

THE KOREAN MILITARY ADVISORY GROUP – DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES DURING ONGOING CONFLICT

A Monograph

by

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ABSTRACT

THE KOREAN MILITARY ADVISORY GROUP – DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES
DURING ONGOING CONFLICT, by Major Arieveh J. Austin, 66 pages.

On July 1, 1949, Brigadier General W. Lynn Roberts initiated the Korean Military Advisor Group. This element had been approved by both the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as President Truman, and served as the primary advisors, mentors, and trainers for the South Korean Army. Initially consisting of five hundred men, this element would soon be tested as tensions, and eventually war, began with North Korea. The Republic of Korean Army had roughly 100,000 untrained, unequipped, and ill prepared men. Of those, almost 35,000 were assigned to headquarters and service outfits. At the time of the North Korean invasion, South Korean forces were willfully unprepared to contend with their advisories.

As South Korean resistance disintegrated, it became apparent that a more robust effort would be required in order to facilitate the eventual transition of efforts against North Korean and Chinese aggression to that of South Korea. In order to accomplish this, US advisors that were assigned to the Korean Military Advisor Group contended with a multitude of issues that prohibited the completion of their assigned tasks. The solutions that they adapted enabled them to minimize many of the cultural and societal differences during their training, created a system that could be maintained by the Korean Military upon their departure, and created a training program that could be implemented during ongoing hostilities with North Korea. For the past eleven years United States military forces have conducted similar training in Iraq and Afghanistan. How the Korean Military Advisor Group conducted their training, equipping, and eventual transition of ongoing alliance operations during the Korean War to indigenous Korean military forces has direct applicability to current military operations in Afghanistan.

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ACRONYMS

DA	Department of the Army
EUSA	Eighth United States Army
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KATUSA	Korean Augmentation to the United States Army
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
ROK	Republic of Korean
ROKA	Republic of Korean Army
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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INTRODUCTION

In 1952 the United States was in its third year of war along the Korean Peninsula. While large maneuvers had mostly ceased, the South Korean front was anything but quiet. The Republic of Korean (ROK) Army assigned the defense of a piece of terrain between Chorwon and Kumwha in the south and Pyonggang to the north to the 9th Infantry Division. The terrain in this vital sector was generally rough, with intermittent hills characteristic of much of the Korean peninsula. It provided excellent road networks to the south and was generally higher in elevation than the terrain around it, which facilitated excellent observation to its defenders. The ROK 9th Infantry Division, commanded Major General Kim Jong Oh, constituted three infantry regiments, each with American advisors from the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAC). General Kim directed two regiments to defend Hill 395, with a third regiment in reserve. It was his intent to use the reserve if Chinese forces were able to penetrate his first two regiments on the hill. KMAC had trained each of these units after the initiation of armed conflict in 1950. Their American advisors, who regularly referred to them as “our little brothers,” often questioned their level of proficiency.¹

On October 6, 1952, the 38th Chinese Peoples Volunteer Field Army attacked the 9th ROK Infantry Division. Chinese tactics had not significantly changed during the war. In an effort to reduce casualties from American air and artillery, they would regularly initiate their attacks at night. This limited American pilots from properly identifying Chinese targets. Additionally, Chinese forces would intentionally seek out and attack less well defended units, such as American tank and artillery positions. The Chinese attempted to shape their attacks by using

¹ Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War, America in Korea 1950-1953* (New York, NY: Anchor Press, 1989), 45, 956; Peter Clemens, “US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948, The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 25, no. 1 (March 2002).

stealth and surprise, limiting observation of their movements by avoiding roads, and attacking from concealed positions. The Chinese also used a technique referred to as the “race horse,” in which they would attack the Korean Army forces with their best units, leaving their worst to fight against the Americans. This ensured that they would succeed in the majority of their contacts, particularly when a penetration was necessary. Hence, the odds were clearly stacked against the 9th ROK Infantry Division. The division had recently been formed and was inexperienced and was being attacked by a superior enemy that was utilizing the elements of both surprise and night.²

The battle that ensued is often referred to as the battle of White Horse, due to the image the decimated terrain gave to those who viewed it. Chinese forces simultaneously conducted a diversionary attack against the 2nd US Infantry Division, located two miles away, preventing their support of the 9th ROK Infantry Division. The Koreans were initially able to hold their defense against determined Chinese attacks, but were eventually driven out of their positions on the 7th of October when additional enemy reinforcements forced the Korean soldiers to withdraw. Unlike similar situations in the past when the Korean National forces would route and flee after an initial defeat, the 9th ROK Infantry Division did the unimaginable. Its leaders rallied their forces and counterattacked!³

² Allen R. Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 304-305. Allen Millett describes in great detail the maneuver techniques implemented by the Chinese in efforts to negate the fire power afforded to ROK Army units by both American Artillery and Aviation; Also see T.R Fehrenback, *This Kind of War* (New York, NY: Potomac Book Publishing, 1995). T.R Fehrenback provides an excellent account of the historical causes of the Korean War, looking as far back as the Russo/Japanese War of 1904-1905 and its effects.

³ “Battle of Korea: The ROKs of White Horse Hill,” *Time Magazine.com*, October 20, 1952, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,817113,00.html#ixzz2BlIxcntl> (accessed June 10, 2012); See also U.S. Department of the Army, *United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea*, Part IV, *KMAG’s Wartime Experiences*, Prepared by the Office of Military History Officer, U.S. Army Japan (Camp Zama, Japan: 1958). 353. Now declassified,

Over the course of the next ten days Hill 395 would change hands more than twenty times. Every time Chinese forces would gain the upper hand by providing additional men to the fight, the ROK 9th Infantry Division would counterattack. Massive artillery barrages supported the Korean attacks totaling over 185,000 rounds, which resulted in some of the fiercest fighting of the war. Determined not to surrender the terrain, Korean forces remained in firm control of the disputed terrain. The Chinese attackers eventually gave up all further efforts to penetrate the IX US Corps left flank, specifically that of the ROK 9th Infantry Division. The savage ten-day battle had inflicted an estimated 10,000 Chinese casualties. Upon completion of the battle, the Koreans reported that they had destroyed a major part of a Chinese division. They substantiated their reports with the direct evidence of more than 2,000 visible Chinese dead on Hill 395 alone. Journalists who covered the battle wrote that it was the bloodiest engagement of 1952. It resulted in the destruction of several Chinese regiments. It also supported a much changed outlook on the Republic of Korean forces. After the battle, a US major from Pennsylvania stated, “These little guys are unbelievable,” while a US sergeant from Seattle reported “That hill was a bouncing, flaming hell. It’s hard to believe that any of them could live through that shelling, let alone stay there and fight.”⁴

The Battle for Hill 395 challenges the misconception that it was American might that eventually ended the war in Korea. In actuality it was events just like the one illustrated which

the Office of the Military History Office headquartered in Japan during the war collected and correlated many of the written records of the Korean Military Advisory Group. Of particular note is the After Action Reviews that KMAG conducted. Maintained in a four part collection entitled, “KMAGs Wartime Experiences,” this record was collected at the time of action or immediately following the war itself. Part IV outlines the training and equipping portion, and can be found on Reel #15, D001126, of the Korean War Scholarly Resources.

⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, *United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea*, 354; See also “Battle of Korea: The ROKs of White Horse Hill,” *Time Magazine.com*, October 20, 1952, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,817113,00.html#ixzz2Blixcntl> (accessed June 10, 2012)

forced both communist North Korea, as well as their Chinese and Russian allies, to concede that the strategic context of the Korean War had changed. South Korean military forces were crucial in bringing the war to an end. Their contribution to the war forced the communist regimes to concede that they were facing a military deadlock and they eventually agreed to armistice settlements. Unfortunately, America's military role in training these forces is generally forgotten or poorly recorded. Allen Millett, a preeminent historian of the conflict and author of several works on the subject stated, "Even the valiant, long-suffering American officers of the Korean Military Advisory Group, 1946-1953, are remembered only in an official army history so sketchy and guarded that it is hardly worth reading..."⁵ It was through the US advisors' persistent efforts, first by working with the Korean Constabulary prior to the war, then the "Provincial Military Advisory Group, and finally as KMAG, that allowed the South Korean Army's resurgence as a formidable military opponent.

The history of American advisory efforts in East Asia is as long as it is colorful. The first American military advisory endeavor to Korea (at the time spelled Corea) began on April 7, 1888. The lead advisor, Brigadier General William McEntire Dye, noted many of the same problems with his mission as the past World War II advisors would note in their efforts almost one hundred years later. General Dye's efforts were continually hampered by both political encroachments from China, Japan, and Germany, as well as an internal struggle between Korea's ruling parties. He also had to manage, in the words of one officer, "the problem of communications between a highly-skilled group of technicians and an eager yet often uneducated people; the need to establish a military language comprehensible to both advisor and pupil; and

⁵ Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North*, 5.

the task of forging a military instrument out of the raw materials at hand under conditions considered primitive by American standards.”⁶

During World War II, US military assistance missions provided assistance in the form of equipment and training to dozens of allies, to include Great Britain, France, Iran, China, the Soviet Union, and Latin America. These efforts continued after the war as well. US military assistance groups or military advisory assistance groups as they were sometimes called continued to provide assistance to countries such as Greece, the Philippines, China, Taiwan, Iran, Japan, and Korea. Forces in South Korea conducted their training and equipping under “Operation BAMBOO” prior to the initiation of hostilities with North Korea. Developed in December of 1945, this program presented a politically unobtrusive plan for gradually growing a security apparatus in the south to counter the growing threat from northern aggression. At the time, US forces in Korea were dependant on a police Constabulary to maintain order. The forces created in Operation BAMBOO intended to assume some of the national defense requirements that the US Army forces in Korea and the Constabulary were conducting. The program proposed, “Raising one infantry company at 20 per cent over strength in each of southern Korea’s eight mainland provinces. Companies were to organize along US Army infantry standards with a manning of 225 men and 6 officers in six platoons.”⁷

⁶ U.S. Department of the Army, *KMAG’s Heritage: The Story of Brigadier General William McEntire Dye* (Seoul, Korea: 8th US Army Historical Branch, 1966), 8.

⁷ Peter Clemens, “US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 25, no. 1 (March 2002): 167; Robert D. Ramsey III. *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 2. Mr. Ramsey uses several case studies in his work for the Combat Studies Institute to demonstrate similarities and differences in the American approach to working with foreign nations armed forces. His assistance with this monograph was paramount to its completion. There is no way to adequately express my sincere thanks to him.

On July 1, 1949, Brigadier General W. Lynn Roberts initiated the Korean Military Advisor Group. This element of five hundred US Army soldiers served as the primary advisors, mentors, and trainers for the 100,000 untrained, unequipped and ill prepared men of the new ROK Army. According to one account, at the time of the invasion a year later, this “embryonic, untrained ROK unit was wasting millions of rounds of ammo in operations against bandits and guerrillas all over South Korea.”⁸ It was in this environment that the soldiers of the Korean Military Advisor Group had to train and equip their men.

Despite obstinate resistance by many of the South Korean trained units during the initial assaults of the North Korean People’s Army in June 1950, American commanders still did not trust in the capabilities of either their KMAG advisors or the Korean units themselves. This was despite reports that some of the ROK Army units were beginning to fight with suicidal determination to protect their country. One example of these efforts is seen in the crossroads battle in the Pochon corridor in which the cadet battalion of the Korean Military Academy fought. This single engagement resulted in almost half the battalions overall strength dead or missing (152 of 489 cadets). Other examples, to include the ROK II Corps attack north out of the Taegu-Pusan perimeter in support of the US First Corps in September 1950, demonstrated that under the proper conditions ROK soldiers had ample willingness to storm positions without artillery fire. It was to this end that KMAG struggled. The challenges that the Korean Military Advisory Group trainers took to reach even the most basic levels of competency are overwhelming when viewed through a historical lens, however.⁹

There have been many different points of view offered by contemporary authors on the problems and performance of the Korean Military Advisory Group. No work on the subject can

⁸ Ibid., 167.

⁹ Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North*, 101-102 & 271.

be considered complete without a comprehensive review of the works completed by Allan Millett and Peter Clemens. Allan Millett is perhaps the only author which not only acknowledges the contributions of the ROK Army soldiers to the overall war effort, but also seems to understand the complex personal relationships forged between both ROK soldiers and their advisors.¹⁰ Alternative to this point of view are authors such as Clay Blair, Roy Appleman, and Maurice Isserman.¹¹ Their view of the Korean War is contextually refined or bounded to that of the American experience. While their works are historically thorough and provide adequate insight to the complex issues facing both the strategic and operational artists of their day, they completely omit the contributions of the Korean people, the sacrifices they endured, or the paramount reality that without their combat capabilities the Korean War could not have been won.

This lack of adequate research has had an undue consequence to the common paradigm of American contributions to the Korean War. It has unintentionally created the axiomatic impression that both the ROK military forces and their KMAG Advisors were incompetent, completely dependent on their American and United Nations partners, or completely irrelevant to the overall war effort. This perception has caused many of the ROK Army's battles to be

¹⁰ Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 192; Allan R. Millett, "Captain James H. Hausman and the Formation of the Korean Army, 1945-50," *Armed Forces and Society* 23, no. 4 (1997): 517.

¹¹ In his work, *The Forgotten War*, Clay Blair only discusses ground combat in one chapter after the initiation of armistice negotiations. This condensed discussion fails to adequately capture the time frame that many of the ROKA divisions were becoming fully combat capable. Only 36 pages out of 976 even highlight these contributions. Further, throughout Blair's work he provided an impression that ROKA soldiers were always a hindrance to their American counterparts. In Maurice Isserman's work, *The Korean War*, KMAG is only mentioned twice! While that may seem odd, it in fact highlights a regular occurrence. Roy Appleman's, *Ridgway Duels For Korea* also only mentions KMAG on two separate pages, out of 665!

forgotten or ignored, despite the fact that out of all the armies that fought in the Korean War, South Korean Army forces suffered the most casualties.¹²

To counter the misconceptions created by the majority of literature it is necessary to broaden ones scope to both the original documents written by KMAG, or to those written by members of the ROK Army themselves. Firstly, after action reviews written by advisors during and after the war provide valuable insights into the day to day operations these trainers had to face.¹³ Additionally, Eighth US Army, as the higher headquarters of KMAG, regularly conducted periodic reviews and assessments of both the ROK Army, as well as the American Advisory Group.¹⁴ It is noteworthy that the US Army Center of Military History and Combat Studies Institute captured many of their observations and conclusions. The records of Captain Robert K. Sawyer and Robert D. Ramsey provide valuable insight not available elsewhere. Lastly, the memoirs of General Paik Sun-yup, entitled *From Pusan to Panmunjom*, portray a unique perspective from the Korean point of view. General Paik began the war as a Colonel commanding the ROK First Infantry Division, and eventually was promoted to the position of the Army Chief

¹² Robert J. Best, "A Study of Battle Casualties among Equivalent Opposing Forces in Korea" (Operations Research Office, The Johns Hopkins University, September 1950), ORO, AD002885, microfiche.

¹³ Now declassified, the Office of the Military History Office headquartered in Japan during the war collected and correlated many of the written records of the Korean Military Advisory Group. Of particular note is the After Action Reviews that KMAG conducted. Maintained in a four part collection entitled, "KMAGs Wartime Experiences," this record was collected at the time of action or immediately following the war itself. Reel #15 outlines the training and equipping issues and solutions.

¹⁴ Alfred H. Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea* (Chevy Chase, MD: John Hopkins University Operational Research Office, 1957). It includes a highly detailed analysis of the performance of the Republic of Korea Army and their KMAG advisors by correlating the interviews of over two hundred KMAG members who served from 1948-1953.

of Staff. It is through his work that many of the misconceptions about the Korean Army and KMAG in particular can be corrected.¹⁵

As many of the above authors and archives indicate, KMAG had to contend with a multitude of issues which both hampered and curtailed their ability to adequately train and equip the ROK Army. American political interest in East Asia was waning after the end of hostilities in World War Two. With little strategic guidance, and a ceded desire not to inflame tensions with its North Korean Russian supported neighbors, KMAG advisors struggled with everything. Their manning was in constant alteration, as was the quality of the men they received. Additionally, the time they had to dedicate to training was limited as both the Korean Constabulary, the Provincial Military Advisory Group, and finally even the soldiers of KMAG were constantly required to contend with a guerrilla war in South Korea. At times American advisors resorted to using captured Japanese rifles from World War II due to inadequate funding and limited resources. No standard existed for the training of foreign forces either, as current doctrine did not perceive it as a necessary step for stability. The group's members had to contend with all of these issues while simultaneously breaching a vast language, education, and cultural gap between themselves and the men they aimed to train. Hence the question remains, how was the Korean Military Advisor

¹⁵ Paik Sun-yup, *From Pusan to Panmunjom* (Riverside, New Jersey: Riverside Brasseys Press, 1992); Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 6. CPT Sawyer as well as Mr. Ramsey's works for the Combat Studies Institute are particularly useful for their accounts of ROKA participation in Eighth Army operations. Mr. Ramsey's OP 18 and 19 are excellent in providing an overview of other Advising and Assistance operations throughout U.S. missions overseas. They clearly show how American Advisory efforts helped evolve a poorly led, trained and equipped Korean Army at the beginning of the war into the formidable army it had become by 1953. Both noted that, "One of the great problems in the preparation of a history of KMAG is the dearth and inadequacy of official records, since it was impossible to fashion a continuous and complete narrative from the existent files."

Group able to successfully train and assist the Korean military during the Korean War, from 1948 through 1953?¹⁶

The answer is immediately pertinent, as for the past eleven years the United States of America and her allies have been embroiled in one of the largest strategic struggles in the history of our country, a war in which diametrically opposed ideologies have pitted themselves for dominion over a civil population located on a breadth of terrain thousands of miles away from this nation's international boundary. Central to this fight is the training of the Afghanistan Security Forces. Similar to the Korean Advisory Group of 1949, Afghan Transition Teams of 2013 are training host nation units with different cultural values and social norms during ongoing hostilities. This trend has been a constant theme in US international relations. When conducting his analysis of the Korean War and the American advisory efforts there in the 1960's, historian Robert K. Sawyer noted the inclination by stating, "The problems that KMAG had to face in Korea in organizing and developing native forces differ only in degree from those that confront many American military advisors working in the more recently founded nations of Africa and Asia today."¹⁷ The operational and possible strategic success of ongoing operations may well rest in their ability to ensure these units are self reliant and sufficient.

Some of the possible solutions that are applicable to KMAGs dilemmas could be a result of the Korean War itself. While there was a constant draw down of fiscal, personnel, and equipment support to the ROK Army from 1945-1950, the sudden resurgence of hostilities within East Asia received the complete attention of a nation which clearly wanted to wage a limited war.

¹⁶ Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 189. The largest outbreak of revolt began on April 3, 1948 in Cheju-do Island and lasted until a few months before the North invaded the South. It required extensive efforts to defeat, involving almost all of the constabulary as well as KMAG.

¹⁷ Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*, 6.

The efforts of the advisors themselves cannot be discredited either. Through both the dedication of a select group of individuals as well as by addressing the language and cultural barriers that existed between the American and Korean soldiers, the American advisors may have been able to standardize the first set of training requirements for a host nation. This would have required ample time, however, which was not necessarily available to them as North Korean forces initiated open hostilities in 1950. It is this work's contention that the Korean Military Advisor Group was adequate in training, equipping, and transitioning ongoing alliance operations during the Korean War to indigenous Korean military forces because it was able to address the significant equipping and organizational challenges that existed within the South Korean military system, it created a sustainable training system during ongoing hostilities and it was able to minimize the significance or problems posed by cultural and societal differences. The problems this group wrestled with have echoed in contemporary Army operations and their effects can be observed throughout all parts of the world today.

EQUIPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

In June of 1950 the Korean Military Advisory Group provided the US Department of State and the US Department of Defense a detailed review of their perception of the ROK Army's training, equipping, and manning status. The analytical bedrock of the report came from their assessment of the Koreans' current manning levels, the availability of serviceable weapons and equipment, their evaluation of the soldiers individual training, and perceptions of troop physical conditions and leadership. Their assessment was grim at best. They determined that the Korean Army had, "made progress but still had serious readiness problems." They believed that the ROK Army could field, on paper at least, sixty-six infantry and reconnaissance battalions. However, their evaluations through periodic review indicated that only twelve of these battalions, or 18% of the South Korean Army, could be assessed as completely trained. Exacerbating this dismal figure was the record that only thirty battalions within the entire army had completed their required company and platoon level training standards.¹⁸

There were several compounding problems that the US Army advisors felt were causing this standard. While the training status of the units could be addressed, it was only a small part of the overall hindrance preventing the South Koreans from being able to defend their own country. With a continual lack of clear strategic guidance from their headquarters from 1945-1948, the Constabulary followed by the Provincial Military Advisory Group struggled to do the best they could with very limited resources. The funding and equipping of this embryonic force was also of primary concern. They felt that their primary issues were in reality an acute shortage of modernized weapons, vehicles, trained specialists, and spare parts. This shortage of equipment had reduced the actual capabilities of the ROK Army by fifty percent. The report specifically

¹⁸ Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North*, 29.

noted that the most dramatic shortcoming was the army's lack of material readiness for war. In the final version submitted to Ambassador Muccio and General Roberts, KMAG officially reported that, "The security forces are not adequately equipped to ensure the successful execution of their mission to secure the Republic against invasion." If KMAG was going to successfully train the ROK Army to fight and defend its own nation, it would have to resolve the guidance issues they received from their higher headquarter in regard to the type of force they were training, resolve its internal manning problems, and provide the adequate type of equipment needed to allow them to engage the North Koreans.¹⁹

The lack of a clear set of long term goals and strategic guidance had plagued US efforts to provide equipment to the ROK Army since 1945. Following World War II, it had been decided that the maintenance of all Korean internal security forces would be the responsibility of the Korean National Police force. This was the same element that had been in place during the Japanese occupation. For US forces in Korea, General MacArthur assigned the US Twenty Forth Corps, which consisted of the Sixth, Seventh, and Fortieth Infantry Divisions, as an occupation force. The command of this element, designated US Army Forces in Korea, fell to Lieutenant General John R. Hodge. To assist with governmental reform and civil affairs, General MacArthur also assigned Major General Archibald V. Arnold, commander of the Seventh Division, as head of the United States Army Military Government in Korea. Both General Hodge and General Arnold felt that a more effective means of both internal security reform, as well as a national defense force, would be required to secure South Korea. Once created their primary functions would be quelling internal disturbances and defending its immediate borders from external threat.²⁰

¹⁹ Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North*, 27-32.

²⁰ Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in*

It was at this point that attitudes and perceptions began to cloud the development of the future ROK Army. A new Korean Constabulary was organized as a reserve force to assist the national police force. Its primary function would be to serve as a police reserves. However, General MacArthur did not feel that providing or equipping armed forces for South Korea was within his jurisdiction. He provided direct guidance to Lieutenant General Hodge and General Arnold not to arm the new Korean Constabulary with anything more substantial than light arms. He then recommended to the US government, “that the police... be equipped with US arms and equipment and be developed to the point where they could relieve US tactical forces.”²¹

While this conflicted with the growing instability and a North Korean supported guerrilla war already occurring in South Korea, General Hodge and General Arnold had no choice but to await further guidance. A State-War-Navy coordinating committee was established in Washington in order to consider future plans for the development of Korean armed forces. At the same time, the foreign ministers of the United States, USSR, and the United Kingdom had agreed at Moscow that a provisional democratic government should be set up for all of Korea. They also arranged for a joint US-USSR commission to meet in Korea to work out the details of organizing a provisional government. This, in turn, forced the State-War-Navy coordinating committee to delay in making any decisions, and their session was postponed until after the planned negotiations were held.²²

This strategic chess game had immense consequences on the status of the Korean defense forces, as well as on American advisory efforts to provide equipment to the South Korea security

Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea, 8; See also Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*, 7-10.

²¹ Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*, 11.

²² *Ibid.*, 12.

forces. An alternate plan for increasing internal security within South Korea was adapted, called Operation BAMBOO. This watered down version of security would be the primary guidance under which the Constabulary would operate. Once the Republic of Korea held elections on August 15, 1948, the US State Department established the Provisional Military Advisory Group to begin to organize and provide equipment to its security forces.²³

Even with that, it was not until October 22, 1948 that the first bilateral agreement between the US and ROK government was drawn up. The agreement committed the US to provide sufficient equipment for security forces numbering 104,000 in total. It was also agreed that the ROK Army would be authorized enough equipment sufficient to equip an authorized strength of 65,000. This still left a remainder of 39,000 security forces unarmed. It was decided that those would fall under the jurisdiction of the police and coast guard. Hence, while creating a native indigenous Korean security force had always been one of the expressed goals of the US occupation policy in Korea, few resources had been assigned to its completion. From 1945 through October 1948, the American advisory effort had to struggle with close to nothing, but at least now a hard agreement existed that could begin to support a growing ROK Army. Unfortunately, South Korea's communist northern brothers had not wasted the last three years bickering on how they would form their armed forces.²⁴

While an agreement had been determined to resolve the strategic aims toward the ROK armed forces, there were still underlying issues with both the equipping of those forces as well as

²³ Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, 8; See also Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*, 12, for a further description of Operation BAMBOO.

²⁴ Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot" 163; See also Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, 8.

the proper manning of KMAG itself. These changing guidance policies had a direct effect on the US Armies ability to provide adequate personnel to support the advisory effort. KMAG solved this by garnering the support of their higher headquarters, Eighth US Army, to fill their ranks. They began by conducting surveys on the type of personnel needed or desired to be advisors, and by aggressively selecting the top officers and noncommissioned officers needed to fill those positions.

Throughout the entirety of US support to the Republic of Korea, there has been a conception that service there is unbeneficial. This feeling amongst American service men was exacerbated as many career oriented officers and noncommissioned officers attempted to avoid service as a foreign army trainer or advisor. The result of this was that the initial staffing of the Constabulary and the Provincial Korean Military Advisory, and eventually KMAG, were always critically short of military government teams, translators, and civilian administrators. With a rapid draw down and demobilization of American forces after World War II, few positions were left to support the training of a ROK Army. To American soldiers Korea was an unwanted assignment in an undeveloped country which prevented them from more career advantageous duties in Japan. The prevailing ideal at that time was that American prestige in Asia was tied to successful operations in Japan due to World War II. Aggravating the low numbers of advisers that were assigned to Korea was the distance they had to travel to work with their counterparts. Advisory personnel were often headquartered in Seoul or other Eighth Army headquarters, away from the units they were advising.²⁵

Another factor preventing the proper manning of KMAG was that the majority of soldiers still serving in the military had just completed long assignments in combat overseas. They had no

²⁵ Roy E. Appleman, *Ridgeway Duels for Korea* (College Station, Texas: A&M University Press, 1990), 350; Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 163-165.

interest in being assigned overseas again, away from their families. The average assignment to Korea at that time was sixteen months. This greatly affected the soldier's decisions on whether to request assignments in Korea. These perspectives continued beyond the war as well. While writing for the *Military Review* in 1957 one officer noted that Korea was an, "Undesirable tour of duty which a certain unlucky percentage of our officers must undergo. The adverse publicity... and the natural desire of officers to serve with United States units have placed KMAG duty low on the assignment preference list of most US commissioned personnel."²⁶

The commanding officers stationed in Japan and Korea did not improve upon this reputation either. Many soldiers reported being dissuaded from requesting service in Korea based on rumors and reputation alone. In his book, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, Don Oberdorfer retold a story of a prominent military strategist, Colonel Harry Summers, who stated, "...arriving for duty as a US Army private and being lectured by the occupation commander, General John R. Hodge, that, "there are three things American troops in Japan are afraid of: diarrhea, gonorrhea, and Ko-rea."²⁷ In September 1946, the Chief of the Korean Constabulary forces conducted a training visit and assessment of the US efforts at that time. He noted that the rapid demobilization of American forces had reduced an advisory effort which had already been handicapped by limited resources and equipment. He noted that it was a, "shell with few men, no resources, and little direction."²⁸

²⁶ Mabry G. Miller, "KMAG: Training Ground for United States Officers," *Military Review* (1957): 39.

²⁷ Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1997), 7.

²⁸ Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 172; See also U.S. Department of the Army, *United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea*, 201. It notes that attitudes amongst the troops who were assigned to KMAG were low due to the types of operations they were assigned to, and did not improve much from 1948-1951. Many of the ROK forces, as well as their KMAG advisors, were tasked to fight

The American advisors conducted a survey to determine what type of officers and noncommissioned officers were desirable to perform their duties. It was determined that the average leader was not preferable for assignment as a military advisor. In actuality, a higher standard was recommended with different leadership traits. The survey suggested that advisors be “hand-picked men,” or “the top men in their branch.” To be competent and to adequately assist ROK forces, selected personnel should be capable of performing at one or two grades higher than their present given ranks. It was to these specifications that General Walker, Chief of KMAG, and the Commander of Eighth US Army agreed to begin to select personnel to serve in the Korean Military Advisory Group.²⁹

Table 1. KMAG Advisor Experience Recommendations.

Previous Experience Important For KMAG Advisors	
Experience	Percent of 255 Respondents***
Extensive combat experience	69
Command experience above Company level	65
Experience in training command	49
Experience in dealing with National Guard, ROTC, Reserve, or other components	26
Attendance at CGSC	19
Experience in other military advisory missions	7
Foreign military mission experience	16
No answer	6

*** Adds to more than 100 percent because respondents were requested to give three kinds of previous experience.

Source: Alfred H. Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*. (Chevy Chase, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Operations Research Office, 1957), 26-27.

internal South Korean guerilla wars instead of the Chinese threat. Operations such as RAT KILLER, FERRET, MONGOOSE, and BLOODHOUND were their initial primary missions.

²⁹ Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, 26-27.

First, in order to ensure the group was manned with both the depth of knowledge and the adequate numbers of men it needed, it began to aggressively screen the orders of all inbound personnel assigned to service in Korea. It did so with the full authority of its higher headquarters. KMAG advisors screened a copy of all Department of Army orders for officers assigned to the Eighth Army in order to judge if they met the desired traits that they were looking for. If they did, a request was sent directly to the personnel management office of Eighth Army, the result of which was that the officer was usually assigned to KMAG duty. To this end, the advisory's staff was able to hand select the personnel assigned to it, greatly alleviating many of their prior manning issues. Additionally, when officers were assigned to forward US elements that were in contact with North Korean units, the Korean Military Advisory Group would wait six months and then have them reassigned to their units. While proving to be a hindrance to units forward, this ensured that the officers that were being assigned as advisors had both combat and command experience.³⁰

A second event which greatly assisted the advisory effort was an expansion of its task organization, which was approved by Eighth US Army in March 1951. Although it was too late to offset the lack of personnel prior and during the onset of the war, it was a vast improvement over what they had before. Beginning as early as April 1951 the following advisory personnel were provided for ROK divisions: five lieutenant colonels, fourteen majors, two captains, and eleven enlisted men. This gave a total of thirty two KMAG personnel to a ROK division. At the beginning of the war in June 1950 an average division advisory group consisted of only five officers and three enlisted men. This essentially was a 300 percent increase in US advisory efforts

³⁰ Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, 26-37.

that was provided directly to the ROK Army divisions! This new organizational structure amounted to a considerable increase over previous advisory efforts.³¹

With clear strategic support, direction and proper manning, KMAC still had to provide the adequate type of equipment needed to facilitate training and allow the ROK Army to be able to fight and defend its own nation. Due to the lack of strategic guidance, or a clear understanding of what the United States was going to do with South Korea after the end of World War II, many opportunities were missed that directly resulted in the lack of equipping for the ROK Army and security forces from 1945-1950. This resulted in unfavorable conditions to support the training of forces by American advisory efforts. The three most damaging aspects of equipment shortages were caused by the deliberate destruction of captured Japanese weapons and ammunition, the deliberate arming of the South Korean police forces over that of the defense forces, and a poor level of management by both the Korean and American administrators.

After World War II General MacArthur's headquarters issued Occupation Instruction No. Two, in September 1945. This order directed US military units that were still located in South Korea to destroy any confiscated or captured Japanese equipment that could be used for warlike purposes. The only exception to this was rather it was deemed the equipment might be used for intelligence and research purposes or if it was desired by American troops as war trophies. The immediate effect of Occupation Instruction No. Two was that millions of rounds and weapons that could have been used to rapidly arm a fledgling security force were wasted. While the American occupation force was rapidly beginning to draw down its forces, armed indigenous personnel could not fill the gap that they left. Advisors struggled to find what they could to offset the crises, but with very limited success. For example, two American advisors assigned to Korea named Major Marsh and Captain Schwartz began to work directly with the Korean head of

³¹ Appleman, *Ridgeway Duels for Korea*, 350.

Logistics and Supply. They described their efforts to arm their trainees as, "...find what you can, where you can, with the resulting logistical support of equipment and supplies based on recycling and salvaging."³²

Since ROK Army supply personnel had to find something for their men to train with, they began to steal from American stockpiles of captured equipment. They did so initially because they were forbidden to buy new American supplies and equipment due to budgetary limitations, but also because American units were destroying Japanese stockpiles in response to Occupation Instruction No. Two. Counter to the American attempts to destroy the weapons, the South Korean supply agents began to confiscate the Japanese supplies they could find and inherited surplus and discarded supplies and equipment from demobilizing American units. The result of these efforts was that many South Korean units only had Japanese pistols, rifles and trucks with very limited ammunition in order to conduct their duties.³³

Compounding these issues was the prioritization of the Korean police forces over that of the Constabulary. The few advisors that were left in South Korea were directed to arm the police over the Constabulary in order to ease tensions with the Soviet supported North Koreans. The budget allocated to the police in 1947 was double that of the Constabulary. Additionally, new American weapons (pistols, carbines and light machine-guns) were issued to the police instead of the South Korean defense forces from 1945-1946. The result of this was that the South Korea defense forces, first in the Constabulary and then under the Provisional Military Advisory Group trained with mixes of different weapons. When US advisors took responsibility for their training, little had been done to correct these deficiencies. It was clear that a revised form of logistical

³² Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAC in Peace and War*, 16; Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 179-180.

³³ Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAC in Peace and War*, 17; Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 181.

support was needed. The table provided here highlights the different level of support the police and Constabulary forces received prior to the war.³⁴

Table 2. Constabulary vrs Police Equipment Support

Comparisons of Appropriations Between Constabulary and Police

Department	FY1946	FY1947	% Increase from FY 1946 to FY 1947
Police	624,743,264	1,584,562,600	153
Internal Security	445,460	1,750,000	293
Constabulary	669,901,800	716,250,000	6

*** Figures are in Korean won currency

Source: Peter Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 25, no 1 (March 2002): 177.

What makes this even more interesting was that the Constabulary, not the police, was tasked to conduct counter guerrilla operations. "The embryonic, untrained ROK units were wasting millions of rounds of ammo in operations against bandits and guerrillas all over South Korea."³⁵ Since they did not have the appropriate weapons to train with, the result was even more wasted training rounds. Not only were the police being armed over the overworked military forces, but there was a deliberate attempt for political reasons to make the Constabulary look like a police force. For example, General MacArthur's headquarters prevented US attempts to re-equip the Constabulary with heavier American weapons such as .50 caliber machine-guns, 81mm

³⁴ Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 177. Descriptions of the efforts the South Korean Supply agents took to correct these deficiencies can be found on pages 178-180.

³⁵ Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War, America in Korea 1950-1953* (Anchor Press, New York, NY, 1989), 51.

mortars, and 105 mm howitzers. Requests for these systems were responded to by the message that, "...in order to maintain the appearance of the Constabulary as a police-type reserve force, no weapons heavier than a light machine-gun should be used."³⁶ This would have tragic consequences once the ROK Army was required to defend the Republic of Korea in 1950. Because KMAC had not been given any of the necessary weapons to defeat a conventional threat, the ROK Forces had not adequately trained in sufficient numbers at the outset of North Korean aggression.

Corruption and lack of governmental controls also hindered equipment availability. Even with the deliberate destruction of captured Japanese weapons and ammunition, the US had still managed to amass approximately fifty one million rounds of small caliber ammunition for the South Korean security forces, both police and army. Unfortunately, lax control over how it was issued, and to whom, immediately caused this supply to begin to dwindle. Wide spread corruption and South Korean attempts to stockpile ammunition or sell it on the black market resulted in the original stockpile of fifty one million rounds dwindled to nineteen million, well over a fifty percent loss. Equipment and maintenance issues were the same for the ROK vehicle fleet. When KMAC assumed responsibility for training the ROK Army, thirty-five percent of the vehicles were already out of commission. This left only 2,100 trucks and operational jeeps. The new soldiers could use very few rounds for training purposes until the situation was resolved. Expansion placed even more stress upon the system. By December 1948, the ROK security forces had grown to about 100,000 men. Of those, 65,000 had been assigned to eight infantry divisions

³⁶ Maurice Isserman, *Korean War: America at War* (New York, NY: Facts on File Publishing, 2003), 25; Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 184.

which had been authorized by Washington. The American equipment, supplies, and spare parts were running out at an alarming rate, and there was little hope for substantial replacements.³⁷

Many of these equipping problems would continue to plague both Korean units and their advisors even as they expanded at the start of North Korean aggression. In October 1947 the Department of the Army directed Generals MacArthur and Hodge to formulate plans for expanding the Korean Constabulary. They decided to form a legitimate national defense force which would create a ROK Army of 200,000 men divided into six divisions. These elements would have all of the appropriate headquarters and technical service elements as well. However, political concerns continued to affect support operations. Meanwhile, US advisors began to attempt to resolve the equipping issue themselves by relying on American troop redeployment schedules and draw down timelines. They were able to establish guidelines which allowed them to maintain the weapons and equipment from units as they rotated back to the US. As troops left Korea during late 1948 and the first half of 1949, they would turn over part of their equipment to the ROK forces they were leaving behind. General Hodge supported these efforts. By November 1948 almost 70 percent of the ROK security forces small arms and automatic weapons were American. While this began to solve the problem, they still did not, however, have heavy machine guns, mortars, artillery, or any anti-tank capabilities.³⁸

A second way that the United States was able to begin to resolve the issue was by actually providing a budget to KMAC directly in order to allow them to begin to equip their ROK Army units. After two and a half years of struggle the US advisory effort began to receive adequate resources during the summer of 1948. While initial attempts to arm the Constabulary

³⁷ Blair, *The Forgotten War, America in Korea 1950-1953*, 51-57.

³⁸ Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAC in Peace and War*, 38; Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 183-184.

were very limited, the establishment of the Provincial Military Advisory Group created a small budget that could be used to begin to purchase training aids and weapons. It was not until 1950, however, that the Department of the Army would allocate any serious funding to the ROK Armies training needs. Their initial budget was assessed at twenty million dollars. This was done at the same time that the manning for KMAG was increased to 500 men. While only a year away from declared hostilities with North Korea, American advisors could finally begin to adequately resource their South Korean partners.³⁹

Another solution to the equipping problem, while perhaps limited in scope, cannot be underestimated. As South Korea's economy began to expand under US occupational control, the South Korean government began to repair and rebuild its infrastructure. Understanding that direct confrontation with North Korea was unavoidable, they made a considerable, albeit limited, effort to rearm their military as well. South Korea supply agents provided some uniforms, ammo, and other gear from newly established South Korean factories. However, this placed a heavy strain on the chaotic and fledgling economy. Unfortunately for all of these efforts, the units that KMAG advisors had trained still lacked any heavy weapons at the onset of the war. The initial surprise of the attack, as well as the poorly equipped and inadequately trained ROK Army forces, caused the initial South Korean resistance to rapidly collapse. This was particularly true in the west, along the main axis of the North Korean assault. It was not until the end of 1950-51 that American efforts would be able to rebuild the ROK Army.⁴⁰

After many delays, US advisors was able to train the ROK Army to fight and defend its own nation by finally establishing clear guidance on the type of force it would train, first through

³⁹ Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 188.

⁴⁰ Blair, *The Forgotten War, America in Korea 1950-1953*, 51; Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 9.

the establishment of a bilateral agreement between the Republic of Korea and the United States in October 1948, followed by the creation of the Korean Military Advisory Group from the Provincial Military Advisory Group. It was also able to eventually resolve many of its manning issues, through hand selecting qualified officers as well as reviewing inbound personnel orders prior to trainer's arrival as well as the expansion of its task organization. Lastly, KMAG was able to provide the adequate type of equipment needed to allow ROK units to begin to engage the North Koreans by utilizing US military units equipment as they rotated out of the theater based on their redeployment schedules, by authorizing KMAG a twenty million dollar budget to equip the forces they were training, and by utilizing internal South Korean factory production as their economy recovered.

TRAINING

Historian and military leader Major General Daniel Bolger noted in a piece entitled *So You Want to Be an Advisor* that all good militaries ensure that they continue to train on fundamental basic skills, irrelevant of rather they are in combat or not. He stated that, “Only the best militaries train during combat, but if you don’t do that, you won’t stay good for long.”⁴¹ While KMAG leadership was struggling to find solutions to their manning and equipping issues, they also needed to improve upon the basic skills that their ROK Army soldiers had if they were ever going to be able to defend their own nation. They faced both internal and external challenges in developing a foundation of training for the ROK Army, not least of which was the war itself.

Republic of Korean President Syngman Rhee’s climb to power, while supported by the Truman administration, was anything but peaceful for the people of South Korea. His election in 1947 resulted in a subversive leftist movement throughout South Korea. President Syngman Rhee’s opposition was led by a man named Pak Hon-yong and called itself the South Korean Labor Party. Upon their loss, the leftist political party against President Rhee resorted to guerrilla warfare in an attempt to delegitimize his administration. In efforts to increase the instability of the government, the North Korean communist’s began a proxy war in which they supported these disenfranchised leftist parties. The guerrilla war started on April 3, 1948 in Cheju-do Island. The resulting insurgency did not end until the north finally resolved to conduct a deliberate ground offensive against South Korea.⁴²

⁴¹ Daniel Bolger, “So You Want to Be an Advisor?” *Military Review* (March-April, 2006): 74.

⁴² Clemens, “US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” 189.

To contend with these insurgents, the South Korean government regularly had to depend upon the inadequately equipped and poorly manned Korean Constabulary. The US Military Government in Korea as well as the US Army Forces in Korea supported this force. Established after World War II in an attempt to create a friendly democratic Korea, this occupational force was composed of the Twenty Fourth Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General John R. Hodge. While there was a Korean police force, it was determined that the Constabulary, which would later become the Korean Army, would conduct the majority of the fighting against these guerrilla forces. While the Constabulary spent their time engaged with guerrillas and low-intensity contacts along the border with North Korea, they were unable to conduct any significant training. Constantly interrupted, they spent the majority of the time they had on basic unit drills, as advanced tactics required more time. Advisory efforts to train ROK units in combined arms tactics proved difficult due to the counterinsurgency campaign's constant disruption of their training schedule. This caused the South Korean forces to remain inadequately trained.⁴³

One benefit from conducting a sustained proxy war with both internal and external threats was that it did provide the new South Korean soldiers with a great deal of experience. The counterinsurgency campaigns conducted by the US Army trained forces from 1948 thru 1950 gave the Constabulary's personnel a wealth of experience. However, this did not offset the benefits that a deliberate training plan could have provided. Clearly seen at the onset of the War with North Korea, the results of these constant distractions became obvious. Additionally, as historian Allen Millett has noted, the North Korean People's Army also had several other distinct advantages. Firstly, they were not burdened with a counterinsurgency campaign like the South Koreans were. Secondly, they had significant foreign assistance which had provided them with

⁴³ Ibid., 165 and 191.

heavy weapons from the USSR and three divisions of infantry from China, not to mention tanks.⁴⁴

Following their initial defeat, the ROK Army began to demonstrate its capabilities by September 1950. While exploiting the successful completion of amphibious landings at Inchon, named Operation CHROMITE, the Eighth Army issued its Operations Plan Ten. It detailed General Walton Walker's counterattack out of the Taegu-Pusan perimeter with four US and ROK Army Corps. While the US First Corps would serve as the attacks main effort, the ROK Second Corps would attack through the Wonju corridor, and the ROK First Corps would attack along the coastal road of Wansong. This would protect the right flank of Eighth Army's main attack. During the attack both the First and Second ROK Corps conducted themselves with professionalism and were able to rapidly move along the coast. The ROK Army's successes stunned many US observers. While their advisors assisted in providing these forces with US naval, artillery, and aviation support, the ROK divisions staged several perilous naval raids that cost them heavy casualties. While ROK commanders refused to slow the pursuit of their men, one US commander noted that, "Man for man, the ROK First Corps may have been the most aggressive unit in United Nations Command."⁴⁵

This transition did not ease the US advisory efforts to train their ROK Army counterparts. KMAC had to continually shift their efforts as the war with North Korea shifted along the peninsula. Transitioning from defensive to offensive operations had increased the morale of the South Korean soldiers, but it did not provide an influx of time in which to conduct training. American advisors had to adapt their training to contend with the new paradigm of ROK Army

⁴⁴ Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North*, 29; See also Peter Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 191.

⁴⁵ Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North*, 269-271, 273.

forces responsibility in the war. They also had to develop a solution to contend with the limited training sites and educational centers available in South Korea as well as provide proper incentives to increase leadership potentials for both the ROK Army officers as well as the KMAG advisors.⁴⁶

The first challenge that American Advisors had to contend with in regards to training was to develop a solution to the limited training sites and educational centers that were available in South Korea. KMAG itself saw that solving this was one of their primary tasks. They wanted to ensure that they established the ROK Army on a firm foundation. Korea required a system which could be maintained and continued once the US advisors left. While unable to properly educate or provide centers prior to the outbreak of hostilities with North Korea due to budgetary constraints, it became almost impossible during the first year of the war itself. Despite guidance in the summer of 1951 from General Van Fleet to General Ryan, who at the time was the chief of KMAG, to create and administer a vast military training program, it would take some time to institute.⁴⁷

This was due almost entirely to the tactical situation on the ground. As a result of North Korea's rapid invasion, almost all of the original military schools that existed in South Korea were overrun or ceased to operate. To complicate the problem, the Korean military system currently in place consisted of several different commands each of which competed for funds and influence within the Korean military. When KMAG assumed training responsibilities for the ROK Army, there were seven different replacement training centers in existence in South Korea that were operating under different commands.

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of the Army, *United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea*, 360; Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North*, 273 & 360.

⁴⁷ Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 1996), Microfilm, p. 3, #D001126; See also pages 120-124.

The second challenge that KMAC would have to correct was a significant lack of Korean instructors. The majority of the school staffs that did exist had been required to fall in with units and help defend South Korea from the initial North Korean offensives, and many of them had died. This created a lack of competent and trained instructors.⁴⁸ In a report entitled *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict*, Eighth US Army Headquarters indicated the significance of the lack of qualified trainers by noting it as one of their primary issues.⁴⁹ The Korean social system further complicated the numerical lack of instructors, in which capable and competent subordinates were unwilling to teach their social superiors. For example, Korean noncommissioned officers refused to provide instruction to those who either outranked them militarily, or were of a different social class than they were. Essentially, the Korean military ranking system as influenced by their social constraints emphasized the importance of rank without reference to ability.⁵⁰ Hence, not only were the limited number of trainers available severely curtailed by the war, but those that were available were generally inadequate to conduct the training needed by Korean standards.

⁴⁸ Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 199. It shows the competing systems that existed throughout South Korea. Due to the dispersion, additional trainers and funds were needed that could have been consolidated elsewhere. Also, each of the schools had different training requirements and standards, which further complicated the process. Also, see page 126.

⁴⁹ HQ, EUSA, *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict* (U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, Eighth US Army Headquarters, 1952), 18.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

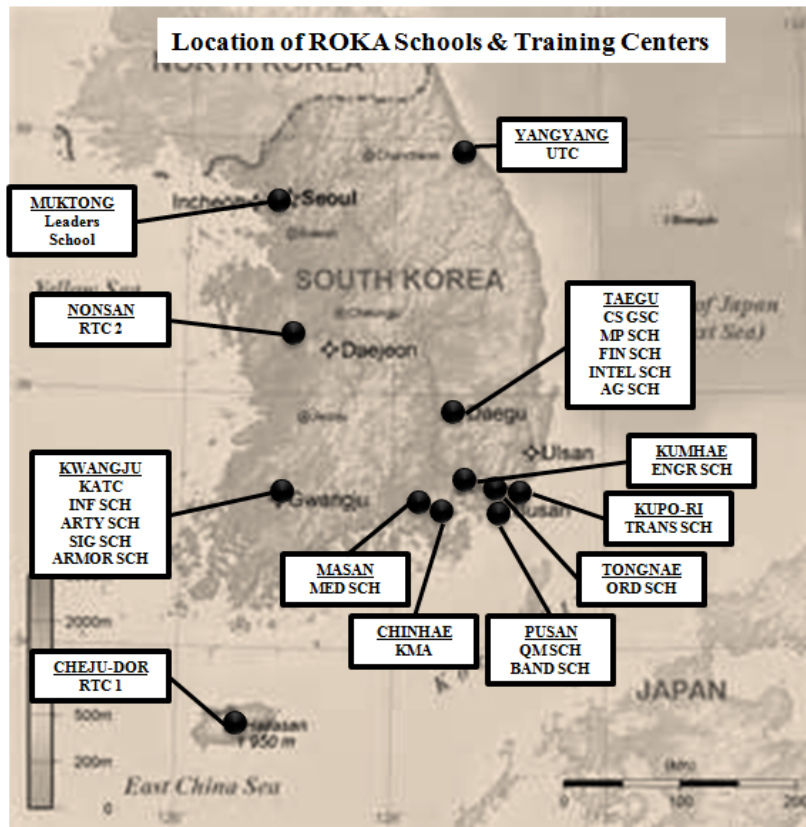


Figure 1. Location of ROKA Schools & Training Centers.

Source: Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 1996), Microfilm, p. 199, #D001126.

The next challenge KMAC advisors had to overcome in regards to training was an acute lack of leadership. There were several different reasons that created this, with each compounding upon the other. Firstly, the historical occupation of Korea by Japan, both before and during the war, had severely altered the societal norms of the South Korean people. Compounding upon this were the very limited opportunities for promotion within the Korean military. Even seeking additional training could result in unwanted debt to those seeking to learn their trade, and hence many shied away from the responsibility of leadership within the ROK Army. Additionally, many people within South Korea lacked the education necessary to serve in leadership positions.

During the Japanese occupation of Korea, the Japanese went through exaggerated lengths to ensure they maintained complete control of Korea's political, economic, and military capabilities. This ensured that they did not have to expend additional resources in securing the population, and that the products of Korea could continue to support the Japanese war and economic efforts. While the Japanese ensured that foreign nationals or other sympathizers were kept in positions of importance such as managerial positions, it also had the side effect of creating a stigma amongst the South Koreans themselves. One result of this was that the Korean people had few leadership opportunities themselves, and in fact were discouraged from seeking leadership positions in any medium. Korean families discouraged working with the Japanese, as they view it as inappropriate. Their own people usually regarded those who did work with the Japanese as collaborators. The overall effect was that it was almost impossible for KMAC to find trained native administrators.⁵¹

Another challenge that the American advisors had to contend with was the selection of leaders within the South Korean military system itself. After the initial invasion by North Korea, the ROK Army had to take every able man they could to fill the decimated ranks of their divisions and corps. This resulted in a very rapid expansion where leaders were literally "pulled off the streets." The selection process was so rapid and substandard that recruiters were told to select intelligent looking men. Obviously, when American personnel had to conduct these selections, they naturally selected those who could speak English to serve as officers. While this process enabled the ROK Army to fill its depleted units, it resulted in very poor qualities amongst its leaders, who at the outset received no more specialized training than the men they were leading.⁵²

⁵¹ Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAC in Peace and War*, 6.

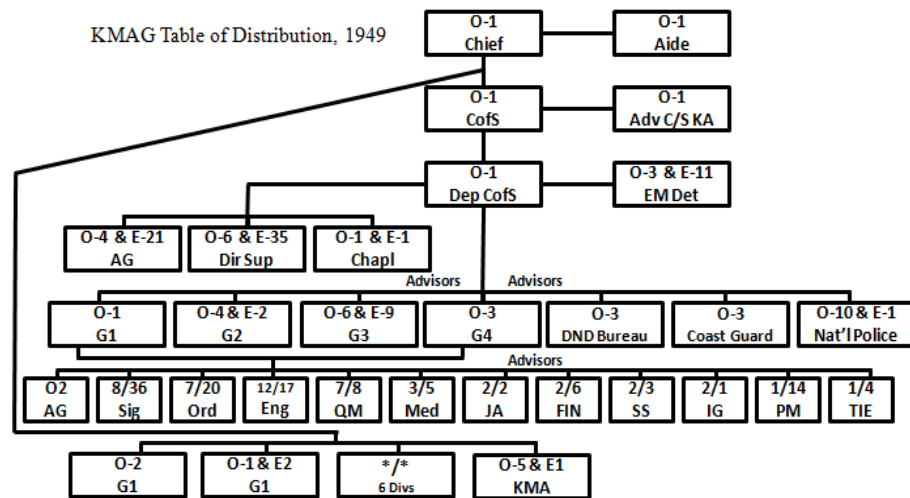
⁵² *Ibid.*, 147.

Lastly, the basic education level of the average South Korean presented a problem to their training. The Japanese occupation had used the Korean peninsula as an agrarian rice production facility. It valued the fields that South Korea provided over the human potential its people offered. As such, education was not a priority to either the Japanese or the Koreans themselves. At the outset of the war approximately twenty seven percent of ROK Army personnel had no education. While these illiterate masses could serve in the Korean infantry units they had great difficulty operating in other fields. Even those that showed promise and were moved to more demanding positions proved to be problematic. Many capable South Korean soldiers were promoted in rank throughout the war from either battlefield commissions or their perceived potential. However, often their educational level prevented them from absorbing instructions from career courses once they would arrive in follow on training.⁵³

While grappling with these many issues, American advisors also had internal conflicts that hindered their ability to adequately support the expanding ROK Army. This was caused by, as outlined in section 1, the initial lack of funds allocated to them, an inability to recruit competent American leadership, and the unwillingness of American soldiers to serve in Korea. Once armed conflict began in 1950, the ROK Army expanded rapidly to meet North Korean aggression. Their strength grew from 273,000 on June 30, 1951 to 376,000 on June 30, 1952. By 1953 it grew by almost another 200,000, finally reaching 591,000 in July. These numbers are staggering in themselves and the KMAC advisors struggled to keep pace with their Korean Allies. KMAC grew from almost 500 personnel for an eight division ROK Army in 1949 to a maximum strength in 1953 of 2,866; 1,918 authorized with the remainder Eighth US Army temporary duty or attached personnel. These numbers were still utterly inappropriate, however. They indicate a ratio of 1,918:376,000, or approximately 1 advisor to every 200 Korean

⁵³ Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 182-183.

personnel! Hence, American advisory efforts were never able to provide real leadership through presence below the Regimental level. That was despite a stated goal that there was to be an American advisor in every division, regiment, and battalion. There simply were not enough advisors for the infantry battalions.⁵⁴



* Thirteen officers and fourteen enlisted men with each ROK Army division. Original source: Adapted from Semiannual report, period 1 July-31 December 1949, United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea

Figure 2. KMAG Table of Organization.

Source: Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 50.

New soldiers assigned to Korea prior to 1951 were mixed in their reports about their reception as well. This was a reflection of the standards of the organization itself. Some of this was due to the tactical situation in the war. With new personnel flooding into Korea and units desperate for replacements, officers and noncommissioned officers were rapidly sent forward to their assigned ROK Army units. Many complained about the lack of understanding they had

⁵⁴ Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*, 50; Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 10-11.

about their new jobs, or even where they were supposed to go. One military advisor actually reported that, “The officer I replaced met me at the railhead (4 hours behind the division), turned his jeep over to me, and gave me directions to the division CP,”⁵⁵ as the extent of the transition he received prior to assuming his job.⁵⁶

There were many creative solutions that KMAG adapted in its training and organizational structure to contend with the constant state of internal and external conflict within South Korea, the limited training sites and educational centers available, and the lack of competent leadership within the ROK Army. The Department of the Army was very interested in the delays and lack of performance from their South Korean allies, particularly in response to the ROK Armies perceived failures in the initial North Korean offensives of 1950. Although deemed, “combat ready,” prior to the invasion, the South Korean units had quickly disintegrated when initially attacked.⁵⁷ On 22 July, in response to a Department of the Army inquiry into what was required to improve ROK forces, the commander of Eighth US Army in Korea, General Matthew Ridgeway replied, “the first requirement was a professionally competent officer and noncommissioned officer corps that possessed a will to fight, an aggressive leadership ability, a professional pride, and a sense of duty.”⁵⁸ These same traits became reflected in a newly published advisors hand book as well.⁵⁹ American advisors and the Eighth US Army headquarters

⁵⁵ Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, 16.

⁵⁶ Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*, 57; Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 12.

⁵⁷ Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North*, 84.

⁵⁸ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 9.

⁵⁹ F. W. Farrell, *Korean Military Assistance Advisors Handbook* (Soule, South Korea: Office of the Chief, Korean Military Assistance Advisory Group, 1951)

immediately began to address both the standardization of their training plans, as well as leadership development. It had become apparent that it would be necessary to overhaul the ROK Army in order to rebuild their self confidence. It was determined that to do so would require the creation of a centralized ROK replacement training and school command, as well as an intensive leadership program which incorporated US Army service schools within the United States of America.⁶⁰

The ROK Army recruitment and training system was the first correction KMAG took. Once the tactical situation permitted, and now with the full support of their higher headquarters, KMAG attempted to create a system that was similar to that of the US Army and began reactivating schools in August of 1950. Simultaneously, in order to standardize the recruitment process and provide an economy of both KMAG and Korean trainers, they inactivated all seven of the operating replacement training centers. They did so in order to consolidate efforts and established one centralized one with a capacity of 14,000 recruits. Also, unlike before when internal rivalries had diminished the control of the training sites within the South Korean Army, it was decided that all of the schools would fall directly under the ROK Army Chief of Staff. Selection of the drafting procedures as well as soldier selection became the responsibility of the ROK Army. This immediately resulted in an improvement to the men recruited as the Koreans could better gauge the recruit's capabilities over that of the Americans, and were not restricted by language and cultural barriers.⁶¹

To address the reality of the war at the front the length of the training schools were extended. When hostilities had commenced with North Korea, some recruits were lucky if they were able to receive even introductory instruction prior to arriving at their units. While many did

⁶⁰ Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 121.

⁶¹ Ibid., Pg 125-126, and 164.

receive basic training at the recruitment training center, the amount of training they received still highly depended entirely upon the tactical situation. A sixteen week cycle which was identical to the one that US divisions were required to complete became the standard. Also, in order to formalize and standardize the training, the cadre began to receive training prior to the arrival of their classes. This gave them time to prepare their lesson plans and conduct rehearsals. It also gave the training centers the needed time to procure and set up training aids for the students. Finally, it was also determined that the shortage of technical field manuals was affecting the proper training of the Korean students. The solution to this was simply to begin to publish field manuals in Korean, which were issued to the soldiers during their initial 16 week training course.⁶²

In order to increase the capabilities of the ROK Army leadership, particularly that of their officers and noncommissioned officer corps, the Chief of Staff of the ROK Army, with approval from Eighth US Army, created the first Korean Military Academy. It was able to open its doors on January 1, 1952, and was modeled on the same principles as the American Military Academy in West Point. This school greatly increased the professionalism of the ROK Army's officers, and numerous key officials attended its opening. Simultaneous to these efforts, ROK recruits who were identified in the recruitment command and who showed promise were separated and sent to Kwangju where a new fourteen week Korean officer candidate school was established. While they were there they were provided specialized training on the employment of infantry weapons as well as blocks of instruction on leadership. Once completed, they would then go back to their original units.⁶³ Finally, many field grade officers who showed specific potential for increased promotion were sent to a newly opened ROK Army Command and General Staff College, which

⁶² Ibid., Pg 165-170, and 187.

⁶³ Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 199.

was built in the city of Taegu and opened on October 28, 1951. Similar to the Korean Military Academy, this school mirrored that of its American counterpart, the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Many of the officers who attended this school would eventually serve in division and corps level positions.⁶⁴ Between the Korean Officer Candidate School program, the Korean Military Academy, the Korean Army Command and General Staff College, and the increase in their basic training time at the recruitment centers, the average Korean company grade officer had almost three times as much training as they would have received prior to the start of the war. Further, over 31,000 officers were trained in these schools from 1951-1952 alone.⁶⁵

Options were examined to increase training opportunities outside of South Korea as well. In November 1950 leaders within KMAC had begun to advocate for the selection of specific ROK officers to attend training in the United States or Japan. Korean soldiers had conducted training in Japan before, as early as 1888 with mixed results.⁶⁶ Eventually, the Department of the Army authorized two twenty-week courses for 300 students to attend specialized training in both infantry and artillery schools in the United States. The first group of these arrived in 1951, and greatly increased the capabilities of the South Korean Army upon their return.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Hausrath, *The KMAC Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, 45 and 314; See also Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 201.

⁶⁵ Hausrath, *The KMAC Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, Pg 44, Figure I.

⁶⁶ United States Army, *KMAC's Heritage: The Story of Brigadier General William McEntire Dye*, 8.

⁶⁷ Hausrath, *The KMAC Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, 178.

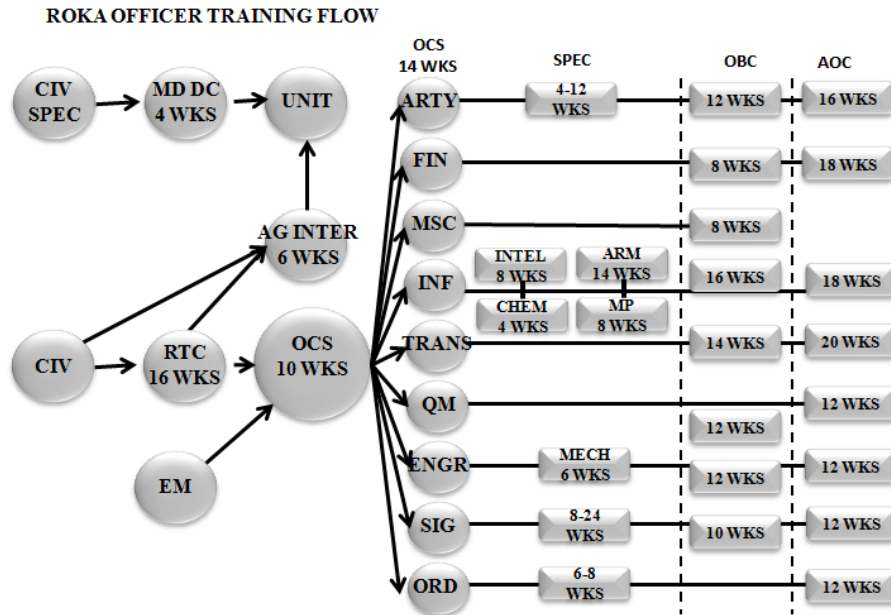


Figure 3. South Korean Officer Training Program.

Source: Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 1996), Microfilm, p. 199, D001126.

American advisors also addressed several of their internal organizational and manning shortfalls. First, it standardized its reception and operating procedures and published the first *Advisory Handbook* in draft format in 1950. Several authors criticized this book for being overly administrative in nature, but it cannot be overestimated how much it helped formalize an organization forced to rapidly expand and adapt with the onset of the North Korean invasion. Addressing such questions as organizational structure, as well as the proper procedures for requesting and receiving US military support when in contact along the front lines, advisors in Korea finally had one document they could turn to for guidance. By 1953 it was also made clear that the success of the units they were assigned to was paramount in determining whether they as advisors were successful. KMAC's leadership told their advisors clearly in 1953 that their performance was measured by the success of the units they were assigned to advise, and not on

their own personal performance. Advisors were held responsible for their units without command authority. One advisor made clear, "In an American corps the senior division advisor had better feel responsible, for the corps commander certainly considers him so."⁶⁸

In summation, KMAG was able to address the challenges they had with the training and management of the ROK Army's limited training sites, educational centers, and leadership. They did so by refining the way ROK Army soldiers were recruited and selected, the establishment of a ROK replacement training and school command, the creation of an intensive leadership program for South Korean officers, the publication and standardization of the US Military advisory groups standards with an advisory handbook, and the tying of US performance to that of the units to which they were assigned. The results of these steps cannot be underestimated. By the end of 1950 almost one-third of the ROK Army's officers and enlisted men were in attendance in one of these training schools, consisting of almost 94,808 soldiers. A report by one inspector in April 1951 on the status of the ROK Army stated that, "the capabilities of the K[orean] A[rmy] education system are being improved and expanded and are rapidly approaching the final requirements to support fully the present forces." This was a significant step forward, particularly as by March of 1951 ROK Army forces were able to occupy 59 percent of the front line. In response to this, their casualties and numbers of contacts also increased. ROK forces suffered 55 percent of the total casualties while dispatching on average 61 percent of all patrols, received 86 percent of the enemy probes, suffered 87 percent of the larger scale enemy attacks, and inflicted 55 percent of the evaluated enemy casualties. By 1952 and early 1953, the major part of responsibility for the Eighth US Army front had been assumed by ROK Army units.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Farrell, *Korean Military Assistance Advisors Handbook*, 20.

⁶⁹ HQ, EUSAK. *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict*. U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, Eighth US Army Headquarters, 1952, 18; Millett, *The War For Korea: 1950-1951, They Came from the North*, 30, 269-271, 273.

CULTURE

Military theorist Patrick Porter stated in his book *Military Orientalism* that culture is a significant influential variable that not only can define victory, but also can assist in conflict termination, provide insight to ranking geostrategic priorities, and constrain choices.

Unfortunately, culture is also an ambiguous repertoire of competing ideas. It is assuredly axiomatic that it has some measurable effect on operations when different societies interact toward the same goal. The Korean War, as well as the way that KMAG interacted with the units they were tasked with training and collaborating with, was no exception. The cultural rift that existed between a victorious post World War Two United States and a war decimated and recently liberated South Korea is almost beyond understanding. If the simple recent strategic context of the two countries was in itself not a sufficient enough problem, then the divide of the Pacific Ocean between the two and centuries of divergent language, religion, ethics, and customs surely was enough to compound it.⁷⁰

Many advisory efforts in the past have been forced to contend with many of the same challenges. With the formulation of his twenty-seven articles, T.E. Lawrence displayed a unique understanding of a concern for the linguistic capabilities of military advisors. He was particularly successful because he had a unique situational understanding of their culture that he was able to garner from his linguistic skills. His ideas, as well as others who had served on other training and assist missions in the past, were available to the trainers of KMAG to help guide them on the

⁷⁰ Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009), 7 & 18; See also Department of the Army. *Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army Printing Office, 2006); See also Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 14.

proper protocol and ways to avoid the Pandora's box of misguided steps while interacting with their ROK Army counterparts.

Just as T.E. Lawrence noted, language was one of the first and most highly cited issues that the advisors would need to contend with. There were no military phases in the Korean language, such as "sector," "phase line," regiment," or "squad." A language had to be improvised, and the result was usually cumbersome or humorous. A machine gun became "a-gun-that-shoots-very-fast," and a vehicle headlight became "a-candle-in-a-shiny-bowl." Another issue that would plague the advisors was the Korean cultural norm called, "oriental pride" or "face." Highly accepted as appropriate behavior in East Asia, "face" greatly complicated and often undermined Army advisory efforts at training. An inexperienced or incompetent ROK Army noncommissioned officer who gave an incorrect or foolish order could not openly admit to his mistake, nor could he be advised or corrected in the traditionally direct American manner without a disastrous loss of pride. In order to be successful, the advisors needed to observe, understand, and incorporate unique solutions to many of these cultural challenges. KMAC was able to adequately minimize cultural and societal differences through minimizing the language barrier that existed between the two countries. American advisors were also able to undermine and then correct the standing tradition of the Korean sense of entitlement that many of the ROK Army soldiers had during their training.⁷¹

While not unique to advisory missions, language barriers were an old nemesis for US personnel working in the Korean peninsula. As early as 1883 the United States had worked with the Korean government in attempts to modernize and train its armies. Upon special request from the King of Korea, President Grant assigned three men, Colonel Dye, Major Cummins, and Major Lee, to serve as advisors to Korea. Their mission eventually failed in 1889 because it was

⁷¹ Blair, *The Forgotten War, America in Korea 1950-1953*, 52.

undermined by internal Korean political struggles, external mismanagement by the Department of State, and intrastate rivalries between Korea, Japan, and China. In regards to advisory issues, however, the fundamental recorded issue revolved around an inability to communicate with the Korean soldiers. Simply, not a single one of the advisors could speak Korean, and the Koreans could not speak English. In an attempt to correct this deficiency before the advisory effort began, Korea founded a Royal English School 1886. Unfortunately, this had no effect on the immediate effectiveness of the Colonel Dye mission to assist Korea.⁷²

Armed with this historical data from Korea's past, as well as their own experiences garnered during World War Two, the soldiers assigned to operate in Korea after the war understood that interpretation was the fundamental cornerstone to their success. The Korean Bureau of National Defense was assigned the responsibility of recruiting, training, and equipping future Korean armed forces. Established on November 10, 1945 by US Army Forces in Korea Headquarters, it fully appreciated the language barrier that was hindering interaction between potential recruits and their trainers. As one of their first actions, the Bureau of National Defense started a military language school in Seoul. The school opened on December 4, 1945 with the intent of easing the language difficulty by teaching potential Korean officers English military expressions. The first class graduated over 60 soldiers. Although this was a start, it did very little over the next five years to offset the larger number of units that did not have enough assigned interpreters. This was because many of the personnel who could translate Korean worked in Headquarters and Headquarters Companies. While this assisted at higher echelons, it did very little to assist at the unit tactical level or with training.⁷³

⁷² Richard P Weinert, "The Original KMAG," *Military Review* (June 1965): 95 & 98.

⁷³ Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," 166.

One attempt to fix this problem was the use of Japanese speaking personnel. Prior to the Korean War in 1950, Nisei (Japanese-American) translators were attached to advisors since many Koreans, especially the officers, spoke Japanese. However, as part of the de-Japanization of Korea the Department of Internal Security, an internal Korean organization, forbade the use of Japanese as a means of conversation. This was entirely due to political reasons, but was a direct consequence of the Japanese occupation during World War II. For convenience, many Korean Constabulary officers and advisors continued to use it. Even with the Nisei and the fact that many Constabulary men knew some English, carrying out simple instructions was a struggle. Compounding this was the lack of training manuals translated into Korean to distribute to the Constabulary men.⁷⁴

For the soldiers within KMAC, language was one of the most difficult and tedious problems they would face. It hampered everything that the American advisors tried to do, reaching from simple weapons qualification tables and team training, all the way to mechanical and technical repair operations. Soldiers that came from half the world over were intended to, upon the completion of their training programs, report forward in their assigned sectors and units and work with ROK Army soldiers who were in armed contact with North Korean and Chinese units. The time allotted for transition and adaptation was minimal. Commander of the Eighth US Army, General Matthew Bunker Ridgway, whom KMAC was assigned, stated during one inspection “Their unfamiliarity with our ways and our inability to breach the language barrier with consistency, combined with the blundering nature of so many of our dealings with their nation, made cooperation extremely difficult, particularly when the pressure of mortal danger

⁷⁴ Scholarly Resources. *The Korean War*, 185; Clemens, “US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” 174.

allowed no time for planning or protocol.⁷⁵ The proficiency of the soldiers whom were assigned to KMAC did very little to help the situation either. There was not a large need for soldiers to speak Korean during World War II, and many who had linguistic skills in East Asia were proficient in Japanese, not Korean. One attempt to locate language proficient American soldiers was only able to identify one KMAC advisor who could speak, read, and write Korean at all in 1953. Additionally, only one other was fluent in Japanese.⁷⁶

Compounding this problem was the socio-economic difference between the trainers and the trainees. Relaying basic instructions was often frustrating and time consuming. The Korean language is an imprecise one that lacks translations of technical terms from English. Many of the military terms that the soldiers regularly used had not found their way into the Korean language. Literal translations were often impossible to make.⁷⁷ Also, many Korean candidates for soldiering were poor, agrarian farmers. Forbidden to serve in the military during the Japanese occupation, there was no need for them to learn any of the drilling commands or typology common to military personnel. Forbidden to serve in administrative positions in corporations, they did not have terms for many of the chronological or essential office phrases that their American counterparts often used. Simply put, the two languages were centuries apart in scope. The perfect illustration of this is the already given Korean phrase for a simple headlight, or a, “candle-in-a-shiny-bowl.” They did not have a lack of aptitude for the training, however, once they were able to overcome the simple problems of communication and the technological gap that existed. One senior advisor commented that, “for a people who are not accustomed to telephones, radios, modern weapons,

⁷⁵ Matthew B. Ridgeway, *The Korean War* (New York, NY: Ballentine Books, 1967), 4.

⁷⁶ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 15.

⁷⁷ Clemens, “US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” 177.

and mechanical equipment to have obtained so much information in so short a time as they have, it appears they they have an inherent aptitude for training and learning new methods.”⁷⁸ It was essential to solve the language barrier, however. During one inspection of KMAC and the units they were training it was noted that the single greatest factor to the loss of confidence between KMAC and their trainees was an inability to communicate with each other.⁷⁹

KMAC undertook several different initiatives in attempts to correct the language barrier that existed. First, they took a top down approach with their inbound personnel that served as advisors. Their leaders made it clear that from in processing onward they were to take a direct interest in their counterparts language, and attempt to communicate with their Korean partners in their own language or as best they could. This immediately destroyed the stigma that English was the preferred form of communication. US Army Forces in Korea issued several directives to assist in the ongoing training programs. First, advisory headquarters instructed them to develop a better understanding of the Korean language. They were also instructed that using conversational Korean, when supplemented with hand and arm signals was easier to learn.”⁸⁰

A second initiative that KMAC undertook was to establish a second line of communication that ran parallel to the United States, Eighth Army command and control structure and that of their Korean counterparts. Due to the initial difficulties that the ROK Army and their US partners had in communicating, two lines of communication had been established at all levels. One line was in English, and the other in Korean. Due to this, orders that generated by KMAC sometimes reached their lower level echelon forces at different times than the Korean

⁷⁸ Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 183; Clemens, “US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” 177.

⁷⁹ Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 186.

⁸⁰ Clemens, “US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” 177.

orders. The result of this was that operations were continually delayed until both Korean Army and KMAC officers received orders. To fix this, American advisory officers procured their own sets of signal communications equipment and then established a switchboard that had English-speaking Koreans as the operators. This ensured that all orders sent between units were being received correctly, and at the same time.⁸¹

A third initiative that the KMAC advisors undertook in order to assist correct the language barrier was to begin to ensure that all communications between American and Korean personnel were recorded, as well as to begin to print joint training manuals in Korean and English. All headquarters documents were to cease being issued in only English text. All documents began to be issued in both Korean and English. Perhaps most importantly, military training manuals were translated for the first time into Korean and distributed down to the platoon level. These manuals covered basic soldiering and squad/platoon tactics. This enabled training throughout all of the Korean units to become standardized for the first time. These manuals also had the additional benefit of letting the Korean officers and NCOs lead their own military lessons, greatly increasing their own confidence. Lastly, the KMAC advisors began to build their own Korean language technical dictionary in order to assist gap the socio-economic challenges many of the Koreans had with understanding the English language as well as the terms associated with serving in a modern army. By the fall of 1951 KMAC had tasked each of the Korean Army schools to compile an individual dictionary. Once these were completed, they were submitted to a central agency which would then publish a complete technical dictionary. KMAC advisors reported that these initiatives greatly alleviating many of the language problems.⁸²

⁸¹ Eight US Army Korea (EUSAK), *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict and Their Solutions, Volume III, Part 14* (Office of Chief of Military History, Carlisle Barracks, PA, September 24, 1952), 22-23.

⁸² Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 187; Clemens, "US Military Advisors in Korea,

Another aspect that KMAG needed to address was to determine a solution to the long standing tradition of a Korean sense of entitlement, or “face,” that many of the ROK Army soldiers had during their training. This concept was noted as having a huge impact on the KMAG advisors being able to properly conduct training. This internal cultural paradigm also had an effect on how Koreans viewed integrity, and would consistently interfere with good American/Korean relations. Essentially, the Koreans fear of losing “face” would often result in the Korean students attempting to conceal their deficiencies during training. They would even go so far as to give false information if it meant that they would not lose respect amongst their peers.⁸³

This cultural concept of face was not only externally oriented, as towards the way that Korean trainees would communicate with their American KMAG trainers. It was also an issue for the proper actualization of Korean subordinates and their superiors, and generally made proper decorum within units seem unattainable by American standards. For example, superior officers in the Korean Army were very difficult to train because of it. They would often refuse to conduct training for reasons that at first were beyond their KMAG instructors. The respect that was given to superior ROK Army officers adversely affected the development of initiative in junior leaders. It was noted that many senior ROK Army officers would avoid attending classes if they knew their instructors were of a lower rank than they were. The additional result of this was that junior ROK Army officers would hesitate in correcting their superior officers because they were afraid they would offend or embarrass them. KMAG advisors noted that ROK Army officers would not

1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” 177-179; 8th U.S. Army Korea (EUSAK), *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict and Their Solutions, Volume III, Part 14*, 23.

⁸³ Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 187-188.

say anything that could possibly be construed as an opinion different from that of the senior officer present.⁸⁴

The first way that KMAG and the Eighth US Army attempted to correct this was by integrating Korean soldiers into American units. This was a necessity during the early parts of 1950 to assist with re-manning many depleted combat units. Later, it was thought that by integrating Korean personnel into American units Koreans would adapt some of the cultural “norms” of their American counterparts. The program they developed was called the “KATUSA” program, or The Korean augmentation to the US Army. The program had mixed results, and by 1951 many of the units, particularly infantry units, stopped accepting KATUSA personnel. Some reports indicated that it was because it was “most difficult” to control Koreans in combat. However, the real reasons extended from equipping all the way to communication issues. As time went on and more interpreters became available, the training was improved and the KATUSA program was maintained, albeit at a reduced level.⁸⁵

The second way that the KMAG advisors elected to correct culturally restrictive behavior was in their overall policy toward interaction with their trainees. General Roberts, Commander of KMAG in 1953, made it clear that individual advisors would live intimately with their ROK Army counterparts. General Roberts made it clear to his staff officers that he believed American advisors would never be able to understand or gain the trust of their assigned counterparts unless they worked out of the same offices, worked in the field together, and attended social functions together. This would allow them to reach a “common understanding on mutual daily problems.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Ibid., Pg 188-189.

⁸⁵ Eighth US Army Korea (EUSAK). *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict and Their Solutions, Volume III, Part 14*, 68; Scholarly Resources, *The Korean War*, 193-194.

⁸⁶ Clemens, “US Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1948: The Intelligent Man on the Spot,” 188.

While increasing their interaction, better bounds and understanding were thought to be created. Guidance was also published in written format to the advisors, institutionalizing this practice. The 1953 publication of the *Advisor's Procedure Guide* even included the term “face” when addressing the Korean cultural norms, signifying an understanding of the concept as well as acknowledgment of its significance and effect it could have on advisor/advised relations. It stated that an advisor must, “...criticize their [ROK Army Officer's] mistakes without causing them embarrassment or a “loss of face.”⁸⁷

KMAG advisors were able to adequately transition ongoing alliance operations during the Korean War to indigenous Korean military forces because they were able to adequately minimize cultural and societal differences through minimizing the language barrier. They did this initially by attempting to incorporate Japanese speaking translators into their ranks in order to capitalize on Korean/Japanese and Japanese/English speaking personnel. While this was outlawed by the Korean Government, KMAG created redundant lines of communication and assigned English and Korean fluent personnel to operate the switch boards which ensured that command and control could be maintained, began to print and provide Korean/English manuals to trainees in order to allow them to both train themselves, as well as codify the Korean training program, and provided guidance to the KMAG instructors to communicate as best they could in the Korean language. They were also able to undermine the long standing tradition of a Korean sense of entitlement, or “face,” that many of the ROK Army soldiers had during their training. American advisors first attempted to do so through the KATUSA program. When this began to fail, they then did so through the publication of direct guidance to its subordinate leaders on how to interact

⁸⁷ Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor: Roles and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, 23.

with the Korean trainees in order to ensure close cooperation. Lastly, KMAG also published directions in the *Advisor's Procedure Guide*, institutionalizing the practice.

CONCLUSION

By the end of the Korean War, it was clear that the ROK Army was conducting the majority of the operations against North Korean and the Peoples Volunteer Army forces, as well as sustaining the brunt of the casualties. They had emerged from the embryonic tutelage of the Provincial Military Advisory Group and Constabulary into a modern military force under KMAG, and they had been able to do so in less than ten years, from 1945 to 1953. This is not to say that the programs instituted by the United States and her partners in East Asia were adequate, holistic, or appropriate in nature. Based on the research conducted and presented here, it is frankly overwhelming to consider that these programs were successful at all. Overall, during the Korean War the ROK Army sacrificed about 257,000 soldiers. At the beginning of the war the ROK Army had only 8 Divisions. At the time of the Korean War Armistice, its size had expanded to three Corps, eighteen Divisions, and 600,000 soldiers. Their success is owed in part to the ingenuity of many of the KMAG soldiers who trained them. They were able to overcome an insurmountable number of challenges to achieve what they did.⁸⁸

Conducting advisory operations in ongoing conflict, specifically the Korean War, has been the focus of this research. It is not hard to see how conducting these types of operations during ongoing hostilities complicates national efforts. It has become apparent that working with other cultures also complicates the process of training foreign defense forces. As highlighted in this research, working effectively with indigenous forces in a foreign country that have an alien

⁸⁸ Global Security Organization, "The Republic of Korea History," Global Security's, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/rok/army-history.htm> (accessed December 1, 2012)

culture, different language, and different concepts of right and wrong is very difficult and presents a multitude of problems.⁸⁹

The lessons learned from this study can be of great service to follow on operational artists as they continue to be presented with similar challenges in the adaptive and complex security environment our nation currently faces. Direct correlations can be made to the recently ended conflict in Iraq and the ongoing war in Afghanistan. Although an in depth analysis of the military advisory effort in either of these wars is outside the scope of this research, trends can still be identified. There can be no doubt that military advisory operations and foreign military internal assistance will continue to be missions assigned to United States services in order to achieve conflict deterrence and regional stability. In a recent declaration by the heads of state and governments of the nations contributing to the United Nations mandated North Atlantic Treaty Organization led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan it was declared that the strengthening of the Afghanistan security forces was their primary focus, superseding even that of ongoing coalition operations. On November 20th, 2010 they declared that “We will further strengthen Afghan security capabilities as we gradually move away from combat to an increasingly supporting role.” Despite a persistent insurgency, the International Security Assistance Force has acknowledged that Afghan security forces have increasingly taken the lead in joint operations and in the most challenging areas. Similar to the conflict in Korea the development of these forces can be directly attributed to the resolution and gradual decrease in violence in the region. As a joint operation the International Security Assistance Force increased

⁸⁹ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 114.

the size of the Afghan Army to approximately 300,000 personnel by the end of 2011. These efforts are at the core of ISAF's mission and are essential to a sustainable transition.⁹⁰

If the United States is going to continue to build and develop other countries military forces, as the declaration by ISAF has indicated, or as can be assumed based on the adapting and chaotic nature of current security challenges throughout the world indicate, how should we progress with future training operations? This research seems to indicate that to be successful with training and advising operations in the future, the United States and her allies should focus on three specific areas; Firstly, that there should be a clear set of operational objectives for trainers to achieve, and that those objectives are not secondary in the nature of the conflict, ensuring that the proper manning and equipping necessary to achieve their aims are provided. Secondly, that advisory efforts acknowledge the cultural shortcomings of her advisors, as well as the necessity to train other nations forces as they would want to be trained – not as we would like to train them. Lastly, that the quality and efficiency of our training program receive the attention that is required and that it is not an ad-hoc last minute effort to achieve a political alternative to failure.

First, there should be a clear set of operational objectives for trainers to achieve, and that those objectives are not secondary in the nature of the conflict. This conclusion has been derived by much of the research conducted in the first section of this work. Ranging from the General Dye mission in 1888 to misguided steps conducted by the Military Government in Korea as well as the US Army Forces in Korea, the United States half stepped its efforts in Korea until the War began. Not until the creation of KMAG was an actual budget even created. By tying the desired

⁹⁰ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the Nations contributing to the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan," Brussels, Belgium. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_68722.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed on November 20, 2012)

operational objectives (ends) to the training to be conducted, the United States can ensure there is no waist or duplication of effort. In short, it can tie its ways to the ends it seeks to achieve. This has been an ongoing dilemma throughout many of the United States advisory missions. For example, in advisory missions to South Vietnam or El Salvador advisory efforts received much less financial resources as other, more operationally deemed necessary, operations. Additionally, just as in South Korea, there was very little guidance or doctrine that was provided to help advisors focus their efforts.⁹¹

As time has progressed, it has become clearer that the advisory mission is usually more significant, if not at least equal to, other ongoing missions. In a recent address to the Association of the United States Army, conducted in Washington D.C. on October 10, 2007, the Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated that, “Arguably, the most important military component in the War on Terror is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we enable and empower our partners to defend and govern their own countries. How the Army should be organized and prepared for this advisory role remains an open question, and will require innovative and forward thinking.”⁹² Current efforts have continually been left up to the units on the ground to figure out, or have been constructed based off continually conflicting guidance. Essentially, military and political planners have repeatedly used an ad hoc approach when executing advisory operations. As our national leaders come to grips with this reality, we as an institution need to shift our organizational structure to adapt.⁹³

⁹¹ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 112.

⁹² Defense Link. “Speech of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates at a meeting of the Association of the United States Army, 10 October 2007” Washington, DC, www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1181 (accessed December 2, 2012)

⁹³ John A. Nagl, “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for an Army Advisor Command,” *Military Review*, September-October (2008): 22.

Based on the argument that the American led coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq have cognitively failed to understand the foreign societies in Asia and the Middle East, a significant shift has begun to correct perceived shortfalls in current military doctrine. For example, published in December 2006 the Army's recent Counterinsurgency Field Manual 3-24 uses the words "culture" or "cultural" 178 times! The manual itself is only 282 pages long! While some may readily dismiss the significance that culture may have on an operations success, others have raised it to the point of being quintessential to the overall effort. Our future advisory missions need to acknowledge the cultural shortcomings of our advisors, as well as the necessity to train other nation's forces as they would want to be trained – not as we would like to train them.

In his 27 Articles, published in 1917, the famed British advisor T.E. Lawrence stated that an advisor should learn the Bedu principles of war as quickly as possible and focus on those tactics rather than on British regimented ideas. He believed this was essential as the Sherif, or leader of the Bedu he was working with, had been culturally acclimated to one form of warfare and would simply marginalize the advisor if this was not the form used. It is almost impossible, unless a long period of time and gradual changes are made incrementally, to alter what has been learned and accepted over unnumbered generations.⁹⁴ Lawrence was pointing out that the Bedu way is the appropriate way to teach a host nation of Bedu how to fight. Too often, the United States advisory missions have attempted to create organizational structures that other nations cannot hope to maintain upon their departure. As seen in section 3 of this research, the Koreans lack of mechanical skills, educational and literacy capabilities, and other irregularities often complicated efforts. Coalition advisors also complicated the process as they attempted to utilize US military approaches that had been developed to optimize US military systems and doctrine.

⁹⁴ T.E. Lawrence, "Twenty-Seven Articles, August 20, 1917" The Arab Bulletin, http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_27_Articles_of_T.E._Lawrence (accessed on December 20, 2012)

US organizations and techniques of ground warfare were devised to defeat a Soviet threat. These techniques were not appropriate for solving the problems faced by either the South Koreans, nor were they very useful against fighting a counterinsurgency. This is due to an apparently irresistible bias of American military personnel to train other nations as if they are our clones.⁹⁵

Hence, future advisory efforts should focus on the host nations internal and culturally accepted organizations, institutions, systems, capabilities, and limitations – not US ideals. Systems that are emplaced need to be able to be financed and maintained by the country they are emplaced in once the advisory mission ends. Additionally, the structure and command and control of the system emplaced should be one that the host nation military itself decides will work for it. It cannot be United States architecture on top of a foreign country apparatus. By ensuring it replicates their needs and desires, the process is legitimized in their eyes and gains efficiencies. As noted by one advisor in Iraq in 2006, “Simply training, equipping, and organizing is not enough. We cannot undo the influence and corruption that has existed for hundreds of years by sending soldiers to a school, calling them commando, and expecting them to execute. It’s just isn’t that easy.”⁹⁶

The quality and efficiency of our training program should receive the attention that is required and that it is not an ad-hoc last minute effort to achieve political alternatives to failure. In order to achieve quality in the troops that are trained by advisory missions, their needs to be

⁹⁵ Loren Baritz, *Backfire: Vietnam – The Myths That Made Us Fight, The Illusions That Helped Us Lose, The Legacy That Haunts Us Today*, (New York, NY: Ballentine Books Press, 1985), 243; Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 113.

⁹⁶ David H. Marshall, “Training Iraqi Forces,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, April, (2006): 60; Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 115.

quality in the instructors who are training them. More effort needs to be placed on the instructors themselves. As demonstrated in this research, that is generally not the case. While assignment as an advisor to Korea was often avoided at all costs, current assignments to advisory missions are generally assigned irregularly. Teams that are selected to perform advisory missions are initially selected from national guard, reserve, and active duty forces on an ad hoc basis. Due to this, the quality of the training they received prior to their deployments regularly varies widely. This could be avoided by simply establishing a set of standardized requirements that advisors have. Once the KMAC advisory handbook was published and distributed to their advisors in the Korean War efforts increased substantially. Similarly, by providing regular guidance and standards, future advisory efforts would increase. As one advisor in Iraq stated, “To have a valid set of selection criteria that works, the military has to formulate a hard set of required skills for advisor duty. It should...then test them to ensure some level of proficiency.”⁹⁷

The military also needs to increase the duration of the advisory mission in general. While some KMAC personnel served less than six months, their efforts were hampered as they attempted to understand the people they were trying to train. The Combat Studies Institute recommended in several of their studies that a longer, repetitive advisory tours will dramatically increase the effectiveness of foreign advisors. They noted that short deployments prevent advisory teams from properly developing rapport with their counterparts, as well as properly being able to understand the environment they are working in. Longer tours would prevent the lack of continuity that currently exists due to the rapid turnover of rotating forces.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Nagl, “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for an Army Advisor Command,” 23; Marshall, “Training Iraqi Forces,” 60.

⁹⁸ Andrew M. Roe, “To Create a Stable Afghanistan: Provisional Reconstruction Teams, Good Governance, and a Splash of History,” *Military Review*, November-December, (2005): 25; Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 116-117.

Another correctable characteristic is the evaluation criterion that is used to determine the success or failure of advisors. In the Korean War, once the success or failure of advisors were tied to their counterparts, the overall effectiveness of the program increased significantly. It clearly states in the Ten Commandments for KMAC Advisors that they stood or would fall with their counterpart. Their success, or their failure, was directly tied to the individuals they were advising.⁹⁹ Currently, coalition advisors can be deemed successful simply by completing their tour overseas, irrelevant of the performance of their counterparts. If the people they train fail, does it not seem to follow suit that the advisors also failed? By linking the two, efforts on the part of the advisors themselves would increase significantly.

Most conflicts can be truly understood at the local level. The institutionalization of advisory missions from Special Forces to the conventional domain is a case study in organizational learning. While the local population may not always be ready to carry a weapon, the success of the military units we as a nation train can be significantly improved if we link them to the local communities they intend to protect. One advisor in Afghanistan noted that to integrate regional militias as lawful arms of Afghanistan's government, "would greatly assist the units they were working with."¹⁰⁰ If these units were then incorporated into a nationwide security structure under central authority, they could become the cooperative cornerstone of regional security. This would also assist ongoing direct action operations as the local communities in a counterinsurgency operation such as Afghanistan could provide a wide girth of information. By establishing a network of local tribal police linked to and supporting foreign military units, local

⁹⁹ Alfred H. Hausrath, *Ten Commandments for KMAC Advisors, The KMAC Advisor: Role and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing and Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea* (Chevy Chase, MD: The John Hopkins University Operations Research Office, 1957), 15-16.

¹⁰⁰ Roe, "To Create a Stable Afghanistan: Provisional Reconstruction Teams, Good Governance, and a Splash of History," 23-25.

Afghan units could begin to provide low-level intelligence as well as early warning of impending guerrilla attacks. This technique has worked very well in other campaigns of Americas past, such as in Northern Luzon around Lingayen Bay during the Philippine War of 1899-1902, in which Brigadier General Samuel B.M. Young trained and used local forces to counter intelligence gaps US forces had while fighting a local insurgency.¹⁰¹

Finally, although we have come a long way since hostilities ended in the Korean War in the 1950's, advisory missions such as the one conducted by the KMAG advisors continue to alternate between success and failure. Adaptation to the current realities of security force assistance will only occur when it is part of an organizational cultural change on the way we perceive foreign internal defense. This should not be as difficult as it seems. It is almost axiomatic that we will rely more and more on other nation's security forces to provide the regional stability our nation cannot. Current Army doctrine and the tactical situation on the ground has clearly demonstrated that the achievement of US objectives overseas will increasingly depend on the performance of the security forces of those countries. It is clear that our "Strategic [success]... now hinges on advisor mission competence and success...because America does not have enough ground forces....[and]...because those forces have more legitimacy than do American troops." We have more than enough evidence to support these assertions – now we just need the fortitude to follow through with them in the future.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Brian McCallister Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 41-46.

¹⁰² Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for an Army Advisor Command," 23.

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