



RANGER TRAINING:

a part of the army's future?

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Mention Ranger training and a full range of thoughts enters one's mind: There are visions of dirty, unshaven students up to their necks in swamp water—eyes red, swollen and sunken from lack of sleep and sustenance. One imagines ultra-dedicated instructors striving to develop superhuman soldiers who can endure the very extreme of hardship. The imagination sees a people factory to turn out master tacticians who outwit the enemy—all the while living on a steady diet of rattlesnake meat.

With even a tinge of truth to such unenlightened flashes of the mind, one can't help but chuckle and wonder why anyone would subject himself to such torture. If a soldier survives such misery, what can he possibly have gained for himself, or the Army, that he could not have achieved in the classroom?

A closer look at the man beneath the uniform reveals that, at least outwardly, he is no different from the day he entered the course, give or take a few pounds that he probably needed to lose anyway. Contrary to popular belief, at graduation, the Ranger does not stand six feet

four, and look like a linebacker. Rangers come in all shapes and sizes, and the military knowledge a Ranger must know could probably be acquired much easier in a comfortable classroom setting. So, the important question arises: What **ARE** the advantages of the Ranger course? Is this just a miserable nine weeks of punishment? Does the tab simply signify an ability to suffer? Should we continue this training in the post Vietnam era?

There is more to Ranger training than is immediately visible. In essence, the Ranger course is a leadership course, and every area of life, whether government or business, military or civilian, needs men with an ability to lead. No, the older men that wear the tab may not be able to run five miles or do 30 chinups, but they have been exposed to leadership principles and have had the opportunity to execute these principles—as well as observe others as they act and react in leadership positions. The Ranger student learns his abilities and limitations, as well as those of the men around him, and he learns to work within the framework of that knowledge. From the

first day of training, the student is confronted with situations he considers beyond his physical capabilities. But with each conditioning, he begins to know himself and what he can conquer with the right attitude. His confidence grows and he begins to accept nothing as impossible on face value. Even the four mile run and the slide for life can become routine.

The pace of the course is fast, and the student has to grasp classroom work while enduring the physical hardships presented him. He learns that he can, and in fact must "drive on" to survive the course and earn the coveted Ranger tab. At this point, the stress factor comes into play as an important tool in the development of a vital hidden value. The student is put under great pressure, both physically and mentally. He is only allowed two hours sleep a night and one "C" Ration meal a day. He is required to take leadership positions, provide operations orders, manage difficult navigation techniques, and control men under fire—day and night. The successful student learns to function under this stress; he learns that his greatest limitation is his own concept of his abilities. It is this ability to work proficiently under pressure that follows the student long after the tab is placed on his shoulder.

The course is divided into three phases, each becoming more important in the development of man's proficiency in working under stress. Phase I at Fort Benning strengthens him physically and provides most of the classroom work; it is the foundation for the next two phases. Here the student Ranger reviews basic military skills and learns the "how" of patrol operations. The fundamentals of patrol operations are covered in detail and high standards are set. It is crucial that he learn the principles involved; the patrol puts the student under stress and allows the cadre to evaluate his leadership ability. At Dahlenega, in the north Georgia mountains, the student learns survival technique and basic and advanced mountaineering. This phase II part of the course begins the execution of some of the leadership techniques learned earlier.

In the mountains, operating against a conventional aggressor enemy, the student fights against human enemies; fatigue, hunger and fear—a real aggressor enemy—and himself. He is watched closely and is graded on a variety of combat operations. His performance is critiqued continually—giving him the opportunity to improve.

Phase III at Florida is the final test. The leader must be not only able to function under stress, he must work with other men who are in a similar condition. Only a man with stamina can run an efficient unit while he is at his lowest ebb. However, the man who runs an efficient unit while both he and his men are tired, hungry, and just plain miserable, has much more. He is a true leader. Despite adverse conditions, the leader must successfully pull his men through firefights and ambushes. Such situations can never be duplicated in a classroom environ-

ment, and only actual combat can put similar pressures upon a man.

A leader must learn to follow first, and the Ranger has played both parts. As a patrol member, he discovers that he falls asleep when he should be awake, and that, at times, he fails to push himself to do his best. He learns how it feels to move, half unconscious and aware only of personal misery. He watches the man in a leadership position and views that man's actions from the eyes of a man who only wants to rest. The platoon member's success or failure can be of benefit or detriment to his fellow members, as well as his leaders. He learns to live by a code of unity that holds the platoon together. Therefore, when this man plays the part of platoon leader or platoon sergeant, he has to feel for the way the men will react in a given situation, and he can apply this knowledge to his own actions.

Ranger training exposes men to leadership principles and gives them the opportunity to execute those principles. ▼



Those who question the cost of training such a small number of students are not aware that the course itself is only a minor part of the whole plan. While cost per graduate may appear high, there is no method of calculating the secondary instruction and influence upon other soldiers with whom the Ranger comes in contact. The individual who wears the coveted black and gold Ranger tab sets an example and passes along his expertise to his subordinates, his contemporaries and even to his superiors.

It is interesting to note that the course is not just attended by newly-commissioned officers and young non-commissioned officers. After completing the Infantry Officer Advanced Course, many senior captains and majors volunteer for Ranger School. These officers and also senior NCOs give their primary reason for going through the course as a desire to reacquaint themselves with the training situation and to take new skills to their next assignment. In addition to these volunteers, the Ranger program offers slots for personnel from the other service branches and Allied nations.

Even so, the Rangers remain without a champion in high places. Some senior officers appear unfamiliar with the performance of Rangers, while others feel that the financial burdens outweigh the benefits.

As president of the Army's Board for Dynamic Training, Brigadier General Paul F. Gorman, in reference to today's junior officers and NCOs, recently stated, "Although individually trained and experienced in combat in Southeast Asia, they may know little about preparing troops for battle in other than a low intensity conflict." Ranger School provides the knowledge and training to dispel such worries.

Not only has the school strengthened the small unit's capabilities, it is found to be a useful instrument in public relations—an area not to be overlooked. The Ranger Department plays the role of ambassador to government and civilian leaders alike. The list of senators, congressmen, mayors, businessmen and even presidents who have viewed the "Rangers in Action" demonstration at Fort Benning, and who have left with a feeling of pride, enthusiasm, and confidence in the training, is a long and distinguished one. This demonstration has also been viewed by virtually every foreign visitor to the Infantry School, including heads of state and military chiefs. Not only are members of allied armies shown a segment of the training, they are permitted to attend the course. Who can say how much influence this has had on the individuals and even the governing bodies of the 59 allied nations which are represented by the graduates of the Ranger Course.

In 1951, the Ranger Department established the course with the ultimate idea of directly training a few and indirectly training many. Each Army rifle company was

to send at least one officer and one NCO to Ranger training. These men were to take back a broadened knowledge and skill, and thus up-grade the training level of each combat-ready unit. An example of exactly such an application of Ranger training was a recent exercise at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. A battalion commander in the 82d Airborne Division was given the mission of conducting two days of water operations training. The only personnel available and qualified to instruct the training were Rangers. There will always be individuals who will tackle the boldest challenges and the most dangerous missions, whether in combat or in the training situation. Men who want to specialize and be the best in their chosen field should not be denied the opportunity, particularly when such instruction can be feasibly provided and extremely beneficial to the individual and the Army. The Ranger course challenges those individuals who wish to go a little further and perform the more difficult tasks. Those who complete the course take pride in their accomplishments, and this pride inspires pride in one's self, one's Army, and in one's country. The Ranger graduate does indeed deserve to be known as the Army's ultimate soldier.

As Vietnam becomes an era past, and the concepts of the Modern Volunteer Army take hold, the Ranger is a model to those who demand adventure. This rugged individual, with the most complete training available, appeals to young men joining today's Army. The Ranger is a proud symbol of the soldier ready and prepared to meet the threat of tomorrow's unknown adversary.

After 21 years, the benefits of Ranger training are taken for granted—until someone questions the program's usefulness and peacetime purposes. Suddenly it is difficult to briefly list all the reasons why its continuation is vital to the Army. Perhaps its basis is best stated by the Honorable John O. Marsh, Representative of Virginia's 7th Congressional District: "The test is men, not armament. Battles have always been decided by the soldier on the ground. The best weapon—yesterday, today and tomorrow, on any battlefield—is the American Ranger. Our country is in his debt." ✕

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