

THE RANGER TRAINING BRIGADE

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Throughout the history of our country, Rangers and Ranger-type units have served with distinction in both peace and war. Although they have been organized in various configurations, they have always been considered to be among the best leaders and units in the Army.

Today, the Army has a complete Ranger regiment on its rolls. The 75th Ranger Regiment has its headquarters and its 3d Battalion at Fort Benning, its 1st Battalion at Fort Stewart, and its 2d Battalion at Fort Lewis.

Rangers for these units, as well as individual soldiers from other units, were trained by the Ranger Department of the Infantry School at Fort Benning. On 1 November 1987, the Department became the Ranger Training Brigade. Of all the organizational and name changes that have taken place during the past 37 years, this one has been the most significant.

The brigade's mission is to develop the individual and leadership skills of selected officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted soldiers by requiring them to perform effectively as small-unit leaders in tactically realistic environments. It does this primarily through the Ranger Course but also through the Light Leaders Course and the Long Range Surveillance Leaders Course. (For a complete discussion of the latter two courses, which are conducted entirely at Fort Benning, see the following INFANTRY articles: "The Light Leaders Course," by Captain William D. Phillips, January-February 1985, pp. 35-37; and "LRSU Course," by William Lyde, Jr., November-December 1986, pp. 37-38.)

Its mission, then, is not essentially different from that of the Ranger Department. The difference is in how the brigade goes about accomplishing that mission.

Traditionally, the Ranger Department was organized in a committee mode. The department's history refers to such organizations as the Coordinating Committee, Platoon Tactics Committee, Combat Conditioning Committee, Benning Ranger Committee, Attack Committee, Defense Committee, and Patrolling Committee. In later years, training at Fort Benning was under the auspices of either the Morgan Team or the Darby Team. Although this approach developed and consolidated the subject matter expertise, it did little to foster a relationship between the trainer and the trainee. In other words, no single Ranger instructor (RI) was responsible for all the facets of a student's training during a particular instructional phase.

When the department was reorganized along the lines of a traditional brigade, instructors were assigned to squads, platoons, and companies of Ranger students, and they became responsible for all aspects of training during each phase. Thus, the end result of each training event could be traced through a specific chain of command.

CONVERSION

The particulars of the conversion were relatively simple. The Benning Ranger Division became the 4th Ranger Training Battalion, with a headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) and five lettered companies. Companies A, B, and C, consisting of two platoons each, train Rangers during the first two weeks of the Ranger Course, which are conducted at Fort Benning. Company D is responsible for the Long Range Surveillance Leaders Course, and Company E trains the students in the Light Leaders Course.

The Mountain Ranger Division, located at Dahlonega, Georgia, became the 5th Ranger Training Battalion, which trains Rangers during the third and fourth weeks. The Florida Ranger Division, at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, became the 6th Ranger Training Battalion; it trains Rangers during the fifth and sixth weeks. Each of these two battalions has a headquarters company and three Ranger training companies.

(The three battalions were numbered 4th, 5th, and 6th—rather than 1st, 2d, and 3d—to avoid confusion with the three battalions of the 75th Ranger Regiment.)

In addition to these three battalions, Task Force Desert at Dugway Proving Ground, Utah, has existed for the past year with a small standing cadre, commanded by the deputy brigade commander. Each of the battalions has supplied instructors to supplement this permanent cadre for the last two weeks of the Ranger Course.

Effective 8 March 1989, however, the requirement for Task Force Desert ceased to exist with the activation of the 7th Ranger Training Battalion, headquartered at Dugway. This action will not only improve the quality of life for the Ranger cadre at Dugway, it will further improve training. (Another change presently under study is the expansion of the Ranger Course from eight to nine weeks.)

Dugway's location, terrain, and environment combine to produce a unique deployment and training scenario. The relatively long flight time provides an opportunity for in-flight

airborne rigging during both the deployment and redeployment stages. The location enables the Ranger Training Brigade to take advantage of positioning and repositioning JAAT (joint air attack team) aircraft, while the vast, open terrain offers virtually unlimited range use.

At Dugway, the Ranger Training Brigade has developed exceptional live-fire lanes with real-world targets for conducting raids and ambushes and for MILES force-on-force training, all of which has been designed to be a model progressive live-fire program. The students progress from buddy team individual movement training through realistic maneuver Angle T live-fire exercises at platoon level. In short, this final two-week period serves as the "graduate" phase of the Ranger Course, because it requires the students to operate at a high level of excellence. Given the payback in terms of training realism, this is the most cost-effective phase of Ranger School.

The conversion has had a number of other, more subtle effects upon the Ranger Course. First, it reflects the true unit nature of the Army's training programs. Rangers are no longer being trained on tasks that are found only in the Ranger Course. The program of instruction now supports the Mission Essential Task Lists (METLs) of many maneuver units. The standards are those of the 75th Ranger Regiment:

All of the training is conducted with combat as its central focus. The missions that are included in the brigade's METL are used as a way of evaluating leadership, and it is apparently an effective way. Data compiled at the National Training Center has shown that junior leaders who are qualified Rangers perform better than their contemporaries who are not.

PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION

The Ranger Course's program of instruction is designed to do two things: Train an individual to be a technically and tactically competent Ranger, and train an individual to be an effective small-unit leader. If he completes the course, a student will be proficient in infantry skills; he will understand how to train others; and he will understand the difference between the roles and responsibilities of officers and those of noncommissioned officers. Performance-oriented training is stressed and the RIs serve as role models for the students.

All of the ranger training is exportable to the field. For example, in the desert phase all of the platoons conduct five live-fire exercises. The intent is to teach the Rangers how to set up and conduct this valuable training when they return to their units.

The training program is built on three foundations: physical conditioning, individual skill development, and unit development.

To complete the course, a soldier must be at an above-average level of physical conditioning even before he begins the training program. When all of the students take the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) on Day Zero, they are required to do 52 push-ups, 62 sit-ups, and run two miles in 14:54. These scores represent the 70-point level for the 17 to 21 age group on the APFT. In addition, the students must do six chin-ups.

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METL

Movement to Contact
Airborne/Air Assault
Raid
Ambush
Defense (includes hasty and perimeter defense)
Reconnaissance and Security

Physical training sessions are conducted each morning on Days 1 through 4. The students learn how to conduct a PT session that will produce a desired training effect. The training emphasizes proper warm-up, circuit training, and improvements in push-ups and sit-ups. Each day the students also complete a run of three to five miles at an eight-minute-mile pace, which is following by a cool-down period.

The students learn how to conduct a road march, and during the Benning phase they do both a 5-mile march and a 12-mile march. During each of the other three phases, extended movements are part of the tactical training. This training emphasizes how to prepare the feet, the importance of trading off heavy equipment, the importance of hydration, and the role of leaders during movement.

Other physical conditioning events include a confidence course, an obstacle course, and hand-to-hand training. The effects of the physical challenges during the eight weeks are increased because of the limited sleep time the students are permitted as well as the reduced amount of food they are given.

LAND NAVIGATION

In the area of individual skill development, the second foundation for the course, land navigation is of major importance. Land navigation skills are a prerequisite for admission and, after a day of refresher training, Ranger students must successfully complete a day land navigation course.

The brigade also teaches the techniques of reconnaissance, raid, ambush, and movement to contact at both the squad and the platoon level, while during the Dugway phase the emphasis is on live-fire training management. A considerable amount of the training is conducted during the hours of darkness.

Other general subject areas include fire support planning, infiltration and exfiltration techniques, and communications. The students receive a basic survival class during the Benning phase, and this is supplemented by environmentally specific training during each of the three subsequent phases. In addition, the 5th Battalion teaches mountaineering techniques and the 6th Battalion teaches waterborne operations.

A key element of the third foundation, unit development, is building unit cohesion and bonding. This is accomplished in a number of ways. Ranger students are assigned to a squad, platoon, and company and stay in the same unit throughout the course. And the students learn to develop unit SOPs and to see the importance of working together daily as a team.

(One of the purposes of the PT program is to begin the bonding process.)

Other aspects of unit development include an emphasis on performance-oriented training, live-fire training, force-on-force training with MILES devices, leader role modeling, and planning integration. Since all the training is done at squad or platoon level, the brigade no longer refers to a patrol as an organization—it is now a squad or a platoon that conducts a reconnaissance patrol, for example.

Although the brigade emphasizes training rather than evaluation, the latter remains an integral part of the training strategy. In addition to successfully completing three of the four runs (including the five-mile run) and passing the day land navigation course, the students must also pass three other evaluations:

- Leadership evaluations on each tactical mission.
- Three confidence tests.
- A peer evaluation in each phase.

Students must receive a "go" on at least one-half of their leadership evaluations, must pass at least one primary leadership evaluation (squad leader, platoon sergeant, or platoon leader) and at least one evaluation in the Florida phase and one in the Dugway phase.

CONFIDENCE TESTS

Two of the mandatory confidence tests are conducted at Fort Benning—the water confidence test and an obstacle course. The water confidence test consists of two events. First, a student must climb a 40-foot ladder, walk 60 feet across an 18-inch-wide plank over the water, commando crawl and monkey crawl along a rope, hang free from the rope, and drop 40 feet into the water. In the second event, he must climb an 80-foot ladder, hang from a pulley attached to a cable, and slide down the cable until an RI signals him to release the pulley. He then swims to the side of the pond.

The obstacle course, called the Darby Queen, consists of 25 obstacles spread out over 2,000 meters of broken undulating terrain. The first 24 obstacles are the standard Army confidence course obstacles; the 25th is a 40-foot cargo net.

NOTES TO COMMANDERS

Give your soldiers a better chance of succeeding in the Ranger Course by preparing them in advance and by carefully choosing which ones to send.

- They must be mentally committed to dealing with 58 days of rigorous training.
- They must be used to marching distances of 5 to 12 miles with loads of up to 60 pounds.
- They must be proficient in land navigation.

Carefully screen your enlisted soldiers, especially those below the rank of sergeant. The Ranger Training Brigade teaches warning orders and operations orders, but experience has shown that privates first class and corporals have a lot of trouble in this area.

Regardless of rank, soldiers who do not have a strong desire to graduate from Ranger School have a low probability of success.

The third confidence test, conducted in the mountains, is a 200-foot rappel at night. A soldier's failure or refusal to participate in any one of these three tests results in his dismissal from the course.

The peer evaluations, conducted at the conclusion of each phase, require each student to rank the other members of his squad, write a narrative discussing each individual's strengths and weaknesses, and make a recommendation for his final status (honor graduate, graduate, recycle, or drop).

A numerical score on the peer report is assigned to each student, and those whose scores fall below 60 are considered "peer failures." These records are carefully reviewed, however, because a "peer failure" may be a good student who happens to be the weakest member of a strong squad. Such a student is easy to identify from the comments in the student narratives. The narratives also help identify any student who may perform well only when an RI is present. All peer failure students are moved to a new squad for the next phase.

Of the five critical evaluations, the Ranger reorganization has had the most effect upon the leadership assessment program. As noted, unless they have failed a peer evaluation, Ranger students are assigned to the same squad, platoon, and company throughout their training. One, two, or three RIs are assigned to each squad in each phase. Under the small-group instruction concept, these RIs conduct all the training for their squads, using the *talk, crawl, walk, run* approach.

To ensure standardization within a phase and among the various phases, the Ranger Training Brigade's Mission Training Plan (MTP), published in June 1988, is used. Standardization is reinforced by periodic commanders conferences and staff and instructor visits to the battalions.

The emphasis is always placed on doing it right the *last* time, and an after-action review (AAR) is conducted after each significant event. The RIs are trained to focus their AARs on how to do the task correctly, not on what the students did wrong. If a squad or platoon does not meet the standard, the RI coordinates with the opposing force to redo the event, either on the same terrain or close by. The intent is to finish all training events on a positive note.

Another significant adjustment is recycle training. His-

torically, a student who failed to meet a standard in Ranger training was returned to his unit. The only students recycled were those who were medically unable to stay in training. In contrast, recycles are now offered to all students who fail to meet a standard the first time through. Today, a comprehensive recycle training program is a part of each phase. The program includes physical training, map reading, warning order and operations order development, and tactical training.

All of the personnel assigned to the Ranger Training Brigade as instructors must complete a certification process before they can train or evaluate students. This three-phase program includes education, hands-on practice, and board certification. In Phase 1, the prospective instructor must become familiar with all of the brigade and battalion SOPs, the Ranger Training Brigade MTP, the Ranger Handbook, and all safety and emergency procedures.

During Phase 2, he is exposed to the student evaluation system, performance-oriented training, after-action reviews, and counseling techniques. He accompanies an experienced RI on several leadership assessment training exercises, and sits in on all small-group instruction.

Finally, in Phase 3, he presents sample periods of instruction to a board made up of experienced RIs and is evaluated in the field during a training exercise. In addition, each certified instructor is evaluated once each quarter by his chain of command. This program provides a high degree of competence and standardization for the brigade's courses.

The name and the organizational make-up have changed, but the end result remains the same. The Ranger Training Brigade trains 50 weeks of the year, seven days a week, to accomplish the mission of producing top quality leaders for the Army.

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