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Tethered falcon : the South Korean Air Force, 1946-1956.

So, Chintae

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**Tethered Falcon:
The South Korean Air Force, 1946-1956**

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Abstract of Thesis

This thesis examines the evolution of the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) in the period 1946 through 1956, during which the growth of the ROKAF was constantly restrained. The examination focuses on two causal factors, exogenous and indigenous, that affected the growth of the South Korean Air Force: United States Korean policy, and South Korean national leadership. American policy toward South Korea demanded an infantry (manpower)-oriented ROK military establishment. The United States not only favoured using 'local' (i.e., Korean) ground forces, but also feared what the ROK government might do with an air force capable of surprising the North with a crippling air attack. Nonetheless, in the end, the assiduous efforts of ROKAF leaders and dedicated endeavours of their American advisers ultimately produced the South Korean Air Force as a tactical airpower, with a separate service identity. The American government's policy limitations on ROKAF growth and its modernisation are analysed, together with several issues arising from the process.

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GLOSSARY

AAA	Anti-Aircraft Artillery
AABD	Army Air Base Detachment
AAC	Army Air Corps
AACS	Air Traffic and Airways Communications Service
AB	Air Base
ABA	Aviation Building Association
ABS	Air Base Squadron
ABU	Air Base Unit
AC&W	Aircraft Control and Warning
ADIZ	Air Defence Identification Zone
AF	Air Force
AFAC	Airborne Forward Air Controller
AFAG	Air Force Advisory Group
AFB	Air Force Base
AFHRA	Air Force Historical Research Agency
ALOC	Air Line of Communications
CAS	Close Air Support
CAD	Constabulary Aviation Detachment
CAFH	Center for Air Force History
CID	Criminal Investigation Detachment
CINCFE	Commander in Chief, Far East Command
COMM	Communications
CONUS	Continental United States
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
EUSAK	Eighth United States Army in Korea
FAC	Forward Air Controller
FASIS	Fifth Air Force Standardization and Indoctrination School
FBW	Fighter Bomber Wing
FEAF	Far East Air Forces
FEC	Far East Command
FG	Fighter Group
FIR	Flight Information Region
FLT	Flight
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FS	Fighter Squadron
FTS	Fighter Training Squadron
FW	Fighter Wing
GFAC	Groundborne Forward Air Controller
GLOC	Ground Line of Communications
GP	Group

GPO	Government Printing Office
HQ	Headquarters
HVAR	High Velocity Aerial Rocket
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IFR	Instrument Flight Rule (Adverse Weather Flight Rule)
INT	Intelligence
JADIZ	Japan Air Defense Identification Zone
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JOC	Joint Operations Center
KADIZ	Korea Air Defense Identification Zone
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group
KNP	Korean National Civil Police
KPA	North Korean People's Army
KPG	Korean Provisionary Government
KTACS	Korea Tactical Air Control System
LAB	Laboratory
LOC	Line of Communications
MDAP	Mutual Defense Assistance Program
MDL	Military Demarcation Line
MELS	Military English Language School
MND	Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense
MOD	Ministry of Defence (U.K.)
MTD	Mobile Training Detachment
MTU	Mobile Training Unit
NA/WDC	National Archives, Washington, D.C.
NAVFE	United States Navy Forces in Far East
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NSC	National Security Council
OPCON	Operational Control
OSI	Office of Special Investigation
POL	Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants
RAF	Royal Air Force
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
ROKA	ROK Army
ROKAF	ROK Air Force
ROKN	ROK Navy
SID	Standard Instrument Departure
SQ	Squadron
SVC	Service
TAC	Tactical
TACC	Tactical Air Control Center
TACP	Tactical Air Control Party
T/E	Table of Equipment
TNG	Training
T/O	Table of Organisation

TRANS	Transportation
UAE	Unit Authorised Equipment
UNC	United Nations Command
USAFIK	United States Army Forces in Korea
VFR	Visual Flight Rule (Clear Weather Flight Rule)
WG	Wing

INTRODUCTION

It has been over four decades since the cessation of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula. From the ashes of war, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) has emerged as one of the leading newly industrialised countries in the world. The economic growth of South Korea has allowed its Air Force to afford the largest fighter forces in Asia in terms of the number of such high performance aircraft as F-4s and F-16s. The role of the Republic of Korea Air Force has increased ever since the war to encompass most of the air defence of the whole Korean Peninsula in cooperation with the United States Air Force under the ROK-US Combined Forces Command. How did this growth come about? How did the ROKAF come into being and develop to the point where it became one of America's major partners for promoting regional security cooperation in the Far East? To understand how this was achieved, it is necessary to examine the early history of the South Korean Air Force. Its present position belies its struggles to survive not only war, but also the restraints imposed upon it by the United States.

The principal purpose of this study is to describe and analyse the history of the ROK Air Force, before, during, and immediately following the 1950-53 war, and to do so in the overall context of the United States Korean policy. Secondary purposes include chronicling the efforts of the ROK Air Force pilots and their leaders in their struggle to establish and then to preserve their identity as an independent air arm in the ROK's unbalanced¹ military forces, and providing a historical record of the evolution of the Republic of Korea Air Force both in battle and during the modernisation period that occurred after the Korean War.

¹ 'Unbalanced' refers to the disproportionate size of the ROK Army, as compared to the Air Force.

These overlapping purposes have not previously been examined by scholars, to whom the ROK Air Force and its evolution remain uncharted territory. Quite simply, there presently exist no scholarly investigations of the ROKAF, let alone any attempt to merge both Korean and Western records in an analysis of South Korea's Air Force evolution. This study is the first attempt of such kind and is informed by the author's thirty plus years of service with the ROK Air Force and its US Air Force partners.

Korean and American archival materials, publications, memoirs, and interviews are used as sources. By probing American and Korean sources, particularly the US Air Force records of the Far East Air Forces and the Fifth Air Force, together with subordinate units of the 314th Air Division and the 6146th Air Force Advisory Group, plus the histories and records of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is possible not only to determine the factors that restrained the growth of South Korea's airpower, but also to shed light on Korean Air Force leaders' efforts to expand their service and the roles played by American air advisers.

Anyone undertaking a task such as this faces challenges regarding source materials that cannot be appreciated by most Western scholars unless described in detail. At least four major problems present themselves. The first is the comparative absence of native Korean source materials pertaining to the early years of the ROKAF. The devastation of the war prevented ROK government officials from safeguarding most official records. When Seoul was overrun by North Korean troops, a majority of the early records were captured and disappeared. Such records that did survive in official hands can be found in the *Goon-Sa Yon-Goo Sil* (Office of Military History Studies, which is better described by its earlier name, *Gong-Goon Jon-Sa Pyon-Ch'an Sil* or Air Force History Compilation Office). This office has a staff of six, of whom only three perform archival duties, which consist

primarily of document receipt and filing. The collection has not been catalogued, but is arranged on shelves by year and functional area (e.g., operations, supply, etc.). The Korean equivalent to the [U.S.] National Archives, *Gook-Rip Ja-Ryo Bo-Kwan So* (National Records Storage Office), contains no ROKAF materials. This is true as well of the Ministry of National Defense History Office, whose holdings are almost exclusively ROK Army-oriented.²

The second major problem is the absence of any ROKAF tradition prior to its virtually instantaneous creation in October 1949. (Compare the RAF's five-year gestation period in the Royal Flying Corps from 1913 to 1918, and the USAF's forty-year experience as part of the army from August 1907 to September 1947.) This situation resulted directly from the Japanese hegemony over Korea from the earliest days of military aviation. One result was that there were at most, in 1945, a few dozen Koreans with any serious experience in military aviation, to include especially aspects of administration and records keeping.

A third problem, one relating to the paucity of critical analysis or commentary, official or otherwise, results from the unique aspects of ROK civil-military relations. In most Western countries, critical accounts eventually emerge, from both participants and observers. In Korea, with (1) former military officers (primarily those of the ROK Army) dominating the political life of the nation, and with (2) the fragile nature of the situation along the border between the ROK and the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), those who might have otherwise been critical have had

² The reader should note that the absence of extensive or well-ordered official records is not unique to the ROKAF. Consider, for example, the following comments from the Introduction to Dr. M. S. B. Nader's 'The Evolution of Egyptian Air Defence Strategy, 1967-1973,' Ph.D. thesis, King's College London, January 1990: 'As in most Third World [sic] countries, Egyptian defence-related matters are not openly discussed or put in the public domain.' (p. 6) '. . . [T]he archival systems of most Egyptian military institutions remain undeveloped.' (p. 7) 'Official documents which might provide more insight into Egyptian military thinking and behaviour are not generally available, . . .' (p. 12)

at least two reasons to remain reticent. In addition, the cultural traditions of Korea do not, thus far, encourage public - let alone published - contention with regard to the government's position on specific issues, particularly those relating to national defence. Even late-in-life memoirs are rare among military officers, in particular ROKAF leaders.

A fourth problem relating specifically to the early years of the ROKAF is that there was simply no time (and little interest) for the founders of the service to set things down in writing. There were missions to be flown, challenges of organisation to be surmounted, American advisers to be pleased, a war to be fought. These imperatives contributed to a view that *recording* what was happening was far less important than doing the best possible operational job, both at the moment and in the future.

The devastation of the war precluded Korean government officials from safeguarding most official records. President Rhee personally maintained his records at his residence, the Kyong-Mu Dae (later called the Blue House).³ When Seoul was overrun by North Korea, most of these records disappeared. What survived of Rhee's materials was the result of the careful husbanding of memos, correspondence, speeches and statements Rhee had sent to Dr. Robert T. Oliver. Rhee used Oliver as a speech writer and diplomatic coordinator after independence. Oliver was employed by Rhee as head of the ROK liaison office in Washington. His office was

³ Proper and personal names are spelled phonetically in English as close to the original pronunciation as possible. However, if the names are widely known already, then they are adopted. Kaesong and Panmunjom, two examples, could be spelled as Kaesung and as Panmoonjum. Personal names are spelled in the Korean way in the text, but in the Western way in the footnotes and bibliography. In the Korean way of spelling personal names, the family name comes first, with such an exception as the name of President Rhee, who is widely known in the Western way as Syngman Rhee. For instance, in the case of Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul, the former ROKAF Chief of Staff (1949-52, 1954-56), Kim is his family name and Chung-Yul his first name. All first names are hyphenated for identification convenience, but those as a part of the titles of publications remain unchanged as originally spelled by the authors.

staffed by Korean diplomats from the ROK Embassy. Because Oliver's materials were housed in Washington, they survived the war.⁴

Finally in these respects, it is no exaggeration to say that the existence of pure ROKAF archives is limited. What materials do exist are essentially lists of names and events, and lack both analysis and critical comment. *H'an-Gong Jon-Sa: H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng (The History of the Air War: The Korean War)*, published by the ROK Air Force, is the official record of ROKAF participation in combat.⁵ This history exists in Korean only, and is a compilation of statistics and documentary records. The other record is *Gong-Goon Sa (The History of the Air Force)*, in eight volumes. Half of these have been declassified.⁶ They exist in Korean only and are purely documentary, without any discussion of associated issues and problems, primarily because the military government worried that critical analysis might be exploited by the North Koreans as well as radical anti-government South Koreans.

There are some other official and unofficial records and literature of the Korean War in Korean, but they are all either ROK Army- or politics-oriented with limited coverage of the ROK Air Force. There are also a few oral histories of Korean Air Force participants in Korean. They are few in number, and confined to their own personal experiences, without observation of strategic significance and political implications of air operations of the Korean Air Force. Unfortunately no diaries have been released yet, except the memoirs of Lt. Generals Kim Chung-Yul and Chang Sung-Whan, both Korean War participants and former Chiefs of Staff of the ROK Air Force.

⁴ Dr. Oliver was associate professor of communications at the University of Pennsylvania when his association with Rhee began in 1942, while Dr. Rhee was in exile in America.

⁵ ROK Air Force. *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa: H'an-Gook Jon-Jueng (The History of the Air War: The Korean War)*. Seoul, Korea: ROKAF History Office, 1989.

⁶ Of eight volumes, only the first four covering the period of 1949-1967 have been declassified. Even so, none are available to the general public.

The author's interviews with several Korean general officers, together with the two written accounts, are invaluable in tracing the development of the South Korean Air Force in its early history. Besides these men, the author's association with Korean War veterans, ranging from mechanics to pilots and commanders, also provided him with invaluable information. In addition to Korean interviewees, professors of the USAF School of Advanced Airpower Studies (SAAS), as well as archivists of the USAF Historical Research Agency, were especially helpful, in particular, Lt. Colonel Mark Clodfelter (Ph.D.), Colonel Philip Meilinger (Ph.D., and Dean of SAAS), and Colonel Richard Rauschkolb (Commander, USAF Historical Research Agency). In addition, two internationally recognised historians of airpower answered every call: Dr. Robert Frank Futrell and Dr. David MacIsaac.

Apart from the unpublished classified and unclassified Korean documents, there are two other types of publications - *Bee-Mae Poom* (Not-for-Commercial Sale /in-house documents) and occasional publications made available to the public through commercial book stores. Government *documents* cannot be purchased commercially. In fact there is no Korean equivalent of either Her Majesty's Stationery Office or the US Government Printing Office. In most cases, Korean government publications are for internal use only - not for public dissemination. For instance, the ROK Air Force printed *Gong-Goon Sa (The History of the ROK Air Force)* as an internal document which cannot be purchased. Culturally, memoirs and writings produced by governmental employees are rarely written for profit, and are therefore not commercially available to the public.⁷

⁷ It is up to the discretion of the author if he wishes to publish commercially. As examples, former ROK Army Chief of Staff General Chung Il-Kwon's memoirs were published commercially, whereas former ROKAF Chief of Staff Lt. General Kim Chung-Yul's memoirs were published privately (*Bee-Mae Poom*/ Not-for-Sale) for limited dissemination. Only 500 copies of Kim's *Memoirs* were published for selected dissemination. Interviews, author with Mrs. Kim Chung-Yul [19 July 1994

Especially noteworthy among the available American documents are air intelligence reports and periodic historical reports of Far East Air Forces, Fifth Air Force, 314th Air Division and 6146th Air Force Advisory Group. These US Air Force commands and units were all directly related to military assistance and supervision of the ROK Air Force,⁸ and literally anxious to record not only their own activities but also those of their 'step-son Air Force' - the ROKAF. Hence, to a much greater extent than many realise, it is to the American documentation of ROKAF activities that Korean historians must look to find anything resembling a full account of the ROKAF's early years. The American advisers in Korea were required by USAF regulation to compile the records of their activities in Korea by producing periodic activity reports. These reports became a part of the over-all semi-annual report of the 5th Air Force to USAF Headquarters. As the 5th Air Force was charged with operational control and the logistic support of the ROKAF through its advisory personnel, there is one chapter or section devoted to the status of the ROKAF within each 5th Air Force semi-annual history. (The 5th Air Force histories, in typescript form and never published, were compiled at the time by officers or NCOs of the 5th Air Force Headquarters.)⁹

A particularly valuable, but little known AFHRA file is the so-called 'Barcus Report.' It is customary for the United States to conduct surveys of the effectiveness of USAF operations in war (e.g., the *United States*

(telephone), 5 May 1995] and Kim Dong-Yul, Chief of ROKAF Military History Studies, 28 April and 15 May 1995.

⁸ See USAF archives on the histories of Far East Air Forces, Fifth Air Force, 314th Air Division and 6146th Air Force Advisory Group during the period from 1948 to 1958 in files with numbers prefixed by AFHRA Call # K730.01 at the US Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

⁹ The entire set of documents with regard to the 5th Air Force history is in file numbers K-730.01, 6146-GP-TNG-III, and 314-AD-III at the US Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. The history of the 5th Air Force during the period of 1948 through 1956 consists of over 175 archive boxes, in unedited typescript form. The AFHRA also stores the whole set of documents pertaining to the US Far East Command (FEC) in 1,233 archive boxes, of which 236 boxes are related to the Far East Air Forces (FEAF) during the period of 1945 through 1956 in file number K-720.01.

Strategic Bombing Survey of 1944-47 and the *Gulf War Air Power Survey* of 1992-93). As a part of this custom, Major General Glenn O. Barcus, then vice commander of Tactical Air Command, [later commander of 5th AF (1952-53)], led a survey team consisting of various USAF officers and civil servant historians. This team investigated FEAF/5th Air Force operational activities on the Korean peninsula during 1950-1953. Their ultimate reports consist of seven volumes, appendices, and supporting documents, all in manuscript form, as an unpublished in-house document. (In particular, volume 1, books 1 and 3, were of great assistance.)¹⁰

The ROKAF's early struggles to achieve an independent (or at least separate) identity had greater support from a few important Korean politicians than from most ROK Army officials, not unlike the experiences of the RAF in 1917-1918 and the USAF in 1946-1947. This study concentrates on the early years of the South Korean Air Force from 1946 until the initial completion of Korean Air Force modernisation in 1956. This ten-year period is especially important, given the evolution of the South Korean Air Force from virtually nothing to nearly one hundred jet fighters and over 16,000 personnel. The political situation after the end of the Second World War, and the American military occupation authorities' concern with developing a Constabulary force to secure internal order, initially deflected almost everyone's attention from creating a separate air force.

The creation of the ROKAF with some twenty liaison planes, less than nine months prior to the Korean War, was almost a miracle, and a feat of enormous importance for the subsequent development of South Korea's indigenous airpower. But for the united front and tenacious effort vanguarded by the seven founding leaders, the formation of the ROK Air

¹⁰ U.S. Air Force, 'An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the United States Air Force in the Korean Campaign, 25 June - December 1950,' Volume I, Books 1 and 3, *ms.* The documents are commonly known as the Barcus Reports. K168.041-1, 25 Jun-Dec 1950, v. 1, pt. 1. US Air Force historical records. US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Force would not have occurred. Chapter One focuses on two facets of the birth of the ROKAF: (1) the background of various aviation groups which banded together, calling for the creation of an air force; and (2) how, once united as a military organisation, this army air corps unit fought to gain its independence as a separate service. Chapter Two analyses the situation on the Korean Peninsula prior to the Korean War, focusing on the lack of military preparedness on the parts of both the ROK Air Force and the United States Air Force (USAF), largely a result of America's security policy in the Far East. Chapter Three examines ROKAF's combat activities, including how the ROKAF participated in the war by simultaneously implementing pilot training and combat missions in close coordination with American air advisers. It is essentially an overview of ROKAF activities at all levels during the war, and is designed to provide the necessary background for Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Four assesses how successfully the USAF advisory team (6146th Air Force Advisory Group) accomplished its mission in support of ROKAF combat operations and pilot training during the Korean War. The initial establishment of the Advisory Group, its command relationships with both 5th Air Force and ROKAF headquarters, the specific activities of the American advisers in the field, and the mentorship and role model aspects of the advisory effort all receive detailed treatment. Chapter Five examines the policy limitations of ROKAF's restrained growth with emphasis on the ROK-US Agreed Minute, and its effects on the South Korean Air Force. It was this basic document upon which the post-Korean War modernisation of the ROKAF was based.

The ROK-US Agreed Minute prevented the ROKAF from increasing the number of its fighter wings. Instead, the existing wing of propeller-driven F-51s was converted to F-86F jet fighters. Personnel strength was

allowed to increase to accommodate the introduction of C-46 twin-engined transport aircraft and the formation of an aircraft control and warning (radar) squadron. Chapter Six then discusses the ROKAF modernisation process from 1953 to 1956 and the extensive conversion training of air and ground crews. In the process of modernisation, a number of issues and problems arose. Chapter Seven examines four recurring issues which persist to this day: (1) aviation English requirements; (2) tri-lateral air defence cooperation between the United States, Korea, and Japan; (3) transfer of America's operational control to the ROK government; and (4) the ROKAF air defence posture, particularly in light of the operational and doctrinal challenges posed by the difficulties of defending the ROK capital from air attack.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FORMATION OF THE SOUTH KOREAN AIR FORCE

Air Forces are more difficult to organize and put on a sound footing than either army or navy, because in this newest arm we have no traditions upon which to build except those developed during the war.

Brigadier General William Mitchell¹

The history of the Republic of Korea Air Force began with a collection of diverse groups who shared one interest - the love of aviation. The liberation of Korea after the Second World War brought returning Korean airmen from Japan and China back to their homeland, seeking a way to develop their interest in aviation into an instrument for their own country. The formation of a country's air force must be considered in the context of the tradition and culture in which it flourishes. Korean culture emphasises the seniority of the members of any group. To understand how the South Korean Air Force came into being in an orderly manner in a short period of time, it is necessary to examine the origins of the groups who banded together out of love for aviation.

Soon after the establishment of the *Gook-Bang Kyong-Bee Dae* (the Korean National Defense Constabulary: hereafter the Constabulary) the American military occupation authorities required re-education of all ethnic Koreans who had served the Japanese or Chinese military. They were required to attend an American military training institute called *Goon-Sa Young-O H'ak-Kyo* or the Military English Language School (MELS). Regardless of their previous rank and background, all Korean military personnel were required to learn not only rudimentary English, but basic

¹ William Mitchell, Brigadier General, Air Services, *Our Air Force: The Keystone of National Defense* (New York: Dutton & Co., 1921), p. xx.

military training, in accordance with American military manuals and regulations. The MELS became the first military training organisation for the future ROK military leaders, including air leaders. As the South Korean Air Force first started as an aviation detachment of the Constabulary (the predecessor of the ROK Army), this chapter commences with a discussion of the genesis of the Constabulary and the establishment of the MELS, and then examines the roots of the founding members and their pioneering role in the formation of the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF).

1.1. The Genesis of the ROK Armed Forces (Constabulary)

In early November 1945, two months after American military occupation started, US Army Chief of Staff General of the Army George C. Marshall instructed General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Commander of United States Forces in the Far East, to prepare plans for raising a police-type force in Korea as the first step toward reducing the number of US troops in southern Korea. On 9 January 1946, the Department of War authorised General MacArthur to form a Korean police force of 50,000 - 20,000 regular police, 25,000 state reserve police, and a coast guard of 5,000, to be equipped with surplus US weapons. The purpose of authorising a constabulary-type police reserve force was to supplement the Korean National Civil Police (KNP), which was to be trained to the point where they could relieve US occupation forces of civil police functions.²

The first battalion of this police reserve force, officially designated as the First Battalion of the First Regiment, was formally inaugurated on 15

² James F. Schnabel, *United States Army in the Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year* (hereafter cited as Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*) (Washington, DC: US Department of the Army, 1972), p. 31; Roy E. Appleman, *United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, June-November 1950* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Army, 1961), p. 13. See also Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington, DC: US Army Office of Military History, 1962), pp. 12-13.

January 1946. It went into action in the Seoul area in late January with a Lieutenant Colonel of the US Army Forces in Korea as its commanding officer and a handful of American officers assigned to guide it.³ Seven additional regiments were subsequently formed by April 1946, at Pusan, Taegu, Kwangju, Iri, Taejon, Chongju and Chunchon, in a scaled-down strength of slightly over two thousand men in total.⁴ These units would also 'provide a nucleus for expansion, if and when circumstances permitted a *bona fide* Korean national defense military force.'⁵

By the end of 1947 the ranks of the Constabulary had swollen to nearly 20,000 men.⁶ In February 1948, Lt. General John R. Hodge, commander of US occupation forces in Korea, recommended to Washington that the Constabulary be increased to 50,000 men, equipped with heavier infantry-type weapons - though not artillery - from US stocks in Korea and, if needed, American sources in Japan. At that time, the formation of a Korean military was still considered premature, because of the lack of training facilities and competent Korean military leaders. Consequently, Hodge's recommendation was disapproved by the US Far East Command of General MacArthur, who instead favoured an increase to 50,000 men to supplement the existing 25,000 Korean *police* force.⁷

³ Eight months later, a Korean Brigadier General (Ryu Dong-Yul) took over as its first Korean commander. ROK Ministry of National Defense, *Han-Gook Jon-Jaeng Sa: Jae I Kwon: Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon, 1945-1950. 6 (The History of War in Korea, Volume 1: The Liberation and the Birth of the Armed Forces, 1945- June 1950)* (hereafter cited as *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*) (Seoul, Korea: Military History Compilation Committee/MND, 1967), pp. 259-260. This book was retrieved soon after being published as an in-house document for official use only, and no longer for public sale. The reason was not known. A copy of this book was found recently by the author in one of the master files at the Office of Military History Studies, HQ ROKAF.

⁴ Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p.17; Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, p. 32; *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, p. 258.

⁵ Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p. 32.

⁶ Young Woo Lee, 'Birth of the Korean Army, 1945-50: Evaluation of the Role of the US Occupation Forces,' *Korea & World Affairs* 4:4 (Winter 1980), p. 647; Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, p. 18.

⁷ Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, pp. 28-29.

The Constabulary received minimum publicity owing to Soviet sensitivities. Aware of Soviet concern, American military occupation authorities took a cautious attitude in implementing occupation policies concerning Koreans in the south. For instance, the term *national defence* was replaced by *internal security*. On 15 June 1946 the Department of National Defense, therefore, became the Department of Internal Security.⁸ This Constabulary represented Korea's first national defence effort since 1907, when the Yi Dynasty's Royal Army was forced to disband in accordance with the agreement signed on 24 July 1907 between Korea (Yi Dynasty) and Japan, which removed from the Korean authorities any vestige of power to make decisions or to exercise governmental functions. Consequently, the Korean Royal Army was ordered disbanded on 1 August 1907.⁹

The development of the Constabulary was hampered by a lack of equipment and the language barrier. Some sixty thousand rifles taken from the surrendered Japanese forces had been set aside by the Americans pending the time when the Korean military might use them. From this reserve the Americans issued rifles to Constabulary units as they were activated. (The Korean soldiers later received a few Japanese light machine guns from American troop units that had collected them as souvenirs.)¹⁰

The second impediment was the language barrier, one of the most urgent obstacles to be overcome. To tackle the language problem - few US

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹ Sung-Hae Kang and Jae-Sung Yoo, *Min-Jok Jon-R'an Sa I (The History of Korean People's Ordeal in War, Volume I)* (Seoul, Korea: War History Compilation Committee/ROK Ministry of National Defense, 1984), p. 181; Tae-Jin Lee, *Il-Bon Ae Dae-Han Jae-Kook K'ahng-Jom (Japan's Coercive Occupation of the Korean Empire)* (Seoul, Korea: Kka-Chi Sa, 1995), p. 142; Sung-Soo Park, *Dok-Rip Woon-Dong Sa Yon-Koo (A Study of the History of Independence Movement)* (Seoul, Korea: Ch'ang-Jak Kwa Bee-Pyong Sa, 1980), p. 129; Jong-Kook Yim, *Il-Bon Goon Ae Chosun Chim-Ryuk Sa I (History of Japanese Invasion of Korea, Volume I)* (Seoul, Korea: Il-Wol So-G'ak, 1988), p. 207. Andrew C. Nahm, *Korea: Tradition & Transformation: A History of the Korean People* (Seoul, Korea: Hollym Corp., 1988), p. 215.

¹⁰ Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p. 16; *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, p. 258.

personnel understood Korean and qualified interpreters were difficult to find - a language school was established on 5 December 1945. A class of sixty officers from three groups was admitted: twenty from among those who had served in the Japanese Army, twenty from among the former Japanese police officers, and twenty from the KPG-aligned *Kwangbok Goon* (the Restoration Army).¹¹ Many of these original sixty officers selected for the first class eventually came to dominate the top level of the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) after 1948. Thus this class took on an importance that was not anticipated in 1945.

The majority of members of both the first class of the Military English Language School and the first two classes of the Constabulary Officers' Training School in 1945-46 were from among those Korean Army officers who had served in the Japanese military during the Second World War. Nearly 50,000 Koreans had been conscripted, of whom several hundred attained officer rank, and almost one hundred were graduates from the elite Japanese Military Academy.¹² Many of these officers later became prominent figures either in the South Korean military or politics. Distinctive among them were: Chae Byong Duk (ROKA Chief of Staff, April 1947-November 1949; April-July 1950), Chung Il Kwon (Commander in Chief of ROK Armed Forces, July 1950-October 1952; former Prime Minister, and Speaker of the National Assembly 1972-1976), Park Chung Hee (ROK President, 1963-1979) and Kim Chae Kyu (Commanding General of the ROK 2nd Army, Director of the Korean CIA as well as the assassin of

¹¹ The *Kwangbok Goon* stands for the Korean Independence Restoration Army. Metaphorically *Kwangbok* means restoration of glory and *Goon* the Army. Hereafter it is cited as the Restoration Army. It was established in collaboration with the Korean Provisional Government (KPG) in Chungking in September 1940. Five thousand strong in 1945, this group was described as the only body of Koreans that fought the Japanese during the Pacific War. *Hae-B'ang kwa Kon-Goon*, p. 258; Kim Se-jin, *The Politics of Military Revolution in Korea* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), p. 38.

¹² The author estimated these figures from his personal interviews on 16-28 September 1994 with Korean graduates of the school.

President Park). The Constabulary in 1945 and 1946 thus produced the leading ROK military cadre that its organisers hoped would 'ease the transfer of elite from the Japanese Army to the ROK Army.'¹³ Bruce Cumings, critical of this view, noted that whereas in Japan high ranking Japanese and Korean militarists were tried and executed as war criminals by American military occupation authorities, and purges of most former Japanese officers were conducted, in Korea such officers were instead rewarded with control of the Constabulary.¹⁴

The American Military Government's policy to allow the 'unfiltered' admission of former colonial military and police officers into the officers' corps of the newly born Korean national defence force affected all other sectors of the country. In the embryonic Korean civil police and military establishment, the Korean people soon began to see the former Japanese police agents and military officers who had led colonial police and military to either persecute or fight against many Korean patriots. Many colonial collaborators were also seen in the fledgling Korean civil service field and in the political arena. None of the Korean intellectuals who had collaborated with Japanese colonial rulers were ever tried for their past traitorous activities. For this reason, a majority of former Restoration Army members refused to participate in the Constabulary.¹⁵

What annoyed the Korean public most, then as well as now, was the collaboration, clearly recorded in Korean history, of those Korean intellectuals who supported Japanese colonial mobilisation efforts during the Second World War. These collaborators have consistently been criticised by Korean writers in their published literature. Distinctive among such works is a book which compiles selections from pro-Japanese works written during

¹³ Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution in Korea*, p. 137.

¹⁴ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Vol. 1: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945-1947* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 507, 200n, 201n.

¹⁵ *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, pp. 258, 279.

the colonial rule by Korean historians, pedagogues, poets, novelists, writers and other activists.¹⁶ Under such circumstances a sound leadership ethos and appropriate role models proved difficult to generate for the sake of healthy nation-building. At the outset, a seed was sown for the Korean public's mistrust of their military leadership. This later bred criticism of the credibility and legitimacy of the military establishment and the government itself. Mistrust between the Korean public - in particular the intellectual community - and the military grew during the period when the latter's coup d'état took place in 1961. From then, authoritarian military rule reigned in an internationally controversial form of 'non-democratic' government until February 1993, when Kim Young Sam (a 'pure civilian' without military connection) was elected President of South Korea.

1.2. The Establishment of the ROK Air Force

When the formation of the South Korean Constabulary forces was discussed by the Bureau of National Defense of the United States Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK) in November 1945, American military occupation authorities confined the issue to only the ground and naval components, owing to the US government's official policy that envisaged no need for an air force, because Korean military forces would be limited to an internal security role only, capable of offering 'token resistance' to invasion, but providing no plausible basis for allegations of being a threat to North Korea.¹⁷

¹⁶ Jong-Kook Yim, *Chin-Il Moon-Hak Ron (On the Pro-Japanese Literature During the Colonial Rule)*, Seoul, Korea: Pan-Moon Kak, 1965.

¹⁷ U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. *Background Information on Korea*. Report. . . 81st Cong. 2d sess. (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1950), p. 34; Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, pp. 34-35. See also Robert Frank Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea 1950-1953* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1983), p. 17. Hereafter cited as Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*.

The lack of a military aviation role was greatly disappointing, particularly for some five hundred South Koreans who had been engaged in aviation branches of the Japanese and Chinese Air Forces, because they entertained great hopes of organising a Korean air force immediately after the liberation of Korea. As they found that the actual formation of a Korean air force was impossible at that time, because South Korea was still under the military occupation of the United States government, whose policy saw no need for a South Korean air force, the Korean airmen moderated their ideas and contented themselves with the formation of a fraternal group, called the *H'ang-Gong Gon-Sol Hyop-Hae* (the Aviation Building Association or ABA). The ABA was formed on 10 August 1946 with the hope of obtaining assistance from the USAFIK in forming the Korean Air Force, if and when it became appropriate to do so.¹⁸

These founding airmen, who were later to form the nucleus of the Republic of Korea Air Force, came from nine different backgrounds: (1) Korean graduates from the Japanese Military Academy; (2) Korean pilots from the Chinese Air Force; (3) Koreans from the Japanese Aviation Boy Cadet Programme (*Sho-Naeng Go-Koo Hei*); (4) Korean students from Japanese colleges; (5) Korean airmen from the Japanese military aviation volunteer programme; (6) Korean civilian employees in the Japanese Army Air Corps; (7) Korean employees in Japanese civilian airlines; (8) Domestic Korean aviation company employees; and (9) Koreans engaged in aviation recreation, such as glider pilots.¹⁹

¹⁸ ROK Air Force, *Gong-Goon Sa Jae I Jip, 1949 - 1953 (The History of the Air Force: Volume 1, 1949-1953)* (hereafter cited as *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949 - 53*) (Taejon, Korea: ROK Air Force Headquarters, 1991), p. 42; Chung-Yul Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Hoe Go Rok (Kim Chung Yul Memoir)* (Seoul, Korea: Eul-Yoo Moon-Wha Sa, 1993), p. 90. (Kim's memoir was printed as an in-house document, not for public sale.)

¹⁹ Among these nine groups, distinguished in their later services in the ROK Air Force, were three of special importance: (1) **Korean Graduates from the Japanese Military Academy:** There were nine graduates who were captains and lieutenants of the Japanese Army Air Corps. One was a bombardier, three were mechanics, and five were pilots who flew Japanese fighters during the Second World War. Six of these were to play leading roles in the ROKAF and political leadership of

Among these nine groups, the most prominent were the first three groups. The third group of *Sho-Naeng Go-Koo Hei*, mainly consisting of former Japanese non-commissioned officer (NCO) pilots, collaborated with the first group of former Japanese military officer pilots. Accordingly, there existed two most influential groups, i.e., Korean graduates from the Japanese Military Academy and Korean pilots from the Chinese Air Force. The Japanese group was led by Colonel Kim Chung-Yul (later ROKAF Chief of Staff, 1949-52/1954-56), known to be the most competent of the leaders in the Korean Army Air Corps/Air Force. The second group's leader was Colonel Choi Yong-Duk, a former Chinese flyer, who was known to be loyal to the former Chinese Army General Lee Bum-Sok.²⁰ Despite their diverse backgrounds, these groups worked closely together without serious conflicts

South Korea after ROK's independence in 1948. (1) Park Bom-Jip (Class No. 52) [Brigadier General, Deputy Chief of Staff ROKAF (September - November 1950), killed in an aircraft crash in November 1950.]; (2) Kim Chung-Yul (Class No.54)[Lt. General, ROKAF Chief of Staff (1949-52, 1954-56);Minister of National Defense (1956-1961); Ambassador to the U.S.(1972-74); Prime Minister (1987-88)]; (3) Kim Chang-Kyu (Class No.55) [Lt. General, ROKAF Chief of Staff (1958-60),Congressman (1975-80)]; (4) Park Won-Suk (Class No.56)[Lt. General, ROKAF Chief of Staff (1964-66)]; (5) Shin Sang-Chul (Class No.56)[Major General, Superintendent of the Air Force Academy (1952-57), Ambassador to Vietnam(1964-68), and Congressman (1975-80)]; (6)Chang Chi-Ryang (Class No.60)[Lt. General, ROKAF Chief of Staff (1968-70), and Congressman (1975-80)].The numerical figure in parentheses is the serial number of each graduating class. For instance, No. 52 class is equivalent to the class of 1937. (II) **Korean Pilots from the Chinese Air Force:** Fifteen officer pilots, who flew Chinese military aircraft, belonged to this group, and they distinguished themselves in the ROKAF by producing two ROKAF Chiefs of Staff. Choi Yong-Duk, a graduate of the Chinese Military Academy, had first started flying in 1921, and participated in the early formation of the Chinese Air Force. He became a lieutenant colonel of the Chinese Air Force, and also served as a general officer in the Korean Restoration Army. He later became ROKAF Chief of Staff (1952-54). Kim Shin was also a graduate from the Chinese Military Academy, and was sent to the United States for pilot training in 1944 as a Chinese Air Force pilot officer. He later became ROKAF Chief of Staff (1960-64) and ambassador to Taiwan (1964-69). (III) **Korean Pilots from the Japanese Aviation Boy Cadet Programme (*Sho-Naeng Go-Koo Hei*):** One hundred and ten young (14-17 years old when they joined) enlisted aviators belonged to this category. Forty were pilots, and another forty were mechanics, and the remaining were radio operators. Out of this group, Lee Keun-Suk was an ace, with twenty-three kills in the China and Pacific theatres. Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, pp. 82-89.

²⁰ General Lee was one of the most prestigious Korean leaders of the Independence Movement in Manchuria during Japanese colonial rule, and later became the Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense from 1947 to 1948.

under the strong leadership of Colonel Kim Chung-Yul, who stressed the importance of solidarity among Korean airmen.²¹

The Aviation Building Association selected seven former military pilots to form a steering committee. (These seven members were the core of the cadre in the subsequent ROK Air Force. All later became generals and four of them eventually served as ROKAF Chief of Staff.)²² From the very beginning, they drew up a list of seniority of all five hundred original airmen (who consisted of ninety pilots, three hundred mechanics, and some one hundred supporting specialists), based on previous individual military backgrounds (e.g., length of service, rank, specialities, etc.) during the Second World War in the Japanese and Chinese military. This seniority roster was used for subsequent personnel career management, thereby minimising possible conflicts arising from the lack of a personnel effectiveness evaluation system at that time. This roster also drove most decisions affecting subsequent promotions and command assignments.²³

Upon its formation, the ABA tried to seek approval from the US Military Government to use those aerodrome facilities and airplanes left by

²¹ The discussion of this paragraph is based on three sources: (1) Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, pp. 82-89; (2) US 5th Air Force, Appendix 100: Air Intelligence Information Report, Subj: ROKAF - Origin and Political Background in 'The History of the Fifth Air Force, 1 January - 30 June 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 343-349. US Air Force historical records, K730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as '5th AF History, Jan-Jun 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 1. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. AFHRA; and (3) interviews, author with former ROKAF Chiefs of Staff, Lt. Generals (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu (1958-60), Chang Sung-Whan (1962-64) and Chang Chi-Ryang (1968-70), 28-30 October (telephone) and 24-28 April 1995.

²² The seven members were: Choi Yong-Duk, Kim Chung-Yul, Lee Moo-Young, Chang Duk-Chang, Park Bom-Jip, Lee Keun-Suk, and Kim Young-Whan. *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949 - 53*, p. 43. See also US Far East Air Forces Air Intelligence Information Report IR-263-49, Subj: South Korean Army Air Force, 12 September 1949. 720.609B-2 49/09/23. AFHRA. Out of the seven ABA key members, the first three (Choi, Kim, Chang) later became Chiefs of Staff of the ROK Air Force. The remaining four were killed during the Korean War except Kim Young-Whan, whose F-51 went missing in adverse weather during a training mission near the Kangnung area on 5 March 1954. ROK Air Force, *H'ang-Gong Ki Sa-Go Tong-R'am: 1950-1972 (Anatomy of Aircraft Accidents, 1950-1972)* (Seoul, Korea: Office of Inspector General/IIQ ROKAF, 1973), p. 38; '5th AF History, Jan-Jun 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 427. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1954, v. 1. AFHRA.

²³ Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, pp. 86-89; telephone interviews, author with Lt. Generals (Ret.) and former ROKAF Chiefs of Staff Kim Chang-Kyu (1958-60) and Chang Chi-Ryang (1968-70), 29-30 October 1995.

the surrendered Japanese military, to no avail. There were 'a considerable number of serviceable transport type Japanese aircraft surrendered in Korea [with] sufficient parts and fuel available to operate these airplanes over a considerable period of time,' in September 1945, when Lt. General Hodge had accepted the Japanese surrender. South Koreans, however, were denied access to the surrendered Japanese aviation assets, because the American military occupation authorities intended to use them for their own purposes.²⁴

Accordingly, General Hodge was granted 'authority to retain sufficient Japanese transport type aircraft and parts to operate a small airline in Korea under US Military Government using Korean personnel.' But this scheme was soon canceled, and all Japanese aircraft in South Korea were condemned and scrapped in accordance with the United States government's policy, which required 'destruction of captured enemy aircraft and components under US jurisdiction.'²⁵ In retrospect, the loss of captured Japanese flying machines proved costly to the new republic when the Korean War broke out and the ROKAF pilots had to fight with only twenty-two unarmed liaison planes.²⁶

In contrast, the Soviet military occupation authorities allowed North Koreans to use the Japanese-surrendered airfields and aircraft. A civilian voluntary aviation corps was formed at Sinuiju airfield in October 1945, consisting of some fifty former Japanese military aviators. A month later they were permitted to retain the Japanese Type-95 trainer aircraft, which were initially used for training North Korean pilots from November 1945

²⁴ Section IV, paragraph 19 of SWNCC 58/9, dated 5 September 1945. JCS 1609, 'Use of Japanese Aircraft for U.S. Military Government Air Line in Korea,' 19 January 1946. PD 580.8 Korea (Commercial Air) (27 Dec 45) Box 393; Air Force - Plans Project Decimal Files, 1942-54; Records of the Department of Defense, RG 341. NA/WDC.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ 8 L-4s, 4 L-5s and 10 T-6s. ROK Air Force, *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa : Han-Gook Jon-Jaeng (The History of the Air War: The Korean War)* (Seoul, Korea: ROK Air Force History Office, 1989), p. 58. Hereafter cited as *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*. See also *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 57.

until they had to stop flying in June 1946, when three of them were lost in accidents.²⁷

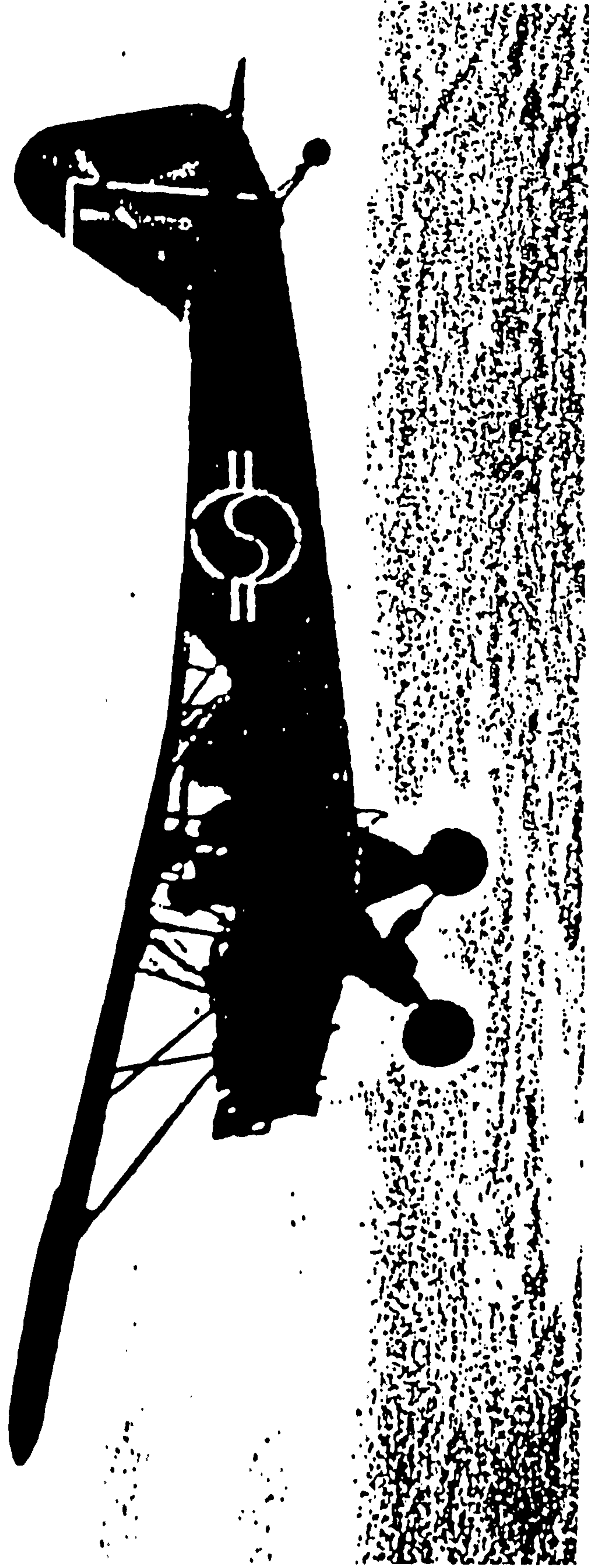
Early in 1947, the ABA Steering Committee members were able to approach Colonel Terrill E. Price, the US Army Advisor to the USAFIK's Internal Security Office, in charge of all activities concerning Korean aviation, and presented to him a roster of those five hundred ABA members, noting their individual specialties.²⁸ (Ethnic Koreans at first had not been permitted by the Japanese colonial government to enter the Japanese military service. But in 1935, the Japanese Imperial Command changed its policies, and from that time on Korean citizens entered every branch of the Japanese Army and Navy Aviation Corps, serving as pilots of bomber, fighter, and transport aircraft; members of aircraft maintenance crews; and in all other fields necessary to maintain an efficient and adequate air force.)²⁹

During March 1948, Colonel Price advised the visiting ABA leaders to enter the Korean Constabulary Infantry School (KCIS), stating that although he did not know when it would be feasible to organise a Korean air force or any unit thereof, he thought it advisable that if and when such an organisation should be inaugurated, leaders should be readily available. Accordingly, on 1 April 1948, seven key members of the ABA entered the KCIS for a month-long American Army basic training course and then received an additional one and a half month officer's training course at the

²⁷ North Koreans resumed their pilot training in December 1948 when Soviet-supplied PO-2 light trainer aircraft entered the North Korean People's Army's aviation unit. *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949 - 53*, pp. 62-63; *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 33; *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, pp. 698-699.

²⁸ Colonel Price was first appointed as the director of the USAFIK's internal security in Spring 1946, and six months later stepped down to the role of advisor, when a Korean Director took over the office. Price left Korea in May 1948. Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 90; Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, pp. 20-22, 31.

²⁹ Far East Air Forces Air Intelligence Information Report IR-263-49, 'South Korean Army Air Forces,' 12 September 1949. US Air Force historical records, 720.609B-2, 49/09/23. US Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as 'Air Intelligence (12-09-49)/ 720.609B-2, 49/09/23. AFHRA.'



One of ten ROKAF L-4 liaison airplanes, initially supplied. (ROKAF Photo)

Korean Constabulary Academy, the predecessor of the Korean Military Academy (KMA).³⁰

On 15 June 1948 these seven men were commissioned Army second lieutenants. Their commissioning was preceded by the formation of the *Kyong-Bee Dae H'ang-Gong Bu-Dae*, the Constabulary Aviation Detachment (CAD) on 15 May 1948 at Susaek airstrip in a suburb north of Seoul, under the direct jurisdiction of the *Tong-Wee Bu* (Headquarters of the Constabulary). On 7 July 1948 these seven lieutenants were transferred to the CAD, and they immediately started obtaining information pertaining to possible recruits most qualified for the CAD. After collecting all possible information, there came a period of administering examinations to selected applicants, which were designed to determine their capabilities prior to their acceptance into the CAD.³¹ These examinations also served as a means of determining the amount of additional training which would be required before maximum efficiency could be expected from the CAD. A total of nineteen officers and eighty-five enlisted men comprised the Korean Constabulary Aviation Detachment when it was moved to Kimpo airfield on 27 July 1948.³²

The Korean Constabulary Aviation Detachment was redesignated as the *Yook-Goon H'ang-Gong Ki-Ji Bu-Dae*, the Army Air Base Detachment (AABD) on 5 September 1948. A week later the AABD was re-organised to become the *Yook-Goon H'ang-Gong Sa-Ryong Bu*, the Army Air Corps (AAC), manned by 495 officers and airmen, and equipped with ten L-4 liaison type aircraft, which were donated by the US Army 7th Division's

³⁰ ROK Military Academy. *H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng Sa (The War History of Korea)* (Seoul, Korea: Il-shin Sa, 1992), p. 191; *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, pp. 42-43.

³¹ At the time the CAD was commanded by 1st Lieutenant Choi Yong-Duk, who later became the ROKAF Chief of Staff (1952-1954).

³² *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 46-48.

aviation unit.³³ On 13 September the AAC pilots participated in the first air parade over the capital city of Seoul with the clear emblem of the Tae-Guk, the Korean national logo, painted on their wings and fuselages. It was the first Korean fly-by over Seoul since December 1922, when Mr. Ahn Chang-Nam, a Korean aviation pioneer, flew a Japanese civilian biplane.³⁴ In the meantime, Korean instructor personnel of five pilots and twenty mechanics were trained by the United States Ground Forces liaison pilots and mechanics. These Korean pilots and mechanics in turn instructed the other Korean pilots and mechanics. By the end of September 1948 the South Korean military had thirty pilots and seventy mechanics.³⁵

On 14 January 1949, the *Yook-Goon H'ang-Gong Sa-Kwan Hak-Kyo* (the Korean Army Air Corps Academy), the predecessor of the ROK Air Force Academy, was established at Kimpo airfield for aviation officer's training. The following day, the *Yo-Ja H'ang-Gong Dae* (the Woman's Aviation Detachment or WAD) was formed to train female aviators. The formation of the WAD was followed eight months later by the activation of the *Shin-Byong Kyo-Yook Dae* (the Airman's Training Detachment).³⁶ In November 1948, the Korean National Assembly passed the Republic of Korea Armed Forces Organisation Act, and on 15 December the Korean Constabulary forces became ROK's national defence organisation, including the Ministry of National Defense (MND), the Army (ROKA), and the Navy (ROKN). Accordingly, the Korean National Defense Constabulary was

³³ Air Intelligence/1949.9.12. 720.609B-2. AFHRA; *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-53, pp. 44-45; *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 48.

³⁴ Young-Dahl Kwak, ed., *H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng: Ch'ang-Gong Ae Bee-Hwa: Soom-Kyo Jin Young-Woong Dul (The Korean War: The Untold Story in the Air: Hidden Heroes)* (Seoul, Korea: Myong-In Hong-Bo, 1993), p. 484.

³⁵ Air Intelligence (12-09-49) 720.609B-2, 49/09/23. AFHRA. South Korean Air Force sources state different figures: 90 pilots and some 300 mechanics. Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 86; *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 48. The author assumes that USAF figures were based on the number of Korean pilots and mechanics who successfully completed formal training in the L-4 aircraft.

³⁶ The Woman's Aviation Detachment was deactivated on 27 June 1950. *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-53, p. 540.

redesignated *Gook-Goon* (the Republic of Korea Armed Forces), but without allowing its Army Air Corps to become a separate service.³⁷

The idea of a separate Korean Air Force was strongly opposed by the ROK Army generals. ROK Army Chief of Staff Major General Chae Byong-Duk argued that for the 'efficient' control of airpower in the conduct of air-to-ground operations, the air force should remain under the jurisdiction of the Army.³⁸ American Army advisers also objected to an independent air force as not being realistic. Brigadier General William L. Roberts, Chief of the US Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAG), stated that initially the US Army Air Force was developed by the Army signal unit.³⁹ As the ROK Army was nascent, what was needed would be a small aviation unit to support the ROK Army signal operations, and the issue of ROK Air Force independence, therefore, might better be discussed after the ROK Army was strengthened sufficiently.⁴⁰

In other words, American advisers' opposition was twofold : (1) Less than fourteen liaison planes plus the purchase of ten AT-6 trainer aircraft were not only insufficient to warrant a separate air arm, but also the AABD, later AAC, had been initially 'intended for an air liaison detachment for the Korean Army, and nothing more'; and (2) furthermore, South Korea's economy was not strong enough to support an air force.⁴¹ These arguments ignored the need for advance preparation of an organisation with

³⁷ Brigadier General Lee Hyung-keun became the first ROKA Chief of Staff. *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon* pp. 360-368.

³⁸ ROKAF, *Gong-Goon 25-Nyon Sa (The 25-Year History of the Air Force)* (Seoul, Korea: ROK Air Force History Office, 1976), p. 16. Hereafter cited as *Gong-Goon 25-Nyon Sa*.

³⁹ A Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG) was established by MacArthur's headquarters on 15 August 1948. On 1 July 1949 the PMAG was redesignated the KMAG (the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea) and came under the jurisdiction of the Ambassador to the American Mission in Korea. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, p. 13; Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p. 45; Department of State, *A Historical Summary of United States - Korean Relations: With a Chronology of Important Developments*, (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1962), p. 75; *H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng Sa*, pp. 199-200.

⁴⁰ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 49; *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, p. 599.

⁴¹ Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p. 93.

autonomous authority to employ airpower professionally. The Second World War demonstrated airpower to be a highly technical and specialised tool with which to wage war. Future airpower projection under the leadership of air experts would be essential to the security of South Korea. What should have been the focus of development was the potential significance of South Korea's own airpower for their future national defence.

Supported by the ROK naval leadership⁴² and MND staff, who recognised the specialised role of airpower in modern warfare, all members of the airman community united together in launching a campaign. The Korean airmen extended their appeal to ranking ROK government officials, including members of the National Assembly, the Minister of National Defense, and ROK Army and Navy leaders, as well as President Syngman Rhee.⁴³ Leaders of the ROK Army Air Corps increased their independence campaign by publishing in April 1948 *H'ang-Gong Ae Kyong-Jong (An Air Warning)* written by Lieutenant Colonel Kim Chung-Yul, the Superintendent of the Army Air Corps Academy and one of the seven ABA founding members. Kim's *An Air Warning*, emphasising the need for South Korean airpower modernisation and AAC's independence, was disseminated to various political and bureaucratic leaders.

The purpose of *An Air Warning* was threefold: (1) to explain to the public the rationale for a separate Air Force; (2) to increase public understanding of the mandatory roles of the Air Force in future national defence; and (3) to promote public support for the growth of an indigenous Korean airpower. It discussed such issues as (1) introduction of fighter aircraft; (2) training of air commanders; (3) separation of the airpower

⁴² The navy, as a minority in the ROK armed forces, aligned itself with the ROK Army Air Corps in an unsuccessful attempt to curb the preponderance of the ROK Army. Author's view was endorsed by former ROKAF Chiefs of Staff. Telephone interviews, author with Lt. Generals (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, Chang Sung-Whan, and Chang Chi-Ryang, 28-30 October 1995.

⁴³ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 49; *Gong-Goon 25-Nyon Sa (25 Years of the ROK Air Force)*, p. 13.

budget; and (4) personnel comparison between ground, air and naval strength. Colonel Kim stressed in *An Air Warning*:

As an indispensable leg of the national defense force 'tripod' (ground, naval and air forces), a separate air force should be a fait accompli, and most of the other countries already have their independent air forces because airpower is an indispensable yet specialized necessity. But [I would] prefer reservation of a further discussion of this issue, because of an existing peculiar phenomenon. Opposition is so strong that the mere utterance of the two words, Air Force, would invite abhorrence from opposing parties, the reasons for which we aviators can hardly understand. They seem to be possessed of an incorrect perception that [our] thought of independence is premature and dogmatic.⁴⁴

In his *An Air Warning*, Colonel Kim also warned of an imminent North Korean invasion, accompanied by air attacks in waves. The first wave of air attacks on Day One would be against strategic targets in the Seoul area, including Seoul Yo'E Do airbase, POL (Petroleum, Oil and Lubricant) storage, and ammunition and supply dumps. The second wave of air strikes would attack the Han River main bridge, the Imjin River railway bridge, and piers of Inchon Harbour. The third wave of air attacks would be at night against Seoul residential areas. These night bombings would be incendiary, designed to demoralise the civilian population. In order to counter these initial waves of North Korean air attacks, Colonel Kim urged the importance of tactical aircraft.⁴⁵ Kim emphasised the enemy's air threat ought to be countered by a South Korean Air Force with autonomous command and control. Kim's vision was ignored by ROK Army generals, who refused to recognise the power of air attacks. Kim cited the historical record of world

⁴⁴ Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*. Appendix 1: 'An Air Warning,' pp. 339, 349-350. Author's translation. For Kim's full account of 'An Air Warning,' see, pp. 331-353.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 343-346.

airpower pioneers such as Generals Douhet and Mitchell, who also angered their Army generals, and were ultimately stigmatised as Army traitors.⁴⁶

Despite American policy, President Rhee agreed with Colonel Kim's analysis and insisted that the ROK would need an air force to cope with North Korea's growing airpower. According to a Korean air intelligence report early in 1949, an air regiment was created in North Korea in June 1948, and was believed to be based at Pyongyang, comprising approximately 800 personnel and 36 Soviet trainers plus some captured Japanese planes. Soon after activation of the air regiment, North Korean officers were sent to the Soviet Union for flying training and were sent back to North Korea when their flying proficiency had reached a satisfactory level. Intelligence further estimated that North Korean Air Force personnel strength would continue to increase to 1,800 men by the end of 1949.⁴⁷ In the summer of 1949, President Rhee dispatched a formal request for tactical aircraft through the American Ambassador to Korea and made similar requests in subsequent months.⁴⁸ Rhee was particularly desirous of obtaining F-51, B-25, AT-6, and C-47 type aircraft from the United States.⁴⁹

Faced with the increase of North Korea's air strength, President Rhee advocated the addition of the Air Force in the process of reviewing the new legislation for the ROK Armed Forces Organization Act (AFOA), so that the

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

⁴⁷ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 64; Air Intelligence Information Report, 'Review of North Korean Air Power and Its Potentialities,' 28 Feb. 1950, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, in the attachment to Memorandum of Conversation, 3 April 1950, Records of the Department of State, Record Group (RG) 59, Central File, 1950-54, 795.00/4-350, Box 4682. National Archives II, College Park, Maryland. Hereafter cited as Air Intelligence (28-2-50)/RG59CF1950-54/795.00/4-350. NA (II).

⁴⁸ US 5th Air Force, 'The History of the Fifth Air Force, 1 January - 30 June 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 261. US Air Force historical records, K730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 1, US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as '5th AF History, Jan-Jun 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 1. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 1. AFHRA.

⁴⁹ Air Intelligence (12-09-49)/720.609B-2, 49/09/23. AFHRA.

legal basis (AFOA Article 23) was provided.⁵⁰ Supported by President Rhee, his Minister of National Defense, Naval Chief of Operations, ROK air leaders' assiduous efforts and Colonel Kim's written appeal, independence finally materialised on 1 October 1949, when the ROK government approved the decree to detach the Army Air Corps from the ROK Army and bring AAC's 1,600 personnel and its 20 liaison airplanes under the direct command of a separate ROK Air Force. Colonel Kim Chung-Yul took office as the first ROK Air Force Chief of Staff on 1 October 1949. At its inception the ROK Air Force was divided into such functional sections as Headquarters (personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics), Flying Group, Air Base Support Group, and the Air Force Academy.⁵¹ (Figure 1-1)

In retrospect, it was a miraculous accomplishment in light of the innocuous size and capability of the ROK Air Force's aircraft fleet, composed wholly of twenty small liaison aircraft, with zero tactical fighters, bombers, or transport aircraft. The accomplishment should be attributed to the united efforts of the ROK Air Force leaders, the indirect influence of the creation of a separate United States Air Force in 1947, and the strong support of President Rhee, as observed by American advisers:

On 1 October 1949, partially as a result of constant pressure by [South Korean] Air Force personnel who had formerly flown with Japanese and Chinese air forces, the air-arm was separated from the army . . . President Syngman Rhee, who was extremely air minded, exerted considerable influence in effecting the change.⁵²

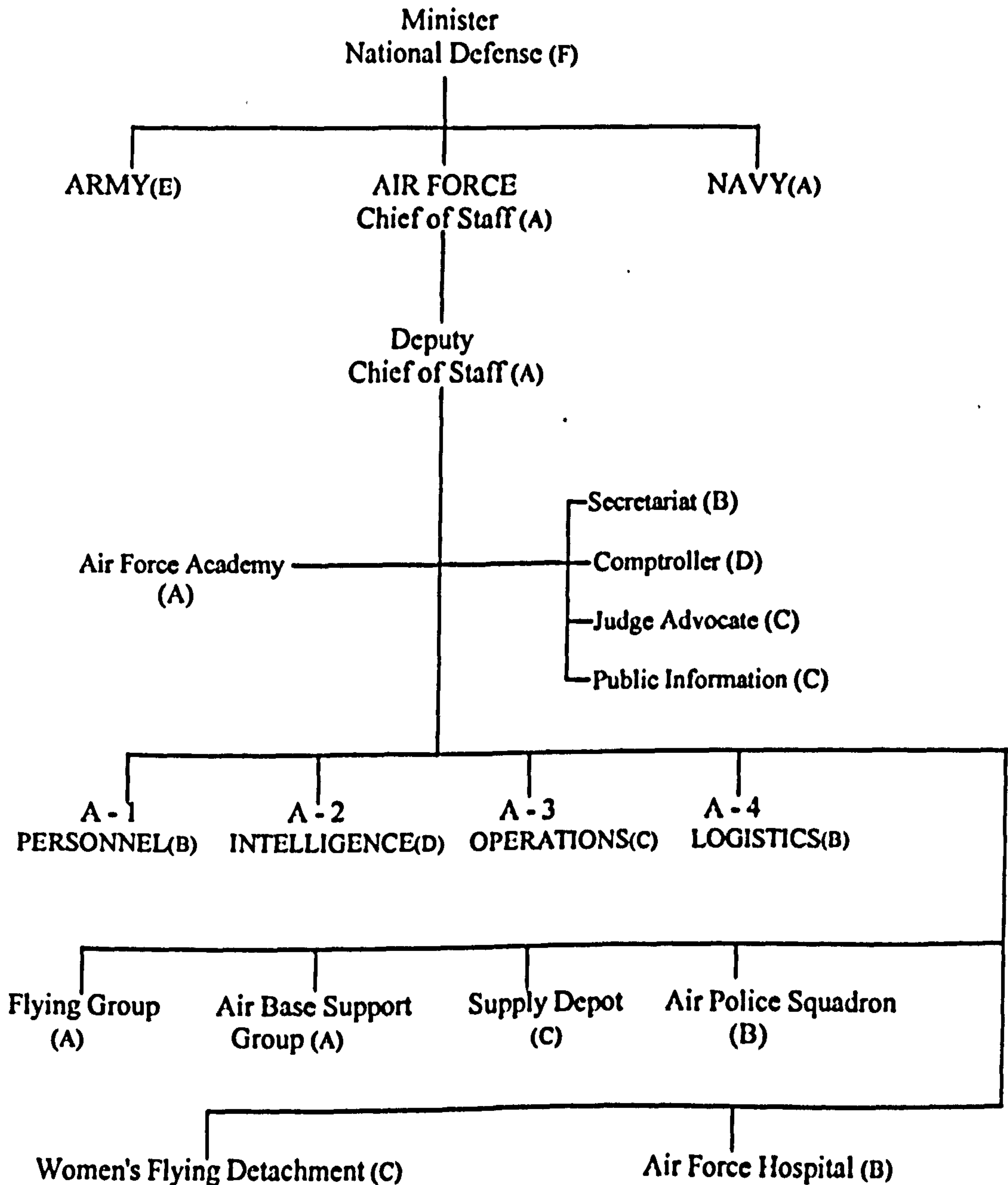
Rhee was never happy with America's infantry-oriented policy concerning military aid to Korea. Rhee was convinced that with sufficient support, the ROK might be able to operate a small but 'reasonably effective

⁵⁰ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 49; Ltr, Chief, KMAG, to Korean Minister of National Defense, Seoul, 7 Oct 49, P&O File 091 Korea, sec. I, case 18/2 as quoted in Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p. 93.

⁵¹ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, pp. 48-49; *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, pp. 598-600.

⁵² '5th AF History, Jan-Jun 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 261. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 1. AFHRA.

Figure 1-1: ROK Air Force Organisation (1 October 1949)



Legend: A: Colonel; B: Major; C: Captain; D: 1st Lt; E: Maj General; F: Civilian.
 Source: ROK Air Force, *Gong-Goon Sa Jae I Jip, 1949-1953 (The History of the Air Force, Volume 1, 1949-1953)* (Seoul, Korea: ROKAF History Office, 1991), p.50.

tactical air arm.' An American air attaché in Seoul observed in 1949 that presidential pressure for tactical aircraft and an air force of 'reasonable size' was constantly exerted:

[Rhee] was primarily responsible for the passing of the law which in October 1949 created the Korean Air Force. This particular move and subsequent moves such as discussions in Korea, during October 1949, with [Major] General [Claire Lee] Chennault and Brigadier General [Russell E.] Randall (USAF Retired) regarding the purchase and operation of military type aircraft and the hiring of General Randall as Air Force adviser were primarily attempts to pressure the US into providing an air force and an air advisory group.⁵³

President Rhee invited Randall to visit Seoul to discuss becoming Rhee's air adviser.⁵⁴ But General Randall's 'first loyalty to the United States,' precluded any commitment beyond providing advice to the Korean government on the issue of establishing a Korean Air Force.⁵⁵ Randall neither supported fully Rhee's request for tactical aircraft,⁵⁶ nor stressed sufficiently Rhee's reiterated statements to him (Randall) affirming that 'the Government of the Republic of Korea would not embark upon offensive

⁵³ US 5th Air Force, 'The History of the Fifth Air Force, 1 January - 30 June 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 345-346, US Air Force historical records, K730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2, US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as '5th AF History, Jan-Jun 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 2, K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. AFHRA. See also Martha Byrd, *Chennault: Giving Wings to the Tiger* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1987), p. 343.

⁵⁴ At first Rhee asked General Chennault to become his air adviser, but Chennault instead presented General Randall to Rhee. Byrd, *Chennault*, p. 343.

⁵⁵ 'Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. John A. Williams of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, December 7, 1949' in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Volume VII: The Far East and Australia*, part. 2 (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1976), p. 1104. Hereafter cited as *FRUS, 1949*, v. 7, pt. 2.

⁵⁶ Telegram, 'The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State, December 7, 1949' in *FRUS, 1949*, v. 7, pt. 2, p. 1106. Martha Byrd states differently: 'Gen. Russell E. Randall was someone who could survey Korea's need and make a report. The result had been a request to the United States for combat airplanes to [the ROK Air Force] before the end of 1949, but these had not been provided.' Byrd, *Chennault*, p. 343.

action in North Korea without the approval of the United States Government.⁵⁷

Even earlier, the American reluctance to approve fighter aircraft for South Korea had prompted President Rhee to send his special envoy, Dr. Chough Pyung Ok, to Washington in April 1949. Dr. Chough pressed for a 122-airplane air force of 3,000 men with seventy-five fighters, twelve bombers, thirty training and reconnaissance planes, and five cargo aircraft, all to no avail.⁵⁸ President Rhee continued to seek from the US government the expansion of his Air Force in a slightly down-sized scale - this time, in the summer of 1949, a 99-plane air force including twenty-five F-51 fighters.⁵⁹ The ROK's request was again denied by the American government, based on the US Far East Command's negative comments.⁶⁰

Following Rhee's lead, ROK Minister of National Defense Shin Sung Mo asked for tanks and fighter aircraft from the US government. This appeal was soon echoed by the American ambassador in Seoul, John J. Muccio, who warned in his report of 26 October 1949: 'The South Korean Army is outnumbered in all weapons except individual arms and the

⁵⁷ 'Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. John A. Williams of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, December 7, 1949' in *FRUS, 1949*, v. 7, pt. 2, p. 1105.

⁵⁸ Seoul Newspaper (ed.), *Ju-Han Mi-Goon 30-Nyun Sa* (30 Year History of US Forces in Korea) (Seoul, Korea: Hang-Rim, 1979), p. 110; Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-1953*, p. 16; US Air Force, *United States Air Force Operations in the Korean Conflict, 25 June - 1 November 1950* (hereafter cited as *USAF Operations in Korea, June - Nov 1950*) (Washington, DC: Department of the Air Force, 1952), p. viii. ; *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 55.

⁵⁹ This plan was devised at Rhee's request by Major General Claire L. Chennault, USAF, Retired, who had commanded the US 14th Army Air Force during the Second World War. ROK Ministry of National Defense/Joint Chiefs of Staff, *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa (The War History of Korea)* (Seoul, Korea: Kyo-Hak Sa, 1984) (hereafter cited as *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*), p. 605; *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 54; *USAF Operations in Korea, June-Nov 1950*, p. viii; Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 17.

⁶⁰ General MacArthur, the commander of the American forces in the Far East, commented in January 1950 that the force suggested by Chennault was not essential for internal order in Korea, would increase the possibility of war between North and South Korea, and would lend credence to communist charges that the United States was 'fostering an arms race there.' *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*, p. 605; *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 54; *USAF Operations in Korea, June-Nov 1950*, p. viii; Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 17.

Russians have given North Korea much better armament.⁶¹ Recommending F-51 *Mustang* fighters for the Republic of Korea Air Force, he emphasised that it was imperative that Korea be given some means of defence against air attack, but that the only aircraft the Republic of Korea had received were twenty liaison-type [non-tactical] planes.⁶²

Ambassador Muccio's recommendation was refused for two reasons. Firstly, the American advisers in the KMAG argued that 'the rough terrain, poor roads, and primitive bridges militated against efficient tank operations,' and that the ROK military forces should be conceived as being for internal security only, with no need of such heavy weapons. Secondly, Americans feared that South Korea might embark upon military adventures of its own into North Korea if it was given such tanks and fighters.⁶³ Initially the KMAG thought the exclusion of such offensive type weapons was appropriate in view of Korea's topographical characteristics (terrain factors) and America's monetary constraints.⁶⁴ However, the KMAG later acknowledged the ROK's need for fighters. In its recommendation for the fiscal year 1950 MDAP (Mutual Defense Assistance Program) aid to Korea, the KMAG warned that Russians had recently supplied more than 120 T-34 tanks,⁶⁵ 40 YAK-fighters and 70 IL-attackers to North Korea, and requested in December 1949 fifty-two aircraft for the ROK Air Force, including forty

⁶¹ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, p. 36. During 1949-50, the Soviet Union supplied about 180 aircraft: in addition to Yak-3's and IL-2's, 10 reconnaissance planes, and 60 Yak trainers; 122-mm. howitzers; 122-mm. guns; 76-mm. self-propelled guns; 45-mm. anti-tank guns; 61-mm., 82-mm., and 120-mm. mortars. By June 1950, the North Korean ground forces - the Korean People's Army (KPA) and the Border Constabulary - expanded to about 135,000 men. *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, pp. 691-699; Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, pp. 10-12.

⁶² U.S. Congress. Senate. Committees on Armed Services and Foreign Relations. *Military Situation in the Far East, Part 3: Military Situation in the Far East and Facts Surrounding the Relief of General Douglas MacArthur, 1951*. Hearings . . . 82d Congress, 1st Sess. (hereafter cited as *MacArthur Hearings*), p. 1993.

⁶³ Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, pp. 100-101. This rationale, time and time again, would drive US policy, as shall be seen in subsequent chapters.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁶⁵ Appleman asserts 150 tanks. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to Yalu*, p. 10.

F-51s, ten T-6s and two C-47 cargo planes, but without any positive response from the US government.⁶⁶

When it became apparent that every request for tactical aircraft would be refused, no matter the nature of the request, ROK leaders sought a non-US avenue to acquire the tactical aircraft.⁶⁷ The ROK government appealed to the Korean public to cooperate in raising a civil fund to purchase fighter aircraft.⁶⁸ The appeal was publicised through the government-run radio system and daily newspapers.⁶⁹

In quick response to the appeal of the ROK government, Korean intellectuals and politicians joined the mass media in encouraging the public's participation in the nation-wide fund raising campaign, reminding them that: 'For the sake of our national defence as a sovereign state, no Koreans would argue about the spontaneous participation in the historical campaign of acquiring the indispensable aircraft out of our own pockets. . . . The immediate participation should be everyone's patriotic duty.'⁷⁰ Civil servants were also encouraged to lead the Korean public in the active fund-raising campaign: 'Needless to say, all civil servants should be role models in the nation-wide pursuit of expansion of our air defence power by demonstrating to the public their leading role in the campaign.'⁷¹ In actuality, civil servant contributions accounted for more than half of the total

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12. Sawyer, in his *Military Advisors*, depicts slightly lower figures of the Soviet's supply of tactical aircraft: 30 YAK-9 fighters and 5 IL-2 bombers. Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p. 94.

⁶⁷ Eventually the purchasing source ended up with a Japan-based American trading company. A further discussion on this issue follows in the subsequent pages.

⁶⁸ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-1953*, p. 56.

⁶⁹ *Chosun Ilbo*, September 25, 1949, p. 1 and September 26, 1949, p. 2; *Dong-Ah Ilbo*, September 25, 1949, p. 1 and September 26, 1949, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Author's translation from an article titled 'Chi-Sung Ae Kyol-Jong In Ae-Gook Ki: Ch'ang Gong Ae Chol-Byok Ui-Ro B'ang-Gong Jon-Sun Ae' ('The Inauguration of the Patriotic Aircraft, a Result of Our Hearty Patriotism: Surely a Water-tight Air Shield in the Anti-Communist Frontline'), *Dong-Ah Ilbo*, 13 May 1949, p. 2. Daily newspapers in Seoul joined together in their united efforts to advertise the event on consecutive days on and around the inauguration day of the newly purchased AT-6 aircraft. See *Dong-Ah Ilbo* and *Cho-Sun Ilbo* of 12-16 May 1949, p. 2.

⁷¹ *Chosun Ilbo (Chosun Daily Newspaper)*, 26 September 1949, p. 2. Author's translation.

funds collected - 180 million Won, out of a total civil fund of 350 million Won (worth about \$600,000 in 1949 US dollars) - in a few weeks.⁷²

This was a considerable amount of money, worth the equivalent of either purchasing twenty surplus US C-47 cargo planes, or leasing one hundred of the same surplus transport aircraft.⁷³ (See Figure 1-2) The refusal of the United States to allow South Korea access to this surplus equipment demonstrates American policy restraints, rather than availability and maintainability of the aircraft.⁷⁴

Figure 1-2: Prices for US Surplus Cargo Planes (1946)⁷⁵

Type of Aircraft	Option 'A'	Option 'B'
C-54A	\$75,000	\$16,000
C-54B	90,000	24,000
C-53	25-40,000	8,000
C-47	20,000	4,000
C-46	25-40,000	not available

Without prior consultation with American advisers, two ROKAF officers were to be sent abroad for a preliminary market survey. But the US government intervened and forced the ROK to abort the plan once again for fear of South Korea's possible self-initiated provocation against North Korea.⁷⁶ As an alternative, the ROK government negotiated a \$300,000 commercial contract for ten Canadian-made AT-6s, 'advanced' trainers, with

⁷² *Chosun Ilbo*, 14 May 1950, p. 2.

⁷³ Generally speaking, the total programme cost of a weapon system is divided into two parts: (1) the unit cost of the equipment; and (2) its operating cost for one year, including spare parts. The unit cost normally occupies around two-thirds of the total programme cost.

⁷⁴ Interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Chang Sung-Whan, 26 April 1995. General Chang had flown Japanese bombers during the Second World War. He later became ROKAF Chief of Staff (1962-1964).

⁷⁵ These were the US Surplus Property Administration prices for various types of surplus planes offered to Chinese National Aviation Corporation. Option 'A' is the cash purchase price and option 'B' is the rate per annum on lease for five years. Telegram, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in China, 1 February 1946, Subj: 'Surplus Planes Purchased from the U.S.' in *FRUS, 1946, The Far East: China*, v. 10, p. 768.



An AT-6 trainer at Seoul Yo'E Do Air Base. Korean figures on the fuselage indicate the code name of the aircraft, *Gon-Gook Ho* (the *Nation Building*). (ROKAF Photo)

the Air Carrier Company, a private American aircraft trading firm in Tokyo. They were factory-rebuilt and were to be equipped with machine guns and bomb racks, and because of this the US government again refused to grant an export license.⁷⁷ The purchase of these ten AT-6s was also resisted by US economic aid officials who claimed that 'Korean dollar credits were scarce,' and that the price was 'exorbitant.'⁷⁸ Eventually, difficulties were overcome and delivery of the aircraft minus guns and bomb racks was approved. The ten AT-6s were delivered in April 1950. In a nation-wide ceremonial rally on 14 May 1950 at Seoul Yo'E Do airfield, these ten 'advanced' trainers were named *Gon-Gook Ilo (The Nation-Building)*.⁷⁹

Once the contract was signed and the arrival of the aircraft was confirmed, the United States Air Force provided a nine-man training team - three officer flight instructors, three airplane mechanics, two radio mechanics and one aircraft electrician - to assist in transition training in the newly purchased AT-6s. But the State Department made it clear in its inter-departmental correspondence that the furnishing of these personnel did not mean 'a commitment in support of an autonomous Korean Air Force. That is, the Department does not consider that it is supporting the creation of an autonomous Korean Air Force by suggesting to the Department of Defense that air advisers be [separately] assigned to Korea.' The American training team, the Department continued to reason, was provided simply because 'in the absence of competent advisers . . . the new aircraft and equipment will be lost to the South Korean government through misuse.'⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the

⁷⁶ Two officers were: Lt. Colonel Kim Chung-Yul and Major Lee Keun-Suk. Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 99. This was also verified in Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul's personal talk on 25 February 1990 with the author. Author's memorandum of records dated 27 February 1990.

⁷⁷ US government permission was required because the AT-6s that were manufactured in Canada were subject to specific contract limitations regarding sale to third parties.

⁷⁸ '5th AF History, Jan - Jun 1952,' *m.s.*, vol. 2, pp. 344-345. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. AFHRA.

⁷⁹ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-1953*, p. 56.

⁸⁰ 'The Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Allison) to the Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Halaby),' January 31, 1950 in *FRUS, 1950*, v. 7, pt. 2, p. 24.

training with these T-6 aircraft received between April and June 1950 was a major factor in laying a foundation for training Korean pilots eventually to fly F-51s with a minimum of transition training soon after the invasion of South Korea.⁸¹

Another contribution to the potential of the South Korean Air Force was made by Borne Associates, an American firm which contracted with the Korean government for the operation of Kimpo airfield in October 1949, after the last of the US occupation forces departed. The contract included the training of civilian technicians in airport operations. South Korean Air Force personnel were classified civilians for the purpose of receiving training. Those who were not then ROKAF personnel became so after the start of hostilities.⁸² Although the numbers involved were few, and the training rather poor and short lived, the contribution to ROKAF potential was important.

No major change in ROK's air defence improvement (i.e., fighter capability) occurred until the middle of June 1950, when the ROKAF had merely twenty-two liaison and trainer airplanes, and 1,897 officers and airmen, including fifty-seven pilots, of whom thirty-nine were considered fully trained. Also included were ninety cadets who had just started a two year regular course in the newly founded ROKAF Academy.⁸³ The ten T-6s⁸⁴ and 12 L-4s/L-5s were deployed at Kimpo and Yo'E Do airfields, and

⁸¹ Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 131; 'History of the Far East Air Forces (hereafter cited as FEAF History), 1 July 1953 - 31 December 1953,' *ms.*, vol. 1., p. 26. K720.01 Jul-Dec 1953, v. 1. AFHRA.

⁸² '5th AF History, Jan - Jun 1950,' *m.s.*, vol. 2, pp. 344-345. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1950, v. 2. AFHRA.

⁸³ Thirty-two of the ROKAF Academy's first class took part in the Korean War, flying an average of some fifty combat missions each in F-51s. Three were killed in action. *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 254-255.

⁸⁴ The AT-6s were redesignated T-6s when Americans refused to equip them with bomb racks and other attack options.

the ROKAF had detachments at five other airfields (Suwon, Taegu, Kwangju, Kunsan, and Cheju Island).⁸⁵

The formation of the South Korean Air Force was unique in the annals of airpower. This force came into being owing primarily to the far-sightedness, enthusiasm and determination of the founding members, together with already experienced personnel who brought to their new organisation flying, maintenance and management skills necessary for operations of their fledgling air force. Initially they encountered resistance from both the Korean Army leaders and the American military advisers, but their persistence eventually overcame all obstacles. The development of the ROKAF was enhanced by the attention paid to the culture and tradition of Korean seniority, which precluded many potential conflicts among airmen, particularly during the early, unsettled stages of ROKAF formation. Albeit a nominal force structure without a single tactical aircraft, the basic foundation (pilots, aircraft, airfields and organisation) was laid with assured status as a separate service of the ROK Armed Forces.⁸⁶

As the newly created ROK Air Force eagerly began to anticipate its future, the military situation on the Korean peninsula rapidly deteriorated from border clashes and communist-agitated insurrections and guerrilla harassment in South Korea. How the South Korean Air Force was swept into the embroiling conditions, and how it adapted to its opportunities on the eve of hostilities, will be analysed in the following chapter.

⁸⁵ Out of the initial 20 L-4s/L-5s, eight were lost in training and liaison missions. *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949 - 1953*, pp. 57, 60; *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 58.

⁸⁶ For an account of ROK Army historians on the ROKAF's independence, see *Yook-Goon Jon-Sa: 6.25 Sa-Byon*, Jae I Kwon (*The History of the Army: The Korean War, Volume 1*) (Taegu, Korea: ROK Army Office of History, 1952), pp. 81-85. The book is out of print. The author was granted access to this book, which is presently kept as ROK Air Force historical reference material. Deung-Rok Bon-Ilo (Registration No.) #8443. Goon-Sa Ja-Ryo (Military Reference) #721-18/1977.10.27. ROK Air Force Goon-Sa Yon-Goo Sil (Office of Military History Studies), Taejon, Korea.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MILITARY SITUATION ON THE PENINSULA, 1949-JUNE 1950

When the ROK Air Force became a separate service on 1 October 1949, it was three months after the departure of the last unit of the withdrawing US occupation forces from Korea, and less than nine months before the outbreak of the Korean War. The nascent ROKAF, equipped with some twenty light planes, was virtually helpless to fill the vacuum left by the departure of American air forces, and the air defence preparedness of South Korea against Soviet-supplied North Korea's YAK-fighters was practically nil. When the Soviet-trained North Korean People's Army launched a preemptive attack with their T-34 tanks and YAK fighters on 25 June 1950, the ROKAF had to cope with the communist onslaught with 'bare-hands,' until the US fighter forces came to their assistance. Nor were the United States Air Forces in the Far East prepared for the required air effort in the Korean theatre.

This chapter examines (1) how the security of South Korea was perceived by the United States government prior to the Korean War, and (2) how ill-prepared both the Korean and American air forces were on the eve of hostilities. Both of these factors affected the early history of the South Korean Air Force, which was viewed by the United States as a token supplementary force for defensive purposes only.

2.1. US Government's Perception of South Korea Prior to the War

American interests in the Korean peninsula until the outbreak of the Korean War remained peripheral.¹ Dr. Syngman Rhee (one of the leading political leaders, not yet President) interpreted the Truman Doctrine as implying an extended commitment to South Korea as well, although it soon became clear that the original intent of the doctrine, as applied to Greece and Turkey for the containment of communism, was not present in the case of South Korea.² In the summer of 1949, a US Department of the Army study reflected the view of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding the non-applicability of the Truman Doctrine to South Korea, due to 'its little strategic value':

[It] involves a militarily disproportionate expenditure of US power, resources and effort at a time when international relations in Europe are precariously balanced and militarily unsound. To apply the Truman Doctrine to Korea would require prodigious effort and vast expenditures far out of proportion to the benefit to be expected.³

This view was later reconfirmed by General Matthew B. Ridgway, the former Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command (April 1951-May 1952): 'Above all, the close ties of blood and culture . . . persuaded Washington that Europe must come first and Asia second.'⁴ Ridgway further stated that prior to the Korean War, in case of a next global war involving the United States, Korea would be 'of minor importance and, in any event,

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, 'Korea in American Politics, Strategy, and Diplomacy, 1945-50,' in Yonosuke Nagai and Akira Iriye (eds.), *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 282; Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 1986), pp. 17, 23; Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), p. 147; Glenn D. Paige, *The Korean Decision* (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 69; Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 385, 407, 418; Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 15.

² Ltr, Dr. Syngman Rhee to President Truman, March 13, 1947. *FRUS, 1947*, v.6, p. 620. Truman did not respond to Rhee's interpretation of the Truman Doctrine. *Ibid.*, p. 620 fn 39.

³ Memo, Dept. of the Army to the Dept. of State, 27 June 1949; Subj: Implications of a Possible Full Scale Invasion from North Korea Subsequent to Withdrawal of United States Troops from South Korea. *FRUS, 1949*, v. 7, pt. 2, p. 1056.

⁴ Ridgway, *The Korean War*, p. 147.

indefensible.⁵ From an economical standpoint, the low priority of Korea may be traced to the US desire to avoid 'a drain of men and material on the peninsula that would weaken American capabilities elsewhere, especially in vital Europe.'⁶

On 30 December 1949, six months after the US troop withdrawal from South Korea, President Truman approved NSC 48/2, a document that spelled out the Washington government's policy for Asia. To prevent the expansion of communist power into the Pacific, the United States intended to rely on its bastions in the Philippines, the Ryukus, and Japan. As for South Korea, mentioned almost in passing, the United States should continue to provide economic, military, and technical assistance.⁷ Then, on 12 January 1950, Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson delivered his famous speech to the National Press Club, in which his sketch of the American defensive perimeter in the Far East excluded South Korea from the US defence line, and declared that should an area lying beyond the perimeter prove incapable of turning back an aggressor, it would be up to 'the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations' to protect the area's independence.⁸

Acheson's speech alarmed many South Koreans, who thought it represented their abandonment by the United States.⁹ Greater anguish would

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶ Paige, *The Korean Decision*, p. 69.

⁷ 'Memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Souers) to the National Security Council, December 30, 1949, Subj: The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia.' *FRUS*, 1949, v. 7, pt. 2, *The Far East and Australia*, p. 1218. NSC 48/2 showed America's determination to contain communist expansion in Asia. For a full account of NSC 48/2, see *Ibid.*, pp. 1215-1220; Department of State, *United States - Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Volume 8 (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1971), pp. 225-275.

⁸ 'Crisis in Asia - An Explanation of U.S. Policy,' remarks by Acheson, January 12, 1950, *Department of State Bulletin*, 22:551 (January 23, 1950), p. 116. John Edward Wilz asserts: 'Acheson's National Press Club speech of 12 January 1950, was, in essence, a summation of NSC 48 [documents]. But it clearly did not dissuade the Communist dictators from proceeding with plans for a military conquest of South Korea.' John Edward Wilz, 'Encountering Korea: American Perceptions and Policies of 25 June 1950,' in William J. Williams, ed., *A Revolutionary War: Korea and the Transformation of the Postwar World* (Chicago, IL: Imprint Publications, 1993), p. 77 fn 220. For Wilz's full account, see *Ibid.*, pp. 13-82.

⁹ *Dong-Ah Ilbo* (13 January 1950), p. 1; Ho-Jae Lee, *Han-Gook Oe-Kyo Jong-Check Ae Yi-Sung Kwa Hyon-Sil: Hae-Bang 8-Nyon Min-Jok Kal-Dung Ki Ae Ban-Sung* (Ideals and Realities of

have been stirred among the Koreans in Seoul, had they known the substance of Acheson's testimony presented to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the day following the National Press Club speech. After explaining to the senators that South Korea could not turn back a Soviet-assisted invasion by North Korea, the secretary testified that he did not know if the United States would undertake to resist North Korea's invasion of South Korea. He also conceded that the Soviets probably would veto any resolution introduced in the Security Council of the United Nations mandating a military response by UN members to an invasion of South Korea.¹⁰ When the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Tom Connally of Texas, surprised Korean leaders in Seoul by telling a reporter in April 1950 that abandonment of the Republic of Korea by the United States was a 'distinctive possibility,' South Korean concern was intensified.¹¹

The ambiguous hint of UN support in the event of war in Korea did not anticipate any specific attempt to exploit the vacuum left in South Korea.¹² At that time the American policymakers believed that 'the major threat to the South was from internal unrest and subversion, rather than from invasion,' and that any communist hostile provocations would occur in

South Korean Foreign Policy: Self-Examination of the 8-Year National Conflict Period (Seoul, Korea: Bop-Moon Sa, 1986), p. 47; Sil Park, *Han-Gook Oe-Kyo Bee-Sa (The Untold Story of Korean Diplomacy)* (Seoul, Korea: Ki-Rim Sa, 1979), p. 28; Chom-kon Kim, *The Korean War, 1950-1953* (Seoul, Korea: Kwangmyong Publishing, 1980), pp. 49-53; Hak-joon Kim, *Han-Gook Moon-Jae Wa Cook-Jae Jong-Chee (The Korean Question and International Politics)* (Seoul, Korea: Park-Young Sa, 1995), p. 194. See also 'Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Rusk), to the Under Secretary of State (Webb),' May 2, 1950. *FRUS, 1950, v. 7, Korea*, p. 65.

¹⁰ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. *Reviews of the World Situation: 1949-1950*. Hearings . . . 81st Cong., 1st and 2nd sess. (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1950), p. 191.

¹¹ 'World Policy and Bipartisanship,' interview with Senator Tom Connally. *U.S. News and World Report* 28:18 (May 5, 1950), p. 30; 'The Charge [d'Affaires] in Korea (Drumright) to the Secretary of State,' May 5, 1950. *FRUS, 1950, v. 7, Korea*, pp. 66-67.

¹² David S. McLellan, *Dean Acheson: The State Department Years* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1976), p. 268.



Europe.¹³ American military planners and policymakers paid little attention to the Soviet Union's fundamental strategic and geopolitical concern with Korea.¹⁴ Soviet control of the Korean peninsula could provide the USSR with strategically advantageous air and naval bases outside its borders, thereby giving the USSR 'a further strategic advantage' in threatening Japan, and consequently enhancing 'the position of the USSR *vis-a-vis* the US in the Far East.' For instance, Soviet military control of the entire Korean peninsula would make it possible for the Russians to neutralise 'the usefulness of Japan as an American base,' in the event of a major war, because of Soviet air and naval threats poised from the peninsula.¹⁵ But such views, common among US intelligence analysts, had little effect on high-level policymakers, most of whom were sceptical about the USSR's military capabilities so soon after the devastating losses incurred during the Second World War.

When the United States ran into the 'shocks of 1949' - the US monopoly of the atomic bomb was broken upon the explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb in September 1949, some years ahead of US expectation,¹⁶ and the 'loss of China' appeared definite in October¹⁷. President Truman responded to the increased apprehension about the trend of the nation's security position, and in January 1950 directed the State Department to conduct a study on general security policy. The results were

¹³ Rudolf J. Rummel, 'Korea and the Correlation of Forces Toward War,' *Korea and World Affairs* 5:1 (Spring 1981), p. 25 fn 8.

¹⁴ Pacific Command United States Army (PACUSA) Report, 'Estimate of Soviet Offensive Capabilities in Korea and Vicinity,' 1 April 1946, in 'KO-46127 PACUSA Report,' 720.609-7. US Air Force historical records, US Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

¹⁵ Annex A: Soviet Position in Northern Korea, Memorandum by the Central Intelligence Agency, June 19, 1950. *FRUS* 1950, v. 7, p. 111.

¹⁶ The NSC assumed that by 1954 the Soviet Union would possess a stockpile of a considerable number of nuclear warheads. Maurice A. Mallin, *Tanks, Fighters & Ships: US Conventional Force Planning since WWII* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1990), p. 45.

¹⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 90.

submitted to the President in April 1950. The study report, entitled NSC-68,¹⁸ treated the Soviet threat 'as primarily military,'¹⁹ and emphasised 'the inadequacy of the Western capability to meet limited military challenges due to a lack of conventional forces, shortcomings in the Western alliance system, and the military and economic weaknesses of Western Europe,' accordingly advocating a drastic increase of American conventional forces.²⁰ NSC-68 can be interpreted as a call to arms that urged significant upgrading of Western defence capability. The gist of the document called for increased defence expenditure for the improvement of US conventional forces 'without war, without long-term budget deficits, and without crushing tax burdens.'²¹ The document's priorities were focused on the defence of Western Europe, and the Middle East.²² Even the formulation by the National Security Council of NCS-68, a document arguing that America should stand up to Soviet and Soviet-supported expansion across the entire world, brought no apparent change in the thinking of the Washington government about Korea.²³ No mention was made of Korea, which was 'presumably to be written off entirely.'²⁴

¹⁸ The result of the study was initially submitted to the President on 7 April 1950, over the signatures of Secretaries Dean Acheson (State) and Louis Johnson (Defense). On 12 April, it was forwarded to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council. The President expressed neither approval nor disapproval of the report itself. Paige, *The Korean Decision*, pp. 58-59; MacDonald, *Korea*, p. 24.

¹⁹ MacDonald, *Korea*, p. 22.

²⁰ William W. Kaufmann, *Planning Conventional Forces, 1950-1980* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1982), p. 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²³ The details on the background and formulation of the NSC-68 can be found in NSC-68: Enclosure 2: 'A Report to the President Pursuant to the President's Directive of January 31, 1950.' *FRUS*, 1950, v. 1, *National Security Affairs: Foreign Economic Policy*, pp. 235-292. President Truman returned the report to the NSC with instructions to work out its actual cost in dollars. Before this could be done, the war began in Korea.

²⁴ Schnabel and Watson, *JCS/The History of the Korean War*, pp. 47-48. According to General Ridgway, the U.S. emergency plans for the Far East did not provide for the defence of the Korean peninsula. Ridgway, *The Korean War*, p. 12.

2.2. The Military Balance in the Far East (1949 - June 1950)

In June 1950, the ROK Army had a total of eight infantry divisions of 65,000 men plus an additional 33,000 in headquarters and service troops. Each of the divisions was below its nominal strength of 10,000, and equipped with light weapons only.²⁵ In addition, the 17th Regiment of the Capital Division was independently deployed on the Ongjin peninsula, geographically separated from the mainland of South Korea.²⁶ The other four divisions were scattered throughout the interior and southern parts of the country, three of them engaged in anti-guerrilla activity and training in small unit tactics.²⁷ Only thirty of the ROKA's sixty-seven battalions, including the three squadrons of the cavalry regiment, had completed company training by the end of 1949. Of these, only twenty had begun the battalion phase. Eleven battalions had not yet finished their platoon training. Twenty-eight battalions had completed qualification firing of the M1 rifle, but the remaining thirty-nine, recurrently engaged in counter-guerrilla activities, were from 20 % to 90 % qualified. The overall training state of the South Korean troops was so below standard,²⁸ that the ROK Army 'could have been the American Army in 1775.'²⁹

The ROK Navy in June 1950 had a total of 6,956 officers and sailors (1,077 marines included), and only one patrol craft (PC701) recently

²⁵ The divisions engaged in fighting guerrillas in the eastern and southern mountains had a miscellany of small arms, including many Japanese Type-99 rifles. 'Heavier' weapons the ROK Army had before the Korean War were: 27 armoured cars; 700 artillery pieces and mortars, including 105-mm. howitzers and 81-mm. and 60-mm. mortars; about 140 anti-tank guns and about 1,900 2.36-in bazookas, which later proved futile coping with North Korea's T-34 tanks. Schnabel and Watson, *JCS/The History of the Korean War*, pp. 326-327.

²⁶ The Ongjin peninsula on the west coast was isolated from South Korea's landmass by the 38th Parallel. After American troop withdrawal, no access by South Koreans was available by land. See Figure 3-1 in Ch. 3.

²⁷ *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*, pp. 309-311.

²⁸ J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969), p. 43; *H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng Sa*, p. 214.

²⁹ *H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng Sa*, p. 196; Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p. 69. For an English account of the state of ROK Army training from mid-1949 to May 1950, see Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, pp. 67-78.

purchased in the United States from surplus vessels; three other similar patrol craft at Hawaii were en route to Korea, 1 LST, 15 former US mine sweepers, 10 former Japanese mine layers, and various other small craft, totaling 28 tactical craft and 43 auxiliary craft.³⁰

The ROK Air Force in June 1950 was of minimal strength, consisting of a single flight group of less than 2,000 officers and airmen and 22 light (non-tactical) airplanes.³¹ At the time, the United States Far East Air Forces had a considerable number of F-51 *Mustang* propeller-driven fighters in Japan and they were being replaced by jets.³² Although these might be obsolescent to the American pilots, they were not to Korean pilots. In March 1950, KMAG suggested to Washington about fifty of the F-51s be turned over to the ROKAF, to no avail.³³ Soon after the war started, ten of these F-51 fighters were hurriedly ferried to Taegu airfield, later becoming the mainstay of the ROK Air Force.³⁴ At the outbreak of hostilities, the South Korean Air Force lost many of its L-4/L-5 liaison planes in combat. They were very vulnerable to small fires because of their lack of armour plate and bullet-proof fuel tanks. In retrospect, to match the speedy, hard-hitting Soviet YAK-fighters, the South Korean pilots had to have its equal, the F-51 *Mustang* fighters.³⁵

In contrast to the United States, which focused its military assistance on the ROK Army, the USSR provided a considerable air strength to North

³⁰ *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, p. 600.

³¹ *Gong-Goon Sa (1), 1949-1953*, pp. 57-60; *H'ang-G'ong Jon-Sa*, p. 58; US Air Force source shows fewer ROKAF aircraft on the eve of the Korean War: sixteen airplanes (8 L-4s, 5 L-5s, and 3 T-6s). Futrell, *USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 17.

³² A total of 47 F-51s were available in FEAF's inventory. US Far East Air Forces, *FEAF Report on the Korean War: Volume I* (s.l., 1954), p. 14. This report was produced in two volumes in the same year. Hereafter the Volume I is cited as *FEAF Report (1)* and Volume II as *FEAF Report (2)*.

³³ Ltr, Maj Gen C. L. Bolte, G-3 Dept. Army to Brig Gen W. L. Roberts, Chief, KMAG, 8 March 1950. Ops 091 Korea (Section I) (Cases 1-20); Decimal File March 1950-1951, Box 121; Records of the Department of the Army, Record Group 319. National Archives, Washington, DC. (NADC)

³⁴ *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, pp. 789-791; *Gong-Goon Sa (1) 1949-53*, pp. 119-121; Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-1953*, p. 89.

³⁵ Dean E. Hess, *Battle Hymn* (New York: McGraw-Hill), p. 76.

Korea. In June 1950, with headquarters at Pyongyang, the North Korean Air Force (NKAF) consisted of one air division of three regiments: a fighter regiment, a ground-attack regiment, and a training regiment. NKAF was estimated to command a considerable number of various types of aircraft, half of which were YAK fighters and IL-attack aircraft. North Korea also possessed a line of airfields from coast to coast with four (Sinmak, Pyonggang, Kumchon, and Kansong) close to the 38th Parallel, in advantageous positions for offensive air action against South Korea. Most of North Korea's tactical aircraft were based at airfields near Pyongyang, Yonpo and Sinmak.³⁶ (The number of NKAF's total aircraft on the day North Korea invaded the South varies depending upon sources. But the most updated number of NKAF tactical aircraft was 152 as appraised by FEAF intelligence.)³⁷(Figure 2-1)

The number of North Korean Air Force personnel in June 1950 was estimated as high as 2,200 men. From October 1946 to the eve of the Korean War, four classes, totaling 1,080 North Korean air force personnel, were known to have received flying training at USSR airbases near Moscow, Kiev in Ukraine, and Vladivostok.³⁸ On the eve of hostilities the Far East

³⁶ Maj. Hugh L. Williamson, Actg. Air Attaché, Seoul, rpt. No. 4-50, 11 May 1950 and rpt. AF200113, OSI Dist. No. 8, 10 June 1950 as cited in Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 720 fn 64.

³⁷ The ROK Air Force source indicates the total number of North Korea's aircraft as 198 (100 Yak-fighters; 71 IL-10; 4 IL-4; 18 PO-2/TU-2; and 5 miscellaneous planes). *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 64; *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 36. Dr. Futrell's total NKAF aircraft number is 162: 62 IL-10 attack aircraft, 70 Yak-3/7B fighters, 22 Yak-16 transports (equivalent to USAF C-45), and 8 PO-2 trainers. Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 19. The breakdown of 152 NKAF aircraft was brought up to date by the FEAF intelligence upon defection of a North Korean pilot to the ROK on 28 April 1950. This information correlated with that obtained from a North Korean pilot, shot down near Suwon at the outbreak of hostilities (Major Pak Kyung Ok, 29 June 1950). *USAF Operations in Korea, June-Nov 1950*, p. ix.

³⁸ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 64; *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 36. There were two distinctive figures who played key roles in the activation of North Korea's air force. One was Senior Colonel Wang Yon, who had served in Manchuria and was graduated from a Soviet military academy as an air force lieutenant in the Soviet army. He had been in North Korea since 1945. Wang commanded the North Korean air unit. His chief of staff was believed to be Colonel Lee Hwal, who had been educated in Japan. He was thought to be responsible for the organisation of the North Korean Air Force. *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, pp. 63-64; *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 32-36; Peter Lowe, *The Origins of the Korean War* (London, UK: Longman, 1986), p. 53.

Air Forces intelligence assessed that most North Korean pilots were aggressive and eager to fight, although they had limited flying experience. Despite the fact that the NKAF was immature and incompletely trained, FEAF intelligence further thought North Korea's airpower was clearly an offensive force, and had the capability to destroy the meager ROKAF and then materially to assist the North Korean ground forces as they moved into South Korea.³⁹

**Figure 2-1: North Korean Air Force Air Order of Battle⁴⁰
(April-June 1950)**

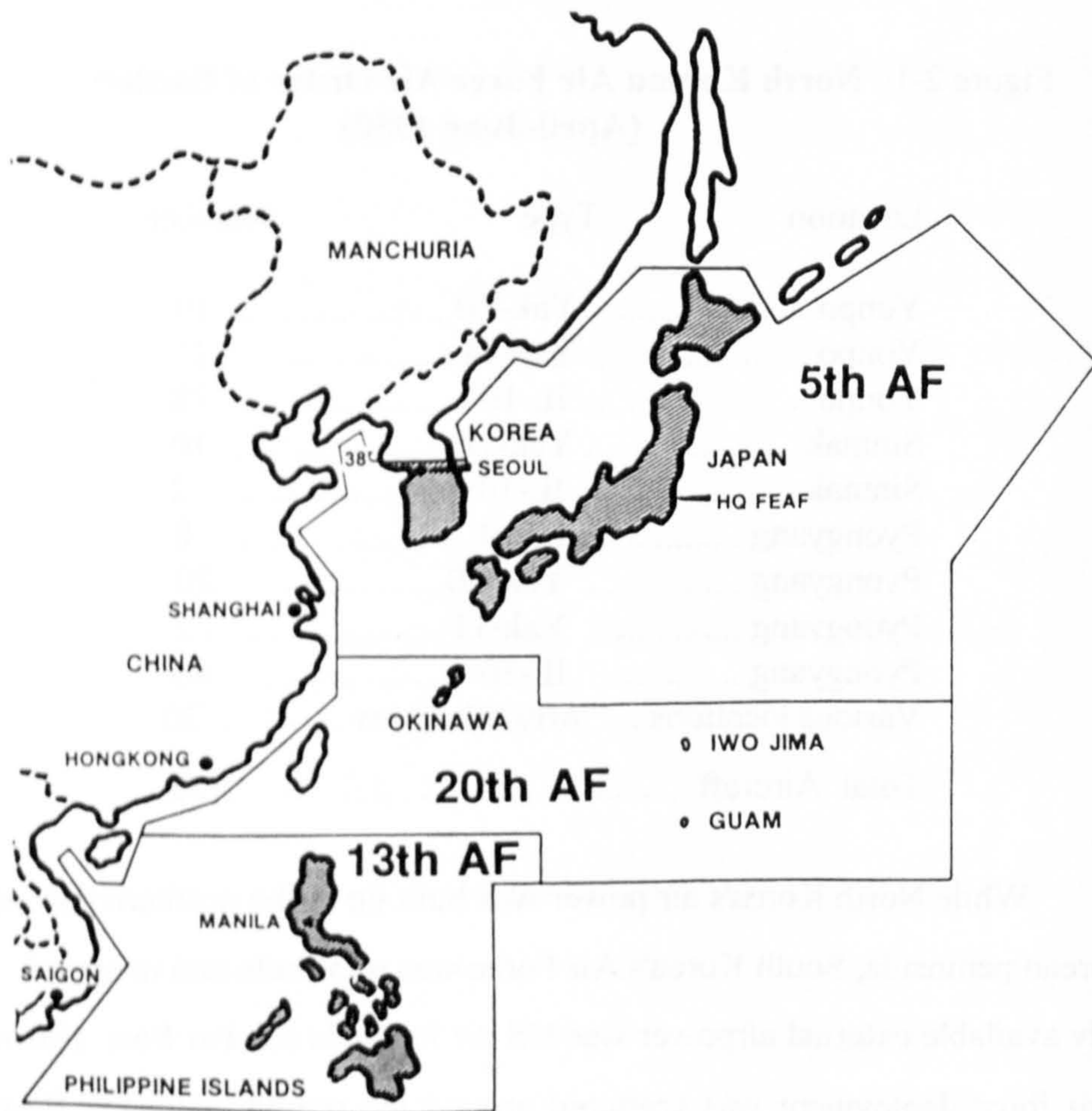
Location	Type	Number
Yonpo	Yak-7B	10
Yonpo	Yak-11	12
Yonpo	IL-10	18
Sinmak	Yak-7B	10
Sinmak	IL-10	2
Pyongyang	IL-10	8
Pyongyang	Yak-7B	20
Pyongyang	Yak-11	2
Pyongyang	IL-10	40
Various locations.....	Miscellaneous	30
Total Aircraft		152

While North Korea's air power was built up in the northern part of the Korean peninsula, South Korea's Air Force was miniscule and unarmed. The only available external airpower was US air forces in the Far East. However, their force deployment was scattered around the region. The Far East Air Forces, the air component of the Far East Command (FEC), were divided among three numbered air forces: 5th Air Force (AF) (Japan), 13th AF

³⁹ Air Intelligence Information Report, 'Review of North Korean Air Power and Its Potentialities,' 28 Feb. 1950, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, in the attachment to Memorandum of Conversation, 3 April 1950, Records of the Department of State, Record Group (RG) 59, Central File, 1950-54, 795.00/4-350, Box 4682. National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁰ *USAF Operations in Korea, June - Nov 1950*, p. ix.

**Areas of Responsibility of the Numbered Air Forces
Under the Far East Air Forces*
(25 June 1950)**



* Robert Frank Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea, 1950-1953* (Washington, DC: USAF Office of Air Force History, 1983), p. 57.

(Philippines), and 20th AF (Okinawa). Collectively, these USAF numbered air forces were commanded by US Air Force Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer. Covering an extensive area of operations from Japan to the Ryukyus, the Marianas and Philippines, the FEAF had, prior to the Korean War, thirty squadrons, the equivalent of nine of the forty-eight combat wings in the whole of the USAF.⁴¹ The aircraft complement of FEAF's tactical units bespoke its primarily defensive mission. As of 31 May 1950, FEAF possessed 1,172 aircraft (including those in storage and a few in salvage or recommended for salvage), of which 73 were B-26s, 27 B-29s, 47 F-51s, 504 F-80s, 42 F-82s, 179 transports of all types, 48 reconnaissance planes, and 252 miscellaneous aircraft.⁴²

The Far East Air Forces were tasked with only one minor mission related to Korea in war, and that was to provide for the safety of American citizens in the country.⁴³ It was not the responsibility of the Commander of FEAF to plan for the air defence of Korea, for the implementation of an interdiction program in Korea, or for the possible support of ground units engaged in combat in Korea. All FEAF F-80s, the mainstay of a US defence force based beyond the boundaries of Korea, were initially configured as interceptors and not fitted out to discharge the primary functions of fighter-bombers, even though the role subsequently was forced upon them.⁴⁴ (Fifth Air Force combat units were stationed at various bases from Misawa on northern Honshu Island, to Itazuke on the southern tip of Kyushu Island. The nearest bases in Japan were located nearly 350 miles from the initial

⁴¹ M. J. Armitage and R. A. Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age* (2nd Ed.) (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 22.

⁴² *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*, p. 787; *USAF Operations in Korea, June-Nov 1950*, p. 3. The figures of tactical aircraft conflict with those depicted in other US Air Force archives. For instance, FEAF reported 24 F-51s, 390 F-80s and 32 F-82s. See *FEAF Report (I)*, p. 14.

⁴³ U.S. Air Force Oral History Interview: K239.0512-919: General Earl E. Partridge, 12 April 1968, p. 13. K239.012-919. AFIIRA.

⁴⁴ *USAF Operations in Korea, June-Nov 1950*, p. 1. See also U.S. Air Force Oral History Interview: K239.0512-919: General Earl E. Partridge, 12 April 1968, pp. 13-14. K239.012-919. AFIIRA.

battle line, north of Seoul.)⁴⁵ (See Figure 2-2) The over-riding mission of FEAF was to provide air defence and air warning for the Japanese Islands, the Ryukyu Islands, the Marianas, and for the United States bases and installations in the Philippine Islands. On the eve of hostilities, FEAF possessed in all of Japan only four airfields with runways 7,000 feet long which could meet the operational requirements for jet fighters loaded with maximum fuel and armaments.⁴⁶

FEAF, whose authorised personnel strength was 39,975 officers and men, had assigned 33,625 - a little under the Air Force peacetime requirement of 90 percent manning. Most FEAF units and all 5th Air Force units held peacetime T/O & E (Table of Organization and Equipment) allotment of aircraft. The appearance, however, of a satisfactory T/O & E status was deceptive, for there were shortages of particular categories of personnel and deficiencies in training, which, compounded by material shortages, would lower operational efficiency in combat. The light bombardment group, for example, was short of navigators, bombardiers, and gunners, so that its combat crews could not conduct sustained operations efficiently.⁴⁷

Prior to the Korean War, USAF budget ceilings, moreover, had cut into the training programme due to the Truman administration's policy to hold military appropriations and expenditures to a minimum: non-tactical manoeuvring missions such as cross-country flights in Japan had been curtailed prior to the Korean War, and most of the navigational flights had been accomplished between well-known bases (geographically

⁴⁵ 'FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundups,' No. 18, From 0001/I 31 Dec 50 to 2400/I 6 Jan 51. Related Documents to Barcus Report (Sup. Doc. in D.C.). K-168.04-1, V. 2, pt 10. Sup. Doc. 10. 25 Jun - 31 Dec 1950. AFHRA.

⁴⁶ *USAF Operations in Korea, June-Nov 1950*, p. 3; U.S. Air Force Oral History Interview: K239.0512-919: General Earl E. Partridge, 12 April 1968, pp. 13-14. K239.012-919. AFHRA.

⁴⁷ *USAF Operations in Korea, June-Nov 1950*, p. 3.

distinctive air bases, well equipped with navigation aids, e.g., between either Yokota-Iwakuni-Yokota or Itazuke-Tachikawa-Misawa-Itazuke), by the pilots making full use of radio aids and ranges. (See also Figure 2-2) Rocket training of FEAF fighter pilots was limited by the USAF policy that stocks of 5-inch high velocity aerial rockets (HVAR) were not to be depleted without special permission. Since few FEAF pilots had ever fired a 5-inch HVAR, they had to get their rocket training in combat, for which they were ill prepared.⁴⁹ Their unit commanders 'estimated their combat efficiency in the spring of 1950 to be only 10 to 25 percent of that usual for such units during World War II.'⁵⁰

2.3. The Eve of Hostilities

In the meantime, despite the lack of tactical aircraft, the South Korean pilots worked hard to support the ROK Army with whatever equipment was available. During the period of October 1948 to January 1949, when the communist-connected ROK Army mutinies occurred in the Yosu-Sunchon and Cheju Island areas, the AAC pilots were called upon to support the mop-up operations against these mutineers.⁵¹ The missions they flew - liaison, aerial observation, and leaflet dropping - were limited by the L-4's short flight range. Soon the US Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK) supplied ten additional longer-range L-5's, which brought the total number of the AAC's strength to twenty aircraft.⁵² South Korean pilots, who felt helpless when they found themselves exposed to the demand for tactical air

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵¹ The Korean Army Air Corps did not become the ROK Air Force until 1 October 1949. English accounts of communist-agitated ROK Army mutinies and guerrilla harassments in South Korea prior to the Korean War can be found in John Merrill, *Korea: The Peninsula Origins of the Korean War* (London, U.K.: Associated University Press, 1989), pp. 98-129; and Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Volume II; The Roaring of the Cataract 1947-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 268-290.

⁵² *H'ang-Gong Jon Sa*, p. 49.

strikes during these counter-insurgency support operations, tried to compensate by dropping from their liaison type aircraft 'home-made' bombs, hand grenades and mortar shells, to no avail. In one unusual instance, an ammunition mechanic of the Korean Army Air Corps produced nine 30-pound aerial bombs which were dropped successfully from an L-4 aircraft on the communist insurgent forces on Cheju Island.⁵³

One of the lessons learned during this period was the deficiencies of the L-4/5s. Their limited range, slow speed, and lack of communications equipment made clear the Korean pilots' need for higher performance tactical aircraft. Another lesson learned was the need to maintain pilots' flying proficiency, without which the support missions would not have been executed successfully. When ten 'heavy' and 'fast' metal-framed T-6 'advanced' trainer aircraft arrived, barely two months before the outbreak of hostilities, Korean pilots immediately converted to the new equipment.

These T-6 trainers were regarded as one of ROK's national treasures. Aware that the ten aircraft were paid for with money donated by the Korean public, ROKAF pilots were mindful of their significance to the Korean people. Only the 'best selected' pilots were allowed to fly. Although these planes were not equipped with weapons, their higher speed and manoeuvrability, as well as their sturdy metal airframes, enabled the Korean pilots to fly tactical manoeuvres in acrobatics and simulated air-to-ground attack missions. In addition to maintaining their proficiency in tactical manoeuvres, visual navigation flights across country and near border areas were constantly flown, so that South Korean pilots could quickly identify landmarks from the air. When the war broke out, these pilots were

⁵³ These bombs were twenty-four inches long and each contained TNT from thirty-six sticks of dynamite. The South Korean pilot who dropped these bombs stated that the bombs were effective for an approximately twenty-five meter radius. Air Intelligence (12-09-49)/ 720.609B-2, 49/09/23. AFHRA. See also Chang Sung Whan, *My Life as an Aviator* (in-house publication, not for public sale)(Seoul, Korea: ROKAF Public Information Office, 1964), pp. 19-21; *Gong-Goon Sa (1)*, 1949-53, pp. 53-54; *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 53.

immediately prepared to support ground forces in aerial reconnaissance and liaison missions, and to convert to the F-51 fighters quickly. Korean pilots were mentally geared to fight, but still materially deficient.⁵⁴

The poor condition of the Korean Air Force at the beginning of 1950 was simply a reflection of the entire state of the military-political scene on the southern part of the peninsula. The ROK military was in disarray, American troops were gone, and the Korean political situation was unstable from border clashes, insurrections, and hollow threats to march north. The frequent attacks by the KPA forces along the 38th Parallel caused nervous misgivings in South Korea that the communists might attempt to invade in the near future.⁵⁵ The American intelligence agencies in the Far East also became aware of the increasingly aggressive posture of the communist regime in North Korea. On 10 March 1948, intelligence branch (G-2) of US Army Forces in Korea reported to the Far East Command in Tokyo a rumour 'from a usually reliable source' that the North Korean Army would invade South Korea in April, and G-2 believed it 'plausible.'⁵⁶ As late as December 1949, six months before the hostilities, Far East Command's G-2 reported almost identical intelligence to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington that there were indications that an invasion of South Korea by North Korea was planned for March or April 1950, but the JCS regarded the report as 'doubtful.' Disagreements among US intelligence analysts could not be resolved, as was revealed when FEC/G-2 decided that the rumour it was

⁵⁴ This is summarised in English by the author from the oral history of Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul. *T'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng Myon-D'am Rok Jae I Kwon* (The Oral History of the Korean War, Volume 1), *ms.*, pp. 90-98, 102-104. ROKAF historical records, *Dung-Rok Bon-Ho* # 71-708 (1967), ROK Air Force Office of Military History Studies, Taejon, Korea. Kim's testimony was reaffirmed by interviews, author with Lt. Generals (Ret.) Chang Sung-Whan and Chang Chi-Ryang, 23-25 April 1995, and 28-30 October (telephone) 1995.

⁵⁵ Prior to the Korean War from May 1949, more than 400 armed clashes and skirmishes occurred along the 38th Parallel. Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p. 73.

⁵⁶ Rpt, 'Korea - Rumored Invasion of South Korea,' 10 March 1948. P & O 091 Korea TS (Section III) (Class 3-15), Box 21, Decimal File 1946-1948, Records of Department of the Army (Plans and Operations Division), Record Group 319. National Archives, Washington, DC.

hearing had been fabricated 'by the North Koreans for the purpose of causing unrest in South Korea.'⁵⁷

The ROK government thought otherwise. It was becoming alarmed by the increasing signs of North Korea's aggressiveness. On 10 May 1950, in one of many similar public statements, the ROK National Defense Minister Shin Sung-Mo announced that North Korea was moving forces toward the 38th Parallel.⁵⁸ But the ROK National Defense Ministry and ROK Army did not 'take any countermeasures with regard to such ominous reports,' instead, simply presuming that the North Korean military movement was 'part of a series of psychological operations designed to threaten the South in connection with their deceptive peace offensive.'⁵⁹ Nonetheless, the Korean Embassy in Washington was instructed to advise the United States government that the ROK Constabulary forces were without an adequate amount of ammunition and would urgently require force improvement. The response was negative. It appeared that Washington's attention remained focused chiefly on the May 30 election in Korea. The ROK government's warning about the intentions of North Korea might have been regarded by Washington as the Seoul government's political manoeuvring, because the ROK government was in part responsible for the impression that it might wish to resort to military action to unify the country.⁶⁰ The National Defense Minister stated in a bellicose manner at a press meeting on 10 May 1950 that 'our National Armed Forces are fully prepared to go and recover our lost land in the north upon order.'⁶¹ Belligerent remarks made by the ROK's

⁵⁷ *MacArthur Hearings*, p. 1992.

⁵⁸ *H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng Sa*, pp. 314-318; Kim Chum-kon, *The Korean War, 1950-53* (Seoul, Korea: Kwang-Myong Publishing, 1980), p. 206.

⁵⁹ Kim Chum-kon, *The Korean War*, p. 206.

⁶⁰ Pyo-Wook Han, *The Problem of Korea Unification: A Study of the Unification Policy of the Republic of Korea 1948-1960* (Seoul, Korea: Seoul Computer Press, 1987), pp. 66-67.

⁶¹ The author's translation. *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*, p. 314. In fact, the National Defense Minister was preceded one and a half years earlier by ROK's Foreign Minister, who said that the ROK would not hesitate to take military action against the communists in North Korea.

ranking officials resulted simply in creating an unnecessary false impression, detrimental to the ROK's security.⁶²

On the eve of hostilities, the readiness of the ROK armed forces remained deficient; all of the details concerning the ROK's weaknesses in the face of a potential assault by the North Korean People's Army were brushed aside. ROK military readiness deficiency was illustrated by poor maintenance of equipment. Over one third of all ROK Army vehicles were pulled out of the frontline and sent to rear areas for 'repair.' The remaining two thirds were also about to be sent to the rear for 'general inspection' when North Korea launched its invasion. In addition, a considerable number (about fifteen to twenty percent) of all firearms except M-1 rifles (machine guns, automatic rifles and mortars) were collected in a 'periodic maintenance programme.'⁶³ The amount of ammunition in stock was barely sufficient to support combat infantry troops in battle for less than a week.⁶⁴

On 10 June 1950, a fortnight before the war occurred, at the peak of the intelligence (surveillance) build-up and during an emergency look-out for a possible North Korean provocation of hostilities, all of the ROKA division commanders along the 38th Parallel were suddenly reshuffled.⁶⁵ The director of operations of the ROKA headquarters was also dismissed. The division commanders' reshuffle was soon followed by replacing many units along the 38th Parallel. This abrupt change of combat commanders and re-assignment of frontal regiments inevitably disrupted ROK combat

⁶² Leland M. Goodrich, *Korea: A Study of U.S. Policy in the United Nations* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1956), p. 74; Leon Gordenker, *The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea: The Politics of Field Operations, 1947-1950* (Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), p. 240.

⁶³ Kim Chum-kon, *The Korean War*, p. 208.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* The US policy to maintain its logistic support for the ROK Army at less than a week level remained unchanged during and after the Korean War. 'Debriefing of General Taylor,' in Memorandum for the Record, by Walter Treumann of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, June 9, 1954 in *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1805.

⁶⁵ An emergency alert was issued, effective as of 4.00 pm on 11 June 1950 to increase military vigilance against North Korea's deceptive peace offensive. Kim Chum-kon, *The Korean War*, p. 207; *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*, p. 315.

preparedness.⁶⁶ Without explanation, the high state of vigilance was suddenly canceled as of midnight on 24 June 1950, the very eve of the North Korean attack, and all officers, NCO's (Non-Commissioned Officers) and enlisted men were allowed either a few days of weekend leave or a one day outing. Moreover, commanding officers of ROK Army military establishments in the Seoul area and nearby frontline units were invited to the house-warming party of the new KMAG club in downtown Seoul, leaving the front line essentially unguarded, while the North Korea People's Army units along the 38th Parallel eagerly awaited an imminent attack order.⁶⁷

South Korea's weaknesses (the government's indecisiveness and military unpreparedness), and the US policy of disengagement from Korea made possible the exploitation of the situation by North Korea. South Korea became a victim to strategic surprise. This danger could have been minimised by enhancing alertness to intelligence assessments of political and military indicators of warning and by a continuous and realistic appraisal of South Korea's strengths and weaknesses relative to those of North Korea.

With the Army so deficient, and the Air Force without fighters, the ability of the South Koreans to defend themselves did not exist. American policy to prevent South Korea from marching north was a success. Its policy

⁶⁶ *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*, pp. 314-315.

⁶⁷ *Hae-B'ang Kwa Kon-Goon*, p. 753. Motives for the poor preparedness have never been documented. Allegations that the ROK military leadership, including Major General Chae Byong-Duk, the new Army Chief of Staff, who took his office on 10 April 1950, may have been involved with North Korea-manipulated fifth columnists cannot be supported. Chae was fired on 30 June, sent to the front line, and reported 'killed' on 28 July 1950 in a battle near the Hadong-Chinju area, the southern tip of the Pusan perimeter. *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*, p. 318. For further discussion, see Professor Lee Jong Hak, ROK Defense College, '*H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng Cho-Ki Jak-Jon Ae Boon-Sok*' (*An Assessment of the Initial Phase of the Korean War*), pp. 23-25, presented at the Fifth Defense Symposium in Seoul on 21 June 1988, sponsored by The Korea Institute for Defense Analyses. General Lee Hyung-Keun, the first ROK JCS chairman (1954-56), stated: 'It was a misfortune to see him [General Chae] allowed to command the ROK Armed Forces at the critical initial stage of the Korean War. He was an ordnance officer in the Japanese Army and knew little about military operations.' Hyung-Keun Lee, *Goon-Bon Il-Bon Ae Oe-Kil In-Saeng: Lee Hyung-Keun Hoe-Go Rok (A Life of Military Serial Number One: The Lonely Road of Life: Lee Hyung-Keun Memoir)* (Seoul, Korea: Joong-Ahng Ilbo-Sa, 1994), pp. 42-46. Author's translation.

to provide for a defensive force, however, was a failure. South Korea was exposed, entirely vulnerable to any outside attacks, as the summer of 1950 began. When the South Korean Air Force was called upon to respond to the invasion by North Korea, the ROKAF encountered enormous difficulties and challenges. How the ROK Air Force not only survived the war, but also grew as a tactical airpower during combat will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

COMBAT ACTIVITIES OF THE ROK AIR FORCE DURING THE KOREAN WAR, 1950-1953

At the outbreak of the conflict they had a little Air Force . . . But by no stretch of the imagination were they a tactical air force. They got very little attention from Air Force assistance, guidance or anything else. It was an army deal over there almost entirely. So . . . shortly we realized we should get them in the business and we organized first a combat squadron, an F-51 squadron.¹

The combat element of the Republic of Korea Air Force has done extremely well and have made a definite contribution to the war effort.²

For all practical purposes, the Republic of Korea Air Force did not exist in terms of tactical capability when war began. However incapable the ROK Air Force was, it had to fight with whatever was available at the time, because this was a fight for the survival of the South Korean nation. The South Korean Air Force adapted to the lack of weapons, flying proficiency, and combat experience. Eventually the Korean Air Force did contribute to the successful air campaign of the Korean War, taking second place among the UN air forces in terms of the number of combat missions flown, in spite of its tenuous fighter strength.

This chapter addresses the issue of how the Republic of Korea (South Korea) Air Force evolved during the battle and survived the war. The chapter is confined to the operational viewpoint of the air campaign in

¹ Historical Document: K239.0512-798: General O. P. Weyland, p. 43. U.S. Air Force historical records. K239.0512-798, 23/00/00-59/00/00. US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as 'General Weyland's Oral History Interview.' AFHRA. [General Weyland was the Commanding General of Far East Air Forces (1951-1953).]

² 'Air Briefing for Unified Command Mission, 11 April 1952,' in 'The History of the Fifth Air Force, 1 January - 30 June 1952,' *m.s.*, vol. 2, p. 358. U.S. Air Force historical records, K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2, US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as '5th AF History, Jan-June 1952,' *m.s.*, vol. 2. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. AFHRA.

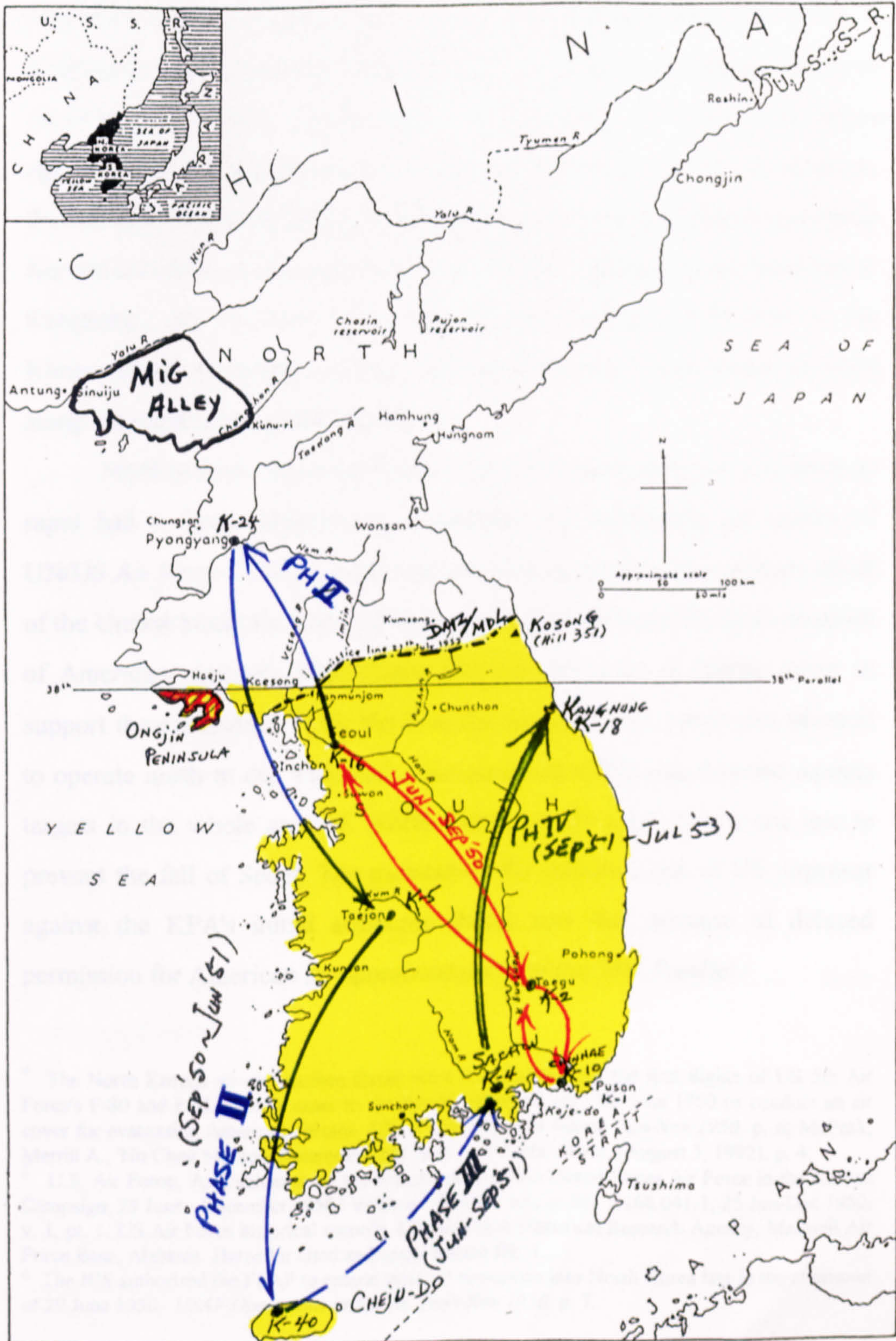
general, and focuses on the ROKAF's combat operations in particular. The ROKAF's air operations during the Korean War were restricted to close air support and air interdiction only, due to its limited resources and role.³ What factors were present in the process which threatened to deny the existence of the ROK Air Force as a separate service even during the war? Who played the leading role in the ROKAF's struggle for survival? How effectively did the US Air Force advisers assist the ROKAF fighter pilots in coping with challenges in combat? This chapter is divided into four phases in accordance with significant chronological events in the evolution of the ROKAF's combat posture in battle. (Figure 3-1) It is, in a way, the story of an itinerant air force, one that began with almost nothing and ended with a proud combat record.

3.1. The Initial Resistance: Combat with Ten F-51 *Mustang* Fighters (25 June - 23 September 1950)

The inability of ROKAF to counter the North Korean attack at the outbreak of war should not be overlooked, because militarily the lack of opposition by any airpower for the first two days was tremendously advantageous to North Korea. Enemy action during this period included large-scale movements of troops and armour across the 38th Parallel, an amphibious operation at Kangnung on the east coast, and the occupation of Chunchon, Pochon and Tong'Duchon by North Korean troops supported by seventy tanks. KPA's predominant dependence on its armour without air

³ An air campaign is usually divided into two aspects – strategic and tactical. Strategic air operations are 'directed at a selected series of enemy targets with the purpose of progressive destruction of such enemy's war-making capacity as key manufacturing systems, sources of raw material, critical material, stockpiles, power systems, transportation systems, and communication facilities.' Tactical air operations '[involve] six combat functions: (1) counter-air, [including air superiority operations]; (2) close air support; (3) air interdiction; (4) tactical air reconnaissance; (5) tactical airlift operations, including air evacuation; and (6) special operations.' Bruce W. Watson and Susan M. Watson (eds.), *United States Air Force: A Dictionary* (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 754, 771.

Figure 3-1: Deployment of ROKAF Flying Units
(26 June 1950 - 27 July 1953)



cover made it extremely vulnerable to air attacks. Only a few flights of fighters armed with 5-inch rockets and napalm would have been sufficient to neutralise these unopposed KPA tanks. KPA's amphibious operations at Kangnung could have been crushed easily by air strikes, because without air cover they were simply 'sitting ducks.' However, US Air Force's first strikes against ground targets occurred on 28 June, the fourth day of the invasion. By that date Seoul had fallen, Kimpo airfield was in enemy hands, and North Korean columns on the east coast had occupied Mukho Naval Base below Kangnung. By 29 June, heavy fighting raged along a fluid front in the Kimpo sector, Kapyong was lost, and North Korean troops began to mass along the north shore of the Han River.

North Korean attacking forces' early advance could not have been so rapid had it been subjected to immediate and continuing air strikes of UN/US Air Forces.⁴ During the first four days of the war, the primary effort of the United States Far East Air Forces was directed towards the evacuation of American nationals from Korea and the provision of fighter cover to support the evacuation.⁵ By the time the American Air Force was allowed to operate north to the Yalu and a concentrated effort was directed against targets in the whole area of North Korea on 29 June, it was too late to prevent the fall of Seoul. The momentum for effective use of US airpower against the KPA's initial armoured thrust was lost, because of delayed permission for American air operations north of the 38th Parallel.⁶

⁴ The North Korean air and surface forces were unopposed, until the first flights of US 5th Air Force's F-80 and F-82 fighters came to the Korean peninsula on 27th June 1950 to conduct an air cover for evacuating American citizens. *USAF Operations in Korea, Jun-Nov 1950*, p. 6; McPeak, Merrill A., 'No Clear Mission Statement Until Now,' *Air Force Times*, (August 3, 1992), p. 4.

⁵ U.S. Air Force, 'An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the United States Air Force in the Korean Campaign, 25 June - December 1950,' Volume I, Book I, *ms.*, p. 46. K168.041-1, 25 Jun-Dec 1950, v. 1, pt. 1. US Air Force historical records. US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as Barcus Report Bk. 1.

⁶ The JCS authorised the FEAF to extend their air operations into North Korea late in the afternoon of 29 June 1950. *USAF Operations in Korea, Jun - Nov 1950*, p. 7.

Immediately after North Korea started its initial reconnaissance air raids over Seoul-Yo'E Do and Kimpo airfields at 10 a.m. on 25 June 1950, all members of the ROKAF were ordered to report to their nearest airfields or accessible ROKAF units. Upon report, the recalled officers and airmen were regrouped into six units: flying operations, aircraft maintenance, anti-aircraft, operational liaison, combat support transport, and medical support. Every one of these groups, regardless of its original specialty, was tasked with the ground defence of the airfields. Their only weapons were Japanese Type-99 rifles.⁷

North Korea's air raids started at noon on 25 June 1950, eight hours after its ground forces launched their first attack. The lack of air threats in the south and poor weather conditions prevented North Korea from early commitment of its airpower at the initial stage of its ground attack. As the weather began to clear around 9:00 a.m., NKAF air activities started, but the enemy disregarded the cardinal principle that the most effective use of airpower lies in the full exploitation of its unique potentialities and its concentrated employment.⁸ Instead, they opted for the piecemeal projection of their airpower. North Korea's airpower was used primarily for harassment and reconnaissance, not as an offensive power aimed at neutralising South Korean forces and military installations. They disregarded the importance of neutralising the runways of Kimpo and Seoul airfields. This failure later proved to facilitate both ROKAF and USAF air operations at these 'untargeted' runways.

NKAF's air reconnaissance raid at noon was immediately followed by its first fighter bombing attack with four YAK fighters, strafing and

⁷ ROK Air Force, *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa: H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng (The History of the Air War: The Korean War)* (Seoul, Korea: ROKAF History Office, 1989), p. 74. This was produced for internal dissemination as an in-house document, not for public sale. Hereafter cited as *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*.

⁸ US Air Force, *United States Air Force Manual 1-1: Functions and Basic Doctrine of the United States Air Force* (Washington, DC: Department of Air Force, 1979) [hereafter cited as USAFM 1-1 (1979)], Ch. 3, pp. 3-1, 2, 3, 4, 5; Ch. 5, pp. 5-1/5-7.

bombing Yongsan and Seoul railway marshaling yards. At four o'clock in the afternoon, three YAKs raided Seoul Yo'E Do Airfield and destroyed one ROKAF T-6 trainer aircraft. Another two YAK fighters attacked Kimpo Airfield, damaging one US Air Force (USAF) C-54, which was later completely destroyed by an additional attack of six YAKs at seven o'clock in the evening.⁹

ROK Air Force Chief of Staff Brigadier General Kim Chung-Yul, and his senior officers met at the Command Post, which was promptly established at Seoul Yo'E Do Airfield soon after the first air raid, and decided to maximise the use of all ROKAF aircraft to support ground troops by any means available. Upon this decision, three flights of nine surviving T-6s were launched under the command of Colonel Lee Kun-suk, Commanding Officer of the ROK Flying Group, to conduct combat reconnaissance missions over Kaesong, Munsan, Uijong'bu, Pochon, Tong'tuchon and Chunchon areas. They reported a large concentration of enemy ground forces north of Pochon and a group of enemy tanks south of Kaesong. Each of the nine T-6s was armed with eight to ten 15 kg (30 LB) bombs.¹⁰ The pilots encountered severe anti-aircraft artillery fire, but proceeded to hand drop bombs by the back-seat pilots. The aircraft flew over at 200 feet against tanks and convoys to enable the 'bombardier' in the back seat to aim more accurately at his target.

Their attempts at bombing were so inaccurate that a group of maintenance officers at Seoul Yo'E Do Airfield formed an *ad hoc* team to design bomb racks for the T-6s. Early in the morning on 26 June, they

⁹ It is worth noting that the American C-54 cargo plane was set afire as a result of YAK fighters' strafing and exploded, while the South Korean T-6 did not explode, although it was hit in its fuel tank, because it was empty. At the time it was the policy to de-fuel all aircraft after daily training missions due to the perceived risk of defection by South Korean pilots. Interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) C. R. Chang. 16 September 1994.

¹⁰ The ROK Army Ordnance Depot manufactured its first 15 kg bomb in April 1949. A total of 337 bombs were produced, 274 of which were stocked in the ROKAF before the Korean War. *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 75.



Formations of F-51 Mustang fighters. The letter 'K' in the tail identifies 'Korean Air Force'. (ROKAF Photo)

succeeded in loading eight bombs under the wings of each T-6. The subsequent T-6 combat missions were successfully executed against enemy convoys and troops. The L-4s/L-5s were also mobilised to fly similar 'tactical' missions, but again bombing by hand from the back seats with two bombs each. Although the results of the attacks were minimal, the psychological impact was considerable.¹¹

Disappointed to see their pilots unable to cope with the KPA tanks, ROKAF leaders strongly appealed to President Syngman Rhee to request fighter aircraft from the United States government. Accordingly, President Rhee asked for the assistance of fighters through Ambassador John J. Muccio. The United States Far East Air Forces Command (FEAF) responded to this request by arranging a staff visit to Korea early on 26 June. The American FEAF visitors recognised ROK's need for fighter aircraft, and gave immediate verbal approval for ten F-51 *Mustang* fighters. Late in the afternoon, ten ROKAF pilots were selected, flown to Japan and began the conversion training at USAF 38th Fighter-Bomber Squadron of the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing (FBW) at Itazuke Air Force Base (AFB).¹²

On 27 June, the 8th FBW of the US 5th Air Force organised the 'Bout-One' Project, to which ten USAF instructor-pilots were assigned. Under the leadership of Major Dean E. Hess, these instructor-pilots, four ground officers, and a hundred enlisted airmen were tasked to train South Korean pilots in the F-51 *Mustang* fighters.¹³ Due to the lack of dual-seat F-51s, USAF T-6s were used for the transition flying training in parallel with

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹² Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 89; *Gong-Gom Sa (I), 1949-1953*, pp. 119-121; *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa (The War History of Korea)*, p. 789. The number of the aircraft was decided as ten, because of the number of available fighter-experienced Korean pilots. *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 91; ROKAF, *H'an-Gook Jon-Jaeng Myon-D'am Rok Jae I Kwon* ('The Oral History on the Korean War, Vol. 1'), ROKAF Dung-Rok Bon-Ho (Registered Number) #708 (1965). ROKAF historical records. Headquarters ROKAF, Taejon, Korea. Hereafter cited as 'ROKAF Oral History (1) RN #708.'

¹³ Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, p. 89.

ground training until the arrival of ten F-51s. The urgency of the war permitted the ROKAF pilots only one sortie of thirty minutes in the F-51s before they personally ferried the planes on 2 July to Taegu Air Base (or 'K-2,' as it was soon designated).¹⁴ (Figure 3-2) With their previous experience in flying similar ferry flights across the Straits of Japan during the Second World War, Korean pilots flew their F-51s without American instructors' escort.¹⁵ Ground crews of 'Bout-One' moved to K-2 Base ahead of them on the eve of 30 June as a USAF provisional unit, and there reported to the local Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG).¹⁶

The ROKAF pilots flew their first combat missions in F-51 fighters on 3 July 1950, the day after their return from Japan. A flight of four F-51s, led by Major Park Hee-dong, destroyed an enemy POL (petroleum, oil, and lubricants) dump near See'hung, ten miles south of Seoul. Major Park's flight was soon followed in the afternoon by Colonel Lee Kun-suk's second flight of four F-51s and Park's third flight (his second mission of the day) of three F-51s. A total of eleven sorties were flown on the ROKAF's first combat mission.¹⁷ The rapid pace, however, to execute combat missions without consideration of the pilots' inexperience in new and heavier fighter aircraft led to an unfortunate early loss of a Second World War fighter ace, Colonel Lee Kun-suk.

¹⁴ Taegu is located about 150 miles south of Seoul. Soon after its active intervention, the US 5th Air Force began to introduce new designations of all airfields in the Korean peninsula by use of numerical numbers prefixed by the capital letter 'K'. This was done to minimise confusion occurring from the Korean names of airfields, which were phonetically spelled in an unstandardised manner, and also to make it easy for English-speaking American pilots to understand. Nowadays, some of them, such as air bases at Seoul, Taegu, Chinhae, Sachon, and Kangnung, are still more commonly referred to as K-16, K-2, K-10, K-4, and K-18 Bases respectively among Korean pilots. See Figure 3-2: K-Designation of ROK Air Bases.

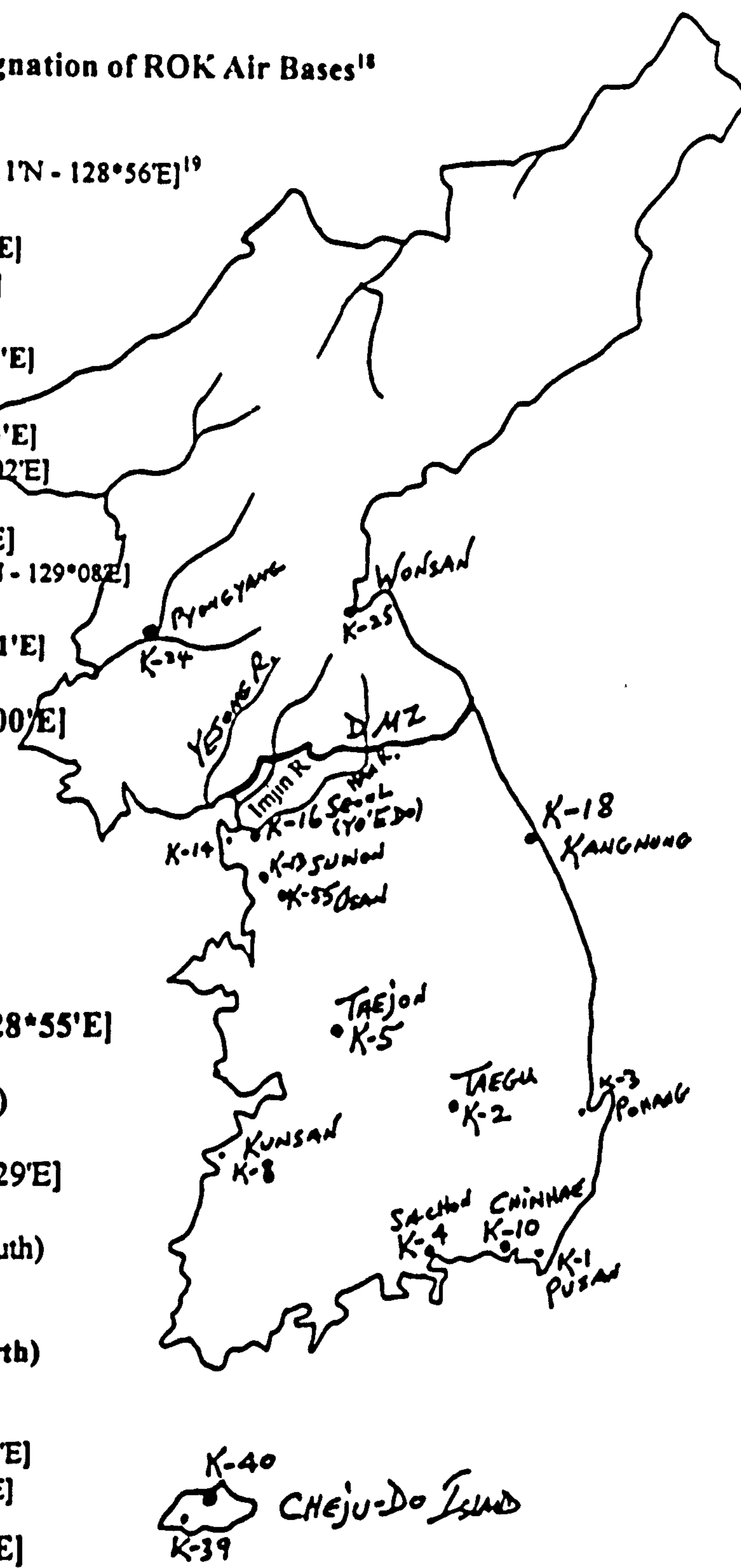
¹⁵ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 91-93. This was also verified by an interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Chang Sung Whan, 26 April 1955. Chang was one of the original ten Korean pilots who ferried the first ten F-51s.

¹⁶ Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, p. 89. For details of the USAF advisory establishment during the Korean War, see Section 4.1 in Ch. 4.

¹⁷ Two tanks, three vehicles, and one ammunition depot were destroyed, and 30 enemy soldiers were killed in Yong'dongpo, on the suburb south of Seoul. *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 96.

Figure 3-2: K-Designation of ROK Air Bases¹⁸

- K-1 : Kimhae (Pusan West) [35°11'N - 128°56'E]¹⁹
- K-2 : Taegu [35°53'N - 128°39'E]
- K-3 : Pohang [35°59'N - 129°25'E]
- K-4 : Sachon [35°05'N - 128°04'E]
- K-5 : Taejon [36°20'N - 127°23'E]
- K-6 : PyongTaek [36°57'N - 127°02'E]
- K-8 : Kunsan [35°54'N - 126°37'E]
- K-9 : Su-young (Pusan East) [35°09'N - 129°08'E]
- K-10: Chinhae [35°08'N - 128°41'E]
- K-13: Suwon [37°15'N - 127°00'E]
- K-14: Kimpo (Seoul West) [37°33'N - 126°48'E]
- K-16: Yo'E Do (Seoul East) [37°31'N - 126°55'E]
- K-18: Kangnung [37°45'N - 128°55'E]
- K-24: Mirim (Pyongyang East) [39°01'N - 125°50'E]
- K-25: Wonsan [39°10'N - 127°29'E]
- K-39: Mosulpo (Cheju Island South) [33°12'N - 126°17'E]
- K-40: Cheju-Si (Cheju Island North) [33°30'N - 126°31'E]
- K-46: Hoeng'song [37°26'N - 127°58'E]
- K-47: Chunchon [37°52'N - 127°43'E]
- K-55: Osan [37°13'N - 127°02'E]



¹⁸ General Order No. 320, 'Subj: Designation of Airfields, dated 1 May 1951. 'SAF History, 1 January 1951 - 30 June 1951,' ms., Vol. 3, pp. 205-206. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1951, v. 3. AFTRA.
¹⁹ Legend: []: location; °: degree; ': minute.

Taking off from Taegu K-2 Base at 11:00 am on 4 July, two days after their return from Japan, Colonel Lee's flight of four F-51s spotted an enemy convoy led by twenty enemy tanks advancing south toward Anyang, fifteen miles south of Seoul. Shortly after Lee attempted a split-S diving attack, he was hit by enemy ground fire, and his plane crashed into an enemy tank. His death was the first F-51 casualty of the ROK Air Force during the Korean War.²⁰ There is an argument over the cause of Colonel Lee's crash. According to the testimony of a USAF pilot who flew *Mustangs* with ROKAF pilots during the war, Colonel Lee, a Second World War ace who flew with the Japanese and shot down twenty American planes, was extremely confident as a pilot, feeling that he could handle anything that flew. He was rather dubious about the prospect of learning anything new from Americans.

This was a double mistake, for the Zero's maneuverability permitted it to make a letter S - a flipover onto its back during a dive for a quicker pullout - at altitudes as low as 1,400 feet. Heavier [and faster than the Japanese Zero fighter he flew], the F-51 needed to be at least at 2,000 feet to describe such a tight arc. Trying this tactic now, Colonel Lee dived into the ground and was killed.²¹

Colonel Lee probably 'forgot he [was] not in Zero. He got absentminded, and he did a Zero dive. He was a little short and went right into the ground,' recollected Major General Earl E. Partridge, Commander of 5th Air Force.²²

²⁰ ROKAF Operational Order No.25. *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 96-97; *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-1953, p. 123.

²¹ Hess, *Battle Hymn*, p. 84. Colonel Frank E. Merritt, Executive Office of Major General Earl E. Partridge, Commander of 5th Air Force, opined also that Colonel Lee 'peeled off at 1,500 feet on the [KPA] tank, but he went in with the tank.' U.S. Air Force Oral History Program: K239.0512-1112: Colonel Frank E. Merritt, 8 December 1977, p. 31. U. S. Air Force historical records, K239.0512-112, 77/12/08. Hereafter cited as 'Colonel Merritt's Oral History.'

²² U.S. Air Force Oral History Program: K239.0512-729: General Earl E. Partridge, 23-25 April 1974, p. 577. U.S. Air Force historical records, K239.0512-729, 74/4/25. US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as 'General Partridge's Oral History.'

The day following Colonel Lee's crash, President Rhee invited all surviving nine Korean *Mustang* pilots to his temporary office in downtown Taegu, consoling them over the loss of Colonel Lee, and recognising their valuable role in the ROKAF. Despite their previous fighter experience during the Second World War, Korean pilots were still inexperienced in their new heavy American fighters. Deeply concerned with the safety of his young and immature fighter pilots, Rhee advised them to be patient and leave combat missions with American pilots for the time being, until their flying skill with the heavier *Mustang* fighters reached a sufficient level so that they could carry out their missions safely.²³

The South Korean Air Force leaders suggested a compromise wherein General Kim proposed to his American adviser, Major Hess, that they conduct ROK-US combined combat missions, led by American flight leaders, because there were no qualified Korean flight leaders in F-51 fighter aircraft. Major Hess responded that because of international law, it would be difficult for Americans to be over enemy lines flying planes marked with the ROK symbols, but Major Hess was sympathetic. He tried to be cooperative by stating that he would willingly be prepared to do so if permitted by the United States' higher authorities.²⁴

As the situation was urgent, the ROKAF pilots continued to conduct combat missions by themselves in those initial days, until ROKAF-USAF combined missions were arranged. During the period of 5-11 July, forty sorties of ROKAF F-51s were flown over Yong'tungpo, No'ryangjin, Suwon, Pyongtaek, Osan, Chon'an and Jo'chiwon areas.²⁵ In the meantime, the issue of the ROKAF-USAF combined combat missions was solved by an

²³ ROKAF, *Gong-Goon Myon-D'am Jip Jae 3 Kwon: Kang Ho-Ryoon Joon-Jang (The ROKAF Oral History Volume III: Brigadier General Kang Ho-ryoon)* (Seoul, Korea: ROKAF History Office, 1985), p. 100.

²⁴ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-1953*, p. 123; Hess, *Battle Hymn*, p. 85.

²⁵ Four supply depots and nine vehicles were destroyed, and 140 enemy troops were killed. *H'ung-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 98.

agreement between Major General Earl E. Partridge, Commanding General of the US 5th Air Force, and General Kim, when the former visited Taegu Base (K-2) on 13 July 1950.²⁶

On 16 July, a flight of four *Mustangs*, with Major Hess leading three ROKAF pilots, was launched to support friendly ground troops in the Sung'whan area, some sixty miles south of Seoul. This was the peak of the monsoon season on the southern peninsula. Due to poor visibility and low ceiling over the target area, the first ROK-US combined combat mission had to return without attacking the enemy on the ground. Adverse weather limited combat sorties to an average of four a day in the period of 17-26 July.²⁷

One of the most serious problems encountered at the initial stage of combat was the lack of an operational coordination system between the mission fighter pilots and the ground troop commanders, who required urgent air strikes to repel overwhelming KPA attacks. As a Tactical Air Control System for the command and control of joint air-ground operations did not exist in the first week of hostilities, requests for air strikes were sent to the KMAG, which forwarded them to the Far East Command Headquarters (FEC). FEC, in turn, forwarded them to the Far East Air Force Headquarters (FEAF), which relayed them to 5th Air Force at Itazuke AFB, Japan. The average time for these requests to reach 5th AF from a field commander was over four hours. To overcome this delay, a Joint Operations Center (JOC) was formed by 5th AF on 3 July to control air-ground operations between a field army and a tactical air force. Here, ground requests for air strikes were made known, and approved requests were

²⁶ Interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Chang Sung-Whan. Chang was former ROKAF Chief of Staff (1962-64).

²⁷ From 3 July to 26 July, a total of 91 ROKAF F-51 sorties were flown, destroying 7 tanks, 17 vehicles, 18 ammunition depots and POLs, 9 enemy artillery positions and killing 300 enemy troops. *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 98-99.

implemented with mission orders to tactical air units. This improvised JOC and two Tactical Aircraft Control Parties (TACP) were flown from Japan to the Korean theatre in order to help request and supervise air strikes.²⁸ Each TACP consisted of one USAF fighter pilot, one radio operator and one radio-mounted jeep. These two TACPs were the only tactical air strike request networks between the ground units in the front-line and the USAF fighter and bomber forces in Japan.

A JOC without a means of communication to the air and ground units was helpless; thus it was also necessary to establish a Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) without delay. The TACC is the focal point for aircraft control and warning activities. Through it, the tactical air force commander controls all activities of his air force, such as air warning and counter air operations (air superiority), air interdiction, close air support (CAS), tactical airlift, and combat rescue operations. For the first three to four weeks before the TACC was formed on 14 July, and colocated with the JOC at Taegu on 19 July,²⁹ joint air-ground operations were random. Most air strikes for ground support in that disorganised period were 'haphazardly' accomplished by the ingenuity of mission pilots at the scene and the ground unit's action officers.³⁰ Whoever had quicker access to the ROKAF F-51 unit and made radio contact first with the mission fighter aircraft had priority.³¹ The nine ROKAF *Mustangs* were the *only* UNC combat aircraft based on the peninsula, until US 5th Air Force *Mustangs* from Itazuke, Japan commenced initial air strikes early on the morning of 10 July (sixteenth day of the invasion), and then landed at Taegu and replenished for several more missions during the day.³²

²⁸ *FEAF Report (2)*, p. 81.

²⁹ Enemy pressure forced the JOC to move back from Taejon to Taegu.

³⁰ The ground unit's action officers refer to the air liaison officer and GFACs dispatched to the ground unit as well as G-3Air/S-3Air ground operations officers.

³¹ Chang, *My Life as an Aviator*, pp. 23-24.

³² Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, p. 91.

At first the air strike requests for the friendly ground troops came directly from the unit in the field to the local KMAG attached to the ROKAF Flying Group. On several occasions Lt. General Walton H. Walker, Commander of US Eighth Army, who established his headquarters in downtown Taegu, came directly to the K-2 Base to request air strikes. Most requests for missions were informal. Major Hess, head of the KMAG's USAF detachment at Taegu K-2 Base, was quoted in an evaluation of the USAF effectiveness in the Korean campaign: 'I recall on one occasion individuals came out from KMAG in the middle of the night, about three o'clock in the morning, and they requested an air strike verbally just by sticking their heads in the tent and requesting an air strike over a city at a certain time and then they disappeared in the night.'³³

The pre-war policy of de-emphasising airpower within the ROK internal security structure resulted in a paucity of usable airfields and support facilities.³⁴ (Figure 3-3) This was especially true regarding jet aircraft, which would demand harder and longer paved runways. Early in July Taegu K-2 Base alone was barely ready for immediate occupancy for F-51 fighter operations, but it had little to offer: a sod-and-gravel runway which was full of pot holes, two concrete buildings, and a wooden mess hall built by the Japanese. Structures which existed in unusable conditions required extensive improvements to meet operational requirements, discouraging the early deployment of USAF forces to the peninsula.³⁵ The newly organised USAF 51st Fighter Squadron (Provisional) of the 5th Air Force flew its first combat missions on 15 July, upon its activation at Taegu Air Base on 10 July.³⁶

³³ 'Barcus Report, bk. 3,' pp. 94-120. K168.041-1, 25 Jun-Dec 1950. AFHRA.

³⁴ *FEAF Report (I)*, p. 15.

³⁵ The fall of Kimpo and Seoul airfields into the KPA's hands left only Taegu airfield available for limited operations of propeller-driven fighters, due to its condition as the best among other unpaved clay runways. See 'South Korean Airfield Status,' in *FEAF Report (I)*, p. 15.

³⁶ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 117.

Figure 3-3: South Korean Airfield Status³⁷

Airfield	Runway Data	Condition (As of 25 June 1950)	Facilities	Construction (Jul'50-Jul' 53)
Kimpo (K-14)	6200 x 150' Asph. ³⁸ 3600 x 150' Conc. ³⁹	Good	Municipal Airport POL, hangars, etc.	8200' runway Add facilities
Seoul- Yo-E 'Do (K-16)	5700 x 100' Asph.	Good	Municipal Airport	7000' runway Add facilities
Suwon (K-13)	5200 x 200' Conc.	Fair	ROKAF Det. ⁴⁰	9000' runway Add facilities
Taegu (K-2)	4800 x 150' Clay	Fair	ROKAF Det.	9000' runway
Kwangju (K-7)	3300 x 150' Grav. ⁴¹	Poor	ROKAF Det.	Add facilities
Pusan W. (K-1)	4850 x 150' Conc.	Poor	None	8000' runway Add facilities
Kunsan (K-8)	2750 x 300' Sod	Poor	ROKAF Det.	8000' runway Add facilities
Pohang (K-3)	4500 x 150' Conc.	Poor	None	8000' runway Add facilities

As the USAF-led air campaign gradually escalated, the tactical air control system had to be reinforced correspondingly. By the end of July, the 5th Air Force fielded ten TACPs to support the frontal ground units. The difficulty in controlling close air support (CAS) aircraft lay in finding the exact target. The front was so fluid and much of the terrain so mountainous that forward controllers stationed on the front line could not see the centre of

³⁷ FEAF Report (I), p. 15.

³⁸ Asphalt

³⁹ Concrete

⁴⁰ Detachment

⁴¹ Gravel

enemy attack or defence.⁴² In response to the two problems - inadequate time in the combat zone, by USAF F-80s flying from Japan, and an inability to positively identify targets - the USAF 5th Air Force reinforced the tactical air control system by introducing fifty two-seat, slow speed T-6s, which were formed into a group-level tactical unit in August 1950 as the USAF 6147th Tactical Air Control Group.⁴³ They were known throughout the war as 'Mosquitos,' which was a radio call sign used to identify T-6 TACs. The 6147th TAC Group had a third squadron, which was assigned the FAC (Forward Air Controller) function of marking targets on the ground and directing fighters' attacks on them. Upon the introduction of the 'Mosquitos,' the mission success rate of the close air support drastically improved. In the following months they became the chief tactical control mechanism and a major source of day-by-day intelligence (visual airborne reconnaissance) for the UN command. Flying every day as weather permitted, 'Mosquitos' developed in combat a new 'speedier' (than the previous L-5s) tactical weapon, the airborne forward air controller (AFAC), which was charged to control air strikes and aerial reconnaissance from the air, in close coordination with the FAC on the ground (GFAC).⁴⁴

Soon after the formation of the USAF 51st Fighter Squadron, followed by the establishment of the 5th Air Force Advon (Advanced Command Post) at Taegu on 24 July, the ROKAF fighter unit had to vacate K-2 Base by 29 July to provide space for the incoming USAF forces. In the meantime Major Hess, his American instructor-pilots/advisers and support personnel of 'Bout One' were approved to form USAF 6146th Air Base Squadron (ABS) on 31 July. As the Commanding Officer of the 6146th

⁴² J. Farmer and M. J. Strumwasser, *The Evolution of the Airborne Forward Air Controller: An Analysis of Mosquito Operations in Korea* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1967), p. 19. Hereafter cited as *Mosquito Operations*.

⁴³ 'FEAF Report (2),' p. 81.

⁴⁴ Initially the airborne forward air controller (AFAC) was referred to as the tactical air coordinator (TAC) during the Korean War. Strumwasser, *Mosquito Operations*, pp. 19-20.

ABS, Major Hess was tasked to train ROKAF combat pilots and provide the ROKAF with such logistic support as aircraft maintenance, armament, and supply as well as acquisition and maintenance of emergency airfields.⁴⁵ As these functions suggest, Major Hess was given the task of literally fulfilling the role of 'American Commanding Officer' of the ROK Air Force flying unit under the guise of 'adviser.' The reason for this arrangement was that the ROKAF could not function as an independent air force organisation due to its lack of trained support personnel and experienced leadership above the flight leader level or the rank of captain. In a practical sense, the ROKAF had to depend totally (planning, programming, budgeting, acquisition, training, etc) on the American Air Force (5th Air Force).

By the end of July the front line was far below Taejon, denying use of Kunsan (K-8) and Kwangju (K-7) airfields. There was only one abandoned airstrip (K-10) available at Chinhae, twenty miles west of Pusan, which had been built to support the former Japanese naval units in Chinhae naval port station. Its runway was too short and the facilities were in need of repair. The F-51s needed at least a 3,200 foot runway for their operations, and it took two weeks to extend the runway from 2,750 feet to 3,500 feet. In the meantime, ROKAF combat missions were temporarily suspended for additional combat training. The combination of Colonel Lee's crash on 4 July and the operational requirement of USAF's fighter deployment to Taegu Air Base (AB) increased the ROKAF's need for additional combat reinforcement training.⁴⁶

At Chinhae AB during the first two weeks of August, the ROKAF F-51 pilots underwent intensive combat training, such as short field takeoffs and landings, instrument and navigation flights, and ground attack gunnery

⁴⁵ In May 1951, the 6146th ABS was officially recognised as the existing KMAG's USAF Korean Advisory Detachment. *Hwang-Gong Jun-Su*, pp. 118-119.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116; W. M. Cleveland, *Mosquitos in Korea* (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall, 1991), pp. 183-184.

missions. Afterwards, they practiced through actual combat missions, escorted by their American instructor-pilots/advisers. At the time the only weapon which could be carried by F-51 fighters to destroy KPA's T-34 tanks was the 5-inch high-velocity aerial rocket (HIVAR). But ROKAF pilots did not have them. Initially South Korean pilots were allowed only machine guns and bombs due to their lack of higher flying skill with that specific *Mustang* aircraft. A few months later Korean pilots finally began to use rockets and napalm - jellied gasoline incendiary, the so-called 'fire bomb' - in actual combat missions, supervised by their escorting American instructors, because the lack of available gunnery ranges and the turmoil of the conflict precluded separate training. Their high standard of flying proficiency and previous experience, averaging over 1,000 hours each in Japanese or Chinese fighters, enabled ROKAF pilots to respond to the crisis without excessive practice.

Meanwhile Taegu K-2 Base had been expanded during ROKAF's absence and could now accommodate the ROKAF planes. They were redeployed to Taegu on 15 September when the Inchon landing began. It was not until September 21 that ROKAF launched a flight of four *Mustangs*, armed with rockets, to attack enemy convoy trains entering the tunnel near Yong'chon, twenty miles northeast of Taegu. This was the first time the ROKAF planes were launched into combat with bombs and rockets. The USAF joined the attack with four F-80 jet fighters and finished the destruction of the trains.⁴⁷ This mission demonstrated the combat proficiency of the ROKAF, and they continued to fly combat missions armed with high explosive rockets and machine guns in support of friendly ground troops around the Pusan perimeter.

⁴⁷ *Gong-Gom Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 132.

3.2. Advance to Pyongyang Airfield and Retreat to Cheju Island (24 September 1950 - 19 June 1951)

With high morale, boosted by the UNC's successful Inchon landing on 15 September 1950, the ROK Marine's 2nd Battalion crossed the Han River and advanced to downtown Seoul on 19 September 1950 with the US 1st Marine Division. Upon their return to Seoul Yo'E Do Air Base (K-16) on 21 September, ROKAF *Mustang* pilots prepared themselves for combat missions. Eight newly qualified pilots increased the number of the ROKAF's F-51 combat pilots to seventeen.⁴⁸ The figure might look meagre, but it represented an eighty percent increase of South Korean *Mustang* fighter pilots in less than three months.

This increase demonstrated how young Korean pilots were eager to learn and join the combat as quickly as possible. The addition was possible only because ROKAF leaders had continued to keep their pilots with earlier Japanese or Chinese experience proficient in flying T-6s prior to the start of the hostilities. Although the ROKAF leaders failed to acquire fighter aircraft, they recognised the necessity of maintaining high flying proficiency through the T-6. This resultant flying proficiency was sufficient to allow smooth and early transition to the F-51 fighter aircraft. Had the ROKAF not proven its determination to learn and fight, its very existence might have been threatened at the early stages of the war, because from America's standpoint, an inept South Korean Air Force would be a military liability. Therefore, American advisers served as flight leaders on nearly half of ROKAF combat missions from 23 September to 13 October 1950. Of the 74 sorties flown from Seoul Yo'E Do (K-16) Air Base, 34 were led by American advisers.⁴⁹ This pattern was to be repeated again by the Americans during the Vietnam

⁴⁸ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 135.

⁴⁹ *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*, p. 825; *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 149.

War, when USAF pilots flew in aircraft with Vietnamese Air Force markings.⁵⁰

Noteworthy was the ROKAF's bombing mission in North Korea from Seoul Air Base. On 13 October 1950, a ROK-US combined flight of four F-51s armed with four 500-pound bombs and four 5 inch rockets per plane, led by an American adviser as its flight leader, attacked the KPA's General Headquarters building on the outskirts of Pyongyang. The building itself was not of significant military value, but the air strike against Kim Il Sung's military command post by the ROK F-51 fighters, clearly painted with the *Tae-Geuk* national symbol and piloted by South Korean pilots, had a positive effect on ROKAF morale.

As the front line moved north across the 38th Parallel, Kimpo (K-14) and Seoul (K-16) Bases became overcrowded with incoming American planes, which again forced the ROKAF to seek another air base to house itself. Although the ROKAF was the host nation's military organisation and should have been entitled to use its own country's air bases with priority, the reality did not permit it. Instead, the ROKAF gave higher priority to whatever American military requirements demanded. The ROKAF leadership recognised this reality and tried to be cooperative with the conduct of air operations under the operational control of the UNC/FEAF (5th Air Force).⁵¹ The ROKAF leaders, young and less experienced, deferred to their American counterparts in the spirit of positive cooperation. They

⁵⁰ Robert Frank Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia: The Advisory Years to 1965* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, 1981), pp. 122, 267.

⁵¹ Ltr, Rhee to MacArthur, 14 Jul 54, concerning assignment of command authority over all ROK forces to UNC during the Korean War. Il-Yon Bon-Ilo 226 Boon-Ryoo Bon-Ilo 741.14 Jo-624-Goon. ROK government historical records. ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Oe-Kyo Moon-So Chol Mok-Rok (Jae 1 Gong-Kae Ja-Ryo) (A Catalogue of Diplomatic Documents: Declassified Volume 1)* (Seoul, Korea: ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1994), p. 99. Hereafter cited as ROK MFA 226:741.14 Jo-624-Goon. See also *H'un-Gook Jon-Su*, p. 262. See also Sec. 7.3. The Issue of Returning Operational Control to the ROK in Ch. 7 of this study.

were aware that their survival and growth were dependent on American advisers, who in actuality played *de facto* commanders' roles.

When ROK Army 1st Division captured Pyongyang on 19 October 1950, its airfield in the Mirim area on the eastern suburb became available to the ROKAF. The redeployment of the ROKAF Flying Group to Pyongyang-Mirim airfield (K-24) was completed on 30 October. The runway was intact and in excellent condition, as were other facilities. A usable aircraft hangar, which had served the former Imperial Japanese Army Aviation Corps as an aircraft maintenance depot, was available. NKAF's evacuation from Pyongyang was made in such haste that warehouses still remained full of aircraft spare parts, military provisions and war supplies.⁵²

UN/US intelligence reports of increased night time enemy movement demanded the shift of USAF combat missions from day to night. The decreased demand of day time air strike requests from the UNC ground forces and diversion of UN air forces' efforts to night time operations deprived the ROKAF *Mustang* pilots of combat missions, and confined them to limited combat orientation unit training. Worried about flight safety, the ROKAF leadership allowed Korean pilots only non-tactical navigation training at night, because of the high risk of night time tactical air-to-ground attack missions. As winter approached, and daylight time became shorter, the need for night flying skills of Korean pilots increased. (When Korean pilots took off for combat missions late in the afternoon, their return to base was usually after dark in winter.) Although they were not allowed to fly night time combat missions, their non-tactical sorties (navigation and touch-and-go landings) at night during this respite helped maintain their flying proficiency.

ROKAF T-6 pilots also flew combat support missions as airborne tactical air co-ordinators to help their F-51 pilots identify targets. Taking

⁵² *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-53, p. 151.

advantage of the extra seat, T-6 pilots found targets on the ground through co-ordination with ROK Army flight observers in their back seats. Their exposure to enemy ground fire was as great as those of their F-51 counterparts. In many cases their missions proved to be more dangerous, because of the T-6's slower speed and longer exposure over target areas. ROKAF T-6 pilots flew 334 sorties of airborne tactical air coordinator and reconnaissance missions, and also flew 364 sorties of liaison and leaflet-dropping missions from the start of hostilities until the massive Chinese intervention in November 1950. The ROKAF's L-type aircraft also flew to support liaison and artillery observation missions of the frontal ROK Army Corps from its formation as ROKAF Air Reconnaissance Squadron on 16 October, headed by Lt.Colonel Oh Jom-suk. They flew a total of 3,600 sorties until their withdrawal late in May 1951.⁵³

3.2.1. ROKAF's Retreat to Cheju Island and Regrouping

The active intervention of Chinese Communist Forces (CCP) forced the ROKAF to evacuate Pyongyang airfield.⁵⁴ The ROKAF Flying Group was withdrawn to Taejon airstrip (K-5) on 30 November 1950.⁵⁵ Due to the rapid Chinese advance of the front line and limited facilities at K-5, the ROKAF had to move its fighters to Cheju Island airstrip (K-40), leaving only one detachment of twenty non-flying personnel, which soon formed *Baek-Goo Boo-Dae* (the White Gull Unit) headed by Lt.Col. Kim Shin.⁵⁶ Taejon airstrip was not suitable for operating F-51 fighters due to the insufficient

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153; *H'an-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 133.

⁵⁴ Evacuation from Pyongyang due to the Chinese intervention was a preemptive surprise to ROKAF leaders, who strongly believed that UNC/US military forces, in particular superior American airpower, could cope with any threat from China, whose military forces were considered basically primitive guerrilla forces and ill-equipped in terms of firepower compared to the advanced American forces. Interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, 28 September 1995.

⁵⁵ ROKAF Operational Order No. 55, dated 14 November 1950. *H'an-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 147.

⁵⁶ The 'White Gull Unit' was tasked originally to provide air base support at Taejon AB. After its redeployment to Seoul AB on March 1951, the unit was augmented by *Mustang* fighters and pilots. It then became a flying unit. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-150, 154-158, 243.

length of its runway, which was barely 3,500 feet long. But it would be of great importance as a forward operating base (FOB) in the vicinity of the front line. Recognising the necessity of maintaining Taejon airstrip as a FOB, USAF 5th Air Force instructed Lt.Col. Hess to keep the airstrip 'alive.' Lt.Colonel Hess' 6146th Air Base Squadron became the 'host,' with Lt.Col. Kim's White Gull Unit as a 'tenant,' after the ROKAF's mainstay of F-51 fighters left for Cheju Island on 20 December 1950. The Taejon base became the FOB for the ROKAF in support of USAF tactical airlift operations at the front lines.⁵⁷

In the meantime, President Rhee, in a letter to Ambassador Muccio on 5 March 1951, re-emphasised his hopes that the additional aircraft he had previously requested in his letter of 25 October 1950 - one hundred F-51s, sixty T-6s, and fifteen C-47s - would be made available to the ROK Air Force. He also requested training of Korean Air Force personnel both in Japan and the United States. Muccio explained that such allocations of aircraft were being considered and implied that a delay could be expected since allocations would require integration with overall strategic planning.⁵⁸ Regarding the training of ROK Air Force personnel, a programme was initiated during April and May 1951 for the ground training of ROK pilots in Japan.⁵⁹ On 11 April 1951, 5th Air Force notified the ROKAF of the newly approved ROKAF fighter UAE (Unit Authorized Equipment) from ten to twenty F-51 aircraft.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 154. Hess was promoted to Lt. Colonel on 1 September 1950. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵⁸ US Air Force, 'History of the Fifth Air Force, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951,' Volume 3, p. 168. Headquarters, Fifth Air Force, APO 970, Air Force historical records, K-730.01, Vol. III, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1951, US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as '5AF History, Jul-Dec 1951,' *ms.*, v. 3. AFHRA.

⁵⁹ Twenty pilots received the instrument flying simulator training at Johnson AFB in Japan in two classes. Sixteen ROKAF senior officers, mostly above the rank of Lt. Colonel, attended USAF Air Command and Staff College in the United States during the Korean War. *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 271.

⁶⁰ '5AF History, Jul-Dec 1951,' *ms.*, v. 3, p. 168. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA; *H'an-Gook Jon-Sa*, p. 826.

As the fighter strength increased, the ROKAF Flying Group at Cheju Island was regrouped into two flying units in April 1951 - 11th Fighter Squadron (FS) and 12th Fighter Training Squadron (FTS) - as well as one maintenance squadron and one supply squadron. Equipped with twenty F-51s, the ROKAF Flying Group now emerged as an independent operating fighter unit. The 11th FS was tasked to conduct combat reinforcement training for the already qualified F-51 fighter pilots, whereas the 12th FTS was to train new student pilots for their combat mission qualification in F-51s. The 12th FTS was augmented by five USAF instructor-pilots/advisers. During the period of 20 December 1950 through 30 June 1951, twenty-four newly qualified ROKAF F-51 fighter pilots were trained.⁶¹ A substantial amount of hours of their previous flying experience in Japanese airplanes, T-6s and L-type aircraft made it possible for those experienced student pilots to undertake only eight hours of transition training before they became qualified in F-51s: five hours of air work, one hour of combat formation flight, and two hours of air-to-ground gunnery.

3.2.2. White Gull Fighter Squadron at Seoul K-16 Base

As the front lines became stabilised and the combat situation started improving early in March 1951, Taejon AB became busy as a FOB for USAF transport forces, airlifting war supplies to the front. The increased volume of US airlift forces soon crowded Taejon, again forcing the ROKAF to relocate its White Gull Unit. Soon after Seoul was recaptured on 15 March 1951 by UN forces, the White Gull Unit, together with USAF 6146th Air Base Squadron moved to Seoul AB. The ROKAF's White Gull Unit was immediately augmented on 31 March by six F-51s and three ROKAF pilots, who had just finished their combat qualification training at 12th FTS on

⁶¹ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 165.

Cheju Island. At the same time, all American instructor-pilots at 12th FTS were also recalled to reinforce the White Gull Unit at Seoul AB, leaving teaching of gunnery training to Korean instructors.⁶²

On 1 April 1951, the ROKAF 101st Base Support Group was established at Seoul AB to support newly arrived ROKAF fighters. Escorted by four American instructors, the South Korean pilots resumed ROKAF's combat missions on 3 April in the Western and Central front lines of E-chon, Haeju, Kaesong, Sibyon-ri, and Kumwha areas. The entire 11th FS was moved from Cheju AB to Seoul AB on 19 April 1951, and absorbed the White Gull Unit. 11th Fighter Squadron then became known as the White Gull Squadron.⁶³

On 1 May 1951, White Gull Squadron was again augmented by two F-51s and four pilots, two Korean and two American. The squadron's strength at Seoul AB grew to a total of eight F-51s and fifteen pilots, including six American instructors. They continued their combat missions in May over Sariwon, Yon'ahn and Kaesong areas, responding to the diversion of the Chinese communist forces' offensive from the eastern front to the western. American instructors/advisers gave high credit to their Korean student pilots for their courageous and positive effort: 'The Korean pilots accepted their responsibility in a manner that left very little doubt as to their courage and willingness to fight the common enemy,' noted the US 5th Air Force history.⁶⁴ During May Lt.Col. Hess completed his 250th combat mission while Major George N. Metcalf and 1st Lt. James J. Gillespie flew their 100th combat missions respectively. General Kim Chung-Yul paid the American instructors/advisers of the 6146th Squadron a great tribute when

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

⁶⁴ '5AF History, Jan-Jun 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 2, p. 244. K-730.01 Jan-Dec 1951, v. 2. AFHRA.

he presented Lt.Colonel Hess and his men with the ROK Presidential Unit Citation.⁶⁵

In the meantime, the ROKAF pilots were at last allowed to use napalm for the first time in their combat missions in May 1951. To drop napalm, pilots were required to fly straight and steady (non-manoeuvring) at very low altitude - normally at treetop level - to make an accurate delivery against enemy targets. Consequently they were exposed to enemy ground-fire for longer periods. Napalm was used against troops, especially gunners in enemy anti-aircraft (AAA) gun positions. The fire bombs were particularly demoralising to North Korean foot soldiers. One of the USAF *Mustang* pilots commented upon return from a napalm attack mission: 'The enemy didn't seem to mind being blown up or shot. However, as soon as we would start dropping the napalm in their vicinity they would immediately scatter and break any forward movement.'⁶⁶ Napalm was also useful against tanks. The Russian-built tanks had a good bit of rubber in their treads and even a near miss with napalm would usually ignite and destroy the armoured tank.⁶⁷ The US Army on the Korean front wanted all UNC/USAF jet fighter-bombers capable of carrying napalm, because American troops were impressed with its tremendous effects.⁶⁸ A US Department of Defense battle damage survey during the Korean War reveals that napalm was assessed 'as the most effective air weapon against tanks.'⁶⁹ Fifty-seven percent of the total KPA tanks killed in the first five months of the Korean War was attributed to the napalm air attack.⁷⁰ Despite its combat effectiveness, the use of

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 244, 246.

⁶⁶ Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁷ Barcus Bd. Rpt., appen., bk. 3, pp. 106-107, K168 041-1. AFHRA.

⁶⁸ Allen R. Millet, 'Korea, 1950-1953,' in Benjamin Franklin Cooling (ed), *Case Studies in the Development of Close Air Support* (Washington, DC: Office of US Air Force History, 1990), p. 362. For Millet's full account, see *Ibid.*, pp. 345-410.

⁶⁹ Edmund Dews and Felix Kozaczka, *Air Interdiction: Lessons from Past Campaigns*. A RAND Note prepared for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense/Program Analysis and Evaluation. (Santa Monica, CA: 1981), p. 59; Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, pp. 95, 357-358.

⁷⁰ Dews and Kozaczka, *Air Interdiction*, p. 60.

napalm, 'a cruel form of warfare affecting the civilian populations,' drew repercussions from American allies, particularly Great Britain.⁷¹ UNC/USAF bombing policy, however, permitted employment of napalm weapons against military targets in the crowded areas, because the KPA often attempted to conceal its military supply storage in the inhabited areas in an attempt to discourage UNC air strikes.⁷²

3.3. Combat Pilot Training at Sachon Air Base (K-4) (20 June - 27 September 1951)

As the front lines began to stagnate along the 38th Parallel after the CCF's spring offensive failed, and available resources of US and UN airpower appeared to increase, the air strike requests from the ROK frontal ground forces to the ROKAF were reduced. Therefore, ROK Air Force Chief of Staff Major General Kim Chung-Yul proposed to his American advisers to increase pilot training for the sake of long-term enhancement of ROKAF combat readiness.⁷³ When General Kim's attempt to persuade his American advisers to agree to his proposal for the temporary respite of ROKAF combat missions failed, he wrote directly to General Partridge, an official memorandum entitled 'A Proposal on the ROKAF Force Improvement,' unilaterally notifying the USAF that 'in order to prepare ROKAF for its self-reliant execution of combat missions in the future, the South Korean Air Force will temporarily suspend ROK-US combined combat missions from 31 May 1951.'⁷⁴

⁷¹ Michael L. Dockrill, 'The Foreign Office, Anglo-American Relations and the Korean Truce Negotiations July 1951-July 1953,' in James Cotton and Ian Neary (eds), *The Korean War in History* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989), p. 108.

⁷² As most of the worthwhile targets in North Korea were destroyed by the fall of 1952, the napalm attacks became infrequent during the last year of the war. *Ibid.*

⁷³ Kim was promoted to Major General on 1 October 1950. Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 491; 'ROKAF Oral History (1) RN #708.'

⁷⁴ *H'ang-Gang Jun-Su*, p. 166, *Gang-Gwan Su (I)*, 1949-53, p. 173. See also ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND), *H'an-Gook Jun-Jaeng Su Jue 6 Kwon (The History of the Korean War*,

General Kim's unilateral action ran the risk of causing an adverse effect on USAF-ROKAF wartime cooperation, but as the commander of the Korean Air Force, the responsibility of providing his pilots with additional training was of higher priority once the front line activities decreased. In the event, no serious backlash ensued and thus, upon the landing of White Gull Squadron's last flight of *Mustangs* at 3:35 pm on 30 May 1951, the ROKAF was temporarily relieved of combat operations, in order to facilitate reorganisation and training to produce more fighter pilots. In the last ten months since its acquisition of ten F-51s on 2 July 1950, the ROKAF had flown a total of 519 combat sorties, including 205 sorties flown by American instructors. Not until 11 October 1951 was the ROK Air Force again placed on combat status.⁷⁵

Sachon Air Base (K-4) was available as a suitable airfield for the training of Korean pilots because of its location at the southern tip of the peninsula, remote from combat operations on the front lines. Other bases in South Korea were already in heavy use by USAF forces. Sachon was also the only airfield with a sufficient length of runway for F-51 operations. From 20-24 June 1951, all ROKAF units scattered in Seoul, Taegu, and Cheju Island, converged into Sachon AB in accordance with ROKAF directives.⁷⁶ The combat and training elements of the ROK Air Force were consolidated at Sachon AB, where ground and flying training were conducted with the assistance of the USAF 6146th Air Base Squadron. The squadron provided technical equipment not authorised for direct issue to the ROK Air Force. Fifth Air Force continued to permit the 6146th ABS to issue supplies and

Volume 17.) (Seoul, Korea: Military History Compilation Committee/MND, 1972), p. 898. This was produced in 8 volumes for internal dissemination only as an in-house document, not for public sale.

⁷⁵ *Gong-Gom Sa (I), 1949-53*, pp. 174, 191.

⁷⁶ Operational Order No.31: 11th FS (White Gull Squadron) and 101st Base Support Group on 20 June, 12th FTS and ROKAF Flying Group and its subordinate supporting squadrons on 22 June, and Air Reconnaissance Squadron on 24 June. *Gong-Gom Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 173; 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 175. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 1. AFHRA.

equipment to the South Korean Air Force.⁷⁷

After consolidating all of its scattered units at Sachon, the ROKAF began to reorganise its flying units. The Flying Group was restructured upwards into a wing to satisfy increased combat demand and was redesignated as the ROKAF 1st Fighter Wing (FW) on 1 August 1951. Brigadier General Chang Duk-Chang, a former commercial transport pilot for the Japanese, became the wing commander. The 10th Fighter Group was activated as a subordinate unit of the 1st FW. Under General Chang's command, there were four separate groups: 10th Fighter Group, 30th Logistic Support Group, 101st Base Support Group, and 201 Medical Service Group.⁷⁸(Figure 3-4) In the meantime, 5th Air Force reconfirmed its approval of official authorisation of manpower and equipment: twenty F-51s, six T-6s, and twenty-one L-type planes. This reconfirmation provided the 6146th Air Base Squadron with legal authority and guidelines for its logistic support to the ROKAF.⁷⁹ At the end of July, a planned and directed training programme was put into effect under the supervision of American instructors of the 6146th ABS, whose mission was to train ROK personnel and provide maintenance to ROKAF airplanes. Until that time, training had been partially coordinated between the ROK Air Force and American advisers with moderate emphasis on transition, formation and ground gunnery. Under the new plan the training was completed in different phases similar to USAF policies.

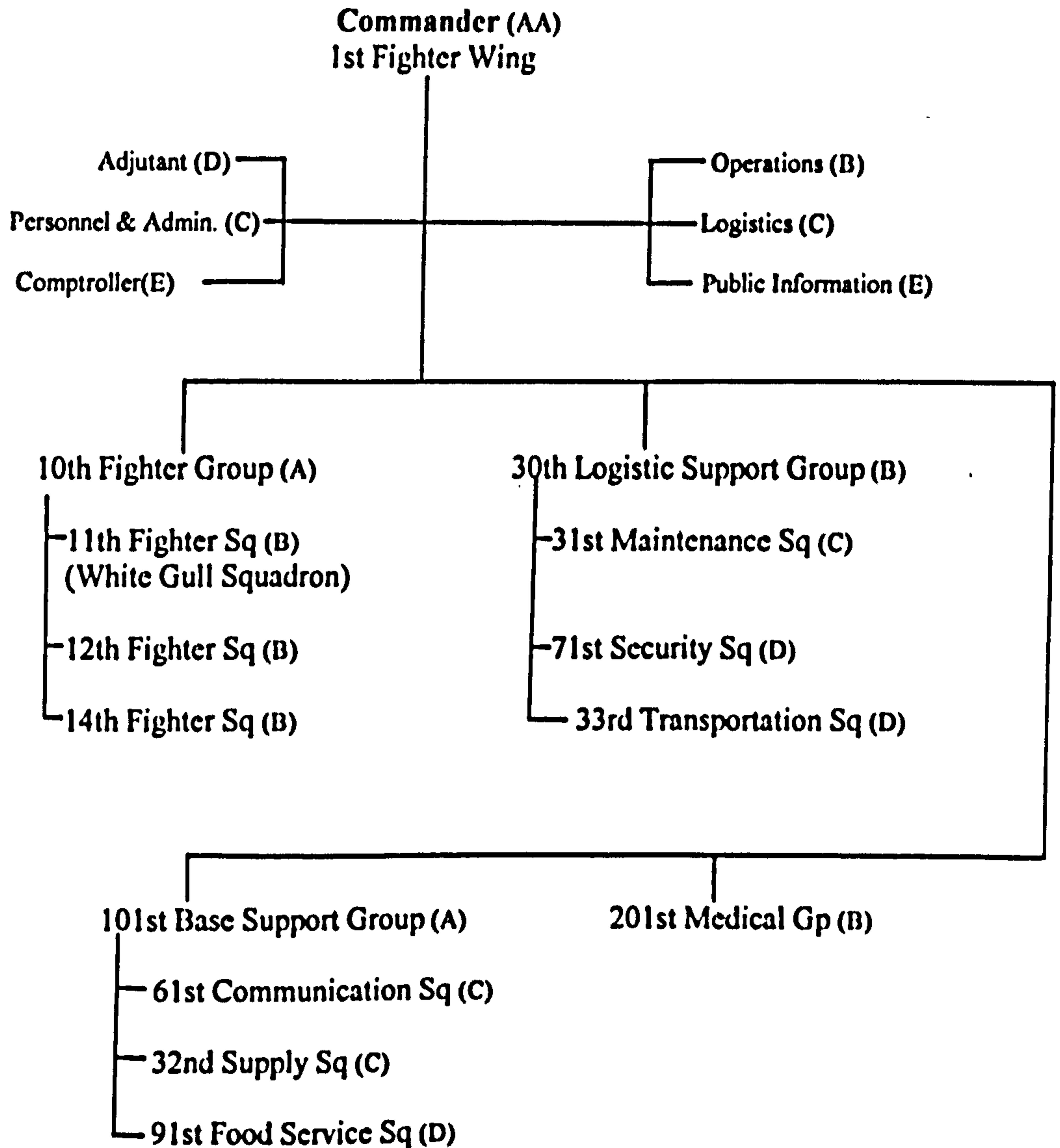
Each phase consisted of a specific number of hours which each Korean pilot was required to complete before being recognised as

⁷⁷ 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 175. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 1. AFHRA.

⁷⁸ 2nd Reconnaissance Group was formed at Sachong AB, which was operating L-4/5 and T-6 aircraft under the direct command of ROKAF headquarters. *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 167-168; Cleveland, *Mosquitos in Korea*, p. 184.

⁷⁹ The authorisation was made as of 9 September 1951. Until then, the logistic support for the ROKAF F-51s was informally arranged by the USAF 6146th Air Base Squadron through its U.S. logistic channel. 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 175. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 1. AFHRA.

**Figure 3-4: Organisation of the ROKAF 1st Fighter Wing
(1 August 1951)**



Legend: AA: Brigadier General; A: Colonel; B: Lt. Colonel; C: Major; D: Captain; E: 1st Lieutenant; Admin: Administration; Gp: Group; Sq: Squadron.

Source: *Gong-Gwon Sa Jae I Jip, 1949-53.6 (The History of the ROK Air Force, Volume I, 1949-June 1953)* (Seoul, Korea: ROK Air Force History Office, 1991), p. 174.
81st Civil Engineering Sq (C)

adequately trained to fly a F-51. The ROKAF pilots were classified into three categories, based on their individual flying proficiency and experience. At the time there were seventeen Category A pilots, who were former Japanese military aviators with some ninety flying hours in F-51s. Three pilots with an average of twelve F-51 hours currently undergoing F-51 conversion training belonged to Category B. The remaining Category C pilots were those flying T-6s who had an average of twenty hours of T-6s.

Upon attaining the minimum thirty-five hours of T-6 training, the pilot began the F-51 conversion training. USAF instructors' constant escort of combat missions had deprived ROKAF pilots of self-reliant map reading and piloting. Therefore, navigation training was emphasised in the training syllabus, and the training programme focused on self-reliant combat mission capability without American escort. The thirty-hour-long flying training syllabus of Category A pilots emphasised basics of navigation and instrument flying, air-to-ground gunnery, join-up and map reading. Two classes of Category A and Category B pilots received 20-hour instrument flying simulator training at USAF 6162th Air Base Squadron, Johnson AFB in Japan during the period of 2-16 April and 7 April - 12 May 1951. From 1 August, instrument flying training commenced with dual-seat F-51s at Sachon AB. Air-to-ground gunnery training was conducted at the Naktong gunnery range, fifteen miles north of Taegu AB in cooperation with USAF 18th Fighter Wing. The lack of airborne moving targets confined the ROKAF air-to-air gunnery mission to simulated training with gun-camera assessment only.⁸⁰

It was hoped that the new training program would enable the unit to be placed on combat status once again. On 2 August 1951, the 10th Fighter Group, commanded by Colonel Kim Young-Whan, was given the task of

⁸⁰ This paragraph is summarised from *H'ang-Gong Jon-Su*, pp. 169-171.

supporting counter-insurgency operations in the nearby Chiri Mountain area in South Kyung-Sang Province. The forested mountains located in the southwestern region of the mainland were utilised as their stronghold by over 9,000 communist guerrillas (bandits, communist sympathisers, and KPA stragglers).⁸¹ These counter-insurgency operations in the rear area were part of the combat training. In order to re-qualify for combat missions, ROKAF had to go through an official Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI). The USAF ORI was a most demanding inspection, the failure of which would cause the termination of the careers of the unit commanders inspected.

In the fear of possible failure, some of General Kim's deputies expressed reluctance to undergo the ORI. However, General Kim, confident of his Korean pilots' proficiency, pressed the American advisers for a full-scale formal inspection by USAF standards.⁸² During this period of counter-guerrilla operations, US 5th Air Force conducted an Operational Readiness Inspection of the 10th Fighter Group.⁸³ It was understood that the inspection would determine whether the ROKAF would be placed on combat status or remain solely a training organisation. This was a critical watershed in ROKAF history, because if the 10th FG (the only combat capable unit of the ROKAF at that time) had failed, the entire ROKAF might have died with it.

A tactical inspection team of the 5th Air Force arrived at Sachon AB on 27 August and began inspection of the ROKAF's combat capabilities. The criteria and standards of the ORI were very high, with USAF pilots flying

⁸¹ For a succinct English account on the counter-guerrilla operations during the Korean War, see Carl Rosenthal, 'Korea (1950-1953),' in John M. Lord, et al., *A Study of Rear Area Security Measures: Greece (World War II), France (World War II), China (1937-1945), Korea (1950-1953), Nicaragua (1926-1933)* (Washington, DC: Special Operations Research Office/The American University, 1965), pp. 109-144. See also ROK Ministry of Defense, *Korean War History for One Year: 1 May 1950 to 30 June 1951* (Seoul, Korea: War History Compilation Committee/Troop Education and Information Bureau of the MND, 1951), pp. A16, A67, A104-106.

⁸² Interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Chang Chi-Ryang, 16 September 1994.

⁸³ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 175; *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, pp. 180-181.

along as inspectors. In connection with the inspection, several missions were flown to assist the Korean National Police in the Chiri Mountain area, and railcuts were made above the bomb line north of Haeju.⁸⁴ Seventy-seven sorties had been flown in August against communist guerrillas, utilising machine gun fire, bombs and rockets.⁸⁵ Despite the revelation of shortages of essential combat equipment, the ROKAF successfully passed the ORI on 1 September.⁸⁶ At last the 5th Air Force officially approved the resumption of ROKAF combat missions, but now without the requirement to be led or accompanied by USAF advisers:

The fine spirit and sincere attempt of the Republic of Korea Air Force to enter combat operations early in September was observed by the inspection party. . . 1 October 1951 [will] now be designated as the date [the] Republic of Korea Air Force shall commence combat operations in forward area. This headquarters [will be] taking action to provide [the] Republic of Korea Air Force necessary material to overcome existing shortages of equipment and supplies.⁸⁷

By September 1951, the ROKAF aircraft strength had grown to forty-nine planes consisting of twenty-one F-51s, one C-47, six T-6s and twenty-one liaison type aircraft. The personnel strength consisted of 967 officers, four warrant officers, 3,681 airmen and 130 cadets - a total of 4,782 men as compared to the authorised strength of 5,800. Fifty-eight of the officers were rated pilots.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ The bomb line is the geographic limit for air strikes not under positive close control, commonly known as the outer limits of the effective range of the army's corps artillery. Millet, 'Korea, 1950-1953,' p. 350.

⁸⁵ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 167-168.

⁸⁶ The revealed shortages were mainly refueling units and equipment for handling heavy armament. Air Intelligence Information Report, 2 September 1951, 'Materiel in Possession of ROKAF,' in 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 175. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

⁸⁷ Message OPP 7067 from CG USAF to C/S ROKAF, 7 September 1951. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176. The ROKAF total personnel strength grew to be 5,451 by the end of 1951. *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 269.

3.4. Self-Reliant Combat Operations at Kangnung (K-18) Air Base (28 September 1951 - 27 July 1953)

As the stalemate of ground combat continued, the ROKAF expedited preparation for its F-51 squadron's self-reliant combat operations at the forward base closer to the ROKA I Corps in the eastern front line. Upon lengthening the runway from 2,700 feet to 5,000 feet and expanding accommodation facilities at the Kangnung AB (K-18), the 10th Fighter Group, the combat element of the 1st Fighter Wing, accompanied by Detachment 2 of the 6146th ABS, was transferred to Kangnung AB to resume combat missions. From 28 September ROKAF maintained a combat element of twelve F-51s at K-18 and continued to conduct maintenance and training at Sachon AB (K-4) as its rear tendering base.⁸⁹ The 10th Fighter Group, consisting of sixty-three officers and 222 airmen, plus one officer and seven airmen of the USAF 6146th Air Base Squadron, hastily prepared for battle with the aid of US Marine Air Group 12, also stationed at Kangnung AB.⁹⁰ The primary mission of the 10th Fighter Group was to interdict and destroy railways, roads, and bridges in the hostile rear area including Wonsan, which is one of the largest port cities in North Korea on the east coast.⁹¹

Recognising that the destruction of the main north-south routes would make useless lateral rail routes on the 'II'-shaped rail network in North Korea, United Nations air forces, concurrently with the US Eighth Army's attack northward late in May 1951, had implemented *Operation Strangle*. This operation sought to 'interfere with and disrupt the enemy's lines of communications to such an extent that the enemy will be unable to contain a

⁸⁹ 10th Fighter Group's deployment to Kangnung Air Base (K-18) was completed on 28 September 1951 in accordance with ROKAF Operations Order No. 36 dated 3 September 1951. *H'ang-Gong Jw-Sa*, pp. 180-181.

⁹⁰ 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 238. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 1. AFHRA.

⁹¹ *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 174; Cleveland, *Mosquitos in Korea*, p. 84.

determined offensive by friendly forces or be unable to mount a sustained offensive himself.⁹² During the period of 5 June-20 November 1951, UNC air forces aimed their heaviest air attacks against the enemy to paralyse its transportation in the zone between the railheads at the 39th Parallel (approximately Pyongyang-Wonsan line) and the 38th Parallel (around the area of front lines). The key north-south traffic arteries were divided into three sections for intensive attack by units of the 5th AF, the US 1st Marine Air Wing, and US Navy Task Force 77. Systematic exploitation of all means of aerial interdiction was sought: bridge attacks, tunnel attacks, cratered roadbeds, and delayed action bombs. It was known that the name of *Strangle* was devised to 'glamorize the task for the benefit of ground officers who had never been charmed by [aerial] interdiction.' Upon its cessation, *Operation Strangle* was followed by *Operation Saturate* on 25 February 1952, which was designed to implement 'round-the-clock concentration of available railway-interdiction efforts against short segments of railway track in North Korea.'⁹³

To support *Operation Strangle*, the first combat mission of the ROK Air Force from Kangnung Air Base was launched on 11 October 1951 against enemy lines of communications (LOCs) in the areas of Hwachon and Yangku behind the central eastern front lines of the Chinese 68th Field Army and the KPA II Corps. The flight, led by Colonel Kim Young-Whan, Commanding Officer of the ROKAF 10th Fighter Group, and observed by Lt. La Gro, the USAF adviser to the Korean Air Force at Kangnung, was completed without mishap.⁹⁴ During the first week of operations, bombing accuracy was poor. This problem resulted from the number of new pilots in the group. However, as the days went by, the railcut percentage hit a high

⁹² Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, pp. 437, 442.

⁹³ This is summarised from Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, pp. 324-325, 437-461.

⁹⁴ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 189-192.

mark, and by the end of the month the ROK F-51s were successfully bombing rail lines and other targets.⁹⁵ Outstanding results of air strikes continued in November, and for the second straight month the efforts of the Korean Air Force were focused on air interdiction. However, on 1 December 1951, all combat elements of ROKAF F-51s at Kangnung AB were diverted back to Sachon AB to participate in *Operation Rattrap*, the clean-up campaign the ROK Army was conducting to eliminate communist guerrillas in the southern mountainous area of South Korea. The ROK Air Force provided close support for the ground troops. At the close of this campaign on 14 December, the ROK planes returned to Kangnung and resumed combat missions, mainly air interdiction, against targets in North Korea. Later in the month these ROK F-51s flew down to Chinhae AB (K-10) again to take part in a ROK-US combined operation with the USAF 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing in the second phase of *Operation Rattrap*.⁹⁶

Three ROK F-51s were lost in accidents from 11 October 1951, when the unit returned to combat status, to 31 December 1951. During the same period one F-51 received major battle damage and one was destroyed by enemy ground fire, with its pilot killed in action. Another pilot died in an aircraft crash. Despite these setbacks the morale of Korean fighter pilots remained high and 'their precision flying, courage and tenacity in battle' won the admiration of United Nations forces throughout Korea.⁹⁷ Considering that the ROK unit at Kangnung AB possessed only twelve aircraft, ROK maintenance personnel performed a notable feat in enabling the ROK Air Force to mount 236 combat sorties in October, 250 in November and 222 in

⁹⁵ The toll of enemy resources claimed by the ROKAF included 76 railcuts, 10 buildings, 13 supply dumps, 14 flak positions, 36 vehicles and 10 railway bridges destroyed. *Hwang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 192.

⁹⁶ *Hwang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 193; 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1951,' *m.s.*, vol. 1, p. 240. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 1. AFHRA.

⁹⁷ 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1951,' *m.s.*, vol. 1, pp. 240-242. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 1. AFHRA.

December, for a total of 708 combat sorties since beginning self-reliant combat operations on 11 October 1951.⁹⁸

During the early months of 1952, intelligence reports called for reassessment of interdiction targeting, because it was revealed that complete destruction of enemy supplies or denial of their movement into North Korea was not possible with the forces and weapons available to UNC air forces.⁹⁹ The situation was quite simple: the enemy's low logistic requirement made it possible for communist troops to keep their limited supply line open through improvised transportation systems operating under cover of darkness and using either humans or oxen for portage.¹⁰⁰ In the aerial interdiction programme, every effort was made to exact from the enemy the greatest cost in manpower and material to prevent it from launching and sustaining another large scale assault against South Korean territory. In implementing this policy, UNC/US 5th Air Force began to concentrate the major portion of its strength on the railcut program (*Operation Saturate*), which called for 'constant attacks on specific portions of the main rail lines - by fighter bombers during the day and by B-26s at night.'¹⁰¹ According to the 5th Air Force intelligence assessment report, the initial effect of this operation considerably slowed the transport of enemy supplies by rail and hampered its overall logistical activities in moving supplies from Manchuria into North Korea. It also forced the enemy to divert huge forces of manpower and large

⁹⁸ The total combat claims of the ROKAF during the period between 11 October and 31 December 1951 were: 196 railcuts; 17 roadcuts; 192 buildings destroyed; 65 supply dumps; 30 carts; 16 railway bridges; 101 gun positions; 48 vehicles; 41 bunkers; and 198 enemy troops killed. *H'ang-Gong Jan-Sa*, p. 194.

⁹⁹ On 15 November 1951, General Ridgway directed the UNC forces 'to cease offensive operations and begin an active defense of its front.' The communists capitalised on the respite (stalemated low combat activities) to fortify their front lines, and secured their battle positions. Thus the Reds reduced their logistical support required at the front lines by moving troops rearward. Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, p. 448.

¹⁰⁰ Oxen and cows were valuable supply sources during the war. The KPA used the cattle in occupied South Korea for military provisions (beef) as well as auxiliary transportation means. *H'un-Gook Jan-Sa*, p. 851; *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 171.

¹⁰¹ Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 451.

quantities of material to repair their battered rail lines.¹⁰² Although the ROKAF mission to support *Operation Saturate* was successful in its combat execution, it is questionable whether the strategic objectives of such an air interdiction campaign were actually achieved.

In the middle of January 1952, Pyongyang served as the distributing point of increased Chinese supplies to the front lines. The railway bridge at Sung-ho Ri into Pyongyang was targeted by the US 5th Air Force for destruction, but was reinforced by the North Koreans after it sustained initial damage. The mission to destroy the hardened bridge, which lay ten kilometers (about six miles) east of Pyongyang, was given to the ROKAF. After two failed attempts on 12 January 1952 at destroying the target, ROKAF pilots analysed the tactics used. They found the main problem was the bombing accuracy. Unless pin-point accuracy was attained, the target could not be successfully destroyed due to its reinforced construction. When the Sung-ho Ri railway bridge was previously damaged by US fighter bombers, North Koreans built an alternative bridge 200 meters farther north of its original location and reinforced it with ten right-angled, hollow pillars of thick timber filled with sandbags. Anti-aircraft guns were reinforced around it as well. The ROKAF pilots assigned to the task finally determined that the American Air Force's high angle dive-bombing tactics were inappropriate for the South Korean pilots to achieve the required bombing accuracy. Therefore, the ROKAF pilots approached the target from 4,000 feet, instead of 8,000 feet, dropped the ordnance at 1,500 feet, instead of 3,000 feet, and finally destroyed the bridge and at the same time a number of corollary targets such as gun positions, supply concentrations and bunkers.¹⁰³

¹⁰² '5AF History, Jan-Jun 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. x. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1952, v. 1. AFHRA.

¹⁰³ Interview, ROKAF historians with Brigadier General Kim Shin, 16 March 1965. Myon-D'am Sa-Ryo #3309-4 (oral historical records #3309-4) in ROKAF, 'Han-Gook Jon-Jaeng Myon-D'am Rok Jae 3 Kwon' ('The Oral History on the Korean War,' Volume 3), *ms.*, pp. 4-6. Hereafter cited as 'ROKAF Oral History (2).' See also 'ROKAF Oral History (3),' *ms.*, pp. 437-439; 'ROKAF Oral History (4),' *ms.*, pp. 194-200. General Kim later became ROKAF Chief of Staff (1964-1966).

These ROKAF pilots proved their proficiency by analysing the problem, changing tactics, and solving the problem without American guidance. In fact, American advisers opposed the Korean pilots' new tactics, because of the increased vulnerability to enemy ground fire at lower altitude. The Korean pilots' ingenuity, demonstrated in combat, made American advisers aware that the ROKAF was now capable of functioning as a combat force on its own without necessarily being escorted by American advisers. This achievement was officially recognised at the Fighter Wing Commanders' meeting of the 5th Air Force on 21 February 1952. Colonel Kim Shin, Commanding Officer of the 10th Fighter Group, accepted the United States Presidential Unit Citation for the successful destruction of the Sung-ho Ri railway bridge.¹⁰⁴

Based on the success of the Sung-ho Ri mission, the ROKAF 10th Fighter Group was given the task of destroying the steel mill at Song-rim, 30 miles south of Pyongyang on 28 March 1952. A total of 116 sorties of ROKAF *Mustang* fighters, each armed with two 500-pound bombs and four 5-inch HVAR rockets, destroyed the mill after a week of attacks.¹⁰⁵ This was the first ROKAF air raid against an industrial target in North Korea. This unique success not only inflicted heavy damage upon North Korean steel plate and coil production, but also boosted the morale of the South Korean pilots.¹⁰⁶

Having been *reborn* as a tactical airpower in battle and *matured* by combat success, the ROKAF now became capable of joining UNC air forces in the massive air raids against Pyongyang, the capital city of North Korea

¹⁰⁴ At the meeting it was known that two commanding officers of American fighter-bomber wings bet on whether the ROKAF pilots could successfully destroy the bridge against which the USAF pilots had failed in several attempts. The winning commanding officer related the story of the bet to Colonel Kim. 'ROKAF Oral History (4),' *m.x.*, pp. 198-200.

¹⁰⁵ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 200.

¹⁰⁶ The Song-rim steel mill was built in 1918 by the Japanese and installed with five furnaces, three 150-ton class and two 200-ton class. Steel products were: pig iron, plate, rail and coil. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

as a part of an *Air Pressure* strategy, which was designed to force North Korea and China to the bargaining table. From 11 July 1952 to 29 August 1952, the combined UNC air forces bombarded and scorched Pyongyang. The South Korean Air Force, barely two years old, but well-seasoned from its combat missions, successfully performed with the other UNC air forces.¹⁰⁷ Professionally and emotionally, this retaliation by ROKAF fighter pilots was the fulfillment of a two-year dream to obliterate the humiliation of the fall of Seoul.

Although the UNC's massive air attacks on enemy supply and industrial targets undoubtedly made the logistical task of the communists immensely more difficult, they did not and could not prevent all supplies from entering and accumulating in North Korea. The short supply line from Manchuria into North Korea made it relatively easy to maintain a moderate flow of supplies to the battle area. With the aircraft and men available to UNC/US 5th Air Force, the static front, and the existing prohibitions against attacking north of the Yalu River, completely stopping the movement of supplies into North Korea was impossible. A review of air interdiction results of the preceding months indicated a need for a shift in interdiction emphasis, this time to selective destruction of supplies, equipment, and personnel concentrated in proximity to the front.

The prospect of preparing the ROKAF combat force for close air support (now usually referred to as CAS) in the eastern front had long been the hope and plan of commanders of various American units as well as ROKA I Corps division commanders. Successful combat experience in previous interdiction missions paved the way for ROKAF fighters to provide air fire support to ground troops of ROKA I Corps in the eastern front. This

¹⁰⁷ Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, p. 204. For detailed accounts of an *Air Pressure* strategy, see Ch. 15: *Toward an Air-Pressure Strategy*, *Ibid.*, pp. 475-489, and Ch. 18: *Sustained Air-Pressure Operations*, *Ibid.*, pp. 605-645. See also *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 204-206.

was an important recognition of combat maturity of the ROKAF fighter pilots. Since the close air support mission is a trilateral joint operation, involving ground-borne forward air controllers (GFACs/TACPs), airborne forward air controllers (AFACs), and mission fighter pilots, the CAS mission required orchestrated co-ordination between command and control of friendly ground forces and air force fighters. Otherwise the risk of attacking friendly forces and mid-air collisions among friendly aircraft (mission fighters and AFACs) might occur.

ROKAF pilots were constantly reminded of the difficulty of the fighter strike (CAS) mission. AFACs who were guiding fighter strikes from their slow speed light airplanes often complained of 'blind spots' they had found when looking out for other airplanes in their flying area. Any aircraft in front of them and at a lower altitude could not be seen, nor could any aircraft directly below or above them. In directing the strikes of high-performance aircraft, these slow speed AFAC pilots had found a need to divert their attention from their missions to be doubly alert to avoid mid-air collisions. In spite of their precautions, however, some of these missions ended in disaster. One such fatality took place on 18 October 1950 when Lt. John Stanton of the US Army 24th Division aviation section, along with his observer, Lt. John Watkins, was leading a flight of four American F-51 *Mustangs* in a fighter strike in the vicinity of Sinmak, thirty miles north of Panmunjom. One of the fighters, in pulling up after a strafing run, collided with Lt. Stanton's L-17 AFAC aircraft. All three of the flyers were killed.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ This is summarised from Dario Politella, *Operation Grasshopper* (Wichita, KS: Robert R. Longo Co., 1958), pp. 36, 178. L-17 is a four-seat all metal liaison plane with high power, which was used extensively by the U.S. Army for observation and liaison missions during the Korean War. John W. Kitchens, 'Army Aviation Between WW II and the Korean Conflict, 1945-1950,' *United States Army Aviation Digest* (September-October 1992), p. 20. L-17 also served well for transportation of VIPs and commanding generals (such as Generals MacArthur, Ridgway and Clark) on their personal inspections of the Korean battlefield. Richard Tierney, *The Army Aviation Story* (Northport, AL: Colonial Press, 1963), pp. 226-227.

This mid-air collision was preceded by a more disastrous incident during a close air support mission at the early stage of the Korean War. A flight of four American F-51 fighter bombers mistakenly strafed and napalmed British troops who were engaged in battle with KPA troops across the Naktong River north of Taegu in late July 1950. The exact number of British casualties was not disclosed. General Partridge, Commander of 5th Air Force, presumed the number to be about twenty or more who were burned with napalm. General Partridge recollected that this mishap occurred due to the failure of close coordination between the forward air controllers (airborne and ground) and the CAS mission pilots.¹⁰⁹

The same mistake was repeated four decades later in Desert Storm by two USAF A-10 fighters against two British armoured vehicles. '[T]wo US A-10 pilots, confident they were over the Iraqi armored column they were to attack, fired [AGM-65] Maverick [anti-armour] missiles against what turned out to be thirty-seven British Warrior armored vehicles parked in the Iraqi desert.' Nine British soldiers were killed and eleven wounded by this inadvertent friendly air attack on 26 February 1991.¹¹⁰

US Marine Corps Major General R. B. Johnston, deputy commander of U.S. Central Command, said that both American mission pilots and a British ground controller should share responsibility for that friendly fire incident. General Johnston wrote in his investigation report: '[T]here was a failure by both the ground controller and the pilots to ensure a thorough understanding of the situation and environment.'¹¹¹ A total of thirty US and British friendly fire incidents occurred during Desert Storm, of which ten

¹⁰⁹ 'General Partridge's Oral History,' pp. 627-628.

¹¹⁰ Stewart M. Powell, 'Friendly Fire,' *Air Force Magazine* 74:12 (December 1991), p. 61. For Powell's full account, see *ibid.*, pp. 58-63. For further accounts on the U.S. and British friendly fire incidents, see Julie Bird, 'Friendly Fire: Deadly Mistakes in U.S. Air Attacks Studied for Solutions,' *Air Force Times* 52:3 (August 26, 1991), pp. 12-13+. Hereafter cited as Bird, 'Friendly Fire.' See also Julie Bird, '2 U.S. Pilots, British Controller Blamed in Gulf-War Fratricide,' *Air Force Times* 52:16 (November 25, 1991), p. 3+. Hereafter cited as Bird, 'Gulf-War Fratricide.'

¹¹¹ Bird, 'Gulf-War Fratricide,' p. 3.

were CAS attacks. American aircraft were involved in at least five of the ten - four cases involved A-10 attack aircraft and one involved an F-4G Advance Wild Weasel air defense suppression aircraft.¹¹² A thorough coordination between mission pilot and ground troop action officers (mainly forward air controllers or air liaison officers) is constantly needed to prevent casualties in the conduct of close air support under stressful conditions. In other words, the hazards of close air support have never diminished over the years, because the stress of combat remains the same despite great technological advances.

The idea of the ROKAF providing CAS to ground units of the ROKA I Corps became a reality on 20 October 1952 when the 10th Fighter Group completed its first successful CAS mission. While the ground fighting went into a stalemate again, and the issue of exchanging prisoners of war became a focal point at Panmunjom, the enemy capitalised on this combat respite to reinforce its troops and harden its defences on the front lines. On 28 October 1952, the communist forces launched an attack against ROKA forces at Hill 351, south of Kosong (in the eastern front, different from Kaesong in the western area) and 50 miles north of the 38th Parallel. Loss of this hill would threaten the further defence of the ROK's entire eastern front because of its tactically advantageous topography and its strategic location as an important transportation hub linking east coastline roads between Wonsan and Kangnung. Upon receipt of the air strike request, the 10th Fighter Group launched two flights of eight *Mustangs* and successfully helped the ROK ground forces defend the hill. The enemy's attempts to capture this hill continued in the following months until 26 March 1953, when four flights of sixteen ROKAF *Mustang* fighters, each armed with two 500-pound general

¹¹² Bird, 'Friendly Fire,' p. 12. In actuality, in the conduct of close air support, especially inherent risks of operating high performance aircraft in close proximity is well known, and worried about, by every pilot who flies an attack-mode aircraft. Each and every one of them, as he or she breaks toward the target, says 'please, God, - don't let it be me.' Author's experience.

purpose bombs, four 5-inch high explosive rockets, and high speed machine guns of 1,200 rounds, wiped out the enemy threat by destroying two caves and twenty hardened bunkers on the hill.¹¹³

In the meantime, the 10th Fighter Group at Kangnung AB (K-18) had expanded to become the 10th Fighter Wing on 15 February 1953, independent of its former parent unit, 1st Fighter Wing at Sachon, which was subsequently redesignated the ROKAF 1st Flying Training Wing. (Figure 3-5) In April 1953, the 10th Fighter Wing began flying general support missions just behind the front lines, in addition to its regular close air support missions.¹¹⁴ Each of these interdiction missions, consisting of fourteen to thirty-eight aircraft, was led by one highly experienced ROKAF pilot and one American instructor/adviser flying to mark targets. Arriving at the target a few minutes prior to the attackers, the US-ROK pathfinder element identified, fixed by radio, and marked the target with bombs. This practice proved quite satisfactory. The attack missions, except the pathfinder element, were flown solely by ROKAF pilots, for their flight leadership had improved, and all front-line tactical air control parties were manned by Korean speaking ROK personnel.¹¹⁵

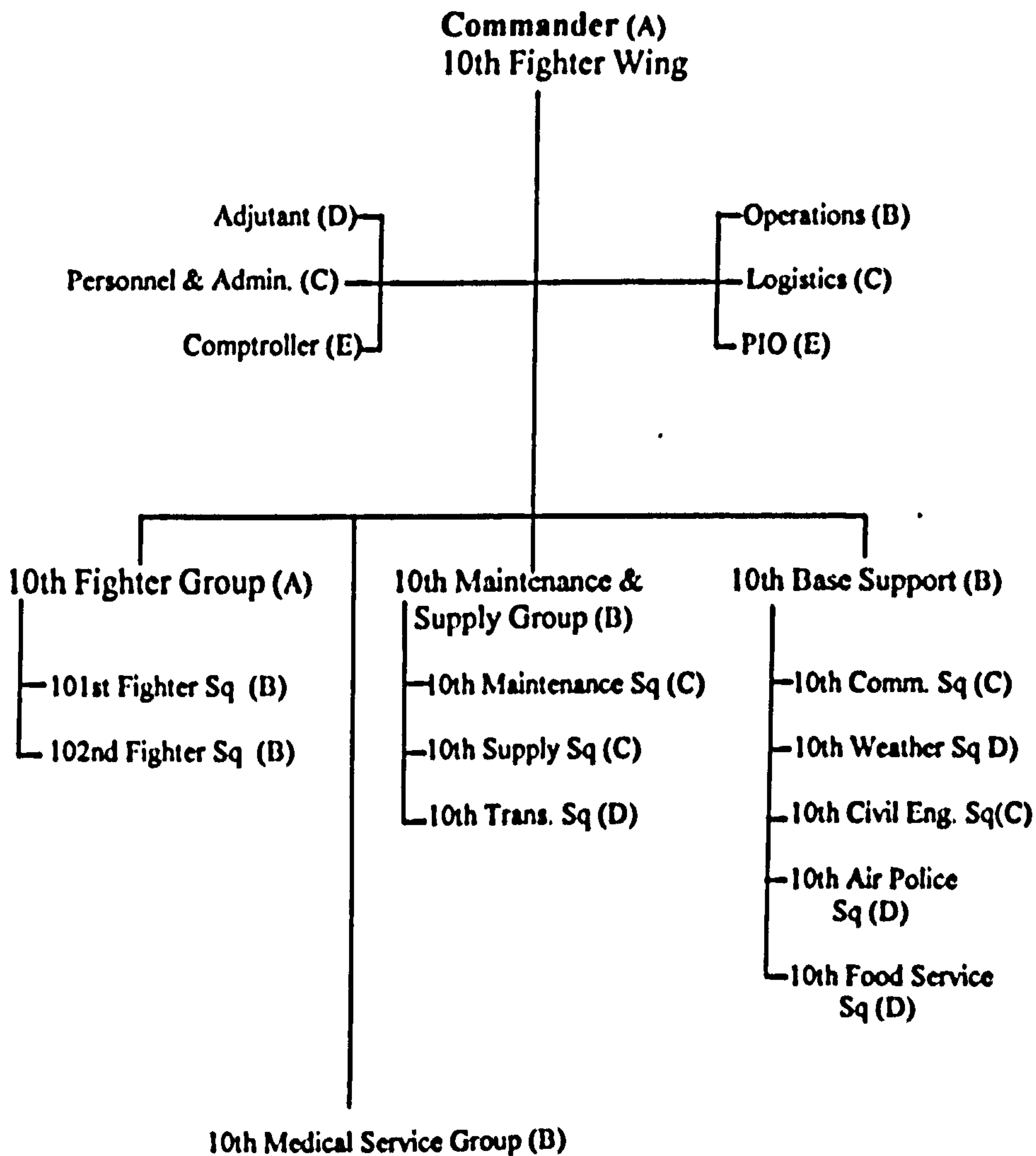
Throughout the period from the formation of the USAF advisory unit attached to the ROKAF on 30 June 1950 until the end of hostilities on 27 July 1953, American instructors/advisers devoted their efforts toward increasing the coordination, flexibility, and effectiveness of ROKAF combat missions by personally participating in actual combat missions as either leaders or observers. Critiques were held upon completion of missions and corrections were made. American advisers initiated a continuing program of instruction, which led to safer and more efficient operating procedures by

¹¹³ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 227-229.

¹¹⁴ *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-53, p. 233.

¹¹⁵ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 228-229.

**Figure 3-5: Organisation of the ROKAF 10th Fighter Wing
(15 February 1953)**



Legend: A: Colonel; B: Lt. Colonel; C: Major; D: Captain; E: 1st Lieutenant; Admin: Administration; Comm: Communication; Eng: Engineering; PIO: Public Information Office; Trans: Transportation.

Source: *Gong-Gwan Sa Jae I Jip, 1949-53.6 (The History of the ROK Air Force, Volume I, 1949-June 1953)* (Seoul, Korea: ROK Air Force History Office, 1991), pp. 233-234.

the ROKAF pilots.¹¹⁶ Enthusiastically responding to their Chief of Staff's emphasis on maintenance of an amiable relationship with Americans, ROKAF pilots willingly accepted advice and assistance from their American advisers.

General Kim's emphasis on the ROKAF's deference to the USAF was reinforced by his awareness of a humiliating incident of a ROKA division's disastrous defeat at the hands of the North Koreans. It took place on 22 April 1951, involving the flight of the ROKA 6th Division before inferior enemy forces and endangering the entire United Nations line. It was serious enough to command the personal attention of Commander in Chief of the United Nations Command (CINCUNC) General Matthew B. Ridgway. Ridgway immediately conducted a study to determine what should be done to increase the effectiveness of the ROK Army. Following conferences with General James Van Fleet, Ambassador Muccio, and President Rhee, General Ridgway concluded that the ROK Army's primary needs were leadership and training, not manpower and equipment. In other words, and quite bluntly, until the ROK forces could demonstrate an ability to perform suitably, there seemed to be little point in arming and equipping them. Because of the ROK's lack of experienced military leaders, one possibility considered in Washington during the study was that US Army officers be used to command elements of the Korean Army. General Ridgway and Ambassador Muccio rejected this course of action as impractical in view of the large number of American officers that would be required, the ever-present language barrier, and the fact that successful command of Korean units by

¹¹⁶ To wit: quick left-hand join-ups after take-off, standard formations and power settings to and from the target, a single pass at the target per each type of ordnance used, a minimum pull-out altitude of 3,000 feet, better coordination with "Mosquito" TAC controllers with less radio traffic, standard 1,000 foot power-off landing breaks, better spacing in the landing pattern, and the expeditious clearing of the runway by the landing aircraft.' '6146 AFAG I history, Jan-Jun 1953,' *ms.*, pp. 57-58. K-GP-TNG-6146-III, Jan-Jun 1953. AFIRA.

US officers would require a prerequisite of complete authority to administer discipline to forces and personnel of a friendly sovereign nation.¹¹⁷

General Kim was chagrined over the cowardice revealed by his Army colleagues. Aware that fear is contagious, Kim became concerned over the possible spread of defeatism to the ROKAF. He therefore insisted upon successful combat missions in 'thorough' co-operation with American advisers, in the hope that ROK credibility could be restored. Accordingly ROKAF's co-operation in both combat and social functions was highly stressed, and General Kim was keen on the outcome of the ROKAF combat missions, as well as the first hand after-action reports prepared by American advisers. He thought that unless ROKAF personnel proved their effectiveness and credibility to American counterparts, the prospect of survival of the ROKAF itself, let alone its expansion, could not be expected.¹¹⁸

The American Army in the field would also have preferred to have ROK airpower integrated into the ROK Army, especially following the confinement of ROKAF's mission to the close air strikes, supporting the ROK divisions of the ROK I Corps. This situation sat well with most army officers, for many of whom the support of engaged ground forces seemed to represent the only legitimate mission for air forces.¹¹⁹ Such views came as a shock to the ROK Air Force leaders who were functioning successfully on

¹¹⁷ Such a possibility had personally been proposed to the Chairman of the JCS, General of the Army Omar H. Bradley by the South Korean UN envoy Colonel Ben C. Limb. Defense Secretary George C. Marshall had expressed interest in the idea. Robert K. Sawyer, 'US Military Group to the Republic of Korea, pt. 3 (Draft), 1945-1951,' *m.s.*, pp. 274-275. K-171.602-1A, 1945-1951, pt. 3. AFHRA.

¹¹⁸ General Kim Chung-Yul mentioned this on 5 March 1990 in a personal conversation with the author at a reception at the ROKAF Academy. Author's memorandum of records, dtd 7 March 1990. See also ROKAF, 'Oral History: General Kim Chung-Yul and Colonel Lee Chang-Yoon.' (Seoul, Korea: ROKAF History Office, 1968), pp. 48-52.

¹¹⁹ General Ridgway once argued that 'the ROK Air Force maintained at its current strength would be ineffectual and extravagant.' Schnabel, James F. and Watson, Robert J. *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy: Volume III: The Korean War. Part I* (hereafter cited as Schnabel and Watson, *History of the JCS*, v. 3, pt. 1) (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979), p. 805.

the operational level with American advisers. Was the ROKAF to become another casualty of the war? Would it continue to be supported once the war ended? US Army General Mark W. Clark's arrival answered these questions in favour of the South Korean Air Force, and reversed the situation. General Clark, who had replaced General Ridgway on 2 May 1952, firmly believed that every means possible should be exerted to create the nucleus of an air force and build it up as situations permitted:

At the very first briefing conference I was given in Washington after my appointment to the command in the Far East, I got the feeling that we should build up the ROK Army to its maximum capability. I favored a military establishment in which the ground forces were predominant, but also believed we should do everything possible to create the nucleus of a navy and air force and expand them as technical skills of the Koreans permitted and as equipment became available.¹²⁰

General Clark submitted his view in recommendations to Washington soon after his arrival in Tokyo. On 30 June 1952, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirmed General Clark's post-war goals for South Korea: 'An Army of ten divisions and 250,000 men and other services (Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force) of approximately their present size.'¹²¹ Thus the ROK Air Force was saved.

The ROKAF was revived and revitalised as a tactical power in battle during the Korean War under American sponsorship. Facing the North Korean invasion without a single fighter aircraft, the ROKAF quickly adapted out of the sheer necessity for survival. The ROKAF had grown from fourteen liaison planes and 1,100 men in 1949 to one hundred and eighteen aircraft with seventy-eight F-51 fighters and 11,481 personnel with 1,386

¹²⁰ Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 171.

¹²¹ Schnabel and Watson, *History of the JCS*, v. 3, pt. 1, p. 809.

officers in 1953.¹²² Over a nine month period from 11 October 1952, when they first commenced their own independent combat missions, until the end of hostilities on 27 July 1953, ROKAF pilots flew more than 2,656 CAS sorties in support of ROKA I Corps in the eastern front. The total number of ROKAF F-51 pilots who took part in these interdiction and close air support combat missions during the period of the war was one hundred and fifteen, with forty of them (35%) recorded as having flown more than one hundred combat missions each. Despite the loss of thirty-nine pilots and 117 aircraft, including sixty-eight F-51s, the ROKAF accomplished a total of 8,495 sorties in combat, second only to United States air forces.¹²³

ROKAF missions had evolved from administrative liaison to such tactical combat missions as air interdiction and close air support. The South Korean pilots had matured into combat hardened fighter veterans. At the beginning of war, they had had to respond to crisis on a case-by-case basis, with neither pre-planning nor organised support. Three years later, they had analysed missions, corrected tactics, functioned as independent teams, and successfully engaged the enemy, fully trained and capable. Thus the South Korean Air Force grew to be a tactical airpower during the Korean War. On numerous occasions, however, it frequently appeared that it would die in its infancy. Had the ROKAF not proven its determination to learn and fight, its very existence might have been threatened at the early stages of war. From America's standpoint, the South Korean Air Force would be a military

¹²² *Gong-Goon Sa (I) 1949-53*, p. 429. Throughout the Korean War, the American government supplied a total of 198 aircraft to the ROKAF: fifty L-type aircraft, fourteen T-6s, one C-47 and 133 F-51s. *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 218, 231-235. By the end of hostilities, NKAF had 1,780 pilots out of its total personnel strength of about 20,000 persons and 255 MiG-15 jet fighters out of 489 aircraft in five air divisions - four fighter and one bomber. *Gong-Goon Sa (II), 1953-57*, pp. 67-68.

¹²³ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa*, pp. 230-231; Cleveland, *Mosquitos in Korea*, p. 184. The ROKAF was also second only to the USAF in terms of manpower numbers committed to the Korean War. The breakdown of ROK and UNC air forces was: US Air Forces 93.4 %; other participating UN air forces 1.0 %; and the ROKAF 5.7 %. Matray, *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War*, pp. 507-508.

liability, because its small size (one fighter squadron) could not contribute much to the conduct of an air campaign.

Nonetheless, ROKAF leaders, young and less experienced, deferred to their American counterparts in the spirit of positive cooperation, as they were aware that their survival and growth were highly dependent on American advisers. The efforts and overall purpose of American advisers had been successful. How they constituted an important cornerstone in the foundation of the growth and improvements of the South Korean Air Force during the war will be further discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ADVISORY ACTIVITIES DURING THE KOREAN WAR, 1950-1953

Upon the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, the inability of the Republic of Korea to support its Air Force was immediately recognised by the United States. Thus, almost from the beginning of the conflict, US 5th Air Force assumed the responsibility for supporting the ROKAF. 5th Air Force was authorised to provide air force equipment, POL, aviation ammunition, ordnance, and such other logistic support as might be necessary for the operation of the ROK Air Force.¹ The US 5th Air Force advisory mission in South Korea encompassed many fields of endeavour and affected almost every corner of the ROK Air Force. It was a demanding exercise of professional duties and a unique human experience for the American air advisers who had to struggle not only with problems of environmental and cultural differences, while facing the complexities and hazards of the war, but also devote their time and energy to nurture South Korean airmen's limited experience with US Air Force mature professionalism.

To the South Korean Air Force officers and airmen who benefited from their American air advisers' expertise and experience, the advisers were both mentors and samaritans. Regardless of their ranks and assignments, they could be characterised by a common trait: a sincere desire to help and devotion to those they advised. Whatever their approach to advisory duties, they always performed with dedication and competence. This chapter examines the evolution of the USAF advisory system to include how it was organised and involved with the ROK Air Force, and how it functioned to

¹ '5th AF History, July-Dec 1951,' Appendix 66. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1951, AFHRA.

help the ROKAF simultaneously implement its pilot training and conduct combat missions in the 'buddy-system' formations with American advisers during the Korean War.

4.1 The Establishment of US 6146th Air Force Advisory Group

Upon completion of US troop withdrawal from Korea on 30 June 1949, the existing Provisionary Military Advisory Group (PMAG) was transformed the following day into an official permanent entity, designated the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAG), which was tasked to carry on the training missions previously undertaken by the US occupation forces in Korea. It became an integral part of the American Mission in Korea (AMKI), along with the US Embassy at Seoul.² But none of the United States Air Force personnel among its authorised strength of 500 men were tasked to advise an air force.³ KMAG was reluctant to take responsibility for 'nurturing a ROK Air Force,' because 'the US [was] in no way committed to support a Korean Air Force with advisors or materiel.' The fourteen liaison planes, KMAG further argued, had been turned over to the South Koreans, 'for an air liaison detachment for the Korean Army, and nothing more.'⁴ But when the South Korean Air Force became a separate service in October 1949 a few months after completion of the US troop withdrawal, 'the *fait accompli* of a Republic of Korea Air Force' dictated that KMAG recommend on 7 December 1949 two instructor pilots and eight enlisted specialists from the United States Air Force be assigned in Korea as advisers. KMAG made further efforts several months later to recommend six officers and eleven enlisted men be

² Sawyer, *Military Advisor*, p. 45.

³ James P. Finley, *The US Military Experience in Korea, 1871-1982: In the Vanguard of ROK-US Relations* (Seoul, Korea: Command Historian's Office/ Hq, USFK/EUSA, 1983), p. 53.

⁴ Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, p. 93.

added to its authorised strength.⁵ However, there is no evidence that any of the US Air Force advisory personnel recommended by the KMAG actually arrived in Korea prior to the Korean War. So, when the Korean War broke out on 25 June 1950, ROK Air Force had no US Air Force personnel as air advisers in Korea. Advisory assistance related to the ROKAF was provided by the US Army advisory personnel.⁶

Simultaneous with Far East Air Forces' transfer of ten F-51 fighter aircraft to the ROKAF on 2 July (a week after the commencement of hostilities) in accordance with 'Bout One' project, responsibility for the support of these F-51s was assigned to the 5th Air Force. At Itazuke Air Base, Japan, the temporarily created 'Bout One' team was formed and tasked with the transition training of ROKAF pilots for the ten F-51 fighters. Having feared at first that the South Korean pilots might not be able to fly safely the ten F-51 *Mustang* fighters (faster and heavier than the Zero fighters Koreans had flown with the Japanese military during the Second World War), the 5th Air Force assigned nine USAF instructor pilots to the 'Bout One' project.⁷ Detachment #1 of the USAF 6002nd Air Base Group was formed at Itazuke, with Major Dean E. Hess, a Second World War veteran fighter pilot, as its commanding officer. Major Hess was charged with the responsibility of advising and supervising the operations of these ten aircraft on loan to the ROK Air Force. Major Hess and his Korean and American ground support personnel moved from Itazuke, Japan to Taegu, Korea in the evening of 30 June, and there reported to the local KMAG headquarters.⁸ These American crewmen were the first personnel assistance

⁵ Sawyer, *Military Advisors*, pp. 94-95.

⁶ Telephone Interviews, author with Lt. Generals (Ret.) Chang Chi-Ryang and Chang Sung-Whan, 29 October 1995.

⁷ 'Bout One' was the code name for the formation of the composite unit of American and South Korean airmen. Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, p. 89.

⁸ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Su*, pp. 92-93, 95; *G'ang-G'um Su (I)*, 1949-53, pp. 120-122; Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, p. 89. Major Dean E. Hess cited ten American pilots instead of nine. Hess, *Battle Hymn*, p. 75.

to the ROKAF since its inception as a separate air force. But they were not yet officially designated as air advisers.⁹

Because the initial authorisation for providing F-51 aircraft to the Republic of Korea Air Force did not at first include authority for providing the ground equipment and supplies required for their operation and maintenance, Detachment #1 of the 6002nd Air Base Group was deactivated. To provide this authority, 6146th Air Base Unit was activated on 27 July 1950 at Taegu with a strength of nineteen pilots (ten Koreans and nine Americans), six ground officers (two Koreans and four Americans), and one hundred airmen (58 Koreans and 42 Americans). Major Hess remained as its Commanding Officer, whose task was to provide the ROK Air Force logistical support, in addition to advising and supervising the ROKAF combat operations and training.¹⁰

General Kim, having flown several reconnaissance missions in L-5s and T-6s during the opening days of the war, pressed his American counterpart: 'What we need is a Korean Air Advisory Group to be formed in order to improve the efficiency of logistical assistance from the United States.'¹¹ The need for a separate air advisory team dedicated solely to the ROKAF headquarters was distinctive only in the sense of its absence within the KMAG. General Kim's request, however, did not receive any immediate response from the 5th Air Force. A declassified USAF archive reveals that during the two months of September and October 1950, there was considerable discussion between the 5th AF and FEAF, which resulted in a USAF policy decision to the effect that : the formal formation of a USAF Advisory Group in Korea should be reserved until receipt of details of ROK

⁹ Ltr, Hq, 5AF, Subj: Fifth Air Force Support of the ROK Air Force, dtd 24 Dec 1951 in "5th AF History, 1 July - 31 Dec 1951," *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 166. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

¹⁰ Ltr, Hq, 5AF, OPP 092, Subj: Korean Air Advisory Group, dtd 23 July 1951, in '5th AF History, 1 July - 31 Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 177. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA. See also *H'ang-Gong Jun-Sa*, p. 119; *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-53, p. 129.

¹¹ *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-53, p. 129; ROKAF Oral History (1) RN #708. Author's translation.

government's request; and existing assistance efforts to the ROKAF and 'the proposed organisation to provide advisory assistance was concurred in, but that no action should be taken which might be construed as a United States commitment to underwrite a post-hostilities Korean Air Force.'¹²

A few days after its formation, 6146th Air Base Unit moved to Chinhae (K-10) where the ROKAF Flying Group was already in place. Upon arrival there, 6146th ABU started supervising the conduct of ROKAF combat pilot training.¹³ Contingent upon the fluidity of the front line after the Inchon landing in September and Chinese intervention in November 1950, and the consequent redeployments of the ROKAF Flying Group, the US 5th Air Force 6146th Air Base Unit also moved back and forth, and supported the operations of the ROKAF combat missions and pilot training; 24 September - 13 October 1950 at Seoul-Yo'E Do (K-16); 24 October - 1 December 1950 at Pyongyang-Mirim (K-24); 2-16 December 1951 at Taejon (K-5); 17 December 1950 - 26 March 1951 at Cheju Island (K-40); 31 March - 18 June 1951 at Seoul-Yo'E Do (K-16).¹⁴

In addition to training, 6146th ABU personnel had to perform other supporting duties (e.g., supply, maintenance, administrative tasks, etc) to make up for the lack of skilled technicians in the Korean Air Force. On 18 May 1951, General Kim once again suggested to the 5th Air Force that a Korean Air Advisory Group be established.¹⁵ In the meantime, the strength of the 6146th Air Base Unit was gradually increased to provide adequate personnel for additional duties, and the unit was upgraded and redesignated 6146th Air Base Squadron on 25 May 1951. Kim's renewed effort persuaded the 5th Air Force to take actions on 23 July necessary for FEAF's

¹² Ltr, Hq, 5AF, OPP 092, Subj: Korean Air Advisory Group, dtd 23 July 1951, in '5th AF History, 1 July - 31 Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 167. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

¹³ *H'ung-Gong Jon-Sa*, p. 119; *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-53, p. 129.

¹⁴ *H'ung-Gong Jon-Sa*, *passim*, pp. 116-161; *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-53, *passim*, pp. 128-173.

¹⁵ Ltr, Hq, 5AF, OPP 092, Subj: Korean Air Advisory Group, dtd 23 July 1951, in '5th AF History, 1 July - 31 Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 167. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

approval of its study on the authorisation of personnel strength for a Korean Air Advisory Group, and a table of distribution and allowances (T/D&A) for a twenty F-51 ROKAF squadron.¹⁶

On 2 November 1951, FEAF approved 5th Air Force's proposals regarding official recognition of an air advisory group and the future status of the ROK Air Force.¹⁷ By the end of 1951, FEAF defined 5th Air Force's responsibility for supporting the ROKAF in the following terms: (1) The authorised logistic support was to include the provision of air force equipment, POL, aviation ammunition, and ordnance required for the operation and maintenance of twenty F-51s, six T-6s and twenty-one liaison type aircraft; (2) The 6146th Air Base Squadron was to provide assistance in organisation, training, and combat operations of the ROK Air Force; and (3) The use of technical service equipment not authorised for direct issue to the ROK Air Force was to be provided by the 6146th Air Base Squadron to other United States outfits.¹⁸

At long last, the establishment of a Korean air advisory group was approved. Effective on 16 August 1952, 6146th Air Base Squadron was redesignated 6146th Air Advisory Group (ROKAF),¹⁹ which became known as 6146th Air Force Advisory Group or 6146th AFAG.²⁰ Although the reorganisation was made without change in American advisory personnel strength and their assigned status, ROKAF leaders were pleased to see that what had long been the actual situation was now formally approved; the

¹⁶ Ltr, Hq, 5AF, Subj: Fifth Air Force Support of the ROK Air Force, dtd 24 Dec 1951 in '5th AF History, 1 July - 31 Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 177. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁹ General Order #495, Hq 5AF, Subj: Redesignation of Unit and Amendment to General Order, dtd 14 Aug 1952. History of Det #2 of 6146th AFAG, 24 January - 30 June 1953,' *ms.* K-GP-TNG-6146-III, Jan-Jun 1953. AFHRA. ROKAF records show that redesignation was made effective on 15th instead of 16th of August 1952. *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 89.

²⁰ *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 89; 'History of Detachment #1 of 6146th Air Force Advisory Group (ROKAF), 1 July - 31 December 1953,' *ms.*, Vol. 2. K-GP-6146-III (Det. 1), Jul-Dec 1953. AFHRA.

ROKAF now had the direct formal connection with the USAF that it had long sought and finally achieved. (See Figure 4-1 for the authorised personnel.)

4.2. Command Relationship of Headquarters ROKAF to 6146th AFAG

A month after the formation of the Advisory Group, it moved to Taegu, where it was collocated with Headquarters ROK Air Force. As depicted in the Table of Authorised Personnel Distribution (Figure 4-1), the 6146th AFAG consisted of three main directorates: (1) OPERATIONS for the supervision of training and combat operations together with advising and coordinating of ROKAF planning and programming; (2) MATERIEL for logistics (aircraft maintenance and supply); and (3) PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION for all relevant administrative support of the advisory group.

The establishment of 6146th AFAG enhanced staff activities by providing the ROKAF with English assistance for the paper work pertaining to the US military assistance programme. Since almost all ROKAF logistic support came from US military assistance, the implementation needed to be accomplished in English and in accordance with US regulations. By promoting ROKAF-USAF staff coordination through the collocation, the American advisers added substantial amounts of catalytic motivation and efficiency to the performance of staff work in the headquarters ROK Air Force.²¹ Despite the best efforts of the American advisers to minimise any inferiority complex Koreans might feel, it sometimes appeared as if the ROKAF were leaving all the details of programming and funding to the donor. It was a general practice accepted by the ROKAF that in staff

²¹ Interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, 24 April 1995. Kim worked as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, Hq ROKAF (1954-56).

**Figure 4- 1: Table of Authorised Personnel Distribution of 6146th AFAG
by US Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC)²²**

	AFSC	Officer	Airman
OIC 6146th AFAG	2162	1 Colonel	
Apprentice Vehicle Operator	60330		1 Cpl
Clerk	70250		1 Sgt
Senior Clerk	70250		1 S Sgt
Administrative Supervisor	70270		1 T Sgt
Operations			
Operations and Training Staff Officer (Assistant OIC)	2162	1 Lt Colonel	
Operations Officer	2161	1 Captain	
Air Operations Supervisor	27170		1 T Sgt
Personnel & Administration			
Personnel Staff Officer	2260	1 Major	
Administrative Officer	2120	1 Captain	
Administrative Supervisor	70270		1 M Sgt
Career Guidance Supervisor	73170		1 T Sgt
Materiel			
Supply and Evaluation Staff Officer	4010	1 Major	
Supply Officer, General	4000	1 Captain	
Technical Supply Officer	4902	1 Captain	
Aircraft Engineer Officer (Armament)	4823	1 Captain	
Aircraft Maintenance Technician	43171		1 M Sgt
Weapons Maintenance Supervisor	46270		1 T Sgt
Supply Inspection Technician	64172		1 M Sgt
Supply Records Supervisor	64174		1 M Sgt
Stock Control Technician	64175		1 T Sgt
Supply Records Specialist	64152		1 S Sgt
Senior Clerk	70250		1 Sgt
Total		9 Officers	14 Airmen

Legend: Numerical figure: Air Force Specialty Code; Cpl: Corporal; Sgt: Sergeant; M Sgt: Master Sgt; S Sgt: Staff Sgt; T Sgt: Technical Sgt.

²² Figure 4-1 was the initial proposed table. Ltr, Hq, USAF, OPP 092, Subj: Korean Air Advisory Group, dtd 23 July 1951, in '5th AF History, 1 July - 31 Dec 1951,' ms., vol. 3, p. 177. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

work in English relating to US assistance matters, American advisers presented their ROKAF counterparts with a drafted plan with the hope that this plan would be translated into Korean and implemented.

There were also instances in which an adviser would just briefly make some remark or suggest an idea as to the course of action that the ROKAF staff could take. The American adviser thus tactfully encouraged his Korean counterpart to elaborate on a suggested idea and develop his own plan based on it. In this way, the plan appeared to be a product that the ROKAF staff had originated. Examples of this approach could be found in numerous correspondences between the ROKAF and USAF/SAF/6146th AFAG, which were usually drafted in English by American advisers first. There was rarely a ROKAF plan which would not have had prior coordination with American advisers. The ROKAF *Three Year Force Improvement Plan* was one of the cardinal examples of successful US-Korean joint staff work under American advisers' supervision.²³

4.3. Inter-Service Rivalry Among American Advisers

There was no serious inter-service rivalry between the ROK Air Force and ROK Army during the Korean War. This was mainly due to the basic nature of the ROK military's heavy reliance for its maintenance on American military assistance.²⁴ Since the United States government's policy of military assistance to the ROK Armed Forces - i.e., allocation and apportionment of

²³ Subsequently, in 1955, the Provisional Military Assistance and Advisory Group (PROVMAAG-K) was established for the purpose of coordinating the efforts of the KMAG, the Air Force Advisory Group and the Naval Advisory Group (NAVAG). This establishment remained generally unchanged until 1 April 1971, when the American military advisers' mission shifted from advising and training to logistics and implementation of the Military Assistance Program (MAP), and the USAF 6146th AFAG came under the jurisdiction of the reorganised Joint US Military Affairs Group in Korea (JUSMAG-K), which incorporated the KMAG and NAVAG. Interviews, author with USAF Colonel Laney K. Cornney, Director of Air Force Programs for the JUSMAG-K, and Mr. James Tong, JUSMAG-K Air Force section historian, 25 April 1995.

²⁴ Interview, ROKAF historians with Brigadier General Kim Too-Man, 15 February 1965 in 'ROKAF Oral History (3),' *ms.*, p. 452.

the assistance budget - derived primarily from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, based on the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff of the individual US military services, there were occasional instances of friction and inter-service rivalry between the US 5th Air Force and US 8th Army. Whenever issues arose that would help the strengthening of the ROK Air Force, American air advisers positively responded for the benefit of the ROKAF, as long as those issues remained within the limits of the overall US government's security policy toward the ROK government.

The issue of jurisdiction of the light airplanes of the ROK military establishment was an example of how the American air advisers and the 5th Air Force staff members worked hard to resolve the issue favourably to the ROK Air Force. When the issue arose and a discussion began between the Far East Command and the Far East Air Forces in Tokyo in September 1951, General Matthew B. Ridgway, CINCFEC, commented that the mission of ROK light aviation should be given to the existing ROK Air Force, because the ROK government was unable to afford two air forces (one separate, one as a part of the army) owing to its shortages of resources and technical personnel. He further recommended that the ROK Air Force should be allowed 'complete freedom of action in utilising and controlling light aircraft available over and above the ROK Army requirements.'²⁵

In close coordination with his American air advisers, who were kept informed of the FEAF/5th Air Force's position, General Kim lobbied his ROK Army counterpart. Lt General Lee Jong-Chan, ROK Army Chief of Staff, not only agreed with General Kim, but also made it clear to Lee's American advisers that both Chiefs of Staff were in complete concurrence 'with the current procedure of the ROK Air Force controlling all ROK

²⁵ Ltr, CG/5AF to CG/FEAF, Subj: Future Status of ROK Air Force, dated 1 January 1952 in 5th AF History, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951, vol. 3, ms., Appendix 66, p. 171. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

aircraft and providing liaison pilots for duty with the ROK Army for reconnaissance and liaison functions.²⁶ Both ROK Air Force and ROK Army Chiefs of Staff further jointly recommended that immediate action be taken to provide the ROK Air Force with a total of seventy liaison type aircraft to be used as: (1) thirty aircraft for duty with the ROK Army; and (2) forty aircraft for ROK Air Force use to include all pilot training and maintain a level of thirty in commission aircraft for the ROK Army.²⁷

The concurrence of ROK Air Force and ROK Army Chiefs of Staff, however, ran into unexpected opposition from the Eighth US Army in Korea (EUSAK). In the process of staff coordination between the EUSAK and 5th Air Force, the former asserted that light aircraft be assigned to the ROK Army (ROKA) because the ROK Air Force had failed to provide sufficient aircraft for the ROKA requirements. This was not a fair assertion, and 5th Air Force counter-argued that it was because the ROKAF had not been assigned enough aircraft by the EUSAK to meet both ROK Army and ROK Air Force requirements.²⁸ When the number of seventy light aircraft was discussed between the Chiefs of Staff of ROK Air Force and ROK Army, the thirty in commission aircraft, with crews maintained by the ROK Air Force for ROK Army use, were to be employed as follows:

- a. Two aircraft to each of ten ROK Army Divisions for observation and liaison.
- b. Two aircraft to I ROK Corps Headquarters for observation and liaison.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, TAPE with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul.

²⁷ Ltr, CG/5AF to CG/FEAF, Subj: Future Status of ROK Air Force, dated 1 January 1952 in 'History of 5th Air Force History, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951,' Vol. 3, *m.s.*, Appendix 66, p. 171. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA; TAPE with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul.

²⁸ Ltr, CG/5AF to CG/FEAF, Subj: Fifth Air Force Support of the ROK Air Force, dated 24 December 1951, in 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951,' vol. 3, *m.s.*, Appendix 66, p. 171. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

- c. One aircraft to each of four ROK Army 155 howitzer battalions for observation.
- d. Three aircraft assigned to ROK Army Headquarters for command liaison.
- e. One aircraft assigned to the ROK Army Training Command for liaison between Army schools.²⁹

The remaining forty aircraft would be assigned to the ROKAF 2nd Reconnaissance Squadron for use in pilot training and instruction in reconnaissance and observation tactics.³⁰ Of the seventy aircraft considered necessary, an average of twenty aircraft would be estimated out of commission for inspection and maintenance. The provision of thirty commissioned aircraft to the ROK Army, therefore, would leave the ROKAF a balance of approximately twenty operational aircraft for flying training. The ROK Air Force had been assigned only twenty-one.³¹ At the time the number of ROKAF instructor personnel assigned for flying training was thirty. ROKAF was also asked to train a number of ROK Army personnel at such time as additional liaison airplanes might become available.³²

The differing opinions of the American Air Force and Army on the jurisdiction of the ROK light airplanes were not reconciled. EUSAK formally proposed to the 5th Air Force in its commanding general's letter of 1 November 1951 that 'the organization and employment of light aircraft in the

²⁹ Ltr, CG/5AF to CG/FEAF, Subj: Liaison Aircraft for ROK Air Force, dated 21 October 1951 in 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951,' vol. 3, *ms.*, Appendix 72, pp. 180-181. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA; *H'ang-G'ong Jon-Sa*, p. 161.

³⁰ Ltr, CG/5AF to CG/FEAF, Subj: Liaison Aircraft for ROK Air Force, dated 21 October 1951 in 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951,' vol. 3, *ms.*, Appendix 72, p. 181. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA; *G'ong-G'ong Sa (I), 1949-1953*, p. 174.

³¹ Ltr, CG/5AF to CG/FEAF, Subj: Liaison Aircraft for ROK Air Force, dated 21 October 1951 in 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951,' vol. 3, *ms.*, Appendix 72, p. 181. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA; *H'ang-G'ong Jon-Sa*, p. 161.

³² Ltr, CG/5AF to CG/FEAF, Subj: Liaison Aircraft for ROK Air Force, dated 21 October 1951 in 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951,' vol. 3, *ms.*, Appendix 72, p. 181. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA; *G'ong-G'ong Sa (I), 1949-1953*, pp. 175-176.

ROK Army parallel that of organic light aircraft in the U.S. Army.³³ Fifth Air Force reminded EUSAK of the valid reason for the American Air Force's current control over American Army Aviation training - i.e., 'the primary flight training program that the Air Force still conducted with Air Force instructors.'³⁴ Fifth Air Force also counter-argued to no avail that the EUSAK's proposal was not agreeable because it might 'result in divided emphasis being placed on the development of ROK military aviation and dissipation of an already inadequate force of qualified aircraft technicians within the ROK military establishment.'³⁵

The issue of the jurisdiction of ROK light airplanes at length disappeared after 21 December 1951, when 5th Air Force reclarified its responsibility for supporting the ROK Air Force, which did not include any stipulation about ROKAF provision of light aircraft to the ROK Army.³⁶ Upon failure of the 5th Air Force - EUSAK negotiation, the ROK Army set up a separate Army Aviation Training School, and the first class of its Army aviators was graduated on 4 May 1952.³⁷ It was detrimental to the ROK Air Force to have been restrained in its growth, not by the US government's policy, but by the parochialism of the American Army commander in the field in an inter-service rivalry with his Air Force counterpart.³⁸

³³ Ltr, CG/SAF to CG/FEAF, Subj: Fifth Air Force Support of the ROK Air Force, dated 24 December 1951, in 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951,' vol. 3, *ms.*, Appendix 66, pp. 171-172. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

³⁴ By mid-1950, the primary flight training for the U.S. Army was provided by the U.S. Air Force in accordance with the Key West Agreement (the so-called 'Function Papers') of 26 March 1948, which assigned to the U.S. Air Force the continued function of controlling U.S. Army Aviation training. Kitchens, 'Army Aviation,' p. 27. For Dr. Kitchens' full account, see pp. 18-28.

³⁵ Ltr, CG/SAF to CG/FEAF, Subj: Fifth Air Force Support of the ROK Air Force, dated 24 December 1951, in 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 July 1951 - 31 December 1951,' vol. 3, *ms.*, Appendix 66, p. 172. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 3. AFHRA.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Politella, *Operation Grasshopper*, p. 181.

³⁸ Cooperation between American military air and ground advisers had been improved decades later, when the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (MACV), headed by a US Army general, allowed the Vietnamese Air Force to control all Vietnamese light military aircraft, including 500 UH-1 helicopters. Cao Van Vien, et. al., *The U.S. Adviser*. Indochina Monograph (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), pp. 159-160. General Vien was the former Chairman of the Vietnamese Joint General Staff.

In retrospect, it was unfortunate that Korean military leaders, both air and ground, failed to press this issue harder, since they completely agreed that light aircraft should be brought under ROKAF jurisdiction. Instead, they allowed the issue to be determined by Americans, without seeking support from President Rhee.³⁹ Rhee's *air-mindedness*⁴⁰ might have influenced the outcome of the issue to the advantage of ROKAF's non-offensive yet quantitative growth. Then, there arises a question: Why did not both ROKAF and ROKA leaders bring the issue to President Rhee's attention? Although there is no Korean archival evidence pertaining to this issue, it may be presumed that higher priority issues in the period of October - December 1951 might have held the attention of both ROKAF and ROKA leaders.

The ROK Army sought to expand its infantry divisions and '[t]he training program for the ROK ten-division army was just beginning to bear fruit.'⁴¹ The ROKAF was also keen on its expansion of fighter forces from one F-51 squadron to two squadrons. ROKAF was busily upgrading its fighter forces in October 1951 when its 10th Fighter Group was deployed from Sachon (K-4) to Kangnung (K-18) forward air base, and started its first close air support missions on its own, without accompanying American air advisers.⁴² The issue of the jurisdiction of light aircraft, however, was not pursued, and once again the opportunity for the potential growth of ROKAF strength was lost. The ROKAF's organisational increase (manpower, infrastructure, budget, etc.) that would have accrued from the added function

³⁹ There is neither Korean archival evidence nor Korean literature pertaining to the issue of the light aircraft. Available are U.S. Air Force archives only, none of which mentioned ROK government's efforts.

⁴⁰ '5th AF History, Jan-Jun 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 261. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 1. AFHRA.

⁴¹ Walter G. Hermes, *United States Army in the Korean War: Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992), p. 212. Hereafter cited as Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*.

⁴² *Gong-Gom Sa (I), 1949-1953*, pp. 191-192; *Hwang-Gong Jun-Sa*, pp. 187-192; 'History of 5th AF, July-Dec 1951,' *ms.*, Vol. 1, pp. 238-240. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1951, v.1. AFHRA.

of controlling ROK Army aviation could have aided in redressing the perennial imbalance between the ROK Army and ROK Air Force, at least partially, without alarming Americans concerned with ROKAF's offensive clout.⁴³

4.4. USAF Advisory Activities in the Field

American air advisers' professional assistance was demanded not only at the ROKAF headquarters level but also at all echelons of ROKAF units. When the 10th Fighter Group of ROKAF 1st Fighter Wing advanced to Kangnung Air Base (K-18) in September 1951, Detachment #2 of 6146th Air Base Squadron (the predecessor of 6146th AFAG) was formed and dispatched there along with the ROKAF.⁴⁴ However, Detachment #1 was not activated immediately. When the Headquarters of the 6146th Air Force Advisory Group, which had been stationed at Sachon Air Base (K-4), moved to Headquarters ROKAF at Taegu on 14 January 1953, Detachment #1 was activated to support ROKAF 1st Fighter Wing at Sachon.⁴⁵ (Figure 4-2)

These two detachments were tasked with the dual mission of advising and supporting the two ROKAF wings, as well as providing support to any nearby US forces. Their mission was specified as follows:⁴⁶

- a. Act in an advisory capacity to the ROK Air Force -1st Training Wing (Det #1) and 10th Fighter Wing⁴⁷ (Det #2) - on all matters pertaining to organisation and operations of those units.

⁴³ ROKAF jurisdiction of the ROKA light airplanes would have eventually provided additional numbers of flying squadrons together with increases of budget, personnel and organisation. At least more than a few brigade-size organisational expansions and a few general rank officers could have been authorised additionally for the ROKAF. Interviews, author with Lt. Generals (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu and Chang Sung-Whan, 24-28 April 1995.

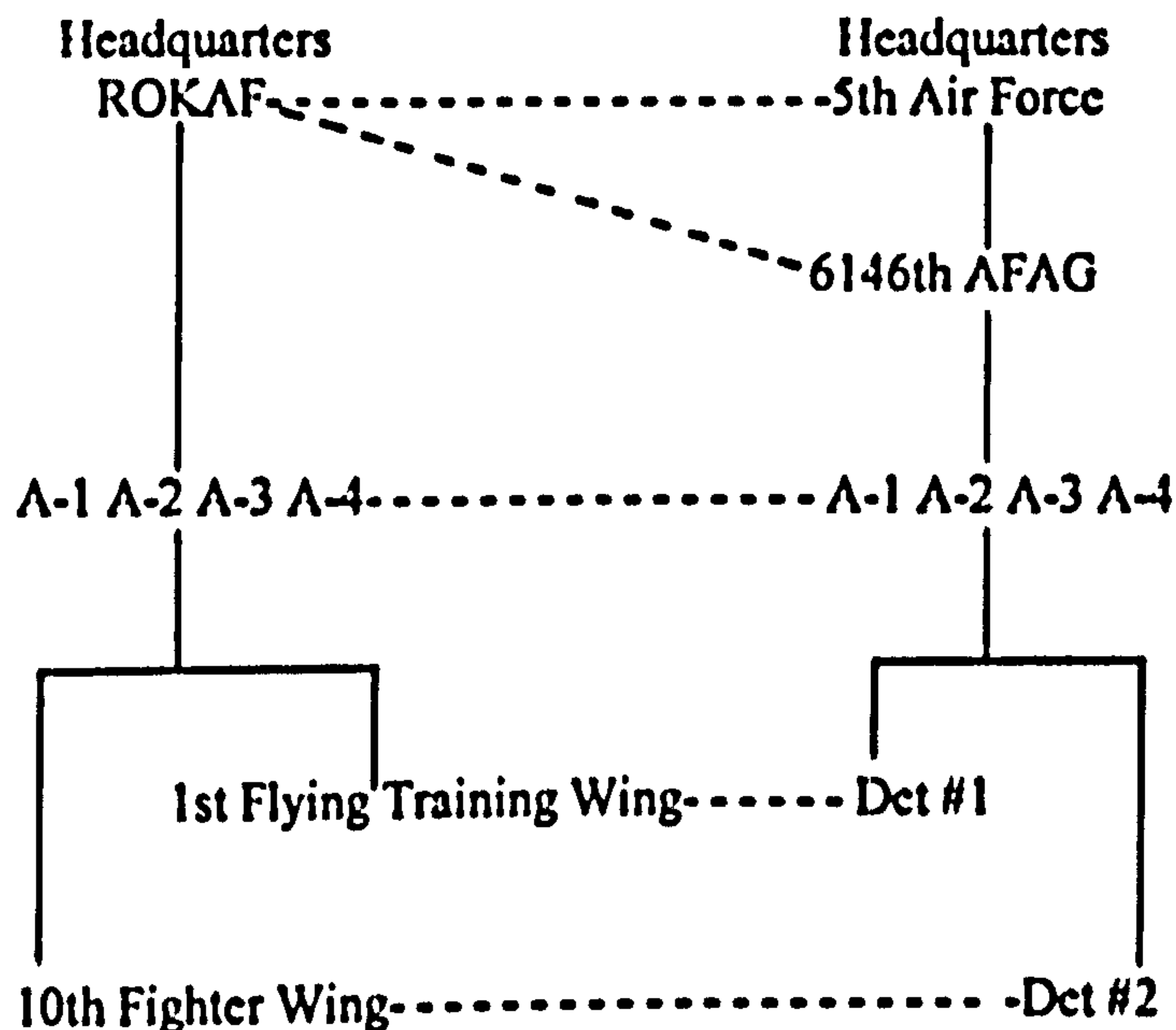
⁴⁴ 'History of 6146th Air Advisory Group (ROKAF), 1 July - 31 December 1952,' *ms.*, p. 13. K-GP-6146-III, Jul-Dec 1952. AFHRA; *Giuk-Giukki Su (I), 1949-1953*, p. 188.

⁴⁵ 'History of 6146th Air Force Advisory Group (ROKAF) (hereafter cited as History of 6146th AFAG), 1 January - 30 June 1953,' *ms.*, p. 25. K-GP-6146-III, Jan-Jun 1953. AFHRA.

⁴⁶ Hq 6146 AFAG GROUP Regulation 24-2 dtd 22 Oct 53. 'History of 6146th AFAG (Det #2), 1 July - 31 Dec 1953,' *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 1. K-GP-6146-III (Det. 2), Jul-Dec 1953. AFHRA;

- b. Act as the agency between the ROK Air Force (1st Training Wing and 10th Fighter Wing), and other USAF units.
- c. Act as a support unit at K-18 Air Base (Det #2), for UNC/US units in the vicinity of that area requiring support.

Figure 4-2: Command Relationship, ROKAF to USAF/6146th AFAG⁴⁸



Legend: A-1: Personnel and Administration; A-2: Education and Training; A-3: Communications; A-4: Materiel; Det: Detachment; GP: Group.

Command _____ Advice - - - - -

Detachment #1, averaging 13 officers and 58 enlisted men, was maintained at Sachon under the command of a Lt. Colonel, who was charged with the responsibility to advise and supervise ROKAF pilot training for F-

⁴⁷ As of 15 February 1953, 10th Fighter Group was redesignated 10th Fighter Wing. *Hwang-Gong Jwun-Su*, p. 215.

⁴⁸ 'History of 6146th Air Advisory Group (ROKAF), 1 January 1953 - 30 June 1953,' ms., pp. 4, 49. K-GP-TNG-6146-III, Jan-Jun 1953. AFHRA.

51, T-6, and liaison type aircraft.⁴⁹ Detachment #1 was able to concentrate on assisting the ROKAF training activities, without being distracted by the secondary function of providing logistical support to any adjacent US units, which were not existent in the Sachon area throughout the period.

But this was not the case for Detachment #2 at Kangnung AB (K-18). Although Detachment #2 was a larger organisation headed by a major and manned with additional strength (averaging 13-15 officers and 96-133 airmen), it had some difficulty in manning its authorised slots with qualified advisory personnel. Due to an increase in the logistical support required for American units in the area, the primary mission of advising the ROKAF (10th FW) had 'not reached the desired optimum point,' because the detachment was the only supply point in the area and performed many functions of an air base unit. In the area, there were ten US military units including one US Marine Fighter Squadron Detachment at K-18 and one USAF radar site stationed nearby. Consequently, the increased ancillary mission inevitably caused 'very little advising to the 10th Fighter Wing ROKAF.'⁵⁰

One difficulty, common to all activities, was the language barrier, which was an obvious limiting factor affecting both the American advisers and their ROKAF counterparts. In an effort to reduce the scale of this problem, English speaking non-rated (non-flying) Korean officers were recruited. During the war, qualified Korean college professors and English-majors, as under- and post-graduate students, were readily available among the Korean officer corps. But all of them were non-rated personnel without previous knowledge of aviation. Therefore, it was not easy for them to translate pilot phraseology into comprehensive Korean, particularly on the

⁴⁹ 'History of Det #1 of 6146th AFAG, 1 July - 31 December 1953,' *ms.*, p. 1. K-GP-TNG-6146-III (Det. 1), Jul-Dec 1953. AFHRA.

⁵⁰ 'History of Det #2 of 6146th AFAG, 1 July - 31 December 1953,' *ms.*, p. 1. K-GP-TNG-6146-III (Det. 2), Jul-Dec 1953. AFHRA.

flight line. American advisers later recollected that it was difficult to get ideas in technical terms across to the Koreans, but 'the Korean personnel that the USAF advisors work with are very cooperative in all respects and are eager to learn the best methods and techniques that we can show them.'⁵¹ Nevertheless, those college students who were selected to work either at the American advisory offices or ROKAF headquarters in fact benefited from their frequent exposure to English speaking American advisers. American advisory offices usually employed several qualified civilian interpreters on a permanent basis, in addition to one or two ROKAF liaison officers.⁵²

Among important effects of the American advisory roles during the Korean War were the Koreans' educational benefits and technical training accrued from the close working relationship on the flight line between American advisers and ROKAF personnel. Every aspect of flight line activity, from the OM (Organisational Maintenance on the flight line, such as changing aircraft tires, loading bombs, and refueling the aircraft) to the FM (Field Maintenance in the aircraft hangar such as 100- and 500-hour periodic maintenance including change of engines), was first demonstrated by Americans and then taught to Koreans as on-the-job training. Not only did Koreans learn another language, they also learned advanced aviation skills, and familiarisation with American culture.⁵³

⁵¹ 'History of Det #2 of 6146th Air Force Advisory Group, 1 January - 30 December 1953,' *ms.*, p. 25. K-GP-TNG-6146-III (Det. 2), Jan-Jun 1953. AFHRA. U.S. Air Force Oral History Interview: Colonel Frank E. Merritt, 8 December 1977, pp. 33-34. K239.0512-1112, 77/12/8. AFHRA; U.S. Air Force Oral History Interview: General Earl E. Partridge, 23-25 April 1974, p. 658. K239.0512-729, 75/4/25. AFHRA.

⁵² Tape recorded interview with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, maintained at Office of Air Force History Studies, Headquarters, ROKAF. General Kim Chang-Kyu was a former Chief of Staff of the ROK Air Force (1958-60). Hereafter cited as TAPE with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu. This was also verified by the author's interviews with General Kim on 24 April and 28 September 1995.

⁵³ Interview, author with Lt. General Chang Chi-Ryang, 16 September 1994. These experiences were catalytic later in the successful conversion to F-86F jet fighters and C-46 transport aircraft under the supervision of American instructors, and the rapid advancement of the ROKAF onto the world military scene. When the U.S. Pacific Air Force sponsored an annual meeting of allied Asian fighters each year during the period of 1959 - 1962 at Clark Air Force Base, Philippines - called 'Flying Brothers' and including air forces from the Philippines, South Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan,

4.5. Mentorship and Role Model

To ensure adequate support for combat operations, American advisers usually had to accomplish all coordination activities from planning to actually delivering the support assets or supplies. They were also active in actual combat missions with ROKAF pilots.⁵⁴ Their positive participation in combat was well illustrated by their combat records. Out of a total of some twenty advisers who flew with the ROKAF in actual combat missions during the Korean War, one third of them accomplished more than one hundred combat sorties each, excluding Lt. Colonel Dean Hess, Commanding Officer of 6146th ABS, who had been recently promoted and completed over two hundred fifty missions.⁵⁵ Their accomplishment was also at the sacrifice of five killed in combat.⁵⁶

It was fortunate for the ROK Air Force to have had Lt. Colonel Dean E. Hess as the chief of the US air advisory team from the early stage of war ('Bout One,' 6146th Air Base Unit) through the summer of 1951 (6146th Air Base Squadron). His leadership epitomised professionalism, airmanship, devotion to duty, and exemplary role model not only to his own men, but also to the ROKAF personnel. Hess worked at the policy level as Commanding Officer of 6146th Air Base Squadron and primary adviser to the ROKAF Chief of Staff, as well as point of contact for the 5th Air Force. In addition, he flew combat missions as flight leader, and worked on the flight line with Korean and American enlisted mechanics and logistic personnel. Apart from his combat record, remarkable enough in itself, he was the key person who

Australia, New Zealand and Japan - South Korean pilots in F-86Fs proved their proficiency by achieving outstanding records in air-to-air and air-to-ground gunnery. *Gong-Gwon Sa (III)*, 1958-1962, pp. 154-156.

⁵⁴ See sections 3.2-3.4 in Ch. 3.

⁵⁵ 'ROKAF,' in '5th AF History, 1 Jan - 30 June 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 2, p. 244. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1951, v. 2. AFHRA. See also Hess, *Battle Hymn*, p. 237.

⁵⁶ No record is available about the official number of American advisers killed in combat during the Korean War. This is the number concluded by the author from the ROKAF History and Colonel Dean E. Hess' writing. *Hwang-Gong Jon-Sa, passim*; Hess, *Battle Hymn, passim*.

made the survival of the ROKAF possible. Resourceful in his duty and amiable in his personal association with both Americans and Koreans, Hess was held in high esteem by both Korean and American Air Force leaders.⁵⁷ His affection for the 'infant ROK Air Force was exactly that of a parent - fierce, possessive, single-minded.'⁵⁸

The respect in which [then Major] Hess was held by ROKAF leaders was established almost immediately. Soon after the 'Bout One' Unit moved to Taegu on 30 June 1950, the 5th Air Force began a massive deployment of its fighters to South Korea and a 6002nd Fighter-Bomber Wing was to be formed at Taegu Air Base (K-2). The USAF colonel designated to command the 6002nd quite possibly had no idea of what 'Bout One' was all about, but he could see Americans already at Taegu AB whom he could put to good use solving his own personnel problems. Accordingly, the colonel tried to press Hess into releasing the American pilots, crew chiefs, and airmen who were the core of 'Bout One.' Hess objected that once those cadre members were gone, the entire 'Bout One' would have to be disbanded. But 'Bout One' was the only cohesive fighter unit ROKAF had. 'Once broken, an organisation, especially one of such strange components as 'Bout One,' like Humpty Dumpty, can never be fully put back together again,' and consequently, ROKAF F-51 pilots would have to be grounded. In a word, 'there would be no more Korean air force.'⁵⁹ When advised of these matters, the ROKAF Chief of Staff threatened to disband his air force and send it to the ROK Army to fight on the ground, where all available bodies were badly needed. Major Hess, on his own initiative, privately visited Brigadier General Edward J. Timberlake, Vice Commander of the 5th Air Force, and

⁵⁷ TAPE with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul; Chang, *My Life*, p. 37; U.S. Air Force Oral History Interview: General Earl E. Partridge, 23-25 April 1974, p. 657. K239.0512-729, 75/4/25. U.S. AFHRA.

⁵⁸ Hess, *Battle Hymn*, p. 113.

⁵⁹ TAPE with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul; Hess, *Battle Hymn*, p. 108.

successfully persuaded him to reject the proposal to gut 'Bout One,' which survived and resumed its combat operations.⁶⁰ Hess had saved the day, - and the ROKAF.⁶¹

Lt. Colonel [then promoted] Hess also impressed ROKAF pilots and mechanics. His outward appearance alone inspired discipline and studiousness. Tall, healthy, masculine, handsome in his clean flying suit and shining flying boots, he conveyed the perfect image of neatness and military elegance.⁶² Four virtues of a successful leader emphasised in a Korean axiom are: (1) *Shin*, PHYSIQUE, APPEARANCE; (2) *On*, ELOQUENCE, COMMUNICATION; (3) *So*, INTELLIGENCE, WISDOM; and (4) *Pahn*, JUDGMENT, INSIGHT.⁶³ These virtues were evident in Colonel Hess. An ordained minister prior to joining the Air Force, Hess preached sermons, conducted Sunday school classes, and was an ardent evangelist for Christianity. His boundless energy in all aspects of his life inspired every one who came into contact with him.⁶⁴

Although Lt. Colonel Hess was assigned in Korea for only a year, this period from the end of June 1950 to the middle of 1951 was the most critical

⁶⁰ Hess and Timberlake flew together in Europe during the Second World War. TAPE with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul: Hess, *Battle Hymn*, p. 110.

⁶¹ TAPE with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul. Both Major General Earl E. Partridge, Commander of 5th AF, and Brigadier General Edward J. Timberlake, Vice Commander of 5th AF were 'a constant source of inspiration and encouragement and tolerant of my [Hess'] unorthodox procedures' during Hess' tour in Korea. Hess, *Battle Hymn*, frontispiece. See also, U.S. Air Force Oral History Interview: General Earl E. Partridge, 23-25 April 1974, p. 657. K239.0512-729, 75/4/25. U.S. Air Force historical records. U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

⁶² Chang, *My Life as an Aviator*, p. 37. Lt. General (Ret.) Chang Sung-Whan was one of ten ROKAF pilots who were sent to Itazuke Air Base, Japan, and ferried a ROKAF F-51 to Taegu, Korea on 2 July 1950. He flew many combat missions with Lt. Colonel Dean E. Hess during the early stages of the Korean War. Chang later became an air attaché in Washington, DC (1952-54), and ROKAF Chief of Staff (1962-64).

⁶³ Chintae SO, 'A Korean's Perception of a Leadership Profile,' *Air University Review* 33:1 (November-December 1981), p. 105. (*Air University Review* was retitled as *Airpower Journal* in 1987. *Airpower Journal* is the current title of the USAF Air University quarterly.) For Colonel SO's full account, see pp. 104-107.

⁶⁴ Colonel Hess was ordained before he enrolled in the U.S. Army Air Corps in the summer of 1942. Hess, *Battle Hymn*, p. 35; U.S. Air Force Oral History Interview: General Earl E. Partridge, 23-25 April 1974, p. 577. K239.0512-729, 75/4/25. U.S. AFHRA.

year for the establishment of the South Korean Air Force. By the time he left, ROKAF had expanded from nil to over twenty F-51 fighter planes, with an increase of personnel strength from under two thousand to nearly six thousand, including over sixty F-51 fighter pilots.⁶⁵

In addition to Colonel Hess, and inspired in part by his own example, most of the American advisers, regardless of rank and specialty, were endowed with broad professional competence and knowledgeable in their special areas of responsibility. Difficult points or questions encountered by ROKAF personnel, especially maintenance and supply personnel on the flight line, were explained quickly and carefully by American advisers. If the American advisers were in doubt about something they had in their answers to Koreans' questions, they always took time to consult their USAF manuals or associates and came back with the correct answers in a succinct and precise manner. This approach by American advisers, especially their willingness and honesty to express occasional doubt or uncertainty, exerted a good influence on ROKAF officers and NCOs in charge, who eventually tried to eliminate their poor habit of improvising inaccurate answers apparently to save face.⁶⁶

Additionally, the American advisers' approach to their task was democratic and reasonable. They were neither coercive nor commanding. They were suave and patient in listening to their Korean counterparts, and apt to win over Koreans by virtue of reason or logic based on their broad professional knowledge. Koreans were impressed by their American advisers who were methodical, careful, thorough and well-prepared. The American way of working was in sharp contrast to what most of the Korean junior officers and enlisted men were currently experiencing under their Korean

⁶⁵ *Gong-Gwan Sa (I)*, 1949-53, pp. 176, 272.

⁶⁶ Interview, author with Master Sergeant (Ret.) Kim Hyun-Sik, 5 October 1994. Kim was a F-51 mechanic at Seoul-Yeo'E Do (K-16) and Kangnung (K-18) Air Bases during the Korean War.

leaders, who were previously exposed to a coercive and arrogant leadership in the Japanese and Chinese military.⁶⁷

While disciplined and duty-minded during duty hours, American advisers were also liberal- and humane-minded. The advisory task was an effort involving human relations. To ensure success, it had to be carried out with a full understanding of human psychology, a deep devotion to duty, a knowledge of strengths and weaknesses and in a tactful and courteous manner.⁶⁸ After work, they easily mingled with their Korean counterparts, and enjoyed their free time together as colleagues. They were also generous. Very often American advisers bought a considerable amount of food and beverages at the base exchange out of their own pockets and gave them to Korean friends for free. Korean officers were allowed to use the American officer's club at the base. For Koreans it was a privilege to have good food and drink at the 'modern' facility in the harsh wartime environment. The Korean government could not pay them well at that time.⁶⁹ In turn, ROKAF personnel displayed an eager willingness to accept advice and assistance from the American advisers.⁷⁰

On the other side of the coin, the generous solicitude and largesse of American advisers produced some less happy side effects. Heavy reliance on American advisory assistance from start to finish pertaining to regulations and doctrines resulted in ROKAF leaders and their deputies neglecting to write their own regulations and doctrine, tailored to Korea's indigenous conditions. The impact of this neglect still exerts a counter-productive influence on the course of ROKAF's own doctrinal research and

⁶⁷ Interview, author with Major General (Ret.) Chun Hyung-II, 1 May 1995. Chun made 100 combat missions flying F-51s at Kangnung (K-18) during the Korean War.

⁶⁸ Cao Van Vien, *The U.S. Adviser*, p. 44.

⁶⁹ American advisers had their own separate dining and recreational facilities at their stations. Interview, author with Major General (Ret.) Chun Hyung-II, 1 May 1995.

⁷⁰ 'History of 6146th AFAG, 1 July - 31 December 1952,' *ms.*, p. 16. K-GP-TNG-6146-III, Jul-Dec 1952. AFHRA.

development and Koreanisation of ROKAF regulations and protocols. Today, four and a half decades later, most of the technical orders and flight manuals are still undergoing conversion into Korean. But owing to the intrinsic lack of proper Korean vocabularies and terminologies, translation would take time.⁷¹

American extravagance and opulence of materials inadvertently discouraged Koreans' traditional frugality. The inability of many Americans to adapt to local living conditions led to the creation of Americans' own living environments within the same base complex, where ROKAF's substandard living conditions co-existed. It was considered more or less mandatory for Americans to have their own Base Exchanges* (equivalent to PX in US Army or NAAFI in Royal Armed Forces), Officers/NCOs/Airmen Clubs, and other recreational facilities wherever they were stationed. In time, the BX* and American compound on the ROKAF air base became monumental institutions of American culture in South Korea. To ordinary ROKAF personnel, especially those from the rural areas, these constituted a totally different world, a world so distant that Koreans seldom felt close to Americans in a cultural sense. Exposure to American material opulence induced envy and greed that led to the practice of illegal business, i.e., black marketeering. By the end of the Korean War, the illegal practice was largely curtailed and the [6146th Air Force Advisory] Group and the CID [(Criminal Investigation Detachment)] were able to breathe easier.⁷²

An undisclosed aspect of the American advisory mission with Koreans was the surveillance of ROKAF activities implicit in the 'buddy

⁷¹ Author's experience. The author was actively involved in translation of USAF flight manuals and technical orders as a member of the ROKAF *Ad Hoc* Translation Committee from Jul 1965-Jan 1967.

⁷² 'History of 6146th AFAG, 1 July - 31 December 1953,' *ms.*, p. 17. K-GP-TNG-6146-III, Jul-Dec 1953. AFHRA. * Base exchanges in the US and ROK Air Forces are commonly referred to as BXs.

system' adopted for flying operations.⁷³ The F-51 was the only offensive weapon which might be used by President Rhee in pursuit of unilateral action, i.e., 'March-North-For-Unification.' The close interface between the American advisers and ROKAF personnel at every level not only enhanced ROKAF combat capability, but also eliminated any possibility for the ROKAF to attempt a clandestine action without it coming to the attention of Americans. In piloting a fighter aircraft, the one area where any unilateral action might be attempted by the ROKAF, the ubiquitous presence of the American advisers as part of the 'buddy system'⁷⁴ precluded any such action by Korean pilots. (At first, every combat mission was conducted by an American adviser as the flight leader. Later, when Korean pilots were qualified, Americans flew in position of wingman as observers.)

Restrained as they were by limitations in personnel and differences in culture, the American advisers worked on equal terms with Koreans. Their overall purpose and efforts 'constituted an important cornerstone in the foundation of the growth of the Republic of Korea Air Force.'⁷⁵ Their dedicated endeavour contributed immeasurably to the very survival of the ROK Air Force - let alone its development - during the trying period of the Korean War. However, American support for the continued existence of the South Korean Air Force was sporadic and extemporaneous. The US government's preponderant emphasis on ROK ground troops resulted in the severe disparity between the ROK Army and Air Force. How the United States policy had been consistently oriented to Korean ground forces and

⁷³ Author's memorandum of record, dtd 13 December 1968. For an implication of USAF advisers' surveillance on the ROKAF, see 'Air Intelligence Information Report, dtd 7 August 1951, Subj: ROKAF - Origin and Political Background,' in '5th AF History, 1 Jan - 30 June 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 343-349. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. AFHRA.

⁷⁴ Hess, *Battle Hymn*, p. 128.

⁷⁵ Ltr, Hq 5AF, OPO 370, Subj: Mission Letter, dtd 2 Aug 51, as quoted in U.S. Air Force, 'History of 6146th Air Force Advisory Group, 1 July 1952 - 31 December 1952,' *ms.*, p. 16. U. S. Air Force historical records, K-GP-TNG-6146-III, Jul-Dec 1952. U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

how this policy limited the growth of the South Korean Air Force during the latter's post-Korean War modernisation will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

POLICY LIMITATIONS ON THE GROWTH OF THE ROK AIR FORCE AFTER THE ARMISTICE, 1953-1956

The United States policy toward South Korea after the Armistice, as interpreted by the US Air Force, remained basically the same as prior to and during the Korean War, i.e., 'to secure an armed force in the ROK large enough to maintain order, but not so large as to strain the country's economy or so powerful as to provide the means for ROK aggression against North Korea.'¹ The money-saving, 'long haul' policy of the Eisenhower administration dictated American forces be redeployed from Korea. The so-called *New Look* policy emphasised strategic airpower as the primary means of attaining containment, along with 'deemphasis of conventional forces through reduction of overseas garrisons and the creation of a mobile strategic reserve in the United States.' To effect this policy, the United States government was committed to increase 'its reliance on allied forces for local defense,'² in order to make American relations with its allies 'more effective [and] less costly.'³ Accordingly, the ROK Air Force was permitted to modernise its capability as a compensatory measure for the redeployment of the US Air Forces from Korea. However, the intrinsic limitations of US

¹ *USAF Operations in Korea, Jun-Nov 1950*, p. vii; Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 17; Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, pp. 34-35; U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. *Background Information on Korea*. Report . . . 81st Cong. 2d sess. (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1950), p. 34.

² Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), p. 402. For an overview of the Eisenhower administration's defence policy in these respects, see Saki Dockrill, 'Cooperation and Suspicion: The United States' Alliance Diplomacy for the Security of Western Europe,' *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 5:1 (March 1994), pp. 138-182.

³ John Foster Dulles, 'The Evolution of Foreign Policy,' *The Department of State Bulletin* 30:761 (January 25, 1954), p. 108. For Dulles' full text, see pp. 97-110.

policy on ROK's tactical air capability never lessened. In other words, the US policy restraints were invoked to modernise the existing South Korean Air Force, without increasing the number of its fighter aircraft - i.e., it was allowed to convert to jets in the one existing fighter wing only.

Disregarding a US high ranking official's promise of 'immediate and automatic military reaction,' and taking into account the potential for American abandonment with the second withdrawal of their forces from Korea, President Rhee continued to seek from the United States government a written defence treaty.⁴ The Eisenhower administration, on the other hand, desired to link its participation in the defence treaty to the ROK government's allegiance to US government policy. Accordingly, the United States intended to formulate written guidelines of its compensatory assistance so that the ROK government could be kept from taking any unilateral action detrimental to America's interests. The guidelines were formulated into the Agreed Minute of Understanding between the two governments. The force structure of the ROK military after the Armistice was spelled out in this document.

The Republic of Korea Air Force was the youngest, smallest and in terms of budget allocation, the least costly of the Korean military establishment. Yet any policy that affected the ROK Armed Forces had direct subsequent impact upon the development of South Korean airpower. Consequently, the ROKAF simply *cannot* be treated in isolation from the ROK Army. Since the US viewed the ROK Army as the core force in the Agreed Minute, the ROK Air Force and Army were treated as two sides of the same, albeit unbalanced, coin. This chapter examines the validity of the

⁴ Secretary of State Dulles assured President Rhee of US government's support in his letter of 24 July 1953. The Dulles letter was insufficient to Rhee because the US constitutional process requiring congressional approval could negate Dulles' promise of immediate military reaction. 'The Secretary of State to the President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee), July 24, 1953' in *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt.2, p. 1430; 'Memorandum of Conversation by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), August 7, 1953' in *Ibid.*, p. 1846.

ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty and the significance of the Agreed Minute, especially with regard to their effects on the ROK Air Force. Since these two documents came into being as a result of US disengagement from Korea after the Armistice, the chapter opens with an assessment of US force redeployment.

5.1. US Post- Korean War Policy and Its Force Redeployment

There was strong US public sentiment to bring American troops home and reduce defence spending when the Korean War ended. On 30 October 1953, three months following the Armistice in Korea, President Eisenhower signed off on NSC 162/2. This policy paper posited a continuation of the containment policy and called for both increased strategic air forces and an expanded air defence for the continental United States.⁵

Henceforth, US planners were no longer to assume that limited war on a large scale should be conducted without atomic weapons; indeed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were instructed to plan on using nuclear weapons whenever their use could be seen as militarily desirable.⁶ The new emphasis on deterrence through the implied threat of employing such weapons - to include the newly emerging class of so-called 'tactical,' or low yield, battlefield weapons (e.g., the Army's new 280 mm cannon) - went largely unnoticed by the American public until Secretary of State John Foster Dulles addressed the Council of Foreign Relations in New York on 25 January 1954. Implying the Eisenhower administration's reluctance to engage in renewed ground combat in Asia, Dulles made it clear that no local defence,

⁵ William E. Berry, Jr., 'Alliance Commitments and Strategies: Asia,' in Schuyler Foerster and Edward N. Wright, eds., *American Defense Policy*, 6th edition (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 225; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, pp. 402-403. For a succinct analysis of NSC 162/2, see S. Dockrill, 'Cooperation and Suspicion,' pp. 153-154.

⁶ Appendix 'A': Major Implementing Actions to Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (*Wilson*). Subj: U.S. Courses of Action in Korea. *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1628.

no matter how numerous in infantry and tactical aircraft, could by itself contain the manpower of the communist world. Henceforth, local defence must be reinforced by the deterrent of massive atomic retaliatory power. The United States, then, could hope to deter local aggression by maintaining 'a great capacity to retaliate instantly by means and in places of [its] own choosing.'⁷

This so-called 'New Look' strategy was driven partly by economic considerations. In its simplest terms, widely used by the US press at the time, the goal was to achieve 'more bang for the buck over the long haul.' President Eisenhower believed very strongly that America's well-being in the future depended upon a balance among three elements of strength - military, economic, and moral (the latter not specifically defined but involving a large dose of anti-communism). Therefore, military expenditures would have to be reduced to a level that could be safely maintained over time - the 'long haul'; this could be achieved by relying on atomic-armed airpower ('more bang') rather than on a more costly large standing American army stationed overseas. Thus, the actual military defence of South Korea after the Armistice was only one small part of a much larger equation. Some combination of local (Korean) forces, backed up by the threat of US atomic airpower, would have to suffice. Accordingly, the United States decided to redeploy most of its forces from both Japan and Korea as soon as possible. (Troop levels in Japan, for example, were to be cut by one-half between 1954 and 1956.)⁸

In the meantime, Far East Air Forces notified the ROKAF of USAF redeployments from Korea in a memorandum, dated 4 September 1954 of Major General Jacob E. Smart, Deputy for Operations, FEAFF, to Lt. General

⁷ Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Address to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York on 25 January 1954. *Department of State Bulletin*, 30:761 (January 25, 1954), p. 108.

⁸ Berry, 'Alliance Commitments,' p. 225. Berry's succinct account on the Eisenhower administration's Asian policy can be found on pp. 223-225.

Kim Chung-Yul,⁹ stating that four light bomber/fighter-bomber wings (3d, 17th, 8th, 18th) and one tactical reconnaissance wing (67th) would be withdrawn from Korea at an early date. But these units would continue to maintain one squadron each on a rotational basis. Two Fighter Bomber Groups (58th, 474th) would remain in Korea, until those units completed their redeployment to the United States, which was scheduled for FY 1955. In his memorandum, General Smart promised that the logistic system would be maintained to permit immediate and sustained combat operations in case of a resumption of hostilities, and Far East Air Forces would continue to promote their combat capabilities to help South Korea's air defence after redeployment from Korea. He noted that as FEAF's tactical air units in South Korea were all in forward areas vulnerable to an enemy's surprise air attack, their redeployment would be to less vulnerable areas, e.g., Japan, Ryukyu Islands, and Hawaii, from which they could immediately launch attacks against enemy targets in the event of renewed hostilities.¹⁰

Based on the results of the redeployments, and in the light of the possibility of reducing forces in Korea below the initial two-division goal, the JCS recommended on 31 December 1954 that the First Marine Air Wing be withdrawn from Korea so that the US First Marine Division could be freed from its static, defensive mission in Korea.¹¹ To offset this loss in tactical airpower, they recommended that one of the two US fighter bomber

⁹ General Kim was promoted from Major General in March 1953. Upon his resignation as ROKAF Chief of Staff in December 1952, he headed the ROK Military Liaison Office of the United Nations Command in Tokyo until May 1954, when he returned to Seoul to become a special assistant to the Minister of National Defense. Six months after his return, he resumed his second tenure as ROKAF Chief of Staff (1954-56). Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 491.

¹⁰ Memo, MGen Jacob E. Smart to LtGen Kim Chung Yul, 4 September 1954. 'Redeployments of USAF Units in Korea.' in '5AF History, 1 July 1954 - 31 December 1954,' *ms.*, Appendix 10. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 3. AFHRA.

¹¹ The intention of withdrawing US Marine units from Korea was also to add their strength to the mobile strategic reserve based in the United States. *New York Times*, 21 December 1954, p. 1.

wings scheduled for withdrawal in 1955 be retained in the Far East at least to the end of the calendar year.¹²

Thus, most of the US Air Force tactical aircraft would depart the Korean peninsula. By the time the redeployment was to be completed in approximately nine months,¹³ American fighter forces retained in South Korea would be reduced to two Fighter Bomber Groups and less than 13 squadrons, from 19 groups and 69 squadrons controlled by the United States Far East Air Forces at the end of the Korean War.¹⁴ With departure of non-American UN fighter squadrons, the three squadrons of the ROKAF 10th Fighter Wing would become the only element of the UN air forces other than the USAF.¹⁵ In effect, the ROKAF F-51 squadrons of Second World War vintage would be left alone as the only air arm on the Korean peninsula to assist the American Air Force on behalf of the United Nations.

Nevertheless, the expansion of ROK's airpower was not an acceptable issue to the Eisenhower administration, which stressed nuclear deterrence airpower (SAC) and increased local (non-US) conventional ground forces.¹⁶ South Korean political leaders did not press their American counterparts to agree to ROK's repeated requests for the increase of ROK's air defence

¹² Memo, JCS to SecDef, 'Redeployment of Forces from the Far East -- Western Pacific Area,' 31 Dec 54, JCS 2147/123. CCS 381 Far East (11-28-50) sec 24, Box 17; Geographical File (GF) 1954-56; Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Record Group (RG) 218. National Archives, Washington, DC. (NA/WDC).

¹³ The phased withdrawal of US troops from Korea began on 12 September 1954, and was to be completed by the end of the same year. 'Second Progress Report by the Operations Coordinating Board to the National Security Council on NSC 170/1, Subj: United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Korea, December 29, 1954,' in *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1953.

¹⁴ Six squadrons of F-86Fs, three squadrons each of 58th and 474th Fighter Bomber Groups, would be stationed at Osan AB (K-55) and Taegu AB (K-2) respectively. The remaining squadrons (one squadron each of 3d and 17th Light Bomb Wings, and 8th and 18th Fighter Bomber Wings) would remain in Korea on a rotational basis. Memo, MGen Jacob E. Smart to LtGen Kim Chung Yul, 4 September 1954. 'Redeployments of USAF Units in Korea,' in 'SAF History, 1 July 1954 - 31 December 1954,' *ms.*, K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 3, Appendix 10. AFHRA.

¹⁵ Counting an average of seven squadrons of US Marines and four fighter squadrons from Australia, South Africa, South Korea and the United Kingdom, FEAF controlled over 1,500 aircraft at the end of war in July 1953. 'FEAF Statistical Digest, 31 July 1953,' p. 8; 'USAF Statistical Digest, FY-1953, p. 15' in Futrell, *The USAF in Korea, 1950-53*, p. 689.

¹⁶ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, pp. 402-403.

capability. Instead, President Rhee and his staff focused their negotiations mainly on an increase of ROK infantry forces, citing a specific number of additional divisions.¹⁷ Diplomatically, the signing of a written defence agreement increased US government's security commitment to South Korea. But practically speaking, did the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty help enhance the actual capability of ROK's own air defence? Did it ensure that the ROKAF could defend its territorial air space before assistance arrived?

5.2. ROK-US Defence Pact: Its Effect on ROK Air Defence Posture

When the United States government agreed to sign the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty on 1 October 1953, it was the first officially documented defence insurance South Koreans ever had with a big power not territorially adjacent to the peninsula.¹⁸ Some nationalistic Korean historians might give credit to President Rhee for the diplomatic accomplishment. However, was it really an accomplishment in terms of practical improvement of the ROK's national defence posture? What was the purpose of the treaty? The answer is contained in Article III, the heart of the treaty:

Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on each of the Parties in territories now under their respective administrative control, or hereafter recognized by one of the Parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and

¹⁷ Memo, JCS (Radford) to SecState, 17 March 1954. *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt. 2, pp. 1764-1765.

¹⁸ The U.S.-Korean Mutual Defense Treaty was signed in Washington on 1 October 1953, about two months after the Korean War ended. The treaty entered into force as of 17 November 1954. The Armistice was signed on 27 July 1953. Department of State, *A Historical Summary of the United States-Korean Relations: With a Chronology of Important Developments, 1834-1962*. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1962), pp. 27, 30.

declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.¹⁹

The ROK government also granted the United States 'the right to dispose United States land, air and sea forces in and around the territory of the Republic of Korea,' as stated in Article IV of the treaty. This meant South Korea permitted in advance the United States to station American military forces in South Korea as needed. Based on this article, US forces are presently in Korea, but the United States could withdraw its forces from Korea, if it seemed expedient.²⁰ Consequently, the issue of America's troop commitment is more a political matter than a consideration of law or treaty interpretation.

It is a widely-accepted view that the mutual defence pact was a concession that the United States made to the ROK government in return for President Syngman Rhee's acceptance of the Korean Armistice.²¹ The hidden main concern of the United States policymakers was the possible effect of a communist dominated Korean peninsula on America's security with regard to 'an area of vital strategic importance to the United States, namely, the offshore island chain in the Far East, and above all the key element in that chain, the Japanese islands.'²² To achieve the security of these islands, the United States used the US-South Korean defence pact to establish the

¹⁹ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations, *Mutual Defense Treaty with Korea*. Report on Executive A. 83rd Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1954), p. 3.

²⁰ Richard T. Detrio, *Strategic Partners: South Korea and the United States* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1989), p. 14.

²¹ Chang-jin Park, 'The Influence of Small States Upon the Superpowers: United States-South Korean Relations as a Case Study, 1950-53,' *World Politics* 28:1 (October 1975), p. 111; Hak-joon Kim, *H'an-Gook Moon-Jae (The Korean Question)*, p. 126.

²² General Matthew B. Ridgway testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: 'The United States has long since learned that to keep war from its shores an enemy must be held far from its territory. The Republic of Korea could make a direct contribution to the security of the United States in the event of general war or of a renewal of hostilities in that area, for if Communist forces were to overrun the Korean peninsula, they would directly and seriously threaten. . . ' the defence perimeter of the United States. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations, 'Mutual Defense Treaty With Korea,' Hearings on Executive A . . . 83rd Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1954), p. 28.

Korean peninsula as a buffer between communist North Korea/China and Japan. South Korea, on the other hand, viewed the treaty as an instrument to achieve nation-building and a foundation for the eventual unification of the peninsula by ensuring America's security commitment in a written form.²³

A basic premise in defence planning - institutionalised in the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty and necessary to ensure that South Korea had significant resources to apply to the paramount objectives of nation-building - was that deterrence and defence were US-South Korean joint responsibilities. In practice, this means that South Korea would provide the great bulk of the infantry-oriented standing forces while the United States would complement those forces in peace and war, principally with high technology (e.g., airpower, and later, satellite-based air surveillance, etc.), sophisticated combat-support systems and logistical support. Despite the supportive congressional hearings on the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty, it would not be easy 'to determine precisely either the South Korean or the American perception of the US commitment,' due to their respective interpretations of obligations and limitations.²⁴

The possibility of America revoking its security commitment remains a serious concern for Koreans. The United States became involved in the Republic of Korea, not as the result of accumulated American interests built steadily over a period of time (like Japan and China), but as an 'accidental byproduct' of Cold War circumstances.²⁵ Therefore, it became apparent to

²³ Yong-Shik Kim, *Kim Yong Shik Oe-Kyo 33-Nyun: Sae-Byok Ae Yak-Sok (A Promise at Dawn: Kim Yong Shik's 33-Year Diplomatic Career)* (Seoul, Korea: Kim-Young Sa, 1993), p. 192. For an account on the working staff's background story of the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty, see pp. 190-194. Kim was one of Rhee's diplomatic staff deeply involved in the treaty negotiation. Ambassador Kim is a former Minister of Foreign Affairs (1963-64).

²⁴ Claude A. Buss, *The United States and the Republic of Korea: Background for Policy* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), p. 68.

²⁵ Interview, 27 March 1993, author with Dr. Kim Hakjoon, Professor of Seoul National University (1977-1990) and Special Assistant to President Roh Tae Woo (1990-1992).

South Koreans that at any time Americans might repeal their commitments at their unilateral discretion.²⁶

President Rhee's preoccupation with the acquisition of written assurance of US commitment to South Korea's security overshadowed the demand for South Korea's air posture after the Armistice, in particular after the extraction of most US air forces from Korea. The ROK government's concentration on the defence treaty deflected attention away from the real (practical) issue of South Korea's air defence capability. Instead, the defence pact resulted in generating a false impression that American airpower would protect South Korea when conflict occurred, despite the fact that the element of time is crucially important in the conduct of air defence operations under the limited early warning time and limited air manoeuvring space, i.e., air defence depth.²⁷ In due consideration of the inevitable organisational delay prior to US Air Force intervention, a compensatory measure should have been provided by further increasing the number of fighter squadrons and aircraft control & warning system (AC&W) in the South Korean Air Force.

The paucity of ROK airpower dictated that its air defence posture be totally dependent upon American air support. Disengagement of America's committed airpower in Korea, however, could be quick, and accomplished in a relatively short time. The air units stationed in the Korean peninsula could be flown out swiftly, if the American government did not want direct

²⁶ President Jimmy Carter used the human rights issue as a political excuse to withdraw troops from South Korea in 1977. Ltr, President Carter to Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., Speaker of the House of Representatives, 21 Oct 77, concerning 'Transfer of Certain Defense Articles to the Republic of Korea.' *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 13:43 (October 24, 1977), pp. 1576-1577; Detrio, *Strategic Partners*, p. 14.

²⁷ It was estimated that North Korea's preemptive attack could be made possible with less than eighteen hours' warning. Charles A. Sorrels, *Planning U.S. Purpose Forces: Forces Related to Asia* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, 1977), p. 36 fn 7. General Richard G. Stilwell, a former commander of American forces in Korea reckoned that North Korea could strike with only a few hours' warning. Richard G. Stilwell, 'Commentary: The United States, Japan and the Security of Korea,' *International Security* vol. 2 (Fall 1977), p. 93.

involvement in the fighting.²⁸ In the obvious sense, all air base facilities and ground support elements without US fighter aircraft are useless, because the loss of fighters incapacitates all remaining elements of airpower. The salient political and psychological difference between ground forces and air units is well summarised by Lefever's quoting of an American official: 'War planes are like geese. They can honk and fly away.'²⁹

In this regard, the defence pact might enhance the ROK's defence posture diplomatically, but not much militarily, unless further actions be taken to improve ROK's indigenous airpower, sufficient enough at least to cope with the immediate initial threat from North Korea until the arrival of US assistance. The likelihood of swift, certain reinforcement by the United States would be problematic at best; the willingness to do so in a future crisis could never be assured. Even in the best political circumstances from the Korean standpoint - e.g., a sympathetic American president, unencumbered by other on-going crises - a minimum of several days would elapse before United States strike aircraft could participate. And the high probability is that three to four days late would be equal to *too late* in the event of North Korea's *blitzkrieg* attack.³⁰ Recognising the necessity for the ROK to establish a foundation for the capability to defend its air space prior to the arrival of external assistance, the ROKAF sought to increase its efforts for further expansion.

5.3. ROKAF's Demand for Further Expansion and America's Response

²⁸ Ralph N. Clough, *Deterrence and Defense in Korea: The Role of U.S. Forces* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1976), p. 18.

²⁹ Ernest W. Lefever, 'Withdrawal from Korea: A Perplexing Decision,' *Strategic Review* 6:1 (Winter 1978), p. 34. For Lefever's full account, see pp. 28-35.

³⁰ Richard G. Stilwell, 'The Need for U.S. Ground Forces in Korea,' *AFI Defense Review*, No. 2 (1977), p. 22.

ROKAF's first official demand for expansion to the United States government was attempted during the Korean War. While South Korean fighter pilots flew combat missions, Major General Kim Chung-Yul and his staff were equally busy planning the expansion of the ROK Air Force. In May 1951, General Kim reiterated the ROKAF's long range concern to have a larger air force, and reminded his American advisers of the ROK government's authorisation to increase the ROKAF personnel strength from 5,800 to 7,000 by August 1952.³¹ In the meantime, the ROK Army strength was increased to ten infantry divisions by the end of 1951, while the ROKAF fighter strength still remained at one squadron. To support the ten-division ROK Army, the ROK Air Force prepared an ambitious programme for its expansion early in March 1952. Known as the ROKAF *Three Year Plan*, it was immediately sent to 5th Air Force in General Kim's letter of 10 March 1952.³²

5.3.1. The Three-Year Plan

The *Three Year Plan* aimed to enlarge the ROK Air Force to three hundred F-84 jet fighter bomber aircraft over a three year period from 1 April 1952 to 31 March 1955. The plan called for the eventual growth of the total ROKAF personnel strength to 23,700 by March 1955, including four fighter wings, with seventy-five aircraft per wing, to be achieved by acquiring one hundred aircraft each year for three years. The plan also proposed the establishment of four major commands - (1) Combat Air Command, (2) Air Traffic Control Command, (3) Air Maintenance Depot, and (4) General Headquarters of Education and Training.³³ The plan was

³¹ '5AF History, Jul-Dec 1952,' ms. vol. 3, p. 41. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1952, v. 3. AFHRA; *Gong-Goon Sa (I)*, 1949-53, p. 266.

³² With President Rhee's approval, the *Three Year Plan* was reported in advance to Lt. General F. F. Everest, Commanding General of 5th Air Force, before it was officially approved by the ROK Cabinet Council on 16 May 1952. *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 89.

³³ *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa (The History of the Air War)*, pp. 212, 214-215.

not a result of prior consultations with high level American military authorities. (It was informally shown in haste to working level American advisers.) FEAF/5th Air Force and the Joint Chiefs of Staff refused to recognise 'such unilateral plans as have been developed by the Chief of Staff, Republic of Korea Air Force.'³⁴ From the American standpoint, any buildup plan of ROKAF strength should have been preceded by an extensive review by the USAF first, because of its logistical support responsibilities. One of the immediate problems was that the US Joint Chiefs of Staff had not yet given formal recognition to the ROKAF fighter and flying training units. As a result, the logistical support to the ROK Air Force came from US Army stocks in the Far East that were no longer replaceable from the continental United States (CONUS).³⁵ Hence, any augmentation in the ROK Air Force strength would result in a further drain on local US Army stockpiles.³⁶

The review of the ROK Air Force logistical and manpower needs was undertaken after FEAF sent 5th Air Force a letter on 10 September from Far East Command (FEC), which requested detailed justification as to (1) why Army logistical support of the ROK Air Force should not be limited immediately to supporting an outfit of 5,800 personnel and (2) why a ROK Air Force of even 5,800 was needed to support its present aircraft strength.

There was a special irony in the second point. Here was a fledgling air force asking to be increased from 5,800 to 7,000 to support a larger number of aircraft, but the question put by the Army-dominated US Far East Command turned out to be, in effect, 'Why do these guys need even 5,800 to

³⁴ '5AF History, Jul-Dec 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 132. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1952, v. 1. AFHRA.

³⁵ CONUS differentiates itself from the terms 'overseas' or 'theatre.' American official papers use this term regularly, occasionally substituting 'the ZI' (zone of the interior) with exactly the same meaning. In these respects, the states of Hawaii and Alaska are explicitly excluded. (In the U.S. military, for example, both are considered 'overseas assignments'.)

³⁶ During the Korean War, the primary logistic support of non-flying equipment and materiel for the ROKAF was provided through the ROK Army logistic system, which was brought under control of the Commanding General, US Eighth Army and Korean Communications Zone. '5AF History, Jul-Dec 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 54. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1952, v. 3. AFHRA.

run a piddling less than one hundred aircraft? The questions were raised, according to the Far East Command, to obtain authorisation from the US Army for interim logistical support and to determine the troop basis for a ROKAF table of organisation (T/O) and equipment (T/E), upon which Army logistical support could be based during the period of hostilities. (Given that the USAF had just become an independent service in 1947, the US Army was upset that it still had to support a separate air force with Army money and equipment.) In its reply to FEAF on 19 September, 5th Air Force stated that pending a restudy of the entire problem of logistical support for the ROK Air Force, it could not defend either the 5,800 or the 7,000 personnel figures.³⁷

Meanwhile, General Kim ascertained at 5th Air Force's request the basis for the ROK government's authorisation to increase ROKAF personnel. In a letter to 5th Air Force on 18 September 1952, the ROKAF Chief of Staff pointed out that the ROK government had previously authorised a strength of 5,800 personnel to be reached by the end of March 1952, increasing to 7,346 by 31 August 1952, and finally to 11,500 by 31 March 1953. The fighter strength of the ROKAF had recently increased from twenty to forty aircraft and plans existed to establish a complete fighter wing and one training wing, plus the necessary command and supporting elements. General Kim also stressed such factors as the disparity of the ROK Air Force strength in relation to the ROK Army strength and the extensive training needs of Air Force personnel as important reasons for justifying manpower increases.³⁸

³⁷ 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 43. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1952, v. 3. AFHRA.

³⁸ As a part of the *Three Year Plan*, ROK government desired the growth of its Air Force manpower strength to 11,500 by March 1953, the initial year, and 23,700 by 1955, the end year of the plan. Ltr, Hq, ROKAF to CG, 5AF, 18 Sep 52, sub: 'Strength of the ROK Air Force for the ROK Fiscal Year 1952.' Same file, pp. 44-46, 53-54.

The 5th Air Force finally completed its own study entitled 'Manpower and Organization Study of the Republic of Korea Air Force' and submitted it to FEAF on 22 October 1952.³⁹ On the basis of its data, 5th Air Force working staff pointed out that a minimum of 4,447 personnel were required by USAF standards to support the ROK Air Force at its current aircraft strength plus certain 'special activities.'⁴⁰ Allowing that Korean training and other standards were lower and that additional personnel would be needed if the ROK Air Force expanded to a strength of two wings, it was recommended that this figure be augmented by 1,353 personnel for a total of 5,800 officers and airmen. This figure, 5th Air Force believed, would be sufficient to support a ROK Air Force composed of one combat wing of seventy-five F-51s, a training wing of twenty F-51s, twenty T-6s, thirty L-5/19 aircraft plus such units as a special activity, a security services and an air police.⁴¹

Supporting his staff's manpower study of the ROKAF, 5th Air Force Commander Lt. General F. F. Everest expressed a negative view of the ROKAF *Three Year Plan*, which he thought went well beyond 'the initial establishment of a ROK Air Force of one fighter wing, one training wing, a transport squadron, and the necessary command and support elements.' General Everest pointed out that there were no existing requirements for a Combat Air Command and Air Traffic Control Command as presented in the plan. Given the size of ROKAF fighter strength and its limited role at the time, the consensus finally arrived at by the American Air Force authorities opposed separate ROKAF subordinate commands, which General Everest said would require additional manpower and 'heavy' organisational structure.

³⁹ Ltr, Hq, 5AF to CG, FEAF, OPP-P 400, 22 Oct 52, sub: 'Logistical Support of the Republic of Korea Air Force.' *Ibid.*, pp. 48-52.

⁴⁰ In collaboration with Far East Air Force, the ROKAF formed a special intelligence unit for commando and guerrilla operations in support of combat rescue of downed UNC pilots during the Korean War. *Gong-Gom Sa (I)*, 1949-53, pp. 314-321.

⁴¹ '5AF History, Jul-Dec 1952,' *ms.*, vol.3, pp. 47, 51. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1952, v. 3. AFHRA.

The 5th Air Force Commander further criticised the ROKAF's 'excessive' manpower goal, which 'could possibly result in inefficiency and wasted personnel. Thus, financial outlays for this purpose could be more suitably employed elsewhere.'⁴²

In actuality, however, the 5th Air Force had been conducting a positive appraisal of the ROKAF force improvement plan, ever since the ROKAF's initial expansion proposal was presented in the spring of 1952. US Air Force documents reveal that General Everest reviewed the South Korean Air Force's *Three Year Force Buildup Plan* in a favourable manner, and recommended in May 1952 to USAF Headquarters in Washington a conversion program for the South Korean Air Force, in which two alternative plans for converting the Korean Air Force to jet fighters were suggested.⁴³ Under both plans two ROK squadrons would receive F-80 jets and the conversion of the USAF 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing to F-86 *Sabres* would generally coincide with the proposed conversion programme for the ROKAF. Thus, the US 8th Fighter Wing's F-80 *Shootingstars* would transfer to the ROK squadrons. The second plan, however, called for converting ROK squadrons to F-84 *Thunderjets* from the USAF 136th Fighter-Bomber Wing beginning on 1 October 1953. If sufficient aircraft were available, three ROKAF squadrons would receive the F-84s. F-80 and F-51 aircraft would be used in a training squadron.⁴⁴

5th Air Force recommended the second plan, which would give the ROK Air Force three fighter squadrons of F-84s, and a training squadron equipped with the remaining F-80s and F-51s by early 1954, thus increasing

⁴² Ltr, CC/SAF to C/S ROKAF, 21 May 52. 'SAF History, Jan-Jun 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 367-368. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. AFHRA. 'Heavy' implies a larger than normal staff organisation.

⁴³ 'Future ROKAF Plans' in 'SAF History, Jan-Jun 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 269-271. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1952, v. 7. AFHRA.

⁴⁴ This is summarised from three sources: (1) *H'ang-Gong Jon-Sa (The History of the Air War)*, pp. 214-215; (2) 'Future ROKAF Plans' in 'SAF History, Jan-Jun 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 1, pp. 267-271. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1952, v. 1. AFHRA; and (3) 'Ltr from Hq SAF to Hq FEAF,' 14 May 1954 in the same file vol. 2, Appendix 65.

the ROKAF strength to at least one hundred *jet* fighter aircraft. The 5th Air Force recommendation forwarded through FEAF/FEC, however, was disregarded by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, based on the rationale of the Joint Strategic Plans Committee (JSPC). In its report of 13 February 1953, the JSPC asserted it would not be advisable to allow the South Korean Air Force to convert to jet fighters and form 'an air force of suitable size and type to provide sufficient ROK air units to counter the increasing communist jet air strength,' because it would be more effective and faster to meet the communist air threat by the reinforcement of American 'air forces where training, supply and maintenance facilities were already in being.' Furthermore, after the cessation of hostilities on the Korean peninsula, the JSPC continued to argue, the South Korean Air Force would hardly be able to serve as a deterrent to North Korea's renewed aggression unless the ROKAF could be allowed to build its own airpower comparable to that of the North Korean Air Force.⁴⁵ Despite the American government's restrained response, the pace of ROKAF's lobbying for expansion never slowed down after the cessation of hostilities.

5.3.2. The Struggle for a Compromise

Fearing the vacuum of combat readiness left by the US force redeployment, the ROK government was very concerned about strengthening its own forces. When Secretary Dulles visited Seoul in August 1953, President Rhee, through Admiral Sohn Won Yil, Minister of National Defense,⁴⁶ presented to Dulles a plan for a major increase in ROK military

⁴⁵ Memo, AFCOS to CJCS, 19 Jan 53. 'Augmentation of the Republic of Korea Air Force, 13 February 1953.' JCS 1776/355. University Press of America (UPA), *JCS Records, 1949-53*, pt 2, Microfilm Reel XI, frame 0237. Hereafter cited as Microfilm XI.0237, JCS 1949-53, UPA.

⁴⁶ Holding the power of the ROK Army generals in check, Rhee had never appointed a ROKA general as head of the Defense Ministry. Vice Admiral Sohn Won Yil, former Chief of ROK Naval Operations, was later replaced by former ROK Air Force Chief of Staff Lt. General Kim Chung-Yul in June 1957. Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 210.

forces. Rhee wished the last four ROK infantry divisions of the twenty already authorised to be activated immediately, and equipped with the same firepower 'as equivalent to that of US divisions.' Rhee's proposal for the South Korean Air Force was to expand it from two flying wings to eight and one-third flying wings:

5 Fighter Wings (15 Fighter Squadrons),
2 Light Bomb Wings (6 Light Bomb Wings),
1 Reconnaissance Wing (3 Reconnaissance Squadrons),
1 Air Transport Squadron,
Necessary command and supporting units;
The US Air Force would turn over to the ROKAF all its aircraft, equipment, and installations in Korea.⁴⁷

Secretary of the Army Robert T. Stevens, who accompanied Mr. Dulles and discussed South Korea's military needs with Admiral Sohn, called the ROK's goals 'utterly impractical'.⁴⁸

The feasibility of attaining the ROK Army's goal of a twenty division force had been argued among American military leaders in Washington for some time. For instance, General Ridgway, US Army Chief of Staff and a member of the JCS, was dubious about the ROK's twenty-division force goal, citing: (1) 'insufficient equipment available in Korea for the last four [skeleton] divisions'; (2) the Armistice Agreement's prohibition of 'the importation of war material'; (3) consideration of 'the requirements of the expanding Japanese National Safety Force'; and (4) the necessity to reexamine the fact that 'the 20-division goal had been approved while the

⁴⁷ Appendix: 'Additional Factors Considered in Conjunction with the Proposed Expansion of the ROK Forces' to Memo, JCS to SecDef, 'Recommendations of the Korean Minister of Defense Concerning Expansion of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces,' 31 Mar 54. S/P-NSC Files, lot 61, 'Korea: Increase in ROK Forces (NSC Action No. 1043-b).' *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, pp. 1781-1785.

⁴⁸ Memo, SecA to SecDef, 'Report on the Dulles Mission to Korea,' 22 Aug 53, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec 135, as quoted in Robert Watson, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy 1953-1954 vol. 5* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1986), p. 234. Hereafter cited as Watson, *JCS History, 1953-54*.

war was still in progress,' and hence might no longer be valid. Ridgway offered instead merely to expedite the organisation of 'cadres for the final four ROK divisions.'⁴⁹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff finally approved the validity of ROK's twenty-division force goal on 31 March 1954. In addition, the ROK Navy's personnel ceiling was increased to 15,000 and its ship strength from fifty-six to eighty-three, including sixteen landing craft and two destroyer escorts.⁵⁰

As for the ROKAF, no increase was approved. The official reasoning behind this decision was best revealed by Admiral Radford on 31 March 1954 in his memorandum to Secretary of Defense Wilson. Radford argued that any expansion of South Korean airpower as requested by the ROK government would not relieve the United States of its responsibility for deterrence, because '[t]he major deterrent to renewed aggression in Korea should be Chinese communists' and North Koreans' fear of atomic retaliation, coupled with the announced intention [of the United States] to resist renewed aggression.'⁵¹ Behind such language, but left unstated, was American apprehension that a powerful South Korean airpower could become the offensive instrument for a unilateral resumption of hostilities by the ROK government.⁵²

Unaware of the deliberations in Washington, in October 1953 the ROK National Defense Minister attempted twice, in writing to the American

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Memo, JCS to SecDef, 'Ultimate Goal for the Republic of Korea (ROK) Navy,' 6 Oct 53, JCS 1776/391. CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec. 137, Box 45; GF 1951-53; Records of the JCS, RG 218; NA/WDC.

⁵¹ 'Additional Factors Considered in Conjunction With the Proposed Expansion of the ROK Forces,' appended to Memo, JCS to SecDef (Wilson), Subj: Recommendations of the Korean Minister of Defense Concerning Expansion of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces, 31 March 1954. *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1784.

⁵² Lecture by Professor Rhee Sang-Woo, Sogang University, 21 May 1991, Air Force Academy, Chongju, Korea. Professor Rhee's view was endorsed by the incumbent Minister of National Defense Lee Yang-Ho and former ROKAF Chiefs of Staff (Lt. Generals (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, Chang Sung-Whan, and Chang Chi-Ryang. Telephone interviews, author with interviewees, 27-31 October 1995.

Defense Secretary, to seek approval of ROKAF's readjusted force goals - five tactical wings.⁵³

Four Fighter Wings

11 F-86 fighter squadrons

1 F-94 all weather interceptor squadron

One Composite Wing

1 RF-86 tactical reconnaissance squadron

1 RB-29 tactical reconnaissance squadron

2 B-26 light bomber squadrons

ROKAF to take over, maintain and operate existing USAF radar, communications and weather systems in Korea

These proposals by the ROK government, albeit in a reduced scale compared to the previous 8 1/3 wing-proposal, were still too ambitious for American military planners. The United States government replied it was 'very interested in strengthening the ROK forces,' but equally aware of 'the problems involved in maintaining the complex equipment that would be required to expand the ROK Air Force,' and its expenses would need to be covered by the US government.⁵⁴ In other words, the cost of additional training of Korean pilots, technicians, radar-observer bombardiers, etc. that would be required to operate these aircraft could not be justified. In particular, American air advisers in Seoul and Tokyo recommended to Washington that B-26 bombers should not be included in any plan, because of the offensive nature of such aircraft, and bad weather missions were to be

⁵³ 'Development of the Republic of Korea Air Force' in 'History of Far East Air Forces, 1 July 1953 - 31 December 1953, Volume 1,' p. 33., *ms.*, USAF historical records, K-720.01 Jul-Dec 1953, v. 1. US Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Hereafter cited as 'FEAF History, Jul-Dec 1953, v. 1.'

⁵⁴ Letters of 7 and 21 October 1953 from ROK Defense Minister Sohn Won-Yil to US Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson. Watson, *JCS History, 1953-54*, pp. 234-235; 'Additional Factors Considered in Conjunction With the Proposed Expansion of the ROK Forces' appended to 'Memorandum by the JCS to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson),' March 31, 1954 in *FRUS 1952-54* v. 15, pt 2, p. 1781. For further discussion of American policy planners' considerations on the ROK force expansion, see pp. 1781-1785.

flown exclusively by the USAF.⁵⁵ The US government also feared that the proposed ROKAF expansion would be equivalent to the size of a USAF numbered Air Force, which the South Korean Air Force simply could not afford.⁵⁶

On 22 January 1954, the ROK government reiterated its previous request for increasing ROK infantry forces, and asked America for even further assistance 'in organizing no less than 15-20 additional divisions' (i.e., *beyond* the 20 already requested).⁵⁷ But this request was rejected by the US government, because in its view the additional increase of ROK infantry divisions made 'no secret of the fact that these were wanted for attack rather than for defense.'⁵⁸ The ROKAF expansion proposal was also refused, and readjusted in a down-sized scale, based on FEAF's reassessment report of 12 February 1954, which included neither bombers nor reconnaissance planes:

6 Fighter Bomber Squadrons (2 wings of 3 squadrons each)
1 Composite Group (1 Fighter Squadron and 1 Transport Squadron)
1 Air Tactical Control Squadron
1 Communications Group
Sufficient personnel and equipment to man a 9-airbase complex on an austerity basis.⁵⁹

The JCS did allow for the conversion of the existing fighter wing to jet aircraft and the establishment of a tactical air control organisation 'within existing personnel ceilings,' but no ROKAF expansion was approved.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ 'FEAF History, Jul-Dec 1953, v. 1,' *ms.*, pp. 33-34. K-720.01 Jul-Dec 1953, v. 1. AFHRA.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵⁷ *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1781.

⁵⁸ Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

⁵⁹ 'Considerations Affecting the ROK Air Force Expansion,' in 'Appendix: Additional Factors Considered in Conjunction With the Proposed Expansion of the ROK Forces to Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson), (Subject: Recommendations of the Korean Minister of Defense Concerning Expansion of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces)' in *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1783; 'FEAF History, Jul-Dec 1953, v. 1,' *ms.*, p. 33. K-720.01 Jul-Dec 1953, v. 1. AFHRA.

⁶⁰ *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1783.

Why did American military planners refuse the ROKAF expansion plan, while at the same time advocating its jet conversion? There are a number of reasons for this. First, in terms of financial affordability, the proposed ROK military expansion demanded money that exceeded the limits of the ROK's economy. The National Security Council estimated in April 1954 that it would cost the ROK government an outlay of at least \$1 billion per year to maintain its proposed forces under peacetime conditions. \$400 million would be needed for military equipment and supplies. The remaining \$600 million of the annual cost would have to be budgeted by the ROK government to cover the operation, military construction, etc. Since the ROK civilian economy could not afford to carry this financial burden, the US government would have to be charged with the annual 'maintenance of the presently approved ROK forces, partly through direct military assistance and partly through economic or defense support aid.⁶¹

Moreover, it was estimated that the ROKAF's jet conversion would cost about \$43.5 million, including the necessary transition training. This cost would be less than six percent of \$750 million, the budget the ROK Army would require for initial equipment of its twenty infantry divisions. The ROK Navy and Marines would require roughly \$12 million and \$25 million respectively for their force improvement.⁶² Although the ROKAF's augmentation would cost more than the Marines' and Navy's, its jet transition was not an expensive scheme in terms of increasing ROK's indigenous firepower and combat effectiveness.

Apart from financial affordability, the Americans thought it was unreasonable for the South Korean government at that time to ask for more than what the United States had stipulated, i.e., a 720,000-troop ceiling.

⁶¹ 'Rough Costs Involved in Expansion of Republic of Korea Armed Forces Cost of Initial Equipment.' Memo, SecDef, 193d NSC Mtg, 13 April 1954 in *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1789.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 1788-1789.

According to an assessment of the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA, predecessor of the AID: Administration of International Development) in June 1954, out of the total South Korean population of approximately 23,500,000, there were less than two million males between the ages of 17 and 40 available for service in the ROK armed forces. This review estimated that 1,041,000 able-bodied men would be the maximum that could be put into the field.⁶³ In other words, the additional fifteen to twenty divisions as requested by the ROK government would well exceed the ROK's total available manpower resources.

Secondly, from the standpoint of logistical supportability, the operational capability of the ROK Air Force would steadily decrease, unless ROKAF's obsolescent propeller-driven F-51 aircraft, suffering from an acute shortage of replacement spare parts, were replaced with modern equipment with adequate spare parts. Apart from the logistic difficulty, the ROK fighter wing, equipped with obsolete non-jet aircraft, would be ineffective either in a ground support or an air defence role against a superior North Korean Air Force. The effectiveness of jet fighters versus propeller-driven F-51s was well illustrated by an American airpower analyst. Allen R. Millet, in his study of the operational efficiency of jet aircraft during the Korean War, asserts the jets were more effective for three reasons: (1) the jet fighters were capable of generating twice the daily sorties of the propeller-driven F-51; (2) the operational readiness rate of the jets was higher because the maintenance time of the jets was only half of the F-51's and jets' spare parts availability was better; and (3) in combat, the jet fighters proved less vulnerable to ground fire because of their speed.⁶⁴

⁶³ 'Expansion of Republic of Korea Forces (Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, same subject, dated April 7, 1954)' in *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, pp. 1786; 'Memorandum for the Record, by Walter Treumann of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, June 9, 1954 (Subject: Debriefing of General Maxwell Taylor)' in *ibid.*, p. 1805.

⁶⁴ Millet, 'Korea, 1950-1953,' p. 365.

In addition to the approval of ROKAF's jet conversion, the JCS endorsed establishment of an effective Korean tactical control organisation (air defence radar system for the aircraft control and warning), in order to compensate for the US Air Force withdrawal from Korea. Such an organisation, equipped with ground-based air surveillance radar as well as command, control, and communication networks, was purely defensive, and necessary for ROKAF operations. The transfer of the tactical control radar system to the Korean Air Force would be a viable military assistance programme for the United States to implement, not only for the ROKAF but also for its own Air Force, because: (1) it was not an offensive weapon system; and (2) if operated efficiently by the ROKAF, a radar-equipped and ground-based tactical air control system 'would facilitate operation of USAF aircraft in support of ROK forces upon a renewal of hostilities.'⁶⁵ The JCS also suggested the possibility of a South Korean Armed Forces reserve programme to justify further reductions in the active forces of the nation. (The Joint Strategic Plans Committee had earlier studied a potential ROK reserve programme, and tentatively decided that 'it was impractical, because South Korea lacked the necessary manpower, particularly officers and equipment.')⁶⁶

While the ROKAF was struggling for its early conversion to jets, the NKAF, within six months after the Armistice, had five tactical wings (4 fighter, 1 bomber), and about five hundred aircraft, including over 250 MiG-

⁶⁵ Memo, ExSec to NSC, 'Expansion of Republic of Korea Forces,' 7 April 1954 in *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1784.

⁶⁶ As quoted in Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 402 fn 79. Some of the sources that Dr. Robert J. Watson used at the National Archives are still classified, although he, as an official agency historian of the Joint Chiefs, was able to use them. Memo, JCS to SecDef, 'Recommendations of the Korean Minister of Defense Concerning Expansion of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces,' 31 March 1954, JCS 1776/447, 2 Apr 54 [CCS 381.21 Korea (3-19-45), sec 148; GF 1954-56; Records of the JCS, RG 218; NA/WDC/JCS] is not declassified. The author has requested the release of this document in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) through the office of the Military Reference Branch (NCRM) of the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

15 jet fighters and more than 40 Il-28 jet light bombers.⁶⁷ In addition, since the United States Air Force had already removed all propeller-driven F-51s from its fighter inventory, the ROK Air Force had to convert to jets to permit USAF-ROKAF interoperability both in fighter operations and logistic support in case of North Korea's renewed hostilities. Thus, the ROK fighter wing had to be converted to jet fighters if it was to be retained as an effective combat unit.

Conversion of the ROK fighter wing to jet aircraft (F-86F) would also lead to increased ROKAF capabilities. Because of their improved performance (speed and manoeuvrability) and fire control system (radar-controlled gun sight and six 50-caliber machine guns), F-86F jet fighters would broaden ROKAF roles and missions, which had so far been confined to air-to-ground profiles only.⁶⁸ F-86F *Sabre* jets, which had already proved their superior combat ability against the communist fighters over MiG-Alley during the Korean War, would provide ROKAF with an air-to-air combat capability, which Korean fighter pilots had long sought in the defence of their country's territorial air space.⁶⁹ But, to reiterate, an important consideration of the intrinsic American policy was that the Korean Air Force be provided only 'with a token force in the interest of morale and national prestige.'⁷⁰ From the US viewpoint in the event of renewed hostilities, therefore, a force of the existing size (one fighter wing and one training wing), if equipped with a limited number of aircraft, would be adequate for a holding force pending arrival of USAF reinforcements.

⁶⁷ *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 73.

⁶⁸ Soon after the Korean War, the USAF began to equip its F-86s with AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air heat-seeking missiles. ROKAF F-86Fs, introduced after 1958, were all equipped with Sidewinders. Author's experience.

⁶⁹ There were different models of F-86 Sabre jet: A-, E-, F-, and H- models were for day-fighters; D- and L-models for night/adverse weather interceptors.

⁷⁰ 'Additional Factors Considered in Conjunction With the Proposed Expansion of the ROK Forces,' appended to Memo, JCS to SecDef (Wilson), 31 March 1954 in *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1784.

Consequently, the security of South Korea would depend on the deterrent effect of American military posture and on the immediate employment of American forces in support of Korean forces during war. In view of requirements of aerodrome facilities in the Korean peninsula, it would be beneficial for the United States to help the ROKAF maintain air bases in peacetime. Because of its mission to act as a deterrent to general war, as well as to air attack by the North Korean Air Force, the USAF 5th Air Force would have a continuing requirement for certain South Korean air bases and facilities for peacetime deployments.⁷¹ The United States Air Force was also concerned with the rule of austerity in regard to US Korean military assistance policy. From the United States' standpoint of economic use of worldwide material resources, it would be wiser to have 'maximum effect with minimum logistic investment' as the rule in equipping the ROK Air Force.⁷² Hence it would be to the American advantage that the existing air base complex in South Korea be maintained and capable of sustaining combat operations, because an 'austere' ROK Air Force would be sufficient to permit the maintenance of the bases in South Korea in an operational status, which would in turn extend the range and flexibility of the fighter-bomber and reconnaissance units of 5th Air Force based in Japan and the Pacific islands.⁷³

What should not be overlooked in investigating America's reluctance to strengthen South Korea's airpower was a key strategic concern: Japan. American policymakers considered that Korea, surrounded by three powerful neighbours (China, Russia, and Japan), could hardly sustain itself against

⁷¹ Two USAF fighter wings are permanently stationed in South Korea today. However, at that time when the American military redeployment commenced soon after the Armistice, the U.S. Air Force initially intended to station its fighter forces in Korea on a rotation basis. Interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Chang Chi-Ryang, 16 September 1994.

⁷² Memo, 193d Mtg of NSC, 'Memorandum of Discussion at the 193d Meeting of the National Security Council,' 13 April 1954 in *FRUS 1952-54* v. 15, pt 2, p. 1786.

⁷³ Air Intelligence Information Report, 7 August 1951 in 'SAF History, 1 January 1952 - 30 June 1952,' Vol. 2., *ms.*, p. 352. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. AFIIRA.

any of these neighbours unless supported by the United States. Accordingly, they reckoned that Korea would have to align itself with Japan (the only one of these three friendly to the West), 'or forever be a millstone around the neck of the United States.' South Korea's value to the United States was only in the degree it could 'protect Japan militarily and support Japan economically.'⁷⁴ American policymakers, therefore, sought a way to encourage Korea to cooperate with Japan. However, unless Korea felt the need for such cooperation with Japan, it would be difficult for the United States to bring her two allies together. Accordingly, any further strengthening of the ROK Air Force as well as other Korean military arms without ROK's alignment with Japan would 'only prolong the period in which the United States must be prepared to commit powerful military forces to the Far East.'⁷⁵

In short, the perennial fear of the US government that any offensive means given to the ROK could be used unilaterally against either North Korea or Japan was persistently reflected in the US policy to restrain the growth of the ROK Air Force. However, the inviolate prerogatives of a sovereign state to protect its territorial integrity demand the ability to defend itself, particularly its air space at the critical initial stage of war, before external assistance arrives. Furthermore, the right of self-defence would not be limited only to instances of actual attack. So, South Korea should be able to act if an external attack were imminent,⁷⁶ because the purpose of South Korea's right to act in self-defence 'should be preventive [(deterrence)] in nature rather than retributive.'⁷⁷ To preclude or restrain this ability denigrates the sovereign state's potential to eventually assume its own defence

⁷⁴ Msg, CINCFE (Hull) to ACOS (Ridgway), 5 July 1954, in *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1823.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1824.

⁷⁶ Richard G. Maxon, 'Nature's Eldest Law: A Survey of a Nation's Right To Act in Self-Defense,' *Parameters* 25:3 (Autumn 1995), p. 56. For Maxon's full account, see pp. 55-68.

⁷⁷ D. W. Bowett, *Self-Defense in International Law* (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1958), p. 20 as cited in *Ibid.*, p. 67.

responsibilities. Such arguments, when put to 5th AF/FEAF advisers, elicited sympathy from many of them, but no one was in a position to force change at the US/JCS/NSC level of decision. Even there, though, an occasional devil's argument along such lines fell on deaf ears.⁷⁸

5.4. ROK-US Agreed Minute and South Korea's Air Force Levels

Despite his earlier promise to President Eisenhower, President Rhee only four months later reiterated, in another letter dated 16 November 1953 to Eisenhower, his 'possible intention to take unilateral action to unify Korea.' (Such dramatic shifts of position, indeed policy in general, were not unusual in the often chaotic two years following the Armistice.) Rhee stated that if the United States was not prepared to support a military offensive to take the north, it could support a three-part alternative programme: (1) provide adequate air, naval and logistic support for twenty ROK Army divisions to prevent a surprise enemy breakthrough; (2) increase the ROK Army to a strength of thirty to forty divisions; and (3) assign General James Van Fleet to train the ROK ground forces.⁷⁹

The prospect of renewed war - this time by South Korea - in Asia precipitated a strong reaction from the United States. President Eisenhower made it clear in his answer on 20 March 1954 to President Rhee that the United States would refuse to support any military action to unify Korea, and also advised him that the request for additional ROK Army divisions would 'dangerously overtax the human and material resources of your country.'⁸⁰

⁷⁸ There is no archival evidence available to explain whether ROKAF presented its view on the issue of self-defence capability formally or informally. A witness presumed that the issue was often mentioned during General Kim Chung-Yul's social association with his American advisers. Interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu (General Kim Chung-Yul's deputy), 30 October (telephone) and 24 April 1995.

⁷⁹ Memo, JCS (Radford) to SecState, 17 March 1954. *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt. 2, pp. 1764-1765.

⁸⁰ Msg, State 748 to Seoul, 20 Mar 54, JCS/1776/447, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), 1 Mar 54, sec 147. Box 27; GF 1954-56; Records of the JCS, RG 218, NA/WDC.

Three days after the arrival of President Eisenhower's letter, President Rhee presided over a strategic meeting attended by the National Defense Minister, Chairman of the ROK JCS, Chiefs of Staff of ROK's three services, and First Army Commander. At the meeting, all ROK top military leaders 'informed Rhee flatly he could not hope to succeed in unifying Korea by unilateral ROK military action.'⁸¹

On 31 March 1954, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reiterated their previous view that forces larger than those planned by their predecessors during the Truman administration could not be maintained by South Korean manpower and economic resources, and 'could only be supplied by depleting US reserves of equipment.' Instead of quantitative expansion, they recommended some qualitative improvements within approved manpower ceilings. The ongoing reorganisation of the ROK Army into a field army on the US model, with army and corps headquarters, was encouraged. The Navy would be adequate when its authorised goal was reached, and the Marine Corps should be reorganised into a division instead of various small units.⁸² American policymakers were generally of the same view that ROKAF's conversion to jets should be accelerated. However, the issue of ROKAF's additional jet fighter wing was reserved by the Department of State, which only conditionally agreed to allow 'the door to be left open' in case the second jet wing would be provided at a later time.⁸³

On the very day that the Eisenhower administration signed off on these US decisions about ROK military force improvement, President Rhee wrote again, this time to Admiral Radford, reiterating his threefold request for ROK force expansion - economic aid, military assistance and the dispatch

⁸¹ Msg, Ambassador to Korea (Briggs) to State Dept, 25 Mar 54. *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1766.

⁸² 'Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson), March 31, 1954,' in *Ibid.*, pp. 1780-1781.

⁸³ Memo, ExSec to NSC, 'Expansion of Republic of Korea Forces,' 7 April 1954 in *FRUS 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1786.

of General Van Fleet (now retired, but still Rhee's favourite among the Americans) to oversee the training of the ROK troops. If the ROK Army were to be doubled in strength and given commensurate air and naval support, Rhee asserted, all UN forces in Korea could be withdrawn and South Korean forces could take full responsibility for defending the nation. Admiral Radford referred Rhee's threefold proposal to the National Security Council, whose members decided on 13 April 1954 that General Van Fleet should go to South Korea to determine the proper size and composition of its armed forces. Two weeks later, Secretary Wilson issued formal instructions to General Van Fleet to conduct a survey of US military assistance programmes in the Far East as well as South Korea.⁸⁴

While General Van Fleet was conducting a fact-finding survey in Seoul, the US government decided upon a different approach with regard to the South Korean President, i.e., an official invitation of Rhee to the United States. President Eisenhower made his announcement that President Rhee would come to Washington on 26 July.⁸⁵ In preparation for a general discussion of US-ROK military problems, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided a memorandum for the NSC on 22 July 1954, which stated: (1) [T]he redeployment schedule that they had submitted on 1 April 1954 should be approved; (2) Currently authorised force goals were adequate and were the largest that the Republic of Korea could support; (3) The UN Commander should retain full command over all forces, including those of South Korea, so long as he was responsible for the security of that nation after the UN/US redeployment from Korea; and (4) US support and assistance for ROK forces would be withdrawn if Rhee removed them from the UNC.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ 'Ltr SecDef to Van Fleet,' 26 Apr 54, JCS 1776/464, 3 May 54. CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec 154, Box 28; GF 1954-56; Records of the JCS, RG 218, NAWDC.

⁸⁵ *Public Papers, Eisenhower, 1954*, p. 629; Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 165.

⁸⁶ Paraphrased from Memo, JCS to SecDef, 'Preparation of U.S. Position Papers in Connection with President Rhee's Visit to This Country,' 16 July 1954 Korea. CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec 154, Box 28; GF 1954-56; Records of the JCS, RG 218 ; NAWDC. The JCS prepared position

When the first meeting of the Korean-American talks was held in the morning of 27 July 1954, President Rhee urged the rapid expansion of ROK forces, reminding Americans of the Korean War lesson:

Specifically, we need more divisions, more air and more sea forces. Let me tell you why. In 1948 General Roberts came to see me,⁸⁷ I told him at that time that we needed more tanks and 200,000 more trained soldiers. I was told at that time that such a demand was outrageous, that the Korean economy could not stand it. I was told that tanks in Asia were no good. I was told that the Reds would never come down south - but in 1950 they came south. So, that being our experience, we need and want larger forces.⁸⁸

North Korea would have the initiative at first, but unless it could score quickly, its forces would likely be worn down and defeated by the follow-on external reinforcement. Such a quick war would demand an orchestrated and highly responsive defence posture, based on such intangible superior elements as strategy, training and leadership in addition to tangible quantity (numerical strength) and quality (weapons). Americans assessed that weakness in military leadership and training would restrict the ROK Army's operational capability to a relatively low level, despite its persistent quest for expansion. A State Department Memorandum for the Record of 9 June 1954 charged: 'The [ROK] troops would not put up an adequate fight without American advisers as far down as regimental level.'⁸⁹ Nevertheless, a few weeks later, General John E. Hull, CINCUNC, recommended that the ROK Army be reorganised into thirty divisions, of which nine would be active and twenty-one reserve, and that the strength of each division be

papers in response to Acting Secretary of Defense Robert B. Anderson's request on 16 July for their advice on: (1) the question of redeployment of US forces from Korea; (2) the augmentation of the forces of South Korea; and (3) the relation between the UN Command and ROK forces. *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Brigadier General William L. Roberts was the commander of the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG).

⁸⁸ Hagerty Diary, July 27, 1954. *FRUS, 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1845.

⁸⁹ 'Memorandum for the Record, by Walter Treumann of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, June 1954' in *FRUS, 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt 2, pp. 1805-1806.

reduced from 15,000 to 10,000. General Hull also supported the idea to establish reserve forces of the ROKAF and ROKN, and reiterated his earlier proposal that the South Korean Air Force be expanded to two fighter wings, one of which would contain F-86F jet fighters.⁹⁰

General Van Fleet meanwhile returned to Washington from his survey of South Korea's military needs and resources. Van Fleet's recommendations, submitted on 23 July 1954, the day before Rhee's arrival in Washington, paralleled some of General Hull's proposals, but Van Fleet's recommendation regarding the active versus reserve forces was starkly different. Van Fleet called for an Army composed of both regular and reserve divisions, totaling thirty (30) in number, and for the creation of Navy and Air Force reserves. However, under his plan, twenty-four (versus Hull's nine) Army divisions would be active and only six (versus Hull's twenty-one) reserve. The increase from twenty to twenty-four active divisions, General Van Fleet thought, would take up the 'slack' left by the impending departure of four US divisions. Van Fleet advocated ROK military expansion for a cost-effective reason : '[F]or the same money we can build up approximately five ROK divisions for each US division withdrawn. . . . and since we stand shoulder to shoulder with ROKs in the common struggle against communism as such in the Far East, [we] should cooperate with [ROK]' with reduced strength of divisional artillery and the elimination of some support units.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Memo, CINCFE to CJCS, 'ROK Armed Forces,' 29 June 1954. Defense - Special Assistant Van Fleet Report Files, 1954, Box 10, RG 330. NA/WDC.

⁹¹ Msg, Ambassador to Korea (Briggs) to State Dept., May 10, 1954. *FRUS, 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1792. At the time when Van Fleet visited Seoul, the ROK Army had only sixteen out of twenty divisions fully manned, and US military planners reckoned that the remaining four ROK 'skeleton' divisions would be reinforced by the 'leftover' equipment of the departing four US divisions, without increasing the already authorised personnel ceiling. (The ROK military personnel ceilings approved by the Eisenhower administration in May 1953 were 655,000 for the Army, 10,000 for the Navy, 23,500 for the Marine Corps, and 9,000 for the Air Force - a total of 697,500.) *Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 210-214, 340-345, 357-361, 439-441. As of 31 July 1953 soon after the Armistice, the actual strength of ROK ground forces, including ROK Marine Corps personnel under operational control of the US Army, totaled 590,911 (*ibid.*, p. 513), and of the Air Force 11,481 (*Gong-Gwon Sa (I), 1949-53*, p. 429).

The US Embassy in Seoul noted that General Van Fleet's advocacy of ROK infantry expansion was in direct opposition to the current thinking of the JCS 'to cut expenditures to the bone.' Van Fleet's unawareness of the American government's emerging military assistance policy - 'building up ROK strength proportionately as [American troops] withdrew' - was soon pointed out in US Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs' follow-on wired report that Van Fleet left the 'impression of not being acutely aware [of] detailed financial and most modern logistical thinking and overall political, economic and sociological developments [in the] Far East or our [overall] budgetary problems.'⁹² (In retrospect, Van Fleet may not have been the right choice for the advocacy of US interests.)⁹³

Van Fleet also recommended the ROK Air Force should be allowed a 'somewhat larger' personnel ceiling (15,000), and its speedy conversion to jets.⁹⁴ He further endorsed the previous observation of US Eighth Army Commander General Maxwell D. Taylor. In his report, dated 9 June 1954, General Taylor had pointed out that the ROK Air Force programme lacked adequate tactical aircraft, and a moderate South Korean Air Force was necessary to help protect the investment which Americans had put into Korea. 'Presently, the [ROK] Air Force is totally inadequate,' he continued. 'Modernizing the Korean Air Force and converting it to jets would take from 3 to 4 years.'⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs of Staff rejected the idea of

⁹² 'Ambassador in Korea (Briggs) to the Department of State,' Seoul, 10 May 1954 in *FRUS 1952-54* v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1792.

⁹³ General Van Fleet was highly respected by Korean generals because of his dedicated efforts to improve ROK Army's combat readiness during his tour in Korea as Commanding General of US Eighth Army (1951-52). He is known as the father of the Korean Army. He also had a personal relationship with President Rhee, who considered General Van Fleet as his 'American son.' Because of his combat experience with Korean soldiers during the Korean War and close relationship with President Rhee, Van Fleet may have generated an impression that he was a bit biased, as Ambassador Briggs suggested in his report to the US State Department after the meeting between Rhee, Van Fleet and Briggs.

⁹⁴ Memo, CINCFE to CJCS, 'ROK Armed Forces,' 29 June 1954. Defense - Special Assistant Van Fleet Report Files, 1954, Box 10, RG 330. NA/WDC.

⁹⁵ Memo by Walter Treumann, June 9, 1954, Subj: Debriefing of General Maxwell Taylor. *FRUS, 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt 2, p. 1805.

doubling the fighter strength of the Korean Air Force, whereas they approved CINCUNC's plan for the 30-division ROK Army (9 active, 21 reserve), recommending the ROK military's new personnel ceilings totaling 718,500 men, as compared with the authorised 702,500.⁹⁶

South Korean President's visit to Washington afforded an opportunity for officials of both nations to review the goals of ROK military force levels. A plan for the expansion and reorganisation of the ROK military establishment was discussed between US and ROK representatives: Secretary Wilson, Admiral Radford, Generals Hull and Van Fleet, and other US military and civilian representatives of the Departments of State and Defense; as well as Admiral Sohn, and ROK Army and Air Force generals, who accompanied Rhee.⁹⁷

Upon arrival in the United States on 26 July 1954, President Rhee irritated the Americans once again by the belligerent tone of his first speech. At Washington National Airport he said that it was 'American cold feet' that had thus far impeded the unification of Korea, and 'God Almighty will see to it that we shall carry out our program.'⁹⁸ President Rhee's purpose was neither to conciliate nor to apologise to the Eisenhower administration, which felt aggrieved by Rhee's independent stand. Rhee's aim in visiting the United States was twofold: (1) he sought greater Korean control over expenditure of the US postwar aid programme designed for force

⁹⁶ These figures are detailed in 'Draft Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense,' attached to JCS 1776/491, 26 Aug 1954. CCS 383.21 Korea (3-1945), Sec.156, Box 29; GF 1954-56; Records of the JCS, RG 218; NA/WDC.

⁹⁷ Korean military attendees were: General Chung Il-Kwon, Chairman of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lt. General Kim Chung-Yul, ROKAF Vice Chief of Staff for Plans and Special Assistant to the Minister of National Defense and Major General Choe Tok-Shin, ROKA, ROK Observer at Panmunjom. General Kim was chosen because he spoke English whereas Lt. General Choi Yong-Duk, ROKAF Chief of Staff, did not. Msg, Ambassador to Korea (Briggs) to State Dept., July 10, 1954. *FRUS, 1952-1954, v. 15, pt. 2, pp. 1831*; 'United States Summary Minutes of the Second Meeting of United States -Republic of Korea Talks, July 28,' dated 2 Aug 54, *Ibid.*, p. 1847; 'United States Summary Minutes of the Third Meeting of United States-Republic of Korea Talks, July 29, 1954,' dated 2 Aug 54, *Ibid.*, p. 1849.

⁹⁸ Robert T. Oliver, *Syngman Rhee and American Involvement in Korea, 1942-1960* (Seoul, Korea: Panmun Book Co., 1978), p. 446.

improvement and the rehabilitation of South Korea; and (2) he wanted to persuade the United States government to reconsider its global strategy, which was, in Rhee's view, little short of 'surrender' to communist imperialism. Rhee wanted to agitate American public opinion and use it to counter President Eisenhower and his policymakers.

In addressing a joint session of Congress on 28 July 1954, Rhee warned of North Korea's increased air threat: 'Communist airfields, newly constructed in defiance of armistice terms, and furnished with jet bombers, lie within ten minutes of our National Assembly. Yet death is scarcely closer to Seoul than to Washington, for the destruction of the United States is the prime objective of the conspirators in the Kremlin.'⁹⁹ In his concluding remarks in the Congress, Rhee tried to remind the American public of a unified Korea:

Let us take courage and stand up in defense of the ideals and principles upheld by the fathers of American independence, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, and again by the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln, who did not hesitate to fight in defense of the union which could not survive half slave and half free.¹⁰⁰

However, if the geographical unification of the Korean peninsula involved large expenditures of men and money, Korean unification would hardly be a viable issue to the American Congress. A divided Korea might even provide two buffer zones, and it would therefore be better, as long as either one could be considered friendly, or at least not hostile, to the United States.

⁹⁹ Hongkee Karl, *Rhee Syngman Dae-Tong Ryong B'ang-Mee Soo-Haeng Kee (President Syngman Rhee's Journey to America)* (Seoul: Office of Public Information, 1955), pp. 25-26; Se-jin Kim, 'Introduction,' in Se-jin Kim, ed., *Korea Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction* (Seoul, Korea: Research Center For Peace and Unification, 1976), pp. 54-55. See also *Vital Speeches of the Day* 20:21 (August 15, 1954), pp. 643-644.

¹⁰⁰ Karl, *President Rhee's Journey to America*, p. 29; *Vital Speeches of the Day* 20:21 (August 15, 1954), p. 644.

The National Security Council met on 29 July 1954, the day following Rhee's inflammatory speech to the US Congress, and the ROK's latest force improvement proposal was discussed. Secretary Dulles had 'grave reservations' about America's provision of 'mobile instruments of war' to South Korea. Dulles wondered why it was necessary to provide Koreans with jet fighters. He pointed out that should jet fighters be supplied, they might be 'used to drop bombs across the Yalu.'¹⁰¹ Admiral Radford, however, argued that propeller-driven F-51 aircraft, which Korean pilots operated so well during the Korean War, were as much mobile instruments of war as jets, and suggested that the Koreans deserved consideration for additional air strength 'by the excellent work their air force had done so far.' Admiral Radford's view prevailed.¹⁰² In fact, South Korean fighter pilots adhered strictly to the rules of engagement. During the Korean War, they made no serious mistakes in their conduct of combat missions. They attacked neither unauthorised targets nor friendly ground forces. There were no officially confirmed defections of ROKAF pilots to North Korea nor any serious violations of the Armistice terms caused by crossing the DMZ.¹⁰³ Their flying safety records in F-51s were excellent.¹⁰⁴ The incessant efforts of

¹⁰¹ Memorandum of Discussion at the 208th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 29, 1954. *FRUS, 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1854.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* For an earlier example of disagreement between the Secretary of State and the JCS, see S. Dockrill, *Cooperation and Suspicion*, pp. 142-143.

¹⁰³ No aircraft defection was recorded in the ROKAF history. However, a likely defection of one ROKAF F-51 shortly after the cessation of hostilities was mentioned briefly in the USAF archives. Captain Kim Sung-Bae, who had previously been grounded by ROKAF Headquarters for continued violation of flying regulations, 'appropriated an F-51, sitting at the parking ramp for maintenance inspection.' Captain Kim departed in his F-51 (ROK #27 [aircraft tail number]) at 1218 local time on 19 October 1953 without benefit of parachute, helmet, radio contact, or clearance, and did not return. 'Many assumptions were made during the next few days, but it wasn't until approximately 26 October 1953, that the North Korean Radio announced the arrival of a South Korean pilot in an obsolete propeller driven aircraft. This, we assumed, was Captain Kim and ROK # 27.' 'History of Detachment One of 6146th Air Force Advisory Group, 1 July 1953 - 31 December 1953,' *m.s.*, p. 11. K-GP-TNG-6146-III (Det 1), Jul-Dec 1953. AFHRA. See also Message, CINCFE (J-2) to DEPTAR/ JCS. Subject: Defection of ROK AF officer pilot to Communists 19 Oct. CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec. 139 Box 46; Geographical File 1951-53; RG 218, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. National Archives, Washington, DC.

¹⁰⁴ The average ROKAF's flying safety record in peacetime between August 1953 and June 1955 was less than the average goal of 3.0 for the US Air Force fighters in peacetime. The value of 1.0

South Korean Air Force leaders and fighter pilots to do their best in combat and their cooperation with Americans in peacetime paid off. Although it was not known to the Korean public, Admiral Radford's recognition of the Korean pilots was a great compliment to the entire ROK Air Force in terms of ROKAF's credibility and growth potential.

When Secretary Wilson presented at the NSC meeting the proposed increase of the ROK Air Force, which would consist of three squadrons of jets, one transport squadron, and two squadrons of re-equipped F-51s (a total of 200 additional aircraft with six additional squadrons), General Hull proposed adding three more squadrons (or one wing) of jet fighters and another of transport aircraft for a total of ten squadrons.¹⁰⁵ It would be an encouragement to the ROKAF to see its fighter force doubled. Equally important was General Hull's proposal of adding another cargo plane squadron. Airlift embodies a key facet of a fundamental air force capability - rapid, flexible and long range mobility.¹⁰⁶ Airlift could be used to support joint operations, as well as military assistance and civilian relief programmes. The ROKAF's ability to resupply the ROK Army in a timely manner would build confidence and stability. The mountainous geography and limited road systems might likely impede maintenance of ground lines of communications (GLOC) in renewed hostilities in Korea, and thereby demand enhancement of air lines of communications (ALOC).

In this respect, General Hull's recommendation to increase the ROKAF's airlift capability from one to two squadrons was more politically acceptable to American policy planners. Because transport aircraft would not be considered offensive, they would be commensurate with the United

equals to one aircraft accident (crash or irreparable damage) out of 100,000 flying hours. *Gong-Gom Sa (II)*, 1953-57, pp. 333-334.

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum of Discussion at the 208th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 29, 1954. *FRUS, 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1854.

¹⁰⁶ The 'long-range' strategic airlift aircraft of the period was four-engined C-124s; 'tactical' inter-theater airlift consisted of C-119s, C-54s, C-46s, and C-47s.

States' Korean policy. However, his proposal was not accepted by Defense Secretary Wilson, who felt that 'there was no need to hurry.'¹⁰⁷ Because of their preoccupation with the numerical increase of infantry divisions and fighter forces, no Korean leaders exerted any official effort to appeal to Americans to specifically support and implement General Hull's recommendation for increasing the ROKAF's airlift capability. Consequently, an important opportunity for increasing a viable and significant element of ROK's airpower was once again lost to the Korean Air Force. Quantitatively, one squadron of sixteen medium sized cargo airplanes had the maximum capacity to simultaneously carry less than five hundred combat troops each time, provided all available aircraft could be tasked.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the approved number of ROKAF cargo aircraft, which could only transport less than one infantry battalion and less than twenty tons of supplies at one time, was totally inadequate to carry out the airlift mission demanded by the logistic air supply for twenty ROK Army divisions. Apart from the disparity between the Army and the Air Force, an internal asymmetry within the ROKAF's own force posture between fighter and combat support aircraft began to emerge.¹⁰⁹

The ROK's force composition was finally agreed upon during the summit meeting between American and South Korean presidents on 30 July 1954. The terms of this agreement were written in an Agreed Minute of

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum of Discussion at the 208th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 29, 1954. *FRUS, 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1854.

¹⁰⁸ In reality, this estimation is too optimistic, because of the limited number of actually flyable aircraft and mission apportionment (allocation of available sorties). Therefore, even transporting five hundred troops would be a best case scenario. One C-46 could carry 35 to 40 troops; its average in-commission-rate (rate of flyable aircraft) was less than 80 %.

¹⁰⁹ The imbalance between fighter and support airplanes within the ROKAF aircraft inventory has not been redressed. Even today when the ROK government can financially afford it, the Korean Air Force maintains less than forty cargo planes (10 C-130Hs, 12 CN-235s, and 15 C-123s) to support ten ROKA airborne commando brigades and 20 infantry divisions. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 1994-1995* (London, UK: Brassey's (UK) Ltd., 1994), p. 181. Currently, it is not because of the US Korean policy, but the ROK Army's dominant influence over the ROK military budget, which precludes correcting this internal disparity.

Understanding after the talks. The core of the Agreed Minute was: (1) The United States promised to defend South Korea in case of unprovoked attack; to support Korean unification by all peaceful means; and to provide economic and military assistance for FY 1955 up to a maximum of \$700 million, or more than \$100 million above the amount previously planned; (2) South Korea would cooperate with America's efforts toward peaceful unification, and promised to disavow any intemperate action for unification purposes; and (3) Personnel ceilings for the ROK forces for FY 1955 were 661,000 for the Army, 15,000 for the Navy, 27,500 for the Marine Corps, and 16,500 for the Air Force - a total of 720,000. The Minute also stipulated that South Korean forces were to remain under the operational control of the UN Command.¹¹⁰

Noticeable in the Minute were two items: the emphasis on the UNC's operational control of the ROK forces and the unchanged proportions of ROK military composition. In fact, the American intention of the written understanding between the two governments was to confirm the ROK's allegiance to the UNC so that ROK unilateral action could be prevented. The revised personnel ceilings in the Minute remained unchanged in terms of the manpower proportion of three services - Army versus Air Force and Navy. The foot soldiers, including the ROK Marines, occupied an overwhelming majority of over 96 % (688,500) of the entire ROK military establishment, which was unprecedented in the free world.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Msg, DepArmy to CINCUNC (Hull), September 15, 1954. *FRUS, 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt. 2, pp. 1876-1878. For the full text and Appendix A of the Agreed Minute, see *Department of State Bulletin* 31:805 (Nov 29, 1954), pp. 810-811. For the full text of Appendix B, see Appendix 5-1 of this study.

¹¹¹ Despite the enormous size of the ROK Army personnel, the South Korean military's war reserve stocks (military stores and equipment) were always kept at the 'lowest possible supply level' that would permit operations for less than a week, thereby enabling the US government to effectively restrain the ROK by manipulating logistical leverage. 'Debriefing of General Taylor,' in Memorandum for the Record, by Walter Treumann of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, June 9, 1954 in *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1805.

After Fiscal Year 1955 (June 1955), these strengths would be reduced as trained men, released from active service, became available for the reserves. A goal of ten reserve divisions was established, to be attained by the end of calendar year 1955. In the case of the South Korean Air Force, the CINCUNC's proposal to create a ROK Air Force reserve was rejected by the JCS on 4 September 1954, based on the 5th Air Force recommendations. The 5th AF refused a ROKAF reserve scheme because of personnel and equipment shortages. The infant ROKAF was coping with the priority task of organising and training its personnel of 16,500 men. Therefore, it would be impractical to assign certain ROKAF personnel released from duty into an organised reserve program in view of the training efforts necessary to organise and maintain the initial ROKAF establishment. In addition there were insufficient aircraft and support equipment in the USAF resources, which would be necessary for the reserve force in the event of hostilities.¹¹² There was to be no expansion of the ROK Air Force, but the United States would allow it to convert to jets by the end of FY 1956 (June 1956).¹¹³

President Eisenhower approved the Agreed Minute on 10 September 1954.¹¹⁴ This document had two appendices. Appendix A delineated an economic program, and Appendix B outlined measures for an effective military program with an overall prescription of South Korea's force levels for Fiscal Year 1955, as well as US assignment of F-86F jet fighter and C-46 transport aircraft as follows:

1. The United States will assist in supporting the following maximum number of military personnel (ROK) during the FY 55:

Army	661,000
Navy	15,000

¹¹² 'ROK Air Force,' in '5AF History, 1 July 1954 - 31 December 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 2, p. 438. K-730.01 Jul - Dec 1954, v.2. AFHRA.

¹¹³ *Department of State Bulletin* 31:805 (Nov 29, 1954), pp. 810-811.

¹¹⁴ Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

Marine	27,500
Air Force	16,500 ¹¹⁵

Adjustments in numbers will be acceptable to the United States as long as the 720,000 total is not exceeded

8. The United States will make available jet fighters and training aircraft to the Korean Air Force in such quantities and at such times as the Korean pilots have demonstrated a capability to utilize this equipment properly. Determination of this capability will be made by the CINCUNC. The United States will plan to make available ten T-33 jet type trainers, and subsequently as need is demonstrated, 30 F- 86F and 16 C-46 aircraft during 1955, and the remainder of one jet fighter wing (45 additional F-86Fs for attrition) by end of FY-1956.¹¹⁶

There was room for the ROK to increase its Air Force personnel to more than 16,500. (Figure 5-1) 'Inasmuch as an overall personnel ceiling of 720,000 was agreed to, the 1,500 personnel unaccounted for [in the Minute] should be allocated among the four Services at CINCFE's discretion.'¹¹⁷ But the ROK Air Force leaders took no action to acquire additional personnel out of the 1,500 unaccounted for.¹¹⁸

In the meantime, the American government's position was that all the agreements constituted a single package; if South Korea failed to prove its allegiance to the US policy (i.e., compliance with the terms stipulated in the Agreed Minute), the Eisenhower administration would reserve its obligation either to execute plans for modernising the ROK forces or to ratify the

¹¹⁵ See Appendix 5-1: Breakdown of 16,500-man Spaces of the ROK Air Force.

¹¹⁶ 'Appendix B to the Agreed Minute Between the Governments of the United States and Korea: Measures for an Effective Military Program,' in 'SAF History, 1 July 1954 - 31 December 1954,' *ms.*, K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 3. AFHRA; Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, pp. 452-455.

¹¹⁷ 'Reorganization of the ROK Armed Forces,' JCS 1776/491, 26 August 1954. CCS 381.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec 156, Box 29; GF 1954-56; Records of the JCS, RG 218; NA/WDC.

¹¹⁸ There is no archival evidence to suggest why ROKAF leaders took no action. Presumably, they were more concerned about the speedy execution of jet conversion, and any peripheral argument might cause the delay of ROKAF modernisation. Telephone interviews, author with former Chiefs of ROKAF, Lt. Generals (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, Chang Sung-Whan, and Chang Chi-Ryang, 28-30 October 1995.

Figure 5 - 1

Breakdown of 16,500-man Spaces of the ROK Air Force¹¹⁹

Base Support	OFFICERS	AIRMEN	TOTAL
K-1 (Pusan W.)	31	377	408
K-2 (Taegu)	51	657	708
K-3 (Pohang)	21	311	332
K-4 (Sachon)	100	1403	1503
K-5 (Taejon)	30	265	295
K-6 (Pyongtaek)	30	326	356
K-8 (Kunsan)	30	326	356
K-14 (Kimpo)	30	326	356
K-16 (Seoul)	54	700	754
K-55 (Osan)	44	536	580
Hq, ROKAF	210	220	430
Hq, Training Command	362	728	1090
Hq, Air Force Academy	108	137	245
Air Command & Staff School	27	23	50
Hq, Air Material Command	78	157	235
Hq, Tactical AF	74	105	179
Fighter Bomb Wing (Jet)	249	1304	1553
Air Trans Svc	176	560	736
Air Int Sv Gp	110	640	750
Comm Gp Hq	30	431	461
Air Weather Gp	129	418	547
AACS Gp	49	798	847
Maintenance Depot	94	1130	1224
Supply Depot	48	198	246
Aero Medical Lab	20	35	55
TP & Carrier Sq	13	117	130
Comm Operations Sq (Tac)	8	112	120
Air Rescue Flt	15	28	43
Air Operations School	11	24	35
AC & W	107	596	703
Air Tac Constr Sq	16	31	47
OSI	83	69	152
TOTALS	2438	13087	15525
Pipeline (Students, Others)	220	755	975
GRAND TOTALS	2658	13842	16500

¹¹⁹ These are the authorised spaces, not actually on hand. 'The Republic of Korea Air Force,' *History of the Fifth Air Force, 1 January 1955 - 31 June 1955*, vol. 2, p. 374. AFHRA K730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 2.

defence pact, until the ROK government had signed the Agreed Minute.¹²⁰ But America's fear turned out to be unfounded, as Rhee signed it without resistance.¹²¹ The text was initialed by representatives of both nations in Seoul on 17 November 1954, while at the same time the ROK-US Mutual Defence Treaty was ratified in Washington.¹²²

Soon after the Agreed Minute was signed, Colonel Chang Chi-Ryang, ROK air attaché in Washington, D.C., notified ROKAF Headquarters in Seoul of a United States' plan for a reduction of ROK Army strength, to levels below those just agreed to. In a telegramme dated 5 January 1955 to Lt. General Kim Chung-Yul, Colonel Chang reported that the US Department of Defense was reviewing a plan for a gradual reduction of the 20-division ROK Army over the following three years: fourteen (14), twelve (12), and eight (8) by FY 1956, 1957, and 1958, respectively. After having listened to General Kim's report at a strategic conference at the Kyung-Mu Dae, President Rhee instructed ROK military leaders to make an effort to minimise the ROK Army reduction.¹²³

President Rhee later emphasised his displeasure over such prospective reductions to General Kim, when Rhee appointed him as the ROK National Defense Minister in July 1957. It was a prime chance for Kim to negotiate with Americans to increase ROKAF fighter wings. If the Americans wanted to reduce the number of divisions in the ROK Army, the 'lost firepower' could be compensated for by enlarging the ROKAF. General

¹²⁰ Memo, SecDef to SecA et al., 'Proposed Agreed Minute Between the United States and Korea Based on recent US-Korea Conferences,' 17 Sep 54, JCS 1776/499, 27 Sep 54, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), sec 157, Box 28; GF 1954-56; Records of the JCS, RG 218. NAWDC.

¹²¹ US State Department officials feared that 'friction with South Korea would probably continue, primarily over the question of unification. But the danger of violent or intemperate action by President Rhee no longer loomed so large as it once had.' Memo, OCB to Exec Secy, NSC, 'Progress Report on NSC 170/1 (Korea),' 30 Dec 54, JCS 1776/513, 5 Jan 55, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) (2) sec 1, Box 5; GF 1954-56; Records of the JCS, RG 218. NAWDC.

¹²² For the exchange of instruments of ratification, see *Chosun Ilbo*, 17 November 1954, p. 1; *New York Times*, 18 November 1954, p. 5.

¹²³ Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 209.

Kim, however, did not capitalise on the opportunity during sixteen months of negotiations. Instead, Kim succeeded on 26 November 1958 only in obtaining a US concession to resolve the issue by stipulating, in the Appendix B of the 1958 Revision of the 1954 Agreed Minute, a reduction of two army divisions, and an overall personnel reduction of 90,000 men, including a large number of non-combat personnel. The ROK military personnel ceiling was to be reduced from 720,000 to 630,000 by 1958.¹²⁴ The number of the ROK Army divisions would decrease from 20 to 18. Instead, the personnel strength of the Air Force and Navy was increased by 5,900 and 1,600 respectively. The breakdown of the reduced ROK military personnel ceiling by 1958 was: 565,000 (Army), 16,600 (Navy), 26,000 (Marine), 22,400 (Air Force).¹²⁵ This revision of ROK Army's force reduction was kept secret at the time to prevent a possible exploitation by North Koreans, as well as the demoralisation of the South Korean public.¹²⁶

To redress the disparity between the ROK Army and Air Force, it was possible either to increase ROK airpower, or to reduce ROK Army infantry forces. To do so, Minister of National Defense Kim Chung-Yul could have asked the United States government for compensatory fire power as a *quid pro quo*. In addition to the military logic of increased ROK airpower, there were also political implications of an unbalanced ROK military structure. Had the ROK Army been reduced at the time to the eight-division strength as envisioned by one United States plan, for example, the disparity of ROK Air Force vis-à-vis ROK Army could be reduced accordingly. Moreover, additionally available US assistance, accrued from the ROK Army's

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 210. Donald Stone Macdonald cites 60,000 men instead of 90,000 men for the figure of actually reduced number of personnel by 1958. Macdonald asserts that since the previous ceiling of 720,000 had not been reached, a new force ceiling of 630,000 meant an actual reduction of 60,000. Donald Stone Macdonald, *U.S.-Korean Relations from Liberation to Self-Reliance: The Twenty-Year Record* (An interpretative summary of the archives of the U.S. Department of State for the period 1945 to 1965), (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), p. 99.

¹²⁵ Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, pp. 209-210, 457.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

reduction, would have greatly helped the rehabilitation of the South Korean economy. At the same time, the subsequent political influence of the ROK Army might have been, to at least some extent, curtailed.

The South Korean Air Force partially benefited from the USAF redeployment, because the ROKAF modernisation would not have occurred if the US had not withdrawn its forces from Korea. However, despite the diplomatic accomplishment, the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty did not directly benefit the ROK Air Force in terms of its mission capability, for the ROKAF was not allowed to expand its fighter forces to eventually assume its air defence on its own. The Agreed Minute was an accomplishment for both the ROK and US governments. To America, it confirmed President Rhee's allegiance to US policy - i.e., to retain the ROK forces under the UNC/US operational control, and to not resort to unilateral action. To South Korea, the Agreed Minute guaranteed a detailed commitment on the part of the United States to modernise ROK military forces. This document reassured the ROKAF, in particular, of jet conversion, albeit on a limited scale (one existing wing only).

The long-awaited era of the jet age of the South Korean Air Force started blooming in September 1954, under the auspices of the ROK-US Agreed Minute of Understanding, which continued to reiterate the intrinsic policy limitations of the American government to restrain a potentially powerful ROK Air Force, while at the same time permitting the continued increase of ROK infantry forces. The modernisation of the ROKAF began with the force level of 16,500 personnel, and with the introduction of ninety-five jet aircraft and sixteen C-46 transport planes into the ROKAF aircraft inventory. The modernisation commenced with great enthusiasm, based on advance preparation. Many challenges, however, were encountered. How

the ROK Air Force dealt with challenges in the actual process of its modernisation will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PROCESS OF MODERNISING THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AIR FORCE, 1954 -1956

With the signing of the ROK-US Agreed Minute of Understanding, ROK civilian and Air Force leaders redoubled their efforts to create a new era for the ROK Air Force, that of the jet age. By October 1953, the North Korean Air Force was thought to have over 480 aircraft, including 250 MiG-15 jet fighters, whereas South Korea had less than 80 F-51 propeller-driven Second World War vintage fighters.¹ The United States officially approved and implemented modernisation of the South Korean Air Force in September of 1954, soon after President Rhee's visit to America. This chapter examines the ROKAF's manpower expansion and aircraft modernisation in accordance with the Agreed Minute, focusing on flying units, especially jet conversion (F-86F), transition to the twin-engined, medium transport aircraft (C-46), and the establishment of a ROKAF tactical air control unit, all significant steps in the actual process of modernising the South Korean Air Force.

6.1. ROKAF's Lobbying for Expansion

Prior to the Agreed Minute, early in 1954, the Republic of Korea exerted additional pressure on 5th Air Force to expedite the modernisation of

¹ ROKAF had a total of 118 aircraft, including 78 F-51s. NKAF had a total of 489 aircraft: 255 MiG-15s; 42 IL-28s; 5 TU-2s; 30 LA-9s; 39 YAK-9s; 47 IL-10s; 35 YAK-11s; 28 YAK-28s; 6 PO-2s; and 2 IL-12s. ROKAF, *Gong-Goon Sa Jae I Jip (The History of the Air Force vol. 1), 1949-53* (hereafter cited as *Gong-Goon Sa (I), 1949-53*), p. 429. See also Appendix A (Enemy Air Situation) of the ROKAF Expansion Proposal, 13 Nov 53, in Lt. General (ret.) Kim Chung-Yul's Personal File-5th Air Force-1954. General Kim, former ROKAF Chief of Staff (1949-52, 1954-56), kept in his personal files copies of documents, memos, manuscripts, worksheets and correspondence prepared for or exchanged between the ROK and US Air Forces through either his or the National Defense Minister's office. These files were made available to the author by the gracious assistance of General Kim's widow. Hereafter cited as Kim's PF-5AF-1954.

the ROK Air Force. ROK National Defense Minister Sohn Won Yil sent a letter on 17 February to Lt. General S. E. Anderson, 5th Air Force Commander, asking for ROKAF pilots' early jet training:

The necessity of training Korean pilots for jet-planes has long been felt by the Korean Govt and the defense of this country against future Communist aggression is far from adequate without Koreans knowing how to handle jet-planes. I wish to request that you will very kindly make arrangements so that a certain number of Korean pilots may get special training in Korea for jet-planes with the least possible delay.²

General Anderson replied that he had referred Minister Sohn's request to Far East Air Forces Headquarters because such a programme was not within his purview, and suggested the 5th Air Force was unable to train ROKAF jet pilots due to insufficient aircraft. At the time, there were only 37 T-33 two-seat jet trainers available for the 5th Air Force to keep its own aircrews (over 1,100 pilots) proficient in instrument flying, which was urgently required for successful combat operations during the monsoon season in Korea.³

Before the finalisation of the Agreed Minute of Understanding, ROKAF leaders had already been working closely with their American advisers to exchange the preliminary information required for ROKAF modernisation. The training of ROKAF mechanics had been approved by USAF 5th Air Force in March, based on the predetermined need to have mechanics ready to service the new jet aircraft, before pilot training began.⁴

² Msg, Gen Anderson (CC/SAF) to Gen Weyland (CC/FEAF), 19 Sep 54. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 3, Appendix 164. AFHRA.

³ Soon after, Minister Sohn received a note from General O. P. Weyland, Far East Air Forces Commander, who stated that the problem was 'under study.' *Ibid*

⁴ Msg, Gen Anderson to Gen Weyland, 19 Feb 54. 'SAF History, Jul - Dec 1954,' ms., vol. 3, Appendix 164. K730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v.3. AFHRA; *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953 - 57, pp. 96-98. See also 'ROK Air Force,' in vol. 2, pp. 424-425, same file. Korean mechanic training began in August 1954, one month ahead of pilot training. This will be discussed further in the following Sec. 6.2.2: Jet Mechanic Training.

General Otto P. Weyland, CINCFEAF, forwarded ROK Minister Sohn's request for expedition of Korean pilots' jet training to Air Force Headquarters in Washington, asking that the Far East Air Forces be kept informed regarding plans for modernising the ROKAF.⁵ US Air Force Headquarters replied that the 'size and composition of [the] ROKAF [was] still under consideration by the JCS, [and any] move to train ROKAF personnel in jets would be inappropriate at this time.⁶ In his letter of 20 July 1954 to Lt. General Roger M. Ramey, who had replaced General Anderson, ROKAF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Choi Yong-Duk, who replaced General Kim, urged the early beginning of ROKAF jet training.⁷ General Ramey, in his reply to General Choi on 31 July, asserted that he personally agreed with General Choi that the best way to shorten 'years' for the Republic of Korea Air Force to convert to a jet air force was to start training at once.⁸

The ROKAF modernisation programme actually got underway earlier when US Air Force headquarters passed its 13 September message to Far East Air Forces, which quoted Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson's 28 August decision 'to authorize Hq USAF to proceed with implementation of the training portion of the modernization program, under the assumption such training would be required by present ROK forces.'⁹ This message was accepted by sympathetic 5th AF officers as sufficient authorisation to develop final plans and inaugurate jet and jet-affiliated training. The message also stated that a modernisation programme had already been prepared by US Air Force Headquarters and submitted by Secretary of the Air Force Harold E. Talbott on 5 August to Secretary Wilson. The Secretary of Defense withheld approval of delivery of aircraft under this programme

⁵ Msg, COMFEAF to COFS USAF, 10 Mar 54, the same file, Appendix 165.

⁶ Msg, COMFEAF to Cmdr 5AF, 15 Mar 54, Appendix 166, the same file.

⁷ *Gong-Gwon Sa (II)*, 1953 - 57, p. 107.

⁸ Ltr, LiGen Ramey to LiGen Choi, 31 Jul 54. K730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 3. Appendix 167. AFIIRA.

⁹ Msg, FEAF to Cmdr 5AF (A-DO-P & P 8352), 16 Sep 54, Appendix 168, the same file.

until the ROK and US governments initialed the minutes of the conference between President Rhee and President Eisenhower, 27-30 July 1954.¹⁰

Fifth Air Force had been preparing for the 'sweeping overhaul' of the South Korean Air Force and, coincidentally, on the same day (13 September 1954) USAF headquarters wired FEAF its approval, and a concrete plan for ROKAF modernisation was presented in the publication of 5th Air Force Operations Plan 19-54. The plan focused on the jet conversion to F-86F aircraft and the composition and location of ROKAF units, within a personnel ceiling of 9,000 - one fighter bomber wing, flying and technical training units, a tactical control organisation, and accompanying support units. The USAF Advisory Group was elected to carry the largest share of responsibility for the success of this plan. Its duties, in part, were to: 'be responsible for establishing ROKAF training requirements; advise ROKAF on effective training techniques and monitor the training program; coordinate with commanders of Fifth Air Force installations to insure that desired training can be accomplished, then allocate ROKAF training quotas equitably; and advise ROKAF in all phases of tactical operations.'¹¹

6.2. The Process of ROKAF Weapon System Modernisation

Although the ROKAF manpower strength tentatively approved by Headquarters USAF was confined to the 9,000-man ceiling, talks between the US and ROK governments during President Rhee's visit to the United States in July 1954 had explored the possibility of a considerably larger ROK Air Force - 16,500 men.¹² This was further proof, were any required, that the painstaking analyses of military staffs are sometimes given short shrift by

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ 5AF Operations Plan 19-54, 13 Sep 54. '5AF History, Jul-Dec 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 413-414. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 2. AFHRA.

¹² Msg, DepArmy to CINCUNC (Hull), September 15, 1954. *FRUS, 1952-1954*, v. 15, pt. 2, pp. 1876-1878.

their political masters. Thus, with the signing of the Agreed Minute of Understanding by President Eisenhower on 10 September, 5th Air Force revised its plan for modernisation of the ROKAF from the 9,000-man to the 16,500-man personnel ceiling.¹³ The ROKAF's conversion programmes of F-86F jet fighters, C-46 transport aircraft, and modernisation-affiliated training started rolling at last. The Agreed Minute (paragraph eight of Appendix B) was to be used as a basis by the USAF 5th Air Force for organising, equipping and training the South Korean Air Force.

The overall development of the ROKAF modernisation programme, particularly materiel, however, had been slowed by several reasons: the partial withdrawal of USAF forces; the suspended disposition of the bases; the delay in approval of plans; the language difficulties between ROK-US working staff; and the slippage in trainer aircraft delivery schedules. The last of these factors presented a problem in accomplishing the ROKAF's jet conversion training in Korea. ROKAF Chief of Staff Lt. General Choi Yong-Duk appealed to General Nathan F. Twining, USAF Chief of Staff, to speed the aircraft delivery through the commander of the USAF 6146th Air Force Advisory Group, who made a trip to the Pentagon in January 1955 on behalf of the USAF programme of assistance to the ROK Air Force. Delays, however, could not be avoided, and the USAF 6146th AFAG Commander reminded the Headquarters US Air Force of the seriousness of the delay in his report of 15 June: 'The ROKAF is relatively weak and out-of-balance compared with ROK ground forces. Any sustained action by the ROK Armed Forces will require an early augmentation of airpower.' The report warned that the failure of the USAF to meet the provisions of the Agreed

¹³ USAF Operations Plan 19-54, 13 Sep 54. 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 2, p. 415. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 2. AFHRA.

Minute pertaining to delivery of aircraft (F-86s, T-33s and C-46s) tended 'to lower the high opinion held by the ROKAF for the USAF.'¹⁴

The problem was further complicated by the awkward position of the ROKAF Chief of Staff, who faced potential repercussions from ROK Army generals. Although no serious inter-service rivalry surfaced, the ROK Army was not happy to see a rapid build-up and modernisation of the ROK Air Force. Given the fixed overall personnel ceiling, the ROK Army would be expected to provide the additional ROKAF manpower requirement by depleting the Army manpower and budgetary resources. Specifically, the ROKAF modernisation programme could require the transfer of 6,020 personnel spaces from the ROK Army to the ROKAF in order to establish a force goal of 16,500 personnel for the ROKAF, as stipulated in the Agreed Minute.¹⁵ In the meantime, the 5th Air Force approved the 6146th AFAAG's recommendation that ten T-33s be drawn from units within FEAF and placed on temporary loan to the ROKAF. In anticipation of the day when the thirty F-86Fs would arrive, a jet training programme had finally begun in September 1954. ROKAF pilots and support personnel were trained not only in Korea, but also at US Air Force bases in Japan and the United States.¹⁶

6.2.1. Jet Pilot Conversion Training in F-86Fs

Jet training in the CONUS was scheduled for thirty ROKAF F-51 pilots in increments of ten from 9 September 1954 to 23 April 1955. The training would last thirty weeks.¹⁷ The first class of ten ROKAF pilots would receive their training from 9 September 1954 to 23 March 1955, and the

¹⁴ 'SAF History, Jan-Jun 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 353-354. K-730.03 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 2. AFHRA.

¹⁵ '5th Air Force Ops Plan 113-58,' in 'SAF History, Jul-Dec 1958,' *ms.*, vol. 4, p. A-2. K-730.03 Jul-Dec 1958, v. 4. AFHRA.

¹⁶ 'SAF History Jul 1954 - Dec 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 417-418; 'Republic of Korea Air Force,' in 'SAF History Jan - Jun 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 2, p. 354. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 2. AFHRA; *Gong-Gom Sa (II)*, 1953-57, pp. 91,96.

¹⁷ The length of actual flying training for each class was twenty-four weeks, preceded by a six week language (aviation terminology) training. *Gong-Gom Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 91.

115 R.O.K. AIR FORCE

598 R.O.K. AIR FORCE

092 R.O.K. AIR FORCE

1133 R.O.K. AIR FORCE

345

193A

A fourship formation of Korean F-86F Sabre jets in combat air patrol. (ROKAF photo)

additional two increments from 27 September 1954 to 6 April 1955 and from 23 October 1954 to 23 April 1955, respectively. Five of them additionally received jet pilot instructor training.¹⁸ Successful completion by these thirty Korean pilots of F-86F fighter jet conversion was followed by another group of ROKAF pilots who went through a series of flying training courses in the CONUS, which included: jet pilot instructor, instrument pilot instructor, RF-86F tactical reconnaissance conversion, instrument instructor upgrading in the B-25, and search and rescue helicopter training in the H-19. From the time ROKAF modernisation started in September 1954 to the end of 1956 when the ROKAF expansion programme entered a stable track, a total of seventy-two pilots either completed or were undertaking flying training in the CONUS, including fifty-seven jet pilots.¹⁹

In fact, the main CONUS jet conversion training was preceded six months earlier by a special trial class. Two elite F-51 pilots, both ROKAF Air Force Academy honour graduates who excelled in English and military competence, were specially selected to go through an instrument pilot instructor course in a B-25 propeller-driven/twin-engined light bomber-turned trainer at the USAF Instrument School at Moody AFB, Georgia. They successfully received the training from 30 April to 31 August 1954. This was the first ROKAF flying training in CONUS, preceding the Jet Conversion Training. The reason had not been mentioned, but presumably it might have been a trial programme in preparation for the forthcoming comparatively massive ROKAF jet conversion training in CONUS.²⁰ In

¹⁸ Pilots who continued to go through a Jet Pilot Instructor School were: Captains Lim Sang-Sup, Ma Jong-In, Kim Young-Min, and Lee Kyo Ahn. Lt. Colonel Lee Kee-Hyup, who was initially included, was killed on 7 April 1955, when his F-86F crashed near Nellis AFB during a gunnery training mission. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92. For the roster of jet conversion training classes in the United States, see Appendix 6-1 of this study.

¹⁹ The total number of Korean pilots who completed flying training in the CONUS by the end of 1957 increased to ninety-seven: 84 for jets, 9 for B-25s (Instrument Flying), and 4 for helicopters. *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 92.

²⁰ The two trainees were Captains Yoon Ja-Joong and Kim Joong-Bo. Both later flew C-46s and F-86Fs. Yoon later made four stars and became ROKAF Chief of Staff (1981-1983). Kim made two

addition to CONUS flying training, a total of one hundred and sixteen jet pilots in seven classes completed the aero-physiological (low-pressure chamber) flight training from October 1956 to March 1957 at Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, Japan.²¹

Keeping pace with the CONUS conversion programme, additional jet training had also started in Korea with T-33 jet trainers. The Fifth Air Force Standardization and Indoctrination School (FAFSIS) of the USAF 6157th Operations Squadron at Osan AFB (K-55) was charged with organising and managing a broad programme to train ninety ROKAF pilots who were already qualified in F-51s. The FAFSIS set up a sixty-hour flying training syllabus, which emphasised acrobatics, particularly string (or 'in-trail') acrobatics, which was an important phase of fighter pilot training in preparation for the air-to-air gunnery for aerial dogfighting. This new air-to-air mission broadened the doctrinal spectrum of ROKAF pilots, most of whom were oriented by their earlier experience only to the ground-attack role. The course, at the request of the ROKAF leadership, would be conducted on a proved proficiency basis, rather than an hourly basis,²² with special attention devoted to high altitude tactics, jet instrument procedures, cruise control, navigation, A-4 radar gunsight, high speed jet strafing, dive-bombing, and aerial gunnery, in which live ('hot') gunnery would be deleted due to USAF policy. Only simulated ('dry') gunnery was allowed.²³

stars and became Superintendent of the ROK Air Force Academy (1974-1976). Interviews, author with chief historian of the ROKAF and General (Ret.) Yoon Ja-Joong, 16-20 September 1994. See also 'History of Detachment One, 6146th Air Force Advisory Group, 1 July 1954 - 31 December 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 3, p. 20. K-GP-TNG-6146-III (Det. 1), Jul-Dec 1954, v. 3. AFHRA.

²¹ *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, pp. 91-93. The aero-physiological training is a compulsory requirement for jet pilots prior to their exposure to high altitude flying missions. During the training on the ground in a pressure-controlled chamber ('low-pressure chamber'), they were to experience simulated high altitude aero-medical symptoms such as hypoxia (low-oxygen) and spatial disorientation.

²² The difference was explicit. One passed the course by demonstrating specific competence as laid out in the training syllabus. The earlier system had required 'x' hours of fixed time, without specifically demonstrated competence at each assigned task.

²³ Sixty-hour flying training syllabus: (1) nine hours of familiarisation and orientation ; (2) eight hours of formation,(3) four hours of acrobatics; (4) instruments and night transition, fifteen and four

Class 55-1, the first group of ten ROK Air Force pilots selected for jet training in Korea, reported to the FAFSIS at Osan Air Force Base on 9 December 1954. The following day, the training phase began with an introductory ride in a T-33 jet trainer. Following this first experience with jet flying, the ten trainees settled down to five days that contained seventy-one classroom lectures.²⁴ The flight training began on 14 December. The first solo flight was made on 18 December and the entire class was flying solo by 23 December. Ten students, lieutenant colonels and majors in rank, were all combat-experienced in F-51 *Mustangs*, having flown more than one hundred combat missions each during the Korean War. They finished the entire course in two months (on 15 February 1955). Class 55-2 of ten ROKAF captains, much younger and less experienced, opened on 15 January 1955 and finished two and half months later.²⁵ The successful progress of jet conversion training in Korea was attributed mainly to two reasons: (1) Korean pilots' combat-experienced flying skills and enthusiasm; and (2) high quality of USAF instructors. The thorough training programme closely paralleled instruction given to American pilots learning to fly jets in the USAF. All of the American instructor-pilots of the FAFSIS were outstanding instructors formerly assigned to the USAF Air Training Command, and had considerable experience instructing both USAF and foreign national students.

hours respectively; (5) air-to-air and air-to-ground gunnery, seven and four hours each; (6) ten hours of tactics. 'ROK Air Force,' in 'SAF History, Jul - Dec 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 2, p. 419. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 2. AFHRA. See also 'ROK F-86 Program, 8 Sept 54,' the same file v. 3, Appendix 174. The reason for omission of live air-to-air gunnery was not known. The dearth of available tow targets (aerial targets towed in the air by aircraft) was presumed to be one of the reasons by a participating trainee at the time. Interview (telephone), author with Major General (Ret.) Chun Hyung-Il (Class 55-2), 6 March 1995.

²⁴ Seventy-one hour ground school: (1) fifteen hours each of aircraft operations and practical maintenance; (2) twelve hours of armament and fighter gunnery; (3) tactical intelligence, physiological indoctrination and flying safety, five, four and six hours each; (4) Navigation, ten hours; (5) gun camera film and target assessing, four hours. 'SAF History, Jul - Dec 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 2, p. 421. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 2. AFHRA.

²⁵ For the roster of ROKAF jet pilot trainees, see Appendix 6-1 of this study.

ROKAF leaders made it clear to the American instructor pilots that quality was preferred to quantity. Therefore, the American instructors determined the extent of flying training that would be required for the ROKAF students. Encouraged by ROKAF leaders to promote good relations with and make a good impression on Americans, Korean trainees, all qualified F-51 pilots, worked hard, and were highly responsive to American instructors. One of the American instructors noted: 'The enthusiasm of the [Korean] students has been terrific and they are eager to learn as much as possible about jet flying.'²⁶

While ROKAF pilots' jet conversion training was being conducted both in the CONUS and Korea, the air staff at ROK Air Force Headquarters was busy preparing for the activation of a jet fighter wing. As the Agreed Minute did not permit an additional fighter wing, ROKAF had no choice but to convert the existing 10th Fighter Wing from F-51s to F-86s. The location of the existing 10th FW was not suitable for jet conversion, because its home base at Kangnung (K-18) on the east coast of Korea was constantly stricken by poor weather and by the unsuitable surrounding terrain. Another location was deemed more desirable. Fortunately, the 5th Air Force's progressive withdrawal from Korea left some air bases available to the ROKAF. Soon after the USAF 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing departed Suwon AB (K-13), the ROKAF 10th Fighter Wing began moving on 4 October 1954 to K-13 on the west, twenty-five miles south of Seoul. The entire Wing became operational (although still with F-51s) at the new site by 26 November, and two days later took over jurisdiction of the base from 5th Air Force.²⁷

²⁶ 'History of the 314th Air Division, 15 March -30 June 1955,' *ms.*, pp. 5-6. K-AD-314-III, 15 Mar-Jun 1955. AFHRA.

²⁷ *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 108. During this movement extreme transportation difficulties were encountered. Since Kangnung AB was not connected by railroad at that time and was cut off by high mountains from the rest of Korea, all loads were carried out in ROK Navy LSTs to Masan, a southern port located twenty miles west of Pusan, where they were transferred to land transportation facilities for Suwon AB.

On 10 February 1955 a ROKAF T-33 Training Detachment of 10th Fighter Wing was activated at Osan AB, in preparation for ROKAF's eventual takeover of jet conversion training from the FAFSIS. At first this ROKAF flight detachment was a static organisation, manned by the minimum number of ROKAF staff, and received on-the-job flight management training under supervision of FAFSIS. The ROKAF's jet training meanwhile continued and the number of jet qualified ROKAF pilots increased with the influx of CONUS and in-country-trained pilots. Upon the delivery of T-33 trainers to ROKAF, the ROKAF T-33 Training Detachment at Osan AB was expanded to become 104th Flight Training Squadron, and began the T-33 transition training at Suwon AB on 25 May 1955. The T-33 course consisted of three weeks of academic instruction and nine weeks of flying training, as conducted by the ROKAF instructors under American advisers' supervision. Sixteen trainees completed the course on 16 December. Five pilots completed the F-86F Staff and Indoctrination Course on 24 December. At the end of 1955, there were thirty-three pilots qualified to fly F-86Fs and sixteen in training. In the T-33 program there were fifteen pilots available and fourteen in training.²⁸

Despite all this progress in flight training, slippage developed in the programme for the delivery of F-86Fs to the ROKAF during FY 1955, and *none* had been delivered by the middle of June 1955. With five F-86Fs lent to the ROK Air Force from the FEAF resources, an official ceremony, attended by dignitaries including President Rhee, was held at Suwon on 20 June to mark the ROKAF's historical receipt of its first jet fighters, during which the ROKAF 10th Fighter Wing was awarded a US Presidential Unit Citation.²⁹ In its report as the introduction of war-tested F-86F jet fighters,

²⁸ The majority of flight instructors were on loan in adviser capacity from FAFSIS. *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 94; 'History of the 314th Air Division, 15 March -30 June 1955,' *ms.*, p. 8. K-AD-314-III, 15 Mar-Jun 1955. AFHRA.

²⁹ *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 104.

the *Chosun Ilbo* reiterated the significance of the ROK's indigenous air defence power: 'Now our Air Force is jet capable and can contribute not only to the defence of the Korean peninsula, but also to the maintenance of freedom in the Far East for world peace in close coordination with the United States Air Force and United Nations. Because of this new global mission, everyone should wholeheartedly support the continued growth of our national airpower.'³⁰

These five aircraft were assigned to the 103rd Fighter Squadron of the 10th Fighter Wing. After the delivery of the five F-86Fs at Suwon AB, qualified F-86F ROKAF pilots were able to obtain part of their required proficiency flying time in these aircraft. Because these five aircraft were insufficient for the number of pilots, however, the pilots had to receive additional flying time in USAF aircraft at Osan AB.³¹

One serious problem encountered in the ROKAF's jet conversion was the 10th Fighter Wing's operational readiness. Combat preparedness in the F-51 squadron had decreased noticeably following the departure of a number of skilled pilots for jet training. But the readiness problem was soon alleviated by the return of those CONUS-trained in April and graduation of in-country (domestic) trained pilots in May 1955. The return to the 10th Fighter Wing of these pilots improved the morale and operational effectiveness of the wing. In contrast, the combat capability of 101st and 102nd Fighter Squadrons of propeller-driven F-51s did not improve, because the sending of qualified combat veterans to jet training dictated that pilot replenishment be provided by recent graduates of flying school without much flying experience. In effect, it was one of the most vulnerable periods

³⁰ *Chosun Ilbo*, 21 June 1955, p. 3.

³¹ 'Operations,' in 'History of 6146th Air Force Advisory Group, 1 January - 30 June 1955,' *ms.*, p. 55. K-GP-TNG-6146-III Jan-Jun 1955. AFHRA; *Gong-Gwan Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 104.

for the ROKAF. Without continued US Air Force presence, the air defence posture on the peninsula would have been jeopardised.³²

6.2.2. Jet Mechanic Training

The training of ROKAF ground personnel in jet aircraft maintenance had started prior to their pilots' training. On 19 March 1954, six months before the Korean pilots entered flying training in the CONUS, 5th Air Force approved jet mechanics' training in advance. 5th AF logistic staff recommended that one of three alternatives be adopted to train ROKAF jet mechanics by: (1) conducting on-the-job-training at 5th Air Force installations in Korea; (2) bringing a MTU (Mobile Training Unit) to Korea; or (3) sending ROKAF personnel to FEAF bases elsewhere in the Pacific area, where MTUs were already in operation. The third alternative was deemed the best,³³ provided the ROKAF could clear diplomatic obstacles with the Japanese government over permitting Korean nationals to visit Japan. The scheme for the ROKAF jet mechanic training would provide a month's training at a mobile training unit at 5th Air Force bases in Japan followed by on-the-job training at 5th Air Force installations in Korea.³⁴

Accordingly, upon notification of the availability of MTUs in FEAF for the ROKAF mechanic training, the ROK government sought diplomatic clearance for the first group of trainees, but visas from the Japanese government were denied.³⁵ When the Korean pilots were trained in Japan soon after the hostilities broke out, Korean pilots did not need Japanese

³² Interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, 24 April 1995.

³³ The MTUs were already in operation, and staffed with professional trainers.

³⁴ Msg, Gen Anderson to Gen Weyland, 19 Feb 54. '5AF History, Jul - Dec 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 3, Appendix 164. K730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v.3. AFIRA. See also 'ROK Air Force,' in vol. 2, pp. 424-425, same file.

³⁵ 'The Republic of Korea Air Force,' in '5AF History, Jan - Jun 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 423. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1954, v. 1; Telephone interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, 30 October 1995.

government visas, because Japan was still under US Military Occupation jurisdiction. Koreans instead travelled on USAF 5th Air Force travel orders. However, when the Korean mechanics were to be sent to US air bases in Japan after the Korean War, Japanese visas were required because by that time Japan was no longer under US occupation, having regained sovereignty with the signing of the US-Japan Peace Treaty in 1951.³⁶

On 19 April 1954, ROKAF proposed sending Korean trainees to Japan on USAF 5th Air Force-issued travel orders, confining their activities to USAF bases in Japan and thus bypassing visas and passports. This proposal was not accepted because of 5th Air Force's fear of a possible diplomatic dispute. After efforts by the ROK government through both American and Korean diplomatic channels in Seoul and Tokyo, ROKAF trainees finally obtained visas. The first group of fifty-four ROKAF mechanics (twenty-three officers and thirty-one NCOs) received F-86F maintenance training at Tsuiki US Air Force Base in Japan (20 August - 27 September 1954). Given the fear of the 5th Air Force authorities and the ROK government of possible harassment by North Korea-affiliated Korean residents living in the Tsuiki area, at first no ROKAF personnel were permitted to leave Tsuiki Air Base while in training. As the training progressed smoothly, and ROKAF personnel proved to be highly disciplined, Korean students were ultimately allowed to leave the base when accompanied by American personnel.³⁷

Under the leadership of Lt. Colonel Kim Suk-Hwan, ROKAF mechanic trainees worked hard and all successfully completed the training

³⁶ Interview (telephone), author with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, 30 October 1995.

³⁷ The North Korean government had clandestine relations with a number of the Korean residents in Japan. Over 600,000 Koreans were estimated to reside in Japan. They were politically divided into two groups: ROK-affiliated Min-Dan (MD) and DPRK-connected Cho-Chong Ryon (CCR). What American authorities worried about was possible harassment of ROKAF personnel by the CCR-affiliated Korean residents in the Tsuiki area. 'The Republic of Korea Air Force,' in '5AF History, Jan - Jun 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 423. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1954, v. 1. AFHRA.

in Japan without incident. USAF instructors were pleased with the trainees' enthusiastic performance. One American instructor revealed: 'Test records of the ROK's have been better than those made by an average USAF class of students.'³⁸ As planned, they underwent an additional month of training with the USAF 58th Fighter Bomber Wing at Taegu (K-2) Air Base upon their return from Japan. At this point, the training of jet mechanics bogged down, due to the delayed arrival of the F-86 Mobile Training Detachment from the CONUS. With the unexpected delay, the training of ROKAF jet maintenance personnel did not keep pace with ROKAF pilot training. By the end of 1954, the ROKAF had only thirty-two F-86F mechanics on OJT status with USAF units in Korea. The ROKAF T-33 pilot training programme at Osan AB (K-55) was in progress and programmed to produce ten ROKAF pilots each month, beginning with ten graduates on 15 February 1955. The 6146th Air Force Advisory Group urged 5th Air Force to speed delivery of the promised F-86F MTD on which ROKAF jet mechanic training had to be based: '[S]ome 25 ROKAF F-86F pilots trained in the ZI [(CONUS)] would return to Korea in March and April of 1955 and unless immediate action is taken to implement the ROKAF jet maintenance training program, USAF maintenance support would be required to maintain ROKAF F-86 pilot transition training.'³⁹ Arrival of the USAF F-86F Mobile Training Detachment (MTD) at Osan AFB in April 1955 revitalised ROKAF's jet mechanic training. In the meantime 113 ROKAF mechanics, including fifty-two officers, received training in CONUS.⁴⁰

³⁸ 'Report of Staff Visit, 16 Aug 54,' in 'SAF History, Jul - Dec 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 3, Appendix 176. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 3, AFHRA ; 'Trip Rpt, Maj Hertel (to Tsuiki AB), 8 Sep 54.' *Ibid.*, Appendix 178, same file.

³⁹ Msg, Cmdr 6146th AFAG to 5AF, 28 Dec 54. 'SAF History, Jul - Dec 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 3, Appendix 179. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 3. AFHRA.

⁴⁰ Due to the limited spaces in CONUS training capacity as well as limited qualified ROKAF enlisted mechanics, out of fifty-two ROKAF officers only thirteen received F-86 maintenance officer's course; the remainder had to join the enlisted technician's course. *Gong-Gum Sa (II), 1953-57*, p. 96.

6.2.3. C-46 Transport Transition

In parallel with jet conversion, C-46 transport transition commenced at the start of 1955. C-46 training, while programmed on a smaller scale than the F-86F jet training, was nevertheless of considerable importance. Cargo aircraft were to be used as a key support element of the modernised ROKAF, and opened new possibilities for expanded ROKAF roles. The C-46 was the first 'heavy' twin-engined cargo aircraft officially authorised for the ROKAF airlift mission, which had been virtually ignored because of the emphasis on its fighter expansion. Yet speed and mobility are among the distinctive characteristics of airpower, and airlift could enhance both. Airlift should always be treated as one of the indispensable missions of an air force. Not only is it faster than any form of surface movement, particularly in such mountainous areas as Korea, but also in war air transport might become the only viable option to keep the line of communications open. In this respect, introduction of C-46 transport aircraft into the ROKAF inventory paved the way for the Korean Air Force to promote the doctrinal improvement of its airlift and air resupply missions in support of ROK Armed Forces.

Bringing vital logistic resupply to tanks and infantry at roadside fields during the Korean war, the airlift had enabled ROK armored columns to keep pushing forward. Long supply lines on the ground were unnecessary; air drops supplied platoons, companies, even battalions with the considerable amount of supplies they needed to wage war. Particularly, air resupply was absolutely essential for the ground troops when they were surrounded by the enemy. The importance of the tactical airlift operations was well illustrated in US Marine operations during the Korean War. The successful US 1st Marines' withdrawal operations from the Changjin (Choshin) Reservoir, pursued by Chinese forces in the winter of 1950 in North Korea, eloquently

illustrated the vital role of the tactical airlift force in the conduct of combat service support mission in the battle area.

During the period of retreat operations (27 November-15 December 1950) in the besieged Changjin (Choshin) Reservoir area, US Marines relied totally on air supply for their logistic supply of food, winter clothing, munitions, and fuel. Impressive and worth noting tactically was an airdrop of eight two-ton spans of a bridge by the USAF Airlift Command's C-119 *Flying Boxcars*. This allowed US Marine engineers to successfully repair a blown-out bridge across a dam for the safe passage of retreating Marines. From 28 November to 6 December 1950, C-119 cargo planes air-supplied over 1,700 tons of supplies. During the same period, over 4,600 sick and wounded troops were flown out by USAF C-47 medium cargo planes, which made over 200 landings at an improvised airstrip in the besieged battle area. Unless air resupply and air medical evacuation by such transport aircraft had been conducted in a timely fashion, the trapped US 1st Marines would not have been able to fight their way out to safety.⁴¹

This lesson of the Korean War necessitated the early introduction of transport aircraft into the Korean Air Force. Under terms of the Agreed Minute, sixteen C-46 transport aircraft for one squadron were to be delivered to the ROK Air Force before the end of Fiscal Year 1955. The 5th Air Force was again committed to take charge of the ROKAF's C-46 training. As one of the first steps, the USAF 6156th Flying Training Squadron (Transport-ROKAF) was established at Taegu AB (K-2) to train Korean personnel and was attached to the USAF 58th Fighter Bomber Wing there for operational

⁴¹ A 2,300 foot-long dirt strip was improvised in the valley of Hagaru-ri, a few kilometers south of the Changjin Reservoir. The C-47 was the only cargo plane at the time allowed to operate on the unpaved yet frozen air strip. William H. Tunner, *Over the Hump* (Washington, DC: Office of US Air Force History, 1985), pp. 253-257; Charles E. Miller, *Airlift Doctrine* (Maxwell AFB, Alabama: Air University Press, 1988), pp. 198-199; Futrell, *The USAF in Korea 1950-53*, pp. 258-259. See also Pegasus, *Air Power in Action: Korea 1950-51* (New York: Fairchild Engine and Airplane Corp., 1952), pp. 32-33.

control, administration, and logistic support. The objective of the ROKAF C-46 training course was set by USAF standards: 'to qualify ROKAF pilots as white card, C-46 transport pilots capable of operations within the same general limitations as USAF transport pilots.'⁴²

The course was four months in duration and required a total of 162 hours of ground schooling and 120 hours of flying training to prepare ROKAF pilots (who were currently flying T-6 and /or F-51 type aircraft) for qualifying in the C-46. In addition, the course aimed to improve their qualifications for weather flying, navigation, flight planning, and communication in the C-46 aircraft. With the arrival of six C-46 aircraft at the end of the year, the 6156th Squadron started the 16-week course of ROKAF C-46 training on 3 January 1955 for the first class of eleven ROKAF pilots, seven maintenance officers and forty-one maintenance airmen. Graduation of the first class on 28 April 1955 was followed by the second class of seven ROKAF pilots, two maintenance officers and fifty-eight maintenance airmen, who started 9 May 1955 and were graduated on 26 August 1956.⁴³

During the period, they flew missions in a loaded aircraft to qualify in handling the C-46 under varying load conditions. Through adroit flight scheduling by the professional USAF instructors/advisers, all ROKAF flying trainees received instrument instructions under actual weather conditions. Instrument training under actual weather conditions proved to be very beneficial, because the ROKAF transport pilots would have to fly 'real'

⁴² 'ROK Air Force,' in 'SAF History, Jul - Dec 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 358, 431, 433. K-730.01 Jul-Dec 1954, v. 2. AFHRA. USAF used two ratings of instrument flying qualifications: one was basic and the other advanced, coded in colours. White was the colour of the certificate for the basic instrument flight rating which allowed the individual pilot to fly in a limited weather condition. Green card holders were allowed to fly in the worst weather conditions. The colour coded dual ratings were later replaced by one standardised rating system in the 1960s.

⁴³ This is summarised from three sources: (1) 'SAF Course Outline (C-46), Flying Trng (ROKAF),' 15 Dec 54. same file, Appendix 182; (2) 'History of 6156th Flying Training Squadron, 15 December 1954 - 14 September 1955,' *ms.*, Table VI. K-SQ-TNG-6156-III 15 Dec 1954 - 14 Sep 1955, AFHRA; and (3) *Gong-Goon Sa (II), 1953-57*, p. 98.

missions during poor weather as a part of training requirements. Prior to their transition to the C-46 transport aircraft, ROKAF pilots usually flew in clear weather, given their limited proficiency in instrument flying and lack of appropriate instrument flying equipment in their aircraft. Such aircraft as T-6s and F-51s were designed to fly under visual (clear) weather conditions without sophisticated instruments. During the training of the two classes, a total of 2,300 hours of flying time and more than 5,000 take-offs and landings were accomplished without a single accident. This achievement resulted from both the quality of training by USAF instructors and the enthusiasm of ROKAF's disciplined and motivated student pilots.⁴⁴

The flying proficiency of Korean C-46 pilots was demonstrated twice. In March 1956, during the period when the ROK Army was snowbound on the eastern area south of the DMZ, twenty C-46 sorties were flown to furnish logistical support to the Army.⁴⁵ On 25 June 1956, four ROKAF C-46 aircraft, manned by ROKAF crews, were flown to Hong Kong, China, for depot maintenance. This was the first overseas long range ferry mission of the ROKAF, and the flight was completed without incident. Thus the new role of ROKAF airlift mission, albeit small scale, successfully commenced.

The introduction of C-46 transport aircraft into the ROKAF inventory paved the way for the Korean transport pilots to enhance their potential value, not only to the development of the doctrinal spectrum for inter- and intra-theatre airlift (air re-supply and air medical evacuation), but also in the growth of the Korean civil aviation industry. The ROK government's commencement of dispatching its troops to South Vietnam in 1965 was followed a year later by deployment of two C-46s to provide air logistic

⁴⁴ 'History of 6156th Flying Training Squadron, 15 December 1954 - 14 September 1955,' *ms.*, p. 4. K-SQ-TNG-6156-III 15 Dec 1954 - 14 Sep 1955. AFHRA.

⁴⁵ One sortie is one flight of one aircraft. If one aircraft flies two flights, the number of flights is counted as two sorties. Twenty sorties could be flown either by each of four aircraft with five flights or five aircraft with four flights.

support there. (Soon after, the C-46 detachment was joined by ROKAF C-54s.) When the ROK government agreed with the United States to participate in the evacuation of Korean casualties from Vietnam, the Korean transport aircrew were prepared to convert to 4-engined C-54 cargo planes. Upon conversion, they formed the 8th Airlift Squadron, nicknamed 'Back-Goo Boo-Dae' ('The Silver Horse,') to conduct the medical evacuation mission from September 1966 to February 1973.⁴⁶ The importance of ROKAF's transport conversion later became apparent when the Korean National Airlines (KNA) was privatised and replaced by the formation of the Korean Airlines (KAL) in 1969. The majority of the KAL's air crews and ground mechanics came from ROKAF personnel sources, which were the main suppliers of experienced aviation personnel.⁴⁷

6.2.4. Formation of an Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron

One indispensable facet of ROKAF modernisation was the 30th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron, activated at Suwon AB (K-13) on 1 September 1955. Previously, with conventional F-51s, the ROKAF fighter operations had been limited to air-to-ground missions. These missions could be conducted visually at any altitude below 10,000 feet and at speeds of less than 250 miles an hour. With conversion to F-86F jet fighters, which flew faster and required more room to operate (more than five hundred miles an hour and from sea level up to over 35,000 feet of altitude), the conduct of ROKAF's diversified air operations, especially the air-to-air mission, was not possible without assistance from radar on the ground. Radar was the backbone of the Korean Tactical Air Control System (KTACS). ROKAF air-to-air aerial defence missions were to be conducted in accordance with the

⁴⁶ *Gung-Goon Sa (II)*, 1963-67, pp. 99-100, 109-113.

⁴⁷ Interviews, author with Major General (Ret.) Park Yong-Jik, a former staff member of the KAL, 10 January 1995, and Lee Tae-Won, executive vice president of the KAL, 25 September 1995.

four doctrinal phases of air defence operations: detection, identification, interception and destruction. The first two phases of detection and identification of the intruding unknown flying objects were to be handled initially by the KTACS radar network, which consisted of eight radar sites throughout the country.⁴⁸ These KTACS radar sites, manned by USAF personnel, played an important role in helping American F-86 *Sabre* pilots outmanoeuvre the communist fighters in MiG-Alley during the Korean War.⁴⁹ Because of high speed and great altitude separation between opposing fighters, both communist MiGs and USAF *Sabres* had to rely heavily on the ground radars for aerial combat operations. Combined with the superior skill of the American pilots, improved version of the F-86F, the extensive coverage of the US ground radars and its support (aircraft control and warning) resulted in 'FEAF domination of the Communist Chinese Air Force.'⁵⁰

With the continued withdrawal of the USAF from South Korea, the transfer of USAF's aircraft control and warning (AC & W) capability to the ROK Air Force was desirable for two reasons. Firstly, radar was an intrinsically non-offensive system. Secondly, even if somewhat obtusely, it would provide the ROKAF with the opportunity to expand its manpower, and thus help curb the emphasis given the ROK Army in the Agreed Minute-approved manpower ceiling. Considering the Agreed Minute's stipulation that 'adjustments in numbers will be acceptable to the United States as long as the 720,000 total is not exceeded,' the ROK air staff initially recommended the establishment of a wing-size ROKAF Aircraft Control and Warning (AC&W) system. ROK Air Force leaders, however, ran into a

⁴⁸ *Gong-Goon Sa (II), 1953-57*, p. 111.

⁴⁹ For an account of USAF pilots' aerial combat missions against MiGs in the 'MiG Alley' (over the area between the Chongchon and Yalu Rivers in northwestern Korea) during the Korean War, see Futrell, *The USAF in Korea*, pp. 289-300, 510. See also Figure 3-1 of this study (p. 68).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 505-515, 607-617.

'political' impediment again. The preponderant influence of the ROK Army generals at the national defence policy-making level curtailed ROKAF efforts to increase manpower by taking over the US Air Force's KTACS. Again, ROK Army manpower and budgetary resources would not be relinquished for a larger ROK Air Force.⁵¹

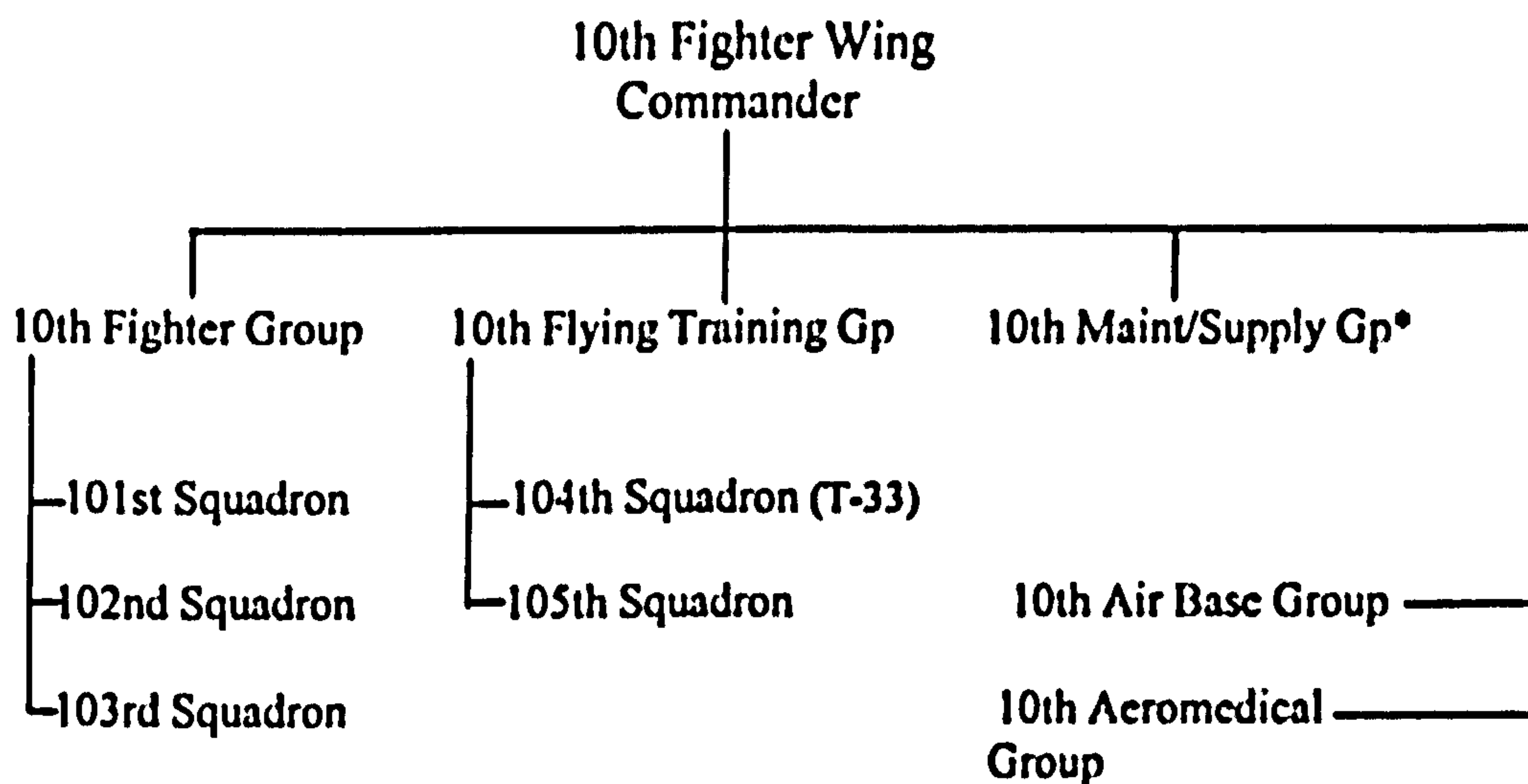
6.2.5. Combat Readiness of ROKAF Jet Fighter Wing

Despite the inability to expand the ROKAF's ground personnel, the additional graduates of jet conversion training, as well as increased numbers of delivered jet aircraft, demanded the reorganisation of ROKAF flying units and redeployment of fighter forces. All conventional F-51s were sent to Taegu AB (K-2) and assigned to the new 5th Composite Wing, which had jurisdiction over two flying groups - 5th Fighter (F-51) Flying Training Group and 5th Transport (C-46) Flying Group. The 102nd and 103rd Fighter Squadrons at Suwon AB (K-13) converted to F-86Fs in April 1956. The arrival of an additional number of F-86Fs at Suwon AB made it possible for the 10th Fighter Wing to establish the 105th Advanced Flying Training Squadron in September 1956. Jet squadrons at Suwon AB were divided into two flying groups: The 10th Fighter Group of 101st, 102nd and 103rd Fighter Squadrons; 10th Flying Training Group of 104th Basic Flying Training Squadron and 105th Advanced Flying Training Squadron. All ROKAF units at Suwon AB were integrated into the expanded 10th Fighter Wing command structure the following year.⁵² (Figure 6-1)

⁵¹ Interviews, author, 19 November 1992 with Lt. General Chang Chi-Ryang, former Chief of Staff, ROKAF (1968-70), Director for Plans, HQ ROKAF(1955-56), Air Attaché in Washington, DC (1956-59); 24 April 1995 with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, former Chief of Staff ROKAF (1958-1960).

⁵² 5th Fighter Group was deactivated upon phase-out of all ROKAF F-51s on 29 June 1957. *Gong-Goon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, pp. 109, 151-152, 158.

Figure 6-1: Organisation of ROKAF 10th Fighter Wing
(31 December 1957)



* Gp: Group; Maint: Maintenance

Source: ROKAF, *Gong-Goon Sa Jae 2 Jip, 1953-1957 (The History of the ROK Air Force, Volume II, 1953-1957)* (Seoul, Korea: ROKAF History Office, 1964), p. 109.

The ROKAF 10th Fighter Wing meanwhile intensified its unit training, focusing on enhancing combat readiness in F-86F jet fighters. The wing successfully participated in two large scale air defence exercises - coded *Chosen Feud* and *Dragon Fly* - sponsored by the USAF 314th Air Division.⁵³ ROKAF leaders encouraged their newly qualified F-86F pilots to obtain 'good grades' in the exercises from the USAF evaluators. Although ostensibly both exercises (*Chosen Feud* on 14-15 June and *Dragon Fly* on 4-6 October 1956) were designed 'to test the Republic of Korea Air Force and

⁵³ Upon redeployment of its headquarters to Japan by February 1955, 5th Air Force created the 314th Air Division at Osan AB on 15 March 1955 and charged it with the air defence mission in Korea, bringing all USAF fighter forces on the peninsula under its command. 'SAF History, Jan - June 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 3, Appendix 52. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 3. AFHRA.

the United States Air Force in coordinated manoeuvres,⁵⁴ their practical objectives were to evaluate the proficiency of ROKAF pilots and support personnel integrated in the USAF-sponsored Korean air defence system. Consequently, the outcome of ROKAF's participation in these two exercises would have an important impact on USAF's official evaluation of the 10th Fighter Wing's combat readiness and subsequent creation of an additional ROKAF F-86F fighter wing.

In impressive fashion, the 10th Fighter Wing demonstrated the ability to 'scramble' interceptor aircraft in minimum time.⁵⁵ The average scramble time for eleven scrambles involving twenty-four aircraft during Exercise *Dragon Fly* was 2.13 minutes. The longest scramble was three minutes and the shortest was one minute and thirty seconds. The average turnaround time needed to prepare an aircraft for air-to-air combat was nineteen minutes.⁵⁶ The Korean pilots' determined efforts to excel paid off. USAF evaluators praised the ROKAF performance during the exercises:

[G]iven some additional logistic support in the form of aircraft spare parts, radar spare parts. . . and some emphasis given to adequate communications . . ., the 10th Fighter Wing (ROK) and the 30th AC&W Squadron (ROK) can play a vital role in the air defense of South Korea. They should be commended for accomplishing so much in such a short time, with so little.⁵⁷

At last, the 10th Fighter Wing became combat-ready to defend South Korea's territorial air space with F-86F jet fighters. The ROKAF's successful performance in both *Chosen Feud* and *Dragon Fly* large scale air defence

⁵⁴ 'History of the 314th Air Division, 1 January - 30 June 1956,' *ms.*, p. 31. K-DIV-314-III Jan-Jun 1956. AFIIRA.

⁵⁵ The normal, alerted air defence posture, always in theory, often in practice, is to have a fully armed and manned aircraft sitting near the end of the runway, awaiting only an order to launch. Sometimes the pilots are near rather than actually in the aircraft. The use of the word 'scramble' to describe what ensues is typical of the allegedly dry humour for which pilots like to pride themselves.

⁵⁶ Turnaround time is the time that expires between a given aircraft landing and its refurbishment to the point of being able to launch again.

⁵⁷ 'ROKAF in Dragon Fly,' in 'History of the 314th Air Division, 1 July - 31 December 1956,' *ms.*, p. 25. K-DIV-314-III Jul-Dec 1956. AFIIRA.

exercises paved the way for the creation of an additional F-86F fighter wing of the expanded (22,000-man) ROK Air Force in less than two years.⁵⁸ By the end of 1956, the Republic of Korea Air Force had five wing-size units - three flying wings and two non-flying technical support wings. (Figure 6-2)

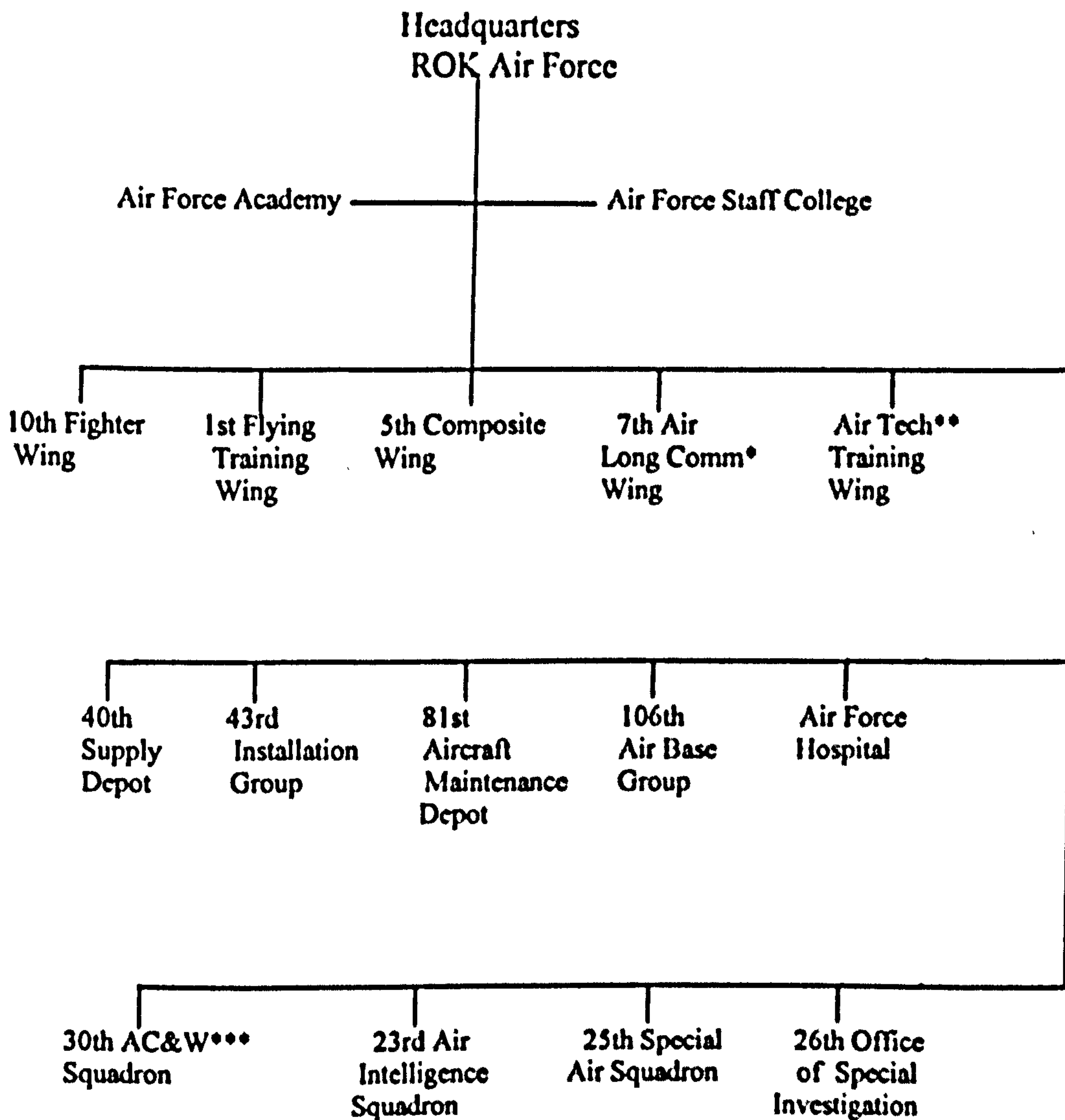
ROKAF's manpower strength increased to 16,241 on hand out of 16,500 authorised, including 254 fighter pilots (113 F-86F- and 141 F-51-qualified) and thirty-three C-46 transport pilots. From the commencement of the ROKAF modernisation programme in September 1954 to the end of 1956, the United States supplied the ROKAF with ninety jet (81 F-86Fs, 9 T-33s) and eighteen C-46 cargo planes.⁵⁹ Thus the ROKAF modernisation was satisfactorily realised in general, although some issues and problems still remained.

Modernisation of the ROKAF was not accomplished overnight. It was the result of the combined efforts of ROKAF leaders and USAF advisers, and reflected coordination and advance planning. The conversion from propeller to jet fighters not only modernised the aircraft, but also diversified the roles and missions of the South Korean Air Force. The significance of the conversion was that the jet fighters vastly increased the potential for air operations in adverse weather - in and above the clouds. It expanded the area of ROKAF's operations with respect to manoeuvrability and responsiveness. Jet fighters, together with the tactical air surveillance

⁵⁸ 5th Air Force planned for the activation of an additional wing for ROKAF to be called the 11th Fighter Wing, and directed 314th Air Division on 5 May 1957 to initiate required preliminary planning activities in conjunction with the inactivation of its 58th Fighter-Bomber Wing at Osan Air Base in Korea. 'ROKAF,' in '5AF History, Jan - Jun 1957,' *ms.*, vol. 4, p. 155. K730.01 Jan-Jun 1957, v. 4. AFHRA. ROKAF 11th Fighter Wing was established at Kimpo AB on 1 August 1958 in accordance with ROK MND (Air Force) Order #26 (1958. 7. 20) and USAF 5th Air Force Operation Plan 113-58 dated 5 September 1958. By the end of 1958 the authorised manpower strength of the ROKAF increased to 22,400 men. *Gung-Gwan Sa (III)*, 1958-62, pp. 98, 320. See also '5th AF Ops Plan 113-58,' in '5AF History, Jul - Dec 1958,' *ms.*, vol. 4. K730.01 Jul-Dec 1958, v. 4. AFHRA.

⁵⁹ The remaining aircraft (4 F-86Fs, 1 T-33) were delivered in the following year. *Gung-Gwan Sa (II)*, 1953-57, pp. 100, 106-107.

Figure 6-2: Structure of ROK Air Force on 31 December 1956⁶⁰



* Communication ** Technical *** Aircraft Control and Warning (Radar)

⁶⁰ ROKAF, *Gong-Goon Sa Jae 2 Jip, 1953-1957 (The History of the ROK Air Force, Volume II, 1953-1957)* (Seoul, Korea: ROKAF History Office, 1964), p. 429

system, promoted the South Korean Air Force potential for command and control, in cooperation with the American Air Force. For the first time, the ROKAF was allowed to take part in the defence of its own territorial airspace, albeit as a supplementary role in support of the USAF in Korea. Equally important was the fact that an airlift capability with C-46s was provided to the ROKAF and the first ROKAF aircraft control and warning (AC & W) squadron was activated, thereby paving the way for the future expansion of ROKAF manpower and support systems. Once jet fighters, transport aircraft and the tactical air surveillance equipment (radar) were introduced into the ROKAF inventory, it would open the door to the multiple roles demanded of a modern air force. However, the acquisition of modern weapon systems and the ensuing training of pilots and support personnel rapidly revealed difficulties and deficiencies, the most important of which are treated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ISSUES ARISING FROM THE MODERNISATION PROCESS

In the process of its modernisation, the ROKAF confronted a series of interrelated issues and problems. Among these were four distinctive and yet recurring issues. Firstly, English is the official universal aviation language required for use in the air in accordance with the regulations of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). To assure the safe traffic control of all aircraft, domestic and international, as well as military and civilian, ROKAF pilots had to learn to use correct voice procedures in English. Secondly, as the area of air operations in the region surrounding the Korean peninsula is contiguous and adjoining that of Japan, a need arose for cooperation in the air operations between Japan and South Korea, owing to the expanded radius of operations of the new jet aircraft. Thirdly, the United States operational control (OPCON) over the ROK Armed Forces, which was given to the UNC/US Military Commander in the Korean theater during the Korean War, became an issue among some ROK officials when the American and UN troops started their withdrawal after the cessation of hostilities. Lastly, since the Armistice, the ROKAF has faced a doctrinal problem coping with the air threat from the North, because of a lack of air manoeuvring depth to defend the capital city of Seoul. This chapter examines how the ROKAF either overcame or still continues to cope with these interrelated issues, each of which profoundly affects both the peacetime readiness and wartime capability of the South Korean Air Force.

7.1. Aviation English Requirements To Acquire Instrument Flying Qualifications

Previously, when Korean pilots had flown propeller-driven F-51s, they had not encountered any serious language difficulties in the air, because their relatively simple and visual flight missions did not require high proficiency in aviation English. Most of their flying activities could be managed with hand signals in accordance with visual flight rules (VFR) in clear weather. The F-51s were designed to fly VFR missions only, and did not have adequate instruments on board for IFR (instrument flight rules) missions in adverse weather conditions. Therefore, Korean pilots managed to fly F-51s without the serious difficulties of aviation English. However, F-86F jet and C-46 transport aircraft, both of which were designed for the IFR missions, demanded thorough understanding of international air traffic control rules and aviation procedures. ROKAF pilots needed to pass the Instrument Flying Qualification test in English. This requirement came as a shock to many pilots, who thought they needed to be proficient only in flying skills.¹

What the author calls 'aviation English' is a specialised vocabulary/terminology that applies to pilot procedures while in flight - e.g., takeoff (SID: Standard Instrument Departure) and landing (Instrument Approach) instructions, flight route changes, radio contacts (Air Traffic Control Contacts/ air-to-air or air-to-ground), etc. This specialised vocabulary, with its attendant minimal grammar, must be mastered by pilots. But its limits are specific, and should not be construed to imply proficiency in day-to-day conversational English.

¹ 'Policy on ROKAF IFR Clearance on Airways,' in 'SAF History, Jan - Jun 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 4, Appendix 181. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 4. AFHRA; ROK Air Force, *Gong-Goon Su Jo 2 Jip, 1953. 7.27 - 1957.12.31 (The History of the Air Force, Volume 2, 27 July 1953 - 31)* (hereafter cited as *Gong-Goon Su (II), 1953-57*), pp. 91-96; Telephone interviews, author with Lt. Generals (Ret.) Chang Sung-Whan and Chang Chi-Ryang, 28-30 October 1995.

In adverse weather conditions the flight itself should be totally on instrument flying, under positive control of ground radar and constant instructions spoken in English by American air traffic controllers. At the time only American controllers were available. Air traffic control procedures in English based on ICAO regulations were universally applicable to both civil and military aircraft.² The need to have a sufficient command of aviation English to understand all air traffic control instructions given by ground controllers was a new challenge to many Korean pilots. The frustration level of both American advisers and Korean students was high because of flying safety, especially while flying under IFR conditions, in which hazardous situations - including mid-air collision during IFR flights (e.g., in clouds) on airways, GCA (ground-controlled approach) or in-flight emergency situations - would likely result from an inability to understand instructions, rather than from improper flying technique.

C-46 transport pilots on airlift missions such as air resupply and aeromedical evacuation would probably fly more often during peacetime in adverse weather conditions than would fighter pilots. Restrictions driven by poor weather would render them potentially useless. Yet F-86 pilots also needed an aviation English proficiency, because many fighter missions occurred in and above the clouds, demanding strict compliance with international IFR air traffic control rules. Korean jet pilots were under more stress than those flying transports, for the rapid pace of jet flight (e.g., change of direction, altitude or speed) demanded that they instantly understand the ATC instructions in English, because the time required to alter their thought processes and courses of action would not adequately conform to the two important elements - time and fuel - intrinsic to jet flying. Most jet fighter aircraft could stay in the air for only one and a half to two

² *Code of Federal Regulations: Title 14 - Civil Aviation, Part 26, Paragraph 1c.* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1949), p. 342.

hours without refueling. Flight time would be related directly to the amount of fuel consumption.³

Initially, the American advisers estimated that only 'fifty percent of the ROKAF pilot graduates were capable of performing an IFR flight on airways in conformation with USAF minimums.' ROKAF leaders were disappointed to see only six in one class of eleven jet students pass qualifications for white card instrument rating, which was the basic minimum qualification given to fly under marginal weather conditions. American instructors observed that the Korean pilots who failed the language requirement were not to be considered dull or careless, but were, on the contrary, 'all good pilots and [could] pass a white card instrument check except for language difficulties.'⁴ On the ground, if needed, they were provided English interpreters in their classrooms and flight lines. Suddenly with the advent of the jet and transport era, they were mandated to use English while flying without interpreters available.

The failure to acquire the planned number of qualified pilots due to the English deficiency threatened to delay the activation of F-86 and C-46 squadrons. As a result, the ROKAF proposed the use of an English-Korean bi-lingual air control system. The proposal was reviewed by a joint ROK-US air traffic control coordinating committee, but ROKAF's proposal was rejected. Why did Americans refuse the bi-lingual system? They stated that the responsibility for the 'safe and expeditious movement of air traffic' was charged to the United States Air Force. As they further explained, any operational concept which required bi-lingual air traffic control instructions

³ Jet fighter pilots always have to be careful of their fast burning fuel consumption, because running out of fuel could be an emergency as serious as the flameout of engines in the air. Author's experience.

⁴ 'Policy on ROKAF IFR Clearance on Airways,' in 'SAF History, Jan - Jun 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 4, Appendix 181. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 4. AFHRA. For a white card instrument rating, see p. 205 fn 42 of this study.

would be unacceptable to Americans. The formal American refusal of a bilingual ATC system was based on the following reasons:

1. South Korea is a member state of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). She accepted the membership and its responsibilities without reservation, therefore she is bound to the language concepts that ICAO requires. Attachment 'A' to part III of Annex 10, Aeronautical Telecommunications covers that part which deals with the development of an international language for aviation: English. Paragraph 1.2 of this Annex requires that English be used or available upon request and further, that the primary means of contacting air/ground stations will be in the language of the state for that station.⁵
2. [USAF's] AACS (Air Traffic and Airways Communication Service) is responsible for maintaining all navigational aids within the Korean airways system. So in accordance with paragraph 1.2 of Annex 'A', English must be used to contact these stations.⁶

Apart from the organisational restrictions, Americans pointed out further reasons for demanding English: (1) the Korean language would not be considered readily adaptable for Air Traffic Control purposes, because of its linguistic nature that would not be sufficiently positive or direct; (2) the word meanings were obscure, even to Koreans, and varied with inflection and accent; (3) it had a very limited technical language for use in Air Traffic Control; and (4) contained very few idiomatic expressions to equate with such standard commands as 'Go Around,' 'Cleared To Land,' 'Closed Traffic,' etc.⁷ (Up until the American military occupation after the Second World War, Korea had been isolated from the Western world. This isolation was

⁵ At that time, all air traffic control facilities and navigational aid stations in South Korea were manned by US Air Force personnel.

⁶ 'Policy on ROKAF IFR Clearance on Airways,' in 'SAF History, Jan - Jun 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 4, Appendix 181. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 4. AF11RA. See also *Code of Federal Regulations*, p. 342.

⁷ Ltr, 1818th AACS Gp to Cdr/314th AD, 12 Apr 55 ('Bilingual Air Traffic Control'), in 'SAF History, Jan - Jun 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 4, Appendix 182. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 4. AF11RA.

exacerbated by Japanese colonial rule, which excluded Koreans from being educated. An American official report to President Truman in 1946 stated: 'It is important to remember that 70 percent of the population of Korea as a whole consists of small farmers, using extremely primitive methods of agriculture and fishing. The education level was very low and there is little knowledge of political, international [and scientific/technical] affairs.)'⁸

Since neither linguistic expertise nor scientifically standardised aeronautical phrases and abbreviations were available at that time, ROKAF representatives on the ATC coordinating committee could not argue with their American counterparts. Besides the unadaptability of the Korean language, what made Koreans succumb to English usage and, indeed, international practice, was the likelihood of such situations which could be created by the characteristics of the Korean language:

1. In the case of an ATC clearance which must be translated verbatim and relayed through a Korean controller to a Korean pilot, there is a possibility of separate interpretations.
2. It has been confirmed by [American] instructor pilots that the translations of a pre-flight check list have been as numerous and varied in meaning as there were translators and the Korean pilots reverted to USAF English printed check lists.
3. ATC officers on duty in the control tower have listened to Korean controllers giving instructions to Korean pilots which were verbose and the controller would finally revert to English and say, 'Go Around.'
4. [Inasmuch as] Air Traffic Control instructions given in Korean are lengthy, it would cause [radio] frequency congestion and would delay air traffic which is counter to the most basic tenet of Air Traffic Control.⁹

⁸ Edwin W. Pauley, *Report on Japanese Assets in Soviet-Occupied Korea to the President of the United States, June 1946* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1946) (Known as the 'Pauley Report.'). p. 2.

⁹ Ltr, 1818th AACS Gp to Cdr/314th AD, 12 Apr 55 ('Bilingual Air Traffic Control'), in 'SAF History, Jan - Jun 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 4, Appendix 182. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 4. AFHRA.

The high rate of failure of ROKAF pilots in acquiring instrument flying qualifications - and the impact of subsequent USAF-imposed instrument flight restrictions on their morale - was feared to strain diplomatic relations between the two air forces.¹⁰ Operational urgency to produce the planned number of qualified pilots to fly the delivered aircraft, as well as morale considerations, allowed those 'English-failed' pilots in the first few classes to fly conditionally, restricted to clear weather only, under the instructor's supervision. The subsequent classes were required to take intensive language training at the language schools promptly established by Americans at Suwon and Taegu Air Bases. American advisers were invited to join Korean faculty at the schools, but because of the manpower shortages of both Air Forces, the available number of qualified Korean instructors and American advisers was limited. Consequently, the improvised language reinforcement measure did not contribute much to improving the ROKAF personnel's aviation English proficiency. However, all equipment and instructional materials such as tapes and textbooks were voluntarily provided by the American advisers. Although language improvement did not occur quickly, the schools did help to motivate the Korean aircrews and ground controllers to concentrate on improving their basic knowledge of Air Traffic Control rules and procedures in English.¹¹

To execute the ROKAF missions in adverse weather conditions, the instrument flying qualification of the South Korean pilots could not be over-emphasised. Korea suffers from rainy weather in summer and snow in winter. The pressure on the ROKAF personnel to carry out the planned F-86 and C-46 conversion programmes on schedule forced them to improve their proficiency of technical aviation English as quickly as possible. They were virtually captives to the English language in their daily exposure to the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Appendix 180, same file.

¹¹ Interview, author with Lt. General (R) Chang Chi-Ryang, 16 September 1994.

English-working environment with American advisers. Although they experienced difficulties in overcoming the language barrier, one of the significant benefits accrued by the 'pressure of learning English' was ROKAF's increased ability to accomplish combined air operations with the USAF. Although the language difficulties would persist, they could be faced directly and, in most cases, individually resolved. The same could not be said of the diplomatic complexities affecting the ROKAF role in regional air defence.

7.2. Trilateral Security Cooperation Between US, South Korean and Japanese Air Defence Systems

Soon after the Armistice, 5th Air Force planners reviewed a plan for the gradual transfer of radar sites in the Korean Tactical Air Control System (KTACS) to the ROKAF (to be completed by March 1958). They expressed concern that the ROKAF was not yet capable of defending itself in large measure against external overt aggression. They reckoned that the ROKAF should continue to develop an effective aircraft control, warning and communications (AC&W) system together with an air traffic control (ATC) capability as quickly as possible. The US military assistance programme would be revised to develop peacetime base complexes on the Korean peninsula that the USAF could use when and if required.¹² This was a good scheme, because it would provide the ROKAF with a chance not only to increase its manpower but also diversify its roles. Such a non-flying support component of Korean airpower was indispensable for the eventual takeover of the air defence of the Korean peninsula. It also conformed to the US policy of *non-offensive* weapon systems.

¹² 'ROKAF,' in '5AF History, Jul - Dec 1956,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 253. K730.01 Jul-Dec 1956, v. 1. AFHRA.

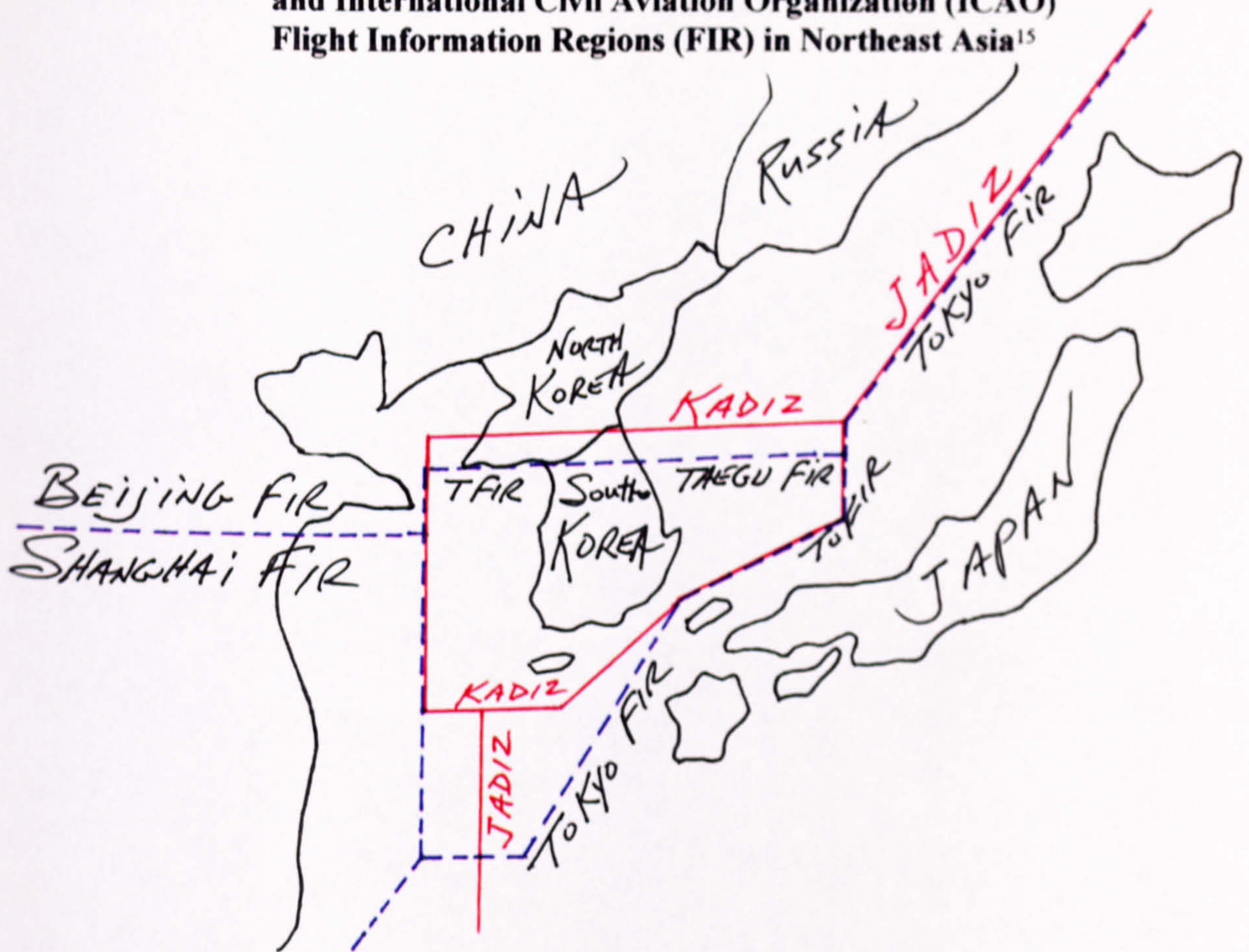
With plans to release the AC&W and ATC systems to the ROKAF, a combined operating relationship would have to be developed among the United States, the Republic of Korea and Japan, as any communist attack on Korea also threatened Japan, and *vice versa*. It was envisaged that 5th Air Force would be responsible for the air defence of Korea and for integrating the Korean air defence system (KTACS: Korea Tactical Air Control System) into that of Japan and Okinawa, as long as major USAF forces would be located in Korea.¹³ On the surface, the scheme was commendable. From the USAF's standpoint of directing a regional air defence network in Northeast Asia, the KTACS's interface with the air defence systems of Japan and Okinawa would minimise the redundant, overlapping radar networks, and thus enhance operational efficiency.¹⁴ The whole area would fall within the coverage of USAF-owned radars in the region. In addition to the technical advantage, it would also enhance command, control and communications when the ROKAF air defence operations merged into the overall Northeast Asian air defence system under the control of the USAF 5th Air Force.

Since the Japanese Air Self Defense Force and the ROK Air Force flight operational zones (i.e., Japan and Korea Air Defense Identification Zones, Flight Information Regions) abut each other, these two countries' air arms needed to coordinate together with United States Air Forces so that they would not get in each other's way when engaged in routine operations or exercises. (See Figure 7-1) However, the realisation that the scheme was idealistic, if not actually unattainable, dawned later when Japan refused to link its radar operations during Air Defence Exercise *Dragon Fly* in October 1956. The Americans sought a rapprochement between

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254.

¹⁴ At that time, Okinawa was under US military jurisdiction. Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972. *New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 8* (London, UK: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1991), p. 900.

Figure 7-1: **United States Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ) and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Flight Information Regions (FIR) in Northeast Asia**¹⁵



KADIZ: Korea ADIZ
TFIR: Taegu/Korea FIR

JADIZ: Japan ADIZ
ToFIR: Tokyo/Japan FIR



¹⁵ The US Air Defense Identification Zone was established during the Korean War and the Taegu Flight Information Region (TFIR) was initially envisioned as a subsidiary flight information region under the jurisdiction of Japan's Tokyo Flight Information Region, whose establishment was approved at the Second ICAO Pacific Area Air Navigation Conference on 15 October 1955 at Vancouver, Canada. The transfer of the Taegu FIR (3800N/12400E, 3800N/1330E, 3730N/1330E, 3440N/12920E, 3230N/12730E, 3230N/12650E, 3000N/12525E, 3000N/12525E) to the ROK government's jurisdiction was approved by the ICAO on 10 April 1963. Air Component Command, (S) ACCR 55-20 (December 1993) (Seoul, Korea: ACC/Combined Forces Command, 1993), pp. 2-20; Sung-Whan Shin, *Kook-Jae Bop Kwa Young-Gong (The International Law and Territorial Airspace)* (Seoul, Korea: ROKAF Air University, 1988), p. 174; Hyang-Kyu Park, 'Han-Gook Ae Gong-Yok Koo-Jo Mit H'ang-Gong Kyo-Tong Kwan-Jae Chae-Jae Ae Kae-Sun Ae Kwan-Han Yon-Koo' ('A Study on "How to Improve the Management of Korea's Territorial Airspace and Air Traffic Control System"', (MA thesis) Inha University, Inchon, Korea, 1993; Sae-Young Kim, 'Han-Gook Ae Gong-Yok Kwan-Ri Chae-Jae B'arl-Jon B'ang-Ahn' ('A Study on the Improvement of Korea's Airspace Management System'), (Research paper # 87-3) ROK Defense College, Seoul, Korea, 1988. Chintae SO, 'Gong-Goon Ryok Ae Kyo-Ri Jok Ko-Chal: H'an-Gook Gong-Goon Ul Joong-Sim U-Ro' ('A Doctrinal Review of Air Power: The ROK Air Force in Focus') (Taejon, Korea: ROKAF Air Training Command, 1983), p. 78.

their two allies, but nothing of that nature developed. Instead, the Japanese continued to deny the use of their bases for the landing of any ROKAF aircraft.¹⁶

Japan refused to cooperate because of Tokyo's reluctance to endorse 'US policies intended to strengthen regional security in general and South Korean security in particular.'¹⁷ This reluctance derived from the Japanese government's concern after the Korean War that 'a rapid and open military buildup in and around South Korea might provoke the Soviet Union and North Korea into taking countermeasures that might in turn trigger an arms escalation in the area.'¹⁸ Therefore, it was reasoned in Tokyo, whatever would enhance ROKAF air operations might not be in Japanese interests.

The logic of trilateral security cooperation would not be as simple as Americans reasoned, without taking into account the historical background of the region. To militarily strengthen either Japan or South Korea, without regard to maintaining an equitable balance between the two nations, would only raise alarms and fears on the part of the perceived 'weaker' state. In addition, the United States - a security benefactor¹⁹ - also had only a limited amount of resources to share between its two allies. Long term strategy, however, would demand American strengthening of South Korea's indigenous airpower to prepare for the eventual withdrawal of American fighter-bombers from Korea.

A continuing American security problem in North East Asia is a tendency to see the Korea and Japan situations as one, in which the Korean element is perceived to be less important than the Japanese. Such a view-

¹⁶ 'ROKAF,' in 'SAF History, Jul - Dec 1956,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 255. K730.01 Jul-Dec 1956, v. 1. AFIIRA.

¹⁷ Edward A. Olsen, 'Contemporary United States-Korean Security Relations,' in June Teufel Dreyer, ed. *Asian-Pacific Regional Security* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute Press, 1990), p. 89.

¹⁸ Detrio, *Strategic Partners*, p. 91.

¹⁹ Both South Korea and Japan are benefited by US security protection.

point is looked upon as naive by the Koreans. The Americans complicated the problem for themselves by assuming that Koreans and Japanese should cooperate with one another. Such a presumption runs counter to the history of the twentieth century so far. Japanese show as little interest in treating Koreans as equals as Koreans do with regard to Japanese. American security planners back in Washington, no matter how frequently informed of such latent difficulties, tend to relegate such problems to the 'too hard to solve file' and press forward with their preferred plans, all the while hoping that all will work out well in the end (as in the case of Franco-German relations in NATO).²⁰

7.3. The Issue of Returning Operational Control to the ROK

On 14 July 1950, President Rhee had assigned command authority over all his ROK military forces to General MacArthur, CINCUNC, 'during the period of the continuation of the present state of hostilities.'²¹ On 9 August 1950, the ROKAF came under the operational control of the Commanding General of US 5th Air Force under the provision of FEAF's General Order No. 46, which also clarified 'the extent to which logistical support could be provided the ROK Air Force during the period of the war.'²² Soon after the Armistice, in the Dulles-Rhee agreement of 8 August 1953, President Rhee renewed his commitment to UNC control of ROK forces 'until the Mutual Defense Treaty can be expected to come into force and

²⁰ For nearly contemporaneous and similarly difficult NATO problems for the Americans, see Saki Dockrill, 'Cooperation and Suspicion,' especially pp. 142-144, 146-147, 161-162, and 168.

²¹ Ltr Rhee to MacArthur, 'Transfer of Operational Control of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces to the United Nations Command,' dtd 14 July 1950. Serial No. J-741-226-741.14 Jo-624-Goon. ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs diplomatic records. ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Oe-Kyo Mok-Mo So Chol Mok-Rok (A List of Diplomatic Documents)* (Seoul, Korea: ROK GPO, 1994), p. 99; Seoul Daily, *Ju-Han Mi-Goon 30-Nyon, 1945-1978 (30 Years of US Forces in Korea, 1945-1978)* (Seoul, Korea: Hang-Rim Chool-Pan Sa, 1979), pp. 168-170. Hereafter cited as *30 Years of US Forces in Korea*. See also Finley, *The US Military Experience in Korea*, p. 59. For a full text of Rhee's letter, see Appendix 7-1 of this study.

²² '5AF History, Jul - Dec 1951,' *ms.*, vol. 1, p. 246. K730.01 Jul-Dec 1951, v. 1. AFIRA.

effect.²³ Determining this limit had been of concern to both the US and UNC since the effective date of the Armistice (27 July 1953). Continued UNC/US control of Korean forces had therefore become 'an element of US policy,' and was included in the US-ROK Agreed Minute of Understanding. It stated:

[it] is the intention and policy of the Republic of Korea to: . . . Retain Republic of Korea forces under the operational control of the United Nations Command while that Command has responsibilities for the defense of the Republic of Korea, unless after consultation it is agreed that our mutual and individual interests would best be served by a change.²⁴

After the Agreed Minute was signed on 17 November 1954, several ROK officials had indicated a desire to initiate consultations regarding a 'change', and in some cases had publicly claimed that such consultations were in progress. Their suggestions included: 'outright and complete' transfer of control; assignment of a ROK officer as Deputy CINCUNC; the establishment of the First ROK Army and the US Eighth Army as co-equal forces under control of the ROK Army Chief of Staff.²⁵ But these suggestions were offered through an informal channel only. The majority of ROK leaders were occupied with the higher priority of national rehabilitation after the cessation of hostilities. Particularly in the case of ROK Air Force leaders, the return of operational control was not an immediate concern. They were busy consulting with American authorities on

²³ *30 Years of US Forces in Korea*, p. 169.

²⁴ *Department of State Bulletin* 31:805 (November 19, 1954), p. 810.

²⁵ Memorandum for Commanding General, United States Army Forces, Far East and Eighth United States Army, APO 343, Commander Naval Forces, Far East, c/o APO San Francisco, California, and Commander, Far East Air Forces, APO 925, Subj: 'Transfer of Control of ROK Armed Forces to the ROK Government (C), 19 April 1955,' in '5AF History, Jan - Jun 1955,' *m.s.* vol. 4, Appendix 185. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 4. AFHRA.

the plan for ROKAF modernisation, which depended on US military assistance recommended by USAF planners.²⁶

As far as operational control was concerned, ROKAF had experienced neither serious friction nor uncopable difficulties in its coordinated operations with the US Air Force. It would not be a great exaggeration to say that no ROKAF flight activities during and after the Korean War could have been achieved so successfully without USAF advisers' dedicated supervision. They had flown together in a 'buddy system' and shared combat risks during the Korean War.²⁷ Coordination and cooperation between the US and ROK Air Forces had been excellent. In effect, the USAF's operational control of the ROKAF had been the principal basis of American aid, and this fact allowed for an enormous amount of USAF assistance, material and non-material, to the Korean Air Force. Therefore, ROKAF leaders were concerned about discussions of shifting operational control to the ROK, because they worried that such debates would not be productive, and might generate unnecessary difficulties in implementing the ROKAF modernisation programme.²⁸

Operational control, commonly called OPCON, is an authority confined to the military's operational aspects only, including joint training necessary to accomplish assigned missions. It does not, 'in and of itself, include authoritative direction for logistics or matters of administration, discipline, internal organization, or unit training.' Operational control is limited to the authority to perform such functions over subordinate forces as 'organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to

²⁶ Interviews, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, a former ROKAF Chief of Staff, who worked as deputy chief of staff under Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul (1954-56), 30 October (telephone) and 24 April 1995.

²⁷ ROKAF pilots and USAF advisers flew together in the same flights of F-51s. This was called the 'buddy-buddy system,' or 'buddy system.'

²⁸ Telephone interview, author with Lt. General (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu, 30 October 1995.

accomplish the mission.²⁹ OPCON is distinguished from *command*, which dictates all aspects of military operations to accomplish the mission, including administrative control and logistic support.³⁰

As the end of the Korean War required re-deployment of American forces stationed in South Korea, American military authorities were concerned that the US/UNC's exercise of operational control of ROK forces under the existing arrangement would have to end eventually. A further reduction of US forces to one RCT (Regimental Combat Team) had been recommended by CINCFE early in 1955.³¹ Accordingly, in April 1955, the Far East Command prepared a proposal, which called for returning operational control of ROK armed forces to the ROK government, and tried to determine when transfer of control would be desirable. The proposal was based on a threefold premise that (1) UNC control of ROK forces could not indefinitely continue; (2) ROK operational control of US or UN forces would be unacceptable; and (3) basic US/UN policies and objectives with respect to Korea would remain unchanged in principle for the following two years.³²

The FEC study reviewed the possibility of a unilateral resumption of hostilities by the ROK, and stated: '[T]he fact remains that Rhee can order his forces to resume hostilities whether or not they are under UNC control.' It also acknowledged that there were no indications that the ROK desire for a change in the UNC/US-ROK command arrangement was related to plans for Rhee's unilateral action. As for the ROK Air Force, the FEC proposal recommended that transfer of operational control be deferred until the

²⁹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The Official Dictionary of Military Terms*, 2nd Edition (Washington, DC: Global Professional Publications, 1992), pp. 262-263.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³¹ 'Transfer of Control of ROK Armed Forces to the ROK Government, 19 April 1955,' in 'SAF History, Jan - Jun 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 4, Appendix 185. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 4. AFHRA.

³² This is summarised from USAF archives as quoted in *ibid.* For the full text, see Appendix 7-2 of this study.

ROKAF possessed adequate equipment and trained airmen as well as experienced officers. The FEC also insisted that 'the degree to which the ROKAF is satellited [sic] upon the US Fifth Air Force for training during conversion to jet aircraft and organization of AC&W and similar specialised units would appear to preclude early transfer of operational control of the ROKAF as a whole.' A gradual transfer of control probably could be considered after the first jet squadron achieved operational status, but could not be completed until the ROKAF 10th Fighter Wing became 'entirely operational.' AC&W units and other specialised units had to 'remain closely associated with US Air Force units until their training [was] completed.'³³

The commander of the 6146th USAF Advisory Group was also strongly opposed to an early transfer of control to the ROKAF. He was concerned over a possible unilateral action by the ROK government, in addition to ROKAF's unpreparedness to control its forces at the time.³⁴ The Far East Command finally concluded that 'the existing [command] arrangement should be continued without significant modification until 1 January 1956 or later' because of ROK's lack of adequate equipment, trained enlisted men, and experienced officers with sufficient education to absorb technical training. The operational requirement for unified control, under US command, if hostilities erupted, would require 'extensive air and naval operations and large-scale logistical support.'³⁵ The actual return of US/UNC's operational control to the ROK Air Force and its sister services was not separately discussed.³⁶

³³ 'Transfer of Control of ROK Armed Forces to the ROK Government, 19 April 1955' in 'SAF [History Jan-Jun 1955,' *ms.*, vol. 4, Appendix 185. K-730.01 Jan-Jun 1955, v. 4. AFHRA.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 386-387, same file.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 4, Appendix 185, same file.

³⁶ With the threat of US troop withdrawal by the Carter administration, the OPCON issue surfaced formally in the 10th ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting in Seoul in 1977. ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Han-Gook Oe-Kyo 30-Nyon, 1948-1978 (30 Years of Korean Diplomacy, 1948-1978)* (Seoul, Korea: ROK GPO, 1979), p. 133. This issue was partially resolved effective 1 December 1994, when OPCON, albeit during peacetime only, was returned to the ROK government. ROK JCS General Order 94-4 dated 1 December 1994, FBIS-EAS-94-231 (1 December 1994), p.

From the ROKAF vantage point, US operational control was to be handled on a long-term basis. Air operations on the Korean peninsula would demand coordination between the ROK and US Air Forces due to the complexity of command, control and communications systems, and the enormous amount of air space, which would cover the whole of Northeast Asia. (See Figure 7-1) An advantage of the USAF's operational control was sharing the USAF Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) at Osan Air Base, the nerve center of the Korean Tactical Air Control System.

The ROKAF acting alone was incapable of assuming the TACC function in a short period of time because of the lack of qualified personnel and trained leadership, as well as cost and the required time for training.³⁷ American control provided an efficient operational relationship of instructor (mentor) vis-à-vis student pilot (client), without infringing upon Korea's self-esteem and national prestige in conducting combat operations or unit training.³⁸ The mentor-client (instructor-student) relationship proved productive in enhancing ROKAF development, not only in the air but also on the ground. Nearly all staff paperwork relevant to ROKAF's operational and

30; 'U.S. Military Control Transfer to South Korea,' *Pyeongyang KCNA* in English 0446 GMT 2 Dec 94, FBIS-EAS-94-232 (2 December 1994), p. 34; *Chosun Ilbo*, 30 November and 1 December 1994; *Dong-Ah Ilbo*, 30 November and 1 December 1994; *Korea Journal of Defense Analysis* 7:1 (Summer 1995), p. 327; Interviews, author with Minister of National Defense (appointed on 24 December 1994) and the former Chairman of ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (1 March 1993 - 23 December 1994) ROKAF General (Ret.) Lee Yang-Ilo, 31 October (telephone) and 23 September 1995.

³⁷ Previously the USAF command post was called Air Operations Center (AOC). In mid-1950s, the terminology was replaced with the current TACC. The existing fortified TACC building at Osan Air Base, Korea, was newly constructed under ROK-US joint venture in 1985. It is a hardened semi-underground command post, jointly manned by American and Korean Air Force personnel. Its construction cost the ROK and US governments over \$100 million, of which the USAF paid more than seventy percent apportioned to purchase sophisticated state-of-art (C) x 3' equipment. The author was one of the members of the ROKAF-USAF Joint *Ad Hoc* Committee for the project during the preparation period, and later worked at the TACC in the capacity of the Deputy Director of Combat Operations, Air Component Command of the US-ROK Combined Forces Command at Osan AFB in 1986. Restricted by security classification, no source material can be cited at present.

³⁸ Unit training refers to the flying training and exercises conducted by operational units to maintain their pilots' proficiency. In a broader sense, it also encompasses all training and exercises conducted by both flying and combat support units, e. g., AC&W controller training and airman's basic training as well as flying and technical training of pilots and maintenance personnel.

logistic plans and programmes were initially drafted in English by American advisers. These drafts were later translated into Korean, except for those (food, clothing, and pay) requiring the ROK government's administrative and budgetary approval.³⁹

As the doctrine of both American and Korean air forces emphasised, air operations should be conducted in an orderly and timely manner, under the principle of 'centralized control and decentralized execution.'⁴⁰ The control of airpower should be centralised to permit its optimum use. Centralised control implies direction by a single air commander to employ airpower in a concerted manner, 'if [its] inherent flexibility and ability are to be fully exploited.'⁴¹ Therefore, '[c]entralized planning, decentralized execution remains a catchphrase of [US] Air Force doctrine, much as 'don't divide the fleet' preoccupied American naval strategists in earlier times.'⁴² Because air space is indivisible, the employment of aircraft must be orchestrated, based on the priorities of missions and targets. This emphasis is in contrast to controlling ground forces in geographically separated operational areas, while ROKAF pilots, once airborne, had the entire air space over the peninsula as their area for combat in wartime and training in peacetime.⁴³

³⁹ ROK Air Force, 'ROKAF Oral History: vol. 1: Lt. General Kim Chung-Yul and Colonel Lee Chang-Yoon'(Seoul, Korea: ROKAF History Office, 1968), p. 15; interviews, author with Lt. Generals (Ret.) Kim Chang-Kyu (24 April 1995) and Chang Chi-Ryang (16 September 1994); and telephone interview, author with Major General (Ret.) Chun Hyung-Il, a Korean War veteran and former Director of Personnel, Ministry of National Defense (1977-79), 2 November 1995.

⁴⁰ U.S. War Department, *Field Manual 100-20: Command and Employment of Air Power* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1943), p. 2; USAFM 1-1 (1979), p. 5-2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* See also Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, 1907-1960*, vol. 1 (Maxwell AFB, Alabama: Air University Press, 1987), p. 406.

⁴² Eliot A. Cohen, 'The Mystique of U.S. Air Power,' *Foreign Affairs* 73:1(January/February 1994), p. 106. See also USAFM 1-1 (1979), p. 5-2.

⁴³ It is virtually impractical to draw boundaries due to the nature of air operations in speed and manoeuvre as well as space limit in the case of the Korean peninsula. In ground operations, however, there are distinct geographical boundaries for the operational jurisdiction between US and South Korean troops. The western front area, including Panmunjom, had been under the jurisdiction of US Army 2nd Infantry Division, until its redeployment to the present Tongduchon area, some fifteen miles north of Seoul (between Seoul and the DMZ), on 12 March 1971. ROK Ministry of

As the '[t]actical air power must be under the command of a single individual to ensure flexibility and concentration of force,'⁴⁴ all flight activities, both Korean and American, from takeoff to landing were closely monitored and controlled - i.e., mission pilots were to maintain constant radar and radio contact with air tactical and traffic controllers on the ground - by the USAF 5th Air Force's 314th Air Division Commander through his command post (TACC) by use of 'FRAG Orders.'⁴⁵ It became ROKAF's second nature to work with Americans in joint air operations. Constant exposure to the USAF's environments, both operational and social, created a natural *camaraderie*. Because of the shared facilities that Americans provided, Korean Air Force pilots and AC&W controllers (often stationed at radar sites in the remote mountains) were in daily contact with American Air Force personnel.⁴⁶ Here was a doctrinal imperative - centralised control - recognised by both the United States Air Force and Republic of Korea Air Force that made the operational control (OPCON) question effectively mute so far as the ROKAF was concerned.

Since its very inception, the ROKAF had worked with Americans on a joint partnership basis through the American command, control and communications system. The ROK Army did not have a US-ROK joint operations command establishment equivalent to the USAF-manned/ROKAF-shared Tactical Air Control Center. The Korean Army thus had not been exposed to a similar environment of joint operations under American operational control. As long as the integrity of the ROK Air

National Defense, *Gook-B'ang Sa Yon-Pyo (The Chronology of National Defense History)* (Seoul, Korea: Institute of National Defense Military History Studies, 1994), p. 364.

⁴⁴ General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, then US Army Chief of Staff, expressed his view in November 1947. Memo, Eisenhower to Forrestal, Nov. 14, 1947 (S), Vandenberg papers, Box 97. Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

⁴⁵ The frag-order stands for the fragmented air tasking order. Air tasking orders are issued daily to each air unit broken down in a format fragmented by types of aircraft and missions.

⁴⁶ At the time, Korean Air Force AC&W personnel were sent for on-the-job-training at radar sites manned by USAF personnel. Each Korean air base had one USAF 6146th Advisory Group's detachment.

Force was honoured, and the efficiency of ROKAF air operations was enhanced under American operational control, it was apparent that the ROKAF would gain nothing beneficial if the United States relinquished its operational control. Instead, if the OPCON transfer were implemented, the Korean Air Force would lose most of the operational assistance, material and non-material, currently provided by the United States Air Force through either formal or informal channels. Because of this unique relationship, as well as the intrinsic nature of joint operations through the Korean Tactical Air Control System, the thought of criticising the OPCON arrangement never occurred to ROK Air Force leaders. Still, whether operational control of the ROKAF was to be in American or Korean hands, the central problem affecting the air defence of South Korea, and especially Seoul, remains a conundrum.

7.4. ROKAF Air Defence Readiness *versus* Air Doctrine

The lack of sufficient air manoeuvring space to defend the capital city of Seoul presents South Korean fighter pilots with an intrinsic doctrinal challenge to cope with North Korea's air threat, less than three minutes flight time from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Although this issue has been a recurring challenge to the defence of South Korea, it had never received serious attention from both American and South Korean military planners when they agreed with their communist counterparts to draw the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) at the present location during the truce talks in July 1953.⁴⁷ The UNC/US inattention to the consequences of the

⁴⁷ The Korean Armistice Agreement set a military demarcation line dividing the two Koreas, generally conforming to the forward edge of troop dispositions at the time of signing. This line is centered in the four kilometers wide demilitarized zone (DMZ), creating two buffer zones. Richard G. Stilwell, former CINCUNC, 'The Need for U.S. Ground Forces in Korea,' *Korea and World Affairs* 1:2 (Summer 1977), p.142 fn 3. Although the DMZ is commonly referred to as a dividing boundary between the two Koreas, in actuality, especially in regard to air defence fighter operations, the boundary must be considered below the MDL. This further restricts the manoeuvring depth of

MDL's location, with regard to the post-Armistice air defence posture of South Korea, derived from United States basic policy toward South Korea, i.e., hasty cessation of hostilities in Korea without allowing South Korea to take charge with its own air defence after the Armistice. From the US point of view, Korea was a small part of America's global strategy. Thus, Seoul was inconsequential, and defence depth was not considered worthwhile in prolonging the truce talks. American policymakers viewed the Korean peninsula as a forward operating base, and the detail of the location and defence of Seoul was of little importance to them. The United States government decision to terminate the Korean War quickly and redeploy its expensive military forces from the Korean peninsula to other parts of the world with higher priority dictated their hasty agreement on the existing location of the MDL. Although air doctrine stresses the absolute importance of forward air defence, the priority attached to terminating the war overrode such considerations. (While the result may have been the same, given the exigencies of the moment, it is also true that senior American airmen played no significant role in the armistice negotiations.) The inattention to this basic concept has resulted in forty years of excessive stress on the capital city and ROKAF fighter pilots, who are constantly placed on three minute runway alert.⁴⁸ (See Figure 7-2)

Dr. Kim Kyung-won, former ROK ambassador to Washington, later illustrated the situation facing the South Korean people because of the excessively close proximity of their capital city of Seoul to the Military Demarcation Line, more commonly known as 'DMZ' (Demilitarised Zone):

tactical air operations, because military operations are strictly prohibited within the DMZ. Author's experience.

⁴⁸ A considerable portion of mission-capable fighter aircraft and equivalent number of fighter pilots are required to stay on alert on base for 24 hours a day around the year, from the author's experience during his tenure as the commanding officer of a ROKAF fighter wing in 1986-7.

If we imagine that the American Civil War ended in an indecisive truce and the South continued to be ruled by the same anti-Northern regime, supported by some giant Southern super-power whose military capacity reached astronomical proportions compared to the Union's self-defense capacity, and the Southern forces, armed to the teeth, were deployed somewhere around Dulles International Airport [in northern Virginia about twenty miles across the Potomac river from Washington, D.C.], then, I would say, our American friends would find it a little easier to understand how we in South Korea must feel.⁴⁹

If you add to Dr. Kim's illustration one more assumption that in Dulles International Airport you have hostile jet fighters on alert, that is exactly the same situation that South Korean fighter pilots are currently coping with. Ideally, the equity of the balance of air defence posture in terms of response time and frontal manoeuvring space should have been pursued, so that Pyongyang and Seoul would have been equally protected from the air threat by timely reaction with early warning.

To Americans, because of their enormous continental geographical background and a number of available metropolitan cities, the loss of one metropolitan city would not be so critically detrimental to the psychology of the whole public and the machinery of government. But that is not the case in South Korea, which is so centralised that Seoul is the real heart of South Korea's life. As Seoul is the centre of communications, the seat of power, and the center of ROK government, the capital city's fall into enemy hands means not only the loss of ROK 'administration but also that of social, professional and political activity.'⁵⁰ From a practical standpoint, the impact

⁴⁹ Kyung-won Kim, 'The Republic of Korea and the United States: Common Interests, Ideals, and Differences,' in Richard B. Foster, James E. Dornan, Jr., and William M. Carpenter, eds., *Strategy and Security in Northeast Asia* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1979), p. 117.

⁵⁰ When Clausewitz listed the three 'acts we consider most important for the defeat of the enemy,' second on his list was 'seizure of his capital as it is not only the center of administration but also that of social, professional, and political activity.' Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 596. This view was recently endorsed by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff US Army General John Shalikashvili, who reaffirmed the importance of the defence of Seoul, stating that 'the destruction of Seoul would be a grave loss for South Korea, since it is the economic heart of South Korea as well as home to 10

of the loss of Seoul would be considerable. It would equate almost to the collapse of the entire country, because more than 44.5 percent of the South Korean population is concentrated within a radius of fifty kilometers (about thirty miles) from the center of the capital, according to the 1992 population census.⁵¹ National identity is represented by Seoul. This is why the UNC tried so hard and paid so much to recapture Seoul after it changed hands four times during the Korean War. It is also the reason why Kim Il Sung suspended his blitzkrieg down the peninsula, in order to celebrate for a few days in the captured city of Seoul.⁵²

When the issue of a truce talk site was first raised, the ROK national leadership might have thought to remind the US-led United Nations Command of the military consequences which would result from the location of the talks. Any talks on land would prohibit the front line from moving further north into North Korean territory. (It was for this reason that the UNC had first suggested the talks take place on a Danish hospital ship, the *Jutlandia*, in Wonsan harbour.) Kaesong was counter-proposed by North Korea and accepted by UNC.⁵³ The disadvantages of Kaesong became apparent from the outset of the negotiations. The communists benefited psychologically and militarily from the truce talks, 'partly because of the inevitable psychological letdown induced by the talks among US forces and partly because of the immunity of the Kaesong area.'⁵⁴ This gave the

million people, about one-quarter of South Korea's population.' William Matthews, 'Shalli Says Attack By North Korea Would Fail,' *Army Times*, 27 December 1993, p. 6.

⁵¹ H.W. Lee, 'Soo-Do Kwon Jee-Yok In-Koo Moon-Jae' (The Issue of the Capital Area Population), *Han-Gook Ilbo* (Korea Times), 6 August 1993, p. C5. The over-crowding and excessive concentration in the Seoul area, with an estimated population over fifteen million (if the transient population is counted) presents a serious problem. Dispersal of the capital area concentration is given priority in the study of the ROK contingency planning. Interview, author with General Lee Yang-Ho, ROK Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, 13 September 1994.

⁵² As General MacArthur recalled, instead of rushing rapidly forward to Pusan, which he could have reached within a week, without the slightest difficulty, the enemy stopped to deploy his artillery across the Han River until 3 July 1950. *Han-Gook Jan-Jaeng Sa*, p. 255.

⁵³ Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 42-43; *FRUS, 1951*, v. 7, pp. 587, 609, 617.

⁵⁴ Schnabel and Watson, *History of the JCS*, v. 3, pt. 1, p. 603.

communists a propaganda advantage, for it meant that the UNC would be going to them to negotiate. (North Korean mass media claimed that 'the "imperialist aggressors" were suing for peace because their military adventure had failed.')⁵⁵The existence of Kaesong as the meeting site - the ancient Korean (Koryo Dynasty) capital, twenty miles within the communist lines and three miles below the 38th Parallel - created the impression that the communists had made this gain during the war, and 'their troops were still [there] in strength.'⁵⁶ Thus, Kaesong, as a truce talk site, gave substance to the communists' demands that the 38th Parallel be the military demarcation line.⁵⁷

Strategically, the western area of the Korean peninsula has the best terrain for military efforts, particularly offensive operations. Eastern Korea is very mountainous. Kaesong is located in the strategic western sector. Therefore, meeting at Kaesong, which stood in the route of advancing UNC forces all the way up to the North Korean capital city of Pyongyang, discouraged and impeded further UNC advances. When Kaesong first appeared as the site of truce talks, the ROK government was concerned about the recovery of lost territory around Kaesong and the Ongjin peninsula. Rhee strongly demanded that General James A. Van Fleet, Commanding General of US Eighth Army, insist upon the recovery of these areas, which previously belonged to the ROK.⁵⁸ According to General Van Fleet's assessment of the military operations required to accomplish this, at least two more infantry divisions were needed. But Van Fleet did not even have one regiment to spare.⁵⁹ The issue died and Rhee never again broached the subject. This situation became even worse for South Korea when the

⁵⁵ Foot, *A Substitute*, p. 44.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ For a succinct account of the siting of the truce talks, see *Ibid.*, pp. 42-61.

⁵⁸ Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 114-116.

⁵⁹ Joong-Ahng Daily, *People's Witness*, v. 4, p. 346.

UNC negotiators failed to get North Korean agreement on 'prohibition against construction of new airfields and rehabilitation of old ones,' as General Ridgway had recommended.⁶⁰ Since North Korea already had several air bases between Pyongyang and the MDL, and South Korea had none (nor room for any) between Seoul and the MDL, the ROKAF found itself at the disadvantage of having all its bases *behind* Seoul.⁶¹

The lack of air defence depth in terms of defending Seoul is the most serious challenge the ROKAF pilots encounter, because time is translated into space to allow for flight manoeuvre. For this reason air manoeuvring space is critical and this space (air defence depth) should be far deeper than the geographical depth required for ground operations. In ground defence warfare, lack of defence depth might be partially compensated for by alternatives such as anti-tank traps. But air defence precludes such a passive measure, because of its intrinsic three-dimensional operations.

Part of the reason for such strategic shortfalls was that President Rhee had virtually no mature military advisers at his side. During the Korean War, ROKAF had only five general rank officers - two three-star generals, one two-star general, and two one-star generals.⁶² Among these five, only Lt. General Kim Chung-Yul, the first and third ROKAF Chief of Staff (1949-52, 1954-56), was recognised and patronised by President Rhee. General Kim, however, was a fighter pilot still in his early thirties, and neither experienced nor knowledgeable to advise on strategic issues. ROK

⁶⁰ Ridgway, *The Korean War*, pp. 238-239.

⁶¹ Soon after the cessation of hostilities, USAF intelligence estimated there were a total of thirty-four airfields in North Korea, which were capable of supporting MiG-15 operations. *FEAF Intelligence Roundup* 4:3 (November 1953), p. 25. K-720.01, Jul-Dec 1953, v. 3, pt. 1. AFHRA. Currently there are nine airfields south of Pyongyang, six of which are jet-capable to house MiG-29s, 23s, 21s, and 19s (Hwangju, Taetan, Haeju, Koksan, Hyonri, Kumiri), while Seoul has none in front of it except Kimpo International Airport, which is too close to the DMZ for tactical air action. Author's memorandum of records (1985-86).

⁶² Major Generals Kim Chung-Yul and Choi Yong-Duk were promoted to the three-star rank on 1 March 1953. Lt. General Choi was incumbent ROKAF Chief of Staff (1952-54), and Kim was a special assistant to the National Defense Minister. Kim later replaced Choi as Chief of Staff for the second time. *Gong-Gwon Sa (II)*, 1953-57, p. 260; Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, p. 491.

generals were also unable to provide long-term strategic advice to Rhee, because of their inexperience and immaturity.⁶³

These generals did not sufficiently recognise that a successful air defence posture for the ROKAF would require operational air space, i.e., air defence depth, both for early warning as well as air intercept operations. Moreover, all ROKAF air defence plans had to be defensive in compliance with US policy. Therefore, adequate advance knowledge of a possible enemy attack would be vitally important, because early warning would be essential to survival. 'The more warning time, the less losses in blood and treasure.'⁶⁴ Had the truce meetings been held on board the *Jutlandia*, the UNC ground forces might not necessarily have been bogged down below Kaesong in the western front line. Instead, the prospect of extending southern territory for the protection of Seoul was lost, when the truce talk site soon after moved farther south to Panmunjom. Thus, the forfeiture of extending Seoul's air defence depth became a *fait accompli*.

Among the four interrelated issues treated in this chapter, only the first, aviation English requirements, is susceptible to a relatively simple solution, through individual concentration and hard work. Although the second issue, tri-lateral air defence cooperation between Korea, Japan and the United States, remains unresolved, it will need to be redressed eventually for long-term regional security. Thirdly, ROK-US combined air operations under USAF operational control through the Tactical Air Control Center (a

⁶³ Most of Rhee's general officers had been young junior-grade officers in the Japanese military. Because of the rapid expansion of the ROK armed forces after the beginning of the Korean War, these men, all in their early thirties, were rapidly promoted to fill generals' posts. During the Korean War, the priority of combat pushed these men into commanders' positions, but their prior education and training did not provide them with vision and strategic thinking. Lt. General Chung Il-Kwon, Supreme Commander of ROK Armed Forces and ROK Army Chief of Staff (1950-1951) was thirty-five years old. General Paik Sun-Yup was thirty-two years old when he became the first four-star general and the Army Chief of Staff in 1952. Paik Sun-Yup, *From Pusan to Panmunjom* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1992), pp. 201-202.

⁶⁴ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. *Airpower*. Report . . . 85th Cong. 1st sess. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1957), p. 36. (This is commonly known as 'the Symington Report'.)

consolidated USAF-ROKAF combined Command Post) helped enhance the effectiveness of ROKAF's newly expanded roles and missions in the jet age. The OPCON promoted close relationships between American and Korean Air Forces. Upon introduction of jet fighters and multi-engined transport aircraft, South Korean pilots became involved in the doctrinal development of their new spectrum of the air defence and tactical airlift missions, the fourth issue treated. At the same time, due to the lack of frontal manoeuvring air space, ROKAF pilots have been constantly on runway alert to defend their capital city of Seoul. Nevertheless, South Korea is the only country in Asia in which the United States Air Force successfully established a joint integrated air operation system with the indigenous air force, thus paving the way for the ROKAF to further enhance its contribution to regional security in the Far East.

CONCLUSION

Today, in 1995, the Republic of Korea Air Force is composed of some 450 combat aircraft and a personnel strength of 53,000. The aircraft (48 F-16C/Ds, 96 F-4D/Es, 190 F-5E/Fs, 18 RF-4Cs, 10 C-130Hs, 12 CN-235Ms, 15 C-123J/Ks, 30 UH-1B/Ns, etc.) are equipped to perform the essentially tactical roles of interception, interdiction, close air support, tactical reconnaissance, tactical airlift, and search & rescue (SAR). The aircraft and personnel are arranged in eleven wings, composed of over forty squadrons, located at twelve major operating (jet-capable) bases throughout South Korea.¹ This is certainly an improvement over the situation in 1956, but it remains true that the ROK Air Force personnel strength today represents less than ten percent of the total number of South Koreans presently in military service. By most Western standards, this reflects a considerable imbalance between air and surface forces, one that would require the ROKAF to have outside assistance should war break out on the peninsula. (By way of contrast, for example, the RAF comprises nearly thirty percent of U.K. military forces.)

The present situation in Korea, especially the imbalance between air and ground forces, has deep roots and can be appreciated only by a thorough understanding and analysis of events and policies that dominated the decade between the end of the Second World War and the post-Korean War modernisation of the ROK forces, essentially complete in concept by 1956. The principal, over-riding background theme of those years, from the perspective of today, can be expressed as the United States government's concern that President Syngman Rhee might be led to take unilateral action against North Korea.

¹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1994-1995* (London, UK: Brassey's (UK) Ltd., 1994), p. 181.

Before the Korean War, US military assistance to South Korea was predicated upon the policy that the South Korean military establishment was an internal security force, which would not need an air arm. This basic premise restrained the growth of the South Korean Air Force, as did America's fear that the provision of offensive weapons might allow South Korea's aggression against North Korea. This fear continued throughout the war, and inflicted limitations on the South Korean Air Force modernisation after the war.

The formation of the South Korean Air Force was unique in the annals of airpower. This force came into being owing primarily to the far-sightedness, enthusiasm and determination of the founding members. Initially they encountered resistance from both the Korean Army leaders and the American military advisers, but their persistence eventually overcame all obstacles. Albeit a nominal force structure without a single tactical aircraft, the basic foundation (pilots, aircraft, airfields and organisation) was laid prior to the commencement of hostilities.

Through the advocacy of President Rhee and his airmen's tenacious efforts, the ROK Air Force ultimately achieved a separate service identity. In retrospect, it was almost miraculous for the South Korean Air Force, with a miniscule number of liaison airplanes, to become independent from the ROK Army. The determined efforts of Korean airmen earned the respect, sympathy and professional recognition of their American counterparts, who not only dedicated their endeavours to develop the South Korean Air Force as a combat unit, but also to create it as a modern air force, capable of fulfilling the responsibilities needed by such an establishment, albeit within the intrinsic constraints imposed upon them by their country's Korean policy.

That policy, unchanged during the period treated in these pages, was strongly affected by the coupling of two inter-related ideas. The first was

that Korea was only one part of a larger issue, - the deterrence of communist aggression in the Far East. In this respect, Japan was perceived to be more important than Korea and the ROK military, especially the Air Force, would have to be restrained, lest it appear threatening to not only North Korea but also Japan. For example, as the US Army Chief of Staff observed in July 1954, 'Korea's value to the US is only in the degree it protects Japan militarily and supports Japan economically. We must find a way to make Korea look to Japan for protection.'²

The second idea was that America's openly stated policy to deter aggression by threatening nuclear retaliation in response thereto would prove sufficient to discourage any would-be aggressor. The same US Army Chief of Staff memorandum of July 1954 stated bluntly that 'the major deterrent to renewing aggression in Korea should be Chinese Communist and North Korean fear of atomic retaliation coupled with the announced intention to resist renewed aggression.' The ROKAF would also have to be restrained from becoming a force capable of a full scale air assault on North Korea in the worst case. As the memorandum went on to make clear, even were the ROKAF to be significantly expanded, 'the United States would not be relieved of responsibility to provide this deterrent.'³ An additional consideration for the Americans was that an austere ROK Air Force would be sufficient to permit the maintenance of bases in South Korea in an operational status, which should be to the US advantage in the event of a renewal of hostilities, as it would in turn extend the range and flexibility of

² Memorandum by the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, 'Redeployment of U.S. Forces from the Far East,' JCS 2147/110 (8 July 1954), 381 Far East (11-28-50) sec 21, Box 17, RG 218 Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, GF 1954-56. NA/WDC. (It should be noted here that the view of the US Army Chief of Staff was a secret matter at the time. It *certainly* was not one that Koreans, then or now, would endorse.)

³ *Ibid.*

the USAF fighter and bomber forces based in Japan and elsewhere in the Pacific.⁴

The South Korean Air Force, virtually reborn in battle as a tactical airpower and matured during the Korean War, successfully survived many challenges. At the outbreak of the Korean War, Korean pilots had to face the onslaught of the North Korean People's Army, and had to improvise their light airplanes to perform 'combat missions' by manually dropping explosives from the back seat. Given ten F-51 Mustang fighters by the 5th Air Force a week after the war started, these Korean pilots had to fly combat missions with only one sortie of conversion training, which lasted less than thirty minutes. This was accomplished only by the proficiency of the Korean pilots, their enthusiasm for flying combat missions, and the urgency of the war.

To support these Korean pilots, American 5th Air Force immediately formed a temporary air base unit called 'Bout One,' with American instructor-pilots/advisers and support personnel. At first American instructors and Korean pilots flew together in a so-called 'buddy system.' These American instructors/advisers quickly recognised Korean pilots' skills and ingenuity. As their combat proficiency increased, Korean pilots were allowed to fly on their own. Although restrained from growing to form more than one fighter wing, the South Korean Air Force eventually flew some 8,500 sorties during the Korean War, second only to the American Air Forces.

Soon after the Armistice, the ROK Air Force successfully converted its fighters from piston-driven to jet-propelled within a short span of time. The ROKAF aircraft inventory grew from twenty-two light airplanes in June

⁴ 'Considerations Affecting the ROK Air Force Expansion' in Appendix: 'Additional Factors Concerned in Conjunction with the Proposed Expansion of the Forces' to 'Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson), March 31, 1954, Subj: Recommendations of the Korean Minister of Defense Concerning Expansion of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces.' *FRUS 1952-54*, v. 15, pt. 2, p. 1784.

1950 to over two hundred aircraft, including ninety jets and over sixty F-51 fighters, in December 1956.⁵ ROKAF manpower strength increased from less than 2,000 men in 1950 to 16,500 men in 1956. The ROKAF mission expanded from liaison to such diversified flight profiles as aerial interception, air interdiction, close air support, and airlift. Its area of operations also grew to encompass the entire peninsula.⁶

ROKAF leaders demonstrated that promotion of cooperation and friendship with Americans resulted in favourable policy consideration of the proposed ROKAF modernisation plan (Three Year Plan). This plan finally materialised, albeit in a reduced scale, and ensured the separate identity of the ROK Air Force. In spite of the existing circumstances, where the imbalance of ROK military force structure had not been redressed, ROKAF pilots and ground support personnel demonstrated an outstanding capability to apply their given air asset effectively against the enemy. Joint operations, both in the air (aircraft) and on the ground (AC&W and ATACS)⁷ with Americans, helped foment a strong *rapprochement* between the United States and Republic of Korea Air Forces. Centralised control of air operations, in an orderly, orchestrated manner under US Air Force's operational control over the ROKAF, enriched the ROK Air Force's combat readiness. By the end of the Korean War, the South Korean Air Force had proved its mission growth potential to both US and ROK governments.

As the modernisation of the South Korean Air Force progressed, there arose a series of issues and problems which had to be solved through the combined efforts of Korean and American airmen as well as both countries'

⁵ ROKAF had 228 aircraft in total by the end of 1956: 81 F-86F jet fighters; 9 T-33 jet trainers; 68 F-51s; 18 C-46s; 38 T-6s; and 14 L-19a. *Gong-Gwon Sa (II) 1953-57*, pp. 106-107; *SAF History, Jan-Jun 1957*, vol. 3, Appendix 135. AFHRA K730.01 Jan-Jun 1957, v. 3.

⁶ Tactical air reconnaissance (TAR) and search & rescue (SAR) missions were added to the ROKAF upon introduction of RF-86F jet reconnaissance planes and H-19 helicopters into its aircraft inventory in 1958.

⁷ Aircraft Control and Warning; Air Traffic and Air Communications Services.

policymakers. The recurring issues of aviation language training, trilateral air defence cooperation between the US, ROK and Japan, USAF's operational control over the ROKAF, and the challenge of the air defence of Seoul remain as vital concerns of the South Korean Air Force today. These issues had their genesis on the Korean peninsula immediately after the Second World War and continued after the Korean War.

The evolutionary process of the ROKAF was erratic, and accomplished by trial and error in battle. This extraordinary process derived from the failure of ROK-US military policy planners to coordinate a combined effort *prior* to the outbreak of hostilities. The failure of coordination is attributable to the political failure of ROK leadership to work with American policymakers during the two years between ROK independence and the Korean War. The ROK national leadership was successful in obtaining a security commitment from the United States after the Korean War (ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty), but American support for the continued existence of the South Korean Air Force was sporadic and extemporaneous, primarily because of the emphasis placed on the ROK Army in the Agreed Minute.

Throughout the entire period covered by this study, it is obvious that the policy limitations of the American government on the South Korean Air Force derived partly from America's distrust in the South Korean government (*Rhee's March-North-for-Unification*). The imbalance of the South Korean military establishment permitted by American policy of manpower-oriented ROK forces resulted in the overgrowth of the ROK Army (20 divisions and 661,000 men - over three percent of the total Korean population and over ninety percent of the total Korean military forces), to the neglect of the ROK Air Force (one single fighter wing and 16,500 airmen). The philosophy to use the huge local (Korean) infantry troops to

contain communist expansion in the Far East could have been relatively less costly to the United States in regard to dollars and American casualties (*New Look*), and strategically it would also be easier for the United States government to maintain political and military leverage over the ROK as long as the US could continue to manipulate logistic support for the ROK Army and restrain the growth of the ROK Air Force. Consequently, America's preponderant emphasis on ROK ground troops, together with the ROK government's insufficient attention to the need for an indigenous air capability, promised a tenuous existence for the ROK Air Force for years during and after the war. This in turn led to a ROK defence posture that was overly dependent on US air support.

In retrospect, it would have been worth the ROK's leaders (political and air) trying to double their efforts to appeal to their American counterparts to allow a further expansion of the South Korean Air Force by investing in ROKAF's non-offensive systems, [e.g., airlift, air search and rescue (SAR), command, control, communication and intelligence, aircraft control and warning (AC&W), and training and education institutions] without posing a threat to North Korea and Japan. These non-offensive systems would be indispensable to strengthen the ROKAF's infrastructure. To build self defence capability, the internal supporting structure would have been equally as important as tactical aircraft, especially in terms of the time required to establish such systems.

Despite many challenges, the ROK Air Force continued its struggle not only to survive, but also to establish a firm foundation for the ultimate responsibility to defend its territorial air space on its own. The ROKAF learned to function as a joint military partner, on an international scale, with a superpower. The South Korean Air Force succeeded in living up to its name, as well as keeping its prestige, through the assiduous efforts of its

leaders and airmen under the support of the United States Air Force, albeit 'tethered' to the restraints, limitations and control exercised by the United States government.⁸ Nevertheless, the American investment of their expertise, money and equipment in the development of South Korea's Air Force was well rewarded by the successful creation of an air arm of its client ally. This air arm would eventually become an important asset of not only South Korea's own defence, but also America's regional security in Northeast Asia.

⁸ The word 'tethered' in the title of this study (*Tethered Falcon*) implies that, like a tethered bird, the South Korean Air Force was confined to a specific area of air operations within the framework of American policy, and never allowed to soar to its full potential. (The bird 'Falcon' refers to the ROKAF, which is currently operating F-16 fighter aircraft, whose nickname is *Fighting Falcon*.)

APPENDICES*

* Note: The first digit of the Appendix number identifies the most relevant chapter.

Appendix 3-1: Letter, from Major General Kim Chung-Yul to Lt. General F.F. Everest, 18 September 1952.**

** 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 July 1952 - 31 December 1952,' *ms.*, Vol. 3, Appendix 99. K730.01 Jul-Dec 1952, v. 3. AFHRA.

HEADQUARTERS
REPUBLIC OF KOREA AIR FORCE
Taegu, Korea

18 September 1952

SUBJECT: Strength of the ROK Air Force for the ROK Fiscal Year 1952

TO: Commanding General
Fifth Air Force
APO 970

The following information is given to justify the increase in personnel authorized by the ROK Government.

1. Since the outbreak of the Korean War, the ROK Government has been doing its best in strengthening its defensive power; ten (10) divisions of ground forces are now being maintained, and the naval strength also has considerably been increased.

2. Regarding airmen's role in the present war as of great importance, and trying to make up for the Air Force's disparity in strength as against the Army and Navy, it has been attempting to expand the Air Force by fostering the necessary number of airmen whose training requires such long time from two to four years.

3. On 1 April 1951 (the beginning year of the ROK FY 1951) we had only 3,238 personnel and twenty-five (25) planes (11 F-51's, 6 T-6's, 7 L-types, 1 C-47). In the light of successful and normal growth, however, the Government authorized 5,800 personnel as the full strength for the ROK FY 1951 (1 April 1951 to 31 March 1952). With this authorization we could enhance our combat capability and train the required number of specialists. At the end of FY 1951, we had 5,552 personnel and fifty-two (52) planes: 13 F-51's, 11 T-6's, 27 L-types, 1 C-47.

4. As for the ROK FY 1952 (1 April 1952 to 31 March 1953) the Government's view was that we should make the first budget estimates, to begin with on the basis of the preceding year's strength and that supplementary budgets should be presented for additional estimates with the increase of strength. In accordance with this policy we obtained the National Assembly's approval of 37,644,956,800 Won (approximately \$6,000,000) for 5,800 personnel as the first budget.

5. The ROK Air Force, through USAF's sincere guidance and support, and by its own efforts, has now come to be fully qualified as a promising one with its increased combat capability and the intensified specialists training in various fields. It is believed that USAF has come to admit a convincing possibility of ROKAF's progress. General Twining, Acting Chief of Staff, USAF has encouraged us in his letter that he is thinking of support for ROKAF's expansion. We know the recent increase of our fighter strength from twenty (20) to forty (40) is one of the living testimonies recognizing our hopeful future.

6. In consideration of the above capability for expansion and to increase the effectiveness of our Air Force, we have mapped out a plan to have a complete fighter wing, and one training wing together with the necessary command and supporting elements.

7. Thus it is necessary to increase our strength to meet the requirement for the above plan and to provide necessary personnel to such direct supporting units for the Fifth Air Force as the Special Activity Unit. It was also deemed advisable to train more specialist in view of the fact that their training requires comparatively long time.

8. As a result of careful study considering various phases of our ability we have established a concrete program that we should have the strength of 11,500 at the end of FY 1952. This program was approved in the 30th State Council of our Government of 12 May 1952. 17,200,000,000 Won (approximately \$2,900,000) the expenditure for the additional 5,750 personnel, has already been sanctioned in the Ministry of National Defense, and by the end of October 1952, the whole budget is to be approved in the National Assembly.

9. Under the Government's approval we have increased the number of ROKAF's personnel from 5,800 to 7,346 since May up to 31 August 1952, and the distribution of personnel is as it shown in the enclosure No. 1. By the end of FY 1952, 4,200 more personnel will be augmented for the reasons described in the enclosure No. 2.

10. Not all of these additional personnel will have finished their regular training and been assigned by the end of FY 1952, but a number of them will continue to be in training. It may appear unnecessary to train so many at the present time, but we cannot be too early in training Air Force specialists whose education takes so much time.

11. The above explanation is on the strength of 11,550 which we hope to reach by the end of FY 1952. This number is of paramount importance for the Korean Air Force to make a sound development toward the end of discharging its assigned duties effectively in defending the Korean sky in cooperation with the UN Air Forces.

12. We would like you to have a full understanding of our plan and to uphold the hand of the ROKAF. The Government's budget of 17,200,000,000 Won (Enclosure No. 3) will pay most expenditures needed yet what with the difficulty of procurement at home and with the shortage of foreign exchange, some common items such as indicated in the Enclosure No. 4 are expected through the USAF aid channels.

13. It would be greatly appreciated if you will kindly recommend the above plan of augmentation to your higher headquarters for their favorable consideration.

KIM CHUNG YUL
Major General, ROKAF
Chief of Staff

4 Encl.:¹

1. Distribution of Strength as of 31 August 1952
2. Augmentation Plan for FY 1952
3. Specification of Additional Budget for FY 1952
4. Additional Requirement of Common Items

¹ Neither four enclosures nor General Kim's letter of 10 March 1952 to the Commanding General of 5th Air Force (General Everest) on 'The Three Year Plan' was available in '5AF History, 1 July - 31 December 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 3, pp. 44-46. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1952, v. 3. AFHRA.

Appendix 3-2: Letter from Lt. General F.F. Everest to Major General Kim Chung-Yul, 21 May 1952*

* 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 January 1952 - 30 June 1952,' *ms.*, Vol. 2, Appendix 102. K730.01 Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. AFHRA.

**HEADQUARTERS
FIFTH AIR FORCE
APO 970**

**Major General Kim Chung Yul
Chief of Staff
Republic of Korea Air Force
Taegu, Korea**

21 May 1952

Dear General Kim:

I have read with great interest your Three Year Plan² for the Republic of Korea Air Force and am gratified to see your attention to the details of the necessary support units and non-tactical units which round out a well developed fighting force.

Your ultimate goal, as far as the tactical units are concerned, is highly desirable. To build such an organization is not an easy task particularly when you are so dependent upon resources of other nations. As you know, I have recommended to Headquarters, USAF the initial establishment of a ROK Air Force organization of one fighter wing, one training wing, a transport squadron and the necessary command and support elements. This does not mean, however, that the larger organization proposed by you is not desirable. The question is solely one of cost.

Before making further comment on the plan that you have developed, permit me to express my opinions on the mission of the ROK Air Force. While the threat of Soviet conspired aggression persists throughout the world, your primary objective will be to maintain a strategic defense of the Republic of Korea. In order to execute this mission, you must retain a capability of conducting an active defense against hostile air attack, while at the same time providing support to friendly ground forces when they are engaged.

² Kim's letter of the Three Year Plan is not available. USAF historical records indicated the reference only: 'Reference to 'The Three Year Plan,' prepared by Major General Kim Chung Yul, C/S, ROK Air Force, 10 Mar 1952, printed by the AG, Hq. ROKAF.' 'SAF History, 1 January 1952 - 30 June 1952,' *ms.*, vol. 2, pp. 367-368. K-730.01, Jan-Jun 1952, v. 2. AFHRA.

In order to properly execute such a mission, emphasis must be placed on the attainment of a strong diversified fighter force together with an adequate aircraft control and warning system. To this end your program is well conceived. I am, however, concerned over the omission of photo reconnaissance, although I note that you include such a capability in your air tactical control group. The type of aircraft shown under the air tactical control group would preclude the utilization of such aircraft as photo reconnaissance aircraft for short range operations behind enemy front lines or deep penetration into enemy concentrations of air power. The matter of utilizing T-6 aircraft would be completely unsatisfactory for any combat function under average conditions. In the event that, in the later stages of development, a tactical air control group is deemed essential, a more suitable type of aircraft must be provided. You, of course, realize that we are able to use the T-6's in their role of airborne controller purely because we enjoyed supremacy of the air.

In my opinion, there is no immediate requirement for a Tactical Command Headquarters or for the Air or Ground Tactical Control Group shown in the plan. The function of reconnaissance would be more appropriately included in a photo reconnaissance squadron and the function of airborne controller for close support can similarly be included in that squadron, when required. The function of aircraft control and warning can be administered by a similar aircraft control and warning group, but the operation of that system, together with your fighter force, could be conducted directly from within the Air Force Headquarters. It may be necessary in this connection to establish within the Operations Division a Control Center. Similarly, I believe that your navigational aids for tactical or non-tactical aircraft should be provided by your Communications Wing, while maintaining the operational control of that system and the control of air traffic directly through your control Center.

My only other comment at this time is that the strength of the proposed ROK Air Force is too large in manpower for the number of tactical units which are planned and the organizational structure appears somewhat too heavy.

One of the primary objectives of an Air Advisory Group in Korea would be to study these problems of organization and equipment and make recommendations based on the abundant experience of the USAF in such matters. My staff is available to you for further discussion of these problems and I should be very happy to discuss them personally at the first opportunity.

F. F. Everest
Lieutenant General, USAF
Commanding

Appendix 5 - 1: Appendix B: Republic of Korea Force Levels for Fiscal Year 1955 and United States Support Thereof. Agreed Minute of Understanding Between the Governments of the United States and the Republic of Korea Based on the Conferences Held Between President Eisenhower and President Rhee and Their Advisers in Washington, July 27-30, 1954, and Subsequent Discussions Between Representatives of the Two Governments³

1. The United States will assist in supporting the following maximum number of military personnel (ROK) during the FY 1955:

Army	661,000
Navy	15,000
Marine	27,500
Air Force	16,500

Adjustments in numbers will be acceptable to the United States as long as the 720,000 total is not exceeded.

2. Increase in pay rate from average of 6,900 hwan per man to an average annual rate not to exceed 20,000 hwan per man.⁴ Food allowance increase from the current average annual rate of 24,000 to 38,000 hwan per man is authorized. This allowance will be supplemented during FY 55 by United States direct ration assistance.

3. ROK will undertake formation of reserve divisions. As training load diminishes and trained reserve strengths are attained, total number of active military personnel will be adjusted accordingly. Training will be accelerated to 20,000 men per month.

4. The United States will supply reserve divisions with necessary equipment.

5. The United States will assist in training the organized reserves.

6. Functions which are common to more than one service will be operated under a combined type of organization which will have the responsibility of servicing all of the military forces.

³ For the full text and Appendix A ('Measures for an Effective Economic Program') of the Agreed Minute, see *Department of State Bulletin* 31:805 (November 19, 1954), pp. 810-811. For the full text and appendices, see 'SAF History, 1 July 1954 - 31 December 1954,' *ms.*, vol. 3, Appendix 60. K-730.01, Jul-Dec 1954, v. 3. AFHRA; Kim, *Kim Chung Yul Memoir*, pp. 447-455. For the final text with Appendices A, B, and C of Draft Minute, context of which was discussed between ROK and US officials on 14 September 1954, see *FRUS, 1952-54*, v. 15, pt 2, pp. 1876-1882.

⁴ *Hwan* was the currency unit prior to *won*. The value of 100 hwan became 1 won.

7. The Korean navy will continue to build toward a goal of 79 vessels. The ships will be supplied by loan from United States sources for a period not to exceed five years.

8. The United States will make available jet fighters and training aircraft to the Korean Air Force in such quantities and at such times as the Korean pilots have demonstrated a capability to utilize this equipment properly. Determination of this capability will be made by the CINCUNC. The United States will plan to make available ten T-33 jet type trainers, and subsequently as need is demonstrated, 30 F-86F and 16 C-46 aircraft during 1955, and remainder of one Jet Fighter Wing (45 additional F-86F's for attrition) by the end of Fiscal Year 1956.

9. All new military construction projects not under construction will be deferred to Fiscal Year 1956 for further review. Minimum facilities for an arsenal and the reworking of ammunition and those construction projects specifically approved by CINCUNC will be funded for construction in Fiscal Year 1955.

10. The Republic of Korea military budget will be jointly reviewed and analyzed by the Republic of Korea and CINCUNC in order to assure that the military program will produce the most effective forces at minimum cost. The Republic of Korea will undertake to revise the present budget of the Ministry of National Defense for Fiscal Year 1955 in order to effect adjustments in the budget conforming to the principles set forth above, to eliminate from the budget such items as are found to have been budgeted in excess or in conflict with austerity standards, and to eliminate from the budget such items as will be replaced by the items the United States will supply the Republic of Korea Armed Forces under programs of military assistance. The implementation of the aid program planned by the United States contemplates that approximately 35 billion hwan will be made available by the Republic of Korea for the military program in Fiscal Year 1955.

11. The Republic of Korea will cooperate with CINCUNC by implementing recommendations designed to increase the effectiveness of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces and effect economies therein.

Appendix 6 - 1: The Roster of ROKAF Jet Pilot Trainees⁵

• in the United States ** in Korea

1st Class: 9 September 1954 - 23 March 1955*

Colonel Kim Sung-Yong	Lt. Colonel Yoon Eung-Yul
Lt. Colonel Oh Choon-Mok	Lt. Colonel Kim Too-Man
Lt. Colonel Lee Kang-Hwa	Lt. Colonel Chon Bong-Hee
Lt. Colonel Ok Man-Ho	Major Sohn Jae-Kwon

2nd Class: 27 September 1954 - 6 April 1955*

Lt. Colonel Park Chae-Ho	Major Lee Yang-Myong
Captain Lim Sang-Sup	Captain Ma Jong-In
Captain Kim Young-Min	Captain Lee Kae-Chul
Captain Choi Young-Chang	Captain Paik Man-Kil
Captain Chang Kyong-Soon	Captain Kim Young-Hwan

3rd Class: 23 October 1954 - 23 April 1955*

Lt. Colonel Lee Kee-Hyup	Major Park Wan-Kyoo
Captain Lee Ho-Young	Captain Choi Soon-Sun
Captain Lim Chong-Doo	Captain Song Jae-Bong
Captain Min Wook-Tong	Captain Lee Chan-Kwon
Captain Lee Hee-Keun	Captain Lee Kyo-Ahn

Class 55-1: 9 December 1954 - 15 February 1955**

Lt. Colonels Kim Keum-Sung, Chang Sung-Tae
Majors Kwon Joong-Hwa, Park Yong-Man, Koo Sun-Jin, Pae Sang-Ilo,
Yoo Chi-Kon, Lim Soon-Hyok, Sohn Heung-Joon, Park Jung-
Hyun

Class 55-2: 15 January - 1 April 1955**

Captains Hyun Chang-Kwon, Park Hi-Kon, Wang Hyun-Shik, Hwang
Jung-Duk, Choi Sung-Dal, Chun Hyung-II, Choi Kyu-Soon,
Kwon Chang-Shik, Kim Pil-Jung, Lee Jae-Kook.

⁵ ROKAF, *Gong-Goon Sa Jae 2 Jip (The History of the Republic of Korea Air Force Vol.2)*, 27 July 1953 - 31 December 1957 (Seoul, Korea: ROKAF, 1964), pp. 91-93.

Appendix 7-1: Letter from President Syngman Rhee to General Douglas MacArthur, dated July 14, 1950.⁶

217-1/52
1 PUSAN
July 14, 1950

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur,
GHQ, FEC, Tokyo

Dear General MacArthur;

In view of the common military effort of the United Nations on behalf of the Republic of Korea, in which all military forces, land, sea and air, of the United Nations, fighting in or near Korea have been placed under your operational command, and in which you have been designated Supreme Commander United Nations Forces, I am happy to assign to you command authority over all land, sea and air Forces of the Republic of Korea during the period of the continuation of the present state of hostilities, such command to be exercised either by you personally or by such military commander or commanders to whom you may delegate the exercise of this authority within Korea or in adjacent seas.

The Korean Army will be proud to serve under your command, and the Korean people and Government will be equally proud and encouraged to have the overall direction of our combined combat effort in the hands of so famous and distinguished a soldier who also in his person possesses the delegated military authority of all the United Nations who have joined together to resist this infamous communist assault on the independence and integrity of our beloved land.

With continued highest and warmest feelings of personal regard,

Sincerely yours,

/s/ SYNGMAN RHEE

⁶ Ltr Rhee to MacArthur, 'Transfer of Operational Control of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces to the United Nations Command,' dtd 14 July 1950. Serial No. J-741-226-741.14 Jo-624-Goon. ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs diplomatic records. ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *(De-Kyo) Moon-So Chol Mok-Rok (A List of Diplomatic Documents)* (Seoul, Korea: ROK GPO, 1994), p. 99; Seoul Daily, *Ju-Han Mi-Gwon 30-Nyon, 1945-1978 (30 Years of US Forces in Korea, 1945-1978)* (Seoul, Korea: Hang-Rim Sa, 1979), pp. 168-170. See also James P. Finley, *The US Military Experience in Korea: 1871-1982: In the Vanguard of ROK-US Relations* (Seoul, Korea: Command Historians Office/Headquarters US Forces in Korea, 1983), p. 59.

Appendix 7-2: A Staff Study by the Far East Command to Transfer Control of ROK Armed Forces to the ROK Government*

* 'History of 5th Air Force, 1 January 1955 - 30 July 1955,' *ms.*, Appendix 185. K730.01 Jan-Jun 1955. AFHRA.

Headquarters
Far East Command
APO 500

AGJ 091.711 CJ-P

19 April 1955

SUBJECT: Transfer of Control of ROK Armed Forces to the ROK Government (C)

**TO: Commanding General, United States Army Forces, Far East
and Eighth United States Army, APO 343
Commander Naval Forces, Far East, c/o FPO San Francisco,
California
Commander, Far East Air Forces, APO 925**

1. The inclosed study was prepared by the staff of this Headquarters as an initial step in the development of a United Nations Command position on the above subject. It is requested that you review this report and submit your comments on the study in general and on the specific aspects of the problem which are directly related to the ROK military service with which you are primarily concerned. Your views on the following points are particularly desired:

a. If an arrangement is concluded for the exercise of UNC operational control through the respective ROK Chiefs of Staff, what is the minimum degree of control which CINCUNC must retain?

b. If in the future US/UN forces in Korea continue to be reduced, at what point will the exercise of operational control of ROK forces under the present arrangement become no longer practicable?

2. To minimize speculation and risk of exposure to ROK personnel, it is directed that all copies of this letter and the inclosed study which may be distributed to commands in Korea be handled on a "need to know" basis.

3. It is requested that your comments be forwarded prior to 20 June 1955.

4. This letter may be downgraded to **CONFIDENTIAL** upon separation from enclosures of a higher classification.

BY COMMAND OF GENERAL TAYLOR:

/signed'
EUGENE L. ANDERSON
1st Lt
Asst Adj Gen

1 Incl
Staff Study
Copies furnished:
JMAG-K (PROV) APO 301
J-2, J-4, Compt

**HEADQUARTERS
FAR EAST COMMAND
J3 Division
APO 500**

17 April 1955

**SUBJECT: Return of Control of ROK Armed Forces to the ROK Government
(C)**

1. PROBLEM. To review the problem of returning operational control of ROK Armed Forces to the ROK Government and to determine the point in time and/or in the course of events when the transfer of control would be desirable.

2. ASSUMPTION.

- a. UNC control of ROK forces cannot continue indefinitely.**
- b. ROK operational control of US or UN forces is unacceptable.**
- c. Basic US/UN policies and objectives with respect to Korea will remain unchanged in principle for the next two calendar years.**
- d. The Armistice Agreement will remain in effect, although it may be amended in part.**
- e. MDAP will assume funding responsibility for the ROK Military Assistance Program as of 1 July 1955, and a conventional MSP arrangement will eventually be established in Korea.**
- f. A US Military Advisory Group will be retained in Korea throughout the foreseeable future.**

3. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM.

- a. In July 1950, ROK President Rhee assigned command authority over all land, sea and Air Forces of the ROK to the Supreme Commander, United Nations Forces, "during the period of the continuation of the present state of hostilities." (AMEMB Pusan msg DTG 140545Z, July 1950).**
- b. In the Dulles-Rhee agreement of 8 August 1953, President Rhee renewed his commitment for UNC control of ROK forces "until the Mutual Defense Treaty can be expected to come into force and effect." This commitment expired in March 1954, when ratification of the treaty was completed, although the instruments of ratification were not exchanged until 18 November 1954.**

c. President Rhee last renewed his commitment for UNC control of ROK forces, on a condition basis, in the US-ROK Minute of 17 November 1954.

d. The JCS have stated that in the absence of satisfactory US-ROK command arrangements, US forces should be withdrawn from Korea (JCS 2147/103).

e. Since the US-ROK Minute was signed, several ROK officials have evidenced a desire for a change in the present arrangement for UNC control of ROK forces.

f. As of 1 July 1955, US/UN forces in Korea will have been reduced to a residual corps of two US divisions and a small UN contingent with an Army (Forward) Headquarters, and one US fighter bomber wing. CINCFE has recommended a further reduction to one US RCT with necessary supporting troops. (C-71121) UN Governments concerned have indicated that further reductions in their forces will be made in the near future.

g. Current US policy contemplates that a US Military Advisory Group will remain in Korea throughout the foreseeable future (JCS 2147/103).

h. The Korean Armistice Agreement is binding upon all armed forces in Korea which were under the control of the respective commanders at the time they signed the truce. During negotiation of the Armistice, CINCUNC, on authority from Washington, assured the Communists that ROK forces were a part of the UNC, that they would comply with the Armistice for the duration of its effectiveness, and that there is no time limit upon the Armistice except as contained in paragraph 62 thereof (HNU 7-1, 19 July 1953, and related messages).

i. The ROK agreement to accept an armistice, upon which CINCUNC's assurances were based, did not refer to UNC control of ROK forces and committed the ROK to compliance with the armistice only until the political conference had been in session for 90 days. (Letter - Rhee to Robertson, 9 July 1953; Robertson Aide Memoir, 3 July 1953).

4. DISCUSSION.

a. In the light of the above assumptions and statements of fact, the problem can be considered more readily if factored into the following questions:

(1) In the balance, would the implementation of US policies and the pursuit of US objectives with respect to Korea be favorably or adversely affected by voluntary return of control of ROK forces to the ROK Government?

(2) Is voluntary relinquishment of UNC control conclusively prohibited by any agreement or commitment?

(3) If control is voluntarily returned to the ROK Government, should the transfer be effected by a single action or by progressive stages; or should a

different command arrangement be substituted for unilateral control by either the ROK or the UNC.

(4) At what point in time or in connection with what event would return of control to the ROK Government be most advantageous to the UNC?

The answer to these questions can best be determined by consideration of the effect of the transfer of control on existing and projected policies, objectives, commitments and programs.

b. Background: In July 1950, shortly after the entry of the UNC into the Korean conflict, President Rhee assigned command authority over ROK forces to CINCUNC "during the period of the continuation of the present state of hostilities." The obvious latitude for differing interpretations of this time limit has been of concern to the US and the UNC forces has therefore become an element of US policy (NSC 5514) and was included in the US-ROK Agreed Minute, which was signed by both governments on 17 November 1954, as follows:

"It is the intention and policy of the Republic of Korea to . . . Retain Republic of Korea forces under the operational control of the United Nations Command while that Command has responsibilities for the defense of the Republic of Korea, unless after consultation it is agreed that our mutual and individual interest would best be served by a change;"

Since the Minute was signed, several ROK officials have indicated a desire to initiate consultations regarding a "change" and in some cases have publicly claimed that such consultations were in progress. To date ROK suggestions have included outright and complete transfer of control; assignment of a ROK officer as Deputy CINCUNC; the establishment of the First ROK Army and the US Eighth Army as co-equal forces under CINCUNC; and an arrangement whereby CINCUNC would exercise his command control through the ROK Chiefs of Staff. During a conference in Korea on 23 November 1954, CINCUNC and CG AFFE/EIGHTH ARMY advised ROK officials that direct UNC command control of ROK forces would be required in combat and that the present command arrangement should not be changed while CINCUNC has responsibilities for the defense of Korea. In connection with a recommendation for further reductions in US forces in Korea, however, Generals Hull and Taylor have subsequently advised DA (but not the ROK) that a definite date should be set for the return of control of ROK forces to the ROK should be set and have estimated that the effectiveness of the ROK forces should still continue to increase since it is conditioned to a large degree by the advisory group (see C-71121, Part II, paragraph 6). It is probable that the question of a change in the existing arrangement for control of ROK forces cannot be avoided indefinitely without risk of the issue developing into another major source of US-ROK friction.

c. The Armistice Agreements. The Armistice Agreement is binding upon all forces in Korea which were under the control of CINCUNC at the time the

Agreement was signed. During negotiation of the Agreement, CINCUNC assured the Communists that ROK forces were under his control and would abide by the terms of the Armistice. Legally, therefore, transfer of control of ROK forces to the ROK Government could be interpreted to be a violation of the Armistice Agreement so long as the present agreement remains in effect. Unless the ROK Government violated the Agreement by some concrete action after assuming control of their forces, the transfer of control probably could be established as a technical violation only. For this reason, if control of ROK forces is to be transferred, it is desirable that NNSC problem be resolved before the transfer is effected. Some additional considerations with respect to this problem merit attention:

(1) The ROK agreement upon which CINCUNC's assurances regarding UNC control of ROK forces were based committed the ROK to comply with the Armistice only until the Political Conference provided for in the Armistice Agreement had been in session for 90 days. This "political conference" was conducted as a part of the Geneva Conference which convened on 26 April 1954. The Korean phase terminated without result on 15 June 1954. Therefore, the ROK commitment expired not later than 24 July 1954 (26 April plus 90 days). Tenuous though the argument is, it could be contended that CINCUNC's assurances to the Communists expired with the termination of the Korean phase of the Geneva Conference.

(2) Coincident with assumption of control of its forces, the ROK Government could agree formally to comply with the Armistice Agreement insofar as it relates to their forces. Such an agreement would not relieve the UNC of its responsibilities, however, unless it took the form of an amendment of the Armistice Agreement to include the ROK as a party, or the form of a separate Armistice Agreement between the ROK and the Communists. The probability is negligible that the ROK Government would enter into any such agreement. ROK assurances embodied in the Minute and in the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty are considered the maximum obtainable and an attempt to make the transfer of control of ROK forces contingent upon a more firm agreement probably would not prosper. An effort in this direction could be made, however, to emphasize the moral responsibilities which accompany control of ROK forces.

(3) If complete control of ROK forces is transferred to the ROK Government, the Military Armistice Commission should be notified of the action.

d. Unilateral ROK Resumption of Hostilities. Transfer of control of ROK forces to the ROK Government would increase to some degree the capability of that Government to plan and unilaterally to initiate a resumption of ROK forces is high, due to the presence of MAG personnel present with KOREAN units. The likelihood of unilateral action to resume hostilities is slight at the present time, but the possibility of a ROK engineered incident on a small scale to provoke the Communists into a resumption of hostilities is a definite possibility that will increase as the ROK forces increase in efficiency and logistic support capability. In the final analysis, the real deterrent to initiation of unilateral action by the ROK

is not UNC control of ROK forces, but the announced US intention to discontinue military assistance and to deny air, naval, and ground support if the ROK undertakes such an adventure. It is not likely that a ROK offensive could be sustained, even for the period for which combat reserves of supplies are available in Korea, without US assistance in logistics operations. Further, there is evidence that Rhee and his military leaders realize that no ROK offensive could succeed without US combat support. Possibility exists that the ROK can initiate a resumption of hostilities in coordination with events elsewhere in the Far East or under other conditions which could require reconsideration of US intentions regarding participation and or support, but this is another problem. The fact remains that Rhee can order his forces to resume hostilities whether or not they are under UNC control at the time. If Rhee issues such a directive with sufficient firmness, the probability of his military leaders executing the order will be the same in either case.

There have been no indications to date that the ROK desire for a change in the UNC-ROK command arrangement is related to plans for unilateral action.

DEVELOPMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ROK ARMED FORCES

e. ROK Army. If supported logistically by the US, the ROKA could at present resist attack by any nation other than a major power (JSC 2099/459, page 3529). It is estimated that the ROKA combat forces are combat ready and, except in the field of planning and logistics support operations, are operationally self-sufficient. Several units of the ROKA combat forces are staellited upon US units or are integrated with US units for training, however, and these arrangements must be continued until the ROKA units concerned have been trained and equipped. Recently organized ROKA service and support forces are not presently capable of supporting the combat forces in either peacetime or wartime, but improvement of their capabilities is being accomplished and it is estimated that they will be capable of supporting the ROKA combat forces under peacetime conditions by the end of calendar year 1955. They are not expected to be fully trained and self-sufficient, however, before the end of FY 1956. ROKA combat forces and service units are both deficient in motor equipment and technical maintenance capability. The ROK Army school system is firmly established, and 17% of all ROK personnel trained in US Service schools are being used as instructors in ROK Army Service schools. Limited education among enlisted men and lack of experience in the Officer Corps are the principal problems faced by the training command. The Chief, KMAG, estimates that the present effectiveness of the ROKA is due in large part to the fact that the US exercises command control and training supervision over the forces, and that without US command guidance at this critical stage in its development the ROKA would gradually lose its present effectiveness. (J4 D/F dated 8 April 1955; KMAG edition of Country Statement - Korea, dated 31 December 1954.)

f. **ROK Navy.** Within the limits of operational capability established by equipment levels, availability of trained technical personnel, and outside logistic support, the ROKN is presently capable of peacetime operation independent of direct US command control. For some time past US command control of the ROKN has been exercised primarily through the ROKN Chief of Naval Operations and results to date have been satisfactory. Additional ships required (and currently programmed) and necessary improvements in the operating characteristic of existing ships must be obtained from the US. Other problems of outside logistic support relate principally to the lack of responsive supply sources -- a situation that has developed since the US Army has commenced transferring basic stocks to the ROK Army for administration.

g. **ROK Marine Corps.** The ROKMC, less the Division, is capable of and is now functioning independent of US command control below the level of Corps Commandant. The Division will require extensive guidance from US advisors until it is fully organized and equipped, but is capable of operating in peacetime independent of US command control except as exercised through the Commandant. While on the MBP, the Division probably will continue under the operational control of the Army organization responsible for defense of the MBP. The ROKMC is critically deficient in motor transport, which severely limits its offensive capability, and faces the same problems with respect to logistic support from ROK Army sources as described for the ROKN. In view of the unique situation presented by the West Coast Islands now garrisoned by the ROKMC, it is probable that the ROKMC Island Defense Force must remain directly under UNC control until those islands are incorporated into the overall ROK defense system.

h. **ROK Air Force.** The degree to which the ROKAF is satellited upon the US Fifth Air Force for training during the conversion to jet aircraft and the organization of AC&W and similar specialized units would appear to preclude early transfer of operational control of the ROKAF as a whole. Transfer of control of the various units of the ROKAF in accordance with a phased program, with the US continuing to exercise general control through the ROKAF Chief of Staff and with an effective USAF advisory group in place, probably could be considered after the first jet squadron becomes operational. Aside from the major conversion program which is in progress, the operational capability of the ROKAF, and hence its ability to operate independent of direct US command control, is influenced primarily by the same factors which affect the other services, i.e., lack of adequate equipment and of trained technical personnel.

i. **General.**

(1) The preceding estimates consider that most material requirements of the ROK Armed Forces must be supplied from US sources.

(2) The principal deficiencies of the ROK forces are:

(a) Lack of an industrial mobilization base;

(b) Lack of equipment and supplies (particularly motor transport) and an effective material maintenance capability;

(c) Lack of trained enlisted men and experienced officers; and

(d) Lack of personnel with sufficient education to absorb technical training.

(3) To date more than 2300 ROKA officers and a proportionate number of ROKN and ROKAF officers, in addition to large numbers of enlisted instructors and technicians, have been trained in schools in the US. Seventeen percent of these ROKA personnel are on duty as instructors in ROKA Service schools and the remainder are being used to fill key command, administrative, and staff positions. In addition to their superior performance of duty, these individuals have provided important on-the-job training for subordinates. Most senior ROKA officers have received high level strategic and tactical training in US schools. Leadership ability of junior officers is considered to be below US standards, but field grade and senior officers are, in general, combat experienced and are considered to be qualified for a greater degree of independence of command than that which ROK military leaders now exercise.

(4) Indications are that ROKA combat forces, the ROK combat forces, the ROK Navy, and the ROK Marine Corps are presently capable of operating independent of direct US command control under peacetime conditions. ROKA service and support forces are not expected to possess this capability until 1 January 1956 at the earliest. Transfer of control of the ROKAF probably could begin when the first jet squadron achieves operational status, but could not be completed until the jet wing is entirely operational, and after that AC&W units and other specialized units must remain closely associated with US Air Force units until their training is completed.

(5) MDA Programs are normally operated in support of armed forces which are under the control of their national governments and it cannot logically be expected that transfer of control of ROK Armed Forces to the ROK Government would adversely affect the operation of an MDA Program in Korean when established.

(6) Current planning contemplates that by 1957 US funds for support of ROK forces will be reduced to a degree which will require a phase-down of active ROK forces. Some advantage would accrue to the US if control of ROK forces had been transferred prior to that time and if the ROK Government were responsible for deciding upon, planning, and accomplishing the phase-down. Risk exists that the ROK Government would make unwise decisions, such as attempting maintain their forces at present levels by distributing US aid more thinly, but the ROK Government is capable of making and enforcing such decisions even if their forces remain under UNC operational control.

(7) US commanders have considered ROK troops under their command and, within permitted limits, have supported them accordingly. With the separation of units which would follow transfer of operational control, it would be difficult for this to continue.

j. Summary. Assuming that US material, advisory and training support continues, whether or not the effectiveness of ROK forces would decrease and their rate of development decline if operational control were transferred to the ROK Government would appear to depend upon subjective rather than objective considerations. If the character and national pride of responsible ROK military leaders is adequate to the task, if the US has been successful in indoctrinating them in the art of military science as practiced by US Armed Forces, and if ROK respect for US military advisors remains as high as it is now considered to be, the sense of pride and responsibility which will derive from their independence should result in an increase in the basic capability of the ROK forces. The expected initial decrease in their effectiveness possibly could be controlled within acceptable limits through the efforts of the MAGs, and it would be more than offset if their capability to operate with less dependence upon US command guidance increased concurrently. Conversely, if the ROK military leaders do not possess the requisite character and have not been effectively indoctrinated, and if the ROK Government does not continue to respect the professional character of its military organization, risk exists that the effectiveness and integrity of the ROK Armed Forces would steadily deteriorate after transfer of operational control from the UNC. This risk, however, must eventually be faced unless the US is to retain control of and responsibility for ROK forces indefinitely. The above remarks refer to peacetime operations. In the event of a resumption of hostilities requiring extensive air and naval operations and large-scale logistical support, unified control under US command of all forces engaged would be required.

US/UNC OPERATIONS IN KOREA

k. CINCUNC's responsibilities for the defense of Korea constitute the principal consideration in this problem, and it does not appear that CINCUNC could completely relinquish control of ROK forces so long as he is charged with such responsibilities. It is possible, however, that existing command arrangements could be modified to make the ROK forces less dependent upon direct US control at the operating level. Modifications acceptable to the ROK could be expected to reduce or eliminate existing lines of command between UNC field commanders on the one hand and ROK commanders on the other, which in turn, could be expected to require new arrangements regarding responsibility for the MBP and would require numerous agreements between the UNC and ROK commanders regarding KATUSA; US control of ROK units while attached to UNC forces for training; joint use of training areas and facilities; combined planning; employment of US-supported ROK forces for purposes not sanctioned by the US (e.g., enforcement of the Rhee line); tactical air control; defense of the West Coast islands; etc. Negotiation of these agreements probably would stimulate ROK demands for an administrative-type agreement to define the rights of UNC forces regarding access

to and utilization of facilities, entry and egress, etc. This could raise such objectionable questions as criminal jurisdiction, measures of security of UNC forces and property, and others. Transfer of control of the ROK forces would, however, relieve the UNC commander in Korea of a major burden of command responsibility and would increase the amount of time and attention which he could devote exclusively to UNC forces.

l. Transfer of control of the ROK forces would increase the need for a joint US military advisory group similar to the joint MAG presently planned. Although the present authority of US advisory groups to require ROK acceptance of advice and guidance is limited, transfer of control of ROK forces would remove this authority entirely. A part of this deficiency could be supplied through US control of MDA support. As much as possible of the remainder would have to be supplied by a well-considered US-ROK MDA Agreement. The MAG would continue to be able to observe and monitor the actions of the ROK forces and to deter them (probably as much as at present) from such objectionable practices as waste and misuse of aid furnished, etc.

m. Discussion to this point has considered the continued existence of UNC forces in Korea approximately as presently constituted. If UNC forces were reduced to the level of one RCT with necessary supporting troops as has been recommended, or if the UNC were disestablished, it is doubtful that direct command control such as is presently exercised over ROK forces could be continued.

POLITICAL AND RELATED CONSIDERATIONS

n. Transfer of operational control of ROK Armed Forces to the ROK Government would increase, at least temporarily, the prestige of President Rhee and his administration at home and abroad and possibly would improve US-ROK relations. Conversely, however, it would also increase the potentiality of unrestricted use of ROK military forces for political purposes such as enforcement of the Rhee line; suppression of political opposition; and facilitation of political crisis by use of military forces for police purposes, possibly under martial law.

o. The action would tend to diminish the concept of United Nations solidarity in the Far East with attendant retrogression of UN political influence in Far East countries. Further, the separation of the ROK forces would not divorce the UN nations concerned from responsibility for events in the ROK, and they probably could not absolve themselves politically from responsibility for ROK actions so long as their forces remain in Korea. Those nations have already indicated the intention to reduce their forces now assigned to the UNC. The transfer of ROK forces from UNC command probable would be interpreted as a US estimate of reduced tension in Korea and would hasten the process of reducing the UNC to the status of a cadre. It is considered important that the continue reduction of the operating forces in the UNC not be permitted to lead to the dissolution of the Command. The UNC was established and mandated to the US by the UN at a time when the UN Security Council was being boycotted by the USSR. It is not likely

that another such instrument of UN policy could be created in the face of a Soviet veto capability.

5. CONCLUSIONS.

a. CINCUNC's responsibilities for the defense of Korea and for implementation of the Armistice Agreement prohibit complete relinquishment of UNC control of ROK forces so long as these responsibilities are included in CINCUNC's mission. Transfer to the ROK Government of the maximum degree of control of ROK forces consistent with CINCUNC's requirements, however, would not adversely affect the implementation of US policies or the pursuit of US objectives with respect to Korea if initiated at an appropriate time (see paragraph 5c below).

b. Legally, transfer of control of ROK forces to the ROK Government could be construed, with justification, as a violation of the Armistice Agreement as presently written.

c. If a change in command relations becomes necessary or desirable while UNC forces in Korea are of the strength of the currently planned residual corps or greater, the UNC should seek an arrangement whereby CINCUNC would exercise command through the respective ROK Chiefs of Staff, either directly or through the FEC component service commanders or through a Deputy CINCUNC. An arrangement of this type, which will serve to change procedures for the exercise of UNC control, must not serve, however, to reduce the degree of control exercised by CINCUNC beyond the minimum point required for the accomplishment of his assigned mission.

d. If UNC forces in Korea should be reduced in strength to a point where the exercise of operational control at the desired level, as is presently the case with respect to control of the ROK Army, becomes no longer practicable, a new command arrangement would be required regardless of other considerations. Even if all UNC forces were withdrawn from Korea, however, UNC control of ROK forces could not prudently be completely relinquished without a change in CINCUNC's assigned mission.

e. With respect to timing:

(1) If otherwise possible, the present command arrangement should not be radically altered until ROKA service and support units are capable of supporting ROKA combat forces under peacetime conditions and until, in the opinion of COMFEA, a reduction of Fifth Air Force control of ROKAF operations can safely be initiated. At present, it appears that the existing arrangement should be continued without significant modification until 1 January 1956 or later.

(2) If ROK pressure for a change threatens the effectiveness of the present arrangement before existing major problems of logistics and training have been

resolved, agreement for a phase transition to a mutually acceptable alternate arrangement should be sought.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS. It is recommended that:

a. This study be distributed to the component service commanders for review and comment before it is refined and a firm position developed.

b. TAB B, draft letter of transmittal to component service commanders, be approved.

Date for automatic downgrading cannot be predetermined at this time. Review for purpose of reclassification will be made on 19 July 1955.

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Even though most United States documents for the period 1946-1956 have been declassified, there is no provision for the equivalent Korean documents to be automatically declassified, unless the US government officially notifies the ROK government of the declassification. Rarely does this occur. Therefore, there are many more relevant declassified documents in the United States than there are in South Korea as far as US-originated US-ROK related archival materials are concerned. Even the coverage of the ROK government's recently declassified documents is limited with regard to this study.²

¹ As mentioned in the Introduction, publications in South Korea are divided into two categories: (1) *P'an-Mae Poom* (For Public Sale) and (2) *Bee-Mae Poom* (In-House Documents, Not for Public Sale). Most governmental publications are printed as In-House Documents. In other words, they are not available to the public. In the bibliography, Korean published materials that are not available to the public are prefixed by an asterisk, identifying 'In-House Document, Not for Public Sale.'

² The coverage of the ROK government's declassified diplomatic documents is confined mainly to the 1955-1959 period. Out of the total 457 released items, only 82 items (18%) fall in the 1948-1954 period, whereas the number of those items in the 1948-1953 and 1948-1952 periods are further limited: 52 (12%) and 41(9%). Two noticeable documents included in the released list and relevant to this study are: (1) President Rhee's original letter transferring the operational control over the ROK Armed Forces to CINCUNC General of the US Army Douglas MacArthur (14 July 1950) with MacArthur's answer (16 July 1950), and (2) a draft of the Protocol of Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America (29 January 1954). ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Oe-Kyo Mook-So Chol Mok-Rok. (Jae 1 Gong-Kae Ja-Ryo) (A Catalogue of Diplomatic Documents, Declassified Volume 1)* (Seoul, Korea: ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1994), p. 99.

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- _____, 'Memoranda of Records, 1968-1991.' [These are the author's personal records of his experience in the South Korean Air Force during the period 1968-1991, as: Korean Air Liaison Officer of USAF 314th Air Division (1968-69); USAF Air War College student (1980-81); Assistant Chief of Staff for Studies and Analysis, HQ ROKAF (1983-84); Commander of 10th Fighter Wing (1985-86); Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Personnel (1986-87), Plans & Management (1987-88), and Operations (Jan-July 1989), HQ ROKAF; Commander of Air Training Command (July - Dec 1989); and Superintendent of the ROK Air Force Academy (Dec 1989 - Dec 1991).]

9. INTERVIEWS AND TAPES

(Note: An asterisk following the date of interview identifies telephone interview.)

Lt. General CHANG Chi-Ryang, ROKAF, Ret., ROKAF Chief of Staff (1968-1970); Air Attaché in Washington, DC (1956-1958); 10th Wing Commander (1952-1953); and Director of Operations, HQ

- ROKAF (1949-1950). 26 November 1992, 16 September 1994, 3 May, and 27 July* 1995.
- General CHANG Sung, ROKA, Deputy Commander of ROK-US Combined Forces Command (CFC) (June 1994-). 25 April 1995.
- Lt. General CHANG Sung-Whan, ROKAF, Ret., ROKAF Chief of Staff (1962-1964); Air Attaché in Washington, DC (1952-1954); and one of the original first ten pilots who ferried F-51 fighters from Itazuke, Japan to Taegu, Korea on 2 July 1950. 25 April 1995.
- Lt. General CHOI Dong-Whan, ROKAF, Director of Strategic Planning, Ministry of National Defense (April 1994-). 2 May 1995.
- Major General CHUN Hyung-II, ROKAF, Ret., Director of Personnel, Ministry of National Defense (1976-1978). Flew 100 combat missions in F-51s during the Korean War. 1 May 1995.
- CHUNG Bong-Kyu, Chief of ROK Air Force History (1981-1987). 25 April 1992 and 19 July 1993.*
- Lt. Colonel Mark Clodfelter, USAF, Ph.D., Instructor, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, USAF Air University. 16 May 1993, 25 August 1993, and 15 March 1994.
- Colonel Laney K. Comney, USAF, Director of Air Force Programs for the Joint United States Military Affairs Group-Korea (JUSMAG-K) (July 1994-). 25 April 1995.
- Dr. Robert Frank Futrell, Professor of military history (now emeritus professor), Air University (1950-1974). 15 May 1992, 3 July 1993, and 30 November 1995.
- Lt. General Ronald W. Inverson, USAF, Commander of 7th Air Force/US Pacific Air Forces; deputy commander of US Forces Korea; commander of Air Component Command, CFC; and commander, US Air Forces Korea (September 1994-). 1 May 1995.
- Lt. General KIM Chang-Kyu, ROKAF, Ret., ROKAF Chief of Staff (1958-1960). 23 April, 28 September, and 30 October* 1995.
- Mrs. KIM Chung-Yul, widow of Lt. General KIM Chung-Yul, ROKAF Chief of Staff (1949-1952, 1954-1956). 19 July 1994* and 3 May 1995.
- Major General KIM Dae-Wook, ROKAF, C-2 of ROK-US Combined Forces Command (July 1993- Dec 1994), Director of Organization and Manpower Management/ROK Ministry of National Defense (December 1994 - Present). 14 September 1994, 24 April and 19 September, and 15 November* 1995.
- KIM Dong-Yul, Chief of ROK Air Force History (1 March 1995- Present). 28 April and 15 May 1995.
- Dr. KIM Hakjoon, Professor of Seoul National University (1977-1990) and Special Assistant to President Roh Tae Woo (1990-1992). 27 March 1993.

- General KIM Hong-Rae, ROKAF Chief of Staff (March 1994- Present). 24 Sept 1994 and 28 April 1995.**
- Master Sergeant KIM Hyun-Sik, ROKAF, Ret., a mechanic of F-51 fighter aircraft at Seoul-Yeo'E Do (K-16) and Kangnung (K-18) Air Bases during the Korean War. 5 October 1994* and 28 April 1995.**
- Dr. LEE Hongkoo, Professor of Seoul National University (1972-86), Deputy Prime Minister for Unification (1986-88), Special Assitant to President Roh Tae Woo (1988-91), Ambassador to London (1991-93), and Prime Minister (1994-95). 26 November 1992, 25 April and 18 June 1993.**
- Major General LEE Kap-Suk, ROKA, Ret., Commander of 8th Infantry Division (1979-1981) and Director of ROK Army Aviation (1982-1983).**
- Lt. Colonel LEE Jong-Hak, ROKAF, Ret., Professor of Military History and Strategy, ROK Defense College (1979-1988). 15 March and 20 September 1994.***
- LEE Myung-Hee, Officer in Charge of Archival Material, Office of ROK Army History, HQ ROK Army. 28 April 1995.**
- General LEE Yang-Ho, ROKAF, Ret., ROK Minister of National Defense (December 1994-Present); Chairman of ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (March 1993-December 1994); ROKAF Chief of Staff (September 1992- March 1993). 13 September 1994, 23 April, 23 September, and 31 October* 1995.**
- Dr. David MacIsaac, Professor of military history and strategy, US Air Force Academy (1964-66, 1968-70, 1972-78), and professor of military history, Air University (1985-1991). 29 July 1994, 17-18 October 1994, 27 February, 31 March, 11 July, and 3/14 November 1995.**
- Colonel Phillip S. Meilinger, USAF, Ph.D., Commandant, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, USAF Air University. 25 April 1993, 20 March 1994, 15 August 1994, 25 March and 6 November 1995.**
- Lt. General PAE Yang-II, ROKAF, Commander, ROKAF Air Operations Command (1 June 1994- Present). 1 May 1995.**
- Major General PARK Yong-Jik, ROKAF, Ret., Air Attaché in Washington, DC (1976-79), and Director of Personnel, Ministry of National Defense (1985-87). 10 January and 30 September 1995.**
- Dr. RHEE Sang-Woo, Instructor of Political Science of ROKAF Academy (1961-64) and Professor of Sogang University (1972 - Present). 27 April 1994, 2 May and 29 September 1995.**
- William Russell, Archivist, USAF Historical Research Agency. 15 March 1993, 5 August 1994, 9 March, and 21 November 1995.**
- Colonel SUH Sang-Ho, ROKAF, Chief of ROK Air Force History (June 1993-February 1995). 16 September 1994.**
- Mr. James Tong, Historian, Directorate of Air Force Programs for the**

JUSMAG-K (May 1992-Present). 25 April 1995.
Colonel YOUM Seong-Hwan, ROKA, Chief of the Modern War Archival
Collection, Office of ROK Army History, IIQ ROK Army. 28
April 1995.

TAPES: ROKAF historians and archivists conducted a series of personal interviews from 1983 to 1991 with former ROKAF Chiefs of Staff as listed below and recorded their interviewed materials in unedited tapes, that are in the possession of the ROKAF Office of History. The permission of the chief of the office is required to obtain access.³

³ Lt. Generals (Ret.) Kim Chung-Yul (1949-52, 1954-56); Kim Chang-Kyu (1958-60), Kim Shin (1960-62); Chang Sung-Whan (1962-64); Park Won-Suk (1964-66); Chang Chi-Ryang (1968-70); and General (Ret.) Kim Sung-Ryong (1970-72).

