

# SUMMARY

## THE PRICE OF STABILIZATION

by Robert P. Wettemann

*Headquarters, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) maintains that five truths guide the development and employment of modern Special Operations Forces:*

- *Humans are more important than hardware.*
- *Quality is better than quantity.*
- *Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced.*
- *Competent Special Operations Forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.*
- *Most Special Operations require non-SOF Assistance.<sup>1</sup>*



### United States Army Special Operations Command SSI

The above conclusions are the product of more than sixty years of Army Special Operations (ARSO) experience that began in WWII. The war to defeat Germany and Japan prompted the Allies to create specialized units to perform long-range infiltration and covert missions, conduct psychological operations, and establish military governments in occupied areas. The return to peace in 1945 led to rapid demobilization of almost all special units except those involved in post-war civil affairs. The first “hot war” of the Cold War rekindled interest in all facets of unconventional warfare. When the war in Korea began, the initial eleven months of the conflict forced the U.S. Army to mobilize, train and deploy new units to perform old tasks. The Korean War validated the need for a constant Special Operations capability within the U.S. Army and forced the consideration of what would become the ARSO truths, for it was difficult, if not impossible, to organize and fill SOF units with experienced personnel once the conflict began.

Beginning in June 1950, hastily formed provisional units drawn almost entirely from Far East Command (FECOM) assets performed a variety of special missions while the Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA) stabilized the Pusan Perimeter and prepared for the Inch'on landings. In August 1950, the GHQ Raiders joined U.S. Navy Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs) and Royal Marine Commandos in maritime raids against a tenuous North Korean People's Army (NKPA) logistics network,

destroying the railroad infrastructure and conducting reconnaissance missions before the Inch'on invasion.<sup>2</sup> In September 1950, the U.S. Army activated the 1<sup>st</sup> Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company (1<sup>st</sup> L&L), ordering it from Fort Riley, Kansas, to begin conducting tactical psychological operations in Korea, though it would be months before the unit was operationally effective.<sup>3</sup> After the 15 September 1950 landings at Inch'on, the Eighth Army Ranger Company [8213<sup>th</sup> Army Unit (AU)], began carrying out counter-guerrilla patrols and eliminate pockets of enemy resistance behind Allied lines.<sup>4</sup> On the heels of these efforts, the U.S. Army began organizing and training additional Ranger companies to augment individual infantry divisions at the recently established Ranger Training Command at Fort Benning, Georgia.<sup>5</sup>

After the success at Inch'on and the liberation of Seoul, General Douglas A. MacArthur convinced President Harry S. Truman that the NKPA had to be destroyed. By then, Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) troops had already crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. Their victories over the NKPA and the ensuing UN advance led to the reconsideration of South Korean President Syngman Rhee's desire for a unified peninsula. By October 1950, the UN advance into North Korea required the employment of Civil Assistance (CA) teams in the North Korean capitol of P'yongyang, as well as the ports of Chinnamp'o and Hungnam.<sup>6</sup>

In mid-October 1950, MacArthur and Truman met at Wake Island to discuss the president's concerns about an expanded war and possible Soviet or Chinese intervention. As UN forces neared China's southern border on the Yalu River, Mao Zedong ordered more than thirty Chinese divisions (300,000 soldiers) to surreptitiously cross the border to stop further UN advances. Undetected by UN reconnaissance efforts, the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) attacked as the EUSA and X Corps launched their final push northward to the Yalu. Beginning on 25 November 1950, the battle-hardened CCF smashed the U.S. and ROKA units and then hammered UN forces trying to plug gaps on both sides of the peninsula. This offensive drove UN troops southward, changing the course of the war and ending U.S. and South Korean efforts to "liberate" North Korea. The war would not be won by Christmas as General

MacArthur had boasted. Lieutenant General (LTG) Walton H. Walker in the west, and Major General (MG) Edward M. Almond, commanding X Corps in the east, ordered the withdrawal of UN forces south of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. After establishing occupation governments and starting the reconstruction process in North Korea, UN Civil Assistance teams assumed evacuation duties to rescue ROKA, U.S. personnel and civilians trapped at P'yongyang, Chinnamp'o, Wonsan and Hungnam. What General MacArthur soon labeled "an entirely new war" prompted President Truman to meet with British Prime Minister Clement Atlee. They rejected President Syngman Rhee's goal of reunification, and agreed to seek an armistice predicated on the recognition of two Koreas.<sup>7</sup>

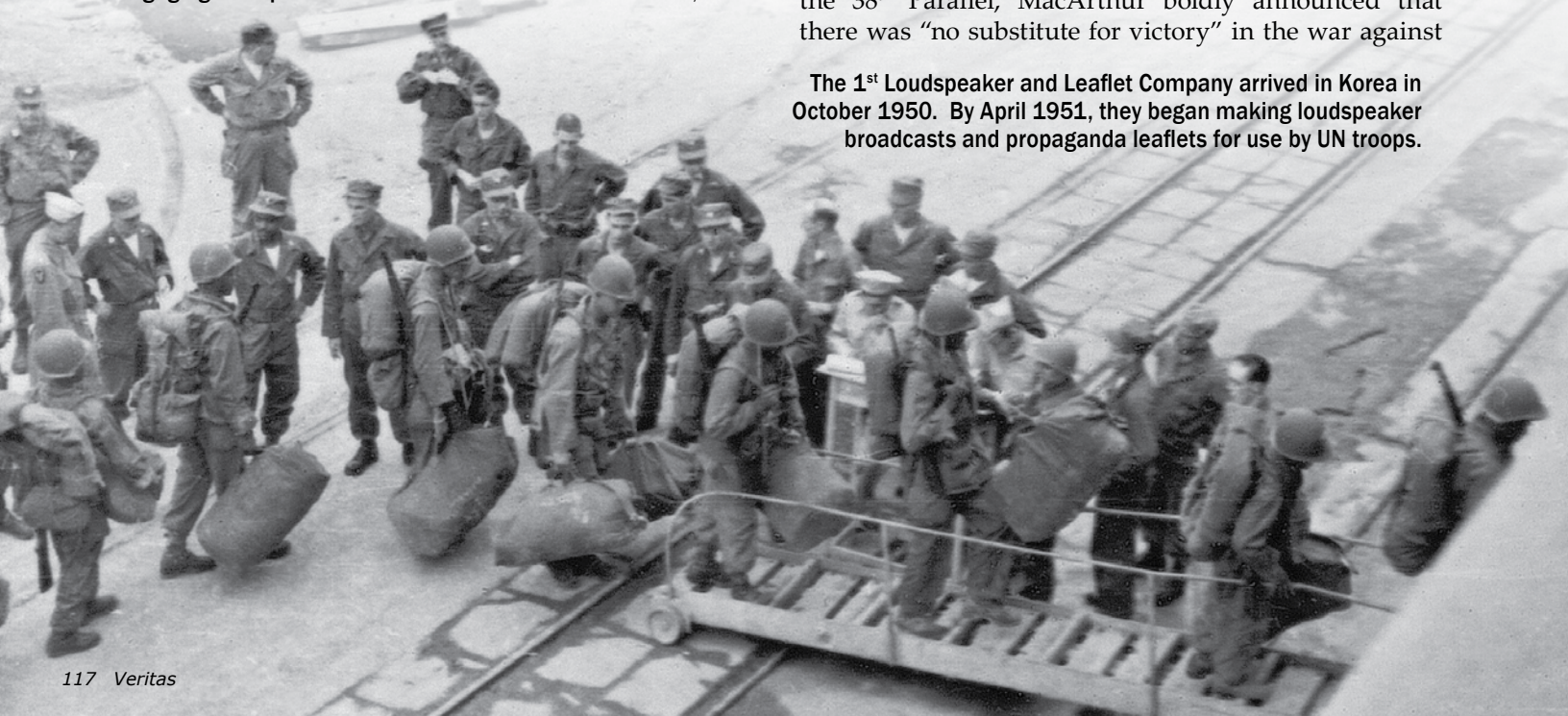
When EUSA commander General Walker died in a 23 December 1950 Jeep accident, LTG Matthew B. Ridgway took command of a dispirited force left in chaos by the CCF offensive. Ridgway soon rejuvenated the "fighting spirit" of EUSA by launching a series of offensives: Operation THUNDERBOLT in January 1951, ROUNDUP in February, KILLER in late February, RIPPER in March, and RUGGED in April, that collectively drove the Communists back to the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel.<sup>8</sup> Again, special units played a significant role, in the process further validating the ARSOF concept. The six Ranger companies trained at Fort Benning were in Korea and had begun infiltrating behind the lines to attack enemy command posts, artillery, tank parks, and key communications centers or facilities in the rear areas. By April 1951, the fully operational 1<sup>st</sup> L&L began delivering loudspeaker broadcasts and propaganda leaflets.

As the "ebb and flow" began on the Korean peninsula, General MacArthur became increasingly critical of civilian decision-making that tied his hands militarily. The outspoken general went so far as to advocate expanding the war by direct military action against China, Truman's decision to accept a negotiated peace notwithstanding.<sup>9</sup> As UN forces moved north towards the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, MacArthur boldly announced that there was "no substitute for victory" in the war against

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company arrived in Korea in October 1950. By April 1951, they began making loudspeaker broadcasts and propaganda leaflets for use by UN troops.**



**GHQ Raiders CPL Melvin J. McCarty, PFC George A. Barry, SFC Leslie A. Lepley, SGT Jamie F. Lee, and PFC John W. Connor engaging in a spirited discussion over Coca-Cola in Korea, 1951.**



# North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

The Korean conflict must be considered against a backdrop of an American strategic commitment to contain Communism elsewhere on the globe, a struggle that emerged in the aftermath of WWII. Although many looked to the UN to ensure international stability, the United States, despite having taken the lead in forming the new organization, increasingly looked to regional alliances to provide collective security. In March 1948, Britain, France and the “Benelux” countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) signed the Brussels Pact, a fifty-year treaty of mutual defense and economic cooperation. In April 1949, the five Brussels Pact signatories joined the United States, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, and Portugal in a European defense agreement organized under the auspices of the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> The twelve charter members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) pledged that an “attack against one or more of them . . . shall be considered an attack against them all.”<sup>2</sup> President Harry S. Truman looked to NATO as “a shield against aggression and the fear of aggression – a bulwark which will permit us to get on with the real business . . . of achieving a fuller and happier life.”<sup>3</sup> When the U.S. Senate ratified the NATO treaty in 1949, the United States entered into its first peacetime pact since the Franco-American Alliance of 1778.<sup>4</sup>

While the United States appropriated \$1.3 billion in military aid for NATO in the October 1949 Mutual Defense Act, the outbreak of war in Korea prompted the NATO

Council to develop an integrated defense force designed to prevent the Communists from launching a similar surprise attack against the member nations in Europe. In September 1950, President Truman committed an additional four U.S. Army divisions to Europe to reinforce the two already there, supporting the “Forward Strategy” developed by the council at an earlier meeting. In December 1950, the NATO Council subsequently named General Dwight D. Eisenhower to head the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE).<sup>5</sup> After the creation of the Psychological Warfare Center in 1952, the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, 301<sup>st</sup> Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group, 5<sup>th</sup> Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company, and 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) eventually made their way to Germany as part of the American commitment to Europe above and beyond the forces already under NATO control. The United States remained a major supporter of NATO throughout the Cold War, and continues to honor the terms of the original 1949 treaty, although current NATO membership has grown to twenty-eight nations.

## Endnotes

- 1 “Origins of the Alliance,” 2001 NATO Handbook, <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb0101.htm>, accessed 22 February 2010.
- 2 “North Atlantic Treaty,” 4 April 1949, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm), accessed 22 February 2010.
- 3 “Draft of President Truman’s speech at the NATO signing ceremony, with handwritten corrections,” April 1, 1949. Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/nato/doc6.htm>, accessed 22 February 2010.
- 4 Michael John Garcia, “NATO Enlargement: Senate Advice and Consent,” Congressional Research Service, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL31915.pdf>, accessed 22 February 2010.
- 5 Gregory W. Pedlow, “The Evolution of NATO Strategy, 1949-1969,” in Gregory W. Pedloe, ed., *NATO Strategy Documents, 1949-1969*, xv, <http://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/intro.pdf>, accessed 22 February 2010.



Flag of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization founded in April 1949.

French President Vincent Auriol welcomes General Dwight D. Eisenhower to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Paris, France, on 2 April, 1951.





At Hungnam, UN Civil Assistance teams aided in the evacuation of more than ninety-eight thousand civilians to South Korea.



General MacArthur and President Truman met on Wake Island on 15 October 1950. Privately critical of MacArthur, Truman ultimately cited failure to respect the authority of the Commander in Chief as his rationale for relieving the popular general.



General Matthew B. Ridgway, U.S. Army, Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, with UN delegates at initial Armistice talks meeting, 10 July 1951. (Left to right): Rear Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, U.S. Navy, Major General Laurence C. Cragie, U.S. Air Force, Major General Paik Sun Yip, Republic of Korea Army, Vice Admiral Turner C. Joy, U.S. Navy, Chief Delegate General Ridgway, and Major General Henry I. Hodes, U.S. Army.

Communism, and that the conflict must be won at all costs. These statements were subsequently leaked to Congress. Despite his popularity, this open defiance prompted President Truman to relieve General MacArthur from command and name LTG Ridgway as his replacement.<sup>10</sup>

Riding out the political tempest stemming from General MacArthur's removal, Washington stuck to a "limited war" policy in Korea that freed resources to contain Communism elsewhere in the world. Even before the Korean War began, President Truman had demonstrated the American commitment to Europe in May 1950 by approving a modest aid package for the French, who were already fighting

the Viet Minh for control of Indochina. Support for the recently formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe took on increased importance on 2 April 1951, when General Dwight D. Eisenhower took command of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE), a post he held until announcing his presidential candidacy in early 1952.<sup>11</sup>

As the U.S. furthered its global commitments to contain Communism, special operations forces continued to prove their mettle in Korea. The stabilization of the situation in Korean along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, however, led to a quiet transformation of the nature and composition of special units. In the early phases of the conflict, the employment of special operations forces represented little more than a scramble to hamper Communist offensives on the peninsula, as these units enabled the withdrawal of ROKA and U.S. Army units into the Pusan Perimeter. Trading space for time allowed forces in the United States to be mobilized and brought into the fight. From 1951 until the armistice was signed, a variety of special units continued to be organized and employed by the U.S. Army. While some represented a perpetuation of the hastily prepared units formed at the war's outset, others took on a greater semblance of permanency as the U.S. Army came to recognize what today are referred to as the ARSOF truths.

The chaotic first months of the Korean War forced U.S. Army leadership to recognize the utility of cultivating and perpetuating knowledge of special operations in both war and peace, since quality special operations units could not be mass-produced after a crisis emerged. By the signing of the Korean armistice, individuals drawn from recently established SOF units validated their

training by serving as advisors, intelligence gatherers, and covert action specialists. UN efforts to stabilize the peninsula also witnessed employment of a fully organized psychological warfare (Psywar) group that more effectively directed strategic and tactical Psywar. Before the Korean War ended, the Department of the Army had begun planning for future special operations units. The creation of the Psychological Warfare Center, established at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in 1952, not only helped meet these new demands for unconventional warfare, but served to centralize doctrine, development and schooling for U.S. Army Special Forces and Psywar. ▲

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## Endnotes

- 1 "Army Special Operations Truths," at <https://portal.soc.mil/C6/C12/Cdr's%20Page/default.aspx>, accessed 23 February 2010.
- 2 Charles H. Briscoe "Born of Desperation: Early Special Operations in the Korean War," appearing elsewhere in this issue.
- 3 Charles H. Briscoe, "'Volunteering' for Combat: Loudspeaker Psywar in Korea," 1 (2 2005), 46-60.
- 4 Eugene G. Piasecki, "Eighth Army Rangers: First in Korea," appearing elsewhere in this issue.
- 5 **The Ranger Companies formed during the Korean War will be covered in the second *Veritas* special issue on the Korean War.**
- 6 Charles H. Briscoe, "The UN Occupation of Pyongyang," and "Do what you can!": UN Civil Assistance, Chinnamp'o, North Korea, November-December 1950" appearing elsewhere in this issue.
- 7 Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (London: Pan Books 1987), 150-72; James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of the Korean War* (New York: Quill, 1988), 97-111.
- 8 Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), 79-123.
- 9 Billy C. Mossman, *United States Army in the Korean War: Ebb and Flow, November 1950-1951* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1990), 489-90.
- 10 Stokesbury, *The Korean War*, 123-27.
- 11 "The History of Supreme Headquarters Allied Command Europe," <http://www.nato.int/shape/about/background.htm>, accessed 22 February 2010.

During the war, millions of Koreans, uprooted from their homes by bombing, shelling or fear, attempted to flee to safety. Pusan and other cities in the south became giant refugee camps with people sleeping in the streets. When the war shifted north, this scene was repeated at P'yongyang, Chinnamp'o, Wonsan and Hungnam as the allied forces withdrew and civilians sought to escape before the cities were taken by the North Koreans. *Defense Department photo.*

