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CHINESE COMMUNIST INTERVENTION IN THE KOREAN WAR:
MISCALCULATION OR PROVOCATION?

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U. S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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by

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19 ABSTRACT (continued)

This study is a historical analysis of the Chinese Communist intervention in the Korean War from the perspective of the intelligence available to General Douglas Mac Arthur prior to the Chinese Communist counteroffensive. It answers whether MacArthur should have known his drive toward the Yalu River would provoke the Chinese Communists' overt military intervention in the Korean War on 25 November 1950.

This thesis considers the significant, credible intelligence available to the various levels of the US military and national intelligence hierarchies. The interpretations of the intelligence and the resulting estimates of Chinese Communist intent significantly affect the national and military policy makers.

The evidence is presented chronologically and is considered on three levels: strategic intelligence, operational intelligence, and tactical intelligence. Strategic intelligence emanated from international and diplomatic sources. Operational intelligence was obtained in the Far East, particularly the People's Republic of China, but not within the boundaries of either North or South Korea. Tactical or battlefield intelligence was the confirmation or repudiation of analyses derived from strategic and operational intelligence.

Prior to MacArthur's final offensive in November 1950, he received sufficient significant and credible intelligence to indicate a Chinese Communist intent to intervene in the war. MacArthur knew of key national intelligence indicators of a hardening of Chinese national resolve. He had accurate information about the relocation of large numbers of Chinese Communist combat forces to Manchuria and into North Korea. MacArthur also had the battlefield intelligence that clearly indicated Chinese involvement prior to their 25 November counteroffensive. The Chinese Communist intent was clear.

The study concludes the General MacArthur is culpable for his failure or refusal to accept valid Chinese Communist warnings.

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

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ABSTRACT

CHINESE COMMUNIST INTERVENTION IN THE KOREAN WAR:

MISCALCULATION OR PROVOCATION? A study of the failure to predict the Chinese Communist intervention in the Korean War, November 1950, by Major August W. Bremer, Jr., USA, 90 pages.

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ABSTRACTED
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In late September 1950, General Douglas MacArthur's United Nations Command (UNC) reversed the tide in the Korean War. An impending disaster, the loss of the Republic of Korea, turned into a decisive victory through imaginative leadership, audacity, and brave fighting by thousands of American, South Korean, and other United Nations forces. UNC forces broke out of defensive positions around the port of Pusan on the southeast coast and landed forces at Inchon, the port of the South Korean capital of Seoul, halfway up the country on the west coast. The two halves of this giant pincer squeezed the life out of the previously victorious North Korean People's Army (NKPA). UNC forces were in position along a line running west to east from Seoul to the Sea of Japan. They planned to continue the counteroffensive across the 38th Parallel, the "border" between the People's Republic of Korea (PRK) - North Korea - and the Republic of Korea (ROK) - South Korea. The UNC objectives were to capture the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, complete the destruction of the NKPA, and secure a peaceful and united Korean peninsula.

On 9 October 1950, the UNC crossed the 38th Parallel and entered North Korea with the mission of destroying the North Korean Armed Forces, disarming remaining NKPA units, and enforcing the terms of a surrender.¹ However, between 9 October and 28 November 1950, when General MacArthur stated he faced "an entirely new war,"² something went terribly wrong. Rather than completing the destruction of the remnants of the virtually ineffective NKPA, the UNC entered into the hardest fight of its short life -- a fight against the competent, well-trained, "seasoned", and professional army of the People's Republic of China (PRC)-Communist China. When the full weight of this new enemy struck, the UNC conducted what the military historian S. L. A. Marshall called "the longest retreat in US military history."³ In the process, the UNC lost the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, the South Korean capital of Seoul, and 50,000 combat soldiers. UNC lines were finally stabilized in mid-January 1951, more than 40 miles south of Seoul. Renewed UNC offensive operations recaptured the city and advanced northward but ground to a halt in a painfully stagnant war of attrition. The UNC positions became the border between North and South Korea in the armistice signed on 27 July 1953.

What caused this catastrophic reversal? Were General Douglas MacArthur and the UNC caught unaware by the Chinese intervention in what the United States hoped

to keep a "localized war" without Chinese or Soviet intervention? Was the Chinese deception so complete that there were no warnings or indications of their large-scale intervention and the resultant escalation of the war? It is the intent of this paper to analyze the Communist Chinese intervention within the framework of intelligence and warning indicators available to General MacArthur, the United Nations Command, and US national-level decision makers.

Did General MacArthur know that the UNC's drive across the 38th Parallel to the Yalu River in Korea in the fall of 1950 would provoke the Communist Chinese Government's direct military intervention in the Korean War? Should he have known?

The purpose of this paper is to answer these questions. What intelligence was available, and at what levels? How was intelligence interpreted, and were the interpretations accepted and believed by the various responsible officials? To use these questions as stepping stones over which this paper arrives at an answer to the basic question presented above, it is necessary to consider the several types and levels of intelligence indicators and warnings and determine what agencies were responsible for analysis and evaluation.

An initial historical background chapter will cover events from the end of World War II, when the Korean peninsula was artificially divided at the 38th Parallel,

through 27 September 1950 when JCS message 92801, told General MacArthur "... you are authorized to conduct mil (sic) operations , including amphibious and airborne landings or ground operations north of the 38th Parallel in Korea"⁴ The chapter will begin with a "broad brush" of selected significant events until the invasion by the NKPA on 25 June 1950, and will set the stage for the Korean War by presenting the overall situation in the Far East. It is not presented to explain causative factors for the war; rather, it serves only as background for further study. The war is highlighted and summarized through the invasion, initial US and UN reactions, early UNC defeats, the consolidation and defense of the Pusan Perimeter, offensive operations northward to the recapture of Seoul, MacArthur's authorization to cross the 38th Parallel, and the attacks across the 38th Parallel from 30 September to 9 October 1950.

Subsequent chapters will chronologically address intelligence indicators and warnings available on three basic levels: strategic, operational, and tactical. Strategic intelligence is identified as that emanating from international or diplomatic sources. For example, Western newspapers reported several public statements by Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese Communist Party Chairman, and Chou En-lai, the Premier and Foreign Minister. These and other statements announced Communist Chinese sentiments

and were, perhaps, warnings that they would not "stand by idly"⁵ as UN forces crossed the 38th Parallel and advanced into North Korea. Additionally, Premier Chou warned the Indian Ambassador to the PRC, K. M. Panikkar, that in crossing the 38th Parallel, the Americans would encounter Chinese resistance.⁶ It was the responsibility of the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and other national-level intelligence agencies to collect, analyze, evaluate, and provide this intelligence to responsible decision makers. It was the responsibility of the decision makers to judge whether these and similar statements were true warnings of Chinese Communist intentions or were "diplomatic blackmail," as General MacArthur claimed⁷. The perceptions of US national-level policy makers and the degree of credibility they afforded these statements at that time are significant in evaluating MacArthur's analysis.

Operational intelligence is defined as that intelligence obtained in the Far East, but not within the boundaries of North or South Korea, that could relate to the military operations being pursued by the UNC. An example is the relocation to Manchuria in mid-1950 of several CCF Armies, two of which spearheaded the CCF counteroffensive across the Yalu in November 1950.⁸ Perhaps restrictions imposed upon General MacArthur by President Truman disrupted the joint efforts of

national-level intelligence agencies and the UNC operational intelligence staff.

Finally, tactical or battlefield intelligence is also discussed. While a necessity for the tactical commander, this level of intelligence is, to the operational commander, more confirmation or verification of analyses derived from strategic and operational intelligence. There were reports prior to 28 November 1950 of ethnic Korean "volunteers" from China fighting with the NKPA; there were, likewise, reports of apparently isolated CCF actions in North Korea. The UNC had occasion to interrogate captured enemy prisoners who spoke neither Korean nor Japanese, only Chinese. The collection, analysis, and dissemination of this intelligence was obviously within the responsibilities and capabilities of the UNC. All three levels of intelligence combine to create a picture which, when viewed in its entirety, with the luxury of 37 years of hindsight, seems clearly to show that General MacArthur could and should have anticipated Communist Chinese intervention in the Korean War.

That the CCF counteroffensive in November 1950 surprised the UN forces in Korea, General MacArthur, and the US government is clear from the results. A concluding chapter evaluates all previously presented intelligence data from MacArthur's standpoint. It details what he knew and what he should have known, what he did and what he

should have done. Ultimately, what General MacArthur should have done is based upon the author's subjective determination of what any objective, rational theater commander should have done in light of all the evidence presented.

NOTES

¹ Message, US JCS to CINCFE, Number JCS 92801, 27 September 1950, (Unclassified), pp. 1-3, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog-1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 14A, hereafter cited as JCS 92801.

² Douglas MacArthur, "Communique #14, 28 November 1950," in A Soldier Speaks: Public Papers and Speeches of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, ed. Vorin E. Whan, Jr. (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1965), p. 229.

³ S. L. A. Marshall quoted in John F. O'Shaughnessy, Jr., "The Chinese Intervention in Korea: An Analysis of Warning," Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence Thesis, Defense Intelligence College, Washington, DC, 1985, p. 2.

⁴ JCS 92801.

⁵ "Chou Says China Won't Stand Aside," New York Times, 2 October 1950, sec. 1, p. 3; and "China's Reds Again Warn US on Korea," New York Times, 12 October 1950, sec. 1, p. 5.

⁶ D. Clayton James, The Years of MacArthur, vol. 3, Triumph and Disaster, 1945-1964 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985), p. 489.

⁷ Charles A. Willoughby and John Chamberlain, MacArthur, 1941-1951 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), p. 403; and T. R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness (New York: MacMillan, 1963), p. 282.

⁸ Courtney Whitney, MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 370.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

Korea occupies a peninsula on the eastern coast of Asia. The northern boundary is the Yalu River, bordering Manchuria. In the far northeast, the Tumen River forms the border with the Soviet Union. To the west of Korea lies the Shantung Peninsula of China; to the south lies Japan. Throughout its history, Korea has been the point where the ambitions of China, Russia, and Japan have conflicted.¹

Late in the 7th Century, a Chinese-controlled, native dynasty unified the Korean peninsula. Korea survived nearly one hundred years of ravage and destruction by Mongol armies during the 13th Century. The Chinese, strengthened and revitalized, returned in the mid-14th Century, and drove out the Mongols. In 1592, the Japanese invaded and subjected Korea to seven years of harsh, tyrannical rule. In 1894, Chinese troops entered Korea to quell an anti-Chinese revolt; Japanese troops also invaded. The resultant Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, compelled the Chinese to relinquish their claims to Korea.² The Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905, ended with Japan dominant in Korea. On 29 July 1905, US Secretary of War, William H. Taft, signed a pact with the Japanese

recognizing Japan's suzerainty over Korea in return for a Japanese pledge not to interfere with American actions in the Philippines. During the years 1905-1910, Japanese control increased until 1910, when Japan formally annexed Korea.

In July 1945, at the Potsdam Conference, the fate of Korea was a topic for discussion. The US needed a line to separate US and Soviet forces in Korea after the defeat of Japan. On the map, the 38th Parallel appeared to provide an acceptable line dividing the peninsula about in half. The line gave the Soviets enough of the country to be acceptable as an occupation zone while retaining for the US as much of the territory as possible. The division gave the US two major sea ports -- Pusan, on the southeast tip of the peninsula, and Inchon, near the capital of Seoul, on the west coast. US planners had to satisfy the Soviets, since they could invade and occupy all of Korea before the US could put any forces ashore.

The 38th Parallel was a temporary, expedient measure to facilitate the acceptance of the surrender of the Japanese occupation forces. It possessed no qualities to recommend it as either a national or political boundary. The southern half of Korea was primarily an agricultural region with rice being the primary crop. The extant heavy manufacturing industries were in the north.

Subsequent to the Japanese suit for peace, the Soviets entered the country on 11-12 August and reached the 38th Parallel by 20 August. American occupation forces landed at Inchon and accepted the Japanese surrender in Seoul on 9 September. After initial efforts to establish a viable public administration in the southern sector, the American occupation government turned its attention to reuniting the two sectors into a single nation. The Soviet Union was uncooperative.

On 10 May 1948, the UN supervised elections in the southern sector. By 15 August, a government had been established, and Syngman Rhee had been inaugurated the first President of the Republic of Korea. The United Nations recognized the Republic of Korea on 12 December 1948. On 8 September, the Communist Supreme People's Assembly of Korea (SPAK) adopted a constitution for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The next day the DPRK claimed governmental jurisdiction over all Korea. By mid-September there were two hostile governments, both claiming jurisdiction over all of Korea.

American troop withdrawals concluded on 30 June 1949. The US left the United States Korean Military Assistance Group (US KMAG) to advise and assist the ROK Government in the task of developing a "security force." The North Korean People's Army (NKPA) was activated on

8 February 1948. Korean veterans of the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF), who had gained valuable combat experience in the recent civil war with the Chinese Nationalists, returned to Korea to form the cadre. The Soviets armed the NKPA. Training was in high gear by January 1950. US Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, reported that during May and early June 1950, the NKPA crossed the border in force weekly (every Sunday) to conduct maneuvers and training exercises.³ Although the US KMAG did not believe an attack from the North was imminent, should one come, the advisors felt the South could defeat the attackers with little effort.

However, by late 1949, the Far Eastern Command seemed to accept the "inevitability" of a North Korean invasion and victory as early as the summer of 1950.⁴ MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo consistently warned officials in Washington that North Korea had the capability to invade and that such an attack was a possibility. There were more than 1,500 such warnings from June 1949 to June 1950.⁵ Intelligence agencies in Washington received these warnings, and others, prior to the invasion. MacArthur's Intelligence Officer (G2), MG Charles A. Willoughby, said that officials in Washington should not have been surprised to learn of the attack, as his previous intelligence reports had clearly indicated it was an opportune time for the Soviets to attempt to subjugate the South.⁶

On 27 June, the New York Times published an article that quoted a 10 June article in the Soviet Communist Party newspaper, Izvestia. The articles cited North Korean plans for abrogation of the 38th Parallel as a division of Korea and a reunification of the country under a "supreme Parliament" to be seated in Seoul on 15 August 1950. Although there was no mention of military force, the manifesto laid out such an ambitious plan with an extremely short timetable that, short of either an immediate capitulation by the ROK Government or an invasion, there was no way the North Korean Communists could be in Seoul by the deadline.⁷

Was this a valid, albeit unheeded, warning of things to come? Did US national-level agencies and MacArthur's Far Eastern Command have accurate intelligence to forecast or predict the invasion of 25 June 1950? Was there a lack of cooperation and coordination between MacArthur's theater intelligence staff and national-level intelligence agencies that could have caused them to misinterpret North Korean intentions? Although these are not questions to be answered by this thesis, they may be indicators of a situation that had a far more devastating impact in November 1950, when the massive CCF counteroffensive and intervention in the conflict caught the same intelligence agencies unaware.

The North Korean attack came about 0400, Sunday, 25 June 1950. Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State, called President Truman, on a holiday in Independence, Missouri, and informed him of the attack. Later that same day, President Truman authorized MacArthur to send ammunition and equipment to Korea to prevent the loss of the Seoul-Kimpo area; to use US aircraft and ships to evacuate Americans from the country; and to send someone to Korea to assess the situation. On 26 June, the President expanded the guidance to authorize the use of air and naval forces to support the ROK Army against military targets south of the 38th Parallel.

The United Nations reacted quickly to the North Korean invasion. On 25 June, with the Soviet Union absent in protest of the UN's refusal to seat the Chinese Communist representative as the official Chinese delegate, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities, North Korea to withdraw north of the 38th Parallel, and all member nations to refrain from aiding North Korea. On 27 June a second Security Council Resolution, again with the Soviet Union absent in protest, called upon member nations to render necessary assistance to the Republic of Korea to repel the armed attack and restore the international peace and security. By the third day of the invasion, MacArthur had been given US authority to fight the North Koreans with air and naval forces, the UN had

called for member nations to help repel the attack, and the NKPA was in Seoul.

By 30 June, President Truman had approved MacArthur's request to introduce a regimental combat team into Korea, with the intent of building to a two-division force, and had directed a naval blockade of the North Korean coast. The tactical situation deteriorated as the NKPA drove south with its main effort directed towards Taejon.

On 7 July, the UN Security Council passed a resolution authorizing the formation of a unified command in Korea to combat the invasion. In response to the resolution, President Truman appointed MacArthur the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (CINCUNC).⁸ On 14 July, President Rhee placed all ROK armed forces under MacArthur's command. In addition to being CINCUNC, MacArthur was the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), the agent for 13 nations of the Far Eastern Commission directing the occupation of Japan; Commander in Chief, Far East (CINCFE), the commander of all US forces in the Far East Command; and Commanding General, US Army Forces, Far East, his own Army component.

MacArthur's initial assessment of the situation, based upon an assumption that neither the Soviet Union nor Communist China would reinforce North Korea, was that he needed the equivalent of 4 to 4 1/2 full-strength infantry divisions, an airborne regimental combat team with its

lift assets, and an armored group of three medium tank battalions, all with their necessary artillery and service elements.⁹

As early as 7 July, MacArthur had announced to the JCS his plan for the prosecution of the war: fix the enemy armies, exploit air and naval dominance, and conduct amphibious maneuvers to strike behind the attacking armies.¹¹ An intelligence estimate presented to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on 10 July concluded that,

Voluntary or forced withdrawal of US forces from Korea would be a calamity, seriously handicapping efforts to maintain US alliances and build political influence among the nations upon whose strength and energetic cooperation the policy of containment of Soviet-Communist expansion depends. It would discredit US foreign policy and undermine confidence in US military capabilities....¹⁰

By 5 August, the UNC established defensive positions covering the critical port of Pusan. These positions ran along the general line of the Nakdong River. In this area, the Pusan Perimeter, the US had a combat strength of 65,000. By the end of August, during the NKPA's most concentrated offensive against the Perimeter, the NKPA concentrated 14 divisions to oppose the UN forces. US intelligence grossly overestimated NKPA strength. MacArthur's intelligence staff estimated these divisions comprised 100,000 combat troops with about 75% of authorized equipment. Actually, the NKPA numbered about 70,000 combat troops, of whom less than 30% were

veterans of Manchuria, and the 25 June invasion. The rest were recent conscripts from South Korea, with no more than 50% supplied with weapons and equipment.¹²

Although still being pressed heavily, MacArthur held to his initial plan of seizing the initiative through amphibious landings to the rear of the attacking NKPA forces. After considerable debate with his staff and with the JCS, MacArthur decided to land at Inchon and capture Seoul. The operation was the UNC's only hope for seizing the initiative and creating a decisive opportunity for victory. Otherwise, the prospect was "...a war of indefinite duration, of attrition, and of doubtful results...."¹³ The JCS approved MacArthur's plan. He activated the X US Corps in Japan on 26 August, and appointed his Chief of Staff, MG Edward A. Almond, to command the corps.

The operation began at dawn on 15 September. The NKPA fought a determined defense. However, by 28 September, UNC forces controlled Seoul and were eliminating remaining NKPA resistance throughout South Korea. On 29 September, President Rhee reestablished the Government of the Republic of Korea in Seoul. The nation had essentially returned to the pre-war status quo.

MacArthur conveyed to Washington his desire to destroy the NKPA, rather than just drive it out of the south.¹⁴ On 11 September, prior to the Inchon landings, President Truman approved a revised National Security

Council Memorandum (NSC 81/1) which authorized UNC forces to advance north of the 38th Parallel in order to defeat the NKPA or force its withdrawal from the ROK. However, MacArthur was prohibited from conducting ground operations in North Korea, if either the USSR or the People's Republic of China (PRC) intervened prior to UNC forces crossing the Parallel. The decision also prohibited air, naval, or ground operations across the North Korean borders into either Manchuria or the Soviet Union. It was "not the policy" for the UNC to use non-ROK forces in the northern border provinces of North Korea. The policy allowed MacArthur to develop contingency plans for the occupation of North Korea upon the cessation of hostilities, but he could execute these plans only upon Presidential authorization.¹⁵

The original NSC memorandum (NSC 81) envisaged a halt to military operations along the 38th Parallel. Based, at least in part, upon the JCS's and MacArthur's insistence that such a halt was "unrealistic," the President approved NSC 81/1.¹⁶ The JCS wired the authorization to conduct operations north of the 38th Parallel, with the destruction of the North Korean Armed Forces as the primary military objective, in JCS message 92801 on 27 September. This message, based upon NSC 81/1, contained several caveats or limitations.

MacArthur was to immediately assume the defensive and defer to Washington for a policy decision if he found major Soviet forces employed either north or south of the 38th Parallel. Should he discover major CCF units employed north or south of the 38th Parallel, MacArthur could continue the action as long as, in his opinion, the action offered a "reasonable chance of success." Should the Soviets or Chinese Communists declare in advance their intentions to occupy North Korea and give warning that their forces should not be attacked, MacArthur was to, again, refer the matter to Washington.¹⁷

Within a matter of days the JCS had approved, "from the military point of view," MacArthur's plan for further prosecution of the war. The new Secretary of Defense, George C. Marshall, obtained the approvals of the President and the Secretary of State on 29 September.¹⁸ The JCS wired the approval to MacArthur for Secretary Marshall and told MacArthur, "We want you to feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed north of the 38th parallel (sic)."¹⁹ On 6 October, MacArthur received word that the UN also supported operations north of the 38th.

Although advanced UNC elements crossed the 38th Parallel as early as 30 September, the attack by the US 1st Cavalry Division on 9 October signalled the UNC decision to proceed northward. The stage was set for what was supposed to have been the final destruction of the

NKPA and the speedy cessation of hostilities. However, within two months, the CCF would open "an entirely new war."

NOTES

¹Edgar O'Ballance, Korea 1950-1953 (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), p. 16. This chapter is a synopsis of the early history of Korea and the Korean War through early October 1950. The background information in this chapter came from a number of sources. These sources include Roy E. Appleman, South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu (June-November 1950) U. S. Army in the Korean War (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1961); and James F. Schnabel, Policy and Direction, The First Year U. S. Army in the Korean War (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U. S. Army, 1972). Unless otherwise cited, the historical background information can be found in these references.

²O'Ballance, p. 16.

³Senate Committee on Armed Services and Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings on the Military Situation in the Far East and the Relief of General MacArthur, 82d Cong., 1st Sess., 1951, pp. 1992-1993, as cited in Schnabel, p. 35.

⁴Schnabel, p. 63, citing briefing the author received in Tokyo in November 1949 when assigned to G2, GHQ, FEC.

⁵Courtney Whitney, MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 320.

⁶Charles A. Willoughby and John Chamberlain, MacArthur, 1941-1951 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), pp. 350-354; and Douglas MacArthur, Reminiscences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 323-324.

⁷"North Korea Plan Bared 17 Days Ago," New York Times, 27 June 1950, sec. 1, p. 3.

⁸Message, US JCS to CINCFE, Number 85370, 10 July 1950, (Unclassified), p. 1, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog-1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 12B.

⁹"Record of the Actions Taken by the Joint Chiefs of Staff Relative to the United Nations Operations in Korea from 25 June 1950 to 11 April 1951, Prepared by Them for the Senate Armed Forces and Foreign Relations

Committees," 30 April 1951, (Unclassified), p. 19, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog-1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 17B, hereafter cited as JCS Report to Senate, 30 April 1951.

¹⁰ Intelligence Memorandum No. 304, "Effects of a Voluntary Withdrawal or Elimination of US Forces from Korea," 10 July 1950, an enclosure to "Estimate by the Joint Intelligence Committee on Estimate of the Situation in Korea," 12 July 1950, (Unclassified), pp. 348-350, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog-1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 251B.

¹¹ JCS Report to Senate, 30 April 1951, pp. 19-31.

¹² Far Eastern Command, General Staff, Military Intelligence Section, "History of the North Korean Army," (Unclassified), Tokyo, 1952, p. 29.

¹³ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁴ Trumbull Higgins, Korea and the Fall of MacArthur: A Precipitous Limited War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 51; and Schnabel, pp. 105-107.

¹⁵ D. Clayton James, The Years of MacArthur, vol. 3: Triumph and Disaster, 1945-1964 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985), pp. 487-488.

¹⁶ Memorandum, US Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, "US Courses of Action with Respect to Korea," 7 September 1950, (Unclassified), p. 1, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog-1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 13B.

¹⁷ Message, US JCS to CINCPAC, Number JCS 92801, 27 September 1950, (Unclassified), pp. 1-3, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog-1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 14A.

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CHAPTER 3

THE UNC CROSSES THE 38TH PARALLEL

CASUS BELLI

In addition to attaining the military objective of the destruction of the NKPA, the JCS directed MacArthur to determine whether the Chinese Communists or the Soviets posed a threat to his mission. Although the JCS later amplified these instructions, the amplifications appear reactive rather than proactive. The instructions told MacArthur how to react under a litany of possible intervention situations, but restricted his ability to predict Chinese Communist or Soviet intervention capabilities and intentions.¹ MacArthur was to stay clear of the Soviet and Manchurian borders, while predicting whether these governments were making plans to go to war. MacArthur would state later that such evaluations and predictions were not within the capabilities or responsibilities of his theater intelligence section.²

Who or what agency should have been given this onerous task? According to Rear Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, the CIA Director, it was not the function of the CIA to evaluate reports or make predictions about enemy or foreign nation intentions.³ If this sort of evaluation was beyond the purview of the military theater-

level intelligence, it was the responsibility of some national-level civilian intelligence agency. The failure to adequately assign the responsibility for determining Chinese Communist national objectives plagued MacArthur and contributed to a gross inadequacy of predictive intelligence at all levels. The US and UN actions in late September and early October, thus, presented MacArthur with a great problem, as they immediately raised the possibility of Chinese intervention.⁴ However, MacArthur's initial assessment on 27 September was that there were no indications of Soviet or Chinese intervention.⁵

On 1 October, as ROK Army units were crossing the 38th Parallel, MacArthur broadcast an ultimatum ordering the Pyongyang Government to surrender. The demand received no direct response from the North Koreans, but US policy makers received indirect responses through diplomatic channels. Early on the morning of 3 October, Chinese Communist Premier, Chou En-lai, summoned the Indian Ambassador, K. M. Panikkar, and told him that, if any UN troops other than South Koreans crossed the 38th Parallel into North Korea, China would enter the war in support of North Korea. Panikkar forwarded the message through British diplomatic channels in the PRC to US policy makers.⁶ Over the next several days, intelligence agencies of several allied and neutral nations and American embassies around the world forwarded

confirmations of the warning. These confirmations supported the idea that Chinese threats of intervention were not bluffs.⁷

The CIA had earlier reported that, while Chinese Communist accusations and charges may be "aimed at providing an excuse" or "stage-setting for an imminent overt move," it was more likely that their participation in the war would be more indirect in light of the potential repercussions.⁸ A 6 October CIA Situation Summary, though, reported contacts between Chou and the Burmese Ambassador to the PRC. The summary indicated that China expected and was ready for war; China would intervene when UN forces crossed the 38th Parallel. This report agreed with the Panikkar warning. The CIA qualified the report by saying there was no verification that the Burmese Ambassador had presented a true picture of Chinese Communist intentions.⁹ Apparently little credence was given to these warnings, although they were forwarded to MacArthur.

Several days before the 3 October warning, Panikkar had responded to US diplomatic efforts to determine Chinese intentions by saying that China had no intentions of entering Korea¹⁰, and even earlier, in a 15 July New York Times article, he had stated that Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese Communist leader, viewed Korea as a "distant matter."¹¹ A frequent spokesman for the PRC, Panikkar had reported on 25 September that the Chief of

Staff of the CCF had told him that China would not "...sit back with folded hands and let the Americans come to the border."¹² These varying stories and Panikkar's perceived pro-Communist and anti-American leanings gave his reports little credibility in the eyes of American intelligence analysts.

In a 6 October message to the UN Secretary General, Chou protested that the UN resolution to unify Korea was illegal, and the advance of American soldiers threatened Chinese security. The message contained the comment that the PRC would never be afraid to oppose an aggressive enemy.¹³ A determination that these diplomatic ventures were valid warnings and not just propagandistic rhetoric is relatively simple in retrospect. However, since the Chinese had not entered the war in August and eliminated the UNC from the Pusan beachhead, why should they enter the war in October when the UN forces were in control of half the peninsula and in much greater strength? Thus went the most common rationale used to discount the diplomatic reports of Chinese intentions. It was consistent with the Department of the Army Intelligence Section's assessment of Chinese intentions.¹⁴

Publicly released and reported statements supported the private, diplomatic warnings. On 1 July Mao charged that American interference in Korea was "unjustified," and American aggression would arouse resistance throughout Asia.¹⁵ By 13 August, following

initial UN successes and the reinforcement of UN forces in the Pusan Perimeter, a Chinese Communist Party magazine reported the war was entering a new stage.¹⁶ The 27 August New York Times published a Chinese Communist threat to intervene if there was no diplomatic settlement.¹⁷ The reports continued. Chou said that China would not "stand aside" if its neighbor, North Korea, was invaded by the Americans.¹⁸ This litany continued on 12 October with the claim that the situation was "more serious," since American troops had ignored previous warnings and crossed the 38th Parallel.¹⁹ Chinese radio broadcasts on 10 October and an 11 October Foreign Ministry public statement again reported Chou's warnings that the Chinese people would not idly accept US crossings of the 38th Parallel. The Foreign Ministry statement called American actions a serious threat to Chinese security.²⁰

Significant among the public statements was an August article in the Chinese Communist Party magazine, World Culture, that inextricably tied Chinese national interests to Korean national interests. It spoke clearly of the Chinese Communist "responsibilities" in Korea. It was the first public statement that specifically labelled American actions a threat to Chinese security. It said also: "North Korea's enemy is our enemy. North Korea's defense is our defense. North Korea's victory is our

victory." It seemed to imply also that North Korea's defeat would be China's defeat.²¹

In a 1960 report, Allen S. Whiting claimed the new harshness in statements intended for international consumption, coupled with an increase in coverage intended for domestic audiences, signalled the evolution of Chinese Communist policy. At the outbreak of the war there had been no prior mention of Korea in the internal press; initial reports about the war were usually belated and often relegated to secondary positions within the papers. Throughout July and August, the Chinese domestic propaganda was not couched in terms of imminent Chinese Communist action or involvement in Korea.

However, the unqualified confidence of June soon gave way to comments of a prolonged war of attrition. Rarely was the war depicted in terms of China's immediate or vital interests, though. Not until October was the war specifically labelled a threat to the national security of the People's Republic of China. The press became more critical of the US, called for support of North Korea, and demanded resistance to American aggression. The internal press was a tool by which the Chinese Communist leadership prepared the Chinese population for military moves. The press became increasingly militant as it mobilized public opinion in support of possible intervention in the Korean War.²²

Had the Chinese delivered, albeit indirectly, an ultimatum of their own? Was the American crossing of the 38th Parallel the casus belli? American intelligence agencies chose to interpret the information as the CIA had done earlier in September. In spite of the military preparations and the stepped-up internal and external propaganda campaigns, direct Chinese Communist military intervention was not considered probable in 1950.²³

General Willoughby labelled the Chinese Communist diplomatic messages and propaganda program as "diplomatic blackmail" and deprecated the warnings in his own intelligence reports. He reported the CCF possessed sufficient strength and capability to enter Korea from their advantageous positions in Manchuria and significantly affect UNC operations. Willoughby qualified the possible disparity within his report by stating the decision whether the PRC would intervene militarily was "...beyond the purview of collective intelligence: it is a decision for war on the highest level...."²⁴

By the beginning of October, the consensus within the intelligence community seemed to be that Chinese Communist intervention was improbable in 1950 and that claims to the contrary were manipulative attempts by the Chinese Communists. There were, however, a few State Department officials who reported that China was prepared to take considerable risks and the Chinese comments should not be regarded as mere bluffs.²⁵ MacArthur and

Willoughby would not be disabused of the conviction that the warnings constituted nothing more than blackmail.

In discounting the Chinese warnings, MacArthur was also disparaging the threat posed by a steady flow of CCF forces into the Manchurian provinces above North Korea. Prior to the Korean War, a significant portion of the CCF deployed to south and south-central China in preparation for an anticipated conflict with the Chinese Nationalists on Formosa. When President Truman ordered the US Seventh Fleet to neutralize the Formosa Strait, he eliminated the requirement for the Chinese Communists to maintain a large force opposite Nationalist China. As a result, two CCF armies were redeployed toward Manchuria.²⁶

Since early April, US national-level intelligence agencies had been aware of CCF troop movements from south China toward Manchuria. By mid-July, the estimates rose sharply, as the CCF strength reported in Manchuria grew to about 180,000 regulars. Included were two CCF field armies (each about the size of a US corps) and support forces. Washington sources viewed the shifts as precautionary and defensive. It was during this time that the Chinese Communist internal press began stepping-up its anti-American propaganda campaign.²⁷

US intelligence agencies explained the movement of CCF troops to Manchuria in a variety of ways. One explanation was that, with the neutralization of Formosa, the units were returning to their normal garrison

locations. Another was that Communist agrarian reforms relied upon the army to assist with regional harvests, and the deployments toward Manchuria were consistent with agricultural needs.

Whatever the justification for the movement of large numbers of CCF units toward Manchuria, intelligence analysts were sensitive to the potential for their employment in Korea. As early as July, Willoughby prepared a detailed study of the capacity of the North Korean rail network to transfer major CCF units south from the Manchurian-Korean border to the battle front.²⁸ Chinese Nationalist sources also reported during July that the Chinese Communist troop movements were preparatory to their employment in Korea.²⁹

Extracts from the Far East Command's Daily Intelligence Summaries paint a rather accurate picture of the build-up in Manchuria:

8 July: Willoughby estimated 116,000 CCF regulars in Manchuria; many in Antung (on the Yalu).

8 August: Willoughby estimated 217,000 CCF regulars in Manchuria.

31 August: Willoughby estimated 246,000 CCF regulars and 374,000 militia forces in Manchuria and said that the movement may be preliminary to their entering the Korean theater.

21 September: The estimate had nearly doubled; a total 450,000 CCF troops were reported in Manchuria.

14 October: The evidence of massing of CCF troops at Yalu River crossing sites seemed conclusive. The CCF order of battle showed a total strength of nine armies and 38 divisions in Manchuria, of which 24 divisions were massed in the vicinity of crossing sites. However, Willoughby said, "Recent declarations by CCF leaders, threatening to enter NK if American forces were to cross the 38th Parallel, are probably in a category of diplomatic blackmail."³⁰

Some of Willoughby's other intelligence summaries could lead a reader to believe that he was convinced of a Chinese Communist intent to intervene in the war through active military participation. On 3 October, he reported positive evidence that as many as 20 CCF divisions could have crossed the Yalu and been in North Korea since 10 September.³¹ This would have been prior to the Inchon landing and almost a month ahead of Chou's warning that the Chinese would enter into the combat should the Americans cross the 38th Parallel. If this intelligence report is accurate, rather than being a case of diplomatic blackmail, the Chinese assertions that an American crossing of the 38th Parallel would bring them into the war were valid warnings.

On 4 October, Willoughby reported evidence of the entry of another nine CCF divisions.³² Although he continued to report CCF troops moving to Manchuria, massing at the Yalu River crossing sites, and entering

North Korea, Willoughby seemed to discount the actual validity of the intelligence. There is no indication that he tried to dissuade MacArthur from crossing the 38th. Although Willoughby stated on 14 October that intelligence reports began to take on a "sinister connotation,"³³ there is no evidence he ever cautioned against a drive northward -- a drive that would undoubtedly run into the sizeable CCF force he reported in North Korea.

These forces comprised the bulk of the CCF Fourth Field Army, commanded by the veteran, Lin Piao. The US Department of the Army G2 cautioned that reports of Lin Piao and his army moving into Manchuria seemed "blown out of proportion by the press." The G2 warned against "blind acceptance" of public statements on the army's location. Previous intelligence reports had indicated the army was somewhere in north China. The G2 felt that, when definitely determined, the location would provide valuable clues to Chinese Communist future military intentions.³⁴

Willoughby and the Department of the Army G2 were not alone in their assessments of Chinese Communist intentions. The CIA stated, "...there are no convincing indications of an actual Chinese Communist intention to resort to full-scale intervention in Korea." Although intervention was a continuing possibility, it was not probable in 1950. The CIA reasoned that the Chinese Communists feared the consequences of a war with the US, as such an action would jeopardize Chinese Communist

chances for membership in the UN and a seat on the Security Council. The CIA believed the most favorable time for intervention had passed.³⁵

Armed with these similar intelligence assessments, the commander (MacArthur) and the President (Truman) flew to Wake Island to meet on 15 October and discuss the conduct of the war. After this abbreviated meeting, and as a result of the massive Chinese counteroffensive in November, critics accused MacArthur of intentionally misleading the President when he reported the chances of Chinese or Soviet intervention were "very little."³⁶

NOTES

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¹⁷"Peiping Again Asks UN Chinese Seat: Role in War Hinted," New York Times, 27 August 1950, sec. 1, p. 10.

¹⁸"Chou Says Peiping Won't Stand Aside," New York Times, 2 October 1950, sec. 1, p. 3.

¹⁹"China's Reds Again Warn US on Korea," New York Times, 12 October 1950, sec. 1, p. 5.

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²¹Whiting, pp. 70, 84-85.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 35-81.

²³CIA Intel Memo 324; and D. Clayton James, The Years of MacArthur, vol. 3: Triumph and Disaster, 1945-1964 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), p. 491.

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²⁷ James, pp. 490-491.

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²⁹ "Peiping Troop Moves Reported," New York Times, 2 July 1950, sec. 1, p. 20; and "Koo Bids Nations Join to Meet Red 'Tests,'" New York Times, 11 July 1950, sec. 1, p. 20; and Harry Rositzke, The CIA's Secret Operations (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1977), p. 53.

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³² J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp. 173-174.

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³⁴ DA G2 WIR 85, 6 October 1950, p. 27.

³⁵ Memorandum by the Central Intelligence Agency, "Threat of Full Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea," 12 October 1950, DSP 8859, pp. 933-934.

³⁶ "Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October, Compiled by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, from Notes Kept by the Conferees from Washington," DSP 8859, p. 953.

CHAPTER 4

VICTORY TURNS INTO DEFEAT

The first time the President and the General ever met each other was at Wake Island on 15 October 1950. It was also the first time in at least six years that MacArthur found himself seated at a conference table with a superior.¹ MacArthur and Truman conferred privately for about an hour. After this meeting, they joined the rest of the conferees for general discussions. The other conferees included Ambassador John Muccio; Ambassador at Large Philip C. Jessup; Secretary of the Army Frank Pace; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General of the Army Omar N. Bradley; Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Arthur W. Radford; Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk; Mr. Averell Harriman; Brigadier General Courtney Whitney, the Chief of the Far East Command Political Section; and Colonel A. L. Hamblen.

After discussions on the rehabilitation of post-war Korea and the cost of such an endeavor, the talk turned to the future of the conflict. The President asked MacArthur about the chances of Soviet or Chinese interference. MacArthur's response was, "Very little." The Soviets were strong enough to have an impact should they intervene, but their closest units would take six weeks to reach combat

positions in North Korea. MacArthur went on to explain that the Chinese had 300,000 soldiers in Manchuria, of which probably no more than 100,000-125,000 were actually massed at Yalu River crossing sites. Of these, no more than 50,000-60,000 could actually be moved across the river.²

The State Department had received a 13 October report from the Netherlands' Ambassador in Peking that reliable, unidentified sources had reported four CCF divisions had crossed the Manchurian border into North Korea.³ Unfortunately, the message arrived in Washington after the President and his party departed for Wake Island. It is doubtful whether the message would have had an impact on the President and his advisors or the General and his advisors. The conferees seemed predisposed to believe there would be no intervention in Korea.

The conversation drifted on to, among other topics, the continued occupation of Japan and the situation between the French and the Vietnamese in Indo-China. As the conversation drifted back to the war in Korea, MacArthur said no "non-ROKs" would be used north of a line that ran from a point about 20 miles north of Pyongyang to Hamhung. He was confident enough of the military situation to state, also, that all non-Korean soldiers should be out of Korea as soon as possible. The President, then, abruptly ended the discussion, less than

two hours after it convened, commenting favorably on the success of the conference.⁴

In a discussion that followed the principal meeting, MacArthur was reported to say that he had no idea why the Chinese had "gone out on such a limb" as to declare they would intervene in the war if the Americans crossed the 38th Parallel. He added that they must have been embarrassed by their disadvantageous positions.⁵ Apparently there was nothing in recent intelligence reports that concerned either the President or MacArthur. It also appears that no one chose to question MacArthur's assessment that there was very little chance of CCF or Soviet intervention in the war.

MacArthur later stated that he had clearly qualified his statements when he told the President the chances of Chinese intervention were small. BG Whitney, at the conference table with MacArthur, wrote that MacArthur preceded his answer to the President by explaining that the answer was speculative -- he could only speak from the military viewpoint. MacArthur claimed the Defense Department, State Department, and the CIA had all advanced the opinion that the Chinese Communists had no intention of intervening. He explained his field intelligence was hampered by the Presidentially-imposed restrictions protecting Soviet and Manchurian borders and air space. Consequently, the Far East Command's aerial reconnaissance could provide no reliable clues.

MacArthur's explanation also included the statement that such an analysis (whether a sovereign state would enter a war) was a political issue rather than a military issue. It dealt with Chinese and Soviet national objectives and intentions and was, therefore, not the realm of his military intelligence staff.⁶

MacArthur's response appears based upon his impressions of Chinese capabilities and not their intentions. He felt the Chinese had lost their chance for decisive intervention. A better time would have been when the NKPA had the UN forces contained within the Pusan Perimeter. Now, however, with the UNC successfully "mopping up" the remaining NKPA resistance, the PRC stood very little chance of decisive intervention.

As, perhaps, tacit proof of even General Bradley's belief in MacArthur's assessment, one need look only to Bradley's question about how soon MacArthur could spare a division for redeployment to Europe.⁷ Had Bradley not accepted MacArthur's assurances as fact, he certainly would not have asked for one of MacArthur's combat divisions. Either Bradley believed MacArthur's intelligence reports over all others, or Bradley's other intelligence sources agreed with MacArthur. The latter explanation is factually supported.

On 20 October, five days after the conference, the JCS advised MacArthur that worldwide requirements called for the redeployment from Korea to Europe, as soon as

practicable, of either the 2d or 3d Infantry Division. The JCS favored the redeployment of the 2d Infantry Division. MacArthur's response was that the cessation of hostilities (between Thanksgiving and Christmas) would allow the Eighth Army to withdraw to Japan with the 2d Division. He would need the 3d Division for occupation duties in Korea for about six months beyond the cessation of hostilities. At the end of this period, the 3d Division would leave for Japan, and he could make the 2d Division available for redeployment.⁸

Clearly, MacArthur and the JCS would not have considered these moves if their intelligence had given them reason to believe Chinese Communist intervention in the war was a *fait accompli*. For whatever reasons, the intelligence analyses of Chinese Communist intentions prior to and immediately following the Wake Island meeting were flawed and sadly inadequate.

Although, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Willoughby's intelligence reports on 3 and 4 October alleged the entry of as many as 29 CCF divisions into Korea,⁹ his subsequent reports mentioned only the possibility of CCF troops crossing into North Korea from their concentration sites in Manchuria. When the reports discussed possible CCF intervention, Willoughby couched the discussions in terms of the CCF "capability" to cross the Yalu. It seems, without retracting or qualifying any

previous reports, Willoughby changed his tone regarding actual versus possible CCF intervention.

There were plenty of reports, official and unofficial, that the relocation of CCF units to Manchuria was a prelude to their employment in Korea. On 18 October, the London Times reported that CCF regulars were moving north to be part of a force to aid the North Koreans.¹⁰ Even while MacArthur was at Wake Island assuring the President that there was little chance of Chinese Communist intervention, the CCF was crossing the Yalu in force. Contrary to Willoughby's intelligence estimates of approximately 162,000 CCF soldiers in Korea (18 divisions with 8,000-9,000 soldiers per division), by late October, the total CCF strength in Korea had reached 250,000.¹¹

On 16 October, Willoughby reported the possibility that the Chinese might occupy a narrow portion of North Korea from east to west and establish a buffer zone to protect the Chinese mainland. On 17 October, MacArthur issued his order for the continuation of the pursuit and the final destruction of the NKPA. The Eighth Army was to push forward to a line, generally between Sonchon and Sonjin, and be prepared to push to the border. MacArthur unilaterally lifted the restrictions on non-ROKs in the provinces bordering Manchuria and the Soviet Union; a restriction imposed by the President and the JCS on

27 September. General Collins, Army Chief of Staff, later wrote that he had no recollection whether the JCS even made note of MacArthur's decision to ignore the restriction; if the JCS noted the action, it certainly offered no objection.¹²

There were signs of the trouble ahead. Signs that Willoughby received, analyzed, evaluated, and disseminated. On 19 October, he reported elements of six CCF armies in Manchuria - all six had recently been reported in locations other than Manchuria. He also reported 46,000 Mongolian troops relocated to Manchuria. Willoughby also cited reports that elements of three CCF armies had moved into Korea and reorganized/redesignated as NKPA divisions.¹³ The next day Willoughby reported as a fait accompli the potential that CCF units deployed in the Manchurian border area would reinforce the NKPA. He also reported 75 fighter aircraft across the border in Antung, Manchuria. In his book, Korea: The Untold Story of the War, Joseph C. Goulden claims Willoughby later explained these as either routine, training aircraft or more of Chou En-lai's "sabre-rattling."¹⁴ UNC aerial reconnaissance of the roads leading south from the Yalu revealed "intermittent, though large-scale, truck convoys." Reliable sources reported increased CCF operational activities during several days prior to the 19 October intelligence summary.

The 20 October intelligence summary further stated the CCF had the unquestionable capacity to cross the Yalu at or north of Antung. This summary contained the caveat that a Chinese decision to cross the Yalu was not within the purview of military intelligence. The decision, a political one, would be based upon the high level readiness of the Kremlin to go to war through her proxies in China and Korea. However, somewhat inconspicuous and farther down in the report was the line, "The speculative date of intervention is set for 20th of October, probably following some sort of official announcement."¹⁵

Apparently someone in the FEC intelligence community had reason to believe CCF intervention was becoming more of a probability and not just a potential capability. On 21 October, Willoughby cited a "reliable report" of 400,000 CCF troops in Manchurian border crossing areas alerted to cross the border. As a precaution, FEC increased its aerial reconnaissance of the border areas.¹⁶

On 24 October, MacArthur issued further instructions abolishing any remaining restraint on the use of non-ROKs and telling his subordinate commanders to "drive forward with all speed and full utilization of their forces." They were "...authorized to use any and all ground forces to secure all of North Korea."¹⁷ When the JCS questioned this action, MacArthur responded that it was a matter of military necessity. He said Marshall's

earlier directive telling him to feel tactically and strategically unhampered gave him the requisite authority. He added that he had covered all his intended actions with the President while at Wake Island. The JCS must have, at least tacitly, approved this explanation as they made no move to countermand MacArthur's orders to his subordinates.¹⁸ MacArthur's orders to his subordinates were contrary to official US policy and also ignored most intelligence indicators.

In an order of battle distributed on 24 October, Willoughby reported confirmation of 316,000+ Chinese Communist Regular Ground Forces in Manchuria comprising a total of 12 armies and 44 divisions. He also reported another unconfirmed six armies and 18 divisions, an additional 172,000 CCF soldiers in Manchuria. Even though later intelligence showed even these figures to be woefully short, Willoughby's reports of close to 500,000 CCF soldiers along the border "alerted to cross" should have caused him to warn MacArthur of the ever-increasing danger facing the new offensive.¹⁹

Recalling Chou En-lai's 3 October comments threatening intervention should the Americans cross the 38th Parallel, it seems that Willoughby should have begun to paint for MacArthur a picture of imminent intervention.

Willoughby's reports often spoke of the possibility of Chinese intervention but never the probability. He was not one to get caught in a prediction

of future enemy operations that he could not ensure. Since Willoughby believed there was no positive, uncontrovertible evidence that the CCF had crossed the border and was in Korea,²⁰ his reports never cautioned restraint. The UN appeared to be drawing near to the successful conclusion of the campaign.²¹

On 25 October, the 3d ROK Division met a CCF unit of undetermined size, supported by armor, at Sudong south of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir.²² That same day a regiment of the 6th ROK Division engaged a CCF unit near Onjong, 40 miles north of Anju, on the west, and was virtually annihilated in two days' heavy fighting. The 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 6th ROK Division was the first UN force to reach the Yalu, arriving near Chosan late on 26 October. That night an attack by Chinese Communist "Volunteers" decimated the battalion.²³ The 1st and 8th ROK Divisions were also hit hard causing the disintegration of the ROK II Corps and exposed the Eighth Army's right flank.²⁴

CCF prisoners captured during the fight with the 1st ROK Division reported they were from a unit of Koreans and Chinese that had crossed the Yalu at Sinuiju some time earlier.²⁵ One soldier reported that, from where he was captured, there were 20,000 more CCF soldiers in the hills to the north and the east.

On the afternoon of 26 October, the Commander of the 1st ROK Division examined the enemy dead from the previous night's fight. He reported to the I Corps Commander that the dead were not a mixed group - they were all Chinese. Eighth Army intelligence officers, though, discounted the prisoner reports and the possibility of a CCF intervention in strength.²⁶ The CIA, likewise, reported prisoner interrogations but sounded no alarm, assigning the reports a low degree of credibility for content and source.²⁷ The 28 October Far East Command Daily Intelligence Summary still maintained

...the auspicious time for such intervention has long since passed; it is difficult to believe that such a move, if planned, would have been postponed to a time when remnant NK forces have²⁸ been reduced to a low point of effectiveness.

Whether the auspicious time for intervention had long passed or not, by 31 October prisoner of war interrogations had identified at least five CCF divisions.²⁹

Perhaps one of the most significant events in the war was the capture of CCF soldiers in late October in the vicinity of Unsong, near the west coast, and at Sudong, about 40 miles north of Hamhung on the east coast. The UNC identified elements of the 124th CCF Division near Koto-ri, a few miles south of the Chosin Reservoir. Within ten days, interrogation of CCF prisoners identified 11 more divisions in forward combat areas in Korea. At

the same time, UNC aerial reconnaissance confirmed heavy troop movements within Manchuria, across the Korean border, and within Korea.³⁰

Theater intelligence officers estimated that about 40,000 CCF soldiers were in Korea, and another 200,000 were in Manchuria within two nights' marching distance of the front. Actually at least 180,000 CCF soldiers were already in Korea, and another 90,000 were scheduled to arrive within three weeks.³¹ Again US intelligence agencies had missed the mark by a large margin. While the UNC was fighting for its life in the Pusan Perimeter, theater intelligence analysts had grossly over-estimated the size, strength, and equipment of the NKPA. This time the error was a gross under-estimation. The possible repercussions in the latter circumstance would be for more serious than those in the former.

In a memorandum dated 1 November, Walter B. (Beetle) Smith, the Director of the CIA, told President Truman that Chinese Communist troops were opposing UN forces. Although he could not dismiss the possibility of a full-scale intervention, Smith felt the Chinese intended instead to establish a cordon sanitaire south of the Yalu. Such a buffer zone could protect the Chinese border from UN forces and ensure the uninterrupted flow into China of electricity from the Yalu River hydroelectric facilities.³² Such a move would then be defensive and designed to not provoke the US. CIA Director Smith

believed the Chinese Communists were genuinely afraid of an American invasion of Manchuria in spite of assertions to the contrary.

Although most intelligence estimates agreed with the CIA Director's estimate that the Chinese involvement was only limited, the increase in enemy air activity should have provided a clue to the expanding nature of the war. The UNC had air superiority. For all intents and purposes there was no North Korean Air Force; however, on 1 November Russian MiG-15 jet fighter aircraft appeared over the Yalu and challenged UNC air superiority. The first aerial combat between jet aircraft made history on 8 November when a US F-80 downed a MiG-15 with a Chinese pilot.³³

Willoughby's 2 November intelligence report was the first of several that indicated a growing conviction that the Chinese Communists were in the war for good, regardless of the qualifiers written into each report. On 2 November, Willoughby reported that the recent flow of events had "removed (sic) [removed] the problem of Chinese intervention from the realm of the academic and turns (sic) it into a serious proximate threat." It cited earlier daily intelligence summaries that reported CCF units (24 divisions total) crossing the Yalu between 1 and 10 September. The 2 November intelligence summary reported recent actions may "...presage the future appearance of some or all of the other CCF units from

north of the Manchurian border." Willoughby concluded China could logically be expected to want to create and control some sort of buffer area south of the Yalu, although some reports indicated CCF divisions were moving forward from the Yalu to the active battle lines rather than staying in the area of the Yalu.³⁴ In this report Willoughby seemed to be using the "perfect vision" of hindsight and attaching greater significance to "unconfirmed reports" he chose not to support in earlier reports.

In three days of vicious fighting around Unsan, 2-4 November, the US 8th Cavalry Regiment was surrounded and severely beaten by a major CCF force. The fighting was so stiff that the 8th Cavalry's parent unit, the 1st Cavalry Division, was unable to fight through and rescue the unit.

In the section for conclusions on enemy capabilities, the 3 November intelligence summary said that, although there was still no "...concrete evidence" of full-scale CCF intervention, the possibility was considered an "active capability." There was no "concrete evidence" in spite of the fact that the US 1st Cavalry Division claimed it did not have sufficient combat strength to fight through and rescue the 8th Cavalry Regiment. The I Corps Commander accepted this assessment when he accepted that the 8th Cavalry Regiment would have to be abandoned.

The 3 November report indicated two-thirds of the 44 divisions (12 CCF armies) shown in Manchuria were either on the border and capable of crossing or actually in North Korea. The same report gave several accounts of heavy vehicular traffic from Manchuria, across the Yalu, and southward out of major North Korean towns along the river. The CCF resupply activities must have been in high gear. The report concluded that there were more than enough CCF troops in Manchuria for most normal purposes. It was unlikely the Chinese would need the additional reinforcements -- if CCF actions in Korea were actually defensive in nature or limited in scope.³⁵

On 4 November, in response to a JCS request, MacArthur responded that it was impossible "...to authoritatively appraise the actualities of Chinese Communist intervention in Korea." He listed four possible courses of action the CCF might pursue: first, full-scale intervention; second, covert military assistance to North Korea; third, assistance by Chinese "volunteers", and fourth, do nothing -- believing only ROKs would be committed to the northern regions, and the ROKs would be too weak to affect the Chinese. MacArthur stated that the first possibility was not as likely as some combination of the other three. MacArthur counselled against making hasty conclusions based upon a less than full accounting of the facts.³⁶

In the 4 November Intelligence summary, the Miscellaneous Section discussed a recent Peking radio broadcast and asked the hypothetical question whether the broadcast signalled a declaration of war. The Peking broadcast detailed China's fear of invasion by the US and the US's disregard for all previous warnings about Chinese Communist intentions in Korea. The broadcast committed Peking "to assist the Korean people," because "resistance alone has the possibility of teaching the imperialists a lesson." The broadcast also called for a formal mobilization of all official political parties in the PRC to resist the American invasion, assist Korea, and protect China. Willoughby's comments were that this broadcast, indicative of an overt declaration of war, could be identified as official Chinese Communist policy. Willoughby claimed that, while previous broadcasts sounded like bombast and boasting, this one did not. To him it seemed a declaration of war that spoke clearly of overt resistance to the anticipated invasion of the PRC by the US.³⁷

The 4 November Daily Intelligence Summary listed enemy capabilities as:

- (1) Conduct guerilla operations.
- (2) Reinforcement by Manchurian Communist forces.
- (3) Retreat to adjacent border areas.
- (4) Troop capacity for defense.
- (5) Conduct air operations.
- (6) Conduct limited offensive operations.³⁸

These reflected Willoughby's estimate of the enemy capabilities in the order of their greatest probability.³⁹ In view of the state of the NKPA, still the primary enemy, and the success of UNC exploitation and pursuit operations, such a ranking of enemy capabilities does not seem out of order.

However, there was a dramatic change on 5 November. The capabilities (again in order of probability) changed to:

- (1) Conduct offensive operations.
- (2) Reinforce with Manchurian Communist forces.
- (3) Conduct guerilla operations.
- (4) Defend in present positions.
- (5) Conduct offensive air operations.⁴⁰

The enemy offensive capability was no longer "limited." It also moved from the least probable course of action to the most probable. Gone was any consideration of "retreat" as an enemy course of action.

"...the entrance of the CCF into the Korean war (sic)" markedly strengthened the potential for the enemy to conduct offensive operations. The Chinese Communists had demonstrated intentions to deny the Yalu area to UN forces. They had become as much the enemy as was the NKPA. The CCF had sufficient forces and had them in advantageous positions that allowed their introduction in Korea, without warning, at any time. Their employment would present a serious threat to the UNC.⁴¹

By 7 November, the report said there were 56 CCF divisions, organized under 16 armies, in Manchuria. Of these forces, 29 divisions were immediately available for employment in any major counteroffensive. This enemy reinforcement capability, if exercised, "...could present a serious threat to UN forces...." It was entirely possible for the deployment to be by back roads and under the cover of darkness to preclude UN detection.⁴² There were no comments in this section that dealt with the actions of CCF units already in Korea. On this same day the PRC admitted that, in addition to ethnic Koreans, Chinese "volunteers" had been fighting alongside the NKPA since 25 October.⁴³

The CCF units, absent in the 7 November intelligence summary, reappeared on 12 November. This particular report listed 75,700 CCF in Korea opposing the Eighth Army. The report compared the 4 November total estimated enemy strength (NKPA and CCF) (40,100) to that of 12 November (98,400) and stated that the most significant increase was in CCF units. It concluded the dramatically lower 4 November figures must have represented "...only the vanguard of the CCF forces in N.K."⁴⁴

As Willoughby's intelligence reports were often contradictory and unhelpful, so were those of the CIA. The Far East Command and the CIA seemed uncertain whether the CCF was actually in Korea and, if in, what it's

strength really was. National Intelligence Estimate 2 (NIE 2), 8 November, agreed in many respects with the "opinions" in Willoughby's reports, although it differed in the strength of the CCF reported in Korea and Manchuria. NIE 2 estimated 30,000-40,000 CCF in Korea and 700,000 in Manchuria, of which 200,000 were regular combat forces. The CIA position was, rather than driving the UN forces completely off the peninsula, the CCF objective was merely to halt the UNC advance. The report concluded that the Chinese Communists had been committing forces to Korea since mid-October and would enter Korea in force if the UNC attacked Chinese territory.⁴⁵ The CIA Director, Smith, again advanced what seems to have been the official CIA position. On 9 November he told the President that the Chinese Communist intent was probably to establish a cordon sanitaire to protect the Yalu River hydroelectric facilities.⁴⁶

Following the bloody engagements between the UNC and the CCF in late October and early November, the enemy seemed to disappear. After about 7 November contact was scarce. This could explain some of the confusion in the intelligence estimates. Had the UNC beaten the CCF badly enough that they were leaving the field of battle? Not likely, in view of the overwhelming potential in manpower poised across the Yalu in Manchuria. Was this a probe designed to find and fix UNC weak points for a later

attack? This question seems borne out by subsequent events.

Joseph Goulden, author of Korea: The Untold Story of the War, and others feel the CCF's October offensive operations were another warning to the UNC. The US had ignored the previous verbal warnings and forced the Chinese to demonstrate their resolve. This could also explain the subsequent lull in the combat. The Chinese Communist leadership could have been allowing the US to assess the situation and make appropriate decisions that would lessen the threat to Chinese national security. Additionally, the Chinese Communist leadership could have been evaluating US responses and reactions to better prepare for the next step in the conflict.⁴⁷

Perhaps, like two fighters sparring in the opening rounds of a prize fight, the PRC and the US were eyeing each other to determine their next moves and to set up the "knock out punch." The Far East Command's 19 November Daily Intelligence Summary gave a hint of the coming blow. Added as a new enemy capability, number six on the list of probabilities, was "Psychological Preparation for War." The discussion of enemy capabilities in this particular report was devoted entirely to recent Chinese Communist propaganda efforts aimed at convincing the Chinese people of the necessity for "defensive intervention" in Korea.⁴⁸ The Chinese internal press' anti-American campaign had become particularly virulent

during the lull that followed the "tap" by the Chinese. The 19 November Daily Intelligence Summary contained the closest thing to a warning seen in Willoughby's reports when it said, "...it would appear logical to conclude that the Chinese Communist leaders are preparing their people psychologically for war."⁴⁹

By the end of November, the US was not certain if it had provoked China. US national-level intelligence estimates were inconclusive concerning whether the Chinese were involved in a full-scale or a limited offensive.⁵⁰ The State Department estimated (from sources other than the Far East Command) that in excess of 50,000 CCF troops had entered North Korea. The State Department, however, would neither evaluate the evidence nor offer suggestions about probable Chinese courses of action -- it only recounted all the options available to the Chinese.⁵¹

The CIA stated that, while the CCF did not have the military capability to drive the UNC from the peninsula, it had the capability to drive the UNC back into defensive positions and into a protracted and inconclusive war. The CIA reported the CCF had sufficient troops to conduct and support major military operations, and the Chinese had given no indication that any of their objectives were limited to buffer zones, protecting Yalu River hydroelectric facilities, or holding UN forces along the 38th Parallel. The indications were that the Chinese were fully committed to the war. However, the CIA

concluded there was a lack of evidence to indicate whether the Chinese were committed to a full-scale offensive effort.⁵²

In this uncertain atmosphere MacArthur planned his final offensive. The UNC was to drive forward to the Yalu and secure the final victory. The lack of evidence to the contrary seemed to imply that total and final victory was within the grasp of the UNC. MacArthur planned to have many American troops home by Christmas.

JCS message 92801, based upon the conditions established in NSC 81/1, required MacArthur to forward for JCS approval all plans for operations north of the 38th Parallel.⁵³ However, on 24 November, without prior JCS approval⁵⁴ and after the UN had voiced concern that just such a move could provoke total, open Chinese intervention,⁵⁵ MacArthur announced his final offensive and prematurely proclaimed victory. The results were devastating for the UNC.

On 25 November, six CCF divisions launched a holding attack in the center of the Eighth Army while eight CCF divisions struck the ROK II Corps on the right flank. "...the irresistible force of the Chinese Communist Army hit the thoroughly movable object of the Republic of Korea's II Corps."⁵⁶ With its flank dangerously exposed, Eighth Army withdrew under heavy enemy pressure.

Despite the evidence, MacArthur and many of his key subordinates initially refused to accept as fact the wholesale CCF intervention.⁵⁷ Willoughby steadfastly refused to believe the dead bodies and captured soldiers in CCF uniforms and the Chinese-speaking prisoners were any more than "another Marine Corps lie."⁵⁸

However, on 28 November, MacArthur wired the JCS:

...The Chinese military forces are committed in North Korea in great and ever increasing strength. No pretext of minor support under the guise of volunteerism or other subterfuge now has the slightest validity. We face an entirely new war....The resulting situation presents an entire new picture which broadens the potentialities to world embracing considerations beyond the sphere of decision by the Theater Commander. This command has done everything humanly possible within its capabilities but is now faced with conditions beyond its control and its strength....

How could the confidence of a few days earlier have become this depressing pronouncement from MacArthur? Was this part of MacArthur's plan -- to draw the Chinese into the war so he could defeat them?

NOTES

¹Joseph C. Goulden, Korea: The Untold Story of the War (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), p. 265.

²"Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October, Compiled by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, from Notes Kept by the Conferees from Washington," in U. S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, vol. 7, Korea, Department of State Publication 8859 (Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 953, hereafter cited as Wake Island Notes. This collection of State Department documents is hereafter cited as DSP 8859.

³Message, The Ambassador in the Netherlands (Chapin) to the Secretary of State, 13 October 1950, DSP 8859, p. 942.

⁴Wake Island Notes, p. 960.

⁵Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Rusk), "Addendum to Notes on Wake Island Conference, October 14," undated, DSP 8859, p. 962.

⁶Charles A. Willoughby and John Chamberlain, MacArthur, 1941-1951 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), pp. 382-383; Courtney Whitney, MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 392; and D. Clayton James, The Years of MacArthur, vol. 3, Triumph and Disaster, 1945-1964 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), pp. 507-508.

⁷Whitney, p. 395; and Wake Island Notes, p. 955.

⁸"Record of the Actions Taken by the Joint Chiefs of Staff Relative to the United Nations Operations in Korea from 25 June 1950 to 11 April 1951, Prepared by Them for the Senate Armed Forces and Foreign Relations Committees," 30 April 1951, (Unclassified), p. 54, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog - 1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 17B, hereafter cited as JCS Report to Senate, 30 April 1951.

⁹U. S. Army Far Eastern Command, Military Intelligence Section, Daily Intelligence Summary, Number 2976, 2 November 1950, p. 1f, hereafter cited as FEC DIS.

¹⁰"Chinese Troops Move to North: Reports of Force to Aid N. K.," Times (London), 18 October 1950, sec. 1, p. 5.

¹¹U. S. Army Far Eastern Command, Military Intelligence Section, "History of the North Korean Army," (Unclassified), Tokyo, 1952, p. 34, hereafter cited as History of NKA; and T. R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness (New York: MacMillan, 1963), p. 278; and James, p. 491.

¹²J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp. 176-177.

¹³FEC DIS 2962, 19 October 1950, p. 5.

¹⁴Goulden, p. 273.

¹⁵FEC DIS 2963, 20 October 1959, p. 1d.

¹⁶FEC DIS 2964, 21 October 1950, as cited in James F. Schnabel, Policy and Direction, The First Year U. S. Army in the Korean War (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U. S. Army, 1972), p. 222.

¹⁷JCS Report to Senate, 30 April 1951, pp. 57-58.

¹⁸Collins, pp. 179-181.

¹⁹FEC DIS 2965, 22 October 1950, p. 1d.

²⁰Schnabel, p. 234.

²¹JCS Report to Senate, 30 April 1951, pp. 58-59.

²²Whether the first combat between CCF and UNC troops was as at Sudong or Unsang and whether it was on 25 or 26 October is not significant to this thesis. The significance lies in the fact that the CCF had materialized "out of nowhere" and was fighting heavy battles with the UNC. All this was in the face of the JCS statement on the morning of 26 October, that there was no indication of Chinese Communist intervention (JCS Report to Senate, 30 April 1951, p. 58).

²³FEC DIS 2970, 27 October 1959, p. 1b; Allen S. Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., [1960]), pp. 130-131; and James, p. 495.

²⁴James, pp. 518-519.

²⁵FEC DIS 2971, 28 October 1950, p. 1f. On 31 October, MacArthur reported to the JCS that he had confirmed the identity of prisoners taken at Sudong on 26 October as CCF. The prisoners indicated their unit had crossed the Yalu on 16 October (JCS Report to Senate, 30 April 1951, p. 60) - the day after MacArthur assured the President on Wake Island that there was very little chance for Chinese Communist intervention in Korea.

²⁶Collins, pp. 184-185.

²⁷James, p. 519.

²⁸FEC DIS 2971, 28 October 1950, p. 1f.

²⁹Schnabel, p. 234.

³⁰History of NKA, pp. 33-34.

³¹Whiting, pp. 131-132.

³²Memorandum for the President from Walter B. Smith, Director of Central Intelligence Agency, "Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea," 1 November 1950, pp. 1-2, in CIA Research Reports: Japan, Korea, and the Security of Asia, 1946-1976 (microfilm; Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1983), reel 4, frame 153.

³³Edgar O'Ballance, Korea 1950-1953 (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), p. 70.

³⁴FEC DIS 2976, 2 November 1950, pp. 1f-1g.

³⁵FEC DIS 2977, 3 November 1950, pp. 1f-1g.

³⁶Message, MacArthur to JCS, Number C-41425, 4 November 1950, p. 1, in Declassified Documents Reference System, Retrospective Collection, part 1, Catalog of Abstracts, vol. 1 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1976), 254A; and JCS Report to Senate, 30 April 1951, pp. 61-62.

³⁷FEC DIS 2978, 4 November 1950, Miscellaneous Section, as cited in John F. O'Shaughnessy, "The Chinese Intervention in Korea: An Analysis of Warning" (Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence Thesis, Defense Intelligence College, 1985), pp. 88-89.

³⁸FEC DIS 2978, 4 November 1950, p. 1e.

³⁹O'Shaughnessy, pp. 85-86.

⁴⁰FEC DIS 2979, 5 November 1950, p. 1e.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²FEC DIS 2981, 7 November 1950, p. 1j.

⁴³Whiting, p. 130.

⁴⁴FEC DIS 2986, 12 November 1950, un-numbered page following p. 1d.

⁴⁵National Intelligence Estimate, NIE 2, 8 November 1950, "Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea," pp. 1-2, in CIA Research Reports: Japan, Korea, and the Security of Asia, 1946-1976 (microfilm; Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1983), reel 4, frame 178.

⁴⁶O'Shaughnessy, p. 93.

⁴⁷Goulden, p. 276.

⁴⁸FEC DIS 2993, 19 November 1950, pp. 1g-1h.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Rosemary Foot, The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950-1953 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 99.

⁵¹"Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea," State Department Weekly Review, 22 November 1950, (Unclassified), pp. 1-5, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog-1975, vol. 1, no. 3, Jul-Sep 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 190B.

⁵²National Intelligence Estimate, NIE 2/1, 24 November 1950, "Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea," pp. 1-2, in CIA Research Reports: Japan, Korea, and the Security of Asia, 1946-1976 (microfilm; Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1983), reel 4, frame 212.

⁵³Message, US JCS to CINCPAC, Number 92801, 27 September 1950, (Unclassified), p. 2, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog-1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 14A.

⁵⁴Trumbull Higgins, Korea and the Fall of MacArthur: A Precipitous Limited War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 75-79.

⁵⁵ Message, Chief of Staff U. S. Army to CINC UNC, WAR 97287, 24 November 1950, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog - 1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 15F.

⁵⁶ "How Our Victory Turned to Defeat," Newsweek, 11 December 1950, p. 28.

⁵⁷ James, p. 519.

⁵⁸ William B. Hopkins, One Bugle No Drums: The Marines at Chosin Reservoir (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1986), p. 125.

⁵⁹ Message, CINCFE to JCS, C-69953, 28 November 1950, pp. 1-2, in Declassified Documents Reference System, Retrospective Collection, part 1, Catalog of Abstracts, vol. 1 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1976), 254F.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The war the Chinese Communists entered in November was a different war from the one that had begun in June. In the intervening five months, the NKPA had rolled south to the Naktong River before being halted by the UNC and pushed back the entire length of the Korean peninsula to the Yalu River. The "unstoppable" NKPA had been reduced to a beaten and demoralized force escaping northward to avoid decisive engagement and ultimate defeat. The UNC had been transformed from an ad hoc force, fighting for its life from within the Pusan Perimeter, to a coordinated military machine that was sweeping northward in a near brilliant combination of amphibious landings, airborne assaults, and ground advances. The Chinese faced an enemy that had gained in numerical strength, weapons, combat experience, and confidence.

Although the reason for the Chinese intervention is not a topic of this paper, it has bearing on the warnings transmitted, intentionally or unintentionally, by the Chinese Communists prior to their intervention. There are three possible explanations why the Chinese entered the war. One contention is that Chinese intervention was a part of the overall plan for the prosecution of the war

against the Republic of Korea. This theory argues that the war was initiated with the full knowledge and support of the Chinese Communists, and the PRC had committed itself to the full use of its resources to ensure the success of the venture.

In its most extreme application, this theory could indicate the Chinese anticipated US intervention and assistance to the Republic of Korea. It could also indicate the Chinese expected the combined ROK and US forces to gain the upper hand over the NKPA, thus requiring the CCF, or allowing the CCF, to enter the war and gain a military victory.

In a less extreme application, this theory could indicate that the Chinese Communists pledged full support and aid to North Korea and realized, after American involvement, that the support and aid had to include overt, large-scale military operations against the UNC. The rational approach would indicate that the Chinese Communists pledged to give the North Koreans only as much support as demanded by the situation.

If overt Chinese Communist military assistance was pre-arranged and a part of the overall concept for the conduct of the war against South Korea, Douglas MacArthur and Charles Willoughby cannot be blamed for either inciting or for failing to predict the actual intervention. Perhaps, in this scenario, they could be faulted for failing to predict the time, place, and nature

of the intervention but not the intervention itself. In a thesis for the Defense Intelligence College, John F. O'Shaughnessy claims Willoughby's 30 September Daily Intelligence Summary alludes that Mao Tse-tung and V. Molotov, the former Soviet Foreign Minister, decided upon China's ultimate military intervention during an August 1950 Sino-Soviet conference in Moscow.¹ Such a decision would have pre-ordained UNC actions to meet the CCF on the field of battle in Korea.

Willoughby cited comments MacArthur made in reference to the 27 August intelligence summary but apparently after the November CCF counteroffensive. He quotes MacArthur as saying,

It is now plainly evident that the intervention by Communist China was responsive to basic decisions reached even before the North Korean attack last June....²

MacArthur seems to be saying that, regardless of what he did as CINUNC, the PRC was committed to entering the war. What MacArthur does not say, but implies, is that he should not be blamed for the effect or impact of the CCF counteroffensive, as his actions did not provoke the intervention. He implies that, since the decision to intervene was a *fait accompli*, there was little he could have done to predict, and nothing he could have done to prevent, the Chinese Communist intervention.

Similar to this theory is one that claims, independent of direction from, or a decision by, the Soviet Union, Mao seized the opportunity to return to Chinese control territory taken by Japan during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895.³ Korea was a Chinese "dependent state" when Japan siezed it as a prize. Regaining Korea would bolster Chinese national pride by returning territory and defeating the US -- the new protector of the ancient enemy, Japan.

This reasoning, that Chinese intervention was "part of the plan," is flawed when used as the primary reason for Chinese Communist actions and UNC defeats in November. It attempts to absolve all US/UNC personalities and intelligence gathering agencies of any and all failures to predict Chinese intervention.

A second theory is that the 38th Parallel was a true casus belli, and China was forced into the war by US insistence upon crossing the parallel. As respected a foreign affairs analyst as the State Department's George Kennan has held that such was the case.⁴ The Chinese announced it, the US crossed it, and the Chinese were then compelled to act. In a report written for the US Air Force, Allen S. Whiting supported this thesis and stated that the intervention was a belated, reluctant last resort in direct response to American actions. He rejected the hypothesis of any carefully premeditated intervention.⁵

MacArthur refused to accept that a US crossing of the 38th Parallel was the action that pulled the Chinese Communists into the war. Maintaining that the Chinese intervention was a premeditated act, MacArthur said,

...whether our troops crossed the 38th Parallel or had remained south thereof, the Chinese forces would have been utilized.... It would be naive indeed to believe that such an imaginary line would have influenced the Chinese in the slightest degree.⁶

It was, however, MacArthur's success at Inchon, his continued attack northward, and the concomitant disintegration of the NKPA that spurred the Chinese Communists into the war. When the UNC crossed the 38th Parallel, it sent a clear and distinct signal to the PRC. That signal indicated an aggressive desire to eliminate the threat to the Republic of Korea. In spite of US assurances that UNC military operations were defensive in nature and not a prelude to the invasion of Manchuria, the Chinese Communists viewed them as a threat to their national security.⁷ With its national security thus threatened, the PRC was compelled to intervene in the conflict to ensure its survival.

Indications are that, just as North Korea and the People's Republic of China had not expected the US to intervene after the June invasion, they had not also expected the US/UNC to continue the offensive across the 38th Parallel. MacArthur's drive presented the Chinese Communists with a very real threat to their national security interests. Just as the US could not stand by and

allow a friendly nation to be invaded and defeated, China could not permit the forced separation of North Korea from her sphere of influence.⁸

A third theory is that, regardless of any premeditated intent or desire and regardless of the perceived threat to Chinese national security, the Chinese Communists became active combatants in the war only after learning that MacArthur could not strike at their Manchurian bases and could not effectively interdict the flow of men and equipment from the PRC into Korea. The restrictions imposed by President Truman disallowed such deep strikes against the Chinese lines of communications.

MacArthur maintained that his plans had been predicated upon the ability to support his operations with reconnaissance overflights of Manchuria and deep strikes against appropriate Chinese Communist targets. They were his only means of halting the Chinese Communist resupply of the NKPA and the "last minute" Chinese intervention. MacArthur maintained that the final Chinese decision to mass for and launch the counteroffensive was based upon their realization that they would not be detected and there was no reason to fear American retaliation against Manchuria -- there would be no threat to Chinese territorial security.⁹ MacArthur claimed someone must have told the Chinese Communists they would be secure in their Manchurian sanctuaries.

Later investigations supported MacArthur's suspicions. Three British Foreign Service officers, with access to all messages between MacArthur and the US JCS, were spying for the Chinese Communists. Guy Burgess, Donald MacLean, and Kim Philby ensured the Chinese Communists were aware of all political, strategic, and operational guidance and directives between MacArthur and the JCS. Armed with such valuable information, the Chinese Communists were able to accurately assess the threat to the PRC and choose the most advantageous time and place for all their actions in North Korea. The privileged information provided by Burgess, MacLean, and Philby demonstrated that the threat was not the UNC intentions or capabilities. The Chinese Communists realized the threat was the loss of North Korea, a friendly state, protecting a potentially exposed flank with the US and Japan.

Rather than being a situation where intervention was either premeditated or forced upon the Chinese Communists, or the fortuitous result of absolutely perfect knowledge of the decisions of the highest level of the American political and military policy makers, the reasons for Chinese Communist overt military intervention in the Korean War are a combination of all three.

The Chinese Communist Government certainly had some advanced knowledge of the planned invasion of the Republic of Korea. Early tacit support gave way to

logistical assistance. The US decision to intervene and defend the ROK was an unanticipated turn of events early in the war. It must have caused discussions in the PRC and the USSR on possible overt Chinese Communist military action in Korea. There was no immediate need, though, for the Chinese to become directly involved, since the NKPA was successfully driving the ROK, US, and allied forces toward the beaches on the southern tip of the Korean peninsula.

The fortunes of the NKPA faded and the potential need for direct military assistance grew as the UNC landed at Inchon and destroyed remnants of the NKPA south of the 38th Parallel. As the UNC drove north across the parallel, the PRC became genuinely concerned for its own security. The loss of a friendly neighbor and its replacement by a hostile power caused the PRC to warn of and follow through with its own intervention.

Undoubtedly, the Chinese Communist leadership had confidence and comfort in the knowledge that MacArthur would be prohibited from striking targets within the sanctuary of Manchuria. Secure in this knowledge, Mao seized the opportunity to eliminate the threat, regain "lost" Chinese territory, and defeat the "American aggressors." There were clear indicators of the Chinese Communist intent.

Although US policy makers and intelligence agencies suspected K. M. Panikkar, the Indian Ambassador to the PRC, of being sympathetic to the Communist cause, they should not have so readily dismissed his warnings. Both Mao and the Chief of Staff of the CCF told Panikkar that the US advance northward would bring the PRC into the war. While the Chief of Staff had said the Chinese Communists would not "...let the Americans come to the border,"¹⁰ Mao clearly identified a US crossing of the 38th Parallel as the trigger for Chinese Communist intervention.¹¹ The Burmese Ambassador to the PRC and US embassies and diplomatic missions around the world reported they had received similar warnings of Chinese Communist intentions. Most of the warnings cited the 38th Parallel as the Chinese Communist trigger.

In the space of two weeks, Panikkar received and reported two separate, terse warnings (the CCF Chief of Staff's warning on 25 September and Mao's warning on 3 October). A similar warning from the Burmese Ambassador and confirmations from numerous American embassies should have convinced the US intelligence analysts that the Chinese threats were not mere bluffs.

In the midst of the bombast and rhetoric from the Chinese Communist leaders, two extremely significant events occurred in the Chinese Communist press. As detailed in Chapter 3, an August article in the Chinese Communist magazine, World Culture, identified US actions

as a threat to Chinese security.¹² By 11 October the Chinese Communist Foreign Minister had declared US actions a "serious threat" to Chinese security.¹³ These statements seemed to signal a hardening of the PRC's attitude toward the US and the UNC. These two statements were neither bluffs nor diplomatic blackmail. The Chinese Communists felt compelled to take appropriate steps to protect their territorial integrity and the security of the border with North Korea.

There was also credible evidence at the operational level that, when viewed in its entirety, should have caused someone to comment on the increasing likelihood that the CCF would actively intervene in the war. Among this evidence was: the build-up in Manchuria of forces that far outnumbered any logical, purely defensive requirement; Willoughby's early and continuing reports of major CCF units deploying across the Yalu River; and the initial, savage combat between the UNC and CCF in late October and early November.

The relocation of a sizeable CCF element from south-central China to Manchuria, while cause for attention, was not singularly indicative of a CCF build up or an intent to intervene in the war. The redeploying CCF units had earlier deployed to south-central China from Manchuria in response to a perceived threat involving the Chinese Nationalists on Formosa. The US Seventh Fleet

effectively eliminated the threat, and the CCF elements returned to their original garrison locations.

Even as the number of CCF soldiers and units in Manchuria grew, the US viewed the relocation and subsequent increase as naturally precautionary and defensive against the perceived threat of a possible US invasion. As the CCF strength and order of battle continued to grow, US intelligence agencies failed to appreciate the significance of the CCF build-up. Shortly after the Wake Island conference, Willoughby was reporting at least 400,000-650,000 CCF in Manchuria and surmising a limited Chinese intervention to create a buffer zone south of the Yalu River. Yet, he failed to paint a picture of imminent intervention. In spite of his comments on a limited intervention, Willoughby never indicated in his reports that MacArthur's decision to drive to the Yalu would cause the UNC to run headlong into the CCF units in the "buffer zone."

Throughout his intelligence reports, Willoughby had been citing purported crossings of the Yalu by CCF divisions. His initial reports were prior to the UNC crossing of the 38th Parallel. These CCF divisions, coupled with the sizeable force reported in Manchuria prepared to cross the Yalu, represented a significantly growing threat to the UNC. However, the UNC made no contact with these CCF units during the two to three weeks between 9 October, when the UNC attacked across the 38th

Parallel, and 25 October, when elements of the 6th ROK Division reached the Yalu. The absence of contact between the UNC and the CCF was likely the reason that, in spite of his reports of CCF units in North Korea, Willoughby was unwilling to commit himself and predict overt CCF intervention. He must have doubted the reliability of his earlier reports.

The picture changed dramatically, though, when the 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 6th ROK Division was decimated the day after it reached the Yalu. Almost simultaneously, three other ROK divisions met and were engaged in heavy combat with confirmed CCF units along the front of the ROK II Corps.

By the end of the first week of November, both the ROK I Corps and the ROK II Corps had engaged large CCF units, the US 8th Cavalry Regiment had been nearly annihilated, and the UNC had identified 12-17 CCF divisions engaged in combat within North Korea. At this time there should have been no question that the Chinese Communist Government had committed its forces to engage the UNC and halt its push to the Yalu. This not so gentle "tap" was the final warning to MacArthur that the Chinese Communists were not bluffing and he should take seriously their threats of intervention in the war.

MacArthur misinterpreted the subsequent CCF withdrawal as a UNC victory, rather than an opportunity to evaluate his operational plans and take the appropriate

actions. He apparently felt he still had a "reasonable chance of success." However, should the Soviets or Chinese Communists declare in advance their intentions to occupy North Korea and give warning that their forces should not be attacked, JCS 92801 had told MacArthur to assume the defense and refer the matter to Washington for a decision.¹⁴

MacArthur's key mistake was the failure to defer to Washington for guidance after the Chinese Communist warnings. The oral warnings were clear and concise. The Chinese Communist intent was manifested in the resolute and vicious attacks on the UNC forces in late October and early November. It was at this point that MacArthur, the theater commander, failed to comply with his instructions from the JCS and the National Command Authority.

The "debris" of the "tap" - captured CCF equipment and dead and captured CCF soldiers - proved the Chinese Communist involvement. MacArthur and his subordinates refused to believe, though, that the Chinese Communists would be so audacious as to enter the war after the UNC had so successfully defeated the NKPA. Willoughby said later they had "gambled" that the Chinese would stay north of the Yalu.¹⁵ It was a bad gamble. It was a gamble that would be paid for over the next year and a half with the lives of thousands more US, ROK, and allied soldiers.

MacArthur was poorly served by his G2. The resultant intelligence failure was the single most important factor in the UNC's operational failure in North Korea. As the operational intelligence officer, Willoughby was the point where national and tactical intelligence collection and analysis converged. His was the key responsibility to gather intelligence from above and below, correlate it to the weather and terrain, and disseminate it to the responsible commanders. Willoughby was responsible for determining enemy capabilities and intentions.¹⁶

The CIA and State Department intelligence analyses were also flawed. No intelligence agency concluded a definite opening of hostilities with the PRC. Most reports from these agencies generally indicated that the Chinese effort, if one came, would be limited to, perhaps, only guerilla action.¹⁷ However, due to the relatively primitive state of international intelligence at that time, particularly regarding Communist China, most of the intelligence available to the national-level decision makers came from MacArthur's Far East Command -- Willoughby.¹⁸

Regardless of other intelligence collection and evaluation deficiencies, the ultimate responsibility rested squarely upon MacArthur's shoulders. By early November, the Chinese intent was clear. The Chinese Communist Government had threatened large-scale

intervention and had identified an American crossing of the 38th Parallel as the casus belli. On more than one occasion the Chinese positively stated they would enter the war if US soldiers crossed the 38th Parallel. They openly described the security of North Korea in terms of the vital interest of the People's Republic of China. They clearly identified the American advance as a threat to their national security. Lastly, the Chinese demonstrated their resolve in late October and early November when, with at least 11 divisions, the CCF drove the UNC from the vicinity of the Yalu. The heavy fighting and the casualties suffered by both sides was the final, convincing demonstration that previous Chinese Communist warnings were not bluffs.

Contrary to MacArthur's later assertions, he had sufficient evidence prior to the end of November to raise doubts about the wisdom of his new offensive. He knew of key national intelligence indicators of a hardening of Chinese resolve. He had fairly accurate information about the movement of the CCF to Manchuria and into North Korea. Although many in the national intelligence community regarded the indicators as vague, MacArthur and Willoughby were still at fault. They had the tactical intelligence that reduced the degree of uncertainty or ambiguity.¹⁹

The point at which MacArthur could and should have known that the Chinese Communists were going to openly intervene in the Korean War was not in early October when the UNC crossed the 38th Parallel. He could have known, should have known (and perhaps did know) that the UNC would meet a large and determined Chinese Communist army by the time he launched his "end the war", "home by Christmas" offensive on 24 November . He should have deferred to Washington for a high level policy decision. For whatever reason, MacArthur launched the offensive in the face of incontrovertible evidence that he was already facing "an entirely new war" -- a war of his own making.

NOTES

¹John F. O'Shaughnessy, "The Chinese Intervention in Korea: An Analysis of Warning" (Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence Thesis, Defense Intelligence College, 1985), p. 55.

²Charles A. Willoughby and John Chamberlain, MacArthur, 1941-1951 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), p. 380.

³Robert C. North, Moscow and Chinese Communists, 2d ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1963), pp. 259-260.

⁴Joseph C. Goulden, Korea: The Untold Story of the War (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), p. 234, as cited in O'Shaughnessy, p. 54.

⁵Allen S. Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., [1960]), pp. 109, 126.

⁶Willoughby, p. 380.

⁷North, p. 260; and Willoughby, p. 380.

⁸T. R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness (New York: MacMillan, 1963), pp. 276-280.

⁹Courtney Whitney, MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 394.

¹⁰James F. Schnabel, Policy and Direction, The First Year U. S. Army in the Korean War (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U. S. Army, 1972), p. 197; and Trumbull Higgins, Korea and the Fall of MacArthur: A Precipice in Limited War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 54-55, 70.

¹¹K. M. Panikkar, In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955), pp. 109-111.

¹²Whiting, pp. 70, 84-85.

¹³Schnabel, p. 233; and Higgins, p. 56.

¹⁴Message, US JCS to CINCFE, Number JCS 92801, 27 September 1950, (Unclassified), pp. 1-3, in Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog-1975, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan-Mar 75 (microfiche; Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), 14A.

¹⁵"How Our Victory Turned to Defeat," Newsweek, 11 December 1950, p. 29.

¹⁶Stanlis D. Milkowski, "MacArthur's 1950 Campaign in Korea: Operational Art on the Strategic Margin" (Strategic Study, National War College, National Defense University, 1986), pp. 19, 29-30.

¹⁷Schnabel, p. 64, citing Memo, Gen Bolling, DA G2, for ACofS, Admin, DA, 18 October 1950, in G3 DA file Cofs 091, Case 28.

¹⁸J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p. 173; and H. A. DeWeerd, The Triumph of the Limiters: Korea (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., [1968]), p. 6.

¹⁹Milkowski, pp. 29-30.

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