

Running Head: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TASK FORCE SMITH AND DESERT  
SHIELD

The Difference Between Task Force Smith and Desert Shield

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### Abstract

This is a paper on the events that happened in two separate conflicts but the outcomes were totally different. The conflicts were Task Force Smith and Desert Shield/Storm. Task Force Smith was a police action that was ill-equipped and undermanned. Desert Shield/Storm was completely different with the best trained men and equipment the world had ever seen.

## ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

The Korean War....The Time: 5 July 1950...The Place: 12 miles North of Pyongtaek, just North of Osan. The Operation: Task Force Smith. President Truman was the Commander in Chief. Dean Acheson was the Secretary of State. General MacArthur was the Supreme Commander, Allied Powers and Far East. Syngman Rhee was the President of South Korea. Kim Il Sung was the leader of North Korea with a growing army of 135,000 men, 100 T-34s, 200 bombers and fighter planes, & 100s of heavy artillery pieces. Joseph Stalin was the man of the hour in the USSR supplying Kim Sung with 5,000 Soviet military advisors and a bottomless supply of weapons and equipment. The North Korean Army had just invaded South Korea in June under the propaganda umbrella that South Korea had invaded them first, and they were fighting back. Our closest troops were spread out in Japan with almost no immediate transportation to Korea.

President Truman immediately responded by ordering arms, and then military support to South Korea. General MacArthur's plan was to put on an arrogant display of strength designed to bluff the enemy into halting their advance. He planned on sending his units in Japan, piecemeal to South Korea, rather than consolidating all available troops in a staging area and then deploying them in mass. This was against U.S. doctrine, but with the shortage of transportation, the urgency of the situation, and foremost. General MacArthur believed that once the Northern Koreans saw that the U.S. Army they would back down. He was wrong.

General MacArthur ordered the 24<sup>th</sup> Division Commander, General Dean to form a task force from his Division in Japan, to delay the advancing North Koreans until more units, equipment and supplies could be massed. On 1 July LTC Charles B. Smith, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry was given the mission: "When you get to Pusan, head for Taejon. We want to stop the North

Koreans as far from Pusan as we can. Block the main road as far north as possible. Make contact with General Church. If you can't find him, go to Taejon and beyond if you can. Sorry I can't give you more information...that's all I got. Good luck and God bless you and your men" (Fehrenbach, 1994). Task Force Smith was born. It consisted of over 400 soldiers and officers. They were given two days of rations each, armed with M1's, 120 rounds per soldier, two grenades each, two 75mm recoilless rifles, two 4.2 inch mortars, six 2.36-inch rocket launchers, and four 60mm mortars. A battery of six light howitzers from the 52<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery joined them. They immediately were flown into Pusan, loaded up on trains to Taejon, and then deployed as the first line of defense at a road crossing near Osan on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1950, in the cold pounding rain.

On 5 July at 0700, a column of 33 tanks with 5-mile convoy of trucks with troops crossed the roadblock. TF Smith destroyed 4 of the 33 tanks. They used every weapon they had. Bazookas failed due to poor maintenance and bad rounds. Rocket launchers failed or simply bounced off the T-34s. The recoilless rifles had no effects. The soldiers had little training on engagement of armor. They were overrun by enemy armor, which continued their march southwardly. Less than an hour later, dismounted enemy infantry nearly surrounded the remains of TF Smith. After 4 more hours of heated battle, with grenades and rounds which failed more times than not, an overall lack of fire discipline, soldiers breaking ranks, dropping their weapons and running away, LTC Smith finally gathered the survivors and withdrew through the gap left by the enemy. The results are now part of our history. The first American to fall in Korea was one of those over 400 soldiers of TF Smith. Of the TF, only 185 men survived the battle. The first battle had ended in defeat. The TF soldiers averaged 19 years of age. While stationed in Japan, they were not allowed to have exercises on Japan soil. Discipline had grown lax. Weapons maintenance

was non-existent. They were told this was a police action and that the N. Koreans were only half-armed, untrained, undisciplined peasants with no pride as warriors. Congress had strapped the Armed Forces. The public wanted a gentler, kinder military. Money was going towards nuclear weapons and bombers. No money was given for updated rifles, renewed war stocks of ordinance, or other basic equipment for conventional forces. Training was not given a priority. All of these factors were not lost on General MacArthur, Congress, as well as the President. Lessons learned were quickly acted upon. MacArthur would obey the Tenants of War from now on. Defeat was blamed on an Intelligence failure of lack of knowledge of the size of the North Korean Army in that sector. In reality, this blocking action did delay the enemy...a whole seven hours.

Hindsight is always 20/20...As you can conclude from this paper, there was no intelligence failure. General MacArthur knew exactly what he was up against. He knew their numbers, their equipment, their tactics, their doctrine, their order of battle. He knew their history, their purpose, and their reputation as skilled fighters. What General MacArthur did was underestimate the will, strength, level of experience and cunning of the North Korean military. He committed a cardinal sin and ignored a basic tenet of war fighting: Never underestimate your enemy. This leadership failure resulted in the slaughter and sacrifice of Task Force Smith.

The lesson of that first battle in the Korean conflict, struck a resounding cord in the very fiber of the American fighting machine. Without proper training, discipline, weapons, logistics, communications, command and control, tactics, numbers of soldiers and respect for the enemy, U.S. forces could not continue as the premier force in conventional warfare. These lessons were learned...but who knows how long they will continue to be remembered. Oh..... and did I say, **"No more Task Force Smith!"**

It was August 2, 1990 when three armored divisions of Saddam Hussein's elite republican Guard crossed the Kuwaiti border. The Kuwaitis quickly surrendered or fled to neighboring countries. Saddam Hussein claimed Kuwait as its nineteenth province and the wealth of Kuwait could help pay Iraq's debts. President Bush was the Commander in Chief; General Schwarzkopf was the Commanding General, Coalition Forces.

Iraq's army had over a million soldiers who were battle hardened from the Iran Iraq war and was well equipped by huge purchases in the international arms market. Prior to Desert Shield/Storm Iraq had the fourth largest army in the world. The first concern was the defense of Saudi Arabia which was code named Operation Desert Shield. As the coalition forces set up their defense in Saudi Arabia the Iraqis were doing the same in Kuwait in preparation for an attack. The Iraqis dug in four divisions along their seaward flank specifically to defend against amphibious assault. The Americans and the Coalition forces did not rush in to Iraq. The fighting began with an air campaign to establish preconditions for the ground assault. Coalition air forces would successively smash Iraqi air defenses, secure air supremacy, suppress Iraqi command and control, and isolate the Kuwaiti theater of operations. The Americans had suffered 148 battle deaths and their allies another 99, versus something upward of 20,000 for the Iraqis. This war was won by the professional American Soldier, thoroughly trained to make the best use of the most modern equipment. The operational scheme for Desert Storm was well conceived and capitalized on coalition strengths while exploiting Iraqi weakness. Never before in history had the American forces been more fully prepared for war. Desert Storm had made a powerful case for the ability to project power around the world on short notice.

## CONCLUSION:

Unlike Task Force Smith the U.S. Army in Desert Shield/Storm took its time and looked at the enemy situation and used it. The U.S Army was living on its reputation from WWII. When they went into Korea it was a show of force and the U.S. thought they (North Koreans) would back down. The U.S Army did not feel that North Korea was a threat. In Desert Shield/Storm the U.S. Army had superb equipment, rigorous training, and professional character which equaled the will to win. In Korea the U.S Army was poorly trained, their equipment was old and outdated and failed to fire.

Desert Shield/Storm was an all volunteer force and all of them wanted to be there. Task Force Smith was a draft Army and considered a source of cheap man power.

Also 8.6 percent of total force deployed in Desert Shield/Storm was women. Task Force Smith had no women.

The conclusion is that the U.S. Army has learned from its past mistakes. The army may be slow to change but it is always changing. We have new ways to train our Soldiers on their equipment, computer simulation, state of the art ranges and cross training. The Soldiers are smarter now then they were prior to the Korean War. In a draft army people are placed into jobs even ones they didn't want. In a volunteer army people get to choose the job they want and if they get the job they want they will do better in that job.

Reference

“This Kind of War”. Written by T. R. Fehrenbach. Published in 1994 by Brassey's, in London.