

# CLOSING ACTS

## The Special Warfare Campaign at the End of the Korean War

By Kenneth Finlayson

The Korean War (1950-1953) was a watershed event in the history of United States Army special operations. The Army had to recreate its special operations capability that was dismantled after World War II. It rejuvenated a moribund psychological warfare capacity and established the Psychological Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, NC, which was responsible for activating the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (SFG). In theater, the Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA) organized, trained and equipped thousands of North Korean anti-Communists under its guerrilla command, coordinated the battle space with the fledgling Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and, late in the war, employed Special Forces-trained soldiers as advisors to the indigenous units. This issue of *Veritas*, the seventh devoted to Army Special Operations Forces (ARSO) in the Korean War, examines those elements that contributed to the special warfare campaign in the latter stages of the war. The birth of modern ARSO dates to the Korean War.

After the Chinese intervention in November 1950, the significant numbers of anti-Communist North Korean guerrillas on the islands off the northwest coast attracted the attention of the EUSA and the Far East Command (FEC). In order to effectively employ the disparate units, EUSA formed a guerrilla command, initially as a G-3 staff section.<sup>1</sup> As the war progressed towards a negotiated cease-fire, the guerrilla command went through a continuous series of organizational and leadership changes. Eventually, FEC put the guerrilla command under the operational control of the G-2.

### *Army Guerrilla Command*

"Army Guerrilla Command, Part II," examines the effort to train and employ the guerrillas under the constraints imposed by the Armistice negotiations. It traces the frequent 'command' name changes. The article culminates in an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the EUSA and FEC efforts to command and control the guerrillas on both coasts and gives an appraisal of their impact on the war effort.

### *Culture, Language & Special Ops*

A separate article highlights the exploits of Chinese-American Major (MAJ) Jack T. Young who recruited and trained Chinese and North Korean defectors in order to incorporate them into the special operations campaign.<sup>2</sup> MAJ Young's service demonstrated how important language skills and cultural awareness were to working effectively with indigenous forces. Both the Army and CIA sought men like Young for their special missions. Service and Agency operations had to be closely coordinated to avoid wasting scarce delivery assets. Far East Command formed two headquarters to 'manage' special operations in theater.

### *CCRAK*

The Combined Command for Reconnaissance Activities, Korea (CCRAK) was formed within FEC to gain control of all guerrilla operations being conducted in theater. Since CCRAK never had command authority over any of the various special warfare elements in Korea, it did not create a special warfare campaign. In the absence of command direction, the American tactical advisors continued to run the day-to-day operations of the guerrilla command.

Inserting intelligence agents in Communist-controlled territory and providing an effective air rescue capability were beyond the capacity of the organization. "CCRAK: Combined Command for Reconnaissance Activities, Korea," looks at the formation, mission, and problems associated with this star-crossed 'staff command.' Accompanying the main article is a brief essay on the CCRAK "Navy," based on photographs of the various vessels used. Simultaneously, the CIA formed the Joint Activities Commission, Korea (JACK). The CIA took a different approach to consolidating its intelligence and paramilitary operations under one office in Korea.

### *JACK and CIA Paramilitary Operations*

JACK was made functional by the American servicemen detailed to the CIA. Nominally a subordinate of CCRAK,

JACK had no requirement other than to coordinate with the toothless CCRAK. MAJ John K. Singlaub, detailed as the Deputy Commander, JACK, noted, "CCRAK was really a paper command. It was a rival for personnel, funding, air support, and above all, mission authorization."<sup>3</sup> A series of articles will cover the CIA paramilitary operations from 1950-1951 and JACK activities from 1951 to 1953, including maritime raiding and JACK air operations.

Soviet sea mines provided to North Korea were a strategic weapon that threatened the UN naval blockade. They became a CIA target. U.S. Army and Navy personnel were used in Agency-directed operations against the North Korean mine-laying operations, principally on the east coast. JACK also directed the air rescue effort there.

UN pilots flying missions over North Korea, particularly those engaged over 'MiG Alley' in the northeast corner of the country, made every attempt to reach the coast if their aircraft was damaged. Because the CIA was unable to establish a means of recovering pilots downed in the interior of North Korea, Far East Air Forces (FEAF) developed an air rescue system along the coast using Navy and Air Force H-5 helicopters, some flying off of converted LSTs (Landing Ship-Tank). Combined with amphibious aircraft and boats, FEAF provided the best chance for recovering a downed pilot who reached the sea. Later JACK operations coincided with the arrival of the first Special Forces (SF) soldiers in theater, three months before the Armistice.

### *SF in Korea*

In the spring of 1953, the first levy of what would ultimately be ninety-nine Special Forces-trained officers and non-commissioned officers began arriving in Korea. The SF troops worked as guerrilla advisors, supported air rescue operations, and as part of the Tactical Liaison Office (TLO), inserted intelligence agents in front of each infantry division.<sup>4</sup> Arriving in the final stages of the war, the Special Forces personnel were especially tested with the demobilization of the guerrilla forces. Some of them were instrumental in the incorporation of the guerrillas into the South Korean Army after the Armistice.

Thus, the Korean War was a catalyst for modern Army special operations. In the course of the war, virtually every special operations element today was introduced. Ranger units were resurrected after their deactivation at the end of World War II and a Ranger Training Center was established at Fort Benning, GA. Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations were reborn for Korea and Cold War Europe. The Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, NC trained Psywarriors and Special Forces. By the time the war ended, the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group had relocated to Bad Tolz, Germany and the 77<sup>th</sup> SFG was activated at Fort Bragg.

This seventh issue of *Veritas* on ARSOF in Korea concludes the series. The scope and complexity of the special operations campaign, the absence of well-documented ARSOF history, and the generosity of our Korean War veterans instilled 'life' into the articles. This was a seminal study. It took as long to write about the ARSOF role as it did to fight the war. ♣



**First Lieutenant Paul A. Christiansen was an infantry officer deployed as an advisor in the guerrilla command. Here he instructs a guerrilla wielding a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR).**



**U.S. Navy Sikorsky HO4S-1 from Helicopter Utility Squadron 1 landing on the carrier USS *Philippine Sea* (CV-47) after rescuing a downed pilot in 1951. The Navy also installed a helicopter pad on a Landing Ship-Tank (LST) that allowed the launch and recovery of air rescue helicopters from locations close in-shore.**

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### **Endnotes**

- 1 Michael E. Krivdo, "Creating an Army Guerrilla Command: Part One: The First Six Months," *Veritas: ARSOF in the Korea War, Part IV*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2012, 12-26.
- 2 MAJ Young, as assistant G-2 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, formed and led the Ivanhoe Security Force during the capture of the North Korean capital of P'yongyang in October 1950. Charles H. Briscoe, "The Ivanhoe Security Force in Korea, 1950," *Veritas*, Vol 6, No. 1, 2010, 83-99.
- 3 Charles H. Briscoe, "Soldier-Sailors in Korea: JACK Maritime Operations," *Veritas*, Vol 2, No. 2, 2006, 12-25. Major General Singlaub's illustrious career in special operations began in the Office of Strategic Services in World War II, and included assignments in China, Korea, as the Commander of MACV-SOG in Vietnam and concluded with his assignment as Chief of Staff of United Nations Forces, Korea and U.S. Forces Korea. MG Singlaub retired in 1978.
- 4 The account of the activities of the Special Forces soldiers assigned to the TLO was covered in *Veritas* Vol 8, No. 2, 2012. See Eugene G. Piasecki, "TLO: Line-crossers, Special Forces, and the Forgotten War," *Veritas* Vol 8, No.2, 2012, 38-48; Steven F. Kuni and Kenneth Finlayson, "Catch as Catch Can: Special Forces and Line Crossers in the Korean War," *Veritas*, Vol 2, No. 2, 2006, 26-32.