

The Imperative of Mission Command: A Case Study of First Contact in the Korean War

A Monograph

by

MAJ Cary J. Fitzpatrick
US Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
US Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, KS

2019

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

*Form Approved
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 23-05-2019	2. REPORT TYPE SAMS Monograph	3. DATES COVERED (From - To) June 2018-May 2019
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4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Imperative of Mission Command: A Case Study of First Contact in the Korean War	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S) MAJ Cary J. Fitzpatrick	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) 201 Reynolds Avenue Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2134	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
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9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Command and General Staff College 731 McClellan Avenue Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1350	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) CGSC
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
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15. SUBJECT TERMS
Mission Command; Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO); Korean War; 24th Infantry Division (ID)

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT (U)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 53	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON MAJ Cary J. Fitzpatrick
a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) (503) 551-1789

Monograph Approval Page

Name of Candidate: MAJ Cary J. Fitzpatrick

Monograph Title: The Imperative of Mission Command: A Case Study of First Contact in the Korean War

Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
Anthony E. Carlson, PhD

_____, Seminar Leader
Glen E. Clubb, COL

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Kirk C. Dorr, COL

Accepted this 23rd day of May 2019 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, PhD

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Abstract

The Imperative of Mission Command: A Case Study of First Contact in the Korean War by MAJ Cary J. Fitzpatrick, US Army, 54 pages.

Mission command, as both a philosophy and a warfighting function, is the conduit through which commanders provide command and control to subordinate units and the binding agent of all warfighting functions. The publication of Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, in October 2017 signaled a renewed operational focus on large-scale combat operations. FM 3-0 stresses the importance of commanders utilizing mission-based orders to provide subordinates the flexibility to execute operations with disciplined initiative. Without effective use of mission command, commanders assume greater risk to mission success. As demonstrated in July 1950, by US and North Korean People's Army forces, the absence of mission command supported by effective command and control systems denies flexibility in a time constrained environment, creating an inability to effectively transition to the next phase of the operation.

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Acknowledgements

This monograph is dedicated to the memory of my grand uncle, Jack Fitzpatrick, who served as an infantry officer in the 24th Infantry Division during the Korean War. Although his aspirations for life never materialized, I hope my service honors his legacy.

Acronyms

1-34 IN	1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division
21 RGMT	21st Regiment, 24th Infantry Division
3-34 IN	3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division
34th RGMT	34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FEC	Far East Command
GHQFEC	General Headquarters Far East Command
ID	Infantry Division
KMAG	Military Advisory Group-Korea
LSCO	Large-Scale Combat Operations
NKPA	North Korean People's Army
PLA	People's Liberation Army
ROK	Republic of Korea
TF	Task Force
TOE	Table of Organization and Equipment
UN	United Nations
USAMGIK	US Army Military Government in Korea
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Introduction

Current Doctrine and Mission Command

The publication of Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, in October 2017 signaled a renewed operational focus on large-scale combat operations (LSCO). In conjunction with Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0 and Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Operations*, the FM “provides a foundation for how Army forces conduct prompt and sustained large-scale combat operations.”¹ With the exception of Operation Desert Storm, the Army has primarily executed contingency operations and protracted counterinsurgency campaigns for the past 30 years.² As the Army emphasizes readiness for LSCO, efforts must be made to improve capabilities in all eight elements of combat power.³ However, to generate rapid advancements in the other elements of combat power, the Army must focus its efforts on improvements in mission command.

Mission command permeates current Army doctrine yet the term serves many different purposes. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command*, defines the philosophy of mission command as “the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations.”⁴ ADRP 3-0, *Operations*, also includes mission command as one of the six warfighting functions, specifically “the related tasks and systems that develop and integrate those activities enabling a commander to balance the art of

¹ US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), vii.

² *Ibid.*, ix.

³ The eight elements of combat power include: leadership, information, mission command, movement and maneuver, intelligence, fires, sustainment, and protection. US Army, *FM 3-0*, 2-21.

⁴ US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1.

command with the science of control in order to integrate the other warfighting functions.”⁵ ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, further broadens the term by applying mission command to systems established by each echelon of command and refers to “the arrangement of personnel, networks, information systems, processes and procedures, and facilities and equipment to enable commanders to conduct operations.”⁶ Mission command enables commanders to use the art of command, through creative and skillful use of their authorities through decision-making and leadership, combined with the science of control, through the use of systems and procedures to improve mutual understanding and support mission accomplishment.⁷ As the Army’s requirements to synchronize across multiple domains simultaneously expands, the demand to provide and execute mission command exponentially increases. Thus, according to Army doctrine, mission command is essential to success in LSCO.

As Carl von Clausewitz stated, critical analysis of history produces lessons for the future.⁸ Understanding the significance of mission command on future LSCO conflicts requires reflection and analysis of previous wars where conflict erupted at a large scale. Lieutenant General Michael D. Lundy, the Commander of the US Army’s Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, argues that in the future the United States (US) may face adversaries that have already achieved overmatch or parity when compared to US capabilities.⁹ An analysis of the 1950 invasion by the North Korean People’s Army (NKPA), as well as the reaction of US forces at the beginning of the Korean War, provides a relevant case study of how commanders employ their formations and how they implement supporting command systems. As the US military

⁵ US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 5-2.

⁶ US Army, *ADP 6-0*, 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-1 and 3-1.

⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 156.

⁹ US Army, *FM 3-0*, Foreword.

Academy Department of History noted in 1981, the “[m]ilitary defeat in Korea deserves far more attention than soldiers have given it in the past, for it had a profound effect on future military policy and command relationships.”¹⁰

This monograph seeks to serve two purposes. First, it provides a timely historical case study of the impact of mission command and its supporting systems on the actions of 24th Infantry Division (ID) and NKPA during the period of June 24th, 1950 to September 14th, 1950. Second, it provides insight for commanders and their staffs on the impact of evolving doctrine on the use of mission systems juxtaposed to those used by leaders in the Korean War.

Political Background

On June 25th, 1950, the NKPA invaded the Republic of Korea (ROK), seeking southern capitulation and the unification of the Korean peninsula under the rule of Kim Il-sung. After enduring thirty-five years of Japanese occupation, the 38th parallel separated the Soviet-backed North and the newly-independent South. While the two countries had existed independently for only two years, that short period witnessed the emergence of a significant gap in their combat power capabilities.

After decades of occupation by Chinese, Japanese, and Soviet forces, Korea found itself entangled in the balance of power following the end of World War II. The United States attempted to counter Soviet expansionism through the implementation of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan in 1947, but it realized the effort to establish a democratic government in Korea was losing traction.¹¹ A US-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) Joint Commission charged with solving the Korean problem fell victim to the escalating Cold War, which led to US

¹⁰ US Military Academy Department of History, *Confrontation in Asia: The Korean War* (West Point, NY: US Military Academy, 1981), 3.

¹¹ Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War: Volume 1* (Seoul: Korea Institute of Military History, 1997), 25.

policymakers deferring to the United Nations (UN) to resolve the political fate of the peninsula.¹² Despite Soviet opposition, elections occurred under UN observation at the end of May 1948, and the UN General Assembly officially recognized the ROK on December 12th, 1948.¹³ Realizing the Soviet limited ability to influence the entire peninsula and a reduced potential for a unified satellite state, the USSR supported Kim Il-sung's de facto communist government in the north with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) being established on September 9th, 1948.¹⁴ With Korea divided along the 38th parallel, rising tensions set conditions for the first large scale proxy conflict of the Cold War between the United States and the USSR.

Military Build-Up

Even prior to the establishment of separate states on the Korean peninsula, the road to war unfolded according to its own logic. Following Kim Il-sung's return to the north, the USSR established the Red Militia in each province to build up combat power and support the Soviet Military Government.¹⁵ Having served as the commander of the Third Division (later the Sixth Division) in the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army, Kim established the NKPA in February 1948 from a merger of the Red Militia and the former Anti-Japanese Guerrilla Army.¹⁶ Backed by the Soviets, Kim selected a handful of trusted *Kapsan* loyalists as the core leadership responsible for developing the NKPA.¹⁷ Although North Korea designed the NKPA on Soviet models, and key leaders studied at Leningrad State University, North Korea capitalized on the opportunity to enhance its political status in the region by allying with communists in China.¹⁸

¹² Korea Institute of Military History, 26.

¹³ Ibid., 29.

¹⁴ Ibid., 31.

¹⁵ Ibid., 35.

¹⁶ James M. Minnich, *The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 15.

¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁸ Ibid., 29.

Drawing on Soviet models and Chinese support, the NKPA expanded from a force of 20,000 in 1946, to 120,000 regular and 40,000 conscripts in 1949.¹⁹ Continuing to follow the Soviet model, the NKPA expanded its command structure to include corps headquarters, front headquarters, and a seven-man committee of cabinet officials to direct military operations.²⁰ As the NKPA grew, the number of Soviet advisors shrunk from 150 to about 15 by 1950, suggestive of the increased capability and professionalism of the NKPA.²¹ On June 25th, 1950, 90,000 NKPA soldiers, roughly two-thirds of the entire Army, poured across the 38th parallel and invaded the ROK.²²

In 1946, the US Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) attempted to counter communist movements in the south, forcing the employment of guerilla tactics against political and military targets.²³ In the midst of the post-World War II drawdown, the US Army based the majority of Far East Command's (FEC) soldiers under General of the Army Douglas MacArthur on mainland Japan, with only a small contingent of officers and soldiers serving as the Military Advisory Group-Korea (KMAG), whose mission included assisting the Korean Constabulary force in January 1946.²⁴ After a discouraging review by the UN inspector general in March 1949, MacArthur ordered the Eighth Army to forego its occupation duties and commit forces to field training in Japan.²⁵ FEC served as the largest contingent of American forces abroad with 108,500 personnel, or roughly one-fifth of the entire US Army, under its command.²⁶ However, due to the turbulence of personnel turnover in the FEC, Eighth Army's units were rarely able to train above

¹⁹ Minnich, 33, 54.

²⁰ Ibid., 57.

²¹ Ibid., 60.

²² Michael J. Varhola, *Fire and Ice: The Korean War 1950-1953* (Mason City, IA: Savas Publishing, 2000), 152.

²³ Korea Institute of Military History, 31-35.

²⁴ Allen Reed Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 27.

²⁵ Ibid., 78.

²⁶ Ibid.

the individual level.²⁷ Furthermore, the KMAG only consisted of approximately 500 soldiers to support the training of the ROK Army.²⁸ Having downplayed reports by the KMAG of a looming NKPA invasion for months, on June 30, 1950, President Harry S. Truman authorized a naval blockade of the Korean peninsula and the mobilization of two Army Divisions (24th ID and 25th ID) to assist the ROK Army in thwarting the NKPA's crossing of the 38th parallel.²⁹ Despite American augmentation, the ROK forces proved woefully ill-prepared to defend against the NKPA's attack.

Following the liberation of Korea from Japanese occupation, the ROK faced the immediate problem of establishing a defense force. USAMGIK's issuance of Ordinance No. 28 officially disbanded the multitude of privatized South Korean militias in November 1945 and authorized a Korean national defense force.³⁰ Initially modeled as a constabulary force, the ROK Army activated regiments beginning in January 1946, ending with the establishment of the 8th Brigade in January 1949.³¹ US military advisors passed the responsibility for training the South Korean armed forces to the KMAG, which supported the US Department of State's mission in South Korea.³² The ROK Army held an overall strength of approximately 95,000 soldiers in mid-1950, but was inadequately equipped largely due to the United States' fear that ROK President Syngman Rhee would seize the opportunity to unite the peninsula by force.³³ For example, the ROK Army lacked a significant armor capability, without a single tank or anti-armor weapon to

²⁷ Thomas E. Hanson, *Combat Ready?: The Eighth U.S. Army on the Eve of the Korean War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 20.

²⁸ Leif A. Gruenberg, *Defining Moments: The Korean War* (Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, 2004), 34.

²⁹ Kelly Jordan, "Three Armies in Korea: The Combat Effectiveness of the United States Eighth Army in Korea, July 1950-June 1952" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1999), 151.

³⁰ Korea Institute of Military History, 63.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

³² Varhola, 117.

³³ *Ibid.*

defend against the NKPA.³⁴ Unable to muster a significant defense capability due to limited support from the US Army, the ROK Army could not deter nor repel a looming invasion by the Soviet- and Communist China-backed NKPA.

NKPA Invasion and US Reaction

North Korea commenced the Korean War with a frontal attack across the 38th parallel at 4 a.m. on June 25th, 1950. Supported by 200 aircraft and 150 T-34 tanks, 7 NKPA divisions opened three corridors to the South Korean capital of Seoul and the Hahn River Valley.³⁵ Titled “Operations Plan Preemptive Strike,” the NKPA commanders and planners abandoned the initial course of action to sequence the attack from west to east due to a fear the plan had been compromised by spies, choosing to launch the five prongs of the attack simultaneously.³⁶ The unprepared ROK Army suffered from sporadic intelligence as well as the fact that many commanders and soldiers were delayed in returning to their units, as they were on leave for the first time in many months.³⁷ By midday on June 28th, NKPA soldiers arrived in central Seoul and began to carry out the planned occupation policy, establishing the People’s Committee under Minister of Justice Lee Sung Yop.³⁸ The attempt by ROK defense forces to thwart the North Korean invasion had been broken, forcing the South Korean government to abandon Seoul and displace to Taegu and eventually Pusan.³⁹

Like the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, timing of the invasion surprised the Americans, although the administration and military leaders considered a Japanese attack a definite possibility. President Truman initially assumed Stalin had ordered the North Korean attack due to

³⁴ Korea Institute of Military History, 89.

³⁵ Millett, 85.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Korea Institute of Military History, 158.

³⁸ Ibid., 241.

³⁹ Varhola, 2.

US diplomatic actions during the previous eight months.⁴⁰ Truman knew western powers could not accept a communist Korean peninsula and heeded Secretary of State Dean Acheson's recommendation to increase military aid to the ROK Army, evacuate Americans on the peninsula by air, and block communist forces from entering Korea by sea by placing the 7th Fleet between mainland China and Taiwan.⁴¹ MacArthur visited the frontlines and observed that the majority of the ROK Army had ceased fighting. As a result, committing US ground forces now proved a foregone conclusion.⁴² The FEC immediately consolidated all American forces in the region under the command of Major General Walton H. Walker, commander of the Japan-based Eighth Army.⁴³ Truman approved the dispatch of two divisions from Japan to Korea on June 30th.⁴⁴ The 24th ID, under the command of Major General William F. Dean, was the first American ground force sent to Korea from its base in Kyushu, Japan.⁴⁵ The ill-fated Task Force (TF) Smith debarked to a gleeful reception from the locals at the Pusan port at 08:45 a.m. on July 1st, ultimately becoming the first American combat forces to directly fight against the NKPA.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Millett, 111.

⁴¹ Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2011), 12.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴³ Jordan, 18.

⁴⁴ Korea Institute of Military History, 285.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 286.

Previous Experience and Preparation for War

North Korea

While the Korean peninsula found itself at the center of a decades-long Sino-Japanese contest for supremacy, it was not until the 1930s when communist forces in the north began to assemble fighting forces. In response to the Japanese Kwantung Army's annexation of Manchuria in 1931, a group of communists met to discuss creating guerrilla units to fight against the Japanese occupation; the future leader of North Korea, Kim Il-sung, was present at this meeting.⁴⁷ Speaking fluent Mandarin Chinese and for a time a member of the Chinese Communist Party, Kim joined the Anti-Japanese United Army and fought in the guerilla war against the Japanese first in northeastern China, and then eventually in the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ The Soviets assigned Kim, also fluent in Russian, to the Khabarovsk Infantry Officers School at some point between 1939 and 1940, where he became the commander of the Korean battalion tasked to train the cadre for a future communist army of North Korea.⁴⁹ During the final years of World War II, approximately 100,000 Korean residents in China joined the Chinese Communist forces, providing the bulk of the manpower to three of the most successful divisions in the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Fourth Field Army.⁵⁰ Due to the support from North Korea during World War II and in the subsequent Chinese Communist Revolution, both China and the USSR sought to leverage their newfound powers to promote the spread of communism, especially in North Korea. Leveraging Kim's experiences with Soviet and Maoist policy, what was once a contentious relationship between the Red Armies would become the foundation of NKPA strength.

⁴⁷ Minnich, 12.

⁴⁸ Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 106.

⁴⁹ Sergei Nikolaevich Goncharov, John Wilson Lewis, and Litai Xue, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 131.

⁵⁰ Chen, 106.

The Sino-Soviet alliance of 1950 traces its roots to traditional Chinese and Russian objectives. Marxist-Leninism drew both nations together, yet cultural and political interests separated them. As the Chinese interpreted the Yalta accords as a disgrace to their country, Stalin saw Chinese resentment as an opportunity for exploitation. In June 1945, the USSR began negotiations with the Chinese Nationalists to limit Japanese influence in the East. Stalin stated that the Soviets needed the ports at Dairen and Port Arthur for thirty years to suppress the restoration of Japanese power.⁵¹ In an attempt to secure Soviet support during the Chinese civil war, the Chinese Nationalists and USSR signed the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance on August 15th, 1945, to “render impossible the repetition of aggression and violation of peace by Japan.”⁵² Emboldened by US support to the Chinese Nationalists, the Soviets began to support the Chinese Communist Party by supplying them with tanks, artillery, and arms for 600,000 soldiers.⁵³ Following the Chinese Communist victory over the Nationalists and Chairman Mao’s “lean-to-one-side” announcement, the USSR became the first nation to officially recognize and establish diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China the day after its founding on October 2, 1949.⁵⁴ On February 14, 1950, the Sino-Soviet alliance came into existence, largely due to anxiety towards US encroachment in the east.⁵⁵ As North Korea began to build its own army, it benefited from the support of both rising eastern powers.

Following the conclusion of the Chinese civil war, the Chinese Communist Forces released tens of thousands of ethnic Koreans to return to North Korea, adding to the growth of the NKPA to over 120,000 soldiers by providing 40,000 new conscripts.⁵⁶ However, Chinese tactical

⁵¹ Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁴ Chen, 64; Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, 76.

⁵⁵ Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, 76.

⁵⁶ Millet, 54.

support to the NKPA was all but absent at the outbreak of the war due to two factors. First, China proved unable to muster sufficient equipment to arm the North Koreans, much less its own army. In his account of Beijing's decision to intervene, Marshal Nie Rongzhen recalled that when the Korean War began, "[our soldiers'] weapons were in disarray since our equipment and weapons had been seized mainly from enemies with various makes and models. Our transportation means were backwards and primitive. An organized system of logistics had yet to be established."⁵⁷ Due to China's inability to provide direct support to Korea, Kim sought Mao's favor by requesting no additional military aid, enabling Mao to focus on invading Formosa (modern Taiwan).⁵⁸ However, Mao knew that if the United States should react to the invasion of South Korea with military force, China would have no choice but to intervene.⁵⁹

Although the NKPA traced its origin to the anti-Japanese movement, the impact of Soviet doctrine on its systems dwarfed those established by the grassroots Korean militias. To maintain influence over the new North Korean regime, the USSR provided an enormous number of weapons to the fledgling NKPA. After the Soviet withdrawal from the peninsula in 1948, the USSR gave all of the equipment from its 120,000-man 25th Army to the NKPA, in addition to the seized armaments of the defeated 34th and 58th Japanese Armies.⁶⁰ In the late 1940s, Soviet assistance to the NKPA surpassed the support it gave to Mao's PLA.⁶¹ As Columbia University Professor Charles K. Armstrong argues, "The Soviets had control in what mattered to them, in particular North Korea's foreign policy, trade, and maintenance of generally pro-Soviet leadership."⁶² Despite the material and training provided to NKPA officers at the Khabarovsk

⁵⁷ Xiaobing Li, Allan Reed Millett, and Bin Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 50.

⁵⁸ Millett, 49.

⁵⁹ Chen, 89.

⁶⁰ Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, 133.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 54.

Infantry Officers School, the USSR did not establish a long-term plan for the occupation of Korea in 1945, which set conditions for Kim's rise to power.⁶³ The USSR knew it was unable to defeat the United States in a direct military conflict due to the pre-1949 US nuclear monopoly, and sought to generate external combat power through exporting its military structures to satellite nations, like North Korea.

The Soviet Union demobilized its army from 500 divisions to 175 divisions from 1945 to 1948, which enabled the distribution of mechanized and mobilized capabilities across their entire force.⁶⁴ In 1947, tank divisions in the USSR consisted of five maneuver regiments of one heavy tank/self-propelled gun regiment, three medium tank regiments, and one motorized infantry regiment.⁶⁵ In contrast, the NKPA's organization emphasized light infantry. A NKPA division consisted of three rifle regiments (each with an organic anti-tank company), one field artillery regiment, and a task organized anti-tank battalion.⁶⁶ Although not organized as an armor or mechanized unit like in the USSR, the NKPA embraced much of Soviet military tactics and doctrine, "incorporating combined arms operations and depending upon conventional lines of communication for resupply."⁶⁷ Despite a limited resupply capacity, the NKPA's signal network's multiple and parallel channels supported immediate control to the commander.

⁶³ Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il-sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 7-8, 59; Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, 131.

⁶⁴ Jonathan M. House, *Toward Combined Arms Warfare: A Survey of 20th-Century Tactics, Doctrine, and Organization*, Research Survey no. 2 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), 142.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁶⁶ Minnich, 41.

⁶⁷ Minnich, 42.

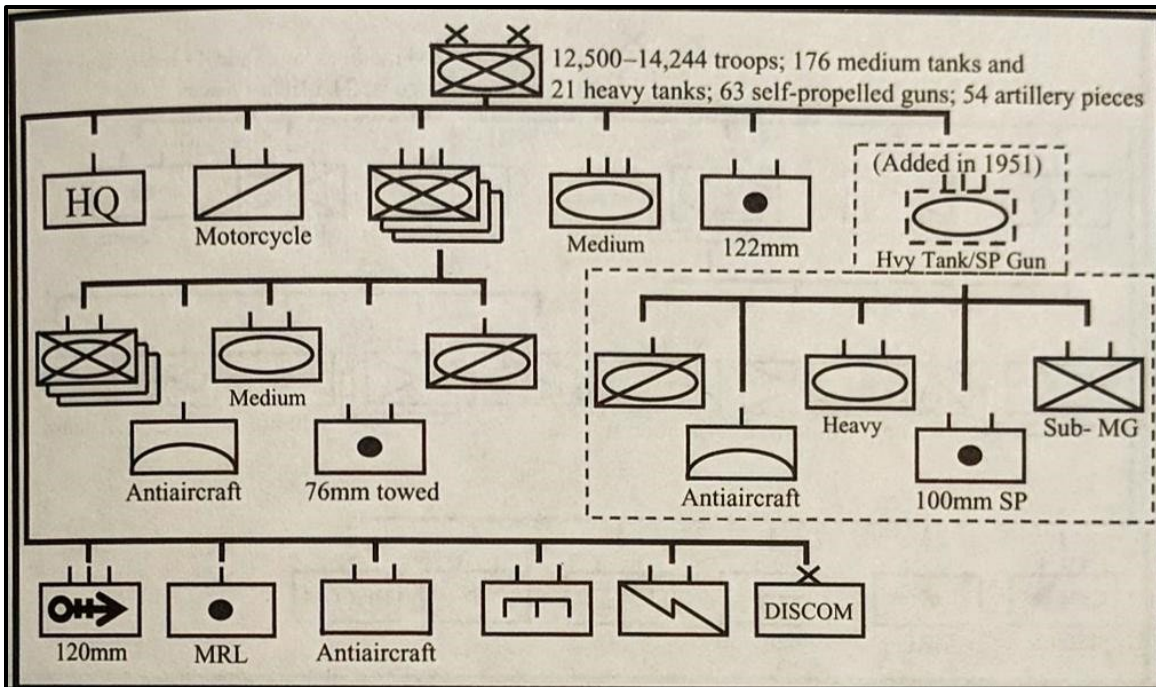


Figure 1. Soviet Army Mechanized Division Organization Chart, 1946-1951. James M. Minnich, *The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 43.

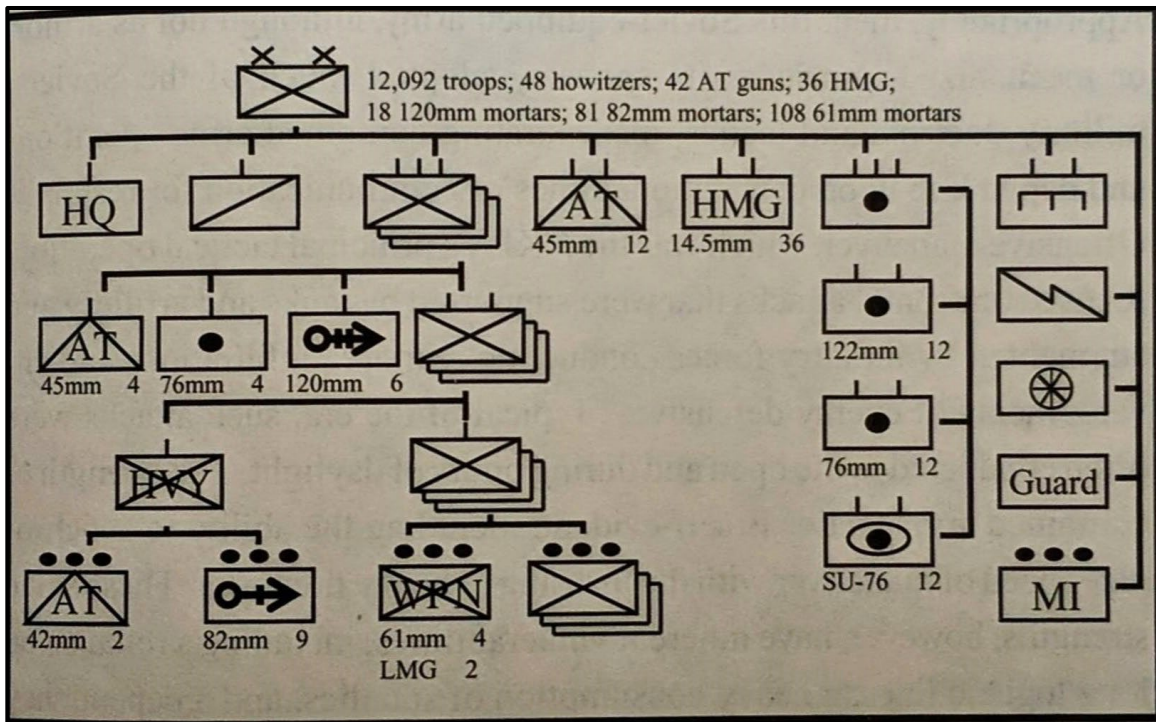


Figure 2. NKPA Infantry Division Organization Chart, 1950. James M. Minnich, *The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 44.

As the NKPA adopted Soviet Army tactics and doctrine, it also used, and arguably improved, a division's signal architecture to meet the NKPA's requirements. Wire was the primary means of communication, with radio reserved for situations requiring rapid movement or for reconnaissance and tank formations.⁶⁸ With wire resources scarce, "administrative circuits [were] often reduced or eliminated and communications with unimportant sectors of the front or with rear echelon [were] pared to the bone."⁶⁹ Despite the limited physical resources available to the NKPA for communication, the network structure rapidly shared information across multiple echelons. The senior commander's forward observation post and command post maintained continuous and uninterrupted communications with the observation and command posts of higher and subordinate units.⁷⁰ The commander's signal officer maintained the communications network through command, staff, cooperation, reconnaissance, liaison (for adjacent units), artillery, and tank nets aimed to assist the commander with his ability to visualize the battlefield.⁷¹ When conducting offensive operations, NKPA commanders strictly enforced radio silence, with communication reduced to direct telephone lines prior to the line of departure.⁷² Following the initiation of an attack, signal efforts focused on the sector that contained the main effort, with "lines of communication and means of transmission duplicated and reinforced, if necessary, by attaching signal personnel and equipment from higher and neighboring units."⁷³ This design facilitated gaining and maintaining momentum on the offense, which would prove critical during the initial invasion.

⁶⁸ General Headquarters Far East Command (GHQ FEC), Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, *Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, Research Supplement, Interrogation Reports, Enemy Forces* (Issue no. 4, December 1950), 4, document no. N-15907.88, Archives, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁶⁹ GHQ FEC, 4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

⁷² GHQ FEC, 11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Notwithstanding the hundreds of engagements along the border from 1948 to 1950, neither side was fully aware of the other's capabilities and the NKPA held numerous advantages. As historian Allan R. Millet describes in *They Came from the North*, "the [NKPA] had not been burdened with a counterinsurgency campaign, and the [NKPA] benefited from significant foreign assistance, including heavy weapons from the Soviet Union and three divisions of veteran infantry from [the PLA]."74

The United States

The US Army fought with distinction in World War II, and successfully defeated Germany and Japan as part of the Allied Powers. Following World War II, the US Army shrank from approximately 6 million to 677,000 men (roughly ten divisions) by the end of 1948.⁷⁵ At less than 12 percent of its World War II strength, the Army had difficulty retaining the experiences gained in direct combat. The Army struggled to retain the lessons learned on the fields of Europe or the islands of the Pacific during the rapid demobilization. The most pressing issues for the US Army following Victory-Japan Day were demobilization and establishing the post-war army structure, both of which were intertwined problems. These were not entirely new problems, as the Army had reduced its numbers from 2.7 million to only 130,000 on active duty following World War I.⁷⁶ However, the rate at which the Army discharged soldiers following World War II hemorrhaged both expertise and morale. From September 1945 to January 1946, the Army discharged on average 1.2 million soldiers a month.⁷⁷ In 1946, when the Selective Service Act of 1940 expired, the Army failed to meet its congressionally authorized endstrength,

⁷⁴ Millet, 29.

⁷⁵ Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 7-8.

⁷⁶ Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 395.

⁷⁷ William W. Epley, *America's First Cold War Army, 1945-1950*, The Land Warfare Papers, no. 32 (Arlington, VA: Association of the United States Army, 1999), 4.

with only 591,000 men in service at the outbreak of the Korean War.⁷⁸ The Army's equipment was in a similar state of disarray. Worth a total of over \$50 billion, the Army left \$18.5 billion of poorly serviced equipment in foreign theaters; only 6,600 of the 28,000 tanks in the Army inventory retained a serviceable readiness rate in 1950.⁷⁹ While the United States struggled to maintain its current force and equipment, generating new soldiers became the larger issue.

The quality of Army recruits after World War II also deteriorated. By January 1946, basic training shortened from seventeen to eight weeks, and divisions demobilizing on the same posts often interrupted training of new recruits.⁸⁰ Due to the demand for replacements, some recruits reported to their units with less than four weeks of military training.⁸¹ Recognizing the deficits in new soldier quality, General Jacob L. Devers, commander of Army Ground Forces, enforced a new policy of a thirteen-week basic training cycle in May 1947, but he reduced the period back to eight weeks in 1948 in response to an influx of new recruits following the implementation of the Selective Service Act of 1948.⁸² The Selective Service Act of 1948 expanded the Army to a strength of 659,000 by June 1949, still 130,000 short of initial projections.⁸³ That same year, the Army issued a new Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE), which served concurrently as a reduction table, cutting the strength of a typical division by 30 percent.⁸⁴ The Army was only capable of fielding ten active divisions in 1949, a reduction of 79 divisions in less than five

⁷⁸ Epley, 6.

⁷⁹ Robert Coakley et al., *Resume of Army Roll-Up Following World War II* (Washington, DC: US Army Center for Military History 1968), 63-65.

⁸⁰ Epley, 12.

⁸¹ Keith Sherman and Albert N. Garland, *Studies in the History of Army Ground Forces During the Demobilization Period*, Study no. 5: "Training in Army Ground Forces, 1 September 1945-10 March 1948" (US Army Center of Military History Archives, Washington, DC, unpublished study, 1948), 52.

⁸² US Army Field Forces, "Annual History, Office, Chief, Army Field Forces, 1948" (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History archives, 1948), 10-12.

⁸³ Epley, 16.

⁸⁴ US Department of the Army, *Table of Organization and Equipment, No. 7, Infantry Division* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1948); US Department of the Army, *Reduction Tables, The Infantry Division, 1948* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History archives, 1948).

years.⁸⁵ The Fiscal Year 1950 budget slashed funding for the Army, resulting in many divisions losing their experienced leadership in the months leading up to July 1950.⁸⁶ Given the loss of experience, commanders experienced great difficulty executing effective command and control of their units as they had done during World War II.

Due to the nation's arsenal of nuclear weapons, many US government officials believed that the Army was sufficiently resourced to meet any national defense need.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the Army conducted a series of conferences to analyze its experience in ground combat during World War II to improve doctrine, organization, and tactics. One of the most substantive suggestions from these boards included the suggestion that divisions should no longer be purely armor or infantry, but a combination of all arms.⁸⁸ The impact of technological innovations in the use of radio and capabilities of tracked vehicles drove this change. As a reaction to reduced personnel strength and expertise, the US Army updated its fighting doctrine to facilitate a reduction in forces while maintaining institutional expertise. However, as historian Russell F. Weigley argues, this restructuring was "less as an attempt to meet new kinds of international perils than as a conventional postwar effort to assimilate the lessons of the war that just ended."⁸⁹ As a result, the integration of new technologies was all but sidelined, directly impacting signal units, one of the most critical enablers of effective command and control.

On the surface, the division-level signal units experienced minimal change during the interwar period of 1945 to 1950. The 1948 TOE ensured infantry, airborne, and armored divisions

⁸⁵ Roy K. Flint, "Task Force Smith and the 24th Division: Delay and Withdrawal, 5-19 July 1950," in *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*, ed. Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 269.

⁸⁶ Epley, 17.

⁸⁷ James Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 121; Hanson, 110.

⁸⁸ John C. Binkley, "A History of U.S. Army Force Structuring," *Military Review* 57, no. 2 (February 1977): 76.

⁸⁹ Weigley, 487.

would retain organic signal companies.⁹⁰ During World War II, the Signal Corps requisitioned planes belonging to Field Artillery units to deliver messages and distribute communications wires across the battlefield. Yet planes remained absent from signal battalions until 1949, negatively impacting commander's ability to anticipate the integration of planes with ground tactical units.⁹¹ The inability of signal battalions to provide support to ground tactical units would have a direct impact on the effectiveness of command post and staff structures in Korea.

The new doctrinal manuals of the 1940s built upon the prewar manuals for large-unit manuals but largely ignored the function of modern command posts. The communications channels of staff officers passed routine reports and "technical instructions not involving variation from command policies and directives."⁹² Disregarding recommendations of a General Board, the TOEs of 1947 and 1948 provided only a skeleton headquarters structure and limited communications capability.⁹³ While these limiting factors plagued the US Army and exacerbated other shortcomings resulting in tactical failures, the NKPA capitalized on the state of the US and ROK forces as it maintained its momentum crossing the Yalu River.

⁹⁰ Rebecca R. Raines, *Getting the Message Through: A Branch History of the U.S. Army Signal Corps* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1996), 319.

⁹¹ Raines, 320.

⁹² US War Department, *Field Manual 101-5, Staff Officers Field Manual: Staff Organization and Procedure* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 17.

⁹³ David W. Hogan, *A Command Post at War: First Army Headquarters in Europe, 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, US Army, 2000), 294.

Yalu to Pusan

North Korean Invasion and Seizure of Seoul

Kim Il-sung had good reason to anticipate a rapid victory when his soldiers breached the 38th parallel: the NKPA held a strength of over 135,000 soldiers, over half of whom were veterans of the PLA or Soviet Army, filling out 8 full divisions and 2 divisions at half-strength.⁹⁴ To exploit the initiative gained by the surprise attack, the NKPA would have to rely on its light infantry, limited armor, and communications networks. These capabilities enabled the NKPA to rapidly defeat the ROK Army, seize Seoul, and force the US Army to retreat to the Pusan perimeter.

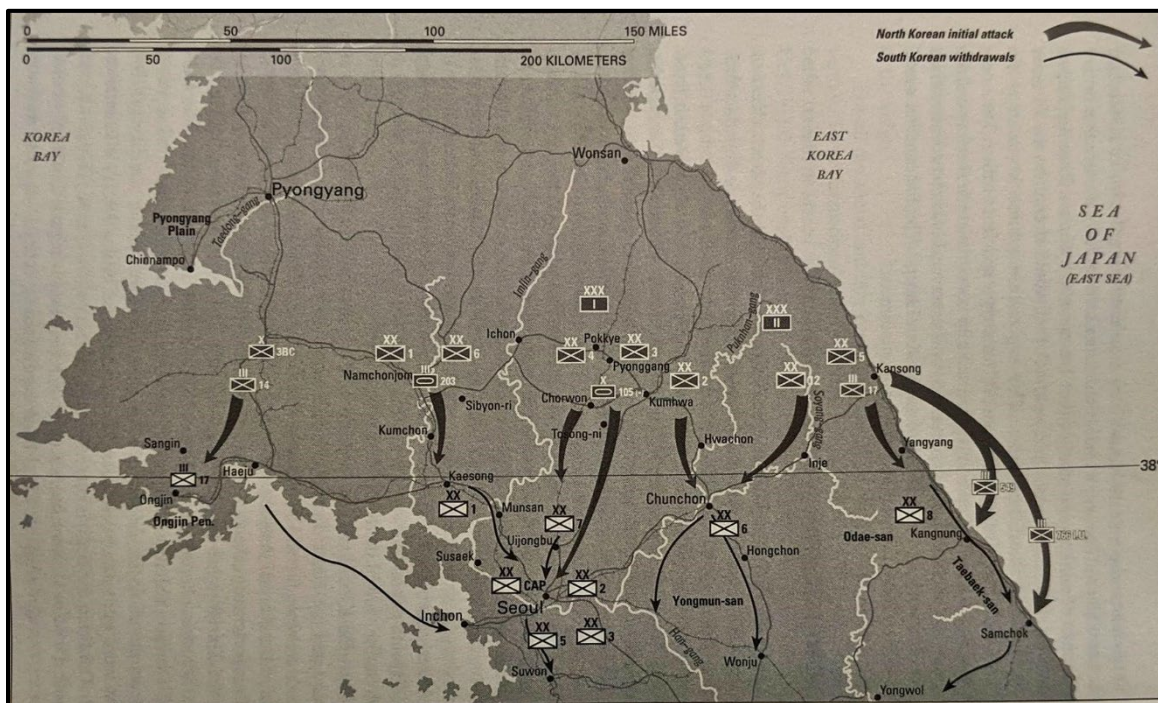


Figure 3. NKPA Invasion Order of Battle. Allen Reed Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 88.

⁹⁴ Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu; June-November 1950* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1961), 8.

The first NKPA artillery rounds impacted south of the 38th parallel at approximately 4 a.m. on June 25th, and continued to fall well into daylight.⁹⁵ In accordance with an operations order published on June 18 and supported by over 200 aircraft and 150 T-34 tanks, the NKPA assault divisions opened 3 corridors to Seoul and the Hahn River Valley.⁹⁶ The first wave of NKPA soldiers came as expected: two full divisions, each led by forty T-34 tanks and supported by 120-mm howitzers, attacked along the Uijongbu Corridor; making contact with an ill-prepared ROK 7th Division.⁹⁷ Further east, two other NKPA divisions attacked the two positioned regiments along the border of the ROK 6th Division, simultaneous to the attack in Uijongbu.⁹⁸ Even though the forward ROK forces provided sufficient time for the 6th Division commander to alert the reserve regiment forty miles to the south, collapse of the ROK 7th Division exposed the flank of the 6th, forcing it to withdrawal back to Seoul. In addition to these two NKPA axes of advance, the NKPA attacked along the Ongjin peninsula, leaving one battalion of the 17th ROK Regiment overrun and destroyed, while the other two battalions evacuated on one Landing Ship Tank into the Yellow Sea.⁹⁹ In the final thrust of the coordinated attack, the NKPA executed frontal and amphibious assaults on the ROK 8th Division, rendering the ROK Army unable to mount any type of defense against the overwhelming invading force.¹⁰⁰ Seventy-two hours after the assault began, the ROK Army's attempt to stop the NKPA invasion proved futile.¹⁰¹ Dislocated, the ROK Army withdrew to defend Seoul, yet the capital would soon meet the same fate of the soldiers defending along the 38th parallel.

⁹⁵ J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 197-8.

⁹⁶ Millett, 85.

⁹⁷ Blair, 60.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Millett, 89.

¹⁰⁰ Blair, 60.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 61.

The NKPA's initial success largely owed itself to the experience of the veteran communists that made up three of the seven assault divisions.¹⁰² In response to their defeat, Major General Chae Byong Duk, the ROK Army Chief of Staff, ordered the majority of his 2nd, 3rd, 8th, and Capital Divisions to reinforce the besieged 1st and 7th Divisions, neutralizing any chance the ROK Army had of effectively defending Seoul or organizing a counteroffensive.¹⁰³ This decision allowed the NKPA to enter Seoul with only a handful of last-stand defensive positions that managed to slow the North's march to the Hahn River.¹⁰⁴ Just three days after its first soldier crossed the 38th Parallel, the NKPA seized Seoul.¹⁰⁵ With steady pressure still on the ROK Army, the NKPA successfully seized Seoul on June 30th, pausing to consolidate gains and secure the capital.

When deployment preparations and movement towards the 38th parallel was already in full effect, the NKPA Staff Headquarters issued Reconnaissance Order No. 1 to the attacking divisions on June 18, outlining the ROK Army defensive posture and detailed reconnaissance requirements to enable a successful invasion.¹⁰⁶ For example, the NKPA 4th Division's tasks included locating the ROK main defensive positions, emplaced obstacles, and passage lines. Once the attack began, the 4th Division also needed to seize avenues of approach for the NKPA from Uijongbu to Seoul.¹⁰⁷ Like the operation orders to the assault divisions, American forces captured the handwritten order to the 4th Division in the vicinity of Taejon on July 16th, dated June

¹⁰² Millett, 87.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 94.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 105.

¹⁰⁵ Wada Haruki, *The Korean War*, trans. Frank Baldwin (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 80.

¹⁰⁶ Korean Institute of Military History, 126. American forces discovered the original copy of the reconnaissance order during the war in Seoul on October 4, 1950, handwritten in Russian. The Korean Institute of Military History provided summaries of this translation and of other operations orders.

¹⁰⁷ Korea Institute of Military History, 126.

22nd.¹⁰⁸ In a summary of the operations order for the main attack, 4th Division's orders included penetrating the ROK defensive belt, occupying two pieces of key terrain (Majiri village and Hill 535), and advancing towards Seoul.¹⁰⁹ The initial invasion orders were detailed yet concise, however, the NKPA headquarters failed to provide guidance to subordinate commanders beyond the seizure of Seoul.

The NKPA anticipated that war would last approximately four weeks, but initial victory occurred during the first few days of battle. During an interview, Yoo Sung Chul, a retired North Korean general, admitted that "The Korean War was planned to last only a few days, so we did not plan anything [beyond the invasion] in case things might go wrong."¹¹⁰ This failure to plan for an extended conflict hinged on two faulty assumptions. First, the DPRK assumed that South Korean President Syngman Rhee would surrender immediately. Second, it assumed that the United States would not intervene militarily. The failure of the NKPA to recognize the resiliency of the South Korean government and the American commitment to the containment of communism forced a prolonged war for which the NKPA was not prepared. However, the initial entry of US ground forces on the peninsula also suffered from issues stemming from an ill-conceived command and control structure.

American Reinforcement

Direct military support from the United States was immediate, but it trickled into theater. The tale of the 24th ID's TF Smith has morphed into a historical parable for military leaders and planners about the importance of not rushing to failure. However, using TF Smith as a singular example of US failure in initial phase of the Korean War is overly reductive. Many authors point

¹⁰⁸ Korea Institute of Military History, 127.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹¹⁰ Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, 155.

to an overestimation of the ROK Army and an underestimation of the NKPA, a training deficit, and a lack of logistical support for the failure of the initial US ground effort.¹¹¹

The US military overinflated its regard for ROK Army capability in the years leading up to the NKPA invasion. The commander of the KMAG, Brigadier General William L. Roberts, had a large role in overestimating of the ROK Army's effectiveness. When politicians came to visit the peninsula and observe the ROK Army, Roberts personally hand-selected the ROK soldiers who would interact with the foreign visitors and participate in field demonstrations.¹¹² When the deputy administrator of the Economic Cooperation Administration, William C. Foster, returned from one of the trips to Korea in 1949, he stated, "[The ROK Army's] rigorous training program has built up a well-disciplined force of 100,000 soldiers, one that is prepared to meet any challenge by North Korean forces."¹¹³ MacArthur even believed "the South Korean forces ('The best Army in Asia') could wipe out the North Koreans with no difficulty."¹¹⁴ Yet, an internal report by the KMAG shed light on the ROK Army's true capabilities. Only sixteen of the sixty-seven ROK battalions had completed battalion training exercises.¹¹⁵ Of this group, the KMAG assessed that only twelve battalions were completely trained and rated them as only 50 percent combat effective.¹¹⁶ In addition to this training deficit, the ROK Army equipment was in disarray. Over 35 percent of ROK Army vehicles were non-operational due to maintenance neglect and an absence of spare parts.¹¹⁷ The South Korean soldiers agreed with the KMAG assessment. South

¹¹¹ I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952), 62; Hanson, 109; James A. Huston, *Guns, Butter, Powder and Rice: US Army Logistics in the Korean War* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1989), 61.

¹¹² US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Volume VII (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 19.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹⁴ Stone, 62.

¹¹⁵ Robert K. Sawyer and Walter G. Hermes, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2005), 78.

¹¹⁶ Millet, 29.

¹¹⁷ Appleman, 17.

Korean officers argued that the NKPA was “not only in greater strength and armed with superior weapons, but were equally good fighters.”¹¹⁸ Despite the sanguine claims of American politicians and generals, the ROK Army was dreadfully ill-prepared for war. Notwithstanding its previous experience in World War II and technologically superior equipment, the US Army was in an equally disadvantageous state due to a lack of training.

As stated earlier, the US Army was in a recruiting conundrum, forced to deal with much smaller numbers of recruits joining the military after World War II; the Eighth Army based in Japan proved no exception. The Eighth Army also lacked adequate training and equipment.¹¹⁹ Of the twelve regimental commanders in Eighth Army, only two held combat commands during World War II.¹²⁰ The divisions in Eighth Army only fielded two battalions in each infantry regiment rather than the typical three, averaging 70 percent of full strength; the typical division at war is authorized at 19,000 soldiers, but the divisions at the time only boasted 12,000 to 13,000 soldiers.¹²¹ With limited personnel, the deploying units would be stressed under normal conditions, let alone immediate deployment to a combat zone. As a consequence, support personnel were the first to assume the role of infantrymen because FEC forecasted the need for infantrymen vice truck drivers in theater.¹²² As a result, untrained South Korean contracted workers provided logistic support, diminishing the speed and quality of support to the combat units.¹²³ The use of local contractors exacerbated the already overwhelmed logistics system,

¹¹⁸ US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Volume VII, 5.

¹¹⁹ Blair, 78.

¹²⁰ Millet, 79.

¹²¹ US Army, Eighth Army Korea, “Logistics Study of the Korean Campaigns, 1950-1953, Headquarters US Army Forces Far East and Eighth US Army, G-4 Special Projects Division, 31 December 1954” (Operations Research Office, San Francisco, CA, 1955), 17, accessed 12 December 2018, <http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/u/?p4013coll11,1083>.

¹²² Millet, 75.

¹²³ US Army, Eighth Army Korea, “Logistics Study of the Korean Campaigns, 1950-1953, Headquarters US Army Forces Far East and Eighth US Army, G-4 Special Projects Division, 31 December 1954,” 14.

leading to a trickle of resupply as the rapid deployment of combat forces to the peninsula denied the establishment of a robust logistics network.

The Eighth Army Headquarters was responsible for many support tasks normally held at the theater army level. With the FEC stationary in Japan, Eighth Army's rear headquarters maintained both the logistics support and area administration duties for the first few months of the war.¹²⁴ After the first month of US ground forces entering the conflict, the Eighth Army's rear support echelon assumed duties as the Japan Logistical Command, which was a theater communications zone organization responsibility.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the Eighth Army provided logistics support to all UN forces under FEC, with the exception of Air Force and Marine Corps platform specific needs.¹²⁶ This misalignment of logistics support did not enable a rapid deployment of ground forces into theater as forces piecemealed onto the peninsula, thrusting American forces into an immediate position of disadvantage.

First Deployment and Eighth Army Plan

Once the NKPA crossed the 38th parallel, the Army only had two days to react prior to the UN Security Council decided to send military assistance, with Seoul falling just one day after on June 28th.¹²⁷ The decision to commit ground forces occurred on June 30th, after which MacArthur deployed 24th ID, the closest US ground force to the Korean peninsula, from the Eighth Army in Kyushu, Japan by both air and sea.¹²⁸ The 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, sent the first ground forces organized as the ill-fated TF Smith, which landed at Pusan on the morning of July 1. 24th ID's main effort began arriving on July 2nd with its trail elements

¹²⁴ Huston, 157.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 61.

¹²⁷ Varhola, 2.

¹²⁸ US Army, Eighth Army Korea, "Logistics Study of the Korean Campaigns, 1950-1953, Headquarters US Army Forces Far East and Eighth US Army, G-4 Special Projects Division, 31 December 1954," 21.

reaching Korea on July 4th.¹²⁹ The 24th ID then became the United States Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK), under the command of Dean. They were the first US ground force to meet the NKPA on the field of battle along the ROK Army's defensive positions on the Han River-Suwon Line.¹³⁰ The ROK Army Chief of Staff, General Chong Il-Kwon, and Dean agreed that the superior American firepower would be best suited to defend the Seoul-Pusan defensive line and the areas to the west where the NKPA was mounting its heaviest attacks.¹³¹ Although US ground forces were physically on the Korean peninsula, those forces needed significant support due to the absence of an established higher headquarters.

The General Headquarters Far East Command (GHQFEC) conceived the deployment of US ground forces as Operation Bluehearts. According to the operation's plan, 24th ID would land at Pusan on July 2nd and move directly to Suwon, blocking the NKPA advance and supporting the ROK Army in the west. The 25th ID was to immediately follow 24th ID and establish a blocking defensive position south of the ROK Army in the center of the peninsula. The 1st Cavalry Division would then execute an amphibious landing near Incheon, enabling 24th ID to attack north and create a pincer movement against the NKPA.¹³² However, synchronizing and executing this plan proved difficult. On July 11th, MacArthur became commander of all UN forces participating in operations in Korea, and it was not until July 24th that the headquarters for the UN Command became operational in Tokyo, Japan.¹³³ Without an established higher headquarters to synchronize UN and US ground forces in Korea, Dean had to rely on his ability to visualize the battlefield to command and control his formation.

¹²⁹ US Army, Eighth Army Korea, "Logistics Study of the Korean Campaigns, 1950-1953, Headquarters US Army Forces Far East and Eighth US Army, G-4 Special Projects Division, 31 December 1954," 21.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹³¹ Lee Suk Bok, *The Impact of US Forces in Korea* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1987), 44.

¹³² Appleman, 488-489.

¹³³ Bok, 44.

General Dean and 24th Infantry Division

At six-foot and 210-pounds, Dean was known as a warrior and capable leader.¹³⁴ Despite being severely burned while rescuing a flamethrower operator during a training exercise in late 1943, Dean ignored doctors' advice to have his left leg amputated and rejoined the 44th ID as the assistant commander during the Division's arrival at Cherbourg in September 1944; he would later assume command after Major General Robert Spragins returned stateside due to injuries.¹³⁵ Dean was willing to put himself in danger to rally his soldiers, and later received the Distinguished Service Cross for leading a platoon through a German artillery barrage.¹³⁶ Selected to participate in the planned, but not executed, invasion of mainland Japan after victory against Germany, 44th ID would remain in Europe until its deactivation on November 30, 1945.¹³⁷

Following his service in Europe, Dean held many command and staff positions while serving in Korea. Initially selected as the Deputy Eighth Army commander in USAMGIK, Dean also served as the commander of 7th Infantry Division, on the Eighth Army Staff, and as the senior American advisor to the police and constabulary.¹³⁸ He did not hold Koreans in high regard, despite learning a few basic Hangul phrases and developing relationships with Rhee and other government and military officials.¹³⁹ After serving as Lieutenant General Walker's chief of staff, Dean lobbied for and gained command of 24th ID in October 1949, following an unforeseen vacancy due to a personnel transfer.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ William Frishe Dean and William L. Worden, *General Dean's Story* (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 6.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³⁶ Blair, 90.

¹³⁷ Dean and Worden, 10.

¹³⁸ Blair, 90.

¹³⁹ Dean and Worden, 10-11.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

When comparing Eighth Army's four divisions, 24th ID was arguably the least prepared. Dean himself optimistically assessed the Division at a 65 percent readiness rate, almost 10 percent below the assessment of the Army's other divisions.¹⁴¹ To enhance 24th ID's readiness for combat, GHQFEC immediately moved 2,108 non-commissioned officers from the other divisions to fill the vacant ranks of 24th ID, leaving some divisions with only first sergeants and master sergeants in artillery battalions and infantry companies.¹⁴² An augment of an additional 2,615 soldiers from other organizations outside Eighth Army raised the total number of 24th ID soldiers to 15,965.¹⁴³ Furthermore, 24th ID's equipment was in shambles. One regiment's plans officer, John J. Dunn, judged that the regiment's small arms were in a state of "national disgrace" and that between one-quarter and one-half were unserviceable.¹⁴⁴ The regiments were also not prepared to maneuver as cohesive units. A regimental executive officer, Charles F. Mudgett, recalled the state of his unit prior to deployment as "rather sad, almost criminal, that such understrength, ill-equipped and poorly-trained units were committed [to Korea]."¹⁴⁵ However, the decision to assign 24th ID as the first US ground force to enter combat occurred largely due to Dean's personality and experience.

On the eve of deployment, Dean remained optimistic. He judged that the excursion into Korea would be "short and easy" as the NKPA would immediately retreat upon encountering US ground forces.¹⁴⁶ However, his experience in Europe led him to request extra support, including three officers he trusted from Eighth Army.¹⁴⁷ After a few days battling poor weather conditions,

¹⁴¹ Dean and Worden, 14.

¹⁴² Appleman, 59.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 195-196.

¹⁴⁴ Blair, 92.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 93.

¹⁴⁶ Dean and Worden, 14.

¹⁴⁷ Blair, 93.

Dean arrived at Taejon on July 3rd after the arrival of TF Smith's lead units.¹⁴⁸ Dean met with Major General John Church, commander of the Advanced Command and Liaison Group (ADCOM), at Taejon, after ADCOM had been routed from Suwon by the NKPA advance.¹⁴⁹ Heeding advice from Church, Dean developed his concept for the operation. He sought to meet the NKPA as far north as possible near the village of Pyongtaek, as the terrain would force the advancing NKPA into a narrow corridor between the Yellow Sea and the mountains to the east.¹⁵⁰ Dean's plan called for TF Smith north of Pyongtaek to identify the approaching NKPA main body while the 34th Infantry Regiment established the main defense along a stream north of Pyongtaek while occupying the village of Ansong, eleven miles east of Pyongtaek, to guard 24th ID's flank.¹⁵¹ Dean designed his plan to create time and maneuver space for the remainder of 24th ID and before the arrival of 25th ID in Korea. Dean's assumption that 24th ID's mission would be "short and easy" ignored one of the most important lessons from both World Wars: even the most well-equipped and well-trained American divisions were reluctant to fight until after they had experienced real combat.¹⁵²

24th Infantry Division Enters the Crucible of Combat

The positioning of 24th ID almost completely disregarded the NKPA's swift success in the north. Staying true to Soviet models, the NKPA continued to seek an initial breakthrough of ROK Army defensive lines and execute a deep exploitation, followed by a hasty consolidation and reorganization. While on the offensive, the NKPA organized its ten divisions under two corps headquarters. Assigned as the main effort, NKPA's 1st Corps controlled the 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 6th

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 96.

¹⁴⁹ Appleman, 61.

¹⁵⁰ Dean and Worden, 19-20.

¹⁵¹ Blair, 97.

¹⁵² Appleman, 78-79.

Infantry Divisions, all supported by the 105th Armor Brigade.¹⁵³ Expecting little resistance after the fall of Seoul, the NKPA would attack south along two axes, with 1st Corps advancing along the central and western axes towards the Mokp'o-Yosu region and 2nd Corps along the eastern axis and coastline towards Masan and Pusan.¹⁵⁴ Due to faulty assumptions about supportive popular uprisings, the capability of ROK Army resistance, and the speed of US reinforcements, the NKPA did not plan for synchronization between the corps.¹⁵⁵ Despite the lack of synchronization, the 2nd Corps was able to hand 24th ID an overwhelming defeat near Pyongtaek due to the US defense's weak arrangement.

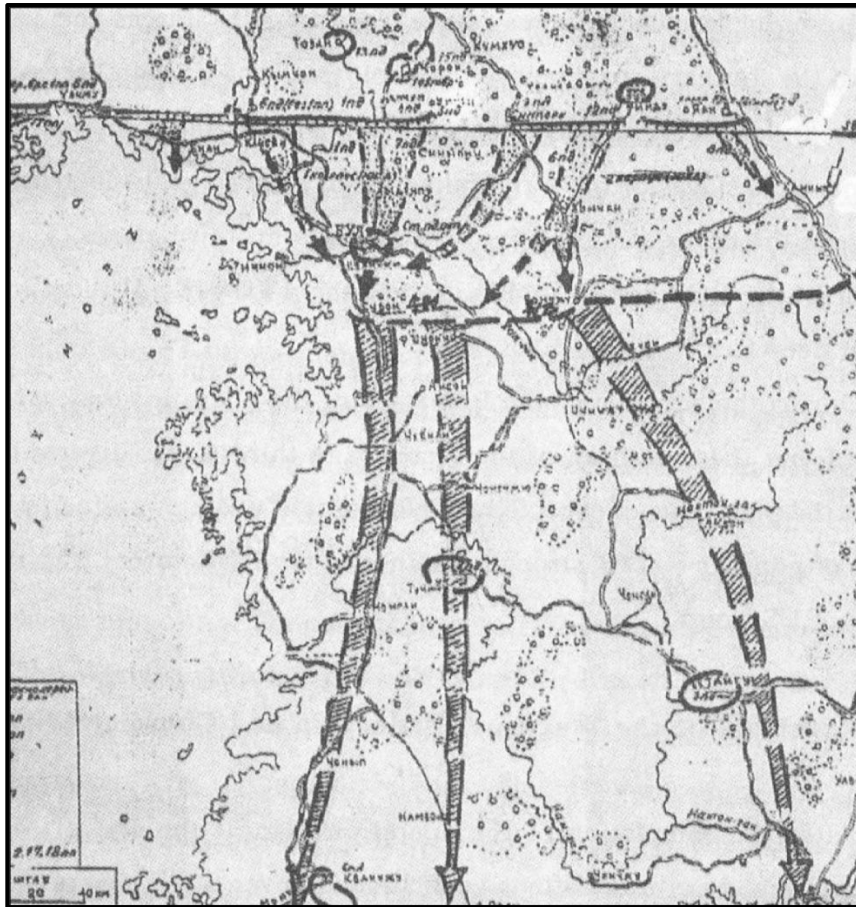


Figure 4. NKPA Phase I and Phase II Plan. Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War, Volume 1* (Seoul: Korea Institute of Military History, 1997), 119.

¹⁵³ Korea Institute of Military History, 118.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

The 24th ID's potential combat power was not synchronized or mutually supportive. None of the battalions were within supportive positions of one another along the defensive lines. As the most forward element, TF Smith was initially positioned north of Osan, located twenty kilometers from 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment (1-34 IN) north of Pyongtaek. The 1-34 IN itself was another fifteen kilometers from its closest adjacent unit, 3rd Battalion (3-34 IN), in Ansong. The 21st Infantry Regiment (21 RGMT), Dean's most capable unit, occupied two separate areas with over forty kilometers separating its subordinate units.¹⁵⁶ When the 1-34 IN Commander, Colonel Harold "Red" Ayres, analyzed the current situation facing his formation, he was horrified by the positioning of 24th ID in the defense. Ayres reflected: "Dean and [Brigadier General George Barth, the Artillery Division Commander] acted as if they were deploying corps against numerically inferior forces instead of three weak, poorly-armed battalions against divisions of well-armed and well-trained and well-supported NKPA forces."¹⁵⁷ As Colonel Ayres noted, the positioning of US ground forces would prove grossly insufficient against an already battle-tested NKPA. Over the following week, 24th ID would fight its understrength battalions against full NKPA regiments and divisions.

On July 5th, when the lead elements of TF Smith came into contact and were overrun by the NKPA thirty kilometers south of Seoul, Dean's units were overextended across 350 kilometers from Osan to Pusan. Each US battalion was fighting at least one full NKPA infantry division without a single adjacent division unit within supportive distance.¹⁵⁸ The experience of the 34th Infantry Regiment (34 RGMT) and 1-34 IN from July 6th to July 7th exemplified the actions of 24th ID during the opening days of the US ground force involvement in combat. The 34 RGMT had less than forty-eight hours between its deployment from Japan when it first

¹⁵⁶ Appleman, 69-76.

¹⁵⁷ Blair, 101.

¹⁵⁸ Appleman, 69-76.

engaged NKPA forces.¹⁵⁹ Despite a protest from the 34 RGMT commander, Colonel Jay Loveless, Dean personally directed the positioning of 34 RGMT's battalions.¹⁶⁰ Dean ordered 1-34 IN to emplace three kilometers north of Pyongtaek and 3-34 IN to block the NKPA advance at Ansong.¹⁶¹ Neither battalion was prepared to halt, much less delay, the NKPA attack as both units lacked artillery support, tanks, and antitank weapons.¹⁶² 24th ID's Artillery Division Commander was with TF Smith when it was overrun by NKPA tanks and, without command authority, changed 34 RGMT's mission. Barth ordered 34 RGMT to hold its defensive positions only until the NKPA threatened the unit with envelopment and then delay the NKPA in successive rearward bounds to buy additional reaction time for the rest of 24th ID.¹⁶³ Upon learning from the TF Smith survivors that none of the task force's vehicles would be returning south, 1-34 IN demolished a bridge over a small stream to impede the looming NKPA advance.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 77.

¹⁶⁰ Blair, 99.

¹⁶¹ Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2004), 63.

¹⁶² Ibid., 63.

¹⁶³ Alexander, 64.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

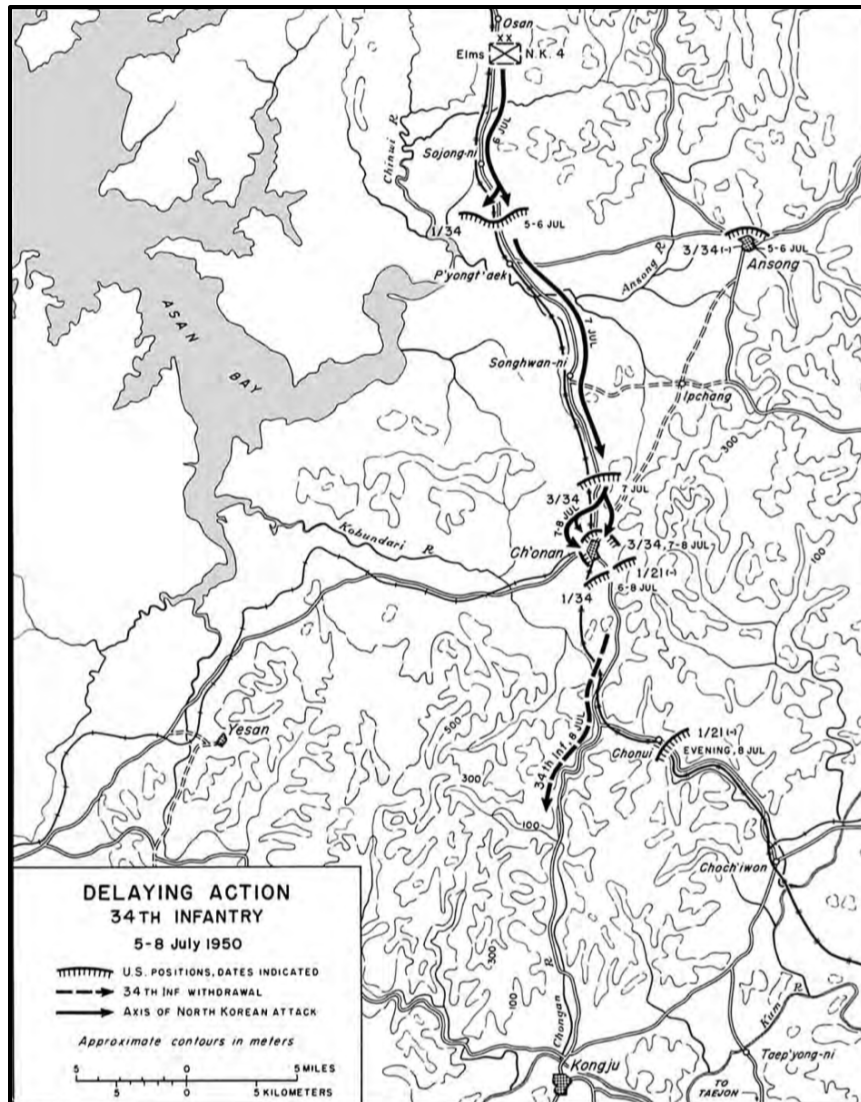


Figure 5. 34th Infantry Regiment Delaying Action. Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu: June-November 1950* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1961), 78.

At day break, the soldiers of 1-34 IN observed two columns of infantry moving south along the road and a tank crew inspecting the newly blown bridge. Due to TF Smith's lack of armor support, 1-34 IN quickly identified this as the NKPA's lead element.¹⁶⁵ Once the Americans opened fire, the NKPA infantry dispersed across the rice paddies and moved south towards the US defensive positions.¹⁶⁶ Supported by thirteen tanks moving along the road from

¹⁶⁵ Alexander, 64.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

the north, the North Korean infantry began to envelop 1-34 IN's Alpha Company and pressured Bravo Company positions 700 meters east of the road.¹⁶⁷ After observing the NKPA attack for a few minutes, the 1-34 IN battalion commander ordered the withdrawal of his companies south towards Pyongyang.¹⁶⁸ In a few hours, the 34 RGMT's defense collapsed due to the NKPA's rapid advance while inflicting minimal damage on the attacking enemy force, ultimately losing over a quarter of its men.¹⁶⁹ Like the other 24th ID battalions, 1-34 IN consolidated in Pyongyang and began movement south towards Chonan to set another defensive position. As historian Clay Blair notes, "At most, [24th ID] delayed the NKPA a total of three, possibly four days . . . these delays were not in any way decisive . . . and might well have been matched at less cost by a consolidated and cohesive defense behind the Kum River."¹⁷⁰ Had Dean ensured his plan to block the NKPA advance was supported by 24th ID's command and control systems and empowered his subordinate commanders to act with disciplined initiative, it is likely the delay of the NKPA advance may have been more effective, potentially reducing American casualties.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 65.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 66.

¹⁷⁰ Blair, 115.

Implications for Mission Command

Mission Command and Command and Control

Before analyzing the use of mission command and command and control systems by both 24th ID and the NKPA, understanding the definition of both terms is paramount. Until 1905, the Army had not published combined arms doctrine, instead relying on branch specific manuals. In February 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt approved the publication of the Army's *Field Service Regulations* (FSR), which became the foundation of Army doctrine in the 20th century.¹⁷¹ In Article II of the FSR, titled *Orders*, the manual outlined what eventually evolved into the contemporary tenets of mission command: "An order should not trespass on the province of a subordinate. It should contain everything which is beyond the independent authority of the subordinate, but nothing more. . . . It should lay upon *the object to be attained*, and leave open the means to be employed."¹⁷² This definition remained largely unchanged for over 50 years, appearing in Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* in 1949 as "An order should not trespass upon the province of a subordinate. It should contain everything that the subordinate must know to carry out his mission and to further the mission of the next higher unit. It tells the subordinate what to do but not how to do it."¹⁷³ The term "command and control" remained largely absent from Army doctrine until its multiple inclusions in the 1968 FM update in a section titled "command, control, and communications."¹⁷⁴ Command and control continued in doctrine and appeared in all levels of Army doctrine by 2001.¹⁷⁵ In 2003, Army FM 6-0, originally titled

¹⁷¹ Walter Kretchik, *US Army Doctrine: From the American Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2011), 110.

¹⁷² Emphasis in original. US War Department, *Field Service Regulation* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1905), 29-30.

¹⁷³ US War Department, *Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Field Service Regulations—Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1949), 136.

¹⁷⁴ Clinton J. Ancker III, "The Evolution of Mission Command in U.S. Army Doctrine, 1905 to the Present," *Military Review* 92, no. 2 (March-April 2013): 44.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

Command and Control, changed to *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* at the direction of the Combined Arms Center commander, Lieutenant General James C. Riley, likely an attempt to invigorate commanders with the Prussian concept of *Auftragstaktik* and reinforce the intellectual aspects of a commander's role into the warfighting function.¹⁷⁶ In a directive from the Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) in 2009, the US Army redesignated the warfighting function "command and control" to "mission command."¹⁷⁷ The justification for the shift centered on supporting the concept of Full Spectrum Operations, as shown in figure 6.

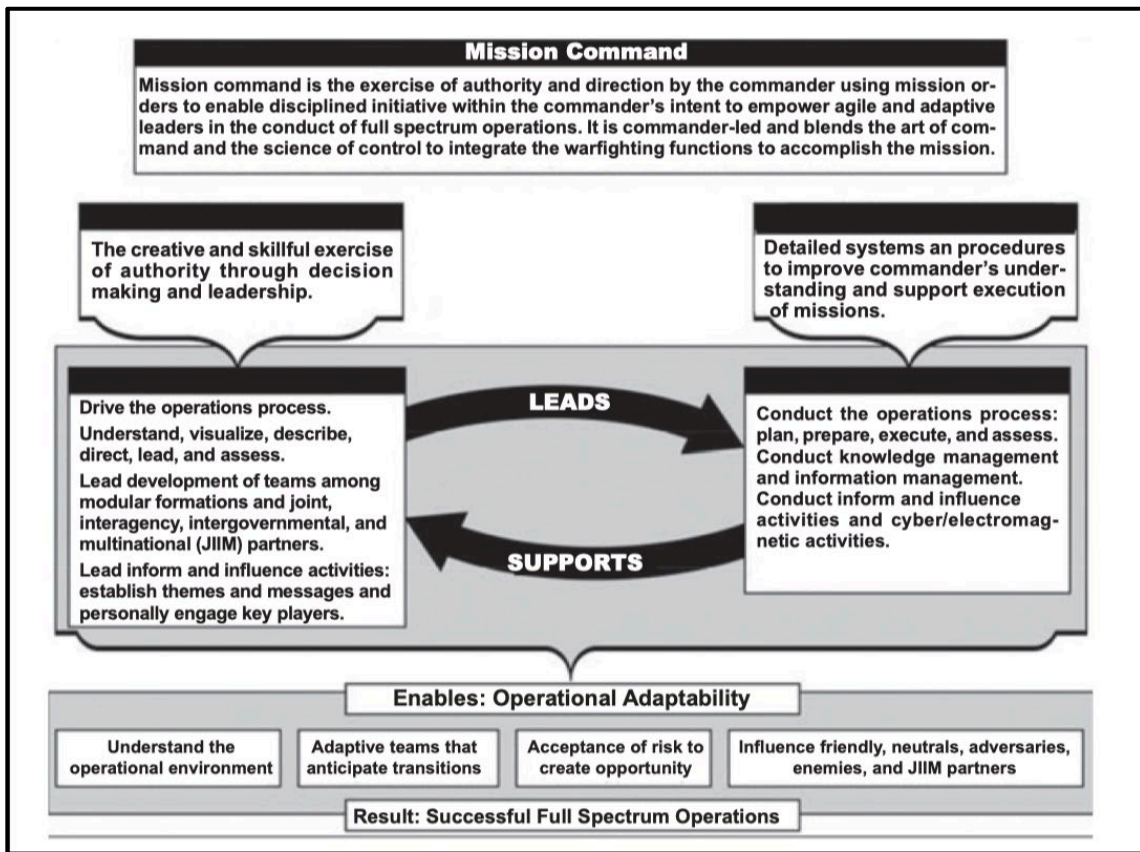


Figure 6. Purpose of Mission Command. Clinton J. Ancker III, "The Evolution of Mission Command in U.S. Army Doctrine, 1905 to the Present," *Military Review* 92, no. 2 (March-April 2013): 51.

¹⁷⁶ US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 6-0, Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2003), 1-17.

¹⁷⁷ Ancker, 42.

Today, the Army and its leaders still struggle with the ambiguity between mission command as both a philosophy and a warfighting function. The recently published FM 3-0, *Operations*, defines mission command as “the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower subordinates in the conduct of unified land operations.”¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, FM 3-0 states that by using mission command, “commanders integrate and synchronize operations.”¹⁷⁹ Mission command serves as the Army’s command philosophy by emphasizing that command constitutes as absolutely a human endeavor. As a warfighting function, mission command consists of the “related tasks and systems that develop and integrate those activities enabling a commander to balance the art of command and the science of control in order to integrate the other warfighting functions.”¹⁸⁰ The current draft of the updated ADP 6-0 rescinds the term “mission command system,” replacing it with “command and control system” in an effort to add clarity to modern Army doctrine.¹⁸¹ At all echelons of command, leaders and their staffs use command and control systems to buttress the effectiveness of mission command as both a philosophy and warfighting function.

Command and control systems encompass “the arrangement of personnel, processes and procedures, networks, and command posts that enable commanders to conduct operations.”¹⁸² Command and control systems empower a commander to exercise control over all forces in his or her area of operations.¹⁸³ Mission command systems allow a commander to direct subordinates

¹⁷⁸ US Army, *FM 3-0*, 1-19.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 6-0, Commander and Staff Organization and Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), vii.

¹⁸¹ US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, Final Draft–Not for Implementation (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), xi.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 1-23.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1-5.

and communicate information through orders, through feedback from those subordinates, revise their visualization, and modify the plan.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, the command and control system supports commanders' decision making to enable the units conducting operations to act towards a common purpose.¹⁸⁵ If commanders do not properly develop, train, or implement these systems, operations cannot be effectively synchronized, increasing the risk of mission failure and the loss of subordinate units in combat, just as 24th ID experienced in the Korean War.

Belligerents' Use of Mission Command

As the NKPA's organizational design followed Soviet models, its doctrine and use of mission command was inherently similar, if not simply a translation from Russian to Hangul. During the invasion across the 38th parallel through the UN counteroffensive in late 1950, the NKPA adopted stereotypical tactical maneuvers that followed a set pattern during execution.¹⁸⁶ By relying on scripted battle drills, the NKPA ensured commanders could anticipate the actions of subordinate units on the battlefield. It was not until December 1950 that the NKPA identified the Soviet armor and mechanized infantry doctrine as ill-suited for the light infantry-centric organization in combat.¹⁸⁷ Unlike the relatively new NKPA, the 1950 US Army possessed recent combat experience in World War II to set an example of how to execute mission command in combat, yet 24th ID could not effectively implement mission command due to a high turnover of subordinate commanders.

The first major failure in American mission command during the onset of the Korean War was an underappreciation for the capability of the enemy. Dean assumed the operation would be quick and simple, and he failed to account for the rapid success that the NKPA had

¹⁸⁴ US Army, *ADP 6-0*, 1-5.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-23.

¹⁸⁶ GHQ FEC, 4.

¹⁸⁷ Minnich, 65.

against the ROK Army defense.¹⁸⁸ The constant turnover of subordinate commanders in 24th ID exacerbated this faulty assumption. The state of commands in 34 RGMT provides critical insight for its poor performance. The two weeks between initial deployment to the theater saw the 34 RGMT commander relieved, the subsequent killed, a battalion commander serving as regimental commander, and finally a permanent replacement.¹⁸⁹ The 34 RGMT battalion commanders experienced similarly poor fates, as multiple commanders were either killed, captured, or relieved of command.¹⁹⁰ The relative stability of the NKPA command structure allowed the NKPA to effectively use a less technologically advanced command and control system, whereas the American forces did not capitalize on the technological superiority of their command and control systems due to force dispersion and the micromanagement of commanders.

Belligerents' Use of Command and Control Systems

As earlier stated, the NKPA relied on familiar battle drills during its attack in July 1950, resulting from the limited capability of its command and control system. The NKPA's signal equipment was exponentially less capable than American units at echelon.¹⁹¹ Initial DPRK supply shortages further aggravated this disparity, especially in wireless radio communications capability, as well as combat losses of equipment.¹⁹² However, the NKPA concentrated its signal capability at decisive points with the main effort, ensuring duplicate equipment and parallel interconnected axes of communication from the regimental through corps levels.¹⁹³ These axes of communication intersected at key control points from forward command posts equipped with a telegraph station, a telephone center, a radio center, and a concentration point for the limited

¹⁸⁸ Dean and Worden, 14.

¹⁸⁹ Appleman, chap. VII-XI.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ GHQ FEC, 3.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 4.

reserve equipment.¹⁹⁴ Although the NKPA possessed limited physical equipment, the design of the command and control system network provided superior, subordinate, and adjacent commanders the ability to rapidly communicate and share information. When juxtaposed with the NKPA command and control system, the American system, although technologically advanced, remained in a state of disarray and was never fully established during first contact with hostile forces.

When 24th ID's first three battalions established their initial defense, there were gaps over of seventeen kilometers between units.¹⁹⁵ This distance was far beyond the tactical radio capability of the time, leaving the battalions without adjacent unit communications. The battalions of the 34 RGMT had no internal communications and could not reach the regimental command post at Songhwan from Pyongyang or from Ansong.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, the battalions had no plan for how they were to displace to later consolidate should Dean's plan fail.¹⁹⁷ Conflicting orders widened the gaps created by the United States' ineffective use of command and control systems. Barth ordered the 21 RGMT to set defensive positions south of Chonan when Dean's plan called for the regiment to defend to the north.¹⁹⁸ Acting without command authority or tactical responsibility over the regiment, Barth's orders divided 21 RGMT between Osan and Chonan, with 1-34 IN stuck between.¹⁹⁹ The speed with which the American ground forces deployed to the front denied the time required to establish telephone lines between the regimental headquarters, as soldiers were still digging their initial foxholes when NKPA tanks came into view.²⁰⁰ 24th ID's underappreciation of NKPA capabilities, combined with the rapid leader

¹⁹⁴ GHQ FEC, 5.

¹⁹⁵ Blair, 97.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 100.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 97.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 100.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Alexander, 64.

turnover and absent communications network, enabled the NKPA to rapidly and decisively defeat the first American defensive effort during the Korean War, a key historical lesson for future LSCO commanders.

1950s Capabilities and Today

The Army of today faces similar challenges to the Korean War era Army. While the principles of mission command have been updated to account for lessons learned during previous conflicts, the increased complexity of today's command and control systems is beyond measure. Command and control systems have evolved from radio and telephone communications used during the Korean War to intricate networks of digital communications integrated at all echelons that rely on access to all domains. Capabilities available in today's Army are beyond the imaginations of past commanders and, as such, changes to Army doctrine must not be ignored as they were in the Korean War.

As the Army shifts its focus towards LSCO, the Army must remember that this challenge is not a new. FM 100-5 stressed the interconnectivity of all domains stating, "Modern warfare demands close coordination of the tactics and techniques and careful evaluation of the capabilities and limitations of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. A salient function of command is the development, in the forces employed on a given task, of the teamwork essential to success."²⁰¹ Today, the integration of emerging multi-domain concepts, such as space, cyber, electronic, and information warfare, have been integrated into the Army's new FM 3-0 to continue fostering the integration of capabilities across multiple domains. However, simply because it has been written in doctrine does not mean it will occur in application. FM 100-5 emphasized the importance of combined arms operations.²⁰² Yet a year after FM 100-5 was updated, 24th ID entered theater and set their defensive positions and its infantry battalions lacked armor or artillery support. The

²⁰¹ US War Department, *FM 100-5* (1949), 21.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 92.

necessity for rapid deployment impacted this shortcoming, but a formation cannot succeed against an enemy with an exponential capability overmatch. To overcome the possibility of modern doctrine not being followed on the battlefield, the Army must enable mission command and the use of command and control systems at all echelons.

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