



Rangers, Scouts, and Raiders: Origin, Organization, and Operations of Selected Special Operations Forces

By Michael F. Dilley

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Special operations forces and their missions have long captured the imagination. These units until recently were ad hoc formations created for an intended purpose and disbanded after the conflict or mission. Military historian and author Michael Dilley examines the rich and extensive history of American special operations forces from the French and Indian War to Vietnam in *Rangers, Scouts, and Raiders: Origin, Organization, and Operations of Selected Special Operations Forces*.

Dilley opens with the return of Rogers' Rangers. Most remember the military exploits of Major Robert Rogers and his Rangers during the French and Indian War and his storied association with today's Army Rangers. Few know that Rogers offered his services to both sides during the American Revolution. Even fewer know of Rogers' role in capturing American spy Captain Nathan Hale.

Dilley informs us that General Billy Mitchell's vision for air power went beyond strategic bombing. Mitchell envisioned a concept where Infantrymen could be dropped by parachute into an enemy's rear to disrupt operations. He describes Mitchell's plans to drop the Army's 1st Infantry Division behind German lines in the spring of 1919 when there would be a sufficient number of parachutes and bombers for the operation. Mitchell's interest in developing airborne capabilities did not end with World War I; he conducted two demonstrations in 1928 utilizing parachuting Soldiers. While Army observers did not take the demonstrations seriously, observers from Germany and Russia were impressed which led to both countries developing their own airborne capabilities.

Readers will find Chapter 6 "The Alamo Scouts – LRRPS of World War II" especially interesting. LTG Walter Krueger, commander of the U.S. Sixth Army, created a special reconnaissance unit to be at his disposal for scouting and raiding missions. Alamo Scouts operated behind Japanese lines during the two years they existed. Their missions included capturing Japanese prisoners, liberating Allied prisoners, recovering down crewmen and/or equipment, conducting reconnaissance, and gathering intelligence. During more than 110 missions conducted by Alamo Scouts, not one was killed or captured. The scouts would serve as a model for long-range reconnaissance patrols of Vietnam and for 75th Ranger companies.

Dilley excels in describing the Son Tay Raid along with its positive consequences despite failing in its intent to rescue American prisoners of war. A disappointment is the fact that Desert One was not included in this work. It would have been interesting to learn Dilley's perspective on the mission, lessons learned, and consequences following the rescue attempt.

The strength of *Rangers, Scouts, and Raiders: Origin, Organization, and Operations of Selected Special Operations Forces* is its exceptional prose and style; it is simply hard to put down. Each chapter contains a list of sources for further research. The work is highly readable and would be an excellent addition to the library of any historian or student with an interest on the subject.