# Elijah Fire Lrrp Rangers Vietnam: Ghosts of the Central Highlands

The Elijah Fire LRRP Rangers, a legendary unit of the United States Army during the Vietnam War, were a highly skilled and courageous group of soldiers who carried out some of the most dangerous missions of the war. Operating deep behind enemy lines, they conducted reconnaissance, surveillance, and ambushes, often in the heart of enemy territory.

#### **Formation and Training**



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Formed in 1967 as part of the US Army's Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) program, the Elijah Fire unit was named after the Biblical prophet Elijah, who was known for his fiery spirit and unwavering faith. The unit was composed of volunteers from various units, including the 101st Airborne Division, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and the 5th Special Forces Group. LRRP Rangers underwent rigorous training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where they were taught advanced reconnaissance techniques, weapons handling, and survival skills. They were proficient in using a variety of weapons, including rifles, machine guns, and explosives. They were also trained in hand-to-hand combat and unarmed self-defense.

#### **Missions in Vietnam**

The Elijah Fire LRRP Rangers were deployed to South Vietnam in 1968. Their primary mission was to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance missions deep behind enemy lines in the Central Highlands, a region known for its dense jungles, rugged terrain, and heavy enemy activity. They would often infiltrate enemy territory by helicopter or parachute and spend days or weeks observing and gathering intelligence on enemy movements, positions, and tactics.

The Rangers were also tasked with carrying out ambushes on enemy supply lines and communication routes. They would typically set up ambush points along known trails or roads and lie in wait for enemy soldiers to pass by. The ambushes were often successful, resulting in the capture or killing of enemy personnel and the destruction of enemy equipment.

#### **Operational Methods**

The Elijah Fire LRRP Rangers employed a variety of operational methods to carry out their missions. They often operated in small teams of four to six men, known as "sticks." These sticks would typically consist of a team leader, a radio operator, a medic, and several riflemen. To infiltrate enemy territory, they would often use helicopters or parachutes. They would often insert into the jungle at night and establish a base camp. From there, they would conduct reconnaissance patrols and ambushes.

The Rangers were highly skilled in camouflage and concealment. They would often wear civilian clothing or use vegetation to blend in with their surroundings. They would also move through the jungle silently and avoid making any noise that could alert the enemy to their presence.

#### **Combat Experience**

The Elijah Fire LRRP Rangers saw extensive combat in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. They conducted numerous reconnaissance and surveillance missions, gathering valuable intelligence on enemy movements, positions, and tactics. They also carried out several successful ambushes, resulting in significant enemy casualties and equipment losses.

One of the most famous missions carried out by the Elijah Fire LRRP Rangers was the reconnaissance of the Cam Lo Valley in 1968. The unit was inserted into the valley by helicopter and spent several days observing and gathering intelligence on enemy activity. The information they gathered was used to plan a major offensive operation against the enemy in the valley.

#### Legacy

The Elijah Fire LRRP Rangers were one of the most successful and respected units of the Vietnam War. They carried out some of the most dangerous missions of the war, often operating deep behind enemy lines in

the heart of enemy territory. Their courage, skill, and dedication made them a formidable force against the enemy.

The legacy of the Elijah Fire LRRP Rangers lives on today. The unit's history and accomplishments are taught at the United States Army Ranger School, and the Rangers are considered to be among the most elite soldiers in the world.

#### In Memoriam

The Elijah Fire LRRP Rangers paid a high price for their service in Vietnam. Of the approximately 200 men who served in the unit, over 50 were killed in action or died from wounds received in combat. Their names are inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and they will forever be remembered for their courage and sacrifice.



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