

# Ranger School to pilot new program

## Select support Soldiers to attend course

**Sgt. Kim Dooley**  
Bayonet assistant editor

The Infantry Center will pilot a test program in which a few support Soldiers slotted for assignment to combat arms battalions (infantry and armor) will be allowed to attend Ranger School.

Although there is no official timeline for the program yet, the first students — two Soldiers from the transportation corps — are expected to attend as early as this summer, said Col. William Kidd, Ranger Training Brigade commander.

Kidd emphasized that this program is just a test — not a change in policy.

“No decision has been made here,” he said. “This pilot program is very limited. ... We are not expanding Ranger School to open the doors to all support Soldiers. But we need to examine what resources will be needed if the Army wants to increase the authorized attendees to the course.”

Kidd said Ranger School eligibility is determined by DA guidance, the last of which was a 1997 directive from the chief of staff of the Army, which restricted attendance to Soldiers assigned to units whose primary mission is to engage in close combat, direct fire battle. In general, that meant combat arms Soldiers.

However, the directive also allowed admittance to support Soldiers assigned to ranger-coded positions in the 75th Ranger Regiment and RTB, “so to say we have no experience training support Soldiers is not all together true,” Kidd

said.

The program came about in light of the implementation of the Warrior Ethos strategy and the recognition that combat arms Soldiers are not the only Soldiers assigned to close combat units, Kidd said.

“Ranger School is another way the Army can inculcate the Warrior Ethos into our Soldiers,” he said. “In the contemporary operating environment, many Soldiers on the battlefield need the training students receive at Ranger School.”

Although non-infantry students may have a “steeper learning curve” in the course, Kidd said he doesn’t think these students will necessarily be at a disadvantage.

“Any student who comes should be physically fit, able to swim and proficient in land navigation and (Skill Level 1) common tasks and common infantry tasks,” he said.

“Regardless of MOS, we have a 45 to 55 percent attrition (rate) in this course,” he said. “Ranger School is tough — *everyone* has a hard time.”

If the pilot program’s students train to proficiency in the core requirements for Ranger School, they should be on a somewhat level playing field with the combat arms students, Kidd said.

Students should be familiar with infantry tactics, techniques and procedures before they get to Ranger School, said Staff Sgt. Michael Dean, Ranger Instructor with B Company, 4th Ranger Training Battalion.

“(Support Soldiers) will have more things to get used to — some added stress,” he said. “But ranger training is good for everybody. It’s about operating in harsh conditions.”

Kidd doesn’t expect RTB’s RIs to feel much of an impact. RTB trains about 3,000 students a year — a

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relatively small course, Kidd said. In order to continue “training the load,” there will be very few slots for pilot program students.

“All the RIs see is a guy with a shaved head with no rank and no insignia — they don’t know who (the students) are,” he said, adding that the program will be so small that it shouldn’t significantly add to the burden the RIs’ already bear.

Whatever challenges arise, the end result will ultimately be the same, whether the student is combat arms or support, Kidd said.

“The important thing is not just what Ranger School brings to the Soldier, but that the Soldier goes back to his unit and makes the unit better,” he said.



Bridgett Siter

An Infantry Center pilot program will allow a few support Soldiers headed for combat arms battalions to go through Ranger School alongside combat arms students.