

[Meditating Green Berets](#)

Category : [March 1988](#)

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Lean and Mean U.S. Kshatriya Warriors Learn Yoga to Master Body and Mind

Peruman, Ravi See yourself drawing in energy. You are relaxed. Now your consciousness fills the room. Now, as you expand, you can see the whole block, now the countryside. You are beyond Earth now, beyond the planets - you can see the galaxy from afar; and now you are returning slowly back to Earth, back into your body. You are contracting, going deeper and deeper inside until you see each atom of your existence," the uniformed instructor intones - without the usual military bark.

Hard to believe this is a class for some of the toughest soldiers in the world: the Green Berets, the U.S. Army's Special Forces. They are fighting and winning the battle to control their minds, bodies and emotions by learning and practicing ancient Eastern mysticism re-packaged as hi-tech Mental Fitness Training. Meditation has hit the military.

In 1982 the Army knew some of its units had problems, including drug and alcohol abuse, low moral, frequent sick-calls and low physical training (PT) scores. "Other than that they were ready to go and defend the country," said Chris Majer, a Seattle-based athletic trainer/entrepreneur. The Army contacted Major's Sports-Mind, Inc., curious to see if the program that had made successes of so many athletes could work on G.I.s. It did. Majer was given eight weeks and a Fort Hood, Texas regular Army battalion on which to try his methods. He delivered such amazing results, the Army wanted to know what he could do with their elite Berets. The Green Beret are not the gung-ho killing machines some films portray. Rather, they are trained first for long-range reconnaissance missions which demand long periods of time deep behind enemy lines, often under the worst conditions. An involuntary sneeze, cough or even movement can give away one's position, threatening a mission. Control can mean survival. Their secondary roles are as teachers, and lastly, fighters. Majer told Hinduism Today, "A soldier falls not because of a weak body, but a weak mind. The inability to deal with stress and fear can cause inappropriate actions which in this case can be fatal." His goal was to

find what, on an individual basis, would enable these soldiers to conquer their fears and master their minds. "We began with flexibility, a part of PT never before taught." Using derivatives of hatha yoga that are common to fitness clubs and programs today, the Green Berets put more stretch into their muscles and flex in their joints. Drawing on Chinese yoga pranayama techniques, Majer taught the Berets breath control. For mind control, he used Tibetan Buddhist meditation techniques that have their roots in the Saivite Natha yoga of Hinduism. Vapasana, the rigorous Buddhist exercise of sitting in a single spot for hours while methodically emptying the mind of mental/emotion content, was integrated with biofeedback monitoring, producing the ability to generate meditative awareness on demand.

Majer explained that his intent is to blend Eastern tradition with Western technology, with the benefits of tradition but without having to sit in a cave for twenty years. "Like the Tibetans, or the Samurai, the greatest warriors are those who mastered the stillness of the mind. The Special Forces are as close to warriors as we can come these days."

But even repackaged, what was basic training in spiritual exploration was not always easy to swallow for these elite fighting machines. Lt. Col. Ken Getty who commanded the initial batch of Green Berets, told Hinduism Today, "While generally enthusiastic about the challenge and the refreshing change of pace, we had to dilute the idea that it was meditation. We just offered them the option of developing other faculties that would make them better soldiers and better human beings. For some, the idea of talking about spirituality was very difficult. Macho men just don't talk about such things." But they have, and the program initiated by Majer and Getty has become a long term contract. There is more involved here than just turning out a soldier who can make himself virtually invisible by being in control of himself. Getty observes, "We are looking to turn out better human beings overall. These men won't always be in the Army, and we want to turn a better man back into the civilian world."