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The Alamo Scouts participated in the “Great Raid” to free hundreds of prisoners held under abominable circumstances at two Japanese prisoner-of-war camps in the Philippines. Some of those men are depicted in this photo: Top row left to right: Gil Cox, Wilbert Wismer, Harold Hard, Andy Smith and Francis Laquier. Bottom row left to right: Galen Kittleson, Rufo Vaquilar, Bill Nellist, Tom Rounsaville and Frank Fox. [Image online via Alamo Scouts.](#)

As MacArthur planned his [return to the Philippines](#), American and Australian troops under his command were making slow progress in [New Guinea](#). At their current rate, it would have taken years to end the Japanese occupation.

The general needed elite guerilla units to dramatically diminish the time required to free the islands. But ... no such units existed in late 1943.

To solve his problem, MacArthur discussed the situation with Lt. General [Walter Krueger](#), head of the [U.S. Sixth Army](#). From San Antonio—home of the Alamo—Krueger thought the required reconnaissance teams would have to perform like Davy Crockett and his frontiersmen.

They would have to be the best of the best, willing to fight against insurmountable odds—like Crockett’s last stand at [the Alamo](#).

The [Alamo Scouts Training Center \(ASTC\)](#) was set up on [Fergusson Island](#), off the coast of New Guinea. Volunteers gathered to see whether they qualified:

We wanted men with skills beyond their prowess as foot soldiers. We wanted men of individual initiative and competitive spirit. They had to be men temperamentally drawn by a game of high risks. They had to be crack marksmen, experts with many weapons, and also able and willing to kill with their own hands. (The Great Raid, page 114.)

Once the right men were selected, and trained, they began to [carry out](#) highly successful surveillance and intelligence-gathering [missions](#). Both MacArthur and Krueger were more than pleased.

Now another elite group was required—complementing the Alamo Scouts—to conduct hit-and-run raids deep behind enemy lines. Needed to “range far and wide,” they would be known as Rangers.

Rangers are still conducting raids—like that depicted in the story [Black Hawk Down](#)—but they had their origins in the spring of 1944. In April of that year, [Lt. Colonel Henry Mucci](#) (who had survived the bombing of Pearl Harbor) took command of the U.S. 98th Field Artillery Battalion, a unit trained for mountain fighting.

Although the men (and their 1,000 mules) had been in the Southwest Pacific since January of 1943, they had not yet seen action. As their morale sagged, Krueger and Mucci developed new plans for them.

Wearing his .45 caliber pistol in a shoulder holster, Henry Mucci told his new troops:

I'm going to turn you men into Rangers. From this point on, we will be known as the 6th Ranger Battalion ... the roughest, toughest outfit in the Pacific!

When they completed their training, the entire battalion included about 570 men. They would carry out swift hit-and-run raids in smaller groups (called companies) of 65 men.

Because they had to move quickly, they would carry no heavy equipment or artillery. Instead, a fully complemented company of 65 would depend on Bazookas, 32 M-1 Garand rifles, 12 carbines, 4 BARs (Browning Automatic Rifles) and 10 "Tommy Guns"—the same firepower that a 190-man infantry company would have.

Trained in hand-to-hand combat, the men would also use their own bodies as weapons.

Once the 6th Ranger Battalion was ready for its first mission, nothing happened...again. They were in the same position as they were before—minus their mules.

As morale sagged, the men could not have anticipated they would soon be assigned to one of the most famous rescue operations in the history of the United States military.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ALAMO-SCOUTS-and-6TH-BATTALION-RANGERS-Great-Raid-The>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ALAMO-SCOUTS-and-6TH-BATTALION-RANGERS-Great-Raid-The>

Media Stream



New Guinea - Training Place for Alamo Scouts and Rangers

Image from *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Volume IV - The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944*, edited by W.E. Craven & J.L. Cate, at page 5.

Image online, courtesy iBiblio website (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).

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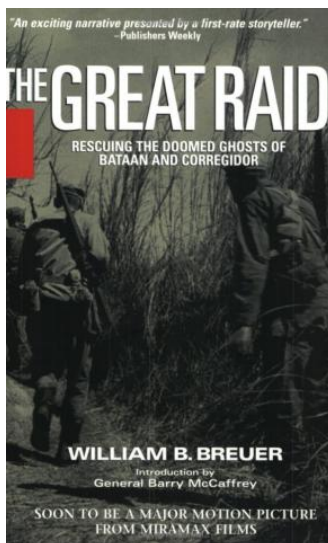


Map of Fergusson Island

Image online, courtesy Land of Vos.

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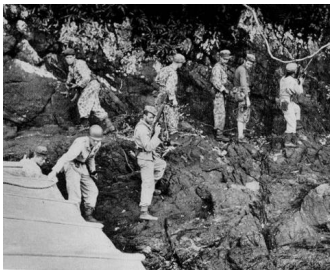
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The Great Raid - by William B. Breuer

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.

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Alamo Scouts on a Mission

Image, described above, included in *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II* (by David W. Hogan, Jr.), at [page 83](#).

Image online, courtesy U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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Henry Mucci - Leader of the Great Raid

Image online, courtesy Ranger Family.org

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Great Raid - 6th Ranger Battalion, Company F Patrol

U.S. Army photo included in *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*, by David W. Hogan, Jr., at [page 85](#).

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Soldier with Bazooka

[Image online](#), courtesy Olive Drab.

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M1 Garand Rifle

This image depicts M-1 Rifles which are [owned by the Swedish Army Museum](#) in Stockholm. Image online, via Wikimedia Commons.

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Browning Automatic Rifle

Photo by the U.S. Army Signal Corps; online, U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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MacArthur's Return to the Philippines

Video clip online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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