



Sergeant First Class Christopher A. Celiz was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for actions while serving with 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment in Afghanistan. He wears the 75th Ranger Regiment DUI on his beret.



THE 75TH RANGER REGIMENT DISTINCTIVE UNIT INSIGNIA

by Troy J. Sacquety

Military insignia serve as both unit identifiers and sources of inspiration for those who wear them. They also connect present-day units to their historical predecessors. While insignia may be instantly recognizable, the symbols they contain often require explanation. The description that follows provides historical context for the current U.S. Army 75th Ranger Regiment Distinctive Unit Insignia (DUI). The Ranger Regiment has roots to multiple World War II units, but the story of the DUI itself starts in the Burma campaign.

A British colony, Burma was invaded by the Japanese in early 1942. In order to take back its former territory and to secure India from threat of invasion, the British attempted a number of military operations. The most daring of these was infiltrating a long-range penetration group, known as the Chindits, into Japanese-controlled Burma. Led by Brigadier General Orde Wingate, in February 1943, 3,000 Chindits entered north Burma and succeeded in causing limited damage to the Jap-

anese, but at great cost in personnel casualties.¹ The Chindits, however, secured a propaganda victory by showing that allied units could operate successfully behind enemy lines. This led the U.S. Army to create its own long range penetration group, the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), otherwise known as Merrill's Marauders.

In February 1944, the Marauders began their own campaign in Burma. They were pivotal in seizing the airfield at Myitkyina, in north Burma, and after three months of siege, the city itself. However, that campaign rendered the unit combat ineffective. Because the 5307th was no longer capable of operations, on 10 August 1944, remaining Marauders—along with their unit lineage—were consolidated into the 475th Infantry Regiment (Long Range Penetration, Special), part of the 5332nd Brigade (Provisional), better known as the MARS Task Force. The MARS Task Force was the second U.S. Army long range penetration unit formed for service in Burma in WWII. It was instrumental in seizing the remainder of the Burma Road from Japanese control, opening up a land route to China, and securing north Burma. The 475th, as well as the other component units in the MARS Task Force, were disbanded in China on 1 July 1945.² For nearly a decade, the two U.S. Army long range penetration groups seemingly were just a memory.

That changed on 20 November 1954, with the activation of the 75th Infantry Regiment on Okinawa. The 75th Infantry Regiment in the mid-1950s was not considered a 'Ranger' unit and at the time had no formal ties to the six WWII Ranger Battalions. However, the 75th drew its lineage directly from Merrill's Marauders and the 475th Infantry Regiment. This heritage was reflected on the 75th's DUI, the description of which reads:

DUI for the 75th Infantry Regiment.



“Blue is the color for Infantry. The two elephant tusks are used to represent Burma, and in forming and arch supporting the Indian Star allude to Burma being the eastern ‘Gateway to India.’ The red stripe leading through the gateway signifies the defense of India and central Burma, the areas in which the regiment was engaged. The two crossed kukris (Gurkha knives) barring the gateway are used to represent the regiment’s two battle honors for service during World War II, and also symbolized the nature of jungle combat. The tusks and kukris taken together simulate the letter ‘M’ and refer to ‘Merrill’s Marauders,’ its famed World War II designation.”³

The 75th had only a short existence before being inactivated on 21 March 1956.⁴ The lineage to the Marauders and the 475th again went dormant.

On 1 January 1969, the 75th Infantry Regiment was reorganized to become the “parent organization” for all Department of the Army-authorized long range patrol units, under the Combat Arms Regimental System.⁵ The 75th retained its lineage to the Marauders and the 475th, but the unit was also granted an exception to policy that allowed it to adopt another DUI. For its DUI, the 75th chose to adapt the shoulder patch of the Marauders, which had also been worn by the 475th and the rest of the MARS Task Force. While never officially authorized, this patch was widely worn in Burma during WWII and symbolized those units. The DUI description reads:

“The colors blue, white, red and green represent four of the original six combat teams of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), commonly referred to as Merrill’s Marauders, which were identified by color. To avoid confusion, the other two colors, khaki and orange, were not represented in the design; however, khaki was represented by the color of the uniform worn by US forces in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II. The unit’s close cooperation with the Chinese forces in the China-Burma-India Theater is represented by the sun symbol from the Chinese flag. The white star represents the Star of Burma, the country in which the Marauders campaigned during World War II. The lightning bolt is symbolic of the strike characteristics of the Marauders’ behind-the-line activities.”⁶



MARS Task Force patch



Merrill's Marauders patch

On 3 February 1986, the 75th Infantry Regiment was redesignated as the 75th Ranger Regiment. The redesignation led to the Rangers, after a long struggle, claiming official lineage to the WWII Ranger Battalions, which had previously been assigned to U.S. Army Special Forces.⁷ The Rangers were later able to show this additional World War II heritage in the form of their Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (SSI), the adoption of which is another story. However, the 75th Ranger Regiment retained the same DUI that had been approved for wear on 18 March 1969, thereby honoring the contributions of the Marauders, the 475th Infantry, and the MARS Task Force to Ranger history and legacy. 🇺🇸

Endnotes

- 1 This first Chindit expedition was Operation LONGCLOTH. A second Chindit expedition, Operation THURSDAY, entered Burma in early 1944.
- 2 For more on the MARS Task Force, see Troy J. Sacquety, “Over the Hills and Far Away: The MARS Task Force, the Ultimate Model for Long Range Penetration Warfare,” on internet at https://arsoc-history.org/articles/v5n4_over_the_hills_page_1.html.
- 3 Arthur E. Dubois, Chief Heraldic Branch Research and Development Division, to Commanding Officer, 75th Infantry Regiment, “Coat of Arms and Distinctive Insignia for the 75th Infantry Regiment,” 27 July 1954, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC. The unit motto was “Attack, Destroy, Defend.”
- 4 Department of the Army Lineage and Honors, 75th Ranger Regiment, on internet at <https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/lineages/branches/inf/0075ra.htm>.
- 5 John H. Maddox to Commanding Officer, The Institute of Heraldry, “Parent Organization for all DA Authorized Long Range Patrol (LRP) Units,” 10 January 1969, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 6 G.W. Dundas, “Distinctive Insignia for the 75th Infantry,” 18 March 1969, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC; Maddox to Commanding Officer, The Institute of Heraldry, “Parent Organization for all DA Authorized Long Range Patrol (LRP) Units,” 11 March 1969, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC. Company sized LRP units were serving at the divisional and brigade level. Concurrently with the adoption of the DUI, the 75th changed its motto to *Sua Sponte* (Of their own accord) because the old motto of “Attack, Destroy, Defend” reflected a traditional infantry mission, not the current LRP role.
- 7 Gerald T. Luchino, TIOH, to Commander, 75th Ranger Regiment, “SUBJECT: Distinctive Unit Insignia for the 75th Ranger Regiment,” 10 October 1990, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC; John A. Wickham, Jr., Headquarters, Department of the Army, General Orders No. 7, “75th Ranger Regiment,” 14 February 1986, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.