“MACARTHUR’S EYES”: REASSESSING MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS IN THE FORGOTTEN WAR, JUNE 1950 - APRIL 1951

DISSERTATION

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By

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*****

The Ohio State University
2006

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Adviser
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ABSTRACT

As American military historians ponder the impacts of military intelligence operations on the conduct and outcome of the nation’s wars, a key question comes to mind: how can we most objectively assess America’s performance of military intelligence operations? In answering this question we must understand the complexity of military intelligence work, for it traverses that gray area where military strategy and foreign policy intertwine. Oftentimes, when policymakers and military leaders fail to synchronize American foreign policy objectives and military strategy, the intelligence community, which forms a bridge between the political and military realms, makes a convenient scapegoat for such policy failures. Conversely, intelligence successes most often remain highly classified to protect the collection capabilities that facilitated a corresponding operational success. Much better known for its failures than its successes, military intelligence is widely regarded as the quintessential oxymoron.

Yet, worse contradictions in terms have affected the American conduct of war. For example, in the Korean War the American principle of “do more with less.” proved true for all parts of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East, including their military intelligence organizations. In the midst of a post World War II force reduction, military intelligence, performed the best that it could within prescribed geopolitical and military constraints. Moreover, the war catalyzed the chaotic reorganization of the U.S.
national security structure, which had tremendous impact on military intelligence operations in Korea.

It is in this context that we must reassess American military intelligence operations in the Korean War. For over a half-century, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur and his Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2), Major General Charles A. Willoughby, have borne the brunt of blame for the “intelligence failures” of June 25th and November 25th, 1950. All too often historians oversimplify these failures by ignoring important distinctions between discerning enemy capabilities and order of battle and the infinitely harder task of discerning enemy intentions. In reassessing military intelligence operations in the Korean War, one finds that “intelligence failures” were actually military command and political policy failures that became mutually reinforcing while intelligence successes reflected the converse. Therefore, MacArthur and Willoughby should not bear their historical burden alone, and they should receive due credit for many of the intelligence successes of the war. Take a look back at military intelligence operations in the Korean War through “MacArthur’s eyes” and judge for yourself.
DEDICATED TO THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SOLDIERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMAND AND ALL MILITARY INTELLIGENCE PROFESSIONALS WHO HAVE FOLLOWED THEM IN SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA, AND THE FREE WORLD
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must not be too quick to show all his cards but must play them at just the right moments to achieve the best effects. It has been my honor, privilege, and pleasure to know, learn from, and work with you.

I must also thank Dr. Philip Brown, who so graciously took on the role of my East-Asian-Japanese minor field advisor as Dr. James Bartholomew left on a year’s sabbatical. Dr. Brown your teachings on Early Modern Japan have done more than you know to make me a more complete historian. Your teachings have helped me on more than one occasion in explaining to my cadets the rise of early modern Japan and how that set the stage for its clash with the United States in the Asia-Pacific War. Moreover, I have a much deeper understanding of Japan’s influence on the Korean people and the “Land of the Morning Calm.” I thank you for all you have done to train me and guide me toward being a more cosmopolitan historian.

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I also thank Professor C. Mark Grimsley. His careful reflection upon my proposed thesis topic, done during class discussion on the craft of historiographical writing, planted
the seeds that grew into this project’s title. Thank you for your contribution in broadening my historical horizons.

I am truly grateful for the outstanding assistance put forth by Mr. James Zobel and Mr. John McLaughlin and their staff at the MacArthur Memorial Library and Archives in Norfolk, Virginia. Thank you, Jim and John, for making another Buckeye graduate student feel at home.

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educating me on the Freedom of Information Act procedures. I also thank my sister-in-law, Kim Puri, and her husband Amit for their wonderful hospitality during multiple research trips to the National Archives. Dr. Toni Petito and Dr. Joseph Caver at the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama were tremendously courteous and helpful in my spring 2005 visit there. Dr. Timothy Francis at the Naval Historical Center’s Operational Archives Branch at the Washington Navy Yard was also very responsive to my summer 2005 inquiries. Thanks also go to Dr. Gary LaValley at the Chester Nimitz Library at the U.S. Naval Academy for getting me quick access to Ambassador William Sebald’s papers on very short notice. I most certainly cannot forget the superb staff of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library in Independence, Missouri led by Mr. Randy Sowell. Thank you for extending me every courtesy in my summer 2005 research visit and for the free tour of the Truman Museum. I shall treasure that experience always.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A

AFSA - Armed Forces Security Agency
AFSS - Air Force Security Service
AI – Area of Interest
AO – Area of Operations
ASA - Army Security Agency
ASAPAC - Army Security Agency Pacific
ATIS - Allied Translator and Interpreter Service

B

BC - Border Constabulary (North Korea)

C

CCF - Chinese Communist Forces
CCP – Chinese Communist Party
CCRAK - Combined Command Reconnaissance Activities Korea
CG - Commanding General
CIA - Central Intelligence Agency
CIC - Counterintelligence Corps
CIG - Central Intelligence Group (CIA predecessor)
CINCFE - Commander In Chief, Far East
CNO - Chief of Naval Operations
COMINT - Communications Intelligence
COMNVAFE - Commander Naval Forces, Far East
COMMSUPACT - Communications Supplementary Activity (U.S. Navy)
CPVF – Chinese Peoples’ Volunteer Forces (a.k.a. CCF)

D

DA - Department of the Army
DIS - Daily Intelligence Summary
DOD - Department of Defense
EEI - Essential Elements of Information
ELINT - Electronic intelligence
EUSAK— Eighth United States Army, Korea

FEAF - Far East Air Forces
FEC, FECOM - Far East Command
FECLG - Far East Command Liaison Group
FRU - Field Research Unit (front name for CIA- OSO)

G-2 - Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence
G-3 - Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations

HUMINT - Human Intelligence

IPL - Intelligence Priorities List

JCS - Joint Chiefs of Staff
JSO - Joint Special Operations
JSOB - Joint Special Operations Branch
JTF – Joint Task Force
K
KGB - Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti\(^1\) - Former Soviet Committee for State Security
KLO - Korea Liaison Office
KMAG - Korean Military Advisory Group

L
LLVI - Low Level Voice Intercept
LST - Landing Ship, Tank

M
MACV - Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MIG - Mikoyan - Gurevich\(^2\) - Soviet Military Aircraft Manufacturer
MMA - Douglas MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia

N
NARA II – National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland
NICK - nickname for Don Nichols’ Air Force Special Activities Unit One
NKPA - North Korean Peoples Army
NKSF - North Korean Special Forces
NSA - National Security Agency
NSC - National Security Council
NSG - Naval Security Group (formerly COMMSUPACT)

O
OSD - Office of the Secretary of Defense
OSDHO – Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office
OSI - Office of Special Investigations (U.S. Air Force)
OSO- Office of Special Operations (CIA)
OSS - Office of Strategic Services (a CIA forerunner)

\(^*\) Information on what the KGB stands for taken from the following search engine website
<http://www.theanswerbank.co.uk/DisplayAnswers.go;jsessionid=aaalGgRJVpw7o-
tMat8c?question_id=25878&category_id=11&index=0>

\(^*\) Information on what MIG stands for taken from the following Search engine website:
OSU - The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

P

PHOTINT - Photographic Intelligence
PIR - Priority Intelligence Requirement (or Periodic Intelligence Report circa. 1950-1953)
POW - Prisoner of War

Q

None

R

RCT - Regimental Combat Team
ROK - Republic of Korea
ROKA- Republic of Korea Army

S

SCAP - Supreme Commander Allied Powers
SCR - Secure Radio
SIGINT - Signals Intelligence
SIS - Special Intelligence Section
SRS - Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron
SVR - Russian Foreign Intelligence Service

T

TECHINT - Technical Intelligence
TRG - Tactical Reconnaissance Group
TRS - Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron
TRW – Tactical Reconnaissance Wing
TSG – Tactical Support Group
TSIT – Technical Service Intelligence Teams

U

ULTRA – signals intelligence (World War II term)
UN – United Nations
UNC – United Nations Command
U.S. - United States
USA – United States Army
USAF - United States Air Force
USAFR- United States Air Force Reserve
USAMHI – United States Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania
USCIB – United States Communications Intelligence Board
USMA – United States Military Academy (West Point)
USN – United States Navy

Y
None

W
WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction
WOTL – William Oxley Thompson Library (The Ohio State University)

X
X Corps – Tenth Corps

Y
None

Z
None
INTRODUCTION
Redefining the Oxymoron

On November 24, 1950, five-thousand feet above the Yalu River, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur observed the lay of the land along both sides of the international border between North Korea and Manchuria (See Figures 1 and 2).¹ Flying in his unarmed, C-121-A transport plane “Bataan”, the 71-year-old Commander in Chief of United Nations Forces, at great personal risk, traversed the Yalu gauntlet.² Soviet-made MIG-15 fighter jets or anti-aircraft guns stationed on the Manchurian side of the river could have engaged his aircraft and its fighter escorts at any time. Characteristically undaunted by dangerous surroundings, MacArthur peered intensely at the frozen ground below him. All that unfolded before his eyes “was an endless expanse of utterly barren countryside, jagged hills, yawning crevices, and the black waters of the Yalu locked in the silent death grip of snow and ice.” Recent heavy snowfall had erased any cart tracks, vehicle tracks, or footprints that would have indicated massive Chinese troop movements into North Korea.³ With his own curiosity satisfied, the general made up his mind to

² <http://www.air-and-space.com/Lockheed%20Constellation%20survivors.htm> Lockheed issued the plane to the U.S. Air Force in January 1949. It was decommissioned in 1966, purchased by NASA, and, as of 2001, it was on permanent display at the Planes of Fame Grand Canyon Museum in Valle, Arizona.
launch his final northward assault to the Yalu River. He intended to crush all remaining North Korean Peoples Army (NKPA) and Chinese Peoples Volunteer Forces (CPVF) inside North Korea, consolidate his control of the peninsula, and end the Korean War. Unfortunately for the United Nations Forces, Mao Zedong’s CPVF troops, commanded by General Peng Dehuai, were already inside North Korea and in camouflaged positions to thwart MacArthur’s plans (See Figures 3 and 4).

Following their initial encounters with the CPVF in late October 1950, U.S Eighth Army and X Corps interrogation teams questioned captured CPVF troops, who verified the presence of CPVF “units” of undetermined size inside North Korea (See Figure 5). As more prisoner interrogation reports came in, MacArthur’s Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2), Major General Charles Andrew Willoughby, initially estimated the combined strength of those CPVF units to be between 60,000 and 70,000 men. Yet, unknown to MacArthur and Willoughby, close to 300,000 Chinese Communist troops had already crossed the Yalu River from Manchuria into North Korea since mid-October.4 They had moved only at night with nominal radio communications to avoid detection by aerial observation, radio intercept, and radio direction finding. As of mid-November 1950, these troops awaited the approach of UN forces from well-camouflaged hiding positions in the hills dominating the southernmost passes into the Yalu River Valley.

With uncertainty as to exact Chinese troop strength and disposition of forces, MacArthur felt he had three options. First, he could proceed north conducting a reconnaissance in force to develop the enemy situation enroute to launching a general

offensive to clear North Korea of remaining communist forces. Second, UN forces could stay where they were along the Chongchon River line (or advance to the last high ground overlooking the Yalu River Valley) and let the situation develop further, which, in MacArthur’s view, could invite disaster and would not fulfill his mission objectives. Third, he could withdraw his units farther down the peninsula and better consolidate his forces, an option that he and his military and political superiors in Washington found politically untenable. MacArthur chose what he saw as the only possible option, a reconnaissance in force, which evolved into a full fledged offensive.

On General MacArthur’s orders, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker’s Eighth Army attacked north from the Chongchon River on 25 November 1950, and it met strong Chinese resistance, which threatened to overwhelm it (See Figure 6). Two days later, the Tenth (X) Corps, commanded by Major General Edward M. Almond, encountered heavy resistance in the vicinity of the Changjin [Chosin] Reservoir stopping its advance to the north (See Figure 7). As the extent of the Chinese onslaught became clear to the UN forces, General MacArthur conferred with his two subordinate commanding generals on 29 November in Tokyo. Generals Walker and Almond convinced MacArthur that their forces could not hold in their current dispositions and that a withdrawal was the best course of action.

Outnumbered on the front lines, UN forces began to withdraw on MacArthur’s orders, to avoid destruction. UN forces skillfully managed to escape the onslaught as Eighth Army withdrew south past the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, and X Corps fought its way out from the Changjin Reservoir to the east coast port of Hungnam and
evacuated by sea to the southern port of Pusan (See Figures 8 and 9). Although battered and fatigued, UN forces remained intact. While eventually having to give up control of the South Korean capital, Seoul, the Eighth Army finally established a new defensive line south of the Han River. Meanwhile, X Corps moved north from Pusan to integrate itself into a single Eighth Army command structure. MacArthur’s forces escaped destruction, but his reputation as a brilliant combat commander did not.

Historians like Peter Lowe, S. L. A. Marshall, D. Clayton James, and Roy Appleman, view the Second Chinese Intervention as nothing less than an utter military disaster precipitated by a colossal military intelligence failure brought on by an arrogant General MacArthur and his obstinate, pompous, sycophantic G-2, Major General Willoughby. In a larger context, the Second Chinese Intervention is viewed as the culmination of an abysmal intelligence effort that started with the failure to anticipate and possibly deter the initial Communist invasion of South Korea. Yet, as John Hopkins University Professor Eliot Cohen has argued, to pin the blame on any one individual for these so called intelligence failures greatly oversimplifies a highly complex chain of events. Indeed, the historical lambasting of MacArthur and Willoughby ignores important distinctions between discerning enemy capabilities and the infinitely harder task of discerning enemy intentions. Moreover, historians must always bear in mind the fact that military intelligence operations are a zero-sum game between opponents. One side’s loss is the other’s victory. Thus, Korean War historians must be careful to avoid pinning the blame on any one individual and also avoid the pitfall of limiting their inspection of

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intelligence operations to the strategic level without exploring theater, operational, and tactical level intelligence efforts of both friendly and enemy forces. Additionally, as Roberta Wohlstetter brilliantly argued in her historical analysis of American military intelligence preceding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, one must learn to separate both “noise,” defined as all the other competing bits of information circulating in the intelligence community that do nothing to help anticipate a particular incident like the North Korean invasion or the Chinese interventions, and “static,” defined as data of “statistical and informative character” with little analytical material contained within it, from “action” intelligence, which requires response via an operational order or a command decision.

Within this complex context, we must reassess military intelligence operations in the Korean War. For over half a century Douglas MacArthur and Charles Willoughby have carried the burden of failing to predict the North Korean invasion and for underestimating the capabilities and resolve of the Chinese Communist Forces of Mao Zedong. While neither MacArthur nor Willoughby remain blameless for what happened, they do not deserve to shoulder that burden alone. Recently declassified documents, oral interviews of Korean War veterans, and newly published first hand accounts of intelligence operations in the Korean War reveal a much wider and more equitable distribution of both blame and praise for the respective “intelligence failures” and successes of the war.

Simply put, a careful reassessment of Korean War military intelligence operations redefines the war’s intelligence failures as political policy and military command failures.

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6 Ibid., pp. 129-130.
that became mutually reinforcing while the intelligence successes reflect the converse. Successful defense of this argument requires a comprehensive analysis of joint military intelligence operations from Major General Willoughby’s perspective. Such examination affords an opportunity to derive a useful framework for analyzing the military intelligence failures and successes of the war and their corresponding impacts upon the war’s causes, conduct, and consequences. In addition, it provides a means to assess the impact of intelligence failures and successes upon American intelligence institutions.

Such analysis will clarify the historical record and perhaps provide some insights for analyzing future American military intelligence operations. Given our nation’s current, evolving intelligence structure and the tenuous armistice on the Korean peninsula, historical analysis of this topic becomes particularly important. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 provoked the most sweeping legislative efforts to reform our national intelligence establishment since the National Security Act of 1947. The 1947 legislation greatly affected the conduct of intelligence operations in the Korean War by creating a new Central Intelligence Agency, an independent United States Air Force replete with its own intelligence agencies, and by forcing the Departments of the Army (formerly War), Navy, and Air Force to work together under a single Department of Defense (DoD).

For example, by June 1950 the organization of the American communications (or signals) intelligence community mirrored the service departmental realignments by placing each service’s communications intelligence agency under the umbrella of a DoD controlled Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA), known today as the National Security Agency.

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Additionally, the fledgling Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), like its World War II predecessor the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), fought to establish itself and justify its existence by mounting clandestine human intelligence operations in MacArthur’s assigned theater of operations even though MacArthur already had his own units for such missions. Today, new legislation has again reshaped the future conduct of military intelligence operations in the Global War on Terror with the appointment of a new National Intelligence Director (NID) to oversee all American intelligence agencies both in and outside of the Department of Defense. Thus, a reassessment of military intelligence operations in the Korean War offers the opportunity to develop a useful framework for analyzing and evaluating the conduct and outcome of military intelligence operations in the midst of institutional change. That reassessment could enhance our appreciation of the current changes underway in the American intelligence community.

Most importantly, there has yet to be a single Korean War volume written that is solely dedicated to analyzing and evaluating intelligence operations in the war. Clay Blair dedicates a few pages in *The Forgotten War* and holds Willoughby responsible for the intelligence failures of 1950, and British historian Max Hastings’ one volume work also finds fault with Willoughby with only a cursory accounting of the intelligence picture. Two articles by another British scholar, Matthew Aid provide a much more complete and accurate account of communications and human intelligence operations in the Korean War, yet even his magnificent research falls prey to a proclivity to blame MacArthur and Willoughby for all intelligence shortcomings. Additionally, Aid’s works shed no light on the photographic intelligence (PHOTINT) of the Korean War. No historian has attempted
to incorporate all of the main intelligence categories from the American armed services and the Central Intelligence Agency to recreate the joint, all-source intelligence picture that General Willoughby was charged to assemble for General MacArthur. This account will begin to fill in this historiographical void.

A complete intelligence picture remains elusive given the current classification of the communications intelligence (COMINT) reports from the war. However, there are now enough declassified materials and first-hand personal accounts available to piece the joint intelligence picture together and to help fill in the gaps left by the missing COMINT reports. For example, in his book #1 Code Break Boy, former Army corporal John Milmore chronicled his Korean War experiences as an Army Security Agency-Pacific (ASAPAC) cryptanalyst and provided first hand insights into both the failures and triumphs of American COMINT operations. His recollections, added to those of his immediate supervisor, former Army sergeant Al Wight, whom I interviewed by electronic correspondence, vividly describe their key roles in the American COMINT operations at crucial points in the war. Milmore’s experience was not only within ASAPAC headquarters in Tokyo but also forward deployed with the 60th Signals Service Company supporting the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea. Milmore and Wight’s recollections convincingly qualify or refute the self-serving “official” accounts put forth by NSA historians like Jill Frahm, Robert Benson, and Thomas R. Johnson. Milmore’s account also fairly criticizes but otherwise lauds the work of Matthew Aid, who has taken the closest look at the available declassified American COMINT documentation.
Matthew M. Aid’s two published articles discussing the roles of COMINT and human intelligence (HUMINT) in the Korean War indeed constitute the most thorough intelligence studies on the Korean War to date. In his most recent article Aid argued that COMINT in particular did not deliver decisive results in the first year of the war. In fact, he argued that COMINT never lived up to its full potential and only became adequate to combat commanders when the war transitioned from a fluid strategic state to one of stalemate.8

Aid’s argument is very well researched and nearly flawless. However, he placed the entire blame upon MacArthur and Willoughby for the debacles in June and November 1950, instead of considering what the full intelligence picture revealed to include not only the American armed services contributions but also those of the CIA. Aid relies upon secondary sources whenever he accuses MacArthur of simply ignoring the evidence of “substantial” Chinese troop presence in North Korea, and he makes no attempt to quantify what he means by “substantial.”9 In addition, according to former ASA cryptanalyst, John Milmore, Aid relied upon official ASA reports, which were written by commissioned officers with “scant knowledge of cryptology or communications intelligence”, compared to the cryptanalysts themselves.10

Patrick C. Roe, a former Marine intelligence officer who served in the Korean War, made a recent, albeit limited, effort to conduct a joint analysis of the intelligence failures surrounding the Chinese Communist interventions in Korea in October and

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9 Ibid., pp. 15, 18.
November of 1950. His work *The Dragon Strikes: China and the Korean War: June-December 1950* analyzed intelligence operations utilizing joint evidence from Army, Navy, and Marine Corps archives, but Roe neglected U.S. Air Force intelligence contributions. Roe also acknowledged that his analysis is far from comprehensive because he did not explore the initial intelligence problems at the time of the North Korean invasion and he did not highlight key intelligence successes, which facilitated the successful breakout of Eighth Army from behind the Pusan Perimeter and the highly successful amphibious landing at Inchon.¹¹

Additionally, Roe confirmed that much of the crucial intelligence reporting of the Korean War held by archives of the United States Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) are classified and probably will remain so for the foreseeable future. However, the CIA has declassified a sizeable series of documents to include National Intelligence Estimates pertaining to the Korean War, while many of these documents are still highly sanitized, they do present strong circumstantial evidence that helps fill in the gaps that Roe left unfilled and paint a more complete intelligence picture of the Korean War battlefield at crucial moments in the conflict.

Additionally, Roe’s analysis failed to address three very important questions which served as guideposts for this research project. First, what was the actual balance among the various collection categories of intelligence utilized in the war? Second, how did that

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balance change over time if it changed at all? Third, what did Major General Charles Willoughby expect that balance to be based upon his World War II experiences? Even if the majority of the NSA and CIA reports remain classified for years to come, this project will, at a minimum, help determine the answers to these questions. By doing so, it will illuminate the relative contributions of each type of intelligence, the use or misuse of that intelligence, and how Willoughby and his staff section weighted the collected information in their final analyses.

An excellent source for gaining an initial appreciation of how both MacArthur and Willoughby analyzed and utilized military intelligence, is Edward J. Drea’s World War II, Southwest Pacific Area campaign history entitled *MacArthur’s Ultra: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*. Drea described Willoughby’s analysis and evaluation of both Allied Army and Navy ULTRA (communications intelligence) as a reflection of “Willoughby’s idiosyncrasies, particularly his disconcerting habit of reversing major interpretations overnight for no apparent reason.”¹² These “contradictory assessments” Drea argued, gave Willoughby’s numerous critics ample grounds by which to label him incompetent.¹³ Drea also pointed to Willoughby’s penchant for projecting “his military appreciation of events onto opponents.”¹⁴ Drea juxtaposed this evidence with evidence clearly demonstrating MacArthur’s penchant for simply disregarding ULTRA intelligence when it did not coincide with his desired plans and timetables.¹⁵ Additionally, Drea’s approach provides a joint basis for understanding the institutional intelligence dynamics

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ⁱ³ Ibid.
ⁱ⁴ Ibid.
within the Far East Command (FECOM) and between FECOM and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which was the predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Many, but not necessarily all, of these personal behaviors and institutional dynamics carried through from the end of World War II, through the occupation of Japan, and into the Korean War.

I intend to build upon Drea’s approach by expanding the scope of investigation across the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. Moreover, I will not focus solely on communications intelligence as Drea did in his work. Instead, I will evaluate the joint intelligence picture from Willoughby’s perspective by incorporating communications intelligence, human intelligence, and photographic intelligence from all Department of Defense intelligence agencies and the CIA into an integrated view of the Korean area of operations.

Based on my research to date, I believe that Willoughby and his staff probably valued COMINT above all other available forms of intelligence even though General Douglas MacArthur did not. While actual COMINT reports from the war remain largely classified, there is some relevant historical testimony that implies the primacy of COMINT in Willoughby’s assessments and substantial evidence that MacArthur had more faith in other sources of intelligence and his own experienced judgment. Lieutenant Colonel, later Lieutenant General, Philip B. Davidson Jr., Willoughby’s Plans and Estimates Branch chief in FECOM/UNC G-2, and later Military Assistance Command Vietnam J-2 under Generals Westmoreland and Abrams, claimed that historians have erroneously judged

15 Ibid.
Willoughby solely upon the basis of FECOM’s Daily Intelligence Summaries. Davidson claims that higher level, limited access, executive summaries containing COMINT, all of which remain classified today, were “the real voice” of Willoughby.16

Phillip Davidson’s claim combined with Patrick Roe’s belief that the Chinese Communist Forces were well aware of American COMINT capabilities and the heavy American reliance upon it help explain Willoughby’s slow and cautious acceptance of increasingly large CCF presence in North Korea in November 1950. Moreover, Roe argued that the Chinese solution to American COMINT capabilities was “a coordinated campaign of deception” designed to make “initial CCF forces in Korea appear much smaller than they were,” then once the main offensive was underway, “to make the available forces seem much larger than they were.”17 Such claims are consistent with UN interrogation reports of Chinese prisoners of war, who claimed that they received instructions to identify their unit affiliation by false numerical designations like the 54th or 55th CCF Units.18

An interesting, associated point is that Eighth Army G-2, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton, verified that Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway, shortly after

17 Patrick C. Roe sent the author a personal electronic copy of his article “The Ghost Armies of Manchuria.” Based off of his book The Dragon Strikes. Information paraphrased from page 2 of the article.
18 These designated CCF Units 54 through 56 were based upon interrogation of CCF prisoners captured from 28 October – 13 November 1950. EUSAK and FECOM carried these false unit designations in their enemy order of battle analysis until 13 November when they realized that these units actually were the 38th, 39th and 40th CCF Armies, respectively. See FECOM DIS No. 2976, 2 November 1950, RG 407: Army AG Command Reports 1949-1954, Box 366, Staff Action Reports, Annex 3, Part II, Supplemental Documents G-2, 1-10 November 1950. National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland. Hereafter referred to as NARA II. See also FECOM DIS No. 2988, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby: Box 14: Folder: Order of Battle Annex. Chinese Communist Potential for
assuming command of the Eighth Army in Korea in late December 1950, voiced his
disagreement with FECOM and Eighth Army G-2 estimates of Chinese Communist Forces
(CCF) strength during the Eighth Army’s withdrawal below the 38th parallel. Tarkenton
wrote that Ridgway “once alluded to the fact that our estimates of CCF in Korea were a
great deal higher than he accepted.” 19 In light of such evidence, Roe’s assessment that the
Chinese Communists enjoyed great success in deceiving and misleading American
COMINT analysts becomes very compelling. Indeed, as Roe argues, there appears to be
enough circumstantial evidence to support this conclusion.20

Published Korean War accounts of China’s intervention based on Chinese primary
source documents such as Shu Guang Zhang’s Mao’s Military Romanticism: China and
the Korean War, 1950-1953 point to a careful precaution on the part of the Chinese
Communist Forces to observe radio silence when crossing into North Korea.21 More
recent documents analyzed by the Cold War International History Project speak to the
deliberateness and determination with which Mao Zedong decided to confront American
forces in Korea. Chen Jian’s book China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the
Sino-American Confrontation was among the more convincing accounts of Mao seeking
to gain international recognition of Red China while also solidifying his domestic power
base. Still none of these accounts discussed communications intelligence deception or any

Intervention in the Korean War, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia. Hereafter referred to as MMA.
19 Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton Jr., Copy of James C. Tarkenton’s written answers to the
questions of author Clay Blair during Blair’s research for writing The Forgotten War. A copy of Blair’s
questionnaire and Tarkenton’s written answers dated 25 October 1984 were provided to the author
courtesy of James Tarkenton’s surviving son, Mr. Scott Tarkenton on 8 February 2005.
20 Roe. The Dragon Strikes. ix.
21 Shu Guang Zhang. Mao’s Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953. (Lawrence:
other form of intelligence deception techniques beyond the use of radio silence. ASA cryptanalyst Al Wight, claimed that the Chinese adversary was not all that sophisticated in terms of COMINT capabilities and that the depth of Chinese Communist COMINT deception was essentially limited to radio silence.\textsuperscript{22} However, the presence of false information and the absence of information can be equally deceiving.

As interesting as the COMINT history of the war is in its own right, it paints an incomplete picture unless it is juxtaposed against the other major intelligence collection categories of photographic intelligence (PHOTINT) and, of course, the oldest form of military intelligence, human intelligence (HUMINT). Thus far in Korean War historiography, when the intelligence situation is considered by diplomatic historians like William Steuck or military historians like Roy Appleman, their conclusions point to a poor performance by Willoughby without really performing this essential comparative analysis across all categories of intelligence. They regard Willoughby’s failures to predict the NKPA invasion of the Republic of South Korea and to detect the infiltration of 300,000 Chinese Communist troops into North Korea from October through November 1950 as indicators of his professional incompetence. However, one cannot pass final judgment or place the full burden of intelligence failure on Willoughby’s shoulders without recreating and analyzing the joint intelligence picture to which he, General MacArthur, and Washington policymakers were privy. Recreation of that picture enables one to derive a useful framework for analyzing and evaluating the operational failures and successes of America’s intelligence community during the Korean War.

\textsuperscript{22} Electronic mail correspondence between Al Wight and the author, 27 August 2005. Mr. Wight responded to the author’s direct question on this subject.
To accomplish this task one must first understand the complexity of military intelligence work, for it traverses the gray area where foreign policy and military strategy intertwine. At the strategic level of war, nations articulate their war aims as a basis for military campaign planning. Therefore, intelligence operations at this level focus upon discerning the war aims and intentions of potential or actual adversaries.

Contrast this with the operational and tactical levels of war, where military campaign plans are formulated and then executed to achieve national objectives. At these levels, intelligence operations focus upon enemy capabilities, which are most often enumerated in an adversary’s order of battle. In piecing together this order of battle one attempts to discern indications of enemy capabilities and intentions. Such indications include the positioning of key equipment such as armored tanks, heavy artillery, and engineer assets, communications (or lack thereof) over radio nets as final combat preparations are made, or the positioning of large numbers of combat troops within certain areas of interest.

Each level of war presents its own unique intelligence collection challenges. At the strategic level, an enemy state holds its war aims within the highest circles of its political and military leadership, and it disseminates those aims solely upon a need to know basis by the most secure means possible. Only a spy with access to the enemy’s senior political and military circles could collect such crucial information. In the wake of the success of ULTRA and MAGIC in the European and Pacific Theaters of World War II, most nations would not chance the compromise of their war aims by transmitting them over radio waves in 1950. Nor could American intelligence analysts necessarily glean enemy war aims
strictly from photographic intelligence of enemy equipment or troop dispositions. Thus, human intelligence is often the most critical collection category at the strategic level.

At the operational and tactical levels, intelligence collection is often less daunting. The indicators of enemy military capabilities such as troop strength, weapons systems, and force structure are much more tangible and detectable by the various collection sources and methods. Collection assets are placed within the area of operations to discover the commander’s essential elements of information (EEI), those critical pieces of information regarding enemy capabilities that the commander must know in order to make timely decisions in battle.

Therefore, a commander’s intelligence must be timely and predictive in nature. A commander expects his intelligence staff to anticipate and make educated guesses about the possible and most probable enemy courses of action. While indicators and hard evidence of enemy intentions are very hard to collect, the intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination efforts must be as comprehensive and constant as all available collection assets, analysts, and command authorities will allow.

Since 1947, American intelligence collection at the strategic level has involved the interface not only of military-controlled intelligence collection assets but also those of other government agencies to include the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department. At the operational and tactical levels, the collection effort hinges mainly upon the joint, combined efforts of all American armed services and their allied counterparts. Regardless of the level of war, intelligence collection operations entail complex interactions of multiple organizations within a given theater of operations.
Such complexity is compounded when policymakers and military leaders fail to synchronize American foreign policy objectives and military strategy. When this occurs, the intelligence community, which forms a bridge between the political and military realms, often becomes a convenient, highly-publicized scapegoat for such policy synchronization and command failures. Conversely, intelligence successes often remain out of the limelight to protect collection capabilities contributing to operational and strategic successes. Much better known for its failures than its successes, military intelligence is widely regarded as the quintessential oxymoron.

Yet, a worse contradiction in terms affected the American conduct of the Korean War. The American principle of doing more with less proved true for all parts of the United States armed forces in the Far East, including their military intelligence organizations. In the midst of the post World War II force reduction, military intelligence performance suffered within prescribed geopolitical, economic, and military constraints. Moreover, the reorganization of the U.S. national security structure under the National Security Act of 1947 exacerbated inter-service rivalries and inter-agency tensions left over from World War II. In Korea, those tensions greatly complicated military operations in general and military intelligence operations in particular.

Imagine the daunting challenges Willoughby faced as the United Nations / Far East Command G-2. Not only did he have to integrate the reports of these competing intelligence organizations into one coherent picture, he also had to enforce MacArthur’s command and control of his theater intelligence assets to the fullest extent possible while working effectively with those assets, specifically the national COMINT assets and CIA
operatives, which were beyond MacArthur’s direct control. In these capacities, the
evidence will show that Willoughby performed reasonably well.

A close inspection of service intelligence records and the actions of respective
operational leaders and chiefs of intelligence for the Far East Command service
components demonstrate a competent, concerted effort by Willoughby and his staff to
analyze and fuse joint intelligence into one coherent picture. For example, Far East Air
Forces (FEAF) Weekly Intelligence Roundups, in addition to memorandums and
correspondence between FECOM G-2 staff and FEAF Assistant Chief of Staff for
Intelligence, A-2, Brigadier General Charles Y. Banfill, showed a dialogue for intelligence
integration that predated the Korean War by almost two years. In addition, the
photographic intelligence reports from FEAF photoreconnaissance squadron unit histories
fill in pieces of the joint intelligence picture that authors like Patrick Roe and Matthew Aid
have not explored. Such reports highlight the challenges associated with utilizing and
maintaining the photographic equipment of the time in a harsh, unforgiving Korean theater
and the capabilities and limitations of that equipment. More importantly, it points to the
conflicting priorities these units had to deal with to meet U.S. Air Force priorities
sometimes dictated from Washington compared to MacArthur’s mission priorities.

Also resident among U.S. Air Force holdings are partially declassified reports of
key Far East Air Forces intelligence personnel, such as the eccentric human intelligence
technician, Chief Warrant Officer Donald Nichols. Nichols miraculously pieced together

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23 FEAF Intel Vol. I. Part I, pp. 1-2, 51, July 1948-December 1948, K720.600, IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, in
USAF Collection, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter
referred to as AFHRA.
Republic of Korea military personnel into his own personally controlled human, communications, and technical intelligence teams. By looking at reports by Nichols and Brigadier General Banfill, one can trace the Air Force’s interactions with Willoughby and his staff and find out how effectively Willoughby integrated the joint intelligence he received into a coherent battlefield picture for General MacArthur.

Records and oral histories from the Operational Archives of the U.S. Naval Historical Center in Washington D.C., the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, and recently published first hand accounts of intelligence collection reveal the thoughts, recommendations, and contributions of key Navy operations and intelligence personnel, like Commander H.W. McElwain, who served as the Task Force 90 intelligence chief for Rear Admiral James Doyle during the Inchon landing, Rear Admiral (later Admiral and Chief of Naval Operations) Arleigh Burke, who served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Commander, Naval Forces Far East, and Lieutenant (later Commander) Eugene F. Clark, who led a daring reconnaissance mission of the Inchon harbor area in the two weeks preceding the UN amphibious landing there. All of these naval officers interfaced either with Willoughby or members of his staff at key points in the first year of the war. The personal recollections of these key leaders have helped immensely in reconstructing the joint intelligence picture. They even paint a more positive picture of Willoughby than many other military service sources.

From a joint service perspective, U.S. Army sources are generally much more accessible than those of the other services. Not only are FECOM daily intelligence

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summaries readily accessible at the National Archives but several oral histories at the U.S. Army Military History Institute and the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library also revealed a great deal about Willoughby and his FECOM/UNC staff interactions.

One example is the transcript of the oral debrief of General James H. Polk, a former deputy G-2 under Willoughby at FECOM headquarters during the Korean War, later the X Corps G-2 in Korea, and later Commander, U.S. Army Europe. Polk argued that Willoughby had the necessary intelligence information on Chinese Communist Forces’ (CCF) presence in North Korea to dissuade MacArthur from attacking toward the Yalu in late November 1950. Polk stated that “we had the dope but old CAW (Willoughby) bowed to the superior wisdom of his beloved boss and didn’t fight him as a good staff officer should.”

In addition, one key Army veteran of the Korean War, who witnessed Willoughby in action, is the recently deceased Lieutenant General William J. McCaffrey, USA (retired). McCaffrey served as Major General Edward M. Almond’s X Corps Deputy Chief of Staff in Korea. In a 2004 telephonic interview, McCaffrey substantiated the prevailing characterization of Willoughby as a “sycophant” who was more interested in staying in MacArthur’s good graces than in rendering an objective assessment of the available facts. McCaffrey mentioned that this was particularly true regarding a debate

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26 Lieutenant General William J. McCaffrey, USA (ret.) died in February of this year. The author is grateful to have had the opportunity to interview the deceased in September of 2004. His recollection of his Korean War experiences was amazingly accurate when compared to the historical documentation of the events he described.
27 Lieutenant General William J. McCaffrey, USA (Ret.). Telephonic interview with author conducted on 3 September 2004. Hereafter referred to as the McCaffrey-Knight telephonic interview, 3 September 2004.
between Major Generals Willoughby and Almond over the magnitude of confirmed CCF troop presence in Korea in late October 1950 prior to MacArthur’s final offensive push toward the Yalu River.²⁸ That advance had near disastrous consequences and turned the tide of the war in favor of the CCF for several months. McCaffrey claimed that Willoughby, like MacArthur, downplayed the level of Chinese presence in North Korea and that he “knew better” and that Willoughby’s biggest flaw as a G-2 was not standing up to his commanding general when the facts mandated that he should.²⁹

Yet, McCaffrey, Polk, and Phillip Davidson all agreed that Douglas MacArthur was a man who consistently made and acted upon his own intelligence analyses and evaluations.³⁰ One must also consider the source of the intelligence information before one can assess its credibility and decide whether or not the intelligence is worthy of deliberate action. The question of what COMINT reporting actually did or did not reveal to Willoughby and MacArthur lingers and along with it a shade of doubt about whether either of them really “knew better” or if either or both of them were swayed by COMINT reports showing sporadic, deceptive radio traffic or simply the absence of CCF radio traffic. The evidence available to date indicates a low volume of CCF COMINT traffic and the distinct possibility of deceptive CCF radio traffic. This absence of radio traffic and possible deceptive traffic corroborated the lack of photographic evidence and even some

²⁸ Ibid.
²⁹ Ibid.
human intelligence sources that indicated a lack of any large CCF presence in North Korea. MacArthur and his superiors in Washington appear to have interpreted this combination of reports in a way that reassured them that the planned November U.N. offensive could succeed. If Willoughby weighted COMINT more heavily in his own overall assessment then he might have had no reason to fight MacArthur’s interpretation of events.

Phillip Davidson’s claim of Willoughby’s reliance on COMINT becomes increasingly compelling given recent evidence. In September 2000, NSA historian Robert Benson claimed that a distinct collection gap and a devastating compromise of American COMINT collection capability against the Soviet Union occurred in 1948 well before the outbreak of the Korean War. Upon discovering that America could read their signal traffic, the Soviets re-encrypted their signal transmissions, and by 1948 and well into the Korean War, American ability to decipher Soviet transmissions was lost, and the cryptanalysts had to start back at the beginning of their code breaking methodologies.31 Yet my recent correspondence with ASAPAC cryptanalyst Al Wight clearly refutes Benson’s analytical claims.

Wight indicated that this supposed loss of ability to crack Soviet codes was in no way as complete as NSA historians have indicated. Wight claimed that his ASAPAC team in Tokyo and another ASAPAC field station in Chitose, Japan intercepted Far East Soviet military communications, broke their codes, and translated these messages into English, and reported their findings right up to the start of the Korean War. Once the Korean War

was well underway, the ASA then switched its intercept focus to North Korean communications.\textsuperscript{32} Robert Benson’s argument, which is based on earlier secondary cryptologic history publications, is very dubious in light of Wight’s experiences. It points to deliberate deception on the part of the National Security Agency to mislead scholars as to the full extent of COMINT capabilities supporting the UN effort in Korea in 1950.

Aside from American intelligence agency deception, the Chinese adversary’s efforts to deceive UN intelligence analysts took on many forms. In a recently declassified and partially redacted CIA intelligence estimate dated 28 October 1950, protected sources reported that

the Chinese Communists and the USSR regard the Korean War as virtually ended and are not planning a counter offensive...the bulk of Chinese Communist units had been withdrawn from Korea leaving only skeleton forces to create the impression that a large number of Chinese Communist Forces were still present, thus deceiving U.S. intelligence so that the maximum number of U.S. troops would be committed in Korea for the longest possible time (See Figure 10).\textsuperscript{33}

Such deception by the Chinese Communists, whether generated by misinformation deliberately given to a human source or by radio broadcasts intercepted and translated by U.N. or allied intelligence units, is consistent with China’s strategic calculus underpinning

\textsuperscript{32} Electronic mail correspondence between Al Wight and the author, 27 August, 2005. Mr. Wight responded directly and explicitly to the author’s specific questions regarding the compromise of American codebreaking abilities vis a vis the Soviet Union as reported by NSA historian Robert Louis Benson in the NSA article entitled \textit{Soviet Espionage and the Korean War.}

\textsuperscript{33} This report is sanitized to protect sources and methods. The information in the 28 October estimate clearly could not be gleaned from PHOTINT. Given the content of the intelligence mentioned in the report it is clear that the sanitized parts of the report are there to protect either HUMINT and/or COMINT sources and methods whether those are American, U.N.-Allied or Chinese Nationalist sources is not clear but the fact that the sources explicitly refer to deceptive exaggeration on the part of the Chinese Communists reflects a consistency that intelligence analysts saw between these sources reporting “skeleton” Chinese forces and reports of Chinese Communist Forces believed to be in North Korea based on earlier prisoner interrogations. Central Intelligence Agency Intelligence Estimate, 28 October 1950.
its intervention in the Korean War. The latest findings of the Cold War International History Project, whose members continue to mine recently declassified Soviet and Chinese diplomatic and military transcripts from the Korean War, indicate a deliberate plan by Mao Zedong to commit his troops to combat against UN Forces with, but not solely because of, Josef Stalin’s prodding. What is clear is that from the very beginning any Chinese intervention was to be done by Chinese “volunteers.”\textsuperscript{34} Between propaganda reports of these “volunteers” aiding the NKPA, CCF prisoners of war claiming to belong to non existent 54th or 55th CCF “units,” possible COMINT deception and CCF radio silence – China’s deliberate efforts to mislead UN intelligence are readily apparent. Such deceptive measures most likely influenced Willoughby’s FECOM intelligence assessments causing him to drastically underestimate actual CCF strength in North Korea in October and November 1950.

This deception influenced not only Willoughby’s assessment, but that of his intelligence counterparts and superiors in Washington D.C. as well. If COMINT or other intelligence sources did provide warning of an imminent Chinese Communist attack in overwhelming strength in November 1950, why would Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall and President Harry S. Truman allow General MacArthur to proceed with his final attack toward the Yalu River?

Marshall had demonstrated some resolve in World War II as Army Chief of Staff for voicing his disagreement with MacArthur’s campaign plans in response to ULTRA reports of massive Japanese troop buildups in Western New Guinea, Halmahera, and Mindanao, Philippines in June 1944. In the summer of 1945, Marshall also disagreed with MacArthur’s assessments on the feasibility of executing Operation Olympic, the planned Allied invasion of the Japanese island of Kyushu, based upon Japanese troop strength estimates provided by ULTRA intercepts. These facts inspire one to question why Marshall as Secretary of Defense would not overrule MacArthur again in Korea in late November 1950 if the intelligence picture warranted such a measure.

Recently declassified memoranda and letters from Secretary of Defense Marshall’s official correspondence reveal his deep respect for the prerogatives of the theater commander, especially when the time for operational execution was close at hand. In addition, President Harry S. Truman’s papers and those of Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson clearly show their ultimate solidarity with Secretary Marshall’s views on the Korean situation in the final deliberations of the National Security Council in late November 1950. While Marshall was privy to all forms of intelligence and all reports

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coming out of the Far East theater of operations and the CIA, none of these reports compelled him to advise President Truman to halt MacArthur’s late November offensive.

Drawing upon numerous intelligence reports from all of the American armed services and the CIA, the official deliberations of the National Security Council resulting in presidential advisements and executive decisions, and JCS correspondence with General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, this work recreates the joint intelligence picture as seen by Willoughby, MacArthur, and their superiors in Washington. This picture reveals that, in the Korean War context, military intelligence failures were failures of political policies and military command that become mutually reinforcing while intelligence successes reflected the converse. While this argument in no way renders Willoughby or, particularly, MacArthur completely blameless, it does entitle them both to some degree of exoneration. Moreover, as ironic as it sounds, reassessment of the military intelligence operations of the Korean War looking through “MacArthur’s eyes” provides a more objective, less parochial means for assessing both American intelligence failures and successes.

In elucidating the contributing factors to the intelligence failures and successes of the Korean War, one finds that, aside from normal human fallibility, they were remarkably unsurprising yet largely unacknowledged. Moreover, one finds that military intelligence in the Korean War was not so much a contradiction in terms as it is simply a part of the larger chaos that characterizes war itself and America’s characteristic, ad-hoc preparations for it. In the Korean War context, where preparations for war followed recently completed force reductions, the American adage of doing more with less proved to be much more of

an oxymoron than military intelligence. From August of 1945 until the outbreak of the
Korean War, this American adage never proved truer for Douglas MacArthur’s forces in
the Far East and the American armed forces as a whole.
Figure 1: MacArthur flies over the Yalu River in the “Bataan”


(Bottom photo) General MacArthur aboard the Bataan on a personal reconnaissance flight over the Yalu River on November 24, 1950. Seated behind MacArthur (from front to back) are Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer (FEAF Commander), Brigadier General Edwin K. Wright (FECOM-UNC G-3), and (standing) Major General Courtney Whitney (Legal Advisor to General MacArthur). (Photo from MS-024: Charles A. Willoughby Collection, Series VII, Special Collections, Musselman Library. Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Caption notation taken from Weintraub, MacArthur’s War, unnumbered page.)
Figure 2: Basic Map of the Korean Peninsula

Peng Dehuai was the Commander of the “Chinese Peoples Volunteer Army” in Korea (a.k.a. the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF)). With a reputation as a tenacious fighter and strong leader, Peng lived up to his billing and managed to infiltrate his units into North Korea at night and avoid detection by UN intelligence collection assets. After his initial clashes with UN forces in late October 1950, Peng managed to keep UN patrols at arms length and camouflage his units well enough to enable them to prepare for their massive counterattack against MacArthur’s advance in late November 1950. He was later given the rank of Marshal of the Chinese Peoples’ Liberation Army. (Photo taken from Paul Noll Online collection http://www.paulnoll.com/Korea/War/Peng-Dehuai-history.html)
Figure 4: CCF troops in camouflaged positions

This photograph depicts Chinese Communist fortification and camouflage techniques used to prevent aerial detection (April 1951). The CCF used this tactical technique with great success during their infiltration into North Korea in October and November 1950 and throughout the war. (SC365738 - KOREAN CONFLICT Korea. Signal Corps Photo #8A/FEC-51-13738, Photo and opening caption line taken from U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.army.mil.cmh-pg/photos/korea/kor1951/kor1951.htm>).
American troops interrogating captured Chinese Communist soldiers in North Korea in November 1950. Aside from the arduous process of having to translate between Mandarin Chinese, Korean, and Japanese languages and finally translating into English, American intelligence personnel had to weigh enemy prisoner information carefully against other sources in order to verify its accuracy. (Photo and first line of caption information taken from Weintraub, MacArthur’s War, unnumbered page. Original photograph courtesy of the U.S. Army).
Figure 6: Map of the Battle of the Chongchon River (25-28 November 1950)

Figure 7: Map of Battle of the Changjin Reservoir (27-29 November 1950)

This map depicts the Eighth Army withdrawal to successive new defensive lines with the last being completely to the south of the Han River. X Corps forces that had evacuated to the southern port of Pusan would move north to integrate into the Eighth Army command structure and form a single defensive front across the entire peninsula. (Map taken from Billy C. Mossman. *Ebb and Flow: November 1950-July 1951*. Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990, at [http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/korea/maps/map13_full.jpg](http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/korea/maps/map13_full.jpg))
Figure 10: CIA Intelligence Estimate of 28 October 1950

Document is found as entry CIA-RDP78-01617A006100020052-2 in CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), NARA II.
CHAPTER 1

CLIMBING MOUNTAINS AND CLAIMING TERRITORY

1.1 Willoughby’s Domain: Far East Intelligence Operations (1945-1950)

MacArthur’s Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G-2, 58-year-old Major General Charles Andrew Willoughby (See Figure 11), had the arduous task of planning and coordinating intelligence operations throughout the Far East with a shrinking pool of collection assets and trained intelligence personnel. He approached that task with all of the poise, haughtiness, presence of mind, and stubborn temperament of a Prussian staff officer. The tall, stout general led his staff organization with a stiff countenance, which reflected his German heritage.

He was born Charles Adolph Weidenbach in Germany on 8 March 1892. His father was Baron T. von Tschepppe-Weidenbach of Silesia and his mother was an American named Emy Willoughby from Baltimore, Maryland. Willoughby attended various European educational institutions such as the University of Heidelberg in Germany and the Sorbonne, in Paris, France majoring in philology and modern languages. By 1910 he decided to join his American relatives in the United States, find a way to finish his undergraduate degree, and obtain U.S. citizenship.¹

¹ Central Intelligence Agency Biographical Sketch (04615) of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, p. 1. Approved for Release 2003/01/29: CIA-RDP, Job number 80B01676R, Box # 0026, Folder # 0008, document # 0039-6, CREST, NARA II.
Willoughby was determined to have a military career and enlisted in the U.S. Army, under his German name, as a candidate for a commission, and served from the rank of private through sergeant in Company K, 5th U.S. Infantry from October 1910 to October 1913. In 1913 he entered Pennsylvania College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (now Gettysburg College) and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1914. By May of that year he received a commission as Major, Officer Volunteer Corps, which he later vacated to accept a Regular Army commission in the rank of Second Lieutenant in August of 1916. ²

From this point on he climbed steadily in rank serving in numerous distinguished assignments. He served as the Executive Officer to General Karl Spaatz, who was then Commandant of the largest World War I aviation training station in Issoudon, France. Willoughby later took command of the Aviation Branch School at Chateurox, France until May 1918, when he received orders to the War Department’s Aviation Section in Washington D.C. There, Willoughby actually helped to pioneer the first aerial mail service for the Postmaster General.³

By October 1919, fluency in Spanish combined with his reversion to his basic branch (infantry), landed Willoughby a company and then a battalion command in the 24th Infantry at Columbus, New Mexico, a famous border station once raided by Pancho Villa. Willoughby was given command of Negro troops at this assignment, which was a testament to his disciplinary capacity and tactfulness. He then made his foray into military intelligence by 1923 when he returned to Washington to work in the Military Intelligence

² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
At this post he was groomed for future military attaché assignments in South America.  

After returning to the United States to attend the Infantry Officer Advanced Course and Command and General Staff Schools, Willoughby stayed on at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas as an instructor of military history and military intelligence. During this assignment he met Army Chief of Staff, General Douglas MacArthur and thus began the association that would result in Willoughby eventually joining MacArthur’s staff in the Philippines.

In analyzing the MacArthur-Willoughby relationship, historians often overlook just how similar Willoughby is in character to Douglas MacArthur. Perhaps that was a reason why they developed such a close friendship, at least as close as anyone could really get to Douglas MacArthur. Both men were highly intellectual, and shared an appreciation of military history. They were both highly intelligent, haughty, arrogant, stubborn, and eccentric. Moreover, they both had a characteristic flair for the dramatic. While in terms of sheer dramatic talent and intellect MacArthur bested and awed almost everyone, Willoughby was a lot like MacArthur, whom Willoughby further venerated and emulated over their eleven years of service together.

One can imagine the interesting dynamics this relationship introduced into General Headquarters, Far East Command by the time of the Korean War. MacArthur’s Chief of Staff, Major General Edward M. “Ned” Almond felt no one should ever go around him to see General MacArthur. However, Willoughby and MacArthur’s Chief of Government

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
Section (and MacArthur’s former lawyer from his Philippine Field Marshal days) Major General Courtney Whitney, had carte blanche to do just that. Almond was not of the Bataan-Corregidor clique as were both Willoughby and Whitney and this was cause for some friction amongst these three officers.⁶

Amongst his peers and subordinates Willoughby’s status as a naturalized U.S. citizen, his stark German accent, and his occasional sporting of a monocle earned him such nicknames as “our Junker General”, “the Count,” and “Sir Charles.” Prone to frequent mood swings and raging tirades, he inspired fear and resentment among many of his fellow staff officers. Still, many who knew the man also claimed that he inspired their personal loyalty.⁷ Lieutenant Colonel James H. Polk, one of Willoughby’s deputies, who later became the X Corps G-2 and eventually a four-star general commanding U.S. Forces in Europe at the height of the Cold War, attested to Willoughby’s explosive personality. He described Willoughby as “an incredible character and one of the most difficult people to work for in the whole world.” Polk felt that Willoughby was “sometimes brilliant, really brilliant”, yet he was “a strange man. He was unpredictable, irascible, mean, and could be very charming at the same time.”⁸


⁸ Oral Debrief of General James H. Polk, USA (ret.) Interview conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Roland D. Tausch, U.S. Army Command and General Staff School on December 9, 1971, pp. 27-28. Papers of General James H. Polk, USA (retired), USAMHI.
Another testament to Willoughby’s eccentric character was his unashamed admiration of Spain’s fascist dictator, Francisco Franco. While such political leanings were highly controversial, Willoughby’s deep seated hatred of communism and his undying loyalty to MacArthur appeared to offset any of his fascist sympathies. Moreover, Willoughby and MacArthur enjoyed a close personal friendship.

They had served together since February 1940. MacArthur and Willoughby met during MacArthur’s tenure as Chief of Staff of the Army in the mid 1930’s when Willoughby was teaching military history and intelligence courses at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. MacArthur never forgot him, and when he set up his Field Marshal offices out in the Philippines Department in February 1940 he brought Willoughby into his department headquarters to be the Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics, G-4. Then, in the summer of 1941, as war clouds loomed over the Western Pacific, MacArthur made Willoughby his Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G-2, in the newly established General Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces Far East (USAFFE). In March 1942, upon receiving President Roosevelt’s order to relocate to Australia, MacArthur took Willoughby with him from Corregidor shortly before the Philippines fell to Imperial Japanese forces. 

While the General Headquarters (GHQ) title and location would change several times with the Allied fortunes of World War II, Willoughby served as MacArthur’s G-2 for almost a decade from August of 1941 until MacArthur’s relief from his UN and Far East commands in April 1951. During the years of the Allied Occupation of Japan and
throughout the Korean War, Willoughby was one of the few in MacArthur’s inner-most circle who could go into see the commanding general at a moment’s notice. Next to his personal legal officer, Major General Courtney Whitney, no one on the GHQ staff was closer to MacArthur on a personal level than Willoughby. He and MacArthur would often have lunch together and visit in the evenings.\(^\text{10}\)

Yet, despite such closeness, MacArthur always seemed to make his own intelligence assessments. Polk maintained that MacArthur was essentially “his own G2,” yet the Far East Commander was also “his own government section, his own legal section” and “the hell of it” was that he was often proved more correct in his assessments than his own staff elements.\(^\text{11}\) If there is one fact that critics and admirers of Douglas MacArthur largely agree upon, it is that Douglas MacArthur had a brilliant intellect. In Polk’s view, such intellect and numerous instances over the years of being proven correct in his assessments made Willoughby and the rest of the FECOM staff revere MacArthur and avoid challenging the commanding general’s views or presenting him with “controversial options.”\(^\text{12}\)

Notwithstanding MacArthur’s penchant for keeping his own council, Willoughby’s keen intellect was also a well established fact. MacArthur’s G-3 and former Deputy Director of the CIA, Major General Edwin K. “Pinky” Wright said of Willoughby, “he

\(^9\) Central Intelligence Agency. Biographical Sketch (04615) of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, p. 2. Approved for Release 2003/01/29: CIA-RDP, Job number 80B01676R, Box #0026, Folder #0008, document #0039-6, CREST, NARA II
\(^10\) Oral Debrief of General James H. Polk, USA (ret.) Interview conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Roland D. Tausch, U.S. Army Command and General Staff School on December 9, 1971, pp. 25. Papers of General James H. Polk, USA (retired), USAMHI.
\(^12\) Ibid., p. 25.
knew the intelligence business, no question about it.” Moreover, MacArthur’s Chief of Staff (and later X Corps commander), Major General Edward M. Almond, described Willoughby as “a highly intelligent individual” who had numerous years of experience in the military intelligence field.

Willoughby’s experience counted for a lot especially at a time when military intelligence itself did not exist as a full-fledged branch of the U.S. Army, a distinction it would not enjoy until 1962 as a combat service support branch. It earned its current designation as Military Intelligence branch, a combat support branch of the U.S. Army, on 1 July 1967. In the Korean War, as in earlier conflicts, Army officers from the combat arms branches filled intelligence billets, and this reflected a prevailing Army mentality that any officer, regardless of their training background, could be an effective intelligence officer. The newly created U.S. Air Force shared that mentality and experienced growing pains similar to the Army in the Korean War by treating intelligence as a mere additional duty at squadron level and below. By 1948, based on its World War II experiences, the U.S. Navy had learned the value of training career naval and Marine Corps officers in intelligence operations, especially those of an amphibious nature. In Willoughby’s case,

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his eight years of World War II and Japanese occupation experience as a theater G-2 served him well in the Korean War, especially when it came to knowing how to lead and manage a theater level G-2 staff organization.

Willoughby held many additional qualifications as a G-2 before he ever joined MacArthur’s staff. He spoke four languages fluently to include Spanish, German, French, and English (albeit with a heavy German accent). Such talents had earned him three consecutive military attaché assignments from 1923-1927 in Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador, respectively.\footnote{Assignment history of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, 201 Personnel File, William J. Sebald Papers, Manuscript Collection # 207, Box 29, Envelope: Willoughby, Charles Andre. Special Collections, Chester W. Nimitz Library, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland.} From the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s Willoughby published a considerable amount of scholarly works. As a student at the Advanced Course at the Infantry School he was asked to stay on past his June 1929 graduation to prepare a “History of the Infantry School.” In this same timeframe he also published a noteworthy study on “The Economic and Military Participation of the United States in the War 1917-1918.” Apparently this work, translated into several different languages, did much to raise several Latin American countries’ appreciation of American industrial capability.

Later, as an instructor in military history at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, a student at the Army War College, and as an instructor at the U.S. Army Infantry School, Willoughby personally edited and developed the \textit{Command and General Staff School Quarterly} and wrote a book entitled \textit{The Element of Maneuver in War}.\footnote{Central Intelligence Agency Biographical sketch of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, undated, pp. 1-2. Approved for release 2003/01/29, Job number CIA-RDP80B01676R, Box # 0026, Folder # 0008, Document # 0062-0, CREST, NARA II.} He even earned a reputation at the Army Command and General
Staff school as one of the most “gifted thespians ever to play romantic leads in the drama club.”\textsuperscript{18} Undoubtedly, Willoughby possessed the intellect and the communications skills required of a theater level chief of military intelligence. Such attributes maintained Willoughby well within MacArthur’s inner circle.

Yet, for all of his talents, Willoughby had many more critics than admirers. Almond recalled that Willoughby was a “hardworking man” and at times he was “excitable” and predisposed to disregard other people’s opinions when they disagreed with his own. For this reason, “many people did not particularly care for his method.”\textsuperscript{19} Given Willoughby’s unwavering loyalty and admiration of MacArthur, it seems far from coincidental that Willoughby’s behavior reflected many of the same character traits as the Commander in Chief, Far East Command. Willoughby, much like MacArthur, was very set in his ways and also highly territorial. Thus, much of the criticisms leveled at the mannerisms and methods of MacArthur and Willoughby likely originated in their aggressive defenses of their respective professional opinions, assessments, and domains.

From the autumn of 1945 until April 1949, primary responsibility for intelligence collection on the Korean peninsula fell under General MacArthur’s Far East Command (FECOM). In accordance with that responsibility, Willoughby set up intelligence gathering organizations comprised of his U.S. Army intelligence agents and coordinated with agencies of the other American and South Korean armed services and the CIA to collect information on developments above and below the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel. Additionally, Willoughby

coordinated laterally with U.S. military attachés in all Far Eastern countries for “mutual exchange of intelligence requirements” and pertinent intelligence. Willoughby’s intelligence requirements for Korea included detailed order of battle information on the North Korean People’s Army (NKPA) and any Korean paramilitary forces. Willoughby’s specific order of battle requirements included the strength, state of training, morale, organizational structure and equipment of the North Korean forces. Additional requirements included tracking anti-U.S. activities as well as scientific, technical, economic, and political activities in both North and South Korea.

Willoughby’s robust intelligence collection requirements implied a sizeable array of collection assets and an impressive staff component to plan and coordinate military intelligence operations. In December 1945, Willoughby was in charge of two intelligence staffs (See Figure 12), both of which worked out of MacArthur’s headquarters in the Dai-Ichi building in downtown Tokyo, Japan. The FECOM G-2 staff focused on military intelligence in the Far East region, and the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP) G-2 staff performed civil intelligence and counterintelligence duties pertaining solely to occupied Japan. Yet, both of General Willoughby’s robust intelligence staffs were “decimated” by post war defense budget reductions. Together, Willoughby’s two staffs,
which numbered 3,872 in December 1945, had been downsized to a total of 898 military and civilian personnel by June of 1950 with further cuts planned.\(^{24}\)

With such a drastically reduced staff, Willoughby, in accordance with MacArthur’s continued command emphasis on the reconstruction and restoration of Japan, weighted his intelligence efforts heavily in support of the occupation mission.\(^{25}\) Willoughby assigned some sixty percent of his intelligence personnel to that task at the expense of Far East Command’s intelligence collection priorities. Additionally, Willoughby’s SCAP G-2 staff controlled over 1,300 U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) and linguist personnel, who worked peacetime counterintelligence operations in Japan.\(^{26}\)

Meanwhile, the FECOM G-2 section’s Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS) struggled in its primary mission. Victimized by defense budget cuts, the ATIS operated at a mere fraction of its World War II capability. It did not have enough qualified linguists to process and analyze the information extracted from 1.5 million Japanese prisoners of war recently repatriated from the Soviet Union. Without linguists to assist the interrogator specialists, the information gained and the intelligence produced from the more knowledgeable Japanese prisoners was a “cursory” assessment at best.\(^{27}\) This was not an encouraging development since the monitoring of Soviet Union’s military activities was fast becoming FECOM G-2’s number one strategic collection priority.\(^{28}\)

\(^{24}\) Ibid.
\(^{25}\) Oral Debrief of General James H. Polk, USA (retired) by Lieutenant Colonel Tausch, pp. 28-29. Papers of General James H. Polk, USA (retired), USAMHI.
\(^{27}\) Ibid.
1.1.1 Far East Air Forces’ Role in FECOM Intelligence Collection

Compelled by personnel shortages driven by an austere defense budget, all of the American armed services came to depend upon one another’s capabilities and the sharing of military intelligence. Up until 1948, Far East Air Forces (FEAF) intelligence organizations were only beginning to recover from the World War II demobilization. Acute personnel shortages enabled only the most critical missions to be performed. FEAF depended upon theater and United States Air Force agencies for the actual collection of intelligence while all available FEAF intelligence personnel performed intelligence collation and evaluation. FEAF relied upon the town plan sketches produced by the Army’s Allied Translator and Interpreter Service to provide the specifics for Soviet target dossiers. Such plans were drawn based upon interrogations and the vague recollections of recently repatriated Japanese prisoners of war. These former prisoners provided some level of accuracy and detail needed for accurate targeting; however, this information needed to be verified among several consistent interrogation reports and existing background information before useable intelligence was obtained. In addition, the town plan sketches were not drawn to scale and required standardization and directional orientation to be useful for targeting purposes.

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., p. 1.
30 Ibid., p. 54. See footnote 123. Other sources were utilized to verify the interrogation reports. In addition World War II target information produced by the Joint Target Group was very useful and “occasionally the CIA, FECOM G-2, CIC, attaché, and USAF reports contributed valuable data.”
31 Ibid. “Intelligence compiled in this manner was given an arbitrary rating of C-3” indicating a fairly reliable source rendering a possibly true report Intelligence rating scale taken from Headquarters, Eighth United States Army, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff G-2, Memorandum: Evaluation of Information, dated 27 July 1950. RG-338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter), Eighth Army G-2 Action Files, NARA II.
32 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
Until the summer of 1948 FEAF’s postwar target program was limited to only a few hundred targets within the FECOM area of operations. These targets consisted of nearly 170 transportation and coastal targets in South Korea, 60 on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, and about 70 Chinese airfields. However, as tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union increased so did the need for more Soviet target dossiers. Thus, FEAF began to expand its target program with primary emphasis on the nearest areas from which Soviet air, naval, or ground forces could threaten the Japanese archipelago and the U.S. occupation forces based there. The targets in order of priority were first, airfields (and the enemy aircraft based there); second, rail transportation; third, naval facilities; and fourth, city infrastructure to include fuel refining and storage facilities.33

Expansion of the target program implied a necessary increase in photoreconnaissance missions for both mapping and surveillance purposes. To ensure greater accuracy of their photographs, the Air Force pushed for a reduction of the existing forty-mile offshore limit for U.S. aircraft flying off the Soviet coast to twenty miles. This enabled the Air Force to take advantage of improved camera equipment designed to allow oblique photography.34 Not only did such a capability allow for better mapping and target identification, but it also helped locate enemy radar stations.35 While it took time for the camera equipment to be made available and mounted on the appropriate aircraft, this was the best course of action open to FEAF, and General MacArthur as Commander in Chief of FECOM fully supported the idea to his superiors in Washington saying that such a

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33 Ibid., pp. 52, 58-59.
34 Ibid., p. 22.
venture fully justified the ‘risks involved.’” The Army G-2 in Washington advocated an even greater reduction in the offshore limit for U.S. aircraft to twelve miles.\(^\text{36}\)

By Early 1949, Headquarters, United States Air Force (USAF) approved FEAF’s plan for photoreconnaissance flights as a distance of 20 miles from Soviet coastal areas. The plan entailed overlapping coverage of Soviet installations along the Siberian coast, the North Korean coast, the Liaotung peninsula, Sakhalin, Kamchatka, and the Kurile Islands. The flights would make use of a sixty inch focal length camera provided to them by Air Material Command on 25 February 1949.\(^\text{37}\) In May 1949, to aid their efforts, FEAF requested that FECOM G-2’s Allied Translator and Interpreter Section routinely provide Headquarters, USAF a “copy of compilation instructions and overlay for each chart, map, and city plan produced by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service.” These products were invaluable to FEAF for targeting purposes because they revealed the degree of reliability of cartographic base data, the location of existing industrial facilities, and the accuracy of placement of specific structures within the industrial bases shown.\(^\text{38}\) The cartographic products Willoughby’s ATIS produced were based on information gleaned from repatriated Japanese prisoners returning from World War II captivity in the Soviet Union. Willoughby worked closely with U.S. Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 23.
\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 24.
\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 39.
Intelligence, A-2, General C.P. Cabell, to ensure the Air Force received the data it required for its Far East target folder construction program.\(^\text{39}\)

General Willoughby’s staff section was willing to help as much as it could within the confines of its other mission priorities. His staff informed the Air Force that it was impossible to completely fulfill FEAF’s request due to personnel shortages and other pressing intelligence missions. However, “a list of city plans, published by ATIS, which indicated cartographic bases”, was furnished along with compilation information used to prepare the city plans. In addition, source material requested by FEAF was made available to the Air Liaison Section working in the Central Interrogation Center of ATIS for Air Force consumption as desired. Willoughby’s staff promised to “render all possible assistance to the Air Liaison Section.”\(^\text{40}\)

The FECOM G-2 section stayed true to its word. While some specific FEAF requests for intelligence were denied due to FECOM personnel shortages, the G-2 staff advised FEAF on when pertinent military intelligence would come out covering the areas they requested. More often than not, such information was contained in more routine FECOM interrogation reports.\(^\text{41}\) FEAF Commander, Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, was so pleased with the cooperation he received that he wrote a letter to Willoughby expressing his gratitude for the close cooperation the FECOM G-2 staff gave


\(^{41}\)Ibid., p. 55.
to FEAF. He felt this cooperation by Willoughby’s “very able organization” was done in a manner of which their mutual boss, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, approved within the “unified Far East Command.”

1.1.2 “Jointness” in FECOM

FECOM was ostensibly a joint command whose intelligence requirements incorporated those of all services in the Department of Defense. Due to MacArthur’s domination of his General Headquarters Staff, which was comprised solely of his handpicked Army loyalists, FECOM fell short of the true definition of a joint headquarters. Although the General Headquarters primary staff was not joint in manning, the command was indeed joint in its official functioning. For example, by August of 1948 Far East Air Forces (FEAF) liaison channels had improved with theater intelligence agencies, and Air Force personnel had become more integrated throughout the various collection agencies to enable better exploitation of air intelligence from all sources.

Willoughby and his staff were cooperative with their sister services, and Willoughby took deliberate steps to improve mutual understanding of service intelligence requirements between air and ground intelligence officers. In November 1949, Willoughby sent five of his officers to FEAF Headquarters to undergo an intelligence indoctrination course. Courses like these produced a trained nucleus of intelligence

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42 Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer to Major General Charles A. Willoughby, 3 March 1950. in FEAF Intel Vol. II., Part IV, July 48 - June 50, 720.600, IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, Box 5, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
officers for the Air Force and for the FECOM General Headquarters intelligence staff. However, many of these Air Force and Army officers were lost in mandated personnel reductions in the months prior to the outbreak of the Korean War. Senior Air Force intelligence officers had to fight with many commanding officers to retain their trained personnel in intelligence billets.45

Personnel shortages had a cascading effect throughout FECOM. Willoughby’s personnel problems were now exponentially magnified. Not only did he have to worry about personnel reductions within his own General Headquarters staff section but he also had to contend with the need for relying increasingly upon the collection capabilities of his subordinate sister service commands despite their personnel reductions. Intelligence positions and duties became consolidated with more work being assigned to fewer people.

By the spring of 1950 FEAF Headquarters had reached a point “where the loss of a single officer or airman forced the abandonment of a particular function or its assignment to another as an additional duty.” Yet such additional duty assignments were often “tantamount to [the] abolishment” of that particular function.46 There was no real solution to the problem. Intelligence collection priorities had to be refined and the scope of collection had to be reduced. These conditions, in conjunction with the U.S. decision to withdraw its occupation troops from Korea in July 1949, ensured that within the FECOM

46 FEAF Intel Vol. I. Part IV. January- June 1950, p. 1, K720.600, IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
area of responsibility, the Soviet Union, Communist China, and Japan all took precedence over Korea for intelligence collection missions.\textsuperscript{47}

Moreover, Europe, and the Soviet targets associated with that theater of operations, took higher national collection priority over the Far East region and received a correspondingly greater amount of U.S. intelligence collection assets.\textsuperscript{48} Still, all intelligence collection sources and methods were represented in the Far East Command to include Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Photographic Intelligence (PHOTINT), technical intelligence (TECHINT) and Communications Intelligence (COMINT). However, HUMINT operations were the primary source of U.S. military intelligence on the Korean peninsula while other sources and methods were focused elsewhere in the Far East.

In January 1950, the primary responsibility for intelligence collection in Korea was taken away from FECOM. However, contrary to popular belief, this was not done simply because the Truman administration declared Korea to be outside the U.S. defensive perimeter in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{49} It was done because the United States had recently ended its military occupation of the peninsula, leaving only the Korean Military Assistance Group (KMAG) to train the fledgling Republic of Korea (ROK) Army. The Truman administration had decided that the nation’s defense resources would be better utilized elsewhere in the Far East, particularly in defending Japan against Soviet and Chinese Communist influences. On January 12, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in his

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{47} Matthew M. Aid, “U.S. HUMINT and COMINT in the Korean War,” in \textit{The Clandestine Cold War in Asia, 1945-1965, Western Intelligence, Propaganda and Special Operations}. p. 29.
    \item \textsuperscript{49} Matthew M. Aid, “U.S. HUMINT and COMINT in the Korean War,” in \textit{The Clandestine Cold War in Asia, 1945-1965, Western Intelligence, Propaganda and Special Operations}. p. 29.
\end{itemize}
famous speech to the Washington Press Club, outlined the American defensive perimeter in the Western Pacific region. He stated

This defensive perimeter runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus. We hold important defensive positions in the Ryukyu Islands, and these we will continue to hold…The defensive perimeter runs from the Ryukyus to the Philippine Islands…So far as the military security of other areas in the Pacific is concerned, it must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against military attack…Should such an attack occur… the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations, which so far has not proved a weak reed to lean on by any people who are determined to protect their independence against outside aggression. But it is a mistake. I think, in considering Pacific and Far Eastern problems to become obsessed with military considerations…

Contrary to many historical interpretations, Acheson’s speech did not preclude U.S. commitments outside of the American defensive perimeter. It clearly stated that in the event of Communist invasion, Korea must defend itself (a mission KMAG was training the ROK Army to do). However, if necessary, the Republic of Korea could call upon the U.N. for assistance. This left the United States a multilateral option of coming to Korea’s defense, an option it eventually exercised.

Later in his speech Acheson referred to “problems in these other areas [of Asia outside the American defensive perimeter] that require some policy on our part.” Here Acheson is referring to areas like Korea and Formosa. He talked specifically about how in the north [of Asia], we have direct [italics mine] responsibility in Japan and we have direct opportunity to act. The same thing to a lesser degree is true in Korea. There we had [italics mine] a direct responsibility, and there

Clearly, Korea was still an area of great American strategic interest in East Asia in early 1950. However, U.S. foreign policy toward the Republic of Korea was in a period of transition, where the U.S. was taking on a more advisory role in Korea’s defense and pursuing the solutions to Korea’s problems through diplomatic rather than military means. As a result, the United States dedicated fewer military assets, intelligence assets among them, to the Korean peninsula.

Just as FECOM relinquished primary responsibility for intelligence collection in Korea, the fledgling Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was expanding its clandestine HUMINT operations into the Far East areas being vacated by FECOM. Created by the National Security Act of 1947, the CIA was the successor to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). President Truman disbanded the OSS in October 1945 and placed the analytical personnel under State Department control while the HUMINT personnel skilled in clandestine collection, were placed in a new Strategic Services Unit under the War Department. That organization evolved into the Central Intelligence Group, which later became the Central Intelligence Agency. 52

The National Security Act of 1947 also created an independent United States Air Force (USAF). The USAF had formed a HUMINT organization of its own, taking any air intelligence related billets and equipment from the Army and expanding the organization from that foundation. Soon air attachés took their place alongside Army attachés

51 Ibid.
52 John Patrick Finnegan. Military Intelligence, p. 103.
The Air Force had already established Project Wringer, its HUMINT collection operation, which mirrored the ATIS operation of interrogating repatriated Japanese prisoners of war for their knowledge of Soviet areas. By early 1950, reductions in trained intelligence personnel led Headquarters, USAF to direct Project Winger personnel to concentrate on technical intelligence rather than specific target intelligence. The amount of information collected on Soviet air technology research and development was sparse. Many major Soviet air platforms had undergone development and were in the process of being fielded without any intelligence reaching Headquarters, USAF. Given their new collection priorities, FEAF would come to rely increasingly on ATIS interrogation reports on top of its photographic intelligence for target information.

Willoughby was in a similar position, having to rely more on FEAF technical intelligence collection capabilities given his own personnel reductions. To ensure that proper coordination was maintained between GHQ, FECOM and FEAF Willoughby sent his technical intelligence representatives to confer with their FEAF counterparts in January 1950. FECOM G-2 called on FEAF for assistance in fulfilling its technical intelligence collection requirements. FECOM G-2 also requested that it receive information copies of all requests for technical information from FEAF and information copies on all technical intelligence reports generated by FEAF.

Despite all of the positive efforts at coordination and intelligence sharing amongst the various intelligence organizations within FECOM’s area of operations, friction was

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53 Ibid., p. 105.
54 FEAF Intel Vol. I. Part IV. January- June 1950, p. 4, K720.600, IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
unavoidable as each service answered to its respective headquarters in Washington not
just to General MacArthur. Moreover, each service had its own specific intelligence
requirements upon which to focus their collection assets. Trying to get limited assets of
one service or another to dedicate time to various services’ collection priorities proved a
daunting task. For instance, FECOM G-2 offered to confer with FEAF in April of 1950 on
a plan to collect positive intelligence on the Kurile Islands, Sakhalin, and the Soviet
maritime provinces, and yet no middle ground was found between them. As a result, this
operation, which most likely included some communications intelligence operations
complicated by National Security Council and FECOM regulations, never yielded any fruit
and was shelved upon the outbreak of the Korean War.\textsuperscript{56} MacArthur and Willoughby were
taken aback by these developments as the newly independent Air Force kept taking parts
of what had been the Army’s intelligence organization. In addition, the Central Intelligence
Agency, operating mostly out of China, took over covert HUMINT collection in areas of
the Far East formerly covered by the Army.

\textbf{1.1.3 Pre-War Interagency HUMINT Turf Battles}

MacArthur and Willoughby’s relationship with the CIA and its predecessor, the
Office of Strategic Services (OSS), was adversarial and tenuous. During World War II,
MacArthur and Willoughby worked to keep the OSS out of their Southwest Pacific
Theater of operations.\textsuperscript{57} They did so because the OSS sought to operate as an

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 8. This FEAF report refers directly to Willoughby’s memo to Deputy for Intelligence,
Headquarters, FEAF, 1 December 1949.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 6. The full context of this report was sanitized by AFHRA. This was standard procedure for any
specific references to electronic counter measure or communications intelligence operations.
\textsuperscript{57} Matthew M. Aid, “U.S. HUMINT and COMINT in the Korean War,” in \textit{The Clandestine Cold War in
Asia, 1945-1965, Western Intelligence, Propaganda and Special Operations}. p. 22.
autonomous organization within MacArthur’s area of operations. MacArthur viewed the OSS, whose theater capabilities were largely redundant compared to his special operations units, as a liability that could compromise his operations.\(^{58}\) Moreover, such autonomous organizations (especially ones seeking to justify their new existence) had a direct reporting line to Washington and MacArthur felt that this could undermine his position as the theater commander. Nor were these autonomous agencies always good at sharing information. Thus, in the early years of the Japanese occupation, MacArthur and Willoughby continued to deny the fledgling CIA access to their intelligence reports or intelligence facilities in Japan.

Competing roles and missions aside, MacArthur and Willoughby had been very unimpressed with the CIA’s HUMINT reporting. Willoughby claimed that when North Korea invaded South Korea the CIA had only four agents operating in North Korea compared to his sixteen agents from the Korea Liaison Office (KLO), headquartered in Seoul. Willoughby had secretly activated the KLO in June 1949, under the command of Major Lawrence J. Abbot. It was a small organization staffed with “two officers, one warrant officer, and two enlisted clerks.”\(^{59}\) The KLO was tasked to infiltrate agents into North Korea in conjunction with ROK Army military intelligence. Documentary evidence suggests that Willoughby considered these agents essential to maintaining situational

\(^{58}\) Michael E. Haas, *In the Devil’s Shadow: UN Special Operations during the Korean War.* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2000), pp. 11-12.

awareness in Korea despite the fact that FECOM had ceded primary intelligence jurisdiction on the peninsula to the U.S. Department of State.\textsuperscript{60}

While the Army was dissatisfied with CIA HUMINT operations, the Far East Air Forces (FEAF) were equally unimpressed with those of the Army. Thus, in the spring of 1949, FEAF opened its own counterintelligence and HUMINT collection organization called the Office of Special Investigations (OSI).\textsuperscript{61} While the OSI performed day to day counterintelligence functions it also did overt and covert intelligence collection through its district offices at Kimpo Airfield in South Korea and Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines.\textsuperscript{62}

Under the leadership of Chief Warrant Officer (and by 1951 Major) Donald Nichols, USAF, the OSI, 8th District, headquartered at at Kimpo Airfield, competed directly with KLO and CIA collection efforts despite its primary focus on the North Korean Air Forces.\textsuperscript{63} Nichols was an amazing character. Fifth Air Force Commander, General Earle Partridge, called Nichols his “one man army.”\textsuperscript{64} Having served in Korea since 1946, he had established his own autonomous, Air Force, all-source intelligence fiefdom in Korea comprised of Air Force personnel and many South Koreans that he

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} FEAF Intel Vol. I. Part II. January- June 1949, p. 44, K720.600, IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
\textsuperscript{62} Matthew M. Aid, “U.S. HUMINT and COMINT in the Korean War,” in The Clandestine Cold War in Asia, 1945-1965, Western Intelligence, Propaganda and Special Operations. p. 21. Additionally, FEAF performed aerial reconnaissance and terrain mapping missions throughout FECOM even covering the littoral and coastal areas since U.S. Navy intelligence capabilities (aside from COMINT) were virtually nonexistent in the theater until after the start of the Korean War.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p. 35. See also <http://www.kimsoft.com/war/essay_korean_war.pdf> “Korea” A Declassified Signals Intelligence History of the Korean War, p. 41. (Fort George G. Meade, Maryland: National Security Agency).
personally recruited. According to Colonel Frank Merritt, Aide to General Partridge, Nichols enjoyed a close personal relationship with South Korean President Syngman Rhee. Additionally, Nichols spoke fluent Korean and throughout the Korean War repeatedly risked his life alongside his own recruited Korean agents by going behind enemy lines. He gathered information and recovered downed enemy aircraft like the MIG-15 in addition to downed UN and enemy pilots. It appeared that no intelligence mission was too tough for Nichols and his outfit (See Figure 13).

Nichols’ organization was a true all-source intelligence entity. When Korean hostilities first began, Nichols had expanded his operations beyond human and technical intelligence gathering to include communications intelligence, and he essentially ran all ground-based intelligence operations in support of the Fifth Air Force. However, for all of its efforts, the OSI 8th District, lost its fair share of Air Force personnel to normal troop rotation and personnel reductions and, as a result, lost many of its more reliable HUMINT contacts that had been established with the Koreans. All remaining intelligence came from sources of low credibility.65

From January to June 1950, OSI operations in Korea, the Philippines, and other district offices in the Far East produced a huge increase in the number of intelligence reports submitted to Tokyo and Washington. Over these six months the number of reports jumped from sixty per month to seven-hundred and eight-hundred per month. Yet, some agents were splitting information into several reports and many of these reports contained

65 Ibid., p. 36.
more political information than specific air intelligence.\textsuperscript{66} Headquarters, USAF, told the OSI to focus specifically on information of “definite air intelligence value.” However, FECOM G-2 had imposed its own conditions on FEAF intelligence collection. Thus, FEAF could not completely ignore FECOM’s requirements. The result was that FEAF collected both types of information, but it only sent the air intelligence back to Headquarters, USAF in Washington.\textsuperscript{67} While declaring that South Korea’s fate was directly dependent upon the active political, economic, and military support of the United States, the OSI District 8 office also acknowledged several fragmentary reports that stated North Korean troops would invade South Korea. Up until 25 June 1950, such reports never materialized into more than border clashes along the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel.\textsuperscript{68}

Such acknowledgements are noticeably absent in the personal account of Donald Nichols. In his erratic 1981 autobiography entitled \textit{How Many Times Can I Die}, Nichols adamantly claimed to have correctly predicted the date of the North Korean invasion and that his reports were ignored. Even more interesting is that General Earle E. Partridge, commanding Fifth Air Force at the start of the Korean War, supported this claim in the book’s foreword, which he wrote in 1968 for a book published in 1981, stating that Nichols’s reports were “suppressed and disregarded.”\textsuperscript{69} Yet Partridge himself would have been privy to such reports, and he never mentioned who suppressed or disregarded the reports or why. Nichols claimed he made three separate major reports over a two month

\textsuperscript{66} FEAF Intel Vol. I. Part III. July - December 1949, p. 7, K720.600, IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.  
\textsuperscript{67} FEAF Intel Vol. I. Part IV. January - June 1950, p. 7, K720.600, IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.  
\textsuperscript{68} FEAF Intel Vol. I. Part III. July - December 1949, p. 61,63, K720.600, IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.  
\textsuperscript{69} FEAF Intel Vol. I. Part III. July - December 1949, p. 61,63, K720.600, IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
period before the war started. He claimed that his final report stated the fighting would start between 25 and 28 June 1950. Nichols wrote

I get more than furious every time someone says why didn’t we know about the Korean conflict before it happened? We did know… Or, at least, some of us knew, but some ass at General MacArthur’s Headquarters in Tokyo and / or Washington didn’t believe what was being reported…Or was too stupid to credit it…or politicians did not want to admit it… any man on the scene in these years would have had to have been blind not to see the enemy build-up.

Indeed, North Korean air and ground forces had been building up. Nichols’ OSI outfit was clearly on top of the air power build-up. His intelligence report to FEAF headquarters dated 11 February 1950 clearly lays out the construction of North Korean airfields in a virtual straight line just north of the 38th parallel in locations ideal to support an offensive strike into South Korea. These airfields were poorly postured if they were to be used strictly for defensive purposes. Nichols used this information in addition to “growing civil unrest in Korea” as a basis for predicting an “inevitable” civil war on the Korean peninsula.

While the air power picture lent some credence to Nichols’ assessment, the ground forces picture was still very murky. However, the gradual build-up of North Korean air and ground forces was never in dispute. FECOM and Washington were well aware of all of those developments as they happened. The real question was whether or not a full scale attack or the more common occurrence of a border skirmish along the 38th parallel was

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70 Ibid., p. 123.
71 Ibid.
72 Donald Nichols, Commander, OSI District 8 Headquarters to Director Special Investigations, FEAF Headquarters, Air Intelligence Information Report, 11 February 1950. Subject: Review of North Korean
imminent. Ultimately, Nichols’s OSI District 8 office fared no better than the KLO or the CIA in producing convincing intelligence assessments of an impending invasion.

The presence of several clandestine HUMINT organizations operating in the same theater precipitated numerous clashes between the armed services and the CIA both before and during the Korean War. From 1947 on, much to MacArthur and Willoughby’s chagrin, the CIA continued to expand its operations in the Far East region. The CIA established the Field Research Unit (FRU) within the Far East Command as a cover for its clandestine organization, the Office of Special Operations (OSO). In 1949, the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek’s Chinese Nationalist forces compelled the CIA to move a handful of recruited Chinese, European, and White Russian agents underground and evacuate their station offices on the Chinese mainland.  

While Chang Kai-shek’s forces evacuated to Formosa, the FRU relocated its base of operations from Shanghai to the Yokosuka Naval base in Japan.  

Determined to resist perceived CIA encroachment, MacArthur as the theater commander and Willoughby as his G-2 demanded the right to continue Army control of all HUMINT operations in the Far East to protect the safety of the command. The CIA reluctantly acquiesced to this demand.  

Through FECOM’s preexisting Joint Special Operations Branch (JSOB), MacArthur and Willoughby attempted to maintain tight control of the entire clandestine HUMINT collection mission in the Far East Command. The JSOB had the responsibility for the “coordination and conduct of all

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Airpower and its Potentialities. FEA F Intel Vol . II: July 48 to June 50, Part IV, K720.600,. IRIS No. 2-6031-1A, Box 5, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.


espionage and counter-espionage activities in the Far East” to include those of the three military services and the CIA’s FRU organization.76

Despite such attempts at centralization, there were still autonomous elements of the CIA operating in Korea and mainland China. According to Major General John K. Singlaub, USA (retired), the former CIA station chief in Mukden, China, the CIA dispatched “dozens of well-trained young” Korean agents “across the Yalu from Manchuria” into North Korea between 1946 and 1948. These agents had the “specific” mission of providing early warning of a North Korean invasion operation by sending a message back through Manchuria or by an emergency exfiltration into American-occupied South Korea. Singlaub claims that the CIA established covert safe houses in Seoul to house agents that were exfiltrated from North Korea. All these operations were executed without MacArthur and Willoughby’s knowledge.77

As rancorous as MacArthur’s relationship with the CIA and its predecessors was, it appears that MacArthur did not share the degree of distrust for the organization that Willoughby had. In April of 1949, MacArthur assigned Brigadier General Edwin K. “Pinky” Wright as his G-3 (Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations). Wright, an armor officer and an Omar Bradley protégé, had just finished a four year term as the Deputy Director of Intelligence at the CIA under the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), General Hoyt Vandenberg, USAF. After learning more about the CIA from the former insider, MacArthur was convinced that Wright would be an asset as his G-3. This appointment did not sit well with General Willoughby at first because Wright agreed to

75 Ibid., p. 21.
76 Ibid., p. 20.
provide communications and facilities for his former CIA colleagues now basing their operations out of Japan. Still, Willoughby and Wright learned to work together well. Their divergent views on the CIA never appeared to get permanently between them. Wright knew that Willoughby’s concerns with the CIA were motivated by professional jealousy over areas that Willoughby felt were in his domain. Wright felt that Willoughby would just have to learn to accept the covert CIA presence in Japan and Korea.78

Professional jealousies aside, there was a valid reason for Willoughby’s distrust of the CIA and his dogged guarding of his intelligence areas of responsibility. Willoughby believed in the need to centralize intelligence efforts. Moreover, he believed that in wartime that centralization must take place under the control of the theater military commander. In his post-World War II Southwest Pacific Area campaign history, Willoughby mentioned that while he could never fully attain the degree of centralization he desired in the Southwest Pacific Theater, his continuous efforts to do so made all of the difference. He wrote that

whatever success G2 was able to achieve can be attributed to a continuous, vigilant, uncompromising effort to establish and maintain centralized control of all intelligence agencies, affiliates, and subsidiaries, in spite of obviously adverse conditions…Competitive, quasi-independent agencies must be eliminated, or ruthlessly subordinated as they tend to unduly assert their individuality and operate independently, causing friction, duplication of effort, loss of valuable time, general inefficiency, and unsatisfactory command relationships. Centralized control was found to be imperative if intelligence was to operate at peak efficiency; everything else was tried reluctantly, only to result in failure.79

In hindsight, Willoughby’s point is very well taken, and it may have created or at least bolstered MacArthur’s belief in the utility of intelligence centralization. On MacArthur’s behalf, Willoughby ruthlessly pursued and attempted to enforce intelligence centralization throughout the FECOM/UNC area of operations. He had managed to accomplish some unity during operations in the Southwest Pacific Theater during World War II, and, with the entrance of the CIA into Japan in 1949, he had to start all over again. Throughout his tenure as FECOM G-2, Willoughby fought to ensure no other intelligence agency would usurp the central authority of his staff section.  At a minimum, Willoughby’s goal was to ensure that competing intelligence organizations coordinated properly (i.e. shared their findings) with FECOM G-2 not just their parent organizations.

MacArthur and Willoughby were not the only people interested in intelligence centralization. Since its inception in the National Security Act of 1947, the CIA was attempting to assert a “highly ambiguous mandate” for coordinating all national intelligence collection and production while lacking the requisite authority over other intelligence agencies to do so. The intelligence centralizing tenets of the National Security Act of 1947 gave in to the strong “centrifugal forces” within the Department of Defense and its allies in Congress that enabled the armed services’ intelligence agencies, as well as

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80 Memorandum from Willoughby to Major General A.G. Trudeau, Army G-2, October 8 1954. RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Microfilm Roll 911, reel 4, Intelligence Correspondence, William Oxley Thompson Library (hereafter called WOTL), The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. Hereafter referred to as OSU-Columbus.

those of the FBI and State Department, to remain independent of the CIA. Each of the armed services fought to retain their tactical level intelligence roles and missions and tailor intelligence requirements to the needs of their respective services. The CIA, only three years old at the time, fought tenaciously to justify its existence and grow its operational capabilities in intelligence and unconventional warfare operations. CIA leaders saw the Korean War as an opportunity to demonstrate the agency’s value to the armed services and the Truman administration. General Richard G. Stilwell, USA (retired), the former CIA chief of unconventional warfare operations in Korea, recalled:

In retrospect, the wise thing would have been to stop everything, pool all assets in one organization at the theater level and place that organization in direct support of the Eighth Army and Fifth Air Force. But pressures for results, the lack of a truly joint theater staff, inter-service quarrels and the CIA feeling that this was the crucible in which a reputation – and therefore service acceptance- was to be found estopped efforts in this direction for over a year. …In the interim, there was confusion, unwitting exposure, undesirable duplication, lack of competence, and no authoritative direction as to targets and priorities.

Competing roles and missions set the stage for duplications of effort and parochial infighting that complicated the intelligence effort. Thus, Willoughby deserves some degree of credit for having the foresight and making the attempt to minimize these unfortunate, lingering hindrances.

Willoughby did achieve a good working rapport with the successive Directors of Central Intelligence, especially Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter, who succeeded General

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Hoyt Vandenberg as DCI on 1 May 1947 and also Hillenkoetter’s successor, General Walter Bedell Smith, USA who took over on 7 October 1950.\textsuperscript{84} In fact, considerable evidence exists indicating that Willoughby cooperated well with the CIA in terms of sharing intelligence assessments and special projects such as terrain studies well before hostilities commenced.\textsuperscript{85} Moreover, just after the North Korean invasion in June 1950, during the U.S. government’s search for a scapegoat, Willoughby stood by the CIA in its assessment that the Truman administration had been duly informed about the North Korean potential for invasion. In response, Hillenkoetter wrote to Willoughby on 21 August 1950:

\begin{quote}
Greatly appreciate your fine personal message. I want particularly at this time to express special appreciation of the help and cooperation you have extended to our people in the FEC area. Your understanding of the mutuality of interest by our organizations in the overall intelligence goal, which has to be achieved by many different methods, has served to advance the aims of U.S. intelligence centrally.\textsuperscript{86}
\end{quote}

While Willoughby’s relationship with the CIA was not without its points of friction, the evidence clearly indicated that the relationship was not so much one rooted in animosity as it was one of competitive “pioneering” to define the role of the CIA, vis-à-vis the G-2

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\textsuperscript{84} <http://www.cia.gov/csi/books/ddcia/index.html> Directors and Deputy Directors of Central Intelligence. Langley, Virginia: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central intelligence Agency, 1998). provides DCI Directory data on Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter and Walter Bedell Smith’s tenures as the DCI. Smith took over as DCI on 7 October 1950 and remained as DCI until 9 February 1953. \\
\textsuperscript{85} Memorandums from Hillenkoetter to Willoughby dated 23 June and 7 July 1950. RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Roll 911, reel 4, WOTL, OSU-Columbus. \\
\textsuperscript{86} G-2, GHQ Inter-office Memorandum. George Aurell to Willoughby (Cable message Hillenkoetter for Willoughby) dated 21 August 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Roll 911, reel 4, WOTL, OSU-Columbus.
\end{flushright}
within an area of responsibility controlled by a theater military commander. According to Willoughby, these problems of jurisdiction were “amicably adjusted” over time.\(^{87}\)

Thus, in the spirit of competitive pioneering, these turf battles periodically surfaced. Most of the CIA’s limited HUMINT collectors were still working the Chinese mainland and trying to expand the agency’s Far East network.\(^{88}\) Despite this fact, Willoughby remained convinced that his larger intelligence organization could produce better intelligence results in Korea than the CIA. Willoughby maintained a Korea Liaison Office (KLO) in Seoul staffed with a handful of U.S. Army agents and South Korean operatives. The KLO mission was “to penetrate North Korean governmental, military, and industrial agencies.”\(^{89}\) From June of 1949 to the start of Korean hostilities a year later, the KLO submitted 1,195 intelligence reports all of which were shared with all the other HUMINT groups operating in theater to include FRU (CIA), OSI, and FEAF.

With additional help from the 500 U.S. Army members comprising the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG), Willoughby routinely included these reports in his FECOM G-2 Intelligence summaries to the Department of the Army.\(^{90}\) In fact, Willoughby’s KLO generated several intelligence reports in early 1950 regarding evacuation of civilians from within two to four kilometers of the thirty-eighth parallel, amalgamations of returning Korean Volunteer Army troops (coming home from

\(^{87}\) Willoughby’s press correspondence in response to George Sokolsky’s CIA editorial “Our Intelligence Agency’s Mission.” RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Roll 908, reel 1, WOTL, OSU-Columbus.


\(^{89}\) Memorandum “Korea Liaison Office Report.” 15 May 1951, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder 4: North Korean Pre-Invasion Build-Up, MMA.

\(^{90}\) Ibid.
participation the Chinese Civil War in Manchuria) into the new North Korean Peoples’ Army (NKPA), the formation of new NKPA units of all echelons, the repair and new construction of airfields, bridges, and roadways in close proximity to the 38th parallel, and the existence of a North Korean savings bond drive to raise war funds. Such reports portended a massive increase in North Korean capabilities for launching an invasion.

However, between March and late June 1950, in a form reminiscent of his World War II days, Willoughby vacillated on his assessment of North Korean intentions. His 25 March intelligence summary concluded that:

It is believed there will be no civil war in Korea this spring or summer. Beyond that, it is believed that the possibility of a North Korean instigated war is contingent upon the success or failure of communism in Southeast Asian countries. South Korea is not expected to seriously consider warfare so long as her precipitating war entails probable discontinuance of U.S. aid. The most probable course of North Korean action this spring and summer is the furtherance of its attempt to overthrow the South Korean government by creation of chaotic conditions in the Republic of Korea through guerrilla activities and psychological warfare.

Yet, on May 25, 1950, exactly one month before the invasion, Willoughby correctly assessed more recent information as clearly indicative of a possible North Korean invasion

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in the late spring or early summer of 1950. Moreover, in a routine report dated 19 June 1950, Willoughby provided Washington with strong evidence of North Korean capabilities for an imminent enemy offensive, which included extensive troop movements along the 38th parallel; evacuation of all civilians within two kilometers of the parallel; the suspension of freight transport for all but military supplies from Wonsan to Chorwon; the concentration of armored tank units along the border; and the arrival of large amounts of weapons and ammunition. Still, based solely upon these indicators, Willoughby stopped short of predicting that an invasion would definitely happen.

Willoughby had several valid reasons supporting his apparent vacillations. Since March of 1947, the North Korean regime had regularly made threats to invade South Korea. Numerous agents reported North Korean “plans” to invade in the near future that never materialized. In addition, armed clashes between North Korean Border Constabulary (BC), North Korean Special Forces (NKSF-guerrillas), and Republic of Korea (ROK) Army units occurred regularly since the early days of the Korean occupation by the United States and the Soviet Union. Moreover, from late 1949 to early 1950, reports indicated that the NKPA regularly rotated both armor and infantry units to the vicinity of the 38th parallel every “one to two months.” Willoughby’s agents reported these rotations to be “orientations” for newly created units of the NKPA. Such regular

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93 KLO Report 518, 25 May 1950. RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder 4: North Korean Pre-Invasion Build-Up, MMA.
94 GHQ, FEC, Military Intelligence Section (G-2), Item no. 6684595, 19 June 1950, cited in Schnabel. Policy and Direction: The First Year. p. 64.
95 GHQ, FEC G-2, DIS No. 2582, 4 October 1949. RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, microfilm roll 921, reel 14, WOTL, OSU-Columbus.
96 KLO Report 361, 24 February 1950; GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2671, 1 January 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, microfilm roll 921, reel 14, WOTL, OSU-Columbus.
rotations, coupled with the regularity of border clashes made all NKPA movements in the vicinity of the 38th parallel appear routine. Additionally, ongoing border evacuations, which by themselves appear to be good indicators of impending hostilities, had occurred as far back as February of 1949. Such actions could just as well have been taken as a security precaution, enabling NKPA and BC troops to better identify and intercept South Korean border guard forays and infiltrating intelligence agents, prevent North Korean migration to South Korea, and create a first line of defense against a South Korean invasion.\(^9^7\) Taken altogether, these possible indicators of offensive intentions could just as easily have pointed to defensive intentions.

Robert Wohlstetter would characterize this intelligence situation as being fraught with “signals” garbled in both “noise” and “static.” “Signals” or what intelligence professionals call indicators, defined as information considered in isolation that might portend an event like an impending invasion, when considered along with numerous competing or contradictory signals called “noise” cause individual “signals” to become less convincing.\(^9^8\) In the Korean context this “noise” was generated by “signals” of a gradual military build-up taking place amidst cyclical military unit rotations along the 38th parallel and repeated threats of an NKPA invasion that repeatedly resulted in no aggressive action taken beyond routine border skirmishes between border constabulary units.

Couple such “noise” with “static” information such as a nation’s national defense structure, the locations of military units, and the activities of its political and military leadership, and it becomes extremely difficult to identify the time when changes in

\(^9^7\) GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2730. 1 March 1950; GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2808, 18 May 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, microfilm roll 921, reel 14, WOTL, OSU-Columbus.
“signals” result in “action” intelligence. That is, information that once known requires an immediate command decision and possibly an operational response. For example, consider Syngman Rhee’s and Kim Il-Sung’s political rhetoric in the days, weeks, and months preceding the start of the Korean War. Syngman Rhee and some outspoken senior ROK Army officers boasted that the ROK Army had the ability to capture the North Korean capital at Pyongyang within three days if given the “go-ahead signal.” Meanwhile, Kim-Il-Sung continued to disparage the southern government and occasionally threatened to reunify Korea by force. Because a belligerent, aggressive attitude flowed both ways across the 38th parallel, Willoughby’s staff distrusted South Korean intelligence agents. Past experiences had led Willoughby and his staff to believe that South Korean intelligence efforts and products were highly politicized, childish, and, ultimately, prone to creating false alarms. Thus, Willoughby’s staff section often assessed reports as unreliable and relayed them to the Pentagon accordingly.

Yet, the CIA apparently placed a greater degree of trust in their Korean agent sources than Willoughby did in his. From 1946 to 1948, Major John K. Singlaub, the CIA station chief in Mukden, Manchuria (China) and an OSS veteran who eventually rose to two-star rank in the American special operations community by the 1980s, was highly confident that the several dozen agents he had recruited and sent into North Korea would

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99 Ibid., p. 318.
100 GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2754, 25 March 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, microfilm roll 921, reel 14, WOTL, OSU-Columbus.
provide early warning of any North Korean invasion. He and his case officers had specifically dispatched these agents for that purpose. Singlaub maintained that these agents did report and that the CIA forwarded their assessment of an imminent North Korean invasion to Washington five days prior to the actual event. Additionally, Singlaub argued that these reports were downplayed by everyone outside of the CIA to include Willoughby, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Omar Bradley, and Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Apparently, all three of them believed these reports represented the South Koreans “crying wolf.”102

Singlaub singled out Willoughby’s “F-6” (untried source, undetermined reliability) assessment of the CIA’s sources as the main reason why everyone else in Washington ignored the CIA’s warning.103 However, Willoughby often evaluated his organic intelligence sources in the same manner and qualified such evaluations with his own assessments. One of Willoughby’s KLO agents, code named “Bicycle” rendered a report on 25 May 1950 about the return of Korean Volunteer Army troops from Manchuria and their integration into the North Korean Peoples’ Army. Such activity was a possible indication of preparations for an invasion. Despite his rating of the source as “F-6” (unknown source, Truth of information cannot be judged), Willoughby voiced his agreement that the report’s indications of NKPA growth were valid and consistent with earlier reporting and a likely NKPA desire for two to one or greater strength superiority

103 Ibid., pp. 165-166.
for success in an offensive.\textsuperscript{104} When considering how carefully Willoughby qualified his assessments, Singlaub’s accusation of Willoughby becomes moot.

More importantly, such accusations do not bode well for CIA credibility within Washington circles. The Director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter, had forwarded the CIA estimate warning of a North Korean invasion to the White House as well as the Departments of State and Defense. Yet, if the indicators and the CIA’s assessment were as unmistakably revealing and alarming as Singlaub asserted, then why did Admiral Hillenkoetter not brief the President or cabinet officials personally that day?

The fact that such an estimate was passed in a routine manner to the Secretaries of State and Defense and to the President is indicative of a warning that stopped shy of actually forecasting an imminent North Korean invasion. In fact, on 27 June 1950, the Department of Defense Director for the Office of Military Assistance, Major General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, a future U.S. Army Chief of Staff, JCS Chairman, and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, recalled reading a \textit{New York Times} article about Admiral Hillenkoetter’s testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee on 26 June 1950. In this article Hillenkoetter “could offer no explanation why the receiving [Department of Defense] agencies had failed to interpret the indications he [and his CIA staff] furnished as evidence of a [North Korean] move to be undertaken soon.” Yet after reviewing the CIA reports for himself, Lemnitzer concluded that not a single one of the CIA reports went beyond stating the potential for a North Korean attack. Moreover, not a single CIA report

\textsuperscript{104} KLO Report 518, 25 May 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder 4, MMA.
labeled a North Korean invasion as being imminent.\textsuperscript{105} According to Lemnitzer, press reports gave the general impression that Hillenkoetter testified that the CIA’s role was to collect intelligence and then leave it to others to evaluate. However, the National Security Act of 1947 stipulated that the CIA must “correlate, and evaluate intelligence relating to the national security, and provide for appropriate dissemination.”\textsuperscript{106} Regardless of what Admiral Hillenkoetter did or did not say, it appears his performance was called into question over the North Korean invasion issue, since he was replaced by General Walter Bedell Smith by early October of 1950. There is a large difference between a warning of what could happen and a decisive prediction that an event will happen. In this regard, the CIA performed no better than Willoughby’s agents or staff.

In hindsight, Willoughby’s agents did report some indicators that appear quite compelling. Some North Korean Border Constabulary units took part in the NKPA system of unit rotations along the 38th parallel to gain rest, undergo unit expansion, and possibly unit re-designation. The possible expansion of the BC units to divisional size was itself a strong indicator that the planned mission of those units was about to change. Moreover, reports of the possible addition of artillery to these units indicated a distinct enhancement of a border security force’s offensive capabilities. Additionally, Willoughby’s analysts quickly grasped that reports of unit re-designation, that is, a change in unit identification,


\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p. 206.
could represent a North Korean initiative to “hamper hostile recognition and assessment of troop strengths in critical areas.” 107 However, the reports could not confirm new unit identifications, the exact degree of the unit strength increases, or how many tubes of any given caliber of artillery were actually being added to these units. With no communications intelligence (COMINT) or photographic intelligence (PHOTINT) assets dedicated to collecting on North Korean military activities and verifying South Korean agent reports, Willoughby and his staff drew no decisive conclusions unless several agent reports showed a consistency of information. Those reports took time to accumulate, and, meanwhile, the North Korean preparations for invasion continued.

Three common threads linked all of FECOM G-2’s pre-war intelligence assessments: (1) the NKPA definitely had the military capability to invade South Korea; (2) the belief that invasion would not come without a Soviet blessing; (3) that blessing depended upon the degree of Soviet success in subversive efforts elsewhere in Southeast Asia (Indo-China, Burma, Thailand). 108 Willoughby’s assessment was essentially correct and reflected the views of the rest of the American intelligence community at that time. Even President Truman agreed that the potential for Soviet sponsored attacks in 1950 was not unique to Korea. Potentially volatile scenarios held true in many other parts of the world to include Indo-China, Iran, Turkey, and virtually every point of contact between

107 GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2739, 10 March 1950; CINCFE to DA, Joint Army Air WEEKA No. 56, 28 October 1949, GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2731, 2 March 1950, GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2708, 7 February 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, microfilm roll 921, reel 14, WOTL, OSU-Columbus. 108 CINCFE to DA, Joint Army-Air Weeka, No. 1, 5 January 1950; GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2702, 1 February 1950; CINCFE to DA, Joint Army-Air Weeka No. 10, 10 March 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, microfilm roll 921, reel 14, WOTL, OSU-Columbus.
Soviet and American spheres of influence.\textsuperscript{109} Unfortunately, neither Willoughby nor anyone else in the American intelligence community knew if or when Kim Il-Sung would ask for and receive Josef Stalin’s blessing to invade. That elusive piece of evidence was beyond the collection capability of Willoughby’s agents and the CIA’s agents in Korea.

Thus, by the spring of 1950, South Korean intelligence agents, who had been active throughout the Korean peninsula for the last five years, were reporting indicators of the impending invasion. Yet, in the scope of worldwide events, no one in FECOM, the CIA, or in Washington policymaking circles thought these indicators were reliable or important enough to warrant further investigation or immediate action. The lack of efforts to verify South Korean agent reports on the changing North Korean order of battle by dedicating theater or national level COMINT or PHOTINT assets clearly demonstrated that Korea was not high on America’s foreign policy priority list compared to other areas of Soviet-sponsored activity in East Asia.

1.1.4 Pre-War COMINT Operations

In acts of omission rather than commission, communications intelligence (COMINT),\textsuperscript{110} arguably the most successful, reliable intelligence source of the Second World War, also failed to forecast the impending North Korean invasion. The military services’ COMINT organizations received their fair share of President Truman’s force

\textsuperscript{109} Harry S. Truman. \textit{Memoirs of Harry S. Truman 1946-1952, Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope.} (New York: Da Capo Press, 1956, reprint of \textit{Memoirs}. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955-1956), p. 331.\textsuperscript{110} COMINT is one of two smaller intelligence sub-disciplines of signals intelligence (SIGINT). Communications intelligence (COMINT) which in 1950 amounted to radio and telegraph communications along with electronic intelligence (ELINT) which deals with enemy air, air defense, and target acquisition radar emissions comprise what is today referred to as SIGINT. However, COMINT is the term used in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s in reference to radio intercept and direction finding activities.
structure reductions and budget cuts and their capabilities suffered accordingly.

Additionally, in early 1950, these lean COMINT structures, spread across the Pacific and the Far East, focused upon a broad scope of Soviet activities with only peripheral glances toward the Korean peninsula. The American interest in Korea extended only as far as the scope of the Soviet activities occurring there.111 When the last Soviet occupation forces left North Korea in July 1948, the 111th Signal Service Company, which had collected against the Soviet 25th Army stationed immediately across the 38th parallel, departed as well. Thus, American COMINT coverage of North Korean diplomatic and military radio traffic faded “to virtually nil.”

Additionally, in the midst of a massive military drawdown, the entire United States COMINT structure was undergoing tumultuous organizational changes. Formed on 20 May 1949, the Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA) combined the cryptologic analysis and communications security functions of all of the armed services into one organization ostensibly under the control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. 113

However, this new organization received its COMINT collection priorities from the newly formed United States Communications Intelligence Board (USCIB), which set the global targets and priorities of collection. Representatives from all COMINT consumer

agencies to include the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), Army G-2, Air Force A-2, the State Department, CIA, and FBI comprised the USCIB.\textsuperscript{114} Essentially, the military and civilian members of the USCIB engaged in a virtual tug of war over the focal points for American COMINT collection assets. Yet, they had to reach a unanimous agreement in order to implement a decision of the Board. In the event of a deadlock, the Board would refer the matter for resolution to the National Security Council. However, this only happened when any disagreement among the military services was first referred to the Secretary of Defense.\textsuperscript{115} Finally, a third layer of bureaucracy, an interagency Watch Committee had input into the collection prioritization process. This committee, comprised of two members each from the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, CIA, and the State Department, was responsible for collating all available intelligence information and warning American policymakers and military commanders of impending hostilities. Within this highly convoluted structure, AFSA essentially functioned in a mission management capacity tasking out the USCIB’s Soviet–centric priorities to the service cryptologic organizations worldwide.\textsuperscript{116}

Financing such a large bureaucracy proved difficult in the days of austere post-World War II defense budgets. Any initial funding for the fledgling AFSA organization came at the expense of the existing armed service cryptologic organizations: the U.S. Army Security Agency (ASA), the U.S. Navy’s Communications Supplemental Activity


\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
(COMMSUPPAC) which in 1950 became the Naval Security Group (NSG), and the newly created U.S. Air Force Security Service (AFSS). The USCIB requested a budget increase of $22 million and 1,410 additional civilian positions to help the AFSA meet its mission requirements. This request and an interim supplemental request for $11.6 million met their fate at the hands of Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, who denied both requests to help reduce defense spending in accordance with the Truman administration’s fiscal policy goals.\textsuperscript{117}

Budget woes aside, the burdensome American intelligence bureaucracy quickly showed its imperfections. Foremost among these imperfections was the loss in translation between the military services’ recommendations for intelligence collection and the USCIB’s compilation of its Intelligence Priorities List (IPL). According to the minutes of the Watch Committee, since April 1950, Major General Alexander Bolling, the Army G-2, in response to a message forwarded from MacArthur’s command, had sought additional information regarding Soviet intentions toward South Korea. This was most likely an effort by Willoughby to verify invasion indicators reported by his HUMINT sources with COMINT. At a Watch Committee meeting on 14 June 1950, the Chairman of the Watch Committee, who at the time was a CIA official (whose name remains classified), mentioned Korea as fifth in order of importance for COMINT collection behind Indo-China, Berlin and West Germany, Iran, and Yugoslavia. However on the USCIB’s IPL for

December 1949 through June 1950, Korea was only mentioned once out of 124 separate intercept priority items on the USCIB agenda, and it was ranked “12th and last in frequency of mention among the areas of the world.”\textsuperscript{118} Exactly where the disconnect occurred in communicating the Army’s and the Watch Committee’s increasing interest in Korea is unclear.

Given such a glaring disconnect between the articulation and selection of collection priorities, it is not surprising that AFSA itself proved to be an ineffective organization. It was merely a conduit between the service intelligence agencies and the USCIB. Moreover, coming into 1950, the AFSA had no trained Korean linguists or other COMINT personnel dedicated to working COMINT targets in North Korea. Focusing almost exclusively on Soviet military communications, AFSA did not even possess Korean-English dictionaries, traffic analysis aides, or Korean typewriters.\textsuperscript{119} Thus, from both a national level and theater level, the American COMINT collection and analysis system entered the Korean War flat-footed.

Allegedly, the AFSA was experiencing an unprecedented blackout period in terms of its ability to break Soviet encryption codes. This was supposedly due to the work of William W. Weisband, the Soviet intelligence agency (KGB) spy working inside the AFSA. Due to his efforts, the American capability of deciphering Soviet military, police, and industrial communications was largely compromised. According to information\textsuperscript{119}

recently released by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), Weisband, code named “Zhora”, was recruited by the KGB in 1934. By the outbreak of World War II, Weisband was a Russian linguist working on signal intercepts in the Russian section of the ASA. He continued on with the AFSA after the war, and from 1947-1948, Weisband delivered top secret documents to his Soviet handlers detailing American success in deciphering Soviet ciphers. That American success had been extensive and rivaled the recent World War II successes of ULTRA. Following the compromise, the American loss of this capability was supposedly rapid and complete. The blackout period continued from 1948 “up to and during the Korean War.” In what could be considered the most important intelligence loss in American history, the United States had apparently lost the intelligence capability that could most likely confirm Soviet complicity in an impending North Korean invasion of South Korea.

However, American COMINT was not nearly as crippled as NSA (formerly AFSA) historians would have us believe. According to Al Wight, a former Army Security Agency-Pacific (ASAPAC) cryptanalyst assigned to ASAPAC headquarters in Tokyo, the United States COMINT community was still able to intercept, decode, and translate significant amounts of Soviet military communications all the way up to and during the Korean War. In the spring of 1950, routine traffic analysis of Soviet

Ibid.  
Ibid.  
123 Al Wight. Electronic mail correspondence with the author dated 27 August 2005. Mr. Wight responded to the author’s direct question on this subject.
communication patterns did provide some indications of heightened Soviet interest in South Korea. A Soviet network in the Far East port city of Vladivostok increased its targeting of communications emanating from South Korea. Soviet targeting increased dramatically after late February and sustained a high tempo until it stopped altogether on May 15th. In addition, large shipments of medical supplies and medicines had left the Soviet Union bound for North Korea and Manchuria in February 1950. However, such isolated reports became compelling indicators of North Korean hostilities only in hindsight following the North Korean invasion.124

From May 1949 to April 1950, some North Korean communications were also intercepted, though they were not identified as such until after the start of the war. In April of 1950, ASA performed a limited ‘search and development’ of North Korean radio traffic. However, none of the two-hundred messages collected were processed before the start of the war since they were not a high priority nor did adequate linguist support exist to translate the messages once they were decoded. In addition, the Naval Security Group (NSG), had monitored some transmissions from North Korean naval bases due to the Soviet naval presence there.125 This marked the extent of the U.S. Navy’s intelligence interest in Korea prior to the outbreak of the war since the North Korean Navy was miniscule.

No one paid attention to North Korean transmissions until after 25 June 1950. ASAPAC cryptanalyst Al Wight recalled that after the NKPA invasion Soviet

124 Ibid.
transmissions were eventually dropped in favor of the North Korean transmissions. He also claimed that the decoded North Korean message traffic revealed that Soviet Military advisors were in fact giving many of the orders during the NKPA invasion. The North Korean channels carried Soviet voice transmissions between the senior Soviet advisor at NKPA Supreme Headquarters at Pyongyang, a man whose last name was Braun (German surnames were not uncommon in the Soviet Union), and his subordinate Soviet advisors, who were forward deployed with the headquarters of the attacking NKPA Corps.\textsuperscript{126} Wight also recalled that NKPA codes were broken relatively quickly, enabling UN forces backing into the Pusan perimeter to have highly accurate location data and order of battle information. That information helped the Eighth Army halt and, eventually, reverse the rapid NKPA advance. Still, despite the rapidity with which American cryptanalysts broke the NKPA codes, the analytical emphasis, to include appropriate linguist support, was not placed on North Korean traffic early enough to have any chance of detecting North Korea’s intent to launch its invasion of South Korea. Ultimately, the isolated indicators provided by American COMINT were of little help to Willoughby and his staff in confirming or denying North Korean intentions.

ASAPAC cryptanalyst John Milmore, who worked under Wight (See Figure 14), confirmed these facts in his own Korean War account and lamented the fact that the ASA had not paid enough attention to North Korean transmissions. In fact, after the Korean War erupted Milmore claimed that ASAPAC officers deliberately withheld unprocessed North Korean intercepts, which dated from November 1949 to May 1950, from ASA

\textsuperscript{126} Al Wight’s electronic mail correspondence with the author 9 August 2005 and Mr. Wight’s untitled article intended for later publication cited here with full permission from Mr. Wight.
headquarters at Arlington Hall Station in Washington D.C. in order to avoid a ‘Pearl Harbor type investigation.”

Between flawed USCIB COMINT collection priorities, a lack of linguist support, and Al Wight and John Milmore’s recollections it is clear why COMINT failed to detect the North Korean invasion. American COMINT collection assets and personnel were simply focused on the wrong communication nets. These conditions were well beyond Willoughby’s capability to rectify in June 1950. He had to work with the personnel he had available and his effort to elevate Korea on the COMINT collection priority list went unheeded by the USCIB.

1.1.5 Pre-War Aerial Reconnaissance (PHOTINT) Operations

Photographic intelligence (PHOTINT) was a third and final means to confirm or deny the human intelligence reporting of a possible North Korean invasion. However, the Far East Air Forces, like their sister services within FECOM, maintained a consistent focus upon Soviet targets. Thus, there were not enough photo-reconnaissance missions flown along the 38th parallel to reveal any conclusive evidence of the coming invasion. The only aerial missions flown over Korea were done mostly for routine terrain mapping purposes.

Like the ground forces, U.S. Air Force units were also drawn down at the end of World War II, and many experienced pilots, technicians, and flight crews returned to civilian life. Squadrons previously utilized for reconnaissance missions over Japan and Europe were downsized but kept intact for mapping and charting missions all over the

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world. In 1946, after having flown its wartime missions over Europe, the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron (Bomber) relocated to MacDill Field in Florida and then later to Howard Field in Panama (as the re-designated 91st Photographic Mapping and Charting Squadron) for mapping and charting missions throughout Central and South America. In 1949, the 91st Squadron was re-designated as the 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron (SRS) and relocated to McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey. There the unit “continued to develop its photographic capabilities through training and lessons learned during World War II missions.” Still, the learning rate was slow due to the loss of experienced personnel.

At the start of the Korean War, strategic reconnaissance squadrons (SRS) such as the 31st, stationed at Kadena Air Base in Okinawa and the 91st from the continental United States were deployed to Japan. MacArthur, remembering the immense value of these units during his Pacific campaigns, had quickly called for these assets to join the Far East Air Forces (FEAF). The 31st SRS was amalgamated into the 91st SRS for the duration of the conflict. With its newly absorbed assets and over 800 assigned personnel, the 91st SRS flew the largest number of various reconnaissance aircraft of any other air unit in the Korean War. The squadron flew six different aircraft which included: the RB-29, the RB-50, RB-45, WB-26, KB-29, and RB-36. However, among these aircraft, the RB-29 and RB-50s flew the most missions (See Figure 15). These aircraft were specially

128 <http://www.rb-29.net/HTML/91stSRSHistory/03.02.91sthist.htm> and <http://www.rb-29.net/HTML/91stSRSHistory/04.01.91sthist.htm> Notations on the History of the 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron. Chapter 3: World War II: Uncharted Territory, p. 2 and Chapter 4: Strategic Shift: Korean War Sacrifices, p.1, respectively.
modified versions of the strategic bombers used against Japan in the final year of World War II.  

At the tactical level, photo-reconnaissance capabilities were not employed in Korea prior to June 1950. This was because the demand for such coverage did not exist, and the limited numbers of aerial photographic platforms and skilled photographic interpreters of this kind were on mission elsewhere in the theater. On May 10, 1949, First Lieutenant (later General) Bryce Poe II, USAF (See Figure 16) flew the first recorded Air Force jet photo-reconnaissance overflight of Soviet territory. Poe took his RF-80A (See Figure 17), equipped with long range fuel tanks, over the Kurile Islands in the Soviet Far East. On later flights Poe flew over the Soviet mainland, and on March 10, 1950, Poe made a flight over the “closed” Soviet port city of Vladivostok. Later reconnaissance flights by other pilots covered key Chinese Communist port cities looking for any indicators that might point to an imminent invasion of Formosa.

Not until the NKPA invasion were such assets dispatched to Korea to take photographs along the 38th parallel, the Yalu River, and other areas desired by combat commanders. Bryce Poe flew many of these missions over the first year of the war. Flying along the 38th parallel and as far north as the Yalu River line, Poe took great care not to violate Chinese airspace while still getting the angle for oblique photographs of Chinese territory. Still, photo-reconnaissance operations, like all other military intelligence operations in the Far East Command, had many limitations. Only a limited number of collection platforms were available in theater and there was a dearth of trained personnel.

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129 Ibid., p. 2.
such as photographic interpreters, pilots like Poe skilled in photographic missions, and navigators, who possessed the dead reckoning skills required to conduct nighttime reconnaissance flights. Such limitations were greatly amplified as the entire Far East Command scrambled to respond to the outbreak of war in Korea.

1.2 Conclusion

Since the end of World War II, American military intelligence in the Far East and the armed forces in general had many obstacles to overcome. First and foremost the shortage of trained and skilled intelligence collection, analysis, and translation professionals affected every category of military intelligence. President Truman’s following of public support for a massive post World War II drawdown produced a massive outflux of skilled military intelligence professionals into the private sector. Their institutional knowledge and experience left with them. As the manpower pool and defense budget continued to shrink, the armed services were faced with having to scale back the scope of their operations and focus on the high priority threats to national security. Thus, the armed forces focused their limited assets upon the Soviet Union and its subversive activities.

Next, in the midst of defense budget cuts aimed at reducing the national debt and funding the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Western Europe, the Truman administration was actually expanding the national security apparatus. The National Security Act of 1947 created the Central Intelligence Agency and an independent United

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131 Ibid., p. 62.
States Air Force. In 1949, the Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA) was established to consolidate communications intelligence analysis efforts of the service cryptologic agencies into one organization. By expanding the intelligence and national security bureaucracy, Congress and the administration engendered an increased competition for already scarce budget resources. As each new organization fought to justify its existence, the more established military service agencies and staffs like that of Major General Willoughby resented the new agencies’ encroachments into areas that had previously been their exclusive domain.

The resulting turf wars and “competitive pioneering” among the different intelligence organizations did little to facilitate cooperation among the organizations. This situation ultimately led to duplications of effort, loss of efficiency, withholding of information, and mutual distrust. These problems were hard enough to overcome in and of themselves, and as hostilities commenced on June 25, 1950, these problems multiplied exponentially as additional (and largely untrained) military intelligence troops and equipment were hastily cobbled together both in Japan and in the United States and shipped off to war. Meanwhile, General MacArthur and Major General Willoughby, putting personnel and turf issues aside for the moment, had to immediately prepare Eighth Army units, which were accustomed to comfortable Japanese occupation duties, and any available intelligence units inbound from the United States for grueling ground combat.

The American military intelligence system and the U.S. armed forces as a whole were forced to respond in a typically American, ad-hoc fashion to participate in a conflict

that no one, particularly the policymakers in Washington, ever truly expected to fight. Indeed, MacArthur and Willoughby had to “do more with less.” American foreign policy toward the Republic of Korea was in a state of transition. Having just ended a military occupation of the country, the United States was limiting its military presence there to an advisory role. After June of 1949, the United States had only a civilian evacuation contingency plan in place to move American civilians to Japan in the event of Korean hostilities. Yet, when the North Korean People’s Army invaded South Korea, President Harry S. Truman was willing to directly intervene with U.S. forces to contain the Communist threat. Just as surely as President Truman chose to defend South Korean soil, so too had the military and civilian intelligence organizations of the United States claimed their territorial rights to operate in the Far East in support of that mission.

However, in the post World War II days of austere defense budgets, the Truman administration had its military intelligence assets dedicated to Soviet-centric collection. Peripheral areas like Korea were not the key areas of emphasis and thus verification of intelligence collected from Korea with other intelligence sources was precluded. Willoughby had tried to get Korea elevated on the COMINT priority list for more robust collection and analysis but to no avail given the Truman administration’s worldwide priorities.
Figure 11: Major General Charles A. Willoughby, FECOM / UNC G-2

(Top photo-1949 portrait): In 1950, fifty-eight year-old Major General Charles Andrew Willoughby was the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G-2, for the Far East Command. Having served with General of the Army Douglas MacArthur in this capacity since the evacuation of the Philippines in 1941, Willoughby was a member of MacArthur’s inner planning circle and a close personal friend. The photograph is from RG-12: Collection of Photographs, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, Virginia.
Figure 12: Organization Chart of Military Intelligence Section FEC-SCAP

In 1950, Sergeant Al Wight (Top photo) and Corporal John Milmore (Bottom Left Photo; Shown receiving the Bronze Star) were two of the leading cryptanalysts at the Army Security Agency-Pacific Headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. In addition to serving in Tokyo, Corporal Milmore (Bottom Right Photo) deployed forward with the 60th Signal Service Company in Korea in 1951. Both men attest to the significant contributions of COMINT during the early stages of the Korean War. Wight attests to MacArthur’s apparent willingness to trust in other sources of intelligence above COMINT while Milmore believes the senior American leadership in Washington and Tokyo relied too much upon COMINT. Photos courtesy of Mr. Al Wight and Mr. John Milmore.
The RB-29 (top) and RB-50 (bottom) were the primary workhorses of the 91st SRS flying numerous long range photo-reconnaissance missions along the North Korean – Manchurian and North Korean - Soviet border areas during the Korean War. (RB-29 Photo and caption information taken from Notations on the History of the 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron History Notes: Chapter 4, pp. 1-2, at <http://www.rb-29.net/HTML/91stSRSHistory/04.01.91sthist.htm> RB-50 photo taken from <http://www.rb-29.net/HTML/06CWMConn./LinksPgs/02.Hist91stSRS.htm> Mr. Chuck Stone is the web site developer.)
Figure 16: First Lieutenant (later General) Bryce Poe II, USAF

(Top photo) Bryce Poe II as he appeared while a USMA Cadet. (Bottom caricature) First Lieutenant Poe, as a member of the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 5th Air Force, FEAF made the first combat jet photo-reconnaissance sortie in aviation history during the Korean War in his RF-80A on June 28, 1950. He later rose to the rank of four-star General in the USAF. (Top photo taken from the Arlington National Cemetery website <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/bpoe2.htm> courtesy of the United States Military Academy photographic archives, and the bottom caricature and biographical data taken from the Maxwell Air Force Base, Air University, Gathering Of Eagles website at <http://www.au.af.mil/au/goe/eaglebios/84bios/poe84.htm> Poe’s mission data is cited in Robert Futrell, *The U.S. Air Force in Korea 1950-1952*, p. 27.)
The RF-80A Shooting Star was the main tactical jet reconnaissance aircraft used by the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. Within the first week of the war, RF-80A pilots from the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron based in Yokota, Japan moved some of their aircraft to Itazuke, Japan and from there flew the first tactical air reconnaissance sorties over the Korean peninsula to locate advancing NKPA forces. (Photo taken from The Braden Files website at <http://braden.weblogs.com/military/ForTheRecord> Caption data taken from Robert F. Futrell. The U.S. Air Force in Korea 1950-1953, pp. 26-27.)
CHAPTER 2

GAZING UPON THE COMMUNIST MONOLITH

2.1 A Cautious Soviet-Centric Approach

After the end of the Second World War, the Truman administration’s foreign policy focused upon containment of the Soviet communist threat. Since 1946, when the Iron Curtain descended across a divided Germany and brought Eastern Europe under Soviet domination, the United States remained fixated upon containing the spread of Communist doctrine and influence worldwide. In the Far East, Chinese Communist Forces led by Mao Zedong forced Chiang Kai-shek’s Chinese Nationalist government to flee to Formosa (later called Taiwan) in 1949, and the Chinese mainland fell under Communist control. In the United States, Republicans ridiculed the Truman administration for having “lost China” by being soft on Communism and failing to support Chiang Kai-shek’s forces adequately.

The Truman administration was not really soft on Communism. It was simply fixated upon the Soviet threat in the European theater much more so than in the Far East. As a result, the vast majority of a fast-shrinking pool of military funding, personnel, and equipment were sent to Europe at the expense of the Far East Command. Truman weighted his political, economic, and military efforts in Europe and he paid the price for
those decisions in Asia. While numerous contingency plans were in the making for a combined Allied response to any Soviet invasion of Western Europe all that existed for Korea was the plan to evacuate American civilians. In the wake of both the Soviet and U.S. withdrawals from North and South Korea in December 1948 and June 1949 respectively, the U.S. seemed to have little need for anything else.¹ The Republic of Korea Army (ROKA), while being trained by America’s 500 man Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG), had little heavy armor or artillery relative to its North Korean counterpart. The U.S. kept the balance that way in the hopes that it would deter any South Korean-inspired civil conflict at the prodding of Syngman Rhee’s autocratic regime. By the summer of 1950, while the crisis on the Korean peninsula was reaching the boiling point, the Far East sections of the America’s civilian and military intelligence organizations focused primarily upon developments in the Soviet Union and Communist China.

When the NKPA invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950 (See Figure 18), a surprised and anxious President Truman was determined not to allow another Asian nation to fall prey to Communist domination, especially in a Congressional election year. By 26 June, Truman initially agreed to “give to MacArthur on demand” whatever he asked for to address the Korean crisis. This was in response to the recommendations of Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, who panicked at the realization that his gamble for economy and peace had failed. Johnson brought to President Truman MacArthur’s demand for eight divisions to address the Korean crisis. This request was about to be approved when Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Omar Bradley, stepped in to bring Truman

¹ Roy E. Appleman. South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu. p.5.
and Johnson back to earth by letting the JCS review all troop requests. Bradley’s action was timely and practical considering that the U.S. Army did not have eight divisions it could immediately give to General MacArthur.²

In spite of these initial hiccups, Truman decided to have U.S. air and naval forces intervene unilaterally as a stopgap measure. On 25 June, Truman ordered MacArthur to employ the naval and air assets under his command but only as necessary to prevent the overrunning of the Seoul-Kimpo-Inchon area in order to see to the execution of the civilian evacuation plan. A day later, after receiving U.N. approval, Truman removed restrictions on the employment of FECOM air and naval forces enabling them to offer the “fullest possible support” to the South Korean forces. However, all naval and air forces of the Far East Command were immediately restricted to conducting their operations in support of the South Korean forces south of the 38th parallel. All North Korean targets south of that line were fair game for the Far East Air Forces (FEAF). Truman’s order, sent to MacArthur by the Department of the Army, stated that MacArthur’s mission was to clear South Korea of North Korean military forces. Likewise, the U.S. Navy could exercise its power south of the 38th parallel to clear South Korean waters of North Korean military elements.³ Additionally, on 28 June, Truman ordered that the U.S. Seventh Fleet be employed under MacArthur’s operational control to prevent the invasion of Formosa.

² R.A. Winnacker, OSD Chief Historian, Personal Memorandum, 3 October 1950, Subject: Mr. Johnson on Korea. Box 193: OSD Historical Office Subject Files III. Geographical Area E. East Asia and Pacific 3: Korea, Korean Crisis and War, 1950-1951, Folder: June 1950, OSDHO.
³ Message 99550 DA WASH DC to CINCFE, 28 June 1950, RG 6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder 4, MMA.
by the Chinese Communists and to ensure, in turn, that Formosa did not become a staging base for attacks by Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Forces upon the Chinese mainland.4

These stopgap measures proved woefully inadequate to stop the NKPA advance. On 30 June 1950, General MacArthur requested, and President Truman authorized, the initial commitment of a regimental combat team to slow the NKPA advance.5 The lead element of that team, the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, 24th Infantry Division, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Charles B. Smith, was immediately sent to Korea.6 Meanwhile, Truman deliberated on the commitment of additional U.S. ground forces to Korea. Foremost in Truman’s mind was the possibility of Soviet intervention in Korea in response to a large U.S. troop presence. This concern was reflected in the careful restrictions he placed upon his military forces both before and after the passage of appropriate UN resolutions. Truman limited all combat operations and their supporting operations to South Korea (everywhere on the peninsula below the 38th parallel) only. These precautions ensured that the conflict would minimize the chances for escalation to a general war while American military action received legitimate, multilateral backing from the UN.

From the outset, President Truman, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and the rest of Truman’s inner circle of policy advisors were convinced that the Soviet Union had

4 Ibid.
engineered the entire North Korean invasion operation. Moreover, they felt that the North Korean invasion was part and parcel of a larger Soviet scheme aimed at total world domination. President Truman not only directed intelligence collection on Soviet participation in Korean hostilities, but also on Soviet actions in other sensitive areas where the Soviet and U.S. spheres of influence rubbed together such as Iran and Yugoslavia. In a June 26, 1950 Oval Office conversation with his Administrative Assistant, George M. Elsey, President Truman, walked over to his globe, placed his finger on Iran and remarked, “Here is where they will start trouble if we aren’t careful.” Truman then remarked that

Korea is the Greece of the Far East. If we are tough enough now, if we stand up to them like we did in Greece three years ago, they won’t take any next steps. But if we just stand by, they’ll move into Iran and they’ll take over the whole Middle East. There’s no telling what they’ll do, if we don’t put up a fight now.

The administration publicly declared it would hold Russia responsible for the North Korean attack. However, the Truman administration remained very leery of any military action that might provoke the Soviet Union into responding militarily to the UN intervention. The Truman administration believed such actions by the Soviets would result in a third world war. Thus, as a result of its Soviet fixation, the Truman

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9 Stars and Stripes. “U.S. To Hold Russia Responsible for War” June 25, 1950. papers of Lieutenant General William W. Quinn, USA (retired), Box 4, Folder: Newspaper and Magazine Articles (Korea) June 1950-Jan 1951, USAMHI.
administration became very cautious in its political, strategic, and military approaches to the Korean crisis.

The Truman administration’s suspicions and cautious approach were very well-founded. Since 1947, intelligence reports verified a definite Soviet role in the training, advising, and equipping of NKPA forces. In the four months preceding the invasion, KMAG Liaison Office reports indicated a significant presence of Soviet advisors. For example, in May 1950, the NKPA Third Division was reported to have seventeen Soviet advisors, consisting of two field grade officers, nine senior and junior company grade officers, and six enlisted men. Robust Soviet cadre units ran basic air operations and pilot training for North Korean Air Force personnel at airfields throughout North Korea, and Soviet flag officers and North Korean “puppet” dignitaries presided over the opening of new airfield facilities.10

In addition, following the invasion, numerous intelligence reports resulting from the observations of trained South Korean agents, interrogation of some North Korean prisoners of war, and the debriefing of repatriated U.S. prisoners confirmed that Soviet officers were with North Korean units even after they moved south of the 38th parallel. Several reports also revealed that Soviet officers donned North Korean uniforms and civilian clothes once the NKPA advanced into South Korea. Such reports revealed that the Soviet Union sought to obtain as “intimate a knowledge of U.S. armed forces” as possible

while avoiding any “international liability” for the invasion should the NKPA’s effort to conquer the peninsula fail.\textsuperscript{11}

It is also worth noting that within a month of the invasion American COMINT analysts were already breaking into North Korean codes well enough to determine that Soviet military leaders were indeed calling the shots during the NKPA invasion of South Korea. According to ASA cryptanalyst Al Wight, a sergeant at Headquarters ASAPAC in Tokyo in June 1950,

The initial onslaught into South Korea was planned and directed by the Soviets, All orders were sent from the senior Soviet advisor at Supreme Headquarters in North Korea to other Soviet advisors at the North Korean corps level. We were reading their communications and reporting to Washington and MacArthur’s Chief of Intelligence, General Willoughby.\textsuperscript{12}

We knew the commitment of Russia, since it was Russian advisors who were giving and receiving the orders during the drive to the Pusan perimeter. The orders came from a Soviet officer named Braun [German names are not uncommon in Russia] at North Korean Supreme Headquarters and were sent to other Soviet advisors (whose names I don’t remember) at each of the North Korean corps. These officers reported back to Braun.\textsuperscript{13}

COMINT reporting from Naval Forces Far East (NAVFE) also corroborated the presence of Soviet military advisors. A periodic intelligence report from the USS Toledo patrolling of the port of Pohang on 5 September 1950 detected a Russian radio transmission at 1808 local time stating “be careful when you are going through I will be with you,” and another

\textsuperscript{11} GHQ, FEC, DIS No. 2965, 21-22 October 1950. RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder 4, MMA.
\textsuperscript{12} Al Wight. Untitled article discussing his Korean war experiences with the ASA. p.2. This article is intended for use in a subsequent publication. It is quoted here with full permission from Mr. Al Wight.
\textsuperscript{13} Al Wight. Personal electronic mail question and answer correspondence with the author dated 21 August 2005.
at 1823 local time stating “work is done.” Despite such clear evidence of Soviet complicity and participation in the North Korean invasion of South Korea, the Truman administration still treaded lightly in political circles to avoid direct military confrontation with the Soviet Union.

President Truman’s cautious approach translated into numerous political and strategic restrictions. These included both the mobilization of national guard forces in a concerted effort to avoid the imposition of a draft, particularly in a congressional election year, and a mad scramble to provide military supplies and equipment from old World War II stocks. Meanwhile, American industries had to prepare to support another war effort (albeit a limited one). All this was done in accordance with an administration philosophy of expending only the essential resources and safeguarding many of them for possible use in more important, European, contingencies. The administration’s labeling of the Korean intervention as a UN “police action” underscored its efforts to keep from acknowledging the conflict as an official war. In addition, despite what the intelligence reports revealed, the Truman administration specifically cautioned General MacArthur to ensure all personnel acknowledged only the North Korean forces as the actual aggressors and that

14 COMNAVFE Periodic Intelligence Report # 69, 7 September 1950, Record Group 313: Records of the Naval Operating Forces, Box 7459 - Commander Naval Forces Far East- Flag Files (Red) Folders 367-371, Folder: A-8 Intelligence (General), 1950. NARA II.
16 Ibid., pp. 346-348. JCS Concerns on the over-commitment of resources to Korea at the expense of other strategic contingencies is very clearly stated later in the war in JCS MEMO to SECDEF “Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea.” 9 November 1950, p. 5. RG-218: Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Box 42, Folder: Geographic File 1948-1950, NARA II.
U.S. forces were combating only those forces and not those of “any other nation or group of nations.”

Following suit, the Joint Chiefs of Staff carefully qualified their views to Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson regarding what constituted Soviet intervention in the Korean conflict. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Omar Bradley, wrote that the JCS considered the Soviets to be full belligerents “when major combat units engaged or clearly indicated their intention of engaging in hostilities against U.S. and/or friendly forces in the Korean area of hostilities.” The recommended criteria allowed for downplaying of various forms of Soviet participation in the Korean fighting that military intelligence had already begun to detect.

In applying the criteria, additional restrictions were placed on the ability of MacArthur and Willoughby to employ their intelligence collection assets in the theater of operations. Under no circumstances were MacArthur’s aerial reconnaissance units or any other type of combat or intelligence units to violate the Manchurian or Soviet border areas adjacent to North Korea. In fact they were to “stay well clear” of those frontier areas. This restriction was specifically designed to avoid triggering Soviet or Chinese Communist intervention. Yet, the Truman administration wavered in its consistency with regard to reconnaissance missions over the Chinese mainland. On 31 July 1950 the JCS informed

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19 Message 84681 JCS to CINCFE, 30 June 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder 4, MMA.
MacArthur that he was authorized to conduct “such periodic reconnaissance flights over the coastal areas of China, south of the 32d parallel as [he] may consider necessary to determine the imminence of an attack that may be launched against Formosa.”

In view of the reasoning behind the Manchurian border restriction, would not any flight over Chinese territory be regarded as equally provocative to the ostensibly neutral Chinese? The Truman administration’s inconsistency on this issue stems from one cause. Clearly, the Truman administration was most concerned about the northeast section of the Manchurian border adjoining Soviet territory and any ripple effect a U.S. violation of that border area might have on any Soviet decision on intervention. The Essential Elements of Information (EEI’s), which Willoughby’s staff put forth in the first operational instruction to forces deployed to Korea reflected the administration’s concerns. The EEI’s were listed in priority order from most to least important. They read as follows:

a. Will the USSR intervene over Korean territory in support of the North Korean forces? If so, will the intervention consist of air action, naval support, ground reinforcements, or a combination thereof?
b. Will the USSR retaliate against United States bases and installations in Japan? If so, what forces will be employed?
c. What is the location of North Korean armed forces south of the 38th parallel?
d. Will the Chinese Communists initiate hostile action against U.S. forces within their range of activity?
e. Will the Japan Communist party or Korean and Chinese minorities in Japan, initiate riots, strikes, acts of sabotage, or subversive activities in psychological support of the North Koreans and Chinese Communists?

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22 GHQ, FECOM, Intelligence Annex to Operations Instructions No. 1, dated 27 June 1950, p.1. RG-319: Army AG Command Reports 1949-1954 Eighth Army (EUSAK), Box 115, Folder: # 928322, NARA II.
Thus, in view of all the political, strategic, and tactical restrictions and the EEI’s that Willoughby’s staff had to answer, it is clear that the Truman administration was fixated upon the Soviet adversary and its potential actions in Korea, Japan, and worldwide. The administration focused more on the Soviet threat than any potential threat from Chinese Communist Forces or even the more proximate threat of the advancing North Korean Peoples’ Army.

2.2 Early COMINT Operations in Korea

The Truman administration’s caution to avoid escalation, coupled with its Soviet-Euro-centric view of national security priorities, presented MacArthur and Willoughby with numerous operational and intelligence challenges. Since reinforcements from the United States were not quickly forthcoming (or simply not coming), MacArthur had to make due with the under strength occupation forces he had in Japan. As MacArthur deployed General Walton H. Walker’s Eighth Army from Japan to Korea, he also realized the importance of supporting it with all available tactical intelligence assets. From 29 June thru 19 July MacArthur inundated the Department of the Army with requests for the immediate deployment of tactical communications intelligence and photo-reconnaissance units from the United States. He asked for at least twenty-four linguists per division (14 Japanese, 4 Korean, and 2 Russian) to act as interpreters and as translators for prisoner interrogation and for communications intelligence transcription. In mid-July MacArthur also gave top priority among FECOM signal requirements to Signal Technical Service

Intelligence Teams (TSITs). The requested support units and augmentees that did meet with Pentagon approval, were slow to mobilize and deploy, and the personnel and equipment shortfalls of these units needed rapid rectification.

Alleviating funding shortfalls was a crucial step toward that rectification. By late July 1950, President Truman had sent to Congress a supplemental defense appropriation estimate for Fiscal Year 1951 to address the Korean crisis. This estimate totaled $10,486,976,000.00. Of this total amount, the Army received $3,063 million, the Navy and Marine Corps received $2,648 million, the Air Force received $4,535 million, and an additional $240 million was earmarked for “Establishment- Wide Activities.” Of the total amount allocated to the Army, $148,752,000 or 4.56% was allocated to the Signal Service of the Army which included some tactical level COMINT units. Recommendation of such a massive infusion of money into DoD’s coffers clearly demonstrated the American national defense establishment’s ill-preparedness for war.

In the meantime, the operational and strategic level COMINT stations of the Army Security Agency- Pacific (ASAPAC), the Air Force Security Service (AFSS), and the Naval Security Group (NSG) had the capacity to collect information from across the enemy frontiers without provoking any escalation in hostilities. The AFSA, in a direct reflection of the Truman administration’s Soviet fixation, tasked its listening posts to focus

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24 Message W87082, CINCFE to DA WASH DC, 19 July 1950; TSIT data found in CINCFE to DA WASH DC, 16 July 1950 ref. message Cx57693, Record Group 9: Collection of Messages (Radiograms) 1945-1951, Box 26, Folder: War Cx DA, 11-19 July 1950, MMA.

25 Truman Administration Press Release of President Truman’s supplemental appropriation estimates for FY 1951 submitted to the Congress, 24 July 1950. Papers of George M. Elsey in the Student Research File (B File) of the Papers of Harry S. Truman, Box 43 A [1 of 2], Folder: The Korean War- The U.S. Response to North Korea’s Invasion of South Korea [6 of 23], Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.

26 Ibid.
their efforts not on the advancing NKPA but on Soviet military radio networks to confirm or deny Soviet intentions to intervene in Korea.

For the first two weeks of the Korean War, most Far East COMINT collection assets revealed that the Soviet 25th Army had moved some 20,000 to 25,000 troops to the North Korean border and placed its armed forces in a higher state of alert. Additionally, Chinese Nationalist COMINT detected the arrival of a Soviet air division to Mukden, Manchuria, near the North Korean border, on 27 June. However, the Chinese Nationalists also intercepted a radio order from the Soviet Far East Fleet headquarters in Vladivostok for all Soviet ships sailing from Darien to return to port immediately. Following that report, American COMINT efforts revealed no further Soviet military movements indicating any intent to intervene. With the political leadership satisfied regarding immediate Soviet intentions, the United States Communications Intelligence Board (USCIB) finally set new COMINT collection priorities targeting the North Korean adversary. 27

These changes could not come soon enough for MacArthur and Willoughby, who voiced their dissatisfaction with the quantity and quality of COMINT support they had received in the opening weeks of the war. Indeed, far too much bureaucratic red tape existed in the dissemination of COMINT through the Special Security Office (SSO) in Tokyo to key FECOM staff members and to tactical units in Korea. Only a few key people

in MacArthur’s headquarters held COMINT access. They were as follows: General MacArthur, Major General Edward M. Almond, FECOM Chief of Staff and later X Corps Commander, Major General Doyle O. Hickey, the soon-to-be-acting Chief of Staff, Major General Charles A. Willoughby, the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G-2, and at least three of Willoughby’s deputies, Colonel Louis Fortier, Chief of the Theater Intelligence Division, Lieutenant Colonel Phillip B. Davidson, Chief of G-2 Plans and Estimates Branch, and Lieutenant Colonel Morton Rubin, part of the Special Intelligence Section that “collated, analyzed, and disseminated COMINT.”

At the tactical level, in the first three months of the war, security regulations forbade Eighth Army Commander, Lieutenant General Walton Walker from sharing theater level COMINT with his corps and division commanders. This situation was not rectified until September 1950 when Eighth Army received a liaison unit headed by Major Edward Dlusly that handled the flow of COMINT to the tactical units. Later, ASA established liaison units down to the division level to handle incoming COMINT. Thus, from June through August 1950 corps and division commanders defending the Pusan Perimeter had no access to COMINT.

Branch, 3 July 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 14, MMA.
28 Robert Hanyok. E-mail correspondence with author, dated 21 August 2005. Mr. Hanyok is the Senior Historian at the National Security Agency, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. His review of some of his agency’s holdings revealed the names of several key personnel within FECOM who had access to COMINT.
30 Robert Hanyok. E-mail correspondence with author, dated 21 August 2005. Mr. Hanyok is the Senior Historian at the National Security Agency, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. His review of some of his agency’s holdings revealed the names of several key personnel within FECOM who had access to COMINT.
Dissemination of COMINT was not the only problem. Trying to focus FECOM theater level COMINT assets on the right targets at the right times and facilitate COMINT analysis had become in Willoughby’s words “extraordinarily complicated.” To remedy these numerous problems, Willoughby ordered the creation of the Special Intelligence Section (SIS), headed by Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) Philip B. Davidson Jr. In July 1950, Davidson, took a handful of trained communications intelligence analysts, on loan by Willoughby’s demand, from ASAPAC, and began to coordinate COMINT research and reporting for FECOM. Davidson’s group collated, analyzed, and disseminated all incoming COMINT traffic from theater level collection agencies in addition to the finished intelligence reports from AFSA headquarters in Washington D.C.  

Meanwhile, Willoughby also demanded that ASAPAC deploy a tactical COMINT detachment to Korea to support General Walker’s headquarters at Tageu.  

ASAPAC decided to deploy a communications reconnaissance battalion at Eighth Army command level and an additional three battalions to support each of the three subordinate corps. The 60th Signal Service Company, based out of Fort Lewis, Washington, appeared to be the closest stateside unit that could be ready for deployment, and ASA directed it to do so. However, the 60th Signal Service Company did not arrive in Korea until 9 October 1950. In the interim, ASA Pacific (ASAPAC) in Hawaii

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31 Ibid.  
immediately deployed a signal collection unit to Korea. Yet, even this unit did not arrive until 18 September 1950.  

Meanwhile, in response to new USCIB taskings, the AFSA shifted its Far East field stations’ collection efforts to the North Korean People’s Army. Over the first two weeks of the war, the number of AFSA intercept positions collecting North Korean traffic increased from two to twelve; two Air Force positions, one Navy position, and nine Army positions. By 15 October, that number of positions had virtually doubled. AFSA also went to twenty-four hour analytic operations by transferring all analysts working lower priority targets to the North Korean problem. Substantial collection and analysis efforts were also maintained against both Soviet and Chinese targets. Additionally, AFSA implemented teletype forwarding mechanisms to decrease the transcription time between radio message intercept and analysis.  

2.2.1 Tarkenton in the Pusan Perimeter: A COMINT Success

Less than three weeks into hostilities, as General Walton H. Walker’s Eighth Army was still losing ground to the NKPA and falling back toward the Naktong River (See Figures 19 and 20), AFSA began to produce valuable analysis of the North Korean military and police radio networks based upon decrypted North Korean intercepts, plain text translations, and routine traffic analysis techniques. By the end of July, the Eighth Army fell back behind the Naktong River, forming the Pusan Perimeter, at this time AFSA

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provided crucial reports indicative of enemy troop movements and operational plans enabling Walker to shift his forces accordingly and put out the series of “fires” that plagued his perimeter daily and nightly for the next month. Moreover, COMINT provided Walker detailed information on enemy unit locations, scheduled ammunition deliveries, and the delivery of key pieces of equipment such as bridging assets and other river crossing equipment. These indicators enabled Walker to surge his forces where and when he needed to stave off NKPA attacks.36

Eighth Army would not have received this crucial information without the tireless efforts of its G-2, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton (See Figure 21). Tarkenton entered the United States Military Academy (USMA) in 1937 as an honor graduate of the Oak Ridge Military Institute in North Carolina. However, Tarkenton dropped out of USMA after his plebe (freshman) year due to problems maintaining his grades. Returning to the state college of North Carolina for a year, he accepted a commission in the U.S. Army Reserve. In 1940 he was called to active duty in the intelligence field serving as the S-2 of the 13th Infantry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division, in Europe and finished World War II as a lieutenant colonel. After World War II he received a Regular Army commission and attended the Command and General Staff School in 1948.37 After graduation in 1949, Tarkenton was assigned to the G-2 section of FECOM General Headquarters

35 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
36 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
37 Clay Blair. The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953. (New York: Times Books, 1987), pp. 377-378. Blair received his information from direct correspondence with James C. Tarkenton, Jr. in 1984 and, after Tarkenton’s death, from his surviving son Scott in 1985 and 1987, who provided detailed biographical information (DA Form 66). However, it appears that Blair got Tarkenton’s World War II divisional affiliation wrong. The 13th Infantry Regiment is in the 8th Infantry Division not the 9th as Blair wrote.
Tarkenton became a Willoughby protégé, working for the FECOM G-2 as the executive officer of the Operations Branch, Theater Intelligence Division. At the outbreak of the war, Willoughby nominated the thirty-four year old Tarkenton for the Eighth Army position over several older, more experienced officers within FECOM G-2. Despite his relative inexperience, Tarkenton quickly earned the trust of General Walker by providing him timely, accurate intelligence during the defense of the Pusan Perimeter.38

Tarkenton’s successes began with some timely tactical intelligence windfalls. In late July, an Eighth Army element captured some portions of an NKPA communications codebook and at least one Soviet made radio used by the NKPA. Since late July FECOM General Headquarters had requested technical data on Soviet made tank radios used by the North Koreans. By early August, FEAF intelligence personnel also asked for technical data to include the amplitude pulse and frequency modulation of the enemy radios, the transmission range of that equipment, its power output, and antenna type.39 The captured NKPA codebook and radio helped answer such requests for information.

Additional intelligence windfalls followed. In early August, Eighth Army’s 25th Infantry Division captured more valuable enemy documents that revealed numerous NKPA unit identification codes from division level down to regimental level.40 Additional

40 HQ, 25th Infantry Division, Annex #2 to Periodic Intelligence Report No. 24, N/K Unit Code Numbers, List of North Korean Code Numbers Identified Units, 081800K Aug 50 to 091800K Aug 50, RG-127:
documents revealed specific radio codewords used by the NKPA to abbreviate radio
messages such as “increase power”, “cannot hear”, and “frequency wave change.”41 These
messages enabled COMINT analysts to discover not only the technical parameters of
NKPA radio equipment but also the NKPA order of battle. Moreover, knowing the
associated NKPA codewords, allowed ASAPAC COMINT analysts to conduct nearly
continuous traffic analysis of NKPA radio communications by knowing or anticipating
when the NKPA changed frequencies. These capabilities were the first steps toward the
complete breaking of the NKPA’s operational codes. Thus, one can clearly see the
emphasis placed on COMINT and the dividends COMINT began to render in the earliest
months of the Korean War.

Tarkenton realized that Eighth Army’s organic radio intercept and direction
finding assets were insufficient to break into the NKPA coded transmissions. Along with
the radio and copies of the captured codes, Tarkenton sent a memorandum back to
FECOM requesting ASAPAC team support and all available higher level assistance to help
break these codes.42 ASAPAC and AFSA efforts to break these codes eventually
succeeded.

By the end of August, elements of Eighth Army’s 25th Infantry Division captured
North Korean radio equipment from 3 temporarily abandoned T-34/85 tanks and another

41 HQ, 25th Infantry Division, Annex #1 to Periodic Intelligence Report No. 24, Captured Document,
081800K Aug 50 to 091800K August 1950, RG-127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, Box 6,
Folder: 1st Provisional Marine Brigade G-2 Journal, 3-10 August 1950, Folder 1 of 2, NARA II.
42 Eighth Army G-2 Memo to FECOM GHQ (G-2), Lt. Col James C. Tarkenton, Jr. to Lt. Col. R. H. Cole,
27 July 1950, RG 338: Records of the U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations
(World War II and Thereafter), Box 51, Folder: G-2 CPX SOP, NARA II.
Russian made set from a transmitting station near Taejon. This technical intelligence (TECHINT) windfall helped the COMINT effort by allowing the Signal Corps Intelligence Agency and, of course, AFSA to learn how similar Soviet-made radios were to American ones and to learn all of the operating parameters of these radio systems. Moreover, the U.S. intelligence community learned that most of the radio tubes used in these systems had a U.S. Signal Corps nomenclature and were made in the U.S.43

Meanwhile, as Walker’s exhausted men struggled to maintain their foothold on the Korean peninsula, the AFSA produced their most valuable pieces of intelligence to the troops inside the Pusan Perimeter. These messages revealed specific instructions to battalion-level NKPA units detailing their assigned areas and times to attack and the weapons to be utilized against UN forces.44 While the NKPA’s simultaneous attacks on all four fronts of the perimeter came as no surprise to the Eighth Army, they still had all they could do to maintain a defensive perimeter. however, the COMINT reporting enabled Walker to employ his men most effectively under these dire circumstances.


Willoughby also had a role in ensuring Walker’s success inside the Pusan Perimeter. Not only did he facilitate the two way communication between AFSA and Eighth Army, he also coordinated closely with Tarkenton to ensure that the crucial sensor to shooter linkages were being maintained. That is, Willoughby ensured that local air strikes were being launched in response to aerial reconnaissance reports confirming enemy logistical build-ups along key rail nets and at forward air bases. Additionally, Willoughby informed Tarkenton of “blank spaces immediately behind the front lines” where FECOM theater level collection assets could not see. In reply to Willoughby’s message, Tarkenton mentioned that prisoner interrogation reports, which were forwarded to the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS) in Tokyo, were his best source of information at the time. 45 Thus, Willoughby and Tarkenton worked very closely to close identified collection gaps with the collection assets available.

Not only was Willoughby’s intelligence coordination tight within Army channels, but joint service cooperation was also taking place. ASAPAC cryptanalyst John Milmore recalled that in early July 1950 his unit was receiving material not just from the ASAPAC Signal Service companies across Japan but also from the U.S. Navy’s COMINT station located on an island in Tokyo Bay and from the Air Force Security Service (AFSS) First Radio Squadron Mobile located at Johnson Air Force Base just north of Tokyo. Milmore’s unit even received reports with “very good D/F (direction finding) bearings” from the “Japanese version of the American Federal Communications Commission.” 46

45 FECOM Message. NR 2648, Willoughby to Tarkenton, 29 August 1950, Record Group 338: Records of the U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter), hereafter referred to as RG 338, Box 51, Folder: G-2 Action File, NARA II.
By September 5th, this close coordination began to pay off as AFSA cryptanalysts began to detect hints that the Far East Air Forces were successfully interdicting North Korean logistics. In fact, COMINT revealed that FEAF air interdiction missions impeded the NKPA’s ability to continue its attacks. These COMINT reports answered an earlier Eighth Army EEI message requesting information on the status of all classes of enemy supplies with emphasis on classes five (ammunition) and one (food rations). Tarkenton’s EEI requirements were quite detailed and asked for any information regarding the amount of enemy supplies on requisition, on hand, and the date, mode, and origin of the logistical transport of these supplies. Moreover, he asked for information regarding the location of enemy supply depots, the basis for issue of enemy supplies, and the restrictions the enemy placed on the use of ammunition, the designated unit of fire, and the average amounts of ammunition enemy units were expending. The AFSA reports revealed North Korean units were running short of ammunition, fuel, and weapons.

In addition, by mid-August an intercepted report from an NKPA Corps to Supreme NKPA headquarters revealed the disposition of several North Korean divisions poised to launch a penetration of Walker’s perimeter defense. According to John Milmore the decoding of that message was made possible by the nearly one-hundred percent cryptanalysis recovery of the NKPA’s codebook. While this cryptanalysis feat took several weeks to accomplish completely, the North Koreans helped out immensely by making the

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47 CG EUSAK Message. GX21618, 300900K August 1950, RG 338: Records of the U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter), Box 51, NARA II.
48 <http://www.nsa.gov/korea/papers/power_into_play_pusn.htm> Jill Frahm. “So Power Can Be Brought into Play: SIGINT and the Pusan Perimeter.” (Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, National Security Agency), pp. 13-14. Further verification of this information is found in vague references to COMINT in
careless mistake of transmitting duplicate messages in at least two cryptographic systems of varying difficulty. Once the easier one was broken and enough of the difficult code recovered to verify a duplicate message, the recovery of the more difficult code became easy. These operational level signals intelligence reports enabled Walker to employ his forces as efficiently as possible and hang on inside his perimeter long enough for MacArthur to execute his amphibious landing at Inchon. That brilliant maneuver distracted the NKPA enough to enable the Eighth Army to break out of the Pusan Perimeter and launch a punishing counterattack on the disheveled North Korean forces.

2.2.2 Linguist Woes

Shortly before the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter in late September 1950, tactical level ASAPAC COMINT units finally made it to the peninsula to support Walker’s ground forces. One of the biggest obstacles to these units’ deployments was the mad scramble to find enough reasonably qualified Korean linguists to translate the communications intercepts. Moreover, these linguists also had to have security clearances to work in a United States COMINT organization. The ASA had to rely upon their only two proficient Korean linguists, Captain Youn. P. Kim and First Lieutenant Richard Chun, both of whom were instructors at the Army Language School in Monterrey, California. Y.P. Kim came from California, the son of Korean immigrants, while “Dick” Chun hailed from Hawaii. During World War II, both men had initially been recruited by ASA for their Japanese language abilities. Kim had been cleared to work as a translator and cryptanalyst at Arlington Hall Station, Virginia prior to 1945, but he had to give up his clearance when

Footnote:

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the FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup, 10-16 September 1950, p. 3. K720.607A, Box 36, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
he was assigned to occupation duties in Japan. Dick Chun, formerly a transportation
sergeant in the Hawaiian National Guard, who had served in World War II in both Italy
and the South Pacific, had never held a security clearance and had no experience in
communications intelligence during World War II.50

The ASA faced a dilemma regarding Kim and Chun. The agency still needed
qualified instructors in Monterrey to train the vast pool of would-be Korean linguists that
was sure to follow, yet the ASA desperately needed their skills to support Eighth Army.
The decision was made to send the two men to Korea.51 There they worked in isolated,
guarded quarters feeding their translated intercepts through mail slots into the Eighth
Army communications center until their security clearances were approved.52

Meanwhile, the United States Air Force had looked more to Korea’s indigenous
personnel to aid their COMINT and HUMINT missions. The Office of Special
Investigations (OSI) had a field office located at Kimpo Airfield just west of Seoul.
Recently promoted First Lieutenant (and by the war’s end, Major) Donald Nichols, USAF
ran that office in support of the Fifth Air Force. Nichols and his outfit had been in Korea
since the end of World War II, and since that time, Nichols had developed and maintained

States Cryptologic History, Series V: The Early Post-war Period, 1945-1952, Vol. 3. (Center for
(Fort George G, Meade, Maryland: National Security Agency). See also John Milmore. #1 Code Break
Boy. p. 38
51 Tom Johnson. “The Korean War- The Cryptologic Story.” June 2000, (Fort George G. Meade,
SIGINT operations) removed from original document source http://www.nsa.gov/korea/papers.htm (Fort

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both communications intelligence and clandestine human intelligence capabilities utilizing mostly South Korean personnel. Nichols had the good fortune to recruit the services of one Cho Yong Il, a North Korean transplant, who had formerly served in the North Korean People’s Army as both a radio operator and a cryptanalyst. Nichols helped Cho gain a commission in the ROK Air Force. In addition, Nichols retained the services of Kim Se Won, a ROK Navy captain. Each of these Korean military officers became the heads of South Korean COMINT teams, which doubled as Nichols’ Air Force organization and the COMINT organizations of their respective South Korean armed services. 53

In addition to COMINT purposes, Korean linguists were also in demand as interrogation translators and interpreters, as military liaisons, and as intelligence agents on the peninsula. At the start of the war MacArthur requested that the Department of the Army provide thirty Korean linguists for immediate deployment to FECOM. The Pentagon could only send seventeen Korean speaking Army officers, whose skills were often questionable. Reluctantly, MacArthur had to ask for twenty-seven civilian Korean translators to be sent to Japan immediately. 54 The expedient solution for Willoughby was to employ some Japanese linguists in three-way translations between themselves, Korean agents (who spoke Japanese as a result of the long Japanese occupation of Korea), and American intelligence personnel. 55 Japanese Nisei, second-generation, American-born Japanese immigrants, with the requisite Japanese language skills were used as liaison

53 Ibid.
agents with South Korean units. Meanwhile, Korean personnel who spoke English were used as interpreters for U.S. officers. Such solutions were fraught with security risks and were ostensibly temporary pending the training of additional Korean linguists in the United States.\textsuperscript{56} Even then, the “qualified” linguists graduating from stateside programs had only rudimentary training. Upon arrival in theater, it would take them several weeks to reach a level of proficiency in Korean military terminology and Asiatic background where they became effective in their COMINT or HUMINT capacities.\textsuperscript{57}

The standard service tour rotation length for linguists was another problem. Nearly eighty percent of the linguists assigned to the Eighth Army were required by existing draft laws to serve for a minimum two-year period. However, the average linguist’s time left to serve in Korea following graduation from the Army Language School in Monterrey, California was only nine and a half months. Sometimes, complications regarding the granting and transfer of security clearances for these personnel further reduced this “useable portion” of service.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{2.3 HUMINT Agent Missions}

Other human intelligence personnel that American intelligence organizations could not readily recruit, let alone replace, were South Korean agents. Willoughby’s KLO collection agents had suffered some huge setbacks immediately before and, of course, during the North Korean invasion. In February 1950, after the North Koreans began evacuating North Korean civilians from the area around the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel, infiltrating South Korean agents into North Korea became increasingly difficult. Moreover, in one of his

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 28.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., pp. 1-2.
pre-war reports dated 25 May 1950, Willoughby stated that “I have long suspected that our secret agents, both Army and KLO were not able to make deep penetrations and some of these men, who were sent into the northeastern corner of Korea, adjacent to the Russian border, have disappeared.”59 The U.S. Army had to hurriedly recruit and train new agents.

The U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI) had similar problems. Since 1946, Donald Nichols had run clandestine Air Force HUMINT operations in Korea from his District 8 office at Kimpo Airfield. Many of his agents were compromised a few months prior to and during the North Korean invasion. Some agents, who returned successfully to UN lines, prepared for future missions. These missions entailed parachute drops as a means of insertion. A shortage of parachutes and available aircraft made training the South Korean agents more difficult. Additionally, as hostilities commenced, Eighth Army often had higher priorities for the use of available aircraft. Still, while many of these barely trained agents succumbed to injuries during their parachute landings or became compromised while on mission, some managed to return safely to UN lines. Yet, the information they possessed was often outdated to the point of being useless.60 As the NKPA continued to advance south and consolidated its control over greater swaths of southern territory, the South Korean agents became increasingly less effective.

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58 Ibid., p. 4.
59 KLO Report 518, 25 May 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder 4: North Korean Pre-Invasion Build-Up, MMA.
2.4 Photographic Intelligence (PHOTINT) Mission Challenges

While tactical COMINT and HUMINT collection efforts continued despite their limitations, MacArthur and Willoughby looked to photo-reconnaissance aircraft and crews to provide crucial information on the North Korean advance. Within forty-eight hours of the North Korean invasion, MacArthur issued verbal orders to the Fifth U.S Air Force to dispatch visual and photo reconnaissance sorties to Korea.\(^{61}\) Those orders carried with them the restriction from the Truman administration to conduct no air operations north of the 38\(^{\text{th}}\) parallel. Lieutenant (later General) Bryce Poe II, USAF took off from Itazuke airfield on Kyushu into the murky dawn weather on 28 June 1950. Despite poor weather over Japan, Poe later found that the weather over his collection area in Korea was clearing nicely. Flying alone is his RF-80A with the mission to find and “photograph the vanguard of the NKPA,” Poe successfully completed what is believed to be the “first USAF combat [italics mine] jet reconnaissance sortie of all time.”\(^{62}\)

With the enemy spotted, MacArthur and the FEAF commander, Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, had the hard task of interdicting the NKPA advance despite the geographical restrictions on air operations. Stratemeyer adamantly maintained that such restrictions detracted from the combat effectiveness of his air forces, Moreover, he argued that in order for his forces to achieve air superiority they had to have the clearance to attack Communist airfields inside North Korea. On 29 June 1950, MacArthur deemed the battlefield situation critical enough to justify immediate authorization to strike


those airfields.\textsuperscript{63} A day later, the JCS informed MacArthur that he had authorization to extend UN air operations into North Korea against critical targets and troop concentrations as he saw fit. The only restrictions on the use of those forces were that they stay well clear of the Manchurian and Soviet frontiers adjoining North Korea.\textsuperscript{64}

In concert with the entry of FEAF combat planes into North Korea, the 8\textsuperscript{th} Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (TRS), the only daytime photo reconnaissance squadron in the Fifth Air Force, began flying photo reconnaissance missions of “all known North Korean airfields.”\textsuperscript{65} Additionally, as Task Force Smith arrived in Korea, with the rest of General Walton H. Walker’s Eighth Army soon to follow, the number of photo reconnaissance mission requests to the Fifth Air Force increased exponentially. The deluge of mission requirements encompassed everything from terrain mapping to armed reconnaissance against key targets. The 8\textsuperscript{th} TRS quickly became saturated with mission requests and could not possibly fulfill them all.\textsuperscript{66} Even with the addition of the 162d TRS, which gave Eighth

\textsuperscript{62} Draft FEAF report on the Korean War, bk. 2, tab 6, p. 5. cited in Ibid., p. 27.
\textsuperscript{64} Message 00647, JCS to CINCFE (ref: JCS 84681), 30 June 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder 4, MMA.
Army and Fifth Air Force a night photo-reconnaissance capability, there were not enough aircraft, pilots, or navigators to fulfill all requested missions.67

Another unit contributing to the intelligence effort was the 31st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron (SRS), Photo. Stationed at Kadena Air Force Base on Okinawa, the 31st SRS shared the similar problems of its fellow FEAF units with regard to drastic personnel reductions, maintenance issues, and logistical support. However, many of these problems were not simply a result of the Truman administrations austere defense budget.68 Two other problems made this unit’s ability to contribute even more difficult.

First, several months prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, the U.S. Air Force had begun a global realignment of these types of units to accommodate its new nuclear weapons-based, strategic bombing focus. On 8 February 1950, Lieutenant General Curtis E. LeMay, Commanding General of the newly formed U.S. Strategic Air Command (SAC), asked for the redeployment of the 31st SRS to the Fairfield-Suisun Air Force Base in California. To compensate FEAF he agreed to send six RB-29 aircraft (four of which would be outfitted with photographic equipment and the other two designated as ferret aircraft) that would be given to FEAF for 90 day TDY rotations to accomplish FEAF’s peacetime reconnaissance requirements.69 FEAF Commander, Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, agreed with the move and had gained General MacArthur’s concurrence

69 Lieutenant General Curtis E. LeMay to Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, 8 February 1950, Early Days of the Korean Conflict taken from Balchen Collection, Part 1, 168.7053-332, IRIS No. 1031200, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
provided that six RB-29 reconnaissance aircraft would arrive as habitual, ninety-day, rotational replacements before the 31st SRS fully departed from the Far East Theater. It appears that the actual exchange of aircraft did not proceed according to plan. At the start of hostilities the 31st SRS had six of its photoreconnaissance aircraft in the United States and only two organizational photo aircraft in Japan available for operations. Apparently, the planned replacement aircraft for the 31st SRS were either inoperative or in transit to the Far East Theater. However, by 7 July, at least eight RB-29’s and twelve RF-80s were available for operations.

The second major problem revolved around competing mission priorities with the available operational equipment. As FEAF juggled its operational units in response to the North Korean invasion, Stratemeyer ordered the 19th Bomber Group to relocate from its base at North Field, Guam to Kadena AFB in Okinawa. The 19th Bomb Group arrived in Okinawa with inoperative camera equipment, which was supposed to perform crucial bomb spot and bomb damage assessment (BDA) missions. The 19th Bomb Group was allowed to essentially cannibalize the 31st SRS for its available aircraft, operational camera equipment, film, and camera technicians. This move highlighted a tension that would have drastic repercussions on PHOTINT throughout the first year of the conflict. FEAF

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70 Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer to General Hoyt Vandenberg, 28 April 1950. Early Days of the Korean Conflict, taken from Balchen Collection, Part I 168.7053-332, IRIS No. 1031200, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
72 U.S. War Department Message 85074, dated 6 July 1950, Joint SITINTREP No. 11, 1400Z 5 July 50 to 1400Z 6 July 50, p. 4, RG-330: Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Box 403, Folder: Joint SITINTREP Korea, July-September 50 84633-93065, NARA II.
had to decide where best to employ its photographic assets, either in bomb damage
assessment missions or in actual photoreconnaissance in search of enemy ground forces.

The 31st SRS eventually relocated from Okinawa to Japan to close the distance
with its areas of assigned photographic coverage in Korea. However, throughout the first
weeks of the Korean War, it had to take orders not only from FEAF headquarters but also
from FEAF bomber command. This situation resulted in confused collection mission
priorities and several duplications in assigned target coverage.75

Daily photographic requirements measured in negatives per day were based on a
1/5,000 meter scale of photographic quality. At this scale, the Eighth Army in defensive
action required full frontal coverage once every three days. Eighth Army required such
coverage to expedite the identification of enemy equipment, troop concentrations, specific
activities (engineer activity, logistical movements), and other factors of intelligence value.
Along an average Army front seventy-five miles wide and twenty miles deep at a 1/5,000
meter scale flown once every three days, 3,350 negatives would be required each day. A
breakdown of the required coverage is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Negatives per Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army Front coverage, 1,500 sq. mi., flown once in 3 days at 1/5000</td>
<td>3,250 negs/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep cover of 10% of enemy rear areas, 600 sq. mi., once in 10 days at 1/5000</td>
<td>380 negs/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special cover, various categories, 1/3000</td>
<td>400 negs/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night strips, 9&quot;x9&quot; negs., scale 1/5000</td>
<td>100 negs/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night mosaics, 9&quot;x9&quot; negs., 1/5000</td>
<td>820 negs/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliques, large scale</td>
<td>50 negs/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL FOR DEFENSIVE ACTION IN NEGS/DAY</td>
<td>5,000 negs/day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Front line cover of Army front, 1,500 sq. mi., scale 1/5000, flown every other day | 3,800 negs/day |
Deep cover of 10% of enemy rear areas flown once every five days at scale | 850 negs/day |

74 Ibid., p. 25.
75 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
During most combat operations, photography was done on a 1/7,000 scale to reduce the number of sorties required for coverage. To photograph at the ideal 1/5,000 scale would have doubled the number of required sorties. Eighth Army requests accounted for almost seventy percent of all photo-reconnaissance missions flown in Korea. Thus, Eighth Army’s photographic intelligence requests had to be carefully screened and prioritized to avoid duplication of effort and ensure optimal coverage with the limited assets available.

Ideally, PHOTINT was to provide confirmation of most COMINT and HUMINT reporting within the Korean theater of operations. However, the quality and quantity of equipment available in the Korean theater was seriously lacking. Had better camera equipment been available in theater it would have produced the same amount of requisite detail from a smaller scale of coverage. This would have reduced the number of negatives required and the number of sorties required to complete the coverage. Moreover, the timeliness of developing these negatives and returning the numerous photographs to only a handful of Eighth Army and FEAF photo-interpreters became the biggest challenge. What reconnaissance missions had been completed in the first months of Korean hostilities were

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76 All data on daily photographic coverage taken directly from Military History Section, Headquarters U.S. Army Forces and Eighth U.S. Army, “Intelligence and Counterintelligence Problems During the Korea Conflict.” pp. 13-14.
77 Ibid., p. 14.
so bogged down in film processing time and analysis that the intelligence produced was often useless by the time it reached its intended Eighth Army unit recipients.  

2.5 Orchestrating Interservice Coordination

Clearly, the timeliness of intelligence reporting and coordination among and organization of all theater intelligence organizations and their assets required prompt corrective action through decisive collection planning. Major General Willoughby and his staff provided it. On 6 August 1950, MacArthur received JCS authorization to conduct aerial reconnaissance over the entire Korean peninsula, as long as UN aircraft stayed clear of the Manchurian or Soviet border areas. This was in response to the Truman administration’s realization that the Yalu River bridges needed to be covered in order to gain photographic proof of supplies or manpower coming into North Korea by way of Manchuria. Within the limits of this new latitude from Washington, Willoughby constructed a comprehensive Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan, which carefully prioritized all intelligence collection requirements for the entire FECOM / UNC area of operations. The scope of Willoughby’s plan entailed “coverage of critical water areas

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79 Message 88051 JCS to CINCFE, 6 August 1950. RG 6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder 4, MMA.


81 An important distinction must be made between the military terms area of operations (AO) and area of interest (AI). The area of operations is that portion of an area of conflict necessary for military operations. AOs are geographic areas assigned to commanders for which they have responsibility and the authority to conduct military operations. An area of interest is the geographical area from which information and intelligence are required to permit planning or the successful conduct of the command’s operation. The AI is usually larger than the AO. It includes any threat forces or characteristics of the battlefield environment.
adjacent to the USSR and the Chinese and Korean mainlands as well as critical roads, railroads, and communications centers of Korea.” His intent was to provide “automatic reconnaissance designed to minimize the danger of surprise air, sea, and ground attacks on installations and units of the Far East Command and to locate troop, supply, and industrial concentrations and/or movements.” All of this was to be accomplished to the maximum of each service component’s capabilities while not causing “a diversion of facilities from present primary operational missions.”

Willoughby’s plan was extremely well crafted providing for mission flexibility and changing battlefield conditions. He included provisions for on-call missions and unforeseen contingencies to ensure that intelligence collection was done routinely but not in a lockstep manner. In doing so, he ensured that the plan did not preclude necessary coverage as the evolving tactical situation might dictate. All intelligence collection priorities were exceptionally well-tailored and appropriate to the capabilities, roles, and missions of each of the armed services.

In addition to the armed services’ regular field intelligence units, Willoughby also included coordinating provisions for the Army Security Agency Pacific (ASAPAC) and for the Joint Special Operations Branch (JSOB), which included clandestine military and government agency human collection assets assigned to missions behind enemy lines. It is

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that will significantly influence accomplishment of the command’s mission. From the very beginning of the Korean War, Willoughby was never allowed to employ all of his collection assets throughout the depth of the AI, only the depth of the AO. (Definitions of AO and AI are taken verbatim from Department of the Army, FM-34-130 Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield. (Washington D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 8 July 1994), Glossary, p. 4.


83 Ibid., p. 2.
significant that even at this stage of the war, long before any FECOM/UNC ground units approached the Manchurian and Soviet Borders along the Yalu River, that Willoughby tasked FEAF and NAVFE organizations to determine, within the prescribed operating limits, “any movement of Soviet units or CCF units into North Korea or to locations adjacent thereto.” Such taskings indicate the thoroughness of Willoughby’s planning and his distinct awareness of all possible threats to FECOM/UNC throughout the depth of FECOM’s areas of interest and operations. Additionally, Willoughby’s plan authorized direct coordination between the commanding general (CG) of Eighth Army, CG FEAF, and the Commander of Naval Forces Far East (COMNAVFE) as required to facilitate theater reconnaissance missions.

Willoughby’s thorough planning and coordinating efforts had a beneficial, cascading effect. Shortly after his strategic reconnaissance plan was published, FEAF published a standing operating procedure for requesting aerial photoreconnaissance missions. That procedure carefully outlined the need to specify the specific area for coverage, the level of detail required, camera angle desired, and the purpose for the coverage. Such specificity, while tedious to articulate in a written request, ultimately enabled the Far East Air Forces to properly prioritize aerial reconnaissance missions, avoid duplication of effort, and respond in as timely a manner as possible to mission requests. This procedure had MacArthur and Willoughby’s full concurrence with the provision that certain clandestine mission information could not be disclosed for “security reasons.”

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84 Ibid., p. 4.
85 Ibid., pp. 2, 4.
Security qualifications aside, Willoughby’s efforts had laid the foundation for effective intelligence cooperation throughout the Far East Theater of operations. Close cooperation proved imperative to overcoming operational intelligence challenges in the early months of the war.

2.6 Conclusion

Shortages of crucial intelligence personnel and equipment across all intelligence disciplines plagued the armed services at the onset of the Korean War. Such shortages were a direct reflection of the Truman administration’s national security priorities, which were mainly European focused and fixated upon the Soviet threat, and influenced by domestic economic and political concerns. Meanwhile, MacArthur and Willoughby had all they wanted to handle in task organizing the tactical level intelligence assets to support Walker’s Eighth Army not to mention MacArthur’s larger troubles of procuring enough combat troops to halt the NKPA. Adding to the difficulties, the Truman administration’s Soviet fixation also delayed the dedication of available operational and strategic level intelligence assets to collect against the North Korean adversary.

After two tumultuous months, the operational and strategic level assets finally began to provide useful intelligence to the Eighth Army as it fell back to form the Pusan Perimeter. Undoubtedly, this intelligence enabled Lieutenant General Walker to shift his forces just in time to frustrate an all-out North Korean offensive bent on pushing his forces into the sea. Yet, the tactical level intelligence units Walker needed for immediate intelligence were slow to arrive. Qualified and cleared linguists, South Korean agents, and intelligence collection equipment such as photo imaging aircraft were in short supply and
many intelligence personnel were not trained to adequate proficiency. Much like their combat arms brethren, they learned as they went.

Simultaneously, tactical photoreconnaissance units were tasked beyond the limits of their available personnel and equipment. All photographic missions had to be carefully screened and prioritized to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts and complete the most tactically valuable requests. Moreover, the time lag imposed by the processing, analysis, and delivery of the final photo-intelligence products often negated their combat intelligence value. The tremendous need for streamlining this intelligence collection process was painstakingly clear.

Management of all available intelligence assets in the Far East / United Nations Command needed better coordination and this had to come from the efforts of MacArthur and Willoughby. The intelligence challenges in the first few months of the Korean War seemed virtually insurmountable. The timely success of communications intelligence inside the Pusan Perimeter was a bright light within a dark cloud of organizational chaos as intelligence units were hastily cobbled together in the United States and partially trained personnel attempted to gain their bearings upon finally reaching the Korean theater of operations. Willoughby and his deputies within the intelligence battlefield operating system faced a daunting set of tasks in early August 1950. Yet as MacArthur and his staff began planning the operation that turned the tide of the war, Willoughby and his men, with their thorough strategic reconnaissance planning, rose admirably to the occasion.
Figure 18: Map of the North Korean Invasion (25 June–4 August 1950)

Commanding General, Eighth United States Army, Korea, Lieutenant General Walton H. “Johnnie” Walker successfully defended the Pusan Perimeter thanks in no small part to the help of timely communications intelligence, which enabled him to anticipate NKPA surges against his defenses and reinforce those areas in time to thwart the attacks. Walker later met a tragic end in a jeep accident on December 23, 1950 and was succeeded in command by Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway. (Photo taken from the Bob West Collection at <http://www.bob-west.com/8thARMY-PHOTOS.html>).
Figure 20: Map of the Eighth Army Defense of the Naktong River Line and the Pusan Perimeter, 1-15 September 1950

James C. “Clint” Tarkenton was instrumental in providing timely intelligence support to Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker enabling him to reinforce the Pusan Perimeter wherever necessary and to later execute a successful breakout to the north against a crumbling NKPA. Willoughby’s recommendation of Tarkenton to the Eighth Army G-2 position at the start of the Korean War over several more senior officers says a lot for Tarkenton’s abilities. (Photo taken from the W.L. Howard website <http://www.wlhoward.com/images/tarka.jpg>
CHAPTER 3

BEHIND THE SCENES OF A STRATEGIC BREAKTHROUGH

3.1 The Commander Drives Intelligence

From the start of the war, MacArthur approached the zenith of his career as an operational commander. His rapid deployment of the Eighth Army and all available supporting assets to Korea was well executed, considering Truman’s hasty decision to intervene. By early August 1950, some of the additional combat and combat support units MacArthur requested finally arrived in theater. The U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins, told MacArthur that aside from the Second Infantry Division, he could not send any additional Army combat divisions from the United States to support any counteroffensive.

However, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, had radioed the Commander of Naval Forces in the Far East, Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, advising him that a Marine Regimental Combat Team (Fifth Marine RCT) was available for deployment to Korea. MacArthur happily accepted the offer of Marine reinforcements through Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepard, Jr, Commander, Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific.¹ Later, MacArthur requested, and the JCS approved, the addition of the 1st

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Marine Division and 1st Marine Air Wing to round out what would become his amphibious invasion force. The U.S. Marine Corps sought to bring the First Marine Division to full combat strength for the mission, but it simply could not be accomplished concurrent with the deployment to Japan before November 1950. Time was of the essence to MacArthur so he took the available Marine units immediately in the best strength possible. The immediate attachment of the U.S. Marine Fifth Regimental Landing Team, the U.S. Army Second Infantry Division, and the U.S. Army Fifth Regimental Combat Team (out of Hawaii) to Eighth Army greatly bolstered General Walker’s ability to defend the Pusan Perimeter.2

Meanwhile, MacArthur’s mind was working on the idea of a bold amphibious counterstroke to sever the NKPA supply lines (See Figure 22). Code-named Operation Chromite, the plan called for a UN amphibious invasion force to take the port city of Inchon, seize Kimpo Airfield, and retake the South Korean capital city of Seoul, which lay only 25 miles inland from Inchon. This action would enable UN forces to seize the NKPA’s main logistical nexus at Seoul and force the NKPA to divert forces from its attack against Walker’s Eighth Army. Forced to fight in two directions simultaneously, the NKPA would then be vulnerable to Eighth Army forces breaking out from the Pusan Perimeter. Walker’s Eighth Army was to act as an advancing hammer that would smash a disorganized NKPA against the anvil of the inland advance by the UN amphibious invasion force, better known as “X Corps.”

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The U.S. X Corps was comprised of the 1st Marine Division, returned to full strength by the Fifth Marine Regimental Landing Team, and the U.S. Army Seventh Infantry Division. MacArthur entrusted command of this unit to his FECOM Chief of Staff, Major General Edward M. Almond. While retaining his authority as MacArthur’s Chief of Staff, Almond had all means at his disposal to gain the men and material required to piece together his landing force. Meanwhile, MacArthur employed the amphibious planning expertise of Rear Admiral James H. Doyle, Commander of the U.S. Seventh Fleet’s Amphibious Group One, and his staff of seasoned World War II veterans. At the start of the Korean War, Doyle’s group of amphibious warriors had been conducting amphibious landing training exercises with some of MacArthur’s troops in Japan’s littoral areas and they were probably the most well trained amphibious group in the U.S. Navy.3 MacArthur quickly brought them to work with Almond to craft and integrate the amphibious landing and ground campaign plans. Together, under the operational control of Joint Task Force (JTF) -7, commanded by Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble, Doyle, Almond, and their staffs would plan and execute the amphibious assault on Inchon.

Indeed, it appeared as though MacArthur’s own amphibious campaigns in the Southwest Pacific Theater in World War II had given him the faith in this latest idea for a bold counterstrike against the NKPA. Yet throughout those amphibious campaigns,

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3 Malcolm W. Cagel and Frank A. Manson. The Sea War in Korea. (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1957), pp. 30-33, 41-42.
MacArthur never seemed to pay much attention to military intelligence unless it comported with his own operational and strategic objectives.\(^4\)

By August 1950, having reflected on his World War II experiences, MacArthur had seemingly gained a new respect for intelligence operations. Additionally as a result of the tremendous opposition he had to overcome to execute the operation, MacArthur and his staff became acutely aware of the risks involved with landing at Inchon. At a meeting in Tokyo on 23 July 1950, Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, and Task Force 90.1 (Amphibious Assault force) Commander, Rear Admiral James H. Doyle, voiced operational concerns that ranged from tidal patterns to ideal geographical locations based on enemy troop dispositions. While MacArthur’s eloquent soliloquy and force of will silenced all opposition in the meeting room, MacArthur, and his Navy and Army planners, wisely took these concerns to heart.\(^5\)

Indeed, the JCS had done its job well in representing their concerns and those of the policymakers in Washington regarding the risks of the proposed operation. By challenging MacArthur’s ideas they ensured that MacArthur and his Navy and Army planners minimized the risks and uncertainties surrounding this operational plan by ensuring a top-notch intelligence preparation of the battlefield.

Throughout the planning stages of Operation Chromite, MacArthur demonstrated the textbook method by which a commander drives his intelligence operations. He personally required his intelligence battlefield operating system to gain the latest


information on harbor conditions, tidal patterns, enemy weapon emplacements, and enemy troop concentrations. His focus on the port city of Inchon as the site for his amphibious counterstroke against the NKPA was recorded as far back as 3 July 1950. At that time MacArthur emphasized to the commanders of FEAF (Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer), NAVFE (Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy), JTF-7 (Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble), and Eighth Army (Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker) his urgent desire for the intensification of visual and photographic reconnaissance of Inchon City “with particular regard to weapons emplacements in the harbor area” and “specific interest” in the gun positions that controlled the channel entrance to the harbor. He ordered daily reports of these essential elements of information (EEI’s) to be furnished to Generals Willoughby (G-2) and Wright (G-3) and to the ROK Army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Chung Il-Kwon. MacArthur also emphasized his interest in any information pertaining to an enemy concentration of forces in the “Inchon-Kimpo-Seoul area” and made such information an additional intelligence collection mission to the ones already stipulated.  

On 15 July, MacArthur ensured close joint coordination between the armed services to facilitate intelligence operations. MacArthur delegated command and operational control of all aircraft to the appropriate air and naval commanders in the Far East Theater. In doing so, MacArthur ensured that targeting various areas for intelligence collection and bombing was truly a joint service effort. Tasks that he assigned to each

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6 Msg. AG 061 CINCFE to CG FEAF, Info COMNAVFE, CG Eighth Army, CG ACOM Korea, dtd. 3 July 1950. RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 1, Folder 8, MMA. The names of key U.N. commanders were taken from
commander, such as amphibious assault, prescribed the requisite command and control coordination by “designation of specific areas of operation.” In instances where the service roles and missions overlapped, as they often did between Air Force and Naval aviation, MacArthur delegated his coordination authority to Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, commanding the Far East Air Forces.7

**3.2 Joint Special Operations**

MacArthur also utilized joint special operations forces to gather important intelligence on the island fortifications guarding the entrance to Inchon’s harbor as well as key information regarding the port city itself. The purpose of this clandestine mission was to “determine the influx of red reinforcements” into the Seoul-Inchon area and “the expansion of beach defenses” at Inchon.8 MacArthur tasked Willoughby to find the right men for the job. Willoughby turned to an old naval intelligence associate, Captain Edward S. Pearce, for advice and a recommendation on who should lead the intelligence gathering mission. After graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1923, Pearce had amassed a wide range of naval intelligence experience in the South Pacific in World War II. His sparse personnel records indicate that he headed a “most important section of the Intelligence Division of the Staff of the Commander, South Pacific Force.” His additional duty as a communications officer in that same theater leads one to assume he was either a

7 Message AG 370.2 GHQ, FEC to COMNAVFE, CG FEAF, 15 July 1950. RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 2, Folder 1, MMA.
communications intelligence officer or a clandestine operations planner of some sort.\(^9\)

FECOM documentation indicates that at the start of the Korean War, Pearce was the head of a “miscellaneous research” unit within the Operations Section of the Theater Intelligence Division of Willoughby’s G-2 staff section. Pearce and his unit were charged with analyzing “troop movement charts, Prisoner of War summations, etc…”\(^10\) This information at least partially clarifies his connection to MacArthur’s Joint Special Operations (JSO) planning staff. Apparently, Willoughby turned to Pearce for some much needed amphibious operational planning expertise for the Inchon harbor reconnaissance mission.

Pearce, in turn, recommended 39 year-old Lieutenant Eugene F. Clark, USN for the dangerous mission of infiltrating Inchon’s small island redoubts and relaying crucial information on the port city’s tidal depths, troop dispositions, and enemy weapons emplacements.\(^11\) In Operation Trudy Jackson, Clark led his small group (See Figure 23) comprised mostly of South Korean partisan personnel with translation, interrogation, and soldier skills on a harrowing, clandestine venture into the islands just off of Inchon.

\(^9\) Award Citation for Captain Edward S. Pearce. Chief of Naval Operations, Award Citations File, Operational Archives Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington D.C. Pearce was awarded a second Legion of Merit “for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service during the period of 27 June 1950 to 23 May 1953.” The fact that his World War II citations nebulously reflect communications intelligence activity may explain why his Korean War award citation does not even mention his assigned duty position as part of a clandestine operational planning staff.


According to Willoughby’s JSO planning group chief, Major General Holmes K. Dager, USA (retired), “command and staff planning personnel involved several services and the CIA.” In addition, Republic of Korea (ROK) Army Colonel Ki In-Ju and ROK Navy Lieutenant Youn Joung were Clark’s right hand men for recruiting twenty-two local Korean agents to enter Inchon and provide key target information. These agents were highly successful in their missions, and they reported precise information on approximately ninety targets within the greater Inchon harbor area. Clark and his clandestine unit were designed to be a check against the aerial photographs of the Seoul-Inchon area being taken by U.S. Marine Aircraft Group 33 and the U.S. Fifth Air Force. Indeed, as Willoughby wrote in his account of Operation Trudy Jackson, Clark’s entire operation was “a check against other sources – a routine and time honored intelligence precaution.”

Clark had experience in amphibious operations during World War II. A former chief petty officer and veteran of the battle for Okinawa, Clark knew what was required to affect a successful amphibious landing on hostile shores. After World War II, Clark served aboard an assault cargo ship, commanded a Landing Ship, Tank (LST) running special operations along the China coast, and commanded the attack transport, USS Errol, which earned the Battle Efficiency Pennant under his capable leadership.

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12 Ibid., pp. 8, 372-373. The rank and names of Clark’s Korean deputies is misquoted by Dager and I have replaced the mistaken names with the correct ones recorded by Eugene F. Clark.
14 Eugene F. Clark. The Secrets of Inchon. p. 5
II background and special operations experience made him a very worthy candidate to lead Operation Trudy Jackson.

At the start of the Korean War, Clark had been working in the Geographic Branch of Willoughby’s G-2 staff, gathering information about tides, terrain, and landing facilities at numerous South Korean ports on the east and west coasts. Clark recalled that he had painstakingly researched every available Japanese terrain study and all available World War II aerial photography on Korea’s coastlines, yet he still came up with scant details.\(^\text{16}\) This was due to several factors. While numerous maps and post World War II studies of both Inchon and Pusan existed they were either not readily available (tucked away in military archives), lacking the degree of detail the Chromite planners sought, or the specific hydrological details in available American and Japanese estimates were inconsistent.\(^\text{17}\) Such information was crucial to amphibious operational planning and had to be as accurate and precise as possible because the port of Inchon experienced the second greatest tidal fluctuations on the globe, up to thirty feet. This factor had tremendous operational impact; it meant that amphibious landing ship-tanks (LSTs) could only deliver their cargoes at high tide (See Figure 24). Otherwise, the LSTs risked getting stuck in the mudflats of the harbor and left as a marked target for enemy artillery or coastal defense guns.\(^\text{18}\)

\(^{16}\) Ibid.


Rear Admiral Doyle’s Amphibious Group One (now designated Task Force 90.1) intelligence staff was led by a highly capable officer, Commander H.W. McElwain. McElwain was a 1939 Naval Academy graduate from Deer Lodge, Montana, who possessed wide-ranging operational experience from his various World War II assignments at Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, the Kurile Islands, the Philippines, and finally at Okinawa in command of the destroyer USS *Foote*. As a 1947 graduate of the Naval Intelligence School, McElwain joined Doyle’s staff in July 1950. He had already helped plan a successful amphibious landing at Pohang and now turned his attention to Operation Chromite.\textsuperscript{19} He and his staff began querying military personnel who had served in the American occupation of Korea. They managed to locate U.S. Army Warrant Officer W.R. Miller, who had worked for over a year on landing craft transport ships operating in Inchon as part of the Second Transportation Unit (Medium), and they incorporated his knowledge into their planning.\textsuperscript{20} Miller proved to be the most valuable single source of information about the characteristics of the Inchon harbor area.\textsuperscript{21}

McElwain also arranged photo-reconnaissance missions with the 8\textsuperscript{th} Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron of the U.S. Fifth Air Force and two Marine Corsairs of 33\textsuperscript{rd} Marine Air Group flying off of the USS *Valley Forge*. In addition, he flew in a special photographic interpretation team from the U.S. Air Force’s Photographic and


\textsuperscript{20} Cagle and Manson. *The Sea War in Korea*. p. 87. See also Commander Amphibious Group One (RADM James H. Doyle) to CNO, Action Report, 6 to 21 September 1950, dated 22 October 1950, p. 5. RG-349: Records of Joint Commands, Box 13, Folder: (655) COMAMPHIBGRU ONE Action Report 6-21 September 1950, NARA II.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
Reconnaissance Laboratory located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. The team was comprised of one officer and two civilians. From the aerial photographs provided, Colonel Richard W. Philbrick, USAF, Assistant Chief of the Laboratory, Mr. Amrom H. Katz, chief of the Physics Branch of the Photographic Laboratory, and Mr. Donald J. Graves determined the heights of Inchon’s sea walls at various tidal depths to within six inches of the actual heights later verified by ground measurements. FEAF’s 548th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron provided additional photographic support to Chromite planners, in close coordination with Army engineers assigned to FECOM General Headquarters in Tokyo, by producing a 48 piece photo-mosaic of the entire Inchon area.

Still, many questions remained. Would the mud banks in the harbor support tracked vehicles? Which piers, if any, would support vehicular traffic? What were the exact troop dispositions and weapon emplacements in the harbor area? Such questions needed fast, reliable answers, and the tidal data and all photographically derived details needed to be verified. Clark himself recalled that Major General Willoughby “had expressed grave dissatisfaction” with the results of ongoing research efforts. Thus, when word came into the FECOM G-2 section that South Korean Navy forces had captured the

22 Cagle and Manson. The Sea War in Korea. p. 87. See also “A Problem at Inchon” at the Wright Patterson Air Force Base Air School website at http://www.ascho.wpafb.af.mil/korea/Photographic.htm.
island of Yonghung-do, only 13.8 miles from Inchon, Willoughby sent Clark out to verify and collect the required information (see Figure 25).26

For fourteen perilous days Clark and his team of brave South Korean Army, Navy, and civilian operatives operated from their island base of Yonghung-do and seized control of two enemy islands, staved off a few limited NKPA efforts to recapture Yonghung-do, and performed thorough reconnaissance and surveillance of Inchon and its harbor channels. Clark provided crucial details on enemy troop concentrations, fortifications, weapons emplacements (including mines), ammunition depots, tidal patterns, and even the approximate height of Inchon’s sea walls that the Marine landing forces would later scale with ladders (See Figure 26).27

In addition, with highly talented South Korean deputies, Clark managed to put together a string of South Korean guerrilla and refugee intelligence networks that reached inland all the way to Seoul. Clark’s operatives reported on the lack of significant NKPA troop concentrations in response to UN pre-invasion bombardments. Moreover, Clark’s guerrilla allies provided bomb damage assessments of UN bombardments upon weapon and troop concentrations in Inchon, which Clark relayed to FECOM G-2 in Tokyo as quickly as possible.28 Finally, at 0050 on the morning of September 15, 1950, an exhausted Clark turned on the lighthouse on the island of Palmi-do to guide the


approaching invasion fleet safely through Flying Fish Channel into Inchon harbor. Clark earned the Silver Star for his heroic and highly successful intelligence mission.

Some of the benefits of MacArthur and Willoughby’s joint intelligence coordination and centralization efforts were negated by problems of conflicting administrative details and procedures. In particular, photo-reconnaissance problems still plagued the Far East Command. Fifth Air Force’s 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (TRS) had to overcome the often lengthy lag time between the actual photographing of targeted areas and the delivery of the finished photographs to the trained interpreters of the requesting service. The 8th TRS became increasingly responsive to Navy planners urgent requests for Inchon’s sea wall height data at high and low tides, and it responded to such requests with four well-timed photo missions between 31 August and 1 September 1950. The information was delivered to U.S. Navy planners in Tokyo by 3 September. However, X Corps planners requesting photographs had to wait an average of five days before receiving results. Later, during the actual Inchon landing, Marine Aircraft Group 33 provided X Corps with photographs within six to twenty-four hours. Direct coordination within the channels of a single service, in this case between Marine ground forces and

29 Ibid., p. 319.
30 Ibid., p. 326.
31 http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/history/korea/no71-112htm, p. 2. “Photo Reconnaissance Problems.” United States Air Force Operations in the Korean Conflict 25 June - 1 November 1950 was prepared 1 July 1952 as USAF Historical Study No. 71. The study was researched by Air Force Historians Dr. Albert Simpson and Dr. Robert Futrell. Dr. Futrell wrote the 115+ page report along with several follow-up studies leading to the comprehensive *The United States Air Force in Korea.* originally published in 1981 and reprinted in 1983.
Marine aviators, still offered the most expedient means of requesting and receiving photographic intelligence.32

Another problem, one that could have had disastrous consequences for MacArthur’s operation, was a lack of operational security regarding the amphibious assault force build-up in Japan. As the time for execution neared it became increasingly difficult to hide the gathering armada of naval destroyers, cruisers, and amphibious assault vessels anchoring at the port city of Sasebo. The conditions of voluntary press censorship that MacArthur condoned in his theater and ambitious members of the American media exacerbated the problem. One particular correspondent, Miss Marguerite Higgins of the New York Herald Tribune, was desperately trying to get a spot on board the Inchon invasion fleet to cover the landing (See Figure 27). Her phone call to New York Herald Tribune President, Mr. Ogden Reid, prompted a call from Reid to Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson in reference to taking Miss Higgins along on “very important navy mission.” This prompted the JCS to notify MacArthur on 12 September of their mounting concerns about possible press leaks and discussions of the operation over radio telephone.33

In addition, Communist China’s intelligence agents soon provided Mao Zedong detailed information of the invasion fleet’s composition and amphibious operational training activities in Japan. Careful analysis of this information led Lei Yingfu, Communist Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai’s military secretary, and his operations staff to conclude that Inchon was among the more profitable military targets for a UN amphibious

32 Ibid.
invasion. He informed Zhou of his findings on August 23, 1950. Zhou immediately informed Mao Zedong, who warned North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung to prepare for such a contingency. However, Kim Il-Sung ignored these warnings. In this regard, luck was indeed on MacArthur’s side.

### 3.3 Assuming Risk and Reducing Uncertainty

No amount of luck or operational planning could negate the fact that the success of Operation Chromite rested on two key assumptions. First, MacArthur assumed there would be negligible change in the disposition of NKPA forces. With the bulk of the NKPA committed to battle along the Pusan Perimeter, MacArthur believed that the sheer bulk, momentum, and aggressive nature of the NKPA predisposed it to inflexibility in its movement and logistics, a condition that U.N. airpower exacerbated.

Second, MacArthur believed that there would be no Soviet or Red Chinese reinforcement of the NKPA. Overt intervention by organized Russian ground units appeared improbable since the start of the conflict and although ample Soviet military advisors and naval assets, including minelayers and submarines, were in the region, Soviet intervention of any kind carried the risk of triggering a general war with the United States.

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33 Message 91151, JCS to CINCFE, 12 September 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folders: Korean War Files 1-2, MMA.
and its allies. Such a war might involve the use of atomic weapons. The Soviet government most likely appreciated that grave risk. Additionally, the U.S. Seventh Fleet’s position between Formosa and the Chinese mainland and the Chinese Communist Politburo’s decision to begin shifting ground forces north toward the Manchurian-North Korean border left Communist China in no tenable position to immediately intervene.37

However, as of 1 September 1950, the CIA had a much more pessimistic view in their weekly Situation Summary. The CIA compiled this report using all available forms of intelligence and published interim summaries between the scheduled summaries if necessary. The heavily sanitized 1 September 1950 report incorporated COMINT reporting that tracked the movement of considerable numbers of Chinese Communist ground forces from the south-central Chinese coastal area opposite Taiwan toward the Manchurian-North Korean border. Naval COMINT appears to have tracked the latest movements of Soviet naval forces maneuvering in the Kamchatka area. In addition, one situation summary report mentioned the first confirmed incident of Soviet jamming of U.S. transport aircraft communications as these aircraft transited the North Pacific from Alaska to Japan. In addition, the summary mentioned “unconfirmed reports” of Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov meeting with Mao Zedong in Beijing in early August to discuss future action in Korea, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. The report also considered Chinese Communist propaganda reports that portrayed the U.S. as a hostile aggressor in Korea, protested alleged U.S. raids into Manchuria, and demanded that the UN force the

37 Ibid., p. 182.
withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea. These reports led CIA analysts to conclude the following:

Thus, the stage has been set for some form of overt Chinese Communist intervention or participation in the Korean War. Overt participation by regular forces would preclude admission of Communist China to the UN, while covert participation of Manchurian “volunteers” might ensure continued localization of the conflict.

Intervention could be launched to restore peace by preventing further U.S. “aggression” and could be linked with the USSR-sponsored peace campaign. It is impossible to determine at this time whether a decision has been made. In any case, some form of armed assistance to the North Koreans appears imminent.38

In hindsight, the CIA’s analysis of Chinese intentions was premature. Additionally, the fact that Chinese Communist Forces did not interfere with the Inchon landing contributed to the CIA’s future downplaying of October 1950 Chinese Communist propaganda reports and diplomatic messages indicating an intent to intervene.

Reports from the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), which interpreted intelligence from Chinese – Nationalist COMINT and HUMINT sources in addition to naval intelligence sources, augmented CIA reporting. In early July, ONI assessed these Chinese Communist troop movements from the south eastern coastal areas to locations near the North Korean-Manchurian border to be either a ploy to divert attention from a planned Chinese Communist invasion of Formosa or a plan for possible reinforcement of the NKPA.39 By 7 September ONI analyzed several reports that indicated large Chinese

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38 Central Intelligence Agency. Situation Summary, 1 September 1950 (Summary of Current Indications Based on All Available Sources). pp. 1-2. Papers of Harry S. Truman: President’s Secretary’s File (PSF), Box 211, Folder: Situation Summaries [1 of 2], Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.

Communist troop movements from Central China northward and reports of Chinese aircraft relocating from South China to Manchuria while Soviet aircraft destined for China were reportedly diverted to North Korea. Here one encounters the conflicting indicators or “noise” as Roberta Wohlstetter defines it.\textsuperscript{40} However, ONI assessed that there was insufficient evidence to substantiate reports that Chinese Communist Forces would intervene in Korea with either air or ground forces.\textsuperscript{41}

ONI based their assessment on their capacity to find as many reasons against Chinese intervention as they did for it. ONI viewed the following factors as reasons to support the conclusion that China would intervene:

(1) the close geographical affinity of the two regimes; (2) U.S. support of South Korea, which would appear to negate any legalistic obstacles to Chinese support of North Korea; (3) the prestige to be gained by providing the decisive forces in the Oriental defeat of Western powers; and (4) the instigation of the USSR.\textsuperscript{42}

However, ONI concluded that the following factors argued more effectively against Chinese intervention:

(1) the strong Chinese Communist desire to join the UN; (2) the preoccupation of the Chinese Communists with internal problems and their known desire to go ahead with economic reconstruction; (3) preparations for the invasion of Formosa, an objective which would seem more important to the Chinese Communists than anything they might gain by supporting North Korea; and (4) the probability that the small Chinese

\textsuperscript{40} Roberta Wohlstetter. \textit{Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision}, pp. 1-3, 318.


\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
Communist Air Force can ill afford to spare planes for assignment in Korea. In addition, ONI did not rule out the participation of an additional 50,000-70,000 Korean veterans of the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) over and above the by 25,000-30,000 Korean-born CCF veterans then believed to be fighting already as part of the NKPA. However, ONI lent more credibility to the argument that air reinforcements were forthcoming from the Soviet Union, but most likely funneled through Manchuria to make it appear that China was providing the air support.

Overall, COMINT and HUMINT reports of Chinese troops massing inside Manchuria left a great deal of uncertainty as to Chinese and Soviet intentions for intervention. However, one thing was certain, if Communist China were to intervene in time to thwart Operation Chromite its forces would have had to cover considerable ground, sea, or air distance along the most direct avenues of approach, which were thoroughly covered by UN PHOTINT, HUMINT, and COMINT assets. If any such enemy action were to take place, UN forces would have at least some degree of early warning given the Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan set in place by Major General Willoughby since 10 August 1950.

The only “static” indicator, as Roberta Wohlstetter defines the term, beyond the NKPA’s continued pressure on the Pusan Perimeter was the movement of increasingly large numbers of CCF ground and air forces and some Soviet air forces to the Manchurian border with North Korea. Those activities, in and of themselves, did not constitute “action” intelligence requiring any sort of command decision to either proceed with or

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43 Ibid.
abort Chromite unless those forces were to make rapid movements toward the Inchon area.\footnote{Ibid., p. 5.}

In the remaining days before the amphibious landing, Willoughby’s intelligence operations reduced the uncertainty surrounding MacArthur’s key assumptions to a significant degree. The Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan, which Willoughby continuously adjusted to meet the requirements for Operation Chromite, kept Eighth Army and X Corps abreast of any change in Communist Chinese, Soviet, and NKPA troop dispositions in the land, sea, and air approaches to the Inchon-Seoul objective area. Special intelligence missions (COMINT and HUMINT) belonging to AFSA and CIA, respectively, continued to monitor the North-Korean-Manchurian-USSR border region.\footnote{Annex C – Intelligence Annex, UNC Operations Order No. 1, GHQ, UNC, dated 31 August 1950, pp.1-2. RG-218: Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Box 43: Geographic File 1948-1950 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) Sec. 40 BP Part 1A, Folder: CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), NARA II.}

U.S. Navy Lieutenant Eugene Clark’s HUMINT networks provided up to date information on enemy strength and dispositions in the Inchon vicinity. Meanwhile, FEAF flew air reconnaissance missions over the main road and railroad routes between the Yalu River, Tumen River, and the 38th parallel to ensure no Soviet or Chinese ground or air forces moved into Korea. FEAF also flew reconnaissance missions near key port areas (like Vladivostok) and any sea lanes of approach not already covered by Naval Forces Far East to provide early warning of any Soviet naval or air movements. Finally, U.S. Seventh Fleet planes, ships, and submarines routinely patrolled the Formosa, Tsushima, and Korea
Straits between China, Korea, and Japan (See Figures 28-34). Given the intelligence assets at Willoughby’s disposal, collection coverage could not have been more thorough. This plan reduced the ambient “noise” and kept an eye on “static” indicators right up until and throughout the execution of Operation Chromite.

Unable to avoid detection by American collection assets and unwilling to risk a general war with the United States via overt intervention, the Soviet Union helped North Korea in every other way possible. One of the most substantial ways it contributed was to supply North Korea with anti-ship mines and teach the North Koreans how to successfully employ them to guard against UN amphibious landings. Unknown to UN intelligence, Russian, magnetic and contact mines had been transported from the Soviet port of Vladivostok as early as 10 July bound for the eastern and western ports of Wonsan and Chinnampo, North Korea respectively (See Figure 35). Within a week, Soviet naval personnel were present in both of these Korean posts and conducted sea-mining schools for their North Korean comrades. By 29 August, a shipment of Russian magnetic mines left Chinnampo bound for Inchon. While search planes had reported enemy barges and patrol craft transiting between Soviet and Korean ports in mid August, no indications of mine-laying activity were reported.

On 10 September, in the northern approaches to Inchon, Lieutenant Commander Lee, one of Eugene Clark’s ROK Navy compatriots in Operation Trudy Jackson,

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commanding the ROK Navy’s PC-703 sub-chaser vessel, engaged and destroyed a North Korean *sampan* (junk vessel). Judging by the powerful explosion and resultant residue, this vessel had most likely been laden with Soviet-made anti-ship mines. Upon receiving Lee’s daily report on the status of potential mining activity in Inchon harbor on 7 September, Lieutenant Clark, was perturbed that Lee never ascertained “whether the load of mines was destined for an existing minefield or a new one.” Clark quickly reported Lee’s finding to Tokyo. Thus, a week prior to the actual amphibious landing, the UN and American high commands was aware that mines in Inchon harbor were a distinct possibility. A week earlier, the American destroyer, USS *McKean*, operating just south of Chinnampo (a port city well to the north of Inchon), had reported seeing seven mines. On 12 September, COMNAVFE reported North Korean troops emplacing fixed or floating mines 15-20 miles southeast of Ongjin. In addition, COMNAVFE carrier aircraft reported sighting floating mines that resembled Russian Mark-26 mines ten miles west of Cho island and 10 miles off the coast of the Ongjin peninsula. COMNAVFE assessed that these activities indicated a probable enemy mine warfare campaign in the Yellow Sea.

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Thus, the indicators of mining activity along the western coast were becoming increasingly prevalent.54

On 13 September, two days before the UN landing at Inchon, seventeen Russian contact mines had been detected by UN destroyers in the Salee River just south of Palmido island ten miles southwest of Inchon (See Figure 36).55 According to Lieutenant Clark, whose South Korean assistants made daily checks of the harbor approaches, these mines had to have been emplaced only within the preceding twenty-four hours. Moreover, they were located “well out of the main ship channel and awash at low tide, so it was relatively easy for the destroyers to knock them off.” Clark knew that his people were limited in their ability to observe minelaying activity at night. However, Clark believed that if the North Koreans did lay mines at night they would almost have to be in shallow waters to avoid the tremendous currents in the main harbor channels. In hindsight, his appraisal appears to be correct. Still, the presence of any mines in the harbor was unsettling to Clark and he redoubled mine patrolling efforts for the next 48 hours until the landing, keeping one ROK junk constantly on the move in all of the harbor channels.56 No additional mines were discovered. The main channels approaching Inchon remained clear for the coming landing.

Clearly, Clark’s group, per Willoughby’s theater strategic reconnaissance plan, anticipated the threat of mines from the very beginning and tasked available assets to look for indicators of mine-laying activity. Willoughby’s plan of August 10th had also tasked COMNAVFE, along with CG FEAF, to conduct “surveillance of shipping to include

54 Robert D. Heinl Jr., *Victory at High Tide*, p. 80.
55 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
course, time of sighting, vessel description, and nationality” and to provide information on “ground defense installations and harbor obstacles, to include radar, anti-aircraft artillery, coast artillery, anti-submarine nets, and underwater obstacles.” UN intelligence collection assets did not detect the degree of Soviet assistance that had been rendered to North Korea and the ongoing emplacement of mines to protect major North Korean-held ports on both Korean coastlines. Only after UN forces attempted another amphibious landing of the X Corps at Wonsan in late October 1950 would the full extent of the North Koreans mining activities be brought to light. The U.S. Navy unfortunately learned the hard lesson of the value of keeping plenty of minesweeper craft readily available to facilitate amphibious landing operations.

While the presence of mines at Inchon, temporarily raised anxieties, it was quickly determined that the main channel approaches were free of them. Clark’s South Korean Navy flotilla had been making daily sweeps of the harbor channels for the past two weeks since Clark’s arrival. While these patrol craft could not be everywhere at once, it is reasonable to assume that if a major mining effort had gotten underway prior to 15 September to seed the main approaches to Inchon harbor then Clark’s patrols would have discovered an operation of that scope and magnitude and quickly reported to Tokyo.

Meanwhile, Willoughby’s theater strategic reconnaissance plan provided early warning capability against the most dangerous threats of Soviet or Chinese air, naval, or ground intervention. The plan called for monitoring all key ground, and air avenues of

approach from the Manchurian border and throughout the depth of the Korean peninsula as well as the key sea lanes between Japan and the Soviet Union, Japan and Korea and around the main west coast ports of Korea.\textsuperscript{58} While these dangerous Soviet and Chinese threats to Operation Chromite never materialized, Willoughby’s intelligence planning and dissemination in preparation for Operation Chromite was admirably thorough.

In addition to masterful reconnaissance planning, Willoughby provided high level intelligence reports from restricted joint special operations and communications intelligence channels directly to the invasion force command headquarters. On September 13, two days prior to the landing, Willoughby relayed the final reports from Lieutenant Clark’s special operations team detailing the specific enemy troop strengths for the defense of Inchon. As of the date of the report, 9 September, Clark’s informants estimated Inchon’s enemy strength to be about 1,000 NKPA troops.\textsuperscript{59} Knowing Clark’s information was dated, Willoughby also sent a direct message on September 13 to Major General Almond, already at sea aboard the USS Mt. McKinley, informing him that a North Korean radio transmission, intercepted just a few hours earlier, verified the NKPA’s awareness of the imminent UN landing. The message read,

Willoughby to Almond. The following enemy radio intercept, transmitted in the clear… ‘Preliminary Order Number 127. As of 1125 hours 13 September 1950 Inchon. 10 enemy vessels are approaching Inchon port from Panwl-Do. Many aircraft are bombing Wolmi-Do. There is every indication the enemy will perform a landing. All units under my command are directed to be ready for combat. All units will be stationed in their

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid. pp. 1-13.
\textsuperscript{59} FRU/FEC Report, Operational Immediate via COM 7th Fleet, DTG 130919Z Sep. 1950 to CINCFE and CG X Corps, Papers of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (retired), Box: Korean War Historical Data / Casualties/ Chronology of Orders 1947-1951, Folder: CG X Corps Radio Log, USAMHI.
given positions so they may throw back enemy forces when they attempt their landing operation. From Commanding General.⁶⁰

Such communications clearly indicated Willoughby’s personal efforts to maximize X Corps’ situational awareness and to ensure that Major General Almond had all available intelligence going into the execution phase of Operation Chromite.

### 3.4 The Successful Landing Team

As the commander of X Corps and FECOM/UNC Chief of Staff, Major General Almond (See Figure 37) brought the full leverage of the FECOM/UNC staff organization to bear in creating and adequately preparing his new unit for the Inchon landing. Almond carefully selected his own Corps staff personnel and chose Lieutenant Colonel William W. Quinn, out of the FECOM G-3 section to be his Corps G-2 (See Figure 38). While Major General Willoughby had several of his own full-colonel protégés to offer to Almond, Almond took Quinn because of his experience and reputation as an intelligence planner for amphibious operations.⁶¹ In World War II, Quinn had been the G-2 for Seventh Army and was responsible for the intelligence planning for Operation Anvil (August 15, 1944), the highly successful landing in southern France that followed the execution of Operation Overlord and facilitated the sustained logistical efforts for the Allied push into Nazi Germany. During Operation Anvil, U.S. casualties numbered only 146 men while the

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⁶⁰ CINCFE to CG X CORPS, EUSAK Cite CX63003, Willoughby to Almond, DTG 131731Z Sep 1950. Papers of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (retired), Box: Korean War Historical Data, Folder: CG X Corps Radio Log, USAMHI.

Seventh Army routed the German 19th Army. The operation was “a reflection of accurate and detailed intelligence on enemy positions,” and thus, Quinn’s ability as a G-2.62

Lieutenant Colonel Quinn apparently had a strained relationship with Major General Willoughby. Quinn claimed that this was due to Willoughby’s apparent disgust over Major General Almond’s selection of Quinn as the X Corps G-2 instead of one of Willoughby’s protégés. Another possible reason was that Quinn had a post-World War II OSS background, serving as the Director of the remnant Special Services Unit that was placed under the War Department when Truman dissolved the OSS on 1 October 1945.63 Quinn continued on as its Chief of Operations when it became the Central Intelligence Group (the CIA’s immediate predecessor). Thus, Willoughby may not have been predisposed to trust Quinn. Additionally, Quinn sensed that Willoughby tried to have him fired for producing substandard intelligence products from a combat field headquarters. That is, Willoughby was supposedly quick to point out to MacArthur and Almond how sloppy and primitive Quinn’s field-generated products were compared to FECOM’s professional, press-printed intelligence products.64

While Quinn claimed that Willoughby critiqued his products closely, available evidence does not reveal any malicious intent by Willoughby. In fact, some of Willoughby’s staff correspondence with Major General Almond clearly shows that Willoughby bent over backward to help Quinn’s staff section obtain some automated

reproduction capabilities to make the X Corps intelligence products better. Apparently, Quinn took Willoughby’s professional critiques of his products very personally.

Additionally, Quinn believed that General Almond was often at odds with General Willoughby and that this made his own relationship with Willoughby more tenuous. However, Quinn’s assertion is not borne out in either the professional or personal correspondence between Willoughby and Almond. On the contrary, most all available correspondence between Willoughby and Almond reveals a very amicable professional and personal relationship that was maintained both during and after the Korean War. The two generals exchanged timely intelligence, mutual personal sentiments of good will, and a mutual respect for one another as professionals and people. In fact, Almond recalled that he had selected Quinn to be his G-2 with Willoughby’s concurrence.

Notwithstanding personality issues, X Corps executed a brilliant amphibious landing operation on September 15, 1950, thanks in no small part to the quality of

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65 Major General Almond to Major General Willoughby, 20 December 1950. In this letter Almond thanks Willoughby for the reproduction equipment he sent over to X Corps headquarters that enabled them to “maintain high standards of intelligence and operational documentation.” In addition, Almond states that Quinn reported the “excellent cooperation” he received from Willoughby’s deputies Colonel White, Lieutenant Colonel Polk, and others for the last three months (since September 1950). Papers of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (retired), Box – Correspondence of CG X Corps, Sep-Dec 1950, USAMHI.
66 While Quinn and Willoughby disagree vehemently on the overall assessment of CCF presence, Almond still values Willoughby’s personal evaluation of all intelligence he received at X Corps. Personal letter Almond to Willoughby, 25 November 1950, reference Chinese prisoner interrogation evaluations. Papers of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, Box- Korean War Correspondence of CG X Corps, Sep-Dec 1950, USAMHI. For evidence of Willoughby’s concurrence in the choice of Quinn as X Corps G-2 See also Transcript of Captain Thomas Fergusson Interview with Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (retired), March 27, 1975, Anniston, Alabama, p. 28, Papers of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (retired), Box: Oral History, Folder: Transcript of Captain Thomas Fergusson Interview with Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (retired), March 27, 1975, Anniston, Alabama, USAMHI.
intelligence efforts and close cooperation at all UN command echelons. Quinn’s X Corps Intelligence Plan was well nested within Willoughby’s Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan. Both Willoughby and Quinn kept a close eye on the possibility of Chinese intervention and NKPA reinforcements with round the clock reconnaissance missions along the key avenues of approach into the Inchon-Kimpo-Seoul area.67 One need look no further than the FECOM and X Corps intelligence annexes of the theater and corps level operations plans (OPLANS) to see the close linkage of the key Essential Elements of Information (EEI) between theater and corps levels. Willoughby’s EEI asked

Will the enemy reinforce the combat zone with additional divisions not now identified in the battle area? If so, are those divisions newly mobilized, or are they CCF or Soviet Units? What routes will they take to the combat zone, and when will they arrive? 68

That EEI clearly translated to the following corps level EEI for Quinn, which asked

Will the enemy reinforce the elements now in the objective area with the elements of the 107th Regiment northwest of Seoul, with replacements from Uijongbu, with elements of the 105th Regiment form Hongsong or with elements of security regiments from Chungju and Wonju? If so, when will these reinforcements arrive, and what route will they take? And will the Chinese Communists openly intervene, or will they provide CCF-trained North Korean replacements? 69

X Corps was comprised of the 1st Marine Division, commanded by Major General O.P. Smith, and the U.S. Army’s 7th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General David G. Barr. Upon landing, these units quickly moved ashore against relatively light

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67 William Quinn. X Corps Intelligence Plan, Annex A to Oplan #2 16 September 1950, pp. 1-3. Papers of Lieutenant General William W. Quinn, USA (retired), Box 3: Korea Historical Reports Folder: Intelligence Reports: Korea: September –December 1950, USAMHI.
North Korean resistance and captured the entire Inchon-Kimpo-Seoul area in less than two weeks of combat (See Figure 39). Intelligence gained from joint special operations, photo-reconnaissance, and communications intelligence prior to the amphibious landing was of such high quality and accuracy that the UN estimate of enemy strength at Inchon reportedly “varied by less than 100 of the actual strength encountered.” Therefore, MacArthur’s bold plan brought overwhelming combat power against a key point of NKPA vulnerability that was previously identified and confirmed by military intelligence.

3.5 COMINT Lends a Helping Hand Again

On 15 September 1950, shortly after Lieutenant Colonel Bob Taplett’s 3rd Battalion Landing Team of the Fifth Marine Regiment seized Wolmi-do Island, the First Marine Division, with Major General O.P. Smith commanding, landed its units successfully at Red and Blue Beaches, and seized the port of Inchon. COMINT once again provided a timely early warning to UN ground forces. John Milmore recalled how his ASAPAC unit decrypted a message revealing that the NKPA’s 27th Coastal Defense Brigade, headquartered at Munsan, had directed units of the 17th and 18th NKPA Divisions, which were deployed just to the west of the Han River, “to counterattack the Inchon beachhead.” Further intercepts confirmed that two columns of six Russian T-34 tanks from these units, accompanied by supporting infantry, were ordered to lay in ambush for the advancing 1st Marine Division at two specific locations. On 16 September, U.S. Marine “Corsair” aircraft launched from the USS Sicily located the first tank column 3 miles east of Inchon and attacked it. While one American plane was shot down the follow

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69 X Corps, Annex A, Intelligence Plan to Operation Plan #2, 16 September 1950, p. 1, RG-349: Records of Joint Commands, Box 15, Folder- Inchon VII, NARA II.
up attacks by infantry and armor units completed the destruction of the NKPA column. On September 17, the 5th Marine Regiment set up its own ambush to annihilate the second NKPA tank column, killing over 200 North Korean troops. Thus, COMINT had a key role in crushing the only remaining threat to the successful inland advance of the X Corps.

The 1st Marine Division paid the Army back for its COMINT contribution to its success when it overran the 18th NKPA Division Headquarters and captured and forwarded an NKPA codebook that verified the accuracy of John Milmore and his fellow cryptanalysts’ work at ASAPAC Headquarters in Tokyo. Even Eighth Army’s 35th Regimental Combat Team of 25th Infantry Division forwarded captured documents, which revealed special three-letter, alpha-numeric codes for North Korean radio communication commands and order of battle data.

Within 24 hours of the successful X Corps landing, Lieutenant General Walton Walker’s Eighth Army commenced four days of hard combat to breakout from the Pusan Perimeter (See Figure 40). Just as MacArthur forecasted, the NKPA had become disoriented by the X Corps threat to their rear area and supply lines, and NKPA resistance quickly crumbled against Eighth Army’s powerful, deliberate advance. As Walker’s forces advanced toward the Han River, the NKPA ceased to function as a cohesive combat entity, but Eighth Army bypassed numerous pockets of NKPA soldiers, who had taken refuge in nearby hills and mountains. These by-passed units fought on as guerrillas and

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70 Ibid., See also appended Biosketch of William W. Quinn p. 2.
72 Ibid., pp. 58-59.
73 Annexes 1 and 2 to Periodic Intelligence Report #25. HQ, 25th Infantry Division APO 25. p.1 and pp.1-3, respectively. RG-127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, Box
later plagued Eighth Army and X Corps rear areas. Still, in the larger operational and strategic scheme, MacArthur’s plan succeeded beyond all expectations (See Figure 41).

The resounding success of Operation Chromite was due in no small part to outstanding military intelligence cooperation from all of the armed services and agencies engaged in the Korean War. The United States Air Force and Marine aviation units provided timely photographic reconnaissance of the Inchon harbor area. U.S. Army COMINT provided timely indications and warning of NKPA responses to the landing. Lieutenant Eugene Clark and his band of South Korean partisans represented contributions of the U.S. Navy, ROK Navy, and U.S. Army respectively in conjunction with the Central Intelligence Agency. These men delivered timely ground level HUMINT that revealed enemy troop strength, dispositions, and weapons emplacements, and literally lit the way for the amphibious assault force to take its objectives. All of these operations were part and parcel to Major General Willoughby’s superb theater strategic reconnaissance plan. Members of the JCS and policymakers in Washington also deserved a pat on the back for doing their job in closely reviewing the MacArthur’s plans and challenging him on the risks involved. In doing so, they did justice to their naturally antagonistic role vis a vis the theater commander and kept MacArthur and his planners focused on minimizing the risks inherent in Operation Chromite.

Everyone in the chain of command from President Truman on down, in addition to numerous soldier and civilian admirers in the United States, heaped countless accolades on General MacArthur for his operational and strategic brilliance. The UN Commander’s

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#6 – OPLANs, Orders, Reports, and Intell Files, 1950, CMC Journal to G-2 Journal, Folder: 1st Provisional Marine Brigade G-2 Journal 3-10 August 1950 [Folder 1 of 2], NARA II.

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reputation soared. The State Department, the JCS, and the Department of Defense began to think of post-war troop redeployments and the transition of control from the UN to a unified Republic of Korea. Indeed, the tide of the war had turned in favor of the United Nations Forces in Korea. The final defeat of Kim Il-Sung and the remnants of the NKPA were looked upon by the American high command as a mere formality. Such hubris ultimately proved to be a large factor in an equally dramatic reversal of fortune in favor of the Communist enemy. Still, for that shining moment in late September 1950, UN forces had turned the tables on the NKPA and complete victory seemed well within MacArthur’s grasp.

### 3.6 Conclusion

For all of its inherent risks, Operation Chromite succeeded in large part due to MacArthur’s audacity and the amphibious expertise that Admiral James H. Doyle and his U.S. Navy planners amassed from their World War II operations. MacArthur’s wholehearted belief that his plan would surprise the NKPA and destroy its logistics network and its ability to wage war silenced his critics. More precisely however, the key to the victory resided in the talents of his well qualified operations and intelligence staff officers, who performed to the highest standards in virtually every aspect of the operation. With an increasingly firm grasp of what information was required, MacArthur drove the intelligence effort from the very beginning of the mission analysis and planning processes and his staff followed through on that emphasis. In the final weeks prior to the landing, the legitimate concerns of the JCS and MacArthur’s joint planning staff helped him to realize what information he still lacked and he tasked General Willoughby to procure it.
MacArthur’s command emphasis enabled Willoughby and his G-2 staff elements to focus their intelligence collection on key enemy capabilities and geographic locations, which minimized the risk to the operation’s success.

Major General Willoughby reflected his commander’s aggressive approach to the operation in crafting a tactically sound, operationally integrated, theater strategic reconnaissance plan. Moreover, his ardent desire for the most detailed information on the Inchon harbor area led him to utilize every available collection capability. Overcoming the limitations of aerial photography processing, a dearth of photo interpreters, and the lack of satisfactory terrain, hydrology, and enemy order of battle data on Inchon, Willoughby turned to joint special operations in addition to high level communications intelligence to gain the information U.S. Navy, Marine, and Army planners needed to succeed. Specifically, Willoughby’s timely dispatch of Lieutenant Eugene F. Clark to the islands off of Inchon paid huge dividends in first hand information on enemy troop concentrations, weapons emplacements, and tidal patterns.

While Soviet naval or air intervention and the proliferation of mines along the Korean coast remained proximate threats to Operation Chromite’s success, MacArthur felt the Soviets and Chinese Communists would not risk global war by intervening. Willoughby’s thorough strategic reconnaissance planning helped guard against such contingencies. Execution of that plan, while far from flawless, helped ensure early warning of any Soviet or Red Chinese ground, air, or naval force deployments. Meanwhile, UN reconnaissance assets remained vigilant for enemy submarines, ships, mines, and other enemy defensive measures.
As a result of such top-notch intelligence and operational planning, a well informed UN amphibious invasion force landed at Inchon on September 15, 1950 and moved inland to Seoul in a well-fought victory over relatively light NKPA resistance. The Inchon landing caused enough confusion and panic in the NKPA forces facing the Eighth Army, that General Walker executed a decisive breakout and smashed the retreating NKPA to pieces as he moved north toward Seoul.

In short, Operation Chromite constituted an operational and intelligence triumph of the highest order. Careful and meticulous operational and intelligence planning and execution produced what the JCS, the Truman administration, and some historians have lauded as one of the most brilliant military maneuvers in all of military history. In the case of Inchon, MacArthur had actually calculated and assumed his risks wisely by empowering his staff to reduce the uncertainties associated with the pertinent operational risks. Willoughby and his staff deserve great credit for their outstanding performance of that mission and their tremendous contribution to this strategic breakthrough. The JCS and policymakers in Washington deserve credit in challenging MacArthur and making him and his staff think through all of the risks involved in the Inchon landing and in doing so MacArthur’s staff figured out how best to mitigate those risks. Indeed, military commanders and political policymakers succeeded in performing their naturally antagonistic roles, and the results exceeded expectations. The only drawback to this breakthrough was the complacency and hubris it engendered throughout the American defense establishment. That complacency and hubris would have near tragic consequences in the months ahead.
Figure 22: Map of Operation Chromite Scheme of Maneuver

This map depicts the general scheme of maneuver for Operation Chromite. It shows the diversionary tactics planned as a prelude to the actual amphibious assault behind the bulk of the NKPA forces, which were massed along the Pusan Perimeter. MacArthur’s “left-hook” enabled X Corps to move inland with 70,000 troops to capture the South Korean Capital of Seoul and strangle the NKPA supply lines. Meanwhile, 8th Army took advantage of the new chaos in the NKPA’s rear to launch its own counterattack and breakout from the Pusan perimeter. The operation was well planned and well executed thanks in no small part to good intelligence planning and operational execution. (The map was taken from Matthew B. Ridgway, The Korean War, p. 130. The estimated strength of X Corps was taken from Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, p. 503.)
Figure 23: Lieutenant Eugene F. Clark, USN and his Korean partisans

Lieutenant Eugene F. Clark, USN (far right) stands with some of his South Korean partisans on Yonghung-do. Their exploits from 1-14 September 1950 provided crucial intelligence on enemy troop strength, disposition, weapons emplacements, and the tidal conditions of Inchon harbor. Clark’s operation helped U.S. Navy, Marine, and Army planners obtain and verify the much needed information to successfully plan and execute Operation Chromite. (Photo and first line of caption taken from unnumbered photo section of John Toland, *In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950-1953*. (New York: William and Morrow, 1991). The original photograph was provided to Toland courtesy of the late Eugene Clark.)
LST’s offload at Inchon harbor on the high tide while they remain stranded on the mudflats at low tide. Inchon harbor experienced one of the largest tidal fluctuations in the world, with as much as a 30 foot depth differential between high and low tides. Intelligence gained regarding these fluctuations helped Navy planners decide the optimal date and time to land UN forces and supplies ashore at Inchon. (Photographs taken from the FReeper Foxhole Profiles General Douglas MacArthur (June 13, 2003) at <http://209.157.64.200/focus/f-vetscor/928949/posts?q=1&page=1#1> Original photos are from the National Archives).
Lieutenant Eugene Clark’s mission took him first to Yonghung-do recently captured by South Korean guerrillas from the NKPA. Using this island as a base of operations, Clark spent two harrowing weeks (1-14 September) conducting thorough on site reconnaissance of the surrounding islands, harbor channels, and the port of Inchon itself. On the night of September 14-15, 1950, he lit up the lighthouse on Palmi-do to guide the UN amphibious landing force safely through Flying Fish Channel. (Map taken from Eugene Clark, The Secrets of Inchon. (New York: Berkley Books, 2002, p. vii. Map content © 2006 by MapQuest, Inc. Used with permission).

Figure 25: Map of Inchon Harbor (1950)
Landing at Inchon on September 15, 1950, Marine First Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez led his platoon up the ladders and over the top of the sea wall onto Red Beach. His heroism that day cost him his life and earned him a posthumous Congressional Medal of Honor. Eugene Clark and his men had verified the height of the Inchon sea walls that staff planners had determined from aerial photographic intelligence so that ladders of the proper length were made for use during the landing. (Photo taken from the National Archives online digital website at <http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/servlet/arc.ControllerServlet?&pg=1&tn=0&nw=y&rn=0&nh=13&st=b&rp=digital>. ARC Identifier 532404, RG-111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer. The first two lines of caption information are taken from the identical photo in the unnumbered photo section of Robert D. Heinl Jr., Victory at High Tide).
In the final days before the Inchon landing, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur was faced with the possibility of press leaks exposing his operational plans. One potential source of trouble was Miss Marguerite Higgins, a correspondent from the *New York Herald Tribune*, pictured here speaking with MacArthur. While MacArthur tried to accommodate the press as much as he could, Miss Higgins actually had her boss telephone Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson in an effort to get her a spot aboard the amphibious landing fleet. (Photograph taken from Bob West’s Korean War Photo Collection at <http://www.bob-west.com/MISC-PHOTO58.html>). Details on the Higgins correspondence is taken from JCS Message 91151, 12 September 1950, RG-6, Box 9, Korea Files 1-2, MacArthur Memorial Archives).
Figure 28: Map #1-FECOM Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan

Major General Willoughby’s Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan (August 10, 1950) clearly outlined the areas of responsibility for all service components of the Far East Command. This particular map shows the areas of responsibility given to NAVFE and FEAF units to cover with their respective collection assets. (Map taken from RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM); 1947-1951, Box 16, Folder “Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan, August 1950.” MacArthur Memorial Archives)
As depicted on this map, Major General Willoughby’s Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan also called upon the FEAF to maintain aerial coverage of key areas along the Soviet littoral areas opposite the Kurile Islands and the Japanese home island of Hokkaido. This reflected the concern of senior U.S. policymakers and military leaders to guard against any potential Soviet invasion of Japan that might be triggered by U.S. intervention in Korea or by the Soviet’s own accord. U.S. leaders feared that the Soviets might seize the opportunity to exploit the vulnerability of the skeleton forces remaining on occupation duty in Japan. (Map taken from RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FE COM), 1947-1951, Box 16, Folder: “Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan August 1950.” MacArthur Memorial Archives).
Figure 30: Map #3-FECOM Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan

This map depicts Major General Willoughby’s desired FEAF reconnaissance coverage of key industrial and communications centers from the Seoul-Kimpo-Inchon complex in the south up to the North Korea-Manchurian border areas. Note the caution annotated on the map to ensure no violation of Manchurian or Soviet airspace. (Map taken from RG-6, Box 16, Folder: “Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan August 1950.” MacArthur Memorial Archives).
This map depicts the major enemy lines of communication and supply that Major General Willoughby tasked FEAF intelligence units to reconnoiter on a regular basis. These intelligence missions facilitated collection of enemy strength and order of battle information while also finding targets for UN air interdiction missions. (Map taken from RG-6, Box 16, Folder: “Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan, August 1950.” MacArthur Memorial Archives).
Figure 32: Map #5-FECOM Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan

This map depicts part of the NAVFE reconnaissance area of responsibility incorporating all Korean coastal and littoral areas and the sea-lane approaches to those areas from both Chinese Communist and Soviet ports. Major General Willoughby’s Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan called for reports on any enemy surface activities and underwater obstacles (such as mines) that could threaten the UN amphibious landing operation. (Map taken from RG-6, Box 16, Folder: “Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan, August 1950.” MacArthur Memorial Archives).
Figure 33: Map #6-FECOM Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan

This map is a continuation of the NAVFE area of reconnaissance responsibility. It covers the key sea-lanes between the Japanese home island of Kyushu and the key South Korean port of Pusan to protect the key communications and supply route to the Eighth Army, which was defending the Pusan Perimeter in August 1950. Reconnaissance of this area helped ensure that no Soviet submarines or other naval threats stood poised in the Tsushima or Korean Straits to oppose the UN amphibious assault forces that were due to leave out of Japanese ports enroute to Inchon. (Map taken from RG-6, Box 16, Folder: “Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan, August 1950.” MacArthur Memorial Archives).
Figure 34: Map #7-FECOM Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan

This map is the third and final map depicting the NAVFE reconnaissance area of responsibility in the Formosa Strait. Since the start of the Korean War, the U.S. 7th Fleet had the mission of interposing itself between the Chinese Nationalist Forces of Chiang Kai-shek located on Formosa and the Chinese Communist Forces, which had been massing on Communist China’s east coast opposite Formosa in preparation for an invasion. 7th Fleet’s reconnaissance mission was to look for any indications of possible armed conflict between Chinese Nationalist of Chinese Communist Forces in this area. (Map taken from RG-6, Box 16, Folder: “Theater Strategic Reconnaissance Plan.” MacArthur Memorial Archives).
Figure 35: Wonsan and Chinnampo (Mining Activity)

On 13 September 1950, the British Destroyer HMS *Mansfield* discovered 17 Soviet contact mines off her port side near the tiny islet of Pukchangjaso just south of Palmi-do. This discovery came as an unwelcome and unsettling surprise to UN Naval Forces executing the preliminary bombardment of Wolmi-do and other selected targets in preparation for the arrival of the amphibious landing force. Lieutenant Eugene Clark’s South Korean naval flotilla had been patrolling the harbor channels regularly and this particular set of mines was likely emplaced at night within the preceding 24 hour period. Clark redoubled his minesweeping patrols and no other mines were found in any of the main harbor channels. The main channels remained clear for the amphibious landing. (Location data taken from Robert Heinl Jr., *Victory at High Tide*, pp. 80-81; map and patrol information extracted from Eugene F. Clark, *The Secrets of Inchon*, pp. vii, 293-294. Map content © 2006 by MapQuest, Inc. Used with permission. Map text box annotation by the author).
General MacArthur placed the new corps-level command of the UN ground forces for Operation Chromite in the hands of his trusted Chief of Staff Major General Edward M. Almond. MacArthur knew Almond could use his leverage as Chief of Staff and X Corps Commander to facilitate the planning process for Operation Chromite and procure the necessary troops and supplies to execute the operation. Here Almond is depicted pouring over the plans for Operation Chromite in the final days before the landing. (Photo taken from Stephen L.Y. Gammons. *The Korean War: The UN Offensive: 16 September – 2 November 1950*. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History), p. 4. Brochure found at <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/kw-unoff/unoff.htm>. The original photograph is from the National Archives).
In September 1950, X Corps Commander, Major General Edward M. Almond, selected Lieutenant Colonel (soon to be full Colonel) William W. Quinn to be his G-2. Having served as the Seventh Army G-2 in World War II, during Operation ANVIL in southern France, Quinn had experience in amphibious landing operations. Thus, his staff experience was well utilized during Operation Chromite. While his relationship with Willoughby was strained at times, especially when the presence of CCF regulars in North Korea was confirmed in late October 1950, Quinn tended to fall in line with Willoughby’s staff in the overall assessment regarding Chinese intentions. Quinn went on from his X Corps G-2 position to command the 17th Infantry Regimental Combat Team in January 1951. There he earned the nickname “Buffalo Bill” Quinn and his unit adopted the “Buffaloes” namesake. Quinn rose to the rank of three star general in the U.S. Army before retiring in 1966. He died on September 11, 2000 and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. (Biographical data taken from the Arlington National Cemetery website at <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/wwquinn.htm>. The top and bottom photographs taken from the 17th Infantry Regiment website at <http://www.17thinfantry.com/board.asp> and <http://www.17thinfantry.com/history.asp>, respectively.)
Figure 39: Map of Inchon Landing (15-18 September 1950)

This map depicts the Eighth Army’s breakout from the Pusan Perimeter. With the success of the landing at Inchon and the X Corps push into Seoul, the NKPA was sufficiently distracted. General Walker seized this opportunity to break out from his defensive line, and in several days of hard fighting, Eighth Army advanced northward to link up with the X Corps. (Map taken from Stephen L.Y. Gammons. *The Korean War: The UN Offensive: 16 September – 2 November 1950*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, p. 15. Brochure found at <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/kw-unoff/unoff.htm>).
Figure 41: General MacArthur views the successful Inchon landing

Top Photo: On September 15, 1950, aboard the USS Mt. McKinley, UN Commander, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur views the seizure of Wolmido island by elements of the X Corps as pointed out by his X Corps Commander, Major General Edward M. Almond. Also looking on (from left to right) are Major General Courtney Whitney (MacArthur’s legal advisor) and Brigadier General Edwin K. Wright, FECOM/UNC Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations. (Photograph taken from <http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/servlet/arc.ControllerServlet?&pg=1&tn=0&nw=y&rn=0&nh=13&st=b&rp=digital>, ARC Identifier 531373, RG-111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer in the National Archives and Records Administration.) Bottom Photo: General MacArthur and behind him (from left to right) 7th Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble, Brigadier General Edwin K. Wright, and X Corps Commander, Major General Edward M. Almond, share a jovial moment observing the successful execution of the Inchon landing. (Photograph taken from <http://www.b-29s-over-korea.com/General_MacArthur/General_MacArthur06.html> The original photo is from the Army Signal Corps Collection, RG-111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer in the National Archives and Records Administration, SC#348448).
CHAPTER 4

SNOW-BLIND IN A HUBRISTIC STORM

4.1 A Pervasive Optimism

On September 29, 1950, General MacArthur, with his consummate flair for the
dramatic, restored President Syngman Rhee and his South Korean government to their
seat of power in Seoul (See Figure 42). With this event, symbolic of the change in the
political tide of the Korean War, a wave of optimism seized both MacArthur and the
political and military leadership in Washington. As the remnants of the North Korean
People’s Army fled north, it appeared that victory was, indeed, close at hand.

U.S. State Department officials began issuing plans for post hostilities. Those plans
covered procedures for temporary military occupation of North Korea, disarmament,
POW repatriation, currency recirculation, and the restoration of democracy to the
peninsula by the holding of free elections.¹ MacArthur’s staff began planning to send some
Eighth Army troops back to Japan to resume occupation duties. The staff contemplated
keeping one division as a UN occupation force, and returning other American combat

¹ Message 210220 Z State Dept to SCAP, 22 September 1950, RG-16: Papers of Major General Courtney
Whitney, USA (retired), TS-1, MMA.; Message. 052324 AMEMBASSY Seoul to SEC STATE, 6 October
1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951 CL-1, MMA.; Message
290445 Z State Dept. to SCAP, 29 October 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command
(FECOM), 1947-1951, CL-1, MMA.
divisions back to the U.S. Army’s central control.2 Virtually everyone in the senior American military and policymaking circles believed that the war would soon end. In a late September press release, General Walker stated: “As far as we are concerned, the war is over. The enemy’s army has disintegrated into ineffective pockets which have no real offensive power.”3 All that was left to do was sweep up the NKPA remnants. Still, moving north of the 38th parallel to finish off the NKPA brought the persistent consideration of possible Soviet or Chinese intervention to bear in the American and UN strategic calculus (See Figure 41).

Following the resounding success of the Inchon landing and the subsequent movement of UN forces toward the 38th parallel, Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai issued a statement on 3 October 1950 threatening overt Chinese intervention in Korea if any UN troops other than South Korean troops crossed the parallel. While the source of this report was a Chinese Nationalist agent, another report came through India’s Ambassador to China, K.M. Pannikar. He relayed Zhou’s warning that China would not stand idle while U.S. imperialists overran North Korea. Regardless of such statements and the undeniable reports of a massive troop build-up occurring along the Manchurian-North Korean border, State Department officials, CIA officials, and other Washington policymakers disregarded Chinese Communist warnings as both idle rhetoric and mere

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2 Message C-67065 CINCFE to DA WASH (for JCS), 21 October 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder: Korean War Files Nos.1 and 2, MMA.
Message 94651 DEPTAR (JCS) to CINCFE, 21 October 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder: Korea War File No. 2, MMA.
posturing for their own border security.\textsuperscript{4} John M. Allison, a member of the United States delegation to the UN, recalled the discussion of Zhou Enlai’s warning with the British delegation prior to UN consultations. He recalled Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s conclusion that stated,

there was a risk in going ahead in view of the Chinese Communists position as conveyed to the Indian Ambassador in Peiping [Beijing], nevertheless there had been risk from the beginning and at present, he believed a greater risk would be incurred by showing hesitation and timidity… in the Secretary’s opinion the only proper course to take was a firm and courageous one and that we should not be unduly frightened at what was probably a Chinese Communist bluff.\textsuperscript{5}

The FECOM G-2 Daily Intelligence Summary of 14 October stated similar views a bit more cautiously:

Recent declarations by CCF leaders, threatening to enter NK if American Forces were to cross the 38th Parallel, are probably in a category of diplomatic blackmail. The decision, if any, is beyond the purview of collective intelligence: it is a decision for war, on the highest level; i.e. the Kremlin and Peiping [Beijing]. However, the numerical and troop potential, in Manchuria is a fait-accompli. A total of 24 divisions are disposed along the Yalu River at crossing points. In this general deployment, the grouping in vicinity of Antung is the most immediately available Manchurian force, astride a suitable road net for deployment southward.\textsuperscript{6}

Clearly, Willoughby and his staff were well aware of Chinese Communist military capabilities for massive intervention. However, they denied any ability to ascertain the intentions of the Chinese stating that such information could only be found within political

\textsuperscript{6} GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2957. 14 October 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part 1, MMA.
channels between the Kremlin and Beijing, an area within the intelligence purview of the CIA and the State Department. It is interesting to note that two days earlier, on October 12th, the CIA reported that “from a military standpoint the most favorable time for [Chinese] intervention in Korea has passed.” It appears that neither Willoughby and his staff, nor the CIA or State Department wanted to put forth an assessment of Chinese intentions from a political standpoint.

In Willoughby’s defense, the reports from Chinese Nationalist agents inside Communist China were quite often inaccurate. While many of the sources had reported reliably on Chinese troop movements in the past, especially as more CCF troops were moved from coastal areas opposite Formosa to the Manchurian border area, their reports of Chinese Communist units receiving orders to cross the Yalu River dated back to early August. For instance, in a 10 September 1950 field report, a Chinese Nationalist agent reported that the 1st and 3rd Artillery Divisions of the CCF Fourth Field Army had recently been ordered to cross the Yalu River from Antung into North Korea to aid the NKPA. The FECOM G-2 staff commented that this report was

the fifth received since 1 August on the crossing of the Yalu River by Chinese Communist troops. In almost every instance, these reports have been received from Chinese Nationalist intelligence agents and have been evaluated by the Chinese Nationalist G-2 as possibly true. As yet there has been no conclusive evidence that Chinese Communist troops, as such, are in North Korea.

Willoughby had attempted to confirm those reports with his own collection assets. He had ordered daily reconnaissance flights over the key avenues of approach emanating from the

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Yalu River. As of 20 October those assets detected no positive movements southward except for “intermittent though large scale truck convoys”, which could have been carrying routine supplies to the NKPA as opposed to masses of Chinese Communist troops.\(^9\)

However, Willoughby never ceased focusing on the NKPA, CCF, or Soviet forces that could impede UN operations. Willoughby’s Theater Strategic Reconnaissance plan of 10 August 1950 remained in effect well after the conclusion of Operation Chromite. Willoughby adjusted the collection emphasis to the appropriate geographical areas of interest already designated in the plan. As of 2 October 1950 UN aerial reconnaissance efforts shifted away from the Inchon harbor area toward Areas 3, 4, and 6 (See again Figure 31 in Chapter 3), which covered the Eighth Army’s overland approaches to Pyongyang and the X Corps’ overland and coastal approaches to Wonsan. In the meantime CIA and AFSA collection assets continued their assigned collection missions with emphasis on the Korean-Manchurian-USSR border areas and the Kunsan-Chochiwon area.\(^10\) These collection asset adjustments addressed Essential Element of Information number 2-e in Willoughby’s 2 October 1950 GHQ Intelligence Annex (C), which read: ”Will UN operations north of the 39th parallel precipitate open Chinese Communist and or USSR intervention? If so, what forces will be employed, in what

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\(^9\) GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2963, 20 October 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part 1. MMA.

strengths, and over what routes?"\textsuperscript{11} Thus, Willoughby focused his collection assets on the correct intelligence requirements.

Knowing the extent of Willoughby’s ongoing reconnaissance efforts, MacArthur had weighed the risks of Chinese or Soviet intervention and felt that the time had long passed when their intervention could have been decisive in unifying Korea under a Communist regime. On 14 October 1950, six days after Mao had initially ordered CCF forces to enter North Korea, MacArthur made his case to President Truman at their famous meeting on Wake Island (See Figure 43):

Had they [the Chinese or Russians] interfered in the first two months it would have been decisive. We are no longer fearful of their intervention. We no longer stand hat in hand. The Chinese have 300,000 men in Manchuria. Of these probably not more than 100/125,000 are distributed along the Yalu River. Only 50/60,000 could be gotten across the Yalu River. They [the Chinese] have no Air Force. Now that we have bases for our Air Force in Korea, if the Chinese tried to get down to Pyongyang there would be the greatest slaughter.\textsuperscript{12}

Had the Red Chinese intervened while Eighth Army was still inside the Pusan Perimeter, MacArthur felt UN Forces would have faced the most dire of circumstances. In actuality, MacArthur’s thinking had not been far off the mark in terms of Chinese Communist intentions earlier in the war. Recently released Chinese archival records of Chinese Politburo discussions and Mao’s correspondence with Central Committee member Gao Gang revealed that Mao earnestly contemplated intervening against UN forces as early as


\textsuperscript{12} <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/wake/Wi198_12.htm> Substance of Statements made at Wake Island Conference, dated 15 October 1950, compiled by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, from notes kept by the conferees from Washington. p 12. Papers of George M. Elsey.
August 1950, one month prior to the Inchon landing. However, given the presence of U.S. Seventh Fleet elements in the Yellow Sea guarding against any CCF amphibious operations and UN airpower capable of monitoring and interdicting any CCF landward avenues of approach, Mao most likely thought better of the idea. In MacArthur’s view, the CCF had missed their best opportunity for intervention.

By the time of the Wake Island meeting, UN units were already advancing north of the 38th parallel preparing to seize the North Korean capital, Pyongyang. Having seen no CCF or Soviet resistance up to this point, MacArthur became even more sanguine about his chances for success. Moreover, recent FECOM intelligence studies of the attritional effects of UN air interdiction and close air support upon NKPA forces bolstered MacArthur’s faith that any additional communist ground forces could be dealt with in a like manner. On October 13, Willoughby’s staff concluded that single NKPA divisions required two-hundred tons of supplies per day to sustain combat, and that UN airpower had allowed NKPA divisions only one-tenth that amount. In addition, FEC analysts calculated that upwards of thirty-three percent of NKPA casualties and fifty percent of equipment losses were inflicted by UN airstrikes. Additionally, prisoner-of-war interrogations revealed that UN air attacks in tactical support of UN ground forces were probably the greatest contributing factor to the overall success of the UN ground

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13 Mao’s telegram and Politburo discussion are cited in Chen Jian. *China’s Road to the Korean War*. p. 143.
campaign to date.\textsuperscript{15} However solidly based these assertions of UN air prowess were in October 1950, by late November increasingly dubious assertions would dramatically skew MacArthur’s command decisions when renewing his offensive against NKPA and Chinese Communist Forces.\textsuperscript{16}

But in mid-October with the NKPA retreating to the north, MacArthur was optimistic about his chances of success in finishing off its remnants and consolidating his control of the entire Korean peninsula. In the event of Chinese Communist intervention, MacArthur predicted that his air power would decimate the Red Chinese foe. He was also confident that the Soviets could not mobilize ground troops quickly enough to intervene in time to stop UN forces from reaching the Yalu River. MacArthur was equally sanguine that the Chinese could not successfully coordinate their ground troop movements with Soviet air cover.\textsuperscript{17} Truman and everyone else in attendance at the Wake Island meeting did not question MacArthur’s assertions. In fact, MacArthur’s recollection that the conference discussion dealt with “nothing on which my views were not known” was entirely correct, for, as he noted, “no new policies, no new strategy of war or international politics were proposed or discussed.”\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} G-2, GHQ, FEC/UNC Staff Section Report, November 1950, Chapter V: Summary of Enemy Activity, p. 84. RG-407: Army AG Command Reports 1949-1954, Box 365: Staff Section Reports, Annex 3, G-2 Supplemental Documents, Part 1, November 1950. NARA II.
\textsuperset\textsuperscript{17} <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/wake/Wi198_12.htm> Substance of Statements made at Wake Island Conference, dated 15 October 1950, compiled by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, p. 12, Papers of George M. Elsey.
This was particularly true in terms of intelligence assessments. Several assumptions by American policymakers led to their underestimation of Chinese Communist intent and resolve. Like MacArthur, American policymakers believed, given the success at Inchon, that the opportune time for Chinese and Soviet military intervention had passed. Much of this optimism came from CIA analysis of trends and developments weeks before the Wake Island meeting. In a report dated 26 September 1950, CIA analysts stated:

> It is improbable that organized units of either the Soviet Union or the Chinese Communists will be committed to action in Korea. It appears that the Soviet Union is willing to write off North Korea militarily rather than risk the possibility of global war with the UN powers…
> Since the Korean War began, Soviet policy toward Korea has scrupulously sought to localize the conflict. The failure of the Chinese Communists to launch an assault on Taiwan thus far, the Soviet return to the UN without its minimum terms, and Soviet propaganda, which has avoided identifying the outcome of the Korean War with Soviet national interest, point to a reluctance on the part of the Soviet Union to take any action which would lead to the spread of the war beyond Korea…
> The most logical timing, from a psychological standpoint, for any Soviet move to defend the 38th Parallel or to preserve it by diplomatic measures, would have been as an immediate reaction to the Inchon landing. It appears logical to assume that any basic decision to employ or not to employ non-Korean forces in support of North Korea has already been made. Therefore, Soviet failure to act at this juncture is another indication that the USSR is probably prepared to permit the complete defeat of the North Korean field forces rather than to accept the risk of war with the U.S. and its UN allies. In view of the above considerations, Soviet reoccupation of North Korea, either with its own troops or with Chinese Communist forces for the purpose of preventing UN ground forces crossing the 38th Parallel, is considered unlikely.19

CIA analysts reached an even more optimistic conclusion. They believed that the USSR was in a weak bargaining position, given its reluctance to risk global war over Korea, and that the Kremlin was
probably prepared to permit the military defeat of North Korea and the unification of Korea under UN auspices. The Kremlin, however, would probably seek to thwart UN efforts through its usual tactics of obstruction in the UN, and guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, and propaganda within Korea, but will probably forego any more decisive action.20

Clearly, MacArthur was not alone in his strategic hubris. His assessments of Soviet and Chinese Communist intentions were congruent with CIA analysts’ views, which were articulated to Washington policymakers and President Truman well before Truman ever met with General MacArthur.

Moreover, from a purely pragmatic viewpoint such conclusions made some sense. If the Chinese had intervened while the Eighth Army was still inside the Pusan Perimeter, then the combined NKPA-CCF strength might easily have driven UN forces off of the peninsula. Although the threat of intervention still remained a strategic option for either of the major Communist powers, that particularly dangerous moment in early to mid-September had indeed passed and any intervention carried the risk of a general war.

The CIA reiterated this view in two memorandums dated 12 October 1950. One memorandum asserted that the prime time for intervention had passed and concluded that while full scale Chinese Communist intervention in Korea must be regarded as a continuing possibility, a consideration of all known factors leads to the conclusion that barring a Soviet decision for global war, such action is not probable in 1950.

The second memorandum concluded that Soviet leaders will not consider that their prospective losses in Korea warrant direct military intervention and a consequent grave risk of war.

19 Central Intelligence Agency. “Summaries of Trends and Developments,” 26 September 1950. pp.1, 4-6. Approved for Release 1999/09/02: CIA-RDP, Job Number 79-01090A, Box number 0003, Folder number 0002, document number 0009-8, CREST, NARA II.
20 Ibid., p.7.
They will intervene in the Korean hostilities only if they have decided, not on the basis of the Korean situation alone, but on the basis of over-all considerations, that it is to their interest to precipitate a global conflict at this time.\footnote{21}

By October 1950, even in the worst case scenario, Eighth Army and X Corps had some Korean ground upon which to fall back if Chinese Communist or Soviet forces intervened. In light of these factors, MacArthur and his superiors in Washington became increasingly confident of success in reunifying the entire Korean peninsula under UN auspices.

The FECOM OPLAN of 20 October 1950, which began to outline the UN plan for the occupation of North Korea, reflected the optimistic American appraisal of Chinese Communist and Soviet intentions. The essential elements of information (EEI) in the intelligence annex of the OPLAN focused intelligence collection on possible North Korean unconventional warfare activities supported logistically by the Soviets and Chinese Communists. FECOM worried about the Soviets or Chinese Communists supplying agents to help subvert UN occupation efforts and aid North Korean guerrilla resistance to UN occupation forces. However, at least one of the EEIs addressed the contingency of Chinese Communist Forces attempting to establish a “buffer zone” inside North Korea.\footnote{22}

Yet, beyond such a limited incursion, CIA and FECOM EEIs never accounted for Chinese Communist interests in Korea independent of Soviet interests. Nor did the EEI’s address the possibility of an all out offensive to conquer the peninsula.\footnote{23} CIA analysts,

\footnote{23} Ibid.
senior American policymakers, and, apparently, General MacArthur did not believe that Mao Zedong sought a viable opportunity to intervene in Korea independent of Soviet desires for global war. They underestimated Mao’s desire to demonstrate the vitality and strength of the Chinese Communist revolution to the Chinese people and to the entire world by intervening in Korea. In short, American policymakers and General MacArthur underestimated the power of revolutionary nationalism, which seethed in Communist China and simmered throughout Southeast Asia, particularly in view of Chinese Communist activities aimed at Formosa, Tibet, and French-Indochina within this same general time period.

American policymakers assumed that Chinese Communist leaders had to respond to domestic pressures for political and economic improvements, which would undermine support for deploying troops into North Korea. Secretary of State Dean Acheson seemed very disposed toward this particular viewpoint stating that “it would be sheer madness” for Mao to enter the conflict given his domestic troubles.24 The State Department also believed that the Chinese intervention would exacerbate Beijing’s dependence on Soviet support while simultaneously “minimizing” the Chinese Communist Party’s chances of assuming “China’s seat in the United Nations.”25

One particular assumption MacArthur and Washington policymakers shared was that, in the event of CCF intervention, America’s military and technological superiority

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would enable it to win an easy victory over the “backward” Chinese nation. American assumptions of cultural and military superiority over the Chinese people seem to be the only factors capable of explaining this consensus viewpoint. Additionally, despite efforts by Secretary Acheson and several other American officials to predict a Sino-Soviet split analogous to Titoism in Yugoslavia, they viewed Communist China as a Soviet client. In the opening months of the war, when the Truman administration became satisfied that the Soviets would not intervene, they found a Chinese intervention to be even less likely. In this context, intelligence analysts in Washington as well as Tokyo failed to recognize indicators of Chinese preparations to intervene. They regarded Chinese troop redeployments toward the Manchurian border as routine and the indications of political mobilization reflected in an increased anti-American propaganda campaign were viewed as mere rhetoric.

President Truman, Secretary Acheson, and the JCS all saw the opportunity to punish the Communist aggressors in Korea and deal a strategic defeat to the Soviet mastermind by going beyond mere containment and rolling back Communist influence in East Asia. As diplomatic historians Arnold Offner and Melvyn Leffler have argued, “‘the taste of victory,’ and hubris, impelled Truman and his advisers to seek preponderant American power in Asia.”

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The conclusions in the CIA’s report of October 12 reflect that hubristic mindset.

The CIA’s report stated that

> despite statements by Chou Enlai, troop movements to Manchuria and propaganda charges of atrocities and border violations, there are no convincing indications of an actual Chinese Communist intention to resort to full scale intervention in Korea.\(^{29}\)

Given the assumptions of MacArthur and those of his military and civilian superiors in Washington, it is readily apparent that the underestimation of Chinese intentions goes well beyond a “simple intelligence failure.”\(^{30}\) In the autumn of 1950, UN strategic, operational, and tactical decision-making became subject to a pervasive optimism, spawned by recently acquired strategic momentum and hubris. Such optimism led to grave consequences for the advancing UN forces.

### 4.2 A New Mission and Its Impact on PHOTINT Operations

In late September and early October 1950, the military question at hand was whether or not UN forces should pursue the remnants of the NKPA to complete destruction. The larger political question was whether the UN expand its mission mandate beyond restoring peace and security to South Korea to reunifying the entire peninsula. With strong support in the United Nations from key allies like Great Britain, the political deliberations on these questions of proceeding north did not last very long. British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin gave full support to the idea that UN forces should proceed north of the 38th parallel stating that “the time has come to have a united Korea, elections, and

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\(^{29}\) Memorandum by the CIA, October 12, 1950, *FRUS (1950) Korea*, 7: 933-934.

\(^{30}\) Chen Jian. *China’s Road to the Korean War*. p. 170.
all the rest." In American policy circles further National Security Council (NSC) deliberations conditionally affirmed the need for further military action contingent upon a lack of Soviet and Chinese intervention in the Korean theater. President Truman signed NSC Memorandum 81/1, which went into effect on 27 September 1950. On 28 September 1950, in accordance with that memorandum, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed MacArthur as follows:

Your military objective is the destruction of the North Korean armed forces. In attaining this objective you are authorized to conduct military operations, including amphibious and airborne landings or ground operations north of the 38th parallel in Korea, provided that at the time of such operation there has been no entry into North Korea by major Soviet or Chinese Communist forces, no announcement of intended entry, nor a threat to counter our operations militarily in North Korea. Under no circumstances, however, will your forces cross the Manchurian or USSR borders of Korea and, as a matter of policy, no non-Korean ground forces will be used in the northeast provinces bordering the Soviet Union or in the area along the Manchurian border. Furthermore, support of your operations north or south of the 38th parallel will not include air or naval action against Manchuria or USSR territory.

On 29 September, Syngman Rhee ordered ROK forces to begin crossing the 38th parallel. The ROK forces complied on 30 September. Considering the dramatic, favorable turn in the war and the UN and South Korean desires for political reunification of the Korean peninsula, the Truman administration sought and received UN authorization for UN forces to proceed north of the 38th parallel. Inherent in the new UN resolution of

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31 *Stars and Stripes*, September 30, 1950. “UN Forces Should Cross 38th – Bevin,” pg. 1. Papers of Lieutenant General William W. Quinn, USA (retired), Box 4, Folder: Newspaper and Magazine Articles (Korea, June 1950-January 1951), USAMHI.
33 Roy Appleman. *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*. p. 615.
October 7th were all of the preconditions and restrictions on military operations recommended in NSC 81/1.\textsuperscript{34}

The new mission reflected the desire of both American policymakers and UN diplomats to reach beyond the mere restoration of South Korean sovereignty, reunify the peninsula, and eliminate the Communist threat within Korea itself. UN diplomats were willing to send military forces all the way to the Manchurian border to ensure a unified democratic Korea, but none of them were willing to pay the price of facing Soviet ground forces and risking a world war to accomplish that goal. Still, American policymakers were willing to risk a limited altercation with Chinese ground forces as indicated in their amplification to MacArthur’s instructions issued on 10 October 1950:

Hereafter in the event of the open or covert employment anywhere in Korea of major Chinese Communist units, without prior announcement, you should continue your action as long as, in your judgment, action by forces now under your control offers a reasonable chance of success. In any case, you will obtain authorization from Washington prior to taking any military action against objectives in Chinese territory.\textsuperscript{35}

MacArthur’s direction in the event of any intervention by Soviet ground forces remained unchanged from the September 27th JCS directive. If Soviet forces entered Korea, MacArthur was to immediately assume a defensive posture, take no action to aggravate the situation, and report to Washington for further instructions.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/koreahowfartogodocs.htm.

\textsuperscript{35} JCS Msg. 93709 to CINCFE, 10 October 1950, RG-16a: Papers of Major General Courtney Whitney, USA (Retired), TS-1, MMA.

\textsuperscript{36} Message 92608 JCS to CINCFE, 28 September 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder: Korean War File No. 2, MMA.
From an intelligence standpoint, these restrictions were nothing new. Yet, given the increased geographic proximity of UN forces to Communist Chinese and Soviet ground and air forces, the degree of negative impact these conditions had on intelligence collection multiplied exponentially. As UN forces moved north, no aerial reconnaissance planes were authorized to cross into Manchuria or the Soviet Union. As before, such restrictions were designed to limit the war to the Korean peninsula and avoid any escalation in hostilities that might precipitate Soviet or Communist Chinese intervention. Yet, these same restrictions gave Communist China and the Soviets an inviolate sanctuary where they could marshal their own air and ground forces and launch attacks or counterattacks against advancing UN forces with relative impunity.

Despite such challenges, the question of Soviet or Chinese intervention remained a priority intelligence requirement to be confirmed or denied by increasingly aggressive intelligence collection. In addition, General MacArthur was determined to prevent retreating NKPA forces from escaping his grasp. The remaining elements of the NKPA were in a headlong retreat toward the Manchurian border, and MacArthur wanted them found and destroyed. In addition to fulfilling that mission, Willoughby also kept an eye on the Yalu River to guard against any possible Chinese or Soviet intervention. Willoughby relied heavily upon FEAF’s day and night aerial photographic reconnaissance aircraft to perform many of these missions.

FEAF ensured aerial reconnaissance missions were flown day and night along the key lines of communication leading north to the major Yalu River crossing sites. During the week of 1-7 October 1950, FEAF photo reconnaissance units flew a total of 130
sorties. Ninety-five of those sorties were flown during the day and 35 were night missions.
The 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron flew 73 daylight sorties. The 31st Strategic
Reconnaissance Squadron flew the remaining 22 daylight sorties. Meanwhile, the 162d
Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Night Photo) flew all 35 of its nighttime sorties over a
five-day period.37

During the week of 15-21 October 1950, adverse weather conditions reduced
FEAF’s aerial reconnaissance sorties to a total of 85 sorties (63 day, 25 night), a 35%
overall reduction from its weekly totals in early October. Clearly, luck, and timing were
on the side of the Chinese Communist Forces as they crossed the Yalu River at night
during the exact time period when FEAF reconnaissance sorties were minimized or
otherwise hampered due to thick cloud cover.38

Not only did adverse weather conditions degrade the effectiveness of the
reconnaissance aircraft and their crews, they also degraded the quality of the photographic
products. At various intervals in October 1950, between thirty and forty percent of the
photography submitted by the FEAF reconnaissance units was rejected due to cloud
cover, too much image overlap for stereoscopic viewing, bad solar angles (too much
ambient light), and poor camera angles.39

37 FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup from 0001/I 1 Oct. 50 to 2400/I 7 Oct. 50.p.3, K720.607A, IRIS
No. 00521033, Box 36, Folder: FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup 3 Sep. 50- 28 Oct. 50, in USAF
Collection, AFHRA.
38 FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup from 0001/I 15 Oct. 50 to 2400/I 21 Oct. 50. p. 4., K720.607A 15-
21 Oct. 1950, IRIS No. 00521035, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
39 FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup from 0001/I 1 Oct. 50 to 2400/I 7 Oct. 50.p.4, K720.607A, IRIS
No. 00521033, Box 36, Folder: FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup 3 Sep. 50- 28 Oct. 50, in USAF
Collection, AFHRA.
Additional complications arose with the K-17 camera systems placed aboard RF-80A photo-reconnaissance jet aircraft. These cameras had been designed to work at speeds of conventional, propeller-driven planes. Thus, the RF-80A pilots had to throttle down to obtain the exposures required to produce overlapping large scale photographs for stereoscopic viewing. This condition made the aircraft vulnerable to flak fires from the Manchurian side of the Yalu River (See Figure 44). Additionally, RF-80A aircraft were 200 miles an hour slower than the Soviet MIG-15s, which eventually appeared over the Yalu River on 1 November. Thus, RF-80A missions eventually became mad dashes to the Yalu for quick shots to avoid being swarmed by MIG-15 aircraft. 40

The 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, which flew the RF-80A, had only a limited number of aircraft and had to limit its coverage to areas immediately adjacent to the main roads leading between the Yalu River and the Eighth Army and X Corps front lines. Both the 8th Tactical and 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadrons focused their attention mainly on the Yalu River bridge crossings. 41 The CCF normally avoided these areas in the daylight hours. The CCF hid themselves and their equipment in village huts, mountain caves, and under haystacks (See Figures 45 and 46). These techniques were later confirmed by interrogation of American prisoners of war released by the CCF in late November 1950, who witnessed Chinese Communist camouflage measures. They described these techniques as “terrific, wonderful, and superior.” They reported that “maximum use was made of simple techniques” such as adding branches and leaves to

40 Robert Futrell. The United States Air Force in Korea , pp. 244, 289, 546, 548.
uniforms, immobility, and the construction of camouflaged parking stalls along the sides of roadways. These parking stalls often consisted of extending the roofing of existing buildings with a canvas sheet and then covering the canvas with straw and in other cases a box like frame would be constructed over some vehicles and vegetation would be affixed to the frame. In addition, upon hearing and seeing approaching UN aircraft, CCF troops caught in the open immediately froze in a squatting position to look like tree stumps or rocks due to the green color of the textured Chinese Communist uniforms. The uniform also had a white liner for blending in with snow-covered landscapes. In addition, if strafed by UN aircraft, CCF troops would immediately fall in their tracks to give the appearance that they had been hit. As a result of all of these measures, daytime photography revealed a lot of tire tracks in the North Korean snow but nothing substantial in the way of enemy troop concentrations. Moreover, those few troops detected in the open often escaped UN air attacks. Even at relatively low altitude, it was difficult for a UN pilot on a strafing run to positively differentiate between CCF and North Korean uniforms to positively identify the nationality of the troops he engaged. Thus, daylight photography and visual observation recorded little to no activity by Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) that astutely chose to move at night.

44 Futrell, The United States Air Force in Korea, p. 229.
The CCF, which began crossing the Yalu River on the evening spanning 13-14 October 1950 (or perhaps as early as the 12\textsuperscript{th}), did so with great efficiency and use of camouflage techniques.\textsuperscript{45} Once across the river, the CCF stayed off of the major road networks and kept to the low-lying areas skirting the extremely mountainous terrain. This restrictive terrain, in addition to fog and haze in the low-lying areas made night photography and night attack extremely difficult. Generally speaking, aerial photographic platforms stayed well clear of fogged in areas to avoid crashing.\textsuperscript{46}

To an even greater degree than daylight operations, technical difficulties also hampered nighttime reconnaissance. The RB-26C reconnaissance aircraft of the 162d Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron utilized M-46 flashbomb technology at night to photograph key road networks and crossing sites along the Yalu River (See Figure 47). Flashbombs illuminated the area long enough for the camera to expose the film and capture the photographic image. However, a high failure rate existed among the stocks of flashbombs used in the newly designed K-19B Split Vertical nighttime camera systems.\textsuperscript{47} In addition, the A-14 camera magazine, which cycled the K-19B camera film, often malfunctioned causing overlapping of photographic exposures.\textsuperscript{48} This particular system relied upon new, specially designed flash cartridges for nighttime photography, and failure rates among these cartridges were high. Indeed, much off the aerial photographic equipment used by FEAF in the Korean War, especially the nighttime equipment was

\textsuperscript{45} Roy E. Appleman, \textit{Disaster in Korea}. pp. 12-14.
\textsuperscript{46} Futrell. \textit{The United States Air Force in Korea 1950-1953}. p. 229.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
“battle service tested” by the 162d Nighttime Photoreconnaissance Squadron in Korea.\textsuperscript{49}

While engineers managed to fix most of the flash cartridges by early November 1950, the increased use of the A-14 magazine system caused it to malfunction more often.\textsuperscript{50}

Not only was FEAF photographic equipment faulty, so too were unit maintenance procedures. The 8\textsuperscript{th} TRS and 162d TRS had recently moved to the K-2 airfield near Taegu, Korea from Itazuke Air Base in Japan. These units’ photographic camera system maintenance personnel failed to attend the training offered to them at Itazuke on how to maintain the new A-14 camera magazine, prior to leaving for Korea. Therefore, they had to gain assistance from the Air Material Command maintenance personnel, who flew a detachment over from Itazuke to Korea on 12 and 13 October.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, the Fifth Air Force’s photographic intelligence units were not operating at their peak capabilities when CCF forces began to enter North Korea. Clearly, the Air Force’s photographic systems designs and maintenance procedures needed a lot of improvement.

Tactical hazards made matters even worse. Nighttime photoreconnaissance missions, just as surely as daylight missions, entailed running the gauntlet of Chinese anti-aircraft artillery fire emanating from the Manchurian side of the Yalu River. Such activity might cause the pilot to lose the camera angle he wanted due to the need for evasive maneuvers. Thus, a multitude of technical and tactical problems, none of which were in

\textsuperscript{49} 162d Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Night Photo), 543\textsuperscript{rd} Tactical Support Group, 6149\textsuperscript{th} Tactical Support Wing, Fifth Air Force, \textit{Historical Data Report}, Historical Data for the Month of September 1950, p. 9, K-SQ-RCN-162-HI Sep. 1950, IRIS No. 431075, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

\textsuperscript{50} 162d Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Night Photo), 543\textsuperscript{rd} Tactical Support Group, 6149\textsuperscript{th} Tactical Support Wing, Fifth Air Force, \textit{Historical Data Report}, Historical Data for the Month of November 1950, Chapter 28, pp. 14-15, K-SQ-RCN-162-HI Nov. 1950, IRIS No. 431077, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

any intelligence officer’s span of control, contributed to FEAF aircraft failures in
detecting, let alone confirming, large Chinese troop concentrations or other indicators of
CCF intervention in North Korea.

Aside from troop concentrations, the reported presence of enemy fighter type
aircraft on Manchurian airfields near the Yalu River was another possible indicator of a
Chinese intent to intervene. On 18 October an RB-29 aircraft of the 31st Strategic
Reconnaissance Squadron reported that 75-100 enemy-fighter type aircraft were present
on the Antung airfield in Manchuria, which was located within 10 miles of the Yalu River.
FEAF planned additional missions to confirm the sighting and positively identify the
nationality and type of aircraft at that airfield. While no UN aircraft were permitted to
cross the Yalu River, oblique camera angles enabled UN forces to gain some photographic
shots of Manchurian soil immediately adjacent to and several miles inland from the Yalu
River. On 19 October, “poor weather prevented accurate reconnaissance of the Antung
airfield in Manchuria,” and UN pilots could not confirm the previous reporting.52 FEAF
had dispatched another RB-29 from the 31st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron with a
forty inch camera to photograph the Antung airfield. However, with visibility restricted to
15 miles in hazy conditions and a cloud ceiling at 7,000 feet, the photographic images
revealed the outlines of the runway and taxiway but no aircraft.53

52FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup No. 7 from 0001/1 15 Oct. 50 to 2400/1 21 Oct. 50, pp. 12-13,
K720.607A 15-21 Oct. 1950, IRIS No. 00521035, Box 36, Folder: FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup 3
Sep. 50-28 Oct. 50 in USAF collection, AFHRA. See also Central Intelligence Agency Daily Korean
Summary, 20 October 1950. p.1. Papers of Harry S. Truman, President’s Secretary’s File: Intelligence
File, Box 209, Folder: Daily Korean Summaries, September-October 1950, Harry S. Truman Presidential
Library, Independence, Missouri.
53FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup No. 7 from 0001/1 15 Oct. 50 to 2400/1 21 Oct. 50, p. 13,
K720.607A 15-21 Oct. 1950, IRIS No. 00521035, Box 36, Folder: FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup 3
Sep. 50-28 Oct. 50, in USAF collection, AFHRA.
FEAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (A-2), Brigadier General Charles Y. Banfill rated the RB-29 crew’s report and photography as “A-2” (completely reliable, probably true report). He assessed that enemy aircraft had indeed been sighted on the airfield at an earlier date and moved to an alternate location or otherwise concealed. Yet, he also assessed that the aircraft in question were “not believed to be in the process of tactical deployment” given the mere 10 mile proximity of Antung airfield to the Korean border. Banfill also assessed that the enemy regarded fighter aircraft positioned so close to the border on an open plain as too lucrative a target for U.S. 5th Air Force aircraft. Banfill regarded the 18 October aircraft sighting at Antung to be a show of force by the Chinese Communists to “lend credence to menacing statements and threats” made by their leadership. 54

In addition, Banfill believed that the Chinese leaders thought that such a show of strength would involve no risk given “the apparent desire of UN forces to avoid border incidents.” Banfill bolstered this assertion by assessing that if the fighter planes in question were bound for Korean airspace or basing at North Korean controlled airfields then it was highly unlikely that such aircraft would be permanently positioned at Antung to “attract attention from south of the border.” Moreover, Banfill believed that the absence of any enemy aircraft attack against his reconnaissance aircraft was a further indicator that the

fighter aircraft in question were not bound for action in Korea in view of FEAF’s “constant surveillance” of the “remaining North Korean airfields available to the enemy.”

Despite such optimistic assessments, from 22 -28 October 1950, the days leading into the first heavy contact with Chinese Communist Forces, FEAF began to run out of battle-front interdiction targets and increased emphasis was placed on armed reconnaissance sorties. The estimated 104 missions flown focused mainly in the northwest portion of North Korea along what FEAF called “the three main escape routes still available to the enemy.” The description of those lines of communication as escape routes as opposed to potential CCF avenues of approach reflected a North Korean-centric mindset within FEAF and UNC/FECOM General Headquarters. Assessments were couched in terms of the retreating NKPA as opposed to any infiltrating CCF. Photographic intelligence reports revealed concentrations of “miscellaneous vehicles” most of which were either destroyed or damaged and “an enemy force of undetermined strength [and apparently undetermined nationality] entrenched on high ground in the Pakchon-Kasan area resist[ing] the advance of the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade.”

Thus, FEAF’s aerial photographic reconnaissance revealed no conclusive evidence in the way of troop or aircraft concentrations that indicated Chinese Communist or Soviet intervention. Not until Chinese marked, Soviet -flown MIG-15’s appeared above the Yalu River on 1 November 1950 did FEAF begin to assess Communist intentions differently. By that time UN ground forces had already come into contact with CCF ground units

55 Ibid.
inside North Korea. However, Willoughby relied on more than aerial reconnaissance units to observe the enemy occupied areas of North Korea and the Yalu River crossing sites.

4.3 HUMINT: Joint Special Operations Revisited

Just as he had during Operation Chromite, Willoughby turned to combined and joint special operations HUMINT units to accomplish dangerous clandestine intelligence operations behind enemy lines. By early October 1950 the U.S. Air Force and Army began Operation Aviary, which entailed parachuting Korean agents behind enemy lines to monitor enemy rear area activities (See Figure 48).\(^{58}\) This operation included limited surveillance of the potential crossing sites along the Yalu River from North Korean high ground. Precise details of the missions and the feedback received from these missions are sketchy and some remain classified. Still, enough evidence has been disclosed to verify Operation Aviary’s existence. Such complex operations were hard enough to train for, let alone execute, and there were many initial growing pains before these clandestine missions began to yield any intelligence dividends.

Operation Aviary missions began shortly after the Inchon landing.\(^{59}\) Aviary agents were to reacquire retreating NKPA elements and track their movements. Still, in logistical terms, these operations were not well supported. Agents lacked radios and had to survive not only their jump, which was never a guarantee regardless of training, but also the duration of their observation mission. Agents had to survive an often grueling trek back to

\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 1.

\(^{58}\) By 1951 female agents were widely recruited. They slept with Chinese and North Korean officers to gain operational and order of battle information. Their exploits met with varied success.


\(^{59}\) Ibid.
friendly lines without being compromised or shot by their own forces. The mission conditions were far from ideal, but Willoughby did his best to support the agents. Some thirty years after the war, Robert Brewer, who was at the time an Army first lieutenant and one of the Aviary mission managers, recalled Major General Willoughby’s personal debrief of one of his North Korean–Manchurian border agents:

By mid-October I had deployed dozens of parachute agents along the border, and immediately significant reports began to come in. By late October, I was making a fuss in every G-2 office from Eighth Army to FEC, about the large Chinese forces crossing into Korea…[By this time] Aviary agents had reported a Chinese order of battle exceeding 60,000. Finally, Willoughby did an unprecedented thing. On 31 October 1950 he ordered me to send him my principal agent from the Kanggye-Manpojin border area for an in-depth interview. The agent gave a rather complete picture of the Chinese units that had crossed the Manpojin Bridge into Korea during the month of October, including heavy weapons and hospital units, indicating that Chinese intentions were something more than mere border protection.60

Brewer also recalled how an “apparently grateful” Willoughby sent Brewer’s clandestine outfit “ten scarce SCR-300 infantry radio transceivers.” These radios allowed for real-time radio communications relayed via “SCR-300-equipped air force aircraft flying overhead.”61 While these radios provided an ideal means of communication for Aviary agents, the operational wear and tear on these limited assets eventually took their toll. Operatives had to resort to smoke signals to relay information.62

In addition to Brewer’s agents, Lieutenant Eugene Clark, USN and his small band of trained Korean agents went into action once again. This time however, the intelligence

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61 Ibid., p. 23.
62 Ibid.
hero of Inchon was joined by Operation Trudy Jackson’s master planner, Major Stephen A.B. Norberg, USA. At the start of the war, Major Norberg was assigned to the FECOM Joint Special Operations (JSO) Branch, G-2 as Assistant Executive Officer and Executive Officer under Major General Holmes E. Dager, USA (retired), who was chief of the JSO Branch. Dager answered directly to Willoughby. 63

On Dager’s orders from Willoughby, Major Norberg, together with CIA planners, had drawn up the plans for Operation Trudy Jackson in August of 1950. The following October, given the resounding success of Trudy Jackson, Norberg was tasked to plan a similar type of operation code-named “Racketeer.” The purpose of Operation Racketeer was through clandestine means, to obtain positive, tactical and strategic military intelligence in the area of North Korea and in such other areas as may become of interest during present and future operations. The specific Essential Elements of Information (EEI) for the mission members to obtain were as follows: “(1) enemy troop strength, (2) ground, air, and naval unit identities, (3) enemy equipment, both mobile and defensive, (4) deployment and movement of enemy forces, (5) location of the source, stockpiling areas, and the tracking of mines in the Yellow Sea Area. 64

On 16 October, Lieutenant Clark, with Major Norberg as his second in command, led their hand picked element of approximately 100 specially trained South Korean guerrillas on their mission. From 24 -25 October 1950, this clandestine unit, located more than one-hundred miles from the nearest UN forces and under constant threat from

63 “Norberg Award Narrative Description.” p. 1. RG-23B: Selected Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 3, Folder “Norberg-Dager Reports,” MMA.
64 Ibid., p. 3. The purpose of the mine location mission was to free up west coast ports throughout North Korea to facilitate a rapid influx of logistical stocks as U.N. forces advanced farther to the north. See also GHQ FEC Message C-50221 CINCUNC to DA, UNC Report No. 10, circa 1 December 1950, covering 16-30 November, p. 5, RG-9: Collection of Messages (Radiograms), 1945-1951, Box 28, Folder: War Cx DA, 16-30 Nov. 1950, MMA.
possible enemy air attack, captured eight enemy-occupied islands along North Korea’s
western coast from the island redoubt of Sinmi-do to the Cholan peninsula near the mouth
of the Yalu River. In the process, they obtained intelligence on enemy troop
concentrations in the Sinuiju area (see Figure 49), the re-commissioning of the Sinuiju
airstrip by the enemy, and the precise location of a “well-camouflaged troop transshipment
point at the time that the first of the Chinese troops were crossing the North Korean
border [Yalu River] to reinforce their North Korean comrades.”

The October 1950 intelligence reports of both Operations Racketeer and Aviary
are highly controversial, and they remain a favorite means by which to ridicule MacArthur
and Willoughby for a failure to acknowledge the presence of large numbers of Chinese
ground forces entering North Korea. Yet, few historians, if any, have cited any sort of
official documents that confirm or deny the exact data that Clark and Brewer reported to
Willoughby in Tokyo.

In his account of the Korean War, author John Toland interviewed Lieutenant
Eugene Clark about Operation Racketeer. Apparently, Clark told Toland, or Toland
would lead you to believe, that Clark’s agents reported as many as 300,000 Chinese
troops crossing the Yalu River in late October 1950. Clark’s agents had supposedly talked
to Sinuiju natives, who said that the Chinese boasted of coming into Korea with 300,000
troops. After supposedly receiving several similar reports (with the same strength of
300,000) from some of his other agents, Clark apparently reported this secondhand
evidence to Tokyo by radio stating “Am confident of these figures and Chinese troop

65 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
movement." The assertion that such a high number of Chinese Communist troops were moving all in one locale in such a short time frame is highly dubious. It is interesting that Toland never bothered to quote Clark on any estimated numbers he reported to Tokyo based upon the reports of Clark’s agents or the North Korean civilians they used as sources. Nor does Toland quote any official documents confirming such reports. In late October 1950, Chinese troops were indeed crossing the Yalu, but this was done at night and for UN agents or civilians counting heads in the dark is difficult. Moreover, Clark, Norberg, and their agents did not get underway from Inchon until October 16th and did not arrive in the Yalu River mouth area near Sinuiju until 23 October. Chinese troops had already begun crossing the Yalu River between 12 and 14 October. Additionally, 300,000 Chinese Communist troops are not all going to cross the Yalu River all at once within one area of the Yalu River Valley! Ultimately, it is unclear just how many Chinese troops, if any, Clark and Brewer’s agents actually saw with their own eyes as opposed to second and third-hand estimates of CCF troop strength relayed by word of mouth from North Korean sources of questionable reliability.

Thus far, at least one of Clark’s Racketeer reports has been unearthed. In this report, dated 25 October 1950, Clark’s unit interrogated two local refugees who reported North Korean troop dispositions in the Sinuiju area, which amounted to about 33,000 North Korean troops billeted at various schools and other public buildings throughout the city. In addition, the refugees reported detailed information on where mines were stored

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67 “Norberg Award Narrative Description.” pp. 6-7. RG-23B: Selected Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby: 1943-1954, Box 3, Folder: Norberg-Dager Reports, MMA.
and distributed. Most importantly, the refugees reported the movement of forty-five boxcars and several sampans (junks) per night over the Yalu River from Sinuiju, North Korea to Antung, Manchuria. These vessels ferried supplies and equipment for NKPA troops retreating to Manchuria. The report also confirms the movement of NKPA troops to defensive positions in depth on the Manchurian side of the border within three miles of the Yalu River. Interestingly, the refugee reports also stipulated that there was no movement of troops or materials into Sinuiju from Antung.68

This assertion of no movement of troops or equipment from Manchuria into North Korea while dubious could very well have been true based purely on daylight observations. This report simply shows that word-of-mouth reporting cannot substitute for on-site reconnaissance. However, the North Korean retrograde movements are very important information. At that time such information could have indicated a passage of lines, where retreating NKPA units withdrew through Chinese Communist Forces moving into attack positions or it could have indicated a Chinese intent to simply cover the NKPA withdrawal into Manchuria. While the reliability of the source and the truth of the information could not really be judged, such reports were the only ground level information Willoughby had from that particular area at that point in time. Given all available evidence, it appears that Major Norberg, Lieutenant Clark, and members of their unit moved in for a closer look at the Sinuiju river crossing at some point in late October

and reported some secondhand indications of CCF movement into North Korea.\textsuperscript{69}

However, common sense and the available evidence suggest that the degree of CCF strength actually observed by Clark’s agents or reported by any one segment of the local civilian populace was far less than 300,000 and required further verification.

Some historians like Colonel Michael Haas, USAF or Thomas Fleming have claimed that Willoughby simply ignored Brewer and Clark’s October reports.\textsuperscript{70} Those assertions are groundless. Haas’ quote of Willoughby’s personal debrief of one of Brewer’s agents clearly shows that Willoughby, at a minimum, considered the information he received from Brewer along with other intelligence reporting. In addition, Willoughby himself acknowledged the existence of Operation Racketeer, as well as receipt of Clark’s reports of Chinese Communist troops moving into Korea. According to Willoughby’s account of Major Norberg’s actions, he and his staff in Tokyo regarded Norberg and Clark’s reported sightings as Chinese “volunteers” moving to “reinforce” their North Korean comrades.\textsuperscript{71}

In hindsight, Lieutenant Eugene Clark appears to be the single greatest intelligence contribution the U.S. Navy made to the joint intelligence effort in Korea. Yet, the recollections of then Rear Admiral Arleigh Burke, assigned as the Deputy Chief of Staff to the Commander of Naval Forces Far East, Admiral C. Turner Joy reveal another naval intelligence contribution. Burke often met with Willoughby to discuss naval intelligence

\textsuperscript{69} “Norberg Award Narrative Description.” p. 7. RG-23B- Selected Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby: 1943-1954, Box 3, Folder: Norberg-Dager Reports, MMA.

\textsuperscript{70} Haas. In the Devil’s Shadow. p. 208. Thomas Fleming makes his assertion in his epilogue in Eugene Clark. The Secrets of Inchon. p. 324.
assessments for FECOM’s consideration. As far back as October 1950, when Chinese Communist Foreign Minister Zhou En-Lai made public remarks warning UN forces of Chinese Communist intervention if UN forces crossed the 38th parallel, Burke recalled passing along his concerns to Willoughby regarding the validity of such claims. Burke also relied on the advice of a former Imperial Japanese Naval officer, Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, the former Japanese Ambassador to the United States before World War II. Nomura reviewed Zhou En-Lai’s remarks and warned Burke that Zhou En-Lai was serious and that Communist China would be certain to live up to its remarks to save face should UN forces cross the 38th parallel. Nomura further believed that any Chinese “volunteers” would most likely be massive Chinese Communist units. Nomura stated “once they make up their minds, they’ll be in great force.” However, Nomura also mentioned that the Chinese Communists may not have made up their minds entirely and that initial reports of Chinese Communist troops crossing the Yalu River could be “preliminary troops.” As more reports of Chinese “volunteers” came into FECOM, Burke recalled waiting to relay such assessments to Willoughby believing that the FECOM G-2 had better sources that he did. But, Burke also recalled that Willoughby and his staff often interpreted the same information differently than Burke and his COMNAVFE staff did.

73 Ibid., pp.192-193.
Burke’s further recollections revealed some indications of Chinese Communist troop presence in North Korea. However, the magnitude of that presence was subject to interpretation and that there was “no real proof” of intervention in great force. Burke acknowledged having four naval officers, who were interpreting the same raw information being collected and analyzed by the CINCUNC/FECOM G-2 staff. Burke and his men were privy to the reports from Lieutenant Eugene Clark and his agents operating in the islands in the mouth of the Yalu River area in addition to Willoughby’s other agents scattered behind enemy lines.

Additionally, the Navy had the most experienced COMINT voice-intercept station in the Far East. Available documentary evidence substantiates that at least locally within the theater, the Navy, Air Force, and Army COMINT stations shared technical data to some degree. After the initial appearance of CCF in Korea in late October, service commanders began to push for an even “freer local exchange” sharing of COMINT information to better develop the enemy situation facing UN forces.\(^7\)

Information sharing amongst the services was indeed a step in the right direction, but three different agencies often had three different interpretations or perspectives on what all of the collected information indicated. Burke mentioned that “the Army had a large intelligence organization. Willoughby had over 2,000 people in his intelligence organization. He had all kinds of electronic intelligence, but he had a lot of native

intelligence, too. I mean individuals." The Naval officers simply interpreted the collected information differently than Willoughby and his staff.

Burke recalled meeting with Willoughby on several occasions to compare naval and Army interpretations of the same evidence. Willoughby agreed to disagree with the Navy’s assessment based upon his staff’s interpretation of the evidence. Burke recalled Willoughby’s explanation being “quite logical” and possibly correct. Yet, Burke believed Willoughby made one critical error as the Army and Navy compared their assessments of CCF strength and intentions. He recalled Willoughby stating, “You heard what the section heads said. I don’t think the Chinese are in there either. I think we’re right. Furthermore, I don’t think they will come in.” According to Burke, Willoughby should not have uttered that final sentence in front of his G-2 staff because from that point onward Willoughby’s staff became biased toward that same interpretation. Still, Willoughby at least considered what Burke had to say. He did not dismiss Burke’s concerns altogether. Burke recalled Willoughby’s response to the Navy’s philosophical assertion that the Chinese would intervene. Willoughby remarked “I don’t think so. It may be, but I don’t think so.”

While Burke himself was by no means any more certain than Willoughby regarding Chinese intervention in force, his Navy intelligence personnel agreed to disagree and reported their interpretation to Admiral Forrest Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations.
Thus, it is very important to note that Washington military leaders were kept in the loop on both the Army’s and Navy’s varied interpretations of Chinese Communist presence and intentions in Korea. Moreover, the services were in fact talking to one another and sharing their analytical views based on all of the collected information they had between them.

In the absence of transcripts of several key radio messages and any remaining classified joint special operations reports to Tokyo, it is hard to determine just how many Chinese troops Clark, Norberg, or Brewer actually saw or reported to be crossing the Yalu River. However, one thing remains clear. Willoughby’s actions, in accordance with MacArthur’s directives, indicated a continuous, aggressive intelligence effort that continued unabated after the success at Inchon. Willoughby maintained a high level of situational awareness based upon what his most forward observers reported. Moreover, true to accepted practice in the intelligence business, he continuously attempted to verify that information through multiple intelligence sources and maintained a healthy skepticism toward information that could not be readily verified. Moreover, he worked with his sister services, and even though their interpretations differed, both were plausible and the services simply agreed to disagree.

**4.4 HUMINT Paints a Confusing Picture beyond the UN Front**

Despite laudable, aggressive collection efforts, Willoughby’s staff was plagued by the inability of other intelligence sources to verify single-source HUMINT reports. As a result the HUMINT reports received by Willoughby’s staff painted a very confusing picture beyond the U.N. front lines. To better understand this confusion and inability to
verify information one must consider intelligence reporting within the context of the tactical environment of the Eighth Army and X Corps as they advanced into North Korea.

A shortage of ships and aircraft transports hampered the logistical operations of the Eighth Army and X Corps. General Walker had to await the availability of transport ships to move his logistical supplies from Japan to Korea. Those ships had just been tasked to land Major General Almond’s X Corps at the port of Wonsan on the east coast of the peninsula. For reasons of geography, ease of resupply, and, perhaps, MacArthur’s greater faith in Major General Almond as opposed to Lieutenant General Walker, MacArthur kept his command divided between the two. With the Taebaek Mountain range essentially bisecting North Korea from North to South, MacArthur thought it best to supply Eighth Army and X Corps through their own port facilities on the west and east coasts, respectively. MacArthur felt that this configuration, would enable his forces to advance north more rapidly along a wider frontage to defeat the remaining elements of the NKPA and gain control of the entire peninsula.79

Aside from transport and logistical challenges, the two forces seemed to progress rather quickly. Pyongyang fell to the Eighth Army when the NKPA abandoned it with little opposition on 19 October 1950. Meanwhile, On 26 October, Almond’s forces landed at Wonsan unopposed after delaying their landing by a week due to the harbor being heavily mined. In the intervening days, the ROK I Corps had advanced overland and seized Wonsan. As Generals Walker and Almond began to move their units north, Eighth Army and X Corps units began to capture Chinese Communist troops.

On 25 October 1950, troops from the Eighth Army’s I ROK Corps captured the first Chinese Communist prisoner of war. That prisoner claimed that his unit consisted of 2,000 Chinese and 150 North Korean troops and that the unit had crossed the Yalu River from Manchuria into Sinuiju, North Korea on 19 October. In addition, he claimed that all personnel in his unit had been outfitted in North Korean uniforms before leaving Antung, Manchuria for North Korea. He also claimed that he and his comrades were specifically instructed that if captured they were not to speak unless they spoke Korean.80

In hindsight, this is a fairly obvious ploy on the enemy’s part to preserve the façade that the enemy unit was made up entirely of North Koreans. However, at the time of the report, Eighth Army and FECOM/UNC General Headquarters had received numerous reports since July 1950 of Chinese Communist volunteers serving in North Korean units.81 Moreover, before the start of the war, there were massive numbers of native Koreans, who had been serving in Chinese Peoples Liberation Army units in Manchuria, that were subsequently returned to North Korea to fight alongside their NKPA brethren. By 28 October, Willoughby and his staff began to think that this “well established pattern” of the CCF releasing its native Korean troops might “have been repeated to the extent of the


81 FRU/FEC Rpt. ZJY 1226, 232130K July 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Series 2, Folder 6, MMA. Korean travelers who left Seoul in mid-July 1950 reported that members of the Chinese Communist Eighth Route Army were in Seoul, wearing NKPA uniforms, they spoke little Korean and tried to avoid conversation. See also Radio Message from JSOB unit thru FRU/FEC, 25 Jul 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Series 2, Folder 6, MMA. The message confirms presence of 4,300 NKPA troops in Seoul 30 percent of which were believed to be CCF.
strength mentioned [by the aforementioned interrogated prisoner], i.e. 2-4,000 as a token force from the CCF.\textsuperscript{82}

In addition, as mentioned in earlier chapters, there had been numerous reports dating as far back as early August from clandestine sources, most of whom were Chinese Nationalists, stating that CCF units (some of which were intermixed with North Korean troops) were crossing into North Korea. Yet, there had been absolutely no other reporting to corroborate this information.\textsuperscript{83} With no other corroborating evidence, it would take more than one Chinese Communist prisoner’s report to convince Willoughby that entire regular CCF units were actually entering the conflict as opposed to mere “token units” of Chinese volunteers augmenting the NKPA.

Adding to the confusion about the ground order of battle were the by-passed elements of shattered NKPA units, which fought on in UN rear areas as guerrilla forces. These guerrilla bands aimed at wreaking havoc on UN supply trains and rear area targets. They also raided local villages for food and clothing. In addition, those guerrilla bands that could keep moving north did so to rejoin their comrades and reconstitute NKPA units.\textsuperscript{84} Prisoner interrogation reporting revealed that these elements traveled in bands from 25-50 people or as many as 500-1,000 in some cases. Some of these units managed to get Soviet-made, handheld, tactical radios with a range of 20 kilometers for communications. Others might have paid attention to Beijing and Moscow radio broadcasts, which were

\textsuperscript{82} GHQ, FEC DIS. No. 2971, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: “Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part 1,” MMA.

meticulous in addressing “activities of guerrillas in UN rear areas” and were possibly means of command and control for the guerrilla fighters. Many of these guerrilla units began to wreak havoc in Eighth Army and X Corps rear areas and along their front lines as well. On the night of 24-25 November 1950, an unknown number of enemy demolished the railway bridge five miles south of Yongchon. In hindsight, this and similar actions in UN rear areas is indicative of the coordination between guerilla operatives and CCF units to sever UN supply lines in preparation for the CCF’s planned counteroffensive. However, viewed strictly in terms of North Korean enemy activity, it could also be interpreted as final efforts by the by-passed elements of the NKPA to slow down the UN advance through North Korea. As of 27 November 1950, Willoughby and his staff estimated that 30 percent of total UN troop strength was engaged with guerrilla elements in Korea. (See Figure 51)

In hindsight, one could attribute much of the front line guerrilla activity to CCF controlled elements that could very well have coordinated with Korean guerrillas bands making their way back north. Doing so would help to preserve the façade of limited CCF

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84 GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2984, 10 November 1950, RG-407: Army AG Command Reports 1949-1954, Box 366, Staff Section Reports, Annex 3, Part II, Supplemental Documents G-2, 1-10 November 1950, NARA II.
intervention. Ever since the success of Operation Chromite, the battlefield situation against the NKPA remnants was in a constant state of flux. Eventually, the combination of North Korean guerrillas, reconstituted NKPA units, and the infiltration of CCF units from Manchuria made UN efforts to determine enemy strength extremely difficult, especially when trying to determine how much of reported enemy strength could be attributed to full fledged Chinese Communist troop units operating in North Korea.

By 28 October Willoughby’s staff reported that

From a tactical viewpoint, with victorious UN divisions in full deployment, it would appear that the auspicious time for such intervention has long since passed; it is difficult to believe that such a move, if planned, would have been postponed to a time when remnant NKPA forces have been reduced to a low point of effectiveness.88

Still, in the same intelligence summary, Willoughby’s staff felt that the interrogation reports from the first Chinese prisoner captured by the Eighth Army three days earlier were important enough to mention. The details of the reports were placed in the context of a repetition of the “well-established pattern” of the CCF releasing to the NKPA North Koreans who had been serving in its ranks. By 27 October the Eighth Army G-2, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton, had reported that a Chinese division was dug in one mile north of Unsan.89 Still, for a theater wide assessment of this new enemy contact, Willoughby was seeking more information on possible Chinese intervention from across

88 GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2971, 28 October 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: “Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in Korean War, Part I,” MMA.
the entire UN front. This fact is captured in the last statement on FECOM’s 28 October intelligence summary, which read, “further detail will develop with more interrogation.”

Human intelligence reports coming in at theater level on 28 October drove that assessment. These reports gave Willoughby and MacArthur reason to believe the Chinese Communists would not intervene. A partially redacted CIA report dated 28 October 1950, from what is most likely a Chinese Nationalist HUMINT source (still protected today under security classification), revealed information from inside Communist China’s policymaking circles. This source reported that

It was decided in early October at a conference in Peiping attended by Chinese, Soviet, and North Korean leaders that if UN troops crossed the 38th Parallel and North Korean forces were unable to hold them, the main part of the North Korean forces would be withdrawn to Manchuria for future use while the balance would carry on Guerrilla warfare in Korea. The Chinese Communists and the USSR regard the Korean War as virtually ended and are not planning a counteroffensive…the bulk of the Chinese Communist units had been withdrawn from Korea, leaving only skeleton forces in order to create the impression that a large number of Chinese Communist forces were still present, thus deceiving U.S. intelligence so that the maximum number of US troops would be committed in Korea for the longest possible time. (See again Figure 10, Introduction).

The CIA concurred with this source’s indications of overall Soviet and Chinese Communist intentions. They did so because up until 28 October 1950, there was no confirmed presence of “independent, organized Chinese Communist units in Korea.”

90 Ibid.
91 This report is sanitized to protect sources and methods. The information in the 28 October estimate clearly could not be gleaned from PHOTINT. Given the content of the intelligence mentioned in the report it is clear that the sanitized parts of the report are there to protect either HUMINT and/or COMINT sources and methods whether those are Chinese Nationalist or some other source is not clear but the fact that the source explicitly refers to deceptive exaggeration on the part of the Chinese Communists reflects an apparent consistency that intelligence analysts saw between this source reporting “skeleton” forces and Chinese forces reported to be in North Korea based on prisoner interrogation. Central Intelligence Agency
Moreover, the reports of Chinese “skeleton forces” had been “consistent with [other protected sources- possibly COMINT or HUMINT] reports thus far received on Chinese Communist participation in the Korean fighting.”

However, further details emerged. Major General Almond’s X Corps, making its way northward out of the east coast port of Wonsan, was already beginning to capture Chinese Communist prisoners. In a seventy-two hour period, from 26-29 October, X Corps took eighteen Chinese Communist prisoners of war all claiming to be from the 370th Regiment of the 124th CCF Division of the 42d CCF Army (a CCF Army is the equivalent of an American Corps). Prisoner interrogation reports were sufficiently detailed and reliable enough for Willoughby to confirm this regiment’s identification to the JCS. These troops had reportedly crossed the Yalu River with their units on 16 October in the vicinity of Manpojin (See Figure 46). Some of the prisoners spoke both the Peking and North Mandarin Chinese dialects.

Willoughby had sent this last report after having flown to Korea to see the evidence for himself. X Corps Deputy Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) William J. McCaffrey recalled that meeting vividly. He mentioned that Acting FECOM Chief of Staff, Major General Doyle O. Hickey, had accompanied Willoughby to Korea. After X-Corps G-2, Lieutenant Colonel William Quinn, had presented Willoughby and Hickey with his interrogation results and physically showed them the CCF prisoners of war, Hickey asked Willoughby for his assessment of the enemy situation. McCaffrey

Intelligence Estimate, 28 October 1950. CIA-RDP, Job number 78-01617A, Box number 0061, Folder number 0002, Document number 0052-2. Approved for release 2003/02/28. CREST, NARA II.

92 Ibid.
recalled that when Hickey asked Willoughby how many CCF he thought were present in North Korea Willoughby replied “as few as 10,000 general and all volunteers.” At that point McCaffrey claimed he had to bite his tongue in disgust. He claimed that Willoughby “knew better” and stubbornly denied the raw evidence in trying to prove MacArthur’s “Assumption A,” that the CCF would not intervene in Korea, to be correct. McCaffrey felt Willoughby should “roast in hell” for downplaying what McCaffrey viewed as unmistakable proof of deliberate intervention in Korea by organized regular units of Chinese Communist Forces.

McCaffrey’s frustration with the FECOM/UNC G-2 is understandable but not necessarily warranted. Willoughby was never quick to jump to conclusions without confirming information by multiple intelligence sources. At that moment in late October 1950, faced with Quinn’s details and the Chinese speaking prisoners, and a lack of both PHOTINT and, most likely, COMINT reports to confirm the prisoner reporting, Willoughby would only begrudgingly concede that at least some elements, possibly a vanguard of Division size CCF units were physically present in North Korea. Moreover, the idea that these units were “token” elements of CCF that did not necessarily indicate full-scale CCF intervention was not some pipe-dream Willoughby constructed.

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93 CINCFE to DA (JCS) Washington, C-67851, 31 October 1950, RG-9: Collection of Messages (Radiograms), 1945-1951, Box 31, Folder: War CX-Misc, MMA.
94 Telephonic interview between the author and Lieutenant General William J. McCaffrey, USA (retired), on 3 September 2004.
95 Lieutenant William J. McCaffrey, USA (retired), interview with Colonel Thomas Fergusson, USA (retired), Interview #3, 17 September 1994, Joins X Corps in Tokyo- includes Inchon, Seoul, and North Korea. Side B, Tape #3 of 4. Copies of original oral history tapes given to author with full permissions for use by Colonel Thomas Fergusson, USA (retired).
The idea was based on prisoner reporting received from Chinese prisoners captured near Unsan on 28 October (See Figure 52). One prisoner claimed to belong to the 2d Battalion 56th Unit, Chinese Peace Preservation Army in Korea. He also claimed that the 1st, 2d, and 3d battalions were composed of the 118th, 119th, and 120th Divisions of the 40th CCF Army. He also claimed that the 40th CCF Army and its 3 divisions remained at Antung on the Manchurian side of the Yalu River while “token forces” from each of the three divisions entered Korea on 20 October.97

An additional CCF prisoner interrogation report revealed a member of an alleged 55th Unit captured by the U.S. 5th Regimental Combat Team on 28 October. The prisoner stated that his 55th Unit belonged to the 39th CCF Army and was composed of 3 battalions taken from the 115th, 116th, and 117th Divisions respectively. He also claimed that 2,000 CCF troops from his unit crossed the Yalu River from Antung to Sinuiju on 21 October. In addition, the prisoner stated that an estimated 80 percent of the men in his unit were nationalists, who were forced into the CCF ranks. He also stated that the CCF 55th unit contained no North Koreans and that similar “token forces” from the 38th CCF Army comprised a 54th CCF unit.98 If these reports are juxtaposed with a lack of COMINT and PHOTINT reporting to corroborate the prisoner’s claims then the whole token force theory actually makes some sense. It makes even more sense when one considers the fact that this initial Chinese intervention ended almost as suddenly as it started.

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Notwithstanding the viability of a token force theory, Admiral Arleigh Burke recalled that after the presence of elements of the 124th CCF Division was revealed by X Corps, Willoughby had to at least partially reverse his earlier assessment of Chinese strength in North Korea, which he did promptly. Burke recalled “that was one good thing about Willoughby. When he was wrong, he said he was wrong as hell and shifted over right fast.” Willoughby’s reversal is reflected in the Department of the Army G-2’s Joint Daily SITREP of 1 November 1950. In this report, the Army G-2 relays Willoughby’s findings that accept the presence of the 124th CCF Division at a strength of 7,500 in addition to the lead battalions of the three subordinate divisions of the 38th, 39th, and 40th CCF Armies, respectively for a total strength of 16,500 CCF troops in North Korea. The CIA concurred with Willoughby’s assessment that these latter units were battalions of lead divisions of CCF Armies, and relatively small numbers of Chinese troops were present in North Korea, which did not, in and of itself, indicate Chinese intent to intervene decisively in the war.

In recalling his Korean War interactions with Willoughby, X Corps G-2, Lieutenant Colonel William Quinn, took great pride in the late October 1950 meeting with

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100 Department of the Army, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Joint SITREP No. 125, dated 1 November 1950. p. 2. Papers of Harry S. Truman: President’s Secretary’s File: Intelligence File, Box 220, Folder: Situation Reports 121-135, October 26-November 15 1950, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.
Willoughby in allegedly proving Willoughby wrong and pinning the blame for the late November 1950 events entirely on Willoughby’ shoulders. Quinn asserted that in later October and early November Willoughby refused to acknowledge that the CCF were entering North Korea in force. He claimed that one of the biggest reasons behind Willoughby’s stubbornness was that Willoughby discounted Chinese Nationalist intelligence reports because he felt they were self-serving.\textsuperscript{102}

Yet, Willoughby does not appear to be the only intelligence officer leery of Chinese Nationalist reporting. Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton, the Eighth Army G-2 actually withheld a report from a source close to Chinese (Nationalist) First Secretary Wang Chi-Shen of the Chinese Nationalist embassy in Seoul. The Eighth Army counterintelligence source reported that the First Secretary in conversation with an informant on 31 October stated that on 1 November 1950 150,000 CCF troops would cross the Yalu River at Antung and engage UN forces. The source further stated that there were already 30,000 CCF troops in Korea. The timing of this report is interesting in that Eighth Army forces had recently made contact with CCF forces near Unsan. Yet Tarkenton believed the truth of this report could not be judged since it came third-hand from a Chinese Nationalist source. He elected not to pass this report to UNC/FECOM General Headquarters.\textsuperscript{103}


\textsuperscript{102} Project 81-E Lieutenant General William W. Quinn, USA, (Ret). Interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. Doyle, USA 1981, p. 71. Papers of Lieutenant General William W. Quinn, USA (retired), Box “Oral History”, Folder: Oral history-(Bound/Unbound Copy), USAMHI.

\textsuperscript{103} Headquarters Eight Army Internal Checkslip: CIC Report, dated 1 November 1950 signed by Lieutenant Colonel James C.Tarkenton, RG-338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and 245
Clay Blair, the late author of *The Forgotten War* would most likely have argued that Tarkenton’s decision lends further credence to his assertion that Tarkenton’s assessment mirrored Willoughby’s when it came to evaluating sources.  

Blair quoted Eighth Army G-3, Colonel John Dabney, who stated Tarkenton’s views were “under the influence” of and “colored” by Willoughby. However, several valid reasons existed that explain why Willoughby and Tarkenton distrusted Chinese Nationalist reports. If one considers the many so-called Chinese Nationalists (former veterans of Chang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Army) that were captured as CCF prisoners of war, the often circular, inaccurate reporting of legitimate Chinese Nationalist agents, which placed regular CCF units in North Korea as far back as August and September 1950, and the Quomintang’s political desire to exacerbate American worries of Chinese Communists in general, it is not surprising that Willoughby and Tarkenton distrusted much of the Chinese Nationalist reporting.

Willoughby’s initial hesitance to assess that pure units of Chinese Communist Forces had entered North Korea, is evident in his 31 October Daily Intelligence Summary (DIS), which concluded that:

> The recent stiffened resistance encountered by UN forces and the setbacks experienced by units of the ROK II Corps indicate the entrance of fresh troops into battle. Those may be either reorganized or previously...
unlocated North Korean units or, on the other hand, *may* [italics mine] signify the commitment of Chinese Communist Forces to the Korean conflict.¹⁰⁷

However, by 5 November, Willoughby’s summary of enemy capabilities and potential for the conduct of offensive operations shows complete acknowledgement of the Chinese Communist presence. It read in part:

> This potential [for an enemy counter-offensive] has been materially strengthened by the entrance of the CCF into the Korean War. Although this capability is limited at the moment to small unit attacks and counter-offensives, the large scale employment of readily available Manchurian forces would pose a serious threat to present UN positions.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, by November 10, Willoughby asserted that

> information from various sources gives strong support to the assumption that the Chinese communists intend to go all out against UN forces in Korea, besides stepping up their efforts in Indo-China. Although allowance must be made in considering the source of the reports [mostly POWs], there is an imposing array of seemingly established facts plus evident sincerity of opinion among the best-informed sources, such as to make it entirely possible that the prediction of all-out action by Chinese Communists in Korea is justified. Among the reasons advanced why the Chinese Communists have delayed entry in North Korea, in force, without speculating on Moscow influences are: 1) Chinese communists assumed that the North Koreans would win and therefore were not prepared to intervene on such short notice. 2) Delaying their major effort until the fighting reached the frontier region greatly shortened their lines of communication, which was particularly important with UN forces controlling the sea and air and also it gave them maximum time to prepare. Besides moving up troops from other parts of China, it was necessary for them to replenish stocks, supplies, and equipment in Manchuria which were seriously depleted in aiding the North Koreans.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ GHQ, FEC DIS, No. 2974, 31 Oct. 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part 1, MMA.
¹⁰⁸ GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2979, 5 Nov. 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part 1, MMA.
¹⁰⁹ GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2984, 10 Nov. 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in Korean War, Part 1, MMA.
Willoughby’s 10 November assessment is not far off from reflecting the main Chinese concerns in early November 1950. Recently declassified documents from Chinese and Russian archives suggest that Mao Zedong was indeed concerned about building up adequate logistics to support their massive troop strength arrayed against the UN forces. Moreover, the evidence suggests that CCF leaders also possessed a healthy fear of UN airpower. Correspondence between Mao and Soviet Premier, Josef Stalin documented Mao’s requests to Stalin to supply arms, ammunition, and air cover to the under equipped CCF. 110

The historical debate continues regarding whether or not Stalin balked at providing Soviet air support to the CCF in early October or whether the Chinese Communist Politburo simply balked at the idea of intervention. Regardless of who hesitated, Mao and “Chinese Peoples’ Volunteer Forces” leader, General Peng Dehuai, decided upon intervention and tailored their operational plans to include a six month build-up inside of a defensive perimeter inside North Korea and, barring an earlier UN attack in the interim, attacking toward Pyongyang and Wonsan only after all preparations were completed. 111 Thus, Willoughby’s intelligence assessments at this time, while carefully qualified, are in large degree accurate and precise. What Quinn and McCaffrey have labeled as Willoughby’s stubborn (to the point of being criminal), refusal to accept CCF presence in


North Korea, is better characterized as a cautious, methodical assessment based upon the available facts.

Quinn, in his own assessment of the first U.N. encounter with CCF regular troops, stated that

It also seems significant that overt Chinese Communist participation was accomplished in such a piecemeal manner. With literally scores of divisions [in nearby Manchuria] at their disposal, with a tactical air force which was readily available from the beginning, with profitable targets at Inchon, Kaesong, and Pyongyang, and with one strategic avenue of approach from Manchuria (Antung-Sinuiju-Pyongyang-Seoul) still open, they nevertheless failed to take the step which would have led to conventional combat.\textsuperscript{112}

Thus, Quinn himself acknowledges that the initial CCF intervention fell short of an outright offensive. Even Quinn’s subordinate G-2, Colonel B.T. Holcomb, of the 1\textsuperscript{st} Marine Division, whose units were in contact with CCF forces assessed that the CCF presence was that of “token forces not likely to prove a serious obstacle to our continued advance.”\textsuperscript{113} Holcomb, like Willoughby and the CIA, believed that there was no clear advantage to be gained by all out intervention by the CCF when the NKPA was on the verge of complete collapse.\textsuperscript{114} The limited time of intense contact between UN and CCF units in late October removed any doubt about CCF presence in North Korea, but it did not remove all doubt regarding the aggregate strength of CCF units present in North Korea or their overall intentions in fighting in Korea.

\textsuperscript{112} Periodic Intelligence Report No. 37. “The Chanagang-Do ‘Redoubt.’” p. 2. Papers of Lieutenant General William W. Quinn, USA (retired), Box 3: Korea Combat Reports, Folder: Intelligence Reports: Korea Sep-December 1950, USAMHI.

As was customary in the military intelligence profession, Willoughby refused to accept as fact reports that he could not corroborate with multiple intelligence sources. HUMINT reports from enemy prisoners and Chinese Nationalist agents were too risky to take simply at face value. Both Washington and FEC intelligence analysts distrusted the observation reports of Chinese Nationalist agents for two reasons. First, they feared that such reports were tainted by the Chiang Kai-shek’s political agenda, which favored at expanding the war into Communist China. Second, analysts feared the reports were circular and thus, reflected information FEC G-2 had passed to the Chinese Nationalists earlier.\(^\text{115}\) Army Chief of Staff J. Lawton Collins testified after the war that many, if not a majority, of Chinese Nationalist intelligence reports were “erroneous.”\(^\text{116}\)

Moreover, two out of three intelligence sources (COMINT and PHOTINT) could not necessarily confirm what these foreign HUMINT sources were reporting. Of course, this was due in large part to excellent Chinese camouflage techniques, nighttime troop movements, and the maintenance of radio silence. In addition, the wearing of North Korean uniforms by CCF troops made discerning North Korean and Chinese Communist units extremely difficult especially, for aerial observers.\(^\text{117}\) On this basis, it was extremely difficult to accurately estimate Chinese Communist troop strength as opposed to North

\(^{114}\) Ibid.


\(^{117}\) FRU/FEC 1845, 270055 October 1950, RG-6, Series 2, Folder 7, MMA.; see also Message. GX 26742 CG EUSA K to CINCE, 262200I Oct 1950, Eighth Army SITREP, RG 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter), Box 62, Folder: G-2 EUSA K OPNS SITREP October 1950, NARA II.
Korean troop strength. Only after multiple intelligence sources revealed consistent information would Willoughby accept the presence of regular Chinese Communist units as fact.

4.5 COMINT: A World War II Mainstay Is Thwarted

Major General Willoughby set a very high standard of intelligence verification. Ideally, if he could verify information with all three of his main forms of intelligence, COMINT, PHOTINT, and HUMINT or at least two of those three forms of intelligence then his information would be reasonably reliable. To achieve this standard, Willoughby applied all tactical level and higher COMINT assets to the maximum extent possible. As UN forces advanced north in pursuit of the NKPA, he ensured all major commands supported “special intelligence (COMINT) detachments to include national agencies operating under or in conjunction with G-2, GHQ, UNC in the development of intelligence. This was to be done “in anticipation of or concurrent with the conditions outlined” in UNC Operations Plan (OPLAN) 11-50’s Essential Elements of Information (EEI). The first EEI listed in that OPLAN addressed the question of whether or not the USSR or Chinese Communists would resupply or reinforce resisting elements in North Korea and the type of supplies, methods, and routes by which they would do so.118

All other intelligence missions performed by the major subordinate commands were to be done “as directed by CINCUNC.”119 The fact that Willoughby explicitly directed COMINT coordination and support among all the services and government

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agencies indicates the greater relative importance of this particular form of intelligence in his assessments compared to the others. The COMINT field stations in the Far East had come through for Willoughby in hasty yet relatively short order in breaking NKPA codes in July and August of 1950. Undoubtedly, he hoped for similar results against the Chinese Communists and the Soviets.

However, at the tactical level, such expectations of COMINT were not very realistic. In early October 1950, tactical COMINT units were still arriving in theater through the port of Inchon. These units worked in a constant catch-up mode to get newly trained operators acclimatized and proficient in the finer parts of North Korean military terminology. The 60th Signal Service Company out of Fort Lewis, Washington arrived on 9 October 1950 and did not commence operations in support of Eighth Army until the 16th of October. Operating out of truck mounted shelters, company personnel intercepted, processed, and analyzed raw NKPA traffic. Operations continued unabated as the Eighth Army offensive pushed north, and the 60th Signal Service Company relocated from Seoul to Eighth Army’s advanced headquarters in Pyongyang. Routine traffic analysis allowed American analysts to follow the reconsolidation of the NKPA as their scattered units gathered in Pyongyang in early October and then evacuated farther north.

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119 Ibid., pp.4-5.
The 60th Signal Service Company and other tactical level COMINT units in Korea proved useless against the CCF when they appeared in North Korea in late October. With no Chinese Mandarin linguists in these units and few, if any, Chinese tactical radio transmissions to analyze, these assets could provide only limited traffic analysis and no early warning to the Eighth Army or X Corps. Eventually, tactical COMINT units had to evacuate to Seoul and points farther south when the CCF counterattacked in late November.123

Meanwhile, at the operational and strategic COMINT levels, AFSA code breakers were just becoming sophisticated in their abilities to exploit North Korean codes while few hands were working on Chinese Communist codes. Only about eight to twelve COMINT analysts were still monitoring Chinese Communist plaintext civil communications at the start of the Korean War. The United States had monitored Chinese communications of all types at the end of World War II. However postwar budget cuts forced the cryptologic community to reduce its collection scope. Targets in the Far East were the only ones that suffered reductions in assigned personnel going from 261 targets in June 1946 to 112 by December 1949. Coverage of Chinese Communist military communications had been abandoned due to pressure to allocate all available resources to Soviet targets.124

After the Communists came to power in China in 1949, American COMINT consumers began to request more coverage of Chinese targets. In March 1950, the United States Communications Intelligence Board (USCIB) began to allocate new personnel and

123 Ibid.
resources to Chinese targets. Still, there were large amounts of lost ground to cover.
Continued collection on Chinese Communist civil communications did reveal intelligence on the Chinese Communist economy, transportation and logistics, and the positions of military units within Chinese Communist territory.125

This collection and traffic analysis enabled AFSA to track the movements of large Chinese Communist units toward the Manchurian-North Korean border region in the summer and autumn of 1950. However, the CCF astutely maintained strict radio silence while crossing into North Korea. A severe shortage of radio equipment precluded their use of radios below regimental level. Other than the use of field telephones at company level, the Chinese resorted to using couriers, bugles, flares, whistles, and flags.126 Moreover, what limited transmissions UN forces did intercept could not be readily transcribed due to a lack of Mandarin Chinese linguists.

At first glance, such limitations appear crippling to UN COMINT efforts. However, many CCF units were identified in Manchuria by means of traffic analysis not just by unsecure civil communications traffic. Traffic analysis is a process in which message “externals” or technical data resident in radio transmissions are analyzed to determine patterns in communication between various units. Each individual unit of an organized armed force has its own radio set with unique characteristics which comprise the electronic “signature” or “footprint” of the unit. The greater the frequency of messages passed between military units, the more these various footprints or signatures become familiar. Increasingly familiar signatures allow analysts to make increasingly accurate

125 Ibid., p. 10.
inferences of transmitted information that can eventually identify the units in question. This technique, if applied patiently for extended periods of time can bear fruit even if the message could not be decrypted. 127 ASAPAC cryptanalyst Al Wight attested to the fact that traffic analysis was the primary means by which ASAPAC first began to identify CCF units moving into Manchuria during the early weeks of the Korean War. 128 Traffic analysis enabled Willoughby’s staff to determine a considerable portion of the CCF order of battle in Manchuria before the bulk of those forces were brought to bear on UN forces in Korea.

However, even with Willoughby’s staff cataloging COMINT indicators of massing CCF troops in the Manchurian-Korean border region, General MacArthur had a penchant for disavowing intelligence that did not match his strategic designs. In the Southwest Pacific Areas in World War II, ULTRA intelligence (COMINT) had aided MacArthur numerous times in defeating Japanese forces in Papua/New Guinea and later in the Philippines. However, MacArthur often ignored these intelligence reports when they did not mesh with his strategic designs of returning to the Philippines. 129

MacArthur repeated this behavior in 1945 by disavowing ULTRA reporting of the huge Japanese build-up on Kyushu during the planning stages of Operation Olympic. 130 In fact, MacArthur conjectured that the Japanese might be resorting to radio deception tactics to mislead the Allied forces about true Japanese strength on the island of Kyushu.

128 Al Wight. E-mail correspondence with the author, 21 August 2005.
With President Truman’s concurrence, General George C. Marshall, as U.S. Army Chief of Staff, overruled MacArthur’s desire to invade Japan and canceled the impending invasion of the Japanese home islands. In doing so, America avoided a bloodbath that would potentially have cost hundreds of thousands of both American and Japanese casualties.

In the Korean War context, ASAPAC cryptanalyst Al Wight recalled that MacArthur had little respect for COMINT as a general rule. Wight recalled forwarding multiple reports to United Nations Command General Headquarters in Tokyo that tracked Chinese Communist troop movements into the Manchurian-North Korean border region. In those reports Wight predicted Chinese Communist troop intervention. Wight recalled Willoughby eventually calling down to ASAPAC headquarters telling them not to send any more such reports. This was not intended to prevent the flow of COMINT traffic altogether as much as it was to quell the assumption Wight himself had made regarding Chinese Communist intervention. Wight admitted that his prediction that the Chinese would intervene was an assumption on his part based upon Chinese Communist troop dispositions in the Manchurian border area north of the Yalu River. He had no evidence of any actual CCF presence inside North Korea.132

Apparently, Wight’s assessment was too alarmist for MacArthur’s liking. Wight admitted he never saw any Chinese COMINT traffic that detected or pinpointed CCF units within North Korea itself until after the CCF had attacked UN forces. According to

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130 Dr. Edward Drea shows substantial documentary evidence of MacArthur’s views in his detailed study of MacArthur and Willoughby’s use of signals (communications) intelligence, then known as ULTRA or MAGIC in the Southwest Pacific Theater of World War II. Ibid. pp. 222-223.
131 Ibid.
Wight, when General Willoughby was asked by ASAPAC to explain the reason for his odd request to stop forwarding COMINT based predictions of Chinese Communist intervention, Willoughby remarked that General MacArthur believed he had a more reliable intelligence source that assured him that the Chinese would not intervene. While Willoughby never stated what that source was, Wight recalled that MacArthur prided himself on his close contacts with the Chinese Nationalists, and Wight and his ASAPAC colleagues always believed MacArthur was relying upon those contacts for the intelligence he desired on Chinese Communist intentions and troop dispositions. Thus, it is interesting to note an apparent divergence between MacArthur and Willoughby’s relative weightings of the various sources of intelligence. MacArthur apparently favored Chinese Nationalist HUMINT agents close to the Chinese Communist Politburo over COMINT whereas Willoughby was highly skeptical of Chinese Nationalist reporting for reasons already stated. If Wight’s presumption that MacArthur’s more reliable source was a Chinese Nationalist holds true then a 28 October report from a CIA agent, with access to Mao Zedong’s high level meetings, quoted earlier in this chapter is worth re-examining.

The HUMINT source inside Communist China reported

It was decided in early October at a conference in Peiping attended by Chinese, Soviet, and North Korean leaders that if UN troops crossed the 38th Parallel and North Korean forces were unable to hold them, the main part of the North Korean forces would be withdrawn to Manchuria for future use while the balance would carry on Guerrilla warfare in Korea. The Chinese Communists and the USSR regard the Korean War as virtually ended and are not planning a counteroffensive…the bulk of the Chinese Communist units had been withdrawn from Korea, leaving only skeleton forces in order to create the impression that a large number of Chinese Communist forces were still present, thus deceiving U.S.

132 Electronic mail correspondence interview questions between Al Wight and the author, 21 August 2005.
133 Ibid.
intelligence so that the maximum number of US troops would be committed in Korea for the longest possible time. (See again Figure 10 in Introduction).  

If MacArthur trusted this particular Chinese HUMINT source above all others, a source that was physically closest to the place where Chinese intentions could actually be revealed (be they true or false as presented or reported by the source in question), then MacArthur’s subsequent decisions begin to make more sense. Although in hindsight MacArthur’s apparent faith in this HUMINT source was gravely misplaced, Wight’s recollections indicate that MacArthur may have valued a HUMINT source closest to the Chinese Communist leadership over COMINT.

Moreover, Al Wight’s recollections indicate that MacArthur did not simply ignore COMINT. Instead, MacArthur believed he had more reliable HUMINT sources on which to base his assessment that the Chinese Communists would not intervene. PHOTINT was likely a distant third with regard to discerning Chinese Communist intentions since, more often than not, enemy intentions are beyond any degree of photographic resolution. In contrast, Willoughby’s apparent unwillingness to accept personal ownership of suppressing COMINT based predictions of Chinese intervention indicates his greater faith in COMINT reporting compared to his commander.

Contrary to Willoughby’s guidance, Al Wight continued to forward his COMINT reports to both UN Command General Headquarters in Tokyo and ASA Headquarters in Washington and what was done with the reports from there was up to those agencies.  

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134 Central Intelligence Agency Intelligence Estimate, 28 October 1950. Approved for release 2003/02/28, CIA-RDP, Job number 78-01617A, Box number 0061, Folder number 0002, Document number 0052-2, CREST, NARA II.

135 Ibid.
Thus, it can be safely said that no COMINT reports regarding Chinese troop movements in October or November 1950 were denied to Washington since a direct reporting channel always existed.

Although COMINT reports were forwarded to both U.N. General Headquarters in Tokyo and to key political and military decision-makers in Washington, the enemy situation unfolding between October and November 1950 was in no way clear-cut. Fusion of all available intelligence sources into one overarching assessment of NKPA, Soviet, and Chinese Communist capabilities and intentions was a necessity. The Central Intelligence Agency tried to provide this in the form of Daily Situation Summaries that incorporated all reporting from all available intelligence sources including COMINT. Heavily redacted versions of these CIA reports, which still mask almost all of the actual COMINT reporting, have been declassified and provide some limited information on what assessments were made of CCF troop dispositions and intentions based on COMINT reporting.

As early as 30 September 1950 COMINT reporting from North Korean People’s Army intercepts revealed reference to an “infantry regiment that came from China.” This unit could have been one of two possible entities: an all Korean unit that had fought with the CCF prior to the Korean War, which had been or was then being returned to North Korea, or a recently arrived CCF unit. While that message traffic did not allow for a positive identification, the tone of the message was such that it indicated a recent arrival. However, COMINT information up to that point from Chinese Nationalist or other sources had not indicated any intent on the part of Communist China to intervene in the
Korean fighting. Numerous Chinese Nationalist HUMINT reports had indicated the presence of some non-Korean Chinese personnel as far back as early July 1950.\footnote{Central Intelligence Agency. Interim Situation Summary, 30 September 1950. Papers of Harry S. Truman. President’s Secretary’s File: Intelligence File, Box 211, Folder: Situation Summaries [2 of 2], Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.}

Yet on 6 October 1950, the CIA reported that “There is still no firm evidence of the presence of non-Korean Chinese Communist units in Korea, although fragmentary information [redacted] …the possibility of close liaison.”\footnote{Central Intelligence Agency. Situation Summary, 6 October 1950. Papers of Harry S. Truman, President’s Secretary’s File: Intelligence File, Box 211, Folder: Situation Summaries [2 of 2], Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.} At a minimum, the context of this report indicates that COMINT detected North Korean-Chinese message traffic of a military nature. The same report also mentioned the continuing build-up of CCF field units in Manchuria from 85,000 to 155,000 based on the recent arrival and identification of two additional armies (corps) of the 4\textsuperscript{th} CCF Field Army. The arrival of that unit had brought estimated CCF strength in the Manchurian military district to 505,000.\footnote{Ibid.}

These reports, coupled with warnings from Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou En-Lai of CCF intervention if UN forces crossed the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel, created an ominous picture. That picture was ominous enough to make Al Wight assess that Chinese Communist intervention was on the horizon. But Zhou En-Lai’s (See Figure 53) warnings were relayed through the Burmese and Indian Ambassadors, who the CIA viewed as possible pawns in a Chinese Communist bluffing tactic.\footnote{Ibid.}

The CIA assessments in the remaining days of October 1950 reflected its belief in this alleged bluffing tactic. As of 13 October 1950, within 24 hours of the first CCF units
actually crossing the Yalu River, the CIA reported that “there is no reliable evidence that Chinese Communist units, as such, are in Korea.” That assessment remained unchanged through 27 October when the CIA reported that “there is no definitive evidence [redacted] of Soviet or Chinese Communist intervention in Korea.” The varied wording the CIA uses is important to note. In the 13 October report the CIA stated that it does not trust the sources it has that point to possible CCF intervention in Korea. On 27 October the CIA stated that the evidence they do have that could suggest CCF intervention of some sort is not enough to be convincing. However, with the benefit of hindsight one can see that circumstantial indicators abounded in the CIA’s 27 October report. That report described military commandeering of all Chinese railroad cars moving from Shanghai north to Manchuria, the apparent backlog and build-up of petroleum products in Manchuria, and the “large Chinese Communist purchases of drugs and medicines abroad over recent months which could, according to the CIA, indicate “military stockpiling.” Of course, the big question remained: Did these measures indicate CCF intent to intervene offensively in Korea or to merely defend its own border with Korea? No one knew the answer.

COMINT reporting in addition to its sister sources demonstrated that the potential for Chinese Communist intervention was clear and unmistakable, and everyone in the American and UN intelligence communities agreed on that issue. Thus, the whole situation hinged on Chinese Communist intentions. Even after the first CCF intervention in late

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139 Central Intelligence Agency. Interim Situation Summary, 30 September 1950, Papers of Harry S. Truman. President’s Secretary’s File: Intelligence File, Box 211, Folder: Situation Summaries [2 of 2], Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri. See also Ibid.
140 Central Intelligence Agency. Situation Summary, 13 October 1950, Papers of Harry S. Truman. President’s Secretary’s File: Intelligence File, Box 211, Folder: Situation Summaries [2 of 2], Harry S.
October, that question remained unresolved since the CCF suddenly broke contact and faded back into the hills of North Korea as fast as they had appeared. MacArthur was reassured by this apparent retrograde movement, and, apparently, so were his superiors in Washington.

In a manner reminiscent of the Operation Olympic scenario in World War II, both MacArthur and his superiors in Washington were privy to all COMINT reports bearing on the situation. But in the Korean War context, no cabinet level official, not even Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall, felt the need to alter MacArthur’s mission or overrule his decision to continue his advance to the Yalu River (See Figure 54). As mentioned earlier, Marshall had clearly demonstrated as recently as 1945 that he did not lack the courage to overrule MacArthur if the intelligence evidence warranted it. Thus, with the possibility of a third world war hanging in the balance, it is very hard to believe that Marshall, as the Secretary of Defense, would fail to recommend that President Truman and the JCS prevent MacArthur’s final offensive push if COMINT or other sources indicated massive Chinese strength inside North Korea. However, it is quite possible that the operational successes supported by COMINT in World War II led the American intelligence community, with Willoughby among them, to become overly dependent upon COMINT in general. Such dependence on any single intelligence source of intelligence relative to the others entails dangerous risk, especially if the enemy anticipates and exploits that dependence.
No one in Tokyo or Washington appears to have lent much credence to the possibility of the CCF engaging in radio deception operations. In addition to radio silence, one cannot rule out the possibility that the Chinese succeeded through false transmissions and false unit designations to deceive American COMINT analysts. For example, by 28 October the 54th, 55th, and 56th CCF “units,” to which numerous Chinese POWs claimed to belong, were first identified in the UN enemy order of battle. However, by 1 November Willoughby’s staff identified these “units” as the lead battalions of the 112th through 120th Divisions of the 38th, 39th, and 40th CCF Armies, respectively, of Communist China’s Fourth Field Army, whose movements American COMINT sources had been following inside Manchuria since mid-July.141

At the start of the Korean War, the Chinese Fourth Field Army had been positioned in eastern coastal areas opposite Formosa in preparation for an invasion. Following the NKPA invasion of South Korea, when American forces intervened, the U.S. Seventh Fleet interposed itself between the Chinese coast and Formosa. At that point, Mao Zedong decided to forgo his planned invasion of Formosa. By 1 September 1950, Fourth Field Army units began to move to the Manchurian-North Korean border area, and

141 http://www.nsa.gov/korea/papers.htm (website now defunct -hardcopy available upon request) “COMINT and the PRC Intervention in the Korean War.” Cryptologic Quarterly (declassified (Fort George G. Meade, Maryland: National Security Agency), p. 11; Army G-2; Joint SITREP NO. 125, dated 1 November 1950, p.2. Papers of Harry S. Truman, President’s Secretary’s File: Intelligence File, Box 220, Folder: Situation Reports 121-135 October 26-November 15, 1950, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri; These “token” units became a bit more fleshed out by 14 November 1950 from an estimated 16,500 as of 1 November 1950 to 76,800 by 14 Nov 1950. See also GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2988, 14 Nov. 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Order of Battle Annex, Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part 1, MMA.

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AFSA (actually ASAPAC) analysts tracked their movements along the railroad lines.142

Given that Chinese tactical radio communications were essentially non-existent during the movement of these units into North Korea, Willoughby’s staff eventually made the proper identification of the Chinese 38th, 39th, and 40th Armies after the initial contact in late October by comparing earlier intercepts of Chinese civil communications tracking military unit movements through China to the Manchurian – North Korean border region, to traffic analysis and to CCF prisoner interrogation reports.

Prisoner interrogations verified the coded unit designations. One CCF officer prisoner “stated that the 38th CCF Army was assigned the code designation of 54th unit for security reasons” with no alteration to the command or subordinate unit structures of the 38th CCF Army.143 Clearly, Chinese Communist Forces went to great lengths to conceal their order of battle and troop dispositions from UN intelligence collection assets.

According to one of Willoughby’s deputies (later the X Corps G-2) Lieutenant Colonel James H. Polk, Chang Kai-shek’s Chinese Nationalist COMINT personnel were reading what little Chinese Communist traffic was intercepted, “but no one trusted what they produced because it was invariably biased and self serving.” Polk proposed bringing some of Chiang Kai-shek’s COMINT people to work in Korea under American cryptanalysts, “but the Pentagon refused permission” most likely on grounds of security.144

144 Quotes taken from Clay Blair’s interview with General James H. Polk, USA (retired) cited in Clay Blair. The Forgotten War. p. 337.
Intercepted North Korean transmissions, which UN forces could intercept, decode, and read by this time, revealed the presence of a Chinese Communist 55th Force that was present during the initial CCF-UN clash in late October. Such ambiguous references to Chinese Communist units by their own allies reveals the extent to which Communist China sought to thwart U.N. attempts to determine the CCF order of battle. Chinese Communist communications security procedures are well documented in the correspondence of Mao Zedong with senior CCF leaders. A former Korean War intelligence officer and author, Patrick Roe, argued in his account of possible Chinese Communist deception measures that

The Chinese were well aware of the UNC’s capability to intercept radio traffic. As early as 1 September, Mao had sent a cautionary message to [3rd Field Army [Shanghai] Commander, Marshal Chen Yi, ordering him to use wire [landline] instead of radio telegrams for all confidential telegrams. Only non-classified information could be sent by radio. The rule was to be applied to the Chinese Communist Party, the government, and the military. So knowing or believing the UNC was reading their radio traffic, there can be little doubt the Chinese made deceptive radio traffic a mainstay of their deception campaign, using American technology against us.  

Roe’s makes the intriguing argument that Communist China resorted to a “coordinated campaign of deception,” which was aimed at making CCF forces in Korea appear much smaller than they were and then, after actually striking in force, making CCF forces in Korea appear much larger than they were. Roe argued that this deception took the form of hundreds of thousands of forces massed on the Manchurian border, some of which were, in fact, “Ghost Armies of Manchuria” that either never existed or, at least, never appeared

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in North Korea. If one compares Willoughby’s estimated CCF troop strengths and order of battle in Manchuria and North Korea from October to December 1950 to the actual CCF strengths and order of battle laid out by Chinese scholar Shu Guang Zhang one finds great disparity and several CCF units that never appeared in North Korea at any time in the conflict despite their earlier identification in Manchuria near the Korean border. These units are Roe’s “Ghost Armies of Manchuria” (See Figures 55 and 56). The alleged presence yet physical absence of these “ghost” units from the actual fighting make a compelling argument for Chinese Communist COMINT deception. Perhaps, the degree of Chinese success at such deception techniques remains a factor in why the COMINT reports from October through November 1950 still remain classified. Such successful deception would certainly help explain Willoughby’s slow acceptance of the presence of regular CCF units as opposed to Chinese “volunteers” augmenting the NKPA.

However, enough CCF units were gathered along the Manchurian – North Korean border area and apparently transmitting enough to convince Al Wight and his fellow ASAPAC cryptanalysts that CCF units would intervene in Korea. Wight believes that the CCF were not sophisticated enough to resort to elaborate deception techniques. He also believes that he and his ASAPAC colleagues knew enough about Chinese Communist

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146 Patrick C. Roe. “The Ghost Armies of Manchuria.” p. 2. This was Roe’s MacArthur Foundation presentation article based on and updating the information presented in his book The Dragon Strikes. This copy of the presentation article was e-mailed by Patrick C. Roe to the author with Roe’s permission for use as a secondary source.

communications systems and could accurately determine CCF unit sizes from traffic analysis.\footnote{Al Wight. E-mail correspondence with author, 21 August 2005. p. 2.}

Wight and his colleagues may have underestimated the Chinese Communists in this regard just as surely as the rest of the American intelligence community. The memoirs of Chinese Communist Field Marshall Nie Rongzhen, the former Chief of Staff of the Chinese Peoples’ Liberation Army, reveal Chinese Communist capabilities for COMINT deception dating back to 1941, when the Chinese Communists fought against Imperial Japanese forces. Nie Rongzhen recalled an instance when Japanese forces pursued his own into the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei area of China, which had been a Communist base area in 1941. He remembered coming to the realization that accurate Japanese pursuit and bombing of his forces had to come through the interception of his own unit’s radio communications. In response, he gave an order to his subordinate, Luo Wenfang, chief of headquarters scouting forces, which stated:

> The enemy may have located us through our radios. We will answer their trick with one of our own and encourage the enemy to attack. Military area radios should suspend operations at once, but you may take a small detachment and a radio to Taiyu Village, east of Leibu, where you can set up the radio, operate it on the original military area call sign and keep contacting various quarters.\footnote{Nie Rongzhen. \textit{Inside the Red Star: The Memoirs of Marshall Nie Rongzhen.} (Beijing: New World Press, 1988), pp. 446, 452. Special thanks to Pat Roe who referred the author to this source.}

Luo Wenfang understood the intent of the order stating “We are to leave the enemy one target for its air raids and mislead them into converging on the few of us so as to pin them down.”\footnote{Luo Wenfang understood the intent of the order stating “We are to leave the enemy one target for its air raids and mislead them into converging on the few of us so as to pin them down.” To which Nie Rongzhen replied “Exactly…this is a very arduous task. You must entice the enemy to converge on you without finding anything; you must make the...}
enemy pursue you without catching you.” Such measures worked very well for Nie Rongzhen and his forces and enabled them to escape from Japanese air raids and advancing ground forces. Clearly, Chinese Communist COMINT deception capabilities predated the Korean War by almost a decade. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that such capabilities only improved over those years as the CCF expanded in size. Moreover, Chinese Communist leaders were smart enough not to expose any of these improved capabilities in subsequent years. In his memoir chapter entitled “During the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea,” Nie Rongzhen never mentioned CCF radio communications.

Regardless of the degree of Chinese Communist deception, X Corps Deputy Chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel William McCaffrey believed MacArthur either ignored COMINT reporting altogether or Willoughby suppressed it from him. However, given Al Wight’s recollection of events and ASAPAC’s direct reporting channel to Washington, MacArthur’s preference for HUMINT reporting from sources closest to Mao Zedong’s inner circle and his dismissal of what he saw as less reliable COMINT-based projections of Chinese Communist intervention is what most likely happened. At the same time, Willoughby’s faith in COMINT could have been greatly misplaced due to deceptive traffic being sent out by the Chinese Communists and a lack of CCF radio traffic within North Korea. Such deceptive message traffic or the absence of it would have been consistent

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150 Ibid., p. 452.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid., pp. 633-658.
154 Author’s telephonic interview with Lieutenant General William J. McCaffrey, USA (retired), 3 September 2004.
with the 28 October HUMINT report. Thus, COMINT reporting most likely lulled Willoughby and further lulled MacArthur into a false sense of security with regard to the presence of CCF units in large numbers in North Korea.

One can draw two possible conclusions from such reporting. Willoughby, in good conscience, told his boss what he wanted to hear because COMINT reporting, replete with CCF deception, happened to comport with MacArthur’s strategic designs, or Willoughby told MacArthur exactly what he did not want to hear leading MacArthur to order Willoughby to stop forwarding ASAPAC COMINT reports warning of possible CCF intervention in Korea. Final resolution on this issue awaits further document declassification; however, one can safely dismiss the widely touted assertion that Willoughby simply manufactured intelligence to fit MacArthur’s strategic designs.

While documentary evidence of signal deception by the Chinese Communists is currently lacking, Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) William J. McCaffrey, the X Corps Deputy Chief of Staff, recalled a press conference General MacArthur gave in Wonsan in late February 1951 where the commanding general remarked to X Corps Commander, recently promoted Lieutenant General Ned Almond, “if we could only read the Chinese codes like we are reading the North Korean ones this war would be over soon.” McCaffrey also recalled that a FECOM G-2 staff officer, Lieutenant Colonel James Polk, promptly went to reporters following those remarks saying “For God’s sake

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155 Ibid. See also Lieutenant General (Ret.)William J. McCaffrey oral history interview with Colonel (ret,) Thomas Fergusson, Interview # 4 of 4, dated 2 March 1996. Complete Hungnam, X Corps Joins Eighth Army, CO, 31st Infantry Regiment, Side B Tape #4 of 4. Copies of original interview tapes given to author by Colonel Thomas Fergusson, USA (retired). MacArthur’s exact words are paraphrased by McCaffrey here.
don’t print that!" This provides some indication that some CCF units in Korea were transmitting but just what they were transmitting was not yet deciphered. If this was the case in February 1951, then it is hard to believe that any CCF operational codes had been cracked in November 1950 if in fact CCF units inside North Korea were transmitting at all, which ASAPAC cryptanalyst Al Wight claims was not the case until after CCF units had attacked UN forces in late November. It appears that in both October and November 1950, cryptanalysts had to rely upon traffic analysis and plain text unsecured communications traffic to flesh out the order of battle until they could eventually crack the Chinese Communist codes. That being said, it is hard to believe that Chinese Communist forces would communicate any military traffic on unsecured channels unless it was deliberately placed there for UN Command consumption.

According to McCaffrey, COMINT traffic on NKPA and CCF units was generally coming from a higher source than the ASAPAC tactical units forward deployed with the X Corps. Apparently, most of the COMINT was coming from ASAPAC, AFSS, or NSG field stations in Japan and some also came from Chinese Nationalist sources. However, given the Truman administration’s continued fixation upon the Soviet threat and the UN focus on destroying the remaining NKPA forces in November 1950, the United States Communications Intelligence Board once again, as they had in June 1950, weighted American cryptanalysis efforts too heavily against the wrong adversary. Recently

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156 Lieutenant General William J. McCaffrey, USA (retired), oral history interview with Colonel Thomas Fergusson, USA (retired), Interview # 4 of 4, dated 2 March 1996. Complete Hungnam, X Corps Joins Eighth Army, CO, 31st Infantry Regiment, Side B Tape #4 of 4. Copies of original interview tapes given to author by Colonel (Ret.) Thomas Fergusson with full permissions for use. Polk’s exact words are paraphrased by McCaffrey here.

157 Author’s e-mail correspondence with Al Wight, dated 21 August 2005.
declassified documents from the AFSA’s successor agency, the National Security Agency (NSA), revealed that American cryptanalysis efforts against Communist Chinese codes finally began to bear fruit in 1952. After shifting skilled cryptanalysts to work on Chinese targets and receiving an influx of trained Mandarin Chinese linguists, AFSA was finally able to break some of the CCF operational codes (See Figure 57). It was not “until 1952 that traffic analysts could detect from military communications when PRC units entered [or] left North Korea.” Thus, in late October and early November 1950, American COMINT, a mainstay of Allied intelligence in the Pacific theater in World War II, was essentially thwarted by a thinking enemy who appreciated COMINT capabilities and by the USCIB, which was too late in focusing COMINT assets on the right adversary at the right time. Moreover, in this instance, the United Nations Commander appears to have placed more faith in HUMINT than he did in COMINT regardless of whether or not COMINT reporting comported with his strategic designs.

4.6 Conclusion

Despite the pervasive optimism and strategic hubris engendered by the resounding success of the Inchon landing, MacArthur and Willoughby had not let their guard down in terms of pressing on with an aggressive intelligence collection effort. The continued use of

158 Ibid.
159 http://www.kimsoft.com/war/essay_korean_war.pdf “Korea” untitled, undated, declassified NSA document. It was written as part of a larger examination of the origins of NSA and its institutional development. As such this essay deals both with the contributions of cryptology to the American forces fighting the war and the influence successes and problems in the Korean War had on the organizational transformation of the Armed Forces Security Agency into the NSA. pp 51-52. This document has appeared on the NSA website and disappeared from it. It appears to have been replaced by another more general unclassified essay written by Dr. Tom Johnson.
joint special operations forces in addition to conventional intelligence collection platforms and personnel reflected MacArthur and Willoughby’s knowledge that the NKPA remnants had to be finished off while simultaneously keeping an eye on the CCF massed along the Manchurian border.

Willoughby’s operatives conducted intelligence collection to the maximum extent allowed within the political restrictions. Aerial reconnaissance could not be conducted over Manchurian airspace, which precluded reliable firsthand knowledge of CCF assembly area activities and troop deployment preparations. Additionally, Willoughby maintained a healthy skepticism of CIA reports from Chinese Nationalist operatives in Manchuria because of their history of exaggerating Communist Chinese activities in the interests of escalating the war. Willoughby accepted Chinese Communist presence in Korea but only in a strength that he could confirm through multiple intelligence sources.

Willoughby’s standards of intelligence confirmation and his collection and analysis methods were not questioned by American policymakers or the CIA prior to the first or second Chinese Communist interventions. The CIA had reached the same general conclusions as Willoughby in terms of the robust capability, yet low probability, of decisive Chinese intervention in Korea. Moreover, Willoughby acknowledged the limitations of his intelligence collection capabilities and deferred to the CIA and other sources of political intelligence to ascertain the intentions of the Chinese and Soviet governments. MacArthur apparently put more faith in political intelligence reports from Chinese Nationalist HUMINT sources to the exclusion of assessments based on COMINT...
reports. Meanwhile the CCF most likely used some deceptive radio transmissions in addition to their other deception and camouflage efforts to thwart U.N. COMINT analysts. Ultimately, the CIA, MacArthur, and Willoughby, albeit for different reasons, agreed that Chinese Communist diplomatic threats of intervention should not be taken at face value.

Such assessments clearly indicated the mindset of American policymakers and General MacArthur regarding the inferiority of the Chinese Communist foe as compared to its alleged Soviet master. This mindset carried over into the intelligence field, especially in the realm of COMINT operations. The Truman administration’s continued fixation on the Soviet threat and the ongoing UN efforts to finish off the NKPA led the USCIB to direct COMINT efforts against the wrong adversary. As a result, Chinese linguists were in short supply and cryptanalysis efforts against CCF elements began too late to provide early warning of CCF forces moving under strict radio silence and the cover of darkness in October 1950 or to provide accurate estimates of CCF strength and intentions in November 1950.

In sum, by the end of October 1950, Willoughby’s military intelligence battlefield operating system had reached the limit of its capabilities. Willoughby’s drastically low estimates of CCF strength inside North Korea were the net result of an inability to verify information by multiple sources, and an outstanding effort by the CCF in avoiding detection and masking their strength and intentions inside North Korea.

On 25 October elements of the 38th, 39th, and 40th CCF Corps attacked the ROK 1st, 6th, and 7th Divisions and the U.S. 8th Cavalry Regiment in the vicinity of Unsan. By 1
November the CCF had effectively crippled these units and advanced south of the Chongchon River threatening the exposed right flank of the Eighth Army. Yet, as General Walker’s units scrambled to shore up their flank security and consolidate their defensive positions, the CCF units broke contact and melted back into the Korean high ground.

As the bitter winter weather of early November 1950 aided further CCF infiltration efforts, American policymakers and General MacArthur had become snow-blind in a hubristic storm generated by the success of the Inchon landing and a desire on the part of the Truman administration to teach the Communist perpetrators of the war a hard lesson. All throughout the autumn of 1950 most American policymakers and senior military officers believed that the CCF, despite its unmistakable capability for large scale intervention, would not risk protracted, large-scale conflict with United Nations Forces. The Second CCF Counter-offensive of November 1950 soon cured all of them of their deluded optimism.

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Figure 42: MacArthur restores Syngman Rhee to the seat of power in Seoul

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur received words of endearing gratitude from South Korean President Syngman Rhee after President Rhee and his government were restored to their seat of sovereign power in the capital building in Seoul on 29 September 1950. (The photograph and caption information were taken from James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction the First Year*, p. 186.)
Figure 43: Wake Island Meeting

The famous Truman-MacArthur meeting on Wake Island took place on October 14, 1950. The strategic significance of this meeting is all too often exaggerated by historians. Regarding the prospects of Soviet and Chinese Communist Intervention in the war, MacArthur remained confident that the Chinese would not intervene. However, President Truman and all in attendance at that meeting agreed with MacArthur’s viewpoint. That viewpoint was consistent with both CIA and State Department intelligence estimates. (The top and bottom photographs were taken from the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Archives website at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/wake/meeting.htm>.)
Figure 44: Bulletholes from CCF Anti-Aircraft Fire

FEAF Aerial reconnaissance pilots trying to photograph near the Yalu River often were assailed by Communist flak fires from both sides of the river. Photo from the USAF Collection at the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.
FEAF Aerial reconnaissance pilots trying to detect and interdict CCF troop or vehicular movements were often confused or fooled by clever camouflage techniques like the one depicted here. Photo from the USAF Collection at the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.
CCF units went to great lengths to conceal their vehicles and equipment from both aerial and ground observation. Such techniques worked well in the daylight hours against FEAF Aerial reconnaissance pilots. Even at ground level these CCF vehicles are difficult to detect unless one is in fairly close proximity. Photo from the USAF Collection at the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.
The RB-26 “Blackbirds” (see top two photos) of the 12th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, executed the nighttime photographic reconnaissance missions for the United Nations Command during the Korean War. The RB-26 utilized flashbomb technology (see lowest photo) to gain the necessary nighttime exposures. (The top photograph is taken from the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing website at <http://www.cottonpickers.org/the_67th_tactical_reconnaissance_wing_in_korea_1951-1954.htm> The two bottom photos are taken from the 12th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron unit history website at <http://www.cottonpickers.org/12th_tac_recon_squadron.htm>. Members of the various applicable air units provided the original photographs.)
These South Korean Partisan agents, about to conduct a night parachute jump behind enemy lines into North Korea, have been more fortunate than some of their fellow agents having received some parachute training before executing their dangerous clandestine mission. This group is part of Operation Aviary under the direction of Army Lieutenant Bob Brewer. These agents were among the most forward deployed intelligence assets employed in the Korean War. Their survival rate was extremely low. (The photograph and caption information are taken from Michael Haas, *In the Devil’s Shadow*, p. 21. The original photograph was provided courtesy of Lieutenant Bob Brewer.)
Figure 49: Yalu River Crossing Areas (Antung-Sinuiju, Manpojin-Kanggye)

Figure 50: Rear Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, Deputy Chief of Staff to COMNAVFE and Major General Charles A. Willoughby, FECOM / UNC G-2

(Top photo): In the Korean War Rear Admiral Arleigh A. Burke (a future Chief of Naval Operations) was the Deputy Chief of Staff to COMNAVFE, Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy. Burke and FECOM G-2 Major General Charles A. Willoughby (Bottom photo) often compared notes on Army and Naval intelligence assessments of all available intelligence information. On the question of the extent of Chinese Communist intervention in the Korean War in November 1950 they agreed to disagree and Burke kept his superiors in Washington informed of his own staff’s intelligence assessments. Nonetheless Burke believes that Willoughby earnestly felt that his FECOM G-2 staff’s assessment of limited CCF intervention was correct. (Top photo taken from the Naval Historical Center website at <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/pers-us/uspers-b/burke-b.htm>. The bottom photo is taken from RG-12: Collection of Photographs in the MacArthur Memorial Archives).
Figure 51: Map of Guerrilla Activities in Eighth Army and X Corps areas of operations as of late November 1950

Each large black dot represents guerrilla concentration of 1,000 men or more and the smaller black dots represent guerrilla concentrations under 1,000. Note the overlap between Eighth Army and X Corps rear areas with the activity along their respective front line traces. Such activities added to the confusion of the intelligence picture in mid to late November 1950 as intelligence analysts tried to discern between NKPA and CCF guerrilla activity versus overt CCF intervention on a massive scale. Map taken from GHQ, FEC Daily Intelligence Summary No. 3001, 27 November 1950, p. 2-a-2b, RG-554: Records of the General Headquarters Far East Command / Supreme Commander Allied Powers / United Nations Command, Box 11, Folder 52, Part I, Supporting Document Annex G-2, GHQ, FEC Staff Section Report, November 1950, NARA II.
Eighth Army’s 8th Cavalry Regiment and elements of the ROK 15th Infantry Regiment were engaged by elements of the 115th and 116th CCF Divisions in the vicinity of Unsan on the night of 1-2 November 1950. The CCF attempted to surround and destroy these forward units. The 8th Cavalry and the 15th ROK Infantry took heavy casualties before reinforcements arrived to help extricate them from CCF encirclement. This marked the first significant engagement between UN forces and newly arrived CCF units. (Map taken from Stephen L.Y. Gammons. The Korean War: The UN Offensive: 16 September – 2 November 1950. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History), p.27. at <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/kw-unoff/unoff.htm>)
Chinese Premier Mao Zedong (at top) sequestered himself in a private home near the Forbidden City and directed Communist China’s war effort from a distance. Mao’s trusted Foreign Minister, Zhou Enlai (at bottom) handled the diplomatic aspects of the war to include warning UN coalition members that Communist China will not remain idle while UN forces overrun North Korea. Top American political and military leaders alike chose not to lend credence to these warnings. (Top photo and first caption line taken from an unnumbered photo-section page in Toland, In Mortal Combat. Bottom photo taken from Schnabel, Policy and Direction the First Year, p. 198.)
Secretary of Defense (General of the Army (Ret.)) George C. Marshall served as President Truman’s 3rd and the nation’s 20th Secretary of Defense from September 21, 1950 – September 12, 1951. From an intelligence standpoint, it remains intriguing that COMINT had led Marshall (as U.S. Army Chief of Staff) to advise President Truman to overrule MacArthur’s invasion of Japan in the summer of 1945. Yet given access to similar level information regarding possible CCF intervention in North Korea in November 1950, Marshall apparently saw no need to halt MacArthur’s planned advance to the Yalu River. (The photograph and the first line of caption information are taken from the U.S. Department of Defense website Defenselink at <http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/secdef_histories/bios/marshall.htm>.)
Figure 55: Data Table 1: Estimated CCF Strength vs. Actual Strength

In his article “The Ghost Armies of Manchuria,” Patrick Roe demonstrates that FECOM Intelligence Estimates of CCF strength differ significantly from actual CCF strength based on the research of Chinese scholar Shu Guang Zhang. This table is directly extracted from “The Ghost Armies of Manchuria” by Patrick Roe. Mr. Roe e-mailed these tables direct to the author with full permission for their use.
Figure 56: Data Table 2: Actual Appearance of Chinese Communist Forces

In his article “The Ghost Armies of Manchuria,” Patrick Roe demonstrates that FECOM Intelligence Estimates of CCF strength differed significantly from actual CCF strength based on the research of Chinese scholar Shu Guang Zhang. More importantly, this table shows that FECOM G-2 reported units in Korea that allegedly took part in the attacks of late October and November 1950 and subsequent engagements, yet according to Zhang’s research of Chinese Communist sources, some of these units never saw action in Korea at all. This indicates the distinct possibility of CCF COMINT deception. This table is directly extracted from “The Ghost Armies of Manchuria” by Patrick Roe. Mr. Roe e-mailed these tables direct to the author with full permission for their use.
This is a radio direction finding (DF) and intercept antenna array of the 326th Communications Reconnaissance Company during the Korean War. As the picture shows, the Korean peninsula is extremely rugged and mountainous particularly in North Korea. This presents a challenge for collection assets that rely upon a direct radio line of sight to accurately determine locations of enemy transmissions. Commanders had to utilize the terrain for purposes of cover and concealment and protection from enemy artillery while still maintaining a position where effective direction finding and intercept operations could be executed. (Photograph and the first sentence of the caption taken from John Finnegan, *Military Intelligence*, p. 145. The original photograph is courtesy of United States Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM)).
CHAPTER 5

SEEKING THE ELUSIVE DRAGON IN THE FOG OF WAR

5.1 Political Decisions Influence Intelligence Operations

After the initial Chinese Intervention in late October and early November 1950, the question of Chinese intervention was academic, for the Chinese Communists had clearly demonstrated their willingness to intervene and risk a general war with the United States. The more compelling question before the American leadership was the purpose behind the CCF intervention.¹ Was it merely to protect the Manchurian border from possible UN incursion? Was it to establish a “cordon sanitaire” inside North Korea to enable Kim Il-Sung’s regime to survive on Korean soil while rejuvenating the NKPA and waging a protracted, undeclared guerrilla war? Were the Chinese Communists simply trying to protect the Yalu River hydroelectric power facilities in North Korea from which they supposedly derived massive amounts of electrical power for Manchuria? Or, were the CCF intending to mount a deliberate counteroffensive to drive UN forces from the Korean peninsula? The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) (see Figure 58) considered all of these possibilities or combinations thereof. Above all else, the JCS felt that the continuing U.S. troop commitment in Korea was a drain against U.S. military potential for strategic

¹ Roy E. Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu. p. 749.
deployment in areas of more strategic significance.\textsuperscript{2} Bearing in mind these possibilities of Chinese intent and global strategic considerations, the JCS concluded that

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a.] Every effort should be expended as a matter of urgency to settle the problems of the Chinese Communist intervention in Korea by political means, preferably through the United Nations, to include reassurances to the Chinese Communists with respect to our intent, direct negotiations through our Allies and the Interim Committee with the Chinese Communist Government, and by any other available means.
  
  \item[b.] Pending further clarification as to the military objectives of the Chinese Communists and the intent of their extended commitments, the missions assigned to the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command should be kept under review, but should not be changed.
  
  \item[c.] The United States should develop its plans and make its preparations on the basis that the risk of global war is increased.\textsuperscript{3}
\end{itemize}

In the first days of November 1950, Douglas MacArthur was already assuming the worst case scenario. With all doubt removed regarding the presence of organized CCF units in Korea, MacArthur took two immediate actions. First he prepared to isolate the Korean battlefield by destroying the bridges over the Yalu River to preclude the arrival of additional CCF troops into his theater of operations. On 5 November, MacArthur ordered the FEAF Commanding General, Lieutenant General George Stratemeyer, to begin bombing those bridges.\textsuperscript{4} Second, MacArthur sent an urgent message to the JCS requesting that, at a minimum, they send the reinforcements he had earlier requested.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{2} Memo CJCS to SECDEF, 9 November 1950, Subject: Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea. RG-218: Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Box 42, Geographical File 1948-50, Folder: CCS 383.21 Korea, NARA II.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{5} GHQ-FEC Msg. C-68436, CINCFE to DA (JCS), 7 November 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9. Folder 6, MMA.
Neither action was well received at the Pentagon. The JCS were highly reluctant to dispatch any more troops to Korea. Convinced that Korea was a peripheral theater meant to take attention away from future Soviet military moves in Europe or elsewhere, the JCS wanted their troops held for those contingencies. Additionally, when FEAF Commander, Lieutenant General Stratemeyer, informed his Air Force superiors in Washington of his new bombing mission, word quickly traveled to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The JCS countermanded MacArthur’s order pending further clarification from MacArthur as to why it must be done.  

In a well-crafted reply to the JCS, MacArthur explained that large numbers of CCF forces were “pouring across all bridges over the Yalu” and that such movement, if left unchecked, jeopardized the safety and threatened “the ultimate destruction” of the forces under his command. Moreover, MacArthur acknowledged that the CCF movement across the river could be accomplished under cover of darkness and the distance to be covered between the Yalu and UN front lines was such that the CCF forces could deploy into position “without being seriously subjected to air interdiction.” He successfully impressed upon the JCS the need for urgent action against the river crossing sites.

The JCS were initially reluctant to allow such missions for fear of escalating the war. They feared any attack on the crossing sites could be misconstrued as an attack upon

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7 GHQ-UNC Msg. C-68396, CINCUNC to JCS, 6 November 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder 6, MMA.
8 Ibid.
Manchuria. Moreover, American diplomatic imperatives demanded consultation with Great Britain before any action was taken against Manchurian territory (See Figure 59).

In addition, Chairman of the JCS, General of the Army Omar Bradley, believed that the Yalu River would soon freeze over making the bombing of bridges a useless exercise.

Still, with the approval of President Truman, the JCS allowed MacArthur to bomb only the Korean side of the Yalu Bridges to enable the UN Commander to secure his forces against possible CCF reinforcements. The mission proceeded with only limited success in the face of Chinese Communist anti-aircraft fire from the Manchurian banks of the Yalu River and from MIG-15’s striking quickly and retreating into their sanctuary airspace over Manchuria. Meanwhile, additional CCF forces continued to pour into North Korea.

The Yalu River bridge bombing decision cycle and missions had significant influence on intelligence operations. Lieutenant General Stratemeyer immediately diverted RF-80A jet photo-reconnaissance aircraft from previously designated reconnaissance routes to cover the target areas for the bombing missions. Knowing that all targets had to be engaged visually to ensure no border or airspace violations occurred, Stratemeyer ordered maximum reconnaissance coverage of the target areas. In addition, he expressed his willingness to task the 31st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron to cover any targets not

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9 Message 95949, JCS to CINCFE, 7 November 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder: Korean War File No. 3, MMA.
10 Message. C-68396, CINCUNC to JCS, 6 November 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder 6, MMA.
covered by the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron’s RF-80A flights. Thus, bomb-
targeting intelligence took precedence over other aerial reconnaissance priorities.

However, UN air reconnaissance forces did not remain idle. They tried many
approaches to address the Chinese Communist infiltration. As CCF presence became
manifest in early November 1950, the Fifth Air Force made efforts to find and engage
CCF units coming into North Korea. The 162d Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Night
Photo) increased their night sorties from 2 per night from 1-5 November to 8-10 sorties
per night by 8 November. Fifth Air Force paired the 162d Squadron’s RB-26C
reconnaissance aircraft with Marine F7F aircraft to form aerial hunter-killer teams. The
Marine F7F squadron was code named “Casteroil.” The reconnaissance planes located the
targets and dropped parachute flares to vector in the Casteroil aircraft to attack the
targets. The reconnaissance planes then attempted to photograph the results of the
airstrikes. However, few targets were located and the operation was eventually
discontinued.

Several other reasons contributed to the difficulties UN aircraft experienced in
trying to detect CCF troops entering North Korea. Interrogation of CCF prisoners
confirmed that the Chinese Communists were draconian in their camouflage discipline.
Unit commanders were directed to kill any subordinate who moved about while under the
visual observation and attack by UN reconnaissance aircraft. Their orders were to remain

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12 Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer. Diary entry, Sunday, 5 November 1950, *The Three Wars of
History and Museums Program, 1999), pp. 258-261.
13 162d Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Night Photo), 543rd Tactical Support Group, 6149th Tactical
Support Wing, Fifth Air Force, *Historical Data Report*, Historical Data for the Month of November 1950,
perfectly still until the aircraft passed unless under fire from ground forces. In addition, the Chinese Communists mastered the art of camouflaging their heavy equipment under haystacks, buildings, and building facades.

In early November, Willoughby’s staff combed through all the aerial reconnaissance and ground patrolling intelligence at its disposal. The staff meticulously constructed studies of vehicular activity, waterborne activity (such as mining activity), and reported troop concentrations along key lines of communication throughout North Korea. For example, from 8-10 November, U.N. ground and air patrols revealed sporadic contacts or observations of enemy elements ranging from 30 to 2,000 troops at various locations. Some reports were highly specific detailing enemy activities like digging trenches, or foxholes and identifying enemy troops by their nationality while others were highly nebulous listing the strength and nationality of the enemy as “undetermined.” UN ground patrols also confirmed Korean civilian reports of Communist troops digging point defense positions on key terrain features dotting the high speed avenues of approach to the Yalu River Valley. Still, all indications pointed to moderate contact and a predominantly defensive posture. Nowhere along the front line did CCF movements clearly indicate attack preparations. Aerial coverage revealed only sparse numbers of troops making it impossible to confirm already nebulous enemy strength estimates reported by combat patrols and civilian observers on the ground. While CCF activities pointed to defensive

14 Extract from ATIS Interrogation Report, #2364, 25 November 1950. Subject: Behavior of CCF under Air Attack. The CCF prisoner was a captured rifleman of the 40th CCF Army. Early Days of the Korean Conflict taken from the Brent Balchen Collection, Part II. K168.7053-332, IRIS No. 1031200, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
type measures, the possibility of a counterattack could not be ruled out, especially with massive reinforcements located just across the Yalu River within two days march of the UN front lines.

If only UN aerial reconnaissance planes could have flown over Manchuria to get a look at CCF troop and supply dispositions! Yet, intelligence reports from reliable sources discouraged American policymakers from authorizing such missions. On 16 November 1950, Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson wrote an official letter to Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall, which stated

The Department of State has learned through reliable channels that the Indian Ambassador to Peiping, Mr. Pannikar, has reported that the Counselor of the Soviet Embassy in Peiping told him that if United Nations Planes bomb Manchuria, they would be attacked by the Air Force of the Soviet Union. Although you may wish to pass this information to General MacArthur, it is requested that special security precautions be used because of the extreme sensitivity of the source.  

U.N. reconnaissance overflights of Manchuria undoubtedly required fighter escorts, and fighter escorts ran the risk of engaging Chinese Communist (Soviet-piloted) aircraft or anti-aircraft ground targets. Given the recent developments with Communist Chinese intervention, American policymakers apparently took this warning of potential Soviet involvement through political intelligence channels at face value.

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16 Secretary of State Dean Acheson letter to Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall, dated 16 November 1950. RG-218: Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographic File 1948-1950, Box # 21: 381 East Mediterranean and Mid-East Area (11-9-47) Sec. 1 to 331.1 Far East (1-13-50), Folder: CCS 062 Far East (Photo Reconnaissance) 7-4-50 Sec. 1, NARA II.
17 UN forces intercepted radio messages from the enemy MIG-15 cockpits to communist ground controllers and the dialogue was clearly Russian. See Oral history Interview of General Earle E. Partridge by Lieutenant Colonel Jon Reynolds, Major Robert S. Bartanowicz, and Captain Phillip Meilinger, 16
In addition, the State Department chose to downplay the fact of overt Chinese intervention and avoid unilateral branding of the Soviets or the Chinese Communists as aggressors. The idea was to wait until the United States drummed up enough support within the United Nations to collectively do so. This required a careful balancing act of placating the Communist inspired fears within the Chinese populace of U.S. bombing attacks and invasion while holding the Chinese Communists responsible for their intervention in Korea.\(^{18}\) Acheson’s strategy took the form of a U.S. sponsored resolution in the UN Security Council that called upon Communist China to halt its military actions in Korea.\(^{19}\) Acheson hoped that clever diplomacy could place the U.S. in an advantageous position to negotiate peace. In implementing this policy, he issued guidance to General MacArthur on 19 November 1950 outlining the intricacies of this delicate balancing act.

That policy guidance read as follows:

Main effort should continue to deal with fundamental issues of intervention…There are however, some important subsidiary considerations raised by the present situation in Korea. Among these are extent to which we: (1) Demolish the fiction that Chinese Communists fighting in Korea are “volunteers.” (2) Charge USSR with responsibility for Chinese Communist intervention and (3) Highlight our own recent over-optimism in order to prove we have had no aggressive intentions. All are questions of degree. UN has not formally charged Chinese Communist Regime with aggression in Korea. To do so would raise crucial questions, which it is not in our interest to raise at this time. The Chinese Communist Regime, in using fiction of “volunteers” apparently also prefers not to raise this crucial question now. Forcing the issue might lead to irrevocable commitment Official statements reflect the U.S. desire to maintain delicate


\(^{19}\) Ibid.
balance between avoiding this fundamental question and at the same time making clear that the Chinese Communist Regime cannot escape responsibility for the continuation of reckless, lawless intervention in Korea. Hence our strong support for UN resolution before the Security Council which calls upon the Chinese Communist Regime to halt these actions.20

These diplomatic machinations that downplayed the intervention played right into MacArthur’s own desires and designs to downplay the level of Chinese Communist intervention. MacArthur downplayed the initial intervention in his own mind for the sake of continuing the UN advance to Yalu and fulfilling his mission of destroying North Korean armed forces for the purpose of restoring a free, independent, unified Korean nation to the world. Moreover, CCF unit withdrawals into the high ground just south of the Yalu River after their initial clash with UN forces became reassuring to both political policymakers and General MacArthur.

In the meantime, reacting to MacArthur’s increasingly urgent requests for reinforcements, the Joint Chiefs of Staff began to reconsider the nature of MacArthur’s mission in Korea. Given the intervention of CCF forces and political pressure from the UN not to escalate the conflict with Communist China into a general war; the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed MacArthur that his current mission in Korea might need to be reviewed. British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin, one of the original UN crusaders for proceeding north of the 38th parallel to unify the Korean nation, was now advocating “a cease fire and a demilitarized zone along the border.”21 MacArthur issued a scathing reply rebuking U.N. proposals of a buffer zone in North Korea as appeasement reminiscent of Neville

20 Ibid.
Chamberlain’s 1938 Munich debacle. Believing in the ability of his air power to preclude
CCF reinforcements from reaching the main battle area, MacArthur pressed the JCS and
the Truman administration to allow him to conduct his attack.22

As Secretary of State Dean Acheson recalled,

the Joint Chiefs were intimidated but not convinced by this blast. They
believed, as they always had, that Chinese power, if the Chinese chose to
exert it, could be defeated militarily in North Korea only by a greatly
augmented and determined American effort and that we had other more
pressing needs for our forces elsewhere.”23

Acheson (See Figure 60) and the JCS held the opinion that the only hope of
achieving the objective of a free and united Korea lay in the realm of diplomacy. A
Chinese Communist delegation arrived in New York City on 24 November 1950 to appear
before the United Nations Security Council. Up until this point the Chinese Communist
regime had maintained that it only had Chinese “volunteers” fighting in North Korea.
Acheson and the JCS apparently hoped to persuade this delegation not to allow
Communist China to intervene on any large scale in Korea.24 Yet, they collectively
recommended, “with Presidential approval through the National Security Council” that
MacArthur’s mission should be “kept under review but not changed at that time.”25 It
appears that even while the Chinese Communists proceeded with their diplomatic ruse, the
U.S. had not given up on the idea of gaining a military victory.

22 CINCFE to DA WASH (JCS), Msg. C-68572, 9 November 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far
East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder: Korean War File No. 3, MMA.
23 Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 465-466.
24 Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond’s address to the Army War College on UN Military Operations
Marine Corps, Box 8, Folder: Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond’s Address to the Army War
College on UN Military Operations in Korea June 29, 1950 – December 31, 1951, NARA II.
25 Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 466.
The failure of the JCS and the political leadership in Washington to alter MacArthur’s plans to launch his 25 November 1950 offensive indicated their preference to allow military force to gain them an advantage at the negotiating table. Given the intelligence they had at the time, most policymakers did not feel compelled to alter MacArthur’s mission. A CIA summary, dated 20 November 1950 echoed a State Department assessment from the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. That assessment read:

Embassy Seoul reports that Chinese Communist Forces continue to remain strictly on the defensive, giving ground invariably in face of UN units moving northward. The Embassy feels that unless the Chinese Communists intervene much more actively than they have during the past two weeks, it may be concluded that the Chinese are fighting a delaying action and are not committed to all-out intervention. The Embassy states that although no one can be certain that the Chinese will not intervene decisively in the future, available information favors the conclusion that Chinese intervention will in the end ‘fall short of all-out war.’

Such qualified, optimistic assessments in American policymaking circles did nothing to encourage a change in MacArthur’s mission. Ultimately, all government departments acquiesced in allowing Douglas MacArthur, the masterful engineer of the Inchon landing, the opportunity to achieve resounding victory against formidable odds. Secretary of State Dean Acheson had the courage to accept at least some of the blame for the ensuing Chinese onslaught. Acheson remarked:

As I look back, the critical period stands out as the three weeks from October 26 to November 17. Then all the dangers from dispersal of our own forces and intervention by the Chinese were manifest. We were all deeply apprehensive. We were frank with one another, but not quite frank enough. I was unwilling to urge on the President a military course that his military advisors would not propose. They would not propose it because it ran counter to the American military tradition of the proper powers of the

theater commander since 1864…If General Marshall and the Chiefs had proposed withdrawal to the Pyongyang-Wonsan line and a continuous defensive position under united command across it- and if the President had backed them, as he undoubtedly would have- disaster would probably have been averted. But it would have meant a fight with MacArthur, charges by him that they denied him victory—which they, perhaps, would have uneasily felt might have been true—and his relief under arguable circumstances. So they hesitated, wavered, and the chance was lost. While everyone acted correctly, no one, I suspect, was ever quite satisfied with himself afterward. Undoubtedly the same might have been true had we all played it the other way. It is a good bet that had we done so MacArthur’s reputation would be higher today.27

Acheson referred to an alleged 1864 precedent set by President Lincoln, which supposedly eliminated political meddling in a theater military commander’s affairs.

Acheson believed that President Lincoln’s appointment of U.S. Grant to the rank of Lieutenant General in command of all U.S. armies established a virtually inviolate code of conduct regarding the prerogatives of a theater commander that endured to modern times.

Acheson’s point is well taken when one considers the views of Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall in the run up to the National Security Council meeting of 22 November 1950, when President Truman decided to allow MacArthur’s planned offensive to proceed as scheduled. When preparing his own account of the Korean War in 1967, Dean Acheson at first labeled Marshall’s view on the issue as a “curious quiescence “ to MacArthur’s desires when the time for a decision came.28 Acheson actually wrote to Marshall’s biographer, Forrest Pogue, requesting Pogue’s help in refreshing his own fading memory of the events of late November 1950.

In asking Pogue how one would explain Marshall’s thought process, Acheson recalled asking Marshall about it at one point after the special meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) on 22 November 1950. According to Acheson, Marshall replied that he was no longer Chief of Staff of the Army and must therefore bend over backwards in nonintervention and maintaining a civilian outlook.²⁹ Apparently, Marshall felt that it was not his place as the Secretary of Defense to meddle in the affairs of a theater commander. Looking back on the conversation years later, Acheson thought this answer to be much too simple for a man of Marshall’s experience and courage. Moreover, Acheson wondered what would keep such a courageous man from “putting some backbone into the JCS.”³⁰ Pogue farmed out Acheson’s request to the Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office, and the OSD Historian, R.A. Winnacker. Winnacker agreed with Acheson’s assessment in that Marshall’s answer was too simple in and of itself. However, given the political pressure brought upon the Truman administration by a hawkish, Republican-controlled Congress that accused the administration of being soft on Communism, and the uncertainty in both CIA and “dubious” field intelligence estimates regarding Chinese Communist intentions ranging from “cordon sanitaire, tying down extensive U.S. forces, or reconquering Korea,” Winnacker thought Marshall’s decision made perfect sense. Forrest Pogue concurred with this assessment and could offer no other information regarding the reasons behind

²⁹ Ibid.
³⁰ Ibid.
Marshall’s actions. However, Marshall’s declining mental health could have been another contributing factor.31

Still, recently declassified correspondence from the Office of the Secretary of Defense has revealed evidence corroborating Marshall’s original answer to Acheson. This evidence also revealed one Washington policymaker, Major General J.H. Burns, USA (retired), the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (See Figure 61), who had the moral courage to question the utility of a renewed UN offensive. On 15 November 1950, Marshall wrote a memorandum in response to a memorandum written by Burns, who advocated a “meeting of the minds” in Tokyo to decide once and for all if MacArthur’s offensive should proceed.32 Marshall replied to Burns:

In connection with your suggestion of 14 November,… I would appreciate your informally getting the views of the State Department (Jessup and Rusk) and the Director of the Joint Staff. I have grave doubts as to the desirability of transferring such discussions from Washington to Tokyo and particularly to involving General MacArthur in them at this crucial period in his operations. I would appreciate your further views after you have talked informally to State and the Director, Joint Staff.33

31 Memorandum for Paul Nitze from R.A. Winnacker, 27 November 1967. Forrest Pogue’s concurrence is documented in an official letter from him to Dr. R.A. Winnaker dated 14 November 1967, both documents are found in Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office Subject Files. III. Geographical Area E. East Asia and Pacific, 3. Korea, Korean War, 1950-1953, Box 196, Folder: Dean Acheson, OSDHO. It is interesting to note that Marshall had only agreed to take the position as Secretary of Defense for one-year. This was most likely due to health reasons. Dean Acheson recalled in his personal notes, General Marshall’s personal feeling of shame in the summer of 1951 in having to admit to Acheson his diminished capacity for performing his duties as a result of his failing memory as the reason behind his ardent desire to leave OSD by September 1951. See Dean G. Acheson. ‘Notes and editing for Sketches from Life.” dated November 7,1960. Insert 3-7. Papers of Dean G. Acheson, Box 103, Folder: Sketches from Life- “George C. Marshall,” Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.


Clearly, Marshall had expressed “grave doubts” at convening any sort of *de facto* council of war that would require MacArthur’s input and presence at a time when MacArthur’s preparations for the offensive were well underway and execution time was close at hand. Thus, Marshall showed his respect for the position of a theater commander. As Army Chief of Staff in World War II Marshall had no compunction in challenging MacArthur’s assessments of the enemy situation, yet, five years later, as the civilian head of the Department of Defense, Secretary Marshall felt it was not his place to meddle in a theater commander’s prerogatives on the eve of operational execution.

Burns’ reply to Secretary Marshall, which relayed the sentiments of Undersecretaries of State Dean Rusk and Phil Jessup, stated that from a political point of view the State Department did not currently think a “meeting of the minds” should be held. Yet Burns, who, as the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, held a position unique in the annals of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), made it a point to demonstrate his opposition to a continued offensive given the serious “risk of becoming involved in the world war we are trying to avoid.”34 He presciently explained,

> We cannot expect General MacArthur to recommend a change in military objectives from complete victory to partial victory. He could assist in formulating lesser objectives, and that was one of my reasons for suggesting the conference. I realize that the initiative and the responsibility with respect to such a change belong to Washington.35

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35 Ibid.
It appears that Secretary Acheson and Secretary Marshall drew the wrong lesson from the McClellan-Lincoln and Grant-Lincoln relationships while Burns drew the right one. As Johns Hopkins professor Eliot Cohen argued in his recent work, *Supreme Command*, ample evidence substantiated that President Lincoln succeeded in the Civil War precisely because he, as the Commander in Chief, asserted his civilian leadership and supervision, both directly and indirectly, over all of his military commanders.36 President Truman, his cabinet, and the JCS needed to derive the right lesson from Lincoln’s conduct in 1864 and change MacArthur’s mission if they felt the need to do so. At the National Security Council meeting of 22 November 1950, they all erred in not doing so. Instead, they felt that while they awaited the arrival of the Chinese Communist delegation to the UN forum at Lake Success, they would let MacArthur’s offensive proceed. They did so hoping to begin negotiations with Communist China from a position of relative strength. Given that they were all privy to the same intelligence as MacArthur, these policymakers share a considerable degree of complicity and responsibility in the fateful offensive gamble in late November 1950.

5.2 Overconfidence in Airpower

Still, MacArthur is in no way free from blame. As he stated at the Wake Island Conference, MacArthur believed UN air power could thwart a massive Chinese intervention. Once again in late November 1950, MacArthur believed UN airpower could inflict mass casualties on any CCF elements seeking to pour into North Korea to reinforce Communist units already in place. Yet, one is left stupefied at how a man of MacArthur’s

intellect could continue to rely on UN airpower to perform that role when it had so clearly failed to detect, let alone interdict, CCF units entering North Korea in mid to late October 1950.

MacArthur’s unwavering confidence in airpower most likely resulted from his World War II Southwest Pacific Area leapfrogging campaigns like Operation Cartwheel in New Guinea and the Solomons and the more recent success of air interdiction and close air support missions against the NKPA. In World War II, MacArthur had utilized land and naval carrier based aviation to wreck Japanese airfields and other fixed installations as well as destroy Japanese naval forces at sea. However, the Red Chinese adversary that now opposed him was much less reliant upon fixed installations. Nor did the CCF carry as much heavy artillery or other heavy weaponry as had the NKPA.37 The Chinese logistical system of toting supplies on the backs of troops on A-frames, while primitive, was also highly mobile and flexible. The Chinese armies could easily move their men and supplies at night and in daylight disappear into the North Korean forests and networks of ravines. Thus, they could avoid detection by FEAF aerial reconnaissance and ground interdiction units.38 Indeed, CCF Forces were much more flexible than their North Korean comrades. Still, given the massive numbers of vehicles observed and engaged by UN aircraft as they entered North Korea from Manchuria, MacArthur remained optimistic that UN aircraft could inflict severe losses on the CCF just as they had upon the NKPA supply lines in September 1950.

Yet, after the initial Chinese intervention in October, Willoughby’s staff, in the 5 November Daily Intelligence Summary, clearly described the Chinese *modus operandi* for nighttime movements and the clear potential for massive intervention. It read in part:

> It is to be noted that one division of the CCF has been identified as far to the east as the Chosin Reservoir while other Chinese Commie forces have been found in the Unsan-Onjong area. They arrived at these points of combat by foot marches, at night over back roads and trails and undiscovered by aerial reconnaissance…

> Regarding the Chinese intention to launch a large scale counteroffensive; the enemy certainly has the potential, particularly in ground forces, and is in a position to exercise this capability at any time and without warning.39

MacArthur himself clearly acknowledged Willoughby’s 5 November assessment and the ineffectiveness of airpower to effectively detect and interdict the flow of CCF coming into North Korea in his 7 November message to the JCS which read in part:

> Men and material in large force are pouring across all bridges over the Yalu from Manchuria. This movement not only jeopardizes but threatens the ultimate destruction of the forces under my command. The actual movement across the river can be accomplished under cover of darkness and the distance between the river and our lines is so short that the forces can be deployed against our troops without being seriously subjected to air interdiction. The only way to stop this reinforcement of the enemy is the destruction of these bridges and the subjection of all installations in the north area supporting the enemy advance to the maximum of our air destruction. Every hour that this is postponed will be paid for dearly in United Nations blood.40

In the 7 November 1950 FECOM/UNC Daily Intelligence Summary, Willoughby’s staff reiterated the CCF capability to immediately move massive reinforcements, as many as twenty-nine divisions, from the Manchurian border into North Korea. The report also

39 GHQ, FEC DIS. No. 2979, 5 Nov. 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part 1, MMA.
40 Message C-68396, CINCUNC to JCS, 7 November 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder 6, MMA.
emphasized the demonstrated ability of the CCF to avoid UN airpower. The summary stated in part:

The Chinese Communists have already displayed their ability to infiltrate troops into Korea with comparative ease. Utilizing back roads and the cover of darkness, it is entirely possible that the CCF could secretly move all or a large portion of this readily available force into position south of the Yalu in preparation for a counteroffensive. Logistic support for such an operation should be relatively simple, particularly in the early phases, since supply lines would be extremely short. The relatively low tonnage requirements for CCF divisions could be readily met by animal and human transport if rail and road facilities were made unavailable by UN air interdiction…. All factors considered, it is quite evident that the enemy possesses a reinforcement capability of considerable potency. A capability which, if fully exercised, could present a serious threat to UN forces now fighting in Korea.41

Despite such assessments and the previous failures of airpower to detect and effectively interdict the enemy before the first CCF intervention, MacArthur later changed his outlook insisting to the JCS that UN airpower could effectively isolate the Korean battlefield against additional Chinese reinforcements long enough for UN units to occupy all of North Korea. On November 9th, in an effort to allay what he felt were appeasement sentiments circulating in Washington, General MacArthur wrote the following to the JCS:

In my opinion it would be fatal to weaken the fundamental and basic policy of the United Nations to destroy all resisting armed forces in Korea and bring that country into a united and free nation. I believe that with my air power, now unrestricted as far as Korea is concerned except as to hydroelectric installations, I can deny reinforcements coming across the Yalu in sufficient strength to prevent the destruction of those forces now arrayed against me in

41 GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2981, 7 November 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Pt. 1, MMA.
General MacArthur gambled the success of his mission on the capabilities of his air power to offset any possible CCF strength advantage. He lost that particular gamble, and thus, deserves much of the blame for the failed attack that followed. Note, however, that this error in his judgment was made counter to the military intelligence he had received. It was a judgment made on the basis of his personal operational experience and strategic views.

5.3 Reconnaissance in Force and Assumption of Risk

MacArthur made his decision despite mounting intelligence reports of the movement and arrival of equipment and possible Chinese Communist reinforcements into North Korea. In addition to the numerous reports from Chinese POWs, Marine Corps armed reconnaissance pilots, who flew nightly strikes against the Sinuiju-Antung crossing site on the Yalu River from 1-9 November, reported a “steady stream of trucks moving into Northwest Korea from Antung, Manchuria.” After blasting the crossing site repeatedly with bombs, rockets, and 20mm shells, the pilots reported that Sinuiju was aflame but still teeming with vehicular traffic, which they described as “very heavy”, “tremendous”, and in at least one instance, “gigantic.”

In a 12 November telegram to Washington, Willoughby provided a detailed intelligence study documenting enemy rail and vehicular movements inside North Korea in the vicinity of the Manchurian-North Korean border area for the period of 15 October to 5

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42 Message C-68572, CINCFE to DA WASH, 9 November 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder: Korean War File No. 3, MMA.
November. Over that period very little rail movement was reported, yet large amounts of wheeled vehicular movement were reported. Willoughby's staff wrote:

1,287 vehicles and 66 tanks were observed moving southward indicating the reinforcing or resupplying of enemy units in the combat area. In the central sector heaviest traffic was observed on the Kangge-Huichon route. In the west coast sector vehicular traffic was especially heavy between Sinuiju-Chongju, and between Sakchu-Chongju. During this same period there were indications of continuing build-up of CCF strength in North Korea. For example: On 2 November the estimated total possible CCF strength in North Korea was accepted at 16,500 and by 7 November this strength had increased to an accepted possible total of 34,500 and present indications indicate a much higher total. This continued build-up in strength is substantiated by the increase in vehicular traffic between 1-5 November. The traffic pattern indicates a strong build-up of CCF strength in the Pakchon-Huichon vicinity and may indicate an attempt to envelop the I Corps, or a major drive along the Huichon-Kunu-ro-Pyongyang axis. The threat of wide envelopment of the X Corps from the southwest would not be disregarded. In view of the comparatively short supply lines and the location of CCF units on the Manchurian border, it is obvious that vehicular traffic is playing a most important role in reinforcing and supplying of enemy units in the north-west and north-central sectors of North Korea.

Based on troop carrying capacity of the rolling stock and motor vehicles sighted, enemy reinforcements during the period of this study could have far exceeded the reported and estimated reinforcements. The limitations of such and estimation of possible troop carrying capacities are obvious when it is realized that weather conditions, darkness, and other factors may have greatly restricted observations of the actual amount of traffic in [a given] area. Allowing 25% of computed capacities for transportation of supplies leaves a considerable capacity that may or may not have been utilized….if fully utilized, would account for a total reinforcement of 88,953 troops….No inference is intended that the above number of troops were actually brought into the area. The purpose is to indicate the number that could have been brought in by rail and motor based on the number of vehicles and amount of rolling stock reported.  

Only a day prior to issuing this detailed study Willoughby’s staff reported the apparent CCF withdrawal taking place along the UN front, but the report still carefully articulated
the need to assume the worst case scenario until the battlefield situation developed further.

The 11 November report stated in part:

Recent reports based on close-in air reconnaissance and limited ground patrolling indicate that there has been some withdrawal by enemy forces on the front of the Eighth Army. This withdrawal may have been effected for the following reasons:

1. Severe casualties suffered in the period 1-5 November, coupled with the crippling results of air strikes of more recent date.

2. A regroupment of forces out of artillery range preparatory to the resumption of an offensive.

3. Assumption of temporary defensive to await the outcome of current political developments.

It is too early as yet to evaluate properly which of the above represents the true facts. Developments in the immediate future should furnish us with additional indications pointing to the correct assumption. Pending clarification, we must assume that the enemy is regrouping preparatory to resumption of the offensive.  

Between 18 and 21 November, Willoughby’s staff rendered the most thorough assessment of the situation taking shape in front of Eighth Army and X Corps. The 18 November report focusing on X Corps stated in part:

In a discussion of this [enemy offensive] capability in Intell. Summary 2983 dated 9 November 1950, attention was invited to the crucial build-up of enemy forces in the Chosin-Fusen reservoir area north of the Hamhung-Hungnam complex. It was pointed out that the force assembled in this area was capable of launching an offensive to the south in an effort to cut off UN forces located north and east of the complex.

It is believed that the enemy retains this capability in spite of recent retrograde movements. In fact, the present position of guerrilla

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44 FEC to DA TELECON 208, 12 November 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for intervention in Korean War, Part 1, MMA.
45 GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2985, 11 November 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention, Part 1, MMA.
forces and remnants of by-passed NK units ...greatly enhances this potential. A study... reveals the present vulnerability of the west flank of the X Corps and the main supply route leading north from Hungnam to the Chosin Reservoir area. With a reported 8 to 10,000 enemy troops located immediately west of this vital line of communication, in addition to the equivalent of four divisions in the Chosin-Fusen area, the enemy is capable of taking the following courses of action:

a) Launch a counteroffensive to the southwest with forces now located in the Chosin Reservoir in an effort to isolate UN forces northeast of Hungnam.

b) Conduct Active guerrilla operations against UN lines of communication utilizing the usual tactics of establishing roadblocks and ambushes.

c) Initiate a combined offensive against the X Corps utilizing the forces mentioned in a) and b) above.

d) Launch an offensive against the gap between Eighth Army and X Corps by side slipping forces to the southwest from the Chosin Reservoir area.

Although there has been no indication that the Chinese Communists are contemplating any large scale offensive operations in this area, a recent PW report revealed plans for local attacks and guerrilla action against the Hungnam-Hageru-ni main supply route. It is quite evident that the enemy, at present, possesses a serious harassment potential in this area. In addition, he retains his capacity for launching a major counteroffensive as outlined at any time.46

This careful and well-reasoned analysis clearly demonstrated how well Willoughby’s staff understood the tactics and techniques of the Chinese Communists. In addition, it reflects the regard they had for the enemy’s offensive capabilities based upon the reported, albeit unconfirmed, strength of CCF and North Korean units in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir.
In analyzing the tactical situation in the Eighth Army sector, Willoughby’s staff continued to consider the full range of enemy capabilities. On 21 November Willoughby’s staff reported that

Although early November saw the enemy on the offensive, a definite withdrawal – defensive trend has evolved during the past ten days. In contrast to the enemy’s recent offensive efforts, which were aimed particularly at the Sinanju-Anju area, the enemy quite suddenly reverted, broke contact, and apparently withdrew to positions farther to the north. Although this withdrawal and delaying action trend has been more or less general along the entire line, resistance has been more stubborn in the eastern sector…

It is important to note that the terrain between the present UN front and the Yalu River is not conducive to long defensive lines. This portion of North Korea is extremely rugged and lends itself more readily to the defense of key terrain features and strong points along major routes of advance. Recent reports seem to indicate that the enemy is organizing the ground with these features in mind.

It is still too early to determine what this general limited withdrawal activity may portend. It should, of course, be noted that similar withdrawals by the enemy in the past have preceded definite offensive action. On the other hand, the sudden reversal, coupled with limited withdrawals and considerable activity in the vicinity of strong defensive terrain points, may indicate a high level decision to defend from previously selected and prepared positions.47

These assessments appear indecisive when juxtaposed with the implicit operational assumption that defensive and offensive activities were mutually exclusive. Yet, in covering both contingencies, Willoughby’s staff leaves open the possibility that the enemy could do both types of operations with one as a prelude to the other. The intelligence

46 GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2992, 18 November 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part 1, MMA.
47 GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2995, 21 November 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: “Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part 1,” MMA.
reports clearly indicated that the enemy had the capability for both point defense and counterattack. In fact, the enemy really was preparing to do both. In his recollections of the war, Peng Dehuai attested to how the CCF prepared point defense positions as a means to slow the U.N. advance in preparation for strong counterattacks.48

Such careful analysis by Willoughby and his staff directly contradicts the slanderous accusations of historians regarding Willoughby’s professional integrity. Historian Clay Blair insinuated that Willoughby falsified intelligence reports to suit MacArthur’s wishes. Clay Blair’s source for this dubious assertion was his interview with X Corps G-3, Jack Chiles, who, as a veteran of FECOM headquarters, apparently observed Willoughby “closely.” Chiles recalled:

   MacArthur did not want the Chinese to enter the war in Korea. Anything MacArthur wanted, Willoughby produced intelligence for… In this case, [regarding Chinese intervention] Willoughby falsified the intelligence reports…He should have gone to jail.49

Such recollections obtained after the passage of many years can hardly be trusted alone without corroborating evidence. Moreover, such caustic accusations call into question the integrity of those who allegedly witnessed such events and made no official inquiries or protests themselves. In an oral history interview with MacArthur biographer D. Clayton James, Chiles described Willoughby as “insufferably hardy. I’m sure, a highly intelligent guy, but moody. He manufactured intelligence he wanted MacArthur to hear. That’s a

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pretty damning statement, and I don’t think I could prove it.”50 Thus, Jack Chiles admitted he cannot prove Willoughby’s intentions with any high degree of certainty. To conclude, as Clay Blair did, that no one in the intelligence community in Tokyo or in Washington was willing to challenge MacArthur’s interpretations of intelligence reports is a drastic misrepresentation of the environment that actually existed.51

If one defines the “intelligence community” in a broader sense to include all those with access to the information and, thus, the capability to draw conclusions from that information then documentary evidence utterly refutes Blair’s conclusion. MacArthur’s acting Chief of Staff, Major General Doyle O. Hickey (See Figure 62), wrote a letter to Willoughby on 12 September 1953, shortly after the end of the Korean War. In that letter Hickey reminded Willoughby of his firm conviction in trying to talk MacArthur out of the late November 1950 offensive. Hickey, a man who had full access to COMINT and every other piece of intelligence coming into MacArthur’s headquarters, had suggested to MacArthur on two separate occasions in November 1950 to pull his X Corps forces back until he could effect a unification of the Eighth Army and X Corps further to the south.52 Hickey wrote to Willoughby,

You will remember how firm my conviction was to the presence of the Chinese in force. So much so that I made a strong recommendation to the General on 4 November and again on 14 November regarding pulling back the X Corps, effecting a tight contact with and attaching it to Eighth Army. Each time I pointed out what I considered the grave hazard that existed

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52 Robert Hanyok. Chief Historian, National Security Agency, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. E-mail correspondence with the author, 29 June 2005. Hanyok confirmed Doyle Hickey’s access to COMINT.
and presented to the General a draft of an order to put my recommendation into effect. The General not seeing the situation as I did, said he could not approve the order.53

Clearly, even if no one in the G-2 section dared to challenge MacArthur’s interpretation of the intelligence pointing to possible Chinese Communist intervention in force, Doyle Hickey, the acting Chief of Staff, did. Here one can clearly see that on two separate occasions prior to 25 November 1950 MacArthur was advised by Hickey of the gravity of his situation vis a vis the CCF, and MacArthur decided to proceed regardless.

One finds some additional interesting commentary about how MacArthur interpreted military intelligence and how he viewed his tactical situation in mid to late November 1950 if one considers the recollections of Mr. Hanson W. Baldwin, a 1924 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and military editor and correspondent for the New York Times and the Saturday Evening Post. Baldwin journeyed to the Far East Command shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War to cover war developments within the United Nations General Headquarters and in Korea itself. Part of his journeys took him to Formosa to gain information and perspectives from the Chinese Nationalist government of Chiang Kai Shek. During his time on Formosa, Baldwin found a source in a U.S. Army intelligence officer (possibly a CIA operative) known only by his surname, Barrett.

According to Baldwin, Barrett was an old China hand with much experience on the mainland prior to the Communist take-over of mainland China. Barrett was an interface for Willoughby with Chinese Nationalist intelligence sources working the mainland. The

Chinese Nationalists had HUMINT agents inside Communist China but the regime also had COMINT equipment by which to monitor developments on the Chinese mainland. In fact much of the COMINT and HUMINT reporting that Willoughby relied upon to monitor CCF movements within China and along the North Korean-Manchurian border came from Formosa based field stations and agents.

While Willoughby remained leery of Chinese Nationalist HUMINT reporting, fearing it was self-serving; he did rely more upon Chinese Nationalist COMINT reports. Willoughby most likely placed more confidence in Chinese Nationalist COMINT reports since he could verify them against American COMINT reporting. Moreover, the U.S. Army had intelligence officer Barrett on Formosa keeping an eye on Chinese Nationalist COMINT reporting. In a 30 April 1976 oral history interview Baldwin recalled Barrett telling him that Willoughby had information from Formosa indicating CCF massing on the Manchurian frontier and even some indications of what Chinese units were in North Korea. Baldwin recalled:

I mentioned Willoughby’s intelligence before. Although before the Chinese came in he did have quite a few mentions of the Chinese massing on the Manchurian frontier and actually some indications, as Barrett later told me in Formosa, of what Chinese units were in North Korea, he didn’t have them all pinpointed, but he had some of them there. And of course, the Marines had run into Chinese around the reservoir and they had taken Chinese prisoners long before it was known that there were many Chinese in North Korea.

MacArthur had all that information. He had the information, I’m sure, from Barrett …But he didn’t believe it…the invasion by the Chinese, quite a few were sure it was happening before the event, but they couldn’t persuade MacArthur, I’m certain. For the latter mistake, I don’t blame Willoughby. I think Willoughby probably had as many facts as you could get at that time about the Chinese in North Korea and across the Manchurian frontier. He put many of these in his intelligence reports, because I saw some of those
reports. I think MacArthur chose not to accept this, or recognize it, and then when the Chinese did come in, of course, he said this was a whole new war and indeed it was. He made the great mistake I think, in face of these warnings, of pushing his forces all the way to the Yalu.\footnote{Hanson W. Baldwin. “Reminiscences of Hanson Weightman Baldwin.” U.S. Navy (Retired). Volume II. Transcript of oral history interview of Hanson W. Baldwin by John T. Mason Jr., April 30, 1976. U.S. Naval Institute Annapolis, Maryland. Copy held by the Operational Archives Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington D.C. refer to biographical sketch page and text pp. 512-513.}

Unfortunately, Baldwin’s recollections did not break out what Chinese Nationalist COMINT revealed versus what Chinese Nationalist HUMINT revealed, but it does indicate that MacArthur received the available intelligence from both types of sources and still chose to continue his offensive.

In light of the available intelligence a compelling dynamic to consider is that once a military staff briefs its commanding officer on all available intelligence and the possible contingencies it suggests and renders their recommendations then the commander makes his decisions. From that point onward the staff must support those command decisions. At that point, the commander alone assumes responsibility for what happens based upon the decisions he made knowing all of the available information bearing on his situation. From 14 November onward, MacArthur’s staff had no recourse other than to support their commander’s decision and facilitate the operational and tactical execution demanded by his decision.

From 14 November until the eve of the new UN offensive further patrolling revealed only limited, sporadic contact with CCF forces along the UN front. However, from 28 October until 14 November, Willoughby’s estimates of CCF strength had continually increased from 16,500 to 76,800. A downward adjustment of CCF strength to
70,935 was made by 14 November accounting for accumulated CCF casualties sustained as a result of UN airstrikes on enemy ground convoys and limited ground contacts.\textsuperscript{55} The break in contact by CCF forces along the front lines also undoubtedly bolstered MacArthur’s confidence prior to the start of the UN push northward. On 25 November, with U.N. forces in motion on the offensive, Willoughby’s staff reported:

Though it is too early for a concrete evaluation, there are some indications which point to the possibility of a withdrawal of Chinese Communist Forces to the Yalu River and across the border into Manchuria. In unconfirmed reports, heavy casualties and the lack of a will to fight are given as possible reasons for such a move. Equally unconfirmed reports furnish a possible link with political factors which might well be influential in making such a decision. The lull in fighting along most of the front, and the actual loss of contact in some sectors might well be indications that such an operation is underway. The report of the return by the Chinese Communists of twenty-seven American POWs to UN lines could also be interpreted as a possible indication that the Chinese have plans to withdraw from Korea. Within the past forty-eight hours, Seoul and Tokyo have been flooded with rumors of possible peace negotiations.

On the other hand, there have been many reports of Chinese Communist plans to strengthen their intervention forces now in Korea, and all indications continue to point to a heavy troop build-up in Northeast China and Manchuria. The tempo of CCF psychological warfare activity has been recently increased. The general theme of this propaganda has been the continued intervention in Korea and the liquidation of the “American Imperialists.” The CCP has stated many times that they could never turn their backs on Korea or stand idly by while the Americans overran a neighboring country. There have also been many indications that the Chinese Communists have every intention of stubbornly defending the reservoirs and power installations.

\textsuperscript{55} GHQ FEC DIS No. 2988, 14 November 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Order of battle Annex, Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, MMA.
along the Yalu River and its tributaries.\textsuperscript{56}

Based on the information Willoughby’s staff could confirm at the time of this report, it predicted a continued Chinese build-up of forces capable of intervention in Korea and a stubborn defense by CCF forces already in Korea. While Willoughby’s strength estimates may have been drastically low, he and his staff did not discount the potential combat strength (be it just north of the Yalu in Manchuria or just south of it in North Korea), that could be brought to bear against UN forces.

On 22 November 1950, three days prior to the final UN push toward the Yalu River, Willoughby’s staff estimated aggregate CCF and North Korean troop strength south of the Yalu River to be at a minimum of 142,472 and a maximum of 166,714.\textsuperscript{57} The higher end of that estimate, while dramatically lower than the nearly 300,000 CCF troops actually present in North Korea, was already over half the total UN (including ROK) ground combat troop strength of 303,303 troops.\textsuperscript{58} Moreover, the mountainous, compartmentalized terrain, through which UN forces would attack, clearly favored the defending force. Thus, in the best of circumstances, UN forces would be attacking at less than the minimum three to one tactical strength advantage desired in attacking dug-in enemy defensive positions on high ground. Willoughby and his staff reported the information they knew to be correct at the time based on what their intelligence assets

\textsuperscript{56} GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2999, 25 Nov. 1950, RG-407- Army AG Command Reports 1949-1954-Records of the Far East Command, Box 368, NARA II.
\textsuperscript{57} GHQ, FEC DIS No. 2999, 25 November 1950, RG-23: Papers of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Box 14, Folder: Chinese Communist Potential for Intervention in the Korean War, Part I, MMA.
\textsuperscript{58} Total UN combat troop strength data (separate from service and logistics troops) taken directly from GHQ, FEC CINCFE SITREP, 25 November 1950. RG-9: Collection of messages (Radiograms), 1945-1951, Box 15, Folder: CINCFE SITREP, 15-30 November, 1950, MMA.
collected. The limited enemy strength they could confirm and what terrain analysis they performed clearly indicated that conditions were far from ideal for a successful offensive campaign.

On November 25, 1950, armed with this knowledge and overestimating the capabilities of U.N. air power, MacArthur launched his forces toward the Yalu River. With no change in mission from his superiors in Washington, no reinforcements arriving in the immediate future, full knowledge that overwhelming Chinese troop strength was at a maximum of fifty airline miles from his front line units, and that in the best case scenario he was operating at a less than two to one strength advantage, MacArthur knew time was growing short. To sit idle at the Chongchon River line would invite possible Chinese envelopment and the possible destruction of his forces, to withdraw to a more defensible line further south could politically embarrass the United States and be looked upon as appeasement of Communist aggression. As it was, a JCS suggestion to assume a defensive position on the higher ground overlooking the Yalu River Valley still required MacArthur’s forces to advance a considerable distance northward from their positions along the south bank of the Chongchon River.59

Given these considerations, it is highly unlikely that Peng Dehuai, commander of the Chinese Communist Forces in Korea, would have allowed MacArthur to simply advance northward unopposed in the hope that MacArthur would halt his advance shy of the Yalu River. If the CCF were present in great strength, any UN advance at all would be met sooner rather than later by a counterattack. Peng Dehuai recalled how his forces
adopted combat tactics to pretend that we were weak so as to let the enemy advance, make them overconfident, and lure them in deep. I used small units to maintain contact with the enemy while our major forces were deployed along the eastern and western areas of Puckchin....Around November 20 [November 25], the enemy launched a fierce attack on our positions. According to our plans, our small units resisted at every step so as to lure them into continuing their attack. We waited until the enemy reached the Unsan-Kusong line, which we chose as the front for our counterattack positions. That evening, when the enemy was tired after daylong attacks and unable to consolidate, part of our troops cut into their rear. With well-prepared and properly organized manpower and firepower, our troops overwhelmed their positions.60

The actions of Peng Dehuai’s units essentially confirm that he had no intention of ever allowing the bulk of MacArthur’s forces to reach the high ground above the Yalu River.

Thus, aside from the politically unattractive option of withdrawing to the south, MacArthur’s assertion that he could not afford to sit idle and that a reconnaissance in force would expose the enemy’s disposition and intentions proved correct. Further evidence of the correctness of MacArthur’s assessment came from Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins, who testified before Congress in April 1951 in response to the questions of Senator Wayne Morse (D-Oregon) as follows:

Senator Morse: I understand it is a matter of judgment, but I want to pin down here that there is no question about what your judgment is, that on the basis of your knowledge of North Korea, on the basis of your study of terrain maps which set out, as I have seen those maps, the topographical problems of the area, you believe that General MacArthur could have stopped some distance this side [south] of the Yalu and adequately protected his troops?

General Collins: Yes, sir. But, in fairness to General MacArthur now, I should say that he would have had to have gone farther than

he was at the time the Chinese made their mass attack on the 24th of November.61

In late November 1950, the geographical aspect of the battlefield situation had reached a crucial point in terms of the shallow depth of the area of operations and the associated inflexibility of combat operations and intelligence operations. The Chongchon River line is only about 45 miles from the North-Korea-Manchuria border.62 In that compressed area of operations, the CCF were already in place. Although MacArthur had no idea exactly how many CCF troops lay hidden in the hills, MacArthur knew that his intelligence assets had reached their maximum limits to ascertain what lay in front of his forces. Thus, the only means left to ascertain that information and confirm or deny the intent of the enemy forces was by a reconnaissance in force.

Too many historians ridicule MacArthur’s characterization of his offensive push to the Yalu River as a reconnaissance in force. They treat the idea as a hasty excuse thought up by MacArthur to cover up his arrogant miscalculation of Chinese intentions. Yet, the historical evidence clearly indicates that as early as 7 November 1950, MacArthur had explained to the JCS his rationale behind the reconnaissance in force:

reports confirm unquestionably that organized units of Chinese Communist forces have been and are being utilized against our forces; that while the exact strength is impossible to accurately determine, it is sufficient to have seized the initiative in the west sector and to have materially slowed the offensive in the east sector. The principle seems thoroughly established that such forces will be used and augmented at will, probably without any formal declaration of hostilities. If this augmentation continues, it can well reach a point rendering our resumption of advance impossible and


62 Ibid.
even forcing a movement in retrograde. An effort will be made in the west sector in due course of time, possibly within ten days, to again assume the initiative provided the flow of enemy reinforcement can be checked. Only through such an offensive effort can any accurate measure be taken of enemy strength [italics mine].

For better or worse, MacArthur had clearly articulated his rationale and desire for continuing to push toward the Yalu River.

The military and political leadership in Washington kept any reservations they may have held to themselves and endorsed MacArthur’s plans. Consider the recorded minutes of an internal State Department meeting held on 21 November 1950 between Secretary of State Acheson and his undersecretaries. Acheson held this meeting to consider and define the Department’s view prior to meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff later that same day.

State Department Executive Secretary Lucius D. Battle recorded:

At a meeting last night in the Secretary’s office he discussed in some detail the current situation in Korea…He said there were four parts to this analysis:

(1) We should see whether General MacArthur has been told very clearly what to do and whether this is within his capabilities.
(2) We should examine the effect of various courses on the probability of bringing on general hostilities and war.
(3) What is the area of political adjustment and what are the pluses and minuses with regard to them?
(4) What is the effect of the general military posture of the United States and does this require change in policies?

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63 Message C-68465, CINCUNC to JCS, 7 November 1950, RG-6: Records of Headquarters, Far East Command (FECOM), 1947-1951, Box 9, Folder: Korean War File No. 3, MMA.
Acheson stated that with regard to part 1 there was ‘the possibility of confusion in General MacArthur’s mind because he has a straight military directive from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and also has general orders sent from the United Nations.’65 Those UN orders had civil affairs directives for a Korean occupation that Acheson stated did not “take into consideration the contingency of the Chinese Communists coming in, as [did] the military directive.”66 Acheson knew that MacArthur’s military orders authorized him to proceed north of the 38th parallel to destroy the NKPA and to continue the mission in the event of Chinese Communist intervention so long as he judged that he had a reasonable chance of success. Given this situation, Acheson felt that “no one should change this [the military] part of the directive until General MacArthur had had a chance to ‘probe’ the situation.”67 That word “probe,” at a minimum, implied a reconnaissance in force effort.

In addressing the second point of analysis regarding “the effect of various courses on the probability of bringing on general hostilities and war,” Acheson stated that “we are unable to answer this question until after[italics mine] General MacArthur had had a chance to “probe.””68 It appears that even Secretary Acheson was of the view that MacArthur should at least have a chance to execute a reconnaissance in force before any change in his mission should be made. Still, no effort was made to limit MacArthur’s offensive operations solely to a reconnaissance in force.

Within the geographic boundaries of Korea, MacArthur’s mission directive from his Washington superiors clearly left open every possible offensive option within the

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
geographic boundaries of Korea shy of direct Soviet ground force confrontation or atomic warfare. The subsequent deliberations between the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, culminating in the National Security Council meeting of 22 November 1950, substantiate that fact.

In the final deliberations between the Departments of State and Defense on 21 November 1950, Secretary Marshall expressed satisfaction with Secretary Acheson’s view that General MacArthur should be allowed to proceed with his planned offensive. Marshall also expressed doubt about the utility of establishing a buffer zone and assumed if one were to be established south of the Yalu River another would be required north of the river. Moreover, any UN commission operating within this zone would require military protection. Marshall voiced his preference that political proposals should be based on the premise that General MacArthur’s pending military offensive would succeed. Moreover, he believed that any further political proposals should await that successful outcome or, at a minimum, be placed on the negotiating table at a time when UN forces are advancing so as to preclude other UN proposals that the United States would find unacceptable.69

In the National Security Council meeting that followed on 22 November 1950, President Truman, Secretary Marshall, General Bradley, and Secretary Acheson all agreed to allow MacArthur to proceed with his reconnaissance in force to develop the situation. Reassured by his forces’ initial rate of advance, MacArthur quickly turned that probing operation into an all-out offensive.

69 Ambassador Philip Jessup. Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, 21 November 1950, Subject: Situation in Korea. Papers of Harry S. Truman, Student Research File (B File), Box 43B, Folder: The Korean War: The United States Response to North Korea’s Invasion of South Korea [15 of 23], Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.
MacArthur had once again made a bold, audacious gamble, but so had his superiors in Washington. They were all privy to the same intelligence. Moreover, both Tokyo and Washington had key staff members, Major General Doyle Hickey and Major General J.H. Burns, USA (retired) respectively, who in view of the intelligence indicating steadily increasing Chinese ground strength, attempted to convince their bosses to pull UN forces back to more defensible positions. MacArthur and his military and political superiors in Washington considered these arguments, but then set them aside in favor of assuming risk and continuing the offensive. Military intelligence is only effective if the key decision makers believe in it. In this instance, none of them did.

Willoughby’s military intelligence system had reached the maximum of its collection capabilities given the political and operational restrictions imposed upon it and the Chinese Communists’ skills at evading it. What information it could collect and verify painted a less than ideal scenario for a UN offensive, and this information was clearly communicated to MacArthur and his superiors in Washington.

Yet, in the view of both intelligence analysts and the key decision makers the situation was fraught with ambiguities. To use the Wohlstetter methodology, there existed a plethora of conflicting “signals” or indicators, which Wohlstetter calls “noise.” This “noise” took several forms to include increasingly belligerent Chinese Communist Political rhetoric from officials like Zhou En-Lai, who warned consistently that Communist China would not sit idle while UN Forces approached the Yalu River, juxtaposed with a lack of Chinese Communist radio traffic inside North Korean or possible deceptive radio traffic that masked unit identities and threw off order of battle analysts with regard to CCF
strength inside North Korea. Add in several other factors to include a lack of photographic evidence to confirm or deny conflicting HUMINT reports of CCF intentions with regard to intervention, claims that CCF intervention was limited to “units” ostensibly comprised of “volunteers,” and contradicting evidence in the X Corps sector of organized CCF units operating in North Korea, and the confusion caused by North Korean People’s Army guerrilla remnants disrupting UN rear areas, and it becomes very clear how “noisy” the situation truly was in November 1950.70

However, if one completely carries through with the Wohlstetter methodology and looks at the “static” information such as the positions of CCF units known to be in North Korea prior to the November 25th attack, one notices the incontrovertible truth that Willoughby and his staff tracked a relatively steady increase in CCF troop strength of over 150,000 CCF troops in a 27 day period between 28 October and 22 November 1950.71 While Willoughby’s overall CCF strength estimate was low by over 100,000, the gradual strength increase itself was unmistakable and warranted action in the form of a command decision by MacArthur and his superiors in Washington to either withdraw to the south or continue the advance.

In a 1 December 1950 State Department re-cap of a Tokyo press conference, following the start of the Chinese Communist onslaught, Willoughby reportedly told correspondents that MacArthur’s tactics had been based upon the premise that large-scale Chinese intervention was only a ‘potential.’ He admitted that MacArthur had been ‘gambling’ that most of the Chinese would remain beyond the

70 The terms noise, static, and action are defined in Roberta Wohlstetter. *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*. pp. 3, 318.
71 Ibid., p. 318.
Thus, it appears that Willoughby was well aware that his commanding general was assuming risk. Having made such commentary, Willoughby does not sound like a man who simply manufactured intelligence to fit his commanding general’s assessment of the enemy situation.

More importantly however, one must never forget that MacArthur and his superiors were well aware of how bleak the situation in Korea might be, for Major General Doyle O. Hickey and Major General J.H. Burns, USA (retired) made their dissenting opinions and reservations about the pending UN advance heard to their respective bosses to no avail. With MacArthur betting on UN air power to compensate against large CCF troop concentrations and senior military and civilian officials in Washington betting on MacArthur to win against the odds, just as he had at Inchon, all parties concerned rolled the dice and crapped out.

5.4 Conclusion

Determining Chinese Communist capabilities was never a problem for Charles Willoughby and his intelligence staff. It was ascertaining precise Chinese strength and intentions that proved difficult. Throughout the UN advance north of the 38th parallel, intelligence reports always mentioned the potential for Chinese intervention. However, as the U.N. forces closed to within one-hundred miles of the Yalu River, UN theater level

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72 Department of State, Foreign Policy Studies Branch, Division of Historical Policy Research, “Chronology of Principal Events Relating to the Korean Conflict.” December 1950, p. 3. Papers of Harry S. Truman- Selected records relating to the Korean War- Department of State, Student Research File (B File), Box 44-A [1 of 2], Korean War: Response to Communist China’s Intervention, Folder: The Korean War: The United States Response to Communist China’s Intervention [10 of 17], Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.
intelligence capabilities in addition to other combat operational capabilities, were
circumscribed by geo-political considerations. Thus, UN military intelligence operators
had entered into the foggy area along the continuum between war and politics. In other
words, military intelligence, at the theater and strategic levels of war becomes highly
political.

Political restrictions prohibited aerial reconnaissance over Manchurian airspace and
the CCF coming into Korea moved at night and camouflaged themselves well by day in
mountainous, forested terrain largely evading both night time and daylight aerial
reconnaissance planes. COMINT specialists were still attempting to break through CCF
operational codes, and HUMINT reports were limited to sporadic, short-term ground
contacts reported by ground reconnaissance patrols and civilians. Thus, with sporadic
reports that could not be confirmed by multiple sources, accurate estimates of Chinese
strength leaving Manchuria and entering North Korea were largely unattainable. Perhaps it
is not so surprising that General MacArthur viewed political intelligence obtained by
Chinese Nationalist spies within Mao’s inner circle in Beijing as the only hope of
determining CCF intentions despite these sources’ questionable reliability.

Aside from political intelligence, a precise estimate of CCF strength south of the
Yalu River was the one thing that might have illuminated Chinese intentions. Willoughby’s
strength estimates of CCF forces inside North Korea, however flawed, were based only
upon information he could confirm and his reports were always qualified with the
acknowledgement of potential large-scale CCF intervention. FECOM G-2 analysts
assessed information collected on CCF units to indicate a consistent potential for
intervention and, regardless of offensive or defensive intent, steadily growing troop
strength inside North Korea. MacArthur, relying heavily upon UN air superiority, elected
to proceed despite the foreboding potentialities of the situation and the obvious failure of
UN airpower to effectively detect or interdict CCF infiltration a month earlier.
Willoughby’s staff had made that failure and the CCF capabilities for intervention well
known to MacArthur and his superiors in Washington.

With the UN intelligence system stretched to its fullest capacity within political,
geographical, and operational limitations and his combat units temporarily paused awaiting
logistical resupply, MacArthur realized that his offensive had to start soon to have any
chance of success. He realized the gamble he was taking. However, he had made an
illustrious military career out of such bold, audacious undertakings. Moreover, with a
scent of appeasement in the air surrounding the political negotiations at the UN,
MacArthur felt even more compelled to act quickly before the chance at a complete
victory against Communist aggression was lost. He elected to seize the tactical and
operational initiative and assume risk by making a reconnaissance in force to reveal the
enemy’s true strength and intentions and then attack before the CCF had the chance to
attack on their own timetable or improve defensive positions to thwart the UN advance.

Meanwhile, policymakers in Washington talked with their UN allies (especially
Britain), who advocated avoiding any activity that could potentially escalate the conflict
into a larger war with Communist China or, even worse, the Soviet Union. In the
deliberations of the National Security Council, the JCS, Secretary of Defense George
Marshall, and Secretary of State Dean Acheson all succumbed to the diplomatic melee,
and ultimately, tried to please everyone by allowing MacArthur to proceed with his mission under strict limitations not to invade Manchurian territory or airspace.

Unfortunately, in late November 1950, MacArthur did not calculate his assumption of risk nearly as well as he had for the Inchon landing. As historical evidence has indicated, this poor calculation was due in some measure to the political and geographic limitations imposed on MacArthur’s forces and the operational limitations of intelligence collection assets, but it is also due to the Chinese Communist Forces’ ability to recognize and exploit all of those limitations. By slipping into Korea under radio silence while possibly sending out deceptive radio transmissions, utilizing the Manchurian sanctuary to protect MIG-15’s and antiaircraft guns while thwarting aerial reconnaissance and bombing efforts around the key crossing sites along the Yalu River, and keeping UN ground reconnaissance patrols at arms length, the CCF deployed enough troops into Korea to push the UN forces back across the 38th parallel.

Most importantly, MacArthur, his staff, and his military and political superiors failed collectively at the key moment of decision. MacArthur placed too much faith in his HUMINT sources and in his airpower to offset any Chinese troop strength advantage. Willoughby’s inaccurate enemy strength estimates were honest mistakes based upon the difficulty of confirming information by multiple sources, especially via COMINT sources that Willoughby appeared to value the most. While Willoughby’s staff could put together enough intelligence to warn of the risks of an offensive, MacArthur would not be deterred. Meanwhile, the Truman administration and the JCS failed to alter MacArthur’s mission despite any of their own reservations and the knowledge that they could not afford the
political or strategic risks of supporting that mission beyond the borders of Korea. Their collective failure and their collective underestimation of Communist China’s strength, resolve, and intentions gave Communist China the opportunity to turn the tide of the war.

Even in the wake of MacArthur’s failed offensive, Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall remained adamant about leaving the tactical fighting of the conflict to the UN commanding general. In the 28 November 1950 meeting of the National Security Council, convened and attended by President Truman, Secretary Marshall talked about how scattered General MacArthur’s forces were and that there was a big gap in General MacArthur’s lines. He further remarked

I don’t know what MacArthur intends to do about that. It is his problem. I won’t even ask MacArthur what he is going to do. We have no business, here in Washington, 8,000 miles away, asking the local commander what his tactical plans are. General Collins here, and General Smith, know that all during the Battle of the Bulge the War Department did not ask them one single question. We let them do the fighting. It’s the same way now. We must follow hour by hour any developments pertaining to our getting further involved with the Chinese Communists but we won’t ask MacArthur his tactical plans.”

Clearly, even in the midst of calamity, Marshall held MacArthur’s tactical prerogatives as the UN commander sacrosanct, and the rest of the cabinet, and even President Truman followed suit in that regard. Strategically, they ensured that MacArthur did not escalate the conflict beyond the borders of Korea. However, at the operational level of war where the tactical and strategic levels of war blend together in the form of a military campaign

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plan ultimately aimed at achieving strategic objectives, these men once again deferred to MacArthur’s judgment and interpretation of the available intelligence.

In doing so they must accept partial responsibility for the failed UN offensive in November 1950. Much like what had happened in the Battle of the Bulge against Nazi Germany in 1944, the theater commander and his superiors in Washington looked for the enemy through a mirror and instead saw the reflection of their own hopes and intentions.74 As a result, they all faced what MacArthur aptly labeled “a whole new war.”

Figure 58: The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff

(Seated from left to right in this February 1950 photo): U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General (by September 1950 General of the Army) Omar N. Bradley; U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins; and Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman. The JCS considered many possible reasons for the Chinese Communist intervention, and ultimately decided to allow MacArthur to proceed with his plan to advance his forces all the way to the Yalu River. (Photo taken from the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library website at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/korea/photos/35percent_Kw_2_13_50.htm>. The original photograph was given courtesy of U.S. Army and the website extracted it from D.M. Giangreco’s War in Korea: 1950-1953 (Presidio Press).)
After the initial Chinese intervention, British Prime Minister Clement Atlee was adamant about keeping the war limited to Korea. When he got word that MacArthur might seek to expand the war into Communist China he hurried to Washington and received Truman, Acheson, and Marshall’s reassurance that the war would be limited. Photograph provided courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.
Dean G. Acheson served as President Truman’s 3rd Secretary of State from 1949-1953. During his tenure in office Acheson presided over much of the new strategies and policies the United States would pursue in the burgeoning Cold War against the Soviet Union. Acheson was instrumental in focusing America’s foreign policy priorities on Europe first while in the Far East he gave top billing to keeping a close watch on Soviet and Communist Chinese activity throughout Asia and securing a final peace treaty with Japan. He shared the prevalent belief among Washington policymakers and General MacArthur, that the CCF would not overtly intervene in the Korean War. (The photograph was taken from its original source at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/wake/planning.htm>.)
Figure 61: James H. Burns, Major General, USA (Retired) – Sworn in as the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense by then Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson

Major General (Ret.) James H. Burns, held a position unique in the history of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. His position had no predecessor, but his outstanding performance of his duties during the Korean War paved the way for a new position to be permanently created, that of Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Burns appears to be the senior Washington policymaker and quite possibly the only one with the moral courage to voice opposition to MacArthur’s late November 1950 offensive based on the intelligence available. He proposed a meeting of the minds between Marshall and MacArthur to discuss the issue in Tokyo in mid November. Burns realized no one could reasonably expect General MacArthur to withdraw to the south of his own accord. Burns knew such a decision would have to be dictated to MacArthur by his superiors in Washington. However, Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall disapproved of the idea. Picture taken from Doris M. Condit. Test of War: 1950-1953: Volume II History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. (Washington D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office), p. 20.
Major General (Later Lieutenant General) Doyle O. Hickey (second from left) had been General of the Army Douglas MacArthur’s Acting Chief of Staff while Ned Almond commanded X Corps in Korea. Eventually, the position became Hickey’s permanently. Hickey appears to have been the solitary voice of vehement opposition within the FECOM staff to MacArthur’s decision to renew his push to the Yalu River in late November 1950. Even if MacArthur’s G-2, Major General Willoughby (pictured at far left) did not argue at length with MacArthur over the decision, Hickey did. Hickey and Willoughby are shown here alongside General and Mrs. Matthew B. Ridgway (at far right) in May 1951 on the occasion of Willoughby’s departure from FECOM and his return the United States for retirement from active duty. (Picture taken from the Matthew B. Ridgway Papers, Series 7 – Photographs, Commander in Chief Far East 11 April 1951-10 Jun 1951, Box 111, Folder: Photographs-FEC Departure of Generals Willoughby and Beiderlinden 22-23 May 1951, USAMHI, Carlisle, Pennsylvania).
CHAPTER 6

VIEWING “A WHOLE NEW WAR” THROUGH RECALIBRATED EYES

6.1 Eighth Army Reflects and Regroups Under New Command

United Nations Forces spent most of December 1950 in a deliberate withdrawal (See Figure 63). Eighth Army and X Corps units displaced south of the 38th parallel and eventually south of the Han River to regroup and halt the massive Chinese Communist Forces bearing down upon them. In the process of regrouping, Major General Almond’s X Corps was absorbed into the Eighth Army’s command structure for future operations. Meanwhile, in true testament to their professionalism, the entire Far East Command, especially the Eighth Army and X Corps commanders and staff officers, assessed their recent combat performance and sought to improve upon their weaknesses while maintaining their strengths.

Looking back on the events preceding the second CCF intervention, the Far East Command convened a joint services board to assess the command’s actions and address its shortcomings. The board recommended establishing a joint services intelligence sharing committee to “expedite the flow of intelligence between the services.” On 30 November 1950, the Far East Command formed the FECOM Intelligence Liaison Committee, comprised of high ranking representatives from each of the armed services along with a
“reluctant” CIA representative who reported directly to Major General Willoughby.¹ This committee was designed to prevent needless duplication of intelligence coverage of various areas while ensuring that strategic level intelligence was centralized under one command. This led to the formation of the Far East Command Liaison Group (FECLG) also known as the 8240th Army Unit, which had the mission of coordinating and running HUMINT operations throughout the Far East. This group also sent a detachment (Far East Command Liaison Detachment-Korea) of the 8240th Army Unit to Eighth Army Headquarters to handle HUMINT collection operations in Korea and coordinate the flow of intelligence between Eighth Army and UNC/FECOM General Headquarters.

In addition, FECOM formed another unit, the Combined Command Reconnaissance Activities Korea (CCRAK) to control all of FECOM’s, and particularly Eighth Army’s, HUMINT detachments to include safe houses in Korea, Japan, and Okinawa. Such structural changes were the result of careful reflection and the joint intelligence community’s belated realization of the need to centralize the collection and dissemination of intelligence under one central authority. That realization surely delighted Willoughby and MacArthur, who had fought tirelessly for such centralization throughout their tenure in the Far East Command!

Meanwhile, Eighth Army Commander, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, had little opportunity for his own careful reflection. Walker met a tragic end in a traffic accident just south of Uijongbu on December 23, 1950.² General MacArthur had planned for such unfortunate contingencies and immediately had Army Chief of Staff, General J.

Lawton Collins, inform Lieutenant General Matthew Bunker Ridgway of his new assignment as Commanding General, Eighth United States Army in Korea. Ridgway had been serving at the Pentagon as the U.S. Army’s Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations (G-3). On Collins’ order, Ridgway, the distinguished paratrooper who commanded the 82d Airborne Division and the XVIII Airborne Corps in World War II, left Washington immediately and arrived in Tokyo on 24 December 1950.

MacArthur’s directives to Ridgway were simple and reflected the UN commander’s own capacity to learn from the lessons of recent experience. First MacArthur told Ridgway to hold “in the most advanced positions in which you can maintain yourself.” This was consistent with MacArthur’s goal of “inflicting a broadening defeat making possible the retention and security of South Korea.” Next, MacArthur imparted his painfully learned lessons of not underestimating the Chinese Communist foe and acknowledging that air power could not isolate the battlefield or stop the flow of hostile troops or supply. Then, after lamenting the diplomatically-induced “mission vacuum” in which the UN Command was currently operating, he encouraged Ridgway stating that “a military success would strengthen our diplomacy.” Finally, in response to Ridgway’s request for permission to attack the enemy whenever feasible MacArthur appreciatively stated “the Eighth Army is yours, Matt. Do what you think best.”

With that last vote of confidence Ridgway proceeded to Eighth Army Headquarters to meet and, as he saw fit, replace key members of his staff. Despite the events of late November 1950 and pervasive talk of intelligence failures circulating in the

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American press, Ridgway decided to retain Eighth Army G-2, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton. Ridgway was not impressed with his first view of the Eighth Army G-2’s enemy situation map, which depicted a “big red goose egg” to the army’s front with the number 174,000 written in it. Notwithstanding this initial encounter, Tarkenton apparently earned the general’s trust (See Figure 64). The fact that Tarkenton was retained within Ridgway’s inner planning circle speaks well for Tarkenton’s abilities.

Ridgway surmised that Eighth Army was not patrolling aggressively enough along its front lines. He immediately ordered his corps commanders to gain and maintain contact with the enemy, take prisoners, and extract information from them. He also ordered his primary staff section chiefs to visit the front line divisions more often to ensure no one lost touch with the tactical realities facing division commanders. Tarkenton responded to this guidance by having his division chiefs within his staff section make monthly visits to the various front line Corps and Division headquarters. On the whole, Ridgway felt that Eighth Army needed to awaken from its retrograde malaise and revert into the offensive mode.

While Ridgway’s diagnosis may have been true in some degree, Tarkenton had already crafted and disseminated a reconnaissance and surveillance plan, which demanded

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6 Headquarters, Eighth United States Army Korea Internal Memorandum from Commanding General to the Eighth Army Staff, dated 7 March 1951, RG-338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter), Box 61, Folder: Incoming Miscellaneous, Vol. 2, NARA II.
7 See also Headquarters, Eighth United States Army Korea, internal memorandum from A C of S, G-2 to Operations Division, Miscellaneous Division, and Counter Intelligence Division dated 12 March 1951, RG-338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter), Box 61, Folder: Incoming Miscellaneous, Vol. 2, NARA II.
the aggressive patrolling efforts Ridgway sought. As early as 9 December 1950, in
reaction to the Chinese Communist counterattack, Tarkenton produced a new set of
essential elements of information (EEI) to be collected by ground patrols and all
intelligence means at the Eighth Army’s disposal. His plan also included requests to higher
echelons for aerial visual and photographic coverage of the enemy avenues of approach,
counterintelligence base security assessments, and operational security measures.9

On 16 December 1950, through his Theater Intelligence Division Chief, Colonel
Earl.C. Ewert, General Willoughby expressed to Tarkenton the dire need to determine the
locations of CCF units. Ewert promised Tarkenton that FECOM was doing everything
possible to leverage theater and higher level agencies to push information down to Eighth
Army and asked for Eighth Army’s upward reciprocation.10 That same day Tarkenton
participated in a conference with Eighth Army operational planners to conduct agent
drops into Communist held territory.11 Additionally, on 18 December, Tarkenton
requested that ROK naval personnel conduct thorough reconnaissance of designated
coastal areas to protect Eight Army’s left flank.12 Moreover, one of General Walker’s last
orders to the Eighth Army directed “aggressive ground reconnaissance” of forward areas

8 Ibid.
9 Intelligence Annex A to EUSAK OPLAN 18, 9 December 1950; Conference Memo (agent drops); 16
December 1950, RG-319: Army–AG Command Reports 1949-1954, Eighth Army (EUSAK), Section III,
Staff Section Reports, A/C of S G-2 December 1950, Box 1135, Book 3, Part 3, NARA II.
10 Letter from Colonel Earl.C. Ewert to Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton, 16 December 1950. RG-
338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and
Thereafter), Box 57, Folder: G-2 Action File Vol. III 1950, NARA II.
11 Conference Memo (agent drops); 16 December 1950, RG-319: Army–AG Command Reports 1949-
1954, Eighth Army (EUSAK), Section III, Staff Section Reports, A/C of S G-2 December 1950, Box
1135, Book 3, Part 3, NARA II.
12 CX-35248, CG EUSAK to all subordinate commands, 1811000I December 1950, RG-319: Army–AG
Command Reports 1949-1954, Eighth Army (EUSAK), Section III, Staff Section Reports, A/C of S G-2
December 1950, Box 1135, Book 3, Part 3, NARA II.
to “considerable depth” to re-establish contact with CCF elements, identify units, and
determine their routes of advance. Walker also gave “high priority to the capture of
prisoners, particularly CCF, for priority interrogation” and specifically directed that “units
out of contact will patrol to gain contact without delay.”13 Tarkenton ensured he met
General Walker’s intent and reassured Colonel Ewert on 20 December, that “all
intelligence agencies [were] directing their efforts toward locating and identifying Chinese
Communist Forces.”14 He further reassured Colonel Ewert that all Eighth Army units
were employing active screening measures on refugees fleeing south and questioning them
extensively about their knowledge of the enemy forces.15 Thus, contrary to popular belief,
substantial evidence exists to show that Eighth Army’s intelligence and reconnaissance
units were not sitting around flat-footed when Ridgway assumed command.

Aggressive reconnaissance patrolling had been the spearhead of Eighth Army’s
push toward the Yalu River in late November 1950. General Walker had sent armored
Task Force Dolvin forward on 23 November to cover the gap between the two lead
infantry regiments in the 25th Infantry Division’s sector. The newly-constituted and well-
trained Eighth Army Ranger Company patrolled as far as 5,000 meters ahead of Dolvin’s
main body and reported no enemy contact.16 However, these aggressive efforts to find the

13 CX-35249, CG EUSAK to all subordinate commands, 181100I December 1950, RG-319: Army–AG
Command Reports 1949-1954, Eighth Army (EUSAK), Section III, Staff Section Reports, A/C of S G-2
December 1950, Box 1135, Book 3, Part 3, NARA II.
14 Letter from Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton to Colonel Earl C. Ewert, 20 December 1950 RG-
338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and
Thereafter), Box 57, Folder: G-2 Action File Vol. III 1950, NARA II.
15 Ibid.
16 TF Dolvin covered a gap since the 25th Infantry Division sector that was too wide for a two regiment
front and too narrow to sustain three regiments and still have enough combat forces left in reserve. 8th
Army Ranger Company Combat Action Report (TF Dolvin), Robert W. Black Collection, Box 9, Folder:
enemy had only mixed results against a Chinese foe that purposely maintained sporadic contact to lure UN forces deeper into Chinese engagement areas.\textsuperscript{17}

Such tactics came as no surprise to General Walker and his staff. Combat information bulletins published by the Eighth Army G-3, with input from Lieutenant Colonel Tarkenton’s G-2 section, clearly revealed a thorough knowledge of Chinese Communist offensive and defensive tactics. Eighth Army had learned a great deal from their earlier encounters with Chinese Communist Forces in October. Specifically, a bulletin dated 20 November 1950 called attention to the ability of small Chinese Communist units to defend in “inverted V” formations situated on high ground astride key roadways. CCF units would allow approaching UN forces to enter the “V” and fix them in place by engaging them while a mobile force moved in from the flank to close off the “V” and destroy UN forces stuck in the deadly cross-fire. Such thorough knowledge of enemy tactics to include the superb camouflage discipline of the CCF shows that Eighth Army was not blindly wandering into a trap.

Walker most likely expected to encounter such strongpoints figuring that he would have to fight through such positions if he was going to reach the Yalu River. Moreover, the longer he delayed the more chance the CCF had to either attack his units or improve upon their fighting positions. Walker advanced northward as soon as his logistics allowed

\textsuperscript{8} Army Ranger Company Official Documents, Training Reports, Attachment of Units 1950-51, USAMHI.
\textsuperscript{17} Peng Dehuai personally recalls his strategy to allow for only minimal contact with enemy patrols in order to lure U.N. forces further north into his prepared engagement areas in preparation for launching counterattacks. Peng Dehuai “My Story of the Korean War.” Cited in Li, Millett, and Yu eds. Mao’s Generals Remember Korea, p. 33.
him, and it was his encounter with massive CCF strength in rough terrain and foul weather that eventually forced him to withdraw.

6.2 Revamping HUMINT Operations

Thus, it was not the CCF front line picture that was ever truly a mystery to the Eighth Army. What remained in question was the strength of the units echeloned and held in reserve behind the enemy’s front line. Given the CCF’s tremendous expertise in night movement and daytime camouflage, the only way to find out such enemy dispositions was to observe the enemy formations on the ground. The insertion of partisan agents behind enemy lines discussed earlier in conjunction with Operations Aviary and Racketeer demonstrate a clear effort on the part of Willoughby’s theater intelligence system to ascertain the much needed intelligence on CCF forces. Yet, former Chief of CIA Partisan Operations, Colonel (later General) Richard G. Stillwell, USA lamented that many of his agent teams were held back from action in late October and early November 1950 when the intelligence they could gather was most needed. He could not fathom the decision to cancel his planned missions, especially for his teams that were assigned to cover Sinanju (near the Chongchon River) and the Changjin [Chosin] Reservoir areas.18

However, numerous reasons existed to support canceling these particular missions. Before September of 1950, unconventional warfare in the Korean theater was without any central theater level organization. Therefore, any organization that wanted to get into the unconventional warfare operations could and often did so without coordinating with...

As discussed much earlier, Willoughby had the thankless task of trying to get his arms around such disparate actors and met with only limited success. By October 1950, there were already many other organizations involved in joint special operations, and only a finite number of assets (such as aircraft and radio equipment) to dedicate to such missions. Willoughby had to pick and choose his intelligence collection missions wisely. Stillwell himself recounted the involvement of the “two different and mutually autonomous elements of the CIA; the OSI, 5th Air Force (under Don Nichols); the FEC Liaison Group (FECLG the cover designation for Willoughby’s own clandestine outfit); a U.S. Navy detachment with the Korean flotilla (Eugene Clark’s partisan outfit); and a special Eighth Army unit created to handle the ROK forces cut off on the coast of Chinnampo Peninsula, northwest of Seoul.” With so many organizations fighting for assets it is little wonder that so few of them entered the battlefield at the place and time of their choosing. Second, Stillwell recalled how the CIA elements were parasitic in terms of their reliance on FECOM for the transportation, logistics, and equipment they required to perform their missions.

Service parochialism also came to hinder Willoughby’s centralization efforts. On two occasions in September and October of 1950 Willoughby had attempted to persuade Major General Earle E. Partridge, the Fifth Air Force Commander, to detail Donald Nichols’ intelligence outfit under FECOM-UNC control. Partridge kept stalling on the issue and in his own diary admitted “Nichols…is concerned especially with the Air Force’s

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19 Ibid., p. 6.
20 Ibid., p. 7.
side of the picture, while the others are concerned with the Army’s side.”21 Given the choice between elements he could personally control and elements he could not, Willoughby understandably chose the former over the latter whenever the situation permitted.

According to a 28 September 1951 memorandum that clearly delineated the responsibilities for clandestine activities in Korea later in the war, there existed a provision in a top-secret letter dated 4 November 1950 that stated Willoughby, as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, General Headquarters, Far East Command was charged with the coordination, surveillance, examination, and approval of plans to be executed jointly or unilaterally by agencies conducting intelligence operations, or related activities, within Far East Command or originating in Far East Command and directed into contiguous areas in which FECOM and SCAP have concurred interests.22

Following the initial CCF intervention, it appeared that Willoughby had the authority needed to centralize and direct all intelligence operations in the theater.

However, despite such authority, interservice and interagency cooperation did not happen flawlessly overnight. It took Willoughby time to achieve the synchronization he desired. By late December 1950, as UN forces sought to reacquire CCF forces after a break in contact, Willoughby approached Stratemeyer stating that the CIA, OSI (led by recently promoted Captain Donald Nichols), and the FECOM G-2 should all get “on the

22 General Headquarters, Far East Command, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Far East Command Liaison Detachment (Korea), Memorandum For Vice Admiral H.M. Martin, Commander Seventh Fleet, Subject: Clandestine Activities, Korea, 28 September 195, p.1. RG-313: Records of the Naval Operating Forces, Box 607: Post 1946 Command File, Folder: FECOM-Chronology: Clandestine
same team.” Stratemeyer responded in the affirmative and directed Partridge to cooperate.\textsuperscript{23} The issue of controlling partisan forces came to the forefront in early February 1951 when Major (promoted again) Donald Nichols of Air Force Special Activities Unit One, code-named NICK, began to lead FEAF sponsored partisan operations to “provide sabotage, demolition, and guerrilla operations” separate from the ongoing partisan operations of the CIA and Eighth Army G-3’s “Miscellaneous” (partisan) Group. While the CIA and Eighth Army partisan forces operated under proper FECLG supervision, the CIA accused Nichols of encroaching on its turf. MacArthur settled the issue by ordering FEAF to scale back its partisan operations and yield to FECLG supervision of selected partisan targets. \textsuperscript{24}

Willoughby, or at a minimum one of his principal staff officers, participated in a meeting in mid-February 1951 that effectively clarified the roles and missions of various intelligence agencies operating in Korea. The newly formed Combined Command Reconnaissance Activities, Korea (CCRAK) was to carry out “positive” (active human agent collection) intelligence operations or sabotage operations aimed at North Korean and Chinese Communist targets designated by FECLG. Under CCRAK, NICK would be responsible for partisan operations against North Korean and Chinese Communist air force targets. In addition, as part of their technical and communications intelligence roles, which

\textsuperscript{24} Ed Evanhoe. \textit{Darkmoon.} pp. 15-16.
they had been performing from the outset of the war, NICK could establish radar and radio intercept units on the islands off of North Korea and mount positive intelligence operations inside North Korea to gather pertinent air force technical intelligence.\textsuperscript{25} Clearly, Willoughby and MacArthur realized the value of centralized control of intelligence collection missions and the centralized flow of intelligence information. Unfortunately, it took calamitous events like the CCF interventions and stern enforcement efforts by MacArthur and Willoughby to make joint service and CIA intelligence professionals embrace those important principles.

The CIA’s efforts to fight Willoughby and MacArthur’s centralization efforts is well documented. A recently declassified CIA internal memorandum addressed to Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, Allen Dulles, dated 15 December 1950, revealed the details of an assessment trip to UNC/FECOM GHQ and Eighth Army Headquarters by Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins and General George Cabell, Air Force Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (A-2). Cabell briefed one of CIA Deputy Director Allen Dulles’s deputies on the results of the meeting between himself, Collins, MacArthur, and Willoughby. Cabell recommended that if the CIA wanted greater autonomy in their Far East operations then the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), General Walter Bedell Smith or Mr. Allen Dulles, should personally go out to MacArthur’s headquarters to work out the issues. According to Cabell, MacArthur stated to Collins his understanding of the need to allow CIA to do its mission, but “he wanted to be certain that his staff was kept

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 16. Technical Intelligence or TECHINT refers to the systematic collection and exploitation of captured enemy equipment. Whether it was weapons, wheeled or tracked vehicles, or aircraft, the U.N. forces never lost a chance to learn more about the capabilities of enemy equipment. However, this form of
sufficiently acquainted with the activities of the CIA in order to provide him with the necessary degree of protection to his own position, especially in his role as Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers."  

In a separate conversation Willoughby and Cabell discussed General Smith’s recent appointment as the DCI. Willoughby stated he was glad to hear of this appointment, but apparently said nothing else. In a final meeting between Cabell, Willoughby, Collins, and MacArthur, Willoughby mentioned General Smith’s appointment and MacArthur offered an invitation to General Smith to come to Tokyo where he would be guaranteed a warm reception and would have the opportunity to iron out any existing issues. Cabell also remarked about Willoughby’s persistence in demanding that CIA furnish to him fairly detailed statements of its planned operations. Given that fact, Cabell recommended the CIA comply with that demand. Moreover, he stated any attempt to go over MacArthur and Willoughby through the JCS would be futile. In his view only a trip by Smith or his immediate deputies would get the CIA the results they sought. Thus, MacArthur and Willoughby demonstrated willingness to work with the CIA but this arrangement was contingent upon the CIA sacrificing much of their desired autonomy within the Far East Theater.

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intelligence was not timely and of no immediate impact. TECHINT benefits were primarily long term in nature and helped U.N. member nations build better equipment to counter the Soviet technology.

26 Central Intelligence Agency internal memorandum to DDCI Allen Dulles, 15 December 1950, p.1. Approved for release 2003/05/08: Job # CIA-RDP80B01676R, Box # 0026, Folder # 0008, Document # 0002-6, CREST, NARA II.

27 It is interesting to note that General Walter Bedell Smith had taken over as Director of Central Intelligence in October 1950 so this was not really news to MacArthur or Willoughby. Ibid., p. 2.

28 Ibid.
While reining in the CIA’s activities in theater, Willoughby had other HUMINT assets to manage as well. One such asset, which was exclusive to the Eighth Army and X Corps, were Army Ranger companies. These companies were elite, light infantry units trained for airborne insertion, long range reconnaissance missions, sabotage, and raids well behind enemy lines. On 25 July 1950, General MacArthur received orders from Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins, to activate a Ranger unit in Japan. On August 25, 1950 the 8213th Army Special Unit was established by GHQ, FECOM and immediately deployed to Korea. The company began training in the high ground north of Pusan during the early part of September 1950. Following the successful execution of Operation Chromite, 8213th Army Unit began finding and eliminating NKPA units bypassed by the bulk of the Eighth Army on its push toward Seoul. In October 1950 the unit was re-designated as Eighth Army Ranger Company and attached to the 25th Infantry Division. There it worked along with the 25th Infantry Division’s reconnaissance company doing long range patrolling at the spearhead of the advancing Eighth Army. Finally in November 1950, the Eighth Army Ranger Company spearheaded Task Force Dolvin in the final push toward the Yalu only to encounter overwhelming Chinese Communist Forces and to narrowly avoid complete destruction. Following their heavy engagement, the Eighth Army Ranger Company was sent to Inchon to guard Eighth Army supply trains.

30 John A. Summers. ‘8th Army Ranger Company Historical Questionnaire.’ pp. 1-9. Robert W. Black Collection, Box 10, Folder – Postwar Correspondence with 8th Army Ranger Company, USAMHI.
In the six months following the massive CCF counteroffensive, six more Ranger companies, fresh out of training at Fort Benning, Georgia arrived in Korea and were assigned to the combat divisions of the Eighth Army. The 1st, 2nd, and 4th Ranger Companies arrived between 17 and 30 December 1950, and when the 3rd and 5th Ranger Companies arrived in Korea on 24 March 1951, the Eighth Army Ranger Company (what was left of it) was deactivated. One day earlier, the one and only airborne operation in the Korean War involving Ranger units was executed by the Second and Fourth Ranger Companies in conjunction with the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team during the parachute assault on Musan-ni (See Figure 65). While each combat division in Korea eventually received a Ranger company, they were never utilized to their fullest capabilities in terms of deep, long range reconnaissance by airborne or amphibious insertion.31

Several factors account for this situation. First, some Ranger units were utilized mostly on ground infiltration missions with some ranging as far as several miles behind enemy lines. They raided command posts, captured prisoners, created havoc, and emplaced anti-personnel mines on dismounted enemy avenues of approach. Yet, even this capability was not exploited to a great degree. Ranger units conducting these missions had to be broken into squad and platoon size elements because companies made too large a footprint in hostile territory. Additionally, the fact that most of these troops were fair skinned, English speaking Americans, made their presence too easily detected by the enemy. This factor along with the difficulty of extraction, should the unit be compromised, made division commanders leery of sending troops on long range reconnaissance missions.

31 Martin Blumenson, “Special Problems in the Korean Conflict (Miscellaneous Problems and Their Solutions).” p. 82.
Moreover, even though Rangers were adept at night time maneuvers and operations, division commanders felt that such missions would cause the Rangers to deviate from preplanned routes and remove any possibility of effectively supporting the Rangers with pre-planned artillery fires or reserve ground forces. 32

Transportation for inserting and extracting the Ranger units performing deep reconnaissance missions posed another problem. The scarce transport helicopters in the Eighth Army’s inventory were already being used for emergency medical evacuations, logistics transport, and other transportation priorities. Recently promoted X Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Almond, notified Ridgway of the utility of rotary wing aircraft for Ranger and partisan agent insertions and extractions and as of 22 May 1951, Ridgway had planned to forward a request for additional helicopters to MacArthur for dedicated use in special operations. 33 Almond and Ridgway’s belief in the utility of rotary wing aircraft pointed to a huge weakness in both the operational and intelligence battlefield operating systems of the Eighth Army and the U.S. Army as a whole. Eighth Army lacked a true cavalry arm, which could be airlifted in light planes, helicopters, and assault type aircraft to find and fix the enemy then pursue and exploit success against the enemy as conditions allowed. 34 Not until, U.S. troops were engaged in a fight for South Vietnam would the helicopter assault technique enter its heyday. In the Korean War,

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32 Ibid., p. 83.
33 Message GK (TAC) 120 KCG CG Army Eight to CG X Corps, 22 March 1951, Papers of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (retired), Box : Korean War Historical Data/Casualties/Chronology or Orders 147-1951, Folder: Correspondence CG X Corps to CG Eighth Army 1951, USAMHI.
additional helicopters would not be quickly forthcoming from the United States Army
inventory, and as the battle lines began to stabilize, the special operations requirement for
them apparently dissipated as well.

While corps and army level commanders like Almond and Ridgway recognized and
attempted to facilitate the unique capabilities of Ranger companies to perform long range
reconnaissance missions, many division level commanders felt the Rangers were too lightly
armed. Moreover, they were administrative and logistical parasites, lacking radio
communications equipment and organic transportation assets. Given such concerns and
limitations, division commanders eventually concluded that Ranger units were simply a
luxury rather than a necessity.35

When Ranger units took casualties, newly trained Rangers arrived in theater from
the United States only in three week intervals. Given the relatively disappointing
intelligence results coming from Korean partisan operatives, who blended into enemy
territory, it is reasonable to assume that Ranger missions deep inside enemy territory
would stand out if discovered and thus produce far worse results. In short, Ranger units
were simply not economical. The limited reconnaissance missions the Rangers were
allowed to perform in Korea (to a depth of 5,000 meters behind enemy lines) could also be
done by division reconnaissance platoons and infantry units that received the proper
training in long range patrolling and raiding techniques. By 1 August 1951, the Ranger
units were inactivated in Korea and their personnel reassigned to other infantry units.36

35 Martin Blumenson. “Special Problems in the Korean Conflict (Miscellaneous Problems and Their
Solutions).” pp. 84-85.
36 Ibid., pp. 85-87.
In January 1951, having not yet received its full complement of Rangers and with the certainty that Chinese Communist units would now continue their offensive push southward, X Corps began to place renewed emphasis on patrolling techniques. On 29 January, X Corps, now fully integrated into the command structure of the Eighth Army, established the Patrol Leaders and Instructors Course “to increase the effectiveness of patrol leaders and to provide potential patrol instructors based on patrolling experience gained in current operations by instructors and students alike.” Specific objectives of the course were

1. To refresh in the minds of the patrol leader students those fundamentals of patrolling whose omission or misuse have resulted in poor patrolling and severe casualties.

2. To have a forum of the different units permitting a free exchange of ideas with resultant improvement of all units’ technique.

3. To disseminate some new technique.

4. To show the leaders of small units how important patrolling is to the “big picture” at Division, Corps, and Army level.\(^3^7\)

Thus, UN forces made a concerted effort to ensure that infantry patrol leaders became as proficient as possible in their field craft and that they fully understood the dire importance of the intelligence information they were to obtain in their future operations.

Without a doubt, there was a large emphasis on intelligence gathering and sharing across the entire Eighth Army, and it was largely a function of the preexisting professionalism of the staff and subordinate commanders as well as renewed command emphasis by Ridgway. On February 8, 1951, General Ridgway convened a meeting with...
his corps commanders at his forward command post, during which he discussed the progress of his ongoing counteroffensive. In that meeting, Ridgway expressed his desire to have additional meetings of this type “to exchange ideas and intelligence.” He was “particularly interested in getting more G-2 information, and getting it disseminated properly.”

Meanwhile, at the theater level, Willoughby finally began to receive the Chinese Mandarin linguists he had earlier requested. In early November 1950, Willoughby, in anticipation of possible, large-scale Chinese intervention, had asked FEC G-1 to requisition from the Department of the Army 30 Mandarin Chinese linguists against possible future contingencies. As of December 1950 only 9 linguists had arrived from the United States, none of whom was considered qualified to perform their duties. Willoughby had also made efforts to procure Japanese national Chinese linguists in November 1950, but this effort proved unsuccessful. However, by March of 1951, seventy-five fluent Mandarin Chinese linguists came to FECOM from Formosa. These linguists were quickly distributed throughout the United Nations Command just in time to aid Ridgway in his upcoming counteroffensive.

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37 Patrolling Course Statement of Purpose. Papers of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (retired), Box – Korean War – Historical Data / Chronology of Orders 1947-1951, Folder: Patrolling School, USAMHI.
38 Transcript of Conference between Eighth Army Commander and Corps Commanders at Tempest Tac, 8 February 1951.” Papers of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (retired), Box : Korean War Historical Data/Casualties/Chronology of Orders 147-1951, Folder: Correspondence CG X Corps to CG Eighth Army 1951, USAMHI.
6.3 COMINT and PHOTINT Progress

While working to improve HUMINT efficiency and capabilities as mentioned above, FECOM and Eighth Army relied upon their increasing COMINT and PHOTINT capabilities for most of their intelligence information on CCF troop movements and dispositions. Throughout the U.N. withdrawal to the south, the U.S. service COMINT organizations continued working on breaking into Chinese coded transmissions. Chinese Communist transmissions in North Korea had been few and far between prior to their counteroffensive in late November 1950. However, in early 1951 the number of CCF tactical level radio transmissions increased as the CCF advanced rapidly toward Seoul. With more enemy radio traffic available for analysis, the AFSS and the ASAPAC units in Korea began utilizing recently arrived Mandarin Chinese Nationalist linguists from Formosa to aid in the transcription of intercepts. Chinese Nationalists jumped at the opportunity to earn U.S. Army Civilian GS-6 level pay and hold officer status in Korea.\textsuperscript{40}

Some of these Chinese linguists were incorporated into newly formed low-level voice intercept (LLVI) teams and placed “as close to the front lines as possible.”\textsuperscript{41} LLVI teams capitalized on the “serendipitous discovery” that Chinese Communist telephone conversations carried through ground wires could be detected by UN ground sensor strings designed to track enemy troop movements. These sensor strings utilized ground

\textsuperscript{39} Military History Section, Headquarters, United States Army Forces and Eighth United States Army. “Intelligence and Counterintelligence Problems During the Korea Conflict.” (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1955), p. 29.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 47.
wave intercept technology, which had existed since World War I.\footnote{Tom Johnson. “The Korean War- The Cryptologic Story.” June 2000. National Security Agency, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. p. 7.} South Koreans were also utilized in an LLVI capacity against North Korean units. While gaining appropriate security clearances for Chinese and Korean linguists proved difficult at times, LLVI quickly became the very best producer of tactical COMINT in Korea, and the demand for this capability quickly exceeded the number of linguists available. Between early 1951 and the end of the war in July 1953, Eighth Army expanded its LLVI capacity from 1 team to 22 teams with two of those teams dedicated solely to tactical voice intercept.\footnote{<http://www.kimsoft.com/war/essay_korean_war.pdf> “Korea.” (declassified summary of Korean War SIGINT operations). removed from original document source at <http://www.nsa.gov/korea/papers.htm>.} These teams provided key intelligence on Chinese troop dispositions that facilitated the two U.N. counteroffensives in both the spring and summer of 1951.

In the early spring of 1951, X Corps Deputy Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel William J. McCaffrey, recalled the improved intelligence operations. Shortly before assuming his own command of the 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, McCaffrey attributed the improved X Corps intelligence picture to Lieutenant Colonel James Polk, who had just come over from Willoughby’s staff at FECOM General Headquarters to replace William Quinn as X Corps G-2. Quinn had left to command the 17th Infantry Regiment. McCaffrey, said Polk was a fantastic intelligence officer, who outperformed the Eighth Army G-2, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton. McCaffrey thought Tarkenton was incompetent because he thought only in terms of enemy capabilities while failing to try and discern enemy intentions. McCaffrey stated that Polk
believed he had to move beyond enemy capabilities and discern enemy intentions to be of use to Lieutenant General Almond.44

McCaffrey’s assessment, taken at face value, is unfair to Tarkenton, who, up until this point in the war, did not have the advantage of LLVI or the associated advances in CCF code-breaking that were beginning to take place. Polk utilized LLVI intercepts to the maximum in successfully “predicting” the Chinese Communists’ 1951 spring offensive thrusts. Tarkenton had no such tactical COMINT capability to rely upon in late 1950. Had McCaffrey’s assessment of Tarkenton really been accurate, it is hard to believe that General Ridgway or General Van Fleet would retain him and not replace him with Lieutenant Colonel Robert G. Fergusson, Tarkenton’s deputy G-2, who actually held an earlier date of rank, and had more G-2 experience than Tarkenton.45 A more accurate reason behind improved intelligence performance in early 1951 was the fact that Army intelligence officers’ abilities to discern enemy intentions improved in tandem with Army tactical COMINT capabilities.

The U.S. Air Force also continued to improve its COMINT capabilities. The AFSS reaped the benefits of the Soviet Bloc’s ground controlled intercept system where Communist fighter sorties were closely guided by Russian ground controllers. In the early spring of 1951, the AFSS began intercepting Russian pilot communications with their

44 Lieutenant General William J. McCaffrey, USA (retired) interview with Colonel Thomas Fergusson, USA (retired), Interview #4, dated 2 March 1996, “Complete Hungnam, X Corps joins Eighth Army; CO, 31st Infantry Regiment.” Tape 4 of 4, copies of original interview tapes provided to the author by Colonel Thomas Fergusson, USA (retired) with full permissions for use as a primary source.
ground controllers via a “mobile intercept hut at Pyongtaek in central Korea.”46 Intercept technicians then relayed these intercepts to the air operations staff sections as radar plots to disguise the source of the information. American air force controllers could then pass the early warning information on to American pilots, who might soon be engaging the Russian aircraft. Thus, COMINT contributed greatly to the favorable UN kill ratios against Communist aircraft in Korea. 47

Meanwhile, the Far East Air Forces were continuing to fly photoreconnaissance missions focusing on the lengthening Chinese supply lines. As the CCF advanced southward, the limitations imposed on intelligence collection by geographical compression and the political worries of violating Manchurian airspace became negligible. UN aerial reconnaissance assets operating well to the south of the Yalu River, were no longer subjected to as many MIG-15 attacks or Chinese Communist anti-aircraft artillery fires. Thus, UN aircraft detected enemy troop and vehicular movements and interdicted the enemy’s elongating supply lines with ever increasing efficiency and accuracy. Specifically, the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group (TRG), comprised of the 12, 15th, and 45th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadrons was activated on February 25, 1951 to replace and absorb the assets of the battle weary 543rd Tactical Support Group and its associated squadrons (8th, 162d, and 363rd). The 67th TRG provided photographic coverage of all

47 Ibid.

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enemy controlled airfields in Korea to ensure FEAF’s effectiveness in keeping them in unserviceable condition. 48

The 67th TRG also flew block coverage photographic missions for the Eighth Army from the front lines all the way to the Yalu River providing surveillance of enemy rail lines, roads, and bridges to facilitate air interdiction missions. Newly developed technology streamlined the film processing time on the ground allowing for more timely intelligence analysis, production, and dissemination. The 67th TRG was able to reconnoiter target areas between air strikes, interpret still wet negatives, and relay the bomb damage assessment information and flak locations to the Joint Operations Center in time to adjust the planning of same-day air attack sorties. 49

Unfortunately, such processing improvements did nothing to alleviate the dearth of trained U.S. Army photo interpreters in the Eighth Army. Due to this shortage, the delivery of finished photographic intelligence to Eighth Army’s subordinate divisions, regiments, and battalions was often so slow during fluid points of the battle that Eighth Army units often overran the terrain under study before receiving the pertinent photography. Lieutenant General Stratemeyer advised Major General Willoughby in late December to go after more photo interpreters. Stratemeyer recorded that Willoughby appeared surprised that FECOM G-2 had the responsibility to procure tactical level photographic interpreters and that Willoughby believed he had at some point requested

49 Ibid.
additional photo interpreters and been turned down by the Army. Stratemeyer then suggested that Willoughby go after “high-powered civilians” to make up the shortage just as the Air Force was doing.\footnote{Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer. \textit{The Three Wars of Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer: His Korean War Diary}. (Washington D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999), Entry from 21 December 1950, p. 356.}

It appears that Willoughby did very well on his next request to Washington. As of 26 February 1951 the Eighth Army Photo Interpretation Center had only 4 officers and 15 enlisted man, and by March 1951, Willoughby received 5 more officers and 23 more enlisted men for a total of 9 officers and 38 enlisted men to man the Eighth Army Photo Interpretation Center. These men were set to receive on the job training from Air Force photo interpreters and gradually assume their posts at the Eighth Army Photographic Interpretation Center. The addition of these intelligence personnel to Eighth Army enabled the Army to assume its own photo interpretation duties for all of its photographic intelligence missions. This enabled the FEAF photo interpreters to focus on Air Force photographic missions. In addition, each corps of Eighth Army stationed one artillery liaison officer at the Eighth Army Photo Interpretation Center to relay high priority target data to their respective artillery units, making the sensor to shooter linkage that much more efficient for Eighth Army.\footnote{Memorandum from Major G. C. Mueller to Colonel Charles Hollstein, Far East Air Forces, 3 March 1951. Subject: Report of Staff Visit, K168.7350, Part 47, IRIS No. 01142074, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.}

In the interim, while these additional Army photo interpreters were being trained, Eighth Army had to very carefully choose which photographic requests the Air Force
fulfilled and keep the raw photography load at a manageable volume. 52 Nevertheless, the 67th TRG, with its own Air Force photo-interpreters, still made a huge impact in facilitating the First UN Counter-Offensive from February to April 1951 and the Summer –Fall Offensive later that year. 53

As the Eighth Army’s spring counter-offensive reached its full momentum in March 1951, military intelligence operations in Korea were finally beginning to find a steady stride. COMINT, PHOTINT, and HUMINT operations were all starting to contribute more information to the overall picture of enemy forces on the Korean battlefield. As a result, information was more readily verified and rapidly disseminated. However, political decisions, aimed at restoring the antebellum status quo and ending the war caused the conflict to evolve into a protracted, World War I-style stalemate in the vicinity of the 38th parallel.

This stalemate had both beneficial and negative impacts on military intelligence operations. The slow-down in the tempo of battle enabled theater collection assets to focus for longer periods of time upon a more compact geographical area and more localized concentrations of enemy ground forces. However, despite UN air superiority, the closer proximity between opposing ground forces also brought forward enemy anti-aircraft guns to protect the ground forces from UN air-strikes and thwart aerial reconnaissance efforts. This was especially true during nighttime reconnaissance flights,

when RB-26 pilots had to fly as low as 3,000 feet to allow the cartridge illumination systems on their aircrafts’ camera apparatuses to function properly and to take advantage of the short range (SHORAN) radar beacon navigational system. In addition, efforts to photograph rear area targets in the northwestern quadrant of Korea near the Yalu River were increasingly subjected to MIG-15 attacks in what had become known as MIG Alley.\textsuperscript{54}

Moreover, trained photographic interpreters were still in short supply and had to adjust their analytical abilities to the static ground situation (See Figure 66). The Chinese and North Korean forces utilized camouflage and concealment to the utmost degree and constantly improved upon their technique. Photo interpreters had to rely upon indications, assumptions, and existing knowledge of the most recent confirmed tactical dispositions in order to locate enemy bases. In addition, photo interpreters had to be familiar with civilian activities in a given area to be able to detect any deviations indicative of enemy military activity. It took between two and three months to bring new photo interpreters up to adequate proficiency levels.\textsuperscript{55}

6.4 The Changing of the Guard: MacArthur, Willoughby and Military Intelligence in Retrospect

While military intelligence operations were adjusting to the changes in battlefield tempo, conflicting views over operational and strategic objectives in Korea had set a highly frustrated General MacArthur on a final collision course with his superiors in Washington. On April 11, 1951, upon hearing the news of his relief from all Far East,

Allied, and UN commands, MacArthur met with his primary staff to issue his final
instructions. At that meeting MacArthur reportedly turned to Willoughby first and said
“You had better get out of here with me. Nobody else will ever take you.”56 Given this
statement and previous comments MacArthur made over the years regarding his G-2, it
would appear that MacArthur held a low opinion of Willoughby’s abilities.57 Yet,
MacArthur’s testimony before the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations
Committees in April 1951 seemed to indicate otherwise. MacArthur testified in response
to questions from Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon regarding the quality of the
intelligence effort in the Far East Command:

Senator Morse. One of the criticisms that was somewhat prevalent in our
country at the time of the break-through [North Korean invasion] was that
our intelligence had apparently been caught napping in that it would be
presumed that they did not know of the strength of the Communists north
of the thirty-eighth parallel. That criticism on the part of people who
apparently did not know the facts, went also to your command, with such
questions as why didn’t MacArthur’s command know of the strength of the
Communists north of the thirty-eighth parallel. What comment would you
like to make on that for the record?

General MacArthur: Well, to answer the latter part, first, it was not in my
command; I didn’t have anything to do with it. But to answer the main part
of the query, there is a pretty definite limit to which intelligence can be

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55 Military History Section, Headquarters, United States Army Forces and Eighth United States Army.
“Intelligence and Counterintelligence Problems During the Korea Conflict.” (Washington D.C.: Office of
the Chief of Military History, 1955), p. 3.
56 Edwin K. Wright. "Oral Reminiscences of Major General Edwin K. Wright." Monterey, California,
August 28, 1971. Interviewer D. Clayton James, p. 58, RG-49: D. Clayton James Interviews, Folder:
Edwin K. Wright Interview, MMA.
57 Edward J. Drea. MacArthur’s Ultra. p. 187. During the Philippines liberation campaign, after a
controversial intelligence briefing regarding Japanese troop strength on Luzon, MacArthur confided to
Sixth Army Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Clyde Eddlemen that there were only three great
intelligence officers in the history of warfare and “mine is not one of them.” Such comments by
MacArthur taken at face value seem to torpedo Willoughby’s professional reputation. But one must
evaluate the source of such comments and the context in which they are used. Douglas MacArthur was a
shrewd political animal and true to that form he had a penchant for pitting general officers off against one
another to suit his purposes.
gathered. The difficulties of first ascertaining the facts, and then making conclusions from those facts, I don’t think the normal public quite understands. It is not as though you had captured an enemy order and there it was all laid out there. Even if you know troops are being concentrated in a certain area, it doesn’t follow that you make the correct conclusion whether they are there for defensive purposes, aggressive purposes; whether they are put there as a blind or as a bluff or caution or not. I don’t think the criticisms of the Intelligence Service are well taken. I believe that the Intelligence Service collected about as much of the facts as it was possible to collect from an area that is behind the iron curtain. It is not easy to get in there and find out. Now, the assessment of all those things does not fundamentally and primarily rest with a local [tactical theater-level] command. About all the local command could do is tell you what is going on in its immediate front. There has to be an evaluation made in the highest governmental level of all the information that flows in from the chancelleries of the world to make the predictions. I don’t see how it would have been humanly possible for any men or group of men to predict such an attack as that, any more than you could predict such an attack as took place at Pearl Harbor. There is nothing, no means or methods, except the accidental spy methods—if you can get somebody to betray the enemy’s higher circles, that can get such information as that. It is guarded with a secrecy that you cannot overestimate. Not even, probably, the commanding officers of the units, military units, concerned knew what was going on until they got the order to march….Those people [North Korean communists] struck without any declaration of war; it was even worse when Red China intervened.”

Indeed, General MacArthur’s assessment was equally applicable in the case of the Chinese interventions as well as the North Korean invasion. Moreover, MacArthur’s defense of his intelligence organization implies an appreciation of the limitations of collection asset capabilities, the daunting tasks Willoughby and his staff section faced, and a high regard for their performance in the Korean War.

In 1951, in the period following MacArthur’s recall to the United States, Colonel Laurence E. Bunker, Chief aide to General MacArthur from 1946-1952, recalled the

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general lauding his former G-2. Bunker claimed that MacArthur told one of the
Secretaries of the Army, who had come to visit him in New York City, that “in his book
Willoughby was the finest G-2 officer he had encountered in his fifty-odd years of service
in the Army, and he was so much the number one that he wouldn’t know whom to name
the number two.” It would appear that General MacArthur appreciated or at least came
to appreciate his G-2 even more than one might expect.

An additional and, perhaps, more impartial observer of Willoughby was Major
General Frank E. Lowe, President Harry S. Truman’s personal representative and
observer in MacArthur’s Far East General Headquarters. Truman brought Major General
Lowe back onto active duty and dispatched him to Tokyo upon the outbreak of the
Korean War. Truman relied upon reports that Lowe forwarded to him on a routine basis
to stay abreast of the happenings inside MacArthur’s General Headquarters. Lowe always
appeared to be largely in agreement with MacArthur on the need to eliminate the Chinese
Communist sanctuary in Manchuria, and he was an ardent supporter of Major General
Willoughby. On 3 February 1951, in “Eyes Only” correspondence addressed to President
Truman, Lowe wrote

Now I know all the sniping and backbiting that has been going on for
twenty years or more against Charles Willoughby but the cold fact is that
he has been superior over the last ten years of service under General
MacArthur or he would not have stayed. General MacArthur has been very

59 Benedict K. Zobrist. “Oral History Interview with Colonel Laurence E. Bunker, Chief Aide to General
Douglas MacArthur, April 1946 to November 1952.” Independence, Missouri, December 14, 1976, Harry
S. Truman Library Oral History Interviews, Box 42, Folder: Oral history Interview # 253. Harry S.
Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.
60 Major General Frank E. Lowe. Letter to President Harry S. Truman, dated 4 February 1951. pp.1-2,
Papers of Harry S. Truman, President’s Secretary’s File: Korean War File, Box 207, Folder:
Correspondence 1947-1952 {1 of 3}, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.
kind to me and no doors are closed to me, so consequently I know a lot of the inside operations in this theater, all of which have served to enhance my previous great respect for General Willoughby’s ability. I know to my own satisfaction that there are people in CIA and the Department of the Army who do not like him. If I had the opportunity I could tell you some things that would be very illuminating as concerns the operations in Japan and Korea. It is a mighty lucky thing we had General Willoughby in command of intelligence over here.61.

Willoughby, despite any personal flaws, was retained by MacArthur because of his undying loyalty but also for his competence. While Willoughby’s assessments of enemy troop strength and intent were at times drastically wrong, it was never for a lack of a robust intelligence collection effort or a lack of analytical rigor. Willoughby and his staff consistently showed their excellent grasp of enemy capabilities and potential. His inaccurate assessments of enemy strength and intent must be viewed for what they really are, educated guesses. Such guesses were based upon the confirmed information that he and his staff had in hand at the time from collection assets that were geographically and climatically limited in their area of operations and collection capabilities. These assets, which were themselves limited in number, often trickled into a highly fluid theater of operations in the opening months of the war.

Moreover, Beijing, where the decision for CCF intervention was actually made, laid clearly beyond the range of Willoughby’s organic theater level intelligence collection assets. Aside from Chinese Nationalist agents, operating on the Chinese mainland, whose reports Willoughby received second-hand, the Chinese Communist capital fell within the political intelligence domain of the CIA and the State Department, and those organizations

and the political and military leadership in Washington agreed with Willoughby’s assessment in mid November 1950. MacArthur knew these facts to be true and defended his G-2 to the last in his Senate testimony. Frank Lowe also knew the facts and defended Willoughby as a competent G-2, who understandably ruffled a few feathers in CIA and Pentagon circles in trying to centralize control of intelligence operations in the Far East Theater.

General MacArthur and Major General Lowe were not the only ones who appreciated Willoughby’s abilities. When Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway assumed command of United Nations Command, Far East Command, U.S. Army Forces Far East, and Supreme Command of the Allied Powers in Japan, he allowed Willoughby to stay on, which Willoughby did for a month after MacArthur’s departure, and Willoughby decided to retire citing health reasons. Marking the occasion of his departure (See Figure 67), General Ridgway wrote a personal letter to Willoughby, which read in part:

In spite of the brief period of my command duty in this headquarters, I have had an unusual opportunity, by direct personal observation, to judge the character of your work. It has been such that I have relied greatly upon your judgment and drawn freely upon your counsel. I shall miss both.

Although this letter comes to you as a personal communication, its purpose – to record my personal appreciation of your distinctly superior service – gives it an official character, and I am therefore forwarding a copy through official channels for inclusion in your official record.62

Ridgway’s sentiments were genuine and not mere sympathy for a fellow general’s years of devoted service. Years after the conflict, General Ridgway upheld his assessment of

Willoughby’s performance in the Korean War. On a 9 May 1984 visit to the Advanced Military Studies Program (now known as the School of Advanced Military Studies or SAMS) at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Ridgway responded to the questions of one Major Dormeyer. Dormeyer asked whether or not anyone on the Army Staff of the Joint Staff or the senior military leadership in Washington recognized the indications of a Chinese intent to intervene in the Korean War. The second part of his question was whether officers who recognized these indicators attempted to bring them to someone’s attention or simply ignored the indicators? Ridgway replied

… I don’t think that the trouble was all on the intelligence side. MacArthur had a very fine Chief of Intelligence, Willoughby. He had been an instructor at this college when I was a student here back in 1933-35. Our Chinese order of battle was pretty accurate, which was confirmed after the hostilities were over. The trouble was in the evaluation of the intelligence they got. I would think you could place blame equally on the Government of the United States. 63

In a 1986 interview with author John Toland, Ridgway remarked upon the mindset of MacArthur and the performance of Willoughby going into the late November 1950 offensive. Ridgway recalled that

He {MacArthur} still didn’t – apparently he didn’t appreciate what might happen. He was determined in his own mind that his own estimate was correct. Now Willoughby was a professional intelligence officer of the highest order, in my opinion, and I think, by and large, the intelligence available to Willoughby and presented to MacArthur was essentially correct. MacArthur wouldn’t believe it. He wouldn’t believe it. Even when

the Marines got in there in Northeast Korea. On the 26th of November, they had four or five days of hard fighting. They took prisoners from three divisions of one of the Chinese field armies. They knew perfectly well that they were up against something you see. But MacArthur wouldn’t believe that.\(^{64}\)

In fact, MacArthur did not decide to withdraw UN forces to the south until 29 November 1950, after conferring with both Lieutenant General Walker and Major General Almond in Tokyo. Military intelligence is only influential if the commander believes in it, and in MacArthur’s case he evaluated the evidence in a different light than did Willoughby and his staff. To attribute the failures that resulted from MacArthur holding and acting upon that difference of opinion solely to Willoughby would be a travesty of historical justice.

In his ten years as MacArthur’s G-2, Major General Charles Willoughby, much like the intelligence operations he managed in the Korean War, improved with time and experience (See Figure 52). Perhaps his biggest flaws, which were apparently shared with many other members of the intelligence community, included an inability to persuade MacArthur (if anyone really could) to abort his planned November offensive and a possible over-reliance upon COMINT as the preeminent source of information, a habit that most likely carried over from his experiences in World War II. Such an over reliance upon COMINT might very well explain Willoughby’s slow, cautious acceptance of large units of Chinese Communist regulars in North Korea in the last few days of November 1950. Willoughby’s Special Intelligence Section (COMINT) chief, Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) Philip B. Davidson, Jr., caveated his personal assessment of the

“surprises” that happened in June and October-November 1950 with some interesting insights. He wrote:

Historians of the Korean War have used as a prime source the Daily Intelligence Summary (DIS) put out by the GHQ/FEC, citing it often as “General Willoughby Reports.” Major General Charles A. Willoughby was MacArthur’s G-2, or chief of intelligence, and as such, my boss. While Willoughby was responsible for the content of the DIS, the truth was that he very seldom even looked at it. The DIS was actually prepared by a group of junior officers (majors and below) with little senior supervision. Willoughby’s neglect of the DIS was particularly pronounced during the period preceding the initiation of the North Korean Attack. Even after the war started, he gave it scant attention. He used as his primary means of intelligence dissemination the all-source daily intelligence estimates prepared by my Plans and Estimates Section [which included the Top-Secret codeword level COMINT reporting that could not be included in the DIS]. These latter documents were Willoughby’s true voice, and since they remain classified and thus unobtainable, historians have consistently garbled Willoughby’s intelligence product and forecasts.

My disclosure here in no way excuses Willoughby. He should have checked the DIS, or at least appointed a senior officer to ride close heard on it. My account is an attempt to put the DIS in its true light and to issue a warning to future historians of the Korean War. And, while Willoughby suffered from the harpoons of the historians, I learned a solid lesson. Some seventeen years later when I became J-2, MACV, I scrutinized with the utmost care the DIS put out by my J-2 section. I frequently changed it- it was my voice.65

Davidson’s claim implies that Willoughby’s all-source intelligence assessments were somewhat different or, perhaps, more accurate than what the FECOM Daily Intelligence Summaries (DIS) have revealed. However, as Davidson also points out section chiefs and commanding officers alike, are ultimately responsible for all that their unit does or fails to do. In that sense the DIS reports are all that historians presently have to objectively assess

Willoughby’s performance, especially, given the absence of any written or recorded records of his official conversations with General MacArthur. Yet even the Daily Intelligence Summaries themselves, when considered in their full context, do not point to a poor performance by Willoughby or his staff.

Only time and more extensive research will reveal the answers to such controversy as historians await the declassification of the AFSA’s (now the NSA’s) and ASA’s, (now U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command’s (INSCOM’s)) communications intelligence reports of October to December 1950. Only then will we begin see to what degree the Chinese Communist Forces deceived American order of battle analysts through radio communications. More importantly, only then will we see exactly what conclusions Willoughby drew from the communications intelligence collected when juxtaposed and weighed against all other intelligence sources. Until then, and perhaps even until the Chinese Communist and Russian governments produce their full intelligence reports on the Korean War, the final jury on the subject remains in suspended animation prepared for careful reflection and a final deliberation based upon all the available facts.

The opinions of two of the intelligence professionals closest to Willoughby during the Korean War paint diverging views of Willoughby’s ability to “sell” his estimate of the situation to General MacArthur. Looking back on the war some 30 years later, Lieutenant General William W. Quinn, USA (retired), whose personal relationship with Willoughby was tenuous at best, believed that Willoughby convinced MacArthur that the Chinese
would not intervene in large numbers. General James H. Polk, USA (retired), formerly one of Willoughby’s intelligence deputies at UNC/FECOM General Headquarters (and later X Corps G-2), who was in much closer proximity to Willoughby at the time of the Second Chinese Intervention, believes otherwise. In a personal letter he wrote to his wife from Tokyo shortly after the massive Chinese Counteroffensive of late November to early December 1950 Polk stated:

> I have often talked to you about how MacA gambles. He takes very long chances. We argued about it quite a bit and I often told you that it was alright with me if he gambled with his troops but I couldn’t see him putting a gamble on with my family. Well, when a gambler pulls one off he is hailed as a genius, and when he fails, he is a bum. This time he failed and he has to take the consequences of that failure as I see it. But as far as the G2 section of GHQ failing, it just isn’t so; he just didn’t care to take our advice. We had the dope but old CAW [Willoughby] bowed to the superior wisdom of his beloved boss and didn’t fight him as a good staff officer should. But he is getting his lumps…

Polk’s mention of “having the dope” implied that Willoughby was in possession of intelligence that clearly indicated the Communist China’s intention to intervene in force. If that was the case then it definitely was not affirmed with any great conviction in the Daily Intelligence Summaries. Thus, Davidson’s account of Willoughby and his use of COMINT and Sergeant Al Wight’s assessment of Chinese Communist intentions mentioned earlier become even more compelling.

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Intelligence Summary of 26 December 1950 illustrated how Willoughby’s and his staff section relied upon COMINT. The report stated

The following information was obtained from an officer PW from the 197th Division, 66th CCF Army (Corps). The unit departed Tientsin for Antung on 22 October, via Shanhaikwan and Mukden, arriving at Antung on the evening of 24 October. The 67th and 68th CCF Armies (Corps) are believed to have remained at Tientsin… The PW stated that from division to army (corps) level; radio (morse code) is used. This radio is powered by a hand generator and has a range of 170 miles. From battalion to regiment to division level, telephone and radio communications are used. This radio has a range of 30 miles over flat terrain, 8-10 miles over mountainous areas and is also powered by a hand generator. Below battalion level all communications are hand carried. The PW said that some of the above equipment was US made while some was manufactured by other foreign powers.

G-2 Comment: The PW’s statement that the 67th and 68th CCF Armies (Corps) are still in China is in conflict with recent reports from other sources. A usually reliable source has stated that both of these Armies (Corps) are at present unlocated in Korea. The presence of the 67th and 68th CCF Armies (Corps) in Korea is not accepted at this time, however, it is considered highly probable that these two units may be identified in Korea in the very near future.68

The “usually reliable source” mentioned in this report is clearly COMINT although it is not explicitly stated. No other source could make such a blanket statement that the units in question are unlocated yet somewhere inside North Korea. The units in question apparently transmitted signals at some point in time but not enough for COMINT direction finders to gain a fix (triangulation of the signal) and pinpoint the units’ exact

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locations. Additionally, the focus upon the communication methods, equipment, and capabilities of the enemy clearly shows an effort to enhance UN COMINT collection efforts. Most importantly, one should notice that the report of the enemy prisoner that mentions these particular CCF units is not accepted as valid given COMINT reports that indicate otherwise. It appears that the UN/FECOM G-2 section lent more credence to COMINT reporting over HUMINT reporting, and the staff awaited further COMINT or HUMINT confirmation of these units’ presences inside North Korea at specific locations before the units were ever accepted as present in the area of operations.69

Based on such evidence, Polk appears to have the most objective assessment of Willoughby, appreciating both his talents and his faults. Thus, one should probably lend Polk’s opinion more credibility than William Quinn’s. Polk’s recollections along with Phil Davidson’s and Al Wight’s provide convincing evidence that Willoughby was more accurate in his analysis than most historians have given him credit for to date. But what is lost to history is the account of any direct conversations that transpired between Willoughby and MacArthur. It is not likely that Polk was always privy to such conversations. Even Polk cannot say with absolute certainty just how hard Willoughby did or did not argue with the United Nations Commander over what all available intelligence indicated or revealed about the intentions of the Chinese Communist Forces.

However, one thing is certain, command authority brings with it the prerogative to take the advice of staff officers or leave it. Moreover, once the commander makes his decision, one way or the other, all debate on the issue ends at that point. Lieutenant

69 Ibid.
Colonel Davidson has often attested to these facts with regard to General MacArthur. He and his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Morton A. Rubin, personally briefed General MacArthur each evening on the last twenty-four hours of enemy activity. Davidson claimed that General MacArthur was a genius with one of the most remarkable memories he had ever witnessed and that MacArthur made his decisions after considering written four page intelligence summaries. According to Rubin these evening briefings were done at Top-Secret codeword level and incorporated COMINT. However, from these interactions with the U.N. Commander, Davidson felt that MacArthur was not interested in the FECOM G-2 section’s interpretation of enemy activities. Instead, MacArthur preferred to act as his own intelligence officer and make his own assessments of enemy intentions. Acting FECOM Chief of Staff, Major General Doyle O. Hickey’s attempts on 4 and 14 November 1950 to change General MacArthur’s mind about launching his ill-fated offensive appear to be the only documented attempts by MacArthur’s staff to challenge his views, but the UN commander had already made up his mind. That is both the privilege and responsibility inherent in command authority. That privilege and responsibility cannot be delegated to anyone else. In that regard, MacArthur stands alone, and the vast majority of historical evidence substantiates his penchant for keeping his own council in analyzing military intelligence and incorporating it into his decision-making processes. In retrospect, it is clear that MacArthur gambled and lost in late November 70


71Ibid.
1950, but policymakers in Washington did the same by consenting to his chosen course of action. All of them came to view a “whole new war” through recalibrated eyes in the wake of the failed November 1950 UN offensive.

6.5 Conclusion

The Eighth Army and the rest of the U.N. Command carefully reflected upon their actions in the winter of 1950-1951. In the short amount of time that Walton Walker had left before his untimely death, he insured that the Eighth Army conducted a deliberate withdrawal and reestablished contact with the enemy as soon as it was tactically prudent to do so. As Eighth Army regrouped well below the 38th parallel to counter the Chinese Communist onslaught, Eighth Army G-2, James Tarkenton and his subordinate G-2’s to include those of the newly absorbed X Corps (William Quinn followed by James Polk) quickly established new EEI and reconnaissance and surveillance plans to reestablish contact with enemy forces. Additionally, patrolling courses were established across the Eighth Army to reinforce the importance of finding the enemy and accurately reporting his strength and disposition in order to fix the enemy in place for destruction.

Meanwhile, the newly arrived Eighth Army Commander, Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway, brought a renewed emphasis on aggressiveness and a return to the offensive. He also received the benefit of General MacArthur’s recent experience and knew not to rely too much on UN airpower to rescue his ground forces. With the running of the ground war left largely to him, Ridgway ensured that subordinate commanders and staff officers were replaced as he saw fit to suit his aggressive tastes. Most likely,
Tarkenton’s consistent initiative in intelligence planning inclined Ridgway to retain his services and allow him into his inner planning circle. Tarkenton’s work helps prove that Eighth Army intelligence was, contrary to popular belief, not sitting completely flat-footed when Ridgway arrived.

Eighth Army’s professionalism was clearly demonstrated in its ability to evaluate its shortcomings and work to remedy them. Intelligence was no exception in this regard. Eighth Army always had a fighting spirit and their ability to reconnoiter and gain a good front line picture of the battlefield was never really a problem for them. The problem lay in getting a look at what was happening in Chinese Communist political circles and throughout the depth of the enemy occupied areas.

Back in Tokyo, General MacArthur and Major General Willoughby worked to remedy that problem by deconflicting unconventional warfare roles and missions amongst their own special operators and those of the Air Force and CIA. Partisan operations were an especially contentious issue among these agencies. MacArthur and Willoughby worked feverishly to allow these organizations to perform their tactical missions on behalf of their respective services and bosses while avoiding needless overlap and redundancy. At Eighth Army level, Ranger companies were used for a while in counter-guerrilla operations and front line infiltration missions, but their use in long range reconnaissance was deemed non-economical and not worth the logistical costs and tactical inconveniences required to support such missions.

Instead commanders looked to the marked improvements in both communications intelligence and photo intelligence operations that had come about since the start of the
war. The Armed services COMINT organizations were beginning to intercept a substantial volume of Chinese radio traffic and, with a timely influx of Chinese Nationalist (Mandarin-speaking) linguists into the United Nations Command, tactical level transmissions were soon being decoded and transcribed. Meanwhile, photo-reconnaissance units like the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group provided Eighth Army with timely coverage of enemy rear areas. However, limited numbers of aircraft, foul winter weather, and, most importantly, the dearth of trained U.S. Army photo interpreters limited the amount of photo images that could be processed in a timely manner. Notwithstanding such limitations, the 67th TRG made a tremendous contribution to the Eighth Army counteroffensives in the spring and late summer of 1951.

Major General Charles Willoughby stood behind the scenes of these evolving military intelligence operations acting as a centralizing influence and an incorporator of newly arrived intelligence assets into the Korean theater. His intelligence assessments, while far from perfect, never suffered from a lack of aggressive intelligence collection or analytical rigor. MacArthur testified to the outstanding efforts of Willoughby and his staff before the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees upon his return to the United States in April 1951. He defended his loyal G-2, to the very last and rightfully so given that the intentions of the Chinese political leaders in Beijing were indeed targets for CIA and State Department intelligence collection.

Willoughby had always been on top of his game in the Korean War in terms of determining enemy capabilities and potential in the military theater of operations. In trying to go beyond front line knowledge of the enemy and gain knowledge throughout the depth
of CCF and NKPA territory Willoughby had exercised his collection capabilities to their
utmost. He had learned a great deal from his experiences in the Southwest Pacific Area
Campaigns of World War II. It was there that Willoughby had come to appreciate
COMINT, which was also referred to as ULTRA or MAGIC. Perhaps his only true flaws
were the stubborn conviction of his intelligence assessments to the exclusion of alternative
assessments and a possible over reliance upon communications intelligence. While there is
little doubt that Willoughby was very set in his intelligence methodologies and
assessments, only time and the declassification of AFSA (now NSA) reports will reveal
the degree of his reliance upon COMINT and how those reports influenced his final
assessments at key moments in the Korean War.

However, what is certain is that Douglas MacArthur kept his own council on what
FECOM’s intelligence reports really indicated, and he let nothing deter him from
launching his final offensive push to the Yalu River. Still, to say that MacArthur ignored
any intelligence that did not comport with his strategic objectives greatly oversimplifies the
issue. The fact that he placed more faith in his own analysis and weighted his intelligence
sources differently than his G-2 is a more accurate statement based on the available
historical evidence.

MacArthur respected the work of his intelligence staff and Charles Willoughby
(See Figure 68). However, he trusted his own assessment of the available intelligence
above all others. For a man of MacArthur’s experience, intellect, capability, and egotism
this is not hard to understand. Moreover, as the theater commander it was his prerogative
to exercise his own judgment even when it countered the recommendations of his staff. By
definition, a theater commander has more individual experience and expertise than any one member of his staff.

Yet, in the wake of his failed offensive and throughout his remaining months as the Commander of UN forces in Korea, MacArthur supported his G-2 to the maximum extent. He demanded increased centralization of intelligence operations within his area of operations. If MacArthur was in the business of simply ignoring intelligence altogether, he would not waste time on issues of centralization. His efforts to help streamline and increase the efficiency of his intelligence battlefield operating system reflected his view of “a whole new war” through recalibrated eyes. He saw that the war could be more effectively prosecuted through better centralized control of intelligence collection assets, which themselves were becoming more numerous and carefully attuned to the Chinese Communist enemy. While MacArthur’s vision of complete victory remained unattained, he apparently found a new appreciation for the complexities of intelligence analysis. He clearly conveyed that appreciation to the United States Senate following his relief from command. At that point, policymakers in Washington had to come to grips with their own contributions to the failed UN offensive.
Figure 63: Map of CCF Attacks (26 December 1950-1 January 1951)

When Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway (top photo and above at center) assumed command of the Eighth in late December 1950, he purged and rearranged his staff to his own liking. Ridgway elected to retain the Eighth Army G-2, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton (pictured at far right in bottom photo) despite all the negative press regarding the quality of intelligence work in the Far East Command. Ridgway’s retention of Tarkenton testifies to Tarkenton’s abilities as a military intelligence professional. With the help of Tarkenton and the rest of the Eighth Army command and staff, Ridgway took the reins of a bruised and battered unit that still had plenty of fight left in it and regained the tactical and operational initiative. (Top photograph taken from the Bob West Collection website <http://www.bob-west.com/8thARMY-PHOTOS.html>. The bottom photo was taken from the W.L. Howard website at <http://www.wlhoward.com/images/ridge01.jpg>.)
U.S. Army Ranger units in the Korean War were trained to conduct long range reconnaissance missions in addition to their raiding missions on enemy rear area targets and command and control centers. However, Ranger units lasted less than a year in Korea before being disbanded since they were too hard to support with transportation, logistics, or with pre-planned artillery fires. This was especially true for long range reconnaissance missions. Instead, Rangers participated in airfield seizures like the one pictured above (see top photo) executed by the 187th RCT at Munsan-ni in October of 1950 (Photo taken from the What You Need to Know About the Military website at <http://usmilitary.about.com/library/milinfo/arhistory/nlkorea49.htm>). In addition, (see bottom photo) Rangers performed traditional ground infiltration reconnaissance patrolling as deep as 5 kilometers behind enemy lines. In this photo, men of the 3rd Ranger Company, 3rd Infantry Division, adjust their gear before undertaking a dawn patrol across the Imjin River in Korea on 17 April 1951. (Signal Corps Photograph #8A/FEC-51-12902 and its caption information were taken from U.S. Army Center of Military History website at <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/photos/korea/kor1951/kor1951.htm>.)
Figure 66: Photo-Interpreters - scarcity and training

U.S. Army photo-interpreters of the 45th (“Thunderbird”) Infantry Division examine imagery of pertinent areas of the Korean peninsula. Army photo-interpreters were in very short supply in Korea and new arrivals took 2-3 months to reach desired levels of proficiency. (Photograph and first line of caption taken from Finnegan, *Military Intelligence*, p. 145. The original photograph was provided courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration).
In late May 1951, Commander in Chief, Far East Command, General Matthew B. Ridgway bid outgoing FECOM G-2 Major General Charles A. Willoughby a fond farewell after presenting him with the Distinguished Service Medal for his devoted service in the Korean War and throughout his tenure as the FECOM G-2. General Ridgway always thought Willoughby was a very competent G-2 and continued to defend his performance in the Korean War long after the conflict ended. Major General Willoughby returned to the United States and retired from active duty shortly thereafter. (Picture taken from the Matthew B. Ridgway Papers, Series 7 – Photographs, Commander in Chief Far East 11 April 1951-10 Jun 1951, Box 111, Folder: Photographs-FEC Departure of Generals Willoughby and Beiderlinden 22-23 May 1951, USAMHI, Carlisle, Pennsylvania).
In reassessing military intelligence operations in the Korean War one finds that the intelligence failures were failures of military command and political policymaking that became mutually reinforcing. While General of the Army Douglas MacArthur deserves much of the blame accorded him as a military commander his superiors in Washington also failed. Major General Charles A, Willoughby may have failed to accurately determine CCF strength but to a certain extent he did read the intentions correctly and brought to light news MacArthur did not want to hear. Willoughby did as well as could be expected of a G-2 in working for a commander and policymakers who gambled on total victory despite the formidable odds. (Photograph from MS-024: Charles A. Willoughby Collection, Special Collections, Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania).
EPILOGUE

General MacArthur’s and Major General Willoughby’s Korean War intelligence successes and failures become more understandable when placed within the larger context of America’s hasty political and strategic reactions of the early Cold War. The Truman administration always perceived the nature of the burgeoning communist threat to be Soviet-centric and Soviet-directed. Thus, the majority of the nation’s strategic intelligence collection assets were focused on the Soviet Union. Korea was not a primary focal point for American foreign policy in East Asia in 1950. United States priorities in East Asia had clearly been focused on bringing Japan into the world of democratic nations while keeping a careful eye on developments in the Soviet Union. As always, Western Europe had priority over East Asia for America’s political and economic security interests. Moreover, having just recently ended the most costly war in human history, President Harry S. Truman was understandably in no hurry to invite another world conflict. Yet, as was customary at the end of massive American mobilizations, huge force reductions were made even while perceptions of a burgeoning Communist menace loomed large across the globe. Military intelligence capabilities deteriorated along with the rest of the American military in the dubious, yet often repeated, quest to do more with less.

In the midst of the post World War II drawdown, the Truman administration presided over a massive reorganization of the American national security structure. The
National Security Act of 1947 created an independent United States Air Force and brought the three armed services departments: Army, Navy, and Air Force, together under the umbrella of a single unified Department of Defense. Additionally, the Central Intelligence Group that had evolved from the World War II-era Office of Strategic Services became the Central Intelligence Agency. That massive reorganization engendered many of the intelligence turf wars experienced in the Far East Command before, during, and long after the Korean War. That competition cut across all intelligence categories and vastly complicated efforts to perform the military intelligence mission. Willoughby, despite any personal and analytical faults, emerged as a champion of centralizing the intelligence efforts in the Far East under MacArthur’s purview. He and MacArthur tenaciously and, at times, successfully fought the resistance they encountered to their great credit.

Willoughby had actually pinpointed the indicators of a pending North Korean invasion almost a year in advance, and yet, as those indicators came to be fulfilled, his assessment of the overall picture changed along with the rest of the American intelligence community, which remained fixated on Soviet activities and Japanese occupation duties. Communications intelligence assets remained focused on Soviet targets while photo intelligence units remained dedicated to other missions outside of the Korean peninsula. Human intelligence gave only sporadic and dated information. Moreover, no one in the American political or military circles lent any credence to the agency of the North Korean government under Kim Il-Sung to gain the obligatory Soviet approval to invade the Republic of Korea.
The North Korean invasion of June 25, 1950 is a classic example of the strengths and weaknesses of the intelligence profession. Any difficulty in ascertaining enemy capabilities paled in comparison to predicting enemy intentions. With the NKPA bearing down on the ROK Army, the United States intervened along with her UN allies and the U.S. Eighth Army. Consequently, FECOM’s military intelligence battlefield operating system had to chisel off the rust accumulated during relatively plush occupation duty in Japan. Thus, began the saga of military intelligence in the Korean War.

This saga helps disprove one of the most prevalent false dichotomies in modern American military history, that of operational success and intelligence failure. That false dichotomy implies an infallibility on the part of politicians, operational commanders, and operations staff officers. Moreover, politicians and military commanders alike bring their own inherent perceptions, biases, and intuitions to bear on their judgment and their decision-making just as surely as any intelligence professional.

More often than not, intelligence success begets operational success, yet intelligence is rarely credited with its role in military victory. In the Korean War context, Operation Chromite stands as a testament to the influence of successful intelligence gathering and analysis in reducing the ambient uncertainty and facilitating the successful execution of a risky military operation. If not for the exploits of Lieutenant Eugene Clark, USN, the planning efforts of Major Stephen Norberg, USA, the photo-reconnaissance efforts of men like First Lieutenant Bryce Poe in the Fifth U.S. Air Force, and the communications intelligence efforts taking place inside the beleaguered Pusan Perimeter, and the tremendous efforts of Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Commander H.W.
McElwain, USN, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Tarkenton, and Lieutenant Colonel William W. Quinn to fuse that intelligence into one coherent picture, Operation Chromite might well have had a very different result. The planning, coordination, and execution of intelligence operations supporting that amphibious turning movement rank among the greatest UN Forces accomplishments of the entire conflict.

Unfortunately, the resounding operational and intelligence successes of Operation Chromite were short lived. American policymakers, General MacArthur, and his subordinates succumbed to a pervasive optimism and strategic hubris from Operation Chromite’s success and believed that the end of the conflict was near. As NKPA remnants fled north of the 38th parallel, MacArthur doggedly pursued them in an effort to crush them and unify Korea in accordance with the UN resolution passed on 7 October 1950. While Willoughby, Tarkenton, and Quinn amassed evidence of a growing Chinese Communist troop presence in North Korea and the clear potential for intervention, press reports and foreign diplomats relayed Zhou Enlai’s threats of CCF intervention along with reports of Chinese “volunteer” units being present in North Korea. Notwithstanding such information, MacArthur and his superiors in Washington felt that they could press on and call what they all felt was a Chinese Communist bluff. In doing so they underestimated the cunning and resolve of Mao Zedong to rally his people under the communist banner, secretly infiltrate massive numbers of ground forces, endure war against the United Nations Forces, and establish Communist China on the international scene as a world power.
The failure to discern Mao Zedong’s intentions was clearly political in nature. However, military intelligence always makes a convenient scapegoat for the shortcomings of foreign policymaking and operational planning and the associated decisions a commander in chief, at both national and theater levels, must make. Those decisions are based upon intelligence he must juxtapose with his own political and operational experiences and intuition. That the Truman administration allowed the American press to blame Willoughby for poor intelligence was a travesty considering the CIA and State Department’s concurrence with Willoughby’s assessments. In the U.S. Senate’s Far East Hearings in April 1951, General MacArthur, quite rightfully, defended his G-2 to the last. MacArthur blamed the failure to discern Chinese intentions on a lack of political intelligence. Evidence indicates that MacArthur based his decision on what little of this intelligence he had from his Chinese Nationalist sources in Beijing.

Communist China was indeed a non-belligerent before late October 1950, but Willoughby still factored potential CCF action into his theater reconnaissance planning. Chinese Nationalist agents, working for Chiang Kai-Shek inside Beijing, were never under Willoughby’s direct control. Willoughby was not in any position to ascertain political intelligence from the Chinese Central Military Commission with his own theater level collection assets. Once Chinese Communist Forces were confirmed to be in North Korea, certainly the responsibility for ascertaining Chinese operational objectives and intentions rested with Willoughby, but the responsibility for political level intelligence always rested with the CIA and State Department intelligence agencies. As renowned MacArthur historian D. Clayton James predicted, it will be very interesting indeed when all of the
State Department and CIA intelligence reports from 1950 become completely declassified, for we will likely see those two agencies as the larger culprits in the failure to provide early warning of both the North Korean and Chinese Communist attacks. While central coordination between all of these government agencies and Major General Willoughby’s staff was far from perfect, more than enough evidence exists to show that this was not entirely Willoughby’s fault. Willoughby worked tirelessly to centralize theater intelligence operations to the very best of his ability.

Meanwhile, declassification of the communications intelligence reports of the National Security Agency regarding the Chinese interventions will likely reveal the degree to which Chinese transmissions (or a lack thereof) succeeded in deceiving American communications intelligence analysts, and what conclusions Willoughby drew regarding the Chinese order of battle, troop dispositions, and locations. Willoughby’s final historical legacy must remain in limbo until that evidence is evaluated. Yet, at a minimum, all indications point to the conclusion that he is not as poor a theater G-2 as most existing historical accounts would have one believe. He did not simply manufacture intelligence to appease General MacArthur.

Additionally, in both MacArthur and Willoughby’s defense, at the strategic (theater) level of war, intelligence collection and analysis become inextricably linked to politics. The Truman administration’s adamant refusal to permit reconnaissance flights over Manchuria throughout the course of the war is a case in point for intelligence collection. The Truman administration deliberately curbed the scope of military

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intelligence operations to stave off Allied criticisms and Communist accusations of inviting global conflict.

Moreover, with regard to American policymakers’ interpretation of the same military intelligence MacArthur received, the Truman administration never saw fit to alter MacArthur’s military mission in late November 1950. MacArthur and Willoughby’s flawed conclusions regarding Chinese troop strength and intentions, while arrived at by differing analytical means and criteria, were ultimately shared by the Truman administration and throughout the entire American intelligence community. This was due to their blanket underestimation of Chinese Communist resolve and nationalist fervor. Such intangible indicators of political and military intentions are virtually impossible to measure let alone collect. Other more readily collected and quantified indicators pointing to Communist China’s internal economic struggles and efforts to consolidate its domestic political power were thus perceived by the American intelligence community as more valid reasons for Communist China not to intervene in Korea.

The inability to discern North Korean and, later, Chinese intentions had landed the United States into the first really “hot” conflict of the Cold War without real thought to synchronizing evolving foreign policy objectives to military strategy and capabilities. From 1950 to 1975 the United States paid the price for its lack of political-strategic synchronization in the form of an enduring stalemate on the Korean peninsula and a loss in international prestige in Vietnam at a total cost of almost 85,000 servicemen dead,

257,000 wounded, and just over 6,000 still missing. Military intelligence operations and military operations in general have a much greater chance of success when military strategy and foreign policy objectives are planned and pursued in unison. In addition, strong links must exist between national intelligence and United States foreign policy. However, the “ultimate fusion of all factors,” to include finished intelligence products and value judgments must remain where they are, a step above and outside of the intelligence community in both the military command and political chief executive positions. After all, those are the people vested with the responsibility and authority to make decisions.

Such considerations appear to be among the most important “lessons” American policymakers and military commanders can glean from this study of Korean War intelligence operations. However, history does not really offer us lessons learned or an exact recipe for success in the future, for every situation is unique. What this study really gives us is a means to think critically about military intelligence operations and how we best evaluate those operations and their final products.

Formulating and assessing the criteria for evaluating intelligence and confirming reported information as fact become all important considerations. More specifically, the relative weighting of intelligence sources in terms of overall reliability and the capabilities

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and limitations of associated collection assets must be clearly articulated and understood by commanders, staff, and policymakers alike. As different staff officers, commanders, and policymakers work together and oppose one another on competing sides in any given conflict, these analytical intelligence dynamics change each time. They change as the perceptions, biases, knowledge, and experience of these groupings of personnel are brought to bear in the decisions of how a given conflict is conducted.

Hopefully, today’s policymakers and military leaders are realizing these facts. In the present age of information, intelligence is placed at an even higher premium in the conduct of military operations. The attainment of information dominance has become the mantra of the military and political components of the American intelligence community. It is also part of the rationale behind assuming risk in making the U.S. Army’s combat vehicles lighter by using less armor. Thus, information, collected in near real time by manned or unmanned platforms or human agents on the ground can, if properly analyzed, make the difference between mission success and mission failure.

History appears to be repeating itself to some degree as Congressional committees investigate the alleged intelligence “failures” to predict the Al-Qaeda attacks on September 11, 2001 or to find evidence of Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) program. Institutional reforms invariably follow in the wake of such failures as the touted remedies to prevent future calamities. For example, in the Korean War, the Armed Forces Security Agency, which lacked the requisite authority to truly centralize the COMINT efforts of all of the armed services, was scrapped in favor of the National Security Agency in 1952.

President Truman ensured the NSA was vested with the necessary authority to finally centralize American COMINT operations. Today, in the wake of the 9-11 Commission’s findings, the new office of National Intelligence Director, has been created to vest one official with the budgetary and legal authority to truly centralize all American intelligence operations. It remains to be seen whether or not the Director of National intelligence, John Negroponte, and his successors will succeed in fulfilling a role that was originally envisioned for the Director of Central Intelligence since 1947.

There is another recurring pattern worth mentioning. U.S. intelligence successes are very short lived in both history books and daily media accounts. In order to protect intelligence sources and methods, this is how it should be until the passage of time, with its political and technological changes, renders the need for such security moot. At that time, historians should make the most of the opportunity to do justice to the historical record of the intelligence profession by highlighting its strengths and contributions as well as its shortcomings. Korean War intelligence successes in the defense of the Pusan Perimeter or in the preparation of Operation Chromite receive little notoriety in comparison to the alleged intelligence failures of the North Korean invasion and the Chinese Communist interventions of October and November 1950. As a matter of course, the intelligence profession enjoys its accomplishments in modest silence reflective of the clandestine nature of its mission. Thus, if intelligence failures receive the lion’s share of historical research and media exposure, then one owes it to the intelligence profession to deliver an even-handed assessment of all the factors political, strategic, economic, or otherwise that contribute to failures of intelligence collection or analysis.
To deliver such an even-handed assessment one must always remember that military intelligence, like the war of which it is a part, is inextricably linked to politics on a continuum. As it was in the Korean War over a half century ago, military intelligence today is a part of war in the true Clausewitzian sense of the term. Thus, “intelligence failures” are rarely, if ever, exclusive to the intelligence community and in the case of the Korean War they were not exclusive at all. The “military intelligence failures” of the Korean War were not purely intelligence failures but failures of military, strategic, and political policies that became mutually reinforcing while military intelligence successes reflected the converse. That conclusion more accurately reflects the Korean War experiences of Major General Charles A. Willoughby and his theater-level military intelligence battlefield operating system. More importantly, that conclusion provides a more objective and more complete assessment of the influence those intelligence operations had not only on the Korean War’s causes, conduct, and consequences but also on American military and political institutions. This is what one achieves by reassessing military intelligence operations in “the Forgotten War” from Charles Willoughby’s perspective. That is, looking back through “MacArthur’s eyes.”
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