The Korean War

9 July 1951-27 July 1953

Chronology

10 Jul 51
Arms talks begin at Kaesong.

23 Aug
Communist side breaks off negotiations.

5 Sep
North Koreans abandon Bloody Ridge, after UN forces, led by U.S. 2d Infantry Division's 9th Infantry, retake it.

12 Sep-13 Oct
2d Infantry Division, using the 72d Tank Battalion to tactical advantage, seizes Heartbreak Ridge.

3-19 Oct
Five UN divisions advance to Line Jamatson, some four miles beyond the Wyoming line, to protect the Seoul-Ch'oryon railway.

25 Oct
Arms talks resume, now at Panmunjom.

12 Nov
General Ridgway, the UNC commander, instructs Van Fleet to cease Eighth Army offensive operations and to assume an "active defense."

12 May 52
General Mark W. Clark assumes command of the UNC.

8 Oct
UN delegation calls an indefinite recess to arms talks, reflecting a long lack of any progress.

11 Feb 53

26 Apr
Arms talks begin again.

14-17 Jul
General Taylor abandons Pork Chop Hill, a 7th Infantry Division outpost, to the Chinese as not worth further fighting.

13-20 Jul
Chinese launch a six-division attack against ROK II Corps and U.S. IX Corps south of Kumsong, after falling back some eight miles to below the Kumsong River. UN forces regain the high ground along the river.

27 Jul
Arms talks agree to an armistice at 1000; all fighting stops twelve hours later; both sides have three days to withdraw two kilometers from the cease-fire line.

The Campaigns

9 July-27 November 1951

28 November 1951-30 April 1952

1 May-30 November 1952

1 December 1952-30 April 1953

United States Army Center of Military History

9 July-27 November 1951

28 November 1951-30 April 1952

1 May-30 November 1952

1 December 1952-30 April 1953

Participating UNC Forces

2d Infantry Division

4th Cavalry Division

1st Cavalry Division

7th Infantry Division

24th Infantry Division

26th Infantry Division

40th Infantry Division

United States Army Center of Military History

2d Infantry Division medic treat a wounded American soldier, February 1952.

Members of Company I, 18th Infantry, are located prior to going on a reconnaissance patrol along the front lines, June 1952.

Infantry troops board helicopters from the 4th Transportation Helicopter Company, U.S. Eighth Army, April 1952.


Lt. Gen. James A. Van Fleet: Eighth Army had fortified its positions along Line Kumsong and along Line Wyoming, a bulge north of Korea in the west-central area known as the Iron Triangle. Both the Kumsong line in the west and the Wyoming line were above the 38th Parallel, the prewar boundary between the two Koreas. On the west, the front line dipped below the 38th Parallel north of Seoul, the South Korean capital, and then continued to fall toward the coast. This uneven line led to the first impasse in negotiations, when the North Koreans and Chinese side argued that the armistice line should be the 38th Parallel, while the UN negotiators called for a line reflecting current positions, which they argued were more defensible and secure than the old border. When the Communist side broke off negotiations on 23 August, General Matthew B. Ridgway's United Nations Command (UNC) responded with a limited new offensive. General Van Fleet sent the U.S. X Corps and the Republic of Korea (ROK) II Corps to gain terrain objectives in east-central Korea five to seven miles north of Kumsong. They likewise placed their forces with infantry, such as the Punchbowl, Bloody Ridge, and Heartbreak Ridge. In the west, five UN divisions (the ROK I, the 1st British Commonwealth, and the U.S. 1st Cavalry and 25th Infantry) struck northeast along the front lines to secure a new position beyond the Wyoming line to protect the vital Seoul-Ch'oryon railway. The U.S. IX Corps followed by driving even farther north to the edge of Kumsong.

By the last week of October the UN objectives had been secured, and on the 28th the armistice talks resumed—now at Panmunjom, at a border six miles east of Kumsong. When the North Koreans and Chinese dropped their demand that the armistice line lie the 38th Parallel, the two sides agreed on 27 November that the armistice demarcation line would be the existing line of contact, provided that an armistice agreement was reached in forty days. A full-scale battle, or fighting erupted at patrols, small raids, and small unit butt fights, fought between opposing forces, often suddenly and without warning shifted across the exchange of fire. As a result, the armistice talks remained deadlocked, and the two sides totally extended their acceptance of the armistice line agreement. The continuing absence of large-scale combat allowed the UNC to make several battlefield adjustments, resulting in an agreement on February 1953. In May 1952, the UNC general staff agreed to move the UN forces to new positions nearer the armistice line agreements. This move was completed in June 1953.

Meanwhile, the Far East Air Force intensified a bombing campaign begun in August 1951, supported by U.S. nuclear and carrier-based aircraft. In August 1952 the U.S. nuclear air raid was conducted against Pyongyang, the North Korean capital. Subsequently, the United Nations began a new phase of operations in the Far East by conducting strategic air raids against North Korean industrial targets. The UNC command thus had to return to the armistice line agreement and the negotiations stalled. As a result, the armistice line agreement had concluded the conflict, and the conflict remained in effect until 27 October 1953, when the armistice agreement was finally signed at Panmunjom. The 27th of October was the date of the armistice agreement, which was signed at Panmunjom on the line of contact between the two Koreas. The armistice agreement was signed by representatives of the United Nations Command and the People's Republic of Korea. It formally ended the Korean War and established a cease-fire line along the 38th Parallel, which served as a dividing line between North and South Korea. The armistice agreement was a major victory for the United Nations and its allies, who had suffered significant losses during the conflict. The armistice agreement also marked the beginning of a period of uneasy peace in the region, as both sides continued to maintain a significant military presence in the area.