

A FOILED, BUT NOT FAILED, MISSION

Frank South, Pres. NE Chapter

In columns of two, about 20 Rangers marched along the entry to the Lincoln Memorial in battle dress, polished boots, black berets, and carrying the Stars and Stripes at the fore. As they came to a halt behind the speakers stand, they snapped to attention and then to Parade Rest. If one didn't know better, you would surely think these were active-duty Rangers. Of course, they were greeted with rounds of applause and cheers by the 250 or so people gathered to welcome them.

Scattered throughout the crowd with three beret colors, two officer garrison hats, wives, girl friends, children - all enthusiastic. After the National Anthem, sung by Penny Neff, and the benediction, we had speeches - rousing and touching.

Emmett Hiltibrand (75th Rgr Assn.) and Bob Black (RICA) led off by detailing the problems that were dealt with, the effect on morale and the exorbitant monetary cost of putting foreign-made (including China) Black Berets on every Army head.

Sandee Rouse (Gold Star Mother, Panama) told of the meaning of the Black Beret to her son, her, his father, and all the others. She moved many to tears. The Rouses were deeply involved in organizing and supporting the 750-mile road march of Ranger David Nielsen.

Nielsen spoke of the support and good will met by him and his group along the way, of his determination to finish his mission, his interviews with members of Congress and their sympathetic reception, including written testaments and letters.

The common theme throughout was succinctly voiced by our own Warren "Bing" Evans when he cited a long-ago incident relating to the attack of Cisterna, Italy. COL Darby had received orders to proceed with the attack, to be led by the 1st and 3rd Rangers. Army Intelligence said the position was lightly defended, but Bing's scouts brought back info that there were several Panzer Grenadier and other divisions now in place - too many for the two small Ranger Battalions (1,000 men at best). Bing reported the new info to the Colonel who replied, "Those are my orders and they are your orders." The Ranger followed orders. Those not KIA were captured. Carl Lehmann stated, "...the worst day of my life." When

the news later reached Darby, he broke down and wept.

Bing ended his remarks hoping the Gen. Shimseki was not going to give himself cause to weep by stubbornly standing by an order that would have unfortunate and unintended consequences.

After the Rally, all Rangers and their families were graciously invited to a get-together at the Black Rooster Pub by Blackie and Lulu Auger and hosted by Judy Taylor. A fine time was had by all!

Sunday morning, the organizers and David Nielsen gathered at Ft. Myer, hosted by BG(Ret.) Jim Herbert to decide the future course of the effort.

On Monday, some of the organizers split into teams and cruised the halls of Congress to gather support from both sides of the Houses. They were highly successful in terms of pledges and letters from members of the various key administration people. One of the most important supporters was Senator John Warner, Chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

All looked well - until we suddenly learned that Gen. Shinseki, through BG King to COL Keen, gave the 75th Rgr Regt. The choice between retaining the Black Beret or adopting a new unique Beret, Tan in color. Of course, there was little choice. Tan will now be the color of the Rangers' Beret. It is worth noting that, until that weekend, the Army's position was that if the Rangers wanted a color other than black, they could petition through channels and it would be given consideration at that time. While the battle was lost, a skirmish was won.

In any case, we succeeded in establishing support and solidarity among the various Ranger Battalions, Special Forces, Airborne, VFW, American Legion, and other veterans associations.

Heretofore, the wearers of the Black Beret were a tiny, but potent, number among the Armed Forces and the color of their beret would attract no more special comment than the maroon or green of the other Special Units. I wonder what the national and international impression will be when the overwhelming numbers of the Army use the head gear so closely similar to that of Saddam Hussein's troops?

Those attending, from RBA-WWII, were - Warren "Bing" Evans, Dan Farley, Carl Lehmann, Leonard and Charlotte Lomell, Frank and Berna Deane South.