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RANGERS LEAD THE WAY: THE VISION OF GENERAL CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS

by

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ABSTRACT

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Examine the strategic vision of General Creighton Abrams to restore values and standards to the Army. Argue the formation of the Ranger Battalions was the tool he used to effect this restoration. A restoration which was key to the Army emerging from its post Viet Nam period of decline. The values and standards incorporated in the Ranger Battalions were promulgated throughout the rest of the Army by Rangers returning to it. Analyze and develop lessons for future leaders.

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RANGERS LEAD THE WAY: THE VISION OF GENERAL CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS

“ RANGERS LEAD THE WAY! “ is the motto of the U.S. Army’s Ranger Regiment. Their motto conveys the pride and esprit de corps of Rangers everywhere. History suggests Brigadier General Norman D. Cota, Assistant Division Commander of the 29th Infantry Division, deserves credit for this motto. Viewing the carnage on Omaha Beach on D-Day 6 June 1944, Brigadier General Cota recognized the need to get the assault forces inland. To stay on the beach under the murderous fire of the defenders guns would only contribute to more casualties. Brigadier General Cota sought out Lieutenant Colonel Max Schneider, commander of the 5th Ranger Battalion and directed “Rangers, lead the way off this beach.” Cota’s command has morphed into the current motto.¹ Since that day on Bloody Omaha, Rangers have continued to lead the United States Army.

This paper will examine the use of the Ranger Battalions to lead the Army through change. The thesis of the paper purports that one of the reasons for the formation of the modern day Ranger Battalions was to provide a change agent for the rest of the Army. This paper will argue that General Creighton W. Abrams, Chief of Staff of the Army, intended such a use of the Ranger Battalions when he authorized the formation of the first one in 1974. General Abrams had a strategic vision of using the Ranger Battalions to re-instill pride and values in the Army post Viet Nam. His strategic vision of using the Ranger Battalions as change agents was continued through succeeding Chiefs of Staff of the Army. Finally, this paper will demonstrate that this strategic role of the Ranger Battalions continues to this day.

The paper will begin this examination with a review of a current conceptual model of vision, change agents and leading change, which will establish a foundation upon which to conduct an analysis of the Ranger Battalions. A brief biography of General Creighton W. Abrams will follow to provide the reader with a feel for the leader who envisioned the Ranger Battalions. Because it is important to understand the conditions under which a strategic vision is developed, the paper will present a review of the state of the Army, as the author believes General Abrams saw it, following Viet Nam. Next a brief history of the Ranger Battalions and the process of their formation will be presented. In conclusion, the paper will then walk the reader through several examples how the Ranger Battalions led the inculcation of ideas, concepts, and values throughout the entire Army.

VISION, CHANGE AGENTS, AND LEADING CHANGE

The Army War College uses the book Leading Change by John P. Kotter as a text for instruction in leading and managing change.² In this book, John Kotter proposes a model for

leading large organizations through change. The Kotter model offers a logical construct with which to examine the formation of the Ranger Battalions. His model consists of eight stages:

- 1) establish a sense of urgency – examining the market and competitive realities; identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities
- 2) creating the guiding coalition – putting together a group with enough power to lead change; getting the group to work together like a team
- 3) developing a vision and strategy – creating a vision to help direct change effort; developing strategies for achieving that vision
- 4) communicating the change vision – using every vehicle possible to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies; having the guiding coalition role model the behavior expected of the employees
- 5) empowering broad-based action – getting rid of obstacles; changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision; encouraging risk taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions
- 6) generating short term wins – planning for visible improvements in performance, or “wins”; creating those wins; visibly recognizing and rewarding people who made those wins possible
- 7) consolidating gains and producing more change – using increased credibility to change all systems, structures, and policies that don’t fit the transformation vision; hiring, promoting; and developing people who can implement the change vision; reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents
- 8) anchoring new approaches in the culture – creating better performance through customer- and productivity-oriented behavior, more and better leadership, and more effective management; articulating the connections between new behaviors and organizational success; developing means to ensure leadership development and succession.³

It is important to remember that this model is based in the corporate world and is not a military specific model. As such it is a product of the explosion in the last 10 years in the study of re-engineering large organizations and changing them. Research indicates that the model did not formally exist as a construct when the Ranger Battalions were formed. However, that does not negate its use as an analytical tool of those events. This paper will show that the formation of the Ranger Battalions fits the model as a change agent for the entire Army.

GENERAL CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS

General Creighton W. Abrams was a 1936 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. An armor officer, he served as the commander of the 37th tank Battalion in General George S. Patton’s Third Army in World War II. He gained fame when he

led the battalion in the relief of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. General Patton is quoted as saying: "I'm supposed to be the best tank commander in the Army but I have one peer - Abe Abrams. He's the world champion."⁴ He also commanded the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment in the post-war occupation of Germany.⁵ In Korea, General Abrams was the Chief of Staff of three different Corps.⁶ He commanded the 3rd Armor Division during the Berlin Crisis. General Abrams served as the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and eventually succeeded General William C. Westmoreland as the commander of all United States forces in Viet Nam.⁷ General Abrams also succeeded General Westmoreland as the Chief of Staff, Army. Two years into his tenure as the Chief of Staff, General Abrams fell ill with lung cancer. Surviving a lung removal operation, he returned to duty for a brief time. However, the disease returned and eventually killed him. General Abrams is the only Chief of Staff to have died while in office.⁸

From this short biography, it is clear that General Abrams had experience leading large organizations. Among the major organizational efforts he led as the Chief of Staff was the withdrawal of the Army from Viet Nam. He also led the Army during its transformation from a draft to an all volunteer force. And he created the Ranger Battalions.

POST VIET NAM ARMY

The Army after the protracted conflict of the Viet Nam War was one that in the hindsight of history was a poor one. Many historians, commentators, and soldiers who were in the Army at the time describe a truly despondent force. Drug and race problems were rampant. Discipline within the entire force was lacking. A story relayed to the author as a cadet at the United States Military Academy in 1980 demonstrates this point.

A captain assigned to West Point as a Tactical Officer relayed to the author this experience. As a cadet at West Point, the officer participated in what is known as the Cadet Troop Leading Training (CTLT) program. Under this program, cadets are assigned, usually in their junior year summer, to regular Army units for a period of time averaging about 6 weeks. During this time the cadets are assigned to platoons to serve as "Third Lieutenants". The purpose to allow cadets to experience the life of a platoon leader in preparation for commissioning the following summer.

The officer, referred to henceforth as the cadet, was assigned to a mechanized infantry platoon at Fort Riley, Kansas. He told the author that as part of his CTLT program he was assigned the task of leading the platoon on a field exercise. Throughout the exercise the soldiers of the platoon failed to perform to any reasonable standard, even though the vast majority of the soldiers were veterans of Viet Nam. As he told the story, the cadet said he spent

the entire field exercise constantly cajoling, yelling, wheedling, and pleading trying to get the soldiers to perform tactically. Then it happened. The platoon pulled into yet another defensive position. And the soldiers sprang from their Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs). With alacrity the soldiers began cutting down the fauna in the area to place on top the APCs as camouflage, or so the cadet thought. Then he realized that the local fauna was in fact marijuana. The soldiers were stacking the stalks on top of the exhaust vent of the APCs to dry out the marijuana.⁹ Such was the Army of the early 70's.

As the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Abrams understood the extent of the drug problem in the Army. In his personal papers are the notes of many the staff meetings he attended. On a note page, dated 26 February 1973, an annotation was made regarding the problems in the Army in Europe specifically.

“Bad-Drugs-hard drugs up Frankfurt

Hash available replaced by hard

Age 25 and under 50% to 90%.....

Soldiers bored.....

VOLAR term no good [VOLAR refers to Volunteer Army. The term was part of the vernacular when the Army transitioned from a draft to an all volunteer force.]

Permissiveness, discipline,

Chain of command.”¹⁰

Of course, it is not possible to know what General Abrams was thinking when he made these notes. However, a logical conclusion that one can draw from the notes is that General Abrams was aware and clearly concerned about the many pressures on the morale and discipline of the Army.

On 22 February 1974, General Abrams testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee. A significant portion of his testimony dealt with the drug problem in the United States Army, Europe (USAREUR). However, some of his testimony, as well as comments to reporters afterwards, dealt with the entire United States Army. In his testimony, General Abrams stated that the drug problem in the Army in 1974 rivaled the extent of the problem during the Viet Nam War. Senator Harold Hughes, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee present that day, made the following statement to the press recounting the hearing. “He [Abrams] sees it as very serious question....I asked him if it was comparable to Viet Nam, and he said yes.”¹¹

General Abrams clearly judged the situation as grave. So grave that he stated to the press following the hearing that he was going to Europe to assess the situation himself. General Abrams told Senator Hughes, "Any force with that size of a drug problem has to have some effect on its readiness."¹²

Another indication as to the state of the Army in the early 70's is a study conducted by the United States Army War College. In 1970, General William Westmoreland, then the Army Chief of Staff, directed the War College to conduct a study of the military professionalism of the officer corps. "This study deals with the heart and soul of the Officer Corps of the Army."¹³ The study was conducted by a group of officers who were students at the War College. The study group included such future senior leaders of the Army as Lieutenant General Walter F. Ulmer, Jr. The study is generally considered to be one of the seminal works delving into the professionalism of the officer corps. The study interviewed over 450 officers ranging in rank from lieutenant to colonel. The survey group was composed of members of the "...staff and faculty of the Chaplains School, the Advanced Courses at Forts Benning, Eutaw, Knox, and Sill, and the USACGSC at Fort Leavenworth....Additionally, all of the Army members of the class of 1970 at the USAWC...were queried..."¹⁴

Comments collected by the study provide a telescope into what the officers of the time were feeling. One problem recorded by the study was,

"The lack of uniform standards throughout the Army...standards of appearance and standards of performance...this sort of thing. Problems that every commander is faced with today...the haircut; on every single post and on each post, within units, there is a different standard for haircuts...What they would like is a Department of Army standard that is enforced by all commanders and all commanders have to live with it..."¹⁵

Haircut standards seem like a minor point of contention in today's Army. But clearly such standards, or rather the lack thereof, were on the mind of officers in 1970. Today such standards endure as touchstones of a units' discipline and morale.

The Army War College's "Study On Military Professionalism" noted several other problems that may certainly have been targets for change. Of particular note is the following conclusion of the study panel.

The most frequently recurring specific themes describing the variance between ideal and actual standards of behavior in the Officer Corps include: selfish, promotion-oriented behavior; inadequate communication between junior and senior; distorted or dishonest reporting of status, statistics, or officer efficiency; technical or managerial incompetence; disregard for principles but total respect for accomplishing even the trivial mission with zero defects; disloyalty to

subordinates; senior officers setting poor standards of ethical/professional behavior.¹⁶

The above conclusion seems to encapsulate the problems of the Army following the Viet Nam War. One must remember that at the time of this study the Army, and the country, was still conducting combat operations in Viet Nam. In fact, throughout the study there are innumerable citations of body counts being a point of ethical mistrust throughout the force. However, from a realistic and historical perspective, this study was the most current pulse of the Army available when General Abrams became Chief of Staff in 1972. Logically, the study remains a good indication of the state of the Army at that time.

Despite its condition in 1971, the U.S. Army of today is widely recognized as the greatest in the world. Indeed, one could safely say that most historians would agree with Professor Henry Gole, who teaches a course titled "Men In Battle" at the Army War College, on the reason for the reputation enjoyed by today's Army. Professor Gole is of the opinion that its success in the combat of Desert Storm explains the high esteem the Army enjoys today.¹⁷ But that success is rooted in the changes in the Army made by General Abrams and other leaders. The Ranger Battalions are part of those changes.

THE RANGER BATTALION SINCE WORLD WAR II

The 5th Ranger Battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Snider on Omaha Beach certainly is the forebear of the modern Ranger Battalions. However, the origins of today's Ranger Battalions are to be found in the Yom Kippur War of 1973, when Egypt and Syria attacked Israel. The Yom Kippur War prompted the leadership of the Army to question its ability to move rapidly a highly capable and lethal military force to trouble spots anywhere in the world. A message from General Abrams to General Fred C. Weyland, Vice Chief Of Staff of the Army expressed this concern.

In light of the kinds of military equipment that is in the area and the demonstrated ability of the Soviets to provide more and in light of the organization and equipment of the 82D – what kind of mission could have reasonably been assigned to the 82D and how well would that have matched the kind of mission our government might have wanted it to perform. If our government would expect it to fight for what would be perceived as our interests then I think we must now review the organization equipment and doctrine of the 82D....I am sure there are many more questions if we look at fighting in that environment [sic]. I believe we should assume now that we will have to do that. It seems to me we should talk...¹⁸

One of the outcomes of Abrams's concern was his decision to resurrect the idea of a light infantry battalion-size force exemplified by the Ranger Battalions of World War II. In late 1973, General Creighton W. Abrams authorized the formation of one battalion in the mold of units like the 5th Ranger Battalion.¹⁹

THE ABRAMS CHARTER

In early 1974, General Abrams issued guidance concerning this new unit. His guidance has become known as the Abrams Charter.

The battalion is to be an elite, light and the most proficient infantry battalion in the world.

A battalion that can do things with its hands and weapons better than anyone.

The battalion will contain no "hoodlums or brigands" and if the battalion is formed from such persons it will be disbanded.

Wherever the battalion goes, it must be apparent that it is the best.²⁰

The Abrams Charter is the codification of his vision in creating the Ranger Battalions. His guidance was explicitly and implicitly conveyed when the Army began its search for soldiers to join this new Battalion.

Headquarters, United States Army Forces Command, published its General Order 127 on 25 January, 1974. General Order 127 directed the activation of the 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry (Ranger). The effective date of the activation was 31 January 1974. The recruitment and selection of soldiers Army-wide began immediately. On 5 March 1974, the Commander, Military Personnel Center released a message to the field recruiting soldiers for this new Battalion. The message read in part:

1. The Chief of Staff, Army has directed the establishment of a Ranger Battalion designed to be the finest foot infantry battalion in the world. The battalion must be capable of accomplishing any infantry platoon, company, or battalion type mission to include participation in airborne, airmobile or amphibious operations. The unit has been designated the 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry.

2. Enlisted personnel who desire assignment to the 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry, are requested to submit volunteer applications indicated herein.

3. Those personnel submitting a volunteer application must meet the following criteria:

a. Volunteer for airborne and ranger training if not already so qualified.

b. Regardless of prior airborne/ranger qualifications, be able to meet the medical,

physical, and mental prerequisites for attendance at the Airborne and Ranger schools....

d. Have no record of GCM, nor any courts-martial during current enlistment.²¹

The tenants of the Abrams Charter were clearly stated in this recruitment message. More important, the vision of General Abrams for the Ranger Battalion as a fighting force was certainly articulated to the rest of the Army by this message.

The vision that General Abrams had for the Ranger Battalion, as a leader of change for the rest of the Army, was not so specifically articulated. This piece of his vision was conveyed indirectly to the commander of the unit. Then Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth C. (K.C.) Leuer was the officer selected as the first Ranger Battalion Commander since World War II. In a interview with Lieutenant Colonel (now Brigadier General) Frank Kearney in 1997, now retired Major General Leuer said he was "...never specifically told that the Rangers were to be role models for the Army..."²² Rather it was in his conversations with senior leaders that he came to understand this implied mission of the Ranger Battalion.²³ Colonel Ken Keen in a study titled 75th Ranger Regiment: Strategic Force For The 21st Century researched this transfer of vision. He writes, "It was understood that the Rangers were to be a role model for the Army and leaders trained in the Ranger battalions should return to the conventional Army to pass on their experience and expertise."²⁴

WE WANT TO BE RANGERS

The recruitment effort for soldiers willing to join the new Ranger Battalion was an unqualified success. An illustration of the dynamics created by the Ranger Battalion recruiting effort may be found in an excerpt of a letter sent to General Abrams by Private Edward P. Lariviera. At the time, 24 March 1974, Private Lariviera and his buddy Private Danny J. Minnick were assigned to the 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. Private Lariviera writes:

Sir: I am writing this letter on behalf of myself and Private Danny J. Minnick in regards to the new Airborne Ranger Battalion. That is being formed in Fort Stewart, Georgia. When Private Minnick and I enlisted, we both wanted to be Rangers....when we were informed of the need for volunteers for the Ranger Battalion we were both very excited. We thought this would be our long awaited chance to be, or at least try to be, Airborne Rangers...

Being too junior in rank to apply, Private Lariviera was seeking a rank waiver for both himself and his Ranger Buddy, Private Minnick. The recruiting message had specified a minimum rank

of Private First Class. Private Lariviera's handwritten letter was found in the personal papers of General Abrams. As an indication of his leadership, the letter was accompanied by a file copy of a memorandum to the Commander, XVIII Airborne Corps, the parent unit of Privates Minnick and Lariviera's 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, requesting assistance to the two soldiers in submitting Ranger applications.²⁵ Another file copy indicates a memorandum was sent to the two soldiers themselves providing additional guidance on how they could apply to be Rangers.²⁶ Determining whether Privates Minnick and Lariviere succeeded in the quest to be Rangers was beyond the scope of this paper. Based on the enthusiasm and desire expressed in the letter, surely it is a reasonable assumption that they did in fact become Rangers. This excerpt certainly conveys the degree of excitement that the announcement of the Ranger Battalion formation created in the ranks of the Army.

The recruitment of the best for the forming Ranger Battalion was not confined to messages and privates. The best officers and non-commissioned officers were also recruited to be part of the Ranger Battalion. The policy toward command in the Ranger Battalion exemplified this search for the best. The Army supported Major General (Retired) K.C. Leuer's demand that only officers who had successfully commanded elsewhere be assigned as commanders in the Ranger Battalion. This dictate included platoon leaders.²⁷ In an interview with the author, Lieutenant General John N. Le Moyne, the current Army G1 and veteran of the 2nd Battalion (Ranger), confirmed this dictate. He said that all the leaders of the Ranger Battalions were "hand picked." Lieutenant General Le Moyne further stated that activations of the 3rd Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry, as well as the Headquarters, 75th Infantry Regiment (Ranger), were delayed due to a lack of soldiers of a high enough caliber. Lieutenant General Le Moyne said the Army simply stuck to the decision not to accept a lesser caliber of soldier just to meet a programmed force structure.²⁸

The success of the of the newly formed 1st Ranger Battalion in meeting the vision of General Abrams can be seen in a letter to him from the Honorable Howard H. Calloway, then Secretary of the Army. Secretary Calloway wrote the letter describing the activation ceremony of the Ranger Battalion. General Abrams was in the hospital at the time and would pass away within a month. In the letter, dated 22 August 1974, and addressed to "Dear Abe," Secretary Calloway writes:

I participated in the official activation ceremony for the 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry, at Fort Stewart on Tuesday of this week. I just wanted to tell you that, in my judgment, the Rangers are everything that you had hoped they would be. I've never seen a unit that looked better or one which had a higher sense of mission, professionalism, and pride than this battalion of Rangers. I had an

opportunity to talk individually to a great many of the soldiers. Every one of them believes that the Ranger Battalion is the greatest thing that's ever happened in the Army.

None of us know what missions this Battalion will be called upon to perform, but I can promise you that anyone who choses [sic] to tangle with them should be prepared to "bring their lunch."²⁹

Secretary Callaway was clearly impressed with the Ranger Battalion. The caliber of the officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers, all proudly referred to as Rangers, allowed the formation of the unit in an incredibly short period of time. The quality of the soldiers who over the years become Rangers has been hallmark since the inception of the Ranger Battalions. The policies put in place to build the first Ranger Battalion have remained in place. The standards have not been compromised. Indeed, as stated above, the activation of the 3^d Battalion (Ranger) and the Regimental Headquarters was delayed by a lack of suitably qualified soldiers. The Army simply could not recruit enough soldiers of the caliber required to form a third battalion until the early 80's.³⁰

From the formulation of the concept, to approval, recruitment, training, and initial operational capability of the first battalion took less than eight months. On 22 August 1974, The 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry stood ready to meet its nation's enemies. It and its sister battalions and Regimental Headquarters, the 2nd Battalion (Ranger) (activated on 01 October 1974) and 3^d Battalion (Ranger) (activated on 03 October 1984 with the Regimental Headquarters) have engaged in everyone of the country's combat actions since 1974. The 1st Battalion (Ranger) participated in the ill-fated Desert One operation in 1980. The 1st and 2nd Battalions (Ranger) fought in Operation URGENT FURY, the liberation of Grenada. The Ranger Regimental Headquarters and all three Ranger Battalions participated in operation JUST CAUSE, the liberation of Panama. The Army force in DESERT STORM included elements of the 1st Battalion (Ranger). Task Force Ranger in Somalia was built around elements of the 3^d Battalion (Ranger).³¹ And, of course, elements from the Ranger regiment are participating in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

THE IMPACT OF ABRAMS'S RANGERS

The 1st Battalion (Ranger) and 2nd Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry were initially known throughout the Army as Abrams's Rangers. The battalions were referred to as such because of the deep personal involvement of General Abrams in their formation.³² The units quickly established a reputation as among the toughest, if not the toughest, combat forces in the world. Certainly their capability in combat has contributed greatly to the overall success of the Army.

But Abrams's Rangers contributed much more to the Army than that of a combat force. The battalions also contributed to the recovery of the Army as a whole from the turmoil following the Viet Nam War.

One of the more little known contributions of the first Ranger Battalions to the Army was the concept of the Family Readiness Group. The Family Readiness Group is an organization of the family members of a military unit. The purpose of the Family Readiness Group is to provide an organization, a construct, to the members to support each other. Support is especially required when the service member sponsor of the family is deployed. Today the Family Readiness Group is very much an institutionalized part of the Army. In fact, unit commanders at every level are required by Army regulation to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of such an organization.³³

Such organizations did not exist in the Army in 1974. Although families of soldiers have been helping each other since the days of the frontier, no formal structure existed. The nature of the formation and the basing of Abrams's Rangers created the environment for such an organization.³⁴ The first ranger battalions were established as separate units on post dominated by much larger divisional units. The 1st Battalion (Ranger) was activated at Fort Stewart, Georgia, which was the home of the 24th Infantry Division. Fort Lewis, Washington, was chosen as the home of the 2nd Battalion (Ranger). Fort Lewis was also the home to the 9th Infantry Division. Since even at their inception the Ranger Battalions were envisioned as strategic assets, they were not under the command of the infantry divisions at their respective installations. Consequently, the ranger battalions found themselves as outsiders. This drove the need for the families to bond in mutual support.³⁵

Lieutenant General (Retired) Lawson W. Magruder III, expounded on this topic in an interview with the author. LTG (RET) Magruder commanded B Company, 2-75th Ranger Battalion 1974-1975. As described previously, all Ranger company commanders had already served successfully as such in other units. In his case, LTG (RET) Magruder had commanded a company in the 82nd Airborne Division. Then, as now, the 82nd Airborne Division was considered one of the Army's best divisions. LTG (RET) Magruder said that the 82nd Airborne Division did not have any such program, but one was in place when he arrived to command B Company, 2-75th Ranger Battalion.³⁶

One of the wives assigned to the 2-75th Ranger Battalion at the time wrote about her experience with what became known as Family Readiness Groups. She wrote:

This was my first assignment as a "wife/dependent" and watching how they [the battalion commander and his wife] maintained that big family has always been a

source of inspiration for me - I still tell new wives to the military how great it can work. Everyone was important and everyone mattered. As wives we looked out for each other constantly, all the way from...Cdr's wife down to the newest and youngest wife.³⁷

This wife went on to write that she continues to pass on the lessons she learned as a spouse of a Ranger. She described practices of those early wives groups that are found in today's formal Army Family Readiness program.³⁸ Empirical evidence such as these examples certainly suggests that Family Readiness Groups are one of the practices of the Ranger Battalions that migrated to the rest of the Army.

LTG (RET) Magruder highlighted another contribution of the Ranger Battalions to the Army. This contribution was the internalization of the Army's newly developed standardized training process. The officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) of the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions were instrumental in the refinement and acceptance of the training concept now commonly referred to as tasks, conditions, and standards. Each task an individual Ranger had to execute in order to contribute to the successful accomplishment of his Ranger unit's mission was identified. The multitask functions were dissected into component parts - into tasks. The conditions under which a Ranger had to accomplish specific tasks were also identified. And finally, the standards to which the Ranger had to perform the tasks were determined and codified. Then the tasks, conditions, and standards were transcribed onto cards to which a Ranger could refer. This stressing of task, condition, and standard was internalized by the Army as Rangers rotated back to ordinary units. The concept now is an integral part of Army training doctrine.³⁹

This concept of standards goes back to the finding of the War College Study on Military Professionalism. The reader will recall that the study found the surveyed officers expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of uniformed standards throughout the Army. LTG Le Moyne, the current Army G1, talked about this principle in his interview with the author. LTG Le Moyne maintained that one the key contributions of the ranger battalions were that the standards held were based on Army standards. It was this idea of establishing and holding to standards that endures as a major contribution of the Ranger Battalions in changing the Army.⁴⁰

LTG Le Moyne also brought out another example of the ranger battalions influence on the Army. Part of the uniform of a soldier who has completed Ranger School is the highly coveted black and gold Ranger Tab worn on the left shoulder of the uniform. The Ranger Tab has been authorized for many years. In 1987, Special Forces became an independent branch of service in the Army. Until that time, completion of the Special Forces Qualification Course

had been signified by the wearing of the Green Beret. However, upon becoming a branch, Special Forces petitioned the Army for permission to wear a Special Forces Tab. The request was approved. LTG Le Moyne maintains the desire for the Special Forces Tab is based on the significance of the Ranger Tab.⁴¹

THE WICKHAM CHARTER

There are two other charters that serve as guides for the Ranger Regiment of today. The second charter was postulated in 1984 by General John A. Wickham when he was the Chief of Staff of the Army. The charter was developed to provide refined guidance as the Regimental Headquarters and the 3^d Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment activated. Of course, this charter is know as the Wickham charter and reads as follows.

The Ranger Regiment will draw its members from the entire army-after service in the regiment-return these men to line units of the army with the Ranger philosophy and standards.

Rangers will lead the way in developing tactics, training techniques, and doctrine for the Army's Light infantry formations.

The Ranger regiment will be deeply involved in the development of Ranger doctrine.

The Regiment will experiment with new equipment to include off-the-shelf items and share the results with the Light Infantry community.⁴²

One can see that the Wickham charter formally codified the vision of Rangers returning to the rest of the Army to promulgate Ranger standards. It must be noted that the Wickham Charter reinforces the Abrams Charter specifying the Rangers as the premiere light infantry in the world. General Wickham fostered his concept of light infantry divisions in 1984 as well. It is clear he intended that the Ranger Regiment would develop the concepts and equipment for such a division.

THE SULLIVAN CHARTER

The third charter guiding the Rangers is known as the Sullivan charter. It is the most formal of the three charters. General Gordon R. Sullivan wrote the charter on letterhead when he was the Chief of Staff. The Charter reads:

The 75th Ranger Regiment sets the standard for light infantry throughout the world. The hallmark of the Regiment is, and shall remain, the discipline and esprit of its soldiers. It should be readily apparent to any observer, friend or foe, that this is an awesome force composed of skilled, dedicated soldiers who can do things with their hands and their weapons better than anyone. The Rangers

serve as the connectivity between the Army's conventional and special operations forces.

The Regiment provides the National Command Authority with a potent and responsive strike force continuously ready for worldwide deployment. The Regiment must remain capable of fighting anytime, anywhere, against any enemy and WINNING.

As the standard-bearer for the Army, the Regiment will recruit from every sector of the active force. When a Ranger is reassigned at the completion of his tour, he will imbue his new unit with the Regiment's dauntless spirit and high standards.

The Army expects the Regiment to lead the way within the infantry community in modernizing Ranger doctrine, tactics, techniques and equipment to meet the challenges of the future.

The Army is unswervingly committed to the support of the Regiment and its unique mission.⁴³

Once again, the mission of the Rangers to return to the Army and spread the Ranger spirit is clear. An additional mission from both the Abrams and the Wickham charters is to serve as the bridge between the Army's conventional and special operations forces. Also interesting is that the Sullivan Charter acknowledges that the Army bears a responsibility to support the Rangers of the Regiment. Until this charter that support had not been so formally stated.

ONE FINAL EXAMPLE

The Rangers of the 75th Ranger Regiment continue to exemplify the professionalism for which they are so famous. On 3 November 2000, the Army Chief of Staff, General Eric K. Shinseki sent a message announcing that on 14 June 2001, the Army would adopt the black beret as the standard headgear.⁴⁴ This announcement came despite the fact that since 1975 the black beret had been authorized for wear by Rangers assigned to Ranger Battalions.⁴⁵ And those Rangers took a great deal of pride in the distinctive headgear. Although the ire of some former Rangers no longer in the Army was raised, no complaints were heard from within the Regiment. The Regiment seamlessly transitioned to tan berets. Once again, Rangers set the standard of professionalism in keeping with the dictates of the Abrams, Wickham, and Sullivan Charters.

COMPARISON TO THE MODEL

A return to the model of John P. Kotter concerning change illustrates some interesting aspects of the relationship of the Ranger Battalions to the Army. Not all components of the

model apply, but those that do provide a potential insight to what may have been what we would now call the vision of General Abrams.

Establish a sense of urgency – The state of the Army in the early 70's certainly provided an urgent need to reinforce standards. The concerns of the Army's responsiveness after the Yom Kippur War highlighted the need for a new capability. The Ranger Battalions provided the Army with the vehicle to do both.

Developing a Vision and Strategy – The Abrams Charter appears to have provided the vision. The words and thoughts of General Abrams captured explicitly in the Charter are powerful in and of themselves. Coupled with the implicit and extrapolated guidance given personally to the first Ranger Battalion commander certainly constitutes a vision.

Communicating the Change Vision – Again we return to the Abrams Charter. Whether he intended those words to survive as guidance for almost three decades is unknown. The fact they have is an indication of their relevance. Clearly the more formal and specific Wickham and Sullivan Charters were intended as long term vision statements.

Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture – Without question, the Ranger Battalions meet this condition. The ways and means instituted in the Ranger Battalions spread to the Army. The Army's new training precepts internalized in the Ranger Battalions became inculcated in the Army as its training doctrine. First, the Battalion Training Management System, then the Field Manuals 25-100 and 25-101.⁴⁶

Major General James Dubik is an example of how the culture of the Ranger Battalions became anchored in the leaders of the Army. MG Dubik is a former division commander and is currently a leader in the Army's Transformation. He describes his service in the Ranger Battalion as having "Defined my leadership for the rest of my professional life, and probably the rest of my natural life."⁴⁷ MG Dubik concluded a description of his observations concerning that service by saying,

These observations affected how I commanded a battalion, a brigade, and a division. These observations affected how I organized the training and fielding plan for the first IBCT [Interim Brigade Combat Team]. These observations affected how I approached leader development at every level.⁴⁸

The impact of his time as a lieutenant in Abrams' Rangers on this current senior leader of the Army is clear. And a case may be made that MG Dubik is such a senior leader because of the impact and influence of two other Rangers. MG Dubik writes that as a lieutenant he decided after a deployment to Alaska to resign his commission. He said it was just too cold for him. He writes that his letter of resignation was never forwarded to the Department of the Army because

CPT Buck Kernan [who retired from the Army as a four star general] and CPT Len Fullenkamp [who retired as a colonel] ripped the letter up and said “nobody quits the Army because its cold; beer’s cold, not Rangers.” That was that.⁴⁹

LESSON LEARNED

The concept of strategic vision is a relatively recent concept. We do not know if General Creighton W. Abrams had such a vision of the Ranger Battalions when he directed their formation. However, the research conducted for this paper clearly indicates that he had more in mind than just another infantry battalion. There is little doubt that Abrams’s Rangers changed the Army.

The Ranger Battalions have a had tremendous and powerful effect on the rest of the Army. From training principle to Family Readiness Groups the Ranger Battalions provided more to the Army than just a quickly deployable fighting force. Much of what was started in the Ranger Battalions has been internalized by the rest of the Army. The continuation of the tradition of charters by successive Chiefs of Staff is indicative in and of its self as to the value of the Ranger Battalions. Rangers have and will continue to lead the way for the Army.

One could argue that General Shinseki is following the Abrams model with his plans to use Stryker Brigades to spearhead transformation of today’s Army. The Stryker Brigades will test and implement a wide variety of concepts relating to fighting, deploying, and integrating efforts with other units in the Army. The brigades will also serve as a test-bed for new equipment. Ultimately, some ideas and equipment will fall by the wayside – but what remains will migrate into the rest of the Army providing form and substance to the transformation concept. As with the Ranger Battalions, the Stryker Brigades will lead the way, thereby validating a model for change that in many ways exemplifies the best of Kotter’s model.

WORD COUNT: 6,816

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