

# Same Organization, Four Different Names: U.S. ARMY CIVIL AFFAIRS IN KOREA 1950-1953

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*In its short existence the 8201st Army Unit, was known as the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment, UNCAC, UNCACK, and KCAC. In this article Civil Affairs (CA) will be used since it is the current branch term. Military Government (MG) and UN Civil Assistance will also be used because they are appropriate predecessor terms for modern day Civil Affairs and were used interchangeably during the Korean War.*



The North Korean invasion sent the South Korean forces reeling. Only a stopgap infusion of American troops prevented a Communist victory. Here, a South Korean and an American soldier occupy a temporary position near Taejon.



In the early months of the Korean War, hundreds of thousands of refugees clogged South Korea's roads. The unprecedented situation made Civil Affairs a necessity.

**O**n 25 June 1950, the uneasy peace between the divided Koreas shattered when the Soviet-backed Communist North invaded the U.S.-supported democratic South. The inexperienced and lightly-armed South Korean Army (ROKA) virtually melted away. Within a week, it had lost 44,000 of its 98,000 troops and the nation's capital, Seoul.<sup>1</sup> The ROKA remnants, along with hastily assembled U.S. sea, air, and ground combat forces pulled from occupation duty in Japan or from strategic naval patrols in the Far East, barely managed to stem the North Korean advance. These contingents, combined with token units pledged by countries in the United Nations (UN), kept the North Korean Army at bay outside the perimeter encircling the city of Pusan. The North Korean onslaught triggered a huge humanitarian relief effort.

Refugees clogged the Allied-controlled areas and were "a constant source of trouble and danger to the UN Command during the early part of the war. During the middle two weeks of July it was estimated that about 380,000 refugees had crossed into ROK-held territory, and that this number was increasing at the rate of 25,000 daily."<sup>2</sup> The refugee problem was compounded by the fact that the only American forces that might have helped mitigate the situation—Military Government units—had left the peninsula two years earlier in 1948.<sup>3</sup> The commander of the U.S. and UN forces, General (GEN) Douglas A. MacArthur, realized that he had to address this problem—and quickly—with available assets.

The CA mission in the Korean War began as an *ad-hoc* effort but rapidly grew. As the strategic situation of the war evolved, so did the role of CA. Although U.S. combat divisions had separate CA officers assigned to their staffs,



The Communist invasion of the South created a humanitarian disaster on a tremendous scale. Many children were separated from their families and forced to survive on the streets. Many did not, especially during the brutal Korean winter. Their plight prompted U.S. soldiers to help.



Brigadier General Crawford F. Sams was the commanding officer of the UN Public Health & Welfare Detachment. As the main force behind reforming the Japanese civilian medical system and personal diet during the post-WWII occupation, BG Sams became a pioneer of modern Civil Affairs.



Far East Command SSI

Thousands of South Korean refugees crowded into the Pusan Perimeter in mid-1950. Their desperate situation caused the creation of the UN Public Health & Welfare Detachment.



administrators with acceptable South Koreans. Because Korea had been a Japanese protectorate since 1910, few Koreans held civil positions, and then only at the lowest levels. This dilemma reduced the available talent pool. To solve this, Military Government personnel trained Koreans to perform administrative duties, provide law and order, and insure food distribution to the cities. They also (sometimes forcefully) repatriated the Japanese back home and brought the Korean “guest laborers” in Japan back. But, with the national election of Dr. Syngman Rhee as the first President of South Korea and the establishment of the Republic of Korea on 15 August 1948, the American military government there “came to an end.”<sup>5</sup> As Military Government units returned to the United States from Europe and the Far East, interest in Civil Affairs in the active Army waned.<sup>6</sup> That is, until the North Korean Communists invaded the South.

a Far East Command (FECOM) element, the 8201st Army Unit (AU), was the main effort. The 8201st AU had four different titles in its short lifespan from 1950 to 1955: the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment, the United Nations Civil Assistance Command (UNCAC), the United Nations Civil Assistance Command, Korea (UNCACK), and the Korea Civil Assistance Command (KCAC). This article explains the evolution of the unit and its various designations and describes how, even though refugee assistance was a constant theme, the 8201st missions grew with the changing situation on the battlefield. It will also show how the CA effort in Korea was the precursor for modern Civil Affairs. In contrast to WWII, where CA worked in occupied areas, Korean-era CA functioned within a sovereign friendly nation. The story begins with the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment.

With nearly six million refugees jammed into the Pusan Perimeter, and in desperate need of aid, President Rhee appealed to the U.S. Government for food, clothing, and assistance.<sup>7</sup> Acting on President Rhee’s request, GEN MacArthur, in his dual capacity as Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan (SCAP) and Commander-In-Chief of the United Nations Command (CINCUNC), directed the establishment of the United Nations Public Health and Welfare Detachment in Korea. GEN McArthur used internal assets in Japan to name Brigadier General (BG) Crawford F. Sams as the Chief of Health and Welfare, General Headquarters, United Nations Command, Republic of Korea. He was concurrently named to lead the unit that would perform the CA mission on the ground, the small UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment. BG Sams was the perfect choice for the job.

## UN PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE DETACHMENT

Prior to the Korean War, CA units had been in South Korea since the end of WWII as part of the American occupation force. The first CA units (Military Government Companies) arrived in South Korea in October 1945 to organize basic government functions.<sup>4</sup> They began by replacing Japanese and collaborationist

Sams had been in the U.S. Army Medical Corps since 1929 when he graduated from the Washington University School of Medicine (St. Louis, MO). He had prior service in the National Guard in both infantry and artillery units. His greatest achievements came while on occupation duty in postwar Japan. As the Chief, Public Health and Welfare Section, in the General Headquarters



The speed of the Communist advance coupled with huge throngs of refugees packing into the Pusan Perimeter, created a housing crisis. Thousands of people had moved into the city and were forced to sleep where they could. The threat of disease became a huge concern.



When Allied forces crossed the 38th Parallel, the UN Public Health & Welfare Detachment reverted to the more traditional Civil Affairs role of acting as Military Government in occupied areas. Due to the Chinese Communist intervention this mission was cut short. Once the battle lines stabilized, the main CA effort once again became assistance to a friendly sovereign nation.



The 8201st Army Unit was initially assigned to the Eighth U.S. Army (SSI on left) and then later, the Korean Communications Zone (KCOMZ) (SSI on right).



(GHQ) of SCAP, Japan, BG Sams reformed the Japanese medical system by enacting professional standards for medical schools, directing medical facility upgrades, instituting Japanese production of medicines and vaccines, creating countrywide inoculation programs, and introducing new foods into the Japanese diet (heavily based on rice) to improve nutrition.<sup>8</sup> The years he dedicated to preventive medicine qualified him as an excellent choice to attack the threats to public health in South Korea.

In South Korea BG Sams faced a massive problem in determining critical needs and setting priorities. Since South Korea was a sovereign nation, he began discussing issues with government officials to enlist their assistance. BG Sams set the precedent for close liaison with the Korean government at all levels down to the CA Field Team. Thus, the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment was organized to dovetail with the South Korean national and provincial governments to facilitate close coordination.<sup>9</sup> With the South Korean government in accord with his proposals, BG Sams evaluated his personnel and equipment assets, which were few in number.

*“If we could control the epidemics of disease among the civilian population, then we would also lessen the hazard of the spread of disease to our own troops and those of our United Nations allies,”*

*—Brigadier General Crawford F. Sams*

Initially BG Sams had twenty-nine officers, sixteen enlisted men, and sixteen civilians in the detachment. Based on these numbers, he addressed the most pressing problem—the refugees and residents packed inside the Pusan Perimeter.<sup>10</sup> Not only did the refugees need housing and food, but they also required medical care and immunizations. Administering inoculations was especially critical. “If we could control the epidemics of disease among the civilian population, then we would also lessen the hazard of the spread of disease to our own troops and those of our United Nations allies,” BG Sams said.<sup>11</sup> The mission of the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment grew as the battlefield situation changed.

When the Allies broke out of the Pusan Perimeter in September 1950, the UN Public Health and Welfare Teams extended their efforts to the rest of South Korea. As the UN forces pushed beyond the 38th Parallel and into North Korean territory, CA duties greatly expanded. The few UN Public Health and Welfare Teams now struggled with administering North Korean territory in addition to coping with the nearly 4,600,000 South Korean refugees—almost a quarter of the country’s population.<sup>12</sup> These new responsibilities brought change. On 30 October 1950, GEN MacArthur transferred responsibility of the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment to the Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA).



Because of this, the UN Public Health and Welfare Teams (and later UNCAACK) did not support X Corps, a separate command. Lieutenant General (LTG) Walton H. Walker, the EUSA commander, then activated the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment in the EUSA on 1 November with 161 officers and 117 enlisted men.<sup>13</sup> A scramble ensued to find officers to fill the holes in the military government teams needed in occupied North Korea. Those efforts deteriorated when the war again took a dramatic turn.

Just as UN forces neared the Yalu River in November 1950, Chinese Communist Forces intervened. UN forces reeled south in confusion after being hit by the Communist onslaught. The UN Public Health and Welfare Detachments had been providing health care and food, organizing governments, and trying to rebuild rudimentary infrastructure in the major North Korean cities in the EUSA area. As the withdrawal began they found themselves once again mired in refugee assistance, this time by anti-Communist North Korean civilians seizing the opportunity to flee. UN Public Health and Welfare teams helped to organize the evacuation of friendly civilians south from the North Korean capital of P'yongyang and from the port of Chinnamp'o.<sup>14</sup> The teams still had to fight the spread of disease, so they sprayed the refugees with the pesticide DDT.<sup>15</sup> The number of refugees heading south in winter, as well as the number already in South Korea, presented the UN Public Health and Welfare teams with a "welfare situation unprecedented even in Europe at the end of World War II."<sup>16</sup> Throughout these actions, it was the responsibility of all CA teams—from the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment down to teams in the infantry divisions—

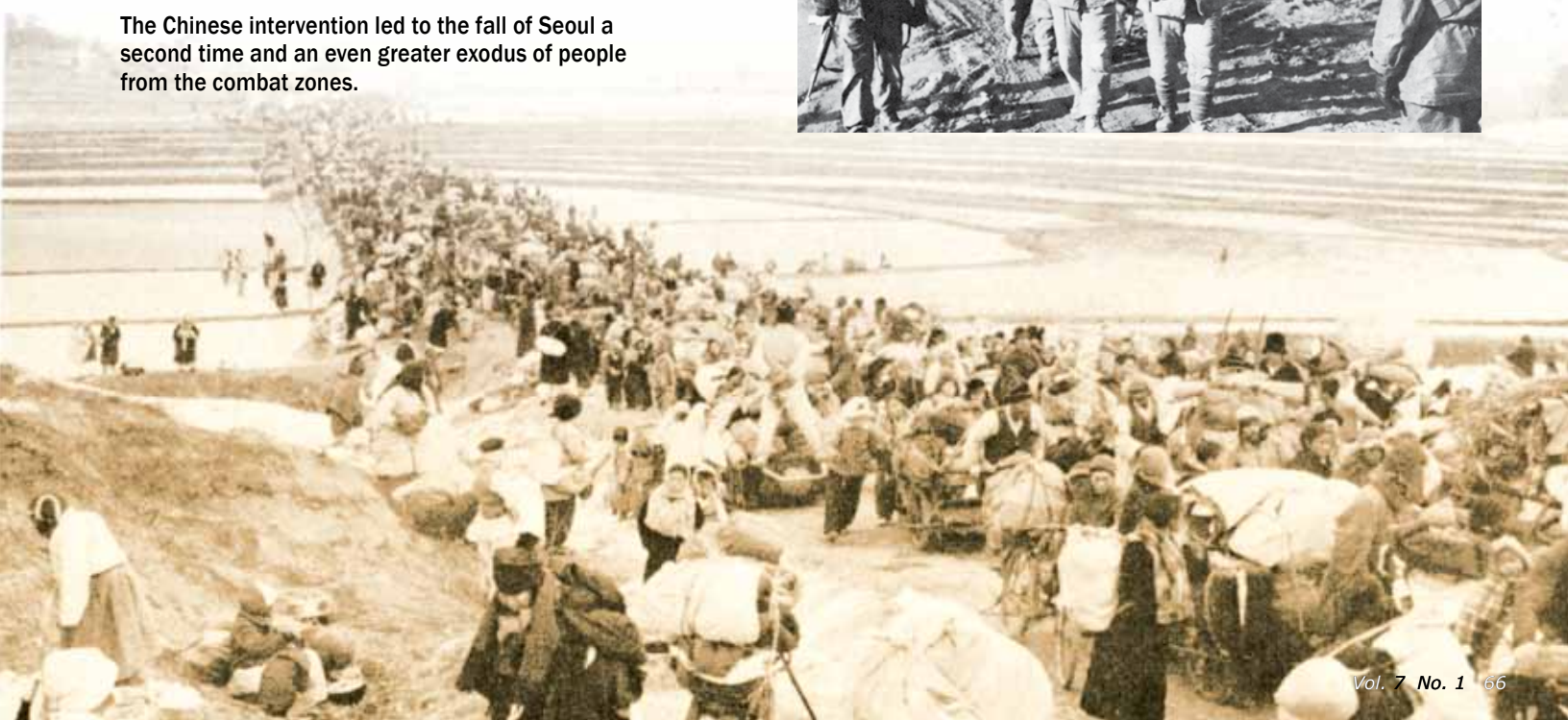
**The Chinese Communist intervention in the Korean War in late 1950 again caught the Allies by surprise and forced them to relinquish their gains. Here South Korean troops bring four captured Chinese soldiers to the rear.**

**The Chinese intervention led to the fall of Seoul a second time and an even greater exodus of people from the combat zones.**

to keep refugees away from the main roads to allow for the free flow of military traffic. Refugees were directed onto secondary roads. The CA teams set up feeding and rest stations about a day's travel apart to assist with the refugee movement.

As an EUSA report described it: "the tactical situation set in motion a southward surge of homeless refugees which . . . [seriously] hampered the movement of Allied troops and supplies . . . With the withdrawal of P'yongyang, however, the situation became grave. More than 200,000 inhabitants of North Korea traveled across the 38th Parallel during the month—100,000 through the Seoul-Inchon area . . . with the civil evacuation of Seoul 1,000 residents a day were moving into (already overcrowded) Taegu and Pusan . . . Foot travelers clogged the highways and rail lines, threatening to block supply routes. It became necessary to divert all southbound non-military traffic along secondary roads and over specified bridges across the Han River."<sup>17</sup> This was not just an EUSA problem; hundreds of thousands of refugees also poured out of the X Corps area. The CA teams, however, were better prepared to deal with the situation because they had stockpiles of supplies on hand.

The UN Public Health and Welfare Detachments could draw on two critically important items that the Army had rushed into theater. The first was the "Basic Medical Unit," which provided enough medicine and medical supplies to support 100,000 people for a month. The second was the "Basic Hospital Unit," a mobile





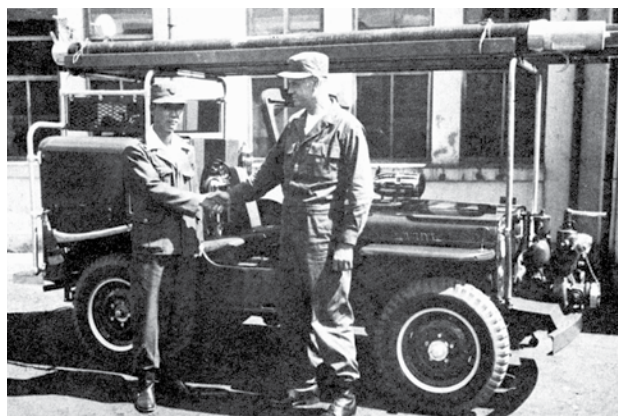
40-bed surgical facility with all the necessary equipment. Both packages helped to sustain the heavily damaged and over-subscribed South Korean medical system.<sup>18</sup> However, because of the sheer magnitude of the refugee problem, a larger civil assistance organization was necessary. To address this, the status of the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment was raised to that of a major command in December 1950, briefly named the United Nations Civil Assistance Command (UNCAC).<sup>19</sup> To add to the confusion, this moniker would only last a month before the unit was redesignated.

## UNCACK

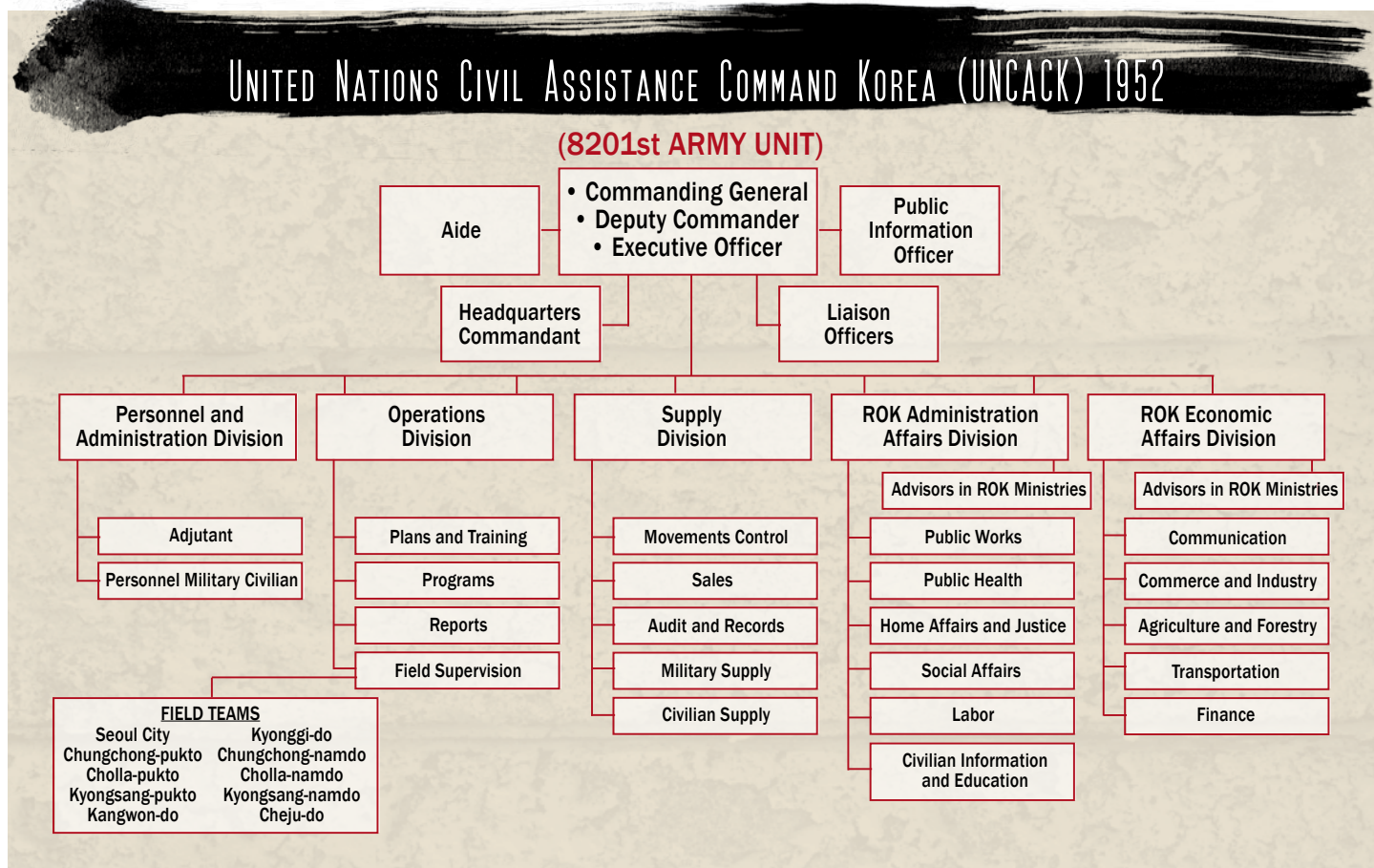
In January 1951, UNCAC was redesignated as the UN Civil Assistance Command, Korea (UNCACK).<sup>20</sup> It was further reorganized 12 June 1951 with an authorized strength of 91 officers and 167 enlisted men.<sup>21</sup> But, filling this complement proved difficult and UNCACK's numbers were in a constant state of fluctuation. In 1951, UNCACK had only 75 officers, 154 enlisted men, and 94 civilians; a total of 323 personnel for the entire country. The officer ranks consisted of a Brigadier General, three Colonels, eight Lieutenant Colonels, twenty-two Majors, twenty-four Captains, and fourteen Lieutenants. The unit had three warrant officers.<sup>22</sup> The civilians were the element that put the "United Nations" into UNCACK. The eighty-nine civilians in UNCACK on 30 June 1952 represented sixteen nations.<sup>23</sup> Among its personnel, "selected on the basis of individual specialties," were

"doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, economists, and specialists in all fields of government."<sup>24</sup> Its mission, size, and logistics requirements outside of the tactical zone grew so large that by July 1952, EUSA was relieved of the responsibility for UNCACK and a new command, the Korean Communications Zone (KCOMZ) assumed control.<sup>25</sup> Still, getting qualified personnel plagued the CA command throughout the war.

Civil Affairs was a capability that the Army had neglected in the postwar years. At first, the U.S. Army tried to identify WWII veterans with prior Civil Affairs or Military Government experience. One newly-trained Civil Affairs officer recalled his frustration: "I asked Camp



An UNCACK officer poses with a Jeep firetruck that was presented to the city of Taejon in October 1952.





# IMMUNIZATIONS FEB 51 TO 31 AUG 1951

Province	Present Estimated Population	Smallpox	%	Typhoid	%	Typhus	%
Kyonggi-do	2,007,016	1,025,548	51	2,110,990	100	1,725,141	86
Chungchong-pukto	1,329,703	932,100	70	981,000	74	897,580	68
Chungchong-namdo	2,762,404	2,106,528	76	1,945,054	70	1,433,700	52
Cholla-pukto	2,316,621	1,881,493	81	3,174,660	100	1,421,742	66
Cholla-namdo	3,080,000	2,318,900	75	2,170,550	70	1,634,660	53
Kyongsang-pukto	4,037,382	2,980,092	74	3,585,138	89	3,510,550	87
Kyongsang-namdo	3,699,509	2,691,611	73	3,290,633	89	2,526,803	68
Kangwon-do	1,331,000	217,741	16	497,049	37	503,563	38
Cheju-do	367,381	258,188	70	281,484	77	271,698	74
Koje-do	179,000	284,735	100	267,335	100	320,889	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,110,016</b>	<b>14,696,936</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>18,303,913</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>14,246,326</b>	<b>67</b>

Gordon for general background material on Korea before leaving the States. They had nothing except material on European occupation experiences . . . I had little idea of the Civil Affairs function in Korea except for a sketchy Pentagon briefing and 3 or 4 days [of familiarization] in Pusan . . . the real orientation [began] in the field.”<sup>26</sup> This poor training led some Army commanders to comment that Civil Affairs personnel in UNCACK were below par with their contemporaries.<sup>27</sup> Despite the lack of appreciation by the combat commanders, UNCACK filled a vital need.

Officially, the mission of the UNCACK teams, like those from the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment, was to help “prevent disease, starvation, and unrest.”<sup>28</sup> In reality their focus was to “safeguard the security of the rear areas” and “to assure that front line action could go on without interruption by unrest in the rear.”<sup>29</sup> Often, the CA team orders were vague at best. Captain (CPT) Loren E. Davis received this guidance from the future UNCACK chief, BG William E. Crist, before going to Chinnamp’o: “Your orders are to see what needs to be done and do what you can. That was the only directive I received for the next two years,” said Davis.<sup>30</sup>

By April 1951, each of the sixteen South Korean provinces as well as the islands of Cheju and Kojedo had an UNCACK Field Team headquartered near the local seat of government.<sup>31</sup> Another team was later sent to work in Seoul. Although the province CA organization was not universal, each team had approximately twenty personnel consisting of five officers with the rest equally divided among enlisted soldiers and civilians. Each team was also

supplemented with South Korean personnel.<sup>32</sup> Besides the U.S., other nations contributed food, medical supplies, and technical assistance.

By 23 June 1951, relief supplies had been donated by nineteen countries, including such diverse nations as Burma, Iceland, and Liberia.<sup>33</sup> The combined medical efforts immediately brought results. In the first five months of 1951 there were 39,802 cases of small pox in South Korea. By May 1953, the number had fallen to just 2,255.<sup>34</sup> Infection rates of other diseases dropped as well. By 1952, typhoid cases had dropped 96 percent from their 1950 levels, typhus, 77 percent, and diphtheria, 87 percent from just the year before. Through the first quarter of 1952, UNCACK vaccinated 5.5 million civilians for smallpox and typhus.<sup>35</sup> Their actions prevented these diseases from becoming a

problem for the UN Command and the South Korean civilian population—again a strong indicator of the unit’s success. Additionally, more than 12,000 of the nation’s 40,000 lepers received treatment through UNCACK.<sup>36</sup> Only an immense effort made that possible.

UNCACK coordinated its efforts through the assistance of the 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group (1st RB&L). They told the Korean people what UNCACK was trying to do. “Since the broadcast

output of Radio Psywar is in the Korean language, it may perhaps be said that our dissemination of ‘What UNCACK is doing in the field’ serves a more important purpose than that of any other communications medium in this theater, that of getting the story down to the people who are recipients of UN aid, and who are all

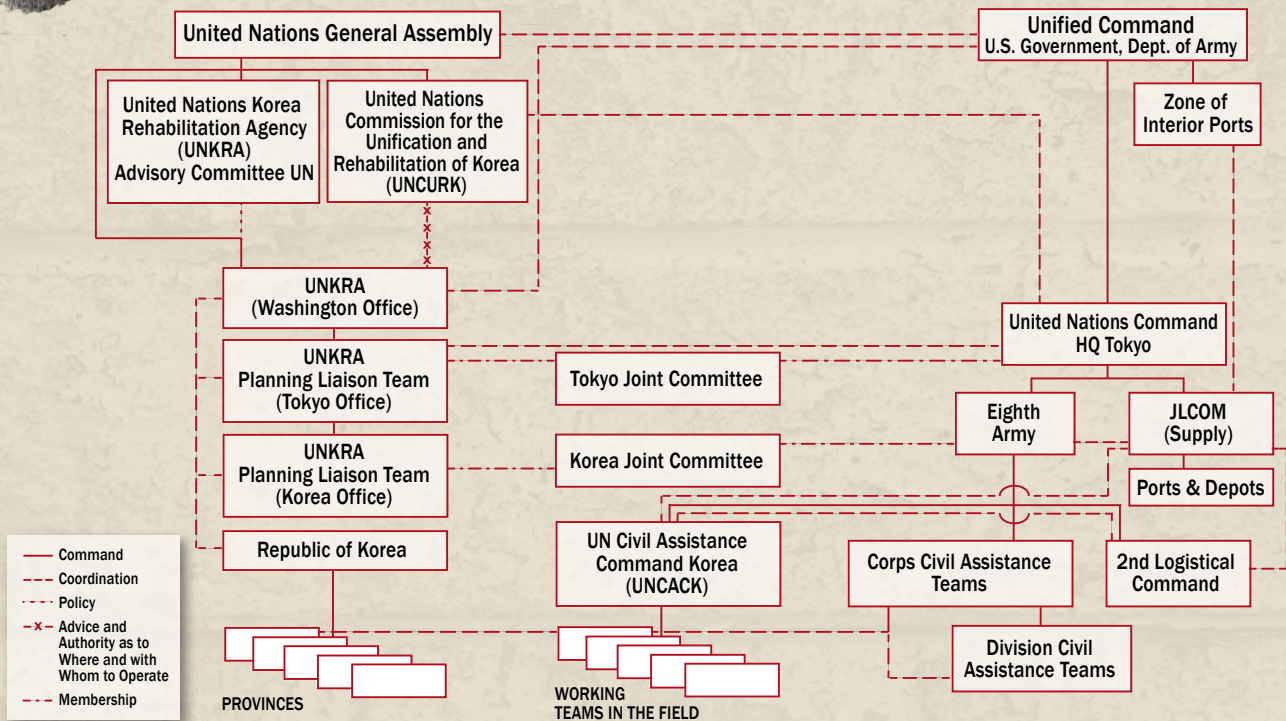
*“Your orders are to see what needs to be done and do what you can. That was the only directive I received for the next two years.”*  
— CPT Loren E. Davis



Since UNCACK personnel worked with South Korean civilian leaders and government officials, business cards were a necessity.



# ORGANIZATIONS CONDUCTING CIVIL ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC AID IN KOREA, JUNE 1952



UNCAACK was based in Pusan, South Korea. MAJ Terrance A. Vangen, sixth from left, front row, was in this commanders and staff photo in 1952.



An average UNCAACK Field Team consisted of twenty American personnel, and had additional South Koreans attached.



too skeptical of the sincerity of the claim that the United Nations intends to remain in Korea on a long term basis to provide the country with needed guidance, know-how and material aid.<sup>37</sup> This helped because UNCAACK had been given the multi-faceted mission to rebuild the South Korean economy.

UNCAACK absorbed the functions of the Economic Cooperation Administration, a postwar U.S. organization established under the Marshall Plan to rebuild war-torn nations. That effort had been stalled by the Korean War.<sup>38</sup> This additional responsibility pushed UNCAACK into economics, agriculture, industry, commerce, natural

resources, finance, information, and education. Fortunately, improving these areas contributed to the war effort.<sup>39</sup> To rebuild the South Korean economy, UNCAACK surveyed and monitored electrical power production, assessed and implemented more efficient practices for textile manufacturing and other industries, and supervised fishing and shipbuilding, mining operations, and transportation.<sup>40</sup> Agriculture, crucial to survival, received special attention.

UNCAACK managed crop acreages and production quotas, thereby maximizing proper land use. The CA teams estimated the fertilizers needed, assisted manufacturers in getting required raw materials, and



# REBUILDING THE SOUTH KOREAN ECONOMY



Children at an orphanage learn to knit with items donated through UNCACK channels. In an effort to stem corruption and waste, UNCACK became the lead agency that monitored the flow of supplies to orphanages.



UNCACK personnel donates women's uniforms to a Korean hospital, 1952.

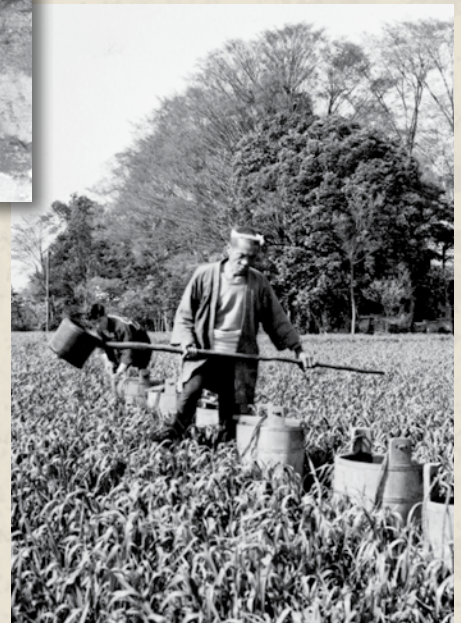


Cement donated by UNCACK was used to make culverts and well casings in July 1952. As the war grew static, UNCACK's mission shifted to that of helping rebuild the South Korean economy.



The unprecedented refugee situation required a herculean effort to take care of the homeless and orphaned. Here Colonel Frank Norwood, 61st Troop Carrier Group, salutes an "honor guard" from an orphanage on Cheju-do. UNCACK was heavily involved in supporting Korean orphanages as part of its Civil Assistance mission.

UNCACK focused on revitalizing the South Korean agricultural system to ensure adequate food supplies reached everyone.



Maximizing South Korean agricultural production was critical to rebuilding the economy and making the country self-sufficient.





A group of UNCACK personnel, all from Minnesota, bid farewell to fellow kinsman MAJ Terrance A. Vangen (far left) in 1952.



With the fluid war over, the conventional forces fought from fixed positions near the 38th Parallel. Then, instead of being primarily concerned with the refugee problem, UNCACK, and later KCAC, assumed the strategic mission of helping to rebuild the South Korean economy.

helped ensure that the finished agricultural equipment was being sold to farmers at fair prices. The teams arranged to repair irrigation systems, made sure that transportation needs were addressed, and that production quotas were met. They then saw that the rice and grain produced was turned over to government authorities and properly stored and distributed.<sup>41</sup> UNCACK oversaw importation of materials to make Korea more self-sufficient agriculturally, thereby reducing the cost and cargo space required to import basic commodities into South Korea. This saved money for the overall UN effort. With this expanded mission, UNCACK assigned more technical specialists at the team level.<sup>42</sup> But, getting involved in commerce and industry led to confusion and duplication of effort because several other United Nations agencies also had responsibilities in these areas.

Among these were the United Nations Korea Rehabilitation Agency (UNKRA), an organization focused on long-term economic reconstruction, and the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK), designed to help the reunification process. The plethora of "help" organizations created confusion for the overtaxed South Korean government officials, who often circumvented UNCACK channels by going to UNCURK and UNKRA. UNKRA realized the dilemma and sent personnel to augment UNCACK. Before the duplication problems were resolved UNCACK evolved into yet another CA command.

## KCAC

UNCACK was disbanded on 1 July 1953 and its personnel transferred to the newly-created Korea Civil Assistance Command (KCAC). It took UNCACK's place as the main U.S. Army unit in charge of CA efforts in South Korea. Just a month later, the Armistice was signed, signaling another mission shift for the CA effort in Korea. With the war no longer "hot," KCAC was charged

with rehabilitating the South. To help this effort, and to enhance its liaison with the South Korean government, KCAC moved its headquarters from Pusan to Seoul in April 1954.<sup>43</sup> Under KCAC guidance, agricultural production became a major success. By the end of 1954, South Korea had more land under cultivation and was producing more food than before the war.<sup>44</sup>

It was a mission that many U.S. soldiers appreciated. Said one officer, "This is one of the most rewarding assignments in Korea. We are really doing something, while others since the Armistice are sitting and marking time." Yet another remarked on the attitude of the South Koreans in regards to KCAC. "They are finally learning that Civil Assistance is quite different from Military Government and are appreciating the importance of the Civil Affairs officers."<sup>45</sup>

South Korean President Syngman Rhee awarded the South Korean Presidential Unit Citation to KCAC on 6 April 1954 for its efforts in preventing disease, starvation, and unrest among the civilian population from 10 December 1950 to 30 September 1953, a period that covered all the wartime



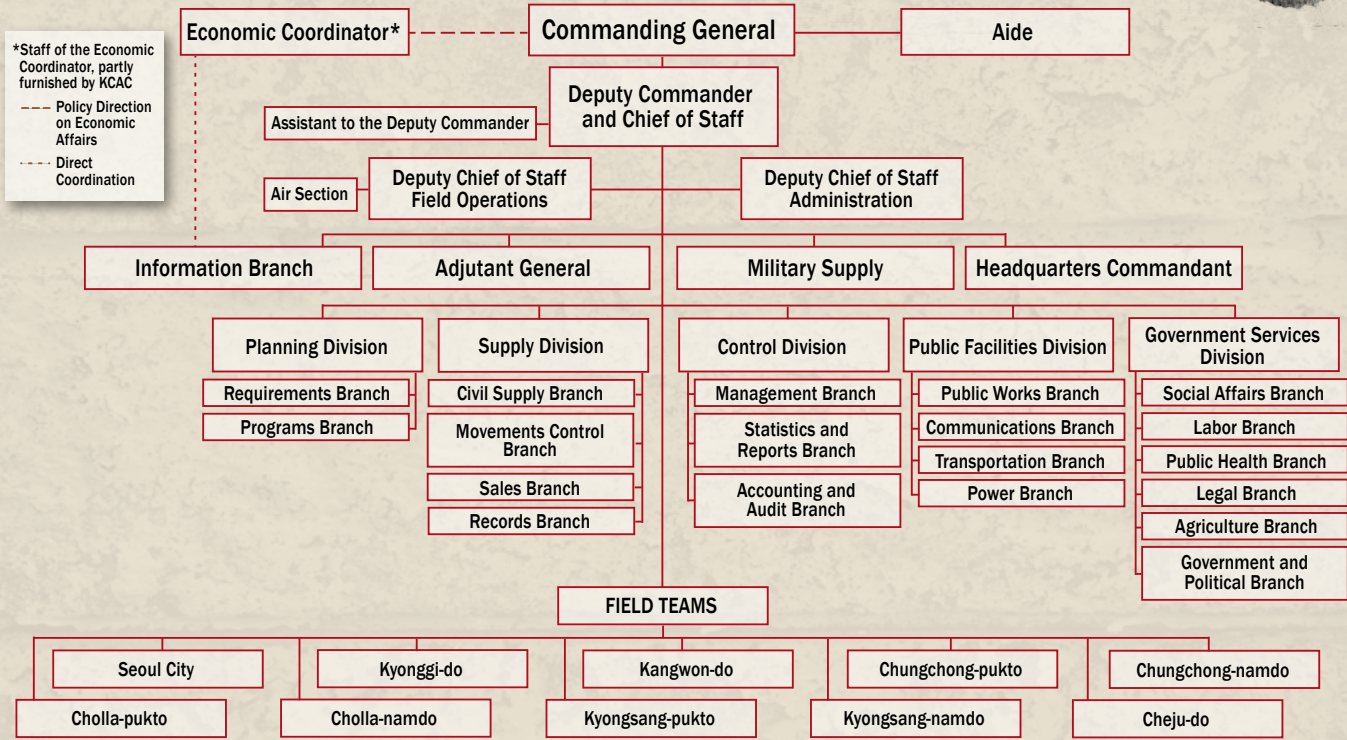
Korea Civil Assistance Command SSI



A Civil Assistance soldier and a ROKA female soldier paste KCAC-produced 4-H posters on a fence publicizing a self-help program.



# KOREA CIVIL ASSISTANCE COMMAND (KCAC) 1953



versions of the 8201st Army Unit.<sup>46</sup> In addition to assisting the South Korean people with medical and agricultural needs, “the Command has aided in the support of over 90 hospitals, 500 medical aid stations and 355 orphanages, has provided refugee camps and has established and operated more than 60 feeding stations which furnished

meals to approximately 55,000 persons daily.”<sup>47</sup> A South Korean newspaper editorial applauded Rhee’s action: “It is not too much to say that thousands are alive today and able to regard the future with hope and confidence because of the work of this great organization . . . There is scarcely a family in the Republic of Korea that has not benefitted directly or indirectly through the unselfish work of the members of KCAC . . . there are literally hundreds of U.S. Army commands and other agencies which are commonly known by alphabetical abbreviations. All are important of course, and each has contributed . . . yet the meaning of many of these ‘gobbled-gook’ designations are relatively unknown



Both UNCACK and KCAC worked to rebuild the South Korean transportation network. This locomotive, and the freight cars below, were donated to Korea to assist that process.





# ORPHANAGES: THE HUMANITARIAN SIDE OF CIVIL AFFAIRS



The Korean children placed in orphanages sponsored by U.S. military units were evacuated to Cheju, an island to the south, as a protective measure.

One of the most visible UNCACK missions was assisting agencies handle the tremendous number of children orphaned during the Korean War. Although the majority were indeed orphans, many had gotten separated from their parents during the massive displacement of civilians caused by the North Korean invasion, the UN counter-offensive, and the Chinese Communist intervention. It was an enormously complex problem, as the following case study shows.

One of the first UNCACK teams to encounter the problem of orphans was the Cheju-do (Cheju Island) Team in December 1950. The South Korean government decided that Cheju-do was a secure sanctuary for orphans should the Communists force another UN retreat. The island, off the southern tip of Korea, therefore became a

collection area for thousands of refugees crowding into the UN-controlled zone. A lot of credit for suggesting this solution goes to U.S. Air Force (USAF) Chaplain Lieutenant Colonel R. L. Blaisdell, who made daily rounds of the streets and back alleys of Seoul rescuing forgotten and neglected children. These waifs would then be placed in orphanages, most of which had a sponsoring U.S. military unit. When the Communist Chinese were poised to take Seoul, Blaisdell saw the need to move the orphans lest the children be targeted for retribution because of their association with U.S. soldiers.

He arranged to airlift them to Cheju-do, which was not under threat of being overrun. He recalled that "All during the trip I worried about taking 1,000 helpless people to a place I had never seen . . . The longer I thought the more concerned I became. 'How will we haul them from the airstrip?' 'Where can we procure billets?' 'How can we cook food?' 'Where will we put the hospital patients?' Many questions now bothered

me." He worried about these things because coordination was not done with the U.S. Army Civil Assistance team already on the island.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Loren E. Davis, the UNCACK team commander on Cheju-do was on hand to observe the unexpected arrival. "We looked up one morning to see U.S. Air Force planes landing on the airstrip just west of town . . . What was arriving on Cheju-do was the entire clientele of The



American GIs quickly felt the need to help Korea's orphans. Here, (left) LT Donald F. Barris and LTC William M. Hales of the 1903rd Engineer Aviation Battalion distribute clothing donated by the Officers' Wives Club of Beale Air Force Base (California) to the Kupo Orphanage in 1952.





American officers of the 1903rd Engineer Aviation Battalion pose with children and staff of the Tae Jee Orphanage in 1952 with boxes of donated clothing.



An American officer poses with children at the Catholic-run Our Sweet Home Orphanage in 1952. U.S. soldiers still sponsor orphanages in South Korea.



Korean orphans drew the sympathy of American GIs.

Orphans Home of Korea, being evacuated en masse from Seoul. By the time the airlift was over late in the afternoon, we had another problem. There on the airstrip were . . . orphans, ranging in age from infant to adolescent, exposed to the elements."<sup>2</sup> Sixteen C-54 aircraft packed with nearly 1,000 children and 100 Korean adult workers had landed. Now they were CPT Davis' problem. Since this was a new mission to him, he took some liberties.

"The first problem was getting the kids out of the weather and into some kind of shelter. An arrangement had been made for them to occupy a school complex." He then took his mission a step farther. "Remembering my orders to 'do what you can,' I commandeered every truck I could find . . . I went through stores, shops, government and privately owned warehouses, collecting rice, veggies, cooking pots—whatever I could find." He continued, "I wrote receipts for things taken—'The United Nations Will Pay.'"<sup>3</sup> Davis hoped that would actually be the case, but he could not worry about it because the children had more immediate needs.

Lieutenant Colonel Blaisdell explained, "Water was a great problem as the nearest water for drinking and cooking was 3 1/2 miles to the city source. Water for

bathing, cleaning, etc. was over 3 miles in the opposite direction. There was no transportation available. At first the [UNCACK Team] hauled some water in 5 gallon cans. Then a 500 gal. tank was repaired."<sup>4</sup> With these immediate duties complete, CPT Davis could go on to his other tasks. But, that did not mean the UNCACK team was finished with assisting the orphanages. Davis recalled that helping the children was a favorite duty and that an UNCACK member "found occasion to visit the orphanage on almost a daily basis."<sup>5</sup>

On Cheju-do, as elsewhere in South Korea, assisting orphanages became another of the many missions of UNCACK. It became the unit's responsibility to help the orphanages get assistance, and to monitor the flow of supplies and aid. U.S. military units supported Korean orphanages then and still do today.

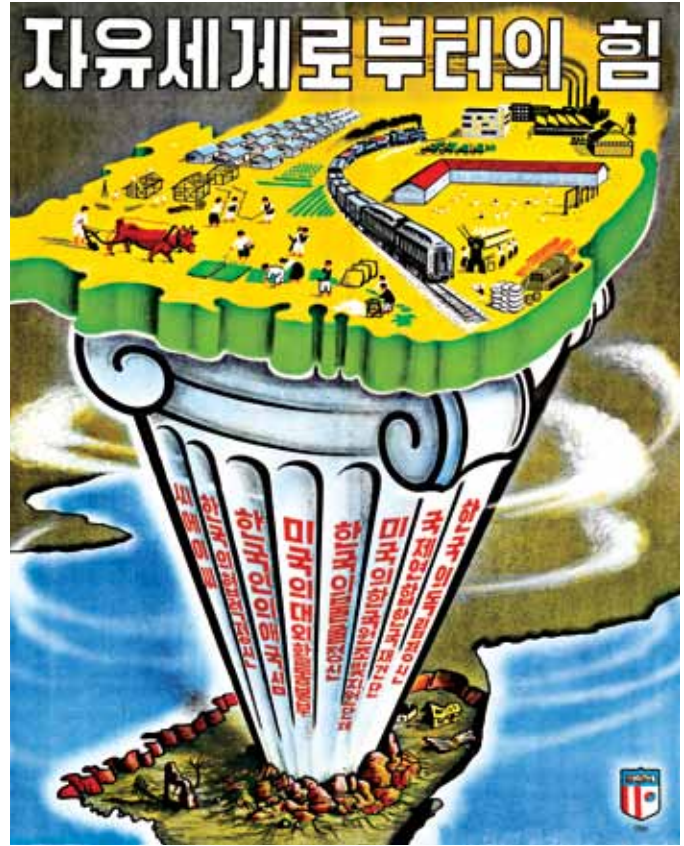
#### Endnotes

- 1 R.L. Blaisdell, "Orphan Care and Evacuation Korea December 1950," Parts 1 and 2 found online at <http://www.koreanchildren.org/docs/kiddyairlift.html>, accessed 22 October 2010.
- 2 Loren E. Davis, "Korean Diaries," 9 March 2002, copy provided to the USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
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A Korean girl sits on the lap of Lieutenant Colonel Jack T. Shannon, who served first as the Psywar officer, then the Chief of the Civil Information Section with KCAC from October 1954 to April 1955 (note the KCAC SSI). Prior to his service in KCAC, Shannon was an OSS officer in WWII, the Executive Officer of the 10th Special Forces Group when it was formed in 1952, and the first commanding officer of the 77th Special Forces Group.



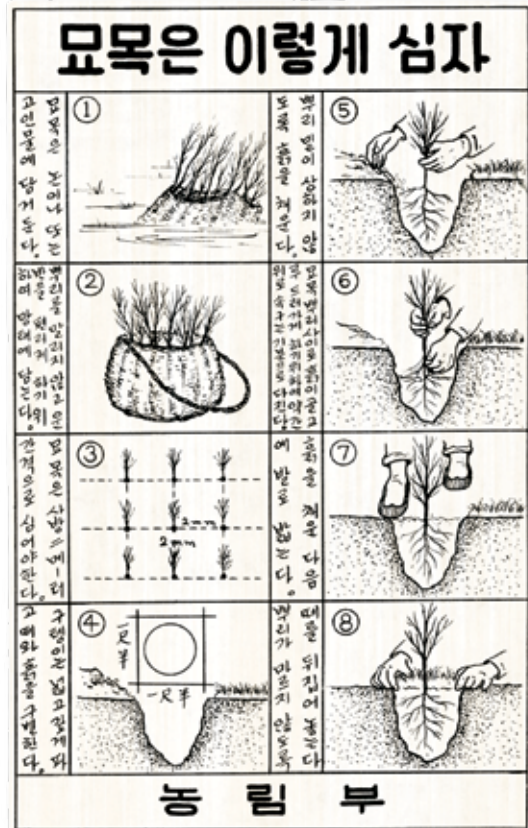
A KCAC poster showing how agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation are the pillars of a rebuilt and renewed South Korea.



A legacy of the Korean War that continues to this day is the sponsorship of orphanages by U.S. military units.

to many of our people. But throughout the length and breadth of the Republic of Korea, the meaning of the three English letters 'CAC' are well known—and long will be remembered with gratitude."<sup>48</sup> No better "Thank You" to the men engaged in the Civil Affairs effort could have been given. It was also an appropriate farewell because on 1 December 1955, KCAC was dissolved.<sup>49</sup>

Despite an uncertain beginning, the U.S. Army Civil Affairs effort in the Korean War was a significant success. The immunization and refugee assistance programs



Just like it was with UNCACK, assisting agricultural programs was a core mission of KCAC. This insert from a KCAC-printed newspaper explains the proper method of planting.





Civil Affairs  
Branch Insignia



95th Civil Affairs  
Brigade SSI

The KCAC Information  
Branch, 1 April 1955.



alone proved its worth. By keeping civilians free of disease and away from the combat areas, CA allowed tactical units to focus on their mission. Indirectly, the 8201st Army Unit also helped move the Civil Affairs effort away from its traditional Military Government role. Thereafter, the primary function of CA was not to set up military government in occupied areas, but was directed towards more humanitarian purposes in friendly sovereign nations. The CA effort in Korea—and its utility in a friendly as opposed to occupied nation—helped lead to the establishment of the Civil Affairs/Military Government Branch in the U.S. Army Reserve on 17 August 1955. The branch designation allowed for the commissioning of Reserve officers directly into CA as well as transferring from another basic Army branch as was previously the case for commissioned officers. The Regular Army rejuvenated Civil Affairs with the reactivation of the 95th Military Government Group—in the lineage of today’s 95th Civil Affairs Brigade—at Camp Gordon, Georgia on 9 February 1955. On 2 October 1959 the USAR branch was renamed Civil Affairs, dropping all connection by name to military government, to become a permanent element in the U.S. Army.<sup>50</sup> The branch was established in the Regular Army on 16 October 2006.<sup>51</sup> ▲

#### Thank you:

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#### Endnotes

- 1 Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June–November 1950)*, (Washington DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2000), 35.
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- 3 In this article: Civil Affairs (CA) will be used as it is the current branch term. Military Government (MG) and Civil Assistance will also be used as appropriate as predecessor terms of modern day Civil Affairs.
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- 22 C. Darwin Stolzenbach and Henry A. Kissinger, *Civil Affairs in Korea 1950-51*, (Washington DC: The Johns Hopkins University, Operations Research Office, 1952), 43.
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- 25 Organization for Assistance to Korea (June 1953?), Copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 26 Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come and Sorry to See Them Go*, 327-328. **Sandler does not cite the source of the UNCACK officer's quote.**
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