



PECULIARITIES OF TEACHING THE SCIENCE OF MOUNTAIN AND HIGH ALTITUDE TRAINING IN US MILITARY UNITS

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Annotation: *This article outlines the peculiarities of teaching the discipline of mountain and high-altitude training in US military units.*

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Introduction

At present, reforms are being carried out in all spheres of our country, which are also showing positive results in the field of the Armed Forces. On the occasion of the 33rd anniversary of the establishment of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces Sh. Mirziyoyev, in his congratulatory address to the defenders of the Motherland, stated: *"Currently, the military-political situation in the world and in our region is changing rapidly, and threats and challenges in the field of national and global security are steadily increasing. Such a highly responsible situation and life itself require us to critically analyze all our achievements as well as the shortcomings we have allowed."*

Combat operations conducted in the Middle East and around the world demonstrate that military actions do not remain confined to a single location but constantly shift. Today, what is required of us is the

preparation of highly qualified and professional officer cadres capable of defending the Motherland.

Peculiarities of Teaching Mountain and High-Altitude Training in US Military Units

The Ranger Training Brigade (Part I): History and Ideology of the Course

In 1951, a special unit was established under the US Army Ranger Program to train officers and sergeants. That same year, at the Infantry School in Fort Benning, Georgia, a special training program was launched. Graduates of this school earned the right to wear the RANGER tab — a yellow inscription on a black semicircular patch sewn onto the left sleeve.

The purpose of the Ranger program was to prepare experienced and highly qualified platoon and company commanders who were confident in their ability to lead soldiers into battle, overcome any obstacles, and accomplish combat missions. Commanders were expected to ensure that their soldiers could act tactically and skillfully in any situation.

Since 1952, the focus of training shifted from company-group level to individual level. Sergeants and officers who completed the course were expected to further disseminate their acquired knowledge and skills within their units, thereby enhancing combat readiness throughout the Army.

Initially, the plan was to train 3,000 Rangers annually so that each platoon would have a Ranger sergeant and each company would have a Ranger officer. In reality, however, no more than 2,000 Rangers were trained each year, and many were later eliminated. Despite this, due to

the prestige of the Ranger tab and its role in career advancement, there was never a shortage of volunteers for the course.

Anyone who successfully completed the program knew that they possessed the knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish missions with their soldiers and bring them home alive if required.

The early training program for cadets included patrols, ambushes, raids, and airborne operations. In addition to specialized skills, commanders developed leadership qualities and the ability to operate in unusual environments. A strong emphasis was placed on physical fitness, with mountain training conducted during marches from Colorado to Dahlonaga (Georgia). Cadets also mastered forest survival skills at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida.

The school graduated its first class in March 1952. In 1958, the Ranger training unit was reorganized to include three training companies: one specializing in operations in Florida forests, one in mountain operations, and one located at Fort Benning. Desert operations began to be taught only in 1983 at Fort Bliss, though in 1985 the course was moved to Dugway Proving Grounds in Utah.

By 1987, the Ranger Training Department had been reorganized into a Ranger Training Brigade, consisting of four Ranger training battalions:

- 4th Battalion – Fort Benning
- 5th Battalion – Dahlonaga
- 6th Battalion – Eglin
- 7th Battalion – Fort Bliss

From 1991, the training program was extended to 68 days, covering rotations at Fort Benning, Fort Bliss, Dahlonaga, and Eglin, with 16 days spent at each location. The program emphasized creating conditions close

to actual combat through hunger, sleep deprivation, constant psychological stress, and prolonged physical exertion.

Daily routines started at 05:00 and continued until 14:00. Food rations were minimal, with trainees typically losing 13–14 kilograms during the course. Despite the grueling nature of the program, teamwork was emphasized: cadets were paired from the very beginning, and all tasks had to be completed together. This system instilled mutual responsibility and cooperation, which were among the core objectives of the course.

Candidate Requirements

Candidates may come both from the US Armed Forces and from allied forces. Male servicemen holding the rank of sergeant or higher are eligible for the Ranger Program. Those of lower rank must obtain written permission from a direct commander holding the rank of colonel.

All candidates must be healthy and in excellent physical condition; even a minor illness such as a fever can disqualify them. Previous parachuting experience is desirable but not mandatory. Typically, 60% of trainees come from the US Army, 20% from other branches of the US Armed Forces, and another 20% from foreign countries.

4th Ranger Training Battalion – Fort Benning

Candidates who receive an assignment to the course are stationed at Camp Rogers, named after Major Robert Rogers, one of the first Ranger commanders of the 18th century. The brigade headquarters, staff units, and the 4th Ranger Training Battalion are located here. Another training camp, Camp Darby, was named in honor of William O. Darby, one of the founders of the modern Rangers during World War II.

The training process at Fort Benning consists of two stages. During the first five days, recruits undergo continuous assessment and testing at Camp Rogers. They then spend ten days at Camp Darby.

Upon arrival at brigade headquarters, candidates present their official and medical documents without military rank or branch indicated. Following a short briefing, each trainee must pass physical exams, including gymnastics, strength, and athletic exercises. These allow instructors to determine the physical readiness of Ranger candidates. Most pass these tests successfully.

The next test evaluates waterborne combat skills under near-combat conditions. It includes:

1. Swimming 15 meters in full gear with a weapon, without losing any equipment.
2. Diving, removing gear underwater, and resurfacing at the pool's edge.
3. Swimming underwater at a depth of three meters with full equipment.

Instructors carefully observe for signs of panic or fear underwater. The absence of fear is one of the most important indicators of suitability, since the ability to control emotions in extreme situations is highly valued. After this phase, trainees are divided into three training companies. From this moment on, each Ranger is paired with a permanent partner. All tasks must be completed together; if one fails, both fail. This instills teamwork and mutual accountability.

Training Content and Standards

Candidates undergo rigorous testing in the handling of weapons and communication equipment. Ranger standards include 11 examinations grouped into five categories:

1. **M-60 machine gun:** assembly/disassembly, loading, and preparing for firing.
2. **Claymore mine (M18A1):** installation, wiring, and preparation for detonation.
3. **Communications:** transmitting messages via radio and encrypting/decrypting radiograms using the KTS-600 encryption table.
4. **M-16 rifle:** maintenance, troubleshooting minor malfunctions, and conducting full inspections.
5. **Hand grenades and M203 grenade launcher:** correct handling and usage.

To pass, candidates must successfully complete at least 7 of the 11 tasks. Those who fail undergo intensive remedial instruction and retesting; repeated failure results in dismissal from the course.

Physical training also includes:

- A 5-mile run within 40 minutes.
- Day and night land navigation using only an Army-issued compass.
- An obstacle course known as the “Darby Queen,” which includes walls, trenches, barbed wire, ropes, and climbing exercises.

Waterborne training ends with a “confidence test”: jumping from a 9-meter platform into Lake Victoria, followed by a 60-meter rope descent into the water. Instructors emphasize that trainees who face obstacles decisively will also act decisively in combat.

The “Gulag” Unit

Those who are temporarily disqualified due to medical or academic reasons but wish to retry may be assigned to a unit nicknamed the “Gulag.” Its tasks include maintaining facilities, repairing training grounds, and serving as opposing forces during exercises. Camp Rogers hosts the largest “Gulag,” where many trainees are held until they can reattempt tests with the next training cycle.

Hand-to-Hand Combat Training

During the first five days, evenings are dedicated to hand-to-hand combat training. Ranger combat techniques, while not as refined as martial arts, are practical and effective. Cadets are taught to use all parts of the body as weapons. Each day, 3–4 hours are spent practicing combat drills.

Mountain and High-Altitude Training

Teaching the discipline of mountain and high-altitude training is mandatory in all developed countries. In the US, soldiers from all types of units are required to undergo mountain and altitude training. From the lowest-ranking private to senior officers, all personnel must complete such courses.

The reason is clear: combat operations may take place not only in urban areas but also in mountainous terrain across the globe. Therefore, every soldier must master mountain and altitude training. Upon returning to their units, soldiers incorporate this training into their schedules and routines. Additionally, they must undergo refresher training and pass control tests every three months.

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