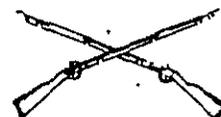




# Commandant's NOTE



**Major General John W. Foss**

Chief of Infantry

## RANGER TRAINING

The battlefield's demands on the infantry are increasing. As usual, it seems that everything is getting harder instead of easier. The introduction of the Bradley fighting vehicle into our mechanized infantry units has demonstrated the critical mounted and dismounted task for infantry leaders and emphasized the fact that our Bradley leaders have to be good to handle them.

At the same time, the light infantry concept has added another dimension of difficulty, what with the requirements for light units to maneuver in areas behind the enemy's front lines and to operate in the toughest terrain.

The very nature of the combat role that has been postulated for our light infantry units requires those units to rely heavily on aggressive and innovative small unit leaders. These highly trained and tough soldiers will move and fight both individually and in units in dense forests, along high mountain ridges, in constricted urban terrain, and frequently under night and foul-weather conditions. They will live and survive with what they carry on their backs.

With all of the increased demands on our infantry leaders, there has come a great demand for and interest in the Ranger Course and in Ranger training for both our mechanized and our light infantry units. Our light infantry units in particular, I believe, must have a high ratio of Ranger-qualified personnel, particularly in the leadership positions, because Ranger training, in simple terms, is leadership training.

Ranger training stresses leadership, toughness, and confidence and uses patrolling to train and evaluate selected NCOs and officers in specific leadership skills. And nowhere in the United States Army are these leadership skills more important than at the infantry squad, platoon and company levels. To lead and win on the modern battlefield, our squad leaders, platoon sergeants, and platoon leaders must be inspiring leaders, physically and mentally tough, and tactically proficient in small unit skills. Ranger training is the best way to instill these characteristics.

One way of infusing Rangers into the new light infantry divisions is to season the units with some Ranger-qualified personnel initially and then allow them to grow their own, working through the Ranger School's quota system. This method has proved highly successful in the 7th Infantry Division, which, over the past 18 months, has had more than 200 of its own soldiers qualified as Rangers. Although proportionally more Rangers are now being assigned to light divisions than to heavy divisions, it is only a matter of time before we have worked our way through the Ranger assignment hiatus created by the activation of the light divisions. Then our heavy divisions will receive their fair share of Ranger-qualified personnel. In the interim, we are devising schemes that will allow all new Regular Army Infantry second lieutenants to attend Ranger School. This, coupled with a coming increase in the number of classes, should place enough Ranger-qualified soldiers in the heavy divisions until we can get caught up.

To meet these increased requirements, Ranger classes at Benning will be expanded in Fiscal Year 1987 from the current 14 classes of 150 students each to 14 classes of 220 students each. This increase (from a total of 2,100 in Fiscal Year 1986 to 3,080 in Fiscal Year 1987) should produce about 1,000 additional Rangers each fiscal year, and further expansions are being considered for subsequent years.

Until this expansion can fully meet the Army's training requirements for Ranger-qualified personnel, spaces will be allocated first to units — with Ranger and infantry units having priority — and to Infantry officers. For other units, the following branch priority has been established: Field Artillery, Armor, Combat Engineers, and Military Police. Any remaining allocations will be distributed to volunteers in the same order of branch priority. For the past six months, all infantry lieutenants who have completed the basic course and have volunteered for Ranger training have received quotas to attend.

Unfortunately, even though our Ranger training spaces are at a premium, many of them are being wasted. Some soldiers who are scheduled to attend never show up; and some of those who do are released immediately because they do not meet the School's prerequisites. (There are no waivers for the Ranger APRT standards or the Combat Water Survival Test.)

I therefore strongly encourage all commanders who send soldiers to Ranger School to get involved and reduce this waste of critical training spaces. In April 1985 I sent a message to all units explaining the entrance requirements. All units should use it

in preparing the necessary paperwork and in testing prospective Ranger students. Unit commanders who have been reluctant in the past to send their soldiers to Ranger School for fear of losing them should know that their soldiers, when they graduate, are now guaranteed 12 months in the units that sent them to the School.

To make sure we are training Rangers the way they're going to fight, we at the Infantry School are constantly reviewing and analyzing the training offered by the Ranger Department. Some of the recent changes include reducing the student's load to mission essential equipment only; reducing (from 15 to 9) the size of patrols for squad level training (when resources are available); adding more squad patrols to the Benning, Mountain, and Desert Phases; using combat drills to develop aggressiveness and tactical competence; and increasing the amount of time devoted to land navigation and to practical exercises.

A major change in the course, which took effect last fall, was the move of the seven-day Desert Phase from Fort Bliss, Texas, to Dugway Proving Ground, Utah. The terrain at the new location — salt flats, sand dunes, foothills, and desert mountains — is ideal for Ranger training. This training begins with an airborne assault into a Middle East scenario and remains tactical to the end.

I have been greatly encouraged by the general toughness of training throughout the Infantry; it is an indication of our determination to have the best-trained and best-led soldiers in the world.

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As I leave Fort Benning, I need to give you an update on the status of the Infantry in the United States Army. The renewed emphasis on infantry in all its forms over the past two years is paying off. We're a healthy force now, but we can get better.

The Bradley fighting vehicle has settled in and is performing extremely well. Some critics remain (only a few of whom understand combat) who would march us back in time and capability, but I believe we can overcome their criticism.

Light infantry has grown and is now a solid member of the infantry team. The conversion of the 7th Infantry Division's battalions is complete and that of the 25th Infantry Division's battalions is in progress,

as is the formation of the battalions of the 10th Mountain Division.

The advent of the 75th Ranger Regiment and of the 3d Ranger Battalion, and the expansion of Ranger training are having a positive effect on our force. We have made improvements in the training of our Infantry soldiers; new lieutenants and captains, and new equipment and weapons are on their way to our units.

Much more remains to be done in every area—training, tactics, weapons, and equipment. I know that all of our Infantrymen will give my successor, Ed Burba, the same great support they have given to me and to the Infantry School. (*General Foss now serves as commander of the 82d Airborne Division.*)