

BATTLE DIGEST™

Lessons for Today's Leaders

Volume 4 ★ Issue 7

Modern Wars:

Inchon

DATE:

Sept. 15–26, 1950

LOCATION:

Inchon and Seoul, Korea

OPPOSING FORCES

United States and United Nations Forces: Initially, the invasion force consisted of 20,000 troops from Xth Corps—comprising 7th Infantry Division (ID), 1st Marine Division, and some Republic of Korea (ROK) units—under the command of Maj. Gen. Edward D. Almond. It would grow to over 75,000. The 7th ID was commanded by Maj. Gen. David G. Barr, while the 1st Marine Division was commanded by Maj. Gen. Oliver P. Smith. Naval Joint Task Force 7 (261 ships from eight nations) was commanded by Vice Adm. Arthur D. Struble. Eighth Army was commanded by Lt. Gen. Walton Walker. In overall command of both US and UN forces was Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

North Korea: Initially, 400 soldiers from the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) 226th Marine Regiment and 918th Coastal Artillery Regiment defended Wolmi-do (now Wolmido) Island at Inchon (now Incheon). The forces grew to around 7,000 soldiers on the approach to Seoul. The primary units defending Seoul were the 18th Division and 25th Infantry Brigade, which grew to around 20,000 soldiers. Kim Il Sung's field commander, Gen. Choi Yong-kun, was in overall command.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

On 25 June, 1950, North Korea surprised the world by sending ten divisions south across the 38th parallel into the Republic of Korea (ROK). Within three days, they had captured Seoul, sending shocked and demoralized ROK units falling back across the country. In the desperate weeks that followed, it was a race against time as the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) pushed south, hoping to overwhelm ROK forces before sufficient reinforcements could arrive.

Initially, US troops from Japan rushed to the peninsula to secure the critical southern port of Pusan (now Busan). For weeks, the war was touch-and-go, until Gen. Douglas MacArthur launched a bold amphibious assault at the western port city of Inchon. This historic turning movement caused the North Korean



STRATEGY & MANEUVER

Actions by North Korea – After Japan's defeat in WWII, Korea was liberated from Japanese occupation. However, awkward postwar settlements with the Soviet Union ended with the peninsula divided along the 38th parallel. Although the division

was meant to be temporary, Cold War tensions intervened, and by 1948, rival governments had formed, with each claiming legitimacy over the entire peninsula. In the north, Kim Il Sung led the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). In the south, Syngman Rhee was elected president of the Republic of Korea. But while the Soviets built up Kim's army with modern equipment and training, the Americans took a more limited approach.



Kim Il Sung

By the spring of 1950, Kim saw his opportunity to reunite the peninsula under communist rule. Not only had the Soviets modernized Kim's army, but Mao Zedong had just returned thousands of battle-hardened veterans after his victory in the Chinese Civil War (1945–49). All that stood in Kim's way was an ill-equipped and untrained constabulary force - marginally supported by a distracted US. His plan was to capture Seoul, destabilize the ROK government, then quickly sweep south before the US could react. On 25 June, he launched his attack, sending ten divisions south across the 38th parallel. The Korean War had begun.

Actions by the US and United Nations – After the end of WWII, MacArthur led the occupation force governing Japan and its possessions, including South Korea. But postwar drawdowns resulted in much smaller forces, leaving Eighth Army in Japan with only four understrength divisions (7th ID, 24th ID, 25th ID, and 1st Cavalry). Equally problematic, the low demands of occupation duty left these units poorly trained and equipped.

In Washington, meanwhile, the newly created Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) wrestled with a new strategy for the postwar era of nuclear deterrence and Soviet containment, which, by the spring of 1950,