

CLIPPING THE EAGLE'S WINGS:
THE LIMITING OF THE KOREAN AIR WAR, 1950-1953

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This work examines the transition in aerial warfare that took place during the Korean War (1950-1953). Before the conflict, air power was conceived of primarily an instrument of unlimited, or total, warfare. Yet Korea, and all subsequent air wars, have been limited. The transitional nature of the Korean air war has not yet been adequately explored by historians.

Methods: The story of this shift is presented in two parts, the first examining the doctrines of the United States Air Force (USAF) immediately before the Korean War, the second comparing them to the USAF's actual campaigns in Korea. This focus on the USAF reflects both its status as the principal air service in Korea and its influence on the theories and doctrines of all air arms in the post-World War Two era. The USAF's planning immediately before the Korean War focused on its role in a possible total war between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was thus unprepared and ill-equipped for the limited war in Korea and had to improvise its operations there.

Findings: The inability of the USAF to conduct an unlimited war in Korea frustrated many Americans, who could not understand the political considerations that limited the conflict, seeing only that the USAF, the world's most powerful air arm, was prevented from using all of its resources. While the resulting controversy contributed to a change of administration in the United States, it had less of an effect on the USAF. After the Korean War ended, its leadership continued to focus on unlimited war,

dismissing the conflict as an aberration from which little about the operation of aircraft in war could be learned.

Conclusions: The failure to recognize the lessons of the Korean War has had serious consequences. There have been no total wars since 1945; every air war of the past sixty years has been limited. Limited warfare is defined by restrictions on air power. The USAF and other air arms were slow to adapt to the changing conditions. The Korean War was a more significant event in the history of aerial warfare than is generally appreciated.

DEDICATION

To my mom,
and to the many members of my family no longer alive to witness this achievement,
despite that they shared in it

GLOSSARY

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 5AF | Fifth Air Force |
| AAA | Anti-Aircraft Artillery |
| AAF | Army Air Forces |
| ABC | American-British Conference |
| AEA | Atomic Energy Act |
| AEC | Atomic Energy Commission |
| AF | Air Force |
| AI | Airborne Intercept |
| AJ | Attack aircraft designed by North American Aviation (American naval designation) |
| <i>AUQR</i> | <i>Air University Quarterly Review</i> |
| AWPD | Air War Plans Division |
| B-[number] | Bomber (American air force designation) |
| BOMCOM | Bomber Command |
| CAP | Combat Air Patrol |
| CBO | Combined Bomber Offensive |
| CEP | Circular Error Probable |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| CINCUNC | Commander in Chief, United Nations Command |
| CINCFE | Commander in Chief, Far East (same as CINCFECOM) |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| CINCFECOM | Commander in Chief, Far East Command (same as CINFE) |
| CINCUSAFFE | Commander-in-Chief, United States Army Forces Far East |
| CO5AF | Commanding Officer, Fifth Air Force |
| COFEAF | Commanding Officer, Far East Air Force |
| CO FEAF BOMCOM | Commanding Officer, Far East Air Force Bomber Command |
| COMNAVFE | Commanding Officer, Naval Forces Far East |
| COSUSAF | Chief of Staff, United States Air Force |
| DPRK | Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) |
| ECM | Electronic Countermeasures |
| ER-[number] | aircraft designed in Yermalaev bureau (also Er) (Soviet designation) (same as YER) |
| ETO | European Theatre of Operations |
| F-[number] | Fighter (American air force designation) |
| F2H | second fighter aircraft designed by McDonnell Aircraft Corporation (American naval designation) |
| F9F | ninth fighter aircraft designed by Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation (American naval designation) |
| FEAF | Far East Air Force |
| FECOM | Far East Command |
| Il-[number] | Aircraft designed in Ilyushin bureau (Soviet designation) |
| IP | Initial Point |
| JCS | Joint Chiefs of Staff |
| JIC | Joint Intelligence Committee |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| JPS | Joint Planning Staff |
| JPSG | Joint Strategic Plans Group |
| JWPC | Joint War Plans Committee |
| MB | Medium Bomber |
| ME | aircraft designed by Messerschmitt AG (German designation) |
| MiG-[number] | aircraft designed in Mikoyan-Gurevich bureau (also MIG or Mig) (Soviet designation) |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| P-[number] | Pursuit (fighter) (American air force designation) |
| PGM | Precision-Guided Munitions |
| PRC | People's Republic of China (Communist China) |
| PVO-Strany | <i>ProtivoVozhdushnaya Oborona Strany</i> , "Anti-Air Defense of the Nation" (Soviet Air Defense Organization) |
| RAF | Royal Air Force |
| ROC | Republic of China (Nationalist China) |
| ROK | Republic of Korea (South Korea) |
| SAC | Strategic Air Command |
| SCAP | Supreme Commander, Allied Powers |
| Su-[number] | aircraft designed in Sukhoi bureau (Soviet designation) |
| TB-[number] | heavy bomber (Soviet designation) |
| Tu-[number] | aircraft designed in Tupolev bureau (Soviet designation) |
| UK | United Kingdom |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| UN | United Nations (same as UNO) |
| UNC | United Nations Command |
| UNO | United Nations Organization (same as UN) |
| USA | United States of America (United States) |
| USAAF | United States Army Air Forces |
| USAF | United States Air Force |
| USMC | United States Marine Corps |
| USN | United States Navy |
| USSBS | United States Strategic Bombing Survey |
| USS | United States Ship |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union) |
| VFW | Veterans of Foreign Wars |
| VHB | Very Heavy Bomber |
| WSEG | Weapon Systems Evaluation Group |
| Yak-[number] | aircraft designed in Yakovlev bureau (Soviet designation) |
| YER-[number] | aircraft designed in Yermalaev bureau (also Yer) (Soviet designation) (same as ER) |

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The Power of Strategic Bombing

In 1965, General Curtis E. LeMay, who had recently retired from the United States Air Force (USAF), published his autobiography. He devoted most of its nearly six hundred pages to recounting his career. Near the end of the book, however, LeMay took the opportunity to share his views about what was going on in the world at the time. He had an idea for bringing the Vietnam conflict, then just over a year old, to a quick and decisive end: he would “tell them [the North Vietnamese] frankly that they’ve got to draw back in their horns and stop their aggression, or we’re going to bomb them back into the Stone Age.”¹

LeMay’s pronunciamiento—usually shortened to just “bomb them back to the Stone Age”—quickly became an English-language catchphrase. Over the past fifty years, it has been cited by government officials, military personnel, humorists (columnist Art Buchwald was particularly fond of it), journalists and other cultural and political commentators (in print, on the web, and in the broadcast media), scholars, artists (musicians, filmmakers, and novelists), and many others, have cited it, often in contexts far removed from military issues.² Variations abound: tax them back, sue them back,

¹ Curtis E. LeMay with MacKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay: My Story* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1965), 565.

² Buchwald is mentioned specifically because he used the phrase often enough (at least ten times between 1967 and 2005) that a number of websites attribute the quotation to him. The error seems to have originated in an online essay written by a history professor at Indiana University. Nick Cullather, “Bomb

tumble-dry them back, rock them back, blog them back . . . (as well as “stone them back to the bomb age,” whatever that may mean).³ Its inclusion in the fifteenth edition of Bartlett’s *Familiar Quotations*, published in 1980, demonstrated its utility (and ubiquity).⁴

Is it possible to actually bomb a society “back to the Stone Age?” Probably not, but aerial bombardment is powerfully destructive. LeMay was not alone in rhetorically linking the potency of modern weapons with the end of civilization. In his famous “Iron Curtain” speech, given just eight months after the end of World War Two, Winston Churchill, the former (and future) Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, called for the world’s nations to create a metaphoric “Temple of Peace.” Otherwise, he warned, “The Dark Ages may return, the Stone Age may return on the gleaming wings of science, and what might now shower immeasurable material blessings upon mankind may even bring about its total destruction.”⁵ Later that year, a concerned citizen wrote to the editors of the *Hartford Courant* to ask if the rising tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union—the Cold War was just beginning—were “so impossible to settle

Them Back to the Stone Age: An Etymology,” posted 5 October 2006, History News Network, <http://hnn.us/articles/30347.html>, accessed 19 January 2012.

As just one example of how the phrase has so permeated American culture that it is no longer employed solely in discussions of military or political affairs, see Jayne Custred, “USGA is ready to Go to War: Governing Body Wants to Bomb High-Tech Clubs Back to Stone Age,” *The Houston Chronicle*, 8 June 1998, 1.

³ A five-minute search of the internet using both the Google and Bing search engines revealed these, and a host of other, variations of the phrase. Most alternative versions change the verb but remain martial in nature: nuke them, blast them, blow them, pound them, knock them, slap them, smite them, and the like.

⁴ M. R. Montgomery, “The Quote People: They’re the Folks Who Put Out the Reference Book That Helps Novices,” *New England Magazine*, 21 December 1981, 1.

⁵ Winston Churchill, address at Westminster College, 5 March 1946, printed as “Alliance of the English-Speaking People: A Shadow Has Fallen on Europe and Asia,” in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 March 1946, 331. This is the famous “Iron Curtain Speech,” also known as “Sinews of Power.” Churchill did not coin the expression “Iron Curtain” but it was he who linked it to the metaphorical border between the communist bloc and the western world.

rationality that our two peoples would be justified in blowing each other back into the Stone Age. . . .”⁶

Churchill and the *Courant*’s correspondent did not identify the specific instrument that would bring about the end of civilization, but “Uncle Dudley” (as the editors of the *Boston Globe* signed their opinions), did. On the second anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, he wrote that there were two possible futures. In one, scientists harnessed atomic power for the benefit of all humanity. In the other, nuclear energy brought only “the terror of a war that might, in truth, drive mankind back to the stone age.”⁷

Although “Uncle Dudley” specified atomic weapons as the means by which mankind would self-destruct, LeMay understood that the same effect could result without them. Just after the infamous “bomb them” passage, he wrote that crippling North Vietnam “would be the simplest possible application of strategic bombardment, and you could do the job with conventional weapons. You wouldn’t have to get into a nuclear fracas.”⁸ Presumably, LeMay would know whether such was possible. He had dedicated most of his life to the development of strategic bombing, as a pilot, leader, organizer, and innovator.⁹

War still exists, as does aerial bombardment. Yet, somehow, the world has avoided Armageddon. If strategic aerial warfare, whether conventional or nuclear, is as

⁶ Robert E. Hart, “To Wage Peace: Not by Military Force or Destruction—‘Tis Hoped” (letter to the editor), *The Hartford Courant*, 13 September 1946, 14.

⁷ Uncle Dudley, “Curse or Blessing,” *The Boston Globe*, 6 August 1947, 14.

⁸ LeMay, *Mission with LeMay*, 565.

⁹ Although the power of both conventional atomic weapons grew significantly in the eighteen years between Uncle Dudley’s opinion and LeMay’s memoirs, the conventional bombing forces of 1965 were still less powerful than the atomic bombs of 1947.

destructive as claimed by the commentators quoted above, drawn from a wide range of professions—a political leader, a military officer, a journalist, and an ordinary citizen—how, then, has mankind avoided reverting back to caveman days?

There are four answers, or perhaps a single answer with four parts, to this question. One is that since the 1940s the powers that possess strategic bombing forces have strived to avoid fighting wars *with other powers that possess similar forces*. The second is that these efforts have, at least until the present, succeeded, and as a result, when a nation that possesses strategic bombing forces has gone to war, it has done so *against a nation that does not possess strategic air arms*. The third is that even in these wars, the nations that possess strategic bombing forces have for political reasons imposed significant restrictions on their employment. The fourth is that the nations against which other nations have employed strategic bombing in the last sixty years were not significantly industrialized—they cannot be bombed back to the Stone Age because, to put it crudely, they are not too far removed from it.

About this Work

This work examines the first exemplar of these four principles, the Korean War, fought between 1950 and 1953. It focuses on the experience of the United States Air Force (USAF), which at the time was the most advanced and powerful air arm in the world.¹⁰ When the Korean War began, American military and political leaders did not

¹⁰ The United States dominated the air war in Korea. Of the many air arms that served in the conflict on both sides, the United States Air Force (USAF) and United States Navy (USN) were by far the

immediately understand that they would not be able to employ their air power, particularly their strategic bombardment forces, in the manner to which they had become accustomed in previous conflicts. The realization that they could not use the full might of their air power, the single most potent weapon in their arsenal and the instrument upon which they had based the defense of their nation, created a crisis situation in the United States. Neither the American people nor their elected officials were immune to the frustration, confusion, anger, and distress this situation engendered: the United States had never before appeared so impotent. The passions aroused had significant consequences, including the dismissal of a senior military officer and, indirectly, a change of administration in the United States.

In addition to its short-term domestic political effects, the Korean War had a profound influence on the conduct of aerial warfare. As noted above, the USAF was the foremost practitioner of aerial warfare in the world at the time, a position it still enjoys. What the US Air Force does affects both its own doctrines and practices and those of the many nations that pattern themselves after it. The USAF's experience in Korea shaped

largest. The United States participated in the Korean War under the auspices of the United Nations Command (UNC), the military arm of the United Nations (UN). All eight of the participating UNC air arms were subordinated to one of the two main American branches.

The USAF controlled most of the UNC's land-based air units. These included the Republic of Korea Air Force, the Royal Australian Air Force, the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force, the Royal Thai Air Force, the Royal Hellenic Air Force, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the South African Air Force. Exceptions were air elements belonging to the American and Turkish armies, the activities of which were directed by the United States Army, and shore-based elements of the United States Marine Corps (USMC).

The USN directed the activities of all air units based on ships. These were the Navy Aviation Group of the Royal Australian Navy and the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy. The USMC was a largely autonomous part of the US Navy; but both its sea- and land-based units came under USN control.

Opposing the UN forces were the USSR, North Korea, and communist (red) China. All three possessed air arms, although none of them committed large numbers of air units to the fighting, and their air arms were not well coordinated.

future air wars, although military theorists did not recognize many of its consequences immediately and no air arm incorporated them into its doctrines of warfare until several decades after the conflict ended.¹¹

This work will argue that the Korean War was a far more significant episode in the history of aerial warfare than scholars, military thinkers, and laypeople generally appreciate. It represents the transition between the age of total warfare and the age of limited warfare—both of which are defined by way aircraft are employed.¹² None of the scholars, military professionals, and enthusiasts who have written about the history of air power has examined this shift in any detail.¹³

Limited war as understood and practiced over the last six decades is for the most part a product of the Air Age.¹⁴ It is a reaction to the perceived excesses of unlimited

¹¹ The tardiness of air power practitioners to notice and learn from the lessons of the Korean War are the result of the Cold War, which so dominated military theory and doctrine between 1945 and 1990 that it almost all other concerns were obscured. Having to be prepared for a global nuclear exchange, the two superpowers adapted their air arms, created for a possible World War Three, to the exigencies of the minor wars they fought. When the Cold War ended, they belatedly realized that their organizations were not well suited for the types of wars they were likely to fight in the future—despite that they had avoided a global nuclear exchange and had actually been fighting such conflicts for four decades.

¹² Readers familiar with aviation terminology will be aware that the word “aircraft” denotes all flying devices, both lighter-than-air (balloons and dirigibles) and heavier-than-air (airplanes and helicopters). In this work, however, it will be used as a synonym for “airplane” to provide variety.

¹³ Although in some quarters, particularly the military and naval professions, the terms “aerial warfare,” “(military) air power,” and “military aviation” have distinctly different meanings, they will be used interchangeably in this work to provide variety. The subtleties are not germane to this discussion.

The difference in meaning between “military” and “naval” is not subtle at all, but this work will generally use the word “military” to refer to all war-related activities and organizations, whether land, sea, or air. References specific to armies should be apparent by their context. “Naval” will be reserved for references to the sea services.

¹⁴ The qualifier “for the most part” was added because there is one aspect of modern limited war that would seem to be the exception to the thesis that limited wars are limited because the employment of air power in them is limited. This exemption would be the exclusion of potential allies from coalitions. The best example would be the United Nations’ repeated rebuffs, on American recommendations, of Nationalist China’s offers to contribute forces to the UN’s Korean War effort. Just before the Korean War began, the Chinese Civil War had ended with the communist faction in control of the mainland after the Nationalist faction had withdrawn to an offshore island. As Korea is adjacent to communist China, the

warfare as practiced in the first half of the twentieth century. Although some pre-nineteenth century conflicts had exhibited elements of total warfare (the Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648, and First Punic War, 264-241 BC, being examples), the concept of total war is a phenomenon of the industrial era and its attendant refinements in the human understanding of political economy.¹⁵ Yet total war was imperfectly realized before the introduction of the airplane in the early twentieth century. It was the development of the technology and doctrine of strategic bombing over the next forty years that made total war so effective that it became virtually unthinkable after 1945.

The object of limiting war is to prevent an unlimited war. There are only a few scenarios in which the activities of an army or navy could cause a war to escalate (although one will be described in Chapter XI).¹⁶ These arms are inherently limited to

UN's leaders concluded that any Nationalist involvement in the Korean War would cause the communist Chinese to intervene.

However, it might be argued that this problem is diplomatic and not military. Until the ally is actually invited into the war, the belligerents will abide by whatever operational policies they have already adopted for conducting their military operations. If a nation never enters a war, its actions need not be limited. One would not argue that because Switzerland and Sweden remained neutral during World War Two that that conflict was a limited war.

As it focuses on the role of air power in defining limited war, this work is not an appropriate forum for exploring this topic further. However, the concept is certainly worth further investigation.

An apparent second example actually serves to support the contention that limited warfare is limited because air operations must be artificially restrained. During the 1991 Gulf War, the United States devoted a considerable amount of diplomatic effort to prevent the Israelis from entering the conflict, fearing that their intervention might cause Arab nations to withdraw from their anti-Iraq coalition. Most limited wars are limited to prevent them from expanding. The Iraqis, however, wanted the Israelis to enter the conflict, which would have had the effect of expanding the war, but in a way favorable to them by removing some their enemies from the war. They attempted to accomplish this end through the employment of air power in the form of Scud missiles.

The First Gulf War was also limited in terms of goals sought, i.e., Coalition forces limited their goal to expelling Iraqi forces from Kuwait and did not seek "total" defeat of the Iraqi armed forces or a change in the regime ruling Iraq.

¹⁵ David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

¹⁶ They are not impossible, just uncommon. An army can blunder across a border; a navy can blockade the wrong coast or bombard a neutral or friendly port. Such episodes could in theory lead to war

the surface of the earth, they move relatively slowly, and, of course, the one may not venture out to sea and the other may not come onto land. Air forces enjoy a total freedom of operations unknown to any other military service. They can fly anywhere, so if a belligerent deems certain areas to be sensitive, it must actively forbid its air arms from visiting them. Aircraft can be based outside of the combat zone, visit it, then return. They may thus be engaged only when conducting missions; any attack on an airbase outside of the combat area can be construed as a widening of the war.

Additionally, air forces can attack any target, so to prevent an attack on a particular site, that location must be purposely placed off-limits. And air forces can employ a wider variety of weapons than land or sea forces. Prohibitions against the use of any of these weapons must be explicit (although they need not be permanent; see Chapters IV, V, and XII). All of these limits must be artificially imposed from without; they are alien to organic concepts of air power.

More significantly, they are political decisions, not military decisions. Air power allows a military organization to attack anything of value to the enemy's war effort. Whether its destruction is consistent with the objectives of the war is for policy makers, not generals, to decide. As nineteenth-century German general Carl von Clausewitz observed, "*Der Krieg ist eine bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mit anderen Mitteln* [war is a pursuit of politics by other means]."¹⁷ Warfare and diplomacy are complementary. The

but would probably require a conspiracy of circumstances to do so. Air units, on the other hand, seem to be navigation and targeting errors waiting to happen.

¹⁷ Carl von Clausewitz; *Von Dem Krieg* (Berlin: Dümmlers Verlag, 1832); Book One, Chapter One, Section 24.

former is an exercise in managing an enemy's capabilities; the latter a way of managing an enemy's intentions.

The assessment of an enemy nation's capabilities and intentions is a task all military leaders have had to perform throughout history. The Korean War, however, required the Americans to evaluate their own capabilities and intentions as well. The mode of warfare they anticipated was going to happen, total war, would have required a full commitment of all of their resources—military, economic, demographic, and cultural—which is easy to calculate. Inherent in the concept of limited warfare is the idea that something will be held back—but what, and how much of it, and when and where? Committing too few assets could result in defeat, but committing too many could lead to a larger war. This dilemma—never before faced by any military organization or political entity in history—was a significant source of the frustration Americans experienced during the conflict.

Air power is paradoxical. The unfettered nature of aerial warfare was what first commended the airplane to the world's militaries. The Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur, invented the airplane in 1903.¹⁸ Its first wartime employment took place less than a decade later.¹⁹ Over the next thirty years, air arms operated with few limitations save those imposed by technology. The earliest flying machines were frail and underpowered, handicapping their range, top speed, ceiling, and load-carrying abilities, and making them subject to the vagaries of weather. But the world's military

¹⁸ In this sentence, "airplane" is understood to mean a "heavier-than-air, powered, man-carrying flying machine."

¹⁹ This historic first occurred when the Italians employed airplanes in Libya in the autumn of 1911 in their war against the Turks.

organizations understood that once designers overcame these technological shortcomings, aircraft would enjoy an unprecedented reach and power, and as a result, the world's armed forces invested in the development of faster, more powerful, and more efficient airplanes. Military aircraft performance improved at an incredible pace in the first three decades of the twentieth century so that by the end of the Second World War, airplanes could reach targets almost anywhere in the world, in all weathers, carrying weapons so destructive that they might bring about the end of civilization.

By improving the instruments of aerial warfare—aircraft and airborne weapons—the practitioners of air power had made it virtually impossible to exploit their arms' full abilities. They did not realize, at first, that they had been “too” successful. In the years after World War Two, they and many others believed that the perfection of air power had rendered war impossible by making it unthinkable. Orville Wright once lamented that he and his brother had thought that they “were introducing into the world an invention which would make further wars practically impossible.”²⁰ World War One, the first major air war, was underway at the time; no doubt he thought that he and Wilbur had failed. He died in 1948 without realizing that they had actually succeeded, but not in the way that they had anticipated.

It is impossible to describe and analyze a transition without relating and comparing the “before” and the “after,” which in this work, contrast with each other so dramatically that they almost seem to be different narratives. Each could be read

²⁰ Orville Wright, letter to C.H. Hitchcock, 21 June 1917, in *The Papers of Orville and Wilbur Wright, including the Chanute-Wright Papers*, vol. 2, Marvin Wilks McFarland, ed. (McGraw-Hill Professional, 2000), 1104. This quotation is cited in numerous books about aviation, particularly military aviation.

independently of the other. The “before” is the history of a campaign that was planned for but never took place, told primarily through military documents. The “after” is the story of a campaign that actually happened but was not planned for, told primarily through diplomatic and political sources. Yet when combined the two parts of this work tell the story of American air power in the decade after World War Two, which, because so many of the world’s air arms pattern their operations on American models, has exerted a significant influence on the conduct of aerial warfare by all nations over the last sixty years.

The two parts of this work are themselves further subdivided. Part one is about unlimited aerial warfare, both real and theoretical, and contains four chapters, beginning with Chapter II, an examination of the development of American air power in the years before World War Two and its subsequent employment in that conflict. Chapter III describes how the United States embraced air power as its primary instrument of policy after 1945, focusing on its role in the early Cold War. Chapters IV and V continue this theme, with an emphasis upon the use of atomic weapons in a hypothetical war against the Soviet Union. Part two, about limited warfare, has seven chapters. It examines the first actual war in which the United States was involved after 1945, the Korean War. Chapters VI and VII discuss the reasons why the Korean War was limited and explore the nature of limited war. The last six chapters describe how aerial warfare was limited in Korea. Chapter VIII examines why and how the concerns about the Soviet Union led the Americans to limit their Korean air operations. Chapters IX, X, and XI do the same but in the context of Communist China. Chapter XII describes the role (or non-role) of

the atomic bomb in the Korean War. Together they will reveal a significant shift in the practice of aerial warfare.

Survey of the Literature

Modern aerial warfare resembles the limited air campaigns of the Korean War more than it does the unlimited air operations of World War Two. The expectation, therefore, is that surveys of the history of air power would emphasize the difference and analyze how the one shifted into the other. Yet somehow they do not. Most histories of aerial warfare, or air power, focus on the period before 1945. Their emphasis is upon the development of strategic bombing (often with a brief excursion into the development of carrier-based naval aviation). They are usually presented as a single continuous narrative, often divided into six parts:²¹

*Part One: The airplane was invented, and most industrialized nations acquired them for their naval and military organizations, but with only the vaguest sense of their utility.*²²

Part Two: During World War One aircraft were used in various roles, but haphazardly, without any coherent overall plan for their employment.

²¹ This six-part framework is adapted from the table of contents of the first edition of Robin Higham's *Air Power: A Concise History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972, iv-v). The 1988 revision retains the same organization. Robin Higham, *Air Power: A Concise History*, 2nd ed. (Manhattan KS: Sunflower Press, 1984). The same author's *100 Years of Air Power and Aviation* is an expanded version of the works cited above. Robin Higham, *100 Years of Air Power and Aviation* (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 2003). Most of the other works alluded to in this paper (see note 23, below) are organized in roughly the same way.

²² Some writers begin before Kitty Hawk. Many surveys of the history of aerial warfare describe the employment of balloons in war during the nineteenth century. It is also common for them to include a brief overview of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century speculative fiction with air warfare themes, the best-known of which are H. G. Wells' *The War in the Air* (1907) and Albert Robida's *La Guerre au Vingtième Siècle* (1887).

*Part Three: After the Great War theorists systematized the lessons of the conflict into formal doctrines for the employment of aircraft in war, emphasizing strategic bombing, useful against both a nation's economy and its morale.*²³

Part Four: These airpower theories were tested and proven during World War Two.

Part Five: World War Two also demonstrated the value of aircraft in naval warfare, as the aircraft carrier supplanted the battleship as the dominant class of warship.

*Part Six: "Then some other stuff happened."*²⁴

This format has become the standard history of aerial warfare. Yet it has several problems. One is that the stories of the vindication of strategic bombing climaxes in 1945 (as does the story of the rise of the aircraft carrier). Everything that follows, including the Korean War, is what literary critics would call "falling action." Most histories of aerial warfare devote less than one-third of their page count to the period after World War Two, thus reducing the last six-and-a-half decades—some two thirds, chronologically, of the history of aerial warfare—to little more than an afterthought.²⁵

²³ Today, attacks against materiel are called "denial" and attacks against morale are called "coercion," names coined by an American political scientist. Robert Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca NY: Cornell UP, 1996).

²⁴ A less cynical way of expressing this idea would be, "*The airplane continues to be employed in warfare.*" The version used above may seem flippant, but its selection was not accidental. It was chosen purposely to convey the casual attitude many writers take towards the significance of the post-World War Two period in the history of aerial warfare. It was taken from the title of a collection of grade-school students' misprisions of American history. Bill Lawrence, *Then Some Other Stuff Happened* (New York: Scholastic, 1970).

²⁵ This emphasis on the pre-1945 era appears in almost every major work about the history of aerial warfare, popular or scholarly, published in the last forty years. These fall into two groups: those published decades before the centennial of the Wright brothers' flight in 2003, and those published in association with that anniversary.

The first group includes the first and second editions of Robin Higham's *Air Power: A Concise History* (see note 19 above). Both are divided into six parts, fully five of which discuss developments before and during World War Two. Only one of the thirteen chapters of Basil Collier's *A History of Air Power* and just two of the sixteen chapters of James L. Stokesbury's *A Short History of Air Power* discuss the period after World War Two. Of course, these works were published decades

As a result, the Korean War and all subsequent wars receive scant attention in such works.

If these works had been about the history of strategic bombing specifically, this focus on the pre-1945 emphasis would make more sense.²⁶ But strategic bombing and air power are not identical. As a congressional committee reported in 1950, “so much public attention has been directed to the long-range strategic bomber and to the

ago, so their paucity of postwar-era material can be understood. Basil Collier, *A History of Air Power* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of Air Power* (New York, Morrow, 1986).

The works published to coincide with the Kitty Hawk centenary still tend, despite the advantage of another few decades’ historical perspective, to focus upon the early years of the air age rather than more recent developments. Higham’s *100 Years of Air Power and Aviation*, an expanded version of the works cited above, devotes more than two-thirds of its page count to the pre-1945 era. John Buckley’s *Air Power in the Age of Total War* has nine chapters but just one examines post-World War Two developments (but note the title). Similarly, fully eleven of the fourteen chapters of Stephen Budiansky’s *Air Power* discuss events before 1945. Of the thirteen chapters in Walter Boyne’s *The Influence of Air Power Upon History*, nine treat with the pre-atomic era. John Buckley, *Air Power in the Age of Total War* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999); Walter J. Boyne, *The Influence of Air Power Upon History* (Gretna LA, Pelican, 2003); Stephen Budiansky, *Air Power* (New York: Viking, 2004).

Both John F. O’Connell’s *The Effectiveness of Airpower in the 20th Century* and Justin D. Murphy’s *Military Aircraft: An Illustrated History Of Their Impact* are divided into three volumes, the first discussing World War One, the second World War Two, and the third the jet age (interestingly, the former places the interwar period in volume two, while the latter treats with it in volume one). In each series, the last volume has far fewer pages than either of its predecessors. Justin D. Murphy, *Military Aircraft, Origins to 1918: An Illustrated History of Their Impact* (New York: ABC-CLIO, 2005); Justin D. Murphy, *Military Aircraft, 1919-1945: An Illustrated History Of Their Impact* (New York: ABC-CLIO, 2008); Justin D. Murphy, *Military Aircraft in the Jet Age: An Illustrated History of Their Impact* (New York: ABC-CLIO, not yet published); John F. O’Connell, *The Effectiveness of Airpower in the 20th Century, part two (1939-1945)* (Lincoln NE: iUniverse, 2006); John F. O’Connell, *The Effectiveness of Airpower in the 20th Century part three (1945-2000)* (Lincoln NE: iUniverse, 2006); John F. O’Connell, *The Effectiveness of Airpower in the 20th Century part one (1914-1939)* (Lincoln NE: iUniverse, 2007).

In contrast to all of the above, the recently-published *A History of Air Warfare* by John Andreas Olsen has sixteen chapters, only three of which are about World Wars One and Two. However, this work is more of an anthology of articles about various air wars than a narrative history of aerial warfare; save for the editorial introductions to each piece, it makes no attempt to link its various parts into a coherent whole. John Andreas Olsen, *A History of Air Warfare* (Dulles VA: Potomac Books, 2008).

²⁶ Robert Saundby, *Air Bombardment: The Story of its Development* (New York: Harpers, 1961), Lee Kennett, *A History of Strategic Bombing* (New York: Scribner, 1982); Brian Johnson and H. I. Cozens, *Bombers: The Weapon of Total Wars* (London: Methuen, 1984); Sven Lindqvist, *A History of Bombing* (New York: New Press, 2001); Kenneth P. Werrell, *Death from the Heavens: A History of Strategic Bombing* (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 2009); Toshiyuki Tanaka and Marilyn Blatt Young, *Bombing Civilians: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: New Press, 2009).

capability of conducting intercontinental aerial bombing from American bases as to persuade America generally that strategic bombing is synonymous with air power.” Unlimited war relies on strategic air power; limited war is the arena of tactical air power. “[A]ir power consists of many elements, not exclusively nor primarily of the strategic bomber.”²⁷ But strategic bombing is the only *unique* element of air power. Everything else that military aircraft do—reconnaissance, transport, and tactical bombardment—duplicates a role that armies and navies had performed for centuries.²⁸

The USAF’s transition from an emphasis on strategic aerial warfare to tactical aerial warfare is reflected in the changing profiles of USAF leaders. It is not a coincidence that most of the early Chiefs of Staff of the US Air Force had started their careers in the strategic bombardment community. By the 1980s, however, most of the USAF’s leaders were being drawn from career fighter men. However, these officers were not fighter pilots in the glamorous flying ace mold, but pilots whose experience had been primarily in tactical—air-to-ground—aviation. Their power and influence (they have been referred to as the “fighter mafia”) grew as a result of their being afforded more combat duty than the bomber pilots in the limited wars of the Cold War.²⁹

Yet this conflation of air power and strategic bomber has influenced the presentation of the history of aerial warfare. Simply put, the dominant narrative of aerial

²⁷ Committee on Armed Services, A Report by the Committee on Armed Services House of Representatives on Unification and Strategy, unnumbered HR Report (1950), 19-20.

²⁸ Air-to-air combat—“counterair operations,” in today’s parlance—is unique in that it exists to intercept and fight other airplanes, particularly bombers. However, military and naval forces have always had units designed to interpose themselves between and enemy’s offensive forces and their objectives. On land, the cavalry often serves this role; at sea, the destroyer.

²⁹ Mike Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals: The Problem of Air Force Leadership (1945-1982)* (Maxwell AFB AL: Air UP, 1998). It is worth noting that in 2008 the first USAF Chief of Staff from neither the bomber nor the fighter commands was appointed. His career was spent in airlift.

warfare focuses on total wars—not a surprise, given that the doctrines of air power are products of the age of total wars, in which strategic bombing plays a key role. Yet the vast majority of wars involving aircraft, particularly those that have occurred since 1945, have been limited in one way or another. Most works on the history of aerial warfare fail to adequately address the political environments in which wars are fought, despite their effect on the conduct of war, especially in the air. They also do not account for the economies of the belligerents, particularly the nations against which air campaigns are directed, which also have a significant impact on the conduct of aerial warfare.

This work will remedy this deficiency. It challenges the common perception that aerial warfare after 1945 is of little consequence. The scholars, military professionals, and aviation enthusiasts who have produced the surveys of the history of aerial warfare discussed above may not have consciously decided to discount post-World War Two era. It seems more likely that they were simply more attracted to the romance and legend associated with air combat before 1945 than the limited wars of the past sixty years because the latter have been distinctly unglamorous. That is the sense that, collectively, these writers' works produce.³⁰

Nonetheless, the efforts of these and others have made this work possible. It builds upon a large body of scholarship in military, diplomatic, and technological history. However, no single work, published or unpublished, scholarly or popular, addresses the specific issues examined in this study.

³⁰ Modern air wars are generally typified by combat aircraft in tactical roles—that is, operations in support of surface forces (“mud moving” and “ground pounding,” as airmen describe them). Air transport is also significant. The World War Two-style “glamorous” roles that in many people’s minds define air power, air-to-air combat and strategic bombing, have been largely absent.

Two, however, come close. The first is Morton L. Halperin's "The Limiting Process in the Korean War," published in *The Political Science Quarterly* in 1963.³¹ However, while this work catalogues the various restrictions on weapons and targets made (by both sides) during the Korean War, it focuses on limitation as a function of the Cold War, and does not link limited war and air power. The other is William R. Hawkins' "Imposing Peace: Total vs. Limited Wars, and the Need to Put Boots on the Ground," published in 2011 in *Parameters*, the Army War College's journal.³² This work does associate limited warfare with tactical air power but is primarily prescriptive, discussing future operations rather than examining the origins and parameters of twentieth-century limited warfare.

The Korean War itself has been the subject of a number of book-length works, most written for the general public, seemingly belying its popular sobriquet, "the Forgotten War."³³ Most of these works focus upon the ground war, so they should be considered military histories, although many of them also discuss how the Korean War fits into the greater Cold War, and so also serve as diplomatic histories.

³¹ Morton L. Halperin, "The Limiting Process in the Korean War," *The Political Science Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (1963), 13-39.

³² William R. Hawkins' "Imposing Peace: Total vs. Limited Wars, and the Need to Put Boots on the Ground," *Parameters* 30, no. 2 (2011), 72-82.

³³ In the past, the term "forgotten war" has been used to describe the War of 1812, the Boer War, the Aleutians Campaign during World War Two, and several other conflicts and campaigns. However, in recent years the expression has been used primarily to refer to Korea. The first to make use of the phrase in this sense was popular historian Clay Blair, who used it as the title of his 1987 book about the Korean War. Since that time, at least thirty other authors have produced works about Korea with the phrase "forgotten war" in their titles.

The term has become so closely associated with the Korean Conflict that historians writing about the historiography of the war often declare that it is "forgotten no more," examples being David R. Mets' "The Not-So-Forgotten War: Fodder for Your Reading on the Air War in Korea a Half Century Later," published in *Air and Space Power Journal* 17, no. 4 (2003), 77-96; and Bonnie B.C. Oh's "Korean War, No Longer Forgotten," in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1(1998), 156-160.

In them, air and sea power are generally given their own chapters. These sections primarily address operational issues and make little attempt to place the Korean Conflict in the larger context of aviation or naval history.³⁴

Works about the history of military aviation, as noted above, tend to give the Korean (and later) wars short shrift, usually because they conflate air power and strategic bombing. Some, however, correctly identify the Korean Conflict as a transitional war, but for the wrong reasons. These works present the conflict only as “the first jet war,” focusing upon the impact of new technologies on air combat.³⁵ Jet aircraft could fly higher and go faster than propeller-driven airplanes, but airmen have always had to adjust to increases in aircraft performance. The fastest aircraft of World War One could reach approximately 125 mph (200 km/h); by the end of

³⁴ Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987); Brian Catchpole, *The Korean War* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2000); George Forty, *At War in Korea* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1982); Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea, the Untold Story of the War* (New York: Times Books, 1982); Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (Simon and Schuster, 1988); Michael Hickey, *The Korean War: The West Confronts Communism* (New York: Overlook Press, 1999); Korea Institute of Military History. *The Korean War*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Korea Institute of Military History. *The Korean War*, vol. 2 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Korea Institute of Military History. *The Korean War*, vol. 3 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); James I. Matray, ed., *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991); Harry J. Middleton, *The Compact History of the Korean War* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965); A.S. Orlov, *Taini Koreeskoj Voini Voeni Taini 20th Veka* (Moscow: Vechye, 2003); David Rees, ed., *The Korean War: History and Tactics* (London: Orbis, 1984); Stanley Sandler, ed., *The Korean War: an Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1995); James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of the Korean War* (New York, Morrow, 1988); William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1995); Harry G. Summers Jr., *Korean War Almanac* (New York: Facts on File, 1990); John Toland, *In Mortal Combat* (New York, Morrow, 1991); *Voina V Koree 1950-1953* (Sankt-Peterburg, 2000); *Voina V Koree 1950-1953: Vzgliad cherez 50 Let* (Moscow: n.p., 2001); Richard Whelan, *Drawing the Line: The Korean War 1950-1953* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990).

³⁵ Dennis E. Showalter, “The First Jet War,” *MHQ: the Quarterly Journal of Military History*, Spring 1996, 66; “Part VI: First Jet War—Korea,” in *Fighter Pilot*, ed. Stanley M. Ulanoff (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1962), 395; “Part Five: Korea: First Jet War,” in Edward H. Sims, *The Aces Talk* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), 241. Entering the terms “first jet war” and “Korean” on the popular internet search engine Google results in some 48,000 web pages that use the two together. “First jet war” plus “Korea” registers just under 35,000 hits, although some, no doubt, are duplicates of sites identified in the previous search. Asking for the expression “first jet war” while *excluding* “Korea” or “Korean” scores but 204 hits, yet most of these refer to the 1950-1953 conflict as well (search made 18 March 2010).

World War Two propeller-driven airplanes could reach 400 mph (640 km/h); the jets of the Korean War-era could fly at 600 mph (960 km/h).³⁶ Service ceiling also increased, but not so dramatically.³⁷ The introduction of the turbine engine, while hailed as a breakthrough at the time, did not significantly affect the way airplanes fought. Most of the aircraft (measuring both types and individual machines) that served in “the first jet war” were piston-engined machines that had made their combat debuts during World War Two.

Indeed, the United States lagged behind many nations in the development of jet propulsion. The jet engine was not well suited for bombardment aircraft, the backbone of the American air war machine through most of history. However, once American aircraft designers applied themselves to this problem, they quickly overcame it. This process is described in many works about the history of American military aviation.³⁸

³⁶ Supersonic flight (which varies with altitude but is generally around 750 mph/1200 km/h) became routine in the late 1950s; the jet fighters and reconnaissance aircraft of the 1960s could reach Mach 2 (1400 mph/2250 km/h). High speed has been de-emphasized since then. Most combat jets have a top speed just above Mach 1.

³⁷ World War One aircraft could reach about 20,000 feet but rarely flew so high for reasons of pilot comfort (oxygen supply and heat). World War Two-era aircraft could fly at 30,000 but usually remained well below that altitude. The earliest jet aircraft had a ceiling of some 40,000 feet and often fought that high as well.

³⁸ M. J. Armitage and R.A. Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age*, second ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Chris Bishop, ed., *The Aerospace Encyclopedia of Air Warfare*, vol. 1: 1911-1945 (London: Aerospace Publishing, 1997); Chris Bishop, ed., *The Aerospace Encyclopedia of Air Warfare*, vol. 2: 1945-present (London: Aerospace Publishing, 1997); Joe Christy, *American Air Power: The First Seventy-Five Years* (Blue Ridge Summit PA: Tab Books, 1982); Joe Christy, with contributions by Alexander T. Wells, *American Aviation: An Illustrated History* (Blue Ridge Summit PA: Tab Books, 1987); David Gates, *Sky Wars: A History of Military Aerospace Power* (London: Reaktion, 2003); Charles J. Gross, *American Military Aviation: The Indispensable Arm* (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 2002); Philip Jarrett, ed., *Aircraft of the Second World War: The Development of the Warplane 1939-1945* (London: Putnam, 1997); Philip Jarrett, ed., *The Modern War Machine Military Aviation since 1945* (London: Putnam, 2000); Philip Jarrett, ed., *Faster, Further, Higher: Leading-Edge Aviation Technology Since 1945* (London: Putnam, 2002); Tony Mason, *Air Power: A Centennial Appraisal* (London:

Professional military personnel, particularly USAF officers, have produced many works about the Korean War. During the conflict itself, the Air University (the USAF's war college) published a number of articles about various aspects of the war in its journal, *Air University Quarterly Review (AUQR)*. Many of these were compiled into a book published in 1957 for a popular readership.³⁹ The *AUQR* and its successor publications continue to publish articles about the Korean War ever since.⁴⁰ The USAF's historical division (which has changed names many times) has also produced many monographs on Korean War topics.⁴¹ The Air Force's official

Brassey's, 1994); Williamson Murray, *War in the Air 1914-1945* (New York: Cassell, 2002); Bernard C. Nalty, ed., *Winged Shield, Winged Sword: A History of the United States Air Force*, vol. 1 1907-1950 (Washington DC: Air Force History & Museums Program, 1994); Bernard C. Nalty, ed., *Winged Shield, Winged Sword: A History of the United States Air Force*, vol. 2: 1950-1997 (Washington DC: Air Force History & Museums Program, 1994); Alan Stephens, ed., *The War in the Air 1914-1994 The Proceedings of a Conference Held by the Royal Australian Air Force in Canberra* (Fairbairn, ACT: RAAF Air Power Studies Centre, 1994); John W.R. Taylor, *A History of Aerial Warfare* (London: Hamlyn, 1974); *The Encyclopedia of Air Warfare* (London: Salamander Books, 1977).

³⁹ James T. Stewart, ed., *Airpower: the Decisive Force in Korea* (Princeton NJ NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1957).

⁴⁰ Robert F. Futrell, "Tactical Employment of Strategic Air Power in Korea," *Airpower Journal* 2, no. 4 (1988), 29-41; Roger Kropf, "US Air Force in Korea: Problems that Hindered the Effectiveness of Air Power," *Airpower Journal* 4, no. 1 (1990), 30-46.

⁴¹ Concepts Division, *Guerilla Warfare and Airpower in Korea, 1950-1953* (Maxwell AFB AL: Aerospace Studies Institute, Air University, 1964); Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Case Studies in the Achievement of Air Superiority* (Washington DC: Center for Air Force History 1994); Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Case Studies in the Development of Close Air Support* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History 1990); Judy G. Endicott, Judy G. *The USAF in Korea: Campaigns, Units, and Stations, 1950-1953*. (Washington DC]: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2001); J. Farmer and M.J. Strumwasser. *The Evolution of the Airborne Forward Controller: An Analysis of Mosquito Operations in Korea* (Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, 1967); *FEAF Report on the Korean War*, vol. 1 (n.p., n.d.); *FEAF Report on the Korean War*, vol. 2 (n.p., n.d.); James A. Grahn and Thomas P. Himes, *Air Power in the Korean War*, MA Thesis, Air Force Command and General Staff College, 1998; R. Cargill Hall, ed., *Case Studies in Strategic Bombardment* (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1998); Richard P. Hallion, ed., *Silver Wings, Golden Valor: The USAF Remembers Korea* (Washington DC: Air Force History & Museums Program, 2006); Kenneth C. Kan, *The Air Force Reserve and the Korean War 1950-1953* (Robins AFB GA: Directorate of Historical Services, HQ AF Reserve Command, 2001); Richard H. Kohn and Joseph P. Harahan, eds., *Air Interdiction in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam: An Interview with Gen. Earle E. Partridge, Gen. Jacob E. Smart, and Gen. John W. Vogt, Jr.* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, 1986); Richard H. Kohn and Joseph P. Harahan, eds., *Air Superiority in World War II and Korea: An Interview with Gen. James Ferguson, Gen. Robert M. Lee, Gen. William Momyer, and Lt. Gen. Elwood P. Quesada*

history of the conflict, originally published commercially, appeared in 1961. The USAF itself released a revised edition in 1983, and again in 2000, the latter timed to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Korean Conflict.⁴²

A handful of scholarly works examine particular aspects of the air war in Korea. Most of these focus on operations and doctrine during the conflict (although one addresses the impact of a particular technology and another examines fighter pilot culture). None discusses the war's place in the overall history of air power, although a few attempt to establish context by identifying key events just before and after the war.⁴³ There are also a number of popular histories of the Korean air war.⁴⁴

(Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983); Richard H. Kohn and Joseph P. Harahan, eds., *Strategic Air Warfare: an Interview with Generals Curtis E. LeMay, Leon W. Johnson, David A. Burchinal, and Jack J. Catton* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History 1988); Eduard Mark, *Aerial Interdiction in Three Wars* (Washington DC: Center for Air Force History, 1994); Frank J. Merrill, *A Study of the Aerial Interdiction of Railways during the Korean Conflict* MA Thesis, Army Staff and General Command College, 1965; William W. Momyer, *Air Power in Three Wars (WWII, Korea, Vietnam)*. (Washington DC: USGPO, 1978); Jacob Neufeld and George M. Watson, Jr., *Coalition Air Warfare in the Korean War 1950-1953* (Washington DC: Air Force History & Museums Program, 2005); John Schlight, *Help From Above: Air Force Close Air Support of the Army 1946-1973* (Air Force History and Museums Program, 2003); George E. Stratemeyer, *The Three Wars of Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer: His Korean War Diary*, ed. by William T. Y'Blood (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999); Lori S. Tagg, *On the Front Line of R & D: Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in the Korean War 1950-1953* (Wright-Patterson AFB OH: Aeronautical Systems Center Air Force Material Command, 2001).

⁴² Robert F. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pierce, 1961); Robert F. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea, 50th Anniversary of the Korean War Edition* (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2000). The latter is a new imprint of the revised 1983 edition.

⁴³ Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea 1950-1953* (Manhattan: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Richard Hallion, *The Naval Air War in Korea* (Baltimore: Nautical and Aviation, 1986); Ben Hardy and Duane Hall, *Photographic Aerial Reconnaissance and Interpretation, Korea, 1950-1952: Yokota Air Base, Japan, Taegu and Kimpo Air Bases, Korea* (Manhattan KS: Sunflower University Press, 2004); Robert S. Sherwood, *Officers in Flight Suits: The Story of American Air Force Fighter Pilots in the Korean War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Kenneth P. Werrell, *Sabres over MiG Alley: The F-86 and the Battle for Air Supremacy in Korea* (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 2005), Xiaming Zhang, *Red Wings over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ John R. Bruning Jr, *Crimson Skies: The Air Battle for Korea* (Dulles VA: Brasseys, 1999); Jennie Ethell Chancey with William M. Fortschen, *Hot Shots: An Oral History of the Air Force Combat Pilots in the Korean War* (New York: William Morrow, 2000); Larry Davis, *Air War Over Korea: A*

One aspect of the air war in Korea that has been well attended to by scholars is President Truman's decision not to employ atomic weapons during the conflict. Most of the works on the topic, however, are identified as diplomatic rather than military or technological history. Yet at the time of the Korean War, the atomic bomb was deliverable only by aircraft, a constraint often overlooked in these works.⁴⁵

Truman's resolve not to employ nuclear weapons in Korea was but one of many choices made to keep the conflict limited. It is impossible to understand why the Korean Conflict became a limited war without a knowledge of the Cold War. A number of good works address this period in world history. Several are commercially available.⁴⁶ Some, however, are unpublished dissertations and theses.⁴⁷

Pictorial Record. (Carrollton TX: Squadron/Signal, 1982); Larry Davis, *MiG Alley: Air to Air Combat Over Korea*. (Carrollton TX: Squadron/Signal, 1978); Douglas C. Dillard, *Operation Aviairy: Airborne Special Operations-Korea, 1950-1953* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2003); Robert F. Dorr and Warren Thompson, *The Korean Air War* (Osceola WI: Motorbooks International, 1994); V. V.Gagin, *Vozdushnaya Voyna V Koree 1950-1953 g.g.* (Voronezh: Poligraf, 1997); Robert Jackson, *Air War Over Korea* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973); Jim Mesko, *Air War over Korea* (Carrollton TX: Squadron/Signal, 2000); Cezary Piotrowski and Piotr Taras, *Korea 1950-53 Kampanie Lotnicze 3* (Gdansk: AJ Press 1994); Igor Seidov, "Krasniye D'iavoli" v Nebe Korei: Sovetskaia Aviatsiia v Voine 1950-1953 gg: *Khronika Vozdushnykh Srazhenii* (Moscow: Yauza/Eksmo, 2007).

⁴⁵ Timothy J. Botti, *Ace in the Hole: Why the United States Did Not Use Nuclear Weapons in the Cold War, 1945 to 1965* (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1996); Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy during the Korean War," *International Security* 13 (Winter 1988-89), 50-91; Michael Finch, "The Korean War and the Atomic Bomb: The Role of Nuclear Weapons in a Limited War," *The Yonsei Journal of Graduate Studies* 1 (Fall 1991): 61-74; John Hilz, "Dirty War in Korea, 1950-1953: Atomic Warmakers Set Back by People's Drive for Peace." *Korea Focus* 4, no. 1 (1975): 22-34; Edward C. Keefer, "Truman and Eisenhower: Strategic Options for Atomic War and Diplomacy in Korea," in Lester H. Brune, ed., *The Korean War: Handbook of the Literature and Research* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1996); Callum MacDonald, "The Atomic Bomb and the Korean War, 1950-53," in Dick Richardson and Glyn Stone, eds. *Decisions and Diplomacy: Essays in Twentieth Century International History: In Memory of George Grun and Esmonde Robertson* (London: Routledge, 1995); Ralph E. Mitchell, "Atomic Air Power and American Foreign Policy: The Period of Nuclear Monopoly 1945-1949." PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1965; Mark A. Ryan, *Chinese Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons: China and the United States During the Korean War* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1989); Jack L. Snyder, *Atomic Diplomacy in the Korean War* (Washington DC: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, 1993); Appu K. Soman, *Double-Edged Sword: Nuclear Diplomacy in Unequal Conflicts: the United States and China, 1950-1958* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2000).

⁴⁶ Jeffrey G. Barlow, *From Hot War to Cold: The U.S. Navy and National Security Affairs, 1945-1955* (Palo Alto CA: Stanford UP, 2009); Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval*

Aviation 1945-1950 (London: Brassey's, 1998); Michael Edward Brown, *Flying Blind: The Politics of the U. S. Strategic Bomber Program* (Ithaca NY: Cornell UP, 1992); Steven C. Call, *Selling Air Power: Military Aviation and American Popular Culture after World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 2009); Paolo E. Coletta, *The United States Navy and Defense Unification, 1947-1953* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983); Edward W. Constant II, *The Origins of the Turbojet Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); George Arlington Daoust Jr., *The Role of Air Power in United States Foreign Policy in the Far East, 1945-1958* (Washington DC: Georgetown UP, 1967); Philip S. Meilinger, *Hoyt S. Vandenburg: the Life of a General* (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989); Walton S. Moody, *Building a Strategic Air Force* (Air Force History and Museums Program, 1996); Jacob Neufeld, George M. Watson Jr., and David Chenoweth, eds., *Technology and the Air Force: A Retrospective Assessment* (Air Force History and Museums Program, 1997); Sterling Michael Pavelec, *The Jet Race and the Second World War* (Westport CT: Praeger Security International, 2007); Herman S. Wolk, *Planning and Organizing the Postwar Air Force 1943-1947* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1984).

⁴⁷ Ronald F. Bartel, "Attitudes Toward limited War: An Analysis of Elite and Public Opinion during the Korean Conflict," PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1970; Joseph William Caddell, "Orphan of Unification: The Development of United States Air Force Tactical Air Power Doctrine, 1945-1950 (Korean War)," PhD diss., Duke University, 1984; Charles R. Christensen, "Airmen, Scientists and Engineers: An Examination of the Development and Uses of Technical Intelligence in the Air Force, 1917-1947," PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2000; Joseph Lloyd Croteau, "Billy Mitchell: Author of an Air Power Geo-Political Theory?," PhD diss., Chapman University, 1980; Melvin G. Deaile, "The SAC Mentality: The Origins of Organizational Culture in Strategic Air Command, 1946-1962," PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007; Raymond Richard Flugel, "United States Air Power Doctrine: A Study of the Influence of William Mitchell and Giulio Douhet at the Air Corps Tactical School, 1921-1935," PhD diss., The University of Oklahoma, 1965; Thomas J. Goetz, "The Development of United States Air Force First-Generation Jet Fighter Aircraft, 1941—1950," PhD diss., City University of New York, 2001; G. Scott Gorman, "Seeking Clocks in the Clouds: Nonlinearity and American Precision Air Power," PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 2006; Steven Warren Guerrier, "NSC-68 and the Truman Rearmament: 1950-1953," PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1988; Robert Smith Hopkins III, "United States Strategic Aerial Reconnaissance and the Cold War, 1945-1961," PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1998; David Robert Klubes, "Conventional Strategic Bombing and Compellence," PhD diss., University of Maryland College Park, 1996; Jeremy Ryan Linden, "Bigger, Better, Faster, More: Jet Fighter Development and Grand Strategy in the United States Air Force, 1947-1953," PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2004.; Jerome Vernon Martin, "Reforging the Sword: United States Air Force Tactical Air Forces, Air Power Doctrine, and National Security Policy, 1945-1956," PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1988; Michael Perry May, "United States Air Force Expeditionary Airpower Strategy, 1946—1964," PhD diss., Kansas State University, 2005; J. Britt McCarley, "General Nathan Farragut Twining: The Making of a Disciple of American Strategic Air Power, 1897-1953," vol. 1, PhD diss., Temple University, 1989; J. Britt McCarley, "General Nathan Farragut Twining: The Making of a Disciple of American Strategic Air Power, 1897-1953," vol. 2, PhD diss., Temple University, 1989; Donald John Mrozek, "Peace through Strength: Strategic Air Power and the Mobilization of the United States for the Pursuit of Foreign Policy, 1945-1955," PhD diss., Rutgers, 1972; Mark Andrew O'Neill, "The Other Side of the Yalu: Soviet Pilots in the Korean War, Phase One, 1 November 1950-12 April 1951," PhD diss., The Florida State University, 1996; Gary Joseph Shandroff, "The Evolution of Area Bombing in American Doctrine and Practice," PhD diss., New York University, 1972; Robert London Smith, "The Influence of USAF Chief of Staff General Hoyt S. Vandenberg on United States National Security Policy," PhD diss., The American University, 1965; Robert J. Sutherland, "The Economic and Political Consequences of Air Power," PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1950; Cory Thorn, "The Decisiveness of U.S. Air Power," PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 2007; Mark David Vital, "The Key West Agreement of 1948: A Milestone for Naval Aviation," PhD diss., Florida Atlantic University, 1999; Caroline Frieda Ziemke, "In the Shadow of the Giant: USAF Tactical Air Command in the Era of Strategic Bombing, 1945-1955," PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1989.

Collectively, the works described above hint at some of the issues examined in this study, but they do not address them directly. The cumulative effect resembles the assembly of a jigsaw puzzle of the United States. Once the pieces representing California, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Arizona are in place, the puzzle builder has also outlined Nevada. He knows that there is something there, but its interior details remain a mystery. Previous research has limned out the borders of an unknown area which this work is intended to map.

The United States was not prepared for the Korean War. For five years the Americans had expected a global atomic war against the Soviet Union. Instead they got a limited war in a small country few of them had ever heard of. Their only formally-recognized enemy had no industries, so their strategic bombers had no targets. Their unofficial foes, however, did have industries, but these were off limits because the Americans did not want the war to expand. As a result, they had to improvise. This work is an examination of the many ways that the Americans adapted to the conflict.

CHAPTER II
PROPHECY: THE FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN RELIANCE ON AIR POWER
BEFORE 1945

Although most of the world's industrial powers developed a theory of strategic bombing in the period between the two world wars, only a handful of nations possessed the unique combination of economic, geographic, and demographic factors necessary to create a true strategic air force. Of these, the United States was arguably the most successful in building a strategic air arm, as evidenced by the effectiveness of its bombing campaigns against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan during World War Two. The Americans were so pleased with the performance of their strategic air forces during the conflict that they elected to rely upon them as their primary instrument of national policy during the postwar era.

The United States' Reliance on Air Power after 1945

In the years following World War Two, it was a rare American who did not know that air power—which in the United States was virtually synonymous with strategic bombing—would dominate future wars. The country's most trusted authorities, from politicians and military officers to newspaper editors and academics, were consistently reminding them that the next war, like the last war, would be an air war. James Forrestal, who under President Harry S. Truman became the nation's first Secretary of Defense in 1947, proclaimed that "There is no disagreement among military

men that air power is now, and will be in the future, the decisive factor in war.”¹

Republican Thomas E. Dewey, Governor of New York and his party’s candidate for president in 1944 and 1948 (and thus under no obligation to agree with any Democrat such as Forrestal), told audiences that “[a]ir power has become our first line of defense.”² General of the Air Force Henry H. “Hap” Arnold’s autobiography, published shortly before his death in 1950, reminded readers that

The same general principles of bombing [that were used in World War Two] will apply in the Third World War. We may use different kinds of planes—jets instead of the orthodox, gasoline-engined type; we may use atomic bombs instead of normal, high-explosive type bombs, but the destruction carried out by bombing will have the same general effect. It may come much more quickly, and may be more decisive when it does come. Fundamentally, it will be the same.³

In 1947, the current “Uncle Dudley” of the *Boston Globe* wrote that “[f]ew Americans would dispute the theory that ultimate victory in any future war can only be won by dominating in the air,” echoing an earlier observation in *The New York Times* that the primacy of air power was “admitted on all sides.”⁴ Bernard Brodie, a professor at Yale University, wrote that “[T]here can no longer be any dispute about the decisiveness of

¹ James Forrestal, “The National Military Establishment Today,” speech before the American Newspaper Publishers Association, 22 April 1948, in Paul Kesaris, ed., *Public Statements by the Secretaries of Defense*, part 1, *The Truman Administration (1947-1953)* (Washington DC: University Publications of America, 1983), reel 2, microfilm. Collection referred to hereafter as “*Public Statements of Secretaries of Defense*.”

² Thomas O’Neill, “Dewey urges strong force to keep peace,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 15 September 1948, 1.

³ H. H. Arnold. *Global Mission* (New York: Harper, 1949), 580.

⁴ “Uncle Dudley,” “First Line,” *The Boston Globe* 16 July 1947, 14; *The New York Times*, 10 May 1947, 12.

strategic bombing.”⁵ Princeton’s Edward Earle Mead observed that “Air power . . . poses some of the most pressing and inescapable problems of modern statecraft.”⁶

American popular culture reflected the public’s awareness of and fascination with air power and strategic bombing. A cartoon in *The New Yorker* published shortly after the end of World War Two in 1945 portrays a Model T Ford gassing up at a filling station with a sign announcing that it purveys “[t]he same superoctane gas used by our B-29s.”⁷ Its humor derives from the contrast of the technologies of past and future. The Model T had first appeared in 1908; the Boeing B-29 Superfortress began operations in 1944. The most advanced airplane the US Army Air Forces employed in combat during World War Two, the B-29 is best known as the aircraft that dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. “No other war weapon approache[d] the Boeing Superfortress in its appeal to the American people . . . or in the terror with which the enemy view[ed] it.”⁸ What American driving an old beat-up car—the production of new automobiles was suspended between 1943 and 1945 to free factories for the war effort—would not want to partake, however vicariously, of some of the essence of the airplane that ushered in the atomic age?

The publishing and motion picture industries also served the American appetite for works, both fiction and non-fiction, about air power and strategic bombardment, and in so doing both reflected and shaped American attitudes towards the subject. *Victory*

⁵ Bernard Brodie, “Implications for Military Policy,” in Bernard Brodie, ed., *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power ad World Order* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1946), 71.

⁶ Edward Earle Mead, “The Influence of Air Power upon History” *Yale Review*, June 1946, 578.

⁷ Alan Dunn, cartoon, *The New Yorker*, 10 November 1945, 26.

⁸ James J. Strebige, “After One Year in the Air: Peerless B-29 Pride of American People,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 10 June 1945, 3A.

through Air Power, by Alexander de Seversky, a former military pilot turned aircraft manufacturer, entered the *New York Times* best seller list in May 1942, shortly after the United States entered World War Two, where it remained until the following December, including a four-week stay at number one in the late summer. The work, a non-fiction appeal for “the emancipation of air power”—the creation of an independent air force to conduct strategic bombardment—became a featured selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club and so affected Walt Disney that his studio produced a mixed animation-and-live-action film based on it, narrated by Seversky himself, in 1943.⁹ The movie did not do as well as the book and is remembered today primarily as a wartime curiosity.

A later motion picture also based on a book about strategic bombardment, 1949’s *12 O’Clock High*, starring Gregory Peck, Hugh Merrill, and Millard Mitchell, fared better at the box office and is now considered a classic of American cinema. Adapted from a novel written by two World War Two air force veterans (who also contributed to the script of the movie adaptation), it reminded audiences that the American confidence in the efficacy of air power in the form of strategic bombardment was a relatively new phenomenon. The film is set during the early days of the war, when the concept of aerial bombing was still a novel idea, untested, poorly understood, and often criticized. In an early scene, a high-ranking USAAF general (Mitchell), uses the language of the prewar air power advocates to confide to one of his subordinate generals (Peck):

There’s a hole in the dike, Frank, and I’m scared stiff. . . . There’s only one hope of shortening this war: daylight precision bombing. If we fold, daylight bombing is done for. I don’t know—maybe it means the whole

⁹ Alexander de Seversky, *Victory through Air Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942), 8, 254-291.

show. We can even lose the war if we don't knock out German industry.¹⁰

The corresponding scene in the novel, published a year before the movie's release, is more subdued but also refers to a common theme of the prewar air power proponents, who exaggerated the potential of strategic bombing. In it the commanding general notes that "our Allies are hanging on by a hair . . . and counting on us to live up to our big promises. We're the only force in U.S. uniforms capable of hitting the number-one enemy for a long time."¹¹

The American assumption that warfare in the future would be fought largely in the air was readily apparent to foreign observers, who had reservations about the United States' reliance on strategic bombing. Shortly after the Soviets successfully tested their first atomic bomb in 1949, thus ending the American monopoly on such weapons, the British journalist Nora Beloff wrote, "Until recently most Americans supposed that atomic bombs carried by long-range bombers deep into Russian territory would win the next war."¹² Richard Crossman, a British politician, counseled Western nations not to rely too heavily on the American military, particularly its air power. He observed that the communists had defeated the Nationalists in the recent Chinese Civil War despite the substantial aid, primarily in the form of aircraft, that the latter had received from the

¹⁰ *12 O'Clock High*; Harry King director; Darryl F. Zanuck, producer; Twentieth Century Fox, 1949. On the 2007 "Special Edition" DVD release, distributed by Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, the scene quoted is in chapter seven, "scared stiff."

¹¹ Beirne Lay, Jr., and Sy Bartlett, *Twelve O'Clock High!* (New York: Ballantine, 1965), 64. Note that the titles of the novel and the movie differ subtly.

¹² Nora Beloff, "U. S. and Strategy of 'World War Three: Service Chiefs in Public Row,'" *The Scotsman*, 14 October 1949, 5.

United States. “This should be a warning to all those who rely on American air power and atom bombs to protect Europe against Communism.”¹³

Americans saw the airplane as the greatest threat to the security of their nation, yet also perceived it as its savior. In 1946, the Gallup Poll surveyed Americans to identify the military arm a foreign country could use to do the most harm to the United States. Even before the USSR emerged as the most likely future foe of the United States, eighty-six percent of those polled identified an air force as the greatest threat.¹⁴ Three years later, Gallup asked the complementary question, “If the United States should get into another World War, which branch of the Armed Forces do you think would play the most important part in winning the war—the Air Force, the Navy, or the Army?” More than three quarters of the respondents answered the Air Force.¹⁵

The United States was undeniably an “air minded” nation by the end of World War Two. However, it took time to achieve this level of awareness. The earliest American advocates of air power had a difficult time convincing the public, the government, and the military of the potential value of aerial warfare.

¹³ “Do Not Depend on U.S. Air Power: Western Powers Warned,” *The Times of India*, 29 November 1948, 1.

¹⁴ Gallup Poll (AIPO), February 1946; iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html, accessed 26 March 2011.

¹⁵ Gallup Poll (AIPO), July 1949; iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html, accessed 26 March 2011. This website provides four separate sets of data for this particular question. In each the answer in favor of the Air Force is overwhelming; the lowest is 71%, the highest is 84%.

The Development of American Strategic Air Power

The most famous of these was General William Mitchell. Most Americans over the age of thirty in the late 1940s likely would have remembered the “Billy Mitchell Affair,” the general’s 1925 court martial. The trial led to the first, but not the last, major national debate about the role of air power in American defense.

Mitchell was one of the earliest American military officers to express an interest in aeronautics and took flying lessons at his own expense in 1916. During World War One, he commanded the US Army’s air forces in France. In 1921 he was appointed Assistant Chief of the Air Service. That same year he organized a demonstration in which he sank two obsolescent battleships with bombs dropped from airplanes. The US Navy contested the results, saying that Mitchell had violated the rules of the exercise, beginning a clash between Army aviation and the surface fleet communities that would continue until well after World War Two.

In 1924 Mitchell published *Winged Defense*, subtitled *The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power—Economic and Military*, in which he argued that the United States needed an independent air service to conduct strategic bombing and to defend the United States from seaborne invasion.¹⁶ That same year, Mitchell was reduced to colonel—his wartime promotion being a brevet (temporary)—and posted to a ground unit. The one-time general did not take his exile well, and continued to agitate for his vision of American air power. He made several intemperate public statements in

¹⁶ William Mitchell, *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power--Economic and Military* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), xvi, 5, 17-19, 31, 110, 123, 133-134.

which he accused both the Army and Navy Departments of “incompetency, criminal negligence, and [an] almost treasonable administration of the national defense.”¹⁷ His court-martial, on charges of conduct detrimental to the good order of the Army, followed.

Despite efforts by the prosecution to quash testimony supporting Mitchell, the trial became a forum for the examination of national defense policy. “[T]he situation is one in which the War and Navy Departments are, in a sense, as much on trial as Colonel Mitchell,” opined one newspaper editorial.¹⁸ The publicity surrounding the affair boosted sales of *Winged Defense* and led to an increasing public awareness of air power’s potential. Mitchell claimed to have received thousands of letters and telegrams of support during the ordeal.¹⁹ It did not, however, result in an independent air service, one reason why air power advocate Alexander de Seversky felt compelled to repeat Mitchell’s arguments in *Victory through Air Power* (which he dedicated to Mitchell’s memory) in 1942. When found guilty, Mitchell, rather than accept his punishment, resigned his commission and retired. His followers, of whom there were many, took to describing him as a “martyr” to the cause of air power.²⁰

¹⁷ “Mitchell Reopens Controversy,” *The New York Times*, 6 September 1925, 6; “Suppression is Impossible” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 7 September 1925, 6.

¹⁸ “Suppression is Impossible,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 7 December, 6.

¹⁹ “Thousands Will Join Fight, says Mitchell: Comments on Messages of Approval Pouring into his Quarters: May write More Books,” *The Washington Post*, 8 September 1925, 2.

²⁰ Prior to his court martial, he had been a “prophet” of air power. The “martyr” label attached to him quickly after his conviction. He is also the “patron saint” of American air power on occasion. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, which Mitchell had predicted with some accuracy, Mitchell’s status as prophet was restored. The 1955 film *Court Martial of Billy Mitchell*, with Gary Cooper in the title role, capitalizes not only on Mitchell’s air power theories, but his prediction of supersonic aircraft and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. *The Court Martial of Billy Mitchell*; Otto Preminger director; Milton Sperling, producer; Warner Brothers, 1955.

There were other air power advocates active before World War Two, the most notable of whom was Giulio Douhet, an artillery and engineering officer in the Italian army, who began publishing his thoughts about aerial warfare before World War One.²¹ However, he is best known for his 1921 book, *Il Dominio Dell’Aria (The Command of the Air)*. Revised and enlarged versions appeared in 1928, 1929, and 1930, the last posthumously. European military organizations accepted Douhet’s ideas fairly quickly. According to one French general in 1933, “the Douhet doctrine . . . ha[s] been generally accepted by military experts since 1927. . . .”²² However, Douhet’s work took some time to become well known in the United States. “Almost unheard of in America at the time of his death” in 1930, Douhet was not “discovered” by American military writers until just before World War Two, when outrage over the “terror” bombings of the Spanish Civil War and the China Incident sparked an interest in the philosophy behind them, the “Douhet doctrine” or “Douhet theory.”²³ By 1942 his name was familiar enough that *The New York Times* could publish a current events quiz asking readers to

²¹ Frank Joseph Cappelluti, “The Life and Thought of Giulio Douhet,” Rutgers University, PhD diss., 1967, chapter 2.

²² Henry Harris, “A General’s Idea for Keeping the Peace,” *The Boston Globe*, 20 February 1933, 12.

²³ Ansel E. Talbert, “Experts Weigh ‘War in the Air,’” *The Washington Post*, 10 September 1939, B4; Boake Carter, “Air War Unproved: Holding on Grimly: Difference in Morale,” *The Boston Globe*, 20 June 1938, 15; “Face the Issue,” *The Washington Post*, 25 September 1938, B8; “Unprofitable Terrorism,” *The Washington Post*, 15 February 1938, X8; Hanson W. Baldwin, “To Meet the Menace from the Skies,” *The New York Times*, 8 January 1938, 103; “A Ghost Walks,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 25 April 1938, B; “Merchant Ships Facing Menace from Bombs: Dozen Sunk by Airplanes in Spanish War,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 9 October 1939, 2; Office of the Chief of Naval Operations: Naval Intelligence, “Notes on the Present Conflict in China,” *Information Bulletin*, March 1939, 62-63.

identify him from a clue describing him as “a former chief of the Italian air force who once said that mass terror raids would crumple a nation in two days.”²⁴

The American military establishment had known of Douhet’s work since the early 1930s, the earliest English translations of his books and articles appearing in 1933 (although an authorized English-language edition of *Command of the Air* did not appear until 1942).²⁵ By that time, however, US Army Air Service personnel had developed their own theories of air power, influenced less by Douhet than by Mitchell. “Douhet’s theory came out in 1933, and was studied by airmen all over the world,” wrote “Hap” Arnold in his autobiography. “It came very close to conforming to the theory we had worked out from our bombing and our operations on maneuvers.” Later in his book, however, Arnold seems almost to concede that Douhet exerted an influence on American ideas. Referring to the American interwar policy of isolationism, he added, “As regards strategic bombardment, the doctrines [we developed] were still Douhet’s ideas modified by our own thinking in regard to pure defense. . . . A different attitude from Douhet’s toward bomber escort and a very different view of precision bombing resulted.”²⁶

²⁴ “Who’s Who? Twenty News Questions. What’s What?,” *The New York Times*, 14 June 1942, E2.

²⁵ James L. Cate, “Development of United States Air Doctrine, 1917-41,” in *The Impact of Air Power: National Security*, ed. Eugene M. Emme, (Princeton NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1959), 189; Lee Kennett, *A History of Strategic Bombing*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1982), 56; Robert W. Kane, “Recent Developments in Air Warfare including the Atom Bomb and Missiles,” unpublished monograph, Command and General Staff College, Ft Leavenworth KS, 31 May 1949, 1; available online at the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) Digital Library at <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/utills/getfile/collection/p124201coll2/id/86/filename/87.PDF>, accessed 15 October 2012; C. A. Willoughby, “The Doctrines of General Douhet: A Controversy,” *Quarterly Review of Military Literature*, June 1933, 18-23; Robert T. Finney, *History of the Air Corps Tactical School 1920-1940* (Washington DC: Center for Air Force History, 1992), 57.

²⁶ Arnold. *Global Mission*. 131-132, 149.

Of course, Mitchell and Douhet were not the only ones thinking about the military applications of the airplane during the period between World Wars One and Two. The British in particular were able to develop their own ideas about air power and strategic bombing independently of Mitchell and Douhet. Yet Mitchell and Douhet are easily the best remembered today among the interwar air power advocates, in large part because they articulated their thoughts so well and shared them with both the military community and the public at large (British air power theorists tended to keep their thoughts within the military establishment). Their air power theories were instrumental in defining the role of air power in war.

Both Mitchell and Douhet were veterans of World War One and had only their experiences in that conflict upon which to base their theories. The First World War was one of the earliest total wars, a conflict in which the belligerents mobilized their entire populations and their entire economies to their war efforts. Based on that understanding, Douhet predicted that “The wars of the future will once more involve all nations and all their resources, with no exceptions.”²⁷

Total Warfare, Economics, and Technology

Total wars are wars of technology, fought by highly industrialized powers relying on machines as well as men, on the home front as well as the battle front. Several new war engines, including the submarine, tank, and airplane, made their combat debuts

²⁷ Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, Dino Ferrari, trans. (New York: Coward-McCann, 1942), 175.

during World War One. Of these, the airplane was the only truly novel weapon.²⁸ The tank and the submarine were simply new developments in the traditional *milieux* of land and naval warfare.

The airplane was a relatively new creation when World War One began, invented but eleven years before the outbreak of hostilities. “The European war was only the kindergarten of aviation,” Mitchell would recall.²⁹ At the beginning of the war, none of the belligerent powers fully appreciated the potential military applications of aircraft. As the war progressed, however, they discovered more and more uses for aircraft. By the time of the armistice, airplanes operated in a multitude of roles, including tactical and strategic bombing, ground attack, dogfighting, and reconnaissance. Yet the evolution of aerial strategy and tactics during World War One was a rather haphazard affair, a matter of opportunity and trial-and-error rather than planning. No coherent all-encompassing doctrine for the employment of air power had appeared either before or during the war. It remained for Mitchell and Douhet to devise such doctrines; synthesizing their ideas from observations made during the 1914-1918 conflict.

Despite the differences in their authors’ backgrounds, *Winged Defense and The Command of the Air* were remarkably similar works. Both shared as a central thesis the ability of air power to transform warfare. Douhet and Mitchell recognized that the airplane’s unique abilities gave it the potential to become the single most valuable weapon in any nation’s arsenal. No longer would armies and navies dominate military

²⁸ The airplane was also the only one of the three to have civilian applications. As Winston Churchill observed in 1949, “The submarine, to do it justice, has never made any claim to be a blessing or even a convenience.” Winston Churchill, speech given 31 March 1949, printed as “United We Stand Secure: War Not Inevitable,” *Vital Speeches*, 1 April 1949, 381.

²⁹ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 29.

arms. “An aerial bombardment . . . will certainly have more influence on the realization of victory than a battle of the kind fought during the last war [World War One] without appreciable results,” wrote Douhet.³⁰ Air forces could reach any point on earth, unimpeded by considerations of terrain. “The frontiers in the old sense—the coastlines or borders—are no longer applicable,” Mitchell claimed.³¹ Able to bypass hostile surface forces by flying over them, aircraft could strike directly at the vital centers of the enemy’s heartland. Any country “subjected to incessant aerial attacks . . . whatever its surface forces may be able to do, must arrive at the conviction that . . . all hope is dead. This conviction spells defeat.”³² Wars in the future would be decided in the air, Mitchell concluded. “The influence of air power on the ability of one nation to impose its will on another in an armed contest will be decisive.”³³

Not only did Mitchell and Douhet agree that air power would be the decisive factor in future conflicts, they also held similar ideas regarding the application of military air power. Both men devoted substantial portions of their works to descriptions of a model air campaign. These models address the basic methods for employing air power to strike at a hostile nation. Although they have been modified somewhat (primarily as a result of practical experience gained in World War Two and later conflicts), the basic methods remain recognizable in the conduct of military air campaigns to this day.

³⁰ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 140.

³¹ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, xiv.

³² Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 140.

³³ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 214.

According to both Douhet and Mitchell, the elimination of the opposing air arm is the first mission to be undertaken in any air campaign. This task is important for two reasons. Deprived of his air force, the enemy can no longer threaten its foe's own land, sea, or air forces; and its own air arm can range at will over the enemy's territory, attacking whatever targets present themselves. Mitchell noted that "once an air force has been destroyed it is almost impossible to build it up after hostilities commence, because the places capable of building aircraft will be bombed. . . ." ³⁴ Douhet observed that "after we have destroyed the enemy [air force], we would be free to choose targets at our own convenience, because our country would be safe from attacks." ³⁵ The essence of aerial warfare, then, is aerial superiority, the control of the air. Both Mitchell and Douhet understood the importance of establishing air superiority, mentioning it often in their writings. The concept of air supremacy was, of course, the central thesis of Douhet's work, hence its title.

How does a warring nation go about defeating an enemy air arm and obtaining air supremacy? Mitchell's answer was "to whip the enemy's air force in aerial battles [by] menacing his airplanes on the ground, in the hangars, on the airdromes and in the factories. . . ." ³⁶ The enemy would have no choice but to take to the air and defend those targets. However, Douhet cautioned that "destroying an enemy's airplanes by seeking them out in the air is, while not entirely useless, the least effective method." It would be easier, he wrote, to "to destroy his airports, supply bases, and centers of

³⁴ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 214.

³⁵ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 201.

³⁶ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 199.

production. In the air his planes may escape; but like the birds whose nests and eggs have been destroyed, those planes which were still out would have no bases on which to alight. . . . ”³⁷

Once an air force enjoys control of the air, it may then perform its other missions. It can fly over the enemy’s armies and territories, photographing and attacking any targets that present themselves. Of course, reconnaissance and bombardment are traditional military functions. As noted in the introduction, most new technologies simply provide new ways to perform existing tasks. A handful, however, especially the airplane, provide to mankind completely novel abilities.

Yet when the world’s military organizations began acquiring airplanes in the early 1900s, their initial instinct was to use them to solve their existing problems (or to attempt to do so, at least, given the limitations of the technology in its early stages). The airplane’s first task was reconnaissance, a role traditionally associated with the cavalry. Soon thereafter, military theorists realized that the airplane could also serve to supplement or complement artillery. Like a cannon shell, an aircraft could pass over obstacles to reach enemy troops directly. It did not take long for military thinkers to realize that the airplane could fly well beyond the battlefield and attack the road and rail network that led to the front, or even the supply depots and magazines at the ends of those transportation routes. As the range of aircraft increased, an increasingly wider

³⁷ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 34.

variety of potential targets came within reach, including the very factories that produced war materiel. Thus did the concept of strategic bombing develop.³⁸

This novel application of the airplane—a role that only it can perform—that that so excited the early aviators, including Douhet and Mitchell.³⁹ Strategic bombing is the cornerstone of the air power theories of both men. They recognized that modern wars are economic as well as military contests and understood that strategic bombing provides a new and unique opportunity to strike directly at the economic strength of a hostile nation. “An attack from an air force using explosive bombs and gas may cause the complete evacuation of and cessation of industry. . . .”⁴⁰ No longer would nations decide wars on the battlefield. “Once one had to be content with destroying a battery with shells,” Douhet wrote. “Today it is possible to destroy the factory where the guns for the battery are being built.”⁴¹ All facilities that contribute to the enemy’s war effort, including “manufacturing and food centers, railways, bridges, canals and harbors,” are

³⁸ It might be argued that the concept of aerial bombardment predated the invention of the airplane. A large number of the “Scientific Romances”—works that would today be categorized as science fiction stories—of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century used the theme of aerial warfare. Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Albert Robidas were among the many writers to speculate about the impact flight would have upon human society, politics, commerce, and the arts. However, most professional military personnel seemed to have disregarded these speculative fictions, preferring to wait until the airplane was a practical reality before devoting time and energy to determining how it might be employed in war.

³⁹ A new technology must do either one of two things: it must present a new way of performing an already existing task, or it must make possible an altogether new task. The former is far more common—despite its fancy modernized appearance, a cell phone is a way of communicating the human voice over distance, as was the telephone, the radio, and the loudhailer. Truly novel technologies are rare. At first glance, the airplane appears to be one such. Human beings are not naturally gifted with the ability to fly. Of course, the balloon was invented 120 years before the airplane, but it was not controllable. Nonetheless, consider most of the applications of the airplane. They are not predicated upon going up but on going from here to there—and thus it is simply another form of transportation, like a wagon or a raft. Only a handful of fliers identify their destination as simply “up”—mostly recreational pilots and scientists doing atmospheric and astronomical research. Most airplane flights are deliveries of bombs, passengers, cargo, or cameras from one spot on the surface of the earth to another.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 5-6.

⁴¹ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 188.

appropriate targets for strategic bombing, because their destruction impairs the enemy's ability to wage war.⁴² It is easier to cripple an army by cutting off its supplies at their source than it is to defeat that army in the field. Navies are similarly vulnerable. "In terms of military results, it is much more important to destroy a railroad station, . . . a war plant, or any other behind-the-lines objective, than to strafe or bomb a trench."⁴³

Mitchell and Douhet both also believed that strategic bombing was an effective psychological weapon. The British, French, Italians, and the Germans all attempted strategic bombing raids during World War One.⁴⁴ Most were on a small scale, with little if any system in their program of targeting. Yet they indicated that noncombatants in communities that had been bombed grew fearful and anxious far out of proportion to the material damage inflicted. Recognizing that modern warfare is as much a struggle of national wills as it is of ability, Mitchell and Douhet argued that strategic bombing could demoralize the civilian population of a hostile nation and so hasten its capitulation. By combining physical destruction with psychological pressure, "bombing units spread terror and havoc, . . . and br[oke] down the moral and physical resistance of [the enemy] people." No modern industrial nation could withstand attacks against both its military economy and the morale of its people, Douhet believed, leading him to write, "[O]ffensive actions can . . . bomb the interior of the enemy's country so devastatingly that the physical and moral resistance of the people would also collapse." Such attacks

⁴² Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, xvi.

⁴³ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 126.

⁴⁴ These attacks employed both airplanes and airships. It was during these campaigns that the superiority of the airplane vis-à-vis the airship was discovered. After World War One, military airships were relegated to a handful of minor roles, generally in areas where they would not encounter opposition. The competition between the two technologies has not been examined in depth and would make an excellent subject for a historian of technology to examine further.

could by themselves compel surrender. “The time would soon come when, to put an end to horror and suffering, the people themselves, driven by the instinct of self-preservation, would rise up and demand an end to the war—this before their army and navy had time to mobilize at all!”⁴⁵ Mitchell took this idea to its logical conclusion: “[I]n the future the mere threat of bombing a town . . . will cause it to be evacuated, and all work in munitions and supply factories to be stopped.”⁴⁶ Unable to maintain its war effort, the nation so affected must capitulate.

The potential of air power to win a war excited military aviators. By combining physical destruction with psychological pressure, strategic bombing promised a quick and relatively “clean” way to end a conflict—a compelling idea, given the seemingly endless and ultimately futile trench fighting on the western front during World War One. By the 1930s, most Western nations had invested in at least a small bomber force.

Yet Douhet’s and Mitchell’s model air campaigns were broad prescriptions. They did not identify, except in the most general terms, the types of aircraft needed for such operations, the classes and sizes of bombs, the best targets for maximum effect, the optimum altitudes for evading ground fire without losing bombing accuracy, and a wide variety of other practical matters. Douhet acknowledged that

no hard and fast rules can be laid down on this aspect of aerial warfare. It is impossible even to outline general standards, because the choice of enemy targets will depend upon a number of circumstances, material, moral, and psychological. . . . It is just here, in grasping these imponderables, in choosing enemy targets, that future commanders of Independent Air Forces will show their ability.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 25, 35, 58.

⁴⁶ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 6.

⁴⁷ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 59-60.

Each nation came up with combinations that best suited its national character, catalogue of potential enemies, and budgets. The rearmament programs in the 1930s, as war clouds darkened the horizons, reflect a wide variety of cultural assumptions and biases regarding technology, politics, economics, and geography.

Air Power and National Character

Mitchell recognized that “[n]ot every nation is capable of developing an efficient air force. To create one, two things are necessary.”⁴⁸ The first is morale and patriotism. The second is industry and raw materials. At one extreme is China, at the other, the United States. Although Mitchell did not specifically mention them, the reader may assume that the industrialized nations of Europe are nearer the one than the other.

Even though the United States and Europe share a cultural heritage, and both experienced the Industrial Revolution, the two main regions of the West differed widely in their attitude towards technology. “Europeans seemed to grasp almost desperately at the airplane, knowing its terrible role but hoping it might prevent war. Americans seized on it eagerly or ignored it complacently, inspired by a confidence about man’s ability to control his creations.”⁴⁹ The Rothbarth-Habukkak Thesis about the relationships between land and labor in the United States and Europe suggests that the typical American welcomes technology as a helpmeet while his European counterpart distrusts

⁴⁸ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 24-25. Mitchell seems to be very consciously emulating the seminal naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan, who identified six features necessary for a nation to be considered a sea power, in these passages. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783* (New York: Sagamore, 1957 [1890]), 25-77.

⁴⁹ Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987), 43.

it as an economic competitor.⁵⁰ As a result, the American attitude toward bombing deviated significantly from that of Europeans. The airplane “is a striking force undreamed of a few years ago and it is, fortunately for this country, the product of an industrial system peculiarly adapted to our economy and our temperament,” Robert A. Lovett, Assistant Secretary of War for Air, testified before the Senate in 1945.⁵¹

Of course, geography is also a factor. A nation’s ability to mount an air campaign is less important than the possibility of its enemy mounting one. “From an aeronautical standpoint, there are three different classes of countries,” Mitchell observed. Island nations are “subject to air attack from the coast of a continent,” and depend on resources from other places. Examples include the United Kingdom and Japan. The second type would be those that have “a land frontier directly facing and joining its opponent and partially dependent on food and supplies from outside.” These include most European powers. The third was the United States: a nation “which is entirely self-sustaining but is out of the ordinary aircraft range.”⁵² Two great oceanic moats protect the USA. Most Americans thought in terms of defending themselves, not attacking, and

⁵⁰ This concept holds that Americans tend to seek technological solutions to their difficulties, a legacy of their colonial origins. The ancestors of most Americans came from Europe, where land was dear and labor plentiful. In the New World, however, the opposite obtained. The shortage of labor put a premium on the development of machines to enable a single person to do the work of many.

The name derives from the first two major writers (both economists) to describe it. However, the earlier of the two hints that the idea was an already-existing concept. Erwin Rothbarth, “Causes of the Superior Efficiency of U.S.A. Industry as compared with British Industry,” *The Economic Journal* 56, no. 223 (1946), 383-390; H. J. Habakkuk, *American and British Technology in the Nineteenth Century: The Search for Labour-Saving Devices* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1962).

This concept has been challenged by economists but is widely accepted by American historians, albeit not by name. For an example of the latter, see Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *A Social History of American Technology* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 48-49,

⁵¹ Robert A. Lovett, testimony, *Proposal to Establish a Single Department of Armed Forces: Hearings on HR 465, before the Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy, House of Representatives, 78th Congress, 1944.*

⁵² Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 10-11.

saw the airplanes as a defensive instrument. They could afford to be isolationists, having no nearby enemies. Neither distance nor size protected European nations. All about at least one other state—usually a potential enemy—and even in the 1930s airplanes could fly across any in a few hours. Europeans saw the airplane as something to fear.

Contributing to their apprehension was their experience. Many European cities had suffered bombing attacks during World War One. Although the physical damage caused by these raids was minimal, the attacks had a lasting effect on the psychology and memory of Europeans. Americans had no such associations.

Six words sum up European apprehensions regarding air attack: “The bomber will always get through.”⁵³ This quotation, from a 1932 speech by Sir Stanley Baldwin, former and future Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, has taken on a life of its own. Numerous books and articles about aerial warfare written in the last eight decades cite it (and in recent years it has been applied to discussions of terrorist suicide bombers). It is worth examining in context, however. Baldwin was referring to the technological difficulties of detection and interception, not some inherent virtue of bombardment aircraft.

I think it is well also for the man in the street to realize that there is no power on earth that can protect him from being bombed, whatever people may tell him. The bomber will always get through and it is very easy to understand if you realize the area of space. . . . Imagine 100 cubic miles covered with cloud and fog, and you can calculate how many aeroplanes you would have to throw into that to have much chance of catching odd aeroplanes as they fly through it. It cannot be done. . . . The only defence is in offence, which means that you have got to kill women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves. . . .

⁵³ “Mr Baldwin on Aerial Warfare: A Fear for the Future,” *The Times* [London], 11 November 1932, 8.

The knowledge of this is probably more widespread on the continent than in these islands.⁵⁴

Radar was yet to be invented. The only way to detect an incoming bomber force at the time was by eye or ear (although devices such as acoustic mirrors, telescopes, binoculars, and the “war tuba”—a sound collector—augmented human ability). The typical bomber of the era could travel from the frontier to the capital of most European nations in less than twenty minutes. The interceptors of the time required as much if not more time to climb to the altitudes at which bombers were expected to operate.⁵⁵ The alternative was to mount standing air patrols, an expensive proposition requiring aircraft, crews, and fuel. Even if they could be afforded—and no nation made the attempt—the sky is a very big place, and airplanes are very small.

And so, with varying degrees of hope and fear, the industrialized powers equipped themselves for an air war . . . or at least tried to.

Necessary Conditions for Strategic Bombing Campaigns

All of the industrialized powers developed bombers, and used them with varying degrees of effectiveness during World War Two. Most air forces employed their bombers in tactical roles. Only three of them, however—the United States, the United

⁵⁴ Ibid. For commentary, see “The Bomber will always get through,” *Airminded: Airpower and British Society, 1908-1941* (mostly) weblog, posted 10 November 2007, <http://airminded.org/?s=bomberalwaysgetthroughbaldwin> and “‘The bomber will always get through’ gets through,” *Airminded: Airpower and British Society, 1908-1941* (mostly) weblog, <http://airminded.org/2008/07/25/the-bomber-will-always-get-through-gets-through/>, both accessed 15 October 2012.

⁵⁵ Brett Holman, “The Widening Margin,” posted 27 May 2008, *Airminded: Airpower and British Society, 1908-1941* (mostly) weblog, <http://airminded.org/2008/05/27/the-widening-margin/>, accessed 15 October 2012.

Kingdom, and Germany—conducted strategic bombing campaigns. In order to do so, three conditions must be met. The first is that the air force must have prepared beforehand for the campaign by embracing the concept of strategic bombardment. The second is that the enemy must have an industrial infrastructure accessible to one's own bombers. The third is time. Contrary to the beliefs of Douhet and Mitchell that aerial bombardment—or even the threat of one—would compel a nation to surrender immediately, strategic campaigns require time. A strategic bombing campaign, being a form of economic warfare, will not produce results immediately. It requires patience (see Chapter IV for more on this subject).⁵⁶ “Industrial damage even on a very large scale might have absolutely no effect on the front-line strength of a warring nation for 20 years or more.”⁵⁷

Alone among the major belligerents during World War Two, the Soviet Union failed to meet the first condition. The Soviets had chosen to disregard Douhet (the few officers who had embraced his theories were liquidated in the purges—a coincidence, no doubt), and designed their air force to serve their army, not to act independently. The failure to meet the second condition prevented the Italians and Japanese from conducting strategic bombing. The Mediterranean and Pacific areas were not industrialized. Their

⁵⁶ These would seem to be obvious, but sometimes that which is obvious in hindsight is not as immediately apparent as might be thought. One of the functions of academics, particularly in the Liberal Arts, is to give names to phenomena that, when identified, lead readers to exclaim “of course!” or “I knew that.” Melvin Kranzberg’s six laws of technology may seem self-evident today, but until they were articulated in 1986, they remained only intuitively suspected. Melvin Kranzberg, “Kranzberg’s Laws”, *Technology and Culture* 27, no. 3 (1986), 544-560.

⁵⁷ H. H. Arnold, *First Report of the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, January 4, 1945, to the Secretary of War*, in *Reports of General of the Army George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff; General of the Army H. H. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces; Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations* (New York: Lippincott, 1947), 345-346. Hereafter referred to as “Arnold, *First Report*.”

strategic value derived from their resources, not manufactured goods (about which more later). Italy and Japan had no one to bomb. Only the Germans, Americans, and British fulfilled all three elements necessary for the conduct of strategic bombing campaigns.

Meeting the three conditions does not imply success, of course. The two German strategic air campaigns—one against the United Kingdom in 1940, the other against the Soviet Union between 1943 and 1945—were so poorly executed that they are often not recognized as strategic operations. A large number of academics, military professionals, and enthusiasts consider the Luftwaffe to have been a tactical-only air arm.⁵⁸ Thus one must ask: What distinguished Germany from the United States and United Kingdom? Why did the Luftwaffe fail where the United States Army Air forces (USAAF) and Royal Air Force (RAF) succeeded?

This question might better be rendered, “What do the USA and UK have in common?” A glance at the map indicates one significant factor. Both nations are geographically isolated. The United States is alone across an ocean from its World War Two adversaries; the United Kingdom is separated from its opponents on the continent by the English Channel. As was noted above, economic campaigns (naval blockades and aerial bombing) need time to be effective. Maritime nations have an advantage in this regard. They are not under immediate threat. Protected by water, they have the leisure to wait for an economic campaign to produce results. This is what the UK did during the Napoleonic Wars—it landed troops in Spain to occupy the French army, but was otherwise content to use its navy to nibble about the periphery of the First French

⁵⁸ John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 91.

Empire—and what the USA and UK did in World War Two, delaying an invasion of Europe until the Mediterranean and Middle East had been secured. “By fighting back, our air force gave us that most precious thing—time,” recalled a British Air Force officer after the war.⁵⁹ Until the invasion of Normandy, the only way that the UK and USA could strike at Germany proper was through the air. Noting that they “were the only Americans fighting in Europe in the fall of 1942,” the film *12 O’Clock High* is dedicated to American airmen.⁶⁰

Land powers have no such luxuries. They must be prepared at any time to fend off attacks from any direction (often from more than one), and in doing so, usually tie up the assets that could be used to conduct a strategic air campaign. Germany has land borders with many nations, most hostile or potentially so. It must perforce strive to win its wars quickly, because if it gets tied up fighting one enemy another may take advantage of its preoccupation. Germany appeared to have the luxury of time during World War Two, but it actually did not. The Soviet Army was thousands of miles away from Berlin in 1941. Distance and time are often interchangeable, but for Germany after *Unternehmen Barbarossa*, the one did not equal the other.

Germany had another impediment in its effort to conduct a strategic air campaign. It is not a coincidence that the two nations that have waged successful

⁵⁹ Arthur W. Tedder, *Air Power in War: The Lee Knowles Lecture* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948), 52.

⁶⁰ *12 O’Clock High*, 1949, opening credits. A similar sentiment from a source contemporary to the event is expressed in the observation, “It is worth remembering that against millions of Nazi soldiers in Western Europe, including probably 240,000 in air defense alone, the only Americans actually engaged over Western Europe are a relatively handful of men, namely, our flying crews.” Mark S. Watson, “U.S. Air Force in Britain Called Amazingly Small: Watson Says for Results for Size of Bomber Group is nothing short of marvelous,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 10 July 1943, 1.

strategic bombing campaigns are the only modern states identified as maritime powers by Alfred Thayer Mahan (as indicated by a list of six criteria in his seminal *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*).⁶¹ This circumstance conditioned the policy makers of these countries to think in economic terms when preparing for war. Sea power and air power are both, in their essence, forms of economic warfare. A strategic bombing campaign is akin to a naval blockade: it requires an economic foundation to produce economic effects. The industrial nations that produced warships and warplanes were aware that their economic might was both an asset and a liability. Knowing their own weaknesses, they saw them in other nations as well.⁶²

Because they are maritime powers, the UK and USA were predisposed to consider the relationship of the sources of raw materials and production centers when conceiving their strategies. During wartime, they must protect their links with their colonies (which served as both sources of raw materials and markets), and disrupt an enemy nation's intercourse with its overseas possessions. Sea power in its classical sense is an expression of the mercantilist understanding of economics, which is founded upon the belief that land is the foundation of wealth. Air power was born of capitalism, which holds that wealth can be created, and is not tied to land. "In the past a war might consume the income of a nation for some years; in the future it will also consume its

⁶¹ These are: geographical position, physical conformation, extent of territory, number of population, character of the people, and character of the government. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783* (New York: Sagamore, 1957 [1890]), 25ff.

⁶² Tellingly, the language of warfare has been used to describe economic setbacks. During the Korean War, during a press conference discussing the impact of a steelworkers' strike on the defense industry, Secretary of Defense Robert A Lovett said, "No enemy nation could have so crippled our production as has this work stoppage. No form of bombing could have taken out of production in one day 380 steel plants and kept them out nearly two months." Robert A. Lovett, Secretary of Defense, minutes of a Press Conference, 23 July 1952, in *Public Statements by the Secretaries of Defense*, reel 6, microfilm.

capital.”⁶³ Air power allows a nation to strike directly at the manufacturing centers that convert resources into finished goods. This understanding gives industrialized Great Powers a unique perspective on economic warfare. Land powers do not necessarily think in these terms. Germany was an exception—its submarine campaigns in both world wars indicate that the Germans apprehended the principles of Mahanism—but its geographical handicaps prevented it from capitalizing on this understanding.

The United States had no such problems, and so was able to conduct its strategic air campaigns much as designed. Of course, “no plan survives its first contact with the enemy,” and the American strategic bombing operations during World War Two evolved during the conflict to reflect lessons gained in combat conditions.⁶⁴ In his *Third Report to the Secretary of War*, published after World War Two had ended, General Henry H. “Hap” Arnold, commander of the US Army Air Forces (USAAF) in World War Two, wrote, “Strategic bombing was a new military weapon, and we had to learn many things as we went along. . . .”⁶⁵

⁶³ H. H. Arnold, “Air Force in the Atomic Age,” in Dexter Masters and Katherine Way, eds., *One World or None* (New York: New Press, 2007), 27.

⁶⁴ An aphorism attributed variously (at least on the internet) to such military thinkers as Helmuth von Moltke; Irwin Rommel; Carl von Clausewitz; Heinz Guderian; Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington; Colin Powell; and Murphy (the eponymous lawgiver).

⁶⁵ General of the Army H. H. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces, *Third Report of the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, 12 November 1945, to the Secretary of War*, in *Reports of General of the Army George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff; General of the Army H. H. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces; Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations* (New York: Lippincott, 1947), 345; hereafter identified as “Arnold, *Third Report*.” The *Third Report* was published in its entirety in *National Geographic* magazine. Henry H. Arnold, “Air Power for Peace,” *National Geographic* 89 (February 1946), 137-193.

The American Air Power Experience during World War Two

In his *First Report*, submitted in early 1944 when the war still had eighteen months to run, Arnold offered his assessment of the ongoing American air war. From the beginning of American involvement in the conflict, he wrote, “We operated on these principles:

The No. 1 job of an air force is bombardment. We must have long-range bombers which can hit the enemy before he hits us; in short, the best defense is attack. . . . We believed in daylight operations. . . . We operated with a precision bombsight. . . . We believed in the strategic precision bombing of key targets deep in the enemy’s territory, such as airplane factories, aluminum plants, and submarine building bases. . . .”⁶⁶

The general conveniently omitted another, which is understandable, considering that by the time he released the *First Report*, events had proved it wrong. This last was that bombers would be able to penetrate enemy airspace on their own.

Americans, like Europeans, subscribed to the idea that the bomber will always get through, no matter what defenses the enemy possessed. Thus no protective escort of fighters was necessary. Testifying before Congress in 1937, General Oscar Westover, the Chief of the Army’s Air Staff, stated that “close pursuit support of modern long-range bombardment can no longer be provided clear to the target or objective. . . . [T]he high speed and great defensive fire power of modern bombers makes close support by large numbers of pursuit airplanes no longer so vitally necessary as heretofore.”⁶⁷

Fighters were short-ranged aircraft that had nothing like the radius of action of bombers.

⁶⁶ Arnold, *First Report*, 304.

⁶⁷ Oscar Westover, testimony, *Military Establishment Appropriation Bill for 1938: Hearing before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations House of Representatives*, 75th Congress, 1939.

Of course, by the time the United States entered World War Two, the Europeans had learned—the hard way—that the bomber did *not* always get through. Even before the appearance of radar, Polish and French interceptors and antiaircraft batteries had demonstrated that bombers could not expect to fly over hostile territory at will. The introduction of radar made the task of the bomber even more difficult, as the Germans discovered during the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940. The Germans quickly developed their own electronic detection aids and inflicted heavy losses on the RAF's Bomber Command shortly thereafter. Both the British and the Germans had to shift their strategic bombing operations to night to afford their crews any reasonable chance of survival, albeit at a significant cost in bombing accuracy.

Despite the evidence, the leaders of the USAAF persisted in their belief in the ability of its bombers to penetrate any enemy's defenses. American bombers had better defensive armaments than their European counterparts, being equipped with more and heavier weapons. Indeed, the popular name of the Boeing B-17 was "Flying Fortress": its larger derivative, the Boeing B-29, was the "Superfortress."⁶⁸ "The Army Air Force put its faith in the American 50-caliber machine gun," wrote Arnold.⁶⁹

The British tried to warn the Americans that enemy air defenses had improved to the point that daylight precision bombing was becoming prohibitively expensive in lives

⁶⁸ The three main American heavy bombers of World War Two, the Boeing B-17, the Consolidated B-24, and the Boeing B-29, were each armed with at least ten fifty-caliber machine guns in five positions, nose, tail, dorsal, ventral, and left and right waist. European bombers were generally equipped with thirty-caliber guns and did not have ventral or waist gun positions, although some had a single twenty-millimeter cannon (heavier than the fifty-cal) in their tails.

The most common explanation for the name "Flying Fortress" is that it refers to the B-17's bristling defenses. However, an alternative story links the name to the aircraft's original function. The isolationist United States needed to rely on its shore batteries to protect itself from invasion. The B-17 served to extend the range of American coastal defenses from gun range (20-some miles) to the high seas.

⁶⁹ Arnold, *First Report*, 309.

and equipment, and invited them to join RAF Bomber Command in its night campaign against Germany. The Americans declined, confident that their heavily-armed bombers could fight their way to and from their targets unescorted. The two eventually negotiated a compromise, the “round-the-clock” bombing offensive.

Most American bombing raids in the first year of the war were relatively short missions against targets in occupied Europe, the first of which took place in July 1942. With experience, the USAAF essayed deeper and deeper penetrations, conducting its first bombing raid against Germany itself six months later. Thus encouraged, the Americans attempted to strike deep into Europe against targets calculated to seriously disrupt German war production. Casualties were appalling. The famous raid upon the oil fields in Ploesti, Romania, in August 1943 was a disaster. The German and Romanian defenses destroyed fifty-five of the 178 aircraft dispatched. Later that month, the Schweinfurt-Regensburg Raid, an attempt to destroy the ball bearing plants upon which German war production depended, lost sixty bombers out of 376. A second strike on Schweinfurt in October resulted in the loss of sixty out of 291 bombers. The Americans could not long tolerate such high attrition rates, and for many months after these raids, USAAF bombing strikes were not nearly so ambitious.

The armament of American bombers continually improved through the war. “Power turrets, chin turrets, and greater fire power are all developments that have come from combat operations,” reported Arnold with pride in 1944.⁷⁰ Yet these innovations

⁷⁰ Ibid., 330.

were not sufficient. It was rapidly becoming apparent that the American bombers could reach distant targets and return only if they had fighter escorts.

An early attempt to create an “escort bomber”—a B-17 stripped of its bombing equipment and loaded with fourteen guns, extra ammunition, and armor plate—failed.⁷¹ It was too slow and unwieldy, unable to keep up with its charges once they had dropped their bombs. Escort by fighter planes seemed the only solution. However, no fighter of the period had the range to accompany bombers at even short range (during the Battle of Britain, German fighters were hard-pressed to reach London even from bases on the French coast). Fighters are small airplanes, built to carry guns and a pilot. Fuel represents weight, which degrades their speed and rate of climb, so most fighters carried minimal fuel reserves. Conceived of as interceptors, they were designed to climb rapidly to the altitude of incoming bombers to protect a given point, not as escorts to accompany bombers across continents.

The solution was the “drop tank.” Fitted to both bombers and fighters, but more closely associated with fighters, these external fuel containers extending an airplane’s radius of action but could be jettisoned to avoid the performance penalty their weight and drag imposed during combat. “The equipment of our escort fighter aircraft with extra long-range disposable fuel tanks now enables them to give our bombers continuous cover to and from targets formerly out of tactical range” wrote General Arnold in his

⁷¹ This aircraft was designated YB-40. It had its bomb racks and other bombing equipment removed and extra armor and guns installed. The extra weight could not be disposed of. As a result, the YB-40 proved too heavy and thus too slow to keep up with other bombers once they had dropped their payloads. After fourteen missions over three months in the spring of 1943, the project was abandoned.

First Report.⁷² Drop tanks also enabled American fighters to range all over Europe and allowed them to take part in offensive actions against the Luftwaffe, in keeping with Douhet's and Mitchell's directions and official doctrine that the control of the air is the first objective of an air arm. War Department Field Manual FM 100-20, *Command and Employment of Air Power*, issued during the summer of 1943, the midpoint of American involvement in World War Two, identifies six basic tasks for military air power. The first, and most important, of these tasks is the destruction of the enemy's air force, which is "accomplished by attacks against aircraft in the air and on the ground, for the application of air power."⁷³ Instead of remaining close to the aircraft they were escorting, American fighter pilots began sweeps well ahead of the bomber formations, seeking and destroying enemy interceptors wherever they were encountered, on the ground and in the air.⁷⁴

While the American fighters were fighting the German air force at its bases and in combat, the American bomber forces were targeting the installations that produced Germany's aircraft. The selection of targets is a vital component of a strategic bombing campaign. Forces are always limited, and commanders must select the targets that will have the greatest impact on destroying the enemy's ability and will to continue fighting.

Arnold examined this subject at some length in his *First Report*. "For quick results, we take out the assembly plants," he wrote, "but for . . . more lasting effects we

⁷² Arnold, *First Report*, 349.

⁷³ United States Department of War, *War Department Field Manual FM 100-20: Command and Employment of Air Power* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1944), 6.

⁷⁴ The others are the destruction of the enemy's land, sea, and air bases; operations against surface forces; strategic bombardment; cooperation with army units; and cooperation with naval units. United States Department of War, *War Department Field Manual FM 100-20: Command and Employment of Air Power* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1944), 6.

concentrate on a system of targets deeper in the industry.” Target selection is more difficult than it appears, he noted, writing that “[c]ontrary to prevailing beliefs, all industry is not absolutely essential to every belligerent country.” Intelligence services and planning staffs must address a wide variety of different questions about prospective targets, examining such issues as production capacity, consumption, stockpiles, plant location, factory vulnerability, equipment redundancy, and the time lag between the destruction of a production facility and the reduction of fighting strength. Personnel making these decisions must have a thorough grounding in economics, both its general principles and the data specific to hostile countries. “Our strategy must be based on a blueprint of scientifically calculated attrition.”⁷⁵

The most obvious target systems were not always the most lucrative.⁷⁶ For example, Arnold noted that unless they could reduce production by two-thirds in a short

⁷⁵ Arnold, *First Report*, 345-346.

⁷⁶ A “target system” is a set of targets that are functionally related, the destruction of which will produce a particular military or economic effect desired by the attacker. For example, aircraft production is a target system; an individual airplane factory is a target. The concept admits of flexibility. Plants that produce aircraft-grade aluminum, jet engines, and Plexiglas canopies may be attacked during a campaign directed against aircraft production. For further information, see, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (JP1-02), and USAF Intelligence Targeting Guide (Air Force Pamphlet 14-210 Intelligence) 1 February 1998.

The concept of a target system is probably related to the concept of “technological systems” devised by American historian and critic Lewis Mumford and expanded upon by Jacques Ellul and Thomas P. Hughes (the third of Kranzberg’s Laws of Technology is that “Technology comes in packages, big and small”). Melvin Kranzberg, “Kranzberg’s Laws,” *Technology and Culture* 27, No. 3, 544-560. There is an opportunity for a historian of technology to investigate this possible link.

The term “target system” is relatively new. Frustratingly, there is no entry for “target system” in the *OED*, which might help establish when the expression was first used. The Google Ngram Viewer (a tool for analyzing the contents of the millions of books and other publications that have been scanned and digitized as part of the Google Books project) indicates a handful of uses of the term before 1940. It did not become widely used until the mid-1950s. “Google Books Ngram Viewer, available online at <http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?> [accessed 22 October 2011. A search of the Proquest historical newspaper archive indicates that before the World War Two era, the term was most commonly associated with sports, particularly gunnery and archery. The first use of the expression in a military context was in 1944. Its earliest appearances seem to have informal.

period, a difficult task indeed, air strikes against Germany's steel industry were not worthwhile. The Germans had excess production capacity and consumed most of their steel in the form of tools and factories, not war machines. Similarly, any campaign against the Third Reich's electrical production had to succeed within one week. The same damage distributed over a year would make little difference. "Before destruction begins to affect front-line strength," Arnold wrote, "it must as a rule, cut through considerable and sometime enormous layers of fat."⁷⁷

Assessing the results of the strategic bombing campaign was also difficult. The long time between action and results proved frustrating. General Arnold observed, "Damage reports of bombing operations, pictures of destroyed factories, estimated curtailment of production—what did they mean? There was no guide in previous military experience."⁷⁸ The Second World War was the first test of systematic, programmed, strategic bombing.

Target selection varied when strategists identified new target systems as valuable. During the war in Europe, American bombers were at different times directed against vehicle production plants, the rubber industry, oil and petroleum refineries, and ball bearing factories, among others. Yet "innumerable other strategic considerations

(The proprietors of the Ngram Viewer request that academic researchers using the resource cite the following article in any resulting work: Jean-Baptiste Michel, Yuan Kui Shen, Aviva Presser Aiden, Adrian Veres, Matthew K. Gray, William Brockman, The Google Books Team, Joseph P. Pickett, Dale Hoiberg, Dan Clancy, Peter Norvig, Jon Orwant, Steven Pinker, Martin A. Nowak, and Erez Lieberman Aiden; "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books": *Science*, 14 January 2011, 176-182.

⁷⁷ Arnold, *First Report*, 346.

⁷⁸ H. H. Arnold, *Second Report of the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, February 27, 1945, to the Secretary of War in Reports of General of the Army George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff; General of the Army H. H. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces; Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations* (New York: Lippincott, 1947), 360. Hereafter referred to as "Arnold, *Second Report*."

enter[ed] the picture.”⁷⁹ In the early days of the war, the United States directed a substantial portion its strategic bombing effort against U-Boat facilities in support of Allied efforts in the Battle of the Atlantic. Similarly, the USAAF targeted transportation systems throughout Western Europe before Operations Overlord and Neptune, successfully hindering German response to the invasion of Normandy, and in the months that followed, devoted considerable effort to the destruction of V-Weapon production, test, and launch facilities. The leaders of the USAAF had long feared a diversion of their forces from their primary tasks. Writing in 1941, before the United States had entered the war, Arnold and fellow Air Force General Ira Eaker wrote a book in which they asked, “Will [the air force] be devoted exclusively to air force objectives or will it be frittered away within the sphere of influence of ground weapons?”⁸⁰

The same problem existed in the Pacific. Curtis Lemay, commander of the strategic bombing forces there, protested having to divert his forces to such projects as the mining of Japanese home waters and—a particularly distasteful prospect to any of the heirs of William Mitchell—the destruction of Japanese air bases to protect US naval vessels in action within range of Japanese land-based aircraft.

The strategic bombing campaign against Japan itself did not start until late 1944, by which time the air campaign against Germany was reaching its climax. American air force officers and air power advocates saw the new campaign as an opportunity. They wanted a chance to demonstrate the full potential of air power to win wars; the United

⁷⁹ Arnold, *First Report*, 346.

⁸⁰ H. H. Arnold and Ira C. Eaker, *Winged Warfare* (New York: Harper, 1941), 150.

States's late entry into the war against Germany denied them a chance to do so.⁸¹ The European "war was not won by air power alone, but it was not proved whether it could be," one general opined.⁸² Instead of identifying the most lucrative target systems by trial-and-error as had occurred in Europe, the Americans could capitalize on the hard-won lessons of the air war in the European Theatre of Operations (ETO) and strike immediately at the heart of the Japanese economy, in an effort to end the war as expeditiously as possible.

The reason that the strategic bombing campaign against Japan began so late in the war was that for the first part of the conflict, the paucity of appropriate targets within range of American bombers limited the opportunity to conduct strategic bombing raids. Japan's early conquests were so extensive that the only bases available to the Allies were in China, Australia, and the Central Pacific. Yet the home islands were well out of range from these areas, and the conquered territories had few industrial sites.

[The] Japanese economy was organized into a central zone that comprised the island empire, and an outer zone stretching through the conquered areas. The inner zone was conceived of as a self-contained economic realm, with a virtual monopoly on the nation's industry. The ring of colonies, in accordance with both German and Japanese race theories, was to assume a vassal agricultural status; industry was to be developed only to meet local needs and to supply Japan with critical imports—oil, for one.⁸³

The Japanese home islands were lacking in many of the resources required by an industrial power. Japan's war aim was to acquire oil, tin, and rubber, among other raw

⁸¹ "Gen. Twining Believes Air Power to Win Alone," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 8 July 1945, 8B.

⁸² "Air Power Test," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 May 1945, 1.

⁸³ Arnold, *First Report*, 333.

materials. The early war in the Pacific Theatres of Operations was thus a mercantilist campaign for the control of land and the vegetable and mineral commodities it produced.

It was not until 1944 that Allied land forces had progressed far enough to establish airfields from which to begin strategic bombing operations against Japan itself. The last year of war in the Pacific was a quest for airfields from which to bomb the home islands. “The primary objective of Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific is to advance our own network of air bases deep into the Japanese perimeter,” wrote Arnold in early 1944.⁸⁴ The first strategic bomber airfields in the Pacific Theatre of Operations (PTO) were in China, permitting raids to begin in June of that year, but they were too far inland, leaving many areas of Japan out of bomber range. The conquest of the Mariana Islands a short time later permitted bombers based there to reach all portions of Japan, the first raids taking place in November. The battles of Okinawa and Iwo Jima in early 1945 were fought primarily to provide bases for fighters to escort the B-29s and to provide a diversionary airfield for B-29s damaged in their 3,000-mile (roundtrip) flights from the Marianas to Japan.⁸⁵

The strategic bombing campaign against Japan was, like the campaign in Europe, originally directed against industry. However, high altitude precision bombing proved problematical. The Americans had introduced a new type of heavy bomber for the campaign, the Boeing B-29 Superfortress, which was designed to operate at high altitudes (20,000 feet or more) to make intercepting it as difficult as possible. However,

⁸⁴ Ibid., 335.

⁸⁵ The first B-29 to make an emergency landing on Iwo Jima did so before the island was fully secured. Over two thousand more B-29s, each carrying eleven crew members, followed. The number of airmen saved by diverting to Iwo Jima compensated for the 27,000 American casualties (6,000 KIA, 19,000 WIA) suffered during the battle for the island.

this seeming asset was revealed to be a liability. The climb to bombing altitude consumed great quantities of fuel. Each gallon of aviation gasoline carried reduced the bombload by six pounds. The Superfortress flew so high that it encountered the jet stream, a high-velocity stratospheric air current which affected the bombers in several ways, all negative. If the bombers approached their targets from downwind, they were slowed almost to a crawl, consuming precious aviation fuel. “You could go on forever, trying to get up to a target in such a wind,” wrote General Lemay. “And if you went cross-wind, your bombsight wouldn’t take care of the drift you had. If you came in downwind, you didn’t have time to get a proper run on the target.”⁸⁶

In consequence, the bombing campaign against Japan did not originally achieve the results hoped for it. The Americans became so desperate to improve their performance—air corps leaders still felt that they had to prove the efficacy of strategic bombing—that they abandoned the once-sacrosanct concept of daylight precision bombing.⁸⁷ General Lemay instructed his crews to fly at low altitudes at night, and to simply drop their bombs into cities without aiming at specific targets.

The decision was not as risky as it might appear. Lemay and his staff had determined that the Japanese radar, antiaircraft, and fighter defenses were not nearly as effective as their German counterparts. So confident were they that darkness would protect their bombers that they ordered the removal of most of the B-29s’ defensive armaments and switched to low-level bombing, both changes intended to allow the bombers to carry heavier payloads—which also changed. Instead of carrying the high-

⁸⁶ Lemay *Mission with Lemay*, 342-343.

⁸⁷ Alexander de Seversky, “Air Power and the War,” *The New York Times*, 14 July 1944, 4.

explosive bombs that had used to destroy the masonry structures of European cities, the B-29s carried incendiary bombs for starting fires among the wood-and-paper buildings of Japan's urban areas.

The transition to a nighttime bombing schedule necessitated a change in the targeting program. Even with radar bombing aids, bombing accuracy is greatly reduced in the dark. As a result, the Americans gave up on trying to bomb specific buildings and just dropped their bombs into the hearts of Japanese cities. It did not matter whether the bombs fell into industrial, commercial, or residential districts. This change represented a significant change in the attitude of USAAF leadership. In 1941, before the United States entered the war, two air force generals had criticized the German and British policies of night bombing (necessitated, as noted above, because the bomber did not always get through): "It is generally accepted that bombing attacks on civil populace [*sic*] are uneconomical and unwise."⁸⁸ The USAAF's leaders justified the change by observing that Japanese industry relied heavily on a "putting-out" system that placed production in private homes (the British had rationalized their nighttime area bombing campaign by claiming that German industry would be disrupted by "de-housing" its workers). No doubt the desire to end the war quickly after the Germans surrendered—plus an element of racism—also contributed to the American willingness to adopt the night area bombing program.

The shift in strategies was immensely successful. American bombers reduced Japan's industrial cities, one by one, to charred ruins, their populations devastated and

⁸⁸ Arnold and Eaker, *Winged Warfare*, 133.

destitute. To all appearances, the Japanese had lost the capacity to fight. Yet despite the destruction, the government would not surrender. The Americans and their Allies continued their preparations to invade the Japanese home islands, well aware that their foes had demonstrated a willingness to die rather than admit defeat.⁸⁹

On 6 August 1945, a B-29 named *Enola Gay* dropped a new and powerful weapon, the atomic bomb, on the city of Hiroshima.⁹⁰ The death and destruction it caused were comparable to the results of any one of the incendiary raids of the previous months, but those raids had entailed hundreds of bombers carrying thousands of bombs. “One B-29 dropping an atom bomb caused as much damage as 300 planes would have done before,” proclaimed General Arnold in 1946.⁹¹ The ability of a single device to devastate a city seemed to make war even more terrible than it already was. Yet the Japanese still did not respond to the Allies’ call for their unconditional surrender. A second atomic attack three days later against the city of Nagasaki, combined with the USSR’s declaration of war on Japan, finally convinced the Imperial government that continued resistance was futile.

The reasons for the Japanese capitulation were subject to varying interpretations, but many air power advocates were quick to point out that no other nation had ever

⁸⁹ The cultural conditioning that led the Japanese to prefer death to surrender provides another example of how the psychological and physical effects of strategic bombing do not always correspond, albeit in a way that inverts the understanding of Douhet and Mitchell.

⁹⁰ The bomber was named by its pilot, Colonel (later General) Paul Tibbets, after his mother, who was herself named after the title character of a novel by Mary Young Ridenbaugh (*Enola, or Her Fatal Mistake*), published in 1888. “Enola” is “alone” spelled backwards.

⁹¹ Hap Arnold, “Air Force in the Atomic Age,” *One World or None*, 29. Note that in the week immediately after the Hiroshima raid, the atomic bomb was described as being worth two thousand conventional bombers. “2,000 B-29’s in One Package,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 6 August 1945, 1; “Atomic Bomb Called Cheaper to Use Than TNT: Engineer Sees Saving in Lives,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 8 August 1945, 4.

surrendered before being invaded. In an interview shortly after VJ-Day, Alexander de Seversky declared, “I don’t think our leaders would carry their loyalty to the old doctrines of warfare to that end with the clear loss of life when it was clear that a strategic air force could have done the job,” calling the planned invasion of Japan “a case of strategic astigmatism.”⁹² General James H. Doolittle, speaking before a Senate committee in late 1945, noted that “[t]he Navy had the transport to make the invasion of Japan possible; the Ground Forces had the power to make it successful; and the B-29 made it unnecessary” (to which one senator added, “I want that emphasized”).⁹³ General Arnold observed, “The collapse of Japan has vindicated the whole strategic concept of the offensive phase of the Pacific War. . . [which was] to advance air power, both land and carrier-based, to the point where the full fury of crushing air attack would bring about the defeat of Japan without invasion. . . . No invasion was necessary.”⁹⁴ Yet the general was willing to concede that “[t]he harnessing of atomic energy and its application at the climax of the Pacific war [*sic*] have tended to overshadow a most important point. Even before one of our B-29s dropped its atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan’s military situation was hopeless.”⁹⁵

⁹² “De Seversky Hits Land Attack Plan,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 15 October 1945, 5; “Japan had only 10 Days Supply of Ammunition,” *The Scotsman*, 15 October 1945, 5.

⁹³ James H. Doolittle, testimony, *Department of Armed Forces Department of Military Security: Hearings on S.84 and S.1482, before the Committee on Military Affairs United States Senate, 79th Congress, 1945*, 290. Hereafter referred to as “Department of Armed Forces Department of Military Security Hearings.” The senator was J. Lister Hill, a Democrat from Alabama.

⁹⁴ Arnold, *Third Report*, 437.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 438.

American Air Power Thinking after World War Two

Scholars have debated for decades whether air power in general and strategic bombing in particular won the war against Japan, but at the end of World War Two few Americans doubted that aerial warfare had proven its value during the conflict and would play a significant role in future wars. “The tremendous contribution of air power to final victory in World War II is a sure portent of even greater weight in the scales of combat in the future,” wrote “Uncle Dudley” in the *Boston Globe*.⁹⁶ The introduction of the atomic bomb only seemed to make air power that much more powerful. In 1946, a writer for the *Afro-American* noted “[T]he atomic bomb gave promise of thorough-going destructiveness, not only for soldiers in the field of fortifications, or even lines of communications, but to an entire nation.”⁹⁷ Of course, any such wars would be years away, or so it seemed. The Axis powers had been crushed, and the victorious Allies were weary of war and wanted to enjoy the well-earned peace. They had made the world safe; another war would not occur for a decade or more, or so the American public assumed. In 1945, any tensions between the USSR, the only other nation able to rapidly recover from the war, and USA seemed almost minor and easily resolved.

Yet there were those who understood that the old principle of *si vis pacem, para bellum* (if you desire peace, prepare for war) still obtained. General Arnold expressed his concern that the American public’s understandable and genuine desire to demobilize might lead the United States to disarm itself to a dangerous degree. He remembered the

⁹⁶ “Uncle Dudley,” “First Line,” *The Boston Globe* 16 July 1947, 14.

⁹⁷ Dwight Holmes, “Lights and Shadows,” *The Afro-American*, 15 June 1946, 4.

aftermath of World War One: “Our aircraft industry was brought to a virtual standstill because of surplus equipment left over from 1918. ‘You have enough—and besides who are you going to fight?’” He outlined a five-point program for maintaining American strength in the air. The United States needed an air force in being, trained personnel, a research and development program, a strong aviation industry, and a network of bases from which to operate.”⁹⁸

The general knew that air power had forever changed one particular aspect of war. Throughout its history, the United States had had time to prepare for its conflicts. It would not have that luxury in the future. The nation had to be properly prepared for war as it could no longer count either time or distance among its allies. “With present equipment, an enemy Air Power can, without warning, pass over all formerly visualized barriers or ‘lines of defense’ and can deliver devastating blows at our population centers and our industrial, economic or governmental heart even before surface forces can be deployed.”⁹⁹ The airplane had not only reach—which it shared with the warship—but the new element of speed. “If another attack comes, the first blow will again fall through the air.”¹⁰⁰ Aeronautical technology had made the world smaller, profoundly changing the old relationship of distance and time.

General Arnold was not alone in his warnings that the American heartland would be on the front lines of the next war. In 1948, the President’s Air Policy Commission, a body formed a year earlier to conduct “an objective inquiry into national aviation

⁹⁸ Henry H. Arnold, Air Force Day Address made at Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, 1 August 1945; printed as “Text of Gen. Arnold’s Speech Here,” *The New York Times*, 2 August 1945, 4.

⁹⁹ Arnold, *Third Report*, 452.

¹⁰⁰ Henry H Arnold “We’ll Lose the Next War,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 11 Jan 1958, E4.

policies and to assist [the president] in formulating an integrated national aviation policy,” issued its final report, entitled “Survival in the Air Age.” Among its conclusions were that

the traditional peacetime strategy of the United States must be changed radically. We can no longer count on having our cities and the rest of our mainland untouched in future war. On the contrary, we must count on our homeland becoming increasingly vulnerable as the weapons increase in destructiveness and the means of delivering them are improved.¹⁰¹

The airplane made the United States vulnerable, a new and uncomfortable realization for many Americans.

Of course, one of the reasons why the United States had had time to mobilize during the two World Wars was because the nation had not entered either conflict for several years after they had begun. The United States, separated from the battle areas by two oceans, had tried to remain neutral as long as it could before ending its isolationist policy in 1917 and 1941. As Arnold reminded the readers of his *Second Report*:

In two world wars, the aggressor has moved first against other peace-loving nations, hoping that the United States would remain aloof, or that other nations could be defeated before this country’s power on land, sea, and air could be brought to bear against him. Luckily, in each [world] war there has been time for the mobilization of such power.

There was only one logical conclusion to this line of thought: “The lesson is too plain for the next aggressor to miss. *The United States will be his first target*” [emphasis in original].¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ The President's Air Policy Commission, *Survival in the Air Age: A Report by the President's Air Policy Commission* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1948), v. Hereafter referred to as “Survival in the Air Age.”

¹⁰² Arnold, *Second Report*, 415

Of course, the United States had already been the subject of a preemptive attack once, which neither General Arnold nor his readers would easily forget. The memory of 7 December 1941 was still fresh in Americans' minds when Arnold issued his warning.¹⁰³ Yet despite the emotional impact of the Pearl Harbor raid, Hawaii was for most Americans a remote and exotic place in 1941, becoming a state only in 1959. However, "[t]he next Pearl Harbor," warned one of General Arnold's subordinates in 1947, "will be an American industrial city or cities. . . ."¹⁰⁴ Air power had placed all of the United States within reach of attack. In 1946, the Secretary of War for Air, Stuart Symington (soon to become the first Secretary of the Air Force) told an audience in Oklahoma City, some 420 miles from the nearest coast, "The next Pearl Harbor . . . may be St. Louis, or Pittsburgh, or right here. Yesterday, you in this great city were protected by your central location. . . . Today, that is all over. . . . Oklahoma City is squarely on the new frontier."¹⁰⁵

It was easy to declare the need for a strong deterrent against future aggression. It was much more difficult to implement such a program, even if the American people supported it. A desire to "bring the boys home" was not the sole motivation for the drive to demobilize after World War Two (just twelve weeks after VJ-Day, the American

¹⁰³ The Pearl Harbor attack was the subject of some nine different inquiries during and immediately after World War Two, the last being the Joint Congressional Committee Investigation, which began in November, 1945, and lasted until May 1946. It published its findings in the first summer of peace after the conflict, helping perpetuate American concerns about a possible repeat well into the post-war era.
http://www.nsa.gov/about/cryptologic_heritage/center_crypt_history/pearl_harbor_review/investigations.shtml, accessed 12 May 2011.

¹⁰⁴ "AAF signs its First Specialist-Training Pact under Preparedness Plan with Ohio Firm," *The New York Times*, 8 August 1947, 4.

¹⁰⁵ "Lack of Forces Merger Invites Disaster, says Symington," *The Washington Post*, 10 December 1946, 9.

military was separating 1,500,000 personnel each month) and enjoy the comforts of peace.¹⁰⁶ The United States had spent a huge sum of money on the war and both the administration and the public wanted to cut back on military expenditures. “Immediately following the war this country reduced its military expenditure as indicated by budget figures by approximately 85 per cent of the wartime expense levels” reported the Secretary of Defense in 1952.¹⁰⁷

In the absence of a credible threat—tensions between the USA and USSR were only beginning in the late 1940s—such cutbacks make sense. The United States had produced a tremendous number of arms during the war—not just airplanes, but tanks, ships, guns, and vehicles—and many Americans believed that the unused equipment could serve the nation well enough for many years. However, aeronautical technology had advanced so rapidly during the war that many if not most of the airplanes in inventory in 1945 were no longer viable as first-line combat weapons. The introduction of jet propulsion had rendered almost all of the aircraft of World War Two obsolete, or nearly so. As General Arnold observed, “The weapons of today are the museum pieces of tomorrow.”¹⁰⁸

The cutbacks in defense spending compelled the United States Congress, which controlled expenditures, to guard the national treasury very jealously. Naturally, the

¹⁰⁶ Harry S. Truman, Message to Congress, 19 December 1945, in *The Department of Defense: Documents on Establishment and Organization 1944-1978*, Alice G. Cole, Alfred Goldberg, Samuel A. Tucker, and Rudolph A. Winnacker, eds. (Washington DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense: Historical Office, 1978), 7. Collection hereafter referred to as *Department of Defense Documents*.

¹⁰⁷ Robert A. Lovett, statement during press conference, 13 January 1953, in *Public Statements by the Secretaries of Defense*, reel 6.

¹⁰⁸ Arnold, *Third Report*, 466.

government and the people it represented wanted to get the most value for their money. What the best investment may have been, however, proved difficult to identify.

Defense Unification and Disunity

One of the most common suggestions was to unify the American military establishment into a single defense organization. The American constitution provided for a Department of War (which controlled the Army, including its air arm) and a Department of the Navy (also responsible for the Marine Corps and naval aviation). Critics of this arrangement, which had not changed since the early 1780s, claimed that it encouraged wasteful duplication of effort; both branches maintained their own air transport services, for example. A single unified Department of National Defense would coordinate the various efforts of the services, from war planning to procurement to mediating disputes arising from interservice rivalry. The idea was first proposed just after World War One, but was not adopted.¹⁰⁹ It came up again during World War Two, with preliminary work conducted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and both houses of Congress.¹¹⁰ Unification gained support rapidly after the conflict. In December 1945, President Harry S. Truman reminded Congress that “One of the lessons which have most clearly come from the costly and dangerous experience of this war is that there must be unified direction of land, sea, and air forces at home as well as in all other parts of the

¹⁰⁹ *Department of Defense and Unification of Air Service: Hearings before the House Committee on Military Affairs*, 69th Congress, 1926; *Air Service Unification: Hearings on HR 10147 and HR 12285, before the House Committee on Military Affairs*, 68th Congress, 1925.

¹¹⁰ *Department of Defense Documents*, 3-7.

world where our Armed Forces are serving.”¹¹¹ Defense unification became law with the passage of the National Security Act of 1947.

The name “unification” is somewhat of a misnomer, however. The 1947 Law combined the War and Navy Departments, of course, but it also provided for the separation of the Army Air Forces from the Army. The AAF was then organized into the United States Air Force (USAF) as a coequal and independent service branch. Thus, the Secretary of Defense would manage three subordinates: the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This arrangement rectified a problem to which President Truman had referred in a message to Congress just after the war ended: “[I]n 1941, the air power of the United States was not organized on a par with the ground and sea forces.”¹¹²

The new structure did not meet with everyone’s satisfaction. The leaders of the United States Navy (USN) were concerned that in the perception of many Americans, particularly the congressmen who controlled the defense budget, their service was becoming increasingly irrelevant. The United States controlled the seas by default after World War Two. Other than the United Kingdom’s Royal Navy, no other fleet of significance had survived the conflict—the Soviets certainly posed little threat at sea—and the British were unlikely to turn against the United States in the near future. Seemingly without mission or purpose, the USN needed to justify its existence.

Compounding the Navy’s problem was its long-standing rivalry with the Air Force. Billy Mitchell had not been shy about expressing his belief that air power

¹¹¹ Harry S Truman, Message to Congress, 19 December 1945, in *Department of Defense: Documents*, 7.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

trumped sea power. The inevitable demise of navies is to *Winged Defense* what “*Carthago delendum est* [Carthage must be destroyed]” was to Cato the Elder.¹¹³ During the debate about unification (and Air Force independence), one way that proponents of air power promoted their cause was by capitalizing on the apparent decline of the Navy’s value. During Congressional hearings on the topic of the future of national security after World War Two, AAF General James “Jimmy” Doolittle testified, “The [aircraft] carrier has two attributes. One attribute is that it can move about; the other attribute is that it can be sunk.” A true heir of Mitchell, he continued, “As soon as airplanes are developed with sufficient range so that they can go any place that we want them to go, or when we have [air] bases that will permit us to go any place that we want to go, then there will be no further need for aircraft carriers.”¹¹⁴ A 1946 article in *The American Mercury* asked, “So what is an American navy of 1079 ships with 667,000 men and five billion dollars going to fight?”¹¹⁵ Seversky was equally blunt. In 1946, he wrote, “Every dollar put into [aircraft] carriers is a dollar thrown away.”¹¹⁶ The 1948 Finletter Report, *Survival in the Air Age*, was a more tactful, observing that “[w]e can no longer follow our traditional procedure of relying entirely on the Navy as our force in being in peacetime.”¹¹⁷

The emphasis on aircraft carriers reflects a transition in naval warfare, which occurred during World War Two. In that conflict, the battleship gave way to the aircraft

¹¹³ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, xvi, 5, 17-19, 31, 110, 123, 133-134.

¹¹⁴ Doolittle, testimony, Department of Armed Forces Department of Military Security Hearings, 308.

¹¹⁵ W. Barton Leach, “The Stupidity of a Big Navy,” *The American Mercury*, May 1946, 529

¹¹⁶ Alexander de Seversky, “Navies are Finished,” *The American Mercury*, February 1946, 137.

¹¹⁷ *Survival in the Air Age*, 10.

carrier as primary expression of sea power. After 1945, the Navy itself began referring to “sea-air power,” to remind Americans that it had not been left behind in the “Air Age.”¹¹⁸ Actually, the USN’s leaders had long recognized—since just after World War One—that the submarine and the airplane had combined to transform naval warfare from a milieu of two-dimensional surface actions exclusively to three-dimensional undersea and aerial combat as well.¹¹⁹

The acrimony between the Air Force and the Navy expressed itself primarily as a struggle for the control of air power, not surprising given the popular perception that the post-World War Two era was indeed the “Air Age.” In 1948, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal summarized the two services’ positions by noting (using the layperson’s psychological jargon so popular at the time)

There are two basic neuroses in the relation between the Air Force and the Navy. The Navy believes that the Air Force is out to take over all air, in spite of the terms of the Unification Act; conversely, the Air Force believes [the] Navy is out to encroach on the Air Force function of strategic bombing. There is some foundation in fact for both of these complexes. . . .¹²⁰

To resolve some of the differences between the three services, Forrestal gathered the Chiefs of Staff at Key West, Florida, in March of 1948, where they produced the “Function of the Armed Forces and the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” better known simply as

¹¹⁸ The earliest use of the term in the *New York Times* was in an unattributed editorial in 1941, but the term did not enter widespread usage until the end of World War Two. “What Air Power Means,” *The New York Times*, 27 April 1941, E10.

¹¹⁹ In addition to the airplane and airship, the development of the submarine boat as a weapon (which occurred at about the same time aircraft appeared) required the USN to stop thinking in two dimensions, inspiring American naval leaders to describe their service as a “three-plane navy” (using “plane” to mean “surface”). Edward G. Lowry, “The Three-Plane Navy,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 11 June 1921, 16-17.

¹²⁰ James Forrestal, “Outline of Remarks to be made at Luncheon of American Society of Newspaper Editors,” 17 April 1948, in *Public Statements of the Secretaries of Defense*, reel 1.

the Key West Agreement. This accord delineated the basic roles and missions of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, with a particular emphasis on how the services would share the skies. Each was assigned several “primary missions.” However, it acknowledged that the services could duplicate each other’s functions to a certain extent. These were enumerated as a service’s “collateral” tasks.

The Navy and Marine Corps emerged from Key West pretty much unscathed. The agreement permitted the Navy was to keep its aviation assets, both shipborne and land-based, although Air Force leaders were not happy about the latter. It listed the “conduct [of] air operations as necessary for the accomplishment of objectives in a naval campaign” among the USN’s primary duties.¹²¹ The agreement also allowed the Navy to retain control of the Marine Corps, which was assigned “service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of limited land operations in connection therewith.”¹²² The Navy took advantage of this clause to have a “collateral duty” written into the *Functions* agreement. It was permitted “[t]o conduct close air support for land operations.” No doubt the framers of the Key West accord intended this stipulation to allow the Navy to provide support for amphibious assaults by the Marines. However, “an understanding was reached, which [did] not appear in the ‘Functions’ paper, that the Navy will not be prohibited from attacking any targets, inland or otherwise, which are necessary for the accomplishment of its mission.”¹²³

¹²¹ Naval Aviation’s Mission, *Naval Aviation News*, May 1948, 8.

¹²² “Function of the Armed Forces and the Joint Chiefs of Staff” in *Department of Defense Documents*, 269. Document hereafter referred to as “Key West Agreement.”

¹²³ Naval Aviation’s Mission, *Naval Aviation News*, May 1948, 8.

The Air Force came out well ahead as a result of Key West, at the expense of its parent service. It controlled the development and acquisition of aircraft for the Army, which was restricted to “such aviation . . . transport as may be organic therein.” This clause was generally interpreted to mean helicopters and small fixed-wing aircraft for observation, liaison, in-theatre transport, and aeromedical evacuation, the pilots of which would be trained by the USAF. The Air Force also retained responsibility for battlefield air support of Army forces, aerial transport outside of a combat theatre, and the carriage of airborne combat forces (although the development of airborne doctrine, procedures, and equipment remained an Army task).¹²⁴

The Key West agreement did not fully resolve all of the issues pertaining to the different services’ aviation missions. Of particular interest was the responsibility for atomic warfare, which was by that time considered almost synonymous with strategic bombing.¹²⁵ The Key West agreement had assigned strategic aerial warfare to the Air Force.¹²⁶ In August 1948, Secretary Forrestal invited the Joint Chiefs and the department secretaries to Newport, Rhode Island, to address “the fundamental concept of strategic warfare as it might have to be waged in defense of the United States.”¹²⁷ The participants determined that “each service, in the fields of its primary missions, must

¹²⁴ Key West Agreement, 279-280.

¹²⁵ Complicating the matter, the Department of Defense did not control atomic weapons. In the event of war, it would have to charge them out from the Atomic Energy Commission, like library books. The AEC was purposely created to retain civilian control of the military. The JCS recommended on numerous occasions that the responsibility for atomic weapons be transferred to the Defense Department. See Chapter V for further information.

¹²⁶ Key West Agreement, 281.

¹²⁷ James Forrestal Secretary of Defense, Memorandum to General Spaatz and Admiral Towers, subject: Fundamental Concept of Strategic Warfare, 9 August 1948. Attachment to Entry, 6 October 1948, “Forrestal Diaries,” 2546-2549, Princeton University Library, quoted in Cole, et al., *The Department of Defense: Documents*, 289.

have exclusive responsibility for planning . . . and the necessary authority. . . . to avoid duplication and the wastage of resources therefrom.”¹²⁸ However, the assignment of a primary task did not imply an exclusive right to that mission. One service could not deny the others participation in a particular role, although their contribution was at the discretion of the service given primary responsibility for the task.

Although the Key West and Newport agreements eased some of the tension between the Air Force and Navy, the truce did not last long. Secretary of Defense Forrestal resigned in March 1949 after disagreeing with the president about the need to cut the military budget even further. One of the first acts of his successor, Louis A. Johnson, was to cancel work on the USS *United States*, the first American aircraft carrier authorized for construction since the end of World War Two. The new secretary cited economic constraints for his decision, but naval officers suspected that the termination was yet another incident in their ongoing rivalry with the Air Force.

The *United States* was a “supercarrier,” large enough to accommodate the new jet fighters that were beginning to enter USN service. However, this capacity also permitted it to carry the North American AJ Savage, a large mixed-propulsion attack aircraft designed in 1946 to carry atomic weapons.¹²⁹ Naval leaders suspected that, despite Key West and Newport, the Air Force still opposed sharing its strategic bombing mission with the USN.

¹²⁸ Key West Agreement, 290.

¹²⁹ “AJ” was a designation, not an abbreviation. It indicated that the Savage was an attack airplane (“A”) produced by North American Aviation (“J”). The letter “N” had already been assigned to products of the Naval Aircraft Factory.

The common perception at the time was that Johnson was making a choice between funding the single supercarrier and funding an entire fleet of superbombers (the Army's desires did not signify). The USAF was in the process of upgrading its heavy bomber inventory from the World War Two-era B-29 to the Consolidated B-36, a massive airplane powered by six piston engines capable of flying intercontinental missions without refueling (although prototypes had flown, heavy jet bombers were still well in the future). Interpreting the decision as an "either-or" proposition, naval leaders took Johnson's act as a signal that the Truman administration was declaring a preference for air power, not sea power, as the dominant instrument of national defense.

The sudden cancellation of the *United States*—which took place just four days after its keel was laid, and without consulting either the Navy or Marine Corps—shocked and disappointed the naval community. The Secretary of the Navy resigned in protest. Other naval leaders, however, took a more active form of resistance, questioning the wisdom of the administration's apparent policy of committing most of its military resources to a single style of warfare. This protest became known as "the Revolt of the Admirals," after an article describing the affair by that name appeared in *Time* magazine.¹³⁰

Naval dissent took two forms. The first was a campaign reminding Americans that the Navy could still contribute to the national defense. Admiral Daniel V. Gallery was particularly active in this area, writing a number of articles for popular magazines with titles such as "Don't Let Them Cripple the Navy" and "An Admiral Talks Back to

¹³⁰ "The Revolt of the Admirals," *Time*, 17 October 1949, 21

the Airmen,” both of which appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*.¹³¹ The admiral managed to cock a snook at the Air Force in the former piece, in which he observed that one of the Navy’s roles was to prevent an enemy from establishing bases in the western hemisphere, “forcing him to fall back on transoceanic bombers. Such bombers must be huge planes, slow and cumbersome” and easily intercepted by jet fighters.¹³² Of course, the only air service in the world possessing of a true transoceanic bomber of any description was the USAF.

The second was to warn the nation of the imprudence of relying too heavily on any particular branch of the armed forces. “[T]he long-range, high-altitude bombing plane is . . . being overemphasized as an instrument of peace and as a weapon of war. The trend of our defense program appears to be directed toward a monopoly. . . .”¹³³ Naval leaders also presented the supercarrier’s cancellation as a failure of unification. What had started out as a protest against the termination of a single project escalated into a forum for the naval community to express its dissatisfaction with a large number of issues, including “strategic doctrine, service roles and missions, and the authority of the secretary of defense.”¹³⁴ The debate became so heated that the House of Representatives held hearings to examine the Navy’s grievances, the published

¹³¹ Daniel V. Gallery, “An Admiral Talks Back to the Airmen,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 25 June 1949, 25-138; Daniel V. Gallery, “Don’t Let Them Cripple the Navy,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 29 October 1949, 36-48.

¹³² Gallery, “Don’t Let Them,” 37-44.

¹³³ Ernest J. King, statement, *The National Defense Program—Unification and Strategy: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives*, 81st Congress, 1949, 251. Hereafter referred to as “Unification and Strategy Hearings.”

¹³⁴ Winfield Scott, “Where there’s Smoke There’s Fire: Air Force Perception of Naval Leadership during the Revolt of the Admirals,” unpublished term paper, Texas A&M University, 2003.

transcripts of which were identified as “National Defense Program—Unification and Strategy.”

During these hearings, Admiral Arthur W. Radford testified that “The B-36 has become, in the minds of the American people, a symbol of a theory of warfare—the atomic blitz—which promises them a cheap and easy victory if war should come.” But cost-cutting, if done improperly, could prove a false economy. Radford and the other admirals did not want to do away with strategic bombing completely. Their argument was that the B-36 was incapable of precision bombing. “I think bombing has to be done,” Radford continued. “I think the B-36 is not a good weapon for doing bombing in a war unless you are in favor of mass bombing” (to which congressman Melvin Price of Illinois replied, “No one favors mass bombing, admiral”).¹³⁵ The superbomber had two problems. One was that the atomic bomb it carried was not a discriminating weapon. Its sole virtue was its destructiveness, as Admiral Raymond A. Spruance observed during his testimony when he testified, “I question whether, as a matter of national policy, atomic or ordinary high explosive bombs on area targets for the destruction of many thousands of the civilian populations and the cities in which they live.”¹³⁶ Admiral Thomas Kinkaid concurred. “Strategic bombing theories—the Douhet or other concepts—particularly when combined with ideas regarding the atomic bomb, may develop a false sense of security, a Maginot-line mentality. . . .”¹³⁷ A balanced force was

¹³⁵ Arthur W. Radford, testimony, Unification and Strategy Hearings, 41, 81.

¹³⁶ Arthur A. Spruance, testimony, *Ibid.*, 340.

¹³⁷ Thomas Cassin Kinkaid, testimony, *Ibid.*, 274.

necessary to engage the enemy on land and at sea while strategic bombing slowly eroded the enemy's will and ability to resist. Why repeat the mistakes of the last war?

The B-36's other problem was its age. Its basic design dated to World War Two when American military planners desired a bomber to fly across the Atlantic in case air bases in the United Kingdom were unavailable. Because the UK never fell, the B-36 program received a low priority, its first flight not occurring until 1946, after the war had ended. Admiral Radford declared that "in the final analysis the B-36 is a 1941 airplane and aviation has made tremendous strides since 1941."¹³⁸ The bomber's intercontinental range meant that the low-endurance fighters of the postwar era could not escort it to its targets. Yet Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington maintained that this apparent fault did not matter. In a speech made months before the hearings, he declared

A B-36, with an a-bomb, can take off from this continent and destroy distant objectives which might require ground armies years to take—and then only at the expense of heavy casualties. The B-36 could do the job within 16 hours after take-off from this continent, and then return nonstop to its home base—all this at the risk of 16 American lives.¹³⁹

During his testimony, Admiral Radford noted that Symington based this claim on several assumptions regarding an enemy's early-warning radar system and the quality of its interceptor forces, all of which, he averred, were spurious.¹⁴⁰ Several air force leaders acknowledged the possibility of interception, but said that the B-36 would attack mainly by night, which reduced the chances of detection, much less contact.

¹³⁸ Arthur W. Radford, testimony, *Ibid.*, 59.

¹³⁹ Symington, speech given 12 February 1949, cited in *Ibid.*, 315.

¹⁴⁰ Radford, testimony, *Ibid.*, 42-43.

Naval officers questioned the B-36's accuracy at night and its ability to survive without escorts at any time, night or day. Few nations had air defenses as poor as Japan's had been during World War Two (a writer in a popular aviation magazine had asked in January 1949, "Does anyone believe that the B-29's successes over defenseless Japan would be duplicated over Russia?").¹⁴¹ Many naval witnesses wondered why the Air Force was being so secretive about the B-36's performance, noting that the USAF's leaders would not allow naval aircrews to be seconded to B-36 units, although both services routinely exchanged pilots and crews for training in other types of aircraft.¹⁴² They claimed that the USN had a jet fighter, McDonnell F2H Banshee, that could intercept the B-36, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff had prohibited the Navy from attempting to prove this contention in exercises.¹⁴³ "There is every reason to believe the enemy will have fighters as good as ours. The British do," one naval fighter pilot remarked.¹⁴⁴ The Navy's argument was that the bomber does not always get through, so neither would the a-bombs it carried—and even if they did, an atomic war would be so destructive that it would be almost impossible to rebuild the world's political, social, and economic order afterward.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Cy Caldwell, "If War Today," *Aero Digest*, January 1949, 94.

¹⁴² Louis A. Johnson, testimony, Unification and Strategy Hearings, 631; Stuart Symington, testimony, *Ibid.*, 413.

¹⁴³ Radford, testimony, *Ibid.*, 340; Louis Denfield, undated letter, quoted in *Investigation of the B-36 Bomber Program: Hearings on HR 234, before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives*, 81st Congress, 1949, 184. This last referred to hereafter as "B-36 Bomber Hearings."

¹⁴⁴ Fred M. Trapnell, testimony, Unification and Strategy Hearings, 132.

¹⁴⁵ Military theorist Bernard Brodie had anticipated this thought several years before, when he wrote, "The present technological trend is decidedly in favor of the defense as against the offense in ordinary strategic bombing. Means of detection and interception of subsonic bombing are making great strides. Guided and homing missiles, proximity fuses, jets all favor the defender." Bernard Brodie, "Navy Department Thinking on the Atomic Bomb," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July 1947, 179.

The dispute between the Air Force and Navy inspired not one but two different, albeit related, sets of hearings. In addition to its examination of the national defense establishment, Congress conducted an investigation of the B-36 program specifically. During the Revolt of the Admirals, an anonymous document alleging impropriety in the B-36's procurement process had begun circulating in Washington. The Secretaries of Defense and the Air Force had reportedly accepted financial favors in exchange for overlooking shortcomings in the B-36 and allowing its development to continue (Johnson had once served on the board of the type's manufacturer). The inquiry into the matter discovered no evidence of any illicit activities, but did reveal that several highly placed naval personnel had assisted in preparing the document. The resulting negative publicity greatly harmed the Navy's reputation and discredited many of the naval personnel who spoke out on the issue. It hastened the retirement of many naval officers, including the Chief of Naval Operations, relieved shortly after the affair.

From the Billy Mitchell Affair to the Revolt of the Admirals, Americans had become increasingly willing to accept air power as an instrument—perhaps *the* instrument—of national defense. Yet how did this reliance manifest itself in war planning after 1945? The World War Two experience provided some guidance, but the introduction of the atomic bomb and profound changes in the world political situation seemed to impose an entirely new set of requirements upon war planners. As a result, throughout the late 1940s, even while Americans were debating the relative merits of air power and sea power in the halls of Congress; the pages of books, newspapers, and magazines; and the bars, water coolers, and barbershops of Main Street, USA—at the

Pentagon, behind the scenes, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were hard at work developing their new plans for the possibility of war.

CHAPTER III
GOSPEL: AMERICAN AIR WAR PLANS, 1945-1950

The United States and the Soviet Union had been allies during World War Two but after 1945 their conflicting policy objectives caused their relationship to deteriorate rapidly. Both nations had emerged from the conflict as superpowers, taking the place of the traditional great powers, all of which, even the victors, had declined in strength and influence after the war. The rivalry between the USA and USSR, known as the Cold War, became so intense that many believed a war between the two was inevitable. This chapter examines the United States' preparations for this conflict.

Cold War Tensions

In both the B-36 Investigation and the Unification and Strategy Hearings, the question of whether to openly debate sensitive material—and there was every expectation of such discussions—came up repeatedly. During the former inquiry, Carl T. Durham of North Carolina asked retired Air Force General Carl Spaatz whether a potential enemy might benefit from examining the topic in such a public forum. The general replied by noting that criticizing the B-36 program “forces the Air Force to give more and more information to the Congress and to the public. . . . Now all that information flows to possible future enemies and the consequence to that is all too obvious.”¹ The Chairman of the Unification and Strategy inquiry, Carl Vinson of

¹ Carl T. Durham and Carl Spaatz, question-and-answer exchange, B-36 Bomber Hearings, 396.

Georgia, announced that “We don’t want any classified information being given in open session. But we do want, as far as possible, an open session, for this country has the right to know what is going on.”²

Even restricted to non-secret material, however, the investigation revealed much about the national defense establishment.³ Representative George Bates of Massachusetts observed, “[T]hese meetings have been productive of much information that would be of aid and comfort to the enemy.” He then asked the current witness, Air Force General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, “Do you know of anything that has been said here today or during these hearings that you feel the enemy himself does not know?”⁴

Vandenberg, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, prefaced his replay by saying

My experience . . . has been that you can read anything that you want to read if you read sufficient newspapers. . . . Now because it has been printed in the press or because it has been printed in magazines has no value to a hostile power. He has to evaluate it, find out what is true and what is not true.

However, concluded the general, “[W]hen responsible officers come up and make these statements, they are quite certain to at least have some merit to them.”⁵

Air Force personnel such as Vandenberg tended to be quicker than their naval counterparts to suggest that some testimony might be reserved for closed or executive sessions. There almost seemed to have been an expectation that the Navy’s witnesses might reveal too much in their desire to promote their own service and discredit the Air

² Carl Vinson, remarks, Unification and Strategy Hearings, 3.

³ By its very nature, an investigation into dissension within a nation’s military establishment will reveal at least one item of interest to a potential enemy—that there is dissension within that nation’s military establishment.

⁴ George Bates, question, Unification and Strategy Hearings, 487.

⁵ Hoyt S. Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 487-488.

Force. Chairman Vinson went so far as to single out the USN for a warning. “The responsibility for an utterance by a high-ranking naval officer is his responsibility. He knows what should be classified and what would be of aid and comfort to an enemy.”⁶ He issued no such caution to the Army’s or Air Force’s witnesses. The Navy found some sympathy, however. General Dwight Eisenhower, observing that the American tradition of civilian control of the military made Congress a party to defense planning, noted “I assure you that this [work] can be done without being careless of military secrets. [T]here is no reason for not telling you the whole story.”⁷ But all participants understood that they had to keep some subjects secret. The General Counsel for the proceedings declared, “You don’t want any blueprints sent to the Kremlin. . . .”⁸

No doubt the Soviets would have appreciated the gift, but the sad truth is that they would not have needed it. Their espionage network in the United States during World War Two and the early Cold War managed to penetrate some of the Americans’ most closely-guarded secret programs. Among its accomplishments were the thefts of plans for the atomic bomb and the USA’s first production jet fighter, accomplished by suborning American technicians, bureaucrats, officials, and scientists.⁹

⁶ Carl S. Vinson, statement, *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷ Dwight David Eisenhower, testimony, *Ibid.*, 565.

⁸ Joseph B. Keenan (General Counsel, B-36 Investigation), statement, B-36 Bomber Hearings, 374.

⁹ Aleksandr Semyonovich Feklisov, *Za Okeanom i na Ostrovye: Zapiski Razvedtsika* (Moscow: DEM, 1994), 106. Feklisov was the spymaster who oversaw both operations. His account contains some curiosities, but they do not seem to discredit his story. He misidentifies the designation of first American jet fighter as the “П-81” (P-81) instead of the P-80. He (or his editor) also departs from standard practice by translating the P-80’s popular name as Падающая звезда (*padayushchaya zvezda*, shooting star), rather than simply transliterating/transcribing Shooting Star as ШУТИНГ Стар, as is far more common in Russian works about aviation topics. Entering “Падающая звезда” on internet search engines returns only entries about meteors.

However, the USSR's information-gathering techniques also included such mundane activities as visiting a newsstand. The Soviets proved avid readers of the American popular press in the immediate postwar era and found plenty of material to warrant their interest during this time. One of the recurring themes in American publications at the time was the possibility of a war between the USSR and the United States, and how such a war might progress.

Naturally enough, the Soviets kept the intelligence that they had gathered through their spying efforts a secret (not until the breakup of the Soviet Union in the 1990s that scholars and journalists discover the full extent of their activities), but they were not averse to revealing their knowledge of American news stories if it promoted their interests. In September 1948, the USSR's Deputy Minister of External Relations, Andrei Yanuarevich Vishinsky, demonstrated his familiarity with the American press in a speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations denouncing the United States for "attempting to realize plans for world domination."¹⁰ As part of his evidence, he presented excerpts from articles that had recently appeared in a number of American publications, criticizing their "frantic warmongering tones [written] with the clear intention of puzzling weak-minded people. . . ."¹¹ Vishinsky identified two news magazines and a general interest journal by name in his speech.¹² He also referred to

¹⁰ Andrei Y. Vishinsky, "United States Seeks World Domination: Defense of U.S.S.R. Foreign Policies," in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 15 (2), 1 November 1948, 38-44. This article was the transcript of a speech given before the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 1948.

¹¹ Vishinsky, "Domination," 42. Americans often referred to the USSR as Russia in the 1940s and 1950s, even though Russia had ceased to exist in 1917. Such usage can be found even in official diplomatic and military documents.

¹² Although he did not mention the specific articles by name—just the publications in which they were found—Vishinsky provided enough information to identify them as: Joseph and Stewart Alsop, "If

“The Map of the Third World War,” depicting the “Pacific Theatre of Military Operations,” published, so he claimed, by the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (better known as Esso, from its initials).¹³

The oil company was quick to deny that it had ever published such a map, although it acknowledged having distributed another illustrating the various campaigns of World War Two, including the Pacific Theatre, “as a public service.”¹⁴ However, the other publications Vishinsky cited could not so easily claim to have been misquoted. *The New York Times Magazine* did indeed identify air bases from which American bombers would attack the USSR and list the “Soviet cities which are apparently doomed to American atomic destruction,” as Vishinsky put it. He also was correct in saying that *US News and World Report* wrote that “‘The United States will attack Russia’—as they call it—‘chiefly by air. . . . Atom bombs will be saved for use on Russia herself.’”¹⁵

It would be easy enough to assume that Vishinsky selected only the most provocative passages in the works concerned, to maximize their propaganda effect, but he actually refrained from citing all of the material he could have used, primarily because the issue of the “insolent” American media reports was a minor point in his speech (a full transcript published in *Vital Speeches of the Day* numbers some seven

War Comes,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 11 September 1948, 15-17, 178, 180-183; Hanson W. Baldwin, “What Air Power can—and cannot—do,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 30 May 1947, 5-7, 20-21; and “Strategy for ‘World War III’: Drive to Choke Soviet Industry: Prospect of Long Conflict, maybe Stalemate,” *US News & World Report*, 9 April 1948, 11-14.

¹³ Vishinsky, “Domination,” 42.

¹⁴ “Oil Company Denies Soviet Map Charge,” *The New York Times*, 36 September 1948, 3. It appears that Vishinsky was the victim of a misunderstanding by his translating staff (or, perhaps, wishful thinking on his part). The map in question was actually called “War Map III, Featuring the Pacific Theater.” “International: The Warmongers,” *Time*, 11 October 1948, 29; “Wrong War,” *Newsweek*, 11 October 1948, 40.

¹⁵ Vishinsky, “Domination,” 42.

pages, of which only one-half of one page was devoted to the offending periodicals).¹⁶ A quick review of the three articles he cited shows that if anything, he overlooked some potentially inflammatory material. *The Saturday Evening Post* article, for example, promised that “the loss of the chief targets in only eighty cities would reduce the Soviet Union to a smoking desert of rubble, without industrial output, transport or communications.”¹⁷

Vishinsky was not the only Soviet official paying attention to the American media in 1948. Earlier that year, in June, the Soviet Embassy to the United States had delivered a communication to the American Department of State objecting to an article published in *Newsweek* magazine the previous month. The Soviet complaint had two main elements. The first was that the article was “an example of unbridled propaganda for war against the Soviet Union,” and as such, was a violation of a resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations prohibiting works that might incite acts of aggression (which they, helpfully, cited in its entirety). The second concerned the contents of the article itself, the subject of which was how the United States would conduct a war against the Soviet Union if the two nations came to open conflict. Their grievance noted that the article described “a plan to use American air forces, air bases and atomic bombs against the Soviet Union, particularly the destruction of Soviet cities. . . . [It] envisages combined air, naval, and ground operations from American bases

¹⁶ Ibid., 38-44.

¹⁷ Joseph and Stewart Alsop, “If War Comes,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 11 September 1948, 182.

located near the Russian mainland and . . . intensive bombing raids and attacks by guided missiles.”¹⁸

The State Department’s reply to the Soviet note, transmitted some three weeks after the Soviet protest, was scrupulously proper. It observed that the American constitution guaranteed freedom of the press, so the US government could not censor any publication or broadcast. As to the Soviets’ other concern, the Americans acknowledged, but did not really address, it. Their reply noted that “the greater part of the article was devoted to speculation concerning measures to which the United States might resort [if attacked but t]here is no suggestion that the United States should take the initiative in attacking the Soviet Union or any other country.” *Newsweek* was describing a hypothetical situation, albeit one with semi-official sanction (the magazine implied that its material was based on a speech by Air Force General George C. Kenney). The State Department closed its reply by pointing out that “The government of the United States is happy to observe the statement in the Embassy’s note characterizing the charge that the Soviet Union is preparing an attack upon the United States as a libelous invention.”¹⁹

This statement seems almost lighthearted, but the possibility of war with the Soviet Union was a very real fear in the United States at the time. The Cold War had entered a new and critical phase earlier that summer. The Soviets, in contravention of their agreements with the western powers (the United States, the United Kingdom, and

¹⁸ Embassy Note No. 107, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, vol. 4: *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1974), 886-888. All subsequent references to any volume of this series hereafter referred to as “*FRUS*,” with the year and volume appended.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 898; Secretary of State, letter to the Ambassador of the Soviet Union, in *FRUS* 1948-4, 896-898. In a footnote on this page, the editors of *FRUS* observe that the Soviets considered the American reply unsatisfactory, and reiterated their protest, although they seemed to have let the matter drop afterwards.

France), had cut off surface access (roads, railroads, canals, and rivers) to the city of Berlin in April, leading the United States and its allies to initiate the Berlin Airlift in response. In his memoirs, written just eight years after the experience, President Harry S. Truman observed, “We had to face the possibility that Russia might deliberately choose to make Berlin the pretext for war. . . .”²⁰ The 1948 Berlin crisis (the first of many superpower crises focusing on the former and future German capital) was a signal event in the history of the Cold War, the first direct confrontation between the two most powerful nations on earth. Prior to 1948, the superpowers had been content to compete with one another by using political, military, and economic influence among allied, satellite, and neutral nations.

The increased threat of war was one of the primary reasons why American newspapers and magazines published so many articles about how a superpower conflict might be fought in the late 1940s. The works cited by the Soviet representatives in the episodes described above were but a small proportion of the total volume of pieces on the subject.²¹ A modern reader, conscious of how strongly the American public responded a few years later when it learned that the Soviets had stolen American secrets (the Rosenberg atomic espionage trial in 1950 produced a huge sensation), might be surprised by how little popular outrage was generated about the Soviets’ ability to read

²⁰ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, vol. 2: *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1956), 124.

²¹ *The Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature* electronic database lists some twelve works published between 1945 and 1950 that include the phrase “War with Russia” or “War with the Soviet Union” in their titles. Widening the search parameters to include “war” and “Soviet Union” as subject or text keywords produces several hundred “hits” (references), although it must be noted that in the first two years of the period searched, these works refer primarily to World War Two.

about America's war plans at the time of the Berlin crisis.²² Americans should have been aware that the Soviets had knowledge of the material. Many newspapers published articles about and excerpts from Vishinsky's speech.²³ Others reported the Embassy protest, yet no articles, editorials, or letters to the editor appeared objecting to the easy availability of what was supposedly secret information.²⁴

The most compelling explanation for this apparent lack of concern about military security is that the American considered their nation's reliance on its air arms common knowledge. The Soviets were well aware that the Americans attributed much of their success in World War Two to their strategic bombing campaigns against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan (see previous chapter). The United States' exclusive possession of the atomic bomb, at the time deliverable only by airplanes, and continued advances in aeronautical technology such as the jet engine, would only encourage the Americans to continue to rely upon their air arms in the future. "Stalin knows, and all Stalin's conferees know, that American air power alone can reach the war mills and smash their

²² Repeated searches of various electronic databases online and printed indices for any evidence of popular reservations about releasing such information publicly in the early Cold War have produced little indication that Americans believed that a greater level of censorship was necessary. Of course, it is impossible to prove a negative, but the (lack of) evidence suggests that most Americans were comfortable with the publication of material that revealed, in broad terms, the thinking of American military planners.

²³ As noted above, *Vital Speeches of the Day* published it in its entirety. In addition, the speech was mentioned in articles in many American periodicals. "Soviet Resolution and Vishinsky Excerpts," *The New York Times*, 26 September 1948, 4; "Russia Proposes 5-Power Arms Cut: Vishinsky Charges U.S. After World Control," *Newsday*, 25 September 1948, 1; Chesley Manly, "Visjinsky Claims United States Plans War," *The Chicago Times*, 26 September 1948, 1; Carlyle Holt, "Vishinsky's Speech Dubbed 'Yesterday's Soup' in U.N.," *The Boston Globe*, 26 September 1948, C50; "International: The Warmongers," *Time*, 11 October 1948, 29; "Wrong War," *Newsweek*, 11 October 1948, 40.

²⁴ "New 'Warmonger' Charge is Lodged: Russian Protest to U.S. based on Magazine Article," *The Sun* [Baltimore], 10 June 1948, 1; "Russians accuse U.S., Dutch Press: Charge Articles in Newsweek and Amsterdam Paper Break U.N. Warmongering Clause," *The New York Times*, 11 June 1948, 11.

gears. . . . They fear American aviation more than all other factors in the United States put together,” wrote the *New York Herald-Tribune*’s aviation correspondent in 1948.²⁵

Additionally, any government authority concerned that a hostile foreign might make use of any information revealed about weapon performance, deployments, or unit strength, and who would be in a position to control the release of such material, would probably have reasoned that these articles, books, and government documents revealed no true secrets, and that the peace of mind they afforded the public more than compensated for any possible loss of security.²⁶ “When the newspapers publish in big headlines that we have a bomber that can fly 10,000 miles with a 10,000-pound bombload, at 40,000 feet, it is most comforting to the American people, . . .” opined congressman Dewey Short of Missouri during the Unification and Strategy Hearings in

²⁵ Gill Robb Wilson, “The Air World: Balanced Weakness or Invincible Air Force?,” *The New York Herald-Tribune*, 2 February 1948, 8.

²⁶ The Americans had at least one attempt to secure top-secret information backfire on them. While the first atomic bombs were still in development, General Leslie R. Groves, the director of the Manhattan Project, commissioned physicist Henry DeWolf Smyth to prepare a short history of the program. The resulting document, formally titled *A General Account of the Development of Methods of Using Atomic Energy for Military Purposes under the Auspices of the United States Government, 1940-1945*, but better known as the Smyth report, was published on 12 August 1945, less than a week after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It focused primarily on physics, not engineering, and contained no details of the design and construction of the atomic bombs. Yet many Americans criticized Smyth and Groves for betraying the secret of the American atomic bomb. “Physicists Declare U.S. Has Told Atomic Secrets,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 19 June 1946, 2; Robert D. Burns, “Lilienthal Cites Breach in Security: Asserts Publication of Smyth Report had Bared Atomic Secrets: Authorization was Given by Truman: McMahon Has Clash with Vandenberg on A-Bomb Information,” *The Hartford Courant*, 29 January 1947, 1; “Reds Obtained Atom Secrets, Baruch Hints,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 4 February 1947, 1).

The Smyth Report was originally published by the US Government Printing Office, but demand was high enough that the Princeton University Press released a second edition later in 1945. The two versions varied slightly. General Groves had directed that a reference he considered sensitive—one single sentence—be removed from the Princeton printing. The Soviets, keen to learn all they could about the American atomic program, acquired copies of both editions, and, comparing the two, *noticed* the discrepancy. “Groves’ deletion of the sentence from the typeset Princeton edition highlighted its importance as surely as if the general had waved a red flag.” Richard Rhodes, *Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 216-217.

1949.²⁷ American leaders wanted to reassure their constituents that they were adequately prepared for a war against the Soviets while at the same time letting the Soviets know the consequences of any aggression. “It is no secret to the Russians that the biggest thing United States war chiefs have studied in connection with the Russian showdown is how we could drop the atomic bomb on strategic Russian cities—if we have to,” wrote political commentator Drew Pearson in his syndicated column in 1948. “It is also no secret that the Russians are obsessed with the fear that the bomb may be dropped and that they are frantically maneuvering to prevent such an attack.”²⁸ Pearson’s prediction proved accurate. A year later, during the Geneva Convention negotiations, described by one British correspondent as a “real picture on how the Great Powers visualise the next war,” the Soviets introduced an article making various “means of exterminating the civil population” a war crime.²⁹ Quick to defend its self-defined prerogatives, the United States delegation objected, arguing that the proposal could be interpreted to ban “the concentrated bombing of civilians from the air.”³⁰ The subsequent debate determined that the existing Hague Conventions governing the conduct of war addressed the topic sufficiently. The article was rejected by a large majority, with only the USSR and Israel voting to include it.³¹

The USA and USSR had been allies during World War Two, but their association, never cordial, had been breaking down for several years by the time of the

²⁷ Dewey Short, question, Unification and Strategy Hearings, 465.

²⁸ Drew Pearson, “Washington Merry-Go-Round: Russia Works against A-Bomb,” *The Washington Post*, 22 March 1948, B15.

²⁹ “Powers’ Fears Reveal Shape of New War,” *The Observer* [London], 3 July 1949, 1.

³⁰ “A Geneva Report” (letter to the editor and editorial response), *The Observer* [London], 17 July 1949, 5.

³¹ “Powers’ Fears Reveal Shape of New War,” *The Observer* [London], 3 July 1949, 1.

Berlin crisis. They soon returned to their pre-war relationship of mutual suspicion and mistrust. Both nations had emerged from World War Two with their economic, political, and military might relatively intact, the only world powers to escape the destructiveness of the conflict. Of course, the USSR had suffered considerably from the fighting (taking “damage . . . estimated at twenty-five per cent of pre-war capital stock”), but it also recovered more quickly than any of the other belligerents.³² Most of its factories were beyond the area of the fighting (and out of range of enemy bombers), so they resumed production quickly.³³ The USSR’s economic revival also benefited from German manufacturing equipment seized as “reparations”³⁴ The Soviets had also received significant industrial assistance from the British after the war.³⁵ Both the United States and the Soviet Union grew so strong after World War Two that the term “Great Power,” long used to describe the nations of Europe that had dominated the world politically and militarily in the nineteenth century (and, by 1900, Japan), seemed inadequate to describe them. A new expression was needed. The phrase “Super-State”

³² “Areas Vital to Soviet War Effort,” JIS 226/2, 12 February 1946, 2, in Paul Kesaris, ed., *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, part 2, 1946-1953: The Soviet Union* (Washington DC: University Publications International, 1979), reel 1, microfilm. Collection hereafter referred to as “Records of the JCS/46-53/SU.”

Note that all references to page numbers in this and subsequent notes are taken from the internal pagination of the document cited.

³³ Additionally, the *Luftwaffe* did not mount a large-scale strategic bombing effort against the USSR.

³⁴ JWPC 474/1 “Strategic Study of Western and Northern Europe,” 13 May 1946, in Stephen T Ross and David Alan Rosenberg. *America’s Plans for War against the Soviet Union, 1945-1950: A 15-volume set reproducing in facsimile 98 plans and studies created by the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, vol. 3: *Pincher: Campaign Plans, Part I* (New York: Garland, 1989), 69. All volumes in the “America’s Plans for War” series hereafter referred to as “APWSU” with their volume number appended.

Note that, save for some introductory material, the “America’s Plans for War” series are not themselves paginated. All references to page numbers in this and subsequent notes are taken from the original internal pagination of the document reproduced.

³⁵ Jeffrey Engel, “‘We are not Concerned who the Buyer is:’ Engine Sales and Cold War Security at the Dawn of the Jet Age,” *History and Technology* 17, no. 1 (2000), 4-67.

enjoyed a brief vogue but lost favor, to be replaced by the word used today, “Superpower.”³⁶

The suspicion and mistrust that had marked the American-Soviet relationship before and during World War Two hardened after 1945. As the Joint War Plans Committee (JWPC), an Army-Navy working group, observed in the year before Unification,

Since the end of World War II the U.S.S.R. has maintained a non-conciliatory attitude toward the Western Powers, particularly the United States and Great Britain, on practically all matters of common international interest. Her participation in the United Nations has been characterized by demands, which, if granted, would better her international position at the expense of other nations and would contribute to the accomplishment of the Communist concept of eventual world domination.³⁷

The State Department was reaching the same conclusions. On 22 February 1946, George Kennan, the American Deputy Chief of Mission to the USSR, transmitted what became known as the “long telegram,” in which he described the “basic features of [the] post-war Soviet outlook” and how they affected Soviet policy.³⁸ Kennan amplified his thoughts in an article published in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, formally titled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” but generally known as the “X Article” because it was attributed to a writer identified only as “X” (Kennan, a civil servant, did not want the readers to believe the piece represented official policy, yet many did interpret it as such

³⁶ The expression “super state” had several meanings in the late 1940s. The first, as described above, was a name for what later became known as a superpower. Another was a confederation of sovereign nations.

³⁷ JWPC 474/1 in *APWSU*, vol. 3, 5.

³⁸ Chargé in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 22 February 1946, in *FRUS*, 1946-6, 696.

once the author's identity became known).³⁹ His main points in both works were that the leaders of the USSR viewed capitalism and communism as inherently incompatible, and that they perceived the USSR to be in perpetual war with the capitalistic democracies of Western Europe and the United States.

Soviet actions in the years immediately following World War Two substantiated American fears. The United States responded by forging collective security agreements with the states of Western Europe that feared that they might be next annexations into a Soviet empire (which the Soviets interpreted as confirming their fears). Thus did the multi-polar world of Great Power rivalry (the "long nineteenth century") evolve into a bipolar world of superpower conflict.⁴⁰ The nations of Europe had little choice but to align with either the USA or USSR; only a few remained neutral, foreshadowing similar decisions the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America would make in the following decades. By 1948, Hanson W. Baldwin, military affairs editor of *The New York Times*, could proclaim the existence of "Two Worlds from Now On."⁴¹ The forty-year-long enmity between the superpowers became known as the Cold War.

World War Three: A New Type of Conflict

Although both the USA and USSR preferred using economic, cultural, and political influence over warfare to achieve their national aims, neither was averse to

³⁹ X [George F. Kennan], "Sources of Soviet Conduct, *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947, 566-582.

⁴⁰ A concept attributed to historian Eric Hobsbawm in his books *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789-1848* (London: Abacus, 1962); *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson), 1975; and *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987).

⁴¹ Hanson W. Baldwin, "Two Worlds from Now On," *The New York Times*, 23 May 1948, C1-C48.

open conflict if it appeared necessary. Each became involved in many wars during the Cold War. Yet the superpowers' land and sea forces never confronted each other directly (although their air units did).⁴² The Soviets and Americans favored limited "proxy" wars against each others' client states when they resorted to force to extend their prestige and influence. Nonetheless, for four decades, the possibility existed that a miscalculation by either nation might lead to war.

Had such occurred, it would have been "different from all major wars [the United States] has fought in the past. . . . It [would] be a strange war, in that neither Russia nor the United States [could] invade and conquer the home territory of the other."⁴³ The two superpowers do not share a land border. They are on different continents, although they are separated by just 55 miles (80 km) of ocean at their closest point, the narrowest part of the Bering Strait (although their shared maritime boundary along the strait is some 1500 miles long). Even if an invasion force crossed from Alaska to Siberia or vice versa it would find itself in an inhospitable environment thousands of miles from the industrial and population centers of either country.

Given that their heartlands are on opposite sides of the world from one another, the superpowers had but one method of striking at each directly in the event of war: air power. Only aircraft had the ability to traverse the vast distances from the one to the other's cities and production centers. Both countries could conduct strategic bombing

⁴² Americans repeatedly made reconnaissance overflights into Soviet territory between 1946 and 1970, losing several dozen aircraft to the defenses in the process. Although not confirmed until after the fall of the Soviet Union (but long suspected), during the Korean Conflict the Soviets transferred several fighter units to China to augment the North Korean and Chinese air forces and to protect China and North Korea from American air attack. Their aircraft often encountered American ones, with both sides claiming many aerial victories.

⁴³ "Strategy for World War III," *US News & World Report*, 9 April 1948, 11.

campaigns against the other, each striving to devastate the other before suffering a similar fate. The only defense would be interceptors and anti-aircraft, but these could only reduce the destruction, not prevent it—World War Two had demonstrated that Baldwin’s formula should have been “enough bombers will get through.” Strategic bombing still seemed to be a race to kill women and children faster than the enemy could. Such a conflict would represent the Douhet theory taken to its logical conclusion. The Italian theorist did warn, after all, that “the fundamental principle of aerial warfare is . . . to resign oneself to endure enemy aerial offensives in order to inflict the greatest possible offensives on the enemy [emphasis in original].”⁴⁴

The only problem with this scenario is that in the early days of the Cold War the USSR did not have a strategic air force. The Soviets had not embraced Douhetism before World War Two and had developed no true strategic bombers during that conflict. In 1946, the Americans’ Joint Planning Staff (JPS) issued the following assessment:

Any consideration of the Soviet Air Force must emphasize the fact that the Russians have not yet developed an effective strategic air force. The Soviets have, however, given indications that they intend to develop a strategic air force which would eventually be composed of modern super-bombers. However, for the next two years their four-engine TB-7, having a 1,000-mile radius and carrying two tons of bombs [both less than the American World War Two B-17], will probably be their best aircraft of this type. It has been estimated that it will require five years for the Soviets to build an aircraft equivalent to our B-29 and from five to ten years to develop an effective strategic air force.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 194.

⁴⁵ Annex “A” to Enclosure “B”: “Soviet Military Forces”: in JPS 789 “Concept of Operations for ‘Pincher’” 2 March 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 26. In the American experience, the progression went from the B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers to the B-29 very heavy bomber to the postwar B-36 “superbomber.” The Soviet would then have to work very hard to catch up. But see note 111, this chapter.

Later appraisals would contain almost identical passages, the only differences being the specific types of Soviet aircraft mentioned.⁴⁶

Why, then, were the Americans so exercised about the possibility of a war with the USSR? They were still safe behind their oceanic moats. Despite the sensationalistic warnings that the “next Pearl Harbor” would be Anytown, USA, the Soviets simply did not pose a credible threat to the United States in the half-decade immediately following World War Two.

It was not their own security that so concerned Americans, but that of their allies in Western Europe, with whom the United States had close economic, political, and cultural ties. In 1946, the JPS recognized that “[t]he Red Army should have little difficulty in completely overrunning Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Austria and France,” although taking the Italian, Iberian, and Scandinavian peninsulas would present difficulties.⁴⁷ During the Berlin crisis two years later the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recognized that “Soviet military forces . . . have the current capacity of overrunning all of Western Europe and the Near East to Cairo within a short period of time.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ A document prepared just two months after the one cited in the note above added the “twin-engine ER-4, having a 1,500-mile radius and carrying 4,400 lbs. of bombs,” and noted that “ER-6 and TU-4, two new four-engine HB’s, are under development and will probably be ready for use in 1948.” JWPC 432/3 “Joint Basic Outline War Plan Short Title ‘Pincher,’” 27 April 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 30.

Similar language is used in JWPC 432/7 “Tentative Over-All Strategic Concept and Estimate of Initial Operations Short Title ‘Pincher,’” 18 June 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 25-26. The “ER” designation indicates products of the Yermalaev bureau, although the abbreviation “Yer” is more common. Neither the Yer-4 nor the Yer-6 entered quantity production. The Tupolev Tu-4, however, did, becoming the backbone of Soviet strategic air forces for a decade. Later documents mention this type almost exclusively when referring to the USSR’s strategic air arm.

⁴⁷ JPS 789, “Concept of Operations for ‘Pincher,’” 2 March 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 10.

⁴⁸ ORE 22-48 “The Possibility of Direct Soviet Military Action during 1948”, 2 April 1948, 2; http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000258340/DOC_0000258340.pdf, accessed 15 October 2012.

Several factors would have facilitated a Soviet advance westwards through Europe. One was that no significant geographical obstacles between the USSR's western frontier and the Atlantic Ocean exist and the Soviets would actually be operating from bases in occupied eastern and central Europe, not the USSR, giving them a "head start" in their drive west. The Soviets only had to march overland. They also had the luxury of being able to choose when to attack. The United States had categorically denied any intention of initiating a conflict with the Soviets. However, the Soviets' most significant advantage in any European conflict was their overwhelming manpower superiority.

This last concerned Americans and Europeans the most. Both the USA and the USSR had committed large forces to the liberation of Europe during World War Two, but after the conflict the Americans, weary of fighting, had demobilized rapidly, as was their tradition, leaving only a small force in the occupied territories (George C. Marshall would call it "a tidal wave for demobilization").⁴⁹ The Soviets, however, did not reduce their forces, nor did they withdraw from Eastern Europe completely. They used their occupation forces to establish communist governments in the region in an effort to create a buffer between themselves and what they perceived as the hostile capitalistic West. Both sides also could draw upon the forces of their allies. Estimates of the total Soviet military strength varied, but all agreed that it was considerable. In 1948, American war plan "Broiler" reported that the Soviets and their allies possessed 173 divisions (the standard unit of comparison of armies, comprised of some ten to thirty thousand troops

⁴⁹ George C. Marshall, remarks to the National Preparedness Orientation Conference, 30 November 1950, in *Public Statements by the Secretaries of Defense*, reel 3.

depending on nation, branch, and time period), although not all were in Europe.⁵⁰ That same year, a member of the American House Foreign Affairs Committee, John Vorys of Ohio, announced that the eastern bloc could field some 199 army divisions, against which the USA and its western partners could field but 104.⁵¹

What could the United States do to compensate for its manpower disadvantage? What it had always done—apply technology to the problem. As noted in the previous chapter, Americans tend to seek technological solutions to their difficulties, a legacy of their colonial origins. The Joint War Planning Committee’s 1946 plan for a possible conflict with the Soviet Union, codenamed “Pincher,” reflected this characteristic American attitude.

An analysis of Soviet capabilities indicates her predominant position in both manpower and natural resources and, although the basic aim of U.S. and Allied military operations is the destruction of the Soviet “will to resist,” the cost of liquidating her massive ground forces in a war of attrition by the direct application of our ground armies would be prohibitive. It thus becomes necessary to select operations which are more in consonance with our military capabilities and in which we can exploit our superiority in modern scientific warfare methods.⁵²

The JWPC’s document was, naturally, classified. A public demonstration of this American preference for technology over manpower occurred in 1949, when W. Stuart Symington, the Secretary of the Air Force, observed in a speech that “The military

⁵⁰ JSPG 494/4, Joint Subsidiary Plans Group, Tab “A” to Annex “A,” 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 71.

⁵¹ To Promote the General Welfare, National Interest, and Foreign Policy of the U. S. Through Necessary Economic and Financial Assistance to Foreign Countries Which Undertake To Cooperate with Each Other in the Establishment and Maintenance of Economic Conditions Essential to a Peaceful and Prosperous World: Hearings on HRG-1948-RUH-0047 or S 2202 [unclear from context], House Of Representatives, Committees on Rules, 80th Congress, 1948, 25; “Survival of U.S.A. at Stake,” *The Irish Times*, 23 March 1948, 1.

⁵² JWPC 432/7 “Tentative Over-All Strategic Concept and Estimate of Initial Operations Short Title ‘Pincher’” 18 June 1947, 16, in *AWPSU*, vol. 2.

forces of democracy are numerically inferior to the military forces of communism; therefore, the military forces of democracy must attain and maintain qualitative—technological—superiority.”⁵³

Symington was not suggesting that a war between the USSR and USA would be like the colonial wars of the late nineteenth century, in which Asian and African peoples armed with spears and shields faced European machine guns, relying on numbers for any hope of victory. The USSR was an industrialized state, and enjoyed a rough technological parity with the United States and its western allies during World War Two and the late 1940s. Symington was referring not to the weapons themselves but to the doctrines that determined the employment of those weapons. The development and production of technology is a cultural activity. The procurement of weapons, which are a highly specialized application of technology, reflects a nation’s vision of warfare—which is, among other things, the interaction between two societies. A nation invests in the military and naval technologies it perceives it needs, which depends in large part on the nature of its potential adversaries. This principle informs the observation, “If any nation can visualize its prospective enemy, it can tell without fallacy the range required for its bombardment [aircraft].” This specific example, as might be surmised, comes from an American source.⁵⁴

⁵³ W. Stuart Symington, “Our Air Force Policy: Three Goals to be Achieved,” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 1 July 1949, 567-568.

⁵⁴ Arnold and Eaker, *Winged Warfare*, 9.

National Styles of Warfare

The USA and USSR diverged most perceptibly in their conception of warfare. The two superpowers prepared for two very different modes of war, but for both, their geographical circumstances determined their styles in large part.⁵⁵ The United States was a sea power, insulated from potential threats by two great oceans. Although large enough to be self-sufficient, it opened itself up to the world and developed an extensive trans-oceanic trading network. Concerned that this commerce was vulnerable to disruption, the Americans established a substantial navy to protect it and to defend their coast from invasion, a task made easier by their predilection for technology.

The Soviet Union was a land power, surrounded by potential enemies. The size of its armies defined its military might, and it procured the majority of its armaments to support its land campaigns, hence the Soviets' dismissal of Douhet. The USSR was large enough to be largely self-sufficient for resources, production, and markets, and could afford to close itself off from contact with what it perceived as a hostile world.

The Cold War was not the first time that two empires with disparate warmaking styles confronted each other. The Napoleonic Wars of the early nineteenth century featured the land strength of France and its allies balanced by the maritime power of the United Kingdom.⁵⁶ An earlier model dates back to the fifth century BC, to which George C. Marshall, the American Secretary of State, referred in a speech in 1947. "I

⁵⁵ Historians try very hard to avoid anything that suggests determinism, but cannot deny that geography exerts a profound influence over human behavior.

⁵⁶ During the Napoleonic era, the land strength of France and its allies were balanced by the maritime power of the UK. Neither side was able to invade the other until late in the conflict. The only major land fighting took place in a peripheral area, the Iberian Peninsula. The French defeat there allowed the UK to cross the Pyrenees and defeat Napoleon only after years of fighting.

doubt seriously whether a man can think with full wisdom and with deep convictions regarding some of the basic international issues of today who has at least reviewed in his mind the period of the Peloponnesian War and the Fall of Athens.”⁵⁷ Most commentators, both at the time and since then, interpreted Marshall’s words to refer to the conflict as the prototype of a struggle between a dictatorship and a democracy. A few also noted that Athens was a naval power while its Peloponnesian rival, Sparta, was a land power.

Geostrategy

Of course, the Spartans defeated the Athenians, which did not bode well for the prospects of either democracies or maritime nations. But, as sea power advocates Mahan and Corbett would have noted, history seems to favor thalassocracies. Two of Mahan’s criteria for sea powers were an empowered entrepreneurial population and a liberal government. Not everyone subscribed to this view, however. Writing in 1919, a few decades after Mahan, geopolitical theorist J. Halford Mackinder held that the Soviet Union enjoyed a favorable position at the center (the “heartland”) of the “World Island” (Eurasia). “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; Who rules the World Island commands the World.”⁵⁸ Such control, of course, would have to be effected with land power.

⁵⁷ George C. Marshall, Washington Birthday Remarks at Princeton University, 22 February 1947, printed in its entirety as an appendix of Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall Statesman* (New York: Viking, 1987), 523-525.

⁵⁸ J. H. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (New York: Norton, 1962 [1919]), 150.

The balance between land and sea power seemed to have an element of the “immovable object/irresistible force” paradox to it. An army has free range over the land; a navy has unlimited mobility at sea, and both are stymied when they arrive at a coastline. They cannot directly strike at each other. Historically, struggles between land and sea powers tend to be lengthy stalemates broken only when one of the belligerents got careless and allowed its opponent to learn how to fight in both elements.⁵⁹

However, this land-sea antithesis is predicated upon two-dimensional thinking. Navies and armies are bound to the earth’s surface. They can only meet or go around each other; they cannot go over or under. The atmosphere covers both land and sea, however, giving aircraft the ability to travel over both, and thus engage both armies and navies. The invention of the airplane would have a profound effect on geopolitical theory.⁶⁰

Not surprisingly, an attempt to create an air-based geostrategy that focused upon the ability of aircraft to overfly any surface obstacle emerged shortly after the airplane was invented. It mainly addressed point-to-point transit without any consideration of

⁵⁹ During the Second Peloponnesian War, the Spartans, a long-time land power, developed a navy, enabling them to defeat the Athenians, a sea power. The Romans did the same thing against the Carthaginians in the third century BC during the First Punic War. Conversely, the Napoleonic Wars represents a sea power (Great Britain) making a lodgment on land (in Spain), which, when not repulsed, was exploited to enable the British to march into France.

⁶⁰ Writing after the Korean War, retired RAF officer John Slessor decreed, “[L]et us not be distracted by geopolitical talk about heartlands, which was all very well in Mackinder’s day but ceased to be relevant with the long-range bomber. Russia’s central position has some tactical advantages, vis-à-vis her neighbours, but in a world air war she would be at a decisive disadvantage. Air power has turned the vast spaces that were her prime defense against Napoleon and Hindenburg and Hitler into a source of weakness. In these days of near-sonic speeds, the depth of penetration necessary to reach some of her vital centres is offset by the size of the area to be defended and the fact that it can be attacked from almost all round the compass.” John Slessor, *Strategy for the West* (New York: Morrow, 1954), 34.

intervening terrain—the globe may as well have been smooth for its proponents. In 1925, William Mitchell had predicted that

Routes between the continents will not follow the old land and water ways parallel to the equator which have been used heretofore, because our old means of transportation used to be confined to land and water. . . . The new routes will follow the meridians, straight over the top of the earth, which cut off hundreds of miles, save weeks of time, untold effort, dangers and expense.⁶¹

Applied to the struggle between the USA and the USSR, the aviators' geopolitical view emphasized an area hitherto ignored by geopolitical theorists: the polar regions. Because it emphasized origins and destinations, a key element of strategic aerial warfare (routes meant little), the USAF helped popularize this idea. General Carl Spaatz, an influential bombardment advocate and leader, warned that “[t]hrough the Arctic, every industrialized country's within reach of our strategic air force. America is similarly exposed. . . .”⁶² The American popular press soon began carrying articles about the new “polar strategy.”⁶³ Almost all contained maps—not the conformal cylindrical types with which most Americans were familiar, but polar projections, the better to dispel “the mistaken idea that North America lies somewhere between Europe and Asia, [which] has developed from the pernicious habit stretching the world out, Mercator-fashion, in an

⁶¹ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 13-14.

⁶² Carl Spaatz, quoted in “Arctic Provides Path of Attack, Spaatz Warns: U.S. is ‘Wide Open’ to Devastating Blows, VFW Convention Told,” *The Washington Post*, 3 September 1946, p1.

⁶³ “The Arctic: It has become the Key to World Strategy,” *Life*, 20 January 1947, pp 55-56; Charles J. V. Murphy, “The Polar Concept: It is Revolutionizing American Strategy,” *Life*, 20 January 1947, 61-62; “U.S. Studies Cold-Weather War to Keep Pace With The Soviet: Midway in Northern Waters Makes Sub-Arctic Carrier Tests; Larger Experiments Planned,” *Newsweek*, 18 March 1946, 40; “The Coldest Cold War,” *Newsweek*, 15 November 1954, 54-56; John Kord Lagemann, “The Handwriting on the Ice,” *Colliers*, 16 November 1946, 18-19, 39-40, 42; Hanson W. Baldwin, “Alaska: Rampart We Must Watch,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 April 1950, SM4-6, 32-34; Anthony Leviero, “Air War Across the Pole,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 14 December 1947, SM10, 61, 63-64.

east-west direction.”⁶⁴ The concentration of industrialized powers in the northern hemisphere caused General Arnold to observe that the “war-making nations are all north of 30 degrees latitude. Study your globe and you will see the most direct routes are not across the Atlantic or Pacific, but through the Arctic.”⁶⁵

Alaska was of particular importance. The closest point of contact between the superpowers, it lay “astride the northwest approaches to the United States [or the northeast approaches the Soviet Union] and . . . dominate[d] the great arctic sea and air routes between the United States and areas of the Far East.”⁶⁶ Mitchell had apprehended the value of Alaska early on. Testifying before Congress in 1935, he said, “Alaska is the most central place in the world for aircraft, and that is true of Europe, Asia, or North America. I believe in the future he who holds Alaska will hold the world, and I think it is the most important strategic place in the world.”⁶⁷

Against the possibility of war with the Soviet Union, the USAF invested a considerable amount of time, money, and manpower in preparing itself for flight operations in the Arctic. Project Nanook, initiated in 1946, was an attempt to survey the polar regions.⁶⁸ In the process, American airmen learned how to navigate at high

⁶⁴ J. Parker Van Zandt, “The New Geography,” in *The Impact of Air Power: National Security and Politics*, Eugene M. Emme, ed. (New York: D. Van Nostrand 1959), 113. This piece is excerpted from Van Zandt’s *The Geography of World Air Transport* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution in 1944), 12.

⁶⁵ Henry H. Arnold, quoted in “Gen. Arnold Urges Polar Defense,” *The Washington Post*, 6 July 1946, 6.

⁶⁶ JWPC 476/2 “The Soviet Threat in the Far East and the Means Required to Oppose it: Short Title ‘Moonrise,’” 29 August 1947, in *APWSU*, vol. 3, 3.

⁶⁷ William Mitchell, testimony, *Air Defense Bases: To Authorize the Selection, Construction Installation, and Modification of Permanent Stations and Depots for the Army Air Corps, and Frontier Air-Defense Bases Generally: Hearings on HR 6621 and HR 4130, before the Committee on Military Affairs*, 74th Congress, 1935, 121.

⁶⁸ Ken White, *World in Peril: The Origin, Mission, and Scientific Findings of the 46th/72nd Reconnaissance Squadron* (Elkhart IN: K. W. White, 1994), 5.

latitudes, where “east” and “west” lose their meaning and only “north” and “south” have relevance, and magnetic north is nowhere near true north. The Air Force had to develop a special grid system for plotting courses and locations in the Arctic. One “crew dog” remembers “the study guide we used [to learn the novel coordinates] . . . began ‘Along the 180 degree meridian on polar charts, true south is the direction of grid north. . . .’”⁶⁹ They also discovered the patterns of arctic weather, the best ways to winterize their aircraft and ground equipment, what facilities air bases should have in the far north, and the techniques of arctic survival on both land and at sea. The Air Force published all of this information in its *Polar Guide*, an 85-page manual issued in 1948.⁷⁰ Even though war never came, the Air Force’s efforts in the Arctic proved their value when, on 3 September 1949, while flying off the east coast of Siberia, a B-29 specially modified to detect atmospheric radiation discovered evidence that the Soviets had detonated an atomic bomb.

American Plans for the Conduct of World War Three

A Superfortress was available for this duty because the type was in the process of replacement with larger, more advanced models such as the B-50 and B-36. As noted earlier, the B-36 was an intercontinental bomber. With it the United States could strike directly at the Soviet Union’s vitals. However, as military theorist Stefan T. Possony, best known for his championship of the 1980s Strategic Defense Initiative, the notorious

⁶⁹ John Matt, *Crew Dog: The Saga of a Young American* (Hamilton VA: Waterford, 1992), 281.

⁷⁰ Department of the Air Force, *Polar Guide* (AFTRC manual 50-0-23), 15 June 1948.

“Star Wars” program, asked in 1949, “Would any air general in charge of operations against Germany base his bombers in Long Island if he could base them on Great Britain, France or Italy?”⁷¹ The United States would be foolish to forego any opportunity to establish bases as close to the Soviet Union as possible. The longer the bombers had to fly to reach their targets, the greater the chances of their detection and interception, and the greater the possibility of mechanical failure.

Forward bases also allowed the United States to employ its shorter-ranged bombers against the Soviets.⁷² The B-36 did not enter service until 1949 and was not available in large numbers until the early 1950s. Until that time, the United States would have to rely on the World War Two-era B-29 and, after 1948, the B-50, an improved model of the Superfortress.⁷³ Both were long-ranged by World War Two standards, but inadequate for the needs of a war against the Soviet Union. The B-29 had a range of 4200 statute miles, while the B-50’s range was 4650 statute miles. The B-36 could fly 7500 nautical miles (The Americans changed their measurement standards after World War Two).⁷⁴

⁷¹ Stefan T. Possony, *Strategic Air Power: The Pattern of Dynamic Security* (Washington DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), 211.

⁷² Appendix “B”: “Appreciation of Air Base Areas initially required in Strategic Air Offensive against the U.S.S.R.”: in JPS 789/1 “Staff Studies of Certain Military Problems deriving from ‘Concept of Operations for “Pincher,”” 13 April 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 20-21. Hereafter referred to as “Appreciation of Air Base Areas.”

⁷³ Reflecting its origins, the B-50 was originally designated B-29D. “The redesignation was an outright military ruse to win appropriations for the procurement of an airplane that by its B-29D designation appeared to be merely a later version of an existing model that was being canceled wholesale, with many existing examples being put into dead storage.” Peter M. Bowers, *Boeing Aircraft Since 1916* (London: Putnam, 1989), 345.

⁷⁴ Data taken from: Gordon Swanborough and Peter M. Bowers, *United States Military Aircraft*, (Washington DC: Smithsonian, 1989), s.v. Boeing B-29, Boeing B-50, and Consolidated B-36. An airplane’s range is notoriously difficult to calculate with certainty. Note that “range” refers to total distance flown from takeoff to landing. The term “radius” is used to mean the distance from base to objective and is, not surprisingly, about half range. Aircraft endurance is predicated on a wide variety of

Thus in the event of war with the Soviet Union, American war plans called for the transfer of bombers to advanced bases in Europe and Asia. A 1946 survey of possible base areas conducted by the JPS as part of the planning effort noted that “[t]he effective deployment of air power against a country’s ability to wage war demands the employment of aircraft from bases which permit a sustained and effective attack with large tonnages against vital targets.” These bases needed to meet two conditions:

- a. Base area system selected must permit VHB [very heavy bomber] aircraft coverage of major industrial areas which may support the military effort of the enemy.
 - b. Further, such air base areas forming the system should be selected from those areas which are expected to be initially in Allied hands and most reasonably secure against enemy attack.
- These principles, a and b. are of basic importance in the selection of a base system, although consideration of other factors such as availability for U.S. occupancy, accessibility for supply, requirements for defense, capacity, etc.

The second principle, it noted, was of particular significance because bases in territory already friendly to the United States would enable the air campaign to begin as rapidly as possible. Fighting for bases from which to operate would cause undesirable delay.⁷⁵

Which areas best met these criteria? War plan “Pincher,” adopted in 1946, stated that “[t]he most likely base areas from which to initiate the destruction of Soviet war-making capacity by aerial bombardment can be found in the British Isles, Italy, Egypt, Northwestern India and to a lesser extent western China.” Flying from these sites,

factors, such as internal and external fuel load, payload, configuration, and throttle setting. As a result, different works may give very different figures for the same type of aircraft, and yet all may be correct, as few sources identify the precise conditions the numbers apply to. As an example, compare the statistics given above to those cited in another work about American military aircraft. The B-29’s range 3,250 miles, the B-50’s is 4,900, and the B-36’s is 7,500. Lloyd S. Jones, *American Bombers* (Fallbrook CA: Aero, 1974), s.v. “Boeing B-29 Superfortress,” “Convair B-36D,” and “Boeing B-50D Superfortress.”⁷⁵ Ibid., 21. “Appreciation of Air Base Areas,” in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 20-21.

American bombers could reach “the major portion of Soviet industry and critical resources. . . .”⁷⁶ Sweden and Spain were not suitable, as they were too far from any major target areas (and Sweden would endeavor to remain neutral, as it had done during World War Two). France, Denmark, and Germany were too easy to overrun, either in the initial Soviet attack or later in the conflict, leading to their rejection. Turkey had the advantage of proximity to the Soviet Union, but had the disadvantage of . . . proximity to the Soviet Union. “The availability of bases in Turkey will depend solely upon her ability to withstand conquest.” Norway, although a good place from which to launch operations, was indefensible (and its proximity to presumably-neutral Sweden might cause difficulties because the Swedes might close their airspace to belligerents).⁷⁷

Of the regions deemed acceptable, some, of course, were better suited for the task than others. The United Kingdom was particularly advantageous. The JPS survey noted that “its strategic position and its extensive and ready logistics support capabilities will dictate its position as the keystone of at least the initial air efforts against the U.S.S.R. and her conquered territories of western Europe.”⁷⁸ The Americans had based over forty heavy bomber groups (each with 45 aircraft) in England during World War Two and the JPS expected that, even though postwar bombers were larger, the UK could host a similar number. Another benefit, albeit one not noted in the JPS study, was that the shared language would ease relations with the local population.

⁷⁶ JPS 789, “Concept of Operations for ‘Pincher,’” 2 March 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 21. The *US News & World Report* article referred to in the Vishinsky speech mentioned near the beginning of this chapter—the one listing air bases from which the Soviet Union could be attacked—correctly identified the UK, Italy, and Egypt, but failed to include India or China.

⁷⁷ “Appreciation of Air Base Areas,” in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 28-29.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

The UK was not perfect, however. Minor shortcomings associated with using Great Britain as a base were weather, which during World War Two had forced the cancellation of many strategic bombing raids, and air traffic congestion—the USAF would have to share the airspace with the RAF, which would also be conducting air operations, both offensive and defensive.⁷⁹ Of greater concern was the vulnerability of the United Kingdom to air attack. “With Soviet aircraft operating from nearby channel coast bases, heavy air attacks could be initiated against the U.K. in the early phase of the war. These attacks could be supplemented by guided missiles, particularly the V-2, launched against the highly concentrated areas. . . .”⁸⁰ Such attacks from the European “rocket coast” could jeopardize the strategic bomber forces based on Great Britain. The ability of the Soviets to threaten airbases in the UK would improve over time as the USSR developed its offensive air arm.

The other locations suggested as possible base areas had both good points and bad points. Italy was less favored than Egypt, offering little that North Africa did not also provide; additionally, the JPS was not certain that Italy could withstand a Soviet attack. One of Egypt’s attractions was that “[a]ir bases sites in the vicinity of Alexandria are practically unlimited.” However, the area was not without its problems. Although aircraft based in eastern North Africa could reach “all of the Soviet oil resources in the Caucasus, Iran and Roumania [as well as] the Ukraine and south central U.S.S.R. industrial regions,” the region would be vulnerable to an attack by the Soviets, who were expected to drive southwards in an effort to secure the oil fields of the Middle East. The

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ JWPC 474/1, in *APWSU*, vol. 3, 49.

Americans might have to remove their forces to Libya and use Cyprus and Crete as staging bases.⁸¹

The main attraction of northwestern India, specifically the Lahore-Karachi area (part of British India until 1948, now in Pakistan), was its location. It was the only site from which American bombers could reach the Urals industrial region. If unable to use the region, the Americans would have to acquire longer-ranged aircraft or seize comparable bases elsewhere. The rugged terrain of Afghanistan also provided protection from Soviet attack. “The importance of this area in our air offensive must be made known to the British as soon as possible.”⁸² The region would have to be prepared for large-scale bombing operations; it had few airbases of sufficient size to handle large-scale operations.⁸³ However, being close to the core of the USSR meant that Lahore-Karachi was far from the USA; it was the most remote area on the list of possible bases. Communications and logistics were a primary consideration for the JPS.⁸⁴

The Joint Planning Staff expressed a similar concern about the Chinese sites on its list, which were desirable because they afforded “access to four industrial regions of the U.S.S.R.: Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Kemerovo and Stalinsk. These target areas are beyond the range of B-29 aircraft from air bases in Japan or Okinawa, and are shielded by the Himalayas from those based in India.” The JPS had other reservations about China, citing the “Soviet preponderance of force in Asia.” The JPS could remove the Chinese locations from the list if and when enough B-36s became available, because it

⁸¹ “Appreciation of Air Base Areas,” in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 24-25.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸³ Joint Logistics Plan Group; “Quick Feasibility Test of J.S.P.G. 496/4,” 19 March 1948; in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 1, 9-10.

⁸⁴ “Appreciation of Air Base Areas,” in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 25-26.

could reach targets in the Soviet Far East from bases in India, Japan, Okinawa, or the Philippines.⁸⁵

The JPS acknowledged that access to bases on the mainland of eastern Asia “will depend . . . on the part China plays in the war. Certainly we have reason to expect a small diversion of our war effort aimed at keeping China allied with us.”⁸⁶ The Chinese Civil War had begun in 1945, and the Nationalist government, recognized by both the United States and the Soviet Union, was faring poorly against the insurgent Chinese Communist Party, ideologically sympathetic to the Soviets. In the first years of the conflict, American soldiers fought alongside Chinese government troops, but the United States withdrew from the fighting when the Nationalist refused to consider a negotiated settlement. The Americans continued to provide money and equipment to the Nationalists, but despite this assistance and a 1945 promise by the Soviets not to intervene in the conflict, which they gave to retain a strategic railroad concession, the Communists emerged victorious in 1949. They then declared the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which the USSR recognized immediately, but not the USA.

Even before the Nationalists’ collapse, the Americans had removed China from their list of possible bomber bases. War plans prepared in 1948 called for strategic bombing operations against the Soviet Far East conducted by aircraft based on the island of Okinawa in the Ryukyu island chain; later plans added Japan. The imminent service debut of the B-36 made the switch to bases further from the target areas more of an

⁸⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 26-27.

inconvenience than a problem. Indeed, a distant island base was easier to defend against an enemy that had little naval or long-range air power.

The substitution of the Ryukyus and Japan for China was just one of many modifications made to American war plans in the early Cold War era. Indeed, the Pentagon's war planning staffs were perpetually revising their plans to better reflect changes in the world political situation, the introduction of new weapons systems, and the receipt of new intelligence about Soviet defensive capabilities. Between 1945 and 1950, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed no fewer than ten different war plans, as well as numerous auxiliary documents examining specific aspects of a war against the Soviet Union, although not all of them were endorsed officially. The large number of plans gives some indication of the remarkably fluid nature of the world political and military environment in the immediate postwar period.

Some indication of the rapidity with which the global situation changed is found in the scenarios for how the war would begin in the various plans. The earliest war plans were predicated on the assumption that the conflict would begin as a result of a crisis involving the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, most likely in the Middle East.⁸⁷ The United States would become involved to assist its European allies. Later plans, however, reflected the declining fortunes of the British Empire and the growing influence and power of the United States. These postulated that war would involve the USA from the beginning. World War Three would probably not be intentional. Instead,

The U.S.S.R., although desiring to avoid a major conflict for the next several years, will commit an act or series of aggressions vitally affecting

⁸⁷ Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans 1945-1950* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 25-26.

the security of the British Empire or the United States or both; through miscalculation by the Soviets of the risks involved, this act or series of aggressions will lead to war between the U.S.S.R. on one side and the United States and the British Empire on the other.⁸⁸

Later plans contained similar passages, such as this one from “Grabber”: “There is a possibility that war will occur at any time as the result of miscalculations by the USSR as to the extent that the United States or other western powers would or could resist their present expansion policy.”⁸⁹ All of them assumed that the Soviets would initiate hostilities.

The most significant differences in the various plans concerned Europe. The Americans originally considered the continent indefensible and planned to concentrate their efforts on the Middle East, save for the defense the UK. In 1946, war plan “Pincher” called for “our European occupation forces [to] withdraw as expeditiously as possible from the continent, or to a defensive position in Italy, or possibly Spain.”⁹⁰ However, later plans called for the Americans to “to hold maximum areas in Western Europe,” from which they could launch a counteroffensive when conditions allowed.⁹¹

A reduction in emphasis on the Middle Eastern theatre accompanied this increasing prominence of European operations. Early plans called for the Allied counteroffensive to originate in southwestern Asia. In all plans the Cairo-Suez area was important as a base for strategic bombers. Thus was the traditional geopolitical

⁸⁸ Appendix “B” to enclosure “B,” JWPC 458/1 “Preparation for Joint Plan ‘Broadview,’” 5 August 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 12.

⁸⁹ Appendix to JCS 1844/1 “Frolic” [“Grabber”], in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 9.

⁹⁰ Enclosure, JPS 789/1 “Staff Studies of Certain Military Problems deriving from ‘Concept of Operations for ‘Pincher,’” 13 April 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 2.

⁹¹ Anthony Cave Brown, ed., *Dropshot: The United States Plan for War with the Soviet Union in 1957* (New York: The Dial Press/James Wade, 1978), 47.

significance of the Middle East confirmed, but the region's twentieth-century economic importance was less well apprehended. The area's oil fields were in some plans vital to the Allied war effort, and thus had to be defended or, failing that, recaptured, yet in others they were dispensable, to be sabotaged if in danger of capture or bombed if lost.⁹²

A comparison of the various war plans reveals another noteworthy shift. Those written immediately after World War Two discount the Soviets' capacity to attack the United States directly.

During the next few years, foreign capabilities for direct attack against the United States and its bases are slight. However, an abrupt change in the situation will result from foreign development of the atomic bomb and/or other weapons of mass destruction and from foreign possession of aircraft or missiles able to deliver the weapons at 4000-5000 miles distance. It appears certain that these developments will take place; only the date is still in doubt.⁹³

For "foreign," of course, read "Soviet."

American estimates of Soviet offensive capabilities in 1946 deemed peripheral bases in the Arctic area and shipping vulnerable only to small-scale air raids, although the Soviets might also be able to mount "[m]inor harassing air attacks by non-return sorties against a few targets in areas of Canada and the northern United States." The greatest threat to American security would come from saboteurs and subversives.⁹⁴ By 1948, however, Soviet offensive capabilities had improved. The USSR was by then in possession of bombing and transport aircraft of sufficient range to allow it to conduct

⁹² Ross, *American War Plans*, 152.

⁹³ Appendix "B" to enclosure "B," JWPC 458/1 "Preparation for Joint Plan 'Broadview,'" 5 August 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 12.

⁹⁴ JWPC 458/1 "Preparation for Joint Plan 'Broadview,'" 5 August 1946, in *APWSU*, vol.2, 3-4.

airborne and attack missions against Alaska.⁹⁵ Although these operations would be primarily to neutralize the American bomber forces based in the area, the Soviets could also seize the airfields, which would definitely neutralize the bombers, and use them for “long-range aircraft [that] could attack any important target in the United States with small-scale, one-way missions; small-scale, two-way attacks could be launched against the Puget Sound area.” Happily for the ordinary American citizens who worried about the “next Pearl Harbor” taking place in their hometowns, “the experience of the [Soviet] air crews in long-range operations [was] extremely limited. Thus their effectiveness in long-range operations . . . depend[ed], mainly, upon the training received since the close of hostilities.”⁹⁶ The Americans expected the Soviets to dedicate significant resources to cultivating their long-range aviation units. They would also, inevitably, acquire atomic weapons. Plan “Dropshot,” submitted in January 1949, shortly before the first successful Soviet A-bomb test, noted that

[a]s the threat of Soviet A-bomb attack increases, heavy pressure on the Department of Defense for maximum protection against air attack of all large populated areas may be expected, regardless of their military importance. Complete protection is not practicable, and attempts to provide it could consume an undue proportion of our available resources without commensurate increase in the degree of protection afforded.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ These include the Tupolev Tu-4, a copy of the American B-29. Three Superfortresses had made emergency landings in Vladivostok during World War Two, and although their crews had been repatriated, the aircraft themselves were seized. In one of the best examples of “reverse engineering” in history, the Soviets took the B-29s apart and used them as templates for the creation of the Tu-4. The realization that the Soviets had avoided the expense and frustrations that the development of heavy bombers usually incurred (the B-29 program had been particularly troublesome) and had thus acquired a strategic bombing force virtually overnight caused great consternation within the American defense establishment.

⁹⁶ “Soviet Intentions and Capabilities,” corrigendum to JIC 435/12, 16 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 10, 26, 55.

⁹⁷ Cave, *Dropshot*, 189.

The government would have to allocate its limited air defense assets to the highest-value target regions in the USA. Some areas might have to go without. And, of course, the Americans could not leave their overseas bases defenseless.

Yet the differences between one particular plan and the one that followed it were minor. It might be more accurate to describe the ten postwar plans as refinements of one another, rather than completely new programs. They shared many common features. All assumed that the Soviets would begin the war and that Europe and the Middle East would be the main theatres. The Far East and Pacific were accorded only secondary importance. The conflict would in many ways be a reiteration of World War Two. The Soviets, like the Germans and Japanese, would be initially successful, taking vast amounts of territory before halting. While the United States and its allies, particularly the United Kingdom, mobilized economically and militarily, American and British strategic air power would strike at Soviet industry. The American war planners understood that “[n]o war with the U.S.S.R. [could] be less than a total war, requiring the full utilization of the entire U.S. and Allied war potential”⁹⁸ Once the air campaign had sufficiently weakened the Soviet will and ability to continue fighting, the Allies could exploit their control of the world’s oceans (the Soviet navy, save for its submarine branch, was not much of a threat) to position their land forces for launching a counteroffensive.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ JWPC 432/3 “Joint Basic Outline War Plan Short Title ‘Pincher,’” 27 April 1946, in *APWSU*, vol.2, 24.

⁹⁹ Ross, *American War Plans*, 152.

Air power would be the Allies' only means of striking at the USSR during the initial Soviet attack and subsequent Allied buildup.

The air offensive is the primary means now available by which the Allies can deliver destructive force against those elements of national power which form the backbone of Soviet military power. The delivery of this destructive force is a basic undertaking—a requirement to prevent loss of the war or stalemate.¹⁰⁰

It would not only keep the Soviets occupied and force them to divert assets to their air defenses that might otherwise be used offensively, it would weaken them enough so that the Allied land counteroffensive could occur.

The importance of the air offensive, naturally enough, cannot be overemphasized. Plan “Broiler,” prepared in 1948, explicitly states that “[t]he success or failure of this plan depends on the early effectiveness of the air offensive particularly that with atomic weapons”¹⁰¹ If the bombing campaign failed to achieve its purpose, the United States and its allies would find it difficult, if not impossible, to initiate the land campaign necessary to reverse the initial Soviet gains.¹⁰²

Not surprisingly, the strategic bombing campaign against the USSR played a key role in the American war plans prepared between 1945 and 1950. It was also, in many ways, the least vague element of these plans. The land campaigns the plans describe were contingent upon too many unknowns. Most did not prescribe any specific course of action, but instead contained analyses of force requirements, terrain, road and rail

¹⁰⁰ Annex “C” to Appendix: “Outline Plan of a Powerful Air Campaign against Vital Elements of Soviet War-Making Capacity, employing Atomic and Conventional Weapons”: in JSPG 494/4 “Broiler” 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 175. Document referred to hereafter as “‘Outline Plan,’ in JPSG 494/4 ‘Broiler,’ in *APWSU*, vol. 6.”

¹⁰¹ JSPG 496/4 “Broiler,” 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 3.

¹⁰² Enclosure “C”: “Joint War Plans for Determination of Mobilization requirements for War beginning 1 July 1949”; in JCS 1725/22, 26 August 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 10, 191.

networks, port facilities and capacity, local politics, the economic and strategic value of the various regions where fighting might occur, and other broad issues. Discussions of sea warfare were even less well defined, generally limited to a brief iteration of the navy's three main tasks: maintaining control of sea routes, securing overseas bases, and neutralizing Soviet naval forces, with a focus on mining operations over battle. One duty, however, would have pleased the admirals: "Carrier task groups available from other tasks will be employed to supplement and support the air offensive."¹⁰³ The plans contained few concrete predictions regarding enemy deployments, strength, and activity, with the exception of Soviet air power, both offensive and defensive.

The detailed descriptions of the American plans for a strategic air campaign against the Soviet Union provide an opportunity to examine how these plans fit into the continuity of American thinking about aerial warfare. They reveal that the Americans still accepted the principles of Mitchell and Douhet, modified, of course, by their assimilation of the lessons of World War Two. However, the American plans were not simple updates of the programs that had defeated the Axis powers. World War Three would have differed from World War Two in several significant respects.

One was that although both the USSR and Germany were industrial land powers on great plains surrounded by numerous places suitable for basing bombers, the two countries were different in scale, the Soviet Union being both vast and distant. Another was that the instruments of air power had changed. The American war planning staffs had to determine how the jet engine would change the calculus of air defense, and what

¹⁰³ JCS 1844/1 Short Range Emergency Plan "Grabber" (later renamed "Fleetwood"), 17 March 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 14.

impact the atomic bomb would have on the air offensive. Although both of these technological innovations had seen service during World War Two, they appeared so late and in such small numbers that their value could not be adequately assessed. The Americans would have to incorporate them into their plans with only limited knowledge of their full wartime capabilities.

The American plans reveal two approaches to the problems associated with the size and remoteness of the Soviet Union. The first was to base their shorter-ranged bombers as near to the USSR as possible.¹⁰⁴ The second was to employ bombers capable of reaching targets in the Soviet Union from North America. During the Unification and Strategy hearings, when Congressman Franck R. Havenner of California asked him, “Isn’t it conceivable that at some early stage in a future war we might not have foreign air bases close to enemy territory?” Air Force Chief of Staff Vandenberg replied, “That is one reason we have B-36’s.”¹⁰⁵

Yet no fighter airplane available at the time was capable of intercontinental flight. The great range of the B-36 precluded any possibility of fighter escort, a point made repeatedly by USN personnel during the Unification and Strategy hearings.

¹⁰⁴ During World War Two, the USAAF had used bombload as the primary criterion for categorizing bombers. The B-25 and B-26 had been “Medium Bombers,” B-17 and B-24 had been “Heavy Bombers,” and the B-29 was a “Very Heavy Bomber.” However, one of the ways the USAF distanced itself from its Army roots upon becoming independent in 1947 was to revise its classification system. Range became the determining factor. In this system, the B-29 was identified as a “Medium Bomber” (as was its variant, the B-50), while the B-36 became a “Heavy Bomber.” It is possible that the introduction of the atomic bomb may have influenced the decision to de-emphasize payload. The change became a source of confusion because many people believed that the designations referred to size or weight, not range, despite that the B-36 dwarfed the B-29. Others interpreted the reclassification as a symbol of the rapid recent advances in aviation technology. Marcelle Size Knaack, *Encyclopedia of US Air Force Weapons Systems*, vol. 2: *Post-World War Two Bombers 1945-1973* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History USAF, 1988), 21 n45.

¹⁰⁵ Hoyt S. Vandenberg, testimony, Unification and Strategy Hearings, 490.

Admiral Ralph A. Ofstie warned, “[D]espite the bitter lessons of the last war, the current concept of strategic air warfare calls for long-range bombers to make attacks without fighter escort. [B]ombing over long ranges results in a significant reduction of the bombing effort, brought about both by operational and combat losses.”¹⁰⁶ Virtually every other naval officer who testified, including Admirals William J. Halsey, William H. P. Blandy, and Arthur Radford; Marine General Vernon E. Megee; as well as large number of junior officers, made similar statements.¹⁰⁷ Not surprisingly, witnesses from the Air Force disagreed. Secretary of the Air Force Symington proclaimed his “belief in the B-36 and its ability to perform its assigned task.”¹⁰⁸ General Vandenberg expressed the same confidence. When Congressman Dewey Short of Missouri asked him, “[D]o you believe that you can have long-range effective bombing without escort—fighters—to protect the bombers?” his reply was a simple and direct, “Yes, sir.”¹⁰⁹ During the investigation into the B-36 program, General LeMay fielded a similar question from General Counsel Joseph B. Keenan and gave a similar answer.¹¹⁰

Much of the testimony in both the B-36 inquiry and the Unification and Strategy hearings concerned when bombing attacks would take place. Naval witnesses appeared to be talking about daylight raids at some times and about nocturnal attacks at others.

They may have been deliberately misrepresenting the issue, in an effort to discredit the

¹⁰⁶ Ralph A. Ofstie, testimony, *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁰⁷ William H. P. Blandy, statement, *Ibid.*, 203-204, and testimony, *Ibid.*, 212, 217; William J. Halsey, statement, *Ibid.*, 239, and testimony, *Ibid.*, 249; 227; Abraham Hyatt, statement, *Ibid.*, 163-164; Charles Frederick Leonard, testimony, *Ibid.*, 155; Alfred B. Metsger, testimony, *Ibid.*, 161; Arthur Radford, statement, *Ibid.*, 42-43, and testimony, *Ibid.*, 102-103, 106; Vernon E. Megee, statement, *Ibid.*, 197; Ralph A. Ofstie, statement, *Ibid.*, 184, 188; John S. Thach, statement, *Ibid.*, 284; Fred M. Trapnell, statement, *Ibid.*, 132-133, 136, and testimony, *Ibid.*, 136, 140.

¹⁰⁸ Stuart Symington, testimony, *Ibid.*, 402.

¹⁰⁹ Hoyt S. Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 464.

¹¹⁰ Curtis LeMay, testimony, B-36 Bomber Hearings, 150.

B-36, or they were simply confused. Like most of the committee members hearing their accounts, they were presumably aware that the USAAF had committed itself to daylight precision bombing against the Germans but had shifted to night area attacks in the war against Japan. The USAF's postwar preferences were unclear, and statements such as General LeMay's proclamation, "We have the capability and we intend to continue developing the capability of bombing in daylight or in darkness, in good weather or in bad weather, by individual airplane or by formation," did little to clarify the issue.¹¹¹

Of course, LeMay may have been simply trying to remain flexible. His next words were, "At the time we have to fight it will be my responsibility to make the decision as to what method we are going to use."¹¹² Daylight missions certainly permitted for greater bombing accuracy but also increased the ability of an enemy to detect and intercept the incoming raid. However, radar navigation and bomb-aiming aids had improved enough in the years after 1945 to make precise nighttime bombing possible, at least within the tolerances required for the employment of atomic weapons. A 1948 evaluation of American air war plans noted, "Where necessary or operationally desirable, daylight attacks can and will be conducted. However, night and weather operations, jamming capabilities, speed and altitude of the bombers would all be used in reducing the risks involved."¹¹³

It was also possible to mix programs. An annex to the appendix of war plan "Broiler" included a breakdown of air unit deployments. The four main overseas air

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ JCS 1952/1 "Evaluation of Current Strategic Air Offensive Plans," 21 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 24.

base areas (UK, Cairo-Suez, Karachi-Lahore, and Japan-Ryukyus) to which medium bomber groups were assigned all had escort groups allocated as well, implying that the USAF expected its B-29s and B-50s to conduct daylight operations (escorts are not needed at night).¹¹⁴ Other documents, such as one that notes that the runways on the airfields in India “must be extended an average of 1,500 feet to accommodate escort fighters,” would seem to confirm that the USAF expected its medium bombers to be escorted.¹¹⁵ Of course, there was no reason why B-29s and B-50s could not fly at night, should that course of action appear preferable to daylight operations.

The missions of the medium bombers based around the periphery of the Soviet Union would have seemed very familiar to the veterans of the air campaigns against Germany and Japan during World War Two (and doubtless many of the aircrews who would have participated in World War Three had fought in that conflict).

On all strikes the bombers would leave their advanced bases . . . and stay as long as possible at the minimum altitude consistent with efficient cruise control to avoid detection by perimeter radar warning sites. They would form into a bomber stream separated at one minute intervals and staggered in altitude (such tactics have proved to be most effective in saturating enemy ground and air defenses). Before reaching the point of possible enemy interception, they would climb to a minimum of 20,000 feet . . . and would maintain proper intervals by rigid adherence to flight plan. Evading known enemy defenses where practicable, they would proceed on course and climb to bombing altitude of 30,000 feet before reaching the initial point (IP), where the bombers make their final turn into the target. At this point the aircraft would fan out (to further split the defenses) and each aircraft would proceed to specifically designated aiming points. Immediately after releases of its bombs, each aircraft turns away from the target. The aircraft withdraw with maximum power settings on the shortest course out, subject to consideration of known

¹¹⁴ “Outline Plan,” in JPSG 494/4 “Broiler,” in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 175.

¹¹⁵ Joint Logistics Plan Group, “Quick Feasibility Test of J.S.P.G. 496/4,” 19 March 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 10.

enemy defenses. In some instances where deep penetrations are required the bombers can be withdrawn to the nearest Allied base area, thus reducing the risk.”¹¹⁶

Only the types of aircraft, on both sides, would have changed—and there would have been aircraft on both sides. American war planners assumed that “[n]o raid will be unopposed if it is at all possible to oppose it.”¹¹⁷

The B-36 units attacking Eurasia from bases in the western hemisphere had no escort units and would have had to go it alone.¹¹⁸ These groups had to rely only on their aircraft to defend themselves.¹¹⁹ The B-36 did have a formidable defensive armament: sixteen 20-millimeter cannon in eight positions. Thus it not only had more guns but more powerful guns than the B-17s and B-29s of World War Two.

¹¹⁶ JCS 1952/1 “Evaluation of Current Strategic Air Offensive Plans,” 21 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 19.

¹¹⁷ Enclosure “E”: “Interception Possibilities”: in “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, E-39.

¹¹⁸ “Outline Plan,” in JPSG 494/4 “Broiler,” in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 175.

¹¹⁹ In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the USAF experimented with a number of ways to extend the range of fighter aircraft so that they could be employed as bomber escorts. The vast distances entailed in intercontinental aerial warfare put almost all targets in the USSR beyond the reach of all American fighters, jet or propeller, in this era. Piston-engined airplanes are more fuel-efficient than jet aircraft, but as the Soviets were assumed to have jet interceptors, which have far better performance than propeller-driven machines, the USAF recognized that it would have to have jet-powered escorts to afford any sort of protection to its bombers.

The most unusual attempts to provide escorts for deep penetration missions involved the conversion of some bombers into “flying aircraft carriers.” The fighter would be conveyed to the target area by a “mother ship,” then released when enemy interceptors were encountered. Once these were disposed of, the fighter would then rejoin and reattach to the bomber that had brought it. There were three such programs: project “Tom-Tom” called for a stock fighter to be carried underneath a bomber on a special trapeze, the “Tip-Tow” concept had two fighters attached to a bomber with a wingtip-to-wingtip linkage, and the XF-85 Goblin was a small fighter designed to fit *within* a B-36’s bomb bay. All three of these projects were abandoned when testing demonstrated that even under perfect conditions it was almost impossible for a fighter to link up with its mother ship.

The ultimate solution to the problem, of course, was the development of reliable air-to-air refueling techniques.

Penetrating the Soviet Defenses

However, the Americans did all that they could to obviate the need for a B-36 to use its guns. There are three phases in the process of destroying an incoming bomber and the Soviets were likely to be deficient at all three of them. The air defenses of the Soviet Union would have difficulty not only with detecting B-36s, but engaging them and destroying them.

The USSR is a vast nation, with a correspondingly long perimeter difficult to patrol. Additionally, it would have to defend any territory it conquered in its initial attacks at the beginning of hostilities.¹²⁰ The challenges facing the PVO Strany (*ProtivoVozhdushnaya Oborona Strany*, “Anti-Air Defense of the Nation”) would be tremendous. So seriously did the Soviets take the threat of air attack by the United States that they made the PVO a separate branch of their armed forces early in the Cold War, responsible for all Soviet fighter, antiaircraft, and surface-to-air missiles forces, in much the same way that the USAF had gained its independence in 1947.¹²¹ Although many sources cite 1954 as the PVO’s founding, American war planners referred to it as a new organization as early as 1948. They described it as smaller than either of the corresponding American or British formations, perhaps because they seemed to believe

¹²⁰ JCS 1952/1 “Evaluation of Current Strategic Air Offensive Plans,” 21 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 11-13.

¹²¹ The elevation of the USAF in the United States and the PVO in the USSR to independent status is another reflection of the relationship between national character and technology.

the PVO was just an interceptor force, and that ground-based air defenses belonging to another service branch, most likely the Red Army.¹²²

One way that American bombers could avoid detection was by crossing into Soviet territory in an unguarded area. The Soviets had the full suite of air defenses, including interceptor fighters, radar, antiaircraft guns, and (possibly) surface-to-air missiles, which were valuable if given sufficient warning, but “the great expanse of [the] country and the vast number of targets it presents make its adequate defense by such means impossible.”¹²³ The one factor favoring the defense was that most of the USSR is farmland or wilderness and offers few targets for strategic bombing. The Soviets knew which of their industrial and population centers of the USSR the Americans were likely to attack, and so could concentrate their defenses along the approaches to these areas.

Even knowing generally where the bombers were going, the Soviets still had to find them. The shortcomings of acoustic and visual detection had been amply demonstrated during World War Two. “The modern bomber flies too high to be seen or heard.”¹²⁴ Radar, introduced during that conflict, proved to be a much more effective method of locating incoming aircraft, and by 1948, according to American estimates, the Soviets possessed “adequate early warning radar apparatus sufficient for generous

¹²² JIC (48) 76 (0) (Final) “A Comparison of the Fighting Values of Russian and Allied Forces,” 21 September 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 10, 3.

¹²³ JCS 1691/10 “Proposed Release of an Extracted Version of the Final Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Evaluation Board on Operation Crossroads and the Related Proposed Press Release,” 29 December 1947, enclosure “C”; in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 125.

¹²⁴ “The Intercontinental Bomber”: author, publisher, and date unknown; 16, in *President Harry S. Truman’s Office Files, 1945-1953*, part 2: *Subject File* (Washington DC: University Publications of America, 1989), reel 13, microfilm. Collection hereafter referred to as “*Truman Office Files/Subjects*.”

coverage of the entire border of the U.S.S.R., plus suitable coverage for more critical areas.”¹²⁵

Radar not only detects aircraft but can also determine their range, altitude, heading, and bearing. The radar station relays this information to fighter units along the bombers’ projected route. Given these data, interceptor crews can then fly to the area through which the bombers are traveling and locate them visually—in the daytime. As one USAF general informed the Secretary of the Air Force, “Under conditions of blue sky day operations I would expect the modern fighter, who merely has to look for the vapor trails in order to locate the high altitude bomber, to give the B-36 a lot of trouble.”¹²⁶

At night, however, interceptor pilots need additional information. Without guidance from ground controllers, they were essentially blind. Radar equipment on their airplanes might assist in their searches, but the airborne intercept (AI) radars available at the time searched a narrow cone directly ahead of the airplane. “[T]he U.S.S.R. [was] behind in night fighter development and had little experience in this field in World War II.” Although they had the capability to produce one, the Americans did not believe that

¹²⁵ Annex “A” to Appendix: “Strategic Estimate”: in JSPG 496/4 [“Broiler”], 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 27.

¹²⁶ George C. Kenney, letter to Secretary of the Air Force W. Stuart Symington, 18 June 1949, cited in *B-36 Bomber Hearings*, 123. Note that condensation trails (vapor trails), while common during high-altitude flight, depend on atmospheric conditions and are not guaranteed to form at all altitudes at all times.

the Soviets had developed an effective AI radar, and thought it unlikely that they would be able to acquire one from foreign sources.¹²⁷

The Soviet pilots could not necessarily rely on ground control, either. American war planners observed, “The Russian technique for controlled interception by fighters is also considerably inferior to our own. . . .”¹²⁸ They had access to the technology in the form of American equipment supplied as part of the World War Two lend-lease program, but had not developed their own ground controlled intercept (GCI) systems after the conflict.¹²⁹ What ground radars the Soviets had were vulnerable to electronic countermeasures (ECM) such as chaff, which produces a false radar signal, and devices which could jam (overload) the radio communications between the ground controllers and the interceptors. However, ECM would not be as effective as it had been during World War Two because bomber formations would be smaller—see below.¹³⁰ An assessment of the planned strategic bombing campaign prepared in 1950 dedicates some forty-six pages—many of them covered with arcane charts mystifying to most laypeople—to various aspects of ECM.¹³¹

The USAF reserved the B-36 for night operations against targets outside of the range of medium bombers.¹³² Many of the most important Soviet industrial and

¹²⁷ Annex “A” to Appendix: “Strategic Implications of the Atomic Bomb”: in JSPG 496/4 “Broiler,” 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 27. Document hereafter referred to as “Strategic Implications.”

¹²⁸ JIC (48) 76 (0) (Final), “A Comparison of the Fighting Values of Russian and Allied Forces,” 21 Sept 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 10, 4-5.

¹²⁹ “Strategic Implications,” in JSPG 496/4 “Broiler”; in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 28.

¹³⁰ Enclosure D: “Electronic Countermeasures”: in “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, D-18.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, D-1 through D-58.

¹³² “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 193.

population centers were located at high latitudes, where the winter nights are long. An American document reviewing the best times for a war concluded, “[D]efense against strategic air attack would be least satisfactory during winter.” Of course, given the climate of west central Eurasia, the Soviets would not likely initiate hostilities during the winter. May or June was more probable, and the Americans had to be prepared accordingly.¹³³

The small number of bombers employed on each raid would further complicate the task of intercepting B-36s. “[B]ecause of the relatively limited number of B-36 aircraft and the wide dispersion of the targets assigned to them, massed raids are precluded for these aircraft.” The B-36 was an enormous aircraft, with a sizable radar signature, but it is much easier to locate a large group of aircraft than it is to find a single airplane, no matter how bulky it is. The atomic bomb had made the massed formations of World War Two unnecessary. A single bomber was sufficient to destroy a city, although “[i]n the majority of cases each bomb carrier [would] be accompanied by two or more similar aircraft equipped with electronic countermeasures equipment.”¹³⁴ The atomic bomb raids on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had each been similarly organized, one reason why the Japanese did not endeavor to intercept those particular formations. They were conditioned to expect hundreds of bombers in each raid. Small flights (usually weather reconnaissance missions) appeared harmless. The Soviets, presumably, would not be so complacent—yet “[o]n certain Siberian targets, it is now contemplated that

¹³³ JC 435/18 “Estimate of Optimum Time of Year for a War to Commence, from the Soviet Viewpoint,” 14 April 1949, 7-8, in *Records of the JCS/46-53/SU*, reel 3.

¹³⁴ JCS 1952/11, 11 February 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 163-164.

bomb carriers will attack without escort. [I]t is not believed that the enemy could safely anticipate this strategy.”¹³⁵

Despite the impediments to the Soviet air defense force’s chances of effecting a successful interception, Air Force leaders were not arrogant enough to imagine that their bombers would all complete their missions and return to base intact. Indeed, Generals LeMay and Spaatz had admitted as much during the B-36 hearings.¹³⁶ Even a superbomber can be shot down. However, the Soviets would have to work very hard to do so. As the authors of “The Intercontinental Bomber” noted, “Assuming . . . that the bomber has been found [by an interceptor] and the interception has been made, there is still the problem of killing the bomber.”¹³⁷

The Americans counted upon the high operating altitudes of their bombers to offer protection. The interceptor would have to climb to the level of the bomber in order to engage it. British tests indicated that their jets required 29.5 minutes to reach a B-29 flying at 30,000 feet, needing an additional five minutes to locate and identify the intruder. In that time the bomber can fly 219 miles (177 if the interceptor pilot forewent confirming the intruder’s identity). Given the primitive radar and GCI systems the Americans presumed the Soviets possessed, the limited effectiveness of which would be reduced further by the use of ECM, the Americans believed that most Soviet fighters will get few passes against the bombers before they dropped their bombs.¹³⁸ Piston-

¹³⁵ Enclosure C: “Enemy Fighter Defense Employment”: in “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, C-17.

¹³⁶ Curtis LeMay, testimony, B-36 Bomber Hearings, 150; Carl Spaatz, testimony, *Ibid.*, 392.

¹³⁷ “The Intercontinental Bomber,” 17; in *Truman Office Files/Subjects*, reel 13.

¹³⁸ JCS 195/1 “Evaluation of Current Strategic Air Offensive Plans,” 21 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 14.

engined aircraft, which have much poorer rates of climbs than jets, had almost no chance of effecting an interception.

Once at the bomber's altitude, the fighter would still then have to maneuver to attack. An airplane's turning performance is greatly degraded at great heights. In the thin air of the upper atmosphere, "a fighter [any airplane, actually] has a very small margin between his top speed and the speed at which he stalls out and falls [and when it] attempts any turn to maneuver other than a very gentle banks, he stalls out and falls."¹³⁹ Within these very narrow parameters (pilots and engineers refer to the combined upper speed and altitude limits of an aircraft's flight envelope as its "coffin corner"), the airplane's pilot would then endeavor to get within firing range of the bomber.

This task would be a matter of straight-line pursuit, not maneuver, because most bombers fly straight and level to prevent stalling and, if near their objectives, to permit better bomb-aiming. Any course corrections are generally moderate (a document evaluating the plans for the air offensive suggested bombers could take evasive action "with banks up to fifteen degrees," which would produce about 1.2 Gs, about the same as a comfortable turn in the family car).¹⁴⁰ Fighters have enjoyed a performance advantage over bombers, "[s]ince the day they first made a bomber and a fighter," as General Vandenberg said.¹⁴¹ The fighter's superior maneuverability and speed would give its pilot the option to attack the bomber from any angle, but he would still have problems scoring a hit.

¹³⁹ "The Intercontinental Bomber," 17; in *Truman Office Files/Subjects*, reel 13, microfilm.

¹⁴⁰ "Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations," 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 178-179.

¹⁴¹ Hoyt S. Vandenberg, testimony, *Unification and Strategy Hearings*, 465.

An attack from anywhere but directly ahead or astern of the bomber would require the fighter pilot to take a deflection shot—to calculate lead, like a hunter shooting birds on the wing. Accuracy would depend on the pilot's innate skills and training and the quality of his gunsights. However, zero-deflection passes have their own limitations. "Head-on attacks [were] virtually impossible because of the very high combined speed of an approaching bomber and fighter." The interval between the time the bomber entered the fighter's field of fire and the time the two aircraft passed each would be very short. "Approaching at such tremendous speed [the interceptor pilot] has only a fraction of a second to aim and fire." A tail attack would increase the time available to shoot but would also expose the fighter to the bomber's guns and present the bomber's gunners with a virtually motionless (relative to the bomber) target.¹⁴²

Nonetheless, the Americans assumed that night fighters and non-jet interceptors would have little choice but to make stern attacks. They would not have the luxury of selecting their attack angle, as a high-performance day fighter would, but would simply have to climb to the proper altitude and begin chasing their quarry. A chart prepared in 1950 (reproduced below as Table 1) shows the "probability of bomber being shot down by fighter in a single pas [sic] on the bomber (stern attacks) after contact has been made."¹⁴³ Note that time of day and altitude, not speed or firepower, are the chief determiners of an interceptor's success.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² "The Intercontinental Bomber," 17; in *Truman Office Files/Subjects*, microfilm.

¹⁴³ "Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations," 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 175.

¹⁴⁴ Omitted from this abridgement of the original table are two entries assessing the success of projected daylight operations in 1953 using the Boeing B-47 Stratojet, a six-engined jet-powered medium bomber expected to enter service shortly, which it did a year after the table was prepared. Both scenarios

TABLE 1: Probability of Successful Interception

| FIGHTER TYPE | ASSUMED FIGHTER ARMAMENT | BOMBER | ALTITUDE | PROBABILITY OF BOMBER KILL P_{KB} |
|---|--------------------------|--------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| 1950 day | | | | |
| La-11 Conventional | Four 23mm | B-50 | 20,000 | 0.20 |
| La-11 Conventional | Four 23mm | B-36 | 20,000 | 0.15 |
| MIG-9 Jet | Two 23mm one 53mm | B-50 | 35,000 | 0.25 |
| MIG-9 Jet | Two 23mm one 53mm | B-36 | 40,000 | 0.25 |
| MIG-14 Swept Wing | Two 23mm one 37mm | B-50 | 35,000 | 0.10 |
| MIG-14 Swept Wing | Two 23mm one 37mm | B-36 | 40,000 | 0.10 |
| 1950 night | | | | |
| ME-262 Jet | Two 23mm one 53mm | B-50 | 20,000 | 0.25 |
| ME-262 jet | Two 23mm one 53mm | B-50 | 35,000 | 0.25 |
| ME-262 Jet | Two 23mm one 53mm | B-36 | 20,000 | 0.15 |
| ME-262 Jet | Two 23mm one 53mm | B-36 | 40,000 | 0.10 |
| Only stern attacks have been shown in this table since for night fighters, and for any type of fighters attacking high speed bombers, these are the only ones feasible. . . . | | | | |
| <i>Notes:</i> | | | | |
| <i>Data taken from Table II in the "Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations," 13 January 1950, in APWSU, vol. 13, 175.</i> | | | | |
| <i>"Conventional" in this context indicates a propeller-driven aircraft.</i> | | | | |
| <i>The "ME-262" is probably the Sukhoi Su-9, which bore a superficial resemblance to the Messerschmitt Me262, a World War Two German jet fighter. It was not a night fighter. The performance of the Su-9 was disappointing and the type did not enter large-scale service.</i> | | | | |
| <i>The "MiG-14" is almost certainly the MiG-15.</i> | | | | |

match the bomber against the "MiG-14," comparing differences between an interceptor equipped with guns only and one carrying both guns and rockets, at 40,000 feet. The P_{KB} for the former was 0.05 and the latter 0.20. The higher survivability of the B-47 vis-à-vis the B-36 in the same circumstances must be attributed to its higher speed.

The Americans were well aware that some fighter pilots would succeed at their tasks. “The effectiveness per fighter of finding and shooting down bombers will not be greatly different from what it was in the case of World War II. This effectiveness was about 0.1 bomber killed per fighter sortied during the day.”¹⁴⁵ A 1948 analysis of the USSR’s defenses estimated that the Soviets had just three hundred more interceptors than the Luftwaffe had had in 1944, yet had far more territory to defend. “The Russian fighter defense organization (PVO) is believed to have assigned to it 1800 operational aircraft of which 1000 are high performance jets capable of overtaking any of the bombers which are planned for use in 1950.”¹⁴⁶ In 1950, this figure was revised upward, to between 1,800 and 4,000, of which 1,000 to 1,500 would be jet-propelled.¹⁴⁷

Of course, the Germans had faced some 3,000 American heavy bombers, as well as the RAF’s Bomber Command, during World War Two. The Soviets would have fewer aircraft to detect and intercept. “The projected forces available to the United States Air Force on 1 May 1950 [were] 570 medium bombers (B-29 and B-50 types) and 54 heavy bombers (B-36 aircraft). A large part of this force will be needed for training, administrative duties, commands support and replacement.”¹⁴⁸ The smaller numbers for both nations reflected a combination of postwar demobilization and reduced replacement budgets, as well as the increased costs of developing and operating jet-propelled airplanes.

¹⁴⁵ Enclosure “E”: “Interception Possibilities,” in “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations, 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, E-39.

¹⁴⁶ “Strategic Implications,” in JSPG 496/4 “Broiler”; in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 27.

¹⁴⁷ Enclosure C: “Enemy fighter Defense Employment”: in “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations, 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, C-15.

¹⁴⁸ JCS 1952/11, 11 February 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 163.

Of course, most of the vital targets in the Soviet Union were not distributed evenly about the country. The attackers and defenders would focus their efforts on the western portion of the USSR, the location of most of its industrial and population centers. Although this area is about twice the size of Germany, the concentration still increased the chances of bomber-fighter encounters. .

With fighter aircraft distributed around the periphery and for close-in defense, an attacking air force might be intercepted three times, once passing over the satellite boundary, once at the target area, and again on withdrawal over the boundary. An attacking force might expect conventional fighter types effective at altitudes up to 35,000 feet with a maximum speed in level flight at this altitude of 366 knots, and jet interceptors effective up to 40,000 feet with speeds of approximately 465 knots.¹⁴⁹

The more opportunities for interception, the greater the chances of a successful shoot-down. The stakes were high. Every American bomber could be carrying a weapon capable of destroying a city.

Interceptors were not the USSR's only defenses. If it eluded the fighters, a bomber would have to surmount one last challenge before reaching its target: an antiaircraft barrage. American planners originally thought the Soviet antiaircraft system would not pose much of a threat. A 1948 plan described Soviet antiaircraft artillery as primitive. The Soviets lacked proximity fuses, devices that detonate antiaircraft shells when they detect an aircraft in range, although the Americans were confident such were probably in development.¹⁵⁰ They did not know that the Soviet spy ring in the United

¹⁴⁹ Annex "A" to Appendix: "Strategic Estimate": in JSPG 496/4 ["Broiler"], 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 27.

¹⁵⁰ JCS 1952/1 "Evaluation of Current Strategic Air Offensive Plans," 21 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 11-13.

States had acquired the plans for the VT-type of proximity fuse.¹⁵¹ By 1950, the USAF expected to lose about ten per cent of the total bombing force dispatched to antiaircraft fire—unless the Soviets had developed rocket launchers, which could double or even treble the casualty rate.¹⁵² War plan “Dropshot,” prepared in 1949 for a possible war in the late 1950s, postulated the development of “hypervelocity cannons”—although it does not describe these weapons other than their bore size, “on the order of 120mm.”¹⁵³

There was little a bomber could do when under fire from the ground. Its crew certainly could not shoot back. But “by using two escorts per bomb carrier, and by training crews of all three aircraft to navigate so as to cross a 2-mile segment of the same bomb release line within two minutes, the fire power against a single plane can be cut by a factor of 3. . . .” Evasive action by the bombers over the target would reduce losses even further, by a factor of five. However, only bombers equipped with radar bomb sights could maneuver during the bomb run. Those with the older optical sights would have to fly straight and level to their targets to ensure accurate bomb drops.¹⁵⁴

Projected Aircraft Losses

The American planning staffs were of course aware that flak and fighters would have taken their toll on USAF bombers. However, the subject of casualties is rarely

¹⁵¹ Seymour F. Goodman, untitled review of Steven T. Usdin, *Engineering Communism: How Two Americans Spied for Stalin and Founded the Soviet Silicon Valley* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), in *Technology and Culture* 47, no.3 (2006), 676; Douglas Martin, “Obituaries: Aleksandr Feklisov, Soviet Spy, Dies at 93,” *The New York Times*, 2 November 2007, C10.

¹⁵² Enclosure “H”: “Losses Due to Antiaircraft”: in “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations, 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, H-4 to H-5.

¹⁵³ Cave, *Dropshot*, 106.

¹⁵⁴ “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations, 13 January 1950, 178-179.

mentioned in the ten major war plans prepared between 1945 and 1950. These works, focusing on the overall conduct of the offensive war, seem to assume that losses would be sustainable. They seemed to be more concerned about the impact of possible reductions in the defense budget on American strength and effectiveness than about how enemy defense would affect the planned operations.¹⁵⁵

Of the many documents war planners prepared in the late 1940s, one of the few to offer a detailed analysis of projected casualties was the “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations.” The figures appeared were in Enclosure “K” of this work, titled “Logistics and Base Defense,” which was primarily an examination of the mundane aspects of supporting a military campaign: parts supplies, POL reserves, the availability of air and sea transport, the rehabilitation of overseas airfields, the readying of “mothballed” aircraft, shortages of trained personnel, and the like.¹⁵⁶

So casual were the preparers of Enclosure “K” about the data that they divided their findings into two parts. Data for the B-36 appeared four pages before the corresponding figures for the B-29 and B-50. This information appeared in tabular form, each one having four possible combinations of the time of day, Soviet defense strength (level 1 was as expected, level 2 was enhanced, with the possibility of surface-to-air

¹⁵⁵ JCS 1800/18 “Allocation of Resources and Funds for the FY 1950 Budget,” 17 November 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 10. This document is an analysis of the allocation of resources and funds for the Fiscal Year (FY) 1950 defense budget. It notes that lawmakers were discussing three separate possible funding levels (\$14.4B, \$16.9B, \$21.4B, plus \$600m for stockpile and other fixed costs) and examines how American force levels would be affected by each of the three possibilities. It then reviews current war plans and identifies how they would have to be modified for each level of spending. American military spending in FY 1950 was actually \$14.2 billion.

¹⁵⁶ Enclosure “K”: “Logistics and Base Defense”: in “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, K-1 *ff.*

rockets), and American tactics in the battle area (individual bombers or formations, the last possible only in daytime).¹⁵⁷ These charts appear below as Tables 2 and 3:

TABLE 2: B-36 Expected Loss Rates for Completed Attack Pattern, Strategic Air Offensive Beginning May 1950

| Attack pattern | Attrition rate (per cent of deployed planes lost) |
|---|---|
| Night, Russian defense level 1, dispersed attack | 30 per cent |
| Night, Russian defense level 2, dispersed attack | 33.3 per cent |
| Day, Russian defense level 2, concentrated attack | 53.4 per cent |
| Day, Russian defense level 1, dispersed attack | 20 per cent |
| <i>Data taken from table in "Logistics and Base Defense," Enclosure "K" of "Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations," 13 January 1950, in APWSU, vol. 13, K-11.</i> | |

TABLE 3: B-29 and B-50 Expected Loss Rates for Completed Attack Pattern, Strategic Air Offensive Beginning May 1950

| Attack pattern | Attrition rate (per cent of deployed planes lost) |
|---|---|
| Night, Russian defense level 1, dispersed attack | 10.9 per cent |
| Night, Russian defense level 2, dispersed attack | 32.0 per cent |
| Day, Russian defense level 2, concentrated attack | 54.4 per cent |
| Day, Russian defense level 1, dispersed attack | 42.6 per cent |
| <i>Data taken from table in "Logistics and Base Defense," Enclosure "K" of "Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations," 13 January 1950, in APWSU, vol. 13, K-15.</i> | |

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., K-11, K-15.

To put these figures in perspective, during World War Two, RAF Bomber Command experienced a 2.5% attrition rate for its night operations (307,000 sorties) and 1.3% for day operations (80,000 sorties).¹⁵⁸ The USAAF's day bombing units, the UK-based 8th Air Force and 15th Air Force based in Italy, lost 2.0% and 1.9% of their heavy bombers, respectively. The B-29s in the Pacific suffered 1.38% losses.¹⁵⁹

These numbers represent total losses throughout the war. British and American bomber casualty rates decreased after the summer of 1944. Earlier, losses on individual missions often exceed ten per cent, sometimes reaching fifteen per cent or even higher, and long-term loss rates rose to double-digit figures for specific units or during particular time periods. In 1945 the RAF's Director of Bombing Operations produced a report that concluded, "Operational experience in this war . . . indicates that a strategic bombing force could become relatively ineffective if it suffered operational losses in the region of 7% over a period of three months' intensive operations, and that its operational effectiveness may become unacceptably low if losses of 5% were sustained over that period."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ As discussed in Chapter II, the British conducted daylight bombing raids for the first four months of the war but high losses compelled them to switch to night bombing. Bomber Command did not attempt large-scale daylight operations again until very late in the war, by which time the German fighter force had lost most of its effectiveness. As a result, the RAF lost few daylight bombers in 1945, but the large scale of the late-war daylight raids were so much greater than those of the early-war that the high attrition figures of the former are lost in the volume of the latter.

¹⁵⁹ Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany 1939-1945*, vol. 4: *Annexes and Appendices* (London: HMSO, 1961), 489; Roger Freeman, *The U.S. Strategic Bomber* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1975), 155-157; Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 5: *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki June 1944 to August 1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1953), 751.

¹⁶⁰ Director of Bombing Operations (RAF), "What's the Highest Percentage of Loss that the Royal Air Force could stand over Period of 3 Months of Intensive Operations?": in Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany 1939-1945*, vol. 4, *Annexes and Appendices* (London: HMSO, 1961), 496.

The projected losses for the war against the Soviet Union were greatly in excess of these thresholds. The high expected attrition rates were the result of many factors. The primary reason why the USAF would suffer so many casualties in World War Three was that its bomber technology had not advanced as quickly after World War Two as the Soviets' defensive technologies. The USSR had better anti-aircraft, radar, and interceptors than the Germans or Japanese, while the Americans would be operating bombers little different than those the USAAF had flown against Germany or Japan. Fighters benefited from jet technology far more readily than bombers. Additionally, the larger distances to be traveled favored the defense over the offense.

What could possibly justify plans that could result in the loss of a fifth, a third, or possibly even half, of the forces involved? Few would argue that the expected attrition rates for bombers in a war against the Soviet Union were not appallingly high. But the Americans might have tolerated the sacrifice of a few hundred, or even a few thousand, aircrew if it meant sparing other Americans, civilian or military.

Military scientists make a distinction between "sustainable" losses and "acceptable" losses. The former are based on a nation's ability to wage war; the latter are based on a nation's willingness to continue fighting, the two of which, when combined, are the objectives of a Douhet- or Mitchell-style strategic bombing campaign. Calculating the one is a simple matter of reconciling loss rates with replacement rates. The other, however, requires a more arcane system of reckoning that accounts for national morale, which is often based on a righteous conviction that the stated aims of the war are worth the costs of fighting it, that the military is making progress in the

accomplishment of those objectives, and that the expectations of the effort involved in prosecuting the war are worthy, among other factors.

Open societies, in which the people, press, and politicians are free to discuss matters of national security, such as the merits of procuring a particular superbomber, have a reputation for being less tolerant of casualties and losses than totalitarian states. This attitude is evident in a statement by Secretary of the Air Force Symington during the Unification and Strategy hearings: “American soldiers are not cogs in a dictator’s machine; their lives are precious; and it has never been part of our military tradition or our national philosophy to expose them carelessly in war.”¹⁶¹

This aversion to risk often manifests itself in the substitution of technology for manpower. Congressman Charles H. Elston of Ohio was not the only American to say or think that “the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved the lives of a great many American soldiers.”¹⁶² Such an attitude informed the American postwar plans for conflict against the Soviet Union.

The U.S.S.R. and her satellites possess a numerical superiority in manpower and in mobilized tactical air and ground forces. They possess the ability to overrun the major portions of the Eurasian continent in a relatively short time. On the other hand, the Allies have atomic bombs and a long-range air force which can deliver these missiles on the vital centers of Soviet war-making-capacity. Therefore, it is essential initially that Allied strategy be to avoid committing forces to oppose Soviet forces except where this is required to assure delivery of atomic weapons.¹⁶³

In the minds of many, World War Two effectively came to an end with the atomic explosions. Just as many thought World War Three would begin that way.

¹⁶¹ Symington, testimony, Unification and Strategy Hearings, 401.

¹⁶² Charles H. Elston, question, *Ibid.*, 434.

¹⁶³ JSPG 496/4 “Broiler,” 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 2.

CHAPTER IV
APOCALYPSE: THE ATOMIC BOMB IN AMERICAN AIR WAR PLANS,
1945-1950

The atomic bomb was a key component of the Americans' post-World War Two plans for war with the Soviet Union. At the time deliverable only by air, the atomic bomb possessed a destructive power far in excess of any other existing weapon. As a result, it appeared to be the element missing in the practice of strategic air power, which in theory was to be able to end wars quickly and decisively without the need for surface actions. This shift in the timing of warfare required the American military establishment to approach the problem of preparedness from mobilization to deterrence.

Air Campaigns and Time: Theory

Implicit in any discussion of “acceptable” or “sustainable” losses is the issue of time. By themselves, heavy casualties and equipment losses do not compel a nation to capitulate. Damage is relative. It is not the raw number of casualties or losses that breaks the will of a nation to continue fighting or destroys its ability to fight. Nor is it some fixed percentage of a nation’s total manpower or its stockpile of materiel (unless the proportion reaches unity). What ends wars is ratio of the amount of damage inflicted measured against the amount of time in which it is incurred.

Time is an intrinsic element of the concept of air power. One of the principal attractions of strategic bombing Mitchell and Douhet described is its ability to inflict

heavy losses and casualties in a short period. This intensity would lead to a quick end to any war. “A really strong Independent Air Force . . . could inflict upon an unprepared enemy such grave damage as to bring about a complete collapse of his forces in a very few days,” wrote Douhet.¹ Mitchell concurred. Air power, he wrote, “[W]ill make the contest much sharper, more decisive, and more quickly finished.”²

The possibility of ending a war shortly after it had begun would have greatly appealed to all who had witnessed the savage, unending, and ultimately vain carnage of trench warfare during World War One. Mitchell followed the passage just quoted by observing, “This will result in diminished loss of life and treasure and will be a distinct benefit to civilization.”³ Douhet, too, thought that air power would make warfare less terrible. “These future wars may yet prove to be more humane than wars in the past in spite of all, because they may in the long run shed less blood.”⁴ The most civilized war is a short war, but the most humanitarian deed of all would be to eliminate war completely. The Wright brothers had once expressed the hope that they “were introducing into the world an invention which would make further wars practically impossible.”⁵ Mitchell and Douhet both expressed similar thoughts about the airplane, noting that it made war even more terrible, and thus best avoided, but they were realistic

¹ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 51.

² Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 16.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 15.

⁵ Orville Wright, letter to C. H. Hitchcock, 21 June 1917, quoted in *The Papers of Orville and Wilbur Wright, including the Chanute-Wright Papers*, Marvin Wilks McFarland, ed. (McGraw-Hill Professional, 2000), 1104; and just about every other book about aviation (particularly military aviation) ever published.

enough to understand that a lasting peace was unlikely.⁶ Thus their primary interest was in identifying how best prepare for an air war, and what airplanes would do in such a conflict.

If war occurred, they believed—like Macbeth—it was best to end it rapidly. A nation must thus have a strong air arm ready for action even before hostilities began. In the event of war, Mitchell argued, “[I]t would take at least two weeks to concentrate land forces at mobilization points. They must be conveyed by rail, motor, or marching to the theatre of operations, and then they must be deployed for action. Airplanes, on the other hand, can take the offensive at once.”⁷ Douhet agreed. “[T]he Independent Air Force must be organically and logistically organized so that it can go into action immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities.” A short war simply would allow no time to build up or mobilize. “[T]he side which finds itself unprepared will have no time to get ready; and therefore [the war] will be decided by the forces ready at hand when hostilities begin.”⁸

Mitchell and Douhet both wrote in the 1920s. By the 1930s their ideas were well known to the general public.⁹ Their logic seemed difficult to dispute. Airplanes could indeed reach distant places quickly with seeming impunity and, in the words of Douhet, “strike mortal blows into the heart of the enemy with lightning speed.”¹⁰ This realization led Europeans, who unlike Americans had to live with the knowledge that they were

⁶ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 16; Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 196.

⁷ Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 150.

⁸ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 56, 203.

⁹ While their ideas were public currency, their names were not. Ironically, Douhet, the better thinker, was known almost exclusively by military professionals, while Mitchell became more famous among the general public in Europe and the USA by virtue of his personality, flair for publicity, and court martial.

¹⁰ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 15.

within bomber range of one or more potentially hostile powers, to believe that the next war would begin with armadas of bombers raining death and destruction down upon the great cities of their continent. “The theory of the knock-out blow solidified into a consensus during the 1920s and by the 1930s had almost become an orthodoxy, accepted by pacifists and militarist alike.”¹¹

Air Campaigns and Time: Practice

This feeling was particularly strong in the United Kingdom and France, the populations of which were concerned about the resurgence of German military power in the late 1930s in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, which had forbidden the Germans an air force. Hitler used this fear to get France and the UK to accede to his demands during the 1938 Sudetenland crisis, leading an American observer to write about a new type of “blackmail made possible only by the existence of air power.”¹² Of course, the Germans were not as strong as the French and British supposed, and were neither prepared, nor equipped, to deliver a knockout blow. A Luftwaffe manual issued just one month before the invasion of Poland notes that although independent air operations will restrict “the enemy’s freedom of action in all important military and economic sectors, [they] require a certain amount of time to have an effect. . . .”¹³

¹¹ Brett Holman, “The Next War in the Air: Civilian Fears of Strategic Bombardment in Britain, 1908-1914,” unpublished dissertation, The University of Melbourne, 2009, abstract. Available online at Brett Holman <http://airminded.org/thesis/> (accessed 1 June 2011).

¹² George Fielding Eliot, *Bombs Bursting in Air: The Influence on Air Power on International Relations* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), 81.

¹³ Der Reichminister der Luftfahrt und Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe, Genst. 3 (takt.) Abteilung (II) Nr. 1240/39 geh. , 1 August 1939, “*Richtlinien für den Einsatz der Fliegertruppe zur*

The British, of course, did not know that the Germans were not capable of the knockout blow they had feared for so long and thus had little choice but to prepare for the worst. However, by the late 1930s, the idea that aerial defenses were useless, as Douhet and Baldwin had averred, was growing less credible. The introduction of radar and the development of advanced interceptors gave many British planners hope that RAF Fighter Command might be able to blunt a German attack should it come.¹⁴ If it survived, the UK could then use its economic superiority to initiate a counter offensive, primarily by air, until it mustered sufficient surface forces to essay an invasion. However, it was not certain how long the RAF could sustain such an offensive. While the British acknowledged that “[e]conomic pressure takes effect slowly,” they seemed to have no true appreciation for the amount of time it would actually take to affect a nation’s economy.¹⁵ One British plan, created in 1936, was intended to cripple German war production in just two weeks by destroying the power and coking plants in the Ruhr upon which it depended. Its creators estimated that it would require no more than 3,000 bomber sorties to wipe out the forty-five targeted installations.¹⁶ A less focused effort adding other types of targets to the program might extend the campaign to “a few months.” The British were counting on a quick decision. In 1938 the Air Officer

unmittelbaren Unterstützung des Heeres,” NARA microfilm T321/76, quoted in James S. Corum and Richard R. Muller, *The Luftwaffe’s Way of War: German Air Force Doctrine 1911-1945* (Baltimore: Nautical and Aviation, 1998), 195.

¹⁴ The British had originally relied on their bomber forces as a deterrent, in the manner of Baldwin and Douhet, but during the 1930s began acquiring advanced interceptor types such as the Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Hurricane.

¹⁵ “Extract from an Appreciation by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee of the Situation in the Event of War against Germany in 1939, 26th October 1936,” cited in Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany 1939-1945*, vol. 4: *Annexes and Appendices* (London: HMSO, 1961), 92.

¹⁶ Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany, 1939-1945*, vol. 1: *Preparation* (London: HMSO, 1961), 97. A sortie is one mission by one airplane.

Commanding-in-Chief of RAF Bomber Command expressed a concern that five days of “maximum” effort, followed by three and a half weeks of “intensive” operations, after which a “sustained” campaign would be maintained, would lead to the exhaustion of all of the RAF’s medium bomber forces in less than a month and the elimination of its heavy bombers in just under two, in addition to requiring thousands of fresh pilots and crew.¹⁷

Even though they entered the war long after it had become obvious that strategic bombing would not produce immediate results, having the empirical evidence of the British and German experiences between 1939 and 1941 on which to base their estimates of time requirements, the Americans maintained their faith in the aerial offensive. Speaking in 1942, General Arnold of the AAF said, “[F]rom the very first our plans called for offensive action. . . . Our concentrations of men and material are not designed to defend ourselves against attack, but to insure our delivering knockout blows. . . .”¹⁸ Every American war plan prepared after hostilities began in Europe—the Rainbow series (created between 1939 and 1941 with minimal input from potential allies), the American-British Conference (ABC) agreements (negotiated in early 1941, before the United States entered the war), and the Air War Plans Division (AWPD) sequence (initiated in the summer of 1941 and refined after Pearl Harbor)—contained references to a strategic bombardment campaign. However, the Americans had learned not to commit to any particular timetable. The ABC and AWPD plans refer to a “sustained air

¹⁷ Neville Jones, *The Beginnings of Strategic Air Power: A History of the British Bomber Force 1923-1935* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), 131-132.

¹⁸ Henry H. Arnold, commencement address at Iowa-Wesleyan College delivered 8 June 1942, ” printed *in toto* as “America Takes the Offensive: Where do we Stand,” in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 August 1942, 643.

offensive” only.¹⁹ Similarly, the “Casablanca Directive” of January 1943 prescribed no set schedule, simply instructing the Allied strategic air forces to engage in the “progressive destruction and dislocation” of German industry and morale.²⁰

The Casablanca Directive provided the conceptual basis of the Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO) program, which guided Anglo-American bomber policy for the remainder of the war in Europe. Its open-endedness clearly departs from the ambitious claims of the prewar air power advocates that strategic bombing could win wars within a few days. It also contrasts with the prewar thinking of German and British air force leaders who, while conceding that air offensives needed time to show results, still seemed to be thinking in terms of weeks or months, not years. What happened between 1939 and 1943 to change the minds of American air force leaders about the effectiveness, and thus the duration, of strategic air campaigns?

For one thing, none of the belligerents took the opportunity to test whether an air bombardment could indeed effect an instantaneous victory when World War Two began. The envisioned mass bombing raids simply did not happen, leading one contemporary observer to describe “the inactivity of the vast and modern air armadas which both sides

¹⁹ Ed Crowder, “Pointblank: A Study in Strategic and National Security Decision Making,” *Air Power Journal* 6, no.1 (1992), 57; “Table of Contents,” <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/readings/awpd-1-jfacc/awpdproc.htm> [Accessed 28 February 2013]; Haywood M. Hansell, Jr., *The Strategic Air war against Germany and Japan: A Memoir* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, USAF, 1986), 51, 58-59.

²⁰ Combined Chiefs of Staff Memorandum CCS 166/1/D, 21 January 1943. The Combined Chiefs of Staff was a joint American and British body charged with coordinating the Anglo-American war effort. Its success led to the creation of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff as part of defense unification after World War Two. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. 2: *Europe—Torch to Pointblank August 1942 to December 1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1949), 305.

possess” as a “mystery.”²¹ There are several reasons why they did not. Bombing operations during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), monitored closely by foreign observers keen to see one of the first tests of air power theory, suggested that air raids did not produce results instantly. Additionally, the warring powers refrained from using their bombers in 1939 for fear of retaliation in kind. Both the Luftwaffe and the RAF were issued stern orders to bomb only military and naval installations at first.

These restrictions on bombing had little impact on the course of the early war. Indeed, the German campaigns of late 1939 and early 1940 almost seemed to demonstrate that strategic bombers were superfluous, as they were accomplished with that other solution to the frustrations of static trench warfare: the tank.²² There was no opportunity, nor was there need, to test the prewar theories about the war-winning potential of bombers because traditional land warfare proved sufficient to achieve victory.

Of course, the Germans did employ airplanes in the campaigns. Their doctrine of Blitzkrieg, “Lightning War,” promoted the use of tactical bombers and ground-attack

²¹ A[dolphus] D[uncan] Emmart, “The Inactivity in the Air: First Three Days of War See almost Complete Quiet in the Flying Armadas of the West,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 7 September 1939, 10.

²² There were two main schools of thought after World War One about how to avoid repeating the mistakes that led to the wasteful tragedy of trench warfare. Both involved the use of technology to counter technology. One was to restore mobility to war with the tank and motorized transport; the other was to prepare defensive fortifications so strong that no enemy would dare attempt assault them. The former was embraced by Germany and the United Kingdom, while the latter was adopted by France, culminating in the construction of the Maginot Line.

As has been noted throughout this work, nations prepare for war based on their understanding of their most likely foes. More significantly, war is a cultural act, and the divergence in philosophy between France and the other nations of Europe reflects their experiences during the 1914-1918 conflict. The British and Germans sent troops to the western front, and so were conditioned to think in terms of movement. The French, on the other hand, had the fighting come to them, and so understandably conceived of warfare as a matter of waiting in one place.

aircraft to facilitate breakthroughs in the front lines and to deny the enemy the opportunity to reassemble in his rear. The Germans also used gliders and paratroopers to make deep penetrations and neutralize key points. They even used their bombers against cities. Contemporary observers condemned these raids as “terror bombing,” horrifying examples of the Nazis’ cruelty and savagery. But these attacks, of which the most famous, or infamous, were Warsaw and Rotterdam, might also be interpreted as attempts to hasten the capitulation of an enemy already defeated on the ground.²³ The Germans may have been trying to use the psychological impact of air bombardment to end the fighting quickly (motivated not out of any concern for their opponents, but by a desire to conserve their own forces).

The German conquest of continental Europe astonished both participants and observers, most of whom could not believe that so much territory could be taken and held so quickly. The Polish campaign lasted about a month, as did the Battle of France. Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium each fell in a matter of weeks. By June 1940 only the United Kingdom still opposed Germany.

The English Channel, the physical barrier separating the continent from Great Britain, compelled the Germans to forego the Blitzkrieg, a land stratagem, in favor of a bombing campaign, which could disregard surface obstacles. The situation provided the first opportunity of the conflict to test strategic aerial warfare on its own merits (that is, without having to control for all possible effects of a concurrent surface campaign).

²³ It is tempting to compare them to the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. From the American’s perspective, the Japanese had lost but refused to admit it. The atomic bomb raids were not a substitution for invasion, as some have argued, but were just another element in pressuring the Japanese government to surrender before Cornet and Olympic, the invasion operations scheduled for September and October, 1945, respectively.

Knowing that they could not initiate an invasion without obtaining air superiority over the British Isles, the Germans, in keeping with the precepts of air power theory, first endeavored to destroy the Royal Air Force. However, German ambivalence about fighting the UK—the ruling Nazi party was far more interested in attacking the Soviet Union—resulted in the addition of other targets to the Luftwaffe’s program, which dissipated Germany’s strategic efforts.²⁴ Mitchell and Douhet had died before World War Two began, but their disciple, Alexander de Seversky, provided the air power advocate’s perspective on these developments. At the height of the Battle of Britain he wrote, “It is already fairly obvious, however, that [the German air campaign] will develop into a long, drawn-out fight. There is no longer any real chance that Nazi Germany can make good on its threat of a quick knock-out blow.” He noted that the Luftwaffe was attacking ports and harbors, which he interpreted as an indication that the Germans were planning a blockade, not an invasion—or, in other words, preparing for the long term, and giving up on a quick decision.²⁵

This lack of apparent progress, combined with heavy losses, led the Germans to abandon daylight bombing in favor of a night campaign, the infamous “Blitz,” in late 1940.²⁶ Nocturnal bombing is notoriously inaccurate, so the Germans switched to a policy of area raids against centers of population (justifying their decision by noting that

²⁴ The Luftwaffe’s campaigns against the RAF and British industry were handicapped by a lack of accurate target data. Given the British appeasement policies of the 1930s, the German had not expected the British to resist them, and so had not prepared for an air war against the United Kingdom.

²⁵ A. P. de Seversky, “Plane Expert sees Failure of Blitzkrieg: Believes chance for Knockout Blow by Nazis Past: Time, Winter Favor British,” *The Hartford Courant*, 21 August 1940, 10.

²⁶ As noted earlier, “Blitz” means “lightning” in German. Although the Blitz of 1940-1941 was a months-long bombing campaign, the term has entered the English language to connote a swift and powerful offensive with an immediate impact. It is in this sense that the word is used in American football, although, strangely, the side doing the blitzing—taking the offensive—is the defense.

the RAF had begun similar bombing attacks months earlier). The Germans seemed willing to concede the long-term economic impact of strategic bombing if its short-term effect on morale might bring about a truce. The British, however, refused to yield, disappointing the air power advocates who claimed psychological pressure was as important as economic destruction and leading to a stalemate in which both nations could strike at each other across the North Sea only with bombers. The situation continued until the Germans invaded the USSR in May 1941. Short of equipment, the Germans transferred most of their bombers to the eastern front, where they operated primarily in tactical support roles.²⁷ The British, however, continued their nocturnal bombing of the Third Reich.

The RAF was alone in bombing Germany for over a year, without evident effect. Its failure must have been disappointing to the drafters of Bomber Command's plans for attacking Germany's manufacturing resources. Of course, these forecasts were predicated upon daylight operations. "The Air Ministry thought that its . . . plan . . . would take about 9 to 12 months to strangle the German economy, which is a long time compared to the classic 'knock-out blow' scenario [but] much shorter than the three years (plus) the British government was planning on the war lasting."²⁸ A nighttime campaign, with its attendant accuracy deficit, would take longer to achieve results.

²⁷ Although improvements in defenses, as demonstrated during the Battle of Britain, had lessened fears of a knockout blow in the UK, "even well into the Blitz, it was still possible to believe that Hitler was holding back his full fury, that the Luftwaffe had tens of thousands of bombers available that it hadn't used yet. [It was not] until the German invasion of the USSR that the pressure really came off." Brett Holman, personal communication (e-mail), 13 June 2011.

²⁸ Brett Holman, personal communication (e-mail), 29 June 2011. In the late 1930s, the British had prepared a series of sixteen "Western Air Plans" against various contingencies. WA5 and WA6 targeted German and Italian industry, respectively. WA5(a) emphasized war production; WA5(b) focused

The British bomber crews were still hard at work on 4 July 1942, when the Americans joined the air war in Europe, a full six months after Pearl Harbor. Their first attack was a small (six aircraft) medium bomber raid across the English Channel against targets in occupied France. Yet this effort was sufficient to make many observers again begin prophesying a quick end to the war. Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska opined, “If our bombers can destroy even one city a week as the British destroyed Cologne [the target of the RAF’s first 1,000-bomber raid, in late May 1942], I don’t believe it would be long until Germany collapsed.”²⁹ Perhaps he was reminded of World War One, when the United States’ late entry provided fresh forces to the Triple Entente’s war effort, ending the long stalemate in the trenches on the western front.

Senator Norris would probably have been disappointed to learn that destroying a city was a very difficult endeavor that no one had actually ever accomplished, lurid reports from Guernica and Coventry notwithstanding. The RAF had already bombed Cologne six times with forces of one hundred or more aircraft before the thousand-plane-raid (aptly codenamed Operation “Millennium”). The city would receive an additional seven visits from such large RAF and USAAF formations before the war ended. The city was bombed some 262 times in all during the conflict, counting main

on the Ruhr specifically, particularly electricity generation and distribution; and WA5(c) prioritized oil resources. James D. Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2006), 44.

²⁹ Thomas L. Stokes, “Time Held Key to Bomber Knockout of Germany: Joint Attacks now would blast Hitler quickly out of War, declares observer,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 31 July 1942, 2.

force, diversionary, nuisance, and spoof raids. Clearly, strategic bombing could not knock out a single city, much less a nation, in one attack.³⁰

As a result, the Americans resigned themselves, as had the British eventually, to a multi-year venture. The first American heavy bomber raids took place in August 1942, but these raids were, like the Independence Day mission, small-scale attacks against sites in occupied France. It was not until 27 January 1943 that the first American bombs fell on German soil. Later that year, *The New York Times* published a five-part series entitled “The War in the Air,” written by its military affairs editor Hanson W. Baldwin.³¹ In its first installment, he informed his readers, “The strategic bombardment of Germany is now equivalent to a major front, . . .” destroying German resources and tying up assets needed on the eastern front.³² Yet the hoped-for knockout blow never came. The Germans continued to fight. Part three of “War in the Air” cautioned, “Strategic bombardment . . . is not the quick victory weapon so many writers have tried to indicate. It has made its effects felt quite slowly, though definitely.”³³

³⁰ The index of Martin Middlebrook’s *Bomber Command War Diaries* lists 105 separate entries for Cologne, while the index for Roger Freeman’s *Mighty Eighth War Diary*, a catalogue of the USAAF’s 8th Air Force’s operations, lists 28 entries for that city (all entries represent an operational mission). Note also that other USAAF units, such as the 9th Air Force, also conducted attacks on Cologne. Roger A. Freeman, with Alan Crouchman and Vic Maslen, *Mighty Eighth War Diary* (London: Jane’s, 1981), 504; Martin Middlebrook, *The Bomber Command War Diaries: An Operational Reference Book, 1939-1945* (London: Viking, 1987), 798.

³¹ Actually, six articles entitled “The War in the Air” appeared in *The New York Times* in the summer of 1943. Five were published on consecutive days (24-28 August) and were numbered I through V. However, an item under the rubric “The War in the Air—I” had appeared in early July. A seventh “The War in the Air” piece—the first, actually—had appeared in May 1942.

³² Hanson W. Baldwin, “The War in the Air—I: U.S. Force in Britain has Grown in Year from ‘Token’ Unit to Great Flying Fleet,” *The New York Times*, 24 August 1943, 8.

³³ Hanson W. Baldwin, “The War in the Air—III: Aerial Blitz Producing Bitter Hatreds That Will Fester Long After War Ends,” *The New York Times*, 26 August 1943, 9.

“The War in the Air” series started just after the USAAF suffered two of its worst setbacks of the war (the Ploesti and Regensburg/Schweinfurt raids). After a third disastrous mission in October (second Schweinfurt), the Americans suspended deep-penetration operations for a period, resuming them only when they had secured long-range escort fighters. Even after the bombers’ “little friends” appeared, the war ground on. In March 1944 Baldwin warned his readers to be patient. “The present bombings in their effects upon morale, communications and industry are an essential part of the war of attrition. Strategic bombardment is, in effect, internal blockade, in addition to a weapon of assault.”³⁴ Economic warfare takes time; the conflict would last another fourteen months.

Baldwin’s choice of words is telling. Both “attrition” and “blockade” (an expression borrowed from the language of sea power) convey long-term time commitments. They are economic terms, implying a contest of resources. The 1944 article was not the first time Baldwin had employed such words. Both appear several times in various parts of “The War in the Air” series and a number of his other articles.³⁵ Baldwin also used the word “siege” on occasion, another term associated with achieving military objectives over time.³⁶

³⁴ Hanson W. Baldwin, “Air Power: What it can—and cannot—do: an appraisal of the strength and weakness of a dynamic force that is now changing the face of war and will influence the course of history,” *The New York Times*, 26 March 1944, SM5-SM7, SM31-32).

³⁵ Hanson W. Baldwin, “The War in the Air—I: U.S. Force in Britain has Grown in year from ‘token’ unit to great flying fleet,” *The New York Times*, 24 August 1943, 8; Hanson W. Baldwin, “Japan’s Industrial Power: While Bombing will Greatly cut Output, Her ‘Denser’ Defense will need less,” *The New York Times*, 22 June 1945, 2.

³⁶ Hanson W. Baldwin, “The War in the Air—I: ‘Internal Siege’ by Long-Range Bombers carries out attrition of Industrial Nations,” *The New York Times*, 7 July 1943. Baldwin was certainly not the only person to compare strategic air warfare to the ancient stratagems of siege and blockade. Variations of the expressions (often “aerial siege” and “aerial blockade”) had appeared in the popular press in both the

Almost entirely missing from Baldwin's articles is another word denoting process: "campaign." It does, however, appear in some of Baldwin's other writings, albeit infrequently.³⁷ Given that today it is probably the single most common term employed to describe a sustained program of bombing operations (consider how often it appears in that context in this work), its absence is surprising. Yet this deficiency reflects common usage at the time. Before World War Two, few military leaders saw a need to develop coherent long-term plans for strategic bombing operations. It was not until 1943 that the word "campaign" was popularly used in the context of aerial warfare.³⁸

Thus did the practical experience of combat deviate from the prewar theories of the air power advocates. Writing in the late 1920s, Giulio Douhet ended his account of a hypothetical European air war by describing just two days of combat, then declaring, "From this moment on, the history of the war of 19— presents no more interest."³⁹ Yet just two decades—or one major war—later, Admiral William "Bull" Halsey could

United States and Europe since World War One. However, most of these references, by their context, appear to be metaphorical, lacking the precise meanings of the terms accepted by military and naval personnel, as defined in international law.

³⁷ Hanson W. Baldwin, *Strategy for Victory* (New York: Norton, 1942), 134.

³⁸ "Popularly" in this context means in the daily American press. A search of the Proquest historical newspaper online database for the term "bombing campaign" by itself turns up many thousand "hits," most of which refer to terrorist and criminal activities. The addition of keywords to specify aerial or strategic bombing campaigns reduces the number of citations considerably. Although the term was used in the context of aerial warfare during World War One, the vast majority of citations date from after large-scale American strategic bombing operations began in 1943 (search conducted 17 June 2011).

³⁹ Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, 394. "The War of 19—" is the last chapter in the 1942 English translation of *Command of the Air* but was originally published in Italy as a separate title shortly after Douhet's death.

express his belief that “[t]he bombing of cities and industries is essentially a siege operation, designed to sap the strength and vitality of the defenders.”⁴⁰

This statement was part of the admiral’s testimony during the Unification and Strategy Hearings and, given the harshness of some of the other naval witnesses’ criticism of the USAF’s bomber program during the inquiry, seems fairly innocuous. After 1945, one might think that even the most enthusiastic adherents of Mitchell and Douhet would have difficulty disputing the idea that strategic bombing requires years, not days, to show an effect. *Yet they did.* What the unbelievers did not appreciate, they argued, was that the air campaigns of World War Two had been, at best, an incomplete demonstration of the efficacy of air power. The lessons of the conflict were not entirely valid. A new element had been introduced during the war, but not given an opportunity to achieve its potential. That new element was the atomic bomb.

Public Concern about the Atomic Bomb

The first public commentaries about the atomic bomb appeared within hours of President Truman’s announcement that the weapon had been dropped on Hiroshima in the form of newspaper columns and editorials (and no doubt radio broadcasts). Prepared quickly, these pieces might be described as too ambitious. They tried to address too many topics at once, touching upon the bomb’s immense destructive power, its impact on the course of the war with Japan, the physics of atomic energy, how the bomb was

⁴⁰ William F. Halsey, statement, Unification and Strategy Hearings, 241. One might argue that this explanation is a better description of a blockade than a siege, but of course Admiral Halsey was at the time engaged in an effort to preserve the prerogatives of the US Navy, so would not have wanted to suggest another service could perform what has traditionally been a naval mission.

developed, and the possible civil applications of atomic power, among a wide variety of other themes, including how security concerns about atomic energy secrets might injure civil liberties. They also speculated about how atomic weapons might affect warfare and international relations in the future, but these specific subjects were lost in the clamor, and for the most part treated rather superficially.⁴¹ However, more thoughtful works from more authoritative writers—scientists, military personnel, and scholars—soon appeared.

There was a market for such works. The public had a tremendous appetite for information about The Bomb (“atomic” was almost superfluous; there was never any confusion about which bomb). Physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer referred to the “Promethean qualities of drama and of novelty [that] have no doubt added to the interest with which atomic weapons have been regarded.”⁴² A technology that could destroy humanity was the concern of all thinking beings.⁴³ Mankind had to own up to its responsibilities to itself if, as Albert Einstein challenged, “[M]an is to prove himself worthy . . . of the self-chosen name of *homo sapiens* [sic]”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Representative examples include: Daedalus (military aviation correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor*), “War and Peace Revolutionized,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 6 August 1945, 1; George A. Orton, “Atom Age: Force in Peacetime can alter Civilization,” *The Boston Globe*, 7 August 1945, 1; “Atomic Energy,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 7 August 1945, 8; “Heard Round the World,” *The New York Times*, 7 August 1945, 22; “An Imperative for Peace,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 August 1945, 22; “The Atomic Bomb,” *The Scotsman*, 7 August 1945, 4; “The Atomic Bomb,” *The Hartford Courant*, 7 August 1945, 8; “The Atomic Bomb,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 August 1945, 4; and John O’Donnell, “The Atomic Bomb,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 8 August 1945, A4.

⁴² J. R. Oppenheimer, “The New Weapon,” *One World or None*, 59.

⁴³ A quick and unscientific survey of the Proquest online database of American and foreign newspapers (over twenty titles, including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*) reveals that within a year of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there appeared some fifteen articles, editorials, and letters using the terms “atomic bomb” and “Frankenstein.” By the end of the 1940s, this number had more than doubled. Extending the search to the present produces seventy-one “hits” (search made 27 June 2011).

⁴⁴ Albert Einstein, “The Way Out,” *One World or None*, 209.

Naturally enough, the possibility of extinction produced anxiety among thoughtful people. But there are ways to displace such stresses, of which humor is one of the most powerful. Within a year of VJ-Day, *The New Yorker*, that barometer of the American elite's thoughts and concerns, published several cartoons reflecting the new atomic age. One captured the balance between light-heartedness and thoughtfulness quite well despite not having a depiction of either a bomb or a mushroom cloud. It was simply a drawing of a church sign announcing the topic of next week's sermon: "Will the atomic bomb blow you to heaven or hell?"⁴⁵

The New Yorker is famous for its cartoons but its 31 August 1946 issue had none. This particular number featured but a single article, John Hersey's "Hiroshima," an account of what six individuals who survived were doing in that city on the day of the bomb. The editors published the piece "in the conviction that few of us have yet comprehended the all but incredible destructive power of this weapon, and that everyone might well take time to consider the terrible implications of its use."⁴⁶ The number quickly sold out. Demand for reprints was high enough that the *Book of the Month Club* published a bound edition of "Hiroshima" and distributed it free to all its members.

Little wonder, then, that the public desired to know what the experts thought about atomic warfare. One of the first major figures to write about the bomb was Henry H. Arnold, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, whose *Third Report to the Secretary of War* appeared in November 1945. Although it discusses atomic weapons

⁴⁵ Alain (Daniel Brustlein), cartoon, *The New Yorker*, 2 February 1946. For others, see Robert J. Day, cartoon, *New Yorker*, 18 August 1945 and Alain, cartoon, *The New Yorker*, 27 July 1946.

⁴⁶ Editorial comment, *The New Yorker*, 31 August 1946, 15.

only briefly, this work was a more thoughtful piece than most of the other material then available. Naturally enough, its examination of the bomb focused on how the bomb would affect aerial warfare. “The influence of atomic energy on Air Power can be stated very simply,” Arnold announced. “It has made Air Power all-important.”⁴⁷

The general expanded on his thoughts on the matter in an essay he wrote for *One World Or None*, a slim book published under the auspices of the American Federation of Scientists in March 1946. Subtitled “A Report to the Public on the Full Meaning of the Atomic Bomb,” this work is an anthology addressing a wide variety of topics associated with nuclear energy. In addition to Arnold, contributors included chemist Harold C. Urey and “The Father of the Atomic Bomb,” J. Robert Oppenheimer, as well as physicist Albert Einstein, political commentator Walter Lippman, astronomer Harlow Shapley, and physicist Leo Szilard.⁴⁸

No sooner had readers digested the first impressions of practitioners of the “hard” sciences than the social scientists submitted their interpretations of the impact of atomic energy. “The Influence of Air Power upon History,” by Princeton’s Edward Mead Earle, appeared in the June 1946 issue of *Yale Review*.⁴⁹ Despite its title, the article is mostly about bombing, further evidence of the growing merger of atomic warfare and aerial warfare in the postwar American mind.⁵⁰ That same month, five

⁴⁷ Arnold, *Third Report*, 462.

⁴⁸ Dexter Masters and Katherine Way, eds., *One World or None: A Report to the Public on the Full Meaning of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: The New Press, 2007 [1946]).

⁴⁹ Edward Earle Mead, “The Influence of Air Power upon History,” *Yale Review* June 1946, 57-78. Earle had worked for several American defense agencies during World War Two.

⁵⁰ A natural conflation, given that “[t]he only known effective means of delivering atomic bombs in their present stage of development is the very heavy bomber,” as General Arnold observed in 1945. Arnold, *Third Report*, 464.

members of Yale University's Institute of International Studies published *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*. Its contributors included William T. R. Fox, credited with coining the term "superpower" in 1944, and Frederick S. Dunn, an expert in international law. Leading the project was Bernard Brodie, a political scientist specializing in naval strategy and modern armaments, who, in addition to editing the book, wrote two of its six essays.

Of the many scholars, scientists, military personnel, commentators, and politicians who considered how atomic weapons would affect warfare in the early Cold War era—and after—Brodie was the most influential. Many credit him with having identified the basic principles of nuclear strategy. He dedicated the rest of his life to the study of nuclear warfare and deterrence theory, publishing several books on the topic over the next three decades. "Although it is not quite the case that nothing new has been said about the subject since . . . Bernard Brodie's *Escalation and the Nuclear Option* appeared in 1966, subsequent work . . . in the field generally has been limited. . . ."⁵¹

Brodie, Arnold, and others were convinced that the atomic bomb had transformed warfare, answering the question posed by the members of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS), a commission assigned to assess the impact of the bombing campaigns against Germany and Japan during World War Two: "Does the existence of atomic bombs invalidate all conclusions relative to air power based on

⁵¹ Karl P. Mueller, "Strategic Airpower and Nuclear Strategy: New Theory for a Not-Quite-So-New Apocalypse," in Philip Meilinger, ed., *The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air UP, 1997), 279. While the foundations of airpower theory were established almost exclusively by military personnel, the strategy of nuclear warfare was the product of civilian minds, many of them professional academics. "After 1945, the US military almost completely abdicated its traditional responsibility for strategic airpower thought, passing it to the civilian experts they employed and whose guidance they occasionally followed." *Ibid.*, 292.

preatomic experience?”⁵² Nobel laureate Urey seemed to think so. “Another war would differ from this past one as a modern automobile differs from the Model T Ford or perhaps a horse and wagon,” he wrote in *One World or None*.⁵³ Brodie agreed. “The conclusion is inescapable that war will be vastly different because of the atomic bomb whether or not the bomb is actually used.”⁵⁴

Inevitably, there were some who declared that the atomic bomb was “just another weapon,” especially once the initial shock of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had worn off.⁵⁵ No doubt some of those who expressed this view were sincere in their beliefs, but in many of the public statements made downplaying the effect of the atomic bomb, a certain level of self-interest is apparent. American naval officers were among the worst offenders.⁵⁶ So were Soviet diplomats and government officials—at least until the USSR detonated its first bomb in 1949.⁵⁷

⁵² Their own answer was ambivalent and not particularly helpful: “It is the survey’s opinion that many of the preexisting yardsticks are revolutionized, but that certain of the more basic principles and relationships remain.” *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey Summary Report (Pacific War)*, (Washington DC; USGPO, 1946); in *The United States Strategic Bombing Surveys (European War) (Pacific War)* (Maxwell AFB AL: AU Press, 1987), 113.

⁵³ Harold C. Urey, “How does it all add up?,” in Dexter Masters and Katherine Way, eds., *One World or None: A Report to the Public on the Full Meaning of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: The New Press, 2007 [1946]), 150.

⁵⁴ Bernard Brodie, “Implications for Military Policy,” 83.

⁵⁵ W[illiam] L. Laurence, “Tragedy of Errors in Bikini Reaction: Writer Deplores Public’s Loss of Awe after Atom Blast Fails to Wipe Out Target Fleet,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 4 August 1946, 3. This article expresses Laurence’s belief that the disappointing results of Operations “Crossroads,” the 1946 atomic tests at Bikini atoll, were no cause for apathy. His opinion would have carried some weight. Known as “Atomic Bill,” Laurence was the science writer for the *New York Times* before being appointed as the official journalist of the Manhattan Project in 1945. He was present at the Trinity and Nagasaki explosions and his work was syndicated widely. In 1946 he won a Pulitzer Prize for his wartime work on the atomic bomb, although recent critics have accused him of covering up the long-term effects of radiation, known to scientists at the time but not to the general public.

⁵⁶ The “just another weapon” idea was expressed by many authority figures, including senators and generals. Elbert D. Thomas (of Utah), quoted in “Senator Urges Renaissance of World Thinking,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 26 June 1946, 2; Lucius D. Clay, quoted in “Army for West Germany ‘Feasible,’ Gen Clay says,” *The Boston Globe*, 21 November 1949, 2.

Yet it was difficult to deny the immense destructive power of the atomic bomb. The USSBS team calculated in 1946 that the “damage and casualties caused at Hiroshima by the one atomic bomb dropped from a single plane would have required 220 B-29s carrying 1,200 tons of incendiary bombs, 400 tons of high-explosive bombs, and 500 tons of anti-personnel fragmentation bombs. . . .”⁵⁸ The majority opinion worldwide was that atomic weapons could level cities and devastate nations, leading Bernard Brodie to observe, “Most of those who have held the public ear on the subject of the atomic bomb have been content to assume that war and obliteration are now synonymous. . . .”⁵⁹ A hypothetical atomic war was often treated as an all-or-nothing proposition. The best, perhaps the only, way to avoid annihilation was to prevent war. “Thus far the chief purpose our military establishment has been to win wars,” wrote Brodie. “From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them.”⁶⁰

This thought echoes the prewar theories of Douhet and Mitchell. Recall that they were writing at a time when many subscribed the idea that the airplane would make

However, naval officers were particularly vocal in dismissing its power. In 1945, both the Commander of the US Pacific Fleet and the Assistant Judge Advocate General of the USN played the “just another weapon” card. Chester W. Nimitz, quoted in Clinton Green, “Nimitz finds Navy Vital to New Bomb: Atomic Weapon’s use to rely on Seapower for ‘Many, Many Years,’ Admiral Says,” *The New York Times*, 22 September 1945, 3; Oswald S. Colclough, quoted in “Atomic Bomb Called ‘Just Another Weapon,’” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 26 October 1945, 7.

In a 1946 speech about the history of the Royal Navy, that service’s Chief of Naval Information stated, “I think we shall find that the atomic bomb is simply a *bigger and better bomb* [italics in book edition].” R. K. Dickson, quoted in “‘Basic Principles of War Unchanged:’ Naval Chief on Effect of Atom Bomb,” *The Scotsman*, 28 January 1946, 3; full text of speech available in R. K. Dickson, *Naval Broadcasts* (London: George Allan and Unwin, 1946), 90.

⁵⁷ Josef Stalin, in a 1946 interview, said “I do not believe atom bomb to be such a serious force as certain politicians are inclined to consider it. Atom bombs are designed to frighten the weak-nerved, but they cannot determine the outcome of war. . . .” Chargé in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 24 September 1946, in *FRUS* 1946-6, 786.

⁵⁸ *USSBS Summary Report (Pacific War)*, in *The United States Strategic Bombing Surveys (European War) (Pacific War)*, 102.

⁵⁹ Bernard Brodie, “War in the Atomic Age,” in *The Absolute Weapon*, 21.

⁶⁰ Bernard Brodie, “Implications for Military Policy,” in *The Absolute Weapon*, 76.

warfare so terrible no nation would dare resort to it. The atomic bomb held out the same promise. “Modern technological war as developed by the European civilization of which we are part may cause its complete disintegration,” declared Urey.⁶¹ Mitchell and Douhet had claimed that the only way to avoid such a terrible war was by, perversely, preparing for one. The postwar air-atomic thinkers made the same argument.

While this country must employ all of its physical and moral force in the cause of peace, it must recognize that real security against atomic weapons will rest on our ability to take immediate offensive action with overwhelming force. It must be apparent to a potential aggressor that an attack on the United States would be immediately followed by an immensely devastating air-atomic attack on him.

This form of deterrence would require Americans to abandon one of their most cherished traditions. “Since the birth of this Nation,” wrote General Arnold, “the people of the United States, peace-loving and hoping for world-wide acceptance of our concept of democracy, have never sponsored a strong peacetime military organization.”⁶²

The destructive potential of the atomic bomb gave new meaning to the idea that “the bomber will always get through.” Even though the efficacy of aerial defenses had improved considerably since Stanley Baldwin’s time—recall that the Germans, British, and Americans all discovered that their prewar concepts of strategic bombing did not long survive the experience of combat—even the best anti-aircraft and interceptor forces could not guarantee the destruction of all incoming bombers. “If [a nation’s] defenses are highly efficient it may down nine planes out of every ten attacking, but [that nation] will suffer the destruction of its cities,” warned Brodie. The atomic bomb seemed to

⁶¹ Urey, “How does it all add up?,” in *One World or None*, 163.

⁶² Arnold, *Third Report*, 464.

restore the validity of Mitchell's and Douhet's forecasts about the duration of future wars. As Brodie observed:

[T]he essential change introduced by the atomic bomb is not primarily that it will make war more violent—a city can be as effectively destroyed with TNT and incendiaries—but that it will concentrate the violence in terms of time. A world accustomed to thinking it horrible that wars should last four or five years is now appalled at the prospect that future wars may last only a few days.⁶³

Postwar air power theory recapitulated prewar air power theory as if the 1939-1945 conflict had not happened.⁶⁴ The message was that the long, arduous, and costly bombing campaigns of World War Two need not be repeated, leading Mead to write, “The threat of a knockout blow, especially with atomic weapons, is enormously enhanced, so that eternal vigilance is more than ever the price of victory.”⁶⁵ Like Mitchell and Douhet, the postwar theorists of atomic conflict offered an alternative to the horrific and wasteful carnage of the war just past.

Mead was writing when the United States still had a monopoly on atomic weapons, so its call for preparedness as a deterrent to attack had a certain alarmist flavor. But the memory of 7 December 1941 was still fresh in American minds. “[A] war, or even a new phase of a war already in progress, *always* starts with a Pearl Harbor kind of attack,” wrote radar expert (and later Chief Scientist of the Air Force) Louis N. Ridenour in *One World Or None*. “[W]e have called what happened a disaster, but we survived it

⁶³ Bernard Brodie, “Implications for Military Policy,” in *The Absolute Weapon*, 88.

⁶⁴ Note that in the late 1940s, little distinction was made between atomic warfare, and aerial warfare. “The only known effective means of delivering atomic bombs in their present stage of development is the very heavy bomber,” wrote General Arnold in 1945. Arnold, *Third Report*, 464.

⁶⁵ Mead, “Influence of Air Power upon History,” 588.

and went on to fight. In an atomic war the first attack . . . will *really* be a disaster. It is quite likely to end the war. . . . [emphasis in original]”⁶⁶

Preventive War

There were calls for a “preventive” war against the Soviet Union while the United States was still in sole possession of the secret of the atomic bomb. There was, after all, “no defense against the atomic bomb.” Everyone was saying so—politicians, scientists, scholars, journalists, military officers, the clergy, and ordinary citizens.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Louis N. Ridenour, “There is No Defense,” *One World or None*, 102.

⁶⁷ The idea that against the atomic bomb no defense was possible had a firm grip on the popular imagination in the early days of the atomic era. The public figures who made statements to this effect include some of the most authoritative people in their respective fields: examples include scientists Niels Bohr, Vannevar Bush, and Harold C. Urey; generals Carl Spaatz and Omar Bradley; scholars Bernard Brodie and Robert M. Hutchins; and political leaders Harry S. Truman, Clement Attlee, and MacKenzie King. Little wonder that the concept became so well accepted among non-experts, evidence of which can be found in such fora as Congressional testimony and letters to the editor. “General Bradley Calls for International Control—even at the Expense of National Sovereignty,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 3 (2) February 1947, 34; Carl Spaatz, “Air Power in the Atomic Age,” *Collier’s*, 8 December 1945, 12; R. E. Lapp, “Atomic Bomb Explosions—Effects on an American City,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, February 1948, 54; Robert M. Hutchins, “Peace or War with Russia?,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 1 March 1946, 2; “The Atom Bomb: ‘Don’t be around when it Explodes: The Only Safeguard,”” *The Scotsman*, 10 February 1950, 8; “No Atom Bomb Defense Seen,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 4 October 1945, 8; Lee Shippey, “Leeside” (column), *The Los Angeles Times*, 6 October 1945, A4; “Bush sees no A-Bomb Defense Yet,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 15 October 1945, 7; A. W. Trice, letter to the editor, *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 August 1945, 4; “Three-Nation Declaration on Atomic Energy” (the text of a joint statement by the leaders of the USA, the UK, and Canada), *The New York Times*, 16 November 1945, 3; Margaret P. Welch, “Atomic Statesmanship” (letter to the editor), *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 October 1946, 20; Albert Einstein, “Help the Scientists: Funds Needed to Bring People the Facts of Atomic Energy (letter to editor),” *The Hartford Courant*, 7 March 1947, 14.

There were some interesting variations on the theme. Irving Langmuir, Nobel laureate, testified to congress that “The only defense, of course, is against the [bomb’s] carrier, before it is delivered. The only defense against the atomic bomb, once dropped, is not to be in that place.” Humorist Robert Quillen wrote, seemingly in all seriousness, “For every weapon there is a defense. But against the atomic bomb there is no defense except for the one given to us by Jesus of Nazareth 2,000 years ago.” Robert Quillen, “World Better, but not Man,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 3 September 1945, 8.

Other respected authorities agreed that while no defenses would work against the atomic bomb itself, there were other methods for preventing its employment. The idea of outlawing the bomb was frequently brought up, especially in the immediate postwar period, as was placing atomic energy under the control of a pan-national organization. Others focused on thwarting its construction. Some emphasized

Similarly, there was a general consensus that the communists were wicked totalitarians bent on world domination. Why not better the planet by eliminating the threat, striking while the Soviets lacked the means to retaliate?

The idea of pre-emptive war was attractive enough that many authorities felt the need to respond to it. Foreign policy expert Arnold Wolfers dedicates several pages in his essay in *The Absolute Weapon* to the issue. He examines possible scenarios for doing so, yet after reasoning through the consequences of such an act, he concludes, “The whole idea of an offensive use of the bomb during the period of our monopoly can safely be laid aside as utterly impracticable.”⁶⁸ Harold C. Urey agreed, giving many of the same reasons Wolfers did. “Supposing that the United States remains ahead of other countries in number or effectiveness of bombs, what good does it do us? Do we plan to attack other countries at a favorable moment?”⁶⁹ Secretary of Commerce Henry A.

the vulnerability of the systems (in the early 1940s, manned aircraft only) used to deliver atomic weapons. These ideas were often accompanied by suggestions about reducing the vulnerability of potential targets by either dispersal or fortification (usually by removing factories to underground locations). The United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) recommended “a progressive evacuation, dispersal, warning, air-raid shelter, and postraid emergency assistance program, the foundations for which can only be laid in peacetime.” *USSBS Summary Report (Pacific War)*, in *The United States Strategic Bombing Surveys (European War) (Pacific War)*, 114.

A handful, however, argued that countermeasures are eventually found for all weapons, so that even the atomic bomb, for all of its horrific power, might someday be rendered, if not harmless, at least less fearsome. Many of these were naval personnel, who of course needed to denigrate atomic weapons because they were the instrument by which the USAF surpassed the USN as the nation’s favored defensive arm. Admirals Oscar C. Badger declared, “History shows us countermeasures always follow.” “Attack Speed Key to Victory, Admiral Says,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 22 June 1947, A8. See also Frederick L. Oliver, “Development of Weapons Brings many problems,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 18 April 1949, 10. Oliver’s byline identified him as “Captain” (albeit retired).

British military theorist B. H. Liddell-Hart responded to this argument by observing that the development of countermeasures takes time. “The time-lag inevitably favors aggression [and as] offensive developments become more powerful even a short time-lag becomes more dangerous.” B. H. Liddell-Hart, *The Revolution in Warfare* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1947), 97.

⁶⁸ Arnold Wolfers, “The Atomic Bomb in Soviet-American Relations,” in *The Absolute Weapon*, 115.

⁶⁹ Urey, “How does it all add up?,” in *One World or None*, 154. Urey continued to oppose preventive war as part of his overall commitment to preserve world peace through the agency of

Wallace called preventive war “not only immoral but stupid. . . . This idea is so contrary to all the basic instincts and principles of the American people that any such action would be possible only under a dictatorship at home.”⁷⁰

Wallace may have had too much faith in his countrymen’s good will. A public opinion poll conducted in March 1946 asked Americans, “If we ever suspect that a certain country is planning to make a surprise atomic bomb attack on our country within a few days, which one of these two things do you think we should do?” The choices were “We should try to keep from being the first country to be bombed—even if this means starting an atomic war as soon as we become suspicious” and “We should first try to prove if they’re really planning this attack—even if waiting means taking a chance that we’ll be bombed first.” Respondents preferred the former to the latter by a margin of forty-seven to forty-three percent.⁷¹

international atomic control agreements or supranational unions. “Urey calls A-Bomb No Police Weapon: 'Preventive War' With It Is Impossible, Scientist Tells Nobel Birthday Dinner,” *The New York Times*, 22 October 1946, 6; “Only Two Foolish Peoples in the World,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 24 November 1947, 1; “Union of Free States,” *The Washington Post*, 16 December 1949, 20.

⁷⁰ Henry A. Wallace, “Text of Secretary Wallace’s Letter to President Truman on U.S. Foreign Policy; No Lasting Security In Armaments International Control Of Atomic Energy Other Problems of U.S.-Russian Relationships Factors in American Distrust of Russia Factors in Russian Distrust Of the Western World What Should We Do The Role of Economic Relationships Summary,” *The New York Times*, 18 September 1946, 2.

⁷¹ Foreign Trade, Atomic Bomb, March 1946; iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html, accessed 29 June 2011. Similar polls in 1949 and 1950 (taken after the Soviet bomb had been tested) rephrased the question slightly, confining the topic to the use of atomic weapons in war. Both asked whether the United States should pledge not to use atomic weapons unless another nation has already used them. The 1949 survey determined that seventy percent of respondents felt that the United States should not make such a commitment. The 1950 poll, however, indicated that seventy-three percent of the respondents approved of such a measure. Gallup Poll, July 1949; Foreign Affairs Survey, January 1950; iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html, accessed 29 June 2011.

Fortunately, American political leaders were more circumspect. The idea of preventive war was so repugnant to them that few official policy documents or war plans prepared in the early Cold War era even mention it, taking for granted that the United States would not initiate hostilities.⁷² One exception was a proposed draft of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's final report on Operation "Crossroads," the atomic tests at Bikini Atoll in 1947, which included a remark about American non-aggression.⁷³ Another was a National Security Council (NSC) paper created in 1949 that acknowledged that preventive war is an option, only to dismiss it immediately. "Resort to war as a course of action is raised in this paper solely for the purpose of making it clear that it should be rejected as a practical alternative."⁷⁴ A State Department document from 1950 discusses an ongoing debate about the possibility of the United States pledging formally not to use atomic weapons except in response to their prior use, but the government never acted on the idea because "such a declaration would be interpreted by the U.S.S.R. as an admission of great weakness and by our allies as a clear indication that we intended to abandon them."⁷⁵

⁷² Alternatively, this absence might be interpreted to mean that the American political leadership was not entirely ready to give up the option. Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War 1945-1950* (New York: Vintage, 1982), 271.

⁷³ JCS 1691/10 "Proposed Release of an Extracted Version of the Final Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Evaluation Board on Operation Crossroads and the Related Proposed Press Release," 29 December 1947, enclosure "c," in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 129-131.

⁷⁴ NSC-58/2 "United States Policy toward the Soviet Satellite States in Eastern Europe," 8 December 1949, in *FRUS*, 1949-5, 50.

⁷⁵ United States National Security Policy: Estimates of Threats to the National Security; the Extension of Military Assistance to Foreign Nations; the Preparation of NSC 68, "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," in *FRUS* 1950-1, 268.

The United States thus committed itself to a policy of reaction, not action, in its ongoing contest with the Soviet Union. It would fight only if provoked. But had war come, what would that war have been like?

Push-Button War

One thing it would *not* have been is effortless, despite the expectations of some. In the years immediately following World War Two, the idea that war could be rendered as simple as throwing a switch or pulling a lever gained a powerful hold on the American imagination. Weapons technologies had advanced tremendously in the six years the conflict had lasted—all of the belligerents had operated at least one type of biplane in the early days of the fighting, yet the British and Germans were flying jets at the end—and there was no reason to believe the rate of progress would abate, an idea encouraged by many authorities.⁷⁶ In 1945, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall reported, “[T]he developments of the war have been so incredible that the wildest imagination will not project us far from the target in estimating the future.”⁷⁷ The end result of this trend would be “push-button warfare.”⁷⁸ A cartoon in a 1948 issue of *The*

⁷⁶ Using the biplane as a symbol of “the olden days” and the jet as a representation of modernity is, of course, a false dichotomy. There is nothing inherently inferior about a biplane *vis-à-vis* a monoplane, whether propeller-driven or jet-propelled, and indeed the two-winged layout offers certain advantages over a single-winged design. But the popular perception of biplanes as outdated antiques is difficult to dislodge. There has been, in fact, a jet-powered biplane, the PZL M-15 Belphegor, which first flew in 1973. The type was designed and manufactured in Poland, which predictably, led to a number of jokes popular with those who think ethnic stereotypes are funny. However, the only reason the Belphegor failed in the market—only 175 articles were produced--was that it uneconomical to operate.

⁷⁷ George C. Marshall, *Third Report*, 150.

⁷⁸ Military historians and historians of technology have long debated the idea of technological determinism, wondering whether technology drives tactics or tactics determine technologies. It is difficult to make a case for the latter, however. The most effective and simplest tactic in the world would

New Yorker depicts a general briefing his subordinates, who are gathered around a conference table, on which is nothing but a small box with a single button on it. Holding out a finger, he tells them, “Now, gentlemen, any practical consideration of push-button warfare must begin with one basic operational technique.”⁷⁹

The American public was eager to learn all it could about how science and technology would transform warfare. Technical magazines targeted to a general readership, such as *Popular Science*, *Mechanix Illustrated*, and *Popular Mechanics*, were full of stories about high-speed jets, guided missiles, helicopters, atom bombs, death rays, and the like throughout the early Cold War. Their brightly-colored covers enticed readers with promises of articles about, for example, “Taming the Turbojets,” “Bomber Carries Jet Fighters,” a “Pilot’s Stratosphere Suit,” and a “Supersonic Rocket Plane,” sometimes by asking questions such as “What can our Bombers do now?” and “Can Superfighters stop the Bombers?”⁸⁰ For inspiration, their contributors had to look no further than official releases from the aircraft manufacturers and the military, an example being General Arnold’s *Third Report*, which devoted several pages to the impact of supersonic aircraft, pilotless vehicles, improved explosives, self-guided missiles, electronic devices for communications and detection, and hydroponics on future conflicts.⁸¹

be to push a button that smote an enemy nation’s leadership and transferred the loyalty of the population to the operator. Yet until such a device exists, armies and navies must accomplish such ends using the equipment at hand (James W. Pohl, personal communication (class lecture), c. 1990).

⁷⁹ Carl Rose, cartoon, *The New Yorker*, 10 January 1948.

⁸⁰ These six examples taken, respectively, from the covers of *Popular Science Monthly*, October 1947; *Popular Mechanics*, June 1947; *Mechanix Illustrated*, February 1947; *Popular Mechanics*, January 1947; *Popular Science Monthly*, August 1948; and *Popular Science Monthly*, August 1949.

⁸¹ Arnold, *Third Report*, 462-467.

These new technologies seemed to have come right out of science fiction. Newspaper and magazine articles describing the new armaments often compared them to the devices employed by the heroes of the pulps and comic pages. “We’re going in for Buck Rogers stuff,” proclaimed a headline in *The Christian Science Monitor* in the last summer of World War Two.⁸² Even high-ranking officials were not afraid to make popular culture references.⁸³ “These Buck Rogers things I’m talking about are not so Buck Rogerish as you might think,” General Arnold quipped in a press conference shortly after the Japanese surrendered.⁸⁴

Such allusions, wrote columnist Marquis Childs in 1948, “confirmed a longing that war can be easily won by the Buck Rogers, push-button technique” among the American people.⁸⁵ This desire stems from what might be called the American approach to warfare in the twentieth century: use technology to do as much damage as possible, as rapidly as possible, as far away as possible, to minimize the exposure of American fighting personnel to risk.⁸⁶ The old thinking about the relationship between land, labor,

⁸² William H. Stringer, “We’re Going in for the Buck Rogers Stuff,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26 June 1945, 18.

⁸³ Buck Rogers is one of the most famous characters in science fiction, and was extremely popular in the post-World War Two era. Originally appearing in the pulp magazines in the late 1920s, he later featured in comic books, radio and television series, and motion picture serials. He is perhaps best known as the subject of a long-running (1929-1983) newspaper comic strip.

Just as well known was Flash Gordon, another hero of the same sci-fi media. His name, too, was evoked to in discussions of futuristic weapons and warfare in the late 1940s, albeit far less often than Buck Rogers’ was.

⁸⁴ Henry H. Arnold, quoted in Sidney Shalett, “Arnold Reveals Secret Weapons, Bomber Surpassing All Others.,” *The New York Times*, 18 August 1945, 1.

⁸⁵ Marquis Childs, Washington Calling: Dropping the Bomb,” *The Washington Post*, 12 October 1948, 10.

⁸⁶ It is tempting to call this preference “the American way of war” but that expression cannot be disassociated from Russell F. Weigley’s 1977 work of that name, the thesis of which is that Americans seek to engage and destroy enemy forces in the field as the surest path to victory, choosing between a “strategy of attrition” or a “strategy of annihilation,” depending on circumstances. Despite its shortcomings, this work has remained the definitive book in American military history for three decades.

and technology was ingrained in the American conscious. “[W]e showed ourselves more reluctant than the Russians to accept great losses of men—a fact easily explained, however, by our ability to spend the money and time necessary to substitute machines for men.”⁸⁷ Any form of combat that promised quick and easy victories at great distances naturally appealed to a technologically-minded people such as the Americans. But Bernard Brodie and others warned against placing too much emphasis on “romantic predictions concerning ‘push-button’ warfare.”⁸⁸ Such weapons require time to develop and would not be available for years, if not decades, they cautioned.

In 1947, syndicated military affairs columnist George Fielding Eliot reported, “[M]ost of the Buck Rogers weapons are still in the experimental stage and could be used only experimentally and therefore on a small scale if war were to break out tomorrow.”⁸⁹ Alexander de Seversky had no illusions about the nature of future combat. “There will be human sacrifice, as always in war, and the ‘pushbutton warfare’ which is talked of is a very long way ahead.”⁹⁰ Vannevar Bush, Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development (a joint Army-Navy endeavor), declared that the idea of a superweapon was “hooey,” and that Americans should not allow their hopes to be raised too much. “This talk has done a lot of harm. The trouble is that the American

Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

For criticism of this work, see Brian M. Linn; “The American Way of War” Revisited,” with a response by Russell F. Weigley, *The Journal of Military History* 66, no. 2 (2002); 501-533.

⁸⁷ Arnold Wolfers “The Atomic Bomb in Soviet-American Relations,” *One World Or None*, 142-143.

⁸⁸ Brodie, “Navy Dept Thinking,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July 1947, 179.

⁸⁹ George Fielding Eliot, “Moderation in Arms Aims,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 19 January 1947, A4.

⁹⁰ Alexander de Seversky, quoted in Mark S. Watson, “Electronic Power Called Key to ‘Next War’ by De Seversky,” *The Baltimore Sun*, 19 February 1946, 1.

people get to thinking in terms of our pushing the buttons, and lose sight of the fact that, if there were a war tomorrow, it would be the same tough slugging match that the last one was.”⁹¹

The American war plans drawn up in the five years after World War Two relied much less on button pushing than on slugging, entailing only those weapons available in front-line units at the time or in the foreseeable future. The staff members preparing these plans had to address two separate issues. Old weapon systems get worn out, and lose their effectiveness. New weapons need a breaking-in period.

⁹¹ Sidney Shalett, “Push-Button Ideas Hit by Bush: Chief of Army, Navy Science Research Says Dream Talk ‘Has Done a Lot of Harm,’” *The New York Times*, 9 January 1947, 2.

CHAPTER V

REVELATION: LIMITS ON ATOMIC WAR PLANS

The United States would have had difficulty waging an atomic war with the Soviet Union in the late 1940s. The problem was the result of a decision to reassign the production and storage of atomic weapons from the military to a civilian agency after World War Two. Communications between the two organizations were poor, leading American war planners to overestimate how many atomic weapons would be available. Additionally, the need to transfer bombs from the one body to the other in the event of war could have had grave consequences, considering the accelerated pace of atomic warfare. A shortage of atomic-capable bombers and the support personnel needed to arm them would have also hindered the ability of the armed forces to carry out their atomic mission.

Splitting the Atom between Civilian and Military

The staff personnel drawing up the American plans for war with the Soviet Union in the late 1940s had little time or energy to waste on speculation and what-ifs. They had more than enough other matters to worry about. Their concerns ranged from the quality of bomber designs and the proficiency of aircrews to the quality of Soviet defenses and the prediction of weather over target areas. The most significant unknowns they addressed were the effects of atomic weapons on warfare.

However, the war planners had some practical problems to surmount as well. Should war come, the USAF could not simply load up its B-29s, B-50s, and B-36s with atomic bombs and send them off to their targets. As the Joint Chiefs recognized,

The effective military use of atomic weapons is conditioned by the possession:

- a. of atomic weapons in adequate numbers
- b. of suitable means for their delivery
- c. of plans for their strategic use
- d. of bases within range of enemy targets¹

To this list might be added two items, both properly belonging before the first entry.

One is “of permission to employ atomic weapons.” The other is “of physical custody of atomic weapons.”

One of the legacies of the United States’ British cultural heritage was the principle of civilian control of the military. In the matter of atomic arms, this belief was manifested in the Atomic Energy Act (AEA) of 1946. Although the “Laboratory for the Development of Substitute Materials” program that created the first atomic bomb was, in theory, a government-wide endeavor, it was dominated by the US Army, for which reason it is now best known as “The Manhattan Project,” after its military cover name, the Army Corps of Engineers’ “Manhattan Engineering District.” Effective 1 January 1947, however, the AEA took custody of the entire American nuclear program away from the armed forces and placed it under civilian control in the form of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Within this agency’s purview were all research laboratories, fissionable material, test ranges, production facilities, and, most

¹ Enclosure “C” of JCS 1691/10 “Proposed Release of an Extracted Version of the Final Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Evaluation Board on Operation Crossroads and the Related Proposed Press Release,” 29 December 1947, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 125.

significantly, the stockpile of completed atomic devices. Transfer of bombs from the AEC to the military was at the discretion of the President, who “from time to time may direct the Commission to deliver such quantities of fissionable material or weapons to the Armed Forces for such use as he deems necessary in the interest of national defense.”²

The military establishment, not surprisingly, was not happy with the new arrangement. In 1948, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal transmitted a letter to President Truman in which he noted that

the present arrangement results in the basic division of authority and responsibility between two co-equal agencies for the provision of a military weapon in operating condition for war use. Possession and control of all atomic weapons lies in the Atomic Energy Commission, while responsibility for final assembly of these weapons and their delivery on an enemy target rests with the National Military Establishment. Prompt and effective delivery of these weapons to the Armed Forces is essential for full military preparedness. An enemy attack in force would expose the United States to unreasonable risk of mistake, confusion and failure to act with the necessary speed and precision. We are convinced that this risk can only be removed by transferring custody of stock pile weapons to the Armed Forces.³

He added that military personnel needed to become familiar with the handling of such weapons, which was not possible if they remained under AEC control, and that current AEC storage facilities were not convenient to military bases, impairing operational readiness.⁴

² Atomic Energy Act of 1946 (Public law 585, 79th Congress), section 6 (a) 2.

³ James Forrestal, letter to Harry S. Truman, 21 June 1948, Digital National Security Archive (DNSA), http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:dnsa&rft_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CNP00050. “Several prominent Manhattan Project scientists agreed with this [assessment, including J. Robert] Opp[enheimer, Enrico] Fermi, and [Ernest] Lawrence.” Anthony N. Stranges, personal communication (editorial note), summer 2012.

⁴ Forrestal, letter to Truman, 21 June 1948, in DNSA.

President Truman, a firm believer in the primacy of civilian rule over the military, turned down the request, which is why many of the American war plans generated between 1945 and 1950 contain passages explaining that they are predicated upon the presumption that permission to use atomic weapons has been granted. For example, Plan “Frolic” (later renamed “Grabber”) states that “assumption is made that authority to employ atomic bombs has been obtained and that atomic bombs in stockpile have been or will immediately be delivered to the armed forces.”⁵ Reading these documents, one wonders what would have happened if, for some reason, the president was incapacitated or otherwise unable to grant permission. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had similar thoughts. In 1948, they suggested legislation that would “make it the duty of the President of the United States, as Commander in Chief of its Armed Forces, after consultation with the Cabinet, to order atomic bomb retaliation when such retaliation is necessary to prevent or frustrate an atomic weapon attack upon us.” At the same time the JCS also expressed the desire that Congress should review the AEA, particularly those portions of it concerning title and custody of atomic bombs after their fabrication.⁶

Given the general feeling that a third world war would start with a surprise attack, and the American policy of rapid retaliation, the intrinsic delays in the system would seem to have been an insurmountable liability—especially because even once the Air Force took custody of the bombs, the unit charged with their delivery would still

⁵ JCS 1844/1 “Frolic” (“Grabber”), 17 March 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 13. A similar caveat can be found in Enclosure “C” of JCS 1725/22 “Joint Outline War Plans for Determination of Mobilization Requirements for War beginning 1 July 1949,” 26 August 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 10, 177.

⁶ JCS 1805/7 “The Final Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Evaluation Board for Operation Crossroads,” 15 June 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 44, 47-48.

require almost a week to deploy and begin operations.⁷ Of course, as Bernard Brodie observed in 1946, “In international politics today few things are more certain than that an attack must have an antecedent hostility of obviously grave character.”⁸ The United States Army’s Command and General Staff College shared this belief, declaring in a 1948 study that “[i]ntelligence will always provide amply [*sic*] warning of an attack.”⁹ Yet while the Berlin Crisis of 1948 appeared to confirm Brodie’s thesis that hostilities are almost always foreshadowed, the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950 demonstrated that wars can commence without warning. Of course, the threat to American interests in Europe in 1948 was fairly direct. The United States was not so deeply invested in South Korea and indeed could have elected not to intervene.

Even if the Presidential had authorized the transfer of atomic weapons to the military without delay, the United States would not have been able to initiate its aerial offensive immediately. The transfer of custody from the AEC to the military would take time. An Air Force officer stated in 1948, “[I]t would take us five days to receive, in the United States, one atomic weapon—receive for transport forward to an operational base; and that short of 30 days, it is very doubtful that we would have 20 weapons for delivery.”¹⁰

⁷ Harry R. Borowski, *Hollow Threat: Strategic Air Power and Containment before Korea* (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1982), 103.

⁸ Bernard Brodie, “Implications for Military Policy,” in *One World Or None*, 74.

⁹ A. A. Chaffin, “Selection of Targets for the Air Forces,” Analytical Study 8-19, Command & General Staff College, 2 June 1948, 3; Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) Digital Library, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/utills/getfile/collection/p124201coll2/id/50/filename/51.PDF>.

¹⁰ [unidentified Colonel] Armstrong, testimony before USAF Aircraft and Weapons Board, 28 January 1948, quoted in R. D. Little, *The History of Air Force Participation in the Atomic Energy Program, 1943-1953*, vol. 2: *Foundations of an Atomic Air Force and Operation SANDSTONE 1946-1948*, part 2 (Washington DC: Air University Historical Liaison Office, 1955), 223. The passage cited does not identify the officer’s first name or affiliation, but six pages later there is a reference to a Colonel

Once in possession of the military, the weapons still required assembly. A JCS document prepared in 1948 to examine atomic weapons requirements noted that

The technical requirements for assembling and firing the bomb are so exacting and complex that the slightest error may result in an ineffective bomb. Therefore, teams for assembling the bomb require a high degree of technical skill. Currently, a twenty-four (24) week course for individual training is required prior to the assignment to an organized assembly team which must be further trained as a unit. Current plans contemplate that there will be 3 highly trained bomb assembly teams available by 1 June 1948 and 7 by 1 June 1949. However, the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project is preparing to step up this program on the assumption that this study will be approved.¹¹

A different part of the same study, however, estimated the availability of assembly teams as seven by 1 January 1949, the same on 1 January 1950, and ten after 1 January 1951.¹²

An assembled bomb remained combat ready for a little more than a week, during which time its batteries would have to be recharged thrice, a task that required partial disassembly. At the end of nine days, an assembly team—assuming one was available—would have to break the bomb down again because the heat generated by the alpha decay of the fissionable materials in its core would have built up enough to damage both its internal components and the storage facilities in which it was kept. The early Mark III and Mark IV models of A-bomb had a very short “shelf life.”¹³

The scarcity of assembly teams was not the only shortage the Americans would have to overcome in the event of war. In 1947, the USAF had only eleven aircrews trained for atomic warfare. Even if the bomb assembly crews worked to exhaustion, it

John G. Armstrong of AFOAT (Armed Forces Office for Atomic Technology). It seems unlikely that there would be two Colonel Armstrongs involved in the Air Force’s atomic energy program.

¹¹ JCS 1745/5 “The Production of Fissionable Material,” 21 January 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, 52.

¹³ Chuck Hanson, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons: The Secret History* (Arlington TX: Aerofax, 1988), 124; Little, *History of Air Force Participation*, 522.

would take nine days and twenty hours to provide each crew with one bomb. A more realistic schedule allowing for resting the crews took seventeen days, six hours.¹⁴

The Air Force, could, and did, train additional ground and air crews, but it also had a shortage of atomic-capable bombers.¹⁵ In their stock configurations, neither the B-29, nor the B-50, nor the B-36 could carry any of the atomic bombs available in the late 1940s.¹⁶ Their designs all dated to long before the Manhattan Project developed a practicable bomb. As a result, a few examples of each type were diverted to modification programs to be converted into atomic-capable carriers.¹⁷ The process required substantial changes to the selected airframes, a task that required a considerable amount of time—some 6,000 man-hours.¹⁸ Among the changes were new bomb shackles and hoists, enlarged bomb bays, additional electronic equipment, and the installation of a new crew station for the “weaponeer,” whose job it was to monitor and arm the bomb.¹⁹

Further delays resulted from continued updates to the specifications for atomic bomb carriage. The first batch of modified aircraft were not considered combat worthy and had to be returned to the depots for additional work. When World War Two ended,

¹⁴ Little, *The History of Air Force Participation*, 527.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 87-93.

¹⁶ The Americans had three basic types of nuclear bombs in the early atomic era. The first was the Little Boy, which used a gun-type mechanism to achieve critical mass. This type was employed at Hiroshima. The second was the Fat Man, an implosion device, used at Nagasaki. Because its style of triggering was more complex than the cannon type, a Fat Man was tested at Los Alamos in July 1945. Both Fat Man and Little Boy were essentially handmade. The first mass-produced atomic bomb was the Mark IV, based on the Fat Man design. All three types were too large to fit into a B-29 or B-50 as delivered from the factory. A third design, “Thin Man” (Mark II), was abandoned early in its development.

¹⁷ These modification programs were codenamed Silverplate, GEM (Global Electronic Movement), and Saddletree. The first was for B-29s only and was initiated during World War Two. Saddletree was essentially the same program for postwar B-29s, B-50s, and B-36s. GEM was an electronics upgrade.

¹⁸ George Cully, “Operation Silverplate: The Aircraft of the Manhattan Project,” <http://www.cybermodeler.com/history/silverpl/silverpl.shtml>. Accessed 28 February 2013.

¹⁹ JCS 1745/5 “The Production of Fissionable Material,” 21 January 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 28.

only twenty-eight B-29s (out of 3,000-plus built) had completed the program, of which just fifteen had the complete suite of modifications.²⁰ The pace of modification did not improve after hostilities ended. In early 1948, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that

[t]he Air Force now has 33 planes adapted to carry the atomic bomb and it is expected that by November 1948 this number will be increased to 120. All Air Force heavy and medium bombers to be procured after completion of B-29's now on contract are so designed as to require only minor adaptations to accommodate the bomb.²¹

At the same time, other programs created to winterize parts of the bomber fleet for operations at high latitudes and to equip them for aerial refueling to extend their ranges were also underway. There was even a plan to modify some cargo aircraft into portable workshops for the assembly of atomic bombs.²²

Supplies of Bombs, Bombers, and other Requirements Limited

Yet the shortage of assembly teams, combat crews, and atomic bombers was not the greatest deficiency with which the USAF would have had to contend. There was also a dearth of that most basic commodity of its trade, atomic bombs. The second page of plan “Pincher,” prepared in 1946, conveyed the warning “Only a limited number of atomic bombs will be available to the U.S. upon entry into the war.”²³

Just how limited the supply of atomic bombs was would have come as a surprise—a nasty one—to the many Americans who assumed that a nuclear monopoly

²⁰ Richard H. Campbell, *The Silverplate Bombers* (Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2005), 26.

²¹ JCS 1745/5 “The Production of Fissionable Material” 21 January 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 27.

²² These modification schemes were Ruralist (inflight refueling equipment), Superman (inflight fueling tankers), and Chickenpox (conversion of C-97 transport airplane into mobile bomb assembly site).

²³ JPS 789 “Concept of Operations for ‘Pincher,’” 2 March 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 2.

implied a nuclear stockpile, and thus the country was ready for war against the Soviet Union. The actual number of weapons in the national inventory was a closely-guarded secret, although there were occasional calls to reveal how many. Senator Brien McMahon of Connecticut, who had sponsored the AEA in 1946, recapitulated the reasons both for and against announcing the number of bombs the United States possessed in a speech in 1949, even as he acknowledged that “I cannot suggest an answer to the problem [of disclosure], for I have not yet arrived at a conclusion myself.”²⁴ One reason to publicly identify the number was to confirm to the world that the United States had the ability to defend itself and its allies. Another was that democracies are predicated upon transparency in government. One reason not to was that potential foes may have overestimated the number of bombs the United States possessed. Deterrence required strength, or at least the appearance of strength. The “disclosure of any lesser number would encourage a state bent on aggression.”²⁵

The Truman administration decided against releasing the information, on the grounds that protecting the secret of the atomic bomb was of paramount importance (identifying how many bombs had been made could indicate how easy it was to produce them). This policy had some interesting repercussions. Even the agency charged with preparing for war seemed to have been unaware how few bombs were in inventory—the AEC did not have to communicate that information to the Department of Defense at first. War plan “Pincher,” created in 1946, called for the use of fifty atomic bombs on

²⁴ Brien McMahon, “Should We Reveal the Size of our Atomic Stockpile?,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 1949, 66. This article is a transcript of a speech given to the Economic Club of Detroit on 31 January 1949.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

twenty target cities.²⁶ At the time, however, the AEC possessed only nine such weapons. A year later, that number had risen to thirteen.²⁷

It was about then, early 1947, that Pentagon war planners finally received clearance to see the inventory figures.²⁸ However, they were not allowed to write them down. As a result, American documents from the era contain passages such as the following from JCS 1745/5: “As of 1 January 1948 there will be on hand _____ tested type and _____ untested type bombs.”²⁹ The actual numbers were recorded elsewhere, on pages keyed to the blanks on the original documents.³⁰

The shortage of atomic bombs must have been a shock and very likely a disappointment to the personnel working on war plans. A study prepared at about the time that the military was made privy to the data contained the observation, “[I]t appears that the atomic bomb and future military requirements of fissionable material cannot be met for a number of years.”³¹ A few pages later that same document concluded, “It is considered that the present supply of atomic bombs is not adequate to meet the security

²⁶ Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod, *To Win a Nuclear War: The Pentagon's Secret War Plans* (Boston: South End, 1987), x.

²⁷ David Alan Rosenberg, “U.S. Nuclear Stockpile, 1945 to 1950,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May 1982, 26.

²⁸ Ross and Rosenberg, *American War Plans*, 15.

²⁹ JCS 1745/5 “The Production of Fissionable Material” 21 January 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 29a.

³⁰ The president himself had to put up with this awkward arrangement. In his memoirs, Harry S. Truman recalled that “[I]n no document in my office, in the AEC, or anywhere in government, could anyone find the exact figure of the number of bombs in the stockpile, or the number of bombs to be produced, or the amount of material scheduled for production.” Any document about atomic weapons would be full of ciphers or blanks where production or inventory numbers appeared. “The figure in question would be recorded on separate and detached pieces of paper. . . .” which were themselves subject to stringent security measures. Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 302.

³¹ JCS 1745/1 “Proposed Study on the Production of Fissionable Material,” 25 February 1947, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 2.

requirements of the United States.”³² The discrepancies between plans and production would have to be reconciled.

The bottleneck was in the production of fissionable materials. The mechanical components of atomic bombs were relatively easy to construct. In 1950, the AEC possessed some 660 bomb shells, but only about 290 nuclear cores.³³ A JCS document written about that time observed that “[e]mergency war plan TROJAN required the delivery of 147 atomic bombs on selected aiming points in 70 urban centers, while a revised plan, OFFTACKLE, now under consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is designed to effect the destruction of a considerable portion of 26 war supporting industries by dropping 200 atomic bombs located in 104 urban centers.”³⁴ These plans were in keeping with a 1948 recommendation that plans include “allowances for losses or failures in the process of delivery of the bombs on target and for a small reserve.”³⁵

Assuming that the armed forces had overcome their various shortages and deficiencies in time, the best American course of action in the event of a conflict with the Soviet Union in the late 1940s would have been to heed Macbeth’s counsel: “[T]were well/It were done quickly.”³⁶ Atomic weapons were a wasting asset (a popular metaphor in the late 1940s).³⁷ Much of their value derived from their ability to compress time. “The atomic bomb is preeminently the weapon of saturation,” wrote Manhattan

³² Ibid., 5.

³³ Rosenberg, “U.S. Nuclear Stockpile,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 26.

³⁴ JCS 1952/11, 11 February 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 163.

³⁵ JCS 1745/5 “The Production of Fissionable Material,” 21 January 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 24.

³⁶ *Macbeth*, Act 1, Scene 8.

³⁷ Marc Trachtenburg, “A Wasting Asset: American Strategy and the Shifting Nuclear Balance 1949-1954,” *International Security* 13, no. 3 (1988-1989), 5-49; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., “The Pentagons’ Wasting Assets” *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2009, 18-33.

Project physicist Philip Morrison in *One World Or None*. “It destroys so large an area so completely and so suddenly that the defense is overwhelmed.”³⁸ Before the atomic bomb, a single target would usually require repeated visits from multiple bombers. But, as General Arnold observed, “One B-29 dropping an atom bomb caused as much damage as 300 planes would have done before.”³⁹ The other 299 aircraft were thus freed to deliver atomic bombs of their own (had that many bombs or bombers been available, of course). Morrison had had similar thoughts, placing them within the context of the air offensive against Japan:

You knew that when the government announced a great raid in progress that, although Osaka people would face an infernal night, you in Nagoya could sleep. For the raids of a thousand bombers could not be hidden. . . . Now, all this was changed. From any plane casually flying almost beyond the range of flak there could come death and flame for an entire city. The alert would have to be sounded now night and day in every city. If the raiders were over Sapporo, the people of Shimonoseki, a thousand miles away, must still fear one airplane.⁴⁰

An atomic blitz demanded simultaneity, not sequence. “The best effect can be attained by early application of the atomic bombs required to neutralize all selected targets rather than by a delayed or long drawn-out operation.”⁴¹ Instead of years, the atomic offensive would be over in a matter of weeks. “The major portion of the atomic bombs will be

³⁸ Philip Morrison, “If the Bomb Gets out of Hand”: in Dexter Masters and Katherine Way, eds. *One World or None: A Report to the Public on the Full Meaning of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: The New Press, 2007 [1946]), 5.

³⁹ Arnold, “Air Force in the Atomic Age,” in *One World or None*, 29.

⁴⁰ Morrison, “If the Bomb,” in *One World or None*, 6.

⁴¹ JCS 1745/5 “The Production of Fissionable Material,” 21 January 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 24-25.

delivered within the first 30 days of the offensive, and delivery should be completed and the results evaluated by the end of the third month.”⁴²

One important repercussion of this accelerated schedule was that the Americans would have to make do with what they had on hand at the beginning of hostilities, which of course placed a premium on preparedness (which would enhance deterrence). The assembly lines for arms, aircraft, and other equipment could not be made faster in time to affect the course of the fighting—and that presumes items that were mass produced. Atomic weapons were essentially hand made. “Present methods of producing fissionable material for atomic bombs preclude the possibility of suddenly increasing that production after an emergency arises. . . .”⁴³

If the AEA could not accelerate the manufacture of existing designs, there was no chance at all of introducing new weapons. The process takes years. The war would be over long before any new arms could be developed. Consider the design and production of aircraft. The United States had been involved in World War Two from 1941 until 1945, yet, as General Arnold observed, “The intensification of research and development after Pearl Harbor, while improving the characteristics of previously designed types, did not lead to the introduction of any new types in combat. All our combat types were designed before we entered the war.”⁴⁴

The introduction of atomic weapons did not change the importance of time as an element of air power, but shifted the emphasis from the “during” to the “before.”

⁴² JCS 1952/11, 11 February 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 152-196.

⁴³ JCS 1745/1 “Proposed Study on the production of Fissionable Material,” 25 February 1947, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 2.

⁴⁴ Arnold, “Air Force in the Atomic Age,” in *One World or None*, 29, note.

In World War II, the limited effectiveness of conventional high explosive bombs made it necessary for an air force to support a continuous offensive using strikes of large numbers of bombers, in order for a campaign to show significant results. . . . The character of atomic weapons makes possible short-term bombing campaigns with comparatively small numbers of bombing aircraft. All of the aircraft required for the atomic offensive are already in existence at the start of hostilities.⁴⁵

Of course, Douhet and Mitchell had also argued that air forces had to be ready before wars began (see previous chapter).

The passage cited above is followed immediately by the observation that “[s]uch a campaign will not be defeated by small percentage attrition because the campaign will be over and the damage done before the attrition can take effect.”⁴⁶ The Americans expected high casualties in the early stages of the aerial offensive. Such losses were acceptable because of the brief duration of the campaign. A study prepared in 1948, when American intelligence agencies tended to discount the Soviet air defenses (hence its casualty forecasts differ from the other sources cited previously in this work), predicted

For those initial atomic attacks an over-all possible attrition loss of 25 per cent, applicable to the entire duration of the atomic campaign, has been accepted for planning purposes. Even if losses up to 25 per cent should be suffered, ample capability still remains for the delivery of the entire stockpile of atomic bombs.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Enclosure E: “Interception Possibilities,” in “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, E-38 through E-39.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ JCS 1952/1 “Evaluation of Current Strategic Air Offensive Plans,” 21 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 20.

The loss rate would quickly drop, predicted the war planners, who wrote, “The risks existing during the early phases of the campaign should decrease appreciably within a relatively short time due to the cumulative effects of the strategic air offensive.”⁴⁸

This high loss rate was considered tolerable. “Under the callously utilitarian standards of military bookkeeping, a plane and its crew can very well be sacrificed in order to deliver an atomic bomb to an extreme distance,” wrote Bernard Brodie in *The Absolute Weapon*.⁴⁹ Warfare is, and always has been, an exercise in cost-benefit analysis. “War will be cheaper in the future so far as the production and use of weapons are concerned and far more expensive from the point of view of destruction accomplished.”⁵⁰ As Bernard Brodie put it, “A million dollar bomb which can do a billion dollars worth of damage—and that is a conservative figure—is a very cheap missile indeed.”⁵¹

Before the introduction of the atomic bomb, it was difficult to calculate the effectiveness of weapons and tactics precisely. Both the British and the Americans instituted huge Operational Research (OR) programs during World War Two in an effort to quantify the impact of new equipment and techniques. These offices had to analyze huge volumes of arcane data, such as the number of anti-aircraft shells it took to shoot down a bomber, then compare the result to the number of interceptor sorties it required to accomplish the same task to determine the best method for destroying incoming

⁴⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁹ Brodie, “War in the Atomic Age,” in *Absolute Weapon*, 37.

⁵⁰ Urey, “How does it all add up?,” in *One World or None*, 153.

⁵¹ Brodie, “War in the Atomic Age,” in *Absolute Weapon*, 44.

aircraft. Atomic energy seemed to reduce the problem to a formula any person could understand: “one bomb, one city.”

American war planners embraced this economy. They had to, given the shortages of bombs and atomic-capable bombers. “[T]he great unit cost of the atomic bomb means that as nearly as possible every one must be delivered to its intended target. This can be done in one of several ways, all of which involve air power.”⁵² Of course, the bomb’s destructive power was such that only one bomb should be necessary for any given target. “The efficient utilization of atomic bombs will dictate the use of one bomb only in any one attack on an objective area.”⁵³ Thus did the atomic bomb fulfill one of Douhet’s dicta:

The guiding principle of bombing actions should be this: *the objective must be destroyed completely in one attack, making further attack on the same target unnecessary*. Reaching an objective is an aerial operation which always involves a certain amount of risk and should be undertaken once only [emphasis in original].⁵⁴

Such was not possible during World War Two, given the technology available during that conflict.

Of course, it might be argued that, in striving for parsimony in their use of atomic weapons, the Americans were simply making a virtue out of necessity. Considering the many technological, training, and operational difficulties they would have to overcome, it seems that they would have had trouble carrying out their plans for an atomic bombing campaign against the Soviet Union in the late 1940s. The conclusions of the Joint

⁵² Arnold, *Third Report*, 465.

⁵³ JCS 1745/15 “Atomic Bomb Assembly Teams,” 2 September 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 52.

⁵⁴ Douhet, *Command of the Air*, 20.

Logistics Plan Group's 1948 study of the feasibility of Plan "Broiler"—"[t]hat the initiation of the strategic bombing effort from the United Kingdom and Okinawa is feasible as planned [and t]hat the initiation of the Karachi-Lahore strategic bombing effort is feasible as planned, if immediate steps are taken to provide for the operation"—seem overly optimistic until the reader realizes that it is only the "initiation" that is being declared practicable.⁵⁵ No guarantee of sustained performance is expressed or implied (demonstrating that preparation and execution are often very different things).

It is tempting, then, to criticize the drafters of the American plans for war in the late 1940s as unrealistically ambitious—if they had relied exclusively on an atomic bombing campaign to achieve their objective of defeating the Soviet Union. But the Americans had other means available to prosecute their air offensive. One was the United States Navy. The Pentagon's war planners expected that "[c]arrier task groups available from other tasks will be employed to supplement and support the air offensive."⁵⁶ The naval air arm's primary duty would be to assist in operations securing overseas base areas (presumably, on or near coasts) but it would also "be employed against any remunerative targets within [its] range."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Joint Logistics Plan Group, "Quick Feasibility Test of J.S.P.G. 496/4," 19 March 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 1.

⁵⁶ JCS 1844/1 "Short Range Emergency Plan 'Frolic' ['Grabber']," 17 March 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 14. Similar passages can be found in JCS 1800/18 and war plan "Dropshot." JCS 1800/18 "Allocation of Resources and Funds for the FY 1950 Budget," 17 November 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 10, 195; Brown, *Dropshot*, 160.

⁵⁷ "Strategic Implications," in JSPG 496/4 "Broiler"; in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 54.

Numerically, however, the largest component of the American air offensive against the Soviet Union would have been the USAF's force of conventional bombers.⁵⁸ These machines outnumbered the atomic-capable aircraft by a considerable margin. A document prepared in 1946 gives the number of available American VHBs (very heavy bombers, the USAAF's classification for the B-29) as 1,000, of which less than fifty were atomic capable.⁵⁹ Two years later, planners estimated that for a conflict beginning in 1950, the USAF would have seven medium bomber groups of 45 aircraft each (the new B-50 and the old but reclassified B-29) available for deployment overseas, and that as the war went on these units would be replenished from existing forces elsewhere, "mothballs" (storage facilities), and ongoing production.⁶⁰ A 1950 study, confirmed by Strategic Air Command (SAC) Headquarters, indicates the availability of 300 atomic carriers.⁶¹

Despite their numbers, the role of the non-atomic-capable bombers was to "augment" the atomic campaign. Plan "Grabber" (later "Frolic"), drafted in 1948, is just

⁵⁸ The late 1940s were a time of two significant transitions in military aviation technology. One was the introduction of jet propulsion. The other was the development of atomic weapons. The new inventions quickly became the standards of their classes, compelling the old standards to be renamed to reflect their relegation to second-line status (today, the new names would be called "retronyms"). Confusingly, the term "conventional" was used for both powerplants and weaponry. Depending on context, the word could mean either "propeller-driven" or "non-atomic," making possible such sentences as the one found in a 1948 document: "The conventional aircraft will carry conventional bombs and ECM (electronic countermeasure) equipment." JCS 1952/1 "Evaluation of current Strategic Air Offensive Plans," 21 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 19.

See also note 105 in Chapter III for another example of the changing standards of aircraft descriptions in the post-1945 era.

⁵⁹ Annex "A" to Enclosure "B": "Soviet Military Forces," in JPS 789 "Concept of Operations for 'Pincher,'" 2 March 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 35.

⁶⁰ Enclosure "K": "Logistics and Base Defense," in "Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations," 13 January 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, K-13. The designation of the B-29 was changed from "Very Heavy Bomber" to "Medium Bomber" in 1947.

⁶¹ Enclosure "F": "Bomber Operational Capabilities," in "Evaluation of Effectiveness"; in *APWSU*, vol. 13, F-12.

one of many documents specifying that “the atomic air offensive would be supplemented by conventional operations to the extent of our capabilities.”⁶² The choice of the word “supplement” seems odd, given that atomic bombing had not yet established itself and that the conventional campaign would require far more time and effort (see below). Less than five years after World War Two had ended, American war planners seemed to be treating the atomic bomb as the norm and conventional high explosives as quaint vestiges of air power’s antiquity, useful but not essential, to be fitted into the air offensive as an afterthought.

Atom Bomb Versus Conventional Bombs

The atomic bomb promised a quick, easy, and inexpensive resolution to any conflict that might arise. Little wonder, then, that the Americans embraced it so rapidly and so completely. The various American war plans drawn up between 1945 and 1950 demonstrate an ever-increasing reliance on the atomic component of the air offensive. Conventional bombs and bombers were still available—and the Americans were practical enough not to deny themselves a weapon of proven value if available—but once enough atomic weapons were in stock, there would be no need for conventional forces of any type (an idea culminating in Eisenhower’s 1955 “New Look” defense policy, which promised Massive Retaliation against any and all threats to the United States—big or small; direct or indirect; atomic or conventional; from land, sea, or air).

⁶² JCS 1745/5 “The Production of Fissionable Material,” 21 January 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 24.

The dominance of the a-bomb in American defense planning also reveals another interesting aspect of humanity's relationship with technology. One of the main themes of the traditional narrative of the history of military aviation is the early air power advocates' struggle to convince their peers, the public, and the government of the utility of airplanes in warfare.⁶³ They succeeded, the World War Two experience changing reflexive resistance into almost blind acceptance.

The traditional conservatism of the military mind . . . has virtually disappeared. . . . Previously, a new weapon had to prove itself before it could be considered by the military hierarchy. . . . Instead of assuming that an old weapon will serve, officers now assume that the old weapon is obsolete, or at least obsolescent. . . . Instead of supply push, military technology now functions on demand pull.⁶⁴

Westerners, particularly Americans, often act as if they believe that "stuff that works must always be replaced by stuff that's new."⁶⁵ The desire to have the latest and best weapons may have serious consequences if the procurement process is predicated only on what is available rather than what is required. "Wanting" is not the same as "needing."

In 1950, the American air force was still in the process of transitioning from the all-conventional force of World War Two to the (hoped-for) all-atomic force of 1955. War plans drawn up at that time anticipated that conventional raids would account for

⁶³ This topic is the subject of a dissertation currently being written by L. A. Henning, a graduate student at Texas A&M University, who focuses upon how the British and American cavalry corps reacted to the introduction of the airplane between 1903 and 1945 (personal communications, 2005-2011).

⁶⁴ Alex Roland, "Technology, Ground Warfare, and Strategy: The Paradox of American Experience," *Journal of Military History* 55, no. 4 (1991), 466.

⁶⁵ Matt Foster, internet forum posting, ConsimWorld Forum: Blog Central: Wedge, Thin End of (Leicester, UK), <http://talk.consimworld.com/WebX?7@209.HQsubczOubx.51015167@.1dd10bd3/16670>, posted 26 May 2011. The western tendency to abandon old technologies in favor of new ones is the theme of historian of technology David Edgerton in his book *The Shock of the Old*. David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

some two-thirds of the total bombing effort against the Soviet Union. “Present plans contemplate about 6000 sorties for the first three months of the offensive. This includes the dropping of 17,610 tons of high explosive in addition to 292 atomic bombs (including a re-attack allocation of 72 A-bombs).”⁶⁶ These figures include some 1500 sorties for atomic attacks—five hundred total missions of five aircraft each. “In atomic strikes the total number of aircraft would normally be in the ratio of one atomic or Saddletree aircraft to four conventional aircraft [which] will carry conventional bombs and ECM [electronic countermeasures] equipment.”⁶⁷ Conventional bombers were assumed to carry a payload of five tons of bombs on each mission, so their operations accounted for some 3522 sorties.⁶⁸ The remaining sorties apparently provided allowance for “reconnaissance, repeat missions, and aborts for the H.E. [high explosive—“conventional”] bombing effort.”⁶⁹ The maximum practical sortie rate for each airplane was six missions per month.⁷⁰ As a result, the atomic campaign was expected to last one month while the conventional campaign would last three.⁷¹

Most of the above data is taken from a single study prepared in 1950, which also breaks down the number of bombers available for the air offensive. “Present plans allocate B-50’s to strike 51 per cent of the targets, B-29’s, 35 per cent, and B-36’s, the

⁶⁶ JCS 1952/11 “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 11 February 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 194.

⁶⁷ Appendix: “Discussion,” in JCS 1952/1 “Evaluation of Current Strategic Air Offensive Plan,” 21 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 19.

⁶⁸ Enclosure “K”: “Logistics and Base defense,” in JCS 1952/11 “Evaluation of Effectiveness”; in *APWSU*, vol. 13, K-6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, K-7.

⁷⁰ JCS 1952/11 “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 11 February 1950, 191; “Logistics and Base Defense,” in JCS 1952/11 “Evaluation of Effectiveness”; in *APWSU*, vol. 13, K-6.

⁷¹ Enclosure “K”: “Logistics and Base Defense,” in JCS 1952/11 “Evaluation of Effectiveness”; in *APWSU*, vol. 13, K-7.

remaining 14 per cent.”⁷² It is unclear from the context whether this distribution applies to the overall bombing effort or just to its atomic component. Of the 300 atomic-capable bombers available at the time the document was drafted, thirty—just ten per cent—were B-36s.⁷³ The strategic offensive was to require 624 aircraft in all, of which 570 were medium bombers and 54—less than nine per cent—were heavies.⁷⁴ Why the B-36s appeared to be assigned three missions for every two flown by their smaller counterparts is not explained.⁷⁵

This same plan estimates that “about 70 to 85 per cent of the atomic bomb carriers will drop their bombs in the intended target. For these bombs the accuracy, for radar bombing, will be such that on the average two-thirds of the single industrial installations which are bombed would be damaged beyond repair.”⁷⁶ The limited number of atomic bombs made performing such calculations a necessity. However, no such formulae were prepared for the conventional bombing campaign. The Americans did not have to worry about their supply of high-explosive bombs. The stockpile of

⁷² JCS 1952/11 “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 11 February 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 164.

⁷³ The full breakdown is as follows: 37 per cent (111) were B-29s, 53 per cent (159) were B-50s, and 10 per cent (30) were B-36s. Enclosure “F”: “Bomber operational capabilities,” in JCS 1952/11 “Evaluation of Effectiveness,” in *AWPSU* vol. 13, F-12.

⁷⁴ “Evaluation of Effectiveness,” in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 163.

⁷⁵ If the B-36 had a higher top speed than the other types, or if it were assigned shorter missions than those given to the mediums, this discrepancy could be the result of a faster turnaround time between sorties. However, the B-36, even after being equipped with auxiliary jet pods, was not substantially faster than the B-29 or B-50, and, as a true intercontinental bomber, it would be employed for long-duration missions (recall that the mediums were to have been based in Eurasia, the B-36 in North America). The ability of the B-36 to carry a payload seven times heavier than the mediums’ maxima does not seem to be relevant to this issue. The most likely cause would seem to be the number of aircraft of each type assigned to each target. Medium bombers would travel in small formations while B-36s would fly alone. Recall that a sortie is one mission by one airplane.

⁷⁶ JCS 1952/11 “Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations,” 11 February 1950, in *APWSU*, vol. 13, 159

munitions left over from World War Two was so large that it was not exhausted until well into the Vietnam War.⁷⁷

As noted earlier, American war planners described the conventional bombing campaign as a “supplement” to the atomic offensive. “Complement” might be a more appropriate word. The two campaigns would have been directed at two very different target sets.

For all of their destructive power, atomic weapons were not appropriate for all types of targets. A study prepared by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in late 1945 explained that “[t]he atomic bomb is distinguished by the tremendous destructive force that is concentrated in a single package. Its destruction is accomplished by heat, pressure, and blast that not only destroys [*sic*] material but also personnel over a wide area. . . .”⁷⁸ The bomb thus combines the effects of conventional high explosive and incendiary bombs. As a result, the “[s]election of targets should exploit the full capabilities of the weapon, i.e., should be of a size commensurate with the area of effectiveness and should have a high content of material and personnel.”⁷⁹

Or, as Bernard Brodie wrote in *The Absolute Weapon*, “One does not shoot rabbits with elephant guns, especially if there are elephants available.”⁸⁰ The essence of the atomic bomb was the concentration of destructive force in time, but only if that

⁷⁷ Albert Clark, quoted in John Morrocco and the editors of the Boston Publishing Company, *The Vietnam Experience: Thunder From Above: Air War, 1941-1968* (Boston: Boston, 1984), 121. General Clark was the Vice Commander of the USAF’s Tactical Air Command during much of the Vietnam War.

⁷⁸ JIC 329/1 “Strategic Vulnerability of the U.S.S.R. to a Limited Air Attack,” 3 December 1945, 9, in Paul Kesaris, ed., *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part 1: 1942-1945: The Soviet Union* (Washington DC: University Publications of America, 1981), reel 1, microfilm. Document hereafter referred to as JIC 329/”Strategic Vulnerability.” Collection hereafter referred to as *Records of the JCS/42-45/SU* microfilm.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Brodie, “War in the Atomic Age,” in *Absolute Weapon*, 46.

damage was concentrated in space as well. “Thus,” Brodie concluded, “the city is a made-to-order target, and the degree of urbanization of a country furnishes a rough index of its relative vulnerability to the atomic bomb.”⁸¹

By that measure, the USSR may not have been the optimum venue for an atomic campaign. Despite the efforts of Premier Josef Stalin to industrialize the country—by force if necessary—the Soviet Union remained a primarily rural and agricultural nation in the late 1940s.⁸² The JIC study cited above includes a list of twenty potential target cities (euphemistically called “recommended urban areas”) in the Soviet Union, only two of which had a population of over one million. Five had less than a quarter-million inhabitants⁸³ Of course, like all cities worldwide in the twentieth century, these urban areas played a disproportionate role in their nation’s cultural, political, and economic lives. The twenty chosen cities produced nine-tenths of the USSR’s aircraft, half of its ball bearings, and two-thirds of its crude and refined oil.⁸⁴ Yet the question may still be asked: How did the Americans plan to conduct a strategic bombing campaign against such a nation?

The 1945 JIC study examined four possible target systems. All four were physical entities, suggesting that the Joint Intelligence Committee either had no members who were air power advocates or, as is more likely, the commission simply did

⁸¹ Brodie, “Implications for Military Policy,” in *Absolute Weapon*, 99.

⁸² For an examination of the Stalinist program of industrialization, see Loren Graham, *The Ghost of the Executed Engineer: Technology and the Fall of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1996).

⁸³ Annex “A” to Appendix “B”: “List of Recommended Urban Areas,” in JIC 329/1 “Strategic Vulnerability,” 9 in *Records of the JCS/42-45/SU*, reel 1, microfilm.

⁸⁴ Annex “B” to Appendix “B”: “Percentages of Total USSR Production in Twenty Selected Cities,” in JIC 329/1 “Strategic Vulnerability,” 14, in *Records of the JCS/42-45/SU*, reel 1, microfilm.

not want to attempt to calculate the psychological effects of strategic bombing, a potentially contentious issue. These target groups were the USSR's armed forces, its transportation systems, its production facilities, and its government administration and control centers.⁸⁵

Targets within the first two categories were deemed unsuitable for atomic weapons. The Soviet air arm, the JIC asserted, could be managed by American air power, and the Soviet navy was "unimportant." The Soviet army was "considered the greatest menace, but experience has clearly shown that strategic weapons are ineffective against initial front-line strength where concentrations of personnel are avoided."⁸⁶ Even when ground forces are concentrated in one area, they make a poor target for strategic bombers, atomic or conventional.⁸⁷ Road, rail, and water transport, on the other hand, were proper targets for strategic bombing, but could be assigned to conventional bombers. "It is considered atomic bombing attacks against transportation targets would produce good results, but that other forms of air attacks would be more appropriate."⁸⁸

Attacks against the third and fourth target categories had the potential to seriously weaken the Soviet war effort, but the JIC seemed to be thinking in terms only of how an air offensive would benefit a surface campaign. Industry, of course, was a suitable target for strategic bombing, although it would be difficult to identify specific targets worthy of the expenditure of a rare atomic bomb. Priority should be given to

⁸⁵ JIC 329/1 "Strategic Vulnerability," 5-7, in *Records of the JCS/42-45/SU*, reel 1, microfilm.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁷ [Robert W. Ackerman], "The Employment of Strategic Bombers in a Tactical Role 1941-1951," (Maxwell AFB AL: USAF Historical Division, Research Studies Institute, Air University, 1953), 152.

⁸⁸ JIC 329/1 "Strategic Vulnerability," 6, in *Records of the JCS/42-45/SU*, reel 1, microfilm.

sites producing weapons and equipment “supporting the forces that pose the greatest menace.”⁸⁹ Attacks against the government and military establishment would be effective only if pressure was concurrently applied to front-line forces on the battlefield—which, given the weakness of American and Allied land forces, was unlikely.⁹⁰ Instead of targeting Soviet leadership specifically, the American strategic bombing effort would be directed towards other objectives, on the logic that elements of the Soviet command structure would surely be affected incidentally. “[T]he ability of the atomic bomb to destroy concentrations of personnel is one of its outstanding features and should therefore be exploited if possible in conjunction with other effects.”⁹¹

Of course, the 1945 study was only a preliminary, tentative, and superficial assessment of the requirements of a third world war. Plan “Broiler,” prepared in 1948, reflected several years of American thinking about the problems of target selection. By that time, atomic bombs, although not unlimited, would be plentiful enough that the Americans did not have to agonize so much over target priorities. Most attacks would be atomic.

Some, however, would not. “The conventional bombing effort will be devoted to attacks upon the petroleum industry, facilities supporting submarine operations, and selected transportation facilities.”⁹² Why were these particular target sets exempted from atomic attacks?

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 7.

⁹² JSPG 496/4 “Broiler,” 11 February 1948, 9, in AWPSU vol. 6.

Two of the three failed to meet the criterion of concentration. In the case of oil production, this deficiency was twofold. Petroleum facilities were dispersed throughout the country, many being nowhere near urban areas, so they would have to be attacked one by one.⁹³ However, individual oilfields and refineries are themselves large and spread out, making them less than optimal targets for atomic attack.⁹⁴ Despite their expanse, they are precision, not area, targets.

⁹³ The Americans estimated that cities of Baku (now in Azerbaijan) and Grozny (now in Georgia), accounted for 49 and 10 percent of Soviet oil production, respectively. Other urban areas accounted for but ten percent, leaving more than a third of the USSR's oil facilities in the countryside. Annex "A" to Appendix "B": "List of Recommended Urban Areas," in JIC 329/1 "Strategic Vulnerability," 9. Yet despite that the two Caucasian cities appeared on lists of potential targets for atomic bombs from 1945 (and thus must have been considered priority targets, given the scarcity of bombs at the time), their oil facilities were included in a 1948 catalogue of oil-producing sites to be bombed conventionally. JSPG 496/4 "Broiler," 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 194-195.

⁹⁴ The Allies put a high priority on the destruction of the Axis oil industry in the European Theatre during World War Two (the CBO places it fourth after submarines, aircraft, and transportation), and conducted well over one hundred attacks against refineries, oilfields, and storage facilities, most in the last two years of the war. However, a great many of these raids were return visits to targets already bombed. Petroleum plants proved to be have significant recuperative powers.

The overall report by the (European) Oil Division of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) compared the duel between the USAAF and one particular German installation to a prize fight. "The plant was knocked down nine times but never out, and recovered rapidly at first but more slowly as the accumulating damage began to tell. [It] was finally defeated on points." United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Oil Division Final Report* second ed. (Washington DC: USGPO, 1947), 91-92.

The problem was that there is a lot of open space in a typical refinery, oilfield, tank farm, or synthetic oil plant. Vital equipment was generally damaged only when hit directly, but even an accurate bomb might fail to have an effect if it were too small. The USSBS concluded that the oil campaign "could have been accomplished with less effort if bombing accuracy had been better [and] if munitions capable of destroying vital process equipment had been employed whenever reasonable bombing accuracy was attainable. . . ." The Survey also noted that not enough use of incendiary bombs was made. United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Oil Division Final Report*, 138, 129. See also Chaffin, "Selection of Targets," 15.

Further evidence that multiple accurate conventional bombs would be better than a single atomic bomb in disabling an oil facility was provided by the Texas City disaster of 19 April 1947. A cargo ship being loaded with ammonium nitrate fertilizer detonated, producing an explosion estimated to have been the equivalent of between 2.7 and 3.2 kilotons (kt) of TNT, and which was likened by survivors and journalists to an atomic bomb attack (or, by one victim, the Rapture). Although smaller than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki explosions (the kt equivalent of both were in the upper teens), the explosion of the SS *Grandcamp* occurred in the middle of a complex of chemical plants, refineries, and tank farms clustered within a three-thousand foot radius of the pier. Damage was extensive, but much of it was caused by fragments of the ship (some of which, despite averaging twenty pounds, were thrown miles from the dock area) and the 15-foot high wave produced by the explosion, not by the concussion and heat of the blast. The city's rapid recovery drew considerable attention from the national press, although, of

So are bridges, the “selected transport facilities” identified in the war plans, which are notoriously difficult to destroy from the air, usually requiring a direct hit to do any damage (most of the bridges in Hiroshima and Nagasaki took very little damage).⁹⁵ They can also be rebuilt quickly, and so need frequent return visits. The “Broiler” plan of 1948 includes an estimate of the tonnage of conventional bombs that would be required to destroy the bridges in six regions of the Soviet Union. The list provides two alternatives, the first using unguided bombs, the second employing AZON or RAZON bombs (some of the earliest precision-guided munitions, designed during World War Two specifically for use against bridges). If the PGMs were employed, tonnage requirements for the initial and policing campaigns against bridges would be reduced by a factor of approximately thirty.⁹⁶

Unlike refineries and bridges, the third target system, submarine yards, was both concentrated and urban and so would seem to be a good candidate for atomic attack. However, sub pens have walls and ceilings made of reinforced concrete some ten feet

course, not as much as the explosion itself did. [Harold V.] Hal Boyle, “Likens City to Nagasaki Ruins: War Reporter says only in Japan after Atomic Bomb Blast did he see such Destruction,” *The New York Times*, 18 April 1947, 3; Agnes E. Meyer, “Old Group Tensions Are Missing in Texas City, Reborn since Blast,” *The Washington Post*, 14 December 1947, B3; Hugh W. Stephens, *The Texas City Disaster 1947* (Austin: University of Texas, 1997), 6, 121.

⁹⁵ Bridges are designed to take heavy vertical loads (roadbed and traffic) and can withstand reasonably strong transient horizontal loads (wind gusts) such as those created by the blast of an atomic bomb. The famous Tacoma Narrows Bridge collapse of 1940 was the result of sustained horizontal wind loading producing resonance, an effect the one-time concussion of an atomic explosion would not replicate. It was possible, however, for a bridge to be subjected to the original (horizontal) blast and its (vertical) reflection off of any water it crossed almost immediately afterward, which happened at Hiroshima, the combination having the effect of lifting a bridge off of its moorings and displacing its several feet down range. *Effects of Atomic Weapons* (Washington DC: Combat Forces, 1950), 152.

The history of aerial warfare contains many episodes of air units sacrificed in repeated attacks against bridges that refuse to fall down, including the Sedan Bridges of the 1940 French campaign; Japan’s Burma Railway bridges; the North Korean bridge complex that inspired James Michener’s novella, *The Bridges of Toko-Ri* (and the movie based on it); and the infamous “Dragon’s Jaw,” the Paul Doumer (*Long Bien*) Bridge in North Vietnam.

⁹⁶ Tab “A” to Annex “B,” in JPSG 496./4 “Broiler”; 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 191.

(three meters) thick or more against which the heat and pressure of an atomic explosion would do little. They can generally be damaged only by direct hits from armor-piercing bombs. Nonetheless, the Americans were obligated to try to destroy them. Reversing the 1945 dismissal of the Soviet navy as inconsequential, war plans “Pincher” (1946), “Broiler (1948), “Grabber”/“Frolic” (1948), and “Dropshot (1950) all refer to the importance of neutralizing the Soviet submarine menace to the sea lines of communication necessary to fight an intercontinental war.⁹⁷ “[T]he threat posed by Soviet submarine capabilities is of sufficient magnitude to justify substantial strategic effort towards its reduction,” declared the JPSG in 1948.⁹⁸ Its prescribed countermeasures included the diversion of heavy and medium bombers from the air offensive to sub pens and coastal mine-laying.⁹⁹

These three targets sets—refineries, bridges, and sub pens—required an accuracy not possible with atomic weapons. The best that might be said about the atomic bomb is that it was an instrument for delivering an area attack precisely. “[T]he demands for

⁹⁷ “Strategic Vulnerability of the U.S.S.R. to a Limited Air Attack,” JIC 329/1, 3; JPS 789 “Concept of Operations for ‘Pincher,’” in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 21; “Outline Plan,” in JPSG 494/4 “Broiler,” in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 176, 180; JCS 1844/1 “Frolic” [“Grabber”], in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 14; Cave, Dropshot, 49-50, 131, 159-160, 195.

⁹⁸ Tab “A” to Annex “B,” in “Broiler,” JPSG 496/4, 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 180.

⁹⁹ JCS 1844/1 “Short Range Emergency Plan ‘Frolic’ [‘Grabber’], 17 March 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 14. In addition to bombing the submarine pens, the Air Force would also be expected to contribute to a mine-laying campaign. “Analysis of the Soviet submarine menace indicates that it can be controlled more effectively and economically by a mining campaign than by conventional bombing.” Tab “A” to Annex “B,” in JPSG 496./4, “Broiler,” 11 February 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 180. Neither the sub pen campaign nor the mining campaign would please Air Force officers, who had long complained that similar operations during World War Two had been a waste of units better employed exclusively against strategic targets (saw reference recently).

accuracy in delivery of a single [atomic] bomb to produce a given result are far less than for bombs loaded with conventional explosives.”¹⁰⁰

Fortunately for the Americans, the other target sets were centered in the cities of the USSR and thus could be subjected to atomic attack. “Inseparable from the destruction of these urban areas is the major destruction accomplished on industry itself.”¹⁰¹ Targeted were industrial complexes that anyone familiar with the 1942-1945 strategic air campaigns against Germany and Japan would recognize. However, many of these target groups would have been accorded a much lower priority in World War Three than they had been given in World War Two.

This change in emphasis was a function of the time compression of atomic warfare. An example would be the Soviet aircraft industry, which had been second after the U-Boats in the Combined Bomber Offensive program of 1943. The American war planners acknowledged its “superficial appeal as a target system” but realized the USSR had so many airplanes in active and reserve units that any lost production would not be felt for a year or more.¹⁰² Similarly, coke, iron, and steel production was a “target system of considerable importance” but “[i]t would probably take about three years of war to have appreciable effect on Soviet offensive or defensive capabilities.”¹⁰³

Electrical generation and distribution, although concentrated in cities, was too large a system to take out in a short time. It had too many redundancies and too much reserve capacity to be worth targeting on its own, although any incidental damage

¹⁰⁰ Enclosure “A” in “The Evaluation of the Atomic Bomb as a Military Weapon: The Final Report of the Joint chiefs of Staff Evaluation Board for Operation Crossroads,” 30 June 1947, 32.

¹⁰¹ “Outline Plan,” in JPSG 494/4 “Broiler,” in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 174.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 182.

inflicted during strikes against other targets would not be unwelcome.¹⁰⁴ In this regard it was like the Soviet transportation network: “[T]he extensiveness of the transportation system . . . even after considering the effect of bombs dropped against other target systems, dictates that the attack on this target system must be deferred . . . until the culmination of the campaign against urban industrial areas and the petroleum industry”—supposing the war lasted that long.¹⁰⁵

Targets for Atomic Bombing

So what target groups would provide the quickest results? Two systems seemed to offer the greatest reward for the effort invested. One was the Soviet atomic bomb development program.¹⁰⁶ War plan “Dropshot,” prepared in 1950, instructed, “Particular emphasis should be based on blunting Soviet offensive capabilities. Accordingly attacks against atomic-bomb production and storage facilities and important air bases from which atomic-bomb attacks are most likely to be launched should be given high priority.”¹⁰⁷ However, the locations and characteristics of these installations were not well known. “Present intelligence is inadequate to provide a firm determination as to the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 180.

¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, the Soviet nuclear program was mentioned as a possible target in the 1945 war plans cited above, but it then disappeared from discussions of possible targets groups until after the Soviets actually detonated their first atomic device in 1949. JIC 329/1 “Strategic Vulnerability of the U.S.S.R. to a Limited Air Attack,” 3 December 1945, 2; Brown, *Dropshot*, 159-160; Ross and Rosenberg, *American War Plans*, 60.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *Dropshot*, 159-160.

requirements for attack on facilities for the assembly and delivery of weapons of mass destruction.”¹⁰⁸

Of course, the Americans’ primary motivation in attacking this target system was self-preservation. Yet defensive operations seldom win wars. The Americans needed to identify a target system that would bring decisive results quickly if destroyed. The most likely to meet this criterion was the Soviet government and military command structure. “The destruction of the core of these governmental and control facilities would be given high priority [and] would have a very great immediate effect on the integration of the enemy’s over-all effort.”¹⁰⁹ The Americans would not have to invest too much time or energy to the effort: “The destruction of the remainder of the governmental and control facilities would be accomplished along with the destruction of the urban industrial areas.”¹¹⁰

Yet for all the discussion of target systems (in the plural) in the American war plans, there really was only one that mattered.

Urban industrial concentrations constitute the highest priority target system for strategic air attack employing atomic bombs. Destruction of this target system should so cripple the Soviet industrial and control centers as to reduce drastically the offensive and defensive power of their armed forces. This could well lead to Soviet capitulation and in any event should destroy their over-all capability for major effective operations.¹¹¹

The atomic bomb was such a powerful weapon that it almost did not matter that the Americans often had only the vaguest sense of where specific Soviet industrial, military,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 200.

¹⁰⁹ “Outline Plan,” in JPSG 494/4 “Broiler,” in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 179.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ JCS 1952/1 “Evaluation of Current Strategic Air Offensive Plans,” 21 December 1948, in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 6-7.

and political installations were located. Much of their information about the physical and economic geography of the Soviet Union came from maps prepared by the Germans during World War Two.¹¹² “The scarcity of detailed intelligence and the availability of the atomic bomb serve to point up industrial urban areas as a suitable target system. Cities can be used . . . to establish in general the location of the Soviet industry.”¹¹³ In other words, cities can be assumed to have vital industries within them. Bomb a city, and its industry will be destroyed as well.

The problem was not a new one to the Americans, who had had similar difficulties during World War Two.

Industrial targets in Japan were dispersed within the larger cities and very small in comparison to [those in] any other major country. This fact made it quite difficult to bomb small factories within a general area, therefore the technique of bombing was altered so that areas would be bombed with the purpose of reducing the industrial capacity of that area.¹¹⁴

Although the American had relied on incendiary devices, not atomic bombs, for this effort, the results were frighteningly similar. The Tokyo raid of 10/11 March 1945 killed at least as many people as the Hiroshima attack. The attack on Toyama on 1/2 August 1945—the only time the city was bombed—left some 99.5 percent of it burned out.

¹¹² Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 104.

¹¹³ “Appreciation of Air Base Areas,” in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 19-20. The idea of bombing a city without knowing its specific economic or military value is reminiscent of the concept called “reconnaissance by fire,” in which units that do not know for certain where the enemy is will fire on likely positions in order to get a reaction or cause incidental casualties. Although the tactic does have its value, cynical military personnel often refer to the tactic as “speculative fire.”

Indiscriminate bombing hoping to hit something vital also brings to mind the practice of marine biologists trying to estimate oceanic fish stocks. One of their primary sources of data is commercial catches. When the fishermen no longer catch anything, the scientists know how large the population was.

¹¹⁴ Chaffin, “Selection of Targets,” 11.

The night raids on Japan were conducted by radar. Locating a blacked-out city at night is far from simple. During World War Two both the British and Germans, despite having many sophisticated electronic navigational and bombing aids, demonstrated that it *was* possible for an entire bomber formation to miss a city altogether in the dark. Just because an atomic bomb could destroy a city and most everything within it does not mean that it would be easy to do so. It had to be located first. However, the Americans lacked accurate dossiers for most potential target cities east of the Urals. When bombing from above 30,000 feet in altitude, the expected Circular Error Probable (CEP, a measure of the distance a bomb misses its aiming point) against an industrial target for which radar data was available was 4,000 feet. “Errors against objectives for which no previous [radar] scope reconnaissance may be even larger. . . .”¹¹⁵

The problem raised serious concerns about the Americans’ ability to conduct their planned air offensive with any hope of success. In early 1948, one Air Force general asked, “Should we change our bombardment doctrine so that every atomic bomb mission is a search attack? . . . The scope of the reconnaissance needed to carry out atomic bomb attacks in Russia staggers my imagination.”¹¹⁶ The deficiency led the

¹¹⁵ USAF Field Office for Atomic Energy, “Doctrine of Atomic Air Warfare (draft),” 30 December 1948, 27; <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/DDRS?vrsn=1.0&slb=KE&locID=txshracd2898&srchtp=basic&c=1&ste=4&txb=doctrine+atomic+air+warfare&sortType=RevChron>, accessed 25 October 2012. This document does not seem to have progressed past the draft stage. A number of secondary sources cite it, but always as the “Doctrine of Atomic Air Warfare (draft).” Examples include Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1987), 28; Fred M. Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (Palo Alto CA: Stanford UP, 1991) 181-182.

¹¹⁶ Earle E. Partridge (Director of Training and Requirements, Air Staff), memorandum to George C. MacDonald (Director of Intelligence, Headquarters USAF), subject: Strategic Reconnaissance, 31 January 1948; in R. Cargill Hall and Clayton D. Laurie, eds., *Early Cold War Overflights: Symposium Proceedings*, vol. 2: *Appendices* (Washington DC: Office of the Historian, National Reconnaissance Office, 2003), 411-412.

Americans to build up the USAF's strategic reconnaissance service, develop some very sophisticated reconnaissance aircraft, and conduct deep-penetration intelligence-gathering overflights against the USSR and China during the Cold War.¹¹⁷

Given the emphasis on urban areas as targets, where, presumably, few military forces other than the PVO-Strany would be located, combined with the recognition that the effects of strategic bombing on arms production would not effect front-line units until long after the conflict would probably be over, it appears that the Americans were thinking less in terms of denial, the destruction of an enemy's physical ability to wage war, than coercion, the destruction of an enemy's will to continue fighting. Much of the deterrent value of the atomic bomb derives from the perception that it somehow different from other weapons, a unique engine of destruction harnessing the mysterious energy that powers the universe.¹¹⁸ The Joint Chiefs of Staff hoped that they could take advantage of this idea. "[O]f primary military concern will be the bomb's potentiality to break the will of nations by the stimulation of man's primordial fears, those of the unknown, the invisible, the mysterious," they wrote in their 1947 report to the president about Operation "Crossroads," the atomic tests at Bikini Atoll the previous year.¹¹⁹ "We may deduce from a wide variety of established facts that the effective exploitation of the

¹¹⁷ For further information see John Thomas Farquahr, *A Need to Know: The Role of Air Force Reconnaissance in War Planning 1945-1953* (Maxwell AFB AL: AU Press, 2004); Hall and Laurie, *Early Cold War Overflights*, vol. I: *Memoirs*; and Hall and Laurie, eds., *Early Cold War Overflights*, vol. 2: *Appendices*.

¹¹⁸ Or so the layperson would express it. Of course, the atomic bomb was a fission weapon, and nuclear fusion is the primary form of energy in the cosmos. But the difference would likely mean little to the average American with his rudimentary knowledge of science.

¹¹⁹ Enclosure "A" in "The Evaluation of the Atomic Bomb as a Military Weapon: The Final Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Evaluation Board for Operation Crossroads," 30 June 1947, 34.

bomb's psychological implications will take precedence over the application of its destructive and lethal effects in deciding the issues of war."¹²⁰

Yet war plan "Broiler," prepared in 1948, explicitly emphasized the physical over the moral:

In this plan the air campaign has been developed on the basis of the enemy's ability to resist. Under that concept, it is important that weapons of mass destruction be applied as early as possible and to the extent necessary for the destruction of the Soviet ability to resist without undue emphasis on their intangible effects.¹²¹

Material damage is quantifiable; psychological harm is not, despite the claim of Hugh Trenchard, "the father of the Royal Air Force," that "the moral effect of bombing stands to the material in a proportion of 20 to 1."¹²²

Yet "Broiler" did not completely dismiss the possibility of striking at the enemy population's morale. It merely asserted that such should not be a primary objective of the air campaign.

In addition to . . . physical destruction, it seems reasonable to anticipate that the use of atomic weapons would create a condition of chaos and extreme confusion. The magnitude of this increased effect can not be accurately evaluated since at least up to this time it will be in the abstract. It seems logical, however, to anticipate that the psychological effect, properly exploited, could become an important factor in the timing of and the effort necessary to cause the cessation of hostilities. . . .¹²³

The Americans, therefore, should be prepared to wage a psychological warfare campaign against the Soviet civilian population that would take advantage of any collateral moral effects of the strategic air campaign against the Soviet economic and political structure.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ "Outline Plan," in JPSG 494/4 "Broiler," in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 178.

¹²² Hugh Trenchard, "The Work of the I.A.F.," *Flight*, 9 January 1919, 52.

¹²³ "Outline Plan," in JPSG 494/4 "Broiler," in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 177.

As a result, potential “[t]arget areas should be so selected that the maximum effect, both of physical destruction of war-making potential and destruction of the will to resist, is attained.”¹²⁴

The psychological warfare campaign would have two main objectives. “The psychological activities should exploit to the maximum the fear created by the atomic bomb in order to weaken the will of the people of the U.S.S.R. to continue hostilities and to strengthen the will of dissident groups.”¹²⁵ To do so effectively, the Americans would have to determine the proper ratio of physical and moral force required to bring a timely end to the conflict. However, the drafters of “Broiler” acknowledged that “[i]t does not appear possible at the present time to analyze the vulnerability of the U.S.S.R. to psychological warfare.”¹²⁶

It would have been difficult to calculate the moral effects of an atomic attack on any nation. The threat of atomic annihilation had never existed before. The people of Nagasaki and Hiroshima had had no idea of the existence of nuclear weapons and thus had had “no opportunity to exhibit anticipatory panic.”¹²⁷ The war ended before the inhabitants of other Japanese cities could form a “picture of the national situation which might have resulted had tens or hundreds of bombs been discharged, within a brief period of time, over several cities.”¹²⁸

¹²⁴ “Strategic Implications,” in JSPG 496/4 “Broiler”; in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 16.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 60.

¹²⁶ “Outline Plan,” in JPSG 494/4 “Broiler,” in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 177.

¹²⁷ Enclosure “A”: “The Evaluation of the Atomic Bomb as a Military Weapon: The Final Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Evaluation Board for Operation Crossroads,” 30 June 1947, 36.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

The Americans could assess only their own mental state, not that of the Soviets. “Even a cursory examination of the characteristics of the American people . . . invites the conclusion that this nation is much more vulnerable to the psychological effects of the bomb than certain other nations” in part because the United States was an open society in which information was disseminated freely.¹²⁹ “Paradoxically, it would seem that, within some limits, the greater the knowledge of nuclear fission phenomena, the greater fear it engenders.”¹³⁰ The totalitarian Soviet regime exercised a considerable control over its subjects’ access to information, and, as has been noted earlier, downplayed the value of the atomic bomb (although the Soviet people then had to wonder why their leaders kept bringing it up, leaving them in a condition of “apprehensive uncertainty”).¹³¹ Although the British “we can take it” attitude during the Blitz was often cited as an example of how the people of a democracy were better equipped for dealing with adversity than those under a dictatorship, the USSBS noted that during World War Two the Germans had proved just as resilient as the British when under aerial attack. “Under ruthless Nazi control they showed surprising resistance to the terror and hardships of repeated air attack. . . . The power of a police state over its people cannot be underestimated.”¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid., 36-37.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 38.

¹³¹ Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 21 July 1947, in *FRUS* 1947-4, 579.

¹³² *USSBS Summary Report (Pacific War)*, in *The United States Strategic Bombing Surveys (European War) (Pacific War)*, 39. State coercion informed Japan’s response to morale bombing as well. The ability of American aircraft to fly unmolested over the home islands the Japanese believed to be inaccessible to foreign enemies had a depressing effect on morale. “Until the end, however, national traditions of obedience and conformity, reinforced by the police organization, remained effective in controlling the behavior of the population.” *USSBS Summary Report (Pacific War)*, in *The United States Strategic Bombing Surveys (European War) (Pacific War)*, 95-96.

Nonetheless, the Americans had to be prepared for the possibility that the Soviets might submit after the initial round of atomic attacks. Although “early capitulation would only result from an atomic bomb-psychological campaign of staggering effectiveness,” plan “Broiler” noted the importance of creating contingency plans for accepting a Soviet surrender.¹³³ However, the United States would not have had many forces available to occupy the Soviet Union right away—recall that the Americans relied on air power to compensate for their lack of land power.¹³⁴ “Continued military control over an area such as the U.S.S.R. can only be maintained over an extended period of time by threat of further action by strategic air or mobile armed forces” (a situation not entirely without precedent—during the interwar period the British had instituted a policy of “air control” in their African and Asian colonies).¹³⁵

By 1950, the Americans were more confident about their ability to fight the Soviet army on land. Recall from Chapter II that in most of their early war plans, they were willing to concede continental Europe to the Soviets, but war plan “Dropshot,” prepared in 1950, committed the United States to defending its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) if they were invaded. However, a direct confrontation with the Red Army where it, presumably, would be strongest would be problematic. As was noted above, the American strategic bombing campaign was not expected to have an effect on Soviet war production for months, or even years. The

¹³³ “Strategic Implications,” in JSPG 496/4 “Broiler,” in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 132.

¹³⁴ The inability to effectively police a conquered nation was a common theme in arguments against preventive war. For further information, see the works cited in notes 74 and 75, this chapter.

¹³⁵ “Strategic Implications,” in JSPG 496/4 “Broiler,” in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 134; For more information about “air control” or “air policing,” see David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force 191-1939* (Manchester UK: Manchester UP, 1990); Chaz Bowyer, *Royal Air Force Operations 1918-1938* (London: William Kimber, 1988).

Americans would have been drawn into a long grinding war of attrition unless they were able somehow to compel the Soviet to surrender early. As a result, the planners of “Dropshot” reversed the position taken in “Broiler” regarding psychological warfare. “It may become advisable to abandon the concept of destruction of the enemy’s physical *means* to wage war in the favor of a concept involving the destruction of his will through . . . mass attack of people, with . . . a minimum of damage to physical property [emphasis in original].”¹³⁶

The explicit declaration of a willingness to target populations is a reminder of one of the great problems confronting air force personnel throughout the twentieth century. When does morale bombing become terror bombing? Or is there a difference? (The cynical answer would be yes, because morale bombing is what friendly forces do, while terror bombing is what the enemy does). A related issue is the inevitable spillover of bombs intended for legitimate targets into populated areas nearby. The quest for bombing accuracy has occupied a considerable part of the attentions of the world’s air arms ever since strategic bombing was introduced (motivated by both the desire for military efficiency—a bomb that misses its target is a bomb wasted—and humanitarian concerns). Given the difficulty of hitting a specific building from the air with a bomb, it was easy to progress from accepting that bombs often missed their targets to concluding that aiming is thus unnecessary or that the only target impossible to miss was a city (which was actually not true). There is, after all, little practical difference between a residence that is hit by a bomb aimed for a nearby factory and a residence that is hit by a

¹³⁶ Brown, *Dropshot*, 23.

bomb specifically aimed at it, or one not aimed at all—although the moral distance between the three situations is immense.

The Americans had given some thought to the consequences of both bombing and targeting civilians in the late 1940s. Plan “Broiler” recognized that an atomic bombing campaign against urban industrial areas would produce heavy civilian casualties. As many of the dead and wounded would be involved in war production, the Americans could claim military necessity. Such an attack would “decimate the major portion of the skilled labor, technicians, and scientific workers available to the Soviets, the loss of which would reduce their industrial capabilities greatly.”¹³⁷ However, the idea that killing civilians should be pursued for its own sake was not militarily efficient. An early attempt by the USAF to draft a “Doctrine of Atomic Air Warfare” contains the observation that “[p]eople themselves have proven very unproductive as a target system.”¹³⁸

That same document also noted, “Actually, the atomic bomb could prove more humane than conventional bombing. . . . Atomic power, capable of destroying at a far greater rate than recovery can be made . . . might easily permit an earlier decision with a saving of lives and suffering in the long run.”¹³⁹ In this it echoes both Douhet and Mitchell. If war is so horrible, it is best ended quickly. The atomic bomb would certainly facilitate a swift conclusion to a conflict.

¹³⁷ “Outline Plan,” in JPSG 494/4 “Broiler,” in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 179.

¹³⁸ USAF Field Office for Atomic Energy, “Doctrine of Atomic Air Warfare (draft),” 30 December 1948, 4.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

But the ratio of time to horror might be a constant. The machine gun and the airplane both promised to be so terrible they might end war, yet were also presented as solutions to the problem of terrible war. The draft doctrine notes, “Populations, cities, and countries destroyed in the past by the spear and the torch are no deader than if they had been atomized. It just took a longer time with the spear.”¹⁴⁰ This sentence is not the only reference to time in the work. At the end of the passage “the atomic bomb is in many respects comparable to the effects of a World War II type bombing attack,” someone had inserted the hand-written addendum “except in time.”¹⁴¹ Obviously, the atomic bomb’s ability to compress time had impressed somebody involved in the project, just as strategic bombardment’s time-condensing effect had impressed Mitchell and Douhet.

Whether they had been correct to be so concerned is another matter. Practice often—perhaps always—departs from theory. This axiom is particularly true in matters of technology. Thomas Edison famously predicted that the phonograph was best suited for the dictation of letters. Recording music was low on his list of possible applications. Of course, the producers and consumers of technology enjoy a reciprocal relationship.¹⁴² For most items, those used every day, they can work together to produce a compromise solution that satisfies most everybody involved.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ruth Schwarz Cowan, “The Consumption Junction: A Proposal for Research Strategies in the Sociology of Technology,” in *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology*, in Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes, and Trevor J. Pinch, eds. (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1987), 261-280.

Military technologies, however, are not employed every day. Every new invention introduced during peacetime adds to the burden of planners who must consider how the new device will affect already-existing programs. These planners do not have to develop their theories *ab initio*, of course, but often all they have to guide them is the experience of the past and the projected performance characteristics of the new weapon.

The air power advocates did not even have that luxury. They had to devise their theories on the basis of very limited empirical experience. Little wonder that their ideas often proved deficient. The pace of aerial warfare is an example. The theorists consistently held that the airplane would bring a quick and decisive end to future wars. It did not, but the theorists then claimed that atomic bomb would have the same effect. After World War Two, the Americans devoted five years to drafting plans based on this assumption that the next war would be over in a matter of months. Yet their next war lasted three years.

CHAPTER VI

HERESY: KOREA, THE LIMITED WAR

The first major conflict of the Cold War era was not the global atomic war that so many feared. Instead it was a small war in a place of seemingly minor importance that began when one of the two rival governments claiming sovereignty over the Korean peninsula decided to eliminate the other. Had the two rival factions not each been sponsored by one of the two superpowers, the Korean War might have gone unnoticed. But the United States decided to intervene in the war on behalf of its client, and by doing so risked giving the Soviet Union cause to enter the conflict as well, or worse, to initiate hostilities elsewhere while the United States was distracted. Fearing escalation, the Americans limited their involvement in Korea, hoping that their restraint would keep the Soviets out of the war. However, they failed to appreciate that their actions in Korea might also lead the People's Republic of China to join the fighting.

Deterrence Theory

The American plans for a nuclear war against the Soviet Union in the late 1940s—the material described in the previous three chapters—were never implemented. Once completed, they were filed away in the safes and cabinets of the Pentagon, to be referred to when needed. Yet the war for which they were prepared never occurred, and so, after slowly losing their utility as American and Soviet military capabilities changed over the following decades, they were at last relegated to the National Archives. It is

fortunate that they were never used. Even before the introduction of intercontinental ballistic missiles, multiple independent reentry vehicles, and stealth bombers, a full-scale atomic war between the superpowers would have been horrific.

No rational being would desire such a conflict. However, the Americans were well aware that a third world war

might arise through miscalculation, through failure of either side to estimate accurately how far the other can be pushed. There is a possibility that the USSR will be tempted to take armed action under a miscalculation of the determination and willingness of the United States to resort to force in order to prevent the development of a threat intolerable to U.S. security.¹

This quotation was taken from war plan “Dropshot,” prepared in 1949, but as was observed in Chapter II, most of the American plans for war against the Soviet Union created in the late 1940s contained similar passages.²

The Americans relied upon their air power—the combination of the strategic bomber and the atomic bomb—to deter such a war. “[I]f we are to have peace in our time it will have to be a Pax Americana,” wrote an Air Force officer in 1948. “The instrument of Pax Americana must be Air Power, just as the instrument of Pax Britannica a century ago was sea power.”³ It was not just military personnel who saw that air power seemed to provide the United States the means to guarantee global tranquility. As one former senator declared, “We now have the opportunity to lessen the

¹ Brown, *Dropshot*, 41.

² Appendix “A” to Enclosure “B”: “Estimate of the Situation—‘Pincher,’” in JWPC 432/7 “Tentative Over-All Strategic Concept and Estimate of Initial Operations Short Title ‘Pincher,’” 18 June 1946, in *APWSU*, vol. 2, 13; “Strategic Implications,” in JSPG 496/4 “Broiler”; in *APWSU*, vol. 6, 22; Appendix to JCS 1844/1 “Frolic” [“Grabber”], in *APWSU*, vol. 9, 9.

³ Frank R. Pancake, “The Strategic Striking Force,” *Air University Quarterly Review* 2, no.2 (1948), 48.

fear of war and promote the blessings of peace by having an Air Force able to rule the skies and bring the nations of earth the assurance of a Pax Americana.”⁴ If war came, it would not be the Americans who started it. “No peaceful nation need fear us. . . . [M]ost nations trust us—the ones who do not are the ones whose actions show their desire to seize and control as large a part of the earth as they can.”⁵ But like both the Pax Britannica and the Pax Romana before it, the American Peace was imperfect.

To a certain extent, nuclear deterrence worked. The threat of unthinkable war prevented such a war—the sword proved equally valuable as a shield. The Cold War ended without a major armed conflict occurring between the United States and the Soviet Union. But the Americans failed to consider that just because one type of war is unthinkable that all types of war are impossible.

Korea Unexpected

The possibility of an atomic conflict with the Soviet Union had so dominated American thinking in the late 1940s that few in the United States had considered the prospect of any other kind of war against any other enemy. But instead of the global nuclear conflict for which the Americans had been preparing (and dreading) since World

⁴ Hiram Bingham, “Peace Preparedness: Strong Air Force Advocated as War Preventative” (letter to the editor), *The New York Times*, 11 April 1948, E10. To this letter the editors of the *Times* appended a short notice observing that Bingham had served the state of Connecticut as both governor and senator. What they did not mention was that after he won the governorship in the general election of 1924, he won a special election to fill a vacant senate seat six weeks later. He served only one day as governor.

Perhaps because it had no bearing on his qualifications to comment about American defense policy, they also did not mention that Bingham was also the leader of the archaeological expedition that discovered the ruins of Machu Picchu in 1911. He published *Lost Cities of the Incas* the same year that this letter appeared.

⁵ *Ibid.*

War Two, the first significant international conflict of the Cold War involving the United States was a relatively minor one by twentieth century standards. It began as a civil war in a place “few Americans . . . knew or thought much about . . . other than it was a strange land in far-off Asia.”⁶ Liberated from the Japanese Empire at the end of World War Two, the “little country of Korea” did not signify highly in American geopolitical thinking during the early Cold War.⁷ Indeed, in 1949, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had dismissed it as having “little strategic value to the United States.”⁸

The problem with making such judgments, of course, is that it becomes easy to forget that others might assess the same situation differently. On the day the Korean War began, the Office of Intelligence Research of the American State Department issued a report concluding, “The Kremlin must therefore have . . . considered Korea as more important than we have assumed. . . .” If not, the Soviets must have “calculated that

⁶ Truman, *Memoirs*, 316. Truman’s remarks about Korea’s pre-1950 obscurity—he also noted that “[e]xcept for a small sprinkling of missionaries, Americans had had little occasion to know ‘the land of the morning calm’ [before] 1945”—bring to mind actor/comedian Paul Rodriguez’s observation “War is God’s way of teaching us geography.” Lawrence Christon, “Comic Relief: An HBO Tradition: Comedians Weave Laughter Into Plea for Homeless at Amphitheatre,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 16 November 1987, 1. This quotation is often attributed to American satirist Ambrose Bierce, usually with the word “Americans” in place of “us.” The internet search engine Google identifies over 180,000 websites that do so (search conducted 23 August 2011). However, Bierce scholars, most notably David E. Schultz, report being unable to find it or anything like it in any of his works and generally credit Rodriguez as its author. Ralph Keyes, *The Quote Verifier: Who Said What, Where, and When* (New York: St. Martins, 2006, 240); <http://www.ambrosebierce.org/notices.html>, <http://donswaim.com/>; accessed 23 August 2011).

⁷Chairman of the National Security Resources Board, statement to the National Security Council, 6 July 1950, in *FRUS*, 1950-1, 338.

⁸“Implications of a Possible Full Scale Invasion from North Korea Subsequent to Withdrawal of United States Troops from South Korea,” Memorandum by the Department of the Army to the Department of State, 27 June 1949, in *FRUS* 1949-7, 1056.

under any circumstances an armed conflict with the United States is more imminent than we had estimated.”⁹

Yet neither the USSR nor the United States were directly involved in the Korean War originally. The conflict began as a clash between two rival governments claiming to preside over the Korean peninsula after the area had gained its nominal independence in 1945. Somehow, however, the Americans believed that “the danger of Soviet resort to war, either deliberately or by miscalculation, may have been increased by the Korean war [and] even an immediate obviation of the Korean crisis would not obviate this danger,” leading to the question, why would they think so?¹⁰

The Korean War was not a strictly local affair, but an episode in the larger Cold War. Each faction in the conflict was aligned with one of the superpowers. When the Japanese Empire was dismantled after World War Two, the victorious allies divided its Korean colony into two parts, the northern portion to be administered by the USSR, the southern part by the USA. The dividing line, the 38th parallel of latitude, had no especial cultural, political, diplomatic, or social significance. It was merely a convenience, as it ran through approximately across the middle of the Korean peninsula.

Both superpowers quickly established governments friendly to them in their respective zones. The withdrawal of the American and Soviet occupation forces in the late 1940s had the effect of making what was intended to have been a temporary arrangement permanent. Both the Republic Of Korea (ROK, or South Korea) and the

⁹ Estimates Group, Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, “Korea (Preliminary Version),” I.E. No. 7 (Intelligence Estimate), 25 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 149-150. Hereafter referred to as “Korea (Preliminary Version).”

¹⁰ NSC 74/4 Report by the National Security Council, 25 August 1950 in *FRUS* 1950-1, 384.

Democratic People's Republic Of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) declared themselves to be the only legitimate authorities in the peninsula.¹¹ The unification of Korea by peaceful means appeared to be indefinitely postponed—but the use of force always remained an option.

Both superpowers supplied “their” Koreas with arms and equipment, and by January 1949 an American diplomat could report “South Korean forces [are] considered adequate [to] maintain internal stability, cope with infiltration for the north, and before long [they will be] adequate [to] prevent even open invasion [by] known North Korean forces.”¹² However, the ROK leadership felt that they had been shorted in the matter of heavy weapons; in January 1950 another American official referred to “the familiar pleas for planes, ships and tanks” from South Korean officials.¹³ Six months later, the Americans, at last recognizing the “undeniable material superiority of the north Korean forces . . . with which the U.S.S.R. has supplied and continues to supply its Korean puppet,” attempted to remedy the problem by increasing arms deliveries to the ROK.¹⁴ But they were too late. The passage just cited appeared in the issue of the American

¹¹ The DPRK is also referred to in some contemporary sources as the Korean Democratic People's Republic (KPDR). The style “People's Republic of North Korea” also appears occasionally in official American documents such as the “United States Delegation [to the United Nations] Position Paper,” 22 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1949-2, 304 and the “Report by the National Security Council to the President” NSC 81/1, 9 September 1950, in *FRUS*, 1950-7, 714.

Naturally, the DPRK was diplomatically recognized by communist countries and the ROK by western- and most non-aligned nations. The United Nations accepted the ROK as the one true government of Korea. Dean Acheson, speech to Newspaper Guild, 29 June 1950, printed as “Review of U.N. and U.S. Action to Preserve Peace,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 10 July 1950, 45.

¹² Special Representative in Korea, telegram to the Secretary of State, 27 January 1949, in *FRUS* 1949-7, 951.

¹³ Ambassador at Large, memorandum, 14 January 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1.

¹⁴ John J. Muccio, “Military Aid to Korean Security Forces,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 26 June 1950, 1049. The small “n” in “north” is not a typo. During the late 1940s, American civil and military authorities, not yet willing to accept that the post-World War Two partition of the country—a temporary expedient, they thought—had become permanent, often referred to Korea as a single entity. The Korean War effectively put an end to American hopes for the unification of the country.

State Department Bulletin dated 26 June 1950—the day *after* the DPRK invaded South Korea, beginning the Korean War.¹⁵

Although the current historical interpretation is that the DPRK initiated the Korean War, albeit only after arranging support from the USSR (and thus the Soviets had to acquiesce to the planned invasion), the Americans were certain at the time that the order for war had come from Moscow. They believed firmly, as the State Department's intelligence agency wrote just after hostilities began, that “[t]he North Korean Government is completely under Kremlin control and there is no possibility that the North Koreans acted without prior instruction from Moscow. The move against South Korea must therefore be considered a Soviet move.”¹⁶ Yet if it was, it represented a new militancy on the part of the Soviets, perhaps because they had successfully tested their first atomic bomb a short time earlier, in the late summer of 1949. “A Kremlin decision to resort to open aggression in Korea is . . . unique . . . among [Soviet] postwar moves generally, in that it clearly carries with it the definite risk of involving US armed forces and hence the risk of a general war.”¹⁷

If the risk of a general war with the Soviet Union was so great, why did the United States enter the Korean War? Although ready to fight a world war against the USSR on multiple fronts should the Soviets initiate hostilities in other parts of the world, the Americans were woefully unprepared for a small localized war in any region. They

¹⁵ The Korean peninsula is west of the International Date Line, so for twelve hours each day it is one calendar date ahead of the continental United States, where many of the actors in the Korean Conflict were located. Thus the invasion took place on 25 June 1950, local time, but the American government and United Nations received the earliest reports of the attack on 24 June 1950 by their calendars.

¹⁶ “Korea (Preliminary Version)”: in *FRUS* 1950-7, 149.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

seemed to have been thinking that their choices in future warfare were either a global atomic conflict or no war at all. “[M]ost Americans take it for granted that a war with Russia is likely and that the atomic bomb will certainly be used; the only unknown is the date,” wrote Hanson W. Baldwin in 1949.¹⁸ The United States certainly had no plans for a conflict in Korea specifically. Military historian Alan R. Millett, one of the premier scholars of the conflict, once observed, “[N]o one has ever turned up a Korean War contingency plan and there’s certainly nothing about the behavior of the principals, then or now, or in the documentary evidence to suggest that there was some secret plan out there. If there was, whoever drafted it should have been hung [*sic*]. . . .”¹⁹

The Americans could have chosen to stay out of the conflict. The DPRK, although established and supported by the USSR, never posed a direct threat to American interests at any time during the conflict. Why, then, did the United States elect to come to the assistance of the ROK? The low priority American policy makers accorded Korea (even though the “ROK [was] a creation of US policy”) indicates that they had no particular attachment to the Korean people.²⁰ What compelled the Americans to intervene in Korea and hazard global war?

They did it to demonstrate that they were willing to resist communist aggression wherever it occurred. Were the Korean peninsula to come under communist control, the two regions most important to the Americans during the Cold War, Western Europe and

¹⁸ Hanson W. Baldwin, “What Kind of War?,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1949, 22.

¹⁹ Allan Millett, remarks during conference, quoted in *Understanding & Remembering: A Compendium of the 50th anniversary, Korean War International Historical Symposium, June 26-27, 2002, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia*, (Norfolk VA: General Douglas MacArthur Foundation; Old Dominion University, 2003), 31.

²⁰ Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to Secretary of State, 25 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 139.

Japan, would lose confidence in the American ability and willingness to provide for their safety and security.²¹ The Americans saw the conflict as part of the larger Cold War, a worldwide, long-term struggle.

The United Nations and the Cold War

In keeping with that perception, they thought it important that they did not venture into Korea alone. The Cold War was a global struggle between the “Free World” and the “communist bloc,” the latter seemingly enjoying the advantage of unity of purpose as it was, as the Americans believed, the result of the International Communist Conspiracy directed from Moscow. President Truman saw the conflict as an opportunity to demonstrate both the solidarity and the authority of the United Nations (UN), a multinational organization formed just after World War Two to promote world peace.²² “It was . . . clear to me,” he would note in his memoirs, “that the foundations and the principles of the United Nations were at stake unless this unprovoked attack on

²¹ “Korea (Preliminary Version),” 151-154.

²² In its earliest years, the United Nations was often referred to as the “United Nations Organization” (abbreviated UNO) in the world press and by members of the American government. For examples see Gordon W. McBride, “UNO” (letter to editor), *The Washington Post*, 17 July 1945, 6; James F. Byrnes, telegram to Ambassador in the United Kingdom, 15 August 1945, in *FRUS* 1945-1, 1434.

In 1946, however, the Assistant Secretary General of the UN, Benjamin A. Cohen, observed that in the UN’s charter “the organization is referred to as ‘the United Nations’ or ‘the organization.’ Nowhere in the Charter is it referred to as the United Nations Organization.” Accordingly, the UN’s press section requested that “United Nations” and “UN” be used in preference to the longer versions. “Cohen says Abbreviation is U.N.,” *The New York Times*, 4 April 1946, 3; “The Press: A Small Favor,” *Time*, 15 April 1946, 52.

Most Americans stopped using the longer name and abbreviation by about 1950, although it appeared often enough during the Korean War era to warrant this note alerting readers to its meaning (should it appear in later citations). It continued to appear in newspapers in commonwealth nations, and in the African-American press, well into the 1970s, and is occasionally seen even today.

Korea could be stopped.”²³ Truman fervently desired the United Nations to succeed in its mission of promoting stability and order in the world. The UN was a second attempt to maintain world peace through international cooperation in the twentieth century. A similar body, the League of Nations, had failed rather spectacularly during the interwar era, leaving many to wonder if such an organization could ever work.²⁴

The UN division charged with maintaining international stability, the Security Council, proved to be more ready to fulfill its duties than the old League of Nations had been, quickly adopting three resolutions signifying a willingness to act in the matter of Korea. The first, passed the day the fighting started, condemned the invasion and called for the DPRK to withdraw its forces from South Korea.²⁵ When it was ignored, the Security Council approved a second measure appealing to its members to come to the aid of the ROK.²⁶ Over twenty nations would offer military forces to the UN (although not all were accepted; see below), with an additional five providing medical teams and equipment.²⁷ The third resolution, adopted in early July, assembled the various military

²³ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 333.

²⁴ In his memoirs, Truman often mentions his administration’s efforts to establish and promote the UN. Most of his references to the League of Nations describe how domestic partisan politics prevented the United States from joining it. Modern historians generally attribute the ineffectiveness of the League to dissension and timidity, not to the absence of the United States. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, vol. 1: *Year of Decisions* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 150, 235, 271-272, 323; Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 144, 172, 243, 508.

²⁵ United Nations Security Council Resolution 82, 25 June 1950; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/064/95/IMG/NR006495.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 15 July 2011.

²⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution 83, 27 June 1950; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/064/95/IMG/NR006495.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 15 July 2011.

²⁷ The offer of one of the seventeen, the Republic of China (ROC) was politely turned down for reasons discussed later in the text. “Answer to China’s Offer to Send Troops,” *US Department of State Bulletin*, 10 July 1950, 47. Contributions proffered by Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Denmark were declined for reasons of size—they were too small to be easily incorporated into UN forces. NSC Staff Study:

and other units volunteered by UN members into “a unified command under the United States of America” (not named in the resolution, but eventually known as the United Nations Command, or UNC).²⁸ It authorized its constituent units to fly the United Nations flag in addition to their own national colors while in the Korean theatre.²⁹ The resolution also “requested” the United States to designate the commander of this organization. President Truman appointed General Douglas MacArthur, a long-serving career army officer then serving as Commander-in-Chief Far East Command (CINCFECOM, often shortened to CINCFE), to the post, thus adding Commander-in-Chief United Nations Command (CINCUNC) to his many designations (he held both positions concurrently).³⁰

“Analysis of Possible Courses of Action in Korea,” enclosure within James S. Lay, Jr., NSC-147 “Analysis of Possible Courses of Action in Korea”, 2 April 1953, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-15 part 1, 853.

All sixteen of the remaining nations provided land units of varying sizes (identified by a parenthetical “L” in the list below), six provided air units (A), and nine provided sea units (S), three of which included naval aviation elements (V). These were Australia (LSAV), Belgium (L), Canada (LSA), Colombia (L), Ethiopia (L), France (LS), Greece (LA), Luxembourg (L), the Netherlands (LS), New Zealand (LS), the Philippines (L), Thailand (LSA), Turkey (L), South Africa (A), the UK (LSV), and the USA (LSAV).

The Republic of Korea, which had land, sea, and air units, was not admitted into the UN until 1991 and is generally not counted as a member of the UNC in most histories. However, ROK forces were part of the UNC. “South Korean Forces Placed under Unified Command of United Nations,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 7 August 1950, 206.

The five nations that provided medical units were Denmark, Italy, India, Norway, and Sweden.

Twenty other UN members provided supplies to the UNC.

²⁸ United Nations Security Council Resolution 84, 7 July 1950; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/064/97/IMG/NR006497.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 8 August 2011).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ MacArthur seemed well qualified to be CINCUNC. He was familiar with the Pacific and East Asia regions by virtue of his pre-World War Two experience and his command of the Southwest Pacific Area (equivalent to a theatre) during the war. Indeed, he had not left the area in over a decade, and had not been back to the United States since 1937. Additionally, at the time of his appointment as CINCUNC MacArthur held three other major regional commands as well. In addition to being CINCFE, the director of all American armed forces in Asia and the Western Pacific, MacArthur was Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP), leading the Allied forces occupying Japan, and the Commander-in-Chief United States Army Forces Far East (CINCUSAFFE), in charge of the US Army’s Asian and Pacific units. All three organizations were headquartered in Tokyo.

The USSR, by virtue of its position as a permanent member of the Security Council, had the power to veto any prospective resolution and so could have prevented the adoption of any or all of the three measures described above.³¹ It could have spared its North Korean client state considerable difficulty in the long term by interceding at any point during the period the Security Council was determining how to respond to the Korean situation. However, the Soviets were exercising another aspect of international communist solidarity at the time. Since January they had been boycotting most UN functions, including Security Council meetings, in protest of the decision to seat the Republic of China (the rump government established by the losing faction in the Chinese Civil War after its withdrawal to the island of Taiwan, then known as Formosa) instead of the People's Republic of China (the newly-created communist state on the mainland) as a permanent member of that body.³² An absence was recorded as just that, neither an

³¹ The permanent members were FDR's "Four Policemen" (the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China) plus France. At the time of the Korean War, the Security Council had six non-permanent members, elected to two-year terms, although this number has since been expanded to ten.

Members of the Security Council must have a representative available to attend meetings at any time (a requirement adopted to avoid a repetition one of the League of Nations' perceived flaws, its slow response to international crises).

³² "Chinese United Nations Representation," *Department of State Bulletin*, 16 January 1950, 105; "Security Council," *Department of State Bulletin*, 23 January 1950, 145; "Action on Political and Security Problems in the United Nations," *Department of State Bulletin*, 30 January 1950, 167; "Soviets Walk Out From Meeting of ICEF Executive Board," *Department of State Bulletin*, 20 March 1950, 456; Dean Acheson, "Tensions Between the United States and the Soviet Union," *Department of State Bulletin*, 27 March 1950; 476; Secretary of State, telegram to the Acting Secretary of State, 14 May 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-3, 1062; Secretary of State, telegram to the Acting Secretary of State, 16 May 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-3, 108; Francis B. Sayre, "Soviet Walk-Outs Flout Democratic Process in United Nations," *Department of State Bulletin*, 10 July 1950, 61.

The Republic of China is also known as the ROC, Nationalist China, Formosa, and Taiwan. The People's Republic of China is also referred to as the PRC, Red China, and Mainland China.

The question of which government represented the duly constituted authority in China would plague international relations for many years, especially because both claimants maintained a "One China Policy," refusing to establish or maintain official relations with any nation that formally recognized its rival. Not surprisingly, communist nations supported the claim of the PRC on the mainland almost immediately. Many unaligned nations in Asia, most of them former European colonies, also recognized the PRC. The United States and most other western nations, however, continued to treat with the ROC for

abstention nor a veto, and thus the Soviets missed an opportunity to keep (or at least delay) the UN from becoming involved in the Korean War.³³

Fear of World War Three

Despite the Soviets' failure to support their North Korean satellite in the Security Council, the relationship between the USSR and DPRK was of great concern to the United States and United Nations. The possibility of a large-scale atomic war was never far from the minds of American military and political leaders during the three years that the Korean War lasted. Nothing indicated that the North Korean invasion of South Korea was not the opening stage of the conflict for which the Americans had prepared for since 1945.

One of the first things the Americans did when informed of the invasion was try to determine whether the Soviets were involved. American army personnel in Korea at the time of the attack were asked if there was any evidence that the Soviets were

several decades (the UK, Netherlands, Switzerland and the Nordic nations being exceptions—but the PRC did not reciprocate with the UK or Netherlands until 1972). In 1970, some two-thirds of the world's states still accepted the ROC as the legitimate government of "China."

However, the increasing political, economic, and social influence of the PRC made it difficult to ignore. In 1971, the ROC was made to relinquish its UN membership (and its seat on the Security Council) in favor of the PRC, after which most nations switched missions from the ROC to the PRC. The United States held out until 1979. Today, only 22 nations, the most influential of which is France, maintain embassies in the ROC.

³³ Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 29 July 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 492. US Navy Admiral Chester W. Nimitz suggested that the USSR did not really want the PRC in the UN and that it campaigned on its behalf just to frustrate Americans. "A strong China is the last thing Russia wants," he said. "Russia Doesn't Want China in U.N., Adm. Nimitz Says," *The Boston Globe*, 28 August 1950, 10.

participating in the attack. The response was negative.³⁴ At the same time the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, wired American representatives around the world to be on the alert. Written in “State Department cablese,” his message informed recipients of the “possibility invasion Korea first of series of coordinated Soviet military action” and instructed them to “pls maintain utmost vigilance and report any positive or negative evidence no matter how fragmentary re situation ur country.”³⁵

Had World War Three begun, the Joint Chiefs of Staff realized, it would have been “militarily unsound” for American forces to remain in Korea, an “area of slight strategic importance, as well as one of Soviet choice.”³⁶ The Korean War might have been part of a Soviet plan to draw American troops away from Europe and the Middle East (the main theatres anticipated in the American war plans drawn up in the late 1940s). “I would not believe . . . that if World War III comes it will be fought in a place like Korea,” stated Congressman George H. Mahan of Texas during appropriations

³⁴ “Memorandum of Teletype Conference, Prepared in the Department of the Army,” 25 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 138.

³⁵ Secretary of State, telegram to certain diplomatic and consular offices, 26 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 166. This message was also transmitted to other embassies, legations, and consuls besides the ones identified.

By the mid-twentieth century, brevity in long-distances messages—telegraph, telephone, and telex—was the norm because of the high cost of such communications (even though the US government had a bigger budget than commercial and individual users). In telegrams, the virtue of terseness expressed itself primarily in the absence of articles and the use of abbreviations. Additionally, many private companies developed code systems for their communications, and telegram style manuals enjoyed a brief popularity. George Kennan’s “Long Telegram” got its name precisely because it was such a departure from standard practice—indeed, in its preamble, he apologized “for this burdening of telegraphic channel.” Chargé in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 22 February 1946, in *FRUS* 1946-6, 697.

Today, the widespread use of broadband communication has eliminated the need for “telegram style,” yet it is making a comeback of sorts in the form of “text messaging” on telephones, personal data assistants, and other handheld portable devices. The resemblance of telegraphese to texting has not been lost on modern observers, who have conducted experiments that reveal that Morse Code telegraphy is faster and more readily understandable than the current texter’s lexicon. Mark Henderson, “A Race to the Wire as Old Hand at Morse Code Beats Txt Msgrs,” *The Times* [London], 16 April 2005, 11.

³⁶ JCS, memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, 10 July 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 346.

hearings shortly after the war began.³⁷ In response, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman of the USN observed that “if we should find ourselves fighting for the existence of the United States we would choose an area that is more favorable than the peninsula of Korea, 5,000 miles from the west coast, . . . and not containing anything of value to us or to the probable enemy.”³⁸ The American post-1945 demobilization and budget cuts meant that the United States simply did not have enough men or materiel to continue fighting in Korea and conduct a global war elsewhere.

Therefore, if major USSR combat units should at any time during military operations in the Korea area of hostilities engage or clearly indicate their intention of engaging in hostilities against U. S. and/or friendly forces the U. S. should prepare to minimize its commitment in Korea and prepare to execute war plans.³⁹

No doubt that in the early days of the conflict a significant number of low-ranking staff officers were tasked with retrieving war plans from the safes and filing cabinets of the Pentagon and reviewing them to ensure that they were up to date.

Fear of Soviet Intervention in Korea

The Americans had to judge the Soviet reaction to their decision to enter the Korean War as well. Immediately after the UN Security Council had voted to intervene in the conflict (but before UNC land forces were committed), the United States began providing aerial and naval support to the South Koreans. However, the Americans were

³⁷ George H. Mahon, statement; *The Supplemental Appropriation Bill for 1951: Hearings, on Department of Defense Mutual Defense Assistance Program, Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives*, 82nd Congress, 1950, 121. Hereafter referred to as “Mutual Defense Assistance Hearings.”

³⁸ Forrest P. Sherman, testimony, *Ibid.*, 121-122.

³⁹ JCS, memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, 10 July 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 346

concerned that the Soviets might have chosen to interpret this action as something more than just assistance to a nation under attack. “[T]o ensure that major decisions about the extension of the Korean issue into a major war be taken in Washington, and not be merely the result of a series of events in Korea, . . .” Secretary of State Acheson prepared the following policy statement:

The decision now made to commit United States air and naval forces to provide cover and support for South Korean troops does not in itself constitute a decision to engage in a major war with the Soviet Union if Soviet forces intervene in Korea. The decision regarding Korea, however, was taken in the full realization of a risk of war with the Soviet Union. If substantial Soviet forces actively oppose our present operations in Korea, United States forces should defend themselves, should take no action on the spot to aggravate the situation, and should report the situation to Washington.⁴⁰

It would not have been too difficult for the Soviets to become involved in the Korean War should they have chosen to do so. The USSR and DPRK share a boundary, albeit a short one—about twelve miles (nineteen kilometers) long—at the northern end of the Korean peninsula.

However, it soon became clear that the third world war had not begun, and that the Soviets would not become directly involved in Korea. Shortly after the fighting began, the USSR declared that “Soviet policy was one of non-interference in the affairs of other states. . . .”⁴¹ Communists in Europe and Asia, no doubt under instructions from

⁴⁰ “Draft Policy Statement prepared by the Secretary of State”: attachment in Secretary of State, letter to the Secretary of Defense,” 28 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 217.

⁴¹ “Memorandum of National Security Council Meeting,” 29 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-1, 327. This message was in response to an American request that the Soviets exert their influence over the North Koreans to get them to withdraw from South Korea. The Soviets’ reply was that the ROK was the aggressor and “hence the USSR could not prevent the North Koreans from defending themselves. . . .”

Moscow, adopted the propaganda theme “Korea for the Koreans,” interpreted by some to indicate that the Soviets would not intervene in Korea.⁴²

Direct involvement in the conflict would have been out of character for the Soviets. They would not risk their own strength or influence if they could get others to act for them, as the American Ambassador in the USSR understood: “In this situation, as we see it Soviets through utilizing satellites have thus far avoided direct Soviet implication in Korean situation, and we feel this to be a fundamental Soviet tactic.”⁴³ The Soviets also preferred exploiting weaknesses and stopped probing when they encountered resistance.⁴⁴ Had the Soviets’ North Korean surrogates succeeded in overrunning South Korea, the USSR would have been able to apply to the community of nations for an opinion that the war was effectively over and communist North Korea was the sole legitimate government on the Korean peninsula. However, the Soviets were practical enough to realize that the North Korean’s offensive might fail. George F. Kennan (author of the “long telegram”) appreciated that the longer the war lasted, the less likely the Soviets would become involved.

A great portion of North Korean strength was probably committed and expended in the initial effort. . . . The Kremlin, having expected [the DPRK] to complete the Korean operation on special supplies stock-piled for the purpose and being unwilling to deplete to any appreciable extent

⁴² “Action in Korea: Non-Communist Left Supports U.S.,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 July 1950, 8; Thomas E. J. Keena, “Europe is with Us,” *The Hartford Courant*, 11 July 1950, 16; “International,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 20 August 1950, D18 (featuring a photograph of a Parisienne protester bearing a placard with the slogan “La Corée aux Coréens”); Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, “Neutralizing Korea: Creation of a Demilitarized State is Proposed, Independent and Unified” (letter to editor), *The New York Times*, 6 January 1951, 11; “‘Show’ of Force is Not Enough, Observers Say,” *The Boston Globe*, 3 July 1950, 1.

⁴³ Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 27 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 199.

⁴⁴ Chargé in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 22 February 1946, in *FRUS* 1946-6, 697.

the arsenals of the [USSR's] Far Eastern Red Army, may find itself in a relatively poor position to conduct a war of attrition at a point some 5,000 miles from Moscow.⁴⁵

The Soviets had needed the DPRK to win quickly, but it had not done so, allowing Kennan to conclude, "The Soviet Communists did not launch the Korean operation as a first step in a world war or as the first of a series of local operations designed to drain U.S. strength in peripheral theatres."⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the possibility of Soviet intervention never fully disappeared. The Americans were still discussing it as late as the spring of 1953, less than three months before the war ended.⁴⁷

Fear of Chinese Intervention

The North Koreans were not the only foreign power the Soviets could employ as surrogates. As Americans' fear of a world war with the USSR subsided, concern about the possibility that the People's Republic of China might intervene in the Korean War increased. "We are not at war with Communist China nor do we wish to become involved in hostilities with Chinese Communist forces," wrote the Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense in July 1950.⁴⁸ But the Americans still thought the PRC was beholden to Moscow.

Although politically unlikely, it is possible that Chinese Communist forces might be used to occupy North Korea, even though the Soviet Union probably regards Korea as being in its own sphere of influence. . . . [T]he Soviet Union, although this would increase the chance of general

⁴⁵ Counselor of the Department [of State], memorandum, 8 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-4, 1225.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1224.

⁴⁷ NIE-80 "Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action in Korea," 3 April 1953, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-15, 872.

⁴⁸ Secretary of State, letter to the Secretary of Defense, 31 July 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-6, 403.

war, may endeavor to persuade the Chinese Communists to enter the Korean Campaign with the purpose of avoiding the defeat of the North Korean forces and also fomenting war between the United States and the Chinese Communists should we react strongly.⁴⁹

Unlike the USSR, the PRC did not have atomic weapons, nor could it project power except on land (as evidenced by its failure to conquer Formosa when the ROC government took refuge there), and then only regionally. Nonetheless, it could have hindered or even halted UN operations in Korea. Communist China and North Korea are neighbors, sharing a 1400-kilometer (870 mile) border, defined primarily by the Yalu and Tumen Rivers, so the Chinese would have found it easy to send troops into the peninsula.

Of course, the Chinese communists could have complicated American military, political, and diplomatic efforts even without intervening in Korea. They might have taken advantage of the opportunity to resume their campaign against their Nationalist opponents on Formosa while the Americans, who had pledged to support the ROC, were distracted by events further north.⁵⁰ “The Chinese Communist reaction to our measures had been hostile and provocative, indicating a possible intention to attack Formosa,” George Kennan observed shortly after the war began, leading him to conclude, “[W]e would need to watch the Chinese Communists very carefully.”⁵¹ The Americans were so concerned about the PRC’s ability to make trouble in the region that just after they

⁴⁹ NSC 81/1 “Report by the National Security Council to the President,” 9 September 1950, in *FRUS*, 1950-7, 714.

⁵⁰ The Nationalist party was also referred to as the Kuomintang, or KMT, in contemporary accounts. In the modern Pinyin Chinese-Roman transcription system, the name is rendered as “Guomindang,” shortened to GMD.

⁵¹ George Kennan, précis of remarks, in memorandum of National Security Council Meeting, 29 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-I, 327.

learned of the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, they dispatched elements of the US Navy's 7th Fleet to patrol the Formosa Straits—not just to “prevent an attack on Formosa from the mainland [but also to discourage] operations from Formosa against the mainland . . .” (the Nationalists were looking for a rematch as well).⁵² An ROC offensive against the PRC would likely have provoked an armed response from the communists, complicating American and UN management of the Korean War. At the same time, the United States took steps to bolster the defenses of the Philippines and French Indochina.⁵³ The PRC could also threaten Tibet, Hong Kong, Macao, or even Burma.⁵⁴

Once the United States and the United Nations became involved in the Korean War, the Americans also had to judge the Chinese communists' reactions to UNC activities on the peninsula, much as they had done with the Soviets. However, neither the Americans nor the UN could contact the Chinese communists directly. Unlike the USSR, the PRC was diplomatically isolated, and so the Americans had to resort to using third parties to deliver their messages to the communist Chinese. Writing in October, 1950, James E. Webb, the Acting Secretary of State, noted that “[u]p to now this Govt's sole channel communication with Chi Commies, except for public statements by officials, has been dubiously reliable intermediary [Kavalam Madhava] Panikkar,”

⁵² Ambassador at Large, memorandum of conversation, 25 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 158.

⁵³ Statement Issued by the President, 27 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 203.

⁵⁴ NSC 73/4 “Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council on the Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Further Moves in the Light of the Korean Situation,” in *FRUS* 1950-I; 383, 388-389.

India's ambassador to the PRC.⁵⁵ The problem was, as another State Department administrator put it, that Panikkar's "political sympathies and biases . . . and his accuracy and objectivity as a reporter are subject to question."⁵⁶

Thus, in early October 1950, when

[t]elegrams received . . . from Panikkar contained statements from [PRC Premier and Foreign Minister] Chou En-lai that Peiping had decided that if UN forces should enter North Korea Peiping must consider such entry as aggression against friendly neighboring state and would meet this aggression with armed force,⁵⁷

the Americans were not certain how trustworthy the intelligence was. The UNC had recently won a series of victories against North Korean force in the ROK and was rapidly driving towards the 38th parallel. However, the UNC's brief was to assist the South Korea in repelling DPRK invasion forces, not to liberate and unify the Korean peninsula, and the Americans were concerned that many of their UN allies would withdraw from the UNC if its land forces crossed the 38th parallel.⁵⁸

Note that the PRC's message referred to ground troops only. American and UN air units had been authorized to conduct strike and reconnaissance missions into North

⁵⁵ Acting Secretary of State, telegram to the Embassy in India, 4 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 875-876.

⁵⁶ Deputy Under Secretary of State, letter to the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Foreign Military Affairs and Assistance, 19 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 981. President Truman shared this opinion, writing in his memoirs that "Mr. Panikkar had in the past played the game of the Chinese communists fairly regularly, so that [he] could not be taken as . . . an impartial observer." Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 362.

⁵⁷ Ambassador in India, telegram to the Secretary of State, 4 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 869-874. The capital of China is today rendered as "Beijing" in Pinyin, but in the late 1940s the exonyms "Peiping" and "Peking" had roughly equal currency. Both were employed regularly in state department documents in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In Pinyin, Chou En-lai is rendered Zhou Enlai.

⁵⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, memorandum, 18 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-8, 602.

Korea since early in the war, and had begun doing so almost immediately.⁵⁹ The Chinese communists had not objected to these operations in principle—although they would file protests about specific incidents with the UN (see Chapter IX). The Soviets, however, introduced a resolution in the UN Security Council condemning the “Inhuman, Barbarous Bombing by the United States Air Force of the Peaceful Population, Towns and Populated Areas in Korea” and “call[ing] upon the Government of the United States of America to cease and not permit in future the bombing . . . of towns and populated areas and also the shooting up from the air of the peaceful population of Korea . . .” in early August.⁶⁰ The Security Council voted upon and rejected the proposal a month later.⁶¹

There were many Americans who were tempted by the “spectacular progress of the United Nations army in Korea” to push into North Korea and eliminate the communist government there.⁶² While communist expansion had been halted at times in the past, opportunities to reverse communist gains were rare. “The recovery of a satellite from Soviet domination,” noted a CIA memorandum, “regardless of its geographic position or political importance, would be a decisive victory for the western

⁵⁹ JCS, telegram to Commander In Chief, Far East, 29 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 240-241; JCS, telegram to Commander In Chief, Far East, 5 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 424.

⁶⁰ Security Council Resolution S/1679 “Proposal Concerning the Inhuman, Barbarous Bombing by the United States Air Force of the Peaceful Population, Towns and Populated Areas in Korea,” 10 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 546-547.

⁶¹ “Reject Red Bid for End of Air Raids in Korea: U. N. Delegates vote 9-1 Against Demand,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 8 September 1950, 3. The Soviets introduced a similar proposal in late September. It, too, failed.

⁶² Tom Connally, statement to Congress, 22 September 1950, printed as “Reviewing American Foreign Policy Since 1945,” in *Department of State Bulletin*, 9 October 1950, 565. Connally, of Texas, was the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign relations at the time.

world.”⁶³ The leaders of the PRC were well aware that the Americans had often expressed their hopes of a unified Korea (most often through the “public statements by officials” to which Webb referred).⁶⁴ As a result, when Americans began talking about how the Korean people should not be condemned to “exist indefinitely as ‘half slave and half free,’ or even one-third slave and two-thirds free,” they began to issue warnings that they would not tolerate the presence of foreign troops anywhere north of the 38th parallel.⁶⁵ They could not, and did not, object to the possibility of South Korean forces alone advancing into North Korea, however.⁶⁶

The Americans tried to reassure “Peiping that [the] US had no hostile designs against Communist China” and that “UN operations constitute no threat whatsoever to Korea’s neighbors.”⁶⁷ But the Chinese communists were convinced that the “basic aim of [the] US . . . is to carry [the] war to Manchuria and China in order [to] return Chiang Kai-shek [leader of the ROC] to power in China.”⁶⁸ Panikkar reported that Premier

⁶³ Central Intelligence Agency, memorandum, 18 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-8, 601.

⁶⁴ For examples, see Warren R. Austin, remarks in UNSC on 10 Aug 1950, printed as “President Malik’s Continued Obstruction Tactics in the Security Council,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 28 August 1950, 326; Philip C. Jessup, radio interview given 27 August 1950, printed as “Ambassador Jessup Answers Questions on Korea,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 4 September 1950, 376.; John C. Ross, remarks before Hadassah, printed as “The Threat of Communist Imperialism,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 4 September 1950, 380.; Warren R Austin, remarks on radio 31 Aug 1950, printed as “Review of Security Council Action in Defense of Korea,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 18 September 1950, 451; “U.N. Commission on Korea Reports to the General Assembly,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 2 October 1950, 540-543.

⁶⁵ Warren R Austin, remarks in UNSC, 10 August 1950; printed as “President Malik’s Continued Obstruction Tactics in the Security Council,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 28 August 1950, 331.

⁶⁶ Ambassador in India, telegram to the Secretary of State, 4 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7 869-874.

⁶⁷ Ambassador in India, telegram to the Secretary of State, 6 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 889; Assistant Secretary of State, telegram to the Embassy in India, 4 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 876.

⁶⁸ Ambassador in Soviet Union, telegram to Secretary of State, 29 September 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 822. Chiang is so associated with the early Cold War era, during which the Wade-Giles system of transcribing Chinese words into English dominated, that he is rarely if ever identified as Jiǎng Jièshí, as his name is rendered in Pinyin, even today.

Chou had said that “since [the] UN seemed to recognize no obligation to China, China had no obligation to [the] UN.”⁶⁹

Despite the warnings from Panikkar (and later others), the Americans greatly desired to carry the fight into North Korea. Yet they did not want to be seen as acting unilaterally. As the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs declared, “[T]his is not a matter for the United States to decide. It is a decision which the United Nations itself must ask. The General Assembly has twice resolved, by votes unanimous but for the Soviet bloc, that Korea should be united and independent. . . .”⁷⁰ Of course, the United States wielded a considerable amount of power and influence in the UN, and on 7 October 1950, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly (47 to 5, with seven abstentions) voted that “[a]ll appropriate steps be taken to ensure conditions of stability throughout Korea [and] for the establishment of a unified, independent, and democratic Government in the sovereign state of Korea.”⁷¹

So confident were the Americans of their ability to get the resolution passed that on 27 September 1950—ten days before the measure came up for vote in the UN—the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized MacArthur “to conduct military operations, including amphibious and airborne landings or ground operations north of the 38th parallel in Korea. . . .”⁷² Three days later (a week before the UN vote), the first UNC troops

⁶⁹ Secretary of State, telegram to the Acting Secretary of State, 28 September 1950, *FRUS* 1950-7, 797.

⁷⁰ Connally, “Reviewing American Foreign Policy,” 565.

⁷¹ Editorial Note, *FRUS* 1950-7, 903; Resolution 376 (V), Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, 7 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 904.

⁷² JCS, draft of directive to CINUNC, attachment to letter from Secretary of Defense to President for latter’s approval, 26 September 1950, available online at

crossed into North Korea, but they were ROK forces, and the Chinese communists did not react, save to continue their warnings that foreign troops should not enter the DPRK.⁷³ However, once the UN General Assembly approved the resolution to unify Korea, MacArthur lost little time in moving his other forces north across the parallel.

Equally quick were the reports that began circulating throughout the world diplomatic community that communist Chinese forces had entered North Korea.⁷⁴ Concerned, President Truman held a conference with MacArthur on Wake Island (in the middle of the Pacific—he did not want to take the general away from his headquarters in Tokyo any longer than necessary) on 15 October. During their meeting he asked MacArthur directly, “What are the chances for Chinese or Soviet interference?” to which the general replied, “Very little. Had they interfered in the first or second months it would have been decisive. We are no longer fearful of their intervention. We no longer stand hat in hand.”⁷⁵ Yet two weeks later, the American Chargé in Korea wired Secretary of State Acheson to report “5 prisoners identified as of Chinese origin have been captured in Eighth Army area and 2 in Tenth Corps area [in Korea].” The captives “asserted that they had crossed from Manchuria on or about October 19. . . .”⁷⁶

http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-09-27&documentid=ki-18-3&pagenumber=1, accessed 36 September 2011.

This document was also included in a telegram from the Acting Secretary of State to the United States Mission at the United Nations, 26 September 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 781.

⁷³ Foreign Ministry of the People’s Republic of China, statement issued 10 October 1950, quoted in *FRUS* 1950-7, 914.

⁷⁴ Ambassador in the Netherlands, telegram to Secretary of State, 13 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 942.

⁷⁵ Harry S Truman and Douglas MacArthur, statements made 15 October 1950, quoted in Omar Bradley, “Substance of Statements made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October 1950,” in *FRUS* 1950-7, 953.

⁷⁶ Chargé in Korea, telegram to Secretary of State Acheson, 29 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1013-1014.

On the first day of November 1950, State Department officials reported that “[t]he presence in North Korea of Chinese Communist forces is now confirmed.”⁷⁷ President Truman directed the JCS to get MacArthur’s view of the situation. His reply was that “[i]t is impossible at this time to authoritatively appraise the actualities of Chinese Communist intervention in Korea. Various possibilities exist based upon the battle intelligence coming in from the front.”⁷⁸ He identified four likely scenarios. The Chinese could be intervening in force, openly; or they could be attempting to assist the DPRK covertly. Alternatively, the PRC could be allowing individual soldiers to come to the aid of the North Koreans voluntarily, or it might simply be taking spontaneous advantage of what appeared to be the weakness of the UNC.⁷⁹ Favoring none of the four, MacArthur directed his land forces to continue northward, and by mid month they were within sight of the Yalu.

But the Chinese were indeed in Korea, soon to be hundreds of thousands strong, and quickly engaged the UNC units in the northern part of the peninsula. The United Nations thus found itself at war with China. Naturally, all of the belligerents expressed an interest in negotiating an end to the situation.⁸⁰ Many uninvolved nations submitted peace proposals.⁸¹ Yet until a settlement could be reached—and given the conflicting objectives and stubborn ideologies of the various combatants, it was unlikely that an

⁷⁷ Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 1 November, 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1023.

⁷⁸ Douglas MacArthur, telegram to the JCS, 4 November 1950, quoted in Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 346; also http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-22-13.pdf#zoom=100, accessed 1 February 2012.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ United States Representative at the United Nations, telegram to the Secretary of State, 6 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1429.

⁸¹ *FRUS* 1950-7, 1497 note 2; United States Representative at the United Nations, telegram to the Secretary of State, 10 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1499-1503.

accord could be arranged quickly—the United Nations would have to continue fighting. It thus had to decide what to do about the PRC. Its main choices seemed to be expanding the conflict to include operations against the PRC itself, fighting only those Chinese forces that had entered Korea, being driven back (or retreating) to the 38th parallel, or being forced (or withdrawing) from the Korean peninsula entirely.⁸² The last two would have serious consequences for the UN's credibility.⁸³ The first could easily become unmanageable and would require resources unavailable to the members of the UNC, including the United States.⁸⁴ A full-scale war with China would tie up assets that might be needed elsewhere. "In a war with Communist China we must not lose sight of the fact that the USSR is our principal enemy," the JCS noted in December 1950.⁸⁵

The third choice, "driving the Communist forces [both PRC and DPRK] out of Korea," was not an entirely new idea but a continuation of existing policy.⁸⁶ The UN had expressed its desire for a free and unified Korea, but "due to Chinese Communist unlawful intervention in Korea in defiance of the UN it has been necessary to stop short of a full achievement of UN objectives in Korea. . . ."⁸⁷ Yet the various UN resolutions

⁸² "U. S. Courses of Action with Respect to Korea," memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council to the National Security Council Senior Staff, 17 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1177.

⁸³ Hanson W. Baldwin, "Strategy of Commitment: Limited War in Korea Held Necessary to Preserve Might for Decisive Areas," *The New York Times*, 24 July 1950, 4.

⁸⁴ JCS 1924/28 "The Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Future Soviet Moves in Light of the Korean Situation," 23 August 1950, 521-52, in *Records of the JCS/46-53/FE*, reel 3, microfilm.

⁸⁵ JCS-2118/4 "Possible U. S. Action in Event of Open Hostilities between United States and China," 27 December 1950, 35, in *Records of the JCS/46-53/FE*, reel 2, microfilm.

⁸⁶ "U. S. Courses of Action with Respect to Korea," memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council to the National Security Council Senior Staff, 17 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1177.

⁸⁷ Acting Officer in Charge of Korean Affairs, memorandum to Deputy Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, 28 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1240.

authorizing and justifying the conflict still remained active. The DPRK had committed an act of aggression against the ROK, to which the UN was reacting; the presence of the Chinese could be and was considered an extension of that aggression (contemporary headlines read “U.N. May Not Brand China as Aggressor: Desire to Avoid General Conflagration”).⁸⁸ Thus the UN could legitimately continue fighting in Korea—but only in Korea.

The restriction of UNC operations to the Korean peninsula was not due to the Chinese intervention. The Americans and UN had adopted this policy as soon as they became involved in the conflict. As has been noted, the Americans and their allies in United Nations had been concerned about possible Soviet or Chinese involvement in the Korean conflict from the time they had entered the war. Consequently, many if not most of the decisions they had made during the early months of the conflict were informed by their desire to contain the fighting within the Korean peninsula and prevent it from escalating into a larger conflict, perhaps even World War Three. Speaking a few months after the Chinese intervention, Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk articulated the rationale for this policy by saying, “What [the United States is] trying to do is maintain peace and security without a general war. . . . [W]e are trying to prevent a general conflagration which would consume the very things we are now trying to defend.”⁸⁹

One way that the Americans and UN attempted to keep the war from escalating was by ensuring that the Chinese Civil War did not flare up again. Although the

⁸⁸ Alistair Cooke, “U.N. May Not Brand China As Aggressor: Desire to Avoid General Conflagration,” *The Times of India*, 10 November 1950, 4.

⁸⁹ Dean Rusk, televised remarks made 15 April 1951, printed as “The Choices Confronting Us in Korea,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 23 April 1951, 654.

Republic of China offered 33,000 men to the United Nations, the Americans politely turned down the tender, citing “the threat of invasion of Taiwan by Communist forces from the mainland. . . .”⁹⁰ Of course, the Americans were also concerned that “the employment of Chinese Nationalist forces in Korea would almost certainly lead to full involvement in hostilities with the Chinese Communists.”⁹¹ Even though the Red Chinese did eventually enter the war (but not because the Nationalists were involved), the Americans still did not “unleash Chiang Kai-shek,” as many Americans then wanted to do. The Truman administration realized that the USA’s allies would be unlikely to accept the inclusion of ROC forces in the UNC. “[T]he employment of Chinese Nationalist troops would give impetus to or at least provide the pretext for increased militancy on the part of Communist China [which] would increase the danger of a general war with China, which in turn might develop into a global war.”⁹² The possibility of a third world war made the leaders of many nations, particularly those in Europe, uneasy. As a result, acceptance of the ROC’s offer was “deferred” for the duration of the conflict.⁹³ The Americans also feared that certain neutral nations, most

⁹⁰ Chinese Embassy, aide-mémoire to the US Department of State, annex to memorandum of conversation by the Acting Deputy Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, 30 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 261-262; Secretary of State, aide-mémoire to Chinese Ambassador, 1 July 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 276-277.

⁹¹ Ambassador at Large, précis of remarks, memorandum of conversation, 21 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1207. In response to this observation from Ambassador Phillip C. Jessup, Dean Rusk noted that it was possible that the British might refuse to fight with ROC troops against mainland China (the UK was in an odd position, having recognized the PRC without reciprocation) and “suggested that 10,000 British troops were of more value than 30,000 Chinese in Korea.” Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, précis of remarks, memorandum of conversation, 21 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1207.

⁹² NIE-12 “Consequences of the Early Employment of Chinese Nationalist Forces in Korea,” memorandum by the Central Intelligence Agency, 27 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1607.

⁹³ “Analysis of Possible Courses of Action in Korea,” enclosure within NSC-147 “Analysis of Possible Courses of Action in Korea,” 2 April 1953, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-15 part 1, 853.

of which were in Asia, might interpret the inclusion of ROC forces in the UNC as an American attempt to overthrow the PRC, thereby destabilizing the region.⁹⁴

Others ways by which the Americans endeavored to prevent the Korean War from escalating included the decision not to use certain weapons during the conflict and the imposition of sanctions against American military and civilian officials whose public statements might prove inflammatory and provoke a military reaction from either the USSR or the PRC, policies which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters VI and VII. The primary means, however, by which the Americans let their concern that the war could expand affect their behavior was to refrain from taking certain actions during the Korean War that were well within their capability to do (and had indeed done during World War Two and planned to do in a war against the Soviet Union).⁹⁵

These self-imposed restrictions took several forms. The most common was the prohibition of American and allied forces from venturing into areas deemed sensitive. A related order placed certain targets off limits (many of which were already protected by their location in proscribed zones). Both of these policies informed an order given to General MacArthur (in his capacity as Commander in Chief, Far East—CINCFE—as the UNC had not yet been formed) on 29 June 1950:

⁹⁴ “Political Annex to NSC 147 prepared by the Policy Planning Staff, 4 June 1953, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-15 part 1, 1144.

⁹⁵ In the introduction it was asserted that “limited warfare as it is understood and practiced today is a product of the air age“ because aircraft have the mobility to reach any place on earth, meaning that a decision to place certain potential targets off limits is a decision to limit war.

It might be argued that there is one element of modern limited war that is not a function of air power: the decision to ally or not ally with certain states for fear of expanding a war or breaking up a coalition. The two best examples of this phenomenon would be the American decision to decline an offer of Nationalist Chinese troops during the Korean War and the American effort to prevent Israel from responding to Scud missile attacks from Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War.

You will employ naval and air forces available to the Far East Command to provide fullest possible support to South Korean forces by attack on military targets so as to permit those forces to clear South Korea of North Korean forces. . . . You are authorized to extend your operations into Northern Korea against air bases, depots, tank farms, troop columns and other such purely military targets. . . . Special care will be taken to insure that operations in North Korea stay well clear of the frontiers of Manchuria [China] or the Soviet Union.⁹⁶

Similar instructions were given to the UNC both before and after the Chinese intervention.⁹⁷ For example, in May 1951, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the following directive:

As CINUNC you will . . . inflict the maximum personnel and matériel losses on the forces of North Korea and Communist China operating within the geographic boundaries of Korea and waters adjacent thereto, in order to . . . terminate hostilities [and] establish the authority of the ROK over all Korea

as far north of the 38th parallel as could be efficiently defended and administered.⁹⁸

Although the JCS had to approve any general advance north of the Hwachon reservoir area (in central Korea), the UN commander was given “authority to conduct guerrilla operations and limited amphib[ious] and airborne operations in enemy rear areas.”⁹⁹

The combined effect of all of these various restrictions was to cause the Korean War to become a “limited war.” Today, of course, the conflict is described as having been one such from its onset, and there were some contemporary observers who did

⁹⁶ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 29 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 241.

⁹⁷ Joint Strategy Planning Committee, draft message to CINCFE, enclosure to “Instructions to General MacArthur Concerning Situation in Korea and Formosa, 7 July 1950, 3, in *Records of the JCS/46-52/FE*, reel 9, microfilm; Acting Secretary of State, telegram to the United States Mission at the United Nations, 28 September 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 781; JCS 1776/185 “Action Regarding Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea,” 16 January 1951, 880-881, in *Records of the JCS/46-52/FE*, reel 9, microfilm; JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 31 May 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 487-493.

⁹⁸ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 31 May 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 489.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

indeed apply the term to the Korean conflict during the period between the initial invasion of South Korea and the Chinese intervention. However, most of those using the expression were journalists and political commentators.¹⁰⁰ One of the few government officials to use the term in a public forum in the early days of the war was a naval officer, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, who while testifying before the House Committee on Appropriations observed that

the history of so-called limited wars is that they tend to be unlimited, primarily because one contestant finds that it is not achieving its objective in the limited area, and therefore strikes elsewhere where it can be more effective. Then the other contestant resorts to the same process and what started out as a limited war then becomes an unlimited war, with the

¹⁰⁰ “‘Show’ of Force is Not Enough, Observers Say,” *The Boston Globe*, 3 July 1950, 1; “Hopes Dashed for Speedy End to War: Mere Show of Force Not Enough to Halt Communist Invaders,” *The Hartford Courant*, 3 July 1950, 1; “We Are in a War,” *The Hartford Courant*, 12 July 1950, 10; James Reston, “Now U. S. Must Anticipate Many ‘Little’ Wars: New Pattern of Limited Actions may Replace Big ‘Germanic-Type’ War,” *The New York Times*, 23 July 1950, E3; James Reston, “Korean War Warns of World Sabotage: Attack Now May Alert U.S. to Need for Defense of Perimeter Areas,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 23 July 1950, 27; “10½ Billion for Arms,” *The Washington Post*, 26 July 1950, 10; Marquis Childs, “Democrats Under Fire: Politics Over Korea,” *The Washington Post*, 18 August 1950, 18.

The above selections are a representative sample of the eighty-four works discovered by searching the Proquest commercial database of American and world newspapers for articles using the term “limited war” (as a unit) published between 25 June and 31 December 1950. Of these, only twenty-eight were published before December—thirteen in July, five in August, nine in September, one in October, and none in November. That the number of articles using the expression published in the first month after the Chinese intervention is *twice* the number appearing during the previous five months combined indicates that the Korean War was not generally considered a “limited war” until after the PRC entered the conflict (search conducted 16 October 2011).

Equally telling, only one of the twenty-eight articles published before December cite an official source using the term. The exception is not actually a feature story or an editorial, but a transcript of the UN Security Council Meeting of 22 August 1950, in which the representative of the UK wonders why “it is not possible for us . . . to do anything effective in the way of ending this terrible, if, happily, still limited, war.” Gladwyn Jebb, quoted in “Verbatim Record of Proceedings in United Nations Security Council Meeting,” *The New York Times*, 23 August 1950.

In most of the other works located during the search, the expression is part of the article’s text (so it is the reporter’s or editor’s choice of words), although a handful of pieces quote private citizens (mostly businessmen discussing the impact of the war on trade) describing Korea as a “limited war.” “War Clause Ready on Textile Sales: Association Here Would Make Deliveries Dependent on Needs of Government,” *The New York Times*, 7 August 1950, 34.

Note that some of the stories found were duplicates of others, as newspapers often printed stories supplied by the various wire services without editing, or opinion pieces by syndicated columnists. The two articles dated 3 July 1950 cited above are examples of the former; the two works by Reston are an example of the latter.

primary theater in an area which has been influenced by global considerations.¹⁰¹

Most other American and UN officials did not start using the expression “limited war” with any regularity until mid-November 1950, and then with specific reference to fighting the PRC, not the DPRK.¹⁰² Thus it may be said that before the Chinese intervened, the war in Korea was limited; but after the PRC entered the conflict it became a Limited War.

¹⁰¹ Forrest P. Sherman, testimony, Mutual Defense Assistance Hearings, 121. The admiral was responding to Congressman George H. Mahon of Texas, who had just observed that he could not believe that “if World War III comes it will be fought in a place like Korea,” and asked the admiral to comment.

¹⁰² A search of an online edition of the *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* series, a record of the private and often secret correspondence of diplomats and other American officials, reveals that the term “limited war” rarely appears in American government communications and papers before December, 1950. The only use of the phrase in reference to the Korea Conflict prior to the PRC entering the war was in a telegram from the American Chargé in Athens recommending that Greece and Turkey be admitted to the UN “as [a] deterrent [to the] outbreak [in] this area [of] any limited war on [the] Korean model.” Chargé in Greece, telegram to the Secretary of State, 24 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-3, 240.

Searching the electronic edition of the *Department of State Bulletin*, a record of American diplomats’ public statements and documents, reveals *no* uses of the term “limited war” from July until December, 1950. Expanding the search to include all variants of the word “limit” (limited, limiting, limitations, delimit, unlimited, &c) reveals very few uses of the term in the context of either warfare or Korea. One of the few examples is a statement by the American Ambassador to the UN before the Security Council on 8 August 1950, protesting the efforts of the president of the Council, Jacob A. Malik of the USSR, to obstruct the Council’s efforts to resolve the Korean situation. “All of this maneuverings [*sic*], cunning, and device . . . does not tend toward limiting the area of combat.” Warren R. Austin, remarks before the UN Security Council on 8 August 1950, quoted in “Protest Against President Malik’s Obstruction of Procedure,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 21 August 1950, 285. Another is a report General MacArthur made in early November to inform his superiors in the UN and USA that the Chinese had entered the conflict. “Our present mission is limited to the destruction of those forces now arrayed against us in North Korea, with a view to achieving the United Nations’ objective to bring peace and unity to the Korean nation and people.” Douglas MacArthur, UN communiqué, 6 November 1950; published as “Alien Communist Troops Enter North Korean Battle,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 13 November 1950, 763. Note that neither of these statements, however, expressly associates the Korean War with the concept of “limited war.”

The Theory and Practice of Limited War before 1950

The definition of “limited war,” in the context of the Korean War, was difficult to ascertain. *The Washington Post* called it “a new phenomenon,” but the idea, if not the name, can be traced back several centuries.¹⁰³ Historians refer to the period between the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and the French Revolution in 1789 as “the age of limited warfare” in Europe.¹⁰⁴ The conflicts of the era, the so-called *Kabinettskriege*, or “closet wars,” were small in scale if not in scope.¹⁰⁵ Anglo-French writer and historian Hilaire Belloc noted that

the warfare of the century preceding the [French] Revolution . . . attempted limited things in a limited manner; it did not attempt any fundamental change in society; it was not overtly—since the Thirty Years’ War at least—a struggle of ideas; it was conducted on behalf of known and limited interests for known and highly limited objects. . . .¹⁰⁶

Additionally, this style of warfare relied upon professional armies “artificial and separate from the general life of nations,” thus distinguishing it from total war, in which the army, the people, and the state were one and the same.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ “10 ½ Billion for Arms,” *The Washington Post*, 26 July 1950, 10.

¹⁰⁴ Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 18; John U. Nef, *War and Human Progress* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1950), 414.

¹⁰⁵ Goerg Ortenberg, *Waffen der Kabinettskriege: 1650-1792* (Augsburg: Bechtermünz, 2002); Siegfried Fiedler, *Taktik und Strategie der Kabinettskriege 1650-1792* (Augsburg: Bechtermünz, 2002). Although the word “cabinet” is often used to connote smallness (as in “cabinet edition,” “cabinet piano,” and “cabinet photograph”), in this case it does not. It literally refers to the advisors of a king. Of course, this particular meaning of the word “cabinet” derives from the small room (cabin) in which such advisors met. Cabinet wars were “wars between princes,” as opposed to “wars between nations” (*Volkskrieg*), the style of war associated with the *levées en masse* of the nineteenth century. “A Cabinet War is one that can be decided by a king’s advisers and with which the general public is not concerned. War can thus remain limited since popular passions are not riled up. . . . It is usually contrasted with the phrase ‘Wars of Public Opinion.’” Jeff Crean, personal communication (e-mail), 20 October 2011.

¹⁰⁶ Hilaire Belloc, *The French Revolution* (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 153.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Limited war continued after the French Revolution, and in the years that followed, several of the most influential theorists of warfare published their thoughts on the subject. The most notable of these were two nineteenth-century professional soldiers, Carl von Clausewitz of Germany and Alphonse-Henri Jomini of France, and a twentieth century naval historian, Julian Corbett of Great Britain. All three, however, formulated their ideas in the period before World Wars One and Two, both total wars. As described in previous chapters, most Americans believed World War Three would be one such as well. Total warfare dominated military thinking in the mid-twentieth century. Thus any earlier theories of limited warfare seemed to have had no practical application in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰⁸ The idea that the use of military force could or should be limited was of no apparent relevance after 1945. As a result, references to limited war are relatively scarce in English-language books, newspapers, and magazines published between VJ-Day and the beginning of the Korean War, which is why the idea

¹⁰⁸ The concept was not completely dismissed, but the few authorities who addressed limited conflict in the interwar period had a distinct post-Great War perspective on the matter. During the 1918 negotiations leading to the creation of the League of Nations, Edward M. House, advisor and confidant to President Woodrow Wilson, recognized that the second of Wilson's Fourteen Points, guaranteeing freedom of navigation "except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants," was adequate for times of peace and for general warfare, but did not account for a "limited war involving no breach of international covenants. . . ." It was possible that "a war between a limited number of nations [might involve] no issue in which the League of Nations cares to take sides." Thus, to House, a limited war was one "in which the League of Nations remains neutral." Address of the President of the United States delivered at a Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress, 8 July 1918, in *FRUS 1918-Supplement I*, 15; Special Representative to the Armistice Negotiations in Paris, telegram to the Secretary of State, 29 October 1918, in *FRUS 1918-Supplement I*, 406.

Hoffman Nickerson, the author of 1933's *Can We Limit War?*, was a staff officer in the American Expeditionary Forces during World War One and afterwards served on the Permanent International Armistice Commission. He was opposed to the idea of the mass armies of the democratic era, and thought that warfare could be limited by the return of professional fighting forces. However, he also acknowledged that the most likely form limited war would take in the future would be the knock-out blow delivered by aircraft and tanks, limited-duration wars becoming necessary because modern industrial-era warfare had become so terrible and so expensive. Hoffman Nickerson, *Can We Limit War?* (New York: Kennikat, 1961 [1933]), 289-291; G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, untitled review of *Can We Limit War?*, *International Affairs*, January-February 1934, 105-106; Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America 1815-1945* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994), 164-165.

of fighting a limited war in Korea seemed so novel and strange to Americans and others.¹⁰⁹

Most of the handful of articles and editorials about limited war published during the early Cold War appeared in the spring of 1948, when the recently-accomplished

¹⁰⁹ This statement requires a note about the methodology employed that led to such a conclusion.

Searching the Proquest newspaper database for all items (not just feature articles and editorials but adverts, letters, reviews, and other material) using the term “limited war” as a unit published between 2 September 1945 and 25 June 1950 resulted in only forty-three “hits.” After eliminating irrelevant material, such as references to businesses such as “Gartons Limited, Warrington, Lancashire” and works using the phrase as a compound adjective, as in “limited war period,” “limited war powers,” or “limited war damage,” less than twenty of the pieces identified in the search refer to a type of warfare.

A search of the Google News Archive, part of the Google News service, produces a handful of newspaper references to limited war published between 1945 and 1950 that do not appear in the Proquest database, further evidence that the subject of limited warfare was of little concern in the post-World War Two era.

Searching the print edition of the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* reveals that “Limited War” did not appear as a subject heading until the 1957 edition, and appeared only intermittently in subsequent volumes—and in all editions in which the term is listed, researchers seeking information on the topic were instructed to “see War.” Prior to 1957, articles about limited war were found under the heading “Military art and science.” Of course, the *Readers' Guide* does not include article abstracts or summaries but lists only titles. The issues published between 1945 and 1950 identify so few works with the phrase “limited war” in their names that, given a reasonably well-stocked library, a researcher can locate and read them all in a single evening.

The online version of the *Readers' Guide* does not recognize “Limited War” as a subject heading but does allow for keyword searches, something not possible in the print edition. A search for “limited war” (as a unit) on this database produces only four “hits” between 1945 and 1950. Using the two words separately as search terms doubles the number of articles found, but because computers are much less discriminating than humans, these include such items as a piece about the struggle of the General Cigar Company Limited with the United States War Food Administration in 1945.

The Worldcat electronic database (a union catalogue listing the holdings of the 27,000-plus members of a worldwide library cooperative) utilizes the Library of Congress subject heading system, which includes “limited war” as a specific topic. It identifies some 832 items about limited war. Of these, just over seven hundred are books. Although the Worldcat system is designed to allow sorting by date, or to limit searches to works published during particular time periods, human errors in cataloguing impair the reliability of such searches. Repeated attempts to identify books about limited war published between 1945 and 1955 produced no results. Joel Kitchens; personal communication (consultation); 26 October 2011).

Using the Google Ngram Viewer (a tool for analyzing the contents of the millions of books and other publications that have been scanned and digitized as part of the Google Books project) to search for the term “limited war” in works published between 1901 and 2000 (a search restricted to the years between 1945 and 1950 produced too small a sample, resulting in distracting statistical artifacts) reveals that interest in limited wars was relatively minor in the late 1940s but greatly increased in the late 1950s and early 1960s, no doubt as a result of the recent Korean and incipient Vietnam experiences. Yet a comparison of how often the terms “limited war” and “total war” were used during the twentieth century shows that the latter is far more common than the former (“Google Books Ngram Viewer, <http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?>, accessed 22 October 2011).

Czechoslovakian *coup d'etat* and building Berlin crisis stimulated Americans to think about war with the USSR and possible alternatives to total conflicts. Some writers held that limited wars were no longer feasible. Columnist Raymond Moley derided the idea of a “token war” promoted by “pen-pushing strategists [who] are deluding the public with the idea that a war with Soviet Russia can be fought by token armies under Marquis of Queensbury rules.”¹¹⁰ American poet Richard Armour was more temperate in his dismissal of the idea, composing a short piece of doggerel called “Lukewarm War”:

Let the next war be fought smartly;
Not all-out, only partly,
.....
Let there be stern directive
On the limited objective
.....
Of this teensy little,
Weensy little,
Homey little war.

Armour, like Sherman, knew that limited wars often escalated.

(But, though such a war's the right one,
It takes two, you know, to fight one,
So be sure our foe is knowing
The details of the foregoing,
Or it won't be such a cozy,
Such a rosy,
Little war!)

The poem is introduced with the epigraph “Analyst Considers Desirability of a ‘Limited’ War,” attributed to a “Newspaper Headline.”¹¹¹

Armour and Moley were obviously responding to one or more other writers but, unfortunately, did not identify them. The most likely candidate appears to be columnist

¹¹⁰ Raymond Moley, “Limited War Talk,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 2 April 1948, A4.

¹¹¹ Richard Armour, “Lukewarm War,” *The New York Times*, 2 May 1948, 193.

Walter Lippmann, who in early 1948 wrote a number of pieces in which he observed that total war may not always serve American interests. A commitment to unlimited objectives is a “mistake,” he averred, “which can be fatal to the strongest nation. . . . [T]he completest [*sic*] military victory would still leave peace unattainable.”¹¹²

Lippmann argued that the United States must strive to achieve “a concrete, and therefore limited but decisive objective.”¹¹³ The citizens of this country were too idealistic, he charged, preferring to fight a crusade against totalitarianism rather than reaching a “settlement which rests on a balance of power and the existence of spheres of special influence.”¹¹⁴ This rejection of Great Power-style *realpolitik* was one of the legacies of progressivism. “[T]he American people are particularly susceptible to the dangerous, perhaps fatally dangerous, heresy of total war for total ends. . . .”¹¹⁵

Yet it is possible that Armour and Moley were responding to another writer.¹¹⁶

In all of his columns condemning unlimited warfare, Lippmann used the expression “limited war” in only one, which appeared on 29 March 1948 in most newspapers. In it he wrote, “The experience of history shows, I think, that Russia has often been defeated

¹¹² Walter Lippman, “Today and Tomorrow: Power with Wisdom,” *The Washington Post*, 25 March 1948, 15.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹⁴ Walter Lippman, “Today and Tomorrow: In Self-Protection,” *The Hartford Courant*, 29 March 1948, 8.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Another possibility is Mark Sullivan, a columnist for the *New York Herald-Tribune*. Moley referred to a “commentator . . . now talking about a token war with Russia . . .” but does not name him. He does, however, mention that this particular writer had once stated that the United States and Germany could never fight one another directly, as one was a whale and the other an elephant (a sea power and a land power). Sullivan had written an editorial using this analogy in 1941, although the whale represented the UK, not the USA—but he concluded, “In this lies a lesson for the United States today.” Mark Sullivan, “Fable in Fact: Britain’s Whale vs. Germany’s Elephant,” *The Washington Post*, 25 April 1941, 13. However, a review of all of Sullivan’s columns published in February and March 1948, the period before Moley’s and Armour’s response pieces, reveals none addressing the topic of limited war.

A search of newspapers from early 1948 for other editorial writers referring to “limited war,” “token war,” or “white war” (an interwar term, albeit one used rarely even then) proved futile.

in limited wars for limited objectives but those who, like Napoleon and Hitler, wage total wars against the Russians are disastrously defeated.”¹¹⁷ He added that the changes in weaponry since the nineteenth century did not matter. “The Russian empire is a far more powerful military state than it has ever been before. It is better organized and disciplined to wage total war and to resist it.”¹¹⁸

The idea that modern weapons were so powerful that a general war would be a worldwide catastrophe was a common theme. “[T]oday the assumption is commonly made that the next war must be a Total war, fought to the death,” wrote a concerned citizen (albeit one of some repute, apparently) to the editors of *The New York Times*. “War can still be fought in a limited way (e.g., without every kind of indiscriminate attack on civilian populations) for limited objectives.”¹¹⁹

Significantly, most of the newspaper and magazine articles referring to limited war written in the late 1940s, both in favor of and against the concept, were the expressions of individual opinions, as demonstrated by the examples above. One of the few examples of “straight” news reporting addressing the subject was an item in *U.S. News & World Report* that noted that

[a]ny war within the next few years involving either Russia or the United States may take one of two forms. Limited war is one possibility. In that case, it could involve fighting, for example, between Italy and Yugoslavia, with both U.S. and Russia taking indirect roles. Or it could start as a civil war in Italy. . . .¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Walter Lippman, “In Self-Protection,” *The Hartford Courant*, 29 March 1948, 8.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Harry W. Jaffa, “The Current Crisis: Firm Stand Advocated, Risk of Limited War Discussed” (letter to editor), *The New York Times*, 19 September 1948, E8. Accompanying this letter was a note by the editors observing that Jaffa was an economist, “formerly with various United States agencies,” and currently at Queens College.

¹²⁰ “Strategy for ‘World War III,’” *US News & World Report*, 9 April 1948, 11.

This particular article was one of the group that had so vexed Soviet Foreign Minister Vishinsky (see Chapter II).

The Berlin Crisis ended in the summer of 1949, after the celebrated airlift had demonstrated the western allies' willingness to confront the Soviets without, they had hoped, resort to open conflict. Having had time to consider the state of Soviet-American relations and the implications of open conflict between the two superpowers, various authorities on war and peace ventured their views on the subject of limited war shortly thereafter. Lord John Boyd Orr of Scotland, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize earlier in the year, proclaimed "No religious or moral principle will prevent the use of any weapon in war. . . . The only restraint is the fear of reprisals. . . . A limited war is an impossibility."¹²¹ Soldier and military theorist B. H. Liddell-Hart agreed that "[t]he homes of all people are glass houses now that it has come to a matter of throwing atomic bombs," but argued that limited war was not only possible but compulsory. Like Clausewitz, Liddell-Hart argued that wars are fought for political purposes, and thus the style of fighting should be appropriate to the objective.¹²² "[T]he best chance may lie in trying to revive a code of limiting rules of warfare—based on a realistic view that wars are likely to occur again, and that the limitation of their destructiveness is to everybody's interest," he wrote. Responding to recent calls for increased efforts to prevent wars from starting, such as Hanson W. Baldwin's "What Kind of War?" published earlier in the year, Liddell-Hart argued that

¹²¹ John Boyd Orr, quoted in "Dangers to Peace: Easier to Outlaw War than Atomic Bomb," *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 December 1949, 10.

¹²² B. H. Liddell-Hart, *Revolution in Warfare*, ix.

[w]hile recent experience has shown the insecurity of international plans for the prevention of war, earlier experience shows that it is possible to develop an international habit of observing limitations, from a shrewd realization that mutual restraint is beneficial in the long run.¹²³

Citing examples of successfully limited wars from history, he observed, “Past efforts in this direction have had more success than is generally appreciated.”¹²⁴

Yet while the concept of limited war was not unknown before 1950, it was not a particularly familiar one. Thus when the Korean War, an actual and not a theoretical limited conflict, began, public reaction to its novel and unfamiliar nature is best described as uncertain. One of the few journalists to apply the term to the Korean Conflict before the Chinese intervened wrote, “The conflict in Korea is the kind of limited war that the American public finds it difficult to rationalize or even understand.” He added that citizens had begun seeking comfort and guidance from their leaders. “The evidence is growing, particularly as reflected in letters to congressmen, that the Korean War has produced great confusion and difficulty.”¹²⁵

Once the Chinese intervened in Korea and American and UN officials began referring publicly to the Korean War as a limited war, discussions of the topic became more common in public fora such as newspapers. Yet the concept was still not easily

¹²³ Hanson W. Baldwin, “What Kind of War?,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1949, 22. In this essay, Baldwin observed that “the kind of war we fight should depend upon the objectives of the war—the kind of peace we want.” Americans do not always look past their current war to the peace to follow. A total war would result in total destruction. “If we fight a war with victory as the only objective; if we fight a war without first spelling out the political aims of the conflict, we can lose the peace again—as we have done twice in the last thirty years.” Better to avoid war altogether, he argued. The Cold War could be managed without resort to combat. “[I]f we win the political, economic, and psychological war already joined, there need be no shooting war” he concluded.

The rebuttal was Liddell-Hart, *The Revolution in Warfare*, 114.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Marquis Childs, “Democrats Under Fire: Politics Over Korea,” *The Washington Post*, 18 August 1950, 18.

accepted. An editorial in *The Hartford Courant* proclaimed that limited war was “a contradiction in terms.”¹²⁶ “Uncle Dudley” of *The Boston Globe* observed

A great deal of confusion . . . arises from the fact that we are fighting a limited war. This is something unfamiliar to us. . . . [W]e have little experience with a limited war in the European sense—a war that could easily precipitate a general conflict. Certainly we have no experience with the type of war that might easily spread into a world atomic conflict.¹²⁷

The nature of limited war baffled even some of the officials to whom Americans looked for confident leadership. A Senate committee investigating the conduct of the Korean War in the spring and summer of 1951 concluded that “[l]imited war is impossible to define. . . . This is a new concept in warfare.”¹²⁸

Proxy War

It was not, of course, but the Korean War exhibited features never before seen in any previous limited war. One was that it involved a power not taking a direct role in the conflict. The United Nations was at war with the DPRK and PRC, but the Americans knew they were just puppets. In a meeting with American diplomatic personnel, “Secretary Acheson said the great trouble is that we are fighting the wrong nation. We are fighting the second team, whereas the real enemy is the Soviet

¹²⁶ “Failure in Washington,” *The Hartford Courant*, 9 December 1950, 8.

¹²⁷ “Uncle Dudley,” Issue of MacArthur,” *The Boston Globe*, 7 April 1951, 10.

¹²⁸ *Military Situation in the Far East: Hearings to Conduct an Inquiry in the Military Situation in the Far East and the Facts Surrounding the Relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur from his Assignments in this Area, before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 82nd Congress, 1951.* Hereafter referred to as “MacArthur Hearings.”

Union.”¹²⁹ Thus, in addition to being a limited war, the Korean Conflict was also a “proxy war.”

The idea that nations, states, and other powers could employ third parties to achieve their political and military aims without directly involving themselves in an armed conflict against their primary foe was, like limited war, not an entirely new concept. The Beaver Wars (mid-seventeenth century), the Border War (in “Bleeding Kansas,” 1854-1861), the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and the Chinese Civil War (1927-1950) are often cited as examples of proxy wars. However, the term has been applied to these conflicts retroactively. It was not in common usage at the time of the Korean War (although it appeared in a document prepared by the Pentagon’s Joint Intelligence Committee in the summer of 1950, which noted that “[t]he Soviets have the capability of conducting a war by ‘proxy’ in the Far East and most of Southeast Asia, utilizing Chinese Communist and other indigenous communist forces”).¹³⁰ Indeed, “proxy war” was such a novelty even after Korea that a prestigious American speech and language journal included it in an article listing noteworthy new words in 1958—a catalogue that included “Sputnik.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ Secretary of State, précis of remarks, memorandum of conversation by the Ambassador at Large, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1326.

¹³⁰ JIC 530/3, 23 August 1950, 11, in *Records of the JCS/46-53/SU*, Reel 3, microfilm.

¹³¹ I. Willis Russell and Woodrow W. Boyett, “Among the New Words,” *American Speech* 33 (2) (May 1958), 125-199. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), however, cites several instances of the use of “proxy war” prior to 1957, but gives two different definitions for the term. It was originally applied to a struggle for control of a public company by agents representing individual stockholders by proxy (a shortened form of “procuracy”). This definition dates back to 1907. Such conflicts are also called “proxy fights” (the first appearance of which was 1906). Both terms are still used today.

The *OED* identifies the first appearance of the term to denote an armed conflict in which any of the belligerents act not just for themselves but for a sponsor as a 1918 article in *The Washington Post* about the belated American entry into World War One after several years of aiding the UK. Searches using the Proquest Historical Newspaper database and the electronic version of the *FRUS* series indicate

By that time, the Soviets had instigated enough proxy wars that the Americans were able to recognize their pattern and give a name to the phenomenon. But when the Korean War began in 1950 the only examples of Soviet-sponsored aggression had been internal rebellions such as the Greek Civil War, the Malayan Emergency, and the Chinese Civil War and internal conflicts (sometimes bloodless) leading to the establishment of communist governments in Eastern Europe. What set the Korean War apart was that it appeared to be both an internecine war and a conflict between two sovereign nations. While some foreign diplomats “took the general line that this [war] was a fight between Koreans,” the Americans, even though they had never “admitted the division of Korea into two separate states,” usually referred to the conflict as the “invasion” of South Korea or an “unprovoked assault,” words rarely applied to civil conflicts.¹³² Accordingly, the North Koreans were described as “aggressors” and the DPRK as a “small Soviet satellite state . . . engage[d] in a military adventure.”¹³³ The Americans needed to generate sympathy for the ROK to gather support for international intervention. “Whose troops are attacking deep in somebody else’s territory?” asked the American representative to the UN. “The North Koreans. Whose territory is

that the term was rarely used in this second sense until a decade after the Korean War had ended. One of the few examples from an earlier time is a *New York Times* editorial from 1952. “The Vishinsky Plan,” *The New York Times*, 8 January 1952, 26. Another is President Truman’s description of the Korean War as a “war by proxy” during his 1951 state of the union address. *The State of the Union: Address of the President of the United States delivered before a Joint Session of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the Subject of the State of the Union*; 8 January 1951; 82nd Congress, House of Representatives Document No. 1, 2.

¹³² Advisor on Security Council Affairs, United States Mission at the United Nations, memorandum of conversation, 25 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 145; Department of State, memorandum to the British Embassy, 2 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 517; North Korean Forces Invade South Korea,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 3 July 1950, 3; Harry S Truman, statement to the press 27 June 1950, printed as “U. S. Air and Sea Forces Ordered into Supporting Action,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 3 July 1950, 5; Secretary of State, telegram to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, 25 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 148.

¹³³ “Korea (Preliminary Version):” in *FRUS* 1950-7, 154.

overrun by an invading army? That of the Republic of Korea.”¹³⁴ Yet the State Department admitted that “it is difficult to fit the Korean Conflict into traditional concepts of either civil or international war.”¹³⁵ Little wonder, then, that the American people were so uncertain about the nature of the conflict in which they had become involved in Korea.

But the Korean War was more than confusing; it was frustrating. It was not the war for which the Americans had been preparing since the end of World War Two. They had been expecting to fight a total war against a superpower on the other side of the planet. Instead they got a limited war against a Soviet proxy, a type of conflict compelling them to deny themselves the full power of their arms. They had never before fought a war under such conditions, as the Senate committee assessing the management of the war noted in its final report:

Some historical examples of limited war were cited [by witnesses during the committee’s hearings] but it turned out that in each case the limitation was imposed by the inability of the commander to bring maximum power to bear. No illustration was given of a commander conducting a limited war when he had the opportunity for offensive effort and the resources to back it up.¹³⁶

MacArthur did not need to be told he was operating under novel circumstances. In an interview in December 1950 he called the restrictions imposed upon his forces “[a]n

¹³⁴ Warren R. Austin, remarks in UNSC on 10 August 1950, printed as “President Malik’s Continued Obstruction Tactics in the Security Council,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 28 August 1950, 328.

¹³⁵ Department of State, memorandum to the British Embassy, 2 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 517. Two years later, the nature of the conflict still remained ambiguous. A document prepared to assist Secretary of State Dean Acheson brief the newly-elected president, Dwight Eisenhower, when he took office in January, referred to “the mixed character of the struggle in Korea as both an international and a civil conflict.” Outline for Secretary’s Use in Briefing General Eisenhower, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-1, 6. This item is dated 18 November 1952 but whether that is the day it was prepared or the day the presentation was made is not clear. The editors of the *FRUS* treat it as the latter.

¹³⁶ MacArthur Hearings, 3585.

enormous handicap, without precedent in military history.”¹³⁷ The American people were sympathetic to his plight, not understanding why “General MacArthur is fighting with both hands tied behind his back,” as they often complained to their leaders.¹³⁸ For what reason, they demanded to know, were UN military forces in Korea being held back, prevented from exerting their full strength against the communists, enemies of freedom and democracy (and capitalism)?

Limited War Determined by Limitations on Air Power

What they did not realize was that the UNC was, for the most part, actually able to bring its full power to bear in Korea. It was not a matter of “being allowed.”

American and UNC soldiers were fighting the way that armies always have: in the field,

¹³⁷ Douglas MacArthur, quoted in “MacArthur’s Own Story: An Interview with the Commander In Chief,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 8 December 1950, 17.

¹³⁸ Erle Cock Jr, quoted in “Legion Chief Says MacArthur has to Fight with Hands Tied,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 April 1951, 13. Cock was the National Commanding Officer of the American Legion.

The “hand (or hands) tied” analogy was one of the most common ways Americans expressed their confusion about, frustration with, and disapproval of the self-imposed restraints under which the United States and its allies operated during the Korean War. For other examples see “No Point in Trying to Win with One Hand Tied Behind,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 1 July 1950, 10; Marguerite Higgins, “What Yanks at Front Would Have U.S. Do: 1—Declare All-Out War (Thereby Unleashing Air Power), 2—Build Army of 13,000,000 (and do it quickly), 3—Back G.I.’s to the Hilt (Some of them Feel Let Down),” *The Boston Globe*, 8 January 1951, 1; “Atom Bomb Use in Korea Asked,” *The New York Times*, 13 November 1951, 3; “‘U. S. Fighting Halfway War,’ Mrs. Rogers Tells GOP Women,” *The Boston Globe*, 28 November 1951, 25; “Bridges Assails ‘Most Hopeless War in History:’ Denounces Truman and Acheson Diplomacy,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 13 February 1952, A2.

“Hands Tied” has become one of the most enduring tropes from the era, often appearing in historical discussions of the Korean War. Veterans, particularly airmen, often allude to it. Examples of Korean War veterans using of the term after the conflict include Walker Mahurin, *Honest John* (New York: Putnam, 1962), 37; Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War: How We Met the Challenge, How All-out Asian War was Averted, Why MacArthur was Dismissed, Why Today’s War Objectives must be Limited* (New York: Da Capo 1986 [1967]), 74; and Herb Graham, quoted in James R. Hansen, *First Man: The Life of Neil A. Armstrong* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 97.

The expression remained in use after Korea and was used in the context of Vietnam and subsequent American conflicts. It is still often encountered.

exposed to “the rigors of climate, terrain, and battle.”¹³⁹ There were few significant limitations on their conduct, save for those resulting from the usual factors of enemy activity, weather, and geography. Similarly, the coalition’s naval forces, having gained control of the seas by default (the communists lacked sea arms), were assigned to the role navies have traditionally been given under such circumstances: the support of the land war, a task they performed with considerable effectiveness and enthusiasm—and few restraints, the most notable being the order to operate within the waters surrounding Korean (naval bombardment could be directed solely against those land targets on the Korean peninsula itself).

The only elements of the UNC that was appreciably discommoded by the restrictions intended to keep the Korean War from escalating were its air arms. Limitations upon where the UNC could fight, what targets it could attack, and what weapons it could use had little impact on the operations of its surface forces, but had a profound effect on its conduct of the air war in Korea. The effect of these constraints was to deny the United Nations the full benefit of what appeared to be its greatest advantage in fighting the DPRK and PRC: its air power, to which the communists had no counterpoise and only limited countermeasure (see Chapters III and IV). Well over ninety percent of the UNC’s air strength was from the United States, meaning that whatever restrictions were imposed upon UNC aerial operations would have their greatest impact on the American air effort.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Douglas MacArthur, quoted in Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 440.

¹⁴⁰ Paul J. Morton, “United Nations Command,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War*, James I. Matray, ed. (New York: Greenwood, 1991), 508; Gordon L. Rottman, *Korean War Order of Battle: United States, United Nations, and Communist Ground, Naval, and Air Forces, 1950-1953*

American participation in the Korean War had been anticipated by General Arnold, who in 1944 had written that the United States would take

full responsibility, under the provisions of the Charter of the [yet-to-be-founded] United Nations Organization, to hold immediately available Air Force contingents for combined enforcement action. These forces must be off [*sic*] sufficient strength, and their degree of readiness must be such as to make effective use of their inherent striking power and mobility.¹⁴¹

Yet the strictures on UNC air operations in Korea prevented American air units from exploiting to the fullest either their striking power or their mobility—the two features of air power its promoters had long claimed were its principal virtues.

The limiting of the Korean War, manifesting itself primarily as a handicapping of air power, was to many Americans an act of betrayal. Since the days of Billy Mitchell they had been asked to place their faith in military aviation to protect their lives and property, and, having witnessed its efficacy during World War Two, they had done so.¹⁴² Americans had embraced air power after 1945, creating, as one popular aviation magazine proclaimed in 1949, “a new American concept of war. It is new because for

(Westport CT: Praeger, 2002), 96-97, 143, 144. Morton writes that the United States provided 93.4 percent of the United Nations’ air forces. The ROK contributed 5.6 percent; the remaining one percent came from the other UNC members with air units: Australia, Canada, Greece, Thailand, South Africa, and the UK. He does not indicate whether these figures are based on the total number of squadrons each nation sent to Korea but it seems likely (only the Americans operated larger units—groups or wings—during the conflict, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to count the number of individual aircraft each had in the theatre).

Note also that these figures do not include naval and marine air assets, which were also dominated by the Americans. Rottman indicates that no other nations equipped their marines with aircraft in Korea. Only two other countries (Australia and the UK) operated aircraft carriers during the conflict, contributing one and four flattops, respectively, to the UN effort. The USN rotated thirty-six carriers through Korean duty between 1950 and 1953: fifteen fleet carriers, four light carriers, fourteen escort carriers, and three attack carriers.

¹⁴¹ Arnold, *Third Report*, 470.

¹⁴² Steve Call, *Selling Air Power: Military Aviation and American Popular Culture after World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 2009), 11-69.

the first time in our history, we are preparing for a war in the air, with the forces of the land and the sea playing supporting roles.”¹⁴³

The United States had adopted air power because it appealed to multiple elements of the American character. Air power was predicated upon the airplane’s freedom of movement; Americans, descended from immigrants, prided themselves on their mobility. Aviators often spoke and wrote about the sense of freedom they experienced while flying.¹⁴⁴ Americans, although not unique in this respect, placed great value on the experience of freedom. Air power was also an expression of good ole Yankee ingenuity: “The fact that we [Americans] are a people almost universally grounded in familiarity with mechanical power gives us a strength that defies definition. Air power comes as naturally to a people with this kind of history as he [*sic*] breath they draw.”¹⁴⁵ It also allowed for the maintenance of peace without the expense of an army or navy, an additional attraction for a people as frugal as the Americans. Finally, air power promised victory. Proud of their martial prowess and unbeaten military record, “Americans are the natural masters of the aerial weapon and therefore the destined victors in a technological contest. . . . Air power is the American weapon.”¹⁴⁶

Any suggestion, therefore, that air power had limitations was an affront to Americans. The thought that the United States was engaged in a conflict in which it was

¹⁴³ Caldwell, “If War Today,” 15.

¹⁴⁴ Robert Wohl, *The Spectacle of Flight: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1920-1950* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), 279-281; Edward T. Gushee, *52-Charlie: Members of a Legendary Pilot Training Class Share Their Stories about Combat in Korea and Vietnam* (Tucson AZ: Wheatmark, 2009), 1-2.

¹⁴⁵ Gill Robb Wilson, “The Air World: Doubts of U. S. Strength Called Unfounded,” *The New York Herald-Tribune*, 29 March 1948, 13.

¹⁴⁶ de Seversky, *Victory Through Air Power*, 350-352. The reader is asked to indulge the elision of almost three pages, an egregious violation of most style manuals, but done here for dramatic affect.

deliberately refraining from using all the weapons and resources it had at its disposal was an alien one. No matter how many times the Truman administration tried to explain its reasons for limiting the Korean War, Americans took exception. They had been conditioned to believe that air power—their chosen instrument—admitted of neither let nor hindrance, either natural or artificial.

The suddenness with which air power's disability had struck was also a factor in American frustration. For five years the United States had been planning for an all-out atomic showdown with the Soviet Union, a total war, a style of conflict with which they were long familiar (if unpracticed in its nuclear manifestation).¹⁴⁷ Then, with almost no warning, war broke out in a country that many Americans considered to be outside the country's defensive perimeter.¹⁴⁸ This conflict was a limited proxy war, completely unlike the one that had been projected. "[T]he trouble with strategic air power is that weapons of annihilation can be used only as a last resort in total war. In . . . local and

¹⁴⁷ The American Civil War, World War One, and World War Two are generally presented as the only total wars in the American experience. However, given its economic components, the American campaign against the plains Indians during the late nineteenth century might also be described as a total war, albeit an asymmetric one—the Indians never posed a credible threat to the economy or territory of the United States. Of course, the same might be said about the Germans and Japanese during World Wars One and Two, as they, too, could not project their power intercontinentally.

¹⁴⁸ Secretary of State Dean Acheson has often been blamed for encouraging North Korea to invade South Korea by omitting the ROK from a list of nations and areas within the American defensive perimeter in the Pacific during a speech he gave in January 1950. Interestingly, however, General Douglas MacArthur had used almost identical language in 1948. One must assume that Acheson was familiar with MacArthur's words; their similarity is too great to be a coincidence. Of course, the general had expressed himself in a top secret forum, whereas Acheson's speech was very public.

Douglas MacArthur, précis of remarks made in "Conversation between General of the Army MacArthur, Under Secretary of the Army [William H.] Draper, and Mr. George F. Kennan, March 21, 1948 (amended March 23, 1948)," Annex III of "Recommendations with Respect to U. S. Policy toward Japan," Report by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, 25 March 1948, in *FRUS* 1948-6, 709; Dean Acheson, remarks before the National Press Club, 12 January 1950, printed as "Crisis in Asia—An Examination of U. S. Policy," *Department of State Bulletin*, 23 January 1950, 116.

indirect conflict, . . . the weapon is too powerful to be used. . . . The big air force is not a weapon of precision.”¹⁴⁹

What Americans did not realize—no one did, actually—was that there could be different kinds of air war.¹⁵⁰ Some Americans adjusted to the new mode of warfare relatively quickly. Others adapted more slowly. A handful never did make their peace with the new style.

¹⁴⁹ Walter Lippman, “Today and Tomorrow: The Finletter Report,” *The Hartford Courant*, 15 January 1948, 10.

¹⁵⁰ There had, in fact, been a number of limited wars involving aircraft before Korea. Most of the Great Powers had employed air power against weaker states and non-government actors during the early air age. Although the British “air policing” efforts in their colonies in Afghanistan, Somalia, and Iraq, among others, during the interwar period are the best known examples of “small wars” involving aircraft, many other colonial powers had used aircraft to maintain order in their empires, and the United States had conducted aerial operations in Mexico, the Honduras, Haiti, and other places.

Additionally, the UK was fighting against rebels in Malaya and the French were fighting guerillas in Indochina when the Korean War began. Both campaigns involved aircraft and both can be considered limited wars.

Yet these operations rarely came up during discussions about air power and the history and future of aerial warfare in the late 1940s and early 1950s in the United States. Air power advocates rarely addressed anything but strategic bombing. The diversion of assets to any other mode of aerial warfare was wasteful and unnecessary, they argued.

CHAPTER VII
INQUISITION: THE LIMITING OF AIR POWER IN THE KOREAN WAR

The novelty of limited war divided political opinion in the United States. The president and his advisors, concerned that the war might expand, imposed significant restrictions on American activities, particularly in the air. Others, including the first commander of the American forces in Korea, advocated a more aggressive policy. When he would not stop publicly criticizing his superiors' decisions, he was removed from his post. His supporters immediately initiated an investigation into the dismissal, which grew into an examination of the overall conduct of the war. One of the primary revelations of the inquiry was that American air power, which had for five years been shaped into an instrument of total war with the Soviet Union, was poorly suited for the type of fighting underway in Korea.

MacArthur and Truman

The confusion and frustration produced by the novel nature of the Korean War was not limited to the American public and to newspaper commentators, but was shared by many prominent public figures, many of whom were not shy about expressing their displeasure with the way the Truman administration was managing the conflict. Not surprisingly, some of the most vocal criticisms came from Republicans, the political party in opposition to Truman's Democrats. In the spring of 1951, their leader, Senator Robert Taft of Ohio, declared, "[W]e cannot hesitate to finish the war in Korea simply

because we fear that Russia might possibly come into the war, and declare we are not going to fight a war to the limit of our ability, whatever it may be, against Communist China. . . .”¹ The isolationist “Mr. Republican” went on to say, “It is ridiculous to say that we are preventing either aggression or world war III by this stalemate war in Korea.”²

The rights to disagree with and speak out against matters of national policy are cherished in the United States. However, one group of Americans enjoys less liberty to exercise them than their fellow citizens. Ironically, it is this group which is responsible for defending these freedoms: the armed forces. As instruments of national policy, service personnel are obligated to obey the orders given them. They do not have to like them, of course: “[E]very second lieutenant knows best what his platoon ought to be given to do, and he always thinks that the higher-ups are just blind when they don’t see [things] his way,” wrote President Truman in his memoirs.³

Military personnel who disagree with their superiors have limited options. One is to challenge them through the chain of command. Another is to simply ignore them. The commander of United Nations forces in Korea, General Douglas MacArthur, often took the latter course. Shortly after “Mac” was appointed, journalist James Reston observed, “Not even the General’s detractors question his ability to handle the military side of the battle; but even in the present developing crisis he has demonstrated his old

¹ 82 Cong. Rec. S4474 (daily ed. 27 April 1951) (statement by Sen. Robert Taft).

² Ibid.

³ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 384.

habit of doing things in his own way, without too much concern about waiting for orders from Washington.”⁴

During World War Two, the Allied high command had had worldwide responsibilities and so had allowed MacArthur considerable autonomy. As Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, however, MacArthur was much more closely supervised than he had been as Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area. The Korean War was the only conflict the United States was involved in at the time, and, of course, it had the potential to escalate. Consequently, MacArthur’s superiors—as a theatre commander, he answered only to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and the President—monitored the war with especial care. “I want you to know,” wrote President Truman to the general in January 1951 “that the situation in Korea is receiving the utmost attention here. . . .”⁵

Like many actors and opera stars, MacArthur enjoyed being in the spotlight and often used the press to advertise his achievements. Many of his public statements can be described as simple self-promotion. Some, however, might be interpreted as attempts to circumvent the chain of command by “going over the heads” of not only the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense but the President himself, by appealing to *their* superiors—the American people. Several observers remarked upon this tendency. General Omar Bradley once confided, “We [the Joint Chiefs of Staff] had been concerned, many times, by his public statements, which seemed to carry differences of opinion to the public,

⁴ James Reston, “U. N. General MacArthur Faces New Tasks: Besides Running a War, He Must Please Washington and Other Capitals,” *The Times of India*, 16 July 1950, 8.

⁵ Harry S Truman, telegram to MacArthur, 13 January 1951, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1951-01-13&documentid=ci-2-10&pagenumber=1, accessed 1 December 2011.

instead of back to the president.”⁶ Hanson W. Baldwin of *The New York Times* wrote, “The purple passages in his communiqués are definitely calculated to influence public opinion.”⁷

MacArthur’s conviction that he knew more than anyone about how to manage a conflict often led him to make pronouncements on matters outside his authority.⁸

“Virtually no public announcement that General MacArthur ever makes deals solely, or is intended to deal solely, with the military situation,” added Baldwin.⁹ Even foreign journalists noticed. As Alistair Cooke of the *Manchester Guardian* informed his readers, “General MacArthur’s disposition [is] to hand down oracles and pep-talks which in the grandiose style he adopts, easily pass over into statements of policy.”¹⁰

Most of the times that MacArthur shared his thoughts about grand strategy and the conduct of the Korean War he revealed that he disagreed, often drastically, with the policies established by his superiors. The general, a product of the age of total war, had

⁶ Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1095.

⁷ Hanson W. Baldwin, “MacArthur-I,” *The New York Times*, 28 March 1951, 4.

⁸ Baldwin observed that “General MacArthur tends to feel he is senior to all our military leaders, both in date of rank, in experience and in intellectual achievement. His attitude towards the Joint Chiefs of Staff sometimes has been almost patronizing and when suggestions or requests were made they might or might not be heeded.” Baldwin, “MacArthur-I,” 4. MacArthur had earned his first star in 1918, at which time four of the five men who would serve as the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1950 (Omar Bradley, Forrest P. Sherman, J. Lawton Collins, and Clifford B. Cates) had held their commissions for less than four years, while the last (Hoyt S. Vandenberg) was still in public school.

All of the significant civilian policy makers in 1950 had served in either the Army (Harry S Truman, Louis A. Johnson, and George C. Marshall) or National Guard (Dean Acheson) during World War One. Johnson and Truman had seen combat; Marshall was a staff officer. With the exception of Marshall, all returned to civilian life after 1919, although Truman became a reserve officer in 1920, a position he held until after leaving the White House. “Records of the Adjutant General’s Office: Military Personnel File of Harry S. Truman (Record Group 407), Harry S Truman Presidential Library and Museum (website), <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/hstpaper/rg407.htm>, accessed 13 November 2011.

⁹ Baldwin, “MacArthur-I,” 4

¹⁰ Alistair Cooke, “Origins of the Truman-MacArthur Clash: Embarrassment for General Bradley,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 31 August 1950, 8.

not adjusted well to the new realities of limited and proxy conflict.¹¹ One historian has called him “the last great 19th century soldier . . .”¹² He had little patience for what he considered excessive political interference with his command. MacArthur found fault with almost every element of the president’s program for preventing the war from escalating, as the following newspaper headlines—most from page-one stories—attest: “MacArthur Raises Issue of ‘New War:’ Cites Manchuria ‘Sanctuary’ in Putting Authority Up to U.N.,” “MacArthur Says Ban on Attacking Reds in Manchuria is ‘Enormous Handicap,’” “MacArthur Asks for Chiang Troops,” “MacArthur Assails Korean Limitations,” “MacArthur May Bomb Manchuria,” and “MacArthur Asks More Troops, Greater Power.”¹³

The general rarely cleared his statements with his superiors, perhaps because he knew that had he done so, he would almost certainly have been instructed to suppress

¹¹ MacArthur was the son of a Civil War army officer and served in the World War One as a staff officer and held a field command during World War Two. During his career he participated in one punitive expedition and had experience in quelling mutinies, insurgencies, and civil disorders. Most of his overseas assignments were in Asia and the Pacific, so he missed out on the “Banana Wars” in Latin America, the only limited wars in which the United States was involved during his lengthy career.

¹² This passage is taken from a sentence contrasting MacArthur with the man who served as both Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense under Truman: “Douglas MacArthur was the last great 19th century soldier, while George Marshall was the first great 20th century soldier.”

The full quotation appears on many websites on the internet, and is always attributed to Mark A. Stoler, professor emeritus of history at the University of Vermont. A few of these webpages provide a link, presumably to the original source of the quotation, but unfortunately, the page to which the link is directed is no longer active (search made 25 November 2011). It appears to be part of the website maintained by the Society for the History of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) dating from Dr Stoler’s tenure as president of that organization in 2004. <http://www.shafr.org/officers/stoler.htm>.

When asked about the quotation, Dr. Stoler replied, “I’m afraid I have no recollection of ever having said or written that (though I would agree with the conclusions expressed).” Marc A. Stoler, personal communication (e-mail), 29 November 2011.

¹³ “MacArthur Raises Issue of ‘New War:’ Cites Manchuria ‘Sanctuary’ in Putting Authority up to U.N.,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 29 November 1950, 2; “MacArthur Says Ban on Attacking Reds in Manchuria is ‘Enormous Handicap,’” *The Hartford Courant*, 2 December 1950, 1; “MacArthur Asks for Chiang Troops,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 7 February 1951, 1; “MacArthur Assails Korean Limitations,” *The Washington Post*, 8 March 1951, 4; “MacArthur May Bomb Manchuria, Says Report,” *The Hartford Courant*, 5 April 1951, 2; “MacArthur Asks More Troops, Greater Power: Army Chief Gets Views of General,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 10 April 1951, 1.

them (as had occurred in August 1950, when the general had publicly released a message about Formosa he had prepared for the National Encampment of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, or VFW).¹⁴ His pronouncements contradicted many aspects of established administration policy: “MacArthur Asserts Asia, Not Europe, is Focal Point of War against Reds,” “Supremo’s Truce Offer Made on Own Initiative: Washington Annoyed,” and “MacArthur Visit to Formosa Viewed by U.N. as Mistimed: Friendly Critics Feel General’s Trip Risked Embarrassing U.S. Far Eastern Policy,” read the headlines.¹⁵

The general’s declarations provided ample fodder for Truman’s political opponents by contributing to the confusion and frustration of the American people. They had the same effect the United States’ UN allies.¹⁶ “[R]epeated statements by

¹⁴ MacArthur was told to withdraw the statement in question “because various features with respect to Formosa are in conflict with the policy of the United States and its position in the United Nations.” Louis A. Johnson, telegram (personal) for MacArthur, 26 August 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-08-26&documentid=ma-firem43-1&pagenumber=1, accessed 29 November 2011.

However, it was perhaps not the contents of this message but the way that MacArthur had released it that most angered Truman. Had MacArthur shared his thoughts about Formosa with only the VFW, the president may have had less cause for concern, but the general had distributed copies of his address to newspapers and magazines nationwide. “When I first heard about it, on the morning of August 26” wrote Truman, “a weekly magazine was already in the mails with the full text.” Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 354.

¹⁵ “MacArthur Asserts Asia, Not Europe, is Focal Point of War Against Reds: General Also Assails Decision to Turn Down Chiang’s Offer: Letter to GOP Leader in House Contends Loss to Communism in East Would Assure Doom of Nations in West,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 6 April 1951, 1; Alistair Cooke, “Supremo’s Truce Offer Made on Own Initiative: Washington Annoyed,” *The Times of India*, 27 March 1951, 1; James Reston, “MacArthur Visit to Formosa Viewed by U.N. as Mistimed: Friendly Critics Feel General’s Trip Risked Embarrassing U.S. Far Eastern Policy,” *The New York Times*, 11 August 1950, 11.

¹⁶ The following are a small sample of domestic and foreign press reports examining how foreign nations viewed MacArthur:

“MacArthur Visit to Chiang Upset Britain, France,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 28 August 1950, 2; A.G. Roth, “MacArthur’s War with London,” *The Nation*, 9 September 1950, 227; Howard K. Smith, “MacArthur Worries London,” *The Nation*, 18 November 1950, 458; “Nehru Criticizes MacArthur for Offer to Talk with Foe,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 29 March 1951, 14; “President’s Dilemma Over Gen. MacArthur: Problem of Cooperation with U. N. Powers,” *The Times* [London], 9 April 1951, 4; Alistair Cooke, “Korean Policy: Who Decides?: American Statements: Truman, MacArthur, U.N., or the Rest,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 17 April 1951, 5.

MacArthur led many people abroad to believe that our government would change its policy,” Truman recalled in his memoirs.¹⁷ MacArthur managed, at various times, to contradict the State Department, the Department of Defense, and the White House: “MacArthur Wanted to Bomb China: MacArthur vs. Pentagon,” “MacArthur Crosses Line on Military Policy,” “State Department Asks Truman to Curb MacArthur,” and “MacArthur Challenges Truman’s World Policy.”¹⁸

The breakdown between the General and Washington took time to develop. Truman sent one of his advisors, W. Averell Harriman, to Tokyo to speak to MacArthur in early August; he also had the JCS issue a directive regarding the extent of the American commitment to the Republic of China. By that time, however, the general had made a visit to Formosa that “raised much speculation in the world press,” as Truman would later recall.¹⁹

The president had hoped that the Harriman visit and the message from the JCS would suffice to keep MacArthur quiet, but the VFW address incident occurred just three weeks later, causing no little consternation in the State Department. Counselor George Kennan tried to warn Acheson that

By permitting General MacArthur to retain the wide and relatively uncontrolled latitude he has enjoyed in determining our policy in the north Asian and western Pacific areas, we are tolerating a state of affairs

¹⁷ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 383.

¹⁸ Marquis Childs, “MacArthur Wanted to Bomb China: MacArthur vs. Pentagon,” *The Boston Globe*, 29 November 1950, 18; Joseph C. Barsch, “State of the Nation: MacArthur Crosses Line on Military Policy,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 April 1951, 1; “State Department Asks Truman to Curb MacArthur,” *The Boston Globe*, 26 March 1951, 2; “MacArthur Challenges Truman’s World Policy,” *The Boston Globe*, 6 April 1951, 1.

¹⁹ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 354.

in which we do not really have full control over the statements that are being made—and the actions taken—in our name.²⁰

Yet the VFW story was succeeded in the headlines by the successful invasion of Inchon and the beginning of the UNC's offensive. A short time later, Acheson observed,

At the present time we had [*sic*] good coordination between our political objectives and the conduct of our military affairs in Korea. If we were lucky and neither the Russians nor Chinese intervened in North Korea, General MacArthur could act consistently with our overall political plans.²¹

But fortune did not favor the Americans. The Chinese entered the war, thwarting the invasion of the DPRK and the hoped-for eradication of its communist government.

MacArthur allowed his frustrations to get the better of him. His communiqués grew more and more critical of the limitations placed upon his forces, such as the following, issued just after Christmas, 1950:

The end of the campaign was clearly in sight when some of our units met with surprise assault by Chinese Communist elements. . . . No command ever fought more gallantly or efficiently under unparalleled conditions of restraint and handicap, and no command could have acquitted itself to better advantage under prescribed missions and delimitations involving unprecedented risk and jeopardy.²²

Truman later wrote that he “should have relieved General MacArthur then and there,” but refrained because he “did not wish to have it appear that he [the general] were being relieved because the offensive [into North Korea] failed.”²³ He also noted that it was

²⁰ Counselor to the State Department, memorandum to Secretary of State, 21 August 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-14-7.pdf#zoom=100, accessed 15 December 2011.

²¹ Dean Acheson, précis of remarks, Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the United States Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, 21 September 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 746.

²² Douglas MacArthur, “MacArthur’s Summary” (text of special Korean War summary issued 26 December 1950), *The Chicago Tribune*, 26 December 1950, 2.

²³ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 384.

MacArthur himself who had discounted—repeatedly—the possibility that the Chinese might intervene.²⁴

“MacArthur Talks Too Much,” wrote statesman Harold Ickes in *The New Republic*.²⁵ The president agreed, all too well aware of MacArthur’s many “press interviews and communiqués, in which he sometimes hinted and sometimes said that if only his advice had been followed all would have been well in Korea.”²⁶ In an attempt to curb MacArthur, Truman issued a directive requiring all official statements by government personnel addressing military or foreign policy to be cleared with either the Department of Defense or the Department of State, depending on the topic, and that copies of these messages be submitted to the White House for reference.

The general’s reprieve was short-lived. MacArthur behaved himself for just ten weeks. His next opportunity to get himself into trouble came on 20 March 1951, when the president, with the concurrence of the Secretaries of State and Defense, decided to enter into peace negotiations with the communist Chinese and North Koreans. The front had stabilized and further fighting would be destructive and wasteful. Truman notified MacArthur of his intentions through the JCS, whose communication read, “State [Department] planning Presidential announcement shortly that . . . United Nations now prepared to discuss conditions of settlement in Korea. . . . [F]urther diplomatic effort towards settlement should be made before any advance with major forces. . . .”²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., 383-384.

²⁵ Harold L. Ickes, “MacArthur Talks Too Much,” *New Republic*, 11 December 1950, 18. Ickes was Secretary of the Interior under Franklin Roosevelt. He remained in the position under Truman, but after a dispute with the president, resigned after less than a year.

²⁶ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 383.

²⁷ JCS, telegram to Commander in Chief, Far East, 20 March 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 251.

Yet MacArthur still seemed to want to conduct policy himself. Just three days later, he delivered what amounted to an ultimatum to the Chinese communists.

The enemy must be painfully aware that a decision by the United Nations to depart from its tolerant effort to contain the war to the area of Korea, through an expansion of our military operations to its coastal areas and military bases, would doom Red China to the risk of imminent military collapse.²⁸

Despite acknowledging that “the fundamental questions continue to be political in nature and must find their answer in the diplomatic sphere,” MacArthur offered to meet with the enemy commander “to find any military means wherein . . . the political objectives of the United Nations in Korea . . . might be accomplished without further bloodshed.”²⁹

By making this proposal, which the Chinese quickly rejected, MacArthur prevented the administration from pursuing its plans to negotiate an armistice.³⁰ Truman was shocked and angry, but after asking the JCS to remind MacArthur about the December directive regarding public statements, decided to give the general (yet) another chance. He would soon have cause to regret his forbearance.³¹

It was one of MacArthur’s supporters who finally made Truman realize the general could not be rehabilitated. In early April, during a meeting of the House of Representatives, Joseph W. Martin of Massachusetts read a letter he had received from

²⁸ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 441.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “Reds Reject M’Arthur’s Peace Plan: Chinese Communist Radio Calls Proposal ‘Bluff’ and ‘Insult,’” *The Washington Post*, 29 March 1951, 1.

³¹ JCS, telegram (personal) to CINCFE, 24 March 1951, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1951-03-20&documentid=ma-firem47-1&pagenumber=1, accessed 21 November 2011.

MacArthur shortly before the ultimatum and truce-talks offer.³² The message reiterated MacArthur's belief in the primacy of Asia over Europe in the fight against communism and the need to allow the ROC to fight the PRC. What particularly aroused Truman's ire, however, was its last sentence, a none-too-subtle criticism of limited war: "There is no substitute for victory."³³

The president had had enough of MacArthur's continued violations of his instructions to guard his statements. He decided that the general was "unable to give his wholehearted support to the policies of the United States Government and of the United Nations in matters pertaining to his official duties. . . ."³⁴ As a result, on 10 April 1951, he relieved MacArthur of not just his authority over the UN's forces in Korea, but of all his commands.³⁵ Replacing him would be Matthew B. Ridgway, who had demonstrated his leadership abilities by his effective management of the Eighth US Army in Korea.

Although he would later write that "General MacArthur—and rightly, too—would have court-martialed any second lieutenant who gave press interviews to express his disagreement" with any of his superiors, Truman and the JCS "never did claim or accuse him of being insubordinate to any military directive."³⁶ As a result, the general was spared a formal trial on charges of disobedience. However, the public outcry over his recall grew so great that an inquiry of some sort seemed to be necessary.

³² Martin was the only Republican to serve as Speaker of the House of Representatives between 1931 and 1995, during which years that body was dominated by Democrats. He served in that capacity twice, the first time from 1947 to 1949, the second between 1953 and 1955.

³³ Douglas MacArthur, letter to Joseph W. Martin, 20 March 1951, in MacArthur Hearings, 3543-3544. The hearings transcript cites as its source the *Daily Congressional Record*, 13 April 1951, 3938 (presumably the Senate edition).

³⁴ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 449.

³⁵ Harry S. Truman, "Message Relieving General MacArthur of Command, April 10, 1951," MacArthur Hearings, 3546.

³⁶ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 383; Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1095.

The MacArthur Hearings

The American people, like MacArthur, were not comfortable with the challenges of limited warfare. The general's simplistic solutions to the problem appealed to many, and, of course, provided aid and comfort to Truman's opponents. "The general . . . has become far more than a general; he is a political symbol in domestic politics," Hanson W. Baldwin observed.³⁷ As a result, two committees of the American Senate examined the issues that had led to the firing of MacArthur, which of course required them to widen their scope to include many other elements of the conduct of the Korean War.

Their investigation, formally titled "Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Eighty-Second Congress, First Session, to Conduct an Inquiry in the Military Situation in the Far East and the Facts Surrounding the Relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur from his Assignments in this Area," but more commonly referred to as either "The Military Situation in the Far East" (as the Superintendent of Documents and the US Government Printing Office described it) or the "MacArthur Hearings" (as space-conscious newspaper and magazine editors called it), took place over forty days in the spring and summer of 1951. Witnesses included MacArthur himself, Secretary of State Acheson, Secretary of Defense Marshall, former Secretary of Defense Johnson, the four Joint Chiefs (Omar Bradley, Chairman; J. Lawton Collins, Army; Forrest P. Sherman, Navy;

³⁷ Hanson W. Baldwin, "MacArthur-I," *The New York Times*, 28 March 1951, 4.

and Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Air Force), and other generals and admirals.³⁸ In their printed form, published later that year, they filled five volumes totaling 3,691 pages—and would have been even longer had not substantial portions of the testimony been omitted for reasons of national security.³⁹

³⁸ The National Security Act of 1947 excluded the Commandant of the Marine Corps from the JCS, although it specified that he was to be consulted when matters concerning the USMC were discussed. General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., Commandant in 1952-1955, was the first to sit as an occasional member. A 1975 amendment to the law elevated the Commandant to full-time membership.

³⁹ After some debate, the Senate decided that the hearings would be held in closed session, but transcripts of the testimony were to be made available at the end of each day. Admiral Arthur C. Davis, advised by Adrian Fisher of the State Department, was responsible for deleting sensitive material before it was released. Despite a charge of 12 ½ cents per page—and a half-day's session could run over eighty pages—and despite that they were unhappy about paying for censored news, over fifty newspapers and press syndicates (including TASS, the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union, and *The Daily Worker* of the Communist Party USA) purchased each day's reports. Many published them in their entirety. The State Department also subscribed. William S. White, "M' Arthur Hearings to Start in Secret: Senators Vote to Bar Public Thursday, when General Talks—to Issue Censored Account," *The New York Times*, 1 May 1951, 1; "Closed-Door MacArthur Hearing Set: Censored Transcript of Testimony will be made Public," *The Sun* [Baltimore], 1 May 1951, 1; "Plan to Charge Press for Transcript Decried," *The Sun* [Baltimore], 3 May 1951, 6; "Fanfare Lacking for MacArthur; Pickets and Newsmen Greet Him: General Arrives Quietly for Hearing Open to All Senators—Record of Testimony is Carefully Censored on the Spot," *The New York Times*, 4 May 1951, 10; "Tass, Daily Worker Buy MacArthur Transcript," *The Washington Post*, 4 May 1951, 12; "Censorship Tilt Seen at MacArthur Hearings," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 4 May 1951, 4.

Each installment was anxiously anticipated. One newspaper story likened the wait for each new page to a "cliff-hanging [movie or radio] serial." The day an electrical malfunction disabled the typewriters and duplicating machines used to prepare the transcripts just increased the suspense. The half-hour interruption did not slow the flow of notes from the stenographers who were recording the proceedings (each worked no longer than ten minutes at a time), but caused the typists and censor to stop working. "Like Cliff-Hanging Serial, Transcript Packs Suspense," *The Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 1951, 3; "Marshall Transcripts Halted By Short Circuit," *The Hartford Courant*, 8 May 1951, 14.

An unexpurgated version of the MacArthur Hearings became available in 1977. It contains a total of 8,287 pages on eight reels of microfilm. The material was taken from facsimile copies of the original typewritten transcript, which was double-spaced. Assuming a (roughly) 2:1 ratio between the page counts of the stenographer's version and the printed edition, it appears that the censored passages amount to some fifteen percent of the total testimony. Most of the deleted material was taken from the testimony of the military witnesses, particularly those representing the USAF. *The Military Situation in the Far East and the Relief of General MacArthur* (Washington DC: University Publications of America, 1977).

Further references to this last work will identify it as "uncensored MacArthur Hearings."

The MacArthur Hearings addressed most of the topics of disagreement between MacArthur and the Truman administration.⁴⁰ Many of these were the diplomatic and political issues that had been in the headlines for months, such as the introduction of ROC troops into the conflict, the role of the UN and its influence on the conduct of the war, the question of whether Asia or Europe should be the primary focus of the Cold War, and whether the Truman administration's Korean War policy was a form of appeasement. They also included subjects that had not received as much attention as these others, such as MacArthur's proposal for an "intensification of our economic blockade against China. . . ."⁴¹

However, a substantial portion of the testimony examined "purely military" matters.⁴² The MacArthur Hearings thus became one of the primary—both "first" and

⁴⁰ The "Truman-MacArthur Controversy" was a significant episode in the history of the United States, touching upon several important issues, among them, the civilian control of the military, the powers of the president, and the desirability of an apolitical military. As a result, the affair has been the subject of a large number of books, articles (both popular and scholarly), and theses in the past six decades, including Donald J. Farinacci, *Truman and MacArthur: Adversaries for a Common Cause* (Bennington VT: Merriam Press, 2010); Larry Wayne Blomstedt, "Truman, Congress, and the Struggle for War and Peace in Korea," PhD diss., Texas A&M University, 2008; Michael D. Pearlman, *Truman and MacArthur: Policy, Politics, and the Hunger for Honor and Renown* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008); Stanley Weintraub, *MacArthur's War: Korea and the Undoing of an American Hero* (New York: Free Press, 2000); Dennis Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean War* (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1999); D. Clayton James and Anne Sharp Wells, *Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea 1950-1953* (New York: Free Press, 1993); Soo Kim, "The Conduct of the Korean War, 1950-1953: With an Emphasis on the Civilian Control of the Military in the United States," PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1987; Allen R. Potter, "The Truman-MacArthur Controversy, A Study in Political-Military Relations," unpublished MMAS thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1972; John Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War* (Cambridge MA: Belknap, 1959); Richard Halworth Rovere and Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The General and the President and the Future of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951).

⁴¹ Douglas MacArthur, Address of General MacArthur to Joint Meeting of the Congress, April 19, 1951, MacArthur Hearings, 3614-3615. The hearings transcript cites as its source the *Daily Congressional Record*, 19 April 1951, 4233-4235 (presumably the Senate edition).

⁴² During the MacArthur Hearings, most of the senators, particularly those hostile to the Truman administration, tried to establish a distinction between "purely military" issues and other concerns (usually "political," sometimes "personal" or "legal"). They must not have read Clausewitz, or else they might have realized that "to leave a great military enterprise, or the plan for one, to a *purely military judgment*

“most important”—fora for exploring the Korean war specifically and the nature of limited conflict generally. As was noted in the previous chapter, limited proxy warfare was a new and unfamiliar concept to Americans in the post-World War Two era. It was a confusing and frustrating idea. In an short piece about the inquiry, the editors of *The New York Times* noted that “[t]he [current] debate over American policy in the Far East can still serve a good purpose. . . . It can elucidate what is meant by a limited war, and how and why one can be fought.”⁴³

Almost all of the “purely military” topics examined during the hearings involved air power. At various times during the inquiry, the senators examined close air support and air interdiction (tactical bombing), aerial reconnaissance, and air superiority operations in Korea. Surprisingly, however, the subject of strategic bombing received little attention compared to these other aspects of air power.

Strategic Bombers in Korea

Given that air power in the form of strategic bombing was the foundation of American defense policy after 1945 (see Chapters III and IV), the infrequency with which strategic bombing was addressed during the MacArthur Hearings may seem

and decision, is a distinction which cannot be allowed, and is even prejudicial; indeed, it is an irrational proceeding to consult professional soldiers on the plan of a war, that they may give a *purely military opinion* upon what the cabinet should do. . . . [emphasis in original].” Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Krieg*, J.J. Graham, trans. (London: N. Trübner, 1873), Book 8, Chapter 6, Section B.

The expression “purely military” appears numerous times in the transcript of the investigation. The senators asked repeated questions about “purely military” considerations, “purely military” decisions made on “purely military” grounds, the “purely military” aspects of the war, and the like, to which the military witnesses replied in kind, answering on a “purely military” basis, citing “purely military” directives made from a “purely military” viewpoint, standpoint, or point of view.

⁴³ “The MacArthur Hearings,” *The New York Times*, 29 April 1951, E8.

surprising. Yet strategic bombing played an insignificant role in Korea. The Korean War was a limited proxy war, and strategic bombing is inappropriate to such a conflict. Of course, the Americans did not know that when they entered the war. In keeping with their precepts, they essayed a strategic bombing campaign in Korea, but it did not resemble the World War Two bombing campaigns against Germany and Japan.

For one thing, the Americans did not commit their full force of bombers to the effort. At the time the conflict began, there was only one medium bombardment group in the Far East. Four additional groups were transferred from the Strategic Air Command (SAC) within a month.⁴⁴ All were B-29 units; the newer B-50s and B-36s remained stateside against the possibility of war with the USSR.⁴⁵ “The U.S.A.F. just didn’t want to waste its first-line equipment in Korea,” one flier would recall in an interview later.⁴⁶

During the MacArthur Hearings, Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire asked General Emmett “Rosie” O’Donnell, commander of the Far East Bomber Command, “[W]e have not used the latest types of bombers we have developed?” O’Donnell started to reply, “We kept the obsolete bombers, . . .” but the senator interrupted him with a follow-up question: “And you kept those newer ones for reserve for primary targets if the occasion ever came?” The general answered in the affirmative.

⁴⁴ Emmett O’Donnell, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 8043.

⁴⁵ Hoyt S. Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3369.

⁴⁶ Joe Hilliard, quoted in Max Hastings, *The Korean War*, 263.

“So you were operating our second team, so to speak,” suggested the senator.

O’Donnell again agreed.⁴⁷

The speed with which the four new groups were able to get into combat encouraged USAF leaders, who had been concerned about the ability to move units overseas rapidly, as required in the United States’ post-1945 war plans. As General O’Donnell boasted to senators (who may not have appreciated the subject’s importance to Air Force officers), “[W]e were actually in operation on July 13, an over-all time of 11 days from the time we got the first notification. And we were in operation from then on. It was not a stunt. It was a sustained operation.”⁴⁸

At the time the Korean War started, the Strategic Air Command had fourteen bomber groups in all: four under-strength B-36 groups, five B-29 groups, and five B-50 groups. “The medium bombers [B-29s and B-50s] run roughly about 36 bombers to a group, and the heavy bombers [B-36s] around 30,” General Vandenberg observed during the MacArthur Hearings.⁴⁹ Compared to the thousand-bomber raids against Germany and Japan during World War Two, the four B-29 groups sent to Korea did not have many aircraft. “[W]e had an average [daily] strength of aircraft of 125 [bombers],” General O’Donnell testified during the MacArthur Hearings.⁵⁰ But these machines represented a substantial portion of SAC’s combat potential. The MacArthur Hearings censor deleted a statement by the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg,

⁴⁷ Styles Bridges and Emmett O’Donnell, question-and-answer exchange, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 8081.

⁴⁸ O’Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3063.

⁴⁹ Hoyt S. Vandenberg, testimony, Ibid., 1427.

⁵⁰ O’Donnell, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 8043 (information repeated 8046).

addressing the impact of the Korean War on USAF readiness. “The Air Force part that is engaged in Korea is roughly 85 per cent—80 to 85 per cent of the tactical capacity of the United States Air Force. The strategic portion . . . is roughly between one-fourth and one-fifth.”⁵¹

American air force officers had been arguing for years that the country’s air arm was too small. “The fact is that the United States is operating a shoestring air force in view of its global responsibilities,” reported the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, during the MacArthur hearings.⁵² The commitment of so much of the USAF’s offensive striking power could have serious consequences. “In my opinion, the United States Air Force is the single potential that has kept the balance of power in our favor. It is the one thing that has, up to date, kept the Russians from deciding to go to war.”⁵³ Of particular concern was the relative insignificance of Korea in context of the Cold War. “We cannot afford to . . . peck at the periphery, . . .” reported the general.⁵⁴

Compounding the problem was that the B-29s in Korea were not always used for strategic bombing, especially in the early part of the war. The North Koreans’ advance had been so rapid and powerful that by the beginning of August they had driven the South Koreans and their UN allies to a small area around the port of Pusan on the extreme southern end of the peninsula. The “B-29s were the only available weapon capable of delivering real destruction in the United States arsenal,”⁵⁵ General O’Donnell observed during the MacArthur hearings. Other types of American aircraft

⁵¹ Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3048.

⁵² Hoyt S. Vandenberg, testimony, *MacArthur Hearings*, 1379.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ O’Donnell, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3065.

had range and endurance problems caused by the lack of air bases in friendly-controlled Korean territory, requiring them to operate from Japan. Flying between Korea and Japan reduced the time these aircraft could engage in combat. “We were hard-pressed. We got into a bad bind,” O’Donnell reported.⁵⁶

“We . . . devoted most of our time during those [first] 3 months, I would say, two-thirds of our time, to direct support of the ground forces,” the general had declared during earlier testimony. “We were forced to go into many unorthodox methods of operations for the B-29.”⁵⁷ The Superfortress was designed for high-altitude daylight precision bombardment. That its usage in the tactical support role might be an error (or at least a poor allocation of resources) was obvious even to non-experts. Before O’Donnell’s appearance on the witness stand, Senator Richard B. Russell of Georgia had asked Air Force Chief of Staff Vandenberg, “We have been using our B-29’s and B-50’s, our large bombers in a way never contemplated, I understand, in tactical support of the troops, is that right? . . . Has that been effective? Can you use those large planes tactically?”⁵⁸ (The censors deleted a related question, “Did you use the B-29’s because they were all you had?”).⁵⁹

Vandenberg answered that he thought that B-29s could be effective ground attack platforms, citing recent episodes in which B-29s had inflicted thousands of casualties on enemy ground forces.⁶⁰ “[U]nder certain conditions, certain peculiar conditions we find

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 3064.

⁵⁸ Richard B. Russell, question, Ibid., 1380. The senator’s reference to B-50s is an error. There were no B-50s employed in Korea.

⁵⁹ Richard B. Russell, question, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 3363.

⁶⁰ Vandenberg, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1380.

ourselves in, against no enemy air opposition near the front lines, that the B-29 is more efficient method of dropping those bombs” than other aircraft with smaller payloads.⁶¹ However, it was not just the absence of enemy aircraft that determined the success or failure of using large bombers for tactical tasks. The target had to be appropriate for the effort against it.

Vandenberg, as the Air Force Chief of Staff, was removed from day-to-day operations in Korea. He was also a tactical officer, his flying experience having been in fighter and attack units. General O’Donnell was in bombers for his entire career, and, as the local commander, he could be expected to have a better sense of how his units performed in Korea.

During the testimony of General O’Donnell, Senator Russell asked what may have been the key question about the tactical employment of strategic bombers: “Do you think that this is an improper use of the B-29?”⁶² The general replied, “Well, close support—I do think it is an improper use. Close support, by that I mean trying to attack actual troops. General support is just a little bit behind [the front lines]—knocking over bridges and interdicting the supply lines. I think it is proper at that time.”⁶³ O’Donnell added that his main objection to the use of B-29s for close air support was that “it is very difficult to get a true concentration of troops.”⁶⁴ Soldiers in the field rarely cluster together closely enough to warrant the use of thirty bombers carrying 20,000 pounds (ten

⁶¹ Hoyt S. Vandenberg, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 3363.

⁶² Russell, question, MacArthur Hearings, 3065.

⁶³ O’Donnell, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3065.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3066.

tons) of explosives each.⁶⁵ “[I]f you want to saturate an area, a rule of thumb would be about 300 tons per square mile. [Otherwise] we just had to open up the interval between the bombs and spread them out and just hope we were lucky in hitting some[thing].”⁶⁶ When Russell referred to the high casualties produced by some B-29 raids against ground troops—MacArthur and the Air Force were quick to publicize these triumphs—O’Donnell replied that he still thought the use of medium bombers for ground attack work was improper. “I think we should be very careful in the future about assigning heavy bombardment, medium bombardment, to this type of task. . . . I think they might be sent against unworthy targets.”⁶⁷

During both World War Two and Korea, American airmen often griped that their counterparts on the ground considered the airplane a type of flying artillery, and resented it when Army requests for airstrikes diverted the Air Force from its primary missions, air superiority and strategic bombing. They wondered why the Army could not make do with its organic guns. There was one occasion in Korea, however, that air power did not just complement Army gunnery, but substituted for it. In the middle of May 1951 the PRC initiated an offensive for which the US Army was not prepared, as General Edward M. Almond testified before a Senate subcommittee in 1953. “It was not expected that

⁶⁵ Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1380.

⁶⁶ O’Donnell, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3066.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Recall that the B-29 had been redesignated as a medium bomber in 1948, as was noted in Chapter IV.

the Chinese would make the worst attack, I think, that they have ever made, the one the 16th of May.”⁶⁸ The general then related what happened after the attack began.

[W]hen that attack occurred our [supply of artillery] ammunition went to zero in the back areas. It was brought to us as fast as possible. Our ammunition was greatly augmented in the critical stages of the operation from the 16th of May until the 22nd of May by bringing in air bombers of all categories, which is an epic in our warfare over there that somebody ought to study sometime—the great employment of bombers of the heaviest type within very short distances of our front line. What was done there ought to be a symbol of our combat operation. . . . You can bring in B-29s with 500-pound bombs—40 of them—and put them 400 yards in front of you, by instruments, accurately. That is a great augmentation of your ammunition capability, and that is the way they ought to be employed when the need comes—not always but when the need arises.⁶⁹

No doubt the leaders of the American bomber forces would agree with Almond’s last sentence, but would argue that the Army officers usually defined “need” too liberally.

The proper use of B-29s, of course, would be strategic bombing, the role for which they were designed. Yet there are multiple ways to accomplish this mission. O’Donnell had first wanted to use the B-29s as they had been employed late in the war against Japan, in fire raids.

It was my intention and hope . . . that we would be able to get out there and to cash in on our psychological advantage . . . by putting a very severe blow on the North Koreans, with advanced warning perhaps. [MacArthur could] make a statement, and we now have at our command a weapon that can really dish out some severe destruction, and let us go to work burning five major cities in North Korea to the ground, and to destroy completely every 1 of about 18 major strategic targets.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Edward M. Almond, testimony, *Ammunition Shortages in the Armed Forces: Hearings before the Preparedness Subcommittee No. 2 of the Committee on Armed Services United State Senate*, 83rd Congress, 1953, 33.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ O’Donnell, testimony, Macarthur Hearings, 3063.

The suggestion was quashed. “[W]e were instructed not to use incendiary bombs, not to burn down the cities, but there were no compunctions on the part of our commanders to bomb legitimate military targets within those cities with high explosives.”⁷¹

O’Donnell obviously remembered that the early air power advocates had claimed that strategic bombing affects both an enemy’s ability and desire to continue fighting, a principle still appearing in official Department of the Air Force publications in 1949, despite the experience of World War Two: one air force mission is the “destruction of the economic capacity and will to wage war [of the enemy],” which is to be accomplished “through the systematic application of force to a selected series of vital targets. . . .”⁷² Air power promised an early end to a war, O’Donnell remarked. “We thought the impact of taking those [targets] quickly, and getting—we could have gotten the five cities—I could have done that in 10 days flat, and we think that maybe that terrific impact would so shock them that it might have pressed them into getting out.”⁷³

One of the reasons that the Americans elected to conduct precision bombing instead of area attacks in Korea was that their choice had political implications. On 18 August 1950, Under Secretary of State James E. Webb noted that

the British had lodged a protest last night based on an assumption that our dropping of evacuation warning leaflets over cities in North Korea indicated that we were preparing to engage in mass bombing of those cities, and that this, if carried out, would produce a feeling in Asia and elsewhere that would be harmful to the West.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid., 3076.

⁷² Air University Tactical School, *Air Power, Warfare, and Principles of War* (Montgomery, AL: Air University USAF Extension Course Institute, 1949), 7, 11.

⁷³ O’Donnell, testimony, Macarthur Hearings, 3110.

⁷⁴ Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 18 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 600. The irony of the British commenting about the area bombing of cities needs no elaboration.

The United States was constantly trying to court world opinion during the Korean War and could not risk alienating any ally or potential friendly nation. The Prime Minister of non-aligned India, Jawaharlal Nehru, “could not keep quiet in the face of suffering brought about by US bombing in Korea.”⁷⁵ His favor was important; the Americans knew that the British believed that “India has done her best to restrain China,” and the British were a key ally of the United States in the UN.⁷⁶

Webb’s memorandum went on to observe that he “was sure this protest was not intended to influence the decision to bomb particular military targets,” which would be up to the commander in the field.⁷⁷ The distinction between “military” and other targets was an important part of limiting the Korean Conflict, and can be traced back to the beginning of American involvement in the war. On 29 June 1950, the Joint Chiefs instructed MacArthur to “employ naval and air forces . . . to provide fullest possible support to South Korean forces . . . so as to permit these forces to clear South Korea of North Korean forces.”⁷⁸ They also authorized him to “extend [his] operations into Northern Korea against air bases, depots, tank farms, troop columns, and other such purely military targets,” but only if he determined that such action were necessary to support the South Koreans or “to avoid unnecessary casualties to [American] forces.”⁷⁹

The “purely military” target types listed in the above directive can all be considered tactical—that is, targets chosen for their contribution to the land battle—

⁷⁵ Ambassador in India, telegram to the Secretary of State, 5 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 882.

⁷⁶ British Foreign Secretary, message to British Ambassador to the United States, 11 October 1950; annex to Secretary at Large, memorandum of conversation, 12 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 932.

⁷⁷ Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 18 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 599.

⁷⁸ The JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 29 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 240-241.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

which is understandable, given the intensity of the ground war in the early phases of the conflict. The North Koreans were advancing quickly southward, and the first priority had to be to retard them and stabilize the front lines. The destruction of the target types mentioned above would have an immediate impact on the enemy's land forces.

Change of Bombing Objective

Within a month, however, the UNC's land campaign had been successful enough for the Americans to consider bombing locations chosen for their long-term economic value—that is, strategic targets—in addition to tactical ones. During the MacArthur Hearings, General O'Donnell told the senators that

when we first got out there, with the exception of one raid on Wonsan, we had to devote almost our entire attention to supporting activities, and I was very anxious to get on with what I called the strategic type of attack which of course is to hit the sources of your enemy's supply.⁸⁰

At the end of July, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed MacArthur that they thought it “highly desirable to undertake mass air operations against North Korean targets, the destruction of which will assist your future operations, destroy industrial targets in North Korea and reduce the North Korean ability to wage war in the future.” The needs of the ground war came first, however. The bombers could be used for other operations. “[I]n directing these operations it is not the intent of the JCS to preclude their emergency employment on other missions which in your judgment are overriding.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ O'Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3067.

⁸¹ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 31 July 1950,

http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-07-31&documentid=ki-22-3&pagenumber=1, accessed 17 December 2011.

The directive included a list of four cities in North Korea (Pyongyang; Wonsan; Najindong; and Konan, better known as Hungnam) and the specific industrial and economic targets to be found in each one. It went on to note that “[t]he JCS will furnish additional data on targets contributing to the concept expressed in para 1 [the”assist, destroy, reduce” portion quoted above]. You are authorized to destroy similar-type targets if info available to you indicates it is warranted.”⁸²

As it turned out, there were very few “similar-type” targets. When O’Donnell told senators that there were five cities he wanted to bomb, he was not exaggerating the paucity of suitable targets in North Korea. However, his list—Pyongyang, Seishin, Rashin, Wonsan, and Chinnampo—varies slightly from the JCS list above, adding two and omitting one.⁸³ The discrepancy is understandable, however, given that even the most industrialized North Korean cities had very few production facilities.⁸⁴ Indeed,

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ O’Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3110. The JCS’ and O’Donnell’s list appear to have three discrepancies, but Rashin and Najindong are the same city. Place names in Korea can vary widely from one source to another.

This work uses the most common name for each location, as used today, but citations from older sources will retain the original spelling, with clarifying annotations if necessary.

The confusion about Korean names has two sources. One is that there are three common conventions for romanizing Korean words. These vary primarily in their rendering of diphthongs and diereses (for vowel sounds) and the use of diacritical marks. The most significant issue associated with consonants is the interchangeability of the letter “N” and the letter “R” in Korean. During the Korean War era, the North Korean city known today as Račõn was referred to by American military and government officials as Najin, Nanjin, Najindong, Rashin, Rasin, Rachin, or Racin. The printed edition of the MacArthur hearings uses at least *four* of these spellings; a supplemental report published by the committee uses a fifth. This work will use “Rashin” throughout, save in direct quotations.

Additionally, the lengthy Japanese occupation of Korea—accompanied by a brutal suppression of the native language and culture, and the replacement of Korean place names with Japanese ones—added even more variables. Hungnam became Konan; Chongdin became Seishin, and Seoul became Keiro. American maps of Korea employed during the Korean War often used the Japanese place names as they often relied on data gathered for World War Two operations. Seoul was an exception, as the city had been relatively well known in the English-speaking world before the Japanese annexation, so “Keiro” rarely appears in Korean War-era material

⁸⁴ For a complete list of the specific industries in each North Korean city, see Futrell, *USAF in Korea*, revised ed., 182-184.

Senator John C. Stennis of Mississippi, possibly thinking about Pittsburgh, Essen, Birmingham, and other great factory cities of the United States and western Europe—or perhaps Japan (by itself, Yokohama had over fifty different sites listed as targets during World War Two)—asked O’Donnell to confirm that North Korea had so few industries: “Five main cities and 18 primary targets?”⁸⁵

Compared to Germany and Japan, North Korea was not very developed—eighty percent of Koreans made their livings by agriculture in 1950.⁸⁶ The mountainous north of Korea was far more industrialized than its rural south. Nonetheless, “[t]hey had some very modern industry out there, not generally known, but they had a good steel and coal and iron business; they had well-developed chemical plants and fertilizer plants.”⁸⁷ Most of the factories in North Korea had been established by the Japanese during their four decades of ruling the peninsula (taking advantage of the area’s natural resources and its fast steep rivers for hydroelectric power production). Their remoteness had spared them the attentions of the American strategic bombing campaign during World War Two. “Korea was the one area in the world that was not very severely, under Japanese domination—had not been severely damaged during the war,” observed General

For a more detailed discussion of the specific targets within each city, and an assessment of the bomb damage to each city during the Korean War, see USAF Historical Division, Department of the Air Force; *United States Air Force Operations in the Korean Conflict 25 June-1 November 1950* (Washington DC: Department of the Air Force, 1951), 87-89.

⁸⁵ Robert A. Mann, *The B-29 Superfortress: A Comprehensive Registry of the Planes and their Missions* (Jefferson: NC: McFarland, 2004), 215-228; John C. Stennis, question, MacArthur Hearings, 3110.

⁸⁶ W. G. Hackler (of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs), memorandum, 27 April 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 49.

⁸⁷ O’Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3064.

O'Donnell. "In fact, it emerged from the war the least damaged area in Asia, I suppose, so that it was a nice plum for the Russians to get hold of and to further develop."⁸⁸

The relative smallness of industrial activity in northern Korea compelled the Americans to change their strategic bombing policy, developed during World War Two and continued afterwards, as evidenced by the post-1945 war plans described earlier in this work. "Under normal circumstances, strategic target priorities are calculated in terms of the immediacy of the effect of their destruction on an enemy's ability to wage war."⁸⁹ The target systems identified as most significant to the enemy's war effort are then attacked first. But because North Korean industrial production was so small, and because it was concentrated in just a few areas, the Americans bombed all of the targets in one city at a time, rather than attack them in a sequence determined by industrial category.⁹⁰

When not engaged on tactical operations, the B-29s struck at the North Korean economy. "We attacked every type of target from culverts and railroad bridges to cars and tracks and tanks, and right on up through war-supporting industries, both direct and indirect," boasted General O'Donnell.⁹¹

We did some major damage out there, a damage which I think affects Russia. For instance, we smashed completely the high-frequency steel installation at Songjin which, I was told, had an output of 3 ½ million tons of stainless and cobalt steel a year, every bit of which went right into Russia. We smashed entirely the entire chemical complex at Konan which is far and away the largest in the whole Far East. Its

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Futrell, *USAF in Korea*, revised ed., 184.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 183-184.

⁹¹ O'Donnell, testimony, Macarthur Hearings, 3064.

electrosynthesis plant alone, for instance, was longer than the Empire State Building is tall.⁹²

O'Donnell's belief that the Soviets benefited from North Korean industry was not speculation. Shortly after the war began the Central Intelligence Agency had noted that "the USSR will continue to support and assist the development of the northern Korean economy only to the ultimate benefit of the Soviet economy. So long as the importation of bituminous coal and petroleum and the operations of the northern Korean merchant fleet is [*sic*] under Soviet control, the operation of Korea's economy will remain almost completely dependent on the USSR."⁹³

The strategic campaign was successful, but did not immediately affect the course of the ground war. During the MacArthur Hearings, O'Donnell would recount,

"[W]e were in our toughest straits . . . in August [1950] when we were down in the tight little line around the Naktong River [near Pusan], and we had knocked out by that time most of our real strategic targets. Inasmuch as we couldn't burn the cities, we went after these targets, we destroyed them, and really destroyed them."⁹⁴

There seemed to be no relationship between the land war and the strategic air war in Korea.

The strategic bombing campaign in Korea ended in October, 1950. "Just before the Chinese came in we were grounded. There were no more targets in Korea," testified O'Donnell.⁹⁵

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Central Intelligence Agency, Annex D: "Current Military Situation": in memorandum "Current Capabilities of the Northern Korean Regime," 19 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 118.

⁹⁴ O'Donnell, testimony, Macarthur Hearings, 3066.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 3082.

The general was not referring only to strategic or economic targets. As was described in the previous chapter, UN forces had repelled the North Korean assault and taken the offensive in the autumn of 1950, and were soon approaching the Yalu River.

[W]hen we were operating against [only] the Korean forces, the first phase of the war, we considered that by the 31st of October, that that phase had been completed and successfully completed. The Korean ground forces had been completely defeated. Our own forces were up to the Yalu. As far as my activities were concerned, I stopped flying and we were actually on the ground for 1 week [before the Chinese intervention] because the bomb line had moved clear to the border, and there were no targets left in Korea. During that time we flew 40,000 hours [and] dropped 30,000 tons of high explosives. . . .⁹⁶

The bomb line indicates how near to friendly troops targets (usually enemy ground forces) may be attacked from the air. It changes with every advance and retreat, and air intelligence officers must be vigilant in monitoring its location and relaying any changes in its position to aircrews. For the safety of UNC troops, the USAF generally drew it one thousand yards ahead of the front line in Korea.

MacArthur had promised to have the troops home by Christmas, 1950. It appeared that he would be able to make good on that pledge. O'Donnell told the senators, "We consequently spent that time in practicing landings and checking off [qualifying] copilots and procedures, and getting ready to go home."⁹⁷

That the DPRK's army collapsed at about the same time that its industry was destroyed is a coincidence. It would be difficult to argue that the strategic bombing campaign had by itself caused the enemy's withdrawal and rout (and no one, not even the most zealous air power advocates, even tried). Its main contribution was a fuel

⁹⁶ Ibid., 3063.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

shortage caused by the bombing of the Wonsan refinery complex, if the testimony of North Korean prisoners of war could be relied upon.⁹⁸ It was the UNC's ground forces that compelled the North Koreans to retreat to the Yalu—although their task was made easier by extensive support from the air, as MacArthur and many other American and UN officers were not too proud to acknowledge.⁹⁹

Soldiers do not operate on bituminous coal, chemicals, and fertilizer, the products of North Korea's main industries. They require weapons, food, and equipment. But the DPRK did not produce its own guns, tanks, airplanes, trucks, and the other accoutrements of war. Although some of its small arms were left over from the Japanese occupation, most of North Korea's heavy weapons and equipment were new and came from the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁰ "The tanks are Russian," testified the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the MacArthur Hearings. "I think most of the artillery is."¹⁰¹

One of the first things General Vandenberg said while testifying at the MacArthur Hearings was

[T]he proper [*sic*] way to use air power is initially to stop the flow of supplies and ammunition, guns, equipment of all types, at its source. The next most efficient way is to knock it out along the road before it reaches the front line. The least efficient way is after it gets dug in at the front line.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ USAF Historical Division, *Operations in the Korean Conflict 25 June- 1 November 1950*, 92.

⁹⁹ Douglas MacArthur, quoted in "Heavyweights Over Korea," in James T. Stewart, ed., *Airpower: The Decisive Force in Korea* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1957), 80-81; MacArthur, MacArthur Hearings, 103; Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 189, 244.

¹⁰⁰ General Headquarters, Far East Command, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff; Uniform, Insignia, Equipment: North Korean Army (n.p., 1950). General Bradley suggested that the North Koreans could also be using small arms of Chinese manufacture or "American weapons that we had furnished the Chinese Nationalists, and which were captured . . ." during the Chinese Civil War. Omar Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 995.

¹⁰¹ Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 995.

¹⁰² Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1382.

By these standards, American air power was employed inefficiently in Korea. It had to work its way backwards from the battle area halfway down the North Koreans' logistics trail, and was denied the opportunity to go any further.

It did not take an expert on aerial warfare to understand the implications of the situation. Senator Bourke Hickenlooper of Iowa asked Vandenberg whether "air power has been allowed to satisfactorily operate so far as military operations are concerned, or has it been restricted in certain of its fields of normal potential of air power?"¹⁰³ The Air Force Chief of Staff's reply was that his forces had indeed been handicapped.

Well, obviously, Senator, from what is well known the army that is facing us in Korea is supplied by matériel from Russia and in a normal operation where you would utilize your air power, that air power would be directed against the industrial source which supplies those arms, in that sense surely air power has been restricted in the Korean operation.¹⁰⁴

General Bradley, who was not a professional airman, but who had expressed his understanding of and agreement with the concept of strategic bombing during both the Defense and Unification hearings and the B-36 hearings, concurred.

Normally you go after certain targets with strategic bombing that are producing the war materials of a nation. In this case most of these supplies are not made in China, but they are made in Russia, so that you cannot go after the real source of supply. You can only get the supply installations where they are moving them down toward the front.¹⁰⁵

It is worth noting that both Bradley and Vandenberg implied that the Korean War was an abnormal situation. It was certainly novel.

¹⁰³ Bourke B. Hickenlooper, question, *Ibid.*, 1453.

¹⁰⁴ Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1453.

¹⁰⁵ Bradley, testimony, Defense and Unification Hearings, 521-522; Bradley, testimony, B-36 Bomber Hearings, 509, 519; Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 887.

The United States thus found itself fighting a war against an enemy that enjoyed many of the advantages of industrial-era warfare (modern weapons, but not mechanized transport) despite having very little industrial production of its own. Like the soul of Koschei the Deathless, a character from Russian folklore, the economy of the DPRK was safely hidden away beyond the reach of its enemies' weapons.¹⁰⁶ If the Americans wanted to destroy North Korea's ability to make war, they would have to go beyond its borders and expand the conflict to include its sponsor, the Soviet Union. As General Vandenberg observed, "[T]rue strategic targets were not available, unless all-out war with Russia was joined. . . ."¹⁰⁷

Calls for Expanding the War

There were many Americans who had advocated precisely such a course of action, despite that Truman and Acheson were attempting to avoid war with the Soviet Union. Calls for initiating hostilities against the USSR peaked in the late summer of 1950, at which time the South Koreans and UNC had been forced to the Pusan perimeter and were at risk of being driven from the Korean peninsula entirely. Unfortunately for Truman, these calls came from within his party—indeed, some were from members of his administration.

¹⁰⁶ The character who achieves immortality by investing his essence in a vessel outside of his body is an archetype found in literature and mythology around the world. Other examples include Chenoo, a giant in Native American legend, Oscar Wilde's Dorian Grey, and Davy Jones from *the Pirates of the Caribbean* motion picture series.

¹⁰⁷ Vandenberg, testimony, unexpurgated Mac Arthur Hearings microfilm, 3668.

The earliest incident occurred on 25 August 1950, when, during a speech commemorating the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Boston naval shipyard, Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews suggested that preventive war would be a fitting way of demonstrating the American commitment to freedom and world peace. “Never have we drawn the sword unless first attacked and so compelled to fight in self-defense. It is possible that we may have to alter that pacific policy,” he said.¹⁰⁸ Citing the sacrifices of Americans in wars since 1776, Matthews declared that liberty and peace were of such fundamental importance that the United States should consider launching a preemptory attack against nations—which he left unnamed—that threaten global stability and order. “To have peace we should be willing, and declare our intention to pay any price, even the price of instituting a war to compel cooperation for peace.”¹⁰⁹ He concluded by saying

Only the forces who do not want peace would oppose our efforts to transform the hostile nations embroiled in the present international conflicts into a tranquil world. They would brand our program as imperialistic aggression. We could bear that slander with complacency, for in the implementation of a strong, affirmative peace-seeking policy, though it cast us in a character new to a true democracy, an initiator of a war of aggression, it would win for us a proud and popular title; we would become the first aggressors for peace.¹¹⁰

The editors of *The Hartford Courant* understood the implications of Matthews’ speech.

“You may be sure the Kremlin will make the most of this proposal,” they warned.

¹⁰⁸ Francis P. Matthews, speech at Boston naval Shipyard, 25 August 1950, printed as “Aggressors for Peace: A Firm, Affirmative Peace-Seeking Policy,” in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 September 1950, 731.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 732.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

“There is no question about the impropriety of the Secretary’s statement.”¹¹¹ They called for Matthews’ resignation, citing the precedent of Henry Wallace, who had been forced to leave the office of Secretary of Commerce in 1946 after publicizing his “new approach” to the Soviet Union, which deviated from Truman’s foreign policy.¹¹²

Both the State Department and the White House quickly issued public statements that Matthews had not cleared his speech with them and that they disapproved of its message. The Secretary later said that his speech “was not intended to be an expression of national policy. I was speaking for myself.”¹¹³

The president did not seek Matthews’ dismissal, but instead gave the Secretary of the Navy a second chance, much as he would with MacArthur a few months later (see above). He was not happy, of course. “There is nothing more foolish than to think that war can be stopped by war,” he would write later in his memoirs. “You don’t ‘prevent’ anything by war except peace.”¹¹⁴ When he spoke to Matthews after the speech, the secretary had said he had been influenced by the many admirals and other naval officers present at the ceremony.

He told me he had heard so many of them talk ‘preventive war’ that he had repeated the phrase without realizing how far it took him away from my policy. He was very contrite and full of regrets when I talked to him and explained why I could not have members of my administration going around the country advocating a view that was so completely opposed to the official policy of the government.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ “Contradictions in Confusionland,” *The Hartford Courant*, 29 August 1950, 8.

¹¹² Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 555-559.

¹¹³ Francis P. Matthews, quoted in “Sec. Matthews Rebuked for War Speech: White House Joins State Department in Repudiating Talk,” *The Washington Post*, 27 August 1950, M1.

¹¹⁴ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 383.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Unlike MacArthur, Matthews seemed to learn from his error and stayed out of trouble for the remainder of his tenure as Secretary of the Navy.¹¹⁶

Truman addressed the nation by radio on 1 September 1950. He made sure to remind his listeners that Americans “do not believe in aggressive or preventive war. Such war is the weapon of dictators, not of free democratic countries like the United States. We are arming only for defense against aggression.”¹¹⁷

The president was not responding only to Matthews’ speech. The day before, in an article about military officials speaking out about foreign policy, political columnist Drew Pearson had noted that Matthews was not alone in endorsing the idea of preventive war. One air force officer was identified specifically. Under Commandant Orvil A. Anderson, the Air War College in Alabama had “been staging a series of lectures in which a preventive war is urged openly.”¹¹⁸ The former aeronaut and bomber officer did not reserve his thoughts on the subject to only the school, but often shared his views with the media.¹¹⁹ “[I]f we wait for the overt act of war,” he said, “Can we be sure that we can then go into action and win? Surely, we as a people do not intend to suffer a lethal blow before retaliating.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Matthews left the post in July 1951 to become Ambassador to Ireland, a position he held until his death the next year.

¹¹⁷ Harry S. Truman, radio address, 1 September 1950, printed as “Aims and Objects in Resisting Aggression in Korea,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 11 September 1950, 409-410.

¹¹⁸ Drew Pearson, “The Washington Merry-Go-Round: Causes of Rebuke to Military,” *The Washington Post*, 31 August 1950, B15.

¹¹⁹ Orvil Arson Anderson first achieved fame in 1935 when he and Albert Williams Stevens, both captains in the US Army, won the Mackay Trophy (recognizing the “most meritorious flight of the year”) for setting a world altitude record of 72,395 feet in a balloon as part of a US Army project.

¹²⁰ Orvil Anderson, quoted in “Anderson Warns Against Morals Dictating Course of Next War: Declares First Blow will be Lethal Blow,” *The Montgomery Examiner*, 25 May 1950, 2; cited in John Henry Scrivner, Jr., “Pioneer into Space: A Biography of Major General Orvil Arson Anderson,” PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 1971, 340.

Knowing that Anderson would likely have an opinion about the Matthews affair, a local newspaper reporter asked for an interview. The resulting article was published on the day that Truman gave his speech about preventive war. In it, the general proclaimed, “Give me the order to do it and I can break up Russia’s five A-bomb nests in a week!” The paper’s editor copyrighted and syndicated the article, allowing it to appear nationwide. The next day, readers all over the country could read how Anderson had proclaimed, “[W]hen I went up to Christ, I think I could explain to Him why I wanted to do it—now—before it is too late. I think I could explain to Him that had saved civilization.”¹²¹

Truman’s memoirs do not mention this incident but Dean Acheson’s do. “General Orville [*sic*] Anderson . . . announced that the Air Force, equipped and ready, only awaited orders to drop its bombs on Moscow. He was retired.”¹²² Writing almost two decades after the event, Acheson misremembered: the general was reassigned but chose instead to leave the service and collect his pension.¹²³

In many works about atomic warfare, the Korean War, or military-civilian relations in the United States, the Anderson affair is generally presented as a sequel to

¹²¹ Orvil Anderson, quoted in Allen Rankin, “U.S. Could Wipe Out Red A-Bomb Nests in a Week, Gen. Anderson Asserts: Action ‘In Time’ Might Save Civilization, AU Officer Asserts,” *The Montgomery Advertiser*, 30 August 1950, 1, 3.

Allen Rankin was a columnist who had himself advocated preventive war. In May 1950, he had written, “It’s spring, and nobody wants to fight, but if we must, let’s get ready and hit the first atomic blow. More Americans will live longer that way.” According to his biographer, Anderson had a copy of this article in his files. Allan Rankin, “Rankin File,” *Alabama Journal*, 26 March 1950, 4; cited in Scrivner, “Pioneer into Space,” 346.

¹²² Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), 478.

¹²³ “Removed General Gets Training Post: Anderson, Relieved for Urging ‘Preventive War,’ is Shifted to Technical Air Command,” *The New York Times*, 14 September 1950, 7; “General Seeks to Retire: Anderson, Backer of Preventive War, Files Application,” *The New York Times*, 28 November 1950, 39.

the Matthews incident.¹²⁴ They do not mention that at the time it occurred there was another element in the controversy. There were some who suggested that the general's offense had not been that he had advocated preventive war but that he let slip a military secret—that the United States knew more about the USSR's atomic bomb program—such as the number of A-Bomb “nests” in the Soviet Union—than it had publicly admitted.¹²⁵

In his statement explaining why he had suspended Anderson, USAF Chief of Staff Vandenberg disavowed preventive war, “so that American citizens may know that the Air Force first, last and always is an instrument of peace.”¹²⁶ The Air Force did, eventually, acknowledge that preventive war was indeed discussed at the Air War College, but only as a possibility. “General Anderson and others in the academic climate of the Air University have discussed the pros and cons of preventive war, just as they have discussed many other subjects on a theoretical basis.”¹²⁷

The Anderson affair was still making headlines when Truman had to respond to yet another irritant. During a radio interview broadcast a few days after Anderson's

¹²⁴ Examples include I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (The New York: Monthly Review, 1952), 93; William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1995), 62.

¹²⁵ “Air Force Mum on Russia's ‘5 A-Bomb Nests:’ General's Talk Gets Poker Face Response,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 3 September 1950, 3; “Anderson Inquiry Set: General's Talks on Preventive War will be Sifted,” *The New York Times*, 3 September 1950, 4; “The Real Reason?,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 1950, A4; “Speculate on Real Reason for Gen. Anderson's Suspension,” *Armed Force*, 9 September 1950, 8.

¹²⁶ Hoyt Vandenberg, quoted in Gerald Griffin, “Air General Suspended in ‘Preventive War’ Row: Staff Chief Drops Anderson from Post Because of Reported Indorsement of U. S. Attack,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 2 September 1950, 1.

¹²⁷ “Preventive War Said Discussed by Officers at Air U.,” *The Boston Globe*, 12 September 1950, 32.

“give me the word” gaffe was published, Senator John Little McClellan of Arkansas said,

If Russia refuses to enter into the spirit of international co-operation . . . we would have our final answer. . . . I would favor our firing the first shot in the war which would then be inevitable. . . . I think we are dealing with a desperate world situation in which our only chance of winning the peace lies in showing Russia that we are prepared to and can destroy her unless she joins in an international spirit of peace and good will.¹²⁸

Although McClellan was, like Truman, a Democrat, there was little the president could do to reprimand him. As commander in chief, Truman could discipline Matthews, Anderson, and, ultimately, MacArthur. The senator was responsible only to the voters of his home state.

Fortunately for Truman, the debate about the desirability of a possible war with the USSR died down in mid-September. The success of the Inchon landing and the UNC’s consequent northwards advance through Korea made it appear that the war would end soon. Other factors contributing to the decline in interest in the subject must be social and psychological: The concept of “aggression for peace” is oxymoronic and, especially when promoted as a religious duty, morally repugnant.

However, there were also practical (“purely military”) reasons why a war against the USSR might not be feasible. At about the time that preventive war was making headlines, the Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared a report in which they noted that

[a]t this time, and in all probability for some months extending beyond the period dealt with in this report, the United States capabilities for executing

¹²⁸ John Little McClellan, quoted in “Senator Asks Showdown on Russian Aims: McClellan Favors Peace-or-War Stand, All-Out Mobilization,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 3 September 1950, 1. Senator McClellan might be best known for chairing an investigation into organized crime in the United States in 1957. However, fame is fleeting, and the inquiry is referred to as the Valachi Hearings just as often as it is called McClellan committee hearings.

any approved emergency war plan has [*sic*] been materially reduced in view off the present involvement in the war in the Far East. . . . If a number of specific satellite acts of aggression occur simultaneously or in succession, the United States must view the situation as the prelude to global war and, accordingly, must not allow its armed forces to be dissipated on dispersed, piecemeal deployments in resisting the aggressions, but instead must fully prepare itself for global war. . . .”¹²⁹

As noted in the previous chapter, the United States had to be prepared for the possibility of war with the USSR. The Soviets could either intervene in Korea or initiate a war in another portion of the world while the United States and its UN allies were distracted by and committed to the Far East. There were many who thought “[t]he North Korean attack was a limited [Soviet] operation designed . . . to commit Western forces in relatively non-vital areas.”¹³⁰ General Anderson had been one of these. In August 1950, he had expressed the opinion that “[t]he Korean operation has all the basic characteristics of a feint: the real threat is in Western Europe.”¹³¹

Yet the Americans realized that if the USSR wanted to start World War Three, there was very little they could do about it. The issue was out of their control; the Soviets would choose their own schedule. The Americans could, however, and did, act to keep the USSR from becoming involved directly in the Korean War.

¹²⁹ JCS1924/28 “The Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Future Soviet Moves in Light of the Korean Situation,” 23 August 1950, 521-522, in *Records of the JCS/46-52/SU*, reel 3, microfilm.

¹³⁰ Counselor, British Embassy in Washington, précis of remarks, United States Delegation minutes, First Session, Preliminary Conversations for the September Foreign Ministers Meeting, Washington, 29 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-6, 1135.

¹³¹ Orvil A. Anderson, quoted in “Air College Commander Calls Korea a ‘Feint,’” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 19 August 1950, 2.

CHAPTER VIII

ANATHEMA: KEEPING THE SOVIET UNION OUT OF THE KOREAN WAR

Throughout its duration the Americans were concerned that the limited conflict in Korea would escalate. Their primary fear was that the Soviet Union would enter the war or, worse, initiate hostilities elsewhere. As a result, the United States adopted a policy intended to avoid giving the USSR any excuse to begin fighting in Asia or Europe. This policy manifested itself primarily as restrictions upon the use of air power in the war. The Americans prohibited their aircraft from entering Soviet airspace, and even within the Korean peninsula, placed certain targets off limits. However, aircraft are highly mobile, and perhaps inevitably, several incidents occurred in which American aircraft committed hostile acts against Soviet land and air forces outside of Korea proper. The Americans' desire to not provoke the Soviets was also tested in other incidents in which Soviet aircraft engaged American air and sea forces well away from Korea.

USAF Stretched Thin

During the first phase of the Korean War, when the UNC was fighting only the North Koreans, the United States and its United Nations allies had to consider and prepare for three possible escalation scenarios: Soviet intervention in Korea, Chinese intervention in Korea, or a Soviet attack elsewhere in the world. Their primary focus was on the USSR. Writing in August 1950, a State Department official noted that “both

the Defense Establishment and the State Department feel very strongly that we do not want active Soviet participation in the Korean War or the commencement of worldwide hostilities this year.”¹ He did not mention the People’s Republic of China.

Because the MacArthur Hearings took place after the PRC entered the war, it was easy for its participants and observers to forget that for much of the first six months of the conflict, American defense and foreign policy focused on the possibility that the Soviets might enter the war. As General Vandenberg told senators about his thinking during the early days of the conflict, “[I]n my analysis of the situation over there, . . . as we say, Sunday-morning quarterbacking, the threat that was the most logical at that time appeared to be from Russia rather than from China. Therefore, the main attention . . . was based more on a consideration of that problem than upon the Chinese.”²

General Vandenberg’s testimony fills some 131 pages in the single-spaced, censored, printed edition of the MacArthur Hearings, and 364 pages in the unexpurgated, double-spaced, typewritten manuscript version. Many of the senators asked him about the preparedness of the USAF for a possible war against the Soviets, but as most of the questions addressed specific elements of the problem, Vandenberg never had the opportunity to summarize his thinking on the matter in a single quotable passage. Fortunately, one of the questioners, H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey, was able to

¹ Deputy Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 14 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7 574. This official, Harrison Freeman Matthews, was not related to Francis P. Matthews, the Secretary of the Navy who had urged preventive war in August 1950.

² Vandenberg, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1504. Modern Americans familiar with the expression “Monday-morning quarterbacking” may find Vandenberg’s version a bit curious. In the early 1950s, college football, traditionally played on Saturdays, was far more popular than professional football, generally played on Sundays (autumn weekends in the USA provide football fans a full three days’ worth of entertainment—high school games are usually played on Fridays).

synthesize Vandenberg's thoughts. "You impressed me very much with your whole discussion of your global air force," he said to Vandenberg.

It seems to me that your position is very soundly taken, namely, that it is one of our main deterrents to the possibility of Russia starting something. If our Air Force was destroyed or badly impaired, Russia might well feel in a much stronger position. She might be happy if we had engaged our Air Force in the Far East or had it impaired or partially destroyed. I take it this is your position.³

But he never asked Vandenberg to confirm whether his summation was correct. Instead he asked the general whether MacArthur had been aware of the USAF's straitened circumstances when he called for the bombing of Manchuria. Was the CINCUNC thinking only in terms of his responsibilities in the Far East, or was he seeing the big picture? Vandenberg answered, "I would suppose that he was thinking mainly about the impact on that area [the Korean theatre]. . . ."⁴

Vandenberg and his fellow Chiefs of Staff, in contrast, had to consider other factors. "I have great global responsibilities for the employment and the security of the United States Air Force," Vandenberg told Smith. "Therefore, when I advocate its use or nonuse, I have to do it in view of those global responsibilities."⁵ It is difficult to imagine a scenario in which an American air attack upon targets within the Soviet Union would not have precipitated a world war, for which the United States and its allies, particular those in Western Europe, were inadequately prepared and equipped.

Yet even if the United States refrained from bombing the USSR for fear of beginning a larger conflict, the Soviets might still have elected to initiate such a war

³ H. Alexander Smith, question, MacArthur Hearings, 1461.

⁴ Vandenberg, testimony, Ibid., 1461.

⁵ Ibid.

themselves. The Americans thus had to gauge what might cause the Soviets to do so. Of course, they had had five years of experience in calculating Soviet intentions and capabilities—American foreign policy throughout Cold War, both before and after Korea, might be described as an exercise in judging how the Soviets would react to various situations. But the Korean War complicated matters. Never before had one of the superpowers participated in open conflict in a region adjacent to its rival. “The Russians are very touchy about any military activity in the vicinity of their frontiers,” noted H. Freeman Matthews, Jr., the Deputy Under Secretary of State.⁶

Rashin

Matthews made this observation in a memorandum he wrote in response to an American bombing raid on 12 August 1950 against the city of Rashin (also known as Racin or Najin) in the far northeastern corner of North Korea.⁷ The attack resulted in considerable unease at the State Department, as indicated by the amount of internal and interagency communications on the topic generated by high-ranking bureau officials over the next few weeks.⁸ Rashin is very close to the Soviet border and the possibility

⁶ Deputy Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 12 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7 566.

⁷ Although “Racin” was used during the Korean War, the US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) recognizes at present three variants of the town’s name: Rashin, Rasin, and Najin. “GeoNames Search, National GeoSpatial-Intelligence Agency, <http://geonames.nga.mil/ggmagaz/>, search conducted 17 December 2011.

The North Korean government now uses the name Racŏn. Before 2000, the officially-sanctioned Romanized name of the city in the DPRK was Rajin-Sŏnbong.

The McCune-Reischauer Romanization system renders the city’s name as Rasŏn or Nasŏn. The Revised Romanization system calls it Raseon and Naseon.

⁸ Deputy Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 14 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7 573; State Department Counselor, memorandum to the Secretary of State, 14 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 574-575; Undersecretary of State, memorandum of conversation, 15 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 581-582;

that an American bomber might stray into the USSR—or worse, bomb it—was a cause of great apprehension for the American Foreign Service. “[I]f the Soviet authorities are undecided or are hesitating as to whether to move on a wider basis now the bombing of Rashin or similar moves might well prove to be an important deciding factor,” wrote a State Department official two days after the raid.⁹

The State Department’s position was that the bombing of Rashin contravened the JCS directive issued to MacArthur on 29 June 1950. Although, as was noted earlier, this order authorized the UNC to conduct aerial and naval operations north of the 38th parallel, it also included a very important *caveat*: “Special care will be taken to insure that operations in North Korea stay well clear of the frontiers of Manchuria [northwestern China] or the Soviet Union.”¹⁰ The intent of this instruction was to avoid giving either the PRC or the USSR cause to enter the war. It would have a far-reaching effect on the conduct of the air war in Korea.

Rashin (identified as Najindong) was one of the cities named in the JCS directive issued to MacArthur in late July recommending that the UNC initiate a strategic bombing program. The list mentioned only one specific target type in the area, a petroleum storage plant (the USAF’s official history of the conflict adds that it was

Undersecretary of State, message to Secretary of Defense, 16 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 588-589; Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 17 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 593; State Department Counselor, memorandum to the Under Secretary of State, 21 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 612-613.

⁹ Deputy Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 14 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 74.

¹⁰ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 29 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 240-241.

specifically a naval oil depot).¹¹ MacArthur's headquarters issued a press release after the raid describing the target as "port naval and transportation facilities. . . ."¹²

By the time of the MacArthur Hearings, however, the petroleum facility had been forgotten. What mattered was Rashin's value as a transportation center, specifically, its railyard. "I was very anxious to bomb Racin. . . . It is the great central distributing point from Manchuria down the east coast of Korea," MacArthur informed the investigation.¹³

The general claimed that "[w]e asked to bomb that [the city's target complex], and were forbidden . . ."¹⁴ (Vandenberg would later testify that the JCS had "authorized its bombing twice," as would Bradley—but see below).¹⁵ He also asserted that Rashin "is perhaps 35 miles within North Korea," although he finally admitted, "[M]y guess is about 35 miles this side of the border."¹⁶

Some of the senators cited MacArthur's mileage figure when interrogating Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall about Rashin.¹⁷ "I don't contest General MacArthur's distance there, . . . but it seemed to me it was closer than he mentioned," he observed.¹⁸ Eventually, Omar Bradley, the Chairman of the JCS, found it necessary to say, "Statements have been used here before this committee several times that it [Rashin] is 35 miles from the Russian border. It is not 35 miles. It is around 17 or 18

¹¹ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 31 July 1950,; http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-07-31&documentid=ki-22-3&pagenumber=1, accessed 17 December 2011; Futrell, *USAF in Korea*, revised ed., 1983, 184.

¹² (Press) Release 245, 13 August 1950, printed in its entirety as "Text of Releases Describing Korean War, *The New York Times*, 13 August 1950, 2.

¹³ MacArthur, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 17.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Vandenberg, testimony, Ibid., 887; Bradley, testimony, Ibid., 750.

¹⁶ MacArthur, testimony, Ibid., 17.

¹⁷ Russell, question, Ibid., 25, 356; Alexander Wiley, question, Ibid., 431.

¹⁸ George C. Marshall, testimony, Ibid., 431.

miles—I have a map here with me if anybody wants to look at it” (in his memoirs, written in 1964, MacArthur would concede only that Rashin was “many miles” from Siberia).¹⁹

Seventeen miles represents just five minutes’ flying time in a B-29 at its cruising speed of 220 mph. Nonetheless, an individual airplane—even a large, heavily-laden, four-engined bomber—should be able to line up on its target, bomb it, and turn away within the space of seventeen miles. A squadron- or group-sized unit, however, is much less maneuverable and the raid of 12 August 1950 involved two squadrons.²⁰ To maintain formation integrity (which reduces stragglers, optimizes defensive firepower, and ensures concentrated bombing patterns), a large assembly of aircraft is limited to gentle turns, “ideally at 30 degrees, but not more than 45 degrees.”²¹ These turns are made at some distance from the target area to allow all of the bombers to pass over the Initial Point (IP), the location at which the bomb run—flown straight-and-level to allow for accurate aiming—is begun, and the Rally Point (RP), the location at which the bombers turn for home, in good order (in large formations, airplanes on the inside or the outside of a turn have to change speed, sometimes significantly, to keep station while turning). To provide sufficient time to locate and aim, IPs can be several dozen miles

¹⁹ Bradley, testimony, *Ibid.*, 750; Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963) 365.

²⁰ O’Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3068. By the time of the Korean War the USAF was changing its unit nomenclature. The unit called a Group during World War Two became known as a Wing, the name used today.

²¹ Roger A. Freeman, *Mighty Eighth War Manual* (Osceola WI: Motorbooks, 1991), 23.

from the target.²² General Bradley was aware of this requirement, telling senators, “17 miles is not a very long space in which to turn around and get back out. . . .”²³

During his testimony earlier, MacArthur had told the investigators, “No one would have been more opposed to doing any bombing in Siberia than I would. . . .”²⁴ He then added,

[T]here was no possibility of crossing the border. It was well within the area [where bombing was permitted], and had we bombed, we would have been solicitous to do so in clear weather so there could have been no mistake. I had the most definite assurances from the Air that there could be no possibility of error.²⁵

General O’Donnell was equally confident about the ability of his crews to bomb Rashin without violating the Soviet frontier.²⁶

Yet although General Lauris Norstad, Acting Vice Chief of Staff for the Air Force, claimed that “the Air Force had given the strictest instructions that B-29s were not to bomb Rashin except under the most favorable weather conditions when there could be no possibility of bombing Soviet or Manchurian territory by error, . . .” the Rashin raid was made without visual acquisition or confirmation of the target.²⁷ As General O’Donnell recounted to senators, “They went up there with a good weather forecast, but actually found the place completely overcast, or undercast, so they bombed

²² For example, for the USAAF raid on Berlin on 29 April 1944, the IP was 36 miles, or ten minute’s flying time, from the target. “The Berlin Bombing Mission Flown by the 8th Air Force on April 29, 1944,” www.B24.net, <http://www.b24.net/stories/annette.htm>, accessed 23 December 2011.

²³ Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1063.

²⁴ MacArthur, testimony, *Ibid.*, 17-18.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ O’Donnell, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3097.

²⁷ Deputy Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 12 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 566.

by radar through the overcast. . . .”²⁸ State Department officials were not pleased when they learned of the raid. In a memorandum for Dean Acheson, George F. Kennan noted, “Given the speed at which these planes operate, and the fact that they were bombing through an overcast, it is obvious how easily they could not only have overflowed the Soviet frontier but actually have inflicted damage on the Soviet side of it.”²⁹

General O’Donnell told the investigating committee, “I heard later on that people back home were concerned about our hitting Siberia, but Siberia is 17 miles from Racine, and we don’t make those kind of errors.”³⁰ He was not the only military officer to make such a claim. In a conversation with H. Freeman Matthews, Army General James H. Burns, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Foreign Military Affairs and Military Assistance, said that “he thought in view of the present Air Force precision there was probably no likelihood that the B-29s had flown over Soviet or Manchurian territory.”³¹

O’Donnell and Burns were mistaken. In the air age, border incursions by aircraft caused by navigational error, while not common, are not infrequent, either. During World War Two, the German Luftwaffe bombed the city of Dublin in neutral Ireland, and USAAF aircraft inadvertently bombed cities in Switzerland on multiple occasions, the most notable incident occurring on 1 April 1944, when forty people were killed in Schaffhausen.³² Advances in radio navigation aids since 1945 did not prevent similar

²⁸ O’Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3068.

²⁹ State Department Counselor, memorandum to the Secretary of State, 14 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 575.

³⁰ O’Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3068.

³¹ Deputy Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 14 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 74.

³² “Germans Admit Dublin Bombed by Nazi Plane,” *The Boston Globe*, 19 June 1941, 3; “Swiss Thank U.S. on Indemnity,” *The New York Times*, 25 October 1949, 3; Jonathan E. Helmreich, “The Diplomacy of Apology: US Bombings of Switzerland during World War II,” *Air University Review* 28,

errors in Korea. In late July, a few weeks before the Rashin raid, General George E Stratemeyer, commander of the Far East Air Forces (FEAF), noted in his diary that

a B-29, scheduled to attack front-line precision targets, due to weather, changed its course for P'yŏngyang; however, due to poor navigation and non-alertness, the pilot discovered he was right over Dairen [in China] at which place he was intercepted by two Russian fighters, but they did not fire. The pilot pulled away, dropped his bombs on P'yŏngyang marshalling yards and beat it for home.³³

Dairen (called Dalian today) is some 200 miles from the capital of North Korea.³⁴

Soviet Sensitivity

The State Department's concern about the Soviet reactions to border violations, both advertent and inadvertent, was founded on experience. "The Kremlin has an intensive and almost pathological sensitivity regarding Soviet frontier areas," Dean Acheson observed.³⁵ Throughout the Cold War, USAF and USN reconnaissance and patrol aircraft routinely conducted flights near or in Soviet territory, their purpose a combination of surveying Soviet defenses and gathering navigational and targeting data (more below). These operations reflected the Americans' reliance on technology: in the

no. 4, (1997), 19-37; Jonathan E. Helmreich, "The Bombing of Zurich," *Aerospace Power Journal* 14, no. 2 (2000), 92-108; Eoin C. Bairéad, *The Bombing of Dolphin's Barn, Dublin, 1941* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2010).

³³ George E. Stratemeyer, diary entry, 27 July 1950, in William T. Y'Blood, editor, *The Three Wars of Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer: His Korean War Diary* (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999), 85. This work hereafter referred to as "Stratemeyer Diary."

³⁴ That Pyongyang is inland and Dairen is on a coast make this error in navigation seem particularly egregious. However, during the Korean War the USAF's B-29s were based on Okinawa and would have approached Korea from the southeast, over the East China Sea. The two cities are located on different peninsulas that share roughly similar shapes and dimensions, so it is possible that the crew of an airplane flying towards Asia from the Pacific could mistake them, not realizing the error until they noticed that there was a city in the wrong location on the peninsula they were approaching. While understandable, such a mistake could have very serious consequences.

³⁵ Secretary of State, memorandum to the President, 11 September 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 721.

absence of more reliable means for collecting intelligence about the Soviet Union, the United States called upon its air power to do the job. No other nation has ever developed a comparable strategic reconnaissance capability.³⁶

These missions did not go unmolested. On 22 October 1949, Soviet fighters attacked a USAF RB-29 (the reconnaissance variant of the B-29 bomber) over the Sea of Japan but their quarry escaped. “Over the next decades, there were thirty documented Soviet attacks on U.S. reconnaissance aircraft. A tragic thirteen were successful.”³⁷ The first was a USN patrol bomber shot down on 8 April 1950 into the Baltic Sea with the loss of all on board (the Soviets claimed it had penetrated Latvian airspace and that its crew had ignored repeated requests to land).³⁸ During the diplomatic maneuvering that

³⁶ The United States is almost unique in having developed aircraft designed specifically for the purpose of reconnaissance and surveillance. Other air forces usually employ modified bomber and fighter designs in these roles. The most famous American reconnaissance aircraft are the U-2 and SR-71, both produced by Lockheed. Other dedicated reconnaissance aircraft designed for the American services include the World War Two-era Hughes XF-11 and Republic XF-12, neither of which entered production.

³⁷ *Dedication and Sacrifice: National Aerial Reconnaissance in the Cold War* (Fort George G. Meade MD: Center for Cryptologic History, National Security Agency, 1995?), 4. This work, a slim (eight-page) pamphlet, provides no formal publication data. Its back cover, however, directs readers seeking more information or additional copies to contact the Center for Cryptologic History at the address (with ZIP code) listed above. Its OCLC entry includes the same information given above.

Dedication and Sacrifice is confusingly written. Immediately after noting “a tragic thirteen were successful,” it states, “During the Cold War period of 1945-1977, a total of more than forty reconnaissance aircraft were shot down in the European and Pacific areas,” possibly contradicting the previous sentence. However, this figure could either represent non-American aircraft losses or shootdowns by powers other than the USSR.

³⁸ Chief of Naval Operations, letter to the Secretary of the Navy, 14 April 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-4, 1143-1144; Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 15 April 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-4, 1144-1147; Secretary of State, telegram to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, 17 April 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-4, 1147-1148; State Department, Oral Statement to the Press, 18 April 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-4, 1148-1149; Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 21 April 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-4, 1158-1160; Secretary of State, telegram to Embassy in the Soviet Union, 4 May 1950, 1190-1191.

As evidenced by the catalogue above, this incident, because it was the first of its kind in the Cold War generated a considerable amount of diplomatic traffic between the United States and the Soviet Union. Sadly, there would be many other shootdowns like it over the next three decades. For more information about Cold War strategic reconnaissance operations, see John W. R. Taylor and David Mandey, *Spies in the Sky* (New York: Scribners, 1972); Paul Lashmar, *Spy Flights of the Cold War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 1996); Robert Jackson, *High Cold War: Strategic Aerial Reconnaissance and the Electronic Intelligence War* (Nr. Yeovil UK: Patrick Stephens, 1998); Curtis Peebles, *Shadow Flights:*

followed, the government of the USSR gave notice that it would not hesitate to use force in any future incident: “It is not difficult to understand that any aviation of any country, under obligation to guard the inviolability of its frontiers, should conduct itself in exactly such a manner as Soviet aviation did, in a case of violation of its country by a foreign plane.”³⁹

These aerial surveillance operations did not end with the onset of the Korean War (and, indeed, continued throughout the Cold War). On 14 July 1950, another RB-29 escaped damage when fired upon by Soviet fighters off the east coast of the USSR. Little wonder, then, that State Department memoranda in the aftermath of the Rashin bombing “emphasized the sensitivity of Soviet authorities to any military activity in the neighborhood of their territory and the dangers involved, particularly in view of their presumed state of tenseness and irritation.”⁴⁰

The war taking place just outside their territory also contributed to the Soviets’ mistrust. Shortly after the Rashin raid, George Kennan wrote to Dean Acheson that MacArthur’s recent announcement that Korean War news would be censored before it could be released, combined with speculation in the American popular press that American authorities had withheld from their reports the actual type of targets bombed in Rashin, “can only appear to the Soviet authorities as evidence as a deliberate attempt to exploit the South Korean hostilities for the purpose of reducing Soviet strategic

America’s Secret Air War against the Soviet Union (Novato CA: Presidio, 2000); John T. Farquhar, *A Need to Know: The Role of Air Force Reconnaissance in War Planning, 1945-1953* (Maxwell AFB AL: Air UP, 2004).

³⁹ Translation of Soviet Note, 21 April 1950, in Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 21 April 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-4, 1159.

⁴⁰ Deputy Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 12 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7 566.

abilities in the area. . . .”⁴¹ The Secretary of State shared these concerns with the President, noting that the Soviets could send troops into North Korea or make their air force available to the DPRK.⁴²

Rashin Again

The witnesses testifying during the MacArthur Hearings raised additional issues involving Rashin. Secretary of Defense Marshall observed that some officials were concerned that an attack upon the docks and port could cause damage to any ships in the harbor —some of which may have belonged to neutral nations.⁴³ Other witnesses mentioned the possibility that the Soviets had a submarine base in Rashin, or had leased other facilities there.⁴⁴

Given that the Rashin raid was a *fait accompli*, the State Department’s objections might be interpreted as simply an effort to register that agency’s opposition to the attack after it had occurred. However, Acheson, Webb, Kennan, and other bureau officials were not just trying to make sure their protests were on record *ex post facto*. They were concerned about future missions. As General O’Donnell was to tell senate investigators,

The rail yards . . . were separated from the city, and that is, the rail yard itself is not a good radar target; the city is an excellent radar target, and I could guarantee almost complete destruction of the city any time whether

⁴¹ State Department Counselor, memorandum to the Secretary of State, 14 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 574-575. The newspaper account to which Kennan referred alleged that the Soviets had been using Rashin as a submarine base because, unlike the USSR’s cities on the Pacific Ocean, it was a warm-water port. Ansel E. Talbert, “U.S. Drives Wedge in Path of Soviet Submarine Project,” *The Boston Globe*, 14 August 1950, 2.

⁴² Secretary of State, memorandum to the President, 11 September 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 721.

⁴³ Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 355.

⁴⁴ Forrest P. Sherman, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1651-1652; O’Donnell, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3097.

we used radar or visual. But I think we would have had to have a good visual day and I could have guaranteed the destruction of the yards on that.⁴⁵

But, as was noted earlier, the weather did not cooperate on the day of the raid, and so

we were trying to hit the railroad yards to the south; and we finally were able to get a photographic reconnaissance of our strike a little later on, and we found that the patterns were very good patterns indeed. One was about 1,500 feet, the center of impact of one was about 1,500 feet to the right of the railroad yards, and another one was a comparable distance to the left, so they were just good, solid, substantial misses.⁴⁶

Accuracy and precision are two different things. “The impact was good, the pattern was good, and they just didn’t hit the target.”⁴⁷ The failure of the mission thus raised the possibility of a second attack, prompting the concern of the State Department.

After the raid of Rashin, Under Secretary of State Webb wrote to the Secretary of Defense, closing his letter by saying “I consider it to be highly important that the Department of State be consulted in advance of any repetition of the bombing of Najin or any other place equally close to the Soviet or Manchurian frontiers.”⁴⁸ The next day, Webb met with both the President and the Secretary of Defense to express the department’s views.⁴⁹ When the need for a return visit to the city became apparent, Secretary of Defense Johnson reminded Acheson that “[t]he bombing of Najin was directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. . . .”⁵⁰ The city’s facilities were legitimate military targets vital to the North Korean war effort. “Your earlier objections to the attack which

⁴⁵ O’Donnell, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3097.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3068.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Undersecretary of State, message to the Secretary of Defense, 16 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 589.

⁴⁹ Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 17 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 593.

⁵⁰ Secretary of Defense, message to the Secretary of State, 21 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 613.

had already been made upon Najin was [*sic*] discussed with the President and the attack met with his approval.”⁵¹

Johnson rejected the idea that the Soviets would interpret the bombing of Rashin as an attempt to affect their strategic position in the region. “Otherwise, it would follow that our entire Korean campaign is, or may be, so regarded by the Soviets, thus placing in question practically all military features of our Korean operations.”⁵² The Secretary of Defense said he understood the need to balance the diplomatic and military. “I firmly believe in the importance of political considerations in politico-military decisions.”⁵³ Yet he did not agree that bombing Rashin would result in the dire consequences that Acheson, Webb, Kennan, and other State Department officials foresaw. Anticipating MacArthur’s March message to Senator Martin (see previous chapter), Johnson wrote, “[O]nce war operations are undertaken, it seems to me that they must be conducted to win.”⁵⁴ Excessive timidity could result in unacceptable casualties to friendly forces, for which the commander in the field would have to answer. “To any extent that external appearances are permitted to conflict with or hamper military judgment in actual combat decision, the effectiveness of our forces will be jeopardized, and the question of responsibility may well be raised”⁵⁵ It was the Defense Department, not the Department of State, that would suffer the consequences of a defeat. “I repeat,” Johnson concluded, “that we interpret the spirit of the expression ‘well clear’ to be that our planes must not violate Soviet or Manchurian frontiers. We are carefully complying with this spirit, not

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 614.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

only in our planning but also in our instructions to General MacArthur.”⁵⁶ The State Department had never defined how far “well clear” was.

Under Secretary Webb advised Acheson not to respond to this letter. He felt that despite Johnson’s acknowledgment that military operations should serve political policies, the Secretary of Defense did not understand the issues at stake, and it would be difficult to instruct him about them, given numerous previous attempts. “It was agreed that the Department of State should take no action which could be interpreted as interference in the conduct of military operations.”⁵⁷

The administration authorized another bombing raid on Rashin. The president had “thought that we would have to take whatever risks were necessary to destroy the points from which supplies were flowing” (although he agreed that the State Department should be consulted about “departures from agreed instructions”).⁵⁸ However, this second mission, scheduled for 22 August 1950, never took place. “One of the bombings went through, the other one, because of weather, had to be diverted to a secondary target,”⁵⁹ General Bradley testified before the Senate the following spring.

MacArthur would not get another opportunity to bomb Rashin. The city was formally placed off limits in September 1950.⁶⁰ General Ridgway, MacArthur’s successor, inherited the ban. On 1 May 1951, shortly after he took over as CINCUNC

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Editors, footnote (describing material not printed), *FRUS* 1950-7, 614.

⁵⁸ Under Secretary of State, memorandum, 17 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 593.

⁵⁹ Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1063.

⁶⁰ Futrell, *USAF in Korea*, revised ed., 194; Editors, footnote (describing material not printed), *FRUS* 1950-7, 722; Editors, footnote (describing material not printed), *FRUS* 1951-7, 202.

and CINCFE, the JCS reminded him, “You are prohibited from attacking Rashin with air and naval forces.”⁶¹

Thus, when the MacArthur Hearings began a few days later, the targets in Rashin were still intact. The committee members wanted to know why the task had been left undone. Senator Harry P. Cain of Washington in particular desired “to secure a full understanding and appreciation of the political reasons which justify providing our enemy with a fireproof and bombproof supply center in the heart of enemy country.”⁶² The prohibition was unprecedented, and unique, even in the context of the Korean War. Senator Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin asked General O’Donnell whether there were “any other vast supply depots in Northern Korea that you were not permitted to bomb?” The general replied, “No, sir; that was the only one.”⁶³

Witnesses provided two motives for not bombing Rashin. “The military reason,” explained the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, “was that we felt that the risks of involvement on the Siberian frontier were unduly large with relation to the return that would be gotten from destroying an installation which is really part of

⁶¹ JCS, telegram to CINFE, 1 May 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 396. The possibility of naval bombardment was mentioned because, as a port, Rashin was also vulnerable to attacks by ships. Harry P. Cain and Forrest P. Sherman, question-and-answer exchange, MacArthur Hearings, 1640.

While the original debate about air strikes against Rashin was going on, Chief of Naval Operations Forrest P. Sherman authorized a study examining the possibility of a naval bombardment of the city, which concluded “the guns of the [battleship] Missouri could reach significant targets from outside the 100 fathom line.” Harry P. Cain and Forrest P. Sherman, question-and-answer exchange, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 4326-4327).

The 100-fathom line is a contour on nautical charts indicating, as its name indicates, where the water is 600 feet deep (in the days before sonar depth finders, hand-thrown sounding lines—the “leads”—were usually that length). Traditionally, the 100-fathom line is where coastal waters end and the open ocean begins. The commanders of large vessels generally try to remain outside the 100-fathom line during normal operations for safety.

⁶² Harry P. Cain, question, MacArthur Hearings, 2260.

⁶³ Alexander Wiley and Emmett O’Donnell, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 3079.

what you might almost call the Vladivostok complex”⁶⁴ (Vladivostok is the largest city in the Soviet Far East and is less than one hundred miles from Rashin). Had there been less dispute concerning the city’s military value, the issue of bombing Rashin would not have been so contentious. General J. Lawton Collins, the Chief of Staff of the Army, told senators, “[W]hen the question of bombing of Racin came up, there was a difference of opinion in the Chiefs as to whether it was profitable to bomb it, whether it was worth taking the chance of provocation, whether it was also worth taking the chance of a bomber getting lost.”⁶⁵

MacArthur, of course, argued that bombing Rashin was “vital.” He told senators that “I was very anxious to destroy that. Its usefulness to the enemy was self-evident. Great accumulations, depot accumulations, were made there. . . .”⁶⁶ He also claimed that General Stratemeyer had “insisted that that place should be taken out”⁶⁷

However, an entry from Stratemeyer’s diary, dated three weeks after the second Rashin mission was scrubbed, indicates a certain ambivalence on the part of the FEAF commander.

Sent a redline [high-priority message] to [Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations Idwal H.] Edwards pointing out to him that my two previous queries to him have not yet been answered re Najin [Rashin]. Three good targets remain and that I desire to bomb them visually. Asked him if it were possible for him to give me the green light on those targets—or should I drop the subject.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Sherman, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1651-1652.

⁶⁵ J. Lawton Collins, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1331.

⁶⁶ MacArthur, testimony, *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 14 September 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 187.

Making three separate inquiries might indicate either a keen desire to strike at the target or a simple wish to resolve an ongoing problem. However, a willingness to contemplate the possibility of rejection is not the behavior of a man who had “insisted.”

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not adamant about Rashin, either. “The issue came up again in September, at which we presented our view, and the matter of bombing it was not pressed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” testified Dean Acheson.⁶⁹ The Secretary of State then added, “The view that this [city] is an important supply point, I think, is not borne out by the facts. . . . There is a rail line running down from Siberia into Manchuria and then down into Racin. There is no rail line south from Racin, so it is not an important supply point. Supplies would have to go by truck from there.”⁷⁰

In response to this assertion, Senator Cain, whose questions and comments revealed that he was a MacArthur partisan, quipped, “It seems to me that the Secretary of State has just gotten himself over into the field of military considerations.”⁷¹ Apparently, he had not been paying attention when the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had expressed a similar thought during earlier testimony. “[T]he railroad from Racin down the coast is not completed, and it is not as good a supply point for the North Koreans as Chongjin, which is farther down the coast and has rail connections with Russia and on down into Korean through Hungnam,” observed General Bradley. “Racin, or Najin—it has two names—does not have rail communications completed on south of it.”⁷²

⁶⁹ Dean Acheson, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 2260.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Cain, question, Ibid., 2261.

⁷² Bradley, testimony, Ibid., 750.

General O'Donnell concurred in the opinion that Rashin was of marginal value. Although, as he testified, "The marshalling yard at Racine was the focal point through which most of the supplies coming from Russia had to go down the east coast to the support of the North Korean troops," he recognized that the North Korean city was not essential.⁷³ General Collins agreed, saying, "[F]rankly, [shipping] could be done almost as well from Vladivostok as it can from Racine."⁷⁴

The general did, however, imply that bombing Rashin might have political value as a reminder of the might of American air power. "[M]y own opinion was in selecting targets to go as far north as you possibly can and really work them over. I thought it might be quite helpful to have them hear a few bombs going off up there in Vladivostok."⁷⁵ None of the senators asked him to follow up the statement. Perhaps their desire to separate the "political" from the "military," focusing on the latter, led the investigators to miss the insinuation.

General Bradley made a similar observation linking Rashin with American air power. He suggested that it might be worth bombing the city "because, it having been brought out in these hearings it is a sort of sanctuary, we may have to hit it again to prove it isn't."⁷⁶ The censor deleted this comment.⁷⁷

Even though representatives of both the military and diplomatic professions expressed doubts about the military value of bombing Rashin, given the political

⁷³ O'Donnell, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3068.

⁷⁴ Collins, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1331.

⁷⁵ O'Donnell, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3097.

⁷⁶ Bradley, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 2298.

⁷⁷ The bombing of Rashin was such a sensitive issue that the entirety of General MacArthur's testimony on the subject was originally deleted by the censor. Secretary of Defense Marshall later cleared its publication (editorial comment, MacArthur Hearings, 16).

ramifications, Senator Cain focused more upon whether it was possible to bomb Rashin without violating the Soviet frontier than whether it was prudent to do so. After the MacArthur Hearings were completed, he and seven of his colleagues, all Republicans, issued a report in which they presented their conclusions about this and many of the other issues discussed.⁷⁸ This document was styled “Individual Views of Certain Members of the Joint Committee” because the Senate had earlier resolved to transmit only “the hearings and the records [and to] file no further report [so] that no views or conclusions be denominated as majority or minority views or conclusions. . . .”⁷⁹ Individual opinions, however, would be published if identified as such. Noting that “General O’Donnell bluntly stated that it was his professional opinion that Rachin could be bombarded and destroyed without any damage to or encroachment on Soviet territory,” they argued that “[h]is testimony clearly indicated the inadvisability of allowing political decisions to overrule military judgments in the course of battle.”⁸⁰

Citing former Secretary of Defense Johnson, who testified that “[t]he Military Department is supposed to be concerned with military power; the State Department with political objectives, . . .” Cain and his fellows were particularly critical of Dean Acheson.⁸¹ “The Secretary of State has assumed military functions, . . .” they

⁷⁸ These were Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin, H. Alexander Smith of Colorado, Bourke Hickenlooper of Iowa, William F. Knowland of California, Owen Brewster of Maine, and Ralph Flanders of Vermont.

⁷⁹ *Individual Views of Certain Members of the Joint Committee on Armed Services and Foreign Relations of the United States Senate relating to Hearings on the Dismissal of General MacArthur and the Military Situation in the Far East, May 8-June 27, 1951* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1951), iii; hereafter referred to as *Individual Views*.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸¹ Louis A. Johnson, MacArthur Hearings, 2577; quoted in *Individual Views*, 28.

charged.⁸² Their position was that despite Acheson's own acknowledgment that "he had no qualifications to evaluate military problems, . . . he *objected* to the bombing of Rashin [emphasis in original]" on the grounds that it was "unimportant" and "might" lead to expanding the war.⁸³ As a result, "the authority of our Air Force to attack this enemy base was withdrawn."⁸⁴

On 10 July 1951, shortly after Senator Cain and his cohorts issued their personal conclusions about the MacArthur Hearings, the United Nations and the United States entered into truce talks with the communist Chinese and the North Koreans. The Americans, while hopeful that the discussions would succeed, did not allow their desire for an end to the conflict to affect their war effort. The Joint Chiefs suggested to the Secretary of Defense that "[i]n the event that the current armistice negotiations in Korea fail, the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider it necessary to increase military pressure on the enemy. However, they do not recommend action which would involve us in a general war with Communist China."⁸⁵ The actual conflict with the PRC had priority over any potential conflict with the USSR. Fourth on the JCS's list of suggested actions was to "[r]emove all restrictions against attacks in North Korea, including restrictions against attacks on Rashin" and selected other targets currently off limits.⁸⁶

The Chinese and North Koreans did not allow the discussions of a ceasefire to hinder their activities, either. In early August, General Ridgway cabled his superiors to inform them that it might be necessary to bomb Rashin again. "Aerial recon[naissance]

⁸² *Individual Views*, 28.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ JCS, memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, 13 July 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 667.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

has revealed extensive stockpiling of matériel and sup[plies] at Najin (Rashin). . . .”⁸⁷

He then, using the terse poetry of the telegram that, whether deliberately or not, imparts a sense of urgency to even the most mundane messages, reminded the Joint Chiefs just what could be found in Rashin.

Oil storage fac[ilities] and rail repair shops are located in this area which also contains extensive marshalling yards and dock areas. The highway and rail complex into and out of Najin is suitable for funneling sup[plies] through this city to all areas to the south. There is every indication that Najin is the principal focal point for intensifying the enemy sup buildup in the battle area. Recent intel rpts indicate that Najin now being utilized for covert ocean shipping between east coast enemy ports.⁸⁸

Like all good officers, he not only reported the problem but offered a method of resolving it: “Recm restriction be lifted earliest against atk Najin (Rashin) with FECOM air and naval forces.”⁸⁹ He further demonstrated his competence by anticipating a possible problem (although, of course, this particular objection was not difficult to divine). “Am convinced atk can be made against this vital enemy installation without violating Soviet border and to substantial advantage of UN Comd in Korea.”⁹⁰

The State Department, too, had been considering possible courses of action should the peace talks fail. A memorandum addressed to Dean Acheson in early August recommended that if negotiations were broken off, *and* the Chinese were to launch a large-scale offensive, the administration should “[r]emove all restrictions against attacks

⁸⁷ CINCFE, telegram to the JCS, 1 August 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 766-767.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

in North Korea (except Rashin). . . .”⁹¹ If the peace talks ended but it seemed that they might be renewed, the UNC should “[c]ontinue air and naval activity on same basis as prior to armistice talks”⁹²

This time, however, military requirements outweighed political considerations. On 10 August 1951 the JCS received permission from the president to bomb Rashin. The Senate also voted its approval.⁹³ The Joint Chiefs accordingly sent Ridgway a telegram informing him, “Restrictions on attacks on Rashin are removed insofar as air action is concerned. . . .”⁹⁴ Naval attacks against the city were still prohibited. Yet the CINUNC was not given *carte blanche* even when performing his aerial operations. The JCS emphasized that

Air attacks [on Rashin] will be subject to the following stipulations:

A. Air attacks will be made only under visual conditions.

B. Every element of attacking air elements will be thoroughly briefed to avoid violation of Soviet and Manchurian borders.

C. No unusual publicity will be accorded such attacks.⁹⁵

The JCS also stressed that the new “[o]rder does not void previous instruction that no air or naval surface ops will take place within 12 miles of USSR territory on mainland.”⁹⁶

The second bombing of Rashin took place on 25 August 1951. This raid was unusual in that although it was a strategic bombing mission, it was not exclusively a USAF operation. The DPRK’s air force had been neutralized early in the war, but once

⁹¹ Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, memorandum to the Secretary of State, 3 August 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 772.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 773.

⁹³ “Bombing of Rashin Approved in Senate,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 26 August 1951, 1.

⁹⁴ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 10 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 767.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

the Chinese intervened, most American bombing missions encountered interceptors (as will be discussed next chapter). But because the target area was well beyond the range of the USAF's fighter aircraft based in South Korea, jets from the American carriers based in the Sea of Japan east of Korea provided the escorts for the mission.⁹⁷

The strike achieved its purpose. "The whole mission went off perfectly. We had good weather over the target, good formation, and an excellent bomb pattern," the Vice Commander of FEAF Bomber Command announced. "We clobbered them."⁹⁸ The attack went so well that no further attacks on Rashin were deemed necessary for the remainder of the conflict.

Of course, at the time no one could foresee that there would be no need to return to Rashin. One week after the raid the State Department recommended that proposed "[a]ir attacks on Rashin should continue to be individually approved in advance by the JCS and UN aircraft should continue to remain well clear of the USSR border."⁹⁹ Acheson was not categorically opposed to the idea of bombing Rashin; he just wanted the military to consider the possible consequences and political significance associated with operations close to the Soviet frontier.

Yet it is possible that the Secretary of State was overthinking the problem. As will be examined in greater detail in the next two chapters, the United States' UN allies were generally not reluctant about expressing their concerns about the possibility that the

⁹⁷ USAF Historical Division, Air University; *United States Air Force Operations in the Korean Conflict 1 November 1950-30 June 1952* (Washington DC: Department of the Air Force, 1951), 145.

⁹⁸ Harris E. Rogner, quoted in USAF Historical Division, Air University, *Operations in the Korean Conflict 1 November 1950-30 June 1952*, 145.

⁹⁹ Position Paper Prepared for the United States Delegation to the Washington Foreign Ministers Meeting, Tripartite, and British Talks, 8 September 1951, in *FRUS 1951-7*, 890.

Korean War could escalate. The issue of Rashin, however, did not seem to trouble them. During a briefing for representatives of the members of the UNC held shortly after the attack, during which a number of war-related topics were discussed, Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk brought up the subject of Rashin and explained why the attack was authorized. Apparently, he found it necessary to identify it for some of the diplomats in attendance, if one of the participants' record of the meeting is any indication:

Commenting on the bombing of Rashin, a Korean city some 17 miles from the Soviet border, Mr. Rusk said that, while it had been bombed earlier in the fighting, it was determined that the military value derived from such bombings was not worth the risk involved. However, in the face of the enemy's military build up in general and the use to which he was putting Rashin in particular—perhaps with the idea derived from the Senate hearings that it was a safe place—it seemed advisable to accept the risks involved and to strike selected targets in the city.¹⁰⁰

He then added, perhaps unnecessarily, “The border was not crossed.”¹⁰¹

Dean Acheson had a similar experience a few weeks later when he was discussing Korea with a delegation from the UK. When the Secretary of State mentioned Rashin, Herbert Morrison, the British Foreign Minister, confessed his lack of familiarity with the city. The Secretary of State “explained its location and proximity to Manchuria and Soviet territory,” described its military significance, and observed that it had been bombed recently.¹⁰² The minister then “asked if there had been any Soviet

¹⁰⁰ John R. Heideman (of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs), memorandum of conversation, 27 August 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 856-857.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Foreign Minister (of the UK), précis of remarks, in United States Delegation Minutes of the Second Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the United States and United Kingdom, 11 September 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-3, 1240.

reaction and the Secretary replied that that there had not been any evidence of it but there may well have been concern.”¹⁰³

Although neither the United States’ allies nor the Soviet Union expressed much interest in the second Rashin raid (or even seemed to notice it), the American press did. The news that the once-forbidden city had been bombed made the front page in cities across the country (not Ridgway’s fault; he abided by the “no unusual publicity” edict). While the *New York Times* ran a story written by one of its own correspondents, the *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Hartford Courant*, and many of other major newspapers printed an article distributed by the Associated Press syndicate. All, however, composed their own unique headlines for it. Not surprisingly, most of these (taking their cue from the AP article’s lede) mentioned that MacArthur had been barred from attacking Rashin the previous winter: “35 B-29s Raid City MacArthur Couldn’t Bomb,” “Superforts Blast Rashin, Target Denied MacArthur,” “Superforts Hit Rashin Near Border of Siberia: City had been Protected by U.S. Orders: Washington Feared Russian Incident: Had Denied MacArthur Plea to Bomb Port,” “300 Tons of Bombs Released on Rashin, Target M’ Arthur was Forbidden to Attack,” “Joint Chiefs Told General MacArthur to Avoid Rashin, Target of Raids,” “Bomb Attack on Rashin is Approved: Gen. MacArthur was Restrained From Similar Assault in Red Rail Hub,” and “B-29’s Bomb Target Near Siberian Line Denied to M’ Arthur.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ “Superforts Blast Rashin, Target Denied MacArthur: 35 Planes Hit Within 20 Miles of Russia: Rails Bombed in Supply Port of Korea Reds,” *The Boston Globe*, 26 August 1951, C1; “35 B-29s Raid City MacArthur Couldn’t Bomb: Blast Red Railway Base near Russia,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 26 August

A second AP story described the reaction in Washington. It quoted Senator Hickenlooper as saying, “[I]t’s been most mysterious why we have not bombed Rashin long before this.” The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Tom Connally of Texas, observed that the raid should not jeopardize the peace talks then underway, as both sides had agreed that they could keep fighting while they negotiated.¹⁰⁵

The bombing of Rashin inspired more than a few editorials and opinion pieces. Some writers saw the 1951 raid as evidence that the administration was finally embracing MacArthurism. “The bombing of Rashin,” noted the editors of the *Los Angeles Times*, “is another step in adoption of the whole program of Gen. MacArthur [who] proposed to bomb Rashin last February and March and was told by the Pentagon (presumably under the instruction of Acheson and Atlee) that he must not.”¹⁰⁶ Clement Atlee, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, was not popular among American conservatives, who believed that the Truman administration’s efforts to maintain UNC coalition solidarity placed unacceptable handicaps on the American war effort in Korea—and they definitely would have emphasized “American.” They held that because the United States provided the vast majority of the fighting forces in Korea, the

1951, 1; “Superforts Hit Rashin Near Border of Siberia: City had been Protected by U. S. Orders: Washington Feared Russian Incident: Had Denied MacArthur Plea to Bomb Port; Jets Clash in North,” *The Hartford Courant*, 26 August 1951, 1; “U. S. Superforts Blast Red Base Near Soviet Border: 300 Tons of Bombs Released on Rashin, Target M’Arthur was Forbidden to Attack,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 26 August 1951, 1; “B-29’s Bomb Target Near Siberian Line Denied to M’Arthur: Permission to Attack Rashin was held back because of Proximity to Soviet Land: Enemy’s Build-Up Struck: Washington Aides Sat Assault on Korea Port was a Part of Policy to Check Reds,” *The New York Times*, 26 August 1951, 1; “Joint Chiefs Told General MacArthur to Avoid Rashin, Target of Raids,” *The Washington Post*, 26 August 1951, M1; *Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle*, 26 August 1951.

¹⁰⁵ Bourke Hickenlooper, quoted in “Bomb Attack on Rashin is Approved: Gen. MacArthur was Restrained From Similar Assault in Red Rail Hub,” *Reading Eagle (PA)*, 26 August 1951.

¹⁰⁶ “MacArthur’s Blueprint, Step By Step,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 29 August 1951, A4.

other members of the UNC should accede without demur to whatever decisions Washington made regarding the war.¹⁰⁷ “And this business of holding on to our allies at all costs is so much flimflam. Damn it, it should be the other way around and we could make it that way if we half tried.”¹⁰⁸

Other writers understood that conditions change, and that the administration should be commended for its flexibility. The editors of the *Boston Globe* noted, “An effort is being made to prove that last week’s bombing of the North Korean rail center of Rashin . . . was a sort of latter-day vindication of General MacArthur. . . . What is a justifiable policy today . . . was not necessarily a justifiable policy last winter. . . .”¹⁰⁹ In the five months since MacArthur had been relieved, the armistice talks had begun, the fighting had stabilized (some would say stalemated), and a final World War Two peace treaty with Japan (to which the USSR was a party) was nearly completed, *The Washington Post* observed.¹¹⁰

The situation in Korea led *The Boston Globe*’s editors to compose a second piece in which they argued that the bombing of Rashin would *reduce* the chances that the Soviets might enter the war:

The exasperating situation in Korea becomes less confusing if it is kept in mind that United Nations forces hold a strong natural defense line protecting South Korea. It seems unlikely that the 8th Army can be permanently dislodged unless there is a Russian intervention. . . . [W]e have been warning the Soviet against such intervention. The Pentagon

¹⁰⁷ “The Debate,” *The New York Times*, 22 April 1951, 147.

¹⁰⁸ John Thomas Wells III, letter, 24 May 1951; read into record by Senator William F. Knowland, MacArthur Hearings, 3089. Wells was an Army officer killed in action in Korea shortly before the Hearings began. The quotation cited above is from a letter he had written to his wife a week before his death. Presumably, Mrs. Wells shared its contents with the senator.

¹⁰⁹ “Bombing Rashin,” *The Boston Globe*, 1 September 1951, 6.

¹¹⁰ “Bombing the Border,” *The Washington Post*, 28 August 1951, 8.

has now permitted the bombing of Rashin. . . . The reason for this change is probably to deter the Russians from underestimating the risk of active intervention.¹¹¹

The *Washington Post* shared this opinion. Noting that the communists had been taking advantage of the lull in the fighting to enhance their forces—particularly their air arms—in eastern Asia, its editors observed, “The Rashin raid was a sort of warning that if this buildup is used, the U.N. will have to take more extreme measures. . . . The Russians ought to understand this.”¹¹²

The editors of the *Hartford Courant* agreed. In their opinion, Ridgway’s “action was a stern warning to the North Koreans and the Red Chinese at Kaesong that he was not in a mood to tolerate any more ‘incidents’ on their part.”¹¹³ Kaesong was the site of the armistice talks (they were later relocated to Panmunjom). The communist negotiators had engaged in a number of delaying tactics while seeking a more favorable battlefield position before committing to a ceasefire. As to the reasons why Rashin was placed off limits originally—that bombing “it would be too risky and might be interpreted as a provocation to Moscow”—the *Courant*’s editors concluded, “No doubt, that risk still exists, but it is satisfactory to note that it is a risk which we are now prepared to take.”¹¹⁴

The foreign press (which apparently was more attentive to Korean War issues than foreign diplomats) noted the inconsistency in policy implied by the Rashin raid. Having no investment in the United States’ domestic politics, they did not say or suggest

¹¹¹ “We Hold the Line,” *The Boston Globe*, 28 August 1951, 14.

¹¹² “Bombing the Border,” 8.

¹¹³ “A Calculated Risk,” *The Hartford Courant*, 27 August 1951, 6.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

that one side or the other had been correct. They simply commented on the situation as they saw it. The *Times* of London observed,

The [Rashin] raid is also interpreted as a reversal in policy, as it was in connexion with the question of whether or not Rashin should be attacked on a previous occasion that Mr. Acheson drew the ire of the eight Republican senators who said . . . that the Secretary of State's objections to such a bombing . . . were a flagrant example of political interference in military decisions.¹¹⁵

The *Times of India* reached a similar conclusion. "The recent attacks [on Rashin] are . . . a curious contradiction of the American Administration's point of view as clarified during the MacArthur Hearings."¹¹⁶

This confusion was not restricted to foreign observers. A letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* expressed a comparable thought. "[I]t is difficult to believe that Gen. MacArthur is still not in command. All of his policies . . . seem to have been put into effect. The Truman administration had warned against extending the Korean War and yet has given the go-ahead signal to the bombing of . . . Rashin. . . ."¹¹⁷ No doubt the attack would have pleased the woman from Connecticut who, eight months earlier when the Chinese had entered the war, shared with the readers of the *Hartford Courant* a letter she had sent to Senator Brien McMahon.

I, along with thousands of mothers whose sons are in the Army, demand that General MacArthur be given complete and entire control of the Far East, to use what bombs and the targets he may choose. . . . It does not make sense to us mothers that the State Department and the U.N. are giving the Chinese Communists more precious hours to gather more men and more materials . . . to wipe our men off the Korean map. They,

¹¹⁵ "Bombing of Rashin: Raid as Evidence of U. N. Determination," *The Times* [London], 27 August 1951, 4.

¹¹⁶ "Current Topics: Contradiction?," *The Times of India*, 31 August 1951, 4.

¹¹⁷ Sarah Levine, letter in "Letters to the Times: Questions to Ask," *The Los Angeles Times*, 12 September 1951, A4.

forbidden to bomb those massings of men and supplies behind the lines, are sitting ducks waiting to be slaughtered.¹¹⁸

As a letter in *The New York Times* protesting the dismissal General MacArthur in early 1951 asked, “How can any army fight indefinitely without bombing the enemy’s sources of supply and massing centers?”¹¹⁹

After the summer of 1951 the topic of Rashin rarely came up again, in either the press or government communications. The last reference to Rashin by American diplomatic personnel (at least, the last one deemed worthy of inclusion in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series by its editors) was in early October, 1951, when American and Canadian officials discussed how to respond if an armistice agreement could not be reached.¹²⁰ At about the same time, political columnist Drew Pearson reported that Omar Bradley was having to explain—again—to the Senate Armed Services Committee why Ridgway had been allowed to bomb Rashin when MacArthur had not (not surprisingly, Senator Cain had initiated the inquiry).¹²¹ A month later, the final mention of Rashin in the *New York Times* appeared in an article by Hanson W. Baldwin discussing how the USN and USAF had cooperated on the 25 August raid, with no allusion to the recent controversy.¹²² No other newspaper had published an article

¹¹⁸ Kathleen M. Finn, “Senator McMahon has a Tremendous Duty” (letter to editor), *The Hartford Courant*, 2 December 1950, 6.

¹¹⁹ Rita McKnight, “Comments on General MacArthur: Dismissal Called Outrage” (letter to editor), *The New York Times*, 13 April 1951, 22.

¹²⁰ Officer in Charge of Korean Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 1 October 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 978.

¹²¹ Drew Pearson, “The Washington Merry-Go-Round: Soybean Slump Laid to Chinese,” *The Washington Post*, 6 October 1951.

¹²² Hanson W. Baldwin, “War Lessons-I: Helicopter’s Use and Naval Fighters Aid to Land Bombers Novelties in Korea,” *The New York Times*, 3 November 1951, 2. A search of the Proquest online database for newspaper articles using the words “Rashin” and “Korea” reveals only a handful after 1951.

about Rashin in weeks; the last news feature on the topic was a piece datelined Washington written by a *Los Angeles Times* correspondent in early September.¹²³ That it was not syndicated suggests that Rashin was “old news.”¹²⁴ Indeed, the subject had become such a dead issue that on 3 November 1951 the Joint Chiefs submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense in which they discussed possible courses of action in Korea. After reviewing their most recent directive on the subject, dated 13 July 1950 (see previous chapter), they decided to “reaffirm the recommendations [it] contained” with only a handful of emendations, one of which was to “[d]elete from subparagraph 1 *d* the word ‘Rashin’ and the comma which follows.”¹²⁵ The city having been restored to the list of permitted targets, the updated sentence thus referred to the handful of other targets still considered too sensitive to be attacked (which will be discussed in the next chapters).

Most published after 1980 refer to people with the first or last name of Rashin (Search conducted 28 December 2011).

¹²³ A search of the Proquest “News & Newspapers” online database indicates that, with one exception, articles mentioning Rashin after August 1951 were editorials and commentary (see note below). Of course, other periodicals may have run stories about Rashin later, but as the database includes papers from most major markets (the American south is underrepresented, but this omission reflects the demographic realities of the era), it seems likely that Rashin was no longer considered newsworthy once it had been bombed the second time (Search conducted 28 December 2011).

¹²⁴ The article reported that the month of August was bad luck for the city. In addition to the raids of 1950 and 1951, USAAF B-29s had mined Rashin harbor on 3 August 1945 and the city was occupied by Soviet troops eight days later. “August Jinx Hits Red City of Rashin: North Korea Port Bombed by U.N. also Felt War’s Force in Same Month on Earlier Years,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 9 September 1951, 11.

¹²⁵ JCS, memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, 3 November 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 1106.

The Soviet Bomber Incident

The bombing of Rashin was not the only air action of the Korean War with the potential to involve the United States in a conflict with the Soviet Union. There were several other incidents that could have also served as causes for war. These were not theoretical encounters, as Rashin had been. American and Soviet air units exchanged fire with each other on numerous occasions during the fighting in Korea.

The first of these engagements took place on 4 September 1950, when radar operators in the American fleet south of Korea detected a pair of aircraft approaching from the direction of the Soviet air and naval base at Port Arthur (modern-day Lushunkou), which the USSR leased from China. The Americans scrambled a flight of four carrier-based fighters to intercept the intruders—standard procedure at any time, but given greater urgency because the UNC was then preparing for the invasion of Inchon. One of the pair turned away, but the other continued on a course that would take it directly over the American ships. The interceptor pilots identified the bogie as a twin-engined Soviet bomber.¹²⁶ When one of its gunners opened fire on the interceptors, they

¹²⁶ The exact type of airplane shot down that day was a minor mystery for decades. Contemporary American and UN records refer to it only as a “twin-engined bomber.” However, the Soviets operated several aircraft of that description in 1950. The pilot who shot it down thought it might be an Ilyushin Il-4, and the Navy has listed the victory as such ever since. However, in his 1986 study of USN air operations in Korea, aviation historian Richard P. Hallion speculated that it might be a Tupolev Tu-2. Finally, in 1995, two Russian aviation writers published an article in which it was established to be a Douglas A-20, an American light bomber provided to the USSR in large numbers during World War Two. Due to their supporting detail, such as the unit to which the aircraft belonged, this identification has been accepted by aviation enthusiasts and other interested parties. Hallion, *The Naval Air War in Korea*, 61; Warren Thompson, “First Responder,” *Flypast*, May 2011, 32-39; Roy A. Grossnick, *United State Naval Aviation 1910-1995* (Washington DC : Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy, 1996), 767; Aleksandr V. Kotlobovski and Igor Seidov, “Goryacheye Nebo v ‘Kholodnoi Voyni,’” *Mir Aviatsii*, 1995, no.2 , 21; Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War over Korea* (College Station: Texas A&M, 2002), 241 n42.

shot it down. A search of the crash site recovered the body of one of the Soviet airmen, who had been carrying extensive identification.¹²⁷

The incident did not generate much excitement in the task force, apparently. The captain of the aircraft carrier on which the victorious fighter unit was based did not even mention it in his action report for the period.¹²⁸ The commander of the air group to which the fighters belonged merely noted that his crews had destroyed six aircraft between 25 August and 6 September 1950, one of which had been airborne—the Soviet bomber, presumably.¹²⁹ Of course, their reports were not filed until well after the diplomatic repercussions stemming from the incident were seemingly settled.

And there were, as might be expected, political ramifications. Ernest A. Gross, deputy to the American ambassador to the United Nations, duly reported the incident to the Security Council when it met the day after the encounter (“At 13:29 o’clock, Korean time, a twin-engine Soviet bomber . . .”).¹³⁰ His account reiterated the claim that the Soviet aircrew had been the first to fire. He then used the incident as an opportunity to promote the passage of a resolution the United States had recently introduced, the intent

¹²⁷ “Incident of Soviet Bomber,” *United Nations Bulletin*, 15 September 1950, 247-248.

¹²⁸ Commanding Officer USS *Valley Forge*, Action Report for Period 25 August through September 1950, 26 September 1950, available online at <http://www.history.navy.mil/a-korea/cv45-s50.pdf>, accessed 2 January 2012.

¹²⁹ Commander Carrier Air Group Five, Action Report for Period 25 August-6 September 1950, 20 September 1950, available online at <http://www.history.navy.mil/a-korea/cvg5-25aug-6sep50.pdf>, accessed 2 January 2012.

¹³⁰ “U.N. Korean Fighter Patrol Shoots Down Hostile Soviet Bomber: Message from U.S. Deputy Representative to the U.N.,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 18 September 1950, 454. The unusual time reference is worth noting. It appears to be a clumsy combination of the American 12-hour and Russian 24-hour clock systems.

of which was to localize the conflict to the Korean peninsula and to prevent any nation from providing troops, aid, or equipment to the DPRK.¹³¹

The reaction was relatively mild in Washington, unlike Lake Success, New York, where the UN was meeting while waiting for its permanent headquarters to be built.¹³²

When first reported, the incident “startled” the UN. Delegates had been expecting the usual routine.

All that marred the prospect of a pleasant, humdrum session—that is, of an excruciatingly boring day—was a blue sheet of paper that lay along on the table where they stack the official releases. It was the first press release of the day. It was a note transmitted a half-hour after midnight this morning [or just ninety minutes after it occurred]. . . .¹³³

Another correspondent reported that the news “dominated” conversation throughout the UN, becoming “the dramatic highlight for the [Security Council] session itself.”¹³⁴

In Moscow on the day of the incident, Minister of Foreign Affairs Vishinsky paid a personal visit to the American ambassador in Moscow, Alan G. Kirk, to deliver a formal note of protest from his government.¹³⁵ According to the ambassador, Vishinsky’s “[p]resentation followed in reverse our note April 18 Baltic plane, . . .” a reference to the navy patrol flight shot down earlier in the year (see above). The note

¹³¹ Warren G. Austin, quoted in United Nations Security Council (UNSC), S/PV.496 Official Records No. 37, 5 September 1950, 5; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N50/390/04/PDF/N5039004.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 25 December 20110. The resolution (UN document number S/1693) also challenged the USSR to use its influence with North Korea to end the conflict, and called for all nations to refrain from assisting or encouraging the DPRK in its aggression. It was not adopted.

¹³² “Soviet Intervention,” *The Washington Post*, 6 September 1950, 12.

¹³³ Alistair Cooke, “U. S. Note Startles Council,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 September 1950, 7.

¹³⁴ A. M. Rosenthal, “Provocation Seen: Russian in U.N. Charges U.S. Move to Localize War is Cover-Up: Austin Stresses Peril: Others in Security Body Back Resolution to Prevent the Conflict from Spreading,” *The New York Times*, 6 September 19950, 1.

¹³⁵ Ambassador in the Soviet Union), telegram (622) to the Secretary of State, 6 September 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 699.

“demanded investigation indemnification punishment those responsible” and claimed that the United States had committed a deliberate act of aggression:

[A]s confirmed by the Soviet government this incident was not a defensive action but was an attack by eleven American planes on a Soviet plane making . . . a training flight between Port Arthur and Haiyan-Do Island [off the coast of North Korea]. Since it was a training flight the plane had neither bombing nor torpedo devices which testifies to the fact that the crew did not have any hostile intentions.¹³⁶

Ambassador Kirk replied that as the fleet was acting under the auspices of the UN, in which the USSR is represented, the matter should be referred to that body. He refused to accept the note. Vishinsky argued that the “[i]ncident took place some 140 kilometers from Korea which has nothing in common with operations taking place in Korea.”¹³⁷ The Americans said that they would welcome an investigation but continued to insist that the matter should be referred to the UN.¹³⁸ The Soviets made additional attempts to deliver the note but each time it was returned.¹³⁹

On 6 September 1950, the Soviets read their protest into the Security Council’s official record (“Actually, the Soviet aircraft not only did not fly over the United States vessel, but did not even approach it, being at a distance of more than 10 kilometres away from it. . . .”).¹⁴⁰ Their representative declared that he did so only because the United States had had its message entered into the minutes of the previous day’s meeting. “This

¹³⁶ Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram (623) to the Secretary of State, 6 September 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 699-700.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 701.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 702.

¹³⁹ Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram (624) to the Secretary of State, 6 September 1950 (5 pm), in *FRUS* 1950-7, 702-703; Department of State, telegram to Moscow, 6 September 1950, quoted in Editors, footnote, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 703.

¹⁴⁰ Josef Malik, quoted in UNSC, S/PV.496 Official Records, No. 38, 5 September 1950, 3; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NL5/007/18/PDF/NL500718.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 25 December 2011.

question is an inter-governmental one and not a matter for discussion by the Security Council.”¹⁴¹ The council, spared the necessity of debating the issue, was able to proceed with its other business, the first item of which, as selected by President Yakov Malik of the Soviet Union (it was the USSR’s turn to lead the Security Council), was the reading of a message from workers in the French textile industry.¹⁴² Afterwards, the Council voted on two proposed resolutions, the first the American proposal to limit the Korean War to the Korean peninsula (see above); the second, the Soviet proposal condemning the bombing of civilians in the Korean peninsula (see Chapter VI). Both were defeated.¹⁴³

The Soviets, as they had promised, did not bring the matter up again in the UN. However, both the western and the Soviet presses continued to analyze the incident for many days after it was last referred to by diplomats. The British Communist Party’s *Daily Worker* doubted that the airplane was actually Soviet, and wondered whether it had actually been shot down off the coast of Korea. It also suggested that the bomber had been on a routine flight and “was not engaged in warlike operations.”¹⁴⁴ In Moscow, the state-controlled newspapers reported the bomber affair, repeating the USSR’s position that the United States had been the aggressors against North Korea and that UN nations were participating only because the United States had bullied them into joining in on its scheme. The American people were not to be blamed; it was their

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Alistair Cooke, “U.S. Note Startles Council,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 September 1950, 7.

¹⁴³ Editorial notes, *FRUS* 1950-7, 704, 705.

¹⁴⁴ “London Daily Worker’s View,” *The New York Times*, 6 September 1950, 12. Both the British and the American Communist Parties published newspapers called *The Daily Worker* until 1966, when the British communists changed the name of their paper to *The Morning Star*.

leaders' fault. "The criticism centered on such figures as President Truman, Secretary of State Acheson, various military men, bankers, industrialists, and, of course, 'Wall street.'"¹⁴⁵ The leaders of the USAF were singled out for special criticism, one periodical branding them "war criminals" and "executioners of the Korean people." The reports were offered "without editorial comment, but [nevertheless] the case created a stir among the public."¹⁴⁶ Yet the Soviet people would have had little outlet for its passions, as the editors of the *Washington Post* knew. "[T]otalitarian governments, as Mr. Kennan has observed, are far less likely than others to be impelled into war by popular hysteria."¹⁴⁷

Many western newspapers interpreted the bomber incident as the first concrete evidence that the USSR had a more direct role in the Korean War than was previously believed. It was not simply supporting the DPRK, as it claimed. One British editorial noted, "This latest incident is proof that Russian forces are involved. . . . Ostensibly, the United Nations is acting against North Korea, but it may have to be recognised that Russia is involved as an aggressor."¹⁴⁸ The *Christian Science Monitor* noted that the Soviets had always been suspected of participating in the conflict. There had been persistent reports of Russian soldiers, tanks, and aircraft in the theatre. "But this incident

¹⁴⁵ "Moscow Stirred by Downing of Bomber by U.S. Planes," *The Chicago Tribune*, 8 September 1950, 1. Modern writers using the Manhattan financial district as a synecdoche for American business usually capitalize both "Wall" and "Street."

¹⁴⁶ "Moscow Stirred by Downing of Bomber by U.S. Planes," *The Chicago Tribune*, 8 September 1950, 1.

¹⁴⁷ "Wrong Address," *The Washington Post*, 8 September 1950, 18.

¹⁴⁸ "Korean Warfare," *The Scotsman*, 6 September 1950, 6.

. . . is the first one with indisputable evidence—in the form of a slain Soviet flier with identification papers on him.”¹⁴⁹

Some commentators saw the incident as a sign of UN solidarity. The aircraft that had shot the intruder down were erroneously identified as British in early accounts of the encounter.¹⁵⁰ If the Soviet representative to the UN admitted that the airman whose body was recovered was Russian, the *Washington Post* observed, “[H]e will say that we attacked the Russians either while they were on vacation or while they were engaged in target practice. We say ‘we,’ for, though the vessel that shot down the plane was British, it was a unit in the United Nations forces.”¹⁵¹ Alistair Cooke informed British readers that the Soviets might claim the incident was “an Anglo-American trap.”¹⁵² The misconception was corrected fairly quickly, however, the United States taking full responsibility for shooting down the Soviet airplane.¹⁵³

Ambassador Kirk was not the only person to note the similarities between the Soviet bomber shootdown and the destruction of the American patrol aircraft earlier in the year. Several American editorialists did so as well. “Russian protests might be put forward in better conscience if the circumstances did not so closely resemble those that attended the shooting down of an American naval patrol plane over the Baltic Sea last

¹⁴⁹ Neal Stanford, “Bomber Held Soviet Link to Korean War,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 5 September 1950, 1.

¹⁵⁰ “British May Have Downed Red Plane,” *The Washington Post*, 6 September 1950, 2.

¹⁵¹ “Soviet Intervention,” *The Washington Post*, 6 September 1950, 12.

¹⁵² Alistair Cooke, “U. S. Note Startles Council,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 September 1950, 7.

¹⁵³ “Admits U.S. Owned Bomber,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 8 September 1950, 3. “Owned” is probably a typographical error; the title makes more sense if the word “downed” is used instead.

April 8. . . .”¹⁵⁴ It was not just the two events that resembled each other. “The text of the Soviet note follows almost point by point the pattern of the American note that was sent last April after an unarmed Navy bomber had been shot down over the Baltic by Russian planes,” observed the *Christian Science Monitor*.¹⁵⁵

Most commentators agreed that the incident could have had serious consequences. Some argued that the affair could destroy the UN if the United States charged one of its members with violating Security Council resolutions.¹⁵⁶ Others foresaw even direr outcomes. “At the moment this is an isolated incident, but it could of course be the most crucial single event of the war if it proved to be the signal for Soviet participation in the Korean War or a Kremlin move to reoccupy North Korea.”¹⁵⁷

Yet despite the high feelings on both sides, there were some who realized that it did not presage the beginning of World War Three. The *Washington Post* noted that the USSR could initiate hostilities at any time it chose. “It is fairly clear, then, that the Soviet government, for all its cheek and bluster, has no intention of magnifying the incident into a *casus belli*. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the Soviet leaders, if they were really determined upon full and outright war with the United States, would have gone to the delay and trouble of manufacturing an incident.”¹⁵⁸

The editors of the *Chicago Tribune* concurred, observing that the Soviet bomber’s shootdown

¹⁵⁴ “Sauce for the Goose,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 19 September 1950, 24.

¹⁵⁵ “Wrong Address,” *The Washington Post*, 8 September 1950, 18.

¹⁵⁶ Neal Stanford, “Bomber Held Soviet Link to Korean War,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 5 September 1950, 1.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ “Wrong Address,” *The Washington Post*, 8 September 1950, 18.

will hardly improve the strained relations between the two nations, but also is unlikely to advance the prospect of war. Hostility has already reached such a peak that a pretext for belligerent action could easily be discovered if either side wanted it. The appearances are that neither does.¹⁵⁹

Noting that both the United States and the Soviet Union had shot down each others' airplanes in recent months, the *Tribune's* editors concluded, "The two plane incidents thus represent a standoff. . . ." ¹⁶⁰ They then, with surprising candor for an isolationist newspaper claiming on its masthead to be "an American Paper for Americans," allowed that neither the USA nor the USSR was entirely blameless. "A fair assumption would be that both the American plane . . . and the soviet [*sic*] plane were on missions less innocent than represented, and that the consequences of being caught off base on snooping excursions were what could be expected." ¹⁶¹

Sukhaya Rechka

One possible reason why the bomber affair was so easily forgotten was that less than two weeks after it had occurred, the UNC invaded Inchon and began its march north up the Korean peninsula. As noted in an earlier chapter, MacArthur's approach to the Yalu led to increased tensions between the United States and the Chinese communists, compelling the Americans to devote most of their time and energy to their relations with the PRC. However, another crisis between the USA and USSR came up a short time later when, on 8 October 1950, a pair of USAF fighter jets strayed about sixty

¹⁵⁹ "Sauce for the Goose," *The Chicago Tribune*, 19 September 1950, 24.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

miles into Soviet territory and strafed the airbase at a small coastal town, Sukhaya Rechka, also the site of a Soviet naval installation.

The two pilots involved had been part of a four-aircraft armed reconnaissance flight (meaning that their aircraft had carried no bombs and were thus armed with their internal guns only). Their assigned target was an airfield at Chongjin, a small if important port city forty miles south of Rashin. Mechanical problems caused two of the jets to abort, one before takeoff, the other *en route*. Unfortunately, the latter was flown by the section leader. His departure left two relatively inexperienced fliers to complete the mission.¹⁶² High winds blew them off course; thick clouds and poor maps prevented them from confirming their location (decades later, a Soviet general would claim the day was sunny and clear).¹⁶³ They did not realize their error until after they had made their attack. “Oh, oh,” thought Alton Quanbeck, the flight-leader-by-default, when he saw a particular geographical feature where he did not expect one, “there’s no island near Chongjin.” After checking his charts, he concluded that he and his wingman had struck an airdrome outside of Rashin—much to his relief.¹⁶⁴

The airbase was full of parked aircraft (a regiment of the 54th Air Army had just arrived the day before).¹⁶⁵ “It was the kind of target fighter pilots dream about,”

¹⁶² Stratemeyer, diary entry, 12 October 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 229.

¹⁶³ Georgy Lobov, “*Glava 1: Za Strokoi Ofitsialnikh Soobsheneye*,” *VVS Rossii V Nebye Severnaya Korei*, <http://www.airforce.ru/history/korea/chapter1.htm>, accessed 27 December 2011. The material on this web page appears to be taken from a series of articles written by General Lobov, Hero of the Soviet Union, for the magazine *Aviatsiya I Kosmonavtika* in the early 1990s.

¹⁶⁴ Alton H. Quanbeck, “My Brief War with Russia: Dief and I Helped Keep the Soviets out of Korea—but We Paid,” *The Washington Post*, 4 March 1990, C5.

¹⁶⁵ Mark Andrew O’Neill, “The Other Side of the Yalu: Soviet Pilots in the Korean War , Phase One, 1 November 1950-12 April 1951, PhD diss., Florida State University, 1996, 34.

Quanbeck would recall later.¹⁶⁶ The two jets made several passes, machine-gunning aircraft on the ground, before low fuel levels compelled them to return to their base. Soviet anti-aircraft gunners, surprised by the attack, fired at the intruders but were unable to hit them. Most significantly perhaps, a local air commander decided not to allow any interceptors to take off in pursuit of the departing Americans (the runway might also have been blocked by damaged airplanes).¹⁶⁷

Fortunately, no one on the ground was hurt. The only damage done was to several Soviet aircraft (sources vary as to their numbers), which, ironically, were American designs provided to the USSR as part of the Lend-Lease program during World War Two. Soviet military officials receiving reports of the attack originally believed that the attacking jets belonged to the US Navy, as they knew that no USAF aircraft had the range to reach Sukhaya Rechka from any base in South Korea or Japan.¹⁶⁸ They eventually identified the intruders as Lockheed F-80 Shooting Stars (the United States' first operational jet fighter, flown only by the USAF), however.

Andrei Gromyko, the Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, telephoned Ambassador Alan G. Kirk late that evening to request an immediate meeting, saying that he had a note to deliver. Kirk was ill, so he dispatched Walworth Barbour, the Counselor of the Embassy (who acted as Chargé when Kirk was unavailable), to meet with the Foreign Minister. Gromyko had read the note to Kirk over the phone, but diplomatic protocol required a formal face-to-face presentation as well.

¹⁶⁶ Quanbeck, "My Brief War with Russia," *The Washington Post*, 4 March 1990, C5.

¹⁶⁷ Igor Seidov, "*Krasnoye D'yavoli*" v *Nebe Korei: Sovietskaya Aviatsiya v Voynye 1950-1953: Khronik Vozdushnykh Srazhenii* (Moscow: Yuza-Eksmo, 2007), 36.

¹⁶⁸ O'Neill, "The Other Side of the Yalu," 34.

The language of the note was proper and, considering the gravity of the event, relatively restrained. After providing details of the incident—“two fighters of Air Forces USA . . . approaching on close-shaving flight . . . strafed airdrome with machine guns”—it declared that the Soviet government wanted to register a “decisive protest to Government of US.” The attack, the Soviets said, was “a gross violation by American military planes of state frontier of USSR and in strafing of Soviet airdrome.” They then demanded the “strict punishment of persons responsible for attack” and “assurance from Government of USA that it will take necessary measures for prevention of such provocatory acts in future.”¹⁶⁹

Just as Kirk had done in September, Barbour refused to accept the note, saying that as the aircraft were operating under the auspices of the UN, the Soviets should file their complaint with that body. He also asked how the Soviets were so sure that the aircraft had come from Korea. Gromyko “opined F-80’s could not come from anywhere else.”¹⁷⁰

Barbour had acted correctly; as Kirk was to report to Washington soon afterward. The mission needed more information before the accepting the note. “Embassy of

¹⁶⁹ Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 10 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-4, 1260-1261. To English-speaking readers, the expression “close-shaving” would seem to be a colloquialism and out of place in the otherwise formal language of the protest. However, “to shave” (Брить) has long been used by Russian-speaking aviators to mean “to fly low.” The Lend-Lease aircraft at Sukhaya Rechka were Bell P-39 Airacobras, which the Soviets employed primarily as ground attack aircraft, which, of course, must fly close to the ground. Thus they were given the nickname “little shaver.” Richard Hallion, *Strike from the Sky: The History of Battlefield Air Attack, 1911-1945* (Washington DC: Smithsonian, 1989), unnumbered photographic plate between pages 76 and 77.

Newspaper accounts of the incident—most of which made page one—substitute “hedge-hopping” for “close-shaving.” It is possible that the Soviets rephrased the complaint—“decisive protest” became “resolute protest” in most news stories—when publicizing the incident after the Americans formally refused the note.

¹⁷⁰ Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 10 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 917.

course without facts.”¹⁷¹ Kirk did observe, however, that despite the protest’s “mild tone,” the Soviets were in a grim mood. If an attack had in fact taken place, it was a serious incident, as the region of Vladivostok was “perhaps [the] most important and sensitive Soviet military area in Far East. . . .”¹⁷²

Meanwhile, back in the Far East, the Americans were still trying to ascertain whether the alleged attack had actually taken place. Although the State Department had not requested a formal investigation, the Defense Department resolved to examine the matter on its own. At FEAF Headquarters, General Stratemeyer learned of the incident when he received a radio message from his subordinate, General Earle E. Partridge, Commander of the Fifth Air Force, who reported the incident and said that he would interrogate the pilots and forward further details when they became available.¹⁷³

Partridge’s initial report, delivered the next day, was not conclusive. “From pilot’s description of landmarks and terrain possible airfield is in Rashin area.”¹⁷⁴ He had dispatched a reconnaissance flight to northeastern Korea to survey airfields in the area, but it had not been successful. Another would be attempted shortly. Stratemeyer then forwarded all of this information to General Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ United States Embassy in the Soviet Union, telegram to State Department, 10 October 1950, quoted in footnote in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1261.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 9 October 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 226.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

By that time the Soviets had made a public statement describing the attack and announced that they had issued an official protest.¹⁷⁶ Stratmeyer radioed Partridge to say he believed that the Soviet news report “confirm[ed] the violation. . . .” He went on to tell the Fifth Air Force Commander that

General MacArthur and I are most unhappy. . . [This incident] shows a disregard for orders [to remain clear of the border]. . . . At such a time near the end of the Korean War, you and your people must be sure of your targets and not permit such exhibition of haphazard navigation. . . . To be over 100 miles off in navigation is inexcusable.¹⁷⁷

Copies of this message were routed to Vandenberg and MacArthur.

Vandenberg—and Norstad, his deputy—both requested reports from Stratmeyer. The FEAF commander was able to submit one on 12 October. It began by reviewing the pertinent instructions under which his aircrews were operating:

On 3 Jul, 14 Aug, and 26 Sept radios [messages] were sent to my major commanders emphasizing the importance of not violating the Manchurian or Soviet borders. In the radio of 26 Sept 50, I repeated that crews operating near the North Korean border be specifically briefed on this point and set a line from P’yŏngyang to Wŏnsan north of which no airplane would attack if it could not positively determine its position.

The general was able to ascertain that the crews for the Chongjin mission had been properly briefed regarding this requirement. After reviewing all of the other facts of the matter, he concluded that the attack had actually taken place, and that it “was the result of pilot error and poor judgment, in that it was made without positive identification of the target.” He then submitted copies of his report to MacArthur and Vandenberg.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Stratmeyer, diary entry, 10 October 1950, in *Stratmeyer Diary*, 227. By October 1950, UNC troops had pushed well north of the 38th parallel, hence the “end of the Korean War” reference.

¹⁷⁸ Stratmeyer, diary entry, 12 October 1950, in *Stratmeyer Diary*, 229.

The information worked its way up through the chain of command. Once it reached Washington, it was distributed to the various government agencies with an interest in the matter. Having confirmed that an attack did take place, the State Department issued a formal apology for the incident in the UN Security Council on 19 October 1950.

[T]he Commander in Chief of the United Nations command has reported the following. . . . An attack was made by two United States jet aircraft on 8 October 1950, against Soviet aircraft on an airfield in the vicinity of Sukhya Rechka [sic]. . . . The United States Government desires to express publicly its regret that American Forces under the United Nations command should have been involved in this violation of the Soviet frontier. As evidence of its good faith, the United States Government is prepared to supply funds for payment of any damages . . . inflicted upon Soviet property.¹⁷⁹

Such reparations are a traditional means for belligerents to compensate neutrals for acts resulting in the damage or destruction of life or property. Although border violations resulting in such losses have occurred throughout history, they became more common in the air age, owing to the high speed of aircraft and the difficulty of identifying international frontiers, even those associated with terrain features such as rivers or mountains, from the air. A report by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1950 noted that

[b]oth enemy countries and Allied countries have recognized the obligation to compensate neutral countries for damage caused by the dropping of bombs or the crash landing of military aircraft on neutral territory during World War II. Germany has compensated Ireland for such damage, Russia has compensated Sweden, Great Britain has compensated Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey. Italy has agreed

¹⁷⁹ UN document S/1856, 19 October 1950; printed as “Apology Before U.N. for U.S. Aircraft Violation of Frontier,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 20 November 1950, 832.

to pay Spain for such damage. . . . [T]he United States has compensated Switzerland and Norway.¹⁸⁰

Similarly, the Japanese remunerated the Americans after the *Panay* incident in 1937.¹⁸¹

The apology also noted that “[t]he commander of the Air Force group concerned has been relieved and appropriate steps have been taken with a view toward disciplinary actions against the two pilots involved.”¹⁸² The “appropriate steps” were courts-martial. MacArthur had originally wanted to sanction the pilots under the 104th Article of War, which allows commanding officers to impose punishment without formal trials for minor offenses. Stratemeyer, no doubt realizing the political implications had MacArthur done so, told him, “General, you just can’t do that in this case.”¹⁸³ Yet the Air Force officer investigating the incident had no evidence upon which to charge the fliers. Their unit had run out of gun-camera film (used to record the effects of gunfire for damage assessment and training purposes) before the mission and there was little else to connect the airmen with the offense, as there was almost no other material proof the authorities could use to establish their involvement in the violation.¹⁸⁴

Washington, however, required that they be tried. The tribunal took place on 18 November 1950 in Japan. The two pilots were charged were disobeying the order to

¹⁸⁰ Committee on Foreign Affairs, Payment of Compensation to the Portuguese Government, HR report 3007 (1950), 2.

¹⁸¹ William Gerald Downey, Jr, “Claims for Reparations and Damages Resulting From Violation of Neutral Rights, *Law and Contemporary Problems* 16, no. 3 (1951), 488. Similar incidents include the 1988 USS *Vincennes* affair, in which an American warship shot down an Iranian airliner, and the 1967 USS *Liberty* episode, in which Israeli warplane attacked and damaged an American naval vessel. Although both occurred in peacetime, the injured parties claimed and received reparations for their losses.

¹⁸² “Apology Before U.N. for U.S. Aircraft Violation of Frontier,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 20 November 1950, 832. Stratemeyer complained that the disgraced officer was “one of the best fighter group commanders I have. . . .” Stratemeyer, diary entry, 13 October 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 231.

¹⁸³ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 12 October 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 230.

¹⁸⁴ Quanbeck, “My Brief War with Russia,” *The Washington Post*, 4 March 1990, C5.

remain within Korea, disobeying the order to refrain from attacking targets without positive identification, and attacking “a country at peace with the United States.” The panel found them not guilty, but the two pilots were quickly transferred out of the Korean theatre.¹⁸⁵

The Soviets appeared to be satisfied with the apology and the promise that the responsible parties would be punished. Just as they had done after the bomber incident in September, they never followed up on the matter. The formal records of the pilots’ courts-martial were suppressed nonetheless.¹⁸⁶

State Department officials offered several possible reasons why the Soviets seemed so willing to accept the apology. Walworth Barbour, in a telegram to Dean Acheson shortly after the incident, suggested that the Soviets’ purpose was to produce a “record for propaganda use in [the] future, should subsequent developments dictate.”¹⁸⁷ A week later, Barbour suggested an alternative theory. He observed that the USSR had been “amiable” in recent weeks, noting that in addition to the non-confrontational tone of their Sukhaya Rechka protest, the Soviets had been making an effort to cooperate—or at least to appear cooperative—with the United States and the UN on a number of issues. However, he suggested that this agreeableness was not the “cheerful grin of a good comrade but rather [the] forced smile of an exposed scoundrel.” Their efforts were “not indications of [a] basic Soviet change of heart but may be early ephemeral fruit of [our]

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Chargé in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 13 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 941.

policy of containment and [the] building [up of Western] strength.”¹⁸⁸ He recommended that the United States exploit the opportunity to work with the USSR but warned against relaxing the firmness that produced it.

Dean Rusk offered another explanation for the Soviets’ silence. In a briefing for foreign diplomats in the late summer of 1951 (ten months after the attack), he suggested that they “had not reacted . . . out of embarrassment that the planes had gotten through.”¹⁸⁹ It is now known that the Soviet base commander and air group commander were demoted for poorly training their units; the Soviets also instituted standby alerts for their airbases for the first time since World War Two.¹⁹⁰ In this regard, the Sukhaya Rechka affair foreshadowed a 1987 incident in which a German teenager in a light airplane entered the USSR from Finland, flew over 500 miles to Moscow, and landed in Red Square, resulting in several senior Soviet military officials, including the chief of the PVO, being demoted or fired and a entire Soviet air defense system being shaken up.¹⁹¹

Another possible reason why the Soviets did not pursue the incident further is that international law may or may not have supported their protests. During World War

¹⁸⁸ Chargé in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 19 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1264.

¹⁸⁹ John R. Heideman (of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs), memorandum of conversation, 27 August 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 857.

¹⁹⁰ Yuri Ufimtsov, “Sukhaya Rechka,” Inform-Port.ru, available online at http://www.inform-port.ru/likbez/rasha-tsvilizatsiya-nasha/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=27&id=84, accessed 1 January 2012).

¹⁹¹ Tom LeCompte, “The Notorious Flight of Mathias Rust,” *Air & Space/Smithsonian*, July 2005, 20-27.

One it had been established that “[b]elligerent aircraft are forbidden to enter the jurisdiction of a neutral State.”¹⁹² There was no provision for accidental violations.

The land war rule that belligerent troops who cross a neutral frontier in proved error are exempt from internment if they leave again at once, was not extended to air warfare. This is more remarkable when one remembers how much easier it is for air forces than for land forces to lose their way.¹⁹³

Violations could not be tolerated. “A neutral government must use the means at its disposal to prevent the entry within its jurisdiction of belligerent military aircraft, and to compel them to alight if they have penetrated within such jurisdiction.”¹⁹⁴ If the intruder resisted, the neutral could take sterner measures to prevent its return to the combat area. “The action of a neutral Power in using force or other means at its disposal in the exercise of its rights or duties under these rules cannot be regarded as a hostile act.”¹⁹⁵ Given these principles, the Soviets would appear to have a basis for their protest—and would have been within their rights had they had shot down the intruders.

However, the obligation of a neutral to intern or destroy an intruder was merely established practice, the precedents for which had been set during World War One.¹⁹⁶ The principles cited above were taken from a 1923 draft of a code of rules for aerial warfare. They were never formally adopted.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² “Rules of Air Warfare Drafted by a Commission of Jurists at the Hague, December 1922-February 1923,” article 39, in J.M. Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights*, third ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1947), 504.

¹⁹³ J.M. Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights*, third ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1947), 423.

¹⁹⁴ “Rules of Air Warfare,” article 42, in Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights*, 504.

¹⁹⁵ “Rules of Air Warfare,” article 48, in Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights*, 504.

¹⁹⁶ Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights*, 420.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

That no formal declaration of war had been made by any of the nations fighting in Korea complicated the issue further. None was necessary, Truman argued, because the United States entered the Korean War as part of its treaty obligations to the United Nations. It was thus not a belligerent, at least not according to international law as it was traditionally understood.

However, as a British air force officer familiar with international law realized in 1947, three years before the Korean War began,

neutrality as it has existed hitherto will have to be revised in some respects when the United Nations Organisation of which the Charter was signed at San Francisco on 26 June, 1945, is operative. It will not, however, disappear altogether. States which are members of the Organisation, and it is to be expected that all states will eventually be members, will no longer be neutrals in certain circumstances, that is to say, when collective action is taken under Chapter VIII, Section B, of the Charter against an aggressor or disturber of the peace. Every member state will then be under obligation, if not to supply a contingent for enforcement action, at least to allow passage for the forces of the States furnishing contingents or to provide such other facilities as the Security Council may demand. It will no longer be open to a member State to close its frontier or its atmosphere to belligerent land or air forces taking part in operations authorised by the Security Council. It will still have to close them against the State against which the enforcement action is being taken. It will do so, however, not under the old law of neutrality but under the new dispensation which, unlike the old law, does not require the two parties to a conflict to be treated alike but subjects the alleged aggressor to definite disabilities. On the other hand, the States acting in restraint of aggression will be favoured. Anything in the old law of neutrality that would hamper their action will be rescinded. All will be, in effect, cobelligerent in some shape or form.¹⁹⁸

By this logic, the USSR, as a member of the United Nations, had no grounds for protesting the border violation itself. It might also not be eligible for reparations for the damage by the intruders (as described earlier).

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 459-460.

The actual reasons why the Soviets did not protest the attack on Sukhaya Rechka more strongly will not be fully known without further research in the Russian archives. The incident is rarely mentioned in Russian histories of the Korean War, and the few Russian websites that describe it rely—too much, perhaps—on American sources.¹⁹⁹ But the Americans do not seem to consider it significant. Neither Truman nor Acheson nor MacArthur mentions Sukhaya Rechka in their memoirs. The USAF’s official history of the Korean War relegates it to a footnote, albeit a long one, and in few other works about aerial warfare in Korea does the episode warrant more than a paragraph.²⁰⁰

The Sukhaya Rechka incident, like the bomber shootdown, received much attention from the media—at least in Western nations. Soviet newspapers and magazines had little to say about it. In an article about Soviet press reaction to the Korean War, *The New York Times* noted that while *Pravda* had recently carried an illustrated article about alleged UN atrocities in Korea, a foreign country, the recent

¹⁹⁹ The Seidov book cited above seems to be one of the few Russian-language works that mention the Sukhaya Rechka attack. Examples of books from Russia that do *not* mention the incident include A. S. Orlov and V. A. Gavrilov, *Tainyi Koreiskoi Voinyi* (Moscow: Bechye, 2003); I.V. Petrova, ed., *Voyna V Koreye* (Saint Petersburg: Poligon, 2000); A. Yu. Kuznetsov, ed., *Voyna V Koreye 1950-1953 gg: Vzgl'yad Cherez 50 Lyet: Materialyi Mezhdunarodnoi Nauchno-Teoreticheskoi Konferentsii (Moskva, 23 Iunya 2000 goda)* (Moscow: ROO “Pervoye Marta, 2001).

Sukhaya Rechka is the subject of a handful of Russian web pages (created, obviously, well after 1950). Most rely heavily, as does this work, on the first-hand account by Alton Quanbeck published in *The Washington Post* in 1990, suggesting that the story is not well known in Russia. Interestingly, almost all of these articles cite Quanbeck’s comparison of the attack to Pearl Harbor. Examples include Sergei Ichshenko, “*Nash Perl-Kharbor zovyetsya Sukhaya Rechka: Amerikanstsi Bombili Sovetskuyu Zemlyu escshye v 1950 godu*,” *Sevodhaya Press*, 5 November 2010, available online at <http://svpressa.ru/society/article/33299/>; Vladimir Albertovich Chekmareb, “*Nalyet Amerikanskoi Aviatsii na nam Aerodrom “Sukhaya Rechka,”*” *Art of War*, available online at http://artofwar.ru/c/chekmarew_w_a/text_1240.shtml; *Nalyet Amerikanskoi Aviatsii ha Aerodrom Sukhaya Rechka v 1950godu*, *Pravda Tvorcheskoye Obedeneniye*, available online at <http://pravda.tvob.ru/rodosvet/1507-nalet-amerikanskoy-aviaczii-na-aerodrom-suxaya-rechka-v-1950-godu>; Yuri Ufimtsov, “*Sukhaya Rechka*,” *Inform-Port.ru*, available online at http://www.inform-port.ru/likbez/rasha-tsvivilizatsiya-nasha/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=27&id=84; (all websites accessed 1 January 2012).

²⁰⁰ Futrell, *USAF in Korea*, revised ed., 149n.

attack on the USSR's sovereign territory was not mentioned. "The Soviet press published nothing further on the Far Eastern incident in which the Foreign Office protested that two American fighter planes had strafed a Soviet airfield near Vladivostok."²⁰¹ The dearth of contemporary Russian-language accounts may explain why modern Russian retellings of the attack rely so heavily on American sources.

Of course, western newspapers did not do much with the story either. Unlike the bomber shootdown, the Sukhaya Rechka affair was, for the most part, simply reported in the news. It inspired very little editorial comment.²⁰² One likely reason for the disparity between the two episodes is that while the bomber affair was an opportunity for both nations to express self-righteous indignation and outrage, the Sukhaya Rechka attack could be considered an embarrassment for both the United States and the Soviet Union, although for different reasons.

The *Washington Post* was one of the few newspapers to offer an opinion on the matter. Written before the violation was confirmed, its editors acknowledged that a border crossing was possible, but were confident that if the alleged incursion had indeed occurred, the United States would admit the error. They also noted that the USAF had

²⁰¹ "Moscow Sees a Long War," *The New York Times*, 12 October 1950, 8.

²⁰² "Soviet Charges Strafing of Airfield by U. S. Jets," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 October 1950, 14; "Soviet Says Border Violated: Charge U.S. Planes Fire in Area of Vladivostok: Scene 63 Miles North of Korea; U.S. Rejects Note," *The Boston Globe*, 10 October 1950, 1; "Russ Charge U. S. Attack on Airport: Planes Strafed Field North of Korea, Note Says; Gromyko Protest Spurned by American Envoy," *The Los Angeles Times*, 10 October 1950, 1; "Moscow Protests U. S. Plane Attack: Charges a Border Violations North of Korea—American Rejects Note as U.N. Matter," *The New York Times*, 10 October 1950, 1; "U.S. Refuses Soviet Charge of Air Attack," *The Washington Post*, 11 October 1950, 2; "Soviet Airfield Attacked: American Fighters Blamed by Moscow: U. S. Refuse Protests," *The Scotsman*, 11 October 1950, 8; "U. S. Admits 2 Jets Strafed Russian Airfield," *The Boston Globe*, 20 October 1950, 2; U.S. Admits Jets Strafed Russian Field by Mistake, "*The Hartford Courant*, 20 October 1950, 2; William R. Frye, "U.S. Apology Given Russia for Jet Attack," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 20 October 1950, 6.

taken several active measures to prevent such an incident long before it happened, but “[t]hese precautions do not, of course, rule out the possibility of an accident or even the deliberate ignoring of instructions. . . .”²⁰³ As a result, the United States needed to consider carefully the risks inherent in operations in the area of the frontier.

Military activities near the Soviet border are dangerous business, and while it is not likely that Russia would choose such an incident to touch off general war at this point, we ought to avoid giving her a pretext. The Air Force might well forgo operations which might go awry in this respect.²⁰⁴

An even way to prevent repetitions of the affair, however, was for the Soviets to “cease their support of aggression.”²⁰⁵

From the original incident to the apology, the Sukhaya Rechka affair was in the news for less than two weeks. Yet the subject would be brought up again—briefly—during the MacArthur Hearings seven months later. The frontier violation and subsequent airfield attack would appear to provide the State Department an excellent argument for its opposition to bombing Rashin. Dean Acheson could cite it as support for his contention that border violations, which could lead the USSR to enter the war, were indeed possible. Unfortunately for the Secretary of State, however, General MacArthur pre-empted this objection. The first witness called to testify, the general told the Senators early in the sessions,

When this [war] first started, there wasn’t any special thought of Red China intervening. The entire thought of the world and anxiety of the world was that the Soviet might intervene, but as time passed, the conjunction of the Soviet to this campaign has receded rather than

²⁰³ “Siberian Border,” *The Washington Post*, 11 October 1950, 11.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

increased. At that time . . . we were looking for various Soviet indications of engaging in the combat. On the contrary, the Soviet even when we accidentally bombed one of her fields and admitted it and apologized and disciplined the officers involved and offered the Soviet compensation, they didn't even take the trouble as far as I know to collect any compensation. They dropped the issue.²⁰⁶

It would be difficult to refute the general's simple yet compelling logic, and neither the Secretary of State nor the Secretary of Defense (his immediate predecessor) attempted to do so. Both had opportunities during the hearings. As was noted above, Acheson and Marshall were asked several times to defend their policies regarding Rashin, but neither elected to mention the Sukhaya Rechka attack as support for their positions.²⁰⁷ Perhaps they thought that an extensive examination of the topic in a public hearing might prove provocative to the Soviets.

American Strategic Reconnaissance Operations during the Cold War

Sukhaya Rechka was not the last combat engagement between American and Soviet forces in the Far East before the armistice. However, it may not be entirely appropriate to consider some of these later incidents as aspects of the Korean War. The American aircraft involved were part of the strategic reconnaissance program instituted before the conflict began and continuing long after it ended. The outbreak of hostilities in Korea, however, complicated matters. The air units that had been conducting these operations in the Far East were made available to the United Nations Command. They thus had to divide their activities between missions intended to support the UN effort in

²⁰⁶ MacArthur, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 251.

²⁰⁷ Marshall, testimony, *Ibid.*, 356, 617-618; Acheson, testimony, *Ibid.*, 2276.

Korea and those performed to gather intelligence about the USSR for use if World War Three broke out.

The increased workload did not significantly reduce or impair the Americans' strategic intelligence-gathering activities but did have at least one unintended consequence. Although the onset of the Korean War allowed the Americans to claim that their reconnaissance flights in northeast Asia were combat missions associated with the hostilities in Korea, this seeming license to operate openly (peacetime spy flights were more covert) also stripped away the protections afforded to the aircraft performing the missions. In previous incidents, the United States had generally maintained that their aircraft had been flying in international airspace, as was their right to do in peacetime, and had been brought down unlawfully. Aircraft engaged in combat operations in war zones are assumed to be at hazard.

Soviet aircraft attacked a number of USAF and USN reconnaissance, patrol, and weather aircraft over the Sea of Japan in the last two years of the war, shooting several down (the Chinese made similar attempts against aircraft flying over the Yellow Sea, succeeding at least once). Another was shot down just two days after the armistice went into effect.²⁰⁸ A State Department memorandum written after a 1951 shootdown reveals the issues with which the Americans contended every time one of their aircraft was attacked in the Far East. In it, John D. Hickerson, the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, asked "Should we pursue further in the United Nations our claim

²⁰⁸ Victor Flinham, "Western Intelligence-Gathering Aircraft: Known or Assumed Losses" (table), in *Air Wars and Aircraft: A Detailed Record of Air Combat, 1945 to the Present* (New York: Facts on File: 1990), 32. An updated version of this information is available online at "Cold-War Shootdowns, Recce-Related Losses and Incidents," Vic Flinham Postwar Aviation Historian and Writer, <http://www.vicflinham.co.uk/lists/shoots.html>, accessed 5 January 2012.

that Soviet Union pilots shot down a United States plane over international waters far from the Soviet coast?” He then answered his own question: “On balance, we are inclined to let the matter lie.”²⁰⁹

The problem was that there was little the UN Security Council could actually do even it did decide to investigate. Impartiality would have been nearly impossible. Hickerson understood that the “only witnesses who might have supported our case were the members of the crew of the lost plane.” The USSR, on the other hand, could produce the “airmen involved, and probably hundreds of Soviet citizens . . . to testify that they ‘saw’ the United States plane over Soviet territory and even that they ‘heard’ it open fire.” The Americans could release the radar records of the flight, but did not do so because the distribution of such materials might reveal sensitive information. “It does not appear that we could prove that the plane did not in fact lose its way and deviate from its course.”²¹⁰

One option was to file a protest with the Security Council anyway, in the hope that the Soviets would veto it, allowing the Americans to gain some propaganda value from the rejection rather than the shootdown. Hickerson counseled against this course of action. “It is . . . a highly questionable and dangerous practice to introduce resolutions which we do not really want to see adopted. . . .”²¹¹ Any discussion of the matter, in the UN, the press, or elsewhere, would reveal the weakness of the American position. “It

²⁰⁹ Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, memorandum to the Acting Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 25 November 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 1180.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1181.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

will become quite clear that in fact we do not know what happened to the plane and the Soviets do.”²¹²

Acting Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs U. Alexis Johnson, the official to whom Hickerson’s memorandum was addressed, wrote back to say that because the aircraft were operating as part of UN combat forces, it was unclear whether the usual defense, that the airplane had been shot down in violation of international law, could work. “Were it not for the UN aspect of the question we would have clearly demanded the usual assurances and indemnification” (which were rarely paid even when made). He found it difficult to accept the loss of the aircraft without some form of protest, however, thinking it unwise to establish a precedent of acquiescence. “I am not sure that we wish to leave the record standing that in the event one of our planes is unlawfully destroyed and the personnel killed while engaged in UN action, we will not make some effort to obtain redress.”²¹³

There was also the issue of responsibility. The United States had refused the USSR’s protest notes about the bomber shootdown and Sukhaya Rechka, referring the Soviets to the United Nations, as the offending aircraft had been under UN control. Based on this model, any protest about aircraft losses should be made by the UN, not the United States.²¹⁴ In his message of 25 November, Hickerson had noted that “[w]e have also examined the possibility of asking the Secretary General to put in a claim against the Soviet Union on behalf of the United Nations and of the personnel of the plane,

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Acting Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, memorandum to the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, 25 November 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 1182.

²¹⁴ Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs), memorandum to Acting Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 12 December 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 1308.

under the principle of the Bernadotte case, . . .” which had established that the UN was like a sovereign nation in that it had the right to seek relief for the injury and deaths of its personnel.²¹⁵ Of course, the American aircrew members were not agents of the UN itself but represented UN member nations engaged in UN business. “Whether the United States Government could bring such a claim not merely in its own capacity but as the Unified Command is an interesting theoretical question, for which, of course, there is no precedent,” wrote Hickerson.²¹⁶ After consulting with the State Department’s legal advisors, he realized that the United States could still present a claim against the Soviets, because while the airplane had been acting on behalf of the United Nations, it remained the property of the United States and its crew members were American nationals.²¹⁷

One thing missing from the correspondence of Hickerson and Johnson is any reference to the possibility of war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Apparently, none of the shootdowns was considered important enough to go to war over. The first such—a novel experience for the USA, the USSR, and the world—led the American ambassador in Moscow to remark that, although the people and government of the United States were “calm and poised,” the Soviet government appeared to be “less at ease” and there was some evidence that the “people [of the USSR were] apprehensive

²¹⁵ Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs), memorandum to the Acting Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 25 November 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 1181. Folke Bernadotte was a Swedish diplomat chosen by the UN to mediate in the first Arab-Israeli War of 1947-1948. He was assassinated by Zionist terrorists. The International Court of Justice and UN General Assembly upheld the right of the UN to make claims on behalf of its personnel injured or killed while on duty. Sovereign nations already had this right.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, memorandum to Acting Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 12 December 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 1308.

lest this incident lead to dire consequences.”²¹⁸ Secretary of State Acheson observed merely that the Soviet government’s uncooperative attitude was “a further obstacle to . . . harmonious relations among nations and cannot be reconciled with the Sov[iet] Gov[ernmen]t’s continued protestations of its devotion to the cause of peace.”²¹⁹ But none of the messages by either the Americans or the Soviets expressed open bellicosity or even veiled belligerence.

Indeed, these incidents eventually became routine. By 1953, after yet another American airplane was destroyed, the *Boston Globe*’s “Uncle Dudley” could observe,

One of the dreary characteristics of the cold war is the fact that incidents which threaten all-out hostilities in normal times have come to be accepted almost as matters of course. These air attacks . . . may have caused some to fear that [the Soviets] have chosen the present time for an assault on Western Europe. They should feel reassured that this is unlikely. . . .²²⁰

He concluded, “[T]hese . . . incidents may have some special significance, but we should also realize that they are nothing out of the ordinary—as the cold war goes.”²²¹

Perhaps because of the numerous shootdowns, the American strategic reconnaissance campaign during the Cold War is fairly well known. Less familiar are the USSR’s aerial probes of the same period, perhaps because they were not on the same scale as the American program. Soviet aircraft penetrated American airspace several times; they also “shadowed” American task force operations in open waters.²²² The

²¹⁸ Ambassador in the Soviet Union, telegram to the Secretary of State, 15 April 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-4, 1146.

²¹⁹ Secretary of State, telegram to Embassy in the Soviet Union, 4 May 1950, 1190-1191

²²⁰ “Uncle Dudley,” “Attack and Riposte,” *The Boston Globe*, 13 March 1953, 18.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² Joseph Alsop and Stewart Alsop, “Red Planes Over America,” *The Hartford Courant*, 17 March 1950, 12; Victor Flinham, *Air Wars and Aircraft*, 33.

Americans, of course, endeavored to intercept these flights, but showed more restraint than the Soviets, preferring to escort the intruders away from their targets than shoot them down (there was, however, the occasional mid-air collision).

The MiG-Panther Incident

Some shooting incidents did occur, however. Most of these occurred during the Korean War, when tensions were high and prudence called for assuming all incoming aircraft were hostile. One such episode took place on 18 November 1952 in the Sea of Japan off the coast where the DPRK and USSR meet. The UNC naval task force was “about ninety miles south of Vladivostok, Russia, [when] an unidentified aircraft appeared on the radar screens, as was usual whenever we operated near Russian territory.”²²³ More blips appeared, but instead of maintaining a constant distance from the fleet, they began approaching—“something the Russians had never done before.”²²⁴ The fleet’s CAP (Combat Air Patrol), guardian fighters sent aloft whenever the battle group was conducting operations, was directed to fend off the incoming aircraft. The CAP pilots identified the intruders as MiG-15s, a type of Soviet jet fighter that enjoyed a significant performance advantage over the type of interceptor the task force sent to meet them. Nonetheless, in the ensuing dogfight, several of the Soviet airplanes were shot

²²³ J. J. Clark, *Carrier Admiral* (New York: David McKay, 1967), 297.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

down (sources vary as to the exact number). The American aircraft, Grumman F9F Panthers, all returned safely.²²⁵

Why the aerial engagement took place has been the subject of speculation since it occurred. It might have been an attempted attack made in response to a recent increase in American air operations in Korea, or simply the rash act of a local commander.²²⁶ Russian websites describing the battle offer little insight into its cause. Some claim the MiGs were on a training mission, others say that it was the Soviets who were trying to intercept the Americans (but they never identify a possible target). Many of them, however, claim that the UNC fighters “suddenly attacked” the MiGs, although they do not explain why the Soviet jets were doing in area in the first place.²²⁷ The most likely explanation was that battle was simply an armed probe. “Through recorded Soviet radio transmissions, it was concluded that the motivation for the MiG attack was to test the defenses of to the U.S. Navy Carrier task force.”²²⁸

²²⁵ Commanding Officer USS *Oriskany*, Action Report for the Period of 28 October 1952 through 22 November 1952, 22 November 1952, 4, <http://www.history.navy.mil/a-korea/cva34a-52.pdf>; Commander Air Group One Hundred Two, Action Report of Carrier Air Group One Hundred Two for the period 28 October through 22 November 1952, 22 November 1951, II-3, <http://www.history.navy.mil/a-korea/cvg102-28oct-22nov52.pdf>, both sites accessed 3 January 2012).

²²⁶ Hallion, *The Naval Air War In Korea*, 163-164.

²²⁷ “Lyetniye Proishestvii v SSSR I RF Stranits,” “Forum Vipusknikov Yebayul,” <http://76.163.106.187/index.php?PHPSESSID=cbb6d8fbc80ec756bbfc2cce19eb6345&topic=248.15>; Bozdushniye Boi “Kholodnoi Voinyi,” <http://alfamodel7li.7li.ru/viewtopic.php?id=356>; http://vadimvswar.narod.ru/ALL_OUT/AiKOut09/WingOSea/WingOSea043.htm http://vadimvswar.narod.ru/ALL_OUT/AiKOut09/WingOSea/WingOSea043.htm, all websites accessed 7 January 2012).

²²⁸ Diane S. Segal, “F9F Panthers: Heroes of Korea,” *Foundation* 28, no. 2, 60 (2007), 60.

Soviet Incursions of Japanese Airspace

A similar incident took place a few months later. This battle was the climax of a series of Soviet probes over northern Japan. These actions might have been simple harassment operations, but the Americans could not dismiss them entirely. The Americans had to respond to them, as they understood that the United States must appear resolute in its opposition to communist aggression, no matter how innocuous it appeared, wherever in the world it occurred.

Beginning in the summer of 1952, Soviet aircraft, presumably based in the Kurile Islands, began making overflights of northern Japan.²²⁹ The Japanese government originally kept the news from the population, in part because Japan did not have the means at hand to oppose them.²³⁰ The 1951 treaty that formally ended World War Two permitted Japan a small self-defense force, but this organization was not yet ready to assume its full duties. American forces, originally in Japan as part of the post-war occupation and kept there both to fight the Korean War and to protect Japan while it built up its defenses, took the responsibility for protecting Japan. The State Department noted that the “interception and destruction [of] Sov[iet] aircraft can be publicly justified

²²⁹ Marvin Stone, “Will Shoot Intruding Planes: General Clark Warns Russia,” *The Atlanta World*, 14 January 1953, 1. The Kuriles (or Kurils) stretch between the Kamchatka peninsula of Russia (part of the Soviet Union in 1953) and Hokkaido, the northernmost of the Japanese home islands. Before 1945, the northern islands in the chain were controlled by the USSR, the southern by Japan. The Soviets occupied the entire archipelago after entering the conflict in August 1945. The 1951 San Francisco Treaty that ended World War Two required Japan give up their claim to the islands. It did not, however, transfer them to the Soviet Union. The Japanese claim that not all of the disputed islands are part of the Kurile chain and thus still belong to them. Despite a 1956 agreement about the most southerly of these, the issue is still unresolved.

²³⁰ Acting Secretary of State, telegram to the Embassy in Japan, 17 November 1952, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-14, 1358; Henry S. Hayward, “Credit Given U.S. Envoy For Japan’s Air Warning,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 February 1953, 11.

on basis maintenance security US forces stationed in Jap[an] under Security Treaty ‘to contribute . . . to [the] security [of] Jap[an] against armed attack from without.’”²³¹

The diplomatic issues associated with the Americans taking over some of Japan’s defense took some time. The shootdown of an American RB-29 reconnaissance aircraft on 7 October 1952 in the vicinity of the Kuriles—for which the Soviets refused to indemnify the United States—may have contributed to the decision a month later that authorized the CINCFE

to intercept, engage, and destroy combat or reconnaissance air aircraft in Korea over Jap[anese] home islands and Okinawa or territorial waters three miles to seaward thereof which commit hostile acts, are manifestly hostile in intent, or which bear mil[itary] insignia of USSR or satellites and which do not immed[iately] obey signals to land unless properly cleared or obviously in distress.²³²

Robert D. Murphy, the American ambassador to Japan, believed that the directive would “deny [the] Russians [the] opportunity to gain psychological advantage by portraying US as impotent and unreliable. . . .”²³³ The diplomatic protests about the RB-29 shootdown had dragged on (and would never be resolved), frustrating the Americans.²³⁴ An encounter between an American fighter and a Soviet aircraft over Japan in early November may also been a factor in the decision. Lacking any orders to fire, the

²³¹ Acting Secretary of State, telegram to the Embassy in Japan, 17 November 1952, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-14, 1358. The word “Jap” can, of course, be looked at as merely a short form of the “Japan,” but the term was considered a pejorative long before 1952. No doubt the American diplomatic corps would have refrained from using it in face-to-face encounters with Japanese officials, but its appearance in internal communications can be interpreted as a representation of the casual racialism of the era.

²³² JCS communication 923816; quoted in Acting Secretary of State, telegram to the Embassy in Japan, 17 November 1952, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-14, 1358.

²³³ US Ambassador in Japan, telegram to the Department of State, 19 November 1952, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-14, 1362.

²³⁴ “U.S. Renews Demand Soviet Pay Damages for Downing B-29,” *The Boston Globe*, 17 December 1950, 11; “U. S. Again Prods Soviet Over B-29: Repeats Demand for Payment for Shooting Down of Plane—Rejects Moscow Stand,” *The New York Times*, 17 December 1952, 2.

interceptors could only watch over the intruder until it crossed back into international territory (they would have been able to defend themselves if it had attacked, of course).²³⁵

Murphy, however, cautioned against publicizing the directive. “I do not believe it necessary or wise to notify the Sov[iet]s of our intended action or make any public announcement concerning our policy.”²³⁶ The Soviets had not issued any such warnings before any of their shootdowns. “Little is to be gained by thus putting them on their guard and would hardly be expected by them in view of their provocative action in shooting down our B-29.”²³⁷ It would be more satisfying to catch them red-handed, he thought. “The dramatic circumstances surrounding the forcing to land of Sov[iet] aircraft or the destruction while actually violating Jap[anise] territory would provide much more advantageous atmosphere. . . .”²³⁸

The State Department did not take his advice, however. On 12 January 1953, the Japanese government, with the full support of the United States, issued a statement announcing that it would begin actively defending its airspace.

Violations of our territorial air over Hokkaido [northernmost of the home islands] by foreign military planes have of late become increasingly frequent. The Government has therefore decided to take the necessary measures, with the cooperation of the United States security forces stationed in Japan, to prevent such violations of Japanese aerial domains in the future. The Japanese government takes this opportunity to caution the foreign power concerned against repetition of such violations, and to declare that hereafter, for any consequences of the measure to be taken in

²³⁵ “U.S. Jets Intercept Red Plane in Japan: Soviet-Type Craft is Sighted over Northern Area Bear where B-29 was Lost,” *The New York Times*, 5 November 1952, 3.

²³⁶ US Ambassador in Japan, telegram to the Department of State, 19 November 1952, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-14, 1362.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

order to repel intruding aircraft, the entire responsibility will rest with the country to which the aircraft belongs.²³⁹

Because Japan did not have diplomatic relations with the USSR—and note that the warning did not actually identify any particular nation by name—the notice was distributed as a press release.²⁴⁰

The new policy required some modifications to the American force structure in Japan. It was known that the Soviets were operating the MiG-15 in the Far East (see next chapter). Because the best American fighter, the North American F-86 Sabre, was committed to the Korean War effort, the USAF units in Japan operated an early-model jet, the Lockheed F-80 Shooting Star, considered inferior to the Soviet machine.²⁴¹ As a result, a detachment (not a full squadron) of the better aircraft was transferred to northern Japan. A detachment of Lockheed F-94 night fighters—inferior in performance, but capable of nocturnal operations—was also relocated to Hokkaido.²⁴²

The first opportunity to test the new policy came a month after the Japanese government's warning note. When a pair of aircraft entered Japanese airspace, American fighters scrambled to intercept them. It did not matter that these machines were the older, less capable type of USAF jet because the intruders were World War Two-era piston-engined machines. In the ensuing dogfight, the interceptors damaged

²³⁹ US Ambassador in Japan, telegram to the Department of State, 12 January 1952, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-14, 1379.

²⁴⁰ Marvin Stone, "Will Shoot Intruding Planes: General Clark Warns Russia," *The Atlanta World*, 14 January 1953, 1.

²⁴¹ The F-86 entered USAF service in 1949. When the Korean War began, American military officials decided that the type should be reserved for the defense of the continental United States, based on the limited numbers of Sabres available and their belief that the F-80 was better than any airplane the North Koreans had. They also considered the F-80 sufficient for defending Japan.

²⁴² Henry S. Hayward, "Credit Given U.S. Envoy For Japan's Air Warning," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 February 1953, 11.

one of the intruders. Smoking, it and its wingman left the area. The American aircraft did not pursue.²⁴³ “Our pilots broke off the engagement to avoid violation of Russian-held territory,” reported a USAF general.²⁴⁴

The Japanese government decided to treat the affair as an isolated incident, not a hostile action, which would require the implementation of the emergency clauses in an American-Japanese defense agreement. “This sky invasion is not considered as hostility,” the foreign minister said.²⁴⁵ “I don’t think the present incident will become an international issue.”²⁴⁶ However, there was some concern in the Japanese Diet (parliament) that the event might have greater significance. The Soviets might be trying to intimidate Japan; the encounter, if repeated on a larger scale, might presage war.²⁴⁷

The American government downplayed the affair as well (which might explain why several American newspapers did not consider it page-one news).²⁴⁸ They did, however, endorse the action. Significantly, official American statements carefully did

²⁴³ William J. Jordan, “Japan Backs Fight with Air Invaders: Officials Defend U.S. Pursuit of Soviet Craft—Pilots Say Intruders Fired First,” *The New York Times*, 17 February 1953, 2.

²⁴⁴ Otto P. Weyland, quoted in “Intruders Fired First in 10-Minute Air Fight: U.S. Jet Pilots Tell How They Chased Reds from Japan,” *The Boston Globe*, 17 February 1950, 1.

²⁴⁵ Katsuo Okazaki, quoted in “Reveal Russian Planes Fired at U.S. Jets First,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 17 February 1953, 4.

²⁴⁶ Katsuo Okazaki, quoted in William J. Jordan, “Japan Backs Fight with Air Invaders: Officials Defend U.S. Pursuit of Soviet Craft—Pilots Say Intruders Fired First,” *The New York Times*, 17 February 1953, 2.

²⁴⁷ “Reveal Russian Planes Fired at U.S. Jets First,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 17 February 1953, 4; Robert Schakhe, “U. S. Jet Planes Fire on Russian-Type war Planes,” *The Atlanta Record*, 17 February 1950, 3; Henry S. Hayward, “U.S. Plays Down Hokkaido Tilt,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 17 February 1953, 1.

²⁴⁸ *The Boston Globe*, *Hartford Courant*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Christian Science Monitor* put the story on their front pages, although none of them felt it warranted a banner headline. *The Globe* and *Monitor* placed it below the fold. *The New York Times* put the story on page 2, *The Atlanta World* on page 3, while the *Chicago Tribune* buried it on its fourth page.

Based on the various papers’ page one banner headlines, the big news in Connecticut that day was that a prisoner had been given a stay of execution at the last minute the night before, while Chicago and Los Angeles readers learned that taxes were high. Atlanta’s main concern was a local zoning issue.

not identify the aircraft as Soviet, describing them instead as “Russian-type” airplanes—although they did note that the intruders had fired the first shots.²⁴⁹

The Soviets seemed to learn their lesson from this incident. There were no further overflights of Japan. The Americans, however, continued to send reconnaissance aircraft on missions that took them near Soviet territory. Less than a month after the dogfight over Japan, an American RB-50 (a re-engined B-29 variant) on a weather reconnaissance flight was attacked off of Kamchatka.²⁵⁰ The Superfortress defended itself—“the first time a plane of the West has fired back” (or at least was able to report doing so afterward)—and was able to escape.²⁵¹

The incident inspired the usual outrage and indignation, of course, but some Americans offered more thoughtful responses. Ralph E. Flanders of Vermont, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, wondered whether the USAF might have “a chip on its shoulder.” He said as that particular airplane was based in Alaska, the Air Force, by conducting operations so near to the USSR, might have been “a little reckless.”²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Henry S. Hayward, “U.S. Plays Down Hokkaido Tilt,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 17 February 1953, 1.

²⁵⁰ Austin Stevens, “U.S. Plane Fired on by Migs Over Siberia: Replies to Attack: Weather Reconnaissance Craft is Engaged by Russians 25 Miles from Kamchatka: Neither Suffers damage: Senators Suggest Inquiry into ‘Chip on Shoulder’ Attitude by Americans in Area,” *The New York Times*, 16 March 1953, 1; Victor Flinham, “Western Intelligence-Gathering Aircraft: Known or Assumed Losses” (table), in *Air Wars and Aircraft*, 32.

²⁵¹ John G. Norris, “Yanks Shoot at MIG Foe; Neither Hit: Americans Checking on Weather Plane Attack 25 Miles from Red Soil,” *The Washington Post*, 18 March 1953, 1.

²⁵² Ralph E. Flanders, quoted in Austin Stevens, “U.S. Plane Fired on by Migs Over Siberia: Replies to Attack: Weather Reconnaissance Craft is Engaged by Russians 25 Miles from Kamchatka: Neither Suffers damage: Senators Suggest Inquiry into ‘Chip on Shoulder’ Attitude by Americans in Area,” *The New York Times*, 16 March 1953, 1.

Senator Flanders was one of the eight Republican senators who had put their names to the “Individual Views” report released after the MacArthur Hearings in 1951, a document that proclaimed, “Fear of Russia is no basis for a foreign policy. . . .”²⁵³ The dissenting senators also declared that “[t]he conviction that the administration’s Far East policy was one of appeasement to communism was proven to be fact as a result of this investigation.”²⁵⁴ Yet two years later one of its signatories was suggesting that the American military might show greater restraint in its air operations in areas the Soviets might consider sensitive.

Soviet-American Relations after Korea

But much had changed in the three years since 1950, when the war had begun. These changes were not in Korea, where the fighting had been stalemated since 1951 and the armistice talks were similarly unproductive, but in the global political environment. In the United States, voters, tired of the lack of resolution in Korea, had elected a new president in 1952. World War Two hero General Dwight D. Eisenhower became the first Republican to hold that office in twenty years. Before the election, the man who would become the new administration’s Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, had advocated “A Policy of Boldness” relying on strong alliances and nuclear arms to deter Soviet aggression.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ *Individual Views*, 13, 51.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ John Foster Dulles, “A Policy of Boldness,” *Life*, 19 May 1952, 146-158.

The USSR also had a change in leadership, although not by means of the democratic process. Josef Stalin, Premier of the USSR since 1941, died in early March 1953. Within the next few weeks communist fighters attacked several western aircraft (both military and civilian) in Europe, shooting down three, leading many to speculate that the new regime was trying either to test the new American administration, intimidate the West and frustrate European solidarity, divert attention away from internal problems, demonstrate to its people and satellites its own “policy of boldness,” or manufacture a pretext for war—or a combination of any or all of these.²⁵⁶ There was evidence that the Soviets had issued an alert to its military units, and to its client states, around the time that Stalin died, and many western newspapers attributed the rash of incidents to the communists’ increased sensitivity.²⁵⁷

Yet a short time later, the Soviets seemed to relax. “Since the death of Stalin on March 5, 1953, there have been more Soviet gestures toward the West than at any other similar period,” wrote a member of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff.²⁵⁸ Soviet officials even offered “regrets” about one of the shootdowns in Europe (although they did not go so far as to formally apologize), avoiding their usual rhetoric about deliberate border violations and the intruder firing first.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ “Something More Than a Protest is Needed,” *The Hartford Courant*, 13 March 1953, 18; J. M. Roberts, Jr, “Bombings Rouse Grave Conjecture: Allies Ponder What Lies Behind Unprovoked Firing on American and British Planes,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 13 March 1953, 6; “Shots Near British Airliner: Berlin Flight Incident,” *The Times* [London], 14 March 1953, 6; “‘Provocative Act’ Against U.S.: Protest to Prague,” *The Times* [London], 14 March 1953, 6.

²⁵⁷ “‘Alert’ Before Stalin Died,” *The Observer* [London], 15 March 1953, 1; “Unexpected Tone of Soviet Note: After Air Incidents,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 March 1953, 21.

²⁵⁸ Carlton Savage (of the Policy Planning Staff), memorandum to Director of the Policy Planning Staff, 1 April 1953, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-8, 1138.

²⁵⁹ “Unexpected Tone of Soviet Note: After Air Incidents,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 March 1953, 21; “Shooting Down of R.A.F. Bomber,” *The Times* [London], 25 March 1953, 3.

The Korean Conflict ended soon after, but the Cold War continued for another thirty years. Throughout this time the Americans maintained their strategic reconnaissance campaign. There were numerous additional shootdowns, each of which raised tensions between the superpowers for a short time. After a period of indignation and outrage, relations between the United States and Soviet Union returned to what passed for “normal” at the time. The USA and USSR never did go to war—not before Korea, not after, and apparently, not during. When invited by the United States to join it, the DPRK, the PRC, and the ROK at a post-armistice conference to discuss the political future of the peninsula, the Soviets declined. The Americans were only abiding by the terms of the ceasefire agreement, which called for representatives of “both sides” to be involved in the dialogue.²⁶⁰

The American concerns that the USSR might intervene in the Korean War thus remained hypothetical. Bombing Rashin, overflying the Soviet Union, or shooting down Soviet aircraft *might* have led to war with the USSR. But all of these events occurred, while the superpowers remained at peace with each other. The American effort to limit the Korean War was successful, at least in this regard. But it failed to prevent the war from expanding in another fashion.

²⁶⁰ Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story*, 648.

CHAPTER IX

COMMANDMENT: LIMITED AIR WAR TO KEEP CHINA OUT OF KOREA

Just as they restricted their air operations along the Soviet-Korean frontier to avoid giving the Soviet Union cause to intervene in Korea, the Americans also endeavored to prevent the Chinese from entering the war by limiting their aerial activities along the Yalu River, the border between Korea and the People's Republic of China. However, because they considered the Soviets a greater threat than the Chinese, the Americans did not place any restraints on their land forces in Korea. Yet the Chinese were more concerned with the land war in Korea than the air war because the United States could establish a presence on the Yalu with its armies. As American troops approached the Yalu, the Chinese warned the United States to halt its advance. The Americans disregarded the warning and the Chinese entered the war.

The Yalu River and the 38th Parallel

Shortly after the Korean War ended, the comic book *Mad* (later reformatted as a magazine) published its parody of *The Adventures of Smilin' Jack*, a popular daily newspaper comic strip chronicling the escapades and exploits of a daredevil pilot. "Smilin' Melvin" was typical of the fare *Mad* presented in its early days under editor Harvey Kurtzman (who also wrote and did the layouts for most issues). In addition to the main action and dialogue of the story, every frame was full of verbal asides and

throwaway sight gags, such as the pinball-type “tilt” light flashing behind Melvin in the cockpit of the “secret super-turbo-hyper-ptooy-jet X-13” he is testing.¹

Mad's artists were not averse to experimenting with their visual techniques. One panel in “Smilin’ Melvin” is drawn not from the ground-level perspective readers experience daily but from a bird’s-eye view. The two main characters are little more than stick figures against the landscape, an airfield. Dominating the frame is a white airplane flying over the runway. It has the word “MIG” on its nose, red stars on its wings and fuselage, and the Chinese ideographs for “heavenly warrior” on its tail section.² Its pilot is a stereotypical cartoon Asian complete with buckteeth and squint. He is peering at a large sheet of paper marked “road map,” which is almost entirely blank except for two notations: “38°” and “Yalu.”³

Both are places that in 1953 would have been familiar to most Americans, being two of the most significant geographical features associated with the just-ended Korean War. The former, of course, was the original border between North and South Korea. The latter marks the frontier between North Korea and communist China. Each was at one time the northernmost limit of UNC land operations during the Korean War.

Both still have name recognition, as evidenced by the large number of books about the Korean War that use them in their titles. A small sample—drawn only from works referring to the air war in Korea—include *From Baddeck to the Yalu, Red Wings*

¹ Harvey Kurtzman, writer, and Wallace Wood, artist, “Smilin’ Melvin,” *Mad* 7 (November/December 1953), third panel of third page (book not paginated).

² Rhonda Reagan, personal communication (conversation), 6 March 2012.

³ Kurtzman and Wood, “Smilin’ Melvin,” first panel of second page.

over the Yalu, and *The Other Side of the Yalu* (and one subtitled *Salerno to the Yalu*).⁴

There are also *Across the Parallel*, *Krasnye Diavolii na 38i Paralleli*, and *The Red Parallel*.⁵ A catalogue of general works about the Korean War using either term would be much longer.⁶

Borders get much of their significance from what lays beyond them. In the case of the 38th parallel, both sides were Korea. The boundary between the ROK and DPRK was an “artificial and unnatural” line on the map, drawn for the convenience of the Allies when dividing their occupational responsibilities in the lands of the former Japanese Empire in 1945.⁷ As one geographer wrote in 1946, “It might have been derived by a quick glance of some busy policy maker at a wall map showing parallels as heavy lines.”⁸ It cut across the Korean peninsula “like a knife,” without reference to

⁴ Norm Shannon, *From Baddeck to the Yalu: Stories of Canada's Airmen at War* (Ottawa: Esprit de Corps, 2005); Zhang, *Red Wings over the Yalu*; O'Neill *The Other Side of the Yalu*; James R. Stegall, *Grasshopper Pilot: Salerno to the Yalu: Combat Memoirs* (n.p.: Ravnhaus, 2002).

⁵ George Odgers, *Across the Parallel: The Australian 77th Squadron with the United States Air Force in Korea* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1952); Igor Seidov and Askold German, *Krasnye D'iyavoly na 38i Paraleli* [Red Devils on the 38th Parallel] (Kiev: OOO “Ruslan,” 1998); W. R. Bennett, *The Red Parallel* (Sidney: Horwitz, 1960).

⁶ Among the best-known books about the Korean War using “Yalu” or “Parallel” in their titles are Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu* (New York: Harpers, 1954); Harry J. Maihafer, *From the Hudson to the Yalu: West Point '49 in the Korean War* (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 1993); Allen Sues Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: Macmillan, 1980); Roy Edgar Appleton, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu: June-November 1950* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1961); and Martin Russ, *The Last Parallel: A Marine's War Journal* (New York: Rinehart, 1957). A Chinese writer combines the two terms in his title, which may strike western readers as odd because it reverses the “to” and “from” relationship of the river and latitude. Ding Wei, *Cong Yalu Jiang dao san ba xian* [From Yalu River to the 38th Parallel Line] (Beijing: Jie fang jun chu chu ban she [Liberation Army Press], 2010).

⁷ “U.N. Commission on Korea Reports to the General Assembly,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 2 October 1950, 541. This article contains excerpts from and a summary of UN Document A/1350, 8 September 1950.

⁸ Shannon McCune, “Physical Basis for Korean Boundaries,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1946), 286. In addition to his academic career—he was the author of numerous books and articles about the geography of the Far East and served as the president of the University of Vermont—Dr. McCune was the first civil administrator of the Ryukyu Islands (Japanese territory occupied after World War Two) and

terrain, culture, or traditional local administrative boundaries.⁹ Indeed, as the 38th parallel crosses an arm on the Yellow Sea, the new border left the southern portion of the Ongjin peninsula isolated from the American zone (which became the ROK) to which it was assigned. On a large scale, it divided the industrial north from the agricultural south; on a fine scale, it separated the industrial Haeju region from its port facilities.¹⁰ Little wonder, then, that in 1950 the American representative to the UN declared that it had “no basis for existence either in law or in reason.”¹¹

What was drawn for political reasons could just as easily be erased, especially as thirty-eight north proved to be little impediment to the movement of armies. Associated with neither mountains, nor rivers, nor any other natural barriers, the parallel proved very easy to cross, as both the DPRK and UN demonstrated during the Korean War. “[T]he thirty-eighth parallel really means nothing,” said General Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, during the MacArthur Hearings. “It has no military significance.”¹² J. Lawton Collins, the Army Chief of Staff, expressed a similar sentiment later during the hearings.¹³

was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for service with the American Foreign Economic Administration in Asia.

⁹ “The line crosses more than 75 streams and 12 rivers. A number of high ridges go at variant angles to the boundary rather than along it.” McCune, “Korean Boundaries,” 286.

¹⁰ “To the west it isolates a sub-peninsula which can only be reached by weekly American convoys going through the Russian zone [this passage written when Korea was still under allied occupation]. This Ongjin peninsula has elevations over 1600 feet and off shore are the Sir James Hall group and other islands.” Ibid.

¹¹ Warren R. Austin, speech given before UN Committee I (Political and Security), 30 September 1950, printed as “Peace and Security for the Future of Korea,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 9 October 1950, 579.

¹² Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1007.

¹³ Collins, testimony, Ibid., 1303.

The Yalu, on the other hand, was and is a natural border, the traditional boundary between Korea in the south and Manchuria (northeastern China) in the north.¹⁴

“[T]hough it provides an economic and communication bond between the two bordering areas, [the Yalu] mark[ed] a definite cultural break.”¹⁵ As such, it would serve as a sort of a goal for the United States and the United Nations. Their purpose was to unify the Korean peninsula. They thus had to reach the Yalu while establishing and maintaining control of everything south of it. Yet to achieve this objective from their established positions in the ROK, the UNC would have to cross the 38th parallel into North Korea.

Warnings from the PRC

The problem was, of course, that the leaders of the People's Republic of China had indicated that they would intervene in the conflict if the non-Korean forces of the UNC ventured into the DPRK. But because they were isolated diplomatically, their warning had been made through third parties, and the Americans, who questioned the reliability of these intermediaries, were unwilling to accept the warnings at face value.

¹⁴ The Yalu River is not impassable. At various times in history the Chinese have penetrated into and held parts of Korea and the Koreans have done the same with Manchuria (the ancient Korean kingdom of Goguryeo may be the only state based in the Yalu valley itself, however). Yet its strategic value as a barrier is unquestioned, as it has played a significant role in Asian wars throughout history. Goguryeo and its successor state Goryeo (from which the name Korea is derived) both built substantial fortifications along its length. The Battle of the Yalu, a naval engagement off of the river's mouth, was in part the result of Chinese attempts to bypass the Yalu by moving their land units by sea during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. During the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, as the Japanese advanced north along the Korean peninsula, the Russians chose not to engage them, instead falling back until they had reached the Yalu, which promised to be (but was not) a defensible line. The resulting Battle of the Yalu River was the first major land battle of that conflict, a loss for Russia demonstrating that Japan had reached rough military parity with western European nations.

For more about the boundaries of Korea, see McCune, “Korean Boundaries,” 272.

¹⁵ Ibid., 277.

As a result, the USA convinced its UN allies to take the risk of the PRC becoming involved in the war. The Americans did not, however, dismiss the possibility of Chinese intervention entirely, and so attempted to reassure the communist Chinese that the UNC's activities would be restricted to the Korean peninsula. They did not radically change their policies regarding Korea; their efforts in this regard were primarily to reiterate and publicize existing policies. Chief among these was the sanctity of the Yalu River, the PRC's northeastern border.

The Americans had recognized the significance of the Yalu soon after they and United Nations decided to come to the aid of South Korea, even though for the first several months of the war the fighting was confined to the area south of the 38th parallel and the Truman administration was more concerned about intervention by the USSR rather than the PRC. As discussed in the previous chapter, on 29 June 1950, the JCS issued a directive permitting the UNC air and sea units to operate north of the 38th parallel provided that “[s]pecial care will be taken to insure that operations in North Korea stay well clear of the frontiers of Manchuria or the Soviet Union”—in other words, the Yalu and Tumen Rivers.¹⁶

This caution was originally academic. Most of the air operations UNC forces conducted in the first part of the conflict (prior to the UN offensive across the 38th parallel) would have been in direct support of MacArthur's land units, meaning that they would have been in the immediate battle area, which at the time was at the far southern end of the Korean peninsula. A large proportion of the remainder would be indirect

¹⁶ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 29 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 240-241.

support missions against the logistical tail of the DPRK army, which would have been further north, but not as far north as the Yalu (most of it would originate just above the 38th parallel and around the “waist” of the Korean peninsula). There would have been no need to assign air units to fly up to the mountainous area along the PRC-DPRK border.

Accidental Border Incursions and UN Arbitration

However, Korea is not a large region, and aircraft assigned to targets in its interior could stray. Perhaps inevitably, some did. Weeks before the Americans had to manage the diplomatic niceties of the Sukhaya Rechka incident with the USSR, they had to defuse the “Affair Manchuria,” as General Stratemeyer called it, with the PRC.¹⁷

On 28 August 1950, Chou En-Lai, the PRC’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, cabled the Secretary-General of the United Nations to report that one day earlier “military airplanes of the United States aggression forces in Korea invaded the air of the People's Republic of China, flying along the right [north] bank of the Yalu River and strafed our buildings, railway stations, railways carriages and people, killing and wounding a number of them.”¹⁸ The telegram gave details of five separate incidents over a span of six hours. Two were reconnaissance overflights by B-29 bombers; three involved machine-gun attacks by F-51 fighter-bombers against various ground

¹⁷ Stratemeyer (in his capacity as Commanding Officer, Far East Air Force [COFEAF]), letter to Commanding Officer Fifth Air Force, quoted in diary entry, 5 September 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 169.

¹⁸ UNSC, S/1722, 28 August 1950, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NL5/017/22/PDF/NL501722.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 10 February 2012.

installations.¹⁹ “These provocative and atrocious acts,” wrote Chou, “are a serious criminal action of encroaching upon China’s sovereignty, killing Chinese people, and attempting to extend the war and violate peace. . . .”²⁰ The Foreign Minister demanded the Security Council condemn the United States for the offenses and “take immediate measures to bring about the complete withdrawal of all United States aggression forces from Korea. . . .”²¹

The American ambassador to the UN responded by sending a note to the Secretary-General in which he reiterated the standing order against crossing the Yalu under which UN aircraft operated. He added that the United States would welcome an investigation into the matter. He then observed that the North Koreans were the aggressors in Korea and that the American forces in Korea were acting under the mandate of the United Nations.²²

The Chinese made another complaint three days later, alleging that on 29 August another formation of American F-51s had crossed the Yalu. “[T]hey fired shots at two Chinese civilian boats, killing one Chinese fisherman and wounding 2 others.”²³ Moving along the river, they encountered and strafed a second group of boats, again causing casualties. The Chinese then repeated the charges and demands they had made

¹⁹ The North American F-51 Mustang is much better known by its original designation, P-51. The change in nomenclature occurred when the USAF became an independent service in 1947 and eliminated the P-for-Pursuit designation in favor of the more accurate (yet more general) F-for-Fighter. However, as it was so well known for its World War Two exploits, it has since the 1960s almost always been identified by scholars and enthusiasts by its World War Two nomenclature, P-51.

²⁰ UNSC, S/1722, 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²² US Ambassador to the United Nations, letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, 28 August 1950, printed as “Letter from Ambassador Austin to Secretary-General [Trygve] Lie,” *The Department of State Bulletin*, 11 September 1950, 413.

²³ UNSC, S/1743, 1, 1 August 1950, ; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NL5/017/43/PDF/NL501743.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 10 February 2012.

in their original grievance, “so that the issue will not assume more serious proportions.”²⁴

The Soviet representative to the UN Security Council, who was at the time serving as its president (the chairmanship rotated among members), introduced the issue of the border violations during the Council meeting the same day the second protest was filed. The resulting debate, which extended through several Security Council meetings, touched upon a number of issues, some directly related to the complaint, some tangential. One was whether the Chinese grievance should be addressed before other agenda items, already pending, had been resolved. Another, brought up by the Soviet delegate, was that the PRC must be represented in any discussion of the affair. He also used the incidents as an opportunity to restate the USSR’s position that the PRC should be represented in the UN.²⁵ The Americans and British delegates argued that the Security Council could not act on the matter until an investigation proved or disproved the allegations (even though the Soviet delegate, after presenting the complaint, declared, “*Takovyi Fakti*”—“Such are the facts”).²⁶ One of the strangest parts of the discussion was the squabble about how to identify the matter for the official record. On the original meeting agenda, it was identified as “Statement of the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China concerning the invasion of the frontiers

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ UNSC, S/PV.496 Official Records no. 38, 5 September 1950, 11; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N50/390/73/PDF/N5039073.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 11 February 2012.

²⁶ UNSC, S/PV.493 Official Records no. 35, 31 August 1950, 12; (English/French version), <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NL5/007/15/PDF/NL500715.pdf?OpenElement>; 6 (Russian version), <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N50/409/37/PDF/N5040937.pdf?OpenElement>, both accessed 10 February 2012.

of the People's Republic of China by United States air forces and the bombing and shooting up by these forces of buildings, railways stations, rolling stock, people and aerodromes.” The American representative suggested “Complaint of bombing of Chinese territory by United Nations aircraft.”²⁷ The Soviet delegate countered with “Complaint of bombing by air forces of the territory of the People's Republic of China” before suggesting “Complaint of bombing by air forces of the territory of China,” which was the name finally adopted.²⁸

Both the American and Soviet representatives introduced resolutions addressing the complaint. The Soviet proposal called for the Security Council “to call upon the Government of the United States to prohibit such illegal acts which violate Chinese sovereignty and cause damage to the People's Republic of China and to the peaceful Chinese population.”²⁹ When it came up for a vote on 12 September 1950, it was rejected, eight votes to one (the USSR the sole vote for). The American proposal called for the creation of a commission to investigate the alleged offenses. This body was to have been composed of two representatives, one each from India and Sweden, both neutral nations. The proposal called for the UN, UNC, and all nations involved to cooperate fully with the inquiry.³⁰ The Americans declared themselves “prepared to make payment to the Secretary-General, for appropriate transmission to the injured

²⁷ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), A/1873 General Assembly Official Records: Sixth Session Supplement No. 2, 1951, 38; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N51/915/96/PDF/N5191596.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 11 February 2012.

²⁸ UNSC, S/PV.493, 1.

²⁹ UNSC, S/1745/Rev.1, 12 September 1950, 1; <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/3348203.30142975.html>, accessed 12 February 2012.

³⁰ UNSC, S/1752, 1 September 1950, 1; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NL5/017/52/PDF/NL501752.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 12 February 2011.

parties, of such damages as the commission shall find to be fair and equitable.”³¹ They also promised to discipline those responsible, if needed.³² The Security Council voted upon this draft resolution the same day it voted on the Soviet proposal. It also failed, seven nations for and one against (but the one was the Soviet Union, which as a permanent member of the Security Council could veto any proposal).³³

The failure of the UN to establish an investigative committee did not prevent the United States from pursuing its own inquiry into the matter, initiated soon after the Chinese registered their first complaint. On 31 August 1950 (Washington time), General Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff, sent a high-priority message to General Stratemeyer, the commanding officer of the FEAF, in which he stated, “I must have no later than 2400Z [midnight, Greenwich Mean Time], 31 August as complete a report as possible of your investigation of possible F-51 attack on airfield on Manchurian border.”³⁴ Vandenberg’s priority was to determine whether an attack had actually occurred.

Stratemeyer appointed a board of inquiry which assembled the various personnel involved in the incident. After reviewing its findings, he filed the following preliminary report with Vandenberg: “Facts, as disclosed, indicate that an attack of an airfield in Manchurian territory, southwest of the city of Antung, was made on 27 Aug 50, in late

³¹ UNSC, S/PV.493, 26.

³² Ibid.

³³ UNGA, A/1873 General Assembly Official Records: Sixth Session Supplement No. 2, 1951, 42; available online at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N51/915/96/PDF/N5191596.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 11 February 2012).

³⁴ Hoyt S. Vandenberg, (US Air Force Chief of Staff [COSUSAF]), top secret redline message; quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 29 August 1950: in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 152.

afternoon. One (1) F-51 aircraft . . . made the attack. . . Pilot in second airplane witnessed attack. . . . In my judgment, attack was made.”³⁵

When the PRC made its second complaint a short time later, the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Air Force, General Lauris Norstad, requested Stratemeyer to look into that incident as well.³⁶ The next day, Vandenberg sent a top secret redline message to Stratemeyer in which he reminded the CO of the FEAF about the inviolability of the Soviet and Chinese borders. “The probable attack of an F-51 on Manchurian territory as reported by you has had, as you know, the gravest political implications.”³⁷ The incident, he stressed, must not be repeated. Stratemeyer’s diary notes that “the signal does not sound like Van. To me, it is a passing the buck signal. . . . It is one of those signals sent purely for the record.”³⁸

On 5 September 1950, Stratemeyer issued follow-up reports up and down the chain of command about the incident. To General Vandenberg, his superior, he wrote a more detailed account of the violation than had appeared in his earlier message (above). He noted that the two pilots involved, experienced veterans of both World War Two in Europe and Korea, were aware of the prohibition against crossing the Yalu. He also observed that bad weather had forced them to fly higher than they normally would have on their way to their target, a concentration of river barges near the mouth of the Chongchon River (which roughly parallels the Yalu some sixty miles to its southeast).

³⁵ COFEAF, signal to COSUSAF, quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry 31 August 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 134.

³⁶ Lauris Norstad (Deputy Chief of Staff for the Air Force [DSOSUSAF]), message for COFEAF, quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 1 September 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 153.

³⁷ COSAF, message for COFEAF, quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 2 September 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 160.

³⁸ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 2 September 1950, in *The Three Wars*, 160.

The pilots “came out of the clouds at a place [they] thought was south of their target.”³⁹ They mistook the Yalu for the Chongchon and began looking for the watercraft. When fired upon by flak, they took evasive action which carried them across an airfield, which they then strafed as a target of opportunity. “It was not until the 29th of August, when they made another flight to determine where they had been, was it definitely ascertained that they had been in Manchurian territory.”⁴⁰ Stratemeyer concluded by noting that “the officers investigating the incident [have] recommended that [First lieutenant Ray I.] Carter, the flight leader and pilot of the airplane that fired upon the airstrip, be ordered to appear before a Flying Evaluation Board, special attention being called to [his] lack of judgment. . . .”⁴¹

To General Partridge, his subordinate, he wrote that the incident led him to conclude that there were

several serious deficiencies in operational procedures. As examples, when new targets in unfamiliar territory are assigned, greater study of maps and terrain features should be made by the pilots; positive steps to insure that the latest weather reports brought in by earlier flights is considered in the dispatch of later flights. The fact that there was no specific briefing on the importance of staying clear of the Manchurian border is not only a reflection on the briefing at squadron level, but suggests that my instructions to you are not reaching the operating levels.⁴²

³⁹ COFEAF, letter to COSUSAF, quoted in diary entry, 5 September 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 170.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² COFEAF, letter to Earle E. Partridge (Commanding Officer Fifth Air Force [CO5AF]), quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 5 September 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 169-170.

While he expected the FEAF commander to take corrective action, he did not make any specific recommendations, leaving any sanctions and policy or training revisions for Partridge to determine.⁴³

Five weeks after it had begun, the “Affair Manchuria” came to an end. Its final act was a formal diplomatic acknowledgement of the error. On 2 October 1950, the American Ambassador to the UN transmitted a message to Secretary-General Trygvie Lie in which the United States reported that “[a] detailed investigation undertaken at the request of the Commanding General of the United Nations Command . . . has now disclosed that . . . two F-51 fighter-bombers supplied by the United States to the United Nations Command, by mistake flew over the territory of China and fired on an airfield just southwest of Antung.”⁴⁴ The message then gave the details of the planned mission and explained how and why it went awry. Significantly, however, the message noted that “[t]he investigation has disclosed nothing to corroborate the complaints of the Chinese Communist authorities set forth in their communications of August 28 and August 30 [*sic*], concerning further violations of Chinese territory.”⁴⁵

The Yalu Dams

No sooner had the Americans admitted and explained the border violation when another problem arose. On 4 October 1950, the British suggested that a delegation from the PRC be invited to the UN to discuss the Korean situation “for the purpose of

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ United Nations Document S/1832, 5 October 1950, printed as “U. S. Acknowledges Aircraft Fired on Chinese Territory,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 16 October 1950, 610.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

discouraging Communist China from intervention and giving it the prospect of being heard.”⁴⁶ The Americans responded by saying that such action would confuse the issue and possibly endanger the lives of American and British troops. United Nations forces were already crossing the 38th parallel into North Korea. However, the Americans “admitted that the Chinese Communists did have legitimate interests in certain aspects of the Korean problem such as questions affecting power plants along the Korean side of the Yalu River which furnished considerable electric power to Manchurian industries.”⁴⁷

Actually, there was only one such power plant in question, the Suiho (Supung in Chinese) Dam complex. Although there were hydroelectric dams on other rivers in northern Korea, only the Suiho was on the Yalu. All of the others were all entirely within the DPRK. These facilities were part of “the TVA of Asia,” a project initiated by the Japanese during the interwar period to provide electricity to the factories and mines of northeastern Asia.⁴⁸ The construction of these dams was a joint effort between the governments of Japan (which, of course, controlled Korea at the time) and Manchukuo (Manchuria, nominally independent of China, its government a puppet regime installed by the Japanese).⁴⁹ “After the Japanese obtained full control of Manchuria in 1932, they

⁴⁶ John M. Allison (member of United States Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly) memorandum of conversation, 4 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 869.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Library of Congress, “The Yalu River Hydroelectric Power Project”: in Cong. Rec. H8335 (1952). The TVA was the Tennessee Valley Authority, a depression era federal project intended to provide flood control, power, irrigation water, and economic development to the southern United States.

⁴⁹ Deputy Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, memorandum to Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, 9 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 916.

moved swiftly to increase the power facilities of the region in line with their plans for rapid industrialization.”⁵⁰

Of the North Korean dams, the Suiho was the most important. It was “the largest in the Orient and the fourth largest in the world,” comparable to the Grand Coulee, Shasta, and Hoover dams in the United States.⁵¹ Even though the Soviets had removed much of its generating equipment for their own purposes after World War Two, the Suiho installation remained “the largest single Korean producer of electric power.”⁵²

More significantly, the Suiho dam also provided power to the PRC. Despite the loss of some of its turbines and generators to the Soviets, it still produced some 400,000 kilowatts, one-quarter of which was transmitted north of the Yalu. This figure represented some ten percent of Manchuria’s power needs at the time.⁵³ The PRC did indeed have “legitimate interests” in Korea.

Concerned that these interests were powerful enough to induce the PRC to intervene in the war, American diplomatic authorities took the precaution of warning their counterparts in the Pentagon to avoid targeting the Suiho dam in the campaign against North Korea’s industry and economy. The Deputy Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs noted that on 7 October 1950

⁵⁰ Library of Congress, “The Yalu River Hydroelectric Power Project,” 8335.

⁵¹ Air University Quarterly Staff, “The Attack on Electric Power in North Korea,” in James T. Stewart, ed., *Airpower: The Decisive Force in Korea* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1957), 127. This work was originally published in the Air Force’s war college journal. AU Quarterly Review Staff Study, “The Attack on Electric Power in North Korea: A Target System is Studied, Analyzed, and Destroyed,” *Air University Quarterly Review* 6, no. 2 (1953), 13-22.

⁵² Consul General at Mukden, telegram to Secretary of State, 15 May 1946, in *FRUS* 1946-10, 1126; Air University Quarterly Staff, “The Attack on Electric Power,” 127.

⁵³ Air University Quarterly Staff, “The Attack on Electric Power,” 127.

Dean Rusk asked . . . that [the State Department] get in touch with the Pentagon in an effort to insure that there would be no bombing during this period of the Yalu River Dam or its power plant. . . . I reported this to [U. Alexis Johnson of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs], who said that he thought the ban on strategic bombing would cover the matter, but agreed that no harm would be done by pointing it out to the military.⁵⁴

Rusk, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, was not dismissing the possibility of bombing the dam entirely, however. “[He] also said that [the UNC] might wish to reserve an attack on the Dam as a bargaining point in case it came to that pass with the Chinese Communists.”⁵⁵

Rusk and Johnson obviously understood that the production of energy is an important economic activity, and thus is often targeted for destruction in total war (and so thus may or may not be in limited warfare). The allies had bombed many German and Japanese oil refineries during World War Two. They did not, however, target electrical generation, as a rule. In his *First Report to the Secretary of War*, General Arnold cited electricity as an example of a target system that has to be destroyed quickly if it were to have any effect on an enemy nation’s war effort. “[I]f the sources of 90 per cent of German electric power were destroyed in one week, the results might well be decisive. . . . From a long-range point of view, however, destruction spread out over a year would hardly be noticed. . . .”⁵⁶ Most electrical generating systems overproduce, so their excess capacity must be destroyed before the loss of power can have an effect.

⁵⁴ Deputy Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, memorandum to the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, 9 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 916-917.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 916.

⁵⁶ Arnold, *First Report*, 346.

Additionally, output can be rationed; consumption can be restricted to “vital industry, public health demands, and military necessity.”⁵⁷

Arnold may have had Operation Chastise, the Royal Air Force’s famous “dams raid” during World War Two, in mind when he wrote the above. On the night of 16/17 May 1943, the British had bombed three dams in the Ruhr valley, one of the most heavily industrialized regions of Germany, with the intent of knocking out their powerplants and so disrupt German war production. Although all of the dams were breached and several powerhouses destroyed in the subsequent flooding, power production was restored within a matter of months.

Even though it was considerably smaller than its German counterpart, the North Korean electrical system would have equally difficult to neutralize. “[I]t was made up of a number of independent elements, none of which would be easy to bomb and all of which would have to be knocked out to rob the grid of electric power. . . .” For this and other reasons, the UNC decided not to attack the Suiho dam in 1950, even after the PRC entered the war. “[E]xcept for one attack by B-29s on Fusen power plan 1 [*sic*] early in the war the vast hydroelectric power system in Korea—the largest industrial development in the peninsula—remained inviolate” for much of the Korean War.⁵⁸

The American high command simply decided that the North Korean hydroelectric system was of little value as a target.

The systematic aerial destruction of the 18 North Korean industrial targets, begun in the summer of 1950 and completed by the fall of 1950, had rendered assaults on electric power facilities unnecessary. With the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Air University Quarterly Staff*, “The Attack on Electric Power,” 119-120, 131.

using agencies eliminated, the mere possession of electric power was considered of little strategic or military value to the enemy and not worth the expenditure of effort and resources required to destroy it.⁵⁹

The dams were part of “a power-source industry rather than a production one, analogous to a coal mine in relation to a steel mill. . . .”⁶⁰

The military benefits to be obtained from bombing the Suiho dam did not outweigh the political liability such an attack would produce. “[C]utting off of the 100,000 or more kws going to the Manchurian grid—less than 10 percent of the total Manchurian power—[was not] considered worth the risks of international repercussions which might follow the neutralization of the Suiho plant.”⁶¹

Of course, the PRC intervened in Korea even though the dams were not bombed. But observers throughout the world thought that there was a link between the North Korean power stations and the Chinese action. The American Ambassador to India reported that the Indian Foreign Minister offered three reasons why the Chinese may have intervened:

- (1) Defensive reaction to alleged American bombing of Chinese territory;
- (2) Action to guard against Manchuria’s loss of important power supply Yalu River;
- (3) Action taken under the direct influence of Moscow

He added that the last was the “worst possible reason.”⁶²

In a meeting between the ROK’s ambassador to the United States and various State Department officials, including the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk asked if the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 131.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 119-120.

⁶¹ Ibid., 131.

⁶² Secretary General of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, précis of remarks, in Ambassador in India, telegram to the United States Mission at the United Nations, 7 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1094.

threat to the dams influenced the PRC's decision to intervene. The Korean envoy answered that he thought it might have been. He then added "that his government would insist that all of the power generated at the dam was Korean by virtue of the fact that the generating stations were on Korean soil, that the dam had been built by Korean labor under the Japanese and that, as former Japanese property, it now belonged to the Koreans."⁶³ He also observed that some of its power might go to Siberia "and that this might be an influence in Sino-Soviet relations in connection with Korea."⁶⁴

The expansion of the war inspired discussions in UN headquarters as well. The French ambassador to the UN wanted the organization to issue "a statement of assurance that the UNC will not damage or destroy hydro-electric facilities on the Yalu River nor interfere with normal power uses of these facilities. [S]uch an assurance would 'simplify and clarify' the issues presented by Chinese Communist intervention in Korea."⁶⁵ The Yugoslavian delegate to the Security Council (its president at the time) agreed, adding that he thought that the Chinese genuinely believed that UN forces in North Korea posed a threat to the dams.⁶⁶

In response to the furor, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States jointly introduced a resolution "affirm[ing] that it is the policy of the United Nations to hold the Chinese frontier with Korea inviolate and fully to protect

⁶³ (Republic of) Korean Ambassador to USA, précis of remarks, in memorandum of conversation by Acting Officer in Charge of Korean Affairs, 20 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1199.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ French Ambassador to UN, précis of remarks, in United States Representative to the United Nations, telegram to the Secretary of State, 6 Nov 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1074.

⁶⁶ Yugoslavian Delegate to the Security Council, précis of remarks, in United States Representative to the United Nations, telegram to the Secretary of State, 6 Nov 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1074. Note that this citation refers to two separate telegrams in which Warren referred to the Yugoslavian delegate, both of which were dispatched at the same time on the same date, and which both appear on the same page of *FRUS*.

legitimate Chinese and Korean interests in the frontier zone. . . .”⁶⁷ President Truman issued a statement to the press later that week in which he used almost identical language.⁶⁸ When the resolution came up for a vote at the end of the month, it received eight affirmative votes but was not adopted because the Soviet representative voted against it.⁶⁹

The French had originally wanted to propose that the UNC “with due consideration for the necessities of military safety resulting from adverse military action originating along the Yalu River . . . take all necessary measures to prevent any damage to the installations of economic importance along that river.”⁷⁰ However, they never formally submitted a resolution for consideration. Perhaps they realized that as transportation is an economic activity, it could be argued that bridges, railways, and roads were to be exempted as well, or that military exigencies could justify attacks against any facility on the Yalu.

The Americans and their UN allies placed much more emphasis on the Yalu dam than the Chinese did. In late November, General MacArthur reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that “what has been said concerning the hydroelectric facilities in North Korea is for the most part a product of British-American speculation, finding little reflection in

⁶⁷ UNSC, S/1894, 10 November 1950, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NL5/018/94/PDF/NL501894.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 6 February 2012.

⁶⁸ Harry S. Truman, statement to the press, 16 November 1950, printed as “U. S. to Take every Step to Prevent Extending Hostilities in the Far East,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 27 November 1950, 852.

⁶⁹ “Security Council,” *International Organization* 5, no. 1 (1951), 177.

⁷⁰ Editors, note, *FRUS* 1950-7, 1100.

any Soviet or Chinese utterances. . . . [O]ne is brought to the conclusion that the issue of hydro-electric power rests upon the most tenuous of grounds.”⁷¹

The CINCUNC was not the first to realize that the Chinese communist government had never mentioned the dams in any of its public statements or diplomatic communications about the Korean War. Three weeks earlier—shortly before the PRC began crossing the Yalu in force—a State Department official wrote to Dean Rusk to caution him that

[t]here has been no reference in Chinese Communist propaganda to the Yalu power-plant factor. The power installation, if important, is nevertheless not the only source of power for Manchurian industry. There are both hydro-electric and thermal plants which are probably adequate, in the main, for the supply of all of Manchuria’s needs, although certain difficulties would undoubtedly be encountered in the first instance. The original Chinese threat of intervention had no reference to the Yalu River installation, the Chinese at this juncture have made no *démarche* respecting that installation, and the scale of their present intervention indicates clearly more than a desire to protect a local area.⁷²

He also observed that “[t]he Chinese Communists were well informed respecting UN objectives, and UN strengths and capabilities, in Korea.”⁷³

This knowledge was not the result of espionage but was rather the result of the UN announcing its intentions. The leaders of the PRC knew that the UNC’s primary mission was to effect the reunification of Korea. They would also have been aware that the UNC had expressed its desire to protect the dam and other PRC interests in Korea, and that neither the Americans nor any of their UN allies had any intention of initiating a

⁷¹ CINFE, telegram to the JCS, 25 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1232-1233.

⁷² Director of Office of Chinese Affairs), memorandum to Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 4 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1038.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

conflict with communist China. This information was made public for one reason: to keep the PRC from intervening in Korea. However, as one foreign policy expert observed a decade after the conflict had ended, UN authorities “assumed that these were the limits in which the Chinese were interested, and that these would serve to keep the Chinese out of the war. But Chinese interests were different. . . .”⁷⁴

Postwar scholarship has suggested a number of reasons for the Chinese intervention. The idea that the leaders of the PRC were simply acting on orders from Moscow (a matter of faith during the war) was discredited fairly early.⁷⁵ One common explanation is that the Chinese simply did not want a large foreign army on its northeastern border, no matter how brief its stay there (the UN had repeatedly promised to withdraw from Korea after it has stabilized the area). Another is that the leaders of the PRC, motivated by communist solidarity, did not wish to see the DPRK liquidated. A third combines these two interpretations—if the UNC succeeded in destroying North Korea, thus giving the ROK control of the entire peninsula, there was nothing to prevent the South Koreans from inviting their allies to post troops along its northern border as protection against the PRC.

However, recent research, made possible by the opening of records in both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, suggests that the Chinese communists were not simply reacting to the actions of UN forces in Korea. The Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong (or Mao Tse-Tung, as his name was rendered in

⁷⁴ Halperin, “The Limiting Process in the Korean War,” 31.

⁷⁵ Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), 2.

English for most of his lifetime), desired to engage the United States from the time the UN entered the conflict (despite that he had originally dismissed the possibility of American intervention on behalf of South Korea).⁷⁶ Still consolidating his hold on the country after the Chinese Civil War, Mao realized that a struggle against an external enemy would help unify the PRC. He also believed that as the Americans were gaining in international power and influence, particularly in Asia, war with the United States was inevitable. He realized that the Korean War provided the PRC an opportunity to engage the United States in an environment over which he had some control—more than he would have had if his showdown with the United States involved Taiwan. “[E]arly in August 1950, more than one month before the Inchon landing, Mao Zedong and the Beijing leadership had been inclined to send troops to Korea, and China’s military and political preparations had begun even a month earlier.”⁷⁷ However, the intervention was delayed because the Chinese army needed time to prepare; Mao also had to coordinate China’s actions with the Soviets and North Koreans.⁷⁸ The timing of the attack led most Americans to believe that the PRC was responding to the crossing of the 38th parallel (although some authorities, including MacArthur, suspected otherwise. They knew that the PRC would have had to begin moving troops to the frontier long before the UNC crossed into the DPRK in order to get them to the Yalu when they did.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Soviet ambassador to North Korea), telegram to Soviet Foreign Minister, 12 May 1950, http://legacy.wilsoncenter.org/va2/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=HOME.document&identifier=5034BF56-96B6-175C-9ED40B8C84C0F12B&sort=Subject&item=Korean War, accessed 28 February 2012).

⁷⁷ Jian, *China’s Road*, 3.

⁷⁸ Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 1995), 62-63; Jian, *China’s Road*, 154-157.

⁷⁹ Chargé in Korea, telegram to Secretary of State, 3 November 1950, in *FRUS 1950-7*, 1031.

Yet the Suiho dam was not entirely out of Mao's mind—it was just not as important to him as it was to the Americans and UN. In early October 1950, as he was still assembling the army that would cross the Yalu, Mao telegraphed Chou En-Lai to explain why the PRC had to act before UN forces reached the Chinese border:

If . . . we sent none of our troops [to Korea] and allowed the enemy to reach the banks of the Yalu River, the international and domestic reactionary bluster would surely become louder; such a situation would be very unfavorable to us. . . . The whole Northeast Border Defense Army would be tied down there, and the electric power in south Manchuria would be subject to the control [of the enemy].⁸⁰

Mao could not be more explicit about his desire to intervene. “In short, we believe that we should enter the war and that we must enter the war. Entering the war would be most rewarding; failing to do so may cause great harm.”⁸¹

Of course, the Americans were not privy to Mao's thinking, and, as has been noted above and in earlier chapters, many did not believe that the Chinese communists would intervene in the Korean War, in large part because General MacArthur had been so dismissive of the prospect. However, when it became apparent that the PRC had indeed entered the conflict, the Chinese were already south of the Yalu in large numbers. How had the UNC failed to detect the movement of so many troops?

⁸⁰ Chairman of Chinese Communist Party, telegram to Minister of Defense (and Premier), People's Republic of China, 11 October 1950; quoted in Chen Jian, *China's Road*, 202.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Reconnaissance Overflights in the PRC

As noted in an earlier chapter, MacArthur and his staff did not become aware of the presence of PRC forces in Korea until UNC troops on the front lines engaged with them and began capturing Chinese prisoners.⁸² Gathering intelligence by interrogating POWs is an established military practice. But MacArthur was a twentieth-century American, with access to twentieth-century American technology.

If a commander is restricted to the information obtained from ground observation posts and the shallow penetration of ground patrols, he is aware only of the fringe of enemy activity. Tactical air reconnaissance not only covers front line activity, but also penetrates this fringe to obtain information concerning the enemy lines of communication, terrain, troop concentrations and movements, supply points, airfields, and factories.⁸³

Like the strategic bomber, the reconnaissance airplane could overfly enemy troops and terrain obstacles to reach an objective far from the battle area. Aerial reconnaissance was “the air weapon of intelligence.”⁸⁴

Unfortunately, the American tactical air reconnaissance system upon which the UNC relied was severely handicapped during the Korean War. It had been neglected in favor of strategic bombing in the years after World War Two. It was also bound by the same restrictions that applied to all other manifestations of air power in Korea.

⁸² Chargé in Korea, telegram to Secretary of State, 29 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1013-1014; Chargé in Korea, telegram to Secretary of State, 30 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1014; Chargé in Korea, telegram to Secretary of State, 31 October 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1013-1018; United Nations document S/1884, 5 November 1950; printed as “Special Report of U. N. Command Operations in Korea,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 27 November 1950, 858.

⁸³ Office, Chief, Army Field Forces (Fort Monroe, Virginia) and Headquarters, Tactical Air Command (Langley Air Force Base, Virginia), Joint Training Directive for Air Ground Operations, 1 September 1950 (Washington DC: USGPO, 1 September 1950), 145. Hereafter referred to as “Joint Training Directive.”

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

For most of the first phase of the Korean War, tactical aerial reconnaissance units were committed to the interdiction campaign providing indirect support for UNC ground forces. Interdiction missions are air operations against the communications and transportation of an enemy. As these are generally behind the battle lines, they cannot be observed from forces in contact with hostile troops. Finding those elements requires aerial reconnaissance. General MacArthur declared “air detection [to be] an essential to air interdiction.”⁸⁵

Aerial reconnaissance also provides information about terrain. Although the Americans had prepared maps of Korea during World War Two for their Pacific campaign (recall that Japan had occupied Korea in 1910), “FEAF air planners discovered that previous stocks of aeronautical charts for Korea had been declared obsolete and destroyed before the war. An Air Force-wide search uncovered only 25 remaining copies that were reproduced.”⁸⁶ These maps, based on Japanese surveys, were often inaccurate. The northern reaches of Korea were particularly poorly charted (which often resulted in bombing and strafing missions being assigned to strike targets that did not exist).⁸⁷

As a result, most of the Korea peninsula, particularly its northern reaches, would have to be re-mapped. This task would have been the responsibility of the air

⁸⁵ Douglas MacArthur, quoted in “MacArthur’s Own Story: An Interview with the U.N. Commander-in-Chief,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 8 December 1950, 17.

⁸⁶ John T. Farquhar, *A Need to Know: The Role of Air Force Reconnaissance in War Planning, 1945-1953* (Maxwell AFB AL: Air UP, 2004), 135-136.

⁸⁷ Futrell, *USAF in Korea*, revised ed., 52, 65, 94, 417, 503, 633.

reconnaissance services.⁸⁸ Yet although the USAF's strategic reconnaissance program had been maintained after 1945 (to prepare for war with the USSR), its tactical reconnaissance assets had been allowed to decline.

When the Korean War broke out, much reconnaissance know-how [gained during World War Two] had evaporated. The total aerial reconnaissance establishment in Japan and Korea consisted of two reconnaissance squadrons [and] one photo-mapping squadron. . . . All of these were seriously understrength, both in material and manpower.⁸⁹

The photo-mapping unit—equipped with just two converted World War Two-vintage Boeing B-17 bombers (predecessors of the B-29)—was transferred from the Philippines to Japan in July, but was unable to begin its duties until the late summer.⁹⁰ Even though the unit gained two additional aircraft in August, progress was slow. The B-17s lacked guns and turrets (removed for peacetime operations) but because Korea was a combat area they had to be reinstalled—and the necessary mounting equipment had to be fabricated (B-17s were no longer frontline aircraft so spares were unavailable). “By 12 September it was evident that [the unit] would not complete mapping before snowfall would bring an end to the work.”⁹¹ Snow would obscure the ground features needing to be mapped. A strategic reconnaissance squadron was assigned to assist but it had to continue performing its other duties as well. Bad weather and equipment malfunctions

⁸⁸ War Department, FM 31-35 Air-Ground Operations (Washington DC: USGPO: 1946), 22-23. Hereafter referred to as “FM 31-35 Air-Ground Operations.”

⁸⁹ “Photographic Reconnaissance in Korea,” in James T. Stewart, ed., *Airpower: The Decisive Force in Korea* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1957), 227. The author of this article is not identified, but was probably the Air University Quarterly Staff.

⁹⁰ USAF Historical Division, *Operations in the Korean Conflict, 1 November 1950-30 June 1952*, 98.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

were also problems, so by the time the mapping program was abandoned when the first heavy snows began, the task of mapping Korea was only four-fifths complete.⁹²

The tactical reconnaissance units that provided information about enemy targets were also overburdened. Once the UNC took the offensive, its need for aerial photographs increased. One air reconnaissance officer recalled that his commanders “regularly increased the number of sorties scheduled until it was impossible to fly them all!”⁹³ The increased volume of photographic flights revealed another problem: analysis. “Especially serious was the shortage of trained [photo] interpreters.”⁹⁴

The shortage of photo interpreters effected not just USAF operations but those of the Army as well. According to a pre-Korean War agreement, when the Army needed aerial photographs of an area, it requested the Air Force to take them. Interpretation, however, was the responsibility of the service asking for the coverage.⁹⁵ An updated version of this accord, promulgated in late 1950, stated, “[F]irst phase interpretation will be accomplished at the reconnaissance squadron by personnel of the requesting service. Second and third phase interpretation normally will be accomplished unilaterally due to a divergence of interests.”⁹⁶ The Army and Air Force used aerial photographs for different purposes. The USAF needed them to identify enemy troop movements along

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Clyde East, quoted in Doug Gordon, *Tactical Reconnaissance in the Cold War: 1945 to Korea, Cuba, Vietnam and the Iron Curtain* (Henley UK: Pen and Sword Aviation, 2006), 20-21.

⁹⁴ “Photographic Reconnaissance in Korea,” 227.

⁹⁵ The prewar agreement was FM 31-35, Air-Ground Operations, issued in August 1946, when the USAF was still part of the US Army. General Stratemeyer makes several references in his diary to his Army colleagues’ unfamiliarity with the manual. Stratemeyer, diary entries, 3 September 1950; 1 December 1950, 21 December 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 163-164, 317, 357. See also reference in Futrell, *USAF in Korea*, revised ed., 547.

⁹⁶ Joint Training Directive, 170.

rail and road lines behind the battle area.⁹⁷ The Army was more concerned with stationary troop concentrations in the combat zone—leading an Air Force general to ask, “They are to examine the photographs and count the men under any given tree?”—and details of terrain.⁹⁸ However, the Army also had a shortage of experienced photo analysts.

The UNC’s rapid northwards advance across the 38th parallel into North Korea increased the demands on the USAF’s tactical reconnaissance units. On 5 August 1950, MacArthur was “authorized to conduct aerial reconnaissance over all Korean territory, including Korean coastal waters, up to the Yalu River on the West Coast and up to but short of the Korean-Soviet International boundary on the East coast [*sic*].”⁹⁹ The USAF now had a much greater area to cover with its limited tactical reconnaissance assets.

Once again, the directive contained a caution regarding frontier violations: “Such aerial reconnaissance missions will be conducted from as far South of the frontiers of Manchuria or the Soviet Union as practicable and in no case will these frontiers be overflowed.”¹⁰⁰ These restrictions would remain in effect long past MacArthur’s tenure as CINCUNC. General Ridgway, MacArthur’s successor, would be issued similar instructions shortly after becoming the UNC’s commanding officer.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Stratemeyer, diary entries, 3 September 1950; 1 December 1950, 21 December 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 163-164, 317, 357.

⁹⁸ Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, USAF; quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 6 December 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 335.

⁹⁹ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 5 August 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-6, 240-244. In most State Department documents from the Korean War era, compass directions were usually capitalized. The inconsistent application of this standard in this document is unusual.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 31 May 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 491.

Given the high demand for and low supply of tactical aerial reconnaissance assets, the Far East Air Force had to choose what reconnaissance operations to perform. Naturally, it gave its own activities the highest priority. Of course, many of its operations provided indirect support to the UNC's ground forces as well. Attacks against rail and road traffic in North Korea were always desired. Strike assessments of previous air attacks were also important.¹⁰² A concern about enemy air forces required a constant reconnaissance of air bases in North Korea.¹⁰³ The Army may not have appreciated these operations—they took place well beyond the front lines where soldiers could not see them—but it was in part responsible for the situation. In his diary, General Stratemeyer often expressed disappointment in the Army's failure to implement many of the procedures it had worked out in the late 1940s with the Air Force for inter-service cooperation and coordination, particularly its shortage of photo analysts.¹⁰⁴

Little wonder, then, that the Americans failed to observe the buildup of Chinese communist troops north of the Yalu prior to their invasion of North Korea. One USAF general called the breakdown “a perfect example of the Army's not producing enough photography interpreters. Thousands of pictures were taken and no one to sit down and evaluate them.”¹⁰⁵ Yet the Air Force received much of the blame for the failure. At a conference of the FEAF's top generals in early December 1950, Stratemeyer

¹⁰² Stratemeyer, diary entries, 3 September 1950; 1 December 1950, 21 December 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 163-164, 317, 357.

¹⁰³ COFEAF, message to COSAF and CO5AF; quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 24 August 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 134. See also Stratemeyer, diary entry, 20 July 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 79.

¹⁰⁴ Stratemeyer, diary entries, 3 September 1950; 1 December 1950, 21 December 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 163-164, 317, 357.

¹⁰⁵ CO5AF, quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry 6 December 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 335.

acknowledged that “they [MacArthur, government officials, the press, and public] are pointing the finger at us—why we didn’t see this build up, etc., and why with the tools we had, we didn’t produce it.”¹⁰⁶ Perhaps air power advocates had raised expectations to an unrealistic level. Stratemeyer then listed the many handicaps working against his tactical air reconnaissance units. “There are many reasons, short distance, Yalu River, came over in dribblets, crossed the ice, etc. The finger is on us.”¹⁰⁷

The prohibition against UNC units crossing the Yalu was probably the most important factor contributing to the failure to detect the presence of Chinese troops in North Korea. In one of General MacArthur’s periodic reports to the UN, he noted, “Aerial reconnaissance beyond the border, which was the normal source of field intelligence, was forbidden. . . . No intelligence service in the world could have surmounted such handicaps. . . . This left ground reconnaissance . . . as the proper, indeed, the sole expedient.”¹⁰⁸ He repeated this explanation in the MacArthur hearings. In response to a question from the Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, Senator Richard B. Russell, he replied, “We had knowledge that the Chinese Communists had collected large forces along the Yalu River. My own reconnaissance, you understand, was limited entirely to Korea. . . .”¹⁰⁹ He did, however, acknowledge that “the general information which was available, from China and other places, indicated large accumulations of troops.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ COFAEF, quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry 6 December 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 335.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Douglas MacArthur, Twelfth Report [UNC to UN], 23 February 1951; quoted in MacArthur Hearings, 3197.

¹⁰⁹ MacArthur, testimony, *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The senators investigating MacArthur's dismissal could not believe that American troops had been denied such basic intelligence. Senator Alexander Wiley wanted to know about the depots supplying PRC troops. "How close were they to the Yalu?" he asked General O'Donnell. "Rosie" replied, "I don' [sic] know, sir. We were not permitted to go across there so we didn't have the reconnaissance that we would have had if we were allowed to go across."

Wiley was not prepared for this answer and asked for clarification: "You were prohibited from even sending planes to ascertain what the situation was?"

"That is right, sir."

Observation planes?"

"Yes, sir."¹¹¹

The Americans may not have been able to do anything to avert the intervention even if they had recognized the Chinese troop buildup for what it was. There was nothing the UNC could do legally to prevent the PRC from assembling troops in its own sovereign territory. The Chinese just had to wait for the UN forces to reach the northern end of the peninsula, at which time all its troops had to do to engage them was cross the Yalu. The Truman administration understood this handicap. During a meeting of representatives of the UN members fighting in Korea shortly after the communist Chinese entered the war, the Australian ambassador asked how it was possible that the Americans had missed the buildup. "Mr. Rusk said the intelligence of course was faulty

¹¹¹ Alexander Wiley and Emmett O'Donnell, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 3082. General O'Donnell's nickname refers to the pinkness of his cheeks in his youth. The COFEAFBOMCOM does not appear to be related to the popular comedian, actress, and talk show host Rosie (Roseann) O'Donnell.

but pointed out again the difficulties caused by the shortness of the distance between the Manchurian border (over which we could not send reconnaissance planes) and the North Korean hills where the Chinese communists are.”¹¹² General MacArthur also noted this issue, observing, “Avenues of advance from border sanctuary to battle area, only a night’s march, provided maximum natural concealment. . . .” for the intervening Chinese.¹¹³

There was another reason that the PRC’s entry into the war went unnoticed, although apparently none of the participants realized it at the time. It took a modern historian, the editor of General Stratemyer’s diary, to identify it. After noting that the FEAF had too few aircraft to do adequately handle its many tactical reconnaissance responsibilities, and that the army had too few photo interpreters, he added, “But there was another reason for [the Chinese] not being seen—they were not really being looked for!”¹¹⁴

The many distractions of USAF tactical reconnaissance prevented any systematic coverage of the Yalu area before the Chinese intervention, despite the diplomatic rumbling from communist China prior to its entry into the conflict. On 5 November 1950, about the time that the Americans realized they were fighting the PRC as well as the DPRK, General Stratemyer informed his deputy chief of intelligence about his “desires to have a map . . . which shows every crossing of the Yalu River, rail or

¹¹² Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, précis of remarks, in Deputy Director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 30 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1265.

¹¹³ MacArthur, Twelfth Report; quoted in MacArthur Hearings 3197.

¹¹⁴ William T. Y’Blood, editorial note, *The Three Wars of Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemyer: His Korean War Diary* (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999), 256-257.

highway, and the names of the towns that they are near.”¹¹⁵ The intelligence officer, Craven C. Rogers, “indicated that because of previous recon restrictions, this was the *first day* we’ve had recon planes covering that dividing line [emphasis added].”¹¹⁶

Rogers then observed that the types of aircraft employed as tactical reconnaissance platforms—obsolescent jet fighters converted to carry cameras in lieu of guns—could cause problems.

[H]e indicated that because of the speed of the jets, [it was] quite possible the border would be violated. [Stratemeyer r]eiterated that the border is not to be crossed and if need be [the Air Force] shall send the 31st [squadron, equipped with RB-29s] up there. They can sit there top-side and get a picture.¹¹⁷

The jet types had vertical cameras and thus had to overfly their targets. They also usually flew at relatively low level. The RB-29, the Superfortress variant designed for strategic reconnaissance, was equipped with oblique cameras allowing photographs to be taken from a distance. It also operated at higher altitudes.

The leaders of the PRC noted the reconnaissance missions to the Yalu area, and protested them to the UN. Lacking representation in that body, they registered their complaints through the Soviet delegation. On 11 November 1950, the Soviet representative submitted an itemized (but “incomplete”) list identifying various border violations claimed by the Chinese.¹¹⁸ John Foster Dulles, the American representative to the General Assembly, addressed the issue in a speech a few weeks later. “[The list] comes to a total of 83, of which 61 are alleged as purely technical violations,” Dulles

¹¹⁵ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 5 November 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 259.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ UNSC, S/1902, 11 November 1950, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NL5/007/57/PDF/NL500757.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 3 March 2012.

announced, meaning that they represented only overflights, not attacks.¹¹⁹ He then suggested that the total number of violations may have been exaggerated. “[T]his list obviously mentions several times the same flight which was apparently observed at one, two, three, four places, and, each time, it was observed, that apparently was listed as a separate and individual air violation.”¹²⁰ Dulles then explained that there was no way to ascertain whether such violations actually occurred. “[T]he United States has no possible way of verifying them, because they occurred without the knowledge of the pilots. Obviously, they cannot testify to something they did not know.”¹²¹

So the efforts of the Americans and the UN to discourage the People's Republic of China from entering the Korean War or attacking Taiwan, manifested primarily as limitations upon their use of air power in the conflict, had been in vain. The same restrictions also contributed to the failure of the UNC to recognize the Chinese intervention when it did occur. By inviting themselves into the conflict, the Chinese had given the UN cause to initiate operations against the PRC itself. Had it done so, its campaign would have almost certainly relied heavily upon American air power, particularly in its early stages. The United Nations thus had to determine how it would respond to the expansion of the war. Its choices ranged from unleashing the full force of the United States' aerial might against the PRC, applying it in limited measures, or refraining from its use completely.

¹¹⁹ John Foster Dulles, statement to the General Assembly, 27 November 1950; printed as “Statement by John Foster Dulles, U.S. Representative to the General Assembly,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 18 December 1950, 991-992.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER X
SCHISM: THE DEBATE OVER BOMBING THE PRC

The Chinese intervention in Korea widened political divisions in the United States. Arguing that the Chinese had invited retribution, the opposition party demanded that the United States extend its air operations into the People's Republic of China. The administration disagreed, maintaining its policy of limiting the conflict to Korea proper. It held that the United States did not have the assets to fight an expanded war and that the further commitment of American forces to Asia would encourage the Soviets to commit aggression elsewhere. The opposition countered by citing increased American casualties without territorial gain in Korea, but the government noted that the Chinese, too, were limiting their involvement and that by attacking the PRC, the United States risked even greater casualties.

The Bridges over the Yalu

When the People's Republic of China intervened in the Korean War in the autumn of 1950, the United States and United Nations were compelled to reassess their policy towards the PRC. Their objective was no longer to keep the Chinese communists out of the conflict but to prevent the war from expanding even further. Yet although the complexion of the conflict had changed—a few weeks after Chinese troops entered Korea, General MacArthur proclaimed that “we face an entirely new war”—the Truman administration elected to maintain its established policy of trying to contain the conflict

within the Korean peninsula.¹ As a result, Chinese and Soviet territory would continue to be off limits. The Yalu River would remain the northernmost limit of UNC air (and ground) operations.

The decision proved divisive and controversial. Many Americans could not understand why the administration persisted in maintaining what appeared to be a failed policy. They argued that the PRC was an aggressor nation and as such had forfeited the protections extended to it before the intervention. It was their contention that Truman's refusal to confront the Chinese communists endangered the lives of every American serviceman in Korea. The relief of General MacArthur in early 1951 was, for them, further evidence that the United States was pursuing a policy of appeasement instead of the punitive action that was required.

Having become a private citizen, the former CINCUNC was no longer bound by orders to police his statements (not that he had minded them when he was on duty anyway) and joined the critics of the Truman administration's Korean War policies, who welcomed him as a "great patriot who had been wronged and betrayed by wimpy politicians."² Just eight days after his dismissal, he addressed Congress, giving his "old soldiers never die" speech. Not quite ready to "just fade away," as he said he would do as part of his closing thoughts, MacArthur used the opportunity to advocate a four-point

¹ Douglas MacArthur, Special Communiqué 14, 28 November 1950; printed as "Statement of Gen. MacArthur," *The New York Times*, 29 November 1950, 4.

² David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 607-612. MacArthur's retirement was conditional. To provide "a ready pool of experienced leaders for the nation[, Congress decreed that a]ll of the generals and admirals upon whom five star rank was conferred are subject to recall to duty at any time. They are provided with full pay, an office, and a staff because they are supposed to serve as advisors to the government." "The General's Pay," *The Kingsport News* [Tennessee], 17 August 1957, 4.

program intended “to neutralize the sanctuary protection given the enemy north of the Yalu. . . .” The third of his suggestions addressed the restrictions on aerial photography and surveillance discussed in the previous chapter. MacArthur demanded “the removal of restrictions on air reconnaissance of China’s coastal areas and of Manchuria. . . .”³ The transcript of the speech printed in the *Congressional Record* indicates that each recommendation received applause. Perhaps the assembled lawmakers believed that the because the prohibition against crossing the Yalu has failed in its intended purpose—keeping the PRC out of the Korean War—it was no longer necessary. Yet even though the conflict had expanded, it had the potential to expand even further.

As noted in the previous chapter, the prohibition against making observation flights north of the Yalu that MacArthur wished lifted was one of the reasons why the Chinese had been able to establish themselves in Korea in 1950. Yet even if the UNC had been able to overfly the Yalu at the time the Chinese were threatening to intervene, it may not have helped. Recall that MacArthur was disinclined to believe that the PRC would enter the conflict in large numbers, and thus may have discounted any evidence to the contrary gathered by photoreconnaissance aircraft, as he did with the intelligence available to him from other sources.

On 4 November 1950 the CINCUNC informed his superiors in Washington that communist Chinese soldiers had appeared in Korea. But he was not willing to attribute their appearance to a full-scale intervention. “Various possibilities exist based upon the

³ Douglas MacArthur, Address of General MacArthur to Joint Meeting of the Congress, April 19, 1951, in MacArthur Hearings, 3615. This work cites the *Daily Congressional Record*, 19 April 1951, 4233-4235, as its source (presumably the Senate edition).

battle intelligence coming in from the front,” he wrote.⁴ An invasion was but one of several possible explanations. MacArthur argued that “there are many fundamental logical reasons against [concluding that the PRC had entered the war] and sufficient evidence has not yet come to hand to warrant its immediate acceptance.”⁵

MacArthur must have received his “sufficient evidence” fairly quickly, however (the timing of the first Yalu-area reconnaissance flights is suggestive—perhaps he would have indeed accepted photographic evidence), because two days later he issued the following order to General Stratemeyer: “Destroy the Korean end of all international bridges on the Korean-Manchurian border” (which the FEAF commander interpreted to mean “the first over-water span out from the Korean shore”).⁶ The directive contained a warning—repeated for emphasis—that the utmost caution be taken to prevent aircraft or bombs from crossing the frontier. “All targets on or close to the border will be hit under VFR [visual flight rules] conditions only. There must be no violation of the border. The border cannot and must not be violated.”⁷

The Far East Air Force’s commander divided the assignment into two parts. O’Donnell’s Bomber Command was given the mission of “destroying [the] Korean end of permanent international bridges with Fifth Air Force [tactical aircraft] destroying pontoon bridges which may be built.” The strategic bombers were also to attack cities

⁴ Douglas MacArthur, telegram to the JCS, 4 November 1950, quoted in Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 346; also http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-22-13.pdf#zoom=100, 1 February 2012.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ CINCUNC, directive, 5 November 1950; quoted in COFEAF, message to CO5AF and Emmett O’Donnell (Commanding Officer, Far East Air Force Bomber Command [CO FEAF BOMCOM]), 5 November 1950; quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 5 November 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary* 260-261.

⁷ COFEAF, message to CO5AF and CO FEAF BOMCOM, 5 November 1950; quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 5 November 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary* 260-261.

and towns in the area of the Yalu while the light bombers and fighter-bombers were to destroy any structure in which the enemy could find shelter. Stratmeyer ordered that the raids be restricted to the Korean-Manchurian border. The Korean-Soviet frontier would remain off-limits. “These operations will not be conducted north of a line running from Ch’öngjin to Musan [both in the far northeastern part of the peninsula].” He also ordered his jet reconnaissance aircraft to get photographs of the Yalu area, again emphasizing the importance of not entering Chinese airspace.⁸

When General Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff, learned of the order (presumably from MacArthur), he sent a “redline” (top priority message) to Stratmeyer instructing him not to carry out the operation. Stratmeyer replied by saying that as the directive came from MacArthur, “Any change in mission must come from CINCFE.”⁹ At the same time, Vandenberg notified the Secretary of the Air Force, Thomas E. Finletter. He, in turn, passed the message on to Robert Lovett, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, who then informed Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Dean Rusk.¹⁰

Mr. Robert Lovett came over from the Pentagon with an urgent message from General Stratmeyer [*sic*]. This message reported that the Air Forces had been ordered to take off at one o’clock p. m. EST today [0300 the next morning in Seoul and Tokyo] on a bombing mission to take out the bridge across the Yalu from Sinuiju (Korea) to Antung (Manchuria). They were to use radio controlled bombs and would attempt to bomb on the Korean side of the bridge.¹¹

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Stratmeyer, diary entry, 7 November 1950, in *Stratmeyer Diary*, 262.

¹⁰ William T. Y’Blood, editorial note, *Stratmeyer Diary*, 262n

¹¹ Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary Acheson, Under Secretary of Defense Lovett, and Mr. Dean Rusk, 6 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1055.

The news seemed to have come as a surprise in Washington. Apparently, MacArthur had not communicated his intention to bomb the Yalu bridges with any of the Truman administration's civilian officials.

Lovett was concerned that although “the results to be achieved would importantly interrupt traffic . . . the danger of bombing the city of Antung and other points on the Manchurian side of the River were very great.”¹² Rusk noted that the strike could have diplomatic repercussions. The Truman administration had promised the British, who were the Americans' closest allies in the UN, that the United States would undertake no actions that might require attacking China itself without first consulting them. The Americans relied on the support of the United Kingdom in the UN despite the UK's active trade with and diplomatic recognition of the PRC.¹³ The British were reconsidering their relationship with communist China and any “ill-considered action on [the American] part might have grave consequences.” Rusk added that the United States was preparing a UN Security Council resolution to call upon the Chinese to withdraw from Korea. He also observed that the PRC had a treaty with the Soviet Union, the full terms of which were unknown to the West, and that any attack on Manchuria might bring the Soviets into the conflict.¹⁴

“After some discussion,” Acheson would report, “we all thoroughly agreed that this action should be postponed until the reasons for it were more clearly known.”

Lovett then telephoned Secretary of Defense Marshall, who agreed that the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ As noted in an earlier chapter, the UK had recognized the PRC but the PRC did not reciprocate.

¹⁴ Memorandum of conversation between Secretary Acheson, Under Secretary of Defense Lovett, and Mr. Dean Rusk, 6 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1055-1056.

bombardment could be delayed “unless there was some mass movement across the River, which threatened the security of our troops.”¹⁵ He also notified the Secretary of the Air Force and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Acheson, meanwhile, contacted the president, who was at the time back in his home state of Missouri to vote in the 1950 general election. Truman acknowledged

the great international complications which may follow the proposed bombing of the Yalu River bridge. He [was] willing to face these complications if the step [were] immediately necessary to protect our forces. He believe[d] under the circumstances that the Joint Chiefs should know from General MacArthur what the pressing reasons are for the operation. If the operation [could] wait until our international commitments are fulfilled, that would put us in the best position.¹⁶

As a result, “[A] message went out to Tokyo at 11:40 ordering General MacArthur not to attack targets within five miles of the Manchurian border and asking his estimate of the situation and reasons for the mission against Sinuiju and the Yalu Bridge in that area.”¹⁷

MacArthur was quick to respond. “Men and material in large forces are pouring across all bridges over the Yalu from Manchuria,” he reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This not only jeopardizes but threatens the forces under my command. The actual [movement] across the river can be accomplished under cover of darkness and the distance between the river and our lines is so short that the forces can be deployed against our tr[oo]ps without being subjected to air interdiction. The only way to stop this reinf[orcement] of the enemy is the destruction of these bridges and the subjection of all installations in the north . . . to the max[imum] of our air destruction. Every hour that this is postponed will be paid for dearly in American and other United Nations blood.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1056.

¹⁶ Secretary of State, summary of telephone conversation with the President at Kansas City, 6 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1057.

¹⁷ Memorandum of conversation between Secretary Acheson, Under Secretary of Defense Lovett, and Mr. Dean Rusk, 6 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1057.

The general was not at all pleased to have his instructions countermanded. “The main crossing at Sinuiju was to be hit within the next few hours and the mission is already being mounted. Under the gravest protest I can make, I am suspending this strike and carrying out your instructions.” MacArthur could not understand why the JCS would prevent him from striking at the Chinese. “What I had ordered is entirely within the scope of the rules of war . . . and constitute [*sic*] no act of belligerence against Chinese territory, in spite of the outrageous international lawlessness emanating therefrom.”¹⁸

Given the general’s record of earlier disagreements with Truman, it is interesting that he identified the Joint Chiefs, not the president, as the source of his irritation, at least in this situation. “I cannot overemphasize the disastrous effect, both physical and psychological, that will result from the restrictions which you are imposing,” he informed them. His message expressed a desire to appeal their decision to the Commander in Chief. “I trust that the matter will be immediately brought to the attention of the president as I believe your instructions may well result in a calamity of major proportions for which I cannot accept the responsibility without his personal and direct understanding of the situation.” MacArthur was apparently unaware that Truman was not in Washington, because he concluded by saying, “Time is so essential that I suggest immediate reconsideration of your decision pending which complete compliance will of course be given your order.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Douglas MacArthur, telegram to the Department of the Army, 6 November 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-11-06&documentid=ki-22-23&pagenumber=1, accessed 15 October 2012.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The Joint Chiefs were surprised by MacArthur's sudden urgency. "The situation described in your [last message]," they telegraphed back to him, "is considerably changed from that reported in [the] last sentence [of your message of 4 November 1950] which was our last report from you."²⁰ The passage to which they referred did not convey any sense of urgency. It read simply, "I recommend against hasty conclusions which might be premature and believe that a final appraisal should await a more complete accumulation of military facts."²¹ The JCS might also have been aware that MacArthur's most recent report to the United Nations, submitted the day these other messages were being exchanged, had been equally casual about the possibility of Chinese intervention. It read:

For the first time in the Korean War, Chinese soldiers of the Chinese Communist forces were captured in combat in Korea. They . . . may have been volunteers. There is no positive evidence that Chinese Communist units, as such, have entered Korea, although incomplete interrogation of these prisoners of war indicates that possibility.²²

During the MacArthur Hearings, Omar Bradley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified that the bridge-bombing order "was the first intimation that we had that they were coming across in great force."²³

²⁰ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 6 November 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-11-06&documentid=ki-22-14&pagenumber=1, accessed 4 February 2012.

²¹ Douglas MacArthur, telegram to the JCS, 4 November 1950 quoted in Truman, *Memoirs* vol. 2, 346; also http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-22-13.pdf#zoom=100, accessed 1 February 2012.

²² Douglas MacArthur, "Reports of U.N. Command Operations in Korea: Eighth Report: For the Period October 16-31 1950, transmitted to the Security Council 6 November 1950," *Department of State Bulletin*, 8 January 1951, 44.

²³ Omar Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 741.

If the Chinese were indeed in Korea in large number, the JCS were not going to gainsay the CINUNC—although they were not sure that the bombing would produce the desired result.

We agree that the destruction of the Yalu bridges would contribute materially to the security of the forces under your command unless this action resulted in increased Chinese Communist effort and even Soviet contribution in response to what they might well construe as an attack on Manchuria. Such a result would not only endanger your forces but would enlarge the area of conflict and U.S. involvement to a most dangerous degree.

Nonetheless, they authorized the bombing of the bridges “provided that at time of receipt of this message you still find such action essential to safety of your forces”²⁴

Their message ended with a caution: “[B]ecause it is vital in the national interest of the U.S. to localize the fighting in Korea it is important that extreme care be taken to avoid violation Manchurian territory and airspace and to report promptly hostile action from Manchuria.”²⁵ The distinction between “territory” and “air space” may seem unnecessary, but is important. The one refers to actions on the ground, including operations by land forces and strikes on surface targets by air forces; the other is a reference simply to flights over the proscribed area.

In the Far East, General Stratemeyer lost a night’s sleep waiting for his superiors to resolve their differences. The next day (7 November locally), he informed his subordinates that “if the green light for the mission was not received by 0830 hours this morning, it would be called off until tomorrow as we cannot take a chance on bombing

²⁴ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 6 November 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-11-06&documentid=ki-22-14&pagenumber=1, accessed 4 February 2012.

²⁵ Ibid.

the Yalu River Bridges at Sinuiju in darkness or even early twilight.” His B-29s were based on Okinawa and would require several hours to fly to the combat area. He did, however, permit FEAF fighter-bombers “to perform armed recce [reconnaissance] flights up to [the] border utilizing napalm, rockets, and machine gun fire against appropriate targets both in the air and on the ground.”²⁶

When the JCS reversed their decision to forbid the bombings, Stratemeyer lost little time in implementing the original order to bomb the bridges. “The max[imum] effort strike against Sinuiju originally scheduled for 7 Nov will be executed on 8 Nov. Tgt [target] times and tasks asgd [assigned] to BOMCOM [Bomber Command] and 5th AF remain unchanged,” he directed. The prohibition against crossing the Yalu remained in effect. “I reiterate that you must insure all reasonable actions and precautions are taken to avoid violation of Manchurian territory and airspace.”²⁷

The enemy was crossing the Yalu in force, but the attack against the Yalu bridges required so many of the Air Force’s units in the Far East that Stratemeyer called upon the US Navy for assistance. He requested that carrier-based aircraft destroy two bridges south of the Suiho Dam, where “our pilots rpt [report] hundreds of vehicles moving to south fr[om] Manchuria on hwy through Sakchu.”²⁸ Stratemeyer’s message relayed MacArthur’s restrictions on any bridge attacks: he observed that the CINCUNC had authorized bombing only “the first overwater span of all international bridges between

²⁶ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 7 November 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 262-263.

²⁷ COFEAF, redline order to CO5AF and CO FEAF BOMCAOM; quoted in diary entry, 8 November 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 267.

²⁸ COFEAF, message to C. Turner Joy (Commander Naval Forces Far East [COMNAVFE]); quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 8 November 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 268.

Manchuria and Korea” and emphasized that neither Chinese territory nor airspace may be violated.²⁹

The first after-action reports began reaching Stratemeyer later that day. The two B-29 units, of three and four bombers, respectively, tasked to bomb the bridges between Sinuiju and Antung got “good” results. The seventy Superfortresses assigned to drop incendiary bombs on Sinuiju reported “excellent” results. After noting that the target received a total of 85,120 fire bombs (each bomber carried 32 five-hundred-pound clusters of 38 bombs each) General Stratemeyer’s diary records that “General O’Donnell indicate[d] the town was gone.”³⁰ The two bridges, however, still stood.

As was noted in an earlier chapter, bridges are extremely difficult to destroy from the air. One on the Han River in central Korea, attacked during the first phase of the conflict, had required eighty bomber sorties and 643 tons of bombs to knock out.³¹ “[B]ridges intended to carry a lot of traffic are strongly constructed from steel, masonry, or a combination of these materials. They can take several hits on nonvulnerable parts of the structure and still stand.”³² The problem is that most of a bridge is not “vulnerable.” There is a large amount of empty space on most bridges, and they of course are designed not just to support their own weight (as most buildings do) but to carry heavy yet moving transient loads. A hit on a bridge’s approaches will usually just produce a crater, which is easily filled in; a bomb striking its road or rail bed can penetrate the relatively thin deck to explode harmlessly below. “To put a bridge fully

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 8 November 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 268.

³¹ Futrell, “Tactical Employment of Air Power in Korea,” 36.

³² Alfred Price, “Bridge Busting, *Air Force* 76, no. 12 (1993), 48.

out of action, one has to drop a span, and that usually takes detonation of one or more large explosive charges close to a vulnerable point.”³³ Damage to a bridge’s superstructure (its non-load-bearing members) can also render it impassable but is usually temporary. “Damage to piers, abutments, cribbing and other embedded supports resulting in collapse of a span is generally more difficult to repair than span collapse resulting from hits on superstructure, and is more likely to result in abandonment of the bridge.”³⁴

Naturally, warmakers would prefer to destroy a bridge permanently than to expose their forces to the risks of repeated visits to it. However, they sometimes have to be satisfied with rendering a bridge impassable temporarily (about which more later). “Most of the bridges [in Korea] have been cut (a span destroyed) and recut many times,” wrote a Marine fighter-bomber pilot in a professional bulletin in 1953.³⁵

But bridges are small targets, long and narrow, making them difficult to hit even under ideal conditions.

Compared to concrete spans, the wooden bridges [in Korea] are easily destroyed by medium and small bombs, but hitting them is the rub. It is not uncommon to have 20 or more jet fighter bombers (FB) fail to cut a bridge. The use of horizontal [medium and heavy] bombers against them is, I presume, even more inefficient.³⁶

The Yalu bridges, unfortunately, “were major steel structures, built by the Japanese [during World War Two] to withstand great natural adversities. . . .” such as rapid

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ John F. Bolt, “Bridge-Busting with Jets,” *Naval Aviation Confidential Bulletin*, November 1953, 4.

³⁵ Ibid. 2-3.

³⁶ Ibid., 4.

currents, heavy freezes, and high winds.³⁷ As a result, the fighter-bombers employed by the USN, USMC, and USAF would not have been able to carry heavy enough bombloads to destroy them without some luck. The horizontal (strategic) bombers carried large payloads but would have had difficulty hitting the bridges. The American high command thus had to choose between accuracy and destructive power.

The requirement that only the southernmost ends of the Yalu bridges were to be bombed complicated the task the bomber crews faced (aware of this policy, the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee remarked during the MacArthur Hearings “Those people have had some good experience in pinpoint bombing, I assume”).³⁸ Long before the Korean War, fliers had learned that the best way to ensure a hit on a bridge was to drop their bombs while flying along a path not quite parallel to the target’s long axis. “The proper approach angle to use would appear to be the one for which the presented area vulnerable to non-super-structure damage is greatest, probably one in which the flight path reaches a 15° to 30° angle with the bridge length.”³⁹ Barring crosswinds, bombs tend to fall in the direction the airplane that dropped them was flying at the moment of release. The slight skew angle corrects for errors in azimuth (left-right aim)—if the airplane flies parallel to the bridge, but is not perfectly lined up with it, all of its bombs will fall to one side or the other. A slight crossing pattern increases the chance of at least one bomb hitting the target.

³⁷ USAF Historical Division, *Operations in the Korean Conflict, 1 November 1950-30 June 1952*, 23.

³⁸ Richard B. Russell, comment, MacArthur Hearings, 20.

³⁹ Bolt, “Bridge-Busting,” 6.

Air Defenses on the Chinese Border

Unfortunately, the UNC's bombers (both light and medium) were denied the ability to employ this ideal approach. During the MacArthur hearings, General O'Donnell told Senator Richard B. Russell, the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, just how much of a handicap the prohibition against crossing the Yalu proved to be to his forces bombing the bridges across that river.

We were not, however, allowed to violate Manchurian territory, and by violation of the territory I mean we were not allowed to fly over any inch of it. For instance, the Yalu has several very pronounced bends like most rivers before getting to the town of Antung, and the main bridges at Antung we had to attack in only one manner. There was only one manner you could attack the bridge and not violate Manchurian territory, and that was a course tangential to the southernmost bend of the river. So you draw a line from the southernmost bend of the river to the bridge and that is your course, and these people on the other side of the river knew that, and they put up their batteries right along the line and they peppered us right down this line all the way. We had to take it, of course, and couldn't fight back.

Senator Russell responded by asking, "You mean they were firing on you from Manchurian territory?" to which O'Donnell replied in the affirmative.⁴⁰

The injustice of exposing American aircrews to gunfire from the north side of the Yalu while denying them the opportunity to strike back at their attackers angered and frustrated lawmakers and civilians. Senator William F. Knowland of California told his colleagues about his visit to Korea in late 1950.

I talked with some of the combat troops who had been sent to the Yalu River area, to interdict the bridges, so that supplies could not come down. They had been given express instructions that they must not go north of the river, so their job had to be done from the south side of the Yalu. I

⁴⁰ Russell and O'Donnell, question-and-answer exchange, MacArthur Hearings, 3069.

talked to some of the men who had had many casualties in their crews. They could see the anti-aircraft guns firing on them from the north side of the Yalu River. Yet the limitations imposed upon them prevented their 'taking out' that anti-aircraft fire.⁴¹

Senator Claude Pepper of Florida shared a similar story about his visit to an American aircraft carrier later that month.

[W]e saw airmen going off the deck of that carrier in their dive bombers and their jet planes, going right to the battle line to drop their bombs or to engage in combat protecting our planes which were dropping their bombs along the Yalu River. On that afternoon I saw one of the airplanes land on the deck, and a great many persons rushed around to look at it. A little later it was brought to the hangar, and there was a great hole, at least 18 inches in diameter, which had been shot in the right wing of the plane which had been bombing the bridges over the Yalu River. But the shell which had torn that great hole through that wing and endangered the life of the flying American, did not come from the Korean side; it came from the anti-aircraft batteries on the Manchurian side, the China side, of the Yalu River. I heard some of our pilots tell the Secretary of the Navy [also touring the area at the time], their superior officers, and me about having to fly along the river's edge, on the Korean side, and take the intensive flak from the other side, and take the fire from the other side, without any authority to cross the river . . . to silence a battery that had jeopardized their lives and their planes. I cannot, for the life of me . . . believe it is wise policy or that it is fairness to our fighting personnel to deny them the right to resist those who are trying to destroy them, because of technicalities. If a bridge is the means over which the enemy is sending troops over on the Korean side to kill our men, I think our men have the same right to bomb that bridge on the China side as on the Korean side, and to stop those troops before they get within range of our men.⁴²

Pepper had told a slightly different version of this story a few days earlier on the radio program "Capital Cloak Room." During the broadcast, he had told his interviewers, "[W]e have pursued the most unrealistic course, gentleman, in this war. . . ." The senator from Florida also expressed the opinion that "we could have stopped, no doubt, a

⁴¹ 81 Cong. Rec. S16049 (1950) (statement of Sen. William F. Knowland).

⁴² 81 Cong. Rec. S16995 (1950) (statement of Sen. Claude Pepper).

great deal of this migration across the Yalu River if General MacArthur had had the authority to go bomb those bridges at both ends. . . .” He wanted the CINUNC to be permitted to conduct any operations he deemed necessary “to save these men of ours that they are crucifying over there. . . .”⁴³

Pepper was probably thinking of soldiers on the ground but he knew the costs of the air war as well. The anti-aircraft defenses near the Yalu bridges were intense enough to compel the USAF’s strategic bombers to change their tactics. During the campaign to clear the North Koreans out of the ROK (the first phase of the war), the B-29s assigned to destroy them could approach their targets at 10,000 feet because they were so poorly defended. The Chinese had both flak and fighters for protecting vital targets. To avoid these hazards, the Americans bombed from 20,000 feet, with a corresponding reduction in accuracy. Because the bombs must fall a greater distance, which takes more time, high altitude bombing exaggerates any defects in bombsights, altimeters, bomb intervalometers (which regulate the pace at which bombs are released, and thus the spacing between impacts), and other equipment.⁴⁴ Precision was also degraded by the requirement to remain outside of Manchurian airspace, which often forced the B-29s to bomb through crosswinds as high as 120 knots, which would affect both a bomber’s flight path and the trajectory of its bombs (the limited approach options also made it easy for the Chinese defenses to predict their ingress and egress routes). An Air Force historical study prepared after the war noted that all of these factors combined to reduce

⁴³ 81 Cong. Rec. A7815 (1950) (extension of remarks by Sen. Claude Pepper made on radio program “Capital Cloak Room,” 20 December 1950).

⁴⁴ USAF Historical Division, *Operations in the Korean Conflict 1 November 1950-30 June 1952*, 23.

the B-29s' efficiency. "At these higher altitudes, the B-29 was inherently unsuited to pinpoint bridge-bombing. . . ." ⁴⁵

A bomb falling from 20,000 feet can drift a significant distance, especially in a crosswind. On 13 November 1950, a single 1,000-pound bomb (out of 102 total) aimed at one of the Yalu bridges landed instead in Antung, China. It fell "1,983 feet from the average range of the bombing patterns and 3,500 feet to the side of the patterns. . . . Tactics used by the B-29s could not explain why this one bomb deviated, but it was thought that defective tail fins created the bombing error" (tail fins stabilize a bomb as it is falling). ⁴⁶ Twelve days later, eight 1,000-pound bombs missed the bridge at Manpojin and struck the mud flats on the Chinese side of the river. A "hung rack" (bomb-release equipment malfunction) caused a 4,000-pound bomb to go astray on the last day of the month.

As noted in the previous chapter, the Chinese communists had already begun complaining to the UN about American aircraft entering and bombing their territory. The above incidents were not among the 83 violations of the Chinese border the USSR described in their protest of 15 November 1950. Nonetheless, had the Chinese filed an additional complaint referring to these mid- and late-month bombings, the Americans would have probably repeated what representative Dulles told the UN General Assembly in response to the PRC's original grievance.

It is alleged that there are 23 cases where bombs were dropped, and an effort is made to identify those places. Well, assuming the correctness of those allegations . . . I have had them charted on a map. . . . As you can

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Y'Blood, editorial note, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 280n.

see, all of the alleged bombings are supposed to have occurred at points of bridge crossings at the Yalu River. Those are the bridges which have borne the Communists troops which have been pouring across them in recent days and which are fighting the forces of the United Nations in North Korea.

He then observed that the USAF had been under orders to bomb only the southern end of the bridges. “But it is obviously extremely difficult to be certain in every case that it may not have been that a bomb fell on the Manchurian side of the bridge rather than on the Korean side.”⁴⁷

Dulles noted that Andrei Vishinsky, the Soviet Foreign Minister himself, had demanded an investigation of the alleged incidents, then said that the United States would welcome such an inquiry. Indeed, he informed his listeners that the American representative in the Security Council had recently proposed the creation of a neutral commission to do exactly that. “That proposal . . . received seven votes in favor and one vote against. I am sure that you [delegates] would be greatly surprised to know what the one vote against was. It was the vote of the Soviet Union which thereby vetoed the proposal to actually prove what Mr. Vishinsky charges.” The Soviets were not interested in the truth, Dulles averred. “[I]t is far simpler to talk propaganda-wise than it is to have your facts verified” (it appears that Dulles had confused the October strafing with the November bombing attack).⁴⁸

While the diplomats were arguing, the American military took steps to prevent repetition of the stray bombs. One way to compensate for the many accuracy problems

⁴⁷ John Foster Dulles, “Statement by John Foster Dulles, U.S. Representative to the General Assembly,” 991-992.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

associated with high-altitude bombing was to use guided bombs such as the AZON and RAZON.⁴⁹ These early examples of “smart bombs,” the precision-guided munitions (PGMs) so famous today, were introduced during World War Two as a way to hit small targets such as bridges and moving targets such as naval vessels. However, the technology was relatively primitive, so although they were more accurate than gravity bombs (“dumb” or “iron” bombs in today’s parlance), they were still fairly imprecise. Even if they hit, the AZON was relatively light (1,000 pounds) and could do very little damage to bridges.⁵⁰ This handicap was to have been alleviated by the use of the 22,000-pound TARZON.⁵¹ A total of thirty missions employing this weapon were mounted during the Korean War, but a series of accidents, as well as reliability, maintenance, and operational issues, led to its being withdrawn (and its development program abandoned) in early 1951.⁵²

Another way to increase bombing accuracy was to attack from low level, as American fighter-bombers did. These aircraft are much faster than level bombers such

⁴⁹ “AZON” stands for AZimuth ONly, meaning that it can be steered left and right but its range could not be controlled. “RAZON,” as might be gathered, is merely an AZON bomb with Range as well as azimuth control.

⁵⁰ USAF Historical Division, *Operations in the Korean Conflict November 1950-30 June 1952*, 23.

⁵¹ COFEAF memorandum to CO5AF and Co FEAF BOMCOM, 20 March 1951; quoted in Stratemeyer, diary entry, 20 March 1951, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 451. “TARZON” was a portmanteau of RAZON and “Tall Boy,” the latter being the 20,000-pound World War Two-era “blockbuster” bomb, designed by the British, on which the TARZON was based.

⁵² Air Force History and Museums Program, *Steadfast and Courageous: FEAF Bomber Command and the Air War in Korea 1950-1953* (Washington DC: USGPO, 2000), 18, 26, 33-34; Frank Farrell, *No Sweat* (n.p.: 1stBooks Library, 2004), 103. One of the problems associated with TARZON bombs was that they would detonate prematurely, often just after they were released. The resulting explosion would destroy the aircraft that had just dropped the bomb, usually with the loss of all on board. For more about the American guided-munitions program of World War Two, see Donald Hanle, *Near Miss* (Lanham MD: Scarecrow, 2006); Paul Gillespie, *Weapons of Choice: the Development of Precision Guided Munitions* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2006); Vernon R. Schmitt, *Controlled Bombs and Guided Missiles: An inside Story of Research and Development Programs* (Warrendale PA: Society of Automotive Engineers, 2002).

as the B-29 so their exposure to the increased flak at low altitude was reduced. However, anti-aircraft fire is but one of the hazards of low-level attacks. Aircraft bombing from minimum altitudes are vulnerable to being struck by fragments of the bombs dropped by the aircraft preceding them on the bomb run.⁵³ “Another difficulty with the low altitude attack is the danger of bomb ricochet” (bombs, surprisingly, can bounce—sometimes quite high in the air—when striking a hard surface, or even water, at certain speeds or angles).⁵⁴

Despite the difficulties, the combined USAF-USN operations against the Yalu bridges might be said to have been successful. By 11 November 1950, Everett F. Drumwright, the American chargé in Korea, could report to the Secretary of State, “All bridges across Yalu River by now have been bombed and damaged although some still appear passable.”⁵⁵ However, considering the risks involved (both to the combat crews bombing the bridges and to the United States’ diplomatic efforts), the campaign proved disappointing. It did not stop the Chinese from continuing to send troops into Korea and indeed did little to retard them. During the MacArthur hearings, Senator Tom Connally of Texas asked Omar Bradley, “[I]n Korea, when those different waves of the enemy have poured in, the air power has not been sufficient to stop them, has it?”⁵⁶

General Bradley replied, “No, sir; because they move at night, they move across country, and while the Air Force has kept a lot of the bridges knocked out, both railroad and road bridges, it has been unable to stop the advance of the Chinese, both as to

⁵³ Bolt, “Bridge-Busting,” 6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Chargé in Korea, telegram to Secretary of State, 11 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7 1130.

⁵⁶ Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 744.

manpower and supplies.”⁵⁷ The general’s use of the word “kept” is significant. The disruption of the enemy’s transportation network in Korea was an ongoing process.

The Yalu bridges are a case in point. The Chinese knew that the UNC would consider their destruction, and so took steps to compensate for their loss even before they were attacked. “The only known instances of the use of pontoon bridges during the Korean War were at two locations on the Yalu. The bridges were temporary expedients in use shortly after the Red Chinese ‘volunteers’ intervened, and have since been replaced by more permanent installations.”⁵⁸

The Difficulties of Interdicting Chinese Arms South of the Yalu

These “more permanent installations” were examples of what one US Air Force study published during the war called “the amazing recuperative power which the Communists have demonstrated in their effort to keep their supply system in operation. The rate of construction and repair of rail and highway bridges by enemy forces in Korea has been little short of phenomenal.” The Chinese and Korean ability to restore damaged infrastructure and keep their supply lines open—which they did everywhere in Korea, not just the Yalu area—frustrated the UN throughout the Korean War, as George C. Marshall would attest to during the MacArthur Hearings.⁵⁹ A lack of steel, concrete, and heavy construction machinery hindered the communists not at all. Their success, according to the study, “was not the result of any secret equipment or new radical

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Felix Kozaczka, “Enemy Bridging Techniques in Korea,” in James T. Stewart, ed., *Airpower: The Decisive Force in Korea* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1957), 191.

⁵⁹ George C. Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 597.

techniques, but must rather be attributed to the ingenious and effective use of crude materials and equipment by hordes of apparently well-directed, hard-working laborers.”⁶⁰

As a result, if the UNC wanted to be able to continue interdicting the flow of men and material to the battle area, it had to maintain a constant watch on the road and rail networks between the Yalu and the front lines. “One prime example of enemy ingenuity is the construction of by-pass bridges at locations where the permanent bridge is still serviceable. In these cases the FEAF had to knock out not one but two or even three bridges at one location in order to halt through traffic.” Nor could the Americans simply attack a bridge one time and expect to strike it permanently from its list of targets.

Another example of attempts at deception was revealed at the pontoon crossing of the Yalu River. . . . After a successful strike against the pontoon bridge, the enemy reconstructed the bridge, but kept it dismantled in sections during daylight hours, only to swing the missing center sections out into place at night to allow vehicle traffic to cross the river. This ruse was discovered by a night photo aircraft.

The communists could do the same with the permanent bridges, creating replacement modules that could be installed for use at night yet kept hidden during the day.⁶¹

During the early part of the Chinese intervention, the communists did not even need bridges to cross the Yalu. In his tenth report to the UN Security Council, describing operations in late November but submitted near Christmas, MacArthur noted, “The effects of destruction of some of the international bridges is [*sic*] being nullified by the freezing of the river which permits crossing on the ice by heavy equipment at many

⁶⁰ Kozaczka, “Enemy Bridging Techniques,” 190.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 198-201.

points.”⁶² Recognizing that the communists did not need the bridges to cross into Korea, the UNC stopped risking its aircrews. “[T]he Yalu bridge attacks were suspended as of 5 December, to be renewed again with the spring thaw of 1951.”⁶³

By that time, bombing the bridges had lost its urgency. Taking advantage of the harsh winter weather, which had curtailed American air operations, the Chinese advanced far down the Korean peninsula in early 1951, reaching the vicinity of the 38th parallel by April. During the MacArthur Hearings, General Marshall testified “[W]e dropped the pressure on the issue [bombing bridges] when the situation entirely changed, and when we were far back, several hundred miles from the Yalu.”⁶⁴

The war devolved into a stalemate after the communist Chinese dug in and established semi-permanent lines in the central part of Korea. The battle front moved very little after the spring of 1951. In a way, this situation worked to the advantage of the UNC. Chinese forces still required supplies and equipment, but their transportation and communications networks were much longer than they had been, having to span half the length of the peninsula. The UNC’s air forces could thus attack targets in these systems in Korea itself and thus avoid the political risks of bombing the Yalu bridges. The air campaign against communist logistics would be a primary focus of United Nations air arms for the rest of the Korean War.⁶⁵ Although it did not and probably could not halt the flow of materiel completely, it did discomfit the communists to the point that “[b]y June 1952 the Communists were ‘using over half of their antiaircraft

⁶² Douglas MacArthur, “Tenth Report: For the Period November 16-30, 1950, transmitted 28 December 1950,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 8 January 1951, 63-54.

⁶³ Futrell, “Tactical Employment of Strategic Air Power in Korea,” 38.

⁶⁴ Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 597.

⁶⁵ Futrell, *USAF in Korea*, revised ed., 437-474, 620-629, 677.

artillery (132 heavy guns and 708 automatic weapons) to protect their key bridges and their rail lines” in Korea.⁶⁶

The Yalu bridges may have lost their military value within a matter of months but retained their symbolic value throughout the war. They figured highly in the rhetoric of the frustrations of limited war until the end of the conflict. Long after his visit to the Korean theatre, Senator Knowland continued to refer to them in his speeches to represent the handicaps under which American servicemen operated. In 1952, he told the members of the American Petroleum Institute much the same story that he told his senate colleagues two years earlier. In this version, however, he told the story from the perspective of an American bomber crew:

‘We are given the mission to fly the Yalu River line to take out the bridges. . . . We are told that we must keep to the south bank. . . . We can see the antiaircraft batteries firing upon us from the north side. . . . [T]hey have excellent range finders for shooting our bombers down in flames. We are not permitted to take out those batteries even though we can see them firing upon us.

To Knowland, the Yalu bridges represented the breakdown of American leadership and the failure of the concept of collective security in the form of the UN. He condemned the politicians and diplomats, both domestic and foreign, who “ask[ed] Americans to fight and die and then den[ied] them the right to win.”⁶⁷

The Yalu bridges came up again a few months later during a congressional debate shortly after newly-elected President Eisenhower’s first State of the Union address in 1953. The president had ordered the withdrawal of the American fleet

⁶⁶ Ibid., 473-474.

⁶⁷ 83 Cong. Rec. A45 (1953) (extension of remarks by Sen. William F. Knowland quoting Unidentified American aircrewman, possibly fictitious, in speech before the American Petroleum Institute, 15 November 1952).

patrolling the waters between Taiwan and mainland China. Senator John J. Sparkman of Alabama wondered if that move was to be the extent of the new Commander-in-Chief's plans for ending the war in Korea. In response, Senator Guy Gillette of Iowa observed that retired Army general Albert C. Wedemeyer, one of the most vocal members of the "China Lobby" (Americans who supported the ROC and who generally favored "unleashing" Chiang Kai-Shek to wage war against the PRC), had recently proposed an eight-point program for combating the communist threat in Asia. One of Wedemeyer's suggestions was the "removal of United Nations restrictions on bombing the Yalu River bridges in Korea and assembly points in Manchuria."⁶⁸

Politicians and military experts were not the only ones who recognized the symbolic value of the Yalu bridges. Shortly before the armistice, a concerned citizen wrote to the *Los Angeles Times* to protest the Eisenhower administration's unwillingness to alienate the United States' UN allies. One of the examples he gave was the Yalu bridges. Bombing their southern ends was "military": bombing their northern ends was "political," he wrote. The British were profiting from their trade with the PRC, the reader charged, and so pressured the United States to refrain from unleashing its full power against the Chinese reds. "I protest on the behalf of a dead GI who died in a limited war."⁶⁹

Bombing the international bridges across the Yalu was intended to curtail the flow of men and materiel from the PRC to Korea. It failed, however, to achieve this

⁶⁸ 83 Cong. Rec. S914-915 (1953) (daily ed. 6 February 1953) (statement by Sen. John J. Sparkman in response to statement by Sen. Guy Gillette referring to General Albert C. Wedemeyer). Sparkman wondered if the United States could afford Wedemeyer's program. He also expressed his concern that "these are steps that may lead to World War III."

⁶⁹ Bob Kneen, "Interest Test" (letter to the editor), *The Los Angeles Times*, 2 June 1953, A4.

object—once in Korea the Chinese communist army was able to reinforce and resupply itself well enough to hold its positions along the 38th parallel from the spring of 1951 until the end of the conflict. The problem was that the Chinese had been allowed to establish themselves in Korea back in 1950, as MacArthur explained during the hearings investigating his relief.

If I had been permitted to bomb them before they crossed the Yalu, Senator, they would never have crossed. If I had been permitted to bomb back of their bases, when they crossed the Yalu . . . their logistical supply would have been cut off so rapidly that they would not have been able to advance with any degree of force or strength against the Eighth Army.⁷⁰

The Chairman of the Armed Services Committee thought there was something odd about the general's statement. "A rather dangerous thing to bomb them before they crossed," he commented.⁷¹

MacArthur did not realize that his suspect chronology had been noted and went on to describe how the JCS had prevented him from stopping the invasion. "As soon as we realized that the Chinese were moving across the Yalu in force . . . I ordered the bridge across the Yalu bombed from the Korean side, halfway to the stream. That order was countermanded by Washington, and it was only when I protested violently that I was allowed to continue my original directive."⁷²

⁷⁰ MacArthur, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 20.

⁷¹ Richard B. Russell, comment, *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷² MacArthur, testimony, *Ibid.*, 20.

Bombing Manchuria

Bombing the bridges was but one of many ways by which the UN could respond to the Chinese assault. Another would be to strike at the sources of the PRC's men and materiel by bombing supply depots, arsenals, and transportation networks in Manchuria. The topic came up almost as soon as the PRC intervened in the conflict. On 7 November 1950, the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs prepared a memorandum for Dean Rusk in which he discussed how to respond to the Chinese invasion. "One way to shift the military balance back into the UN favor in Korea would obviously be to throw in more troops." However, given commitments elsewhere, he recognized that augmenting the American contingent in Korea would be "inadvisable." Other options, he noted, included chemical warfare and the indirect employment of ROC forces (and he provided reasons why they might be effective). A third choice would be to employ air power. "Strategic bombing (even atomic) of certain selected targets in Manchuria, especially if prior public notification was made that the population of *all* major cities of Manchuria should evacuate, would indubitably shake the Chinese aggressor [emphasis in original]."⁷³

A week later Rusk received another communication about bombing the PRC, this time from General MacArthur's political advisor, who reported that the CINUNC had said that he was building up supplies for a drive to push the PRC's forces back into Manchuria. "The UN Forces would, of course, stop at the boundary." If the offensive

⁷³ Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, memorandum to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 7 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1090.

could be begun and ended before the Yalu froze, MacArthur felt, “the Korean campaign would be at an end.” However, “[s]hould the planned operation fail and the Communist forces continue to stream into North Korea from Manchuria, he saw no alternative, from a military point of view, to bombing key points in Manchuria.”⁷⁴

By the end of the month, Dean Rusk realized that these key points were not limited to the logistical targets catalogued earlier. The PRC’s airfields might also need to be struck. During a meeting with a group of diplomats from the British Commonwealth and northern Europe to discuss affairs in Korea, and after observing that one of the reasons why the PRC’s intervention had not been detected before it occurred was that the UNC was prohibited from making reconnaissance flights north of the Yalu, he noted that the United Nations enjoyed “total air superiority” south of the Yalu—but warned, “If the Chinese concentrate air power in Manchuria and use it in Korea, it will be necessary for [the UNC] to bomb the bases in Manchuria.”⁷⁵

By the beginning of December the Chinese had advanced well into Korea. Many high-ranking State Department officials became concerned that morale in the Defense Department was low and that the UNC, wanting to regain the offensive, might decide to bomb targets in communist China.⁷⁶ But such an undertaking, they feared, would widen the war. They were aware—and passed on to the Defense Department—that the Indian ambassador to the PRC had reported that a Soviet diplomat had told him “that if United

⁷⁴ Acting U.S. Political Advisor to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, Japan, memorandum of conversation, 14 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1148-1149.

⁷⁵ Dean Rusk, précis of remarks, in Deputy Minister of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 30 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1264.

⁷⁶ Deputy Director of the Executive Secretariat, memorandum of conversation, 3 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1338; Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, memorandum, 4 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1346.

States planes bomb Manchuria, they would be attacked by the Air Force of the Soviet Union.”⁷⁷

Shortly after Christmas, the JCS, aware that the communist Chinese “possess the capability of forcing United Nations forces out of Korea,” informed MacArthur that their choices were to commit a substantial number of additional troops to the conflict or make “the effort so costly to the enemy that they would abandon it.” The former, however, was not practicable. After observing that “Korea is not the place to fight a major war,” they instructed him to fall back to the south, inflicting as many casualties as he could on the invaders without suffering too many losses of his own.⁷⁸ It was possible, they conceded, that he might even have to withdraw his forces to Japan, the defense of which remained his primary mission. The message closed with a request for his views on the situation.

MacArthur’s response, transmitted on 30 December 1950, was to observe that the old policy intended to prevent the war from expanding had failed but had not yet been replaced with a new one reflecting the changed situation. He saw an opportunity where others saw only imminent defeat. The PRC had committed so many troops to Korea that it had left itself vulnerable in other locations. “Should a policy determination be reached by our government or through it by the United Nations to recognize the State of War which has been forced upon us by the Chinese authorities and to take retaliatory measures,” a number of offensive actions were possible to take advantage of the PRC’s

⁷⁷ Secretary of State, letter to the Secretary of Defense, 16 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1163.

⁷⁸ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 29 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1625.

overextension. One was to accept the ROC's offer of troops, which would engage and tie down communist Chinese forces in Korea, which would in turn render the PRC less capable of resisting a UN blockade or an invasion by other ROC units. Noting that "under existing restrictions our naval and air potential are being only partially utilized," MacArthur also recommended that the UNC "destroy through naval gunfire and air bombardment China's industrial capacity to wage war." He knew that what he was suggesting had been discussed before but thought the changed circumstances warranted a change in policy.

I am fully conscious of the fact that this course of action has been rejected in the past for fear of provoking China to a major war effort but we must realistically recognize that China's commitment thereto has already been unequivocally made and that nothing we can do would further aggravate the situation as far as China is concerned.

He tried to anticipate other possible objections as well. He discounted the risk of war with the Soviet Union—the USSR would initiate war only when it was ready, regardless of anything the Americans or western Europeans did—and declared that his suggestions would not require any reduction in the defenses of Europe (a major concern in the United States because its allies in that region were so fearful of Soviet aggression).⁷⁹

The JCS responded on 9 January 1951 by informing MacArthur that the "retaliatory measures you suggest have been and continue to be given careful consideration here." However, they informed him that there were certain conditions that must be accepted, and one of them was that "[t]here is little possibility of policy change or other external eventuality justifying [the] strengthening of our effort in Korea." The

⁷⁹ CINFE, telegram to the Department of the Army, 30 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1630.

blockade of China would have to wait for the situation to stabilize, the ROC troops would be better utilized elsewhere (defending Taiwan, presumably), and “Naval and Air attacks on objectives in Communist China probably can be authorized only if the Chinese Communists attack United States forces outside of Korea and decision must await that eventually [*sic*].”⁸⁰

MacArthur’s superiors were aware that the American public was wondering why American air power was not living up to the promises Billy Mitchell (who had once declared, “aircraft have set aside all ideas of frontiers”) and his followers had been making since the 1920s.⁸¹ Strategic bombing was being successful, apparently, yet was also not achieving the results desired. During a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “General Vandenberg indicated that we have reached the point where there are not enough targets left in North Korea to keep the Air Force busy.” Tactical aviation was proving to be effective, but had its limits. “He also pointed out that while we are punishing the Chinese on the ground, we are trading irreplaceable Americans for expendable Chinese.” The American belief that technology in the form of air power could compensate for the United States’ manpower disadvantage vis-à-vis the communists, by multiplying the labor of individual Americans, was being sorely tested. “The question,” Vandenberg observed, “is not only how long will the Chinese be willing

⁸⁰ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 9 January 1951, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 41-42. The editors of the *FRUS* series suggest the word “eventuality” for the word “eventually” in this sentence. Editors, note, *FRUS* 1950-7, 42). During the MacArthur Hearings, General Marshall had an opportunity to quote from this instruction; he used the word “eventuality.” George C. Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 333.

⁸¹ William Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 4. Douglas MacArthur was one of the officers who served as Mitchell’s judges in his court martial.

to take the punishment but also how long the U. S. public be willing to take American losses, even at the ratio of 20 Chinese to one American.”⁸²

The American diplomatic corps was equally concerned about the American public’s perceptions of the war. Limited war was a new phenomenon, alien to existing American concepts of warfare. A State Department document prepared in early 1951 noted that

The United States had desisted from countering against the Chinese mainland. . . . This restraint has not been pleasant for Americans. If we followed the dictates of our emotions we would take naval and air actions against the Chinese on the mainland. We would lay waste their cities and destroy their industries. We would let the Chinese people know the terrible potential consequences of the irresponsible actions taken by the men in power in their government.

The Americans and its UN allies would not be swayed by fear or anger. “Reason alone dictates this restraint.”⁸³ The risk of enlarging the war was too great.

That the diplomatic corps and the military were discussing the possibility of bombing Manchuria was no secret. The subject first appeared in foreign newspapers shortly after it became apparent that the Chinese had intervened in the war. However, it was not until the last five weeks of 1950, as the situation in Korea grew more desperate, that the topic began being addressed in the American press with any frequency.⁸⁴

⁸² Hoyt S. Vandenberg, précis of remarks, in memorandum for the record—Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 13 February 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 176

⁸³ Department of State, memorandum of conversation, 6-7, 12-13 January 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 1476.

⁸⁴ Searching the Proquest online database of newspapers for articles, editorials, and other pieces in which the phrase “bomb Manchuria” appeared during the first winter of the war reveals one reference in October 1950 (a *Baltimore Sun* article about a Chinese radio broadcast), eleven in November 1950 (four in mid-month in foreign newspapers, the rest in American newspapers in the last three days of the month), and twenty-two in December 1950. Use of the phrase declined in the first three months of 1951, being employed five, four, and seven times, respectively. There were sixty-three mentions of the phrase in April

President Truman was asked about bombing Manchuria twice during a press conference just four days into 1951. The first question was whether the United States would request the United Nations to approve air operations against China. Truman's response was that his administration was not even considering doing so. The second was whether the United States would bomb the PRC without referring the issue to the UN first. The president again replied in the negative.⁸⁵ He was asked a similar question in another press conference in early April (about which more below).⁸⁶

By that time, the dispute between Truman and MacArthur was nearing its conclusion. The president removed the general from his post as CINCUNC on 11 April 1951. Although he was ostensibly relieved for his refusal to temper his public statements, it was the subjects of those statements that forced the president to order MacArthur to be quiet in the first place. As the first sentence of an editorial in the *Christian Science Monitor* aptly expressed, "To bomb or not to bomb China has been a central issue in the MacArthur controversy."⁸⁷

of 1951, with twenty the following month. "Chinese Warn Against Raids on Neighbors: Communist Official Predicts Ultimate North Korea Victory," *The Sun* [Baltimore], 1 October 1950, 1.

The phrase "bombing Manchuria" was used five times in 1950, four of which occurred in December. It does not appear at all between January and March 1951. It appeared in eight articles in April and four in May.

Search conducted 17 March 2012.

⁸⁵ Harry S. Truman: "The President's News Conference," 4 January 1951; Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13887>, accessed 16 March 2012).

⁸⁶ Harry S. Truman: "The President's News Conference," April 5, 1951; Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14051>, accessed 16 March 2012. Truman was asked if General MacArthur had been given permission to bomb Manchuria. His reply was that he could not answer the question because it asked about strategy. Whether he could not answer because he did not wish to divulge military information, or whether he was deferring the issue to military authorities is not clear from his response.

⁸⁷ "Bombing in the Balance," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 May 1951, 24.

The president addressed the topic in a radio speech he gave on the day he dismissed MacArthur as CINCUNC. “Why don't we bomb Manchuria and China itself?” he asked. Answering his own question, he noted that “[i]f we were to do [so] we would be running a very grave risk of starting a general war. If that were to happen, we would have brought about the exact situation we are trying to prevent.”⁸⁸ Senator Robert Taft, leader of the opposition, gave a rebuttal the next day. “It seems ridiculous to me that . . . we should not permit [air] raids . . . to make as much trouble for the Chinese Communists as possible. . . . I cannot see why such a policy would in any way incite Russia to war unless they're determined to go to war anyway.”⁸⁹

The MacArthur Hearings began a short time later. The practicability and desirability of bombing the military facilities in Manchuria was one of the primary subjects discussed during the investigation. Virtually all of the witnesses were asked their opinions on the matter. As their answers often revealed confidential and sensitive information, a sizable portion of their testimony was deleted by the censor.

MacArthur, the first witness, thought that bombing Manchuria could have kept the PRC from intervening in the first place. “I would have warned China that, if she intervened, we would have regarded it as war and we would have bombed her and taken every possible step to prevent it. That is what I would have done and it seems to me that what common sense would have dictated should have been done.” He also believed that air raids could get the PRC to withdraw from the war.

⁸⁸ Harry S. Truman: “Radio Report to the American People on Korea and on U.S. Policy in the Far East,” 11 April 11, 1951; Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14059>, accessed 17 March 2012).

⁸⁹ Robert Taft, speech, 12 April 1953, excerpted in “Text of Sen. Taft’s Address,” *The Boston Globe*, 13 April 1951, 11.

I would advocate that the Chinese, the Red Chinese Government, be served notice that if they continued this type of predatory attack in North Korea and refused to consider terms of an armistice and cease fire, that after a reasonable period of time we should exercise such military sanctions . . . as would be necessary to force him to stop. That would unquestionably involve bombing of the bases on the other side of the Yalu.⁹⁰

One of the senators knew that the morale of American troops was declining as a result of the restrictions placed on UNC operations. “May I ask whether or not they are happy about not being able to bomb the arsenal back in Manchuria?” he inquired of MacArthur. “I think the vote would be 100 to nothing in favor of bombing,” the general replied.⁹¹

General Wedemeyer, as might be expected as a vocal member of the China Lobby, a coalition dedicated to the overthrow of the communist regime in China, agreed that MacArthur should have been allowed to extend hostilities into the PRC.

A commander in the field should be given no restrictions whatsoever in carrying out his mission. . . . And as I see it, the refusal to permit General MacArthur to bomb bases where the enemy was gathering together his strength to destroy our bases, destroy our boys, to kill our men, in my judgment that it an unfair restriction and an unrealistic approach to a military and to a strategic problem. No commander should be put in the field and given such a mission. If it is determined that the bombing of those fields will involve another country and if politically or diplomatically we do not want to do that, then the mission should be changed.

Bombing Manchuria was apparently an essential part of combating communism and preserving liberty. “General MacArthur should have been told, ‘We no longer have that

⁹⁰ MacArthur, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 21.

⁹¹ Bourke Hickenlooper and Douglas MacArthur, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 56.

mission which requires you to destroy all these North Korean forces, to restore Korea to democratic processes,” Wedemeyer proclaimed.⁹²

The idea of bombing Manchuria made sense to many of the senators on the investigating committees. However, they were willing to concede their lack of expertise on military matters. Senator Walter F. George of Georgia asked Secretary of Defense George Marshall,

As a matter of sound military strategy, of common sense as a nonmilitary man, such as I am, if the commander in the field knows his troops are being cut down through a period, and if he believes that through the use of air power he can prevent these build-ups across a boundary line, whether it is a river or an imaginary line, and thereby interrupt their supplies, do you see that there is anything other that man can do except recommend that course of action? . . .⁹³

Marshall agreed that it was a sensible course of action. However, after answering a series of follow-up questions, he observed, “[Y]ou have referred to my being a soldier, which I was. . . . [E]very reaction of a soldier is to hit back, counter immediately and destroy the enemy. All of the enemy’s possibilities for build-up of his strength and execution of his plans.” Yet there were other issues involved, said Marshall. “[H]ere is a case where we have a great many other factors we have to consider, and I think they are very important considerations.”⁹⁴

Marshall got similar questions from other senators. Perhaps they believed that because he had served as the Secretary of State after his military career, he might be capable of understanding their civilian perspectives. Bourke Hickenlooper of Iowa was

⁹² Albert C. Wedemeyer, testimony, *Ibid.*, 2315-2316.

⁹³ Walter F. George, question, *Ibid.*, 401.

⁹⁴ Marshall, testimony, *Ibid.*, 401, 403.

one of the questioners who thought that bombing Manchuria made sense, militarily, as a way of protecting American troops.

I don't intend to put words in your mouth, but I suggest from a purely military standpoint, leaving out the political implications, every military man in this country probably would agree that the strategy and tactics for a successful conclusion of that action in Korea against the Reds would include, among other things, going over with our present air power and bombing the arsenals at Mukden and the installation at Harbin and the lines of supply which are enabling the Reds to go back and recoup themselves so they can attack again. . . .⁹⁵

Marshall responded by noting that every military man in this country did *not* think that way.⁹⁶

One such officer was General David G. Barr, a veteran of both world wars and Korea, and a former advisor to the Nationalists during the Chinese Civil War. When Hickenlooper asked him

[F]rom a purely military standpoint, do you not agree . . . that it would contribute to the discouragement of the North Chinese, of the Red Chinese, to renew their attacks at some future date if we used our strategic bombers to destroy . . . their armories, or their arsenals and their storage centers and so on that we can reach with our strategic air operations?⁹⁷

he would admit only that such an attack would “reduce their capability for making war, at least momentarily.”⁹⁸ The senator followed this answer up by switching his line of inquiry to the material effects of strategic bombing, discarding his original question about its psychological effects. “And has not that very philosophy been followed in every war we have been in? Have we not attempted as far as we could to destroy the

⁹⁵ Bourke Hickenlooper, question, *Ibid.*, 491-492.

⁹⁶ Marshall, testimony, *Ibid.*, 492.

⁹⁷ Hickenlooper, question, *Ibid.*, 3013.

⁹⁸ David G. Barr, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3013.

enemy's potential to make war as rapidly as we can?" The general agreed, but noted that circumstances had changed. "Well, the conditions may have been different," Hickenlooper conceded, "but we followed that philosophy to bring victory." The United States was not seeking to win in Korea, implied the senator, but he knew whom was responsible for the failure. "I am not blaming the military. . . . [I]t is a political responsibility and not a military responsibility."⁹⁹

Hickenlooper changed his approach somewhat when questioning General O'Donnell, the commander of the FEAF's strategic bombing forces. "Isn't one of the prime—if not the—one of the prime purposes of the Air Force to isolate the battlefield as much as possible by disrupting the enemy's ability to resupply himself and reinforce himself?"¹⁰⁰ The senator was describing battlefield air interdiction, generally considered a tactical mission. The general answered in the affirmative. After asking whether the USAF had done so in Korea, O'Donnell again agreed, but Hickenlooper then sought to clarify his terms. "By that I do not mean the immediate front. . . . I am talking about the sound military objective of isolating the battlefield as far away and in the rear of the enemy as was reasonably possible and feasible. Did we do that?" O'Donnell said that they had not, at first. "Originally we were up too close to the front lines." During the first phase of the war, his bombers had been employed primarily in the close support role, attacking enemy troop positions. Hickenlooper expressed surprise at this answer. "Well, but we did not go into Manchuria? . . . And disrupt their ability to resupply

⁹⁹ Hickenlooper, question, *Ibid.*, 3013-3014.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3100.

themselves or to make that sanctuary an untenable place for them. We did not do that?” O’Donnell confirmed that his forces had not done so.¹⁰¹

Senator Hickenlooper then asked what the American policy was in Korea. “[W]hat is our program for bringing this war to an end, for stopping this business over there in Korea, and for bringing about peace in Korea?” (O’Donnell’s reply was, “I am not in the programming business”).¹⁰² By switching his line of questioning, the senator from Iowa missed an opportunity to ask why the UNC had not bombed Manchuria. Of course, O’Donnell was one of the last witnesses to testify (and his remit was to carry out, not determine, policy). Most of the reasons for not bombing Manchuria had already been discussed earlier in the hearings.

General Bradley, who testified immediately after MacArthur, identified three basic principles guiding the administration’s policy towards bombing Manchuria in his opening statement. “Some critics of our strategy say if we do not immediately bomb troop concentration points and airfields in Manchuria, it is ‘appeasement.’” He believed that these people failed to consider the consequences of bombing the PRC. “These critics ignore the vital questions: Will these actions, if taken, actually assure victory in Korea? Do these actions mean prolongation of the war by bringing Russia into the fight? Will these actions strip us of our allies in Korea and in other parts of the word?”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Bourke Hickenlooper and Emmett O’Donnell, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 3100-3101.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Bradley, testimony, *Ibid.*, 733.

Admiral Oscar C. Badger, a naval officer with considerable experience in the Far East and Pacific, answered Bradley's first question by arguing that bombing Manchuria would not assure victory in Korea—because it was not necessary. “I can't do better than explain my view in that I said that I think we can beat these people in Korea. I think that we can. . . .” No one had provided a good case for attacking the PRC. “I offered no opposition to the fact that they don't want to go in there and bomb Chinese bases [and] I have no conclusive reason why I want them to, because I think you can get away with this thing without it.”¹⁰⁴

If there was no good cause for bombing Manchuria, there were several arguments for not doing so. It would widen the war without doing anything to resolve it, General Bradley testified. “I do not think you could get any decision [over the PRC] by naval and air action alone,” he said in response to a question from Texas' Tom Connally, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.¹⁰⁵ Enlarging the war would almost inevitably lead to the commitment of American ground forces to operations in the PRC.¹⁰⁶ He noted that the Japanese had invaded China in 1937 and were never able to subjugate it completely. If the fighting was confined to the Korean peninsula it remained manageable, and, despite its cost in blood and treasure, relatively economical, at least when compared to the alternative. “[O]ne would only jump from a smaller conflict to a larger deadlock at greater expense. My own feeling is to avoid such an

¹⁰⁴ Oscar C. Badger, testimony, *Ibid.*, 2799.

¹⁰⁵ Bradley, testimony, *Ibid.*, 745

¹⁰⁶ Tom Connally and Omar Bradley, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 745.

engagement if possible because victory in Korea would not be assured and victory over Red China would be many years away.”¹⁰⁷

The Possibility of Soviet Intervention in Korea and Elsewhere

Bradley argued that even if the United States were to end the Korean War by conquering the DPRK and defeating the PRC, the victory would still not bring an end to the Cold War—and might, in fact, endanger the United States’ ability to contain communist advances in other places.

As long as we keep the conflict within its present scope, we are holding to a minimum the forces we must commit and tie down. The strategic alternative, enlargement of the war in Korea, would probably delight the Kremlin more than anything else we could do. It would necessarily tie down additional forces, especially our sea power and our air power, while the Soviet Union would not be obliged to put a single man into the conflict.¹⁰⁸

The Soviets could then employ their power and influence elsewhere. Talk of fighting the PRC distracted Americans from more significant issues, Bradley averred. “Red China is not the powerful nation seeking to dominate the world. Frankly, in the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, this strategy would involve us in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Bradley, testimony, *Ibid.*, 733

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 731. General Bradley made the statement cited in this note on 15 May 1951. An unsigned editorial in the *Washington Post* had used a similar expression several months earlier: “No one could guarantee, for example, that a limited war against China could be kept limited; and an all-out war in Asia would bog us down against the wrong enemy to the delight of the Kremlin.” “Bomb-Happy,” *The Washington Post*, 20 January 1951, 6. Of course, the use of a single phrase may have been a coincidence. But see the note immediately following.

¹⁰⁹ Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 732. General Bradley made this statement, one of his best-known quotations, on 15 May 1951. His choice of words may have been influenced by an editorial in the *Washington Post* a month earlier. On 20 April 1951, the paper expressed the opinion that

General Vandenberg, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, echoed Bradley's concerns. The United States could not afford to fight both the PRC and the USSR at the same time. Vandenberg observed that MacArthur's plan for bombarding the PRC did not include ground forces. "We would have to considerably supplement it, both in the air, and with sea power, and with, in my opinion, logistic supplies, spare parts, ammunition, and so forth." This material would have to be transported across the Pacific to the theatre. The communists would not have the same problems:

[S]ince the majority of this equipment could be supplied by Russia, which is very close to the Manchurian border, where the fighting is taking place, that even though we devastated completely Manchuria, which is [in] our capacity to do . . . and knocked out the principal cities in which they were manufacturing some articles of war, that should the Russians desire, there is a possibility that they could keep the fighting going over there by supplying all the materials that were required.¹¹⁰

MacArthur's prescription for ending the Korean War was dangerous because "[i]t is war. It is war against the wrong foe on the wrong battlefield, fought without allies, with our real enemy husbanding his men and resources while we are wallowing in the Chinese bog." "MacArthurism—What It Is," *The Washington Post*, 20 April 1951, 22.

Of the many expressions and phrases the Korean War provided to the American vocabulary—"limited war," "police action," and "MiG alley," among others—"the wrong war" (with or without "the wrong enemy" portion) may be the best known. Critics of American military adventures have used it since the 1950s. John F. Kennedy promised not to involve the United States in such a conflict in a campaign speech in 1960. More recently, Howard Dean and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., used it to express their opposition to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. During a presidential debate in 2004, George W. Bush rebuked his opponent, John Kerry, for having also used the expression in this context, saying its demoralized American troops by questioning their sacrifices. Wikipedia, s. v. "The wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_wrong_war,_at_the_wrong_place,_at_the_wrong_time,_and_with_the_wrong_enemy, accessed 18 March 2012)

The quotation has also provided titles for several books about the Korean and subsequent American wars. Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Ithaca NY: Cornell UP, 1985); Jeffrey Record, *The Wrong War: Why We Lost in Vietnam* (Annapolis MD: US Naval Institute, 1998); and Francis J. West, *The Wrong War: Grit, Strategy, and the Way out of Afghanistan* (New York: Random House, 2011).

A search on Google for "wrong war" combined with "wrong enemy" resulted in almost 23,000 "hits." "Wrong war" by itself resulted in 1.5 million "hits" (search made 18 March 2012).

¹¹⁰ Vandenberg, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1401-1402.

In response, Senator Theodore Francis Green of Rhode Island, asked, “It would take the whole of our Air Force to be successful, but even with the whole of our Air Force, it might be unsuccessful, is that right?”¹¹¹ Vandenberg replied by saying that if attacking the PRC brought the USSR into the conflict, the United States did not have the resources to prosecute two wars. “While we can lay the industrial potential of Russia today waste, in my opinion, or we can lay the Manchurian countryside waste, as well as the principal cities of China, we cannot do both. . . .” The USAF—a “shoestring air force,” according to Vandenberg—had been so reduced by post-1945 budget cuts that it would have to employ its every asset in Manchuria. “If we use less than the full power of the United States Air Force, in my opinion it might not and probably would not be conclusive.” Yet any force employed against Manchuria would suffer attrition, which would further impair the USAF’s readiness for conflict with the USSR. “[T]he effect on the United States Air Force . . . would fix it so that, should we have to operate in any other area with full power . . . we would not be able to.”¹¹²

The main reason why a bombing campaign against the PRC—or even Manchuria alone—would require a significant portion of the USAF’s assets is that there was no guarantee that the destruction of a single set of targets would achieve the desired objective. MacArthur, apparently, never identified the specific targets we wished to bomb—or so General Bradley testified during the MacArthur Hearings.¹¹³ He just indicated the general types of installations he would like to bomb. Senator Wayne

¹¹¹ Theodore Francis Green, question, *Ibid.*, 1402.

¹¹² Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1379.

¹¹³ Estes Kefauver and Omar Bradley, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 1132.

Morse of Oregon tried to ascertain from MacArthur where he had wanted to send his bombers. “General, in discussing the proposal for bombing north of the Yalu if the Red Chinese would not capitulate to the ultimatum, you at several times referred to destroying Chinese bases, supply routes, and manufacturing centers. Now do you mean just in Manchuria or all over China progressively, depending on the effect of the early bombing?”¹¹⁴ The former CINCUNC answered by saying, “In the beginning I certainly would apply it merely to the supply routes and bases that contribute to the actual battle front. It might become necessary later to go deeper if the enemy deploys his forces deeper.”¹¹⁵ The general had made it clear that his program could require an increased effort by the United States. “That is consistent,” Morse noted, “with your statement that you have made that you would have to see it through to whatever extent it became necessary to get the victory in ending hostilities in Korea.”¹¹⁶

Senator Hickenlooper would no doubt have approved of such a program, judging by a question he posed to General Barr.

I ask you as a military man, divorcing political considerations completely, whether or not it is accepted military principle that you hit the enemy where it hurts as far back as you can to keep from supplying and regrouping, in order to win the battle engaged in, if you have the force and power to do it?¹¹⁷

Despite Hickenlooper’s qualification, Barr, who understood that the military and the political could not be segregated so easily, prefaced his answer with a caveat: “If the

¹¹⁴ Morse, question, *Ibid.*, 261.

¹¹⁵ MacArthur, testimony, *Ibid.*, 261.

¹¹⁶ Morse, question, *Ibid.*, 261.

¹¹⁷ Hickenlooper, question, *Ibid.*, 3011.

battlefield wasn't limited, I would certainly hit him as far back as I could.”¹¹⁸

Hickenlooper was not satisfied by this reply. “When you say ‘if the battlefield were not limited,’ I submit that is letting the political consideration edge into the purely situation.”¹¹⁹ Barr had to admit that if political issues were removed from consideration, long-range bombing seemed the proper course of action.

“When Do You Stop?”

Hickenlooper and many of his colleagues could not understand why American air power was being prevented from exercising its primary attributes: reach. They also wondered why the UNC was being denied another important aspect of air power—economy of effort. While questioning the Army Chief of Staff, J. Lawton Collins, Senator Russell B. Long of Louisiana observed that “if we are going to punish the Chinese for their aggression, with the least possible losses to ourselves, one of the most effective ways to punish Red China would be to carry fire bombs into their cities, simply ignite their cities and burn them, many of them down.” He then asked, “That would not entail a great loss of Americans lives to do, would it?”¹²⁰ The general responded by observing that it would not, but it would kill a large number of Chinese civilians. He then noted that in the PRC, like in most other communist countries, a small minority ruled. “[T]he average peasant in China out in the hills probably doesn't even know that

¹¹⁸ Barr, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3011.

¹¹⁹ Hickenlooper, question, *Ibid.*, 3011.

¹²⁰ Russell B. Long, question, *Ibid.*, 1245

there is a war going on in the first place, or what it is all about. . . .”¹²¹ Long followed up by asking whether bombing mainland China could have the effect of unifying the population to stand behind its government. Collins thought that it would.

I firmly believe that, and the trouble is when you bomb, when you start bombing, to make it effective you wouldn't only have to bomb the airfields where there are planes, but you would have to bomb the storage houses, warehouses, and things of that sort, which are right in these towns. They are not miles away from a town. . . . Once you embark on the business of bombing the other man is going to move away from you. Well, he just moves a little deeper and then you go deeper, and the first thing you know, you are involved in the bombing of cities and all sorts of things, aside from the bombing of strictly military installations such as air fields.”¹²²

Like the Lernaean hydra of Greek myth, the problem could keep growing.¹²³ “Now where do you stop?” asked Collins.¹²⁴

Admiral Badger had similar reservations. As was noted above, he thought that the Korean War could be resolved without resort to bombing the PRC.

I think we can lick them in Korea. I think we should not open ourselves to the bombing of bases in China. But I think that if we do not get a negotiable reaction from the Chinese Communist Government pretty soon, we would have to do what we could to destroy the sources of equipment, which, I think, is the element of weakness on the part of Chinese forces.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Collins, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1245.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1246.

¹²³ The Lernaean hydra had seven heads and every time one was chopped off, two more grew in its place. The hero Hercules finally dispatched it (the second of his twelve labors) by pacing a burning torch at the stump of each head as he chopped them off, preventing it from regenerating.

African folklore offers a similar story, that of the gum doll the trickster god Anansi, a spider, fashioned to trap Mmoatia the dwarf (this story inspired the tale of B'rer Rabbit and the Tar Baby, part of the oral tradition of American slaves in the antebellum south, written and popularized by Joel Chandler Harris in his *Uncle Remus* series).

Allusions to the classics being out of fashion at the present time, recent attempts by politicians and military officers to express the same concept refer to the popular arcade game “Whac-A-Mole.”

The word “quagmire” might also be appropriate.

¹²⁴ Collins, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1246.

¹²⁵ Badger, testimony, *Ibid.*, 2739.

The admiral was responding to a question from the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services committee, who after a short discussion of related topics, asked Badger to amplify this comment. “I was just wondering whether you mean the warehouses where the equipment was stored or the places where this equipment was manufactured.”¹²⁶ The admiral explained his thinking by saying,

I would take the sources of equipment all the way back, well, everything involved in equipment. Sources of equipment may be shipments made into China from other areas. So, as I said before, I think we can stop that source of supply with the leeway we have got between the Yalu River and the position of those troops [by the time of the hearings the front lines were well south of the Manchurian border]; and I would prefer to limit military action to that area for the time being.¹²⁷

Russell immediately grasped the scale of the problem, observing, “The question immediately arises, of course, whether [this equipment] is being furnished by the Russians, and how far we would have to go to bomb it.”¹²⁸ Like the North Koreans, the Chinese were dependent on the USSR for many items of equipment. Yet the Soviet sources of supply were within range of American air power.

Richard B. Russell, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, acknowledged that this situation “troubled” him. “I could not see how even if we knocked out the sanctuaries in Manchuria, that we would be completely successful without likewise assailing the sanctuary of supplies that exists in the Soviet territory of Siberia.” General Bradley agreed that it was a problem. “That is true; to be entirely effective you should hit those also. The others would be effective some, but to be more

¹²⁶ Russell, question, *Ibid.*, 2739.

¹²⁷ Badger, testimony, *Ibid.*, 2739.

¹²⁸ Russell, question, *Ibid.*, 2739.

effective you would have to bomb both.” Russell then asked, “Is there any doubt in your mind that bombing of the Soviet territory would involve great extension of the war?”

Bradley’s reply was a concise, “No, sir.”¹²⁹

Yet few were actively advocating bombing the Soviet Union. The matter under discussion was bombing Manchuria. Some of the witnesses were not certain that the USSR might intervene if the PRC were to be attacked. Generals Vandenberg and O’Donnell thought that bombing mainland China did not guarantee the USSR’s entry into the war.¹³⁰ Vandenberg did, however, concede that not bombing Manchuria reduced the chances of Soviet involvement (or at least did not increase them). “I think there is always danger when nations are fighting on the border of another country, and one country is supplying the equipment.”¹³¹

Other witnesses were more adamant about the cause-and-effect relationship between bombing Manchuria and the USSR entering the conflict. General Bradley explained that the risk of Soviet intervention was significant due to “certain provisions of the Chinese-Russian treaty. They have a mutual defense pact. . . .” Fighting the Chinese in Korea would probably not be sufficient to invoke the treaty. “But if you attack China itself, then they [the Chinese] might claim that they had been attacked and, therefore, Russia must come to their aid.”¹³²

Senator Hickenlooper noted that the Sino-Soviet treaty was created to protect the PRC from Japan, which had invaded China during World War Two, causing great

¹²⁹ Richard B. Russell and Omar Bradley, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 1011.

¹³⁰ Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1403; Emmett O’Donnell, testimony, *Ibid.*, 3013.

¹³¹ Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1402-1403.

¹³² Bradley, testimony, *Ibid.*, 925.

suffering and destruction. He wanted to know why the USSR would honor the treaty if the PRC were attacked by forces of the United Nations, to which Japan did not belong (he may not have been aware that early in the conflict both Chinese and Soviet propaganda alleged that the UNC included Japanese forces).¹³³ Bradley replied that it did not matter. The Soviets “have a timetable; they may be willing to step up that timetable” if an opportunity presented itself. The Korean War had been instigated by the Soviets (through their North Korean puppets), which Bradley considered “an indication that they were in a position now where they were willing to risk war and, therefore, must be willing to accept it.”¹³⁴

Secretary of State Acheson provided further evidence for why the USSR might come to the aid of the PRC if UN forces bombed Manchuria.

The treaty was significant. But even if the treaty did not exist, China is the Soviet Union’s largest and most important satellite. Russian self-interest in the Far East and the necessity of maintaining prestige in the Communist sphere makes it difficult to see how the Soviet Union could ignore a direct attack on the Chinese mainland.¹³⁵

He also noted that the Soviets had interests in Manchurian railroads and had property in Dairen and Port Arthur, although the last was supposed to be transferred to the PRC by the end of 1952. There were also Soviet troops posted in Chinese cities.¹³⁶

Senator Morse wanted to know more about the railroads. He asked Acheson whether they would be included in the list of targets should Manchuria be bombed. The Secretary of State said that they probably would. Morse then asked if the administration

¹³³ Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, memorandum to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 4 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1039.

¹³⁴ Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 942.

¹³⁵ Dean Acheson, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1719.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1877.

thought that their destruction would increase the likelihood of the Soviets entering the war. Acheson replied that it did.¹³⁷

The senator from Oregon had earlier asked MacArthur whether bombing the railroads might provide the USSR with a *casus belli*. The general dismissed his concerns. “I believe it is a very minor question when it is related to the great problem of whether a third world war is about to be launched.”¹³⁸ When Morse pressed the point, MacArthur informed him that most of the traffic on the railroads went south, transporting material from the USSR to the PRC, meaning that the Chinese, not the Soviets, would incur the most property damage if the lines were bombed. In addition, he said, all Soviet property in China was to be transferred to the PRC within a few years, so the Soviets did not have to protect their investment.¹³⁹

Morse also asked MacArthur about the treaty between the PRC and the USSR. “Would it not appear from the terms of the Russian-Chinese alliance of 1950 that bombing in China would be the line beyond which the U.S.S.R. could not remain passive in that alliance?”¹⁴⁰ MacArthur, so confident when offering opinions from his headquarters, did not wish to commit to an answer. “Well, I couldn’t tell you that, Senator.”¹⁴¹ When Morse rephrased the question, asking whether the PRC be justified in requesting Soviet assistance if we bombed, MacArthur again demurred.

That, again, I wouldn’t speculate upon. There are many things they might do. They might call upon the Soviet for air assistance; they might call for other types of supplies that would help them meet the conditions.

¹³⁷ Wayne Morse and Dean Acheson, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 1878.

¹³⁸ MacArthur, testimony, *Ibid.*, 252.

¹³⁹ Wayne Morse and Douglas MacArthur, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 252-253.

¹⁴⁰ Morse, question, *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁴¹ Morse and MacArthur, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 249.

Whether they would wish to have the Soviet troops and forces injected into the very heart of China, I don't know, sir.¹⁴²

MacArthur thought that the Chinese communists might hesitate to invite the Soviets to assist them. They would not want to risk becoming “completely within the military dominion and power of the Soviet. . . . It is quite possible that they would regard that with a degree of fear and dismay that would tend to preclude them from considering it [invoking the treaty] seriously.”¹⁴³

General Wedemeyer was not as hesitant as MacArthur to declare that the USSR would not come to the aid of the Chinese. When he was asked, “Do you not feel that bombing of a railroad owned by the Soviet Union might conceivably give them justification to feeling it is an act of war against them?” he replied, “Well, it might, sir. That might result in war. It is a calculated risk that personally I would recommend we accept.”¹⁴⁴

Risk was a recurring theme during the MacArthur Hearings, which should not be surprising, given that risk assessment—the determination of how much to invest by comparing possible losses against potential gains—is an integral part of the work of all high-ranking military officers and upper-echelon diplomatic personnel. In the specific context of bombing Manchuria, calculations of loss and benefit could not be made with actuarial precision, as there were too many unknown variables. All that was known was the current relationship of gain and loss in existing conditions.

¹⁴² MacArthur, testimony, *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁴³ Morse and MacArthur, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁴⁴ Estes Kefauver and Albert C. Wedemeyer, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 2502-2503.

American military leaders were willing to accept the situation as it stood. When questioning the Secretary of Defense, Senator George asked, “If the probabilities . . . are that whatever decision Soviet Russia finally follows has already been made in Korea, is there not sound reason in saying that our Air Force should be used to prevent military build-ups aimed at our own troops across the northern boundary line of Korea?”¹⁴⁵ Marshall’s response was, “[Y]ou are surrounding your question with factors that make it too hypothetical to get a concrete answer. . . . [W]e do not feel up to the present time that the [proposed] action against the supply bases materially affects the campaign to a degree that makes it acceptable to accept the hazards of what occurs next.”¹⁴⁶

Senator Hickenlooper, who obviously did not agree with this assessment, had his opportunity to lecture the Secretary of Defense a few days later.

Had we destroyed those bases, had we attacked them and bombed them, it seems perfectly reasonable to me that they would not have had the equipment and the material to mount those two assaults as effectively and as vigorously as they did. Therefore, I suggest that from my view we have suffered tremendously by not destroying their sources of supply. . . .¹⁴⁷

Marshall stood by his earlier statement. “Well, if by hitting those supplies to replenish himself, which we do not think have vitally affected the campaign, we hazard a general war, then I think the American people are on the side that the Defense Department, the Chiefs of Staff, and the civilian authority of the Government favor.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ George, question, *Ibid.*, 402.

¹⁴⁶ Marshall, testimony, *Ibid.*, 402.

¹⁴⁷ Hickenlooper, question, *Ibid.*, 495.

¹⁴⁸ Marshall, testimony, *Ibid.*, 492.

Hickenlooper had earlier asked how the Korean War differed from other situations in which the United States risked war with the Soviet Union. As was his wont, he appealed to the principle of military necessity in his question.

Why did we accept most serious risks in Europe, both in the question of the Berlin airlift and in the matter of arming under the North Atlantic Pact—why did we accept those risks in Europe in the interests of either resisting or pushing back communism and refuse now to accept the risks which many will admit exists, refuse to accept the risks in this Korean War of bombing the sources of supply along the lines of known and accepted military principles?¹⁴⁹

Marshall's reply was that "[i]n Western Europe . . . we literally had no choice. . . ." The Soviet Union was a clear and present danger to the United States' European allies. The threat in Korea, coming from intermediaries less potent than the USSR, was tolerable and manageable.

Beginning with our European recovery program [the Marshall plan] and later taking up the rearmament of western Europe, it was a proposition of whether we simply let that be overrun by the Communist conquest, either political or military, to our calamitous disadvantage, but we had no choice in that means. Now in Korea I have stated that our command, in the opinion of my military advisors and in my own concurrence, has not suffered to any material extent from the lack of bombing you have specifically referred to.

However, the intermediaries had not applied their full strength to their effort, and of course could if need be summon Soviet assistance. "[T]he unanimous judgment on this side of the water in connection with [bombing Manchuria], of the constituted authorities in connection with it, is that the risk is too great."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Hickenlooper, question, *Ibid.*, 494.

¹⁵⁰ Marshall, testimony, *Ibid.*, 494-495.

The potential threat posed by the Chinese airfields was considered to be equally insignificant. Army Chief of Staff Collins testified “that the Chinese air really never hurt us. It has hurt our air force, but I mean the ground forces have never been subjected to any kind of bombardment from the Chinese that amounted to anything.”¹⁵¹ The USAF was holding its own against the Chinese (about which more next chapter).

Marshall agreed that the threat the airfields in Manchuria represented was acceptable. He testified that

[u]p to the present time, the reaction so far as our troops are concerned on the ground, has been that they have not suffered in a direct way and have not suffered seriously in a direct way, from the fact that these air bases exist in Manchuria, and that we have not bombed them out of commission. . . . But no material harm was being done to our armies on the ground, none to our ships whatsoever, and to our stores and our communications; so we did not have a demanding action there where we had no choice in the matter.

However, he added, “We may have no choice, as I say, tomorrow.”¹⁵²

The Americans and their UN allies were doing what they could to discourage the Chinese communists from escalating the war. However, they recognized that their efforts may not be sufficient. The communists had committed only a portion of their land forces to the fighting in Korea. They had other assets that they could add to the battle.

¹⁵¹ J. Lawton Collins, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 3280.

¹⁵² Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 399-400.

The Chinese Air Force

Conspicuously absent from the PRC's order of battle during the first six months of its intervention in Korea were aircraft. The only communist airplanes the UNC encountered regularly were the fighters that protected the far northwest of Korea (the famous "MiG Alley"). The Americans knew that the PRC had bombers and attack aircraft, but never saw them. "There must be some reason," Senator Hickenlooper mused, "why they are not using aircraft in order to advance their position." General Bradley could only agree with him.¹⁵³

One possibility was that the PRC was marshaling its air forces for an air attack somewhere outside Korea. As was noted above, the JCS had on 9 January 1951 informed MacArthur that they would probably not be able to authorize attacks on Manchuria until the PRC had committed an aggressive act elsewhere. Of particular concern were Formosa (Taiwan) and Japan. The Chinese communists might target the former because the island was traditionally a part of China; it was also the seat of the ROC, which the PRC wanted to eliminate. The PRC's interest in the latter was that it was the base of operations for the UNC and was a traditional enemy of China. In January 1951 both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the National Security Council examined the possibility of "initiating damaging naval and air attacks on objectives in Communist

¹⁵³ Bourke Hickenlooper and Omar Bradley, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 940.

China at such time as the Chinese Communists attack any of our forces outside of Korea, including troops in transit to or from Korea.”¹⁵⁴

The next month, MacArthur again requested “that in the event of Chinese Communist air or sea attacks against Formosa or U.S. forces outside of Korea—as distinct from operations within Korea—[he as] CINCFE should be authorized to retaliate immediately against targets within China.” This time, the JCS granted the authority to do so, provided that MacArthur report his reasons and obtain formal approval for such actions “except for the right of self defense—that is, immediate self defense.” General Ridgway, his successor, was granted the same permission.¹⁵⁵ Because it allowed the CINCUNC to bomb Manchuria, but only in reaction to an expansion of the conflict beyond Korea, the Secretary of Defense described this directive as “both a restriction and an authority. . . .” during the MacArthur Hearings.¹⁵⁶

That order, Marshall continued, “has not exactly been superceded, that still stands, but [there was] a more important order. . . .”¹⁵⁷ That the Chinese might attack targets outside of Korea was of course a possibility. But the PRC was already actively engaged against the UNC in Korea. The administration was concerned that the Chinese might initiate an air campaign against the United Nations forces in support of their land operations.

¹⁵⁴ “Draft Report by the National Security Council on U.S. Action to Counter Chinese Communist Aggression”: in Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, memorandum, 15 January 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 81. This document shares much of the language of a document prepared by the JCS to which the NSC had access. JCS, memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, 12 January 1951, in Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, memorandum, 12 January 1951, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 70-72.

¹⁵⁵ Collins, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 3385-3386.

¹⁵⁶ Marshall, testimony, *Ibid.*, 808.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Intimately familiar with the potency of air power, the Americans knew that United Nations forces were operating in a small area at the end of a long logistics trail and were thus at great hazard from an air attack—far more than the PRC was. Marshall observed that “the targets and all in Manchuria were scattered and the targets in retaliation by them with us were highly concentrated, and we were very vulnerable.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the UNC was so exposed to air attack that Marshall specifically asked that his statement be stricken from the public record of the investigation “because I don’t want to advertise that to the Chinese Communists.”¹⁵⁹ General Collins was only slightly more optimistic than Marshall about the vulnerability of UNC ground forces. “I think that the troops that are deployed in the field would not be hurt by any attack from Communist air,” he said, “but the key thing might well be the attacking of our reserves during their movements.”¹⁶⁰

The PRC had initiated a land offensive shortly before the MacArthur Hearings began, as Marshall observed while answering questions from Senator Hickenlooper during the MacArthur Hearings. The Secretary of Defense testified—again requesting that his words be stricken from the record—that “if they made a considerable penetration in their first attack the other day, that the minute that had been taken advantage of by their troops, we might catch a full fledged bombing.”¹⁶¹ The Iowan interpreted this to mean that “the philosophy is for us to sit back and wait until they throw their full power against us and then retaliate rather than . . . attempt to destroy them on the ground before

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 877.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3125-A. Apparently the stenographers lost track of the page count, as there is also a page 3125.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1303.

they were able to inflict whatever damage the initial wave would inflict on us.”

Marshall responded that the UNC was not being passive. “We are going ahead with our own maneuvers to produce the most advantageous situation we can.” In response, Hickenlooper returned to his favorite themes: political interference in military decision-making.

“[T]he normal conduct of a military campaign dictates purely as a military axiom that you hit the enemy where it hurts worse. . . . Therefore, if we are not using our air power to go back and destroy before they can get off the ground their air power, or . . . to destroy the supplies which they will use to build up a new offensive, which I see in the paper they are doing today, that decision therefore must be a political decision and not a military decision, doesn’t it follow?

Marshall replied, “It follows to an extent, but there is a heavy military involvement in making the decision.”¹⁶²

Marshall had earlier testified that when discussing the possibility of an air campaign against the PRC with the JCS, he had originally been in favor of the idea but the Chiefs had recommended against it. It was a “purely military” judgment. “[T]hey made it clear to me very convincingly that the reaction on our troops might be much more serious . . . [than] the destruction that we would make against the enemy in Manchuria.”¹⁶³ As a result, the Americans decided that they would not initiate a bombing campaign against the PRC. This decision did not, however, preclude the possibility of conducting a bombing campaign in Manchuria in retaliation for a communist air attack against UN troops in the field or the UN’s staging areas.

¹⁶² Bourke Hickenlooper and George C. Marshall, question-and-answer exchange, MacArthur Hearings, 501. This page corresponds to sheets 1303 and 1304 of the uncensored hearings record. Only Marshall’s “full fledged bombing” statement was excised. The censor allowed the rest to be printed.

¹⁶³ Marshall, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 1272.

Concerns in the United Nations

Shortly after the beginning of 1951, the Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared a document examining the issue. While it acknowledged that no existing UN resolution constituted authorization to bomb the PRC, the

United States Government has always maintained that it must reserve right to take action essential to protect United Nations forces under its command; e.g., in the event of large-scale air attacks against United Nations troops from Manchurian basis [*sic*], it *would* bomb airfields from which such air attacks originated [emphasis in original].

However, if the UNC—meaning the Americans—decided to initiate a bombing campaign against Manchuria, they would then need to justify their action to the UN. The JCS did not think that they would have difficulty in doing so. “United Nations forces will deliver air attacks against Manchurian airfields only if such attacks are essential for the protection of United Nations forces.” The question was whether to justify the campaign before or after it began.

[T]he exigencies of the situation under such circumstances in all probability would not permit the United States to inform, in advance, nations participating [in the] military action in Korea of our proposed action. Further, the security of the proposed air attacks might well be jeopardized if the several states concerned were informed in advance of specific plans for air attacks.¹⁶⁴

There were other reasons for acting before talking as well. The United States would “have a big political problem if the Chinese Communists launch[ed] a heavy air

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. JCS 1776/185 “Action Regarding Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea,” 16 January 1951, 880, in *Records of the JCS/46-53/FE*, reel 9, microfilm.

offensive,” Dean Rusk observed.¹⁶⁵ This problem would complicate both foreign and domestic politics.

The Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs agreed with those who said that the United States’ UN allies, its partners in Korea, should be notified if the UNC were attacked. However, he was also aware that most UNC members, particularly the United Kingdom, would no doubt counsel against retaliatory bombing for fear it would precipitate a wider war. Yet as General Collins observed, “[E]ven if their answer is in the negative, we are still going to have to react.” The Americans might have to present the UN with a *fait accompli* and accept the international political repercussions. The alternative was to lose domestic political support for the war. “We cannot be in the position that we have to consult with our allies for Congress would ‘blow its top’ if we were under any such limitation,” Collins remarked, adding, “Does the U.K. understand that?”¹⁶⁶

Rusk had given much thought to the issue of bombing Manchuria and its effect on the solidarity of the UN coalition. In February 1951 he prepared a memorandum in which he discussed the five principle alternatives available to the United States and its UN allies in Korea. The one he recommended was to “accept a cease-fire along the lines of the December, 1950 [*sic*] proposals and a modus vivendi in Korea providing for a phased withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea.”¹⁶⁷ The ones he rejected (for various political—both foreign and domestic—and military reasons) were to reunify the

¹⁶⁵ Memorandum on the Substance of Discussions at a Department of States-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 18 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 355.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 361.

¹⁶⁷ Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, memorandum, 11 February 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 166. The Latin words are not italicized in the source material.

country by force, withdraw, accept an indefinite stalemate, and “resolve the Korean affair by bringing down the Peiping regime through action against China.” His rationale for dismissing this last course of action was that

a general war against China must be avoided in the face of the world threat posed by the Soviet Union; there is no assurance of bringing down the Peiping regime without a major commitment of U.S. forces to the China mainland; if we make a major commitment of U. S. forces to the China mainland, there is no assurance that we can avoid general war at a time and under conditions of great disadvantage to us; [and] *the U.S. would be politically isolated in any such effort* [emphasis supplied].¹⁶⁸

The United States could not afford to alienate its UN allies, Rusk knew. Shortly after the PRC entered the war he had received a communication from another State Department official noting that an “[i]ncursion into Manchuria would hardly be countenanced by the UN as such, and if undertaken with less than united opinion would probably by itself set off the next Communist move in the direction of a further splitting of the sometimes united UN front. . . .”¹⁶⁹

The only members of the UNC who favored bombing Manchuria were the South Koreans (not members of the UN), as their Ambassador to the United States mentioned to Dean Rusk in early 1951. The Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs cautioned against the action. He

pointed out that certain military disadvantages would result from our bombing of Chinese bases, which might cause retaliation in Korea by the Communist air forces and further prejudice the safety of UN troops, pointing out that our refraining from bombing China had strong military as well as possible political justification.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 165-166.

¹⁶⁹ Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, memorandum to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far eastern Affairs, 7 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1090-1091.

¹⁷⁰ Dean Rusk, précis of remarks, in Officer in Charge of Korean Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 17 January 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 95.

The Chinese communist did not have a large air arm, but the Soviets did. During a later conversation between South Korean and State Department officials, “The [Korean] Foreign Minister again took up the question of the bombing of Chinese bases, which he stated was a course favored by the ROK.”¹⁷¹ Rusk again argued against it, saying there were

very serious considerations involved in any such step. Among those considerations, he pointed out that whereas UN forces now enjoyed virtual domination on the air space in Korea south of the Yalu River, the Soviet Union had very powerful reserves of air strength in the Far East and that we had received information that this air force might be thrown in against us if we were to attack China. Should this occur, we would lose the very important advantage we now enjoy in the air and that an outright attack on China would very probably involve the spread of warfare to the point where a general war might ensue.¹⁷²

The people of the ROK, Rusk concluded, would not benefit from an enlargement of hostilities. The South Koreans countered by arguing, like MacArthur, that the USSR would not enter the war unless it accrued a significant advantage by so doing.¹⁷³ They were so much in favor of bombing Manchuria that they wanted to petition the UN to give the PRC an ultimatum: withdraw from Korea or be bombed by the UNC.¹⁷⁴ The Americans recommended against them doing so because it would give the impression

¹⁷¹ Officer in Charge of Korean Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 22 March 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 261.

¹⁷² Dean Rusk, précis of remarks, in Officer in Charge of Korean Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 22 March 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 261.

¹⁷³ Officer in Charge of Korean Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 22 March 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 261.

¹⁷⁴ United States Representative to the United Nations, telegram to the Secretary of State, 20 March 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 251-252; United States Representative to the United Nations, telegram to the Secretary of State, 21 March 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 255.

that the UN had abandoned the “policy of seeking [a] peaceful settlement in Korea which the US and UN [had] repeatedly expressed.”¹⁷⁵

The British, no doubt, would have had a strong reaction to the South Korean proposal. They were adamantly opposed to bombing Manchuria. During a meeting with President Truman near the end of 1950, the UK’s Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, stated outright, “[W]e do not wish to be bogged down in an all-out war with China. . . . We therefore do not want to bomb the industries of Manchuria and the various centers in China.” He then added that the Chinese were “like the Huns” in that they could “get on without large industrial centers” (he seems to have meant the fifth-century barbarians, not twentieth-century Germans).¹⁷⁶

The other member nations of the UN were equally opposed to bombing Manchuria. Just before the new year, the American representative to the UN Security Council reported that several diplomats had expressed their concern about a proposed resolution then under discussion. A delegate from India said that the Soviets and Chinese could choose to interpret it as a threat to bomb Manchuria. Other diplomats agreed that the draft version of the resolution seemed to give the UNC a “blank check to cross [the] frontier and hit at bases from which trouble is coming.”¹⁷⁷ The Americans

¹⁷⁵ Editor’s note, *FRUS* 1951-7, 255.

¹⁷⁶ United States Delegation Minutes of the Second Meeting of President Truman and Prime Minister Atlee, 5 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1396.

¹⁷⁷ American Representative to the UN Security Council, telegram to the Secretary of State, 29 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1627-1628. Austin does not make clear whether the “blank check” analogy was his or was used by the Egyptian delegate to whom he was speaking.

spent much of January explaining that the resolution did not “confer any additional authority for military action beyond that already covered in various other resolutions.”¹⁷⁸

In early April, however, rumors began circulating that MacArthur had been given authority to bomb targets north of the Yalu.¹⁷⁹ The story even reached as far as front-line units in Korea.¹⁸⁰ During a presidential press conference on the fifth, a reporter asked whether MacArthur had been authorized to bomb Manchuria. Truman replied that it was “a military strategy question” that he could not answer.¹⁸¹

Foreign governments—both those that had contributed to the UNC and those that had not—promptly expressed their alarm. An Indian representative in Washington asked Dean Rusk about the rumors.¹⁸² John D. Hickerson, the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, reported being “cornered” by five diplomats who wanted to know more about why the president had been so noncommittal.¹⁸³ The stories gave the impression that MacArthur had been authorized to bomb Manchuria at his discretion.

¹⁷⁸ Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 6 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 306-307.

¹⁷⁹ “MacArthur May Bomb Manchuria, Says Report,” *The Hartford Courant*, 5 April 1951, 2; “MacArthur says UN can Beat Chinese,” *Sun-Advertiser* [Yuma AZ], 5 April 1951, 1.

¹⁸⁰ Andrew G. Anderson, *Involuntary” 731st Night Intruders Over Korea* (n.p.: Xlibris, 2000), 133.

¹⁸¹ Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 6 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 306; Harry S. Truman: “The President's News Conference,” 5 April 1951; Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14051>, accessed 16 March 1=2012. The diplomats who confronted Hickerson represented Belgium Canada, France, the Netherlands, and the Philippines.

¹⁸² Acting Officer in Charge of India-Nepal-Ceylon Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 7 April 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 316.

¹⁸³ Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 6 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 306.

He had not, as Rusk and Hickerson both pointed out. However, they also observed that the United States had the right to protect its forces, and had informed its allies that they would, if pressed, do so months earlier. “[I]n the event of a massive air attack against UN forces,” Hickerson said, “the United Command must reserve the right to take counter-measures, including bombing of the bases from which the attacking planes came.” The United States would consult the member nations of the UNC if circumstances permitted but “could not be absolutely sure that there would be time for this for military reasons.” One of the ambassadors then asked whether MacArthur was required to communicate with Washington before bombing Manchuria. Hickerson replied that he was. Two of the diplomats began arguing about the wisdom of warning the Chinese communists that if they attacked, they would face retaliation. Hickerson joined in by observing that he thought the PRC’s leaders already knew, or at least suspected, that such was the case, and added that delivering a warning would be problematic.¹⁸⁴

Whether Rusk or Hickerson were aware of it or not, the rumors had some basis in fact. On the day after Hickerson had his encounter with the foreign diplomats, several American and British officials, both military and civilian, met to discuss the situation in Korea. The Americans began by saying that the communists had some 800 aircraft available to them on bases in Korea, Manchuria, other parts of the PRC, and Siberia. These aircraft represented a credible threat to the UNC in Korea, and, as a result, the

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

Americans were considering authorizing MacArthur to bomb Manchuria should the PRC mount a large-scale air attack on UN forces in Korea.¹⁸⁵

The British argued that the Americans' assessment was exaggerated, that their own intelligence suggested that many of the communist aircraft were not operational. The number of aircraft did not signify, of course. Yet the ambassador said that he could not accede to the proposal without referring the matter to his superiors. "It would go much easier for [the] government to go along with the consequences of such an action if they had participated in the decision," he said, adding that his government would probably recommend issuing a formal warning to the PRC.¹⁸⁶ Lord Arthur Tedder, an RAF officer in Washington to represent the British armed forces in discussions with the United States about mutual defense issues, "said the important criterion was whether the attack was damaging. He said that the effects of such an attack often appeared much more serious right at the time then subsequently turned out to be the fact."¹⁸⁷

Air Operations over China Conditionally Authorized

Ironically, had MacArthur not offended his superiors so egregiously, he would have received the permission to bomb Manchuria that he evidently desired so much. The administration decided that it could not wait for their allies to come to a decision about the proposed retaliatory campaign, and as a result, the JCS sent a memorandum to

¹⁸⁵ Director of the Policy Planning Staff, memorandum of conversation, 6 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 308.

¹⁸⁶ British Ambassador to the United States, précis of remarks, in Director of the Policy Planning Staff, memorandum of conversation, 6 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 308.

¹⁸⁷ Chairman of the British Joint Services Mission in Washington, précis of remarks, in Director of the Policy Planning Staff, memorandum of conversation, 6 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 308.

the Secretary of Defense on 6 April 1950 suggesting that he request the president to grant the CINCUNC authority to bomb the PRC if the UNC were attacked.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that you obtain Presidential approval now for them to send the following message to General MacArthur if and when the enemy launches from outside Korea a major air attack against our forces in the Korean area: 'You are authorized with the U. S. forces assigned to the Far East Command to attack enemy air bases and aircraft in Manchuria and the Shantung peninsula in the immediate vicinity of Weihaiwei.'¹⁸⁸

The request was granted (the White House, the State Department and Department of Defense had all agreed upon its necessity), but MacArthur never learned about it. He was relieved before the JCS could inform him.¹⁸⁹ Thus when the issue of bombing Manchuria came up during the MacArthur Hearings, Secretary of Defense Marshall had to tell the assembled senators that although the order was approved by the president, "it remains in the Office of the Chiefs of Staff to be dispatched at the instant any massive air attack is directed against us in Korea."¹⁹⁰

In the unsettled circumstances following the dismissal of MacArthur, the Americans apparently decided not to grant his successor the authority to bomb Manchuria if the PRC attacked right away. Their UN allies were still not prepared to commit to such a course of action. They wanted to be consulted before Manchuria was bombed (and of course the Americans countered by saying that such may not be possible if the situation became urgent enough); many of them also argued that the PRC be issued

¹⁸⁸ JCS, memorandum to Secretary of Defense, 6 April 1951, enclosure in Director of the Policy Planning Staff, memorandum of conversation, 6 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 309.

¹⁸⁹ Editors footnote, *FRUS* 1951-7, 309.

¹⁹⁰ Marshall, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 807.

a warning before the CINCUNC be given authority for retaliatory raids. In a meeting with Australian diplomats, Dean Rusk

pointed out that such a warning might introduce prestige considerations and actually produce the action we hope the Chinese would not take. Furthermore in issuing a warning to the Chinese Communists it would be very difficult to handle the problem presented by the fact that the Chinese are even now operating against our forces from Manchurian bases. We could not in effect condone this situation in a warning directed against large-scale as opposed to small-scale enemy air attack.¹⁹¹

In effect, the members of the UNC were declaring their willing to tolerate Chinese fighter aircraft operating in northern Korea against UNC air units but would not accept communist bombers striking against UNC ground units in Korea (see next chapter).

The Americans could not understand their allies' recalcitrance and decided that they needed to work harder to persuade the members of the UNC that a PRC air offensive was a considerable threat to coalition ground forces in Korea (the Australians, like the Koreans, could not conceive of an air attack large enough to prevent the CINCUNC from consulting with the UN).¹⁹² As General Vandenberg would observe, "We need earnest efforts to persuade our allies that an air offensive could be serious. We cannot handle this thing on a wait-and-see basis as the U.K. desires."¹⁹³

However, the negotiations proved slow, and by the first week of May, no decision had been reached. The members of the UNC were still insisting that they be notified and, preferably, consulted if the PRC should begin an air attack. All that Marshall could report during the MacArthur Hearings was that "it [was] still under

¹⁹¹ Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs), memorandum of conversation, 18 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 364-366.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 365.

¹⁹³ Vandenberg, quoted in memorandum on the Substance of Discussions at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting, 18 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 357.

discussion.”¹⁹⁴ The administration did not want to alienate its allies, but would do so if necessary. “We hope to get the concurrence of Great Britain and the other nations concerned, but we will proceed without that concurrence if it is decided we are undergoing a massive air attack.”¹⁹⁵

The Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Richard B. Russell, asked Marshall to clarify his statement. The Secretary of Defense had mentioned two separate orders, one an authorization to bomb Manchuria in the event of a Chinese attack outside of Korea, the other permission to bomb Manchuria in response to an air attack on the UNC within Korea. “The only one that actually reached the theater so far is the one which would permit the retaliation in the event of attack outside Korea?” he asked. Marshall confirmed that it was. Russell followed up. “[T]he other is still under consideration, is that correct?”¹⁹⁶

Marshall’s reply was that the administration would not allow the ongoing negotiations with the various UN members to prevent the Americans in Korea from defending themselves. “It is still under consideration by them [UN members] by us in relation to them, but it stands effective as far as our air force is concerned and the action that will be authorized the instant General Ridgway notifies us that he thinks a massive air strike is underway.” The Secretary of Defense was withholding an important fact: the CINCFE had been formally granted authorization to bomb Manchuria more than a week earlier.

¹⁹⁴ Marshall, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 808.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 809.

¹⁹⁶ Russell, question, uncensored MacArthur Hearings, microfilm, 809.

On 27 April 1951, ten days before Marshall gave the testimony cited above, General Ridgway, MacArthur's successor, had requested permission to bomb Manchuria if the Chinese initiated an air attack against his forces (whether he knew such authorization had been prepared, and had almost been granted to his predecessor, is not clear, but seems unlikely, given the language he employed in his request). His telegram began with the observation, "I am fully cognizant of the national interest in avoiding extension of hostilities in this theater, providing this can be done without jeopardizing the safety of my own forces, and without appeasement or sacrifice in principle. . . ." He then reported that "the military situation in this theater now requires that there should be delegated to me without delay authority to attack enemy air bases in Manchuria and the Shantung peninsula at the earliest moment." At the present time, he noted, the PRC's air activities were "sporadic, limited and primarily defensive in nature," but [the] PRC had been building up its air arms, making it possible for it to mount a massive air attack, which he defined as "a concerted effort by large numbers of enemy combat aircraft against our ground forces, rear bases or fleet. . . ." If the PRC were to make such an attack, Ridgway wrote, he would not have the time to notify and consult with any authorities in Washington, much less the UN. Any delay "would almost certainly decrease the effectiveness of our retaliation and increase our own immediate and ultimate losses." Ridgway also argued that he would need to conduct aerial reconnaissance operations north of the Yalu, not to provide warning of an attack before it came—the prohibition against crossing the frontier meant that the UNC had no choice

but to wait to be attacked—but “as an essential preliminary to [his] effective attacks on such bases. . . .”¹⁹⁷

Ridgway received his permission the next day. The JCS did insist on certain conditions, however. The authority they granted could not be delegated, save to his successor should he become a casualty (Ridgway had in fact anticipated this restriction in his request). Any reconnaissance flights over “the enemy air bases in Manchuria and the Shantung peninsula . . . should, if practicable, be made at high altitude and as surreptitiously as possible.” He was also required to make a good-faith effort to alert, and if at all possible, consult with the JCS before initiating his attacks.

The consequences of the action authorized may set in chain a course of events [a world war] making it of the utmost importance to have the support of other countries and the right to use facilities and bases controlled by them. This support may depend on consulting or at least informing them of the action prior to its occurrence. . . .

The Joint Chiefs would take responsibility for the last. Ridgway was to “withhold publicity until notification of allies has taken place.”¹⁹⁸

Ridgway lost no time in getting his reconnaissance aircraft into Manchuria. On 13 May 1951, they confirmed the presence of medium bombers in Manchuria. The pilot who flew the mission would later recall, “I flew an RF-80 [reconnaissance jet] out of Suwon and crossed the border into China above the Suiho reservoir while the F-86s mixed it with the Mig-15s out of Antung [Andong]. Photographed the Mukden airfields, four of them. The [bombers] were there.”¹⁹⁹ These particular aircraft were World War

¹⁹⁷ CINCFE, telegram to the JCS, 27 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 385.

¹⁹⁸ JCS, telegram to the CINCFE, 28 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 386-387.

¹⁹⁹ Jean Woodyard, quoted in Doug Gordon, *Tactical Reconnaissance in the Cold War: 1945 to Korea, Cuba, Vietnam and the Iron Curtain* (Barnsley UK: Pen & Sword Aviation, 2006), 24.

Two-era piston-engined types; when reports came that the communists had begun to operate jet-powered bombers in late 1952, deep penetrations of Chinese territory became routine.²⁰⁰ The airfields from which enemy fighters operated were also visited frequently. “We flew many missions to photograph the enemy’s Mig bases,” another pilot remembered. “At times, the targets would be the North Korean airfields at Namsi, Taechon, Sinuiju, or Kunari. Other times, the targets were Antung and Ta King Kao just north of the Yalu River on the Chinese side.”²⁰¹

These reconnaissance flights revealed that the PRC did indeed have the capability to mount a large-scale air offensive against United Nations forces in Korea. This intelligence confirmed the fears of American military and diplomatic officials, such as Dean Rusk, who had expressed his apprehensions shortly before the overflights were authorized.

We are increasingly concerned that . . . there may be [a] heavy enemy air attack. We do not have any firm indications, but there has been increased air activity reported and intelligence sources indicate build up of air strength in Manchuria including 2-engined bombers [the propeller-driven types noted above]. [B]ombers from bases north of [the] Yalu [could] endanger our troops, our ships at sea, as well as our bases in Japan. We are vulnerable to heavy air attacks especially since our troops have gotten used to fighting without fear of enemy air opposition. Our ports are generally unprotected except for friendly aircraft. If in the opening phase of an enemy attack, there [should] be heavy air offensive, [the] enemy [could] do us considerable damage.

However, capabilities do not equate intentions. The Chinese never initiated the air attacks the Americans and their UN allies feared so greatly. “From a military point of view,” Rusk noted, “it is perhaps to our advantage to fight battle in Korea without

²⁰⁰ Clyde Voss, quoted in *Ibid.*, 38; Mele Vojdovich, quoted in *Ibid.*, 38-39.

²⁰¹ Norman Duquette (pilot), quoted in *Ibid.*, 24.

having to face attacks on our troops and ships from Chinese and Russian planes. Other side presumably was equally content not to have their bases and installations on Chinese territory attacked by our bombers.”²⁰²

Mutual Sanctuary

This “mutual sanctuary” did not go unremarked. While the administration’s political opponents focused on the protections the communists seemed to enjoy, the JCS, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense were grateful that the communists, too, seemed to have imposed restrictions on their actions. During the MacArthur Hearings, Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire asked General Bradley, “Do you think it is fair to ask American troops to go into battle when the enemy has a complete sanctuary across the river and the only sanctuary the American troops would have would be in the ocean, the other way?”²⁰³ The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff responded by saying,

Well, I don’t admit that they don’t have any other sanctuary actually. Right now we are bombing their troop concentrations over about a 200-mile line of communications, we are bombing their troops, we are bombing any airfields that occur in North Korea. They are not bombing our ports and supply installations, and they are not bombing out troops. So that, in a way, we have a sanctuary, too, under the conditions under which we are fighting.²⁰⁴

Bradley had another opportunity to discuss the subject when responding to a comment by Senator Hickenlooper. He observed that the UNC was currently restricting its

²⁰² Dean Rusk, précis of remarks, in Secretary of State, telegram to the United States Mission at the United Nations, 3 April 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 291-292.

²⁰³ Styles Bridges, question, MacArthur Hearings, 751.

²⁰⁴ Bradley, testimony, *Ibid.*, 751.

operations to the area between the battle line and the Yalu, “and we think that we should not extend it beyond that for the time being, because we are fighting under rather favorable rules for ourselves, too, because so far they have not attacked our air bases, our port at Pusan, they have not attacked our air bases in Japan.” Both sides, apparently, wanted to keep the war confined. “In other words, they are fighting in Korea and we are fighting in Korea.”²⁰⁵

Some of the senators, at least, understood how fortunate the UNC was because the Chinese communists did not elect to expand the war. Both Richard B. Russell and Guy M. Gillette (Iowa) made references to the issue, the former when speaking to General Barr and the latter when questioning Secretary of Defense Marshall.²⁰⁶ Senator Morse brought it up when questioning MacArthur, asking the former CINCUNC to clarify remarks he had made during his earlier testimony.

[Y]ou testified that to date they [the Chinese communists] have not carried on any air attacks, to any great degree, on our own ground forces in South Korea, nor any attacks at all on our Navy, or on Japan. Do you think that the moment we started bombing in Manchuria, that we would bring an end to the freedom from bombing of what has been referred to as the United States sanctuaries in South Korea and Japan, and in the form of the United States Navy?²⁰⁷

MacArthur dismissed the idea. “I don’t believe that Red China has the potential to bomb any of those places. I don’t believe she has got the air or the navy to make any such threat. The Soviets, as I have said, would be a much more formidable enemy along

²⁰⁵ Bradley, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 2435-2436.

²⁰⁶ Guy M. Gillette and George C. Marshall, question-and answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 1756; Richard B. Russell and David G. Barr, question-and answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 7887-7888.

²⁰⁷ Morse, question, MacArthur Hearings, 264.

those lines.”²⁰⁸ As was discussed above, MacArthur did not think that the USSR would enter the conflict, either.

The mutual sanctuary concept presented a dilemma to American policy makers. An NSC document prepared in late 1951 noted that the communist air forces had grown large that if they were be unleashed in a large and sudden assault that they could inflict considerable damage on the poorly defended UN forces and installations in Korea, Japan, and at sea.

[T]he choice [is] whether to leave the initiative to the Communists to bomb and attack our air bases—to try to end our air sanctuary; or whether to take anticipatory and preventive action to end their sanctuary by destroying Communists planes on the ground in Manchuria and North China before they actually attack . . .

The UNC could eliminate the threat by preemptory bombing raids against the communists’ airfields. However, doing so might cause a retaliatory strike against the UNC’s fragile logistics lines. It could even bring the Soviets into the war, or lead them to initiate a general world war. Additionally, the United States would have difficulty convincing its allies to contribute air units to such a campaign; it did not have the resources to do so all by itself. Yet if the UNC did not act to neutralize the threat, it was vulnerable to air attack at a time of the communists’ choosing. “Success or failure in ending the respective air sanctuaries in Korea or in Manchuria may lie with the air force that strikes first.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ MacArthur, testimony, *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁰⁹ NSC Staff, “United States Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea”: Annex to “Statement of Policy prepared by the National Security Council on United States Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea”: enclosed in Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, memorandum to the National Security Council, 20 December 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 1395.

The document's authors concluded by observing that "both the Soviet side and the free world find advantage in not trying at this time to reach their respective maximum objectives in Korea by force." An escalation of the fighting would jeopardize the armistice negotiations then underway. "Since the Communists appear to want a cessation of hostilities . . . it is probably a safe assumption that the enemy will continue to prefer to retain his own air sanctuary."²¹⁰ Despite the difficulties in obtaining one, a ceasefire was preferable to the continuation of or an expansion of hostilities.

The American public would have learned about the concept of mutual sanctuaries from the popular press, not the MacArthur Hearings—most of the testimony about the UN's safe havens was suppressed because it exposed security concerns (administration officials did not want the communists to know how vulnerable they thought the UNC was to air attack).²¹¹ Walter Lippman, Hanson W. Baldwin, and Stewart Alsop all discussed it in their columns.²¹² Yet most of the population of the United States chose to be outraged at the enemy's "privileged sanctuary" rather than be relieved by safety

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ "Privileged Sanctuary," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 13 April 1951, 20; "Limited War," *The Washington Post*, 13 April 1951, 20; "The Issue is now Joined," *The Hartford Courant*, 20 April 1951, 18; "Test in Korea," *The Washington Post*, 25 April 1951, 14; "With Fortitude and Confidence," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 April 1951, 20; A.M. Rosenthal, "U.S. to Hit Manchuria Bases if Reds Bomb Troops heavily," *The New York Times*, 26 April 1951, 1; "North to the Yalu Once Again?," *The Hartford Courant*, 14 June 1951, 14.

²¹² Walter Lippman, "Today and Tomorrow: Korean Prospects," *The Washington Post*, 15 February 1951, 15; Stewart Alsop, "Was MacArthur Right? Should U.S. go to War with China, in Alliance with Chiang Kai-Shek? The General Believes the Way to Fight a War is to Try to Win it by All Possible Means: BUT the Ruhr Valley is more important than the Yangtze Valley: AND the Real Source of Communist Power is Moscow, not Peiping," *The Boston Globe*, 11 April 1951, 1; Stewart Alsop, "Matter of Fact: Views of a Man who was Right," *The Washington Post*, 6 May 1951, B5; Hanson W. Baldwin, "Chinese are Repelled but Battle isn't Over: Enemy in Korea Shown to be Unable to Carry on a Sustained Offensive," *The New York Times*, 6 May 1951, E5.

(albeit artificial) of American and UN forces²¹³ The month after MacArthur was dismissed, a public opinion survey asked Americans, “Do you think United States airplanes should or should not cross the Korean border and bomb communist supply bases in Manchuria?” Fifty-four percent of respondents favored the idea; only thirty percent opposed it (and sixteen percent responded that they did not know). At the same time, polltakers asked if bombing the bases inside China, combined with helping Chiang Kai-Shek fight the communists, would end the fighting or lead to “an even worse war.” Thirty-five percent said it would end the conflict; forty-six percent thought it would cause the war to escalate (the remainder told the polltakers did not know).²¹⁴ A follow-up survey in three months later asked the first question again. The numbers remained virtually unchanged (“bomb” dropped one percentage point, which “do not know” gained).²¹⁵

The next June, as the Korean War entered its second year, Americans were once again asked whether American aircraft should bomb the supply depots in Manchuria. No doubt wearied and frustrated by the stalemate, they overwhelmingly favored attacking the PRC (sixty-one percent for, twenty-eight percent against, and eleven percent not knowing). Respondents were also asked what the United States should do if the ongoing armistice talks broke down. Their choices were withdraw, stay in Korea

²¹³ The phrase “privileged sanctuary” first appeared in a UN report MacArthur filed shortly after the PRC entered the war. Douglas MacArthur, UN communiqué on Intervention, 6 November 1950; printed with that title in *Department of State Bulletin*, 13 November 1950, 763.

²¹⁴ Foreign Affairs Survey, May 1951; iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html, accessed 17 March 2012.

²¹⁵ Foreign Affairs Survey, Aug, 1951; iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html, accessed 17 March 2012.

and hold the line, and attack the Chinese. Only twenty-one percent favored leaving Korea. Twenty-nine percent preferred maintaining the present policy. Nearly half, forty-four percent, wanted to bomb the PRC (only seven percent admitted not knowing what to do). A related question explored attitudes towards the ongoing armistice talks and the UN. “Suppose the truce talks break down completely. Should the United States go ahead and attack the Chinese communists, even if our allies in the United Nations are not willing to join us?” Again, nearly half were in favor of the proposal: forty-eight percent said yes, forty-three percent said no, leaving just nine percent who said they did not know.²¹⁶

American aircrew shared their countrymen’s frustrations. They wanted to strike back at the Chinese communists who enjoyed an undeserved immunity from attack. As one airman expressed in his memoirs, “Every man who flew in Korea supported general MacArthur and disagreed with President Truman when he fired the general because the general wanted to bomb Manchuria. On reflection, Truman was probably right, but then he wasn’t in an airplane at twenty thousand feet being shot at.”²¹⁷

In the spring of 1951, when rumors that General MacArthur had been authorized to bomb north of the Yalu began circulating, the commander of the 3rd Bomber Wing called a briefing to say that his unit would soon be bombing the Chinese mainland. One airman who was present recalled the unit’s reaction: “We shouted, we cheered, we

²¹⁶ Foreign Affairs Survey, June 1952; iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html, accessed 17 March 2012.

²¹⁷ Gushee, *52-Charlie*, 125.

whistled, we yelled and screamed. . . . Next to being told we were being rotated home, this was the best news we could have received.”²¹⁸

But there was no follow-up. Even when MacArthur’s successor was indeed granted permission to bomb Manchuria (albeit conditionally), the American aircrews who would have conducted the bombing were never informed of the decision. They just had to keep fighting.

The bomber crews attacking targets in North Korea flew high enough that they could observe installations in communist China. As one recalled later, “We could see the Manchurian air bases on the other side of the border (the Yalu River). We could see the MiGs [jet-powered communist interceptors] taking off.”²¹⁹ But they were never allowed to bomb the airfields on which the enemy’s fighters were based; they could only wait for the interceptors to engage and hope that their own escort fighters could protect them. But the American fighter pilots were operating under limitations of their own.

²¹⁸ Anderson, “*Involuntary*,” 133.

²¹⁹ Gene Fisher, quoted in Robert F. Dorr, *B-29 Superfortress Units of the Korean War* (Oxford UK: Osprey, 2003), 22.

CHAPTER XI

SANCTUARY: “HOT PURSUIT” AND THE UNC’S AIR WAR WITH CHINA

The Truman administration’s decision to restrict UNC air operations in the Korean War to the Korean peninsula, even after the People’s Republic of China entered the conflict, angered many Americans, who argued that American soldiers were being sacrificed needlessly because the Chinese could assemble their troops unmolested. These losses could be prevented, they argued, if American air power were allowed to venture north of the Yalu, where it could disrupt or destroy the Chinese forces before they entered the combat area in Korea. They also demanded that American fighter aircraft be permitted to enter China, rather than wait for Chinese aircraft to enter Korea, which they did only under conditions favorable to themselves. The administrations responded to the criticism by noting that the Chinese, too, were acting under restraint, and that American rear areas were just as vulnerable to Chinese air strikes as the Chinese support facilities were to American air attacks.

Hot Pursuit in International and Domestic Law

In the late spring of 1951, The *Los Angeles Times* published a letter from a citizen who reported that he had recently seen a member of the Burbank city police force chasing after a red sedan, the driver of which had apparently violated one of the suburb’s traffic ordinances a short time earlier. The sedan had reached the corner of Victory and Alameda, where, the letter writer noted, “Burbank ends . . . and Los Angeles begins.

Yet, the magic word ‘border’ had no effect on Burbank’s finest—he crossed it.” The driver of the sedan pulled over soon after, receiving a ticket and a lecture.

However, it was the Korean police action, not the California policeman’s action, that inspired the citizen to write to the *Times*. “My only thought,” he related, “was, ‘It is just like . . . the Truman vs. MacArthur debate.’” One of the most contentious issues discussed during the MacArthur Hearings, which had begun a few weeks before the letter appeared, was the policy prohibiting UNC aircraft from engaging in “hot pursuit,” chasing communist aircraft engaged in Korea across the Yalu River into Manchurian airspace. “Under . . . international law, as interpreted by the United Nations and our own administration,” the *Times*’ correspondent declared, “the red sedan should have found sanctuary in Los Angeles. That nasty policeman should be court-martialed. . . .” The officer had done nothing improper, insisted the writer. “In ‘hot pursuit,’” he concluded, “a policeman may cross the border and arrest a lawbreaker.”¹

The letter writer was mistaken, however. The incident he witnessed in California was *not* “just like” the situation in Korea. His letter reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the doctrine of hot pursuit. Unfortunately, he was not alone in his error. Many Americans, including public officials, military and naval officers, and influential public opinion makers, shared his confusion, which contributed to the frustration Americans experienced during the Korean War.

This widespread confusion was understandable. Hot pursuit in the context of the Korean War was a novelty, the product of an equally new phenomenon, limited proxy

¹ Hal Garfield, “In ‘Hot Pursuit’” (letter to the editor), *The Los Angeles Times*, 20 May 1951, B4.

war. Being new, it did not have a name. It did, however, bear a superficial resemblance to an existing legal doctrine called “hot pursuit.” As a result, the old name became associated with the new concept, leading many to conflate the two.² That the phrase was not being used properly was recognized by many, who in the first month or so of its appearance employed it only in quotation marks.³ But by the time of the MacArthur Hearings it had become the accepted term, and was generally not qualified by the use any special distinguishing punctuation in the press or government documents.

The problem was that most Americans believed that they knew what hot pursuit in its original sense was. Although General Bradley defined hot pursuit in its Korean context early on during the MacArthur Hearings, only one other witness, Admiral Sherman, offered a definition of the term’s origin—and he got it wrong in significant respects.⁴ The “Individual Views” document issued by twelve Republican senators after the hearings (see Chapter VII) included a more accurate definition of the established

² The provenance of the term in the context of the Korean War is obscure. One of its earliest appearances in the American press was 29 November 1950. A newspaper article published that day attributes it to MacArthur “a week ago,” but the State Department had been using it in internal documents for almost three weeks by that time. Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, memorandum to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 10 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1125; Deputy Director of the Office of Northeastern Asian Affairs, memorandum of conversation, 16 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1161; Ferdinand Kuhn, “Nations Patch Rifts in Anger at Wu’s Tirade: Ominous Talk appears to Doom Negotiations; U.N. Stand Stiffened,” *The Washington Post*, 29 November 1950, 1; John G. Norris, “U. N. Seen Able to Hold Line in Korea: Estimate is Based on U. S. Air Superiority in Air and on Sea,” *The Washington Post*, 29 November 1950, 1.

³ Examples of the use of the term in quotations marks include the works cited in the note above. State Department documents sent by cable did not use the term “hot pursuit” in quotation marks. Telegrams generally used only the basic forms of punctuation. Secretary of State, telegram to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, 13 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7 1145; Ambassador to Canada, telegram to Secretary of State, 14 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1156; Ambassador to Canada, telegram to Secretary of State, 15 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1159).

⁴ Omar Bradley, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 887; Forrest P. Sherman, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1597. Admiral Sherman defined hot pursuit as “a term which comes from practice of naval blockade. When a blockade runner runs a blockade, you can chase him as long as you are engaged in hot pursuit.” However, blockades are acts of war and are conducted by military organizations, not law enforcement agencies, and thus are governed by a portion of international law different from that regulating hot pursuit.

legal doctrine but attempted to draw an analogy between it and the situation in Korea that breaks down on several important points.⁵

The confusion surrounding hot pursuit warrants a brief examination of the term and its various meanings. The doctrine of hot pursuit is part of the corpus of international law, specifically that portion addressing territorial and international waters. The concept of freedom of the seas allows a ship registered in one nation to sail in the waters claimed by another state. When so doing, it and its crew must also abide by the laws of the nation through which it is traveling. The jurists who framed this law understood that it was possible for a ship or its crew to violate its host country's laws and, if close enough to a maritime frontier, escape to the high seas (international waters), where those laws do not apply. The doctrine of hot pursuit allows the law enforcement agencies of the offended nation to follow that ship even if it had reached international waters. But they must act quickly: to be considered "hot," the pursuit must be "immediate and uninterrupted."⁶

The marine right of hot pursuit has no terrestrial analogue, as there are no land areas that are not under the jurisdiction of one political authority or another. Land-based law enforcement agencies do not have the right to pursue suspected criminals from one sovereignty into another except when allowed by treaty or other compact.⁷ It is this

⁵ *Individual Views*, 23. See also note 12, this chapter. No doubt the use of the term "police action" to describe the Korean War contributed to the confusion.

⁶ Robert C. Reuland, "The Customary Right of Hot Pursuit onto the High Seas: Annotations to Article 111 of the Law of the Sea Convention," *Virginia Journal of International Law* 33 (1993), 580.

⁷ In an 1888 incident, American lawmen pursuing train robbers from Arizona into Mexico were arrested by Mexican authorities. The United States and Mexico had a treaty agreement allowing the armies of both nations the right to enter each others' territory in the pursuit of marauding Indians, but it

aspect of hot pursuit with which most Americans are familiar, thanks to the popularity of the police and western genres in literature and drama. Frustrated pursuits are a common plot device in film, books, short stories, and television programs. It creates dramatic tension when the protagonists must give up a chase when their quarry crosses “the border” into a jurisdiction in which they have no legal authority.⁸

These episodes, while often exaggerated for artistic purposes, are not just the products of writers’ imaginations. Many real-life criminals have escaped justice, at least for a time, by crossing a conveniently near-by border. The bank robbers of the Depression-era United States are some of the best-known examples. They would commit their crimes in one state and escape to another. In large part to prevent such abuses, Congress made such crimes federal offenses in 1934 and thus allowed federal law enforcement personnel to arrest violators wherever they were in the country.⁹ At the same time, the idea that the various states adopt acts granting law enforcement officers from other states permission to enter their jurisdiction when chasing criminals gained popularity (most eventually did so, although the process took decades).¹⁰

was unclear if the treaty permitted the pursuit of criminals. “Another Row with Mexico: United States Marshals Arrested while Pursuing Train Robbers,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 11 March 1888, 11.

⁸ For a more detailed examination of this dramatic and literary trope, including many examples, see “Run for the Border,” <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/RunForTheBorder>, accessed 28 October 2012.

⁹ The American federal system is predicated upon the sovereignty of the several states, which created the national union as a voluntary association. Although they ceded certain sovereign privileges to the national government when entering into the federation (among them, the right to conduct international diplomacy and to organize their own postal systems), the states retained their right to create and manage their own law enforcement agencies. This arrangement was often taken advantage of by criminals.

¹⁰ Unidentified “Staff Correspondent,” “Laws Drafted to Speed Drive against Crime,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 3 December 1935, 2.

It may be that the California writer had these types of laws in mind when he wrote his letter.¹¹ So might the twelve senators who produced the “Individual Views” document, as evidenced by their observation

[t]he timidity with which the United States exercised command [in Korea] is illustrated by the failure to apply the doctrine of ‘hot pursuit.’ This is a doctrine of criminal law which enables a peace officer to pursue a fleeing felon outside the area of his jurisdiction when he is close behind the culprit.

They, like the *Times* correspondent, perceived a connection between the situation in Korea and the legal doctrine. “The privileged sanctuary of Manchuria is comparable to the area outside the policeman’s jurisdiction,” they declared.¹²

However, neither the doctrine of hot pursuit at sea nor the doctrine of hot pursuit on land applied in Korea, despite the apparent similarities between the concepts. One reason why the situations were different was that the surface (land and sea) manifestations of hot pursuit are peacetime activities (although the legal status of the war in Korea was ambiguous). A second is that hot pursuit is practiced by law enforcement agencies, not military and naval organizations. Another is that hot pursuit in its traditional forms is reserved for land and sea, not for the air. Hot pursuit involving aircraft conflicts with another legal doctrine, the right of a nation to control its own airspace.

¹¹ The incident of the red sedan probably entails a different legal concept. In most American states municipal peace officers are warranted by the state, meaning that they are allowed—indeed, obligated—to enforce all state laws—criminal, traffic, and others—anywhere within that state.

¹² *Individual Views*, 3583.

National Rights to Secure Airspace

The traditional conventions of hot pursuit described above provided a *modus vivendi* for the world's powers and their political subdivisions for centuries. The invention of the airplane, however, disturbed this comfortable equilibrium. As John Cobb Cooper, an airline executive and the founder of the Institute of Air & Space Law at McGill University, observed,

Until nations had the ability to fly, every type of transport in history was on the surface, either on land or on water. Our whole society has been built on the basis of surface communications between peoples. . . . Our whole political boundary system is based on surface boundaries, some natural, some artificial. . . . [H]ow far the right of a nation to fly in the airspace must be controlled is the question which the world must answer.¹³

Was air travel to be governed by laws modeled after the customs of the sea, which permitted the right of transit in foreign territorial waters, or the law of nations, which held that travel on land could take place only at the pleasure of the local sovereign?

The first international conference on air law, held in Paris in 1910, ended without promulgating a doctrine. The next took place in 1919, also in Paris (it was originally an ancillary to the negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles).¹⁴ The world had changed significantly in the intervening nine years. World War One had demonstrated the reach and speed of the airplane. In the absence of international law defining the rights of air

¹³ John C. Cooper, *The Right To Fly: A Study in Air Power* (New York: Henry Holt, 1947), 7-8. After establishing himself as an authority on international air law, Cooper became one of the first legal authorities to address issues of space law, publishing his first article on the subject in 1951. He also served on the Finletter Commission, which, as was discussed in an earlier chapter, produced the report titled *Survival in the Air Age* in 1947. His expertise on topics of air law came from his lengthy tenure as an executive of Pan American Airlines, a job he got because his brother, Merian C. Cooper—best known as the director and producer of the film *King Kong*—was one of the company's founders.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-36.

passage, nations had to develop air policies on their own during the conflict. One of the most significant, adopted independently by almost all states, both belligerent and neutral, was that they had the right to control their sovereign airspace. The warring powers, of course, exerted considerable effort to defend themselves against intruders in the air, but so did neutral nations. Without consultation with one another,

[t]he Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Spain and Italy, Roumania, Bulgaria, and China . . . showed by words or acts that they adhered to the principle of prohibition of belligerent air entry, coupled with the obligation of the neutral State to intern any aircraft and airmen effecting entry in face of such of prohibition.¹⁵

They thus indicated that the traditions of the sea, which held that belligerent warships were allowed to enter neutral waters (provided that they refrained from acts of war) and to visit neutral ports (but for no more than twenty-four hours), did not apply to aircraft, civilian or military.¹⁶ The belligerents did not protest this development.¹⁷ “That practice has created a rule of international law which must be regarded as being as firmly established as it is possible for such a rule to be,” wrote British air force officer J. M. Spaight, an authority on war rights under international law.¹⁸

As a result of the World War One experience, the right of all nations to control their airspace in both war and peace was formally codified by the 1919 Paris convention. Article 1 stated that “every Power has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the air

¹⁵ Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights*, 420.

¹⁶ “Convention on Maritime Neutrality,” Section II, Articles 3-9, *The American Journal of International Law* 22, no. 3 (1928), Supplement: Official Documents, 152-154. One of the more interesting features of international law regarding the rights and responsibilities of belligerents visiting neutral ports was that if the warships of two opponents were visiting the same port, the one that left last would have to wait a full day after the one that departed first.

¹⁷ Oliver J. Lissitzyn, “The Treatment of Aerial Intruders in Recent Practice and International Law,” *The American Journal of International Law* 47, no. 4 (1953), 563.

¹⁸ Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights*, 420.

space above its territory . . . understood as including the national territory, both that of the mother country and of the colonies, and the territorial waters adjacent thereto.”¹⁹

Although nations were expected to accord the freedom of innocent passage to the aircraft of other states (Article 2), they had the right to forbid overflights of certain portions of their territories in both peace and war (Article 3 and its amendments).²⁰

During the interwar period, nations took a relaxed approach to the problems of intrusive overflights by foreign aircraft, particularly in Europe, where countries are relatively small and bad weather common.²¹ There were numerous reasons why an airplane might stray across a frontier, most of which were offered little threat to the state over which they trespassed. Such flights

may be deliberate and with hostile or illicit intentions such as attack, reconnaissance, aid to subversive activities, smuggling, or calculated defiance of the territorial sovereign. They may be deliberate but with essentially harmless intentions such as shortening a flight or avoiding bad weather. They may be necessitated by distress or caused by mistakes.²²

The advances in aviation and weapons technology during World War Two, however, meant that after 1945, nations could not afford to be as forgiving of aerial intrusions, purposeful or not, as they had been prior to 1939. “The increasing speeds of aircraft and the tremendous destructive power of new atomic and other weapons, as well as the memory of Pearl Harbor,” wrote a legal authority in 1953, “make it impossible to

¹⁹ Convention Relating to the Regulation of Aerial Navigation, Chapter I, Article 1, in Cooper, *Right to Fly*, 291-292.

²⁰ Convention Relating to the Regulation of Aerial Navigation, Chapter I, Articles 2 and 3, printed in Cooper, *Right to Fly*, 291-292.

²¹ Lissitzyn, “The Treatment of Aerial Intruders,” 565-567.

²² *Ibid.*, 559-560.

impose any rigid restrictions upon the freedom of a state to guard itself against sudden attack or hostile reconnaissance.”²³

Legal Status of the Korean War and the Doctrine of Hot Pursuit

What was discussed during the MacArthur Hearings was not hot pursuit at all, from a legal perspective. The doctrine of hot pursuit does not apply in wartime. When nations are engaged in hostilities with one another, they are no longer bound to observe or respect the boundaries of the states with which they are warring. Although they must still heed the rights of neutrals, they are legally permitted to conduct operations anywhere in their foe’s territories (if they can). This doctrine has long been accepted as one of the laws and customs of international warfare, and was not changed substantially even after the invention of the airplane.²⁴

A formal state of war may not have existed between the PRC and any of the various members of the United Nations, but few would argue that the two nations were neutral to each other. “I don’t see how it’s possible that Communist China could be more at war with us than she is today,” General MacArthur told senators during the investigation into his dismissal.²⁵ However, the ambiguous legal status of the conflict

²³ Ibid., 586.

²⁴ The introduction of the airplane did inspire a number of attempts on the part international legal authorities to ban certain types of bombing—Article 25 of the 1907 Land Warfare Rules of the Hague famously prohibits “[t]he attack or bombardment, by any means whatever, of undefended towns, villages, dwellings or buildings”—but no one ever seriously suggested that a nation be prohibited from using its aircraft on the far side of a frontier. It was a given that aircraft would be used against a nation’s war industries if possible. The primary issue associated with this understanding was the changing definition of “civilian”—war-workers were legitimate targets but other noncombatants were still supposed to be immune from attack. Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights*, 41-62.

²⁵ Douglas MacArthur, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 69.

complicated interpretations of belligerent and neutral rights. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin observed that Korea was “an unacknowledged war, [in which] we endure all the disadvantages of war without any of the advantages. We are powerless to exercise the political or military initiatives customary to a belligerent.”²⁶ The debate about hot pursuit was never about whether it was legally permissible for UNC aircraft to enter the PRC at any time, but whether doing so would have provoked the Chinese communists to widen the war.

The debate about hot pursuit in Korea began in early November 1950 when the communist Chinese entered the conflict (during the MacArthur Hearings, MacArthur claimed that it had predated the Chinese intervention, but given how small the North Korean air force was, he seems to be mistaken about, or at least misremembering, the timing of events).²⁷ At the time, the UNC was pushing into the DPRK and was approaching the Yalu. This northern movement was facilitated by the almost total air superiority the UNC enjoyed; the air force of North Korea, never very large, had been nearly eradicated, permitting UNC aircraft to conduct operations at will anywhere on the Korean peninsula.

²⁶ 82 Cong. Rec. S6556-6557 (daily ed. 14 June 1951) (statement by Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy).

²⁷ Senator Richard B. Russell asked the general if anyone had discussed blockading or bombing the People's Republic of China prior to the intervention. MacArthur replied, “I don't entirely recall, Senator, except the question of ‘hot pursuit,’ I know that the Air wished from the very beginning to pursue an attacking enemy plane to the death, whether it was over the border line or not.” When the DPRK was the sole enemy no one thought much of action against the PRC.

The senator followed up by asking, “Well, the North Koreans did not have enough air to make that really a vital question; did it, pursuit?” MacArthur agreed. Russell then commented, “It did not really become an issue until after the Chinese intervened,” to which the general responded, “Correct; but the question was raised at the very beginning, whether we could pursue an attacking plane to the conclusion in the air fight.” Richard B. Russell and Douglas MacArthur, question-and-answer exchange, MacArthur Hearings, 12.

On 2 November 1950, General Earl E. Partridge, commander of the Fifth Air Force, notified his superior, General George E. Stratemeyer (CO of the FEAF), that what was left of the North Korean air force was fleeing into the PRC, where it, safe from UNC air operations by virtue of the prohibition against crossing the Yalu, could presumably recover its strength. He then applied for permission for his air units to follow enemy aircraft into Manchuria. Stratemeyer referred the problem to the CINCUNC in a letter written the next day.

Hostile aircraft have been seen flying from Korean territory across border into Manchuria. Current directives prohibit UN aircraft from continuing pursuit of such enemy aircraft beyond the border. . . . It is requested that clearance be obtained for UN aircraft to pursue enemy aircraft across the UN border to destroy them in the air or on the ground and to determine the location of their bases.

Stratemeyer and MacArthur had a chance to discuss the issue face-to-face later that same day. The latter shared his suspicion that the increased activity along the Yalu was an indication of the PRC's intention to intervene. However, as Stratemeyer recorded in his diary, "He indicated that . . . it was not his intention to refer this matter to higher authority until more information was received that the Chinese Communists were actually engaged in strength against our forces in Korea. His words were: 'I want to muddle over this a bit longer.'"²⁸

²⁸ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 3 November 50, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 253. The general's use of the word "muddle" instead of "mull" is suggestive.

The Communist Air Forces

As noted in an earlier chapter, the Chinese communists had decided to enter the war months before, but had been delayed for various reasons. One was that the PRC, like the North Koreans, had only a small air force. As the Chinese understood that air power was an essential part of twentieth-century warfare, they had to make arrangements to create or acquire an air arm. They asked their Soviet sponsors for assistance, and the Soviets obliged their request, providing modern jet fighters, instructors, and technical advisors (which they also did for the North Koreans). However, it would take some time for the People's Air Force, as the PRC styled its air arm, to learn how to use its new equipment. The Soviets promised the Chinese that they would provide air support for the PRC's armies in Korea, and in November 1950 transferred two air force divisions to Manchuria (a third arrived in March 1951).²⁹ It was these units—Soviet aircraft flown by Soviet pilots (most of them experienced World War Two veterans)—that had the responsibility of defending northern Korea from UNC air attack until the Chinese and North Korean air service could be trained and equipped.³⁰ Even after the Asian communist air forces were deemed ready for combat, the Soviet squadrons remained in the PRC.

²⁹ Kathryn Weathersby, "Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1950-1953: New Evidence from Russian Archives," Working Paper no. 8, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 32; http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Working_Paper_8.pdf, accessed 14 April 2012; Council of Ministers USSR, "The Question of the War Ministry USSR," October 1950, printed in Kathryn Weathersby, "'Should We Fear This?' Stalin and the Danger of War with America," Working Paper no. 39, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 23-26; <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ACFAEF.pdf>, accessed 14 April 2012.

³⁰ And thus American and Soviet units engaged each other during the Cold War in circumstances other than the periodic reconnaissance shootdowns described elsewhere in this work.

All of the communists' air units—Soviet, Chinese, and North Korean—were eventually equipped with the Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-15 jet fighter (the USSR immediately; the PRC late in 1951; the DPRK in 1952). Its performance came as a shock and surprise to the western airmen who first encountered it in Korea, who had taken for granted that they flew the most advanced aircraft in the world. Secretary of the Air Force Thomas K. Finletter called its appearance “an object lesson which should teach us not to be too complacent about the quality of our machines.”³¹ It had a better top speed and service ceiling, and was more agile, than any airplane the UNC operated in Korea in the fall of 1950—even the jet types. The Soviet air industry was not supposed to be capable of producing such an advanced design.³² The MiG-15 developed such a powerful reputation that the region of northwest Korea where they usually operated, the area between the Yalu and the Chong'chon Rivers, became known as “MiG Alley.”³³

³¹ Thomas K. Finletter, statement, *Department of the Air Force Appropriations for 1953: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives*, 82nd Congress, 1952, 5. Hereafter referred to as “Air Force Appropriations 1953.”

³² *Ibid.*, 6; D. N. Yates, statement, *Ibid.*, 284; Hoyt S. Vandenberg, statement, *Department of the Air Force Appropriations for 1954: Hearings on HR 5969, before the Subcommittee of the Committee of Appropriations, House of Representatives*, 83rd Congress, 1953, 3-4. Hereafter referred to as “Air Force Appropriations 1954.”

³³ Indeed, the mystique surrounding the new Soviet fighter proved so great that that the Americans made several attempts to recover the wreckage of downed MiG-15. Although successful, technical intelligence could learn little from these badly damaged machines and consequently decided that an intact MiG-15 was needed. To this end, Operation “Moolah” was launched. The USAF dropped thousands of pamphlets written in Russian, Chinese, and Korean over North Korea offering a reward of \$50,000 (later increased to \$100,000) to the first communist pilot to deliver a flyable MiG-15 to UN forces. “The Far East Command is offering its help to all brave pilots who desire to free themselves and want to lead a better, honorable life.” Headquarters, United States Air Forces, Far East, Psychological Warfare Section, memorandum (subject: Leaflet), undated; collection of the author.

On 16 September 1953 (several months after the peace accords that ended the conflict were signed) a North Korean pilot, Lieutenant Kim-Suk No (also known as Kum-Suk No and Kenneth Rowe), flew his MiG-15 to an American air base in South Korea. Although he claimed not to be aware of the

What gave the MiG-15 its superior performance was its swept-back wing design. Wing sweep allows an airplane to operate at higher speeds than an otherwise similar straight-winged aircraft, a category that includes all of the jet types the UNC operated in Korea at the time of the Chinese intervention.³⁴ Fortunately, the Americans also had a fighter with swept-back wings, the North American F-86 Sabre. They had purposely kept it out of Korea because the jets they operated in the theatre were more than capable of defeating the World War Two-era piston-engined (“conventional”) aircraft flown by the DPRK.³⁵ United Nations forces enjoyed almost complete air superiority over the Korean peninsula during the summer and fall of 1950, having eliminated the DPRK’s air force (equipped with propeller-driven World War Two-era Soviet aircraft) quickly. The introduction of the MiG-15 threatened this control, compelling the Americans to transfer a wing (four squadrons) of F-86s to Korea.³⁶ The F-86 and Mig-15 enjoyed comparable performances, but the Sabres were in short supply and remained so throughout the

reward, he was paid anyway. For his story, see Kim-Suk No, *A Mig-15 to Freedom* (Jefferson NC: McFarland, 1996).

³⁴ A swept-winged airplane can fly faster and is more stable than a straight-winged airplane because the wing sweep delays the onset of compressibility, the buildup of aerodynamic forces on an airplane’s structure as it approaches the speed of sound. Even if the airplane itself is subsonic, local airflow over the wing can exceed Mach one, leading to control and stability problems. Unable to “get out of the way” of the airplane quickly enough, the air compresses (hence the name), making it more difficult for the aircraft to force its way through it and increasing the resistance on the ailerons, elevators, and rudder, with the result that they become difficult to manipulate. Bill Gunston, *Jane’s Aerospace Dictionary* (London: Jane’s, 1980), s. v. “compressibility,” “compressibility effects”: J. E. Barfoot, “Design of Sweptback Wings.” *Aero Digest*, June 1947, 55.

³⁵ As noted in the introduction, most writers addressing the place of the Korean War in the history of aerial warfare focus on technological issues. An indication of how far-reaching this transition was the use of the word “conventional,” which at the time was applied to *three* different aspects of the technology of aerial warfare. The most common was the use of “conventional” to mean a propeller-driven airplane, as contrasted with a jet-powered aircraft. However, the term was also used to identify aircraft with the traditional “taildragger” landing gear configuration (two-main-landing-gears-and-a-tailwheel), which had been the standard layout for aircraft since World War One but was being replaced by the “tricycle” configuration (a nosewheel and two main landing gears). Although most jet types had tricycle landing gear, a large number of propeller-driven aircraft were also being so equipped as well in the late 1940s. The last was the use of “conventional” to refer to high-explosive bombs, as opposed to atomic weapons.

³⁶ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 8 November 1950, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 267-268.

conflict. A JCS document prepared in late 1951 acknowledged that “[a]ugmentation [of] F-86 strength [in the Far East] to give . . . anything approaching parity with enemy in his present fighter-interceptor strength is not feasible.”³⁷ To make up the shortfall, the United States even had to buy Sabres manufactured in Canada.³⁸

The UNC was thus outnumbered by the “communist hordes” in the air as well as on the ground, often by a substantial margin.³⁹ The numerical advantage the PRC enjoyed on the ground forced the UNC to lose ground throughout the peninsula. In an attempt to retard the flow of men and equipment across the Yalu, MacArthur issued his instruction to bomb the Yalu bridges On 5 November 1950 (as was related in Chapter X). The Joint Chiefs of Staff rescinded the order, requesting the CINCUNC to explain why he had issued it originally. Macarthur asked Stratemeyer to draft a response. The resulting text read

Rate of enemy air operations on new high level yesterday with both conventional and jet aircraft employed. . . . Joint Chiefs of Staff’s restrictions against crossing border convey to enemy full initiative in action against our aircraft near Yalu River. I view with great alarm your instructions to me which give sanctuary to enemy equipped with modern jet fighters. He is gaining confidence and aggressiveness with experience. Further, his numbers are increasing and if this trend continues unchecked, his air operations will soon a most serious threat to

³⁷ JCS 2147/52 “Augmentation of FECOM Air Forces,” 14 December 1951, 156, in *Records of the JCS/46-52/FE*, Reel 2, microfilm.

³⁸ 82 Cong. Rec H 1027 (daily ed. 14 February 1952) (statement of Sen. H. Carl Anderson of Minnesota); Orval R. Cook, testimony, *Aircraft Procurement: Hearings before the Preparedness Subcommittee No. 1 of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate*, 83rd Congress, 1953, 84; Kenneth P. Werrell, *Sabres over MiG Alley: The F-86 and the Battle for Air Superiority in Korea* (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 2005), 229-230.

³⁹ “Communist horde” was popular expression in newspaper accounts written during the Korean War. It was employed so often it became the subject of jokes: “How many troops in a horde?,” Gordon Walker, “From the Bookshelf: A New Yorker Looks at War in Korea,” review of *The Peculiar War* by E. J. Kahn Jr.; *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 January 1952, 13; “Korean War Educator: Memoirs- P. Michael Pezzella, http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/pezzella_mike/index.htm, accessed 15 October 2012.

overall operations of United Nations forces. I must be authorized to release my aircraft to strike on and above Manchurian soil. I cannot over emphasize the gravity and seriousness of the prospects in the light of the directives under which I am now forced to operate. I therefore strongly urge that I be given authority to dispatch my aircraft in pursuit and attack both in the air and on the ground. I consider this authority mandatory if I am to protect are now engaged against Chinese Communist troops.⁴⁰

However, MacArthur chose not to transmit this particular message, and instead sent his “Men and material in large forces are pouring across all bridges over the Yalu from Manchuria. . . .” cable (quoted in Chapter X) to the JCS.

Stratemeyer thought that MacArthur’s message emphasized the ground war too much (although it included a request for permission to bomb the Yalu bridges, this appeal was couched in terms of how communist ground forces were using the bridges), and had a supplementary telegram transmitted to General Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff. It used much of the language of the draft he had prepared for MacArthur, but was more concise.

Rate of enemy air operations on new high level yesterday with both conventional and jet aircraft employed. Enemy is gaining confidence and aggressiveness with this air experience. The enemy, equipped with modern jet fighters, has a sanctuary in Manchuria into which I am not permitted to penetrate. His numbers are increasing and if this trend continues unchecked, his air operations will soon constitute, in my opinion, a most serious threat to overall operations of the United Nations forces.⁴¹

MacArthur apparently realized that he had not described the situation in the air well enough and followed the “men and material” telegram with the following message to the Joint Chiefs:

⁴⁰ Stratemeyer, diary entry, 7 November 50, in *Stratemeyer Diary*, 263.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 266.

Hostile planes are operating from bases west of the Yalu River against our forces in North Korea. These planes are appearing in increasing numbers. The distance from the Yalu to the main line of contact is so short that it is almost impossible to deal effectively with the hit-and-run tactics now being employed. The present restrictions imposed on my area of operations provide a complete sanctuary for hostile air immediately upon their crossing the Manchuria-North Korea border. The effect of this abnormal condition upon the morale and combat efficiency of both air and ground troops is major. Unless corrective measures are promptly taken this factor can assume decisive proportions. Request instructions for dealing with this new and threatening development.⁴²

Although the JCS did permit the bombing of the Yalu bridges to go on as originally planned, they did not accede to the request that UNC aircraft be allowed to conduct operations north of the Yalu.⁴³

The Manchurian Sanctuary

Thus UNC air operations had to be restricted to the Korean Peninsula. As discussed in earlier chapters, this prohibition prevented UNC aircraft from striking at the airbases from which the MiG-15s operated. More significantly, the directive was interpreted to mean that UNC aircraft could not attack an enemy airplane *in the air* north of the border—even if doing so meant withdrawing from an engagement already underway. As James Jabara, the world's first jet ace, wrote, "The traffic light changes

⁴² Ibid., 266-267.

⁴³ JCS, telegram to CINCFE, 6 November 1950; http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-11-06&documentid=ki-22-14&pagenumber=1, accessed 4 February 2012.

from green to red the minute [the enemy airplane] darts across the [Yalu] river, and it never changes to green no matter how long we wait.”⁴⁴

It was this last that rankled Americans the most. Airmen, military leaders, lawmakers, and the general public alike made it clear that they did not approve of the policy. It was one thing, they argued, to prohibit airstrikes against airbases and other targets north of the Yalu. It was another to expect pilots in the heat of action to give up fighting. Admiral Oscar C. Badger recognized this distinction in his testimony during the MacArthur Hearings.

[I]t is the [enemy] airplane that is going to produce the attack, and if you can by the system of “hot pursuit” refuse to recognize the security of that fellow, because he happens to cross a certain border, and authorize going and getting him. . . . I don’t think that the base can come over, the base can’t fly over and form that attack. I want to get the fellow that comes over there and not give him sanctuary.⁴⁵

General David G. Barr also understood that there was a difference between the two situations. When Senator Harry P. Cain asked him about hot pursuit, his first response was to ascertain which scenario Cain was describing, asking, “[I]f they are in pursuit of the plane, and it crossed the border, should they be permitted to continue to pursue that individual plane—or continue over to bomb bases?” Cain told him it was the former. If so, Barr replied, “[M]y personal reaction is that they should be permitted to pursue the individual plane.” Cain then asked, “That is purely a military answer, isn’t it?” The

⁴⁴ James Jabara, “How I Became History’s First Jet Ace,” in *The Wild Blue Yonder*, Stanley Ulanoff, ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1961). 449. Jabara was the first jet pilot to achieve “ace” status—earned by scoring five or more aerial victories—*against* jets. During World War Two, a number of German jet pilots were credited with five victories, but these were all against piston-engined aircraft.

⁴⁵ Oscar C. Badger, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 2890.

general then made sure that there was no confusion about his answer: “Not to go on bombing missions—I want to make a good distinction between the two.”⁴⁶

Badger and Barr were not fliers, although, of course, their backgrounds in a surface force do not invalidate their opinions. Senator Bourke Hickenlooper of Iowa, however, wanted an airman’s estimation of the matter. During General Hoyt Vandenberg’s time on the stand, he asked,

What is the difference between shooting down Red planes in the air across the Yalu and attacking Red planes on the ground across the Yalu? What is the moral principle? What is the difference in that situation? If our Government believed and the Chiefs of Staff believed that we should be permitted to pursue those planes across the Yalu and shoot them down there, what is the difference between shooting them down in the air and shooting them on the ground across the Yalu?⁴⁷

The Air Force Chief of Staff made it clear that the two situations were not the same.

There is a difference in my mind, Senator. When a few aircraft are engaged in aerial combat in the element of the air and they are at some altitude, perhaps thirty or forty thousand feet, a line that is drawn on the ground is very difficult to extend. The theory and the thought, as I understand it, behind the hot pursuit was that they could go for over 6 or 8 miles, while they were engaged in a dogfight to continue the dogfight; that distance in the air at six or seven hundred miles an hour is a matter of seconds. The difference between that and a determined attack pressed forward on the ground where a great many individuals come under fire is a different proposition, I think, in the reaction of the people that are being attacked.⁴⁸

The enemy would be more inclined to escalate in the wake of a bombing attack against a ground installation than he would after an aerial engagement in which a handful of fighters were destroyed.

⁴⁶ Harry P. Cain and David G. Barr, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 3010.

⁴⁷ Hickenlooper, question, *Ibid.*, 1410.

⁴⁸ Vandenberg, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1410.

Surprisingly, the only other air force officer to testify during the MacArthur Hearings had little to say about hot pursuit. When General O'Donnell, the Commander of the FEAF Bomber Command, was asked about the subject, he replied that it did not affect his operations, but added that he understood how it affected the fighters that escorted his units. His interlocutor, Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, seemed to be taken aback, saying, "So, that you were not directly affected as the commanders of the fighting units were—I mean the fighting planes, the units of fighters, were on the question of hot pursuit; it was more academic with you." O'Donnell's answer was a concise "That is right, sir." Bridges still could not believe that O'Donnell had no strong opinion. "But your only knowledge is that you were aware of the decisions," he said, half asking, half stating. "Yes, sir," replied O'Donnell.⁴⁹

Ultimately, it took a seaman to provide the simplest definition of how bombing and dogfighting differed. Hot pursuit, Admiral Sherman testified during the MacArthur Hearings,

is a continuing operation against a ship, or in the case of an airplane, against an airplane that is coming into North Korea and has attacked you; you engage in a fight with him, and you continue to fight and you keep on fighting as you pass over the border. That, to me, is different from deliberately planning to go and hit Mukden on a particular day.⁵⁰

The one is deliberate and premeditated; the other, reactive. Bombing Manchuria would be a tacit declaration that the UNC was willing to expand the conflict. Chasing an airplane across the Yalu was simply a response to the PRC already having done so.

⁴⁹ Styles Bridges and Emmett O'Donnell, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 3078.

⁵⁰ Sherman, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1597.

American Fighter Pilot Morale

Admiral Sherman also recognized that fighter pilots are expected to be aggressive. “I think, he continued, “that it is recognized as the traits of human nature that once we are in a fight, it is difficult to peel off at the border.”⁵¹ General Bradley concurred, saying, “[I]t would be tough for a man in a dogfight to keep one eye on the Yalu River and stop the minute he gets there. It is very difficult.”⁵²

It must have been infuriating for the Sabre pilots to see the enemy fighters taking off, climbing, and assembling into battle formation (three parts of a mission profile when aircraft are particularly vulnerable) just out of reach across the Yalu. Walker “Bud” Mahurin, who achieved ace status during World War Two and who would have probably done the same in Korea had he not been shot down and captured, described the situation as follows:

The Communists would send many flights of aircraft up from different airfields in Manchuria whenever our friendly fighters penetrated North Korea. The enemy would climb in larger and larger circles while more units joined formation. As soon as the whole mass of aircraft had reached a desired altitude, usually higher than that of the United Nations fighters, they would . . . dive down to pick up speed, and turn south into North Korea. Thus the Communists gained three advantages: superior speed, superior altitude and advantageous position. Until the enemy actually penetrated North Korea, the United Nations forces were unable to do anything but fly along at cruising speed and watch the Communists work their way into a superior tactical advantage

Many American and UN pilots, constantly having to concede two key elements in aerial warfare—airspeed and altitude—to the communists, began to grumble about the

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Bradley, testimony, Ibid., 887-888.

performance of the F-86. “Sometimes the complaints were valid,” Mahurin admitted, “but most of the time they were based on emotion and not on scientific fact.”⁵³ The two aircraft were fairly evenly matched. The MiG-15 had a better rate of climb and ceiling than the Sabre, but the F-86 could roll (and thus turn) faster and could dive more rapidly than the MiG. Their top speeds were very close.

The MiG pilots could not only choose when a battle would begin, but could also control when it would end. Frances Gabreski, who became an ace in both World War Two and Korea, noted that “[i]f the F-86s started to get the best of them, they could break off and run for sanctuary on the north side of the Yalu. . . .”⁵⁴ It was a violation of the warrior spirit cultivated in the USAF fighter corps to let an enemy escape.⁵⁵ “[O]ur pilots were frustrated by not being free to chase the MiGs home. . . .”⁵⁶

By requiring the American fighter aircraft to wait for the MiGs to cross the Yalu, the UNC hot pursuit policy also meant conceding the initiative to the communists. The F-86 pilots were thus placed in the same awkward position that German *jagdflieger* found themselves in during the Battle of Britain, when the Luftwaffe’s high command had ordered them to remain close to the bombers they were escorting, rather than range out ahead of the attackers to engage British interceptors as they approached.⁵⁷ “It’s too late to fight the air battle in and around the bombers,” one frustrated Sabre pilot charged. “The enemy has to be engaged . . . a minimum of a hundred miles in advance of the

⁵³ Mahurin, *Honest John*, 37.

⁵⁴ Frances Gabreski, *Gabby: A Fighter Pilot’s Life* (New York: Orion Books, 1991), 220.

⁵⁵ John Darrell Sherwood, *Officers in Flight Suits: The Story of American Air Force Fighter Pilots in the Korean War* (New York: New York UP, 1996), 85-98.

⁵⁶ Gabreski, *Gabby*, 224.

⁵⁷ Adolf Galland, *The First and the Last: The Rise and Fall of the German Fighter Forces, 1938-1945* (New York: Ballantine, 1957), 28-29.

bombers' target."⁵⁸ During the MacArthur Hearings, Secretary of Defense Marshall explained that "our close distance from the Yalu gave our planes almost no room in which to operate."⁵⁹ Senator Harry P. Cain of Washington, no friend of the Truman administration, agreed. "The farther north we go, the more we minimize the effectiveness of our own air power, and the greater need there shall be for destroying enemy aircraft which has as its only purpose the total destruction of our allies [*sic*] forces in Korea."⁶⁰

Few of the pilots who have written about their experiences in Korea have failed to mention the Yalu MiG sanctuary. However, they exhibit many different attitudes towards it. Gabreski took the philosophical approach: "Such were the politics of flying F-86s in Korea," he wrote.⁶¹ Jack W. Hayes, a veteran of World War Two, Korea, and Vietnam, might have been either mischievous or angry when he observed that he and his squadron mates "were not allowed to cross north of the Yalu River, which we called the 'Goddamn River,' or 'GDR,' for short. The Yalu 'no-no' line was hard to take, but was reluctantly accepted. . . ."⁶² Other airmen were less understanding. One Marine pilot wrote that

the morale of many units was being eroded by the 'No Win' policies emanating from Washington. To most of us it seemed ludicrous that the MIG's could shoot at us and then race safely to their Manchurian Sanctuary where we could not follow. They came after us with malice aforethought and we could not even retaliate "in hot pursuit." It was

⁵⁸ W. W. Marshall, "MiG Alley," in *Top Guns*, Joe Foss and Matthew Brennan, eds. (New York: Pocket Star Books, 1991), 276.

⁵⁹ George C. Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 597.

⁶⁰ Acheson, testimony, *Ibid.*, 2077.

⁶¹ Gabreski, *Gabby*, 220.

⁶² Jack W. Hayes, *Cavalry Trooper to Fighter Pilot . . . and Three Wars* (Manhattan KS: Sunflower UP, 1997), 135.

difficult to rationalize your own sacrificial death on the altar of such political stupidity. I kept going, held captive like a spider by the sticky web of personal pride and professional loyalty.”⁶³

The memoir from which this passage is taken was published shortly after the United States had suffered defeat in Vietnam, which might have colored its author’s perspective.

Walker Mahurin was one of the first American pilots to publish a book about his Korean experiences. *Honest John* appeared in 1962, before the United States entered Vietnam, so the Korean War was the most recent large war in American memory.

Our State Department treated Communist China as a noncombatant, and any flight into Manchuria by United Nations aircraft constituted a border violation of a neutral nation. We seemed to ignore the fact that the enemy flew from this neutral nation to kill our men. . . . To allow a foe the luxury of preparing for the conduct of war knowing he is impervious to attack until he penetrates enemy territory is ridiculous in the extreme, in a strictly military sense. . . . The United Nations forces lost thousands of men because of the political, as opposed to the military, solution to the problems of the Korean War.⁶⁴

Mahurin had personal reasons to be bitter. He had spent sixteen months as a prisoner of war, during which he was tortured, starved, and threatened with execution, eventually confessing to participating in biological warfare against North Korea (he retracted his statement after being released).

Of course, the accounts cited above were all written after the war had ended—at least a full decade after. It thus might be possible that the resentment they express is merely the grumblings of crotchety old men upset that their war had been forgotten. However, contemporary newspaper articles and editorials provide ample verification that

⁶³ Jack McGuckin, *Split Second From Hell* (Scottsdale: Good Life Productions, 1979), 87.

⁶⁴ Mahurin, *Honest John*, 35-36.

American airmen were “galled” and “baffled” by the sanctuary policy during the period of the war itself.⁶⁵ A 1951 interview with John C. Meyer, the highest-scoring American ace to survive World War Two and the commander of a fighter wing in Korea, quoted him comparing his experiences in the two conflicts.

It was the difference between fighting a war and fighting a battle with rules. The enemy has the tactical advantage. It’s like the case of the boy with glasses. He slips them off, hits you, and then puts them on again. The enemy fighter planes gain altitude in their own sanctuary and then come out.⁶⁶

He did observe, however, that the effect of the hot pursuit and sanctuary issues had been over exaggerated. Just as the UNC had refrained from bombing airfields in Manchuria, he noted, the communists never attacked any UNC airbases in Japan or Korea.

Royal N. Baker, a double-digit jet ace in Korea, had a similar story. He told an interviewer, “It was very frustrating for the pilot to be up in combat in MIG alley and then, after a hit, have to let ’em go over the Yalu. You couldn’t tell if you had a damaged plane or a kill.”⁶⁷

An editorial in the *Christian Science Monitor* agreed with Meyer’s assessment that the hot pursuit policy was not the handicap many thought it was. Although “merely rattling our jet-powered F-86 Sabres at the ensanctuaried foe” might seem to be a sign that the United States lacked the will to fight as avidly as many wanted it to, the UNC’s

⁶⁵ “U.N. Air Force Baffled by Foe’s Hit-Run Raids: Communist Strike at Will From Manchuria and Cannot Be Pursued,” *The New York Times*, 19 November 1950, E5; Harlan Trott, “That Line in the Sky: An Intimate Message From Washington,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1 March 1951, 22; “Yalu Line Galling to Yank Fliers: Voice Dislike for Boundary Following Raid Near China,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 10 May 1951, 19.

⁶⁶ John C. Meyers, quoted in “U. S. Ace Tells Red Threat to Air Supremacy,” *The New York Times*, 13 January 1951, 3.

⁶⁷ Royal N. Baker, quoted in “Ace Laments Yalu Barrier in Chasing MIGs,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 24 March 1953, 6.

air arms were accomplishing their primary mission, the achievement of air superiority over Korea. The coalition's ground forces enjoyed a freedom of action that would have been impossible had communist air power been able to penetrate the cordon of fighters patrolling MiG Alley. There were some, the author noted, who held the belief that "it would be good in the long run if the MIG-15's would chase our army around a bit to remind them [*sic*] that Korea is not the kind of war that would be fought in Europe, for example." American fighter pilots were understandably frustrated by not being able to finish their battles with the Soviet jets ("Understandably, nothing irks the airman quite so much as that line in the sky behind which jet-raiding Red bullies can claim immunity").⁶⁸ But the Sabre pilots were forgetting that it was not their individual victory totals that mattered (see Baker's thoughts, above), but their collective contribution to the overall war effort.

Yet because fighter-*versus*-fighter combat has such an indirect, and thus almost unmeasurable, effect on ground combat (just how far can the UNC army advance because a fighter-bomber was able to destroy a train carrying ammunition after a Sabre pilot shot down the MiG that was pursuing it?), air-to-air victories are about the only way fighter pilots can gauge how well they are doing. As a result, being denied the opportunity to shoot down as many aircraft as they could had a depressive effect on UNC fighter pilot morale. It violated their warrior spirit.

Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, understood that pilot morale was an important consideration in the hot pursuit debate. During the MacArthur

⁶⁸ Harlan Trott, "That Line in the Sky," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1 March 1951, 22.

Hearings, he was asked a question about bombing across the Yalu. “In my opinion,” he replied, “it would have assisted somewhat our Armed Forces, but would not have been in any way decisive.” He was then asked how crossing the Yalu to shoot down communist aircraft contributed to the UNC war effort. “Hot pursuit, in my opinion, would have been of morale value to our Air Force.” The senator questioning him requested a clarification: “Morale value; but its actual decisiveness would not have been substantial or material at that point?” Vandenberg stood by his statement. “Would not have been decisive, in my opinion,” he repeated.⁶⁹

The Secretary of Defense also made this point. When asked about bombing the airfields on which the MiGs were based, he noted, “Its most serious effect was not the destruction it did at that time, but it was having a decided effect on the morale of our aviators who could not strike back because of the immediate retirement of their fast planes behind the Yalu River.”⁷⁰

General Bradley was of the same opinion.⁷¹ As a result, he noted, UNC fighter pilots would have to accept the situation. The MiGs were simply not a threat to anyone but airmen, and this risk could be easily managed.

[I]t is true that we could go over and destroy a lot of Chinese planes. On the other hand, they [enemy fighters] have not been effective to date. They have confined their efforts almost entirely to attacking our [aircraft] formations that approach the Manchurian border. They have not caused any serious difficulty with our troops, and so far we have not felt it was necessary to go after them. . . .”⁷²

⁶⁹ Walter F. George and Hoyt S. Vandenberg, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 1388.

⁷⁰ Marshall, testimony, *Ibid.*, 399.

⁷¹ Bradley, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1032.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 886-887.

Secretary of State Acheson concurred. “I understand that they are not attacking our ground forces and are either not able to or don’t do it, and they do create a problem in the bombing missions which are carried on in the north for the fighter pilots, who chased them as far as the border and then don’t go farther. . . .” Hot pursuit had been an important issue in the weeks after the Chinese intervention, when it was not known whether the PRC would use its air power against UNC forces in Korea. By the time MacArthur had been relieved, however, the situation in Korea had stabilized, leading Acheson to add, “But this problem is not as acute as it once was.”⁷³

The Secretary of State was referring to the weeks immediately following the entrance of the PRC into the war, when the UNC air arms had no equipment comparable to the MiG-15. On 4 December 1950, William F. Knowland of California told his colleagues in the Senate that on a recent visit to Korea he had “talked with [bomber crews] who said they could see fighter planes rise from the airfields north of the Yalu River and attack, and inflict casualties, among the members of the crew.” These men were frustrated that they could not bomb those bases. Knowland was frustrated because the fighters escorting the bombers could not defend them properly.

[T]hey could not permit our planes to pursue those fighter planes back to their lair. When our own fighter planes would rise to give protection to our B-29’s, the Communist planes would fly across the Yalu River, where the United Nations has erected an “off limits” sign, and where our planes are not permitted to pursue.⁷⁴

⁷³ Acheson, testimony, *Ibid.*, 2080.

⁷⁴ 81 Cong. Rec. S16049 (daily ed. 4 December 1950) (statement of Sen. William F. Knowland).

The senator sympathized with the aircrews. “I think that it is rather tough to ask men to fight and perhaps to die under those conditions. . . .”⁷⁵

Alleged Foreign Influence on the Hot Pursuit Decision

By the time of the MacArthur Hearings, advocates of hot pursuit shifted their argument from reducing American casualties to freeing American policy from excessive foreign influence. Senator Homer S. Ferguson of Michigan wanted to know “why it is necessary to take to the United Nations various matters which affect military activities alone? I cite one instance, the so-called principle of hot pursuit.”⁷⁶ He then described how hot pursuit worked, and expressed his concern that the United States had lost control of military strategy and operations in Korea.

Joseph McCarthy, then at the height of his popularity as a crusader against communists, real and imagined, in the federal government, referred to hot pursuit in his “conspiracy so immense” speech, a denunciation of the Truman administration’s foreign policy. The junior senator from Wisconsin was trying to explain how the United States had fallen “from [its] position as the most powerful Nation on earth [*sic*] at the end of World War II to a position of declared weakness by our leadership.”⁷⁷ He told his colleagues that he had been following the MacArthur Hearings very closely. The inquiry revealed that “[i]t was the unanimous opinion of General MacArthur, General Stratemeyer, the Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs that our Air Force be

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ 82 Cong. Rec. S5083 (daily ed. 9 May 1951) (statement of Sen. Homer S. Ferguson).

⁷⁷ 82 Cong. Rec. S6557 (daily ed. 14 June 1951) (statement by Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy).

allowed to engage in hot pursuit.”⁷⁸ Yet the military did not get the support it needed from the civilian side of the government. Secretary of State Dean Acheson failed to get the consent of the UN, McCarthy related.

When asked why he did not present this question to the United Nations in view of the fact that the United Nations is allegedly the final authority in the operation of this war, he stated—and listen to this—that could not be done because Russia as a member of the United Nations would veto this military action.⁷⁹

Thus the Korean War, McCarthy charged, was being “run by an organization . . . in which our principal enemy [the USSR] . . . can veto any action which would promise us victory.”⁸⁰

McCarthy’s critics often accused him of exaggerating some facts and omitting others, and in this instance he certainly did so. It was not just the American military establishment that had approved of hot pursuit. Civilian policy makers also gave it their endorsement, which McCarthy neglected to mention.⁸¹ During the MacArthur Hearings, Secretary of Defense Marshall observed that

there was initiated in the Joint Chiefs of Staff a proposal about December 7 or 8 [but see below] to authorize General MacArthur to institute a procedure in the air called “hot pursuit,” which meant that our planes could follow theirs for a stated distance over the Yalu River into Manchuria. That was considered, concurred in by me—as a matter of fact I had urgently recommended it—and was concurred in by the Secretary of State, and approved by the President. . . .⁸²

The Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee thought to ask the Secretary of State directly about his role in the administration’s debate about hot pursuit. “Did you as

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 328.

the responsible head of the Department of State approve or disapprove it? . . .”⁸³

Acheson’s response was, “We did not disapprove it. We were quite ready to approve it.”⁸⁴

McCarthy also told his colleagues that “Acheson was instructed to take the necessary steps to get the consent of our 13 ‘allies’ [the nations contributing military forces to the UNC].”⁸⁵ The Truman administration never sought permission from the UN or from any individual nation to institute hot pursuit. Washington made the decision without consultation. The Americans did not think it was necessary. In response to a State Department request for military views about various ways the UN could respond to the PRC intervention in Korea and how to convince its members to adopt them, Secretary of Defense Marshall wrote, “I believe it should be made clear that a sanctuary for attacking Chinese aircraft is not explicitly or implicitly affirmed by any United Nations action.”⁸⁶

However, once they determined that it might become necessary to allow UNC aircraft to follow enemy aircraft across the Yalu, the Americans thought that it would be courteous to notify their UN allies that they were considering it. As a result, the Secretary of State transmitted the following message to the American representatives in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and France on 13 November 1950 (the

⁸³ Russell, question, *Ibid.*, 1723.

⁸⁴ Acheson, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1723.

⁸⁵ 82 Cong. Rec. S6557 (daily ed. 14 June 1951) (statement by Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy).

⁸⁶ Secretary of Defense, letter to the Secretary of State, 10 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1126.

embassies in Ankara, Moscow, Delhi, the Hague, and Wellington also received copies, but for informational purposes; the other four were intended “for action”):⁸⁷

[Please] discuss with FonMin [Foreign Minister] at earliest possible moment grave problem confronting UN forces in Korea in use by enemy of Manchuria as privileged sanctuary for forces which are in fact attacking UN forces in Korea itself. . . . [E]nemy aircraft (nationality not always known) operate from Manchurian fields, dash into Korea air space to strike UN air and ground forces and then fly to safety behind Manchurian border a very few minutes away. UN Commander has strictest orders about violations Manchurian territory in addition to orders to use extreme care in operations near the frontier itself to insure that hostilities are restricted to Korea. This determination to play according to the rules imposes most serious handicap in face of an enemy which is willing not only to break the rules themselves but to exploit proper conduct of UN forces. US Govt is determined to do everything possible to localize conflict. . . . [I]t is obvious, however, that the abuse of Manchuria by the enemy could easily impose an intolerable burden upon UN forces operating lawfully and properly on UN missions in Korea. Therefore, US Govt wishes to *inform* Govt to which you are accredited that it may become necessary at an early date to permit UN aircraft to defend themselves in the air space over the Yalu River to the extent of permitting hot pursuit of attacking enemy aircraft up to two or three minutes flying time into Manchurian air space. It is contemplated that UN aircraft [would] limit themselves to repelling enemy aircraft engaged in offensive missions into Korea. We believe this [would] be a minimum reaction to extreme provocation, [would] not itself affect adversely the attitude of the enemy toward Korean operations, [would] serve as a warning, and [would] add greatly to morale of UN pilots who are now prevented from taking minimum defense measures and for whom in case of bomber pilots it is impossible under existing conditions to provide adequate air cover [emphasis added].⁸⁸

The cable makes clear that the Americans were not saying that they would allow hot pursuit, only that they were thinking about doing so.

⁸⁷ Editors, explanatory footnote, *FRUS* 1950-7, 1144.

⁸⁸ Secretary of State, telegram to the Embassy in the United Kingdom [and selected other missions], 13 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7 1144-1145. As Secretary of State Acheson read this document verbatim during the MacArthur Hearings, it was printed in its entirety in Volume 3 of the inquiry transcripts. Dean Acheson, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1928.

It also unmistakably identifies itself as an advisory, not an inquiry. Its concluding paragraph begins,

FYI we are not asking the concurrence of Gov[ernmen]t because we believe the highly limited application of hot pursuit doctrine in this situation [would] turn upon milit[ary] necessity and elementary principles of self-defense, but we think it important that Govt be notified of the problem.⁸⁹

Nonetheless, Acheson did want to know what foreign leaders thought of the proposed action. “[Please] telegraph any reactions niact [“night action”—requiring an overnight response]”⁹⁰

The governments to which this message was addressed were quick to react. The American ambassador in Ottawa reported that the Canadians understood that the Manchurian sanctuary could be a problem for the UNC but did not agree that it had become one yet. They suggested warning the Chinese communists that “if hostile aircraft continue to use Manchurian air space, United Nations aircraft will naturally have to defend themselves in the air space over the Yalu River to the extent of pursuing attacking enemy aircraft.”⁹¹ Any decision to implement a policy of hot pursuit must wait for the Chinese response.

Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, instructed that UK’s ambassador in Washington to tell Acheson that he could not “endorse the United States suggestion that

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid. “Niact” is short for “night action.” When Dean Acheson read this cable aloud during the MacArthur Hearings, the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee asked him about the term. Acheson told him it was “a type of immediate reply. It is a reply which gets immediate treatment and is not dealt with in the order in which the replies come in. It is pulled out.” Richard B. Russell and Dean Acheson, question-and-answer exchange, MacArthur Hearings, 1928.

⁹¹ Ambassador in Canada, letter to the Secretary of State, 15 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7 1159.

violation of the Manchurian border may be necessary. To my thinking, the suggestion has potentialities of great danger, for it is likely to result in the very thing which we want to avoid, namely the spreading of the conflict.”⁹² The Dutch expressed a similar concern. “In view its expected grave complications Netherlands Government considers aforesaid measure (hot pursuit) beyond scope authority granted Commander UN Forces.”⁹³ Several other nations objected as well.⁹⁴

The vehemence of their allies’ reactions compelled the Americans to reconsider hot pursuit. While they were assessing their options, the situation in Korea stabilized (in part because the first F-86 units had arrived in the theatre, in part because the communist Chinese were content to rely on ground forces alone in Korea), reducing the sense of urgency felt in Washington and Tokyo (UNC headquarters). Secretary of Defense Marshall described this period during the MacArthur Hearings: “Serious concern was registered by several nations that action in the way of hot pursuit might precipitate an extension of the hostilities. . . . Thereafter, enemy air action in Korea did not develop to such an extent that it was deemed necessary to take a decision with respect to hot pursuit.”⁹⁵

As noted above, many senators believed that the United States had lost much of its sovereign autonomy by fighting in Korea under the auspices of the United Nations.⁹⁶ Both Omar Bradley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and J. Lawton Collins, the

⁹² Foreign Secretary, United Kingdom, message to the British Ambassador to the United States, 16 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1172.

⁹³ Ambassador in the Netherlands, letter to the Secretary of State, 18 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1126.

⁹⁴ Acheson, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 5028-5029.

⁹⁵ Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 362.

⁹⁶ 82 Cong. Rec. A2600 (statement by Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy).

Army Chief of Staff, were both asked outright whether any other American policy or decision had been overridden by members of the UNC. Neither could think of any.⁹⁷ Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin prompted George C. Marshall for his opinion on the subject by observing, “It has been alleged that the decisions of the President, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other high-ranking American officials, defense officials, have been vetoed in secret by other governments. You say that isn’t true.” The Secretary of Defense could think of only one case in which UNC members had objected to an American proposal. “I would say that that is not true except as specifically stated, where the Chiefs of Staff brought forward a plan authorizing hot pursuit, and that was disappointed by other governments refusing to concur.”⁹⁸

Some senators wanted to know exactly which UNC countries had thwarted the American will by “vetoing” hot pursuit. Early in the hearings, Secretary of Defense Marshall had referred to “the 13 nations involved with us in fighting Manchuria,” which, when informed that the Americans were considering allowing aircraft to cross north of the Yalu, “voted solidly against it. . . .”⁹⁹ Later, Walter F. George of Georgia asked him, “Did you put into the record the names of those nations?” (he had not—see below). Senator Owen Brewster of Maine was not happy that “13 anonymous diplomats at Lake Success, presumably civilians” could override American policy decisions.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Brien McMahon and Omar Bradley, question-and-answer exchange, MacArthur Hearings, 959; Richard B. Russell and J. Lawton Collins, question-and-answer exchange, MacArthur Hearings, 1260.

⁹⁸ Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 428.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 328.

¹⁰⁰ Owen Brewster and Omar Bradley, question-and-answer exchange, Ibid., 998-999.

How Senator Brewster reacted to the revelation that it was not thirteen nations but six that had caused the Americans to abandon hot pursuit is not recorded.¹⁰¹ The Secretary of Defense had confused the number of nations participating in the UNC with the number of nations that had been informed that the Americans were considering hot pursuit. It was not until Senator Russell asked Secretary of State Acheson how the decision to forego hot pursuit was reached that the actual number of nations consulted was identified. The Chair of the Armed Services Committee was quick to notice the discrepancy: “You said you took it up with six countries. I will not ask which they were. But I had understood there were some 13 nations who had contributed troops to the United Nations forces in Korea. Why was it confined to six nations rather than consult with all of them?” Acheson explained how and why so few were apprised of the possibility that UNC aircraft might be allowed north of the Yalu. “The six countries which were picked out were prominent and representative, and I think it was probably a view of not spreading the security too widely.”¹⁰²

Russell asked why hot pursuit was not discussed with the UN Security Council. Acheson replied by observing that the USSR was a member of that body. “[T]his would be a military operation which you would not want to inform the enemy about.”¹⁰³ The senator, satisfied, then changed the subject.

¹⁰¹ Brewster was present when the matter came up., but his only contribution was to ask Acheson to repeat a word. “Did you say ‘embassies?’” Whether he had simply misheard, or whether he was ascertaining that the Secretary of State had indeed used the plural, cannot be determined from the context. Owen Brewster and Dean Acheson, question-and-answer exchange, MacArthur Hearings, 1723.

¹⁰² Richard B. Russell and Dean Acheson, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 1724.

¹⁰³ Acheson, testimony, *Ibid.*, 1724.

Senator Russell may have declined to ask which nations had negated hot pursuit, but Harry P. Cain of Washington, Acheson's nemesis throughout the hearings, made a special effort to discover just which of the United States' allies had thwarted the American will. Acheson's revelation that there were six, not thirteen, such countries was made on the morning of Friday, 1 June 1951. It was not until Monday that Cain was able to get the Secretary of State to identify the six nations that had frustrated the American plan to implement hot pursuit. "I had understood from your testimony that you referred this question to five nations and then a sixth nation, and that these six nations denied the proposal," he observed, adding, "May I ask you, Mr. Secretary, to advise us of the six nations with whom this proposal was taken up and discussed?"¹⁰⁴

Acheson tried to demur. "I do not believe that is really a matter of great relevance to the work of this committee, which nations they were." The senator from Washington insisted. "I asked the question in part because the Secretary of Defense said he had taken this question up with 13 nations, and your testimony had been you took it up with six." Acheson still resisted. "Well, I see no point in making—well, a point of this. I should ask that the names of these nations should be considered by Admiral Davis as something that he might well delete from the public record."¹⁰⁵ He was on the verge

¹⁰⁴ Cain, question, *Ibid.*, 5027-5028.

¹⁰⁵ Harry P. Cain and Dean Acheson, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 5028. The censor more than obliged Acheson's request. The original typewritten transcripts indicate that only a single sentence of the Secretary of State's testimony—the one in which he named the six nations—was to be removed for security purposes. However, the entirety of the exchange related in the paragraph above was deleted from the sanitized edition of the MacArthur Hearings published by the USGPO in 1951.

Usually the expurgated version of the transcripts indicates where material was excised but the wholesale elimination of so many pages of testimony makes it difficult to ascertain precisely how the censored and uncensored versions correspond.

More than two weeks separated Marshall's testimony from Acheson's. As a result, the idea that thirteen nations had thwarted the Americans' desire entered the vocabulary of isolationists and other

of revealing the secret when Senator Walter F. George of Georgia interrupted to confirm the dates on which the nations concerned had been contacted. The Secretary of State answered this question, then returned Cain's original query. "Now, the countries that were involved in this were: the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, France, Australia and New Zealand." Cain then tried to determine why Secretary of Defense Marshall had referred to thirteen nations. Acheson did not know, but pointed out, "We did not ask them [the six] to agree or not agree. We asked our people to put up the situation as well as they could to them. . . . [T]he results that came back were unanimously adverse and very disturbed replies."¹⁰⁶ He then said that he had reported this reluctance to the Secretary of Defense.

The subject then changed to a discussion of the role of UNC nations in drafting a ceasefire proposal.¹⁰⁷ Cain did not have a chance to follow up on the subject of hot pursuit and the six recalcitrant nations until the next day. Acheson thought he had addressed the topic adequately in his earlier testimony. "Senator," he said, "we have been over this several times. . . ." Yet Cain wanted to hear it again. The ensuing question-and-answer exchange filled six full pages of the densely-typescript single-spaced MacArthur Hearings (no doubt it was just as tedious to experience as it is to read

opponents of the Truman administration. For examples, see: 82 Cong. Rec. S6557 (daily ed. 14 June 1951) (statement by Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy); 82 Cong. Rec. A2847 (extension of remarks by Rep. George H. Bender [Ohio], including entirety of an editorial entitled "Not Much of an Answer," *The Cleveland Press*, [no date given]); "The Basis of Opposition to MacArthur," *The Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 1951, A4; "Marshall Versus MacArthur," *The Los Angeles Times*, 11 May 1951, A4.

¹⁰⁶ Acheson, testimony, uncensored MacArthur Hearings microfilm, 5028-5030.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

it).¹⁰⁸ Cain ended his inquiries only because he wanted to change topics and had three minutes in which to ask about it.¹⁰⁹ His final comment to Acheson about hot pursuit was, “Well, sir, we simply have a difference of opinion and we had better let it go at that for the time being”¹¹⁰

The “time being” proved to be about half a day. The interrogation recounted above took place in a morning session; after the lunch recess, during which he had reviewed Acheson’s testimony, Cain returned to the subject of hot pursuit (this exchange was shorter than the earlier one, needing only four pages to transcribe).¹¹¹ Cain asked what would happen if the UNC was able to advance into North Korea again and thus, presumably, need to conduct air operations near the Yalu.

Mr. Secretary, I ask this question because of my hope and my anticipation that one of these days we are going to be back on the Yalu River, from which we were driven last November: Can you suggest a single logical military reason why enemy aircraft whose sole mission is to destroy and hinder allied operations should not be shot out of the air wherever they are found?¹¹²

The Secretary of State did not want to comment about a hypothetical future situation, but reminded Senator Cain why the United States’ UN allies had reacted so strongly to the idea of hot pursuit in the first place:

Well, I can suggest the reason which were given at the time this proposal was brought up for believing that it might be more of a disadvantage than it is an advantage, and that is that if by pursuing an airplane across the

¹⁰⁸ Harry P. Cain and Dean Acheson, question-and-answer exchange, MacArthur Hearings, 2075-2080.

¹⁰⁹ For fairness, the senators were limited to thirty minutes with each witness, although they could have more than one half-hour session with any particular witness if they so desired.

¹¹⁰ Acheson, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 2080.

¹¹¹ Harry P. Cain and Dean Acheson, question-and-answer exchange, *Ibid.*, 2277-2280.

¹¹² Cain, question, *Ibid.*, 2278.

border you bring in the air on the other side against your whole operation you may have lost more than you have gained.¹¹³

Cain then cited statements by MacArthur, Marshall, and Bradley from earlier in the hearings in which they described hot pursuit as a military necessity. He also mentioned a recent news story describing a bombing raid over North Korea in which communist and American fighters had clashed. But he did not give Acheson a chance to respond, instead asking about the activities of the National Security Council. His last comment on the subject of hot pursuit was, “As this question has arisen in the past, it is certain to be before us in the future.”¹¹⁴

The senator was in error. Hot pursuit was never seriously debated again in any public forum for the remainder of the Korean War.¹¹⁵ It remained under discussion by American policy makers—the Pentagon, White House (in both Truman’s and Eisenhower’s terms), and State Department, which continued to discuss the issue with foreign governments—but the American people gradually forgot about it.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Acheson, testimony, *Ibid.*, 2279.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ A search of the Proquest online newspaper archive for uses of the phrase “hot pursuit” (without any other qualifiers, such as “Korea,” “United Nations,” or “MacArthur”) between June 1950 and December 1953 reveals that the term appeared in American and foreign papers more often during the two months of the MacArthur Hearings (May and June 1951) than it did for the remainder of the Korean War era combined. It was used 39 times in 1950, 30 times in 1952, and 46 times in 1953. Between January and April 1951, it was used 22 times, and between July and December, 1951, it was used 37 times. Compare these figures to the 87 times and 56 times it appeared in May and June 1951, respectively

It should be noted also that as no attempt was made to control for uses of the term in either a law enforcement context or as a metaphor (e. g. , an actor in “hot pursuit of an Oscar”), so many of the occasions in which the phrase was used may not have referred to the Korean War at all. However, the cluster of “hits” in the late spring of 1951 is suggestive (search conducted 18 April 2012).

¹¹⁶ By the summer of 1951, the Korean War had entered its stalemated phase (which would continue for the rest of the conflict). Both the State Department and JCS considered the problem of how the UN would react to any significant change in the situation. The generally-agreed upon policy was that hot pursuit would be authorized if the PRC delivered a large-scale air attacks against the UNC in Korea, or if the armistice negotiations then underway collapsed without leaving any hope of being resumed later. JCS, memorandum, 13 July 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 667; John D. Hickerson and Livingston Merchant,

The one place where hot pursuit remained an active topic of discussion was the capital building. Until the election of 1952, opponents of the Truman administration continued to debate the subject. Senator Cain, not surprisingly, was one such. In the fall of 1951 he engaged Senator A.S. Monroney of Oklahoma in a debate about how the communists had been permitted to continue build up their forces. Supporting his

memorandum to the Secretary of State, 3 August 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 773; Memorandum on the Substance of Discussions at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 26 September 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 961-962.

For an example of an exchange between American and foreign diplomats on the subject of hot pursuit after 1951, see the series of communications collected under the title “Alleged Violations of Chinese Airspace” on the Documents on Canadian Foreign Relations website, the first of which can be found at <http://www.international.gc.ca/department/history-histoire/dcer/details-en.asp?intRefId=3550>, accessed 18 April 2012. Subsequent documents can be found by following the “next” links on this page.

For the duration of the Korean War, the Eisenhower administration did not see fit to modify the directives it had inherited from the Truman government in any significant fashion. Memorandum of Discussion of the 131st meeting of the National Security Council, 11 February 1953, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-15, 770.

However, in 1956, the Eisenhower administration apparently adopted a formal hot pursuit policy in 1956, codified as NSC 5604, the details of which remain classified to this day. Virtually the only part of it available to the general public is its title, which, fortunately, provides some indication about its intent and scope: “U.S. Action in Event of Unprovoked Communist Attack against U.S. Aircraft.” The vast majority of the text of the document was redacted when declassified in 1986. The Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS), an online database, reproduces all of its twenty pages, but the vast majority of them are blank.

<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/DDRS?vrsn=1.0&slb=KE&locID=txshracd2898&srchtp=basic&c=3&ste=4&txb=nsc5604&sortType=RevChron>, accessed 18 April 2012. It was also included in volume 19 of the *FRUS* series for 1955-1957, published in 1990. The still-secret material was omitted, leaving just two pages of text, most of which is a memorandum noting that the State Department and Defense Department had collaborated on it. NSC 5604 “U.S. Action in Event of Unprovoked Communist Attack against U.S. Aircraft,” 23 April 1956, in *FRUS* 1955-1957-19, 300-301.

Yet the contents of NSC 5604 can be deduced by references to it in other documents. In a JCS document prepared in 1958 that discussed how the United States should react to recent incidents in which the Soviets had harassed air traffic into and out of Berlin, there are two allusions to “the Hot Pursuit policy contained in NSC 5604.” JCS, memorandum to Secretary of Defense, 12 September 1958, in *FRUS* 1958-1960-8, 40, 42.

NSC 5604 was rescinded in 1972. However, the document revoking it—National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) 163, “Statement of Policy Relative to U. S. Action in the Event of Unprovoked Communist Attack against U. S. Aircraft or Vessels Outside of Communist Territory”—specifically permitted American air or sea forces under attack to take “all necessary defensive measures,” including “[i]mmediate pursuit into hostile territorial waters or airspace. . . .” The policy expressed in NSDM 163 applied the Caroline rules to hot pursuit by aircraft (and ships): “Immediate pursuit into hostile territorial waters or airspace must be continuous and uninterrupted and is authorized only until the hostile aircraft or vessels no longer pose an immediate threat to U. S. forces.” Henry Kissinger, National Security Decision Memorandum 163, 6 April 1972, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdm-nixon/nsdm-163.pdf>, accessed 19 April 2012.

assertions with what he had learned during the MacArthur Hearings, he recapitulated all of the standard criticisms of Truman and Acheson. He spoke of how the JCS had approved the idea, and how a handful of UNC members had stymied its implementation. “The Greeks [members of the UNC] were never advised of America’s intention. The Turks, who proportionately have spilled more blood than anyone else in Korea, outside of the United States and the South Koreans, were not advised.” What should have been a purely military decision had been reversed by political considerations. “Having once made up our minds as Americans, under the most competent military advice we could get, that it was necessary to try to destroy the enemy’s sanctuary in Manchuria, we promptly did no such thing.”¹¹⁷

As the debate about hot pursuit in Congress evolved over time, new elements were added. When it was revealed that the United States had lost far more aircraft in Korea than the communists, critics of the administration argued that this imbalance was a result of the hot pursuit and sanctuary policies.¹¹⁸ “We read only of the enemy aircraft we shoot down. We are seldom advised of our own losses,” Senator Cain said in the fall of 1951.¹¹⁹ They did not realize that the vast majority of USAF, USN, and USMC aircraft that had been shot down in Korea were victims of flak—antiaircraft fire—which was only to be expected, as the UNC air arms were employed primarily in air-to-ground operations. The UNC still enjoyed air superiority in Korea, save for in “MiG Alley”

¹¹⁷ 82 Cong. Rec. S13069 (daily ed. 12 October 1951) (statement by Sen. Harry P. Cain).

¹¹⁸ 82 Cong. Rec. A1398 (extension of remarks by Rep. Frank W. Boykin [Alabama]); 83 Cong. Rec. A637-638 (extension of remarks by Sen. Milton R. Young [North Dakota], including entirety of editorial [title not given] from the *Jamestown Sun* [state not identified] of 3 February 1953). There is a Jamestown in North Dakota.

¹¹⁹ 82 Cong. Rec. S12539 (daily ed. 2 October 1951) (statement by Sen. Harry P. Cain).

(although, of course, much of the bombing occurred in this area). In air-to-air combat, the Sabres had an overwhelmingly favorable kill-to-loss ratio over the MiGs.¹²⁰

Border Violations by American Aircrews

It might have pleased the critics of the government to find out that the airmen who were most affected by the UNC's no-hot-pursuit policy—the F-86 pilots tasked with preventing the MiGs from attacking UNC bombers and ground-attack aircraft—often simply ignored it.¹²¹ Of course, the pilots who disregarded the sanctuary directive could not admit that they were violating the directive during the war. But after the conflict had ended, a number of American fighter pilots revealed that they had crossed the Yalu during dogfights. Some even admitted entering the PRC on an active search for quarry when MiGs were hard to come by south of the Yalu.

One of the first American pilots to disclose that he had ventured into Manchuria was Walker Mahurin, whose 1962 autobiography, *Honest John*, devotes several pages to the subject of hot pursuit.¹²² “Bud” was not a lone rogue who surreptitiously disobeyed orders he did not agree with. According to Mahurin, his immediate superiors tacitly approved of the violations (he is unclear about whether they were sanctioned by authorities higher up in the chain of command), and many of his squadron mates often

¹²⁰ Thomas K. Finletter, speech made 26 February 1952, in 82 Cong. Rec. A1399 (extension of remarks by Rep. Frank W. Boykin [Alabama]); Hoyt S. Vandenberg, testimony, Air Force Appropriations 1953, 69-71; James Jabara, quoted by Lloyd P. Hopwood, Air Force Appropriations 1953, 237; Hoyt S. Vandenberg, statement, Air Force Appropriations 1954, 4.

¹²¹ For more about American fighter pilots' ventures into the PRC, see Kenneth P. Werrell, “Across the Yalu: Rules of Engagement and the Communist Air Sanctuary during the Korean War,” *The Journal of Military History* 72, no. 2 (2008), 451-475.

¹²² Mahurin, *Honest John*, 68-72, 83-86, 88-89.

joined him.¹²³ These included some of the highest-scoring aces of the war, such as Iven Kincheloe and Frances Gabreski (who in his own memoirs confessed that one of his victories was made over the PRC: “If the truth were known I believe I was on the Manchuria side of the Yalu when I made the kill”).¹²⁴ Indeed, it appears that a willingness to bend or break the rules against crossing the Yalu was the only way to accumulate high victory totals. “Apparently only a small number of the aces obeyed the rules of engagement,” noted a military and aviation historian. “The majority of the American aces crossed the Yalu, perhaps two-thirds of the thirty-nine . . .” American Sabre pilots who scored five or more victories in Korea.¹²⁵

Another pilot—also an ace—who admitted to crossing the Yalu was Frederick “Boots” Blesse, perhaps best known as the author of a handbook of fighter tactics that is still used today.¹²⁶ In his memoirs, “*Check Six*,” he wrote, “We were forbidden to cross the Yalu but we did it anyway,” adding that “we had to if we were going to protect the fighter-bombers.” He noted that Sabre pilots devised a special code of conduct if they were going to violate the UNC directive, as if that might absolve them of their sins. “One rule specifically ordered us not to strafe MiGs on their airfields, all of which were across the river—an absolute no-no. If he was flying, okay, shoot him down, but if he

¹²³ An aviation and military historian who has examined this topic in detail was unable to uncover any conclusive evidence to indicated whether trans-Yalu flights were merely tolerated or actively encouraged. Kenneth P. Werrell, “Across the Yalu,” 462-468.

¹²⁴ Gabreski, *Gabby*, 225.

¹²⁵ Werrell, “Across the Yalu,” 451-475.

¹²⁶ “No Guts, No Glory” was based on Blesse’s Korean War experiences. It was originally published as an article in the *USAF Fighter Weapons Review* in March 1955. The *USAFFWR* has reprinted it several times since its first appearance. It has also been frequently bootlegged as a stand-alone volume.

was even rolling down the runway, no dice, because that's really ground attack. That's a whole new ball game."¹²⁷

John Glenn, later to gain fame as an astronaut and as a senator from Ohio, downed a MiG—his first—forty miles inside of Manchuria after first engaging it over North Korea. In his 1999 memoir, he asserted that he had permission to do so. “Our rules of combat were that we could enter Chinese airspace across the Yalu only if we were in hot pursuit.”¹²⁸ Glenn had the necessary aggressiveness, and would very likely have made ace had the war not ended when it did. Stephen G. Warren, who, like Glenn, was a Marine seconded to a USAF fighter unit, also shot down a MiG over Chinese territory.¹²⁹

Ace Cecil Foster made a claim about hot pursuit being permitted, similar to Glenn's, in his 2001 autobiography.¹³⁰ Harold E. Fischer, also an ace, asserts that “[t]he issue of flying across the border varied from time to time, and at one time, we were not permitted to fly closer than 20 miles from the Chinese border. Then it was allowed if in hot pursuit.”¹³¹

Pilots who flew over Manchuria risked much. Fischer was shot down in April 1953 during a mission in the far north of Korea. Although he was probably on the south side of the Yalu when he ejected from his Sabre (his account of his capture is ambiguous

¹²⁷ Frederick C. Blesse, *“Check Six”: A Fighter Pilot Looks Back* (New York: Ivy Book, 1987), 87.

¹²⁸ John Glenn, *John Glenn: A Memoir* (New York, Bantam, 1999), 144.

¹²⁹ Stephen G. Warren, *Flying into Combat With Heroes: World War II, Korea, Vietnam & Terrorism* (Baltimore: PublishAmerica, 2003), 70.

¹³⁰ Cecil C. Foster, *“MiG Alley to Mu Ghia Pass: Memoirs of A Korean War Ace* (Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2001), 52.

¹³¹ Harold E. Fischer, *“Dreams of Aces: The Hal Fischer Story: Korea and Vietnam* (Dallas: Great Imptressin, 2001), 135.

on this point), he landed in Manchuria and was taken prisoner.¹³² Another Sabre pilot, Edwin Heller, was also captured in China. His version of the story was that “the dogfight had started over North Korea, but I landed in Manchuria. . . .”¹³³ Other sources, however, assert that he was some one hundred fifty miles away from the Yalu.¹³⁴

Heller and Fischer became prisoners of the Chinese. Due to the ambiguous legal status of the Korean War, they were held as criminals, not prisoners of war. In his memoirs, Fischer noted that one of his interrogators told him that if he cooperated he might be returned home quickly. “He further stated,” wrote Fischer, “that my crime was very serious, that I was guilty of violating the sacred territorial airspace of China and this fact I certainly could not deny.”¹³⁵

Two other American airmen were imprisoned by the Chinese for violations of their airspace. One had suffered a compass malfunction and got lost, eventually flying over the Liaotung peninsula when he ran out of fuel and was forced to abandon his Sabre.¹³⁶ The other was an attack pilot shot down while allegedly strafing a train in the Kirin Province of the PRC (the United States government disputed this story, claiming his fighter-bomber went down in the vicinity of Kanggye, about twenty miles south of the Yalu).¹³⁷ Along with Heller and Fischer, they remained captives until 1955. The Americans protested their continued imprisonment and were joined by fifteen other members of the United Nations in sponsoring a “Complaint of Detention and

¹³² *Ibid.*, 138-142.

¹³³ Edwin Heller, “I Thought I’d Never Get Home,” in *The F-86 Sabre Jet and Pilots* (Paducah KY: Turner, 1997), 42

¹³⁴ Werrell, “Across the Yalu,” 470, n77.

¹³⁵ Fischer, *Dreams of Aces*, 146.

¹³⁶ “U. N. Documents on Airmen,” *The New York Times*, 8 December 1954, 14.

¹³⁷ “Text of China Reds’ Broadcast on Fliers,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 31 May 1955, 10.

Imprisonment of United Nations Military Personnel in Violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement” in the UN General Assembly.¹³⁸

Chinese officials referred to their subsequent release as an “expulsion” ordered by a military tribunal (whether the UN resolution influenced their decision to release the fliers is unknown). They had been accused of unlawfully crossing the frontier. “While piloting American military planes, they had repeatedly and illegally penetrated air space over our country during period from September 1952 to April 1953.”¹³⁹ That the United States and the PRC had been fighting each other at the time was not mentioned. The four airmen had simply “committed such criminal action as flying their military aircraft into China’s territorial air to conduct harassment and provocation. Their crimes endangered the security of China and the peaceful life of the Chinese people.”¹⁴⁰

The extended incarceration of the four American airmen seems a petty act on the part of the leaders of the PRC, whose real grievance was with the United States, the aircraft of which had from the beginning of the Korean Conflict routinely violated Manchurian airspace (both advertently and inadvertently). The four pilots were told that they would not be released until “American policy towards China is changed. . . .”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ UNGA, A/2888 “Complaint of Detention and Imprisonment of United Nations Military Personnel in Violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement,” 17 December 1954; available online at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N54/346/22/PDF/N5434622.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 28 October 2012.

¹³⁹ American Consul General at Geneva, telegram to Department of State, 19 June 1955, in *FRUS* 1955-1957-2, 585

¹⁴⁰ “Text of China Reds’ Broadcast on Fliers,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 31 May 1955, 10.

¹⁴¹ Unidentified Chinese military officer, quoted by Andrew R. MacKenzie, himself quoted in Eugene Griffin, “3 U. S. Airmen Told Price of Freedom by Chinese Reds,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 18 December 1954, 5. MacKenzie was a Canadian fighter pilot who was seconded to a USAF unit. He was shot down (by an American aircraft) over North Korea but was captured by a Chinese detachment. He was repatriated on 5 December 1954. After his release, he reported that he witnessed a Chinese military

Yet the Chinese had few other ways to express their anger and frustration against the United States after the Korean War.

During the Korean War, however, they certainly *appeared* to have the means by which to have struck at the United States in the form of its Korean expedition—as has been demonstrated in earlier chapters, the Americans, British, and other UNC members were profoundly concerned that the PRC could launch a massive air strike against their forces in Korea. Had the Chinese done so, however, the United States would almost certainly have responded in kind. The communists were well aware of the range and speed of American air power, as represented by the fighter jets that had carried their prisoners to them. But mobility is but one of the assets of air power. Destructiveness is another. The Chinese were also conscious that any American bomber that appeared over their territory could be carrying a weapon capable of obliterating an entire city.

officer tell the four Americans that they would remain prisoners until the United States modified its stance towards the PRC.

CHAPTER XII

ARMAGEDDON: THE DECISION NOT TO USE ATOMIC WEAPONS IN KOREA

The Korean War was the first conflict in history in which one of the belligerents possessed atomic weapons at the time it entered the conflict. That combatant, the United States, thus had the option to employ atomic weapons at any time during the Korean War. Yet it refrained from doing so. President Truman, who had authorized the atomic bombing of Japan during World War Two, decided not to approve its use a second time. His successor, President Eisenhower, made a similar determination. They both considered it, of course.

Public Sentiment about Using the Atomic Bomb in Korea

Many Americans could not understand why the United States would forego the use of the single most potent weapon in its arsenal. The first calls for using the atomic bomb in Korea as soon as President Truman determined that the United States would come to the assistance of South Korea. On 27 June 1950, columnist Hal Burton of *Newsday* wrote

How about the atomic bomb? Should we use it? My vote is yes. We tried out the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, two unprepared cities which we took by surprise. The Reds won't be so careless. Drop a few bombs. Then we may find out how effective or ineffective they are in hilly, rugged terrain against troops. Until we let 'em go, we'll never be able to do more than guess at the results. It's risky business, a practice war, but it's a risk worth taking.¹

¹ Hal Burton, "Change of Pace," *Newsday*, 27 June 1950, 39.

Within the next few weeks a number of citizens wrote to their local papers to suggest that the United States threaten to use the atomic weapons against the DPRK if it did not withdraw from South Korea. “It seems sensible to me,” wrote a woman in California.² “What are we waiting for?” asked a writer from Maryland, adding, “[It] would bring the war to a quick end either by the mere threat or the actual use of the bomb.”³ Grace Lee Kenyon, who in the course of three decades had over four hundred letters published in the *Hartford Courant*, proclaimed, “[I]f dropping an atomic bomb or two on North Korea would save even a few American lives, I’d vote for dropping them, but hard, and with a loud ‘bang,’ and let the chips fall where they might.”⁴

Several lawmakers held similar opinions. Texas congressman Lloyd M. Bentsen, Jr., agreed that the United States should send the North Koreans an ultimatum. Senator Owen Brewster of Maine favored giving General MacArthur *carte blanche* to use atomic bombs in Korea as he saw fit.⁵

Other Americans, however, were not so certain that the atomic bomb should be used. “We have no territorial interests in Korea,” wrote a New Yorker in response to other writers who claimed using the atomic bomb in Korea was morally acceptable. “We are protecting the South Koreans against unjust aggression. If we do this by unjust

² M. Rathbun, “An Atomic Bomb?” (letter to the editor), *The Los Angeles Times*, 8 July 1950, A4.

³ W. P. Campbell, “A Bomb for Korea” (letter to the editor), *The Washington Post*, 8 July 1950, 4.

⁴ Grace Lee Kenyon, “Re: Atom Bombs and Rolling Pins” (letter to the editor), *The Hartford Courant*, 3 August 1950, 8. Kenyon was a prolific writer. A search of the Proquest online newspaper archive for letters written by Grace Lee Kenyon produces over 470 “hits” (search made 31 March 2012). Kenyon also contributed articles to *The American Mercury* and *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*. <http://www.unz.org/Author/KenyonGraceLee>, accessed 31 March 2012.

⁵ William S. White, “Senator Demands U. S. Call Up Guard: Johnson of Texas Also Asks Emergency Legislation to Mobilize Industry,” *The New York Times*, 13 July 1950, 6; “Using the Bomb,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 July 1950, 20.

means, then what are we fighting for?”⁶ It should not be necessary to use such a potent weapon against a nation as small as the DPRK, another writer noted. It “presents us as the big bully, so much bigger, in fact, that we dare not use our best weapon, the atomic bomb.”⁷ Most editorial writers addressing the subject agreed that there were few good reasons for employing atomic weapons in Korea.⁸

Some Americans seemed to have been confused about whom the United States was fighting. A writer identifying herself “Former WAVE” declared that “I believe the A bomb [*sic*] should be employed only as a last resort, either if the enemy uses it against us, or our allies, or if it should be the only means of winning the war.”⁹ The North Koreans did not possess atomic weaponry (but the Soviets, their sponsors, did, although the writer did not mention them). Others understood the futility of targeting North Korea for atomic bombing when it was the USSR that had induced the DPRK to invade its neighbor. “When Russia attacks us through its satellites we are prevented from bombing of the enemy production centers with our long-range weapons because those centers are in the mother country with whom we are not at war, which is, when you come to think of it, a most ideal defense against the atomic bomb!”¹⁰

The American debate about using atomic weapons did not go unnoticed. *The Times of India* accused Americans of suffering from “atomania,” which had caused them

⁶ William Esslinger, “Bombs in Korea” (letter to the editor), *The Washington Post*, 9 August 1950, 12.

⁷ E. Acoff, “More ‘Small Wars’?” (letter to the editor), *The Los Angeles Times*, 12 July 1950, A4.

⁸ “Using the Bomb,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 July 1950, 20; “Shall We Use It?,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 15 July 1950, A4; “The A-Bomb and Korea,” *The Hartford Courant*, 17 July 1950, 6.

⁹ “Former Wave,” No A-Bomb in Korea” (letter to the editor), *The Washington Post*, 31 July 1950, 6.

¹⁰ Acoff, “More ‘Small Wars’?” *The Los Angeles Times*, 12 July 1950, A4.

to become “bomb-happy.” Its editors noted that American lawmakers publicly endorsed—“with the naivete of the little school boy”—using the atomic bomb against the USSR and DPRK. “Every time they indulge in such irresponsible talk in America it sends shivers down the spine in Britain and in Western Europe.”¹¹

These foreign commentators may not have fully understood that in the American tradition of public debate, any citizen was welcome to express personal opinions—except, of course, high-ranking officials whose opinions might be mistaken for statements of policy. Surprisingly, General MacArthur did not have much to say on the subject of employing atomic weapons in Korea or China until after he had become a private citizen. During the investigation into his relief, he told the committee members, “[W]hen you get on the atomic bomb, you have gotten on territory that I can’t comment on. . . . I have never discussed the use of the bomb with [Truman] in any way shape, or manner; so I wouldn’t be able to give you any information whatsoever on the subject. He did, however, say, “The use of the atomic weapon would certainly represent a great reserve potential,” to which he added an acknowledgement of the primacy of civilian rule: “which we could exercise at the discretion of the Commander in Chief.”¹²

And *only* at the discretion of the Commander in Chief. The Atomic Energy act of 1946 had made the President the sole person responsible for atomic weapons in the United States. Truman, who had worked very hard to get the AEA passed, took the burden seriously. He wanted the Korean conflict to remain confined to the Korean peninsula, and he was convinced that employing atomic weapons would provoke an

¹¹ “Atomania,” *The Times of India*, 5 September 1950, 6.

¹² Douglas MacArthur, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 260.

escalatory response from either the PRC or the USSR. He thus was willing to conduct the war without resort the nation's most powerful weapon, a policy that he established very early. At a press conference one month after the conflict began, a reporter asked him, "Mr. President, you have said in the past, several times, that you would not hesitate to use the atomic bomb in case of aggression, are you considering such a step no [*sic*]?" Truman's reply was a simple, "No."¹³

Officials Consider Using the Atomic Bomb in Korea

However, administration officials had discussed the possibility of using atomic weapons in Korea. On the day that the conflict began, key White House, State Department, and Defense Department personnel met to examine how best to respond to it. When the topic of Soviet intervention came up, the president asked about the power of the Soviet air force. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff, replied that the Soviets had "a considerable number" of aircraft in the Far East. Truman asked if the airfields on which they were based could be neutralized. Vandenberg answered that it was possible, but it would take time, adding that it could be done with atomic weapons (whether he meant that process would be slow even if atomic weapons were used, or that

¹³ Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference," 27 July 1950; Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13572>, accessed 31 March 2012; Joseph B. Short, "Truman Denies A-Bomb Plan: Not Considering Use of Weapon in Korea, He Asserts," *The Sun* [Baltimore], 28 July 1950, 1; Anthony Leviero, "Truman Bars Atomic Bomb Now: Says He Fervently Hopes for Peace," *The New York Times*, 28 July 1950, 1.

the use of the a-bomb would accelerate the campaign, is unclear). The conversation then turned to the subject of sending ground forces to Korea.¹⁴

The Americans could not allow the Korean War to distract them from the threat the USSR posed elsewhere in the world. A JCS document dated just after the United States entered the conflict identified four ways the Soviet Union might benefit from the Korean War. One was that the conflict enabled the communists to acquire territory at low cost. Another was that it allowed them to assess American reactions to acts of aggression. The third was that it reduced the prestige and influence of the UN and United States. The last was that it was a “trap sucking the United States into Korean involvement to permit maximum advantages in exploiting elsewhere.”¹⁵

In the summer of 1950 the United States transferred ten atomic bombs to the forward bases at Guam (part of the Far East Command, and thus under MacArthur’s control). This move was not a reaction to the fighting in Asia, but was part of a program that had been “formalized prior to the Korean incident.” These weapons lacked fissionable cores. When the JCS informed MacArthur about the transfer, they noted that the “[s]hipment of nuclear components, requiring 72 hours, plus Presidential decision authorizing use would be necessary before atomic bombs could be employed.”¹⁶ The

¹⁴ Ambassador at Large, memorandum of conversation, 25 June 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 159.

¹⁵ JCS 1924/10 “Intelligence Estimate of Soviet Position with Respect to Korean Situation,” 30 June 1950, 210, in Records of the JCS/46-52/SU.

¹⁶ JCS, telegram to CINFE, 31 July 1951,

http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1950-07-31&documentid=ki-22-24&pagenumber=1, accessed 31 March 2012.

United States also ordered the deployment of atomic-capable bombers to Guam, Okinawa, and Great Britain.¹⁷

The Chinese intervention in the fall of 1950 renewed the debate about the use of atomic bombs in Korea. Most of the citizens who wrote letters to the editors (or most of those whose correspondence were selected for publication) at this time called for the United States to drop atomic bombs on the PRC.¹⁸ One writer suggested threatening “the use of atomic power to form a radioactive screen along the Manchurian border in case the Communists commit more troops or refuse to pull their troops out of North Korea.”¹⁹ Only a handful of citizens opposed using atomic weapons in Asia.²⁰ However, most editorial writers counseled against using atomic bombs in the Far East.²¹ Washington policymakers were equally divided: a headline in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* suggested “Congressmen Split on Use of Atomic Bomb.” The article’s subtitle was “Some Suggest Dropping It on the Kremlin.”²²

The entrance of the PRC into the war compelled the American defense establishment to reconsider the “Possible Employment of Atomic Bombs in Korea,” as a

¹⁷ Robert S. Norris, William M. Arkin, and William Burr, “Where They Were,” *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 55, November/December 1999, 27; Appu K. Soman, *Double-Edged Sword: Nuclear Diplomacy in Unequal Conflicts: the United States and China, 1950-1958* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 62.

¹⁸ Ranch Roewer, “Plan Advocated” (letter to the editor), *The New York Times*, 5 December 1950, 30; Frederick Shannon, “Moral Issue of Atomic Bomb” (letter to the editor), *The New York Times*, 5 December 1950, 30; Gordon R. Zahn, untitled letter to the editor, *The Washington Post*, 6 December 1950, 12.; R. D. Brown, “A-Bombs in China” (letter to the editor), *The Washington Post*, 11 December 1950, 8.

¹⁹ P.T., “Atomic Warning to Red China” (letter to the editor), *The Washington Post*, 10 November 1950, 22.

²⁰ Grace E. Barstow Murphy, “Against Use of Atomic Bomb” (letter to the editor), *The New York Times*, 5 December 1950, 30.

²¹ “Atomic Warning to Red China,” *The Washington Post*, 10 November 1950, 22; “The A-Bomb is Not a Quick, Easy Answer,” *The Hartford Courant*, 29 November 1950, 10; “The Atom Bomb is not the Answer,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 30 November 1950, 22.

²² “Congressmen Split on Use of Atomic Bomb: Some Suggest Dropping It on the Kremlin,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 1 December 1950, 5.

JCS document prepared in late November was titled. This study noted that the United States enjoyed a significant technological advantage in Korea. “[I]t appears that conventional air strikes will be effective in preventing any buildup of enemy forces sufficient to threaten the UN position. . . .” However, the Chinese could obviate American air power with their manpower, which would require the employment of deadlier technologies to compensate. “[I]n the event of an all-out effort by the Chinese Communists, the use of atomic bombs against troop and material concentrations might be the decisive factor in enabling the UN forces to hold a defensive position or to effect the early drive to the Manchurian border.”²³

Truman’s Controversial Press Conference

The PRC’s entrance into the war made the United States’ UN allies nervous. They were concerned that one escalation might beget another, leading to a global war in which they, lacking the geographical isolation the Americans enjoyed, would be consumed. In his memoirs, Truman acknowledged this anxiety. “Just how sensitive and on edge the world had become was demonstrated when the words ‘atomic bomb’ were mentioned at my press conference on 30 November [1950].”²⁴

The incident, which had worldwide repercussions, had begun innocently enough. The conference had been called so that the President could discuss the Chinese intervention, which he described as a “serious crisis.” After making a short statement,

²³ JCS 2173 “Possible Employment of Atomic Bombs in Korea,” 21 November 1950, 2, in *Records of the JCS/46-53/FE*, reel 9, microfilm.

²⁴ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 395.

Truman invited questions from the assembled reporters. Most of the correspondents wanted to know more about what the UNC might do in response to the intervention, such as bombing Manchuria and accepting the ROC's offer of troops. Truman avoided addressing specific courses of action and made it clear that the United States would seek UN approval before doing anything it was not already doing. One reporter asked what MacArthur might do if the UN granted him greater discretion. The President replied by saying, "We will take whatever steps are necessary to meet the military situation."²⁵

"Will that include the atomic bomb?" asked the reporter.

"That includes," answered the President, "every weapon that we have."²⁶

The reporter repeated Truman's words, confirming that the Commander-in-Chief had indeed used the phrase "every weapon we have." Following up, this journalist asked, "Does that mean that there is active consideration of the use of the atomic bomb?" "There has always been active consideration of its use," said Truman. "I don't want to see it used. It is a terrible weapon, and it should not be used on innocent men, women, and children who have nothing whatever to do with this military aggression. That happens when it is used."²⁷

Truman could not have anticipated the reaction his extemporaneous exchange with the reporter would generate. Within the day, however, it became apparent that his statements were being interpreted to mean that the United States was planning to employ

²⁵ Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference," 30 November 1950; Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13673>, accessed 1 April 2012.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

atomic weapons in Korea or Manchuria. Charlie Ross, the President's press secretary, issued a press release the evening of the conference to clarify Truman's remarks.

The President wants to make it certain that there is no misinterpretation of his answers m [*sic*] questions at his press conference today about the use of the atom bomb. Naturally, there has been consideration of this subject since the outbreak of the hostilities in Korea, just as there is consideration of the use of all military weapons whenever our forces are in combat. Consideration of the use of any weapon is always implicit in the very possession of that weapon. However, it should be emphasized, that, by law, only the President can authorize the use of the atom bomb, and no such authorization has been given. If and when such authorization should be given, the military commander in the field would have charge of the tactical delivery of the weapon.

The statement ended with the observation, "In brief, the replies to the questions at today's press conference do not represent any change in this situation."²⁸

Many of the editorials in domestic newspapers written in response to Truman's press conference and the follow-up statement focused on the effect that they would have on the country's international relations. Some held that the administration was too concerned about what foreigners thought. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* declared that "Internationalism Has Betrayed America," and the editors at *Newsday* proclaimed that "[t]he time has surely come when, whether Britain likes it or not, U.S. planes should blast the enemy to dust. . . ."²⁹

Others newspapers recognized that the United States could not act unilaterally. The title of an editorial in *The Hartford Courant* declared, "We need Unity, Power—and Allies."³⁰ *The Christian Science Monitor* understood the "concern on the part of Great

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Internationalism Has Betrayed America," *The Chicago Tribune*, 2 December 1950, 8; "Time for the A-Bomb?," *Newsday*, 1 December 1950, 47.

³⁰ "We need Unity, Power—and Allies," *The Hartford Courant*, 1 December 1950, 14.

Britain, France, and other countries of Europe and Asia whose friendly support in the United Nations is of utmost importance to America.”³¹ *The Washington Post*’s editors offered an explanation for why the people who lived within range of the Soviet Union’s army might not see the atomic bomb as the Americans perceived it—as a shield or umbrella. “One of the neatest tricks of Russian propaganda has been to convince people that there is something morally reprehensible in the atomic bomb not found in other instruments of warfare.”³²

The response from overseas was immediate. The foreign press published a number of editorials on the subject, all of which urged caution and strongly condemned the idea of using atomic weapons in Asia.³³ In an editorial called “Tragedy of Errors,” *The Jerusalem Post* noted that “[t]he misconceptions and self-delusions which are sweeping humanity towards scientific self-obliteration must be dispelled.”³⁴

Foreign diplomats were equally concerned. The American representative to the United Nations, Warren R. Austin, spent much of the day speaking to foreign diplomats and assessing their reactions. Reporting to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the next day, Austin noted that “if [the atomic] bomb [is] used, [the] effect on US relations would be disastrous for years to come.” A number of Europeans expressed their concern that

³¹ “As the Radioactivity Clears,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2 December 1950, 18.

³² “Bomb Morality,” *The Washington Post*, 1 December 1950, 22.

³³ “Commotion,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 December 1950, 8; “Korean Crisis,” *The Scotsman*, 1 December 1950, “Atomic Bomb,” *The Times of India*, 2 December 1950, 6.

³⁴ “Tragedy of Errors,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 3 December 1950, 4.

Truman had blundered greatly. “[Julius] Federer, German observer, felt [that the] threat or even [the] use of [the] A-Bomb would solve nothing.”³⁵

Truman recognized that America’s European allies had genuine cause for concern. “The possibility of general war . . . was much more frightening to the inhabitants of Paris and London—barely recovered as they were from the ravages of the last war—than to a great many Americans who had not been subjected to the destruction of their cities.” Many Europeans feared that their continent would be the primary battleground in any future conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Without careful management, Korea could escalate into such a conflict. As Truman observed, “Europeans generally assumed that a new war would be a battle of atomic weapons, and the slightest mention of atomic bombs was enough to make them jittery.”³⁶

Even after the clarification was issued, America’s allies were still concerned about the Korean situation. Truman recalled that “news reports persisted that I had threatened to use the A-bomb in Korea.”³⁷ In his memoirs, Secretary of State Acheson recalled that “in London the House of Commons, engaged in a five-day foreign policy debate, received an erroneous report that General MacArthur might be given discretion to use the atomic weapon.”³⁸

The Times of London reported the debate in some detail. It noted that one Member of Parliament (MP), a member of the Labour Party, had heard that, subject to

³⁵ United States Representative to the United Nations, telegram to the Secretary of State, 1 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1300. Julius Federer was a high-ranking magistrate in the West German justice system.

³⁶ Truman, *Memoirs*, 395.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), 478.

UN approval, Truman might use the atomic bomb in Korea. He wondered if “there was some exaggeration or misinterpretation. . . . If so, he hoped that some explanation was being put out quickly. . . . [A] great deal of harm had already been done and alarm caused.”³⁹ MacArthur was a servant of the United Nations, he noted, and should not be allowed to “initiate any project which might further endanger the east.” Another MP said that “the civilized world would not readily forgive the use of the atom bomb at present on the open cities of China,” a pronouncement which produced cheers in the House.⁴⁰

Many of the MPs expressed dissatisfaction with the state of Anglo-American relations, accusing Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, of not being alert or forceful enough to prevent the Americans from making a unilateral decision about the use of atomic weapons in the Far East.⁴¹ One MP thought that a higher authority should present the UK’s position to the United States. He “appealed to the Prime Minister [Clement Atlee] to go, not to Moscow—for [Britons] wanted no Munich or Berchtesgarten—but to Washington immediately to satisfy the nation that our destinies were being conducted by those people in whom they had the fullest confidence.”⁴² In

³⁹ Tom Driberg, précis of remarks in ““Use of Atomic Bomb: Mr. Truman’s Alleged Statement,” *The Times* [London], 1 December 1950, 4.

⁴⁰ J. Silverman, précis of remarks in “Use of Atomic Bomb: Mr. Truman’s Alleged Statement,” *The Times* [London], 1 December 1950, 4.

⁴¹ “Use of Atomic Bomb: Mr. Truman’s Alleged Statement,” *The Times* [London], 1 December 1950, 4.

⁴² J.B. Hynd, précis of remarks in ““Use of Atomic Bomb: Mr. Truman’s Alleged Statement,” *The Times* [London], 1 December 1950, 4.

his memoirs, Truman recalled later that “one hundred Labor MP’s signed a letter to Prime Minister Atlee to protest the possibility of the use of the atomic bomb.”⁴³

Atlee was himself so troubled by Truman’s gaffe that he flew to Washington to speak to the President personally. Although other matters were discussed, his primary concern was the possible use of nuclear weapons in Korea. Truman’s memoirs contains the following account of their meeting: “He asked me if my recent press-conference statement had been intended to be a hint of some sort that perhaps we were giving more active thought to using the bomb. I assured him that nothing of the sort was intended and told him in detail how the statement came to be made.”⁴⁴

However, the Prime Minister sought more than reassurance from the President. Acheson recalled that “[Atlee] wished Britain to be admitted to some participation with us in any future decision to use nuclear weapons.”⁴⁵ All that came from the meeting was a vague promise that the United States would “consult” Great Britain before using atomic bombs. No formal and binding agreement was ever produced.

One reason why the British made such an effort to assert their role in the UNC decision-making process was that the UK had been a global power for two centuries but had seen its influence on world affairs eroding since the end of World War Two. The United States was also affected by the post-1945 anti-colonial movement in Africa and Asia. The USA had been founded by Europeans, and most of its population was of

⁴³ Truman, *Memoirs*, 396.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁴⁵ Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 481.

European heritage. China and Korea were Asian nations and many thought that the Americans' attitude towards atomic weapons displayed elements of racialism.

Among those who expressed this concern were the Indians, who had just three years earlier rid themselves of British rule by applying the principles of non-violence and civil disobedience advocated by Mohandas K. Gandhi and others. "This Gandhi-ism partly explains the revulsion [in India] for the mass killing and destruction in Korea even though India joined the United States in its United Nations stand against the aggressor," wrote journalist Marquis Childs a month before the PRC entered the conflict.⁴⁶ Childs noted that the Indians were sensitive to the casual racialism of Westerners.

The remark Gen MacArthur made, and was widely printed here, saying that the sight of dead North Koreans was good for his old eyes caused a highly unfavorable reaction. This is also related to the suspicion that the West considers Asiatics expendable and that the desire of Europe and perhaps America is to fight the war against Communism in Asia where weapons of mass destruction, such as the atomic bomb, can be used.⁴⁷

Nehru was convinced that World War Three would bring about the end of civilization, hence his careful policy of neutralism in world affairs.

The Indians were not the only ones to suspect Westerners of making war against Asians by means that they would not choose when fighting each other. Many Asian national leaders thought that it was no coincidence that Germany had been spared atomic bombing during World War Two while Japan had suffered not one but two such attacks during the conflict (that the atomic bomb had not been available until after VE-Day did

⁴⁶ Marquis Childs, "Why Nehru is against more Fighting in Asia: India's Leader Tells Globe Writer that Third World War would mean a Reversion to Barbarism over Large Areas of the Earth," *The Boston Globe*, 18 October 1950, 16.

⁴⁷ Ibid. The word "Asiatic" was the preferred English term for the peoples of Asia in the 1950s. It has since been deemed racially insensitive.

not signify). In early November 1950 after the Chinese entered the war but before President Truman's unfortunate press conference, John Emmerson, the planning advisor of the State Department's Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, informed Dean Rusk that the feeling in Asia was that "the A-bomb has the status of a peculiar monster conceived by American cunning and its use by us, in whatever circumstances, would be exploited to our serious detriment." He went on to observe that if nuclear bombs were used in Korea or Manchuria, "fears that we reserve atomic weapons exclusively for Japanese and Chinese would be confirmed, [and] our own efforts to win the Asiatics to our side would be cancelled. . . ." ⁴⁸

Not surprisingly, Asian leaders and diplomats reacted strongly to Truman's press conference comment. The day after it occurred, Warren R. Austin at the UN informed his superiors that "several Arab delegates went out of their way to convey [the] fear, as expressed to them by Asian delegates, that [the] A-bomb might be dropped again on [an] Asian people." Ironically and significantly, the Israelis agreed with the Arabs that Ross' clarification had done little to dispel the impression that the United States was preparing to employ nuclear weapons in Korea. ⁴⁹ Two days later, the Assistant Secretary of State for UN Affairs, John Hickeson, reported that "Nehru believes that it is a matter of absolute necessity to avoid use of the atomic bomb." ⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1100. Policy Planning advisor, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, memorandum to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, 8 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1098, 1100.

⁴⁹ United States Representative to the UN, telegram to the Secretary of State, 1 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1300.

⁵⁰ Assistant Secretary of State for UN Affairs, memorandum of telephone conversation, 3 December 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1334.

The Americans knew that “the decision to use atomic weapons is a fateful responsibility,” as a State Department document prepared in the spring of 1951 noted. It went on to observe that

[the] United States is the only nation ever to use atomic weapons in war. When we used them, no other nation had them and consequently there was no possibility of retaliation in kind. Now . . . if we use them, they will almost certainly be used against us. . . . Furthermore, our allies would be likely targets for atomic attack, particularly those in whose territory we have air base rights.

As a result, employing atomic weapons in Korea or anywhere else would require great resolve. “It is of course essential that U.S. public opinion be behind the Government in a global (atomic) war.”⁵¹ Such support would probably not be easy to obtain, given how divided the country was regarding bombing Korea with atomic weapons (a national poll in late 1951 indicated forty percent of Americans favored the idea and thirty-seven percent opposed it).⁵² Persuading the people of American allies would be much less easy, but was necessary. “[I]t is also of incalculable importance that public opinion in allied countries be with us.”⁵³

⁵¹ Carlton Savage (of the Policy Planning Staff), memorandum, 23 May 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 834.

⁵² Gallup Poll (AIPO), November 1951; iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html, accessed 2 April 2012). The question was “Do you think the United Nations Forces should or should not use the atom bomb on enemy military targets in Korea?” Forty percent of respondents said “should,” thirty-seven said “should not,” ten percent had no opinion, ten percent said “qualified should,” seven percent said “qualified should not,” and one percent offered a “qualified” no opinion.

⁵³ Carlton Savage (of the Policy Planning Staff), memorandum, 23 May 1951, in *FRUS* 1951-7, 834.

Practical Considerations of Using the Atomic Bomb in Korea

Had the Americans been able to persuade their UN allies that it was necessary to employ atomic weapons in Korea, they still would have had a number of other obstacles to overcome. In addition to the logistical problems described in Chapters III and IV—the shortage of bombs, atomic-capable bombers, and bomb assembly teams—they would also have other problems. One is that the USAF would have had great difficulty delivering atomic bombs.

The communist air defenses proved more effective than many Americans had believed prior to the war (see Chapter II). The Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-15 fighter jet took a heavy toll on B-29 bombers operating in the far northern reaches of the Korean peninsula. Even with jet fighter escorts, B-29 losses in Korea were so heavy that a year after the MiG-15 was introduced (the same time the Chinese entered the conflict) the USAF eventually restricted the Superfortress to night missions.⁵⁴ The performances of the other American propeller-driven bombers capable of carrying atomic weapons, the B-50 and B-36, were superior to that of the Superfortress, but not by much. The MiG-15 served in the Soviet, Chinese, and North Korean air forces, raising serious doubts about the USAF's ability to deliver atomic weapons against any nation equipped with jet interceptors.⁵⁵ Until the jet bombers then being designed could replace the piston-engined B-29, B-50, and B-36 upon which the American plans for war with the Soviet Union relied—which would take time, and the Americans did not want to remain in

⁵⁴ Armitage and Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age*, 2nd ed., 35; Crate, *Americans Air Power Strategy*, 86.

⁵⁵ A. W. Jessup, "MiG-15 Dims A-Bomb Hopes," *Aviation Week*, 4 February 1952, 16.

Korea longer than they had to—the USAF had to conserve its bomber inventory (which is one of the reasons why only B-29s saw action in Korea—“The U.S.A.F. just didn’t want to waste its first-line equipment in Korea,” one aviator grumbled).⁵⁶ The Korean experience revealed that American plans for global war against the Soviet Union might be even less easy to accomplish than had originally been feared. “Certainly, the capability of continuous atomic-bombing [*sic*] is . . . much less than it was prior to the Korean War. Perhaps the best that can be hoped for is a successful, one-time atomic attack,” related *Aviation Week’s* correspondent in Korea.⁵⁷

Fortunately for Truman and the USAF, the Korean theatre offered few targets appropriate for atomic attacks. Indeed, North Korea lacked targets suitable for any sort of strategic bombing. The USAF had difficulty finding uses for its B-29 bombers carrying conventional weapons. “Within eight days after the outbreak of war in Korea, B-29s . . . were dropping bombs in North Korea. Within a matter of weeks they had destroyed the few strategic targets in North Korea.”⁵⁸ If there was not enough military and economic activity in North Korea to warrant a full-scale strategic bombing campaign with conventional weapons, there certainly was not enough such activity to make atomic bombing worthwhile. As air power advocate Alexander de Seversky observed shortly after the war began, “There are no genuine strategic targets in Korea.”⁵⁹

Because there were so few industrial and economic targets in the DPRK, the American heavy bombers often struck at tactical targets instead. The B-29, designed for

⁵⁶ Joe Hilliard, quoted in Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 263.

⁵⁷ Jessup, “MiG-15 Dims A-Bomb Hopes,” 16.

⁵⁸ “Air Policy Still Rests on Strategic Bomber,” *Aviation Week*, 25 February 1952, 25.

⁵⁹ Alexander de Seversky, *Air Power: Key to Survival* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1950), 2.

the role of strategic bombing, was “not considered the ideal aircraft for [tactical missions], but it [was] available in large numbers” and made to do.⁶⁰ Of course, like the B-29, atomic weapons could be used tactically. In November 1950, Paul Nitze, Director of the Policy Planning Staff of the Department of State, discussed the possible uses of atomic weapons with Army General Herbert Loper, the armed forces’ liaison with the AEC. After their meeting Nitze wrote in a memorandum that “if the [atomic] bomb were used in Korea it would be for tactical purposes.” Yet Nitze recognized that there would be few opportunities for its employment, noting that “such targets would . . . have to be created. . . .” How they were to be created was not explained. A large number of enemy troops, aircraft, or ships would have to be concentrated in a relatively small area to make the use of tactical nuclear weapons worthwhile. It seems unlikely, however, that either the Chinese or the North Koreans would allow themselves to get into such a situation. “Very few atomic bombs could be used as few targets could be created,” Nitze concluded.⁶¹

Of course, such situations could develop spontaneously. American military intelligence identified four occasions during the course of the war in which potential targets for tactical atomic weapons existed. All four were large assemblages of ground forces and all took place in the six weeks between 24 November 1950, shortly after the communist Chinese entered the conflict, and 8 January 1951, after which the Chinese had distributed themselves more evenly throughout the theatre. Of course, “intelligence

⁶⁰ Alpheus W. Jessup, "Flexibility Seen as Air Power Key," *Aviation Week*, 10 September 1951, 18.

⁶¹ Paul Nitze (Director of the Policy Planning Staff), memorandum, 4 November 1950, in *FRUS* 1950-7, 1041.

did not establish the existence of the [first two] hostile concentrations . . . until they were breaking up” and the third and fourth masses of communist troops were located too close to American and UN positions for atomic bombs to have been employed without risking serious casualties to friendly forces.⁶² Never again would such opportunities present themselves.

Yet even if the Americans had identified these potential targets, they still might have refrained from using atomic weapons. The United Nations had entered the war in an effort to repel the DPRK invasion of South Korea but its mission changed to the unification of the two Koreas. The entire peninsula was thus, ostensibly, the territory of an ally. Why, then, asked the editor of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* in 1950, would the UNC indiscriminately use atomic bombs anywhere in Korea? Did it make sense “to destroy communist-occupied Seoul, the capital of the South Korean republic, whose freedom and independence we are defending?” He concluded that it would not. “We would be facing the question of how to protect a country from subjugation, or liberate a country already subjugated . . . without decimating its people and destroying their wealth, their homes, and their beloved ancient cities and monuments.”⁶³ J. Lawton Collins expressed a similar concern during the MacArthur Hearings. Although he was discussing conventional bombings, the Army Chief of Staff told senators, “We were genuinely concerned—and this again is a combination of both political and military, which I say cannot be wholly separated—we were concerned about the conditions that

⁶² Futrell, *USAF in Korea*, revised ed., 701-702.

⁶³ Eugene Rabinowitch, "Atomic Weapons and the Korean War," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July 1950, 194.

might exist in North Korea with respect to the reaction of the North Korean people toward a quick and early cessation of the fighting if we were to just bomb their cities.”⁶⁴

Albert Gore, a Democratic representative from Tennessee, did not take the needs and desires of Koreans into account when just after the relief of General MacArthur he made public the contents of a letter he had written to the President. “After removing all Koreans therefrom,” he wrote,

dehumanize a belt across the Korean peninsula by surface radiological contamination [and] place in readiness and in the Far East availability such variety of atomic bombs . . . as might be necessary to repulse a submarine attack on our naval forces or an attempted invasion of Japan either of which . . . justify use of the atomic bomb.⁶⁵

Truman himself did not publicly respond to the letter. However, another Democrat, Senator Brien McMahon of Connecticut, the Chairman of the Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, pointed out a number of issues that made Gore’s suggestion impracticable.⁶⁶

Eisenhower’s Attitudes toward Using the Atomic Bomb in Korea

Truman was not the only president to receive such advice. Shortly after the 1952 elections, General MacArthur made a similar suggestion in a private conference with president-elect Eisenhower and his presumptive Secretary of State nominee, John Foster

⁶⁴ Collins, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 1362.

⁶⁵ “Atomic Death Belt Urged for Korea: Radiological Contamination of Line across Peninsula Asked by Gore to Bar Red Attack.” *The New York Times*, 17 April 1951, 3. Gore later served as one of Tennessee’s senators. His son, Albert Gore, Jr., better known as “Al,” also represented Tennessee as a congressman and senator, and later became vice president under Bill Clinton.

⁶⁶ “Atomic Belt Plan Held Not feasible: McMahon Tells of Difficulties Facing Gore’s Proposal for Radioactive Area in Korea,” *The New York Times*, 18 April 1951, 16.

Dulles. If the communists did not withdraw from North Korea, MacArthur suggested, the United States could clear the peninsula by “the atomic bombing of enemy military concentrations and installations in North Korea and the sowing of fields of suitable radio-active materials . . . to close major lines of enemy supply and communications leading south from the Yalu.”⁶⁷ “Ike” did not implement this recommendation, yet he also did not, as will be described later, reflexively reject the idea of using atomic weapons in Korea. It was the absence of suitable targets that would stymie him.

Lacking targets and populated with the victims of a communist government, North Korea was an unsuitable environment for the employment of atomic weapons. Mainland China was equally bereft of targets, or at least the Chinese thought so. Shortly after the UN landing at Inchon, Kavalam M. Panikkar, the Indian ambassador to the PRC, had a chance to speak with General Nieh Yen-Jung, acting Chief of Staff of the Chinese army. Nieh, talking about the possibility of Chinese intervention in the war and the risks of conflict with the United States, said, “The Americans can bomb us, they can destroy our industries. . . . They may even drop atomic bombs on us. What then? They may kill a few million people.” Panikkar asked if the Chinese could truly withstand the widespread destruction caused by atomic warfare. Nieh’s reply was, “China lives on the farms. What can atom bombs do there?”⁶⁸

A short time later, when Truman implied he was considering the employment of atomic bombs in Asia, Panikkar noted that within the PRC itself the only apparent

⁶⁷ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 411.

⁶⁸ K. M. Panikkar, *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955), 108.

response to Truman's words were an increase in anti-American propaganda and the construction of bomb shelters along the city walls of Beijing. His diary offers insight into the attitude of the Chinese. He observed that "they know that they have but few industries to be destroyed and equally they know the bombs the Americans may make for a hundred years will not be sufficient to destroy the manpower of China."⁶⁹

Nevertheless, there were American military officers—who presumably knew what sort of targets the PRC offered—who thought that communist China could and should be bombed. On 19 January 1951, Major General Emmett "Rosie" O'Donnell, having returned to the United States after serving as commander of the Far East Air Forces Bomber Command, gave an interview in which he implied that the United States should have used atomic weapons against the Chinese after the intervention. Aware of the reaction to Truman's press conference six weeks earlier, O'Donnell "skirted carefully any pointed proposal that the atomic bomb be used against the Chinese Communists."⁷⁰ However, when "[a]sked directly if he thought the atomic bomb should be used, General O'Donnell replied: 'I personally believe we should have cracked them and cracked them hard as soon as it was determined it was the Chinese Communist army attacking us. . . .'"⁷¹ General Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff, when asked about O'Donnell's remarks, replied, "Obviously, he doesn't speak for the Air Force."⁷² "Rosie" was summoned to Air Force headquarters to discuss his statements with

⁶⁹ Ibid., 119. .

⁷⁰ Gladwin Hill, "O'Donnell Favors Using All Weapons: Bomber Head in Korea Implies Backing Atom Bomb Against Chinese Communists," *The New York Times*, 19 January 1951, 7.

⁷¹ Emmett O'Donnell, quoted in Gladwin Hill, "O'Donnell Favors Using All Weapons: Bomber Head in Korea Implies Backing Atom Bomb Against Chinese Communists," *The New York Times*, 19 January 1951, 7.

⁷² "Draws Vandenberg Rebuke," *The New York Times*, 19 January 1950, 7.

Vandenberg.⁷³ He was exonerated.⁷⁴ Perhaps he told Vandenberg what he would later tell senators during the MacArthur Hearings (one of the few references to atomic weapons in the 3,000-plus pages of testimony). O'Donnell claimed that he had been misrepresented. "I was quoted as having said that I advocated the immediate use of the atomic bomb, and of course I did not advocate that because that is the President's prerogative and I am in the service long enough not to assume his prerogatives." When he said that the United States should use every weapon at its disposal, he "meant any weapon that we could spare at the time the Chinese made their invasion."⁷⁵ He said that he did not use the word "atomic" and added that he did not know whether the United States had any atomic weapons available for use in the Far East.

O'Donnell's mention of the presidential prerogative was a reference to the American policy of civilian control of the military, in which Truman firmly believed, as evidenced by calling a special session of Congress to introduce the legislation creating the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). In his memoirs, he noted, "In the message I sent to Congress . . . I strongly emphasized the peacetime uses of atomic energy and for that reason I felt that it should not be controlled by the military."⁷⁶ Senator Arthur S. Vandenberg of Michigan (the uncle of General Vandenberg) introduced an amendment that would set up a military board that, in Truman's opinion, "would duplicate the proposed Atomic Energy Commission." The president reiterated his ideas in a press conference on 14 March 1946, saying,

⁷³ "Air Force Calls O'Donnell On His Bombing Remarks," *The New York Times*, 20 January 1951, 3.

⁷⁴ Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 61.

⁷⁵ Emmett O'Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3074.

⁷⁶ Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 3.

The full responsibility for [the] development of atomic energy . . . should rest with the civilian group directly responsible to the President. Now the President is the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States in the first place; and the civilian board under him would in no way hamper the military in their proper function.⁷⁷

The AEC, a commission of five civilians, supplanted the US Army's Manhattan Engineering District as the government entity responsible for the nation's nuclear plants and atomic weapon stockpiles.⁷⁸

Thus the transfer of atomic bomb components to Guam in the summer of 1950, as described earlier, was done only with Truman's express authorization. Similarly, the deployment of the bombs' atomic cores to Guam the following spring, although initiated by a request from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, could not take place until Truman had approved the move.⁷⁹ The warheads were formally transferred to the JCS, in the person of Air Force Chief of Staff Vandenberg, in June.⁸⁰

The need for getting presidential permission to take any action concerning atomic bombs had its shortcomings, however, as occurred in the autumn of 1951 when the USAF conducted Operation "Hudson Harbor," an exercise testing the preparedness of the United States' atomic forces to deliver atomic weapons. Four times, B-29s of the Strategic Air Command made simulated atomic bombing raids over North Korea.⁸¹ The exercise demonstrated that the crews were not well prepared to conduct atomic

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 6-7.

⁷⁸ Anthony Leviero, "Lilienthal Heads Atom Body; Control Passes From Army: Truman Appoints Five-man Commission—Pledges U.S. to Devote Development of Atomic Energy to Peaceful Aims," *The New York Times*, 29 October 1946, 1.

⁷⁹ Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy during the Korean War," 72-73.

⁸⁰ Norris *et al.*, "Where They Were," 29.

⁸¹ Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 71.

missions.⁸² To make the Hudson Harbor exercise as realistic as possible, the participants waited three and a half hours after loading the aircraft with atomic bombs to represent the time needed to secure authority to continue the mission.⁸³ Eventually, the procedures were determined to be too unwieldy for actual wartime operations. On 30 June 1953, President Eisenhower reversed the Truman policy by authorizing the semi-permanent transfer of some but not all assembled atomic bombs to the armed forces.⁸⁴

Eisenhower and his cabinet differed from the Truman administration in how they viewed atomic weapons. During a meeting of the National Security Council shortly after he took office, Eisenhower introduced the subject of using tactical atomic weapons against the North Korean city of Kaesong, “which provided a good target for this type of weapon” (in a later meeting, he noted that Korea did not have many other good targets for atomic bombs).⁸⁵ General Bradley thought the new administration might have difficulty persuading the UN to agree. The Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, observed that the Soviets had had been successful in getting other nations to set “Atomic weapons apart from all other weapons as a special category.”⁸⁶ The president then said that American prestige was at stake, and that if any allies objected to the use of atomic

⁸² James I. Matray, ed. *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War*, s.v. “Operation Hudson Harbor.”

⁸³ Crane, *Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 71.

⁸⁴ Soman, *Double-Edged Sword*, 37.

⁸⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, précis of remarks, in memorandum of Discussion at the 113th Meeting of the National Security Council, 11 February 1953, in *FRUS* 1953-1954-15, 770; Memorandum of Discussion at a Special Meeting of the National Security Council, 31 March 1953, in *FRUS* 1953-1954-15, 826.

⁸⁶ John Foster Dulles, précis of remarks, in Memorandum of Discussion at the 113th Meeting of the National Security Council,

bombs they should be asked “to supply two or three divisions . . . to drive the Communists back.”⁸⁷

A few months later, Eisenhower asked General Bradley whether the airfields in North Korea would be good targets for atomic bombardment. The airfields were an issue in the armistice negotiations then underway. It had been agreed that neither side would be able to introduce new airplanes into Korea after the ceasefire became effective, and the United States was doing its best to keep all of the airbases in North Korea out of commission to prevent the communists from getting any aircraft into Korea at all. Bombed-out airfields were kept under constant surveillance and attacked if it appeared that they were being rebuilt. Bradley stated that the aerodromes were not suitable for atom bombs. The president stated that he “had reached the point of being convinced that [he and his officials had] to consider the atomic bomb as simply another weapons.”⁸⁸ It was, to him, merely a more powerful explosive and did not deserve the mystique that had developed around it.

The armistice became effective on 27 July 1953. The communists were never able to transfer any aircraft onto the North Korean airfields. Nor were they, or any other location in North Korea, ever subjected to atomic bomb attacks.

⁸⁷ Eisenhower, précis of remarks, in Discussion at the 113th Meeting of the National Security Council, 11 February 1953, in *FRUS* 1953-1954-15, 770.

⁸⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, précis of remarks, in Memorandum of Discussion at the 143rd Meeting of the National Security Council, 6 May 1953, in *FRUS* 1953-1954-15, 976.

Post-Korean War Atomic Plans

However, the Americans never waived their right to do so should circumstances warrant. They did not entirely trust the Chinese communists to abide by the terms of the ceasefire. A memorandum prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff a short time later explored how the American might react “in the event that hostilities in Korea are renewed by the Communists in the near future.” In keeping with the American preference for long-distance, strategic warfare (essentially, aerial warfare), the first item on a list of four actions to perform in a new Korean War was:

Employing atomic weapons, conduct offensive air operations against military targets in Korea, and against those military targets in Manchuria and China which are being used by the Communists in direct support of their operations in Korea or which threaten the security of US/UN forces in the Korean area.

This campaign would then be followed by combined land, sea, and air actions in Korea. Additionally, if need be, the Chinese coast could be blockaded, offshore islands could be seized, and Chinese Nationalist forces could be employed to conduct raids on the mainland.⁸⁹ These actions were to be taken to defeat the PRC in Korea, reduce the Chinese communists’ ability to commit further aggression against Korea, and prepare the ROK to defend itself.

The boldness of the program outlined above must have been a relief to many of those who read it, for it acquitted the United States of any responsibility for escalation. The PRC would have had to bear the blame. “The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognize that

⁸⁹ JCS, memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, 18 December 1953, in Charles E. Wilson, letter to the Secretary of State, 23 December 1953, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-15, 1674.

any positive course of action to oppose renewed Communist aggression in Korea might involve increased risk of World War III. However, if the Communists attack our forces in Korea [the Americans maintained a significant presence in South Korea after the war], there is no suitable alternative. . . .”⁹⁰ The Americans could conduct the second Korean War unrestrainedly, free from the limitations that had bound them during the first one.

For the thirty-seven months that the Korean War lasted, American military planners had had to improvise a new set of rules for warfare. They were denied the full benefits of the single most powerful weapon in their arsenal—atomic air power—because it was inappropriate for the situation. Restricted aerial warfare was, to Americans, a contradiction in terms. The NSC’s plan for a second Korean War, tentative, brief, and general though it was, represented a return to the type of warfare the American defense establishment understood and had planned for since before the Korean War—all that had changed was the enemy. The Korean Conflict had been an aberration. It had passed, and there was little that could be learned from it.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 1674-1675.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSIONS

The Korean War took place during a time of two significant transitions in military aviation. It was both the first limited war and the first in which jet aircraft were deployed in significant numbers. The second of these has led to the characterization of the Korea War as “The First Jet War” and has overshadowed the more important transition from total to limited war. Because this technological shift has received so much attention, the other transition has gone almost unnoticed.¹ Yet this other change represents a significant change in how wars are fought, and was the direct result of the Korean Conflict. The Korean War was a limited war, the first after almost a century of total wars, and both forms of warfare are defined by how air power is employed.²

¹ Robin Higham, whose survey of the history of air power has appeared in three editions, is among those who emphasize the technological significance of Korea. He denies categorically that the Korean War has any other importance: “It presented a number of novel circumstances, as the first war in which jets tangled. The air operations in the war, however, did not really contribute much to air-power concepts other than to prove once again that slow bombers cannot operate in daylight in the face of jet fighters, and that speeds in a dogfight remain relative.” The only other item of interest about Korea for Higham was the concept of mutual sanctuary.

The passage above was taken from the third rewriting, but the previous editions express the same sentiment in similar language. Robin Higham, *100 Years of Air Power and Aviation*, 240; Robin Higham, *Air Power: A Concise History*, 2nd ed., 147; Robin Higham, *Air Power: A Concise History*, 216.

² This statement needs to be qualified, as it is somewhat exaggerated for rhetorical effect. A more precise way of expressing the idea it is intended to convey would be that the Korean War was the first *major* limited war of the air age. The truth is that air power had been employed in limited wars almost since the airplane was invented. Indeed, the first war in which aircraft were employed, the Italo-Turkish War of 1911, was limited. The belligerents did not commit all of their resources to the war. But that conflict, and all of the limited wars before 1950 involving aircraft (such as Haiti in 1919, Afghanistan in 1928, the Chaco War of 1935-1939, Khalkin-Gol in 1939, and the War of Israeli Independence in 1948), are rarely considered part of the main sequence of aerial warfare, as will be explained in greater detail further below.

The portion claiming that total wars are defined by the use of air power, while at the same time stating that total warfare had been practiced for nearly a century before Korea (thus beginning fifty years before the invention of the airplane), is similarly hyperbolic.

Total warfare targets not only enemy military organizations but the national economies that support them, which are directly accessible only through the air. Limited wars are fought directly against a nation's naval and military forces. Total wars are fought for an easily definable objective: regime change (often rendered as "unconditional surrender"). The aims of limited wars are less easy to identify but often entail attempts to get a hostile power (not necessarily a government) to change its behavior.³ Another difference is that a nation waging total war applies its every resource to a conflict. A limited war does not require such a commitment. For this reason, it is difficult for a nation's leaders to manage limited wars. They must judge what proportion of their available military, economic, demographic, and other assets to assign to the conflict. Too few may lead to defeat while too many is uneconomical and, more significantly, may be escalatory and could lead to total war.

Total warfare is a product of the industrial era—the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) and American Civil War (1861-1865) are cited as early examples—but it was not until the invention of the airplane that total wars were truly "total," becoming so destructive that a less devastating form of resolving international disagreements became desired. Strategic air power allowed nations to bypass an opposing nation's armies and navies and strike directly at the source of its armed strength, its economy, making it possible for belligerents "to strike not only at the *users* of armaments but at the *makers* of armaments [emphasis in original]."⁴ As a result, not just soldiers and sailors but

³ Roger Horky, "Six Ways of Aerial Warfare," paper presented to the 78th Annual Conference for the Society for Military History; Lisle, Illinois; 10-12 June 2011.

⁴ Spaight, *Air Power and War Rights*, 43

civilians could experience the horrors of war. This understanding led to several attempts to outlaw air attacks against civilian populations in the decades before World War Two, but without success.⁵

Just as air power made limited war necessary, it defines it. Limited warfare expresses itself primarily as limited aerial war. Land and sea forces are by their natures constrained. There are many places they cannot go. They are also generally restricted to using weapons of local effect. As a result, surface forces engaged in limited wars have few opportunities to provoke total wars, except in special circumstances.

Air power, on the other hand, must be actively constrained. It is inherently unlimited, able to go almost anywhere and attack almost anything, and can employ weapons of immense destructive power because the delivery vehicles are able to escape their effects.⁶ These factors led American lawmaker Leroy Johnson to proclaim in 1953 that “[a]ir wars cannot be localized. It is hard to get many intelligent people to understand that holding a line is not valid for air warfare. The atmosphere covers the whole earth. The atmosphere is where air warfare is carried on.”⁷

The relationship between total warfare and strategic air power has been well established. The history of air power is often presented as the story of the development of strategic bombing, the primary expression of economic warfare from the air.⁸ The connection between air power and limited warfare has not been articulated at all. The

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ During the Cold War, several nations developed atomic artillery shells. Most had a range of less than five miles, although one Soviet projectile could be fired fifteen miles.

⁷ 83 Cong. Rec. A2092 (1953) (extension of remarks by Rep. [Justin] Leroy Johnson, entirety of speech made to Aviation Writers’ Association on 14 April 1953).

⁸ As evidenced by the subtitle of Johnson and Cozens’ book, *Bombers: The Weapon of Total War*.

story of strategic bombing climaxed during World War Two, which ended in 1945, five years before the Korean War began. Because later conflicts have not been part of the continuity of strategic bombing, they are difficult to account for in the traditional narrative of aerial warfare, and are often ignored, or nearly so

Yet there have been no total wars since 1945. The wars in which air power has been applied over the last six decades have all been limited. The Korean War was the first of these conflicts, and thus established the pattern of those that followed (although few understood that it had for many decades). Many of its lessons are still applicable today, and consequently it deserves more attention than it has received thus far.

However, the shift from total to limited warfare that took place in Korea was unanticipated and, like many critical transitions in history, not recognized at the time it was occurring (which is one reason it remains underappreciated by both military professionals and scholars). As a result, the Korean War was a difficult experience for the air arms involved, of which the most of important, by far, was the United States Air Force (USAF). This organization had become an independent branch of the American defense establishment just three years before the Korean War began. It was not its newness that caused the USAF to experience difficulty making the transition from total to limited war, however. The USAF had been created out of an existing service, the United States Army Air Force (USAAF), which had gained extensive combat experience during the Second World War. Indeed, the independent status of the USAF is often described as a “reward” for the USAAF’s accomplishments, particularly its strategic

bombing operations, during the 1939-1945 conflict.⁹ But the Army Air Force had perhaps performed too well in that war, causing many to assume that the next time the United States went to war, the USAF would conduct its operations in much the same way that the USAAF had conducted its World War Two campaigns.

This belief grew stronger after 1945, when most Americans believed that their next war would be with the Soviet Union. As the USSR was both vast and remote, air power appeared to be the only means by which the United States could strike at the Soviet Union in the event of the Cold War turning hot. A presidential commission assigned to investigate the United States' defensive posture after World War Two proclaimed, "[W]e believe that . . . the country must have a new strategic concept for its defense and that the core of this concept must be air power."¹⁰ Accordingly, the USAF suffered the least from the United States' postwar budget and manpower cuts.

Indeed, it grew stronger. Aviation technology advances rapidly and thus air arms must constantly improve their equipment to remain competitive with any potential opponents. The two most significant additions to the USAF's strategic bombing equipment in the late 1940s were the Consolidated B-36 and the atomic bomb (the jet engine would not be a factor until the mid-1950s). The former was a new type of bomber designed for intercontinental missions possessing a payload and range far greater than those of any previous bomber. The latter was a weapon so destructive that a

⁹ Although the USAF did not come into existence until 1947, many books identifying themselves as histories of that service include the activities of the USAAF as well. For examples, see Carroll V. Glines, *The Compact History of the United States Air Force* (New York: Hawthorn, 1963); David Anderson, *The History of the U.S. Air Force* (New York: Crescent, 1981); Nalty, *Winged Sword, Winged Shield*, vol. 1: 1907-1950 ; and Nalty, *Winged Sword, Winged Shield*, vol. 2: 1950-1997.

¹⁰ *Survival in the Air Age*, 10.

single one could level a city, as had been demonstrated at Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War Two. Atomic bombs were so immensely powerful that many people opined, only half jokingly, “that the war after the atomic-bomb war will be fought with spears.”¹¹

The tensions between the superpowers manifested themselves in many ways. One of the most significant was by nurturing friendly governments in the regions they occupied after World War Two. The Americans did so in Japan, Italy, and Austria, while the Soviets installed communist regimes in the nations of eastern Europe they had liberated from the Nazis. There were two areas, however, that ended up having two competing administrations, one sponsored by the Soviets, the other by the Americans. One was Germany, which became two states because the USA and USSR could not agree on the terms of its unification.

The other was Korea, an Asian nation which before World War Two had been part of the Japanese Empire. When that entity was dismantled in 1945, the USSR and USA agreed to share occupation duties in Korea, with the understanding that Korea would in time become self-governing. Both superpowers established local administrations made up of native leaders sympathetic to their sponsors’ ideologies. The problem was that when the superpowers withdrew their forces from the area, both governments claimed to be the only legitimate representatives of the Korean people. As had occurred in Germany, the postwar partition, created for the convenience of the

¹¹ Genet [Janet Flanner], “Letter from Berlin,” *The New Yorker*, 2 August 1947, 46.

liberators, became a permanent arrangement, although both Korean governments never abandoned their desires for unifying the country under their own rule.

The Korean War began in the summer of 1950 when the Soviet-sponsored north (styling itself the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK) attacked the American-supported south (the Republic of Korea, or ROK). The USSR had been more generous to its client than the USA had been with the ROK, and the better-equipped DPRK had little trouble advancing along the peninsula. The only thing that saved the ROK was the decision of the United States to intervene on its behalf. The Americans did not act unilaterally but were able to induce the United Nations (UN), an international organization founded in 1945 to foster world peace, to come to the aid of South Korea. Some sixteen member states elected to do so. Their military contributions were assembled into a United Nation Command (UNC), to be led by the Americans, who provided the majority of men and materiel to the coalition.

The decision to come to the aid of a nation resisting foreign aggression was easy for the Americans. Fulfilling that commitment, however, was less straightforward. The United States had for five years been preparing to fight a global total war with the Soviet Union. The Korean Conflict would prove to have little in common with that war. World War Three was to have been an air war. The Korean War was primarily a land war, but the United States, not expecting to need it, had neglected its army in the years after 1945.

The only land forces available to the UNC at the beginning of the Korean War were elements of the Allied forces (mostly American, particularly the air and sea contingent) occupying Japan after World War Two. Those that could be spared were

dispatched to Korea, but they were too few and too disorganized—five years of peacetime duty had taken their toll—to halt the North Korean advance. By the first week of August, just five weeks after the fighting began, DPRK troops occupied all of the Korean peninsula save for a small area in the extreme south. This pocket was able to hold out because of the support provided by the UNC's air and naval components (the latter in the form of carrier-based aviation) to the combined South Korean and UN armies on the ground, apparently vindicating the American belief that technology could adequately compensate for manpower inequalities.

Although the USAF had strategic bombing units stationed in the Far East at the time the United States entered the Korean Conflict, the initial weeks of the war were so frantically hectic that they were employed primarily in the support of UNC land forces, a task for which they were ill suited. When the situation stabilized, however, the bombers could be employed in their designed role. The problem was that even though the Japanese had constructed a number of industrial facilities in northern Korea when they controlled the region, the DPRK still had very few strategic targets, and what industry it had was not geared to war production but to the extraction of minerals and the production of energy. Almost all of these sites were bombed within a few weeks.

By the time the bombardment campaign ended, the UNC had rallied and had begun advancing northwards through Korea. An amphibious landing halfway up the peninsula in mid-September appeared to signal that the Korean War was nearing its conclusion. Thus whatever effects the American strategic bombing campaign had on the North Korean war effort cannot be isolated from the effects of the ground war—and not

even the most fervent proponents of strategic bombing suggested that the North Korean collapse was the result of the destruction of the DPRK's economy.

Despite their belief in and commitment to strategic air power, the Americans understood that the Korean War had not been an appropriate environment for a strategic air campaign. The DPRK's economy was not a closed system. The North Korean army did not rely on domestic manufacture but on outside sources. Most of the arms and equipment it used had been supplied by the Soviet Union.

The Korean War was thus a "proxy war." The first of its kind in the air age, it surprised the military theorists who thought only in terms of total warfare. The advocates of strategic bombing had never contemplated fighting a war against a non-industrialized nation that relied on a non-belligerent for its war materiel.

Although there were a few Americans who advocated bombing the USSR, either to bring the Korean War to an end or to eliminate the Soviet threat to world security, most American political and military leaders and almost all of their counterparts in UN member nations were adamantly opposed to any action that might provoke the USSR into initiating World War Three.¹² However, there was disagreement about what actions might lead to escalation. The field commander of the UNC, General Douglas MacArthur, advocated a relatively aggressive policy in Korea. His superior, American president Harry S Truman, preferred caution.

The best way to keep the war from expanding, Truman believed, was to keep it limited to the Korean peninsula. He placed a particular stress on the importance of air

¹² Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 345.

units remaining within Korea, as aircraft can easily cross a frontier without their crews realizing it, and Truman did not want any UNC aircraft to inadvertently violate the territories of North Korea's neighbors, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, which might give them cause to enter the conflict.

Of the two, the Soviet Union was considered the greatest threat. The Americans and their UN allies were convinced that if their activities in Korea provoked a response from the USSR, that response would have taken the form of a world war.¹³ As a result, they devoted most of their efforts to avoiding giving offense to the Soviets.

The entrance of the Chinese into the war surprised the Americans, compelling them and their UN allies to reassess their objective in Korea and how they were going to accomplish it. They had three options. One was to abandon Korea and withdraw, a distasteful prospect that few liked but all realized might become necessary. Another, favored by MacArthur and his supporters, was to expand the scope of UNC air operations to include the PRC (yet not even MacArthur suggested sending land forces into the PRC, calling it a "ridiculous" notion that "no man in his proper senses would advocate. . .").¹⁴ A third was to continue fighting under the same rules that had obtained before the PRC became involved and to limit hostilities to the Korean peninsula.

It was this last that became policy. Truman and his advisors knew that the Chinese had such large manpower reserves that the only way the United States could

¹³ There were many who believed that the Soviets were only biding their time before initiating a third world war and that the Korean Conflict was a way to weaken the United States by compelling the Americans to commit a "maldeployment" of their combat forces. JCS 1924/59 "Soviet Intentions and Capabilities in the Far East," 1005, in *Records of the JCS/46-53/FE*, reel 6, microfilm.

¹⁴ Douglas MacArthur, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 29.

counter them would be to initiate a total war against the PRC. However, the American military did not have the strength to fight an air war against both Korea and China without a significant reduction in its ability to wage war with the USSR should the Soviets decide that the commitment of American forces to the Far East was their opportunity to initiate hostilities elsewhere. The Americans could not allow the crisis in Asia to distract them from the ambitions of the Soviet Union, the “real enemy,” as their military and diplomatic leaders constantly warned.¹⁵

The Korean War was such a departure from warfare as it was understood at the time that the Americans had to devise new expressions to describe it. One was “police action,” used almost from the beginning of the conflict.¹⁶ Another was “limited war,” which gained currency after the Chinese intervened.¹⁷

¹⁵ For examples of American policy and opinion makers identifying the Soviet Union as the USA’s chief opponent in the Cold War, see: JCS 1924/31 “Chinese Communist Overt Operations,” 6 September 1950, 568, 573, in *Records of the JCS/46-53/FE*, reel 3, microfilm; Dean Acheson, précis of remarks, in Ambassador at Large, memorandum of conversation, 3 December 1950, in *FRUS 1950-7*, 1326; Enclosure “A”: “Army View”: in JCS 2118/4 “Possible U. S. Action in Event of Open Hostilities Between United States and China, 27 December 1950, 35; *Records of the JCS/46-53/FE*, reel 2, microfilm; George C. Marshall, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 621; Albert C. Wedemeyer, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 2519; Emmett O’Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3095; Matthew Ridgway, précis of remarks in “Will Germany be the Next Korea?,” *The Hartford Courant*, 13 May 1952, 12.

Douglas MacArthur, who advocated that American foreign policy give priority to Asia over Europe, was one of the few Americans who disagreed with the sentiment represented by the above citations. He identified Red China as the United States’ “primary enemy.” Douglas MacArthur, quoted in “MacArthur Calls for ‘Limited War’ Against China,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 20 April 1951, 1.

¹⁶ The term “police action” is today understood to mean an undeclared war, primarily because the Korean War was the first major conflict to which the name was applied. President Truman justified his sending American troops to Korea by claiming that the United States was obligated to do so as part of its treaty obligations to the United Nations. His critics countered by saying that UN Treaty violated the American constitution, which allows Congress, and only Congress, to declare war.

However, the expression “police action” dates back to the nineteenth century. The term was also employed by Dutch officials to describe military actions taken in an attempt to reassert control of Indonesia after World War II and by British officials in India in what they and others termed the “Hyderabad Police Action.” Its association with the Korean War stems from one of President Truman’s press conferences shortly after the war began. In response to a reporter’s question, Truman stated explicitly that “We are not at war.” When a second journalist asked, “Mr. President, would it be correct,

Yet Korea was a limited war only from the perspectives of UNC aircrews. The UN's ground forces fought under the same conditions their predecessors had endured during World Wars One and Two, save that they never came under air attack.¹⁸ United Nations naval personnel, on the other hand, were largely spared the rigors of combat. The DPRK and PRC lacked navies and rarely subjected the UNC's task forces to air or artillery attack.¹⁹ Limited war is largely limited air war. Not attacking navies was a form of limiting the war.

The Yalu River was the focus of American efforts to limit the air war in Korea, and as such, became its symbol. Of course, the ban against entering Chinese airspace had been in effect since the first week of the conflict, but it did not have much of an effect during the early part of the war, when the UN was fighting the DPRK alone. Once the PRC entered the war, however, the restrictions and prohibitions associated with the boundary between North Korea and the People's Republic of China affected every component of the UNC's air campaign (save for its transport operations).

against your explanation, to call this a police action under the United Nations?," Truman's answer was, "Yes. That is exactly what it amounts to."

This exchange seems to indicate that the term "police action" had a meaning for both Truman and his interrogator, and that this meaning had less to do with the undeclared nature of the conflict than it did the sanction of the United Nations.

Harry S. Truman: "The President's News Conference," 29 June 1950; Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13544>, accessed 11 June 1012.

¹⁷ The Korean Conflict was also a "proxy war," but, as explained in Chapter VIII, this term was not often used while the war was underway.

¹⁸ William W. Momyer, quoted in Richard H. Kohn and Joseph P. Harahan, eds., *Air Superiority in World War II and Korea: An Interview with Gen. James Ferguson, Gen. Robert M. Lee, Gen. William Momyer, and Lt. Gen. Elwood P. Quesada* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 74-75.

¹⁹ The United States Navy suffered only 3,619 casualties during the conflict, a substantial portion of whom were aircrewmembers. Only five US naval vessels were sunk while engaged in Korean operations. All were minesweepers. Some eighty-seven, however, were damaged, although not all of these were through enemy action. Malcom W. Cagle and Frank A. Mason, *The Sea War in Korea* (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 1957), 527-531.

The restrictions on aerial operations both in the vicinity of and beyond the Yalu were one of the main sources of disagreement between President Truman and General MacArthur during the first nine months of the war. The two leaders had diverging opinions on the nature of limited war. Their escalating tensions eventually led the President to remove the general from his command. This event had a significant effect on the domestic politics of the United States. The American public was frustrated by the administration's policies in Korea. It did not understand why the military, particularly the USAF, was not being allowed to exercise its full power in the war.

MacArthur's relief coincided with the end of the original Chinese offensive. The conflict then entered a two-year-long period of stalemate. Both the PRC and the United Nations had the ability to overcome the stalemate through the use of air power, had they chosen to. The UN could have conducted air attacks on facilities within the PRC. The Chinese had received a ready-made air force from the Soviets, which they could have employed to strike at the ports of Korea and Japan, the main entry points of UN men and materiel into the theatre (the Americans were also concerned that the PRC might influence the Soviets to participate in such an endeavor). However, neither side took advantage of its potential for escalation, knowing that the other had a similar capability. The cost of the war in blood and treasure would increase but little else would change. As a result, the PRC and UN both accepted that they enjoyed sanctuaries outside of the Korean peninsula.

Of course, the American had one "trump card" they could use: the atomic bomb, another expression of air power. They considered its use during the Korean War but

realized that it was too powerful to be used effectively in a limited war for limited objectives. There were no targets in Korea that warranted atomic attack, which requires a minimum threshold of military, industrial, or population concentration. The urban areas of China were sufficiently dense, but the Americans realized that an atomic attack against the PRC would almost certainly lead the Soviets to respond, initiating World War Three. “[N]either the atomic bomb nor anything else is a quick, easy, and safe way out of the situation in which we and the world find ourselves. . . .” declared Congressman John Foster Furcolo of Massachusetts in 1950.²⁰ The atomic bomb was a weapon for total wars, not limited ones.

Aware that the war could continue indefinitely because there were no acceptable military solutions to the problem save escalation (neither side, of course, would countenance withdrawal), the Chinese and Americans came to the realization that the only way to end the conflict was to negotiate. Armistice talks began shortly after the fighting reached a stalemate in early 1951. However, both sides made what the other considered to be unreasonable demands regarding territory, prisoners, and the political, economic, and military futures of the two Koreas. They were not able to reach an accord until the summer of 1953.

Although the Chinese and Americans both attempted land offensives during the peace talks, the front lines moved very little during the last two years of the war. Both sides then attempted to use air power. However, they had to confine their efforts to the

²⁰ 81 Cong. Rec. H16941 (1950) (statement by Rep. John Foster Furcolo).

Korean peninsula; they had tacitly agreed to respect each other's sanctuaries and any violation would have been considered escalatory.

The Chinese, knowing that their interceptors based north of the Yalu lacked the range to protect their land forces in central Korea, endeavored to rehabilitate the airfields in the DPRK so that they could transfer their fighters (and later, bombers) southward. The Americans were aware of this project and used their own air power to thwart it. Their reconnaissance aircraft routinely monitored the rebuilding process and when any airfield appeared to be nearing completion, the USAF bombed it.

Unable to establish parity in the air, the Chinese directed their efforts to neutralizing UN air power by increasing the political costs of employing it.²¹ They made several claims that UNC aircraft had bombed and strafed the truce-talk sites in violation of the demilitarized zones established to protect their neutrality. These failed because the evidence the Chinese presented was obviously manufactured.²²

The PRC's propaganda efforts were unsuccessful. The UN's air operations, if anything, intensified. The Americans realized that limited warfare allowed for a range of responses and that they had been underutilizing their air assets out of concerns that the

²¹ Most of the non-American members of the UNC were European nations that had experienced the horrors of aerial warfare firsthand during World War Two. Within these states were significant minorities willing to accept that the same country that had unrestrainedly bombed the civilians of Germany, Japan, and the occupied nations of Europe and Asia would not hesitate to do the same in Korea. The Chinese hoped that these groups might sympathize with the plight of the Koreans and influence their governments to withdraw their support for the American air campaigns in Korea. Of course, those states that had joined the UNC were generally sympathetic to the United States and resisted the communists' attempts to erode the solidarity of the coalition.

The Chinese had more success in appealing to the peoples of Africa and Asia, areas that had long been colonized by various European states (and were only just beginning the process of gaining their independence). Only the richest nations—the western colonial powers and their supporter, the United States—could afford to build air forces.

²² An American aircraft did strafe the site by accident, but the United States quickly investigated the incident and took full responsibility for it.

Chinese or Soviets might escalate. When it became apparent that the USSR and PRC were unlikely to expand the war unless the UN actually attacked them, the Americans began increasing their air efforts with the objective of raising the costs of continued fighting for the Chinese.

Because the PRC's primary strength was its manpower, the Americans shifted the focus of their tactical air operations from interdiction (attacks against units and supplies in transit) to close air support (attacks against units in contact with friendly forces).²³ "In Korea, . . . airpower [was] the predominant destructive force against ground troops in the field." Tactical aviation had supported armies during World Wars One and Two, but in Korea it supplanted them—but only because the Americans were no longer trying to take ground but were instead trying to destroy an army. The airplane had become "the U.N.'s most productive troop killer. This [was] a new role for air power."²⁴

The UN's focus on inflicting as many casualties on the Chinese and North Koreans as it could did not produce the expected results. The communists were infamous in the west [*sic*] for their "willingness to accept abnormally high casualties."²⁵ The Americans began trying to identify other targets the destruction of which might compel the PRC and DPRK to agree to a ceasefire.

²³ The static nature of the war reduced friendly-fire incidents, most of which have historically been caused when friendly units are not where they are expected to be, which occurs more often when the front lines keep moving.

²⁴ Ibid., 55. William Jennings Bryan Dorn and Orland K. Armstrong, "The Great Lesson of Korea," *Air Force*, May 1951, 52, 55.

²⁵ Ibid., 52.

The leaders of the USAF welcomed the search. Naval and marine aviators might be content to act as flying artillery, but their service was an *independent* air force.²⁶ Its task was to conduct strategic aerial warfare. If they allowed their assets to be diverted to any lesser role, such might become expected of them.

Fortunately for the USAF, there were some economic targets in Korea other than those that had already been attacked. One was the power generation complex at Suiho (the dam itself remained off limits).²⁷ The raid against these targets took place in the summer of 1952, two days before the second anniversary of the conflict. The Suiho complex was severely damaged, as were several hydroelectric plants elsewhere in North Korea that were attacked at the same time.

The dams raid resulted in an almost complete blackout in North Korea and a twenty-five percent reduction of electrical power in northeastern China, curtailing local industrial production. The Chinese accused the Americans of practicing “19th century gun-boat tactics” but added that the raid “would have no effect whatever. . . .”²⁸ However, the Labour Party in Britain, unaware, apparently, that the Chinese had dismissed the attack, took great offense, accusing the United States of risking a third world war. Generally sympathetic to the worldwide communist movement, the

²⁶ Because the Soviet Union was not a naval power, the leaders of the USN had spent much of the period between 1945 and 1950 trying to justify its existence by identifying what they might do in the event of World War Three. They finally devised the concept of the “transoceanic navy,” the primary function of which was to provide support for ground forces within the range of shipboard gun batteries and shipborne aviation units. Roger Horky, “Competing Visions: The Korean War as a Transitional Period in the History of Aerial Warfare,” paper presented to the Korean War Conference: Commemorating the 60th Anniversary, Victoria TX, 24-26 June 2010.

²⁷ The leaders of the USAF were not happy having to share the task of bombing the electrical power plants with the USN and USMC.

²⁸ Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs for the PRC, précis of remarks, in Chargé in the United Kingdom, telegram to the Department of State, 23 July 1952, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-15, 420.

Labourites did not share the Americans' confidence that the Chinese and Soviets would consider the raid acceptable within the unwritten rules of the war.²⁹

Yet despite their military and economic losses, the Chinese truce negotiators continued to hold out. The Americans, frustrated by the PRC's uncooperative stance, widened their search for a target or target system that might compel the PRC to come to terms. A suitable candidate was identified at about the time of the Suiho raid: the dams that provided water for what small agricultural activity existed in North Korea.

Although the "production of food . . . was the only major element of North Korea's economy still functioning efficiently after . . . years of war," the Americans were at first reluctant to bomb the dams, for two reasons. One is that "[i]n a traditional war strategy [irrigation] dams represent a target system of limited value. . . ."³⁰ Their destruction would have a negligible effect on an enemy army in the field. The other was that the UN's leaders feared that air strikes against North Korea's food supply would be used in propaganda by the Chinese, Soviets, and North Koreans.

By the summer of 1953, however, the Americans decided that the dams should be attacked, which, they hoped, would encourage the communists to speed up the armistice negotiations. It was known that the dams supplied three-quarters of the water needed for North Korea's rice production, so the proposed air strikes not only raised the possibility of famine in North Korea, but "also raised the likelihood that China would

²⁹ Both major political parties in the UK were upset that the United States did not consult with Her Majesty's Government before the attack. The British, long accustomed to being world leaders, had tried to take a greater role in shaping Korean War policy (recall their umbrage at Truman's atomic bomb gaffe in late 1950), but the Americans often made decisions unilaterally.

³⁰ *Air University Quarterly Review* Staff, "The Attack on the Irrigation Dams in North Korea," in *Airpower: the Decisive Force in Korea*, ed. James T. Stewart (Princeton NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1957), 167.

have to supply rice from her own strained economy. . . .”³¹ Breaching the dams would have a secondary benefit as well. The water released when they burst would damage roads and rail lines in downstream areas, which would impede the movements of enemy troops in North Korea.

American aircraft attacked five dams during May and June 1953. Two were breached, resulting in floods that caused massive damage for miles downstream. The other three were also destroyed but not until after the North Koreans had drained their reservoirs. Although this action prevented flooding, it did deny the North Koreans a significant source of irrigation water, which of course was the UN was trying to accomplish in the first place.

The communists agreed to a ceasefire in July 1953, a month after the last dam raid. The timing was in all likelihood coincidental. “It would be of course extremely presumptuous to claim that the Communists signed the armistice solely as a result of the pressure out upon them by air strikes against the irrigation dams and the threat of further attacks,” wrote the staff of the USAF’s war college the winter after the war.³² Other factors must have affected the communists’ decision. Both the United States and the Soviet Union had recently experienced changes in their political leadership. The death of Josef Stalin, the premier of the USSR, would have been significant if the Chinese had already wanted to extricate themselves from the war but were under Soviet pressure to stay in.³³ “The Chinese . . . had to keep fighting (and dying) to keep Stalin’s military

³¹ Armitage and Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age*, 42.

³² AUQR Staff, “Attack on the Irrigation Dams,” 187.

³³ The relationship between the United States, the People’s Republic of China, and the Soviet Union at the time of the Korean War is best described as “complicated.” The Soviets and Chinese did not

aid coming.”³⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, who succeeded Truman earlier in the year, had hinted that he was willing to employ atomic weapons in Korea and China if a truce was not forthcoming.³⁵ No single event decided the Korean War: there was no Teutobergerwald, no Waterloo—and no Hiroshima.³⁶

Was air power, as the title of a book published in 1957 proclaimed, the “decisive force in Korea?”³⁷ It would appear to have been. Air power was the only variable in the Korean equation after 1950. The two great armies facing each other cancelled each other out. Had the conflict been a total war, the belligerents would have committed their full strength to the fighting from the beginning. They would have had no reserves. The limited nature of the Korean Conflict, expressing itself as a limiting of air power, allowed for experimentation.

Some Americans, such as Otto P. Weyland, commander of the UNC’s air forces for most of the conflict, understood this principle.³⁸ The Korean War, he observed, was

trust each other but shared a mutual antipathy towards the United States. Robert O. Blake, “The Sino-Soviet Relation and its Potential Sources of Differences” (Background Paper presented in the Department of State for the United States Delegation to the Geneva Conference), 6 April 1954, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-14, 401-402.

However, the Americans believed that they could appeal to Stalin to exert pressure on the Chinese if they became too stubborn during the armistice talks. Counselor of the Department of State, précis of remarks in Memorandum of the Substance of Discussion at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 6 March 1953, in *FRUS* 1952-1954-15, 810.

³⁴ Allan R. Millett, “Introduction to the Korean War,” *The Journal of Military History* 65 (4), 933.

³⁵ Walter J. Boyne, *The Influence of Air Power*, 295-296.

³⁶ The three battles mentioned illustrate the three traditional means of achieving victory in war: The destruction of an enemy army, the elimination of an indispensable enemy leader, and the conquest of an enemy capital. Hiroshima may or may not have been the primary cause of the Japanese surrender in 1945 but its symbolic value—to the world, if not the Japanese—remains incredibly potent.

³⁷ Stewart, *Airpower: the Decisive Force in Korea*, title.

³⁸ Weyland, a graduate of Texas A&M College, had been the Vice Commander of the FEAF under George E Stratemeyer at the beginning of the conflict. He was promoted and transferred stateside to take command of the USAF’s Tactical Air Command (TAC) in early 1951. When Stratemeyer had a heart

“a laboratory study of limited military action in the support of a very difficult political situation. . . . The war represented a short step in the direction of using air power as a persuasive force to obtain limited objectives.”³⁹

The vast majority of Americans, however, including many influential military and political leaders, failed to see how the Korean War could teach anybody anything about how to conduct aerial warfare in the future. It was not a valid example. Air wars were total wars. Limited war was an aberration. The next war the United States would become involved in was the global nuclear war against the Soviet Union that the Americans had been expecting and planning for since 1945.

Among the authorities who discounted the Korean War was General Emmett O’Donnell, who told senators during the MacArthur Hearings, “I think this is a rather bizarre little war out there, and I think we can learn an awful lot of bad habits from it.”⁴⁰ He had made similar statements at the beginning of the year when he was transferred stateside to take command of the 15th Air Force in California. “[W]e have not learned a single important lesson in this war,” was his opinion.⁴¹

General Hoyt S. Vandenberg shared this view. During budgetary hearings in 1953, he told congressmen that “we must not lose sight of the fact that the war in Korea has not yet as provided any real test of air power—ours or the enemy’s.” He believed

attack a few weeks later, Weyland was appointed to replace him. He remained in that position until after the armistice.

³⁹ Otto P. Weyland, “The Air Campaign in Korea,” in James T. Stewart, ed., *Airpower: The Decisive Force in Korea* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1957), 30.

⁴⁰ Emmett O’Donnell, testimony, MacArthur Hearings, 3066.

⁴¹ Emmett O’Donnell, quoted in “O’Donnell Favors Using All weapons: Bomber Head in Korea Implies Backing Atom Bomb against Chinese Communists,” *The New York Times*, 19 January 1951, 7.

that “the situation in Korea is a special one such as never has occurred before and is not likely to occur again.”⁴²

Two congressmen who had visited Korea in early 1951 came to similar conclusions. Discussing their observations in a magazine article, they wrote, “[T]he first great lesson to be learned from Korea is that this is an unreal war.” The various prohibitions and restrictions the United Nations imposed on its air forces during the war created a situation from which no lessons about the proper conduct of air campaigns could be learned. “In our repeated inquiry into the lessons of Korea that might apply to all-out war,” they noted, “we were confronted repeatedly with the lessons that have not and cannot be learned in Korea.”⁴³

Representative Leroy Johnson of California, a military pilot during World War One, enjoyed this article so much that he had it inserted into *The Congressional Record*.⁴⁴ It was not the last time he gave thought to the significance of the war in Korea. In a speech before the Aviation Writers’ Association in 1953, he said, “[W]e are fighting an air war that is most peculiar.” The Korean experience proved nothing about air power, he believed. “This kind of war we have been waging in Korea gives us no real test of air strength.”⁴⁵

The best known example of an authority dismissing the significance of Korea was a journal article written by Thomas K. Finletter, a former Secretary of the Air Force

⁴² Vandenberg, testimony, Air Force Appropriations 1954, 3-4.

⁴³ Dorn and Armstrong, “The Great Lesson,” 29.

⁴⁴ 82 Cong. Rec. A2753 (1951) (Extension of remarks by Rep. [Justin] Leroy Johnson).

⁴⁵ 83 Cong. Rec. A2091 (1953) (extension of remarks by Rep. Leroy Johnson, entirety of speech made to Aviation Writers’ Association on 14 April 1953).

(under Truman), in 1955. Air power had not done any of the things it was supposed to do in a general war, he wrote, because the Korean War was fought for limited objectives.

It was not air power's function to destroy the Red Chinese state or to bring the Chinese to unconditional surrender nor was air power supposed to extend, petulantly, the war to the Chinese mainland unless this was necessary to accomplish what we were fighting for, namely to throw back the North Koreans and Chinese back of the line where the aggression had started. . . . Air power was properly under wraps in Korea. Korea, however, was unique.⁴⁶

The article is best known as the source of the quotation, "The Korean War was a special case, and air power can learn little therefrom about its future role in United States foreign policy in the East, . . ." which has been cited in a large number of books and articles about air power.⁴⁷

Finletter also wrote that "United States air power was left considerably confused as to what it was to do to get ready for in its planning for the Far East."⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the United States' next war was also in that region. Like the Korean War, the Vietnam Conflict was a limited war against a small Asian country, not a global nuclear war against the Soviet Union. The Vietnam experience proved as frustrating as Korea, and led to significant shifts in the American attitude towards air power. Essentially, the United States had to create two parallel air forces, one a strategic arm for employment

⁴⁶ Thomas K. Finletter, "Air Power and Foreign Policy, Especially in the Far East," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May 1955, 80.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Among the many works quoting this passage are Armitage and Mason, *Air Power in The Nuclear Age*, second ed., 44; Diego M. Wendt, "Using a Sledgehammer to Kill a Gnat: The Air Force's Failure to Comprehend Insurgent Doctrine during Operations Rolling Thunder," *Airpower Journal* 4, no. 2 (1990), 56; Earl H. Tilford, *Crosswinds: The Air Force's Setup in Vietnam* (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 2009), 66; Ian Horwood, *Interservice Rivalry and Airpower in the Korean War* (Fort Leavenworth KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 19.

⁴⁸ Finletter, "Air Power and Foreign Policy," 81-82.

against the Soviet Union and/or the PRC should World War Three begin, and a tactical arm for use in all other conflicts.

Indeed, since 1945, all wars involving aircraft—not just those in which the United States was involved, but all air wars—have been limited in one way or another. The combatants have restricted their choices of weapons, or the areas in which they permit themselves to operate, or the types of targets they will attack, or two of these or all three. The modern laws of international warfare impose additional restrictions.⁴⁹

These limitations all come from without. Air power itself is not limited. Military aircraft can travel vast distances, at enormous speeds and great altitudes, carrying heavy payloads, including some of the most destructive munitions on earth.

⁴⁹ A substantial portion of the corpus of the international laws of warfare seems to apply specifically to air operations, yet does not single them out by name. For example, Article 56 of the 1977 Additional Protocol to the 1949 Geneva Convention states that “Works or installations containing dangerous forces, namely dams, dykes [*sic*] and nuclear electrical generating stations, shall not be made the object of attack, even where these objects are military objectives, if such attack may cause the release of dangerous forces and consequent severe losses among the civilian population.” Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977; <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e636b/f6c8b9fee14a77fdc125641e0052b079>. Accessed 28 February 2013.

It is difficult to imagine a scenario in which a land army in possession of such a facility would desire its destruction. The only military arm capable of attacking these sorts of installations without risk to itself would be an air force because of its ability to make long-range attacks.

Although they do not explicitly make this connection between international prohibitions and air power, the following works describe how air operations have been affected by the various treaties regulating warfare:

John L. Humphres, “Operations Law and the Rules of Engagement in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm,” *Airpower Journal* 6, no. 3 (1992), 25-41; Mathew J. Dorschel, “The Effects of Restrictive Rules of Engagement on the Rolling Thunder Air Campaign,” unpublished dissertations, United States Air Force Command Staff College, 1995; Phillip S. Meilinger, “A Matter of Precision: Why Air Power may be more Humane than Sanctions,” *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2001), 78-79; Michael W. Lewis, “The Law of Aerial Bombardment in the 1991 Gulf War,” *American Journal of International Law* 97, no.3 (2003); Marco Roscini, “Targeting and Contemporary Aerial Bombardment,” *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2008); A.P.V. Rogers, “Zero Casualty Warfare,” *International Review of the Red Cross*, <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/57jqcu.htm> (accessed 24 April 2012); Erich Rathfelder, “Crimes of War: Dangerous Forces: Dams, Dikes, and Nuclear Stations,” <http://www.crimesofwar.org/a-z-guide/dangerous-forces-dams-dikes-and-nuclear-stations/>. Accessed 24 April 2012.

The history of aerial warfare after 1945 is the story of things that air power could do but did not. Yet historians focus upon the things that air power did rather than what it did not do, which is understandable, as the weapons of air war represent the most advanced technologies of their times and the warriors of the air represent both martial virtue and the mastery of technology. As a result, even though the history of aerial warfare began just over a century ago, it has featured more than enough weapons, warriors, and campaigns to keep scholars, professionals, and enthusiasts occupied for generations.

Because air power can do so much it becomes important to examine why it has not always done all that it can. Military history is as much about the decision-making process as it is about weapons. It is sometimes difficult to remember that a decision not to do something is still a decision.

The reasons for limiting aerial warfare are far more common than the reasons for not limiting it, and as a result, limited air wars have been the rule rather than the exception in history. Yet professional military personnel, scholars, and enthusiasts treat them as aberrations, departures from the accepted narrative of the history of aerial warfare. They are not. They are the standard, and the Korean War was the first of them. Any attempt to understand how and why air power has been restrained must perforce begin with an examination of that conflict. The Korean War was a far more significant event in the history of aerial warfare than is generally considered.

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