The 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) was born from the August 1943 Quebec Conference, where President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and other Allied leaders decided that an American Long Range Penetration Mission behind the Japanese lines in Burma was needed to destroy enemy supply and communications lines and to disrupt the Japanese forces.

President Roosevelt issued a Presidential call for volunteers for "A Dangerous and Hazardous Mission". Approximately 3,000 brave American soldiers responded to the call. The Unit was officially designated as the "5307th Composite Unit (Provisional)", code name "GALAHAD", later known as "MERRILL'S MARAUDERS" after their leader, Brigadier General Frank D. Merrill. The campaign began February 24, 1944, and the Unit was disbanded August 10, 1944.

Although faced with many difficulties, Merrill’s Marauders were successful in completing their mission and paved the way for Allied forces to create supply lines, sustain Chinese forces, and maintain Allied control of the region.

**Decorations**

- Presidential Unit Citation
- Rare distinction of every member awarded the Bronze Star
- 6 Distinguished Service Crosses
- 4 Legions of Merit
- 44 Silver Star Medals
- 25 inducted into the Army Ranger Hall of Fame (More than any other Ranger Unit)

**Recognitions**

- 1st American combat troops to fight the Japanese on the ground in Asia
- 1st American Long-Range Penetration Group
- All-volunteer unit that was severely outnumbered by a veteran Japanese army
- Had the second most uninterrupted jungle fighting service of any American unit
- Fought 5 major battles (Walawbum, Shadazup, Inkangahtawng, Nphum Ga, Myitkyina) and 30 minor battles
- In 2014, 49 States passed a proclamation to make August 10th Merrill’s Marauders Day

**Overcame Difficulties**

- Considered expendable since no plan existed to get them out of Burma; War Department expected 85% casualties
- Operated behind enemy lines with only what they could carry on their backs or mules; resupplied by airdrops
- Repeatedly attacked the enemy’s infrastructure while spearheading the Chinese advance
- Walked over 1,000 miles through the Himalayan Mountains and the dense jungles of Burma
- Suffering from diseases (e.g., malaria, dysentery, typhus) and other jungle maladies (e.g., leaches, fungus, infections), in addition to fighting against the Japanese, there were less than 300 of the remaining 1,310 Marauders, who were considered well enough to fight for the Myitkyina airstrip
- Reinforcements (a.k.a. New Galahad) arrived and Myitkyina airfield and village were captured
- Living on inadequate emergency rations, they continually fought malnutrition and exhaustion

Only 40 to 50 Marauders are still living and today the 75th Ranger Regiment honor their legacy by wearing the Marauder patch as their crest.

“We were certainly fulfilling our mission, that being to harass, distract, and block the enemy. … General Tanaka and his Imperial 18th Japanese Division had been gleefully denied any success in their attempts to decimate the now-famous Merrill’s Marauders”, from “The Fightin’ Preacher”, by Colonel Logan E. Weston, Marauder.

**Additional Reading**

Marauder’s website: [http://www.marauder.org/history.htm](http://www.marauder.org/history.htm)