Commandant's NOTE

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THE RANGER COURSE

Every Infantryman who has experienced combat knows the value of tough, realistic training. And because our current tactics emphasize independent actions by small units, there is a greater need for soldiers who have been trained under demanding conditions and who are accustomed to producing exemplary results in the most rigorous of combat environments. As a result, there has been a great demand for Ranger-trained soldiers in all types of infantry units.

For almost 40 years, the Infantry School has conducted Ranger training. Throughout those years — even as the course's program of instruction has changed to accommodate new weapons, equipment, and doctrine — the Ranger training mission has not changed. That mission is to produce a hardened, competent, small unit leader who is absolutely confident that he can lead his unit into combat and overcome all obstacles to accomplish its mission.

The School continually reviews and analyzes the training offered by its Ranger Training Brigade. Next month, as a result of our most recent look at the training program, we will make a number of adjustments to the course. These adjustments will not affect the length of the course. They are designed to modernize the program of instruction and to enhance the students' opportunity to successfully complete the course.

Here is a brief rundown of the adjustments:

During the first, or Benning, phase, the course will begin on Monday instead of Friday to ease certain administrative constraints, and the previous zero-day testing program will be expanded to a four-day assessment period — the Ranger Assessment Phase (RAP) — so the Brigade can better determine an individual's readiness to complete the program successfully.

The RAP will include the Army's Physical Fitness Test, the Combat Water Survival Test, a five-mile run that must be completed in 40 minutes, day and night land navigation testing, an eight-mile foot march, and the Ranger Stakes (an evaluation of ten Soldier's Manual tasks). Soldiers must successfully complete these events to continue the course.

The Benning phase will continue to focus on training Ranger candidates to an entry level of proficiency in conducting squad patrolling operations. At the same time, there will be increased emphasis on land navigation and survival training.

The desert training phase, formerly the fourth phase of the course, will now be the second. The Brigade is moving this training from Dugway Proving Ground to Fort Bliss to reduce operating costs, increase training support, and avoid Utah's extreme winter weather conditions.

This phase of the training program — following an airborne insertion conducted with full combat equipment — will concentrate on desert survival and operational considerations and on transitioning the Ranger students from squad to platoon level combat operations. When they complete their desert training, the Ranger students will return by military aircraft to Fort Benning, where they will conduct another airborne insertion.

Following a short recovery period, the students will then be transported to Camp Frank Merrill in north Georgia to be trained in basic mountaineering skills and a continuation of platoon combat operations. With minor exceptions, this training will be much the same as that given to previous Ranger classes.

Finally, the Ranger students will move to Florida for the fourth and final phase of their training. Although they will still face waterborne training, a mid-cycle night jump, and difficult swamp infiltrations in their 13-day FTX, they will now also seize MOUT (military operations on urbanized terrain) objectives and conduct upgraded air assault training.

In addition to these changes in the program of instruction, the Ranger Training Brigade has also begun a significant effort to upgrade its training equipment, organization, and opposing force model to more closely resemble those of a modern U.S. light infantry unit operating in a low intensity environment.

The Ranger Course is the Army's premier leadership course. It challenges individuals who want to be the best soldiers and the best leaders they can be. Those who complete the course take great pride in their accomplishment. A Ranger leader stands as a proud symbol of the soldier who is prepared to meet the threat of tomorrow's unknown adversary.