

# Blueprinting Success: The Tropic Lightning in Korea, June to October 1950

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

Blueprinting Success: The Tropic Lightning in Korea, June to October 1950, by MAJ Kyle D. McElveen, US Army, 51 pages.

Adversarial near-peer equity on the battlefield has altered the future of ground-based combat. US Army doctrine has recently updated to address this emergent threat. In doing so, the primary revision is to *Field Manual 3-0, Operations*. This shift in echelon focus moves away from tactical, brigade combat team-centric counter-insurgency towards operational, division-led large-scale combat. Simply put, the US Army is going back to what it does best, fighting and winning the nation's conflicts on land. To gain a clear understanding of how to win, this paper uses historical analysis to judge the past success of a US Army division in large-scale combat. What resonates throughout research for this study is a correlation between maneuver and victory.

The US Army's 25th Infantry Division and their success in Korea in 1950 is a case study worthy of examination in the context of how a division maneuvers to fight and win on offense and defense. This study demonstrates tempo, culmination, operational reach, and risk mitigation stand out as the amalgam necessary to achieve maneuver superiority and deny it to an enemy force. Further, it proves that 25th Infantry Division's masterful combination of these four elements of operational art allowed the division to gain and maintain the initiative through this decisive maneuver while denying it to the North Korean Peoples' Army.

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## Acronyms

ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
CINCFE	Commander-in-Chief Far East
DOD	US Department of Defense
DPRK	Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea
FM	Field Manual
FSR	Field Service Regulation
GHQ UNC	General Headquarters, United Nations Command
ID	Infantry Division (US Army)
JP	Joint Publication
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group (US Army)
LSCO	Large-Scale Combat Operations
NKPA	North Korean Peoples' Army
NSC	National Security Council
PPCNK	Provisional Peoples' Committee for North Korea
RCT	(Infantry) Regimental Combat Team (US Army)
ROK	Republic of Korea
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VE/VJ Days	Victory in Europe / Victory in Japan Days, 1945

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## Introduction

### Background, problem statement, purpose, and significance

This study encompasses a historical analysis of first-hand accounts and supplementary literature in regards to a US Army division in large-scale combat operations (LSCO). The author's research emphasizes US campaign participation during the outbreak of the Korean War, with its brief lead-up in June 1950 to October 1950 as the period of investigation. The paper traces the origins of enmity between the opposing Korean factions, cross-examining it against US foreign policy prevalent during the onset of the Cold War with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The monograph frames the implementation of that policy as a prelude to the case study, illustrating how it shaped military strategy executed at the operational level by the US Army in Korea against a Communist regime.

In the case study, this paper addresses how a US Army division employs elements of operational art to successfully transition between the offense and defense in large-scale combat operations. It draws upon comparisons between the 1949 version of *Field Service Regulation (FSR) 100-5, Operations* and the 2018 *Field Manual (FM) 3-0, Operations* update to show the applicability to today's division fight. The paper uses the US 25th Infantry Division (25 ID) in the case study portion to highlight the employment of specific elements of operational art to demonstrate effective campaign phasing.

The intent of this study is to deliver a blueprint for how a US Army division wins in a high intensity fight. To accomplish this, this paper scrutinizes how 25 ID employed tempo, culmination, operational reach, and risk to execute offensive and defensive operations from June to October 1950. This analysis ends comparing 25 ID's actions to the current US Army framework, showing a complementary link to what the division did and what the large-scale combat operations concept envisions.

This study's significance lies in providing additional evidence to validate the employment of a division in regards to the US Army's current operational model. The author's aim is to use 25 ID to convey an archetype to transition and win in offensive and defensive operations. This paper's intent is twofold. First, the reader develops an historical appreciation for 25 ID's actions in the Korean War. Second, the reader gains additional insight into how employment of the US Army's 2018 operational concept is feasible, through 25 ID as the exemplar.

## Hypothesis, limits and de-limits, assumptions, and organization

Transitions in offense and defense require a US Army division to manage the deep, close, and consolidation area via thoughtful application of the elements of operational art. The research paper defines offensive and defensive operations in terms of the 1949 edition of *FSR 100-5, Operations*, the operational manual used by 25 ID in the case study, and compares it to the 2018 *FM 3-0, Operations* update. It traces transitions in offense and defense through 25 ID's actions in the deep, close, and consolidation area fights from their deployment onto the peninsula in July 1950, through the US IX Corp's repositioning of forces to retake Seoul in October 1950.

The author encountered very few limitations in pursuing this research project. Although primary sourcing was restricted to journal entries and reflections from inside 25 ID, they were detailed and complete. Journals for the duration of the division's participation in the war were accessible and the information corroborated with abridged 'yearbook' releases from the division's information office after the war. Furthermore, additional primary sourcing from high-profile commanders, like GEN Matthew Ridgeway, complemented the accounts reflected in 25 ID's journals. Secondary sourcing was helpful in framing political intent, aims, and strategy as well as in providing context to actions happening in concert with 25 ID during the period of examination.

Piecing together the research necessary to complete this paper was not difficult. However, the great challenge the author encountered in conducting research was the sheer

amount of tactical data available. Each Infantry Regimental Combat Team (RCT) had reams of journal entries detailing minute movements, sometimes down to the squad and platoon level. Sifting through this amount of data required months, to capture the key facets, which proved the operational and strategic implications of 25 ID's actions. Because of research time availability and the scope of the project, the author chose to end this project with 25 ID closing in on Seoul. This still allowed the author to portray 25 ID's execution of offensive and defensive tasks. However, it cut short further exploration of the connectivity between the division's execution of *FSR 100-5, Operations* and the US Army's current concept of division-based employment in high-intensity conflict, a topic that bears more consideration and subsequent research.

In addressing this topic, the author began with three assumptions. First, that 25 ID was effective in transitioning between offense and defense because they were able to conserve enough combat power to continue offensive operations north of Seoul. Second, that parallels existed between the doctrine 25 ID used in 1950 and the US Army's 2018 update because the US Army routinely draws upon its previous experiences to reform operational cannon. Third, that in concluding the research on this topic, the author could demonstrate American success in high intensity conflict by demonstrating 25 ID's ability to exercise maneuver-based advantage.

In completing this project, the author used a five-part monograph organization to convey research in pursuit of the hypothesis. The author's aim was to write a qualitative research paper illustrating 25 ID's transitions between offense and defense to argue for the linkage between LSCO and 25 ID achievement in Korea. This begins with a review of the literature and methodology used throughout the paper, to validate source material and demonstrate a common understanding of terminology since the paper switches often between the US Army's 1949 and 2018 operational documents. A road to war follows the literature review and methodology. This section outlines the political and strategic mindsets of both belligerents and communicates 25 ID's operational environment in 1950. Following that, a case study on 25 ID ties in specified elements of operational art with operational transitions. This frames the evidentiary substance of

the research to show correlation between the 2018 LSCO concept and 25 ID's deeds in the latter half of 1950. The monograph then closes with the linkage between management of transitions in the operational level of war. It finds that efficient division operations in high-intensity conflict for today's warfighter correlate with the redesign of the US Army's current operating concept as exemplified by 25 ID's accomplishments in 1950.

## Literature Review and Methodology

### Assessment Criterion

For the purposes of examination, the author uses elements of operational art to demonstrate how 25 ID transitioned successfully between the offense and defense in terms of the US Army's 2018 operational doctrine update on LSCO. To articulate this accurately, the author uses the following definition of operational art: "Operational Art is the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs – supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgement – to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means."<sup>1</sup>

Using this definition of operational art as the metric, the evaluation criteria for this research project are four of its ten elements. Those elements are operational reach, tempo, risk, and culmination. The monograph further subcategorizes each in usage, by type of operation, offensive or defensive.<sup>2</sup> In using this set of evaluation criterion, the author's aim is to discuss the elements most influential on division operations in LSCO, those that control the commander's ability to make decisions and assume risk. The case study details this with an appraisal of 25 ID's actions between June and October 1950, to show how the division anticipated the North Korean

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 1-20. See also: US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), xii.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to types of operations in a comparative manner between US Army doctrine used in 1950 and current US Army doctrine, in regards to the offense and defense. See US Department of the Army, *Field Service Regulation (FSR) 100-5, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1949), 80, 120. See also: US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (2017), 6-1, 7-1.

Peoples' Army's (NKPA) actions to mitigate risk, manage efficient provisioning of resources, and extend the division's operational reach.

To shape this correctly for consideration, the author assesses 25 ID against the aforementioned criteria by detailing the linkages between theory and doctrine that contributed to 25 ID's actions in Korea in the latter half of 1950. The intent behind outlining military maneuver theory and applicable doctrine is twofold. First, highlighting the connections to theory and doctrine allow the reader to trace the lineage of US Army maneuver warfare, to grasp a holistic understanding of the undertaking 25 ID embarks on in June of 1950. Second, it allows the reader to draw their own deductions from the connections the author demonstrates, in the case study and conclusion, to US Army offensive and defensive operations at the division level in 1950 and 2019. To accomplish this, the research draws a complementary comparison to the 1949's *FSR 100-5, Operations* and the 2018 version of *FM 3-0, Operations*. This framework makes evident this connection, in this section of the monograph, to explain it.

## Defining and Evaluating the Framework

The intent of this portion of the monograph is to provide a framework to define evaluation criteria and a process to appraise them. The framework used in the evaluation portion of this literature review consists of three standards: theory, concept, and empirical evidence. These standards provide a trio of explanations to the reader to establish depth and validity of the research and the connectivity between the evaluation criteria and the theory and doctrine with which they interact on the Korean peninsula in the latter half of 1950.

First, these standards give a collective explanation of how twentieth century US Army campaign-level history resulted from "paradigm shifts" in "normal science" in land-based warfare

theory, driven by the creation and use of doctrine later championed by 25 ID in late 1950.<sup>3</sup>

Second, the framework synthesizes doctrinal terminology, defining those terms used as part of the evaluation criteria process and creating questions to direct the case-study portion of the monograph. Third, major primary and secondary sourcing produces a rank-ordered value to provide a literary road map of source material reflecting the core of the author's research. This portion also explains how this monograph answers gaps found in research.

This three-part framework approach allows the author to set the stage for an appraisal of 25 ID's actions in Korea in 1950 and their impact on today's doctrine by defining the assessment process and conveying it in manageable, coherent, and synchronized parts. This framework also seeks synthesis by fusing primary and secondary source material, which provides a historical assessment to corroborate the appraisal process. This demonstrates the validity of research for the monograph by laying the aforementioned elements of operational art over a historical timeline of political and strategic motivations, and 25 ID's actions, contributing to the achievement the overall allied military end state. In following this process, the author draws a complementary comparison, during the case study, between 25 ID's operations in late 1950 and the tenants of LSCO, as stated in the 2018 version of *FM 3-0, Operations*.

## Theory, Concept, and Empirical Evaluation behind the 25 ID in Korea

### Theory Disruption and Changes to US Army Operating Doctrine

The theoretical portion explains the history and theory that drove changes to US Army doctrine, shaping ground operations in 1950. In theorizing US Army operating concepts that drove ground operations in Korea, this monograph briefly explores the transition away from the

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<sup>3</sup> In regards to the concepts of the paradigm shift in normal science to what is often coined "new-normal science," the author refers to the theory posited by Thomas S. Kuhn. Further, the author relates it to a marked shift and growth in doctrinal evolution due to the incorporation, and subsequent combination of tenants of French, German, and Soviet military theory. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970), 24, 36, 47, 52-53.

prevalence of the French combat method in US Army doctrine.<sup>4</sup> This transition, occurring between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is an amalgamation of three nations' military theory. Those parts consist largely of the eighteenth-century French combat method, combined with the nineteenth-century German theory of an operational war of movement, and the twentieth-century Soviet deep-operations theory of annihilation.<sup>5</sup> In illustrating this evolution of US land-domain theory, the monograph analyzes concepts that drove 25 ID operational planning. It goes further to highlight the pertinent elements of operational art present during 25 ID's campaign and demonstrates the significance of those elements in today's application of US Army doctrine.

Stemming from the evolution of ground combat experienced in the First World War and campaigns during the Second World War, the US military made seven changes to its ground operations doctrine between 1939 and 1950. The final revision to *FSR 100-5, Operations* went into publication in mid-August 1949, approximately a year before the US entered the Korean conflict. This doctrinal evolution modified among other things the offense, defense, division-centric exercise of command, and echelon force structure. More importantly, it implemented guidance, which shaped an operationally minded force cognizant of the linkages between war at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.<sup>6</sup> This doctrinal change began with the observations the US Army made between both the German and Soviet forces in the almost 100 years that preceded the 1949 version of *FSR 100-5, Operations*.

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<sup>4</sup> Michael A. Bonura, *Under the Shadow of Napoleon: French Influence on the American Way of Warfare from the War of 1812 to the Outbreak of WWII* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 132.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 132, 181. See also: Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 306-307. See also: Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Military Theory* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), xix, 3.

<sup>6</sup> US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 21, 80, 120, 256.

Prior to the emergence of mechanized warfare, the US Army maintained a preoccupation with the French combat method, which found its way into the US Army at the onset of the American Revolution. From 1776 onward, this way of war also matriculated into the writing and revision of US Army regulations and military academy instruction, culminating as the *modus operandi* in the American Civil War.<sup>7</sup> Summarized, this method emphasized massing on decisive points and bringing the brunt of one's forces to bear against the majority of the enemy's force.<sup>8</sup>

When operational stalemates occurred on battlefields the emerging German threat and the precipitation of war on an industrial scale drove the US Army to examine the Franco-Prussian War. US Army doctrine used the German theory of mobile war as a model, resulting in the decentralized execution of a centralized plan, a professional and organized support staff for the commander, and rapid mobilization to achieve envelopment.<sup>9</sup> The US Army formally added these concepts into its instruction in 1902, signaling a definitive split with strict adherence to Jominian theory and the beginning of an American way of war.<sup>10</sup> By introducing these three German tenants to the concept of massing on decisive points with the French combat method, the US Army began the formulation of what *FM 3-0, Operations* now describes as operational art, warfighting functions, and maneuver.<sup>11</sup>

In observing the success the Soviet Army had in Eastern Europe, counterattacking German forces between 1942 and 1945, the US Army also acknowledged the significance of tenants of the deep-operations theory of annihilation. These observations fostered an interest that

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<sup>7</sup> Bonura, *Under the Shadow of Napoleon*, 36-37, 44-47, 51, 56-58, 72, 78, 82, 93, 109, 111, 119, 132.

<sup>8</sup> Antoine-Henri Jomini, *The Art of War*, ed. and trans. by G. H. Mendell and W. P. Craighill (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott & Co., 1862), 'Chapter III. Strategy,' 'The Fundamental Principal of War,' 70-71.

<sup>9</sup> Citino, *The German Way of War*, 306-307. See also: Bonura, *Under the Shadow of Napoleon*, 181.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (2018), 1-19-20, 7-21.



grew out of now maneuvering entire field armies and hundreds of thousands of men and equipment in multiple theaters, simultaneously. This theory in the deep area focused maneuver of a force to achieve annihilation through eccentric or concentric envelopment, allowing Army corps or divisions to act as the baseline tactical force.<sup>12</sup> Further, this Soviet theory, like its German counterpart, maintained an emphasis on levels of war, focused on tactical maneuver driving operational ‘Udar’ to achieve strategic end state.<sup>13</sup>

This fixation on operational maneuver and envelopment in Soviet theory complements both the French idiom on massing at decisive points and the German dialectic of decentralized execution of unified planning. Amalgamating these three theories, the US Army achieved a fused practicum in the 1949 *FSR 100-5, Operations* that would accentuate operational tempo while allowing subordinate units considerable lenience to manage said tempo internally to extend operational reach. Mindful of risk mitigation too, these same units worked together, and sometimes apart, to prevent strategic culmination. Emphasizing these applicable elements of operational art then provides segue to the conceptual standard for evaluation of each.

### Conceptualization of Doctrine in Relation to the Elements of Operational Art

To understand the relation of doctrine to evaluating the stated hypothesis, defining each element of operational art used as a metric is necessary. Evaluation criteria occur against the elements of operational art reintroduced from the theoretical portion. Together, these elements drive the monography to answer a series of five questions, specific to operational-level offense and defense maneuver.<sup>14</sup> These elements are operational reach, culmination, tempo, and risk and shape the core argument for the hypothesis. In managing operational transitions between the deep, close, and consolidation areas, these four elements represent the minimum combination

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<sup>12</sup> Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, xix, 1.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Udar’ refers to the Soviet concept of operational strike maneuver, and the inherent linkage of that operational maneuver to tactical decision-making and strategic end state. See *Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (2018), 6-1, 7-1. See also: US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 80, 120.

necessary to generate maneuver superiority in LSCO. The research, which follows in the road to war and case study, validates this premise by arguing that reach, tempo, and culmination formulate opportunities that give a commander the ability to aptly assume risk to achieve their intent. To understand this decision cycle, the author postulates the meanings of each of the four criterion and their interactions as interdependent variables key to winning in the two types operational-level actions, as a force transitions during combat.

*Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations* defines operational reach as “the ability to achieve success through a well-conceived operational approach,” acting as “a tether” to “balance the natural tension among endurance, momentum, and protection.”<sup>15</sup> This element fuses “intelligence, protection, sustainment, endurance, and relative combat power” to prevent untimely or premature culmination.<sup>16</sup> This element proves especially critical in maintaining the duration of a mission or the capability to shift between offense and defense over a prolonged operational engagement.

Conversely, culmination is the point at which operational reach is exhausted, and the shift to operational defense must occur. *ADRP 3-0, Operations* states, “Culmination represents a crucial shift in relative combat power.”<sup>17</sup> Refined, it is the “point at which a force no longer has the capability to continue its form of operations, offense or defense.”<sup>18</sup> Prevention of culmination before the anticipated transition requires apposite planning and balance of operational tempo.

Tempo becomes a deciding factor in the extension of operational reach and the careful management of culmination because it balances a unit’s battlefield time management against the enemy’s. Defined, tempo is “the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with

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<sup>15</sup> US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 2-8.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *JP 5-0, Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), GL7.

respect to the enemy.”<sup>19</sup> It is responsible for the rate of military action and maintaining initiative. One can add that this relation to the enemy goes further to include accounting for duration, sequencing, and frequency.<sup>20</sup> The arrangement of speed, duration, sequencing, and frequency form opportunity for inherent risk during operational execution and transition.

Risk, and the mitigation thereof, is the awareness and management of “probability and severity of loss linked to hazards...uncertainty, and chance...inherent in all military operations.”<sup>21</sup> Accepting and incurring risk provides for opportunities to expose and exploit enemy vulnerability to gain pivotal or crucial favorable outcomes. Taking risk thereby becomes an inherent and necessary danger, which requires full staff and unit systems synchronization, to allow for apt command decisions in a timely and efficient manner.

### Types of Operations, in Relation to the Elements of Operational Art

In considering these four elements of operational art as evaluation criteria, the reader must also comprehend how they fit within the context of types of operations. For the purposes of this monograph, two types of operations as defined in current US Army doctrine refer to offense and defense operations. This monograph brackets consolidation area security with defense operations in the case study, to discuss 25 ID’s transition between defense and offense in combat on the Korean peninsula in 1950.

Offense operations are a decisive sequence of tactical events, focused on either the enemy or terrain, to degrade the enemy or influence the operating environment. Specifically, in the offense, an element seeks to “defeat, destroy, or neutralize the enemy force” or “secure decisive terrain, to deprive the enemy of resources, to gain information, to deceive and divert the enemy,

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<sup>19</sup> US Department of the Army, *ADRP 3-0, Operations* (2017) 2-7.

<sup>20</sup> For the interrelation of duration, frequency, and sequencing, this monograph channels Robert Leonhard’s definition for tempo. The author draws upon collation in duration, frequency, and sequencing to the overall pertinence of temporal comprehensiveness. See Robert R. Leonhard, *Fighting By Minutes: Time and the Art of War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 10-12, 53, 69, 91-92.

<sup>21</sup> US Department of the Army, *ADRP 3-0, Operations* (2017), 2-10.

to hold the enemy in position, to disrupt the enemy's attack, and to set up the conditions for future successful operations.”<sup>22</sup> This type of operation consists of four characteristics, which are present throughout the discussion of actions taken by both US and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) forces in 1950. Those characteristics are audacity, concentration, surprise, and tempo. Nevertheless, to clarify the other characteristics of the offense, the definitions for the remaining three follow. Audacity is the bold, violent application of combat power against a plan.<sup>23</sup> Concentration revisits the concept of Jominian theory above, and places emphasis on simultaneous application of massed combat power “to achieve a single purpose.”<sup>24</sup> Finally, surprise is the leveraging of effects on an enemy at a “time, place, or manner in which the enemy does not anticipate.”<sup>25</sup>

Defensive operations are the strongest type of operation and are “conducted to defeat an enemy attack, gain time, economize forces, and develop conditions favorable for” the transition of a force to offense of stability operations.<sup>26</sup> This type of operation consists of seven characteristics: disruption, flexibility, maneuver, mass and concentration, operations in depth, preparation, and security.<sup>27</sup> In relation to the monograph case study, this paper focuses on 25 ID's masterful use of flexibility, maneuver, mass and concentration, and operations in depth in relation to the previously mentioned military theories that formed the backbone of Army ground combat planning in 1950. Flexibility in this sense is detailed contingency planning to ensure subsequent or alternate battle positions and the eventual transition to offense by counterattack. Maneuver refers to operational movement aided by direct and indirect fires to grant the defender a position

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<sup>22</sup> US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-90, Offense and Defense* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 3-1.

<sup>23</sup> US Department of the Army, *ADRP 3-90, Offense and Defense* (2012), 3-1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 3-2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 4-1.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 4-1-4-2.

of advantage on the enemy.<sup>28</sup> Mass and concentration is the composition of a bulk amount of effects to achieve overwhelming combat power.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, operations in depth are the “simultaneous applications of combat power” in a defenders operational environment that “improve the chances of success and minimize its casualties.”<sup>30</sup>

Rear-area security operations in their disambiguation in this monograph refer to actions taken as part of a consolidation area element. It is included in the context of defensive operations, but separately defined here to draw attention to necessity in transition from offense to defense. Specifically, this paper discusses consolidation area actions by 25 ID as a medium between their defense of Pusan in August and September 1950 and the assumption of offensive tasks in October 1950. Consolidation area security is essential to the success of both defensive and offensive operations and includes the responsibility for the acting unit to protect lines of communication and clean up bypassed enemy elements that could adversely affect them.<sup>31</sup>

With the terms relating to both elements of operational art and types of operations defined, the monograph uses the following five questions to examine 25 ID operations in 1950 and their relation to tenants of LSCO. How did 25 ID mitigate risk in rapidly preparing for combat operations in Korea? How did 25 ID force NKPA culmination at Pusan? What factors influenced 25 ID planning for risk management and tempo preservation in consolidation area security tasks? What did 25 ID do to prevent operational culmination and extend their reach as they transitioned to the offense? How did 25 ID maintain tempo and balance operational reach to enable future operations north of Seoul? Using these questions to frame the operational context of the case study, the author concludes the monograph with a comparison between the 2018 LSCO concept and actions by 25 ID to prove the case study as an exemplar of success in operational

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<sup>28</sup> US Department of the Army, *ADRP 3-90, Offense and Defense* (2012), 4-1-4-2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (2018), 6-17-6-18, 7-13-7-14.

conflict. This linkage is further evident in the empirical portion of the literature review and methodology, in the written works of primary and secondary sourcing used in the research of this monograph.

### Empirical Tie-ins to the Evaluation Criterion

In evaluating the primary and secondary sourcing used to research 25 ID operations in Korea, this monograph assesses an emergent research topic connecting the 2018 LSCO concept with a return to the US Army operating procedure largely dominate in the twentieth century. To conduct this research, several pieces of current or outdated US Army doctrine, first-hand reporting from those in 25 ID, and classical military history contributed to a comprehensive appreciation of how 25 ID planned and executed against what would become the elements of operational art in large-scale operational combat in 1950. Key, and of utmost value, to this research were primary sources from after action reviews taken by the 25 ID staff, narratives of 25 ID's actions in 1950 from key leaders in the division, and the operations orders for the US IX Corps. Secondary sourcing is abundant on the topic. However, for the purposes of framing a holistic understanding of the political and strategic nuances preceding the war and their connection to how the initial operational campaign was structured, this monograph relies heavily on the insights of LTC Roy Appleman, and his portion of a five-part classical history series on the Korean War. In each of these works, the presence of operational reach, culmination, tempo, and risk mitigation are salient. This continual presence validates the requirement for research of the author's hypothesis on operational transitions management through thoughtful application of operational art.

### Summary of the Literature Review and Methodology

In totality, the literature review and methodology provide a roadmap. This assists the reader in three ways. First, it aids the reader in understanding the theory and doctrine, which drove US Army operations in 1950. Second, it clarifies the meaning of that doctrine in today's

terms. Third, it demonstrates the quality of research conducted in comparing the 2018 concept of LSCO to 25 ID's actions on the Korean peninsula in 1950. Combined, these mechanisms cast light on the world events in 1950 that directed the use of the military source of national power. Furthermore, this section provides the background necessary to illustrate the inherent connection to how that source of power accomplishes or enables political intent through the elements of operational art in the road to war.

## Road to War

### Korea in the late 1940s

Discussing the road to the Korean War enables a holistic understanding of the political and strategic situation shaping worldviews of the belligerents involved in 1950. This analysis sets the conditions for the evaluation of 25 ID's actions in the autumn of 1950 by framing the political and strategic context steering unit operations. Further, this part of the monograph details the worldviews and strategic aims of each belligerent to show the shaping narrative for 25 ID's operational approach in their first four months at war.

To provide this worldview and strategic context, this section of the monograph divides this narrative into three main parts. First, the author describes the worldviews contributing to policy, strategic aims, and political objectives for the DPRK and the US. Second, military objectives, strategy, and resources are detailed. Third, identification of the strategic military approach provides a summation of the military actions each nation took to address their respective political and strategic goals. This section's summary transitions the road to war narrative to set conditions for the introduction of the case study and the operational military drivers behind 25 ID's commitment to the Korean Peninsula in July 1950.

### Worldviews

Korea, as it stood in 1950, arrived at a point of bifurcated political turmoil after decades of Japanese occupation. Shaped partly by the "Wilsonian declaration of the right of self-

determination” and a combination of Soviet-championed Leninist-Marxism and Maoist-based people’s war, strong nationalistic ideologies influenced Korea after the Second World War.<sup>32</sup> In the north, the Provisional Peoples’ Committee for North Korea (PPCNK) emerged as a Soviet and Chinese-backed shadow government under the control of Kim Il-Sung. Kim’s role in the formation of the DPRK and a declaration of hostilities against the south led to his rise to the positions of Premier (1948) and Commander (1950) of the DPRK and its military.<sup>33</sup> Wrought with anti-imperialistic struggle, Kim Il-Sung’s early adulthood foreshadowed the PPCNK’s intent for the Korean people. Kim desired to unite the peninsula under a single socialist framework that would free it from the confines of western influence and the perception of imperialistic subservitude. Militarily bolstered by both the USSR and China, Kim and the PPCNK used the three-year period between the end of the Second World War and the formation of the DPRK to train and equip the north for eventual civil war. Their worldview leading into the conflict is one of Leninist-Marxist totalitarianism combined with Maoist nationalism and post-colonial liberation. The Communist Korean party’s goal was to establish an oligarchy to self-govern all of Korea for the first time in its history.<sup>34</sup>

To the south, the United States has concluded agreements with the USSR in April 1948 dividing the Korean peninsula in half at the 38 parallel.<sup>35</sup> Careful of triggering further agitation and risking another world war with the USSR, the Truman administration’s worldview was one of non-committal geostrategic posture in the east and concentration of effort on the rebuilding of

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<sup>32</sup> Roy E. Appleman, LTC, US Army, *United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1961), 2. See also: Alan R. Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 11. See also: Matthew B. Ridgeway, GEN, US Army, *The Korean War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1967), 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 5, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Millet, *They Came from the North*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Ridgeway, *The Korean War*, 7. See also: Billy C. Mossman, *United States Army in the Korean War: Ebb and Flow, November 1950- July 1951* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1988), 8-9.



Europe.<sup>36</sup> This posture excluded the occupation of Japan, which remained so for decades following the Second World War as part of the reparations treaties signed by each Axis power in 1945.

However, this US worldview conflicted with the emerging sense of global superpower competition building after both VE and VJ days in 1945. President Harry S. Truman recognized and desired to contain the spread of Marxist-Leninism and Bolshevism to the USSR and during the late 1940s implemented the US policy of containment vis-à-vis National Security Council resolution (NSC) 68 and later NSC 81, specific to the military efforts in Korea.<sup>37</sup> Although it is valid to point out here that the Truman administration sought to help establish a self-sustaining democratic and free Korea, the US's actual goal was in preventing another potential flashpoint for the spread of Soviet influence after succeeding in Greece in 1946 and failing in China in 1949.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the US worldview leading into the Korean civil war was one of cautious observation, muddled by mismanagement and premature withdrawal from post-World War II occupation Korea between September 1948 and July 1949.<sup>39</sup> The Truman Doctrine, which aimed to stymie Soviet global geopolitical influence, heavily influenced the US political position heading into the conflict on the Korean peninsula in 1950.

## Policy, Strategic Aim, and Political Objectives

With the understanding that the DPRK's global perspective revolved around both Leninist-Marxism and Maoism, the PPCNK adopted a policy of political interference and total

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<sup>36</sup> Ridgeway, *The Korean War*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> James S. Lay, Jr., National Security Council Executive Secretary, *NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* (Washington, DC: NSC Report, 1950), 21, 50-51. See also: James S. Lay, Jr., National Security Council Executive Secretary, *NSC 81: United States Courses Of Action With Respect To Korea* (Washington, DC: NSC Report, 1950), i.

<sup>38</sup> In regards to China, see Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War* (New York: Times Books, Random House Publishing 1987), 24-25. In regards to Greece, see Melvyn P. Leffler, *For The Soul Of Mankind: The United States, The Soviet Union, And The Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 61-62, 71, 77. See also: Ridgeway, *The Korean War*, 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> Ridgeway, *The Korean War*, 8. See also: Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 5.

war, accomplishing its three political objectives. First, backed by a “period of organization and political agitation,” Kim Il-Sung and the PPCNK began the establishment of a provisional government in the north in 1945.<sup>40</sup> This government traded natural resources and capital for protection and consolidated control under the Soviets as a means to bring the DPRK to power across the entire peninsula.<sup>41</sup> Second, as Kim transitioned towards Maoism, the DPRK initiated hostilities in April of 1948 by invoking partisan upheaval, subversion, and rebellion in a politically divided Republic of South Korea (ROK).<sup>42</sup> The attempts to invoke a people’s revolution in the south were only partially successful. However, emboldened by successful raids, political assassinations, and the withdrawal of all US combat forces by the summer of 1949, the DPRK transitioned to its third political objective. In June 1950, Kim ordered the transition from insurgent-based to conventional war. At this point, the DPRK’s strategic aim became apparent as Kim and the PPCNK sought to overthrow President Syngman Rhee’s ROK government in an effort to “unify Korea by force.”<sup>43</sup>

Conversely, the Truman administration’s conflicting worldview of checking Soviet global influence and non-commitment on the Korean peninsula became more complicated. Concerns of growing Soviet influence in Europe, Maoism in China, and by his own surprising win in the 1948 Presidential election on a platform of fiscal responsibility, hampered necessary military funding towards a US presence in Korea.<sup>44</sup> To converge on a management technique for these concerns, Truman directed more money towards “foreign aid,” and away from the US Department of Defense (DOD), who he had already begun downsizing.<sup>45</sup> Truman’s

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<sup>40</sup> Millet, *They Came from the North*, 11.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Millet, *They Came from the North*, 11-12. See also: Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Millet, *They Came from the North*, 11-12.

<sup>44</sup> Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 3-4.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 7-11.

administration also began to rally the UN towards the separation and independence of the democratic South Korean state, to prevent another promising democratic territorial loss to the Communists after China fell.<sup>46</sup> Truman had run on a promise of “bringing the boys home” and of reducing the government’s budget, the largest part of which was the DOD, to reign in the quarter of a trillion dollars deficit that had amassed during the Second World War.<sup>47</sup> One could argue that, in keeping with the UN General Assembly’s directive to withdraw forces “as early as practicable,” the United States sought political relief for itself by relinquishing additional responsibility of protecting Korea as a fiscal conservation, asking for multi-national intervention to burden-share the cost of potentially defending South Korea. It also came as no surprise that the US policy prior to July of 1950 concentrated on the Marshall Plan, mitigation of rising tension with Moscow over its influence in Western Europe, and prevention of the overthrow of Chaing Kai-Shek’s Republic of China by Maoist forces. Further complicating this was the Soviet “scares” in 1948 when the USSR succeeded in overthrowing the Czechoslovakian government and sealed off Berlin from western aid.<sup>48</sup> However, the US strategic aim prior to the conflict changed from one of post-Second World War European and Chinese emphasis to the protection of the ROK on 25 June 1950, when an unexpected but ignored build-up of NKPA units crossed the 38 parallel and overwhelmed ROK Army units and their Korean Military Advisory Group monitors.<sup>49</sup> Truman’s administration would later codify political policy shift in support to the ROK in NSC 81, stating, “The political objective of the United Nations in Korea is to bring about the complete independence and unity of Korea.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Leffler, *For The Soul Of Mankind*, 91-92, 211. See also: Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 40, 53, 67, 72.

<sup>47</sup> Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 3-7.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>49</sup> Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 20-21.

<sup>50</sup> Lay, *NSC 81*, 2.

# Military Objectives, Strategy, and Resources

## DPRK Military Objectives, Strategy, and Resources

The DPRK's policy of total war against South Korea had a strategic aim of forcibly uniting the peninsula under Kim Il-Sung and the PPCNK. This policy and strategic aim drove the provisional Communist government to control closely its military objectives, strategy and resources. For the DPRK, it was pertinent to achieve its five strategic military objectives, in order. First, instigate insurgent activities. Second, build-up conventional, multi-domain military capability along the demarcation line. Third, seize of major metropolitan areas. Fourth, eliminate Rhee and other prominent ROK politicians. Fifth, ensure the collapse of ROK military forces (see figure 1).<sup>51</sup>

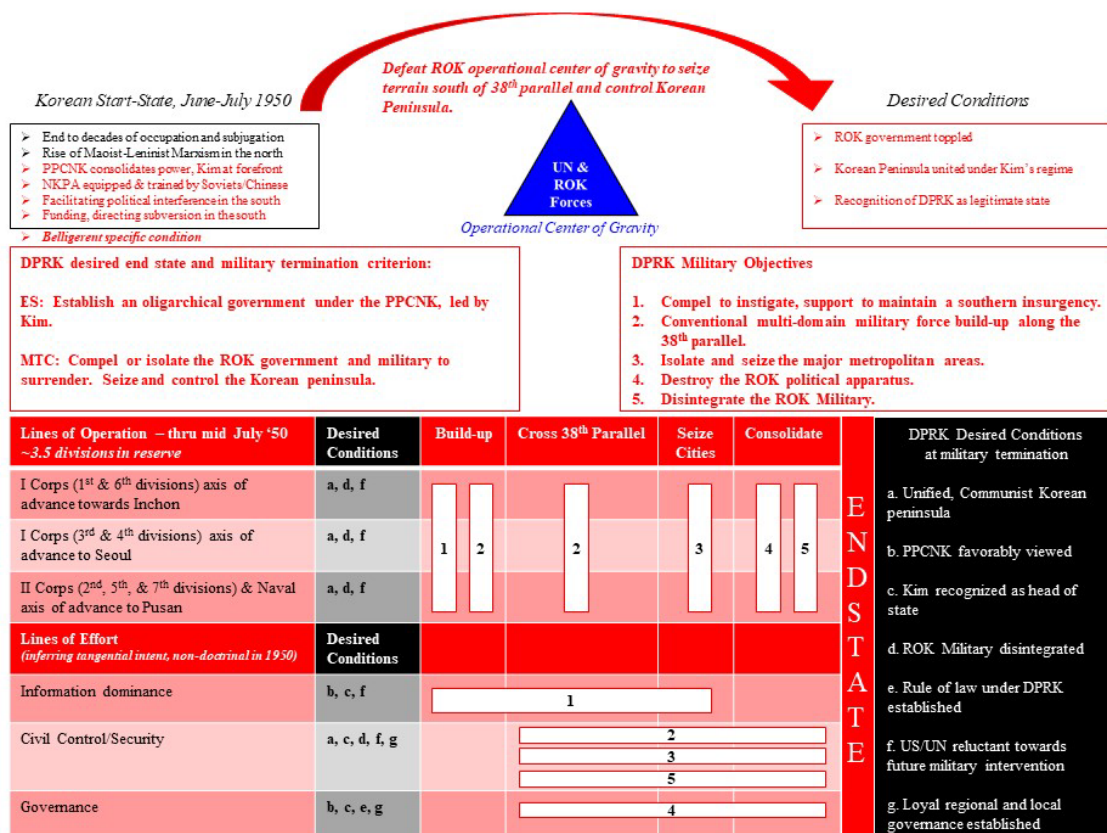


Figure 1. Created by the author.

<sup>51</sup> For sourcing relative to partial information contained in figure 1, see Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 5-6, 19-21. See also: Millet, *They Came from the North*, 12, 49-50.

The driving force for these five military objectives was the DPRK military strategy of force annihilation and ROK capitulation. Combined, the DPRK's strategy and objectives enabled a sequencing of military and political capacity that capitalized on North Korean enmity across the people, military, and government.<sup>52</sup> In exploring each objective and how it is linked to the military strategy of the DPRK, the reader gains a comprehensive understanding of the political enmity that would drive rapid Communist military action south into Pusan, in July 1950, and set the political and military conditions for 25 ID's intervention in the same month.

To accomplish the first strategic military objective, North Korea elicited help from southern sympathizers against the ROK government. Instigating widespread insurgent activities began almost immediately after establishing the PPCNK in 1946. Running a Communist front in South Korea, called the South Korean Labor Party, the PPCNK began discrediting and weakening the ROK government by challenging democratic elections and creating security dilemmas south of the 38 parallel.<sup>53</sup> These actions nested with the DPRK's first and second policies of political agitation and upheaval.

As insurgent activity kept the South Korean government preoccupied, and western powers focus continued to be on the rebuilding of Europe, the Communist regime in North Korea sought military surplus and training from those who shared their ideology. DPRK military build-up began in February 1948 with the founding of the ministry of defense and NKPA. Supervised by Soviet military advisory groups, the military arm of the DPRK expanded in 1950 to include a uniform border police force. The border constabulary constituted five brigades totaling 23,000

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<sup>52</sup> Here the monograph refers to elements of Carl von Clausewitz's theory on the symbiotic yet paradoxical relationship of a society to their political machine. This paper further implies that the DPRK sought to play on the passion of the North Korean people, through bigoted reasoning to invoke enmity and thereby garner unchallenged support for the use of the NKPA in pursuit of political goals. Specifically, in the first and eighth books of his capstone work, *Vom Krieg*, Clausewitz discusses the concepts of enmity, in relation to the people, and reason, in relation to politics with similar inference. See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 81, 87, 89, 582-583, 605-606, 608.

<sup>53</sup> Millet, *They Came from the North*, 10.

paramilitary police in June 1950. In the late summer of 1950, the NKPA consisted of two corps, dividing seven infantry divisions with another three and half in reserve at half strength accompanied by an armor brigade and motorcycle reconnaissance regiment totaling approximately 135,000 men. Together, the paramilitary and NKPA totaled over 150,000, pairing with a smaller element of 180 attack, bomber, and reconnaissance aircraft to create an urgent and dire situation massed along the internal Korean demarcation boundary (see figure 2).<sup>54</sup>

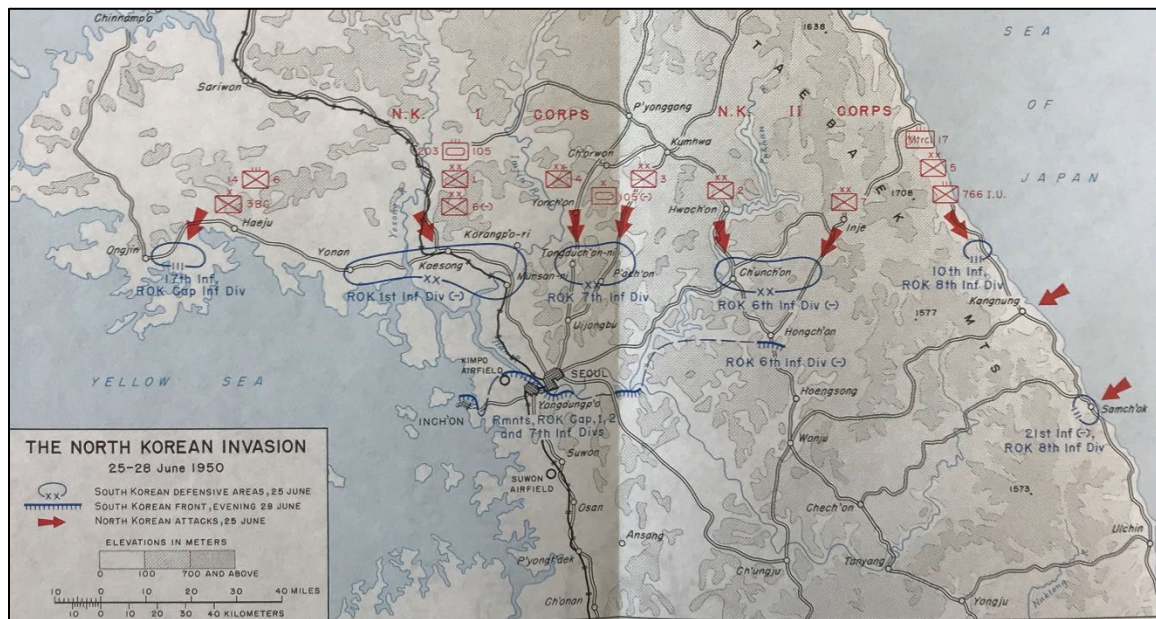


Figure 2. D. Holmes, Jr., *The North Korean Invasion*, Map Inset I, in LTC Appleman's *United States Army in the Korea War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*.

The primary focuses in seizing cities were Seoul, Pusan, and then Incheon. In taking Seoul first, as the closest of the three major metropolitan areas to the border, the NKPA could legitimize their unification campaign and defeat the anticipated strategic center of gravity for the

<sup>54</sup> LTC Appleman mentions NKPA force restructure after the US and UN enter the conflict in mid-July 1950. It is, therefore, important to note that the DPRK's ground force size and structure grow with augmentation of Communist Chinese Force advisors and trained personnel. During Part IV of this monograph, the author discusses the NKPA from this restructured division frontage. However, at the conflict's start, the inset graphic provides a cursory overview of what the committed NKPA ground element is. See D. Holmes, Jr., Defense Mapping Agency Hydrographic and Topographic Center, *The North Korean Invasion*, Map Inset I, in LTC Roy E. Appleman's *United States Army in the Korea War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1961), 21. See also: Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 7-8, 11-12. See also: Millet, *They Came from the North*, 12.

ROK, their political apparatus. Assuming preservation of audacity, concentration, surprise, and tempo, the NKPA also potentially could achieve all or parts of its fourth military objective by arresting and executing prominent ROK political figures present and unable to escape from those same city centers.<sup>55</sup> The subsequent fall of Incheon and Pusan would deny reinforcing capability from allies, allowing the DPRK time to consolidate its gains while fighting continued against the remnants of the ROK Army. Pusan was especially important, as it was the only “modern port,” that could sustain major logistical operations.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, with the military element defeated, the North Korean Communist Party could focus on their fifth strategic objective, solidifying their political influence on the peninsula. With the removal of ROK political figureheads and the defeat of ROK armed forces, the Communist North Koreans would be able to consolidate strategic gains by establishing totalitarian control over all peninsular population centers. A request to the cessation of hostilities and mediation from China and the USSR would follow, seeking to validate the PPCNK as the internationally recognized government. Lastly, this victory could create the opportunity for additional Soviet militarization, adding a complex anti-access area denial defensive posture along the coastline and isolating the peninsula from allied intervention.

#### US Military Objectives, Strategy, and Resources

The shift in US strategic aim in late June 1950 began with the immediate need to reinforce the rapid retrograde of ROK forces to coastal areas in vicinity of Pusan and Incheon. Newly refocused, the US strategic aim was now the preservation of the Rhee government in Seoul. To accomplish this, the US military objectives as of 25 June 1950, after the NKPA crossed the 38 parallel, were twofold: first to reinforce the ROK Army and second to facilitate the

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<sup>55</sup> This refers to the US Army’s definitions of the characteristics of the offense (FM 3-0) as compared to offensive objective characteristics and coordination (FSR-100-5), see US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (2017), 7-1. See also: US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 22, 80, 82, 93, 96.

<sup>56</sup> Millet, *They Came from the North*, 44.

noncombatant evacuation of Americans. In reinforcing the ROK Army, the United States sought to replenish an ally, whose force attrition rate at the end of June 1950 was 75 percent, by sending ammunition and combat equipment to prevent the loss of Seoul and by dispatching an assessment team to evaluate the need for American intervention.<sup>57</sup> The United States also needed to “provide ships and planes” to conduct a noncombatant evacuation operation of American citizens. These objectives expanded over the next five days, with GEN Douglas MacArthur’s appointment to complete “operational control of all US military activities in Korea.”<sup>58</sup> MacArthur, then known as the Commander in Chief of Far East Command (CINCFE), expanded US military objectives to include the employment of US Army forces on ground in Korea and US Naval and Air Force capability to combat the NKPA in North Korea. In employing US Army forces on ground in Korea, MacArthur needed to maintain communications and essential services with the ROK Army, to retain air and sea points of debarkation availability in the Pusan-Chinhae, and deploy a regimental combat team to the combat zone, vicinity the Han River and Seoul, to reinforce the forward line of ROK troops. In leveraging US Naval and Air Force capability, MacArthur directed the US Air Force against military land targets in North Korea and the US Navy to create a littoral area blockade of North Korea.

Happening simultaneously, the UN passed a series of resolutions in late June 1950, culminating with a call to all member nations to provide military and humanitarian assistance in Korea.<sup>59</sup> Combined, these military objectives intended to accomplish the now multi-nation task force military strategy of hostilities containment and reestablishment of the demarcation line at

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<sup>57</sup> Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 35, 38, 46.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 38, 43, 46-47.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 48.



the 38 parallel, with all NKPA forces north of said line. However, to achieve the growing list of military requirements, a sizeable amount of military means was required (see figure 3).<sup>60</sup>

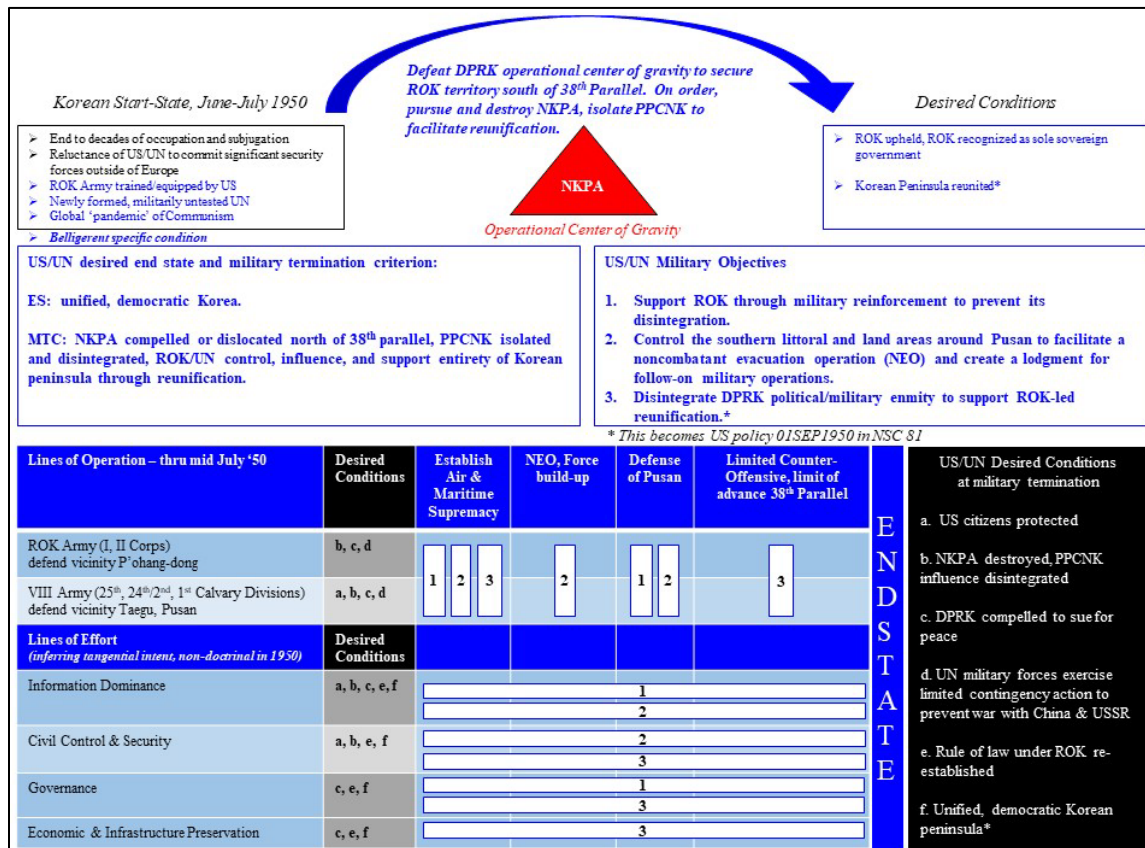


Figure 3. Created by the author.

To achieve this military strategy, Washington consolidated command and control of naval, air, and ground forces with the CINCFE, later gaining concurrence through the UN to rename MacArthur as Supreme Commander for Allied Powers and head of the UN Command in Korea.<sup>61</sup> At the beginning of July 1950, MacArthur established the advanced command liaison group to focus on the implementation of the growing UN joint military capability and maintain situational awareness of the progress of NKPA units near Seoul.<sup>62</sup> Shortly after the liaison

<sup>60</sup> For sourcing relative to partial information contained in figure 3, see Lay, *NSC 81*, 2, 5-7, 9-15. See also: Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 17.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>62</sup> Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 43, 112.

group's initial assessment, UN command determined that, in addition to requiring a regimental combat team to reinforce the ROK Army near the Han River, the UN force would also require two US Army divisions from Japan to augment the US naval and air forces already under his control as CINCFE. Those naval and air forces included one cruiser and four destroyers as well as four fighter squadrons in range of the Korean peninsula. In addition to these forces and the request for a regimental combat team and two divisions, MacArthur gained operational control of US Seventh Fleet and a detachment of anti-aircraft artillery, which he placed at Pusan to protect the ports of debarkation. After the UN resolutions passed in late June, CINCFE gained operational control of forces from commonwealth allies, which included British, Australian, Canadian, and New Zealand air and watercraft.<sup>63</sup>

Overall, the estimated strength of the initial combined, joint UN force in Korea in early July 1950 was approximately 41,000 ground troops, five squadrons of fighter and pursuit aircraft, and fifteen naval vessels with an assortment of amphibious and support watercraft. Of the 41,000 ground troops, almost half were already seeing combat. These were the 25,000 ROK Army troops, the remnants of the initial 98,000 monitored by military advisory group just weeks prior. The remainder of the ground force was comprised of Eighth Army's 24 ID, amounting to 16,000 soldiers. At this point in the campaign, MacArthur placed GEN Walton H. Walker and his Eighth US Army in command of the operational fight in Korea. It would be another week before US forces committed 25 ID's matching number of troops to assist the dire situation 24 ID and the remnants of the ROK Army faced. In that time, 24 ID had suffered staggering setbacks with elements of 21 RCT (Task Force Smith) at Osan and then again for the 34 RCT from P'yongt'aek

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<sup>63</sup> Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 46-48, 50.

to Choch'iwon. As 24 ID pulled back to Pusan, 25 ID began arriving in mid-July 1950 to bolster Walker's Eighth Army force.<sup>64</sup>

With the arrival of 25 ID, Walker was now able to begin establishing a defensive belt around Pusan and retrograde 24 ID into as their forward line of troops collapsed from temporary defensive positions vicinity Taejon. This defensive belt would further enable the UN force and Eighth Army to establish a consolidated line of reinforcement for along with the ROK Army within range of naval and air force joint fires support. Furthermore, it created a security bubble around Pusan to protect additional UN reinforcements and resupply that would become essential to the August through December counterattack spearheaded by 25 ID.

## Operational Approach

With the military objectives, strategy, and means considered for both sides of the Korean conflict, each side adopted unique operational approaches. These operational approaches aimed to link the strategic and political aims to military means. Accomplishment of or change in the strategic objectives and political goals for the belligerent for termination of military application.

For the NKPA, it was essential to continue to advance both of its corps in simultaneity. This allowed the DPRK to maintain consistent and even pressure across the entire peninsula as its forces advanced south, and provided the depth and speed necessary to both reinforce the wide frontage of troops and posture to force a decisive and quick end to the conflict, in their favor. In this sense, the NKPA was strategically and operationally on the offensive in mid-to-late July while its forward division began to culminate, as lines of communication grew longer. This culmination forced the NKPA to pause and transition to the tactical defensive while rear echelons consolidated their gains in Seoul.

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<sup>64</sup> Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 46, 59, 67, 78, 108-110, 182. See also: US Department of the Army, Office of the Historian, "25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Tropic Lightning) in the Korean War," last modified 30 October 2018, accessed 01 July, 2018, <https://history.army.mil/documents/Korea/25id-KW-IP.htm>.

Conversely, the combined UN force, having faced multiple tactical defeats within the first month, was able to bolster its defensive belt in Pusan, primarily because of the arrival of the 25 ID, as previously detailed. The operational approach that emerged for MacArthur, Walker, and Rhee was defensive in nature across the strategic, operational, and tactical spectrum as the UN force built combat power behind the security perimeter that 24/25 ID and the ROK Army were providing.

### A transition to 25 ID actions in July 1950

In summary, this security perimeter bought allied forces the time to continue build-up. This build-up was the catalyst for the Pusan breakout. Two months after 25 ID's arrival, the division would assume an offensive posture along the far western flank (oriented north) as allied forces began their counteroffensive (see *figure 4*).<sup>65</sup> It was this preparation and planning that 25 ID's staff and RCTs took between mid-September 1950 and the end of October 1950 that concretely demonstrate successful operational planning at the division level.

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<sup>65</sup> D. Holmes, Jr., *The Front Moves South*, Map Inset III, in LTC Roy E. Appleman's *United States Army in the Korea War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 182. See also: US Department of the Army, Office of the Historian, "25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Tropic Lightning) in the Korean War," last modified 30 October 2018, accessed 01 July, 03 September 2018, <https://history.army.mil/documents/Korea/25id-KW-IP.htm>.

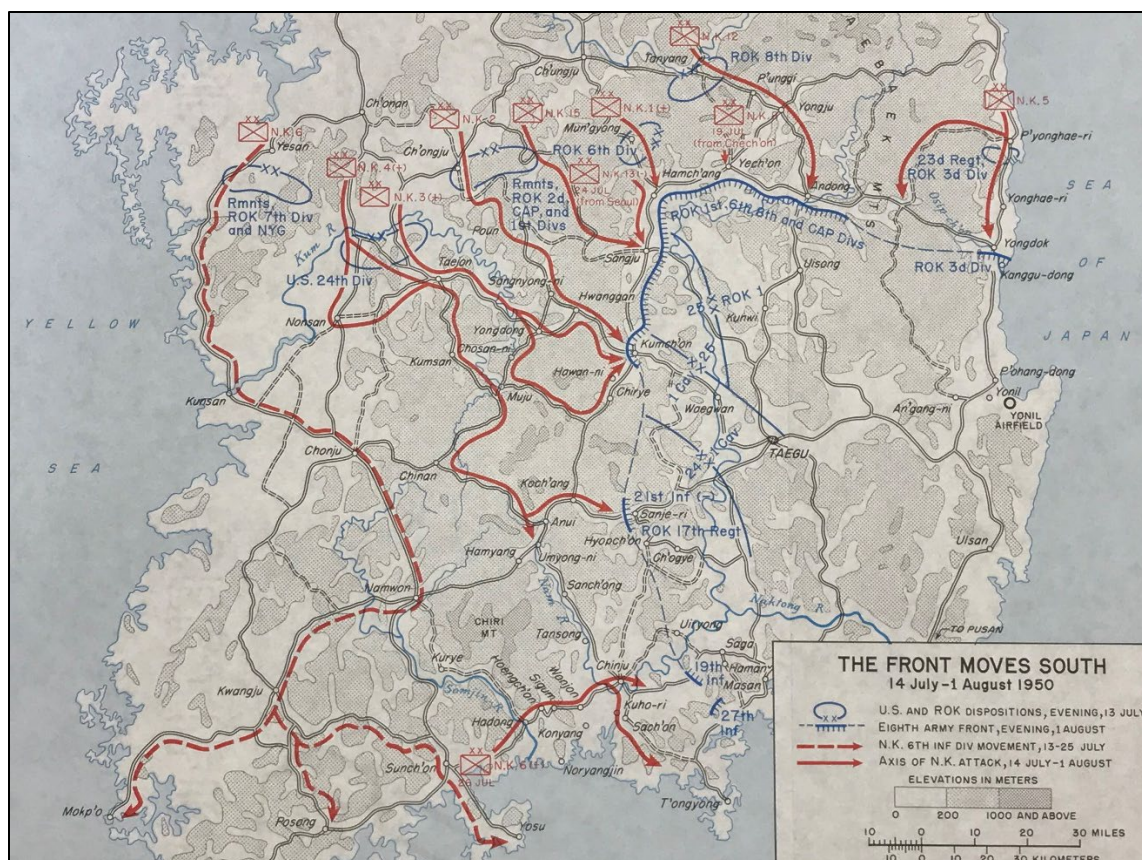


Figure 4. D. Holmes, Jr., *The Front Moves South*, Map Inset III, in LTC Appleman's *United States Army in the Korea War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*.

## Case Study: 25 ID as an operational force in Korea, July – October 1950

The United States 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division has been a mainstay of the United Nations forces since the beginning of the war in Korea. The men of the “tropic lightning” division have met and defeated the forces of communism on the field of battle. Its formidable blows against the enemy on the offensive...its tenacity on the defensive...have proven it a tower of strength.<sup>66</sup>

- Matthew B. Ridgway, General, US Army, 24 October 1951

## 25 ID in transition, as an expeditionary operational force

In examining this case study, a historical precedent clearly exists for the US Army's 2018 LSCO concept through the operational combat lineage of 25 ID in Korea. To prove this, the author details the associations between *FSR 100-5, Operations* and the 2018 update to FM 3-0,

<sup>66</sup> Allen A. David, CPT, US Army, ed, *Battleground Korea: The Story of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division* (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, 1951), xi.

showing the similarities in employment concept of a division in high intensity, large-scale combat. This case study validates the relation of both sets of doctrine through a three-part narrative. The first part demonstrates the use of history, theory and doctrine in the evolution of the American way of war. The second part begins with 25 ID in strategic transition from occupation to defense of Pusan (July – September 1950). The third part continues with 25 ID in operational transition, leading the breakout of the Pusan perimeter at Masan (October 1950). At the conclusion of this case study, this paper facilitates a keener understanding of the role of a division in LSCOs and it provides the reader with an appreciation for 25 ID's championing of what becomes LSCO via their operational feats in 1950.

### History drives theory, doctrine is the result

25 ID's actions between July and October of 1950 outline a balance between its roles as a defensive and offensive force. Over this four-month period, 25 ID transitioned three times, testing the application of French, German, and Soviet theory against US Army doctrine and their division operation's history from the Second World War. At the end of offensive operations in October 1950, 25 ID had both successfully defended Pusan and began their advance to Seoul. The division inflicted heavy casualties on the NKPA as they attacked them from Masan; this eventually drove them through the Seoul valley corridor back across the 38 parallel, less than five months after Communist divisions initially crossed it. Achieving these feats required the masterful application and balance of defeat mechanisms, characteristics of the offense and defense, and their combination with the elements of operational reach, culmination, risk, and tempo. Applied through the lens of US Army doctrine and operational theory at the time, evidence exists to demonstrate the aforementioned influences of Jomini, Moltke, and Isserson and Tuchachevsky.

The amalgamation of history, theory, and doctrine to arrive at *FSR 100-5, Operations* and its multiple revisions before the 1949 publication used by all US Army divisions are primarily reflections of the lessons from the Second World War. These reflections would also weigh on

national policy and strategy.<sup>67</sup> In restating these ideas defined in the literature review of this monograph, this study emphasizes their significance to 25 ID's fight in Korea. Concepts from the French combat method, such as massing at decisive points and a preference for the offense would continue to hold pertinence in *FSR 100-5, Operations*.<sup>68</sup> Moltke's paradigms of professional staff and emphasis on operational mobility played key roles as well. By 1950, the US Army had run a Prusso-Germanic influenced staff development program at its Command and General Staff College for half a century.<sup>69</sup> Its benefits were transparent in the quality of the staff officer produced, given the bevy of Second World War and Korean War US generals who had successful careers after their matriculation. The ability of operational maneuver was so vital, in fact, that 25 ID's commander at the end of the Korean War recounted it as a decisive advantage for all US Army units facing both the NKPA and Chinese Communist forces.<sup>70</sup> Finally, the Second World War Soviet concept of deep penetration and annihilation of an enemy force saw its first applications in US operational combat in Korea. Exemplars include the Incheon landing conducted by MacArthur in September 1950 and the near-simultaneous use of 25 ID to breakout at Masan, more than 150 miles from Pusan. It was the combination of these concepts against mindful application of operational reach and culmination of forces to transition between defense and offense and aggressive tempo mindful of risk to the division, which enabled 25 ID to destroy the NKPA and their will to fight and forced the CCF to intervene.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Lay, *NSC 81*, 10-11.

<sup>68</sup> Jomini, *The Art of War*, 70-71. See also: Bonura, *Under the Shadow of Napoleon*, 36-37. See also: US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 22.

<sup>69</sup> Bonura, *Under the Shadow of Napoleon*, 181.

<sup>70</sup> Samuel T. Williams, MG, US Army, Comments made on departure from Korea, 1953, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS, C#17055.38, page 5.

<sup>71</sup> US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 21.

## 25 ID in transition, Japanese occupation to Korean defense

25 ID had been in Japan since the weeks following VJ Day, as part of the multi-division occupational force. Positioned on Honshu Island, 25 ID consisted of the 24th, 27th, and 35th RCTs. As 25 ID assisted with the evacuation of American citizens from South Korea to Japan, the division watched as the NKPA continually advanced southward, vying for complete control of Korea. As the situation worsened in late June 1950, 25 ID placed operational control of its 35 RCT with 24 ID, tasked with combat assistance to the depleted ROK forces defending south of Seoul. Within the same week, as 24 ID began retrograde in a delaying action south away from Seoul, 25 ID received orders placing them under the US Army's First Corps and Eighth US Army for combat operations, terminating their occupation of Japan.<sup>72</sup>

As 25 ID prepared to deploy the division across the Eastern Sea onto the Korean peninsula, the division spread out its remaining RCTs and support elements to the port cities of Moji and Sasebo, using railheads at Osaka, Nara, Kyoto, and Gifu to speedily prepare troops and equipment for debarkation.<sup>73</sup> From the outset, the recognition present by the staff of the efficiency needed to offload in Korea and to prepare the division for defending Pusan with rapidity was paramount. It was both an acknowledgment of the dire situation facing 24 ID and the ROK and an effective allocation of resources to set conditions in extending 25 ID's operational reach at the onset of its change of mission.

In the first weeks of July, 25 ID successfully deployed the division and accompanying equipment to bolster the 24 ID defense of Pusan, securing the northern port of Pohang-Dong and the airfield at Yongchon. Positioning 25 ID in a northern orientation between Pusan and Pohang-Dong had the purpose of blocking the NKPA from further advancement south. With the 35 RCT now back under the operational control of 25 ID, the division prepared for defense between

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<sup>72</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 1-1 - 1-3. See also: Richard Pullen, MAJ, US Army, et. al, eds., *The Tropic Lightning in Korea* (Atlanta, GA: Albert Love Enterprises, 1954), 2.

<sup>73</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 1-2.



Andong (27 RCT), Kumchon (24 RCT), and Kyong-ju (35 RCT) to contain the advancing NKPA and protect the Pusan perimeter.<sup>74</sup> By mid-July 1950, the division was complete in movement and had established all their defensive positions, encountering their first engagements against the NKPA. In hastily occupying and improving defensive positions in their sector of the Pusan perimeter, 25 ID was able to surprise the NKPA, causing the advance guard to pause and temporarily dislocate. This unhinged the NKPA's operational approach south by disrupting their perception of the battle area and presenting them with an unexpected additional dilemma.<sup>75</sup> Later in July 1950, 25 ID repositioned its forces northeast to relieve the first and second ROK armies. This new division frontage was much larger than before, expanding 25 ID's sector of the defensive perimeter to twenty-seven miles.<sup>76</sup> In managing such a large frontage, *FSR 100-5, Operations* prescribed a number of conditions that need be present, namely in this case, an "enemy inferior in training, in material, and...mobility."<sup>77</sup> These conditions undoubtedly played a role in 25 ID's ability to both reposition and defend over the next month, as the division saw almost daily "face-to-face" combat "with the advancing enemy" forces, whose size amassed more than five divisions and 30,000 troops' worth of strength opposite 25 ID's single division of 12,000.<sup>78</sup> During this initial defensive mission, the 25 ID's task and purpose had been to "hold and delay the enemy until reinforcements could be brought in" to balance the force ratio.<sup>79</sup> July would see 25 ID successfully contain the NKPA "in its zone," slowing their advance and "gaining time for the UN forces to strength their defenses."<sup>80</sup> Overall, 25 ID's ability to stage their equipment and troops efficiently in Japan allowed for deployment into and preparation of

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<sup>74</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 1-3 - 1-4.

<sup>75</sup> US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (2018), 1-21.

<sup>76</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 1-7.

<sup>77</sup> US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 140.

<sup>78</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 1-7, 1-16.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 1-14.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

defensive positions that bought time and space for more US reinforcement, providing much needed relief for the 24 ID and ROK Army. Strategically, it reinforced the United States' political aim of preventing the fall of a democracy, strengthening US global power in opposing the expansion of Soviet influence.

In August 1950, 25 ID continued defensive operations of the Pusan perimeter, shifting further east to Sangju, and eventually Chinju-Masan.<sup>81</sup> Eighth Army also took 27 RCT from 25 ID, displacing the 27 RCT to Chinju to act as the Army reserve (see *figure 5*). Eighth Army replaced 27 RCT with 5 RCT to compensate the loss of maneuver combat power to 25 ID during initial defensive preparations near Masan.<sup>82</sup> This shift coincided with increased intelligence reporting, indicating the NKPA were doubling down on Pusan and advancing unopposed and hastily south, hundreds of miles west of the 25 ID's new defensive sector. With this new information, 25 ID temporarily split the division to enable a delaying action to attack near Sangju until the division could reposition and block the advance of this NKPA offensive in the west. While most would consider this dilution of combat power a mistake, 25 ID again played to the strengths of their unit, following *FSR 100-5, Operations'* principle of surprise to "compensate for numerical inferiority."<sup>83</sup> In a skillful balance of defensive tasks, 25 ID continued their temporary support of the defensive in Sangju with 24 RCT as MG William B. Kean ordered 5 and 35 RCTs and the division TAC to move west to Chinju-Masan. This maneuver occurred overnight, placing both RCTs into a hasty defense near Chinju-Masan, more than 150 miles from their previous positions in the Pusan perimeter (see *figure 6*).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 2-1. See also: George Bittman (G.B.) Barth, BG, US Army, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea, July 1950 - May 1951*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Athens, Greece: American Embassy, 1955), 11.

<sup>82</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 2-1. See also: Barth, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, 13, Map 3.

<sup>83</sup> US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 22.

<sup>84</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 2-2. See also: Barth, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, 15, Map 4.

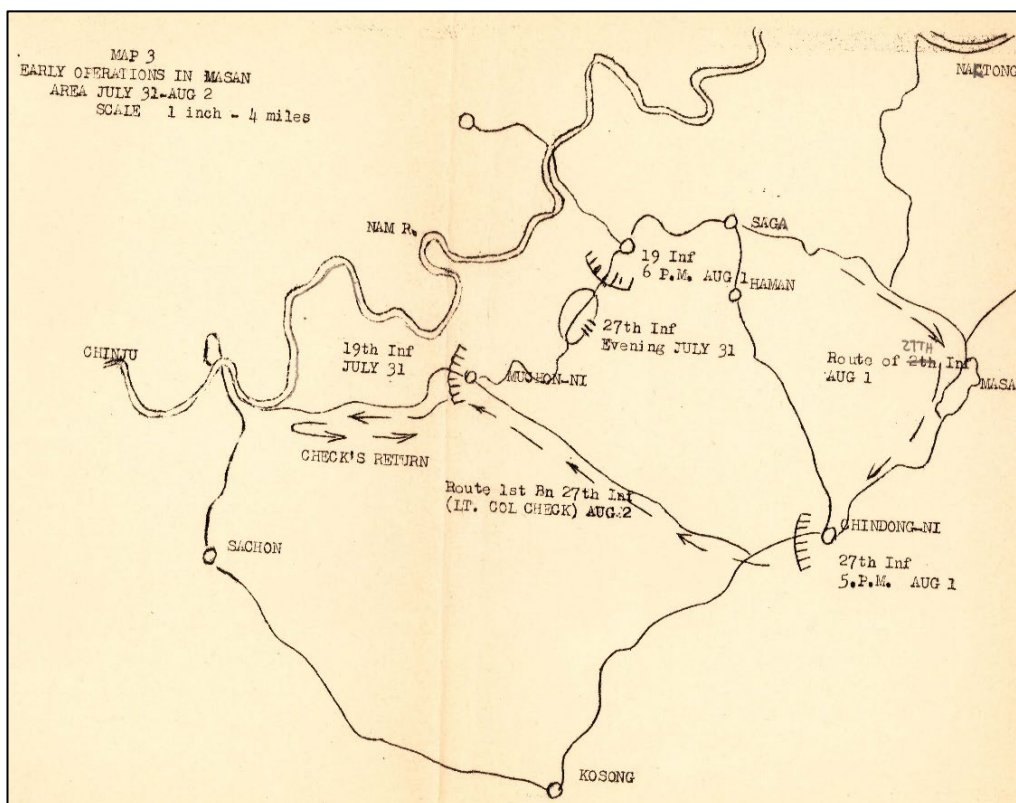


Figure 5. Early Operations in Masan Area, Map 3, in BG G.B. Barth's US Army, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, July 1950 - May 1951.

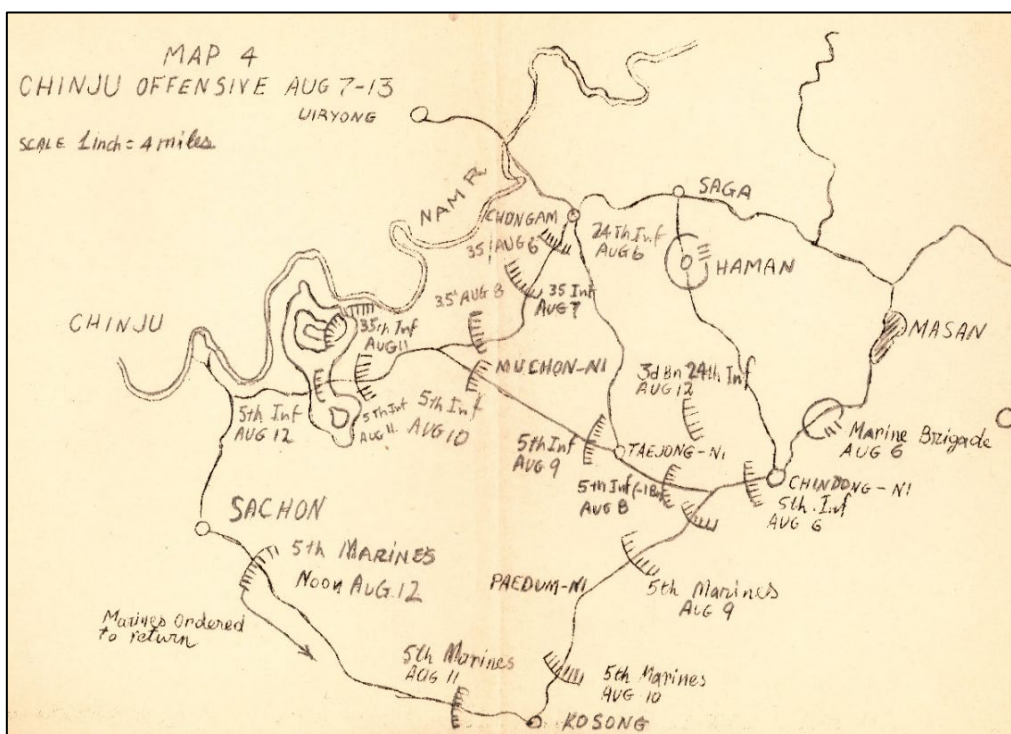


Figure 6. Chinju Offensive, Map 4, in BG G.B. Barth's *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, July 1950 - May 1951.

Although an initial risk in diluting the combat power of the division, the repositioning placed 5 and 35 RCTs near Eighth Army's reserve, 27 RCT, providing the potential for mutual support or exploitation of success against the advancing North Korean ground forces. This repositioning was "bold, carefully thought-out, and prepared with sufficient strength" for 25 ID "to do their job and achieve decisive far reaching results."<sup>85</sup> In Sangju, 24 RCT continued attacks throughout the night to conceal the withdrawal of her sister regiments, disengaging the next morning and following the rest of the division into defensive positions near Masan. The split disrupted NKPA efforts near Sangju, as they were still operating under the assumption that they were facing an entire division, instead of an RCT and, eventually, no US forces. This confusion caused the NKPA in Sangju to delay actions for days, until intelligence redefined their situation as they suspected a trap that could envelop or turn them out of their eastern axis of advance on Pusan.<sup>86</sup> 150 miles to the west, in Masan, the entire division had relocated and moved into a defensive belt between Masan and Chinju, by 3 August 1950, depicted in *figure 7*.<sup>87</sup> This repositioning was critical to slowing and, ultimately, halting the Communist advance on Pusan as the resulting combat actions allowed 25 ID to mass combat power at Masan and cripple the NKPA sixth division, easing the threat on the UN force's main port. In withdrawing, the division gained four-days of time to establish deliberate defensive preparations in Masan "against the confused, disoriented" NKPA.<sup>88</sup> This also proved crucial to the morale of the soldiers of 25 ID by demonstrating combined arms, multi-domain operational maneuver supported by air and ground artillery support was decisively effective against an aggressive, numerically superior force.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Barth, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, 15.

<sup>86</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 2-2.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. See also: F. Temple, *The Pusan Perimeter*, Map Inset IV, in LTC Appleman's *United States Army in the Korea War: South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 236.

<sup>88</sup> Barth, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, 15.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

More simply put, 25 ID had discovered that by out maneuvering the NKPA, they won decidedly.<sup>90</sup>

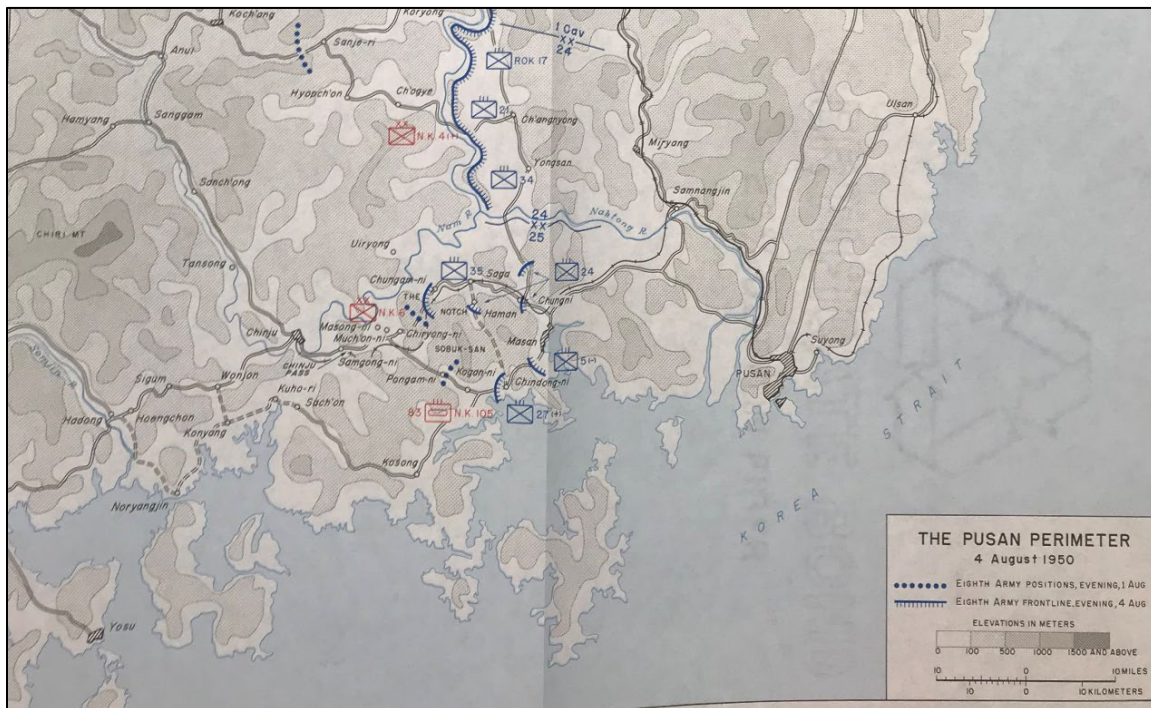


Figure 7. F. Temple, *The Pusan Perimeter*, Map Inset IV, in LTC Appleman's *United States Army in the Korea War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*.

As August 1950 continued, 25 ID faced three North Korean divisions near Chinju-Masan while in an operational defense. The division conducted a counterattack that disorganized multiple North Korean offensives against Pusan and prevented enemy capture of the port. During the transition to tactical offensive operations, 25 ID seized key elevated terrain east of Chinju, providing decisive advantage in enemy axis of advance over-watch and forward reverse slope for division fires assets.<sup>91</sup> 25 ID followed this counterattack in mid-August 1950 by continuing

<sup>90</sup> Analysis of out-maneuvering to win against a slower, poorly resourced enemy was a theory that repeated itself during the Korean War. COL John Boyd would later codify this theory with his Observe, Orient, Decide, Act or 'OODA' loop model. Here, he surmised two things: that the actor who could orient fastest was at the advantage, and that by orienting faster, one could complete and move onto subsequent OODA loops first. The summation being that one's enemy, who failed to orient quicker, saw their forces thrown into disarray and their cohesion destroyed. See Frans P.B. Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-3.

<sup>91</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 2-3, 2-14.



defensive preparation in the area for the remainder of the month. Multiple “military officials,” including Rhee, credited the rapid repositioning of an entire division with changing “the history of the world... Had the division been delayed in transit, Pusan undoubtedly would have fallen,” and with Pusan seized, North Korea could have “isolated American forces in Korea,” partially achieving their third and fifth strategic military objectives.<sup>92</sup> The military effects of 25 ID’s counterattack and defense provided a level of certainty to both Eighth Army and the UN that “the southern portion of the Pusan perimeter was firmly guarded and could withstand further assaults,” (see figure 8).<sup>93</sup>

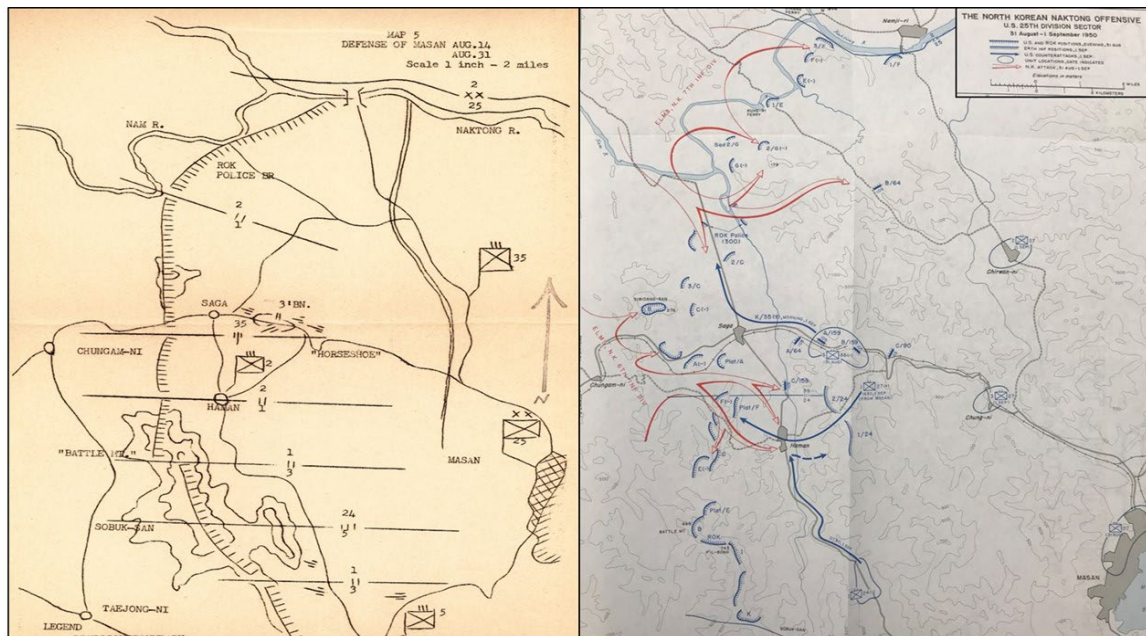


Figure 8. (L) *Defense of Masan, Map 5*, in BG G.B. Barth’s *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea, July 1950 - May 1951*. (R) D. Holmes, Jr., *The North Korean Naktong Offensive, Map Inset V*, in LTC Roy E. Appleman’s *US Army in Korea: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*.

These actions proved vital in allowing Eighth Army time to develop favorable conditions in the operational environment, amounting to an operational counteroffensive in mid-September

<sup>92</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 2-14. See also: Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 5. See also: Millet, *They Came from the North*, 12, 49-50.

<sup>93</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 2-14. See also: Barth, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, Map 5. See also: D. Holmes, Jr., *The Pusan Perimeter*, Map Inset IV, in LTC Appleman’s *United States Army in the Korea War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 438.

1950.<sup>94</sup> The successful defensive set conditions that later forced NKPA culmination in early September, while the division continued to attrit the North Korean forces and prepare for the breakout. The implications drawn from this audacious movement, deliberate operational defense, and seeking opportunities to go on the tactical offense demonstrate keen risk mitigation and cognizance of operational reach by 25 ID. It also shows an accounting for enemy assumptions that played into an advantage for the division in tempo and concentration of maneuver capability. These actions stalled a repetitive, seemingly unstoppable NKPA advance against Pusan and set the conditions for 25 ID to defend, in depth, the western approach to the sea-lodgment area while destroying the NKPA forces, through the beginning of September 1950, they later counter-attacked. The ability to defend in depth as an operational force, while seeking opportunities to take tactical offensive action proved crucial in the operational transition into the offensive for 25 ID. Success at repelling the NKPA along the Pusan perimeter was further echoed in the northern sector 25 ID had dislodged from, now protected by the US 2nd ID and the US 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. Contingency planning began almost immediately by Eighth US Army staff officers for a “great UN counterstroke” in Pusan to accompany “the amphibious assault on Inchon.”<sup>95</sup> These successes played a significant role in the greater UN operational picture, refocusing NKPA attention away from Incheon where MacArthur would lead a sea-borne surprise deep envelopment to turn the North Koreans out of their southern positions and force their fighting withdrawal.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 120. See also: Barth, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, 39. See also: Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 472, 477-478, 487.

<sup>95</sup> Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona, Capt, US Marine Corps, *US Marine Operations in Korea 1950-1953, Volume 1: The Pusan Perimeter* (St. Clair Shores, MI: Scholarly Press, 1976), 241.

<sup>96</sup> Richard W. Stewart, *Staff Operations: The X Corps in Korea, December 1950* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1991), 1-2.

## 25 ID in transition, from Pusan to the Han River

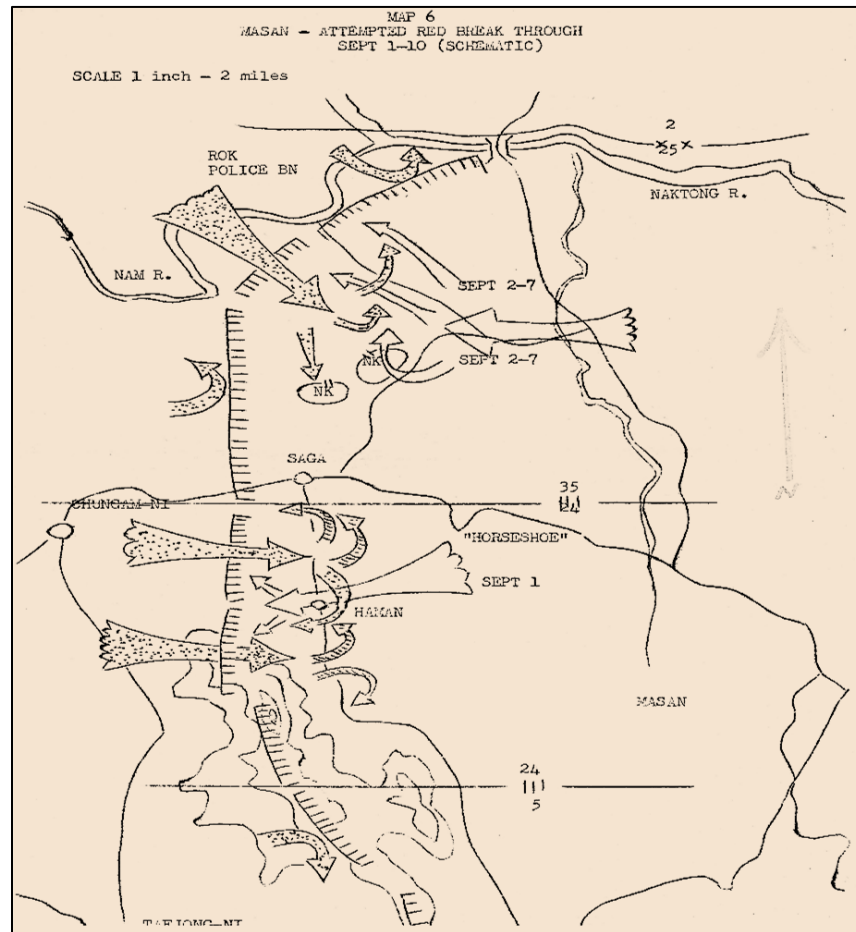


Figure 9. *Masan - Attempted Red Break Through*, Map 6, in BG G.B. Barth's *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, July 1950 - May 1951.

During the first week of September 1950, 25 ID was embroiled in what amounted to a final effort by North Korean forces to penetrate the UN southern flank at Masan and seize Pusan (see figure 9). Over the latter half of August and through the first days of September, Communist forces kept constant pressure on 25 ID, and other elements of the Pusan perimeter. Taking advantage of terrain between seams of the division's frontage and another RCT, the NKPA were able on one occasion to penetrate the perimeter, where "five enemy battalions were still lodged behind US lines."<sup>97</sup> This ultimately proved fruitless, as elements of both 24 and 35 RCT

<sup>97</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 4-8.



transitioned to consolidation area security operations and began “mopping-up...behind” the division’s lines (see *figure 10*).<sup>98</sup> In later describing the ordeal, the 25 ID commander reflected on how well the division was suited in balancing tactical offensive opportunities with their operational defensive task: “Never before, to my knowledge, has a unit closed the gaps in its front line and held it intact while a full scale battle was raging in the rear areas.”<sup>99</sup>

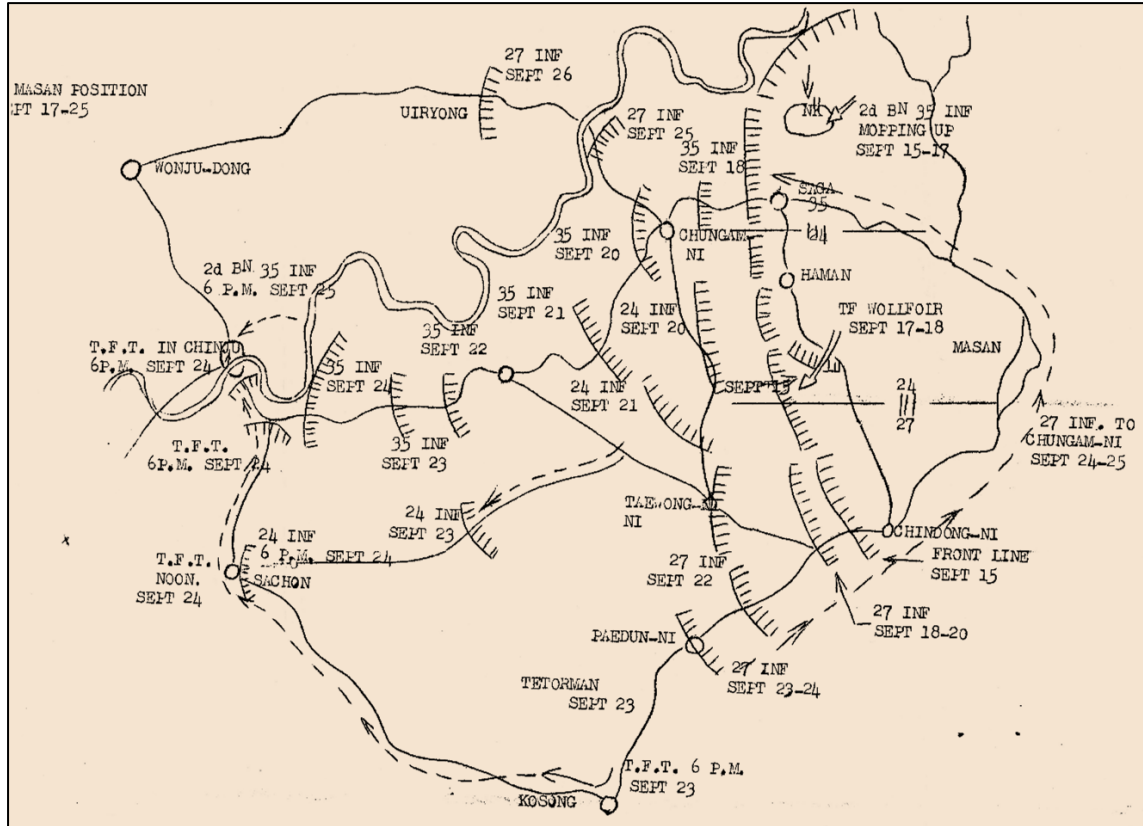


Figure 10. *Masan Position* (mid-September 1950), Map 7, in BG G.B. Barth’s *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea, July 1950 - May 1951*.

With larger portions of the North Korean frontage now reeling from their manpower losses and the latest failure to dislodge 25 ID, the division was ready counterattack. As the first

<sup>98</sup> This continued for parts of 25 ID into mid-September, as the division transitioned from consolidation area security activities to a role as part of the larger US Eighth Army offensive. See David, *Battleground Korea*, 4-9. See also: Barth, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, Map 7. See also: Pullen, *The Tropic Lightning in Korea*, 82.

<sup>99</sup> Quote from then division commander, MG William B. Kean, on 06 September 1950, describing his surprise at the division’s success in audaciously concentrating forces to close penetrations made by the NKPA in the forward line of troops while committing significant combat power in their rear areas to mitigate risk and defeat forward elements of the NKPA. See David, *Battleground Korea*, 4-10.

week of September 1950 ended, the attrition rate inflicted by the 25 ID on the North Korean main effort in the west was over fifty percent, between casualties and prisoners of war.<sup>100</sup> These heavy losses contributed to the conditions needed for the UN breakout from Pusan. To conduct this breakout, 25 ID and the remaining elements of Eighth Army would have to penetrate North Korean lines, as terrain did not permit an envelopment or flanking maneuver. The NKPA would not make this penetration easy, as they consolidated along their lines, retrograding the combat exhausted seventh North Korean division while the sixth North Korean division bounded past them to the north to cover their withdrawal. Nevertheless, on 16 September 1950 Eighth Army ordered an Army-wide frontal assault.<sup>101</sup> US Army doctrine in 1950 called for a transition to offense to destroy “the effectiveness of the enemy’s armed forces and his will to fight.”<sup>102</sup> In pursuing the destruction of the North Korean forces and their enmity, 25 ID had to facilitate five characteristics in their operational approach. First, the NKPA had to be captured or defeated “within the time and space limits” of the mission.<sup>103</sup> This meant defeating or destroying the remaining elements of the North Korean sixth and seventh divisions to prevent their escape and refit. Second, the Communists needed to be “compelled...to evacuate” their positions between the Pusan perimeter and Seoul.<sup>104</sup> These were already happening, but as *FM 3-0, Operations* recommends in the characteristics of the offense, an audacious and tempo-balanced offensive created space for other UN forces to maneuver while not allowing Communist forces the opportunity to rest. Third, their capture or defeat must “facilitate...future operations,” meaning 25 ID had to neutralize enemy forces south of Seoul before they could enable complementary

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<sup>100</sup> See David, *Battleground Korea*, 4-17.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 5-4 - 5-5. See also: Pullen, *The Tropic Lightning in Korea*, 2.

<sup>102</sup> US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 80.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

offensive action further north.<sup>105</sup> Fourth, these efforts should “produce a convergence” effect, owing to the responsibility of the division to maneuver in concentricity to the other UN forces on the front.<sup>106</sup> Fifth, the effects of the offensive penetration need to have an “easily identified” purpose, in this case, forcing the destruction or withdrawal of North Korean forces north of the Han River.<sup>107</sup> These five characteristics built on 25 ID’s ‘war of movement’ operational approach. Offering the greatest freedom of maneuver, 25 ID aimed to gain a “maximum advantage of position” before the enemy forces could stabilize.<sup>108</sup> Later reflecting on enemy capability to fight a war of movement, 25 ID senior leadership would comment that Communist forces had neither the command and control nor the “mobility, communications, or armor and artillery” to defend against a well-organized American assault.<sup>109</sup>

25 ID kept constant pressure on the NKPA elements it faced in the latter half of September 1950. In their zones of action, each 25 ID RCT handily turned, enveloped, or destroyed North Korean military capability. The rapidity with which 25 ID had transitioned overwhelmed the NKPA, so much that MG Kean continued to direct units towards “all-out attacks for the purpose of keeping the enemy off balance.”<sup>110</sup> Although advance was slower and deliberate at first, the exhausted Communist divisions began “gradually crumbling,” offering “sporadic resistance” as 25 ID forced them to abandon untenable positions.<sup>111</sup> Owing to their tenacious advance, 25 ID smartly reorganized combined ground and air strike packages, multiple times, to deny consolidation or recuperation to the enemy. With Task Force Torman, 27 RCT seized Kosong on 27 September along with enemy weaponry and transportation assets. Further

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<sup>105</sup> US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 80.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>109</sup> Williams, Comments made on departure from Korea, 5.

<sup>110</sup> David, *Battleground Korea*, 5-8.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 5-5 - 5-9.

south, 24 RCT's Task Force Blair was able to maneuver through Sachon, in pursuit of fleeing NKPA echelons. The resulting pursuit routed enemy resistance to the RCT's front and enabled 35 RCT to link-up with Task Force Torman and 27 RCT southeast of Chinju (see *figure 11*).<sup>112</sup> The US Ninth Corps recognized the success 25 ID was creating, ordering MG Kean to proceed towards Kunsan. "Enemy has been reeled back by your attacks. Essential that he not be allowed to organize for further defense, push your advances with vigor, destroying the enemy by deep penetrations, exploitation of weakness, and maneuvers in accordance with missions assigned."<sup>113</sup>

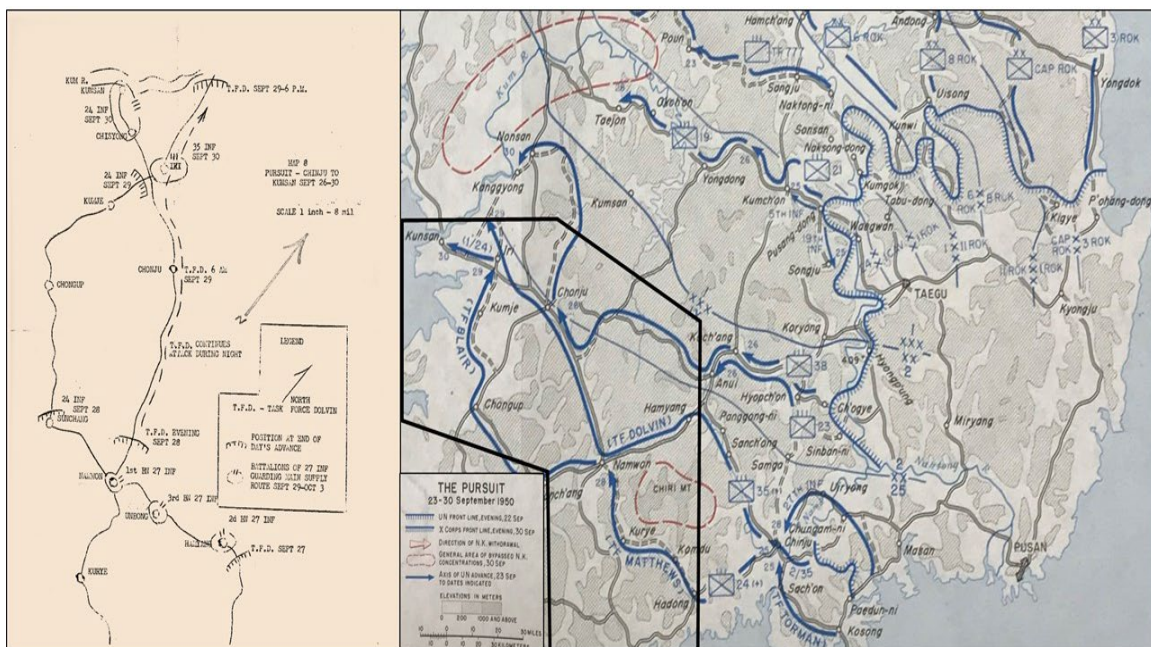


Figure 11. (L) *Pursuit - Chinju to Kunsan, Map 8, in BG G.B. Barth's Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea, July 1950 - May 1951*. (R) F. Temple, *The Pursuit*, Map Inset VIII, in LTC Roy E. Appleman's *US Army in Korea: South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*.

<sup>112</sup> The F. Temple map VIII (R) contains an black outlined inset by MAJ Kyle McElveen to show the area depicted in BG Barth's Map 8 (L). See also: Barth, *Tropic Lightning and Taro Leaf in Korea*, Map 8. See also: F. Temple, *The Pursuit*, Map Inset VIII, in LTC Appleman's *United States Army in the Korea War: South to the Nakdong*, 574. See also: David, *Battleground Korea*, 5-10.

<sup>113</sup> Quote from MG John B. Coulter, Commander, IX Corps, 23 September 1950 to MG Kean, CDR, 25 ID. See US Department of the Army, Historical Section, Office of the Army Chief of Staff, G3, *The Corps In Korea, A Brief Informal History of IX Corps (Group) in Korea: From 23 September 1950 to 1 September 1954* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1954), 1. See also: Pullen, *The Tropic Lightning in Korea*, 2.

In pursuing and defeating or forcing the withdrawal of all North Korean forces north and west, away from Masan, 25 ID was successful in transitioning with rapidity to the offense in a war of maneuver. 25 ID's tempo and concentration while executing their operational approach enabled the RCTs to operate concentrically to each other to overwhelm the remnants of the NKPA, and placed them in position for the eventual seizure of Kunsan in October 1950. These actions concluded the Masan breakout and the occupation of Chinju and Kunsan, where 25 ID would continue to stage for offensive operations supporting the UN advance north, in both securing Seoul and pursuing the NKPA across the 38 parallel.

## 25 ID on the offense and defense as an expeditionary force

In adapting concepts of deep penetration theory to massing, maneuver concentricity, and operational mobility from historical precedent, existing doctrine enabled 25 ID to achieve success in 1950. These theories were present from 25 ID's movement out of Japan, to their defense of Pusan, and their breakout at Masan. The staff planning, coordination, and leadership necessary to get 25 ID from occupational duty in Japan to combat in Korea is not unlike what is required to win the division fight in a multi-domain, contested operating environment today.

In examining this association, this case study compared the presence of selected elements of operational art and the characteristics of the offense and defense to the operating concepts present in *FSR 100-5, Operations* in 1950. In comparing the US Army's doctrine in 1950 to today, similarities in the 2018 LSCO concept and *FSR 100-5, Operations* are apparent throughout 25 ID's actions in 1950. Namely, the connections between the aforementioned doctrine documents the division's responsibility to "shape, dominate, and win the close fight."<sup>114</sup> Placing comparable emphasis on roles and responsibilities, the US Army's operating manual in 1950 describes the flexibility a division provides in "combining the action of various arms and

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<sup>114</sup> Michael D. Lundy, LTG, US Army, "Meeting the Challenge of Large-Scale Combat Operations Today and Tomorrow," special issue, *Military Review* 98, no. 5 (September - October 2018): 117.

services, to maintain combat over a considerable period of time, to fight sustained close combat, and to gain and hold ground.”<sup>115</sup> In the US Army’s 2018 update, further elaboration on the division reveals it has a “central role in large-scale combat operations...[impacting]...the ability to prevail in ground combat...a decisive factor in breaking an enemy’s will to continue a conflict.”<sup>116</sup>

In tying these successes to selected elements of operational art as an evaluation metric, 25 ID’s actions in Korea clearly depict the interrelated nature of operational reach and culmination, in their efficiency in deploying from Japan to Korea and forcing North Korean forces to overextend themselves. Their ability to enable Eighth US Army Korea time to build requisite combat power is also a powerful example of the division’s ability to influence operational reach. The operational tempo 25 ID maintained once they arrived in defensive positions in Pusan kept constant, unforgiving pressure on enemy forces, allowing for an opportunity at operational transition to the offense. Moreover, the division’s ability to anticipate enemy actions was apparent by their triumphs on the defensive and in transition to the offensive. The Tropic Lightning Division shrewdly mitigated risks with diluting combat power through timing, audacity, and surprise. The combination of these four elements of operational art enabled 25 ID’s swift transition from Japan to Korea and then from Pusan to Kunsan from July to October 1950.

Future high intensity, large-scale conflict similar to what 25 ID experienced in Korea is likely to rely on the division as the tactical to operational bridge. The adequately trained, manned, and equipped division will have the responsibility of winning the close fight in unrelenting combat where holding terrain and consolidating gains are paramount. “Success in large-scale combat operations against a peer threat requires [an evolution of focus] to expeditionary

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<sup>115</sup> US Department of the Army, *FSR 100-5, Operations* (1949), 256.

<sup>116</sup> US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (2018), 1-15.

operations.”<sup>117</sup> This requires tailoring the division as an expeditionary echelon, able to maintain tempo, extend operational reach, prevent their culmination while forcing transitions on an enemy, and mitigate risk to their force and operations. Commanders and staffs must “converge multi-domain capabilities at echelon with the tempo and intensity necessary to present the enemy with multiple dilemmas.”<sup>118</sup>

## Conclusion

### Proving the thesis and purpose of the study

This monograph argued a hypothesis, through qualitative research, that a US Army division is able to maneuver, fight, and win in LSCO through masterful application of select elements of operational art. Those elements are tempo, culmination, operational reach, and risk mitigation. The paper addressed this position by examining the doctrinal relation of *FSR 100-5, Operations* to *FM 3-0, Operations*. It further argued to the validity and connection of LSCO in relation to how the US Army has historically fought, expounding on lessons from the 25 ID’s campaign in Korea as historical evidentiary analysis. By demonstrating how 25 ID employed elements of operational art to maneuver and transition between the offense and defense in LSCO, this research proves the basis of current US Army doctrine to address the anticipation of high-intensity conflict as the future of ground warfare.

### Why it matters and the context for today’s US Army Warfighter

In proving LSCO as a viable concept in future ground wars, this monograph acts as an exemplar of how a unit can be successful at the operational level. Through the lens of a historical case study and evolution of military theory, the author explained the doctrinal blueprint 25 ID used to conduct offense and defense. In tracing the history, theory, and doctrine that contributed

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<sup>117</sup> Lundy, “Meeting the Challenge of Large-Scale Combat Operations Today and Tomorrow,” 112.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 113.

to 25 ID's success, this paper validates the tenants of LSCO proposed in the US Army's *FM 3-0, Operations* update and reemphasizes the significance maneuverability plays at the operational level. The ability to maneuver or prevent an opponent from doing so is key to winning on offense or defense and is thereby timeless. The aforementioned four elements of operational art that this monograph proposes are the most vital to that achieving maneuver, and thus offensive and defensive success in LSCO.

Emphasizing that mastering tempo, culmination, operational reach, and risk mitigation equate to maneuver superiority and therefore operational success in LSCO, this paper closes with the author's context for impact on future conflict. LSCO, above all else, is about integrating warfighting functions to achieve elevated maneuver disparity with one's opponent. In visualizing how 25 ID was able to attain maneuver superiority in late 1950, the reader comes away with two insights to use in future application. First, the reader gains a deeper appreciation for how history reinforces doctrine through theory. This means that by reexamining past success, through the lens of current doctrine, the reader quickly arrives at a higher level of understanding. Second, once the reader can visualize how employing the US Army's LSCO concept is feasible, they are able to make their own informed interpretations of existing theory and doctrine, potentially replicating success and avoiding failure. This stresses that only by describing the relationship of history and theory in producing doctrine, can a practitioner of war direct the use of maneuver doctrine, while reacting to their ever-changing operational environment, to achieve victory.



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