

Korean War Timeline

America's Forgotten War

By Kallie Szczepanski, About.com Guide

At the close of World War II, the victorious Allied Powers did not know what to do with the Korean Peninsula. Korea had been a Japanese colony since the late nineteenth century, so westerners thought the country incapable of self-rule. The Korean people, however, were eager to re-establish an independent nation of Korea.

[Background to the Korean War: July 1945 - June 1950](#)



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Potsdam Conference, Russians invade Manchuria and Korea, US accepts Japanese surrender, North Korean People's Army activated, U.S. withdraws from Korea, Republic of Korea founded, North Korea claims entire peninsula, Secretary of State Acheson puts Korea outside U.S. security cordon, North Korea fires on South, North Korea declares war

July 24, 1945- President Truman asks for Russian aid against Japan, Potsdam

Aug. 8, 1945- 120,000 Russian troops invade Manchuria and Korea

Sept. 9, 1945- U.S. accept surrender of Japanese south of 38th Parallel

Feb. 8, 1948- North Korean People's Army (NKA) activated

April 8, 1948- U.S. troops withdraw from Korea

Aug. 15, 1948- Republic of Korea founded. Syngman Rhee elected president.

Sept. 9, 1948- Democratic People's Republic (N. Korea) claims entire peninsula

Jan. 12, 1950- Sec. of State Acheson says Korea is outside US security cordon

June 25, 1950- 4 am, North Korea opens fire on South Korea over 38th Parallel

June 25, 1950- 11 am, North Korea declares war on South Korea

[North Korea's Ground Assault Begins: June - July 1950](#)



Department of Defense / National Archives

UN Security Council calls for ceasefire, South Korean President flees Seoul, UN Security Council pledges military help for South Korea, U.S. Air Force shoots down North Korean planes, South Korean Army blows up Han River Bridge, North Korea captures Seoul, First U.S. ground troops arrive, U.S.

moves command from Suwon to Taejon, North Korea captures Incheon and Yongdungpo, North Korea defeats U.S. troops north of Osan

June 25, 1950- UN Security Council Resolution calls for immediate ceasefire

June 26, 1950- N.K. takes Uijongbu; South's Pres. Syngman Rhee flees Seoul

June 27, 1950- UN Security Council calls for military support of S. Korea

June 27, 1950- U.S. Air Force shoots down three North Korean aircraft

June 28, 1950- S. K. Army blows up Han River Bridge killing 500-800 Seoulites

June 28, 1950- North Korean forces enter Seoul; city is taken at midnight

June 29, 1950- First 33 U.S. ground troops arrive in Suwon

July 1, 1950- U.S. command is based at Taejon, well south of Seoul

July 3, 1950- North Korea captures Incheon and Yongdungpo

July 5, 1950- North Korea defeats U.S. force near Osan; 165 U.S. casualties

[Lightning-Fast North Korean Advances: July 1950](#)



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U.S. troops retreat to Chonan, UN Command under Douglas MacArthur, North Korea executes U.S. POWs, 3rd Battalion overrun at Chochiwon, UN headquarters moved from Taejon to Taegu, US Field Artillery Battalion overrun at Samyo, South Korean President gives ROK military command to UN, North Korean troops enter Taejon and capture Major General William Dean

July 6, 1950- Outnumbered U.S. troops retreat to Chonan, south of Osan

July 7, 1950- UN Command under General Douglas MacArthur created

July 8, 1950- North Korea takes Chonan; U.S. 3rd Batt. 34th loses all but 175

July 10, 1950- UN southward retreat continues; N. Korea executes 6 U.S. POWs

July 11, 1950- U.S. 3rd Batt. overrun at Chochiwon; 345/667 killed or captured

July 13, 1950- Frontline runs through Taejon and Cheongju

July 13, 1950- U.S. and South Korean headquarters move from Taejon to Taegu

July 14, 1950- U.S. 63rd Field Artillery overrun at Samyo; 136 U.S. troops die

July 14, 1950- South Korean Pres. Rhee gives ROK military command to UN

July 20, 1950- North Koreans enter Taejon, capture Major General William Dean

["Stand or Die," South Korea and the UN Hold Busan: July - August 1950](#)



National Archives / Truman Presidential Library

Battle for Yongdong, Fortification of Jinju, South Korean General Chae killed, Massacre at No Gun Ri, General Walker orders "Stand or die," Battle for Jinju on Korea's south coast, US Medium Tank Battalion arrives at Masan

July 23, 1950- Two-day-long Battle for Yongdong; U.S. troops pushed south

July 25, 1950- US troops fortify southern city of Jinju, northwest of Busan

July 25, 1950- Americans wipe out two North Korean battalions at Sangyong-ni

July 26, 1950- N.K. uses refugees as human mine sweepers south of Yongdong

July 26, 1950- South Korean General Chae Byong Duk killed at Hadong

July 26-29, 1950- No Gun Ri Massacre, 150 (?) Korean refugees killed by U.S.

July 29, 1950- General Walton Walker orders UN troops to "Stand or die."

July 30, 1950- North Korean troops on western front get within 2 miles of Jinju

July 31, 1950- Battle for Jinju, North Korea takes city

Aug. 1, 1950- U.S. Medium Tank Battalion gets to Masan, on south coast of Korea

[North Korean Advance Grinds to a Bloody Halt: August - September 1950](#)



National Archives / Truman Presidential Library

First Battle of Naktong Bulge, Massacre of U.S. POWs at Waegwan, President Rhee moves government to Busan, US victory at Naktong Bulge, Battle of the Bowling Alley, Busan Perimeter established, Landing at Incheon

Aug. 5-19, 1950- First Battle of the Naktong Bulge

Aug. 7, 1950- North Korea takes Cloverleaf Hill and Obong-ni at Naktong Bulge

Aug. 16, 1950- North Korea breaks ROK army line 15 miles north of Taegu

Aug. 17, 1950- North Koreans execute 36 U.S. POWs at Waegwan, South Korea

Aug. 17, 1950- US Marines fail to retake Obong-ni; 2 assaults, 60% casualties

Aug. 18, 1950- President Rhee moves S. Korean government to Busan

Aug. 18, 1950- US retakes Naktong Bulge

Aug. 19-24, 1950- Battle of the Bowling Alley, US/UN forces halt NKA advances

Aug. 27-Sept. 15, 1950- Fighting all along Busan Perimeter

Sept. 15, 1950- Marines land at Incheon, well behind NK lines, near Seoul

UN Forces Push Back: September - October 1950



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UN forces breakout from Busan Perimeter, UN troops secure Gimpo Airfield, UN victory in Battle of Busan Perimeter, UN retakes Seoul, UN captures Yosu, South Korean troops cross 38th Parallel into North, General MacArthur demands North Korean surrender, North Koreans murder Americans and South Koreans at Taejon, North Koreans murder civilians in Seoul, U.S. troops push toward Pyongyang

Sept. 16, 1950- Breakout attack, UN forces begin push out from Busan Perimeter

Sept. 18, 1950- UN troops re-secure Gimpo airfield, northwest of Busan

Sept. 22, 1950- Battle of Busan Perimeter ends, UN troops advance northward

Sept. 25-27, 1950- UN retakes Seoul in northwest and Jinju in southern Korea

Sept. 29, 1950- UN forces push west, capture Yosu on southwest coast

Sept. 30, 1950- S. Korean troops cross 38th Parallel into North Korea

Oct. 1, 1950- Gen. MacArthur demands N.K. surrender; China warns UN off

Oct. 2, 1950- 1,100 S. Korean and 30 U.S. bodies found as N.K.A. leaves Taejon

Oct. 4, 1950- S. Korean government reports 10,000 civilians killed in Seoul

Oct. 7, 1950- U.S. troops enter N. Korea at Kaesong, push toward Pyongyang

China Stirs as UN Takes Most of North Korea: October 1950



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UN takes Wonsan, Anti-communist North Koreans murdered, China enters war, Pyongyang falls to UN, Twin Tunnels Massacre, 120,000 Chinese troops move to North Korean border, UN pushes to Anju in North Korea, South Korean government executes 62 "collaborators," South Korean troops at Chinese border

Oct. 11, 1950- UN secures Wonsan, in northeast corner of South Korea

Oct. 13, 1950- 550 dead anti-communist N. Koreans found in Wonsan

Oct. 14, 1950- First Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) troops enter Andong, N.K.

Oct. 18, 1950- 700 N. Korean political prisoners found dead at Hamhung

Oct. 19, 1950- Pyongyang falls to UN forces

Oct. 19, 1950- Twin Tunnels Massacre; N. Korea shoots 89 US POWs, 21 survive

Oct. 20, 1950- Mao moves 120,000 soldiers to Yalu River, border with N. Korea

Oct. 23, 1950- S. Korean and U.S. troops to Anju, N. Korea; rescue 40 U.S. POWs

Oct. 24, 1950- S. K. government condemns 62 to death in Seoul for collaboration

Oct. 26, 1950- S. Korean troops man N. Korea border with China along Yalu River

[China Comes to North Korea's Rescue: October 1950 - February 1951](#)



Photo by Spencer for Department of Defense / National Archives

China joins war, First Phase offensive, US advances to Yalu River, Battle of Chosin Reservoir, UN cease fire declared, General Walker dies and Ridgway assumes command, North Korea and China recapture Seoul, Ridgway Offensive, Battle of Twin Tunnels

Oct. 27, 1950- China enters war, bringing new Russian armaments

Nov. 1, 1950- China's First Phase Offensive, UN pushed south to Chongchon River

Nov. 21, 1950- U.S. 17th Regiment advances to Yalu River

Nov. 25, 1950- UN offensive launches from Chongchon River area

Nov. 27-30, 1950- Battle of the Chosin Reservoir

Dec. 14, 1950- UN resolution calling for a cease fire passes

Dec. 23, 1950- Gen. Walker killed in jeep accident, Gen. Ridgway takes command

Jan. 1-15, 1951- 500,000 N.K. and CCF troops recapture Seoul

Jan. 25, 1951- UN counterattacks in Ridgway Offensive

Feb. 1, 1951- Battle of Twin Tunnels, U.S. and French kill 1,300 Chinese troops

[Hard Fighting, and MacArthur is Ousted: February - May 1951](#)



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Battle of Chipyeong-ni, Siege of Wonsan Harbor, Operation Ripper, UN retakes Seoul, Operation Tomahawk, MacArthur relieved of command, First big airfight, First Spring Offensive, Second Spring Offensive, Operation Strangle

Feb. 13-15, 1951- Battle of Chipyeong-ni, UN standstill with 18,000 CCF troops

Feb. 16, 1951- Siege of Wonsan Harbor begins, U.S. Navy's longest blockade ever

March 7- April 4, 1951- Operation Ripper, Communists pushed above 38th Parallel

March 18, 1951- UN retakes Seoul

March 23, 1951- Operation Tomahawk, 3,437 paratroopers dropped at Munsan-ni

April 11, 1951- President Truman relieves General MacArthur of command

April 12, 1951- War's first big airfight, 40+ MiGs vs. UN's B-29 formation.

April 22-29, 1951- First Spring Offensive, 250,000 CCF troops, biggest of war

May 17-22, 1951- CCF's Second Spring Offensive and the May Massacre

May 20- Sept. 20, 1951- Operation Strangle, UN air blockade of North Korea

[Bloody Battles and Truce Talks: June 1951 - January 1952](#)



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Battle for the Punchbowl, Truce talks at Kaesong, Battle of Heartbreak Ridge, Operation Summit, Peace talks resume, Line of demarcation set, POW lists exchanged, North Korea nixes POW exchange

June 10-16, 1951- Battle for the Punchbowl, Hwachon Reservoir. US Marines win.

July 10, 1951- Truce talks begin at Kaesong, city on the 38th Parallel

Aug. 17- Sept. 6, 1951- Battle of Bloody Ridge (Hill 983)

Aug. 23, 1951- Communist negotiators break off Kaesong talks

Sept. 5- Oct. 15, 1951- Battle of Heartbreak Ridge (Hill 931), UN seizes ridge

Sept. 21, 1951- Operation Summit, first ever helicopter deployment, 228 Marines

Oct. 25, 1951- Peace talks resume at Kaesong

Nov. 27, 1951- 38th Parallel designated as line of demarcation, fighting eases

Dec. 18, 1951- POW lists exchanged by all sides

Jan. 2, 1952- UN proposes POW exchange; northern forces reject offer

Death and Destruction: February - November 1952



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Riots at Koje-do prison camp, Operation Counter, Battle for Old Baldy, North Korean power grid blacked out, Battle of Bunker Hill, Largest bombing raid on Pyongyang, Outpost Kelly siege, Operation Showdown, Battle of the Hook, Fight for Hill 851

Feb. 18 & March 13, 1952- Riots at UN's Koje-do prison camp, hundreds die

June 6-14, 1952- Operation Counter, US establishes 11 bases around Old Baldy

July 17- Aug. 4, 1952- Battle for Old Baldy (Hill 266)

July 23, 1952- N. Korea's power knocked out by airstrikes on hydroelectric dams

Aug. 12-16, 1952- Battle of Bunker Hill (Hill 122), first action in west Korea

Aug. 29, 1952- 1,403-sortie air strike on Pyongyang, largest one-day raid

Sept. 17-24, 1952- U.S. infantry division besieged by CCF at Outpost Kelly

Oct. 14-25, 1952- Operation Showdown/Battle of Sniper Ridge, near Kumwha

Oct. 26-28, 1952- Battle of the Hook, CCF vs. mostly British UN forces

Nov. 3, 1952- CCF tries to take Hill 851, Heartbreak Ridge area; UN holds it

Final Battles and Armistice: December 1952 - September 1953



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Battle of T-bone Hill, Battle for Hill 355, First Battle of Pork Chop Hill, Operation Little Switch, Panmunjom talks, Second Battle of Pork Chop Hill, Battle of Kumsong River Salient, Armistice signed, POWs repatriated

Dec. 25, 1952- Battle of T-Bone Hill, UN infantry repels intense CCF attacks

March 17, 1953- Battle for Hill 355 (Little Gibraltar); hill holds against CCF

April 16-18, 1953- First Battle of Pork Chop Hill, heavy UN casualties

April 20-26, 1953- Operation Little Switch, exchange of sick/wounded POWs

April 23, 1953- Peace talks resume at Panmunjom

June 18, 1953- ROK frees 27,000 N. Korean POWs who refuse repatriation

July 6-10, 1953- Second Battle of Pork Chop Hill, UN retreats after 5 days

July 13-20, 1953- Battle of Kumsong River Salient, last CCF offensive of war

July 27, 1953- U.S., N. Korea and China sign armistice, ending war

Sept. 4, 1953- Repatriation of POWs begins at Panmunjom