

# Isolated Provocations

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You know he's out there all the time just waiting for you to make a slip. It's a matter of pride to us to see that he doesn't get through.

— an infantry private first class,  
U.S. 2d Infantry Division, late  
1968

At about the same time ROK police, soldiers, and militia trapped and finished off the last of the Ulchin-Samchok landing forces, the North Koreans finally released the *Pueblo* crewmen. The United States representative at Panmunjom, Major General Gilbert H. Woodward, signed a DPRK-mandated confession of American perfidy in order to secure the final release. Once all eighty-two prisoners returned to UNC control on 23 December 1968, Woodward publicly repudiated the embarrassing statement of U.S. guilt.<sup>1</sup>

Yet to all appearances, the damage had been done. For almost a year, the mightiest power in the world consented to sheath its sword and beg for its sailors' freedom from Kim Il-sung's Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Kim had not missed a single chance to extract maximum propaganda value from the entire sorry affair. He mistreated the American captives, compelled them to record admissions and apologies for their imperialist "crimes," and then twisted the knife one more time with the Panmunjom confession—all the while blaring the tale of U.S. impotence to the listening world and especially into South Korea. One *Pueblo* sailor's taped lament played incessantly from banks of loudspeakers aimed across the DMZ at his countrymen.

The *Pueblo* seemed to symbolize faltering American resolve, an image reinforced by President Johnson's decision to curtail the U.S. war effort in Vietnam—not to mention domestic political assassinations, race riots, and campus upheavals. One Washington insider summarized the thinking among gloomy Johnson administration staffers: "The theory goes that the communists are determined to keep the U.S. humiliated as long as we stay in the Far East, and Korea is as good a place as any to keep up the humiliation."<sup>2</sup> The dishonorable nature of the *Pueblo* crew's return looked like the crowning blow to America's tottering prestige as a confident superpower.

Appearances can be deceiving, however. Even with the gush of propaganda triumphs afforded by the *Pueblo* episode, Kim Il-sung could hardly have been pleased with his overall strategic situation. His Communist benefactors, the USSR and China, were not only exchanging insults but bullets as well along their long common border. Kim could expect no big increases in aid from either power.<sup>3</sup>

This Communist bloc discord could not have flared up at a less opportune moment for the DPRK. This was a tough time for Kim Il-sung to be left on his own. After more than two years of intensive unconventional operations, the UNC allies had thwarted the best North Korean efforts. Economic and demographic trends, apparently unaffected by the northern offensive, continued to run as strongly as ever in favor of the ROK. Most distressing of all, the U.S.-ROK alliance had grown stronger, not weaker, despite some serious policy disputes early in the year. Kim held some American sailors and the headlines, but the United Nations Command held the initiative throughout the Republic of Korea.

Perhaps the DPRK gave back the *Pueblo* crewmen because they no longer served a purpose, other than as a possible casus belli for an increasingly more powerful U.S.-ROK military establishment. As long as the American prisoners remained in North Korea, they formed an unwelcome distraction from urgent political and military decisions facing the Pyongyang leadership. Its unconventional approach a shambles, North Korea needed new strategic thinking and a new set of officials to carry it out. While the public record offers only minimal insight into Kim Il-sung's logic, political developments in the north suggest that the desire to focus on cleaning house prompted the rather abrupt return of the *Pueblo* crew.

### *A Purge in Pyongyang*

Following the Ulchin-Samchok fiasco, Kim Il-sung wasted little time in junking his entire unconventional warfare campaign. A few days after the *Pueblo* crewmen departed, Kim's ax fell, taking out a wide swath of senior military officers closely associated with the prosecution of the Second Korean Conflict. Among others, these included defense minister, General Kim Chong-bong and his two brothers (both generals); KPA political bureau chairman, General Ho Pong-haek; chief of the general staff, General Choe Kwang; Reconnaissance Bureau chief, Lieutenant General Kim Chong-tae; KPN commander, Admiral Yu Chang-gon; KWP guerrilla activities secretary, Major General Cho Tong-chol; and the commanders of three frontline KPA corps. Kim Il-sung summarily executed Kim Chong-bong, Ho Pong-haek, and one corps commander—then promptly tossed the remainder into prison.<sup>4</sup>

The North Korean premier justified his harsh actions before his principal political and military lieutenants at the secret Fourth KWP-KPA Conference that convened in Pyongyang in January 1969. In a fulsome tirade, Kim Il-sung stated that the defrocked generals had "deliberately sabotaged" his campaign plan, wrecking it beyond reclamation. These traitors, he charged,

“entirely overturned the military line of the party.”<sup>5</sup> Kim elaborated on his accusations. First, the KPA leadership failed to translate the ideology of the Korean Workers’ Party into a program palatable to South Korean farmers. Kim attributed this to the regular officers’ lack of emphasis on developing committed Korean Workers’ Party cadres in its special operations units.

This charge rings hollow, however, when one considers the extensive political education furnished to all northern special warfare units—particularly the elite, all-officer 124th and 283d Army Units. But by KWP logic, the political line could not be wrong, so the KPA’s political indoctrination must have been faulty. Nobody dared to express the possibility that the KWP message did not appeal to the southerners.

Second, Kim stated that his generals neglected to make coordinated use of all of the assets made available by the much-touted “fortification of the entire country.” For example, Kim noted that the generals never made use of all available ground, sea, and air assets, nor did they carefully coordinate those that they did employ. Most operations proceeded piecemeal.

The northern leader especially decried the commanders’ unwillingness to rely on the extensive DPRK militia, which might have offered some help in integrating political agitation and military skills. He intimated that a dangerously misguided KPA distrust of peasant and worker political sentiments lay behind this calculated refusal to involve the Red Guards.

This charge held a bit more water, but only barely. While the generals often launched uncoordinated, high-risk missions, these mainly reflected Kim’s own insistence on immediate, splashy results rather than the patient construction of a reliable southern infrastructure. The nature of missions was also affected by the limited number of high-quality special operators on hand at any one time. Any resort to throwing a great many conventional units into the fray promised little help in the unconventional effort and risked the big war that Kim did not yet want.

Even the premier’s complaints about the failure of his generals to involve the militia seemed suspect. The generals understandably showed reluctance to use half-trained villagers in the volatile environs south of the DMZ, but they did not ignore these forces. The home defense outfits expanded in strength and received better arms throughout this period. This guard force served a vital function by securing the DPRK interior from ROK espionage and potential reprisals and thus freed regular North Korean troops for action.

KPA commanders employed the militia not only in routine uses but to validate unconventional warfare techniques. For example, the Reconnaissance Bureau tested its Blue House raiders against an entire battalion of specially selected Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Guards. The citizen-soldiers played the parts of ROK police and local civilians so energetically that thirty militiamen had to be hospitalized due to injuries sustained in these intense exercises.<sup>6</sup> This imaginative use of the DPRK militia did not impress the northern dictator, although Kim never made it clear just what he thought the part-time troops could add to his campaign in the south.

Finally, the premier observed that the purged generals never created a viable method for generating an insurgency in the South Korean mountains, even though the objective circumstances for building a guerrilla movement seemed to exist. Here, Kim argued that the failed leaders could not adapt KPA tactics and weapons to mountainous terrain, such as the Taebaek range.<sup>7</sup> This greatly concerned all North Korean officers. If even the cream of the DPRK's armed forces could not operate in the highlands, it implied a doctrinal failing of massive proportions for an army dedicated to war on a mountainous peninsula.

The tactical troubles in the up-country, of course, came from far more than any alleged inability to deal with the physical environment. Secure in their ideological cocoons, Kim and his cronies chose to ignore effective ROK counteractions and popular support and, instead, blamed the uniformed chain of command. The KWP line did not allow for any other possibilities.

Having fingered the culprits and their crimes, Kim Il-sung offered his new vision for the continuing struggle against the ROK and its U.S. allies. Kim used the same old catchphrase, "combining regular and irregular warfare," but went on to explain that this now meant something far different from what it had meant in October 1966. In January 1969, Kim argued that a combination of methods required strict subordination of all military activities to party goals. Just as the North Korean armed forces could only operate in support of KWP objectives, so special operations proceeded only in support of conventional operations—not vice versa, as had been the case since 1966.

With the military forcibly ejected from the subversion business, the premier transferred responsibility for creation of southern support back to the KWP Liaison Committee, which aimed to develop the moribund United Revolutionary Party as an actor in legal ROK politics.<sup>8</sup> Kim no longer gave much credence to the dream of fomenting a serious anti-ROK insurrection.

This new thinking resulted in crucial changes for the North Korean military establishment. Disgusted by his generals' mistakes, which he attributed to disloyalty, Kim Il-sung moved to ensure definite party control over every military activity. Kim instituted full dual command throughout his armed forces. Prior to this time, the KPA, KPAF, and KPN had enjoyed freedom from the onerous commissar system that deadened initiative in the Soviet and Chinese armed forces. After January 1969, however, every company-size element in the DPRK military received a political officer. These party watchdogs attended orders, rendered secret reports on their commander counterparts, passed on all officer promotions, conducted surprise inspections in accord with KWP guidance, and even held authority to shoot disobedient officers and men. No order was legitimate unless countersigned by a political officer.<sup>9</sup>

This major shift in policy hit the military quite hard. For twenty years, Kim Il-sung's officers enjoyed the favor of their former guerrilla comrade. When the party guardians arrived in unit garrisons, not all old-line commanders toed the line willingly. It took months to build a working commissar

system, and further purges throughout the ranks were required to make it stick. As late as November 1970, Kim found it necessary to expel another slate of key generals as "anti-party factionalists" who "refused the military line" of the KWP.<sup>10</sup> He gained loyalty—but at the usual cost in innovative leadership.

Along with a thorough imposition of party discipline, North Korea carried out a complete overhaul of its special operations component to bring it into alignment with the more conventional approach now espoused. The infamous 124th Army Unit, the 17th Foot Reconnaissance Brigade (that so often worked the American sector of the DMZ), and the shadowy 283d Army Unit all disbanded. Each had lost too many key men in the ongoing conflict; the 124th had been particularly battered by the Ulchin-Samchok fighting. More telling, these forces had lost Kim Il-sung's confidence. Like the generals that spawned them, they had to go.

The dissolution of these elite forces signaled the reorientation of DPRK special warfare capabilities toward a role clearly subordinate to the conventional military. The remaining few thousand veteran special operators provided the backbone for new divisional light infantry battalions, corps light infantry and reconnaissance brigades, and a new national reservoir of chosen warriors called the 8th Special Purpose Corps. This distinctive corps included the amphibious arm and the germ of a paratrooper force, both soon to increase markedly. By 1970, these special units had expanded to 15,000 men, a solid start on the way to a current strength that by some estimates exceeds 100,000 troops.<sup>11</sup>

The new 8th Special Purpose Corps and its associates certainly gave North Korea a diverse and useful array of unique tactical units, to include more seaborne elements and a sorely needed air assault capability. Still, quality necessarily diminished as numbers went up. Good as they were, the refurbished and swollen ranks of airborne, naval infantry, mountain, and reconnaissance formations lacked the handpicked personnel, intensive training, and guerrilla-organizing expertise that characterized the rigorously schooled 124th Army Unit and its contemporaries. While they might complicate U.S.-ROK conventional defensive schemes, the DPRK's rebuilt special forces no longer could conduct an independent unconventional warfare campaign.

That squared nicely with the new approach from Pyongyang. Thanks to Kim's reinterpretation of his previous "combined warfare" idea, the DPRK returned to a hybrid of the policies of 1953–62 and those of 1962–66—conveniently couched in the now-familiar rhetoric of the Second Korean Conflict. As it had from 1953 to 1962, the north now put primary focus on reunification by overt conventional warfare, to be aided by selected commando missions that drew on the experience built up during the miscarried guerrilla campaign. Kim believed that his unimaginative generals had squandered a unique chance to undermine the ROK through special operations. With South Korean and American leaders now fully alerted to such efforts, the opportunity to create an insurgency had passed, perhaps for the foreseeable future.<sup>12</sup>

Yet the north did not completely abandon subversion. In line with the thinking of 1962—66, Kim also saw benefits in pursuing political erosion of the ROK, but only as an adjunct to invasion, not as a substitute. As in earlier times, the KWP would handle this undertaking.

The January purges, formal abandonment of the 1966 military campaign plan, and thorough reorganization of the armed forces, in general, and the special warfare units, in particular, created a window of vulnerability for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The revitalized United Nations Command forces definitely constituted a more formidable threat than they had in years. If for some reason the South Koreans or Americans chose to act, Kim Il-sung could well find himself in the same ugly quandary that his Soviet mentor, Joseph V. Stalin, faced in 1941: his army would be in confusion, his officer corps in disarray, and his allies distant and unwilling.

Thus, though the war was admittedly lost and the guilty already punished, Kim found it necessary to keep up a front of mystery and belligerence lest his cautious enemies discover too much and become bold. Leaning ever more heavily on his conventional units as his special operators underwent their painful mutations, Kim played his weak hand well enough to ward off any response from the uncertain UN Command. In the process, the North Koreans salvaged a few spiteful victories that marked the last year of the Second Korean Conflict.

### *The Allies at High Tide*

Premier Kim Il-sung had good reason to fear his opponents. The accumulated effects of over two years of American and South Korean political and military innovations reached their zenith by early 1969. The fact that this waxing power now served the active U.S. president, Richard M. Nixon, rather than the paralyzed, exhausted Lyndon Johnson could not have made the Pyongyang leadership sanguine about prospects for the coming campaign season.

Heartened by the resounding success in the Ulchin-Samchok operations, the United Nations Command put the finishing touches on the major programs of 1968. Anti-infiltration measures on the Demilitarized Zone and seacoasts dovetailed with the extensive counterinsurgency apparatus erected throughout the South Korean interior.

On the land frontier, both allies continued to improve on the tactics instituted during 1968. To aid detection, the Americans installed floodlights along a four-and-one-half-kilometer segment of their sector. Several UN divisions continued to test experimental electronic sensors of all types. American and South Korean military engineers and infantrymen worked throughout the winter to strengthen fortifications and clear fields of fire around the guard posts and the south barrier fence, all important to delay intrusive northerners. Most of the major construction had to wait until spring, but the allies did not allow weather to prevent routine position improvements.

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President Richard M. Nixon, a new, tough U.S. president entered the scene against the North Koreans

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National Archives



Both the U.S. and ROK forces received delivery of a total of a dozen new UH-1 turbine helicopters. The Americans used these aircraft to enlarge their overtaxed 6th Aviation Platoon into the 239th Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter)—the first such Huey-equipped organization in Korea. The forward divisions located and readied numerous landing zones to allow better use of these new rotary-wing assets.<sup>13</sup> The additional helicopters and landing zones gave more mobility to the quick-reaction forces so vital for neutralization of infiltrators.

These ongoing upgrades, coupled with intensive training for U.S. and ROK DMZ units, made the zone extremely hazardous for the few North Korean intelligence agents and agitators who tried to take advantage of the winter ice, snow, and cutting, cold winds. Allied patrols and guard posts turned back several incursions without loss during January and February. One American after-action summary correctly attributed these achievements to the “vigilance” of enlisted men and “their quick reaction.” The U.S. units still were filled with men brought in during the post-*Pueblo* buildup; though junior in rank, they were now veterans well-versed in the Korean environment. ROK divisions, always disciplined, also benefited from the extensive experience gained by all ranks during the bitter clashes of the previous year.<sup>14</sup> This new-found qualitative edge boded ill for the declining ranks of highly skilled KPA special forces, not to mention their unblooded conventional backups.



National Archives

The UH-1 helicopter, used in Korea to provide quick-reaction forces greater mobility

With the DMZ so difficult, the northerners might have turned to the typically open seacoasts. These, however, no longer looked so inviting. In the wake of Ulchin-Samchok, new ROK Southern and Eastern Coast Security Commands had been established to oversee integration of everything from rare search aircraft to numerous citizen coast watchers. In this way, anti-infiltration measures along the barren shores benefited from the immediate command interest they sorely needed.

The emphasis on the beaches paid off almost immediately. Tipped off by sound intelligence work from the Korean CIA—carefully coordinated with police reports and air squadron sweeps—an ROK Navy patrol boat netted a North Korean spy boat on 25 February, the first of several intercepted and sunk during the year.<sup>15</sup> The exceptional cooperation of the year before became standard as 1969 went on. The South Koreans appeared to be serious about closing down coastal infiltration once and for all.

In the interior, the counterinsurgency programs continued to build upon the successes of 1968. The ROK Army drew upon their own potent special forces and activated two ranger brigades, each with five battalions. One went into the Taebaek Mountains, the other to the Chiri Mountains, the two usual havens for northern guerrilla troublemakers. These hard-bitten paratroopers, mostly veterans of previous fighting, retained the ability to relocate on short notice to anywhere within the republic.<sup>16</sup>

Intelligence efforts by the Korean CIA and ROK Army Counterintelligence Corps unearthed more DPRK sympathizers, informants, and deep-cover operatives. In one far-ranging escapade, ROK CIA men in Saigon nabbed a double agent en route to Cambodia.<sup>17</sup> In addition, local police, militiamen, and interested civilians brought in a steady stream of useful news and often participated in the final apprehension of enemy agents.



Finally, President Park's long-overdue conversion to the virtues of social mobilization proceeded full tilt into 1969. He increased funding for his formal Civic Action Program by 26 percent, with emphasis on the same sorts of medical services, educational work, and rural civil engineering that characterized the 1968 plan. As before, Park ordered his military commanders to concentrate upon "local community development and antiespionage operation areas."<sup>18</sup> Seoul's already strong control of the countryside would become ironclad in the absence of a viable North Korean guerrilla effort.

Curiously, with all the sweat devoted to the defense of the ROK against both midintensity and low-intensity challenges, neither General Bonesteel nor his intelligence staffers took any special notice of the significance of the wholesale changes in Pyongyang. But the general did know about the shuffle and even discussed it with visiting journalist Emerson Chapin early in 1969. Bonesteel correctly identified the affair as an inner-party struggle resulting from the reversals of 1968.<sup>19</sup>

From that point, though, the UN commander in chief's vaunted intuition faltered. Bonesteel did not think the personnel changes meant anything. He believed that the new defense minister, Ch'oe Hyon, had the reputation of being a guerrilla warfare specialist, which probably signaled business as usual. In a later public statement, the general went so far as to say: "The situation in 1969 reflects a north Korea ready and able to cause trouble, more so than at any time since 1953." Bonesteel thought that the noteworthy drop-off in North Korean infiltration merely reflected the success of continuing UNC initiatives, especially that of the new ROK Homeland Defense Reserve Force.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps better weather might bring about a resurgence of North Korean pressure, but the enemy seemed stymied by effective allied responses.

How did the astute Bonesteel miss the signs of real trouble in the northern military system? First, the Korean People's Army operational security proved to be airtight. If public sources and later actions offer a reliable guide, it took months before the UNC discerned the stand-down of the 124th Army Unit and its ilk—let alone the imposition of political officers throughout the North Korean command channels. The exact circumstances of the UNC discovery of these developments remain classified, but they probably could not be confirmed until well into 1970, after the Second Korean Conflict ended.<sup>21</sup> Without definite word, Bonesteel surmised that the drop-off in hostile infiltration corresponded only to UNC actions and not to any internal dynamics in North Korea.

Second, Bonesteel's favorite source, Kim Il-sung himself, remained rather tight-lipped and circumspect throughout 1969. As he confided to some scientific and educational workers in March, he found little time for detailed pronouncements because "the situation in the country was tense." His next major address on the South Korean issue came in November 1970, when he finally delineated his reversion to a conventional military program and renewed emphasis on the United Revolutionary Party as his front group in the south. The premier's few public statements in 1969 featured enough of

the standard phraseology—"a burning desire to drive the U.S. imperialists from our soil and unify the country at the earliest possible date"—to convince Bonesteel that nothing had changed.<sup>22</sup>

But the great purge in January clearly indicated that something had changed—regardless of vague public statements. The 1966 change of plan had been characterized by a similar, though less extensive, purge. That time, the supreme leader himself spelled out his state's new direction. He had acted identically in 1950, 1958, and 1961–62. A new mass program, promulgated right from the top, followed every previous housecleaning.<sup>23</sup> This time, however, the cleansing lasted much longer. Though Kim already knew what he intended to do, he could not truly start his mass effort until the military had been restructured to his liking.

Given Kim's style of personal leadership, his lack of comment furnished sure proof that the DPRK wallowed in dire straits, caught in the interlude between concrete strategies. Bonesteel and his subordinates, burned too often by North Korean craftiness, chose not to read anything into this "dog that did not bark."

Aside from a dearth of hard intelligence and some faulty analysis, one should not discount the predispositions of the United Nations Command by early 1969. Almost all of the key commanders and staff officers recognized that the tide had turned in the Second Korean Conflict; even the cautious Bonesteel characterized the situation as "greatly improved." Justifiably pleased with the giant strides taken since the dark days of November 1966, the Americans and Koreans naturally attributed the dwindling infiltration rate strictly to growing allied tactical prowess. Few, if any, considered the possibility that allied success had caused a breakdown between Kim Il-sung and his armed forces and a consequent scaling back of unconventional operations at Pyongyang's direction.<sup>24</sup>

Solid intelligence on the real picture up north might have altered some of Bonesteel's perceptions. Even if he knew that North Korea was in trouble, the general's determination to avoid a wider war ruled out the kind of pre-emptive attack so feared by Kim Il-sung. More to the point, had he known what had gone wrong in the DPRK, Bonesteel might not have displayed so much optimism in his own troops' improved, but by no means unassailable, defensive abilities.

Without that knowledge, the Americans and South Koreans could only proceed from what they sensed—that the situation had changed greatly for the better. Bonesteel became so certain that things were winding down that he chose not to submit an expensive (more than \$200 million) updated counterinfiltration and counter guerrilla requirements request to the Joint Chiefs, even though his staff had labored mightily to produce this revised document. He even authorized U.S. and ROK patrols to remark the DMZ's Military Demarcation Line for the first time since early 1967. Rather than deal with the northern threat, many of the U.S.-ROK senior staff officers instead prepared for the upcoming Exercise Focus Retina, a test of America's ability to reinforce its troops on the peninsula.<sup>25</sup>

Unaware of the North Korean plight and convinced that they were imposing their will on the conflict, the UN Command grew confident, even cocky. Inadvertently, they encouraged the nervous northerners to take harsh retribution.

### *The North Strikes Back*

Joint-Combined Exercise Focus Retina could not help but be noticed in Pyongyang. This mid-March war game featured the spectacular jump of a three-battalion brigade from the U.S. 82d Airborne Division. Tiers of light green parachutes blossomed in the late winter skies forty miles southeast of Seoul near the Han River. The Americans had flown thirty-one hours straight from Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina, intending "to demonstrate rapid reaction capability." Hundreds of jets from four U.S. Fifth Air Force tactical fighter wings provided notional ground support for the paratroopers (see figure 10). ROK special forces joined the airborne drop and the maneuvers that followed. The maneuver play included the repulse of a mythical aggressor that bore more than a passing resemblance to the DPRK. More than 7,000 troops (4,500 of which were U.S.-ROK forces based in Korea) participated in this impressive display of allied power.

From Kim Il-sung's vantage point, and according to his propaganda mills, Focus Retina looked like a dress rehearsal for the opening stages of a U.S.-ROK march to the north. Had the UNC figured out what was going on in the hobbled KPA? In any event, Focus Retina demanded a strong reply from the north. Kim's precise rationale for his response remains hidden in the bowels of the Pyongyang archives, but his reactions are definitely a matter of record. From March to May, the DPRK defended itself with a shield of blows reminiscent of the height of the 1967-68 skirmishing.

Korean People's Army regulars took the lead. They noticed that the U.S. troops had settled already into some complacent routines, and they used these patterns against the Americans. A few days before the U.S. airborne troops jumped, North Koreans ambushed a daylight barrier-fence repair

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#### U.S. Army from Fort Bragg, North Carolina (1,806 men parachuted in)

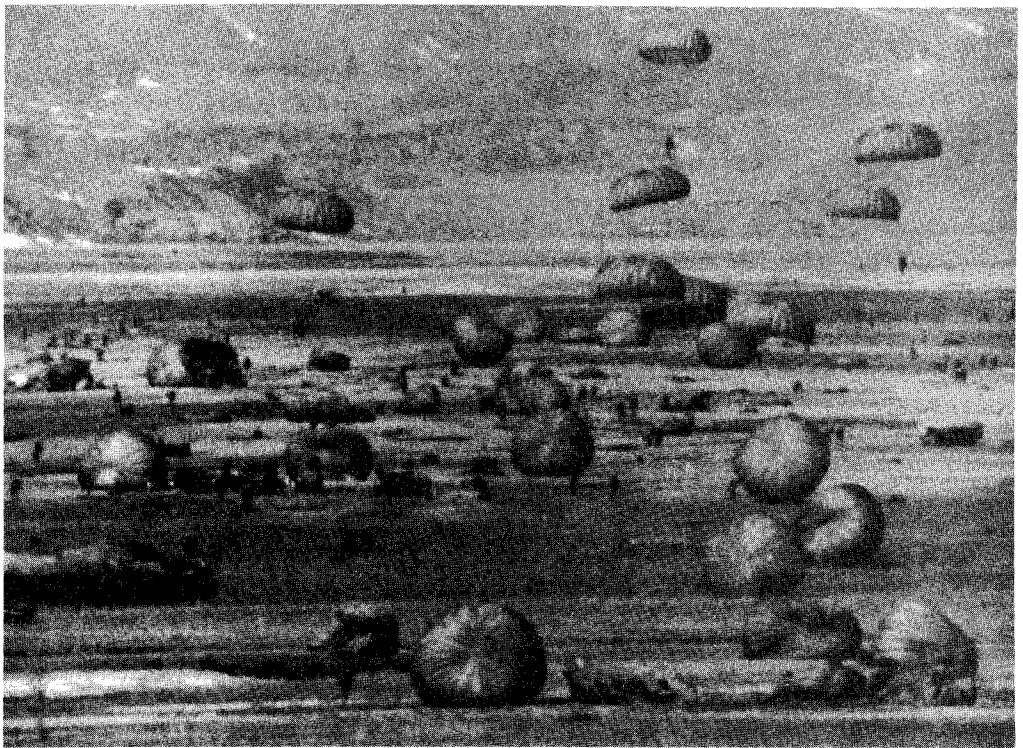
HQ, 2d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division  
 1-325 Infantry (Airborne)  
 3-325 Infantry (Airborne)  
 1-319 Artillery (105-mm towed, Airborne)

#### U.S. Air Force (approximately 300 aircraft)

18th Tactical Fighter Wing from Kadena AB, Okinawa  
 347th Tactical Fighter Wing from Moody AFB, Georgia  
 354th Tactical Fighter Wing from Myrtle Beach AFB, South Carolina  
 475th Tactical Fighter Wing from Yokota AB, Japan  
 Military Airlift Command airlifters from various bases

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Figure 10. U.S. combat forces deployed for Exercise Focus Retina, March 1969



Army

Part of the 7,000 troops participating in Exercise Focus Retina, a U.S.-ROK continental airborne assault exercise

patrol from the U.S. 38th Infantry—Company C of the 2d Battalion. The Americans escaped unscathed.

Two days later, on the eve of Exercise Focus Retina, the enemy tried a different method. In the full light of morning, a KPA guard post opened fire at long range against a demarcation-line marker-replacement patrol in the U.S. sector. One American died; two Americans and a KATUSA fell wounded. During a rescue attempt, these unfortunates died too, along with a pilot and four crewmen when the medical evacuation helicopter from the 337th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) crashed shortly after takeoff, a tragedy not caused by the enemy action.

The North Korean regulars probed U.S. defenses constantly over the next two weeks, but the wary Americans were on their guard by this time, and no further casualties resulted.<sup>26</sup> Sporadic clashes also flared along the ROK divisional fronts, to include a forty-minute firefight on 7 April. In this case, the northerners merely opened fire. Killing troops, not cutting through the zone, seemed to be their goal.

On the beaches, eight Communist seaborne raiders landed at Chumunjin in the Eastern Coast Security Command. Like their regular comrades on the DMZ, these operatives also showed little interest in subversion or spying.

Rather, the team seized and killed a hapless policeman, an act of terrorism repaid when ROK combat policemen and militia trapped and destroyed the KPA detachment.<sup>27</sup>

Obviously, when taken in concert with the virulent broadcasts and printed complaints blaring forth from the Communist media, these selective strikes served to demonstrate Kim Il-sung's concerns about Exercise Focus Retina. They did not signify renewed attempts to infiltrate South Korea and stir up the populace—a distinction not lost on Bonesteel. With Focus Retina over, there appeared to be no need to continue the cycle of violence on the borders. Thus, Bonesteel denied requests for reprisal raids by his frontline commanders and limited the UN counteractions to strenuous and largely effective defensive measures.<sup>28</sup>

Aware of the different intent of these recent attacks, Bonesteel tried diplomacy to curb the KPA. Perhaps the DPRK might choose to talk rather than fight. On 10 April, the UNC delegation at Panmunjom proposed a special meeting of the Military Armistice Commission aimed at reducing tensions along the DMZ. The impassive KPA general and his men heard the UN proposal and answered with four and one-half hours of stony silence.<sup>29</sup> So, there would be no succor from that quarter.

With the threat still looming and the North Koreans unwilling to acknowledge anything at the truce table, the Americans and South Koreans took precautions. Units assumed higher readiness postures along and behind the DMZ and in the exposed coastal command regions. Additionally, to emphasize that the war on the DMZ had not ended, the UNC suspended the recently restarted demarcation line marking efforts.<sup>30</sup> These activities would not resume until years after the Second Korean Conflict ended.

The North Koreans did respond to UN diplomacy—but not in the conference room and not along the DMZ. This time, Kim Il-sung's air commanders committed a calculated act of terror aimed to reopen the seams in the U.S.-ROK alliance. On 15 April, just after the northern premier's fifty-seventh birthday, two Korean People's Air Force MiG interceptors shot down a U.S. Navy EC-121M Constellation ninety-five miles off the east coast of the DPRK. The Communist fighter pilots issued no warning to the unarmed, four-engine turboprop, which lumbered along gathering electronic signals under a long-standing project code-named Beggar Shadow. Thirty-one Americans died in the one-sided encounter.<sup>31</sup>

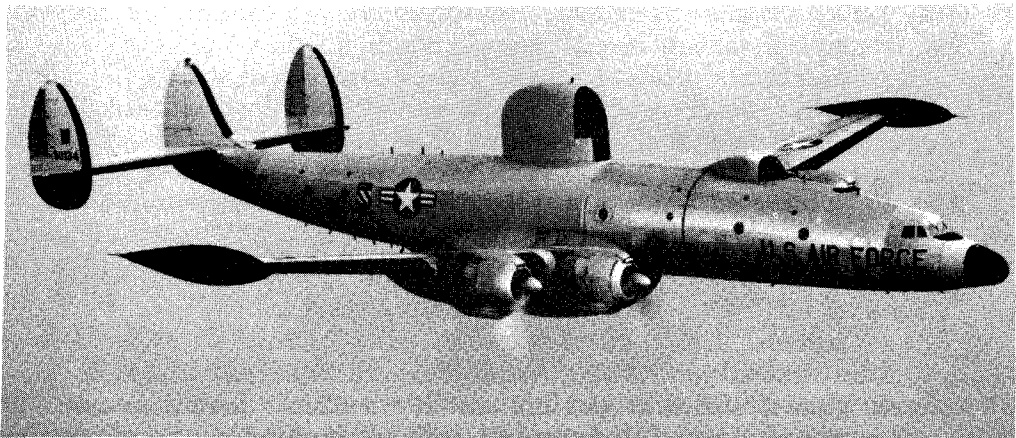
The specter of the *Pueblo* seemed to be resurrected. This time, the evidence clearly showed a premeditated act by the north. There was little likelihood that some local commander had gotten bold given Kim's massive crackdown against his officer corps. Dare the United States and/or its Republic of Korean allies hit back?

President Nixon thought so. "We were being tested, and therefore force must be met with force," assumed the new U.S. leader. His national security adviser Henry Kissinger agreed. The president convened most of his National Security Council and weighed his options. Two USN carrier battle groups

headed out into the Sea of Japan—just in case.<sup>32</sup> Kissinger, noticeably excited to be facing his “first major crisis,” prepared a slate of possible responses. These included a protest at Panmunjom, armed escort of future reconnaissance flights, seizure of North Korean vessels on the high seas, mining of Wonsan harbor, shore bombardment by air or ship gunnery, and retaliatory air strikes against the KPAF fighter airstrips. The president and his national security adviser agreed that only two options really seemed possible: a reprisal air strike or an aerial escort linked to a diplomatic complaint at the truce table. Both men favored the air attack.<sup>33</sup>

But Nixon and Kissinger found themselves alone in their enthusiasm to bomb North Korea. Secretary of State William Rogers feared a public backlash from another military action in addition to the immensely unpopular Vietnam War. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird warned that Congress would conduct its own retaliation, scuttling Nixon’s other projects early in his administration. Laird also made the usual strategic argument: Korea was an economy-of-force theater, and anything used there diverted from the main effort in Vietnam. For his part, CIA chief, Richard Helms, also agreed that an air strike risked escalation and promised nothing but momentary gratification in the Oval Office.<sup>34</sup> All urged the president to limit his response to armed escorts and a note at Panmunjom.

The key men on the scene in Korea also warned against an air strike. Ambassador Porter recommended a mild response, for fear of encouraging radical elements in Pyongyang (or Seoul, for that matter). General Bonesteel also “didn’t consider it wise” to react strongly, reported the JCS chairman, General Earle G. Wheeler. The general and ambassador cited intelligence sources, confirmed by CIA Director Helms, that indicated that the EC-121M downing was just another “isolated provocation,” perhaps hoping to draw a UNC overreaction to suit some arcane internal needs in Pyongyang. So far, the ROKs had not stirred. Would they remain quiet if UN Navy fighter-bombers struck North Korea?<sup>35</sup>



National Archives

An EC-121M reconnaissance plane of the type shot down on 15 April by two MiGs



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Henry Kissinger, national security  
adviser to President Nixon in 1969

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Dismayed by the lack of support for their aggressive ideas, Nixon and Kissinger relented. On 18 April, the president announced that armed escorts would accompany future U.S. reconnaissance flights in the vicinity of North Korea. He also told the UN representative to the Military Armistice Commission to deliver what Nixon called “a very weak protest” to the DPRK general at Panmunjom.

In his mind, Nixon reserved the bombing option, but as the days passed, it became less and less likely. “I still agreed,” wrote Nixon later, “that we had to act boldly. I just wasn’t convinced that this was the time to do it.” Like Johnson after the capture of the *Pueblo*, the president worried about launching aircraft and then finding himself at war in Korea. “As long as we were involved in Vietnam,” concluded Nixon, “we simply did not have the resources or public support for another war in another place.”<sup>36</sup>

The same factors that militated against a massive response to the taking of the *Pueblo* still restrained U.S. decision makers. Taking the long view came easier this time. The infiltration situation had improved greatly, the ROKs faced no special crisis, and the poor naval fliers were dead—not hostages. Thus, the Americans reacted to the loss of the EC-121M in three

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Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird maintained that Korea was an economy-of-force theater

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*National Archives*

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Secretary of State William Rogers, who feared a public reaction to intensified military action in Korea

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*National Archives*





A meeting of the Military Armistice Commission at Panmunjom

ways: the note at Panmunjom, armed escorts, and a naval show of force off the North Korean coast.

The “nonconfrontational” statement was accepted without comment by the KPA representative. The American delegation also withdrew until August to reinforce its protest.<sup>37</sup> The DPRK gave no indication of how it interpreted this missive, but it certainly must have calmed any invasion hysteria. Attacks on Americans tailed off drastically over the next few weeks.

The armed escorts proved easier to order than implement. Panicky Pentagon officials suspended all U.S. reconnaissance flights worldwide on 15 April, pending a decision on armed escorts. It took until 8 May to scrape up enough escort fighters to restart the missions. Given the heavy air commitment to Vietnam—to include the recent commencement of secret bombings in Cambodia—this should have surprised few. Nixon, however, raged against the “postponements, excuses, and delays.” He might have been even more annoyed had he learned that Beggar Shadow flights had always received fighter escorts through the end of 1968 when requirements in Southeast Asia and the presumed easing situation in Korea encouraged a shift of these assets.<sup>38</sup> Once escorted flights resumed, no further reconnaissance aircraft were attacked. The KPAF declined to test the U.S. aviators.

In the Sea of Japan, the Seventh Fleet's Task Force 71 collected its warships and demonstrated its capabilities during maneuvers held on 19–26 April (see figure 11). Much like the Formation Star deployments of 1968, Rear Admiral Malcolm W. Cagle's ships conducted air and surface training—all the while reminding the North Koreans of the potential power lurking off their coasts.<sup>39</sup> Of all of the American reactions to the shooting down of the EC-121M, this probably carried the most weight. Four aircraft carriers with more than 350 warplanes could not be lightly dismissed in Pyongyang.

Nixon and Kissinger, however, were not happy with what the latter termed a “weak, indecisive, and disorganized” American effort in the case of the downed aircraft.<sup>40</sup> Yet together, these steps did the job. They mounted a credible threat, gave Kim Il-sung assurance that he was in no immediate danger, and, most important of all, maintained alliance solidarity. The North

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### Task Force 71 operations

USS *Enterprise* (CVAN-65) with air wing  
 USS *Ticonderoga* (CVA-14) with air wing  
 USS *Ranger* (CVA-61) with air wing  
 USS *Hornet* (CVS-12) with air wing  
 USS *Chicago* (CG-11)  
 USS *Oklahoma City* (CLG-5)  
 USS *St. Paul* (CL-73)  
 USS *Mahan* (DLG-11)  
 USS *Dale* (DLG-19)  
 USS *Sterrett* (DLG-31)  
 USS *Lynde McCormick* (DDG-8)  
 USS *Parsons* (DDG-33)  
 USS *Radford* (DD-446)  
 USS *John W. Weeks* (DD-701)  
 USS *Lyman K. Swenson* (DD-729)  
 USS *Gurke* (DD-783)  
 USS *Richard B. Anderson* (DD-786)  
 USS *Shelton* (DD-790)  
 USS *Ernest G. Small* (DD-838)  
 USS *Perry* (DD-844)  
 USS *Tucker* (DD-875)  
 USS *Meredith* (DD-890)  
 USS *Davidson* (DE-1045)

### Abbreviations

CG guided missile cruiser  
 CL light cruiser  
 CLG guided missile light cruiser  
 CVA attack aircraft carrier  
 CVAN nuclear-powered CVA  
 CVS antisubmarine carrier  
 DD destroyer  
 DLG guided missile DD leader  
 DDG guided missile destroyer

Sources: Lieutenant D. L. Strole, United States Navy, and Lieutenant W. E. Dutcher, United States Naval Reserve, “Naval and Maritime Events, July 1968—December 1969,” *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 96 (May 1970):14; and Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 1979), 320.

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Figure 11. The United States' response to the downing of the EC-121M, April 1969

Koreans throttled back. Incidents along the DMZ persisted into May, then died away in the U.S. sector, although the ROK DMZ divisions and the coasts continued to experience occasional incursions.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Torch Passes*

By avoiding contact with U.S. forces throughout most of the summer, the Korean People's Army achieved by inaction what it had never gained by fighting. With the Second Korean Conflict almost over, the "American imperialists" began to make long-term plans to pull out of the ROK (a process still in progress two decades later). The United States could contemplate this possibility because their South Korean allies had finally come of age—a development that more than balanced any comfort Kim Il-sung might have derived from waning U.S. interest.

In late July 1969, during a stopover at Guam following his visit with the crew of the Apollo 11 lunar landing mission, President Nixon told reporters that the United States would supply military hardware and advice, rather than U.S. ground troops, to support its allies. These allies could also count on American sea and air power. Though aimed at Vietnam, this "Nixon Doctrine" also extended to Korea. An alarmed Park Chung Hee flew to San Francisco in August to receive assurances that the U.S.-ROK alliance had not been altered. He accepted Nixon's word that basic U.S. policy remained intact.<sup>42</sup>

Yet despite these words, Park might have done better to look at what had begun to happen to his American defenders during the summer. With combat in the U.S. sector rare, the battle-experienced men brought in during 1968 were being replaced by novices. As one veteran U.S. colonel lamented, "a special kind of leadership is required to keep men 'up' during the lulls in enemy action."<sup>43</sup> Most of the time, the KPA did not cooperate by relieving the boredom. As in the rest of the U.S. Army about this time, troop quality, never too impressive in Korea to begin with, started on a long decline. Sloppy American soldiers suffered five deaths from accidental weapons discharges—equal to the number of U.S. ground troops lost all year to enemy action. Other careless troops sowed hundreds of little three-and-a-half-ounce M-14 "toe-popper" mines without regard for regulation marking procedures. More injuries resulted.<sup>44</sup>

Even the two remaining battlefield face-offs with the KPA sullied the U.S. soldiers' reputation for competence. On 17 August 1969, a 59th Aviation Company OH-23 pilot somehow became disoriented and flew his helicopter into North Korea, where he and his two cohorts quickly found themselves forced down and placed in custody.<sup>45</sup> Rumors of drug abuse swirled around the incident.

On 18 October, following months of absolute calm in the American sector, four U.S. soldiers from the U.S. 7th Infantry Division drove their jeep into the DMZ, trusting in a white flag to provide security. The North

Koreans pounced on the vehicle. Each American took a bullet through the head at close range, and their jeep was found riddled with holes torn by bullets and grenade fragments.<sup>46</sup> The lopsided skirmish suggested too many stark images from the ambush of 2 November 1966. It was as if the American infantrymen had learned nothing, but in reality, they were beginning to unlearn lessons that had been imparted earlier at great cost.

These developments of 1969 were just the first cracks. A year later, the same problems with drugs, race relations, and indiscipline that infected the forces in Vietnam had spread to Korea in a pronounced way. Things deteriorated so badly that a 1970 operational report prominently featured this ominous note: "The Assistant Chief of Staff G-2 has initiated a master list of all [U.S.] individuals who present a possible threat to distinguished visitors."<sup>47</sup>

Quantitative American contributions also started to erode. The air reservists brought to Korea during Operation Combat Fox left in June—unreplaced. Air Force aircraft strengths slowly drew down to pre-1968 levels. By November, the U.S. Department of Defense formalized the diversion of resources from the Korean theater. Due to a \$38 million budget cut, U.S. Eighth Army laid off almost a tenth of its Korean labor force; deferred some military construction; and restricted usage of vehicles, spare parts, water, heating fuels, and electricity.<sup>48</sup> It marked the first outright resource reduction since November 1966. Once the cuts started, it was only a matter of time before the first big slash occurred: the withdrawal of the U.S. 7th Infantry Division in 1971.

While the Americans started down the slippery slope to a reduced force, the ROK military, its supporting agencies, and its faithful populace proceeded from victory to victory against the diminishing numbers of North Korean infiltrators. Between June and December 1969, ROK soldiers repelled numerous DMZ intrusions, trading mortar and even artillery fire with North Korean line units. On the coasts, joint air-sea-intelligence-police operations located and sank four 75-ton spy boats and captured another, the most impressive haul to date along the vulnerable beaches. In the interior, police and popular militia worked together to round up hundreds of agents, many reported by concerned citizens. Speeding into action in new helicopters, modernized warships, and screaming F-4D Phantom jets, the South Koreans had fulfilled Bonesteel's fondest hopes.<sup>49</sup> At long last, they could defend themselves against anything the north could throw at them.

Bonesteel himself departed on 1 October 1969, turning over command to Korean War hero General John H. Michaelis. It fell to Michaelis to negotiate the release of the unlucky helicopter crew. Their return on 3 December 1969 signified the end of the Second Korean Conflict, although intermittent small-scale DPRK-ROK scrapping persisted unabated well into 1971.

Michaelis pronounced the conflict's end in an article published in October 1970. "Continued activity by agents can be expected, but they should meet with no more success than in the past," he argued. "While north Korea

might provoke incidents along the Demilitarized Zone, the probability of all-out hostilities in the foreseeable future is limited."<sup>50</sup> It remains so to this day.

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# What Went Right

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In small wars, caution must be exercised, and instead of striving to generate the maximum power with forces available, the goal is to gain decisive results with the least application of force and the consequent minimum loss of life.

—U.S. Marine Corps  
*Small Wars Manual*,  
1940

Lately, it has become fashionable to refer to the Korean War of 1950—53 as “the forgotten war.” Popular historian Clay Blair chose that apt phrase as the title of his monumental recent study of the war. If the Korean War, a three-year slugfest that cost America almost 34,000 battlefield dead, has been lost in the shuffle between the triumph of World War II and the trauma of Vietnam, is it any wonder that the confusing, sporadic, and far less bloody Second Korean Conflict has drifted into utter obscurity, blotted out by the awful spectacle of the contemporary war in Southeast Asia?

This studied indifference to an important small war is unfortunate given America’s continued involvement on the Korean peninsula and today’s constant soul-searching over the perils of low-intensity conflict. Military professionals and interested civilians would do well to consider the results achieved, the reasons for victory, the broader implications, and the unfinished business of the Second Korean Conflict.

## *Decisive Results*

By comparison to other wars, the human cost of the 1966—69 fighting in Korea appears rather small (see table 3). Including those killed, wounded, and captured in firefights and the *Pueblo* and EC-121M incidents, the allies lost 1,120 soldiers and police plus 171 South Korean civilians. Of this total, 374 troops and 80 civilians died.<sup>1</sup> To put these numbers in perspective, consider that U.S. casualties in Vietnam averaged more than 1,190 killed *per month* during 1968.<sup>2</sup>

**TABLE 3**  
**The Second Korean Conflict: A Statistical Summary, 1966—69**

|                                | 1966 | 1967                          | 1968                | 1969               |
|--------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>DMZ Incidents</b>           |      |                               |                     |                    |
| Firefight                      | 22   | 143                           | 236                 | 39                 |
| KPA harassing fire             | 3    | 5                             | 19                  | 4                  |
| KPA mining                     | 0    | 16                            | 8                   | 0                  |
| U.S.-ROK fire on suspected KPA | 12   | 280                           | 223                 | 24                 |
| <b>Casualties</b>              |      |                               |                     |                    |
| KPA KIA                        | 13   | 126                           | 233                 | 25                 |
| KPA WIA                        |      | accurate totals not available |                     |                    |
| KPA PW                         | 1    | 4                             | 4                   | 3                  |
| KPA defector                   | 17   | 10                            | 5                   | 1                  |
| DPRK agents seized             | 205  | 787                           | 1,245               | 225                |
| ROK/U.S. KIA                   | 29/6 | 115/16                        | 145/17 <sup>1</sup> | 10/36 <sup>2</sup> |
| ROK/U.S. WIA                   | 28/1 | 243/51                        | 240/54              | 39/5               |
| ROK/U.S. PW                    | 0/0  | 0/0                           | 0/82                | 0/3 <sup>3</sup>   |

<sup>1</sup>This column includes 1 U.S. KIA and 82 U.S. PWs (January—December 1968) from the USS *Pueblo*. The PWs were released by the DPRK.

<sup>2</sup>This total includes 31 U.S. KIA when their EC-121M was shot down by KPAF jets on 15 April 1969. It does not include 8 U.S. deaths resulting from the crash of a medical evacuation helicopter on 15 March 1969.

<sup>3</sup>These 3 U.S. Army helicopter crewmen were held from August until December 1969, then released.

Sources: Finley, *The US Military Experience in Korea*, 220; and Lieutenant Colonel Everett H. Webster, United States Air Force, "Is the Morning Calm About to Be Broken in Korea?" 8—9, Research report no. 4471, Air War College, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, March 1971.

But there are other ways to consider these Korean numbers aside from the obvious fact that the soldiers were all just as dead, hurt, or captured as those lost on Omaha Beach. In retrospect, both the United States and the Republic of Korea can find some special significance in these sad tallies from three years of undeclared war on the peninsula. From the American point of view, the 319 casualties suffered during the 37 months of the Second Korean Conflict make this fighting the fourth most costly and second longest U.S. military undertaking since the end of World War II. Only the Korean and Vietnam Wars and the ill-fated Beirut expedition of the early 1980s took greater tolls, and only Vietnam lasted longer.<sup>3</sup> Although more widely reported and studied, the interventions in the Dominican Republic (1965—66), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), and the Persian Gulf (1990—91) all proved less sanguine and much shorter.

For the South Koreans, this war cost 84 percent of all soldiers and 58 percent of all civilians lost to DPRK military actions since 1953.<sup>4</sup> To date, the Second Korean Conflict remains by far the single most violent period in the ongoing, smoldering postarmistice struggle between South Korea and the north. Only the original Korean War and the ROK contribution in Vietnam cost more southern lives.



What did the allies accomplish to justify these sacrifices? The military score sheet appears unimpressive at first glance. Given General Bonesteel's campaign plan, the U.S.-ROK forces did not achieve an especially favorable body count, killing only 397 KPA soldiers, capturing 12, and convincing 33 to defect. But again, numbers alone do not tell the full story. Almost every North Korean that fell was a highly trained special operator not easily replaced. Growing attrition among these few high-quality forces made North Korea's proinsurgent program markedly more difficult to implement as time went on.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, aggressive ROK internal security measures, especially the creation of the Homeland Defense Reserve Force in early 1968, netted a whopping 2,462 North Korean agents, informants, and collaborators.<sup>6</sup> Even allowing for President Park's tendency to toss domestic opponents into the bag of true DPRK auxiliaries, it still seems to be a huge haul. These damaging blows to the North Korean intelligence apparatus in the ROK evidently helped to convince Kim Il-sung that further unconventional efforts could not succeed.

Far more important than any body counts, the combined U.S.-ROK forces accomplished their mission. The Republic of Korea remained secure in 1969—and even stronger than in 1966. The allies' array of countermeasures derailed any realistic possibility for a Pyongyang-sponsored insurgency. Kim Il-sung had his chance, took it, and failed. After 1969, the south could turn its attention to the north's conventional threat, fairly certain that the DPRK had squandered its opportunity for an insurrection.

The frustration resultant from Kim Il-sung's attempts to stir up a potent guerrilla movement have had important and lasting effects on all three of the warring powers. Each involved state-made major policy adjustments in the wake of the Second Korean Conflict.

For the ROKs, the victory of 1969 has proved both bright and dark. Success bequeathed the sort of yin-yang paradox so familiar to classical Korean philosophers. In this case, an uneasy tension arose between new-found economic muscle and internal repression. The issue persists to this day in the sometimes troubled southern republic.

The bright side of this relationship is the continued expansion of the ROK productive sectors, especially all varieties of industry. The United Nations Command shield provided sufficient security to permit a strong, populous ROK to grow almost unaffected by the northern provocations (see table 4). The positive trends that accelerated so dramatically in the late 1960s still go on. Thanks to the frustration of his 1966—69 schemes, Kim Il-sung today must confront his worst nightmare: a South Korea teeming with twice the population and four (nearly five) times the gross national product of its northern neighbor.<sup>7</sup> The military implications of this imbalance surely must cause the Pyongyang leadership to think twice before contemplating renewed war. This imbalance has created deterrence in the truest sense of the term.

Yet the drive to secure the ROK and protect its economic growth had a darker side. In essence, South Korea traded citizen rights for collective pro-

**TABLE 4**  
**Republic of Korea Population and Gross National Product,**  
**1962—72**

|      | <i>Population</i><br><i>(in millions)</i> | <i>Increase</i><br><i>(in percent)</i> | <i>GNP</i><br><i>(in billions)</i> | <i>Increase</i><br><i>(in percent)</i> |
|------|---|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 1962 | 26.2                                      | 2.7                                    | \$2.3                              | 3.1                                    |
| 1963 | 26.9                                      | 2.7                                    | \$2.5                              | 8.8                                    |
| 1964 | 27.7                                      | 2.9                                    | \$2.7                              | 8.6                                    |
| 1965 | 28.3                                      | 2.2                                    | \$2.9                              | 6.1                                    |
| 1966 | 28.9                                      | 2.1                                    | \$3.2                              | 12.4                                   |
| 1967 | 29.5                                      | 2.1                                    | \$3.4                              | 7.8                                    |
| 1968 | 30.1                                      | 2.0                                    | \$3.8                              | 12.6                                   |
| 1969 | 30.7                                      | 2.0                                    | \$4.4                              | 15.0                                   |
| 1970 | 31.3                                      | 1.9                                    | \$4.7                              | 7.9                                    |
| 1971 | 31.8                                      | 1.7                                    | \$5.1                              | 9.2                                    |
| 1972 | 32.4                                      | 1.9                                    | \$5.6                              | 7.0                                    |

Sources: Kim Mahn Je, *Korea's Economy: Past and Present* (Seoul, South Korea: Korea Development Institute, 1975), 342—43; and Frederica M. Bunge, ed., *South Korea, a Country Study*, Area handbook series (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Army, 1981), 56, 113.

tection. Although this guaranteed continued industrial progress, the ways in which President Park mobilized his people against the northern unconventional challenge left permanent scars on South Korean politics and society. Park apparently grew to enjoy the emergency powers he accumulated during the Second Korean Conflict, and he discovered that the same intelligence, police, military, militia, and social mobilization systems devised to defeat northern Communists also worked splendidly against domestic opponents—all conveniently cast by Park as “pro-northern agitators.” In many ways, after 1969, the Seoul government replaced North Korea as the greatest danger to the average ROK citizen.

Even as the threat from the north receded, Park and his successors did not relinquish their powers. There were always enough sparks along the DMZ to justify further crackdowns. Labor groups, college students, and opposition politicians felt the unleashed power of the intrusive apparatus created to thwart Kim Il-sung's unconventional warriors. This resort to the rule of armed force, rather than law, produced a succession of tragic battles for authority in Seoul involving the military, the police, and the intelligence services. Stolen, illicit elections and a hastily rewritten authoritarian constitution led in a few turbulent years to President Park's death in 1979 at the hands of his own disgruntled Korean CIA chief. Coups, an army junta, and continued rule by a general-president have marked the period since Park's demise. Although there have been some promising moves toward

real democracy, the military-dominated central government remains firmly in control.<sup>8</sup> Like the strength of the Samsung and Hyundai corporations, the overbearing might of the soldiery in Seoul is also a legacy of the Second Korean Conflict.

If the war delivered a mixed blessing to the ROK populace, the verdict north of the DMZ appears to have been much more clearly negative. The guerrilla option appeared to be permanently foreclosed, barring some unforeseeable collapse by the wary generals in the south. Worse, Kim Il-sung's vindictive purges had wiped out many key northern officers and burdened the previously innovative Korean People's Army with the strictures of a clumsy commissar system. Other than some experience in certain clandestine tactics, the DPRK gained nothing by its ambitious, unconventional campaign.

Faced with a much more capable ROK, today's sullen northern regime can only hold out and hope for a miracle to bring them any possibility of victory. Curiously, the overzealous ROK generals might inadvertently deliver that miracle by pursuing iron-fisted repression, thereby generating the deep-seated domestic discontent that Kim Il-sung's men had been unable to foment in 1966—69. But that is only a possibility—and not one that the north can control. If current tendencies hold up, the very survival of the DPRK will come into question within a few decades.<sup>9</sup>

The Americans, who suffered the least in the conflict, might have reaped the greatest benefit. Uncomfortable with long-term overseas troop commitments, the United States found itself able to begin a gradual disengagement from the Korean peninsula. This confident and virtually inevitable long good-bye began because of the excellent ROK showing in the Second Korean Conflict. The ROKs' prowess convinced the Nixon administration that it could withdraw an infantry division in 1971. That pullout was merely the first and largest. Throughout the 1970s, America made several incremental withdrawals, while simultaneously transferring more and more authority and responsibility to the Koreans through such vehicles as the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC) headquarters. The CFC was established in 1978 as the logical successor to Bonesteel's U.S.-ROK Operational Planning Staff of ten years earlier. Ample American high-technology arms, both granted and purchased, have been delivered to make sure that the southern forces maintain a qualitative edge on the North Koreans.<sup>10</sup>

Today, American ground units in Korea center around the U.S. 2d Infantry Division. The United States still maintains its formal command of all forces through the UNC and the new CFC. Given the ROK armed forces' deep involvement in domestic politics throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a relatively objective U.S. commander certainly helped keep defenses up while some of the Korean generals jostled for power in Seoul.

That American command, however, will probably change before the new century. Overall ROK command and final U.S. withdrawal are in the offing. General Bonesteel predicted as much as far back as 1970: "I can see a day where the U.S. forces in Korea will consist of a single armored cavalry

regiment—a trip wire to hold up our end of the alliance. The ROKs will do the rest. That's exactly what we want, you know."<sup>11</sup>

In a sense, then, Kim Il-sung did achieve one of his goals, though hardly in the way he had hoped: the United States' forces will leave but turn over the fate of the peninsula to a powerful, militant South Korea. By then, the enfeebled North Korean leadership might decide that it prefers Yankee imperialism—if only as a brake to surging ROK ambitions.

### *Reasons for the Victory*

No one reason explains the U.S.-ROK victory in the Second Korean Conflict. Still, one could fairly argue that it largely derived from three causes: the flawed execution of the DPRK campaign plan, the UNC's ability to discern the northern threat and choose sound countermeasures, and the eventually comprehensive ROK reaction to the danger of an insurgency.

Like all wars, the 1966–69 Korean combat was lost as much as it was won. Kim Il-sung's unconventional campaign plan represented a superb concept poorly executed. In theory, the authoritarian, militarized ROK government, heavily dependent on a foreign power, should have been vulnerable to efforts to stir revolt. It was, but the northern soldiers botched their chance—probably for good.

The North Korean failure revolved around an inability to mass their special operations combat power against the objectives specified in Kim Il-sung's original blueprint. Lacking the proper numbers of trained cadres and without an established southern intelligence and logistics infrastructure, it would have taken the North Koreans years just to prepare the ground for generation of a viable insurrection in the ROK. But Premier Kim, fearful of the burgeoning southern power and cognizant of the diversion provided by Vietnam, refused to wait. He demanded immediate action, thus greatly hampering his armed forces' ability to accomplish the task.

Overly optimistic generals accepted this need for speed but ignored the consequent requirement (so well enunciated by Napoleon) to concentrate their resources before racing to battle.<sup>12</sup> Instead, they abetted Kim's grandiose guerrilla designs and sent their few half-prepared special warfare troops into action piecemeal within weeks of receiving their marching orders. The major forces built for the campaign (the 124th and 283d Army Units) were not even raised until four months after the incursions began and were not committed until fourteen months after the opening shots.

This haphazard commitment of forces resulted in fighting that lacked much discernible pattern and, therefore, much purpose. Rather than focusing initially on the Americans and widening potential clefs in the U.S.-ROK alliance, KPA special forces began to work directly upon the ROK population, thereby diluting their very limited strength between two formidable targets. All of this provided time for the UNC to figure out what was happening and devise countermeasures.

Individually outstanding achievements, such as the grimly efficient initial ambushes of November 1966, the precision demolition of a U.S. barracks in May 1967, and the near-miss at the Blue House in January 1968, exemplified both the great potential and the wasted effort of the DPRK campaign. Certainly, the north had the assets to brew up serious troubles for the UNC. But with the important exception of the Blue House raid, these skilled troops were frittered away against average U.S. riflemen, ordinary ROK soldiers, local police, and unlucky southern villagers—hardly the sort of high-value targets likely to unhinge South Korean society. With only a handful of special forces available, KPA leaders erred by not being more selective in their objectives.

Aside from taking little care in choosing tactical objectives, the infiltration teams rarely cooperated to deliver the sort of wide-ranging strikes and follow-up raids that might have paralyzed the UNC, particularly if such methods had been used from the outset. Rather, the whole northern campaign displayed an inexplicable lack of coordination. Forces did not move immediately to create or exploit opportunities like the Blue House raid, the *Pueblo* seizure, and the Tet Offensive in Vietnam; the DMZ and coasts remained quiet, and the squabbling allies enjoyed a breathing space to resolve their differences.

The only big, well-orchestrated North Korean operation, the Ulchin-Samchok landings, came several months after the allies had perfected a solid counterinsurgency structure. Even this massive infiltration attempt did not feature simultaneous pressures along the DMZ, thus permitting the Americans to shift valuable helicopters to support the ROK reaction forces.

One has the impression that the KPA commanders assumed that they might achieve something simply through “operating,” by merely dispatching random teams into the south to prey on the Americans, ROK troops, and hapless citizens. All they gained for their troubles were steady attrition and increasingly more effective allied responses.

What if the North Korean leaders, most of them experienced in guerrilla warfare, had employed their forces differently? Although the brutal November 1966 ambushes offered immediate proof to Kim Il-sung that the military supported the new party line, they also tipped North Korea’s hand. This led directly to UNC reactions that doomed the unconventional offensive. But it did not have to be that way. The northern forces could have saved their trained men for the decisive moment. It would have been possible to increase intelligence gathering without confronting and alarming U.S. and ROK troops or the disjointed ROK internal security agencies (which in 1966 posed little threat to clandestine infiltrators). By waiting a year or so as their agents shifted over from purely political agitation to setting the stage for dramatic decapitation raids, the north might have plotted a coordinated countrywide series of strikes against key ROK and UNC officials. An Ulchin-Samchok-size landing in the wake of such mayhem, against an unreformed UNC security system, might have produced far more drastic effects. Instead, the KPA generals settled for a series of small, immediate triumphs and lost the war.

As for the winners, victory came from properly identifying the problem and then taking appropriate action. General Bonesteel deserves special credit here. Almost single-handedly, as was his style, the cerebral general divined Kim Il-sung's new insurgency plan within days of its implementation. Bonesteel boldly challenged the standard beliefs of the U.S.-ROK intelligence staffs, who had hitherto watched almost exclusively for a repeat of the 1950 invasion. By accurately understanding the threat at the outset, Bonesteel spared his men a great deal of bloody, unproductive fumbling around. From the start, the UNC forces knew what they were up against.

Within a few months after heightened hostilities began, Bonesteel's Special Working Group of handpicked U.S. and ROK officers created the UNC campaign plan that defeated Kim Il-sung's proinsurgent activities. Guided by Bonesteel and ever aware that the United States could not fight a major war in Korea, the Special Working Group ignored America's "go it alone" ethnocentric tradition and reposed trust in the ROKs right from the start. The ROKs' ability to secure their own populace would constitute success. The UNC, mostly ROKs, handled the anti-infiltration fighting on the DMZ and coasts, leaving the counterinsurgent war inside South Korea almost exclusively to the ROK government.

Ignoring almost all printed doctrine and contemporary field practice, Bonesteel refused to commit his American battalions as mobile counter-guerrilla strike forces. Instead, he chained them to the unglamorous but important DMZ security mission and greatly curtailed their use of firepower. This encouraged the relatively well-equipped U.S. troops to conduct some important experimentation to formulate the right mix of barriers and small-unit tactics needed to interfere with DMZ intruders. These techniques then became standard for the ROK soldiers as well. The DMZ service accorded closely with conventional U.S. tactics, severely limited any escalation of the American role, and threw the bulk of the war effort on the ROKs. Each of these expedients reinforced Bonesteel's favored concept of operations.

As Bonesteel envisioned it, the counterinsurgent war proper fell to the Republic of Korea. Whatever his eventual shortcomings as a corrupt autocrat, President Park Chung Hee distinguished himself in his conduct of the Second Korean Conflict. Early on, Park accepted Bonesteel's evaluation of the threat and consequently agreed to most of Bonesteel's suggestions. The ROK leader believed that, if carried out, these measures could accentuate the nationalism and guarantee the sovereignty of South Korea that Park so much wanted.

Park's actions are especially noteworthy because of the personal risks he accepted. Presidential Instruction #18, which created the effective framework for ROK counter-guerrilla operations, tempted fate by requiring the suspicious fiefdoms of the ROK military, police, and intelligence services to surrender their independence to a definite chain of command. As these agencies could make or break Park (and finally did break him), this reorganization represented a substantial political gamble on his part. Had the Blue House raid and Ulchin-Samchok landings not occurred to validate the

new policy, Park could well have felt a backlash from his offended, powerful subordinates.

In the same way, the February 1968 decision that formed the Homeland Defense Reserve Force represented an uncharacteristic trust in the average South Korean, the same people (in Park's mind, at least) who rioted in the cities and chafed under Park's political programs. For a man elevated to authority as a result of the chaos created by popular unrest, the choice to arm his people, especially in the face of determined Communist agitation, seemed like a very big leap of faith. The new militia might take their weapons and turn on Park. But like the powerful bureaucracies, the ROK citizenry rallied to their president in the teeth of the guerrilla challenge. In Bonesteel's opinion, "I think this [the militia] is what finally turned off the north."<sup>13</sup>

It would be wrong to suggest that the UNC did not make mistakes—including some serious ones. For all his brilliance, Bonesteel appears to have missed the significance of the KPA purge of early 1969, and his knee-jerk recommendation for a nuclear reaction to the *Pueblo's* capture hardly did him credit as a sensible strategist. As for Park, he was slow to institute all of the recommended changes in his counterguerrilla apparatus and never bothered to deliver the political freedoms that could have cemented ROK society more firmly to its leadership. Finally, both the Americans and the South Koreans, despite their potentially substantial naval capabilities, virtually ceded the ROK coastline to the intruders. Although the Ulchin-Samchok forces failed, the fact that they could land in such numbers so late in the conflict says a lot about UNC shortcomings on the sea frontiers.

All of these mistakes hurt the allied effort, but North Korea's grave errors and the UNC's many sound methods counted for more in the final analysis. It is interesting to observe that in this most political type of war, the politically astute General Bonesteel proved able to impose his will on those most political of soldiers—General Park of the south and Marshal Kim of the north. More than any other individual, Bonesteel dominated the Second Korean Conflict. Its outcome bears his indelible stamp.

### *The Broader Implications*

Obviously, all participants learned, or could have learned, from their experiences in the 1966–69 Korean combat. For the Koreans, this knowledge may be of direct utility in future confrontations on their divided peninsula. As citizens of a global superpower, however, Americans do not have the luxury of focusing their attention in one place. Did the experiences of 1966–69 produce any insights that might be applied outside the Korean context?

It would be easy to dismiss the Korean case as unique and thus unworthy of serious consideration. Certainly, Korea features three elements distinct from the usual formula for American interventions in the Third World. First, the ROK in 1966 constituted a somewhat developed polity,

with a growing economy and some social cohesion. Second, the United States had made a long-term commitment to ROK security, formalized by a tested wartime alliance, a treaty, and forward deployment of U.S. troops. Third, thanks to the continuation of wartime arrangements, the U.S. military command structure permitted the U.S. commander in chief in Korea to work around the U.S. embassy and exert operational control over the host country's armed forces. Many might suggest that these circumstances are so peculiar to Korea as to render suspect any general observations about U.S. actions undertaken in that country and their broader application.

On closer appraisal, the situation in Korea in 1966–69 was not so unusual. First, the ROK had the potential to be a stable sovereign state, but it also suffered from all of the expected pains of rapid industrialization, including significant political unrest and social dislocation. Add to this a semimilitarized government of questionable legitimacy and an aggressive northern neighbor, and it is easy to see that the ROK was vulnerable to infiltration and insurgency—especially if the government overreacted with heavy, indiscriminate force. Although obviously stronger than the Republic of Vietnam, the ROK was by no means a stable state fourteen years after the Korean War. One must be careful not to project too much of modern South Korea onto its 1960s predecessor.

As for the long-term U.S. commitment, this again is not unheard of. Like any world power, America has posted its forces overseas in many places, not all of them safe. One can posit a few fairly parallel cases, like Panama, the Philippines, Honduras, and El Salvador, where the United States has backed up its words with men on the ground.

It is also important to note that commitments made can be broken—regardless of the amount of blood and treasure invested. Lebanon, Iran, pre-1979 Nicaragua, and of course South Vietnam serve as pointed reminders that even long-term arrangements do not last forever. Had Korea gone sour, the United States might well have pulled out precipitately.

Korea in the 1960s was unique in one sense. The command relationships obviously seemed optimum from an American military perspective. Thanks to enduring Korean War practices, the theater commander in chief could circumvent the cumbersome ambassadorial “country team,” a definite advantage in this case, although not completely unprecedented for U.S. field commanders.<sup>14</sup> The really unusual aspect of the Korean command framework involved the U.S. commander in chief's operational command of the South Korean military. Most countries, and even a good portion of today's ROK population, see such a U.S.-dominant arrangement as a violation of their sovereignty. There are some similar cases of agreed-upon U.S. command of multinational forces, such as the Sinai peacekeeping contingent or the Grenada intervention forces. But these sorts of structures are becoming less likely. More typical is a sort of combined committee, as in the American-British World War II setup. Americans found themselves in such committee war efforts in Vietnam, in Beirut (1982–84), and in the Persian Gulf (1987–88 and 1990–91).<sup>15</sup>



Even allowing for General Bonesteel's unusual degree of authority in Korea, it should be noted that U.S. operational control had definite limits. These were generally understood to relate to troop movements involved with prevention or conduct of a conventional war, which was not the major problem in 1966—69. Bonesteel and his U.S. ambassador counterparts could not and did not command Park Chung Hee, and the ROK president's decisions to reorganize his counter guerrilla forces and establish a militia proved to be absolutely crucial. Though Bonesteel could direct matters to some extent, he found it more expedient to persuade the South Koreans. In this regard, the command relationship in Korea resembles many likely Third World arenas.

In general, Korea is only unique in as much as all countries and all wars are unique. Having said that, the real question emerges: what are the broader implications of the Second Korean Conflict? Six come to mind.

First, *victory in low-intensity conflict does not always look the same as victory in a larger war*. Based on the outcome of the balance of individual engagements, the North Koreans could claim to have won the Second Korean Conflict. The UNC looked uncomfortably passive in the face of numerous small reverses—not to mention the alarming Blue House raid, the embarrassing *Pueblo* episode, and the unexpected EC-121M downing. Yet because the war revolved around securing the ROK—not matching the north tit for tat—these DPRK tactical successes meant little. In low-intensity conflict, a commander must keep his eye on the objective and suppress his conventional instincts about winning and losing.

General Bonesteel's decision to track enemy infiltration activity rather than enemy bodies exemplifies the different mind-set required.<sup>16</sup> The UNC tactics for forestalling infiltration rested more on allied defensive layers and ROK social mobilization than steel applied to targets. Making infiltration too hard to accomplish proved more effective, in the long term, than trying to locate and kill every intruder with armed force. In a war to protect unarmed people, the less violence, the better.

Second, *low-intensity conflict should be a combined and joint effort*. While this seems obvious today, it is an assertion more often spoken than accomplished. General Bonesteel took full advantage of the combined UNC force structure throughout his campaign and looked for opportunities to place more responsibility on the ROKs. He also employed those U.S. and ROK joint assets he had available to assist his war effort and showed the South Koreans how to integrate their nonmilitary agencies into the struggle.

Interestingly, cooperation in the combined realm exceeded that in the joint domain. Even at the height of the 1968 crisis, Bonesteel never exercised command over the U.S. Seventh Fleet or the U.S. Fifth Air Force. The U.S. Air Force, especially in the 1968 show of force, provided good support to the UNC despite the separated command structure. This reflected the joint interoperability built through the hard work of Bonesteel's private air arm, the 314th Air Division.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Navy missed a chance to furnish similar support. Busy with blue-water operations worldwide and brown-water fighting in Southeast Asia, the U.S. Navy provided little beyond advice (and not so much of that) to meet Bonesteel's formidable coastal defense problems. The U.S. Coast Guard, which might have been especially helpful, did not participate at all.

*The United States will normally be in an economy-of-force role in LIC.* That is one of the key traits that makes such a war "low intensity" from the American viewpoint. Economy of force means that the U.S. commander must work with what he has in theater. Bonesteel, aided by his U.S. and ROK subordinates, demonstrated an uncanny ability to make the best of available resources. A shrewd commander like Bonesteel will make a virtue of necessity. The restraints on American commitments can be employed to justify shifting the responsibility for wars onto the host countries. The alternative, Americanizing the war, is at best a short-term solution that can develop unhealthy dependencies in the host state and play right into the hands of nationalist opposition factions, to include insurgent groups.

In his insistence on a severely restricted U.S. role, Bonesteel deviated sharply from a prevalent American attitude of his time—epitomized by General Westmoreland's thoroughly "Made in USA" campaign in Vietnam. Today, American doctrine and practice come down firmly in support of the Bonesteel approach. The officers responsible for military assistance in El Salvador agree that "imposing some sort of ceiling [on U.S. participation] is a *good idea*" [emphasis in original] because it "preclude[s] any possibility of Americanizing the war."<sup>17</sup> In the overall scheme of U.S. security policy, a successful American effort in low-intensity conflict should remain at that intensity.

Not suprisingly, *small wars do not neatly adhere to the doctrinal LIC categories of operations.* Contemporary doctrine separates LIC into insurgency/counterinsurgency, the combating of terrorism, peacekeeping, and peacetime contingencies. Examination of the Second Korean Conflict suggests that the clear delineations described in today's doctrine do not really hold up in the field. The current FM 100-20 notes that "LIC operations may involve two or more of these categories" and that knowing how to handle each type of operation might allow a commander to "establish priorities in actual situations."<sup>18</sup> This is the only acknowledgment that things could get confusing out in the bush.

The doctrine writers go on to explain their categories, recommending certain discrete forces and tactics to meet *each* sort of LIC situation. For instance, the authors discourage any employment of U.S. conventional combat forces in a counterinsurgency, while noting that American conventional fighting units play a major role in a contingency mission, such as the evacuation of U.S. citizens from a hostile country.<sup>19</sup> That is fine advice as long as the situations remain clearly in one category or the other.

But what if a U.S. commander finds himself stuck with *both* situations? Then, current doctrine stands mute on what to do. Nowhere does FM

100-20 discuss the messy realities that confronted Bonesteel in Korea and faced other Americans in Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama, to name a few examples. If only LIC operations adapted themselves to such a neat taxonomy!

Instead, the categories intertwine and become blurred. In Korea by March 1968, the UNC was faced by a simultaneous counterinsurgency threat in the ROK interior, cross-border terrorism, and a contingency show of air and naval force—all under the peacekeeping restraints imposed by the 1953 armistice. Just to further muddy the waters, one might mention the enduring menace of a North Korean conventional invasion. A modern professional would find it frustrating indeed to try to apply current U.S. doctrine to this all too typical LIC mosaic.

Since the doctrine of Bonesteel's era made no attempt to address this confusing array of dangers, the general met the challenges as he thought best. Then again, so did General Westmoreland in Vietnam. Rather than rely on the local American commander to act and then hope for the best, however, one would think that today's doctrine should accept and address the likelihood that handy theoretical categories rarely occur in nature.

*U.S. conventional combat units do have a role in counterinsurgency—if used wisely.* There is little doubt that, despite shortcomings and mistakes, the American forces of UNC contributed significantly to the allied victory won principally by the South Koreans. But stung by the bitter memories of the frustrating Vietnam experiences suffered by U.S. troops, today's doctrine all but rules out any use of American line units in battling insurgents.<sup>20</sup>

The Second Korean Conflict compels some reevaluation of that idea. There is a sensible middle ground between an Americanized counter guerrilla war and a completely indigenous effort supported by a few U.S. advisers and supply clerks. Bonesteel's UNC found two very effective uses for American combat troops from 1966 to 1969.

First and foremost, Americans in battle served an important political function by demonstrating U.S. solidarity with their ROK allies. This showed that the Americans were carrying their part of the war and thereby permitted Bonesteel to argue with President Park as a cocombatant rather than an uninvolved, and therefore suspect, foreign adviser. Bonesteel gained some moral authority, and he used it.

Second, Americans helped block DMZ infiltration along the major approaches to Seoul—an important and perilous role that made good use of conventional U.S. tactics. In carrying out this task, Bonesteel's men developed their own anti-infiltration doctrine, melding manpower, barriers, and techniques to find, slow, and finish off intruders. The American experiments became standard across the DMZ and remain so. Echoes of this innovative effort persist in today's LIC doctrine.<sup>21</sup>

Bonesteel's conventional troops contributed to his mission because he let them do just enough to help, without allowing them to plunge headlong into the South Korean counterinsurgent fight. It is probable that tying the

U.S. soldiers into static defensive positions and denying them any use of massed firepower exacted an additional price in American blood. But these measures also prevented escalation and made the ROKs carry the ball—two key ingredients in the UNC victory.

Lastly, *command in LIC goes well beyond killing the enemy and effecting destruction of his resources*. Senior commanders in LIC should be proconsuls, not Pattons (although that general showed some proconsular skills himself in French Morocco). Commanders need to be aware of American foreign policy, their place in overall U.S. strategy, host-country domestic politics, and adversary politics and goals. They also should understand where their forces fit into this complex situation. Without fail, they should recognize that they are in a LIC environment, not World War II.

Once alert to their surroundings, commanders should be as clear as possible about defining and pursuing American and allied political objectives. Good LIC generals “must adopt courses of action that legally support those objectives even if the courses of action appear to be unorthodox or outside what traditional doctrine had contemplated.”<sup>22</sup>

General Bonesteel provides an intriguing model for a LIC commander. Intellectually gifted in his own right, conditioned by previous assignments to consider political factors, and unfettered by any excessive allegiance to U.S. Army tactical doctrine, he successfully recognized and met the challenges of the Second Korean Conflict. More a politician and bureaucratic infighter than a field commander, Bonesteel nevertheless concocted and pursued an operational vision well suited to the situation in Korea.

Bonesteel was not much of a troop leader, nor did he feel close to his men. Those tendencies, normally unwelcome in generals, probably worked to Bonesteel’s advantage in his small war. He did not worry overly about employing his men in ways that they found disagreeable and confining; when they complained, he ignored them and stuck to his campaign vision. A more soldier-oriented general, a “warrior,” might have reacted differently. Such a general might have employed his American troops more aggressively, ordered greater use of firepower to protect his men, demanded the right of cross-DMZ reprisals, or keyed on killing North Koreans. While such a tack might be better for U.S. soldiers’ morale than Bonesteel’s restrained methods, a more traditional American approach promised a weaker ROK or a wider war—neither acceptable results.

Every war, big or small, requires fighting leaders of high caliber. Low-intensity conflict puts a premium on a hybrid political-military authority at the decision-making pinnacle. The narrowly focused combat commander still has his important place, but the Second Korean Conflict suggests that he does not belong at the very top.

### *Unfinished Business*

The dwindling infiltration rate of late 1969 marked the end of North Korea’s stand-alone unconventional campaign to subvert the south. It did

not, however, signal the conclusion of all hostilities on the embattled peninsula. Military theorist Carl von Clausewitz writes that “even the ultimate outcome of a war is not always to be regarded as final.”<sup>23</sup> Considering that the conclusion of the Second Korean Conflict simply restored the two Koreas to the uneasy peace created by the 1953 armistice, Clausewitz’ caution certainly applies.

Occasional skirmishing, sometimes lethal, still occurs along the DMZ, the South Korean coasts, and inside the ROK. America has sustained casualties in this ongoing struggle, although never on the scale of 1966–69 (see figure 12). The South Koreans, as in earlier times, bear the brunt of this desultory probing. Although foiled in their bid to create a southern guerrilla base, Kim Il-sung and his generals continue to harass the ROK with a view toward creating some sort of opening for conventional exploitation. Kim’s advancing age, coupled with the increasingly pro-ROK correlation of demographic and economic power on the peninsula, argues that some sort of northern desperation offensive is not out of the question.

Extensive North Korean tunneling under the DMZ, unsuccessful assassination attempts against President Park (1974) and President Chun Doo Hwan (1983), and a steady trickle of infiltrating agents offer proof of an enduring DPRK threat.<sup>24</sup> Even allowing for likely ROK exaggerations, these events, plus rumors of DPRK nuclear technology and confirmed chemical and ballistic missile stocks, require the U.S.-ROK forces to stay ready.<sup>25</sup> This dangerous situation has not been altered by the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev’s reforms in the Soviet Union. There has been no corresponding *glasnost* in Pyongyang.

American troops will probably continue to pull out in bits and pieces, but for now, the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command stands ready to repel aggression. Allied soldiers, to include a few U.S. infantrymen, still patrol the Demilitarized Zone, man the barrier fences, and wait to provide quick-reaction forces, dutifully working within the system devised by the UNC over twenty years ago. South Korean ships, planes, and coast watchers observe the sea approaches, enforcing schemes evolved by General Bonesteel’s headquarters. Behind the borders, ROK soldiers, police, and

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|------------------|--|
| 20 November 1974 | A combined U.S.-ROK investigation team tripped a KPA booby trap while examining a KPA tunnel complex, 1 U.S. KIA, 6 U.S. WIA.                                |
| 18 August 1976   | KPA guards in the Joint Security Area attacked a U.S.-ROK tree-cutting party, 2 U.S. KIA, 4 U.S. WIA.  |
| 14 July 1977     | DPRK forces shot down a U.S. CH-47 helicopter that strayed north of the DMZ, 3 U.S. KIA, 1 U.S. briefly held prisoner.                                       |
| 6 December 1979  | A U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol (1-9 Infantry) became lost and tripped a mine on the KPA side of the DMZ, 1 U.S. KIA, 4 U.S. WIA, and unknown KPA losses. |
| 28 August 1982   | A U.S. 2d Infantry Division soldier (1-31 Infantry) defected to the DPRK   |

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Source: Finley, *The US Military Experience in Korea*, 178–241.

Figure 12. DMZ incidents involving casualties to U.S. forces (since 3 December 1969)

militia guard the interior, carrying out programs begun under President Park in 1967—68.

To date, this massive security effort has been sufficient. Neither the Americans nor the South Koreans have lapsed into the sort of complacency that prevailed in the early 1960s. Instead, it appears that the allies have kept in mind the prescient words of General Maxwell Taylor as he announced the armistice of 27 July 1953: "There is no occasion for celebration or boisterous conduct. We are faced with the same enemy, only a short distance away, and must be ready for any moves he makes."<sup>26</sup> Bolstered by the lessons learned in the Second Korean Conflict, the vigil continues.

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# Appendix 1

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## The Second Korean Conflict— A Chronology of Key Events

### 1966

- 1 Sep General Charles H. Bonesteel III, USA, assumed duties as Commander in Chief, United Nations Command; Commander, U.S. Forces, Korea; and Commanding General, U.S. Eighth Army.
- 5 Oct Kim Il-sung addressed the Second Korean Workers' Party Conference. He vowed immediate, vigorous efforts to subvert the ROK and fight the United States. He also installed a cadre of hard-liners to prosecute his new insurgency policies.
- 31 Oct U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson arrived in Seoul for a state visit.
- 2 Nov U.S. patrol ambushed with six killed. This signaled the start of the Second Korean Conflict.
- 6 Nov Commander, U.S. Eighth Army, formed his Special Working Group to address the changed threat from the DPRK.

### 1967

- 9 Feb Special Working Group recommendations implemented. This comprised the rudiments of the UNC campaign plan to meet the new northern challenge.
- 12 Apr ROK troops employed artillery to repulse a company of KPA soldiers. This was the first U.S.-ROK use of artillery since the armistice. It reflected new, more discretionary Eighth Army rules of engagement.
- 22 May A bomb planted by North Korean terrorists destroyed a U.S. barracks well south of the DMZ.
- 1 Jun Ambassador William J. Porter replaced Ambassador Winthrop G. Brown as U.S. representative in Seoul.

- 28 Jul New barrier test fence construction began in U.S. sector of DMZ.
- 28 Sep U.S. troops completed the anti-infiltration fence in their sector. One battalion of U.S. 7th Infantry Division joined the U.S. 2d Infantry Division to start a new rotation system that placed four maneuver battalions on the DMZ and a fifth in reserve as a quick-reaction force.
- 3 Oct Commanding General, U.S. Eighth Army, released his proposed Counterinfiltration-Guerrilla Concepts Requirements Plan, his resource forecast for the Second Korean Conflict.
- 15 Dec ROK Presidential Instruction #18 issued. It delineated new ROK counterinsurgency goals and actions.

**1968**

- 17 Jan A platoon from the KPA's elite 124th Army Unit infiltrated through the U.S. sector of the DMZ. They intended to assassinate ROK President Park Chung Hee.
- 20 Jan Raid on the Blue House detected and repulsed. ROK losses totaled sixty-eight killed and sixty-six wounded.
- 23 Jan USS *Pueblo* (AGER-2) was seized by KPN patrol boats—one killed, eighty-two captured U.S. men. United States implemented an air and sea buildup in and around the ROK. President Johnson activated 14,787 reservists to support the show of force.
- 31 Jan Tet Offensive started in Vietnam.
- 11 Feb U.S. envoy Cyrus Vance arrived to discuss U.S.-ROK approaches to the deepening Korean crisis.
- 15 Feb ROK President Park Chung Hee ordered creation of a popular militia, the Homeland Defense Reserve Force. This was formally announced in mid-April. Additional measures strengthened the ROK intelligence agencies, police, and military for counter guerrilla work.
- 21 Mar A brigade headquarters of the U.S. 7th Infantry Division deployed north to assist in command of U.S. forces along the DMZ.
- 1 Apr Combat pay authorized for U.S. troops north of the Imjin River.
- 17 Apr President Park and President Johnson met in Honolulu to coordinate allied strategy.
- 1 Jun U.S. Congress approved an emergency \$100 million Military Assistance Program grant for the ROK.
- 30 Jul ROK First Army completed its portion of the DMZ anti-infiltration fence. Linked into the U.S. fence that had been built in 1967, the new barrier ran along the entire length of the DMZ.



- 21 Aug DPRK agents' boat intercepted and sunk in combined effort between ROKN, ROKAF, USAF, and ROK CIA.
- 30 Aug First two of twenty planned ROK "Reconstruction Villages" opened just south of the DMZ. Discharged ROK Army veterans and their families lived in these villages.
- 24 Sep ROK Army units battled a small battalion of KPA troops south of the DMZ.
- 15 Oct The ROK-U.S. Operational Planning Staff formed to coordinate ROK defense. Until now, ROK officers had no official voice in United Nations Command planning.
- 30 Oct Ulchin-Samchok landing began. KPA 124th Army Unit troops attempted to foment a guerrilla movement. KPA force eliminated. ROK losses totaled sixty-three dead and fifty-five wounded.
- 23 Dec USS *Pueblo* crew released from captivity.

### 1969

- 1 Jan In a major shake-up, Kim Il-sung removed and denounced key leaders in his anti-ROK operations.
- 7 Mar ROK Army formed two antiguerrilla brigades from their special forces elements.
- 17 Mar Exercise Focus Retina demonstrated U.S. ability to reinforce the U.S. Eighth Army; a U.S. airborne brigade flew in from the continental United States.
- 15 Apr KPAF fighters shot down a U.S. Navy EC-121M aircraft over the Sea of Japan. Thirty-one Americans died. A U.S. naval show of force followed.
- 5 Jun The last American reservists departed Korea. They had been called up in response to the USS *Pueblo* incident.
- 26 Jul U.S. President Richard M. Nixon announced what became known as the "Guam Doctrine" or "Nixon Doctrine." In short, he promised American advice and equipment for allies but warned them not to expect commitments of ground troops. U.S. overseas troop contingents, including those in Korea, would be reduced in size.
- 25 Aug President Park met with President Nixon in San Francisco to discuss implementation of the Guam Doctrine in the Korean theater.
- 29 Aug The first six American-made F-4D Phantom II fighter jets were turned over to the ROKAF.
- 1 Oct General John H. Michaelis succeeded General Bonesteel as Commander in Chief, United Nations Command; Com-

mander, U.S. Forces, Korea; and Commanding General,  
U.S. Eighth Army.

18 Oct A U.S. jeep was ambushed with four killed. These were the last  
U.S. casualties in the Second Korean Conflict.

3 Dec The DPRK returned three captured American helicopter  
crewmembers.

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## Appendix 2



### U.S. Forces, Korea, Order of Battle, 1 January 1968

#### ***Combined and Joint Headquarters***

U.S. Eighth Army-U.S. Forces, Korea-UN Command—Yongsan  
Military Armistice Commission (MAC) Delegation—Panmunjom  
Korean Military Assistance Group (KMAG)—Yongsan

#### ***U.S. Army*** (about 50,000 soldiers)

U.S. Army Support Group, Joint Security Area—Panmunjom  
U.S. Army Advisory Group, Korea—Yongsan  
2d Engineer Group (construction)—Yongsan  
4th Missile Command (supporting ROK First Army)—Chuncheon  
Eighth Army Depot Command-Eighth Army Rear—Taegu  
Eighth Army Special Troops—Yongsan  
Eighth Army Support Command—Yongsan  
38th Artillery Brigade (Air Defense)—Osan AB  
I Corps (Group)  
2d Infantry Division(+)—Camp Howze  
7th Infantry Division(-)—Camp Casey  
I Corps (Group) Artillery—Camp St. Barbara

#### ***U.S. Air Force*** (about 5,000 airmen)

U.S. Air Forces Korea—Osan AB  
6145th Air Force Advisory Group—Osan AB  
314th Air Division—Osan, Kimpo, Kunsan ABs  
3d Tactical Fighter Wing—Kunsan AB  
611th Military Airlift Command Support Squadron—Kimpo AB  
6314th Support Wing—Osan AB

#### ***U.S. Navy-U.S. Marine Corps*** (about 500 sailors and Marines)

U.S. Naval Forces Korea—Chinhae, Pohang  
U.S. Naval Advisory Group—Chinhae

Sources: General Charles H. Bonesteel III, USA, "On Korea's DMZ: Vigil Seals the 'Porous' War," *Army* (November 1968):58—6C; "Pacific Air Forces," *Air Force and Space Digest* (September 1968): 83—84.



# *Appendix 3, Annex 1*

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## **Tactical Disposition of Korean People's Army Maneuver Forces, 1 January 1968**

### *Along the DMZ (West to East)*

#### 2d Army Group

##### 2d Corps

6th Infantry Division

8th Infantry Division

9th Infantry Division (in depth, corps reserve)

##### 7th Corps

15th Infantry Division

45th Infantry Division

5th Infantry Division (in depth, corps reserve)

##### 2d Army Group reserves

3d Motorized Infantry Division

101st Medium Tank Regiment

#### 1st Army Group

##### 5th Corps

4th Infantry Division (in depth, corps reserve)

12th Infantry Division

46th Infantry Division

25th Infantry Brigade

##### 4th Corps

2d Infantry Division (in depth, corps reserve)

13th Infantry Division

47th Infantry Division

111th Independent Infantry Regiment

##### 1st Army Group reserve

103d Medium Tank Regiment

### *In the Northern Democratic People's Republic of Korea*

#### 1st Corps

7th Infantry Division

10th Infantry Division  
104th Medium Tank Regiment

3d Corps

1st Motorized Infantry Division  
37th Infantry Division  
102d Medium Tank Regiment

6th Corps

26th Infantry Brigade  
27th Motorized Infantry Division  
28th Infantry Division

National Reserves

20th Infantry Brigade  
22d Infantry Brigade  
24th Infantry Brigade  
105th Tank Division  
106th Heavy Tank Regiment

Ten cadre-strength reserve divisions

(Cadre unit designations unknown. These reserve component formations were probably located in the interior of the DPRK, although some may have supplemented coastal-defense border guards.)

Sources: Joseph G. Bermudez, *North Korean Special Forces* (London: Jane's Publishing Co., Ltd., 1988), 5—6, 154—55, 160—62, 169—73; Suck-ho Lee, "Party-Military Relations in North Korea: A Comparative Analysis" (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1983), 154, 219; Emerson Chapin, "Success Story in South Korea," *Foreign Affairs* (April 1969):565; Sung An Tai, *North Korea in Transition* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 16—18; Frederica Bunge, ed., *North Korea: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 229—31.

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## *Appendix 3, Annex 2*

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### **Tactical Disposition of U.S. Eighth Army Maneuver Forces, 1 January 1968**

#### *Frontline Units on and Near the DMZ (West to East)*

Defending Seoul: I Corps (Group)

ROK 5th Marine Brigade

ROK 98th Regimental Combat Team<sup>1</sup>

U.S. 2d Infantry Division(+)

ROK VI Corps

ROK 25th Infantry Division

ROK 28th Infantry Division

ROK 20th Infantry Division

Forces in depth: ROK I Corps (Group)

U.S. 7th Infantry Division(-)<sup>2</sup>

Central and Eastern Republic of Korea: ROK First Army<sup>3</sup>

ROK 6th Infantry Division

ROK 3d Infantry Division

ROK 15th Infantry Division

ROK 7th Infantry Division

ROK 21st Infantry Division

ROK 12th Infantry Division

Forces in depth: ROK First Army

ROK 1st Armored Brigade

ROK 2d Armored Brigade

ROK 2d Infantry Division

ROK 5th Infantry Division

ROK 8th Infantry Division

ROK 11th Infantry Division

ROK 26th Infantry Division

ROK 27th Infantry Division

ROK 29th Infantry Division

ROK 32d Ready Reserve Infantry Division(-)<sup>4</sup>

***Units in the Southern Republic of Korea: ROK Second Army***

ROK Marine Division(-)

ROK Reserve Components

ROK 30th Ready Reserve Infantry Division

ROK 33d Ready Reserve Infantry Division

ROK 38th Ready Reserve Infantry Division

ROK 51st Ready Reserve Infantry Division

ROK 31st Rear Area Security Division

ROK 35th Rear Area Security Division

ROK 36th Rear Area Security Division

ROK 37th Rear Area Security Division

ROK 39th Rear Area Security Division

ROK 50th Rear Area Security Division

***Deployed to the Republic of Vietnam:***

ROK Forces Vietnam Field Command

ROK Capital Division

ROK 9th Infantry Division

ROK 2d Marine Brigade

<sup>1</sup>From the ROK 32d Ready Reserve Infantry Division, under operational control of the U.S. 2d Infantry Division.

<sup>2</sup>Includes the 22d Royal Thai Company.

<sup>3</sup>ROK units organized into corps for combat. There are no reliable unclassified listings that depict the exact composition of these corps, other than ROK VI Corps in the U.S. sector.

<sup>4</sup>The ROK 32d Ready Reserve Infantry Division went on active duty to help fill the gap created by the departure of forces to Vietnam. It was replaced in ROK Second Army by the newly organized ROK 51st Ready Reserve Infantry.

Sources: Shelby L. Stanton, *Vietnam Order of Battle* (Washington, DC: U.S. News Books, 1981), 272—73; General Charles H. Bonesteel III, USA, "General Bonesteel's Year End Press Conference, 11 January 1967," transcript from personal papers of Colonel Walter B. Clark, USA (ret.), Charleston, SC.

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## Appendix 4

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### Significant U.S.-KPA Firefights, November 1966—December 1969

- 2 Nov 66 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol (1-23 Infantry) ambushed south of DMZ. Six U.S. KIA, one KATUSA KIA, one U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 12 Feb 67 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol (3-23 Infantry) ambushed south of DMZ. One U.S. KIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 5 Apr 67 U.S. 2d Infantry Division guard post engaged KPA infiltrators south of DMZ. No U.S. losses; five KPA KIA.
- 29 Apr 67 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol ambushed KPA infiltrators south of DMZ. No U.S. losses; one KPA KIA, one KPA WIA, one KPA captured.
- 22 May 67 U.S. 2d Infantry Division barracks (1-23 Infantry) demolished by daylight explosion south of DMZ. Two U.S. KIA, seventeen U.S. WIA; no KPA losses.
- 16 Jul 67 U.S. 2d Infantry Division guard post attacked south of DMZ. Three U.S. KIA, two U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 10 Aug 67 U.S. 7th Infantry Division construction team (13th Engineers) ambushed well south of DMZ in daylight. Three U.S. KIA, sixteen U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 22 Aug 67 U.S. 2d Infantry Division jeep destroyed by mine and ambush south of DMZ. One U.S. KIA, one U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 28 Aug 67 U.S. Eighth Army construction team (76th Engineers) ambushed in daylight near the Joint Security Area but still south of the DMZ. Two U.S. KIA, two KATUSA KIA, fourteen U.S. WIA, nine KATUSA WIA, three civilians WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 29 Aug 67 U.S. 2d Infantry Division jeep destroyed by mine south of DMZ. Three U.S. KIA, five U.S. WIA; no KPA losses.

- 7 Oct 67 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol boat ambushed on Imjin River south of DMZ. One U.S. KIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 22 Jan 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division guard post engaged by KPA infiltrators. Three U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 24 Jan 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division defensive position (1-23 Infantry) attacked south of DMZ by KPA 124th Army Unit exfiltrators. Two U.S. KIA; three KPA WIA.
- 26 Jan 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division defensive position (2-72 Armor) attacked south of DMZ by KPA 124th Army Unit exfiltrators. One U.S. KIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 29 Jan 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrols and outposts engaged and repulsed four teams of KPA infiltrators. No U.S. losses; unknown KPA losses.
- 6 Feb 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division guard post attacked. No U.S. losses; one KPA WIA.
- 27 Mar 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division reaction forces and ROK 25th Infantry Division ambushed KPA infiltrators. No U.S. losses; three KPA KIA.
- 14 Apr 68 U.S. Army Support Group truck ambushed south of the Joint Security Area in daylight. Two U.S. KIA, two KATUSA KIA, two U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 21 Apr 68 U.S. 7th Infantry Division patrol (2-31 Infantry) engaged KPA infiltrator company in the DMZ. One U.S. KIA, three U.S. WIA; five KPA KIA, fifteen KPA WIA.
- 27 Apr 68 U.S. 7th Infantry Division patrol (2-31 Infantry) ambushed in the DMZ. One KATUSA KIA, two U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 3 Jul 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol ambushed in the DMZ. One U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 20 Jul 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol ambushed in the DMZ. One U.S. KIA; unknown KPA losses. U.S. 7th Infantry Division patrol (1-32 Infantry) ambushed in the DMZ. One U.S. KIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 21 Jul 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol (2-38 Infantry) ambushed in the DMZ. One U.S. WIA, one KATUSA WIA.
- 30 Jul 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol (3-23 Infantry) ambushed in the DMZ. One U.S. KIA, three U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 5 Aug 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol (1-38 Infantry) ambushed south of the DMZ in daylight. One U.S. KIA, four U.S. WIA; one KPA KIA.

- 18 Aug 68 U.S. 7th Infantry Division patrol (1-32 Infantry) ambushed south of the DMZ. Two U.S. KIA; two KPA WIA.
- 19 Sep 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrols (2-38 Infantry) and quick-reaction forces (4-7 Cavalry, 2-9 Infantry [Mechanized], 2d Division Counter Agent Company) isolated and destroyed KPA infiltrator squad. Two KATUSA KIA, six KATUSA WIA; four KPA KIA, one KPA WIA.
- 27 Sep 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division jeep ambushed in the DMZ. Two U.S. KIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 3 Oct 68 U.S. 7th Infantry Division guard post (1-31 Infantry) engaged KPA exfiltrator south of DMZ. No U.S. losses; one KPA KIA.
- 5 Oct 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol ambushed in the DMZ. One U.S. KIA, two U.S. WIA; unknown KPA losses.
- 10 Oct 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division boat patrol engaged KPA infiltrator crossing the Imjin River. No U.S. losses; one KPA KIA.
- 11 Oct 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division ambushed KPA infiltrators in the DMZ. No U.S. losses; two KPA KIA.
- 23 Oct 68 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol engaged KPA infiltrators in the DMZ. One U.S. KIA, five U.S. WIA; one KPA KIA.
- 23 Jan 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division guard posts repulsed KPA infiltrators. No U.S. losses; unknown KPA losses.
- 4 Feb 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division guard posts repulsed KPA infiltrators. No U.S. losses; unknown KPA losses.
- 13 Mar 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division fence repair patrol (2-38 Infantry) engaged by KPA infiltrators. No U.S. losses; unknown KPA losses.
- 15 Mar 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division marker maintenance patrol ambushed in the DMZ. One U.S. KIA, two U.S. WIA, one KATUSA WIA. Medical evacuation helicopter crashed after takeoff, killing five fliers and the three wounded.
- 16 Mar 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol engaged KPA infiltrators in the DMZ. No U.S. losses; unknown KPA losses.
- 20 Mar 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol engaged KPA patrol in the DMZ. No U.S. losses; unknown KPA losses.
- 29 Mar 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol engaged KPA patrol in the DMZ. No U.S. losses; unknown KPA losses.
- 15 May 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division patrol engaged KPA infiltrator. One U.S. WIA, one KATUSA WIA; unknown KPA losses.

- 20 May 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division guard post engaged KPA infiltrators. No U.S. losses; one KPA KIA.
- 21 Jul 69 U.S. 2d Infantry Division guard posts engaged and repulsed KPA infiltrators. No U.S. losses; unknown KPA losses.
- 17 Aug 69 U.S. Eighth Army helicopter (59th Aviation Company) strayed north of the DMZ and was shot down. Three U.S. captured.
- 18 Oct 69 U.S. 7th Infantry Division jeep ambushed in the DMZ. Four U.S. KIA; unknown KPA losses.

Sources: James P. Finley, *The US Military Experience in Korea, 1871—1982* (Yongsan, Korea: Command Historian, USFK/EUSA, 1983), 116—35; Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division, "Annual Historical Supplement 1966," "Annual Historical Supplement 1967," "Annual Historical Supplement 1968," "Annual Historical Supplement 1969," and Headquarters, 2d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division, "Annual Historical Supplement 1968," Military History Institute Archives, Carlisle Barracks, PA.

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