

SSP Working Paper
June 2004

**Route to a Stronger Alliance:
Command and Control of the
Second Infantry Division**

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Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE JUN 2007		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2004 to 00-00-2004	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Route to a Stronger Alliance: Command and Control of the Second Infantry Division				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, 02139-4307				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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Route to a Stronger Alliance: Command and Control of the Second Infantry Division

The Republic of Korea (ROK) and United States began their alliance during the dark days of the Korean War. The US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty formalized the relationship, where the two countries established their determination to defend the peninsula against attack¹. Due to its forward location between the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and Seoul, the U.S. Second Infantry Division (2 ID) continues to be the most visible symbol of the commitment of the United States to the defense of the ROK.



The Second Infantry Division (2 ID) was the first division deployed from the continental United States to the Korean Peninsula to help hold the Pusan Perimeter. It fought through the toughest battles of the war, redeployed to Ft. Lewis briefly, then returned to Korea in 1965 and has remained ever since.² The 14,323 soldiers, plus 1689 Korean Augmentation to the United States Army soldiers (KATUSAs), inhabit multiple camps throughout Kyong-gi and Kangwon Provinces between the DMZ and Seoul.³ The division is unique in the U.S. inventory in that it is organized into a heavy brigade consisting of two armor battalions and one mechanized infantry battalion, and an infantry brigade consisting of one mechanized infantry battalion and two air assault infantry battalions. A third brigade would deploy from the United States to complete the division. They are supported by a reinforced division artillery and an aviation brigade which includes a battalion of AH-64 Longbow Apache helicopters. The appropriate combat support and service support organizations complete the division.

The division's mission, as stated by their higher headquarters, the Eighth United States Army (EUSA), is to "deter war on the Korean peninsula by maintaining a high state of combat readiness and vigilance. 2 ID units "SECOND TO NONE" stand shoulder-to-shoulder with first-echelon Korean units immediately south of the DMZ."⁴ The 2 ID clearly understands their responsibility to fight within the alliance and hold a counter attack as part of the ROK VII Corps as one of their primary missions.⁵

The main organization that the Second Infantry Division “stands shoulder to shoulder” with is the Third Republic of Korea Army (TROKA). TROKA has the mission to defend the Munsan, Chorwan and Tongduchon approaches to Seoul, which are the traditional invasion routes and the terrain best suited to rapid mechanized advance.⁶ This is also the area where the 2 ID lives, yet the division works not for TROKA, but is a major subordinate unit of the Eighth United States Army.

The mission of the EUSA is:

Eighth United States Army (EUSA) supports deterrence of NK aggression against the Republic of Korea (ROK). Should deterrence fail, Eighth United States Army supports Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO), transitions to hostilities, generates combat power to support CINC UNC/CFC’s campaign, and provides combat support and combat service support to assigned, attached, and other designated forces within the KTO. On order, conducts combat operations.⁷

As stated, EUSA’s primary mission is to generate the combat power necessary to execute the campaign as required by the commander of the United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command (UNC/CFC)⁸, not to command and control tactical units.

The strategic situation in the ROK is undergoing rapid change. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) has heighten tensions by admitting possession of nuclear weapons, and that it will begin reprocessing fuel rods to make the raw materials for additional warheads. They have also admitted to a Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) program that could provide additional fissionable material for internal or export use, and concurrently withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). These actions have greatly increased the risks of conflict and have put a severe strain on the alliance.⁹

The Republic of Korea is also experiencing an increase in anti-American sentiment. This was exacerbated by the tragic death of two Korean schoolgirls beneath an American armored vehicle and widespread opposition to the war in Iraq. The result has been a popular movement for the withdrawal of US troops from the peninsula.¹⁰

Finally, the nuclear tensions and the anti-American sentiment came at a time when the US had announced its intent to move the Second Infantry Division south, away from the DMZ and to examine future force structure changes. These could include cuts in ground forces, movement to a rotational base of some form, or a combination of both.¹¹

Currently the 2 ID is assigned to the Eighth United States Army, which means that they are totally responsible for all aspects of command and control, discipline, training and logistics for the division.



However, there are other forms of command relationships. An operational control (OPCON) relationship would give the “authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission....”¹² In other words, the assigned headquarters would be responsible for tactical employment and key combined training, but not responsible for logistics, administration and unit organization.

This paper will explore the Second Infantry Division’s command relationship within the US-ROK alliance from the standpoint of the coalition warfare precepts of doctrine, communication, training, culture and unity of command. It will evaluate the efficacy of the current arrangement and propose that there are key advantages to placing the 2 ID under the

operational control of one of the corps headquarters within the TROKA. This will lead to recommendations for future command relationships as the current crisis continues, the alliance matures, and the US transforms its force structure footprint in Northeast Asia.

Doctrine

As befits a long-standing alliance, the doctrine that allows U. S. forces to fight effectively at the side of the ROK Army have been developed and refined over many years. The Combined Forces Command (CFC) is a joint and combined command that lives and works together every day. The Second Infantry Division conducts some form of alliance training daily because it is a necessity to coordinate with their ROK hosts to even move about the country. Yet doctrine, like capabilities of various armies, does not stand still. It is a

dynamic entity that can be mastered only by constant practice. GEN Robert W. Riscassi, a former commander of U.S. Forces Korea stated, “Doctrine is not contained simply at one level of war – strategic, operational, or tactical – it embodies all. Campaign execution demands that these levels of war become inextricably linked.”¹³ In other words, tactical doctrinal issues can have major effects on the effectiveness of the campaign despite apparent strategic doctrinal congruence. The Second Infantry Division’s doctrinal problems with attack helicopters and infantry illustrate this point.

An example of this is the use of AH-64 Longbow Apaches in tactical operations. As the operations officer (G3) for the Second Infantry Division, I participated in multiple combined exercises where the division worked as part of a ROK Army Corps. Usually from the first moments of our command relationship, the ROK Army Corps Staff would make inquiries into the status of our attack helicopters and how soon the corps could employ them. This would begin the discussion where the division staff would explain that as a divisional asset, the Apaches were essential to provide the synergistic effect necessary to exploit the total combat power of the division. Notwithstanding this discussion, the division would soon receive an order to send an Apache company to another division sector to respond to a Corps priority mission. Normally this was without the time to properly coordinate intelligence assets, suppression of enemy air defenses and link-up with appropriate ground units. The results predictably were poor with little gained from the effort, and the loss of vital aircraft.

Another example is the employment of light infantry. The ROK Army is primarily a light infantry army. However, their ranks are filled with conscripts in the service for 26 months, have little night vision equipment or laser sighting devices, and thus are primarily employed in a static defense role. U.S. light infantry, by contrast, are all volunteers, all have some form of night vision and laser aiming device, and are optimally used in an offensive role. In combined exercises American officers are often surprised at the relative lack in offensive punch provided by ROK Army infantry and likewise, ROK Army officers often do not appreciate the offensive options afforded them by U.S. infantry, especially in night operations.

The solution to the above doctrinal mismatches will not be found through additional combined exercises under the current model. Typical combined exercises select multiple ROK Army units to cycle through training with the division, or often consist of a couple of days training with a U.S. counterpart unit. Rather, the procedures for working together will only come from an understanding of the organization, equipment and training that led to the doctrine in the first place. If the 2 ID were under OPCON of a ROK Army Corps, then these issues would be addressed on practically a daily basis. The ROK Army Corps would

supervise the training and better understand the organization of the U.S. units, and they would be held accountable as such by the CFC Commander. The result would be a more complete understanding of the employment of the Second Infantry Division, and more efficient application of the combat power of this unique division. This command relationship would also lend itself to inculcating lessons from U.S. aviation and infantry operations into future ROK army doctrinal and equipment decisions. The end result would be a tremendous positive impact on the total combat readiness of the Combined Forces Command.

These doctrinal issues only get worse as we consider future force alignment and structure changes that could happen on the peninsula. First, if the 2 ID moved south from its current locations they would have even less contact on a daily basis with the ROK army and an obviously lower ability to identify doctrinal difference and work them out together. Distance will by its very nature make combined training more difficult, and therefore less likely to occur. A rotational unit plan would exacerbate this problem even further. Second, the U.S. will likely consider use of new organizations (Stryker Brigades and Units of Action) in theater and will continue to adjust our doctrine based upon transformational equipment and lessons learned from current operations. Without some formal arrangement that demands close cooperation, the tactical doctrines of the alliance partners will continue to diverge.

An OPCON relationship between the Second Infantry Division and ROK Army Corps would go a long way toward fixing these problems. The ROK Army Corps would be held accountable for executing coalition training objectives despite the difficulties of distance. The Corps would be the Korean center for excellence to understand U.S. Army transformation and integration of new equipment and capabilities. Finally, the doctrinal lessons would be captured within one corps to make it easier for the Combined Forces Command to document, validate, and distribute so they truly turn into lessons learned.

Communications

There is no aspect of coalition operations more crucial than effective communication. The sharing of critical intelligence, necessary logistical planning and real-time targeting depend on clear and accurate communications.¹⁴ No plan can be issued, no direction given, and no operational execute order can be delivered without translation into the proper language and adequate technical delivery means. Despite living with the alliance every day, the Second Infantry Division must improve in both these areas.

The Korean language is exceedingly difficult for the average English speaker to learn. With one-year tour lengths for the majority of the soldiers in 2 ID, there is little time or incentive to learn more than a

few phrases. The division's main source of translators comes from the 1,689 Korean soldiers who are part of the divisions through the KATUSA program.¹⁵ The KATUSA program was initiated during the Korean War to fill gaps in American unit ranks when Korean national soldiers performed duties as stretcher-bearers and laborers. It has evolved to the point where KATUSA soldiers fill multiple specialties in the division, from infantryman to medics and supply clerks. Their language capabilities range from very good to poor. In fact, only thirty KATUSAs are considered translators, and of that, all but five are in the Division headquarters.¹⁶

The reliance on KATUSAs for translation purposes is also quite dangerous from an operational standpoint. Aside from the thirty translators described above, all the other soldiers perform duties that take the place of a U.S. soldier. Their talent and skill as a tank gunner or forward observer will be a lot more critical in combat situations than working in an operations section or as the company commander's translator.



KATUSAs in training

No doubt the tank crews would be the priority to the obvious detriment of the unit's ability to coordinate.

The division's operations officer supervised the twenty translators who worked in the division liaison section. Their language capability was exceptional as they were a highly select group. However, even among them, many had difficulty with spoken English. On the other hand, American soldiers in the liaison section have no language requirement. The section would be tasked to the last man working continuously for days to translate a major Corps order.

For the executions phase of most combined exercises, they had to be distributed to multiple subordinate brigades and battalions to accomplish the mission. This obviously detracted from their main mission of liaison with adjacent and higher headquarters of the division. ROK units are in worse shape for the most part, with few soldiers who could be considered fluent in English.

Another aspect of the language issue is the language capability of the leaders of the respective countries. All ROK Army officers take English from primary school through college. American officers on the other hand have no Korean language training prior to assuming their duties in Korea. If an American officer in Washington, D.C. were ordered to take command in Germany, he would have to attend a four-week

basic German course called Gateway. However, no equivalent course in Korean is offered newly assigned commanders.¹⁷

The technical aspects of communication demand equal attention. The U.S. Army uses Mobile Subscriber Equipment (MSE) to provide the framework for the passing of voice (telephone) and data between headquarters. The ROK Army has a similar system called the AN/TTC-95K SPIDER tactical switchboard system, which provides the same service. The 122d Signal Battalion of the Second Infantry Division participated in testing of the two systems to determine compatibility. According to LTC Eric Albert, the 122d Battalion Commander, the result was that you could indeed pass voice transmissions and data with certain adapters. However, because of classification issues between the two countries, and lack of computer firewalls powerful enough to limit access to the data, the two systems cannot be connected to pass data.¹⁸ This means that to pass data to ROK Army headquarters, the division would not only have to send a liaison section, but they would need to take a considerable portion of the division's MSE equipment as well.

If the 2 ID were under the operational control of a ROK Army Corps, it would be forced to deal with these problems every day. The requirements of daily operations would stress our language capabilities beyond the breaking point very easily. Out of survival we would re-visit the manning of necessary liaison sections and staff with the appropriate talent and language skills. The Second Infantry Division would demand the assignment of language trained officers and establish a language program for its leaders. The command relationship would certainly provide an incentive for investing the time and talent necessary to design the proper computer firewalls, and the trust and confidence built by the relationship might negate some of the reason for doing so. It should also provide the incentive for accurate translation software and other automated tools that would greatly simplify this issue. The result would be an organization customized for operations on the peninsula, but would also provide a blueprint for follow-on divisions from the U.S. and for ROK divisions to emulate as well.

Alignment and force structure changes on the peninsula would not help this situation in the least. With movement and consolidation in the southern part of the country, there would be even less need to communicate with the ROK Army on a consistent basis. Rotation from outside the country on a likely reduced basis from the current twelve months would likewise provide little incentive to improve our capabilities. Only a formal command relationship would demand the interaction necessary to be truly interoperable within the alliance.

Training

Combined training is the only way to optimize the generation of combat power through a melding of the various unit capabilities within the alliance. Tough, hard training designed to push the forces to their limits will determine the flaws and weaknesses in doctrine and communications as previously illustrated. Training of the Second Infantry Division in Korea is unique because its units are located in many different camps scattered throughout two Korean provinces. Even after the planned consolidation of units is complete, the 2 ID will still be separated from its major training areas. It is also a highly urbanized environment through which we conduct maneuver training of heavy forces. We also have an Army headquarters that is required to transform itself into a Corps to execute major training events. Placing the Second Infantry Division under operational control of a ROK Army Corps would simplify many of these unique training conditions, and at the same time increase both interoperability and the training level of the ROK Army Corps.

The Eighth United States Army recognizes the necessity for combined training. In their 2004-2005 Command Training guidance they state:

For us to achieve combined war fighting readiness and the capability to fight tonight and win, we must focus on the following combined training objectives: identify core combined competencies, share TTPs on how to fight in the Korean Theater of Operations; professionally develop our leaders; and build and sustain the ROK/US alliance team. All MSCs down to brigade level will develop and execute a combined training program with their ROK Army counterparts.¹⁹

The main problem with a decentralized approach to combined training as described above is that it is not very efficient in Korea. The division operations officer (G3) would hold a training meeting once a month that was attended by every operations officer in the division. All the ROK Army Corps would send representatives, and all wanted to do some form of combined training with U.S. units. This training would run the gamut from soccer games to combined river crossings. Of course both the Eighth United States Army training guidance and Second Infantry Division training guidance would prescribe the latter. But, if the American unit's Korean partnership unit, which was also their camp's next-door neighbor, was the one that wanted soccer, they would be hard pressed to avoid the game. Many battalions and brigades had multiple partnership units for critical reasons, such as war plans, and for mundane purposes, like access to a local training area. The U.S. unit would most likely conduct the river crossing as well as play the soccer match. The result was a lot of activity, which often did not focus on the key elements of alliance operations.



A squad from the 23d Infantry Regiment, 2D Infantry Division, moves out from bunker positions on patrol duty at Kumgangsan, Korea. Jan. 1952.

The Republic of Korea is one of the most densely populated countries on the planet. Combined with extreme mountainous terrain over 70% of the country, there is extreme competition for training land by both the civilian population and the ROK Army.²⁰ In the 2 ID area of operations there is only one major maneuver training area to which the U.S. has access. This is the Mu-Gun-Ri or Twin Bridges Training area (approximate usable area 8 Km by 4 Km), and the U.S. has access to that area for 13 weeks per year (increasing to 17 in 2005).²¹ This is a minimal amount of land to train a heavy division, including its combat support and combat service support units. Despite the agreements, there is often encroachment on the training area from both civilians and ROK Army units. As a result, units coordinate on their own for additional training areas from the ROK Army. Without a formal ROK Army sponsor, unit efforts often fail, or gain permission for training facilities too late in the planning cycle to be used. A similar scenario occurs when agreed upon land is encroached by ROK Army units. It often takes most of a day to rectify the situation, as the complaint has to go up through the Eighth United States Army, over to the ROK Army and

then down to the unit on the land. A day's maneuver training lost, when you only have 13 weeks per year to train the division, is a major setback, and could be an irreplaceable loss for some support units which may only get a few days each year for maneuver training.

In April 2003 the Second Infantry Division participated in a major collective training event, the division Warfighter exercise, run by the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) from Ft. Leavenworth, KS. Every division in the U.S. Army participates in these exercises that are designed to test the planning and command and control procedures of the division.²² Normally, the U.S. Corps headquarters for the unit is the controlling headquarters for the exercise, for the 2 ID, however, the Eight United States Army put together a team that controlled and acted as the Second Infantry Division's higher headquarters throughout the exercise. As a participant in the exercise, the EUSA was superb, but paid a tremendous cost. First, they had to put aside their own duties while they deployed to the field for two weeks to conduct the exercise. Add to that a preparatory exercise earlier in the year and the time involved in planning and orders process and you get an extraordinary effort with limited manpower. The other units, within the EUSA, paid this price as their daily requirements were pushed back in the queue so the staff could support the division. Second, there was an opportunity cost to the CFC. This exercise is a fully instrumented command post exercise where all the intelligence, operations, communications and logistics functions are stretched. If a ROK Army Corps were the higher headquarters, it would have created a tremendous opportunity to learn, test our doctrinal and communications issues in a very stressful environment, and make real progress toward understanding the way we will fight together on the peninsula.

These training issues would be easier to solve with a formal command relationship under a ROK Army Corps. Partnership units would be set based upon war fighting needs, and combined training would be organized within the Corps to bring focus to the training and avoid activities that do not contribute to combat readiness. The 2 ID would have a ROK Army higher headquarters to coordinate for appropriate training areas, arbitrate disputes, and quickly settle encroachment issues. Finally, it would be a shame to ever conduct a Warfighter exercise without involving a ROK Army Corps headquarters. Training is truly the only crucible where we can capture lessons without bloodshed, and to let this opportunity for the highest quality joint and combined training escape is very unfortunate.

Moving the division to the south or changing the force's structure makes these problems worse. If the division moves away from their agreed upon training areas, they will be forced to look for new ones in unfamiliar territory. There will be new competition for land with ROK Army units with whom Second

Infantry Division has never worked, and civilians who will regard our activity with suspicion. Rotation from the states will result in the same problem. A ROK Army higher headquarters will be necessary to adjudicate the partnership and land issues. Another aspect of changing force structure on the peninsula is a possible reduction in strength of the Eighth United States Army as well. That might preclude them from acting as a BCTP higher headquarters in the future. A ROK Army Corps headquarters, which participates and trains together with the 2 ID from planning through execution, will solve the EUSA manpower problems and provide invaluable lessons to the Combined Forces Command.

Cultural Differences

In all coalitions, including long standing alliances, cultural considerations are key to effective operations. The U.S. Army's capstone Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, states, "Understanding and dealing with cultural considerations can make the difference between success and failure in unified action. National and organizational culture, language, communication, media relations, and law enforcement all play important roles in this environment."²³ Poor understanding of the cultural differences in Korea can lead to a lack of trust, mutual respect, and cooperation that can isolate U.S. forces and loosen the bonds of the alliance.

One key cultural difference is the Korean concept of connectionism, or the establishment of all business relationships on personal connections. Korean character evolved from the principles and teachings of Confucianism, which permeated the social and political fabric of society for five hundred years. One of the main precepts of Confucianism is that trust between friends is a prime virtue, and from this came the concept of connectionism. As a result, business, including military business, does not get done without a significant amount of time spent cultivating and nurturing personal relationships.²⁴ With the Second Infantry Division subordinate to EUSA, there is little incentive to form close personal relationships with any Korean officers. Of course there is social, and some military contact, but as stated earlier, this contact is with many different units for short periods of time. There is no formal framework to force repetitive contact that would result in close personal relationships. The result is that few members of the division ever form the friendships upon which effective operations in Korean society are based.

However, if the Second Infantry Division were under the operational control of a ROK Army Corps, there would be daily contact between U.S. and ROK officers in the course of conducting normal business. Partnership units would be formalized so that units would train with the same units, plan future operations, and coordinate operational details in all aspects of mobilization and war plans. This daily contact alone

would foster the personal relationships necessary for close efficient work within Korean culture. This would lead to a real feeling of kinship between the 2 ID and the ROK Army, and would enhance the combat capabilities of both.

Movement of the Second Infantry Division to the southern part of the peninsula or using rotational units would make close cooperation almost impossible. Simply moving the division to a new area would certainly break the current relationships they have, however haphazard they may be. Without some formal working relationship in their new home, it will be difficult to establish new contacts and the division will become even more isolated from their hosts. This is especially true if the division is reorganized under some rotational operational system. However, if they were part of a ROK Army Corps, the unit would take ownership of the division, facilitate the move and integration into new facilities, and provide a consistent base upon which rotational units could rely.

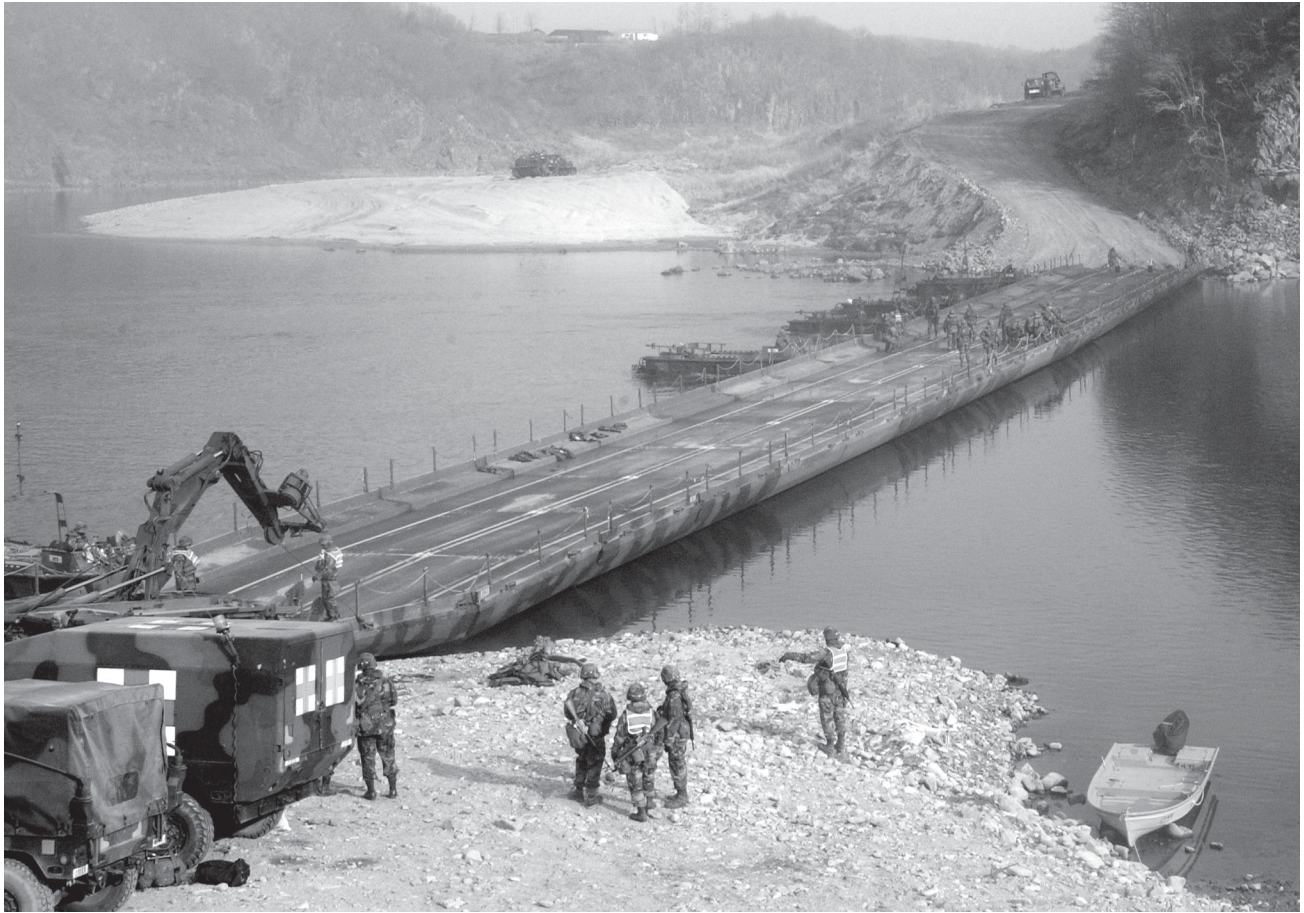
Unity of Command

Unity of command is the principle of war that all coalitions must achieve to be an efficient fighting force. U.S. Field Manual 100-8, *The Army In Multinational Operations*, describes unity of command as:

The principle of unity of command is better explained as unity of effort for multinational operations. Successful multinational operations center on achieving unity of effort. The unity is extremely difficult to achieve without each commander's individual attention. There must be a certain spirit of cooperation among the nations, and each participating nation must agree to provide the MNF commander sufficient authority to achieve unity of effort.²⁵

Only through close cooperation, mutual respect and confidence can the combat power possible through the sum of each country's capabilities be realized. This unity is also the Achilles heel of the alliance which anti-American forces are only too ready to exploit. Changing the command relationship of the Second Infantry Division can have a tremendous impact on improving unity of command by neutralizing anti-American propaganda and demonstrating mutual confidence in our ROK Army allies.

Operations at the lowest tactical level can quickly escalate into strategic issues. In June 2002, the 2 ID was involved in a horrible accident during a major training exercise in the Twin Bridges training area. Two young girls were killed after being hit by a U.S. armored vehicle moving on a road into the training area.²⁶ The deaths were a great tragedy felt deeply by all in the division, and the Eighth United States Army did everything it could to investigate the incident and mitigate the family's suffering. However, anti-American forces in Korea seized on this incident and used it as a major propaganda issue to serve their



Engineers from the 2nd Infantry Division connect an improvised bridge across the Imjin River.

purposes.²⁷ It became the catalyst for months of violent protests, interruption of training exercises, firebomb attacks on U.S. installations, and assaults on U.S. personnel. The reason that it was such an effective propaganda weapon was that the incident was perceived to be an example of foreign soldiers running amok on Korean sovereign soil. Despite the obvious fact that the only reason American forces train is to fight along side their Korean brothers, only the U.S. forces were identified as the culprits. The end result of a mistake at company level was the escalation of a crisis that struck at the basic fabric of the alliance.

Confidence is a two way street. Within an alliance, each contingent must feel that the other can count on its commitment to the mission and its own battlefield competence. The Second Infantry Division is based side by side with multiple ROK Army Corps within TROKA. They pass each other's camps and conduct combined training exercises, yet the Eighth United States Army, stationed in Seoul, is the division's higher headquarters. This arrangement gives the appearance of a lack of confidence on the part of the U.S. to

entrust our forces to ROK commanders. From the ROK Army side, they could only question the United States' faith in the ROK Army's battlefield competence, or the commitment of the U.S. to defend the peninsula. These perceptions do not bode well for the nurturing of mutual confidence.

If the Second Infantry Division was under OPCON of a ROK Army Corps, the situation would be totally different. The training accident would have been part of ROK Army exercise by its very definition. Anti-American forces would have been neutralized as the U.S. units could not have been isolated, and the ROK Army would have assumed responsibility. Imagine the prestige of the ROK Army with the U.S. giving OPCON of one of its only ten divisions. The ROK Army confidence would soar, and they would be convinced of the United States' commitment to the peninsula and the belief in the competence of their allies. This would lead directly to better combined efforts and increased unity of command within the alliance.

The probable redeployment within the peninsula and restructuring of the Second Infantry Division make changes to current command relationships even more vital. As the 2 ID moves into unfamiliar training areas with a local populace not used to the training tempo of U.S. units, there will be accidents and contacts which will be exploited by anti-American forces. The umbrella of working under a ROK Army Corps would not only mitigate the fallout from incidents, but would ease the transition into the new location as it would not seem as a purely foreign invasion. Movement south from the DMZ and restructuring the division can be perceived as a lessening of American commitment to the alliance. By tying our major combat force on the peninsula to a ROK Army Corps, the U.S. can credibly establish its commitment and assuage the fears of abandonment. Unity of command can be maintained even as the U.S. goes through the chaos of redeployment and restructuring its forces with very little cost.

Recommendations

My recommendations are twofold. First, the Combined Forces Command must make a thorough review of war plans, possible future basing, and planned force structure changes. Of course the war fighting requirements will take priority, but locations of bases and training areas will have a great impact on the daily life of the division, thus, they should be included in the discussion. From this review, the combatant commander will identify the ROK Army Corps that should receive operational control of the Second Infantry Division, and seek appropriate authority from Washington to give the order. Second, the 2 ID should serve under the operational control of that Corps and establish a memorandum of agreement to maintain the appropriate ties to the Eighth United States Army to ensure any U.S. unique support requirements are met.

The main counterargument to this proposal is the visceral one that American soldiers do not serve under foreign command. However, U.S. units have served under foreign commanders since 1776, including under ROK Army command in the early days of the Korean War. In U. S. Army Field Manual 3-0, *OPERATIONS* it states, “In certain circumstances, it may be prudent or advantageous to place Army forces under OPCON of a foreign commander.”²⁸ Since the U.S. Army’s experience and doctrine undercut the foreign command argument, we need to move forward and face the realities of this situation. However, this argument does mask the true difficulties that the 2 ID will face.

The initial transition will be difficult. The Second Infantry Division must still rely on the Eighth United States Army for administration and logistical support. This will force them to report to two masters, and will be difficult at first. Communications with their new ROK Army Corps, both from a technical and language perspective, will be a great challenge, and there will be misunderstandings and confusion. Cultural differences will cause frustration until they are mastered. Yet all these difficulties can be overcome, and they must be prior to experiencing them out on the battlefield.

To most military officers, this seems like a very uncomfortable situation. Few relish even the concept of foreign command, much less look forward to the tremendous amount of work it will take to make this an efficient organization. However, the situation on the Korea peninsula is not an ordinary one. The alliance faces grave threats from a nuclear-armed North Korea, and an undercurrent of anti-Americanism present today in South Korea. The last thing the U.S. and The Republic of Korea can afford is the appearance of a weakening of the alliance at this critical juncture.²⁹ Despite the misgivings of some, and the frustration and work involved, this will be the right move to signal the strength of our bilateral ties.

Providing operational control of the 2 ID to a ROK Army Corps would force improvement in our understanding of each other’s doctrine and capabilities. The vital communications issues would have to be addressed immediately to accomplish everyday operations, and would result in changes to both organization and equipment to facilitate alliance operations. Training would be enhanced, as every operation would have a coalition element that would increase the capability of the Second Infantry Division, but also provide invaluable lessons necessary for follow-on division to integrate easily into operations on the peninsula. Each side will work to overcome cultural differences, and establish key personal relationships. Finally, adopting this concept will be a bold demonstration of the confidence the U.S. has in the ROK Army and America’s commitment to the defense of our allies. This will greatly enhance unity of command and strengthen the alliance itself in the face of crisis.

Endnotes

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