

AFP's

Scout Rangers

by 1st Licut. Jose R. Fariñas

YOUNG, deeply-tanned officers and men stood ramrod-straight, the scorching afternoon sun drumming on their sphinx-like faces. Unflinchingly these soldiers held on, each mind's eye roving far and beyond. As the public address system recited the litany of General Orders on the different awards of decorations, the individual awardee upon citation recalled to mind and relived the moment of his rendezvous with death which seemed but yesterday. As the medals were pinned to individual recipients, a deep sense of oneness pervaded the atmosphere. This feeling in general was keenly shared by each and every officer and man of the outfit that afternoon because, being part and parcel of a unit which exacts precise teamwork, he is fully aware that he is definitely a vital cog in the well-oiled machine.

The occasion was the award-giving ceremonies in connection with the 5th anniversary of the

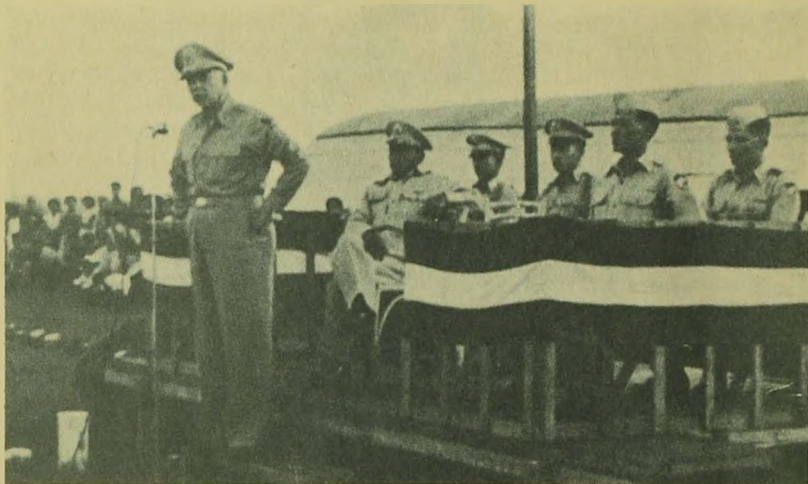
activation of the 1st Scout Ranger Regiment (Provisional) GHQ, AFP. This best-regimented outfit of the armed forces received no better accolade than what the Chief of Staff, as Founder and Day guest, remarked in his speech. Among other things, Gen. Jesus Vargas said: "Your organization is only 5 years old but, despite its youth, it has proved as one of the best weapons in the armed forces in the anti-dissident campaign and all forms of outlawry.... The organization is proud in the selection of officers and individual soldiers who contributed to the fame of this Unit.... You have a reputation to keep; carry on the job well done."

Because of so many problems involved, the present 1st Scout Ranger Regiment suffered a setback of birth-pangs before it finally came into being in February 1954. It evolved from The Scout Ranger Training Center activated in November 1950, which was reorganized into the Scout Ranger Training

Unit in August 1951. The organization of the Scout Rangers was brought about when Army top brass put their collective heads together seeking a solution to cope with the Hukbalahap movement which then posed a very grave threat to the national security. The Huks during that time flagrantly struck at will anywhere and then fled to their hideouts in the mountain fastnesses. Killings, pillage, arson, rape and brigandage were rampant that time. The majesty of the law of the land was flouted. When large-scale operations were launched to go after these bands of dissidents, the enemy would have left the same for the crime with the loot, leaving death and destruction in their wake. Big bodies of troops had to pursue the enemy were not only expensive, they took too long to mount and attracted too much attention thereby losing the element of secrecy. By the time friendly troops were in hot pursuit, after the enemy, they were seen less of approaching and the dissidents scampered and disappeared in the thick jungle undergrowth. It was only after a frank appraisal and intelligent reexamination of bare facts of the peace and order campaign then, obtaining that GHQ, AFP, conceived of "Project Scout Rangers." The plan was to have a handful of intrepid, well-powered commandoes who could creep stealthily inside enemy territory unnoticed, and strike swiftly with unerring and de-

vastating force against enemy personnel and materiel. To train and lead this daringly novel unit, the then Colonel, now Brig. Gen. Alfonso Arellano, hand-picked the then Captain now Lt. Col. Rafael M. Ileta under him in G-3. A West-Pointer, he served with the First Filipino Infantry attached to Lieut. Gen. Walter Krueger's US Sixth Army during World War II. An Alamo Scout team leader who personally led men on hazardous missions in Luzon during liberation, Lt. Col. Ileta was but the natural choice to organize, train and lead this unit which so much was demanded. He possessed the training and experience; he had the intelligence and courage.

Scout Ranger was adopted as the name of the Unit because it was supposed to be patterned after the Alamo Scouts and the U.S. Army Rangers. The unit would put up a hard-hitting, straight-shooting, highly-mobile force. It would serve three types of missions: intelligence, combat and combat intelligence, or the X, Z and XZ missions, respectively. Not only accurate and timely intelligence data would be gathered right from the heart of the enemy's concentration, but also unexpected lightning-like raids would be made against the enemy, if necessary. The Scout Rangers would run swift sorties on enemy concentration points, employ ambushes



Lieut. Gen. Jesus Vargas, AFP chief of staff as Foundation Day guest, exhorts officers and men of the Scout Rangers Regiment. He said that the Regiment "despite its youth, it has proved to be one of the best weapons in the armed forces."

along enemy routes, and sabotage enemy installations. The Scout Rangers were expected to be the answer to the unorthodox warfare, the mocking defiance of a ruthless and elusive foe.

The training of a Scout Ranger is composed of a rigid and intensive program of instruction with particular emphasis on scouting principles and techniques to enable him to range far and wide in seeking the enemy speedily yet stealthily, stalking the quarry patiently, striking suddenly with a deadly blow, and then vanishing just as swiftly. Master schedules are drawn up systematically to develop in the individual soldier-student the triangular foundation of Scout Ranger operations, namely: stamina, skill

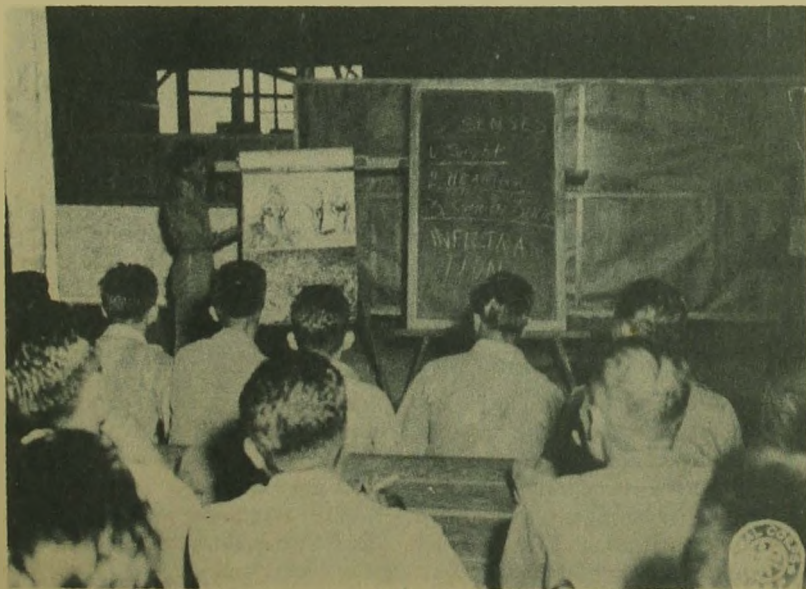
and spirit. With these, he is imbued with 3 elements of combat—courage, confidence and combat discipline. The training starts at the physical conditioning stage, through the toughening or hardening stage, and finally the sustaining stage. Stamina is a "must" quality to a ranger. He must have the endurance and grit to withstand the rigors and hardships in order to accomplish his mission. That is why the Scout Rangers run rugged obstacles, play competitive athletics, exert in physical conditioning exercises, like daily dozens and the breathless cross-country runs up and down hills and across valleys.

The standards set for a Ranger trainee are high. The sieving of prospective applicants

is meticulous. First of all, an applicant should be a volunteer, and at least a high school student. He should be physically fit and must know how to swim. Age bracket is limited from 19 to 30 years. An unmarried soldier is preferred but, if married, he should not have more than 2 children. Six months combat experience with actual fire contact with the enemy is a requisite. The regular course is of 14 weeks' duration to include a week of Corregidor combat maneuvers and 3 weeks of on-the-job training or test missions in actual combat with the enemy. To raise the skill of the Scout Ranger to a high degree, added curricula embody a variedly wide

range of specialized subjects essential to the combat and intelligence missions of the Scout Rangers. These subjects cover military intelligence, signal communication, essential equipment, tactics, mission planning to include technique of coordination, among others, aside from the general subjects common in all other local military schools. Night and day jungle operations and survival is another subject given special emphasis in the school. He must pass a rigid test in movements, concealment, observation, direction and deception — both for day and night. The Scout Ranger is taught how to read and draw maps, how to use the compass — an essential equip-

A class in camouflage and infiltration.





Camouflage and concealment practice during the training of the 1st Scout Rangers.

ment. He is taught how to trek cross-country across any obstacle without using worn-out trails and paths. He must be able to operate independently such signal equipment as the SCRs 536 and 300, the flashlight blinkers and improvised panels. He is taught how to cover his tracks and conceal his whereabouts. As part of the training, he learns how to exist on a canteenful of water for days and subsist on crackers and specially prepared rations because in Ranger missions no cooking is done. If his food runs out on a given mission, he lives off the uninhabited land because home base is far and replenishment arrives for some time to come, if ever. The trainee also specializes in a sort of sign language

and peculiar night sounds because for the length of a whole mission he may not directly communicate with his companions verbally. He is to communicate with team-mates by the simple expedient of gestures or simulated sound language like the hoot of an owl, the chirp of a cicada, the cooing of a cuckoo or the hiss of a snake. The Scout Ranger is supposed to know his weapons blindfolded. He must have confidence and faith not only in himself but also in his comrades and in his equipment. Where comes confidence there follows courage and with courage, the Scout Ranger will dare anything. And in the confidence firing, the soldier learns expert rifle marksmanship. It is a

coach-pupil method whereby one holds a 50-centavo-size bullseye cardboard target stuck to a one-foot stick from the body and the other fires away at 30 yards at prone position. It is a case of eye and nerve. It may seem theatrical but this confidence in each other's shooting ability is imperative in missions where a soldier is covered from behind. He must be sure that if his cover-man fired, it would surely be at the enemy. In actual missions, Scout Rangers approach the enemy not less than 25 yards before pressing the trigger.

It is standard operating procedure that as early as the first phase of training, trainees who could not make it were returned to their respective mother units. As training advances, those who fail to make the grade bid good-bye as fast as they come. "Mortality" rate of trainees of the regular Scout Ranger course upon graduation is from 40% to 50%. The training unit trains and produces only graduates to meet the strict demands of a Scout Ranger 7-man team which is composed of the team leader, who is usually an officer, lead scout, a guide, a radio man and assistant radio man, a contact and demolition man, and a tail scout who covers the rear.

The Regiment does not produce half-baked graduates. It wants assets, not liabilities. It believes in the concept that it is criminal to pit haphazardly-trained men in

battle, much more in ranger operations where so much is at stake. Training is hard; the battle, harder. The battle is always the payoff. Maj. General Calixto Duque as Chief of Staff at the time the first batch of Scout Rangers graduated, said in his message to the Class: "By reason of mental and physical prowess, you have been selected and trained to be able to seek, locate and destroy the enemy over an extended period of time and in any nook and corner of these islands...With more than usual courage and ability you are to prove your superiority in every respect over the enemy. You must be strong, alert and wise... like the panther whose stealthy movement you must emulate."

Maj. Gen. Leland S. Hobbs said: "The Scout Ranger unit can be of great value in anti-dissident operations. The team is indeed a potent weapon..." The rigid and intensive training paid off in surprisingly big dividends beyond expectations. From the first mission of the 1st Scout Ranger Class in May 1951 in Zambales, to succeeding exploits in the field, the Scout Rangers have gained renown for their mettle in combat. In that first Scout Ranger test mission encounter alone, 1st Lieut. Felix Sanson's team caused heavy casualties to the Zambales Huk command and was awarded 7 Gold Crosses and 1 Wounded Soldier's Medal for the outstanding achievement. So fast and deadly is the

ranger attack characteristic of the sleek feline's stealth, agility and viciousness that the Scout Rangers earned the sobriquet of "Black Panthers." President Ramon Magsaysay, then the Secretary of National Defense, said: "Compact, battle-wise, hard-hitting — that is the Scout Rangers. Highly mobile for deep penetration, it is the solution to the many tactical difficulties that have arisen inevitably from the wide disparity between conventional war methods and the type of warfare we are engaged in against the Huks."

The panthers from time to time have been called upon by GHQ to perform important roles in practically all the major operations of the armed forces. The participation of the panther contingent led by Lieut. Col. Ileta in the dissident campaign in Panay Island led to the slaying of Guillermo Capadocia, member of the Huk pulitburo. Ranger 1st Lieut. Jose Drillon received a special commendation for this. In Operations Four Roses, the panthers played an active and invaluable part. Days before the bombing started which was the signal for the battalion combat teams to start the offensive, the Scout Rangers were already deep in the enemy's mountain lair. While waiting for the Army planes to start the fireworks, the soldiers watched a Huk wedding ceremony some distance away. Sometime later, the Scout Rangers captured the contact-woman and courier of American Huk

William Pomeroy, which eventually led to his eventual celebrated capture. The late 1st Lieut. Teodorico Dominado was decorated for the distinct role he played in the operations.

In Operations Gumamela, Scout Rangers within a period of 10 days of XZ mission, encountered 4 enemy groups numbering 130 men of the Huk Regional Command 2 under Peregrino Taruc in the vicinity of Mt. Dorst in April 1952. Taken by complete surprise, the enemy retreated helter-skelter leaving 5 of their men killed and several wounded. Also left behind were invaluable Huk documents and equipment looted by the Huks in the infamous Camp Macabulos massacre. For the exemplary feat of the black panthers, Capt. Godofredo Carreon and others were fittingly awarded with decorations. The killing in Jolo of Sapayani, one-time leading henchman of Kamlon, was credited to 2nd Lieut. Orlando Villadelgado and other panthers. The late 2nd Lieut. Cesar Ongoco was duly awarded commendation for the slaying of Commander Williams, commanding Regional Command 5 in Bondok peninsula. Other typical commendations are those bestowed on Capt. Esteban Lumyeb, 1st Lieuts. Hilario Escudero, Nilo Juaneza and Hilario Torre for leading sorties against the enemy which led to the slaying of 3 top Huks; and that given to 1st Lieut. Higinio Espineli for the killing of notorious Huk Commander Nanning. One classic example of Scout

Ranger XZ mission was that led by the teams under the leadership of then 2nd Lieut., now Capt. Agustin Columbres and 1st Lieut. Felino Tupas in Operations Omaha. With infinite patience and perseverance, the men crawled and crept through almost impenetrable jungle amid torrental rain to locate a twin waterfall near the peak of Mt. Dorst and verified the presence of a big Huk ordnance depot. With a compass as a sole guide, the men cautiously and tediously went through rugged and teacherous terrain to reach their objective. Unnoticed, they approached a heavily-armed Huk outpost within 15 yards and fired. This caused the Huks to run pell-mell in utter rout, leaving 5 men dead and arms behind.

During the Kamlon campaign, the outlaws evaded contact with the Scout Rangers if ever espied upon. Before the arrival of the panthers, the outlaws had the upper hand. When the Scout Rangers were thrown into the Kamlon campaign, the tide of battle turned. Instead of the Moros ambushing army patrols, the panthers ambushed the outlaws. They gradually became decimated and terror was struck in their midst. It is of common knowledge in Jolo that a soldier in comouflage suit sporting field cap with flaps — Scout Rangers never wear helmets or army leather shoes — is called a "bibang", Tausog for lizard. It is a compliment to the Ranger's abi-



Maj. Gen. Wayne Smith, JUSMAG chief holds a balloon to test the shooting eyes and nerve of a Scout Ranger.

lity to slink silently through the underbrush in search of and devour its prey. A glimpse at the scoreboard of the toll of killed, wounded and captured against the enemy in the Kamlon campaign will reveal that the rangers rank way above the other troops of the armed forces who operated in the area.

Most classical in the plan and execution of a Scout Ranger com-



COL. ERNESTO MATA,
man behind the Scout Rangers Regiment

bat intelligence mission was the capture of Balgos in the Bicol campaign. The exploit was splash-ed in metropolitan dailies and played up; it added lustre to the prestige of the unit. It was another feather on the cap of the Armed Forces. For this achievement, Lieut. Cols. Rafael M. Ile-to and Tomas Karingal were promoted to their present ranks on the spot for their masterly planning and superior intelligence work, respectively. First Lieuts. Francisco Alesna, Delfin Panela and Tomas Galan were integrated into the Regular Force for their feat. Six Scout Ranger enlisted men went past Circular 23 of GHQ, AFP, series 1952, by being promptly promoted two notches over their grades.

Now Scout Rangers come back from missions invariably successful and with the least number of

casualties expected as calculated risks. The Scout Rangers ram-page freely in swamps and mar-shes, plateaus and hills, moun-tains and jungles — tracking, stalking, raiding, inflicting dev-astating and irreparable loss to the dissidents and other outlaws. When the panthers come back from assigned missions, they sing lustily:

We strike —

*We who are happy and free
Birds of a feather we flutter
together*

Scout Rangers of fortune are we.

We seek —

*Greeting the night with a song;
Laughing at danger, we fight like
a panther*

*And conquer the hardships all
way*

*Shadow to hide us and bright
stars to guide us*

The night we roam.

*No one can find us wherever we
chose to roam;*

We ride, march, creep, crawl

Silently in the jungle:

*Scout Rangers of fortune are we.
Seeking and fighting and laughing
and loving:*

Scout Rangers of fortune are we.

A world of meaning has this song to the Scout Rangers.

The 1st Scout Ranger Regiment is presently under the competent leadership of Col. Ernesto S. Ma-ta (GSC) Inf. No command is better tailor-cut for him. A combat-wise veteran infantryman, he is Scout Ranger-conscious and advocates the expansion of the unit. Graduated as 1st Cadet

Captain in the Philippine Military Academy in 1937, he found himself with the 61st in Panay Island before World War II. At the outbreak of the war, he was transferred to the 74th Inf. Bn. in Negros as Commanding Officer. Instead of raising the white flag to the Japanese upon the call for surrender, he fled to the hills and organized his own guerrilla force and served as the Battalion Commander of the reorganized 74th Inf. When the 72d Division, Negros Military District (Gr1a) was activated, he was designated as the Division Commander. He served for a time as Senior-Aide to former President Sergio Osmeña after liberation. After graduating in the Command and General Staff School at Ft. Leavenworth in 1945 and the Infantry Advance Course at Ft. Benning, U.S.A. in 1949, he returned to the PMA as Commandant of Cadets, the very post he was holding prior to his departure for Ft. Benning. Later, he was successively Battalion Commander of the 27th BCT, Bataan-Zambales Sector Commander, and then Chief of the MIS, AFP before assuming command of the Regiment in 1954. For a time, he was on detached service as the Jolo Task Force Commander when the Kamlon campaign was at its height. Under his competent leadership, the Unit has been whipped up to its present well-knit, compact state. Adept at organization and discerning with his knowledge of men, he has, with the

assistance of his able staff, built a cohesive organization maintaining a high morale and combat discipline.

The officers and men of the 1st Scout Regiment look forward to the future with a broad outlook. They are ever ready, willing and able; they are not afraid of new ideas. There were apprehensions when the Scout Rangers were detailed to such humdrum and unexciting assignment as Operation Elections to maintain peace and order. At any rate, they came back with flying colors and commendations.

There are plenty of projects in Camp which are classified as yet. But one thing sure is that the troops in garrison receive a round-the-clock training and reconditioning, and reconditioning and training again. Continuous study and research is being made by the Staff and the training group research team, reconstructing lesson plans so as to discard outmoded ideas and assimilating new and better ones drawn from the rich stockpile of successful and sometimes bitter but well-learned combat lessons. This operational and training Regiment believes in being always prepared for any eventuality. It is only when the security of the state from within and without is assured that the black panther may eventually hie away to some shade, sit on its haunches, scan the horizon and, with a contented purr, lick the sweat and blood off its tawny hide.