FIGHTING IN A KOREAN WAR:
THE AMERICAN ADVISORY MISSIONS FROM
1946-1953

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
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School of The Ohio State University

By
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ABSTRACT

In the earliest days of the Korean War, the Commander in Chief of the United States Far East Command, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur reported to President Harry Truman that South Korean troops were outmaneuvered, outgunned, and appeared beaten: “South Korean casualties as an index to fighting have not shown adequate resistance capabilities or the will to fight and our estimate is that a complete collapse is possible.” MacArthur’s low opinion of Korean soldiers rested unchallenged, and remains unchallenged to this day.

American advisors in Korea were responsible for the organization, training, and development of the Korean army. Fundamental to the evaluation of the Korean army’s capability is an analysis of the American military advisory missions active in Korea from January 1946 to July 1953. This dissertation examines how these missions performed their mandated duties to organize, train, and mentor the Korean Constabulary and the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army. These advisors faced tremendous challenges ranging from cultural disconnects, inexperience, scarce resources, and lack of time. The North Korean invasion in June 1950 revealed crucial weaknesses in training, experience, leadership, and firepower. These weaknesses nearly brought the ROK Army to its knees by the spring of 1951.

Once truce negotiations began, however, new command emphasis, new leadership, greater resources, and a coherent vision for reform produced a movement to create a new army that was better led, reorganized, and expanded. In the process, the Koreans developed confident leadership, trained units, and tactical and technical skills in fighting modern war. This new ROK Army fought critical battles from October 1952 through June 1953 that set the conditions for an Armistice agreement in July 1953.
This study concludes that the successful reformation of the Korean Army (1951-1953) under the supervision of its American advisors enlarged the fighting ability of the Eighth United States Army as a whole. By the end of the war, Koreans were bearing a military burden that was inconceivable just two years earlier. It is improbable that an armistice agreement could have been signed without a demonstration of their increased fighting ability.
For my parents, Dr. L. Bruce and Haydee Gibby

and

For Desrae
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I served in Korea as an Army officer for two and a half years, from 1997-2000. Koreans are industrious, cultivated, kind, and respectful. The older generation especially was solicitous. Never did I feel out of place. For this, and many other, reasons, I wish to thank the people of the Republic of Korea for their hospitality and friendliness towards American servicemen and women. My study of US-ROK governmental and military relationships during the Korean War has only increased my admiration for the “Land of the morning calm.”

The completion of this project could not have been realized without the generous assistance I received from several research institutions. The personnel of the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland, Beth Lipford, Will Mahoney, and Rich Boylan, provided assistance in finding the documents related to the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea and the United States Army Forces in Korea. Many of these records are not yet fully catalogued or organized, so their patience and expertise was invaluable.

A special thanks goes to Susan K. Lemke, the National Defense University Special Collections, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C. Her guidance through various security protocols allowed me to be one of the first scholars to have unfettered access to the papers of General Maxwell D. Taylor. Ms. Lemke generously allowed me to make copies of any unclassified documents that I wanted – a grand gift indeed to any researcher.

Cynthia Brougher and Joanne Hartog of the George C. Marshall Library and Archives provided valuable assistance with the voluminous collections of George C. Marshall, James A. Van Fleet, and Walton H. Walker.
Dr. Geoffrey Parker, Dr. John Guilmartin, and Dr. Alan Beyerchen of the Ohio State University have all contributed to this study in material and psychological ways. Thanks to their mentorship, I learned that fighting is never the full story – training, organization, logistics, and culture also play a part, sometimes in obvious ways, sometimes more subtly.

As a rotating faculty member in the Department of History, United States Military Academy, I must acknowledge the tremendous support and encouragement I have received from Colonel Robert A. Doughty (Department Head), Colonel Lance A. Betros (Deputy Head), and Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Moten (Chief, Military History Division). I especially owe a debt to my division chief, who not only read and gave constructive criticism on four chapters, but also provided me with time to complete this project. The Office of the Dean also provided generous financial support for research trips to Washington, D.C., Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, and Lexington, Virginia.

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I am most appreciative to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Allan R. Millet of The Ohio State University. I owe him a great intellectual debt. A generation of officer-historians has matured under his guiding influence, and I consider it a privilege to count myself as part of that generation. Dr. Millett provided me not only encouragement but access to his personal collection of correspondence, recordings, and official documents.

Lastly, I thank my wife Desrae and our four children: Paul, Peter, Parker, and Preston. Desrae, a soldier’s wife, has patiently and without complaint (nearly so) gone far above the demands of duty, living – one page at a time – some of the most forgotten aspects of the Korean War.
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<td>MAG</td>
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<td>MIA</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the Korean War, the military power of the United Nations Command (UNC), a coalition of seventeen nations, hinged upon the combat capabilities of its ground component, which consisted of the Eighth United States Army in Korea and its allied attachments. In turn, the military fortunes of Eighth Army relied to a large degree on the capability of the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) – its largest and longest serving co-belligerent. On the day of the North Korean invasion, 25 June 1950, the ROKA numbered less than 100,000 men, whereas the American military presence in Korea amounted to less than 500. Within two weeks battle losses reduced the South Korean army to fewer than 50,000 soldiers. By the time of the armistice agreement, 27 July 1953, the Eighth Army and its coalition components boasted just over 300,000 men, while the manpower contribution of the Republic of Korea had soared to nearly 600,000 men under arms.¹ More importantly, the capability of the ROKA in 1953 was radically different from that of 1950. Without the trained, equipped, and well led soldiers of the ROKA, it is inconceivable that a satisfactory armistice would have been obtained when it was.

It is time for historians to give the ROKA the place it deserves, which is at the center of Korean War history. The reformation, or as Allan Millett has called it, the redemption, of the ROKA is one of the central features of the war. It ranks with the North Korean invasion, Inchon, the Chinese intervention, and the negotiations in

¹ ROKA figures include marines and Korean Augmentation to United States Army (KATUSA) soldiers who although ethnic Koreans, fought as part of U.S. combat units; Logistics Study of the Korean Campaigns, 1950-1953, vol. III, 31 December 1954, United States Army Forces Far East (USAFFE)/8th Army Logistics Study, Organizational History Files, Military History Office, Records of Headquarters U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), Record Group 550, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland.
importance and influence on the conduct and consequences of the first conflict of the Cold War. It is impossible to appreciate fully the military situation, for good or bad, at the Naktong River, the Chongchon River, the Imjin River, or the future demarcation line without understanding the ROKA’s history. Because military capability is a relative quality, the challenge for American commanders was to figure out how best to build up a confident and competent Korean army, given the constraints of economics, politics, and – of course – fighting a tenacious and skillful enemy. Only when the ROKA’s martial capabilities exceeded some invisible baseline would the Eighth Army, and by implication the UNC, be able to stand confidently against the military and political power of its enemies.

The ROKA’s history was a disappointing one that reached its nadir from 1950-51. Having been pummeled by North Korean and Communist Chinese armies, the ROKA was on the verge of collapse in May 1951. General Matthew B. Ridgway, then commander of the UNC, despaired that it would take nothing short of a military miracle to transform the ROKA into a net asset on the UNC’s ledger book. Ironically, it was Ridgway’s successor as Eighth Army commander, Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet, who recognized that the tool to reform the ROKA already existed in his command. Although it had a cumbersome organizational title, its four-letter acronym would soon become synonymous with ROKA fighting capability. It was called KMAG.

The United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, a small organization of fewer than 1,300 men (it later expanded to 2,000 authorized slots), became in the summer of 1951 Van Fleet’s executive agent responsible to reform, reorganize, re-equip, and retrain the military forces of the ROK. From this wellspring of reform and reorganization, Korean army units emerged ready to fight as a more equal partner in the UNC coalition.

For more than fifty years, Korean War history has neglected, maligned, or marginalized the advisors of KMAG (and their predecessors in the Provisional Military

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2 Readers unfamiliar with Korean history and the war can refer to the chronology in Appendix A.

Advisory Group and the Department of Internal Security). The officers and men who constituted America’s commitment to a Korean army from 1946, invented the ROK’s military organization from scratch. The ROKA (and its predecessor, the Korean Constabulary) was their creation. With much effort the Americans gave it identity and nurtured it during a truly forgotten civil war that flared up in April 1948 and was not extinguished until March 1950. They trained it, supported it, and watched it nearly die in the summer of 1950. Unfortunately, the ROKA would have to repeat the cycle again through the first five Chinese offensives, culminating in the debacle of May 1951, when Van Fleet disbanded the ROK III Corps and seriously contemplated breaking up the ROKA entirely. Over the next twelve months, under new leadership and with a new emphasis to train and mentor, KMAG reformed itself and its protégé. The results were impressive – a holistic strategy from new-soldier recruitment to individual and unit training that made ROK units tougher; a revamped leadership committed to professionalism and learning how to wage modern war; a six-fold expansion carefully managed that resulted in increasing ROK manpower just when the Communists had peaked out; the formation of combat ready divisions capable of entering the line and slugging it out with veteran Communist units. When the ROKA-KMAG partnership produced a state of military equilibrium capable of withstanding the hammer blows of the Chinese armies, the Communists had to accept the full implications of military deadlock.4 There can be no question that the ROKA’s resurgence under the guidance of KMAG changed the context of the military struggle, ensured the survival of Syngman Rhee’s government, and forced the conclusion of the Armistice agreement on 27 July 1953.

Historians have neglected to tell a much broader, nuanced, and even bolder story of the ROKA: How did American influence before June 1950 condition the South Koreans for the military challenge unleashed by the Communist invasion? What explains

4 There is no accessible documentary evidence for this assertion, however, based on statements of Communist negotiators in June and July 1953, coupled with an examination of the Chinese plan and tactics employed against the Koreans, it becomes clear Mao recognized there was nothing more to be gained from continued military action. Bin Yu, introduction to Mao’s Generals Remember Korea, eds. and trans. Li Xiaobing, Allan R. Millett, and Bin Yu (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 3; for evidence that the Chinese had planned more than just a “demonstration” attack against ROK forces, see Zhang Shu Guang, Mao’s Military Romanticism (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 238, 240-41.
the dramatic contrast in the ROKA’s combat performance between the periods 1950-51 and 1952-53? How, after so much trial and error, did the ROKA evolve into a competent military force? Who, or what, was responsible for the ROKA’s reformation? A more complete understanding of the answers to these questions not only would “place the Koreans in a critical point in their thirteen centuries of history as a people with a distinct culture, language, and heritage,” but it would also reveal a great deal about the origins, conduct, and consequences of military operations in the war itself. Even fifty years after the guns fell silent following the signing of the cease-fire, 27 July 1953, English-language students of the war still have an inaccurate and incomplete view of the ROKA and KMAG. Nearly everyone is familiar with the ROKA’s early collapse in June and July 1950, the unavoidable withdrawals (called “bug-outs” by too many) in the face of overwhelming Chinese forces in November and December, and the collapse of entire divisions and a corps during the Chinese Fifth Offensive in April and May 1951.

Virtually unknown is the good news story behind the military challenges to the Republic of Korea before the war began: the Cheju-do rebellion (April 1948 – August 1949), the Yosu-Sunchon mutiny (October – November 1948), the border war in the summer and fall of 1949, and the guerrilla suppression campaigns in the fall and winter of 1949-1950. Although successful in the short term, the seeds for later disaster were sown as the South Korean army was unable to prepare itself to fight a conventional war against a strong conventional enemy. During the war itself, many will be surprised to learn that at the battles of Pohang and Tabu-dong, ROK units likely saved Lieutenant General Walton Walker’s Eighth Army during the early desperate days of the Pusan Perimeter. ROK units were the first to cross the 38th North Parallel in October, and one division, the ROK 3rd, made phenomenal progress on the east coast, while the ROK 1st Division beat the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division to Pyongyang. This same division fought like a tiger to defend “Line Golden” and to keep Seoul from falling for a third time to the Communists in April 1951. Korean units also fought bitter anti-guerrilla campaigns in

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the cold and unforgiving mountains of southwest and central Korea. These campaigns, of which Operation RATKILLER was the most celebrated, were harbingers of things to come regarding the ROKA’s improved combat capabilities.

By 1952 the ROKA was a different army. At the battle of White Horse Mountain (5-15 October), the ROKA turned a corner in its relative capabilities and inspired the confidence of its American patrons. In this ten day battle the ROK 9th Division fought three Chinese divisions to a standstill, as ROK soldiers proudly demonstrated their confidence and fighting ability. More battles throughout the fall and winter of 1952-1953 confirmed the same impression that this indeed was a better army. Spring in 1953 bought anticipation that an armistice might be near. May and June were bloody months for the ROKA, but they were only foreshadowing the main event. As prospects of an imminent agreement dominated the attention of the UNC command, the culmination of negotiation and fighting came in the last two weeks of July. On the evening of 13 July 1953, elements of fifteen Chinese divisions commenced the last Communist offensive in Korea, aimed at erasing a protruding bulge known as the “Kumsong Salient,” along with the five Korean divisions defending it. Remembering the collapse of Korean troops in the spring of 1951, the American commanders closely watched the situation on the Kumsong front. A ROKA collapse might possibly have set the impending Armistice back for weeks or even months. By the same token, Communist failure might convince them of the futility of further military efforts in Korea. For the next two weeks Chinese and Korean soldiers fought over the blasted hillsides, employing huge amounts of artillery and manpower to influence the course of this final battle.

After six days, the attacking Chinese had pushed the Koreans back about twenty kilometers before the lines stabilized. Supported by strong American forces on either flank, plentiful artillery and air support, and fighting an exhausted enemy, ROK forces began to counterattack and drive the Chinese north of the Kumsong River, where they remained until 27 July, when the Armistice, signed by the commanders of the United Nations Command, the Chinese People’s Volunteer Force (CPVF), and the Korean People’s Army (KPA) finally went into effect. It was a dramatic achievement and

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6 The most exhaustive account of the Kumsong battle is from the Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War*, vol. 3 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 630-681 (hereafter KIMH, KW).
testament to the effectiveness of KMAG’s reforms. The Republic of Korea Army stood up to the greatest Communist offensive in two years and convinced its enemy that military action was no longer profitable.

To understand how the Communists finally became “convinced” requires a fuller appreciation for the ROKA’s combat capabilities that goes beyond mere operational military history. Although glad to see an end to the killing in Korea, General Mark W. Clark regretted that the UNC had fought for so long with little to show except having given the Communist Chinese and North Koreans practice waging modern war. It is unfortunate that Clark, and others, did not attempt to give impressions about why the war ended when it ended. Consequently, for over fifty years historians of the conflict have struggled to understand this “forgotten war” and to determine its military, political, and diplomatic structures. Because of this focus at the macro-strategic and international levels of the conflict, little attention has been paid to how the war ended on the ground. The answer to this question illuminates fully the contribution of KMAG to the ROKA and, by extension, to the overall capability of the UNC.

Negotiations for a cease-fire resulted in two years of haggling and posturing at Kaesong (then Panmunjom) in which the Communists held the initiative, and it quickly became clear that negotiations were simply another front in the battle over the Korean peninsula. They were in no hurry to settle the conflict when it appeared that a deliberate

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attritional strategy could garner either prestige or ground. After the summer of 1951, the U.S. and its allies (excepting South Korea) were committed to a settlement. The UNC had to compel the Communists to accept that military stalemate no longer benefited their political-strategic position, and that there was no reasonable chance for them to alter the conditions of that stalemate.

Nearly two years later, on June 8, negotiators finally agreed to specific “Terms of Reference” as a basis for a cease-fire. Because Clark considered an agreement practically signed, China’s deliberate offensives against the Koreans assume new importance. These assaults against the Kumsong salient take on a significance that goes beyond the capture or defense of territory. On this night more hung in the balance than a few tactically important hilltops. The political consequences of the Battle of the Kumsong Salient demonstrate that the ROKA played a key role to satisfy the military conditions necessary to bring the Korean War to a close. Its perceived weakness threatened any settlement because it invited further Communist military action. Its renewed strength in the fall of 1952 made continued war unprofitable, and perhaps even dangerous, for the Communists.

When it comes to considering the connection between KMAG, the ROKA, and the Armistice, current Korean War historiography suffers from three defects. First, very few historians have attempted to analyze or emphasize the pre-war relationships between KMAG and the ROKA. This is a crucial oversight for these relationships set the conditions under which the ROKA suffered once the conventional war began in June 1950. Bruce Cumings’s revisionist treatment of the American Occupation in Korea (1945-1947) and of the origins of the war itself (1948-1950) sees the KMAG-ROKA relationship in dark hues. The American advisory effort was simply an extension of


11 The “sticking point” for over a year had been over the issue of voluntary repatriation of prisoners of war. President Harry Truman insisted that no prisoner would be returned to Communism against his will. For obvious reasons, the Communists desired otherwise. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, vol. 2, *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956), 460-61. On 4 June the Communists accepted the UNC’s “final offer” proposal of 25 May. On 8 June both parties signed an agreement on the repatriation prisoners of war, Mark W. Clark, “Why Not a Pacific Pact?” *Colliers* 133 (5 March 1954): 48.
American imperialism and provocative anti-Communism that used Koreans to suppress anti-American and pro-communist dissent. As the American military government perpetuated through ignorance or design the hated institutions of the Japanese colonial era – particularly the National Police and collaborationist bureaucrats – the patriotic and indigent Koreans spontaneously revolted against new imperialism. Eventually, to save his own skin, President Syngman Rhee “provoked” a war that both sides knew was inevitable. Although this overall line of interpretation is questionable, Cumings has identified key structural components of the Korean War. Most importantly, it was a civil and social Korean conflict long before it became an international one. It was also a conflict inflamed by intense nationalism, for which American occupation authorities had little policy guidance or preparation to help them navigate through the tumultuous seas unleashed during the months following liberation from Japanese rule. How American and Korean military forces reacted to these challenges go far to explain why the Republic was nearly crushed in the summer of 1950.

The second objection is the failure to recognize the decisive contribution of KMAG to the ROK Army’s increased capability, the crucial role played by KMAG in the larger context of U.S. and ROK relationships, or the fighting record of the ROKA. For example, just as the English literature of the Korean War generally skips over the important formative years of 1945 to 1950, histories of the war typically accept the proposition that stalemate on the battlefield in 1951 led to protracted negotiations, which did not make meaningful progress until the spring of 1953, following the death of the Soviet Premier, Josef Stalin. The satisfaction of all other necessary conditions – Chinese flexibility on the prisoner of war (POW) issue and the American mini-negotiations to


13 There are two notable exceptions to this studied neglect: Allan Millett is virtually the only American historian to recognize and emphasize the special relationship between ROKA and KMAG. He writes, “Much of the success of the Republic of Korea depended upon its ability to defend itself, and that ability in turn depended upon the influence of the U.S. Army officers and enlisted men assigned as advisors to the Korean Army.” Allan R. Millett, “Captain James H. Hausman and the Formation of the Korean Army, 1945-50,” *Armed Forces and Society* 23, no. 4 (Summer 1997): 517; General Paik Sun-yup also testified to the direct relationship between the ROKA and KMAG. See Paik Sun-yup, *From Pusan to Panmunjom* (Dulles, Virginia: Brassey’s, 1999), passim.
ensure the cooperation of President Rhee – followed. Inevitably, both sides arrived at the agreed terms for the Armistice. T. R. Fehrenbach’s *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness* and Clay Blair’s *The Forgotten War* – neglect to explain or even consider the significance of military activity in the months between the summer of 1951 and the armistice. Both authors convey the impression that the “real” war ended by October 1951. All that followed was simply politics as an extension of fighting. It is difficult to find a good word about the ROKA, and Blair’s unseemly haste (36 pages out of 976 covers the last twenty-four months) also confuses the relationship between ROKA and Eighth Army, implying that as late as June 1953 the ROKA was still a handicap for the Americans.\(^\text{14}\) Other histories of the war tend to follow the same assumption: after talks began at Panmunjom, what happened on the ground was no longer militarily important.\(^\text{15}\)

This interpretation is patently false. Not only did events of great military and political significance occur on the ground from July 1951 to December 1952, but KMAG and the ROKA were at the epicenter of these movements. To give the ROKA staying power on the battlefield, KMAG embarked on comprehensive reform of the Korean Army, starting in the summer of 1951. A year later, the results were dramatic, as ROK Army units fought a number of violent and extensive battles in the fall and winter of 1952-53. White Horse Mountain was the exceptional demonstration of the ROKA’s new fighting spirit. The ROK 9th Division fought like a contemporary American division, employing infantry, armor, artillery, and combat engineers to support a single coherent tactical plan. Korean officers valiantly led their troops by example, defending, advancing, and counter-attacking on order. The division staff not only fought the day’s fight, it also planned the action for the following day. Personnel officers kept the divisions regiments and battalions at a combat effective level, and Korean logisticians kept these units supplied with ammunition, weapons, food, and medical supplies. When the meat-grinding was done, the 9th Division was king of the mountain, earning

\(^{14}\) See Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 973-975.


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approbation from the corps and army commander. The Koreans had lost their fear of the enemy, and they had fought with confidence. This was a first for the ROKA, and the fact that the 9th Division had been judged a mediocre unit in 1951 speaks volumes about the ROKA’s improved capabilities as an institution.

Finally, the almost axiomatic condemnation meted out to the ROKA and KMAG (if KMAG figures at all in the narrative) is unjustified. Based on the Koreans’ performance from June 1950 to May 1951, the prevailing view seems to be, “If they aren’t Red, they’re yellow.” The repetitive collapse of ROK units from June 1950 to May 1951 certainly established an alarming trend, which American and Korean senior officers moved to correct. However, little has been done to investigate and explain the root causes for the ROKA’s erratic performance or the results of the ROKA’s “makeover.” Consequently, few have examined critically how or why the ROKA – particularly its increasing combat effectiveness and professionalism – influenced the armistice, if they even considered that such a linkage existed at all. In short, they ignore the influence KMAG exerted through the ROKA against the Communists, an influence that conditioned every significant aspect of the conflict, from the progress of the civil war that began in 1948 to the Communist decision to seek unification by force in 1950 to the political negotiations begun in 1951 and to the culmination of military stalemate in July 1953.

Usually KMAG is measured only by misunderstood public statements about the ROKA’s capabilities from Brigadier General William L. (Lynn) Roberts, chief of KMAG from August 1948-June 1950. Historians have reported these statements out of context and used them to “prove” KMAG’s failure to predict or prepare for the North Korean invasion. If it is not condemnation heaped on KMAG then it is irrelevance, as in

16 Cf Clay Blair’s analysis of why the war ended: “[The Americans] having brought Rhee into line and resolved all other outstanding issues, the senior delegates met at Panmunjom at 10:00 A.M. on July 27.” The uninformed would have to conclude that fighting had little to do with the war’s conclusion. Blair, The Forgotten War, 975.

17 See Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, 8-12 (page references are to reprint edition) and Blair, The Forgotten War, 55-57. Blair at least does attempt to understand Roberts’s position, but he neglects to highlight the political and economic constraints around which Roberts had to maneuver. As will be shown, given these constraints, KMAG did a remarkably good job at creating a hard kernel of an army that would survive multiple hammer blows in the first twelve months of the war.
Alexander Bevin’s *Korea: The First War We Lost*. According to Bevin, American officers quickly took to joking that KMAG stood for “Kiss My Ass Goodbye” since KMAG advisors rarely received word from their South Korean counterparts about withdrawals, and so were left to fend for themselves.\(^{18}\) Such shallow interpretations of the advisory effort have done much to color the perceptions of the Korean War as a largely American affair.

Fortunately a new historiography is emerging that corrects these misperceptions. Allan Millett has placed the role of American advisors in a more appropriate context by emphasizing relationships between the advisors and their Korean counterparts. He has also taken on the myth that the only army that counted was the American one.\(^{19}\) It was a Korean war, and it was in the crucible of civil conflict and conventional war that Koreans learned to wage modern war and to become the bulwark of the United Nations coalition. It was their war, and it was their Armistice, and though one might legitimately question their level of professionalism, competence, and commitment to political neutrality, no one can accuse the ROKA or its officers as being stooges for the American government or its policies, or being lackadaisical in its duty to defend its part of the line.\(^{20}\)

The revised three volume official history published by the Korea Institute of Military History from 1997-99 has made an in-depth history of the ROKA accessible to American readers.\(^{21}\) These volumes chronicle the evolution of ROK military forces from liberation in August 1945. This detailed account of the ROK Army’s operations and battles is important if only for an appreciation of the sheer number of battles fought that are unknown outside of Korea. The narrative is comprehensive and unlike other South

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Korean accounts does not spare criticism of the ROKA’s combat and institutional problems. Although ROK Army reform was critical to getting the Koreans back into the war, the mechanics, personalities, and challenges of the process remain unknown territory. KMAG does not figure as prominently as it should, even in this Korean literature. What is particularly missing is the contribution KMAG officers made in their organization, training, and combat roles. This is a critical omission, for the story behind the ROKA’s resurgence in 1952 and 1953 is driven by personalities that effected a social and cultural transformation as well as a military one. The process of reformation was just as important as its results.

Another valuable account of the ROKA’s war is the memoir of General Paik Sun-yup, From Pusan to Panmunjom. First published in English in 1992, From Pusan to Panmunjom is the story of the ROK Army told through the experiences of a distinguished and admired soldier, who began the war in June 1950 as a colonel commanding the ROK 1st Division. Three years later, he was the ROK Army chief of staff, a four-star general. Paik’s memoir does two things historiographically. It illuminates the forgotten ally of the UNC coalition, by giving substance to the unknown Korean soldier and by providing a corrective to western assumptions about the will or capability of Korean soldiers to fight. Secondly, it demands a reconsideration of the role the Koreans played in their war. From Pusan to Panmunjom convincingly shows how much this was the Koreans’ war to win or lose.

KMAG’s story is even more obscure. Only one monograph, Robert K. Sawyer’s Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War, published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History deals specifically with the challenges advisors faced to build and train a national Korean army. This study comprises little analysis, interpretation, or synthesis with other elements of the Korean conflict. It is also incomplete, as it does not cover the years 1951-53, years of the greatest change within KMAG and the ROKA. Although Sawyer based his work entirely on interviews, letters, and official reports, he was unable to draw significant conclusions about the linkages between the ROKA, the overall conduct of the war, and its termination.22 KMAG’s Wartime Experiences, 11 July

1951 to 27 July 1953, an unpublished manuscript by Kenneth W. Myers, picks up the narrative of the ROKA and KMAG and carries it to the end of the war. This history is quite exhaustive of what KMAG did, but it does not link KMAG’s actions to ROKA’s combat performance. It also suffers from a dull texture because it is mostly derived from official reports and histories.23

Among the U.S. Army’s official histories of the war, Walter Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, treats well the subjects of ROK Army expansion, training, and rearmament after the initiation of negotiations. However, again, the linkages between KMAG, reform, and the ROKA’s improving combat capabilities are largely absent. Since Hermes’s focus is on the American effort, this is not surprising, but it does shortchange the officers and men of KMAG and their organizational as well as combat accomplishments during a critical time period.24

To supplement these official histories, the U.S. Army commissioned a number of studies under the auspices of the Operations Research Office at Johns Hopkins University. In many respects these studies are invaluable resources because they detail the scale of the difficulties facing the advisors. Building an army from scratch is never an easy task. The contours of the basic problem are quite steep considering the barriers of culture, society, language, professionalism, and personal hardship. Add to that the unique conditions attached to service in Korea and the magnitude of KMAG’s task becomes clearer and more Herculean. Understanding why, how, and under what conditions advisors were successful illuminates some causes behind the ROKA’s uneven performance throughout the war.25

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Military history is more than stories about armies and battles; ultimately it boils down to people. KMAG was never stronger than the men who constituted it and the leadership that guided it. In the period before invasion, Captain James Hausman and Brigadier General William L. Roberts had the most enduring influence on KMAG and the ROKA. Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet and Brigadier General Cornelius E. Ryan continued that legacy in the summer of 1951. Unfortunately, none of these men were present to witness the ROKA’s final triumph in battle, and none left published memoirs or histories. Nevertheless, their influence can be appreciated through official reports, correspondence, and private papers and recollections. General Van Fleet did participate in the U.S. Army’s Senior Officer debriefing program, and the transcript of this interview is located at the U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. The treasure trove, though, is the collection of Van Fleet’s papers at the George C. Marshall Library, Virginia Military Institute.

Official records (command reports, operational reports, intelligence reports, official and unofficial correspondence) located at the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland along with letters, interviews, and personal papers of the advisors themselves constitute the foundation of this dissertation. Although the official records are incomplete and disorganized, they present the most comprehensive look at KMAG as it was perceived at the time. As valuable as these official records are, the “real” KMAG can only be revealed by the men who made it. Personal correspondence, telephone interviews, and personal diaries, recollections, and accounts put a human face on the official records. More importantly, they show how KMAG did its job, how their Korean counterparts responded to advice, and how the ROKA moved from being a marginal to a near-first rate military organization. It is a story of a long, difficult, and dangerous journey that deserves to be told.

These records paint a very different picture of KMAG than that portrayed in the published literature on the war. KMAG officers aggressively tackled their jobs as advisors and mentors. They worked under arduous and isolated conditions. In addition to being combat soldiers, they had to be quartermasters, personnel officers, air-ground
liaison officers, fire support officers, disciplinarians, teachers, coaches, and father figures. Not all were cut out for this job description, but many were successful and their units subsequently performed credibly in combat.

With these sources it is possible to evaluate how well KMAG performed its assigned mission to organize, equip, train, and advise the ROKA. Because nothing KMAG did would have mattered if the ROKA never amounted to a credible military organization, it is also necessary to look at how that advice was put into practice, and how advisors adapted to the changing conditions of the Korean conflict. Battle is the test – indeed, the raison d’etre – of any military organization. Therefore, an analysis of the conduct and consequences of some of the ROKA’s battles and engagements are included. For the ROK soldiers to be relevant strategically, they had to survive tactically. It was this requirement that was sorely tested from the very beginning.

In retrospect, it is clear that the Koreans carried a heavy burden for an army so young. The legacy of Japanese colonization, the turmoil of decolonization, factionalism in the army, the unforgiving environment, a competent tenacious enemy, and political intrigue should have brought the ROKA down. The South Koreans and their American advisors fought guerrillas in the hills and jealous government functionaries, particularly the National Police, in their rear areas; they created from nothing a military structure to raise, equip, train, and deploy units that would be in continuous combat from April 1948 until the Armistice. They weathered a conventional invasion followed by the shock of the Chinese intervention. ROK infantry reached the Yalu River. By July 1953 the ROKA was responsible for about two-thirds of the front line in contact with the enemy. Most significantly, under the test of battle, the ROKA of 1953 was not that of 1951 or 1950.

It may be simplistic to postulate the following syllogism: the UNC achieved its political objectives; the ROKA was key to the UNC’s success in 1953; and, KMAG was responsible for the reformation of the ROKA and its improved combat capabilities – therefore, KMAG held the key for success or failure of the UNC in Korea. Other factors, events, and institutions certainly played roles influencing the outcome of the war. But, the correlation between KMAG’s reform and the ROKA’s institutional overhaul that resulted in a significant increase in military capability cannot be overlooked. The two
organizations, from the beginning, were linked together, each influenced by, and
influencing the behavior of the other. This sense of mutual interaction is the key to
understanding the ebb and flow of Korean combat performance throughout the period of
civil conflict and war. When this interaction worked both organizations flourished and
expanded, innovative techniques for training and leader development were developed,
and the results on the battlefield more than justified the expense in talented manpower
and valuable equipment the Americans invested in the advisory effort.

Therefore, success is not too strong of a word, despite Clark’s misgivings about
being the first commander in the history of the United States to sign an armistice without
accepting the surrender of the enemy.26 From a political standpoint, the UNC had
fulfilled all of its principled objectives. It preserved the territorial integrity of the ROK,
repelled Communist aggression, and ensured that no Communist prisoner would be
forcibly repatriated to China or North Korea. In this kind of war, the armistice of 27 July
1953, was a victory of sorts.

When Clark signed the armistice at Munsan, standing close beside were senior
ROK officers and their KMAG counterparts.27 It is appropriate that the story of the war’s
close should depend upon the relationship between ROKA and KMAG. KMAG’s duty
was just as much a cultural, technical, and social mission as much as a military one. In
the final analysis, they did not completely succeed in overcoming all challenges, but they
did make enough headway to accomplish the mission of establishing a professional and
competent ROK Army. Without KMAG, the story would have had a much different
ending. Just as the ROK relied upon the ability of its KMAG advisors to teach the army
to fight, much of the success of the UNC depended on the health and tactical viability of
the ROK Army. It follows then that the officers and men of KMAG played a much larger
role in the conclusion of an armistice agreement than has heretofore been generally
recognized.

After Clark signed the armistice, he ruefully reflected, “The enemy remained
undefeated and even more powerful . . . than before . . . [they] have learned how to fight

modern ground warfare. They learned from us, by fighting us. What they didn’t know . . . we taught them, and it only cost them lives . . ..

What Clark had not considered in his calculus was that the Republic of Korea Army had also learned to fight modern war, and it had learned by fighting along with the Americans of KMAG. What they did not know, they learned from their American advisors and their own battle experience. It cost them lives too. Surely, it would have cost even more lives had the seeds not been planted and tenderly cultivated in the pre-war days to produce roots deep enough to stand against the Communist flood tide. These roots held ROKA together long enough to start the reformation process. No armistice could have survived the knowledge, or belief, that the ROK Army could not stand on its own; likewise, the Communists would never had agreed to an armistice if they thought the ROK Army was still a weak link.

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28 Clark, *Danube to the Yalu*, 297.
At the end of the Second World War, the United States began an open-ended political and military commitment to Korea. The first American soldiers who debarked from their transport ships at the port city of Inchon in September 1945 found a land that was inhospitable, unknown, and very far from home. They did not know or understand how important their occupation mission would be for the security of the peninsula south of the 38th parallel and for the United States during the first military clash of the Cold War. Unfortunately, the Americans were ill-prepared to fill the political, economic, and social vacuum created by the collapse of Imperial Japan. Consequently, military power, whether American or Korean, became the *sine qua non* for stability and occupation “success” on the one hand, and liberation and social revolution on the other. In Korea, the United States engaged in its first major confrontation with communism, ideologically, economically, and militarily. The first shots of the Cold War were fired south of the 38th parallel in September 1945, just days after the surrender of the Japanese Empire to the allies. From Liberation on 15 August 1945 until the signing of the Armistice agreement

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1 Franklin Roosevelt had unwittingly made such a commitment as early as 1 December 1943 in a joint statement with Winston Churchill and Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) that “the aforesaid three powers [Great Britain, United States, and China], mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent.” The phrase “in due course” meant many things to many people, but ultimately it meant that American power would have to be present on the peninsula until an independent Korean state emerged; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 1, *Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 104-09.

2 Of course, such an assertion is open to question and interpretation, but, the government of the Republic of Korea considers Kang Shin-ok, Kim Shin-ong, and Son Hang-chin – all members of the National Police – as the first casualties of the Korean War; see Millett, *Their War for Korea*, xix.
of 27 July 1953, which resulted in the permanent division of the peninsula between a communist north and a capitalist south, the war for Korea was symbolic for America’s commitment to a new order following the most destructive conflict ever known.

The Environment and Structure of the American Military Occupation

In August 1950, General Douglas MacArthur had warned of dire consequences for failure to take decisive action that led to his famous amphibious assault at Inchon.³ The American occupation commanded by Lieutenant General John R. Hodges, which also began at Inchon, nearly five years to the day before MacArthur’s more famous landing, suffered from many handicaps. Whereas MacArthur exuded confidence bordering on personal revelation, Hodge’s XXIV Corps and the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) stumbled about until it successfully squandered much of the latent goodwill and patience of the newly liberated Korean people.

The collapse of the Japanese Empire suddenly made Korea a priority for the allies. The Americans, primed and outfitted to participate in OPERATION OLYMPIC, the invasion of Japan, suddenly found themselves in “a situation which was far from clear, and of which the barest amount of intelligence had been available beforehand.”⁴ While Soviet forces quickly sweep across the Yalu River and occupied the peninsula north of the 38th parallel, American planners scrambled about for sixteen days to plan and move three divisions from Okinawa and the Philippines to Korea (collectively the plan was known as Operation BLACKLIST). In the rush to move, there was little time to consider the complex history or political aspirations of the people in this new theater of operations.

The Americans’ ignorance of Korean geography and culture, and their unpreparedness to deal with the effects of colonial exploitation, war, factionalism, and subsequent ideological division made the task of governing extremely complex. From


the very start, the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) was one step behind popular expectations for economic improvement, political emancipation, and social stability. The dizzying effects of this heady mixture of liberation, nationalism, and anti-colonialism – Bruce Cumings rightly calls it “revolution” – caused the Americans to temporize and make decisions that were not in their, or the Koreans, best long-term interests. As Bonnie B.C. Oh points out, “the policy [of the Military Government] was comprised of reactive, incremental stop-gap measures.” No where is this assessment more accurately descriptive than in the American Military Government’s initial attempts to create stability through an indigenous national military organization. Nonetheless, during the American occupation – whatever its other faults – the basic structures were settled that allowed the formation of an independent Republic with an armed security force. American patronage of this organization, first known as the Constabulary and subsequently as the Republic of Korea Army, ensured the state’s independence and survival.

Known to the Koreans as “the land of the morning calm,” Korea is a severe country dominated by climatic and topographic extremes. A peninsula situated between 34 degrees and 43 degrees north latitude, Korea’s weather fluctuates between a southern monsoon that produces hot, wet summers and a continental monsoon bringing cold, dry winters. Temperatures fluctuate between winter lows of 25 degrees Fahrenheit to the summer highs of 82 degrees, with high humidity and rainfall. Physically, the land is a rugged peninsula jutting into the ocean between Japan and China, which measures 215 miles across at its widest point, and 600 miles in length. Nearly seventy percent of its 86,000 square miles of land is mountainous, a characteristic that leaves an indelible

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5 Cumings, *Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes*, xx.


7 The term “Republic of Korea Army” and its acronym “ROKA” are artificial designations and entirely of American origin. Korean soldiers consider themselves part of the “Korean Army.” All three expressions will be used interchangeably.

impression on those having to cross it on foot or even by motor vehicle. One geographic observer remarked: “Iron it flat and Korea would cover the earth.”

The eastern “backbone” of Korea, the Taebaek and Nangnim mountain ("san" in Korean) ranges rise gently from the western coast before dropping off suddenly on the east coast. These peaks can reach heights of 1500 – 2000 meters. Other ranges, such as the Sobaek mountains in the south, complete the process of geographic sectionalization and constitute barriers to east-west communications and movement.

A system of great rivers complements the mountains in dividing up and sustaining the land. In the western lowlands rivers running generally east to west support the major population centers and agricultural regions. These rivers ("gang" in Korean), the Yongsan, Kum, Han, Taedong, Imjin, and Chongchon are sluggish and regularly flood during the summer rainy season (June through August). The Naktong and Somjin Rivers empty into the Korea Straits in the south. Flooding river plains are vital to the land’s agricultural cycle, which played a prominent role influencing social stability in post-war Korea. Combined with the severe sectionalism of the mountains, rivers and their associated land forms determined many aspects of traditional class relationships and tensions between isolated urban centers and the surrounding countryside.

A byproduct of Korea’s criss-cross network of mountains and rivers is the tendency towards regionalism. The relatively isolated Cholla provinces in the southwest are known for their rebelliousness, agitation, and discontent. Not surprisingly, it was in the Chollas where some of the first severe military tests for American and South Korean troops occurred. Even more remote was Cheju island ("do" in Korean), “the Sicily of Korea.” Administratively tied to South Cholla province, the inhabitants of Cheju-do might as well have been on the moon, and it was on Cheju-do that the first campaign of the Korean War began. The regions surrounding the major metropolitan

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11 Ibid., 21.
areas of Taegu and Pusan proved to be just as resistant to administration from Seoul, and rebellion in the hinterlands of the Kyongsang provinces endured until well into the war years of 1950-1953.\(^\text{12}\)

A second related problem was the historical tendency to disregard central governmental authority. Only the direct physical presence of government, military, or law enforcement agents could have any effect to enforce the policies of the central authority. Geographic separation tended to reinforce insular and independent thought, and made it more difficult for the American authorities to communicate a coherent message to the outlying centers.\(^\text{13}\) Whenever trouble did erupt into violence, the poorly developed transportation system (with the exception of the Seoul to Pusan railway) handicapped the movement and coordination of government forces, which encouraged the formation of outlaw and guerrilla groups.

Even greater challenges flowed from Korea’s tumultuous colonial past, which liberation in August unleashed like a bursting dam. General Hodge, commander of the U.S. XXIV Corps, and his military administrators simply were not prepared to fulfill the expansive political, economic, and social expectations that boiled over in the months following liberation. Hodge – a Midwesterner and veteran of both the First World War and the Pacific war against Japan – had no civil government experience or much inclination to command the American occupation of Korea. After earning distinction as a division then corps commander on Guadalcanal, New Georgia, Bouganville, and in the Philippines, Hodge boasted a reputation as a hard-bitten, direct, and forceful commander. He appeared to thrive on control and order, in war and in bivouac.\(^\text{14}\) In a pre-occupation flier dropped over the soon-to-be American zone, Hodge explained the role and expectations of the occupation: the Korean people would docilely accept the collapse of Japanese authority and the reconstruction of American influence. How and in what time

\(^{12}\) Meade, *Government in Korea*, 33-34.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 5.

\(^{14}\) Biography of General Hodge, XXIV Corps Personalities, XXIV Corps G-2 Historical Section, General Headquarters Far East Command, Supreme Command Allied Powers, and United Nations Command, Record Group 554, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland.
frame the Americans would transfer power to Koreans remained unstated.\textsuperscript{15} With this emotionless preamble, the American 7\textsuperscript{th}, 40\textsuperscript{th}, and 6\textsuperscript{th} Divisions arrived over the next two months to receive an uncertain welcome from the Korean people. Unfortunately, even this chilly honeymoon period was not to last long, as Hodge immediately slapped an eight p.m. curfew on the celebrating citizens in Seoul, and it became clearer that the American’s concept of liberation sharply diverged from the Korean.\textsuperscript{16}

To be fair to the Americans, Hodge’s task to maintain order was vague: “suppress activities of individuals and organizations which may be inimical to the operations of the occupation force.” Hodge also had the military task to receive the surrender of Japanese forces, disarm them, and repatriate them as soon as possible. Beyond that, his mandate for political, social, or economic reconstruction was ambiguous.\textsuperscript{17} As a result, circumstances forced Hodge to play for time, which had nearly catastrophic results. Immediately upon Japan’s capitulation, fearful colonial officials in Korea had attempted strike a deal with prominent Koreans. They convinced a moderate Korean, Yo Un-hyong, to accept responsibility for maintaining order while awaiting the tardy Americans. Yo agreed, but only under conditions that would exclude any Japanese or pro-Japanese Korean from exercising influence or power.\textsuperscript{18} From Liberation Day (15 August) to 8 September, Yo and his left-leaning organization, the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence, effectively governed Korea and managed to control violence while planting the seeds of national feeling. On 6 September, Yo’s partisans even declared the birth of the Korean People’s Republic.\textsuperscript{19} This act unsettled Hodge’s sense of good order,

\textsuperscript{15} See Appendix B for complete text of message. General Hodge’s Proclamation to the People of Korea, 1 Sep 1945, HQ, XXIV Army Corps, “To the People of Korea,” XXIV Corps G-2 Historical Section, GHQ FEC, SCAP, and UNC, RG 554.

\textsuperscript{16} KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 11-12.


\textsuperscript{18} Cumings, Liberation, 71; KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 16.

\textsuperscript{19} Cumings, Liberation, 83-84.
particularly as military, quasi-military, youth group organizations that answered to no central authority proliferated. In any event, the United States Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK), which included both the XXIV Corps and the military government, was supposed to be the central authority, and Hodge wanted to make sure there was little doubt of that.

To erase any doubts, Hodge unceremoniously dumped Yo, explaining “There is only one government in South Korea – the United States Army Military Government.” Hodge’s peremptory action set the scene for future tension between the USAMGIK and the popular masses, because although Yo’s partisans did include some Communists or leftist sympathizers, they at least had strong nationalist and anti-Japanese credentials. Because Hodge decided to retain much of the Japanese governmental apparatus, such as administrative officials, taxes, fees, and laws, it now it appeared as if the Americans simply supplanted Japanese colonialism. The stage was set for three years of misunderstanding and antagonism. Anti-American demonstrations following the dismantling of the Korean People’s Republic tended to reinforce Hodge’s prejudices about Korean political maturity. In contrast, colonial officials (both Japanese and Korean) appeared to be model citizens, and their compliance with Hodge’s Korea policy, such as it was, greatly influenced how the Americans organized South Korea’s national government and military structures. But, under the surface, the Americans alienated many Koreans who justifiably chafed at the thought of having replaced Japanese imperialism with an American version.

Having disposed of the pesky problem of who exactly was in charge, Hodge then had to deal with the near rock-bottom depressed economy of the south. Korea had suffered tremendously under Japanese colonialism. The Japanese rationalized their exploitation of Korea as “modernization,” but with the coming of the Pacific War in December 1941, they ravaged the land for anything that could support the war effort:

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metal drains, plumbing, telegraph poles, locks, hinges, keys and timber were all removed to Japan.  This policy effectively impoverished the country, and stirred up bitter resentment against the Japanese and their Korean collaborators.

The rehabilitation of Korea was one of the most vital aspects of the American Military Government, for it was central “to mitigate the disrupted and distorted economy” and to create a viable social structure. Even under the best of conditions, the revival of Korea’s prostrate economy would have been difficult, but the constant stream of refugees and returning expatriates to the south overburdened an inadequate administrative system, which in any event, many Koreans considered illegitimate.

From October 1945 to December 1947, 2,380,821 refugees officially arrived in the south, representing about a fifteen percent population increase. The actual figure is likely much higher considering the number of refugees who entered surreptitiously or before American officials began counting. The majority of documented Koreans came from Japan (1.1 million) and north Korea (.85 million). Other than poverty, these refugees brought with them plenty of ideological baggage, both for and against communism. USAMGIK already had a subsistence crisis on its hands. In 1946, the Americans imported over 200,000 tons of grain. The influx of refugees aggravated the problem because the Military Government already did not have adequate fertilizers, transportation, or distribution facilities upon which it could rely. Not until 1949 did the south become more self-sufficient agriculturally, and even then it relied on imported fertilizers.

Together, these nearly insoluble issues left over from Japan’s collapse in Korea constituted the USAMGIK’s Achilles heel. Hodge and his soldiers had no desire to play

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24 Meade, Government in Korea, 190.
26 U.S. Department of State, Korea, 26; Cumings, Liberation, 60.
a diplomatic occupation game. It was unfortunate that Hodge quickly isolated himself through remarks and attitudes attributed to him. Apparently, he approved when Japanese police used lethal force to keep order until a formal surrender could be signed on 9 September. That night, heedless of the wild celebrating in Seoul, the Americans clamped a dusk-to-dawn curfew. The fruits of liberation must have “tasted slightly bitter in Korean mouths.” Patience was running thin for everyone.

Why would the Americans react with such callousness towards a liberated people? First, Hodge’s corps had absolutely no experience in civilian government or occupation. It also lacked Korean expertise – no military member of the future American Military Government had any experience with Korea’s language, culture, anti-Japanese history, or traditions. Second, when American troops arrived in the capital city of Seoul (more than three weeks after Japan’s surrender), they found absolute chaos: public transportation was non-existent, public utilities were idle, fresh water was scarce, schools were closed, and displaced persons threatened to collapse any semblance of public order and sanitation. No trained civil-affairs units arrived in Korea to officially take the reins of Military Government until mid-October, and the process was not complete until mid-November. Taking these two factors together, the cultural-political battle line had already hardened by the time many Military Government teams arrived, and in places such as the South Cholla and the two Kyongsang provinces resistance to American authority prompted a cycle of disdain and contempt.

It also did not help that Koreans perhaps looked too much like the erstwhile Japanese enemy. When Hodge looked upon the docile and defeated Japanese, he could

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30 Kennedy, *Mission to Korea*, 12, identifies the police as Korean. The difference is only in semantics since the Korean Police followed the orders of the Japanese Governor-General.
not help but draw a negative impression of the aggressive and obstreperous Koreans who clamored for immediate independence. The tendency for the Military Government to rely almost exclusively on Japanese administrators for advice and continuity, even after Hodge had dismissed these officials, rubbed salt into the wound that was Korean pride and political immaturity. In North Kyongsang province, Military Government officials in Taegu kept Japanese police officials on the payroll for a full month as “advisors” as their Korean subordinates remained on the job as “understudies.” The people regarded the police as collaborators and worthy only of vilification. The failure to comprehend the history of the deeply impressed enmity between Koreans and Japanese – the sixteenth century invasions by Hideyoshi Toyotomi, the international neglect that permitted Japan to snuff out Korean sovereignty for the first time on 22 August 1910, and the brutal repression of the 1 March 1919 Independence Movement – is in hindsight a shocking omission. This omission, and the actions that followed from it, threatened the legitimacy of the occupation, no matter how benevolent or progressive it might turn out to be.

On 12 September Hodge, under orders from MacArthur in Tokyo, dismissed the Japanese Governor-General Abe Nobuyuki and replaced him with Major General Archibald V. Arnold, a West Point graduate, infantry officer, and distinguished commander of the 7th Infantry Division. Although Arnold pledged to replace Japanese functionaries when suitable Koreans could be found or trained, he mostly retained or promoted those Koreans already entrenched in the colonial bureaucracy. Unfortunately, even after two months, the Americans remained blissfully ignorant about the ramifications of political stasis. On top of a thoughtless order perpetuating the legal strictures of the Japanese colonial era was a “non-fraternization” directive, which had the unusual characteristic of isolating the liberating forces from those who had just been liberated. Meanwhile, there was no restriction on associations with the defeated Japanese. One American officer recalled being arrested twice in 1948 for eating with

34 Cumings, Liberation, 139-40.
36 Cumings, Liberation, 139-40, 156; KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 19.
37 Cumings, Liberation, 159.
Koreans. The policy made little military sense, and it deeply offended the Koreans.\textsuperscript{38} The continual roll of affronts to Korean dignity turned many away from the Military Government and reinforced the prejudices of American administrators in Seoul.

American efforts to stabilize the twin problems of population and food supply also had uneven results. The Military Government company in Seoul judged the solution to the refugee problem as “task number one” in the fall of 1945. In November, the Kyonggi-do province (including the city of Seoul) boasted a daily rate of more than 6,000 South Korean returnees, North Korean refugees, and Japanese repatriates passing through to their final destinations.\textsuperscript{39} In an attempt to prevent the spread of communicable disease, such as smallpox and typhus, the Americans had to establish checkpoints to control refugee movement. The checkpoints dusted refugees with DDT and conducted medical inspections, but otherwise did not interfere with their movement southward.\textsuperscript{40} The result, though generous on humanitarian grounds, simply overburdened an already fragile economic and public welfare system.

Arnold also attempted agro-economic relief, which was ultimately self-defeating because fertilizer shortages restricted supply. Hoping to jump-start free-market trading, the Military Government deregulated the rice market, which had a long history of subordination to Japanese demands.\textsuperscript{41} Rice soon became a scarce commodity, and all attempts to re-regulate the market failed miserably. Speculation and black-marketeering drove prices up and supply down. Reasonably priced rice all but disappeared on the open market. By 1 January 1946, price spiraling had gotten so bad that the Military Government declared rice “a critical commodity” and ordered the National Police to

\textsuperscript{38} Robert G. Shackleton to Allan R. Millett, 11 April 1997; Millett, \textit{Their War for Korea}, 161.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{HUSAMGIK}, part III, vol. 1, 13.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 41; see also the account of one Korean family’s experience crossing the 38th parallel in Millett, \textit{Their War for Korea}, 11-13. Cf Cumings, who accuses the Americans of dividing the peninsula with a \textit{de facto} boundary, robbing, and assaulting refugees. For the latter charges, idem, \textit{Liberation}, 390.

\textsuperscript{41} “List of Accomplishments by Military Government in Korea,” 6, Arnold Papers.
stop the illegal sale, storage, or movement of rice. Needless to say, neither the National Police nor the Military Government earned any popular goodwill through these measures, nor was the rice shortage abated.42

Popular impatience with the worsening situation in Korea resulted in persistent agitation and confrontation with American troops. Eventually Hodge had to reconsider the propriety of using American soldiers to suppress local uprisings, which increasingly became more recalcitrant, nationalist, and (due to severe economic hardship) susceptible to socialist propaganda and agitation. Therefore, in mid-November the Military Government initiated the first steps towards a national defense force, which of course, were not without controversy. Because the requirements for internal security complicated the issues of political and economic stability, and as individual political partisans emerged with armed followers, the potential for continued violence became intolerable for the Military Government.43 Therefore, on 13 November, Arnold published Ordinance Number 28, creating the Office of National Defense within the Military Government, which oversaw the Bureau of Armed Forces the Bureau of Police. Furthermore, this ordinance abolished all armed groups not sanctioned by the Military Government:

No persons or groups of persons will engage in any form of recruiting, training, organizing, or equipping of any persons for any form of police, military, or naval activities, or engage in any activities . . . within the jurisdiction of police or armed forces . . .. 44

It was hoped that Ordnance 28 and the subsequent creation of a Korean military organization under the control of the Military Government would reduce the potential for violence and remove a great military and political burden from the Americans.45

42 Every province reported acute rice shortages in the winter of 1945-46. Raids in Chunchon impounded sizeable amounts of rice at an illegal sake factory; HUSAMGIK, part III, vol. 1, 30-31, 43, 73, 143.
43 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 21, 62.
45 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 63.
Two days later, an incident in the village of Namwon (North Cholla province) underscored the desirability of a Korean military-security force to support the National Police. The incident began when local police attempted to enforce a Military Government ordinance to turn over all Japanese property held by local “People’s Committees.” This the committees refused to do, and when the police arrested several committee leaders, spontaneous riots erupted. American reports claimed that up to 1,000 civilians besieged the Namwon police station, which American troops had to defend. After giving a warning to the crowd to disperse, the troops fired in the air and marched forward with leveled bayonets. In the scuffle a number of Koreans were killed or injured (including one policeman stabbed to death), and up to fifty agitators were arrested. The bloody confrontation at Namwon did much to solidify the idea to disband the numerous private “armies” and other armed groups, and to establish a national defense force to relieve American troops of internal security missions.

Although Hodge immediately approved a concept to recruit and train 45,000 Koreans according to American standards and doctrine, it soon became clear that a plan for a “national” defense force would be hard to implement without Soviet approval. Therefore, Hodge temporized and assigned Colonel Arthur Champeny, the first Director of National Defense, two tasks regarding the creation of a Korean national defense establishment. First, he was to devise a plan to establish the kernel for a Korean national defense force, “in order to prepare for the eventual independence of Korea . . .” This kernel grew into Korean Constabulary, with the mission to support local police in times of disorder or when called upon by the Military Governor. Accordingly Champeny’s plan (also known as the “Bamboo Plan”) constituted the Constabulary as a 25,000-man police reserve armed with light infantry-type weapons and given basic infantry tactical training. Hodge approved Champeny’s concept and directed the Constabulary to begin activating units in January 1946.

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48 HUSAMGIK, part II, 69-70.
For the second task, Champeny and his American staff began to implement the Bamboo Plan by recruiting and training officers, formulating an organizational structure, and providing military equipment and training to units as they formed. All three aspects of this task were interrelated, and the relational integrity of these interrelated functions determined the effectiveness and survivability of the Korean Constabulary. Later, they would influence the fortunes of the Republic of Korea Army; therefore, it is necessary to examine how the Americans constructed Korea’s first national military establishment of the twentieth century.

Beginnings: January 1946 – June 1946

The basic premise behind the formation of a Korean national defense was articulated in a document called “Estimate of the Military and Political Situation,” which postulated that any future Korean state (presumably one united with Seoul as the capital) might face military threats from the Soviet Union, Nationalist China (maybe even from a Communist China), northern Korea, or Japan. A Communist backed northern invasion combined with a popular southern uprising also was considered as a possibility. Therefore, the American planners decreed that “Korean leaders and troops must be indoctrinated, during training, with the superiority of U.S. Armed force and military doctrine over those of other powers.” Unsurprisingly, the Americans committed to fashion a Korean army in the image of the United States Army, while being only partially aware of the deep cultural, social, and economic differences that would make the experience, motivation, and caliber of Korean officers and soldiers completely different from their American counterparts.

It was in the arena of officer recruitment and selection that the officers assigned to the Director of National Defense – who were the individual precursors of KMAG – got their first taste of the challenges in building an indigenous military. The Americans

50 Report of Board of Proceedings of Board of Officers, 18 November 1945, Defensive Plans – 1945, XXIV Corps G-2 Historical Section, USAFIK, RG 554.

began the process by seeking qualified candidates who would likely be compatible with American military doctrine and culture. The material that the Americans had to work with for selecting officers was raw. For the level of responsibility they would assume, potential Korean officers were young and inexperienced in the art and science of modern warfare as understood and practiced by the Americans. The most promising candidates (those with some kind of military experience) came from varied and incompatible political and military backgrounds: Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) or its surrogate Manchukuo Army, the Korean nationalist “Restoration Army,” (Kwangbok-kun) and the Nationalist Chinese Army. It was an unenviable task to choose the officers who only months before had been fighting against each other but would now be the standard bearers for a new national Korean army.

Without any type of system in place to recruit officers, the Americans simply invited representatives of militia groups and any Koreans with military experience to apply for commissions. A number of men assembled at the old Capitol Building in late November, where Colonel Reamer Argo, Champeny’s deputy, explained the Constabulary program and encouraged them to join. Gradually, word spread that the Americans were accepting applications at the Methodist Theology Seminary at Sudaemun and at the Japanese military post at Taenung. Aspirants who showed up were interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel John T. Marshall (first chief of the Constabulary) and Major David Rees. The Americans invited suitable candidates to remain, and as American officers reported to receive their regimental assignments they picked up three or four officers. By such an informal procedure, the first six of eight planned regiments of the Constabulary were formed.

Within four months, the first 110 officers of the future army of the Republic of Korea received their commissions into the Constabulary. Of these officers, all but two had service in the Japanese Army or its Manchurian surrogate. Twenty-two had


53 Lim Sun-ha to Allan R. Millett, 29 December 2003 and 1 January 2004.

54 *HUSAMGIK*, part II, 70-72; KIMH, *KW*, vol. 1, 64.
graduated from military academies in Japan and Manchuria; seventy-two had entered Japanese service from the universities after receiving officer training. Of this group, seventy-five became general officers and thirteen rose to the position of chief of staff. With this kernel of an officer corps established, the Americans proceeded to flesh out the remaining parts of the Constabulary organization.

Champeny’s Bamboo Plan envisioned the formation of the Korean Constabulary with an authorized strength of 25,000 men and officers, a proposal which the JCS approved for implementation in January 1946. On 14 January 1946, the Korean National Defense Constabulary was officially established with an authorization for 25,000 men. With an approved plan and officer training already in progress, the Americans then turned to tackle soldier recruitment, equipment, and training.

The Bamboo Plan envisioned that each province in the American zone would support the formation and maintenance of one regiment, locally recruiting a company at a time until the regiment’s manpower complement had been achieved. Keeping within the intent of providing an emergency reserve for the National Police, each company table of organization and equipment (TO&E) mirrored an American infantry company, minus the weapons platoon (figure 2.1).

With each company’s personnel complement over strength by twenty percent, excess soldiers became a trained cadre as leavening for future expansion. After completion of initial training, this cadre would separate with an American training team of two officers and four enlisted men to recruit, assemble, and equip the next company.

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55 Only two officers came from Nationalist Chinese army, and no one was commissioned who had been part of the Restoration Army; Huh Nam-sung, “The Quest for a Bulwark of Anti-Communism: The Formation of the Republic of Korea Army Officer Corps and its Political Socialization, 1945-1950” (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1987), 147; and, Millett, “The Forgotten Army,” 8-9.


57 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 66.

58 I.e., no machine guns, mortars, rocket launchers and other heavy weapons; Ibid., 65.
A third company subsequently completed the activation program for the first battalion. Two more battalions were to be formed in a similar manner. In this way, eight full-strength regiments would be active by May 1946 (table 2.1).

![Figure 2.1: Table of Organization of a Constabulary Company, ca. 1946](image)

Recruitment progressed slowly; by the end of April 1946, the entire Constabulary numbered only 3,000 men. American observers noted that there seemed to be little enthusiasm “for a Korean army as such.” In fact, many Koreans identified the Constabulary too closely with the Japanese-era colonial police, which had become a hated institution. The American and Korean officers attempted to disguise reality by implying that the Constabulary was actually the precursor organization to a national army.

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and by marching recruits in formation. The Military Government offered little incentive for young Korean men to join the Constabulary, whose conditions for food, discipline, and treatment “fell somewhere between the harsh standards of the Japanese army

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regiment</th>
<th>Activation Date</th>
<th>Place of Activation</th>
<th>Initial Commander</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>15 January 1946</td>
<td>Taenung</td>
<td>Capt. Chae Byong-duk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>28 February 1946</td>
<td>Taejon</td>
<td>Capt. Lee Hyong-kun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>26 February 1946</td>
<td>Iri, Kunsan, Chunju</td>
<td>Lt. Kim Paik-il</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>15 February 1946</td>
<td>Kwangju</td>
<td>Lt. Kim Hong-jun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>29 January 1946</td>
<td>Pusan</td>
<td>2nd Lt. Park Byong-kwon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>18 February 1946</td>
<td>Taegu</td>
<td>2nd Lt. Kim Yong-hwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>7 February 1946</td>
<td>Chongju</td>
<td>2nd Lt. Min Ki-sik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>1 April 1946</td>
<td>Chunchon</td>
<td>Lt. Kim Jong-kap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Regimental Activation, Korean Constabulary.61

and the treatment of Japanese POWs.”62 Not surprisingly, recruitment became much easier once the National Police began to crack down on leftist groups. However, this new “source” of manpower came at a cost. As more and more men of questionable loyalty found refuge in the Constabulary, it called into question the Constabulary’s stated purpose to reinforce police authority. As the political environment in Korea became increasingly volatile, the foundation of the Constabulary itself began to crack.63

Equipment and training for the Constabulary consisted initially almost entirely of cast-off Japanese rifles, uniforms, and tactics; and as such, gave quite the wrong

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61 Lim Sun-ha to Allan R. Millett, 29 December 2003; KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 70.


impression about the Constabulary’s role, not to mention the negative effects on its ability to function as designed. The mix of Japanese trained instructors, Japanese weapons and ammunition, together with American doctrine and experience led to inefficient, and at times regressive, results. The lack of uniform standards for equipment, training, and doctrine also frustrated the best intentions of the Americans.

For example, American advisors recorded the difficulty simply to implement a communications network within the Constabulary. XXIV Corps signal officers assigned such a low priority to Korean communications that American radio channels could not be relied upon, and the National Police channels were only slightly better. Telephone service was non-existent. By the end of 1946, creative staff work and energetic scrounging made available enough American and Japanese “cast-off” equipment to create a fragile communications network. Still, the Americans were frustrated, and they assumed that Korean operators were not capable of handling a network efficiently. They believed “the average Korean radio operator was not able to grasp the basic idea of circuit discipline, nor could he resist the temptation to tinker with the insides of the equipment. It was only after long and arduous hours . . . that the Korean became fully instructed in this procedure.”

The Americans’ self-generated pressure to field the Constabulary without suitable amounts of equipment precluded a thorough, hands-on instructional approach that would have solved this particular problem. Only in late 1949 did American equipment (mostly surplus weapons and supplies left behind by units of the XXIV Corps deactivated or redeployed to Japan and the United States) completely displace Japanese supplies, allowing a more careful approach to training, which produced beneficial results.

Bureaucratic infighting complicated the Constabulary’s other teething troubles. From the beginning, the Constabulary competed with the National Police for weapons,

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64 Lim Sun-ha, Major General, Republic of Korea Army (ret.), interview by Allan R. Millett, Yongsan, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 30 November and 1 December 1994, transcript, provided to the author.


men, and political support. Not unnaturally, the National Police sought to undermine and eventually absorb the Constabulary, which threatened its grasp on political power, prestige, and internal dissent. Koreans of dubious loyalty to the government in the south often sought refuge in the Constabulary, and some of them even became officers.\textsuperscript{67}

Under pressure from the Americans, who perhaps measured success for the Constabulary in terms of numbers, little fuss was made about who entered so long as candidates had all their limbs and teeth.\textsuperscript{68} As a result, the Constabulary accepted a large number of leftists and trained them to use military weapons and tactics. Over time, many of its units (as well as two classes of officer candidates) soon became thoroughly infiltrated by militant socialists. Violence between Constabulary and National Police units was commonplace, and its occurrence questioned the utility of the Constabulary as a reserve for the national police.\textsuperscript{69}

Despite these problems, the Koreans and Americans had taken the first steps to form a national defense organization. As more and more units began to congeal as battalions and regiments, the advisors (who at this point functioned as \textit{de facto} commanders) then had to face the growing and complex challenge to train this pseudo-military Constabulary. Although simple enough administratively, training Korean soldiers proved to be much more difficult than training American ones. Since Constabulary units had a first duty to support police forces – a frequent requirement as popular discontent fuelled by food shortages and poor harvests exploded into violence – and each Constabulary “regiment” was at a different level of organization and

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 208.

\textsuperscript{68}Ibid.; Millett, “Captain Hausman,” 518-19, and Lim Sun-ha’s recollection in Millett, Their War for Korea, 82.

\textsuperscript{69}Park, “Dragon for the Stream,” 25; G-2 Periodic Report no. 191 (7\textsuperscript{th} Division) and no. 640 (USAFIK), Korean National Defense, XXIV Corps G-2 Historical Section, RG 554. The August 1947 report from the 7\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Division details an incident where Constabulary soldiers (presumably with the approval of their officers) commandeered the unit’s only vehicle and vandalized the headquarters of the rightist Korean National Democratic Party and abducted ten members found therein. In September, a Constabulary soldier assaulted Chang Taik-sang, chief of the Seoul metropolitan police, who called the Constabulary a “well-known group of law breakers and anarchists” and later declared, “[the Constabulary] is a constant threat to the police all over Korea.”
competence, training regimes had to be improvised.\textsuperscript{70} Prudent advisors recognized the value of both on-the-job training as well as cooperative training with neighboring American units.\textsuperscript{71} These techniques were inefficient, frustrating, and perhaps not even that effective, but they were a start, and the Americans were confident that overall conditions would improve with time.\textsuperscript{72}

This assumption was only partially accurate. Material factors would get better, but too much depended on American domestic politics and the largess of the occupation forces in Korea. The Korean economy was in no condition to divert resources or labor towards military material. Language barriers continued to be an issue throughout the tenure of the advisory groups, and no truly satisfactory solution ever revealed itself. A popular (and understandable) shortcut was to recruit officers who already spoke some English, but this policy did not guarantee a correlation between language ability and military competence. Nor did simple linguistic compatibility overcome all of the nuances of the Korean language. As a result, Americans were often held hostage by the skills of their interpreters.\textsuperscript{73} Bureaucratic turf wars and political factionalism also complicated the life of the Constabulary. These non-material factors also would improve over time, but once the Constabulary began to be involved in sustained combat operations, these issues were pushed aside and remained unaddressed.

\textit{The Constabulary at Peace, June 1946-February 1948}

By the summer of 1946, the justification for military government in Korea, the disarming and repatriation of Japanese, was gone. Gradually, the Americans transferred governmental to Koreans, and by November 1946, Koreans occupied the chief posts of most governmental agencies with the Americans as advisors. This change did not alter

\textsuperscript{70} Sawyer, \textit{Advisors in Korea}, 24-25.

\textsuperscript{71} Robert Shackleton, Telephone interview by Author, 29 November 2003, notes.

\textsuperscript{72} Sawyer, \textit{Advisors in Korea}, 90.

the hard realities of continued food shortages, persistent unemployment, and continued frustration with American insensitivity. This frustration finally exploded in the Autumn Harvest Uprisings. The Uprisings began a series of political and social conflicts that spread throughout the countryside and escalated into war – the first campaign of the Korean conflict – against the American occupation, then against the nascent Republic of Korea. Clearly time for a peaceful transition to a united Korean authority was running out, and even the loosely organized violence in early 1948 served to accelerate American plans for Korean solutions. The war of subversion had begun and would not be put down until the bloody aftermath of rebellion and mutiny in the Constabulary itself.

During this troubled time, the XXIV Corps retained the mission to maintain order south of the 38th parallel while remaining on duty as the neglected step-child of the MacArthur-led occupation of Japan. Soldiering in the Korean Occupation was not like Japan. While the Soviets and Americans dickered over the fate of the entire peninsula, agreeing to a largely American proposal of a “trusteeship” period of five years, considerable agitation and violence brewed up in the American zone. An attempted coup against the Military Government on New Year’s Day 1946 demonstrated the depth of anti-trusteeship sentiment, and the assassination of Song Chin-yu, a moderate leader of the Korean Democratic Party, pointed toward increasing levels of political violence in the coming months. Communist-inspired agitation also increased during the occupation’s first year, to include a large-scale counterfeiting enterprise uncovered on 3 May 1946. The Americans accused Korean communists of using stolen Military Government paper and leftist newspaper presses. As a result, popular sympathy for the Communists dwindled and their activists went underground. General Hodge claimed to be “winning the peace,” a task he took very seriously. Although he relied on naked force to keep the Koreans “in line” he also took measures to ensure the proper decorum of American

74 The foreign ministers of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union met at Moscow in December 1945 to discuss, among other things, how best to implement previous agreements on Korean independence. The resulting five-year trusteeship agreement was wildly unpopular with all Korean parties. On instructions from Moscow or from political expediency, the Korean Communists changed their opposition to tepid support; HUSAMGIK, part 1, 228-241; Cumings, Liberation, 215-227.

75 USAMGIK, Political Developments in Korea (Draft), 4-6, Arnold Papers.
servicemen in Korea. He understood that to establish and maintain law and order, reestablish orderly governmental organs, and train Koreans to assume responsible positions in the government of South Korea, the Americans would have to live up to every principle they espoused. This sentiment was just as applicable to Constabulary advisors.

Charismatic Americans like Lieutenant Colonel Russell Barros and Captain James Hausman, who became Barros’s executive officer in the fall of 1946, played key roles to keep the Constabulary independent of the National Police and to instill in its officer corps a sense of patriotic duty and professionalism. This was not an easy task given that these few officers (less than ten) had to manage the torrid pace of unit activation, provide guidance for individual and unit training, and find the equipment for training and actual operations. Understanding Korea’s poor economy, the small number of qualified advisors, and the small base of indigenous military experience upon which to draw, it is something of a miracle that the Constabulary could field a force at all.

By June, despite efforts to recruit an additional two battalions for each provincial regiment the Constabulary remained far from filling its authorized billets of 25,000 men. Within another six months, the Constabulary nearly doubled in size, but it still remained woefully undermanned, and each of its “regiments” was in reality a loose organization of one to three companies. In keeping with the stated purpose of the Constabulary, training was limited to individual drill, rifle handling exercises, and riot control. Even when Constabulary units received more powerful weaponry, such as mortars, no one was trained to employ indirect fire, or to call for and observe indirect fire. Training had little relationship to combat tasks expected of a real military organization.

For the few Americans designated as Constabulary advisors, there was too little time and way too much to accomplish. Each advisor, who typically oversaw one

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76 Headquarters, USAFIK, Our Mission in Korea, undated document (but likely written in late 1947), Box 9, Arno P. Mowitz, Jr. Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

77 KMAG Historical Report, 1.

78 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 23, n53.

Constabulary regiment (which could have subordinate units spread over an area as large as 350 square miles), was responsible for recruitment, induction, organization, administration, and training. Each of these duties ordinarily commands the attention of a full staff section in any modern military; for young majors and captain, the challenge could be overwhelming. Each advisor essentially relied on his own ingenuity and knowledge to discharge his duties for training in “methods of internal security.”\textsuperscript{80} There were, however, several special factors that influenced, and would continue to influence, the training of the Korean Constabulary and the future ROK Army. Among these were the educational level and general health of soldiers, lack of suitable training materials and training areas, awkward language issues, and the ability of individual advisors to persuade and lead their Korean counterparts.

Soldier health and education continually influenced the fortunes of the Constabulary. In comparison to American standards, Koreans had a low level of general health. Nearly one-third of recruits and inductees were rejected because of various health problems, such as tuberculosis, intestinal disorders, and other communicable diseases. For a population that lived on the margin for so long, the rigors of soldiering often left many Constabularymen at higher risk of illness, which compromised training and readiness. Also from a Western perspective, the Koreans ranked low educationally. Although the Koreans prized learning, a high level of functional illiteracy meant that many of the standard training procedures used in the American army were ill-suited to training Korean soldiers. All training had to be presented in a visual format, and reinforced through demonstration and repetitive drill. Such measures can be effective for introductory tasks such as rifle manual of arms or basic military movement, but they are time consuming and mindless; add to this mixture the inability to communicate except

\textsuperscript{80} Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 23-24.
through an interpreter and the result would test the patience and flexibility of advisor, trainer, and trainee. For more complex tasks, or for technical skills training, illiteracy was a major handicap.\textsuperscript{81}

The advisors never believed Koreans lacked aptitude to be soldiers. On the contrary, one senior advisor said that the Koreans’ ability to learn military arts depended in great part on their “educational level, ability of the leaders, and efficiency of the training program.” Furthermore, considering that Koreans “[were] not accustomed to telephones, radios, modern weapons and mechanical equipment to have obtained as much information in as short time as they have, it appears that they have an inherent aptitude for training and learning new methods.”\textsuperscript{82} More important in determining the effectiveness of Constabulary training was usually the availability of training materials and space. Advisors fortunate to be close to American occupation troops could leverage their contacts of ammunition, equipment, and training space. In more remote areas, advisors had to rely on make-shift training aids and less realistic exercises.\textsuperscript{83} Training manuals also were in short supply, and there was never a completely satisfactory program to translate and publish American manuals.\textsuperscript{84} In August 1948 as economic conditions improved (paper shortages precluded earlier action) the Constabulary headquarters did make prodigious efforts to get field and technical manuals translated into Korean and issued to field units.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{81} Not until after the war did the ROKA institute a three-week literacy program that reduced the percentage of trainees required to repeat various phases of training from twenty to five percent; HQ, Eighth United States Army Korea, Experience and Lessons Learned in Training the ROK Army, 30-31, 8\textsuperscript{th} U.S. Army Experiences and Lessons Learned, Classified Organizational History Files, Military History Office, USARPAC, RG 550.

\textsuperscript{82} Experience and Lessons Learned in Training the ROK Army, 31.

\textsuperscript{83} Sawyer, \textit{Advisors in Korea}, 25.

\textsuperscript{84} Major Arno P. Mowitz, a senior advisor for the ROK 2\textsuperscript{nd} Division, received his division’s complement of forty-seven American field manuals in October 1949. He also had to sign a statement that “I will, to the best of my ability, maintain control over, and pass on to my successor, the above listed manuals.” Box 9, Mowitz Papers.

\textsuperscript{85} Headquarters, Korean Constabulary G-3, Request for 16,000,000 Won to Translate U.S. Field Manuals, 3 August 1948, AG Files 300 1948; Provisional Military Advisory Group (1948-49) and Korean Military Advisory Group (1949-1953), RG 554.
Because of these great structural handicaps, much of the success and failure of the Constabulary rested on the talents of the Korean officers and energy of their individual advisors. As previously noted, the language barrier was a tough, but not insurmountable obstacle. Even so, qualified interpreters often struggled with the incompatibility of military English with Korean. Many words and concepts easily accepted and understood by the advisors were baffling if translated literally into Korean. For example, “headlight” became “the rice bowl with the candle inside mounted on the fender of a truck” and “machine gun” was called the “gun that shoots very fast.”

Mediocre officers could be paralyzed by the frustration of having to speak and move at such an agonizingly slow pace. The great demands of such austere cultural isolation were also hard to deal with and contributed no small amount of friction between the Americans and Koreans. Therefore, making officers quickly became the first priority for the Constabulary.

The process to build a professional Korean officer corps in a society that viewed warriors as one of the lower classes was slow and halting. The most significant problem was determining whom to commission as officers. There were many applicants with varying degrees of qualification and reliability. Officer procurement and training changed with the requirements of the Constabulary and the situation on the ground. On 1 May, eighty-eight candidates began training at the Officer Training School (OTS), located at Taenung. These candidates included veterans not picked during the initial accessions process, noncommissioned officers, and promising enlisted men from the existing Constabulary regiments. Their common traits were military experience in foreign armies and the motivation to form the nucleus of a national Korean army. As could be expected with the ad hoc nature of the School in the early days (the First Class graduated in seven weeks), training was limited to small arms (Japanese rifles), drill and formations with American instructors using American doctrine, and small unit tactics taught by Korean instructors using Japanese doctrine. The end product must have been a comical sight if the business had not been so serious. Classes Two through Four continued to reflect the hectic pace of Constabulary expansion and the desire to put

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86 Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 63.

officers in front of troops. Officer candidates were drawn mostly from Constabulary enlisted soldiers (though the Second Class was open to civilian candidates), and their confused training regimen lasted an average of three months.88

Not until the Fifth Class (October 1947-April 1948) were slots opened to competitive selection from the civilian population at large. Four hundred candidates, many of whom were non-communist refugees from the north, received three months of recruit training before beginning a second three-month curriculum of officer development, which for the first time featured U.S. training doctrine with U.S. weapons, equipment, and field manuals. This class produced 380 officers commissioned as second lieutenants. This class also established the template to be used by other classes dominated by civilian candidates (Seven, Eight, and Nine).89 The Tenth Class, also composed of civilians, was also known as the first cadet class of the Korean Military Academy, and it lasted for one year.90

As successful as the OTS was at turning out officers, it fostered a number of difficult problems that resulted in friction between the Koreans and Americans, but most significantly, it handicapped the effectiveness of Korean troops in the field. Leadership weaknesses – particularly inexperience and maturity – would continue to frustrate American commanders, from KMAG all the way up to the Chief of Staff of the Army, until the conclusion of the Armistice in 1953.91

The first problem was the nature of the officer corps itself. Although Koreans are a very homogeneous group culturally and linguistically, the pool of officers brought into the Constabulary during 1946-1948 came from four different groups, all with dissimilar backgrounds, motivations, and aptitudes. Veterans from foreign armies such as the Imperial Japanese Army, the Manchukuo Army, or the Nationalist Chinese Army made up the bulk of officer commissioned either directly or through the OTS. These

90 Ibid., 156-58; Park, “Dragon from the Stream,” 21; Kim, Politics of Military Revolution, 42.
91 See for example, General Collins’s recollection of ROK officer development and potential in his War in Peacetime, 314-16.
candidates, for obvious reasons, recommended themselves to the Americans who were looking to staff the expanding Constabulary with men who knew enough to march, salute, fire a rifle, and give commands. However, these officers lacked legitimate national credentials in the eyes of many Koreans. For those who served in Japanese armies, their presence (and sanction by the Americans) was an affront to Korean dignity. Japanese-trained officers often did not care for the administrative requirements of soldiering, and they tended to avoid having to teach or train their soldiers in the Western manner. The discipline they exercised was harsh and physical, often bordering on abusive in the eyes of the Americans. They also had to unlearn tactics and techniques that were incompatible with American methods and weapons. These officers, prized for their military experience, nevertheless complicated efforts to produce an army along the democratic American model. Despite these drawbacks, the foreign army veterans were the men most likely to make a viable corps of army leadership. The light curriculum and short duration of these classes (an average of two and a half months) testify to the assumptions and strategy of filling billets as quickly as possible.

The second pool of potential officers came from the Kwangbok-kun (Restoration Army). Formed at Chungking, China, on 17 September 1940, the Kwangbok-kun never amounted to much, though its founders had high hopes for what Korean soldiers would do to fight against the Japanese occupation forces in Korea. Upon formation, the Kwangbok-kun had no soldiers, as it waited for deserters and Korean expatriates to fill its ranks. When the war ended in August 1945, the Kwangbok-kun had perhaps 600 “soldiers” in its ranks, of which 200 claimed to be officers. Trained for low-level operations of infiltration, reconnaissance, and sabotage, the Kwangbok-kun had no

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92 Because of the shortage of officers in the Constabulary as late as the summer of 1948, an intensive recruitment campaign canvassed 1,300 former officers of the Chinese, Manchurian, and Japanese armies to join the Constabulary; History of the DIS, 31.

93 Lim Sun-ha, interview.


95 Cumings, Liberation, 173-74.
experience with real fighting, military discipline, or structured training methods. Consequently, the Americans’ hope to rely on these “veterans” to counter the negative image of the Japanese officers was doomed to fail. Cumings believes that the Americans’ presumptive plans backfired as prominent Kwangbok-kun personalities, such as Yi Pom-sok flatly and proudly refused to join “this ‘Constabulary’ under a military government.” As a result, the Restoration Army contributed little to the officer corps during the Occupation: only two sub-classes of five weeks duration graduated during the period of the Constabulary’s existence.

The third group were noncommissioned officers or enlisted men (classes Two through Four, Six and Seven). These candidates, despite their military background, enervated the Constabulary. Many leftists and potential subversives fled into the Constabulary to escape from the National Police, entered the OTS, and received commissions. Officers from these classes played notorious roles during the mutinies of 1948. One officer, Park Chung-hee, was actually a Communist sentenced to life imprisonment for his part in the 1948 mutinies. Park eventually was rehabilitated, and he later rejoined the ROK Army, but only in exchange for information regarding other subversive elements in the Constabulary.

The remaining OTS classes produced officers from civilian candidates. Many of these officers were Christian refugees from the north, and so had a deep antipathy toward communism. They were also educated and they often expressed disdain toward their comrades who were tainted by collaboration, patronage, or inherited social status. However, their ideological purity and sense of innate intellectual or cultural superiority

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97 Cumings, *Liberation*, 175.
98 Huh, “Bulwark of Anti-Communism,” 179. Kwangbok-kun veterans did increase their representation within the officer corps after the inauguration of the Republic of Korea in August 1948. They were known for their intense nationalism and anti-communism; Park, “Dragon from the Stream,” 41-42.
99 Lim Sun-ha’s recollection in Millett, *Their War for Korea*, 83.
101 Ibid., 87; Millett, *Their War for Korea*, 81.
could get in the way with the Americans’ attempt to imbue OTS graduates with a sense of military professionalism. For example, the Eighth Class, which had a large number of northerners in its ranks, received a high dose of ideological training, which emphasized “spirit” over “skill” as a virtue for Korean officers. It is unclear how this not so subtle shift in emphasis occurred, but it is clear that it was not effective. Fully a third of the 1,264 graduates of the Eighth Class who began the Korean War in 1950 as senior lieutenants became casualties in the desperate fighting early in the war.\(^{102}\)

Under ordinary circumstances, military training, discipline, and subordination will break down differences between social groups to produce a cohesive, tightly knit officer corps. In the extraordinary situation of the Constabulary, such socialization could not occur. Time was the critical factor. The Americans insisted on minimal entrance requirements, which meant that the quality of officer candidates was not always the best for the Constabulary. So long as candidates were at least 21 years of age, had no criminal record, and possessed the equivalent of an American 11\(^{th}\) grade education, they were accepted into the ranks. The Constabulary soon gained a reputation for being a haven for leftists and others pursued by the National Police. The Third and Fourth Classes (graduated in 1947) in particular were thoroughly permeated with Communists and leftist sympathizers who had enlisted in the Constabulary.\(^{103}\) In many cases, the Constabulary admitted soldiers and officers who had no interest in seeing the Constabulary become an effective force for internal security.\(^{104}\)

Time also pressured the length of training officers received. The longest classes were those devoted to civilian candidates, who received three months basic soldier instruction followed by three months officer training. Of the first nine OTS classes, only one received more than three months of officer training.\(^{105}\) The Americans recognized the futility of trying to establish a coherent and competent officer corps based entirely on “ninety-day wonders.” Consequently, the Tenth Class was the First Cadet class of what

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102 Huh, “Bulwark of Anti-communism,” 166.

103 Ibid., 208.

104 Kim, Politics of Military Revolution, 40-41.

105 The Fourth Class received four months training; Huh, “Bulwark of Anti-communism,” 179.
would become the Korean Military Academy. This class was drawn entirely from competitive civilian examination and was intended to last two years. Its graduates received their commissions early to feed the immediate need for officers after the North Korean invasion in June 1950.106

By mid-1948, the OTS was operating at an acceptable level of efficiency with about 200 officers receiving commissions every three months.107 Yet, the lack of a coherent military culture shared by the officer corps, the haphazard nature of their training and socialization, and inability to mature in judgment and experience prior to being committed to combat constituted grave weaknesses in the Constabulary’s fighting capability. As a result, too often Americans had to overstep the advisory boundary attempting (not always successfully) to regain control of a situation before turning it back over to their Korean counterparts. Over time, this practice became less frequent, and it was a true measure of Korean officer proficiency when advisors never had to make decisions about actual control of Korean forces. By January 1950, the worst of these problems – the ideological ones – had been dealt with, particularly after the Americans and the ROKA purged the officer corps of subversive elements.108

In May 1946, Colonel Terrill (“Terrible”) E. Price became Director, Department of National Defense, which shortly was renamed the Department of Internal Security. Because of the many political and economic problems plaguing the country, there was little enthusiasm for putting resources into a Korean army. Price was lucky to get five additional officers assigned to the Constabulary between June and August. These officers immediately were sent to command the Constabulary regiments forming in the field.109 The situation these officers found defied their definition of what an army should be: training ranges and facilities were decrepit or non-existent; weapons, uniforms, supplies, and ammunition were scarce; Constabulary recruits (could not be called

106 Park, “Dragon from the Stream,” 42; Huh, “Bulwark of Anti-communism,” 179; see also Millett, Their War for Korea, 63-67 for one officer’s journey into the Korean Military Academy’s 11th Class.

107 History of the DIS, 31.


“soldiers” yet) barely met western standards for fitness and health. It was a nightmare assignment for most officers, who found themselves literally at the end of a long supply line stretching from San Francisco to Honolulu to Tokyo, then finally to Korea.¹¹⁰

In this environment, personal relationships became crucial to success. The Constabulary advisors had to cement a social and professional bond with their Korean counterparts just as quickly and effectively as they did with fellow officers assigned to nearby occupation units. Additionally, the American Constabulary officers assumed roles as salesmen, mediators, auditors, and commanders.¹¹¹ One particular officer distinguished himself as the catalyst to make the Constabulary a viable organization that one day would mature into the Republic of Korea Army. Captain James H. Hausman, a reserve officer who fought the Germans in Europe, arrived in Korea in August 1946. His first assignment was as commander of the 8th Regiment, based at the north-central city of Chunchon. He did not stay there long because Colonel Barros, chief of the Constabulary, recognized Hausman’s talent for administration and organization and brought him back to Seoul to be his executive officer.¹¹² Over the next four years, Hausman shepherded the Constabulary’s expansion to 50,000 men, helped purge its ranks of communist subversives, negotiated for the “lease” of American weapons and ammunition, and navigated the dangerous political waters between the rising nationalist Syngman Rhee, the Korean National Police, and the American Military Government. Hausman probably did more than any other American to establish a professional bedrock that would become the moral support of the future ROK Army. He set the standard for other officers who would forge bonds of trust between KMAG and the ROKA, bonds that proved strong

¹¹⁰ George McCune inferred that American GI’s took the occupation’s codename “Blacklist 40” to heart, seeing that they were at the end of the line for personnel and supplies, McCune, Korea Today, 1; initially, all Constabulary units were equipped almost exclusively with Japanese weapons and uniforms. Only starting in Sept 1946 did American issue begin to replace Japanese cast-offs, KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 67. One advisor felt that he was one of the “forgotten kids of the [U.S.] Army,” Shackleton interview.

¹¹¹ Cf Cumings, The Roaring of the Cataract, 283ff, who accuses the Americans of exercising far more authority and responsibility over the Constabulary than they possibly could have. It is certain that some Americans were enthusiastic supporters of the Constabulary and that they did their best to advise and guide Korean actions; however, by 1948 Korean officers commanded Constabulary units, and the results of the subsequent counter-mutiny and counter-guerrilla campaigns demonstrate that Korean Constabularymen were the “doers”, not the Americans.

¹¹² Millett, “Captain Hausman,” 513; Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 23.
enough to reform, rebuild, and recommit the ROKA to its decisive role as guardian of an independent southern state. Hausman accomplished this extraordinary feat by a complete immersion in the culture and language of the Koreans, a trait that did not necessarily find approval from his superiors. In so doing, he emerged in the eyes of many Koreans and fellow advisors as the father of the ROK Army.\footnote{Lim Sun-ha recollection in Millett, Their War for Korea, 80ff; Kennedy, Mission to Korea, 174; Millett, “Captain Hausman,” 527.}

Getting the Constabulary to its future authorized paper strength of 50,000 was no mean task. Because the Constabulary competed for resources and manpower with the National Police and the other military government departments, Hausman had to make a strong case to get what the Constabulary needed, which was more men. Unfortunately, his and the Korean officers efforts to screen recruits failed in the face of mounting pressure from Colonel Price, who insisted on speed. Later, Hausman admitted that a thorough screening process would have been time-consuming, but in the long run feasible and beneficial. Leftist infiltration both into the officer corps and the ranks reduced the Constabulary’s effectiveness and it opened it up to charges from the national police that the Constabulary was merely a haven for Communists.\footnote{James H. Hausman to Allan R. Millett, 13 December 1994.}

Hausman also had to fight to get the under strength Constabulary relieved from non-military duties that interfered with training or internal security operations. One such distraction was the requirement to guard “vital installations.”\footnote{Headquarters, Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG) to the Korean Constabulary, Staff Study on Plans to Increase Present Strength of Korean Constabulary, 6 November 1948, Hausman Papers.} In the aftermath of the Autumn Harvest Rebellion (discussed below), and with the emergence of an organized communist front, the South Korean Labor Party (SKLP), incidents of vandalism and sabotage escalated, which naturally drained lifeblood from the south’s economic recovery. Constabulary units found themselves ordered to guard various valuable targets, which groups of communists and leftist guerrillas attacked with regularity: police offices, mines, railroads, bridges, wealthy landowners.\footnote{Cumings, Roaring of the Cataract, 276.} As the Constabulary’s anti-guerrilla
activities picked up, it was impracticable, as well as imprudent, to expect up to 10,000 Constabularymen to stand guard over telephone poles. It is unclear if Hausman was successful in getting this mission passed back to the national police, but his required intervention demonstrates how easily the Constabulary could be diverted from what many perceived to be its real, if unrealized, mission. Training during the first year of the Constabulary consisted mainly of public security, bayonet drills, rifle handling exercises, and riot control. It was not much in the way of an army.

The Department of Internal Security’s first military challenge came soon enough, during the Autumn Harvest Uprisings. Progress in the transfer of power from American administrators to Koreans could not paper over the social and economic inequities that appeared to perpetuate Japanese colonial structuralism in the countryside, particularly in the southern provinces. In October, popular discontent with American policies along with an economic crisis fuelled by rice shortages and the constant influx of displaced persons exploded into violence. Mobs generally limited their actions to labor stoppages and attacks against the National Police, but the Americans interpreted the rebellion as a Communist inspired bid to subvert the Military Government. As a result Military Government policy tilted towards support for a crack down on suspected communists. Conservative Korean political leaders and parties received a boost in American eyes, while more moderate, or left-leaning, figures were shut out of the Military Government’s inner circle. The second consequence was to emphasize the impotence of the Constabulary as a reserve force to keep law and order. The National Police, who bore the brunt of the rebellion, resented the Constabulary’s failure to be of

117 HQ, PMAG, Staff Study, 3, Hausman Papers.
118 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 67.
119 The Department of National Defense was changed to the Department of Internal Security in June 1946 in response to Soviet protests about the status implied by the word “national.” The Constabulary also dropped the word “national” in its title. On 12 September, Ryu Dong-yol, a veteran of the Restoration Army became the first director of the Department of National Security, responsible for both the Constabulary and the National Police. Lieutenant Colonel Song Ho-seung, also a Restoration Army veteran, assumed the duties as chief of the Constabulary in November 1946. Command authority thus transferred from the Americans to the Koreans for the first time; KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 68-69; Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 23.
much help. Hence, the uprising highlighted the most unpleasant aspects of the occupation, as American troops had to use force to maintain order in the Korean hinterlands – a task that the Constabulary should have handled.¹²⁰

Violence in the southern provinces remained widespread throughout October and November. Bruce Cumings asserts that the high casualties among Korean police, who had only a year prior been in the service of the brutal Japanese, show that the rebellion was aimed at the vestiges of the colonial regime. By his count, 200 police died, and the number of civilian deaths – innocent and rebels alike – may have topped 1,000.¹²¹ Despite its aggregate failure, the Autumn Harvest Uprisings cast a large shadow over the administration and control of the country. Even more pressure fell upon the Constabulary to become an adjunct to the National Police, while the Constabulary’s questionable capabilities continued to wear away at any confidence the Military Government might have had in it. Only a few Americans, such as Hausman and Barros, retained faith in the Constabulary. Through their efforts to find equipment and supplies, mentor Korean officers, and supervise training, the Constabulary would weather the severe bureaucratic and political storms of 1947, only to face its greatest challenge in the rebellions and mutinies of 1948.

In response to increasing political agitation and in the face of Soviet obstinacy, Hodge unilaterally began transferring administrative authority to an Interim South Korean Government in June 1947.¹²² Admittedly, the Military Government had come a long way from the “interpreters’ government” that dominated policies and perspectives in the first year after Liberation.¹²³ Still, labor stoppages and consumer shortages aggravated the frustration felt in Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington.¹²⁴ Political violence

¹²⁰ Cumings, Liberation, 352-59.
¹²¹ Ibid., 379-80.
between Korean factions continued to escalate throughout 1947. On 19 July, Yo Un-hyong, the first president of the “People’s Republic” and the most prominent moderate noncommunist political figure, was assassinated by a rightist supporter. Such commonplace events precluded a peaceful and satisfactory compromise between conservative and moderate political factions. Finally, in September, Washington admitted the magnitude of its “Korean Problem” and turned the case of Korean independence and unity over to the United Nations.125

During this turbulent time, Hausman’s assignment to the Constabulary headquarters paid immediate dividends. When Hausman arrived in Seoul, the Constabulary numbered about 5,000 men. By the end of the year, another 3,000 men had joined the ranks. Hausman also formed a strong advisory relationship with Major Lee Hyong-kun, the acting chief of the Constabulary. Together, they toured the American zone on a command fact-finding mission to accelerate the organization of regiments and procure adequate space for the expanding Constabulary. Hausman’s dogged persistence and skillful administration kept the Constabulary afloat despite the open antagonism of the National Police and numerous youth organizations that were little more than right-leaning hoodlums. As a result, by April 1947, the Constabulary boasted 10,000 men in the ranks.126

Jealousies between the Constabulary and the National Police died hard, though. Small-scale clashes finally erupted into full-scale violence when one Constabulary company stationed in the South Cholla province marched on the police station in Yongam. After a prolonged gun-battle, both sides separated to nurse their wounds. The Americans intervened to stem this fratricidal conflict, and in a serious of high-level conferences they exerted pressure on both organizations to mind their own spheres of interest. The Constabulary, however, was forced to concede that its recruitment policies had allowed a number of agitators and lawbreakers into the ranks, which contributed a great deal to the indiscipline of some Constabulary units.127 An example of the discipline

125 Oh, Korea under Military Government, 8-9; Department of State, Korea, 6.
126 KMAG Historical Report, 2; Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 26.
127 KMAG Historical Report, 3; History of DIS, 28.
problems experienced by the Constabulary at large was the plight of the 7th Regiment stationed at Chongju, North Chungchong province. The regimental commander had to confine a number of his subordinate officers for various infractions: drunken assault of a fireman, failure to control intoxicated enlisted men, and beating a train conductor for failing to make directed stops on the way to a football game. In every case the officer in question was a second lieutenant. In the wake of the violence at Yongam, the Constabulary attempted to rid its ranks of its most persistent discipline problems, but the process was counterproductive to the requirement to flesh out the expanding units. Therefore, not much was done, much to the Constabulary’s future regret.

In May 1947, Barros was relieved of his duties as advisor to the Constabulary chief, and Hausman was appointed to replace him, though only as an “acting advisor” to the Chief of the Constabulary. Hausman’s skill and obvious ability to get along with his Korean counterparts made his assignment permanent on 21 July. Recruitment continued at a sustainable pace, reaching 15,000 Constabularymen by the end of July, however, as the Korean economy continued to slug along, the military governor, Major General Lerch, ordered the Constabulary to cease further recruiting efforts.

In December, though, Lerch changed his mind, and the Constabulary entered into a period of time that “brought about the most important events in [its] history.” One month after the U.S. referred the Korea problem to the United Nations, the Soviet representative to the U.S./USSR Joint Commission countered with a proposal to remove all foreign troops from Korea. The Americans saw through the Soviet ploy and refused to agree to a scheme that would leave the obviously understrength Constabulary with a task it could not fulfill. The Soviet proposal did, however, energize Hodge and MacArthur in Tokyo to realize that eventually the Constabulary would have to become the national military organization of the south. To beef up the Constabulary and to make it look more like an army, Hodge agreed to expand the Constabulary to 50,000 men and to provide heavy infantry weapons, light artillery, and light armored vehicles.

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128 Headquarters, 7th Korean Constabulary Regiment, Special Orders 34-36, Mowitz Papers.

129 KMAG Historical Report, 3.

While it appeared that the Constabulary finally had earned high-level recognition as an embryonic military force, the truth of the matter was quite different. The number of advisors within the Constabulary remained inadequate, though it did increase from less than two dozen to ninety officers. It was further decided that an American brigadier general ought to be assigned to the Department of Internal Security as the head of an advisory organization. Yet, in terms of the structure of the Constabulary, no provisions were made to field the various support units necessary for a modern army to function. Tactical proficiency, in the accepted sense, was feeble. Facilities, training areas, logistics, transportation, and other infrastructure remained backward or non-existent. Additionally, no system was in place to train new specialties to employ the heavier weapons being added. Nevertheless, in December 1947 the Constabulary moved forward to consolidate its regiments into brigade-sized organizations and to prepare to take over the defense of the southern half of the peninsula.\footnote{KHAMG Historical Report, 3; KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 69-70.}

\textit{The War of Subversion, March – October 1948}

Early in 1948 Hausman and the rest of the Department of Internal Security (DIS) had to set aside efforts at building and coaching, and turn instead to combat operations when unrest gave way to insurrection and guerrilla war. The immediate cause of armed rebellion was rooted in the U.S. State Department’s successful maneuver to place the “Korea problem” within the jurisdiction of the United Nations. On November 14, 1947, the UN General Assembly had approved an American-sponsored resolution for nationwide elections supervised by the UN. Although the Soviets protested, they could not block the resolution, and Hodge set elections, to be supervised by the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), to take place on 10 May 1948.\footnote{The Soviets refused to allow UNTCOK to supervise elections in the north; KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 28-29; Robert T. Oliver, \textit{Syngman Rhee and American Involvement in Korea, 1942-1960: A Personal Narrative} (Seoul: Panmun Book Company, Ltd., 1978), 128.}

Communist inspired agitation had been percolating at a moderate level in the first three months of 1948. The South Korean Labor Party (SKLP) orchestrated a number of...
strikes and riots that disabled factories, public facilities, and even a meteorological station. These were nuisances leading up to the main drama of the year. In an effort to disrupt the forthcoming elections, and possibly to establish a sort of “safe haven” far from the sources of American power, a cell of the SKLP, in collaboration with conspirators within the Constabulary’s 9th Regiment stationed on Cheju-do, launched several attacks on police boxes on the night of 3 April. Police units, rightist paramilitary groups, and loyal elements of the 9th Regiment failed to crush the incipient insurgency, which increased in intensity. Favorite targets were voter registration booths and records, police officers (one captured rebel admitted that a policeman was worth between 10,000 and 20,000 won, depending on his rank), homes of rightist families, and infrastructure such as bridges. The intimidation value of these attacks bore fruit as voter registration on Cheju-do was recorded at 64.9 percent, while the rest of the south boasted a 91.7 percent registration rate. Eventually, the Constabulary deployed a cadre of loyal troops (designated as the 11th Regiment) from Pusan to Cheju-do, where they suppressed the revolt for the time being.

Elections south of the 38th parallel proceeded as scheduled and resulted in the convention of a National Assembly, which in addition to drafting a constitution elected Syngman Rhee as its first President on 20 July. On 15 August 1948, Syngman Rhee proclaimed the inauguration of the Republic of Korea. In a near-simultaneous series of changes, the USAMGIK terminated its operations and the American advisors (ninety

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133 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 32.


137 Millett, “Forgotten Army,” 15.

altogether) previously assigned to the DIS were subsequently reassigned to the Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG), with Brigadier General William L. (Lynn) Roberts as chief.  

Roberts’s arrival in Korea on 20 May marked a watershed for the Korean Constabulary and the Americans assigned to it. Roberts replaced Colonel Price and immediately made his mark on the American and Korean organizations under his purview.  

General Roberts had a long though undistinguished record as an infantry officer in World War I and a commander of armored forces in the European Theater of Operations from 1944-1945. He had seen war and had plenty of experience with training raw troops. He did not like what he found in Korea.

As soon as Roberts arrived he attacked the problems of training the Constabulary with the zeal of a convert. First, he streamlined the DIS and Constabulary headquarters to free up advisors for the field and to flatten the bureaucracies involved. He also established a number of provisional schools to train officers and men to use the new American weapons and equipment. Roberts also traveled extensively in the south. On 12 July, Roberts, along with several staff officers descended on Taegu to inspect the Weapons School and the headquarters of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades.  

From this experience, Roberts ascertained some of the critical weaknesses in training, drill, and discipline that he expected advisors to correct with dispatch. Additional advisors began to flood the field, but Roberts was picky in whom he sent where. One advisor recalls that Roberts, assisted by Hausman, actively sought officers from the USAFIK manpower pool with combat experience to send to field units. In this manner, Roberts fleshed out PMAG’s authorized strength to 248 advisors, but these were still inadequate to fulfill all the functions necessary for the formation of a new army.

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139 Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 35.

140 KMAG Historical Report, 3-4.

141 Ibid., 4.

142 Harold S. Fischgrund, email to the author, 8 February and 18 February 2002.

143 Minor L. Kelso, Telephone interview with Author, 5 December 2003, notes; Eighth Army, Special Problems, 2. When KMAG became operational in July 1949, its manpower authorization was raised to 500.
Despite the relatively smooth constitutional process and subsequent transition of authority from the Military Government (which officially ceased to function on 15 August), the latent communist threat remained potent, and manifested itself in a battle for the soul of the Constabulary. Both Roberts and Hausman recognized the effects of expansion (from 35,000 in August to 50,000 in December) that continually diluted the narrow base of trained soldiers, stretched out advisory and logistic resources, and offered a safe haven for dissidents. Subversive elements in the Constabulary constituted the largest and most immediate threat to internal security and therefore to the viability of the Republic. Because armed uprisings and mutinies (particularly the Yosu mutiny) started within Constabulary units, the resulting fratricidal combat threatened to kill it off before it could gain experience and confidence. How the Constabulary, and particularly the American advisors assigned to PMAG, responded and performed would determine the level of trust afforded to the American advisory effort and the degree of autonomy afforded to the Constabulary as the legitimate defender of the Republic’s sovereignty.

To check the subversives, Hausman convinced General Song Ho-song, the Constabulary chief, and General Roberts, to orchestrate a counter-subversion plan for the summer of 1948.\textsuperscript{144} He further persuaded Song to appoint Colonel Paik Sun-yup,\textsuperscript{145} a regimental commander in Pusan, as the Constabulary G-2 (intelligence officer). With assistance from the U.S. Army’s 971\textsuperscript{st} Counterintelligence Detachment, Paik managed to identify nearly all suspected subversives in the Constabulary. Paik’s agents eventually fingered the 14\textsuperscript{th} Regiment at the southern port city of Yosu as being the most compromised, and in fact, most prepared to revolt.\textsuperscript{146}

However, before the Constabulary could move, active rebellion broke out again on Cheju-do. Major fighting had died down during the summer months as the guerrillas fled into the inner mountainous region of the island. On 1 October large-scale fighting erupted again, prompting the government in Seoul to declare martial law and plan to

\textsuperscript{144} Millett, “Captain Hausman,” 521.

\textsuperscript{145} Colonel Paik was a northerner with experience fighting Korean guerrillas as an officer in the Manchukuo army.

\textsuperscript{146} Millett, “Captain Hausman,” 522.
reinforce the island’s Constabulary units with troops from the mainland. Cumings notes that the rebellion on Cheju-do was difficult to root out because of the broad base of support for the peasant guerrillas making up the inmin-gun (People’s Army, not to be confused with the North Korean Inmin-gun responsible for the 1950 invasion), and the numerous caches of weapons, ammunition, and supplies left behind by the Japanese. However, advisors on the scene reported that the 9th Regiment simply did not have the will or leadership to close with and confront the guerrillas in their mountain redoubt. Orders went out from Seoul to the 14th Regiment stationed at the port city of Yosu to prepare one reinforced battalion for movement to Cheju-do.

On the eve of the regiment’s deployment (19 October), a rebellious core of about forty men – led by Communist noncommissioned officers – killed their loyal officers, took over the city, proclaimed a national uprising, and dispatched elements of the regiment to Sunchon and other nearby villages. Along the way, they clashed with and swept away National Police forces blocking their path. During the first twenty-four hours of the mutiny, PMAG G-2 reported at least 1,000 soldiers to be in rebellion. This was by far the most serious problem facing the ROK regime and it stained the legitimacy of the army. Equally disturbing was the number of civilians who believed the rebels’ claims that the south had fallen to a socialist revolution, joined the rebellion, and raised the specter of mass revolt in the south.

The next day (October 20th), up to 500 rebels disembarked at the Sunchon train station and attacked police and one Constabulary company of the 4th Regiment. A hundred men continued north towards Namwon, where they fought an understrength

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147 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 32-33.
148 Cumings, Roaring of the Cataract, 255.
149 James H. Hausman, interview by Allan R. Millett, Austin, Texas, 21 March 1995, The Ohio State University; Minor L. Kelso to Allan R. Millett, 12 October 1995.
150 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 33; Diary of First Lieutenant Minor L. Kelso, transcribed copy with comments provided to author.
151 G-2 PIR 967, August to October, 1948.
152 G-2 PIR 967 and 968, August to October, 1948; “Revolt in Korea,” Life Magazine 25 (15 November 1948): 58.
loyal battalion throughout the night and into the next day. American air reconnaissance kept Seoul informed of the geographical extent of the mutiny, but they could give no texture to events on the ground. What these aerial reconnaissance reports could not indicate was the bloodshed occurring in the “liberated” towns of Yosu, Sunchon, Posong, and Kwangyang. In Yosu and Sunchon in particular, the Communists killed and plundered those National Police and anti-Communists unfortunate enough to be identified and caught. The police chief of Sunchon was stripped of his clothing, wrapped in barbed wire and set afire. Dogs finally consumed his remains. Christians also merited special attention from the rebels. Two young men, Matthew and John Son, sons of a local Presbyterian pastor, were denounced, dragged into the street, and beaten until their captors, perhaps frustrated at the stoic faith of the brothers, finally shot them. As government troops recaptured the Sunchon, and viewed the hundreds of corpses strewn about the streets, retribution was fierce, swift, and undiscriminating. An American photo-journalist, Carl Mydans, on assignment for Life Magazine, witnessed the suppression of the rebellion and captured its gruesome details on film. His pictures reveal clearly the depth of violence spawned from the civil conflict.

First Lieutenant Minor Kelso, advisor to the 4th Regiment, was the first American to report on the mutiny. To Kelso’s amazement, no immediate instructions were forthcoming. However, the mutiny had large political implications and required an organized response. General Roberts took no chances and ordered Captain Hausman to personally supervise the Korean counterstroke against the rebellion. Roberts further convinced the Chief of the Constabulary, Song Ho-song, to organize and deploy a new command, the Counter-rebel Combat Command, on 21 October and declared martial law.

153 G-2 PIR 968, August to October, 1948; Kelso diary.
154 G-2 PIR 970, August to October, 1948.
155 Carl and Shelley Mydans, The Violent Peace (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 111-12; Kelso diary; Millett, Their War for Korea, 11-12.
157 Minor L. Kelso to Allan R. Millett, 9 January 1996.
on 23 October for the Yosu-Sunchon region. General Song, the Constabulary chief, ordered loyal units to begin converging on Yosu. Hausman and Colonel Paik then convinced Song to appoint Colonel Kim Pak-il to take command or the reorganized 5th Brigade, now controlling an ad hoc grouping of units to suppress the uprising. Kim not only had experience fighting Communist guerrillas in China, he also was a known entity to Hausman, who had seen him in action as the Constabulary’s G-3 operations officer. With his own hand-picked staff and American advisors, Kim directed the convergence of six loyal battalions from the west and north into the Yosu region (figure 2.2).  

In a concentric operation, elements of the 5th Brigade finally succeeded in forcing the rebels from Sunchon by the evening of the 22nd. On the 23rd, loyal forces, acting against American advice but under pressure from Seoul, attempted simultaneous assaults against Yosu, Posong, and Kwangyang. The results were less than satisfying. One battalion of the 5th Regiment in a World War II landing ship, tank (LST) attempted a direct assault on Yosu, which the defenders easily repulsed. Bitter engagements in and around Kwangyang and in the vicinity of Posong continued until the 24th. Once the 5th Brigade solidified its hold on Sunchon, it was able to break the mutiny into three separate parts, and eventually overpower each in turn. However, due to Rhee’s impatient insistence to crush the Yosu rebels, hasty and uncoordinated attacks allowed many rebels to flee into the mountains and escape capture. 

The final thrust against the rebels in Yosu began at 0600 hours on 25 October and involved troops from four regiments. Loyal infantry units, lacking heavy weapons and artillery made little progress. Not until the 1st Reconnaissance Troop arrived from Seoul did Constabulary forces begin to make headway against Yosu. As the only force

159 Millett, “Captain Hausman,” 524-25.
162 G-2 PIR 971, August to October, 1948.
possessing weaponry heavier than that of the rebels (ten reconditioned half-tracks with .50 caliber machine guns, fifteen jeeps with .30 caliber machine guns) the 1st Reconnaissance Troop found itself flung into the thick of the battle. After three days of intense fighting, the Troop suffered one-quarter of its number as casualties (ten killed in action and an additional fifteen to twenty wounded), but its firepower overwhelmed the
isolated defenders.\textsuperscript{163} Much of Yosu lay in ruins and the overall casualty level was relatively high. One of the first American official reports catalogued the piles of dead – mostly police, Christians, and rightists. It was left to the photo-journalists to record the retribution that followed.\textsuperscript{164}

By the end of October, the ROK government declared an end to the rebellion, but the surviving rebels fled into the Chiri mountains where they continued to resist for another fifteen months.\textsuperscript{165} Overall, the \textit{ad hoc} command performed adequately, thanks in large part to the high degree of American supervision, as well as some judicious diplomacy. The Constabulary’s chief, General Song, materialized – in full warlord regalia with sword in hand – in the area of operations like a character from “some oriental drama,” but fortunately he had minimal impact on the conduct of operations.\textsuperscript{166} He impressed no one with his bellicose rhetoric and antiquated ideas, and the Americans quickly marginalized him and place responsibility for the battle in the hands of younger and more competent officers.\textsuperscript{167} These officers – Chung Il-kwon, Chae Pyong-duk, and Kim Paik-il – graduates of Japanese military schools and the Constabulary’s OTS learned first hand, by doing it themselves, the complexities of command and control of Constabulary forces.

The Constabulary’s record was tarnished in other ways, though. At lower levels, problems such as poor coordination and inadequate training hampered the efforts of the 5\textsuperscript{th} Brigade to crush a relatively small and contained uprising. Personality conflicts prevented the necessary coordination between the 15\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th} Regiments, which complicated the nearly absurd situation of two sides armed, equipped, and clothed identically fighting one another. A simple expedient – tying a white cloth around the helmet – was deemed sufficient to identify loyal troops from rebels. Nonetheless, there

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{163} Kelso diary; Shackleton to Millett, 11 April 1997.
\item \textsuperscript{164} Johnston, “Two Towns Held by Korea Rebels,” 12; Mydans, \textit{The Violent Peace}, 112.
\item \textsuperscript{165} KIMH, \textit{KW}, vol. I, 34.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Ralph Bliss to Allan R. Millett, 13 February 1997.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Shackleton to Millett, 11 April 1997; see also Cumings, \textit{Roaring of the Cataract}, 263.
\end{itemize}
were a number of incidents when battalion, regiment, and brigade staff officers failed to coordinate troop movements and positions. Consequently, in a few cases of mistaken identity, loyal troops fired on one another.\textsuperscript{168} The inability of Koreans to employ weapons such as mortars and machine guns to their full capability highlighted the training deficiencies that permeated the Constabulary. Identification of friend and foe in the confusion of urban fighting combined with indiscriminate application of firepower resulted undoubtedly in a large number of innocent casualties. After the recapture of Yosu, one advisor recalled, “many [civilians] died from the [ROK] recon[naissance] troops [we] advised . . . at least I think [we] concluded that our people, not fully trained, tended to spray buildings with machine gun fire and needless casualties resulted.”\textsuperscript{169} Another advisor recalled having to service personally a Korean mortar to keep fire on the insurgents.\textsuperscript{170} Unit coordination and tactical proficiency at the small-unit (squad, platoon, and company) level were endemic deficiencies in the Korean army that in some cases were not remedied until the summer of 1953.

From the American standpoint though, the conclusion (even if only partially successful) of the Yosu-Sunchon operation had a greater significance, as it encapsulated the aggregate experience of the advisory effort since the origins of the Constabulary in January 1946. Battle is the only test of military competence. Advisors saw first hand the many challenges facing the immature Republic of Korea Army, and thereby gained an objective perception of the Koreans’ capabilities that was impossible to quantify in their routine role as field advisors. The Americans also firmly demonstrated their tactical, administrative, and logistical expertise, thereby increasing their prestige in the eyes of their counterparts. Not only did the American advisors gain valuable experience in their roles as mentors, but Yosu affirmed the counterpart principle that would ultimately make the KMAG-ROKA relationship a fruitful one. The official KMAG historical report

\textsuperscript{168} “Revolt in Korea,” 57; “Two Towns Held by Korea Rebels,” 12.
\textsuperscript{169} Shackleton to Millett, 11 April 1997.
\textsuperscript{170} Hausman, interview; Kelso to Millett, 9 January 1996.
commented: “It [Yosu-Sunchon operation] was also a good test for the system followed by the American Advisory Group, for it showed, although it is difficult, the Advisor can properly advise his counterpart even in battle.”

**Ending one War, Bracing for a Second**

By November 1948 the Constabulary had successfully defended the ROK Government from the subversion war that began in a small scale in the summer of 1946, gathered momentum during and after the Autumn Harvest uprisings, burst into open conflict in April 1948 and finally culminated in October 1948. Although much had changed in the Korean situation from the summer of 1946 until the end of 1948, many of the same problems plaguing American administration in the south remained. In August 1947, General Albert Wedemeyer visited Seoul to confer with Hodge and to ascertain the progress of the Military Government. Hodge summarized the issues confronting the Military Government in Korea. The artificial division of the peninsula that had solidified into a quasi-permanent boundary interfered with any attempt to rehabilitate the Korean economy and to stabilize the plight of displaced persons and other refugees. The utter unpreparedness of American troops to fulfill their occupation mission placed their efforts at reconstruction and stability behind the popular tide of liberation and liberalization. Hodge emphasized that the U.S. XXIV Corps had no military government personnel assigned to it, therefore, Hodge had to rely on stragglers picked up from Okinawa and the Philippine Islands until trained teams could transit through Japan from California.

The remaining issues were political in nature. Hodge’s initial directive (immediately rescinded, but only after the damage was done) to make use of the existing Japanese government structures simply laid the ground for political chaos, which forced the Americans to support tacitly men such as Rhee, who was unarguably autocratic and

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171 Kmag Historical report, 5.

172 Headquarters, XXIV Corps, Transcript of General Hodge’s verbal summary to General Wedemeyer, 27 August 1947, 1, Wedemeyer Mission, XXIV Corps Historical Section, RG 554.
extreme in his views. Hodge also accused the Soviets of non-cooperation in every facet of the occupation, from the (non) delivery of electrical power to their insistence on a strict interpretation of the Moscow agreement and the trusteeship agreement. Hodge was sure that the Russians were behind every communist move in the south. To what degree this assessment was true is irrelevant. The rebellions on Cheju-do and at Yosu-Sunchon were severe tests for both the Constabulary and the early Republic. Failure in 1948 to contain the armed uprisings likely would have destroyed South Korea before it could have gained any legitimacy in the eyes of the Americans and United Nations. This legitimacy would be the foundation for continued military and economic support, culminating in the UN endorsement of the Republic during its hour of need.

The Americans’ early achievement to establish a national (south) Korean defense organization that would survive bureaucratic entanglements (mainly with the National Police), rebellion, mutiny, guerrilla war, and outright attempts at politicization to become a capable military organization is all the more impressive because of the steep structural barriers existing in the fall of 1945. Harsh geography and climate, a prostrate economy, dashed political and social expectations made the task of occupation difficult enough. But because the Americans knew almost nothing of Korean history, culture, traditions, and language – a handicap that manifested itself immediately when Hodge began making decisions in Seoul – every bump on the road to fulfill the pledge of a unified and independent Korea was fraught with misunderstanding, mutual antagonism, and suspicion. Although anxious to turn over the organs of government to Koreans, the Americans found themselves increasingly pulled into the vortex of U.S. – Soviet - Korean politics.

An additional concern was the clear chilling of U.S.-Soviet relations, not only in Asia but at nearly all other points of contact in west Asia and central Europe. The Soviets protested every perception that the Americans were promoting independence for

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173 Little love was lost between Rhee and Hodge, two men impatient with each other’s problems; see Robert T. Oliver, *Syngman Rhee: The Man Behind the Myth* (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1954), 265ff; and Oliver, *American Involvement in Korea*, 25, 171, 192.

174 Transcript to General Wedemeyer Mission, 2-4.

175 Oh, *Korea under the American Military Government*, 7.
the south, which included any “schemes” for building an indigenous military force. As a result, the Americans often had to resort to legerdemain to implement the rudiments of the so-called Bamboo Plan, a tactic not fully appreciated by the Koreans.

After the structural obstacles enumerated above, the most enduring hurdles to be crossed were ignorance of Korean history, tradition, and language. Whether the Koreans really were a difficult lot (the “Irish of the Orient” according to George McCune), the thirty-five-year legacy of Japanese suzerainty, exploitation, and forced integration to the Imperial vision would force the Americans to either begin from “ground zero” or to find shortcuts to administer the country. For reasons of time and military habit, they chose the latter, which meant relying on Koreans tainted by collaboration or pro-western sympathies – a condition generally unacceptable to a large number of Koreans. The inability of the Americans to communicate to the Korean population, or to persuade them to follow the American way, left the ground fertile for discontent, agitation, and insurgency. This insurgency followed by mutiny and guerrilla war nearly brought the Constabulary, and the southern government, to its knees. Only the constant tactile guidance by the Americans kept the South Koreans going in the destructive civil war that erupted in April 1948 and continued up until 25 June 1950.

The cultural problems of raising and training an indigenous military went beyond differences in language, customs, and the difficulty of imposing western military concepts on a society that has no common frame of reference. Concerns about social prestige and correctness, a concept Westerners most conveniently abbreviate as “face” often interfered with the American business-like approach to military organization, training and management. The Americans had to learn to accept “the Korean way,” even if efficiency or effectiveness suffered. In the long-run, and when it really mattered, strong advisory relationships would produce highly cohesive and competent military units. However, such confident predictions were still a long way from realization.

176 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 68. The Soviets were stalling on a permanent settlement of the Korea problem even as they forged ahead to make their northern client political viable and militarily strong.

177 Ibid., 69; or by more modern observers, see Cumings, Liberation, xx-xxvi
This early advisory triumph ensured the political, institutional, and military survival of the Constabulary. While supervising and promoting the Constabulary’s expansion, the Americans had to take care to protect the Constabulary from the Communists, the National Police, and the covetous intent of Korea’s 107 political parties. Charismatic Americans like Russell Barros and James Hausman played key roles to keep the Constabulary independent of the National Police and to try to instill in its officer corps a sense of patriotic duty and professionalism. Of course, how the Constabulary performed its military duties also weighed heavily on the Americans for the future viability of a South Korean state. Between August 1946 and October 1948 the Constabulary faced its sternest test in surviving internal subversion, political imbroglio, and expansion. The Constabulary survived more because of the fractured nature of the armed opposition to American Military Government and (after 15 August 1948) the Republic of Korea, than because of any real fighting ability. In fact, during the Constabulary’s greatest challenge, the Yosu-Sunchon mutiny of October 1948, Americans had to get uncomfortably close to exercising command and control of Korean units, and the failure to consummate the government’s victory over the mutiny would have long-term consequences for the ROKA until well into the Korean War. However, the experience gained by both American and Korean officers became the foundation for the successful prosecution of anti-guerrilla campaigns in 1949 and the first six months of 1950.

178 Millett, “Captain Hausman,” 513.
CHAPTER 3

THE LIMITED WAR, 1949-1950

The suppression of the Yosu-Sunchon mutiny ended the first campaign of the Korean civil war that began with the Cheju-do uprising in April, but it did not end the internal discontent and turmoil that Bruce Cumings terms “resistance to the Southern system.”\(^1\) Nonetheless, during the next nineteen months until June 1950, when Brigadier General Roberts returned to the United States, the KMAG chief provided much public and private praise for the Republic of Korea Army and the ROK in general.\(^2\) Much has been made about Roberts’s optimistic appraisals of the ROKA, especially in light of how poorly the South Korean Army stood against a conventional invasion of trained infantry, tanks, artillery, and aircraft. Notwithstanding the Constabulary’s problems from 1946-48, of which Roberts was patently aware, much progress had been made in the South Korean military and in the advisory groups assigned to assist them. On the eve of Roberts’s departure, the ROKA boasted nearly 100,000 men organized into eight divisions. These divisions enjoyed the support of a schools and training base that functioned under KMAG’s supervision. Korean leadership also showed signs of improvement and maturation.

Paramount in his mind, and perhaps the motive behind his optimistic support for the Koreans was his assessment that Syngman Rhee’s republic – notwithstanding its

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\(^1\) Cumings, *Roaring of the Cataract*, 235-267.

\(^2\) Frank Gibney, “Korea – Progress Report,” *Time*, 5 June 1950, 26-27; Collins, *War in Peacetime*, 42-43 goes so far as to accuse Roberts of leading the JCS “astray [with] faulty estimates” of the ROKs capabilities. Bradley’s autobiography claims that Roberts met privately with Bradley on 20 June 1950 and “was completely reassuring” about the ROKA’s ability to stand up to a northern invasion. The autobiography continues, “Since I knew Roberts to be a professional soldier of good judgment, I took his word on it, feeling greatly relieved that we had no cause for concern in Korea.” Omar Bradley and Clary Blair, *A General’s Life: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 527, 530.
faults – was not Jiang Jieshi’s Nationalist China. Rhee’s government and army were less corrupt and more stable than the Guomindang had been. Furthermore, the Korean Army had protected the ROK by defeating subversion within the army and successfully controlling a more extended limited war involving a substantial guerrilla movement in the south along with cross-border raids from the north. By the spring of 1950, the ROKA had acquitted itself well, and it appeared to justify continued American interest and investment.

This chapter will outline the progress made by the American advisors and the South Koreans that gave many Americans – not just Roberts – the sense that the Korean Army could defend the Republic from outside aggression. Transforming the Constabulary into a fully functioning national military establishment was no mean feat and involved significant growing pains and political questions, namely, how much equipment and how many men should the U.S. subsidize, and how should the ROK Army be organized and employed. One of the side effects of this transformation involved KMAG’s role in advising and assisting. Emphasis evolved towards tactical training, which as many advisors noted, was simply beyond the inchoate army’s capabilities to design and support. However, the biggest obstacle to training was the fact that the ROKA had to engage in continuous combat operations right up to the outbreak of the conventional war. Time, supplies, ammunition, and equipment were all at a premium, and there just was not enough to train, and fight. As it turned out, the ROKA – perhaps without any choice – neglected training in favor of fighting. The result was victory over guerrillas, but certain defeat against its northern nemesis if and when it chose to move. Roberts was not entirely wrong, for the ROKA was a much better army when he left than it had been when he arrived. It was just his misfortune to be unable to predict the future.

The stability of Jiang’s Nationalist government vexed Truman Administration officials to no end from September 1945 until its collapse and retreat to the island of Formosa by December 1949. Aid to this failing enterprise cost the American government hundreds of millions of dollars, and by mid-1948, many responsible officials were voicing their skepticism that the money was well spent. Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall wrote to Louis Johnson, Secretary of Defense, “the situation [in China] seems hopeless.” Kenneth Royall to the Secretary of Defense, 22 March 1948, Xerox 2114, 2113, 2119, George C. Marshall Foundation National Archives Project, George C. Marshall Papers, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia.

President Truman, among others, however, noted that Rhee was as autocratic in manner as any despot, but that he was the best the Americans had with whom to work. Truman, Trial and Hope, 329.
Aftermath of the Yosu Mutiny, October – December 1948

It was embarrassing for the ROK government and the American advisors to confront the sources of rebellion within the ranks of the Constabulary. Worse still was the growing realization that the young republic’s domestic problem was not yet under control, as evidenced by continued violence on Cheju-do and in the southern Cholla and Kyongsang provinces. In one particularly bold action shortly after the recapture of Yosu, Constabulary rebels ambushed a government motorcade carrying the South Cholla province’s chief of police to a memorial service in Sunchon. Eight police officers were killed and fifteen wounded; only three rebels were casualties.\(^5\) By the end of the year, a true guerrilla conflict had matured not only in the Chiri mountains straddling the boundary between South Cholla and South Kyongsang provinces, but also in the North Kyongsang province, particularly in the areas surrounding the city of Taegu – home to the 6\(^{th}\) Regiment. American intelligence sources reported that SKLP agents were planning to inaugurate a full-fledged guerrilla campaign in that province, and these sources fingered compromised Constabulary units as being prepared to assist in preplanned riots scheduled for late October or November. Up to 700 soldiers were suspected of being in league with the SKLP.\(^6\) These and other indicators demonstrated that the ROK was immersed in a limited war aimed at destabilizing and perhaps even overthrowing Rhee’s rule.

A further element of concern came from the objective observations of the American advisors who did not have much confidence in the Constabulary’s fighting abilities. First Lieutenant Minor Kelso, who participated in the suppression of the Yosu mutiny from beginning to end, wrote a scathing after action report to General Roberts detailing his criticism of both the Koreans and his American superiors.\(^7\)

\(^5\) G-2 PIR 973, August to October, 1948; G-2 PIR 1017, December 1948.

\(^6\) G-2 PIR 975, August to October, 1948

\(^7\) First Lieutenant Minor L. Kelso to Chief, PMAG, Personal account – Sunchon, Yosu, Kurye Action, 15 November 1948, copy furnished to author.
Kelso, an infantry officer who had spent the past three months as a battalion and regimental advisor, enumerated serious defects in training and leadership: an inclination of small units to avoid closing with enemy forces, failure to communicate between units and their higher headquarters, inadequately maintained situation maps, command ignorance of the tactical realities on the ground, and the inability to employ indirect fire weapons such as mortars. In fact, Kelso himself directed and serviced an 81 mm mortar he found not being used. Even when mortars were employed, the infantry failed to take advantage of their barrage fire. Kelso did give high marks to Colonel Kim Paik-il, the task force commander, who alone seemed to have a grip on the situation and who set a personal example of calmness, authority, and organization. He and Kelso understood each other and the tactical requirements of the situation. Any sense of professional competence during the campaign came from Colonel Kim.

After the recapture of Yosu (27 October), the Constabulary followed with a pursuit operation near the town of Kurye in the Chiri mountains, where many of the Yosu mutineers and other rebels had found refuge. This was the decisive phase of the campaign, when the loyal Constabulary forces could have stamped out a hard-core of Communists and their sympathizers. It was also a dismal failure. Kim dispatched two battalions of the 12th Regiment, under the command by Paik In-yup, an aggressive and ambitious officer. His PMAG counterpart was First Lieutenant Foster Cowey, a West Point classmate of Kelso. Though not assigned as an advisor to the 12th Regiment, Kelso was directed to accompany Cowey. They agreed to split the two battalions to cover more ground and possibly trap and destroy the rebels.

Kelso’s counterpart was Captain Chun, a poor selection for such a demanding mission. Chun’s battalion made its first contact with six rebels on 2 November. Instead of deploying his battalion to engage or maneuver against the rebels, Chun temporized and ignored Kelso’s advice long enough for the rebels to escape. Later in the afternoon, approximately thirty unidentified soldiers fired on Chun’s lead platoon. Chun was unsure
if they were rebels or elements of Major Paik’s battalion, so he did nothing. Kelso urged Chun to send a runner to Paik to report on their situation. Chun did not see the utility of this advice and disregarded it. Frustrated, Kelso grabbed a Korean soldier and left to find Paik. By the time he had, night had fallen, and the rebels once again escaped. No other enemy forces were found.\textsuperscript{11}

As it turned out, the same group of rebels had pinned down both battalions. Neither one made any effort to coordinate movement with the other. Although the troops had radios, they claimed they did not work. Both Kelso and Cowey were disgusted with the sloppy tactics, poor preparation, lethargy, and overall sense of apathy. With the exception of Major Paik, a veteran of counter-guerrilla campaigns in Manchuria, the Korean officers showed no inclination to close with the enemy and to bring effective fire on them. The troops and their leaders showed no grasp of elementary infantry tactics such as using scouts, establishing a base of fire, or coordinating fire and movement. Exasperated, Kelso sarcastically recommended that Korean troops “battlesight” their rifles to 1,000 yards, which seemed to be their standard engagement range.\textsuperscript{12} Discipline was also poor. Because the battalions had neglected to bring rations and warm clothes the troops lit fires that allowed rebels to avoid the Constabulary units.\textsuperscript{13} The next day the operation terminated with no results other than frustration.

The Yosu rebellion and its aftermath marked a critical point for the Koreans. While the body count was relatively high (how many innocent civilians died in the fury of retribution remains unknown), and most dissident elements in the Constabulary prematurely compromised themselves, the two weeks of sustained combat exposed many shortages in training, equipment, and leadership that would preoccupy PMAG (and later KMAG) for the next year and a half. If Yosu was an indication of the long-term potential for a ROK Army, it would have disappointed the most dedicated American advisors. It was imperative that the Koreans begin to show some stomach and talent in fighting against well-armed and dedicated soldiers.

\textsuperscript{11} Kelso to Chief, PMAG, 15 November 1948, 7-9.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 8-9.
With the proclamation of a Republic in August 1948, Roberts had to confront the new obligations assumed by the Republic’s security forces. The Americans had been eager to disengage from South Korea’s internal conflicts, and Hodge had hoped that the formation of the Constabulary under the DIS would prevent U.S. forces from becoming more deeply involved. By October 1947, when the Soviets proposed the withdrawal of all occupation forces from Korea, not much progress had been made to make Korean security forces self-sufficient.\(^\text{14}\) The implications of the Soviet proposal forced the Americans to confront their dilemma: they could abandon the south with the strong chance that it could never withstand a coordinated internal uprising or external assault; they could sponsor the formation of a national army, complete with the same complement of modern arms, equipment, and training the Soviets provided to their northern client; or, they could continue to muddle along with a “half-army.” Of course, nationalist Koreans like Syngman Rhee favored the second solution, but Washington took a dim view towards creating a strategic offensive potential in the south, especially one that the Americans supplied but did not control.\(^\text{15}\)

As a result, a compromise solution emerged. While the United States refused to be drawn into a proposal to abandon the south, the Americans began a phased withdrawal of the units in the XXIV Corps and passed the political problem of Korean unification to the United Nations.\(^\text{16}\) At the same time, Hodge pressured USAMGIK to increase the capabilities of the Constabulary, which it did by doubling its paper strength to 50,000 men and providing it (or planning to provide it) with heavier infantry crew-served weapons (machine guns, mortars, 2.36 inch rocket launchers), light artillery (to include 57 mm anti-tank guns), and armored cars and half-tracks from the stocks of departing U.S. units.\(^\text{17}\) To provide training and expertise for this equipment and to help organize

\(^{14}\) KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 69.

\(^{15}\) Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 30; Truman, Trial and Hope, 328-29.


\(^{17}\) KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 69-70, 82.
the Constabulary’s expansion, ninety American officers were transferred to the DIS.\textsuperscript{18} These officers, many fresh from their commissioning source, were the ones that carried the Constabulary through the turbulent days of the fall of 1948.

The formation of the Republic did away with the need for USAMGIK’s functions, including defense. The ROK established a ministry of national defense and redesignated the Constabulary as the Korean Army, and charged it with national defense and security.\textsuperscript{19} Unfortunately, the situation hardly warranted this shift in responsibility to the Koreans, which now added defense of the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel to the suppression of bandits and guerrillas on Cheju-do and the mainland. The fifty thousand men organized into fifteen regiments were already stretched too thin. A spike in guerrilla activity in the Chiri and Taebaek mountains coincided with infiltration attempts and raids along the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel in January 1949, and further taxed the Republic’s slender military resources even while the American Forces in Korea redeployed its last remaining major units. Of the once three-division strong XXIV Corps, only, the 5\textsuperscript{th} Regimental Combat Team (RCT) and the Provisional MAG remained to demonstrate America’s commitment to the ROK. Six months later the 5\textsuperscript{th} RCT likewise redeployed to Hawaii, leaving only the 500-man strong advisory detachment to assist the organization and training of the ROK forces. A secondary function, perhaps the important one from the Korean perspective, was to ensure the efficient provision of U.S. military supplies and assistance. Its support capability was limited, however, without substantial material assistance from the U.S. Army sources in Japan.\textsuperscript{20}

Consequently, less than a year after gaining sovereignty, the ROK Army had to accept ultimate responsibility for training its units, fighting guerrillas, and defending the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel. This problem only grew in magnitude as the army’s organizational goals continued to place expansion as its first priority. Regiments grew into brigades, which

\textsuperscript{18} KMAG Historical Report, 3. Many of these officers were lieutenants recently reassigned from the U.S. 6\textsuperscript{th} and 7\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Divisions.

\textsuperscript{19} Legislative authority for the Ministry of National Defense and the ROK Army was not granted until December 1948; KIMH, \textit{KW}, vol. 1, 73; Eighth Army, Special Problems, 2. The Korean Army today celebrates its establishment on 5 September; Park, “Dragon from the Stream,” 18.

then expanded into divisions. As of January 1949, the ROK Army consisted of six infantry brigades and twenty regiments.\(^{21}\) By May, using the discarded weapons and supplies of the deactivated U.S. units, two additional regiments were established, which provided the basis for the decision to reorganize the six brigades as divisions, First through Seventh.\(^{22}\) By the time the last U.S. combat units left Korea, the ROKA had added two more divisions, the Eighth and the Capital Division.\(^{23}\)

Progress on paper was one thing—naming and filling divisions with bodies was the easy part. While manpower was seemingly plentiful, modern weapons, supplies, and equipment were not. As of March 1949, 50,000 American rifles had to equip 65,000 soldiers of the ROK Army and 45,000 national police. Equipment and supply problems were further aggravated when the ROK government unilaterally raised the ROKA’s manpower ceiling to 100,000, which it reached by 31 July.\(^{24}\) Surplus Japanese weapons, uniforms, and equipment had to make up the difference.\(^{25}\) The obvious drawback of this situation was a confused and strained supply system, as well as different tactical standards and techniques of employment, which unnecessarily complicated training and threatened operational efficiency. KMAG officers worked out compromises as best they could, but it was a no-win situation in the long run. After the last American combat units departed Korea on 30 June, stocks that were to support an army of 65,000 were quickly dwindling away.\(^{26}\)

A closer look at ROK Army organization reveals several structural weaknesses. A primary concern, as the KMAG professionals recognized, was that an infantry unit

\(^{21}\) KIMH, *KW*, vol. 1, 80.

\(^{22}\) There was no Fourth Division because Koreans consider the number “four” as unlucky.

\(^{23}\) KIMH, *KW*, vol. 1, 83. This latter division is named for the capital city of the Republic, Seoul, not to be confused with a capitol building, the seat of government. Hence, Capital and not Capitol, as many American sources erroneously refer to it.

\(^{24}\) KMAG Historical Report, 7.

\(^{25}\) Hickey, *Korean War*, 20; Lim Sun-ha, interview.

\(^{26}\) The KMAG G-4 (Logistics) reported that Korean “equipment and supply usage is entirely different than that experienced in the American Army and consequently it played havoc with supplies made available to Koreans,” KMAG Historical Report, Inclosure 4, 1-3.
larger than a battalion requires service and support capabilities only found at the
regimental level or higher. Artillery, engineer, communication, transportation, and
supply were a few of the combat functions that units higher than battalion routinely relied
upon for independent operations. To save manpower and expense, Korean divisions
either did not have these support units or they had diminutive versions. For example, by
mid-year 1949, the ROK Army had only six light 105 mm (M3) howitzer battalions;
three battalions of 57 mm anti-tank artillery; one signal, one quartermaster, two ordnance
battalions; and one engineer construction group to support eight divisions. All these
units were short critical equipment and trained soldiers.

KMAG also made efforts to improve the technical services of quartermaster,
ordnance, signal, and engineers, which remained “the weakest segment of the Korean
Army.” The first “Supply Unit” was formed in July 1946; by January 1948 it had
expanded into three battalions, one each of engineers, ordnance, and quartermaster. Support units did not keep pace with the expansion of combat troops. Two years later
KMAG reported that it had a long way to go “to put the Korean Army technical services
on the best possible operating basis” to support an army of 100,000 men. Even as early
as November 1949 the ROKA was struggling simply to maintain itself. Ambassador
John Muccio relayed to Washington Roberts’s opinion that the ROKA “urgently
require[d] strengthening,” particularly in the areas of artillery. What was more, the
ROKA was entirely reliant on the United States for fuel, lubricants, ammunition, spare
parts, and raw materials such as cotton, rubber, and wood.

27 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 67. An American army of comparable size would have had at a minimum
thirty-three artillery battalions, ten anti-tank battalions, and a dozen each of engineer, signal, and ordnance
battalions.


29 Memorandum of Conversation by the Ambassador in Korea, 2 May 1949, Department of State, Foreign

30 The Ambassador in Korea to the Secretary of State, 10 November and 16 December 1949, FRUS (1949),
7: 1095, 1099, 1108-09.
Training the ROKA 1949-1950

Changing the Constabulary’s name did not change its capabilities. Its combat ability was still very much in doubt, and further expansion simply diluted whatever strengths the ROKA did have. Expansion also spread KMAG thin at a time when the ROKA could least afford it. KMAG found its training mission extremely challenging, especially since the ROKA had yet to develop a modern military culture among its officers that stressed methods and benefits of training. Advisors did the best they could to emphasize minimum essential fundamentals in the hope that time would provide for many of the ROKA’s shortcomings.

Continuing officer training in the field necessitated a patient program to help the Korean officer unlearn old habits and concepts and substitute for them American tactics and techniques. Demonstrating that old habits die hard, an advisor to the 2nd Division reported that even “experienced” Korean officers needed to have close supervision, for “unless closely supervised and strongly controlled, Koreans have a definite tendency of reverting to the Japanese style of doing things . . .”31 They could also be head-strong and full of bravado. Advisors continued to fault their reflexive reliance on Japanese methods of attack and defense when fighting guerrillas and border raiders.32

For a variety of reasons officer training was slow and frustrating. One advisor recorded that it was not enough simply to give orders or provide guidance. Advisors had to follow their counterpart along every step of the way, thereby ensuring that the Korean officer saw first hand what was expected of him. This persistence was doubly important when working with officers with prior military experience, who thought they already knew everything.33 Language difficulties also complicated even simple tasks. Advisors

31 United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, Headquarters, 2nd Division, Korean Army (undated), 3, Box 8, Mowitz Papers.

32 Eighth Army, Special Problems, 3. One notable officer, Colonel Kim Suk-won, an honor graduate of the Japanese Military Academy with a distinguished record in China, sported a Kaiser-moustache and an annoying flamboyance. He claimed that with command of the ROKA, he would take Pyongyang by lunchtime, and eat supper in Sinuiju (along the Yalu River); Kim, Politics of Military Revolution, 49.

33 Headquarters, 2nd Division (undated), 4, Mowitz Papers.
often had to improvise technical terms to suit translation, hoping that the connotation at least got through to the student. Only in March 1950 did a group of English-speaking Korean officers attempt to compile a dictionary of American doctrinal and technical military terms. Work on the translation of *The Dictionary of United States Army Terms* was still ongoing in June 1950 when the North Koreans struck across the parallel.\(^{34}\)

As students, Korean officers presented another unique challenge to their American mentors. Cultural differences often had the two parties talking past each other. American officers lived to plan; they were always thinking about the future. Korean officers, in contrast, remained fixed on the present, and they were reluctant to make future commitments that they might not keep and thereby lose face. The Korean also valued formal education intensely, which made them attentive students who excelled at rote learning but disdained “on-the-job” training. Some advisors felt it necessary to take a hard line and demonstrate an officer’s ignorance to earn his respect and undivided attention.\(^{35}\) While it is a truism that officers need to understand and be proficient at the tasks their men must execute, in the Korean context, advisors had to tread diplomatically to avoid alienating their counterparts. If advisors could get around the general lack of experience or difficulty to apply learning to practical problem solving, they often discovered that the Koreans were willing and excellent students who responded to the U.S. Army’s time-tested method of “Tell, Show, Do, Practice,” with more emphasis on “Do.”\(^{36}\) Again, American officers who applied themselves generally got satisfactory results. It was just a slow and inefficient process.

It was the ROKA’s misfortune that officer training did not keep pace with expansion, which resulted in many officers being promoted prematurely to the next level of command or responsibility. Another source of inexperience and inefficiency at command levels was Rhee’s policy to shuffle officers through as many positions as

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\(^{34}\) Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 64.

\(^{35}\) Headquarters, 2nd Division (undated), 4-5, Mowitz Papers; Howard A. Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 17, 19, Howard A. Trammell Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

\(^{36}\) Hausrath, *Problems*, 164, 166.
possible. Consequently, advisors had to assume an increasing burden to train the ROKA. Although training was certainly implied in KMAG’s mission, it was a panacea. Koreans needed to be training their own units, not relying on the Americans. That was the only way Korean officers would become familiar with their units and their capabilities. However, seeing that the vast majority of Korean officers were ignorant of even where to begin, Roberts ordered the field advisors to establish a baseline that the Koreans could emulate. He shifted KMAG’s mandate to be “a trainer first and an Advisor afterwards. Training is our big mission now (original emphasis).” The result was a short-term solution, but a long-term institutional failure that would not begin to be addressed until 1951.

In the summer of 1949, Roberts began a peninsula-wide tour of Korean army units from Pusan to the Ongjin peninsula to inspect and evaluate the “dispositions and status of training” of the ROKA. He also directed inspection teams to visit the various KMAG detachments and their associated Korean units. These inspections were not courtesy visits. They were in-depth inspections under the direction of the KMAG G-3, with each team led by a lieutenant colonel. These teams wrote comprehensive reports detailing their observations, unit status, and recommendations. Roberts used these evaluations and his personal observations to formulate a series of policy and procedural memoranda to the senior advisors, which KMAG headquarters then consolidated into a booklet called the Advisor’s Handbook, issued to the field specifically to disseminate Roberts’s guidance regarding training.

What he and his representatives found was not encouraging. The state of training and readiness of the ROKA was suffering from nearly continuous combat operations.

37 William L. Roberts to Major General Charles L. Bolté, 19 August 1949, 2, Assistant Chief of Staff (G-3), Plans and Operations 091 (Korea), Decimal File 1949-1950, Records of the Army Staff, Record Group 319, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland.

38 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 58; William L. Roberts to Arno P. Mowitz, 3 September 1949, Box 8, Mowitz Papers.

39 KMAG Historical Report, 7.

40 Ibid., 6.

41 Chapter 4 will examine the Handbook and its influence on KMAG and the ROKA.
Repeated clashes along the parallel, particular on the Ongjin peninsula had the potential to spiral out of control, as ROK troops allegedly crossed the parallel as much as the North Korean Security Forces. Roberts was dismayed at the number of troops and ammunition committed to what he figured was a strategic cul-de-sac, but to which the South Koreans attached great political significance.\(^{42}\) Farther south, guerrilla activity was on the rise, particularly in the Chiri and Taebaek mountain regions. KMAG intelligence identified guerrillas in the latter region as having been trained in North Korea and infiltrated into the south.\(^{43}\) Consequently, training, such as it was, had not progressed very much in the six months since the ROKA’s inauguration. So poor was the ROKA’s overall state of training and organization, one discouraged KMAG officer, said the ROK Army then “could have been the American Army in 1775.”\(^{44}\) KMAG inspectors found in the 5th Regiment (formerly commanded by Paik Sun-yup) of the 3rd Division (Pusan) that although the regimental staff appeared to be proficient, company grade officers and NCOs lacked basic tactical knowledge and leadership skills. Gun crews were generally ignorant of their duties and squad leaders were incapable of conducting fire and movement, the most basic foundation for infantry tactics. Additionally, little supervision was given to care and cleaning of weapons. Conditions in the regiment’s 2nd Battalion were even worse. In addition to the above problems, the inspectors declared the unit unsatisfactory in training, administration, and general “housekeeping.” Only a fully remedial program had any hope of bringing that battalion to the mediocre level of the other two.\(^{45}\) This evaluation was a severe blow because the 5th Regiment only a year

\(^{42}\) KMAG Historical Report, 7; Cumings, Roaring of the Cataract, 383, 388ff. General Roberts reported to the Army G-3 that in his opinion, “each [incident] was brought on by the presence of a small South Korean salient north of the parallel;” Roberts to Bolté, 19 August 1949, 7-8.

\(^{43}\) KMAG Historical Report, 7.

\(^{44}\) Quoted in Sawyer, In Peace and War, 69.

\(^{45}\) Inspection of 5th Regiment, 3rd Division, KA (Pusan), 4 June 1949, AG File 333 Report of Inspection of 2nd Div. KA 1949 to 353.8 Amusements and Athletics 1949, PMAG (1948-49) and KMAG (1949-53), RG 554.
earlier was considered one of the best in the Constabulary. The change of commanders had made the difference, and it underlined the importance of strong Korean leadership for these higher formations.

In the 2nd Division stationed around Taejon, Major Arno Mowitz dealt with all of these problems simultaneously. From August 1948 until the summer of 1949, the 2nd Division had nine different regiments assigned to it at one time or another as well as four different commanders. Although Roberts was committed to the “counterpart system” such personnel turmoil effectively destroyed any semblance of professional bonding between counterparts. Additionally, Mowitz reported that Korean staff officers also rotated frequently before having a chance to grasp the essentials of their positions, resulting in inefficient headquarters operations. The state of training in the division reflected the organizational chaos at the division headquarters. Battalion and company commanders listlessly performed their duties since advisors never had the opportunity to implement or supervise a coherent training plan.

The G-3 inspection report illuminated the 2nd Division’s deficiencies even more clearly. Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Vieman reported, “Training has imparted rudimentary knowledge to the officers and men. It has left them ignorant of the means and manner of using this knowledge effectively and skillfully.” To support his conclusion, Vieman cited that although riflemen knew how to assemble and disassemble their weapons and assume basic shooting positions, they had no training or practice in range estimation, sight adjustment, or proper trigger squeeze – tasks that come naturally to trained infantrymen. Vehicle operators understood they needed to inspect vehicles before driving, but they were unsure for what exactly they were inspecting. Squad leaders could recite the principles of dispersion, movement under fire, and small unit control, but they could not execute these tasks in the field. The emplacement of automatic and support weapons also was haphazard and without consideration of terrain or other conditions.

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46 United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, Headquarters, 2nd Division, Korean Army (undated), 2-3, Box 8, Mowitz Papers.

Mowitz did observe one successful training technique that illuminated the way for successful inculcation of leadership and tactical principles from the officer ranks down to the soldiers. Mowitz assigned his most experienced advisors to the 25th Regiment, freshly raised with new soldiers, with instructions to make it a “first class unit.” The regimental advisors set up and trained a series of committees (staffed by Koreans) covering subjects such as preliminary rifle instruction, employment of infantry weapons, security, arm and hand signals, squad formations, and minor tactics. The committees then presented these classes to the unit at large, under KMAG supervision. The advisors also held mandatory night classes for the Korean officers, where the advisors provided criticism, solicited ideas, and planned the next day’s activities. The Korean officers then repeated the process with their noncommissioned officers. Mowitz reported favorably on this system: “instruction is not only standardized, but the chances of misinterpretations and incorrect instruction being given to troops is greatly reduced.”

The conclusions of these various reports were symptomatic of conditions throughout the ROKA. In general, advisor and equipment shortages hampered training at all levels. Lack of suitable training facilities often forced units to improvise in unrealistic settings, such as using any open space to practice squad movements. This is why Roberts urged his advisors “to sneer at their parade ground tactics, get them in the field.” The ROKA was learning bad habits that would cost them blood in the future. There was, of course, another problem that Roberts and KMAG had no control over, and that was the increasing demand to fight guerrillas and counter raids along the parallel.

To balance these two competing requirements, KMAG headquarters suggested a common training regime to address the lack of a comprehensive program from the individual soldier to the division level. The ROKA had yet to create an institutional base such as a centralized training command that could keep up with the large number of individually untrained soldiers that swelled the ranks. In a similar vein, few brigade and division units had completed even platoon or company level tactical training by mid-

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48 2nd Division, Korean Army (undated), 3, Mowitz Papers.

1949. Therefore, as the basis for their program, KMAG adapted the U.S. Army’s Mobilization Training Plan 7-1 for the Infantry Division (dated September 1943) to the needs of the ROKA. At the heart of this program was a progressive twelve-week regime training the individual soldier up to the battalion headquarters. Although the program officially began in July 1949, guerrilla conflict forced the ROK Army leadership to postpone its implementing instructions, Educational Memorandum No. 1, until January 1950. Under this directive, ROK divisions had three months to complete tactical training prescribed for squads through battalions. By 30 June, all regiments were to have completed their training exercises, which would then be followed by divisional training problems for combined arms and maneuver. These directives, though well intentioned, were overly optimistic. By June 1950, only the nine battalions of the Capital Division, six battalions of the 7th Division, and one battalion of the 8th Division had completed the program. Higher level exercises were beyond the ROKA’s reach at the time of the northern invasion.

From KMAG’s perspective in mid-1949, these were problems that could be overcome with time and experience. Unfortunately, the pressing issue was how to tame the guerrilla problem before sustained operations wore the army down to impotence. The primary reason for ROKA’s failure to train was the need to counter increased guerrilla activity in the latter half of 1949. For most ROK units, anti-guerrilla and counter-infiltration operations displaced formal training. This condition became so normal that KMAG attempted to make a virtue out of necessity. Based on the ROKA’s combat performance to date, Roberts realized that the crisis moment had arrived. His initiative pushed additional resources (mainly advisors) down to the battalion level with an increased focus on specific assistance to counter-guerrilla operations. The ROKA

50 Kim, *Korean War*, 203.

51 Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 70.


53 Ibid.

54 Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 78.
established specialized task forces to deal with guerrillas in the Chiri-san and Taebaek-san regions; a similar task force was organized on the Ongjin peninsula with a special KMAG detachment assigned to it. In this way, Roberts hoped to keep his finger on the pulse of the ROKA by monitoring both the progress of training and by getting a continuous stream of field reports of combat operations. \(^{55}\) Perhaps even more significant for the long-term health of the ROKA, these initiatives, for the first time, put the advisory effort on a clearly directed focus to observe, advise, and report. The advisors were also largely successful in helping the ROKA to subdue guerrillas and hold its own against North Korean security forces. If Roberts perhaps went overboard with his public statements about the ROKA’s progress, at least he had reason to be proud of both KMAG and the ROKA. By March 1950, they had suppressed the guerrilla movement and defended the parallel against North Korean infiltrations and attacks.

**ROKA, KMAG, and the Limited War – Guerrillas and Raiders**

Following the suppression of the Yosu-Sunchon rebellion, the army pursued a massive purge of its ranks to eliminate subversive elements. Consequently, rebellious outbursts within the Constabulary slackened, but attacks by guerrilla bands operating in the mountainous regions and supported by army deserters and North Korea increased. \(^{56}\) This shift in Communist tactics was due mainly to the Rhee government’s crackdown on suspected leftists and SKLP members, particularly in urban areas. \(^{57}\) However, incidents along the 38th parallel involving raids, shootings, and infiltration kept the ROKA busy chasing the shadows of North Korean security forces, while southern-based guerrillas attempted to expand their operations in the mountainous regions. Border clashes were not considered serious so long as ROKA responses did not threaten to escalate the

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55 KMAG Historical Report, 8-9; KMAG Estimate of the Situation, 1 January 1950, 20; Report of Inspection, TAEBAEK SAN Area, 16 September 1949, Box 8, Mowitz Papers; William L. Roberts to Arno P. Mowitz, 23 September 1949, Box 8, Mowitz Papers.

56 Constabulary mutinies did flourish for a time in the Taegu region, which fueled the flames of revolt in North Kyongsang province; Cumings, *Roaring of the Cataract*, 275ff.

57 John Muccio to Secretary of State (Dean Acheson), 27 January 1949, *FRUS* (1949), 7: 949.
violence beyond control. However, guerrillas were a different matter. Insurgent activities peaked in late 1949 as ROK Army units repeatedly clashed with so-called “People’s Guerrilla Units.” These units tried to undermine Rhee’s regime and prepare the south for occupation by Communist armies from the north. Organized, trained, and controlled by Pyongyang, these guerrilla units launched a massive “September Offensive” in the southern Cholla and Kyongsang provinces. The failure of this and other offensives in the south, along with the signs of increasing sturdiness of the ROK Government and army units along the 38th parallel are significant because the southern regime did not have a guarantee of American military support. In other words, in this fight, the South Koreans were on their own, and their success generated substantial enthusiasm for the ROK on the part of Roberts, Ambassador John Muccio, and others.

The second campaign of the Korean War began in the spring of 1949. Along the 38th parallel on the Ongjin peninsula and at the ancient capital city of Kaesong, small scale incidents between North Korean security forces and ROK border troops had been commonplace since January 1949, but in May, cross-border fire-fights and raids escalated into sustained combat involving battalion-sized units. On 3 May, fighting broke out in the ancient capital city of Kaesong as North Korean border troops crossed the parallel and ROK forces responded by carrying the fight to the heights that dominated the city’s northern side. In response to fighting on the Ongjin peninsula, the ROKA headquarters dispatched the 12th Regiment (from Inchon) with more than a thousand troops. With these reinforcements the South Koreans took the offensive to envelope Communist positions on Kurak-san, which the North Koreans tenaciously

58 Kim, Korean War, 145.
60 Charles L. Wesolowsky to Allan R. Millett, 16 September 1995; Summary of Operations, Korean Army, 4, Fischgrund Papers.
61 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 58; KMAC Historical Report, 6; Summary of Operations, Korean Army, 4, Fischgrund Papers; The Ambassador in Korea to the Secretary of State, 6 May 1949 and 11 June 1949, FRUS (1949), 7: 1009, 1041.
defended. Further fighting continued from June through August and spread eastward to Chunchon and the East Coast with North Korean units probing south and ROKA units responding. South Korean forces also initiated a number of engagements as they tried unsuccessfully to seize more defensible terrain that was astride or even north of the 38th parallel. In at least one case, a ROK battalion crossed the parallel north of Kaesong to attack Hill 488, which was the source of many northern raids. It, too, was repulsed. North Korean forces responded with raids and cross-border assaults. At last, starting with the new year, border incidents fell precipitously, averaging just less than ten a month for the next six months.

The fact that ROK units appeared to have fought well pleased Roberts, and it made him more confident that the ROKA was reaching a level of military competence that justified American support. Field reports, however, continued to emphasize training deficiencies, as well as the discrepancy in firepower between North Korean and ROK troops. This did give Roberts pause, and he reported his concerns to Washington, yet the dramatic decrease in the number of incidents along the parallel implied that the ROKA had contained the limited war along the border. The ROKA now turned its attention to deal a decisive blow against the communist guerrillas.

In April 1949, concerned that the south’s continued insurgent problem undermined the prestige and legitimacy of the ROK, President Rhee decided to make a concerted effort to root out guerrillas on Cheju Island and in the interior of the mainland. While propaganda broadcasts from Pyongyang and Soviet areas celebrated the April 3rd anniversary of the 1948 uprising, Rhee (and perhaps Muccio as well) feared that if left to

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62 F. Foster Cowey to Allan R. Millett, 29 February 1996.


64 Cumings, Roaring of the Cataract, 405.

65 John Muccio went even further. He wrote to the Secretary of State, “It is generally felt . . . that the Korean Army has made such progress during the past six months that it would give an excellent account of itself against the North Koreans.” The Ambassador in Korea to the Secretary of State, 11 June 1949, FRUS (1949), 7: 1043.

66 Cowey to Millett, 29 February 1996.
grow unchecked, the guerrilla movement could become so vast as to require a withdrawal of ROKA forces from the 38th parallel. For obvious reasons, this result would have been intolerable. Rhee directed his minister of defense, Shin Song-mo to take personal command of army units on Cheju Island and to eliminate the guerrilla problem for good. Similar measures were to be taken in the Chiri and Taebek mountain regions.\(^67\)

The anti-guerrilla campaign began in August and was taxing for the ROKA and KMAG. The hard core of insurgents were former members of the Constabulary who had revolted in the fall of 1948, not only at Yosu, but also on Cheju island and at Taegu. Later in 1949, these groups received specially trained reinforcements from North Korea. Therefore, the ROKA had to tangle with fighters who had similar training, weapons, and equipment – in addition to the natural advantages accrued by guerrillas.\(^68\) After much effort and hard fighting, the ROKA’s efforts finally bore fruit as ROKA units destroyed or dispersed the majority of insurgent groups. By September, Cheju Island was completely pacified, though the number of civilian deaths likely exceeded those of actual guerrillas. Guerrillas in Chiri-san and Taebaek-san proved more durable and required more strenuous and repressive measures.\(^69\) The formation of Korean Army Task Forces assisted the ROKA and KMAG to command and control operations requiring forces from various divisions to operate in concert. For example, in the Taebaek-san region, battalions from two divisions (2nd and 8th) and an independent battalion fell under the control of the 16th Regiment. Fortunately, border incidents declined sufficiently in September to permit some regiments to redeploy troops to the interior. Better results began to be noticed as advisors stressed more appropriate tactics and continuous pressure against the insurgents. For example, in the 16th Regiment, one battalion commander favored the practice of mobilizing large bodies of troops to scour the region without any preparation or intelligence about enemy movements or positions. The regimental advisor

\(^67\) John Muccio to Secretary of State (Acheson), 9 April 1949, \textit{FRUS (1949)}, 7: 983.

\(^68\) Summary of Operations, 1, Fischgrund Papers.

\(^69\) The Ambassador in Korea to the Secretary of State, 13 October 1949, \textit{FRUS (1949)}, 7: 1087; Cumings, \textit{Roaring of the Cataract}, 399-402.
recommended that the battalion institute an aggressive patrol pattern with small units to determine routes of movement, hide sites, and assembly areas. Then, special ambush teams would wait for the guerrillas to come to them. The battalion adopted this tactic, which produced immediate results with several guerrillas either shot or captured along with their arms and ammunition.\(^70\)

These measures eventually denied the guerrillas sanctuary and popular support, and wore away at their fighting strength.\(^71\) To keep the guerrilla movement fresh, the northern Communists infiltrated more than a dozen guerrilla units across the 38\(^{th}\) parallel. Korean Army units intercepted and destroyed or scattered all of these specially trained units.\(^72\) As the ROKA gained control of the border infiltrators, the guerrillas continued steadily to lose manpower as well, until 1 October when the ROKA coordinated a three-pronged campaign to eliminate all guerrillas in the south. The best officers were hand-picked to fill command and staff positions of the three active task forces and for once, the ROKA established an effective intelligence net with adequate transportation and supplies for a sustained winter campaign. At first, results were meager, but eventually the rebels were driven into the open. By March 1950, the ROKA claimed 5,621 guerrillas killed or captured and 1,066 weapons seized.\(^73\) Although the above figure was likely exaggerated by including innocent civilians, these operations, which continued throughout the spring, caused guerrilla activity largely to collapse and not to be revived until after September 1950.

In a last ditch effort to keep the guerrilla conflict boiling, North Korea sent two battalion-sized units south to link up with the last significant guerrilla group in operation. The first battalion, commanded by Kim Sang-ho, ran into troops from the ROK 8\(^{th}\) Division, which reduced the infiltrating unit in a series of engagements to a strength of

\(^{70}\) KMAG Historical Report, 9-10; Report of Inspection, TAEBAEK SAN, 2, Mowitz Papers.

\(^{71}\) North Korean sources celebrated the “success” of the September Offensive, which they claimed had raised 77,000 recruits, initiated 1,184 engagements with ROK army and security forces, and resulted in 1,272 ROK fatalities, 832 prisoners and 1,300 weapons captured; Kim, Korean War, 147.

\(^{72}\) KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 52-54.

seventy men. These survivors scattered and hid until ROK troops hunted them down, killing or capturing them all. The second column, under Kim Moo-hyon, attempted to slip through the zone held by the 6th Division. This division coordinated a two-battalion “hammer and anvil” to trap the infiltrators. The 1st Battalion of the 8th Regiment pressed its attack vigorously until Kim’s command was eliminated on 22 April. Casualty results were equally impressive: 480 guerrillas killed, 104 captured, while ROKA suffered 69 killed and 186 wounded in action.74

Although the ROKA was successful in fending off the challenges of guerrillas, infiltrators, and raiders, these operations complicated the ROKA’s attempts to establish and support itself. Of immediate concern were the dangerously low levels of ammunition, spare-parts, and other equipment.75 From July through December 1949, the ROKA conducted 542 separate operations against insurgents, an average of almost three actions every day.76 Such a tempo exhausted the logistical stocks left by the departing American forces, and left the ROKA in a precarious position. One report estimated that 15 percent of its weapons and 35 percent of its vehicles were unserviceable, while only 15 days worth of ammunition and other supplies were on hand to conduct defensive operations.77

From KMAG’s perspective, the limited operations along the parallel seemed to have had the objective (for the Communists) to evaluate the effectiveness of both the Communist infantry forces as well as the defensive capabilities of ROK units. The advisors noted that although the ROKA ultimately triumphed, it had been an expensive undertaking, with “many troops used to fight a few.”78 Although Cumings claims that the North Koreans were not prepared for a major war in the summer of 1949, the border fighting undoubtedly provided them valuable experience, which they put to good use the

74 Summary of Operations, 3 Fischgrund Papers; KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 54.
76 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 74.
77 Ibid., 104.
78 Resume of Korean Army Operations, 3, Fischgrund Papers.
following summer.\textsuperscript{79} A second likely objective was to keep ROK units spread thinly, especially along the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel, forcing them to choose between concentration to combat guerrillas or dispersion to intercept northern penetrations.\textsuperscript{80} In this objective, the Communists were entirely successful, as nearly half of the ROKA remained deployed beyond supporting distance of units defending the parallel. Thirteen of the ROKA’s twenty-one active regiments were deployed to defend 204 miles of linear front, roughly breaking down to nine and half miles (straight-line distance) per regiment. The remaining regiments were committed to internal security, pacification, or retraining.\textsuperscript{81} A third possible objective, postulated by at least one Korean historian, is that the Communists hoped to spark a nationwide uprising against the Rhee “puppet regime.”\textsuperscript{82} If this truly was a Communist objective, then their failure to prompt a widespread rebellion against Seoul likely dismayed northern leaders and played a large part in setting the conditions that led to the June 1950 invasion.\textsuperscript{83}

\textit{ROKA on the Eve of War}

Any assessment of military capabilities is relative, therefore, it is important to evaluate the ROKA’s capabilities in light of its challenges and accomplishments. It is especially important to remember this truism when considering how ill-prepared the ROKA was for a conventional war in the summer of 1950 against the Soviet-sponsored North Korean People’s Army. The early American occupation authorities only vaguely considered that they were establishing a military force to defend a sovereign state south of the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel. The Constabulary’s first two years were devoted to many things other than training for war: establishment, bureaucratic politics, officer development,

\textsuperscript{79} Cumings, \textit{Roaring of the Cataract}, 388.

\textsuperscript{80} KIMH, \textit{KW}, vol. 1, 61.

\textsuperscript{81} ROKA-KMAG G-3 Conference, May 1950, 1; Resume of Korean Army Operations, 1, Fischgrund Papers; Sawyer, \textit{Advisors in Korea}, 74-75.

\textsuperscript{82} Kim, \textit{Korean War}, 152.

\textsuperscript{83} Goncharov, et al., \textit{Uncertain Partners}, 143.
organization, and equipment. The Constabulary was barely organized when armed rebellion broke out on Cheju-do and then spread to the mainland during the Yosu-Sunchon mutiny. The guerrilla war placed a terrible strain on the fabric of the ROKA. Nevertheless, the ROKA survived as did the Syngman Rhee government. The American advisors deserve no small credit for this accomplishment. They played key roles at every crucial phase of the development of an indigenous Korean Army.

An objective look at the ROKA of 1950 identifies weaknesses that fall into three categories: material, tactical, and institutional. None of these problems were new nor were they unsolvable in time. In fact, Roberts and his advisors had spent considerable time and resources to remedy these deficiencies. Unfortunately, these issues interacted with one another to such a degree that defied a direct or quick solution. Roberts recognized that raising an army from scratch is a long-term proposal. The perception that the collapse of Nationalist China might be a metaphor for Korea’s failure concerned Roberts and it influenced his directives within KMAG as well as his public and private correspondence. Therefore, it was not unreasonable for him to publicly support increased funding and attention from Washington by promoting the ROKA’s virtues and rationalizing its weaknesses. KMAG lacked the time, resources, and support to do the job correctly.

The most visible obstacle to military effectiveness was the state of the ROKA’s equipment, weaponry, and organization. The South Korean Army in 1950, like the U.S. Army following its post-World War II demobilization, had to cope with surplus or obsolescent equipment and weapons. By any modern standard, it was weak in artillery of all types and numbers; it had no tanks, and few reliable anti-tank weapons. In terms of capabilities, its weapons were completely outclassed by the Soviet-supplied North Korean People’s Army (KPA) in all areas. KMAG estimates in January 1950 credited the KPA with 65 T-34 tanks (85 mm main gun), 148 artillery pieces (122 mm towed and 76 mm self-propelled), over 6,000 machine guns, and 35 Soviet-built tactical aircraft. In

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comparison, the ROKA possessed 27 M8 armored scout cars (37 mm gun), 90 105 mm howitzers (because these were M3 model howitzers designed for airborne units, they were outranged even by the smaller North Korean howitzers), 1,530 machine guns, and 13 light reconnaissance planes. In the six months prior to war, ROKA believed the North Koreans added 100 tanks, 600 artillery pieces, and 150 aircraft. In this same time period, the South Koreans gained only one howitzer and a few unarmed aircraft. This disparity in numbers and type of equipment doomed the ROKA from having any chance to compete with the NKPA in terms of firepower or mobility.

In response, both Roberts and Muccio lobbied to increase military aid to the ROK. In January 1950 Roberts presented a “generally optimistic” appraisal of the ROKA to Philip C. Jessup, but he pointed out that in addition to increased military assistance funds, the ROK needed an air defense capability (preferably its own air force using obsolescent F-51 fighters from Japan) and more naval craft. The ten million dollars allocated for Fiscal Year 1949 were but drops in a bucket that was almost empty. Expansion and continuous combat had drained the ROKA’s logistical and supply accounts to dangerously low levels, yet the Department of Defense did not see the perceive as urgently as Roberts, and it ruled that there was “no military necessity for an increase in MDA (Military Defense Assistance) program for Korea at this time.” The Defense Department, with prodding from Acheson, eventually reversed itself, but only authorized $108 of aid for FY 1950; the remaining aid would not arrive in Korea until FY 1951-1952.

Aside from inadequate weaponry, Constabulary and army expansion occurred without thought to the specialized and technical units required to support such a force in conventional combat simply to save money. In any event, not until 1949 did KMAG or

85 Based on intelligence reports summarized in ibid., 135, 137; Annex 7 “Weapons Comparison NKSF-KSF, 1 January 1950, KMAG Historical Report.

86 The Ambassador to Korea (John Muccio) to the Secretary of State (Dean Acheson), 28 January 1950, FRUS (1950), 7: 19.

87 Secretary of State (Acheson) to the Ambassador to Korea (Muccio), 13 April 1950 and Chargé in Korea to Secretary of State (for Muccio), 20 April 1950, U.S. Department of State, FRUS, 1950, vol. 7, Korea (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 45-47.
the ROKA begin to foresee that it would need such supporting units. Rapid expansion also aggravated the problems of training, because units were expected to train their own soldiers – while doing everything else as well. The multiplication of units threatened to overwhelm already over-stretched fiscal and physical resources. Although the ROKA met its ambitious (and from the American viewpoint, unauthorized) strength of 100,000 men, the problem of large numbers of individually untrained soldiers forced units to scrap any plans for collective training at battalion or regimental level. What the ROKA needed was a centralized system for recruiting, induction, and training of individual replacements. No such organization existed until after the conventional war began, and it did not produce adequately trained soldiers until well into 1951.88

This situation was made worse because the ROK Army was not yet organized as an army in the classic sense. Although called an army, it continued to function more like a constabulary, ensuring internal security and stability, not preparing to defend against a bona fide conventional invasion from the North. Hence, from Washington’s perspective there was no perceptible requirement to provide modern artillery, tanks, and combat aircraft. The Americans were also reluctant to arm the south in any degree that might increase the likelihood for conflict along the parallel.89 Even had the Americans done so, it may not have changed the initial results. Although organized into divisions, the South Koreans never fought as divisions; rarely did they fight as regiments, and when they did a regiment was as likely to have unfamiliar units assigned to it as its own. There simply was no experience base to fight a modern conventional war, or even to maintain and support a modern conventional army that trained for war. It is true they would have benefited from having more anti-tank weapons (mines, 3.5-inch rockets, towed guns), but it is highly questionable whether the South Koreans would have been able to turn back

88 This was known as the Replacement Training Center, first located at Taegu in August 1950, then relocated to Cheju-do. The ROK Government did attempt to institute a conscription system which the Americans squashed by limiting the ROKA to eight divisions. As a result, this initial effort at compulsory military service collapsed under the strain of oversupply and low demand; Kim, Korean War, 204.

the invasion on account of larger quantities of modern equipment. Above all, they needed experience and training to use and maintain that equipment to generate larger amounts of firepower and greater fighting capability.

Organizational and material weaknesses that inhibited realistic training seamlessly blended into the ROKA’s tactical vulnerability. When the conventional war started in June 1950, a bare majority of units had completed platoon and company training programs. Only five of their twenty-two regiments had certified their subordinate battalions as being trained.\(^90\) The concept of combined arms – employing indirect fire with infantry maneuver – had been unnecessary in the border conflict and in the guerrilla suppression campaigns, which were generally set-piece affairs with minimal complexity. For example, fighting around Kaesong in May 1949 typically devolved into an exchange of mortar and artillery fire, which then was followed by an infantry see-saw battle at close range.\(^91\) Counter-guerrilla operations did not encourage subtlety or imaginative tactics. The exigencies of the moment forced advisors simply to tell their counterparts how to do tasks without making sure that the Koreans understood the underlying principles. At first glance, it would appear that the primary obstacles to training were inadequate space, facilities, and equipment. In actuality, the basic problem was time, for after the winter of 1948-49 nearly all Korean Army units spent most of their field time chasing guerrillas and fighting a low-intensity border war with the north. That left little time for realistic combat training emphasizing coordination between units, cooperation with fire support weapons, and individual initiative.

General Roberts tried to get his advisors to make the best of a bad situation by taking advantage of real operations as training opportunities. Appearances seemed to validate that approach, but the hard reality was that for all of KMAG’s best efforts to plan and resource training, improvisation was the norm, not the exception. Training as recognized in the United States Army simply did not occur. In contrast with the well drilled and trained soldiers of the KPA, who did not have to contend with a pervasive

\(^90\) Kim, *The Korean War*, 203.

internal uprising like the south did, easily tore through the bulk of the South Koreans in the first days of the conventional war. Whereas a comprehensive training program would have helped to work out and practice procedures and tactics, ROKA units had to improvise when in contact with the enemy. The results were predictable, had KMAG been able to read the signs more presciently. It would be twelve months before the tempo of battle let up enough for implementation of a comprehensive regimen that retrained Korean combat units to fight modern war with modern tactics, weapons, and organization.

Leadership remained the limiting factor for the development of a military institution capable of providing for the defense of the southern republic. The mixture of inexperience, disloyalty, corruption, and ignorance threatened to tear the ROKA apart. Its survival stemmed from the commitment of a few Korean and American officers who showed the way to a more professional, technical, and militarily competent army.  

American organizers of the Constabulary found few experienced leaders untainted by association with the Japanese colonial occupation, which had stamped out or suppressed any semblance of Korean nationalism, leadership, or technicalism. With the exception of a small number trained in Nationalist China, most Koreans with military experience who became officers came from the Imperial Japanese and the Manchukuo armies. Their prior experience did not generally prepare them to assume in a few short years positions as battalion, regimental, and division commanders. KMAG officers understood that nearly everything was learned “on the job,” and they did the best they could to make the most of these situations. Despite these handicaps, advisors generally were confident in their counterparts’ abilities to learn from experience and to grasp more complex tasks over time. Indeed, how the ROKA responded to and dealt with the

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92 Roberts to Bolté, 19 August 1949, 3-5.

93 Lim Sun-ha to Allan R. Millett, 29 December 2003. The Manchukuo veterans at least had combat experience against Communist partisans in Manchuria. These officers, represented by Paik Sun-yup and Chung Il-kwon, played key roles in the counter-guerrilla campaigns of 1949-1951.

94 Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 21, USAMHI.
guerrilla problem in the fall and winter campaigns of 1949-50 testifies to their ability to adapt to difficult military situations. It augured well for the ROKA, provided they had the time to increase their experience and confidence.

Disloyalty among officers and troops was a pervasive problem in the first five years of the Constabulary and ROKA. Although the Koreans are a proud people with a long history of independence and high culture, liberation had unleashed forces that spun out of control. The siren song of communism readily competed with the true beginnings of national feeling and, after 15 August 1948, ideological commitment to the Rhee regime. It is worth remembering that all incidents of rebellion in 1948 were either instigated, or openly supported, by subversives in the ranks of the Constabulary. Following the Yosu mutiny, the ROKA in cooperation with the G-2 (intelligence) section of PMAG undertook a massive internal review to eliminate subversive elements in the military. Internal turmoil continued at least until May 1949, when two battalions of the ROK 8th Regiment (6th Division) crossed the parallel to defect. The attempt largely failed, but it still kept KMAG preoccupied with the possibility that other units might remain compromised.

Corruption and self-centeredness within the officer corps had a debilitating influence on the ROKA’s operations and it made it harder for Roberts to lobby for increased support to the South Koreans. Still, KMAG had made great progress in this arena. General Roberts held periodic conferences with division commanders that were part lecture, part exhortation, part emotional appeal for greater professionalism within the officer ranks. Unfortunately, the progress of growing an indigenous professional officer corps was slow work that cut across cultural norms of hierarchy and perceived status. Failures to report truthfully, exercise initiative even when the initial plan or idea obviously no longer applied to the situation, or to train subordinates confounded the Americans, who simply chalked up these “deficiencies” as cultural problems. This view, though widely accepted, was not wholly correct. Many advisors proved that

95 Millett, “Captain Hausman,” 527.
96 KMAG Historical Report, 6, 9.
97 Hausrath, Problems, 55, 163-64, 222.
cultural barriers could be penetrated, despite language incompatibility. To show his counterpart the value of training subordinates, one KMAG officer patiently encouraged a Korean commander to let his staff work all night instead of taking all the work for himself. The officer complained, “But I’ll have to redo it.” The advisor replied, “Okay, but you have to train them.”98 It had not occurred to many Korean officers that a staff was not simply a coterie of yes-men, but rather a professional structure whose development was a benefit to the army as a whole. As with many other American practices, it was up to the advisors to show the Koreans the value of expanding the competency of the army as a whole, rather than simply working for self-serving ends.

When ably led, the Korean soldier fought admirably in spite of his equipment or training. Roberts said of him, “He can be molded into a reasonably good soldier in six months, in my opinion. He has many qualities I’d like to transfer to American soldiers, viz. attentiveness, stoicism, a desire to learn, a ready willingness to die if ordered, tenacity.”99 Unfortunately, strong and imaginative leadership was too often lacking, and there were too few opportunities to educate Korean officers with modern leadership and combat practices. As a result of these handicaps, few senior Korean commanders by 1950 could be expected to have enough practical experience or training to cope against a full-fledged conventional invasion. KMAG’s greatest challenge – and its proudest achievement – would be to build an officer corps in a country that had almost no modern military tradition.100

The unique feature of this catalogue of the ROKA’s weaknesses and emerging strengths on the eve of war is the sense of interaction among them. As an example, KMAG recognized that the ROKA needed more organic fire support in the form of tube artillery. Yet, simply rewriting the division’s table of organization and adding battalions of artillery would not suffice to make a division more effective in battle. Trained

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98 Quoted in ibid., 225.
99 Roberts to Bolté, 19 August 1949, 3.
100 Ibid., 3-5; Hausrath, Problems, 1. Roberts had few positive things to say about the ROKA’s senior leadership, though he did single out Chung Il-kwon and Paik Sun-yup. It is very illuminating that Roberts said of then Colonel Paik Sun-yup, “We’ll ride with him, and I believe he’ll be good.” Starting in June 1950, Paik commanded in succession the ROK 1st Division, I Corps, Task Force Paik, and II Corps. In 1952, he became the ROKA Chief of Staff.
leadership, with “hands-on” experience was required before units could be expected to employ the advanced tactics of effective artillery and infantry cooperation. Better leaders needed better leadership training, and better training needed more experienced leaders – and more artillery. It would not be sufficient to address each problem sequentially; solutions to one problem often required as a foundation simultaneous progress on others. This example (which became urgent in the fall of 1951) required a solution that would address organization, equipment, leadership and technical skills, and soldier training in a simultaneous process. This challenge was complex in the extreme, and it was beyond the pre-war KMAG’s managerial ability, even in peacetime. During wartime, it would become impossible unless the ROKA and KMAG could get resources, time, and space to sort out a comprehensive reformation.

Despite the causes for pessimism, the latter half of 1950 did bode well for measurable improvement. Although guerrilla operations continued to influence training, ROKA Headquarters appeared to have a grasp on the problem when it issued Educational Memorandum No. 2 on 14 March 1950, directing the completion of regimental training from June to September 1950.\(^{101}\) Additionally, KMAG continued to advise an infrastructure modeled on the U.S. Army that would give substance to the south’s military facing. For example, branch and technical schools to train officers and enlisted men for specialized combat functions had by 15 June 1950 graduated 9,126 officers and 11,112 enlisted men. Schools for infantry, artillery, signal, engineer, finance, and other military specialties were finally addressing ROKA’s deficiencies in modernity.\(^{102}\) Manpower expanded to 65,000 combat troops and 25,000 administrative and support troops, roughly keeping up with the size of North Korean forces. Combat troops were dispersed in eight divisions; four along the length of the 38\(^{th}\) parallel, three in the interior (Taejon, Kwangju, and Taegu), and one in Seoul (figure 3.1).\(^{103}\)

Moreover, the divisions themselves were gradually evolving into more capable organizations. Expansion proceeded well enough to organize six divisions with three

\(^{101}\) Kim, *Korean War*, 203; KIMH, *KW*, vol. 1, 149.

\(^{102}\) Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 90.

infantry regiments each, while the remaining two divisions each had two regiments (3rd and 5th). In October 1949, the Capital Division was the first to receive its organic

Figure 3.1: Disposition of ROK Army Divisions and Regiments, January to June 1950
artillery battalion, and the divisions defending along the parallel received their artillery battalions between October 1949 and June 1950. Supporting units also entered the ROKA’s inventory as they formed, adding to the combat and support capability of the front line divisions. By June 1950, three of these divisions had organic engineer battalions.

Finally, by June 1950 – just as Roberts boarded a plane destined for Tokyo – the ROK Army was winning the limited war. The southern system sponsored by the United States had weathered a conflict of internal discontent and revolt. Cheju-do had been pacified. Guerrillas in Chiri-san and Taebaek-san were neutralized. President Rhee had not blinked in the war of nerves along the parallel. U.S. forces had withdrawn and the ROKA was not only still standing, it was improving. In the late spring of 1950, Frank Gibney, a correspondent for Time magazine, believed that the ROK had made its “longest step toward recovery in the military field.” Time was not on the side of the Communists. If the northern Communists intended to reunify the Korean peninsula, it would have to be done by invasion.

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104 Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 84.


CHAPTER 4

THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF
THE MILITARY MISSIONS
1948-1950

It is impossible to understand the combat performance of the Korean army without understanding the structure and functions of the advisory organizations primarily responsible for its organization, training, and fighting ability. The formation of the Provisional Military Advisory Group – PMAG – in August 1948 established the first formal structure for the Americans to advise the Koreans. However, PMAG remained a fringe organization in the USAFIK hierarchy, and it had to compete for personnel, equipment, and attention. The effects of PMAG’s low priority was such that one advisor dryly noted that “provisional” described the situation perfectly. Despite these organizational handicaps, within two years these advisors developed a native military force in Korea that had finally attained some equilibrium. In short, they had accomplished a minor military miracle. The Republic of Korea was not going the way of Nationalist China, and the Republic’s military problems, though still severe, appeared to be lessening with the passage of time.

The dominant figure of PMAG was Brigadier General William Lynn Roberts. Roberts faced a Herculean task. His job was to supervise the organization, training, and advice of a foreign army whose size grew from 50,000 to nearly 100,000 soldiers, in just two years of peace and war. Contrary to his historical sketch, Roberts was a capable administrator and a strong leader who made an indelible impression of confidence, appreciation for training, and zealous pursuit for support to the ROKA not only on the advisory groups he led, but on the Koreans as well. This impression endured to the very end of the war.
The final withdrawal of American combat troops in the summer of 1949 coincided with the inauguration of the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAG). The officers and enlisted men detailed as KMAG advisors carried their counterparts through the tough times of sedition, rebellion, and war. As American combat units withdrew from Korea, they found themselves in many cases as de facto leaders of the Korean military. Problems that previously had been considered in abstract terms were now theirs to solve. Haphazard organization, training, and logistics combined with challenges in understanding Korean history, language, and culture to make the problems of advice and assistance nearly impossible to fathom, let alone ameliorate. Individual initiative and resourcefulness of the advisor had had to make up for many of these deficiencies. To their credit, these men did the best they could given the environment of poverty, insurrection, corruption, and isolation. This was the organization, in final form, that had a mere twelve months to prepare the Korean army to survive and thrive on its own: to conquer guerrillas and bandits, to repel raids and incursions across the parallel, to prop up and defend the legitimacy of the southern government. Had they failed, no amount of American support would have saved the Republic from destruction in 1950. They made an army and ensured its survival.

*The Office of the Chief*

Historians of the Korean War have not been kind to KMAG or General Roberts. He is variously portrayed as a caricature of a colonial administrator, a disgruntled officer “passed over” for promotion and just putting in his time before retirement, or one man swimming naively against the tide of southern hostility. These various descriptions attempt to explain his apparent ignorance of actual conditions within the Korean military, his deliberate attempt to mask the corruption and deficiencies of the ROKA, his lack of
real authority, or his self-promoting and wildly optimistic support for the ROKA. The real General Roberts was an experienced and veteran soldier, who understood the sensitivity of his position and the importance of his mission. He was committed to discharging his duty in the best way he knew, while maneuvering within the resource and political constraints placed upon him.

Roberts’s arrived in Korea in May 1948 in the midst of great events. Elections in the south had returned a National Assembly that was busy writing a constitution and establishing a free-standing government. Cheju-do was aflame in insurrection, and the Constabulary was wracked by internal dissention, leftist agitation, and antagonism from the National Police and other right-wing organizations. Fortunately, Roberts was an experienced officer, combat veteran of both world wars, well respected by his superiors in Asia and in Washington. He brought order to the chaotic conditions he found in Korea, and he imposed upon both KMAG and the ROKA standards for leadership, training, and administration. These standards ensured that the ROKA would survive its turbulent early years and even escape from under the crushing burden of a war for which it had not prepared.

The most critical quality General Roberts brought to PMAG was firm leadership. When it came to his organization, Roberts knew what he wanted. Gruff in manner and unafraid to express his views, Roberts moved to imbue his subordinates with a sense of urgency. He keenly felt the responsibility for making the Constabulary into an efficient and militarily competent organization. As soon as he arrived in Korea he set out on a comprehensive inspection tour of the Constabulary units and their advisors. These

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inspections helped Roberts and his staff identify the key weaknesses afflicting the Constabulary, such as organization, training, and inefficiency. Over the next ten months he continued to be personally involved with the operations of PMAG, and he took steps to make sure his subordinates understood his vision and philosophy for being an advisor.³

The most important decision Roberts made was to establish KMAG’s standard advisory procedure, which became known as the “counterpart system.” This system was KMAG’s signature trait, and it lasted throughout the war years. American officers held no command authority after 15 August 1948, but they needed to act and think as if they did if they were to infuse American experience, technical knowledge, and judgment throughout the Korean army. In practice, advisors would weld themselves to the Korean officer to whom they were assigned to advise. Of course, the counterpart system was not fool-proof, and it did not eliminate all friction that could be expected in this unique military marriage of radically different customs, perceptions, and experiences. Because he expected advisors to offer (and even insist upon) counsel and guidance, even if unsolicited, to his counterpart, Roberts searched hard to find and assign experienced officers as field advisors down to the battalion level.⁴ To reinforce that standard and to ensure that the Americans clearly understood their place in the military chain, Roberts emphasized, “Advisors do not command – they ADVISE.” He directed his advisors to beware trying to “convert the Korean into an American.” Their mandate and foremost responsibility was simply “to organize and train, in a democratic way, a small but efficient organization . . . capable of maintaining internal security.”⁵

Unfortunately, Roberts had to wait to get the experienced men he knew he needed. For many of the young officers assigned to PMAG, advisory duty was the last thing they had expected to draw in an overseas assignment.⁶ They had no training or

³ KMAG Historical Report, 4.
⁴ Harold Fischgrund to author, 8 February and 18 February 2002.
⁶ Of the 106 officers assigned to PMAG on 17 August 1948, 63 were in the grade of lieutenant. Headquarters, USAFIK, Special Orders no. 176, 17 August 1948, Korean War Collection, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.
introduction in how military missions should function. To help these officers understand “how to” make the most of their assignment, KMAG published an *Advisor’s Handbook* in the fall of 1949. In this handbook, Roberts and his staff laid out standards of leadership, expectations for advisors, and procedural techniques to assist the field advisor in all his endeavors as partners in command with his counterpart.

Roberts was a hands-on Chief, and he believed that hand-on advisory work worked best. He told an assembled group of officers, “[G]et under the skin of your counterpart – get his confidence by your honesty, your ability, your guidance – this may become a ‘command’ team even if not in name.” Roberts recognized that credibility was the only capital that he could freely spend, and he understood that credibility would only have an influence if exercised in person. This point became even more critical as the army had to dedicate more time to anti-guerrilla and counter-infiltration operations in place of formal training. Roberts expected his advisors to make a virtue out of necessity. In an August 1949 memorandum he wrote, “Whenever a hot spot [incident] highlights the operations and training [activities] in a division zone or area, I expect the senior advisor to go into action” and see to it that Korean officers “milk” the incident dry of its training value.

Too frequently Korean officers spent valuable time indulging in the perquisites of rank, rather than being focused on tactics or training. One of his specific concerns was that advisors supervise Korean staff officers, whom often had difficulty grasping the essential, if unglamorous, nature of their responsibilities. Basic tasks, such as maintaining accurate intelligence and operations situation maps rarely occurred, and Roberts expected the advisors to fix that. Further, he noted that the best advisors would keep good notes, share information with fellow advisors, and of course, be sure to “prevent mistakes.”

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9 Roberts to Bolté, 19 August 1949, 3.

10 Ibid.
By the fall of 1949, KMAG was operating on a firmer basis than it had been just a few months prior. At the same time, the ROKA was conducting many more daily operations, primarily against guerrillas. Roberts continued to sing his old refrain for the counterpart system. Personal observation and involvement had no satisfactory substitutes. Officers who failed to accompany their unit on combat missions not only missed the best opportunity to gain respect, they also failed in their duty to observe, critique, train, and advise. “Get with your unit. You cannot find out what is going on if you stay at your desk,” he ordered. In admirable bureaucratic tradition, he added that after any such experience, officers should send in a full and factual report.  

While Roberts was proficient at making decisions and giving orders, he was not tone-deaf to his subordinates in the field. To the contrary, he was friendly, knew every officer in KMAG by name, and socialized freely with them. He was an accessible leader who sought the input of his subordinates. One KMAG officer remembered that Roberts valued experience and on-the-spot judgment, no matter what form it came in, or the rank it carried. Any officer who had to go to Seoul was expected to make an office call with the Chief and to report on his local situation, to include the status of training, the competence of his counterpart, logistics, and enemy activity. This dialogue of instruction and feedback was valuable to keep Roberts informed of local conditions and activities.

He often acted on the input from his subordinates, and he was prepared to back them fully in disputes involving high-ranking Korean officers and government officials. On 19 April 1949, Major Arno Mowitz, the senior advisor to the 2nd Brigade, wrote Roberts to recommend the relief of the brigade command, Colonel Chae Wan-gai, for his “continuous failures to perform his duties as Brigade Commander.” Mowitz reported that Chae’s lack of interest in his responsibilities as a commander manifested itself in apathy, absenteeism, and a preoccupation with “social gatherings.” Roberts forwarded Mowitz’s recommendation with his concurrence to the ROK defense minister.

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12 Fischgrund to author, 18 February 2002.
13 Fischgrund to author, 8 February 2002.
14 Major Arno P. Mowitz to Brigadier General William L. Roberts, 19 April 1949, Box 8, Mowitz Papers.
day, adding, “Last summer I made an inspection of the [2nd] Brigade in [Taejon] and found it in the poorest condition in the army . . . I believe that [Colonel Chae] has shown he is not deserving of this or any other command.”

The colonel was replaced. In a later personal message to Major Mowitz, now senior advisor to the 2nd Division, Roberts wrote, “From time to time I intend to write you and other senior advisors personally to let you know what matters are of current interest and concern to the Advisory Group.” This particular letter focused on marksmanship and scheduling training. The Chief indicated that Mowitz was “responsible that your Division and your regiments are properly instructed in firing their weapons . . .” Properly laid out ranges, weekly progress reports, and true records of qualification forwarded to Seoul were among Roberts’s other expectations. Roberts finished his letter by reminding Mowitz to report promptly any commanders who failed to follow published training schedules or who otherwise failed to support training.

In another instance, Roberts asked a lieutenant who had just returned from Cheju-do how best to deploy the reconstituted 9th Regiment for training. First Lieutenant Charles Wesolowsky disagreed with Roberts’s idea to centralize the regiment’s encampment and instead suggested a series of company-sized patrol bases along the island’s perimeter to establish a visible presence among the islanders and provide training in scouting and patrolling, small unit tactics, and marksmanship while in the field. Roberts briefly considered the idea and then told Wesolowsky that he was immediately reassigned to Cheju-do to implement the plan. It is a credit to Roberts’s professional competence to know when to defer to the judgment of an officer many years his junior. He was smart enough to realize they were the ones who had to live and fight with their counterpart. He not only enforced the counterpart system on his advisors, he allowed them the flexibility to make it work.

15 Brigadier General William L. Roberts to ROK Defense Minister Shin Ung-kyun, 19 April 1949, Box 8, Mowitz Papers.

16 Brigadier General William L. Roberts to Major Arno P. Mowitz, Senior Advisor, 2nd ROK Division, 3 September 1949, Box 8, Mowitz Papers.

17 Wesolowsky to Millett, 26 March 1996.
Roberts recognized that the Korean Constabulary and Army had significant defects that would not be overcome quickly, and he constantly reminded advisors to look to the long-term. Roberts knew that training the army was a tough requirement. He acknowledged that the advisors would “be called upon to exercise the utmost ingenuity” in training and mentoring. Many Korean officers, particularly those with backgrounds in Japanese service, did not approach training in the ways that their American mentors did. Lecture and group demonstrations substituted for the time-tested Fort Benning method of explanation, demonstration, and practical work, which resulted in tactical demonstrations that usually impressed KMAG observers as being unrealistic and “for show” rather than for combat. Roberts was concerned about this condition and he directed the advisors to be active in showing their counterparts effective training techniques. It was important for the development of the officer corps that advisors show that officers would not lose face by getting close to the ground and dirty, “teach[ing] as much by example as by expert knowledge.”

At the same time, the advisors needed to remain objective and focused on tactical fundamentals. Roberts’s considerable combat experience told him that the success of American arms was due to “great attention to the smallest detail.” It was important how individual soldiers moved on the battlefield. At the squad level, marching fire was far superior to the banzai charge. Advisors needed to exert all their powers of logic and demonstration to “kill off all ideas of banzai.” The Chief also directed his advisors to be intimately familiar with all weapons in the Constabulary inventory – rifles, machine guns, carbines, and automatic rifles. They had to teach Koreans to employ units as units, not to fragment them attempting to accomplish too much at once. Roberts was impatient with half-stepped measures, and he urged his advisors to get out with the troops and “sneer at their parade ground tactics.” Roberts reminded advisors to emphasize realistic training, such as patrolling techniques, which were particularly useful against guerrillas.

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18 Roberts, Speech to All Tactical Advisors, 3-6.


piece demonstrations, while useful when dealing with large audiences, could not substitute for rigorous training modern warfare demanded. It was necessary for soldiers and units to go out and practice what they saw and learned.

Of course, advisors had to find ways to get training value out of counter-guerrilla operations, which became increasingly prevalent in 1949. Roberts expected advisors to witness, and render advice upon, everything their units did, including combat. After one anti-guerrilla operation conducted by the 8th Regiment near Kuman-ni, Roberts received an operations summary and critique from the regiment’s senior advisor. Roberts distributed the report along with his endorsement:

[This] report itself indicates a number of things. First, it shows that the advisor was actually on the ground, where the action was taking place. Second, it is obvious that he kept his eyes open and made complete, comprehensive notes. Third, he was always thinking of the training value to be obtained from this combat experience. And finally, he ‘kept the Boss informed.’

Roberts also expected that advisors would read, digest, and disseminate the lessons catalogued in such reports to their own units. Nothing could substitute for actual field work, and he expected advisors to use their experience and judgment to make units tactically proficient and their officers professionally competent.

When it came to tackling training, it is clear that Roberts’s intent was to get advisors focused on fundamentals. Roberts sought to simplify the advisor’s responsibility by emphasizing simple tactical tasks. His list of “do’s and don’ts” might seem pedantic, but it was necessary to keep the Americans from losing control of their advisory role. It also reinforced the idea that the advisor had to be the role model par excellence. Koreans could be expected to learn only what the Americans demonstrated. For example, if the KMAG advisor made a visible effort to use his noncommissioned officer as an extension of his own authority, then it was likely that the Korean counterpart would be willing to do likewise.

While the advisors focused on unit training, Roberts continued to push the MAG staff to promote Korean officer training, education, and professionalization, one of his principal advocacies. During Roberts’s tenure, Captain Hausman shepherded a program to send high quality Korean officers to U.S. Army schools. On 14 August 1948, the first six select officers left Korea to attend the Advanced Infantry Course at Fort Benning, Georgia. Although a small start, this program continued until the summer of 1953, with only a short break from 1950-51. This was an investment that successfully returned hundreds of officers trained in American doctrine and techniques for tactical combat, service support, and operations. Upon their return to Korea these graduates provided a fruitful leaven for the Korean counterpart schools, and they proved exceptionally competent in brigade and division positions.

Roberts’s third role was as an administrator, which included his role as the principal advisor to the Minister of National Defense, the chief of the Korean Constabulary, and subsequently to the Chief of Staff of the ROKA. This was a role he took seriously. He was always concerned that mismanagement on the part of Korean governmental officials and army officers would result in reduced material support, which would make the already difficult task of organization and training an army impossible. When he found out that some Korean officers were selling American military equipment intended to outfit army units, he sternly emphasized that American largess would not continue indefinitely. To make his point clear, Roberts reminded his counterpart that he personally had to account for all U.S. government issue on a semi-annual basis, and that the amount of sanctioned graft among the officer corps was professionally embarrassing to both KMAG and the ROKA.

Administratively, Roberts read every report and acted on relevant conclusions or requests. He expected weekly reports from the advisors, and he in turn made sure to articulate germane responses to them. Although he may have tended to equate bureaucratic efficiency with advisory success, he at least did not fall into the managerial

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22 KMAG Historical Report, 4.

23 Roberts to the Supreme Chief of Staff, ROKA, 22 November 1948, AG File 400, 000 General 1948 to 250 Discipline 1948, PMAG (1948-49) and KMAG (1949-1953), RG 554.
trap of demanding reports he would never read. In addition to reports on training and operations, Roberts was interested to know if Korean officers resisted or disregarded advice, or if they used military supplies for other than military purposes. Distractions such as unauthorized travel, personal service to high ranking officers, and black-marketing not only deprived the army of money and training time, they reflected badly on the officer corps as a whole. Such abuses had to be reported and eliminated. If permitted to endure, he was sure that these practices would undermine the credibility of KMAG and the legitimacy of the military mission to foster a professional army and officer corps.24

Sometimes the Chief had to speak frankly with his, and he was not shy to provide unsolicited advice to his counterpart, an unfortunate officer who did not enjoy Rhee’s confidence and could not enforce his directives on much of the army. Nonetheless, Roberts sought to stiffen his resolve to squash practices inimical to the efficient management of the army. Late in 1948, he delivered a stern rebuke when subordinate commanders bypassed positions in the chain of command. In Roberts’s judgment, to permit such practices demonstrated a poor appreciation for military effectiveness, while sowing confusion and inefficiency:

[Your] office knows the correct way. If your army is to become efficient, you should listen to correct advice by those who are more experienced. The U.S. is furnishing some 200 advisors at great expense, but their usefulness is being curtailed by the necessity of ironing out needless difficulties put in their way by such practices throughout the Korean Army.25

Roberts also had the opportunity to speak to the senior tier of the Korean officer corps on a number of occasions.26 In April 1950, he spoke to all the division commanders and gave them a broad tongue-lashing, which he acknowledged up front: “By this time you too know that I do not pull punches, that I call spades, spades. You [will] know what I mean when I’m thr[ough].” For the next half of an hour, he

24 Advisor’s Handbook (1949), 5, Mowitz Papers; Roberts, Speech to All Tactical Advisors, 3.

25 Roberts to the Supreme Chief of Staff, ROKA, 29 November 1948, AG File 300, 000 General 1948 to 250 Discipline 1948, PMAG (1948-49) and KMAG (1949-1953), RG 554.

26 Park, “Dragon from the Stream,” 51. Roberts lectured regularly on tactics at the ROKA Staff College.
admonished the senior leadership of the ROKA to economize ammunition and fuel expenditures, treat civilians with dignity and humanity, improve relations with the local and national police, assess honestly good and bad officers, ensure that officers receive the same technical education as the soldiers, stamp out graft and dishonesty, focus on training rather than personal comfort, status or enrichment, resist the temptation to fatten administrative functions and symbols of office at the expense of infantry soldiers, produce timely and accurate reports, coordinate and cooperate with neighboring units during operations, and train and allow staffs to function. Roberts concluded:

I must finish now. I may have talked about many things which are wrong. Believe me when I tell you I have seen more correct things than wrong, and I know there is vast improvement... I see great strides in training; every month sees a graduation from our many schools... Every unit is hard at work daily. Our troops operating against guerrillas are successfully terminating those operations; there are very few guerrillas left today... All these add up to progress and excellence. I think you have reason to be proud.27

If Roberts had let his optimism run ahead of reality publicly, he at least saw no need to sugar-coated the truth as he saw it when dealing with his Korean counterparts.

Up to his last day of duty, Roberts remained focused on fundamentals: marksmanship, leadership by example, simple tactics, planning, and assessment. He confided to his advisors, “If these few items are taught honestly and well during the summer, this army will become one fine group.”28 After two years at the helm of the PMAG and KMAG, advisors under Roberts’s direction were doing what they were supposed to do. Frequent inspections of ROKA divisions and schools identified deficiencies and focused advisor attention to correct those deficiencies. They did everything they could to exploit field operations of any training value whatsoever, be it patrolling techniques, marksmanship, staff procedures, or bivouacs. Promising Korean

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27 Roberts speech to Korean Army Division Commanders, 10 April 1950, Roberts’s Speeches to Americans and Koreans, AG File 333 1949, PMAG (1948) and KMAG (1949-1953), RG 554.

28 Roberts, Speech to All Tactical Advisors, 6.
Just prior to leaving Korea, General Roberts published a farewell letter to KMAG and the ROKA. In this letter, Roberts reflected on his two years in “a most important and satisfying assignment.” He acknowledged the many challenges that KMAG faced in trying “to superimpose Western methods on you and your army,” but he also underscored his faith in those methods to turn the Korean Army into a modern military force. He urged Korean officers to keep their American counterparts informed so that the advisors could best perform their job to advise and support the ROKA.

Roberts praised the Korean officer corps saying, “Your strength lies in your attention to duty, your willingness to work, your bravery, your loyalty to your country . . .” Then, in his fashion, he revisited the ROKA’s many weaknesses. Unit security in the field was still generally poor. It was a leader’s responsibility to minimize needless casualties due to poor security. Officers still needed to consider terrain when placing units in tactical situations, especially to avoid frontal assaults and to maximize the effect of supporting weapons such as machine guns and mortars. Care for men and material needed to improve, and officers should be expected to render full and factual reports both to their advisor and to their higher headquarters. Brutality towards civilians could not be condoned; again, it was a leadership responsibility to stamp it out. Generals especially needed to inoculate themselves against graft and the temptation to act politically. Roberts final words of advice to his Korean counterparts reminded them of his high regard for the soldiers who made up an army that “will endure great hardships if properly lead.”

Conscientious, efficient, and sternly professional, Roberts did fail in one crucial aspect. Although many of KMAG’s shortcomings – personnel, materials, space, and time – were beyond his control, Roberts did run KMAG as a personal fiefdom, with each member expected to report directly to him. As a result, when war did come and the chief

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29 General Roberts’s Farewell Letter, 1 June 1950, AG File 300.6 1950, PMAG (1948) and KMAG (1949-1953), RG 554.
was midway across the Pacific Ocean enroute to the States and retirement, too many advisors were unsure of what they were supposed to do in the face of a *real* war. KMAG had not progressed much beyond a formalized *ad hoc* organization. It remained undermanned, undersupported and underappreciated by its own army, and leaderless at the moment of greatest danger. Furthermore, his private warnings about ROKA had not surfaced, buried by the tide of acceptance his public comments prompted.\(^{30}\) The unfortunate result was that when it really mattered, the KMAG’s potential was less than the sum of its parts.

**Advisors in the Field**

Roberts’s rhetoric and drive could have no effect without executive agents – the advisors working in the MAG headquarters and with the units in the field. These men constituted the soul of the American military mission to Korea. Eventually, this group evolved and acquired more mature officers, but in August 1948, the majority of advisors were from varied backgrounds and branches with one common trait. Most were recently commissioned lieutenants without combat experience. They knew nothing about running armies, let alone fighting a war.

Few officers desired advisory duty, but many saw it as a challenging opportunity and volunteered. Others, like the lieutenants from the U.S. 7\(^{th}\) Infantry Division, were considered superfluous and transferred wholesale to the DIS in April 1948.\(^{31}\) These officers, regardless of their willingness, background, or talents, were the men that would take the Constabulary through its toughest times and growing pains on Cheju island, at Yosu and Sunchon, along the parallel, and in the hinterlands of southern Korea. Their responsibilities as organizers, trainers, mentors, and fighters, ensured the survivability of the Constabulary, the ROKA, and the Republic.

\(^{30}\) The most revealing information is found in Roberts’s correspondence with Major General Charles L. Bolté, plans and operations officer of the U.S. Army G-3. The KMAG chief clearly outlined the ROKA’s structural, training, tactical, and leadership weaknesses. He also took care to highlight progress, but his report is at best cautiously optimistic. See Roberts Bolté, 19 August 1949.

\(^{31}\) Minor Kelso, Ralph Bliss, and Robert Shackleton, telephone interviews with author, notes.
One of the toughest roles that the Americans had to assume was that of organizing Constabulary units from scratch. To raise a new unit was a difficult undertaking, as it embodied all of the challenges of language, unfamiliarity with the environment, inexperience, and lack of resources. The history of the Cavalry Regiment illuminates these factors and the dramatic impact that individual advisors could have on their counterparts. First Lieutenant Robert G. Shackleton, a West Point graduate (class of 1946), was one of the officers affected by the 7th Infantry Division levy that assigned him to the Department of Internal Security in April 1948. Although not unwilling to go to advisory duty, he was shocked to learn that as an infantry officer with only one year of troop duty, he was to become the senior advisor to the 1st Reconnaissance Troop, a true-to-life cavalry formation, complete with horses, saddles, and armored cars. When Shackleton protested that he had no experience with either cavalry or armor, the director of the DIS, Colonel Terrill Price (known behind his back as “Terrible” Price) curtly informed him that he “was and would remain the cavalry advisor.” When the lieutenant attempted to find out more about his new posting, Price lost his patience and erupted, “Lieutenant, talk to Captain Hausman. I’ve got my problems, you’ve got yours. Now get out.” Impressed only by the disorganization, discouragement, and lack of direction at the DIS headquarters, Shackleton set out to organize his new command. He did not know how it would all turn out, for to him it seemed that only Hausman knew what he was trying to do.  

Shackleton found the Reconnaissance Troop (actually still a Constabulary infantry company) billeted not far from Seoul. Immediately upon assuming his duties to advise two officers and 200 men, the unit embarked on a program of training, recruitment, and expansion lasting from May to September. Initially, progress was very slow. Neither of the Korean officers spoke English well, which made Shackleton’s advisory role problematic. Military terms and concepts like “machine gun” or “phase-line” had no natural Korean equivalent, and so had to be improvised – and not necessarily in a standardized way. Shackleton recalls that he often resorted to “pidgin English” to express his views; other advisors simply attempted to “Koreanize” American words:

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32 Shackleton to Millett, 11 April 1997; Shackleton, telephone interview, notes.
radio was pronounced “rah-dee-oh” and a ¼ ton utility truck (“jeep”) became “jee-po”. In the Reconnaissance Troop, Shackleton had to face additional problems dealing with people who lacked any knowledge about motor vehicles. One advisor recalled his frustration that even items as simple and ubiquitous as spark plugs were novelties to the Koreans, and known as “bolts that spit fire.”

Fortunately for Shackleton, he encountered a civilian, Chang Bong-chung, who spoke marvelous English and wanted to join the Constabulary. Shackleton enlisted him on the spot and relied on Private Chang as his interpreter. When an English speaking lieutenant joined the Troop later in the summer, Shackleton’s language problems were minimized.

Trying to get the most of official training, which prior to 1948 consisted mostly of small arms practice and basic tactical skills congruent with “methods of internal security” was a constant challenge. Now, Shackleton’s explicit task was to train a motorized unit capable of mounted combat operations. Worry about old and worn weapons, poorly conditioned vehicles, and lack of training space occupied much of his time. At one point, due to poor sanitation and mess facilities, up to sixty percent of the unit was sick. Even when the majority of the men were healthy, Shackleton found it impossible to rely on a published training schedule, for he was never sure when equipment would arrive or what he could expect to receive. Constant shifting of billets back and forth across the Han River further aggravated the training situation.

Noticeable improvement began in late summer. Roberts’s presence energized PMAG, and his personnel inspections impressed and lifted the morale of the advisors and Korean soldiers. Shackleton also received reinforcements. Second Lieutenant Ralph

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33 Shackleton to Millett, 11 April 1997; Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 63; Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 16, USAMHI.

34 Edward J. Stewart, telephone interview by Author, 1 May 2003, notes.

35 Private Chang learned English in Japan and eventually obtained a commission through the Constabulary’s OTS. He commanded a tank battalion in 1953 and later rose to the rank of Major General in the Korean Army; Shackleton to Millett, 11 April 1997; Shackleton, telephone interview.

36 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 24.

37 Shackleton to Millett, 11 April 1997; Shackleton, telephone interview, notes.
Bliss, a 19-year-old cavalry officer and OCS graduate, whose first assignment was as a stevedore officer in the port city of Inchon, was a welcome addition to the Reconnaissance Troop. Bliss was glad to be assigned to a real cavalry unit, but he looked in vain for the horses. Enough vehicles had arrived to constitute a mechanized capability, but it was not much. The half-tracks and jeeps were poorly reconditioned surplus items with almost no reservoir of spare parts. Their motley collection of weapons consisted of carbines, .45 caliber pistols, some .50 caliber machine guns and a few air-cooled .30 caliber machine guns.38

Both Shackleton and Bliss remember the Yosu campaign as a watershed event for the Reconnaissance Troop. Following the bitter fighting to recapture Yosu, in which the Troop suffered nearly a quarter of its strength killed or wounded, the Americans discovered themselves to be more openly accepted by their Korean counterparts, as if their shared experience had constituted some sort of test. Shackleton also noted that the soldiers themselves appeared to carry themselves more confidently in light of their baptism by fire.39 Shortly after Yosu, the Troop was redesignated the Cavalry Regiment, and it redeployed to a former Japanese cavalry garrison post near Seoul. Here, Shackleton seized an opportunity to collaborate with an American cavalry troop that was preparing to redeploy. For the first time, training began to assume the formality that Shackleton recognized. American sergeants teamed up with interpreters to provide individual instruction on radios, motor maintenance, scout tactics, and mounted movement. The Koreans learned quickly, and became especially adept with their vehicles. Shackleton proudly remembered that in just over a year, men who had never set foot inside a motor vehicle, much less repair one, were able to plan and conduct a lengthy road march from Seoul to Chuminjin (on the east coast) without breakdowns or accidents. Much of the movement was at night, further testifying to the proficiency of the officers, NCOs, and soldiers. Following this major tactical movement, Shackleton and Bliss felt they had arrived. The regiment had a new commander, Colonel Lee Ryong-moon, a competent officer, veteran of the Imperial Japanese Army, and broadly experienced in

38 Bliss to Millett, 13 February 1997.

39 Shackleton, telephone interview, notes.
military administration. The versatile and reliable M8 armored scout car, armed with a 37 mm cannon and a coaxially mounted .30 caliber machine gun replaced the regiment’s ramshackle fleet of jeeps and half-tracks. “I began to see light at the end of the tunnel,” Shackleton recalled, and he was confident that the Regiment, with its base of training, combat experience, and esprit, was on its way to being a first-class outfit. Both advisors were justifiably proud of the regiment’s achievement – a transformation of raw and inexperienced recruits into trained and disciplined soldiers.  

As the story of the Cavalry Regiment demonstrates, the challenges of decentralized organization frequently compounded training problems. Until the MAG headquarters formulated a coherent training program for the Korean Army, advisors had to manage competing demands against training as best as they could. Good advisors tried to approach the problem philosophically, finding it best to let their counterparts attempt their own solutions. If needed, the advisor could offer advice when requested. This was not always a good solution, so some had to take matters into their own hands and be much more closely involved in training. Perhaps no where was the training challenge more acute than on Cheju-do. The volcanic island was far removed from the mainland and infested with bandits and communist inspired rebels. The 9th Regiment, recruited on Cheju-do was also the Cinderella of the Constabulary, first to get abused, last to get support. 

Violence on Cheju-do began in April 1948 and was only suppressed by repressive measures taken by the Constabulary’s 11th Regiment, hurriedly transported from Pusan. A general calm settled over the island during the summer months, even though Constabulary operations and intelligence reports indicated the presence of rebels among the island residents. Retraining the 9th Regiment involved small scale field exercises,

40 Shackleton, telephone interview, notes.

41 Unfortunately, this fine unit never lived up to its potential as a mounted reconnaissance force, as it was mismanaged, committed piecemeal, and destroyed in the early days of the Communist invasion of June 1950. Shackleton to Millett, 11 April 1997.

42 History of the DIS, 32.

43 Headquarters, Korean Constabulary, G-2 Intelligence Summary No. 4 (5-9 July 1948), 4 and No. 6 (17-24 July 1948), 1; Record of Events, Headquarters, 9th Regiment Korean Constabulary, 21, 26, and 27 July 1948, Hausman Papers.
patrols, and marksmanship. However, the Americans never had enough interpreters or printed materials to help them teach Korean soldiers the rudiments of tactics, weaponry, or field craft. One advisor recalled having to work directly with the troops, using a combination of written instructions, slow speech, and hastily drawn diagrams to make his point.

First Lieutenant Minor Kelso (West Point class of 1946) found a disheartening situation in his 3rd Battalion, located near the port of Mosulpo. The regimental advisor, First Lieutenant Charles Wesolowsky, had just compiled and distributed a weekly training schedule along with forty-six American field manuals. But, like other units on the mainland, the battalions on Cheju lacked basic building blocks for militarily effective units:

The equipment was in a poor state of repair. The individual soldier did not have all of the normal basic equipment. The rifles were rusty. The troops knew little about their weapons. There was very little practice firing. I recall no inspection by higher headquarters.

In fact, Kelso’s first inspection of his unit revealed that although it paraded smartly, it was not ready to train, and it would be a long while before it could fight. The battalion had a mixture of U.S. and Japanese weapons, with less than forty rounds available for the American rifles and ten for the carbines. The only men who appeared to have even fired a weapon were the officers and a few noncommissioned officers.

Weapons training began on 11 August when Kelso visited each company and demonstrated the care, cleaning, and assembly of the M-1 rifle to the Korean officers and NCOs. Three days later, the battalion went to the range to practice firing. Kelso dryly noted by 1000 that morning there had been “considerable delay with no firing at present.” Eventually, the Constabulary officers got organized enough to send six-hundred men through the range, firing both M-1 and Japanese rifles. Kelso noted that Captain Hahn competently demonstrated proper techniques and positions, but he was alarmed at the

44 Charles Wesolowsky to Allan R. Millett, 26 March 1996.
45 Edwin M. Joseph, U.S. Army Service in Korea Questionnaire, 2, USAMHI.
46 Minor L. Kelso to Allan R. Millett, 12 October 1995.
lack of safety awareness, “a factor that received little attention from either enlisted men or officers.” His personal intervention likely saved several soldiers’ lives. He was also dismayed at the poor scores, “however, for men (and particularly men from the farm, etc.) who had never fired before, the results were as could be expected with only eight rounds fired per M-1 and five per Jap[anese] rife.”

A month later Kelso transferred to Kwangju, where he became the senior advisor to the Fourth Regiment. Even with several months under Roberts’s emphatic regime, Kelso found the state of training in the brigade in shambles. Kelso confronted the brigade commander about this sorry affair and demanded that training programs include English translations and activities at the company level. Before anything could be done, though, the Fourth Regiment was committed to suppress the mutinies at Sunchon and Yosu, actions that highlighted the poor state of training among officers and soldiers alike.

Training remained a weak spot for the ROKA until the 1950 invasion. Korean officers, even those with combat experience, still had to unlearn tactics and techniques that were incompatible with American methods and weapons. For example, Japanese tactics as practiced on mainland Asia, “suggest[ed] that battle, whenever possible, was reduced to a drill.” The heavy emphasis on small group action over individual initiative or higher unit objectives meant that offensive tactics lacked cohesion and coordination, and often degenerated into futile and bloody frontal efforts. Since the Japanese did not practice the same degree of combined-arms coordination between tactical units as the Americans did, elementary tactics such as fire and movement, support by artillery, or support by fire were completely alien to Koreans. Roberts never had enough advisors to spread across the force (the scarcity of American noncommissioned officers was

47 Minor L. Kelso, PMAG Personal Diary, August – November 1948, entries 11 and 14 August 1948, copy furnished to author.
48 Entry 15 October 1948, Kelso diary.
50 Ibid., 38, 40-42. Roberts reported, “I am afraid of the tactical knowledge of all of them [Korean officers].” Roberts to Bolté, 19 August 1949, 5.
especially hurtful), and the operations tempo after November 1948 kept army units in the field instead of following any comprehensive training program that would have addressed these problems.

If KMAG advisors were not so successful in training the Korean army, they did make a significant impression on the counterparts nonetheless. The mentor relationship between American and Korean officers was crucial to developing a professional officer corps, as many advisors reflexively understood. All the material support, training, and advice in the world would make no difference if Korean officers simply failed to grasp the tenets of modern military practices. The Americans were attempting a cultural as well as military transformation among their counterparts. For example, advisors had to showcase American military traits such as direct and honest communication, flexibility, and initiative. These were western military values without direct equivalents in Korean culture. Professionalism included being willing to learn from experience, either direct or vicarious from the advisor. It also meant being flexible and self-correcting. Nearly every advisor had to come to terms with the unique trait that did more perhaps to interfere with the formation of a professional culture than any other – “face.”

Face manifested itself in many ways, not all of which were obvious to Americans. One observer called it “purely a question of that compound of pride, self-respect, and vanity.” It also touched upon social status, perceptions of power, and Confucian hierarchical values. Maintaining face among peers was as important as with social inferiors. All Koreans stood to lose “face” if proper “protocol” was not observed – a cultural fact that put more than one advisor into a tight spot. Any advisor who caused his counterpart to lose face was on a fast track to failure. Sometimes, issues of face led to humorous situations that illuminate the potential for frustration between the different cultures. Major Howard A. Trammell recalled:

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51 Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 17, USAMHI.

52 Kennedy, Mission to Korea, 103.
I used to get filter cigarettes for [Colonel] Choi. One time he lit one of them, but lit the filter end by mistake. I pointed this out to him and he replied, “That’s the way I always smoke them,” and he proceeded to do so. He didn’t want to admit in front of his driver and the interpreter that he had goofed.53

This same reluctance to admit mistakes in judgment or to relay bad news rankled the Americans, particularly when the stakes were much higher than personal prestige. Some advisors accused Korean officers even of supplying misinformation to avoid losing face with superiors or their counterpart, or refusing to change or modify orders, lest their original judgment be suspected of being wrong.54

For any criticism to be effective (and a means of furthering mutual professional respect) it had to be given in private. To embarrass an officer by contradicting or correcting him, particularly in front of his subordinates, was a surefire way to discover the erection of an impenetrable wall.55 The shrewd advisor recognized the value of social and informal contacts with his counterpart as a method of building a relationship of trust. One advisor indicated that he had success by maintaining formality at the command post and informality at the “hooch.” In this way, the Korean officer would not feel pressured always to be correct in front of his staff. He could try to extend his own ability, confident that any tutorial would come at the end of the day and in private.56 In this way, a bond of trust developed that would permit a Korean officer to ask for advice without being ashamed of his ignorance.

Advisors also worked to root out corruption, which was an intractable problem with a firm basis Confucian hierarchical relationships and in the Korean experience with colonial occupation. Valuable military supplies and equipment were always hard to come by, and given the poor state of the southern economy and cultural and political

53 Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 17, USAMHI.
54 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 65.
55 Sometimes advisors learned that occasionally “the Korean way was best,” and spared themselves the trial of trying to repair their advisory relationship just to demonstrate superior knowledge; Hausrath, The KMAG Advisor, 48.
56 Ibid., 50.
pressures to “please the boss,” too often Korean officers succumbed to the temptation to profit from their position.\textsuperscript{57} For example, Korean commanders felt no compunction against selling supplies such as fuel or vehicle replacement parts, or spending for their own use cash meant to support their units. Lieutenant Kelso was once offered money as part of one commander’s larger scheme to pocket nearly 600,000 won that had been earmarked to pay for food and supplies during a counter-guerrilla operation. Kelso declined, but that could not stop the soldiers from just taking what they wanted and leaving the civilian population to do without.\textsuperscript{58} Equipment and supplies purchased through American supply channels too often wound up in the open or black markets, with the proceeds going to enrich Korean officers.\textsuperscript{59}

Because Korean officers and soldiers were neophytes with little appreciation or understanding of “logistics” as practiced by the American Army, advisors spent a lot of time teaching and coaching the fundamentals of maintenance and supply. One advisor remembered:

\begin{quote}
Maintenance was a hell of a problem at first. You must remember that there were few vehicles in Korea before the war [1950], discounting Japanese Army, except oxcarts . . . As a result of this, the Korean didn’t know one was supposed to keep oil in the engine, anti-freeze in the radiator, inflated tires, etc.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

However, once Korean soldiers were shown how to take care of their equipment, they generally did so, as long as the advisor held his counterpart to that standard. This meant visiting the local markets to check for unauthorized sale of military supplies, spot-checking individual units, and at times even withholding authorization for supplies as a means to “encourage” compliance with an advisor’s “suggestions.”\textsuperscript{61} Logistics advisors sometimes ran even greater risks than their combat brethren on account of the general

\textsuperscript{57} Kim, \textit{Politics of Military Revolution}, 75-76.

\textsuperscript{58} Kelso to Millett, 12 June 1995; Entry 3 November 1948, Kelso diary.

\textsuperscript{59} Kelso to Millett, 12 October 1995.

\textsuperscript{60} Trammell, “Korean War Notes.” 21, USAMHI.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Advisor’s Handbook}, October 1949, 4-5, 14-15, 30-32; Cowey, telephone interview, notes.

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lack of knowledge about military things. One advisor witnessed a Korean civilian in a ammunition “factory” manually filling and crimping .30 caliber cartridges with black powder and primer, all the while with a lit cigarette dangling in his mouth!\textsuperscript{62}

If the advisors had to work hard to teach the value of logistics discipline to their counterparts, they had to take an entirely different approach towards personnel discipline. The Americans flatly disapproved of the physical punishment meted out by Korean sergeants and officers. In addition to being abusive, discipline was often applied inappropriately during training. Reluctant to tell his counterparts how to run their army, Lieutenant Shackleton nevertheless took special care when dealing with Korean soldiers to model more productive techniques to teach and train.\textsuperscript{63} Captain Edward J. Stewart witnessed one Korean lieutenant smack a soldier on the head when he failed to fire his weapon properly. Stewart made the lieutenant fire the rifle, while Stewart smacked him on the head to make his point, if bluntly so.\textsuperscript{64} It was a hard and uphill battle to displace these deeply ingrained methods, which were not only unmilitary but counter-productive to the goal of developing a professional army.\textsuperscript{65} Most disheartening of all was to see “army justice” and “discipline” applied to civilians who were suspected of harboring or aiding the enemy, or to witness true indiscipline as when soldiers deliberately used deadly force against noncombatants.\textsuperscript{66} The brutality of the Cheju-do campaign and the carnage attending to the recapture of Sunchon and Yosu were beyond the capability of the Americans to understand, much less prevent at the time.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{62} Stewart, telephone interview, notes.

\textsuperscript{63} Shackleton, telephone interview, notes.

\textsuperscript{64} Stewart, telephone interview, notes.

\textsuperscript{65} Kelso to Millett, 12 October 1995. In July 1948, the Military Government published “Articles for the Government of the Korean Constabulary,” which was patterned after American codes of military justice. There is no evidence, though, that these articles made their way to unit commanders before the transfer of authority from Americans to Koreans occurred. Military Government of Korea, Articles for the Government of the Korean Constabulary, 5 July 1948, Mowitz Papers.

\textsuperscript{66} Kelso diary, 26-28 October 1948; Advisor’s Handbook (1949), 4.

\textsuperscript{67} Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 7; Kelso to Millett, 12 October 1995.
Even with these strains and stresses, KMAG always enjoyed good overall relations with Korean officers. This relationship was an anchor for the greater trials that would come, and it was in no small measure responsible for the rebirth of the Korean army later during the war. During the initial years of the Constabulary, the Americans chose officers with care, tending to favor candidates with military experience gained in the Imperial Japanese Army or its anti-guerrilla surrogate, the Manchukuo Army. These officers brought with them Japanese habits and tactical concepts that did not neatly mesh with American standards, and they often did not care for the administrative requirements of soldiering.\(^{68}\) Despite these drawbacks, the Americans prized these veterans, and they formed a core of loyal and patriotic officers, who never relinquished their attachment to all things American.\(^{69}\)

To demonstrate that KMAG’s mentor relationship had deep roots, it is interesting to note that although political reliability trumped pure military competence in the eyes of Syngman Rhee, the Americans never had to suffer a purely political chief of staff. Rhee played the army against itself by alternating chiefs of staff between the two most prominent and competing factions amongst the ROKA’s senior leadership, yet he failed to politicize its top ranks. Even after firing the very capable and respected Lee Chong-chan for failing to follow his political program in 1952, Rhee replaced him with Paik Sun-yup, an officer that was fully “Americanized” if anyone was.\(^{70}\) Rhee’s sedulous quest to insure an army leadership loyal to him alone resulted in a number of shake-ups, which Roberts and his successors decried, but it never succeeded in weaning the Koreans away from the Americans.\(^{71}\) Even to the end (July 1953), American commanders fretted about the “loyalty” of Korean officers; that at least, was not a worry over which they needed to lose sleep.

\(^{68}\) Lim Sun-ha, Major General, ROKA (Ret.), Interview by Allan R. Millett, Yongsan, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 30 Nov, 1 Dec 1994, notes.

\(^{69}\) Millett, *Their War for Korea*, 81-82; Roberts to Bolté, 19 August 1949, 2.

\(^{70}\) Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom*, 201-04.

\(^{71}\) See Kim, *Politics of Military Revolution*, 20-21, 44.
Though technically the advisors’ least important role, participation in combat operations was the one assignment that carried the most risk and had the potential for the greatest gain. How much (or little) an advisor had to do personally was a good gauge of a Korean officer’s or unit’s competence. General Roberts made it very clear that the advisors’ role was to prepare their counterparts to do for themselves what they could no longer rely upon the Americans to do – defend their country. Advisors had no official combat role to perform and they had no command authority over Korean troops, nevertheless, many found themselves participating in actual operations against Communist guerrillas, bandits, and even North Korean security and army forces. In June 1949, just a month after the most severe fighting along the 38th parallel, and in the midst of a concerted anti-guerrilla campaign, Roberts reminded his advisors that though their chief task was training, they needed to be prepared to assume a wartime function. “This army,” he told them, “even to do its defense mission, will, in my opinion, need your stabilizing advice.”

In fact, that was an understatement, as many American officers discovered when the pressure was on, such as occurred in the evening of 25 June 1950. Captain Stewart received instructions directly from the senior advisor of the 20th Regiment to take his battalion north to Seoul and await further instructions. Stewart managed to get his battalion in position north of the capital by nightfall on the 26th. The next morning, his battalion was overrun by several T-34 tanks. In Stewart’s words, “we just got clobbered.” The battalion was unsupported on its flanks, and its position was unprepared to resist tanks. To top it off, none of the battalion’s anti-tank rockets had any effect. They either failed to fire or failed to detonate against the enemy armor. Reflecting back on that hellish day, Stewart saw his biggest problem was making sense of the situation through interpreters. In the life or death situation he confronted, the formal procedures of the counterpart relationship were abandoned. “We commanded those battalions,” he recalled many years later.

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72 Roberts, Speech to all Tactical Advisors, 2.

73 Stewart, telephone interview, notes.
In the months prior to the conventional invasion, it was rare that an advisor had to assume full operational control over his Korean unit in battle. Usually, his brushes with the enemy were brief but sharp. Some engagements were humorous misadventures, such as one officer’s encounter with a clothesline. Others were more serious. Kelso’s first combat experience was during the effort to recapture Sunchon. Kelso was accompanying Colonel Kim Paek-il, the task force commander, when rifle fire came from his left. He and the nearby Korean troops dove into a ditch on the side of the road. When he looked up, he saw Colonel Kim, unperturbed and standing in the middle of the road. Somewhat embarrassed, Kelso got up too, now appreciating that Koreans often did not shoot straight. Later, Kelso again found himself in the thick of the fighting, when he personally directed the firing of a 81 mm mortar at a rebel machine gun position. When the first round destroyed the rebel site, “a great cheer came up from the soldiers. The American lieutenant was [now] in good standing.”

Kelso’s experience was echoed by many other advisors who, by virtue of their responsibilities to render advice on all situations, found themselves leading troops and directing operations. On Cheju-do, Wesolowsky and his fellow advisors took active roles to search out guerrillas (called “raiders” in official reports). Immediately following his arrival, Constabulary troops conducted an ineffective two-week operation to sweep the island from south to north, up Halla-san mountain, an extinct volcano. Because the raiders had been tipped off by local informants, the troops only fought heat, thirst, and fatigue. Figuring that the intelligence and reporting system was likely compromised by civilians sympathetic to the raiders, Wesolowsky and his fellow lieutenants changed tactics, and directed their units to rely on frequent foot patrols and coast guard craft to disrupt and maybe surprise and capture some raiders. This change in method did not enjoy much success either, but it shows the degree to which American officers had to remain involved in the daily operations of the units they were only supposed to advise.

In the heat of battle, advisors had not only to think quickly, they also had to communicate their advice and ensure it was understood. An example of the absurdity

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74 Entry 26-28 October 1948, Kelso diary.

75 Charles Wesolowsky to Allan R. Millett, 16 September 1995.
that could result from imprecise interpretation and misunderstanding comes from an advisor to the ROK 2nd Division following the Chinese intervention in 1950:

Once, in a bad situation . . . I asked our best interpreter which side of the mountain the Chinese were on as it had been reported they had broken thru [sic]. After a long pow-wow with Korean officers the interpreter turned around and said the Chinese were ‘on the outside of the mountain.’

This example highlights an important problem faced by advisors, aside from the technical language problem. Too often, of how the advisor’s question was translated, and of how the ensuing discussion unfolded, the advisor remained ignorant. He had to trust his interpreter not only to interpret correctly the English-Korean exchange, but also to capture the nuances inherent in any verbal communication, particularly those bearing on a fluid tactical situation. Under the pressure of battle, this might be too much to expect.

Obviously, in this kind of situation, the advisors had to form close bonds with their interpreters. Good interpreters were treasured like gold. An advisor’s effectiveness depended on him being able to understand a situation, give pertinent advice, and – when required – assistance to implement that guidance. Major Trammell recalled, “Fortunate indeed, was the advisor who had [an interpreter] who could really translate and interpret.” In some cases, the bond between advisor and interpreter was one of life or death. Lieutenant Kelso personally intervened to prevent the execution of a relative of his interpreter. On a second occasion, Kelso bluntly told one Korean officer that he specifically did not want his interpreter shot as a suspected Communist. As it turned out, the Korean officer was himself a Communist, and he cleverly knew how to sabotage any effective linkage between the advisor and the troops.

By any measure, Korea was a tough assignment. Considering the extra burden of being the only American living and working with Koreans without any linguistic or

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76 Richard C. Corbyn to Matthew Ridgway, November 30, 1972, Korean War Folder, Special Collections, USMA Library, West Point, New York.

77 Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 15-16, USAMHI.

78 Kelso to Millett, 12 June 1995.
cultural preparation, little material support, and a motivated but demanding boss, it is amazing that so many advisors not only were successful, but even thrived in this most challenging environment. Not all officers, however, were cut-out for this kind of duty.  

Ignorance, insensitivity, racist attitudes, and dissatisfaction with an advisory assignment had no place in KMAG. Advisors stuck in their own rut of cultural and military superiority could not expect to get very far, and they were completely ineffective. Advisors who did make conscious efforts to accommodate themselves to Korean language, manners, and food quickly learned the secret for a productive relationship with their counterparts. Professional courtesy and genuine friendship, along with a willingness to respect the judgment of the Korean officer, who was after all in charge, could carry an advisor far when he was called to render hard advice. It was not uncommon for lieutenants to advise battalion and regimental officers in training and combat operations. If their youth seemingly disqualified them from interaction on the basis of social equality, their professional expertise, courage, and cultural sensitivity nearly always made up the difference. Fortunately, the Americans demonstrated early their professionalism and commitment to the counterpart partnership. As a result, most Korean officers had a high opinion of Americans in general, especially those who followed the example set by men like Hausman. They trusted these officers, even if they did not always follow their counsel. It could only be on this moral basis of trust that Korean officers would allow foreigners so much latitude to make their army.

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80 Fischgrund to the author, 8 February 2002.

81 Hausrath, The KMAG Advisor, 45.

82 Ibid., 44.

Taking “Provisional” out of the MAG

When Roberts assumed responsibility of the advisory effort, he inherited a disjointed and anemic organization. The transition from the DIS to PMAG unfolded with minimal turbulence, mainly because there was so little from which to transition. What formal structure there was remained transparent to the men in the field. The DIS and the Constabulary had not worked out a rational division of labor, no specialized training schools existed, few Americans clearly understood the magnitude of the task at hand, and Roberts had only a handful of advisors to help the Constabulary with its many problems. Roberts made the development of a structure for the advisory mission a high priority.

General Roberts’s first major decision was to de-emphasize the role of the DIS while enhancing the stature and self-sufficiency of the Constabulary. He shifted responsibilities for supply, finance, and technical services to the army, and he sharpened the focus of the advisory effort out to the field. The PMAG staff worked hard to open numerous provisional schools to train officers and enlisted men. These concerns did not yet evolve into a centralized basic training, but they did provide a forum to teach Koreans to use American weapons and equipment. Korean officers sent to the United States to attend U.S. Army schools in September 1948 returned to help establish a training center south of Seoul, which one American correspondent labeled “little Fort Benning.” Twelve months later, nearly 27,000 officers had passed through this and other specialty schools established and run by KMAG.

Captain Hausman continued to play an important role behind the scenes, balancing Roberts’s abrupt manner with a more Korean-oriented perspective. Koreans could take for granted his competence in tactics, weapons, drill, instruction, and administration. What really resonated with them was their belief that Hausman was devoted to Korea, and he was committed to a professional Korean Army. Hausman also is universally praised by his fellow Americans as being the heart of the advisory effort.

84 KMAG Historical Report, 3-4; Shackleton, telephone interview, notes.

85 KMAG Historical Report, 4; Marguerite Higgins, “U.S. Army Mission Called Success in South Korea’s Fight on Reds,” Herald Tribune, 30 May 1950.
Roberts set the tone and vision, but Hausman was at the center of every effort to support a Korean army, whether it was planning for increased manpower or supervising the counter-rebel campaign in South Cholla.\(^{86}\) Gradually, the MAG’s provisional aspects were displaced by better organization and support. Schools for infantry weapons, artillery, and communications exposed hundreds of Korean soldiers to American experts and techniques. The headquarters also turned out the G-3 (operations) section for command inspections of schools and unit headquarters. Roberts had made it clear that training should be the first priority for the Constabulary and the headquarters advisors collaborated with the Constabulary to produce standard training directives and schedules.\(^{87}\)

By 1 January 1949, the Constabulary had become the Korean Army, and it boasted a total strength of 64,588 officers and men.\(^{88}\) As the ROKA continued to expand, PMAG also grew, from just over one-hundred officers to 234 officers and men in the spring of 1949. To reflect the growing responsibilities of PMAG, the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, John Muccio received in April a telex message from the Department of the Army granting authority for an official advisory group, subordinate to Muccio’s American Mission in Korea (AMIK).\(^{89}\) Washington also authorized an increase in personnel, which allowed Roberts to plan for a redistribution of officers so that an advisor would be present at all the military schools and down to battalion level.\(^{90}\)

On 1 July 1949, the day after the last American combat troops left Korea the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea officially assumed duties as the military mission in Korea. Its mandate was “to develop ROK security forces

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\(^{86}\) Roberts recommended Hausman for the Legion of Merit for his role in the suppression of the Yosu mutiny. Headquarters, PMAG, “Award of the Legion of Merit,” 20 December 1948, Hausman Papers.

\(^{87}\) Ibid.; KIMAG Historical Report, 4, 6.

\(^{88}\) KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 73-74; 2,730 officers and 61, 858 enlisted men, KIMAG Historical Report, 5.

\(^{89}\) Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 45; MacArthur, Reminiscences, 320. The subordination of a military group to civilian authority was not as quirky as subsequent authors have made it appear. After all, Muccio, not MacArthur, was Washington’s point man in Korea, and Roberts was Muccio’s top military advisor. Apparently, the two worked well together and appeared to have converging views on many of the military issues facing the ROK government.

\(^{90}\) KIMAG Historical Report, 5.
within [the] limitations of [the] Korean economy, by advising and assisting [the] ROK in
training such forces involving Army, Coast Guard, and National Police and by insuring
effective utilization [of] US military assistance [to] these forces."91 For an army now
expanded to eight divisions, it was a tall order by any measure for the 492 officers and
men assigned to KMAG.

One of the greatest criticisms that can be leveled at Roberts was the failure to
provide a systematic mission overview to his advisors. Officers assigned duty to the DIS
or PMAG never received any kind of formal in-brief or orientation. They arrived in
Seoul and then shipped out to a field unit. Consequently, officers simply had no official
guide to what they were supposed to be doing. Not until June 1949 did Roberts begin to
consolidate his ideas on the advisory mission and draft a presentation that he called his
“Orientation speech,” which he gave frequently to new and old KMAG soldiers. For
many advisors, this was the first time they caught a comprehensive glimpse of what the
boss wanted them to do. A few months later, KMAG demonstrated its growing
organizational maturity by publishing The Advisor’s Handbook and providing a copy to
every American in KMAG. The Handbook symbolized a giant leap over the provisional
methods prevalent in the days of DIS and the PMAG. In the Handbook were specific
instructions covering every aspect of an advisor’s job, such as personnel, logistics,
training, etc. The advisor also received guidance on how to interact with the KMAG staff
in Seoul.92 Perhaps most importantly, the Handbook contained Roberts’s “command
philosophy,” in which he had the first and last words of advice and instructions to
incoming advisors. Roberts clearly articulated his vision, expectations, and potential
pitfalls as an advisor. The Advisors’ Handbook was a valuable distillation of experience,
judgment, and practical application. At last, KMAG had a standard, and Roberts
expected KMAG to live up to it.

Despite the great progress made in the two years of Roberts’s tenure as chief,
some serious weaknesses still remained in the overall structure. KMAG’s manpower

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91 KMAG Historical Report, 7; Inclosure 1 to KMAG Historical Report, 1.

authorization, though doubled over PMAG’s authorization, was still not enough. No matter how good individually the advisors were, they could not be everywhere their duties demanded. Prior to 1950, KMAG go little attention, other than what Roberts could squeeze out of official visitors and journalists, because in the eyes of the real decision-makers in Tokyo and Washington the advisory effort was secondary to providing for the U.S. troops still stationed in Korea and those with occupation duties in Japan.\textsuperscript{93} In fact, there was some talk of even cutting KMAG’s authorization in half.\textsuperscript{94}

The schools system for Korean recruits was still not adequate to train all of the army’s soldiers. Without a centralized replacement training center individual training remained a unit function, which obviously distracted from operations, and vice versa. Korean officers, in Roberts’s opinion, still had a long way to go towards achieving the American standards of professionalism and tactical competence. He lamented in May 1950 that too many had too much tendency to cling to “old ways” – a euphemism for Japanese methods.\textsuperscript{95}

Roberts also worried about the physical state of the ROKA. KMAG’s last great initiative prior to June 1950 was to build up the ROKA’s stocks of weaponry and supplies. Although Roberts looked askance at Rhee’s persistent requests for tanks, combat aircraft, and heavy artillery (which he felt were economically and logistically unsupportable without substantial increases in military aid), KMAG was not blind to the fact that the ROK Army was weak on firepower and logistics support. While touting the ROKA’s accomplishments, he continued to lobby (as did Muccio) for greater military assistance. Washington’s cost consciousness, however, approved a paltry sum of $10 million in military aid, which only began to arrive in Korea by the time war broke out in

\textsuperscript{93} See the report of Philip C. Jessup, Ambassador at Large, Memorandum, 14 January 1950, \textit{FRUS} (1950), 7: 5ff for an account of a high-profile visit to the ROK.

\textsuperscript{94} Muccio endorsed a KMAG proposal (which was directed by the Department of the Army) to reduce the size of the advisory mission by January 1951, “without any appreciable impairment of the ROK Security Forces.” He went on to say, “The Korean Army, in particular, has made enormous progress during the past year . . . reductions in advisory personnel can well be made.” The Ambassador in Korea to Secretary of State, 23 June 1950, \textit{FRUS} (1950), 7:122.

\textsuperscript{95} Higgins, “U.S. Mission Called Success,” 30 May 1950.
June 1950. The effects of attrition and expansion strained the ROKA’s fragile logistics system to the breaking point. As of 5 May 1950, KMAG estimated that the ROK Army had fifteen percent of its weapons and thirty-five percent of its vehicles unusable due to maintenance shortfalls. Roberts warned his advisors “[t]he significance of this situation is that unless prompt, effective and vigorous measures are taken to conserve available resources, the Army will be dangerously reduced in firepower, mobility, and logistical support.” Even more disturbing was the assessment that ammunition stocks continued to decrease from nineteen million rounds of small arms ammunition in December 1949 to a point that only six days of combat supply existed for the front line divisions in June 1950.

But Roberts was no stooge; nor was he a stodgy officer bucking for a “tombstone” promotion. Some battles he could not or would not fight, such as publicly exposing the ROKA’s weaknesses in equipment, firepower, or leadership. He did not endorse Rhee’s requests for tanks and heavy artillery, nor did he fall in line with the outlandish estimates produced by the Ministry of National Defense.

Officially, and knowing full well that Washington was not willing to expend the resources in Korea, Roberts ducked the issue by asserting such requests were unnecessary because not only was the Korean terrain unsuitable for such heavy equipment, but that the ROKA was “the best little army in Asia” and fully capable of handling any potential opponent. Privately, though, Roberts was aware that the Koreans simply did not have the economic capacity to afford the

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96 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 88; FRUS (1949), 7: 1095.


98 Kim, Korean War, 208. Roberts blamed Korean commanders for failing to enforce fire discipline. In the fall of 1949, he reported to General Bolté that the Koreans “burn up ammunition at a fantastic rate in operations . . . a study of enemy casualties and our own ammunition expenditure showed that it took 14,604 rounds of ammunition to produce one casualty.” Roberts to Bolté, 19 August 1949, 9. See also Roberts to Bolté, 13 September 1949, 2, Plans and Operations (091) Korea.

99 Roberts figured that the “best rule” for evaluating ROKA reports and estimates was to “divide by ten.” Roberts to Bolté, 19 August 1949, 7. Regarding tanks, the Minister of National Defense requested tanks weighing 46 tons; Roberts pointed out that Korean bridges were only rated at 30 tons, and at any rate, even if Washington was ready to accede to their request for tanks, the Koreans had neglected to ask for 90 mm ammunition. Roberts to Bolté, 13 September 1949, 2.

100 Millett, “Forgotten Army,” 21.
military expertise to use, nor the technical ability to maintain such equipment and organizations Rhee demanded. Although subsequent events would cause many to question his motives and judgments, his decisions in this regard were in fact entirely consistent with his mission to “advise the Government of the Republic of Korea in the continued development of the Security Forces . . . now in being, consistent with the limitations of the Korean economy.”

As for the inability of the military to use or maintain more modern equipment, Roberts had plenty of empirical evidence to support his position.

Given time, most American advisors were confident that conditions in the ROKA would improve. The history of the MAGs up to the summer of 1950 appeared to bear out that conclusion. The advisors’ achievement in the first two years of the Republic’s existence was unique in America’s involvement in Asia. They established enduring credibility with their Korean counterparts in an environment defined by an alien culture and language, low practical experience, and inadequate manning and resources. Their high military standards commended them to those Korean officers who eventually became senior commanders, and they built up interpersonal “capital” with the future leaders of the ROK government and military. General Lim Sun-ha, one of the first officers of the Constabulary and later a division commander in the ROK Army during the conventional war, still remembers how impressed he and his fellow officers were with the Americans. Officers such as Colonel Champeny, Lieutenant Colonel Barros, and Captain Hausman made their mark with their work ethic and willingness to get into the details, a habit that former officers of Japanese service found unusual. Their example resulted in a push by Korean officers to learn U.S. military drill and customs, and to acquire U.S. uniforms and equipment – indeed, Koreans perhaps went overboard in their desire to do everything like the Americans, to the point of copying unit insignia.

Although Roberts

101 KMAG Table of Distribution, AG File 400.34 1949, RG 554.

102 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 90.


104 Lim, interview; General Isaac D. White, Senior Officers Oral History Program, 426, USAMHI.
had expressly forbade the advisors from trying to turn the Koreans into Americans, the
Koreans themselves saw imitation as the only the way to be who they wanted to be.
KMAG had become the ROKA’s figurative “older brother.”
CHAPTER 5

6-2-5: INVASION AND SURVIVAL

Paik Sun-yup, commanding the ROK I Corps, remembered the day that the ROKA nearly died. Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet, commanding general of the Eighth Army in Korea, descended from his aircraft at K-18 airfield, near Kangnung. It was 25 May 1951. Chinese forces had just routed the ROK III Corps in the mountains of central Korea. It was the worst defeat suffered by the ROKA, and one that Van Fleet felt was totally preventable. Van Fleet made directly for the Korean chief of staff, Major General Chung Il-kwon, and bluntly stated:

General Chung, I hereby abolish ROK Army III Corps; and ROK Army Headquarters will no longer exercise any operational control. The mission of ROK Army Headquarters shall be limited to personnel, administrative, logistic, and training matters but shall not involve operations . . . and the ROK Army Forward Command Post is abolished.¹

Van Fleet was not done, either. He even contemplated breaking up “superfluous” Korean units “to squeeze several thousand combat troops” and group them into battalion or regiment-sized units assigned to American divisions as rear security light infantry.²

In the minds of many, friend and foe alike, it was hard to escape the conclusion that by spring 1951, KMAG had failed. From the moment that North Korean infantry, tanks, and aircraft crossed the 38th parallel, the future livelihood of the ROKA was in doubt. Within two weeks, the ROKA was defeated and its survival, as well as that of the ROK, appeared to be a pipe dream. However, within a short amount of time, the ROKA bounced back with an infusion of manpower, support from the American Eighth Army

¹ Paik, Pusan to Panmunjom, 156.
dispatched from Japan, and desperate fighting to defend the “Pusan Perimeter.” Indeed, MacArthur’s brilliant stroke at Inchon would not have been possible without the ROKA’s stalwart resistance along the so-called Pusan Perimeter in August and September. Unfortunately, the ROKA’s miniature renaissance was insufficient to help it withstand the weight of Chinese intervention in October and November.

The fighting from June 1950 to June 1951 was a pivotal period of the war. Not only did these months comprise the “war of maneuver,” but they sorely tested the structures of KMAG and the ROKA that had been built in the years prior to the North Korean invasion. Even if KMAG could not advise their way to victory, the ROKA’s ability to survive and resist rested in large part on KMAG’s organizational and administrative efforts to keep the Koreans supplied with weapons, munitions, and above all, manpower.

The ROKA’s miraculous survival in the summer of 1950 laid the foundation for a reformed and revitalized army in the future, but Korean collapse in May of 1951 forced Van Fleet and General Matthew B. Ridgway, the United Nations Commander in Chief, to reappraise their expectations of the ROKA’s fighting capabilities, as well as the nature of KMAG’s advisory role. After May 1951, the Americans could no longer afford to cast ROKA as a useful auxiliary. Van Fleet reenergized KMAG and underwrote the ROKA’s expansion and reform that would in two years bring to fruition a cease-fire agreement. KMAG would not recreate the Korean army of 1949, but it would build from the foundation up a new army with competent leadership, and that was realistically trained and generously supported by artillery, engineer, and logistics units.

Until that time, whether KMAG’s efforts to build a Korean army would result in a successful defense of the ROK or ignominious failure in the face of a conventional invasion depended on the fighting spirit of the ROK soldier, the ability of the ROK Army to adapt to the war at hand, and proficiency of the advisors to keep the Korean army in the field.
In South Korea today, the numbers “6-2-5” (yuk-ee-oh) have the same ring as December 7, 1941 has for Americans. It is a date that defined a generation of Koreans, whose influence in politics and society extended right up to the dawn of the 21st century. It was also a date long in coming, for fighting along the 38th parallel was commonplace by June 1950. American troops had exchanged shots with the northern Communists as far back as 1947.3 The border clashes of 1949 centered on the cities of Kaesong and Chunchon and along the length of the Ongjin peninsula. Hundreds of incidents had occurred along the parallel, with very shallow penetrations made by either side. The North Koreans had always limited the scope and range of their activities, even when responding to offensive action by the ROKA. The surprise that Sunday morning was the unexpectedly intense artillery bombardment followed by large bodies of infantry and tanks.4 Because of a recent relaxation of tension between north and south, many ROK officers and soldiers were on pass or otherwise away from their duty posts. Surprise was nearly complete, and it was a rare occasion that the Communist troops ran into defenses prepared and manned. Only the ROK 6th Division defending Chunchon remained alert, and it was the only division to offer effective resistance to the initial Communist assault.5

Nobody south of the 38th parallel ought to have been surprised that the perennial border conflict had burst into open war in the early hours of 25 June 1950. What was surprising was the breadth and intensity of the Communist assault, which achieved nearly unstoppable momentum. With a few exceptions, North Korean artillery, infantry, and tank units quickly punched through ROK defenses and plowed over the only genuine counterattack by the ROK 2nd and 7th Divisions. Within a week, Seoul had fallen to the

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5 Major General Frank E. Lowe, President Truman’s personal envoy to Korea reported that even among KMAG staff, disagreement existed for some time regarding the nature of the North Korean attack. While the KMAG G-3 figured that this was simply another “rice raid,” the G-2 insisted it was a full invasion. By noon, Korean police reported North Korean attacks in regimental strength along the east coast, which erased any doubts that this battle was limited in scope or objective. Major General Frank E. Lowe Report, Tab 11, KMAG, 2, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.
Communists and the ROKA appeared to be destroyed as a fighting force. General Douglas MacArthur had already closed the book on the ROKA, stating that “South Korean units [are] unable to resist determined northern offensive. South Korean casualties as an index to fighting have not shown adequate resistance capabilities or the will to fight and our estimate is that a complete collapse is possible.” MacArthur pessimistically reported on 29 June (Tokyo time) the “complete and disorganized flight” of the South Korean soldiers indicated defeat and demoralization that could only be reversed by the commitment of American combat forces. MacArthur also estimated that only about 25,000 Koreans remained under arms. When President Harry Truman received the initial reports from MacArthur and the Department of State, he concluded that Korean units were unlikely to contribute much to their own defense as independent forces. In the President’s view – as well as that of much of the Western world – the Korean War had at last begun.

Quite unexpectedly, the advisors now found themselves fighting a close, brutal, and uneven contest against Soviet-built artillery, planes, and tanks without any guarantee of support from American forces in Japan or anywhere, for that matter. General Roberts had vocally promoted the ROKA’s skills at countering guerrillas and repelling raids, but these now seemed quaintly irrelevant. The tactics and methods used to suppress the

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7 MacArthur, Reminiscences, 332; Message C56942, CinC Far East to Department of the Army (for JCS), 30 June 1950, cited in Merrill, Documentary History, vol. 18, The Korean War, 133. Cf Ridgway, Korean War, 21-22, who reports that other witnesses to the same scene had vastly different impressions.

8 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 243, 257; CiC Far East to DA (for JCS), msg C56942 30 June 1950, Merrill, Documentary History, vol. 18, The Korean War, 133.


10 J. Lawton Collins implied that Roberts’s claims were even misleading. However, as Collins admits, neither he, nor any member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ever personally visited Korea to evaluate the ROKA’s capabilities for themselves; Collins, War in Peacetime, 42-44. Omar Bradley, too, was sufficiently satisfied by a personal interview (of which no record exists) in mid June with Roberts, who had stopped over in Tokyo enroute to retirement, that he felt no sense of undue alarm at the situation; Bradley and Blair, A General’s Life, 530.
guerrilla war were useless against the coordinated heavy assaults across the 38th parallel. Rifle marksmanship, which Roberts so heavily emphasized, was immaterial if infantry failed to stand its ground, was outflanked, or rolled over by T-34 tanks. Drilled and disciplined artillery crews could have no effect if they never received a call for fire. All of the thousands of patriotic youth that populated the south Korean countryside were of no consequence if the ROKA had no system to find, transport, induct, train, and deploy them as new soldiers. This was a new kind of war, and now it was KMAG’s war too.

Surprise was only one advantage held by the North Korean People’s Army (KPA). The South Korean troops were doomed by geography and the nature of their defensive line, which was held by four divisions spread out over the length of the peninsula. The arbitrary division of the peninsula had paid no mind to defensive principles, and it forced the South Koreans to spread their forces to cover sectors such as Ongjin that had no strategic importance. On the main or traditional routes of advance into the south, Kaesong-Munsan-Seoul and Tongduchon-Uijongbu-Seoul, secondary positions, anti-tank traps, and reserves were virtually nonexistent. Anti-tank gun and field howitzer crews were not deployed in depth or in sufficient number, nor were their fires integrated into a coherent battle plan. The army simply had not been big enough to train, repel cross-border raids, hunt down guerrillas, and prepare a proper defense in depth over 210 miles long. At a planning conference in May 1950, the KMAG G-3 attempted to put a positive spin on the ROKA’s hopeless position by announcing that the principles applicable to a “normal” defense applied just as well as to one along an extended front.11

Of course, KMAG was deceiving itself, for as subsequent fighting would show, the ROKA’s problem was as much in outlook as in organization. It had not yet developed a sufficient base of experienced leaders and trained units to fight against well drilled combined-arms formations. The Koreans were in no position to fight a defensive war of maneuver and counterattack, which is precisely what the KMAG G-3 advocated:

11 KMAG-ROKA G-3 Conference, 1 May 1950, 3, Fischgrund Papers.
Since we must await attack, we must organize in depth; we must teach delaying action to our troops; our engineers must operate as demolition experts and infantry; our officers and troops must know that strategic withdrawal and delaying actions are not defeats but clever maneuvers which will tend to wear the enemy out. We expect to use few troops against many (emphasis in the original). \textsuperscript{12}

Not only did the ROKA not have the organization to fight in this manner – it lacked the necessary artillery, engineers, and transportation – but the concepts of mobile defense were beyond its capability. The pressure of the limited war in 1949-1950 had not allowed the ROKA to formulate a sound basis for its regulations, doctrine, and operating procedures to fight a conventional war. There were not nearly enough trained staff officers who could manage the complex demands of logistics, intelligence, and maneuver. Concepts such as “delay,” “strategic withdrawal,” and “clever maneuver” sounded sophisticated, but they were meaningless to an army leadership as immature as the ROKA was in 1950. To top it off, logistics remained unplanned, uncoordinated, and inadequate. As a result, few ROK units were physically or psychologically capable of effective resistance. \textsuperscript{13} These deficiencies were not unusual for a new military organization built from scratch, particularly one that had to engage in active operations almost from its inception, but they nearly were fatal.

Finally, the North Koreans had a very good army. In contrast to the South, the KPA quickly matured in the image of its Soviet patron. According to ROK sources, following the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1948, material assistance from Moscow – modern aircraft, T-34 tanks, self-propelled guns, howitzers, and small arms – guaranteed the North military superiority in terms of equipment and weapons. \textsuperscript{14} The Communist regime in China, having just finished its revolutionary struggle against the Nationalists, released thousands Korean veterans – enough to form three experienced divisions –

\textsuperscript{12} KMAG-ROKA G-3 Conference, 3. The remaining report of the conference details an admirable attempt to teach proper defensive doctrine to the commanders of the ROKA: principles and techniques for security echelons, battle positions, mutual supporting fires and obstacles in depth, all-around defense, flexible use of terrain – all important issues for the successful implementation of ROKA’s defensive plan.

\textsuperscript{13} Eighth Army, Special Problems, 5.

\textsuperscript{14} The Soviet 25\textsuperscript{th} Army handed over all its weapons – enough to equip 120,000 men – to the KPA when it withdrew in December; Goncharov, et al., Uncertain Partners, 133; KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 42-45.
whom the KPA absorbed into its ranks from July 1949 to May 1950.  

Conscription, military training with Soviet advisors, and the formation of infantry divisions a full two years before the ROK gave the Communists the advantage in both manpower and training. Northern officers tended to possess greater ideological clarity, and many had experience fighting the Japanese either with the Soviet Army or with Mao Zedong’s Communists. Having received intensive and realistic training from their Soviet patrons, North Korean leaders understood the framework of combined arms fighting. Officer training and development began immediately after the Soviet “liberation” and continued up to the 1950 invasion. As of June 1950, it would have been more accurate to call the KPA the best little army in Asia.

West of the Ongnin peninsula and just north of Kaesong, elements of the ROK 1st Division awoke to the blaze of artillery directed from observation posts on Songak-san, a large hill-mass overlooking the ancient capital of Korea. Its three regiments were deployed forward to defend sixty-two miles of relatively flat terrain that made an ideal avenue for high-speed attacks. Colonel Paik Sun-yup fought his division gallantly, but once the North Koreans breached the Imjin River with tanks his division’s defense collapsed, and he led the remnants back to Seoul, across the Han river, and ultimately to the northwest salient of the Pusan Perimeter. Along the way he gathered up any Korean soldiers he found to reconstitute his division on the move. Once in position protecting the northwest bulge of the Pusan Perimeter, he directed several critical battles for the corridor in front of Taegu. He even received two American units complete with artillery and tanks attached to his division, the 27th Regimental Combat Team (“Wolfhounds”) and the 23rd Regimental Combat Team (RCT). His professional competence and

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18 KMAG-ROKA G-3 Conference, 11; Lowe Report, 2, Truman Papers.
personal example of aggressive leadership drew not only accolades from the Americans, but confidence as well. Thanks to his leadership, the ROK 1st Division remained the darling of the Eighth Army and carried to the end of the war its “own” battalions of American tanks and artillery. Paik proved to be a solid and capable commander. He was realistic, aggressive, and pro-American. KMAG officers universally liked him, and he was without question one of the ROKA’s most energetic and inspiring leaders, even during the darkest days.19

In the center sector of the defensive line, the ROK 6th Division put up a more determined and successful fight that threw the KPA off schedule long enough to prevent the envelopment and complete destruction of the units defending north of Seoul. This division, like the ROK 1st Division benefited from inspiring leadership, but unlike its sister units, it defended rougher terrain and along a shorter line. It had also taken the time to implement a local training plan integrating its artillery with a rudimentary defense in depth. Its KMAG team ignored an order to evacuate and remained with the division, contributing in no small measure to the division’s successful resistance.20 The defenders also benefited from skillful use of the terrain, and the division’s junior officers turned in some heroic performances before KPA infantry outflanked the division and forced its withdrawal.21

Both of these divisions demonstrated the potential capabilities of the ROK soldier if given good leadership, some basic training, and a stable tactical situation. Nonetheless, the ROKA’s weaknesses ran deep, as the only counterattack prior to the fall of Seoul demonstrated.


20 Lowe Report, 3, Truman Papers. KMAG’s wartime status and mission were unclear and any decision involved questions of national policy; therefore, the KMAG “evacuation” was incomplete and the decision was reversed almost immediately; Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom*, 5-6; Eighth Army, Special Problems, 6; Edward J. Stewart, Korean War Service Questionnaire, U.S. Army Military History Institute; James D. Holland to Allan R. Millett, 18 October 1996; Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 40.

With the ROKA holding more or less firmly on either flank, events in the Uijongbu corridor assumed great importance. Syngman Rhee’s insistence to hold Seoul forced the ROKA chief of staff, General Chae Pyong-duk (known as “Fat Chae”), a corpulent veteran of the Imperial Japanese Army, to resolve “to hold Uijongbu under any circumstance.” The KPA committed two infantry divisions and two tank regiments in this sector, and they were pounding their way through the ROK 7th Division, which had insufficient artillery (one battalion of 105 mm howitzers) and inadequate anti-tank weapons. “Special attack teams” that were in reality suicide-squads armed with demolitions bravely tackled the tanks, but the KPA’s momentum and fire support kept the ROK troops on the run.

In response, General Chae summoned the 2nd Division from Taejon, the 5th Division from Kwangju, and the 3rd Division from Pusan. He then planned a two-division frontal attack to block the Communist thrust coming south along the line of Tongduchon-Uijongbu-Seoul. He issued his order in person to Brigadier General Yu Jae Hung (7th Division) and Brigadier General Lee Hyong-kun (2nd Division). Yu agreed to attack at dawn, but Lee demurred, expressing concern that only two battalions of his division would be in position. Chae repeated his order and returned to Seoul.

Chae’s plan reflected haste without any regard for the practical lessons KMAG and experience had taught. No provision for unified or overall command, unit coordination, or communication was made. Although Yu was willing to attack, Lee had no intention of jumping off as ordered with only a fraction of his command. Both divisions lacked leadership, firepower, tactical mobility (troops of the 2nd Division detrained in Seoul then marched all night toward Uijongbu, where many simply collapsed due to exhaustion), troop control, and heavy direct-fire weapons such as recoilless rifles or 3.5 inch rocket launchers to deal with tanks. The attack began at about 0800 hours on 26 June and made some surprising progress until it ran into North Korean infantry supported with tanks. Both divisions were pushed aside as tanks thrust on to Uijongbu,

22 KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 179.

which fell that night, leaving Seoul virtually defenseless. Syngman Rhee’s government fled to Taegu, followed closely by the ROKA headquarters. On the 28th of June, KPA forces entered the capital against only disorganized resistance. As ROK troops and civilians attempted to evacuate from the city, the Han River bridge exploded without warning and collapsed into the river. The destruction of the bridge “was the breaking point for control . . . and from that point on panic, confusion and disorder reigned in the city.” The loss of the bridge also stranded the remaining troops of the 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 7th Divisions with their ammunition, supplies, and transportation on the wrong side of the river.

The failure of the Uijongbu counterattack, the loss of Seoul, and the premature destruction of the Han River bridge should have put the ROK Army down permanently. However, the timely intervention of U.S. aircraft and ground troops, combined with some desperate defensive fighting by the Koreans on the south bank of the Han River, held the KPA long enough to permit a fighting withdrawal two-hundred miles to the Naktong River. Nonetheless, American ground forces sufficient to stop the KPA were still far away in Japan. The issue was still up to the ROKA, an army that KMAG advisors now barely recognized. It was beaten, demoralized, and without direction. Less than half of its soldiers still answered to a recognized chain of command. The frontier defenses were lost, as was much of the ROKA’s equipment, artillery, communications, and transportation. The KMAG headquarters itself was in disarray and no longer functioned along the pattern so carefully crafted by Roberts and others since 1948. By far, the most crucial problem was to keep the ROK Army in the field as a fighting

24 General Lowe blamed Lee Hyong-kun, a “political favorite and entirely ineffective” officer for the failure to develop the counterattack; Lowe Report, 3, Truman Papers. See also the account in KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 179-84.
26 Eighth Army, Special Problems, 6; Appleman, South to the Naktong, 33-34; Stewart, Korean War Service, USAMHI.
28 Park, “Dragon from the Stream,” 81-82. Only the 6th and 8th Divisions managed to preserve their artillery. Of the 2,800 vehicles the ROKA possessed on 25 June, by 1 July, 2,300 had been lost.
29 Eighth Army, Special Problems, 8.
organization. To do that, someone had to take command of Korean units, keep them together, and find a way south towards comparative safety to reorganize and refit. Seeing that almost the entire chain of leadership had broken down, KMAG found itself, contrary to its mandate, having to go “operational,” that is, for the critical days of July and into August, KMAG officers assumed temporary command over units they were supposed to advise.\(^{30}\)

KMAG’s usurpation of the chain of command saved the South Korean Army; it did not have much more practical effect than that. Acting as commanders the advisors could impose a degree of control and coherence on their units, but they could not change the basic weaknesses plaguing the South Koreans: no practice in combined arms fighting, no fire support to speak of, lack of communications, and inadequate measures for supply, transportation, and casualty replacement.

Fortunately, both KMAG and the ROKA began to recover their equilibrium in mid-July. On 15 July, President Rhee placed all ROK armed forces under the operational control of General MacArthur’s United Nations Command. The next day MacArthur designated Walker as his executive agent to direct the operations of the ROKA. Two days later, Walker’s Eighth Army assumed operational control of the ROKA and command authority over KMAG as well. On 25 July, KMAG received a new chief, Brigadier General Francis W. Farrell.\(^{31}\) While the ROKA officers reorganized their remaining regiments as best as they could by re-integrating stragglers as they caught up with their parent units, KMAG headquarters assumed a new role to act as a liaison between Walker’s Eighth Army and the Koreans. For the moment, KMAG – thanks to its field advisors – was in a position to provide the situation awareness Walker desperately needed. KMAG also became responsible to ensure that Walker’s directives were passed to the Korean Army and followed. Among these were directives to standardize personnel, logistics, and operations reporting in accordance with accepted

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 10-11; Stewart, telephone interview, notes.

\(^{31}\) American Embassy (Muccio) Korea to CINCFE (MacArthur), 15 July 1950 and CINCFE to CG EUSAK (Walker), 16 July 1950, Jan-April 1952, Box 20 The Korean War – Special File, December 1950 – May 1952, Ridgway Papers; Eighth Army, Special Problems, 8; KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 346-47; Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 138.
American practices. It took a few months, but by September, KMAG could report that
the Korean Army at least was operating along recognizable principles in conducting its
military operations.\textsuperscript{32}

KMAG’s most important immediate initiative was to increase the size of the
advisory elements supporting ROK divisions and corps. In addition to the principal
advisor (counterpart of the Korean commander), one officer advised the G-1 (personnel)
and G-4 (logistics) staff sections and one officer the G-2 (intelligence) and G-3
(operations) officers. A communications element and administrative assistants rounded
out the KMAG detachment.\textsuperscript{33} KMAG was now in a position to provide material help to
divisions and corps, in addition to advice. For example, up to this point, each division
had only four radios, one for the headquarters and one for each regiment.\textsuperscript{34} Now, with
KMAG’s help, communications within the division were expanded and improved. Paik
Sun-yup especially valued the communications, supply, and air-ground liaison
capabilities that KMAG brought with them.\textsuperscript{35} ROKA logistics, which had completely
collapsed, likewise gained new life in the late summer of 1950 thanks to the intervention
of the American advisors.\textsuperscript{36}

As Eighth Army assumed responsibility for the operational control and logistical
support of the ROKA, KMAG’s change in orientation from “purely advise” to
“materially assist” did help to integrate Korean troops into the American command
framework. KMAG’s \textit{de facto} assumption of ROKA command and staff responsibilities
provided for continuity within the ROKA and a linkage with Eighth Army at a time when
the situation called for maximum cooperation between the two armies. As noted above,
KMAG officers took over the ROKA G-4 (Logistics and Supply) operations for a time,
ensuring a semblance of logistical organization for American-provided supplies and

\textsuperscript{32} Eighth Army, Special Problems, 8.

\textsuperscript{33} Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 56; “United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea,” Box
90/12, Van Fleet Papers.

\textsuperscript{34} Stewart, telephone interview, notes.

\textsuperscript{35} Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 56.

\textsuperscript{36} Eighth Army, Special Problems, 11, 14.
equipment. Concerning personnel management, ROKA headquarters, at KMAG’s insistence, began requiring unit rosters in August 1950, and subordinate units began submitting daily morning reports, an essential administrative tool for maintaining accountability and facilitating efficient logistical support.\(^{37}\)

Still, the damage to the ROKA was severe. Nearly its entire pre-war infrastructure – supply and maintenance depots, training installations, and bureaucracy – was destroyed, occupied by the enemy, or so disrupted as to be useless. From a June total of eight divisions and 95,000 men, the ROK Army had by August only five skeletal divisions with 45,000 soldiers.\(^{38}\) As the KPA’s forces closed in on Walker’s beleaguered Eighth Army, KMAG cast about for ways to keep the ROKA fed with a supply of manpower to keep pace with attrition at the front.

**The Replacement Training Centers**

Until the Communist invasion, no centralized training system existed, which left commanders with the responsibility to train both individuals and units. Full-scale combat operations gave the training of combat replacements new urgency. To flesh out the existing divisions and to fill new units, President Rhee’s government reinterpreted the existing conscription legislation and scoured the countryside for new levies, but these men entered battle untrained and unprepared.\(^{39}\) The most intelligent looking were turned into NCOs, and riflemen were lucky indeed to have even fired a full eight-round clip in their weapons before heading to the frontline.\(^{40}\) It was a noble sacrifice, but KMAG recognized it was not sustainable.

These expedient solutions could not survive in the long term because men and units need a chance to develop group cohesion and learn basic tactical skills necessary for survival, let alone proficiency in combat. KMAG recognized this deficiency and lobbied

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 10-11; KIMH, *KW*, vol. 1, 353.

\(^{38}\) Eighth Army, Special Problems, 9.

\(^{39}\) With the promulgation of the Emergency Decree for Homeland Defense, 22 July 1950, all young men age 14 and up were liable for conscription; KIMH, *KW*, vol. 1, 352-53.

\(^{40}\) Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 144.
the ROKA for a more appropriate and rational initial training system. Although the solution was not totally satisfactory, these efforts laid the groundwork for a future training regime that would encompass unit as well as individual training at the battalion, regiment, and division levels.

The idea behind replacement training was to create a number of centers to receive incoming soldiers, process them into the army, and train them in basic soldier skills. Graduates would then enter a central pool to replace casualties or constitute new units. KMAG and the ROKA organized the first Training Battalion in Taegu on 17 July, which the Koreans enlarged two weeks later and reorganized as part of the First Replacement Training Center (RTC 1). Four more training centers became operational in August around Pusan and on Cheju-do. By the end of August these training centers were putting into the field a constant stream of replacements to reconstitute the ROKA’s shattered units. The manpower quota of the RTCs increased enormously from July to September. The Taegu center turned out 150 soldiers a day until August, when its quota rose to 500 a day. A month later, 1,000 soldiers graduated each day to replace casualties in the ROKA’s five existing divisions. The other training centers also produced between 200 and 750 replacements daily.

The command structure of the RTCs continued to reflect the counterpart principle. A Korean lieutenant colonel commanded and an American major rendered advice and assistance. This senior advisor also led a team of other KMAG personnel who supported training, logistics, and other administrative functions. In practice, these officers made the RTCs function. Everything from construction materials, training aids, weapons, ammunition, and transportation had to come from Eighth Army resources, and KMAG

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41 Personal notes, First RTC, Box 4, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Doyle Papers, USAMHI; *United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea*, ed. and comp. by the KMAG Public Information Office (Tokyo, 1956), 34. All told, by the end of August 1950 four RTCs were in operation, putting out 1,700 men a day. When a RTC opened on Cheju-do, an additional 750 men per day were added to this total.

42 First RTC, Doyle Papers.
officers made those resources appear at the appropriate times and places. These officers also acted as liaisons with the KMAG headquarters to keep General Farrell informed of problems as they arose.\textsuperscript{43}

Major Dan Doyle, a reserve infantry officer who had been a regimental advisor from February 1950 until August 1950, was one of the first Americans detailed to the RTC at Taegu. He kept a comprehensive diary of the inner workings of RTC 1 from August until January 1951, when the Taegu RTC closed and transplanted its training apparatus to Cheju-do. Major Doyle stayed on as the senior advisor for the new RTC 1 until relieved on 1 March 1951.\textsuperscript{44}

Doyle was one of the rare officers who combined combat experience and excellent technical understanding about military organizations with a zealous commitment to the Koreans whom he served.\textsuperscript{45} Personally brave (he received a Bronze Star medal while advising the ROK 1\textsuperscript{st} Division) and resourceful, Doyle was a motive force behind the resurrection of the ROKA in the fall of 1950 and winter of 1951. If the product of the RTCs left much to be desired in their first months of operation, a firm and rational system of recruit training had at least been realized. This system would evolve into a backbone for the other reforms undertaken by KMAG and ROKA. Without soldiers trained in the basic arts of infantry combat, all else would have been in vain.

Doyle’s first challenge was also the most basic – find adequate training materials. Among the five RTCs, only one training manual (operation of the M-1 rifle) existed. Based on his experience before and immediately following the outbreak of conventional hostilities, Doyle understood the barriers in teaching Korean trainees western military methods. He set to work to adapt the U.S. Army’s training manuals to the Korean situation, culture, and learning methods. He redacted essential parts of various manuals and produced for the RTCs a single volume, richly endowed with hand-drawn illustrations accompanying text, a mixture of\textit{hangul} (Korean alphabet) and Chinese

\textsuperscript{43} Sawyer,\textit{Advisors in Korea}, 148; First RTC, Box 4, Doyle Papers.

\textsuperscript{44} Service records, Boxes 3 and 6, Doyle Papers.

\textsuperscript{45} Doyle maintained a “Korean Customs Book” with his own annotated entries about Korean culture, language, songs, and history; Box 5, Doyle Papers.
characters. The illustrations are detailed enough that even an illiterate student or instructor can grasp their meaning. The training regime based on this manual progressed from basic soldier skills such as military bearing, marching, saluting, manual of arms and close order drill to instruction on weapons characteristics and capabilities, firing positions, individual marksmanship and movement, land navigation, squad movement, construction of fighting positions, weapons maintenance, and first aid.\(^{46}\)

Unfortunately for Doyle and his Korean colleagues, that was a lot of training to cram into three days, which was all they had in July and August. Riflemen fired nine rounds to “qualify” with their weapons; machine gunners had a more generous allotment of twenty rounds.\(^{47}\) The RTCs had no time to spare, for fighting along the Naktong River was fierce as the KPA made one desperate push after another to break through. There were some close calls, but the lines held. In the battle for the Pusan Perimeter, ROK units composed of veterans and untried troops held the northern face to include the bulge of the perimeter and beat back attacks at Taegu, Yongsan, and Pohang.\(^{48}\) A break at any point on this line would have spelled disaster for Walker’s command and doomed MacArthur’s grandiose and risky assault against Inchon.

The crisis of the Perimeter began to ebb in September, which allowed the RTC training cycle to increase officially to ten days. Still, it was a rare cycle that completed its allotted days of training. As MacArthur stripped Eighth Army of troops in preparation for the Inchon landing, Walker’s reserves dwindled away. At one point, Doyle was ordered to deploy 622 officers and men from the RTC to fill an immediate gap in the line to stop infiltrating enemy troops. Lieutenant Colonel Robert T. Hazlett, the KMAG G-3, emphasized the severity of the situation: “If you don’t get those men out there tonight there won’t be any RTC here tomorrow.” These soldiers, who were the best available at the time, departed and acquitted themselves well.\(^{49}\)

\(^{46}\) Basic Training Manual, Box 2, Doyle Papers.

\(^{47}\) Personal Notes, 1st RTC, Doyle Papers.

\(^{48}\) KIMH, KW, vol. 1, 440-480, 492-505.

\(^{49}\) Personal notes, 1st RTC, Doyle Papers.
Doyle also helped improve the RTC’s internal organization. To make the RTC reflect the standard organization of a combat division, a modified Table of Organization and Equipment went into effect on 6 October. The RTC now had three training regiments comprising ten training battalions – six for riflemen or carbineers, and one each for machine guns, mortars and rocket launchers, and automatic rifles (BAR). Each battalion had a headquarters section and seven training companies, with one company graduating a class every day of the week. Each squad had one training cadre member to instruct and supervise training. By focusing its training on a particular weapons system, each battalion turned out 100 trained soldiers a day. Three support companies – service support, finance, and medical – attended to the administrative and personal needs of the Korean soldiers. Along with this reorganization, the RTC also instituted formal tracking mechanisms and standard record keeping procedures.

Meanwhile, Doyle railed against the KMAG headquarters for virtual neglect of the RTC’s needs (“we had no engineer help whatever on any project”), which were many. As could have been expected, facilities for barracks, ranges, and squad maneuver were non-existent or inadequate, and had to be constructed on the spot. The Eighth Army G-3 inspectors were not much help either. They only noted the insufficient number of weapons, ammunition, and equipment, and recommended that more combat experienced Korean officers be assigned to the RTC. This was an excellent suggestion, but yet another good idea held hostage by the demands of the moment. Transportation for

50 The Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) was the American standard infantry squad support weapon, capable of sustained fire from a 20-round magazine. It was very accurate and powerful, but heavy.

51 Personal notes, 1st RTC; On 1 March 1951, Lieutenant General Chung Il-kwon codified the RTC’s organization and mission, Table of Organization and Equipment for the RTC, Box 4, Doyle Papers.

52 Personal notes, 1st RTC, Doyle Papers. Doyle was particularly proud of the performance of Korean 3.5 inch rocket (bazooka) men. Within a week of the deployment of the first twenty graduates, ROK units reported they had destroyed three North Korean tanks with their bazookas. It was an auspicious start considering that no one (including the KMAG advisors) had ever fired one before picking them up at Taegu.

53 Personal notes, 1st RTC, Doyle Papers.
inductees also lacked organization and oversight. One noteworthy event occurred on 31 December, when 7,309 men staggered into Taegu, having walked from Seoul, a twenty-day journey in winter weather because no train cars were available.\(^{54}\)

Plans had been in the works to consolidate all of the RTCs on Cheju-do and expand the length of training to twenty-eight days. The movement of instructors and students was accomplished in December and January. Once the RTC (Cheju-do) became fully operational on 12 February 1951, plans to expand training to an eight-week cycle with special emphasis on marksmanship, squad and platoon tactical problems, field firing, night demonstrations, and tactical marches began, but they would not be ready for some time, and as usual, Doyle had to contend with some serious problems. Korean soldiers were herded like cattle into large cargo ships in Pusan, and they endured a long voyage exposed to the elements and without food until they arrived on Cheju-do. Less than a week after opening its doors, the RTC already had fifty-five confirmed cases of typhus with 178 others suspected. The only productive measures were quarantine and regular dusting with DDT. On 1 March, the medical company identified two cases of small pox.\(^{55}\) Another problem was the rejection rate. About twenty percent of the first batch of trainees was rejected as unfit for military duty. After a month, the RTC had rejected 10,000 recruits as medically or physically unfit. RTC advisors identified the solution as being a way-point to screen inductees prior to shipment to Cheju-do. Such a procedure would reduce the burden on the RTC’s already limited resources.\(^{56}\)

In addition to health and fitness issues, Doyle reported other urgent needs to General Farrell. In short supply were tents, radios, ambulances, clothing, food and water, fuel, sandbags, wood planking, compasses, rifle cleaning kits, medical supplies, and above all, ammunition. The dramatic increase in the Center’s training base (to a ceiling of 14,000 trainees) required a monumental increase in ammunition expenditures. As of 18 February, Doyle was short 60,000 rounds of belted .30 caliber (machine gun) and

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\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Headquarters, 1\(^{st}\) Replacement Training Center, Mosipo, Cheju-do, Weekly Report, 18 February 1951, 7-8; HQ, 1\(^{st}\) RTC, Weekly Report, 5 March 1951, 3-4, Box 5, Doyle Papers.

\(^{56}\) Weekly Report, 18 March 1951, 4.
15,000 rounds of carbine cartridges. Less severe shortages affected mortars, rocket launchers, hand grenades, and tracer ammunition.\textsuperscript{57} By 12 March (one month after the first trainees arrived at Cheju-do) the situation had become acute. Enough recruits were in the training pipeline that intensive range firing occurred daily. The shortage of weapons (50 rifles per company of 250 recruits) threatened to derail the entire marksmanship program, to say nothing of bayonet drill, movement techniques, and weapons maintenance training. Doyle refused to improvise with these other events, for when recruits fired on a range it was clear that they had not become comfortable with shooting positions and real weapons. Doyle emphasized, “The methods of instruction in marksmanship have improved three hundred percent, but the instruction is only about twenty per cent as effective as it could be because of the lack of weapons.”\textsuperscript{58} A week later, the RTC received a shipment of 2,300 rifles – a small but significant down payment of a debt that eventually was liquidated.\textsuperscript{59} At least Doyle could be satisfied that someone had read his report and understood the issues involved.

Doyle also excelled in his personal relationships with his fellow advisors and counterparts. He was quick to credit his assistant, Major Francis J. Madden and his advance party that established the most necessary facilities to receive the main body of the RTC contingent. As bad as things were in the RTC’s first days, they would have been infinitely worse had Major Madden failed to exercise tireless initiative, good judgment, and cooperation with local authorities and civilians. Doyle also complimented his counterpart, Brigadier General Paik In-yup (the same officer who as a major commanded the two-battalion Kurye operation following the Yosu uprising in October-November 1948, and as a colonel commanded the 17th Regiment from June-December 1950). Doyle reported, “General Paik has been very cooperative and has frequently asked advice and suggestions from Major Madden and myself. We have agreed on general policies and the General has given orders that they be carried out.”\textsuperscript{60} Doyle

\textsuperscript{57} Weekly Report, 18 February 1951, 5-7.

\textsuperscript{58} Weekly Report, 12 March 1951, 2.

\textsuperscript{59} Weekly Report, 18 March 1951, 3.

\textsuperscript{60} Weekly Report, 25 February 1951, 4.
proved that the counterpart system that had served the ROKA and KMAG so well from 1948 to the outbreak of the conventional war was still a valid model for professional understanding and cooperation.

On 2 March, Doyle took the next step as a mentor. He made it clear that although he, an American, was tasked to make sure the RTC produced trained soldiers, it was ultimately the responsibility of the Korean cadre to make that happen:

Your primary mission as a leader and an instructor in the 1st Replacement Training Center is to train recruits to be Number One soldiers. The battle against the Communist invaders of your Fatherland will be won or lost on the training fields of Cheju-do. It will be won if you train your recruits to be better soldiers than their Communist enemies; it may be lost if you fail in your mission of making your recruits into first class soldiers (original emphasis).

The first step in instruction is Preparation. THIS MEANS PREPARATION BY THE INSTRUCTOR. The following Training Notes have been prepared by your Commanding Officer, General Paek (Paik) In Yup and the Training Section of G-3 for your instruction. It is your duty to study them carefully so that you will be prepared to train your recruits to be better soldiers than their Communist enemies (original emphasis).

Doyle understood his audience and what they needed to hear. Seoul had fallen for a second time, and UN ground forces, having weathered another Chinese offensive, in which two ROK divisions were roughly handled, were just beginning to slog their way forward. The cadre on Cheju-do needed to be inspired. Doyle delivered. His last emphatic words were “TAEHAN MINKUK MANSEI!” (Long live the Korean Republic!) 61

By now the RTC was in high gear focused on its mission “to train basic enlisted personnel in Military Subjects common to all branches, and Specialist training for the Infantry; to produce basic fillers for the Infantry Division.” 62 In other words, for the first time in the five year history of organized Korean military forces, soldiers received a watered-down version of basic training, American style. From this centralized location, safely removed from the fighting and generally free from political interference, hundreds

61 HQ, 1st RTC, To the Officers and Enlisted Cadre, 2 March 1951, Box 5, Doyle Papers.

62 Chief of Staff Korean Army, Table of Organization and Equipment, Replacement Training Center, 1 March 1951, Box 4, Doyle Papers.
of thousands of soldiers learned the basic skills of soldiering. This was not a cure in itself for the ROKA’s larger problems, but it did represent a good start. As a measure of the RTC’s contribution in the first year of the war, Korean manpower soared from less than 50,000 men in July to 250,000 in July 1951. Fortunately, KMAG learned a larger lesson from this experience. Building a military infrastructure capable of handling the demands of modern war had to be a deliberate, well planned, and well supported affair. Any sense of “provisionalism” in KMAG’s psyche was eradicated in the process of standing up a systematic and professional training program for individual soldiers. In future endeavors – unit retraining, organizational expansion and training, and officer training– KMAG would follow the same general template, taking care not to repeat the mistakes of 1948-50.

**Out of the Frying Pan, September 1950 – March 1951**

Fighting in August and September kept the South Koreans and their advisors busy surviving and beating back repeated attacks against the Pusan Perimeter. After the Inchon landing on 15 September, however, MacArthur’s forces drove on to capture Seoul and cut off KPA troops engaged with Walker’s Eighth Army, which began an epic pursuit northward. ROK troops were the first to cross the 38th parallel and begin the liberation of the north. Unknowingly, they marched into Armageddon. Chinese intervention in October and November of 1950 forever sealed off the possibility of a United Nations victory and political unification. In the mountainous wastes along the Yalu and Chongchon Rivers, yet another ROK Army was destroyed. ROKA’s crippled remnants found safety only south of the 37th parallel as the new year began. The cycle was to repeat itself one more time as Eighth Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Matthew Ridgway and subsequently by Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet, recaptured Seoul and fought its way back across the 38th parallel, and right into the strongest Communist offensive of the war – the Spring Offensive.⁶⁴

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⁶³ Eighth Army, Special Problems, 16.

⁶⁴ Also referred to as the Chinese Fifth Offensive.
The Koreans’ fanatical defense at Tabu-dong and Pohang in August 1950 gave KMAG hope that perhaps the worst deficiencies of Korean leadership and training were subsiding. Korean blood in defense of the Pusan Perimeter bought time and space for reinforcements to bolster General Walton “Bulldog” Walker’s Eighth Army. Walker’s skillful and tenacious defense held the North Korean forces so that MacArthur’s counteroffensive at Inchon would have devastating effects. At first, Inchon had no appreciable effect on the situation facing Eighth Army until the KPA unexpectedly collapsed. In the pell-mell pursuit to the pre-war boundary between North and South Korea little further thought was given to the Korean forces. It was enough that they stayed out of the way to let the Americans do the real fighting.\textsuperscript{65} This was an unfortunate attitude to take, for in the wake of the decisive Chinese intervention in October and November of 1950, and their subsequent offensive that drove the UNC south of the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel, it became clear that the Eighth Army, now more than ever, needed the Koreans if it were to avoid catastrophe in Korea. The process of remaking the ROK Army, however, could not be invented overnight; it could not even be contemplated while under the crushing weight of the Chinese intervention, which thoroughly beat up three ROK Divisions (6\textsuperscript{th}, 7\textsuperscript{th}, and 8\textsuperscript{th}) and sent the remaining ones reeling. The Chinese also roughly handled the American units of the Eighth Army. The U.S. 24\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Division escaped relatively unscathed, but the other divisions in Eighth Army -- U.S. 1\textsuperscript{st} Cavalry, 25\textsuperscript{th}, and 2\textsuperscript{nd} Infantry Divisions got cut up; the latter was hurt so bad as to be combat ineffective.\textsuperscript{66}

General Walker intended to consolidate his troops and hold a line along the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel when personal tragedy struck the Eighth Army on 23 December. Walker’s jeep crashed into a ROK Army weapons carrier, which knocked the jeep over on its top. The Eighth Army commander was the only occupant killed, and Eighth Army was suddenly without its “Bulldog,” the tireless warrior who had kept the ground forces of the UNC together against daunting odds.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65}Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 54-61.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 111; Blair, \textit{The Forgotten War}, 501-02; KIMH, \textit{KW}, vol. 2, 246-268. The US 7\textsuperscript{th} Division and the Marine 1\textsuperscript{st} Division were part of the U.S. X Corps, subordinate to MacArthur’s Far East Command – not the Eighth Army – and were evacuated from Hangnum in December.

\textsuperscript{67}Blair, \textit{The Forgotten War}, 552-53.
Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway assumed command of the Eighth Army on 26 December. Surveying the situation facing the Eighth Army he resolved to begin offensive operations immediately. A few quick strokes changed the strategic balance in Korea. Operation WOLFHOUND (15-17 January 1951) caught the Chinese infantry exposed and exhausted after three successful campaigns in three months. Although WOLFHOUND was billed as a “reconnaissance-in-force,” success prompted Ridgway to order a general advance, Operation THUNDERBOLT (25-31 January) that pushed the Chinese and North Korean forces back to the Han River. The Chinese responded to Ridgway’s attacks in February with their Fourth Offensive, aimed at the U.S. X Corps advancing in the vicinity of Chipyongni – Wonju – Hoengsong. Korean troops – the unfortunate 8th Division and the veteran 3rd and 5th Divisions – caught by surprise, scattered into the hills and abandoned most of their equipment. Only the stalwart defense by the U.S. 23rd Infantry Regiment (reinforced) and the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team supported by air and artillery strikes at the epic battles of Chipyong-ni and Wonju respectively brought the Communist rush to a halt. After Ridgway parried this blow he counterthrusted with Operation KILLER (20 February – 6 March) immediately followed by RIPPER (7 March – 31 March). RIPPER carried the Eighth Army across the 38th parallel and recaptured Seoul (15 March).

Notably, ROK troops performed adequately in this latter operation. One battalion of the ROK 6th Division distinguished itself with a lightning attack that annihilated an enemy battalion without a single ROK fatality. The battalion commander, Major Lee Hong-sun, planned to execute a double envelopment, but when the enemy detected this maneuver and attempted to withdraw, Lee ordered an immediate frontal attack.


69 In fairness to the ROK troops, their unmilitary behavior was due in large measure to unwise directives issued by the Headquarters, X Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Edward “Ned” Almond. Almond insisted the 8th Division send two regiments far in advance of the rest of the corps into a salient anchored on air and “supported” by ad hoc American task forces. Communications, command relationships, and overall objectives were blurred and amateurish; J. D. Coleman, Wonju (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 2000), 97-100; Mossman, Ebb and Flow, 266-269.

70 Ridgway, Korean War, 113.
rushing Koreans caught the enemy in the open and incapable of offering resistance. Afterwards, Major Lee’s troops counted 231 bodies on the field and captured much equipment. Lee’s aggressive and swift decision proved Ridgway’s confidence that when Korean troops “were well-led their accomplishments spoke for themselves.”\(^{71}\) Elsewhere across the front, ROK troops advanced side-by-side with their American and UN allies. By the end of RIPPER, the ROK Capital Division had recrossed the 38\(^{th}\) parallel, the first UNC unit to do so.\(^{72}\)

Despite these tactical setbacks, the Chinese learned a valuable lesson – better to fight Korean units than American ones, which were more generously endowed with artillery, engineers, and other supporting troops. The Korean divisions, on the other hand, remained as before – lacking depth, competent leadership, and training.\(^{73}\) Their fighting quality had generally not improved with experience. Ridgway noted that the South Koreans “were inclined to view the Communist soldiers with deep awe, bordering on superstition,” which if unchecked by forceful leadership often led to panic and wholesale collapse.\(^{74}\) As the Chinese recovered from the disastrous months of February and March, they planned to strike a hammer blow at Eighth Army’s weak link.

Meanwhile, KMAG’s plate was full to overflowing, and the pace of operations from Inchon, the advance to the Yalu and Tumen Rivers, and the retreat south past the 37\(^{th}\) parallel brought back not only nightmares of the previous summer but frustration at the inability to effect real change among the ROK units. KMAG’s personnel authorization had about doubled since June 1950, but as an institution, KMAG remained remarkably static.\(^{75}\) Its most experienced personnel had become casualties, rotated to the States, or were assigned to American units. Even Hausman was gone. With a new crop of men, KMAG continued to provide its expertise to the ROKA’s administration, and

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 112.

\(^{72}\) Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom*, 141.


\(^{74}\) Ibid., 106.

\(^{75}\) KMAG strength rose from 469 officers and men in June 1950 to 758 in December 1950; at the war’s anniversary, KMAG’s strength had risen to 973; Eighth Army, Special Problems, 31.
advisors continued to walk the hills with their counterparts, yet the combat performance of ROK divisions had not improved as might have been expected with all the experience they had accrued.

The reality was that although KMAG and ROKA had moved mountains to keep Koreans in the field, many of the institutional shortcuts – abbreviated recruit training, accelerated graduation of officer candidates, creation of new units or reconstitution of shattered ones – had met the immediate needs of battle at the expense of a variety of additional problems in the future that brought into question the ROKA’s long-term viability. A large part of the problem was that KMAG was not expected to transform the Korean Army. Walker seems to have expected KMAG advisors simply to stiffen ROK units, ensure a steady stream of replacements, and function more as a G-3 (operations) liaison agency to the ROKA headquarters and field units. His replacement, Ridgway did not change that orientation. As a result, KMAG’s organizational focus gradually turned away from its original mandate to organize, train, and advise Korean ground forces. Neither commander made provisions, and KMAG did not insist on any, to improve the quality of Korean combat and support units. Finally, the Chinese Third and Fourth Offensives forced Ridgway to reconsider the role for Korean divisions vis-à-vis Eighth Army. Gradually, Korean divisions took their place beside American ones, and Eighth Army assumed a more direct control of the operational activities of the ROKA, which theoretically freed KMAG to concentrate on rebuilding the Korean Army.

Until now, advisors had been too engrossed in their role as fighters. Somehow, KMAG needed to recapture its essence as the organizer, trainer, and mentor of the ROKA. Systemic problems in KMAG itself needed attention before efforts to reform ROKA could possibly take hold. Of particular concern was how KMAG went about its business to form, train, and advise Korean units in combat. In many respects, KMAG was still operating in its pre-1950 mode. It needed to transform itself into a wartime advisory organization. KMAG lacked a vision of its role in Eighth Army’s operation and

76 Ibid., 13.

77 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 155-158; Eighth Army, Special Problems, 15-16; CG’s Journal, 14 and 16 February 1951, Historical Record February – October 1951, Box 22 Korean War Historical Record, Ridgway Papers.
a sense of purpose regarding ROKA’s long-term maturation. To his credit, General Farrell did take some initial steps in the early months of 1951 to make KMAG more relevant to the war being fought. Two important steps were his efforts to reintroduce a formal training regime that by March 1951 generally reflected that of the United States Army, and the (re)publication of the *KMAG Advisor’s Handbook*.

As winter turned to spring in 1951, the ROKA appeared to be in a healthy state. The appearance was, however, misleading. The ROKA’s methods for reconstituting units were haphazard, because while everyone recognized that the ROKA needed more trained soldiers, the overriding concern was simply to find soldiers to keep the ROKA in the field. From the very beginning of the war, KMAG wrestled with the tasks to find replacements to refill the ROK divisions and to train them to fight. Over the winter of 1950-51 the ROKA inducted approximately 300,000 replacements. Unfortunately, ROKA’s training establishment beyond the RTC was still too immature and incapable of absorbing this massive influx of men. The lack of qualified instructors combined with the difficulty to obtain equipment, land, and transportation made it easy to give in to the tactical demands at the front, which required immediate replacement of combat casualties regardless of their level of training. Consequently, ROK divisions’ combat capability was not commensurate with their paper strength.

The ROKA had a fairly extensive schools system that the KPA overran and destroyed in the summer of 1950. As the tactical situation permitted, various schools were reconstituted: The Artillery Training Center at Chinhae, The Infantry School at Tongnae, The Engineer Training Center at Kumhae, and the Ordnance Training Center at Hokae. To manage these various schools, the ROKA chief of staff established the Korean Army Ground General School in February 1951. Although the Ground General

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78 Eighth Army, Special Problems, 17-19.

School centralized administration, each branch of service continued to run separate officer candidate schools, officer basic and advanced courses, and specialized enlisted training.\(^{80}\)

KMAG supervised the reorganization and re-establishment of these training facilities and provided critical logistical and administrative support. ROKA schools, like the RTC, operated under the counterpart system with an American officer or enlisted soldier supervising or assisting their counterpart to plan, resource, and execute training programs. Because Eighth Army supplied most of the technical and military equipment to run these schools and training centers, KMAG advisors had the responsibility to approve and forward all supply requisitions. Advisors also instructed and assisted their counterparts in record keeping, strength reporting, and other administrative tasks.\(^{81}\)

As a result of KMAG’s efforts, the ROKA training and school system stabilized enough to provide continuity between the institutional base of the army and the field units. Of greatest concern was to maintain a consistent quality of training while supporting the expansion of the Korean Army. General Farrell reported in April 1951 that “the capabilities of the K[orean] A[rmy] education system are being improved and expanded . . . and are rapidly approaching the final requirements to support fully the present forces.”\(^{82}\) Based on projected attrition and replacements, Farrell expected an integrated replacement and training school system to be fully operational by 1 September 1951.\(^{83}\)

Standing in the way of Farrell’s objective were two familiar problems: lack of qualified instructors and material shortages. KMAG could do little about either problem, for the requirements of the front dictated the flow of both personnel and resources.\(^{84}\) Nevertheless, the re-establishment of the ROKA’s schools system was the first indication

\(^{80}\) Eighth Army, Special Problems, 17.

\(^{81}\) Hausrath, Problems, 53-54. Korean Army training centers kept no tracking or personnel records until Major Doyle told them to do so on 7 August 1950 (the day he arrived at RTC 1), Personal notes, RTC #1, Doyle Papers.

\(^{82}\) Quoted in Eighth Army, Special Problems, 18.

\(^{83}\) Eighth Army, Special Problems, 18.

\(^{84}\) Ibid., 19.
that KMAG understood the impact uncontrolled wartime expansion had on the ROKA. Enough trained officers and soldiers would never be produced under the current conditions, but Farrell did plant seeds of reform in both KMAG and the ROKA that would bear fruit once certain conditions along the battlefront were met. Throughout this process KMAG learned further valuable lessons about army expansion and organization in wartime, its advisory duties, and how to make the most of its meager resources without being an undue burden to the fighting capabilities of the Eighth Army.

As a further indication that KMAG was getting its own house in order, the Advisor’s Handbook, published in March 1951, consolidated operational procedures while giving individual advisors technical guidance in the performance of their duties. Part I of the Advisor’s Handbook familiarized the advisor to KMAG’s mission, objectives, organizational structure, and procedures covering administration, supply, and interpreter services. It also listed the various agencies, combat, and support units assigned to the ROKA. Part II contained information from the various general staff sections (personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, and signals) outlining advisory functions and reporting procedures. Part III consisted of two appendices. The first one addressed standard procedures for KMAG’s internal supply process. The second, and perhaps most important document in the entire sixty page handbook, was Farrell’s personal letter to all advisors.

Much as General Roberts had set the tone for his stewardship of the advisory effort with his “Instructions to Advisors” in October 1949, Farrell’s “Suggestions for Unit Advisors” laid out a blueprint for advisors to follow during their tour of duty. Farrell’s comments distilled the experience of veteran advisors without being doctrinaire: “These suggestions should not be considered as solutions to all the problems confronting advisors. However, they illustrate principles that have been applied with excellent results [in the past].”85 These principles focused on the basic skills of advisory work such as understanding both the mission and the people advised, gaining confidence and respect of the Korean officers and troops, personal involvement with the unit, and situation

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awareness. Farrell impressed upon the advisors that although they did not command Korean units, they had better think as if they did. Only then would they be in a position to offer competent advice to their counterpart, whether for administrative matters or in combat.

The advisor was held responsible for fixing problems or, if required, reporting them to KMAG headquarters for action at higher levels. When it came to getting counterparts to listen to advice, KMAG officers could exercise their influence through the control of communications, ammunition, and fire support, all assets for which the ROKA relied upon Eighth Army. Farrell concluded his missive with a final warning, which indicates that Farrell expected advisors to be responsible for the performance and conduct of their units:

The American advisor in the field . . . is faced with many difficulties. The solution to some of these may appear impossible. As a result of this feeling, advisors often take the line of least resistance. This attitude does not get the job done. To quit is to let down the other advisors in KMAG . . . . The combat effectiveness of a Korean unit is directly proportional to the efficiency and enthusiasm of the American advisor.\(^{86}\)

Although lacking the punch of Roberts’s direct style, the 1951 edition of the Advisor’s Handbook placed the KMAG advisor on firmer ground with the enumeration of specific combat duties, which materially contributed to the fighting ability of Korean units. For example, the advisor learned that one of his many additional tasks was to act as the “G-3 Air” officer for his unit, requesting and coordinating air support against observed targets. Helpfully, the G-3 (Operations) section of the Handbook contained the proper formats and procedures (authored by the Vice Commander of Far East Air Forces) for requesting close air support.\(^{87}\)

General Farrell’s “Suggestions for Unit Advisors” (as the Handbook in general) constituted his best effort to impart experience gained the hard way. Unfortunately, a close reading indicated some unrealistic expectations. Farrell expected advisors to be personally involved to a degree beyond the physical and intellectual capacities of even

\(^{86}\) “Suggestions for Unit Advisors,” 3, Advisor’s Handbook, 1951.

the most knowledgeable and pro-active officer. He further urged advisors to recommend procedures on matters as mundane as ammunition status reporting, weapons accountability and maintenance, sick call procedures, and oversight of supply requests and their status. These procedures are common to militaries the world over, but they are often managed by a full complement of half a dozen or so trained staff officers, not one or two officers who also have a full-time job of advising the unit commander. Furthermore, in practice these procedures ought to be based on doctrine, not an individual’s “personal observation” and initiative. Farrell’s method, though commendable perhaps in the short run, promised to retard the ROK Army’s institutional growth and development by making the Koreans hostage to the unique experience and initiative of their advisors.

The outbreak of war in June 1950 at once multiplied requirements in manpower, training, leadership, and equipment for both KMAG and the ROK Army. It also wiped out the previously built infrastructure that supported those requirements. In the initial battles the ROK Army barely held on, continually regenerating units destroyed in combat. Rapid expansion and combat attrition enervated and diluted officer leadership, training, and unit equipment. There never was time to institute a comprehensive program to fix all their interrelated problems regarding combat effectiveness. Without the guidance of the KMAG officers it is doubtful that the ROK Army would have survived tactically long enough to give the hastily recreated institutions time to work effectively. To KMAG’s credit, individual advisors performed their duties as best as they could, given the fluid tactical situation and the small degree of supervision from KMAG headquarters. Of necessity, individual initiative and judgment took the place of a KMAG “Standard Operating Procedure,” and, as in the case of the RTC, these advisors had a profound – though disjointed – effect on the institutional health of the ROKA. It remained for KMAG to evolve into a stable advisory organization with command support

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89 Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 152.
to address expansion, unit training, leadership, and organizational improvements. Only
then would ROK units overcome their reputation for erratic performance by standing up
to their enemies on the battlefield.

**The Fifth Offensive – April 1951**

At the conclusion of Operation RIPPER, Eighth Army paused triumphantly across
the peninsula. The triumph, however, was rocked on 11 April when President Truman
properly relieved General MacArthur for insubordination. Ridgway replaced MacArthur
as Commander in Chief, Far East Command and United Nations Command, and
Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet, then commanding the U.S. Second Army in the
continental United States, received the Eighth Army command.\(^90\)

Van Fleet was a distinguished soldier with a solid combat record, but he declined
two opportunities to attend the U.S. Army’s prestigious Command and General Staff
College, which placed him behind his more famous peers. A member of the West Point
class of 1915 (the class “the stars fell on”), Van Fleet commanded a machine gun
battalion in France during the First World War, then faded into relative obscurity in the
1920s and 30s. In fact, Van Fleet was still a colonel when the United States entered the
Second World War.\(^91\) He commanded the 8\(^{th}\) Infantry Regiment (4\(^{th}\) Infantry Division) at
Utah Beach on D-Day and earned recognition in the capture of Cherbourg. Rank then
came fast as he commanded a division and a corps before Germany’s surrender in May
1945.

While Van Fleet’s wartime duties prepared him well for command of Eighth
Army, his post-war assignments had the greater influence on Van Fleet’s future role as
“foster father” of the Korean Army. In 1948 he assumed command of the U.S. Military

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\(^91\) Van Fleet’s career path during the interwar years was unusual – no attendance at the Command and General Staff College and multiple tours of duty (two at Florida State University where he taught ROTC and coached football) that took him out of the mainstream army – and responsible for his slow climb up the ranks compared to his classmates.
Advisory and Planning Group in Greece, a nation then fighting a Communist inspired civil war. Van Fleet worked hard to build the Greek national army into a competent military force. He saw that his raw material – the Greek soldier – was proud and individually brave, but he lacked training, leadership, governmental support, and a vision for victory. Van Fleet believed that if the Greeks had the will to win, he could provide them modern equipment and training to be victorious. In this task he was successful; by 1949, the insurgency faded away in the face of a resurgent and competent army. In 1950, Van Fleet assumed a similar role as commander of the U.S. Second Army, Fort Meade, Maryland, supervising army training installations east of the Mississippi River.\textsuperscript{92}

Reflecting on his years of military service, Van Fleet believed in a philosophy he called “the will to win,” and when he arrived in Korea on 14 April, he intended to infuse this will to win into his soldiers, American and Korean alike.\textsuperscript{93} Van Fleet’s stature among Koreans remains great to this day. He deserves the title of a Great Captain, not only for what he did for the Eighth Army during the nearly two years that he led it (he was its longest serving wartime commander), but also for what he did for the ROKA. Under his guidance and patronage, the ROKA became a force to be reckoned with – strong, confident, and resilient. Van Fleet would write the satisfactory ending to the Korean War in the summer of 1951, in the aftermath of the Communists’ greatest offensive to that date.

The Chinese Spring, or Fifth, Offensive burst upon Van Fleet’s tentatively advancing forces on the night of 22-23 April. Van Fleet immediately determined to hold Seoul and the defensible terrain along an imaginary line known as “KANSAS” to give the Communists a beating they would not soon forget.\textsuperscript{94} Nonetheless, Eighth Army units had to give ground to the attacking Chinese, particularly along the Imjin River north of


\textsuperscript{93} Paul F. Braim, \textit{The Will to Win} (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 48, 156-64, 239; Mossman, \textit{Ebb and Flow}, 368. Van Fleet spent a great deal of time with senior ROK and KMAG officers in conferences or on inspection tours of combat units and training installations; CG Journals, Van Fleet Papers.

Seoul, but overwhelming firepower and gritty defense blunted the most dangerous Chinese drives to recapture the southern capital. The ROK 1st Division lived up to all expectations and fought like an American division along Line GOLDEN, a mere handful of miles north of Seoul. Though the division gave ground under steady pressure, it maintained its cohesion, inflicted horrendous casualties on the enemy, and never allowed the envelopment the western flank of the U.S. I Corps.95

The ROK 6th Division, on the other hand, single-handedly jeopardized Van Fleet’s possession of Line KANSAS and threatened to expose the U.S. I Corps to envelopment from the east. This division, experienced and reasonably well equipped, broke in a wave of panic and practically disintegrated in the face of a secondary attack. The Battle of Sachang-ri gave Van Fleet a clear picture not only of the state of the ROKA, but of the ROKA’s importance to the welfare of Eighth Army as well.

The division’s commander, Brigadier General Chang Do-yong, received information indicating an imminent Chinese attack from the vicinity of the strategic town of Kumhwa. At 1600 hours he ordered his advancing regiments to halt, prepare defensive positions, and secure their flanks with the U.S. 24th Division to the west and the U.S. 1st Marine Division to the east.96 The Korean troops were physically exhausted and due to the terrain, the lateness of the hour, or just plain incompetence, the regiments failed to tie in to their adjacent units and cover gaps on the exposed flanks, and no one apparently bothered to check to see if it had been done. An hour later Chinese infantry began infiltrating the gaps between the battalions and firing at ROK units from the rear. Knowing that the Chinese had blocked southward routes of withdrawal, the forward battalions panicked and tried to find their way south. However, this movement was without control or coordination, and it rapidly degenerated into a rout. The retreating Koreans overran their own reserve, 7th Regiment, which had been placed too close to the

96 Ibid., 629.
front line and immediately joined the retreat. The pursuing Chinese then overran the ROK 27th Artillery Battalion and Company C of the U.S. 2nd Chemical Mortar Battalion, which had taken up positions behind the reserve regiment.97

The next day, Lieutenant General William M. Hoge, the U.S. IX Corps commander, ordered Chang to reorganize his division and defend along Line KANSAS, just south of Sachang-ri. Chang and his staff eventually mustered about 2,500 men ten miles south of his original positions. This line held until dusk when the Chinese penetrated yet again. This time there was no effort to resist. The division simply melted away and abandoned all of its heavy equipment and much of its basic weaponry as well.98

U.S. equipment losses as a result of the Korean collapse included thirteen 4.2” mortars and a large number of radios and vehicles.99 The roads (Highway 3A and 17) to Seoul were open. The Chinese continued their offensive south and west along Highway 17 with their east flank anchored on the Pukhan River. Fortunately, the British 27th Brigade in corps reserve, had dug in at Kapyong, directly south of the Chinese breakthrough. After three days of fighting, the British blunted the Chinese drive and eliminated the threat to Seoul from the east.100 The danger had been contained for the time being, and the damage apparently repaired as Van Fleet steeled the Eighth Army for follow-on attacks (figure 5.1).

97 Ibid., 630.
98 The ROK 6th Division’s equipment loss was immense: 14 howitzers (75 and 105 mm), 2,352 M-1 rifles, 852 carbines, 88 machine guns, 45 pistols, 42 mortars (60 and 81 mm), and 86 trucks; Message IXCCG 76, Memorandum for Commanding General, EUSAK, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.
100 Ibid., 633-35; Mossman, Ebb and Flow, 382-84.
Command reaction to Sachang-ri was swift. Hoge wrote Van Fleet detailing the “rout and dissolution of the [Korean] regiments,” which was particularly galling because the intelligence information at the time indicated that the Chinese had not attacked in great strength on 22 April. After another night of confusion, the ROK 6th Division reported only 3,000 effectives and the loss of most of its equipment. Hoge’s opinion was that the collapse of every unit from squad to regiment reflected a complete lack of leadership and control “on the part of all grades of officers and non-commissioned

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101 Hoge cited the fact that two British battalions sufficed to block the same Chinese attack that blew apart the 6th Division.
The specific failing was that officers failed to assert their command responsibilities in the face of excited rumor that turned to hysteria at the thought of a Chinese encirclement. Hoge recommended that all ROK officers receive thorough indoctrination in “the basic principle that with leadership goes responsibility [and] they are responsible for their men . . . [including] the training, discipline, and well-being of their men.”

Hoge officially reprimanded Chang and his division on 28 April. He castigated the 7th Regiment for failing to attack as ordered, an attack that Hoge felt would have sufficed to restore the situation. He placed blame squarely on the shoulders of the division commander along with the regimental and battalion commanders for failing to stem the hysteria and to exert aggressive leadership. This failure caused the loss of control and discipline in the face of the enemy. Hoge concluded his letter by noting with disappointment that the 6th Division had never before failed. In his opinion, only through future valor on the battlefield could the division “blot out the memory of this disgraceful occasion.”

At Ridgway’s direction, Van Fleet took the matter of the ROKA’s continuing leadership and fighting weaknesses to President Rhee. Van Fleet felt he had to dispel certain assumptions ascendant in President Rhee’s mind, namely that manpower equaled fighting power. Noting that President Rhee had presented the ROK Army to General MacArthur during the early days of the war for him to do with it as he saw fit, in early May Van Fleet symbolically returned the army to President Rhee. Van Fleet bluntly told him that what the ROK Army needed most was not more soldiers, but competent leadership. “They don’t have it, as is clearly evidenced by repeated battle failures.” Van Fleet emphasized that the responsibility for building a professional army belonged to

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102 Msg IXCCG 76, Van Fleet Papers.

103 Ibid.

104 Lieutenant General William M. Hoge to Brigadier General Chang Do Yong, 28 April 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.

President Rhee and his government. Finally, Van Fleet underscored his reluctance to furnish any more valuable equipment and weapons to the ROK until the Koreans demonstrated leadership and training worthy of that support.  

Van Fleet later recorded, “President Rhee accepted full responsibility. From that day on, the ROK Army owed its allegiance to its own people and country – as it should – and not to the U.S. Eighth Army.” The ROK 6th Division did in fact live up to Van Fleet’s expectation during intense fighting against elements of three Chinese divisions in May. He did not spare praise for a division he was confident could be a model for the remainder of the ROKA. After the war he reflected, “After that [the Sachang-ri incident] I never had a better, more dependable division in all my command.”

Van Fleet’s personal diplomacy with Rhee could not, however, constitute the full solution to his ROKA problem. Leader commitment surely was imperative to maintain morale and battle cohesion, but leader competence was also in question. The 6th Division had been caught in a disadvantageous tactical position before the Chinese assault began. Although little time was available to prepare for a defensive battle, the division and regimental commanders neglected to secure even a basic defensive posture, which would have included a forward outpost line to provide intelligence about the enemy. Against the advice of the KMAG advisors, the reserve regiment was positioned too close to, and directly behind, one of the forward regiments. Such a disposition guaranteed difficulties in command and control with two different units occupying the same space while trying to fight an enemy skilled in night movement and fighting. To the trained observer, it was clear that the Koreans had not yet mastered basic tactics.

By American standards, ROK officers lacked initiative and capability in basic military skills. Rapid expansion had propelled unprepared officers to high rank and

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106 Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet to Ambassador John J. Muccio, 3 May 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.

107 Van Fleet, “25 Divisions,” 7. The ROKA, however, remained under the operational control of Eighth Army.

108 Ibid.

109 Mossman, Ebb and Flow, 382.
positions of responsibility in which their inexperience severely hampered their units’ effectiveness. In terms of small unit tactics, officers lacked aggressiveness in attack and were lackadaisical occupying and organizing defensive positions, often omitting to build protected fighting positions, emplace obstacles, and clear fields of fire. Ignorance of “the mechanics of troop leadership and control” and an inability to maintain lateral contact with sister units compromised the ability of Korean units to withstand enemy attacks. Artillery officers also suffered from similar gaps in their professional knowledge. Even if the Koreans were technically competent, they lacked tactical sense, and often failed to establish communications, disseminate fire plans, and maintain proper fire control and discipline both in attack and defense. What was worse, no mechanism existed to provide officers with the technical education and a chance to practice tactical proficiency before being thrust into the crucible of battle.

Another problem which had adversely affected the leadership of the ROKA’s combat units was the frequency of rotation among senior Korean officers. Korean officer tended to form their strongest loyalties to their immediate superiors, which may explain why President Rhee, who did not trust many of his senior officers, particularly those with Japanese service records, directed command changes at the most inappropriate times. Commanders often had to fight battles on unfamiliar terrain with unfamiliar subordinates and without appreciating the strengths and weaknesses of their units. Frequent command rotations during the war’s first year made ROK units less aggressive and more fragile than they would be in the last year of the war.

Although KMAG officers could show their counterparts how to do many of the technical functions required in battle – under pressure of time, personal danger, and fatigue – the prospects were overwhelming for one or two officers to manage. The Koreans had to learn for themselves how to fight. Relying on “minimal essentials” to create leaders and units was no longer adequate. The inevitable failure of stop-gap measures imposed by the political, military, and economic conditions in South Korea was

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clear only in retrospect. General Ridgway wrote of the ROK Army, “It was not willingness to fight or courage in battle that was lacking on the ROK side, so much as intensive training and good leadership.” Leadership and training remained core problems up to the end of the war.

It is little wonder then that the ROK divisions – smaller, overextended, anemic, and untrained – were less threatening to the enemy than the American ones. The Korean divisions were expected to hold as much ground with half the manpower complement and less than one-third the firepower of their American counterparts. Therefore, it should not have been too surprising that Korean units folded when pressed. The Koreans lacked confidence, competence, and coherence, which made the ROKA Van Fleet’s problem. The failure of the 6th Division at the Battle of Sachang-ri was simply symptomatic of his larger problem with the ROKA, and it was just a prelude to even greater catastrophes.

**Getting Worse before Getting Better – May 1951**

Van Fleet soon had to put aside his abstract thinking about KMAG and ROKA to focus again on saving Eighth Army. Van Fleet figured that the Chinese would renew their offensive in May, but he guessed wrongly that the main blow would land on the western sector. Instead, the Chinese transferred the bulk of their forces to launch a Second Phase of their Fifth Offensive in the east, away from the firepower of the American divisions. Instead of striking along the obvious routes to Seoul, namely the Uijongbu, Pukhan River, and the Chunchon-Hongchon corridors, the enemy massed against the central and eastern sector, held by six ROK divisions on line, organized into two corps. Whereas Van Fleet felt that the rough terrain would shore up the Korean defense, the Chinese saw the Eighth Army disposition as an opportunity. The Chinese

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114 Lieutenant General Edward “Ned” Almond, commander of the U.S. X Corps, corroborated many of Hoge’s and Van Fleet’s impressions with his after action review of the ROK 5th and 7th Divisions, which were assigned to the X Corps. Almond cited poor leadership, inadequate communications and developed methods of troop control, and an absence of a general feeling or “will to fight.” Headquarters, X Corps, Operations of the ROK Forces 22 – 27 April 1951, AG File 370.1951, RG 554.

decided to attack the salient created by the ROK divisions and thereby achieve a penetration that would result in the isolation of the ROK I Corps to the east and the envelopment of the U.S. X Corps to the west (figure 5.2).  

The Chinese assault began on the evening of 16 May and this time underscored on a huge scale the poor condition of the Korean divisions. They were no match for the Chinese’s favored tactics of brief artillery bombardments, nighttime infantry assault, and relentless exploitation of success. The Chinese plan was simple: create multiple penetrations, cut the Korean line of communication between Omachi and Hyon-ri, and force the ROK units to fall back or risk destruction by encirclement. In execution, the disposition and reaction of the ROK soldiers and units played to all the Chinese strengths in the attack: surprise, infiltration, quick assaults, and fluid action. From the ROK 5th Division (part of U.S. X Corps) on the western-most sector under attack to the ROK 3rd Division on the eastern flank of the ROK III Corps, the story was essentially the same. The collapse of one unit inevitably uncovered the line of retreat of a neighboring unit, prompting a massive and wholesale rout that did not abate until a new line formed nearly forty miles to the south. Soldiers abandoned weapons and officers removed insignia of rank. Where units did maintain some cohesion, they bunched up into clusters, which offered minimal resistance that the Chinese easily bypassed.

The final act in this tragic operational play occurred in the afternoon of 17 May when the ROK III Corps commander, Major General Yu Jai-hung, ordered his two divisions to attack and break through the Chinese block at Omachi, which one battalion of Chinese infantry defended. The attack was a complete failure. The corps

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116 Clay Blair added that the Chinese objective was to isolate Seoul and to drive as far south as Taegu. It is hard to believe, though, looking at the map, that the Chinese really maintained such an extravagant objective. It is more likely that they wanted to rupture the front enough to compel the withdrawal of UN forces north of the Han River; Blair, Forgotten War, 871.

117 Ridgway, Korean War, 161, 174.


commander and his staff acted as if on a simple outing. They made no effort to provide additional fire support, exercise personal leadership, or coordinate and control the actual attack.\(^{120}\) General Yu believed that the divisions’ two artillery battalions would suffice to dislodge the enemy, and he returned to his headquarters after putting the 3\(^{rd}\) Division commander in charge of a corps-level operation. The result was predictable. The lead regiment halted at the first sign of Chinese resistance, causing the ROK 3\(^{rd}\) Division commander to call off the whole attack rather than attempt to maneuver other units or request fire support to break through the enemy blocking force. By 0300 hours on 18 May, the whole corps was retreating in disarray, pursued by small Chinese units. In

\(^{120}\) It is unfortunately not known what advice, if any, KMAG offered to the corps commander and his staff. It would appear, from the results of their efforts that if advice was given, the Koreans were unwilling or incapable of carrying out KMAG’s suggestions.
contrast, U.S. units faced envelopment and mass assault better than they ever had, and they were primarily responsible for halting the Chinese advance against the U.S. X Corps’s exposed flank.\textsuperscript{121}

Both Ridgway and Van Fleet concluded that the Korean officer corps simply was not up to the challenge of modern warfare. Yet, the total collapse of the ROK III Corps was especially frustrating for Van Fleet.\textsuperscript{122} He had regained some confidence in the Korean units that successfully attacked during the first two weeks of May to regain Line KANSAS, and had publicly praised the ROK’s fighting abilities.\textsuperscript{123} However, the failure of the entire structure of the South Korean Army had completely changed the calculus that Van Fleet used to figure Eighth Army’s combat capability. If an entire corps, defending a narrow sector in highly defensible terrain, was incapable of organized resistance, what hope did he have for his ally? Notwithstanding some strong performances by select ROK units, expansion of the Korean Army without proper training of leaders and units had produced not an army but a wet reed. An official history summarized the situation:

There were no commanding officers to control the situation nor was it controllable, for those who escaped enemy pursuit and assembled in total disorder in the Pangdae-san area were unable to identify their own assigned units . . . the ROK 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 5\textsuperscript{th}, 7\textsuperscript{th}, and 9\textsuperscript{th} Divisions responsible for about 40 kilometers of the frontline . . . were paralyzed due to [their] inability to command and control, and were penetrated on the main line of resistance, thus unable to exercise their combat capabilities. Incapable of overcoming the enemy’s night infiltration attacks, [and] overwhelmed by the enemy’s superiority in manpower, and unable to dislodge the enemy and recapture Omach’i, the ROK III Corps finally [was] encircled by the enemy.\textsuperscript{124}


\textsuperscript{122} Entry 20 May 1951, Van Fleet Journals, Van Fleet Papers.

\textsuperscript{123} Van Fleet made a special effort to single out these actions to the ROK Chief of Staff, General Chung Il-kwon, Van Fleet to Chung Il-kwon, 13 May 1951, Alphabetical Correspondence, Box 68/13, Van Fleet Papers.

\textsuperscript{124} KIMH, KW, vol. 2, 682.
The Korean officers could not effectively control fire, movement, or morale. More than a lack of modern equipment or firepower, this underlying weakness in command and officer leadership was responsible for the catastrophic results at Hyon-ri.

The experience of the ROK III Corps prompted a thorough reconsideration of the level of Eighth Army commitment necessary to reform Korean combat units and to provide the levels of combat support required by the military situation. As a first step, Van Fleet felt it necessary to dissolve the ROK III Corps and turn over all ROK divisions (except for those in the ROK I Corps in the east) to American command. He further limited the functions of the ROK Army staff to manpower induction, training, and administration. It was a bitter pill for all Koreans to swallow, but it sent a strong signal that the Korean Army would either develop its own independent military culture, competence, and identity, or it would become a permanent ward of the Americans. Van Fleet’s decision was a short-term solution, as it did not solve the problem of remaking a ROK Army capable of fielding units that could hold their own against the Chinese.

Not everyone agreed with Van Fleet’s calculations. President Rhee continued to object to American policy that restricted the size of the ROK Army. On 22 May 1951, Lieutenant General Chung, the ROKA Chief of Staff joined in the criticism by implying that the Americans unfairly expected too much from their disadvantaged ally. Chung argued that it was unreasonable to expect Korean units, which did not enjoy the same amount of firepower that U.S. units did and often had to engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat due to a lack of supporting infantry weapons, not to be overwhelmed by the

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126 ROK I Corps, commanded by now Brigadier General Paik Sun-yup, remained in existence as a Korean command, subordinate to Eighth Army. Had this organization also failed in May, it would have been a different story. Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom*, 156-57.

127 Trip of Commander-in-Chief to Korea, 19-20 May, Historical Record, February – October 1951, Box 22 Korean War, Historical Record, 1950-52. In March 1951, Rhee made a public statement that if the UNC would train, equip, and integrate an additional 500,000 Koreans into the army, then the ROKA would be in a position to defend, by itself, even the Manchurian border; Office of the President Press Release, 24 March 1951, M-R Korean War Correspondence, Box 19 CINCFE Correspondence, January 1951 – May 1952, Ridgway Papers.
Communist assaults. Chung’s implied conclusion was that American reluctance to support its ally, not any shortcoming of the Korean Army, was to blame for the debacle of the ROK III Corps.

Ridgway, who tenaciously clung to his views about the ROKA’s deficiencies, demanded Van Fleet either confirm or refute these allegations, known as “Chung’s Blast.” Van Fleet turned the inquiry to KMAG. General Farrell’s response highlighted themes of pre-war training decisions, the ill-effects of rapid wartime expansion, and limited tactical capability. Farrell noted that ROK units were weak in organic artillery (one battalion with a mixture of obsolescent 105 mm howitzers and even less useful 75 mm guns), and they usually had to rely on fire support from neighboring U.S. units when it was available, which in the case of the ROK III Corps it generally was not. KMAG dismissed the notion that simply increasing the amount of artillery and other heavy weapons available would have any effect. The Koreans had a poor track record with the one battalion they had: “ROK Divisions have repeatedly demonstrated their inability to employ effectively or protect additional fire support weapons of their own.” This same argument applied against assigning tank units to ROK divisions.

Farrell also admitted that ROK units and their officers in particular simply never received the training required to make use of supporting firepower assets in battle. He noted that prior to the war no Korean unit had completed training above the battalion level or had exercised artillery tactics in support of infantry movement of combat. The rapid expansion of the ROK armed forces to fill casualties and reconstitute units in the

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128 FECOM MSG Z16025 to EUSAK, 24 May 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet papers.

129 On 23 May, Ridgway wrote Van Fleet an EYES ONLY message asking the latter to consider whether or not Chung “was capable of providing that forceful, dynamic leadership which the situation imperatively demands. It may be that some other individual with more iron in his soul, even though less professionally qualified otherwise, could and would revitalize ROKA and inspire it to a battlefield performance it has so far failed to display.” Van Fleet was not yet ready to cast Chung aside, and he played a key role to send Chung to Fort Leavenworth’s Command and General Staff College (Chung took a rank reduction to Colonel) to learn advanced concepts of division and corps operations. Upon Chung’s return, Van Fleet “rehabilitated” him by giving him a division command and subsequently command of a ROK corps. Ridgway to Van Fleet, 23 May 1951, Special File, April 1951 – January 1952, Box 20 Korean War, Special File, December 1950 – May 1952, Ridgway Papers; Correspondence – Alphabetical, Chung Il-kwon, 68/13 Van Fleet Papers.

130 KMAG to EUSAK, 25 May 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.
late summer 1950 through the winter of 1951 slighted unit training and produced units full of unskilled soldiers led by inexperienced, low grade, and low potential leaders. Farrell concluded his review of the ROK Army’s performance and capability by indicating that in its current condition not much ought to have been expected from ROKA. 131

This was a shocking admission of failure on the part of KMAG, and Van Fleet was smart enough to recognize that his problem was not solely with the Koreans – it was with KMAG, specifically with its leadership. KMAG had failed to adapt its current responsibilities with its original mandate. From Van Fleet’s perspective, KMAG’s criticism of the ROKA was water under the bridge. KMAG needed to face the current reality, not brood over past neglect. Van Fleet was not yet prepared to take drastic action against KMAG so he dealt with the superficial elements of Chung’s Blast.

In his reply to Ridgway, Van Fleet allowed that Chung was generally correct in identifying the Chinese propensity to attack Korean divisions and in his assessment of the basic reasons for Korean failure in battle. However, he refused to allow the Koreans to shift the blame. He noted that many Eighth Army units also had to fight the Chinese at a tactical or numerical disadvantage. In his view, it was fighting spirit, more than firepower and manpower, that the Korean units lacked. His experience in Greece told him that to develop properly an effective combat force was a long term and multi-faceted project. 132 It would take more than simply adding extra artillery battalions or another hundred thousand men to the ROKA’s rolls.

Van Fleet’s response to Ridgway was crucial for what it implied – nothing less than a full reformation of the ROKA’s training, organization, and leadership would suffice. Farrell had emphasized that the tactical situation had not permitted an extensive unit training program to address the ROKA’s technical and tactical deficiencies, and some progress had been made in establishing army schools and replacement training. 133

131 Ibid.
132 CG EUSAK (Van Fleet) to CINCFE (Ridgway), 25 May 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.
133 Ibid.
In other words, the problems were not insoluble, if ROKA could get a break in action to catch its breath long enough to retrain its units and reform its institutional structure. Van Fleet needed only to find that break and find the man who could turn both KMAG and the ROKA around.

Looking to the Future, June-July 1951

ROKA’s survival into the summer of 1951 put it in a position for Van Fleet to make it strategically relevant to Eighth Army. The fall-out from Chung’s Blast turned scrutiny away from purely technical matters of organization and equipment and directed it towards the identification and acknowledgment of more fundamental problems. Consequently, under Ridgway’s guidance, Van Fleet accepted the responsibility to implement a new policy toward the Koreans.\(^{134}\) Ridgway and Van Fleet understood the issues involved; to these battle-hardened soldiers they were quite obvious. It was the solution to these problems that required Van Fleet’s experienced judgment to avoid the pitfalls of the 1945-1950 experience. The ROKA needed an expansion plan based on a solid foundation of reform: officer training and education, individual and unit tactical training, and increased combat power. It could be done; all Van Fleet needed was time, space, and the means to remake the Korean Army.\(^{135}\)

During the spring of 1951, American policy makers in Washington articulated their options for bringing the Korean conflict to a satisfactory conclusion in a document known as NSC 48/5. This document formally recognized that the entry of Chinese Communist forces into the Korean conflict made a military solution to the political question of Korean unification a pipe dream, and it argued for a new policy towards the war, a key component of which was a negotiated settlement and the eventual disengagement of the U.S. from its military commitment in Korea. Regarding the ROK

\(^{134}\) In late April, Secretary of the Army Frank Pace agreed with Ridgway that the ROKA needed improved training and added, “I still think it vital that one man of outstanding competence be given the responsibility in toto for the training program.” Secretary of the Army, Frank Pace, Jr. to Ridgway, 23 April 1951, N-S CINCFE Correspondence, Box 19 CINCFE Correspondence, January 1951 – June 1952, Ridgway Papers.

Army, NSC 48/5’s most significant military provision explicitly advocated the rapid build-up of South Korean military forces in order to apportion to them a greater share of the combat burden. Specifically, the National Security Council recommended:

The United States should give special attention at all stages of the settlement of the Korean problem to the development of a strong ROK military establishment for continuation of the struggle against Communist forces (in the case of stalemate) . . . . Particular emphasis should be placed on training capable Korean officers.  

American policy had finally shifted from feeble support to a commitment to create a first class military ally, but the actual mechanism was still vaguely defined. In other words, NSC 48/5 was a good idea, not a blueprint for action.

Nevertheless, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff used NSC 48/5 almost verbatim as the basis for their operational directive to General Ridgway, which Ridgway passed on to Van Fleet.  The Chiefs instructed Ridgway as the Commander in Chief of the United Nations Command to conduct operations to repel aggression and to restore peace and security to the Republic of Korea. Tactical operations were to “inflict the maximum personnel and material losses” on the Communist forces while seeking to preserve UN combat strength and avoid casualties. His military objective now was “to create conditions favorable to a [political] settlement of the Korean conflict.”

The final caveat to Ridgway’s instructions addressed the ROK Army. Whatever settlement resulted, Ridgway was to ensure that it would “permit the building of sufficient ROK military power to deter or repel a renewed North Korean aggression (emphasis added).” Although this instruction only implied future action, the Chiefs later made the issue of ROK Army expansion more immediate: “It is the policy of the United States to develop dependable ROK military units as rapidly as possible and in sufficient


138 Ibid.
strength eventually to assume the major part of the burden of the UN forces in Korea.”

A strong ROKA was now an operational objective for Ridgway’s command, which also made it a pre-requisite for any armistice agreement terminating hostilities in Korea. It was under this authority that Ridgway recast his views concerning the ROKA. In consultation with Van Fleet he then submitted his recommendations to the Joint Chiefs regarding ROK Army reform and improvement.

A political surprise on 23 June 1951 provided Eighth Army with the gift of both time and space, although neither Ridgway nor Van Fleet immediately recognized it. Jacob Malik, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations, publicly broadcast his government’s readiness to support truce negotiations to end the war in Korea. Under Washington’s direction, Ridgway announced the UNC’s willingness to negotiate an end to the fighting. On 10 July, negotiators from both sides met at the historic capital of Kaesong to begin the tedious affair of producing a cease-fire agreement.

Although the negotiations quickly degenerated into a protracted ordeal, there was one virtue to the stalemate. While the Communist and UNC delegates talked for the remainder of 1951, little large-scale fighting occurred, and that which did was at Van Fleet’s direction. With the operational initiative from May to October 1951, Eighth Army launched a number of tactical offensives that bought space by pushing the line of contact far north of the 38th parallel (with the exception of a strip of land below the parallel in the far western sector). Both sides then dug in for a protracted and desultory war. Behind this fortified line, which shifted only slightly until the summer of 1953, Eighth Army prepared to inaugurate a full-scale reform of the Korean Army.

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139 Joint Chiefs of Staff Directive 92831, 31 May 1951, 976.

140 On 26 April 1951 the JCS had sent Ridgway a request for information, prompted by Rhee’s request to add 10 divisions to the ROK order of battle, regarding the suitability using additional Korean manpower. This request and the results of the Chinese Fifth Offensive gave Ridgway the opening to address the specific requirements of the JCS’s latest directive. Collins, War in Peacetime, 314-15; Msg CX 67484, CINCFE to DEPTAR, 23 July 1951, Subject Files, Republic of Korea – Correspondence Folder 4, 1951-1953, Box 86/1 Van Fleet Papers.

141 Kaufman, The Korean War, 190-92.
Reform of the South Korean Army began with a small step in May 1951 when Van Fleet requested the assignment of Brigadier General Cornelius E. Ryan as the Chief of KMAG. Van Fleet recognized KMAG was the right tool for the job of ROKA reform, but it had become dull from disuse. Van Fleet intended to grant Ryan wide latitude while exercising greater influence and cooperation with KMAG than his predecessors had done. The ripple effects of this decision were decisive. Ryan transformed KMAG into a first-class military training and advisory mission. Under his experienced direction, KMAG then inaugurated a series of training and organizational reforms that laid the basis for a Korean Army capable of fighting the Chinese on more equal terms.

As American military operations no longer focused on a military victory, and as the Chinese limited their offensive posture to buy time to rebuild their exhausted combat units, participants generally considered that they faced a whole new kind of war, and in a certain sense, they were correct. It is true that a war of posts – static lines of entrenched positions facing off across “no man’s land” – tended to dominate ground combat, while various air campaigns, seeking some abstract “pressure point,” fought an inconclusive battle of logistical interdiction. Even Ridgway, the aggressive former commander of Eighth Army, perceived a reordering of military objectives when he wrote, "But the negotiations were just an extension of the battlefield . . . and it was the bitter task of the soldier to impress the enemy with our ability to resist all his efforts to move the battle

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Ridgway’s view of the purpose of ground combat implies the acceptance of a new reality that war would not end in victory or in a settlement force upon the Chinese and North Koreans.

His initial expectation of a quick settlement colored Ridgway’s perceptions regarding the ground tactical situation. Van Fleet wanted to seize the initiative from the Communists and exploit Eighth Army advantages in mobility and firepower to deal the enemy a punishing blow. He made ambitious plans involving amphibious landings and limited offensives. Ridgway felt it unwise to expend lives for ground that might have to be surrendered in a cease-fire deal. Van Fleet had to settle for elbowing forward along the “Iron Triangle” and around the “Punchbowl.” Although negotiations and political concerns shackled Van Fleet and let a beaten enemy find sanctuary to lick his wounds, Van Fleet at least now had the time, space, and mandate to retrain, reorganize, and expand the ROKA’s capabilities. He wrote to Collins, “I plan to supervise the ROK Army through three principal departments of KMAG: one will be schools and basic training; another will be field training of units up to division size; and the third will be ROK Army frontline operations.”

Van Fleet’s trust in his new KMAG chief was well placed. Under Ryan’s direction and supervision, programs for Korean officer training expanded and improved; individual replacement (basic) training received parallel attention and reform. The

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2 Ridgway, Korean War, 197.

3 The Iron Triangle was a region bounded by Pyonggang to the north, Kumhwa to the south east, and Chorwon to the south west. These three towns encompassed the pivotal road network connecting the western and eastern halves of the peninsula. Eighth Army forces captured the southern apexes in the summer of 1951, which weakened the Communist’s military position considerably.


6 James A. Van Fleet to J. Lawton Collins, 13 June 1951, Correspondence – Alphabetical, Collins, J. Lawton, Box 68/17, Van Fleet Papers.
Koreans finally began producing a routine crop of competent leaders and trained soldiers at scheduled intervals. A new field training command was established in the summer of 1951 to retrain Korean divisions in modern combat skills, and it resulted in every ROK division being refitted, refilled with replacements, and retrained under realistic conditions. KMAG’s new clout with Eighth Army permitted it to acquire more experienced officers as advisors, particularly at the corps and division levels. Their influence was felt most strongly in 1952 as Chinese and Korean troops sparred in the mountains of central and eastern Korea. Ryan also developed strong relation with his counterparts, Lee Chong-chan and Paik Sun-yup, who were both reform minded and capable officers. Together, they authored the plans to make a new army.

Van Fleet was delighted with the progress of both KMAG and the ROKA from July 1951 to September 1952. In May 1951 he expressed his dismay at the ROK III Corps’s “too hasty withdrawal” and loss of much equipment, which was responsible for a massive break in Eighth Army’s battle lines. He was also not impressed with KMAG’s field operations, which in his view were inefficient and did not contribute much to Eighth Army’s combat power. By September 1952, he sang a different tune in a publicly released statement:

Much of our frontline success during the past three months can be attributed to the brilliant progress of the Army of the Republic of Korea. The ROK soldier, with new-found leadership and tutelage, developed under KMAG supervision, has been forged into a hard-fighting individual instilled with military wisdom and inspired with a will to close with the enemy.7

Both KMAG and the ROKA responded to Van Fleet’s leadership. The qualitative improvement in both organizations had profound effects on the fighting capability of Eighth Army – capabilities that would be seriously tested in the fall of 1952.

Before directing any changes to the ROKA’s training or administration, Van Fleet made perhaps the most far-reaching decision of his wartime command. Van Fleet confided to Collins that General Farrell had done a wonderful job as KMAG chief, but that he was “completely worn out and needed a change.” Collins cautiously approved Ryan to take over KMAG, although he was somewhat puzzled at Van Fleet’s selection. Van Fleet was adamant in his choice. Van Fleet needed someone he could trust, who thought like he did, and had experience doing what needed to be done. His selection for the future commanding general of KMAG was a good one, for next to Van Fleet, he was the officer most responsible for the future development of the Korean Army.\(^8\)

Cornelius Ryan was a seemingly unremarkable and overage infantry officer (he had just turned fifty-four in May), but he possessed one prime quality that Van Fleet could not do without: he was an accomplished trainer of troops. Until Ryan’s appointment as Chief of KMAG, he commanded the 101\(^{st}\) Airborne Division (Training) at Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky, which fell under Van Fleet’s Second Army. In April 1951, Ryan received a personal commendation from the U.S. Army G-3, Lieutenant General Maxwell D. Taylor for being cited by the 9\(^{th}\) Report of the U.S. Senate’s Preparedness Subcommittee on Military Indoctrination Centers. This congressional review of army training centers found Ryan’s command superior in making do with less than adequate resources. Clearly, he was the man for the job in Korea.\(^9\)

Ryan’s previous assignments as a staff officer in Europe during World War II and at various schools recommended him also as a competent manager of personnel and resources. His wartime positions included G-3 (Operations) officer for Third Army, chief of the Civil Affairs Section, and military government officer for First Army and Twelfth Army Group. He was a graduate of the Infantry School, French Tank School, and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. His training assignments ranged from

\(^8\) Collins to Van Fleet, 24 May 1951; Van Fleet to Collins, 13 June 1951, Van Fleet Papers.

\(^9\) Van Fleet received both a newspaper clipping extolling Camp Breckenridge’s organization and efficiency and a copy of Taylor’s commendation from the Eighth Army Chief of Staff. Correspondence – Alphabetical, Ryan-Ryle, Box 71/50, Van Fleet Papers.
two tours at Fort Benning, one as professor of military science and tactics, and nearly three years at Fort Bragg and Fort Campbell. Van Fleet relied on Ryan and his broad background to implement and supervise Van Fleet’s vision for the training and reorganization of a new Korean Army. Ryan had to accomplish two broad tasks: he had to put KMAG on a more solid footing within Eighth Army, and he had to make KMAG more responsive to the needs of the ROKA. KMAG’s mission to advise and assist would take on a whole new meaning under Ryan. With Van Fleet’s unqualified support, Ryan would build and train a fighting army in a remarkably short period of time.10

The structure of KMAG’s reforms rested on three pillars. First, Ryan had to bring KMAG’s organizational structure in line with Van Fleet’s new emphasis to reform the ROKA, which meant increasing KMAG’s size and reorganizing its administrative structure. Secondly, Ryan had to manage this internal reform to align KMAG’s operations more closely with those of the ROKA, and ensure that KMAG’s efforts were properly focused on the salient problems afflicting the Korean Army. Finally, Ryan had to ensure a comparable quality of advice over time and between the different advisory functions – training, administration, combat. All three functions interacted and relied on each other in a delicate balancing act. Ryan could not afford to be weak by assuming risk in any one function to shore up his other efforts. Uniform excellence was his objective.

KMAG’s shortcomings, which resulted largely from having to fight a war without a comprehensive and long term vision, were the easiest to address. He started by rationalizing KMAG’s structure to better handle functions of administration, training, and advising combat units. The addition of two deputy commanders, one to oversee the Replacement Training and Schools Command (RTSC) and one to run the Field Training Command (FTC) made Ryan’s supervisory duties more manageable, an especially important consideration as KMAG began to grow in size and scope of responsibilities.11 These officers played key roles to keep the ROKA’s progress evenly balanced and to


11 KMAG Manpower and Appraisal Report, Far East Command, February 1952, GHQ, FEC, SCAP, and UNC, RG 554, NARA II; KMAG Information Brochure, United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, 1 and Section II, January 1952, Box 90/12, Van Fleet Papers (hereafter KMAG Brochure).
prepare it for combat. Monthly update meetings between Ryan and his staff and the senior advisors from the Replacement Training Command and field units resulted in “an interchange of ideas and promote[d] mutual understanding” between KMAG headquarters and the far-flung advisors – a seemingly impossible task given KMAG’s loose structure. However, through this managerial technique Ryan remained aware and more responsive to his advisors needs while keeping the ROKA’s particular issues firmly in focus. Ryan completed the internal transform of KMAG by increasing its personnel authorization, expanding its sphere of influence with the Koreans, and focusing on the long-term prospects of ROKA institutional viability.

Ryan’s second pillar was to cement personal relationships between key KMAG personnel and their Korean counterparts. Ryan took his role seriously as the chief advisor to the ROKA Chief of Staff, and he made sure that his staff adopted this stance with their Korean counterparts (officers responsible for Personnel, Intelligence, Operations, Logistics, etc.) in the ROKA headquarters. Ryan’s aide-de-camp, Captain John B. Blount recalled that Ryan spent every day in the company of his ROK counterpart, touring the battle lines, training centers, and other installations to evaluate personally the effect of KMAG’s programs on ROK units in the field. This personal style of interaction and observation allowed Ryan to guide KMAG’s effort to address organizational and operational problems within the ROK Army. When Paik Sun-yup was the ROKA Chief of Staff (1952-1953), he worked closely with Ryan to solve many problems affecting the morale and fighting capability of Korean soldiers. Ryan’s attentiveness and ability to get things done earned KMAG prestige in the eyes of its Korean counterparts. In a related fashion, Ryan took a strong stand against ineffective officers and those who would not, or could not, find a cooperative relationship with their counterparts. He explained, “This is especially so because of our close relationship with ROKA. They judge us by the pattern we set and will rise in effectiveness only

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12 Headquarters, KMAG, Memo 29, 3 November 1951 and 34, 5 December 1951, AG File 300.5 1951 Memorandums, PMAG (1948-1949) and KMAG (1949-1953), RG 554.

13 Blount, tape recording.

14 Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom*, 211, 214, 223.
proportionately to the level we maintain.\textsuperscript{15}  Ryan’s commitment to Korean officers, his leadership by example, and personal style earned a large measure of respect from his counterparts and set a distinctly positive tone within KMAG. The result was better coordination, supervision, and advice to the ROKA’s training and combat operations.

Ryan’s third concern was to furnish tactical, technical, and administrative advice and assistance to Korean commanders and staff of tactical units.\textsuperscript{16} This was KMAG’s staple – if it could not do this, then it had no reason to exist. Because the field advisors were in the best position to make a contribution to the ROKA’s training centers and combat units, Ryan insisted on quality officers with combat experience commensurate to the level of organization they would advise. He did not care much about their background – the great majority of KMAG officers were in fact reservists – only their ability to get results. Although KMAG saw few “stars” of the Army, in many respects, their broad mixture of military and civilian experience made them more sensitive and flexible with their counterparts.\textsuperscript{17} As before, Americans held no command authority within the ROKA, but Ryan made it KMAG’s business to look after all aspects of military organization and administration, from the induction and training of soldiers, to the formation and equipping of new units, to their employment on the battlefield. With the understanding that command responsibility continued to rest upon the Koreans, Ryan and his advisors went to work with a long-term perspective and the goal to field a Korean Army capable of fighting substantially on its own merit.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} Subject Files, Ineffective Officers, 7 September 1951, Box 84/20 Van Fleet Papers.


\textsuperscript{17} Hausrath, \textit{The KMAG Advisor}, 109. There were some notable exceptions. Colonel Richard G. Stilwell (USMA 1938) was the senior advisor to the ROK I Corps. He later rose to four-star rank and command of the United Nations Command in Korea from 1973-76.

\textsuperscript{18} In the aftermath of the April debacle, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs suggested that American officers perhaps should command Korean elements. Both Ridgway and Van Fleet squashed the idea, basing their objection on the grounds that such an arrangement would compromise ROK sovereignty by transferring sensitive aspects of command authority, such as discipline, to U.S. officers. Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 160; Collins, \textit{War in Peacetime}, 314; DA 91940, DEPTAR to CINCFE, 23 May 51, ROK Correspondence #1-9, Box 86/4 Van Fleet Papers.
To help KMAG with its ambitious objectives, Van Fleet supported Ryan’s efforts to expand its personnel complement. When Ryan arrived in Korea, KMAG had 920 officers and men assigned to it. By September 1951, Ryan supervised 1,308 advisors. This number increased yet again until KMAG had a strength of 1,812 by January 1952.¹⁹ For the first time in its organizational existence, the KMAG chief had enough manpower to spread between KMAG’s training and combat advisory responsibilities. Ryan was not satisfied with just more men, however. He knew that he needed certain kinds of officers and NCOs, who could make the immediate impression necessary to assure success. Van Fleet was serious about KMAG’s reforms and he supported Ryan’s efforts to get veteran American officers and NCOs, particularly those who had served successfully at battalion and regimental levels in Korea, as advisors and trainers. Van Fleet committed to give KMAG priority for officers who were “superior, experienced infantry officers with the tact and personality requisite for dealing with Koreans and the enthusiasm and drive necessary to carry out very difficult assignments.”²⁰

The reassignment of successful regiment and battalion commanders to non-command billets in KMAG was understandably unpopular with many officers involved. In some cases, KMAG could act heavy handedly as officers found themselves peremptorily diverted from “ordinary” unit assignments to “special” assignments as KMAG advisors, especially in the new ROK training establishments. One officer, a colonel, was decidedly not impressed with his KMAG levy. He was told that he had been diverted to "a more important job than the one scheduled" for him.²¹ Thinking what could be more important than deputy assistant division commander, he reluctantly, assumed his post as the chief of Field Training Command, where he supervised the

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¹⁹ Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 161; Eighth Army, Special Problems, 31.


retraining of Korean regiments and divisions. The success of this command did more to increase the military position of Eighth Army than anything he could have done as an assistant division commander.

Sometimes advisors were in a position to have even more immediate impacts on the battlefield. Colonel Richard G. Stilwell commanded a regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division for five months when he received word that he was being reassigned as the senior advisor to the ROK I Corps. When he asked if the Eighth Army commander might possibly change his mind, he was informed “that would be impossible.” Stilwell reported to the ROK I Corps headquarters and soon found it necessary to be more personally involved in the corps’s operations than the title of advisor would suggest. The experience proved valuable not only for Stilwell, who virtually commanded a corps as a colonel, but his Korean counterparts learned from his aggressive leadership style and personal example.  

As the Korean army passed through its critical phase of reformation, it was indeed fortunate that Ryan had Van Fleet’s unconditional support to get the right men to accomplish the mission of making ROKA a first class fighting organization.  

Blount recalled an incident that epitomized KMAG’s new clout, which occurred shortly after Ryan’s arrival.  

Ryan’s recently arrived chief of staff, Colonel Dick Mayo, an artillery officer, was talking on the phone to an Eighth Army staff officer, who had not realized the tectonic shift that had taken place between Eighth Army and KMAG.  

According to Blount, Mayo said, “Wait a minute, do you know who you’re talking to? You’re talking to Colonel Mayo and I’m the chief of staff of KMAG and I want this done and I want it just done this way, and I want it done now. Do you understand?” General Ryan, who overheard Mayo’s side of the conversation, reacted by saying, “Looks like we’re on the right road.” Blount calls this episode symptomatic of KMAG’s turnaround.

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22 Blount, tape recording. General Maxwell Taylor, who replaced Van Fleet early in 1953, continued to support KMAG’s personnel requirements; General Richard G. Stilwell, Senior Officer Oral History Program, 1979, 98-101, USAMHI.

23 Ryan assumed command of KMAG on 10 July 1951; U.S. Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, General Orders Number 13, 10 July 1951, AG File 300.4 1951, RG 554.
With quality officers at the headquarters, the quality of advisors in the field also improved and resulted in a corresponding improvement to ROKA’s institutional and combat effectiveness.\(^{24}\)

Although not directly influencing the advisory mission with the ROKA, Ryan did work hard to build a solid relationship with Eighth Army and maintain a strong link between it and the ROKA. From the early days of the conventional conflict, KMAG had the implied mission to act as a liaison between the Eighth Army commander and his staff, and the ROK Army headquarters. For good reasons Van Fleet and the American corps commanders continued to rely on KMAG advisors to corroborate ROKA field reports, establish unit locations, and generally ensure that Korean units followed corps and army directives. Ryan always accompanied Van Fleet when he visited Korean command posts and units, or when he met with the ROKA chief of staff. As a result, Van Fleet was far more attuned to undercurrents within the Korean Army and was more familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of its leaders than either of his predecessors.

In a reciprocal fashion, Ryan and his advisors remained sensitive to the requirements of the American commanders and did much to smooth relations between them and the Koreans. Some friction inevitably occurred, but overall, the Americans got used to working with and through their KMAG elements.\(^{25}\)

Having put KMAG on the right road, Ryan’s focus turned to the ROKA. In light of the Koreans’ recent combat experience, Van Fleet determined to overhaul their sense of confidence and fighting spirit; he wanted to give them “the will to win.” Both Van Fleet’s experience in Greece and elsewhere indicated that the key to this goal could be found in improved officer leadership and unit training.\(^{26}\) The success of these reforms laid the foundation for organization changes and expansion that resulted in greater firepower being placed in the hands of Korean commanders.

\(^{24}\) Blount, tape recording.

\(^{25}\) See for example Van Fleet’s visit to the ROK II Corps, entry 9 August 1952, Van Fleet Journal, Van Fleet Papers.

**Officer Training – Keystone for an Army at War**

Ryan wanted officer training focused on a coherently structured doctrine-oriented program run as much as possible by Korean officers. Ryan believed that U.S. doctrine and training methods were exportable, and what he saw in Korea convinced him that ROK officers and soldiers, though lacking in formal western style education, had the aptitude to learn, if someone could show them how. Consequently, he pushed to have Korean instructors present instruction and conduct training whenever possible, under the supervision and guidance of a KMAG advisor. Advisors remained on hand to help with technical issues such as adapting programs of instruction (POI) from those used by U.S. training installations to that which was generally more pragmatic and useful in Korea. These new POIs left more time for practical exercise under supervision and less time for lectures or demonstration training. Koreans continued to command at all military schools and training centers, and whether stationed behind the lines for unit retraining or commanding a unit at a training facility, they were responsible for the training and discipline of their men. Although these officers may not have been formal students at any school, they were still learning valuable lessons under the careful tutelage of an experienced advisor of how to exercise basic command functions: delegation, care for subordinates, and techniques to deal with inevitable friction and mistakes. A second advantage was that KMAG could identify and weed out incompetent officers early, before they had a chance to make serious errors in combat.

KMAG’s revision of officer training proceeded along three paths: new officer training, field grade officer advanced training, and officer exchanges to U.S. military

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27 Ridgway told Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, “…no Army is better than its leaders.” Ridgway to Pace, 5 May 1951, Ridgway Papers. See also Caufield and Elton interview, 20, *op cit.*


29 Ibid., 45.

30 Ibid., 53.

31 Ibid., 47.
New officer training was the most immediate need for the ROK Army, both for providing proficient leadership at lower levels and for setting the foundation for all other officer training programs. The demand for junior officers remained high throughout the war, but the need was especially acute during the negotiations period. Patrolling, ambushes, and small unit actions placed a premium on skills such as initiative, combat instinct, fire planning and control, and communications. As a result, junior officer training had to be both extensive and specifically tailored to conditions at the front.

Previous efforts to acquire and train officers had not lived up to these demanding standards. The 4,600 graduates of the Officer Training School/Korea Military Academy (OTS/KMA) received some formal military training education, but the curriculum never was robust enough to train officers as wartime leaders. Ryan and his staff, like their predecessors, understood that the trade secret was to produce leaders not only in a sufficient quantity but also at a sufficient level of quality. To give Korean officers an American military outlook and culture, Ryan determined to mimic the structure and methods of American officer candidate training. In addition to completion of basic soldier training, all officer candidates had to attend an Officer Candidate School (OCS) lasting twelve weeks, followed by a twelve to sixteen week branch-specific basic course. Such a program would not only streamline and improve the efficiency of training, it would produce officers more prepared to lead platoons and companies in battle. As these officers matured into higher ranks, their educational base would help them operate more comfortably as an integral member of the Eighth Army, leveraging American logistics, artillery, and close air support in battle.

Selection procedures for new officers were improved and standardized for officer candidates. Each candidate had to have at least sixty days of military training, pass a

32 KMAG also played a role to re-establish the Korean Military Academy – Van Fleet’s pet project – but its graduates had no effect on the ROKA prior to the Armistice.

33 The Officer Training School was renamed the Korea Military Academy in September 1948, Huh, “Bulwark,” 149. For the state and duration of training, Huh, “Bulwark,” 148–49, 151; Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 63–64.

34 See Hausrath, Problems, Appendix E.
written entrance exam, be of an appropriate age and education level (six years of middle school), and be in good health. Conceptually, the entire process to become an officer resembled a giant sink works. To begin, promising candidates from field units, Army Service Units (ASU), or the Replacement Training Center (RTC) reported to the Infantry School (TIS) at the Korean Army Training Center, Kwangju, for a ten to fourteen-week OCS. There they received instruction in basic leadership subjects such as employment of infantry weapons and small arms, map reading, unit training, first aid, field sanitation, maintenance, troop movement, physical training, and basic tactics. Following successful completion of this course, officers assigned to branches other than infantry then attended OCS and Officer Basic Training at their assigned branch school, where they received an additional twelve to twenty-four weeks of training in the tactical and staff procedures of technical and supporting service units. These graduates then flowed into a replacement battalion to await assignment to a field or training unit (figure 6.1).

For those officers assigned to the infantry, by far the largest contingent of all officer accessions, OCS lasted the full fourteen weeks with an emphasis on individual tactical skills and weapons employment, in addition to the “common core” curriculum for all OCS students. Following OCS, infantry lieutenants entered the Infantry Basic Course, lasting an additional sixteen weeks. Here lieutenants learned and practiced company and battalion offensive and defensive operations, battalion staff functions, and the tactical employment of the infantry-armor-artillery team. Logistics, intelligence, air-ground operations, training management, techniques of infantry fire control, and troop movement rounded out the tactical training for infantry officers. New officers then either

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35 Brochure of Replacement Training and Schools Command, no date (likely October or November of 1951), Intelligence, Operations and Training – Korean Replacement Training and School, Box 89/13 Van Fleet Papers.

36 The Korean Army Training Center began operations in November 1951. Prior to then, the Infantry School was located at Tonghae.

37 Hausrath, Problems, 327; KMAG Information Brochure, Section V (Training), 4, Van Fleet Papers.

38 Hausrath, Problems, 326-27.
transferred to front line units or they drew assignments to new units in the process of forming. By the summer of 1952, the average Korean company-grade officer not only had twice as much formal training than his pre-war counterpart, he was also part of a system of officer selection and education that was deliberate, organized, and efficient. These officers learned a common doctrine and gained vicarious experience that trained

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them to perform their wartime duties. Altogether, in a two-year period (ending 25 July 1953) more than 31,000 initial-entry officers trained at the various ROK Army schools.⁴⁰

Officers in the mid-grade levels (captain, major, lieutenant colonel) commanding companies and battalions, or serving on regimental and division staffs, attended officer advanced courses in their branch specialty. The emphasis of these courses was on the techniques and challenges of combined arms warfare. For example, officers commanding infantry battalions and regiments received an eighteen-week Officers Advanced Course that taught company, battalion, and regimental tactics for offensive and defensive operations. Instructors placed special emphasis on the planning, coordination, and synchronization of engineer, artillery, air support, and armor assets. Armor and artillery officers spent fourteen and sixteen weeks, respectively, learning to employ their firepower assets in support of the infantry battle, both in attack and defense. Engineer officers practiced in their twelve-week course the complex coordination required between engineer units and infantry, particularly in emplacing and removing tactical and protective obstacles. Quartermaster, transportation, medical, and intelligence officers had similar courses geared to produce competent staff officers to support infantry regiments and divisions. Students also conducted troop and staff map exercises to help them visualize the methods of planning and conducting training and combat operations. Familiarization instruction on communications, intelligence, and the use of smoke rounded out their practical education. It is important to note that this education was teaching Korean officers to perform many functions that they had previously relied upon KMAG to do. It was a critical step to streamline Korean command processes and troop leading techniques to keep pace with the fluid conditions of battle as they experienced it.⁴¹

Select senior officers attended the ROK Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), which KMAG established in Taegu on 28 October 1951. The ROKA CGSC followed the pattern of the U.S. Army’s CGSC at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where officers learned the specialized command functions of intelligence, logistics,

⁴⁰Hausrath, Problems, 44, table 1.

personnel management, and tactics as they applied to operations at the division and corps level. In the inaugural speech to the first class of officer-students, which entered the college on 10 December, General Van Fleet stressed the importance of learning command techniques and functions in modern war. He praised the ROK Army and its officers for the progress they had made to date in digesting those lessons and said, “The start of this school marks another step in the development of a Korean army that can stand on its own feet.”

The first class of thirty officers contained two brigadier generals, six colonels, and twenty-two lieutenant colonels. All were selected by a board of high-ranking ROK officers and approved by the chief of staff of the ROK Army; Ryan undoubtedly influenced these selections. Initial instruction was in English, with ten officers held back as future instructors. Subsequent classes increased enrollment to fifty students for each six-month cycle, a number that the ROK Army felt it could not exceed without jeopardizing requirements at the front.

The last avenue that KMAG pursued for training officers was to sponsor the most promising officers (those with proven capabilities and who spoke usable English) to the infantry and artillery schools in the United States. A few ROK officers had attended U.S. schools before the outbreak of the war. Many American advisors noted the difference between U.S. trained and domestically trained officers. Despite their small numbers, U.S. trained officers played pivotal roles to advance the professional education and competence of their compatriots.

As early as November 1950 KMAG explored avenues to restart the pre-war program of sending Koreans to the United States for basic and advance infantry and artillery training. Nothing came of this effort until July 1951, when Brigadier General Arthur S. Champeny, Ryan’s soon-to-be deputy chief, made personal agreements with the


43 Myers, Wartime Experiences, 205.

44 Ibid., 206.

U.S. Army Infantry and Artillery Schools and eventually secured the support of the Army G-3, Lieutenant General Taylor.\textsuperscript{46} The fruits of his labors were two twenty-week courses for 250 students to attend the infantry (150) and artillery (100) schools. The first batch of officers departed for the States on 11 September 1951, graduating and returning to Korea in March 1952.\textsuperscript{47} KMAG maintained the momentum of this program by securing money from the Department of the Army to fund a second group of 250 officers during the spring of 1952.\textsuperscript{48}

As of 31 July 1953, a total of 1,034 students (including interpreters) had completed training in U.S. service schools. In addition to the Infantry and Artillery schools, Korean officers in smaller numbers also attended the Engineer, Medical, Signal, Ordnance, Armor, Transportation schools, and the Command and General Staff Course (table 6.1).\textsuperscript{49} Upon returning to Korea, these officers often became school instructors or frontline battalion and regimental commanders. Ryan had high hopes for these service school graduates, who would produce “a chain reaction” within the ROK training establishments and combat units. He said:

\begin{quote}
We are counting heavily on the hope that the standards they have seen at schools like Benning [Infantry] and Sill [Artillery], and which can be learned only by first-hand contact, will be placed in effect in Korea by the Koreans themselves when they return. If they do, it is logical to expect that those standards will ‘snowball’ throughout the ROK Army and its training centers. We can expect then to reach the point where the Army will become more nearly self-supporting in training than it has in the past, with a consequent decreased drain on the American manpower now needed for advice and supervision.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46} Brigadier Arthur S. Champeny to General James A. Van Fleet, 18 March 1952, 2, and Champeny to Commanding General, Eighth Army, 24 July 1951, Training and Tactics, Box 87/18, Van Fleet Papers.

\textsuperscript{47} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 173-74. These officers were preceded by an advance party made up of 22 interpreters and two KMAG advisors. Eventually, interpreters became graduates of their respective schools and they stayed on as semi-permanent “faculty” for about a year before returning to Korea; ibid., 178-79.

\textsuperscript{48} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 174.


\textsuperscript{50} Quoted in Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 180-81.
Table 6.1: ROKA Officers at U.S. Army Schools\textsuperscript{51}

Ryan saw this program as a down payment on the long-term professionalization of the army. Anecdotal evidence from advisors indicates that a large percentage of the outstanding Korean officers were trained at U.S. service schools. They tended to have higher élan, morale, and expectations for their army. Unsurprisingly, advisors typically got along best with these officers, with whom they shared a common training experience and military language. The advisors also universally praised these officers as being both well trained and efficient. They interacted more often with their subordinate commanders and tended to listen more attentively to their counterpart’s advice, even if they chose not to accept it.\textsuperscript{52} This program represented a huge administrative and operational burden on KMAG and ROKA, but the benefits of increased ability, technical competence and tactical interchangeability far outweighed the expenses incurred.\textsuperscript{53}

KMAG successfully modernized and expanded the system of Korean officer training and education by structuring it to progress from basic battlefield oriented tasks to

\textsuperscript{51} Tab Y, Information Briefing, ROKA Expansion, no date (likely November 1952), Box 90/6 Van Fleet Papers.

\textsuperscript{52} Representative examples are Leon Sembach to author, 27 April 2003 and KMAG Veteran Questionnaire; William H. Davis, “Chorwon, Kumsong Campaigns,” 2, U.S. Army Military History Institute.

\textsuperscript{53} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 179.
more complex and abstract subjects. Officer education reform went far beyond those objectives of socialization and rudimentary military training that characterized the pre-war emphasis. KMAG’s new focus on leader development paid dividends quickly. Like Van Fleet, Ryan realized that only an effective officer corps would be able to get the most out of the Korean soldier’s excellent qualities and potential. Ryan foresaw this result, which he articulated in a letter to the assistant commandant of the infantry school at Fort Benning in the fall of 1951. General Ryan described the changes that the ROK Army was making in training officers, and he confidently predicted that the officers attending U.S. schools would return to increase ROKA’s leadership quality and combat effectiveness. He summed up their potential by writing, “The ROKs have proven their worth in battle and with proper leadership, will develop into a first-class army.”

*Instilling the Will to Fight: New Soldier Training, 1951-1952*

Battle had demonstrated the unhealthy effects that the ROKA’s replacement system had on Korean combat units. The RTC produced soldiers in quantity, but their utility on the battlefield remained problematic. No doubt driven in part by the Americans’ cultural impression with industrial warfare and production, KMAG considered how best to maximize quality manpower throughput. Three initiatives – a separate command to supervise replacement and schools training, the creation of a centralized combined arms Korean army training installation, and the establishment of a field training command to supervise a retraining program for all ROKA infantry divisions would provide the most product, at the highest standard, as the time allowed. Over the

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54 Progress was rapid enough that Van Fleet felt comfortable to activate a second ROK Corps headquarters in April 1952.


57 Myers, *Wartime Experiences*, 121.
next eighteen months these initiatives became reality and progressively more efficient, until the new Korean Army was a vast improvement over the old. KMAG’s rapid and successful institutionalization of this comprehensive training program surely ranks as one of KMAG’s greatest wartime achievements.

One of Van Fleet’s first directives to Ryan was to expedite improvement to the ROK replacement training system. Soon after Ryan’s arrival as the new chief of KMAG, Brigadier General Arthur S. Champeny assumed duties as Ryan’s deputy and the senior advisor to the Replacement Training and Schools Command (RTSC), responsible for operations of the RTC and the individual branch training facilities. Champeny was an experienced officer and veteran of the Occupation (1945-46), in which he served in several critical capacities: Director of Internal Security, Deputy Military Governor, and Civil Administrator of Korea. He had played a key role in conceptualizing the original Constabulary and was the author of the “Bamboo Plan.” Now, as the counterpart to the Korean commanding general of the RTSC, Champeny was responsible to monitor and coordinate organizational and training activities to produce “the maximum number of well-trained basic soldiers in sufficient numbers for all branches of the Service.” In addition, Ryan wanted Champeny to supervise the KMAG elements and “to effect a high degree of efficiency and leadership in the Officer Corps of the Korean Army.” Ryan also tasked Champeny to survey the RTSC’s training installations with a view to consolidating any or all to a central location. Unfortunately, Champeny had little influence in the final form of the ROKA’s individual training programs because of personal disagreements with Ryan and key members of his staff, which ultimately led to the loss of Van Fleet’s confidence and his relief and reduction in rank.

Under KMAG’s supervision, the ROKA headquarters continued to expand its training base in the fall and winter of 1951-52. The entire initial-training population of nearly 80,000 soldiers (inductees, officer candidates, and basic trainees) now fell under

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58 Brigadier General C. E. Ryan to Brigadier General Arthur S. Champeny, 6 August 1951, Training and Tactics, Box 87/18, Van Fleet Papers.

59 It is unclear precisely what disagreements caused the breach between Champeny on one hand and Van Fleet and Ryan on the other. It is likely, though, that Champeny was overqualified for his subordinate position, given his previous experience and status with the Constabulary and the Occupation, and that perhaps he carried an air of “I know best.”
the (RTSC), an organization commanded by a Korean major general with an American brigadier general as a counterpart. Prior to its deactivation and transfer to the consolidated training facilities at Kwangju, the RTSC eventually oversaw more than eleven separate schools and training centers that provided the ROKA with manpower trained in the various techniques of modern war.

Shortly after the activation of the RTSC on 10 August 1951, it became apparent to Ryan that more effective and efficient combat arms training could be accomplished if the various training centers operated from a centralized location. A thorough reconnaissance resulted in the selection of a site near the southwestern city of Kwangju. KMAG made plans to move the Infantry, Artillery, and Signal schools, as well as OCS to this new site, home to the Korean Army Training Center (KATC), which opened its doors in November 1951. The KATC consolidated many of the branch basic training and officer candidate training at one site under one command, thus helping to reduce duplication of administrative and logistical requirements. It also sat on an ideal location with a usable airstrip, adequate water and electric power supplies, a rail connection to the port of Mokpo, and plenty of space for maneuver training, which became critical when the ROK Army began to activate additional artillery and armor units. The KATC was a first-rate, purpose-built facility capable of supporting 15,000 troops.

Van Fleet had high hopes for KATC graduates. The Eighth Army commander stressed that OCS training needed to weed out clearly incompetent candidates before they had a chance to make major mistakes in combat. Advanced infantry training for RTC graduates needed to focus on simple “hook” or envelopment tactics and techniques for assaulting bunkers – a nod to the new realities of the frontline. Artillery live-fire training and armor maneuver and maintenance training also received command attention. At an Eighth Army staff conference in December 1951, Van Fleet, concerned that “progress at

60 Myers, Wartime Experiences, 128; KMAG Information Brochure, Section V “Training,” 1, Van Fleet Papers.


this [the KATC] school appears to be dragging,” directed his subordinates to find the weapons and equipment necessary to make the KATC a premier training facility. He did not want to have to go back and fix improvisations later.63

Fortunately, the ROKA Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Lee Chong-chan found energetic leadership for the KATC on the part of Brigadier General Lim Sun-ha (one of the first officers commissioned in the Constabulary). Together with the KMAG counterparts at the various subordinate schools they turned the KATC into the vanguard for future expansion. For the first time in the ROKA’s history Korean soldiers and officers experienced a combined-arms training environment for advanced infantry, artillery, and armor tactics. All-weather classrooms, adequate mess and quartering facilities, combat experienced instructors and cadres supervised by 131 American officers and enlisted soldiers, and plentiful training space made the KATC a first-class facility. The results of the KATC were so gratifying that the Koreans hailed it as “a safeguard for Korean freedom.” President Rhee, who attended the official opening ceremonies on 6 January 1952, christened the KATC Sang mu dae, indicating his hope that the KATC would reignite the spirit and tradition of the old Korean warrior class.64

Van Fleet visited Kwangju just three months later and saw first-hand the progress made in the attitude and competence of the Korean soldier. One hundred-fifty-three Americans assisted the four thousand Korean cadre to train 15,000 students in advanced tactics.65 The KATC was well on its way to leveling the field between Korean and Chinese divisions. Although the KATC was a ROKA operation, the commandant of the Infantry School confessed to Van Fleet that without his KMAG advisor’s distinct intellectual abilities, skills, and soldierly behavior, the results would have been much

63 Entries 14 and 17 December 1951, Van Fleet Journal, Van Fleet Papers.

64 Myers, Wartime Experiences, 131-32; KMAG Information Brochure, Section V “Training,” 6-8, Van Fleet Papers. Sang mu dae can refer to either an “age of military power” or a group of elite warriors.

65 Entry 25 April 1952, Van Fleet Journal; Replacement Training and Schools Command, Intelligence, Operations, and Training – Korean Army Training Center, Box 89/20, Van Fleet Papers.
less.\textsuperscript{66} The advisors’ lasting influence on the Infantry School, as well as the other training activities, prepared the Korean Army to face some of their toughest challenges in the armistice period.

While the KATC garnered much attention, both Ryan and Van Fleet encouraged the ROKA to improve living and training conditions at the RTC. In July 1951, Van Fleet, accompanied by Ryan and the ROKA Chief of Staff, visited Cheju-do and met with the RTC commander, Brigadier General Paik In-yup and the Senior Advisor, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Raemon. After a brief orientation, Van Fleet tabled a number of suggestions (directives, really) to improve training, such as conducting realistic exercises to include a one week bivouac (none were then currently scheduled) and platoon level field problems with machine guns and mortars in support. The RTC leadership also took the opportunity to explain their concerns, such as a request for more instructors and resources to construct better facilities. Van Fleet promised Ryan that Eighth Army would provide the men and equipment to accomplish the RTC’s training mission.\textsuperscript{67}

It was not long before Ryan had to call on Van Fleet’s promise. The number of advisors present at the RTC (16 officers and 1 enlisted man) was not sufficient to supervise the training of over 15,000 new soldiers. The RTC still lacked adequate barracks, medical facilities, maintenance bays, and administrative support. Between August and December 1951, the training population nearly doubled to 28,000 soldiers. KMAG’s support contingent also increased by a factor of seven, to 38 officers and 87 enlisted men. Gradually, more appropriate facilities to support a sixteen week training program became available, and there was even enough material to begin construction of a second RTC.\textsuperscript{68} In February 1952, this training center opened at Nonsan to provide an eight-week training program for replacements destined for units other than infantry, such as artillery, armor, the technical or administrative branches.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{66} Lee Han-lim to Van Fleet, 14 February 1952, Box 70/20, Van Fleet Papers.

\textsuperscript{67} Eighth Army Command Report, July 1951, “Daily Activities, 17 July.”

\textsuperscript{68} RTC 1 PERSTATs, August – December 1951, First Replacement Training Center 1951, AG File 470 1951, RG 554; KMAG Command Report, January 1952, “Replacement Training and Schools Command,” (RTC #1).

\textsuperscript{69} Myers, Wartime Experiences, 151, 154; Hausrath, Problems, 313.
By the summer of 1952, the two replacement training centers were producing 900 soldiers a day to a variety of schools supporting the combined arms development of the Korean army.\textsuperscript{70} Despite this phenomenal progress, two issues continued to plague replacement training: food and health. Trainee welfare had been a low priority, stemming partly from haste to get as many men to the front as quickly as possible and partly from cultural mores that gave young conscripts no rights and few expectations for decent treatment. Advisors were shocked at the number of recruits physically unfit for service, ill from malnutrition, or otherwise unable to train as soldiers.\textsuperscript{71}

Conditions finally began to improve in the summer of 1952 as Paik Sun-yup, now Chief of Staff of the ROKA, and Ryan turned their attention towards reforming the ROKA’s support and logistics system. An experienced commander who understood the “American way” of managing an army, Paik took an interest in soldier welfare and morale and was appalled to find chronic undernourishment among the front-line ROK soldiers. Believing that “a soldier who eats well fights well,” Paik investigated rumors that enemy prisoners ate better than ROK soldiers. The rumors turned out to be true because the U.S. Army maintained jurisdiction for prisoners and determined their nutritional requirements. Paik forwarded the results of his investigation through KMAG to the Eighth Army staff. Somehow (perhaps deliberately), the findings of the report were made public. Consequently, the U.S. authorities began to augment the Korean dietary ration with soybeans and other foodstuffs such as biscuits, canned fish, and vegetables. This support fell under the program for military aid and assistance, and thus was KMAG’s responsibility to administer.\textsuperscript{72}

Attempts to increase the production of biscuits and canned fish ran into various obstacles, which cost thousands of man-hours in lost training time and inefficient production and distribution. KMAG’s biscuit conundrum illustrates the problem well. Efforts to construct a Korean biscuit factory in Pusan ran afoul of UN bureaucrats, who

\textsuperscript{70} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 151-52. Daily rates fluctuated based on a variety of circumstances. Remarkably, the RTCs were structured with enough flexibility that they could meet higher (or reduced) demands without compromising efficiency or the effectiveness of the replacement training program; ibid.


\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 208-9; see also Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 278-95.
demanded assurances that the proposed factory would only produce food for the army, and Korean politicians, who hoped to compel the Americans to foot the ROKA’s food bill indefinitely. Such an attitude ran counter to Ryan’s (and Van Fleet’s) desire to make the ROKA self-sufficient, but the inertia was too great to overcome. Despite KMAG’s and Eighth Army’s best efforts, the biscuit crisis never was fully resolved. Soldiers in the field often managed to augment their rations from sources outside the army system, but trainees suffered the worst with no remedy for their persistent undernourishment.  

Ryan had better success rationalizing the induction and reception process to minimize the number of unhealthy inductees rejected at the RTC. As late as February 1952, the process for shipping soldiers to Cheju-do had not changed. Government agents combed the countryside and urban centers for youths who flowed through a personnel pipeline from Reception and Induction Centers (RIC) to the RTC, a two to four day journey by LST. Only then were they evaluated by the RTC’s personnel, and if found fit, inducted into the army. Because the ROK Army did not have money or resources to feed and house potential soldiers, the rigors of this process caused malnutrition and illness that resulted in a rejection rate of 20-25 percent, wasting transportation space, time, and other valuable resources. An additional problem was that fully 35 percent of those inducted eventually were found to be positive for tuberculosis. Ryan commissioned a joint study to fix this problem and maximize the efficiency of the induction and training centers, which up to this time had to receive, house, feed, and examine men who might not even be healthy enough to train.

On 9 March 1952, KMAG and ROK staff officers coordinated a plan to house, feed, screen, swear-in, issue clothing and equipment, and transport inductees from the moment of their conscription to acceptance as trainees. Men screened and rejected at the RIC would be returned to their originating Army Service Unit within three days. The conference recommended that more personnel staff the RICs to perform these functions prior to shipping inductees to Cheju-do. A senior KMAG G-1 (Personnel) advisor as a “competent, experienced officer” was dispatched to each RIC to train Koreans in the art

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73 Myers, *Wartime Experiences*, 275-89; Improvement of ROKA Ration, 7 December 1951, KMAG AG File 430, RG 554.
of in-processing new soldiers. Ryan also enumerated a number of additional suggestions to his counterpart that would give the ROKA greater oversight and influence over the induction process. General Lee implemented these suggestions and in May 1952, the ROKA assumed control of the RICs and brought new inductees immediately under the care of the army for food, shelter, transportation, and equipment. A KMAG team of five advisors worked with each RIC to expedite the flow of new soldiers. By the fall of 1952, KMAG witnessed a material improvement in the condition of trainees, with the induction wastage rate falling to less than 10 percent.

By mid 1952, KMAG’s impact on the induction, reception, initial and advanced training of Korean soldiers marked a milestone in the combat capabilities of the Korean Army. Although the Americans were principally responsible for making an indelible imprint on the psyche of the ROKA’s training establishment, Ryan was careful to ensure that the ROKA maintained responsibility and ownership for the final products. Ryan always went to the ROKA Chief of Staff before turning to Eighth Army resources. By the summer of 1952, the ROK soldier was the product of a training regime that was far advanced of that just one year previous. American officers noticed the difference that these training reforms made on the soldier, which increased their expectations. One KMAG advisor said, “Given good leadership they would become good soldiers. They are good soldiers when properly led.” Ryan considered them brave, patriotic, hard-working, “and highly responsive to proper leadership.” Van Fleet went even further. In a publicly released statement, he praised the ROKA, “which had developed from a small, untrained, inexperienced force to one which today is recognized and admired as highly trained, loyal, courageous, effectively led, and combat tested.”

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74 A Staff Study: Joint Induction and Reception Centers ROKA, March 1952, 8th U.S. Army Korea, RG 550.

75 Myers, Wartime Experiences, 161-64.

76 Quoted in Hausrath, Problems, 230.


Retraining the Korean Divisions: The Field Training Command, 1951-1952

Even as Ryan conceptualized his ideas to reform the individual training and schools system, the Eighth Army commander pressed on with his idea to retrain the ROKA’s combat divisions. In July 1951, Van Fleet held a command conference to discuss unit training within the ROKA. He told Major General John W. “Iron Mike” O’Daniel, commanding general of the U.S. I Corps, “I intend to give an extended training period to all ROK divisions, concentrating on basic weapons fire and small unit tactics.” Van Fleet dismissed suggestions that ROK units could conduct in-place training that would keep them close to the front. Such a program would not go far enough to recast the Korean divisions in truly combat capable units. Van Fleet emphasized his desire for a comprehensive retraining program, conducted in each corps’s rear area and supervised by KMAG.\footnote{Eighth Army Command Report, July 1951, Section I, “Narrative,” 73.}

The slackening pace of combat tempo in the summer of 1951 caused Van Fleet to risk rotating ROK divisions out of the line for two months of remedial training. His sense of timing was propitious, for as the Communist Spring Offensive showed, the battle weary battalions of the Korean Army were virtually on their last legs.

Van Fleet appointed Brigadier General Thomas J. Cross, then deputy commander of U.S. IX Corps, to be the commanding general of the Field Training Command (FTC) under Ryan’s supervision.\footnote{Entry 30 July 1952, Van Fleet Journal, Van Fleet Papers.} General Cross was a perfect choice for this assignment. He had served Van Fleet before as the G-3 (Operations) officer of Second Army. He also had significant combat experience in Europe as a division chief of staff and regimental commander.\footnote{Biographical Press Release, “Major General Thomas Joseph Cross,” General Officer Files, U.S. Army Center of Military History, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.}

Cross’s FTC mission was to supervise a division-level rehabilitation and retraining program. Nonetheless, to carry out this broad mission, his specific responsibilities were not limited to supervision. Personnel of the FTC also had to establish a high standard of instruction, supervise the construction of appropriate training facilities, prepare subject schedules and outlines in the master training program, conduct

\textit{\textsuperscript{79}} Eighth Army Command Report, July 1951, Section I, “Narrative,” 73.

\textit{\textsuperscript{80}} Entry 30 July 1952, Van Fleet Journal, Van Fleet Papers.

reconnaissance and select final training areas, establish ammunition requirements, and establish advisory personnel requirements.\footnote{KMAG Information Brochure, Section V “Training,” Field Training Command, 1, Van Fleet Papers; Eighth United States Army Korea, Command Report, July 1951, Section II, CG’s Narrative.} This was a lot for Cross to get done in a short amount of time. He tackled this important project with zeal, initiating and supervising the effort to establish Field Training Center 1 in the U.S. I Corps sector on 4 August. From the beginning, interest in the FTC was widespread, and General Cross’s clout made KMAG’s task much easier. Within ten days, with construction on the training facilities proceeding at a rapid pace, Cross’s assembled staff had organized their training materials and planned for operations. Miraculously, dedication ceremonies took place on 13 August, and the ROK 9\textsuperscript{th} Division began training on 18 August.\footnote{Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 133; Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 162.}

Three more training centers sprang up in quick succession: on 12 August at Yangyang for ROK I Corps; on 25 August at Yanggu for U.S. X Corps; and on 4 October at Sachang-ri for U.S. IX Corps. Van Fleet intended for every Korean division to go through the nine-week (later reduced to eight) retraining program. As an additional caveat, divisions in training passed from operational control of the corps to the control of the ROKA chief of staff, but each division was maintained on a two-day recall status, should the need arise to redeploy back to line.\footnote{Field Training Command, Unit Histories – Korean Military Advisory Group, Records of Interservice Agencies, Records of Military Assistance Advisory Groups, Record Group 334, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland.} It is significant that divisions in training never strayed too far from the front, which served to make sure that all trainees remained focused. In fact, several divisions were at times called upon to interrupt their training for operational reasons. Nevertheless, every Korean division eventually returned to complete the training program.\footnote{Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 142, figure 12; KMAG Information Brochure, Section V “Training,” Field Training Command, 2, Van Fleet Papers.}

The FTC training program, the first training program to focus on division level combined arms fighting, comprised three progressive segments. During the first week, the division rested, received replacements, drew new equipment, and organized itself to
conduct training. During this time the KMAG advisors worked night and day with ROK instructors and the training division’s general staff to prepare schedules, coordinate logistics, and issue orders. It was a tedious but necessary process. The division received an overall training schedule with tasks and objectives from the ROKA headquarters, signed by the chief of staff.\textsuperscript{86} For many commanders and staffs, this was the first time they learned to act like division-level officers, responsible to coordinate and synchronize the actions of the subordinate battalions. Staff officers, not used to taking an active role in planning and coordinating operations, now had to learn to appreciate the mundane and tedious work that pays dividends as successfully executed training or combat operations.\textsuperscript{87}

During weeks two through seven, tactical training began in earnest with a review of individual and crew served weapons followed by instruction in basic individual fighting skills, progressing to squad, platoon, and company tactics, with each echelon following a specified training matrix of tasks.\textsuperscript{88} Tactical problems for squads through battalions accounted for 335 out of 480 total training hours. Thirty percent of all training was at night.\textsuperscript{89} Divisional support units, such as engineer, signal, reconnaissance, and artillery conducted parallel training in basic subjects as well.\textsuperscript{90} They also benefited from on the job experience learning the combined arms technique practiced by their American counterparts. During the final phase, week eight, the training exercises culminated in a battalion-level field problem in conjunction with a regiment/division command post exercise.\textsuperscript{91} Only after certification of proficiency in this last task were ROK divisions then reassigned to the front. According to General Paik, this field retraining program

\textsuperscript{86} Headquarters, Korean Army, Training Memorandum 75, 7 August 1951, 1-3, Box 4, Doyle Papers.

\textsuperscript{87} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 136-37; Training Memo 75, 2, Doyle Papers.

\textsuperscript{88} “Field Training Command,” Van Fleet Papers; Training Memo 75, Annex 2, Appendices A-G, Doyle Papers. Paik’s memoirs state that training had been so bad that the FTC cadre automatically assumed “nobody knew anything.” Paik’s tone indicates he agreed with their judgment, Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 162.

\textsuperscript{89} Training Memo 75, Annex 2, 1, Doyle Papers.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., Annexes 3-6, Doyle Papers.

\textsuperscript{91} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 134; “Field Training Command,” Van Fleet Papers.
likely did more to save the Korean Army than anything else done by the Americans. He noted that divisions that completed this remedial training typically reduced casualty and equipment losses by fifty percent over their counterparts. These same units also “revealed an élan and confidence quite superior to what they had shown before going through the training.”

Despite the energy devoted to, and attention showered upon, the FTC, friction still abounded. The suddenness of Van Fleet’s directive caught the logisticians by surprise, and support organizations had not forecasted the materials to construct or run the FTC. Equipment, construction supplies, and other materials necessary for training either came from existing stocks or the trainers improvised without them. Eventually, KMAG established a “centralized training aids shop” to publish “essential technical and field manuals now lacking at the schools and training centers” to produce locally the aids that American resources could not provide. Another problem was that the necessary manpower to supervise training did not exist on KMAG’s authorization, so Eighth Army had to work a compromise to detach trainers that would remain on temporary duty for a division’s training cycle. Additionally, Ryan recognized that language was still a formidable obstacle, though surmountable with proper planning for interpreters, translated training materials, and the temporary borrowing of individual U.S. units to demonstrate training objectives. This technique followed by supervised repetition by the students often proved sufficient to overcome language barriers. Much effort needed to be devoted to supervision of training, especially that conducted by company level officers and NCOs. Additionally, some units took advantage of their reconstitution phase to

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92 Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom*, 162.

93 KMAG Command Report, January 1952, Section I, 22; Van Fleet directed the U.S. I Corps to detach to KMAG four officers and forty-five enlisted men as training cadre for the ROK 9th Division; Van Fleet Journal, 1 August 1951, Van Fleet Papers.

94 Myers, *Wartime Experiences*, 137. Colonel Stilwell opined that the Korean were good imitators of techniques, but they did not necessarily grasp the tactical principles involved. The truth of this observation was borne out in the last two months of the war; Stilwell Oral History, 102, USAMHI.
hoard and hide equipment, supplies, and vehicle parts. Inspectors from KMAG headquarters identified the worst abuses and reported them to the division commander and his senior advisor.95

Once the FTCs began operations, Van Fleet and Ryan made periodic visits to evaluate the division’s training progress. The ROK 9th Division, which Van Fleet visited on 6 September, began the reorganization phase on 1 August, receiving 1,600 replacements and new equipment to bring it to its authorized TO&E. Actual training commenced on 18 August and lasted until 12 October.96 Van Fleet observed training demonstrations for infantry fire, attack, and infiltration, and he pointedly emphasized some of his favorite themes: principles of fire and movement needed to become second nature throughout all echelons, unit commanders and staffs needed experience exercising all their subordinate elements, and every soldier needed to be a marksman with his assigned weapon. Only then could the Korean divisions be sure to apply the full weight of their combat power against the enemy.97

Eighth Army’s and KMAG’s leadership played a vital enabling role to the success of the FTC. Van Fleet deserves credit for accepting the hazards to withdraw a unit from combat, refit it with equipment and replacements, and run it through a demanding and realistic training program. General Cross had geared the training program to erase any feelings of military inferiority among ROK troops and to instill within them confidence in the leaders, weapons, and tactics. The results justified the risk: improved combat effectiveness, unit cohesion, and individual confidence. From his Fort Campbell experience, Ryan understood the challenges training large bodies of troops, and he was particularly sensitive to the unique problems associated with training Korean units. The cooperation between trainers, advisors, and Koreans was an essential element to getting a unit up to an acceptable combat standard within two months.98

95 5th ROK Division Inspection Report at FTC #2, 20 December 1951, 4, 6, AG File 319.1, PMAG and KMAG, RG 554.

96 Entry 1 August 1951, Van Fleet Journal, Van Fleet Papers; Myers, Wartime Experiences, Figure 12, 142.


98 5th ROK Division Inspection Report, 6.
However, the greater share of credit must go to the Koreans. ROKA’s leadership, particularly the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Lee Chong-chan (1951-52), fully supported KMAG’s program and accepted responsibility for its success. Lee made it clear that “the Division Commander is responsible for the overall successful rehabilitation of his unit.” The ROK Army headquarters also played the primary role to provide administrative and logistics support to organize the divisions and their training program.99 The stalwart Korean soldier also played a role in the ROKA’s redemption. American trainers were unanimous in their admiration for the ROK soldier, who despite his lack of formal training showed great resolve and enthusiasm to learn and gain confidence. Because of this attentive audience, the seeds of training did not fall on rocky soil. For the first time in the history of the Korean Army, ROK units had been trained to fight like a team, from the squad up to the division. KMAG advisors noticed a significant change in the attitudes of the officers and men at the end of their training cycle, which directly carried over to the battlefield.100

It was a notable achievement that within fifteen months of the FTC’s inauguration, every Korean division, separate infantry regiment, and security battalion had passed through the Field Training Command. A fundamental transformation in the ROK Army had occurred and was recognized by many. Like General Roberts before him, Van Fleet believed that the ROKA was a good investment. When General Collins visited Korea in the fall of 1951, Van Fleet made sure that Collins could see for himself that money and equipment provided to the FTC was worth the expense.101 Furthermore, the Korean Army gained intangible advantages of morale and confidence that would be clearly revealed in the crucible of battle at places such as White Horse Mountain, Sniper’s Ridge, and Triangle Hill.102

99 Training Memo 75, Annex 1, 1-6, Doyle Papers.

100 Myers, Wartime Experiences, 141.

101 Entry 28 October 1951, Van Fleet Journal, Van Fleet Papers; Collins, War in Peacetime, 316.

102 Paik, Pusan to Panmunjom, 162.
Preparing the Way for ROKA Expansion

Van Fleet was justifiably proud of the ROKA’s progress in the first year of armistice stalemate. In June 1951, Van Fleet wrote Ridgway that Eighth Army’s advantages over the Communists were in its mobility, troop quality, and firepower, but the same could not have been said about the ROKA.103 Just twelve months later, the combat capabilities of the ROKA had appreciably improved. The ROK 9th and 3rd Divisions, the first two graduates of the FTC, had both returned to the line in October and were making “a splendid impression on the Corps Commanders.”104 The Koreans were holding their own against routine Chinese and North Korean probes, patrols, and limited attacks. In July 1952, Van Fleet crowed: “One of our biggest military advances here in Korea has been the improvement of the ROK Army. We now have 10 well-equipped and well-trained divisions capable of standing confidently alongside other UN units.”105

Van Fleet had other reasons to be confident in the ROKA’s future. The Chief of Staff, Lee Chong-chan, was a principled officer who worked well with Ryan and the Eighth Army. He and his staff cooperated with Van Fleet’s directives to reform along the lines laid down by KMAG. Even more critically, General Lee demonstrated the growing sense of professionalism and loyalty of the ROKA to Eighth Army. Lee played a key role to keep the ROK army out of politics – a situation that gravely threatened the legitimacy of the UNC’s war effort and the integrity of the ROK Army itself. Beginning in May 1952, the ROK Government experienced a constitutional crisis that threatened to tear the Korean Army apart into factional conflict. The crisis began when President Rhee, increasingly unpopular with members of the National Assembly, decided to force a vote to amend the Korean Constitution to allow for his direct re-election by popular vote. When the Assembly refused his demand, Rhee declared martial law and ordered General Lee to cooperate by providing combat troops from the front. This Lee refused to do,

103 Van Fleet to Ridgway, Correspondence – Select, Matthew B. Ridgway, April 1951 – August 1951, Box 77/28, Van Fleet Papers.

104 Van Fleet to Ryan, 23 October 1951, Correspondence - Alphabetical, Ryan-Ryle, Box 71/50 Van Fleet Papers.

105 Van Fleet to Henry I. Hodes, 29 July 1952, Correspondence-Alphabetical, Box 69/28, Van Fleet Papers.
which earned him Van Fleet’s admiration and Rhee’s seething wrath. In fact, the pressure against Lee became so acute that in August Van Fleet hustled Lee out of the country to protect his life, while Paik Sun-yup assumed the duties of the ROKA Chief of Staff.\footnote{Entry 4 July 1952, Van Fleet Journal, Van Fleet Papers; Paik, Pusan to Panmunjom, 201-202; For a view of the key elements of the Constitutional Crisis, see U.S. Department of State, \textit{FRUS, 1952-1954}, vol. 15, Korea (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984); Kaufman, \textit{The Korean War}, 270-74; and Clark, \textit{Danube to Yalu}, 151-53.}

Under Ryan’s supervision, the ROKA’s manpower strength increased with individuals trained in a manner modeled after that received by American soldiers. More soldiers were graduating from leader courses and other specialty schools. American-trained officers also had returned in the summer of 1952 and were now filling positions at the ROKA’s schools and in its frontline units.\footnote{Ryan to Orlando “Gus” Mood, 23 April 1952, ROK Correspondence, 1951-1953, #10-14, Box 86/5 Van Fleet Papers.} In Van Fleet’s opinion, the ROKA was becoming “a fighting army that can be relied on [by Eighth Army].”\footnote{Ralph J. Watkins to Karl Bendetsen, Assistant Secretary of the Army, 28 August 1952, Subject Files, Operations and Personnel, Box 84/31 Van Fleet Papers.}

Van Fleet was also satisfied with his new KMAG. Ryan panned out superbly, and with the exception of Champeny, all of KMAG’s senior officers supported Van Fleet’s vision of how to remake the ROKA. KMAG had needed new leadership and direction, and Ryan provided it; his influence would carry beyond the completion of his tour in the spring of 1953. KMAG had also needed much more support than Eighth Army had been in a position to give, particularly in manpower. Van Fleet supported increases to KMAG’s authorization tables and he provided Eighth Army personnel “on loan” to the various training and schools facilities as trainers and supervisors. Thanks to KMAG’s efforts as well, relationships with the Korean Army were also at a high level, as Lee’s refusal to compromise the ROKA’s relationship (not to mention his own personal one) with Eighth Army revealed. These relationships would prove enduring and critical for the tests that lay in the future.

Armistice talks gave Van Fleet the space and time to reform and retrain the ROKA at all levels – officer, soldier, and unit. These were the prerequisites for a
successful renaissance of the ROKA, and KMAG’s focused attention on training moved the Koreans a long way towards adapting to the demands of modern war.\textsuperscript{109} The success of Van Fleet’s reform program carried influence beyond the blasted hills along Line KANSAS. In Tokyo and Washington, American officers and policy makers now became more willing to consider expansion of the Korean Army as an economical method to defend the military status quo won in the summer of 1951. As a result of the revolution KMAG had effected in training and leader competence, the vast pool of Korean manpower was now seen as a military asset rather than a political sore spot.

Anticipating Washington’s approval, Van Fleet turned his attention the fall of 1951 towards making tangible changes to the ROKA’s organization and capabilities. Expansion of the ROKA’s firepower, manpower, and staying power – all arenas with great potential for profitable investment – promised to make the ROKA a strong ally and a good substitute for American manpower. The full potential of expansion was proved when the Communists launched their next major offensive in the fall of 1952. Met by trained manpower and a barrage of bullets, artillery, and tank shells – provided, fired, or directed by Koreans, it was an experience not soon forgotten.

The experience of battle throughout 1952 indicated that the ROKA was maturing and becoming prepared for a systematic expansion. Expansion along the lines of a modernized organization with adequate supporting units, modern weaponry, and greater combat power would mark the emergence of a military force that was no longer a liability but a strategic asset. The end commodity – a bigger, more aggressive and resilient army – upset Communist calculations that time was in their favor. Changing military and political conditions would then force the Chinese into precipitate military action leading to a cease-fire agreement.

\textsuperscript{109} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 121.
CHAPTER 7

REFORMATION, PART II:
A NEW KOREAN ARMY AT WAR

Expectations for an armistice agreement restricted Van Fleet’s tactical flexibility, but protracted negotiations undoubtedly saved the ROK Army. Protected by Eighth Army, KMAG finally had the opportunity and means to reform the ROKA’s organization and training infrastructure. The Communists also exploited these unique conditions to replenish their troops and supplies in anticipation for a protracted struggle. They improved their tactical positions with elaborate tunnels and fortifications, received replacements, drilled fresh units, and accomplished a doctrinal shift from mobile to positional warfare. These actions allowed the Communists to sustain grinding offensives from September 1952 to April 1953 aimed at influencing their position at Panmunjom by driving a wedge between ROK and U.S. forces or policies.

KMAG’s reform had a strong influence on the military equilibrium, for it encouraged an expansion program that would make the ROKA nearly six times as big as it was in June 1950. Rearmed, retrained, expanded, and led by a revitalized officer corps, the ROK Army transformed the context of the war between the United Nations and the Communist armies. ROKA’s performance in the field in 1952 had a tremendous impact on the political and military situation. Whereas experience from 1950 to 1951 led the Chinese to believe that significant tactical gains could be made at the expense of the Koreans, fighting from September to November 1952 and again throughout the winter of 1953 demonstrated otherwise. In fact, despite Communist offensive action on a scale not
seen since mid 1951, the forces of the UN-ROK coalition continued to gain strength at an astonishing rate. In other words, Chairman Mao Zedong and his allies confronted a window of military opportunity that shrank with each passing month.¹

When Van Fleet determined that the time was right to begin expansion, the ROKA had one corps headquarters, ten combat divisions, ten artillery battalions, and thirteen separate security units. By January 1953, the Koreans boasted two corps headquarters, twelve combat divisions, forty artillery battalions (to include ten 155 mm howitzer battalions). Two additional divisions, two artillery battalions (155 mm), and a tank company were in the process of forming. Not only was the ROKA growing, KMAG reported that its training and expansion programs were “paying off in the added effectiveness of ROK units to the extent that greater faith was placed in them as they took on a larger role in the conflict.”² In other words, they were fighting better too, and killing Communists.

The comments of Secretary of the Army Frank Pace in his semi-annual report to Congress reflected the Americans’ new hope in the ROK Army:

Vast strides have been made in developing a reliable and effective combat army which has grown from a small force reduced to 25,000 to 30,000 during the early fighting to a well-trained, well-equipped, and well-led force . . . This army of major proportions has been created literally on the field of battle and is proving itself more than equal man for man [to] the Communist enemy.³

Little did the secretary know the prophetic nature of his words. Whether or not the South Korean Army, as developed during this phase of expansion, proved the equal of the Communist would have a significant effect on the battlefield and at the truce tent.

² KMAG Command Report, January 1953, Section I, 1.
³ Hausrath, Problems, 27.
**Debating ROKA Expansion, 1950-51**

Van Fleet tackled the problem of ROK Army expansion with the same tenacity and thoroughness he used for fighting the Communists. In the summer of 1951, he directed KMAG to develop plans to modernize and expand the ROKA’s capabilities, but rather than wait for formal authority from the JCS and Ridgway, he impatiently charged ahead with plans for an interim increase to the ROKA’s size. Van Fleet was especially concerned to increase the ROKA’s organic artillery capabilities, and he directed KMAG and his Eighth Army staff to take all measures necessary to make it happen, including sending personal messages “as a matter of priority” to Ridgway. In the final stage of this interim expansion, Van Fleet reactivated the ROK II Corps and vocally supported the addition of up to ten divisions with supporting units to the ROK order of battle. Although his suggestions had a chilly reception in Tokyo and Washington, once General Mark W. Clark replaced Ridgway in May 1952, the push to expand the ROKA by adding divisions gained new momentum.

Expansion of the ROK Army had always entailed a three-way battle between Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington, D.C., with the commanding general of Eighth Army and the chief of KMAG caught in the middle of a conflict involving politics, money, and the enemy. Of course, Syngman Rhee never tired to promote his view that more men fighting at the front was what was needed. He never abandoned his faith in the mass of

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6 KMAG’s enthusiasm for expansion was somewhat reserved since Ryan was already short handed and additional units requiring advisors threatened to derail the entire expansion process. When the conventional war began, KMAG had fewer than 500 soldiers for the nearly 100,000 man ROKA. Midway through the war, Van Fleet and Ridgway had increased KMAG’s authorization to 1,308, still considered inadequate to support an army of ten divisions and 250,000 men. Only in 1952, when the JCS approved a ROK Army ceiling of 463,000 did KMAG reach its pinnacle of 1,953 authorized advisors (actual strength varied between this figure and 2,800 with soldiers detailed for three months at a time from Eighth Army to make up the difference); Allan R. Millett, Introduction to *The Korean War*, vol. 3 by Korea Institute of Military History, xiii; KMAG Command Report, October 1952, Section IV, KMAG Command Reports, Jan 52 – Apr 53, Army – AG Command Reports, RG 407.
Korean youth. If he might distrust his professional generals, he firmly believed that the confidence of the people in him would translate into military power in the fight against Communism.⁷ Every American commander sympathized with his courageous resistance to communist occupation of Korean soil, but they all understood equally well the political, economic, and military constraints they confronted.⁸ Eventually, he had to drop his tiresome demands and settle for a program of accretion in fighting strength. In the end, he got what he wanted, American commitment to support a twenty-division army, but he was disillusioned that no one but he could see the way northward to the promised land.⁹

In the headquarters of the Far East Command in Tokyo, MacArthur and his successor, Ridgway, had pressing concerns in addition to the war on the peninsula. Japan was always considered a more vital element of American security in the western Pacific, and neither man could make decisions about Korea without considering the effects on America’s position in Japan. While Van Fleet publicly espoused the virtues of increased ROK participation (according to Van Fleet’s figures it cost $3,129 to support an American infantryman, while it cost only $193 to put a Korean soldier in the field), Ridgway insisted that his primary duty was to defend Japan for subversion or even external attack.¹⁰ Feeling perhaps that Van Fleet’s perspective had narrowed excessively to the fight in Korea, Ridgway played his role closer to the thinking in Washington,

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⁸ Clark, Danube to the Yalu, 328-29; Ridgway, Korean War, 156-57; Van Fleet, “25 Divisions,” 7.

⁹ Paik, Pusan to Pammunjom, 165, 212; 231-33; Syngman Rhee to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 17 June 1953, published in Rhee, Korea Flaming High, 31; Allen, Korea’s Syngman Rhee, 160-62; Collins, War in Peacetime, 359.

which was skeptical of ROK Army capabilities. Although Ridgway did not approve additional divisions, he did allow Van Fleet to begin raising and arming separate field artillery battalions for service with existing ROK divisions.\(^{11}\)

In Washington, policy makers focused on the economic dimensions, with an eye firmly fixed on the post-hostilities obligations that America would assume worldwide. In the context of NSC-68, further obligations in Korea might undermine America’s general commitment to rearm to face the Soviet threat in Europe. With expectations that an armistice would be forthcoming, military planners naturally sought to economize, even at the expense of developing more combat power on the peninsula. A wartime figure for a ROKA strength between 250,000 and 300,000 seemed to be the magic number; for peacetime, it was anticipated that the ROK Army strength would fall closer to the former. Anything higher required stronger political and military justification, which until 1952 had been totally lacking.\(^{12}\)

Because the ROKA had no system for army growth following its collapse in the summer of 1950, President Rhee advocated a policy of expansion by improvised and unrestrained conscription. Rhee persuaded MacArthur on 9 August 1950 to support the reconstitution of destroyed divisions by re-activating one division a month for five months. Although MacArthur had his doubts, the manpower shortage along the Naktong River forced him to relent and direct Walker to activate Korean units as soon as they could be filled.\(^{13}\) This program might have produced acceptable results if these new levies could have filled positions in divisions that were organized in a more modern fashion. Unfortunately, the fluid tactical situation precluded any drastic overhaul of the

\(^{11}\) See for example Ridgway’s feelings that ROK military expansion might have on Japanese sensibilities and that Van Fleet did not have the big picture in mind; Ridgway to Department of the Army, CX 66647, 10 April 1952, Subject Files – Republic of Korea, Box 86/1, Van Fleet Papers; Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 183.

\(^{12}\) Myers, *Wartime Experiences*, 35, 43.

ROKA’s table of organization and equipment (TO&E). The battles of the Pusan Perimeter and the attrition suffered during the first two Chinese offensives effectively kept pace with ROKA’s induction of fresh soldiers. In an attempt to finesse the problem, KMAG tinkered with the division TO&E to bring men into already existing formations by simply injecting raw recruits into expanded or existing divisional units. Little thought was given to addressing the organizational, technological, or logistical weaknesses of these divisions.

Following the Chinese intervention and the retreat south of the 37th parallel, Rhee continued to beat the drums for Korea’s “bottomless pool” of manpower. Rhee argued that if the United States would only arm and equip more Korean soldiers, the Eighth Army would be in a better position to resist the Communist onslaught and even drive the Chinese out of Korea altogether.

Military and logistical constraints were stacked against Rhee, though. It is not necessary to revisit the military arguments against giving more equipment to the ROK, but the logistical questions were pervasive and unanswerable. American supply lines, stretched across thousands of miles of ocean, already nearly buckled under the weight of supporting the current effort. Because Eighth Army had to provide all of the ammunition, fuel, transportation, clothing, and much of the rations for the ROK Army, more Korean soldiers, of dubious value in battle,
were certainly a liability logistically. Eighth Army was in no position to remedy this condition until negotiations put the brakes on further general offensives by either the UNC or the Communist forces in Korea.

The rapid methods used to beef up the ROKA also complicated leader selection and training procedures. Leadership cadres were culled from groups of young men who had been grabbed off the streets of Pusan and Taegu, or from the rural hinterlands in between. The standard for these new leaders was “the most intelligent looking men.”

Captain John B. Blount, who served as aide-de-camp to the chief of KMAG from October 1952 until June 1953, recalled that noncommissioned officers were often selected by examining a recruit’s head for scars. Those without scars were deemed the most qualified on account of being either smart or clever enough to avoid the stick beatings that were a common method of schoolhouse discipline in Korea.

This un-systematic approach allowed KMAG and ROKA to fill their expanding officer and NCO quotas, but it did not provide for experienced or educated leaders on the front lines.

The overall experience with the first efforts to expand the ROKA was disappointing. KMAG had to find a way to increase the ROKA’s size without further diluting its strength. The Communist Spring Offensives in April and May conclusively demonstrated that tinkering on the margins – adding soldiers and equipment to the ROKA’s existing divisional structure – might address individual concerns, but it would not solve ROKA’s basic structural problems. Of these, Ridgway zeroed in on leadership, particularly that of ROK senior commanders at regimental and division levels. Citing “political interference,” Ridgway argued with Rhee that Korea was failing to develop competent commanders, which in turn adversely affected unit training and the organization of the army as a whole.

Furthermore, both Ridgway and Van Fleet wanted the ROKA eventually to rely less on KMAG and more on the skills of its own indigenous officer corps.

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18 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 147.
19 Blount, tape recording.
20 Ridgway, Korean War, 176.
void of professional education and training. Prompted by an inquiry from the Department of the Army, General Ridgway further investigated the situation to determine how to increase the combat effectiveness of the Korean Army. 22

After consultation with Van Fleet, he submitted his findings, in which he vehemently opposed expanding the ROK Army. He reported, “Until the ROK forces then in being could demonstrate an ability to perform suitably in battle, there seemed little point in arming and equipping additional units.” Ridgway acknowledged many of Van Fleet’s training reforms to make the ROK Army a capable and reliable military partner, but he remained leery of ROK officer leadership. 23 Leader development had to come first, before any consideration of expanding the Korean Army or its role in the war. He wanted thoroughly trained officers, who possessed a will to fight and were capable of aggressive action. Equally importantly, they had to be inspired with values such as love of country, honor, integrity, devotion to duty, and professional pride. Until officers developed these professional qualities, Ridgway believed that the ROK soldier would continue to shirk his military duties, no matter how much equipment or firepower he possessed. 24

None of these reforms were, or would have been, possible without a tactical deadlock that took the military pressure off of Eighth Army and the ROKA. As the tempo of battle slowed down, more equipment came available, manpower attrition declined, and Korean units had a chance to withdraw from the line to refit and retrain. The problem with restructuring and retraining ROKA was two-fold: timing and logistical commitment. The pace of fighting in the twelve months since the northern invasion demanded every combat unit on the front line, despite the risks involved in committing

22 Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 170. Among other things, General J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, asked Ridgway to consider the suitability of employing more Korean manpower, expanding training facilities for Korean units, and using American officers to command ROK soldiers, Collins, War in Peacetime, 314.

23 Quoted in Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 170.

24 Ridgway, Korean War, 176-77; CINCFE to DEPTAR, CX 67484, 22 July 1951, Box 86/1, Van Fleet Papers.
unprepared units to battle. America’s commitment to support war in Korea was also fully stretched, competing as it had to for every dollar that the Truman administration had committed to rearmament against a global Communist threat.25

However, now that negotiations reduced the tempo of combat and forced the U.S. to consider the size and capabilities of a post-war ROKA, arguments and benefits for expansion took on a more military cost-benefit perspective. Gradually, the Joint Chiefs of Staff became increasingly supportive of Ridgway’s and Clark’s requests to expand ROKA’s capabilities. President Rhee eventually got what he wanted – a large and well-equipped military, and, the Americans got a reliable and combat capable ally, that increasingly shouldered more of the burden at the front.

Strengthening the ROKA’s Divisions: Focus on Firepower

Van Fleet took the first momentous step towards expansion by approving a plan to add artillery firepower for ROK divisions. Ridgway agreed that the lack of equipment and training in fire support procedures put Korean divisions at a disadvantage compared to American or Commonwealth forces, particularly in the new conditions of fortified positional warfare. Additional battalions of Korean medium and long-range artillery would permit greater mutual support between all divisions and help the make up in firepower what Eighth Army lacked in manpower.26

In September 1951, Ridgway approved Van Fleet’s authorization for KMAG to raise, equip, and train four 155 mm howitzer battalions. Soon after, Van Fleet initiated a plan to activate six 105 mm battalions and headquarters batteries. These artillery units represented a down payment on KMAG’s plan to provide each ROK division with an artillery group of four battalions. KMAG officers supervised the activation of new units by using cadres from existing battalions, training them at the Artillery School at Kwangju, and equipping them in Seoul. These cadre organizations then deployed to a


26 Ridgway, Korean War, 194.
U.S. corps sector to complete their organization and training under the tutelage of an American artillery unit, while participating in live fire missions against the enemy.27

One of the first 155 mm battalions formed in this manner was the 97th Field Artillery Battalion (FAB). This battalion began training and operations in the U.S. IX Corps sector on 1 November. A team led by an American lieutenant colonel from the corps artillery assumed the primary task to train the battalion’s fire direction center and chain of command. The KMAG detachment, led by Captain Leon Sembach, looked after the logistical and equipment support. Sembach had an inglorious but essential job to make the battalion functionally equivalent to the American artillery. He said, “A key activity . . . was the selection of drivers for the 4-ton prime mover trucks. Driver training started with jeeps and then jeeps with trailers. The better drivers kept moving up . . . until finally the twelve best were selected to drive.”28 Finding trucks and training drivers was no ordinary concern for the KMAG advisors. These medium battalions fired tremendous quantities of ammunition, and the Nissan vehicles assigned to Korean units were generally inadequate to carry the battalion’s heavy ammunition loads on mountainous roads. KMAG’s ability to keep the battalion logistically fed was as important as the Koreans’ technical fire direction and support capabilities.

The 97th FAB completed its training in December and was assigned to the not-yet-active ROK II Corps artillery. Although by American standards the battalion could not be considered well trained, it was an active battalion that performed competently with its American counterparts in the Kumsong sector for the remainder of the war. General Van Fleet himself was present to fire the battalion’s 25,000th round in April 1952.29

27 Formation of ROK 155 mm Howitzer Battalions, ROK Correspondence, 1951-1953 #15-19, Box 86/6 Van Fleet Papers.

28 Sembach, KMAG Questionnaire.

Sembach noted that American units after seven weeks of training could have hardly been expected to achieve more than what the Koreans did, especially given their lack of command and technical experience.30

These additional battalions made an immediate impact on the battlefield by multiplying the number of artillery tubes available to the army and corps commanders. On Van Fleet’s first anniversary as Eighth Army commander, he noted that his American and Korean artillery had fired 11,096,243 shells at the enemy, who only mustered an anemic response of 277,000 during the same period – a forty to one ratio.31 What is more, they were trained and competent units, with an adequate share of TO&E equipment. This made the battalions self-sufficient in many respects and less reliant on American support.32 As additional battalions organized and drew equipment they were assigned to a Field Artillery Group (FAG), which completed and certified their training. This process fostered an immediate relationship between the fire directing headquarters and the gunners. Eventually, each FAG comprised one 155 mm battalion and two 105 mm battalions. A trained Group then deployed to a division area, where it absorbed the existing 105 mm battalion. These four battalions constituted the division’s artillery.33

In May 1952, Ridgway received official approval from Washington to proceed with artillery unit expansion. Van Fleet’s artillery activation program moved into high gear, following KMAG’s proven blueprint for expansion. From September 1951 to 31 December 1952, the ROK Army activated twenty-four 105 mm battalions and six 155 mm battalions, qualified them for combat, and organized them into five fully operational FAGs. Altogether, ROKA had a total of forty artillery battalions at the beginning of

30 Sembach, KMAG Questionnaire. Sembach attests that the battalion’s only failures during his tour of duty were one mission fired “short” (causing friendly casualties), one cannoneer accidentally killed by recoil, and one gun crew lost when a vehicle overturned killing all on board. Sembach adds, “I saw much more than this [number of accidents] in the properly trained 155 mm howitzer battalions in which I served in World War II.”


32 That is not to say that these battalions were independent of American control. They still relied on American sources of supply, and the 5th Field Artillery Group, the organization that controlled many of these battalions, was commanded by an American officer.

33 Formation of ROK 155 mm Howitzer Battalions, Van Fleet Papers; Myers, Wartime Experience, 90-93; Sawyer, Advisors in Korea, 183-84.
Activation of additional FAGs and howitzer battalions continued every month thereafter. This five-fold increase in Korean artillery argued persuasively that this was no longer the ROKA of 1950.

While the ROK Army strengthened its fire support arm, KMAG and Eighth Army considered just how big to make the ROK Army. At the time that negotiations began at Kaesong in the summer of 1951, the ROK Army order of battle consisted of ten divisions and thirteen security battalions. With the exception of two divisions in the ROK I Corps, all Korean units operated directly under U.S. command control. In July, Van Fleet and Ryan visited Major General Lee Chong Chan, the ROKA chief of staff to present their vision for the new ROK Army. Van Fleet assured his Korean host of America’s commitment to the military security of the ROK and of its determination to make a “top-flight” Army. Van Fleet emphasized that the next twelve months would spell the difference in whether the ROKA became more like the American Army or remained as it was. The implications for Korean cooperation were clear. ROKA would modernize on Van Fleet’s terms or not at all. As incentive, Van Fleet’s expansion plan offered much: more command level formations, soldiers, and the institutional and support structures needed by a modern military. And of course, all provided and sustained at U.S. expense. Following this meeting, Van Fleet directed KMAG to design a force structure of three field corps, with ten infantry divisions, eighteen 105 mm artillery battalions, four 155 mm battalions, six artillery group headquarters, three tank battalions, thirteen security battalions, and ten separate infantry regiments for use as rear area and lines of communication security troops. When KMAG had added up the totals for this new army, which included the ROK schools and training institutions, the paper strength of the ROK Army was 362,946. Pending official authorization, KMAG and ROKA proceeded with the planned expansion, reaching a ceiling of nearly 270,000 by 30 November 1951.

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34 Sawyer, *Advisors in Korea*, 183-84; KMAG Command Report, December 1952, Section II.

35 USMAG to ROK, 25 November 1951, Classified Organizational History Files, Military History Office, Records of HQ U.S. Army Pacific, Records of USARPAC, RG 550. After much massaging, Ridgway forwarded this figure along with the proposed and expanded organizational tables to Washington on 1 May 1952, Myers, *Wartime Experiences*, 42-44.
Not until 20 March 1952 could Ridgway forward to Van Fleet Washington’s approval for this initial expansion of combat troops to a level of 362,946 troops. As an unexpected pleasure, Washington agreed to fund the additional artillery battalions that Van Fleet felt were critical to even out the odds between ROK and Chinese forces. The approved list was timely, for Eighth Army had just re-activated the ROK II Corps headquarters in the winter of 1952 and had assigned it to the U.S. IX Corps for training, with the intent of assigning to it new artillery and corps support forces. Paik Sun-yup, promoted to three-star rank in January 1952, was to assume command of the new corps. Being above all a practical soldier, Paik at first had doubts about the wisdom of such a move. Although he, like all Korean professional soldiers, wanted to see larger Korean formations in the fight, he knew that to recreate a Korean corps on paper only invited repeated failure. He was immensely gratified to learn that Van Fleet intended to provide the ROK II Corps with the same capabilities found in an American corps, namely its organic artillery, engineer, armor, and service support units.

From RATKILLER to the ROK II Corps, November 1951 – May 1952

If Van Fleet needed other reasons to support the activation of a new corps headquarters, he soon got them in the form of improved combat performance. Since November 1951, Paik had commanded a special anti-guerrilla campaign dubbed Operation RATKILLER. Van Fleet conceived this idea to combat the growing threat of bandits in the rear areas of Eighth Army and to provide opportunities for the ROKA to gain experience with small and easy steps. At a planning conference on 14 November, at which Ryan, Lee, Paik, and the Eighth Army operations and intelligence staff were

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37 KMAG Command Report, January 1952, G-3 Narrative Summary, 4; Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom*, 191. The development of Korean armor is a small but interesting part of the expansion story. It will be recalled that many American officers, including Lynn Roberts, took a skeptical view towards supplying the ROKA with tanks. Van Fleet saw no incongruence with the idea, and the first two ROK tank companies, equipped with M36 tank destroyers, were formed in October 1951. These small units proved their worth just a year later and provided “assurance that the complexities of mechanized warfare could be as readily absorbed by ROKA officers and men as were earlier lessons in infantry tactics and artillery fire direction.” Myers, *Wartime Experiences*, 211-14.
present, Van Fleet presented his plan. Paik would command an all-Korean task force to converge upon and eradicate the guerrilla strongholds in the Chiri-san region. Eighth Army would provide photo and signal intelligence, transportation and logistics support “as needed,” and two ROK divisions – the 8th and the Capital. Van Fleet fixed the date for Phase I to begin not later than 1 December.\textsuperscript{38}

Guerrillas and bandits were endemic to the region and they proved to be resilient adversaries. When beaten, such as during the winter of 1949-50, and again in the spring of 1951, they faded into the mountainous regions to lick their wounds, and scour the countryside for supplies and recruits. In this way, the Communists maintained an active presence that harassed and embarrassed the ROK.\textsuperscript{39} Paik was a natural choice for this mission. He had extensive experience fighting guerrillas in World War II while an officer in the Japanese sponsored Manchukuo Army, and he had impressed Van Fleet (along with every other American officer of note) with his aggressive confidence, tactical competence, and grasp of American military methods. Paik was also one of the Korean officers behind the suppression of the Yosu mutiny; he was familiar with the challenges of operating in the south Cholla province.

Task Force Paik became operational on 25 November 1951, and combat operations began one week later. The overwhelming force of three divisions (two regular army and one security force division) piled on the guerrilla strongholds and compressed them into an ever-shrinking sanctuary. Unparalleled cooperation by government and police officials also enhanced the effectiveness of the campaign by denying the rebels the ability to hide among the civilian population.\textsuperscript{40} Climatic conditions (no foliage and a light dusting of snow) exposed the rebels and facilitated the ROKA’s movements and intelligence gathering operations. Paik’s forces also called upon numerous air strikes

\textsuperscript{38} Memorandum for Record, Coordination Conference on Anti-Guerrilla Activities, 14 November 1951, Correspondence-Memoranda, October 1951-December 1952, Box 82/1, Van Fleet Papers. Van Fleet was also under considerable political pressure from President Rhee, who was increasingly embarrassed by the strong show of communist power within the confines of the ROK; Van Fleet to Ridgway, 15 November 1951, T-Z Correspondence, Ridgway Papers.


\textsuperscript{40} Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 184-86.
flown by South Korean pilots in venerable F-51 Mustangs. Paik, like his soldiers, watched in awe as the ROK aircraft bombed and strafed the surprised and exposed guerrillas. After the successful convergence of the three divisions, TF Paik began Phase II of RATKILLER on 19 December with each division tasked to search out and destroy guerrilla remnants in their area of operation. The regiments and battalions in these operations performed very well and employed sophisticated blocking and envelopment tactics to trap, kill, or capture the rebels. A third phase lasted from 6 January to 1 February 1952, and it resulted in the largest aggregate enemy losses during any phase of RATKILLER.

The results from RATKILLER were exceptional: 9,770 enemy killed with an equal number captured along with 3,132 individual and crew-served weapons. TF Paik broke the back of subversive resistance in the Chiri-san mountains and established a template that the ROKA would follow in successive counter-guerrilla operations. Even more importantly, Paik and his staff demonstrated convincingly their ability to command and control a complex and fluid operation involving three divisions plus engineers, air support, logistics, intelligence, and civil-military units. In Van Fleet’s mind, Paik was ready for prime time; he was confident in his leadership and fighting abilities.

The processes followed in the formation and deployment of the ROK II Corps was symptomatic of the pattern worked out by KMAG for the activation of new artillery battalions. The new organization formed about an existing kernel of experienced personnel, which then trained under supervision of an American parent organization before entering its apprenticeship phase. After a period of certification training, the unit assumed independent missions. The conversion of TF Paik to the ROK II Corps was Eighth Army’s most ambitious expansion project to date, and both Van Fleet and Ryan closely monitored its progress. After Paik’s headquarters redeployed from the Chiri mountains to Chonjon, he and his staff were attached to the headquarters company of the

41 Ibid., 188.
U.S. IX Corps. There they engaged in a five-week training program under the respectful
guidance of Major General Willard Wyman, commander of IX Corps, and his staff. At
the end of this period, the IX Corps certified Paik’s headquarters as being proficient in
U.S. tactical procedures, which they had taken pains to codify in writing as their own.\textsuperscript{45}
Paik and his staff were demonstrating the extent to which they had internalized U.S.
military culture and tactical techniques.

On 5 April 1952, the ROK II Corps took over a sector of the Kumsong front from
U.S. IX Corps. In addition to its command and control responsibilities, Van Fleet
intended to use ROK II Corps as the training headquarters for Korean artillery. The Fifth
Field Artillery Group was assigned to ROK II Corps as a dual – training and operations –
headquarters, and it was the last stop in the journey for the newly created artillery
battalions. This headquarters certified Korean battalions and controlled their fire support
missions.\textsuperscript{46} With three newly retrained and experienced divisions, and seven battalions of
artillery (one U.S. and six ROK), Paik’s corps was a formidable force defending a
valuable section of the line from the Pukhan River in the east to the Kumsong salient in
the west.\textsuperscript{47} Paik’s corps had another distinction. For the first time since May 1951, a
Korean corps faced off against the Chinese. Paik recognized the gravity of his position; a
repeat performance of the May debacle would leave a yawning gap between the U.S. IX
and X Corps, and would mean the likely loss of both Chunchon and Wonju, critical hubs
in the logistical network supporting the whole eastern front.\textsuperscript{48}

Within a month, Paik had occasion to test his corps artillery’s proficiency, as well
as the limits within which he could expect command support from Van Fleet. Paik had
always been concerned how the Chinese would react to the knowledge of facing another
Korean corps, and he took a particular interest in intelligence collection activities,
especially prisoner interrogations. He noted from these reports that an increasing number

\textsuperscript{45} KMAG Command Report, February 1952, Section I, 11; Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 194-95.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 194.
\textsuperscript{47} Headquarters, U.S. IX Corps, Command Report, April 1952, 10, Army – AG Command Reports, 1949-
1954, RG 407; Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 50.
\textsuperscript{48} Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 195.
of different Chinese units were appearing in the enemy order of battle opposite his corps, which, he felt, indicated that the Chinese were massing for an operation against the Koreans. ⁴⁹

He communicated his views to the Eighth Army staff and soon found himself talking to Van Fleet, who directed Paik, “Have your artillery shoot the hell out of the areas where you think the Chinese are massing. And do it as soon as I hang up. Use as much ammunition as it takes.” ⁵⁰ Paik’s staff scrambled to identify probable enemy assembly areas and to coordinate the fire strike. The 5th Artillery Group commander, Colonel Richard W. Mayo (the former chief of staff of KMAG), did not agree with Paik’s plan to fire so much ammunition at unobserved targets. But Van Fleet’s order left little room for interpretation, so Mayo planned the largest Korean artillery shoot of the war up to that time. For nineteen hours Paik’s ten artillery battalions blasted away at suspected concentration areas, firing more than 20,000 shells at the enemy. Paik later felt that because of that demonstration of firepower, there was no enemy attack on the Kumsong sector until just prior to the war’s end. ⁵¹

Although there was no other evidence to indicate the Chinese intended to attack the ROK II Corps, or that Paik’s artillery “serenade” ⁵² had any effect on Chinese intentions, Van Fleet was clearly impressed by Paik’s quick response to a potential threat. Van Fleet later told Paik:

> The artillery barrage . . . prevent[ed] [the enemy] from launching an attack . . . that, in its turn, reduced the total number of friendly casualties we took in that sector. Compared with the value of these outcomes, the ammunition we expended was cheap indeed. The Chinese Army has nothing but scorn for the ROK Army. The quickest way to establish psychological mastery over the Chinese Army, then, is by providing ROK II Corps whatever it needs to intimidate the Chinese Army with sheer firepower. ⁵³

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⁴⁹ Ibid., 195.
⁵⁰ Ibid., 199.
⁵¹ Ibid.
⁵² Artillery officers referred to their nightly harassment and interdiction missions as “serenades;” Sembach, KMAG Questionnaire.
Whatever effect the ROKA barrage had, it was over a year before the Communist steeled themselves enough to attack on the Kumsong front. In the broader scheme, this incident illuminated that the KMAG reforms had taken root. Paik understood Van Fleet’s intent to expend steel rather than lives. Trained officers, performing staff operations competently, identified a potential threat and acted upon it. The planning, coordination, and most importantly, timely execution by the artillery strike proved that the expense and efforts to train Korean officers and reorganize the army had made an impression on the ROKA. They were beginning to think and act as Americans would. This result is testimony to the success of the various KMAG reforms and the faith that Van Fleet and KMAG had in the Koreans’ ability to direct and coordinate the defense of a valuable sector along Eighth Army’s front.

*Fire and Blood: Proving a Better Army Can Get Bigger Too, 1952-1953*

When General Mark Clark relieved General Ridgway as the Commander in Chief, Far East Command and United Nations Command, in May 1952, he brought with him fresh political and strategic conceptions of how best to terminate the war in Korea. As he figured, the military problem for the UNC was quite simple: “We either had to get an armistice, win the war, or get out of Korea.” With this simplified view, Clark looked for a cheap way to increase political and military pressure on the Communists. When it came to negotiations, he authorized the chief UN delegate, Lieutenant General William K. Harrison, to suspend talks unilaterally for three days at a time if the Communists

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54 Clark, *Danube to the Yalu*, 117. Just nine days prior to Clark’s arrival in Japan, the UNC delegation had made its “final offer” to the Communists at Panmunjom. Only one issue remained to be settled – the disposition of more than 90,000 prisoners of war and civilian detainees who resisted involuntary repatriation. All other armistice issues – location of the demarcation line, establishment of a Neutral Nations Supervisory Committee to oversee the implementation of the armistice provisions, and a post-war political conference to resolve the “Korea problem” – had been agreed upon in relatively short order. The Americans concocted a number of schemes they hoped would appeal to the Communists without compromising their stance against involuntary repatriation; Clark, *Danube to the Yalu*, 102; Collins, *War in Peacetime*, 348-49.
failed to say anything constructively new. On June 7, Harrison used his new prerogative to good effect, stunning the Communist negotiators who did not know quite how to interpret the UNC’s new and aggressive negotiating stance.

Clark also adjusted UNC tactics and operations, forbidding even local attacks unless approved by him. In his words, he wanted to avoid falling for the trap of “just going after the next hill,” or of engaging the Communists in an unwinnable attritional contest. Instead, he sought to escalate pressure in an arena the Communists were vulnerable – the air. He received approval from the JCS to unleash attacks against the previously restricted hydro-electric plants along the Yalu River, and from 23-25 June, U.S. Air Force and Navy aircraft destroyed ninety percent of these previously undamaged targets.

Clark also endorsed Van Fleet’s requests to expand the ROK Army’s firepower and size, and he became a vocal advocate for a more aggressive military policy against the Communists. Such dramatic changes were bound to have political, and hence, military consequences along the battle lines in Korea.

The Chinese too had been using their time wisely over the previous fifteen months. They reorganized and strengthened their logistical network and systems. They built up reserves of men, food, and ammunition, despite the increased efforts of UN

55 Lieutenant General William K. Harrison, great-grandson of President William H. Harrison, and a lay Baptist minister, was an experienced soldier. He finished the Second World War as a division commander (2nd Infantry) and had the decorations to back up his no-nonsense demeanor. He succeeded Admiral C. Turner Joy when the latter retired due to frustration and poor health. In the negotiations with the Communist delegation at Panmunjom, Harrison proved his toughness and aplomb; Clark, *Danube to Yalu*, passim; Collins, *War in Peacetime*, 348-49; Millett, *Their War for Korea*, 256-57.

56 Clark, *Danube to the Yalu*, 107-08. Under pressure from Washington, Ridgway had insisted that the UN delegation continue to meet with their Communists counterparts, lest the UNC appear at fault for any breakdown in negotiations. The façade had gone on so long that the UNC found itself mouse trapped into giving the Communists a free forum for propagandizing the conflict. Harrison felt that so long as the Communists interpreted the UNC position as negotiable, they would never agree to an armistice, which he felt, they wanted just as much as the UNC. Ralph J. Watkins to Karl Bendetsen, Assistant Secretary of the Army, 28 August 1952, Subject Files, Operations and Personnel, Box 84/31, Van Fleet Papers.

57 Clark, *Danube to the Yalu*, 79.


59 Watkins to Bendetsen, Van Fleet Papers; see also Mark Clark’s correspondence to Washington on the subject of ROKA expansion, especially 28 October 1952 and 1 November 1952, Subject Files, Republic of Korea – Correspondence 1951-53, Box 86/2, Van Fleet Papers.
airmen to isolate the battlefield from communist supply sources in Manchuria and Soviet Russia. 60 The Chinese had also learned some tactical lessons from the Spring Offensive in 1951, which they disseminated down to the front-line troops. 61 Among these was a greater appreciation for firepower, both in attack and defense. Soviet-provided field artillery, mortars, and rockets, along with small arms, ammunition, and other supplies made the Chinese divisions much more formidable and flexible opponents. This transformation was profound and disconcerting for the UNC. As Samuel Griffith notes, it was an unpleasant reality that “the PLA infantry divisions of late 1952 bore little resemblance to their primitive predecessors which crossed the Yalu [River] in October and November 1950.” 62 These organizational changes and material adaptations gave Beijing the means to adopt new tactics corresponding to the shift in their strategy, from annihilation of UNC units to protracted attrition. While UNC commanders assumed that static conditions would characterize the war after negotiations began, the Chinese were putting as much effort into reforming their ground forces for a protracted contest to seize terrain and inflict casualties against Eighth Army and ROK forces as KMAG did for the ROKA to resist such efforts.

Negotiations provided protection for the Chinese to adjust to a new tactical and strategic solution to the Korean problem. Finally accepting the UNC’s dominance in firepower and mobility, and the futility of trying to drive the Eighth Army off the Korean peninsula, Mao Zedong revised his strategic thinking. He now urged “patience” at Panmunjom and along the battle lines. Simultaneously, Chinese troops fortified their positions and prepared to implement a new tactical method known colloquially as “eating niupitang.” 63


Niupitang is “sticky candy,” most easily eaten in small bites, broken off bit by bit. Mao used this metaphor to prescribe the new Chinese tactics in which infantry forces used stealth and tunneling to move in close to an objective, usually a platoon or company strongpoint. A massive artillery barrage preceded the infantry attack, which secured the objective. After throwing back the defenders, the infantry feigned a withdrawal to lure the enemy back into a pre-registered “kill zone.” Before the enemy force could consolidate its position, fresh Chinese reserves – accompanied by artillery fire – returned in greater strength. This “see-saw” engagement continued until the enemy either abandoned the objective or the Chinese tired of the attritional contest and shifted their effort elsewhere.64

Chinese commanders understood Mao’s metaphor, and they synthesized it with their actual experience against American firepower and mobility. The commander of the Chinese People’s Volunteers, Peng Dehuai, articulated the new principles to his subordinates:

- Toughness and tenacity in combat and unwillingness to give up defensive positions; a close coordination of the artillery, antitank, antiaircraft, and infantry firepower; repeatedly wrestling for any lost positions; and, disposition of a large number of reserves so as to ensure that the longer we fight, the stronger we will be.65

Peng felt that these principles, rigorously applied, would be effective against the Americans, whom he believed were overly dependent on firepower, afraid of heavy casualties, and generally lacked the depth of reserves the Chinese could amass.

Although niupitang proved its validity against Americans forces as early as November 1951, its most critical test was against the ROK Army, for whom the Chinese had nothing but scorn.66 In addition to employing new tactical methods, the Chinese reinforced their assault elements with additional artillery firepower and more sophisticated fire support techniques. Supply of equipment and ammunition was also

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64 Zhang, Military Romanticism, 163-64; Nie, Inside the Red Star, 641.
65 Zhang, Military Romanticism, 162.
66 Ibid., 78.
greatly improved. Although the Chinese attacks in the fall of 1952 demonstrated the maturity and flexibility of the CPVF, they failed to force political concessions from the UNC, even at the vulnerable time immediately preceding the U.S. presidential election. They failed also to destroy ROK units or defeat a significant portion of the ROK Army enough to cause a split in the coalition. The Chinese attacks, and the ROK defense, illustrated for all that the progress made in leadership, training, and equipment in the ROK Army was on par with the best that the Chinese could muster, in limited offensives. The course and outcome of these battles also had a significance that radiated beyond the shell-blasted hills in central Korea. What the Chinese did gain was a new view of startling clarity – United Nations Command forces (including the Koreans) were not only prepared to fight, they were prepared to match the Communists with an increase in their strength by adding Korean divisions and artillery battalions to the contest.67

Believing that Clark’s new bellicosity presaged some type of military offensive, and feeling that their own tactical and logistical preparations were adequate, the Chinese planned a pre-emptive offensive for the fall of 1952 – a series of attacks that collectively were the largest ground battles since the beginning of armistice talks. The Chinese attacks began in the first week of September 1952, focused on the mountainous area in and around the Iron Triangle, which was defended by the U.S. IX and ROK II Corps. Both sides understood the vital tactical and political importance that loss of terrain by either side signified. For that reason, the fighting between September and November was especially bloody.

The first Communist blow fell against the ROK Capital Division, which had already been fighting a sporadic, limited outpost war on “Capital Hill” since 5-6 August.68 On 5 September, the Chinese infantry attacked in regimental strength, and a ten-day battle ensued. The Koreans held their position at high cost, but it was clear that the Chinese were just testing the ROK defenses.69 A month later, on 6 October, the

67 When the UNC unilaterally recessed negotiations in October 1952 over the Chinese refusal to countenance yet another UNC proposal to dispose of the prisoner repatriation issue, the Chinese had to face the prospect of strategic failure as well; KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 418.


69 Paik, Pusan to Panmunjom, 207.
Chinese initiated a more climatic struggle for Hill 395, which pitted the ROK 9th Division against elements of two divisions from the Chinese Thirty-Eighth Army. The Battle of White Horse Mountain was the turning point for the Koreans, for this division had a mediocre combat record. However, in this ten-day battle, Korean officer leadership reached a level previously expected only of American officers. Individual battalions fought as coherent units, giving ground in good order when necessary, then always returning to attack with élan and proficiency. The division’s leadership competently exploited the ROKA’s new firepower capabilities against the Chinese see-saw tactics. The American IX Corps commander, Major General Rueben E. Jenkins, was so impressed by this stalwart division, that he even made additional American artillery and tank units available for the 9th Division commander’s use.70

Indications for a general assault against Hill 395 were in evidence for about ten days prior to the Chinese attack. ROK troops reported increased daytime movement by Chinese infantry and artillery, and the number of vehicle sightings was the highest ever recorded along that portion of the IX Corps front. On 3 October a patrol from the ROK 30th Infantry Regiment captured a Chinese soldier, who revealed the plans for the Chinese assault against Hill 395. From this interrogation, the division commander, Major General Kim Jong-oh, learned that the Chinese planned a regimental attack followed by a planned withdrawal to entice an advance that would be met by artillery and an infantry counterattack. A similar but diversionary attack was also planned against Hill 281 to the west, defended by the French Battalion assigned to the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division.71

Both Kim and Jenkins recognized the seriousness of the situation. The 9th Division held key terrain dominating the western approaches to Chorwon (the lower west apex of the Iron Triangle) and overlooking the entire Yokkik-chon Valley. Loss of Hills 395 and 281 would require the IX Corps to reposition itself to the southern rim of the valley and cede control of Chorwon to the Communists.72 There was no alternative

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70 Hermes, Truce Tent, 303.


72 IX Corps AAR Hill 395, 3-4.
except to stand and fight whatever the Chinese threw at Hill 395. Van Fleet was equally adamant that the 9th Division would win this contest. Once the fighting began, Van Fleet insisted that the ROK division have total victory by retaining absolute control of Hill 395.73

Kim’s disposition reflected tactical acumen and confidence. He ordered two battalions of the 30th Regiment to entrench on Hill 395, with one battalion held back as a local reserve. The other two regiments Kim held back as division reserve, and Kim’s staff worked out a detailed counterattack plan for the 28th Regiment.74 He emplaced American tanks and anti-aircraft batteries along the flanks of Hill 395 to cover the valley approaches and to guard against a possible envelopment. Searchlights and flares rounded out the defensive preparations, and as the division planned its defense, it also coordinated its fire and air support with IX Corps.75 KMAG advisors certainly played a crucial role throughout all phases of Kim’s defensive planning, from giving advice to assisting the liaison and coordination process between the division and corps headquarters, particularly for planning defensive artillery fire.76

Kim’s preparation of the battlefield is evidence of the increased professional experience and judgment of Korean officers. The division’s deployment minimized exposure to enemy artillery, while providing fresh forces to respond to the inevitable breaks in the line. He also expected to resist more with steel and dirt – a distinctly American approach to war – than with flesh. Nevertheless, victory was by no means preordained just because Kim listened to his advisors and planned to rely on firepower. For his plan to have any chance of success, staff and commanders had to think abstractly – such as enumerating, evaluating, and anticipating enemy reactions, or planning ahead to rotate fresh troops with adequate supplies and ammunition in the course of the battle. His subordinates had to prepare, lead, rally, and control their soldiers in close combat. The

74 IX Corps AAR Hill 395, 8.
75 Ibid., 7-8.
76 The ROK 9th Division had seven U.S. and ROK medium artillery battalions and three American heavy artillery batteries in support.
division’s preparedness on the eve of battle testifies to the training and competence of his
division staff officers and subordinate commanders, whom Kim expected to act with
initiative and foresight. The 9th Division, a microcosm of the whole Korean Army, had
come a long way since Hyon-ri.

The ordeal of the 9th Division began on the night of 4 October, when the
division’s forward units received intensive artillery fire. Observers reported three to six
times the number of shells landing on the dug in battalions than on 1-2 October. Chinese
artillery rose to a crescendo on 6 October, when at least 1,291 rounds of artillery landed
among the Koreans’ advanced positions, and Chinese infantry began their assault,
supported by the fire of some tanks. By 1900 hours, the forward Korean battalions
began to call their final protective fires as they withstood three assaults by two Chinese
battalions and counterattacked to eliminate enemy penetrations. Shortly after midnight,
the Chinese launched their final assault before withdrawing, having inflicted 300
casualties while suffering an estimated 1,500 killed and wounded.

During the afternoon of the 7th, the Chinese returned, this time employing four
battalions and capturing the crest of Hill 395, but losing it to a nighttime counterattack
from two battalions of the 28th Regiment, which decimated the Chinese units on the hill.
This regiment now assumed the defense against daily attacks from Chinese infantry and
artillery until relieved by the 29th Regiment on 9 October. Attacks and counterattacks
characterized the battle for the next two days. Not until 10 October could Kim report that
Hill 395 was entirely under his control. Despite their failure to eject the 9th Division, the
Chinese continued to pour reinforcements into the area. On 12 October, Kim was
confident enough to recommit the 30th Regiment in a limited attack. The next morning
he leap-frogged the 28th Regiment to the front, keeping fresh troops against the Chinese,
who fell back enough to remove the immediate threat to Chorwon. Kim suspended his
advance on 15 October, when the battle officially ended.

78 IX Corps AAR Hill 395, 9-11.
79 Ibid., 12.
80 Ibid., 17-20.
The Battle for White Horse Mountain had profound repercussions. The Chinese had suffered a humiliating setback. Their repeated and determined efforts to seize the hill and dislodge the Koreans had utterly failed. For ten days the ROK 9th Division beat off twenty-eight separate Chinese assaults and endured the pounding of 50,000 artillery and mortar shells. One observer was so impressed by the amount of artillery thrown at Hill 395 that he reported to Van Fleet the “intense and prolonged artillery fire from both sides has changed the configuration of the hill to a noticeable extent.” IX Corps estimated that the Chinese force facing the ROK 9th Division was “now in no condition to renew the action.” Throughout the battle, in which the summit of Hill 395 changed hands numerous times, Korean officer leadership had been exemplary. Troop control and fire discipline enabled the Koreans to stop a near endless stream of enemy attackers. General Kim, in particular, was singled out for praise, for his “timely injection of fresh troops on both offense and defense” that kept the 9th Division combat effective. At lower levels, Korean officers proved their valor, suffering a casualty rate of more than fifteen percent killed and wounded. The Korean soldier also proved his mettle in this grueling battle. The casualty figures demonstrate the resiliency of Korean units who had received the KMAG remedial training program. Suffering over 3,000 casualties in a ten-day period, the division maintained its cohesion enough to defend, counter-attack, and receive and integrate 3,743 replacements during the battle, without a corresponding loss in its combat effectiveness. This statistic reflects the ability of Korean units to function under the stress and strain of combat. It also demonstrates the quality of staff officers who

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81 Hermes, *Truce Tent*, 306. The IX Corps AAR noted that Chinese artillery preparations had been unusually thorough and effective, with an adequate supply of ammunition. The corps registered over 77,000 artillery and mortar rounds for the period 6-15 October; IX Corps AAR Hill 395, 24.

82 Colonel David W. Gray to CG Eighth Army, 4 November 1952, Subject Files, Special Operations Reports and Training, #1-6, 1953, Box 87/10, Van Fleet Papers.

83 IX Corps AAR Hill 395, 20.

84 Entry 26 October 1952, Van Fleet Journal, Van Fleet Papers.

85 From a starting strength of 662 officers, the division lost eighty-two WIA and twenty-three KIA. KMAG Command Report, October 1952, Annex F, 9th Division, 2.
maintained the division’s combat potential under trying circumstances. When the battle ended, the 9th Division actually had nearly 200 more soldiers in its ranks than it did before the battle began.86

Korean artillery also did yeoman’s work. The 1st Field Artillery Group (ROK) controlled the fires of four Korean artillery battalions, one American rocket battery, and one American heavy mortar company. Three other American artillery battalions (155 mm howitzer and gun) provided general support or reinforcing fires to the division and the 1st FAG, respectively. The employment of these fire support assets was so satisfactory, that “this organization was maintained with minimum changes throughout the action.”87

From the perspective of American commanders like Van Fleet and Jenkins, the 9th Division had performed impressively. Kim masterfully managed his own supporting artillery and the additional fire support assets from the U.S. IX Corps. Teamwork and cooperation, from the initial intelligence preparation to the defensive fire planning through the successful counterattack, frustrated a major enemy effort and resulted in an estimated 10,000 enemy casualties.88 Van Fleet praised the division’s stalwart defense and judicious use of all its assets. The division’s performance under fire provided an excellent testimonial to the type of leadership, skill, and experience that the ROK Army was in fact developing under KMAG’s guidance and with Van Fleet’s support.89 Little wonder that Clark pushed to get more of it and use it.

Whether Clark actively “conspired” with Van Fleet to equip ROK units before receiving official authority, he certainly realized the potential for an expanded ROKA to play an important role on the battlefield.90 Providing for a larger Korean army had two advantages addressing immediate concerns on the battlefield. First, expansion was the

86 IX Corps AAR Hill 395, 29; KMAG Command Report, October 1952, 9th Division, 2.
87 IX Corps AAR Hill 395, 29-30.
88 Ibid., 22.
89 Hermes, Truce Tent, 306.
90 Clark, “The Truth About Korea,” 90.
only way he could increase pressure against the Communists without increasing his liability for American casualties. Second, expansion also destabilized the military equilibrium that the Communists exploited in the negotiation tactics. If Chinese sources are to be believed, the Communist forces deliberately raised the combat stakes in the fall of 1952 in order to impress Clark with Communist capabilities. Yet, it is equally plausible that the Chinese recognized the political and military dangers of unchecked ROKA expansion and they were forced into precipitate action.

Whatever the reasons for increased combat activity, ROKA expansion continued and accelerated as a response to its credible conduct in the fall of 1952. In July, Clark recommended to the JCS a plan to increase the ROK Army by two divisions; and, to make room for these troops and additional logistical units, he further argued for an increase in the ROKA’s manpower ceiling to 415,046, a number which the ROKA was already fast approaching. In fact, prior to the Battle for Hill 395, Van Fleet was alert to the fact that the ROKA had already burst its authorized ceiling of 363,000 by 18,000 soldiers. To cut back on the ROKA’s induction rate would, he felt, incur both a strategic and administrative risk. To get around ROKA’s ceiling levels, KMAG began to carry Korean soldiers in training as “civilian trainees,” a shell-game that brought the ROKA down to 344,369 when its actual figure was closer to 391,000. Van Fleet had no intention of shutting down the pipeline and he directed his staff to “continue [with the present induction rate] until CINCFE [Clark] says stop.”

Fortunately for Van Fleet, Clark never said “stop.” Throughout September and October, Clark continued to articulate to the JCS his arguments for expansion, which centered around two facts: the need to reinforce the defensive lines while maintaining an adequate reserve force, and the desirability to utilize the increasing number of trained

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91 For example, see Yang Dezhi, “Command Experience in Korea,” in Mao’s Generals, 166-170.

92 In September, the JCS approved this request and forwarded its endorsement to the Secretary of Defense for authorization, Myers, Wartime Experiences, 59-60.

93 Chief of Staff, Eighth Army to Van Fleet, 2 October 1952; Chief of KMAG (Ryan) to Van Fleet, 24 September 1952, ROK Correspondence #20-29, Box 86/7 Van Fleet Papers.
Korean soldiers entering the army each week.\textsuperscript{94} On 28 October Clark proposed to increase the size of the ROKA from ten to twenty divisions, with a manpower ceiling of 639,194 men. Included in this request was an augmentation for KMAG, increasing its authorized strength by 506 officers and 759 enlisted men.\textsuperscript{95}

On 31 October, Clark finally received JCS authorization to add two divisions to the ROK Army and to increase the ROKA’s strength to 415,120 men.\textsuperscript{96} This decision ranks among the top three taken by the Americans during the war.\textsuperscript{97} The immediate consequence of Truman’s approval to add divisions to the Korean Army opened the flood-gates of expansion. Clark urged Van Fleet to “activate 2 Divisions without delay.” Fortunately, KMAG had already worked out the requirements to activate two divisions and six regiments (essentially two additional divisions) over the next two months.\textsuperscript{98} Thanks to KMAG’s efforts at rewriting full strength unit organization tables, the ROK Army was able to add troops and equipment to their divisions and incorporate these units into the existing ROKA infrastructure without sacrificing combat effectiveness or organizational efficiency. Schools, training camps, and reception stations that had deliberately been operating sluggishly in an attempt to remain below the U.S. mandated manpower ceiling, suddenly cut loose from their artificial restraints and began to operate at capacity. By the end of October KMAG planners had succeeded in bringing order to the initial administrative chaos, and ROK expansion proceeded without the deleterious effects experienced during the early months of the war.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{94} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 55. Clark also found compelling the idea that ROK divisions would replace U.S.-UN divisions on a one for one basis; CINCFE to DEPTAR, 28 October 1952, Box 86/2, Van Fleet Papers.

\textsuperscript{95} CINCFE to DEPTAR, 28 October 1952, Van Fleet Papers.

\textsuperscript{96} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 62-63; CINCFE to CG EUSAK, C58179, 2 November 1952, ROK Correspondence #20-29, Box 86/7, Van Fleet Papers.

\textsuperscript{97} Naturally, the top two decisions would be the initial intervention in June 1950 and the relief of MacArthur in April 1951.

\textsuperscript{98} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 63.

\textsuperscript{99} KMAG Command Report, Section II, October 1952, 2. On 6 November, Van Fleet directed the ROKA and KMAG to activate two divisions and make them combat ready (minus artillery) by 31 December and 31 January, respectively; HQ EUSAK to Chief of Staff, ROKA, Expansion of Republic of Korea Army, 6 November 1952, ROK Correspondence #20-29, Box 86/7, Van Fleet Papers.
Despite his enthusiasm for expansion, Ryan remained concerned about a manpower shortfall in advisors that promised to only get worse. As the tempo of combat actions at the front increased, Ryan maintained that although the problem of expansion was “primarily a mechanical one,” the “success of the ROK Army [was] still directly proportional to the effectiveness of American advice.” He pointedly reminded his superiors that success of the ROK Army could not yet be taken for granted. Concerned that “in spite of consistent expansion [of] its advisory responsibilities” KMAG had suffered a net loss of personnel for the fifth consecutive month, Ryan warned that expansion might be numerically successful, but whether it would serve a useful military objective remained in doubt.\(^{100}\)

Ryan’s concerns were valid because as the Korean units demonstrated tactical proficiency, American commanders from Van Fleet on up felt that a greater burden could be shifted on to ROKA. As negotiations failed to advance, the war on the ground went through yet another phase transition. Van Fleet convinced Clark to approve a limited two-division offensive, called SHOWDOWN, that was meant to respond to the Chinese offensives against Hills 281 and 395 with a show of political and military resolve. SHOWDOWN was a costly and limited success with much of the burden falling on the Koreans. The casualty list (9,000 Americans and Koreans) shocked Clark, who vowed not to repeat any such “limited” attacks again,\(^{101}\) yet no one could deny that the Korean 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) Division, commanded by Chung Il-kwon, generally fought well, and KMAG attributed the great interest and support for more Korean divisions to these battles. A month later, as SHOWDOWN concluded, KMAG reported, “The sudden burst of interest brought on by the valiant ROKs themselves was a timely and convincing argument for the enlargement of their force.”\(^{102}\)

\(^{100}\) KMAG Command Report, October 1952, Section IV, 32.

\(^{101}\) Clark, *Danube to Yalu*, 78-79.

**The Unit Training Center**

In November the ROKA activated and began training the 12th and 15th Divisions. Both of these divisions had radically different experiences than those raised or reconstituted in the early days of the war. Several factors account for this condition. First, KMAG and the ROKA had acquired nearly a year’s worth of experience in activating, organizing, and training new units. The process had already been worked out ahead of time; all that remained was for the ROKA headquarters to identify which units would come together to form the division. Korean leadership was also dramatically improved and Korean officers were now accomplished trainers and administrators, which allowed KMAG to focus less on officer supervision and more on the technical (“mechanical” to use Ryan’s word) problems of expansion. Lastly, KMAG recognized that divisions, perhaps more than any other type of unit, required a period of time for combined arms training at a centralized location, along the model established at the FTC. For this purpose, KMAG retained operational control of FTC 2 and renamed it the Unit Training Center on 1 July 1952.103

The UTC perpetuated the training system pioneered by the FTC, providing KMAG with an installation to support ROK Army expansion. Divisions and replacement regiments raised and equipped after the fall of 1952 conducted unit training at the UTC before being committed to the front line.104 KMAG advisors felt that the quality of training was not as high at the UTC as it had been at the various Field Training Centers, but the UTC did represent a vast improvement over the process used between June 1950 and July 1951, which completely skipped any sense of unit training. KMAG’s biggest trouble was the increasingly tight competition for personnel and equipment between the UTC and the activation of new army units, which also required a full complement of


104 Ibid.
advisors. KMAG felt the pinch as it tried to staff both existing units and new units as they formed with advisors without a corresponding overall increase in personnel authorizations.

As a consequence of KMAG’s overall personnel shortage, the UTC suffered more than was prudent. To staff the training center responsible for the combat preparation of new divisions, the KMAG authorization was only eight officers and thirty-one enlisted men. To make up for this inadequate manning situation, Eighth Army provided up to twenty-two additional officers and sixty-three enlisted men on a rotating basis from thirty to ninety days. The constant turnover of these temporary personnel, and the requirement to orient and train them, necessarily took away from the time available to supervise the training of the Korean soldiers.\textsuperscript{105} It is a tribute to the Americans and Korean officers involved that despite chronic resource and personnel shortages, in one year the UTC trained an impressive number of troops: five full-strength divisions (minus artillery), a dozen regiments, and a number of security battalions.\textsuperscript{106}

The early history of the ROK 12\textsuperscript{th} Division illustrates the critical role played by KMAG and the UTC training program to create battle-worthy divisions from scratch. This division was the first to go through the UTC, starting training on 10 November 1952. Lieutenant Colonel Stewart F. Yeo, the division’s senior advisor, reported to the unit on 12 November. Yeo was immediately impressed by what he found. He recalled that the division commander, Brigadier General Yoon Chun-koon, promptly greeted and welcomed him to the unit, thereby establishing the critical bond between counterparts. The division’s area, which was neat and well maintained, Yeo reflected, “was a sample of the future excellent operation of this division.”\textsuperscript{107}

The partnership between Yeo and Yoon was a fruitful one. Although Yoon was above average age (forty) for his rank and position as a Korean officer, he impressed Yeo

\textsuperscript{105} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 143-44.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 142, figure 12.

\textsuperscript{107} Stewart F. Yeo, “Service in Korea, 12 December 1951 – 8 March 1953,” 1, Senior Advisor 12\textsuperscript{th} ROK Division, U.S. Army Military History Institute.
“as a man of character and as a leader. I never had occasion to change my opinion.” 

A veteran of the Imperial Japanese Army, Yoon served in Manchuria for nine years from 1936 to 1945. He commanded the ROK 9th Infantry Regiment in June 1950, and had taken part in the defense of Uijongbu during the opening days of the North Korean invasion. Now a division commander, he had the difficult task of building a fresh fighting team from new soldiers and some veteran cadre, and training them to be capable of immediate combat operations.

To oversee the division’s training, Yoon’s KMAG team comprised (in addition to Colonel Yeo) three lieutenant colonels (a senior advisor, G1/G4 advisor, and G2/G3 advisor) at the division headquarters; three majors for the supporting functions of engineer, signal, and ordnance; and one lieutenant colonel and major for each of the three infantry regiments. KMAG enlisted personnel consisted of signal, communications, headquarters, supply, mess, and motor vehicle maintenance elements, a total of twenty-nine soldiers. Together, these forty-four officers and men helped to train the division and prepare it for deployment on 18 December to the U.S. X Corps sector.

Yoon and his staff proved up to the task of training the division’s subordinate units, deploying the division over a hundred miles in the middle of winter to relieve a U.S. division in place, and fighting a significant engagement – all in the space of two months. Throughout this period, the KMAG advisors played important but supporting roles, particularly as liaison officers with the U.S. X Corps headquarters and the 45th Infantry Division, which provided armor and artillery assets support. As Yoon’s “shadow,” Yeo went everywhere the division commander did. After Yoon addressed the division’s soldiers he always turned to his senior advisor and expected him to speak some words of encouragement as well. Their relationship was extremely positive and effective.

After the war, Yeo wrote, “My opinion of the ROK combat divisions . . . is that when

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., 1-2; Myers, Wartime Experiences, 15, figure 3.
110 Yeo, “Service in Korea,” 5-6, USAMHI.
given adequate training and the same amount of artillery, tank, mortar, and air support which U.S. combat divisions normally receive, they will fight as well as American troops.”

In December the 12th Division deployed into the U.S. X Corps sector and entered action before the year’s end. This division had responsibility for two important hilltops, known as Hill 854 and Hill 812. Both became the focus of the intensive fighting during the months of January and February 1953.

In the first week of the January 1953, patrols of ROK 12th Division captured a North Korean prisoner who revealed the likelihood of an attack against the division’s outpost line. On 10 January, the division requested and received a counter-preparatory bombardment on suspected enemy assembly areas and supporting artillery locations. After midnight the enemy attacked, advancing to the point of engaging the Koreans in close combat. The battle raged over the summit of the hill for three hours before the enemy forces withdrew. Anticipating that the enemy would withdraw when the sun rose, the division commander ordered each company in contact to prepare one platoon to pursue when the enemy withdrew. The division’s senior advisor reported, “As a result of this order two [prisoners of war] were taken and additional casualties inflicted on the enemy.” The victorious Koreans counted ninety-seven enemy bodies on the hill, and estimated another 138 wounded. Friendly casualties were nineteen dead and twenty-three wounded. When the enemy returned in February to contest possession of Hill 812, the results were quite similar to those of the preceding month. For a unit’s first action in combat, the ROK 12th Division had performed credibly by any standard.

Like the ROK 12th Division, the ROK 15th Division also saw combat immediately after completing its training in January 1953. These divisions – raised, trained, equipped, and deployed in combat in the space of sixty days – vindicated KMAG’s efforts to remake ROKA’s institutional structure and to improve its fighting capability.

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111 Ibid., 11.

112 Myers, Wartime Experiences, 356.

113 Yeo, “Service in Korea,” 7, USAMHI.

114 Myers, Wartime Experiences, 65-66.
This achievement also indicated the degree of potential stored in ROKA that could increase Eighth Army’s combat strength on the battlefield. Therefore, KMAG continued to lay the groundwork for further expansion in the expectation of the greater role that Korean units would assume in combat.\(^{115}\) January was a very busy month for ROKA and KMAG. Units activated, trained, and deployed included the 20th and 21st Divisions two medium 155 mm howitzer battalions (the 100th and 101st), the first Korean tank company, and in support a true litany of other units – engineer, signal, ordnance, and quartermaster.\(^{116}\) At the end of the month, the ROK Army had a strength of 460,078 officers, men, and trainees (which were not counted against the manpower ceiling). Combat casualties continued to be light despite some sharp clashes: 824 killed, 1,605 wounded, and 26 missing during the month.\(^{117}\)

In fact, at this time, the low casualty rate compared to the trainee induction rate had become something of a polite embarrassment for Clark. Under pressure to utilize the increasing flow of trained Korean manpower, on 14 January Clark requested authority from the JCS to form two more divisions (provisional, that is without organic artillery) and to increase again the ROK Army manpower ceiling to 460,000 men. With the current induction rate of 7,200 a week, KMAG projected that the Koreans would certainly exceed that manpower ceiling by the end of the month.\(^{118}\) Yet, Clark was reluctant to tamper with the ROKA induction system or to apply a “stop and go” process, which might have wrecked eighteen months of patient work on the part of KMAG, Eighth Army, and the ROK Army staff.\(^{119}\)

Early in February 1953, the JCS relayed President Eisenhower’s approval to add two more divisions to the ROK order of battle and to increase strength levels to 507,880

\(^{115}\) KMAG Command Report, January 1953, Section I, 1.

\(^{116}\) KMAG Command Report, January 1953, Section I, 3-4; Section II, 5.

\(^{117}\) KMAG Command Report, January 1953, Section IV, 12.

\(^{118}\) CG AFFE to CG EUSA (Information copy to CINCFE), EX40140, 31 January 1953, ROK Correspondence, 1951-1953, Box 86/2, Van Fleet Papers.

\(^{119}\) Myers, *Wartime Experiences*, 68.
soldiers.\textsuperscript{120} By the time the 20\textsuperscript{th} Division completed its training and joined the U.S. X Corps, the 21\textsuperscript{st} Division had completed its formation and began training.\textsuperscript{121} KMAG and ROKA had clearly hit their stride, this being the second time that they were able to coordinate the addition of two fully manned and trained divisions without overtaxing the expansion system. Two more artillery battalions and one tank company likewise completed training, and troop levels continued to rise to 479,760. In April, the ROK Army approached the pinnacle of its wartime expansion. Two more divisions, the 22\textsuperscript{nd} and the 25\textsuperscript{th}, were activated on 21 April, increasing the ROKA’s manpower strength to 513,673 soldiers.\textsuperscript{122}

The last act in army expansion was mostly symbolic, the announcement to activate the ROK III Corps and to raise an additional four divisions.\textsuperscript{123} None of these developments for further expansion had a tangible effect on the battlefield. However, what cannot yet be fully assessed, is the effect that these announcements of future expansion had on the Communists.\textsuperscript{124} As the war dragged on and drained Chinese military and economic resources in what was a deliberate protracted struggle to wear down the enemy, the Chinese must have realized the ridiculousness of a situation where the “contemptible” South Koreans were actually \textit{gaining} military strength. Not surprisingly, the Chinese – facing declining Soviet support and economic disaster at home – quickly accepted Clark’s suggestion in March 1953 to resume armistice talks along with a limited prisoner exchange. The Chinese, eager to disengage from an unprofitable conflict, even overlooked much of President Rhee’s militant opposition to an armistice. Communist negotiators loudly remonstrated against Rhee’s most egregious act, the unilateral release of 27,000 North Korean prisoners of war, but they accepted

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 69.

\textsuperscript{121} KMAG Command Report, February 1953, Section I, 2, Section II, 4-5, Section III, 11.

\textsuperscript{122} KMAG Command Report, April 1953, Section IV, 13. Neither of these divisions completed their training in time to see combat before the armistice took effect.

\textsuperscript{123} ROK III Corps was activated 1 May and assigned to U.S. X Corps for training. President Eisenhower approved a concept for a twenty-division army on 12 May. Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 75, 77.

\textsuperscript{124} Weathersby, “End of the Korean War,” 108ff.
Clark’s apology and explanation that there was not much they could do about it. Clark too, was incensed, and American authorities had to prosecute the remaining months of war with one eye increasingly focused on their South Korean ally.\(^\text{125}\)

**“Kill the chicken so as to scare the monkey”**

Stewart Yeo’s assessment regarding the ROK 12\(^{\text{th}}\) Division’s early combat record corroborated other observations about the ROKA’s increased martial competence. ROK artillery battalions and infantry divisions increasingly appeared to be interchangeable with their American counterparts.\(^\text{126}\) Van Fleet credited KMAG’s comprehensive training reform from recruits to officers to units as being chiefly responsible for “a fighting army that can be relied on.”\(^\text{127}\) The ROKA’s newly demonstrated martial competence validated the risk assumed by KMAG and Eighth Army to support genuine and open expansion of the ROK Army. Once the political decisions had been cast to support expansion, it was critically important that ROK Army expansion be a natural extension of the KMAG training program. There was an undeniable linkage between training reform and expansion. First, only trained units were worth the logistical and command support Eighth Army provided. When retrained Korean divisions demonstrated their mettle in combat against the Chinese in October and November 1952, it became clear that Van Fleet could afford the risk of supporting new Korean divisions while exploiting their tactical potential. This realization had both political and military advantages, not least was the potential to substitute Korean manpower for American soldiers.\(^\text{128}\) Since Korean manpower continued to outstrip attrition it was militarily possible and desirable to arm more Koreans and give them a greater share of the combat burden. Second, new divisions and regiments entered their first battles not as raw

\(^{125}\text{FRUS (1952-1954), 15: 1159-60.}\)

\(^{126}\text{Gray to Van Fleet, 4 November 1952, Van Fleet Papers.}\)

\(^{127}\text{Watkins to Bendetsen, 28 August 1952, Van Fleet Papers.}\)

\(^{128}\text{Hermes, Truce Tent, 305-310, 341-42; Collins, War in Peacetime, 317ff; Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), 95.}\)
formations, full of trepidation and carrying old equipment, but as cohesive, trained, equipped, and motivated units. The discrepancy between the army of 1950 and that of 1953 was huge. That “army of 1775” was no more. Lastly, expansion, like training reform, depended on the reduced pace of fighting on account of the armistice negotiations. Without this artificially imposed condition, it is unlikely that training or expansion would have been as effective or constructive in the pursuit of a cease-fire agreement.

Feeling the weight of greater political, economic, and now military pressure, the Chinese had to do something to gain an armistice while maintaining a façade of victory. This meant that the last Chinese efforts of the war would be aimed at the ROK Army. It would be the supreme test for the Koreans, the culmination of two years of work to improve the leadership, training, and organization. KMAG’s methods resulted in both a greater quantity and quality of leadership, manpower, and weaponry. In KMAG’s admittedly biased perspective, the ROK military establishment had matured into a combat force with great potential.\textsuperscript{129} Whereas ROK divisions used to be “sandwiched” between U.S. divisions “for their own protection,” ROK units by January 1953 occupied fifty-nine percent of the frontline, meet eighty-seven percent of the enemy’s probes and attacks, and inflicted fifty percent of enemy casualties.\textsuperscript{130} From August 1952 to January 1953, the ROK Army demonstrated its new proficiency and resiliency against Chinese attacks aimed at putting pressure on the United States, and Korean units increasingly assumed more responsibility for the front line. The Koreans also demonstrated increasing confidence and skill when facing their Chinese opponent.

The significance of KMAG’s reform of the ROK Army can hardly be overstated. According to KMAG’s internal evaluations, the ROKA, which had doubled in strength in two years, had “showed improvement in every field of military endeavor.”\textsuperscript{131} Battle experience proved that little hyperbole influenced Ryan’s optimism. The ROK Army’s reformation also salvaged the political position of the UNC at Panmunjom by showing

\textsuperscript{129} Myers, \textit{Wartime Experiences}, 67.

\textsuperscript{130} KMAG Command Report, December 1952, Section I, 1.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
the Chinese that attrition was a sport two could play. Thanks to the ROKA, 1953 would be the year that saw the final bloody spasms of the Korean War finally evolve into an cease-fire agreement.

In the semi-annual report of the Secretary of the Army, covering the period 1 January to 30 June 1953, Robert T. Stevens wrote:

By the end of fiscal year, 1953, largely through the efforts of our Army and under the guidance of our Korean Army Military Advisory Group, [the ROK Army] has been built on the battlefield into a hard-fighting, effective combat force of some 460,000, well equipped and led by excellent officers, and it was holding about 60 percent of the line. This was a training achievement for which it would be difficult to find a parallel.\(^\text{132}\)

The secretary’s words were strong praise. He succinctly identified the elements that led to the remarkable turnaround in the fortunes of the Korean Army. Compared with the beaten and dejected force of May 1951, the Korean soldier of 1953 could look up to trained, disciplined, and courageous officers. He had confidence in his individual training, which lasted at least three months even at the most basic level, and in his unit training, where he learned to fight as a member of a team. He also went into battle knowing that his division and corps artillery stood behind him, ready on a minute’s notice, to bring a rain of ruin on his enemy. It was a new Army that matured just in time to fight a new war for an armistice that thousands of men had died trying to reach.

\(^{132}\) Quoted in Hausrath, *Problems*, 34.
CHAPTER 8

THE TEST OF BATTLE:
THE SUMMER OFFENSIVES, MAY – JULY 1953

The burden of the war decisively shifted to the ROK Army in 1953. Although the term was not used by the Americans, “Koreanization” was in full swing, and KMAG’s expansion program appeared to generate gratifying results without adversely affecting Eighth Army. During the month of January 1953, the ROKA amassed an impressive array of combat-related statistics with the twelve ROK divisions held fifty-nine percent of the frontline. The Koreans were active in proportion to their size. They dispatched sixty-one percent of UNC ground patrols, and made eighty percent of the contacts against the enemy. At the same time, Chinese and North Korean forces gave the ROKA more attention relative to American and allied troops. Eighty-six percent of enemy probes and attacks, and sixty-nine percent of all enemy artillery directed against Eighth Army landed against Korean lines. The disproportionate share of enemy attention given to ROK units shows that the Chinese considered them less problematic targets than American units. The casualty statistics, however, demonstrate that ROK units were not so vulnerable as expected, particularly when U.S. artillery and air support lent their weight to the Korean divisions. Korean troops suffered three-fifths of the UNC’s ground casualties, but they were killing, wounding, or capturing more than half of all enemy casualties evaluated by Eighth Army intelligence.1 The Koreans were holding their own, and they were dishing out severe punishment to Chinese and North Korean troops.

Just prior to his departure from Korea, Van Fleet wrote to Major General John “Iron Mike” O’Daniel, former commander of the U.S. I Corps, “The ROK Army continues to shine with great brilliance. There is never a disappointment – rather, there is

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1 Hausrath, Problems, 28, Figure 1, “Relative Efforts of ROKA and UN Units in Korean War January 1953.”
often a pleasant surprise. The new 12th Division has recently replaced the 45th U.S. [Infantry Division], and it is doing an outstanding job.”

Van Fleet never tired of promoting the virtues of the Korean soldier and the vast improvement in the ROKA’s combat capability. He noted with satisfaction that newly formed units such as the 12th Division allowed the American corps commanders to pull U.S. divisions back into corps reserve – a luxury that Eighth Army never before had. Therefore, it was a bitter-sweet transition when in February 1953, Van Fleet bade farewell to President Rhee and to his beloved Eighth Army. After a brilliant and full career of thirty-six years, Van Fleet faced mandatory retirement for age. He left behind in Korea his son James A. Jr., an Air Force pilot shot down and declared missing over North Korea, and his regrets that he did not attain “final victory.”

The change of command in Eighth Army did not change the overall program of ROKA reform. Lieutenant General Maxwell D. Taylor assumed command of Eighth Army on 7 February, and he assured Syngman Rhee that he would continue to support Van Fleet’s initiatives towards the ROKA. Taylor had more doubts about his Korean ally than Van Fleet, but he concealed it well and continued to support KMAG’s programs for expansion and training. For its part, KMAG continued to play a conspicuous role as the ROKA’s combat role increased during the winter of 1952-53. The universal praise heaped upon Korean units in battle testified to the efficacy of KMAG’s program to raise, train, and deploy new divisions and artillery battalions. In fact, demand outstripped General Ryan’s supply, forcing him to make hard choices assigning advisors. ROK units with officers whom KMAG judged to be of “exceptional caliber” saw their KMAG authorization reduced.

General Clark noted the mutual affection that existed between

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2 Van Fleet to John O’Daniel, 5 January 1953, Correspondence – Alphabetical, Box 71/17, Van Fleet Papers.

3 Van Fleet to O’Daniel, 29 January 1953, Van Fleet Papers.

4 Maxwell Taylor to Syngman Rhee, 11 February 1953 and Rhee to Taylor, 13 February 1953, Correspondence – Alphabetical, Taylor, F.-Taylor, M., Box 73/2, Van Fleet Papers.

5 Gray to Van Fleet, G 30790, 4 November 1952; G 31243, 19 November 1952, Van Fleet Papers.

6 KMAG Command Report, December 1952, Section II, 12; Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 11, USAMHI.
the two organizations and the reluctance with which ROK officers accepted the loss of their advisors, but Ryan’s decision was necessary. As winter turned to spring, a new round of battle commenced with most of the enemy’s weight thrown against the most exposed and inexperienced ROK divisions.\(^7\)

Beginning in January 1953, Communist forces focused on stockpiling ammunition, food, and fuel. They feared that ROKA expansion and Clark’s increasing willingness to apply military pressure might result in a UNC offensive. The Chinese command in Korea determined to make their defenses impregnable while ensuring that no Chinese offensive would fail because of an inability to supply the attacking troops.\(^8\)

The slower tempo of battle in February and March masked the effort Communist logisticians made in anticipation of a general offensive lasting up to twenty-four days.\(^9\)

By the spring of 1953, the Chinese, benefiting both from experience and Soviet advice, had evolved a sophisticated logistics and transportation system that bested the UNC’s prodigious efforts to interdict the flow of munitions and supplies southward. By May 1953, the Chinese employed over 10,000 trucks just to support their artillery.\(^10\)

In addition to these organizational assets, the Chinese also exploited their manpower advantage, by directing an “army” of rear area troops that labored ceaselessly every day to repair roads and bridges destroyed at night.

By May the Chinese realized that the UNC would not initiate offensive action. However, they were prepared for a final, major military effort, their largest offensive since the spring of 1951.\(^11\) The only open question was how the Koreans would stand up to a final large-scale offensive. Two years of patient reform now boiled down to this ultimate question: how would the ROKs fight? The failure of this offensive to break the Korean army or the UNC coalition finally established the military equilibrium required to support a meaningful armistice agreement, which was signed on 27 July.

\(^7\) Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu*, 185.

\(^8\) Zhang, *Military Romanticism*, 234, 238.


\(^10\) Ibid., 127.


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A Violent Spring in Korea

It was no coincidence that action along the front picked up appreciably as negotiators reconvened at Panmunjom in April to reach an agreement on prisoner repatriation. Stalin’s death two months earlier had softened the Soviet support to the Chinese, who by now were straining under incredible economic and military burdens. Not much time remained for the Communists to achieve a settlement without loss of face. With a few notable exceptions, the Chinese refrained from large-scale attacks to conserve their strength, but they kept the pressure on the UNC through aggressive patrolling and by selective fights for key hilltops. It was cruel irony that the last few months of the war saw quantities of blood spilled for blasted hill tops that would have to be evacuated once the armistice went into effect. As a bit of tactical “insurance,” Chinese forces made a concerted effort to dominate “no man’s land” in the Imjin River valley and in the region surrounding the Iron Triangle. These terrain features possessed the greatest strategic value in the event that a cease-fire agreement failed to hold.  

Although KMAG reports of the period reflect positively on the Koreans’ improved combat ability, a lot of work remained. Inexperience with artillery tactics, weak logistics, and uneven leadership continued to remain relevant in determining the final effectiveness of the ROKA in battle.

The ROK Army had not had time to develop competent officers who understood the effective employment of artillery at corps and division levels. The lack of experienced officers resulted in over centralization of artillery firepower, such as occurred in the ROK II Corps. Corps artillery consisted of fifteen battalions of 105 mm and 155 mm medium howitzers, and 8-inch (U.S.) heavy howitzers, yet only three

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12 One such battle occurred in the ROK 3rd Division sector over Hill 689, known as Outpost Texas, along the Kumsong bulge. The ROK II Corps G-2 estimated that up to three battalions were involved in the several attempts to overrun Outpost Texas. For two weeks Korean and Chinese troops surged back and forth over the hill, which changed hands nine times. The Chinese finally gave up and left behind 146 bodies and four prisoners. The Koreans estimated they killed 304 Chinese and wounded 271. Friendly casualties were sixty-two dead and 182 wounded. KMAG Command Report, April 1953, Section II, 7, 16-17, and Annex F “Combat Units,” 3rd Division, 1.
battalions fired in direct support of the frontline divisions.\textsuperscript{13} The remaining battalions fell under the 5\textsuperscript{th} Field Artillery Group, which was commanded by an American artillery officer. This practice ran counter to American doctrine for it complicated time-sensitive procedures for fire support, and it would suffer severe criticism during and after the final offensives.\textsuperscript{14}

At the firing units themselves, the Koreans received high marks from their KMAG advisors, even though they worked with less adequate equipment. One battalion advisor, Captain William H. Davis, assigned to the 62\textsuperscript{nd} Field Artillery Battalion, reported that his battalion’s gun tubes were so old and worn that accurate indirect fire was unlikely, and tube wear made it impossible for batteries to fire off of the same firing “solution.” Gunners had to compute separate firing data for each gun, a time-consuming and technically demanding process. This drawback meant that the battalion could not fire the most effective burst pattern, which required all initial rounds from any single battery (each battery consisting of six howitzers) to land simultaneously on a target.\textsuperscript{15}

Nevertheless, Davis felt that his battalion possessed good leadership, and was trained and competent in basic artillery tasks.\textsuperscript{16} Most KMAG artillery advisors shared Davis’ opinion:

\begin{quote}
[Korean] artillery is excellent. They are a match for the American batteries . . . They like fire direction and survey and they are good at laying pieces. They get six months of training [from an American unit], including three months on the line. There is no attrition . . . and they need few replacements. They get more experience as a team.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13} Including battalions assigned to the divisions in II Corps. Tube breakdown was as follows: U.S. artillery numbered thirty-six 105 mm howitzers in two battalions and one battalion of twelve 8-inch heavy howitzers. ROK artillery numbered 162 105 mm howitzers in nine battalions, and fifty-four 155 mm howitzers in three battalions, for a total of 264 pieces of artillery in support of three divisions spread along a front approximately twenty-five kilometers in length. KMAG Command Report, January 1953, Annex F “Combat Units,” 2.


\textsuperscript{15} Also known as a “Time on Target” or TOT. William H. Davis, U.S. Army Service in Korea Veteran’s Questionnaire, U.S. Army Military History Institute.

\textsuperscript{16} Davis, Veteran’s Questionnaire.

\textsuperscript{17} Hausrath, \textit{Problems}, 218.
While the Koreans were good at mimicking the proper techniques for fire support, advisors continued to note weaknesses in understanding the full capabilities of cannon artillery, an indication that deeper tactical understanding was more elusive. Korean battalions were not yet proficient firing immediate missions or under circumstances that differed from their specifically trained tasks. These deficiencies, however, must be considered in proper context. Korean artillery units formed, trained, received equipment, and entered combat within a six-to-eight-week period. They formed the most technically advanced segment of Korean army and society. They also played a large role in bringing the tactical situation back into balance in the fall of 1952. Even during the crucible of the final offensives, when the lines became fluid and communications broke down, some artillery units found themselves having to employ direct fire at close range in order to disengage and redeploy to a more secure area. Korean artillery was one of the good news stories of the ROKA’s reformation, and it was a critical component contributing to Eighth Army’s overall combat capability.

A second weakness was in logistics, transportation especially. Van Fleet directed KMAG to plan for division and army service elements at a level of “minimum troops necessary to insure combat effectiveness.” As a result, ROK divisions and corps lacked mobility to move troops and supplies in large quantities. While the war maintained the characteristics of positional fighting, this was not a serious handicap, but in March 1953, KMAG felt compelled to include in its command report that lack of transportation was still an issue, just in case Eighth Army had forgotten. However, during the last two months of the war, when casualties increased dramatically, and as Eighth Army hastily redeployed units and released Korean units in reserve, the ROK Army found itself at a severe disadvantage. Generally able only to match the speed of the attacking Chinese,

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18 Ibid., 221.
20 Myers, Wartime Experiences, 43.
21 KMAG Command Report, March 1953, Section VI, 29.
the defending ROK units were unable to exploit fully firepower and terrain advantages.\textsuperscript{22} Under the tremendous strain of the Chinese summer offensive, ROK transportation broke down, permitting the Chinese to penetrate further before meeting reinforced and prepared defensive positions capable of withstanding the onrush of enemy infantry.\textsuperscript{23}

The last weakness relevant to understanding the combat performance of Korean units during the last three months of the war revolved around leadership. When it came to small unit tactics, KMAG advisors continued to see need to improve junior officers’ ability to plan and execute attacks at the platoon and company levels.\textsuperscript{24} At higher levels, Korean officers still struggled to comprehend the simultaneous characteristics of modern war and the requirement for cooperative, combined arms combat. Some divisions, such as the ROK 1\textsuperscript{st} and 9\textsuperscript{th} Divisions, had eliminated these problems. For other units, such as the divisions in the Kumsong salient (ROK II Corps), it was another story. KMAG officers still had to perform more functions than they should have. Weapons employment, fire support, logistics, and communications were still battlefield functions for which the Koreans relied upon the Americans to provide.\textsuperscript{25}

This, then, was the situation in May 1953. Plenary negotiations had resumed at Panmunjom after both sides conducted an initial prisoner exchange, dubbed “Little Switch” from 20-26 April.\textsuperscript{26} The UNC purposefully refrained from any ground offensive

\textsuperscript{22} Yeo, “Service in Korea,” 9, USAMHI.

\textsuperscript{23} The dire situation required the Eighth Army commander, General Taylor to take unusual steps to get ROK divisions quickly to the threatened sector. He even relented to the idea of ferrying an entire division, the 11\textsuperscript{th} by air, one infantry squad at a time. Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 240-41.

\textsuperscript{24} Hausrath, \textit{Problems}, 217.

\textsuperscript{25} An incident in the 6\textsuperscript{th} Division again serves as a good example. Division advisors noted that recoilless gunners, fearful of being detected by the large back-blast of the recoilless rife, were reluctant to shoot from their static positions lest they attract unwanted attention. Failure to employ these weapons reduced the firepower of platoons and companies. To correct this deficiency and promote confidence in their weapons, KMAG orchestrated a shoot-off of all the division's recoilless weapons. The shoot-off had three impressive results. First, the enemy barely responded to the massive demonstration of firepower. Second, the troops observed first hand the accuracy and destructiveness of their weapons. Third, gunner confidence increased dramatically. Henceforth, recoilless gunners began to pick out their own targets and fire on their own initiative. This episode reveals to what extent KMAG still had to go to ensure soldiers employed every weapon at their disposal. KMAG Combat Operations Command Report, May 1953, 12.

\textsuperscript{26} Clark, \textit{Danube to Yalu}, 258-61.
action that might result in unnecessary casualties or jeopardize the negotiations, even while increasing pressure through air attacks. The Communists, still concerned that the UNC might try a major offensive combined with an amphibious attack, continued with their preparations for their own decisive offensive, which they hoped would bring an cessation to the fighting largely on their terms. With the final offensive of the war about to burst upon the Korean battlefront, ROKA’s American patron could be pleased with the past eighteen months of effort and expense. Although not an American army, the ROK Army was at least moving along a parallel path of development. Just as in June 1950, all they needed was time.

The Summer Offensive, May and June

For the UNC, May and June were months of increasing anxiety. An armistice agreement was tantalizingly close. Months of haggling, posturing, and propagandizing had boiled down to the essential question: would the Communists accept voluntary repatriation? On 7 May, they indicated that they would under certain conditions. On 25 May, General Harrison tabled the UNC’s final proposal accepting the Communists’ demand for a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission to screen and determine the final disposition of all prisoners resisting repatriation. Significantly, Harrison clearly informed the Communist negotiators that this was the UNC’s “final offer,” which it was, for Washington authorized Clark to “break off the truce talks . . . and to carry on the war in new ways never yet tried in Korea.” Nam Il, the chief North Korean delegate, responded positively to Harrison’s offer on 4 June, and four days later both sides substantially agreed to a framework to end the fighting. “We had only to fix the date and details of the final signing ceremony,” Clark recalled.

27 Zhang, Military Romanticism, 240.


What Clark did not realize was that even while progress was made at Panmunjom, the Communists would not quit fighting until they had squeezed every possible tactical and strategic concession out of the UNC. Somewhat simplistically, the Americans expected increased Communist action prior to the conclusion of an armistice, if for no other reason than to shoot off accumulated stocks of ammunition, or as grist for their propaganda mills.\footnote{Clark, \textit{Danube to Yalu}, 257; Ridgway, \textit{Korean War}, 222-23; Maxwell D. Taylor, \textit{Swords and Plowshares} (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1972), 145; Collins, \textit{War in Peacetime}, 361.} The Chinese had other objectives in mind.

Immediately following Beijing’s commitment to restart negotiations in late March, the Chinese leadership planned a May offensive “to deal the enemy a fatal blow.”\footnote{Zhang, \textit{Military Romanticism}, 240.} To avoid political embarrassment and loss of face, Yang Dezhi, deputy commander of the CPFV, felt the Chinese had to “impress the enemy with the ‘iron’ fact that we were capable – not afraid of fighting the war [through to the end].”\footnote{Ibid.} The decline of Soviet interest and support for the war, the ROKA’s expansion, and the prospects for a harder line from the Eisenhower administration meant that the Communists’ window of opportunity for a beneficial settlement was closing. President Rhee’s public intransigence made the Korean troops convenient targets for political and strategic purposes.\footnote{Syngman Rhee, \textit{Korea Flaming High, 1953} (Seoul: Office of Public Information, 1954) provides a collection of public and private statements regarding truce negotiations and Korean-American relations.} The Chinese were determined to punish Rhee for his belligerent rhetoric and posturing while simultaneously demonstrating their capability to continue fighting.\footnote{Chai Chengwen, “The Korean Truce Negotiations,” in \textit{Mao’s Generals}, 227-30.}

The Chinese planned their final offensive in three phases: preparatory, decisive battle, and exploitation. In the preparatory phase, sudden attacks by coordinated infantry and artillery assaults to seize exposed positions would pave the way for the decisive fighting in phase two, which itself comprised two stages. First, attacks against U.S. and ROK troops in the far western and eastern sectors would pin down UNC reserves and
distract attention from the Kumsong sector in the center. Stage two was the main offensive effort, directed along Pukhan River valley, which coincided with the boundary between the ROK II and U.S. X Corps on the eastern side of the Kumsong salient. In the exploitation phase, reserve troops would drive deep between the two corps in an effort to annihilate significant parts of the ROK Army and to force a humiliating withdrawal from the Kumsong salient. The Chinese planned for each phase to last approximately ten days with a five day pause between phases. If the Chinese did not expect a military victory outright, they did expect to create the conditions for a more favorable settlement at Panmunjom.\textsuperscript{35}

The Summer Offensive officially erupted along Eighth Army lines on 12 May 1953. For two weeks the Chinese employed elements of three armies – the Twenty-fourth, Sixtieth, and Sixty-seventh – in small attacks to probe the six Korean divisions defending the salient and gain terrain favorable for follow-on assaults (figure 8.1). These attacks represented a switch in tactics from the previous spring and fall, when the Chinese wrestled with the UNC in an attritional contest. Now Chinese troops came to stay, and they put heavy pressure on the Korean divisions defending the Kumsong bulge in the U.S. IX, X, and ROK II Corps sectors.\textsuperscript{36} Chinese attacks began 8\textsuperscript{th} Division’s sector, a serious blow because it guarded an approach down the west bank of the Pukhan River, that could outflank the ROK 5\textsuperscript{th} Division. This situation would have serious repercussions during the second phase.\textsuperscript{37}

On either side of the salient, the Chinese enjoyed less success. In the west, the Capital Division and the 9\textsuperscript{th} Division both fought hard to keep the Chinese attackers at bay in three separate engagements. Timely intelligence, accurate artillery employing variable-time fuse shells, and an efficiently planned counterattack inflicted heavy casualties on the attacking Chinese.\textsuperscript{38} KMAG observers noted that both these divisions


\textsuperscript{36} KIMH, \textit{KW}, vol. 3, 590, 594.


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 10.
enjoyed aggressive leadership and the imaginative employment of weapons such as artillery delivered flares and flamethrowers, which resulted in higher nighttime casualties for the Chinese than they had hitherto suffered. The two divisions reported a combined total of 150 enemy dead (confirmed and estimated) and 200 wounded (estimated).³⁹

East of the ROK 5th Division, the ROK 20th Division had its baptism by fire from 16 to 25 May. The division acquitted itself well, especially during the battle’s climax on 18 May, when an enemy battalion managed to penetrate the outpost line and cut off several positions from the main line of resistance (MLR). The division’s inexperience was a concern, but with KMAG’s assistance to call upon American artillery and air support, the ROK troops managed to contain and eventually repulse the Chinese penetration.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ Ibid., 14.

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³⁹ Ibid., 10, 13.
Because the ROK 5th Division defended the mouth of the Pukhan River valley, a natural avenue of approach southward deep into ROK II Corps territory it was the focal point for Chinese efforts during Phase One. The loss of this valley would compromise the security of the U.S. X Corps, so it was vital for the Koreans to stand their ground. The most significant engagements took place along the division outposts in the vicinity of Hill 689, Obong Ridge, and Hill 973, the latter being the keystone strongpoint along the division’s MLR. The Chinese 180th Division made two efforts to take the former positions thereby exposing Hill 973 to direct observation and future attack from the rear. After a grueling fight, in which possession of Hill 689 changed no less than eight times, the Chinese 181st Division finally entered the battle and captured Hill 689.

Unfortunately, Eighth Army commanders and their staffs failed to see this phase for what it was, preparatory for a larger offensive. Rather, the Americans, informed perhaps by KMAG’s own misreading the situation, interpreted the crescendo of Chinese offensive action in the context of the armistice negotiations, particularly UNC’s "final offer" of 25 May. Eighth Army and the UNC concluded that the Communist objective simply was to gain tactical terrain advantages while pressuring the UNC to give in on the final details of the prisoner exchange issue. They did not understand that the Chinese had planned their offensive well beforehand, and that they expected to exploit their gains in the future.

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41 Hill 973 stood at the elbow of a right angle forming a salient pointing northeast. Its loss would have broken the entire line of the 5th Division and forced it retreat beyond the Pukhan River to the southwest, KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 607.

42 Ibid., 593.


44 Eighth Army’s Combat Operations Report for May opined that the outpost battles, which were the most intense since the fall of 1952 represented an effort by the enemy “to exercise his accepted capability of launching a general offensive” without actually conducting one; Eighth Army Command Report, May 1953, 1. Korean War historiography has followed this trail, by either ignoring entirely the beginning of the Communist offensive, or miscasting it as “concentrating upon winning dominating terrain features along the line to improve their positions both on the battlefield and at the truce tents at Panmunjom,” Hermes, Truce Tent, 462. However, Zhang Shu Guang in Mao’s Military Romanticism, 234-241, lays out a convincing case that the Chinese leadership was increasingly concerned about ROK Army expansion and the need to recoup political prestige. Consequently, Mao decided on a two-pronged strategy of engagement in negotiations and a military offensive “to deal the enemy a fatal blow.” This statement was made on 3 April 1953.
The Chinese concluded Phase one without a major shift in the battle lines, but they gained some important outposts, which whetted their appetite for more. Had the Americans been less focused on the illusory progress of negotiations, they may have learned some startling facts to prepare them for Phase two. Communist proficiency and profligacy in artillery shelling had made alarming progress. KMAG reported that the overwhelming proportion of Korean casualties – 97.8 percent – was due to enemy artillery and mortar fire, while small arms fire, mines, and other causes accounted for the remainder.\(^{45}\) In support of the May offensive, 99,340 rounds landed on Korean and Eighth Army positions.\(^{46}\) The period 21-31 May was the highest ten day total of artillery fire since 21-31 October 1952 – 52,520 rounds. The implications for the Eighth Army and ROKA were clear – the era of presumed artillery supremacy was over.\(^{47}\) Korean troops now needed more training on how to move and fight under heavy bombardment. Unfortunately, the Chinese did not plan to pause long enough for KMAG to do something about this new condition.

Political considerations likely influenced the Chinese decision to forego the planned five-day pause. U.S. Air Force and Navy planes struck at hitherto “protected” targets, such as the Suiho hydro-electric plant (10 May) and the Toksan irrigation dam (13 May). Flood waters from the irrigation reservoir accomplished in one night what months of interdiction bombing could not – several rail and highway bridges were totally washed out, and over six miles of rail lines and two miles of highway were damaged or destroyed. Buildings, crops, and irrigation canals were also severely damaged or even swept away in the devastating torrent.\(^{48}\) The Communists also had to consider carefully the finality of the UNC’s 25 May offer. Although the Chinese had no way of knowing what the Eisenhower administration contemplated regarding the armistice negotiations or


\(^{46}\) Eighth Army Artillery Staff Section, Eighth Army Command Report, May 1953, 2. The majority of these rounds were undoubtedly fired during Phase I, but it is impossible precisely to figure how much was in support of Phase One, 12-26 May, because the deception stage of Phase Two began on 27 May.

\(^{47}\) White, Oral History Program, 416, 424-45, USAMHI.

expanded military options, including ambiguous threats of nuclear attack, it was clear that time was running out for the Communists. Consequently, riding the tide of momentum gained in the first phase, the Chinese recommenced offensive action on 27 May, just one day after terminating Phase One.

Phase Two was a deliberate two-stage attack to extend the penetration of Phase I into the main positions of the MLR and force a withdrawal to less easily defended, or less prepared, positions farther to the south. Exploitation of these gains would result in the annihilation of significant portions of the ROKA.\footnote{Interrogation of Chinese prisoners revealed that these attacks were not limited in scope, but rather aimed at recreating conditions for “movement warfare.” Furthermore, individual soldiers in the Chinese 60th Army were told specifically that their task was “to annihilate ROK soldiers; the [Communist Chinese forces] will not make peace until the ROK Army is too weak to stand alone,” Eighth Army Periodic Intelligence Reports, July 1953, entry for 18 July.} Because the Chinese did not pause for an extended period of time between the phases, the UNC completely missed the significance of the diversionary stage of this attack.\footnote{Maxwell Taylor, \textit{Swords and Plowshares}, 145.} For example, attacks in the U.S. I Corps sector against the NEVADA complex at the end of May led many to believe that the Communists were simply jockeying for improved positions along the front in anticipation of an armistice.\footnote{Hermes, \textit{Truce Tent}, 462-64.} No one, it seems, regarded the Communist surge in manpower and artillery expenditure as a prelude to a larger attack elsewhere.

With the diversionary aspects of this phase working to keep Eighth Army reserves pinned in place, the Communists massed three armies – the Sixtieth, Sixty-seventh, and the Sixty-eighth in reserve – against the ROK II Corps.\footnote{Hermes, \textit{Truce Tent}, 466; Eighth Army Periodic Intelligence Report (PIR), 16-30 June 1953, Eighth Army Command Report, June 1953, Records of Eighth United States Army, RG 500.} This disposition pitted nine veteran Chinese divisions against three ROK divisions (8th, 5th, and 20th Divisions) and gave the Chinese numerical superiority at the points of attack, and adequate reserves to cycle fresh troops against the ROK defenders who quickly wore themselves out in repetitive counterattacks (figure 8.2).

Some minor fighting occurred between these armies and the ROK II Corps during the initial stage of Phase II, but not to the extent seen on the flank sectors. Fierce fighting
for the outposts of the so-called Nevada complex and the Punchbowl region fixed General Taylor’s attention to the I and X Corps sectors at the expense of the Korean divisions, who themselves fell under attack beginning 27 May.\textsuperscript{53} Two outposts in the 5\textsuperscript{th} Division sector fell to the Chinese, while the ROK 8\textsuperscript{th} Division also had to give up two positions on Hill 549 and Hill 647. Ominously, Korean counterattacks failed to dislodge the enemy on these four positions.\textsuperscript{54}

It was a different story in the 6\textsuperscript{th} Division sector, with some crucial tactical lessons that KMAG identified and attempted to disseminate to other ROK units. In this

\textsuperscript{53} Hermes, \textit{Truce Tent}, 462-65.

\textsuperscript{54} KMAG Combat Operations Command Report, May 1953, 11-12; cf KIHM, \textit{KW}, vol. 3, 596 which states that in all three division sectors all enemy "attacks were repulsed."

Figure 8.2: Situation, June 1953
case, two companies of Chinese attacked a weak ROK company (seventy-eight soldiers) defending Hill 424. Although heavily outnumbered, the defenders resolved to hold their position and fight it out with the enemy in the trenches. After three hours of close and hand-to-hand combat, with variable-time fuse artillery falling on friendly positions, the Koreans held their ground and finally repulsed the Chinese, who withdrew under a Korean artillery barrage. The Koreans counted 110 dead enemy soldiers with a large number of captured weaponry and equipment. Only ten ROK soldiers escaped the action without harm. Despite the dangers of close combat, KMAG figured that a comparison of the ROK 6th Division's battle with other divisions in the ROK II Corps revealed that "it is better to remain on a major outpost position and fight than to retreat and have to execute a costly counterattack."  

While KMAG and ROKA leaders scrambled to adjust to conditions of defense against deliberate attack, the Chinese did permit a brief lull in the action after 5 June while preparing for their second stage. The Communists had established a strong position at the conclusion of their diversionary attacks, in which they managed to capture and hold a number of outposts valuable for follow-on attacks. During this time, they rotated in fresh troops and defended their recent acquisitions from counterattacks. The Chinese also reinforced their main effort by inserting the Sixty-eighth Army between the Sixtieth and Sixty-seventh Armies. The Chinese had enough strength concentrated against the ROK II Corps to conduct frontal assaults in conjunction with infiltration attacks to surround and destroy ROK units. The enemy had also built up reserves to maintain continuous pressure with fresh troops. The Korean troops in the Kumsong salient, in contrast, remained thinly spread, even when allowing for the rugged terrain


they defended. The three front-line divisions of the ROK II Corps defended an average of 8,000 meters each.\textsuperscript{59} To the east of the ROK 5\textsuperscript{th} Division stood the ROK 20\textsuperscript{th} Division, subordinate to the U.S. X Corps. It was in this sector, along a division \textit{and} a corps boundary in the Pukhan River valley, that the Chinese made their main effort in the month of June.

Again, the ROK 5\textsuperscript{th} Division defended the most crucial sector, but the fight in the 20\textsuperscript{th} Division’s sector (immediately to the west) would spell success or failure for the larger objective to annihilate the ROK II Corps. Failure to blunt the Chinese attack would expose the 5\textsuperscript{th} Division to flank attack and near certain destruction. The Chinese penetration also would have had nearly unlimited potential for depth, and would threatened both the ROK II and U.S. X Corps with the choice of destruction or withdrawal.

Once again the 20\textsuperscript{th} Division, in existence for only three months, frustrated a major Chinese attack to pry it loose from its position. For one week (10-17 June), this division fought for control of Hill 1090 and its associated outposts. For the first three days, the ROK 1\textsuperscript{st} Battalion, 61\textsuperscript{st} Regiment engaged in a \textit{niupitang}-style battle with two Chinese regiments determined to seize the crest of nearby M-1 Hill.\textsuperscript{60} Although they retained the hill, two days later strong Chinese forces overran Hill 1090 and defeated all attempts to retake it.\textsuperscript{61} The battle for this critical hill reached its crisis stage. Shortly after dawn on 18 June the Koreans seized the initiative, and by 1200 hours had dislodged the enemy from all but the most northerly positions on Hill 1090. In the afternoon, the Chinese returned with their own counterattack, which the Koreans drove back. Exhausted and frustrated, the Chinese withdrew, leaving the ROK 20\textsuperscript{th} Division to dominate the Hill 1090 complex.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{59} The ROK 3\textsuperscript{rd} Division was in corps reserve; Headquarters, Eighth Army, The Offensive of June-July 1953, Organizational History Files, Military History Office, U.S. Army Pacific, Records of U.S. Army Commands, 1942-, RG 338.

\textsuperscript{60} Eighth Army, Combat Action in the Eastern Sector, 1-18 June 1953, part III, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{61} KIMH, \textit{KW}, vol. 3, 620.

The consequences of this battle were significant because the U.S. X Corps commander retained his freedom of action to react to the caving flank of the ROK II Corps. The 20th Division’s successful defense blunted Chinese plans to penetrate into the western flank of the U.S. X Corps and to drive it away from the Pukhan River. Although a new division, with levies that had about six month military experience, the ROK 20th Division stood its ground defiantly and traded blows with the enemy in a manner that would have been inconceivable for nearly any Korean division (excepting the 1st Division) in April or May 1951. M-1 Hill changed hands over twenty times during the week-long battle. As the Chinese penetrated down the Pukhan valley, the 20th Division had to contend with attacks against its flank as well as its front. Undaunted, the division defended its exposed flank and managed to support a successful one-regiment counterattack to its front. The corps commander, Lieutenant General Issac D. White, was pleased with this division’s performance, and he made plans to deal with any further Chinese attacks down the Pukhan River valley.63

In the ROK II Corps, where the Chinese made their main effort, heavy action commenced at 2000 hours on 10 June when Chinese artillery unleashed a furious barrage of over 10,000 artillery and mortar rounds on the ROK 5th Division (figure 8.3). Scarcely eighty minutes later, a force estimated as two enemy regiments of the Chinese Sixtieth Army (180th and 181st Divisions with the 179th Division in reserve), attacked these positions along the Main Line of Resistance (MLR). The ferocity of the attack overcame the Koreans, and in forty minutes the Chinese had gained entry into the outpost line and were pushing reinforcements forward to attack Hill 973.64 Chinese infantry also assaulted the adjacent positions of Hill 949 to the west and Hill 883 to the south. The loss of this triangular area would equate to the destruction of the ROK 27th Infantry Regiment and would cut off the division's other two regiments to the north, allowing the enemy to thrust deep down the river valley. Despite a heavy defensive bombardment

63 KMAG Combat Operations Command Report, June 1953, 16; White Oral History, 431. On the 4th of July, as part of a general reshuffling and strengthening of the west flank, General White replaced the ROK 20th Division with the U.S. 45th Infantry Division.

from division and corps artillery, the enemy continued its attack and eventually penetrated the main line of resistance at two critical points by 2300 hours that night. By the early morning hours on 11 June, the situation for the 5th Division had reached a critical stage, with at least two regiment-sized penetrations of the MLR.\(^{65}\)

Lack of depth, bad weather, and rugged terrain aggravated the division's plight and compelled Brigadier General Choi Hong-hee to order immediate frontal attacks to regain these lost positions, otherwise his troops would be trapped against the Pukhan River. The division had a number of bridges supporting its lines of communication to the south side of the river, but only one was a full-fledged military bridge manned by corps

level engineer troops. Although the Chinese assault brought the enemy into the open where he was vulnerable to air attack, low cloud ceilings and monsoon rain grounded allied aircraft for much of the battle. Choi would have to rely on his own reserves and movement of troops. Inadequate transportation and communications now compromised Choi’s attempts to concentrate enough troops to guarantee success. Lacking trucks and reliable radio links (nearly all of the division’s wire communications were destroyed in the initial bombardment), much valuable time was lost getting units into attack positions, and the attacks that did occur were piece-meal and lacked punch. In contrast to the ROK troops, the Chinese Sixtieth Army marshaled its forces in depth, so that fresh troops were continually available to carry on the momentum of the attack or to counter any ripostes by ROK forces. Small elements, infiltrated through Korean lines, enhanced the surprise of the initial attack and interfered with troop movements and the effective employment of defensive artillery.

At 0100 hours on 11 June, the division commander ordered the reserve regiment to attack to recover Hill 973 and he ordered the 27th Regiment along with the division reconnaissance company to recapture Hill 883. Two hours later, the corps commander, Lieutenant General Chung Il-kwon, decided to commit part of his reserve, the 22nd Regiment (from the ROK 3rd Division) to the 5th Division sector. This late-breaking development caused the division commander to revise his counterattack plan to incorporate the additional combat power of the 22nd Regiment. Nevertheless, these attacks failed to make progress as fresh Chinese troops entered the battle and repelled two Korean battalions that did manage to gain a foothold on Hill 973.

Although the division had lost two critical pieces of terrain, the quick and aggressive reactions of its subordinate battalions prevented a crisis from turning into a

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66 One bridge was a pedestrian crossing, one was a temporary sheet metal bridge, and the third was not even a bridge at all but a single cable car to ferry small bulk supplies; KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 606.

67 Ibid., 608.

68 Ibid., 606.

disaster. The 27th Regiment established a firm blocking position south of Hill 883 and the two battalions of the 35th Regiment had sealed off the exits from Hill 973. The division's flanks had not been turned nor had the enemy penetrated beyond the main line of resistance. Overall, considering the magnitude of the Chinese attack, amplified by the unexpected intensity of enemy artillery support, the ROK 5th Division finished the first full day of battle in a good position and with high morale. Without a substantial level of reinforcements, however, the division's position was still precariously balanced because it had committed its reserve and danger still loomed on its flanks.

Sensing that the 5th Division was not going to break, the Chinese expanded their zone of attack against the ROK 8th Division, immediately to the west. The ROK 8th Division had remained relatively unmolested during this phase prior to 12 June. Only two patrol contacts registered on 10 June, each lasting between five and ten minutes, neither of which had any effect on the tactical situation. On 12 June, though strong elements of the Sixty-seventh Army attacked the division's principal positions on Capital Hill and Finger Ridge. At worst, Chinese possession of Finger Ridge threatened to outflank the 5th Division and seize the Pukhan River corridor, while at best the loss of the ridge compromised ROK II Corps lines of communication to the south and west.

On 13 June, the Chinese attack shifted against the Finger Ridge complex, and in a nighttime attack captured the ridge. Infantry closed in on Korean positions and, heedless of casualties from artillery fire, engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the defenders. The force of the assault overwhelmed the Koreans and forced them to scatter. After an anemic counterattack, the 16th Regiment abandoned Finger Ridge and established a blocking position to the south. Numerous reports of battalion sized units indicated that the Chinese attack was arrayed in depth and intent on seizing the valuable terrain over the Kumsong and Pukhan valleys.

The loss of both Capital Hill and Finger Ridge shattered the division’s cohesion. Individual battalions, backed by artillery, withstood further daylight attacks, but as night

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fell on 14 June, the division had had enough, and its retreat uncovered the 5th Division’s flank, and left an inviting avenue of approach into the west flank of the 5th Division.

Unaware of how events would develop to the west, Choi ordered another counterattack on the morning of 12 June by the 35th and 22nd Regiments. Heavy fighting raged throughout the day as the Korean battalions threw themselves against the Chinese holding the high ground. The Koreans pressed these piece-meal attacks, which kept the Chinese pinned to their initial gains, but the ROK soldiers suffered heavily from enemy artillery and mortar fire. By the end of the day, all four regiments were exhausted or decisively committed. The division commander had finally lost ability to react to new developments. The Chinese then struck in force from both flanks. Committing elements of its reserve army, the Sixty-Eighth, against the 22nd Regiment compelled it to fall back south of Hill 883 an additional 1,000 to 1,300 meters. Further interrogation confirmed that the ROK 5th Division was now in contact with elements of four divisions belonging to two different armies.

The division commander did the only sensible thing and called off further counterattacks. The forward battalions were already sorely depleted morally and physically. High casualties, continuous operations for the past three days, and no food finally sapped the troops of their will to resist. Cohesion finally broke in the evening hours of 14 June, as two Chinese divisions, the 180th and the 203rd, caved in the division's left and drove the 27th Regiment in disarray towards the river and the temporary bridge leading to safety. On the division’s right side, the 22nd Regiment defended against persistent attacks mounted by five enemy battalions, but by 2000 hours, their line also broke. Three hours later the 35th Regiment, in the center collapsed under pressure from five Chinese battalions.

The collapse of the 5th Division was so rapid that the Eighth Army records for 14 June practically ignore the details. One after action-report summarized the events of that

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73 Eighth Army, The Offensive of June-July 1953.


75 KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 614.

76 Ibid., 614-15.
day as follows: "The situation in the 5th ROK Division sector became obscure. It was believed that Division elements had withdrawn and established a new line . . . only light contacts occurred in these sectors since both forces were reorganizing and consolidating their new positions." In fact, by midnight on 14/15 June, the entire division front had been completely overrun. Even the ROK official history concedes that "the ROK troops rushed into the Hwangbyong-dong valley, chased all night by the Chinese . . .. Around midnight the situation of the division deteriorated beyond recovery." 

The nature of the terrain and the divergent enemy attacks compelled the 5th Division to fall back southward while the 8th Division withdrew to the southwest, which opened a gap between the two divisions that beckoned the Chinese. The corps commander fortunately kept his wits and authorized both the 5th and 8th Divisions to withdraw to a new defensive line, named ICELAND, on the south and west side of the Pukhan River. He also ordered the ROK 3rd Division to assume a defensive position between the 8th and 5th Divisions. The retreat, fortunately, was orderly, and officers managed to reassemble their units across the river. Corps engineers blew the bridges over the Pukhan River, which prevented the Chinese from pursuing the retreating Koreans. Once out of contact, the weather cleared, and the remnants of the ROK 5th Division reorganized and watched with rueful satisfaction as UNC air forces pounded the Chinese with 2,143 sorties, the most ever recorded for the war in a twenty-four hour period up to that point. American air power and the corps commander’s quick thinking sealed the breach made in the corps line and blocked further Chinese penetration southwards.

Eighth Army had reacted to the impending collapse of the ROK 5th Division with curiously mild alarm. Taylor ordered the U.S. IX Corps to transfer the 461st Chemical

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78 KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 615.
79 Ibid., 615-16. Air strikes were used to great effect once the weather cooperated. Although the tonnage of bombs dropped in the month of June 1953 was not significantly altered from previous months, the tonnage of napalm employed rose dramatically. For USAF strikes, May = 56 tons, June = 117 tons, Command Report, FEAF, July 1953, Annex 9 "Statistical Digest," Army – AG Command Reports, 1949-54, RG 407.
Mortar Battalion to the ROK II Corps just after midnight on 11 June, and the U.S. X Corps released the 5th Regiment of the ROK 7th Division to II Corps at 0300 hours on 11 June.\textsuperscript{80} Attaching individual units to other parent organizations was a peculiar method to deal with a potentially major crisis. It probably reflected Taylor’s uncertainty regarding the imminence of a cease-fire agreement and his desire to avoid committing reserve divisions prematurely. Major General Samuel T. Williams, whom Taylor detailed as the Deputy Corps Commander of the ROK II Corps on 15 June, kept notes regarding the performance of the ROKA, and he forwarded his detailed observations to Taylor.\textsuperscript{81} In particular, he felt that the piecemeal utilization of reserves was a bad practice. According to Williams:

\begin{quote}
The Korean officer has a greater loyalty to his next senior [commander] as contrast[ed] to his loyalty to the ROK Army. For example, a regimental commander's loyalty is to his division commander. He may not do well if temporarily attached to another division. If a regiment is attached to a division and the division meets a reverse, the attached regiment is held to blame.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

Williams observed that this is exactly what happened when Chung attached one regiment (the 22\textsuperscript{nd}) of the ROK 3rd Division to the ROK 5th Division. It simply did not integrate well into the existing chain of command in the 5th Division, and its collapse on 14 June made it the scapegoat for the division’s overall failure.

Nonetheless, the stubborn resistance and successful withdrawal of the ROK 5th Division was a remarkable achievement that had operational consequences. Choi’s division fought and held an enemy three times its size for four days. The 5th Division tenaciously resisted a deliberate attack – involving close and brutal combat – by an entire

\textsuperscript{80} Eighth Army, Combat Action in the Eastern Sector, 1-18 June 1953, part I, 2.

\textsuperscript{81} General Williams was a colorful character, known throughout the Army as “Hanging Sam” for his impatient outburst at a courts-martial of an American soldier accused of rape. Allegedly, he moved to dismiss deliberations and just “hang the son-of-a-bitch.” In Korea, Williams lived up to his fiery reputation and took an interest in the ROK Army’s training and operations. He later went on to lead the American advisory effort in the Republic of Vietnam. Harold J. Meyer, \textit{Hanging Sam: A Military Biography of General Samuel T. Williams, From Poncho Villa to Vietnam} (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1990).

\textsuperscript{82} Major General Samuel T. Williams to Lieutenant General Maxwell D. Taylor, 22 June 1953, Taylor Papers, SPCOL 089-86, National Defense University Library, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.
Chinese army, and counterattacked on numerous occasions when prudence might have suggested retreat. Only after four days of uninterrupted pressure, without significant reinforcement, and in the face of overwhelming enemy superiority, did the division give up its sector of resistance and fall back southwards. The stiff resistance and steadfastness of the ROK 5\textsuperscript{th} Division also had serious ramifications for the Chinese tactical and operational objectives. To gain leverage against the recalcitrant 5\textsuperscript{th} Division, the Chinese had to expand the zone of their attack westward, against the ROK 8\textsuperscript{th} Division. Although the Chinese managed to breakthrough this division and then attack the ROK 5\textsuperscript{th} Division’s flank, their reserve troops were too spread out to exploit their gains.

As air and artillery firepower exacted a high toll on the Chinese attackers Eighth Army ordered organizational changes on 15 June. To accommodate the changes in disposition along the ROK II and U.S. X Corps sectors, The ROK 5\textsuperscript{th} Division transferred to the American corps, and the ROK 11\textsuperscript{th} Division moved from Eighth Army control into reserve for the ROK II Corps. This reorganization had no appreciable effect for subsequent attacks were local in nature and without strategic significance. The Chinese offensive had petered out by 15 June, and the Communists had to content themselves with a territorial gain of about 3,000 meters over a frontage of thirteen kilometers. Three ROK divisions had been committed to plug gaps and strengthen the line. Two ROK divisions had been roughly handled and lost several key positions along the main line of resistance.\textsuperscript{83} But, the overall integrity of Eighth Army’s line held firm, and of huge significance for both KMAG and Eighth Army was the fact that with the exception of air support and a few field artillery and other supporting units, the battle along the Kumsong bulge was entirely a Korean affair. No American ground combat units were involved, and no U.S. divisions had to extricate themselves from precarious situations, as had previously been the case when ROK divisions defended against Chinese offensives.\textsuperscript{84} On 18 June, Eighth Army imposed enough stability on the situation that Taylor directed the

\textsuperscript{83} Eighth Army, The Offensive of June-July 1953, 10.

\textsuperscript{84} Eighth Army Command Report, June 1953, 36ff.
ROK II and U.S. X Corps to coordinate plans reestablishing the corps boundaries that had existed prior to 15 June. Both corps also reconstituted their reserve force with the ROK 5th and 7th Divisions in the ROK II and U.S. X Corps, respectively.\(^8^5\)

The second phase in the battle of the Kumsong salient demonstrated two important characteristics bearing on the question of a cease-fire. First, the Chinese forces had improved their offensive capabilities, particularly in artillery, whose volume and accuracy were at their acme. Chinese artillery in June broke all previous records for weight of metal thrown against Eighth Army lines. Enemy counter-battery fire reached frightful proportions, increasing by over 200 percent from any other month in 1953. Enemy artillery accounted for five guns damaged and put out of action, and killing twelve gunners and wounding forty-four.\(^8^6\) Against the ROK troops, the Chinese made maximum use of artillery in support of their initial attacks and in support of their defensive fights and counterattacks as well. Overall, the 8th Division was the hardest hit, but the 5th Division took the brunt of the shelling when the offensive began on 10 June.

Infantry tactics were also more sophisticated and deliberate. Intelligence analysis showed that the Chinese infantry generally conformed to previously established patterns with some significant exceptions. Prisoner of war statements from soldiers captured along the Kumsong bulge revealed the depth of preparations the enemy had made for this phase of the offensive. Company and battalion units had conducted training and rehearsals over terrain similar to that encountered for as long as a month ahead of time. Long before the 8 June agreement on repatriation issues at Panmunjom, the Chinese had been drilling and preparing their infantry and artillery units for this offensive. Furthermore, individual soldiers received detailed briefs prior to the action on specific

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\(^8^5\) Eighth Army, Combat Action in the Eastern Sector, 1-18 June 1953, part I, 8.

\(^8^6\) Eighth Army Command Report, June 1953; Artillery Section, Eighth Army Staff Section Reports, June 1953, 1-2. Figures for enemy artillery do not match between different reports, ranging from 329,130 at the low end to 401,652 for the Kumsong action alone. Nonetheless, when compared with May's total of 99,340, the June artillery effort had its own impact.
attack missions of their small units.\textsuperscript{87} This evidence points to a deliberate offensive effort, not an \textit{ad hoc} or hasty attack attempting to reap cheap tactical victories in anticipation of an armistice agreement.

Perhaps the greatest shock of all was the amount of manpower and material support that the Chinese were willing to commit to battle just when an armistice agreement was in sight.\textsuperscript{88} Since the beginning of the negotiation phase of the war, attacks of this magnitude were only feasible in local scale, usually only involving an outpost or two along the MLR. On account of the relentless air interdiction campaign, a multi-divisional, multi-army offensive should have been beyond their capabilities. Yet, nowhere do Eighth Army or ROK Army reports suggest that the Chinese ever ran low on ammunition, equipment, or supplies. In fact, the Korean soldiers were the ones who often felt the pinch logistically. They still relied on Eighth Army for much of their supply and transportation. Bad weather, undeveloped roads, lack of organic truck assets in ROK divisions and corps, and the critical demands all along the Kumsong bulge interrupted routine methods of getting supplies to the front. Helicopters were impressed to ferry supplies and men to the front, and KMAG artillery officers had to intervene personally to get ammunition to their starving field pieces from the corps ammunition supply points located on the wrong side of the Hwachon Reservoir.\textsuperscript{89}

On the other hand, the ROK Army had acquitted itself well, despite the ultimate withdrawal to Line ICELAND. The loss of Finger Ridge, Hill 883, Hill 973, Capital Hill, and most of the outpost system based on Hill 1090 had pushed the line of contact back an average of 4,000 meters to the south.\textsuperscript{90} Nevertheless, General Williams reported to Taylor his belief that ground was not overly significant, except that lost terrain affected Korean morale. He approvingly noted that in light of the physical mauling the divisions had suffered (7,300 killed, wounded, and missing in the nine-day battle), as well as the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{87} Eighth Army, Combat Action in the Eastern Sector, 1-18 June 1953, part III, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{88} See Clark, \textit{Danube to Yalu}, 274-76 for the anticipation of an armistice in June.
\item \textsuperscript{89} X Corps Artillery Command Report, June 1953, X U.S. Corps, Eighth U.S. Army, Army-AG Command Reports, 1949-54, RG 407.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Eighth Army, Combat Action in the Eastern Sector, 1-18 June 1953, part III, 9.
\end{itemize}
ignominy of retreat, all ROK divisions in the II Corps had quickly regained their equilibrium and in a matter of days were conducting offensive actions.\textsuperscript{91} The 8\textsuperscript{th} Division executed a limited attack to regain an observation post on Finger Ridge, and the 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 5\textsuperscript{th}, and 6\textsuperscript{th} Divisions all conducted "aggressive patrolling".\textsuperscript{92} Williams concluded that perhaps this experience was salutary in at least one regard. Having had "more battle and on a larger scale, than any other ROK [unit] in the last two years" Williams believed that Chung Il-kwon and his division commanders had learned valuable lessons in fighting modern war.\textsuperscript{93} For the first time since the ROK Army’s reorganization, Korean officers had to grapple with the complex issues of command, control, supply, and fire support on a broad scale involving multiple divisions in battle. Taylor later characterized these engagements as “a graduation exercise” for the ROKA.\textsuperscript{94} The Koreans managed substantially on their own their command, control, communications, fire and air support, logistics, and intelligence apparatuses. Although the U.S. IX and X Corps both had some sharp fighting to deal with in their sectors, the real story was how the ROK II Corps and their KMAG advisors fared.

Williams continued in his report that he was satisfied on the whole with the job that KMAG was doing in the ROK II Corps. There is no evidence that he was able to get down to the divisions and regiments or to the artillery battalions and observe for himself how advisors performed in the field. But his observations of the corps headquarters, its staff, and its commander all convey a positive view, both of KMAG and their ROK counterparts. He was concerned that some ROK commanders and KMAG advisors (likely artillery officers, but he does not specify) "were intimidated either intentionally or unintentionally by the Commanding Officer, 5th Artillery Group (an American)."

Williams did not elaborate on this conflict, but he did indicate that he believed "the

\textsuperscript{91} ROK sources claim to have counted 6,064 enemy dead, captured 26 prisoners, and inflicted a further 7,200 casualties, KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 629.

\textsuperscript{92} Williams to Taylor, Taylor Papers.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{94} Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, 146.
condition corrected.”95 Williams also reiterated what Ryan had advocated all along, that officers assigned to KMAG needed to be of the highest caliber. For officers assigned as division and corps advisors, they needed to be at least equal to a American regimental commanders or division chiefs of staff. To underscore his point, he said, "Second flight officers should not be given these assignments.”96

Even at lower levels, Korean officers were demonstrating greater tactical flexibility and sophistication, compared to their capabilities in 1951. The U.S. X Corps artillery summary for June recorded, “Exceptionally good times were recorded for officers of the three ROK Divisions [in X Corps]” in making defensive artillery fire support requests.97 In fact, KMAG and the U.S. Army Infantry School may have succeeded too well in drilling into the heads of ROK officers at the battalion level the need for adequate fire support in defense and attack. KMAG reported a widespread tendency of ROK officers to rely too much on artillery fire “in lieu of proper use of small arms and mortar fire.”98 During intense fighting, like that in June, such tendencies overburdened the fragile and sparse communications and command-control systems in place in ROK regiments, divisions, and corps for receiving, prioritizing, and forwarding such requests to the artillery and air support providers. Since the tactical units tended to rely on land telephone lines, it is not improbable that the incentive to withdraw increased as the lines of communications became cluttered and small units felt increasingly isolated and assaulted on all sides by the enemy.

As a final analytical point, the Korean soldier did not run. He had to give ground because of the multitude of enemy penetrations puncturing the ROK II Corps front line,

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid. At the conclusion of KMAG's June Command Report, KMAG's new chief, Major General Gordon B. Rogers recommended that, "Professional qualifications of all advisory personnel be maintained at a very high level to match the increased knowledge and experience of ROK Army commanders at all levels," KMAG Combat Operations Command Report, June 1953, 17.
97 X Corps Artillery Command Report, June 1953.
98 KMAG Combat Operations Command Report, June 1953. In response to multitudinous fire support requests, Eighth Army fired 2,704,463 rounds of field artillery and 5,785 rounds of heavy (240 mm) – the highest total of any single month in the war. The highest one day total was from 141800 – 151800 June 1953, which resulted in 223,849 shells falling on the Communist side of the front line, Eighth Army Artillery Section Report, June 1953.
but KMAG reported that any failure on the part of the Koreans was principally due to "the size and intensity of the Communist offensive [which] accounted for initial successes in battle for outpost positions and portions of the MLR."\(^99\) Despite the furious onslaught by enemy infantry and artillery, the Korean units managed to maintain cohesion and even to organize regiment-sized counterattacks. The KMAG report continued, "it is notable that hard-hit ROK Army units continued to inflict heavy casualties upon the attacking forces."\(^100\) The ROK divisions kept this constant counter-pressure on the enemy for over ninety-six critical hours. Even when forced to retreat, Korean officers maintained control of the men and reestablished defensive positions at the earliest opportunity to resist successfully Chinese exploitation efforts.

The fruits of KMAG’s reform program – improved training, leadership, cohesion, and fires support – were clearly displayed during those June days. Eighth Army intelligence noted the failure of Chinese forces to capitalize on the apparent collapse of the 5\(^{th}\) and 8\(^{th}\) Divisions on 14-15 June and speculated that the Chinese were "not prepared to fully exploit [their] successes with the large scale reinforcements of personnel and heavy weapons needed. It appears that [they] had not anticipated such success along this part of the front and [were] unprepared accordingly."\(^101\) This assessment was in error. It was not that the Chinese failed to anticipate success along the Kumsong bulge; on the contrary, they had concentrated enough force, including one complete army in reserve, to exploit the gap they expected to create. They were not prepared for the determined resistance by the ROK 8\(^{th}\), 5\(^{th}\), and 20\(^{th}\) Divisions that stood in their way. By 18 June, when the front was still somewhat permeable, the Chinese were exhausted. By the end of the month, Korean units had fortified their blocking positions sufficiently to constitute a new line of resistance.\(^102\) It would take another major attack to break the Eighth Army’s lines to create the military conditions that the Communists desired prior to an armistice.

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\(^{100}\) KMAG Combat Operations Command Report, June 1953, 17.


\(^{102}\) KMAG Combat Operations Command Report, June 1953, 17.
Had the armistice agreement not been considered imminent, the June battle should have disabused American political and military leaders from believing that the Communists’ aim was merely to gain a prestige victory prior to the cease-fire. Overall, the first two phases of the Summer Offensive had not achieved their intended effect. Considering the gravity and scope of the eight days of fighting from 10-18 June, the most serious and intensive since May 1951, the overall military situation had barely budged. The attacking Chinese failed to erase the Kumsong salient; they failed to eliminate any ROK units above company level; and they failed to upset the military balance enough to force last-minute concessions at the bargaining table. The Koreans, outnumbered without adequate reserves and with little space to maneuver, held their ground tenaciously and launched a dozen local and general counterattacks to regain lost ground. Korean resistance forced the Chinese to commit reserve divisions just to maintain the momentum of the attack, rather than to exploit the breakthrough they had planned to achieve more quickly.

The cost to the Eighth Army for Phase Two was about 36,000 square meters of blasted terrain and 7,377 ROK casualties – a steep price to pay for the ten thousand Chinese casualties inflicted by ROK and U.S. ground and air forces, but the potential cost could have been much worse. Just two years earlier, Eighth Army faced a series of strategic reverses, thanks to the poor performance of Korean divisions and corps. KMAG, ROKA, and Eighth Army leaders could be proud of the progress that had been made over the intervening two years. Unfortunately, Eighth Army could enjoy the close call for only a brief spell. Political actions sanctioned in Seoul threatened to postpone a cease-fire almost indefinitely and gave cover for the largest Chinese effort to gain on the battlefield what they had been unable to gain at the conference table – a semblance of victory.

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103 Eighth Army G2 evaluated Communist losses for the entire month of June at 36,200 killed and wounded, and 146 prisoners; EUSA Periodic Intelligence Report, 16-30 June 1953. For the Kumsong battle, the ROK official history tallies the cost as 7,300 Koreans killed, wounded, and missing in exchange for 13,000 enemy casualties, KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 629.
The Last Offensive and the Armistice

Anxious that an armistice agreement would leave Korea eternally divided and occupied by foreign powers, President Syngman Rhee took precipitate action that nearly derailed the cease-fire and earned him the opprobrium of his American ally. On 18 June, just as the Chinese Phase Two offensive wound down, Rhee ordered the release of 27,388 North Korean prisoners resisting repatriation and held by ROK security forces. Rhee and the Americans had been on a collision course ever since the constitutional crisis of 1952. Now, the Communists screamed perfidy, and Clark had to agree with them.\(^{104}\)

Rhee’s acquiescence to a cease-fire was only one issue external to official negotiations standing in the way of a settlement. The second, and more important obstacle, was the perception of Korean military weakness. Historians have made much of Rhee’s unilateral efforts to derail the Armistice and have linked the Chinese final offensive of July to this egregious act. As important as this event was – and it was a calculated slap in the face of the Communists, not to mention the Americans – the Communists had yet to accept the implications of military stalemate. It was this fact more than Rhee’s intransigence that put the Communists on a collision course with the ROKA. The inauguration of Phase Two – just two days after agreeing to the American compromise proposal for the exchange and repatriation of prisoners and eight days before the release of Korean nonrepatriates – is evidence that the Communists were already intent on reaping strategic gains through military action. Unfortunately, the Americans were distracted by the situation in Seoul, for the Americans would not support Rhee’s demand to expel the Chinese or to unify the peninsula by force. The United States was, however, amenable to a mutual-defense treaty, and it communicated as much on 30 May.\(^{105}\) To placate Rhee and keep an eye on the political situation in the Eighth Army’s rear, President Eisenhower agreed to send a personal envoy to negotiate a series of

\(^{104}\) Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom*, 229-30; Clark, *Danube to Yalu*, 281-82.

concessions in exchange for Rhee’s promise of good behavior. Meanwhile, the Chinese prepared for one final push to erase the Kumsong salient and gain a significant battlefield victory over the Koreans.

Rhee’s act provided convenient cover for the Chinese. After having made a giant concession at Panmunjom in agreeing to voluntary repatriation, they needed a significant battlefield success to justify their claims for having attained “victory” in Korea. By accepting a settlement following the ambivalent results of the Second Phase, and in light of the ROK’s POW propaganda coup, the Communists would forfeit much of the political prestige they had accumulated by fighting in Korea. For the Communists, the emotional outrage over the event caused them to delay Phase Three for a time to increase their chance for strategic success. The Chinese attack, when it came, would be the final showdown between the ROK Army and the Communists. Only when the fighting ability of the ROK was confirmed, would the last remaining impediment to the cease-fire fall away.

Although the Chinese offensive in June had not resulted in the anticipated strategic success of eliminated Korean divisions, it had inflicted significant casualties and gained the Chinese a strong foothold on the east side of the Kumsong salient. The

106 On 22 June President Eisenhower dispatched Assistant Secretary of State Walter S. Robertson to Seoul to negotiate the armistice settlement with President Rhee. By 9 July an agreement between Robertson and Rhee materialized in which many of Rhee’s core issues involving Communist military forces were dropped in exchange for rapid consideration of a defense treaty and a sizable economic subsidy. On 11 July, Rhee communicated to Eisenhower: “I have decided not to obstruct, in any manner, the implementation of the [armistice] terms . . . I have yielded to your representations as an evidence of the friendship we Koreans bear for the United States . . .” For the price of $200,000,000 in immediate economic aid (and much more to follow), the promise of a mutual defense treaty, a commitment to expand ROKA to twenty divisions, and other agreements, President Rhee was finally satisfied. FRUS (1952-1954), 15: 1237-38, 1369; Collins, War in Peacetime, 359.

107 FRUS (1952-1954), 15: 1234-36. Rhee demanded, among other things, the withdrawal of Chinese forces, the demilitarization of North Korean forces, and a agreement for a mutual defense treaty with the United States as a guarantee for the Republic’s future security. Rhee, Korea Flaming High, 163-64.

108 See the very interesting memoir of Major General (ret.) Chai Chengwan, who at Panmunjom was the secretary general and liaison officer of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Force. General Chai claims that further military action against the Koreans was intended as “a heavy blow to Rhee as retaliation [for the POW release]. However, Chai’s memory completely blanks out between 8 June, when the Communist negotiators signed the “Terms of Reference” regarding POWs, and 18 June, when Rhee played his ace. Chai Chengwan, “The Korean Truce Negotiations,” in Mao’s Generals, 184-232; see especially 228-30.
Chinese still had materials and reserves enough to launch their final phase of the summer offensive. The only question was one of timing. An immediate attack was out of the question since the Chinese had been forced to commit their reserve army just to secure the gains they did make. A delay, therefore, appeared to offer the best chance for a last blow against the Pukhan River valley that might exploit the gains made from 10-14 June and force the withdrawal of the Koreans from the Kumsong salient; it could also exacerbate tensions between the ROK and the UNC, which were already strained.

It is important to understand that this attack, known as the Kumsong Offensive, was not solely a retaliatory attack against Rhee. It was a well prepared offensive (plans for which predated 18 June) with expectations for military and political consequences.\(^{109}\) To recoup their prestige, the Chinese had to mount an even larger offensive, one that would not only punish Rhee and the ROK generals, but also wipe out the Kumsong salient and destroy a significant amount of the ROK Army. There is also evidence that the Chinese prepared yet another summer offensive (their seventh) to be launched after the destruction of the ROK II Corps. However, for reasons that became clear during the July attack, the Chinese opted to sign the armistice instead. Rhee’s “intransigence” actually set the conditions required to establish the military and political equilibrium upon which an armistice agreement depended.

The Chinese carefully prepared for the July offensive with the objective to eliminate the UNC’s control of the Kumsong bulge and its interference of the Iron Triangle. The attack was postponed until mid-July, and two additional armies, the Twenty-first and the Fifty-fourth, entered the line behind the three armies already opposite the Kumsong bulge.\(^{110}\) All the while the Communist negotiators continued to rant at Panmunjom while demanding “guarantees” of good Korean behavior from General Clark (figure 8.4).\(^{111}\)

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\(^{109}\) The amount of time that elapsed between Phase two and Phase three, and the amount of reinforcements and supporting artillery make it hard to accept post-war assertions that the July offensive was just to punish Rhee; Zhang, *Military Romanticism*, 241-42. Cf Chinese accounts in Li, Millett, and Yu, *Mao’s Generals*, which claim that the July offensive was aimed exclusively at communicating a message to Rhee and his generals.


\(^{111}\) Clark, *Danube to Yalu*, 282, 284.
The battle of the Kumsong Salient was the largest Communist offensive in over two years. From 13 July until 19 July, Chinese forces held the initiative and they drove the Koreans back all across the Kumsong bulge. As Chinese infantrymen moved to their attack positions in the forty-eight hours preceding their assault, ROK troops in the salient reported an increase in the volume of Communist artillery fire. In three days the number of shells exploding on Korean positions increased by a factor of six, from 4,857 on 10 July to 26,049 on 13 July.\(^\text{112}\) The crescendo of artillery never abated, either, as Chinese artillery stockpiles permitted an all-time record expenditure for the CPVF of 375,565 rounds during the first twenty-seven days of July.\(^\text{113}\) Not until the Koreans reached the safety of the Kumsong River did they recover enough to push forward against the ebbing tide of Chinese infantry.

\(^{112}\) Eighth Army G-2 Periodic Intelligence Report, 1 July–15 July 1953.

\(^{113}\) Eighth Army Command Report, July 1953, Staff Section Reports, Artillery Section.
The weight of the Chinese assault leaned heaviest against the most exposed point of the salient, defended by the ROK Capital Division (U.S. IX Corps). Heavy attacks in this sector by elements of four divisions inundated the defenders so that by the morning of 14 July all battalions of the division were committed against thrusts at the division’s front and western flank. Remnants that survived the initial onslaught fell back and secured a loose defensive line along Highway 117A. Here the Chinese impetus finally gave way under the crushing weight of American and Korean artillery, but the Capital Division was so roughly handled that it was considered unfit for further combat operations.\textsuperscript{114}

To the east of the Capital Division, the units of the ROK II Corps also had to give ground during the first hours of the attack. At first, the main line of resistance appeared to be holding against battalion-sized enemy attacks, but when Chinese units penetrated the Capital Division to the west, they attacked the ROK 6\textsuperscript{th} Division in its flank and rear, which precipitated a confused withdrawal.\textsuperscript{115} The uncovering of the 6\textsuperscript{th} Division started a chain reaction across the salient as Korean troops scrambled to meet threats emerging on their flank. On the east side of the salient, Chinese forces infiltrated company and battalion-sized elements into the rear of the ROK 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 5\textsuperscript{th} Divisions prior to the main attack, which interrupted the movement of reserves and resulted in their piecemeal and ineffective deployment.\textsuperscript{116} In the center, with both flanks giving way, and facing strong attacks from four Chinese divisions, the ROK 8\textsuperscript{th} Division could only hold out for twelve hours before receiving orders to withdraw.\textsuperscript{117} It appeared that disaster loomed over the Kumsong front.

For the next two days, Chinese forces pushed into the crumbling Kumsong sector. General Taylor ordered the U.S. IX Corps to defend along Highway 117A and for the

\textsuperscript{114} KMAG Combat Operations Report, July 1953, 10, USMAG-Korea, Army Unit 8202, Army – AG Command Reports, 1949-1954, RG 407; Senior Advisor, Capitol ROK Division, After Action Report, 1 August 1953, Military History Office, Organizational History Files, RG 338.

\textsuperscript{115} KMAG Combat Operations Report, July 1953, 10.

\textsuperscript{116} KIMH, \textit{KW}, vol. 3, 654-55.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 667.
divisions of the ROK II Corps to re-establish themselves along the south bank of the Kumsong River. This order evacuated the most exposed portions of the salient, but it did not give up any ground south of the salient’s base. Unfortunately, the Chinese assault still had significant momentum in the II Corps sector, and many Korean units retreated beyond the specified line before being reigned back in to their designated positions. There were no reserves left to speak of, troop control broke down, and many of the corps artillery units found themselves first “overrun” by their own retreating troops, then again by those of the enemy.

By the evening of 16 July, the Koreans turned round, but several miles to the south of the Kumsong River. Taylor ordered all units to counterattack to regain the Kumsong River line. He also took measures to contain the Chinese break-in by replacing the shattered Capital Division in the west with the American 3rd Infantry Division and releasing the ROK 11th Division to the ROK II Corps control. These two divisions sufficed to repair the more dangerous breach along the western edge of the salient. With their west flank firmly anchored, the remaining divisions of the ROK II Corps pushed forward to regain the Kumsong River. After three days of heavy fighting, the ROK II Corps finally reached its objective. On 19 July, Taylor called a halt to further offensive action, although patrols remained active until the armistice on 27 July (figure 8.5).

In the aftermath of the battle, the Chinese claimed a great victory commensurate with their effort. Mao did not get his desire to “eliminate ten thousand more South Koreans,” but the casualty figures for the Koreans were daunting nonetheless. In the

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120 KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 672.

121 Ibid., 678; Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, 146.

122 Zhang, Military Romanticism, 243.
Kumsong sector alone (including the Korean divisions of the U.S. IX Corps and the ROK II Corps), Eighth Army admitted to losing 15,093 Korean soldiers (killed, wounded, and missing) and giving up six miles of ground across a twenty-mile front. Total Eighth Army casualties for twenty-seven days of combat in July (29,629 killed, wounded, and missing) topped the previous record of 23,161 set in June.\textsuperscript{123} The Eighth Army command report testified to the fury of battle even up to the final moments prior to the cease-fire:

\textsuperscript{123} Eighth Army Command Report, July 1953, 58.
The cease fire at 2200 hours on 27 July brought to an end a period of such concentrated attrition that... a greater number of casualties were recorded than during any complete month since... August 1951. Even during the last four hours prior to the cease fire, friendly casualties continued at the rate of more than one per minute across the Eighth Army front.124

Since the Chinese signed the armistice immediately after the battle, it would appear that Mao was satisfied. Chinese generals at least claimed to have punished Rhee by “kill[ing] the chicken so as to scare the monkey.”125 Again, the proximity of the armistice agreement to the severe losses suffered by ROKA could indicate that the Chinese had won a political victory by forcing the UNC to agree to a cease-fire after a successful offensive.

These views, however, are incomplete. First of all, the price for their victory was steep. Eighth Army estimates of enemy casualties ranged from 43,000 to 72,000, and the ground gained was not strategically significant, for the Chinese had to abandon it as dictated by the armistice terms.126 In the balance, the Koreans gave up worthless ground and inflicted a high toll. Although many looked at the Kumsong battle as a replay of the Korean rout during the Spring Offensive (May 1951), those who knew better said so. Taylor praised the Korean army, which “had demonstrated its ability to recover from a heavy blow and come back fighting.”127 Tactically, the Koreans were in a difficult position, holding the tip of an exposed salient, surrounded on three sides. Chinese logistics preparations had been thorough and included the construction of new roads leading into the Pukhan valley. Weather again conspired to mask Communist preparations and prevent effective air support.128 Despite these problems, the ROK II Corps held itself together in the face of overwhelming attack. On the other side of the

124 Ibid., 57.
126 According to the terms of the cease-fire agreement, both parties were required to withdraw their troops two kilometers from the line of contact to establish a demilitarized zone; see text of Armistice Agreement, 27 July 1953, cited in full in Tucker, *Korean War*, vol. 3, 1026.
128 Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom*, 236.
salient, the Capital Division fought well from a disadvantageous position. Although multiple penetrations quickly confounded the division’s command and control system, individual battalions fought with distinction. The division artillery continued to fire missions in support of the infantry even while defending itself from Chinese attacks. The commander of the First Battalion, the Cavalry Regiment acted prudently in his selection of defensible ground to north of Highway 117A. This battalion held its position under heavy assault long enough to permit the remainder of the division to escape encirclement and annihilation. This battalion’s defense also limited the depth of the Chinese penetration into the II Corps flank, thereby gaining valuable time for those units to react to the Chinese attack.

Even in retreat, ROK units maintained cohesion, their weapons, and combat capabilities. KMAG advisors were quick to point out that every Korean division – despite casualties and confusion due to the rapid withdrawal – quickly recovered, reentered the battle, and participated in the counter-offensive. As the battle ended, and the armistice became a reality, the ROK Army had passed its final test. Under extreme pressure, and fighting substantially on its own, the ROK divisions inflicted serious casualties on the attacking Chinese, maintained the integrity of their line, and thwarted a major offensive drive that could either have destroyed a large segment of the ROK Army or forced a massive withdrawal of the Eighth Army across the peninsula. It was in fact a victory for ROKA and KMAG.

At 1000 hours on 27 July, Lieutenant General Harrison, representing the United Nations Command, and General Nam Il, representing the North Korean People’s Army and the Chinese People’s Volunteers, signed the initial armistice documents that established a cease-fire to begin exactly twelve hours later. In thirty minutes they each

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129 Eighth Army, The Offensive of June-July 1953, 16.

130 KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 650.

131 Eighth Army, The Offensive of June-July 1953, 12.

132 KMAG Combat Operations Report, July 1953, 15. The Capital Division was the exception, being withdrawn from contact to reorganize behind the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division.
had signed thirty-six copies of the agreement and then left without speaking. Three hours later, General Clark signed his name eighteen times to confirm the cease-fire agreement. The Korean War was finally over. There were no salutes from dignitaries, victory parades, or other celebrations. Clark admitted, “I cannot find it in me to exult in this hour.” Instead, at 2200 hours, 27 July 1953, the guns fell silent from the Yellow Sea to the East Sea. The costs were incalculable. Since the uprising on Cheju-do in April 1948, the Korean peninsula had known nothing but war that threatened to engulf the southern republic. Now, in an uneasy peace called a cease-fire, ROKA’s race against time had finally ended.\footnote{Clark, \textit{Danube to Yalu}, 294-96; Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 244.}
A popular Korean proverbs states that “when whales fight, shrimp get crushed.” Korea’s twentieth century history bears out this metaphor with unfortunate accuracy. First caught in the rivalry between China, Russia, and Japan at the end of the nineteenth century, Korea lost its independence in 1910 and did not regain it until after the Second World War. Unfortunately, the fruits of liberation in 1945 were postponed as Korea was immediately ensnared in the Cold War that put the co-victors over Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan at odds with one another. A concoction of western liberalism, Soviet-inspired socialism, and frustrated nationalism doomed one of the most homogeneous peoples on earth to division, suspicion, and mutual antagonism for over sixty years. From the beginning of the American occupation in September 1945, U.S. policy pursued an uncertain path between cooperation with the Soviet Union and compromise with the many political interests active in the U.S. occupation zone. Overcome by the difficulties of governing the prostrate region and dealing with the recalcitrant Soviets, the Americans determined in October 1947 to reduce their responsibility as an occupation power. As American troops withdrew from Korea’s domestic political and social problems, the military advisory mission to Korea emerged as America’s military and moral commitment to southern Korea.

Beginning with the Department of Internal Security in 1946, then PMAG (1948-1949), and finally KMAG (1949-1953), these military missions had significant influence over the structure, competence, leadership, and fighting capabilities of the Constabulary and the Republic of Korea Army. These American military missionaries confronted a host of obstacles and circumstances that threatened to overcome their slender resources. Strong leadership, professionalism, and commitment on the part of the Americans forged
a strong bond with their counterparts and over time gave the Koreans the means, will, and encouragement to take charge of their own military destiny. If KMAG is to be blamed for the catastrophic losses in the summer of 1950, as many historians do, then it is important to remember two key points regarding the conduct of the Korean War. First, credit must be given for the success in combating armed sedition and guerrilla war. After all, it was this success that forced Kim Il-sung to opt for open warfare as the only means to unify the peninsula under a dictatorship of the people.\(^1\) Second, the greatest degree of transformation occurred during wartime, under the most stressful conditions of defeat, huge losses in men and equipment, and a crisis of confidence in American officers regarding the Korean army.

KMAG must receive credit for remaking the ROKA, ensuring its survival, and providing it with modern military capabilities. They had to find a way to work through all of the challenges that had plagued earlier advisory efforts, while still fighting a war and reforming the ROKA’s training, leadership, and organization. The summer of 1951 was a turning point for both the ROKA and KMAG. Thanks to KMAG’s reform and Van Fleet’s support, the ROKA evolved into a force capable of standing up to the Chinese and making itself an essential pre-condition for the Armistice settlement. Without the Koreans, no cease-fire agreement could have materialized in the summer of 1953. To get to that point, Van Fleet relied on ideas that had been germinating in his fertile mind since May. His personal emphasis on KMAG as his executive agent resulted in greater resources in personnel, equipment, time, and space devoted to the ROKA. Cease-fire negotiations took the pressure off of Eighth Army and the Koreans, which gave KMAG its first opportunity since June 1950 to attempt reform in training and organization. With trained soldiers, competent officers, and greater artillery firepower, the Korean army was now in a position to make itself felt at the strategic level. As important as these technical functions were to the ROKA’s reformation, KMAG’s mentoring relationship also changed as Korean officers gained confidence and experience. In 1953, it was a totally different Korean army that went to war.

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\(^1\) Kim Il-sung had been considering open military operations for some time, at least since the summer of 1949; Chen, *China’s Road*, 75, 87, 106-113; Goncharov, et al., *Uncertain Partners*, 134-40.
The expansion of the ROKA occurred just as the war entered a new phase with the Communists increasing the military pressure to force a settlement. By the end of April 1953, the ROK Army had proved itself adept in the new form of war that began in the fall of 1952. The time had come for the final military confrontation between the two “whales” – Eighth Army and the Chinese. At risk was the Armistice agreement itself.

**Armistice in the Balance – The ROKA Achievement**

While many (Van Fleet included) considered the decision to pursue a negotiated settlement to the war in Korea a colossal mistake, without a tactical stalemate accompanying negotiations, there would have been neither opportunity nor means to reform the ROKA.\(^2\) Both KMAG and the ROKA desperately needed a break from the continuous body blows endured since June 1950. Only under stalemated conditions could the ROKA rest and reconstitute its units. KMAG too needed these conditions to implement a holistic training and reorganization program to produce “a fighting army that [could] be relied on.”\(^3\) KMAG’s success in training, leader development, and reorganization brought the ROK Army back into strategic relevance, for the resuscitation of the Koreans as capable and independent combatants was a very unwelcome development for the Communists, who ridiculed the South Koreans as “puppets” of the Americans.\(^4\)

As of July 1951, Van Fleet did not have the ability to conjure additional American troops, flatten mountains, or dictate clear skies -- supernatural powers needed for Eighth Army to exploit its advantages in mobility and air power to the fullest extent to make the Communists pay for every day of war. The ROKA was the only expandable asset

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\(^2\) For contemporary viewpoints, see Ralph Watkins to Karl Bendetsen, 28 August 1951, 7, Van Fleet Papers; Van Fleet Oral History, tape four, 26, 37, USAMHI; Clark, *Danube to Yalu*, 297. Historians have picked up the refrain of a missed opportunity and the folly of taking the pressure off the enemy too soon. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 470-71; Stokesbury, *The Korean War*, 137-39; Blair, *Forgotten War*, 895ff are good examples.

\(^3\) Watkins to Bendetsen, 5, Van Fleet Papers.

available to Van Fleet that did not require an escalation of the war or a greater manpower commitment on the part of the United States. Still, because the armistice had to be earned on the battlefield, the war would continue until the Chinese and North Koreans agreed that further fighting was of no use. It would be up to the South Koreans to tilt the balance against the Chinese and North Koreans.

The consequences of the Kumsong Offensive relate best the ROKA’s (and by extension, KMAG’s) contribution to the Armistice. To eliminate UNC observation and interdiction of the “Iron Triangle” region and to make the South Koreans more pliant, Chinese forces focused almost exclusively on the ROK Army occupying the strategic Kumsong salient. Eighth Army casualty figures for July illustrate the Chinese strategy: the Americans suffered 4,696 casualties (638 killed, 3,636 wounded, and 422 missing), while the Koreans lost a staggering 24,631 men (4,634 killed, 14,788 wounded, and 5,209 missing). In the last twenty-seven days of ground combat, ROK units suffered eighty-three percent of the Eighth Army’s casualties.5

Despite their efforts – the most powerful offensive in two years with huge advantages in manpower, artillery, and favorable non-flying weather – the Chinese failed to bludgeon the ROKA to the breaking point. Even with the rapid withdrawal from the salient, Korean troops recovered quickly from the initial shock and began to counterattack only three days after the initial penetration of their MLR positions.6 The Chinese took the ground they wanted and scored a tactical victory, but they failed in their larger purpose to destroy the cohesion of significant ROK units or to shatter the Eighth Army defense.7

The Korean defense of the Kumsong salient, though tactically unsuccessful, was a strategic victory for the UNC. A Communist breakthrough in this sector would have knocked the military balance out of equilibrium, possibly keeping the war going beyond the end of July. But, because the Chinese failed to achieve their operational aim to

5 Eighth Army Command Report, July 1953, 58.

6 The Chinese forces opposite the Capital Division and II Corps had a three to one manpower advantage and a 1.7 to one artillery advantage, with forty-four pieces of artillery per kilometer of front, KIMH, KW, vol. 3, 631.

7 Ridgway, Korean War, 224; Paik, Pusan to Panmunjom, 241-42; Zhang, Military Romanticism, 240, 243.
penetrate the ROK defense sufficiently to force a large-scale withdrawal, they were now in an overall position of weakness. Their troops were exhausted and exposed to the firepower and maneuver of Eighth Army units. The American 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 45\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Divisions loomed on either side of the salient, and the ROK 7\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} Divisions were fresh and eager to move forward. Under pressure of potential political and military failure, the Communists decided to talk. Paik Sun-yup noted that “the communists came to the armistice talks . . . on July 19, 1953, \textit{with a new attitude}. Despite our release of the anticommmunist POWs, the communists showed themselves prepared to conclude an armistice (emphasis added).”\textsuperscript{8} Paik properly links the outcome of the Kumsong battle with the change of heart in Beijing, and to a lesser extent in Pyongyang. It was significant that on 19 July, just when the Communist chief negotiator, General Nam Il, indicated a willingness to end the fighting, ROK divisions were counterattacking and driving the Chinese north of the Kumsong River. Perceived ROK military weakness had animated the Chinese offensive, but after six days of sustained combat against the ROK II Corps, the Communists accepted there was nothing more to gain from further military action. With this simple realization, the Korean War finally came to an end.

\textit{The KMAG Accomplishment, 1951-1953}

The changes in the ROK Army’s military capabilities illustrate the depth of achievement for an advisory effort that at its height numbered no more than 2,800 officers and enlisted men. The combat statistics from the Chinese Fourth Offensive and the Kumsong Offensive illustrate the transformation that occurred from the summer of 1951 until July 1953 – relatively fewer Korean troops suffering fewer losses and giving up less ground, but inflicting greater casualties on the enemy.

During Fourth Offensive (February 1951), four Chinese divisions attacked the ROK 8\textsuperscript{th} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} Divisions north of Wonju, while elements of three North Korean divisions attacked the adjacent ROK 5\textsuperscript{th} Division. After three days of fighting against odds of two to one, these three divisions suffered more than 16,000 casualties, nearly

\textsuperscript{8} Paik, \textit{Pusan to Panmunjom}, 244.
one-half of their strength. The 8th Division was so badly mauled that it virtually disintegrated as an organization. Collectively, these divisions did little to retard the advance of the Chinese, and their collapse exposed elements of the U.S. X Corps to the full weight of the Communist offensive.

Twenty-eight months later, fifteen Chinese divisions attacked five ROK divisions (Capital, 6th, 8th, 3rd, 5th), and in three days of intense combat inflicted somewhat less than 14,000 casualties, a much less severe figure than in the February 1951 fighting. In addition to fighting against greater odds (three to one) than in 1951, at no time did any ROK division disintegrate or fail to offer resistance before being properly relieved. One division, the Capital, was considered unfit for further combat operations due to the loss of much of its artillery and other heavy equipment. However, this division had sacrificed itself in a valiant attempt to keep the Chinese from enveloping the west flank of the ROK II Corps. The delay imposed by this division allowed significant portions of this corps to withdraw before being encircled. Lieutenant General Rueben Jenkins, commanding general of the U.S. IX Corps commended the Capital Division in a personal citation, which reads in part:

I hereby cite in my personnel orders the Capitol [sic] ROK Division . . . for its courageous and determined defensive action during the period 13-28 July 1953 in the Kumsong Salient Battle . . . Although isolated by overpowering odds, troops of this Division continued to fight doggedly on their positions until food and ammunition were exhausted, some units continuing to fight until as late as 17 July, after which . . . [they] fought their way through as much as four miles of enemy-infested territory . . . Although to those inexperienced in military matters and to those without full knowledge of the facts this great Kumsong Salient Battle may appear to have been a most tragic defeat for the Capitol [sic] ROK Division,

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9 This total, as reported to Ridgway immediately after the battle, includes soldiers who were accounted as missing, but eventually returned to duty; CG X Corps to CG Eighth Army, 13 February 1951, A-C Korea Correspondence, Box 17, Korean War Eighth Army Correspondence December 1950 – April 1951, Ridgway Papers; KIMH, KW, vol. 2, 481-82, 485. ROK Divisions had an authorized strength of 10,561 officers and men; Park, “Dragon from the Stream,” 39.

10 KIMH, KW, vol. 2, 480-90; Mossman, Ebb and Flow, 266ff.

nothing can be farther from the Military Truth. This great battle was, in fact, [the division’s] most magnificent hour of triumph in which it truly lived its Motto: EVERY MAN A TIGER.

For your extraordinary action during this period I, as your Corps Commander, am filled with admiration and deep gratitude.12

Jenkins’s citation is a world away from most historians’ negative verdict about the Korean Army, which may have accurately portrayed ROK capabilities in early 1951, but which was completely anachronistic by 1953.

The (re)creation of this particular Korean army was a long and comprehensive process, in which KMAG advisors fulfilled their traditional roles as organizers, trainers, and mentors. The first step was Van Fleet’s reorganization of KMAG, which reinvigorated and refocused the advisory effort. Van Fleet’s guidance was clear – KMAG had to focus on training fundamental military principles, which included basic soldier skills, tactics, leadership, logistics, and command.13 To give KMAG more muscle, Van Fleet made some key personnel decisions – the assignment of a new KMAG chief, the placement of combat experienced lieutenant colonels and colonels as senior advisors to training facilities and ROK divisions and corps, and the loan of Eighth Army personnel as unit and school trainers. Van Fleet also increased KMAG’s overall personnel authorization from 1,300 in September 1951 to nearly 2,000 by the end of the war. Including officers and men on loan from Eighth Army, KMAG’s actual strength topped 2,800 in July 1953.14 This 115 percent increase in manpower was essential to staff training facilities, advise combat units at the front, and overhaul the ROKA’s organization. KMAG’s efforts directed at training, leadership, and organizational

12 Headquarters, IX Corps, Office of the Commanding General, Subject: Citation, 29 July 1953, Classified Organizational History Files, Military History Office, Records of U.S. Army Commands, USARPAC, RG 338. See Appendix C for full citation.

13 At a conference with KMAG’s leadership, Van Fleet observed that only 8 percent of KMAG’s manpower was dedicated to training. He directed Ryan to economize on staff and field advisors to “shake the trees and bushes and get more [men] into training.” Entry 16 July 1951, Van Fleet Journal, Van Fleet Papers.

14 As of 31 July 1953, KMAG was authorized 1918 officers and men; however, KMAG actually had on hand 2,808 officers and men. Eighth Army details made up the difference of 890 bodies, KMAG Statistical Summary, August 1953, 2.
expansion remained to the end of the war the most important links in the chain of support between Van Fleet and the ROKA’s new combat capability. Failure at any one link in this chain would have caused the entire project to fail.

KMAG’s list of accomplishments in the expansion and reform of the ROKA’s training establishment is impressive. Within seven months (August 1951 – February 1952) the ROKA had an renewed training establishment that progressed logically from the lowest level of basic training to division and corps operations. The reorganization of the ROKA’s officer schools system produced officers familiar with the military virtues of teamwork, leadership, fire support, and troop control. Officer training schools cultivated Korean leadership and expertise in tactics and operations that made them nearly equal to their American counterparts. These graduates were more prepared to operate at their respective levels of command and responsibility, as the Battle of White Horse Mountain demonstrated. The Replacement Training Centers provided constant stream of manpower that fortified Korean units and helped to justify organizational expansion in the fall of 1952. By then, Korean trainees enjoyed more food, better equipment, and more thorough training – fourteen (later increased to sixteen) weeks. This was a huge improvement over the one-month program in existence when Ryan arrived at KMAG. Altogether, 499,751 trainees passed through the RTC system from July 1950 through August 1953.\(^\text{15}\)

The Korean Army Training Center was the “backbone” for the new ROKA, for it trained infantry, artillery, tank crews, and signalmen to fight a combined arms battle.\(^\text{16}\) The Field Training Command (and its successor, the Unit Training Center) was responsible for the retraining of every Korean combat regiment and division. The results of these eighth week programs were stunning for their immediacy and durability. Unlike when Korean units deployed to the front with confused organization and little training, by 1953, every ROK battalion, regiment, and division entered battle with at least two months

\(^{15}\) Park, “Replacement Training and School System,” 51; Hausrath, Problems, 197-98, 313; KMAG Statistical Summary, August 1953, 35. Figures for RTC replacements are thru August 1953.

of tough, realistic, and demanding training that emphasized teamwork, fire support, and troop control. New confidence, improved tactical capabilities, and a positive attitude characterized this new Korean army, thanks to these training centers.

In April 1952, Ryan confidently pointed out that the improved efficiency of Korean units was due to the individual training programs, the field training centers, and the influx of specially trained noncommissioned officers and U.S. trained officers in key command and staff positions. The mutual interaction of these various elements was obviously at work in 1952, for by the summer of 1952, these training facilities were producing the well trained officers and men that held the line in 1952 during some of the most intense fighting since the fall of 1951. Their tenacious fighting ability impressed their American patrons and opened the way to expansion and growth that the Communists could not meet.

The results of these training reforms – divisions trained to fight as a combined-arms team, soldiers familiar with individual tactics and fighting skills, and officers equipped to lead and function in battle – were a critical element supporting Van Fleet’s push to increase the size of the ROK Army after the disastrous experience in the spring of 1951. Under KMAG’s supervision, the ROKA expanded first its artillery fire support, followed by its logistics capability, then its organizational size. Van Fleet’s artillery expansion program took advantage of Korea’s manpower and greatly increased its fighting power with a small investment in training and equipment. In the summer of 1950, the ROKA only had six battalions of obsolescent howitzers; a year later, they had ten, a completely inadequate number to support an army of ten divisions. The first medium artillery battalions (155 mm) were activated in September 1951, and they were firing missions in support of Korean infantry by March 1952. More battalions followed in rapid succession until the Koreans had forty battalions of 105 mm and 155 mm artillery.

Although not every division received control over its full complement of artillery, by December 1952, enough artillery battalions were on line to support each ROK division with an artillery group of four battalions. When the fighting stopped seven months later,

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17 Brigadier General Cornelius Ryan to Major General Orlando “Gus” Mood, 23 April 1952, ROK Correspondence, 1951-1953 #10-14, Box 86/5, Van Fleet Papers.
the ROKA had seventy-two battalions of modern howitzers. The Koreans developed strong attachments to artillery firepower, and they were never shy about using it. In fact, because Koreans became so good at employing supporting artillery, American corps commanders frequently placed U.S. guns in “direct support” of Korean divisions.

Organizational expansion gave the Koreans the material means to stand against the Chinese offensive in the fall of 1952 and again during the winter fighting in 1953. As individual units and leaders proved their increasing capability to use larger amounts of firepower and other supporting assets, the floodgates opened as combat, support, and service units began to enter the ROK’s order of battle. Of course, more artillery, infantry division, tanks, and trucks would have been quite useless without the base of leadership and training developed during the twelve months from July 1951 to June 1952. This was the critical period for ROKA reform. Fortunately, it coincided with the truce negotiations, which relaxed the combat tempo sufficiently to permit the U.S. to transfer large stocks of weapons, supplies, and equipment to support the ROKA’s expansion. American units were also able to devote a significant amount of time to training Korean counterparts, such as happened when the U.S. IX Corps headquarters mentored General Paik’s newly formed ROK II Corps headquarters in the spring of 1952. When fighting began to be pick up in intensity in the fall of 1952, the Koreans quickly demonstrated they had learned some hard lessons about modern war.

The KMAG Advisor

Training reform and army expansion were just two factors behind the ROKA’s rebirth. A more elusive, but no less vital, characteristic behind KMAG’s reform effort was the quality of its people and the advice they gave. The success of KMAG’s mentorship directly affected the ROK Army’s capabilities. After all, more training, troops, and artillery had little utility if the Koreans had not yet grasped how to use them. It was the advisor’s place was to teach them.

18 Myers, Wartime Experiences, 99, 108.
Mentorship was certainly the most challenging role for the advisor. It required a great deal of patience and a certain amount of fatalism. He had little direct control, but he also exercised a great deal of responsibility, and it weighed heavily on him. Both parties often valued different aspects and attributes of the counterpart relationship and their expectations colored their reactions to each other. American officers were quick to criticize their counterparts’ deficiencies in accepted military practices, such as mutual communication, appropriate delegation and supervision of tasks, initiative, and economy of resources. Their counterparts expressed equal amounts of frustration over advisors who were arrogant or belittled the ROK Army. They also expected the Americans to be more proactive in helping the counterpart procure supplies and equipment, to help satisfy demands from higher headquarters, and to be more interested in the country, customs, and language of their hosts. Without constant effort and attention to bridge the gaps of culture, language, and experience, the advisor-counterpart relationship was destined to fail. One advisor succinctly captured the core difficulty in mentorship: “Their 5,000 years of culture is based on a slow, contemplative and introspective approach to a problem. The 180 years of U.S. existence is premised upon a fast and decisive attack.”

As in the days of General Roberts, personal relationships between KMAG and Korean counterparts were the only way to ensure the success of organization and training reforms. Rewriting a unit’s TO&E or formulating a training plan were technical functions requiring only applied knowledge and common sense. Advising was an art that required greater faculties of patience, tact, maturity, and professionalism. One of the greatest obstacles that faced the Americans was simply knowing how to go about the process of advising. This problem was just as acute in 1953 as it was in 1946. Symptomatic of the disorganize state of the DIS and PMAG, the first Advisors’ Handbook was not published until October 1949, when KMAG was already three months old. It provided little practical information about training, administration, and combat, but it was full of command direction. In fact, it perhaps went too far in providing


20 Quoted in Hausrath, The KMAG Advisor, 116.
guidance without giving an advisor a clear long-term vision. Roberts was not a visionary officer; his focus was on getting results in the short term. It was more important to “prevent mistakes” than to coach, critique, and assess. Consequently, too much of KMAG’s work relied on the experience, judgment, and initiative of individual advisors, as opposed to a comprehensive and cogent scheme worked out ahead of time.

Roberts’s system, if it can be called systematic, had its merits, for it got KMAG focused on training, but it certainly did not suffice for wartime. The confusion within KMAG during the first months attests to the lack of comprehension about what KMAG was supposed to do. It was eight months before General Farrell updated the Advisor’s Handbook (March 1951) to reflect KMAG’s wartime obligations. The longevity of this edition – more than two years – attests that it was a good blueprint for the advisors. Nevertheless, it shared the core defect of the 1949 version. It assumed that the Korean was and would remain dependent on his advisor, which is how many American officers viewed the situation. Once again, the advisor was left with little alternative than to consider that he was the responsible officer, even though he did not command.21

Nearly two years into Ryan’s tenure, KMAG could afford a more reflexive look at its advisory mission. In June 1953, after many years of combined experience in the trade of organizing, training, and mentoring, KMAG published the Advisor’s Procedure Guide (APG), a comprehensive document that demonstrates how much the Americans had absorbed in their experience with the Korean Army. In addition to an explanation of KMAG’s mission, organization, and the daily duties of an advisor, the APG attempted to fill the long-standing gap in understanding the depth of difficulty for the American advisor:

Living, working, fighting and training with a regiment, an Advisor must be acquainted with every phase of the regiment’s operations. He must be abreast of the tactical and logistical situation. He must know the strong and weak points of the command and his subordinates. It is upon him that the [Korean] regimental commander depends for knowledge that will teach him teamwork in the employment of infantry, artillery, air, signal communications and armor in combat operation and of the various

21 Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 18, USAMHI; Davis, “Chorwon, Kumsong Campaigns,” 2; Sembach, KMAG Questionnaire.
services in support of the same. He must *criticize* their mistakes without *causing them embarrassment* or “loss of face.” He must *teach* them economy without *seeming to deprive* them of their needs. He must *hold* them to proven military methods and standards while *still applauding* their improvisation and, last but not least, he must *do these things with a view toward building their confidence* (emphasis added).”

This quotation shows that KMAG had finally grasped the complexities and nuances involved in the process of advising a foreign army. In 1951, officers in the ROK Army probably responded to advice given more directly. By 1953, however, the power relationship between counterparts had shifted to one based more equitably. The Koreans were better trained than before, with a significant number of key officers having graduated from Americans schools. They were battle hardened and had as much, or even more, combat experience as the advisors. Advisors had to work harder to establish a basis of rapport with his counterpart. It was more important to win his confidence, respect, and trust than to “prevent mistakes.” In such a relationship, the advisor would be in a stronger position if his counterpart would *want* to seek and accept advice.

How an advisor established this mentoring relationship could take more than one path. While some officers felt it best to be assertive immediately, some found it best to allow for a “breaking in” time, where the advisor spent two to three weeks observing his counterpart, learning the tactical situation, and understanding the state of logistics, personnel, and intelligence. Then, the advisor could gradually assert himself as required. Others found it more comfortable simply to observe and offer advice when asked. However it was done, building a relationship of trust with close and personal contact, and gaining the confidence of the counterpart with professional competence was how an advisor made himself useful to KMAG and the ROKA.  

There were, however, times when advisors had to resort to more drastic methods to establish a credible relationship with their counterpart. Assigned to the ROK 1st Division during the winter of 1952-53, Major Howard Trammell recalled the only serious disagreement with his counterpart, Lieutenant Colonel Choi, that occurred during a

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23 Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor*, 43; Sembach, KMAG Questionnaire.
Chinese night attack. In the frantic atmosphere of the regimental command bunker, Trammell’s interpreter could not keep pace with the battle, which forced Trammell to query Choi directly. Choi studiously ignored him the entire night. Trammell was an experienced advisor and had already served several months as the division’s G2/G3 advisor. Since Choi had personally requested Trammell, the latter felt rather put off. The next day, as Trammel packed his jeep,

Choi came up to where I was. I told him what I was doing and pointed out that, unless I was kept informed, I could not do the job I was sent up there to do, and for which he had personally [requested] me. From that day forward, Choi and I, to borrow a British term, got along fabulously.  

In this environment, where cultural differences and interpersonal conflict constantly wore aware at the advisory relationship, it is not surprising that most advisors found persuasion and coaching more effective mentorship tools than peremptory guidance (“orders”) or open criticism. One advisor reported that by keeping a formal atmosphere in public and by being more informal (and honest) in private, he could demonstrate respect for his counterpart’s rank and position while still being candid and forthcoming with suggestions and criticism. Anything the advisor could do to reaffirm his commitment to the partnership made the Korean counterpart more receptive to the advice given, which after all was the purpose of the advisor.  

In the process of mentoring their counterparts, advisors had a range of tools available to reinforce their advice. They could appeal to the American chain of command (if his counterpart unit fell under an American corps), refuse to countersign requests for supplies, or take personal control and give orders directly. In a post-war survey, 255 former KMAG officers were asked what was the best way to influence their counterpart. It is revealing to see that the vast majority of advisors found that “compulsory” methods

24 Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 11, USAMHI.

did not further KMAG’s objective of mentoring the Korean officer corps to reach its potential on the battlefield. The Koreans had to be taught, and sometimes shown, what was expected of them (table 9.1).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Pressure exerted</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argument and persuasion</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring matter to higher ROKA/KMAG headquarters</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusing to countersign supply requests</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threaten to appeal to U.S. Commander</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give, or countermand, orders</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
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Table 9.1: Resolving conflicts with counterparts

The advisor coached, mentored, and demonstrated, but the success or failure of the counterpart ultimately did not rest in American hands. The Koreans had to start standing on their own. Ridgway, Van Fleet, and Ryan all placed a high premium on the development of an independent officer corps, and in some areas, the Koreans made great strides. KMAG’s program to send Korean officers to U.S. Army schools paid rich dividends. The training of promising officers at these schools enhanced the technical and tactical capabilities of these officers, and it increased the pool of Korean officers familiar with U.S. doctrine and practices. Upon their return, these officers became commanders of units and commandants of schools, who could then train other officers and soldiers in American methods. In the spring of 1953, Korean graduates of the U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Benning formed an advisory board to "determine faults and suggest improvements" in the program of instruction for the trainees at Replacement Training Center #2. As a result of their observations and recommendations to simplify training, all conference-style instructional sessions were revised and replaced by demonstration

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26 Davis, “Chorwon, Kumsong Campaigns,” 2; Hausrath, The KMAG Advisor, 58.

27 Sembach, KMAG Questionnaire.
training followed by more time in practical exercise. These officers also took the existing training curriculum, which was in most cases simply a word-for-word translation, and modified it to take into account the differences in the ROK Army TO&E, terrain, and soldier education levels. Graduates of U.S. Army schools also filled billets as division and regimental commanders, and as staff officers in corps and divisions. Their technical expertise was critical to the ROKA’s ability to use modern weaponry and fighting techniques. Individually, these officers represented incremental improvements throughout the army; collectively, they were the vanguard of the ROKA’s progress to modernity.

Of course, KMAG advisors continued to assist their counterparts by doing things that the Koreans could not, such as obtaining specialized equipment. Advisors at the Leader's School requested from Eighth Army four flame-throwers to provide more realistic training for the task, "Attack of a Fortified Position." They also provided oversight to correct deficiencies in "creeping, rushing, selection of routes of approach, and correct firing positions" of the same task.28 They would also take the initiative to show Korean officers how to fix training deficiencies even in a combat zone, as was done with the ROK 6th Division’s recoilless rifle gunners.29 By the end of the war, though, the Americans were physically doing less but supervising more, which was a beneficial arrangement for both parties.

Some weaknesses persisted to the end, which the Chinese offensives in June and July 1953 prominently highlighted: reliance on American logistics and air power, difficulty thinking flexibly as opposed to blind application of technique, and maintaining troop control and discipline in a fluid environment.30 Still, one must balance the ROK casualty toll and loss of the Kumsong salient with the thousands of casualties (Eighth


29 Ibid., 12.

30 Stilwell, Oral History Program, 102, USAMHI; Headquarters, Eighth United States Army Korea, Investigation Concerning Displacement of II ROK Corps Artillery Units During the July 1953 Enemy Offensive, 30 August 1953, Classified Organizational History Files, Military History Office, USARPAC, RG 338; The Battle of the Kumsong Salient, SPCOL 131-86, Box 8, Taylor Papers; KMAG Command Operations Report, May 1953, 9-10.
Army estimated 28,000 in the ROK II Corps sector) they inflicted on the Chinese. Two other facts bear on the question of KMAG’s success as an advisory mission. Despite the terrible beating they absorbed, the Korean soldiers continued to fight to the end; the ROK Army did not collapse. Secondly, the Koreans fought the battle that broke the logjam at Panmunjom. It was their Armistice to lose. The Chinese agreed to a cease-fire only when it was clear their offensive momentum against the ROK II Corps had collapsed.

**Conclusion: The American Military Missions to Korea, 1946-1953**

America’s first military mission to Korea was a sorry affair that lacked official support, funding, and equipment. After several years, the few officers of this “original KMAG” were reduced to drilling the palace guard. In 1896 they were replaced by Russians.幸运地，1946-1953年的顾问任务成果更加丰硕。尽管面临许多相同挑战，如内部分歧、语言不兼容、政治阴谋和官方忽视，MAGs在Roberts、Farrell、Ryan和Rogers的领导下开发了克服时间紧迫的最紧迫挑战的方法并取得持久成果。尽管军事任务的背景从美国占领转变为韩国主权，从脆弱的和平到游击和常规战争，KMAG和其对等方齐心协力；他们如何做到这一点代表了至关重要的，但微不足道的，朝鲜战争史的一个部分。

When the Americans first began to raise an indigenous military force, they faced great challenges: no modern military tradition, language and culture incompatibility, few resources, and little time. The individual methods employed by advisors from the DIS through KMAG to overcome these challenges varied according to the situation, the task to be performed, and the experienced and maturity of the counterpart officer. Yet, the basic method, since the formation of the Constabulary in January 1946, was to model professional competence. The objective of KMAG’s mentorship was to get the Koreans

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to take over the responsibilities of organization, training, and fighting. The degree of reliance Koreans placed on KMAG was a good indicator to the development and maturity of the ROKA.

The professional growth of Korean army leadership and the parallel maturation of the army were products of a close relationship between advisors and counterparts and KMAG and the ROKA. General Clark noted the mutual affection that existed between the two organizations when he wrote: “These Americans lived and fought with the ROK front-line units. In combat they came to have tremendous mutual admiration for each other. I knew well how the ROK officers felt, for each time we suggested that perhaps they didn’t need the KMAG people any more they protested vehemently.” For their part, the ROK Army and government understood and appreciated the contribution of their American advisors. In October 1952, President Rhee presented KMAG the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation (ROK PUC), for “eminently meritorious service” during the period 7 July 1951 to 7 July 1952. The bracket dates are significant, for they represent the time period of greatest danger and opportunity. It was also the period of the most change and adaptation of the ROK Army, from a shrimp caught between whales, to something a bit bigger and meaner.

Van Fleet once referred to himself in an off-handed manner as “the Father of the ROK Army.” Although it is true that Van Fleet did more than any other American officer to develop within the ROKA a respectable fighting capability, he cannot claim exclusive paternity. The ROKA had a multitude of father figures, from Colonel Champeny, Lieutenant Colonel Barros, and Captain Hausman during the occupation to Generals Roberts, Farrell, and Ryan in war. Army organization and reform was a team effort – a term that Van Fleet would have easily understood – with one goal: to win. Under Van Fleet’s direction and Ryan’s leadership, KMAG advisors accomplished much

32 Clark, Danube to the Yalu, 185.
33 See Appendix D for full text of award. Myers, Wartime Experiences, 342. A second ROK PUC was awarded on 25 June 1953, covering the period from 8 July 1952 to 25 June 1953, see Appendix E.
34 Van Fleet Oral History, vol. 2, tape five, 3, USAMHI.
in a short time. They reorganized the replacement training and schools system to include reformed officer training and education. The establishment of a combined arms training center housing the infantry, artillery, and signal schools gave the ROKA a firm foundation for current stability and future expansion. The creation of the field training command successfully retrained every division and independent regiment in the Korean order of battle. The continuation of this same program for newly activated units ensured that these units received a training program based on realistic combat conditions. The results, proven in combat, was improved fighting capabilities of Korean divisions and corps. The door was finally open to an expansion program that would add not only divisions, but artillery, engineers, armor, and other supporting units that would make the ROKA a reliable and resilient fighting organization.

KMAG also played a critical role in advising the ROK Army in battle. The results of this effort spoke loudly in the battles from October 1952 through April 1953, as the ROK Army stood its ground, traded shots with the enemy, and took casualties just like the rest of the UN contingents in the line. The tide of rapid growth of ROKA forces begun the previous November was showing no signs of subsiding. By the time of the Armistice the ROKA was expanding at a rate of one division and two artillery battalions a month. The final offensive finally put to rest impressions that the Koreans were the weak link – that they could not constitute a credible deterrent after the cease-fire agreement. If they could not, there could be no settlement at Panmunjom worthy of its signatures. Thanks to KMAG’s retraining, reorganization, and mentorship, the Koreans developed a martial quality capable of supporting the Armistice. Ridgway would have called this quality “fighting spirit,” and Van Fleet “the will to win.” Paik Sun-yup and many of his fellow officers understood it as well. Until Korean infantry fought for its ground, inflicted and absorbed casualties with determination, and demonstrated its ability to maintain itself, there would be no peace in Korea. Small numbers, inferior training, obsolescent weapons and equipment, and incompetent officers all contributed to the initial shock of defeat against the KPA and the CPV in 1950-51. Nevertheless, the Korean soldier learned fast and well in the years of stalemate. After the war, Van Fleet

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remarked that in this reformation, “with blame for failure and credit for success on their own shoulders, they suddenly were transformed into soldiers (original emphasis).” Van Fleet exaggerated the pace of reform but not its actual effect.

KMAG made the difference. Without the American advisors, with their example of technical and tactical proficiency and professionalism, along with their unique ability to supply American equipment and ammunition, the ROK Army never would have managed what it did accomplish in the face of guerrilla insurrection, invasion, and stalemate. The ROKA owed its survival, both in 1948 and in 1950, to the American advisors who at times exceeded their mandated duties and assumed control of command, training, and logistics. It owed its rebirth in the summer of 1951 to the KMAG reforms that finally addressed the critical leadership and training needs of the Koreans. After a eighteen months of attention, direction, and increasing resources, the ROKA was no longer a victim in need of protection, and it certainly was not the panicky, fickle, little ally of historical myth.

It was appropriate for both KMAG and ROKA representatives to be present at Munsan as General Clark signed his name to the armistice documents. The ROKA’s relative health throughout the war had been an accurate barometer of Eighth Army’s military capabilities. When the ROKA faltered, Eighth Army suffered. Therefore, the partnership between KMAG and ROKA was symbolic for American commitment to obtain a satisfactory settlement to the war. The strength and fighting capability of the Korean Army was a vital component of the UNC strategy. The increase in the ROKA’s size from 50,000 soldiers in July 1950 to 570,000 three years later is an obvious dimension of their contribution to the Armistice. Of course, numbers of troops tell only part of the story, for the foundation of the ROKA’s improved fighting ability was not due to numbers alone. Mark Clark explained his impression of the ROKA’s rebirth:

36 Quoted in Hausrath, Problems, 23.

The ROK Army did not just grow. It had to be nursed and trained and helped before it was old enough and big enough to stand alone . . . The joint effort of America and South Korea to create a first-rate fighting force of Asian farmers and laborers without technical and educational training for modern war was an outstanding success.\(^{38}\)

ROKA expansion, though obvious, was not the whole story, nor can the ROKA’s success be explained as a result of mechanical processes that moved the Koreans along a linear scale from less to greater military effectiveness. A far better metaphor is biological. The ROKA grew and adapted as a military ally through a series of mutual interactions involving the American Eighth Army, the enemy, and KMAG. Of these three, KMAG had the greatest influence. As the competence and organization of KMAG fluctuated, the state of the ROKA likewise varied. ROKA’s eventual success was based on individual, unit, and combined arms training; reform in the selection, education and training of officers; and, organizational modernization and expansion that gave the ROKA more punch on the battlefield. It was the mutual interaction of these elements that produced an army capable of meeting its enemy on more equal terms.

Time had been a hard taskmaster for the Korean army, which came of age in 1953. Years of dissent, factionalism, and war had nearly destroyed it. Years of reform tempered its leadership, increased the value of its training and modernization, and matured the ROK Army, giving it the confidence and the means to stand, fight, and kill the enemy. After two years of reform and reorganization, the South Koreans did not have to substitute courage for firepower, or rely on bravado in place of solid training and competent leadership. Modern war was not beyond their grasp, they just had to be shown how to do it.\(^ {39}\) Thanks to the relative stalemate resulting from negotiations in the summer of 1951, KMAG was able to show them how while giving them the means to learn and adapt.

\(^{38}\) Clark, *Danube to Yalu*, 178.

\(^{39}\) Trammell, “Korean War Notes,” 21-22, USAMHI.
The Armistice agreement had to be earned on the battlefield. In its last battles the ROKA may have had to give ground, but it never broke. The battle line never became unhinged. The ROKA proved that not all shrimp have to be crushed in a battle between whales.
APPENDIX A: CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1882</td>
<td>Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce, and Friendship signed at Chemulpo (Inchon) between Korea and the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-1905</td>
<td>Russo-Japanese War. President Theodore Roosevelt brokers Treaty of Portsmouth (September 1905); Russia agrees to Japan’s influence over Korea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Japan forces protectorate status on Korea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Japan formally annexes Korea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Dec. 1943</td>
<td>Cairo Declaration that “in due course Korea shall become free and independent” announced by United States, Great Britain, and China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 August 1945</td>
<td>Japan declares intent to surrender to allies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 August</td>
<td>Liberation Day in Korea. Soviet troops begin to occupy Korea north of the 38th parallel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 September</td>
<td>U.S. troops (XXIV Corps) land at Inchon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>U.S., Soviet, British foreign ministers announce Moscow Agreement, which provides for a five-year trusteeship in Korea. Large-scale demonstrations, north and south of the 38th parallel, erupt at the news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1947</td>
<td>Soviets suggest removal of all foreign occupations troops from Korea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
February  (North) Korean People's Army formally activated. Labor strikes and unrest in the American zone.

3 April  Beginning of Cheju-do Rebellion; not fully suppressed until 1949.

10 May  UN supervised elections return representatives to the National Assembly, which drafts constitution and elects Syngman Rhee first president of the republic.


31 Dec. Soviets announce that their forces have withdrawn from Korea.

January 1949 XXIV Corps begins redeployment to Japan and Hawaii. As ROK troops replace American forces along the parallel, clashes between northern and southern security forces escalate.

29 June  The last U.S. combat unit leaves Korea.

1 July  KMAG is the only American military presence remaining in Korea.

25 June 1950 Korean People’s Army invades the Republic of Korea.

27 June  President Harry Truman authorizes U.S. air and naval forces to support South Korea. U.N. security council adopts U.S. sponsored resolution to call on all member nations to assist the ROK.

28 June  Seoul falls to the KPA.

30 June  President Truman commits U.S. ground forces to Korea.

July  Formation of United Nations Command with General MacArthur as commander in chief; ROK Army placed under MacArthur’s operational control; KMAG falls under Eighth United States Army Korea, commanded by General Walker.


22 Sept.  Walker’s forces break out of Pusan Perimeter.

28 Sept.  Seoul liberated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Oct.</td>
<td>ROK troops cross 38(^{th}) parallel. Six days later U.S. troops also march into North Korea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Oct.</td>
<td>ROK 1(^{st}) Division captures Pyongyang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Nov.</td>
<td>MacArthur’s “Final Offensive” begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Dec.</td>
<td>Pyongyang recaptured by Communists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 Jan. 1951</td>
<td>UN forces abandon Seoul, withdraw to 37(^{th}) parallel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Jan.</td>
<td>Eighth Army conducts Operation WOLFHOUND, followed by Operation ROUNDUP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Feb.</td>
<td>Eighth Army counter-offensive, Operation KILLER.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 March</td>
<td>Operation RIPPER.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 March</td>
<td>UN troops regain the 38(^{th}) parallel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-28 April</td>
<td>Chinese Fifth Offensive, first phase.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-23 May</td>
<td>Chinese Fifth Offensive, second phase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 June</td>
<td>Eighth Army troops capture Chorwon and Kumhwa in the Iron Triangle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 June</td>
<td>Soviet UN representative, Jacob Malik proposes cease-fire talks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>Ridgway announces UN’s readiness to discuss an armistice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 July</td>
<td>Negotiations between UNC and Communist delegates begin at Kaesong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1952</td>
<td>Artillery and air attacks pressure the Communists; ground fighting stalemate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 May</td>
<td>General Clark succeeds Ridgway as Supreme Commander, UNC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 1953</td>
<td>General Van Fleet retires, General Taylor assumes command of Eighth Army.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 March</td>
<td>Soviet Premier, Joseph Stalin, dies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>Delegates resume talks at Panmunjom and prepare for a limited prisoner exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-26 April</td>
<td>Exchange of sick and wounded prisoners, Operation “Little Switch,” at Panmunjom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 May</td>
<td>Begin first phase of Chinese Summer Offensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 May</td>
<td>UNC’s “final offer” presented to the Communists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 June</td>
<td>Communist delegates agree to Terms of Reference for voluntary repatriation of prisoners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 June</td>
<td>Second Phase of Summer Offensive begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 June</td>
<td>President Rhee releases approximately 27,000 anti-Communist prisoners of war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 June</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson begins “Little Truce Talks” with President Rhee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 July</td>
<td>Rhee informs President Eisenhower he will not interfere with the Armistice agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 July</td>
<td>Final Chinese Offensive against the U.S. IX and ROK II Corps begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 July</td>
<td>General Nam II, senior Communist delegate, announces intention to finalize the cease-fire agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 July</td>
<td>Counterattacking Korean troops establish new main line of resistance along the Kumsong River.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 July</td>
<td>Armistice agreement signed, ending three years of war.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: LIEUTENANT GENERAL JOHN HODGE’S STATEMENT TO THE KOREAN PEOPLE

The armed forces of the United States will soon arrive in Korea for the purpose of receiving the surrender of the Japanese forces, enforcing the terms of surrender, and insuring the orderly administration and rehabilitation of the country. These missions will be carried out with a firm hand, but with a hand that will be guided by a nation whose long heritage of democracy has fostered a kindly feeling for peoples less fortunate. How well and how rapidly these tasks are carried out will depend on the Koreans themselves. Hasty and ill-advised acts on the part of its residents will only result in unnecessary loss of life, [and] desolation. Present conditions may not be as you would like them. For the future of Korea, however, remain calm. Do not let your country be torn asunder by internal strife. Apply your energies to peaceful pursuits aimed at building up your country for the future. Full compliance with these instructions will hasten the rehabilitation of Korea and speed the day when the Koreans may once again enjoy life under a more democratic rule.¹

¹ Headquarters, XXIV Army Corps, “To the People of Korea”, General Hodge’s Proclamation to the People of Korea, 1 Sep 1945, G-2 Historical Section, XXIV Corps, RG 554.
29 July 1953

HEADQUARTERS IX CORPS

OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL

I hereby cite in my personal orders the Capitol ROK Division, Republic of Korea Army, for its courageous and determined defensive action during the period 13-28 July 1953 in the Kumsong Salient Battle.

On the evening of 13 July the five forward Battalions of this Division were struck with the overwhelming weight of four full Chinese Communist Forces Divisions. The Battalions were rapidly isolated by overwhelming enemy forces. Three reserve Battalions were rushed promptly to the assistance of the forward elements, either for counterattack or as blocking forces. These troops were rapidly enveloped and isolated by the great number of infiltrating enemy battalions. Final reserves were also rushed forward to blocking positions north of Route 117A, on which line the enemy masses were halted during the early morning hours of 14 July, thus saving the east flank of this Corps and the west flank of the II ROK Corps from disaster, and the center of Eighth Army from a strategic difficulty of major proportions.

Although isolated by overpowering odds, troops of this division continued to fight doggedly on their positions until food and ammunition were exhausted, some units continuing to fight until as late as 17 July, after which many of the isolated groups escaped by infiltration from their positions which the enemy was never able to overrun, and fought their way through as much as four miles of enemy-infested territory back to newly established friendly lines. This determined action so confused the enemy and
delayed his advance that the time necessary was gained for the movement of reserves by the IX Corps and II ROK Corps into positions to block, definitely, the dangerous hostile penetration.

As an indication of the high sense of loyalty and duty which permeated the infantry troops of this Division in this critical phase of combat, the total of only 1500 effectives which were known to be available on the afternoon of 14 July had risen to over 5600 on 18 July by the great numbers who fought their way out of the encircling enemy after their determined stand on 14, 15, and 16 July. On 17 July the troops of this Division, who had acted as covering forces for IX Corps reserves moving into position, were withdrawn and reorganized into a Task Force along with the great number of others who were finding their way back to friendly lines. These troops, when organized and rested, demanded the right to reenter the battle as a unit. This was granted to them, whereupon they took over a sector within the zone of the 3rd US Division and defended it aggressively and with complete success until after the cease-fire at 2200 hours 27 July 1953. Thereafter they were relieved and returned to reserve for a long-deserved rest and refitting.

Although to those inexperienced in military matters and to those without full knowledge of the facts this great Kumsong Salient Battle may appear to have been a most tragic defeat for the Capitol ROK Division, nothing can be farther from the Military Truth. This great battle was, in fact, its most magnificent hour of triumph in which it truly lived its motto: “EVERY MAN A TIGER.”

For your extraordinary action during this period I, as your Corps Commander, am filled with admiration and deep gratitude.

Reuben E. Jenkins, Lieutenant General, U.S. Army, Commanding

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1 Inclosure 2, Citation, IX Corps, After Action Report, Capitol ROK Division.
7 July 1952

The United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea has been of inestimable value to the Army of the Republic of Korea since the Chinese Communist intervention in assisting and advising, in the formulation of operational, training, and logistical plans which were carried out with outstanding success, in hurling back the forces of both the North Korean and Chinese Communists, in the founding of the Command and General Staff College, Replacement Training Centers which have brought the great expansion and development of the Army of the Republic of Korea. All officers and men of the Military Advisory Group have consistently exercised utmost tact and keen discernment in promoting and maintaining the most harmonious relations with representatives of the Korean Government, the Korean Army, and members of the United Nations Command participating in the Korean campaign. The manifold duties and great responsibilities of coordinating the Republic of Korea Forces with the troops of other nations were carried out by the officers and men of the Military Advisory Group with clearly exceptional ingenuity and superb leadership. Under the brilliant and inspiring guidance of all members of the Military Advisory Group the Republic of Korea Forces were revitalized and developed into a self-sustaining, hard-hitting combat force, and the basis for a strong Republic of Korea Army established. The distinctive diplomacy and superior ability displayed by all members of the Military Advisory Group have contributed in the highest degree to the success achieved by the United Nations and the Republic of Korea in their common fight against Communist aggression. The eminently
meritorious service rendered by all officers and men of the Military Advisory Group throughout this period was clearly exceptional and is an inspiration to all ranks of the Republic of Korea Army.¹

¹ Quoted in Myers, *Wartime Experiences*, 342.
25 June 1953

The United States Military Advisory Group (KMAG) has been of inestimable value to the Republic of Korea Army by giving effective advice and excellent instruction resulting in the development of an Army organization sound and strong and able to accomplish its mission I in a superior manner.

The officers and men of KMAG faced with courage and resourcefulness the many problems inherent in formulating operational training and in accomplishing the expansion of the Republic of Korea Army while it was actively engaged in combat. During raging battles and under trying circumstances the valiant officers and men of KMAG strained normal operational facilities and methods to accomplish monumental feats of operational and logistical triumphs. . . .

The self-assurance, singular ability to surmount the most formidable obstacles and steadfast devotion to duty displayed by the members of this Group materially furthered the cause of the United Nations in Korea and reflect highest credit upon the United States Army and the entire United Nations Forces.

One of the noteworthy contributions of KMAG has been the strengthening of the bonds of understanding and friendship between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Republic of Korea.

With sincere gratitude and restored faith in the strength of democracy, the people of the Republic of Korea will forever remember the valiant and meritorious service rendered by the officers and men of KMAG.¹

¹ Quoted in United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAG Public Information Office: Tokyo, 1956), 66.
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