

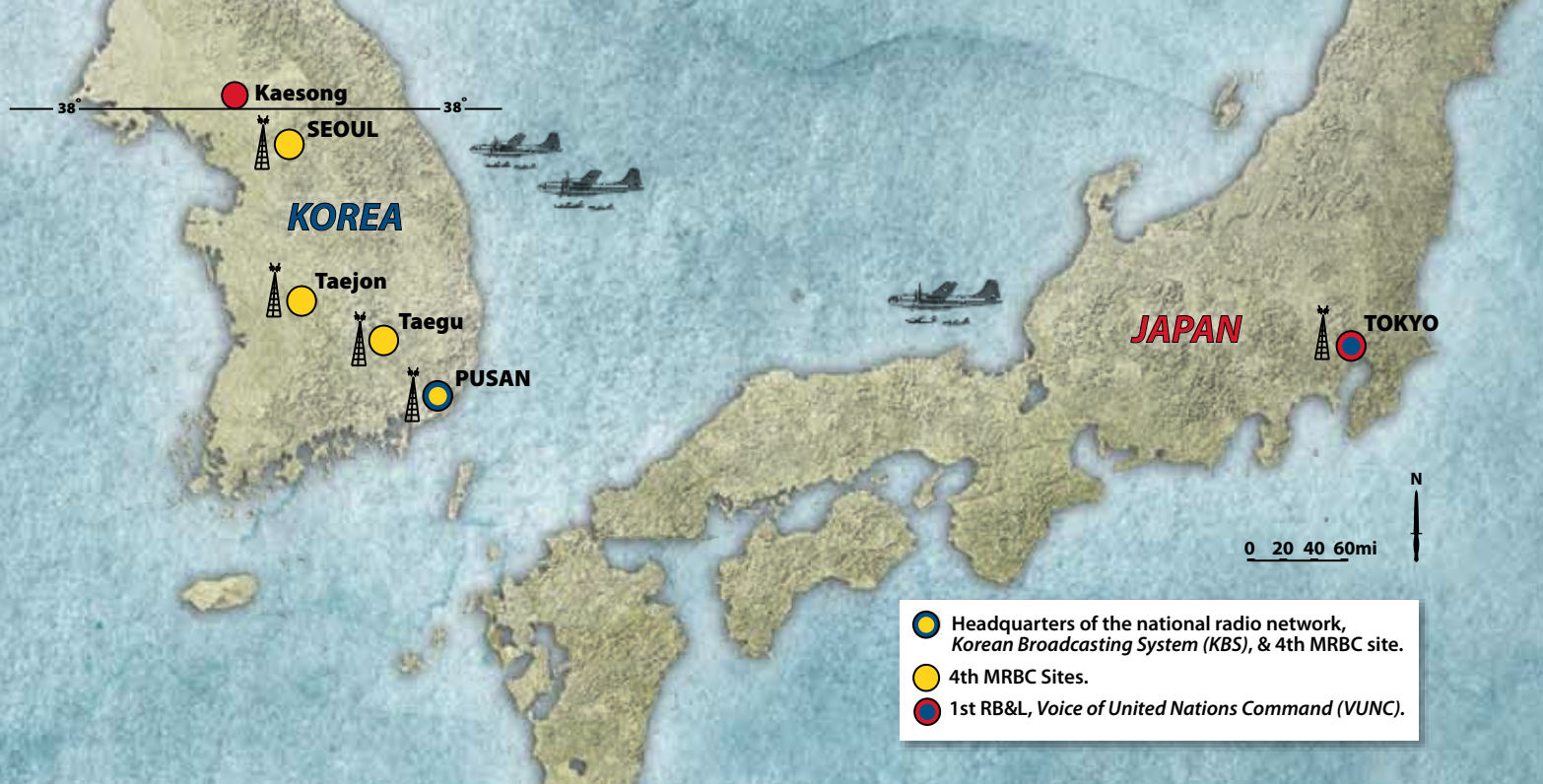
# Psywar in Korea

## A Matter of Adjustment

By Kenneth Finlayson

**T**he Korean War presented the United States with challenges unlike any previously faced in the Twentieth Century. In contrast to World War II, when the national objective was the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan, the political and military ramifications resulting from the entry of Communist China into the conflict altered the U.S. campaign to one designed to reach a negotiated settlement between the warring factions. The Korean War was the first major conflict in which the United States engaged without a formal Congressional declaration of war, but rather conducted under Presidential authority.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. prosecution of the war can be broken into five distinct phases.

The initial phase of the war was the reestablishment of the pre-War South Korean national boundary along the 38th Parallel following the 25 June 1950 attack by North Korea. In the second phase, General (GEN) Douglas A. MacArthur's stated goal of destroying the North Korean Army led to the drive north to the Yalu following the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter and the Inch'on landing. The entry of the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) into the war pushed the United Nations (UN) forces back in Phase Three, necessitating the reestablishment of the line along the 38th Parallel in Phase Four. The fifth and final phase of the war was the effort by both sides to seize key terrain and establish the most advantageous



The 4th Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company was responsible for the repair of the damaged *Korean Broadcasting System* and for establishing radio broadcasting facilities at Pusan, Seoul, Taegu and Taejon.

position during the protracted armistice negotiations. By necessity, every aspect of the U.S. military effort was adjusted to reflect the change from the initial offensive against North Korea to subsequent operations designed to strengthen the United Nations position in the Armistice negotiations. This included adapting the priorities and capabilities of the Psychological Warfare (Psywar) effort to the changing nature of the war.

Psywar was a critical element of the U.S. campaign from the initial phases of the war. The articles presented in this issue of *Veritas* run the gamut from the strategic to the tactical and cover the period from mid-1951 through the signing of the Armistice in 1953. The focus is largely, but not exclusively, on the radio broadcasting operations conducted in support of the UN effort. Told largely through the words of the participants, each article describes the establishment of the radio broadcasting capability in South Korea, the expansion of the radio network, the technical support required to get the stations on the air

and an American perspective on the 1952 May Day riots in Tokyo that followed the official end of the U.S. occupation of Japan. Included are articles on the implementation of strategic Psywar operations, the establishment of the Psywar Center and early 10th Special Forces Group, and biographies of two individuals prominent in the development of the Army Psywar capability.

The first Psywar priority for Far East Command (FECOM) at the outset of the war was the establishment of *Radio Tokyo* and the *Voice of the United Nations Command (VUNC)* in order to counter the widespread Communist propaganda. Psywar support was the responsibility of the 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group (1st RB&L). Within the 1st RB&L, the 4th Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company (4th MRBC) was the unit tasked with establishing radio stations and developing and executing the radio programming. Headquartered in Tokyo after arriving from the United States in August 1951, the 1st RB&L was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Homer E. Shields. His immediate strategic priority was the program management of *Radio Tokyo* with the concurrent responsibility of airing the *Voice of the UN Command*. He then had to focus on the establishment of a radio broadcasting capability in South Korea to regenerate the decimated *Korean Broadcasting System (KBS)*. Support to these two missions fell on the 4th MRBC.

As described in a previous issue of *Veritas* (Vol. 7, No. 2, 2011), the establishment and operation of *Radio Tokyo* was handled by the 1st RB&L using all the assets within the Group.<sup>2</sup> To resurrect the *KBS* on the mainland, a four-man detachment led by 2nd Lieutenant (2LT) Jack F. Brembeck was dispatched to Pusan in mid-August 1951 to assess the extent of the wartime damage to the *KBS* facility and prepare for broadcasting from the city. Soon replaced in Pusan by 2LT Eddie Deerfield, Brembeck

moved to Kaesong to replace First Lieutenant (ILT) Jack F. Brennan who was the 1st RB&L liaison officer at the preliminary armistice talks. By October, *Radio Pusan* was operational and became the focal point of the 4th MRBC effort until the signing of the Armistice.

Pusan was the primary port of entry for troops and supplies entering South Korea. In addition, at the beginning of the war, the South Korea government led by President Syngman Rhee relocated there after the fall of Seoul. From the repaired *KBS* studio, Rhee was able to broadcast to his nation. *Radio Pusan*, the 'Voice of Korea,' was the hub of the 4th MRBC-supported stations. As the UN offensive rolled north, the MRBC detachments followed, establishing radio stations in Seoul, Taegu, and Taejon. The company relocated to Seoul with the recapture of the capital, supporting the outstations from there.

An unheralded, but crucial part of the 4th MRBC operation was emplacing the antennas that supported each station. Within the company were three Mobile Radio Broadcasting Platoons. Each platoon had a Radio Service Section that included four antenna riggers whose training included erecting the organic 180-foot radio towers. In Korea, the riggers repaired and maintained the *KBS* towers that reached as high as 365 feet. A good 'head for heights' was a prerequisite for an antenna rigger. Once *Radio Seoul* was established, the 4th MRBC headquarters relocated from Tokyo to Seoul to provide administration and coordinate support for the outlying detachments.

When *Radio Seoul* became operational, the 4th MRBC moved the company main body to the Korean capital in

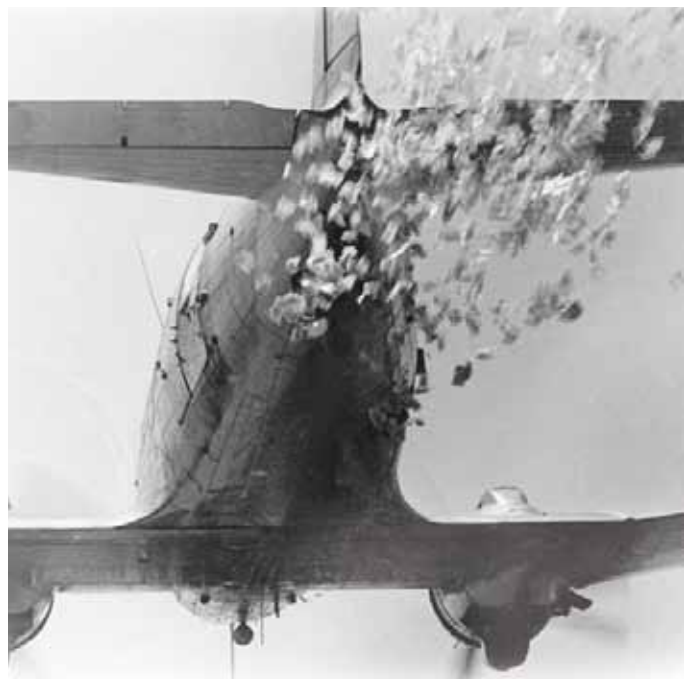
Leaflet (below) used by the United Nations Command to warn civilians of an impending air attack. The Leaflet reads: "Air Raid Warning! Move Away From Military Targets."



November 1951. Soon *Radio Seoul* was on the air and the 1st RB&L regularly rotated scriptwriters and technicians to Korea to give Psywar troops field experience to improve their skills and performance at *Radio Tokyo* and *VUNC*.<sup>3</sup> The company headquarters provided the daily administration and logistical support to the outlying radio stations, which were connected by teletype and telephone. The *Radio Pusan* detachment remained the hub for all the Psywar personnel moving between South Korea and Japan. Through their radio broadcasts, the personnel of the 4th MRBC executed the strategic Psywar campaign in Korea. As the war progressed, a number of Psywar initiatives were implemented.



A good "head for heights" was a prerequisite for the riggers who repaired the *Korean Broadcasting System* antennas and erected the antennas to support the 4th Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company operations.



The aerial distribution of leaflets from a U.S. Air Force C-47 over Korea. Leaflets were an integral part of the United Nations information campaign.

In Japan, the 1st RB&L expanded its operations providing Psywar support to the UN strategic objectives. One example is the Group's support to the bombing campaign conducted by Far East Air Force (FEAF), the air component of FECOM. Leaflets developed by the RB&L warned North Korean civilians when military targets in their vicinity were scheduled for bombing. Coupled with broadcasts from *Radio Pusan*, this mission employed the full range of Psywar capabilities and was lauded by the Secretary of the Air Force as an exemplary example of the humanitarianism of the UN air campaign. Similar missions combining leaflet drops with radio broadcasts were executed, leading to the most ambitious Psywar operation in the war, Plan PATRIOT.

The purpose of Plan PATRIOT was to commemorate the original Korean Independence Day, 1 March 1919. To this end, on 23 February 1952, a synchronized distribution of leaflets and radio broadcasts began to reinforce the sense of national unity and resistance in the manner that the original 1919 Declaration presented Japanese occupation authorities. The *Radio Pusan* and *Radio Tokyo (VUNC)* broadcasts featured some of the original signers of the Korean Independence Day Declaration. The seamless employment of the entire Psywar arsenal, both in Korea and Japan, resulted in a very successful operation that was well received by the Korean population.

Plan PATRIOT led to additional operations that furthered the Psywar campaign. Operation HOAX was a deception plan created around a fictitious UN amphibious landing at Wonsan to break the armistice negotiations deadlock. Operation EYEWASH was a comprehensive public information display extolling the value of Psywar to newly-arrived U.S. infantry divisions. The Psywar troops were fully engaged both in Korea and in Japan, where on 1 May 1952 the American units got a dose of 'Yankee, Go Home.'

On 28 April 1952, the United States Senate ratified the peace treaty with Japan returning full sovereignty and formally ending the Allied occupation. This precipitated anti-American riots led by the previously suppressed labor unions. On 1 May 1952, over three hundred thousand people gathered in Tokyo's Meiji Park. Abetted by Communist agitators, the rally turned into a riot as a crowd of ten thousand surged three miles into the city center to battle the police outside the Emperor's palace. Observing from atop the U.S. military headquarters buildings were members of the 1st RB&L, many of whom documented the chaotic scene in photographs and letters home. When the rioters were eventually subdued, the entire tenor of the U.S. presence had changed and Japanese politicians received a different view of democracy. No longer did the U.S. military enjoy the privileged life of the ruling occupiers; the Army now went on 'full alert.' While there were no further outbreaks of violence in the days that followed, for the Americans stationed in Japan the 'good old days' were over. At the time of the riots, most of the personnel who had arrived with the



Students composed a significant portion of the rioters who took to the streets during the 1952 May Day riots.



Colonel Charles H. Karlstad, an experienced World War II combat commander, came to the Psywar Center from the Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Georgia. An authority on training soldiers, he was instrumental in raising the standards of the Psywar Center to equate to the other Army training centers.



Captain Herbert Avedon was an early convert to Psychological Warfare and as commander of the 1st Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company, worked diligently to improve the training of his Psywar soldiers.



Hand-to-hand combat training on the main parade ground at the Psywar Center, 1954. Under COL Charles H. Karlstad, the training program at the center was quickly brought up to Army Field Forces standards.

1st RB&L were beginning to rotate back to the United States. Some officers went to the recently established U.S. Army Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg.

The Psychological Warfare Center and School (PWCS) was the creation of Brigadier General (BG) Robert A. McClure, the Army's Chief of Psychological Warfare. The school initially faced resistance from conventional Army officers who did not see a need for Psywar. In order to rapidly bring the Psywar Center up to the highest levels of Army school administration and training, McClure tapped Colonel (COL) Charles H. Karlstad to be the Psywar Center commander and school commandant. A veteran of both world wars, Karlstad was the Chief of Staff of the Infantry Center, Fort Benning, Georgia. A consummate trainer and organizer, Karlstad was the ideal choice to bring to the new Psywar Center and School up to Army Field Forces standards. Among the officers who benefitted from Karlstad's tenure was Captain (CPT) Herbert Avedon.

CPT Avedon was the World War II signal officer of the 1st Ranger Battalion. He later also served with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Burma in the Morale Operations Branch. After the war Avedon stayed in the Army Reserve and was recalled to active duty in 1951. Initially assigned to the 306th Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group (USAR), he completed the Psychological Warfare Course at Fort Riley, Kansas, before assignment to Eighth U.S. Army in Korea. An early convert to the value of Psywar, Avedon was a Psywar staff officer and then the third commander of the 1st Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company. He remained devoted to the promotion of Psywar throughout his long and varied military career. He typified officers who rode the rapidly growing wave of Psywar during the war in Korea.

In this issue, the rapid expansion of the Army's Psywar capability, in particular the employment of the mobile radio broadcasting systems in Korea is highlighted. The personal experiences of the men who, very often straight out of civilian life, were instrumental in shaping the Psywar mission, reveal that the heaviest responsibility for executing Psywar campaigns fell to the junior officers and enlisted men. The privates wrote the scripts, and supervised foreign language broadcasts featuring presidents and senior generals. This shows that the ability to communicate effectively is an integral part of the Psywar campaign at every level. This applies to today's special operations soldiers. ♣

---

*Kenneth Finlayson is the USASOC Deputy Command Historian. He earned his PhD from the University of Maine, and is a retired Army officer. Current research interests include Army special operations during the Korean War, special operations aviation, and World War II special operations units.*

---

## Endnotes

- 1 On 30 June 1950, Congress passed the Selective Service Extension Act that gave President Truman the authority to call up National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve units for a period of twenty-one months. During the course of the war more than 342,000 National Guard and 244,000 Army Reservists were called to active duty. The call-up extended to the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force Reserves. Additionally, in July 1950 the Selective Service issued draft notices to 50,000 eligible males. Sean Williams, in *Encyclopedia of the Korean War: A Political, Social and Military History*, Spencer Tucker, ed., (Santa Barbara, CA, ABD-Clio, 2000), 456-457.
- 2 Charles H. Briscoe, "Top Priority RB&L Missions: *Radio Tokyo, VUNC, and KBS*," *Veritas*, Vol 7, No. 2, 2011, 19-31.
- 3 "Tokyo-Korea Traffic Heavy with Groupers: Radio Ops Keep Men Between Japan-Korea," *The Proper Gander*, 1:27 (8 November 1951), 1, Broderick Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.