

**The United Nations Command on the Korean  
Peninsula – History, Effectiveness  
and Future Roles**

**By**

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## Preface

During my time in the British Army I have frequently witnessed, either first hand or vicariously, the armed forces of various nations being used to mitigate an imminent but predictable disaster or assist in the immediate aftermath. Rarely though have they been perfectly suited, equipped and resourced for the task assigned, and usually they have been given that task when every other avenue has been exhausted: a classic example of ‘too little, too late’. The approach to deploying each armed forces has varied significantly by country but, nevertheless, normally follows similar principles allowing them to be compared.

Understanding the ability of an armed force to support the demands of its own nation is self-evidently of importance. Gen Charles H. Jacoby USA, a previous Commander United States Northern Command & North America Aerospace Defence Command, regularly stated that “it is too late to exchange business cards during a crisis”, which is why an early consideration of the logic train from National Risk Register to military tasking will pay dividends. Understanding who can do what, when, where, how and, importantly, why, is always of significance and made even more germane during a period of national threat. Gaps in the logic train could prove hugely expensive in terms of both lives lost and opportunities missed. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to help prevent such a situation arising.

Choosing which countries to study was remarkably simple: the country I am from; the UK, the country in which I am currently living; Thailand, and the country in which, save my own, I have lived and worked the longest; the USA. Whilst the scope of the research was inevitably constrained by the availability of unclassified information and the challenge of language, experience gained from extensive exposure to the system employed in the UK and the USA, enabled a useful comparison to be made to the one in Thailand. I hope this paper, in some small way, helps others to assess their own system and, perhaps, make enhancements.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Background and problem

The Korean peninsula was colonised by Japan from 1910 to the end of World War II. In August 1945, the Korean peninsula was divided along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel with US Forces administering Japanese surrender in the southern region, and Soviet forces administering Japanese surrender in the northern region. As differences between the US and Soviet morphed into the Cold War, these two regions were separated into South Korea and North Korea, with separate established Governments.

On the 25 June 1950, North Korean (Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea) forces invaded South Korea (Republic of Korea) in an attempt to unify the divided Korean peninsula. In response to this armed attack, the United Nations Security Council adopted several Resolutions. UNSCR 82 (25 June 1950) called for an immediate cessation to hostilities and for North Korean forces to withdraw to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. <sup>1</sup>UNSCR 83 (27 June 1950) recommended that member nations of the UN furnish assistance to South Korea 'as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNSCR 82 (1950). Resolution of 25 June 1950  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/82\(1950\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/82(1950))

<sup>2</sup> UNSCR 83 (1950). Resolution of 27 June 1950  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/83\(1950\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/83(1950))

UNSCR 84 (7 July 1950) recommended UN member nations to provide ‘forces and other assistance available to a unified command’ under the US, requested the US to designate a commander of the forces, and authorised the unified command ‘to use the United Nations flag in the course of operations against North Korean forces’.<sup>3</sup>

This unified command was established on 24 July 1950 with the formation of a headquarters in Tokyo under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. Both Under the auspices of this unified command sixteen nations provided combat troops to the Korean peninsula during the 1950-1953 Korean War, with five other nations providing medical and humanitarian support. The Armistice Agreement between the United Nations Command on one side, and the Korean People’s Army (North Korean) and the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army on the other side, was signed on 27 July 1953. The Armistice Agreement was intended to be a cease-fire between military forces as a pre-cursor to peace treaties being agreed between relative governments.

More than 63 years since the signing of the Armistice Agreement the United Nations Command remains as a unified command on the Korean peninsula. Whilst commanded by the United States, other nations, including Australia and Thailand, remain a part of the United Nations Command with varying levels of activity and presence on the Korean peninsula. It can be argued that the functionality of the United Nations Command as a strategic tool to ameliorate tensions on the Korean peninsula and establish a lasting peace regime has atrophied over these 63 years.

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<sup>3</sup> UNSCR 84 (1950). Resolution of 7 July 1950  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/84\(1950\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/84(1950))

Contributing nations to the United Nations Command, such as Australia and Thailand, can align their presence and activities as active member nations to revitalise the relevance and utility of the United Nations Command as a valuable tool for regional security.

### **Objectives of the research**

The aims of this research paper are as follows:

- To outline the history of the United Nations Command and its changing composition and roles over the last 63 years.
- To consider the current effectiveness of the United Nations Command as an organ for the maintenance of security and stability on the Korean peninsula.
- To develop recommendations on the most effective future roles of the United Nations Command, allowing contributing nations to best support the United Nations Command to revitalise its role in the maintenance of stability on the Korean peninsula.

### **Scope of the research**

Data collected to provide a qualitative analysis of the functionality of the United Nations Command was based on an assessment of the annual activity reports submitted to the United Nations General Assembly.



## **Methodology**

The research based on data collection of United Nations Command activities was used to provide a qualitative assessment of the functional activities of the United Nations Command. This is supported with case studies of various activities of the United Nations Command. This research was then used as the basis for determining whether there is scope for the United Nations Command to be revitalised to further promote stability on the Korean peninsula, and if so what means this can be best achieved.

## **Limitations**

The research paper will focus on the utility of the United Nations Command in addressing security challenges in dealing with North Korea. Naturally any changes to the functionality of the United Nations Command will also have strategic implications for China; as will China's reactions to this. Whilst this will be addressed briefly in the paper it will not be a key focus.

## **Utilisation of the Research Paper**

The aim of the research paper is to provide senior decision makers within the United Nations Command, including elements of the Australian and Thai membership:

- An understanding of the relevant shaping factors in the history of the United Nations Command that affect its current composition and role, as well as possible future roles.

- A discussion on the current effectiveness of the United Nations Command.
- To consider recommendations on the most effective future role of the United Nations Command that will allow contributing nations to best support the United Nations Command to revitalise its role in the maintenance of stability on the Korean peninsula.

This consideration could then be used by Australian and Thai national liaison officers to the United Nations Command in strategy focus groups and Command sponsored think-tanks to look to provide considered options to the United Nations Commander for discerning the future role of the United Nations Command on the Korean peninsula.

## Chapter 2

### Relevant Readings

#### Readings

The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War (edited by Matray and Boose 2014) discusses the formation of the United Nations Command in detail. In his article on the United Nations Command, Kim (2014) argues that whilst there was a perception that the UN coalition was more a ‘political symbol of international solidarity’, the United Nations Command played a key role in the outcome of crucial battles and campaigns and thus a key role in the outcome of the war.<sup>1</sup> Kim further points out the interpretative challenges apparent due to its ambiguous nature.<sup>2</sup> Stueck (1995) noted that whilst the UNC could be seen as an instrument of US policy, it was also an international mechanism that ‘restrained and constrained’ US policy, crediting this restraint as possibly being a factor that prevented a nuclear World War III.<sup>3</sup>

Kim (2014) argues that the United Nations Command’s mission to repel aggression and restore peace and security has not

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<sup>1</sup> *United Nations Command and Korean Augmentation*, Jiyul Kim, *Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, p.283, James I. Matray and Donald J. Boose, Ashgate Publishing 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.283

<sup>3</sup> *The Korean War: An International History*, p.98, Stueck, W, Princeton University Press 1995.

changed; though he also noted that it remains important to discern the role and function of today's United Nations Command and how it relates back to the United Nations Command's original conception. Kim also asserts that the United Nations Command 'undeniably' brought together many United Nations member and non-member states, saving South Korea's sovereignty and maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.<sup>4</sup>

Kim also notes that the United Nations Command was a uniquely complex coalition that transformed the way in which modern wars could be fought with a multinational, multicultural and multiracial coalition force under the United Nations flag, furthering the idea of collective security whilst also restraining elements within the coalition from pursuing their own individual ambitions.<sup>5</sup>

Hong (2003) argues that the United Nations Command was unable to play a decisive role in the final days of the Korean War and the lead up to the signing of the Armistice Agreement, pointing out that the voluntary, ad-hoc associative nature of the United Nations Command could not compete with the resolute action of the United

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<sup>4</sup> *United Nations Command and Korean Augmentation*, Jiyul Kim, Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War, p.284, James I. Matray and Donald J. Boose, Ashgate Publishing 2014.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.294

States as a major power, with the United States naturally dominating proceedings.<sup>6</sup>

Hong also speaks of the efforts by North Korea to eliminate the United Nations Command in the years after the Korean War. He argues that North Korea see the presence of the United Nations Command as a 'stigma' as the United Nations Security Council Resolutions explicitly identify North Korea as the aggressor. Hong likens that North Korea see the disbandment of the United Nations Command as good as 'removing a criminal record'.<sup>7</sup> Hong argues that the United Nations Command must not be dismantled until 'North Korea fundamentally changes its military strategy, forward-based offensive structure, and its policy of developing weapons of mass destruction'.<sup>8</sup>

Park (2009) argues that the Korean peninsula remains is a 'quasi-state of war', with the Armistice Agreement not having been replaced by a peace treaty.<sup>9</sup> Park points out that the United Nations Command has the following characteristics: First, the ongoing basis for the United Nations Command being stationed in Korea is rooted in

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<sup>6</sup> *The Continuing Role of the United Nations in Future of Korean Security*, p.74, Kyuduk Hong, *Recalibrating the US-Republic of Korea Alliance*, edited by Donald W. Boose, Jr, Balbina Y. Hwang, Patrick Morgan, Andrew Scobell, Strategic Studies Institute, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 80

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 85

<sup>9</sup> *The United Nations Command in Korea: past, present and future*, p.485, Won Gon Park, *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol 21 No. 4, December 2009.

United Nations Security Council Resolutions, and separate to the ROK-US alliance. Secondly, the United Nations Command has solid legal grounds to be in Korea until peace and security were restored to the Korean peninsula. With North Korea's ongoing destabilising actions, Park argues that this peace and security has not yet been restored. Thirdly, the direct reason for the creation of the United Nations Command was to integrate military assistance supplied by United Nations members. Fourthly, the right of command of the United Nations Command was entrusted to the United States from the time the United Nations Command was established. Finally, the United Nations Command is a core operational mechanism in the armistice regime, executing important principles, providing communication channels and making key decisions.<sup>10</sup>

Park also describes the four roles of the United Nations Command as: First, repelling any armed attack by the North. Second, supervising the execution of the armistice agreement and rectifying any violations. Third, the maintenance and use of United Nations Command Rear bases in Japan. Fourth, provision and control of support to forces dispatched by United Nations member states in the case of an emergency on the Korean peninsula.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p.488

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p.490

Houck (1993) states that, as none of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions in setting up the United Nations Command provided for any United Nation Security Council control, in effect the United Nations had given the United States an open-ended objective and complete authority with which to achieve it.<sup>12</sup> Houck also asserts that there was little evidence that other participating nations supporting the United States had a significant impact on the ultimate outcome of the Korean War, citing the breakdown of UNC contributions compared to the United States contributions.<sup>13</sup>

Hwang (2011) cites the 2010 sinking of the ROK ship Cheonan and the artillery clash on Yeonpyeong-do, and the fact that these were not addressed immediately as armistice violations, indicates that the current cease-fire agreement is largely considered a historical remnant rather than an effective means of imposing peace and preventing conflict.<sup>14</sup>

Jung (2004) argues that, despite the limitations of the Armistice Agreement, it cannot be denied that the United Nations Command preserved the freedom and legitimacy of the Republic of

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<sup>12</sup> *The Command and Control of United Nations Forces in the Era of 'Peace Enforcement'*, p.12, James W Houck, Duke Journal of Comparative and International Law, Volume 4 1993

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p 19

<sup>14</sup> *Reviving the Korean Armistice: Building Future Peace on Historical Precedents*, Balbina Hwang, p 1, Korea Economic Institute June 2011 Volume 6 Number 6.

Korea.<sup>15</sup> Jung further argues that, despite the United Nations Command has been changed and slightly weakened in the intervening years, it remain an important and effective tool for the Republic of Korea and the United States, and consideration for dismantlement should not be considered until North Korea changes its aggressive military strategy and nuclear weapon program.



Figure 2-1 - Korean People's Army Officers looking through the T2 Conference Room that straddles the Military Demarcation Line in the Joint Security Area, Panmunjom (Picture courtesy of author).

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<sup>15</sup> *The Future of the United Nations Command in the Republic of Korea*, Won-Il Jung, p.4, US Army War College Strategy Research Project, 3 May 2004



## **Chapter 3**

### **Historical Factors Relevant to the United Nations Command**

The factors surrounding the formation of the United Nations Command are critical to the ongoing functionality and limitations of this military coalition, and the relevance of these factors cannot be ignored when considering possible future roles for the United Nations Command on the Korean peninsula.

As previously outlined in Chapter One, the United Nations Command was formed through a succession of United Nations Security Council Resolutions passed in response to North Korea's invasion to the south. As soon as word was received of North Korea's actions, US State Department Officials pressed the United Nations Secretary General to convene an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council.<sup>1</sup> This emergency meeting took place on June 25, 1950 at the UN Headquarters in New York. Earlier that year, on 10 January, the Soviet Union informed the UN Security Council that they would be conducting a Soviet boycott of the UN Security Council until a Chinese Communist representative replaced the Guomindang representative on the council.<sup>2</sup> This ongoing boycott

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<sup>1</sup> *The United Nations*, William A. Taylor, *Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, p.98, James I. Matray and Donald J. Boose, Ashgate Publishing 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.99

effectively prevented a possible Soviet veto of the succession of UN Security Council Resolutions addressing the security situation on the Korean peninsula pushed through by the US. The US made full use of this Soviet veto, ensuring UN Security Council Resolutions 82-84 were passed between the 25 June and 7 July of 1950, culminating in the United Nations authorising the US to command a force under the auspices of the United Nations to repel the North Korean attack and restore international peace and security in the region.

It is reasonable to question why the Soviets maintained their boycott whilst the US, supported by other like-minded nations, continued to achieve the passage of these UN Security Council Resolutions. Weathersby (2004) argues that it was important for the Soviets to maintain their support for the People's Republic of China by continuing their protest to the UN, and Moscow sought to avoid any links between an end to the boycott and any Soviet culpability in the North Korean attack.<sup>3</sup> Stueck (1976) points out that Moscow assumed that the absence of a permanent member would preclude any action by the UN Security Council, and Moscow also did not expect the US would seek to intervene on the Korean peninsula.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *The Soviet role in the Korean war: the state of historical knowledge*, p.68 Weathersby, K, *The Korean War in World History*, W.Stueck, University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> *The Soviet Union and the origins of the Korean War*, p 628, Stueck W, *World Politics*, 28(4), 1976.

Some United Nations Command members sought to ensure that UNSCR 84 (the creation of the UNC under a US command) would be defined as a collective security mission rather than a US led military intervention.<sup>5</sup> However the US administration resisted efforts to have United Nations Command be directed by the United Nations by instead having the Commander of the United Nations Command (MacArthur) chain of command go through the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. Secretary General Lie proposed a that a committee within the UN Security Council would be formed that would allow the United Nations have direct access to the United Nations Command to ‘stimulate and coordinate’ offers from sending states, in effect keeping the United Nations ‘in the picture’. This proposal was supported by the United Nations delegates of the United Kingdom, France and Norway; however it was rejected out of hand by the US Mission with the British and French subsequently persuaded to support Resolution 84 in giving the United States complete authority.<sup>6</sup>

A total of 15 nations committed military forces to the United Nations Command. Whilst there was naturally a range of motivations and considerations for these commitments by various nation’s capitals, some common threads were also apparent. These commonalities included seeking increasing diplomatic influence in

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<sup>5</sup> *The United Nations and the politics of the Korean War*, p 314, Stairs D, *International Journal*, 25(2), 1970

<sup>6</sup> *The Command and Control of United Nations Forces in the Era of ‘Peace Enforcement’*, p.13, James W Houck, *Duke Journal of Comparative and International Law*, Volume 4 1993

the policy sphere of the US as well as the United Nations.<sup>7</sup> Other defining motivations included reinforcing the utility of the United Nations to reinforce collective security in Europe, and to issue a symbolic warning to the Soviet Union against further sponsoring acts of aggression during the early years of the forming Cold War.<sup>8</sup>

The United Nations Command played an important role in tempering some US military actions that could potentially be seen as provocative to the Chinese or Soviets with a resulting escalation of the war. The United Nations Commander from April 1951 to May 1952, Lieutenant General Ridgeway, spoke of how the UNC limited the use of air power during the Korean War as an example of this, providing caveats and requirements for targeting and rules of engagement (similar to what has been seen in recent US led coalition military operations in the Middle East). Ridgeway recalled that “It may be said that this requirement hampered our operations, and to a certain extent it did. But it also laid a restraining hand on military adventures that might have drawn us into deeper and deeper involvement in Asia”.<sup>9</sup>

The United Nations Command also played an important role in continuing to revitalise the frequently stalled armistice

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<sup>7</sup> *Op cit*, p. 316

<sup>8</sup> *The Soviet Union and the origins of the Korean War*, p 632, Stueck W, *World Politics*, 28(4), 1976.

<sup>9</sup> *The United Nations and the politics of the Korean War*, p 313, Stairs D, *International Journal*, 25(2), 1970

negotiations. UN member nations, such as India and Canada, sought to use the United Nations to continue to apply pressure to progress movement towards agreement on an armistice.<sup>10</sup> The continued efforts in the United Nations in 1952 provided the only impetus for reaching an armistice to end the Korean War, resulting in the final signing of the Armistice Agreement 27 July 1953.<sup>11</sup>

Although the US initially saw the role of the United Nations as a role that added value to its campaign, Stairs (1970) argues that the US eventually tired of the restrictions, layers and complications of multilateral diplomacy throughout the Korean War, likening this to a ‘diplomacy of constraint’. Stueck shows that, by early 1951 the influence of the United Nations on the US policy making was a positive one, and the role of the United Nations prevented the Korean War from spreading beyond the Korean peninsula to a possible nuclear war, with the United Nations playing a dynamic and critical role in the containment and cessation of the Korean War.<sup>12</sup>

The participating nations in the United Nations Command also provided a substantive military capability that extended beyond a political symbol of international military unity and a multilateral diplomacy. Whilst there seems an enduring perception that the

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p 315

<sup>11</sup> *The United Nations*, William A. Taylor, *Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, p 106, James I. Matray and Donald J. Boose, Ashgate Publishing 2014.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p 106

Korean War was largely a US fought war with some symbolic participation by other countries, this participation extended well beyond the symbolic. In mid 1951 the proportion of non-US infantry troops in theatre within the United Nations Command was 25% - this is far from an insignificant commitment.<sup>13</sup> These non-US forces continually played key roles in the outcome of crucial battles and campaigns, and thus played an important role in the outcome of the Korean War.<sup>14</sup>

Whilst it can be argued that the origin of the United Nations Command was simply a tool for US policy to contain communism in the early days of the Cold War, the United Nations Command became more than this. It provided a level of restraint for US policy that contained the Korean war, gave the action on the Korean peninsula in repelling North Korean aggression international legitimacy, as well as providing military forces that played a significant combat role.

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<sup>13</sup> *United Nations Command and Korean Augmentation*, Jiyul Kim, Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War, p 283, James I. Matray and Donald J. Boose, Ashgate Publishing 2014.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p 283

## Chapter 4

### Changing Composition of the United Nations Command Post-Armistice

The factors surrounding the formation of the United Nations Command are critical to the ongoing functionality and limitations of this military coalition, and the relevance of these factors cannot be ignored when considering possible future roles for the United Nations Command on the Korean peninsula.

Naturally, the peak strength and breadth and depth of integration of the United Nations Command on the Korean peninsula occurred during hostilities. United Nations Command Forces began to arrive in significant numbers in the August 1950. United Nations Command ground forces arrived at the end of 1950 from ten countries (Australia, Canada, France, Greece, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and the UK) and ground forces from four other nations arrived by mid-1951 (Belgium, Luxembourg, Ethiopia and Columbia). Five other nations also sent military medical units (Sweden, India, Denmark, Italy and Norway).<sup>1</sup> In July 1953 the United Nations Command consisted of 932,964 military personnel, 61

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<sup>1</sup> *United Nations Command and Korean Augmentation*, Jiyul Kim, Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War, p 291, James I. Matray and Donald J. Boose, Ashgate Publishing 2014.

air force squadrons and more than 250 naval vessels.<sup>2</sup> However, this figure can be deceiving when considering the composition of sending states other than the US. The peak ground strength between 1950 and 1953 of the US military personnel was 330,000 troops, and the peak ground strength of Republic of Korea troops was 707,000. The remaining peak strengths from other sending states between 1950 and 1953 totalled 41,830. As noted previously whilst this may be a very small percentage of overall troop numbers, the role of the United Nations Command personnel from countries other than the US and the Republic of Korea was still significant, playing key roles in the outcomes of crucial battles.

On the 27 July 1953, the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed by the Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command, the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, and the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers. The Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command signed on behalf of the 17 nations that operated under the United Nations flag on the Korean peninsula, and the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers signed on behalf of the opposing communist forces from North Korea and China. The Armistice Agreement set out a separation of opposing

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<sup>2</sup> *The Future of the United Nations Command in the Republic of Korea*, Won-Il Jung, p.4, US Army War College Strategy Research Project, 3 May 2004



forces and a cessation of hostilities.<sup>3</sup>

The Armistice Agreement created a Military Demarcation Line at the last line of contact between the two opposing forces at the time of signing. Both sides agreed to withdraw two kilometres either side of the Military Demarcation Line to form a de-militarised zone four kilometres wide that ran the 214 kilometre width of the Korean peninsula. Both sides were allowed conditional access within respective sides of the DMZ however were prohibited from crossing the Military Demarcation Line without the agreement of the other side.<sup>4</sup>

The Armistice Agreement also established three Commissions – the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission<sup>5</sup>, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission<sup>6</sup>, and the Military Armistice Commission<sup>7</sup>. The Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission completed its mission in 1953 with the exchange of prisoners-of-war. The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission's primary function is "to provide supervision, observation, inspection and investigation into activities of both sides, and provide reports on

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<sup>3</sup> A full transcript of the Armistice Agreement can be found at <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2829764-1953-Korean-War-Armistice-Agreement.html>

<sup>4</sup> Armistice Agreement signed 27 July 1953 Article One paras 1-9

<sup>5</sup> Armistice Agreement signed 27 July 1953 Annex "Terms of Reference for the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission"

<sup>6</sup> Armistice Agreement signed 27 July 1953 Article Two Section C

<sup>7</sup> Armistice Agreement signed 27 July 1953 Article Two Section B

these observations, inspections and investigations to the Military Armistice Commission<sup>8</sup>. The Military Armistice Commission's primary function is "to supervise the implementation of the Armistice Agreement, and to settle through negotiations any violations of the Armistice agreement".<sup>9</sup>

The Military Armistice Commission was established as a joint organisation without a chairman, comprising ten military members, with five officers from the United Nations Command and five from the Korean People's Army/Chinese People's Volunteers. Three from each side shall be generals of flag rank, whilst the remaining two may be of major general, brigadier general or colonel (or equivalents) rank.<sup>10</sup> The Commander of the United Nations Command has historically selected a US major general, a ROK major general, a ROK brigadier general, a Commonwealth brigadier general and a rotating colonel from the other United Nations Command sending states.

The Armistice Agreement called for the Military Armistice Commission to meet daily, with recesses of not more than seven days permitted if both sides agreed.<sup>11</sup> Despite this, from 1953 to 1991 the

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<sup>8</sup> Armistice Agreement signed 27 July 1953 Article Two Section C para 41

<sup>9</sup> Armistice Agreement signed 27 July 1953 Article Two Section B para 24

<sup>10</sup> Armistice Agreement signed 27 July 1953 Article Two Section B para 20

<sup>11</sup> Armistice Agreement signed 27 July 1953 Article Two Section B para 31

Military Armistice Commission met only 459 times.<sup>12</sup> In 1991 North Korea refused to attend any further Military Armistice Commission meetings when the ROK major general was appointed as the senior member of the United Nations Command side of the Military Armistice Commission. North Korea argued that the ROK was not a signatory to the Armistice Agreement and therefore a ROK officer could not be a senior member of the Military Armistice Commission. The United Nations Command argued that the ROK was represented by the United Nations Commander at the signing of the Armistice Agreement, as were the other United Nations Command sending nations. The United Nations Command also pointed out that the Armistice Agreement dictated that the Commander of the United Nations Command appoint the five United Nations Command senior officers comprising the Military Armistice Commission, and there was nothing in the Armistice Agreement to make the choice of the ROK major general being the senior member inappropriate.

On 28<sup>th</sup> April 1994 the Korean People's Army sent a message to the United Nations Command stating that they would recall all Korean People's Army members of the Military Armistice Commission, they would cease participation in Military Armistice Commission activities, and would no longer recognise the United

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<sup>12</sup> *The Future of the United Nations Command in the Republic of Korea*, Won-Il Jung, p.6, US Army War College Strategy Research Project, 3 May 2004

Nations Command Military Armistice Commission as a counterpart.<sup>13</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> December 1994 the People's Republic of China recalled its Chinese People's Volunteers delegation from the Military Armistice Commission. Military Armistice Commission meetings have not been held since, however there has been 13 talks held at the General Officer level since then, as well as other working level meetings.

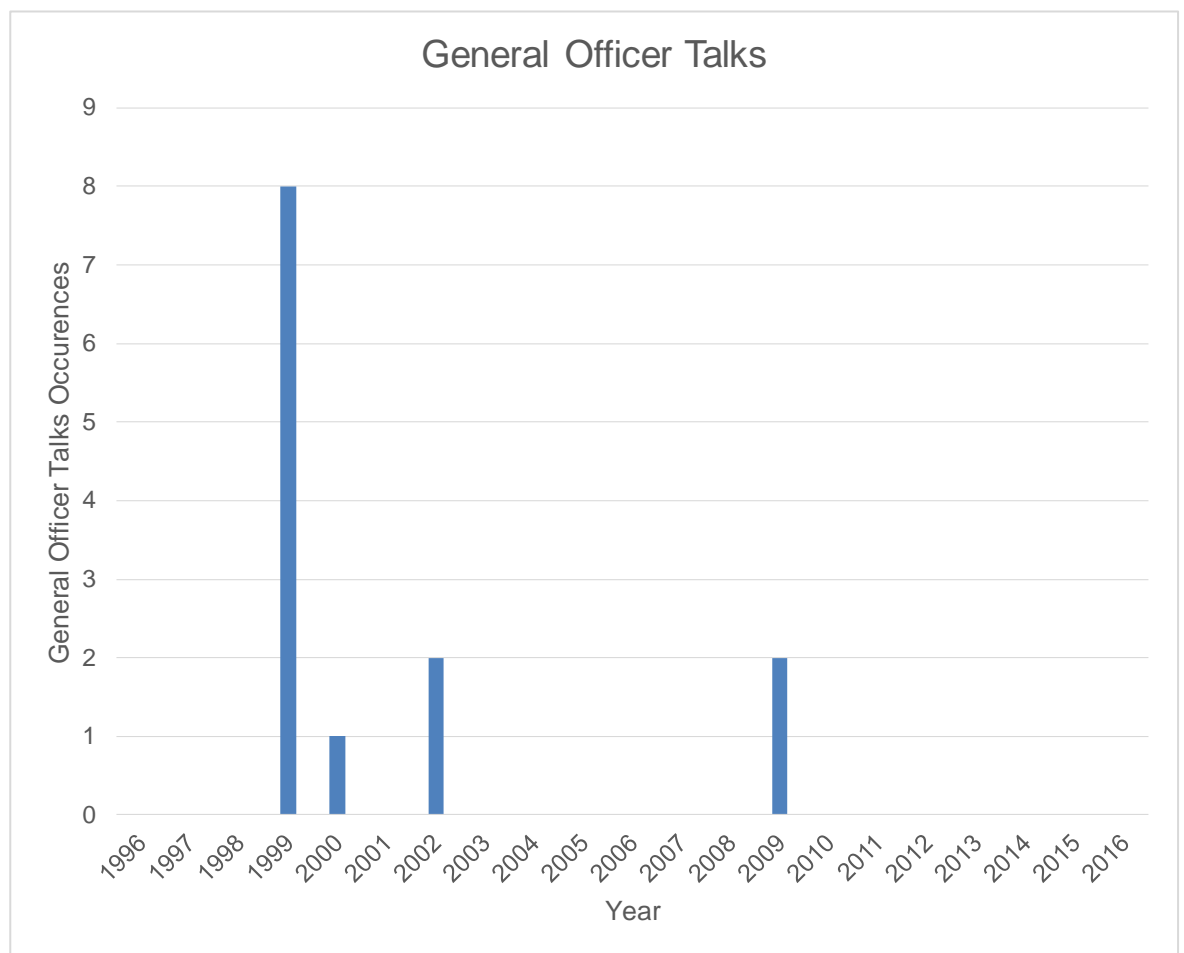


Figure 4-1 – Occurrences of General Officer Talks held between the United Nations Command and the Korean People's Army 1996-2015 (source United Nations Command Annual Reports).

<sup>13</sup> *Report of the Activities of the United Nations Command for 1996, United Nations Command and its Mission*

The signing of the Armistice in 1953 saw a gradual withdrawal of United Nations Command combat and medical forces. Military contingents from 17 of the United Nations Command sending states had departed the Korean peninsula by the end of 1956. With the withdrawal of Thai combat troops in 1972, apart from the US military the remaining United Nations Command military forces consisted a small number of military troops supporting the United Nations Command Honour Guard, charged with ceremonial duties. Up until 1993 the United Nations Command Honour Guard comprised troops from the United States, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and Thailand, however the United Kingdom withdraw their contingent in 1993.



Figure 4-2 – United Nations Command Honour Guard personnel 2011 (photo courtesy of author)

In addition to the small honour guard contingent, the other non-US United Nations Command presence on the Korean peninsula between 1972 and 2003 consisted of liaison officers to the United Nations Command. Prior to 1985 Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States all had liaison officers to the United Nations Command. France resumed their presence within the United Nations Command with a liaison officer in 1985, and Colombia in 1987. Between 1998 and 2001 six other nations resumed representation: the

Netherlands (1998), Norway (1999), Belgium (1999), Denmark (2000), Greece (2000) and Turkey (2001). South Africa resumed participation in 2010 and Italy in 2013 to bring the total number of sending states with liaison officers at the United Nations Command to 18.<sup>14</sup>

Since 2003 several United Nations Command sending states commenced sending officers on short term rotations within the United Nations Command. Initially these were focussed on supporting United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission activities. Australia, Denmark, Canada, Columbia, Denmark, France, New Zealand, Thailand and the United Kingdom have all sent officers to support at various times. Typically, the employment for these officers would either be in the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission Secretariat, providing support to Military Armistice Commission activities, assisting with duties within the Joint Security Area within the de-militarised zone, or assisting in controlling the two Transportation Corridors established across the de-militarised zone.

Subsequently, from 2011 some United Nations Command sending states commenced sending officers to serve on longer term attachments as staff within the United Nations Command separate to the Military Armistice Commission, with these representatives

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<sup>14</sup> *Report of the Activities of the United Nations Command for 2015*, Historical Background Information

participating in exercises on the Korean peninsula, training with the United Nations Command, meeting regularly with senior leadership and working within the Command.<sup>15</sup>

The current sending state composition of the United Nations Command includes field grade officers from Denmark, New Zealand and Canada serving in various positions within the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission Secretariat, and an Australian General Officer and field officers from the United Kingdom and Canada serving in various positions within the United Nations Command in the Directorates of Intelligence, Operations, Logistics and Strategy and Policy.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the United Nations Command headquarters role on the Korean peninsula, the United Nations Command (Rear) in Japan is also part of the United Nations Command structure. On 19 February 1954 a United Nations Command-Japan Status of Forces Agreement was signed providing access, transit and basing rights for the eight signatories.<sup>17</sup> The eight signatory nations to this agreement are Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, Philippines, Turkey, the

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<sup>15</sup> General Curtis Scaparrotti statement before the House Armed Services Committee, 24 February 2016  
<http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20160224/104587/HHRG-114-AS00-Wstate-ScaparrottiC-20160224.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> *Report of the Activities of the United Nations Command for 2015*, Evolution of the United Nations Command Section D

<sup>17</sup> *The Future of the United Nations Command in the Republic of Korea*, Won-II Jung, p.5, US Army War College Strategy Research Project, 3 May 2004



United Kingdom and the United States.<sup>18</sup> The United Nations Command Rear consists of a Headquarters and seven US military bases that are also designated as United Nations Command Rear bases. Currently the Commander of the United Nations Command Rear is an Australian and the Deputy Commander a Canadian. The United Nations Command Rear reports directly to the United Nations Command Headquarters in Seoul.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> United Nations Command Rear Factsheet:

<http://www.yokota.af.mil/Portals/44/Documents/Units/AFD-150924-004.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

## **Chapter 5**

### **Future Role of the United Nations**

General Brooks, the Commander of the United Nations Command (and also Commander United States Forces Command Korea, and Republic of Korea and United States Combined Forces Command), described the United Nations Command as Duties as the ‘the home for international commitments to the Korean peninsula’, responsible for ‘64 years of armistice maintenance and much more’. The United Nations Command also remains ‘useful as a standing mechanism to help like- minded nations contribute unique capabilities before, during and after conflict’.<sup>1</sup>

When looking at the original roles for the United Nations Command when created through United Nations Command Security Council Resolutions 82-84, and the ongoing functions of the United Nations Command in the more than 60 years since the Armistice Agreement, the roles of the United Nations Command can be broken into two areas:

- To deter and repel North Korean aggression, and to maintain the Armistice, and

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<sup>1</sup> Statement of General Vincent K. Brooks, Commander of United Nations Command, before the Senate Armed Services Committee 27 April 2017.

- To provide continued means of returning to the fight if required.

The effectiveness of the United Nations Command in deterring and repelling North Korean aggression and maintaining the Armistice has been somewhat mixed. Whilst there has not been a resumption of conflict, there has been a number of incidents of aggression attributed to North Korea. This includes the 2002 Yeonpyeong naval clash, the sinking of the Republic of Korea Navy ship the Cheonan in 2010, and the North Korean artillery attack on the Republic of Korea held island of Yeonpyeong-do later that year. It is difficult to judge the impact of the United Nations Command on deterring these acts of aggression – the underlying reasons for decisions made by the North Korean leadership are notoriously very difficult to discern, and likely due to a combination of domestic and international drivers.

In looking at the United Nations Command response to the three major armistice violations above, the coordination and effectiveness of the response has varied. In each case a United Nations Command Special Investigation Team was formed – this is comprised solely of United Nations Command personnel. A Joint Observer Team (this comprises representatives of both the United Nations Command as well as the Korean People's Army to

investigate major violations of the Armistice Agreement<sup>2</sup>) was not formed in any of these three examples of major armistice violations.

For the 2002 Naval clash, in addition to the Special Investigation Team being convened to investigate the incident, the recovery operation of the sunken Republic of Korea naval vessel was placed under the temporary control of the United Nations Command; this operation included notification of the fact that the recovery vessel would have United Nations Command members embarked, and the flying of the United Nations Command flag on the vessel. The recovery operation was conducted without incident.

For the 2010 sinking of the Republic of Korea Navy ship the Cheonan, on completion of a Special Investigation Team conducting an initial investigation into the sinking, a Joint Civilian-Military Investigation Group of the Republic of Korea was convened, with participation of international experts from Australia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. A Multinational Combined Intelligence Task Force was also formed, comprising the Republic of Korea, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.

<sup>3</sup> The role of the United Nations Command in deterring and

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<sup>2</sup> Armistice Agreement signed 27 July 1953 Article One para 27

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Security Council S/2010/281, *Letter dated 4 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*

repressing North Korean aggression, and maintaining the Armistice was effectively side-lined in the aftermath of the sinking of the Cheonan. The only tangible outcome of the United Nations Command and the Military Armistice Commission as a Special Investigation Team that was formed in the immediate aftermath with no significant findings presented on completion. This investigative role was abrogated to the joint investigative groups above – the membership of these groups was separate to any United Nations Command membership.



Figure 5-1 – Recovered wreckage of the sunken Republic of Korea Navy ship Cheonan (photo courtesy of author).

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Figure 5-2 – Recovered upper structure wreckage of the sunken Republic of Korea Navy ship Cheonan (photo courtesy of author).

For the 2010 artillery attack on the Republic of Korea held island of Yeonpyeong-do later in 2010, again a United Nations Command Special Investigation Team was convened to examine the incident as a major breach of the Armistice Agreement. This involved the notified deployment to the island by a United Nations Command team comprising personnel from nine sending state nations.<sup>4</sup> The finding of this Special Investigation Team was submitted to the United Nations Security Council in December that

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations Security Council S/2010/648, *Letter dated 19 December 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General*

year.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, United Nations Command observer missions to the ROK held islands in the vicinity of the Northern Limit Line in the Western Sea during regular live-fire exercises. Again, whilst it is difficult to discern the decision-making calculus of the North Korean leadership, it is highly likely that the presence of these observer missions comprising personnel from a number of United Nations Command sending states was a factor in any decisions to conduct a repeat attack on these islands during any live-fire exercises.



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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.





Figure 5-3 – A United Nations Command observer mission on the ROK-held island of Yeonpyeongdo 2011 (photo courtesy of author).

Figure 5-4 – Aftermath of the 2010 artillery attack on the ROK-held island of Yeonpyeong-do by North Korean artillery (photo courtesy of author).

The number of Special Investigation Teams formed by the United Nations Command to investigate possible major violations of the Armistice Agreement has varied in recent years (figure 5.1 below) with a general trend of an increase from the year 2000 onwards. This shows a general increase in the activity of the United Nations Command in monitoring the Armistice Agreement and responding to apparent violations by either the North or the South. This is in



contrast to the actual number of major violations recorded each year (figure 5.2 below) which shows a spike around 2003 before a general decline.

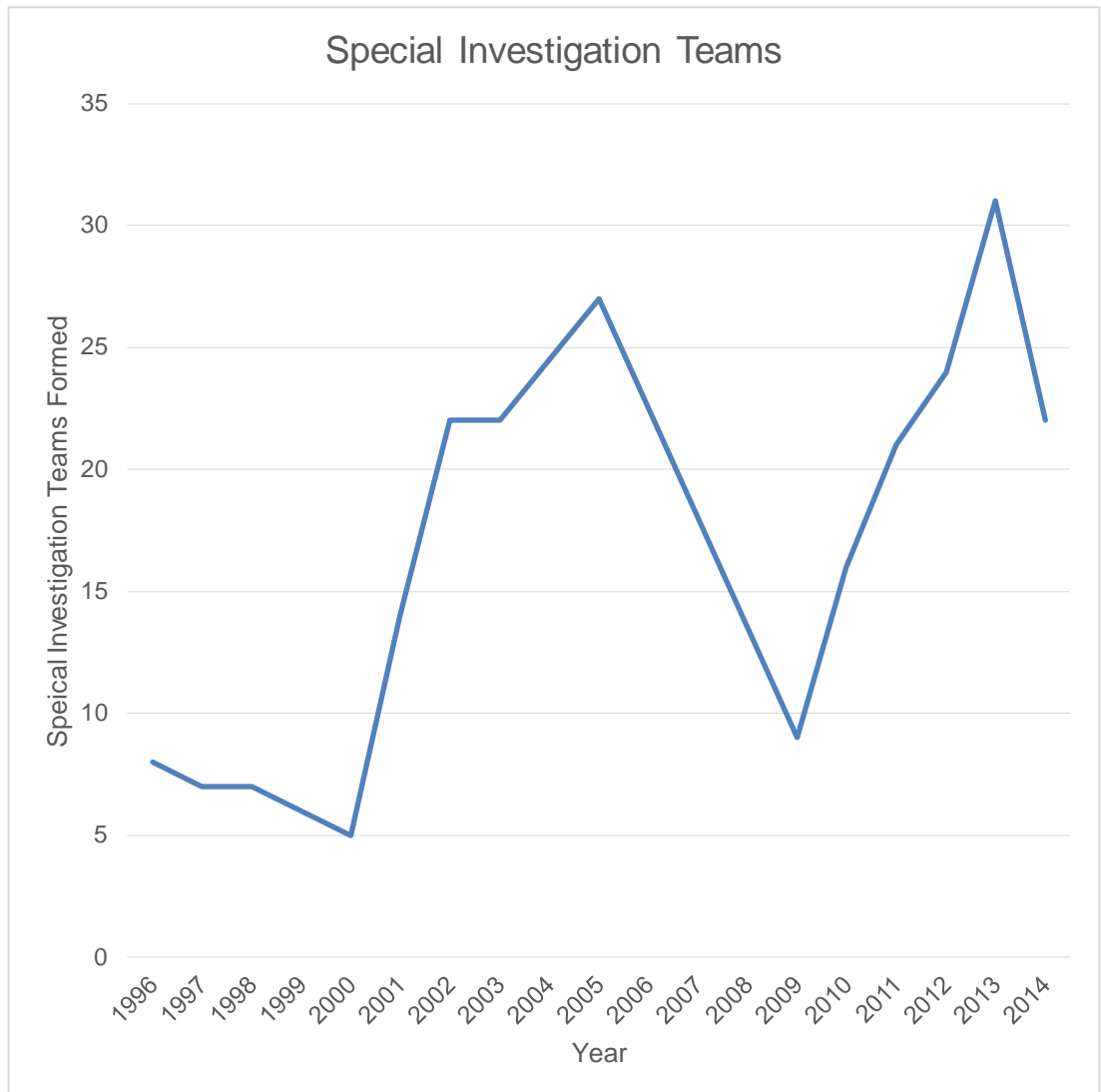
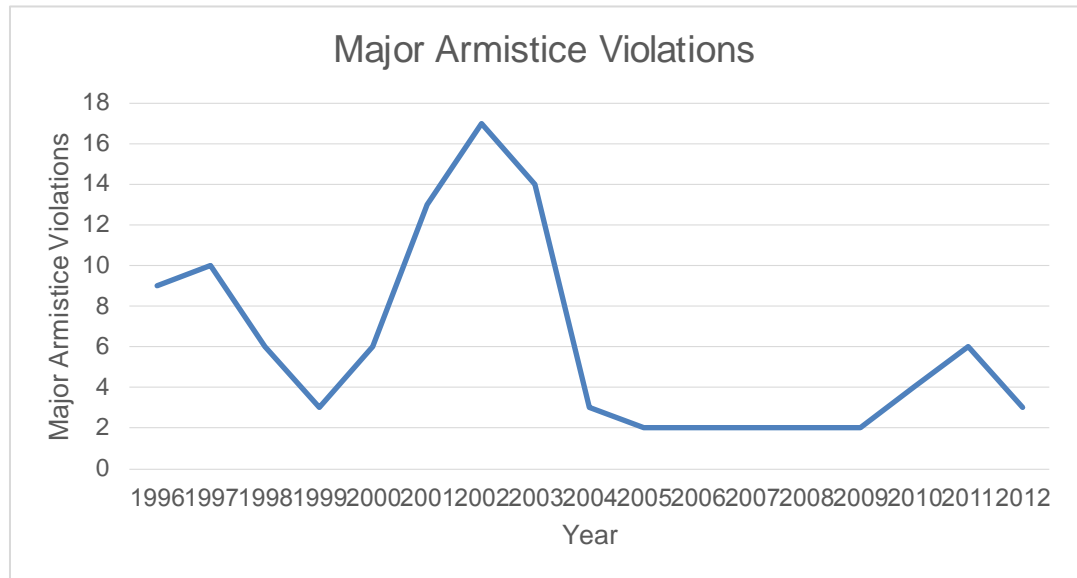


Figure 5.5 - Number of Special Investigation Teams formed by the United Nations Command to investigate violations of the Armistice Agreement from 1996-2014 (source United Nations Command Annual Reports).



Number of Major Armistice violations per year recorded by the United Nations Command from 1996-2012 (source United Nations Command Annual Reports).

The United Nations Command allows the security situation on the Korean peninsula to extend beyond the relatively simple equation of North Korea facing a Republic of Korea and United States alliance. With an active participation by the 18 sending states to the United Nations Command, North Korea faces an international coalition that is maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula. Again whilst it is difficult to quantify, it is almost certain that the presence of this international coalition remains a key factor in the decision-making process of the North Korean leadership when considering instigating acts of aggression.

North Korea has repeatedly publicly declared that it will no longer abide by the Armistice Agreement. On 4 April 1996, the KPA announced that it would no longer accept responsibility for the maintenance and administration of the DMZ and MDL.<sup>6</sup> On the 21 August 2012 in protest of ROK-U.S. exercises ULCHI/FREEDOM GUARDIAN, the Korean People's Army declared that "We proclaim to the world that our army and people have the right to do what they have to do at any given time, no longer constrained by the truce (of the Armistice Agreement)." Finally, on the 5 March 2013, the Korean Central News Agency reported that "the KPA Supreme Command will make the Korean Armistice Agreement totally nullified.". Despite these announcements, the demilitarised zone remains in place, the military demarcation line has not moved, and there has been no outbreak of open hostilities on the Korean peninsula. Whilst there have been incidents of violations on the Armistice Agreement on both sides (albeit these violations have been largely incurred on the North Korean side) the structure of the Armistice Agreement remains largely in force. The apparent refusal by the North Koreans to recognise the Armistice Agreement has made the role of the United Nations Command in ensuring the terms of the Armistice Agreement are carried out has become ever more important.

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<sup>6</sup> *United Nations Command annual report to United Nations Security Council 2015*, Section C paragraph 1.

After the signing of the Armistice Agreement on 27 July 1953, the sixteen United Nations Members who had military forces participating on the Korean peninsula affirmed their intent to abide by the Armistice, and to also again ‘be united and prompt to resist’ any armed attack.<sup>7</sup> This relates to the second role of the United Nations Command, to provide a means to return to the fight if required. As was discussed in the previous chapter the strength of the United Nations Command atrophied dramatically on the completion of the Korean War. Whilst this dramatic reduction is natural, the level of United Nations Command presence and participation in United Nations Command activities on the Korean peninsula between 1972 and 2003 was at such a low level the ability to have United Nations Command member nations return to military activities on the Korean peninsula would be extremely problematic. During this time the United States and Republic of Korea alliance continued to exercise within the Combined Forces Command separate to any United Nations Command involvement. These exercises were bilateral military exercises and ranged from low-level practical exercises to the ‘world’s largest’ war simulation exercise.<sup>8</sup> A new coalition wide area network providing secure communications was developed, the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System – Korea (CENTRIXS-K), allowing access for both United States and

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<sup>7</sup> *United Nations Document S/3079*, 7 August 1953, made public 7 August 1953

<sup>8</sup> *South Korea to join in Ulchi Focus Lens exercise*, Stars and Stripes 20 August 2005, <https://www.stripes.com/news/south-korea-to-join-in-ulchi-focus-lens-exercise-1.37271#.WXmMScZ7GCQ>

Republic of Korea military personnel for secure voice and data transfer.<sup>9</sup>

A previous Commander of the United States Forces Korea/Combined Forces Korea/United Nations Command from 2006-2008, US Army General B.B. Bell saw the creation of the United States/Republic of Korea Combined Forces Command in 1978 abrogating the role of the United Nations Command to the ‘reduced and singular mission of continuing to enforce the ongoing 27 July 1953 Armistice Agreement’.<sup>10</sup> The Combined Forces Command Headquarters was the ‘warfighting headquarters with responsibility to plan, train and exercise United States and Republic of Korea troops to ensure they remain ready to ‘fight tonight’. The United Nations Command ‘shifted its focus to then and now to the day to day maintenance of the Armistice Agreement only’.<sup>11</sup> This assessment by the Commander of the United Nations Command does not reflect a high level of ability of the United Nations Command in its role of providing a means of returning troops to the fight if required.

Participation in exercises on the Korean peninsula by United Nations Command sending states slowly increased from 2010. In

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<sup>9</sup> *CENTRIX-S provides Vital Communication*, America’s Navy News, 16 July 2007 [http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=30603](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=30603)

<sup>10</sup> *The Evolution of the Combined Forces Command*, General (ret) B.B. Bell, 9 Jun 2012 <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/69-Bell-Evolution-of-Combined-Forces-Command.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

2010 five of the sending states (Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and Denmark) commenced deploying military personnel to participate in the major command post exercises Key Resolve (March) and Ulchi Freedom Guardian (August).<sup>12</sup> From a relatively modest beginning (only 18 United Nations Command personnel from five sending states participated in Ulchi Freedom Guardian in 2010, this slowly developed into a meaningful level of participation of more than 100 troops from ten United Nations Command sending states.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> UNC increases participation in annual UFG exercise, 8<sup>th</sup> US Army Public Affairs, 25 August 2010, [https://www.army.mil/article/44224/UNC\\_increases\\_participation\\_in\\_annual\\_UFG\\_exercise](https://www.army.mil/article/44224/UNC_increases_participation_in_annual_UFG_exercise)

<sup>13</sup> *Sending States: The International Component of Ulchi Freedom Guardian*, US Pacific Command, 29 August 2014 <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/564543/sending-states-the-international-component-of-ulchi-freedom-guardian/>

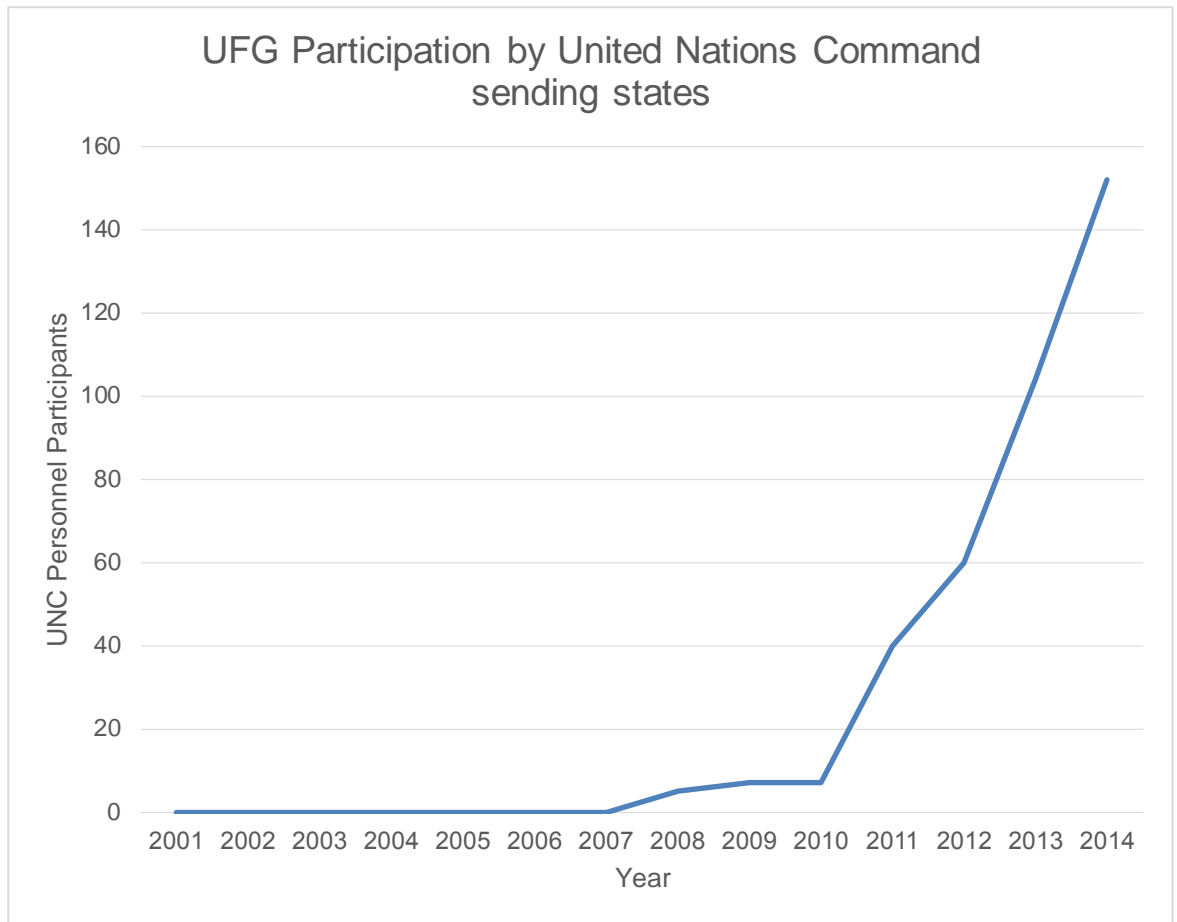


Figure 5.7 – United Nations Command sending state personnel (non ROK or US) participating in the command post exercise Ulchi Freedom Guardian (source United Nations Command Annual Reports).

Military personnel from seven United Nations Command Sending States participated in UFG 2015, including Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom joined the 25,000 United States military personnel and 50,000 Republic of Korea military personnel in the command post

exercise Ulchi Freedom Guardian in August 2015.<sup>14</sup> The Commander of the United States Forces Korea/Combined Forces Korea/United Nations Command from 2014-2015, Lieutenant General Curtis M. Scaparotti, noted that a trend had established seeing United Nations Command Sending States ‘qualitatively and quantitatively enhanced their participation in exercises’, also noting the United Nations Command as ‘a multi-national enabler to the defence of the Republic of Korea’ that could be counted on by the United States and the Republic of Korea.<sup>15</sup>

Albeit from a relatively low baseline, the United Nations Command has recently increased its focus on a role previously seen as focusing solely on the maintenance of the Armistice Agreement, into developing the ability to return to the Korean peninsula should a break out of hostilities occur. Whilst there is no legal requirement for the nations to return to the Korean peninsula should hostility break out, it is important that this role is fulfilled by military planners to ensure nations are provided an option for this should it be decided to commit military forces against a North Korean attack.

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<sup>14</sup> *CFC to begin Ulchi Freedom Guardian 2015*, 15 August 2015, United States Forces Korea portal <http://www.usfk.mil/Media/News/Article/613688/cfc-to-begin-ulchi-freedom-guardian-2015/>

<sup>15</sup> *Sharpening the tool of deterrence: enhancing the US-ROK alliance*, Lt Gen Curtis M Scaparotti, 2 October 2015, <https://www.army.mil/article/156593/>



## **Chapter 6**

### **Results and Recommendations**

It has been shown that the roles of the United Nations Command atrophied into that purely focused on maintaining the Armistice Agreement, and even this single role was met with mixed success when confronting major violations such as the sinking of the Republic of Korea Navy ship the Cheonan. The role of preparing for military options should they be required to again defend the Republic of Korea from attack has recently been recognised again and slowly expanded, however this remains a work in progress. How can sending-state nations for the United Nations Command continue to revitalise their role in deterring North Korean aggression and maintain the Armistice Agreement, as well as be prepared to contribute military forces should conflict again break out?

A key part of the deterring North Korean aggression is ensuring that North Korea is aware that its actions are accountable not just to the United States and Republic of Korea alliance, but to the international community. The United Nations Command is a long-standing coalition of the international community representing the initial actions by the United Nations in responding to the North Korean attack on South Korea in 1950. When North Korea commits an aggressive act against South Korea, the United Nations Command

can be used to show that this is not simply an inter-Korean incident, nor a North Korea versus a United States-Republic of Korea alliance, but it is a provocative act aimed against the international community.

Similarly, the United Nations Command must also be seen to be upholding the terms of the Armistice on both sides of the Military Demarcation Line. To ensure its credibility, it must continue to investigate possible violations of the Armistice on both sides, and enforce the terms of the Armistice Agreement on the southern side of the military demarcation even in the face of continued public North Korean refusal to accept that they must abide by the terms. The United Nations Command can also assist in continuing to ensure that any responses to North Korean provocations by either the Republic of Korea or the United States are proportionate and considered – the patience in particular of the Republic of Korea in maintaining a measured reaction to continued serious provocative actions by North Korea is to be applauded – the United Nations Command must ensure this strategic patience endures to ensure directed provocations by North Korea do not spiral into conflict on the Korean peninsula when this can be avoided.

The United Nations Command must also continue to expand its role from that of being responsible for the maintenance of the Armistice to ensuring a means of maintaining the ability to provide military assistance to the Republic of Korea should this be required as

either a show of force in a contingency, or the provision of military forces in a conflict. Noting the breadth of the capabilities in the military forces within the United States-Republic of Korea military alliance, a focus should be maintained on the provision of niche capabilities that would be sought by the alliance in time of contingency or combat. The most efficient means of ensuring the ability to operate together, and provision of appropriate capabilities by United Nations Command sending states, would be the continued expansion of participation in military exercises on the Korean peninsula. This increased participation would also have the effect of ensuring North Korea is aware of the relevance of this long-standing coalition.

United Nations Command sending states, such as Australia and Thailand, should seek to amend their representation and participation on the Korean peninsula to be able to maximise the presence of an international coalition that is committed to maintaining peace and security on the Korean peninsula and prepared to provide effective military assistance should conflict once again break out. Whilst mindful of the difficulties and expense in establishing overseas positions for military personnel, it is important that United Nations Command sending states maintain a permanent presence on the Korean peninsula. Up until very recently the number of United Nations Command personnel on the Korean peninsula had dropped to a number threatening insignificance compared to the United States-

Republic of Korea Combined Forces Command – this was apparent in 2010 in the aftermath of the sinking of the Cheonan when the United Nations Command’s role in the maintenance of the Armistice Commission was effectively side-lined – this was at a time when this role was recognised as the only relevant role for the United Nations Command. Recent increases in numbers of military personnel in the Republic of Korea from Australia, Canada, Denmark and the United Kingdom are assisting in the revitalisation of the United Nations Command, complementing the continued commitment of military personnel from other sending states such as New Zealand and Thailand.

The positioning of these sending state personnel should be both within the Military Armistice Commission Secretariat as well as the United Nations Command headquarters to seek maximum strategic advantage. Positions sought should be both high-profile, to maximise the visibility to North Korea of the international coalition, as well as aimed to provide maximum access and influence within the United States-Republic of Korea. Appropriate positions would be within the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom where the greatest exposure to North Korean troops occurs, within the operations area of the Military Armistice Commission responsible for investigations into Armistice Agreement violations as well as educating and monitoring Republic of Korean forces on the Armistice Agreement responsibilities, and within key operational planning areas of the

United Nations Command headquarters.

Effort should continue to be placed on considering Military Armistice Commission activities that can be conducted by United Nations Command personnel that can assist in the maintenance of the Armistice Agreement whilst enhancing the relevance of the United Nations Command. A relatively recent example of this is the recent commissioning of United Nations Command vessels patrolling the Han River estuary in June 2016, seizing a Chinese fishing vessel that had been fishing illegally in this sensitive area.<sup>16</sup> This was the first time an operation in the Han River estuary had been conducted by the United Nations Command since the cessation of hostilities in 1953. Consideration should be given to continuing to utilise the strategic advantages of having Armistice maintenance activities conducted under the United Nations Command auspices.

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<sup>16</sup> Crackdown on illegal Chinese fishing a success, South Korea says, Stars and Stripes, 13 June 2016,



Figure 6-1 - United Nations Command marked vessels patrolling the Han River Estuary on 10 June 2016 – Photo courtesy of United Nations Command

Expanded participation on the Korean peninsula in multilateral exercises such as Key Resolve, Ulchi Freedom Guardian and Ssang Yong should continue to be sought for United Nations Command sending states. This participation provides a two-fold benefit – in addition to exposing sending state planners to the intricacies of the operational plans of the United States-Republic of Korea Combined Forces Command and allows continued development of the ability for multinational partners to operate within

this command, it also provides a very visible reminder to the North Koreans of the relevance and investment of the international community in the maintenance of peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

## **Recommendations**

- The recent revitalisation of the relevance of the United Nations Command continue, with a focus on continued increase in presence, participation and activities on the Korean peninsula by sending state nations.
  - Strategic messaging continues to expand on the relevance and investment of the international community in the maintenance of peace and security on the Korean peninsula with a focus on United Nations Command activities.
  - Sending states of the United Nations Command increase their presence as practicable within both the United Nations Command and the Military Armistice Commission Secretariat.
- Within the United Nations Command positions should be sought within the operational planning, logistics and

intelligence components to maximise the opportunity for access and influence by sending state representatives.

- Within the Military Armistice Commission Secretariat positions should be sought that are both high profile (such as within the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom), as well as influential in investigation, inspection and education activities conducted by the operations section of the Secretariat.
  - United Nations Command activities aiding in the maintenance of peace and security on the Korean peninsula, such as the recently expanded activities of observer missions for live-fire exercises on the Republic of Korea held north-west islands, and the provision of maritime patrols in the Han River estuary, continue to be developed to maximise the visibility and relevance of the United Nations Command in maintaining the Armistice and deterring North Korean aggression.
  - The United Nations Command continues to enforce Armistice Agreement requirements on the southern side of the Military Demarcation Line, supervising and controlling Republic of Korea activities within the de-militarised zone and educating Republic of Korea forces on the Armistice Agreement requirements.



- Sending state representatives participate fully in all investigations and inspections conducted under the auspices of the Military Armistice Commission for apparent Armistice violations conducted by both the North and South side, ensuring an international credibility is provided for these activities.

- United Nations Command sending states continue efforts to help shape as possible counter-provocation planning by the Republic of Korea to ensure these responses are both proportionate and measured to reduce the chance of provocative actions deteriorating into open conflict.

- United Nations Command sending states continue to increase their participation in multilateral exercises on the Korean peninsula to both assist in ensuring an ability to provide effective military support in the event of conflict is maintained, as well as enhancing the visible deterrent providing by elevating these activities to the international community, and not just the Republic of Korea and United States alliance.

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## Biography

- Name:** Captain Chris Smith,RAN
- Date of Birth:** 9 March 1970
- Educational Background:** Graduating as a Midshipman from the Australian Defence Force Academy with a Bachelor of Science majoring in Oceanography and Mathematics
- Military Courses:** commenced seaman officer training, and as a Sub-Lieutenant served as an Officer of the Watch in the survey motor vessel HMAS BENALLA, thence the two guided missile frigates HMA Ships ADELAIDE and DARWIN
- received his Aviation Warfare Officer wings in 1996 and completed Operational Flying Training at 816 Squadron on S-70B-2 Seahawk helicopters
- served in embarked Seahawk Flights in HMA Ships SYDNEY and MELBOURNE, completing a tour conducting maritime interception operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf in MELBOURNE in 1999
- Military Experience:** Commencing a loan posting to the Royal Navy, Captain Smith completed Operational Flying Training on Lynx Mk 8 anti-surface warfare helicopters at the Royal Navy's 702 Squadron in early 2001. Graduating to 815 Squadron, he then served in the embarked Lynx Flight in HMS MONTROSE, including a tour of duty in West Africa flying in support of the International Military Assistance in Sierra Leone in 2001. Assuming duties as a Lynx Flight Commander from 2002, he served as a Flight Commander in HMS MARLBOROUGH

for the Iraq Conflict in 2003, flying combat sorties in support of the Al Faw campaign.

Captain Smith returned to Australia in 2004 as a Lieutenant Commander, and instructed Pilots, Aviation Warfare Officers and Aircrewmembers on AS-350BA Squirrel helicopters at 723 Squadron. After this instructional posting he served as Executive Officer of HMAS STIRLING, the RAN major Fleet Base in Western Australia, from 2006.

In 2008 he completed Korean language training at the Defence School of Languages prior to assuming duties in Seoul as the Assistant Defence Attaché from 2009-2012. On return to Australia as a Commander in 2013 he worked within International Policy Division as Deputy Director North East Asia, responsible for Defence engagement with China, South Korea, North Korea and Mongolia.

**Current Position:**

Australian Defence Attaché, Bangkok, Thailand

# SUMMARY

**Field Strategy**

**Title:** The United Nations Command on the Korean Peninsula – History, Effectiveness and Future Roles

**Name:** Captain Chris Smith, RAN

**Course NDC Class 59**

**Position:** Australian Defence Attaché

## **Background and problem**

The Korean peninsula was colonised by Japan from 1910 to the end of World War II. In August 1945, the Korean peninsula was divided along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel with US Forces administering Japanese surrender in the southern region, and Soviet forces administering Japanese surrender in the northern region. As differences between the US and Soviet morphed into the Cold War, these two regions were separated into South Korea and North Korea, with separate established Governments.

On the 25 June 1950, North Korean (Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea) forces invaded South Korea (Republic of Korea) in an attempt to unify the divided Korean peninsula. In response to this armed attack, the United Nations Security Council adopted several Resolutions. UNSCR 82 (25 June 1950) called for an immediate cessation to hostilities and for North Korean forces to withdraw to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. <sup>1</sup>UNSCR 83 (27 June 1950) recommended that member nations of the UN furnish assistance to South Korea 'as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNSCR 82 (1950). Resolution of 25 June 1950  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/82\(1950\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/82(1950))

<sup>2</sup> UNSCR 83 (1950). Resolution of 27 June 1950  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/83\(1950\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/83(1950))

UNSCR 84 (7 July 1950) recommended UN member nations to provide 'forces and other assistance available to a unified command' under the US, requested the US to designate a commander of the forces, and authorised the unified command 'to use the United Nations flag in the course of operations against North Korean forces'.<sup>3</sup>

This unified command was established on 24 July 1950 with the formation of a headquarters in Tokyo under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. Both Under the auspices of this unified command sixteen nations provided combat troops to the Korean peninsula during the 1950-1953 Korean War, with five other nations providing medical and humanitarian support. The Armistice Agreement between the United Nations Command on one side, and the Korean People's Army (North Korean) and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army on the other side, was signed on 27 July 1953. The Armistice Agreement was intended to be a cease-fire between military forces as a pre-cursor to peace treaties being agreed between relative governments.

More than 63 years since the signing of the Armistice Agreement the United Nations Command remains as a unified command on the Korean peninsula. Whilst commanded by the United States, other nations, including Australia and Thailand, remain a part of the United Nations Command with varying levels of activity and presence on the Korean peninsula. It can be argued that the functionality of the United Nations Command as a strategic tool to ameliorate tensions on the Korean peninsula and establish a lasting peace regime has atrophied over these 63 years.

Contributing nations to the United Nations Command, such as Australia and Thailand, can align their presence and activities as active member nations to revitalise the relevance and utility of the United Nations Command as a valuable tool for regional security.

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<sup>3</sup> UNSCR 84 (1950). Resolution of 7 July 1950  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/84\(1950\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/84(1950))

## **Objectives of the research**

The aims of this research paper are as follows:

- To outline the history of the United Nations Command and its changing composition and roles over the last 63 years.
- To consider the current effectiveness of the United Nations Command as an organ for the maintenance of security and stability on the Korean peninsula.
- To develop recommendations on the most effective future roles of the United Nations Command, allowing contributing nations to best support the United Nations Command to revitalise its role in the maintenance of stability on the Korean peninsula.

## **Scope of the research**

Data collected to provide a qualitative analysis of the functionality of the United Nations Command was based on an assessment of the annual activity reports submitted to the United Nations General Assembly.

## **Methodology**

The research based on data collection of United Nations Command activities was used to provide a qualitative assessment of the functional activities of the United Nations Command. This is supported with case studies of various activities of the United Nations Command. This research was then used as the basis for determining whether there is scope for the United Nations Command to be revitalised to further promote stability on the Korean peninsula, and if so what means this can be best achieved.

## Results

The roles of the United Nations Command atrophied into that purely focused on maintaining the Armistice Agreement, and even this single role was met with mixed success when confronting major violations such as the sinking of the Republic of Korea Navy ship the Cheonan. The role of preparing for military options should they be required to again defend the Republic of Korea from attack has recently been recognised again and slowly expanded, however this remains a work in progress.

A key part of the deterring North Korean aggression is ensuring that North Korea is aware that its actions are accountable not just to the United States and Republic of Korea alliance, but to the international community. The United Nations Command is a long-standing coalition of the international community representing the initial actions by the United Nations in responding to the North Korean attack on South Korea in 1950.

Similarly, the United Nations Command must also be seen to be upholding the terms of the Armistice on both sides of the Military Demarcation Line. To ensure its credibility, it must continue to investigate possible violations of the Armistice on both sides, and enforce the terms of the Armistice Agreement on the southern side of the military demarcation even in the face of continued public North Korean refusal to accept that they must abide by the terms. The United Nations Command can also assist in continuing to ensure that any responses to North Korean provocations by either the Republic of Korea or the United States are proportionate and measured.

The United Nations Command must also continue to expand its role from that of being responsible for the maintenance of the Armistice to ensuring a means of maintaining the ability to provide military assistance to the Republic of Korea should this be required as either a show of force in a contingency, or the provision of military forces in a conflict. The most efficient means of ensuring the ability to operate together, and provision of appropriate capabilities by United Nations Command sending states, would be the continued expansion of participation in military exercises on the Korean peninsula. This increased participation would also have the



effect of ensuring North Korea is aware of the relevance of this long-standing coalition.

United Nations Command sending states, such as Australia and Thailand, should seek to amend their representation and participation on the Korean peninsula to be able to maximise the presence of an international coalition that is committed to maintaining peace and security on the Korean peninsula and prepared to provide effective military assistance should conflict once again break out.

The positioning of these sending state personnel should be both within the Military Armistice Commission Secretariat as well as the United Nations Command headquarters to seek maximum strategic advantage. Positions sought should be both high-profile, to maximise the visibility to North Korea of the international coalition, as well as aimed to provide maximum access and influence within the United States-Republic of Korea.

Effort should continue to be placed on considering Military Armistice Commission activities that can be conducted by United Nations Command personnel that can assist in the maintenance of the Armistice Agreement whilst enhancing the relevance of the United Nations Command.

Expanded participation on the Korean peninsula in multilateral exercises should continue to be sought for United Nations Command sending states. This participation provides a two-fold benefit – in addition to continued development of the ability for multinational partners to operate within this command, it also provides a very visible reminder to the North Koreans of the relevance and investment of the international community in the maintenance of peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

## **Recommendations**

- The recent revitalisation of the relevance of the United Nations Command continue, with a focus on continued increase in presence, participation and activities on the Korean peninsula by sending state nations.

- Strategic messaging continues to expand on the relevance and investment of the international community in the maintenance of peace and security on the Korean peninsula with a focus on United Nations Command activities.
- Sending states of the United Nations Command increase their presence as practicable within both the United Nations Command and the Military Armistice Commission Secretariat.
  - Within the United Nations Command positions should be sought within the operational planning, logistics and intelligence components to maximise the opportunity for access and influence by sending state representatives.
  - Within the Military Armistice Commission Secretariat positions should be sought that are both high profile (such as within the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom), as well as influential in investigation, inspection and education activities conducted by the operations section of the Secretariat.
- United Nations Command activities aiding in the maintenance of peace and security on the Korean peninsula, such as the recently expanded activities of observer missions for live-fire exercises on the Republic of Korea held north-west islands, and the provision of maritime patrols in the Han River estuary, continue to be developed to maximise the visibility and relevance of the United Nations Command in maintaining the Armistice and deterring North Korean aggression.
- The United Nations Command continues to enforce Armistice Agreement requirements on the southern side of the Military Demarcation Line, supervising and controlling Republic of Korea activities within the de-militarised zone and educating Republic of Korea forces on the Armistice Agreement requirements.
- Sending state representatives participate fully in all investigations and inspections conducted under the auspices of the Military Armistice Commission for apparent

Armistice violations conducted by both the North and South side, ensuring an international credibility is provided for these activities.

- United Nations Command sending states continue efforts to help shape as possible counter-provocation planning by the Republic of Korea to ensure these responses are both proportionate and measured to reduce the chance of provocative actions deteriorating into open conflict.
- United Nations Command sending states continue to increase their participation in multilateral exercises on the Korean peninsula to both assist in ensuring an ability to provide effective military support in the event of conflict is maintained, as well as enhancing the visible deterrent providing by elevating these activities to the international community, and not just the Republic of Korea and United States alliance.