In Korea, at 0700 hours on 11 April 1951, the 3rd Infantry Division (3rd ID) formed a task force composed of C Company, 64th Heavy Tank Battalion, F Company, 65th Infantry Regiment, and the 3rd Ranger Company. The task force crossed the line of departure and moved north to clear the village of Kantongyon and the small valley beyond. Captain (CPT) Jessie C. Tidwell, the Ranger Company Commander, loaded his men on the Charlie Company tanks (commanded by CPT Daniel Boone from Kentucky) and headed towards the village.

As the tanks approached the village, they began receiving small arms fire. CPT Tidwell dismounted his 1st and 2nd Platoons, keeping 3rd Platoon in reserve with him. CPT Robert I. Channon, the Ranger Executive Officer (XO), took charge of the two dismounted platoons and rapidly cleared the village. Reaching the far side, the Rangers moved up a low hill behind the town. After the troops crested the hill, they began moving down the far side.

At the base of the hill, the Rangers found a network of terraced rice paddies extending for seven hundred meters to a ridge that intersected the valley from the east. Well-prepared and camouflaged positions from the base of the ridge to the crest provided excellent observation and fields of fire for the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF). Unknown to Channon, the 3rd Platoon and the armor company had already moved around the west side of the hill, splitting the task force. Only two tanks were left to support the dismounted Ranger platoons. As soon as the Rangers began advancing across the rice paddy, the two tanks, without warning, pulled back and rejoined the rest of the armor company.

Now, under increasingly heavy Chinese small arms and mortar fire, the two Ranger platoons were quickly pinned down in the terraced rice paddies. Reaching CPT Tidwell on the radio, Channon requested fire support. What arrived instead was a heavy bombardment of Chinese mortar fire. Under the barrage, both platoons were forced to advance across the open paddies towards the base of the ridge. As they moved, two tanks sent by CPT Tidwell positioned themselves behind the Rangers and began systematically destroying the bunkers on the ridge with cannon fire. Reinforced by the armor, the 3rd Rangers...
charged up the slope into the hostile fire to clear the ridge with a ferocious bayonet charge and hand grenades. Moving from one position to another, the Rangers killed or forced the defenders to flee. As the Rangers crested the ridge, the rest of the task force, coming from the flank, drove the Chinese up the valley. The fight for “Bloody-Nose Ridge” cost the 3rd Ranger Company four killed and eleven wounded.\(^2\) The bayonet attack across a half mile of open terrain culminating with a violent hand-to-hand assault typified the Rangers’ combat training and aggressive spirit. This demonstrated that the 3rd Rangers were probably the best trained of any of the Ranger companies deployed to Korea.

Mountain and Winter Warfare training will be conducted at Camp Carson, Colo, for the Third, Fifth, and Eighth Ranger Companies, totaling 390 pers. Ranger troops will depart Ft Benning GA, on or about 20 Jan 51. Movement Directive will be published by DA. This special training to begin at Camp Carson as soon after arrival as practicable and continue for approximately 3 weeks.

— Chief, Army Field Forces 30 Dec 1950.\(^3\)

The first iteration of training for the four newly-formed airborne Ranger Infantry Companies at Fort Benning, Georgia’s Ranger Training Center (RTC) ended with the deployment of the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Ranger Infantry Companies to Korea in early December 1950. The 3rd Ranger Company remained at the RTC as the cadre to train the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Companies. Having husbanded the second cycle of Ranger company training, the 3rd Rangers were most prepared for combat operations in Korea. Unlike the first three Ranger companies, those in the second cycle went through three additional weeks of rigorous mountain and cold weather training before going overseas.

The Commandant of the Ranger Training Center, Colonel (COL) John G. Van Houten, a decorated World War II infantry regimental commander, and his staff developed a challenging six-week training program that progressed from individual fitness and soldier skills to collective training at the company-level.\(^4\) Strenuous physical training, hand-to-hand combat, and individual marksmanship with all infantry weapons were the initial focus. Road and cross-country marches up to forty miles in length reflected COL Van Houten’s belief that a Ranger’s ability to move rapidly on foot was critical to his success on the battlefield.\(^5\)

As the first cycle of individual Ranger skills culminated, training shifted to advanced skills which included land navigation, patrolling, and crew-served weapons, the 60 mm mortar and 57 mm recoilless rifle. Also part of the sixty-hour weeks was demolitions training, the handling of prisoners of war, and intelligence collection.\(^6\) The final weeks culminated in platoon and company-level small-unit training and field exercises.

Week Five encompassed platoon day and night patrolling, a combat reaction course, and day and night live fire attacks against a fortified position. In the final week, the Rangers trained on company-level operations, raids, practiced infiltrating enemy lines, and conducted night airborne operations.\(^7\) On 30 November 1950, three of the four Ranger companies returned to their barracks in the Harmony Church area of Fort Benning. An equipment issue had caused the 2nd Ranger Company to finish training a week later. Then, on 9 December 1950, the 1st Ranger Company deployed to Korea. It was followed shortly by 2nd and 4th.\(^8\) The 3rd Company remained at the RTC to cadre the next cycle Ranger training cycle.

Training for the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Ranger Companies began on 20 November 1950. The Program of Instruction (POI) remained essentially unchanged from the first cycle. However, 3rd Ranger Company Sergeant (SGT) Raymond L. Pierce recalled, “there was a distinct difference between the first and second training cycles. The first cycle was characterized by light packs and moderately long, five mile runs. The second cycle movements involved heavy packs and very long marches.”\(^9\)

The training was both demanding and dangerous. During a night low-level airborne insertion on 8 January 1950, twenty-two Rangers were injured and one, Ronald L. Sullivan, of the 8th Company, was killed.\(^10\) On 13 January 1951, while the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th companies graduated and were awarded their black and gold Ranger Tabs at Fort Benning, the 3rd prepared for advanced winter training.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the training program, several Ranger Training Center staff went to Korea to observe the first three Ranger companies in combat.\(^11\) One of the observers was Major (MAJ) John K. Singlaub, a World War II veteran of the Office of Strategic Services, who arrived in late November.\(^12\) Based on
the observers’ collective recommendation, a three-week mountain and cold weather phase was added to the Ranger POL. Hence, early on 20 January 1951, the 3rd, 5th, and 8th Ranger Companies boarded a train in Columbus, Georgia, bound for Camp Carson, near Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Mountain Training Detachment will prep detailed training program and forward thru Fifth Army to this office for approval. Physical conditioning, survival under all conditions, and resupply by air drop, animal pack and man pack will particularly be stressed. The ability to live in cold weather will be of prime importance. Individual and unit mobility will be covered from the stand point of ability to negotiate mountainous terrain on foot. Snow is not required for this phase of training. All training to be conducted at Camp Carson, Colo or vicinity, unless otherwise specifically directed. Any ski instruction that may be conducted will be of the military cross country variety.

— Chief, Army Field Forces 30 Dec 1950

The three Ranger companies arrived at Camp Carson late on 22 January 1951, glad to be off the filthy, dilapidated troop train that had carried them half-way across the country. Up early for a morning run, the Rangers got their first taste of operating in the thin air of the Rocky Mountains. First Lieutenant (ILT) Robert I. Channon, the 3rd Company XO, recalled: “The first week showed us clearly what was meant about becoming acclimatized to higher elevations. One or two training runs at that altitude told us we were in a brand new ballgame. We wondered for a while whether we would ever get our breath back.”

The three-phased mountain training program began with the issue of cold-weather clothing and mountaineering equipment. Fur parkas, ankle-high leather mountain boots, cold weather tents and stoves were among the specialized items supplied to the Rangers. A series of classroom lectures interspersed between strenuous field training that concentrated on movement techniques over rock and ice got them familiar with the proper employment, use and maintenance of the new equipment. “We were told we were in Carson to learn two things,” said SGT James M. Stamper, 3rd Company. “One was cold weather and mountain training, and the other was mule packing and lashing.”

CPT George A. Parnell, from the Ranger Training Center, had come along to observe and evaluate the training. During the first phase Parnell noted: “The training was informative, well-prepared, and enthusiastically received by Ranger personnel.” However, as with any new program, not everything went smoothly. “A major error was committed which was recognized, in that Ranger personnel were issued new ski boots and committed to a cross country march prior to refitting and breaking [them] in. Exchanges were subsequently made: however, many men endured blistered feet during the remaining two weeks of the program.”

Despite sore feet, Ranger field training in the second phase featured individual survival techniques, winter bivouacking, mountain climbing, movement and evacuation. “The second week was spent at mid-elevations working from a base camp in a mountain ravine that would be resupplied by mule train,” noted ILT Channon. The second week was most noteworthy for the severity of the weather, a factor not considered important in the Army Field Forces directive.

Temperatures during the Phase II field bivouac ranged from minus 15 degrees in the daytime to a low
Named for General Christopher “Kit” Carson, the famous Army Scout of the 1800’s, Fort Carson, Colorado was for many years the home of the Army’s Mountain Warfare Training Center. Established in 1942, Camp Carson was built on land donated by the city of Colorado Springs. During World War II, more than 100,000 soldiers trained at Camp Carson. Four infantry divisions, the 71st, 89th, 104th, and 10th Mountain Division were activated or trained at the post along with more than 125 smaller units.

During the war, Camp Carson served as an internment camp for more than 9,000 Italian and German prisoners of war. It was the Army’s primary training center for units using pack animals, particularly the artillery, a role the post kept until the Army did away with pack animals in 1956.

In 1954 Camp Carson became Fort Carson and served as one of the Army’s premier training sites for mechanized units. In 1983, the purchase of the 237,000 acre Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site more than doubled the size of the post. Today, Fort Carson is the home of the 4th Infantry Division, the 43rd Sustainment Brigade, and the 10th Special Forces Group.

Camp Hale was established in 1942 for use as a winter warfare and mountain training site. The cantonment area was located in Red Cliff, near Leadville, Colorado. It was used extensively by the 10th Mountain Division for training. Camp Hale was the primary training site for the Army’s Mountain and Cold Weather Training Program until July 1965 when the camp was deactivated and control turned over to the U.S. Forest Service.

The high passes and deep snows of the Colorado Rockies were an ideal training ground for the Army’s 10th Mountain Division. Today’s 10th Special Forces Group still trains in the high mountains from their base at Fort Carson.
The training at Camp Carson involved long marches over mountain terrain. The Rangers traversed passes over 10,000 ft. in the Rocky Mountains during their three weeks at Carson.

The Army’s Arctic Tent proved inadequate for the severe cold and high altitude the Rangers encountered at Camp Carson. The Rangers resorted to using ponchos and tree boughs for shelter during the frigid winter nights.

of nearly 30 below at night. Repeated snowfalls dumped six to eight inches of snow on the Rangers. In the cold, high altitude conditions, they discovered that some of their modern equipment did not function as well as some more traditional techniques. “Personnel initially occupied the two-man mountain tent, which were promptly discarded in favor of the bough shelters due to the accumulation of frost and the ‘imaginary’ concentration of cold within the tent,” observed CPT Parnell.23 “We tried our two-man tents the first night,” said ILT Robert Channon. “When we woke up in the morning, the inside of the tent was coated completely with thousands of little icicles from our frozen breath.”24

The amount of snow reduced the rock climbing, rope-work, and rappelling to simply demonstrations by the Mountain Training Detachment cadre. However, the heavy snow did force the Rangers to concentrate on their primary training objective, moving rapidly in the mountains during winter.

“Day conditioning marches and compass problems were executed and much knowledge acquired in mountain movement as well as physical hardening,” reported CPT Parnell. “Rangers learned to follow contour and ridge lines, estimate range and time distance in mountainous terrain.”25 The continuous heavy snow and below freezing temperatures in Phase II finally forced the Camp Commander to order all the troops in from the field for the weekend. The Rangers rested in the barracks before heading back out to the field on Monday for Week Three or Phase III.

Week Three was mostly tactical, cross-country day and night marches under simulated combat conditions. Aerial resupply drops were used in good weather; otherwise supplies were packed in by mules. The 35th Quartermaster Company (Pack), one of the last remaining pack mule units in the Army, supported the Rangers. Lean, weather-beaten ex-cowboys in the 35th taught the Rangers the finer points of “mule skinning” before assigning the often recalcitrant mules for one-on-one training.26

The final Ranger company exercise was a cross-country march from Camp Hale, twenty miles outside of Leadville, CO (altitude 10,430’) back to Camp Carson. During the seventy-five mile, multi-day march, the Rangers crossed mountain passes over 10,000 feet high, battling the winter snows all the way back to a base camp outside Camp Carson. “The total load on our backs including weapons reached about seventy pounds,” recalled ILT Bob Channon. “At times we were climbing directly up over the high passes where each step was a high mountain climbing step. The sheer exhaustion of the repetitive steps was more than many of us could stand.”27 Then the Rangers had to infiltrate into the post without getting caught by the MPs.28

The rugged training took a toll on the three companies. CPT Parnell noted: “Ranger casualties and evacuations averaged 5 to 10 men per day. A total of approximately 40 percent of all Ranger personnel were evacuated by the end of the second week. Roughly 97 percent of these casualties were due to flu.”29 Still, when the Rangers boarded a train on 27 February 1951 to take them to Camp Stoneman, California, their Port of Embarkation for Korea, the consensus was that the winter training at Camp Carson was worthwhile.

In his final report to COL Van Houten, CPT George Parnell concluded that “the overall training received was excellent and of infinite value. Training was considerably enhanced by the unusual and extreme cold. An excellent program was offered and subsequent instruction should be even better due to the experience being gained by the Mountain Training Detachment and the efforts being made in developing and improving training.”29

On 5 March 1951, the 3rd boarded the troop transport USS General William F. Hase (AP-146) along with the 5th and 8th Ranger Companies, in San Francisco. After short stops in Yokohama and Kobe, Japan, the Hase docked at Pusan, Korea on 24 March 1951.31 Following a short in-processing period, the three Ranger companies loaded aboard Landing Ship-Tank (LST) Q018 on 28 March for a
An Army mule loaded with a 57 mm Recoilless Rifle. After training with using mules at Camp Carson, the Rangers did not use animals in Korea.

Three-day journey to Inch’on. Arriving on 31 March 1951, the companies were assigned to their respective divisions; the 3rd Ranger Company to the 3rd Infantry Division (3rd ID); 5th Company to the 25th Infantry Division (25th ID); and 8th to the 24th Infantry Division (24th ID).

The 3rd ID, commanded by MG Robert H. Soule, was northeast of Seoul in the vicinity of Uijongbu. The division was attacking north towards the Imjin River as part of Operation RIPPER. Unlike what the other Ranger Companies experienced, MG Soule had given considerable thought to incorporating the 3rd Ranger Company into his division’s operations.

In a memorandum to General (GEN) Matthew B. Ridgway, Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA) commander, MG Soule outlined his plan. Initially, the 3rd Ranger Company would go through a two-week indoctrination period. During this time, the Rangers would reconnoiter areas in the division rear to flush out by-passed enemy troops, locate weapons caches, study the enemy’s use of camouflage, and learn their methods of operation. The “Officers and NCO’s will spend a few days with the Division Reconnaissance Company . . . accompanying them on patrols to gain knowledge of the terrain.” Also, the division had scheduled “a parachute jump for the entire company for morale and pay purposes.” The subsequent missions given the 3rd Ranger Company reflected MG Soule’s clear understanding of their role and his appreciation for the mountain training they had received.

Prior to a division attack, the Rangers would conduct “close-in patrols and raids across the Imjin River to determine which of the many dug-in positions are occupied by the enemy and to secure prisoners.” Additionally, they were to “establish ambushes on [forward] roads and trails, and establish observation and listening posts in front of and in the rear of enemy lines to observe his movements and determine his habits.” When the division attacked, the Rangers’ role shifted.

In the offensive, MG Soule directed that the Rangers “accompany armor on its deep thrusts into enemy lines, remain with it and patrol until the infantry makes contact. They were to seize and occupy selected high peaks used by the enemy as observation posts and run combat patrols on the flanks through rugged mountains to maintain contact with friendly units on the [division’s] flanks.” MG Soule also envisioned using the Rangers against high value targets deep in the enemy rear: “When there is reason to believe important Communist personalities are in an area and will withdraw in front of the attack, [the Rangers will] parachute into the areas one or two days march by armor in front of the line, block the most probable escape routes and capture or destroy the important Communist personnel . . . if such an operation could promise the capture or destruction of ten or fifteen leading Korean Communists, it would be worth the risk.”

The UN Command’s objective had changed from the destruction of the North Korean People’s Army...
A WWII Ranger veteran loads ammunition aboard a tank prior to offensive operations. Thanks to the division commander, MG Robert H. Soule, the Rangers had a strong supporter in the 3rd Infantry Division who gave them the types of missions for which they were best suited. 

(NKPA) with the intervention of massive Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) in November 1950. The CCF Spring Offensive, beginning on 22 April, completely changed the complexity of the battlefield and virtually eliminated the opportunities for employing the Rangers as planned by MG Soule. Still, the Rangers accomplished what MG Soule envisioned when they took part in the attack during Operation RUGGED that became known as “Bloody-Nose Ridge” on 11 April 1951.11

As with all the Ranger Companies that fought in Korea, their training, aggressiveness, and bravery made them formidable foes. The 3rd Ranger Company was fortunate in their assignment to a division commander who capitalized on their capabilities and tried to employ them properly. Ultimately, it was the static nature of the battlefield, not the skill and determination of the Rangers, that led to their disbanding in June 1951.  

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Endnotes

1 Robert W. Black, Rangers in Korea (New York: Ivy books, 1989) 105. C Company, 64th Heavy Tank Battalion was a mixed unit with all black enlisted men and only white officers.

2 Black, Rangers in Korea, 110.

3 Chief, Army Field Forces, Fort Monroe, VA, Message to CG Fifth Army dated 30 Dec 1950, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. For the sake of clarity, certain abbreviations in this message have been spelled out.

4 Headquarters, Ranger Training Center, Summary of Training Activities dated 30 October 1950, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

5 Colonel John G. Van Houten, Letter to Major General Charles L. Bolte, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 28 December 1950, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

6 Headquarters, Ranger Training Center, Summary of Training Activities.

7 Headquarters, Ranger Training Center, Summary of Training Activities.

8 Department of the Army, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 Memorandum, Subject: Deployment of Ranger Units to FECOM, dated 6 November 1950, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

9 Raymond L. Pierce in Robert I. Channon’s Cold Steel Third, manuscript copy, pages 2-5, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. Hereafter referred to as Channon manuscript.

10 Black, Rangers in Korea, 53.

11 HQ Far East Command, memorandum to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, Subject: Observers from Ranger Training Center to Observe Employment and Activities of Ranger Type Units in FECOM, dated 13 November 1950, USASOC History Office Classified Files.

12 Major Singlaub ran the Advanced Airborne Training Section. While in Korea, he was involved in air drop operations in support of the Marines pulling out of the CCF trap at the Chosin Reservoir. Flying over the lines, the vivid image of Marines huddled around small fires left a strong impression. John K. Singlaub, Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century (New York, Summit books, 1991), 174.

13 Headquarters, Far East Command, Memorandum dated 13 December 1950, Subject: Mountain and Extreme Cold Weather Training (Ranger Units), USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

14 The 6th Ranger Company was the only Ranger company to deploy to Europe, where it was attached to the 1st Infantry Division. The 7th Ranger Company remained at Fort Benning, GA to fulfill the role of cadre vacated by the 3rd Ranger Company and provide replacements for the Ranger companies in Korea.

15 Chief, Army Field Forces, Fort Monroe, VA, Message to CG Fifth Army.

16 Black, Rangers in Korea, 57-58.

17 Channon Manuscript, 3-5.

18 Headquarters Rangers Training Center, Memorandum for Commander Ranger Training Center, Subject: Ranger Training at Camp Carson Colorado, 16 February 1951, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited as Parnell Memorandum.

19 Channon manuscript, 3-13.

20 Parnell Memorandum.

21 Parnell Memorandum.

22 Channon manuscript, 3-5.

23 Parnell Memorandum.

24 Channon Manuscript, 3-6.

25 Parnell Memorandum.

26 Black, Rangers in Korea, 60-61.

27 Channon Manuscript, 3-8.

28 Black, Rangers in Korea, 62.

29 Parnell Memorandum; 1LT Robert I. Channon noted that only twenty-two members of the company made it through the entire third week without illness or injury. Eventually all the Rangers needing medical attention rejoined the company before it deployed; Channon Manuscript, 3-8.

30 Parnell Memorandum. A second iteration of training at Camp Carson was conducted for the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Ranger Companies assigned to the Army National Guard. Today’s Rangers go through mountain training at Camp Frank D. Merrill, near Dahlonega, Georgia.

31 Black, Rangers in Korea, 99-102.

32 Billy C. Mossman, Ebb and Flow: November 1950 – July 1951 (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 2000), 343. Operation RIPPER concluded at the end of March, 1951. Just as the Rangers were attached to the 3rd ID in early April, the Chinese launched their Spring Offensive.

33 The 3rd Infantry Division was composed of the U.S. 7th, 15th, and 65th Infantry Regiments, the British 29th Brigade, a Belgian battalion and the 10th Aboriginal Battalion. The 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Ranger Companies assigned to the Army National Guard. Today’s Rangers go through mountain training at Camp Frank D. Merrill, near Dahlonega, Georgia.


35 3rd ID Memorandum.

36 3rd ID Memorandum.

37 3rd ID Memorandum.

38 3rd ID Memorandum.

39 3rd ID Memorandum.

40 3rd ID Memorandum.

41 Mossman, Ebb and Flow, 355.