

IN THEATER

A GIANT ENTERS THE BATTLE: ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE UN AND CHINESE COMMUNIST FORCES IN KOREA, NOVEMBER 1950

by Troy J. Sacquety

After Inch'on and the Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA) breakout from the Pusan Perimeter, the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) reeled back in shambles, their supply lines cut. On paper, the NKPA had a total of eight corps, thirty divisions, and several brigades, but in reality most were combat ineffective.¹ Many North Korean units had fled north of the Yalu into Manchuria in order to refit and replenish their numbers. Only the *IV Corps* with one division and two brigades opposed the South Korean I Corps in northeastern Korea, and four cut-off divisions of *II Corps* and stragglers resorted to guerrilla operations near the 38th Parallel.

With the war appearing won, only the Chinese and Soviet response to the potential Korean unification under a democratic flag worried U.S. policymakers. Communist China was the major concern. Having just defeated the Nationalist Chinese and reunified the mainland, the seasoned Red Army was five million strong. In fact, some of the best soldiers in the Chinese Communist Army were among those "volunteers" who intervened early in the Korean War.² When the stream of Chinese "volunteers" became a flood, Allied optimism for a quick end of the war vanished despite much improved capabilities since July 1950.

FOUR MONTHS INTO WAR: THE ALLIED ORDER OF BATTLE: NOVEMBER 1950

Surprised by the North Korean attack on 25 July 1950, the Allies lost no time in building a larger and more capable force to counter the Communist aggression. By 23 November 1950, the Allies had massed 553,000 troops (the majority of whom were American and South Korean); counting 55,000 air force and 75,000 naval personnel.³ UN members also contributed forces.

On 7 July 1950, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 84, condemning North Korean aggression. Resolution 84 authorized member states to furnish military forces under a U.S.-led UN Command to help restore the balance. Fortunately for the United States, the Soviet Union, a permanent Security Council member with veto power, boycotted the UN because the Republic of China and not the (Communist) People's Republic of China, held a permanent seat on the Council.



South Korea provided soldiers, called "KATUSAs" to serve in U.S. divisions alongside American soldiers. This soldier, nicknamed "Joe" served in the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.

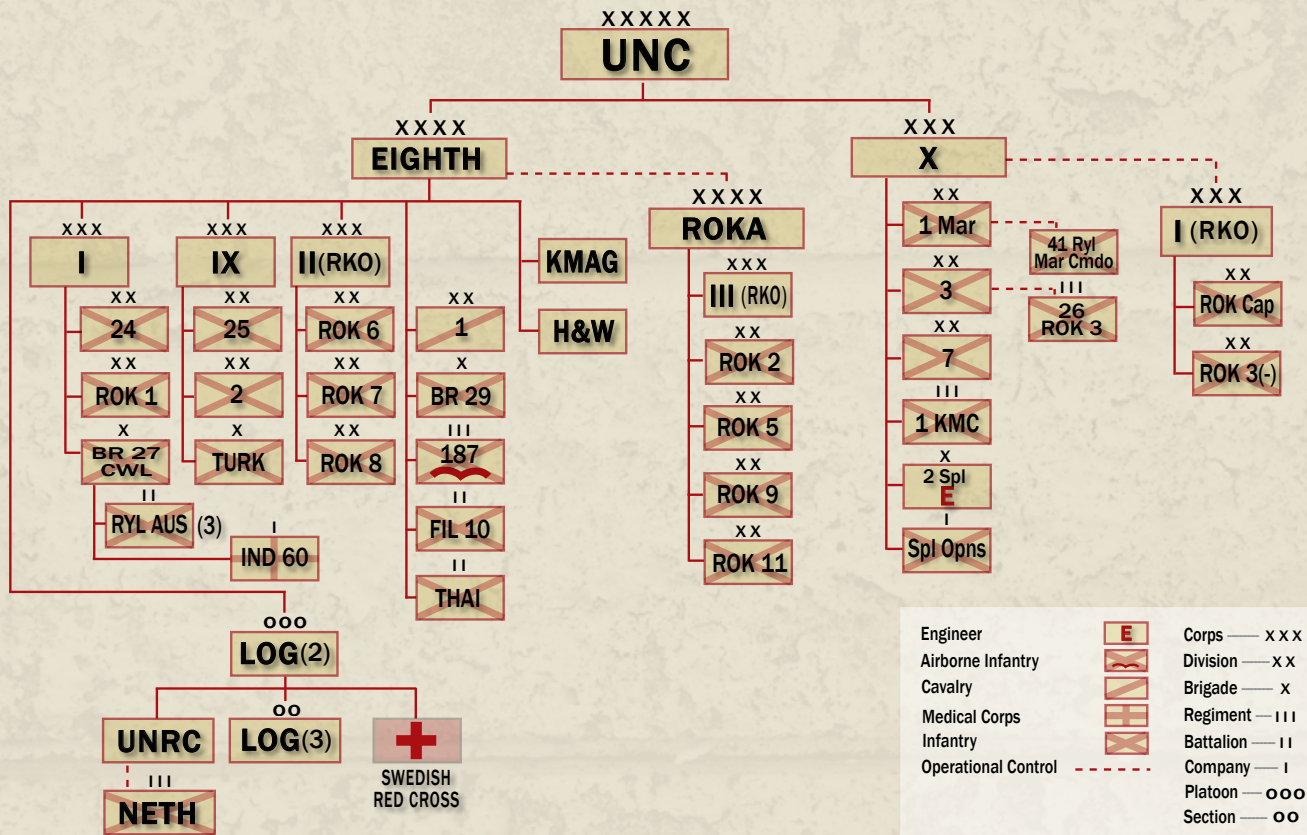
Ground forces came from the United Kingdom (11,186), Turkey (5,051), the Philippines (1,349), Thailand (1,181), Australia (1,002), The Netherlands (636), and India (326). Sweden furnished a civilian medical contingent (168). France contributed an eleven hundred-man battalion that arrived at the end of November. Air forces from the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and South Africa, quickly responded as did naval forces from the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Colombia, and Thailand.⁴

From the four divisions committed by August 1950, Washington's response grew exponentially. All services rushed units into theater to participate in General (GEN) Douglas A. MacArthur's offensive to free the south from Communist domination. To increase the combat power of the weakened U.S. infantry divisions, South Korea provided as many as 8,300 KATUSAs (Korean Augmentation to the United States Army) to most American divisions.

The Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA), led by Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, and the X Corps, commanded by Major General Edward M. Almond, were the two major U.S. ground combat commands in Korea in late 1950. EUSA had two Corps (I and IX), four divisions (1st Cavalry, and the 2nd, 24th, and 25th Infantry divisions), the separate 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team, and an EUSA Ranger company (see Eugene Piasecki's *Eighth Army Rangers: First In Korea*). Most of the Republic

Organization of UNC Ground Forces in Korea

23 November 1950



In the first months of desperation, many WWII veterans were recalled back to duty to serve in Korea. The author's grandfather, MSG Chester R. Wilson (left), had served in WWII with the 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Division before being recalled for service from 1950 to 1951 with the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.

of Korea Army (ROKA) served under EUSA control; two corps (II and III) with eight divisions (1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 11th). Several UN contingents also bolstered EUSA, including the 1st Turkish Armed Forces Command, the 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade (with Australian and Indian troops attached), the 29th British Independent Brigade Group, the Thai 21st Regimental Combat Team, and the battalion-sized Netherlands Detachment, and the Philippine 10th Battalion Combat Team.⁵

Meanwhile, X Corps, which made the amphibious assault at Inch'on on 15 September 1950, was controlled by the Far East Command (FECOM). X Corps had two U.S. Army infantry divisions (3rd and 7th) and the 1st Marine Division (1st MarDiv), recently brought up to strength with reservists and 2nd Division Marines. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was absorbed by the



X Corps SSI



I Corps SSI



IX Corps SSI



187th Regimental Combat Team SSI



1st Marine Division SSI



3rd Infantry Division SSI



7th Infantry Division SSI

1st MarDiv. The South Korean I Corps (3rd and Capital divisions), and the regimental-sized 1st Korean Marine Corps completed Seoul's contribution. The British 41st Independent Commando, Royal Marines, U. S. 2nd Special Engineer Brigade and the GHQ Raiders filled out X Corps. (see Dr. Charles H. Briscoe's *Born of Desperation: Early Special Operations in the Korean War*) The U.S. units now had heavier support weapons.

Chief among them were heavier tanks and artillery support. Each infantry division had nearly eighty assigned tanks, either M4A3 Shermans, M26 Pershings, or M46 Pattons, or a combination thereof.⁶ All were heavier than the M24 Chaffees the U.S. had when it entered the war. The U.S. divisions had heavier artillery support with the addition of 155 mm and 105 mm howitzers, and infantry regiments used 57 mm and 75 mm recoilless rifles and 4.2 inch, 81 mm, and 60 mm mortars. Because UN forces had air superiority, crew-served anti-aircraft weapons were used against enemy personnel.

The UN allies dominated in airpower. By late June Lieutenant General (LtGen) George E. Stratemeyer, commander of Far East Air Force (FEAF), requested these reinforcements: 164 F-80Cs; 21 F-82s; 22 B-26s; 23 B-29s; 21 C-54s; 64 F-51s; and 15 C-47s.¹⁰ Although insufficient numbers existed in the Air Force inventory, Stratemeyer wanted to "fill up" squadrons under his control with a ten-percent attrition reserve. The main fighter first used in FEAF was the F-80C Shooting Star. Because more WWII-era F-51 Mustangs were available than the F-80Cs, Stratemeyer converted six squadrons back to F-51s.¹¹ Although slower, the F-51 had longer range, a larger bomb load, and could operate from rough and unimproved Korean airstrips. The next jets to arrive were F-84E Thunderjet and F-86 Sabrijets. Strategic bombing duties were done by B-29 Superfortresses while B-26 Invaders carried the operational load. Cargo was transported by C-54, C-119, C-47, and C-46 aircraft. By August, FEAF was averaging 238 close-air support sorties a day.¹²

The U.S. had developed better medical care of its wounded than it did in WWII. Helicopters became the primary method for the evacuations of critically-wounded soldiers quickly from the battlefield, allowing better and more advanced treatment facilities. For immediate and advanced care, the most seriously wounded were brought to a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH). Each of

The U.S. Navy committed a huge force early in the Korean War. Among the nearly two hundred ships that participated in the Wonsan landings were aircraft carriers, such as this one. They carried a range of aircraft, including jets like the F9F Panther.



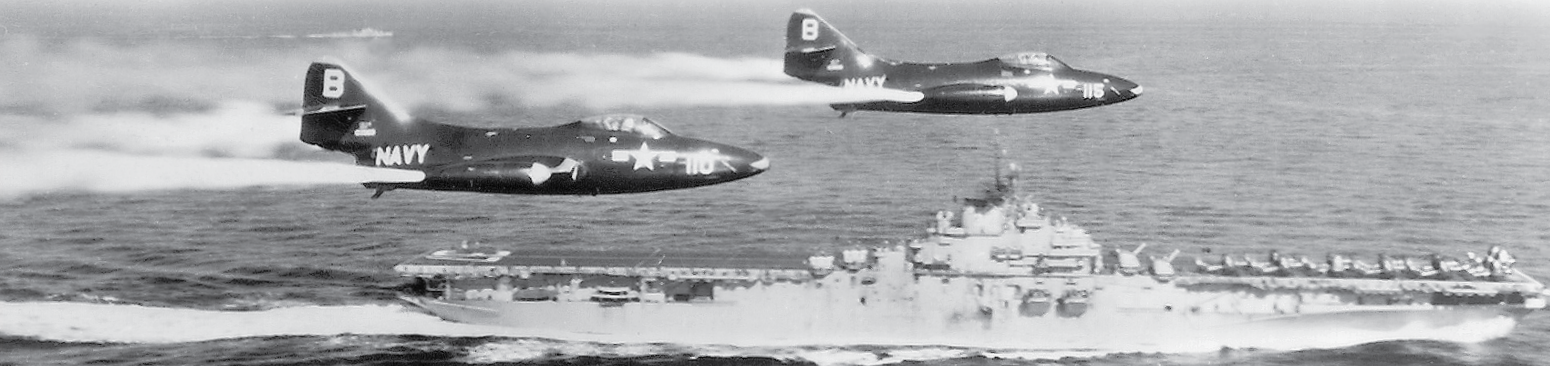
Allied units soon had more firepower, even at the lowest levels. Here, American troops prepare to fire a 75 mm recoilless rifle.



The M26 Patton heavy tank (above) and other models soon arrived in Korea. They supplemented the M24 Chaffee light tank, which had been no match for North Korean T-34s.

the four MASHs in Korea had the capacity of 150 beds and were located just close enough to the front to be out of artillery range. By war's end, only 2.5 percent of all soldiers who reached a care facility died, compared to 4.5 percent in WWII.¹³ Helicopters overcame the poor road and rail infrastructure of Korea.

Unfortunately for the UN forces, the poorly developed and war-damaged transportation network greatly hampered the movement of supplies. The Korean rail system had been heavily damaged by allied air attacks early in the war. Trucks had to carry the logistical burden and poor roads and constant use reduced the fleet.¹⁴ It was aerial resupply that enabled UN forces to maintain their pursuit of the retreating NKPA.



Disposition of FEAF Units 1 Nov 1950

K-2
49 FTR BMR GR
7 FB SQ
8 FB SQ
9 FB SQ
543 TAC SUPPORT GP
8 TAC RCN SQ (PJ)
162 TAC RCN SQ (MP)

K-3
35 FTR INTCP GP
39 FI SQ
40 FI SQ
77 RAAF SQ

K-9
18 FTR BMR GP
12 FB SQ
67 FB SQ

K-14
8 FTR BMR GP
35 FB SQ
36 FB SQ
51 FTR INTCP GP
16 FI SQ
25 FI SQ
80 FB SQ

K-16
FLT F 3 RESCUE SQ
(MINUS 1 FLT)

K-24
ROK AF UNIT
6147 TAC AIR CONTROL SQ
FLT F 3 RESCUE SQ (1 FLT)

BRADY
437 TROOP CARRIER GP (ADV)

ITAZUKE
452 BOMB GP
729 B SQ
730 B SQ
21 TROOP CARRIER SQ
68 FTR (AW) SQ



ASHIYA
314 TROOP CARRIER GP
37 TC SQ
50 TC SQ
61 TC SQ
62 TC SQ
347 TROOP CARRIER GP
6 TC SQ
22 TC SQ
FLT D 3 RESCUE SQ

IWAKUNI
3 BOMB GP
8 B SQ
13 B SQ
731 BOMB SQ

ITAMI
ELEMENTS 1 MARINE AIR WG

KOMAKI
45 TAC RCN SQ

TACHIKAWA
1 TROOP CARRIER GP (PROV)
47 TC SQ (PROV)
48 TC SQ (PROV)
US NAVY PATROL SQ 6

YOKOTA
98 BOMB GP
343 B SQ
344 B SQ
345 B SQ
DET A 84 BOMB SQ

JOHNSON
41 FTR INTCP SQ (MINUS 1 FLT)
339 FTR (AW) SQ (MINUS 1 FLT)
31 STRAT RCN SQ
6204 PM FLT
2 SAAF SQ (ADV)
FLT A 3 RESCUE SQ

MISAWA
41 FTR INTCP SQ (1 FLT)
339 FTR (AW) SQ (1 FLT)
512 RCN SQ
FLTS B C 3 RESCUE SQ



The use of helicopters, such as this Sikorsky H-6, allowed immediate air evacuation of casualties.



The introduction of Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals (MASH) saved countless lives. They allowed critically-wounded soldiers to receive near-immediate care.

THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS ENTER THE FRAY

Immense in numbers, the five-million man Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) were primarily a light infantry force composed of ten thousand-man divisions, lacking artillery, tank, or air assets. They relied heavily on mortars for fire support. Their primary offensive tactic was to get close enough to Allied units to overwhelm them with sheer numbers. Possessing a limited logistical capability, the Chinese Army relied on primitive—but effective technology. They used simple communications like bugles, whistles, and flutes. Normally, three divisions comprised an Army [the approximate size of a U.S. Corps]. Up to six Armies would be controlled by an Army Group. Three Army Groups made up a Field Army, the highest organizational level.¹⁵

As the UN forces approached the Yalu River in late 1950, Beijing's response was to intervene militarily. Named the "People's Volunteer Army" to avoid overt conflict with the United States and United Nations forces, troops infiltrated in large numbers to surprise the allies. Maintaining strict operational security and avoiding aerial detection and attack, they hid by day and marched only at night. They also employed deception by referring to Armies as "units" and divisions as "battalions," thereby disguising the size of elements.¹⁶ In the first contact on 25 October, ROKA soldiers captured some Chinese soldiers.¹⁷ Despite facing real evidence, FECOM refused to acknowledge that large, organized CCF units were in Korea, and consistently downsized enemy troop



Allied airpower destroyed North Korean infrastructure such as bridges. Unfortunately, this hampered the movement of supplies north, and slowed the speed of the allied offensive.



Because the bridges and railroads were destroyed and truck transportation was inadequate, supplies piled up in ports.



The large-scale intervention of Chinese Communist Forces, such as this one guarded by a soldier of the 3rd Ranger Company, surprised American combat commanders.

numbers. When the Chinese struck in force on multiple fronts on 26 November, U.S. Army commanders could no longer deny that the war had not only taken a new turn, but as GEN MacArthur noted on 28 November, “we face an entirely new war.”¹⁸

As with the North Koreans, it is difficult to establish with any precision the exact numbers of the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) that intervened in November 1950. At the time, U.S. intelligence estimates placed the number of CCF at sixty to seventy thousand, a woeful underestimate.¹⁹ The official U.S. Army history, using intelligence estimates from later in the war, placed thirty CCF divisions [300,000 troops] in North Korea by the third week of November 1950.²⁰ Eighteen divisions in the XVII Army Group opposed the Eighth U.S. Army, and twelve Chinese divisions of the IX Army Group attacked X Corps. Still, these figures may be quite low. From November 1950 forward, the CCF carried the Communist effort until the Armistice. †

Troy J. Sacquety earned an MA from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and his PhD in Military History from Texas A&M University. Prior to joining the USASOC History Office staff he worked several years for the Central Intelligence Agency. Current research interests include Army and Office of Strategic Services (OSS) special operations during World War II, and Special Operations units in Vietnam.

Endnotes

- 1 Billy C. Mossman, *Ebb and Flow: November 1950–July 1951* (Washington DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2000), 51.
- 2 Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June–November 1950)* (Washington DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2000), 751.
- 3 Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 23.
- 4 Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 24.
- 5 Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 26.
- 6 Gordon L. Rottman, *Korean War Order of Battle: United States, United Nations, and Communist Ground, Naval, and Air Forces, 1950–1953* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), 20–21.
- 7 James A. Field, Jr, *History of United States Naval Operations: Korea* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 1962), found online at <http://www.history.navy.mil/books/field/ch3b.htm#top>, accessed 29 March 2010.
- 8 Rottman, *Korean War Order of Battle*, 94.
- 9 Rottman, *Korean War Order of Battle*, 70.
- 10 Robert F. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea 1950–1953* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 68. Found online at http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/Publications/fulltext/usaf_in_korea.pdf, accessed 29 March 2010. **The F-82 was soon withdrawn from Korea due to a lack of airframes and spare parts.**
- 11 Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, 70.
- 12 Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, 137.
- 13 Frank A. Reister, *Battle Casualties and Medical Statistics: U.S. Army Experience in the Korean War*, found on-line on the U.S. Army Medical Department, Office of Medical History website at <http://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/korea/reister/ch1.html>, accessed 21 March 2009.
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- 16 Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 753.
- 17 James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992), 233.
- 18 James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of the Korean War* (New York: Quill, 1988), 107.
- 19 Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 796.
- 20 Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 768.