

Chronology of the Korean War

Recent Korean History:

1876 Japanese gunboats open Korea's ports to foreign trade, imposing the first unequal treaty.

1882 United States and Korea conclude an unequal treaty.

1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War. Japan defeated China. The Treaty of Shimonoseki (April 17, 1895) required China to recognize the independence of Korea.

1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War. Japan defeated Russia. The Treaty of Portsmouth (September 5, 1905) required Russia to recognize the special Japanese interests in Korea. On November 15, 1905, Korea became a Japanese protectorate.

1910, August 23, Korea became a Japanese protectorate.

1919 Independence movement against Japanese rule was initiated on 1 March. The Japanese crushed the movement with the help of Koreans.

1931 September, Japanese Kwantung Army occupied Manchuria. The following year the Japanese established the puppet state Manchukuo. The League of Nations condemned the occupation and the Japanese left the League.

1932 Japan established the puppet state of Manchukuo, in the three northeastern provinces of China.

1933 Hitler rises to power in Germany as Chancellor of the Third Reich. The French and British began their Policy of Appeasement.

1937-1945 Sino-Japanese War. July 27, the Japanese declares that it is determined to establish a "New Order" in Asia. Japan initiated the Sino-Japanese War.

1939, September 1, Germany invades Poland starting World War II in Europe. Britain and France promised to support Poland, declared war on Germany, but stay behind the Maginot Line.

1940 May, the Fall of France. Japan received German approval to occupy French Indochina—Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

August 1, the Prime Minister of Japan, Konoe Fumimaro, declares the Japanese intent to establish a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," including China, India, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, the Philippines, Dutch East Indies, Australia, French Indochina and other regions and states.

August 19, Japanese forces start operation out of French Indochina, with the approval of the French. And, the disapproval of the Americans.

1941,

13 April Japan and the Soviet Union signed a neutrality pact that required both sides to respect established borders.

22 June the Germans initiated Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union and the large land invasion in history.

1 August, Roosevelt stopped oil exports to Japan.

7 Dec Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, bringing the United States into World War II.

1943, December 1, The Cairo Conference, delineated provision for Korean independence following the defeat of Japan.

1939-1945 World War II**Prelude to the Korean War****1945**

6 Aug, The United States employed the first atomic bomb against Japan destroying the city of Hiroshima. The world enters the nuclear age.

8 Aug The Soviet Union (USSR) entered the war against Japan, and entered Korea. The United States dropped the second atomic bomb destroying Nagasaki.

15 Aug US General Order No. 1 directed US forces to take the Japanese surrender in Korea south of the 38th parallel and USSR forces to take Japanese surrender north of the 38th parallel. The division of Korea was initially a temporary expedient. U.S. Military Government of Korea initiated.

2 Sep Japanese formally surrender aboard the USS Missouri battleship.

1948

15 Aug Republic of Korea (ROK) established in Seoul under President Syngman Rhee in the U.S. zone. The US Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) ended, and the insurgence war in South Korea expanded.

9 Sep Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) established in Pyongyang under Premier Kim Il Sung in the Soviet zone.

1949

March Kim Il Sung traveled to Moscow to get Stalin's approval and support for a military operation to reunite the two Koreas.

July The last American military forces departed ROK, leaving the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) to support the ROKA. Rhee concerned about the departure of U.S. soldiers

asked President Truman, “In case of attack by outside powers would the Republic of South Korea be able to count upon all-out military aid?” Truman made no commitments to defend South Korea.

1950-1953 The Korean War, the conventional war.

1950 Invasion and the Pusan Perimeter (Phase One)

25 Jun At 0400 on Sunday morning the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) attacked across 38th parallel. At 0930 Kaesong was taken. The United Nations Security Council called for an end of aggression and withdrawal of NKPA forces.

27 Jun President Truman ordered United States air and naval forces under the command of General MacArthur to help the ROK repel the NKPA. The US Seventh Fleet was ordered to defend the Formosan Straits; thereby intervening in the Chinese civil war. The UN adopted a US resolution—with the Soviet ambassador to the UN absent—proclaiming the NKPA attack a breach of world peace. UN member nations were asked to assist the ROK repel the NKPA invaders. Fourteen nations sent ground troops to assist the US and the ROK.

28 Jun NKPA captured Seoul, the Capital of South Korea. 40,000 ROK soldiers were missing, captured, or dead.

29 Jun President Truman authorized General MacArthur to send ground forces to Korea. In Japan performing occupation duties is the Eighth Army under the command of General Walton Walker. It consists of four understrength infantry divisions (7th ID, 24th ID, 25th ID, and 1st Cav Division).

30 Jun President Truman received Congressional authorization to call into active service any or all reserve components of the Armed Forces for a period of 21 months.

1 Jul The first US Army combat unit, “Task Force Smith” (1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, 24th Infantry Division) arrived in Korea.

3 Jul NKPA captured Inchon, one of two major port cities in South Korea.

5 Jul TF Smith fought the first engagement in Korea to gain time for the deployment of the 25th ID and 1st Cavalry Division (CD). It was defeated. The NKPA broke through at Konji, and continued south.

7 Jul UN Security Council authorized the formation of a UN Command (UNC). The UN flag provided legitimacy.

8 Jul General MacArthur named Commander-in-Chief of UNC.

10 Jul 25th Infantry Division (ID) and 1st CD initiated movement from Japan to Korea; the 29th Regimental Combat Team sailed from Okinawa for Korea; and 2nd ID at Fort Lewis, Washington initiated actions for deployment to Korea.

12 Jul Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker appointed Commanding General Eighth US Army in Korea (EUSAK). US Army forces in Korea forced back under pressure to Kum River near Taejon.

14 Jul NKPA crossed Kum River. All ROK forces placed under MacArthur's command.

18 Jul US reinforcements started arriving in Korea.

19 Jul President Truman authorized the Department of Defense to call up reserve units and individuals.

20 Jul US Army continued the retreat south. NKPA captured Taejon. Major General William F. Dean reported missing.

24 Jul NKPA in western Korea advanced to the southern coast, captured Suchon, and attacked toward Pusan, the last major port facility in South Korea.

31 Jul Walker ordered: "There will be no more retreating." First reinforcements from the United States arrived in Korea. MacArthur went to Formosa to consult with Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese Nationalist leader, without the approval of President Truman. MacArthur started to deviate from the foreign and limited war policies of the President.

1 Aug Walker formed the Pusan defensive perimeter with US and ROK forces.

3 Aug US and ROK forces retreated to Naktong River. NKPA attacked to within forty miles of the Pusan.

6-8 Aug MacArthur consulted with Truman's military and political advisors from Washington (Generals Norstad, Almond, and Ridgway, and Averall Harriman) regarding his planned landing at Inchon.

7 Aug US forces conducted limited counter-attack toward Chinju, west of Pusan.

16 Aug The US X Corps activated for the Inchon Landing. It consisted of 1st Marine Division and 7th Infantry Division. It was commanded by Major General Ned Almond who was still MacArthur's chief of staff. The X Corps was constituted as a separate command, independent of Walker's EUSAK -- arguably a violation of the principle of war unity of command.

29 Aug First British troops arrived from Hong Kong. By the end of August UN strength was about 180,000 soldiers. NKPA strength was about 92,000 soldiers. The outcome of the initially phases of the war were, in fact, decided.

1 Sep NKPA established a bridgeheads across the Naktong River and pushed to within thirty miles of Pusan. Walker counterattacked and Pusan Perimeter held.

Inchon Landing (Phase Two).

15 Sep The Inchon Landing was a turning movement that landed UN forces in the rear of the NKPA, causing it to fight in two directions at the same time.

16 Sep Inchon captured by 1st Marine Division. Walker's EUSAK initiated attacks to break-out from the Pusan Perimeter. The initial attacks were not successful.

19-25 Sep EUSAK conducted breakout attack from the Pusan Perimeter. NKPA troops retreated north from the vicinity of Pusan. Because South Korea has only one main transportation artery running north and south, many NKPA troops were trapped between EUSAK and X Corps.

26 Sep Seoul was recaptured by X Corps, and linked up with the EUSAK near Osan.

30 Sep UN forces recaptured almost all territory south of the 38th Parallel. Chou En Lai, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China (PRC) warned: "The Chinese people will not supinely tolerate seeing their neighbors being savagely invaded by the imperialists."

Advance to the Yalu (Phase Three)

1 Oct ROK Third Division crossed the 38th Parallel.

7 Oct UN General Assembly authorized UN Forces to cross the 38th parallel into North Korea to complete the destruction of the NKPA and the government of Communist North Korea, unifying the Korean Peninsula.

9 Oct US 1st Cavalry Division crossed the 38th parallel.

10 Oct Wonsan, a port on the east coast of North Korea, was captured by ROK Third Division. The Chinese repeated their warning against US intervention in North Korea. MacArthur and Truman ignored the warnings.

15 Oct Truman and MacArthur met at Wake Island. MacArthur informs the President that he does not believe the Chinese will intervene, and that if they do it would be a dreadful slaughter for the Chinese. The CIA failed to warn the President of the impending Chinese attack.

16 Oct Chinese Communist Forces (CCF), also known as Chinese People's Volunteer Force (CPV), the "People's Volunteer" army secretly entered the Korean peninsula from Manchuria.

19 Oct Pyongyang, capital of North Korea, captured by UN forces.

20 Oct US 187th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team (RCT) conducted an air assault in the vicinity of Sukchon and Sunchon, about twenty-five miles north of Pyongyang.

24 Oct MacArthur ordered his commanders to advance. He removed all restrictions on non-Korean forces in the provinces with contiguous borders with China. This was in violation of instructions received from the JCS, but in keeping with the instructions he received from Secretary of War George Marshall.

Chinese Intervention (Phase Four)

26 Oct ROK Sixth Division reached the Yalu River at Chosan. CPV attacked ROKA.

27 Oct CPV launched the first phase of their offensive.

1 Nov UN forces reached the Yalu River on the Chinese border. UN pilots opposed for the first time by Soviet built MIG-15 jet fighter.

2 Nov US 1st Cavalry Division suffered heavy casualties when attacked by CPV at Unsan, causing a withdrawal across Chongchon River.

5 Nov MacArthur notified the UN that CPV were conducting offensive operations in Korea.

6 Nov MacArthur warned JCS that movement of CPV across Yalu threatens the position of UN forces.

7 Nov CPV forces broke contact with UN forces.

15 Nov Elements of 1st Marine Division reached Chosin/Changin Reservoir.

21 Nov Elements of US 7th ID occupied Hyesanjin on banks of Yalu River.

24 Nov MacArthur flew from his headquarters in Tokyo to Korea to announce the "end of war," having concluded that, "the Chinese are not coming in." EUSAK again advanced toward the Yalu.

26 Nov CPV, under command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, launched a violent counter-offensive on both the EUSAK in the west and X Corps in the east. UN forces were caught totally unprepared to defend, even after the numerous warnings of a pending attack. Substantial numbers of UN forces are encircled and have to fight their way out, and then initiate a general retreat. The 1st Marine Division was cutoff at Chosin Reservoir. Part of the 7th ID was also cutoff.

28 Nov-11 Dec 1st Marine Division broke out of encirclement, and moved south to rejoin the X Corps at Hungnam.

30 Nov EUSAK and X Corps initiated general retreat.

4 Dec Pyongyang recaptured by CPV.

11 Dec UN forces initiated evacuation of Hungnam, Songjin, and Wonsan.

15 Dec UN forces started establishing a defensive line near the 38th parallel.

23 Dec CG EUSAK, General Walker, was killed in a jeep accident. Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway was selected to command the EUSAK.

24 Dec The US Navy completed the evacuation of 105,000 soldiers of X Corps from Hungnam beachhead.

26 Dec Ridgway arrived in Korea and takes command of all UN ground forces — X Corps and EUSAK.

29 Dec CPV prepared for major new attack across the 38th parallel into South Korea.

1951

1 Jan CPV attacked across 38th parallel. Ridgway ordered retreat.

3 Jan CPV captured Seoul.

7-15 Jan UN forces on Pyongtaek-Wonju Line halt CPV offensive.

Ridgway's Offensive (Phase Five)

21 Jan Ridgway initiated a series of offensives designed to halt the retreat, restore the confidence of the Army, destroy enemy forces, and regain lost territory south of the 38th parallel. The first limited offensive was "Operation Thunderbolt."

5 Feb Ridgway launched offensive, Operation Roundup.

13-17 Feb CPV launched offensive. US 23rd Infantry Regiment of the 2nd ID with an attached French Battalion is surrounded at Chipyeong-ni. In a desperate battle the CPV attacks were defeated.

21 Feb Ridgway launched Operation Killer, a general offensive to annihilate enemy forces and re-establish UN line east of Wonju.

7 Mar Ridgway launched Operation Ripper to outflank Seoul and capture Chunchon.

14 Mar Seoul was recaptured by UN forces.

23 Mar US 187th Regimental Combat Team jumped in (airborne assault) at Munsan to cut off enemy forces south of Han River.

31 Mar Advanced elements of UN forces reached the 38th parallel.

8 Mar UN forces in Operation Ripper cleared most CPV from South Korea, south of Imjin River.

11 Apr President Truman relieved General MacArthur of command for insubordination.

12 Apr General Ridgway became Supreme Commander of UN forces. General James A. Van Fleet assumed command of EUSAK. Ridgway placed tight control measures over Van Fleet's operations.

15 Apr UN forces established defense along 38th parallel, the Kansas Line. CPV established the "Iron Triangle" assembly area, Chorwan-Kumhwa-Pyonggang.

22 Apr CPV launched an all-out spring counter-offensive.

29 Apr UN forces halt CPV offensive, after a limited withdrawal, just north of Seoul and 40 miles south of the 38th parallel.

3 May UN forces launched a limited offensive to regain former positions and reestablish contact with the enemy.

16 May Second phase of CPV spring offensive initiated. CPV penetrate 15 to 20 miles into the south along a 75 mile front.

19 May UN forces stopped the enemy drive on western front and conducted a counterattack.

20 May Far East Air Force (FEAF) initiated Operation Strangle, a massive air effort to interdict logistic and other types of resources flowing from the north to CPV at the front.

21 May UN forces counterattacked.

30 May UN forces regained Kansas Line.

13 Jun UN forces took Chorwon and Kumhwa in the Iron Triangle. UN forces started to construct a deliberate defense along the 38th parallel--generally along the same line that existed before the NKPA invasion.

Truce Talks, Negotiating while Fighting (Phase Six)

24 Jun Jacob Malik, Soviet UN representative, called for cease-fire in radio speech.

30 Jun Ridgway proposed meeting with CPV leaders to discuss armistice, suggest Danish hospital ship in Wonsan harbor as site.

1 Jul CPV commander proposed meeting at Kaesong near 38th parallel.

10 Jul The first meeting took place between UN and CPV delegations. Admiral C. Turner Joy led the UN delegation. LTG Namm Il, NKPA headed the CPV delegation.

26 Jul After ten meetings, the two delegations announced agreement on a five-point agenda.

5 Aug UN delegation suspended armistice negotiation because of CPV violations into neutral area.

15 Aug FEAF continued Operation Strangle.

23 Aug CPV broke-off talks because of FEAF violations of neutral area.

13 Sep UN forces initiated attack at Heartbreak Ridge.

25 Oct Armistice talks resumed at Panmunjom. Delegates met for the 27th session.

28 Oct Military demarcation line agreed upon. The line of contact was the cease-fire line.

12 Nov Ridgway ordered EUSAK to cease all offensive operations, and initiate active defensive operations. Stalemate develops. Both sides begin to construct substantial defenses that would make enemy offensive operations extremely costly.

18 Dec Prisoner lists were exchanged. UN listed 132,474 communist soldiers, Chinese and Korean; and the CPV listed 11,559 UN soldiers.

1952

2 Jan UN delegation proposed principle of "voluntary repatriation" in POW exchange.

3 Jan CPV rejected proposal.

24 Jan Negotiations stalemated.

Feb-Jun POWs uprising took place at the UN camps on Kojé.

22 Feb CPV charged UN forces with using "germ warfare."

7 May Brigadier General Francis T. Dodd, commander of UN Prisoner of War Camp Number One on Kojé-do, was taken hostage by prisoners, and held for 78 hours.

12 May General Mark W. Clark assumed command from General Ridgway. Ridgway assumed command of NATO from Eisenhower.

22 May Major General K. Harrison succeeded Admiral Joy as chief UN negotiator.

Jun-Oct General stalemate assumed along front. Armistice talks deadlocked on POW issue.

19 Jun Operation Break-up, the resettlement of Kojé Island prisoners into 500 inmate stockades completed.

23 Jun FEAF destroyed the majority of North Korea's power plants.

10 Jul Truce talks entered second year.

29 Aug FEAF attacked North Korean capital, Pyongyang with 1,403 sorties, the largest one day air assault of the war.

4 Sep Air Force reported record one day kill of thirteen MIGs.

6 Oct CCF launched largest attack of the year.

8 Oct Truce talks suspended indefinitely, deadlock over POW return policy.

4 Nov Eisenhower elected President.

2 Dec Eisenhower began a three-day tour of Korea.

1953

2 Feb President Eisenhower ended neutralization of Formosa Strait with the 7th Fleet, creating the possibility that Chiang Kai-shek's forces might be used against the PRC. Eisenhower also made known to the Chinese that the war might be expanded in areas and methods of his choosing. In other words, he threatened to use the atomic bomb if an armistice agreement was not reached in an expeditious manner.

11 Feb General Maxwell D. Taylor took command of EUSAK.

5 Mar Stalin died.

6 Apr UN and CPV delegates opened talks on the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners.

11 Apr Agreement reached on limited prisoner exchange, 605 UN soldiers and 6,030 CPV and NKPA soldiers.

26 Apr Operation Little Switch, the exchange of POWs took place at Panmunjom. The exchange consisted of 471 South Koreans, 149 Americans, 32 British, 15 Turks, 6 Colombians, 5 Australians, 2 Canadians, 1 Netherlanders, 1 Filipino, 1 South African, and 1 Greek. Truce talks resume at Panmunjom.

7 May CPV accepted UN proposal that war prisoners unwilling to return to Communist control be placed in neutral custody within Korea.

28 May Fighting along the 38th parallel intensified as negotiations approach final phase.

8 Jun CPV and UN delegates signed agreement on prisoners of war exchange policy. President Syngman Rhee and South Korean government vehemently opposed the agreement. Rhee wanted Korea unified, which is what Truman promised when order UN forces across the 38th parallel in October 1951.

9 Jun ROK National Assembly unanimously rejected truce terms. General Clark attempted to negotiate with President Rhee.

11 Jun CPV renewed attacks along the front.

18 Jun South Koreans released 25,000 North Korean anti-communist prisoners in the general population, without Clark's approval. President Rhee ordered the release demonstrating his opposition to the armistice agreement.

20 Jun CPV accused UNC of conspiring with the ROK to release the prisoners, and suspended negotiations.

25 Jun CPV attacked ROKA positions. Anti-armistice demonstrations took place in Seoul. Walter Robinson, US Assistant Secretary of State, and General Clark negotiated with Rhee to gain his compliance.

8 Jul CPV agreed to resume talks.

11 Jul Robinson announced that he has gained the support of President Rhee.

13-20 Jul CPV launched major attack, driving back ROK forces to adjust the cease-fire line.

27 Jul Armistice agreement signed at Panmunjom. Fighting ends at 2200. No permanent treaty was ever signed. In the days following the CPV returned a total of 12,773 UN prisoners, including 3,597 American (General Dean among them), 7,862 ROKs, 945 British, 229 Turks, and 140 others. The UN returned a total of 75,823 prisoners, including 70,183 of the NKPA and 5,640 of the CPV. The US suffered 54,246 dead (32,629 killed in combat and 20,617 from other causes). The Pentagon estimated that military casualties on both sides were approximately 2.4 million. Korean civilian casualties were roughly 2 million men, women, and children.

1994 Kim Il Sung died. His son, Kim Jong Il, became the leader of the DPRK.

Today Thousands of US soldiers and airmen currently serve in Korea.