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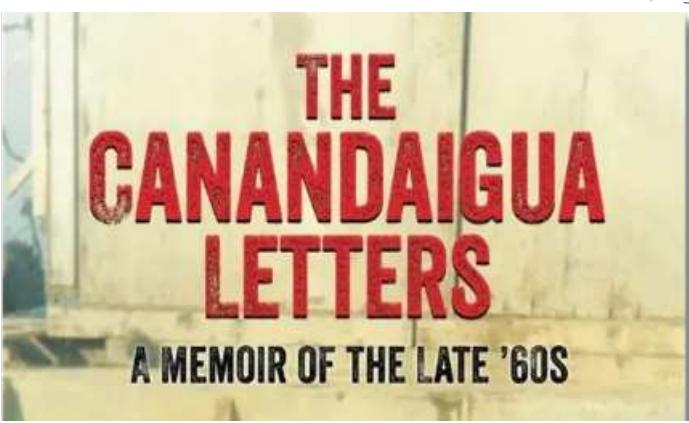
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Honor Flights: Interview with Chief of Staff, Marion; *Page 5*



Intergenerational Service: My Korean-American Family and the U.S.-ROK Alliance; *Page 7*



The DMZ War – Hidden Chapter of the Vietnam Era; *Page 10*

CONTENTS

Introduction:

By General (Ret.) Curtis M. Scaparotti, *Chairman and President, KDVA and 14th Commander, ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command*. 3

KDVA Membership Information 4

Our Veterans and Members:

Honor Flights: Interview with Chief of Staff, Marion Watkins; *By Ethan Morrison* 5

Intergenerational Service: My Korean-American Family and the U.S.-ROK Alliance; *By Andrew Soohwan Kim* . . 7

The DMZ War – Hidden Chapter of the Vietnam Era; *By William Winship* 10

Lessons in Diversity and Camaraderie: CSM Diahann J. White's Experience Serving in Korea; *By Youngmin Moon* 12

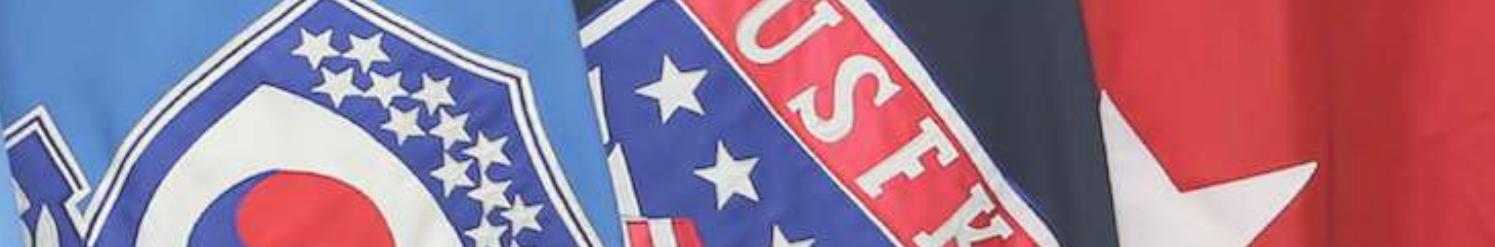
Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Steve Payton; *By Ethan Morrison* 14

Interview: Maj. Gen. (Ret.) James W. Lukeman; *By Morgane Hamza* 15

Learning...and Hard Work; *By Rick Bogusky* 17

The Rainbow Agents Used in the DMZ (1969-1970); *By William 'Gary' McGuire, Major (Retired)* 19

Continuing My Contribution to the ROK-U.S. Alliance; *By Dae-young Kim* 21



Security and Strategic Topics:

Strengthening the U.S.-ROK Alliance through a Reciprocal Procurement Partnership; *By Hwa Yu and Brian Hobbs* 23

The Impactful Role of the ROK-U.S. Alliance in the Growth of South Korea; *By Sooyoung Lee* 25

A Monumental Strategic Decision;
By Norm Spivey 27

Korean and American Culture:

Comparing Korean and American Culture: A Personal Reflection; *By Sicily Giamanco* 29

Back Cover: KDVA Sincerely Thanks Our Donors! .. 31

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The Rainbow Agents Used in the DMZ (1969-1970); *Page 19*



Comparing Korean and American Culture: A Personal Reflection; *Page 29*



INTRODUCTION

Dear KDVA Members and Supporters,

KDVA members, donors, partners, and supporters are the reason that the Korea Defense Veterans Association had another record year of growth in 2024 capping 35,000 members and 106,000 social media followers with the Korea Chapter, four U.S. Chapters, two KDVA Campus Clubs, and 27 virtual Common Interest Groups.

Each of us, who has served in Korea or care about Korea and the ROK-U.S. Alliance that we helped build, has an important story to tell. Inside these stories are experiences, lessons, joy, sadness, and unique perspectives.

I am very proud that the KDVA Quarterly Journal is about you and your willingness to share. Thank you for taking the time and effort to write your articles.

Together in this first edition of the Journal for 2025, you will find nine articles about "Our Veterans and Members," three articles about "Security and Strategic Topics," and one article about "Korean and American Culture."

The contributions of each of the authors fuels KDVA's ability to grow and reach out to the 3.5 million U.S. & ROK Korean War Veterans and the 3.5 million U.S. & ROK Korea Defense Veterans as well as the millions of their family members and friends. This is why KDVA is so motivated and passionate about the need to continue our efforts to raise awareness, educate, and seek your contributions. And we will be working hard in 2025 to open new KDVA USFK Chapters in Korea, more Campus Clubs, more U.S. Chapters, and more Common Interest Groups as well as continuing the Korea Revisit Program and KDVA Reunion.

Thank you for supporting KDVA and our mission to support the ROK-U.S. Alliance and our Veterans. I am proud to work with you "Together for the ROK-U.S. Alliance"!

Curtis M. Scaparotti
General, U.S. Army (Retired)
Chairman and President



KDVA MEMBERS



BENEFITS FOR OUR MEMBERS

- Part of a premier professional organization.
- Help strengthen the important ROK-U.S. Alliance ... that you helped build and continue to serve.
- Honor and remember those who have served in Korea.
- Participate in the Korea Revisit Program.
- Participate in KDVA Reunions.
- Networking and access to experts and experiences found nowhere else.
- Mentor and mentee opportunities.
- Staying in touch with those who served with you in Korea.
- Opportunities to participate in forums and events.
- Opportunities to volunteer in leadership positions, internships, scholarships, community service, and be published.

REGULAR MEMBERS:

- Former and current U.S. military & DOD personnel of U.S. Forces Korea ("USFK"), Combined Forces Command ("CFC"), or the U.S. Embassy in Seoul.
- U.S. military & DOD personnel who meet the requirements for the Korea Service Medal ("KSM") or the Korea Defense Service Medal ("KDSM").
- Korean Augmentation to United States Army ("KATUSA") Veterans.
- Retired ROK Military personnel who have served in or been assigned to one of the following for at least three consecutive months.
 - United Nations Command ("UNC").
 - CFC Headquarters and its components.
 - ROK Embassy in the United States.
 - Other ROK-U.S. Combined Commands.
 - MND, JCS, and/or Service HQs.
- Former and current ROK government civilians of CFC and USFK, if ROK law or regulations do not prohibit.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

- U.S. military & DOD personnel who do not meet the requirements for the Korea Service Medal ("KSM") or the Korea Defense Service Medal ("KDSM").
- Adult supporters of the ROK-U.S. Alliance.
- College students who are interested in the U.S.-ROK Alliance.

HONORARY MEMBERS:

- ROK & U.S. distinguished personnel who are dedicated to enhancing ROK-U.S. Alliance.
- Former and current U.S. and ROK government interagency personnel who directly worked or work on ROK-U.S. Alliance topics.

No need to reach for your wallet to pay membership fees ... just click [here](#) for free membership!

www.kdva.vet/join-kdva

Honor Flights: Interview with Chief of Staff, Marion Watkins

By: Ethan Morrison



Service in the United States armed forces is a time-honored tradition of patriotism, but more importantly, it is a duty of service and self-sacrifice that should never be forgotten. While America has commemorated and recorded the bravery of those who served, many veterans, particularly those who fought in Korea over seven decades ago, have seldom looked back upon their military experience. In order to honor these heroic veterans and celebrate their stories, America needs selfless people to step up, and give these men and women the respect they deserve. Fortunately, those people do indeed exist, and their efforts have culminated in Honor Flight Network: an organization dedicated to celebrating and giving thanks to the amazing people who have served the United States.

Honor Flight's nonprofit model is simple: provide veterans with a once-in-a-lifetime experience by bringing them on a cost-free trip to our nation's capital. Upon arrival, our heroes witness the nation's gratitude on display by touring the Korean War Veterans Memorial, as well as other war memorials. Honor Flight's Chief of Staff, Marion Watkins, provided revealing insight into the organization and its mission.

Describing the organization's dedication to gratitude and celebration, she reveals the truly shocking scale at which Honor Flight operates:

The mission of Honor Flight is really twofold – first of all, it's a mission of gratitude and secondly, it's a celebration of service. What we accomplish as a Network is quite straightforward – bringing America's veterans to our nation's capital so that they can visit and reflect at the memorials built to commemorate their service. By honoring approximately 22,500 veterans each year with trips to Washington, D.C., our 130 hubs across the country build upon that simple concept and create an Honor Flight experience that is truly next level. Next year, Honor Flight will celebrate its 20th anniversary. We have honored over 300,000 veterans since 2005, so our mission remains quite strong.

In order to give as much due thanks as possible, veterans who travel with Honor Flight do so free of charge. Reflecting upon this gracious gift, Watkins also stresses the importance that these heroes need not pay for their journey:

Allowing a veteran to experience an Honor Flight trip free of charge is essential. This is the veteran's trip of honor – a gesture of thanks for the tremendous sacrifices made by that veteran many decades ago. Having the Honor Flight trip free of charge allows the veteran to feel that gratitude in a very meaningful way. The veterans are our honored guests, and we strive to roll out the red carpet for them in every way possible.

Upon arrival, the veterans are greeted with a jubilant crowd. But to make this happen, Honor Flight Network needs not just donations, but the involvement of everyone. Speaking more about what this kind of help looks like, she explains what getting involved to honor our nation's heroes looks like on the ground:

Everyday Americans can always express their respect and appreciation for our nation's veterans. A simple "thank you for your service" goes a long way in making that veteran feel proud. Teaching children to



appreciate our nation's veterans is so important, too. There's something special when a child walks up to a veteran and thanks that veteran for his or her service. You'll see many moments like that during the course of an Honor Flight trip. The wonderful thing about this organization is that there are so many ways to get involved – at the local level throughout the U.S., at the three airports near D.C., at the memorials in and around D.C., and everywhere in between.

Our veterans have not always been treated with so much reverence, Watkins explains. Upon their return to the United States, many were met with apathy, given the cold shoulder, or even bombarded with open hostility. The beauty of Honor Flight is, as she says, the fact that it gives these brave men and women the welcome home they may have never received. When met with the gratitude they rightfully earned yet were

never given, Honor Flight's veterans experience a profound sense of awe, and often rethink the way they look back on their service:

Many veterans describe their Honor Flight experience as the "trip of a lifetime." Others tell us that the trip ranks along with other major life events in terms of personal significance. Many families indicate that after an Honor Flight trip, their loved one now shares stories of his/her service that were never shared before. Collectively, this type of feedback reminds us of the deep impact of each and every Honor Flight trip. For many Korean War and Vietnam War veterans, their Honor Flight trip was the first time they have ever been thanked for their service – those are particularly meaningful testimonials that really speak to the power of gratitude.

To get involved in Honor Flight, visit honorflight.org for more information. No matter how small your contribution, your efforts mean the world to those who gave up their world for us. Odds are, there's a veteran near you who needs a welcome home, so give them that celebration they never received. Allow them, for perhaps the first time in their lives, to realize that their country respects and honors them for their service. Our heroes, their families, and their communities will never forget how you've helped them, and we will never forget what they gave up for us. This, in short, is Honor Flight's mission, but none of it can be done without your help.





INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE: MY KOREAN-AMERICAN FAMILY AND THE U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE



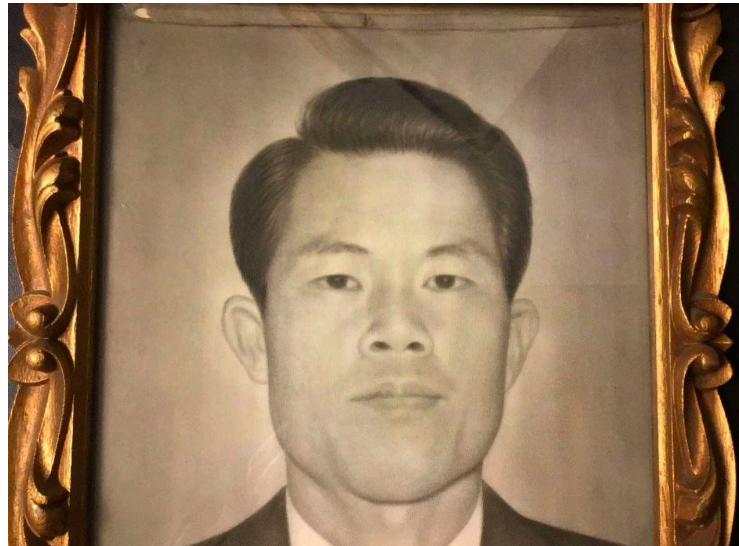
Picture taken during the Korean War and my grandfather's service in the ROKN. Grandfather is the fifth adult from the left in the second row.

By:Andrew Soohwan Kim

My grandfather was a typical Gyeongsang-do sanai,¹ a reticent, towering edifice of stable masculinity, rarely sentimental and perpetually tight-lipped – even when it came to his military service to his country and to the U.S.-ROK alliance. Despite this vocal reticence, he nevertheless allowed his collection of military memorabilia and pictures, which adorned his room in my father's law office in Los Angeles, as well as his years of association with local veterans' associations, to do the talking for him. Underneath his muted personality was a man immeasurably proud of his service to his country and to the alliance. Though I was not privy to his story during my youth, after his death in 2008, I came to know of both his story and how his service made our immigrant lives in America a reality.

My grandfather, Kim Yeong-kuk, was born in 1935 during the colonial period of Korea, in modern-day Sangju, North Gyeongsang Province. After the Korean War broke out just weeks after his fifteenth birthday, grandfather made the decision to voluntarily enter into service in the nascent ROK Navy (ROKN). Despite being well below the standard enlistment age, grandfather was characteristically taller than other kids his age and he inflated his actual age by three years when he enlisted in the ROKN on November 1, 1950. He handled tasks pertaining to communications and intelligence (tongsin jeongbo) and reached the rank of a "hasa" (roughly equivalent to the rank of Petty Officer First Class in the US Navy). Over the course of the Korean War, the ROKN underwent significant expansions and, despite glaring deficiencies in equipment and training, contributed greatly to alliance operations through its superior inshore capabilities and intimate knowledge

Our Veterans and Members



Grandfather as a young man.

of local waters as well as the morale and bravery of the Navy's personnel, which were noted to be excellent.²

After the war, grandfather served in the ROKN until 1955, after which he became an employee of the US government, becoming a civilian staff member of the U.S. Eighth Army. He worked in Bupyeong, Incheon, at the site of the now-defunct "ASCOM City" (an acronym referring to the Army Service Command XXIV Corps)³ and its constituent U.S. Army installations, including the famous Camp Market site which was recently fully returned to South Korea. True to ASCOM City's role, prior to its disbanding in 1973, as a site for the production and distribution of military supplies,⁴ grandfather worked behind a desk and handled logistics and accounting tasks. Having married and started a family in Bupyeong, he then relocated to Daegu, taking up residence near Camps Henry, George, and Walker.

Ultimately, it was grandfather's service to the alliance that made possible our family's immigrant identity as proud Korean-Americans. Per the pivotal Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which sought to eliminate discrimination based on national origin in American immigration policy and which is credited with catalyzing the third wave of Korean immigration to the U.S.,⁵ a visa category for "special immigrants"



Uncle Ki-hwan during his deployment to Camp Taji near Baghdad during the Iraq War.

was formalized. This "special immigrants" category includes those who are "an employee, or an honorably retired former employee, of the United States Government abroad, and who has performed faithful service for a total of fifteen years, or more, and his accompanying spouse and children" (provided that such individuals receive recommendation for such special immigrant status by a principal officer of a Foreign Service establishment and approval of such a recommendation by the Secretary of State).⁶ After fulfilling his 15 years of service for the U.S. in Bupyeong and Daegu, grandfather was able to procure this highly selective visa for himself and his family. After immigrating to California in December 1974, grandfather worked tirelessly in various jobs and raised his three sons (Ki-hyun, Ki-hong, and Ki-hwan) to pursue the American Dream, with his eldest son Ki-hyun (my father) becoming a lawyer, his second son Ki-hong becoming a teacher and pastor, and his third son Ki-hwan becoming a member of the U.S. Army. One man's service and love for the alliance thus formed the bedrock of our family's ongoing story in the United States.

Such service and devotion to the U.S.-ROK Alliance proved to be an intergenerational inheritance. Namely, my uncle, Ki-hwan Kim, followed in grandfather's footsteps in serving the alliance as a U.S. Army servicemember. Uncle joined the U.S. Army in 1999 with his training in California, after which he served faithfully in various locations across the world. His career encompassed deployments to Pyeongtaek (Camp Humphreys), Colorado, Iraq, Dongducheon (Camp Casey), Germany, Oklahoma, Daegu (Camp Henry), and North Carolina (in that order). During the Iraq War, he was deployed to Forward Operating Base (FOB) War Eagle and to Camp Taji near Baghdad. He served as a paralegal specialist, working in tandem with civilian and military lawyers and performing a wide range of legal tasks for the army. He retired in 2022 with the rank of Staff Sergeant (SSG) and now resides with his wife, daughter (Young-chae), and son (Young-saem) in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Though the task of educating two children while constantly having to adapt to new locations presented challenges, the U.S. army service provided my uncle and his family the unique opportunity to travel and to gain experience across the globe. In 2017, his service brought him back to the site of his childhood, in the Nam-gu District of Daegu. Via his four-year stint at USAG Daegu, uncle's service for the U.S. Army mirrored that of his father at the same site five decades prior. History continued to rhyme across generations.



Grandfather (second from right) at an office Christmas party during his time working for the U.S. Eighth Army.



Over seventy years have passed since my grandfather's service during the Korean War, and since that time a third generation of Kims have come of age. Grandfather's service and the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance have not been forgotten. Uncle Ki-hwan's service in the U.S. Army has inculcated a deep appreciation for the alliance in my cousins. As for me, grandfather's story has inspired me to volunteer my time to meeting and interviewing Korean War veterans in California and Korea. It has also inspired me to write this article for the Korea Defense Veterans Association in honor of his legacy. As a proud grandson of a Korean War veteran, I hope to uphold a modus operandi of serving the U.S.-ROK alliance as an intergenerational tradition of our family as well as a key mandate of our shared identity as proud Korean-Americans.

1 A colloquial and humorous moniker referring to the archetypal male from the Gyeongsang-do region of southeast Korea.

2 Yu, Jihoon, Erik French, and Ian Bowers. 2024. "The ROKN and Coalition Naval Operations in the Korean War." In *Coalition Navies During the Korean War*, 1st ed., 1:40–56. United Kingdom: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781032626574-4.

3 Nam, Sang-so. "ASCOM Facility and Korean Wave." *The Korea Times*, December 1, 2020. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2025/02/137_300105.html.

4 Lee, Yeonkyung. "The Never-Ending Controversy over Preservation and Demolition: Bupyeong Camp Market." *VM SPACE*, October 8, 2021. https://vmspace.com/eng/report/report_view.html?base_seq=MTcyMA.

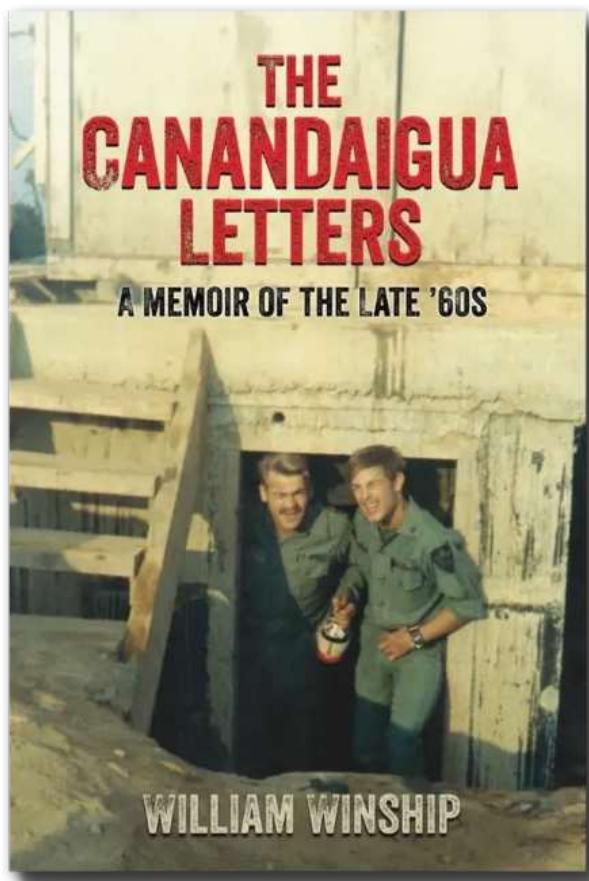
5 Chung, Soojin. "History of Korean Immigration to America, from 1903 to Present." Boston University Korean Diaspora Project. n.d. Accessed February 16, 2025. https://sites.bu.edu/koreandiapora/issues/history-of-korean-immigration-to-america-from-1903-to-present/#_ftn10.

6 Pub. L. No. 89-236, 79 Stat. 911 (1965), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg911.pdf>.



Paying my respects at the California Korean War Veterans Memorial during my visit to the San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery.

THE DMZ WAR – HIDDEN CHAPTER OF THE VIETNAM ERA



By: William Winship

In the late 1960s, North Korean dictator Kim Il-Sung gazed down across the Chinese mainland and—observing half a million U.S. ground troops mired in Vietnam—decided that the moment had arrived to push the Americans off the Korean Peninsula and foment an insurgency in the South. The Pentagon countered by sending the U.S. Army's 2nd Infantry Division back to Korea and deploying a handful of 2ID infantry battalions along an eighteen-mile stretch of the DMZ, fronting North Korea's traditional invasion corridor. What followed was what military historians now refer to as the DMZ War, which raged along the Demilitarized Zone from 1966-1969, exploding briefly again in the summer of 1970 before finally subsiding.

Fearful that events unfolding in Korea would jeopardize public support for Vietnam, then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ensured that

all reports of North Korean hostilities along the DMZ were classified as secret—keeping both the American public and the media completely in the dark. Only North Korea's seizure of the U.S. Navy intelligence vessel, the USS Pueblo, in January 1968 emerged in the press.

During this period, the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam rapidly increased to half a million, where it stood at the time that I was drafted (February '69). And so it was that I found myself deposited at the Oakland Army Terminal with orders for Vietnam a year later—no secret to anybody, least of all the mob of civilian protesters demonstrating outside the Main Gate.

Climbing out of the taxi in my dress greens, I shouldered my duffel bag and pushed my way through the crowd of civilians to enter the main building. I was a 20-year-old infantry sergeant, fresh out of jump school, and I don't remember much about Oakland beyond the long hours standing in formation as we waited for our names to be called.

On my third day, in the last formation of the day, I suddenly heard my name echoing over the loudspeaker, along with several of the other NCOs. We promptly fell out, formed up, and shepherded a large group toward the gigantic air terminal, carrying our duffel bags, everybody's heart going like a triphammer.

When our plane arrived, we moved out onto the tarmac and watched as the giant C-141 taxied to a stop. The ground crew strolled out to service the plane, mingling with the front of the line, and word suddenly spread that we weren't going to Vietnam. The NCOs were at the back of the line, and we were the last to hear this. My first impulse was to dismiss it—wild, unsubstantiated rumors being the waters we swam in.

"Hey, check this out," said one of the sergeants, and we turned to see a captain striding briskly toward us from the tower, holding a large manila envelope. He halted in front of our group, eyed us briefly, then handed the manila envelope to the senior NCO present—a master sergeant, conspicuous by the three rocker arms below his sergeant's stripes. "Do NOT open this until the plane lifts off," he said.

No one else among the enlisted men had heard this exchange, but everybody had witnessed the manila envelope being passed to the master sergeant. The line buzzed wildly, as the doors were thrown open and the plane began to board. The NCOs were the last to board and, hence, we occupied the front of the airplane.

"OPEN THE ORDERS!" somebody yelled, and suddenly everybody was



yelling as the doors of the plane were shut and locked down.

The C-141 engines began to roar, the big jet transport began to move, and we found ourselves taxiing into a takeoff position—no waiting at a military airfield.

Inside the plane, the din was now deafening: "*OPEN THE F**KING ORDERS!*"

The shouting was replaced by the sound of the engines building to a shriek; the brakes released, and the jet transport began to hurtle down the runway. Everybody felt the wheels come off the tarmac, and the yelling immediately recommenced.

The master sergeant stood up, fumbled slowly with the seal on the manila envelope and extracted the orders—then stood frozen as he stared numbly at the mimeographed page thick with military acronyms. An auditory wall of abuse hit us like a physical blow and, being seated on the aisle nearest to him, I stood up.

"Let me," I said, and he handed the orders to me, while I quickly skimmed to the bottom of the page and spotted the APO number. "*KIMPO AIR BASE, REPUBLIC OF KOREA*," I read aloud.

There was a sudden and absolute silence inside the C-141—then a lone voice spoke up from the back of the plane:

*"KOREA! Where in the F**K is KOREA?"*

We landed at Kimpo Air Base nineteen hours after lifting off—a freezing fog blanketing the Korean peninsula as the C-141 touched down at the military airfield outside Seoul.

This was a very different Korea from the affluent, economic juggernaut that sits astride the world today. In the early months of 1970, South Korea was a struggling third-world country with a bare subsistence economy and no industry—still recovering from the wholesale destruction wrought by the Korean War, halted seventeen years earlier by a UN-brokered truce.

Shortly thereafter, a group of sixty of us were loaded into a pair of deuce-and-a-halves, and with diesel stacks belching smoke, we roared out of the compound heading north toward the DMZ.

This was our first real look at Korea, and it was an eye-opener. We rolled through villages where wooden carts drawn by sway-backed oxen competed with miniature three-wheeled trucks whose ability to stay upright seemed to defy the laws of physics. People squatted in doorways in the traditional Korean pose, as the smell of fermenting kimchi (cabbage buried in pots underground and allowed to ferment for months) hit us in an olfactory wave, while guys recoiled and exclaimed violently in the back of the Army trucks.

I arrived at Blue Lancer Valley on the evening of my first day in Korea—the two trucks depositing troops at various military installations along the way north. By midnight, with only a small handful of us remaining, we dismounted stiffly from the truck bed and signed in at the headquarters of the 2nd Battalion, 38th Infantry, 2nd Infantry Division: "The Rock of the Marne."

They hauled the S1 Clerk out of his bunk to process us—and he sleepily pushed an official form across the desk at me.

"Read this, and sign it," he said.

"What is it?" I asked him.

"You can't say anything to anyone outside the unit about what's happening on the DMZ—it's classified!" he told me. *"And don't even THINK about writing home about what's going on because they're censoring our mail."* (*To be continued...*)

From **The Canandaigua Letters**, (<https://thecanandaigualetters.com>) the Pulitzer Prize-nominated memoir by William Winship, 2ID Memorials Foundation Historian

LESSONS IN DIVERSITY AND CAMARADERIE: CSM (RET.) DIAHANN J. WHITE'S EXPERIENCE SERVING IN KOREA



By Youngmin Moon

Command Sergeant Major (Ret.) Diahann J. White is a veteran soldier who served in the U.S. military for many years, gaining deep insights into cultural diversity and camaraderie through her several years of duty in Korea. Her experiences provide valuable lessons on the importance of diversity within the U.S. military and the strengthening of the U.S.-ROK Alliance. We will examine White's experiences, the lessons she learned, and her views on the future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance.

- Military Experience in Korea

White's service in Korea began as a Private First Class at the 43rd MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) at Camp Humphreys. During this period, White was able to deeply experience Korean culture beyond simply performing military duties. Through experiences such as visits to zoos and orphanages, and trips to Jeju Island, White was able to broaden her understanding of Korean culture. She particularly emphasizes the camaraderie she experienced with KATUSAs (Korean Augmentation to the United States Army) that transcended language barriers. "Although our languages were different, we became one through working together. This experience taught me the importance of true teamwork and mutual understanding."

- The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion

White emphasizes that diversity within the military is not just a force multiplier but a key element of mission effectiveness. According to her experience, when soldiers from diverse backgrounds work together, the team's resilience, perspectives, and growth are enhanced. "Diversity is the strength of our military," White says. "When people with different backgrounds and experiences work together, we can find more creative and effective solutions. This is especially important when facing complex military challenges." She also emphasizes the importance of inclusion. "When every soldier feels that their voice is heard and valued, we become a stronger team. This is essential in enhancing the strategic credibility of the U.S. military."

- The Role of the Combined Forces Command (CFC)

White offers in-depth views on the role of the Combined Forces Command (CFC). She believes that the most important role of the CFC is its integrated command structure that enables seamless military cooperation between U.S. and Korean forces. "The CFC is more than just an organization," White explains. "It's a platform that allows the militaries of both countries to work together towards a common goal. This integration ensures rapid and effective response to North Korea's military threats and strengthens powerful deterrence." She emphasizes that the CFC plays an important role not only in military cooperation but also in building cultural understanding and trust between the two countries. She says, "Daily interactions within the CFC create deep bonds between soldiers of both countries. This creates true brotherhood beyond mere alliance."

- CFC's Strategic Response to North Korean Threats

White assesses the CFC's strategic response to the current situation of increasing North Korean military threats as follows "The CFC has never taken lightly the 71 years of armistice. We have always maintained a firm posture in preparation for any contingency." She explains that as North Korea's missile tests, nuclear development, and aggressive rhetoric have increased, the CFC's strategic approach has evolved. She says, "Currently, the CFC focuses on faster mobilization, improved missile defense capabilities, and enhanced information sharing protocols.

This means a much more complex and sophisticated response capability compared to the past"

White particularly notes the recent integration of cyber defense strategies. She explains, "This reflects a shift from traditional deterrence to modern, multi-domain defense approaches. The CFC is taking a proactive stance in



adapting to the dynamic nature of North Korean threats and ensuring that both countries are prepared for any escalation."

- Suggestions for Strengthening the Alliance

White makes the following specific suggestions to further strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance. She explained it in four categories to strengthen the alliance.

1) She insisted on enhancing cultural understanding between the Korean and U.S. forces. She explains, "We need to strengthen mutual respect through regular cultural exchanges, language education, and diplomatic discussions. This is essential in forming deep human bonds beyond mere military cooperation."

2) She expressed her opinion that personal ties should be strengthened. She explains, "We should expand social events and cultural programs that encourage connections between family members and soldiers. This helps extend trust and camaraderie to a personal level."

3) She advocates expanding cyber defense cooperation between two countries. She said, "Both countries should invest more in joint training, technological infrastructure, and policies focused on cyber and information security. This is essential to effectively respond to new threats of the 21st century."

4) She expressed her position that continuous education and training should be carried out. She said, "We should expand joint education and training programs for soldiers of both countries. This will help improve interoperability and develop a shared strategic vision."

- Conclusion

The experiences and insights of White provides valuable lessons on the importance of diversity within the U.S. military and the strengthening of the U.S.-ROK alliance. Her experience serving in Korea vividly demonstrates how cultural understanding and camaraderie enhance military effectiveness.

White's suggestions present specific ways to further strengthen cooperation between the militaries of both countries and effectively respond to changing security environments. Her views emphasize that the U.S.-ROK Alliance should be based on deep cultural understanding and human bonds beyond mere military cooperation.

In conclusion, her experiences and suggestions show that the future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance depends on respect for diversity, promotion of cultural understanding, and continuous cooperation and innovation. When these elements are combined, the U.S.-ROK Alliance can continue to evolve into a strong and flexible partnership capable of effectively responding to any future challenges.

Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Steve Payton



By: Ethan Morrison

While the ROK-US Alliance has stood on its own for decades, it always continues to require the support and guidance of the finest people from both the United States and the Republic of Korea. These people, with one foot in both worlds, are crucial in both the exchange of culture and the maintenance of social interaction between these two great nations. One of these people is Command Sergeant Major Steven Payton, whose service in Korea and work at KDVA has been critical in upholding the ROK-US Alliance. Serving on both KDVA's Senior Enlisted Council and Board of Directors, Payton's passion for Korea goes far beyond his military service. Enlisting in the summer of 1986, Payton's newfound career in the military would lead him to Korea just two short years after the fact. This period, he explains, served as the formative years for the future of his service:

My first assignment in Korea is where I cut my teeth as a leader. I went on to serve in several leadership positions from Team Leader to Command Sergeant Major at the Nominative level, mostly with the 82nd Airborne Division (America's Guard of Honor). I also had the invaluable opportunity to serve in staff positions at the Battalion, Division and Headquarters Department of the Army levels.

Serving a second assignment in Korea, Payton was tasked with serving a role as a Senior Enlisted Advisor. It was at this time when he first learned about KDVA and its mission, and realized that he could play a role in upholding the alliance even after his military service:

While serving as the CFC Senior Enlisted Advisor, I became aware of the Korea Defense Veterans Association (KDVA), its mission, purpose, and accomplishments. Having served and lived within the alliance, I felt compelled to join the efforts of KDVA and continue to be an active part of what I knew was something incredibly special.

Post retirement, I kept a level of awareness about the organization and soon learned that my former Commander, General Brooks, had taken the helm as its President. General Brooks felt that I could be valuable as a member the KDVA Board of Directors, and I eagerly accepted the opportunity to serve in a non-

profit organization working to strengthen the ROK-US Alliance. I genuinely appreciated the opportunity and officially joined the Board of Directors in January of 2022. Under the Leadership of General Brooks, I would later go on to form what is now the KDVA Senior Enlisted Council (SEC), which serves as a board of advisors to the President and Board of Directors for KDVA.

Through his service in Korea, work with KDVA, and his consulting role with the Department of Defense, Payton gained a great appreciation for the ROK-US Alliance, and truly realized its importance. Going forward, he understands that the alliance will always continue to require support, and that the fruits of his work will always be rewarding. Wisely pointing out the fact that neither the alliance nor the war ended with the stalemate, Payton explains why contributing to the Alliance remains crucial to this day:

The thing I have enjoyed most about my service and work in Korea is knowing that executing my daily duties had meaning and purpose. Knowing full well while serving, that the Armistice did not end the Korean War, and that every day meant the Alliance had to be "Ready, Willing, and Capable" of carrying out our duties as a combined force while steadfastly maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

Indeed, the Armistice did not end with the end of open warfare, nor did the ROK-US Alliance. Commitment to the alliance is not just mutually beneficial, but is of major importance to both countries. The Alliance, he adds, is not merely built off the backs of nations or militaries, but of people:

What makes the ROK-US Alliance special are the people who serve both in and out of uniform, and the relationships that have been built over time dating back to the Korean War; relationships built through sacrifice and commitment to a common cause. The Alliance is built on the sharing of struggles and accomplishments by ROK and US service members and, most importantly, families.

The richest personal reward from my service in Korea are the lifelong friends I have made in the Republic of Korea, and the appreciation that the Korean people have for US service members and families serving in Korea and for the US writ large. When asked by friends, family, and other service members to describe the Korean people, I simply use one word: gracious. I have a profound respect for the people of Korea and am proud and honored to have had the opportunity to serve the Alliance and live and work in this amazing and beautiful country.

This mutual respect and admiration is precisely why the United States and the Republic of Korea remain close allies to this day. And, thanks to the ceaseless work of Payton and others who recognize this fact, the Alliance has blossomed beyond a mutual convenience into a beautiful friendship. At the end of the day, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America share a great many interests, but they also share values, culture, and, most importantly, incredibly selfless and intelligent individuals like CSM Payton. These individuals have worked tirelessly to make both nations great, and demonstrate the heart of what the ROK-US Alliance truly is.

Interview: Major General (Ret.) James W. Lukeman



By: Morgane Hamza

Major General James W. Lukeman was the Commanding General of Marine Forces Korea and Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans, Policy, and Strategy (UCJ5) for the United Nations Command (UNC), Combined Forces Command (CFC), and U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), from 2017 to 2019.

The Call to Korea: A Mission of Responsibility

When Lukeman first received his assignment to Korea, he did not fully know what the role would entail. In the Marine Corps, officers are assigned to positions where leadership believes they will best serve, and for Lukeman, that meant stepping into a critical position in a geopolitically sensitive region that is the Korean Peninsula. After discussing with his wife, he accepted the duty, inspired and ready to succeed in his mission. "[My] goal was to take care of my Marines and ensure that they were ready to fight and win in a war," Lukeman says. "[My other goal] was to ensure that we did all we could to prevent a war." His perspective reflects the dual responsibility entailed in military leadership: the commitment to readiness and the value of peace. The saying "If you wish for peace, prepare for war" became a guiding voice during his time in Korea.

Building Bonds Across Borders: Collaboration with ROK Forces

One of the most challenging yet rewarding aspects of Lukeman's role was

fostering cooperation between U.S. and South Korean forces. Cultural differences can hinder the effectiveness of joint military operations, but his approach was grounded in the belief that values and goals transcend national differences. "American Marines and ROK Marines are not that different. We share the same esprit de corps—small, elite, and focused on warfighting," Lukeman explains, emphasizing that connections were naturally built through shared principles. Finally, the mutual respect cultivated through the intensive training environment these young marines went through together further strengthened their bonds.

Lukeman's approach to leadership was also based on forging collaboration not only on a professional level but also on a personal level, starting at the top of the ladder. He recounts how he would regularly go out with his deputy, a ROK brigadier general at CFC, recognizing that such social connections played an essential role in breaking down barriers and fostering effective teamwork. Lukeman emphasizes the importance of human connections and sees in the most genuine activities—such as socializing around a meal—an effective way to build trust, which reminds us that food is at the core of cultural diplomatic practices.

Another critical step in ensuring smooth interoperability between U.S. and ROK forces for Lukeman was overcoming language barriers. One way to alleviate the frustration felt by both American and Korean military members was to require self-introductions in each other's languages, cultivating a sense of unity despite their differences. "Another, more tangible action was to assign very good liaison officers to the headquarters of the other country," he explains. These officers were graduates of the other country's military schools and were stationed full-time at key command posts, facilitating daily communication and mutual understanding between the two forces. Fluent in both languages and deeply familiar with each other's military cultures, they ensured that interoperability remained strong. For example, Lukeman remembers that during his time, an American Marine who had graduated from the Korean War College was assigned as a liaison officer to the ROK Marine Headquarters.

Navigating Tensions: The Challenge of Shifting Regional Dynamics

Lukeman's tenure at CFC coincided with one of the most volatile periods of U.S.-ROK-North Korea relations. "I believe that the military alliance between the U.S. and ROK provides stability, as political changes in both of these democratic countries can change with every election. When I arrived in the summer of 2017, tensions were very high between the U.S. and the DPRK," he recalls. Threats of war were coming from all sides amid rising North Korean provocations, but Lukeman's leadership played a crucial role in maintaining stability and avoiding escalation. At that time, the CFC acted as a mediator, working toward de-escalation while maintaining a readiness to respond offensively—a capability he refers to as the ability to 'fight tonight.'



As a result of these efforts, the political climate shifted in 2018, paving the way for the historic summit between U.S. former President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. This included handshakes and former President Trump crossing the DMZ into North Korean territory to symbolize mutual trust. Lukeman's ability to adapt and think strategically proved essential as he always emphasized the need for readiness despite the sudden reconciliation. On this topic, he also warns about the impact it had on CFC, drastically reducing the number of joint exercises. "This could have created a vulnerability in the alliance if not for some very ingenious and courageous efforts to conduct effective training within the limits set on us by political leadership. Again, the military alliance embodied in CFC is a stabilizing force as political leadership changes in our two countries," he explains.

A Legacy of Equality and Respect: The Foundation of Strong Alliances

As he looks to the future, Lukeman shares one of the most critical lessons

he learned, which he wishes to pass on to future military leaders: alliances are fundamentally partnerships of equals that require mutual respect. "Both the U.S. and ROK need the alliance that we have. It is not about the U.S. doing this for the ROK's sake or the ROK supporting U.S. Forces for the U.S.'s sake. This alliance must serve both countries," Lukeman stresses. "You must [also] respect your partner in the alliance, and that means respecting the service members of the allied country personally. [...] That respect starts at the top with the Commanding General and must be reinforced all the way down the chain of command."

Lastly, Lukeman warns future military leaders with a reminder of the inherent complexities of alliances in a globalized world. He highlights factors like economic trade and historical grievances that could undermine the strengthening of such alliances, citing the reduced likelihood of forming an official U.S.-ROK-Japan alliance, despite the willingness of each country. Thank you for your service, Major General James W. Lukeman.



Major General James W. Lukeman and ROK Marine Commandant, Lieutenant General Jin Jung Goo at the Marine Corps Birthday Ball in November 2017

Our Veterans and Members



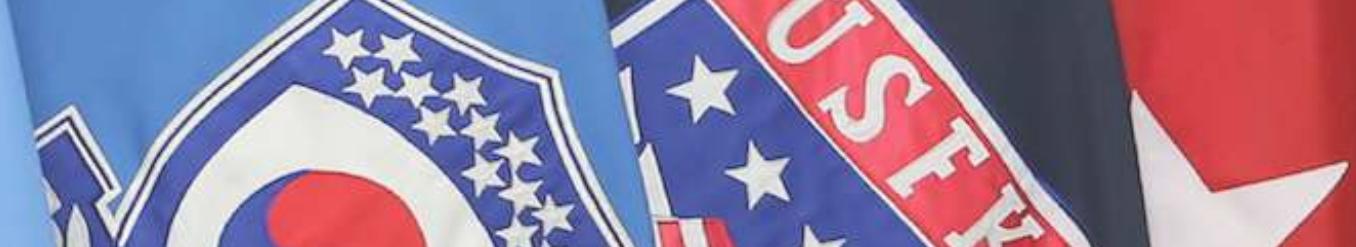
Learning...and Hard Work

By: Rick Bogusky

What I learned in Korea. I have had an association with Korea since 1977. That includes five assignments there, numerous official trips (TDY), and many personal trips. As such, I have learned many things and continue to learn. So, of the many things I have learned, let me start with that one word...LEARNING. During my first tour I was asked by a departing officer if I would like to take over for him in teaching English at a local private institute (hak-kwon). I was interested in getting out into the community to experience the culture and jumped at the opportunity. I taught two nights a week to college students who were eager to learn. I discovered that written and spoken English were key elements in the job application process. Since the male students had to do military duty while in college (about 3 years at the time), they were my age or older and we got along great. One of the students asked if I could go to the university to teach him and his classmates in the Business Administration school, and I happily agreed to two days a week. So now, I was committed to three evenings and Saturday afternoons. After a few months in country, the head of the Korean Language Department at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) visited Korea and met a former classmate of his who was the President of Kangweon National Bank. As a DLI alumni, I was invited to a dinner with

the two of them; at which time I was asked to teach English to some of the bankers, thus committing me to another evening each week. This attitude towards learning and bettering oneself seemed to permeate society and is still deeply part of the Korean culture.

Is it no wonder that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) currently ranks Korea as the 12th largest economy in the world. The Republic of Korea (ROK) has been called the Miracle on the Han River. A miracle can be something that is unusual, astonishing, or inexplicable by natural laws. So, while the phrase is catchy, it can lead to the idea that the ROK magically advanced like no other country. Not so. Korea is the vibrant society that it is today because of hard work...lots of it. From the emphasis on academics, to a strong work ethic, spending long hours on the job, and a drive to be successful, the Korean people have advanced in a generation or two like no other country. During my first tour at Camp Page in Chuncheon, there were few private cars, a mostly open sewer system, and few, if any high-rises. Small businesses were open 24/7 with the owners residing in little rooms behind the store front. Yet, as you walked around, there was a positive vibe, and a palpable energy with all the hustle and bustle that caused one to think the place was about to explode economically. In 1978 I took the attached picture of a man leading an ox cart loaded with large sewer pipes and a taxi on otherwise



empty street in Chuncheon. To me it signified the transition from the old to the modern as well as the paradox of Korea.

Fast forward to today and it is hard to believe all the changes. Let me mention a few things that happened along the way. Seoul hosted the summer Olympics in 1988, and to me that was a catalyst for the expanding middle class. That rise continued until 1997 when the financial crisis hit and Korea experienced a negative 5% GDP growth. I was living there at the time and saw how the entire population pulled together to get through the crisis with individuals donating gold and other valuables to the government to overcome this obstacle. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) stepped in, and those three letters were pasted everywhere and were synonymous with a bargain. Restaurants had IMF soup and stores had IMF sales. The ROK quickly got out of the economic abyss and in two years' time, you could find no IMF signage anywhere. The people wanted no reminders of that experience. I was last in the ROK in 2019.

Today it is almost unimaginable to think what Korea was like 40+ years earlier. It is more than a night and day comparison. For example, Koreans now love their cars and in Seoul you can find lots of the most expensive cars in the world. The Korean brands of Hyundai and Kia are the top brands globally. The very cheap Hyundai Pony hit the U.S. market in the early 1980s and now our roads are full of quality Hyundai, Kia, and Genesis models. Is there a house in the U.S. that does not have a Korean appliance or smart phone in it? And what about the popularity of Korean dramas, K-pop, and Korean food? None of this happened by accident and none of it was a miracle. I think back to my first experience in Korea, and I know how it happened...learning and hard work.

THE RAINBOW AGENTS USED IN THE DMZ (1969-1970)



By William 'Gary' McGuire, Major (Retired)

I was a young Sergeant E-5 and had just returned from Vietnam to be assigned to the I Corps Defoliation Mission of the 2nd Infantry Divisions area of the DMZ. The year was 1969 and a platoon of KATUSA's and two US NCOs deployed to conduct the spraying of at least five of the many Rainbow Agents. The unit we were assigned to was the 25th Chemical Company (Smoke Generator) located at Camp Mosier, just north of Camp Red Cloud and Ui-Jong-Bu.

The two US NCOs were Staff Sergeant Fred Sanders and me, Sergeant Gary McGuire. Fred and I were assigned to the 2ID G3 and Chemical Section and Lieutenant David Rogers. David Rogers died in March of 2024 from medical issues directly linked to exposure to the Rainbow Agents and more than likely to Agents Blue (Arsenic), Orange (Dioxin) and Agent White (Telvar-Monuron). One of David's NCO's Staff Sergeant James Furgal worked with our team to help accomplish the spray mission. Fred Sanders died in 2010. I'm not certain if he contracted any of the Presumptive Diseases. David Rogers, James (Jim) Furgal and I have all three contracted various diseases linked to the exposure to Rainbow Agents.

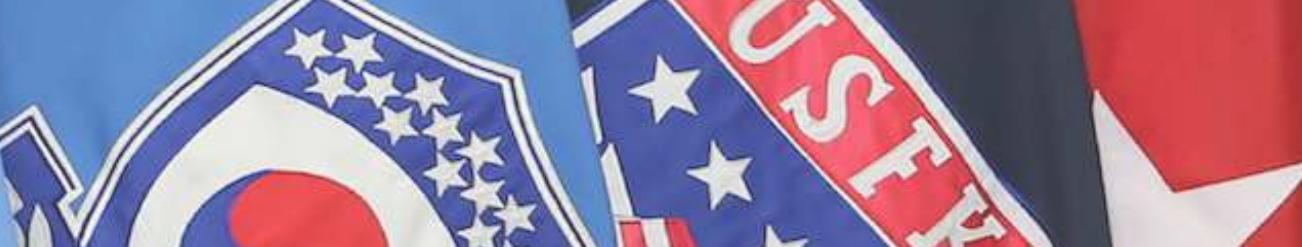
I used a Kodak camera to document the spraying mission from the pre-mixing of some agents to the delivery and spraying of the deadliest of the chemicals we sprayed (Agents Blue and Orange). You can see many of the photos if you view our book titled, 'Last Three Soldiers Standing.' David, James, and I co-authored the book to help with getting the word out

about the mission to defoliate. Our senior leadership often denied the spraying of agents blue and orange, but I kept anecdotal notebooks and personal photos of our entire mission. David and James kept personal photos of the mission while I tracked the number of 55-gallon drums of Agent Blue and Orange coming into the area from Vietnam as well as the number of 40-pound bags of the Telvar-Monuron received by the Division Support Command and shipped to us in the in the DMZ. Telvar was the only agent requiring mixture with water and was mixed in a Power-Driven Decontaminating Apparatus (PDDA) at 12 bags to a 500-gallon tank. There were two 500-gallon tanks on the PDDA and would generally spray 4 to 6 trucks loads per day. The Telvar was sprayed on vegetation the leadership thought would take the longest time to kill vegetation. It was initially sprayed on the River Grass near Observation Post 1 and the Imjin River.

Most of the soldiers in both the 2nd and 7th Division assigned to the DMZ had little to no knowledge about the hazards associated with the chemicals we sprayed. I recall them walking through areas where we sprayed without fear of future health issues. I cannot guess how many soldiers (both US and South Koreans) were exposed to any or all of the chemicals we sprayed. The three co-authors have reached out through various websites for Veterans offering help to file claims with the Veterans Administration for disability compensation. The book was written to 'tell our stories' of how the military and government denied the US Military had sprayed any hazardous materials in South Korea. Supposed experts supported these statements with 'research reports' from academicians alleging 'we were never there.'

Since the writing of the book, 'Last Three Soldiers Standing,' the three co-authors have helped more than 1,500 soldiers from all four military services having served in South Korea from 1967 – 1970. Each of us accumulated source documents that have been declassified to help military file claims for compensation. We have lost thousands of Veterans due to the Deny and Delay actions of our Political Members as well as the VA. As the Veterans live into old age, they are dying off at a rate of 10,000 per day or roughly 3,650,000 per year. The end of the Vietnam and Vietnam Era Veteran has morphed into the other War Theaters such as, Southwest Asia, Grenada, Desert Shield and Storm followed by Iraqi Freedom and Afghanistan and who knows what's next. As long as we occupy or support any country around the world with our military, the potential for loss of life and disability compensation remains an issue we as a Nation haven't figured out how to support, especially for our Veterans.

Using the VA's philosophy of Deny and Delay, we could all be dead



before the government wakes up to the needs of Veterans. Personally, I waited almost 50 years before I thought I would qualify for disability compensation. When I first heard from the VA about 'the benefits I might be due' one of the customer folks asked me, 'Sir, what took you so long to file a claim?' I asked the representative if they had served in the military and they responded with 'no, they hadn't served but they were working to help as many Veterans as they could.' I felt a little better about there service while I still believed, 'they will never understand what it means to be a Veteran.'

So, brothers and sisters of the military, if you served in any area where we sprayed the Rainbow Agents, please take action before you die to file claims for disabilities. I served 12 enlisted years and 18 officer years for a total of 30 years before discovering the VA had only paid me compensation for my officer service. I was not given any credit for my Vietnam Service or the defoliation mission in the South Korean DMZ. I was fortunate to keep a copy of my medical records and the VA finally helped me to 'catch up' by paying 'retro-pay' for what I was owed.

I have since grown much older and cannot help as many service members as I was helping. I have survived Prostate Cancer, a Double Heart By-pass surgery, Type II Diabetes, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Skin Cancer, Hypertension Linked to exposure to Agents Blue and Orange which I personally sprayed in and along the DMZ and Leg Trauma from service in Iraq. As long as I'm alive, I will continue to offer my services to Veteran's in need.

I'd love to come back to South Korea, but I believe my health would not support such a trip. Many of my KATUSA friends that were part of our defoliation mission have struggled with the same diseases and continue to die without their country supporting them. I am proud to have served in the US Army and all of those areas where US Forces occupied.

Second to None. William 'Gary' McGuire, Major (Retired)
Co-author of book, 'Last Three Soldiers Standing.'

Continuing My Contribution to the ROK-U.S. Alliance



Colonel Lee I. Peters, former Combined Forces Command Public Affairs Director, and I in March 2021 after the combined training.

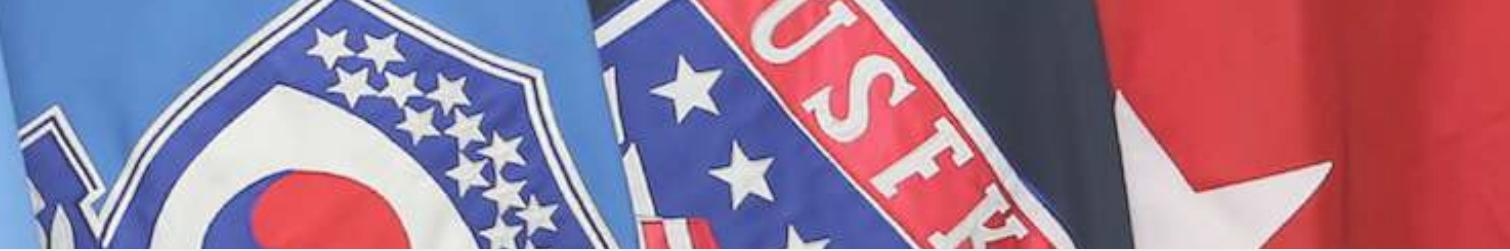
By: Dae-young Kim

On December 9, 2024, I was selected and accepted into the Korea Defense Veterans Association Internship Program (KIP). At that moment, I was so glad and delighted to hear the news, not only because of the selection itself but because this would allow me to continue contributing to the ROK-U.S. Alliance. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Alliance has been a great part of my career, and thanks to the acceptance into the KIP, my dedication to it has now entered a new phase.

My first contribution to the ROK-U.S. Alliance was my mandatory military service. From January 2020 to June 2021, I served in the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) as a military translator/interpreter at the Combined

Forces Command Public Affairs Office (CFC-PA). The tasks that I carried out involved interpreting news headlines, press releases/statements, and military documents. In addition, my duties included translating at briefings and meetings both in English and Korean, thus enabling the communication between the ROK and U.S. military personnel.

The most memorable experience throughout my military service was the participation in two biannual ROK-U.S. combined military exercises, which were held in August 2020 and March 2021 respectively. It is no surprise that the assignment becomes more tough and intense during training seasons since the objective of the exercise is to prepare for a future enemy attack or invasion. The trainings that I took part in were even more challenging though, as they were all held during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, I put my utmost effort into



At the National Museum of American History in Washington D.C. during my exchange program participation in July 2022.

accomplishing the mission amid such demanding circumstances and eventually succeeded in doing so.

Consequently, I received a Certificate of Appreciation (COA) for each training I participated in. I also earned the Letter of Recommendation (LOR) from my superior officer (U.S. Army Colonel), as I requested him to write it for me based on my performance, which he did without hesitation. All of these achievements greatly represent the arduous efforts that I have made during my 18 months of military service in the CFC.

A year after getting discharged, I took part in the 2022 U.S. Congress – ROK National Assembly Exchange Program, which turned out to be my second contribution to the ROK-U.S. Alliance. The program, co-sponsored by the Department of State and the ROK National Assembly, provides both U.S. and South Korean college students with the opportunity to participate in international exchange activities at the legislative level. After being selected in May 2022, I had a chance to visit and attend seminars in Seoul, which were held in the National Assembly and several ROK government institutions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

Then in July 2022, I visited the United States as a member of the Korean Delegation. Me and my colleagues visited U.S. government agencies in Washington D.C., including the Library of Congress and Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In addition, we visited think-tanks, such as the Stimson Center and Cato Institute, along with the ROK Embassy in the

U.S. and the Korean Cultural Center. We had great discussions and Q&A sessions about various and significant issues, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine, human rights in North Korea, tensions in the Taiwan Strait, public diplomacy, and most importantly, the ROK-U.S. Alliance.

Through all of these precious experiences, I am proud that I have been able to enjoy the opportunities of contributing to the ROK-U.S. Alliance, not only once but twice. By serving as a military translator/interpreter in the CFC, I gained not only discipline and self-confidence but also the professional knowledge and expertise that are required in the field of defense and national security. I also had the chance to greatly improve my English skills as I had to use every linguistic aspect (Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing) in a skillful manner to perform my duties successfully.

Furthermore, by participating in the exchange program, I was able to broaden my perspectives on international relations. Having discussions with people working in the actual field of foreign policy enabled me to gain a vivid comprehension of the current global issues, far beyond what I have previously learned and studied through books and lectures. I was able to gain a better understanding of American politics and culture by engaging in interactions with my American counterparts.

Thanks to such valuable experiences, I realized how significant and crucial the ROK-U.S. Alliance is for both countries and thus pledged myself to be committed to advocating for it. Fortunately, I have now become a Research Assistant in the KDVA, which will be my third contribution to the Alliance. By researching related topics, writing articles, and creating social media contents, I look forward to promoting the importance and significance of the Alliance and raising public awareness of it. I sincerely hope that my dedication will be of great help both for the cause of strengthening the ROK-U.S. Alliance and achieving my future career goal: becoming a diplomat in the MOFA and working in the field of foreign service.

Overall, I have had extraordinary experiences of working for and contributing to the ROK-U.S. Alliance in various stages of my life. Through participating in the KDVA's internship program, I aspire to continue my contribution to the Alliance by connecting my past commitments with my present and future dedications. When I eventually start my professional career at the MOFA, I will strive to strengthen the Alliance as well as working for the national interest of the Republic of Korea. By fulfilling such goals, I wish to embody the Alliance's famous and everlasting motto: "Katchi Kapshida (같이 갑시다)" – "We Go Together".

STRENGTHENING THE U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE THROUGH A RECIPROCAL PROCUREMENT PARTNERSHIP

By: Hwa Yu and Brian Hobbs

Amid China's territorial ambitions, and Russia's European expansion that includes North Korean troops, the strength and resilience of the U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) alliance has become ever more important for maintaining stability and security. One key avenue for bolstering our alliance is the establishment of a Defense Procurement Agreement (RDPA) or Memorandum of Understanding (RDP MOU) between the two nations.

What is an RDP Agreement?

RDP Agreements are designed for the Department of Defense (DoD) to strengthen industrial collaboration with its security partners, with each signatory known as a 'qualifying country.' The primary goal of these agreements is to enhance rationalization, standardization, interchangeability, and interoperability among military forces. The U.S. has signed RDP Agreements with 28 security partners, encompassing traditional NATO allies, newer NATO members, as well as major non-NATO allies and partners. Despite the longstanding U.S.-ROK alliance, however – often described as a 'blood-forged' partnership – the U.S. and South Korea have yet to sign an RDP Agreement. Why is this the case?

RDP History

RDP Agreements have historically focused on NATO allies and, to a lesser extent, non-NATO European partners, with only a few exceptions. Of the 28 RDP relationships, 23 are with NATO members, including six former Soviet Bloc states. These agreements have evolved since the first was signed with Canada in 1956, adapting to shifting security priorities over time. Cold War RDP Agreements reflected the U.S.-Canada special relationship; post-Vietnam offsets with Switzerland and the United Kingdom (both in 1975) to overcome mutual procurement barriers; and NATO-Europe rationalization, standardization, and interchangeability (RSI) with 13 European countries including non-NATO Sweden (1978-1987). Agreements with Israel (1987) and Egypt (1988), tied to the 1979 Camp David Accords, illustrate the RDP Agreement as a foreign policy tool for RSI and economic access, benefiting all parties by reducing Israel-Egypt mutual hostility and inducing their reliance on U.S. procurement.

Since 1990, qualifying countries emerged in the early post-Cold War, including Australia (1995), and during the more recent Russia and

China rising era, including Japan (2016). Australia and Japan expanded the RDP footprint, addressing security in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) area. Back in Europe, the most recent agreement, with Lithuania (2021) highlights a response not only to Russia's regional aggression, but also insulation from China's economic coercion extending globally, beyond the INDOPACOM region.

Currently, the U.S. is negotiating RDP Agreements with three additional countries: Brazil, India, and South Korea. Among these three, Brazil and India complicate the RDP calculus due to their membership in the Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) bloc, which frequently opposes U.S. economic policies. Furthermore, Egypt joined BRICS in January 2024, meaning an RDP relationship already in place with a BRICS country. Including Brazil and India in the RDP network would demonstrate how the U.S. leverages new agreements as proactive tools in shaping future foreign policy outcomes with non-aligned countries.

RDP Characteristics

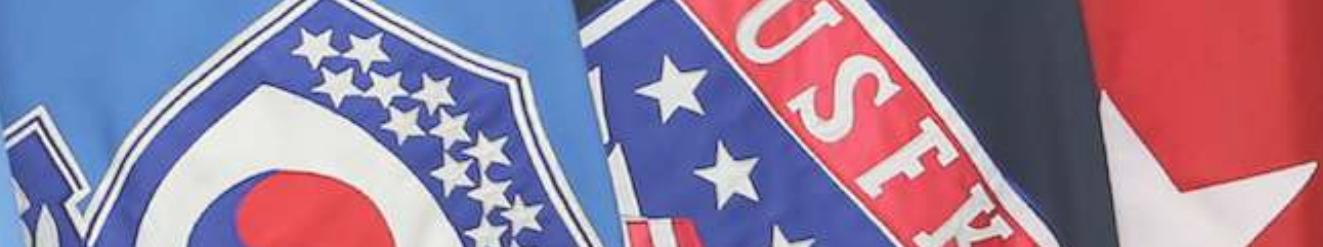
Qualifying countries generally share certain characteristics: they are U.S. allies or friendly nations, have U.S. weapon systems in their military inventories, face regional security threats motivating security cooperation behavior, have advanced defense industry capacity, and have a strong desire to participate in DoD procurement. It should be noted, however, that not all of these characteristics are present in all RDP relationships.

The U.S.-ROK RDP Negotiation Game

It is rather unusual that the U.S. and South Korea have not accomplished an RDP Agreement, given the trends and history that have extended to non-NATO allies and partners. RDP discussions between the U.S. and the ROK have been on and off since the late 1980s. Only recently have the two governments taken serious steps toward making progress.

In South Korea, longstanding concerns about mutual defense market access remain the primary obstacle, even as its defense industry has matured and become highly competitive. With annual defense exports averaging over \$15 billion, South Korea aims to be among the world's top four defense exporters by 2027. Yet, many in South Korea's defense industry assume that an RDP Agreement creates unrestricted U.S. access to Korea's market that will undermine indigenous industry.

In the U.S., negotiation with South Korea is also subject to a range of



domestic pressures, including the interests of local defense industries, labor unions, legislators, and public opinion. In May 2024, U.S. lawmakers requested the Government Accountability Office (GAO) review the potential impact of RDP Agreements, expressing concerns about giving foreign industry access to the U.S. defense market in ways they believe might harm American manufacturing.

Understanding RDP Benefits

Understanding how an RDP relationship benefits both countries mitigates these concerns. First, the RDP Agreement is on one hand a framework for communicating about industrial cooperation and market access. Second, the RDP Agreement is meant to remove discriminatory barriers to procurement, to the extent mutually beneficial and consistent with national laws, regulations, policies, and international obligations. Third, any country can terminate the RDP Agreement unilaterally. If either government should determine the RDP relationship is detrimental, it can withdraw. Fourth, although historical data does not provide any consistent patterns of exports or imports, trends suggest that formal RDP relationships tend to strengthen industrial cooperation overall, benefiting both sides of the partnership. Finally, all RDP Agreements have expiration dates, but none of the 28 countries with RDP Agreements have walked away. All have renewed their agreements, some which have remained in effect for several decades. This longevity strongly suggests that membership in the U.S.-centered RDP network does not undermine partner country defense industries.

As mentioned earlier, the RDP Agreement goal is to enhance mutual defense market access with strategic benefits that go beyond economic gain. The strategic implications of an RDP relationship between the U.S. and the ROK are immense, especially in light of rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. National Defense Industrial Strategy (2023)

emphasizes the critical importance of maintaining a robust, resilient, and dynamic defense industrial ecosystem" to counter threats posed by China and Russia. An RDP Agreement would not only facilitate industrial cooperation and supply chain partnership between the U.S. and Korea, but would also signal a strengthened U.S.-ROK alliance.

Conclusion: A Path Forward

The global security landscape is aligning toward the second Cold War, creating conditions that make signing an RDP Agreement more critical for the U.S. and South Korea. The RDP Agreement gives South Korea's defense industry better access to the world's largest defense market, offers U.S. defense industry increased access to South Korea's vibrant defense market, and facilitates industrial cooperation and mutual opportunities for enrichment through partnership. Ultimately, an RDP Agreement would help both countries build a more robust and increasingly resilient industrial ecosystem to support warfighters among friendly and allied countries in a more effective and efficient manner.

Co-authors:

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The Impactful Role of the ROK-U.S. Alliance in the Growth of South Korea

By: Sooyoung Lee

The alliance between South Korea and the United States has played a crucial role in South Korea's security, economic growth, and technological development. Since the Korean War, the partnership between the two nations has evolved, providing South Korea with military support, economic stability, and access to advanced technology. In recent years, this alliance has also influenced South Korea's defense and shipbuilding industries, making it a key factor in the country's global competitiveness.

Defense Industry Growth Through the ROK-U.S. Alliance

One of the most significant contributions of the ROK-U.S. Alliance has been in South Korea's defense industry. Until the 1960s, South Korea struggled to produce even basic military equipment, such as bullets. However, through collaboration with the United States, South Korea has developed advanced weapons systems that are now recognized worldwide. To exemplify it further, the K2 tank is a symbol of South Korea's progress in military technology. South Korea initially relied on American tanks, such as the M48 and later the K1, which was designed by General Dynamics, a US defense company. By building upon the knowledge and experience gained from working with American technology, Hyundai Rotem successfully developed the K2 tank in 2008. Today, K2 is considered one of the most advanced tanks in the world.



Similarly, South Korea's K9 self-propelled artillery is another example of how the alliance helped develop local defense capabilities. The South Korean military first used the American M109 self-propelled

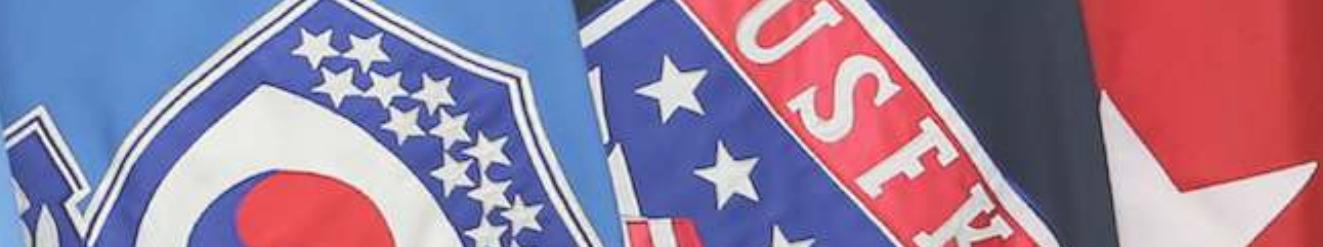


artillery but later produced an improved version called the K-55 after paying for the necessary technology. The lessons learned from this process allowed South Korea to create the K9 in 1998. Today, the K9 is widely exported and used by several countries, demonstrating South Korea's ability to develop world-class military equipment.

Another success story is the T-50 advanced trainer jet, which was jointly developed by Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) and the American company Lockheed Martin. With US technological support, South Korea was able to enter the global trainer jet market, and the T-50 has been sold to multiple countries. This project highlights how the ROK-U.S. alliance not only strengthens South Korea's military but also provides economic benefits by expanding its defense exports.

Impact on the Shipbuilding Industry

Beyond the defense industry, the ROK-U.S. Alliance has also influenced South Korea's shipbuilding industry. South Korea is one of the world's largest shipbuilding nations, and its cooperation with the US has helped strengthen this position. Recently, South Korea's Democratic Party met with key figures from the shipbuilding and defense industries to discuss ways to enhance cooperation with the U.S. in this sector. The Democratic Party emphasized that South Korea's shipbuilding industry could benefit from stronger ties with the U.S., particularly in defense-related shipbuilding. By working closely with the U.S., South Korean companies could gain more opportunities to participate in American naval projects. One key proposal discussed was the idea of allowing U.S. warships to be built in allied shipyards, including those in South Korea. If approved, this would provide South Korean companies with significant economic and technological advantages.



The shipbuilding industry has also called for government support in securing agreements with the U.S. Some of the key proposals include establishing a special fund for defense exports and creating a system where both exporters and related agencies can collaborate more efficiently. Additionally, the industry is seeking to develop high-value, low-carbon ships to remain competitive in the future.

Political and Economic Considerations



The importance of the ROK-U.S. Alliance extends beyond defense and shipbuilding. Politicians in South Korea recognize that maintaining a strong partnership with the U.S. is essential for economic growth and national security. As South Korea approaches a potential early presidential election, both major political parties are prioritizing defense policies that align with the U.S. Alliance. The ruling People's Power Party has committed to investing over 3 trillion won in key defense technologies, such as artificial intelligence and space-related innovations, by 2027. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party is actively engaging with U.S. officials to promote cooperation in the shipbuilding and defense industries. Both parties understand that a strong ROK-U.S. Alliance is not only a security necessity but also a crucial factor in South Korea's economic and technological advancement.

However, there are concerns that political competition over defense policies could negatively impact South Korea's defense exports. If the Alliance is used as a political tool rather than a strategic partnership, it may create uncertainty for businesses. Therefore, it is important for policymakers to focus on long-term cooperation rather than short-term political gains.

Conclusion

The ROK-U.S. Alliance has been essential to South Korea's defense and economic progress. From developing advanced weapons like the K2 tank and K9 artillery to expanding the shipbuilding industry, cooperation with the US has provided South Korea with valuable technology and opportunities. As South Korea continues to strengthen its industries, maintaining a strong partnership with the U.S. will ensure continued growth, security, and innovation.

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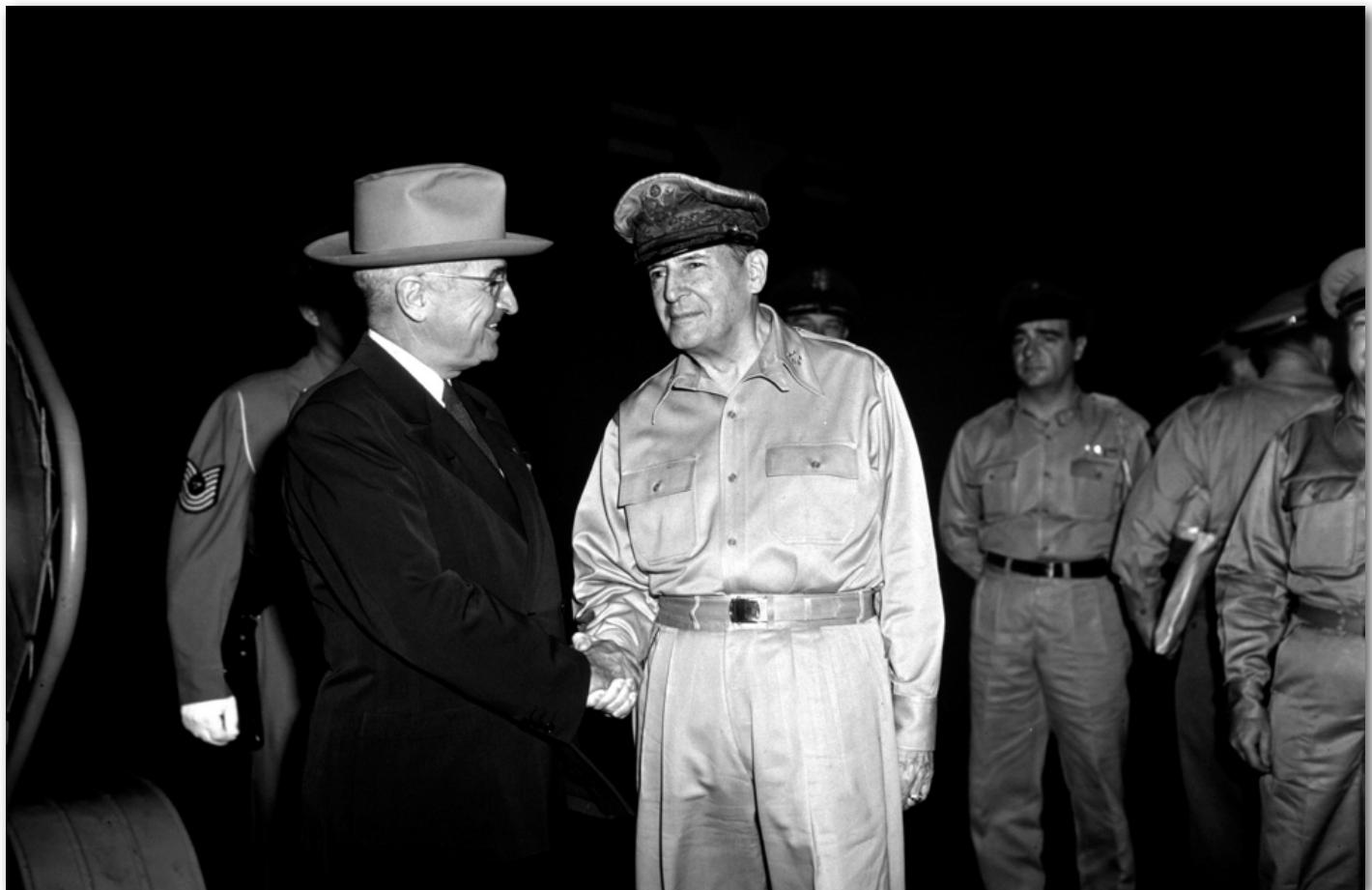
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A MONUMENTAL STRATEGIC DECISION



Truman and MacArthur on Wake Island in October 1950. Public domain photo. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Truman_and_MacArthur_on_Wake_Island_1950.JPG on 10 October 2022

By Norm Spivey

Perhaps the most impactful strategic decision during World War II was President Truman's decision to use atomic weapons. This decision clearly hastened the end of World War II freeing millions of oppressed people across the Pacific, to include Koreans. However, the decision to use atomic weapons also had the second order effect of forever changing "strategic leveraging". We see this playing out nearly daily on the Korean peninsula. Did Truman consider this effect on global geopolitics before ordering the use of atomic weapons? More importantly, what "moral calculus" went into the decision? I had the opportunity to explore these questions while a student at the National War

College and was surprised by some of my findings.

Much of my research came from an excellent book on the subject. The renowned historian Rev. Wilson D. Miscamble's book, *The most controversial decision: Truman, the atomic bombs, and the defeat of Japan* is an outstanding, informative read on this topic. It is highly recommended for those wishing to learn more about Truman's decision to use atomic weapons. Within my analysis, I used the lens of the ancient Greek philosopher Thucydides, who asserted that states make decisions on war out of "fear, honor and interest". This simple framework is a favorite of novice strategy students.



Before examining conclusions from the analysis, it is prudent to review the most basic factual outcomes of Truman's strategic decision. At Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 6th and 9th of August respectively, 135,000 Japanese were killed instantly and the cities razed to the ground. Many more Japanese died in the following years of radiation sickness. Less than a week after the attacks, Japanese Emperor Hirohito surrendered to the Allied powers effectively ending WWII, a war that by some estimates cost 50 million lives across the globe during the course of the conflict.

Through the lens of Thucydides' three motivations for war - fear, honor, interest and solely based on Truman's military strategy, it appears he made the necessary choice to use atomic weapons. The President successfully achieved US vital national interests, allayed American fears about prolonging the war, and played to America's desire for honor following its significant contribution to ending WWII.

That being said, many would argue that an analysis of Truman's decision to use atomic weapons must include a discussion of the moral implications of an action that left such a deadly and profound impact on the world. I discovered there was not a lot of "moral calculus" conducted prior to ordering the attacks on Japan in 1945. To fully appreciate this absence of considering moral implications, one must understand at a top level, the global context Truman was operating within.

By merely considering the violence that befell cities such as Shanghai, Nanking, Leningrad, Rotterdam, Coventry, London, Hamburg, Dresden, and Tokyo many WWII scholars suggest that in 1945 the world already crossed a "moral Rubicon" long before the atomic blasts in Japan. History shows that Truman's analysis of the facts in 1945 led to his assumption that the net death toll and destruction would be far greater the longer the war dragged on and that the bombs could hasten the end of the war. In terms of human loss and suffering Truman most likely felt the use of atomic weapons was indeed the correct moral choice between the "lesser of two evils" to expedite the end of the war.

While Truman's strategic decision clearly achieved U.S. vital national interests, assuaged the American public's fears about a prolonged WWII and attained U.S. honor as a superpower, this is not to suggest the decision-making process was without flaw. First, there was very little objectivity in Truman's decision to employ atomic weapons as group think prevailed within his administration. Perhaps due to steadfast loyalty to the goals and memory of the iconic President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the decision to drop atomic bombs was mostly a foregone conclusion when Truman took the oath of office. There was little or no consideration of critics against employing the weapons. Although the overall outcome was successful, this episode of rampant group think at the highest levels could have potentially produced an equally disastrous outcome.

Closely related to the lack of objectivity was a certain naivety that the foreign relation adverse Truman and those diplomats he surrounded himself with possessed. As history showed, Truman assumptions about the Soviet Union as well as China's post war intentions and dispositions could not have been more wrong. Furthermore, he probably could have never imagined that someday

not just super powers, but also rogue nations would use nuclear weapons as a strategic lever. A memorable quote from Truman that captures a blindness to the future geopolitical situation occurred on the evening of August the 14th as he announced the Japanese surrender on the White House lawn by proclaiming, "this is the day for free governments in the world. This is the day that fascism and police governments cease in the world."

Similarly, President Truman and his key staff did not fully consider the unintended consequences both positive and negative from his decision to employ atomic weapons in the post war Pacific region. Some suggest the use of atomic weapons gave the Emperor of Japan the "honor out" he needed to end the war, ultimately resulting in a beneficial post war peace with Japan. While this led to an invaluable ally, it also may have alienated other nations in the Pacific rim. But the most significant unintended consequence remains the fact that President Truman's decision ushered in an atomic age which led to the creation of countless terrifying weapons that held the world in a delicate balance for decades and unfortunately is currently experiencing a resurgence.

The enduring debate will remain. Whether President Truman's strategic decision to employ atomic weapons that achieved national interests, quelled American fears, promoted U.S. honor and most importantly helped free the Korean people in the summer of 1945 was worth the cost of initiating a landmark revolution in modern warfare. There is much to be learned today by studying the lessons of the past, especially regarding this monumental strategic decision. Barring the complete destruction of all nuclear weapons, we can only hope our world leaders won't skip the "moral calculus" and consider unintended consequences when contemplating the use of nuclear weapons. Our world can't afford to cross another "moral Rubicon" as it did in 1945.

About the author. Norm Spivey is a retired Army, Air Defense Artillery Colonel and was honored to serve three assignments in the Republic of Korea over the course of his military career. He continues to work in missile defense, self publishes books and writes in his weekly blog, www.normspivey.com. The views, opinions and biases expressed in this article are the authors and do not reflect those of the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense.

COMPARING KOREAN AND AMERICAN CULTURE: A PERSONAL REFLECTION SERIES



By: Sicily Giamanco

In September 2024, I had the incredible opportunity to spend two weeks in Seoul, South Korea, accompanied by a close friend. We decided to base ourselves in Hongdae, a lively district known for its vibrant shopping and clubbing scene, situated near one of the city's prominent universities. Staying in such a youthful, energetic neighborhood offered us a firsthand look at the intersection of tradition and modernity that defines Korean culture, particularly through Seoul's dynamic atmosphere.

This article reflects on my experiences navigating both the visible differences and subtle nuances between Korean and American cultures, focusing on transportation, café culture, social dynamics, and our observations about daily life in one of the world's most advanced cities.

The Vibrancy of Seoul: A Modern, Yet Historical City

Seoul, like many major cities worldwide, blends the old and the new, but the way these elements coexist here is particularly striking. From the moment we arrived, it was clear that Seoul offers something for every visitor. The sleek, modern skyline with towering skyscrapers in districts like Gangnam stands in sharp contrast to the historical palaces like Gyeongbokgung, offering a constant reminder of the rich history that underpins the city's fast-paced, technologically driven life.

Given that we were staying in Hongdae, an area renowned for its youthful energy, shopping, and nightlife, our experience was naturally centered around contemporary Seoul. The area was always bustling with students, the younger generations and tourists. It felt like a city that never slept. The nightlife was very wild. When we woke up in the morning, there were people exiting the clubs from the nights before.



Getting Around: The Subway Culture and Urban Connectivity

One of the most striking differences I noticed in Seoul was the use of public transportation, particularly the subway. In San Diego, public transit is much less common and not nearly as convenient as it is in Seoul. The subway system in Seoul is a marvel of efficiency and accessibility, something that I came to rely on every day. The convenience of taking the subway everywhere, whether to explore local sights or enjoy areas further away from us without driving there, was something I hadn't experienced back home.

The subway in Seoul felt like the backbone of the city's infrastructure. With clear signage in both Korean and English, it was remarkably easy to navigate, and we were always able to get to our destination quickly and comfortably. Unlike in San Diego, where driving is often the primary mode of transportation, most people in Seoul opt for the subway, which means the streets are less congested by cars and public transportation becomes the most practical solution. I was particularly fascinated by how seamlessly it blended into everyday life. The subway wasn't just a means of transport; it was an essential part of the social fabric.

Café Culture: A Place for Relaxation and Socializing

Another cultural aspect that stood out to us was the café culture in Seoul. Coffee shops in the city are more than just places to grab a quick caffeine fix; they are social hubs where people gather to relax, study, or catch up with friends. The sheer number of unique, aesthetically pleasing cafés in Hongdae was overwhelming. From sleek, modern spaces with minimalist design to cozy, vintage-style establishments, each café seemed to have its own personality. The atmosphere in these cafés was one of warmth and community, as people of all ages sat down to enjoy their drinks, either alone or with friends.

Coming from San Diego, where coffee shops are often quick stops or places for remote work, it was fascinating to see how ingrained coffee culture was in Seoul. Although, university students in San Diego are beginning to make cafes more popular like Korea. People seemed to take their time, savoring their beverages and socializing at length, sometimes for hours. This was a striking difference from the American approach, where cafes are often more functional, and many people drink coffee on the go. It wasn't just about the coffee; it was about the experience of being in a space that encouraged relaxation and connection.

Social Dynamics and Respect: A Different Approach to Interactions

During our time in Seoul, we also had the opportunity to observe the ways in which social dynamics differ. In many ways, Korean culture emphasizes respect, hierarchy, and formality more than what we're accustomed to in the U.S. For example, when we entered a café or restaurant, we noticed that there was an unspoken understanding of respect for elders, with younger people deferring to those older than them, both in speech and behavior. In these spaces, even our interactions with strangers felt more mindful of age and status, something that was different from the casual approach many Americans take toward social interactions.

While it's common in America to maintain a certain physical distance, especially in crowded spaces, we noticed that the dense population in Seoul meant people often had to get much closer to one another, whether on the subway or while walking down a busy street. Despite the closeness, however, there was a strong sense of mutual respect and consideration.

Dining Culture: A Focus on Tradition and Shared Meals

Food in Seoul is more than just sustenance—it's an integral part of social life, with communal dining being the norm. Our meals often consisted of a variety of small dishes, or "banchan," that were shared among the group, emphasizing the collective over the individual. It was a departure from the more individualistic nature of American dining, where people tend to order their own meals and often eat alone.

One aspect of dining culture that I particularly enjoyed was the importance of mealtime rituals. For example, at a traditional Korean barbecue restaurant, it wasn't just about cooking and eating—it was about engaging with the food together, sharing the cooking process, and ensuring everyone at the table had a chance to partake in the experience. This communal spirit felt very different from the more transactional approach to meals that we often see in the U.S., where eating can sometimes be more about convenience than connection.

Reflections on a Two-Week Stay: Bridging Cultures

After spending two weeks in Seoul with my friend, I came away with a deeper appreciation for both Korean and American cultures. Seoul offered a fascinating glimpse into a society where technology, tradition, and social structure coexist in a unique way. The prevalence of public transportation, the café culture, and the attention to respect and hierarchy all contributed to a distinctly different experience from what we're accustomed to in the U.S.

Despite the differences, I found that the common thread of valuing human connection—whether through communal meals, socializing in cafés, or shared experiences on the subway—created a shared sense of humanity that transcended cultural boundaries. My time in Seoul wasn't just about seeing a new place; it was about gaining insight into the ways people live, interact, and thrive in an ever-evolving world.

As I reflect on my time in Seoul, I can't help but feel that the experience deepened my understanding of the world, offering me a more nuanced perspective on the cultures that shape our lives and I cannot wait to return.

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