

Parachute Rigger Badge

First worn in 1949. Authorized 1986 (retroactive to before 1951)-present



Cloth and metal versions of the rigger badge approved in 1986. The cloth design had been used unofficially since 1949 and was authorized for field uniforms since 1956.

Unofficial cloth parachute riggers badges began in 1948 when Major Thomas Cross (11th Airborne Division parachute maintenance officer) and Sergeant First Class Ewing (also of the 11th Parachute Maintenance Company) were in Sendai, Japan. These two soldiers designed a riggers' cloth badge for the right sleeve of the field jacket. The initial design of a parachute and a half wing looked similar to the pathfinder badge and so Major Cross suspended the design and started another effort when the division moved to Camp Campbell, KY, in 1949. The 1949 rigger wings they developed went on the field jacket and on red baseball caps. Soon both the red caps and the wings were worn by riggers throughout the army.

The Army Chief of Staff approved the concept for a cloth badge for wear on the field uniform in November 1956 with a detailed design "to be developed." The Institute of Heraldry completed the formal design in February 1957, making it virtually identical to the 11th Airborne Division version.

Mr. James Emery of the Quartermaster School, Fort Lee, Virginia, initiated a formal request for the badge in metal form in 1983. Although heavily supported by the field, General Wickham, while Chief of Staff, disapproved. After an appeal by General Thompson, commander of the Army Material Command, Wickham approved the metal badge in June 1986, retroactive to May 1951. A Department of the Army message of May 1999 provided for retroactive qualification before 1951.