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To: General Peter Schoomaker
cc: General Peter Pace
Mr. Francis Harvey, Sec, of the Army

Subject: AIRBORNE "Jump Boots" The Static Line editorial by Trooper Don Lassen

From: Ranger Gerald H. Shaffer
12th. Airborne Ranger Company – Korean War

Dear Sir's,

You're adjudication to rusticate the AIRBORNE JUMP BOOTS is very saddening to this 79 year old veteran of the Airborne Rangers. I will therefore submit a bit of history:

Following the de-activation of the Ranger Training Command we Rangers were entitled transfers to any branch of the Armed Services we wished, I chose Baker Company of the 508th ABN Regimental Combat Team of the 82nd.Airborne Div. I was one of the first groups of elite U.S. Solders to wear a Beret, "BLACK", and the coveted Ranger Tab. These symbols of excellence originated during the Korean War with the fifteen (15) Airborne Ranger Companies trained at the Ranger Training Command, Ft. Benning GA. These Ranger companies were de-activated in 1952 but other Ranger Special Forces units were formed in the late 1960's. Seals and other elite Special Forces units have followed since and all must have the superior attributes to survive Airborne School and Ranger Training.

The Jump Boot decision is just the latest in a long line of highly questionable directives. One example now several years past was initiated by the then Chief of Staff, General Shinseki and his ARMY OF ONE was apparently implemented to enhance recruiting by bringing every recruit to an equalized status. This decision was turpitude if there ever there ever was, perpetrated on the Airborne Ranger Community. This directive hi-jacked the "our" original 1950 Black Beret and re-issued it to the entire US Army, and instructed the 75th Ranger Regiment at Ft. Benning to "choose another color". A decision requiring an estimated \$60-80 million dollars wasted on BLACK berets for the entire US Army, not including the thousands plus on new TAN Berets for the 75th Ranger Regiment. At what cost socially, and to military tradition and history? What is next? Do we give every recruit a "Ranger Tab" or "Special Forces Patch"?

"Rangers Lead the Way"

To say the least, subject venture smacks of political correctness. This type of polarization as implemented throughout the past 30 years has been employed to pasteurize the importance of excellence and individual achievement throughout America and now our military and is apparently intended to avert hurt feelings of those who, for what ever reason, do not have the mental or physical will required, notwithstanding the drive, perseverance, and “moxey” to achieve what the vast majority can’t.

The age old wisdom (adage) *“If you can’t run with the big dogs, don’t get off the porch”* if emulated, would ultimately prove beneficial to those in need without penalizing those who wish to achieve

Gentleman, I now ask you to please re-read Trooper Don Lassen, Editor of “THE STATIC LINE” an Airborne publication, Jumps Boots letter to you for supplication before trashing these Boots into History. The following is a scenario, reminisced and recalled by an old Sky Solder:

“The years 1950 thru 52 each and every evening, ‘Sky Solders’ sitting on their foot lockers spit polishing his Jump Boots with heated cordovan polish even though his boots were glistening before he begin the evenings shine however. He must be assured his boots out shine all others in his company. Airborne Pride indeed. He recalls the weeks of grueling conditioning in the Sweat/Torture sheds, hanging up in full Parachute harness with temperatures of 100+ degrees in the shade for hours, the 34ft. jump towers with 50yd long cables slamming one into a large ground bank for training on landing techniques. This followed by the 250ft towers, learning how to descend, slip, land and then dragged by your chute on bumpy ground at body wrenching speed generated by a GIANT FAN, until one learned to collapse that SOB of a Parachute. Finally the 5 minimum required “perfect” paratroop jumps from some old C-46/47’s, C-82s and C-119s. All this and more just to earn and qualify for those silvery wings and subject coveted “JUMP BOOTS.”

He also remembers his initial decision to bravely enlist in the Army Airborne. In doing so he displayed the fortitude and bravery required and setting every thing else aside, knew he would be required to exit “jump” day or night from a moving airplane. His ultimate reward was the privilege to wear this universally recognized and coveted BADGE OF BRAVERY AND ACHIEVEMENT, (Paratrooper Jump Boots).”

Gentleman, Sir’s, please don’t retire this badge of recognition of history. Keep them marching and jumping bravely for America. The parachute was interjected into the US Army in the late 1930’s and tested and evaluated by a TEST PLATOON and in doing so some brave men lost their lives. Chutes were perfected thru evolution before and after WW-II and Korea. Should you wish to visit the Airborne Ranger Monument at Ft. Benning GA. and visit view the RICA (RANGER INFENTRY COMPANIES AIRBORNE) ‘STONE’ and you may wish to count the numerous training casualties as well our Korean War combat KIA’s. One can only envision the screams to the high heaven by play it safe persons who detest those of us who are not. Sir’s, the Jump Boots in question, and Paratrooper Wings are to us what the “Door Mans style” Marine dress uniforms are to Marines, bravery not withstanding.

“Rangers Lead the Way”

If Airborne Jump Boots, historically and previously worn by a special breed of men are retired to history simply because not everyone possesses the fortitude to earn them, it will be a sad day and reflect on all future brave enlistees into the Airborne..

General Pace, Sir, are you aware of and or read an article recently published in a major US News Paper entitled, The Marine Corp's "TWO BUDGETS"? As reported, it sheds light on #1: A budget exclusively for Marine Corp public relations that heavily encompasses Washington D.C. politics. As reported this budget alone exceeds that of many US Corporations. Tax \$\$\$\$ for "SHOW AND TELL", or is it SELL? Budget #2, however for a worthier cause, encompasses the brave fighting men of the Marine Corps Infantry. My entirely personal opinion of the Marine Corp mission arguably at this time in history echo's that of several other branches of military, SF, Ranger & Seal units with budgets dwarfed by that of the Marine Corps.

You're pending decision related to the future longevity of "Our", The Airborne Jump Boots" that is inclusive of the "New Dress Blues" for the Army is questionable during this particular time of tight budgets for the overall military. One feels that if you gentleman cannot think of anything more urgent, necessary, and constructive, than the above, it should be very worrisome to many.

Gentlemen, I sincerely thank you for dedicating and risking your entire lives in service as a soldier and protector of this wonderful free AMERICA we inhabit. Personally as an over the hill old man, very patriotic, and a citizen soldier that would die for this Country in a heart beat. I 'SALUTE YOU' however, let "OUR" Jump Boots continue to march thru history.

God Bless RLTW

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