



MEDIA RELEASE: For Immediate Release

August 25, 2026

New Prague Native Earns Army Ranger Tab After 15-Year Goal

NEW PRAGUE, Minn. – A goal that began when he was a child watching a documentary about military training came full circle July 17 when Army 2nd Lt. Henry Geiger of New Prague graduated from the U.S. Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, Ga.

“I remember watching a documentary about elite military training with my brother when I was probably 10 or 11 years old,” Geiger said. “Ranger School has been on my mind for probably 15 years.”

Geiger, an infantry officer assigned to West Saint Paul-based Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment, Minnesota Army National Guard, graduated as a member of Ranger Class 07-26 after completing the grueling course without being recycled through a phase – an accomplishment commonly referred to by Soldiers as going “62 and through.”

For Geiger, earning the Ranger Tab was not simply a professional milestone. It was a personal goal he had carried for years.

Geiger enlisted in the Minnesota Army National Guard at age 17 with his parents’ consent while attending New Prague High School. He later enrolled in the University of Minnesota's Reserve Officers' Training Corps program, earned a four-year ROTC scholarship, and commissioned as an infantry officer in May 2025. By his sophomore year of college, he had decided that becoming a Ranger-qualified infantry officer was a goal he needed to accomplish.

“I kind of thought that my military career would be incomplete if I didn't give that a shot,” Geiger said.

Ranger School is an Army leadership course designed to develop Soldiers' ability to lead small units under demanding physical and mental conditions. The course consists of three phases: Darby, Mountain and Swamp. Students face demanding tactical training, limited sleep and food, difficult terrain and graded leadership evaluations.

For Geiger, the physical demands were only part of the challenge. He said the course gave him an opportunity to see how his leadership would hold up under the most difficult conditions.

“I think it was a stress test of your leadership,” Geiger said. “How could I lead when the chips are down?”

During Mountain Phase, Geiger said the physical demands reached their peak as students moved for hours over steep terrain carrying heavy loads. At times, he said, the only way forward was to focus on the next step.

“You just have to keep going and just know that eventually, you'll get to the end point,” Geiger said.

The most significant leadership lesson, however, came during the final phase of Ranger School.

On July 5, while serving in a platoon leadership position during Swamp Phase, Geiger encountered a series of challenges that included a failed resupply, a delay due to lightning, and a compressed planning timeline. He said he became overly focused on mistakes he had made earlier in the day, allowing them to affect his performance later.

Looking back, Geiger said the lesson was simple: slow down, focus on the immediate problem and don't allow a previous mistake to dictate what happens next.

“I think when you're stressed like that, it's just stepping back and thinking about one move at a time,” Geiger said.

He applied that lesson during his next leadership evaluation, which he passed before continuing on to the final portion of the course.

Geiger estimates that only about 10% of what he learned at Ranger School was tactical, with the remainder consisting of personal and professional lessons about leadership.

“When no one wants to do anything, and you're the most tired you've ever been, trying to motivate people is the most raw form of leadership,” Geiger said. “If you're a good leader, you'll be able to motivate people.”

His experience also reinforced the importance of balancing high standards with fairness.

“When you're running off minimal food and minimal sleep, people are going to want to take the easy way out,” Geiger said. “You have to be firm, but also fair. I think people really respect that.”

Throughout the course, Geiger's parents, Angela and Joe Geiger, remained among his strongest supporters. His mother wrote him letters and prayed rosaries while he was at Ranger School. After completing the final phase, Geiger called his parents from a payphone to tell them he had passed.

He said his parents' support has been present throughout his entire military career, beginning when they signed the paperwork allowing him to enlist at 17.

“They've been my biggest supporters ever since day one of my Army career,” Geiger said.

That support was with him when he returned to Victory Pond for the Ranger School graduation ceremony.

Victory Pond holds particular significance for Ranger students because it is where they begin the course with the Combat Water Survival Assessment during Darby Phase. The graded assessment tests students' water confidence, ability to negotiate obstacles at height and survival skills while wearing combat equipment. After successfully completing the course, students return to Victory Pond for graduation.

For Geiger, returning to the pond with his family and wearing his newly earned Ranger Tab created a full-circle moment.

“It was just really cool to be back there and know that I'd passed,” Geiger said.

Geiger credits his New Prague upbringing with helping shape his approach to service. He specifically remembers Greg Tikalsky, one of his former New Prague High School teachers, for emphasizing civic responsibility and the importance of giving back to the community.

That lesson remains relevant to Geiger as a member of the Minnesota Army National Guard, where he serves part-time while pursuing a civilian career.

“I think one thing that I like about the Guard is just how community-facing it is,” Geiger said. “If there is an emergency that arises in the state, it’ll be people from Minnesota actually helping out.”

For Geiger, earning the Ranger Tab is not an endpoint, but another milestone in a career built around seeking difficult challenges.

“You want to always have a mountain to climb,” Geiger said. “To have something to chase.”

Now a platoon leader with the 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment, Geiger plans to continue developing as an infantry officer. He hopes eventually to serve as a company commander and would welcome opportunities to pursue additional challenging Army schools and assignments.

Editor’s Note: Interview requests with 2nd Lt. Henry Geiger may be coordinated through Maj. Richard Green at 651-442-7037 or richard.l.green158.mil@army.mil.

About the Minnesota National Guard: Established in 1856 and headquartered in St. Paul, the Minnesota National Guard has more than 13,000 Soldiers and Airmen who serve in 58 communities across the state. The Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen of the Minnesota National Guard are ‘Always Ready’ to fight the nation’s wars, protect the country, respond to state emergencies, and contribute to local communities. For more information about the Minnesota National Guard, visit <https://MinnesotaNationalGuard.ng.mil>.



2nd Lt. Henry Geiger, an infantry officer assigned to Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment, Minnesota Army National Guard, poses with his parents, Angela and Joe Geiger, at Victory Pond following his Ranger School graduation at Fort Benning, Georgia, July 17, 2026. (Photo provided by Henry Geiger)