

Jungle Operations: An Introduction

Jungle operations dominate the history of 25th Infantry Division. Formed on 1 October 1941, two months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Division went on the offensive against Japanese forces on Guadalcanal, in the Solomon Islands, in early 1943 during some of the war's earliest engagements in the Indo-Pacific. The Division's tactical successes in the jungles across the Solomons and into the Philippines over the next two and a half years earned us our nickname, "Tropic Lightning." To this day, citizens of the Philippines recognize the 25th Infantry Division and our iconic shoulder sleeve insignia for enduring 165 days of fierce Japanese resistance in the thick jungle that covered the Filipino Caraballo Mountains and at the strategic Balete Pass.

Following the Korean War, the Army established a jungle training course at Schofield Barracks, the home of the 25th Infantry Division. The Tropic Lightning Division sent Soldiers to the jungles of South Vietnam as early as 1963, on a more massive scale in 1965, and engaged in various campaigns during the war through 1971. Over 1,716 consecutive days in combat, 25ID Soldiers fought in campaigns at Cu Chi, Tay Ninh, Pleiku, in the defense of Ton Son Nhut during the Tet Offensive, and in Cambodia. Despite advances in technology, fighting in the jungle required specialized knowledge reminiscent of the Division's first fights in World War II.

After Vietnam, the Tropic Lightning Division refocused to work with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. Exercises like "Cobra Gold" in Thailand became the Division's priority, solidifying our relationships with Armies across the region and bolstering our jungle operations expertise. After 10 years of fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq during the Global War on Terror, 25ID again returned to its roots in the jungle as the United States pivoted to the Indo-Pacific. Then-Commanding General MG Kurt Fuller established the 25th Infantry Division's Lightning Academy and the Jungle Operations Training Course (JOTC) in 2014, manned by cadre who had attended several foreign jungle schools, from Malaysia to Gabon, over the years. For the last 10 years, JOTC trained thousands of U.S. Soldiers, Joint Service Men and Women, and allies and partners.

JOTC skills are invaluable as Tropic Lightning Soldiers work alongside regional allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific today on Operation Pathways and at the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center. The jungle can be a harsh teacher — with this in mind, I asked Leaders and Soldiers across the 25th Infantry Division to contribute articles for this special edition of Infantry. The articles explore four central themes: personal monographs and experiences from 25ID Soldiers, joint and combined operations in a jungle environment, medical and sustainment operations in the jungle, and innovation and experimentation for jungle operations. The articles should assist leaders across the Infantry, the Army, and the Joint Force to better understanding the Indo-Pacific and its unique challenges and opportunities. As this region continues to grow in importance for the United States, land forces will play an important role in defending national sovereignty, building relationships, and implementing deterrence. I hope you enjoy reading them and learning a little bit — and we will see you in the jungle soon! Tropic Lightning!

— MG Joe Ryan

54th Commanding General of the 25th Infantry Division and U.S. Army Hawaii

