



# THE RANGER COURSE

BY CPT ERNEST W. COOLER

For the past 29 years, the Ranger Department of the United States Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, has conducted the Ranger Course. Although many of the methods used in teaching the course have changed over the years, the goal has remained constant — to train selected officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men in leadership and in patrolling tactics and techniques.

The Ranger Department conducts 14 classes per year of 150 students each. (In Fiscal Year 1981, the number of students per class is expected to increase to 200.) Unfortunately, many soldiers who apply for the course are not eligible to attend it, while others may be eligible but not fully qualified. Even among the soldiers who are both eligible and qualified, many do not know what the course is really like or what to bring with them when they come to Fort Benning to attend the course.

Accordingly, this article has been prepared as a step-by-step guide for the prospective Ranger student, from who can apply to who can be a Distinguished Honor Graduate.

### Who Can Apply And How To Do It

First, all applications are voluntary. Officers and noncommissioned officers of any branch of the Army, and of other services and nations as well, may apply. Enlisted men who hold a specialist rank or who are below the rank of sergeant must first submit a waiver of NCO grade to: Director, Ranger Department, U.S. Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia 31905. The request must include length of service, leadership positions held, MOSs awarded, and the length of time served in each MOS. An approved waiver must accompany the soldier's application to attend the course.

Each applicant must have had a medical examination within one year of his reporting date and must bring with him a record that shows he is medically qualified to attend the course. In addition, each applicant must meet the minimum standards on the Advanced Physical Fitness Test as referenced in DA Pamphlet 351-4, U.S. Army Formal Schools Catalog, dated January 1980, or in FM 21-20. Specifically, he must have a minimum total score of 400 points with at least 70 points in each event. This test must be administered by his parent unit within 30 days of his application.

Each applicant also must have successfully completed the Combat Water Survival Test (CWST), which consists of three stations:

- **The 15-meter swim.** The soldier must be able to swim 15 meters while carrying his rifle and wearing his fatigues, boots, and web equipment (pistol belt, suspenders, two ammunition pouches, and two empty canteens). He must not lose his rifle or his equipment, and he must not show any unusual signs of fear or panic.

- **Equipment removal.** After he enters the water from poolside, the soldier must submerge to a depth of three meters, discard his weapon and web equipment, surface, and swim to the side of the pool without showing unusual signs of fear or panic.

- **The 3-meter drop.** The soldier must walk blindfolded off a 3-meter diving board with his weapon and web equipment. After he enters the water, he must remove his blindfold and swim to the side of the pool without losing any of his

equipment or his weapon and without showing unusual signs of fear or panic.

In addition to these requirements, every applicant must be qualified in the 46 entry skills shown in Figure 1. The sending unit commander must certify the soldier's knowledge in the prescribed military skills, and the soldier must present a copy of that certification during his inprocessing on the day he reports to Fort Benning. Enlisted applicants must have a standard score of 90 or higher in aptitude area CO or IN and must have nine months or more of active duty service remaining after he completes the course.

If an applicant does not bring with him evidence that he has completed the prerequisite skills and requirements, he may not be enrolled. A sample certificate is shown in Figure 2.

No security clearance is required for the course, and no additional obligated service is incurred by active Army commissioned officers for attending the course.

In spite of persistent rumors to the contrary, students do not have to be airborne qualified to attend. From the standpoint of the student, though, this training is desirable, because airborne operations are a part of each phase of the course. Soldiers who are not airborne qualified are inserted into tactical situations by alternate means.

In preparing to attend the Ranger Course, an applicant should be briefed on the course by a Ranger-qualified officer or NCO, and he must be sure he is in top physical condition when he reports for the course. For some reason, few students really believe the course will be as difficult and physically demanding as it really is, and most of those who fail to graduate attribute their failure to a lack of physical preparation.

### What The Student Needs To Bring

Although most of what the students need will be issued to them, there are some things they must bring along when they report.

There are no Class A uniform requirements for students while they are attending the Ranger Course. All those who attend, though, including members of other U.S. services and from other nations, must have a proper uniform for travel purposes in accordance with the regulations of their particular services.

The following uniforms and equipment are *required* for all students.

- A minimum of six sets of fatigue uniforms; eight sets are recommended. One set must have all authorized patches and insignia attached. The rest will be stripped except for the OD name tape and the "U.S. Army" tape.

- Three pairs of combat boots, all of which should be well broken in before the course begins. (Jungle boots are not authorized in the mountain phase of the course between 15 October and 15 April, and they are not a substitute for the required combat boots at any time of year.) Insulated boots are not authorized.

- A minimum of 12 pairs of cushion-sole socks.

- At least six sets of underwear, winter or summer.

- Two pairs of long underwear are required only during the winter.

- Identification card and identification tags.

PREREQUISITE SKILLS

1. "Perform Mouth-to-Mouth Resuscitation and External Heart Massage"  
TASK 081-831-1004
2. "Stop Bleeding (Arm or Leg)"  
TASK 081-831-1005
3. "Identify the Signs of and Treat for Shock"  
TASK 081-831-1006
4. "Apply First Aid Measures for Burns"  
TASK 081-831-1008
5. "Call for/Adjust Indirect Fire"  
TASK 061-283-6003
6. "Camouflage/Conceal Self and Individual Equipment"  
TASK 051-202-1001
7. "Camouflage/Conceal Defensive Positions"  
TASK 051-202-1003
8. "Select Temporary Battlefield Positions"  
TASK 071-326-0513
9. "Construct Individual Fighting Position"  
TASK 071-326-5703
10. "Clear Fields of Fire"  
TASK 071-331-0852
11. "Supervise/Evaluate Construction of a Fighting Position"  
TASK 071-326-5704
12. "Use Challenge and Password"  
TASK 071-331-0801
13. "Process Known or Suspected Enemy Personnel"  
TASK 071-331-0802
14. "Collect/Report Information — SALUTE"  
TASK 071-331-0803
15. "Conduct Day and Night Surveillance without the Aid of Electronic Devices"  
TASK 071-331-0804
16. "Perform Operator Maintenance on Radio Sets; AN/PRC-77 or AN/VRC-64"  
TASK 113-587-3005
17. "Operate Radio Set AN/PRC-77 or AN/PRC-25"  
TASK 113-587-2001
18. "Identify Terrain Features (Natural and Manmade) on the Map"  
TASK 071-329-1001
19. "Determine the Grid Coordinates of a Point on a Military Map Using the Military Grid Reference System"  
TASK 071-329-1002
20. "Determine a Magnetic Azimuth Using a Compass"  
TASK 071-329-1003
21. Determine the Elevation of a Point on the Ground Using a Map"  
TASK 071-329-1004
22. "Determine a Location on the Ground by Terrain Association"  
TASK 071-329-1005
23. "Navigate from one Position on the Ground to Another Point"  
TASK 071-329-1006
24. "Determine Distance While Moving Between Two Points on the Ground"  
TASK 071-329-1007
25. "Measure Distance on a Map"  
TASK 071-329-1008
26. "Convert Azimuths (Grid or Magnetic)"  
TASK 071-329-1009
27. "Determine Azimuths Using a Coordinate Scale and Protractor"  
TASK 071-329-1010
28. "Orient a Map Using a Compass"  
TASK 071-329-1011
29. "Orient a Map to the Ground by Map-Terrain Association"  
TASK 071-329-1012
30. "Locate an Unknown Point on a Map or on the Ground by Intersection"  
TASK 071-329-1014
31. "Locate an Unknown Point on a Map or on the Ground by Resection"  
TASK 071-329-1015
32. "Construct a Nonelectric (Initiation) Detonating Assembly"  
TASK 051-193-1503
33. "Prime a Demolition Block Nonelectrically"  
TASK 051-193-1003
34. "Construct an Electric (Initiation) Detonating Assembly"  
TASK 051-193-1004
35. "Prime Demolition Block Electrically"  
TASK 051-193-1005
36. "Connect Electrical Firing Circuits"  
TASK 051-193-1006
37. "Clear Demolition Misfires (Above Ground)"  
TASK 051-193-1502
38. "Inspect Personnel/Equipment"  
TASK 071-328-5301
39. "Supervise Maintenance on Individual and TOE Equipment"  
TASK 071-328-5302
40. "Enforce Preventive Medicine Program (Includes Personal Hygiene)"  
TASK 071-328-5304
41. "Control Rate and Distribution of Fire"  
TASK 071-326-5501
42. "Prepare and Issue an Oral Squad Operation Order"  
TASK 071-326-5505
43. "Supervise the Preparation of a Squad Defensive Position"  
TASK 071-326-5701
44. "Establish an Observation Post (OP)"  
TASK 071-326-5705
45. "Supervise Subordinates"  
NOTE: Not a Soldiers Manual task. Refer to FM 22-10, Military Leadership, Chapter 2, and Ranger Handbook, Chapter 1 (APL Checklist)
46. "EIB Road March"  
NOTE: Volunteers should be able to participate in a road march in accordance with the standards specified in paragraph 3-2B, AR 672-12, Expert Infantryman's Badge; additional reference: FM 21-18, Foot Marches.

Figure 1

- One baseball cap.
- Two black web waist belts with buckles.
- Three pairs of boot-blousing garters.
- One pair of black leather shell gloves.
- Two pairs of glove inserts.
- A pocket-size notebook, pens and pencils.
- A shaving brush and a toothbrush for cleaning weapons.
- Five pairs of nylon bootlaces (extra).
- A duffel bag with lock.
- Three combination padlocks.
- Two pairs eyeglasses, for those students who wear them. (Contact lenses are not allowed in Ranger training.) Two sets of retainer bands for glasses are recommended.

- A pile cap.
- A wristwatch that is inexpensive but durable.

In addition to the above required equipment, the following items are *highly recommended*, but they are not required:

- A hunting knife (or large pocket knife) and whetstone.
- Plastic waterproof bags.
- A map case.
- A sewing kit.
- Black friction tape.
- Two plastic protractors.
- Four OD T-shirts as a minimum.

All other required clothing and equipment is issued by the Ranger training companies.

The normal dates for seasonal change of uniform at Fort Benning are 1 April and 1 November. Students whose classes extend from one season into the other must have uniforms that are appropriate for both seasons.

Because of limited off-duty time and limited storage space, students should bring only a minimum amount of civilian clothing with them. Students are not permitted to store luggage in the billets, but some space is provided for storing other items.

Students who travel to Fort Benning on temporary duty (TDY) only to attend the Ranger Course are encouraged *not* to bring dependents. They will be given just three passes during the course; each pass is limited to eight hours and is given at a time specified by the Ranger Company. Students who plan to attend other courses at Fort Benning, such as IOBC and airborne, might find it advantageous to have their dependents accompany them. Reasonable dependent housing can be obtained off post, and the post's Housing Referral Office can help. Government family quarters are *not* available to students who are assigned to Fort Benning on TDY.

Students should bring enough money to defray initial expenses for food, laundry, and incidentals, because pay may not be available to them at Fort Benning until a week or two after they report. TDY checks will be available when the class returns from the mountain phase of training during the sixth week of the course.

### Where And How To Report

All incoming students must report to the 3d Ranger Company in the Harmony Church area of Fort Benning *before* 1700 on their reporting date. The company is located 12 miles from the Main Post area, and there are directional signs on post and

DISPOSITION FORM			
For use of this form, see AR 340-12, the proponent agency is TAGCEN.			
REFERENCE OR OFFICE SYMBOL	SUBJECT		
	Certificate of Completion of Ranger Course Requirements		
TO	FROM	DATE	GMT
Commandant, USAIS ATTN: ATSH-R Fort Benning, GA 31905			
1. This is to certify that _____ has:			
a. Completed the Advanced Physical Fitness Test and scored at least 400 points with at least 70 in each event.			
TOTAL SCORE:	_____	SIT-UPS:	_____
HORIZONTAL LADDER:	_____	INVERTED CRAWL:	_____
RUN, DODGE AND JUMP:	_____	2-MILE RUN:	_____
b. Completed the Combat Water Survival Test successfully IAW DA Pam 351-4.			
c. Demonstrated his proficiency in the Ranger Course prerequisite skills IAW DA Pam 351-4, January 1980 or later.			
2. These tests were given within 180 days of the applicant's reporting date.			
			_____
			Commanding
Figure 2			

DA FORM 2496

REPLACES DD FORM 2496, WHICH IS OBSOLETE.

on Highway 27 south of Columbus, Georgia.

Each incoming Ranger student must have in his possession his health and dental records, his 201 file, his pay records, 10 copies of his orders, and his certificate of entry skills.

Officers who arrive before the starting date for their class must provide their own living accommodations, either at the BOQ on Main Post or off post, until their class starts. Enlisted personnel are billeted at the 3rd Ranger Company. Once they are enrolled, *all* students must live in the Ranger company barracks.

The billets for Ranger students are uniformly arranged, and cleanliness and security of Government and personal equipment are primary concerns. The student chain of command is responsible for insuring that the billets are ready for inspection at all times.

There is a lighted, fenced, and locked parking lot in the company area where students may park their personal vehicles for the duration of the course. Vehicles that belong to students who are at Fort Benning only to attend the Ranger Course do not have to be registered on post as long as they are parked in this lot.

All of the students eat in the Ranger company dining facilities. The rates charged for each meal are in accordance with the current regulations, and officers pay for meals at the end of each phase. Payment by personal check is permitted. Enlisted men on separate rations are not charged for their meals at the end of each phase, but payment for their meals is deducted from their separate rations allowances.

All financial matters, including monthly pay, travel pay, and per diem, are administered by the 3d Ranger Company at Fort Benning. Pay for allied students is administered by the Allied Student Training Division, U.S. Army Infantry School.

## What The Student Can Expect

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The Ranger Course lasts for eight weeks and two days and is divided into three phases. Because each phase is taught in a different geographic location, the terrain the students cover varies from steep and rugged mountains to coastal, tidal swamps. The physically demanding nature of the course is reflected in the 30 percent attrition rate in most classes.

The first phase of training, conducted at Fort Benning, is 19 days in length. The second phase, at Camp Frank D. Merrill in the mountains of north Georgia, lasts for 17 days. The third phase, 18 days long, is conducted at Camp James E. Rudder, which is part of Eglin Air Force Base in northwest Florida. The remaining four days are for travel, in- and outprocessing, and graduation.

The structure of the course is progressive in that each phase is designed to prepare the students for the training they will receive in the subsequent phases.

The Fort Benning phase provides the basic instruction and preparation for the more demanding training that follows. In

this first phase, the students receive extensive physical conditioning and technical training in the basic skills of patrolling. Patrolling is taught in great detail, because it provides the vehicle by which the students are placed in the leadership situations in which they are evaluated.

The instruction during the Benning phase is divided into three subphases. First, through demonstrations the students are told what they are to do and how well they must do it, after which they rotate through stations where they are shown how to perform each action of the patrolling operation and are allowed to practice it. At the end of this "county fair" style of training, the Ranger students have a good foundation upon which to base their future tactical operations.

The students then move to Camp Darby, which is in a remote corner of the Fort Benning Reservation. Here they take part in cadre-led patrols. Highly qualified Ranger instructors act as the patrol leaders, going through each action of the patrolling operation from planning through execution, showing the students how a patrol leader should function.

During the second subphase of the training at Fort Benning,



practice is emphasized. Each student gets to lead at least two nongraded practice patrols, while Ranger instructors accompany them to critique and evaluate their performances in these leadership positions.

After these ungraded leadership exercises, the third sub-phase consists of one student-led patrol that is graded. This operation is a squad-sized airborne/airmobile reconnaissance patrol. On this and all subsequent patrolling operations, Ranger instructors accompany the patrols to grade the students and to critique and counsel them on their performance.

Having learned the basic patrolling skills during the Fort Benning phase of training, the students move to Camp Merrill at Dahlonega, Georgia, where they undergo several days of training in techniques that are peculiar to the mountain environment. These include communications, rope bridges, and mountaineering.

While in the mountains the students participate in three tactical operations, which vary from two to five days long. Each student is evaluated on his leadership ability on at least two occasions.

When they leave the mountains, the students move back to Fort Benning to prepare for their insertion into Florida. This insertion, called Operation STILLETTO, places the students in a jungle and swamp environment by means of an airborne assault on an objective near Camp Rudder. (As mentioned earlier, those who are not airborne qualified are inserted by other means.)

In Florida the students receive technical training that is designed to acquaint them with the unique requirements of the jungle and swamp environment. These include small boat operations, river crossing operations, tracking and survival, and reptile familiarization.

Once they are acclimated to the Florida environment, the students participate in 12 days of extended combat operations during which they are once again graded on their leadership ability. Airborne, airmobile, rappelling, and small boat operations are among the various means of insertion that are used by the Rangers to engage the enemy forces during their final phase of training. Food and sleep are in short supply, and the students carry the heavy rucksacks full of the equipment they need to accomplish their varied missions.

The Ranger students then return to Fort Benning, where the students who have successfully completed the course participate in a graduation ceremony.

### How The Students Are Evaluated

At the beginning of the course, each student is given a copy of the course's evaluation standards to make sure there is no doubt in his mind as to what is expected of him.

Since the Ranger Course is a course in leadership, this aspect is of primary concern in all of the evaluations. Leadership evaluations are made on the basis of the concept of "totally involved leadership" and "leadership by example." Each student is continually evaluated on his abilities as a small-unit leader, and his leadership ability is determined by how effectively he influences his subordinates and uses his available resources in accomplishing all of his assigned tasks and missions.

The specific requirements are:

**Patrolling/Leadership Evaluation.** Each student is evaluated a minimum of four times in patrolling/leadership and must receive a "GO" in 50 percent of these evaluations. Each student must pass at least one patrol in the mountain phase and one in the Florida phase.

**Skill Evaluation.** Each student must receive a "GO" in all of the events listed below according to the specified standard. Any student who receives a "NO GO" in one of the events may be eliminated immediately.

- Ranger Runs: Each student must successfully complete the five-mile run as well as two of the other four graded runs in order to receive a "GO" in this event.

- Terrain Navigation: Each student must correctly locate four of the six stakes in the prescribed time in order to receive a "GO."

- Performance Examination: Each student must pass all critical areas of the examination in order to receive a "GO."

- Mountaineering Performance Test: Each student must successfully complete three required performance areas (knots, belays, and rappels) to receive a "GO."

**Confidence Test.** Each student must successfully accomplish each of the events listed below. Any student who does not successfully accomplish an event or who refuses to attempt it may be eliminated from the course immediately:

- Log Walk/Rope Drop.

- Suspension Traverse.

- 200-foot Night Rappel (60-foot night rappel during severe weather).

- Helicopter Rappel.

**Critical Incident Reports (CIR).** These reports are established to provide an additional means of evaluating student performance, particularly when the students are in non-graded positions. They reflect both good and bad performance. They are divided into four categories — major satisfactory, minor satisfactory, major unsatisfactory, and minor unsatisfactory. Three minor CIRs are equivalent to one major CIR. Any major or minor satisfactory CIR cancels a major or minor unsatisfactory CIR, respectively. Three major unsatisfactory CIRs or the equivalent is cause for elimination from the course.

**Special Observation Report (SOR).** An unsatisfactory SOR is grounds for dismissal. No student with an approved SOR will be allowed to progress to the next phase.

**Peer Evaluations.** Each student must receive a "GO" in two of the three peer evaluations administered during the course. He must attain a score of at least 65 percent to receive a "GO." A "NO GO" on two peer evaluations constitutes cause for elimination.

At the end of each of the successive phases (Benning, Mountain, and Florida) of the Ranger Course, the Senior Tactical Officer and the Division Chief responsible for the particular phase of training reviews the records to determine whether a student is eligible to remain in the course. They make their recommendations to the Department Director for a final decision to relieve, recycle, or continue any student whose performance has been substandard.

The following guidelines are used to determine whether a student progresses to the next phase:

**Basic Phase — Benning Ranger Division (BRD):**

- A student must pass all the following skill evaluations: Ranger Runs.

### Terrain Navigation.

#### Performance Examination.

- Each student must attend 75 percent or more of each of the following types of instruction:

Hand-to-hand combat.

Fire support/field artillery instruction.

Demolition training.

- Each student must successfully negotiate the log walk/rope drop and the suspension traverse.

- Any student who receives more than eight minor unsatisfactory CIRs or their equivalent will not be allowed to continue to the Mountain Phase.

- Any student who receives an approved unsatisfactory SOR will not be allowed to continue to the Mountain Phase.

#### Mountain Phase (MRD):

- A student must pass one leadership grade (patrol) in the Mountain Phase.

- Each student must pass the Mountaineering Performance Test.

- Each student must successfully negotiate the 200-foot night rappel, or, during severe weather, the 60-foot night rappel.

- Any student who accumulates more than the equivalent of eight minor unsatisfactory CIRs during the BRD/MRD phases will not be allowed to continue to the Florida Phase.

- Each student must pass one of the two peer reports.

#### Florida Phase (FRD):

- Any student who receives a validated unsatisfactory SOR or accumulates more than the equivalent of eight minor CIRs may not be eligible for graduation.

- Each student must pass one leadership grade (patrol) during the Florida Phase.

- Each student must successfully complete a helicopter rappel.

- Any student who fails the Florida peer report and one other (Benning or Mountain) may not be eligible for graduation.

The Ranger Department Faculty Board is convened at the end of the Ranger Course to review the records of students who completed all the training but failed to meet the course standards. This board, after considering all the available information, makes its recommendations to the Director as to who should be graduated, who should not be graduated, and who should be turned back to repeat the course. The students who completed all of the training but failed to meet the course standards may present matters of extenuation or mitigation in person to the Board.

The faculty board uses the following prerequisites to select the honor graduates for the Ranger Course. To be eligible for this honor, a student must:

- Meet the standards for graduation.
- Pass all graded leadership positions.
- Pass all peer reports.

- Not have lost any major item of equipment due to negligence.

- Have had all unsatisfactory CIRs cancelled by offsetting satisfactory CIRs.

- Not be a turnback from a previous course for other than compassionate or medical reasons.

- Not have had to be retested in any skill evaluation.

The Distinguished Honor Graduates of the course are the one officer and one enlisted graduate with the best overall performance as determined by the Faculty Board.

If no student meets the above criteria, the one student with the best overall performance is designated the Honor Graduate, and there is no Distinguished Honor Graduate for that class.

When the day for graduation finally comes, it is a proud one for the students and for their guests.

Guests of the graduating Rangers are encouraged to attend the special briefing that is presented at 0900 on graduation morning in the Ranger classroom (Building 4833) in Harmony Church. At the end of the briefing the guests are taken on a guided tour of Rogers Hall, which is the Ranger Museum. The graduation ceremony that follows is conducted out of doors and lasts about an hour.

This is the Ranger Course as it is today. If it were conducted on the basis of a regular 40-hour work week, it would take not eight but 26 weeks to complete. This compressed training creates an atmosphere of great mental, emotional, and physical stress. The student who learns to function as a leader in this environment leaves the Ranger Course with more self confidence and a great deal of technical expertise. He has learned to make the most of scarce resources — particularly time — and he can be counted on to carry on the tradition that "Rangers lead the way."



**CAPTAIN ERNEST W. COOLER** was the assistant operations officer of the Ranger Department at the Infantry School. A 1973 ROTC graduate of Clemson University, he has served in various command and staff positions in the United States and in Europe, and is now attending the Marine Amphibious Warfare School at Quantico in lieu of the Infantry Officer Advanced Course.