

High Standards and Discipline; The 75th Ranger Regiment

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“The 75th Ranger Regiment’s mission is to plan and conduct joint special military operations in support of U.S. policy and objectives. The regiment is a direct action force capable of executing any special operations or light infantry mission requiring a mature, competent, highly disciplined and lethal force to ensure the precise application of combat power in a politically sensitive environment, day or night, in all weather conditions via land, sea or air.” [1] This requirement the Army has placed on the Regiment defines the necessity for such High Standards and Discipline.

For Operation Just Cause, the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment was selected to spearhead the operation in order to restore stability to the country of Panama. The date chosen for the mission was 20 December 1989. For years, the Army had been in a state of decline. In the 1980s, the U.S. Army continued to be plagued by discipline problems. At that time, the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment was the Army’s main effort for conducting airfield seizures. The Army knew that the Rangers were a highly disciplined unit, which was combat ready.

The U.S. Army started its steady decline in the wayward years of the Vietnam War. The war effort was not successful in Vietnam or back home, during a period marked by social unrest. America was in turmoil with the death toll in excess of 50,000 soldiers, anti war and racial riot’s in the streets, and college students killed by National Guard troops at Kent State. These sentiments spread back and forth from society to the Army. The Army was in steady decline with rampant discipline issues; black market, drug and alcohol abuse, and morale issues.

The Army had to transform. Reestablishing and maintaining discipline was one of the many avenues, which would transform the Army from a post Vietnam Era. By contrast, the Army at the end of 1980 was at peace, gradually modernizing, and with its attention directed toward the Europe. The active Army contained sixteen divisions. It was an all-volunteer force

with members of minority groups, the less educated, and the poor overrepresented.

Consequently, the capabilities of the Army became an issue, which attracted the attention of Congress and the nation's press. During that summer, legislation was sponsored to reduce the size of the Army if the services failed to recruit a larger percentage of high school graduates. In 1974, the Army Chief of Staff, General Creighton Abrams had a vision of rebuilding and re-instilling pride and discipline in the U.S. Army. The initial steps included the reformation of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ranger Battalions.

A line from General Abram's Charter reads: "The Ranger Battalion is to be an elite, light and most proficient infantry battalion in the world; a battalion that can do things with its hands and weapons better than anyone. The battalion will not contain any hoodlums or brigands and that if the battalion is formed of such persons it will be disbanded. Wherever the battalion goes it will be apparent that it is the best". [2]

There is no doubt that there are standards set forth by the U.S. Army that all Soldiers are subject to and when not followed will result in disciplinary actions. Discipline is the core of any organization.

During the waning years of the Vietnam War the Army had been influenced by a society in a state of social unrest, influencing young Soldiers entering the Army. Widespread chaos was evident throughout the Army. Studies indicate that Soldiers were resistant to following authority, desertions and AWOL were common, morality became a major issue; battlefield misconduct was the byproduct.

Standards are, "performance standards provide the employee with specific performance expectations for each major duty. They are the observable behaviors and actions which explain how the job is to be done, plus the results that are expected for satisfactory job performance." [3]

All Army units have standards that their Soldiers are expected to conduct themselves, if not, it would return to issues that plagued it in the early 1970's. The Ranger Regiment has the highest standards of any unit in the US Army. During Initial Entry Training (IET), the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) standard for basic training is a minimum of 50 points per event and no less than 150 points overall by the end of basic training. Graduation requirements for Advanced Entry Training (AIT) and One Station Unit Training (OSUT) require 60 points per event. This standard applies to all other Army personnel (active and reserve) as well.

Soldiers, both enlisted and officer, aspiring to become part of the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment are 4 time volunteers: they volunteered to join the Army, they volunteered to attend Airborne School, they volunteered to join the Ranger Regiment, and they volunteered to attend U.S. Army Ranger School. Rangers are required to surpass all Army standards; for example, the APFT, enlisted Soldiers E-1 through E-4 the minimum standards are 70% on each event for the APFT of the youngest age group (17-21) to include 6 chin-ups. For NCOs and officers, the minimum standard for the APFT is 80% by age group. Failure to pass any of these Ranger standards can result in a one-time retest. This coupled to many other standard requirements exceeds the Army minimum.

Morale, judgment, and Esprit de Corps are a standard of the Ranger Regiment: a way of life. "Morale, also known as esprit de corps when discussing the morale of a group, is an intangible term used for the capacity of people to maintain belief in an institution or a goal, or even in oneself and others. The second term applies particularly to military personnel and to members of sports teams, but is also applicable in business and in any other organizational context, particularly in times of stress or controversy." [4] For members of the Ranger Regiment, life is all about being one of the best that the Army has to offer, second best is not to standard.

This belief must be maintained in order for the Regiment to maintain its “can do” attitude.

Rangers operate within parameters that are above and beyond those set forth for the conventional Army. Rangers live by their Ranger Creed with such terms as “I will always endeavor to uphold the prestige, honor, and high esprit de corps...”, “my country expects me to move farther, faster and fight harder than any other soldier”, “I will shoulder more than my share of the task...”, “under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country”, and the final stanza, “Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission, though I be the lone survivor.” These may be just words to some but for members of the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment, this is a way of life.

The Ranger Regiment is one of the very few Army units that have the authority to release Soldiers for not maintaining standards. Some of the standards that Soldiers can be released for in the Regiment include not being financially sound, to include writing bad checks, drug use is automatic release, alcohol abuse, morale misjudgment, not maintaining 80% on each APFT event, and failure to adapt to the Ranger way of life.

The ascent from private to E-5, and through to SGM, in the same unit speaks volumes as to the esprit de corps of the Regiment. Approximately ninety percent of Ranger NCOs climb the enlisted ladder within the Regiment. A smaller number of officers transition from the NCO Corp to become officers in the Regiment. This ascent through the ranks is similar to and replicates the Army’s COHORT (Cohesion, Readiness and Training) concept that according to a study by Donald Vandergriff supports my theory of Ranger NCOs, “Studies on the Army’s unsuccessful unit manning program of the 1980s called Cohesion, Readiness and Training (COHORT) found that units in the program evolved much faster than units still utilizing the Individual Replacement System (IRS). Studies also found that the constant rotation of officers and senior

noncommissioned officers was an impediment to COHORT units reaching their full potential.”[5] This provides a unique environment to develop the NCO Corps from within the organization and solidifies the high standards and discipline intended.

In today’s OCO (Overseas Contingency Operation) conflict, the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment is the only Regiment in the Army that has Soldiers continuously on the battlefield since 2001. The Regiment’s depth and experience level remains unparalleled. “According to information released by the Army’s Human Resources Command, the 75th Ranger Regt. is the first Army unit to be awarded the Global War on Terrorism, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. One other unit, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, III Corps, Fort Hood, Texas, was approved for the Operation Enduring Freedom campaign streamer.” “Highlighting the unit’s combat successes in Afghanistan, Iraq and other geographic regions, each campaign streamer marks combat deployments of the 75th Ranger Regt. since October 2001 to the present.” [6]

“The 75th Ranger Regiment, composed of three Ranger battalions, is the premier light-infantry unit of the United States Army. The 75th Ranger Regiment is a flexible, highly trained and rapidly deployable light infantry force with specialized skills that enable it to be employed against a variety of conventional and Special Operations targets.” [7] I believe the Regiments long history of success is due to its high standards and the discipline of its NCO corps.

[1] <http://shadowspear.com/vb/archive/index.php/t-13138.html>

[2] <http://www.specialoperations.com/Army/Rangers/default2.html>

[3] [http://www.indiana.edu/~uhrs/training/performance\\_management/define.htm](http://www.indiana.edu/~uhrs/training/performance_management/define.htm)

[4] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morale>

[5] Vandergriff, Donald. "Transforming the U.S. Army Officer Corps". Defense Watch, The

Voice of the Grunt. 11 June 2003, 3 August 2009. < [http://www.sftt.org/cgi-](http://www.sftt.org/cgi-bin/csNews/csNews.cgi?command=viewone&id=288&database=DefenseWatch%20Archive.db)

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[ive.db](http://www.sftt.org/cgi-bin/csNews/csNews.cgi?command=viewone&id=288&database=DefenseWatch%20Archive.db)>

[6] "75th Ranger Regiment awarded three campaign streamers for combat deployments"

USASOC News Service. 29 June 2006. 5 August 2009.

<<http://news.soc.mil/releases/News%20Archive/2006/06JUN/060629-01.html>>.

[7] <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/75rr.htm>