

# THE KOREAN WAR





**In late 1945, when the Soviets occupied northern Korea, North and South Korea did not yet exist nor were they truly planned. Kim Il Sung was the Soviet's default choice for a leader. He spoke Russian better than Korean and he was politically reliable and loyal to Stalin. But he was not considered educated or bright by the Soviets. He was merely convenient and reasonably pliable and known to them.**

**The Soviets were looking for a better choice; one more capable and certainly one reliable better known and more popular with the people. The U.S., USSR and certainly all Koreans were assuming a reunified Korea was in the future, not two Koreas. The Soviets wanted a leader acceptable to them and most Koreans and Kim was not that man. Unfortunately, they found no one who fit all criteria not named Kim – particularly loyalty to the Soviet Union.**

**In early 1946, the new United Nations as one of its first major resolutions decided that Korea should be a unified Korea but would not be independent any time soon. It would become a UN Trust Territory until the UN decided it was sufficiently stable and recovered to become an independent country. The resolution was introduced in the General Assembly by the British, negating any chance of a veto (by the Soviets). Only the Soviets and their satellites voted against the resolution although there is little doubt that had Korea had a delegation (or two) they would have voted against it as well.**



**Trusteeship had been set up for all the other former Japanese Colonies: The Marshall Islands, the Caroline Islands, Palau and the Northern Mariana Islands so there was a precedent. Under such a situation, a third party would oversee the administration of the trust territory and would be tasked to guide it towards independence. The trustee could not occupy the territory nor set up military bases without the approval of the resident population. The trusteeship was open ended and would continue until the local population, the trustee and the UN decided it could end at which time the country could become independent. (It could also choose to become a part of the trustee or another country by referendum at that time.) In practice, this meant the trusteeship would last decades.**

**As the Trustee was decided by the UN General Assembly and not the Security Council, and as the General Assembly of 1945-46 was dominated by the Western Allies and their supporters, it was a given the Soviets would never be named as Trustee in Korea and thus would be expected to vacate the country or potentially risk the wrong war in the wrong place for a country of little real use beyond being a buffer. They were certain the US would be named Trustee and managed to stall implementation through the Security Council.**

**In 1947, to break the logjam, India volunteered to be trustee, but this was objected to by almost everyone of note.**



**In late 1947, the UN decided Trusteeship was never going to work and decided that Korea could hold national elections and upon those elections it would become independent. They were intended to be nation wide for a single country and government.**

**Syngman Rhee and the Korean politicians in the south were elated. Kim and the Soviets were aghast. Two third of the population (and votes) were in the South and outside of Kim and Soviet influence. A nation wide vote would mean the end of Kim's dreams and the Soviet satellite. What would become North Korea refused to participate. Instead they would hold their own elections for a nation wide government – one that barred the south from participating.**

**Syngman Rhee had headed the provisional government certainly since 1945 and in his and his supporters view since 1920. In May, he was elected president of Korea (all of Korea). The new legislature included seats for legislators from all of Korea and office space for their staffs, to include the provinces in the North. The northern seats would remain empty. By the standards of the day, it was almost fair as it was not certain even with Rhee's supporters shenanigans that Rhee would win.**

**Less than a month later, the North held its own elections although in this case there was little opposition – although Cho Min-Sik managed 10% of the vote despite not being on the ballot.**





**Neither Korea call themselves North or South. South Korea is the Republic of Korea and considers itself the legitimate government of all Korea.**

**Its flag is a traditional Korean flag.**

**North Korea is the Peoples Democratic Republic of Korea and likewise considers itself the only legitimate government.**



**This was true in 1948 and is still the case today although as a result of the years to come both were forced to concede they had no control over the other.**

**As in 1948, both countries desire unification but under their system and not the other.**



**When Kim was “elected” Premier of the DPRK, his Korean was still heavily accented. He was barely known outside political circles in the DPRK. Few would recognize him. His cult of personality was years into the future, although he began to build it (with little success at first) from 1948.**

**Even before the elections of 1948, Kim and his provisional government took it upon themselves to try and overthrow the provisional government in the South. Agents were sent south to agitate strikes, unrest and even open rebellion. They succeeded in creating chaos here and there. A ROK Army regiment mutinied under their direction and two or at least part of two provinces revolted setting up communist governments for a brief time. All of these were repressed ... brutally. Most North Korean**

**agents were caught and shot. South Korean leaders in the unrest were shot. Participants and suspected communists were rounded up and imprisoned (and later shot.) Thousands died. But South Koreans began seeing the North as an enemy so that by 1949, North Korean agents would be outed to authorities before they could cause trouble.**

**The South retaliated sending raids north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel and agents to encourage defection. They proved far more successful and defectors from the north told tales that made the Rhee government seem benign by comparison.**



**The Soviets began arming North Korea soon after the occupation began in August 1945. It was not large scale. The NKPA (North Korean People's Army) numbered around 120,000 total in 1950 at the outbreak of the war. But they were generally well trained and well equipped.**

**They would field 1 Armored Division and 10 Infantry Divisions based upon the Soviet model – whose divisions were only about 60% the size of US divisions.**



**It was made up of surplus equipment. The tanks and self propelled guns were WWII, the later being replaced during the war and the former in the subsequent years. Small arms were also WWII surplus.**

**Still, it was more than the South Koreans had. The Soviets chose to keep the NKPA small to discourage adventurism by Kim. But while small, its divisions were equipped for modern, mechanized warfare.**



**Kim felt it was too small. By 1949 it was only around 80,000 men. It was not enough to take on South Korea. In July, he demanded that Communist China repatriate any Korean nationals with military experience to North Korea as a quick means to expand his Army and as a means to provide it with veteran troops. About 50,000 soldiers from the PLA were repatriated by early 1950. Kim was convinced now he had an invincible force and could reunify Korea by conventional warfare.**

**He did not believe he needed an overwhelming force. Despite the failures of his infiltration raids, he was convinced South Korea was ripe for rebellion and that once his Army crossed into South Korea, the people would rise up and overthrow Rhee's regime.**

**The Soviets were not convinced of any of this. They doubted the South Koreans would rise up in a way that would make anything easy for the North. They did not believe Kim had the supplies to sustain all but a short offensive (both in time and space. This was deliberate.) And they were convinced the Americans would intervene as soon as the North Koreans crossed the border and they would not help Kim if that happened. Kim was told "no" on several occasions prior to March 1950 but he kept asking and kept insisting he was right.**



**When Japan announced its surrender on August 14, 1945, it caught U.S. military planners somewhat by surprise. While they had planned on eventually occupying Korea, they had not planned on it happening until after an invasion of Japan – sometime in mid 1946. They were forced to scramble. Joe Stilwell's 10<sup>th</sup> Army in Okinawa – a reserve force for the invasion of Japan, was tapped to go to Korea. Stilwell died on leave before this happened. He was replaced by LGEN John Hodge who would command the 50,000 man (initially) Army of Occupation until June 1948. Hodge saw it as an Army of Occupation over a vanquished enemy. (MacArthur saw his 150,000 man force as a liberation force tasked with nation building and not occupation.)**

**An occupying army did not arm its former enemy. There were no efforts to form a combat force while Hodge was in charge. He formed a police force and constabulary for internal security only made up largely of Koreans who served as such for the Japanese during the Japanese occupation, which made him loathed by the Koreans.**

**By the time his tenure ended, the Americans were reluctant to arm South Korea to their standards. It was clear by then Rhee wanted to unify Korea under his rule and was more than willing to use force to do so if he had a force capable of doing so. The U.S. would build an army capable of internal security and defending against an invasion, but not offensive operations.**



**The Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAC) stood up in July 1948 replacing the Army of Occupation. It had about 1500 soldiers and their task was to oversee the training and equipping of the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army. The ROC TO&E (Table of Organization and Equipment which defined what an army unit was supposed to have in manpower and equipment) differed markedly for the U.S.**

**First, there were no tanks or armored fighting vehicles. (A late WWII infantry division either had its own tank battalion or one was assigned to it.) It had about 1/3 the amount of artillery per division as a U.S. division mixed between 105mm and 75mm PAK guns, neither of which could match the capability of the NKPA Soviet supplied**

**122mm guns in either range or firepower.**

**While the South Koreans gained an air service, this was restricted to small transport and liaison aircraft. These were unarmed and difficult to arm with anything useful.**

**This was deliberate. The goal was to deny Rhee an offensive capability without denying him the ability to defend against an attack. By June 1950, the ROK Army had over 150,000 men, outnumbering the NKPA in manpower but not in firepower. While publicly KMAC said this was an adequate force, privately they held out little hope if North Korea invaded.**

# THE THEORIST



Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, the critical American view of Communism was based largely on the documented writings and speeches of Lenin and Trotsky.

They were hardly the only voices, but were the best known in the West.

Both had come to believe that Communism cannot hope to coexist with Capitalism thus to survive it must spread.

The difference between the two was when. Trotsky believed now, Lenin believed when the Soviet Union was ready.

Regardless, they saw the USSR as the vanguard of world revolution.





# THE THEORIST



**Lenin died in 1924. Trotsky believed himself to be the natural successor but he had few friends and fewer allies. (Lenin had noted Trotsky was a brilliant organizer but an incompetent politician.)**

**When the struggle for a successor concluded, Joseph Stalin was in charge.**



**He had little use for Trotsky (and ultimately had him assassinated) or fomenting world revolution. The Soviet Union was in no position to provide more than token, moral support.**

**He believed the Soviet Union was more important than world revolution and securing it was the only priority.**



# THE THEORIST



**George Kennan (1904 – 2005) was a State Department bureaucrat and by 1940 was the Department’s expert on the Soviet Union.**

**He believed that Lenin and Trotsky were aberrations. It is said all politics is local and he believed Communism was no different in this regard. The policy of the Soviet Union differed only in degree from that of Imperial Russia.**

**Moreover, Russian Communism was Russian only. Communism elsewhere (not under Red Army occupation) was its own entity and could not be viewed simply as an extension of the Soviet Union.**

**What were the “local” interests?**

# THE THEORIST



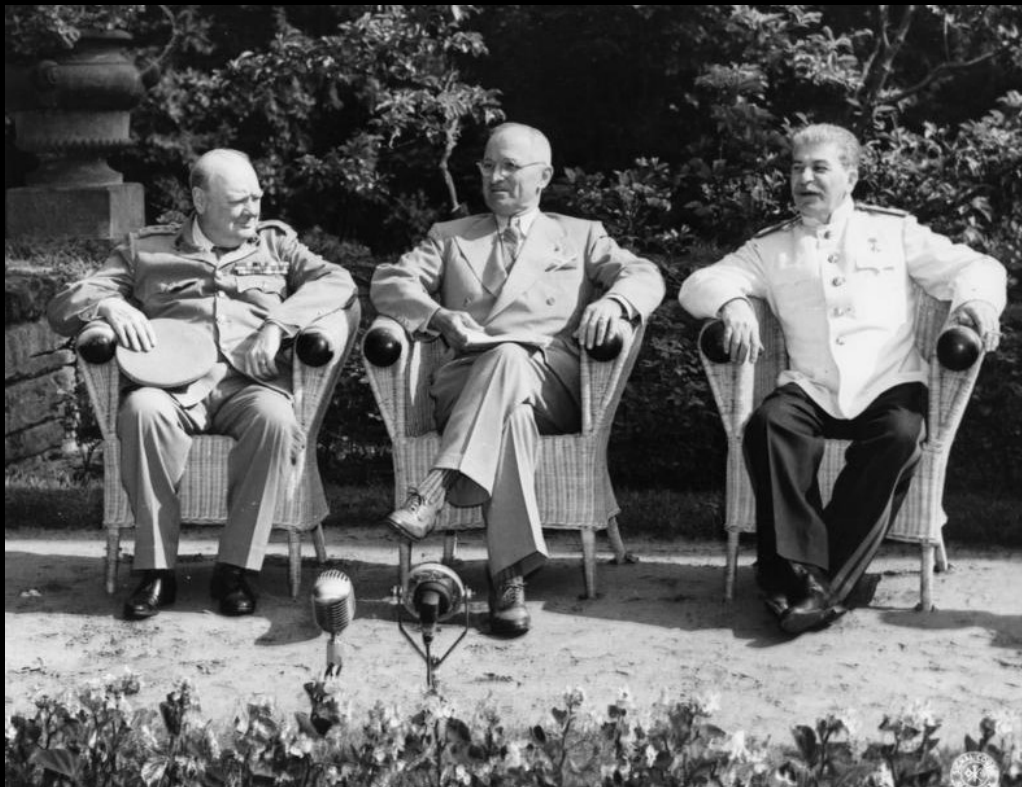
During the war, Kennan was posted with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow as advisor to the Ambassador and U.S. envoys. He did not have the ear of Roosevelt – for various reasons not in the least being he (Kennan) did not trust the Russians.

For reasons only known to Roosevelt, FDR trusted Stalin and truly believed he could work with the man.

In Kennan's opinion (and others) this was true so long as the only issue of note was the defeat of Nazi Germany. Beyond that, trust Russia to act in its own interests and be certain those would never align with your own.

# THE THEORIST

**Roosevelt may have trusted Stalin.  
Truman did not.**



**Roosevelt may have seen Yalta as  
a success, Truman saw it as an  
unavoidable surrender given that  
the only alternative – fighting the  
Red Army – was not in the cards.**

**The Roosevelt administration had  
more than a few members who  
supported Roosevelt's assessment  
of Stalin.**

**They were all gone within a few  
months. Truman wanted people  
who would counter Stalin.**

**People like George Kennan (if only  
he was even marginally  
personable.)**

# THE THEORIST



By 1946, Kennan believed Stalin was a threat not because he was a Soviet Communist but because he was Stalin.

To maintain power, Stalin needed an external, existential threat. He would expand the sphere of influence to provide a defensive buffer and to keep the people's focus abroad and not on domestic issues.

Kennan believed that containment was the key. The Soviet Union could not survive contained. Bolstering the West would deny Communism inroads.

Moreover, as only the Russians were Russian, treating its Allies as themselves and not as Soviet pawns could potentially undermine and perhaps roll back the Soviets.

At first (1946), Kennan had the ear of President Truman.

# THE THEORIST



**While history (and the opening of the Soviet archives) would show his view of Communism was correct, it was also very difficult to explain in simple terms.**

**While it was possible to be an anti-Stalin, anti-Soviet, nationalistic Communist such that what would work against one could not work against all, try explaining that to the average voter or politician especially without being patronizing (as was Kennan's wont).**

**The Americans preferred a monolithic threat. In WWI, this was the Kaiser even though each country fought for its own reasons. In WWII the Axis (Germany, Italy and Japan) was a unified threat, even though they barely got along, rarely coordinated (or not at all in the case of Japan) and even worked against each other.**

**The communist threat was a multitude of challenges, not a single one.**

# THE THEORIST



An example from as early as 1945 was Josip Broz (Tito) and Yugoslavia. Tito had been born in what is now Croatia and fought in WWI with the Austro-Hungarian army as one of the youngest senior NCO's until he was captured by the Russians. He would then fight with the Red Army in the Russian Civil War before returning to Yugoslavia. He became a communist but not a Bolshevik having little use for the Russians.

In WWII he led communist partisans against the Germans and succeeded in liberating Yugoslavia (without Russian help). It was the only resistance movement that succeeded. When the Soviets tried to influence his new communist state, he broke with them completely and opened relations with the West. While he would not embrace western politics, nor seek an alliance, he would not support the Soviets or their policies either.



Tito would be a thorn in Stalin's side and he feared others might get similar ideas.

# THE THEORIST



**The U.S. would eventually see Tito's Yugoslavia as distinct from the Soviet Union and its satellites, but that would not be until the 1960's.**

**In the 1940's and 1950's a communist was a communist.**

**It was further believed at the time that when Moscow said jump, all communists would jump even though this had never been the case before and was not the case going forward except in the countries under Soviet occupation whose leadership existed only because the Red Army was there and had their backs.**



**As the events of 1989 would prove, once Moscow and the Red Army made it clear that a country was on its own, the communists governments' days were numbered.**

# THE THEORIST



**Kennan was brilliant and difficult. He clearly knew his subject – Russia. But he had few friends or true colleagues.**

**He had little concept of political realities and would not accept that what he believed important could be subordinated.**

**Moreover, while he was an expert on Russia, he knew little about anywhere else. Thus while probably correct that Communism was not purely Russian, he could provide little real insight regarding other Communist movements.**

**This would prove particularly true in regards to Asia.**



# THE THEORIST



**His idea of containment, however, seemed just simple enough (unless you asked him for details). His idea was based upon what soon became a false assumption: that military ability would not matter.**

**American policy was not so naïve but also turned on a false assumption: that the American armed forces could back up its diplomacy.**

**Moreover, as much as Stalin feared American military ability, it had effectively been frittered away by 1950.**

**The U.S. Army of 1950 outside perhaps Europe was less capable than it had been in 1939. The Navy, while the largest in the world, was not capable of a major war. The Air Force was brand new and believed that nuclear weapons were all that was necessary.**

# UNPREPAREDNESS

	Army	Navy	Marines	Air Force
1939	189,500	125,200	19,432	(~28,000 USAAC)*
1945	8,266,000	3,320,000	470,000	(2,330,000 USAAF)*
1950	593,000	381,000	74,000	411,000

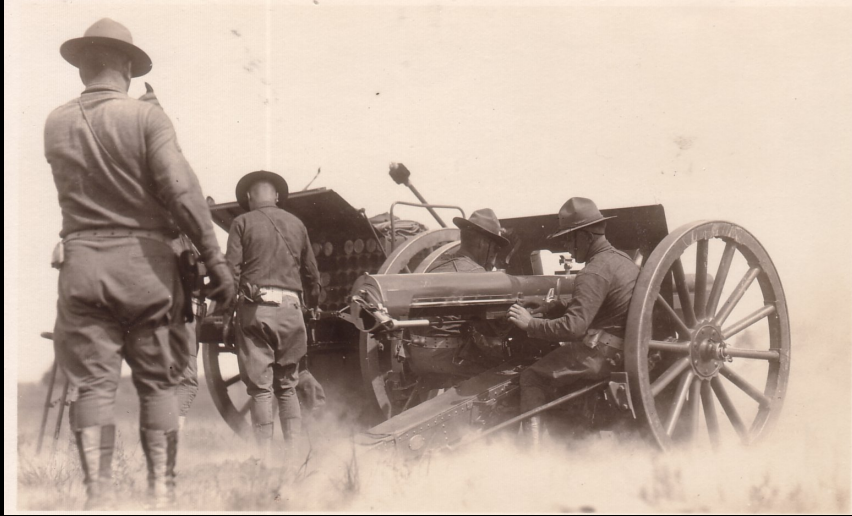
\* U.S. Army Air Corps and U.S. Army Air Force were part of the total Army manpower figures until the establishment of an independent Air Force in 1948.

However, while the total U.S. military manpower in 1950 (before the war) was over four times larger than in 1939, there were substantial qualitative differences.

While larger, as a whole the U.S. military of 1950 was less prepared for combat and less capable than its 1939 counterpart.

There are several reasons for this (as well as qualifications).

# UNPREPAREDNESS



The U.S. Army of 1939 was small – falling in between Portugal and Bulgaria in size. It was not even the largest in the Western Hemisphere (Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Chile were larger. Mexico to deal with internal problems, the others to potentially deal with each other.)

But the Army was professional. Every soldier was a volunteer and the majority re-enlisted. While they were not well paid by any measure, they were paid which was more than many Americans could expect.



They were also well equipped (as an infantry force) and well trained. The Army had more weapons than it needed thanks to WWI surplus. The lean budgets had prevented modernization and expansion but not training.

# UNPREPAREDNESS



**But despite the budgets, by 1939 the U.S. Army was only one of two armies in the world that was fully mechanized (The other being the British.)**

**This did not mean they had a lot of tanks or even good ones. What it meant was the Army did not rely on horse transport to move its (limited) equipment, troops or supplies.**



**Aside from the British, every other army in the world at the time relied heavily on horse transport and the bulk of such armies moved at a walking pace (Including the German Army.) By the end of WWII, the Soviets and French were also mechanized, thanks mainly to U.S. trucks.**

# UNPREPAREDNESS

**The Army Air Corps of 1939 was small. Poland had a larger Air Force. But its size meant it was less expensive than it could be and easy to re-arm thus it was the most advanced in the world. This was because whenever a newer and better plane came along, the Air Corps could afford to replace its older ones. Size was its major weakness.**

**The Navy was the second largest in the world, only by a small amount. (Britain's was larger). It had been helped by the Washington and London Naval Treaties that severely limited new construction thus while it was older – most ships were built during or immediately after WWI, every one else of note was in the same boat. With the expiration of the London Naval Treaty of 1931, Congress had authorized a significant modernization and construction program.**

**All of the battleships, most of the aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers and submarines were at least ordered (in smaller numbers) before war was declared as were all of the Navy's airplanes which saw combat. In 1939, the Navy was the most prepared.**

**Most of the Army of 1939 was stationed in the continental United States. Its overseas commitments were in the Panama Canal Zone, Hawaii and the Philippines and numbered under 30,000 men total.**

**The Army of 1950 was three times larger. But it was not professional. The majority of soldiers were draftees and while willing to do their time were not willing to do more than was absolutely necessary for a day longer than absolutely necessary. Congress had been littered with complaints from draftees about working hours, lack of time off, harsh discipline, too much marching and exercise etc and had pressured the Army to cut back on such activities. Well over half the Army was stationed overseas.**

**Moreover, the Army's budget had been slashed to the bone and beyond.**

**What had happened?**

**When Japan surrendered, both the public and Congress demanded the boys return home and to their civilian lives. The Army (and Navy and Marines) were not asked to suggest what size of peacetime force would be needed, just to cut, cut, cut. The Republicans wanted deep cuts to be able to cut the high income taxes (90% at the highest bracket). The New Deal Democrats wanted to cut the defense budget to fund not yet approved social programs.**

**The only branch that got what they wanted (in part) was the Air Force which wanted to be its own service, which they got in 1947.**





**The new Air Force was convinced strategic bombing had won the war and long range bombers armed with nuclear weapons had rendered conventional warfare obsolete. There was no need for an Army or Navy. Fighters were only needed to defend against air attack, not to support unnecessary ground forces. The Air Force believed the Convair B-36 was the future.**

**The B-36 was not designed to be a nuclear bomber. The Army Air Corps set down its specifications in 1940. They wanted a bomber capable of an immense bomb load and hitting targets in Germany from North America and returning without running out of fuel. The reason was that they feared that Britain might lose the war with Germany leaving the U.S. with no way to bomb Germany if the U.S. entered the war.**

**(The B-29 was a separate program aimed at Japan given the distances in the Pacific. The Air Corps initially wanted a bomber that could bomb Japan from the Philippines.)**

**Convair was awarded the contract in early 1942, but the funding was cut. Britain had not surrendered thus the intercontinental bomber was a lower priority. But low levels of funding continued as the Air Corps could see it would be useful in the future.**

**The prototype first flew in early 1946. This bomber was designed to carry both conventional and nuclear ordinance. By the time series production began in 1947, the new Air Force decided a conventional capability was unnecessary. As produced, the B-36 was only capable of carrying atomic weapons. Likewise, as nuclear weapons were at least as devastating as hundreds of B-29's, fewer new bombers were needed for the same punch.**

**As each B-36 squadron came into service, two or more B-29 squadrons were either retired or in some cases transferred to the Air National Guard.**





**The B-36 was expensive and the late 1940's were lean years for military budgets. Unless the Air Force received a much larger share of the budget, it would take a decade or more to bring the B-36 force on line. They went after the Navy.**

**In 1947, the Navy laid the keel for the USS United States. This new aircraft carrier would be three times larger than the Essex class of WWII. It was designed to carry a larger air wing of mostly jet aircraft (to be built later).**

**The First navy jet squadrons were expected to be operational about the time the United States entered service around 1950. The Air Force managed to convince the new Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson that the carrier was a waste of money, money better spent buying the B-36. Johnson cancelled the carrier. Six admirals including the CNO and Chief of Naval Aviation resigned in protest, but the carrier remained cancelled.**

**Johnson also wanted to get rid of the Army and Navy as a whole. He bought the Air Force "Bomber Barons" line. Fortunately, while Congress would cancel the carrier, they refused to cancel the rest of the Navy or the Army.**



**Louis A. Johnson was a lawyer from Virginia. From 1937 until 1940 he had served as Assistant Secretary of War where he advocated for repeal of the Neutrality Acts and expansion of the Armed Forces. He resigned in 1940 when Roosevelt appointed Harry Stimson as Secretary of War, the position he wanted and felt he deserved.**

**His military experience was limited to serving as a Captain in logistics in WWI.**

**Truman named him as Secretary of Defense following his re-election in 1948. The reason? Johnson had been one of the few Democrats who funded Truman's campaign in the final**

**months and the only one who wanted a job for doing so. He is generally considered the worst Secretary of Defense in History. And not just because he cancelled an aircraft carrier. (In some ways he did the Navy a favor on that one. Technology would come about in a few years that would make it obsolete or at least too costly to renovate – specifically steam catapults, more sophisticated radar and an angled flight deck.)**

**In 1949, NSC 68 was prepared. This policy document stated that the military was far understrength and reliance solely on nuclear weapons was dangerous, enough so that it recommended a significant increase in the conventional forces and no corresponding expansion of nuclear capability.**



**Johnson sent it on to Truman with a recommendation to ignore it. He was tasked to cut defense spending and NSC 68 flew in the face of his mission. In 1949, he was tasked to keep the budget for the Department of Defense to around 10 Billion. The Budget submitted to Congress was for only 6 Billion.**

**He saw little use in training or procurement except for the B-36, so the rest was gutted. While he could not know Korea was around the corner, his job was to see to the preparedness of the military. His budget would insure it was unprepared.**

**In the Army, if you did not fire a weapon in boot camp, you would not get any real opportunities to do so in the field. Maintenance and spare parts were cut to the point most weapons did not work. The ones that did were maintained by cannibalizing the others. In the Navy, the remaining carrier battle groups still trained (But not as much) but only because he could not get rid of them yet. In the Air Force, bomber commands were not hurting for maintenance or training, but the rest of the service was not so lucky.**

**Only the tiny Marine Corps was prepared, but no thanks to Johnson. He had slashed their budget to the bone and as soon as he could he would get rid of them. They were just more Army, in his mind and Truman tended to agree.**

## **Why was the Marine Corps prepared?**

**It cheated.**

**When the military demobilized after WWII it had far more equipment than it needed. Much of it was scrapped. Some was sold or given to other countries. What could be sold in the civilian market was sold: trucks, jeeps, firearms, uniforms, tents, cots, field kitchen equipment, etc. Or at least the Army and Navy sold. The Army-Navy Surplus Store sprang up to sell the surplus to consumers. There was, however, no Marine Corps Surplus.**

**The Marine Corps dropped from about 600,000 men in 1945 to 75,000 by 1950. Surely they had equipment in excess of need? They did. But they only scrapped equipment that was deemed too worn out for further use. Everything else, guns, tanks, bombs, ammunition, even fuel, went into storage. The Marines had enough supplies in storage to train without additional funding for a decade or more so their training did not slow down.**

**Marines were professionals. All were volunteers. Most units were manned with veterans of the Pacific War. While there were recruits, the number was small. Moreover, Marine recruits wanted to be Marines. In the words of an underage Marine who landed at Inchon, you joined the Army 'cause you had to. You joined the Marines hoping for a war as no matter the size, the Marines would be there.**

**And they trained as if that war would start tomorrow.**



**From 1945 through 1950, U.S. forces in Korea were under the overall command of General Douglas MacArthur. For all practical purposes, this meant they were largely left to their own devices. MacArthur seldom visited Korea. He did not consider it important. He was in charge of the occupation of Japan and U.S. interests in the Far East and aside from Japan, only Taiwan and the Philippines mattered. But Japan was his primary concern.**

**MacArthur is a controversial figure mainly because of what would happen in Korea. But to a professional military officer, he would have been in any event. He was a very odd duck.**

**He was a genius, first in his class at West Point. He could be imaginative and innovative and well ahead of his time. But throughout his career he had moments of**

**monumental and inexplicable stupidity that would have seen less capable (and less connected) officers cashiered.**

**His administration of Japan after the war was arguably his finest moment. Despite gravitating towards the more extreme right wing in American politics, his policies in Japan made the New Deal seem conservative. Japanese communists would complain they could gain nothing because MacArthur had already delivered.**



**After Japan's surrender, the Soviets demanded to be allowed to send occupation troops. MacArthur refused. They were not needed. A Soviet staff was sent to be a part of the Allied Command, but he never met with it nor allowed his staff to do so.**

**But he changed Japan. Women got the vote for the first time. Labor unions were made legal and protected by the new Japanese constitution. Japan, on the brink of starvation did not starve to death. Returning Japanese soldiers found work on public construction projects rebuilding the burned out cities. There was massive land reform. Farm land became the property of those who farmed it and not the absentee landlords. Only heavy industry suffered at first, until others convinced MacArthur that a thriving economy needed a true industrial sector.**

**To this day, he is seen as one of Japan's great leaders and heroes, the same man who had accepted their unconditional surrender and had fought a long, bitter war against them in the Southwest Pacific.**

**He is not so well regarded in Korea.**





**MacArthur's Intelligence Officer was Charles Willoughby. Willoughby had served as MacArthur's Intel Officer since before WWII. Unlike his boss, he is not well regarded by anyone. Any other commander would have fired him long before as he was usually wrong about everything he was supposed to be right about. He was very good at telling MacArthur what MacArthur already knew and subordinates what MacArthur believed, but not once had he warned MacArthur of an impending mistake even when other intel officers below knew it was a mistake.**

**But he had been with MacArthur in the Philippines, played a good hand at bridge and did not violate MacArthur's rules about women. He would disregard reports from Korea in 1949 and early 1950 of an impending attack, convinced the North Koreans were not a threat even if they attacked – for that was MacArthur's opinion and MacArthur was right no matter the facts to the contrary.**

**By June 1950, KMAC and the ROK Army were convinced the North Koreans were preparing an offensive into the south. Patrols had observed the build up of units and supplies in the north. Deserters from the NKPA had reported the same.**

**Tokyo dismissed the warnings.**



**Prior to April 1950, despite Kim's repeated requests, the Soviets were opposed to any action against South Korea. Despite having a copy of NSC 48 which said otherwise, the Soviets were convinced any such attack would result in a full scale intervention in Korea by the U.S. and could be the provocation for a broader war, a war Stalin did not want for another decade or more.**

**On February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson gave a speech before the National Press Club where he outline U.S. strategic interests overseas. In the far east, he mentioned and discussed Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines. He said nothing about Korea.**

**The Soviets picked it up and saw this as confirmation that NSC 48 was not a ruse, thus Korea was wide open. But they did not release their hound. They were not convinced he could win even if the U.S. stayed out and were certain he would need reinforcement to prevail. The Soviets were not willing to send one combat soldier into Korea even if the American's stayed at home. They would only agree to an invasion if China agreed to back North Korea with ground troops in the event they were needed.**

**They knew the Chinese would not agree anytime soon. In an earlier discussion about Korea, China made it clear that not one Chinese soldier would cross the Yalu without air cover, i.e. without a Russian or Chinese Air Force (preferably Chinese – meaning a few years later).**





**Kim went to Moscow in early March to once again beg to be allowed to invade. He again asserted he was convinced South Korea would collapse as soon as he invaded and that the Americans would do nothing about it. While Stalin was now less concerned about the Americans, he was not convinced an invasion would cause a revolt in the South and as Kim's plans depended upon such a revolt – or massive support from either China or Russia, he told Kim that he would not agree unless Mao agreed, probably expecting Mao to disagree and end the nonsense.**

**Kim then went to Beijing and told the Chinese that he was going to invade South Korea and that the Soviets agreed. He did not ask the Chinese for support. The Chinese tried to discourage him. They were even less convinced Kim and the NKPA could win. The plan was poor. Kim had insufficient logistics. And the plan relied on the enemy doing exactly as Kim expected for even a remote chance of success. Kim told the Chinese they were wrong and it was already decided. Mao, Cho En-lai and Marshall Peng then demurred – but did not agree to support Kim.**

**Kim then went to Moscow and told Stalin the Chinese were onboard and Stalin then agreed his plans could go forward.**

# MAP OF KOREA

Durs is a single nation with 5,000 years of history; it is a valorous, ambitious nation that has been vigorously fighting against foreign invaders and successive reactionary rulers from olden times; and it is a talented nation that has contributed greatly to mankind's development of science and culture.

KIM IL SUNG



From April to June, alerts had been called in South Korea due to increased activity north of the border. Beginning in early June, a full alert was ordered and the border defenses manned by about 100,000 South Korean troops – a number that outnumbered the North Koreans. The alert was called due to the increasing number of attempts to infiltrate through ROK lines which triggered increasing large skirmishes and increasingly even artillery duels. Everything pointed to a build up to the north and an invasion was deemed imminent.

Things grew quiet around the 22<sup>nd</sup> and no attack materialized. The Army stood down. As June 25<sup>th</sup> was a holiday, troops were granted leave or days off to spend with their families.

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, only 38,000 troops remained manning the border defenses...





**Before dawn on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1950, a massive artillery barrage began along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. It was not all along the front. The NPKA did not have nearly enough guns to saturate 200 miles or so of front. It was concentrated along the axis of advance of their assault forces.**

**It took less than ten minutes for the South Koreans and their KMAG advisors to realize this was no harassment fire. Many of the KMAG had served in combat in WWII. Many of the more senior ROK officers and even a fair few of their men (not a majority) had also fought in the war either with Chinese troops or the Japanese. They knew the North Koreans were coming.**

**Word reached Seoul before dawn, not that it mattered as the barrage could be heard in the city. The State Department, KMAG, ROK Army and ROK government immediately implemented their plans.**





**Not long after dawn, the North Koreans attacked. There were about 90,000 soldiers with over 250 armored vehicles. (Those vehicles were concentrated on two of several lines of advance. The rest were infantry only.**

**The North Koreans had assumed the barrage would cause significant damage and casualties on the South Korean front lines. Their gunners were not that good and the ROK defenses were largely intact.**



**The North Koreans did not know that they outnumbered their opponents at the front nearly 3 to 1, nor that about half of the ROK army was away on leave. Had they known that, they might have had second thoughts given the casualties they suffered for little gain in the opening hours of the attack.**

**Only their tanks made it through initially. Their infantry was either pinned down or slaughtered.**



**While the Americans had not armed South Korea to the teeth – no tanks, combat aircraft and less artillery than advisable, they did provide the ROK with a fair amount of anti-tank weaponry, specifically the 57mm anti-tank gun and 2.36 inch bazooka.**

**These weapons had been effective against anything the Japanese had and the older German armor. (They could also take out Panther and Tiger tanks at close range from the rear).**



**They proved useless against the Soviet made T-34's even at point blank range. The gun ammo bounced off the sloped armor. The bazooka shaped charges failed to detonate even when they did not bounce off.**

**But the ROKs adapted quickly. By the end of the first day, they had devised a tactic that could take out the tanks – a risky one.**

**The tactic was devised by a desperate Lieutenant. A “suicide squad” of infantryman would ambush a tank with Molotov Cocktails and grenades, climbing on the tank to drop their weapons into hatches or the engine compartment. This was not a Kamikaze tactic as the soldiers did not need to die in the attack for it to work, but it was very risky since the soldiers were exposed to enemy fire until they got away.**

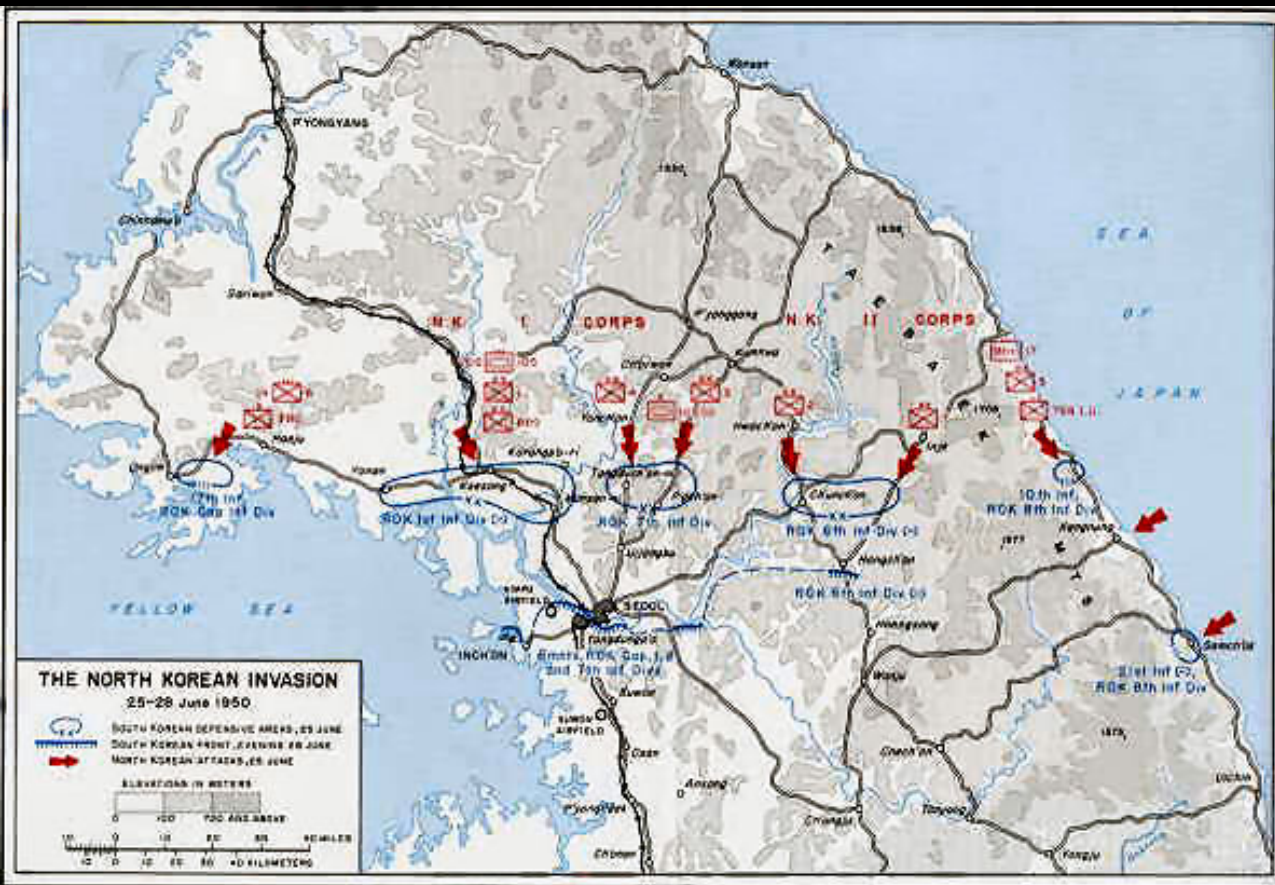
**By the end of the second day, this tactic was employed whenever possible throughout the army. They had no trouble with volunteers and the ROKs learned not to fear the tanks. The greatest advantage a tank has over infantry – invulnerability and shock value – was countered in the first 72 hours of the war – at least for the ROKs.**

**The North Korean plan had counted on the ROKs being too terrified to fight and too disloyal to fight. The opposite was the case. By 9:00 AM, Korean radio broadcast news of the attack. Without orders, the vast majority of the soldiers on leave were on the road north to rejoin their units by the afternoon. Those still in training were practically begging to join the fight.**

**Kim had also counted on an uprising. What he achieved was to unify the South Koreans. The handful of agitators who attempted to cause trouble were promptly denounced to the police or, if the police were not there, lynched. There were not many efforts to rebel, none came close to really causing trouble.**

**Still, the ROKs were massively outnumbered. They inflicted heavy casualties but were forced to yield ground. Occasionally ordered to do so, usually they fell back when their ammunition was exhausted or they were about to be surrounded.**



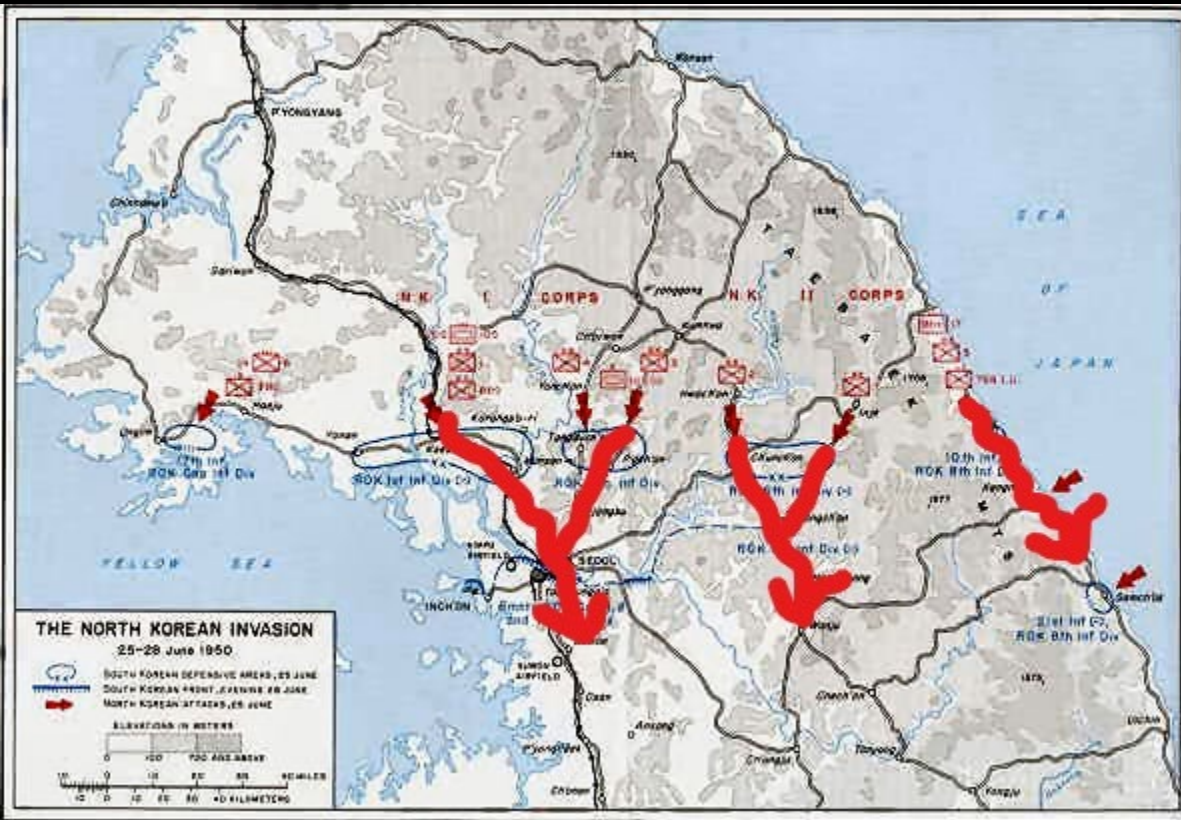


The North Korean plan was not for an attack all along the border, but three separate attacks (four if one includes the one to the far west into what was essentially a small peninsula). Each was aimed at breaking through and cutting off a sizable portion of the ROK army and then driving deep into the rear. The plan was that Seoul would fall in 2 – 3 days and all of the south in 2 – 3 weeks.

The operational concept was derived from Soviet doctrine developed before WWII (abandoned before the war broke out and readopted in 1943.) A heavy attack would break the enemy line, maneuver forces would exploit into the rear and immobilize and surround the enemy and then crush them. (Soviet “Deep Penetration” and German “Bevegungskrieg” (Maneuver War – called “Blitzkrieg”) were similar and developed for the same reason – to avoid the static warfare of WWI.

Maneuver warfare has been likened to a soccer match as compared with football.

It is also more complicated and requires more flexibility than broad front offensives and must be adapted to fit terrain. What works on the Russian Steppe, would never work in the mountains. The Soviets had not been fans of the North Korean plans because the North Korean's had discounted

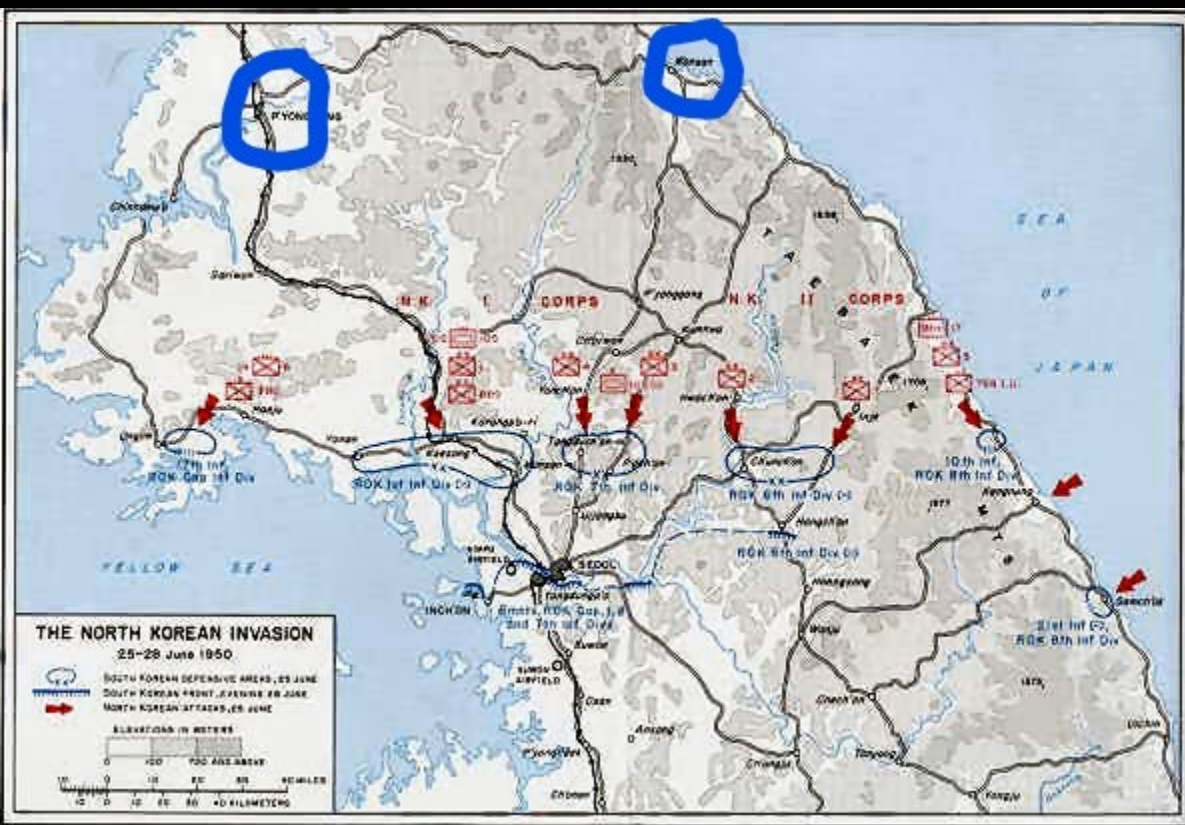


terrain and placed too much emphasis on political factors they could not control.

The North Koreans began with a manpower and firepower advantage. Manpower was by accident rather than design (the ROK army being on stand down). The South Koreans had the terrain which limited maneuver and hampered logistics. Only the narrow west “plain” allowed any kind of maneuver for large formations. Even then, it was a plain only in comparison to the narrow, steep mountains to the east.

The half strength South Korean units on the border were able to slow the North's attack to a crawl – and a crawl favored the South.





It did not help that the Soviet advisors were far to the rear. None were with the staffs executing the division or corps assaults. Stalin had ordered that no Soviet soldiers (advisors) were to be within 100 kilometers of the front and under no circumstances were they to move south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. At the outset, the closest advisors were in Pyongyang and Wosan, in no position to observe operations

or provide timely suggestion for a battle that changed on a minute to minute basis.

KMAG had officers with the ROK regimental staffs at or near the front.

The Chinese had observers at or near the front and from the opening days of the war began to send back reports to Beijing. They rapidly developed a low opinion of the North Koreans. In their opinion the army was improperly trained for the war they had to fight and led by officers who were inflexible and uninspired. (Part of this was because Kim did not trust the 50,000 Koreans who had fought with the Chinese. His trusted officers had little or no real experience.) Time would not change the Chinese opinion of the NKPA.



The result was that the NPKA achieved success despite themselves. Attacks were uncoordinated between major units. They often and repeatedly walked into large ambushes unprepared and unawares. Each day saw the ROK army grow (as men returned to their units) and the NPKA weaken through casualties. Firepower was the only advantage.

The South Koreans knew this and saw their war as a delaying action. They were to prevent a major breakthrough, rather than hold at all costs trading space for time. They did not think they could truly win without a U.S. intervention so the goal was to do their best to keep the NKPA from winning.

North Korea counted on the Americans staying out of the war. It was how Kim managed to get permission from Stalin. The South Koreans counted on U.S. help – supply for certain and preferably ground and air support. The question was which side was correct (did NSC 48 mean anything? Was Atchison’s omission of Korea an oversight or a statement of immutable U.S. strategic policy?)





**While the North Korean attack took the South Koreans and Americans by surprise, it was merely tactical surprise, not strategic. The NPKA attacked where attacks had been anticipated and with forces anticipated. The surprise was when the attacks occurred only. (Pearl Harbor, by contrast, was a strategic surprise as while there were some who saw it as a vulnerability and the U.S. knew Japan was going to attack in the far**

**east, an attack against the U.S. fleet in Hawaii was not considered and thus it went against an unprepared defender.)**

**Both the South Koreans and Americans had plans to deal with a North Korean attack. Had half the ROK army not been on leave, the “surprise” attack might well have been stopped at the border at least so long as the ROK army had supplies. The American plans were in the event Washington agreed – thus not self executing with one exception.**

**That exception was the evacuation plan for U.S. personnel in Seoul or otherwise near the border. Air transports from Japan began arriving to evacuate such personnel from Kimpo which was just south of Seoul across the Han River within hours of the North Korean attack and well before any affirmative decision to intervene had been made elsewhere (Truman was still on an airplane returning to Washington.)**



**There were no detailed plans for any intervention in Korea even though military planners saw it as a possibility. The nearest forces were based in Japan.**

**The U.S. 8<sup>th</sup> Army had four infantry divisions in Japan:**

- **7<sup>th</sup> ID**
- **24<sup>th</sup> ID (on Okinawa)**
- **25<sup>th</sup> ID, and**
- **1<sup>st</sup> CAV.**

**The 1<sup>st</sup> cavalry was in name only. In manning, weapons and equipment it was indistinguishable from any other infantry division.**

**That being said, the four divisions were divisions in name only. They were all around half strength and had little combat training being used as constabulary troops – basically glorified traffic cops.**



**In addition to a shortage of manpower, 8<sup>th</sup> Army was also short of working equipment. All was WWII surplus and much was poorly maintained and what was maintained and operable had been through “cannibalizing” other equipment for parts.**

**It’s anti-tank weaponry was the same as the South Koreans, and nowhere near the best in the Army’s inventory.**

**It had few tanks. Each division had but a single company of M-24 light tanks. (A WWII infantry division had a full battalion of medium tanks.) Fast, maneuverable and reliable, these tanks were poorly armored and designed for recon missions of WWII and not for fighting other tanks.**

**They were no match for the NKPA T-34’s and could only hope to knock one out with a lucky shot or at dangerously close range.**







In 1950, 8<sup>th</sup> Army was commanded by LGEN Walton “Bulldog” Walker. Walker was one of the few commanders in 8<sup>th</sup> Army with combat experience in WWII. He had commanded XXth Corps (The Ghost Corps) of Patton’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in Europe. He was seen as extremely capable based upon that command – and it was not unfounded. But he was persona non grata and SCAP (Supreme Command Allies Pacific). With one unfortunate exception (later), MacArthur had no use for any officer who served in Europe and even less than no use for those who served

under Patton (including Walker and the commander of 1<sup>st</sup> CAV Hap Gay who had been Patton’s Aide de Camp for much of the war).

Walker arrived in late 1948 and was appalled at the state of 8<sup>th</sup> Army. To paraphrase – while they easily got into one, they could not fight their way out of a brothel, much less anything else. Walker wanted to train the divisions to fight. His requests for time and resources were ignored.

The divisions in Japan were the least trained in the Army. It was not considered a priority as no one saw the need to deploy them. Most of the soldiers saw Japan as a plush assignment – little hard work and soft living. This was not a situation that produced effective infantrymen.

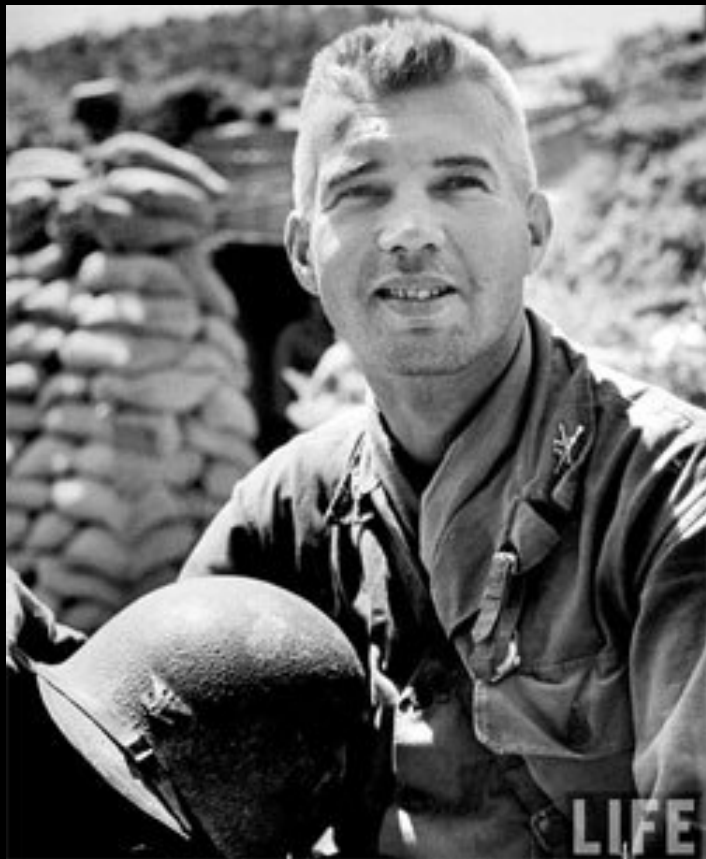
**In 1939, even before the invasion of Poland, General George Marshall became Army Chief of Staff. Shortly after the war began, he saw that unless Germany lost soon, the U.S. could not avoid the war. His goal was to prepare that small army.**

**He believed that in war, regimental commanders had to be under 45 years of age. Over 45, most such officers lacked the stamina and mental flexibility to be effective in combat in that position. Before the end of 1941, all of the regimental commanders over 45 – and some deadwood under – were either reassigned to positions that would not tax their abilities or retired.**

**In 1950 in Japan, all but one of the regimental commanders in the four divisions were not just over 45, but well over. Of those, all but two had no real combat experience in WWII. Most were there to “punch their ticket.” During the prior war they had been assigned to non combat staff jobs either in the U.S. or elsewhere far from the front. They needed a regimental command to fill out their Army resume for general (it was required) or even for other jobs – there were enough veterans out there who would wonder about them without it.**

**As Japan was not anywhere near a theater where a war was expected (that was Europe), it was a “safe” place to punch that ticket as they were not considered a potential liability (as they would in Europe).**

**Moreover, most of the WWII Army combat veterans of all ranks assigned to divisions overseas were in Europe. That was where the threat was.**



The notable exception was Col. John H. Michealis – commander of the 27<sup>th</sup> Inf. Reg., 25<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. He was 38 years old and this was his second tour as a regimental commander. He had previously commanded the 502 PIR, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne. He had been made commander on D-Day when the prior commander broke a leg on the jump into Normandy and commanded the regiment through Operation Market Garden where he was wounded. He returned to the division just in time for the move to Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge where he served as division Chief of Staff. He had recently been ordered to Japan and had refused to serve of MacArthur’s staff.

Being under the same constraints, Michealis’ 27<sup>th</sup> Inf. was not notably more prepared for combat than any other 8<sup>th</sup> Army regiment. But in Korea it would prove to be the most reliable and was given the toughest assignments becoming a “fire brigade” for the Army to hold key positions or stop enemy attacks. The next commander of 8<sup>th</sup> Army (Matthew Ridgeway) was not surprised. Michealis was airborne. He was used to long odds, lack of adequate supplies and being surrounded so such things did not bother him.

During the opening months of the war, Michealis’s regiment was the only Army regiment Walker could count on in all circumstances.





20<sup>th</sup> Air Force was in better shape than 8<sup>th</sup> Army. The first American combat mission of the war took off from Japan less than three hours after the North Koreans began their attack. It was a flight of all-weather F-82 “Twin Mustang” night fighters from Japan. Their mission was to locate the lead elements of the NKPA advancing towards Seoul and their supply lines to allow planners to plan missions should they be ordered to enter the war (an order they would receive the next day.)



Three squadrons of the F-82's had only just arrived in Japan to replace the older P-61's of WWII which lacked spare parts. (Those planes were scrapped.)

In addition, the Far East Air Force also had several squadrons of the P-51D Mustang of WWII which was already approaching obsolescence, but were adequate against the WWII vintage planes of the North Korean Air Force.



**They also had several squadrons of jet fighters in Japan. These included the P-80 Shooting Star, America's first jet fighter which saw service in Europe in the final months of WWII. (A single squadron flew air recon and ground support missions in Italy. It lacked the range to escort bombers or reach contested air space so it saw no air combat.)**



**They also had the newer F-84 Thunderjets. These planes entered service in late 1947. They were faster and more responsive but would prove to be no match for front line Soviet jets (which would not enter the war for some months.)**

**The North Korea Air Force was no match for these planes.**

**While all of these planes could be used for ground attack, the one thing the Air Force lacked was forward air controllers. The fighters were meant to defend against attacks, not participate in them.**



**For its strike capability, the Far Eastern Air Force had a bombardment group in Okinawa of B-29 medium bombers. (Yes – Medium Bombers. They were less than half the size of the B-36 heavy bombers). These were the only nuclear capable assets in theater, but they had not been modified to carry such weapons nor were any such weapons available in theater.**

**These bombers were not capable of close air support, but they could be used against fixed targets and supply lines.**

**By the end of the first day of the war, the Air Forces were preparing to be called into action. They had no orders to do so nor any orders to prepare, but they began compiling target lists just in case – as their commanders believed the orders would come.**





**Far Left: SecState Dean Atchinson**  
**Left: Harry Truman**  
**Far Right: SecDef Louis Johnson.**

**News of the North Korean attack reached Washington D.C. in less than an hour and to the President in less than three hours. The President was at his family home in Independence MO when he received the call from Secretary of State Atchison. He was flying back to Washington almost immediately, arriving late in the afternoon of the 25<sup>th</sup> (early morning of the 26<sup>th</sup> in Korea). He met with Atchison and the Joint Chiefs and ordered air support immediately. (Sec Def Johnson was still out of town.) He initially reserved making a decision on whether to send ground troops pending**

**more information on the situation on the ground. (MacArthur would send MGEN Church G-3 to Korea to prepare an analysis.) Likewise, USS Valley Forge carrier group operating off Formosa (as a result of China's failed attempt to invade), would remain on station for now. In a separate conversation with Atchison, he agreed that should full intervention become necessary, ideally it should be with approval of the UN. (Although it also seemed that this would be a formality. Should the UN refuse approval, Truman was inclined to intervene if the alternative was the fall of South Korea.)**



**Left: MGEN John Church who was sent to Korea to analyze and report on the situation – later forced to take over a division (he felt he was too old for the job).**

**Right: LGEN Walton Walker commander 8<sup>th</sup> Army.**

**complete conquest if they had adequate resupply but could not retake lost ground without reinforcement.)**

**Church arrived near Seoul on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The ROKs had been fighting well given the situation, but the assault against Seoul was nearing a crisis point. NPKA casualties were far in excess of what the North had expected, but they had less than 20 miles to cover from the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel and Seoul itself. While the NPKA was already well behind their schedules, the ROK Army was not confident it could prevent the fall of their capitol. The plan was to hold the NPKA back as long as possible to facilitate evacuations and set up a strong defensive line along the Han river south of Seoul, blowing all bridges before the enemy could get a single soldier across. Church reported ground intervention would be necessary to prevent a complete defeat (he may have overestimate the NPKA) and recover the lost territory (where he was in agreement with the ROK leadership. The ROKs believed they could possibly prevent**





**On the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, Dean Acheson took the US seat in the UN Security Council to submit a resolution demanding North Korea pull back north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and authorizing UN member states to deploy ground forces should North Korea fail to do so immediately.**

**While the general assembly could condone military action between two member states by a majority vote, only the Security Council could condemn such action, impose sanctions for such action, or authorize military force in response to such action. This was the first time such a request had been made. It was a similar request in 1933 against the Japanese occupation of Manchuria that had led**

**to the collapse of the League of Nations and this fact was not lost upon observers and diplomats.**

**A resolution regarding sanctions or intervention would pass if a majority of the members of the Security Council agreed and there were no vetoes. Five members had the right to veto such a resolution: the United States, Great Britain, France, China (Nationalist China aka Taiwan) and the Soviet Union. A no vote by any of those members would end the discussion without recourse. It should be noted, neither North or South Korea were member states and North Korea was not recognized as legitimate by the UN. (The UN had sponsored and approved the elections in the South, but refused to recognize the elections in the North.)**



**In what can be argued as one of the greatest diplomatic oversights in recent history, on orders of Stalin, the Soviet Ambassador to the UN was boycotting. He refused to attend unless and until the UN recognized the People Republic of China as the sole, legitimate government of China to include seating it in place of Taiwan on the Security Council. The Soviet mission was advised of Acheson's agenda before the meeting of the Council and still refused to attend. The resolution passed without objection or, more critically, veto. SCAP (MacArthur) was named commander of the UN military mission and would command UN forces in Korea – initially just US forces under UN authority. This did not give him any UN or other**

**authority over ROK forces.**

**The resolution directed UN forces to defend the South, reestablish a border on or near the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel and ensure the North complied with all other UN resolutions in regards to Korea. (At the time this meant the North had to accept and respect the legitimacy and independence of the South. No thought was given to just how expansive this could be – not by the US or anyone else).**

**Thus the US objective was to throw back the invasion and reestablish insofar as possible the political status quo ante.**





**Seoul “fell” on June 28<sup>th</sup>. The ROK had not lost the battle for the defense of the city. In fact, most of the NKPA was still to the north and fighting was still at the city’s outermost suburbs. Small, uncoordinated bands of NKPA soldiers had penetrated into the city itself but were being dealt with. The ROK army knew it was a matter of time but it was not yet truly desperate. They were to hold the enemy back as long as possible to allow their supplies to cross the Han River and as many civilians as possible. The bridges were set with explosives to prevent**

**the NKPA from crossing and orders were to blow the bridges only at the last possible moment. MPs were to try and stop civilian traffic before detonation to limit casualties. But the engineers at the bridges panicked when a rumor spread that NKPA tanks were at the city center (they were not). The bridges were blown. There was no effort to warn or stop the civilians. The Army had yet to order its own movement across the Han. Thousands died in the explosions and thousands more fell into the river and drowned.**

**Three ROK divisions were now trapped north of the Han with most of their equipment and supplies. They would continue to hold back the NKPA to allow them to escape to the south, retreating only when threatened with encirclement or when out of ammunition.**



**Most of the troops would make it across the Han over the next few days to the frustration of the North. But most of their remaining supplies and equipment had to be abandoned. Kim Il Sung would consider the failure to destroy these three ROK divisions the biggest mistake of the war.**

**The troops who crossed the river were sent south to rearm and reorganize and would be back in the fight within ten days.**

**For General Church and MacArthur,**

**however, the apparent entrapment of three divisions north of the Han told them the ROK Army could not fight, much less hold without substantial reinforcement. Truman approved the use of ground forces on the 28<sup>th</sup> (29<sup>th</sup> in Korea.) He announced it the same day and when asked by a reporter about it, he refused to call it a war. “So this is like a police action?” the reporter allegedly asked. “That’s about the size of it,” he replied.**

**SCAP and 8<sup>th</sup> Army had to quickly determine how to move men and equipment from bases on Okinawa, Kyushu and Honshu islands to Korea, ideally as close to the line as possible. Two problems emerged immediately. First there was no sea lift – no ships, at least none immediately available. Second, there were only two airfields capable of handling the traffic needed to airlift large numbers of men and supplies.**



MAP 2

From: Ebb And Flow, November 1950-July 1951  
 Center of Military History, 1990  
 By Billy C. Mossman

Actually, only one. While when the decision was made to send in ground forces there were two, one was Kimpo Airfield located just south of the Han River and across from Seoul, within range of NKPA artillery and even small arms fire in places. Moreover, while the ROC Army still held the south bank of the Han, there was no guarantee this would continue.

The only other airfield large enough to land and handle planes for a major airlift was at Pusan, well to the south of Seoul and the Front Line, and Pusan was not as capable as Kimpo.

But until they had ships, air transport was the only option albeit a limited one at the time.

The initial idea was to send a Regimental Combat Team – basically a demi-division. But theater airlift could not support that large a lift quickly.



**General Walker (Left) determined that the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division under MGEN William Dean (right) was the most combat ready in 8<sup>th</sup> Army – probably because it had an edge in serviceable equipment, not training. Dean was tasked to send a reinforced battalion to Korea ASAP. He chose a battalion from what he believed was his best regiment (the 21<sup>st</sup>) under Lt.Col. Smith. It would be augmented with a company of engineers and a battery of six 105mm howitzers to make it a reinforced battalion on paper. (In reality, with on 576 officers and men in all and**

**barely 500 in the battalion itself, it was not even a battalion sized force by WWII or later standards.)**

**They already knew from reports that their anti-tank weapons were mostly useless against T-34s. Newly named Task Force Smith's would be equipped with 105mm armor piercing ammo – all that could be found in Japan – a total of six rounds.**

**The men would soon learn that six rounds of useful ammo was about par for the course at this stage. Most of their weapons were poorly maintained and unreliable. The same was true for their vehicles. They had insufficient supplies of ammunition and what they had was not properly stored, often damaged or deteriorated and liable to jam or fail to work. But they would not truly learn that until it was far too late.**





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Col. Smith's orders from MGEN Dean were to assemble his task force ASAP upon arriving at Pusan and travel north to Taejon and report to MGEN Church for orders. If he could not find MGEN Church at Taejon, he was to continue north towards Seoul until: he found Church, he reached the ROK front lines, or he encountered the NKPA.

As of Jul 1<sup>st</sup>, the NKPA had yet to make a serious crossing of the Han.

While TF Smith deployed, the remainder of the 24<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. would be sent to Pusan and follow behind them.

Despite this utter lack of any useful information, the men of the Task Force were confident. They truly believed that as soon as they encountered the NKPA, the war would be over as the NKPA were no match for Americans. They assumed it would all be over in a week at most.



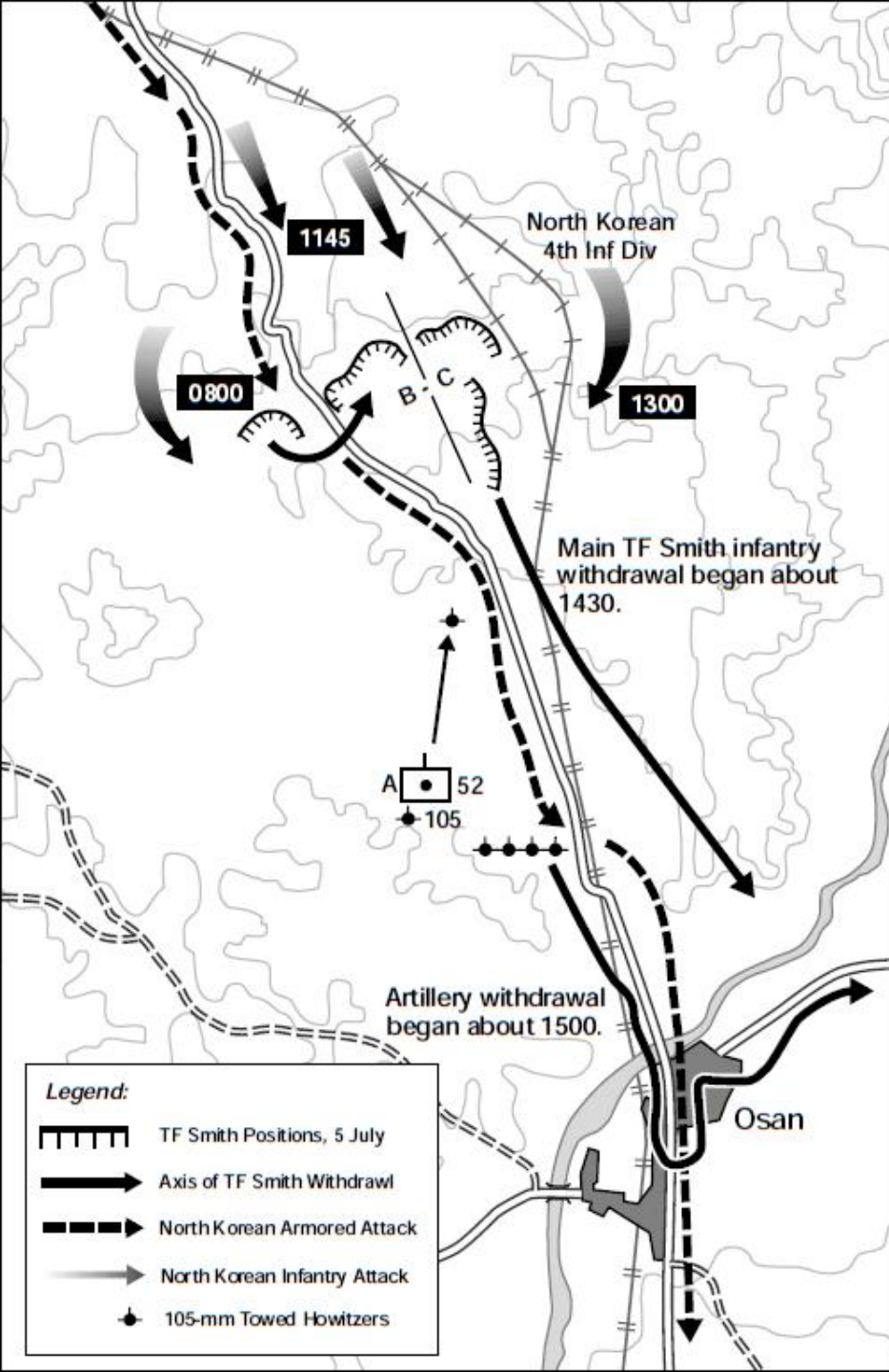
**Task Force Smith arrived in Pusan by air beginning on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June. By July 1<sup>st</sup>, the entire force had assembled and the infantry began boarding trains for Taejon. The vehicles followed by road. Upon reaching Taejon, General Church could not be located (he was to the north with the ROK army HQ). Task Force Smith reassembled and moved north by truck.**



**Meanwhile, one of the rail bridges over the Han had not been destroyed, but merely damaged. Infantry could cross – and did. But tanks, trucks and artillery could not. The NKPA was able to establish a bridgehead on the south bank (largely because of a misdeployment by the ROK) and began repairing the bridge to allow vehicles and equipment across.**

**It would take a couple of days but by July 4<sup>th</sup>, the NKPA was again on the move to the south.**





Task force Smith would engage the lead elements of the NKPA advance just north of Osan on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>. They had no coordinated air support (there being no forward air controllers). The 576 men of TF Smith was hit by 10,000 NKPA of the 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions, supported by a tank brigade.

They soon realized what the ROK had learned – their anti-tank weapons were useless for the most part.

Despite the disparate numbers, TF Smith did stand and fight for some six hours before running out of ammunition. Their six 105mm AP rounds scored six hits knocking out 3 tanks and damaging three others – but that was a drop in the bucket as the enemy had some 60 AFV's.

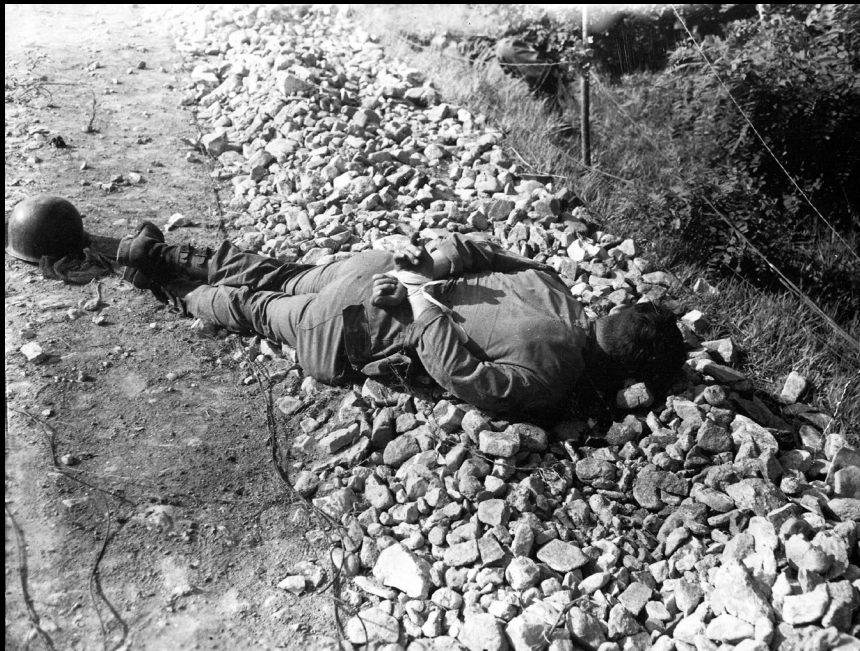
When the order for withdrawal had been given, it became a rout. Many Soldiers dropped their weapons and fled. The wounded were abandoned. (And executed.)





**TF Smith had made no real contact with the ROK before engaging the NKPA. It had been all alone. It lost its artillery – unable to recover the guns. It suffered 40% KIA and MIA, although that number would not be known until after July 10<sup>th</sup> when the last stragglers staggered into the lines at the Kum River just north of Taejon.**

**It was during this route that the real difference between this “Police Action” and the last war became apparent. North Korean infiltrators often mingled within refugee columns and attacked ROK and US soldiers whenever they had a chance. It was impossible to search the huge columns, thus the Americans took to opening fire to drive the columns away rather than take the risk.**



**As bad as that was, the North Koreans were far worse. American prisoners were often summarily executed. (And the death rate in North Korean POW camps was higher than it had been under the Japanese.)**



The shock of the T-34 started the “Tank Scare,” a desperate effort to improve the US Army’s ability to fight modern tanks. The Scare would accelerate development and production of heavy tanks for years, long after the last NKPA T-34 was knocked out later in 1950.

The Army had a weapon that could take out the T-34 – the 3.5 inch bazooka – which entered service in 1947. None were in the far east. There were a few in the U.S. but most were in Europe. The Army in Korea needed them yesterday.



The XC-99 provided the answer. It was a prototype civilian transport based on the B-36 and could fly non-stop from the US to Japan. It could carry up to 400 soldiers and their equipment, and more cargo than several transport aircraft in service. Only one was ever built, but it would serve throughout the war ferrying high priority cargo to the far east.



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 Center of Military History, 1990  
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By July 6<sup>th</sup>, the day after TF Smith's defeat north of Osan, according to the NKPA war plans most of all of South Korea was supposed to be under their control and the ROK Army defeated. In reality, the ROK Army was hardly defeated and fighting effectively and the NKPA was barely 20 miles south of Seoul at its furthest point of advance.

The U.S. air campaign was not yet having a significant effect on the NKPA overall supply system (but was destroying their Air Force). But the truth was the NKPA supply system was not up to the task – something both their Soviet advisors and the Chinese observers had observed even before the first shots were fired.

Their offensive ground to a halt as their army was short of fuel, food, and ammunition. This would allow 8<sup>th</sup> Army to deploy troops to the north without a fight.





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MAP 2

Specifically, it would allow MGEN Dean to deploy the 24<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. to prepared defenses on the south bank of the Kum River just north of Taejeon. The bulk of the ROK army was deployed to his right, all the way to the east coast near Samch'ock. The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry began arriving at Pusan during this time.

Back in the US, the Truman Administration was beginning to realize this "Police Action" would require far more effort than they had anticipated. The problem was, they lacked the Army. Or, rather, they lacked an Army that could manage the situation in Korea and in Europe.

The Marine Corps had begun a form of mobilization on June 27<sup>th</sup>, mainly because they foresaw that they would be called into action and as it was they were too dispersed. A provisional brigade was already at sea by mid July and a division was forming.

**The Provisional Brigade was being pulled together from units and even individual marines throughout the U.S., including most of those assigned to some form of combat unit at Camp Pendleton CA. No unit larger than a company had worked or trained together before embarking onto three troop ships hastily removed from “mothballs.”**

**Unlike the Army units in Japan, the Brigade included three full strength battalions, three heavy tank companies (reinforced), Marine forward air controllers with each company, engineers and support units – plus a Marine Air Wing to provide close air support and reconnaissance. More critically, the Air Wing had helicopters.**



**The Army and Air Force also had helicopters, but they had no service wide doctrine for their use. Korea would change that. The first rescue of a downed pilot and the first helicopter medical evacuations occurred in the opening weeks of the US ground intervention.**

**The Marine Corps and Navy had already been training in those operations. Additionally, the Marines were already training in using**

**helicopters for reconnaissance, troop transport and supply transport.**





The Marines would arrive in Korea in with the M-26 Pershing Tank. Developed late in the war, it was despised by the Army. They liked the gun and armor, but it was grossly underpowered, too heavy and easily developed transmission problems. (Its power train was meant for a vehicle about 10 tons lighter.) Armored divisions liked speed. If tankers tried for speed in an M-26, it broke down quickly.

The Marines had used tanks in the Pacific.

Speed was not critical, if only because once up to speed one had to slam on the breaks before running out of land. They used tanks as infantry support – meaning it only had to keep up with a walking (or running) Marine. When the war ended, the Marines snapped up the surplus M-26 tanks. (More Marine cheating).

The T-34 had to get lucky to take out an M-26. (It happened, but not often.)

Once the Marine M-26's began besting T-34's, the Army scrambled to catch up. They had a total of three broken down M-26's in Japan. They were replacing the M-26 in the rest of the Army with the M-46 – mostly identical except with a powertrain that worked for its weight. The older tanks went to Korea until production allowed. The Army priority throughout the war would be Europe. (Most soldiers saw service in Europe than Korea).

**The opening weeks of the Korean War would set precedents not only for the war itself, but long after even as far as the present day.**

**The U.S. Army's attitude regarding the Koreans and the ROK Army was set in the opening days, and it was not a good one. Atrocities were on both sides (Although more so by the North Koreans.) The American soldiers, many of whom were draftees whose image of war was that of WWII – newsreels and movies – which made war seem like good vs. evil with Americans as good and wholesome – would become disillusioned with the war in Korea which did not fit that mold. It did not help that for months no one could really understand what they were fighting for. Unlike later wars, this attitude did not reach the public – at least not until decades after the fact.**

**The attitude regarding the ROK Army was largely misunderstanding. At first, communications were non-existent. Few Koreans spoke English and even fewer Americans spoke Korean. Messages sent were not understood thus it always seemed the ROKs retreated for no reason and without telling anyone. Higher HQ knew, but did not disseminate the information.**

**The truth was the ROKs fought well, and fell back only when there was no other option and usually in a disciplined manner. The Americans tended to fight well at first but when things went south were more likely to “bug out” in an undisciplined route which, at times, did not end until they reached the coast and could bug out no further. (And there were situations when the Americans did not even do that well). Perhaps some of the attitude was that Americans refused to accept that maybe at that time the Asian soldiers were better...**

**But the more lasting issue was political.**

**Truman had sought support from the UN for entering the war. But he had not sought any kind of formal support from Congress. He had spoken with congressional leaders and having heard no push back at the time went no further.**

**It did not help that while he was certainly a decisive individual, he was an ineffective communicator and did not have any kind of public relations staff to publish a message. The result was that few could understand just what the US was doing in Korea.**

**At first this was not an issue. Public opinion was behind it. The political opposition was behind it. But it would wax and wane with the fortunes of the Army.**

**In WWII, the first 6 months were not good news for the home front. Every day brought another defeat somewhere. But support would not waiver at all until the war was almost over. This was not the case at any point in Korea. If the war was going well, support was high. When things went badly, support plummeted. And when it stalled ... the war was forgotten.**

**But the lack of a Congressional Resolution had other drawbacks. It prevented anything like a military much less an economic mobilization such as had been the case in WWII. This would create its own problems almost from the start.**

**In the fall of 1940, the U.S. initiated its first peacetime draft. All males over age 21 (at the time) were required to register. There were exemptions and deferments available but they had to be stated and the local draft boards would decide whether they applied.**

**Induction was by lottery.**

**Those selected (and who passed a medical screening) would be enlisted for a period of one year active duty at first. This was extended for the duration of the national emergency plus six months or two years whichever was longer in late 1941 (but before Pearl Harbor).**

**Later in the war, the draft age was lowered to 18.**

**This version remained in effect after the war. The only difference: fewer numbers were called up.**



**But of course it was not that simple. The 2 years active duty was the minimum obligation. There was “fine print.”**

**If one was discharged after their initial service they remained subject to recall in the event of another national emergency for a period of ten years after first entering the service provided they were under age 36.**

**This requirement was regardless of rank or whether one was a volunteer or draftee and regardless of branch of service.**

**The advantage to the military was obvious. It took less time to retrain a veteran than to train a new recruit. That and the veterans had experience in the military that could be put to use, as opposed to needing to gain such experience.**

**Until 1950, most veterans gave this little thought.**





**The Selective Service Act did not define “national emergency” nor state whether or how it was determined or announced. It did not require congressional action. As it turned out, it did not require more than an Executive Order – and such order need not be front page news. Nor did the Order have to state there was a national emergency explicitly.**

**The U.S. intervention in Korea – the Police Action – qualified as a national emergency under the Act.**

**The Marine Corps took advantage of this practically from the moment the President signed the order committing ground troops to Korea.**

**The Marine Corps was all volunteer. It could not expand recruitment quickly. But it could and did begin to recall WWII veterans. Combat veterans were preferred, but not required.**



**Baseball great Ted Williams, for example, never saw combat in WWII. He was on his way to Okinawa when Japan surrendered. But he would be recalled to active duty, retrained as a jet pilot and serve in Korea in 1951-1952 flying over 30 combat sorties where his wingman – some guy named John Glenn – said he was a pretty good combat aviator.**

**(Williams is the tall one on the left).**

**The other branches would follow suit to varying degrees.**

**The Army, Air Force and Navy had provided scholarships to medical and nursing students starting in WWII and continued after the war ended. The recipients were not required to enter the armed forces, but could (and would) be called up if needed. A wartime military has a far greater need for medical personnel than a peacetime one.**

**The Army would also call up combat infantrymen – NCO's and officers. (It would also call up some artillerymen.)**

**The Air Force would call up pilots – specifically fighter pilots and, more critically B-29 pilots and aircrew. Many of those on active duty had transitioned to the B-36 and those would be untouchable. (Same was true for B-36 ground crew).**

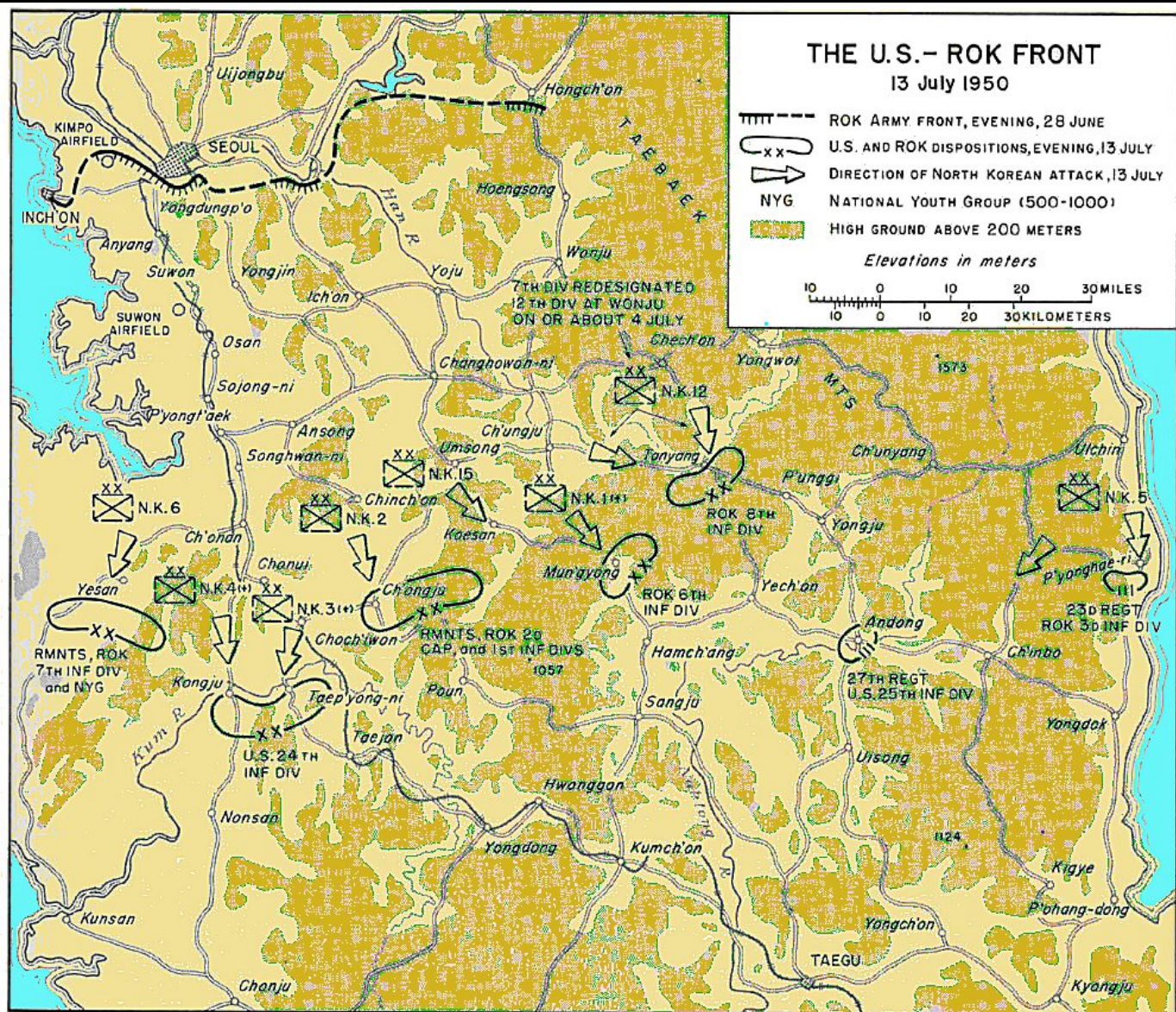
**While these WWII veterans brought valuable experience into the armed forces, they did not bring in enthusiasm. Most were now married, had young families, and decent jobs and the military saw a substantial cut in pay for most.**

**What the military did not do was expand the draft as that was considered too unpopular.**

**Over the course of the Korean War, the military more than doubled in size yet while many served in Korea, far more saw service in Europe.**

**But this was in the near future...**

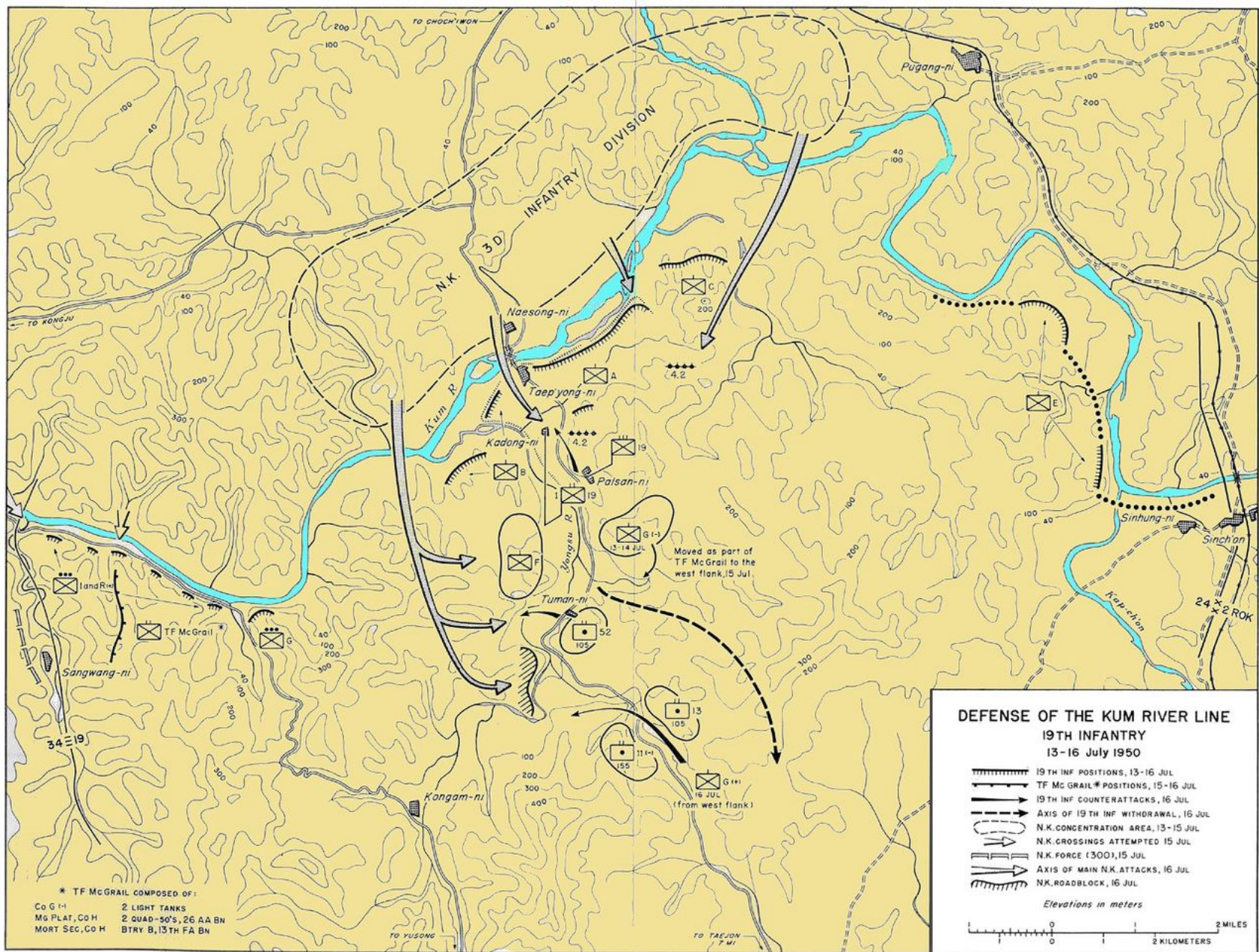




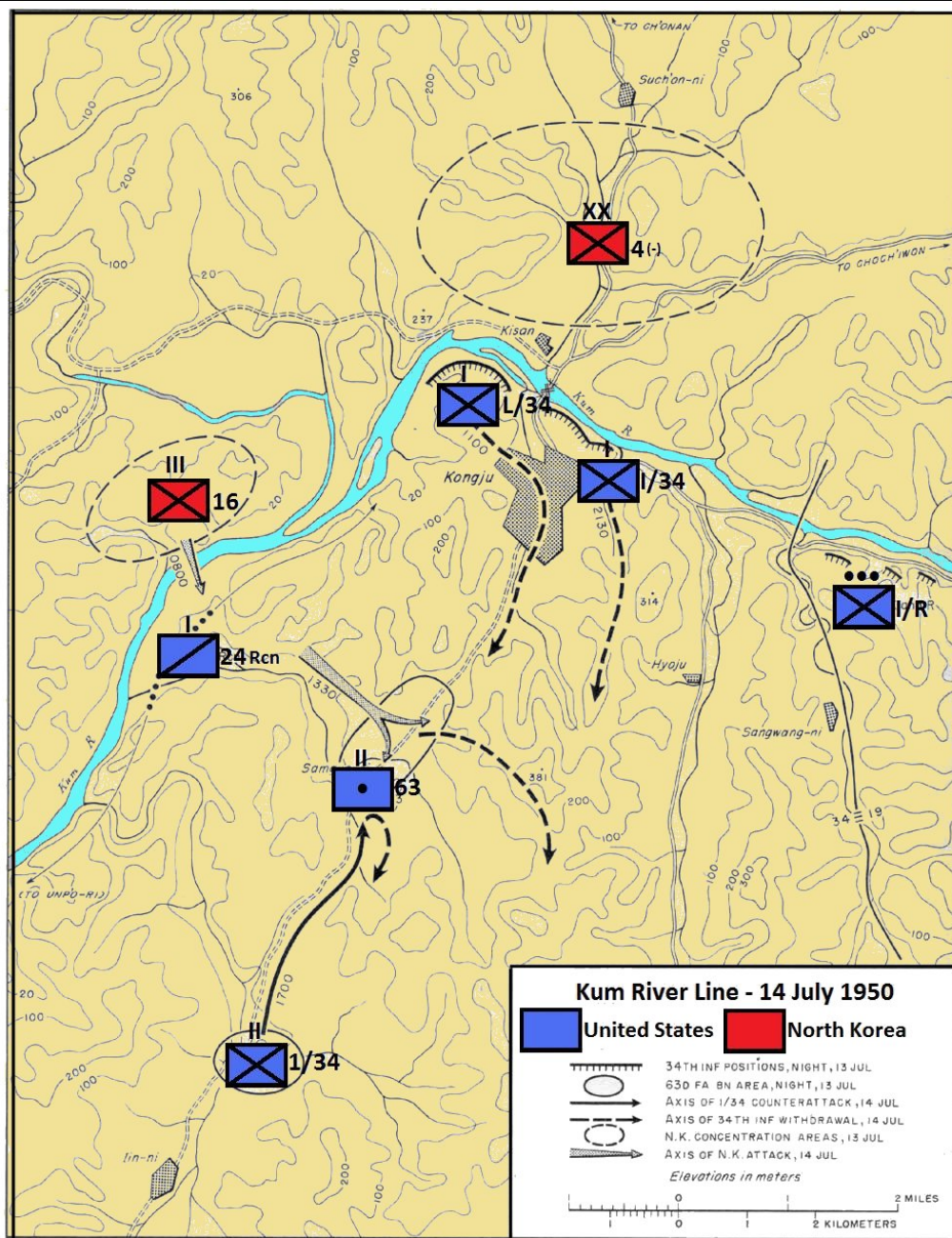
F. Temple

MAP 5









MAP 6

Between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of July, there was little fighting on the American front. There was, however, no such let up at other points against the ROK divisions. The U.S. Army was deployed to cover the city of Taejon, a major road hub, provincial capitol, and temporary command center.

It was defended by the remainder of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division (less TF Smith).

Beginning on the 13<sup>th</sup>, the NPKA 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions attacked two of the three infantry regiments deployed on the Kum river. Both regiments would fight hard but would be unable to stem the tide despite now having M-24 tanks and some 3.5 inch bazookas.

The 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment in particular would be mauled, suffering over 40% KIA and MIA over three days of fighting.



**On the 16<sup>th</sup>, the 24<sup>th</sup> Division (now effectively two regiments) was withdrawn to the area around Taejon. Walker ordered Dean to hold as long as possible and sent the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment from the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf. Division to support. The goal was to buy time for 8<sup>th</sup> Army to establish a defensive position along the Naktong River to the rear.**

**The 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment was a segregated regiment despite Truman's executive order desegregating the armed forces in 1948. The Army had proven slow to do so,**

**not in small part to the fact that the majority of its bases in the U.S. were in the deep south at this time. At the turn of the century, the segregate Army units were its best soldiers. WWI had begun to change that. During WWI and after, the segregated units tended to receive the dregs of the officer corps and the troops were well aware of this.**

**The 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment had barely deployed when scouting NKPA patrols attacked. Most of the Regiment bugged out immediately.**

**The 24<sup>th</sup> Division was hit hard again yet held for the next couple of days. Dean was finally given permission to withdraw on the 20<sup>th</sup>. (And they had to find him as he was out hunting tanks at the time).**

**The remnants of his division would withdraw somewhat chaotically.**



**General Dean was one of the last to leave Taejon. His driver took a wrong turn and they were ambushed. General Dean woke up hours later in a ravine. No one was around. He would spend the next 35 days lost and on the run from the North Koreans trying to make his way back to friendly lines. He would be captured and spend the rest of the war in a POW camp.**

**This would not be known until September 1953. He was declared MIA and presumed dead three years earlier and “posthumously” awarded a Medal of Honor**

**for the defense of Taejon. General Church was named as his replacement over General Church’s strong objections. While Church was hardly older than average for a division commander, he was physically older than his years and knew it and confessed he did not think he could handle the physical stress. But there was no one else.**

**At least no one in the Far East and at this point, field promotions to division command were not a thing (they became such late in WWII and were dropped as soon as the war ended.)**

**Fortunately for Church, he took command of a division sent into reserve to take on replacements, not a front line unit.**



**It was during the Battle of Taejon (13 – 20 July) that two events happened. First, it was around this time that MacArthur began planning his invasion of Inchon. The plan was to land two divisions deep behind enemy lines near Seoul and cut off the North Korean supplies, stranding its army in the South. Inchon was a gamble. It had no real beaches and among the highest tides on earth. For all but a few hours, the approaches were unnavigable and it would be impossible to land troops. It was partly for this reason MacArthur chose Inchon because such a landing would be deemed impossible.**

**But days before MacArthur first mentioned the idea, General Peng Du-hai, who commanded the PLA troops in Manchuria and was tasked with observing the war (and, if it came to it, leading any Chinese intervention) met with Kim Il Sung and the NKPA leadership and suggested a strong garrison at Inchon as he was convinced it would be the objective of a MacArthur like end run.**

**He had no information that such was being planned. Peng had studied MacArthur and his Southwest Pacific campaign and such a move seemed like something MacArthur would seriously consider.**

**The North Koreans believed an invasion at Inchon was impossible and would take no action to defend the port despite Peng's concerns.**







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The 24<sup>th</sup> Division was moved into reserve after Taejon. It was replaced by the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry and the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry at the front. Lead elements (mostly staffs) from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Divisions which were deploying from the U.S. had arrived at Pusan and the Provisional Marine Brigade was already at sea.

8<sup>th</sup> Army wanted to punch the NKPA in the nose, force them to pause, to allow more time to strengthen the defenses around Pusan – their only port and main base of supply. Walker came up with a plan – a massive ambush.

There was a narrow valley between Kumch'on and the Naktong River. The main road and rail from Pusan to Seoul (and thus the NKPA's supply route and line of advance) passed through this valley. Walker hoped to draw a sizable force into the valley and destroy it.



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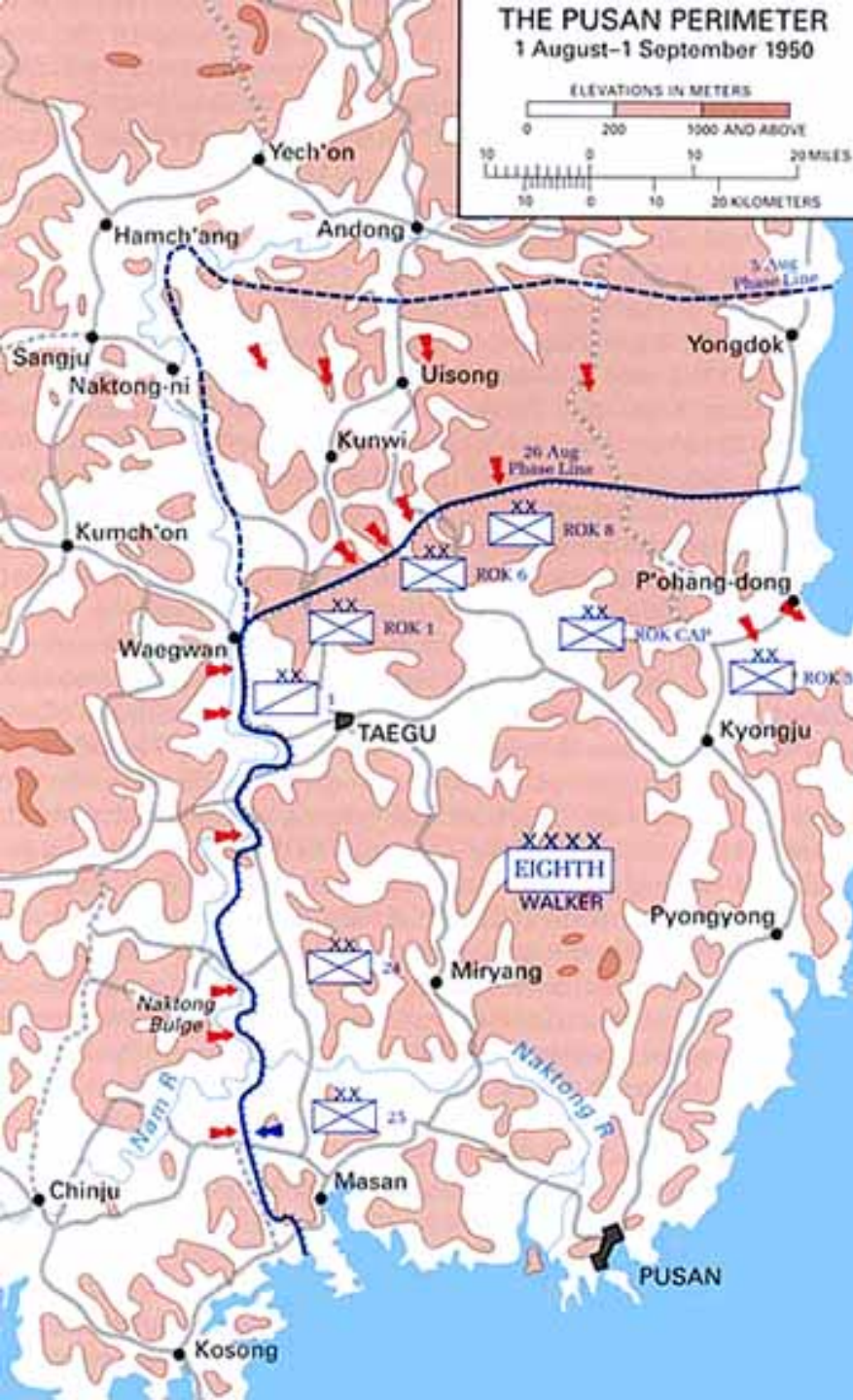
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The plan was rather callous. The segregated 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment would defend the narrow point of the valley. Elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav would hold the northern ridgelines and other elements of the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. the south. The plan was the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment would entice the NKPA 6<sup>th</sup> Division into the valley. This was a fresh division.

The 24<sup>th</sup> would do this by doing as they had done – running away at contact. (They would not be told to do this). 8<sup>th</sup> Army hoped the NKPA would pursue and fall under the guns of the other units (and air support).

It worked as planned. The NKPA division went for the bait and was mauled in the valley causing the rest of the NKPA to pause for several days to evaluate the situation giving the UN forces time to solidify their defense, as much as they could at least.



By the end of July, U.S. and ROK forces had pulled into what became known as the Pusan Perimeter. This pocket was about 60 miles by 40 at first. Its western side was along the Naktong river. The key points to defend were Taegu and Pusan.

Taegu controlled most of the roads in the region including the main road and railroad to Pusan. Pusan was the main supply port.

Another critical point was Masan as this controlled the southern roads. Both sides knew this.

The North Koreans had almost won but to win they had to reduce this pocket or force a Dunkirk, something that was unthinkable to the U.S. and ROK. That being said, the line was hardly impenetrable. The Naktong was shallow enough to ford at several points in dry weather, and the summer of 1950 was unusually dry.





**In the first month of the war, the Port of Pusan became one of the busiest in the world at the time. It was not just a port of debarkation for incoming soldiers, but a massive supply depot – the bulk of the shipping was cargo.**

**It was the sole supply point for tens of thousands of refugees camped nearby in addition to the entire UN force on Korea. In WWII it was said that the U.S. did not solve logistics problems, they overwhelmed them. This is what Pusan became, a supply base where supplies arrived faster than they could be distributed but were distributed fast enough to keep the armies in the fight.**

**Historians of the war believe this is why North Korea lost. They could not hope to defeat this supply system especially as their own was already on the brink of collapse – and not because of air strikes but because they lacked the ability to supply an army so far south.**



**The 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade began arriving on August 1<sup>st</sup>. It sailed on three ships, originally bound for Japan but diverted mid ocean to Pusan. Only two ships arrived the first day. The third, holding supplies, troops plus the brigade staff and commander had broken down in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and would limp into Pusan a couple of days later.**



**The Marines off loaded their own supplies as it seemed the Army was unwilling to help ... and then the Marines helped themselves to what they could find in the Army warehouses, and anything else not nailed down. (They had a paint shop to repaint trucks, jeeps and other vehicles stolen from the Army – including practically from under their noses.) Oddly, to the Marines, the Army did not seem to care. (Those in the rear with the gear did not see the point and many were convinced the war was lost.)**



**MGEN Craig commanded the 1<sup>st</sup> Marines at Pusan. Before arriving in Korea he had never flown in a helicopter and had not really seen much use in them. On his first day, he was flown to the Brigade HQ and became a true believer. He would fly everywhere and encourage subordinate commanders to do the same.**

**From the air, they could control columns, spot enemy positions long before the Marines on the ground could do so, spot gaps in their defenses, etc.**

**And the Marines came ready to fight. They held ground the Army could not and took ground the Army would not. (The exception being Michaelis 27<sup>th</sup> Regiment). The 1<sup>st</sup> Marines became one of two rapid reaction forces in 8<sup>th</sup> Army used to respond to breakthroughs, shore up a weak defense, and take key positions from the enemy – often to the embarrassment of the Division or Regimental commander in the area.**



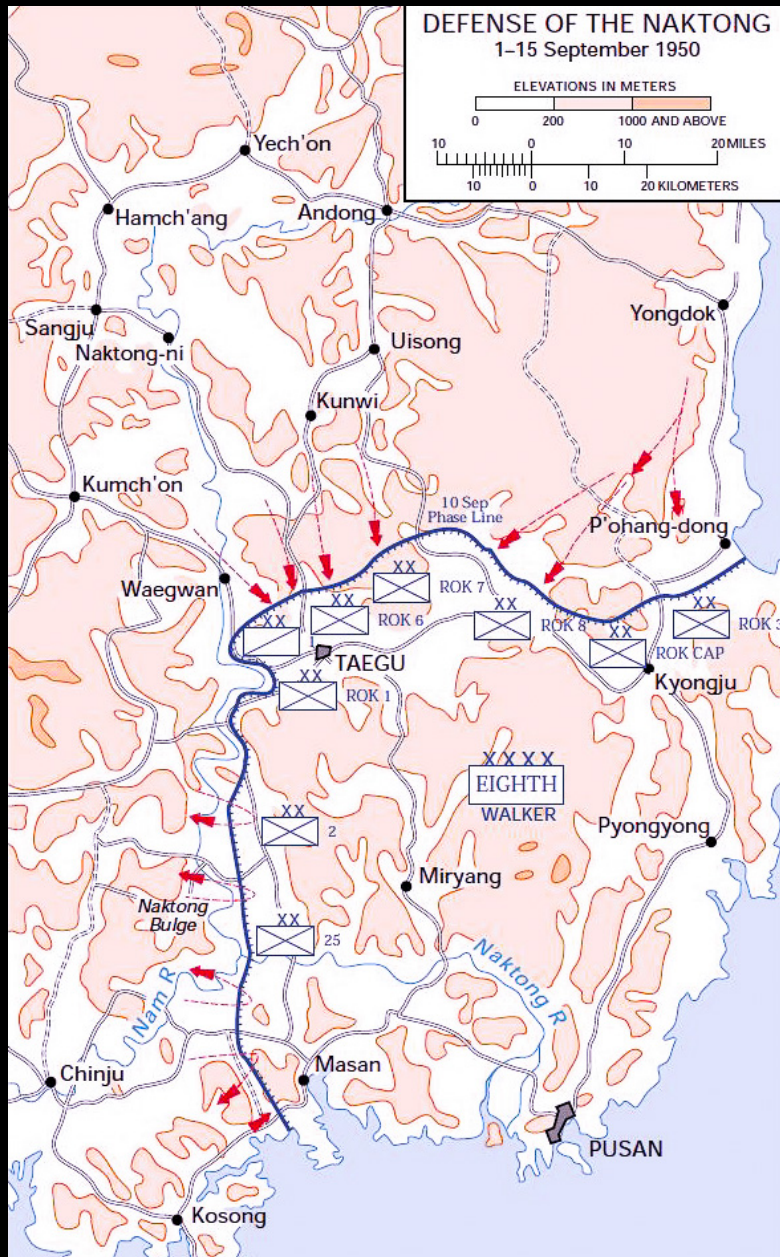
**The fighting along the perimeter was sporadic but intense. The North Koreans made many attempts at a breakthrough and while they often broke through, the attack was quickly contained and wiped out.**

**With the arrival of the Marines came close air support from Navy and Marine aircraft that was devastating. The Marines came with forward air controllers who could direct air attacks onto targets and the Navy and Marines provided airplanes from carriers just off shore, minutes away, that could loiter over the battlefield for hours waiting for a call.**



**The Army had to wait for that, but they finally started receiving tanks that could match up with the T-34. The M-48's were still months away but it turned out the latest version of the M-4 Sherman matched up well enough. Basically it was an even fight, except American tank numbers increased daily while North Koreans fell.**





September was make it or break it. For the North Koreans, if they did not win now, they would run out of supplies and starve. For the Americans, supplies were not coming in as fast as earlier, nor were reinforcements. They did not know that a major operation was in the works – Walker would not learn of it until the beginning of the month and only then because MacArthur wanted to pull out the Marines.

The major push delayed the Marine withdrawal by two days. Walker was convinced when they left the perimeter was in trouble.

What he did not know was that push that had unnerved him would be the last real threat to the perimeter. The NKPA was out of gas and supplies and a major force was about to fall on their rear and end any chance...