



Spc. Juan Mayorga, Merrill's Marauder's Platoon, 5th Ranger Training Battalion, aims his weapon downrange at pop-up targets during a blank-fire exercise Aug. 7 at Catoosa Training Facility near Ringgold, Ga. (Photo courtesy of Army News Service)

# Rangers Knock the 'Rust' Off During Exercise

*By Nick Duke*

Army News Service

**N**estled in the mountains of north Georgia at Camp Frank D. Merrill near Dahlonega, the 5th Ranger Training Battalion is responsible for overseeing the Mountain Phase of Ranger School.

Soldiers assigned to the battalion spend 11 months a year making sure that the next generation of Rangers will be prepared to lead the way. Merrill's Marauder's Platoon, in particular, role plays as opposition forces during Ranger School classes.

As such, members of the platoon spend most of their time emulating a nonconventional, guerilla-type threat.

However, once a year, the battalion is able to spend time ensuring Soldiers permanently assigned to Camp Frank D. Merrill are up to speed on the proficiencies needed to be an effective Ranger.

The Soldiers spent Aug. 5-8 at Catoosa Training Facility near Ringgold, Ga., for a four-day training exercise focusing on various squad activities.

Day 3 may have been the highlight, however, as the four squads took part in a live-fire exercise on one of CTF's open ranges.

Each squad was designated as a decisive operation force and was tasked with moving to support a platoon assault on enemy forces.

Soldiers took their time moving down the range in two separate fire teams, dealing with pop-up targets standing in for enemy forces as they moved and setting up support by fire positions.

Each squad completed the live-fire exercise six times over the course of Day 3, including runs without ammu-

nition, with blank ammunition and with live ammunition during the day. The squads then completed dry, blank and live iterations after nightfall.

Staff Sgt. Keith Platt said repeating the exercise throughout the day helped his squad to knock off some of the proverbial rust that had accumulated over the previous year.

“There’s always an element of rust, so to speak,” he said. “With only being out here four days, you really have to knock the rust off pretty quick. By doing the dry, blank and live iterations of the lanes here on the range, it allows you to kind of work through those kinks. We don’t have the same training opportunities as someone on Kelley Hill, so you really have to work together to just do the best we can and get back to our basic level of proficiency.”

Platt said the exercise was also useful because it helped refine his knowledge of squad movements.

“The way we are maneuvering with elements on the low ground and high ground, we need to create a constant effect on the target,” he said.

“Because of our elements being separated by elevation, I need to bound one fire team more than the other and because we have greater fields of fire on one side, I have to break that down into smaller elements.

“I can’t have five or six guys up and moving without support. The name of the game for us is fire and maneuver. You can’t maneuver if you don’t have somebody supporting you.”

Staff Sgt. Nicholas Fenton said the exercise gave him an opportunity to practice managing his Soldiers’ under hot conditions.

“The thing that I’m really working on is dealing with heat management,” Fenton said. “It’s hot and we’ve been doing this all day. ... We have to make sure guys are hydrating and eating and just making sure they’re healthy. They know what to do, so if I can keep them mentally cleared and physically ready, it’ll be easy.”

The platoon spent the final day of the training exercise cleaning up the range and conducting after-action reviews before returning to Camp Frank D. Merrill to await the next class of Ranger School students. ■

---



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

