

# U.S. Army Rangers



The Ranger Battalions of World War II were developed in order to create an American unit with the same specialized training as the British Commandos. Desiring a name different from that of the British units, Major General Lucian K. Truscott, who had been giving the task of training men alongside the British Commandos, chose "rangers," a name used by Major Robert Rogers in 1756 during the French and Indian War.

Early rangers were prized for their weapons and woodcraft skills, and were used to patrol and scout the wide spaces that often separated frontier outposts and forts. Although the use of the word "ranger" goes back as far as King Phillip's War in 1675, if not even earlier, Roger's Rangers were the first units of a professional military to employ ranger techniques.

Originally the American Rangers who trained with the British were meant to return to regular Army units to spread their knowledge and training in anticipation of an eventual attack on German-occupied France. The Ranger soldiers and their commanders had little interest in being dispersed and sent back to regular Army units. The Rangers were never used in this fashion, and were instead employed as independent combat units. The one exception was the short-lived 29th Ranger Battalion, which was disbanded after seeing only limited combat action.

## 1st Ranger Battalion

The U.S. Army 1st Ranger Battalion was constituted on May 27, 1942, and officially activated on June 19, 1942 in Carrickfergus, Ireland under the command of Major William Orlando Darby. Volunteers for the first Ranger unit had come from Army soldiers who had been in training in Northern Ireland with the 34th Infantry Division and the 1st Armored Division.

The first Rangers to see combat were 50 men who joined Canadian and British forces in a disastrous raid on Dieppe, France on August 19, 1942.

During World War II the 1st Ranger Battalion fought in Algeria (Operation Torch), Tunisia, Sicily, Naples-Foggia, Rome-Arno and [Anzio](#).

The 1st Ranger Battalion earned two Presidential Unit Citations; one for its actions in clearing El Guettar Pass in Tunisia in March of 1943, and a second for Salerno.

Following actions near Cisterna, Italy in January of 1944, the 1st Ranger Battalion was captured by German forces. The battalion was officially deactivated on August 16, 1944.

## **2nd Ranger Battalion**

Constituted on March 11, 1943, the 2nd Ranger Battalion was activated on April 1, 1943 at Camp Forrest, Tennessee. The unit would eventually be commanded by Major James Earl Rudder.

Along with the 5th Ranger Battalion, the 2nd Rangers participated in the D-Day assault on June 6, 1944 (*see [2nd Ranger Battalion](#) for more detailed information*) as well as campaigns in Northern France, the Rhineland, Central Europe and Ardennes-Alsace. The 2nd Ranger Battalion earned a Presidential Unit Citation and a French Croix de Guerre with Silver-Gilt Star for the assault on Pointe du Hoc.

The 2nd Ranger Battalion was inactivated on October 23, 1945 at Camp Patrick Henry in Virginia.

## **3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions**

Activated after the success at Tunisia, the 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions were commanded by Major Herman Dammer and Major Roy Murray respectively. The 3rd Battalion, comprised of Companies A and B of the 1st Battalion, was activated on May 21, 1943 at Nemours, Algeria. The 4th Battalion, comprised of Companies E and F of the 1st Battalion, was activated on June 8, 1943. The 1st Battalion was left with Companies C and D.

Because of their small size, the three Ranger battalions were not organized as a regiment, but instead were designated as the 6615th Ranger Force. Lt. Colonel Darby was promoted to colonel and placed in command of the Ranger Force.

Both the 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions fought in Sicily, Naples-Foggia, Rome-Arno and Anzio.

The 1st, 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions lead the night landings at [Anzio](#), Italy on January 22, 1944, but later suffered a major defeat in January of 1944 when the 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions were surrounded and captured by Germans near Cisterna. The 4th Ranger Battalion received heavy casualties, and the 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions were effectively destroyed. The 3rd Ranger Battalion earned a Presidential Unit Citation for actions in Salerno.

The 3rd Ranger Battalion was deactivated on August 15, 1944. The 4th Ranger Battalion was deactivated on October 24th, 1944 at Camp Butner in North Carolina.

## **5th Ranger Battalion**

The 5th Ranger Battalion was constituted on July 21st, 1943 and was activated at Camp Forrest, Tennessee on September 1, 1943 under the command of Lt. Colonel Max Scheinder.

The 5th Ranger Battalion was involved in the landings at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, as well as campaigns in Northern France, the Rhineland, Central Europe and Ardennes-Alsace.

The 5th Ranger Battalion earned a Presidential Unit Citation and a French Croix de Guerre with Silver-Gilt Star for the assault on Pointe du Hoc. A second Presidential Unit Citation was awarded for actions in the Saar River area.

## **6th Ranger Battalion**

The Sixth Ranger Battalion was constituted on December 16th, 1940 as the 98th Field Artillery Battalion, and later converted and redesignated as a Ranger unit on September 25th, 1944 at Port Moresby, [New Guinea](#). The 6th Ranger Battalion participated in actions in New Guinea, Leyte and Luzon.

Company C of the 6th Ranger Battalion was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for actions in Cabu-Luzon. The entire battalion was awarded a Philippine Presidential Unit Citation for actions between October 17th, 1944 and July 4th, 1945.

The 6th Ranger Battalion was inactivated on December 30th, 1945 in Japan.