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## U.S. Army Mobilization During the Korean War and Its Aftermath

Mark A. Olinger

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**The Institute of Land Warfare**  
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## Foreword

After the Allied victory in World War II, the Army experienced a significant demobilization of forces as it transitioned from full-scale combat to peacetime occupation. Service obligations for many Soldiers were complete at the end of hostilities, and the number and types of divisions required in Europe and the Pacific was drastically reduced. When the Cold War standoff with Russia began, the United States kept its defensive posture in Europe, but the large combat-ready Army was not required. With the invasion of South Korea by the North in 1950, however, the need for a continuously well-funded and manned military became glaringly apparent.

One of the differences between warfighting in World War II and the Korean War was the lack of a clear objective—when would the United Nations declare victory? Should the North Korean army be pushed back only behind the 38th parallel, or should the communists be pushed off the peninsula entirely? The U.S. military was caught off guard; reshuffling the available divisions and supplying the appropriate manpower put a strain on already thinned resources from the previous conflict.

This paper explores the troop movements that occurred after World War II, in the initial stages of the Cold War and during the Korean War, and the impact of that restructuring on the Army then and now. The Army's experience during the Korean War, in terms of readiness and funding requirements, led to a lesson learned—"No more Task Force Smiths!"



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November 2008



# **U.S. Army Mobilization**

## **During the Korean War and Its Aftermath**

### **Introduction**

When former Army Captain and U.S. Senator Harry S Truman became the Commander in Chief, the United States military had organized, trained and equipped 89 ground divisions (67 infantry, 16 armored, five airborne and one mountain) and a number of independent regimental combat teams.<sup>1</sup> In late 1945 the Army began to reorganize for new missions, which included occupying former enemy territories and establishing a General Reserve, while demobilizing the majority of the World War II forces. Within a year after the end of the war in Europe, the total number of divisions on active duty had decreased from 89 to 16; of these, 12 were engaged in occupation duty and the remaining four were in the United States.

By the end of January 1947 three more infantry divisions overseas were inactivated and the 3d Infantry Division was withdrawn from Germany and sent to Camp (later Fort) Campbell, Kentucky, where it replaced the 5th Infantry Division. When demobilization ended in 1947, the number of active divisions stood at 12.

While the Army developed and reorganized its postwar divisions, it continued to maintain and redeploy its existing forces to meet changing international situations. With the ratification of the Italian peace treaty in the fall of 1947, the Army inactivated the 88th Infantry Division (less one infantry regiment, which remained in Trieste) and at the end of 1948 withdrew its forces from Korea.<sup>2</sup> To make room in Japan for the 7th Infantry Division, the 11th Airborne Division, which had been stationed there since 1945, redeployed to Fort Campbell, where it was reorganized with only two of its three regimental combat teams. The reduction of forces in Korea also resulted in the inactivation of the 6th Infantry Division. Four years after the end of World War II the number of Regular Army divisions had been reduced to 10 and were deployed around the world. The 52 Organized Reserve Corps and National Guard divisions were at various levels of readiness.<sup>3</sup>

Initially overwhelmed by the tidal wave of demobilization after World War II, the Army had struggled to rebuild both Regular Army and reserve divisions during the late 1940s. Its divisional structures were based on combat experiences during the war, under the assumption that atomic weapons would not alter the nature of ground combat. Units previously attached to divisions from higher headquarters during

combat were made organic to divisions, which also received additional firepower. The postwar divisions of the era were not fully prepared for combat because they were not properly manned and equipped; they nonetheless represented an unprecedented peacetime force in the Army of the United States, reflecting the new Soviet-American tensions.

When a Soviet-trained and -armed North Korean army attacked South Korea in June 1950, the Cold War turned hot. The U.S. Army was forced to adopt emergency expedients during the first months of the war; the retention of a significant military sustaining base after World War II allowed the nation to mobilize. Within a year and a half the number of Army combat divisions on active duty went from 10 to 20. The Army, reacting to changing political, strategic and operational requirements worldwide, for the first time in its history reassessed its reserve forces during a major war. Nevertheless, the end of the fighting in Korea brought new reductions, which resulted in fewer Army divisions by the end of the decade than during the war.

### **U.S. Army Strength and Stationing – 1950**

In June 1950, the strength of the active Army was about 591,000 and included 10 combat divisions. About 360,000 troops were stationed within the continental United States (CONUS), and the remaining 231,000 were overseas. Most of the overseas forces were performing occupation duties. In Europe, approximately 80,000 soldiers were stationed in Germany; 9,500 in Austria; and 4,800 in Trieste. Slightly more than 7,000 were assigned to the Pacific area and about 7,500 to Alaska. In the Caribbean were about 12,200 soldiers. Several thousand more were assigned to military missions throughout the world. The largest group overseas—about 108,500—was located in the Far East.<sup>4</sup>

Combat forces located in the Far East in June 1950 comprised four under-strength infantry divisions, nine antiaircraft artillery battalions and one infantry regiment, all in Japan. The major combat units were the 1st Cavalry Division (organized as infantry) in central Honshu; the 7th Infantry Division in northern Honshu and Hokkaido; the 24th Infantry Division in Kyushu; the 25th Infantry Division in south central Honshu; and the 9th Antiaircraft Artillery Group in Okinawa. Frequent protests had been registered by General Douglas MacArthur that his missions in the Far East required a minimum force of at least five full-strength infantry divisions, 23 antiaircraft artillery battalions and one separate regimental combat team.<sup>5</sup>

The force designated to carry out the Army's no-notice missions was called the General Reserve. Except for the 5th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) in Hawaii, this force consisted of five combat divisions and selected smaller units in CONUS. Major General Reserve units on 25 June 1950 were the 2d Armored Division, split between Camp (later Fort) Hood, Texas, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma; the 2d Infantry

Division at Fort Lewis, Washington; the 3d Infantry Division, split between Fort Benning, Georgia, and Fort Devens, Massachusetts; the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; the 11th Airborne Division (less one RCT) at Fort Campbell, Kentucky; the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Meade, Maryland; and the 14th RCT at Fort Carson, Colorado. In addition, there were smaller combat support and service support units.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the General Reserve in the United States and Hawaii, four tactical divisions and one RCT were located in the Far East Command. In Europe the Army maintained one tactical division, one RCT, three armored cavalry regiments and one separate infantry regiment. One infantry battalion was in Alaska, and two separate regiments were in the Caribbean area. Four training divisions were stationed in the United States.

Budget planning in the spring of 1950 contemplated a reduction of the authorized strength of the Army from 630,201 to 610,900. The proposed cut would have eliminated one of the Army's 10 tactical divisions; specifically, it would have reduced the number of divisions in the Far East from four to three. The strength of the United States Army in 1950 was much less than what American military leaders were comfortable with, but government economies in the aftermath of World War II allowed no increase.

### **Deployment of Forces to Korea**

The invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950 exposed a hollow Army. Eighth Army, the main combat force of Far East Command, stood at about 93 percent of its authorized strength. Each division had an authorized strength of 12,500 to 13,650 soldiers as compared to its authorized war strength of 18,900, and none of the divisions was even up to its peacetime authorization.<sup>7</sup> Divisions in Japan were completing a reorganization that reflected greatly reduced manning and equipment levels. The 1st Cavalry Division and the 7th, 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions all lacked reconnaissance, military police and replacement companies, medical detachments, and bands. Their infantry regiments were each short one battalion, and the tank company; and the 105mm howitzer battalions had only two firing batteries. Further, only one company or battery was manned in the tank and antiaircraft artillery battalions. Tank companies were equipped with the M24 light tank because Far East Command leaders believed that heavier tanks would damage Japanese roads and bridges. The one exception was the 25th Infantry Division, which fielded one RCT built around the 24th Infantry Regiment. In the 24th RCT the infantry regiment and the field artillery battalion had all of their subordinate elements, but at reduced levels.<sup>8</sup> In terms of battle potential, the infantry division had only about 65 percent of its combat power.<sup>9</sup>

Although the divisions were well below wartime levels, President Truman responded to the United Nations resolution to stop aggression in South Korea by ordering troops to Korea on 30 June. On the recommendation of his chief of staff, Major

General Edward M. Almond, General MacArthur ordered the airlift of a small task force from the 24th Infantry Division into Korea ahead of the main body to engage the North Korean Army as quickly as possible, sacrificing security for speed. Because the task force would go by air, its size was restricted to 500 soldiers—basically two rifle companies, some antitank teams and a battery of light artillery. General MacArthur selected this division on the basis of location. The 24th Infantry Division was closer to Korea than other combat force in Japan and could be deployed more rapidly.

Major General William F. Dean, Commanding General, 24th Infantry Division, selected Lieutenant Colonel Charles B. Smith, Commander, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, to lead the delaying force, called Task Force Smith. The artillery battery originally called for had been replaced by two 4.2-inch mortar platoons. A platoon of 77mm recoilless rifles and six 2.36-inch bazooka teams had also been added. This ad hoc unit was to report to Major General John M. Church, who headed the group designated General Headquarters (GHQ) Advance Command and Liaison Group, at Suwon by 1 July; realizing that Suwon might fall at any time, General MacArthur authorized Church to divert the force to Pusan if necessary. Task Force Smith landed at Pusan Airfield on 1 and 2 July. Because of the poor flying weather, many trucks and some soldiers could not be flown in until later. Lieutenant Colonel Smith, after reporting to Major General Church at Taejon, was sent forward with his task force to engage the enemy on sight. Assisted by elements of the 52d Field Artillery Battalion, Task Force Smith dug hasty positions on the night of 4 July three miles north of Osan, and awaited the approaching North Koreans. Shortly after 0800 hours on 5 July, Task Force Smith engaged two regiments of the North Korean 4th Division and thirty-three T34 tanks. Badly outnumbered and without armor, effective antitank weapons or air support, the American soldiers held their ground until they expended their ammunition, and then abandoned the field, suffering heavy losses in the process. The next day, Lieutenant Colonel Smith could assemble only 250 men, half his original force.

After the defeat of Task Force Smith, Major General Dean employed the 34th and 21st Infantry Regiments in additional delaying actions against the advance of the North Korean 3d and 4th Divisions along the corridor that ran south of Osan toward Taejon. Fighting occurred at P'yongt'aek, Ch'onan, Chonui and Choch'iwon. The defeat of Task Force Smith underscored the importance of adequate prewar training along with armored and air support in combat operations. Shortly after the 24th Infantry Division's departure, the Far East Command brought the 25th Infantry and 1st Cavalry Divisions to some semblance of wartime strength by cross-leveling from the 7th Infantry Division. By the end of July both divisions had deployed to Korea, with the almost totally gutted 7th Infantry Division remaining in Japan.<sup>10</sup>

As the three under-strength divisions fought in Korea, the Army Staff set about bringing them to full strength, along with the 7th Infantry Division in Japan. Soldiers'

enlistments were involuntarily extended, and the length of their overseas tours was increased. Other commands were cannibalized for units, personnel and equipment. Particularly scarce in the Far East Command were tanks and antiaircraft artillery. Because all the divisional tank and antiaircraft artillery battalions there had been reduced to a company or battery, replacement units had to come from the United States. With the divisions in Korea taking heavy casualties and the replacement system on the verge of failing, several months elapsed before the units neared wartime levels.

Heavy losses and the amount of time required for units and personnel to reach the Orient resulted in an agreement on 15 August between the Far East Command and the South Korean government for the temporary assignment of Korean nationals to U.S. Army units. Under the Korean Augmentation to the United States Army (KATUSA) program, approximately 8,600 Koreans were to serve as soldiers in each American division. A few months after the plan's inception, the program was curtailed because of improvements in the replacement system and the desire to concentrate on rebuilding the Republic of Korea Army. Although U.S. divisions continued to receive some KATUSAs, no division received the 8,600 initially envisaged.<sup>11</sup>

With United Nations troops being overwhelmed in South Korea, General MacArthur requested immediate reinforcements from the United States. In July he requested the 2d Infantry Division, stationed at Fort Lewis; an RCT from the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg; and some smaller units. Army Chief of Staff General J. Lawton Collins refused to send an RCT from the 82d Airborne, preferring to keep the division intact for other contingencies. Instead, he supported deploying an RCT from the 11th Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, organized around the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment. The Joint Chiefs of Staff decided that the Army should send General Reserve units to fill General MacArthur's request. But the issue was so important in terms of worldwide commitments that on 7 July they asked the Secretary of Defense to gain the approval of the President.<sup>12</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff obtained President Truman's approval for the deployments on 9 July, but many units in the United States had to be cross-leveled to fill the 2d Infantry Division before it could deploy. Elements of the 2d Infantry Division arrived in Korea on 31 July, and the division entered combat in late August. This division was the first unit to deploy to Korea directly from American soil.<sup>13</sup> The 187th Airborne RCT would not arrive until October.

The arrival of the 2d Infantry Division in Korea allowed Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, commanding the Eighth Army, to withdraw the 24th Infantry Division from combat along the Naktong River. Due to the heavy losses sustained by the division, Walker decided to transfer all personnel and equipment from the 34th Infantry and the 63d Field Artillery Battalion to other units in the division, replacing them with the 5th RCT, which had recently arrived from Hawaii.<sup>14</sup> With that infusion, the division was ready for combat again by the end of August. Subsequently the 34th

Infantry Regiment and the 63d Field Artillery Battalion returned to Japan, where they were reorganized to train replacements.

In August 1950 MacArthur planned an amphibious assault at Inchon, Korea, that would include the 7th Infantry Division—the only U.S. Army division left in Japan. To replace it in his reserve, he requested deployment of the 3d Infantry Division, the last Regular Army infantry division in the United States. After much debate in Washington, Truman approved its deployment. Since a large portion of its personnel and equipment had been withdrawn earlier to meet other demands in Korea, the 3d Infantry Division had fewer than 5,000 soldiers. To address the personnel problem, the division commander reassigned the personnel from one of its RCTs and one general support field artillery battalion elsewhere in the division.

At the same time, the Army Staff assigned two field artillery battalions and attached the 65th Infantry Regiment, the Puerto Rican regiment, to the division. The 3d Infantry Division (minus the 65th Infantry Regiment, which had deployed directly to Korea from Camp Losey, Puerto Rico) arrived in Japan on 15 September.<sup>15</sup> In Japan the division received its KATUSA augmentation and began to train for combat. As elements of the 3d Infantry Division arrived in Japan, elements of the 7th Infantry Division landed at Inchon. Following the Chinese intervention in the war during the fall of 1950, the 3d Infantry Division also moved to Korea, where the 65th Infantry Regiment joined it.

During the first few months of the war, the Army relied on stopgap measures to field its six under-strength divisions in Korea but were still able to evolve a strategy for conducting the war. Under General MacArthur, a strategy of attrition was quickly replaced by a strategy of annihilation. When the Chinese entered the war in the fall of 1950 the United Nations reverted to an attrition strategy, but one which depended on firepower rather than manpower. No major reinforcements would be provided to the forces in Korea. Although limited manpower mobilization in the United States solved many personnel problems in the Far East Command, divisions continued to lack trained infantry and artillery troops. After the United Nations spring counteroffensive, which ended on 8 July 1951, negotiations began for an armistice, with the number of Army divisions in Korea remaining fixed at six until the summer of 1953. Limited war meant limited forces. One of the assumptions that military planners in Washington and the Far East had to contend with constantly in developing courses of action was the dictum that the military strength of the Far East Command would remain substantially as it was.<sup>16</sup>

Existing mobilization plans at the beginning of the Korean War, both for personnel and materiel, were focused on an all-out war against the Soviet Union. The Department of Defense had no plans for a limited war, causing the entire mobilization process to be improvised. The limited mobilization was aimed at manning and equipping

the necessary forces for fighting a limited war in Korea and at placing the United States in a posture to meet Soviet threats not only in Western Europe but globally. A complication in all phases of mobilization was the method of appropriating funds for support of the forces in Korea. Based on estimates of the duration of the conflict, those funds were appropriated after they had been spent to reimburse appropriations from which this money had been withdrawn.<sup>17</sup>

### **Rebuilding the General Reserve**

To field the divisions destined for Korea, the Army stripped the General Reserve of its resources. After the summer of 1950 its divisional units consisted of only the under-strength 2d Armored Division, the partially organized 11th Airborne Division and the 82d Airborne Division, which was closest to its wartime authorized strength. The reserve had to be quickly rebuilt for other contingencies, particularly for Western Europe, where many national leaders feared a major challenge from the Soviet Union. In July, defense officials began discussing the means for expanding the Army, but many months passed before they decided upon a program.

In the meantime, the Army expanded piecemeal. Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson approved the activation of another infantry division on 14 July 1950, but it was not until October that the 4th Infantry Division, which had been serving as a training division at Fort Ord, California, moved to Fort Benning to be reorganized as a combat force. The Army Staff expected the division to be trained by the late spring of 1951.<sup>18</sup> For almost a year, the only General Reserve division prepared for combat in the United States was the 82d Airborne Division.

To rebuild the General Reserve, provide additional forces necessary in Korea and simultaneously build up the U.S. Army contribution to NATO from one to six divisions, limited mobilization of manpower was begun in July 1950, but it was a “creeping mobilization.” Between 6 July and 19 July the President raised the authorized strength of the Army three times—from 630,000 to 834,000. On 3 August 1950, Congress removed the existing limitations on the size of the armed forces; future levels would be set by the Secretary of Defense. Seven days later, the ceiling strength was increased to 1,081,000; on 22 November 1950 it was increased again, to 1,263,000. After the Chinese Communist intervention, the ceiling strength was increased again on 17 April 1951, to 1,552,000.<sup>19</sup>

Industrial mobilization ran a course parallel to that of manpower mobilization; because of industrial lead time, averaging 18 months to two years for major end items, its products had much less significance in fighting the war in Korea than did the results of personnel mobilization. The industrial mobilization program was not focused on the needs of the war but had the broader purpose of meeting five objectives: support and equip an armed force of about 3.5 million men; replace the materiel and

supplies used in the Far East; build up reserves of materiel difficult to produce; tool up and expand industrial capacity for still higher levels of production in the future; and provide facilities and installations for the expanded armed forces. This program was carried out largely through the existing machinery of government and without extensive enabling legislation apart from appropriations. The powers conferred on the President by the Defense Production Act and the Declaration of a National Emergency made possible the establishment of priorities for defense production, placement of contracts without advertising, inauguration of a controlled materials plan such as was used during World War II, and other emergency measures to facilitate production. Planning, directing and implementing the military production program fell to the Department of Defense and its component agencies. The rate of development was determined by congressional appropriations and by the rapidity of tooling up industry for the task. Creeping industrial mobilization paralleled creeping personnel mobilization.<sup>20</sup>

Because it would have taken too much time to organize, train and equip new Regular Army divisions and cadre-strength Organized Reserve Corps divisions, the Army's leadership recommended bringing under-strength National Guard divisions into federal service. The principal strength of both the Organized Reserve and the National Guard lay in the fact that a majority of their personnel had seen combat service during World War II. None of these organizations' units had been manned or equipped to planned levels, and they were in a poor state of readiness. On 10 August the President approved the mobilization of four National Guard infantry divisions. To support them, the Army reactivated four World War II camps, and early in September the 28th (Pennsylvania), 40th (California), 43d (Connecticut, Rhode Island and Vermont) and 45th (Oklahoma) Infantry Divisions entered active federal service; organic to each were a tank battalion and a reconnaissance company. Army Field Forces and the Army Staff selected those units because of their geographic distribution, the status of their equipment and their strength, which ranged from 8,000 to 9,500 soldiers each.

The Army Staff immediately began working to bring the divisions up to their full table of organization and equipment strength.<sup>21</sup> Initially, individual reservists recalled to active duty filled both Regular and National Guard divisions; to maintain them the Army Staff relied on volunteers and draftees. Three separate RCTs were also federalized during the Korean War; none of the non-divisional infantry regiments from the National Guard served in Korea.<sup>22</sup> To operate the training centers, Army Field Forces activated five Regular Army divisions—the 8th Infantry at Fort Jackson, South Carolina; the 101st Airborne at Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky; the 5th Armored at Camp Chaffee, Arkansas; the 6th Armored at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; and the 7th Armored at Camp Roberts, California—between August and November 1950. The 6th Infantry Division was also reactivated to replace the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Ord.<sup>23</sup>

The Chinese intervention in the fall of 1950 stimulated broader mobilization measures. After considerable debate, President Truman declared a national emergency, which required additional military forces to meet the potential Soviet threat in Europe as well as to fight the war in Korea. The mobilization plan called for 18 combat divisions to be on active duty by June 1952. To obtain the additional divisions, the President approved the mobilization of the National Guard's 31st (Alabama and Mississippi) and 47th (Minnesota and North Dakota) Infantry Divisions into federal service in January 1951. These were reorganized under reduced tables that called for approximately 14,500 soldiers. For the 18th division, the Army reactivated the Regular Army's 1st Armored Division in March. Activation of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) in 1951 brought the total active regiments of this type to five for the Korean War period, but none served in the Far East. The other four active regiments were the 2d, 3d, 6th and 14th ACRs. This last unit improved the balance in the active force among infantry, armored, and airborne divisions, which stood at two armored, two airborne and 14 infantry.<sup>24</sup>

In the fall of 1951 the Joint Chiefs of Staff reevaluated the mobilization program and set a new goal of 21 active duty combat divisions by 31 December 1955. From the National Guard, the 37th (Ohio) and 44th (Illinois) Infantry Divisions were brought into federal service in early 1952, but the 21st division was not federalized or activated because of budgetary limitations. The Korean War and the Cold War mobilization peaked at 20 divisions.

Personnel policies for manning divisions during the Korean War differed from those used in World Wars I and II. Prior to 1951, when soldiers went overseas to fight, their tour was usually for the duration of the war. With far-flung commitments throughout Europe and Asia, Army leaders adopted a personnel rotation policy during the second year of the Korean War. They hoped such a system would avoid alienating the general public and maintain the morale of the soldiers themselves. To accommodate the additional personnel needed to implement the rotation, the training base was further expanded in the spring of 1951. The 5th Infantry Division was activated at Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pennsylvania, increasing the number of training divisions to 10, the maximum number during the Korean War. General Reserve divisions were also tasked to train recruits.

In 1952 Congress authorized what were in effect eight more divisions for the National Guard to replace the units in federal service. These organizations gave some areas of the country military forces where none had existed since units were federalized two years earlier for the Korean War. Under the new law the federal government could retain National Guard units exclusive of personnel for five years, but the states could organize replacements for the units in federal service. The new local units were to have the same designations as the units in federal service, with the additional identification

National Guard of the United States (NGUS).<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the legislation required that when the National Guard units in federal service were returned to the states, they were to be consolidated with their sister organizations. States began organizing NGUS units in 1952; by the end of the Korean War in July 1953, six of the eight National Guard infantry divisions in federal service had local counterparts. Of the remaining two, the 37th Infantry Division (NGUS) received federal recognition on 15 January 1954, but the 44th Infantry Division never had an NGUS counterpart. The governor of Illinois, as an economy move, declined to organize it and requested the state's troop allotment be amended to delete the 44th Infantry Division. When the division was released from federal service in December 1954 it was removed from the force structure.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to fighting the war in Korea in the early 1950s, the nation committed forces to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Since 1947 only the 1st Infantry Division had been stationed in Europe, but with the establishment of NATO President Truman announced a substantial increase in forces there. Between May and November 1951 the 2d Armored Division and the 4th, 28th and 43d Infantry Divisions joined the 1st Infantry Division in Germany. The commitment of these forces and similar actions by the NATO partners demonstrated a new reliance on collective security to deter aggression.

### **Readjustment of Divisional Forces**

By April 1951 the Army was able to provide additional forces to improve the security of Japan, where no divisional reserve had existed since the Chinese intervention in the Korean War. The 40th and 45th Infantry Divisions deployed to Japan, where they completed their training. Congress directed that the National Guard divisions have an opportunity to serve in combat, and in the winter of 1951–52 the 40th and 45th Infantry Divisions replaced the 1st Cavalry and 24th Infantry Divisions in Korea.<sup>27</sup> The method of exchange revived a technique that had been developed during World War II. Ships that carried the 40th and 45th Infantry Divisions to Korea brought the 1st Cavalry Division and 24th Infantry Division back to Japan. The units exchanged all heavy equipment and supplies while the men carried only their personal arms and equipment with them. Thus the units experienced only a limited decline in combat efficiency. The 1st Cavalry and 24th Infantry Divisions returned to Japan to serve as a reserve. Until July 1953 the 2d, 3d, 7th, 25th, 40th and 45th Infantry Divisions carried the fight in Korea. During the closing days of the conflict, immediately before the armistice on 25 July, the 24th Infantry Division returned to Korea as a rear-area force to bolster the security of prisoner-of-war camps. Prior to the redeployment of 24th Infantry Division to Korea in the summer of 1953, elements of the 1st Cavalry Division and 24th Infantry Division had served there as security forces on a rotation basis since October 1952.<sup>28</sup>

Hostilities ended in Korea on 27 July 1953 when the United Nations and North Korea signed an armistice agreement. Demobilization, like mobilization, did not follow a preplanned course. While the Korean Armistice Agreement ended large-scale combat in Korea, military forces were still required in positions of readiness. A threat still hung over Korea, and the defense of Western Europe remained of paramount concern. The size of the Army depended on the new President, Dwight D. Eisenhower (inaugurated in January 1953), who was committed to reducing military expenditures. Between 1 July 1953 and 1 July 1956, the Congress, at the President's request, cut the active Army from 1.5 million to 1 million men, a reduction that required major adjustments in divisional forces. By that time the annual load in the training centers had stabilized at a lower peacetime level, and the Army Staff had turned its attention to improving the General Reserve, particularly as a reinforcement force for Europe.

In October 1953 the Army Staff designated the 1st Armored Division and 44th Infantry Division as 30-day reinforcement units for NATO and identified the 82d Airborne Division as the Western Hemisphere's contingency force. To bring these and other divisions in the General Reserve up to war levels, the 5th Infantry, 7th Armored and 101st Airborne Divisions, which had been operating training centers, were inactivated and their personnel reassigned. The training center operated by the 10th Infantry Division was also closed, and a new mission was planned for that division.<sup>29</sup>

In December 1953 Eisenhower, who had hesitated to reduce forces in Korea because of the precarious armistice, announced that two of the seven U.S. Army divisions there were to return home, a step permitted by improved capabilities of the South Korean Army. United States Army Forces, Far East, selected the 40th and 45th Infantry Divisions for return to the United States, and they departed Korea in the spring of 1954 with only a token personnel complement. Shortly thereafter the divisions were released from active federal service and reverted to state control. With the French on the verge of withdrawing from Southeast Asia there were concerns about the effects of demobilization; to counter these concerns Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson suspended further reductions in the Far East Command on 7 April 1954.

Although the Army could retain National Guard designations for five years, Secretary of Defense Wilson decided to release the 28th, 31st, 37th and 43d Infantry Divisions to state control in June 1954. This decision was primarily an administrative action and did not affect the actual number of combat or training divisions in active service. In Europe the 9th and 5th Infantry Divisions replaced the 28th and 43d Infantry Divisions, while the 8th and 10th Infantry Divisions in the United States replaced the 31st and 37th at Fort Carson and Fort Riley, Kansas. The 69th Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne Division were reactivated to fill the gaps left by the 5th and 9th Infantry Divisions in the training base.<sup>30</sup>

By the summer of 1954, the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of Korea and the expansion of its army to 20 divisions permitted additional American reductions in Korea. This allowed the Department of Defense to release all reserve units from active duty. In October the 25th Infantry Division, with its personnel and equipment, moved from Korea to Hawaii, where it became part of the Pacific area reserve. Shortly thereafter the 2d and 3d Infantry Divisions, reduced to near zero strength in Korea, replaced the National Guard 44th and 47th Infantry Divisions at Forts Lewis and Benning. By December 1954, all National Guard infantry units federalized during the Korean War had reverted to state control and were reorganized at their home stations, ending their involvement in the Korean War. When those divisions left federal service, only their designations reverted to the states since the Guardsmen themselves had been released earlier. The states reorganized the units—except for the 44th Infantry Division, which Illinois did not want—by using the NGUS divisions as planned.<sup>31</sup>

After many revisions of the requirements for a residual force in Korea, the Department of Defense instructed the services to plan for three divisions—one Army, one Marine and one United Nations, plus combat support and combat service support units—to remain there. In December 1954 Secretary of Defense Wilson decided that the Marine division would return to the United States, leaving two Army divisions in Korea. As a result, the 24th Infantry Division, in the midst of moving to Japan, reversed its course and rejoined the 7th Infantry Division in Korea. To improve the balance within Regular Army divisional forces after the Korean War, General Matthew Ridgway, who had become Army Chief of Staff in 1953, decided to revise the ratios among infantry, armored and airborne units. In June 1954 the Fourth Army activated the 4th Armored Division, the first division to be equipped with the new M48 90mm tank. General Ridgway planned to organize another armored division, raising the Regular Army total to four, but tank production lagged, preventing its formation until 1955. The 3d Armored Division was then converted from a training division to a combat division.<sup>32</sup>

Although total Army strength declined and the reserves were released, the Army remained committed to an active force of 20 divisions. The Department of Defense authorized the activation of the 23d and 71st Infantry Divisions, through the use of existing RCTs. Activated on 2 December 1954, the 23d Infantry Division—the former Americal Division of World War II fame—controlled units stationed in the Panama Canal Zone, Puerto Rico and the southeastern United States from its headquarters at Fort Amador, Panama Canal Zone. With its headquarters at Fort Richardson, Alaska, the 71st Infantry Division, activated on 10 October 1954, included units in Alaska and the northwestern United States. Because of their scattered divisional elements, the Army Staff labeled the divisions “static units,” indicating that they were not capable of early deployment. Both divisions were inactivated in less than two years—the 23d

Infantry Division on 10 April 1956 at Fort Amador, Panama Canal Zone, and the 71st Infantry Division on 15 September 1956 at Fort Lewis, Washington.<sup>33</sup>

With endstrength reductions on the horizon for the Regular Army, the Army Staff had to economize on manpower if it was to maintain 20 divisions. A review of all divisional tables of organization resulted in slightly smaller divisions. Without a change in structure, the infantry division dropped from 18,212 men of all ranks to 17,452. In addition, the tables provided for a reduced peacetime-strength division, with some 2,700 fewer soldiers for each division in the General Reserve. Before its divisions were sent into combat, they would need sufficient time and personnel to be brought to war strength as required for sustained operations. The lessons of Task Force Smith and the deployment of other units to Korea in the summer of 1950 appeared to be already lost. General Reserve divisions adopted the new tables in the summer of 1955. Because of severe manpower shortages, divisions in Europe were also reorganized under reduced tables of organization. The following year the tables were applied to the 25th Infantry Division, stationed at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii.<sup>34</sup>

In December 1956, in addition to those forces in the continental United States, combat forces were stationed in the Panama Canal Zone, Alaska, Hawaii, Iceland, Italy, Berlin, West Germany, Japan and Korea. Still on duty in Korea were two infantry divisions with three organic infantry regiments each.<sup>35</sup>

## **Retrospect**

Although the Cold War soon followed the end of World War II, it was initially political in nature. The United States continued with its demobilization and slowed down the process of modernizing its military forces with new technologies or warfighting doctrine. The nation's leaders were focused on Soviet intentions in Western Europe, with the Army committed to occupation duty in Europe and the Far East. When the Korean War erupted it was waged with weapons, ground forces and doctrines inherited from World War II. Change would not come about until after the Korean Armistice was signed, when the Eisenhower administration decided to nuclearize the American defense strategy because nuclear weapons were less expensive than conventional forces.

Within the space of a few months, the United States had gone from attaching no strategic importance to Korea to active involvement there in a major armed conflict. Between 1950 and 1956 the Army fought a war in Korea and deterred the Soviet challenge in Western Europe. At the height of the Korean War the active Army had eight divisions in the Far East, five in Germany and seven in the General Reserve in the United States. As the United States exerted its leadership of the Western democracies, a ready force, backed by fully manned and equipped reserves, took on added significance.

It has been said that no new lessons were learned in Korea, but many old lessons were relearned. The Korean War helped to convince a majority of the U.S. leaders that military spending on a large scale was required to provide adequate forces, and weapons in a state of readiness to counteract the growing Communist threat must be sustained. In the postwar period the large sums allocated to the defense budget were stark evidence that the need for preparedness had not been promptly forgotten. Despite large defense budgets, funding constraints exacerbated the manning conditions; because of the Eisenhower administration focus on nuclear deterrence, the fiscal emphasis was on weapon systems for the U.S. Air Force rather than on the ground forces. Under the impetus of war the United States expanded its system of alliances and began to conclude security pacts with the countries in the Pacific-Asian area. Korean experience demonstrated that allies are helpful in marshaling favorable world opinion and that their contributions in men, materiel and political support are very valuable in the search for peace. The multiplication of U.S. politico-military ties with non-Communist nations throughout the western Pacific and on the Asian mainland was a direct consequence of the war.

More important, the United States had also gained valuable experience in the difficulties of fighting a limited war. The concept of limited war affected the Army in many ways: the lack of definite military objectives, the requirement to plan for large-scale operations and contingency operations, the problem of budgeting its costs, a cap on forces to prosecute the war, and a shift to a liberal rotation program that was uneconomical and inefficient as a practical solution. Wars and operations with limited strategic objectives have been a feature of American global strategy ever since.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Daniel P. Bolger, *Death Ground Today's American Infantry in Battle* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1999), p. 20.
- <sup>2</sup> John B. Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower: The Evolution of Divisions and Separate Brigades* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998), pp. 229–232.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.
- <sup>4</sup> James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), pp. 43–45. In 1947, Trieste was declared an independent state as the Free Territory of Trieste divided into two zones, A and B, along what was called the Morgan Line. Trieste and its surrounding regions remained under Allied control until 1954. In 1954 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in London. It granted a provisional civil administration of Zone A with Trieste to Italy and Zone B to Yugoslavia. In 1975 the Treaty of Osimo was signed, definitively dividing the former Free Territory of Trieste between Italy and Yugoslavia.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- <sup>6</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 232; and Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, p. 44.
- <sup>7</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 239.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, p. 54.
- <sup>10</sup> Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), pp. 60 and 61; and Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 240.
- <sup>11</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 240.
- <sup>12</sup> Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, pp. 91–94; and Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, pp. 240–241. By 9 July, the 2d Infantry Division, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, an RCT from the 11th Airborne Division, the 378th Ordnance Heavy Maintenance Company, the 15th and 50th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalions (Automatic Weapons, or AW), the 68th and 78th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalions (90mm), and the 6th, 70th and 73d Tank Battalions had been approved for shipment to General MacArthur.
- <sup>13</sup> Fred L. Borch and Robert F. Dorr, “2nd ID has storied history of successes in combat,” *Army Times*, January 7, 2008, p. 36; and Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, p. 389.
- <sup>14</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 241.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 241–242; and Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, pp. 133–134. The attachment of the 65th Infantry to the 3d Infantry Division marked a departure in the Army's segregation policies. In the past, native Puerto Ricans were assigned exclusively to Puerto Rican units. In September 1951 the only units in which Puerto Ricans could serve outside the Caribbean area were elements of the 65th Regimental Combat Team in Korea. However, since more Puerto Ricans had entered the Army than were needed for these segregated Spanish-speaking units, the Army removed all restrictions on the assignments of Puerto Ricans who spoke English.

- <sup>16</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, pp. 241–242; and Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), p. 31.
- <sup>17</sup> Robert W. Coakley, “Highlights of Mobilization, Korean War,” p. 1. This manuscript was prepared for the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army (now the U.S. Army Center of Military History), 10 March 1959; the original is on file in the Historical Manuscripts Collection under file number 2-3.7 AF.C.
- <sup>18</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, pp. 242–243.
- <sup>19</sup> Coakley, “Highlights of Mobilization, Korean War,” p. 2.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.
- <sup>21</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 243; and Mary Lee Stubbs and Stanley Russell Conner, *Armor–Cavalry Part I: Regular Army and Army Reserve* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 79.
- <sup>22</sup> John K. Mahon and Romana Danysh, *Infantry Part I: Regular Army* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), pp. 78–79.
- <sup>23</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 243.
- <sup>24</sup> Stubbs and Conner, *Armor–Cavalry Part I*, pp. 78–79; and Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 243.
- <sup>25</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 246; and Stubbs and Conner, *Armor–Cavalry Part I*, pp. 79–80.
- <sup>26</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 246.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 244–245.
- <sup>28</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 202–204.
- <sup>29</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 250.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 250–251.
- <sup>31</sup> Mahon and Danysh, *Infantry Part I*, pp. 87–88; and Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, p. 251.
- <sup>32</sup> Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower*, pp. 251 and 252.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253; and John B. Wilson, *Armies, Corps, Divisions and Separate Brigades* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), pp. 290 and 407. The 23d Infantry Division was activated on 25 September 1967 in Vietnam to control 196th Infantry Brigade; 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division; and 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. The division base was to be activated as requirements were identified. In December 1967 the division received its planned brigades. In addition to the 196th Infantry Brigade, the 11th and 198th Infantry Brigades had arrived in Vietnam, replacing the brigades of the 4th Infantry and 101st Airborne Divisions, which returned to their parent units.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.
- <sup>35</sup> Mahon and Danysh, *Infantry Part I*, p. 88.