



# KOREAN WAR

1950-1953

Teacher Resource Guide

"MIG ALLEY" 200 MILES

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# An Introduction

“The Air Force is on trial in Korea.”

- Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, USAF Chief of Staff, 1950

*The U.S. Air Force was only three years old as a separate service when North Korea invaded South Korea in the summer of 1950. The next three years brought significant changes in technology, roles and tactics, marking the beginning of the modern Air Force.*

When World War II ended, the United States accepted the surrender of the Japanese in Korea south of the 38th parallel, while the Soviet Union accepted the Japanese surrender north of that line. Although the western Allies intended that Korea become an independent democracy, the Soviet Union had other plans.

In 1947 the United States put the problem of Korean independence before the United Nations. When the UN ordered free elections throughout the country, the Soviet Union refused to allow them in the north. Free elections in the southern half of Korea in May of 1948 established the Republic of Korea. The Soviets created a rival communist government in the north, the “People’s Democratic Republic of Korea.”

With governments established in both halves of Korea, the Soviets announced their intention to leave the country and challenged the United States to do the same. After training a small national force for internal security in South Korea, the United States departed, leaving only a few military advisors. In the north, the Soviets oversaw the creation of the well-trained and equipped North Korean People’s Army with Soviet tanks, heavy artillery and aircraft. After assuring the military superiority of North Korea, the Soviets left in 1949. Less than a year later, border skirmishes between north and south exploded into all-out war with the North Korean invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950.

### U.S. and UN Roles

The United States was committed to defending South Korea against communist aggression. Although the United States had no official treaty obligating it to South Korea, President Harry Truman ordered U.S. forces in the Far East into action on June 27, and

three days later authorized air attacks in North Korea. He also began to mobilize reserves for the coming battles.

The Korean crisis was also the first major test for the five-year-old United Nations. On June 25, 1950, the United Nations Security Council met to address the crisis. The Soviet Union, boycotting the UN because the international body did not recognize communist rule in China, did not attend. On June 27, the U.S. proposed the UN intervene in Korea with armed force. With the Soviets absent and unable to veto the measure, the resolution passed. In addition to South Korea and the U.S., 15 other member nations sent military forces to stop the communist attack.

### K-Bases in Korea

The USAF had numerous air bases in Korea, and many of these were former Japanese airfields. The spelling of Korean locations on maps varied greatly, and villages had a Korean and a Japanese name. A “K” number identified individual air bases in both northern and southern Korea to prevent confusion among locations.

- K-1 Pusan West
- K-2 Taegu No. 1
- K-3 Pohangdong
- K-4 Sachon
- K-5 Taejon
- K-6 Pyongtaek
- K-7 Kwangju
- K-8 Kunsan
- K-9 Pusan East
- K-10 Chinhae
- K-11 Ulsan
- K-12 Muan
- K-13 Suwon
- K-14 Kimpo
- K-15 Mokpo
- K-16 Seoul (Yongdungpo)
- K-17 Ongin
- K-18 Kangnung (Koryo)
- K-19 Haeju (Kaishu)

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*(Introduction continued)*

- K-20 Sinmak
- K-21 Pyonggang
- K-22 Onjong-ni
- K-23 Pyongyang
- K-24 Pyongyang East
- K-25 Wonsan
- K-26 Sondok
- K-27 Yonpo
- K-28 Hamhung West
- K-29 Sinanju
- K-30 Sinuiju
- K-31 Kilchu (Kisshu)
- K-32 Oesicho-dong
- K-33 Hoemon (Kaibun)
- K-34 Chongjin (Seishin)
- K-35 Hoeryong (Kainsei)
- K-36 Kanggye No. 1
- K-37 Taegu No. 2
- K-38 Wonju
- K-39 Cheju-do No. 1
- K-40 Cheju-do No. 2
- K-41 Chungju
- K-42 Andong No. 2
- K-43 Kyongju
- K-44 Changhowon-ni
- K-45 Yoju
- K-46 Hoengsong
- K-47 Chunchon
- K-48 Iri
- K-49 Yangsu-ri
- K-50 Sokcho-ri
- K-51 Inje
- K-52 Yanggu
- K-53 (not completed)
- K-54 (not completed)
- K-55 Osan-ni
- K-56 (not completed)
- K-57 Kwangju

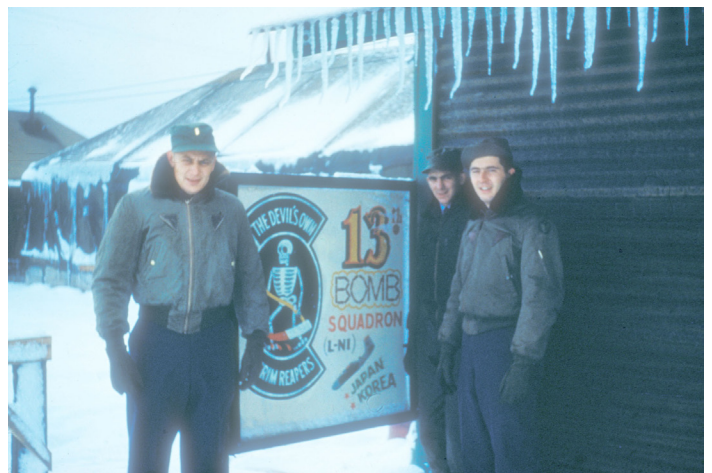
### **Dust, Mud and Snow: An Airman's Life in Korea**

Life on the K-bases remained fairly basic throughout the Korean War. USAF personnel generally lived in tents with wooden or concrete floors and stored their meager possessions in furniture cobbled together from scrap wood or crates. These tents were blistering hot in the summer and freezing cold in the winter.

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## **Presentation available**

This information is also available in a Power-Point presentation. View the table of contents at <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-111229-005.pdf> and visit <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-111229-004.ppt> to download the presentation.



The Korean climate was one of extremes, from the humid summer heat to the bitter winter cold.



This photo of K-9 (Pusan East) in June 1953 shows a typical Korean air base at the end of the war.

There are temporary corrugated metal buildings in the middle, while on the right are tent barracks. The B-26 aircraft on the left are parked in the open, exposed to the elements.

*(Introduction continued)*

The vast unpaved areas on air bases were dusty when dry, and they turned to mud with spring rains. While air crews did their best to fight boredom between tension-filled missions, maintenance personnel worked long hours in poor weather conditions to keep worn and damaged aircraft in service.

### Army Green to Air Force Blue

After the U.S. Air Force became a separate service in 1947, it created new blue uniforms. Even so, Air Force personnel during the Korean War continued to wear U.S. Army uniforms from existing stocks, including the famed “pinks and greens” clothing and “crush cap” hats from World War II. In some cases, Airmen wore a combination of Army green and Air Force blue uniforms.

For the enlisted, yellow Army rank chevrons were replaced with silver Air Force stripes. Another notable change was the renaming of some enlisted ranks



The varied uniforms illustrate the USAF in transition during the Korean War. Some wear the old uniform of the USAAF while others wear newly issued USAF blues or a combination of both.

in 1952—The Army ranks of private and corporal became “Airman.”

An interesting result of this uniform change was the nickname “brown-shoe Air Force.” The old Army uniform had brown shoes, while the new Air Force blue uniform had black shoes. So, “brown-shoe Air Force” referred to the old U.S. Army Air Forces or to a person who had served in the USAAF.

## Air Superiority: Controlling the Sky

“As it happened, the air battle was short and sweet. Air supremacy over Korea was quickly established.”

- Lt. Gen. E. George Stratemeyer, Far East Air Forces Commander during the first year of war

*Controlling the skies over Korea was the USAF’s primary mission. After defeating the small North Korean Air Force, USAF pilots were challenged by*



All-weather F-82G fighters at an air base in Japan. The USAF was forced to base some of its fighter units in Japan when communist forces overran South Korean bases in 1950 and 1951.

*Soviet—and later Chinese and North Korean—pilots in nimble, swept-wing MiG-15 jets. The winning combination of the F-86 Sabre and experienced USAF pilots, however, ensured UN ground forces need not fear the enemy’s air power.*

In Korea, the air superiority fight reflected the end of propeller-driven fighters and the supremacy of jet aircraft. At the beginning of the war in June 1950, the USAF Far East Air Forces had the piston-engine F-51D Mustang, the all-weather F-82 Twin Mustang, and the jet-propelled, straight-winged F-80 Shooting Star. Skilled USAF pilots overwhelmed the inexperienced pilots of the North Korean Air Force (NKAf), who were equipped with about 140 World War II-era piston-engine aircraft.

After defeating the NKAf, UN air forces enjoyed a period of air supremacy until the arrival of the MiG-15 in November 1950. Flown by Soviet pilots, the MiG-15 threatened to wrest control of the air away from UN forces—it seriously outclassed the best USAF fighter in Korea, the F-80C. Even so, F-80 pilots were

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*(Air Superiority continued)*

able to turn inside the MiGs when attacked and scored some victories. The USAF counter to the MiG threat was the swept-wing, F-86 Sabre jet fighter. The F-86A entered combat in mid-December and quickly proved its worth.

The MiG-15 versus the F-86 in Korea has long been the subject of comparison. While the MiG-15 enjoyed some performance advantages against early model F-86s, it also suffered serious vices that killed a number of its pilots. The F-86 was a better gun platform and could dive faster. Ultimately, any MiG-15 performance advantages over the Sabre were more than offset by the superior training of American pilots. When the communists tried to challenge UN air superiority, they suffered heavy losses from USAF Sabres almost every time.

The combination of the F-86 Sabre and superior USAF pilots denied the communist armies air cover and gave protection to UN forces on the ground. Except on isolated occasions, UN ground troops seldom saw a communist aircraft, while enemy soldiers suffered under relentless UN air attack. In controlling the skies, the USAF performed brilliantly and successfully in its first combat test as a separate service.

### **The First Aerial Victories**

On the morning of June 26, 1950, one day after the start of the war, the U.S. Air Force's 68th Fighter (All-Weather) Squadron sent four F-82G aircraft from



First on the left is Lt. Charles Moran.

In the center is a sergeant writing out an intelligence report on the aerial battle. Second from the right is Lt. William Hudson. Stooping is Lt. Carl Fraser, the radar operator who flew with Hudson.



The F-80C was more than a match for the propeller-driven fighters of the North Korean Air Force, but suffered from short range when flying from Japanese air bases.

Itazuke Air Base in Japan to protect two Norwegian ships evacuating civilians from Seoul. While covering a motor convoy of civilians on the Seoul-Inchon road, two of the F-82s were attacked by two Soviet-made La-7 fighters, presumably flown by North Korean pilots. Rather than endanger the civilians below, the two F-82s pulled up into the clouds instead of engaging the La-7s.

The next day, North Korean aircraft attacked the early morning USAF flight. This time, however, the F-82 crews accepted the challenge and shot down three enemy aircraft.

An F-82 piloted by Lt. William G. Hudson and carrying Lt. Carl Fraser as radar operator, claimed a Yak-11 over Kimpo airfield in full view of those on the ground. As Hudson fired at the Yak, Fraser attempted to photograph the action with a malfunctioning 35mm camera. Meanwhile, after a North Korean La-7 fighter damaged the tail of his F-82, Lt. Charles Moran shot it down. Maj. James Little, flying high cover nearby, also shot down an La-7.

### **Birth of Jet Combat**

The Korean War served as the arena for history's first air-to-air combat by jet-propelled aircraft. USAF pilots did not start scoring heavily against Russian-made MiG-15 jets until the swept-wing F-86A Sabre arrived in Korea in late 1950. Then the victories began to mount, and by the end of hostilities in July 1953, 38 USAF pilots had become aces by shooting

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*(Air Superiority continued)*

down five or more enemy aircraft (nearly all of which were MiG-15s).

The first jet-to-jet victory took place on Nov. 8, 1950, when Lt. Russell J. Brown, flying an F-80C, shot down a much faster MiG-15 over North Korea.

### **MiG Alley: Sabre vs. MiG**

“The MiG-15 was good, but hardly the superfighter that should strike terror in the heart of the West ... There was no question that the F-86 was the better fighter.”

*- No Kum-Sok, North Korean fighter pilot who escaped to South Korea in 1953 after flying nearly 100 combat missions in the MiG-15*

*Soviet leader Josef Stalin feared that if a Soviet MiG-15 pilot was captured, it would prove the USSR’s direct involvement in the war. Stalin ordered MiG-15 pilots to fly only near their bases in Manchuria and northwestern North Korea. This area, famously known as “MiG Alley,” became the scene of furious air combat battles between USAF F-86 and Soviet MiG-15 pilots.*

Large formations of MiGs would lie in wait on the Manchurian side of the border. When UN aircraft entered MiG Alley, these MiGs would swoop down from high altitude to attack. If the MiGs ran into trouble, they would try to escape back over the border into communist China. (to prevent a wider war, UN pilots were ordered not to attack targets in Manchuria). Even with this advantage, communist pilots still could not compete against the better-trained Sabre pilots of the U.S. Air Force, who scored a kill ratio of about 8:1 against the MiGs.

### **Soviet Pilots Over MiG Alley**

The opening of archives in the former Soviet Union confirmed a fact that had long been denied—the USSR provided many of the MiG-15 pilots and units that fought in MiG Alley. Like their U.S. Air Force opponents, several of these Soviet pilots were WWII combat veterans.

Before the Korean War, Soviet pilots were already in China training the newly created communist Chinese air force, or People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF). In August 1950, the USSR secretly deployed MiG-15s to Antung next to the border with North Korea. Soviet MiG-15 pilots flew their first



Soviet-built MiG-15 jet fighters ready for takeoff.



Famous photo of the torii gate leading to the Sabre flight line at Kimpo Air Base.

combat missions over North Korea in early November 1950.

The Soviets tried to hide their nationality and denied they had pilots in direct combat. Their MiG-15s had North Korean or Chinese markings. Soviet pilots received orders to only speak Korean phrases over the radio (although F-86 pilots heard them speaking Russian over the radio in the heat of combat). Despite these precautions, USAF pilots reported seeing non-Asian pilots flying the MiGs. Sabre pilots also noticed the difference in experience when less-skilled North Korean and Chinese pilots also began flying MiG-15s against them—they nicknamed the more-capable Soviet pilots “Honchos” (Japanese for “boss”). The fact that Soviet pilots were flying the MiGs became an open secret.

### **Lt. Col. Bruce Hinton: First F-86 MiG Kill**

Lt. Col. Bruce Hinton, commander of the 336th

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*(Air Superiority continued)*

Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing, was the first F-86 pilot to score a MiG-15 kill. On Dec. 17, 1950, Hinton led a flight of four F-86s over northwestern North Korea.

To trick the communists, the Sabre flight flew at the same altitude and speed as F-80s typically did on missions, and they used F-80 call signs. Hinton spotted four MiGs at a lower altitude, and Hinton led his flight in an attack. After pouring a burst of machine gun fire into one of the MiGs, it went down in flames. In April 1951, Hinton shot down a second MiG-15.



Jabara

### **First Jet-Versus-Jet Ace: Capt. James Jabara**

The world's first jet-vs-jet ace was USAF Capt. James Jabara, who scored his initial victory on April 3, 1951 and his fifth and sixth victories on May 20. He was then ordered back to the U.S. for special duty.

At his own request, he returned to Korea in January 1953. By June, he had shot down nine more

MiG-15s, giving him a total of 15 air-to-air jet victories during the Korean War. Jabara was also credited with 1.5 victories over Europe during WWII. (The German Luftwaffe had 22 jet pilot aces during WWII but all claims were Allied prop-driven aircraft.)

In November 1966, Jabara, then a colonel, was killed in an automobile accident while traveling to a new assignment.

### **Leading Jet Ace: Capt. Joseph McConnell Jr.**

The leading jet ace of the Korean War was Capt. Joseph McConnell Jr., who scored his first victory on Jan. 14, 1953. In a little more than a month, he gained his fifth MiG-15 victory, thereby becoming an ace.

On the day McConnell shot down his eighth MiG, his F-86 was hit by enemy aircraft fire, and he was forced to bail out over enemy-controlled waters of the Yellow Sea west of Korea. After only two minutes in the freezing water, a helicopter rescued him. The following day he was back in combat and shot down his ninth MiG. By the end of April 1953, he had scored

his 10th victory to become a “double ace.”

He scored his last victories on May 18, 1953. That morning McConnell shot down two MiGs in a furious air battle and became a “triple ace” with 15 kills. On another mission that afternoon, he shot down his 16th and final MiG-15.

On Aug. 25, 1954, Capt. McConnell crashed to his death while testing an F-86H at Edwards AFB, Calif.



McConnell

### **USAF Aces of Two Wars**

Many American pilots with WWII experience fought in Korea. Francis S. Gabreski, Vermont Garrison and Harrison R. Thyng were three of the six USAF Korean War aces who were also WWII aces. (The others were Maj. George A. Davis Jr., James P. Hagerstrom and William T. Whisner.)

Francis Gabreski was the top American ace in air-to-air victories over Europe during WWII with 28 officially credited kills. While he was strafing a German airfield in July 1944, the propeller on his P-47 struck the ground and Gabreski crash landed. He was captured and sent to Stalag Luft I near Barth, Germany, where he spent the remainder of the war. Returning

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Gabreski (left) congratulates another WWII and Korean War ace, Maj. William T. Whisner (center). On the right is Lt. Col. George Jones, a MiG ace with 6.5 kills.

*(Air Superiority continued)*

to combat during the Korean War, he commanded the 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing and scored an additional 6-1/2 victories. Gabreski retired from the USAF as a colonel in October 1967.

Harrison Thyng probably shot down a greater variety of planes of other nations than any other American pilot. While flying Spitfires in North Africa in 1942-1943, he shot down six German, one Italian and one French airplane (a Vichy French fighter in North Africa). He went to the Pacific in 1945, and while flying P-47Ns escorting bombers over Japan, he shot down one Japanese airplane. Assigned to Korea in November 1951, he commanded the 4th Fighter-Interceptor Wing and shot down seven Soviet-built MiG-15s. He retired from the USAF as a brigadier general in April 1966.

Vermont Garrison originally flew Spitfires and Hurricanes in the Royal Air Force prior to transferring to the U.S. Army Air Forces in 1943. He was credited with 7-1/3 victories before being shot down and captured by the Germans. Garrison, like Gabreski, spent the rest of the war as a POW at Stalag Luft I. He went to Korea in November 1952 and while flying F-86s, he shot down 10 MiG-15s. He retired from the USAF as a colonel in March 1973.



Kincheloe

### **From Ace to Space: Iven C. Kincheloe Jr.**

Iven C. Kincheloe Jr. was typical of those young Americans who fought the communist threat in the skies over Korea. Born on July 2, 1928, in Detroit, Mich., he entered the Air Force under the cadet program at Purdue University. While a member of the Air Force ROTC, he was sent to Wright-Patterson AFB in July 1948

for summer training. The next year he graduated from Purdue with a degree in aeronautical engineering, and in August 1950, he was awarded USAF pilot wings at Williams AFB, Ariz.

In September 1951, he arrived in Korea where he flew F-80s on 30 missions and F-86s on 101 missions. Before returning to the U.S. in May 1952, he downed

five MiG-15s, becoming our nation's 10th jet ace.

In 1955 Kincheloe became a test pilot and went to Edwards AFB, Calif. On Sept. 7, 1956, he piloted the Bell X-2 rocket-powered research airplane, reaching more than 2,000 mph and 126,200 feet—the highest altitude to which anyone had ever flown. For this spectacular flight, he was awarded the Mackay Trophy and nicknamed “America’s No. 1 Spaceman.”

With his skill and experience, Kincheloe was selected to fly the famous X-15 rocket plane then under construction. However, his stellar career was cut short when he was killed while taking off in an F-104 jet from Edwards on July 26, 1958.

### **Master Fighter Tactician: Frederick “Boots” Blesse**

Frederick C. Blesse was one of the greatest aces of the Korean War era. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1945, flew two combat tours during the Korean War, completing 67 missions in F-51s, 35 missions in F-80s, and 121 missions in F-86s.

During his second tour in F-86s, he was officially credited with shooting down nine MiG-15s and one La-9. At the time of his return to the U.S. in October 1952, he was America’s leading jet ace.

Blesse remained with fighter aircraft for practically his entire military career. During the 1955 Air Force Worldwide Gunnery Championship, he won all six trophies offered for individual performance, a feat never equaled since. During the Vietnam War, he served two tours in Southeast Asia; while on his first tour in 1967-68, he flew 156 combat missions.

He retired from the USAF in 1975 as a major general, with more than 6,500 flying hours in fighter aircraft and more than 650 hours combat time to his credit.

### **Capt. Harold Fischer: Double MiG Ace and POW**

Harold Fischer had great success as a fighter pilot in Korea, and he also endured captivity in communist



Blesse

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*(Air Superiority continued)*



Fischer

China long after the end of hostilities. On his first tour in Korea, Fischer flew ground attack missions in F-80s in the 8th Fighter Bomber Wing. He stayed in the Far East and transferred to the Sabre-equipped 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing.

Fischer scored his first MiG-15 kill on Nov. 26, 1952. He increased his tally through February 1953, including one day

in which he shot down two MiGs. He scored his 10th and last MiG victory on March 21, 1953.

During a mission on April 7, 1953, Fischer's engine caught fire—he was either fired on by another MiG or his engine ingested pieces coming off the MiG he was shooting at. Fischer ejected and was captured by Chinese soldiers.

Instead of placing Fischer in a North Korean POW camp, the Chinese held him in Manchuria. While there, Fischer was tortured and kept in solitary confinement. He managed to escape but was recaptured. The Chinese did not release Fischer until May 31, 1955, nearly two years after hostilities had ended (and North Korea had returned those it had held as POWs).

### **Flight to Freedom: The Story of the MiG-15bis at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force**

In November 1950, the communists introduced the Soviet-built MiG-15 into battle. Its advanced design and exceptional performance startled United Nations forces. The U.S. hoped one of the planes could be acquired for technical analysis and flight evaluation. However, MiG-15 pilots were very careful not to fly over UN territory where they might be forced down.

In April 1953, the U.S. Far East Command made an offer of \$100,000 for the first MiG-15 delivered intact. No enemy pilot took advantage of this offer, and when the Korean truce went into effect on July 27, 1953, the U.S. still had not acquired a MiG-15 for flight-testing.

On Sept. 21, 1953, a MiG-15bis (a more advanced version of the original MiG-15) suddenly landed

downwind at Kimpo Air Base near Seoul, South Korea, greatly surprising the personnel there. The plane was piloted by 21-year-old Senior Lt. No Kum-Sok of the North Korean Air Force, who had decided to fly to South Korea because he was “sick and tired of the red deceit.”

Shortly after landing at Kimpo AB, the young pilot learned of the \$100,000 reward. To his relief, he also found out his mother had been safely evacuated from North to South Korea in 1951 and the she was alive and well.

The MiG-15bis was taken to Okinawa where test pilot Capt. H.E. “Tom” Collins, first flew it. Collins and Maj. C.E. “Chuck” Yeager made subsequent test flights. The airplane was disassembled and airlifted to Wright-Patterson AFB in December 1953, where it was reassembled and exhaustively flight-tested. The U.S. then offered to return the MiG to its rightful owners but no country claimed the plane. It was transferred to the museum in 1957.

At his request, No and his mother came to the United States to lead full and free lives. He changed his name to Kenneth Rowe, married, became a U.S. citizen, and graduated from the University of Delaware. Interestingly, just below the gunsight on his MiG-15bis was the following admonition in red Korean characters: “Pour out and zero in this vindictive ammunition to the damn Yankees.”

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Repainted in USAF markings and insignia, the MiG-15bis under guard and awaiting flight-testing at Okinawa.

## F-86 Sabre vs. MiG-15 Armament

The F-86 carried six M-3 .50-cal. machine guns. The M-3 was a later version of the M-2 used in World War II. The MiG-15 carried two 23mm and one 37mm cannon and was designed to destroy enemy bombers. The MiG's cannons fired heavy, destructive shells at a slow rate while the Sabre's guns fired lighter shells at a much higher rate of fire. In the high-

speed dogfights typical of MiG Alley, communist pilots found it very difficult to hit the F-86s they faced.

On the other hand, Sabre pilots frequently inflicted only light damage because their machine guns lacked the punch of cannons. MiG pilots could then escape across the Yalu River into the safety of Manchuria (although F-86 pilots sometimes followed them in "hot pursuit").

# AF Reserve and Guard in Korea

*During the Korean War, more than 146,000 Air Force Reservists and 46,000 Air National Guardsmen were mobilized to meet the communist threat in the Far East and enable the USAF to expand worldwide.*

When North Korea invaded in June 1950, the USAF was, in the words of Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, a "shoestring air force." In the Far East, the USAF was equipped for the air defense of Japan, but had inadequate resources for combat on the nearby Korean peninsula. To increase its strength, the Air Force mobilized its only available resource—thousands of Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard Airmen. Most were World War II veterans, and their training and experience proved invaluable to the war effort.

The sudden emergency in Korea needed a quick response, but leaders worried about using Guard and Reserve forces outside the U.S. The Korean war's unique character as a "UN police action" forced questions about how reserve components should operate. The Cold War's needs for huge amounts of people and equipment at bases worldwide complicated the roles of Guard, Reserve, and regular forces.

Inefficiency and dissatisfaction with the Korea call-ups led to legislation during the war to untangle the situation, including making all men between 18

1/2 and 20 years old liable for military training and service. Those up to age 26 had to register under the Selective Service System, and young men could be drafted during war or peace. This was a response to frustrated WWII veterans who had to go back to war in Korea because there was no one else to call.

The government first called for volunteers, and then began involuntary mobilization. From the Guard and Reserve, the Air Force needed not just pilots, but people in every specialty. Between 1950 and 1953, the USAF called up 146,683 Air Force Reservists and 46,413 National Guardsmen to fight the war in Korea and to fill Cold War needs by increasing forces around the world. This number was about equally divided between officers and enlisted members.

Reserve and Guard Airmen filled roles in every part of the USAF during the war, from combat flying in bomber, fighter, airlift, and rescue units, to all manner of ground support jobs at forward and rear bases in the Far East and elsewhere. Mobilization for Korea led to greater equality and cooperation among active duty and reserve forces because Guard and Reserve Airmen played an essential part in the young U.S. Air Force's success as a combat-tested service.



Ground crewmen from the Florida Air National Guard's 159th Fighter Squadron ready an F-84 for combat in Korea.

# Air Power Partners in Korea

“Members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and restore international peace and security in the area.”

- *United Nations Security Council Resolution 83, June 27, 1950*

*Although the U.S. Air Force provided the largest number of aircraft, U.S. Navy, Marine and Army aviation, along with UN partners and the budding South Korean Air Force, also contributed to the fight in Korea.*

South Korea, the U.S. and 15 other nations contributed military forces to the UN command in Korea. The U.S. force consisted of aviation units from the USAF, Navy, Marines and Army. The small South Korean Air Force started the war unable to contribute combat forces, but with USAF assistance and equipment, fielded combat forces as the war progressed. Great Britain, Australia and South Africa sent combat air units, while Greece, Canada, Thailand and the Philippines sent airlift units to Korea. Moreover, some of these countries sent air crews to fly in USAF units on exchange duty.

## “Bout One”: Building a South Korean Air Force

At the beginning of the Korean War, the South Korean air force (known as the Republic of Korea Air Force or ROKAF) had no combat ready aircraft. The U.S. Air Force quickly provided instructor pilots and 10 F-51 Mustangs to the fledgling ROKAF under the code name “Bout One” and commanded by Col. Dean Hess.

Despite numerous obstacles, Hess and his men not only trained the inexperienced South Korean pilots, but also conducted operational combat flights, which he often led. After receiving more F-51s and training enough pilots, ROKAF operations became autonomous from the USAF in January 1952.

## Col. Dean Hess and Bout One

On Dec. 7, 1941, Dean Hess was an ordained minister of the Christian Church, living in Cleveland, Ohio. After Pearl Harbor, realizing he could not expect his parishioners to bear arms for the U.S. if he was not willing to do so, he enlisted in the Aviation Cadet Program and became a pilot. Sent to France in

1944, Hess flew P-47s on 63 combat missions.

Following World War II, Hess returned to the pulpit and to graduate school, but in July 1948, he was recalled to active duty. Stationed in Japan when the Korean War began, he was immediately sent to Korea as commanding officer of “Bout One.” By June 1951 when he left Korea, he had flown 250 combat missions. During this period, Hess started an unofficial program for giving food and shelter to orphan children, and helped evacuate them to safety.

In 1957 Hess published his story in a book entitled *Battle Hymn* which was made into a motion picture that starred Rock Hudson as Dean Hess. Hess’ royalties from both the book and the movie were used to construct a new orphanage near Seoul, Korea. Hess retired from the USAF as a colonel in 1969.



Tired USAF and Royal Australian Air Force Mustang pilots being debriefed after an attack on communist forces southeast of Seoul in February 1951.



Hess in the cockpit of his F-51D.

# Interdiction: Tightening the Noose

“There is every evidence that the enemy has been caused increasing difficulty by our concerted efforts in destroying his trains, trucks and other equipment.”

- Gen. Earle E. Partridge, Commander, 5th Air Force, March 1951

*Interdiction destroys an enemy's transportation system and materiel en route. Interdiction missions accounted for nearly half of U.S. Air Force combat missions in Korea. USAF interdiction efforts, using new technology and tactics, destroyed large amounts of enemy materiel and limited communist build-ups for large-scale offensives.*

During the first year of the Korean War, USAF interdiction destroyed trains, bridges, roads and trucks in an effort to slow or halt North Korean transportation. The communists were vulnerable to this kind of attack because of their higher supply needs while attacking and retreating, and they lost large amounts of war material.

By the summer of 1951, the Korean War had changed to a static war and FEAF reexamined the roles of airpower. Interdiction seemed to hold the most promise as an offensive use of airpower. While many ground commanders throughout the war believed the Air Force should focus on providing direct air support for ground troops, USAF leaders stressed the importance of interdiction. Large-scale interdiction campaigns in 1951 and 1952 enjoyed some success, although the static enemy did not need as much supply as during previous major operations and was quick to rebuild railways and bridges.

Interdiction tactics changed constantly as the communists adjusted their movements. Enemy trains and trucks moved by night and remained hidden by day. In the last year of the war, new tactics involving the combined efforts of fighter-bombers by day and light bombers by night proved successful.

Interdiction continued in the strategic “air pressure” campaign from 1952 until the signing of the armistice in 1953. The air pressure campaign was targeted to produce costly economic damage to the communists and reduced their will to continue fighting (many communist prisoners complained of inadequate supply as the biggest cause of poor morale). Perhaps more importantly, interdiction efforts during the last two years of the war prevented the enemy



Air Force light bombers laid waste to this cluster of storage warehouses west of Pyongyang, North Korea.

from starting major offensives by limiting his ability to transport material.

## 5-inch HVAR

USAF fighter-bombers used the High Velocity Aircraft Rocket (HVAR) to knock out communist tanks, trains and bunkers. Developed by the U.S. Navy in World War II, the HVAR's warhead carried a deadly load of TNT that sped to the target at 1,360 feet per second.

## Tetrahedrons

Stopping enemy traffic at night proved to be a difficult problem. One of the more interesting attempts to stop Communist trucks involved dropping tetrahedrons on North Korean roads. Those trucks that were left stranded could then be destroyed by UN fighter-bombers the following morning. In the end, the concept proved to be impractical and was discontinued. On display are reproductions of the type used in Korea.

## A-Frames

The USAF interdiction campaign struck targets as large as trains or as small as single communist soldiers with A-frame backpacks. Used as an effective means of transportation in Korea for centuries, the A-frame allowed its bearer to carry a tremendous load.

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*(Interdiction continued)*

### **B-26 Invader in Korea**

“Dear Sis ... The Commies have .50-cal. machine guns, 20 mm, 40 mm, 85 mm and 105 mm anti-aircraft guns and some son-of-a-b\*\*\*\* with a rifle shot us down ... I don’t reckon you need to tell mom about my hairy story.”

- Letter written home by Lt. Charles Hinton on January 8, 1952

The World War II-era B-26 Invader was the Air Force’s light bomber during the Korean War. 3rd Bomb Group (Light) and 452nd (later 17th) Bomb Group (Light) air crews used their B-26s to strike the enemy’s storage centers and transportation system. For the first year of the war, they flew these “interdiction” missions during the day, but increased enemy antiaircraft fire and the MiG threat later forced them to fly at night.



Davis

### **Leading From The Front: Col. Joseph Davis Jr.**

Thunderjet wing commander Col. Joseph Davis, Jr. displayed exceptional leadership by personally leading successful close air support strikes and interdiction raids over North Korea. By war’s end, he was the commander of all F-84 units stationed in Korea.

Perhaps the most important mission Davis led was on July 27, 1953, the last day of the war. United Nations forces hoped to knock out all the enemy’s airfields to prevent them from bringing in more jet fighters (the terms of the armistice limited the communists to what remained in North Korea at the time of the cease fire). Col. Davis led a formation of 24 F-84s in an attack against Chunggangjin airfield, deep in North Korea and only 300 feet from the Yalu River and the Chinese border.

Davis showed outstanding navigational skill by leading the formation directly to the target. He dove at the airfield through enemy gun fire, and placed his bombs precisely on the target, thereby marking it

for the other aircraft. The attack rendered the enemy airfield unusable for jet aircraft. For his gallantry and skill during this mission, Davis was awarded the Silver Star and the South Korean Award of Military Merit Ulchi with Silver Star.

Davis commanded the 474th Fighter-Bomber Wing from December 1952 until the unit was attached to the 58th Fighter-Bomber Wing (Reinforced) in April 1953—Davis then became the deputy commander of the 58th FBW(R), which contained all the Air Force’s F-84 units in Korea. On July 1, 1953, he became the 58th FBW(R) commander.

Already a combat veteran of the U.S. Army Air Forces during WWII, Col. Davis continued his distinguished military career after Korea. In the 1950s he flew various aircraft types as the Deputy Commander for Flight Test and Chief Test Pilot at the Wright Air Development Center. In the 1960s he came up with the revolutionary concept of the laser-guided bomb, and spearheaded its development into operational use.

Davis retired in 1969 with over 10,000 hours of military flight time (including about 580 hours of combat time in Korea and WWII). His decorations included the Silver Star, Legion of Merit with three oak leaf clusters, the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster, and the Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters.



As the sun sets, Maj. Robert Fortney and Capt. Bob Dorbacker stand fully outfitted for the night’s mission. Their aircraft is painted black for camouflage at in the dark.

# Close Air Support

“... The support that our tactical air has given to our ground troops in Korea has perhaps never been equaled in the history of modern war.”

- Gen. Douglas MacArthur, commander of U.S. and UN forces in Korea

*Close air support missions destroy enemy targets close to friendly ground troops. They require a high level of communication between air and ground forces to prevent accidental casualties. When the USAF became a separate service, it retained the responsibility of close air support for the Army. In spite of problems with aircraft, equipment, and communication between services, close air support missions were vital to the success of UN efforts.*

Following Chinese intervention in the war, the Air Force used both tactical fighters and strategic bombers for close air support, attacking vulnerable communist troops in the open, and helping to slow the enemy drive. After the front stabilized in 1951, close air support was less effective against the dug-in communists. Even so, when they left their trenches to attack, close air support once again thinned their ranks.

A joint system of coordinating USAF, Navy and Marine ground support had its first test in Korea. Perhaps the most important element of USAF close air support was the extensive use of “Mosquito” airborne forward air controllers (FACs) and ground-based Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP). The airborne FACs



Bomb dump with several M26A1 bomb clusters. Each one scattered twenty 20-lb. fragmentation bombs as it fell. This weapon was effective against enemy troops and trucks.

flew “low and slow,” locating and marking targets for other aircraft to attack. Air Force TACP personnel also called in airstrikes and coordinated with ground troops.

The Air Force continuously improved its methods of directing close air support in Korea. Advances in radar, communications, vehicles, aircraft and tactics all helped Airmen protect troops on the ground. The Airmen of the USAF, along with Navy, Marine and UN air crews, provided more air support to ground forces than ever before.

## Mosquitoes in Korea

During the Korean War, the personnel of the 6147th Tactical Air Control Group, known as the “Mosquitoes,” created a large-scale, effective forward air control (FAC) system that included both airborne and ground-based FACs.

The primary FAC missions were to direct strike aircraft against enemy targets and conduct visual reconnaissance. Forward air controllers matched the most important targets with the limited resources available, significantly raising the efficiency of air strikes against the enemy.

Since the USAF did not have any airborne FAC units at the beginning of the war, pilots flew the first missions with borrowed Army liaison aircraft only



Lt. Daniel “Chappie” James in Korea. He later rose through the ranks to become the first African-American four-star general in the USAF.

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*(Close Air Support continued)*

two weeks after the war started. To perform these missions, Mosquito FACs flew “low and slow” over enemy positions so they could spot and mark targets, a practice that left them particularly vulnerable to anti-aircraft fire.

The value of these early Mosquitoes was readily apparent, and the hastily created, squadron-sized unit steadily grew in size while it developed the tactics of airborne forward air control. By the end of the war, the Mosquitoes flew over 40,000 sorties in support of United Nations ground forces. In spite of their success during the Korean War, the USAF disbanded the Mosquitoes and their mission in 1956, believing that slow flying airborne FACs were not practical in the supersonic jet age. Ironically, 10 years later in Vietnam, the USAF reexamined the legacy of the Mosquitoes when it once again needed airborne FACs.

### **North American T-6D “Mosquito”**

During the Korean War, airborne forward air controllers (FACs) chose the T-6 as the best available aircraft because it could operate from small, rough airstrips and was easy to maintain. More importantly, the T-6 was faster and more rugged than the light liaison aircraft they initially flew. Even though this WWII trainer was not designed to fly in combat, it performed well in its role as an airborne FAC, where it became known as the “Mosquito.”

The T-6, originally known as the Texan, was the



The enemy quickly learned the importance of the Mosquito FACs and targeted them with rifle and anti-aircraft fire. This aircraft made it back safely despite damage caused by an anti-aircraft shell.



A Mosquito crew consisted of a USAF pilot in front and an observer in back. The observer could be an Air Force officer, or a U.S. or UN soldier familiar with the local geography.

sole single-engine advanced trainer for the USAAF (U.S. Army Air Forces) during WWII, and 15,495 were built between 1938 and 1945. The T-6 continued to train pilots in the newly formed USAF.

The T-6D on display, 42-84216, flew as an early Mosquito with the 6147th Tactical Air Control Group during the first two years of the Korean War. Ironically, it was converted to a mosquito spraying aircraft in 1952. Two years later, the USAF transferred it to the fledgling Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF). After retiring this aircraft, the ROKAF placed it on display outside for several years. The museum acquired in 1995, and after restoration it went on display in 2001.

### **TECHNICAL NOTES:**

Top speed: 206 mph

Range: 1,000 miles with a 55-gallon drop tank

### **Forward Air Control Communications**

Since Air Force and Army radios were not compatible, Mosquito airborne FACs and TACP personnel were critical for communicating between ground and air units.

1. Mosquito T-6s communicated with all the other elements using different radios, including the 8-channel ARC-3 and the portable SCR-300 (or “walkie-talkie”).

2. USAF Tactical Air Control Parties (TACPs), provided ground control of close air support in concert with airborne Mosquitoes, and could also communicate with all elements.

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*(Close Air Support continued)*

3. Ground forces could communicate directly with airborne forward air controllers via the SCR-300 “walkie-talkie” if necessary.

4. Fighter aircraft were directed to the front by Mellow Control and Mosquito Mellow. When they arrived, airborne Mosquitoes directed them to specific targets.

5. Mosquito Mellow (also called Mosquito Shirley), whose crew included U.S. Army personnel, relayed information and could divert air strikes for greater efficiency.

6. Mellow Control (TACC or Tactical Air Control Center) allocated fighter aircraft to different areas of the front based on information given by Mosquito Mellow and individual Mosquito forward air controllers.

### **Mosquito Radios**

Compared to modern communications gear, radio equipment in the early 1950s was complicated, bulky, and temperamental. In most cases, a “radio” was a set of several boxes, each performing a different function. Moreover, they relied on fragile glass vacuum tubes that could easily break. These radios required extensively trained personnel to operate and maintain them.

### **Tactical Air Control Parties**

An Air Force TACP (Tactical Air Control Party) consisted of an experienced Mosquito pilot, a radio operator, a radio mechanic, and one or two radio jeeps. TACP personnel lived as soldiers during their tour at the front and carried weapons to defend themselves against attack—they were unofficially nicknamed the “Air Force infantry.”

The original mission of the TACP was to directly control air strikes at the front line. The visual limits of these ground-based observers in Korea’s mountains, however, led to the creation of the highly successful Mosquito airborne forward air controllers (FACs). Though the airborne FACs directed most of the air strikes, the TACPs continued to play an important role.

The TACPs became communication links between ground commanders, airborne Mosquito FACs, and strike aircraft (the TACP jeeps were the only ground units at the front that could communicate between

incompatible radio systems). They also coordinated artillery fire with air strikes. Further, having an experienced Mosquito pilot so close at hand enabled ground commanders to effectively use air power.



The back of a TACP jeep was filled with equipment. The types of radios used in TACP jeeps evolved over the course of the war.



Lt. James Troublefield, a TACP forward air controller (on the right with headset and binoculars) is observing an airstrike he is directing in concert with an airborne T-6 Mosquito.



# Strategic Bombing: New Flexibility



Maj. Harry Bailey points out the often-visited target of Sinuiju, North Korea. On the right of the map is a red dot that represents their starting point, Yokota Air Base near Tokyo, Japan.

“Practically all of the major military industrial targets strategically important to the enemy forces and to their war potential have been neutralized.”

- Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer, FEAF Commander, less than two months into the Korean War

*After destroying North Korea's industry in the first two months of the war, USAF B-29 Superfortresses operated in many varied roles, from close support of troops on the ground to bombing bridges on the Yalu River. The air war in Korea also saw the extensive use of smaller tactical aircraft to attack strategic targets.*

In World War II, the division between strategic bombers and tactical aircraft was clear. Long range, multi-engine strategic aircraft bombed factories, key bridges, ports and power systems far behind enemy lines. Smaller, short-to-medium range tactical aircraft hit targets closer to the front lines. In Korea, this division blurred as the available strategic bomber, the B-29 Superfortress, was used in both of these roles.

Within the first two months of the Korean War, the strategic bombing campaign was considered over. Most of the industrial targets deep in North Korea had been destroyed or seriously damaged—although some potential strategic targets still remained untouched for political reasons. These included the port city of Rashin, located only 17 miles from the USSR border, and hydroelectric power facilities in North Korea (which also supplied power to Manchuria and Sibe-

ria).

The Chinese intervention in November 1950 signaled a new escalation in the Korean War and new responsibilities for bomber crews. Superfortresses hammered towns and cities all along the North Korean side of the Chinese border, and interrupted the enemy's transportation system by bombing bridges and railroad marshaling yards. They also neutralized enemy airfields (including those situated along the Korean side of the Manchurian border) and attacked enemy troop concentrations.

With the first raids into northwestern Korea came the first MiG-15 attacks against B-29s. Between November 1950 and November 1951, the Air Force lost 16 B-29s to enemy action, in spite of F-86 and F-84 fighter escort. The MiG threat forced Far East Air Forces (FEAF) Bomber Command to switch almost exclusively to night attacks for the rest of the war.

In the spring of 1952, with a stalemate on the

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Lead 19th Bomb Group B-29 begins the bombing attack against a target in North Korea in February 1951.

*(Strategic Bombing continued)*

ground and the failure of a negotiated truce, FEAF began a new policy of “selective destruction” using “air pressure” to force the communists to settle. The goal was to make the war in Korea too costly for the communists by destroying specific high-value economic targets.

The air pressure campaign started on June 24, 1952, when USAF, U.S. Navy and Marine fighter-bombers attacked North Korean hydroelectric dams, devastating the enemy’s power supply. The air pressure raids continued into 1953 with strikes against key North Korean communication, transportation, manufacturing, supply, and power centers. In May 1953, Air Force F-84 Thunderjets attacked irrigation dams

## Reconnaissance

“Korea not only presented a different kind of war for military planners and politicians, it also presented a different kind of place for aerial reconnaissance to prove itself.”

*- Brig. Gen. George W. Goddard, pioneer of modern air reconnaissance*

*U.S. Air Force reconnaissance units in the Far East were undermanned and under-equipped, and jet aircraft fitted with World War II-era cameras posed new problems. Even so, Air Force aerial reconnaissance provided almost half of ground intelligence gathered, proving its worth during the war and ensuring its support in the years to come.*

When North Korea invaded, the Air Force had few tactical reconnaissance assets. This created problems in knowing where the enemy was, and what his next move might be. Only one RF-80A reconnaissance squadron and a handful of other types operated in the Far East. The few Air Force reconnaissance and photo development personnel available did their best to track the rapid North Korean advance.

In January 1951 the situation improved with the arrival of reconnaissance expert Col. Karl “Pop” Polifka. He instituted many positive changes, beginning with the activation of the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing. Colonel Polifka also made the best use of the limited forces under his command by creating a

priority system assigning reconnaissance missions to those most in need.

for the first time, causing extensive flood damage. The air pressure campaign was a means of striking at the enemy when the situation on the ground was deadlocked, and it was a significant factor in bringing the fighting in Korea to a close.

Many features of the strategic air war in Korea pointed to USAF tactics of the future: the use of air power against sensitive enemy targets as a bargaining chip in negotiations, the first extensive use of precision bombing at night by strategic aircraft, and the large-scale use of strategic aircraft against tactical targets. Moreover, the use of smaller, tactical aircraft against strategic targets foreshadowed later multi-role aircraft that could function as fighters, fighter-bombers, and even long-range strategic bombers.

The Air Force flew reconnaissance missions for the Army, and also conducted other important photo missions. Aerial reconnaissance played an important part in identifying and rating potential bombing targets as well as their respective anti-aircraft threats. Reconnaissance also determined post-strike bombing damage, and detected enemy efforts to repair airfields, bridges and factories.

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Ground crew prepare to fit the RF-80 *Emma-Dee* with nose cameras as reconnaissance pilots watch.

*(Reconnaissance continued)*

## Inchon

The key to the UN counter-offensive in 1950 was a surprise amphibious landing far behind enemy lines at Inchon. Timely reconnaissance contributed to the landing's stunning success. Shortly before the landing, U.S. Navy planners needed to know the precise heights of Inchon's sea walls at low and high tides. Four RF-80 missions quickly delivered 2,100 photos that provided the measurements and greatly aided the landing.



Col. Karl "Pop" Polifka, whose efforts improved reconnaissance effectiveness in Korea.

# Airlift: Combat Cargo

"The airdrops were a godsend."

- Marine Sgt. Lee Bergee, a survivor of the Chosin Retreat

*At the beginning of the Korean War, the value of large-scale combat zone airlift had yet to be tested. As the war went on, Air Force transports gave ground commanders new flexibility, proving the crucial importance of USAF airlift.*

At the outbreak of the Korean War, U.S. Air Force airlift capability in the Far East suffered from a lack of numbers and central direction. In August 1950 the situation improved considerably with the arrival of additional airlift units and Maj. Gen. William H. Tunner, who had recent experience running the successful Berlin Airlift. Tunner created Combat Cargo Command to perform all intra-theater airlift duties, including landing and dropping supplies, troop trans-



The enormous C-124 Globemaster entered the USAF inventory in mid-1950, and had unmatched carrying capacity.

port, dropping paratroopers, psychological operations, medical evacuation and air rescue.

Airlift provided quick response in both offensive and defensive circumstances. After the Inchon landing, Combat Cargo supplied the 8th Army by air after it rapidly outpaced its ground supply. This allowed the Army to continue pursuing and pressuring the North Koreans.

During the first Chinese offensive in November 1950, aerial resupply often meant the difference between survival and destruction. Combat Cargo conducted the largest airdrops in history up to that time in support of retreating UN ground forces. During the second Chinese offensive in the spring of 1951, Combat Cargo again supported UN troops on the ground, delivering an average of 1,100 tons of supplies (including about 600 tons of artillery shells) daily during peak periods.

The final tally for Combat Cargo was impressive. With an average of 140 operational transports, it flew 210,343 missions, brought in 391,763 tons of materiel, airdropped 18,000 tons of supplies, and carried 2,605,591 passengers. USAF Combat Cargo Command illustrated both the critical importance of a unified theater airlift command and the combat flexibility airlift provided to commanders on the ground.

## Chosin Reservoir

One of the most dramatic Korean airlift episodes was the supply of the 20,000 beleaguered troops of

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(Airlift continued)

the 1st Marine and U.S. Army 7th Infantry Divisions during their harrowing retreat from the Chosin (also known as Changjin) Reservoir late in 1950. Far in front of allied lines, outnumbered, cut off from land supply, and suffering in the bitter cold of the Korean winter, these divisions faced annihilation by Chinese forces.

To ease the critical situation, Air Force C-119s dropped supplies to the retreating forces while USAF and Marine C-47s landed supplies and flew out thousands of wounded soldiers from rough strips at Hagaru-ri and Koto-ri. During a 12-day peak, USAF aircraft airdropped or air-landed about 1,700 tons of supplies and ammunition.

The retreating forces were almost lost when they reached a damaged bridge over an impassable chasm. Working with Army riggers, eight USAF C-119 crews airdropped 16 tons of portable bridge spans. This operation, never done before, enabled U.S. units to escape over the gorge.

By the time they reached the evacuation port of Hungnam, U.S. ground forces had suffered more than 5,000 combat casualties and many thousands more from frostbite and illness. With the necessary tools provided by airlift, however, the Marines and soldiers had successfully fought their way down 80 miles of hotly contested mountain roads. USAF airlift prevented the retreat from becoming a military disaster.

### Operation Kiddy Car

The poverty and hardship of war orphaned many helpless Korean children, and 5th Air Force Airmen in Seoul decided to unofficially feed and shelter them. Command Chaplain Lt. Col Russell L. Blaisdell, Lt. Col. Dean Hess and others organized relief for the children. Chaplain Blaisdell saved many orphans from near certain death by collecting them from the streets with the help of Staff Sgt. Merle “Mike”

Strang and Korean social workers. Blaisdell worked to find shelter and medical care for children, while he and Hess arranged invaluable food, money and clothing contributions. When communist forces pushed UN troops south and threatened to take Seoul in the winter of 1950, the Korean population—especially the orphans—faced a dire crisis. Blaisdell tried several avenues to save nearly 1,000 children by ground and sea convoy, but little help was available.

Blaisdell and Hess devised a plan to transport the children to Cheju-do, an island off the southern coast of Korea, where Hess’s men were to be stationed. This plan became known as OPERATION KIDDY CAR. As communist forces approached, Blaisdell’s

dogged persistence paid off: 5th Air Force Chief of Operations Col. T.C. Rogers found 16 C-54 transports to evacuate the orphans. Commandeering several trucks at the port of Inchon, Blaisdell orchestrated orphans’ and rescue workers’ movement to nearby Kimpo airfield and the waiting aircraft.

The transports flew the children to Cheju-do, where Lt. Col. Hess made arrangements to receive them. With contributions from U.S. troops and many others, an orphanage established there by Hess was able to accept

even more children.

In 1957 Hess published the Kiddy Car story in his book *Battle Hymn*, later made into a motion picture. Royalties from the book and movie went to build a new orphanage near Seoul. In 2001 Chaplain Blaisdell returned to Korea to visit those he helped to save, and has been honored along with Hess as a great friend of the South Korean people. Blaisdell, Strang, Hess and many other Airmen who selflessly aided helpless orphans amid the terrible destruction of the Korean War exemplified the continuing humanitarian spirit of the U.S. Air Force.

In December 1950 Operation Kiddy Car saved the lives of 1,000 South Korean orphans by evacuating them by air from the mainland to Cheju-do, a southern island, as communist troops advanced.



A Korean toddler climbs aboard a C-54 bound for Cheju-do.

# Special Operations



The Air Force used 85-foot crash rescue boats to insert agents in North Korea. This boat was damaged by enemy fighter aircraft near Cho-do island off the coast of North Korea.

“We started dropping people way up north. We would fly eight-hour missions in a C-47, dropping people all over.”

- Capt. (later Brig. Gen.) Harry “Heinie” Aderholt

*During the Korean War, Air Force personnel conducted highly-classified special operations in enemy territory, including partisan insertions, intelligence gathering, flare-drops, and psychological warfare. Airmen participated in these dangerous missions at great risk, and could expect particularly brutal treatment from the enemy if captured.*

One important top secret mission inserting Korean agents and guerillas into North Korea under the code-name “Operation Aviary.” “Special Air Mission” air crews dropped hundreds into North Korea by parachute from C-46s, C-47s and B-26s. Others were inserted by C-119s, B-29s, UH-19 helicopters, SA-16 amphibians, or Air Force crash boats.

These special missions demanded exceptional skill. To avoid detection, aircrews flew at low altitude at night in mountain valleys—the slightest error in navigation could cause them to fly into a cliffside. Flying at this level also made them vulnerable to ground fire.

Air Force-inserted partisans sabotaged key infrastructure like bridges, attacked enemy forces, and gathered vital intelligence on enemy military strength. The guerillas not only disrupted the enemy, but they also provided warning of impending attacks.

Air Force aircrews orbited above the partisans at prearranged times to relay radio messages and drop supplies. If a guerilla survived the mission, they made their way back to friendly lines on foot (in the first year of the Korean War, about 70% returned safely, but this number dropped later in the war).

The Air Force also carried out psychological warfare against the communists with leaflet drops and loudspeaker broadcasts over North Korea. These missions often targeted the enemy’s will to fight by enticing them to surrender or face annihilation (a legitimate concern—82% of captured enemy soldiers said they feared air attack more than anything else). Some leaflets and broadcasts also warned civilians to leave an area for their own safety.

“Operation Firefly” flare-dropping missions helped deny the enemy cover of night. Air Force flare-dropping aircrews could be found both over the battlefield, and behind the lines illuminating enemy convoys for bombers to strike. The enemy rarely moved or attacked during the day because of swift and deadly air attacks from UN air forces.

## 1st Lt. James Pragar

1st Lt. James Pragar, a C-47 pilot, flew special operation missions in Korea in Baker Flight, 6153rd Air Base Squadron (later designated the 6167th Operations Squadron) from July 1951-February 1952. His flights included agent drops, leaflet drops, loudspeaker missions, agent radio relays and partisan aerial resupply. Like many special operation C-47 pilots, Pragar flew special operations missions at night, and VIP flights for generals and political leaders during the day.

Pragar received the Distinguished Flying Cross for a six hour, low-level mission he flew on Sept. 12, 1951. Pragar dropped supplies to agents in northwestern North Korea in poor weather. His citation noted



Pragar

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*(Special Operations continued)*

“This mission was an extremely dangerous one in good weather and doubly so in bad weather.”



Ledford

### Tech. Sgt. James H. Ledford

On Dec. 8, 1952, disaster struck a 6167th Operations Squadron B-26 crew on a low-level classified mission over North Korea—an antiaircraft shell exploded next to the pilot, Maj. Lawrence Freligh, severely wounding him. Freligh slumped against the control column, sending the aircraft into a dive. Flight Engineer Tech. Sgt.

James H. Ledford saved the aircraft and crew by pulling the B-26 out before it hit the ground.

Freligh was too wounded to be moved out of the pilot's seat, and he told the navigator and Ledford to bail out, but they both refused. Ledford then helped the partially incapacitated pilot fly back to base and land the damaged B-26.

For their actions, both Freligh and Ledford received the Distinguished Service Cross.

## Air Rescue

“After a successful rescue mission, morale would be sky high from the rescue crew right down to the administrative clerk—we all had a part in it.”

- Richard McVay, 3rd Air Rescue Squadron Operations Officer

*With courage and daring, the U.S. Air Force Air Rescue Service saved the lives of hundreds of UN personnel during the Korean War. This war saw the first large-scale use of helicopters in rescuing Airmen from behind enemy lines and evacuating the wounded.*

The USAF's air rescue mission came into its own during the Korean War. Crews of amphibious aircraft performed spectacular rescues from North Korean riv-

### Korean War Leaflets and Safe Conduct Passes

Leaflets dropped by Air Force aircraft communicated many different themes. One type of leaflet was a warning against UN air attack. The ones meant for civilians directed them to stay away from unexploded ordnance, or roads, railways and other military targets. The ones aimed toward soldiers tried to instill fear by warning that the only escape from the “Flying Tigers of the Free World” was to surrender. Another main type of leaflet portrayed the people of North Korea as pawns of the Korean, Chinese and Soviet Communists. These leaflets blamed Kim Il Sung, Mao Zedong and Josef Stalin for lying to the Korean people and prolonging the war.



Air Force aircraft dropped certificates that promised enemy soldiers safe passage through UN lines if they surrendered.

ers and off the coast, and USAF air rescue units used helicopters to reach downed Airmen on land deep in enemy territory. Rescue crews flying modified B-29 and B-17 bombers also dropped lifeboats to Airmen downed in the ocean, and a small number of Air Force crash rescue boats operating from Japan and Korea retrieved downed Airmen. Knowing they could be rescued quickly by air or sea greatly improved aircrews' morale.

The Air Force also evacuated many wounded troops from the front lines. In the war's early stages, USAF H-5 helicopters rushed critically wounded soldiers from the front to Army MASH (Mobile Army

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*(Air Rescue continued)*



With the increasing use of helicopters, the USAF developed new rescue techniques including using hydraulic winches.

Surgical Hospital) units. Many would have died without such timely transport and treatment. During the course of the war, the U.S. Army eventually took over front-line helicopter medical evacuation, though USAF helicopters were still used on occasion.

Using helicopters for air rescue and front-line evacuation in Korea represented a fundamental change in tactics. Although helicopters were used for rescue at the end of World War II, it was not until Korea that their use became widespread and efficient helicopter rescue methods were developed. At the same time, the Korean War was the last time the Air Force used sea-going boats for combat rescue.

The Air Rescue Service brought back 996 UN personnel from behind enemy lines, including 170 American Airmen. Air Rescue also evacuated 8,598 sick and wounded UN troops, many of these from the front lines. With this record, the Air Rescue Service in Korea truly lived up to its motto, "That Others May Live."

### **Lifeboat from the Sky**

The Edo company developed this model A-3 lifeboat in 1947. Modified B-29 bombers, known as SB-29s, carried these boats. SB-29s accompanied bomber formations to the coast of North Korea and circled

there while the bombers hit targets inland. If a returning bomber had to ditch in the ocean, a lifeboat could be dropped to save the crew.

The boat could carry 15 people. It was equipped with food and water for several days, and also had a small engine. The boat was self-righting, featured covers to keep out sun, wind, and rain, and had a ladder for boarding. About 100 of these boats were made.

### **TECHNICAL NOTES:**

Length: 30 ft.

Weight: 2,736 lbs. fully equipped

Speed: 8 knots on calm water

Engine: Gas, 4-cylinder Red Wing Meteor 20



An Air Rescue Service SB-29 of the 5th Rescue Squadron with an Edo A-3 lifeboat attached.

### **Air Force Sailors in Korea**

The U.S. Air Force's crash rescue boats were little-known but important parts of the rescue effort in Korea. After WWII, the Army Air Forces' dismantled its extensive network of rescue boats, but the war in Korea made them once again necessary. The Air Force regained a limited number of boats from the Army and Navy, and found Airmen with boating skills to man them. In most cases, enlisted men commanded rescue boats. The boats were not part of the Air Rescue Service, but instead were assigned to local air base groups.

Crash boat duty was difficult. Boats stationed off the coasts of Korea and Japan moved constantly to stay in the path of likely aircraft routes from several air bases. The boats had no heating systems, so crews suffered in the frigid winter weather off the Korea peninsula. Crews typically lived onboard for two to three months at a time, returning to harbor bases for

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*(Air Rescue continued)*

food, water, and maintenance.

In addition to rescue duties, Air Force crash boat crews also transported clandestine agents and armed raiding parties to and from North Korea, often exchanging fire with communist forces in hostile waters. They armed their fast 85-foot boats with heavy machine guns, and though some boats were damaged, none were lost in combat.

The models at the museum represent two types of boats the Air Force used in Korea (painted in their WWII USAAF and Army colors). The USAF disbanded crash boat units in 1957, as helicopters and aircraft became increasingly effective in rescue work.

### Exposure Suits for Sea Rescue

Exposure suits protected downed pilots and other air crew and passengers from freezing in the icy waters of the Yellow Sea between Korea and Japan. Fighter pilots commonly wore exposure suits while flying, since they would not have time to put one on if they had to eject from a damaged aircraft. Air crew and passengers in larger aircraft like bombers and transports had access to quick-donning exposure suits packed in highly visible yellow bags hung inside aircraft. If a plane ditched in the water, they could rapidly slip them on for protection from the elements.



This is the type worn by fighter pilots over their G-suits, with a life preserver.

## Aeromedical Evacuation

“When they take care of you like that you don’t mind fighting.”

- *Wounded 8th Army soldier on his evacuation by air*

*The method of evacuating sick and wounded troops improved during the Korean War. Air transport of wounded was used in World War II, but in Korea a larger proportion of patients were evacuated by air, increasing the expectation of survival. The increasing availability and speed of air transport saved thousands of lives.*

Medical evacuation at the beginning of the Korean War was based on ground and sea transport. Upon his arrival in August 1950, Brig. Gen. William H. Tunner directed his staff to study the possibility of air trans-

port as a standard procedure for moving wounded and sick troops. The technique became known as aeromedical evacuation.

By October 1950 Combat Cargo transports began returning injured personnel to Japan or airfields in South Korea according to a centralized control plan. The Air Force’s Military Air Transport System (MATS) assumed responsibility for airlifting patients from Japan back to the United States. In flight, Air Force nurses and medical specialists cared for the sick and wounded. By the end 1950, air transport became the standard for casualty movement.

The USAF aeromedical evacuation system, along with the use of antibiotics, helicopter evacuation,

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*(Aeromedical Evacuation continued)*

and new surgical techniques, cut the death rate from wounds to half the rate of WWII. These advances greatly improved the morale and eased the suffering of wounded and sick soldiers.

By the end of the war, Combat Cargo moved 311,673 wounded and sick personnel (some individuals were counted more than once in this figure because of more than one move). In addition to Combat Cargo's impressive evacuation record, the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) moved 43,196 casualties home to the United States. The heart of the system set up during the Korean War still exists today, with the USAF fully responsible for all aspects of military aeromedical evacuation behind the front lines.



Loading casualties onto a C-54D at Taegu, 1951.

### **An Important Moment for Military Women**

*The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 established a permanent place for women in the military. Air Force women contributed to the war effort both in Korea and in support roles elsewhere in the Far East.*

Before the Korean War, women serving in the U.S. armed forces did vital wartime work, but then went back to domestic life in peacetime. Based on the value of women's WWII contributions, the Army asked in 1946 that women be made a permanent part of the military. The resulting legislation, signed by President Harry S. Truman on June 12, 1948, made the change for all branches, including the new U.S. Air Force.

Women, while made permanent, were initially limited to 2 percent of the total force. In USAF

operations in the Far East, the only women permitted to serve in the Korean battle zone were medical air evacuation nurses of the USAF Nurse Corps. In the process of saving countless UN personnel, three USAF flight nurses lost their lives in Korea, and two received the Distinguished Flying Cross (one posthumously).

Women in the Air Force (WAF) personnel carried out numerous support roles at rear-echelon bases in Japan, including air traffic control, weather observation, radar operation and photo interpretation. In June 1953 the number of WAFs serving in Japan peaked at about 600. By the end of the Korean War, the total WAF strength worldwide reached 12,800 officers and enlisted women.

### **Capt. Lillian Kinkela Keil: Pioneering Flight Nurse**

Capt. Lillian Kinkela Keil was one of the most accomplished women in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War, and one of the most decorated women in American military history. Her work in aviation began in 1938 when Kinkela (later Keil), a registered nurse, was hired as one of United Airlines' first flight attendants. During WWII, she became a flight nurse and made 250 evacuation flights in England and France, plus several transatlantic flights, caring for wounded patients.

Returning to active duty when the Korean War broke out, Lillian Kinkela flew another 175 evacuation missions in Korea, and was one of only 30 Air Force flight nurses in the Far East. Her extraordinary experiences inspired the 1953 Hollywood movie *Flight Nurse*, and she remained active in veterans' affairs until her death in 2005.



Lt. (later Capt.) Kinkela at Tachikawa AB, Japan, during the Korean War.

# Medal of Honor Recipients

“The President may award ... a medal of honor ... to a person who, while a member of the [armed forces], distinguished himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty ...”

*Four USAF pilots received the nation’s highest combat decoration, the Medal of Honor, during the Korean War. All four acted above and beyond the call of duty, sacrificing their lives in battle.*



Seville

## Maj. Louis J. Seville

Maj. Louis Joseph Seville flew 68 combat missions in World War II as a B-26 bomber pilot. He became commanding officer of the 67th Squadron, 18th Fighter-Bomber Group, in the fall of 1948. When the Korean War began, his squadron was one of the first sent to Japan.

On Aug. 5, 1950, during a close air support mission, antiaircraft fire damaged Maj. Seville’s F-51. Rather than abandon his aircraft, Seville continued the attack under heavy fire. His aircraft was again damaged, and he dived to his death onto the enemy gun battery.

### Medal of Honor Citation

Major Louis J. Seville, United States Air Force, a member of the 67th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 18th Fighter Bomber Group, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty near Hanchang, Korea on 5 August 1950. During an attack on a camouflaged area containing a concentration of enemy troops, artillery, and armored vehicles, Major Seville’s F-51 aircraft was severely damaged by antiaircraft fire. Although fully cognizant of the short period he could remain airborne, he deliberately ignored the possibility of survival by abandoning the aircraft or by crash landing, and continued his attack against the enemy forces threatening the security of

friendly ground troops. In his determination to inflict maximum damage upon the enemy, Major Seville again exposed himself to the intense fire of enemy gun batteries and dived on the target to his death. The superior leadership, daring, and selfless devotion to duty which he displayed in the execution of an extremely dangerous mission were an inspiration to both his subordinates and superiors and reflect the highest credit upon himself, the U.S. Air Force, and the armed forces of the United Nations.

## Capt. John S. Walmsley Jr.

Capt. John Springer Walmsley Jr. served as a flying instructor in the United States and Japan throughout the 1940s. In June 1951, Capt. Walmsley went to Korea as a B-26 pilot in the 8th Squadron, 3rd Bomb Group. He completed 25 combat missions.

On Sept. 14, 1951, Capt. Walmsley successfully attacked an enemy supply train. When he ran out of ammunition, he used a searchlight mounted on his aircraft to illuminate the target for another B-26. Despite heavy antiaircraft fire, he continued to light the area. When his B-26 was hit, it crashed into the surrounding mountains and exploded.

Walmsley’s navigator/bombardier, 2nd Lt. William D. Mulkins, and photographer Capt Philip W. Browning also died in the crash. One crewmember survived, though—gunner Master Sgt. George Moror was badly burned but escaped from the aircraft. He became a POW, and survived the war.

### Medal of Honor Citation

Captain John S. Walmsley, Jr., United States Air Force, a member of the 8th Bombardment Squadron, 3rd Bomb Wing, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above



Walmsley

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*(Medal of Honor continued)*

and beyond the call of duty near Yangdok, Korea on 14 September 1951. While flying a B-26 aircraft on a night combat mission with the objective of developing new tactics, Captain Walmsley sighted an enemy supply train which had been assigned top priority as a target of opportunity. He immediately attacked, producing a strike which disabled the train, and, when his ammunition was expended, radioed for friendly aircraft in the area to complete destruction of the target. Employing the searchlight mounted on his aircraft, he guided another B-26 aircraft to the target area, meanwhile constantly exposing himself to enemy fire. Directing an incoming B-26 pilot, he twice boldly aligned himself with the target, his searchlight illuminating the area, in a determined effort to give the attacking aircraft full visibility. As the friendly aircraft prepared for the attack, Captain Walmsley descended into the valley in a low level run over the target with searchlight blazing, selflessly exposing himself to vicious enemy antiaircraft fire. In his determination to inflict maximum damage on the enemy, he refused to employ evasive tactics and valiantly pressed forward straight through an intense barrage, thus insuring complete destruction of the enemy's vitally needed war cargo. While he courageously pressed his attack Captain Walmsley's plane was hit and crashed into the surrounding mountains, exploding upon impact. His heroic initiative and daring aggressiveness in completing this important mission in the face of overwhelming opposition and at the risk of his life, reflects the highest credit upon himself and the U.S. Air Force.



Davis

### **Lt. Col. George A. Davis Jr.**

Lt. Col. George Andrew Davis Jr. was a P-47 fighter ace in the Pacific theater in WWII, with seven victories to his credit. In October 1951 he went to Korea as commander of the 334th Squadron, 4th Fighter Interceptor Group. Within a few months, he became the leading ace of the Korean War.

On Feb. 10, 1952, Maj. Davis and his wingman encountered twelve MiG-15s approaching friendly fighter-bombers on an interdiction mission. Davis sped into combat and quickly destroyed two MiGs. While pursuing a third MiG, his aircraft sustained a direct hit and crashed. At his death, he had 14 victories in Korea to his credit. He was posthumously promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1953.

### **Medal of Honor Citation**

Major George Andrew Davis, Jr., United States Air Force, 334th Fighter Squadron, 4th Fighter Group, 5th Air Force, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on 10 February 1952, near Sinuiju-Yalu River area, Korea. While leading a flight of four F-86 Saberjets on a combat aerial patrol mission near the Manchurian border, Major Davis' element leader ran out of oxygen and was forced to retire from the flight with his wingman accompanying him. Major Davis and the remaining F-86's continued the mission and sighted a formation of approximately 12 enemy MiG-15 aircraft speeding southward toward an area where friendly fighter-bombers were conducting low level operations against the Communist lines of communications. With selfless disregard for the numerical superiority of the enemy, Major Davis positioned his two aircraft, then dove at the MiG formation. While speeding through the formation from the rear he singled out a MiG-15 and destroyed it with a concentrated burst of fire. Although he was now under continuous fire from the enemy fighters to his rear, Major Davis sustained his attack. He fired at another MiG-15 which, bursting into smoke and flames, went into a vertical dive. Rather than maintain his superior speed and evade the enemy fire being concentrated on him, he elected to reduce his speed and sought out still a third MiG-15. During this latest attack his aircraft sustained a direct hit, went out of control, then crashed into a mountain 30 miles south of the Yalu River. Major Davis' bold attack completely disrupted the enemy formation, permitting the friendly fighter-bombers to successfully complete their interdiction mission. Major Davis, by his indomitable fighting spirit, heroic aggressiveness, and superb courage in engaging the enemy against formidable odds exemplified valor at its highest.

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*(Medal of Honor continued)*



Loring

### **Maj. Charles J. Loring Jr.**

Maj. Charles Joseph Loring Jr. went to Europe in 1944 as a fighter pilot with the 36th Fighter Group's 22nd Squadron. He completed 55 combat missions before he was shot down and made a prisoner of war. He went to Korea in May 1952 with the 36th and 80th Squadrons, 8th Fighter Bomber Group.

During a close air support mission on Nov. 22, 1952, Loring's flight was dive-bombing enemy gun positions. He was hit repeatedly by ground fire during his dive. Instead of withdrawing, Loring aimed his F-80 directly at the gun positions and deliberately crashed into them, destroying them. Loring Air Force Base, Maine, was named in his honor.

### ***Medal of Honor Citation***

Major Charles J. Loring, Jr., United States Air Force, a member of the 80th Fighter-Bomber Squad-

ron, 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty near Sniper Ridge, North Korea on 22 November 1952. While leading a flight of four F-80 type aircraft on a close-support mission, Major Loring was briefed by a controller to dive-bomb enemy gun positions which were harassing friendly ground troops. After verifying the location of the target, Major Loring rolled into his dive bomb run. Throughout the run, extremely accurate ground fire was directed on his aircraft. Disregarding the accuracy and intensity of the ground fire, Major Loring aggressively continued to press the attack until his aircraft was hit. At approximately 4,000 feet, he deliberately altered his course and aimed his diving aircraft at active gun emplacements concentrated on a ridge northwest of the briefed target, turned his aircraft 45 degrees to the left, pulled up in a deliberate, controlled maneuver, and elected to sacrifice his life by diving his aircraft directly into the midst of the enemy emplacements. His selfless and heroic action completely destroyed the enemy gun emplacement and eliminated a dangerous threat to United Nations ground forces. Major Loring's noble spirit, superlative courage, and conspicuous self sacrifice in inflicting maximum damage on the enemy exemplified valor of the highest degree and his actions were in keeping with the finest traditions of the U.S. Air Force.

## **Prisoners of War**

"Each hour seemed like a month and every second was filled with pain."

- Lt. Wallace Brown, B-29 co-pilot shot down over North Korea, on his experience as a prisoner of the Chinese

*Air Force prisoners of war held by communist forces endured horrible conditions during their imprisonment. In the face of constant brutality, American Airmen held prisoner during the Korean War acted with great courage.*

The majority of the 235 airmen captured during the Korean War were held in solitary confinement for a large part of their captivity. Prisoners suffered from

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One of the first Air Force POWs to return to Japan in Operation Big Switch was Staff Sgt. Robert M. Wilkins (center).

*(POW continued)*

bitter cold and inadequate food, clothing, and medical care. Airmen, especially pilots, were considered potential sources of intelligence and were subjected to frequent psychological and physical torture.

Debate over how to return prisoners of war on both sides began with the start of armistice talks in late 1951. The UN demanded that no prisoner be returned to communist control against his will. The communists immediately refused. When the UN revealed that more than half of the UN-held POWs did not want to return, tensions increased.

The communists tried to sway world opinion against the UN by forcing “confessions” of atrocities against North Korea from American POWs. They also



Shot down in 1953, this 11-man B-29 crew was held in China, tortured and not repatriated until late 1955.

provoked riots inside UN-run POW camps to cause worldwide outcry against UN treatment of “helpless” communist prisoners.

The communist stance concerning POWs changed abruptly with the death of Josef Stalin in March 1953. Weary of fighting, both sides soon agreed to exchange sick and wounded prisoners. Between April 20 and May 3, 1953, Operation Little Switch exchanged a total of 6,670 Chinese and North Korean prisoners and 669 UN personnel. The main prisoner exchange took place after

the armistice was signed three months later. Operation Big Switch returned 75,823 POWs to the communists and 12,773 prisoners to the UN, including 3,598 Americans. By Feb. 1, 1954, all former prisoners choosing not to return to communist rule were released as free civilians.

## Ceasefire

“We are pretty sure now that the communists wanted peace, not because of a two-year stalemate on the ground, but to get airpower off their back.”

- Gen. O.P. Weyland, Far East Air Forces Commander

*Facing increasing UN air power pressure, the communists finally signed a ceasefire on July 27, 1953, ending the fighting in Korea. The U.S. Air Force emerged from the Korean War as a proven force, ready to face future Cold War challenges. In the fight to resist communist aggression, 1,198 USAF Airmen gave their lives.*

Peace negotiations began on July 10, 1951, in Kaesong, a city near the 38th parallel and now part of North Korea. For two years, negotiations stalled over the prisoner of war issue. Talks were deadlocked and troops faced a stalemate on the ground, but air power still gave the UN effective leverage. Air attacks made continuing the war too costly for the communists, and they signed an armistice on July 27, 1953.

The end of combat created the famous Demilita-



The armistice is signed.

ized Zone or “DMZ” as a buffer zone between the two Koreas. This zone has become the world’s most fortified international frontier, and has been the scene of several small-scale but violent North Korean incursions over the years. The zone completely divides the peninsula. It is 4 kilometers wide, or 2 kilometers on either side of the border.

While the armistice ended the fighting, there is still no peace treaty officially ending the war in Korea. Since 1953, US forces have remained on guard in South Korea and Japan, ready to defend South Korea against aggression from the north.

# The Commitment Remains

*The legacies of the Korean war include lasting commitment to democratic ideals and steadfast action to stop aggression. In the decades since the war, the Republic of Korea has grown into a modern, free, and vibrant industrial nation. The foundation of South Korean freedom lies in the sacrifice of its people, and in the strong support of fellow democratic nations in war and peace.*

America's commitment to South Korea remains strong. As communist North Korea has demonstrated through the years, it still poses a threat to peace and democracy in the region. Serious incidents, including murders in the Demilitarized Zone, the illegal capture of the American naval vessel USS *Pueblo*, and innumerable armistice violations and threats of military action, have proven that North Korean hostility is still a grave danger. Strong U.S. forces therefore remain in partnership with the Republic of Korea's defense establishment.

The United States Air Force maintains a robust presence on the Korean peninsula. The 7th Air Force's 51st and 8th Fighter Wings operate from Osan and Kunsan Air Bases, with support units at several other South Korean locations. Bolstering U.S. air power in the region, Pacific Air Forces also are present in Japan, Hawaii, Guam and Alaska. Overall, the U.S. has around 28,500 service members stationed in South Korea, including about 20,000 U.S. Army Soldiers. Naval and Marine forces also play key roles in Pacific regional defense.



U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates talks with Republic of Korea President Lee Myung-Bak at the 9th International Institute for Strategic Studies, June 2010.



Generations connect: Air Force Korean War hero, POW and double ace Lt. Col. Harold Fischer greets 51st Fighter Wing personnel at Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea, 2007.



Republic of Korea Air Force F-15 fighters on a joint training mission with a USAF F-16 Fighting Falcon over South Korea.

More information and photos from the Korean War Gallery are available online at <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/exhibits/korea/index.asp>. To plan a field trip to the museum, see <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/education/educators/index.asp>.

# Guest lecture video loan program

The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force has hosted several guest lecturers who have discussed the Korean War. Descriptions for the following lectures and instructions on how to borrow copies for your classroom are available at <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-051201-009.pdf>.

*Note: Videos should be requested at least 30 days in advance and some lectures may contain visual material or language which may be considered inappropriate for young viewers. The Museum strongly suggests that the videotapes be previewed prior to student viewing in the classroom.*

## **Why Me? From Fighter Ace to POW [V901]**

Col. (Ret.) Walker M. "Bud" Mahurin

## **A Fighter Pilot's Life [V951]**

Col. (Ret.) Francis S. Gabreski

## **Cold War Reconnaissance / Project Heart Throb [V984]**

Mr. Donald E. Hillman / Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Gerry Cooke

## **The RF-86 in the Cold War, Korea and After [V156]**

Maj. Gen. (Ret.) William MacLaren

## **Cold War Warrior [V170]**

Col. (Ret.) James Kasler

## **No Guts, No Glory [V915]**

Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Frederick C. Blesse

## **MiG-15s in the Korean War [V971]**

Mr. Kenneth H. Rowe (aka No Kum-Sok)

## **The Air War in Korea: A Chinese Perspective [V208]**

Dr. Xiaoming Zhang

## **Air Power in the Korean War: America's First Jet-Age Air War [V210]**

Dr. Richard P. Hallion

## **A Rather Bizarre War: The Air Force Learns / Adapts in Korea [V221]**

Dr. Conrad C. Crane

## **B-29s in the Korean War: The Superfortress' Final Glory [V226]**

Lt. Col. (Ret.) George A. Larson

## **Flight Testing the Russian MiG-15 [V891]**

Maj. Gen. (Ret.) H.E. Collins

## **American Helicopters in Combat [V160]**

Mr. Robert F. Dorr



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