served in the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS).²⁴³ According to an interview with retired Colonel Maltese in 2002, he recalled that shortly after his arrival to the 7th Army Headquarters, he and several staff officers identified a gap in their ability to effectively identify targets.²⁴⁴ They developed an initial concept of what soon became long-range reconnaissance units and proposed it to General Mel Zais who was the G-3 (Operations) officer for 7th Army in 1961. After gaining his support, United States Army Europe (USAREUR) approved the formation of two LRRP companies in V and VII Corps, 7th Army.²⁴⁵

In June 1961, Major Maltese became the first commander of VII Corps LRRP Company (Airborne).²⁴⁶ Once appointed as the VII Corps LRRP commander, Maltese and First Sergeant Patty Flynn began the process of hand-selecting the men who would serve in the company. When building the company, Maltese worked closely with the VII Corps assignment NCO reviewing packets of potential candidates. Captain (later Colonel) Ellis Bingham, a signal officer for VII Corps LRRP in 1961, said that “upon releasing the call for volunteers, airborne soldiers and airborne rangers in true American fighting-man

²⁴² Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 370.

²⁴³ Mir Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors: A History of the U.S. Army Rangers*, 1st ed. (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2005), 68.

²⁴⁴ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 65.

²⁴⁵ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 65–66.

²⁴⁶ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 64–69.

fashion ran to the sound of the bugle.”²⁴⁷ In an interview conducted in 2002, Maltese said that “as far as qualifications, what mattered to me was what they had done, that’s the only thing I ever cared about if it looked like they had been in the Army.”²⁴⁸ The extent of the selection process and the selection criteria for VII Corps LRRP Company (Airborne) did not go much beyond a packet review process and personal interviews. Following the initial selection of personnel, Maltese and a handful of leaders in the company developed a training program that focused on physical fitness, small unit tactics, and communications capabilities. There was further attrition in training; however, those that participated in the training were already selected members of the unit. Therefore, it was not considered part of the selection process.

²⁴⁷ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 69.

²⁴⁸ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 66.



Figure 14. Company C (LRP), 58PthP Infantry Regiment, VII Army Corps²⁴⁹

In 1961, V Corps LRRP (Airborne) was also establishing a LRRP company in Wildflecken, Germany. Major Reese Jones was selected to be the first company commander and Sergeant Major Gilberto Martinez, an experienced leader who fought in World War II and Korea, was the company First Sergeant.²⁵⁰ To draw in personnel for the new unit, a call for volunteers went out across the division. Sergeant (later Sergeant Major) Mike Martin, an initial member in V Corps LRRP, recalled that “you had to have a certain score on your Army testing in the field of communications” and that “they picked 13 of us out of the division.”²⁵¹ Similar to VII Corps LRRP, the initial assessment and selection of company members was completed through a packet review process and personal

²⁴⁹ Source: “VII Corps LRRP,” U.S. Army Germany, accessed November 5, 2019, http://www.usarmygermany.com/Sont.htm?http&&www.usarmygermany.com/Units/Corps/USAREUR_VII Corps%201.htm.

²⁵⁰ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 319.

²⁵¹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 318.

interviews. Further attrition during specialized training followed the initial selection process, but again, members who fell out of training were already part of the unit.

Throughout most of the 1960s, the V and VII Corps LRP companies continued to operate in Europe conducting deep reconnaissance operations. However, in 1968, the United States military began the redeployment of forces from Germany under the title “REFORGER.”²⁵² In 1969, Company D (LRP), 17th Infantry Regiment, V Army Corps became Company A, 75th Infantry (Ranger) and Company C (LRP), 58th Infantry Regiment, VII Army Corps became Company B, 75th Infantry (Ranger).²⁵³ In 1974, these companies became a primary recruiting pool for the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions.

C. VIETNAM

In addition to the units formed in Europe, the LRP and Ranger units activated during the Vietnam War were made up of United States Army Special Forces members, prior Rangers or Ranger Course instructors, former OSS members, and regular service members recruited from replacement depots or from the unit of which the LRP or Ranger company was formed. Nearly three million service members served in the Vietnam War; however, fewer than five thousand served in LRP or Ranger units.²⁵⁴

As the United States entered Vietnam, the evolutionary capabilities of elite reconnaissance units appealed to several high-level commanders. Brigadier General (later Major General) Ellis Williamson, commander of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, was one of the first to arrive in Vietnam in the summer of 1965 and recognized that “we had been in Vietnam only a few days when it became clear that small units could get out and get information much better than large search-and-destroy type operations.”²⁵⁵ In a war with no clear delineation of front lines, accurate and timely intelligence often determined the successor. Additionally, the shift from mass warfare toward small unit and jungle tactics

²⁵² Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 326.

²⁵³ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 363–64.

²⁵⁴ Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 78.

²⁵⁵ Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 53.

forced commanders to consider the development and employment of elite reconnaissance units to provide the necessary intelligence to accomplish their missions. General Williamson was not the only leader who held this realization, and as more United States ground forces arrived in Vietnam from 1965 to 1966, the number of LRRP units also increased.

In July 1966, General William Westmoreland, commander of MACV, sent official orders to establish LRRP units. The orders defined a Long-Range Patrol as “a specially trained military unit organized and equipped for the specific purpose of functioning as an information gathering agency responsive to the intelligence requirements of the tactical commander... These patrols consist of specially trained personnel capable of performing reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition within the dispatching unit’s area of interest.”²⁵⁶ The formation of elite and specialized units demanded a process to select the right personnel for such an organization. The challenge was that every unit in the Army was competing to recruit or keep their very best soldiers. However, with the re-emergence of elite units in Vietnam came the call for volunteers.

When selecting personnel, General Williamson recognized that “people were by far the most important element of small-unit operations,” thereby, the challenge to “weed out the kooks” was the responsibility of the recruiters who “had to select the trainable, not necessarily the smartest or best educated.”²⁵⁷ Brigadier General (later Major General) Robert Forbes, commander of 71st Infantry Detachment (LRP) of the 199th Infantry Brigade from 1967 to 1968, provided a lengthy list of attributes which included: “alert, quick thinking, innovative, team players, resourceful, intelligent, well trained in basic fundamentals of soldiering, excellent health, dexterous, brave, steady under stress, capable of operating in unfriendly environments over extended periods, physically strong, and have a desire for dangerous and challenging assignments.”²⁵⁸ While this extensive list certainly displays desirable characteristics of an elite soldier, Specialist William Bullen, a former

²⁵⁶ Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 55–56.

²⁵⁷ Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 81.

²⁵⁸ Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 82.

member of Company K of the 4th Infantry Division, simply stated that a desirable candidate was someone with “balls, stamina, and a hell of a lot of team-oriented smarts.”²⁵⁹

Even though the desired criteria or attributes of a LRP member appear to have varied from one person to another or from one unit to next, in the end, unit commanders and senior leaders were all searching for the same person. A person who unquestionably desired to be the best and was physically and mentally willing to carry out the demanding and often dangerous tasks that were required of a LRP unit. For some LRP units, this was where the selection process stopped. They filled their unit rosters with desirable volunteers, conducted minimal fundamental training, and off to war they went. But for some, there was still further assessment that needed to be completed before a volunteer was formally selected.

For many of the initial LRP units formed in Vietnam from 1965 through 1968, there were very few formalized assessment and selection programs. In the absence of a formal or centralized program, many units developed or adopted a selection and training program that best supported their mission, available resources, and manning requirements. At most, some units developed a two-week training program to not only attrite volunteers that didn't have what it took, but more importantly, prepared those who did for what lied ahead. Additionally, the programs that each unit developed also served as a replacement program throughout the war to counter personnel attrition that resulted from injuries, deaths, leave, personnel rotations, promotions, or the loss of men who didn't have what it took to continue serving in the unit.

LRP units did not have the same opportunities as the U.S. Army Special Forces, where every SF member had a least eight months of specialized training before their assignment to a unit.²⁶⁰ Some LRP units were merely a conversion of the existing unit's reconnaissance element, while others attempted to recruit from across the Army. Additionally, since most LRP units were hastily formed after their arrival in Vietnam, there

²⁵⁹ Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 82.

²⁶⁰ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983,” 380.

was limited time and resources to formally put a program together. More often than not, the extent of the assessment and selection process for LRP units did not go much beyond a packet review process, personal interviews, and a short indoctrination and training program.

As the concept, employment, and capabilities of the LRPs began to grow after 1966, some units started establishing short training programs as part of their assessment and selection process. Additionally, the Department of the Army continued to produce and revise various field manuals and military doctrine that covered Ranger and LRP training and operations. A 1967 report by the Department of the Army covering Company E of the 9th Infantry Division stated that “an intensive two-week training program was established to prepare new members in specialized skills and techniques of reconnaissance work. The program of instruction is based upon doctrine established by the MACV Recondo School and lessons learned from experienced LRRP leaders.”²⁶¹

The program of instruction at the MACV Recondo School was developed by personnel from 5th Special Forces Group and Project DELTA in 1966. With an attrition rate of 45 percent, the course consisted of three weeks of physical conditioning, classroom instruction, and practical exercises centered around long-range reconnaissance operations.²⁶² The school operated in Nha Trang, Vietnam, from 1966 to 1970 and over those four years ran a class of sixty men every two weeks and produced over three thousand graduates.²⁶³ However, those who failed to make it through the course were sent back to a conventional unit within the division.

²⁶¹ Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 100.

²⁶² Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 442.

²⁶³ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 421.

	<p>MACV Recondo School “Smart, Skillful, Tough, Courageous, Confident” 1966 – 1970</p>	
	Key Events	
Week 1	Individual Skills: Classroom work, maps, weapons maintenance, rappelling, first aid, ocean swimming test, foreign weapons training, live fire with all weapons, and physical conditioning including a seven-mile run with full equipment and the Recondo sandbag runs.	
Week 2	Aerial Operations and Field Exercises: Helicopter familiarization, LZ and PZ selection, extraction techniques, use of Maguire and STABO rigs, patrolling, and weapons training.	
Week 3	Field Exercises: Combat patrols – often a trial by fire, called “you bet your life.” This was done with six-man teams with one to two instructors conducting evaluations.	

Figure 15. MACV Recondo School Program of Instruction²⁶⁴

Several other LRP and Ranger companies began to adopt similar assessment and training regimes to support their selection processes. The 101st Airborne Division, 1st Cavalry Division, 4th Infantry Division, and 9th Infantry Division LRP and Ranger units developed two-week programs that emphasized physical conditioning, map reading, land navigation, first aid, marksmanship, rappelling, aircraft familiarization, patrolling, and various training events that integrated the fundamentals of reconnaissance. Company F of the 51st Infantry Division pushed their men through a rigorous ten-day course²⁶⁵ Staff Sergeant Earl Toomey, a former member of Company F, reflected on his experience of the course and said that

the first few days are composed of a strenuous physical training period, forced marches with thirty-pound rucksacks in the morning and a five to

²⁶⁴ Adapted from: Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 442; Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 422.

²⁶⁵ Stanton, *Rangers at War*, 36–37.

seven mile run in the afternoon. Special attention is given in the classroom to map reading and radio communications.²⁶⁶

However, even after successful completion of the course, it was a common requirement that all volunteers had to “complete from one to three patrols as a probationer” before officially being placed on the unit’s manning roster.²⁶⁷ This method of “proving one’s self” through on-the-job training, which could also be referred to as a probationary period or indoctrination phase, was widely accepted across many of the other LRP and Ranger units throughout the Vietnam War. Company N (Ranger), 75th Infantry was one of the units that used this method and emphasized that “all prospective personnel were interviewed prior to acceptance and full acceptance was not granted until the volunteer had completed a period of individual training conducted by the company and had participated in a few patrols to prove his abilities.”²⁶⁸ In many cases, a volunteer was not authorized the black beret and the Ranger scroll until they successfully made it through the probationary period.²⁶⁹ Those who were not successful were sent back to their original unit or placed somewhere within the division.

D. CONCLUSION

LRP and Ranger units served throughout the remainder of the Vietnam War and operated from the Mekong Delta to the Demilitarized Zone.²⁷⁰ Among their members, Specialist Four Robert D. Law, Staff Sergeant Laszlo Rabel, and Staff Sergeant Robert J. Pruden received the Medal of Honor for their actions. By 1972, as the Vietnam and Cold War were reaching an end, nearly all LRP and Ranger companies deactivated as their parent organizations were withdrawn from the war. Two long-range reconnaissance patrol units (Company D, 151st Infantry of the Indiana Army National Guard and Company G,

²⁶⁶ Stanton, *Rangers at War*, 37.

²⁶⁷ Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 101.

²⁶⁸ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 81.

²⁶⁹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 336; Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 101.

²⁷⁰ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 27.

143rd Infantry of the Texas Army National Guard) as well as Companies A and B, 75th Infantry (Ranger) were the only companies that the Department of the Army retained.²⁷¹ Company A, 75th Infantry (Ranger) was located at Fort Hood, Texas, and Company B, 75th Infantry (Ranger) was initially located at Fort Carson, Colorado, but later relocated to Fort Lewis, Washington. In 1974, these remaining companies, along with Rangers from C Company (Ranger) of the 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry supporting the Ranger Department at Fort Benning, would become the nucleus when forming the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions.

There are two primary lessons or observations to be taken from the LRPs and Ranger companies that served during the Cold War and Vietnam. The first is that the people who were selected were no different from the ones selected before them as well as the ones selected in the future. The second lesson is the importance of a longer selection process. Two weeks was not enough time. As every special operations or elite unit attempts to weed out those who do not belong, it will always remain an imperfect process. However, if the assessment and selection process is rushed or overlooked, which has often been considered to support operational demands, the unit inadvertently accepts risk when the wrong people make it through and not only jeopardizes the reputation of the unit but the lives of those that are in it.

First, regarding the people, LRP and Ranger unit members who were selected during the Cold War and throughout Vietnam possessed attributes that were no different from those that came before them as well as those that were soon to come. Retired Command Sergeant Major Walter D. Stock, a former member of Company E, 20th Infantry Division LRP, I Field Force Vietnam from 1967 to 1968 and later Command Sergeant Major of 2nd Ranger Battalion from 1980 to 1982, best summed up a Ranger with his acronym TESTICLES. He said that “the traits of a good LRRP in Vietnam were the same thing I looked for in volunteers for the modern Ranger battalions. They possessed teamwork, enthusiasm, stamina, tenacity, initiative, courage, loyalty, excellence, and a sense of humor.”²⁷²

²⁷¹ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Rangers... Past and Present*, 27.

²⁷² Lanning, *Inside the LRRPs*, 82.

Second, regarding the overall selection process, the LRP units that established programs to assess and select its members did the best with what they had available at the time. However, most units did not exceed a two-week program of instruction. Two weeks was not enough time to effectively assess, select, and train individuals and teams for the demands of war. Ranger units across history and through the Vietnam War were always activated to support wartime demands. This pattern of activation and inactivation has repeatedly resulted in expedited manning requirements and capability demands. Between 1962 and 1964, U.S. Army Special Forces experienced similar challenges. As the SF mission was expanding due to the lack of Ranger type units, the demand for more SF personnel increased substantially. Consequently, the Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which typically produced approximately 400 graduates per year, then had to produce nearly 3,000. Their attrition went from 90 percent to 30 percent.²⁷³

Additionally, not making use of previous Ranger programs during World War II or adhering to the recommendations of military doctrine and field manuals at the time, the assessment and selection process was condensed to two weeks. To put things into perspective, the British SAS, which was conducting similar operations, was using a three-week program followed by ten to twelve weeks of follow on training.²⁷⁴ Although LRP and Ranger members received the necessary on-the-job training after their initial selection, and not to compare the quality, length, or content of various other special operations courses, LRP and Ranger companies were lucky to leave Vietnam with the legacy and reputation they did. It is a tribute to the NCOs and officers that led them.

The legacy and reputation of the LRPs and Ranger companies that served in the Cold War and throughout Vietnam resulted in the shortest inactive period for American Rangers across history. In 1974, General Creighton Abrams reactivated 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions. For the first time, Rangers units were activated in a peacetime Army.

²⁷³ Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983," 386–87.

²⁷⁴ Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983," 460–61.

VI. MODERN-DAY RANGERS: 1974–2019

A. INTRODUCTION

As the United States began to withdraw military forces from Vietnam in 1969, under the Nixon Doctrine and Vietnamization, it was also entering a third decade of the Cold War. At a time where the United States government needed the support and confidence of the American people, events such as the Watergate scandal from 1972 to 1974 and debates over national security and American intervention impacted popular support. Anti-war and anti-military protests were just as frequent as drug use and racial controversies in the United States in the early 1970s. Military cutbacks and reductions in the defense budget resulted in the drawdown of over one million service members, of which nearly all Ranger companies were deactivated by 1972 and from 1969 to 1974, 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 8th Special Forces Groups experienced similar outcomes.²⁷⁵ In addition to these reductions, the U.S. Army was in transition and became an all-volunteer army (VOLAR) once again.

Yet, amid the drawdown from the Vietnam War and the commitment to nuclear deterrence operations in Europe, the threat of global terrorism began to rise in the early 1970s. Events such as the kidnapping of the American ambassador to Brazil in 1969, the Palestinian hijacking of five airplanes in 1970, the hostage situation in Munich, Germany during the 1972 Olympics, and the Yom Kippur War of 1973 demonstrated that the United States Army lacked the necessary capability to quickly respond to a crisis or a concern of national security.²⁷⁶

In 1973, General Creighton Abrams, United States Army Chief of Staff, ordered the reactivation of the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions to serve as one of the Army's elite quick reaction forces, while also serving as a role model for the rest of the U.S. Army. According to a 1985 interview with General William DePuy, who was the commander of

²⁷⁵ David W. Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942–1983" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1986), 471.

²⁷⁶ Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Ranger, 1942–1983," 476–77.

United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) after Vietnam, “one of the factors that led General Abrams to order the re-activation of Ranger battalions in 1973 was he wanted to prove that the Army, not the Marines, could produce a model force capable of responding to such threats.”²⁷⁷ Over the 1970s and 1980s, elite and special operations units began to reappear across the U.S. Army as well as the other U.S. military services. It marked the first time that Rangers and other special operations units were activated during a time of peace.

However, peace did not last long. The Rangers and other special operations units in the U.S. military were called upon throughout the 1980s and 1990s with operations in Iran, Grenada, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Africa. Following the success of operations in Grenada in 1983, the U.S. Army authorized the activation of the 3rd Ranger Battalion and the Regimental Headquarters in 1984. Other special operations units in the U.S. military were also expanding as well as the establishment of unifying headquarters such as USASOC and USSOCOM. Then in 2001, the 75th Ranger Regiment, along with the rest of the United States military, entered the Global War on Terrorism. As the 75th Ranger Regiment continued to support operations in the Middle East, the Regiment also evolved with the demands of war with the addition of two more battalions: the Regimental Special Troops Battalion in 2006 and the Regimental Military Intelligence Battalion (Provisional) in 2017.

This chapter covers the modern-day Rangers and their evolution of assessment and selection programs since the activation of 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions in 1974. From programs at the battalion level in 1974 to those consolidated and standardized by the Regiment in 1984, the programs to assess and select members for service within the 75th Ranger Regiment have evolved in and out of wartime demands. While changes in duration and focus have varied, the type of Ranger selected for service within the Regiment and the ability of the Regiment to uphold its standards have never changed.

²⁷⁷ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Ranger, 1942–1983,” 477.

B. FORMATION OF 1ST AND 2ND RANGER BATTALIONS (1974)

In December 1973, the Department of the Army notified and issued orders to TRADOC and United States Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) that directed the formation of Ranger battalions to serve as elite light infantry units. According to the notification, a force structure review “revealed the need for Ranger battalions capable of rapid deployment to any location in the world requiring an American military presence.”²⁷⁸ While TRADOC and FORSCOM worked to determine the size, location, and type of personnel that would fill the 1st Ranger Battalion, a subsequent task was the selection of the first commander of a Ranger battalion since World War II.

In 1973, General Abrams tasked General Bernard Rogers, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, with identifying potential candidates to command the 1st Ranger Battalion. After eliminating dozens of potential candidates, Rogers was left with approximately ten packets. When General Abrams asked for his recommendation, Rogers recommended Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Kenneth Leuer.²⁷⁹ Leuer was a 1956 graduate of the University of Iowa, a prominent wrestler with two state championship titles in Minnesota, a 1956 NCAA wrestling champion, served several tours in Vietnam, and a three-time battalion commander.²⁸⁰

In late 1973, General DePuy notified LTC Leuer of his selection as the future commander of 1st Ranger Battalion and also relayed General Abrams’ vision and expectations for the elite unit. This vision was later transcribed as “Abrams Charter,” however, Leuer claims “there is no such thing as a written Abrams Charter.”²⁸¹ Leuer never received a written memorandum or military order that contained the vision for the modern-day Ranger battalions. Instead, Leuer recalled a conversation with General DePuy

²⁷⁸ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Ranger, 1942–1983,” 478.

²⁷⁹ Ross Hall, *The Ranger Book: A History 1634–2006* (Charleston, SC: Book Surge Publishing, 2007), 437.

²⁸⁰ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 433.

²⁸¹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 141.

in 1973, which he transcribed on a three-by-five note card, where DePuy relayed Abrams' vision and expectations as the following:

Our Army is in the worst shape it's been in a century. What Abe expects is it'll be the Gold Medal Infantry unit in the world. Wherever they go they'll be recognized for their superior excellence. There will be no hooligans or bums in that organization. If there are, it will be disbanded immediately. If, in any way, you disgrace the United States Army or the U.S. as a nation, the commander alone will bear the consequences. There will be a Creed that they will develop, that they will live by, train by, and fight by... members of this organization will go throughout the Army and be the example of professionalism in how to train, how to live and how to fight.²⁸²

On January 25, 1974, FORSCOM published General Order 127 that directed the activation of the 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry (Ranger), with an effective date of January 31, 1974.²⁸³ CSM Neil Gentry, a former Ranger platoon sergeant and company 1SG who served with Company L, 75th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam, was selected to be the 1st Ranger Battalion CSM.²⁸⁴ LTC Leuer and CSM Gentry developed a plan to recruit nearly 600 enlisted men and officers. Companies A and B of the 75th Infantry, C Company Rangers at Fort Benning supporting the Ranger Department, U.S. Army Special Forces personnel, and traditional Army recruiting channels were the primary means to solicit volunteers for the battalion.

Leuer and Gentry established recruiting teams consisting of company commanders, company 1SGs, and other senior NCOs that would visit each major installation to identify volunteers. Captain (later retired Brigadier General) Ron Rokosz, the original B Company commander of 1st Ranger Battalion in 1974, led one of the recruiting teams and said each team "went to different installations, made presentations to those interested, then personally interviewed each volunteer—anyone who had any disciplinary problem at all

²⁸² Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 442.

²⁸³ Kent T. Woods, *Rangers Lead the Way: The Vision of General Creighton W. Abrams*, 0704–0188 (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 2003), 8, <https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA415822>.

²⁸⁴ Reinaldo Rios, "History of the Ranger Scroll in the U.S. Army," *Shadow Spear Special Operations* (blog), 2004, <https://www.shadowsppear.com/vb/threads/history-of-the-scroll.566/>.

was discarded.”²⁸⁵ In a 2004 interview, Ross Hall asked retired General Leuer about how recruits were selected for the 1st Ranger Battalion in 1974 and said that

one of the requirements for selection of the officers and NCOs is that they have the Tab [Ranger Tab] before I would even look at them. The arrangements I made with MILPERCEN [Military Personnel Center] were that they would nominate. I could interview. They’d send them in. Accept or not. They would send me files and I would say, send these guys in for an interview. If they sent someone in and a couple of weeks later they didn’t make it... no paperwork, no hard feelings, send them back and get on with their business.²⁸⁶

Retired CSM George Conrad highlighted the assessment and selection procedures of the 1st Ranger Battalion in 1974 and throughout his service in the 75th Ranger Regiment in an interview on September 20, 2019. George Conrad was a former member of C Company Rangers at Fort Benning in 1973, an original member of 1st Ranger Battalion from 1974 to 1977, a platoon sergeant and company 1SG in 2nd Ranger Battalion from 1977 to 1984, the original Commandant of the Ranger Training Detachment in 1984 at Fort Benning, and eventually retired as the CSM of Fort Benning in 1996. Conrad recalled that in addition to the criteria described above, LTC Leuer also expected company commanders and NCOs, above the rank of staff sergeant, to have combat experience and that every lieutenant was at least a first lieutenant. Conrad recalled only one exception: Roger Brown, a former SFC who served in the Ranger Department in the 1970s and a graduate of the Officer Candidate School, was selected as a second lieutenant due to his reputation as a Ranger leader.

Finding volunteers, especially NCOs, was not an easy task. According to retired Army Colonel Keith Nightingale, the original company commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company of 1st Ranger Battalion in 1974, “Finding officers, senior NCOs and junior EM [enlisted members] was pretty easy. Finding mid-grade NCOs was very hard.”²⁸⁷ Retired Army Major Mike Wagers confirmed Nightingale’s observations in an

²⁸⁵ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 444.

²⁸⁶ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 438.

²⁸⁷ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 429.

interview on June 12, 2019. Wagers was a former enlisted member of C Company Rangers at Fort Benning in 1973, was selected by CSM Gentry to be a platoon sergeant in C Company, 1st Ranger Battalion in 1974, and in 1984 commanded the Regimental Training Detachment. Wagers recalled a list published by MILPERCEN in 1974 that contained the names of all Ranger qualified NCOs in the U.S. Army. He said that the record included no more than 1,000 names. Lastly, to highlight further challenges, retired CSM Conrad noted that “a lot of people who volunteered didn’t make it. A lot of people got disgusted and left because when you take all-stars and put them with ALL stars, you have to work really hard to prove your worth... A lot of people couldn’t handle that and just left.”

To add to the challenges of recruiting suitable volunteers, various senior leaders across Army installations did not support the Ranger’s recruiting efforts. Leuer addressed this challenge in his interview with Ross Hall and said that leaders like General Sidney Berry, who was the acting division commander of the 101st Airborne Division (AASLT) in 1974, did not support losing his best soldiers to the Rangers.²⁸⁸ While Leuer understood leaders not wanting to lose their most qualified soldiers, Leuer said, “What I can’t understand is, we had an Army of 1.4 million men at that time—troops—mostly men. I was going to get 600, and I was hearing stories and people were telling me, you’re getting the cream of the Army. You take the best 600 people out of it and we’ve got nothing left out of the 1.4 million soldiers?”²⁸⁹ Retired COL Nightingale and several others remembered the same challenges and recalled that LTC Leuer often had to “backdoor them [senior leaders] with General Abrams to gain access.”²⁹⁰

Despite several recruiting challenges, LTC Leuer, CSM Gentry, and their team eventually received the support they required. Whether through direct assignment orders or through the recruiting efforts of 1st Ranger Battalion leaders, the battalion began to take shape through the summer of 1974. Once members were recruited, they were either sent to

²⁸⁸ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 439.

²⁸⁹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 439.

²⁹⁰ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 429.

Fort Benning for cadre training or straight to Fort Stewart, Georgia, to begin logistical preparations to receive the battalion in July 1974.

Retired Brigadier General Rokosz recalled in a 2004 interview that “We began a training program there at Benning—lots of tough PT and, especially for the officers, classroom work on performance-oriented training.”²⁹¹ LTC Leuer was an advocate of performance-oriented training. Before his assignment as the commander of 1st Ranger Battalion, Leuer had received training at Florida State University on a new approach called performance-oriented training and was working to develop a plan to implement it across the U.S. Army.²⁹² Instead, 1st Ranger Battalion became responsible for this initiative and spent nearly six months developing tasks, conditions, and standards for every individual and collective soldier task. Wagers remembered over 100 personnel, predominately NCOs and officers, that were part of the cadre training. He also recalled spending many hours writing, testing, and revising three-by-five note cards that had task, conditions, standards for hundreds of tasks.

Beyond the initial selection and interview process, volunteers were tested physically. Recruits had to pass the Army’s Physical Combat Proficiency Test (PCPT) in combat uniform which, according to the 1969 version of Field Manual 21-20 for *Physical Readiness Training*, contained the 40-yard low crawl, 20-foot long horizontal ladder (monkey bars), grenade throw or 150-yard buddy carry, the dodge, run, and jump (agility run), and a 1-mile run.²⁹³ Additionally, according to Leuer, there was a qualifying road march that was “a 20-mile road march to be accomplished in six hours with a 90-pound ruck on your back, and be in formation. Those that did not make that did not accompany the battalion any longer.”²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 443.

²⁹² Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 441.

²⁹³ Department of the Army, *Physical Readiness Training*, FM 21-20 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1969), 221–43.

²⁹⁴ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 440.



Pictured above is the horizontal ladder event (left), the 40-yard low crawl event (middle), and the dodge, run, and jump event (right).

Figure 16. The Army Physical Combat Proficiency Test²⁹⁵

Lastly, before the 1st Ranger Battalion was activated, LTC Leuer tasked CSM Gentry with the development of the Ranger Creed (Appendix: History of the Ranger Creed). Having served as the CSM for the Airborne Department on Fort Benning, CSM Gentry and several members of the battalion developed an initial draft of the Ranger Creed in June 1974. Once the initial draft was complete, LTC Leuer passed it to MAJ Rock Hudson, who made minor revisions followed by final reviews by company leadership before LTC Leuer approved it. The final version of the Ranger Creed developed by CSM Neil Gentry and the members of 1st Ranger Battalion was immediately implemented across the formation. According to the history of the Ranger Creed, “it [the Ranger Creed] defines the person and the organization. It is what is and what all believe. It transcends all other motivations of the individual.”²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ Department of the Army, *Physical Readiness Training*, 225–29.

²⁹⁶ 75th Ranger Regiment, “History of the Ranger Creed” (unpublished history report, 2017), 1–4.

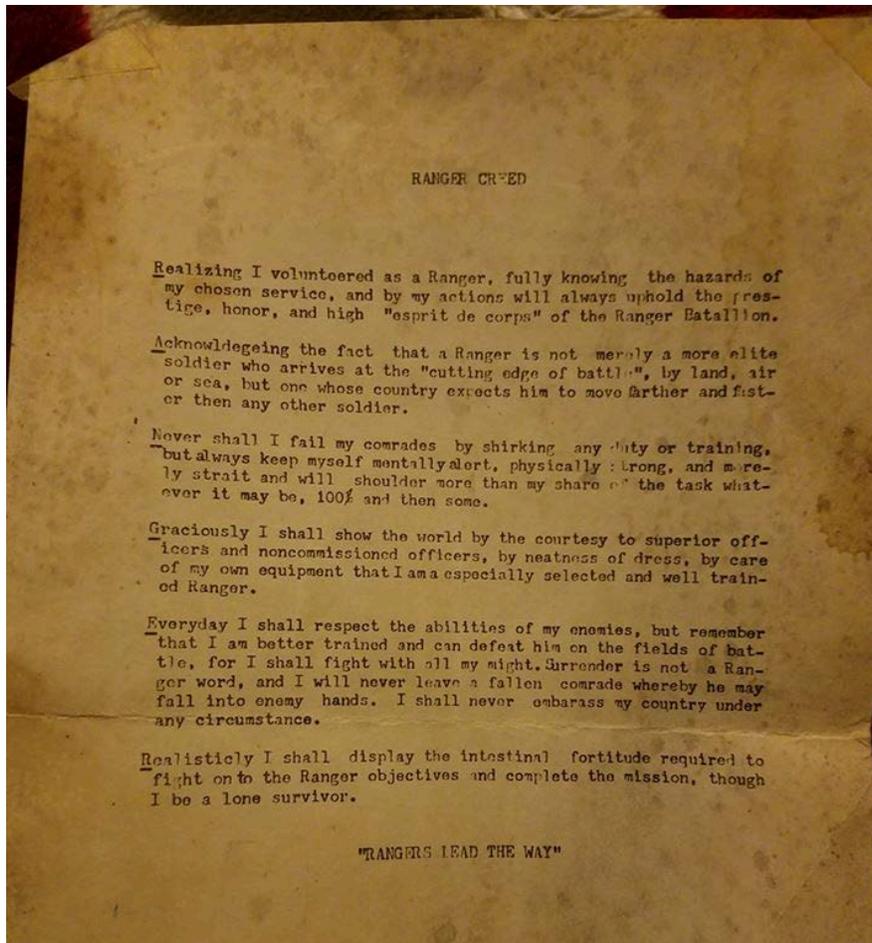


Figure 17. An Initial Draft of the Ranger Creed in 1974²⁹⁷

On July 1, 1974, approximately 180 members of the 1st Ranger Battalion loaded three C-130s and jumped into Fort Stewart for the battalion's activation ceremony, where they remained until permanently relocating the battalion to Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia in September 1978.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Richard Negrete, "Original 1974 1st Ranger Battalion 45th Birthday Celebration," *Facebook* (blog), October 8, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2985604648122680&set=g.212529032269000&type=1&theater&ifg=1>.

²⁹⁸ "75th Ranger Regiment," U.S. Army Fort Benning and The Maneuver Center of Excellence, accessed October 29, 2019, <https://www.benning.army.mil/tenant/75thRanger/1st-Battalion.html>.

In 1974, the 2nd Ranger Battalion was also going through a similar process as the 1st Ranger Battalion. Following only a few months behind 1st Battalion, the 2nd Ranger Battalion begin to recruit, screen, interview, and select volunteers in the summer of 1974. Lieutenant Colonel (later retired Colonel) A. J. “Bo” Baker was selected by General Abrams to be the commander of the 2nd Ranger Battalion. According to his biography, Baker was a prior enlisted member in the U.S. Air Force who commissioned into the U.S. Army in 1956. He passed Special Forces Officer’s Course (SFOC) in 1964, served three tours in Vietnam with 6th Special Forces Group and as a member of Project DELTA. Baker was the commander of the Recondo School in 1968 before his assignment to the 2nd Ranger Battalion.²⁹⁹ With CSM W. E. Morgan as the appointed Battalion CSM, in a similar fashion to Leuer and Gentry, Baker and Morgan began traveling the U.S. in search of volunteers. On October 1, 1974 the 2nd Ranger Battalion was activated at Fort Lewis, Washington.

For the initial few years that Ranger battalions were back in the U.S. Army’s formation, they conducted individual and collective unit training. Morale was high, and in 1977, a unit report showed a reenlistment rate that was above 60 percent and a “sick call rate that was only 10 percent of the Army’s overall rate.”³⁰⁰ Since the Ranger battalion was a highly selective and all-volunteer force, any member could voluntarily leave or be told to leave at any time. The two battalions relied on the unit of choice option for recruiting after their initial activation, and in 1977, approximately 70 percent of each Ranger battalion was composed of first-term volunteers.³⁰¹ Teenagers who were eager for a challenge could enlist in the Army and volunteer for airborne training, ranger training, and assignment to the Ranger battalions.

²⁹⁹ “Colonel A. J. ‘Bo’ Baker,” accessed October 29, 2019, <http://www.projectdelta.net/bios/baker.htm>.

³⁰⁰ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 497.

³⁰¹ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 496–97.

However, another 1977 report showed that 1st Ranger Battalion lost over ten people per month, primarily a result of disciplinary issues or failure to meet physical standards.³⁰² These conditions were a change from only two years earlier when Leuer recalled, “We had no hooligans or drunks. I had the battalion about a year, and I think the tally showed about 120 people that came, signed in, didn’t make it, and left. Some were good people—they just couldn’t handle the physical end of it.”³⁰³ However, retired CSM Franklin Ashe, who arrived to the 1st Ranger Battalion in 1976, recalled in an interview on August 1, 2019, that when LTC (later Brigadier General) Joseph S. Stringham took command of 1st Ranger Battalion from LTC Arthur C. Stang in January 1978, he was given 90 days to “turn the battalion around or it would be disbanded.” Ashe was not aware of the directive at the time or who made it; however, he recalled that shortly after Stringham took command, the battalion spent the next three months in the field. He said that “this was really where the battalion got the standards of conduct down.” The outcome of the training not only resulted in the retainment of the 1st Ranger Battalion but was also a driving factor in the establishment of a more formalized assessment and selection process.

C. RANGER INDOCTRINATION PROGRAM (1978–1984)

In 1978, the 1st Ranger Battalion established the Ranger Indoctrination Program (RIP) to receive, assess, train, and integrate incoming members of the battalion. In an interview on June 11, 2019 with retired CSM Michael Hall, Regimental Command Sergeant Major of the 75th Ranger Regiment from July 1996 to April 2000, Hall recalled that while serving with 1st Ranger Battalion in 1978, his platoon leader from A Company, 1LT Parish, was assigned the duty of “standing up the battalion RIP Detachment” with a “handful of NCOs.”

Retired CSM Michael Kelso arrived to 1st Ranger Battalion as a junior enlisted soldier in 1979 after a short tour with the Rhodesian Army. In an interview with retired CSM Kelso on July 17, 2019, he recalled that upon his arrival to 1st Ranger Battalion, RIP

³⁰² Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 496–97.

³⁰³ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 442.

was a three-week program. He stated that “RIP had two primary purposes: First, it existed to check a Ranger out to ensure they had what it took mentally and physically. Second, RIP prepared Rangers for the physical challenges that they would encounter when they got to their squad or platoon.”

Over the three weeks of RIP in 1979, Kelso remembered daily physical fitness training, the “daily dozen,” and a lot of road marching. He stated that they [RIP candidates] received classes on weapons, communication equipment, first aid, land navigation, rucksack packing, survival techniques, and battle drills. He also recalled that they conducted parachute operations on Saturdays because that was the most accessible day to get aircraft and a drop zone. According to Kelso, the biggest discriminators during RIP were PT (the daily running and the road marches), injuries due to training, or volunteers merely quitting. He also recalled some of the RIP NCOs dropping guys and sending them to “worldwide assignment” if they “didn’t have what it took;” however, majority of the time, it was the other three reasons why a guy would fail RIP. Kelso could not recall the exact attrition rate of the battalion RIP program in the late 1970s but said it was very high and estimated only a 20 to 30 percent success rate.

Shortly after 1st Ranger Battalion implemented an assessment and selection program, the 2nd Ranger Battalion also developed a RIP program of their own. In 1978, LTC (later General) Wayne Downing, the 2nd Ranger Battalion commander, tasked 1SG George Conrad with the responsibility of standing up the battalion RIP program. According to Conrad, Downing wanted him to “develop a program and get their selection process on track.”

1SG Conrad was assigned approximately 20 to 30 cadre from within the battalion who worked to develop a three-week program of instruction that included daily physical conditioning and foot marches, weapons familiarization and qualification, a swim test and PT test, hand-to-hand combat training, demolition training, and patrolling. Approximately 13 cadre members ran the RIP program while the remaining 10 to 12 ran a pre-Ranger school program. Conrad stated that the RIP program was intended to “weed out those who didn’t have what it took and identify the ones who did.” Volunteers who received more than two “no-go’s” on the swim test or two failed attempts to achieve a minimum score of

70 points according to a candidates age group on the Army PT test were sent to a board to determine if they were going to be dropped from the course or recycled to another class. The attrition rate for the RIP program at 2nd Ranger Battalion in the late 1970s and early 1980s was similar to that of the 1st Ranger Battalion during that time: 70–90 percent.

Tim Abell, a former Army Ranger in 2nd Ranger Battalion in the late 1970s, similarly remembered RIP and recalled classes on Ranger history and standards, swim tests, map reading and land navigation, knot tying, weapons training, and endless amounts of physical conditioning and road marching.³⁰⁴ Abell emphasized the amount of physical conditioning they did during RIP and said:

Physical training also included running, a lot of running, 6-minute miles kind of running, running up Noble Hill, running down range road, running cross country and running back up Noble Hill, and running in place and on and on and on... What I hated with a passion were the forced marches with full packs and weapons. Especially with my brand-new jungle boots that were merciless on my feet. Blisters on top of blisters bleeding calluses ripped loose. We had to complete at least two of three road marches they had in store for us. The forced marches increased in length and intensity culminating in a ball busting soul searching, blister bleeding 18-kilometer road march. There was a deuce and a half [truck] following carrying all those who had already dropped out... the RIP NCOs were encouraging us to quit but we were determined to continue this insane pace to the end.³⁰⁵

William Hazen, another Ranger who went through RIP at 2nd Ranger Battalion in late November 1978, shared a story of his experience:

We started with 50 guys that late November in the hell of North Fort Lewis... Only 15 survived. You try going through RIP with Viet Ranger Vets as your instructors (God Bless George C. Conrad. The RAD!!!)... The only day I ever considered quitting was day three or a five-day field problem the last week of RIP. It was three weeks back then. It was early December at Fort Lewis and we were in the world-famous South Rainer training area. I AM TALKING THICK vegetation... It had been raining all day and all night and we poor soaking wet Rippies were in a “Patrol Base” to plan our next mission. Less than 50 meters from the perimeter the RIP Sp/4 [Specialist] instructor mafia and a couple of the senior instructors had built

³⁰⁴ Mir Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors: A History of the U.S. Army Rangers*, 1st ed. (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2005), 97.

³⁰⁵ Bahmanyar, *Shadow Warriors*, 97–98.

a nice sized fire and they are sitting around cooking chow and sipping on beers... they asked each one of us if we wanted to quit. The man that quit was given a place by the fire and hot chow, AND a beer, AND they were allowed to rack out... It was a masterful psyche job... It worked! First one Rippie got up, then two, then eventually there were 12 Rippies sitting by the fire... We survivors froze and OF COURSE we had to maintain security which meant little sleep.³⁰⁶

From 1978 to 1984 each battalion ran its own RIP program. Every junior enlisted volunteer that came to 1st or 2nd Ranger Battalion was put through the battalion's RIP process. According to various testimonies by leaders like retired CSMs Michael Hall, George Conrad, Michael Kelso, and Franklin Ashe, who all served in 1st or 2nd Ranger Battalions in the 1970s and 1980s, all stated that the two programs were not the same, however, conceptually they both existed to serve one purpose: to select the very best Soldiers for the Ranger battalion and select out those who didn't belong.

In the late 1970s, officers and senior NCOs were hand-selected through a packet review process, interviews, and direct assignment orders. Although no formal program existed at the time for senior NCOs and officers, those that were selected to serve in either battalion were still held accountable to the same physical standards as the rest. According to retired CSM Ashe, he said "if you [NCOs and officers] had the right qualifications, the right background, and if the battalion needed you, they took you. After arrival, some made it and some didn't." It wasn't until around 1982, that the Ranger Orientation Program (ROP—pron. "rope") was developed for staff sergeant and above as an informal two-week course that tested physical standards (PT test, 5-mile run, 12-mile foot march, and the CWST), orientated leaders to the battalion, and assisted in the completion of all the administrative in-processing requirements.

While the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions continued to assess, select and train Rangers over the first decade since reactivation, the Rangers and the U.S. special operations community writ large was first put in the spotlight in 1980. In April 1980, an ad hoc joint task force was assembled under the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to support Operation Eagle

³⁰⁶ William Hazen, "I Went Thru the Hardest RIP Class to Date," *Special Operations Community Network* (blog), December 2000, <http://www.socnet.com/archive/index.php/t-2546.html>.

Claw, the attempted rescue of U.S. embassy personnel who were being held hostage in Tehran, Iran. The joint task force contained U.S. Air Force and Navy personnel, 120 U.S. Army Delta Force operators, and 12 members from C Company, 1st Ranger Battalion.³⁰⁷ Even though the mission was aborted due to the lack of mission capable aircraft, it demonstrated that the U.S. administration considered Rangers a strategic asset capable of supporting or responding to national and international crises while also justifying the need for a unifying command structure for elite and special operations units.

As a result of Operation Eagle Claw, the U.S. Joint Special Operations Command was established in December 1980. In 1981, following the Carter Administration, President Reagan advocated for increases in the defense budget to counter Soviet aggression, terrorism, and the spread of Communism.³⁰⁸ On January 26, 1981, only six days after his inauguration as President of the United States, Ronald Reagan remarked in his diary, “A meeting on terrorism with heads of F.B.I.–S.S.–C.I.A. Sec’s of St., Defense & others. Have ordered they be given back their ability to function.”³⁰⁹ This level of empowerment, focus on the capabilities of the United States’ agencies, and the inclusion of specialized units also led to additional increases in elite military forces.

As elite and special operations force organizations continued to increase in the early 1980s, the U.S. Army established 1st Special Operations Command, the predecessor to USASOC, in 1982. In October 1983, the Reagan administration called upon Army and joint special operations units to support the invasion of the Caribbean island of Grenada under Operation Urgent Fury. 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalion’s participation in the operation not only added to their credibility as a national mission force asset but also justified the activation of another Ranger Battalion and a unifying headquarters.

³⁰⁷ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 463.

³⁰⁸ Hogan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army’s Rangers, 1942–1983,” 521.

³⁰⁹ Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 1.

D. FORMATION OF THE 75TH RANGER REGIMENT, THE 3RD RANGER BATTALION, AND THE REGIMENTAL TRAINING DETACHMENT (1984–1985)

Following operations in Grenada came increases in the defense budget and a stronger emphasis on special operations units. In 1984, the Department of the Army announced “that it was increasing the size of the active duty Ranger force to its highest level in 40 years.”³¹⁰ On October 3, 1984, ten years after the activation of 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions, Honorable John O. Marsh, Secretary of the Army, presented the colors to activate 3rd Ranger Battalion and the Regimental Headquarters of the 75th Ranger Regiment at a large ceremony on York Field of Fort Benning.³¹¹

When forming the Regimental Headquarters and the 3rd Ranger Battalion, the authorized strength increased by over 600 Rangers.³¹² The selection process was similar to that of the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions 10 years prior, except in 1984, there were two existing Ranger battalions to support the recruiting efforts opposed to only the few Ranger companies that existed in 1974. When Ron Rokosz arrived to Fort Benning in 1984 to serve as the deputy commander of the Regiment, he recalled that most of the key staff was already in place, and “almost everyone in the headquarters were individuals who had served in either 1/75 or 2/75 previously.”³¹³

COL Wayne Downing and CSM Garry Carpenter were selected as the first Regimental Commanding Officer (RCO) and Regimental Command Sergeant Major (RSM) of the 75th Ranger Regiment. According to the biography of General Wayne Downing, he graduated from the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point in 1962 and commissioned as an infantry officer. His first assignment with the Rangers

³¹⁰ 75th Ranger Regiment, “The 75th Ranger Regiment,” Facebook, October 3, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/75thRangerRegiment1942/photos/a.229376993744666/525523624130000/?type=1&theater>.

³¹¹ “3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment,” U.S. Army Fort Benning and The Maneuver Center of Excellence, accessed November 6, 2019, <https://www.benning.army.mil/tenant/75thRanger/3rd-Battalion.html>.

³¹² Authors collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³¹³ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 486.

was from 1975 to 1976 as the 1st Ranger Battalion operations officer and later as the executive officer. In 1977, Downing was selected to be the 2nd Ranger Battalion Commander until 1979. Before his assignment as the first commander of the 75th Ranger Regiment, he served as the Commander of 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division in Europe. Following his assignment as the commander of the 75th Ranger Regiment, Downing went on to serve at various levels within special operations and retired as a General Officer and Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Special Operations Command in 1996.³¹⁴ Downing selected his right-hand-man and Ranger Buddy, CSM Carpenter to be the RSM. Carpenter was an experienced Ranger leader who carried all the right credentials to lead the 75th Ranger Regiment. According to his biography, Carpenter enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1961 as an infantryman. He served two tours in Vietnam and in 1972 was assigned to Company A, 75th Infantry (Ranger) in Fort Hood, Texas, as a platoon sergeant and later became the company 1SG. He then served as the 1SG of B Company, 1st Ranger Battalion, and in 1982 was the 1st Ranger Battalion CSM.³¹⁵

As COL Downing and CSM Carpenter were standing up the Regimental Headquarters, LTC William Ohl and CSM Autrail Cobb were standing up 3rd Ranger Battalion. In April 1984, a small group of cadre arrived at Fort Benning to begin the selection process. According to a historical report posted by the 75th Ranger Regiment in 2012, “training and organization was designed to meet the same standards and perform the same missions as 1st and 2D [sic] Ranger Battalions.”³¹⁶ Rangers and Ranger volunteers from around the Army were interviewed and selected. With most of the battalion formed by June 1984, collective training began and culminated with an evaluation from the Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) in September 1984.

³¹⁴ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 492–93.

³¹⁵ “CSM Carpenter Bio,” accessed November 6, 2019, https://www.benning.army.mil/infantry/ocoi/content/pdf/DB_Winner/CSM%20Carpenter%20bio.pdf.

³¹⁶ 75th Ranger Regiment, “The 75th Ranger Regiment.”



From left to right: Kip Reinhardt (1/75), Joe Thompson (1/75), Ralph Rocco (2/75), Bobby Lane (1/75), Brian Duffy (1/75).

Figure 18. Color Guard for the Activation Ceremony of the 75PthP Ranger Regiment in 1984³¹⁷

³¹⁷ Brian Duffy, “75th Ranger Regiment Association,” Facebook, October 3, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10217896553518916&set=g.126779317716&type=1&theater&ifg=1>.

In addition to the activation of the Regimental Headquarters and the 3rd Ranger Battalion, another significant change occurred on October 3, 1984. Under the Regimental Headquarters formed several small detachments: The Regimental Signal Detachment (RSD), the Regimental Reconnaissance Detachment (RRD), and the Regimental Training Detachment (RTD).³¹⁸ The RTD was responsible for consolidating the assessment and selection programs of 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions to create a standardized program for the entire Regiment.

Already an advocate for selection and training programs and having directed the formation of a RIP program at 2nd Ranger Battalion in 1978, COL Downing directed the formation of RTD and the consolidation of a Regimental assessment and selection program. When selecting who was going to stand up the program, the choice was easy: 1SG George Conrad established the RIP program at 2nd Ranger Battalion in 1978 and now he would build a standardized program for the Regiment. According to an interview with Conrad, he recalled getting a phone call from Downing one morning to inform him that he [Downing] was selected to become the Regimental Commander and that he [Conrad] was going to move from 2nd Ranger Battalion at Fort Lewis, down to Fort Benning to stand up the Regimental RIP program. Conrad also recalled that Downing informed him that Autrail Cobb was going to be the CSM of 3rd Ranger Battalion and was already on his way from being stationed in Alaska to pick him up. In addition to George Conrad, COL Downing also selected Captain Mike Wagers, who had served with COL Downing in 1st Ranger Battalion in 1975, to be the first commander of RTD and help 1SG Conrad stand up the detachment.

According to Conrad, when standing up the Regimental program, one of the main issues identified in Grenada and also evident when consolidating the two programs was that the battalions had different standards and different ways of doing things. The 1st Battalion Rangers had rank and the Ranger tab sewn onto their patrol caps (PCs), while 2nd Battalion Rangers had jump wings and the Ranger tab on the front and “cat-eyes” on the back. The 2nd Battalion Rangers wore 550 cord for boot laces and A7A straps as belts.

³¹⁸ Mir Bahmanyar, *U.S. Army Ranger 1983–2002: Sua Sponte – Of Their Own Accord* (Oxford, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 8.

The 1st Battalion Rangers removed all the ALICE clips from the LBEs and replaced them with 550 cord. Hand and arm signals were also different. These challenges, along with many others, were the driving factors in creating a centralized program. Conrad said that Downing wanted to standardize the Regiment and that the RTD was to be the standard-bearer for everyone entering the Ranger Regiment.

Once 1SG Conrad and CPT Wagers linked up at Fort Benning to stand up the detachment, they had to identify the requirements, find a location, coordinate logistics, and find cadre. After Conrad secured four World War II barracks buildings located at the top of “Cardiac Hill” on the north side of Lawson Army Airfield on Fort Benning, the next task was selecting cadre and building a program. Conrad recalled Downing telling him, “You go to 1st Battalion and 2nd Battalion and pick the people that you need.” Conrad was looking for cadre who were preferably combat veterans, in good physical condition, possessed the ability to teach, and were willing to volunteer to come to Fort Benning to be part of the RTD. Conrad knew that he “needed good people to get a good product.” However, Conrad recalled that he got a lot of resistance from the battalions in the beginning since leaders didn’t want to lose their best Rangers. However, after receiving support from COL Downing, Conrad and Wagers received who they needed. Conrad said, “If you want something good, you sometimes have to give up something good.”

They returned to Fort Benning and over the next several months, Wagers recalled receiving approximately 40 cadre members. He said, “most of the cadre and NCOs they received were really top shelf and were truly some of the best NCOs that the Regiment had.” However, he also recalled that “since the battalions were given an opportunity to off-load some people, RTD was sent a handful of NCOs that didn’t fully meet the expectations of what Wagers or Conrad needed as cadre members.” Wagers and Conrad both believed that having the right cadre was the first step in selecting the right people for future service in the Regiment.



Figure 19. RIP Barracks and RTD Chow Hall in 1984³¹⁹

In 1984, the RTD was responsible for three programs: RIP, ROP, and a pre-Ranger program designed to prepare members of the Regiment to go to the U.S. Army Ranger School. According to Conrad, he and Wagers built the programs from the bottom up. They reviewed the programs of 1st and 2nd Battalions, got feedback from battalion leadership across all three battalions, and received necessary guidance from Downing and Carpenter. In summation of what they received from the RCO, RSM, and the three battalions, Conrad said “all everyone cared about was: can they [volunteers] run, can they shoot, and can they fight” and that “every Ranger was assessed as a Ranger first—the standard was the standard and that is what made the Regiment what it was in 1984 and established our credibility.”

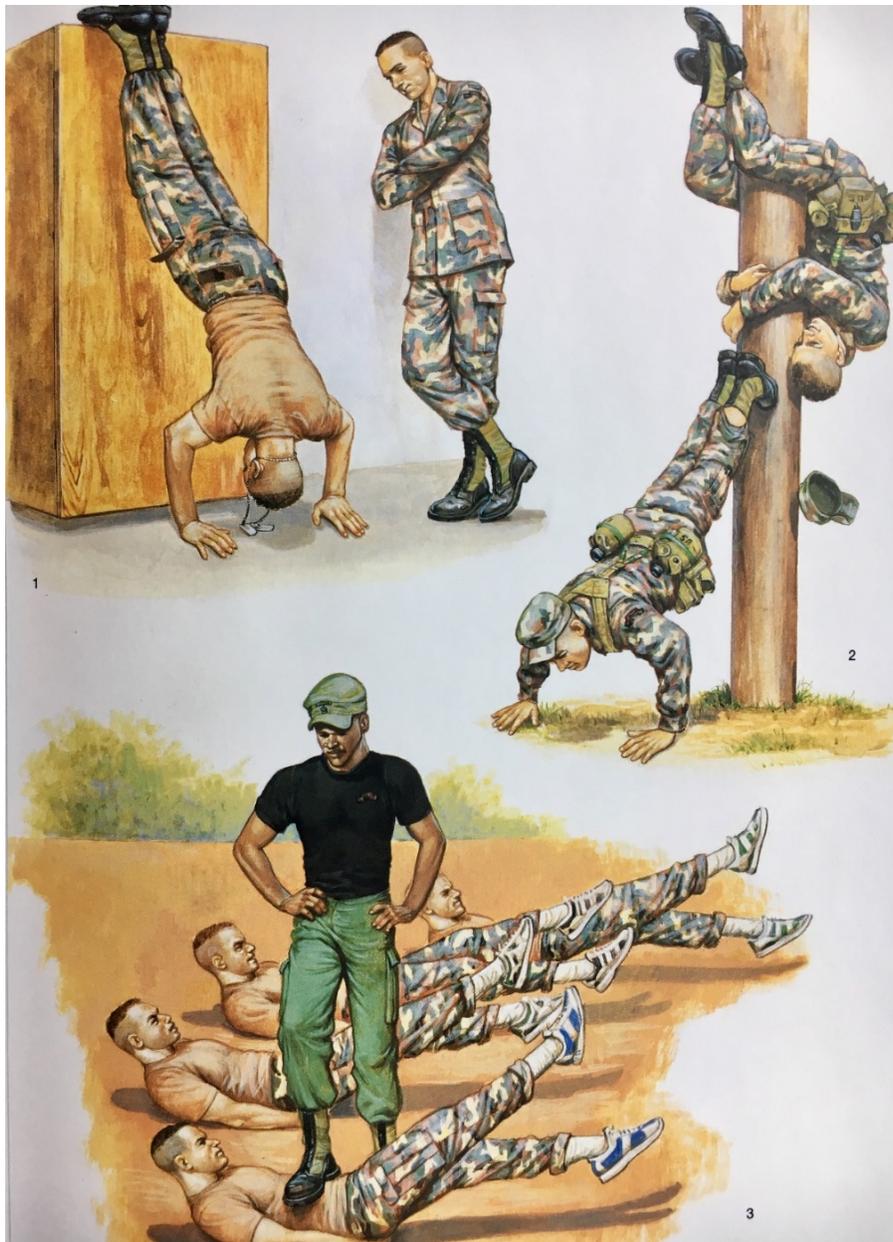
After receiving feedback from all the battalions and the Regimental leadership, Wagers, Conrad, and their team developed a three-week program of instruction for RIP that included daily physical conditioning and roach marches, obstacle courses (especially one that later became known as the “Downing Mile” after COL Wayne Downing), day and night land navigation, weapons familiarization and firing, rappelling, hand-to-hand combat, patrolling, jump training, and demolitions. Conrad stated that the purpose was “to

³¹⁹ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

expose Ranger volunteers to everything they would see or do in the Regiment, with the exception of all the special operations stuff such as airfield seizures.” He stated that “the focus was on the fundamentals and the intent was to weed out those that didn’t belong.” While many Rangers who went through RIP in the 1980s may recall it as “a three-week hazing session,” Wagers and Conrad said that everything had a purpose and that some of the physical training techniques that the cadre used were to “assess a guy’s mental toughness because, in addition to the physical demands of the Regiment and combat, the psychological and mental pressures were also important to assess.”

However, to objectively weed out those that didn’t belong, RTD worked to establish the physical standards for the Regiment. They determined that every Ranger must achieve a minimum of 70 points on each event according to a candidate’s age group on the Army PT test, perform six chin-ups, run five miles in under 40 minutes, conduct a 12-mile foot march with combat equipment in three hours or less, and pass the combat water survival test. In addition to the physical standards, Ranger candidates had to also receive a minimum grade of 70 percent on a Ranger history exam. Conrad stated that “once the standards were set, Regiment didn’t lower or raise the standards for anyone, and nobody ever questioned the standards.”

For candidates that were non-combat arms, Conrad recalled many of them telling him that “they didn’t want to be assessed by a different standard. They wanted to be assessed the same as everyone else in the Regiment.” There was no partiality in training, and if a Ranger candidate received more than two “no-go’s” on any of the standard events, they were required to go to a board that was held by RTD leadership and cadre. The board would deliberate and consider the candidate’s overall performance to determine whether to drop or recycle the candidate.



(1) A Ranger candidate is being instructed to conduct elevated push-ups. (2) A Ranger candidate is “koalafying” while another candidate is conducting elevated push-ups. (3) A Ranger cadre member running candidates through daily physical training.³²⁰

Figure 20. Depiction of RIP in the 1980s³²¹

³²⁰ Bahmanyar, *U.S. Army Ranger 1983–2002*, 63.

³²¹ Bahmanyar, *U.S. Army Ranger 1983–2002*, 37.

The ROP program of instruction that RTD developed was two-weeks long and was intended to assess and orient new leaders who were staff sergeant and above or were already Ranger qualified. ROP assessed the same standards as RIP. Everyone, regardless of rank or specialty, was expected to meet the same standard. In addition to physical testing, ROP candidates were given classes on Regimental policies, standard operating procedures, history, and capabilities. They also conducted basic airborne refresher and jump training. Furthermore, according to Wagers, it was also common for officers and NCOs to spend time at the Regimental Headquarters shadowing staff members and getting oriented with the operational demands of the Regiment.

Once the programs were established in 1984, RTD began receiving Ranger candidates for assessment and selection. RTD ran an average of one RIP class and one ROP class per month, except for summer and winter block leave or holiday periods. Wagers recalled that class sizes varied with RIP classes ranging from about 65 to over 100 candidates per class while ROP classes usually only had around 10–15 candidates per class. Attrition rates also varied from class to class and often depended on how grueling the Georgia heat was. However, the average attrition for RIP in 1984 and 1985 was approximately 50 to 70 percent and the attrition rate for ROP was less than 10 percent. Reasons for candidates being unsuccessful in RIP or ROP typically resulted from one of three things: they didn't meet the physical standards, they were injured, or they quit.

Once a candidate successfully completed the program, they were authorized to don the black beret, the Ranger scroll, and purchase their Ranger coin. The framework and standards that Wagers, Conrad, and their team at RTD established in 1984 remained relatively unchanged for over two decades. However, as the Regiment and the U.S. special operations community grew through the late 1980s and 1990s, RIP and ROP correspondingly evolved, merely building upon what was already in place. Changes included alterations to the length of the program, addition or removal of certain events, and the adjustment of specific PT standards through the development of the Ranger Physical Fitness Test. However, the intent, purpose, and type of candidate that the programs sought were equivalent to what was established in 1984.

E. THE 75TH RANGER REGIMENT (1985–2000)

From 1984, when the Regiment was formed, through the attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001, the 75th Ranger Regiment was called upon numerous times to confront threats of national security around the globe. Beginning on December 20, 1989, the entire 75th Ranger Regiment participated in the invasion of Panama, originally under the name of Operation Blue Spoon but later known as Operation Just Cause.³²² Members from RTD participated in the operation as part of the Regimental Headquarters elements that jumped into Rio Hato and Tocumen Airfields.³²³ Operation Just Cause was the first time the entire Regiment, operating as Task Force Red, demonstrated its niche capability of successfully seizing a defended enemy airfield.



Figure 21. Plaque from the RTD's Participation in Operation Just Cause

³²² Leigh Neville, *U.S. Army Rangers 1989–2015: Panama to Afghanistan* (Oxford, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 11; Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 501–6.

³²³ Author's collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

From February to April 1991, elements of 1st Ranger Battalion and the Regimental Headquarters deployed to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait in support of Operation Desert Storm. Two years later, in 1993, elements from 3rd Ranger Battalion deployed to Somalia, Africa to support Operation Gothic Serpent and on October 3, 1993, fought in the battle of Mogadishu. These operations arguably demonstrated that the 75th Ranger Regiment was not only a strategic asset but also demonstrated the importance of having specially selected and well-trained Rangers.

As the Regiment continued to adapt and grow, and through the creation of USSOCOM and USASOC, the Regimental assessment and selection programs evolved throughout the 1990s. When 1SG Michael Kelso took over as commandant of RTD in October 1989, he described RIP and ROP in a very similar fashion to what Wagers and Conrad had developed five years earlier. RIP remained three weeks long and ROP was still two weeks long. Both programs contained the same events and the standards had not changed. A past Ranger, who graduated RIP in 1989, shared his experience of the course in the following way:

When I went through (1989) it was 3 weeks long and basically it is a screening process for soldiers regardless of rank who are not Ranger qualified (Tabbed) who want to become a member of the 75th Ranger Regiment. It's a lot of PT, jumping, humping [ruck marching], O-course and classroom time. It seemed like it was more PT and humping than anything else. In a nutshell it is a three-week gut check that will test your endurance physically and mentally and it could very well be the worst three weeks of your life up till that point but the reward is well worth it.³²⁴

However, sometime in 1990, Kelso recalled one of the first changes to ROP and said that ROP had developed a stress and leadership exercise held at Cole Range on Fort Benning. Cole Range, approximately ten miles east of the Fort Benning cantonment area, provided a remote training area surrounded by Georgia swamps and thick vegetation. It was a premier location for Ranger-type training. The stress event was intended to test the leadership ability of Ranger candidates through mock combat scenarios and patrolling exercises that were conducted under conditions of minimal sleep and continuous

³²⁴ "RIP," *SOCNET: The Special Operations Community Network* (blog), June 12, 2000, <http://www.socnet.com/archive/index.php/t-2286.html>.

movement. ROP eventually expanded to three weeks to accommodate for the additional time required to run the multi-day exercise.



Figure 22. Entrance to Cole Range³²⁵

In the years following operations in Somalia, the 75th Ranger Regiment made several changes to their equipment, training, and assessment and selection methods. In a combined interview with former Rangers and retired CSMs Franklin Ashe, Michael Kelso, and Matthew Walker on May 23, 2019, all recalled specific changes in the Regiment during the mid to late-1990s as a result of operations in Somalia. They said that, based on lessons learned from fighting in an urban environment, the Regiment transitioned from the M16 rifle to the M4 carbine, sought advancements in body armor and urban mobility, increased medical and marksmanship training, and emphasized the importance of physical

³²⁵ Author's collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

endurance. Additionally, the Regiment had never emphasized the psychological analysis of its members as both an assessment tool and periodic evaluation requirement. However, as the psychological impacts of combat became more apparent after Somalia, the Regiment began to implement assessment tools similar to those that were already being used by U.S. Army Special Forces since 1989 and other U.S. special operations units.³²⁶

Several of these changes were first implemented into assessment and selection in February 1995, when 1SG Ashe took over as the commandant of the RTD. According to Ashe, one of his first orders from the Regimental Headquarters was to implement a psychological evaluation process for ROP candidates. According to an interview on June 10, 2019 with retired Lieutenant General Ken Keen, the 11th Colonel of the Regiment from July 1999 to July 2001, even though the psychological evaluation process began in 1995, it gained more traction and focus in 1997 when COL Stanley McCrystal and CSM Michael Hall were the RCO and RSM and was eventually formalized after he [Keen] took over as the RCO in 1999.

According to Ashe, the psychological evaluation process that was initiated in 1995 was intended to assist in the assessment and selection of members for the 75th Ranger Regiment and was designed to objectively assess individual personality traits, behavioral tendencies, cognitive abilities, and levels of intelligence. Testing consisted of two primary tests: the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) that measured psychopathology and the Wonderlic Personnel Test that measured intelligence.³²⁷ Candidates were administered a series of written exams at the beginning of the course, and a team of unit psychologists would analyze the results and conduct interviews with candidates to validate what the testing revealed.

Ashe also recalled adding an event to ROP that aided in the psychological evaluation process. The event consisted of a 12-mile foot march followed by a Leadership Reaction Course (LRC). During the LRC, ROP candidates were assigned a squad of RIP

³²⁶ Morgan Banks, "The History of Special Operations Psychological Selection," in *Psychology in the Service of National Security*, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 88.

³²⁷ Banks, "The History of Special Operations Psychological Selection," 93.

candidates and were then assessed by cadre and unit psychologists on their ability to lead RIP candidates through each obstacle. The combination of these psychological assessments, coupled with the observations of the ROP cadre during the course, provided a more holistic evaluation of each candidate before appearing before a board at the end of the course, chaired by battalion and regimental leaders, to determine if they would be selected for service in the Regiment.

In addition to the psychological evaluation process, RIP and ROP added additional emphasis on marksmanship and medical training. Every Ranger that attended assessment and selection received training on both rifle and pistol marksmanship as well as Combat Life Saver (CLS) training. Ashe recalled that, at the recommendation of his senior medic, “Doc Black,” and the approvals of Regiment and the U.S. Army Medical Department (AMEDD), a 72-hour CLS course was added to the RIP program of instruction. The CLS course started on a Friday and went through the weekend. While these events offered increased training for the candidates, they also served as an assessment tool for RTD cadre to determine whether a candidate was trainable.

Lastly, Ashe highlighted a change to the assessment and selection process that was short-lived. While he was serving as the RTD commandant, the Regiment had a probation policy in place for critical low-density MOSs. The policy stated that low-density MOS candidates who failed to meet any of the prescribed Regimental standards during RIP or ROP, but otherwise demonstrated the potential to serve in the Regiment, would be hired for a 12-month probationary period. Candidates who were selected on a probationary period were granted 12 months from the date of their graduation to meet the Regimental standards. If they failed to meet the standards within 12 months, the policy stated that they would be released from the Regiment back to the conventional Army. This policy was rescinded before 1996, and when CSM Hall took over as the RSM in July 1996, he highlighted that “every Ranger was assessed as a Ranger first.”

Following the changes implemented in the mid-1990s, the RIP and ROP programs of instruction underwent two additional changes before the turn of the century. First, the PT standards evolved in 1998 when the Regiment began to develop what was to become the Ranger Physical Fitness Test (RPFT). According to Chapter 6, “Regimental

Assessment and Selection Program” of the *Regimental Training Circular 350-1*, dated March 12, 1998, instead of testing Rangers against their age group, every member and candidate was tested against the 17–21-year-old male standard and had to achieve a minimum of 42 push-ups, 52 sit-ups, and run two-miles in under 15:12.³²⁸ The RTC also authorized a deviation from the standards when environmental conditions permitted. For the five-mile run, the RTC stated that “RIP Cadre may vary the pace up to 8:30 per mile based on environmental conditions,” and for any foot march that exceeded six miles in formation, RIP cadre were authorized to vary the pace up to 15:30 per mile based on environmental conditions and take 10-minute breaks every four miles.³²⁹

The only additional change was the inclusion of a field training exercise in RIP. Between 1998 and 1999, RIP added a multi-day stress event at Cole Range. The initial concept included objective testing on day and night land navigation, battle drills, knots classes, and other basic soldier skill tasks. While candidates underwent training and assessment at Cole Range, cadre exposed them to conditions of minimal sleep, continuous movement, intense physical exercise, and “hitting the wood line.” A candidate who attended RIP in 1999 highlighted his experience in this way:

I graduated RIP 29SEP99... RIP is a 2 ½ week kick in the nuts with weekends off. It consists of a APFT (Army Physical Fitness Test, a CWST (Combat Water Survival Test) a 5 mile run, 6 & 10 mile road marches, and a CLS test (Combat Life Saver)... Fear Cole Range. You’ll get a good intro to land nav and a lot of knowledge from the ex-squad leaders who make up the RIP cadre.

RIP and ROP continued to evolve through the 1990s and incorporated lessons learned from operational experiences. Retired LTG Keen recalled that “before the Global War on Terrorism began in 2001, the POIs for assessment and selection were structured around Somalia.”

³²⁸ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Training*, RTC 350-1 (Fort Benning, GA: Department of the Army, 1998), chap. 6.

³²⁹ 75th Ranger Regiment, *Training*, chap. 6.

F. THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM AND THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF THE REGIMENT (2001–2009)

After the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001, the 75th Ranger Regiment spearheaded ground operations in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). On October 19, 2001, elements from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment and the Regimental Headquarters, under the command of COL (later General) Joseph Votel, conducted a nighttime airborne assault to seize a desert landing strip, codenamed Objective Rhino, in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Following the initial invasion to Afghanistan, the 75th Ranger Regiment continuously rotated battalions to support Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Then on March 24, 2003, the Regiment expanded its operations with the invasion of Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Over the first decade of the GWOT, the 75th Ranger Regiment conducted targeting and intelligence gathering operations, direct action raids, and other joint special operations missions.

As the Regiment supported combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the assessment and selection programs did not undergo any significant changes until 2004. Both programs used the training philosophy of the “Big 4,” which were physical fitness, marksmanship, small unit tactics, and medical aid to assess, select, and train future members of the Regiment.³³⁰ However, in a series of interviews from May 1, 2019 through November 12, 2019 with Sergeant Majors Michael Wagner and Christopher Masters, who were both serving as active members of the 75th Ranger Regiment in 2019 and had previously served as cadre and company 1SGs in the Regiment’s selection and training company, recalled that the first fundamental change in the assessment and selection programs was in 2004 when RIP expanded from three to four weeks. According to SGM Masters, while CSM A. Greg Birch was serving as the RSM of the 75th Ranger Regiment in 2004, he directed that the RIP program of instruction be expanded from three to four weeks to include a week of marksmanship training. Masters recalled the reasoning behind the change was three-fold: first, it provided an additional assessment tool to objectively

³³⁰ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

and subjectively assess whether a candidate was trainable, second, it allotted cadre additional time to determine if a candidate could assimilate with the operational needs of the Regiment, and third, the Regiment intended to deliver a more qualified individual from RIP, who within weeks of graduation could be deployed to combat.

In May 2004, as a candidate of the newly designed four-week RIP program of instruction, Wagner described the sequence and events of the course as depicted below:

 Ranger Indoctrination Program “The Gateway to the Regiment” 2004 - 2009 	
	<u>Key Events</u>
Week 1	Indoctrination Week: physical conditioning, combatives training, Ranger Swim Assessment and Evaluation (RSAE), Ranger First Responder (RFR) training, and classes on Ranger history, Ranger standards, and land navigation.
Week 2	Stress Week: 12-mile foot march to Cole Range, progressive day and night land navigation training and testing, practical exercises on infantry battle drills, and classes on basic field craft and knots
Week 3	Marksmanship Week: training on rifle and pistol basic marksmanship and an airborne operation
Week 4	Graduation Week: Ranger Physical Fitness Test (RPFT), critical event re-tests, and graduation ceremony.

Figure 23. Depiction of RIP (2004–2009)

According to Wagner, he classed up with approximately 150 candidates, and when they donned their tan berets and Ranger scrolls four weeks later, 83 graduates were standing in formation. Through 2004, there were no other known changes in either RIP or ROP. As the Regiment continued to execute combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, operations like the Battle of Takur Ghar in March 2002 and the rescue of Private Jessica Lynch in April 2003 after the Battle of Nasiriyah, demonstrated the increasing demand for specially selected and well-trained Rangers.

From 2005 to 2007, the Regiment continued to support combat operations in the Middle East and the increasing demands of the Regiment resulted in the growth of additional companies in each of the rifle battalions and the activation of the Regimental Special Troops Battalion (RSTB). In 2005, each battalion provisionally formed an Echo Company or individual support company. According to Masters and Wagner, the process of creating the Echo Companies was similar to the process of activating the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions in 1974 as well as the 3rd Ranger Battalion and Regimental Headquarters in 1984. In 2005, the Regimental Headquarters and USASOC worked with the Department of the Army to identify suitable candidates across the Army that were needed to fill the support companies. Specialties included, but were not limited to, cooks, mechanics, engineers, communication specialists, ammunition specialists, motor transport operators, supply specialists, and parachute riggers. Additionally, according to Wagner, the initial Echo company leadership was primarily composed of senior enlisted infantrymen from the battalions until the Regiment could formally identify the right leaders to fill each of the authorized positions.

Once candidates were identified for the Echo companies, the Department of the Army issued each candidate direct assignment orders to one of the three battalions. However, upon arrival, candidates were not yet authorized to wear the tan beret. Instead, they wore maroon berets to symbolize that they were part of an airborne unit but had not yet been officially selected through RIP. Wagner recalled that over nearly 90 days candidates began arriving to fill the Echo companies. Once candidates arrived, the battalions, not RTD, were responsible for the final assessment and selection process.

In a follow-up interview with SGM Wagner on November 10, 2019, he recalled that each battalion tasked out team leaders and squad leaders to run a battalion internal two-week assessment and selection course that was fundamentally similar to RIP. The program focused on daily physical fitness, classes on Regimental history, standards, and capabilities, and also assessed each candidate on their ability to meet Regimental standards. Wagner recalled that there was over a 50 percent attrition rate. Once the assessment and selection process was complete, those who made it through were authorized the tan beret and Ranger scroll.

After the initial surge in the Echo companies, future candidates recruited for the support companies went through RTD for assessment and selection before official assignment to the Regiment. On February 16, 2006, the RTD was re-designated as the Ranger Operations Company; however, there was no change to their mission. The ROC continued to assess and select all members across sixty military occupational specialties for future service in the 75th Ranger Regiment.

On July 17, 2006, the Regimental Special Troops Battalion (RSTB), 75th Ranger Regiment, was provisionally activated on Fort Benning. From 1984 to July 2006, elements such as the RTD, RSD, and RRD fell under the Regimental Headquarters. With the operational demands of war and the expansion of these elements arose the need to activate another battalion headquarters to oversee their training and operations. In 2006, the RSTB initially had the Regimental Reconnaissance Company (RRC), the Regimental Communications Company (RCC), the Military Intelligence Company (MICO), and the Ranger Operations Company (ROC) under its command.

According to historical documents published by the 75th Ranger Regiment in 2018, “RSTB provides the Ranger Regiment and Special Operations Forces with increased operational capabilities to sustain combat operations. RSTB conducts communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance functions in support of the Regiment and other special operations task forces to enable the execution of joint special operations anywhere in the world.”³³¹ The addition of the RSTB did not significantly impact the Regimental MTOE since the majority of the companies had already existed. The provisional activation of the battalion represented more of a transfer of authority that placed a LTC and CSM with a supporting staff over some of the Regiment’s niche enablers. The RSTB dropped its provisional status and was officially activated on October 16, 2007.

The last organizational change that occurred within the Regiment between 2005 and 2007 was the activation of an additional rifle company, or Delta Company, in each of the three rifle battalions. In response to the increased demand resulting from combat

³³¹ 75th Ranger Regiment, *75th Ranger Regiment: Ranger Knowledge Handbook*, (Fort Benning, GA, 2018), 46.

operations, Delta companies were activated beginning in October 2007 “in order to provide the nation with additional Ranger combat power.”³³² In less than a year, each battalion reorganized its leaders to form the Delta companies, filled the ranks with incoming RIP graduates, and conducted training and validation exercises before they were determined ready to conduct combat operations.³³³ On May 26, 2008, Staff Sergeant Leroy Petry, who was serving in the newly formed D Company, 2nd Ranger Battalion, was severely wounded while conducting operations in Paktia Province, Afghanistan. Despite his injuries, he saved the lives of his fellow Rangers and in 2011, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions.

G. TRANSITION TO THE RANGER ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION PROGRAM (2009–2016)

From 2009 to 2010, the 75th Ranger Regiment overhauled their assessment and selection programs and implemented the most significant changes since the program’s inception in 1984. While the assessment and selection programs that were consolidated and standardized at the Regimental level in 1984 provided a fundamental framework for assessing and selecting Rangers for the Regiment for over two decades, lessons learned from more than nine years of continuous combat operations demanded necessary revisions to the programs. According to an excerpt from the “JSOC Annual Historical Report” in 2009 and the Force Design and Force Modernization Updates “The assessment and selection programs of instruction (POI) for both senior leaders and new Rangers have undergone a significant transformation during the later portion of 2009. The Regiment’s two initial entry POI’s have been altered to produce a more ready Ranger, capable of executing the duties of their respective positions in the Regiment.”³³⁴ Additionally, according to communications with CSM Charles Albertson in 2014, while he was serving as the RSM of the 75th Ranger Regiment, he reflected on the changes of the Regiment’s

³³² 75th Ranger Regiment, *Ranger Knowledge Handbook*, 46.

³³³ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³³⁴ Joint Special Operations Command, *JSOC Annual Historical Report* (Fort Bragg, NC: United States Special Operations Command, 2009).

assessment and selection programs and said that “We were fighting in two theaters of operation and Rangers needed a more fundamental baseline given the fact they could show up at any point in the JORTS [Joint Operational Readiness Training] cycle and potentially deploy to combat within weeks or days of arrival.”³³⁵

Beginning in 2009, when COL (later General) Richard Clarke and CSM James Hardy were serving as the RCO and RSM of the 75th Ranger Regiment, the concept of transitioning RIP and ROP to the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program (RASP) began to arise as a result of operational demands. According to SGM Mike Wagner, although the concept was initially proposed in early 2009, the Regiment really started to apply and provide the necessary attention and resources to the transition after COL Michael “Erik” Kurilla took command of the Regiment on August 6, 2009.

According to planning documents and presentations produced by the ROC in 2009, there were several courses of action that were proposed for both RIP, which would become RASP 1, and ROP, which would become RASP 2. Based on feedback from the battalions and the observations of cadre, ROC leadership recommended expanding RIP to eight weeks and ROP to four weeks. After the Regiment adopted “mobility” as a part of their training philosophy in 2006, making the “Big 4” become the “Big 5,” ROC leadership also recommended the inclusion of mobility training in RASP 1. Additionally, ROC leadership recommended the inclusion of additional marksmanship training and demolitions training based on operational demands requiring a better trained Ranger.³³⁶

As COL Kurilla and the Regiment pushed forward to improve the POIs, justifications were made through USASOC to receive additional funding to support a more robust assessment and selection program. A funding report from USASOC G-8 (Force Modernization), stated that

the 75th Ranger RGT Commander’s [COL Kurilla’s] vision, in accordance with COMASOC’s Strategic Planning Priority Number 1, is to increase the effectiveness of our assessment and evaluation of candidates, while also

³³⁵ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³³⁶ 75th Ranger Regiment, “Ranger Assessment and Selection Program” (unpublished planning documents, 2009), 7–13.

enhancing the training of those candidates... As the enemy evolves, so too must the means that we employ to select and train our Rangers to fight that enemy. As our enemy continues to mature and adapt, our missions have become more and more complex, decentralized, and unique. This requires a better trained and more flexible Ranger. Assessing, selecting, and training this caliber of Ranger calls for a more holistic approach with an increased focus on assessment and enhanced Ranger-peculiar training that better prepares the individual Ranger and Ranger leader to successfully execute these missions. The issue allows RASP Levels 1 and 2 to expand to a POI that more effectively assesses and selects the most qualified individuals for service in the Ranger Regiment.³³⁷

After analysis and feedback from the Regimental Headquarters, in January 2010, RIP became an eight-week program known as RASP 1 and ROP remained a three-week program known as RASP 2. In 2010, CSM Hardy provided the following comments on the transition:

As the Ranger Regiment enters its 9th year of continuous combat operations, we identified a need to ensure our Rangers and their leaders are better prepared for immediate service in the Ranger Regiment and the increasing demands on the battlefield. The most significant change, other than the additional four weeks added to RASP 1, is on the detail of the assessment and increased training proficiency of all candidates. We started with what we assessed the ideal end product was and redesigned both Programs of Instruction to achieve that goal. The key in all of this is that every Ranger assigned to the Ranger Regiment meets the same standard for entrance and service to the Ranger Regiment and regardless of their MOS, is a Ranger first. I am very pleased with the initial progress of the courses and the effort and motivation of all the Ranger NCOs serving as the Cadre in both programs.³³⁸

Below is a depiction of what the RASP 1 and RASP 2 programs of instruction looked like in 2009 when they were developed and in January 2010 when the ROC implemented them:

³³⁷ United States Army Special Operations Command, *75th RGR RASP 1 and 2*, Report No. 2.030 (Fort Bragg, NC: Department of the Army, 2010), 1.

³³⁸ Author's collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

 Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 1 2009 - 2012 							
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Indoctrination	Skills Training	Cole Range	RFR and Airborne Operations	Mobility Training	Marksmanship and Breaching	Marksmanship and Breaching	Graduation
Physical conditioning	Physical conditioning	7-mile foot march	8-mile foot march	10-mile foot march	12-mile foot march	APFT	Peer evaluations
Obstacle courses	Land navigation classes	Progressive day and night land navigation training	Ranger First Responder training	PMCS	RMIC: M4/M9	RMIC: M4/M9	Final boards
APFT		Land navigation testing	Airborne operation	Dispatch	Group and Zero KD range	Group and Zero KD range	FRIES training
RSAE		Battle drills and combatives	Trauma lanes	Recovery operations	CQM tables	CQM tables	Out-processing
Ranger history and standards classes				Driving test	RABC: Mechanical, ballistic, and explosive breach	RABC: Mechanical, ballistic, and explosive breach	
← Phase 1 →				← Phase 2 →			

Figure 24. Depiction of RASP 1 (2009–2012)

 Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 2 2009 - 2019 		
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
In-processing and equipment issue	Critical event re-tests	Boards
Critical event testing	Marksmanship training	Classes on Regimental capabilities
Ranger history and standards classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M4 and M9 Shoot house LFX 	Ethics class
Psych exams	Ranger First Responder Training	FRIES training
T11 Basic Airborne Refresher	Airborne Operation	Course critiques
FTX	Psych interviews	Out-processing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24-48 hour stress-induced event to evaluate physical and mental endurance, leadership ability, and teamwork. 	Peer evaluations	

Figure 25. Depiction of RASP 2 (2009–2019)

Following the implementation of the RASP programs of instruction, the ROC was assigned a new designation and became known as the Regimental Selection and Training Company (RSTC) on January 20, 2011. Once again, the company’s mission did not change; however, its name became more aligned with its core responsibilities.

In 2011, the Regiment enacted a “re-validation” policy that required current enlisted members of the Regiment to successfully attend RASP 2 before becoming a platoon sergeant or company 1SG.³³⁹ While a specific policy letter could not be located for 2011, a Regimental policy letter from March 2014 outlined the re-validation requirements that were directed in 2011. The Regimental policy letter prescribed the following demographics were required to attend RASP 2:

- All leaders in the grade of O-1 to O-3, E-6 to E-8, and W1 to W5 who are coming to the Regiment from another unit or school.
- All 11-series NCOs who are currently serving in the Regiment, are selected for continued service as Platoon Sergeants, who did not successfully complete a previous RASP 2 course.
- All non-11-series Regimental NCOs selected for service as First Sergeants
- All Regimental NCOs selected for service as cadre in the Selection and Training Company.
- All officers in the grade of O-4 [selected through Field Grade RASP] who have no prior Regimental experience and did not successfully complete a previous RASP 2 course.³⁴⁰

While the re-validation process was initially criticized by many NCOs across the Regiment, it quickly established increased credibility and emphasized the importance of standards and expectations for leaders across the Regiment.

As RSTC continued to observe the impacts of the new RASP 1 and RASP 2 POIs, several revisions were made to RASP 1 in 2012. RASP 2 remained primarily the same with only minor mechanical changes. Fundamentally, RASP 1 did not change; however, there

³³⁹ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³⁴⁰ Christopher Vanek, “Regimental Commander’s Policy Letter #19 (Ranger Assessment and Selection Program, Phase 2, Attendance)” (official memorandum, Fort Benning, GA: Department of the Army 2014).

were several changes to the structure and sequencing of events. According to a memorandum in December 2012, submitted by RSTC to the Regimental Headquarters, a change was initiated to refine the marksmanship instruction.³⁴¹ As a result, RSTC moved the Cole Range field training event to week two, RFR and an airborne operation moved to week three, mobility training moved to week four, basic rifle marksmanship was added to week five, and weeks six and seven contained advanced rifle marksmanship training through the Regimental Marksmanship Instruction Course (RMIC) and demolitions training through the Regimental Assault Breacher Course (RABC).³⁴² Below is a general depiction of the updated RASP 1 model implemented from 2012 through the end of 2014.

 Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 1 2012 - 2014 							
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Indoctrination	Cole Range	RFR and Airborne Operations	Mobility Training	Basic Rifle Marksmanship	Marksmanship and Breaching	Marksmanship and Breaching	Graduation
Physical conditioning	7-mile foot march	8-mile foot march	10-mile foot march	<u>M9 (2x days)</u> • Slow aim fire • Grouping • 300pt agg eval	12-mile foot march	APFT	Peer evaluations
Obstacle courses	Progressive day and night land navigation training and testing	Ranger First Responder training	PMCS		RMIC: M4/M9	RMIC: M4/M9	Final boards
APFT		Airborne operation	Dispatch	<u>M4 (2x days)</u> • Iron sights • Grouping • Zero (25/300)	Group and Zero KD range CQM tables	Group and Zero KD range CQM tables	FRIES training
RSAE	Weapons test	Trauma lanes	Recovery operations		RABC: Mechanical, ballistic, and explosive breach	RABC: Mechanical, ballistic, and explosive breach	Out-processing
Ranger history and standards classes	Battle drills and combatives	Peer evaluations	Driving test				

Figure 26. Depiction of RASP 1 (2012–2014)

According to a report from RSTC in August 2014, the RSM, CSM Charles Albertson “initiated a Regimental-wide review of the RASP 1 POI eliciting feedback from every battalion to ensure the training objectives and end-state were meeting the requirements of the

³⁴¹ Matthew Work, “Regimental Selection and Training Company” (official memorandum, Fort Benning, GA: Department of the Army, 2012).

³⁴² Work, “Regimental Selection and Training Company.”

numbered battalions.”³⁴³ Feedback from the battalions ranged from concurrence with the RASP 1 POI to recommendations to condense the course back down, remove breaching training, and discussions on whether the swim evaluation should remain a critical event. Following a Commander’s Round Table Discussion (CDRT) in August 2014, the command team for RSTC sent their recommended changes of RASP 1 through email to the RSTB command team based on the collective feedback received from the battalions.³⁴⁴ Based on the collective feedback, RSTC recommended that mobility training be removed from the POI and in its place be an additional week of marksmanship. The justification for eliminating mobility training was that the student to instructor ratio was not conducive for training or assessment, candidates only spent an average of ten minutes behind the wheel of an M1151, and even though candidates were leaving the course with a completed driving record, they still had to be re-certified by their gaining company and installation.³⁴⁵ The recommendations were approved, and on January 5, 2015, RSTC implemented the revised RASP 1 POI.

³⁴³ Carmen Bucci, “Regimental Selection and Training Company” (official memorandum, Fort Benning, GA: Department of the Army, August 2014).

³⁴⁴ Carmen Bucci, “New RASP 1 POI Decision Brief,” October 1, 2014.

³⁴⁵ Carmen Bucci, “RSTC Overview” (presentation, Fort Benning, GA, August 12, 2014), 5–6.

 Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 1 2015 - 2017 							
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Indoctrination	Cole Range	RFR and Airborne Operations	Marksmanship Training	Basic Rifle Marksmanship	Marksmanship and Breaching	Marksmanship and Breaching	Graduation
Physical conditioning	7-mile foot march	8-mile foot march	10-mile foot march	12-mile foot march	12-mile foot march	Record APFT	APFT re-test
Obstacle courses	Progressive day and night land navigation training and testing	Ranger First Responder training	Diagnostic APFT	M9	RMIC: M4/M9	RMIC: M4/M9	Peer evaluations
RSAE		Airborne operation	Marksmanship PMI classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow aim fire Grouping 300pt agg eval 	Shoot and move Transitions CQM table Stress shoot	Shoot and move Transitions CQM table Stress shoot	Final boards
Land navigation classes and PEs	Written tests	Trauma lanes	M9 (2x days) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow aim fire Grouping 	M4 (2x days) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KD Range Alternate firing positions Intro to barricades 	RABC: Mechanical, ballistic, and explosive breach	RABC: Mechanical, ballistic, and explosive breach	FRIES training
Ranger history and standards classes	Battle drills, knots, and combatives	Peer evaluations	M4 (2x days) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iron sights Grouping Zero (25/300) 				Out-processing
← Phase 1 →				← Phase 2 →			

Figure 27. Depiction of RASP 1 (2015–2017)

From 2015 to 2017, both RASP 1 and RASP 2 did not undergo any significant changes to the structure or conduct of the POIs. However, as the Army began to evaluate the feasibility of allowing females in special operations units, beginning in 2014 and 2015, the Regiment and its assessment and selection programs conducted consequent analysis to support the future of gender integration.

H. GENDER INTEGRATION (2015–2017)

In 2015, the 75th Ranger Regiment began making preparations for the integration of female Soldiers. However, according to a memorandum from RSTC in the summer of 2014, “a USASOC team from Project Diane (Women in SOF Review) consisting of two Army MAJs and a civilian from RAND Group observed three days of RASP 1 and RASP 2 training events to achieve a better understanding of how we assess and select Rangers and their rigors of the POIs. Their analysis was in preparation for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to conduct a Ranger Job Analysis Review for the potential of female service within the Regiment.”³⁴⁶ A follow-up visit was conducted in the fall of 2014 by a team consisting of “three Personnel Research Psychologists from the USASOC Directorate

³⁴⁶ Bucci, “Regimental Selection and Training Company.”

of Psychological Application (DPA), and Team Lead, MAJ Angela Greenewald (USASOC CIG/Project Diane Physical Standards Lead).”³⁴⁷

Based on the increased emphasis of the integration of women in SOF, SGM Wagner, who was serving in the Regimental Headquarters at the time as a SFC, recalled that the RCO tasked the RS8 (staff proponent for force modernization) with the responsibility to identify the requirements to integrate females in the Regiment as early as 2016. Throughout 2015, the Regiment surveyed the force to gather feedback and also worked to refine the Regimental standards since the PT standards were not gender-neutral and were based on the 17–21-year-old male APFT standard. Additionally, LTG Kenneth Tovo, Commander of USASOC, directed that the Regiment validate its assessment and selection POIs to ensure that the standards and expectations supported gender integration.³⁴⁸

First, to develop a new Regimental standard for physical fitness, the RS8 gathered available data from RSTC that depicted the PT scores of successful RASP graduates over the previous two to three years. Based on the available data, the Ranger Fitness Test (RFT) was developed consisting of two minutes of push-ups, two minutes of sit-ups, a five-mile run, and chin-ups. After analyzing available data, the staff determined the average PT scores of a successful RASP graduate were 58 push-ups and 69 sit-ups. In addition to the push-up and sit-up event standards, the Regiment retained the standard of running five miles in under 40 minutes and the completion of six chin-ups. Once Regiment and USASOC validated and approved the RFT standard, Regiment immediately implemented it across the organization.

The next requirement was the validation of the POIs. To accomplish the validation, the Regiment and RSTC worked closely with USASOC and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) located at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. While the task was primarily administrative, it also included a requirement to

³⁴⁷ Carmen Bucci, “Regimental Selection and Training Company” (official memorandum, Fort Benning, GA: Department of the Army, November 2014).

³⁴⁸ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

allow “non-grading cadre” or female NCOs tasked by USASOC, to serve as observers who attended each of the Regiment’s assessment and selection courses to validate the conduct, standards, and environment for the integration of females. Items such as barracks facilities, environmental considerations during field training, packing list requirements, and the preparatory command of “Gentlemen” used before every block of instruction were modified to ensure gender neutrality. On January 15, 2016, one of the female observers provided an out brief to RSTC and RSTB leadership that highlighted the “professionalism” and “consistency” of the POIs and the cadre.³⁴⁹ In February 2016, the POIs were officially validated and a memorandum dated February 5, 2016, signed by COL Nestor Sadler, the Special Forces Commandant at SWC, stated:

A comprehensive review and analysis of all courseware and required documentation associated with the course [RASP 1 and RASP 2] was conducted. Upon completion of the courseware review, several on-site critical training event observations were conducted to ensure that all documentation accurately reflected the training conducted. Results of the courseware analysis and critical training event observations indicate that the RASP Program conducted by the 75th Ranger Regiment be fully validated at this time.³⁵⁰

Following the validation of the POIs, the USASOC policy to have non-grading cadre observe females as they entered RASP 1 or RASP 2 was still in effect. However, in July 2017, COL Brandon Tegtmeier, the RCO of the 75th Ranger Regiment, submitted an exception to policy that was approved by USASOC. In place of non-grading cadre, the concept of a “safety valve” (a female NCO or officer that is available if and when required) that was developed by ARTB when they began integrating females into Ranger School was also adopted by the Regiment.³⁵¹ After implementing the safety valve model, a Regimental policy letter signed by COL Tegtmeier on November 20, 2017, stated that “the entire Regimental Chain of Command and cadre will foster an environment of dignity, respect,

³⁴⁹ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³⁵⁰ Nestor Sadler, “Validation of Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 1 and 2” (official memorandum, Fort Bragg, NC: Department of the Army, United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, 2016).

³⁵¹ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

and professionalism to enforce the fair treatment of all RASP and SURT candidates... The Ranger Regiment's assessment and selection process and standards remain unaffected by integration. Throughout the integration process, RSTB cadre will exemplify the Ranger Regiment's unwavering tradition of professionalism and select the most qualified candidates for service in the Regiment."³⁵²

The first female was welcomed to the Regiment in December 2016. From 2016 to 2019, the Regiment selected six females out of approximately ten who attempted one of the RASP programs.³⁵³ As of 2019, five female officers and one junior enlisted female soldier had completed RASP 1, RASP 2, or Field Grade RASP.

I. GENERATE, DEVELOP, AND SUSTAIN THE REGIMENT (2017–2019)

After COL Brandon Tegtmeier took command of the 75th Ranger Regiment on June 29, 2017, he immediately directed a change in the Regimental priorities. Since 2001, when the Global War on Terrorism began, the Regiment's number one priority was always "the forward fight." While the wording may have changed over sixteen years of combat and across eight RCOs, the number one priority always highlighted the Regiment's operational demands overseas. However, for the first time since 2001, the number one priority shifted to an organizational line of effort and became "Generate, Develop, and Sustain the Regiment."³⁵⁴

During a brief with COL Tegtmeier in June 2017, he described his philosophy and reasoning behind rearranging the Regiment's priorities. He said that "everything starts with the people. If the Regiment focuses and applies the necessary resources toward selecting the right people, all of the other priorities will essentially take care of themselves. However, if we fail to prioritize the selection of our Rangers, how can we expect to succeed across

³⁵² Brandon Tegtmeier, "Commander's Policy Statement #29 (Integration of Females into Ranger Assessment and Selection Programs and Small Unit Ranger Tactics)" (official memorandum, Fort Benning, GA: Department of the Army, 2017), 1.

³⁵³ Author's collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³⁵⁴ Author's collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

our other priorities?”³⁵⁵ In addition to COL Tegtmeier explaining his philosophy and reasoning behind the shift in Regimental priorities, he also posed the questions: “Why doesn’t everyone in the Regiment go through the same selection process? Why have I, as the RCO, never gone through RIP or RASP 1? Why does RASP 1 execute the stress event of Cole Range at the beginning of the course instead of towards the end, giving candidates more of an opportunity to succeed?”³⁵⁶ With the shift in Regimental priorities and the inquiries of the RCO into the assessment and selection programs, RSTC not only gained necessary focus and attention from the higher headquarters, but was also forced to take a critical look at the POIs to validate or provide supporting recommendations on the future of the assessment and selection process for the Regiment.

Following similar procedures from the past, RSTC reached out across the Regiment for bottom-up feedback on the POIs. The decline in RASP 1 graduation rates and the force generation requirements to sustain the Regiment was a mounting concern across the force. RASP 1 graduation rates declined from 65 percent in fiscal year 2012 to 21 percent in fiscal year 2017.³⁵⁷ From 2012 to 2017, the standards and the general structure of the course had not changed, which caused RSTC to look deeper at the problem. When RSTC analyzed the data, they found that over half of the RASP 1 class was quitting by day eight of the course.³⁵⁸ It wasn’t a failure to meet physical standards; candidates were voluntarily withdrawing from the course due to the physical demands and mental stressors of the course, and more specifically the Cole Range field training exercise. Several speculations were made surrounding the cause of the increase in voluntary withdraws to include: a decrease in standards in basic training that then caused a decline in performance and potential in RASP as well as placing blame on “the millennials generation.” However,

³⁵⁵ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA 2019.

³⁵⁶ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³⁵⁷ Regimental Selection and Training Company, “RASP 1 Data,” 75th Ranger Regiment, November 12, 2017.

³⁵⁸ Regimental Selection and Training Company, “RASP 1 Data.”

unable to truly identify the cause of the issue, RSTC took ownership of the problem and focused on what they could control.

Based on feedback from the battalions and input from the Regimental Headquarters, RSTC developed an updated POI that didn't alter or jeopardize any of the Regimental standards. The most prominent change was that the Cole Range stress phase event moved from week two to week four. By moving the event to week four, it provided RASP 1 cadre the opportunity to train and develop candidates over the first three weeks to better prepare them for the physical and mental challenges associated with the Cole Range field training exercise. Additionally, for the first time since 2004, marksmanship training was decreased by one week to facilitate the additional training in phase one of the POI. Below is a depiction of the updated RASP 1 model that was approved by the Regimental Headquarters and implemented in January 2018.

 Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 1 2018 - 2019 							
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Indoctrination	Land Navigation Training	RFR and Airborne Operations	Cole Range	Basic Rifle Marksmanship	Marksmanship and Breaching	Marksmanship and Breaching	Graduation
Physical conditioning	8-mile foot march	10-mile foot march	12-mile foot march	Critical event re-tests	ARM: M4/M9 Shoot and move Transitions CQM tables	ARM: M4/M9 Shoot and move Transitions CQM tables	Culminating exercise
Obstacle courses	Progressive day and night land navigation training	RFT	Land navigation assessment: 3x practice iterations and 2x test iterations	M9 (2 days) • Slow aim fire • Grouping			Information briefs
RSAE	Peer evaluations	RFR		M4 (2x days) • Zero and grouping • KD range	RABC: Mechanical, ballistic, and explosive breach	RABC: Mechanical, ballistic, and explosive breach	Out-processing
Ranger history and standards classes		Airborne operation	Classes on knots, battle drills, patrol base activities, and field craft				
Land navigation classes and PE		Trauma lanes			Performance review boards		
T-11 BAR		FRIES					
		Cadre boards	Peer evaluations				
← Phase 1 →				← Phase 2 →			

Figure 28. Depiction of RASP 1 (2018–2019)

Additionally, RSTC cadre and leadership took a critical look at their assessment and selection methods, conduct, and approach to candidate interactions. Since the inception of RASP 2, RASP 2 cadre members had conducted themselves in a stoic manner, never revealing an emotion during their interactions with candidates. Whether it was through a

grueling PT session, training on a marksmanship range, or a classroom block of instruction, the conduct and demeanor of the RASP 2 cadre never altered. Course critiques from previous RASP 2 candidates continuously highlighted the effectiveness of this approach while also reflecting the highest levels of professionalism and discipline.³⁵⁹ With the implementation of the updated RASP 1 POI, RASP 1 cadre adopted a similar approach in their conduct.

In 2019, SFC Raye Perez, a cadre member of RSTC, wrote a white paper titled *Why Wait for Society to Create Our Success?* Perez addressed topics such as culture and leadership and stated, “A deliberate focus on our culture influenced our language, mindset, and brought attention to our true problem. Our new vision was Influence Leadership in the Regiment from the Ground Up. Our culture focused on growing at any cost, valuing student’s time, and preparing for war.”³⁶⁰ In the summer of 2018, RSTC implemented a “growth model” across all the POIs. According to Perez, through the growth model, cadre began “deliberately focusing on our strength of coaching to prime our population potential, all the while trusting our standards and process to objectively remove those that are not yet ready for an assignment within the 75th Ranger Regiment.”³⁶¹ Since the implementation of the new RASP 1 POI and the refined focus of the human domain through the growth model coupled with the overall conduct of RSTC cadre, RASP 1 graduation rates increased to 39 percent in FY 18 and 53 percent in FY 19.³⁶²

The last fundamental change that occurred in August 2018 was the overall pipeline for a RASP 1 volunteer. Since 1984, volunteers that desired to serve within the 75th Ranger Regiment arrived to assessment and selection already airborne qualified. However, RSTC observed that approximately 40 percent of recruits voluntarily withdrew after the

³⁵⁹ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³⁶⁰ Raye Perez, *Why Wait for Society to Create Our Success?* (Fort Benning, GA: 75th Ranger Regiment, 2019), 1.

³⁶¹ Perez, *Why Wait for Society to Create Our Success?*, 2.

³⁶² Perez, *Why Wait for Society to Create Our Success?*, 2.

completion of Airborne School and never attempted RASP 1.³⁶³ Therefor, the Regiment worked with Army Human Resources Command to shift the attendance of Airborne School to after the completion of RASP. The change in the pipeline resulted in the Regiment's ability to receive volunteers that wanted to assess for the organization and as a result, the voluntary withdraw rate went down by nearly 10 percent in RASP 1.³⁶⁴

J. CONCLUSION

In 2019, the Regimental Selection and Training Company not only continued to assess, select, train, and grow future Rangers, but also continued to assess their internal capabilities to impact the culture, discipline, and expectations of the 75th Ranger Regiment. As the Regiment continued to support operations overseas, the demand for highly disciplined, physically fit, and well-trained Rangers persisted across the U.S. Army. The 75th Ranger Regiment, through the Regimental Selection and Training Company, continued to uphold the spirit of General Creighton Abrams' charter by selecting only those that are capable of serving in the most elite light infantry unit in the world.

From 1974, when the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions were reactivated in the U.S. Army to 2019, the assessment and selection programs have evolved. However, one thing that remained constant was the type of Ranger who was selected for service in the 75th Ranger Regiment. While serving as the company 1SG of RSTC in 2011, 1SG Jesse Navarro wrote a paper titled "The Complete Ranger" and said that that through the assessment and selection process, "candidate development is accomplished by focusing on the five major facets that comprise the complete Ranger." The five facets presented by Navarro were: discipline, lethality, physicality, resiliency, and self-awareness.³⁶⁵

In addition to the "complete Ranger," the ability of the Regiment to uphold its standards has not changed since LTC Leuer and CSM Gentry raised 1st Ranger Battalion

³⁶³ Author's collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³⁶⁴ Regimental Selection and Training Company, "RASP Statistics," 75th Ranger Regiment, May 21, 2019.

³⁶⁵ Jesse Navarro, "The Complete Ranger" (unpublished story, 2011), 1-2.

in 1974 and when COL Downing and CSM Carpenter standardized the Regiment in 1984. While specific metrics have evolved, the accountability and demand for every Ranger to uphold equal standards remained unaltered. LTC Leuer said “It’s hard work defending the standards and meeting the standards” but that “they [the NCOs] stuck to the standards, they supported the standards, and they trained their troops to reach those standards.”³⁶⁶ This observation has remained unchanged and was further emphasized in 2011 when the Regiment required leaders who demonstrated potential to serve in higher positions to validate their ability to meet the standards through their attendance to RASP 2.

Lastly, retired LTG Keen and retired CSM Hall recognized that the assessment and selection programs for the 75th Ranger Regiment have always been a product of the war. Using the lineage, traditions, and framework of the RIP and ROP programs as they evolved from 1974 to 2009, it is evident that the 75th Ranger Regiment deliberately evaluated the operational demands through operations in the 1990s and the Global War on Terrorism to form the Ranger Assessment and Selection Programs in 2009. As the operational requirements evolved, so too did the assessment and selection programs.

³⁶⁶ Hall, *The Ranger Book*, 441–42.

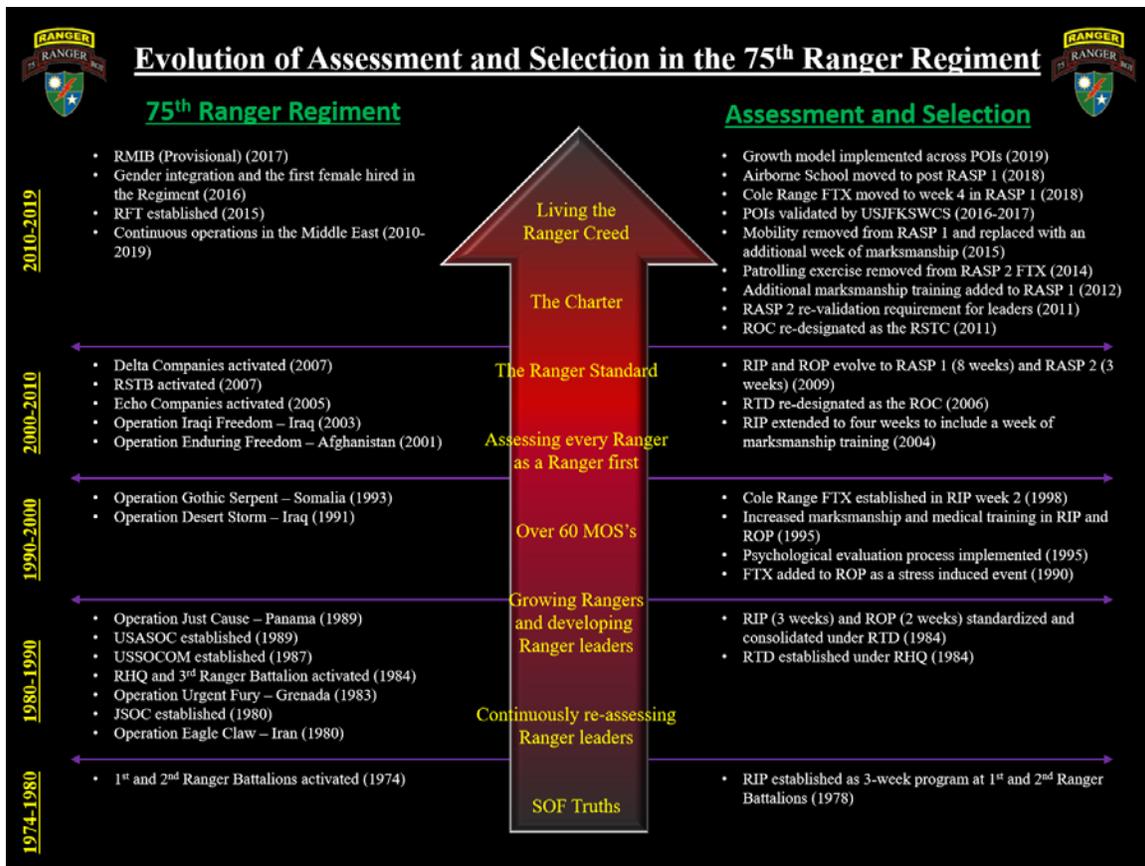


Figure 29. The Evolution of Modern-Day Ranger Assessment and Selection Programs

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VII. CONCLUSION

A. SUMMARY

Since the late 1600s and predating the founding of the United States, the demand for Rangers and Ranger units has been necessary to protect and defend the interests of the American people. Predating the American Revolutionary War, Rangers scouted, patrolled, and raided the American frontier against aggressive Native Americans. As the concept of Ranger-type operations evolved through the twenty-first century, so too did the methods which assessed and selected members for service in Ranger units.

Beginning in 1675 and moving through the mid-1700s, rugged and physically fit frontiersmen served as volunteers under charismatic and intelligent leaders like Benjamin Church and Robert Rogers. Although there was no formal program to assess and select Rangers in Colonial America, Church, Rogers, and other Ranger leaders recruited the best and most experienced marksman that possessed unique skills in forest tactics and survival techniques. Furthermore, the early Ranger units were held to a higher expectation and demanded higher levels of discipline than their conventional counterparts. If a Ranger failed to uphold the standards set by early Ranger units, they were released from the formation. This higher level of discipline was evident through orders such as those received by Church in the formation of Ranger units in 1692 that demanded good order and discipline. As Ranger and elite infantry operations continued to evolve along with warfare and technology through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the character and conduct that established the Ranger lore remained consistent when the United States Army activated Ranger battalions during World War II in the summer of 1942.

While Ranger leaders and units preceding World War II established a Ranger lore that projected a more elite Soldier, the Rangers of World War II not only capitalized on that image, but also established assessment and selection procedures, organizational standards, and training techniques for future Ranger units. The foundation of assessment and selection procedures of Rangers during World War II, was largely a result of the British Commandos and primarily focused on the physical and mental strengths of Ranger volunteers. While each of the six battalions evolved their assessment and selection

programs to fit the operational demands and lessons learned from the war, medical evaluations, interviews, physical conditioning, team-building events, live fire exercises, marksmanship, and fundamental infantry unit training over four to six weeks was emphasized across the various programs. Colonel Darby and other subsequent leaders expected every Ranger to meet the same standards regardless of rank or specialty. Volunteers who failed to uphold the standards set by Ranger leaders and cadre were released back to the conventional Army. Following operations in North Africa, Europe, the Mediterranean, the Philippines, and Burma, the Ranger battalions were all deactivated in 1945 at the end of the war. However, in the summer of 1950, the outbreak of the Korean War again demanded the reactivation of Ranger units in the U.S. Army.

In 1950, fifteen Ranger Infantry Companies (Airborne) (RICAs) and the Eighth Army Ranger Company were activated to serve as elite light infantry units that conducted reconnaissance operations and raids deep into enemy territory. Ranger veterans who served during World War II served as cadre who assisted with the assessment, selection, and training of Ranger volunteers during the Korean War. Similar to the assessment and selection methods established by the British Commandos and further refined by Colonel Darby and other Ranger leaders during World War II, the Ranger companies of the Korean War were assessed and selected in similar fashion. However, dissimilar to Ranger units of the past, the establishment of the Ranger Training Center at Fort Benning, Georgia, was the first attempt in Ranger history to consolidate and standardize the assessment and selection of Ranger volunteers. Except for the Eighth Army Ranger Company, all Ranger companies endured a three-week program at Fort Benning that emphasized physical conditioning, individual and advanced fundamental skills training, and formal interviews or boards that determined a recruit's final selection. Following the war and the deactivation of the Ranger companies in 1951, the Army recognized the importance of producing Ranger qualified leaders throughout the force; therefore, the Ranger Training Center remained operational and continued to award the Ranger tab to those that completed the course.

As the United States was engaged in the Cold War and entered Vietnam in the 1960s, the demand for Ranger-type units in the U.S. Army arose once again. With the rise

of counterinsurgency operations, the need for specially selected and well-trained elite and special operations units became more evident across the U.S. military. Beginning as Army Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) units in Europe and expanding to support operations in Vietnam in 1966, LRRP units conducted reconnaissance operations as well as highly sensitive raids behind enemy lines. In recognition of the similarity between LRRP and Ranger-type operations, fifteen LRRP units were re-designated by the United States Army as Ranger companies in 1969. The assessment and selection of LRRP and Ranger companies was conducted internally to the units that they supported and often only consisted of a two to three-week course focused on physical conditioning and fundamental reconnaissance training that included rotary wing operations, land navigation, and combat patrols. After the completion of an assessment and selection program, a LRRP or Ranger unit member was not entirely accepted into the unit until they successfully completed one to three combat patrols. Two-week replacement programs continued to run throughout the Vietnam War; however, by 1972 when the war was coming to an end, all but two active duty Ranger Companies were deactivated.

As Ranger units went through periods of activation and deactivation through World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam, the continuous demand for Rangers was evident in the U.S. Army. However, under the direct influence of General Creighton Abrams, the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions were permanently reactivated in 1974. From 1974 to 1984, 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions ran separate assessment and selection programs. However, when the 3rd Ranger Battalion and the Regimental Headquarters were established in 1984, so too was a standardized assessment and selection program. From 1984 to 2019, the assessment and selection of members for the 75th Ranger Regiment continued to evolve with the expansion of the special operations community as well as operational demands. Through the assessment and selection of initial recruits and continuous re-assessment of its active members, the 75th Ranger Regiment has continuously set the example across not only the U.S. Army as an elite light infantry force but has arguably served as a standard-bearer across the entire joint special operations enterprise.

B. FINDINGS

After qualitative analysis relating to the evolution of the assessment and selection of Rangers from 1675 to 2019, it is evident that the methods and programs employed to support force generation within Ranger units across history have continuously demanded the best available Soldiers, have emphasized the importance of selecting every Ranger as a Ranger first, and have conformed to operational demands. As programs and processes evolved, the fundamental events to assess the physical, mental, and psychological qualities of Ranger volunteers have characteristically remained the same. Additionally, even though the life experiences of modern-day Rangers vary from that of their predecessors, many of the individual characteristics and attributes to be selected as a Ranger have conceptually remained unchanged since the genesis of the American Ranger in 1675.

Although several components have remained unaffected throughout Ranger history, further analysis identified several institutional changes in the ways Rangers have been assessed. A review of Ranger units, such as those in Vietnam, identified a tendency to rush the assessment and selection process to meet wartime demands. The replacement requirements of Ranger units in Vietnam resulted in Ranger recruits only receiving two weeks of assessment and training before being assigned to a LRRP or Ranger company. This condensed timeline placed higher risk on the selection of volunteers due to the absence of a more holistic assessment process.

While programs to assess Rangers preceding or succeeding the Vietnam War prioritized longer selection courses and supplementary training, the additional time allotted to each program allowed Ranger cadre and leaders to properly and effectively select the right people for such an elite unit. An example of this was in 2009 when Colonel Kurilla pushed for the development of the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program. The expansion and professionalization of the Regiment's premier programs not only gained the 75th Ranger Regiment credibility but ultimately produced a more capable Ranger.

An additional finding that varied across Ranger units throughout history was the inconsistency in selecting the Ranger cadre who were charged with the responsibility of facilitating the assessment and selection of future Rangers. Retired CSM George Conrad recognized that "selecting high quality and competent Ranger cadre was the first and most

important step to ensure the Regiment received high quality and competent Rangers.” Additionally, in 2011, Dick Couch was given unlimited access to the newly implemented RASP programs and observed that the cadre were “superb Rangers and role models—they are the equal, and then some, of any I’ve encountered in other SOF training venues.”³⁶⁷

However, despite these observations, the subjective analysis provided by current and former Ranger leaders recalled that the professionalization and competency of the Regiment’s cadre have not always been optimal.³⁶⁸ Based off similar observations in 2017 and personal communications with COL Joe Ewers and CSM Curtis Donaldson, commander and CSM of the RSTB in 2018, both recognized the impact and importance of the cadre team and concurred that “the first impression that a Ranger recruit is going to get is from an NCO in the RSTC and based off that impression, that candidate is going to make a decision on their future in the 75th Ranger Regiment.”³⁶⁹ Therefore, in the summer of 2018 COL Brandon Tegtmeier and CSM Michael Albaugh again placed the necessary command emphasis to ensure that the Regimental Selection and Training Company was manned with the best leaders the Regiment had to offer.

As Ranger units have assessed and selected Rangers for service in what is known as the most elite light infantry unit in the world, a premium was always placed on the standards and discipline of individual Rangers as well as the Ranger unit. Retired General W. F. “Buck” Kernan, the sixth Colonel of the Regiment from June 1989 to July 1991 highlighted that “There are no double standards... There is a standard for everything they do, and they hold themselves to that standard, never leaving a task until every member of the team has met it. This builds pride, cohesion, and professionalism. Discipline is demanded, and a Ranger takes personal pride in displaying that in all aspects of his duties.

³⁶⁷ Dick Couch, *Sua Sponte: The Forging of a Modern American Ranger*, (New York: Penguin, 2013), 210.

³⁶⁸ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

³⁶⁹ Author’s collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

In holding themselves to this rigid standard, there is little room for compromise; minor infractions can result in relief from the Regiment.”³⁷⁰

However, according to an interview on November 1, 2019 with Dr. Kalev Sepp, a former member of 2nd Ranger Battalion from 1977 to 1979, he stated that in an officer’s call in 1978 with 2nd Battalion officers, then-Colonel Downing was questioned about physical standards for the battalion. Sepp remembered that Downing admitted to making a mistake while serving as the 1st Ranger Battalion executive officer when he expected all the battalion’s support personnel to meet the same physical standards as the combat soldiers, and further stated that “I ran off some of the best support personnel in the Army, and I was wrong.” However, in 1984 when Downing was selected to command the Regiment, he recognized the damaging impact of this philosophy to the culture of the organization and reverted to a philosophy of standardization that was uniform across the organization. Whether it be the insight of Downing, or the attempt of other leaders in the Regiment to enact such things as probation policies for critical support specialties, the Regiment continued to revert back to equality in standards and the philosophy that every Ranger is a Ranger first. Retired CSM Michael Hall reiterated this philosophy and said that “A Ranger is a Ranger, first and foremost, no matter his rank, military occupational specialty, or duty position... All are bound by the Ranger standard.”³⁷¹ It is this philosophy that continues to set Rangers apart from other elite and special operations units and has established a culture that is grounded on pride, discipline, and accountability.

C. THE ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION OF FUTURE RANGERS

Based on the facts presented throughout this thesis and the findings presented above, the future assessment and selection of Rangers and Ranger leaders needs first to recognize that the strength of the assessment and selection process resides with the strength of the cadre. If the Regiment fails to assign its best and most qualified members as cadre, it will not receive the same from the Rangers it produces. Next, while remaining aware of

³⁷⁰ Couch, *Sua Sponte*, xii-xiii.

³⁷¹ Couch, *Sua Sponte*, xvii.

the operational demands of the Regiment, the assessment and selection process must remain focused on the fundamentals. Leaders and cadre of the 75th Ranger Regiment must not let operational demands or changes in the operational environment detract from the importance of fundamental Soldier skills. The assessment and selection process identifies Rangers who can meet the Ranger standard and will embody the responsibilities prescribed in the Ranger Creed. Following successful selection, the battalions will train Rangers to meet operational requirements. Lastly, every Ranger must be assessed as a Ranger first. Many leaders have highlighted the significance of this expectation and how it has created and preserved a culture of trust, equality, and cohesion that must never be lost.

In addition to the above recommendations, the direct application of the SOF Truths must also not be lost on future assessment and selection programs. The SOF Truths were proposed in a report to Congress in 1987 by John Collins, a retired Army Colonel and defense researcher for the Congressional Research Service.³⁷² In 1991, General Wayne Downing, then-commander of USASOC, approved the implementation of the SOF Truths as basic guidance across the force. Although a fifth SOF Truth was added in 2009, the SOF Truths approved by General Downing in 1991 and still remaining in 2019 were:

- Humans are more important than hardware.
- Quality is better than quantity.
- Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced.
- Competent Special Operations Forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.³⁷³

This thesis presented a qualitative review and analysis of the evolution of the assessment and selection of Rangers from 1675 to 2019. However, future studies are

³⁷² John Collins, *United States and Soviet Special Operations: A Study by the Congressional Research Service Library of Congress*, 72–338, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 1987), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015039055655&view=1up&seq=1>.

³⁷³ John Friberg, “SOF Truths,” SOF News, October 28, 2017, <http://www.sof.news/sof/sof-truths/>.

required to provide a more quantitative assessment of whether the programs are effectively meeting the organizational and operational demands of the Regiment. The only quantitative analysis presented in this thesis was the available data relating to selection rates across various Ranger assessment and selection programs. However, this analysis was not correlated to the success or failure of a specific program or change. Future leaders must not attribute selection rates to success or failure of a selection program. Instead, a mixed-method approach to both qualitative and quantitative data relating to the service of Rangers after selection must be analyzed to determine the success or failure of a specific program. CSM Michael Hall stated that “assessment and selection is neither the beginning or the end of the process. It is only part of the process.”

In closing, the proud and honorable lineage established by Ranger veterans of the past has continued to permeate through the ranks of the 75th Ranger Regiment. Unwavering standards, unsurmountable esprit de corps, the pursuit of excellence, and the relentless commitment to the nation continues to define the Ranger way of life. Rangers selected for service in the most elite light infantry unit in the world stand ready to defeat the nation’s enemies by land, sea, or air at a moment’s notice.

Rangers Lead the Way!

APPENDIX. HISTORY OF THE RANGER CREED

Below is the unpublished history of the Ranger Creed. While similar publications exist on the Ranger Creed, this was authored by the 75th Ranger Regiment and presents additional details that cannot be found elsewhere. It describes how the creed was developed by CSM Neil Gentry and other members of the 1st Ranger Battalion in the summer of 1974 and what it represents to the members of the 75th Ranger Regiment.³⁷⁴ Below is the unedited version of the history of the Ranger Creed that has been circulated throughout the 75th Ranger Regiment:

Every living Ranger knows and understands the Ranger Creed. It is a living embodiment of a personal and organizational philosophy. It sustains the individual and the unit in its darkest hours and most perilous exposures. It is posted on walls of living quarters around the world where Rangers live and have lived. It is referred to by many non-Rangers as a secret basis for their own existence and personal beliefs. It transcends all other motivations of the individual. It defines the person and the organization-It is what is and what all believe.

The Ranger Creed states what a Ranger as an individual stands for, what he will do and for the unit, what it must do. It is simple, clear and unambiguous and that is both its strength and its glory.

The Ranger Creed

Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession, I will always endeavor to uphold the prestige, honor, and high esprit de corps of my Ranger Regiment.

Acknowledging the fact that a Ranger is a more elite soldier who arrives at the cutting edge of battle by land, sea, or air, I accept the fact that as a Ranger my country expects me to move farther, faster and fight harder than any other soldier.

³⁷⁴ Author's collection, Monterey, CA, 2019.

Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong and morally straight and I will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be. One-hundred-percent and then some.

Gallantly will I show the world that I am a specially selected and well-trained soldier. My courtesy to superior officers, neatness of dress and care of equipment shall set the example for others to follow.

Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country. I shall defeat them on the field of battle for I am better trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is not a Ranger word. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission though I be the lone survivor.

RANGERS LEAD THE WAY!

The origin of the Ranger Creed goes back to the formation of the renewed Ranger Battalion concept in 1974 as well as to the concept of the Creed as a unifying philosophy in the beginnings of Christianity. As the concept of a specific form of Church evolved before Christ, various sects devised the concept of a defined creed to identify them from others. The most famous being the Nicene Creed of 400 A.D. It simply stated the personal philosophy and belief of its adherents so as to separate itself from others-so does the Ranger Creed. It is the embodiment of the soul of the individual and the organization in which he serves.

Throughout recorded history, every great Nation has had a small military organization that was utterly reliable and totally dependable to accomplish the mission of the moment or disintegrate itself trying. It was both the model of the best that military structure possessed as well as its last resort. The Greek Hoplites, Caesar's Tenth Legion, Napoleons Old Reliables, the British Household Guards and the American Ranger, each had a Creed as the basis for binding and bonding their membership into a cohesive mass that thought and acted alike, shared common values and forsook privations while relegating personal desires for the greater good. In the darkest of moments and the in the most tenuous

of times, the Creed focused the members and caused ordinary people to achieve extraordinary things. It was the foundation of the organizational soul.

The outbreak of the 1973 Middle East War prompted the Department of the Army to be concerned about the need for a light mobile force that could be moved quickly to any trouble spot in the world. In the fall of 1973, General Creighton Abrams, Army Chief of Staff formulated the idea of the reformation of the first battalion-sized Ranger units since World War II. In January 1974, he sent a message to the field directing formation of a Ranger Battalion. He selected its missions and picked the first officers. He felt a tough, disciplined and elite Ranger unit would set a standard for the rest of the U.S. Army and that, as Rangers “graduated “ from Ranger units to Regular Army units, their influence would improve the entire Army. The first officer selected was LTC K.C. Leuer.

LTC Leuer received a call in mid-February of 1974 to go to Lawson Army Airfield and report to Gen Bill DePuy-then the TRADOC Commander. At the VIP reception room at Lawson, Gen DePuy presented LTC Leuer with the now famous Abrams Charter:

“The battalion is to be an elite, light, and the most proficient infantry in the world. A battalion that can do things with its hands and weapons better than anyone. The battalion will contain no “hoodlums or brigands” and if the battalion is formed from such persons, it will be disbanded. Wherever the battalion goes, it must be apparent that it is the best. “ Gen DePuy then went on to state that “Abe wants you to create a Creed that will serve as the guiding light for the Rangers to train, fight and live by.” This was to embody a set of personal and organizational standards that would migrate throughout the Army as soldiers came and left the unit. LTC Leuer then had to determine how to accomplish all of the above.

LTC Leuer, determined that the device of a Creed was such a necessary and fundamental part of the evolving Ranger experience that it must be established during the formative period.

He believed that this Creed must be so compelling and so clear as to attach the individual to the unit and to define the system of standards and quality necessary for the First Ranger Battalion. He assigned the original draft task to CSM Neil Gentry, the First

CSM. LTC Leuer believed that the acceptance and promulgation of the Creed by the Ranger NCO corps would be the only way in which it would be lastingly inculcated and imbedded in the Ranger ethos. This was not going to be an issue that would expire at his change of command.

CSM Gentry, as a recent CSM of the Airborne Department, used the existing Airborne Creed as his start point.

The Airborne Creed

I volunteered as a parachutist, fully realizing the hazard of my chosen service and by my thoughts and actions will always uphold the prestige, honor and high esprit-de-corps of parachute troops.

I realize that a parachutist is not merely a soldier who arrives by parachute to fight, but is an elite shock trooper and that his country expects him to march farther and faster, to fight harder, and to be more self-reliant than any other soldier. Parachutists of all allied armies belong to this great brotherhood.

I shall never fail my fellow comrades by shirking any duty or training, but will always keep myself mentally and physically fit and shoulder my full share of the task, whatever it may be.

I shall always accord my superiors fullest loyalty and I will always bear in mind the sacred trust I have in the lives of the men I will accompany into battle.

I shall show other soldiers by my military courtesy, neatness of dress and care of my weapons and equipment that I am a picked and well trained soldier.

I shall endeavor always to reflect the high standards of training and morale of parachute troops.

I shall respect the abilities of my enemies, I will fight fairly and with all my might. Surrender is not in my creed.

I shall display a high degree of initiative and will fight on to my objective and mission, though I be the lone survivor.

I shall prove my ability as a fighting man against the enemy on the field of battle, not by quarreling with my comrades in arms or by bragging about my deeds.

I shall always realize that battles are won by an army fighting as a team, that I fight first and blaze the path into battle for others to follow and to carry the battle on.

I belong to the finest unit in the world. By my actions and deeds alone, I speak for my fighting ability. I will strive to uphold the honor and prestige of my outfit, making my country proud of me and of the unit to which I belong.

In turn, the U.S. Airborne Creed, as developed by the USAIS Airborne School, was adopted after a study of the WW II German Fallschirmjager Creed.

Fallschirmjager Creed

You are the chosen ones of the German Army. You will seek combat and train yourself to endure any manner of test. To you the battle shall be the fulfillment.

Cultivate true comradeship, for by the aid of your comrades you will conquer or die.

Beware of talking. Be not corruptible. Men act while women chatter. Chatter may bring you to your grave.

Be calm and prudent, strong and resolute. Valour and enthusiasm of an offensive spirit will cause you to prevail in the attack.

The most precious thing in the presence of the foe is ammunition. He who shoots uselessly, merely to comfort himself, is a man of straw. He is a weakling who merits not the title of Fallschirmjager.

Never surrender. To you, death or victory must be a point of honor.

You can triumph only if your weapons are good. See to it that you submit to this law - first my weapons, then myself.

You must grasp the full purport of every enterprise, so that if your leader be killed you can yourself fulfill it.

Against an open foe fight with chivalry, but to a guerrilla extend no quarter.

Keep your eyes wide open. Tune yourself to the topmost pitch. Be nimble as the greyhound, as tough as leather, as hard as Krupp steel, and so you shall be the German Warrior incarnate.

CSM Gentry, with assistance from several enlisted Ranger battalion candidates, developed this draft of the Ranger Creed in June of 1974.

The Ranger Creed-Draft

Realizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen service, and by my actions will always uphold the prestige, honor, and high “esprit de corps” of the Ranger Battalion.

Acknowledging the fact that a Ranger is not merely a more elite soldier who arrives at the “cutting edge of battle,” by land, air, or sea, but one whose country expects him to move farther and faster than any other soldier.

Never shall I fail my comrades by shirking any duty or training, but I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong and morally straight and will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be, 100 percent and then some.

Graciously I shall show the world by the courtesy to superior officers and noncommissioned officers, by neatness of dress, by care of my own equipment that I am especially selected and a well trained Ranger.

Every day I shall respect the abilities of my enemies, but remember that I am better trained and can defeat him on the fields of battle, for I shall fight with all my might. Surrender is not a Ranger word, and I will never leave a fallen comrade whereby he may fall into enemy hands. I shall never embarrass my country under any circumstances.

Realistically I shall display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objectives and complete the mission, though I be the lone survivor.

“RANGERS LEAD THE WAY!”

LTC Leuer then passed the draft to Major Rock Hudson, battalion XO, for final refinement. “The Rock” further revised it to the point where LTC Leuer felt it was sufficiently polished to “go final.” Accordingly, in July of 1974, he had a Commander’s Call at the Ft Stewart headquarters with company commanders, staff and 1sgt’s. The group made small adjustments to the point where it is today. The next issue then was how to

disseminate it and attach its manifest and emotional significance so it was as imbedded within each Ranger as the concept of PT and Road Marches.

The Creed was discussed at length by the commanders and senior NCO's and its import quickly became apparent. This was a core item that would provide the Rangers a unique identity and be a right of passage providing both a psychological as well as real inclusion device for both individuals and the unit.

Each NCO and Officer was provided a copy of the Creed and required to train his people to memorize it. Evening sessions in squad bays reverberated with the Creed. New Ranger volunteers stumbled over the stanzas in front of a less than sympathetic squad leader. Rangers marching from barracks to mess to details all repeated it as a march cadence. And LTC Leuer led the way. The Monday morning Battalion PT, led by the battalion commander, was the key effective "instructional device" for the Creed.

The cadre soon learned that if the Commander made a passing comment or musing at the daily Commander's Call, it was a precursor for a public demonstration. One day, very early after arrival from Ft Benning, he mentioned that stanzas of the Creed might be a good "wakeup" device at PT. Battalion PT was where every officer and NCO was vulnerable to exposure-hence there was a deliberate effort by the entire cadre to study those lines before Lights Out.

On the PT stand, in the dark, foggy and humid wrap of Ft Stewart in the Summer, LTC Leuer would say- "Commander Company B. First Stanza of the Ranger Creed." That officer would then recite at top volume the right or wrong words. He did this for the entire Creed randomly selecting positions so no one was able to guess their vulnerability for demonstrated excellence. Very quickly, every leader got it right. What man wanted to publicly fail in front of his men and all others? If the Red Cockaded woodpecker could speak like a parrot, generations of Georgians who never wore a uniform would know the Creed by heart.

As the battalion grew and its cadre migrated to 2-75 and later 3-75 and Regiment, the Creed went with them as did the standards and what it meant to be a Ranger-exactly as General Abrams and Gen DePuy envisioned. With Grenada and Urgent Fury, the Ranger's

gained National public recognition as being the best of the best and the Ranger Creed became the definition of a Ranger.

The present Ranger Creed clearly established a precedent within the U.S. Army as a tool to define its soldiers and for the soldiers to define themselves.

U.S. Army Creed

I am an American Soldier.
I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.
I will always place the mission first.
I will never accept defeat.
I will never quit.
I will never leave a fallen comrade.
I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.
I am an expert and I am a professional.
I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.
I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.
I am an American Soldier.

The Ranger Creed has grown from a memorized set of stanzas uncertainly repeated on a dark humid PT field at Ft Stewart, Georgia to a near universal guide to life, duty and performance for any person exposed to its words. The Creed is posted on walls around the world wherever Rangers have been and do their work. It is carefully folded and carried in thousands of rucksacks and notebooks. It resides on plaques and mementoes of retired Rangers and is indelibly etched in the mind of any soldier, sailor, airman or Marine who has worn the Tab or been associated with the Regiment or RTB.

The Creed is the first thing spoken in the morning and the last at night. It is the last non-operational item a Ranger will discuss before executing his assigned Ranger mission or jumping out the door into hostile territory.

The Ranger Creed is both the comfort and the courage that opens the wellsprings of the individual soldier and converts him from an ordinary to an extraordinary soldier and makes him truly the glory of our nation.

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