THE ACTIONS AND OPERATIONAL THINKING OF GENERALS STRATEMEYER AND PARTRIDGE DURING THE KOREAN WAR: ADJUSTING TO POLITICAL RESTRICTIONS ON AIR CAMPAIGNS

Nicholas Michael Sambaluk, B.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2008

APPROVED:

Alfred Hurley, Major Professor
Geoffrey Wawro, Minor Professor
Adrian Lewis, Committee Member and Chair of the Department of History
Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies
Airpower played an important supporting role in the Korean War, and as General of the Army Douglas MacArthur pursued victory in the war and President Harry S Truman’s objectives altered throughout the first year of the conflict, tension arose between the two men. One issue in these frictions was the restriction of airpower.

Not only MacArthur, but also his admiring subordinate Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer commanding the Far East Air Forces, and Fifth Air Force commander Major General Earle E. Partridge opposed the restrictions which had been imposed on airmen from the outset of the conflict. Stratemeyer did so partly because of his loyalty to MacArthur, who wanted latitude in coping with the situation in the field and defeating the Communist enemy. Partridge did so because he thought they endangered his personnel and limited the effectiveness of airpower in the war. These commanders had a fundamentally different opinion from Washington regarding the likelihood of overt Soviet intervention in the war, and because they did not think the Korean War would become a world war, they were more willing than Washington to prosecute the war more aggressively.

MacArthur’s conflict ended with his removal in April 1951, and Stratemeyer (who suffered a heart attack weeks afterward) continued to advocate for forceful American foreign policy in Asia during his retirement. Partridge eventually earned four stars and long after the war likewise continued to disfavor the restrictions which had been put in place. Between oral history interviews in 1974 and 1978, however, Partridge
reconsidered the issue of restrictions. He expressed that the Korean War had been a considerable challenge without a wider war, implying that restrictions had perhaps been important.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAYS OF CRISIS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FROM INCHON TO WAKE</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHINA REACTS</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURNING BRIDGES</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON MACARTHUR’S “BALLTEAM”</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A POST-MORTEM ON RESTRICTIONS</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUDING REMARKS</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The limited war in Korea from 1950 to 1953 between the United States (US), its allied members of the United Nations (UN), and Communist North Korea and China, raised enormous questions for the political and military leaders of the United States. America was committed to containing Communist expansion during the Cold War, but there was debate about how this was to be done in a shooting war. Fighting in Korea was nonetheless considered to be a sideshow, overshadowed by continuing to secure Western Europe. In its immediate aftermath, the conflict would be viewed as having been an aberration.¹

During the war, airpower provided important support to ground forces combating North Korea’s invasion of the South. Airpower nonetheless was a controversial tool, because General of the Army Douglas MacArthur (the commander of UN forces fighting in Korea) used it while attempting to win victory in the war, whereas President Harry Truman’s objectives repeatedly altered during the conflict. Although these aims intersected, they were frequently dissimilar, which caused serious tension.

Since North Korea lacked a long list of strategic targets and was largely supplied by China, airpower was used mostly in interdiction and ground support roles. MacArthur confidently expected the Far East Air Forces (FEAF), commanded by Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, to contribute to a UN victory by successfully bludgeoning Communist forces and isolating the Korean battlefield from China.

From the outset of the war, the United Nations imposed restrictions on its forces fighting in Korea. FEAF was prohibited from crossing into the airspace of officially

neutral China; when they were intercepted by Communist fighter planes based in China, American pilots were forbidden either to pursue their enemies back across the Yalu River into Chinese airspace or to strike Communist airstrips north of the river.

MacArthur, Stratemeyer, and Major General Earle E. Partridge (commander of the Fifth Air Force) each disfavored the restrictions facing UN airpower, but they did so for different reasons. MacArthur sought a victory in Korea, although Washington’s objectives altered and so did its willingness to risk a larger war. The restricted parameters of an artificially limited war impeded MacArthur’s pursuit of victory. MacArthur intended to achieve victory with the resources at hand and with those which could be delivered to him from outside the Far East, and airpower was one important element of this force. Stratemeyer, awed by MacArthur’s charisma, was ardently loyal to him.

Both MacArthur and Stratemeyer believed that it was unlikely that the Korean conflict would expand into a general war against the Soviet Union. Partridge, too, considered Soviet involvement in the war to be unlikely. Partridge likewise opposed the restrictions imposed on his airmen, since he thought they endangered his personnel and limited the effectiveness of airpower in the war.

Weeks before the UN forces were pushed back by Chinese “volunteers,” MacArthur directed that the main bridges connecting Sinuiju to Antung, China be destroyed, and that the attacking aircraft not violate the Chinese border. Washington hesitated before eventually authorizing these attacks, which were unable to destroy the bridges.

MacArthur’s tensions with Washington eventually ended in his removal as commander in April 1951. Both Stratemeyer and Partridge left the war soon thereafter.
Stratemeyer, forced to retire by a heart attack just weeks after MacArthur’s removal, continued after the war to urge for a more assertive American posture in Asia. Partridge retired from the Air Force in 1959, and in oral history interviews with Air Force historians he continued to view restrictions as having been detrimental to the UN war effort. In another interview in 1978, his view had changed and he expressed that the Korean War had been a considerable challenge without a wider war, implying that restrictions had perhaps been important.

Seventy years old in 1950, MacArthur had a long history of leading American troops in peace and war, and he would cast a long shadow over the events of the Korean War’s first year. His relief as commander of the UN forces in Korea resulted from public disagreements with President Harry S Truman and his administration over a potentially broader war.

In the First World War, MacArthur’s actions had earned him the respect of his troops and inspired the then Secretary of War Newton Baker to call him the Army’s “‘greatest fighting front-line’ officer.”\(^2\) In World War II, after the American defeat in the Philippines, MacArthur had galvanized the Allied advance island-hopping from Australia to the Philippines, returning there late in 1944. His memory, personal discipline, and persuasiveness, won him what historian Clay Blair called “a profound and boundless admiration” among people who met him.\(^3\) MacArthur was a man supremely confident in his own abilities.\(^4\)


MacArthur’s long experience in Asia and the Pacific led him to conclude that it – not Europe – was the crucial region and that the Korean War had great influence over the fate of the continent as a whole.\(^5\) Europe was, in his opinion, “a dying system” of less importance than Asia.\(^6\)

Although a truly gifted commander and an inspiring leader, MacArthur was of course like all human beings, an imperfect mortal. Blair noted that he was also:

impulsive, driven by an idealistic optimism and a feeling of infallibility that often led him to pass over or discount more realistic staff appraisals. Once he set his mind on a course of action, he wouldn’t take no or maybe for an answer.\(^7\)

In Korea, MacArthur’s genius would bring victory at Inchon. But although his optimism at Inchon had been proven spectacularly correct, he would test that optimism again and again. Eventually, fallibility and hubris seem to have overshadowed even as strong a combination of luck and genius as Douglas MacArthur possessed.

One dimension to the tension between MacArthur and Washington dealt with the use of American airpower. Air Force Secretary Thomas Finletter summarized airpower’s role in Korea during an oral history interview in 1972:

Something which can be said with confidence is that many factors, including the surprise nature of the war and the weak condition of the Eighth Army, made the Air Force’s role from the outset of the war of vital importance in reversing what might have been a Communist sweep of the peninsula. When tensions mounted between the President and his field commander, the Air Force presented principle points of contention.\(^8\)


\(^7\) Blair, *MacArthur*, 3.

MacArthur’s battles with the Communists were constrained by restrictions imposed by the US and the rest of the UN, which sought to prevent the Korean conflict from growing into a general war. According to Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, the Joint Chiefs had hoped at the outset of the war that American-trained ROK troops would hold firm, needing only the support of American air and naval power.\(^9\) As Finletter described in his oral history, MacArthur resisted restrictions imposed on his use of airpower. MacArthur’s admiring air subordinate Stratemeyer firmly agreed that the UN forces defending Korea needed to be freed from restrictions imposed by the UN’s members.\(^10\)

During the war, Partridge (the operational leader of the US/UN air effort), also wanted his airmen freed from some of their restraints. However, Stratemeyer’s view of MacArthur was simpler and more subjective than that of Partridge, whose reconsiderations of the role of airpower in Korea after the war led him to new conclusions. With the former working in Japan to coordinate US air units across the Northwestern Pacific area and the latter based in Korea and flying over hostile territory, the roles of the two airmen and their leadership styles caused them to see MacArthur and the handling of airpower in different lights. During the war, both Stratemeyer and Partridge wanted airpower to be less fettered: Stratemeyer, at least partly because MacArthur wanted greater latitude and more resources so he could achieve victory, and Partridge, largely because restrictions endangered his airmen.

\(^9\) Pace, Oral History Interview, 22 January 1972, (accessed 21 February 2008), http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/pacefj2.htm#73. Presumably, Vandenberg would have been an exception to this summary of the Joint Chiefs’ views.

The effective use of airpower in Korea was important but was by no means the only challenge facing the United States in that period. As Soviet power grew and British power receded after World War II, new global responsibilities had to be shouldered by the United States. American leaders would need to acknowledge this new responsibility and decide how to take on this new role. Some steps, such as the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, indicated that this was beginning to be done.11

Between 1945 and 1950, foreign policy expert George Kennan urged that the US provide “counter-pressure” against Communist expansion.12 At first favoring the idea of a perimeter defense, in which the US would work to cancel Communist efforts anywhere on the globe, he soon recognized that attempting to protect everything would mean protecting nothing; priorities would have to be determined.13 Defense priorities were to be strongpoints – regions that were defensible and vital to American security – from which America could capitalize on its strengths.14 As the major industrial centers outside the US and USSR, Western Europe and Japan were crucial regions. They were also dangerously near Communist-held territory.

Kennan considered it imperative to secure stable and friendly societies and governments in Western Europe and Japan; long-term occupation of Germany and Japan was an unworkable solution, and “world balance of power” depended on “balance

11 However, it had been the Western European nations that promoted the formation of NATO. John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 72.
12 Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 49.
14 Kennan’s “X’ article” had called for “unalterable counter-force at every point,” a perimeter defense, but he had changed his view by the time the article was published in July 1947. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 58.
on the Eurasian land mass.”

Communist zeal outside the USSR would erode because local peoples would become frustrated with and resentful of the controls that the Soviets would inevitably impose on them. Therefore, Kennan believed, direct American military intervention in places threatened by Communist takeover would only bog down the US in difficult local conflicts and impede the frictions among Communists that Moscow would otherwise itself engender.

In the late 1940s, the hypothetical loss of Asian rimlands, such as Afghanistan and Korea, to Communist takeover had been viewed by Kennan and by the Truman administration as unfortunate but nonetheless not immediately threatening to American security. With the “loss” of China to Communism and the Soviet development of an atomic bomb in 1949, the Truman administration’s stance on the Korean “rimland” changed.

In foreign affairs, Europe generally came first in the eyes of American officials in Washington, D.C. American strategy in World War II had begun this pattern NATO had been established with this in mind. Before the Korean War, the Truman Doctrine aiding Turkey and Greece against Communist takeover, the Marshall Plan, and the Berlin Airlift had demonstrated that great attention was being paid to Europe.

15 Presumably Japan could be included in this if the term is considered a generalization. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 39, 41-2.
16 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 42-3.
17 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 44, 46.
18 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 60.
19 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 84-5.
21 Gaddis, The Cold War, 30-4.
The events of 1949 brought attention to an even wider, global set of responsibilities. Not only did Asian matters seem ominous, the prospect of Soviet nuclear weapons directly threatened Western Europe and therefore endangered the United States.\textsuperscript{22} The Europe-first view was further challenged by the North Korean surprise attack on 25 June 1950 that began their invasion of their non-Communist South Korean neighbor.\textsuperscript{23} The lion’s share of the United Nations’ response depended on American ground forces and combat airpower, despite the surprise of the war and the shrunken size of its post-World War II military. The White House adopted National Security Council (NSC) Document #68 of 1950, which called on America to contain Communism but to “take no avoidable initiative which would cause […] a war of annihilation.”\textsuperscript{24} NSC-68’s emphasis on maintaining a perimeter defense was not in agreement with Kennan’s contemporary thinking.\textsuperscript{25}

The outbreak of the Korean War ensured NSC-68’s adoption and, according to its rationale, the threat in Korea transformed an area of peripheral interest into a critical battleground.\textsuperscript{26} The war also led to expanded American assistance to French Indochina and the signing of defense treaties with several nations in the Pacific area.\textsuperscript{27}

The American personnel and equipment fighting in Korea had to be reinforced by resources from Japan but also from elsewhere in the world. This herculean undertaking

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{footnotes}{\footnotesize
\begin{enumerate}
\item Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 85.
\item Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 91.
\item Stueck, \textit{The Korean War}, 5.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
\end{footnotesize}
was further impeded by Truman’s being “a very strong believer in a balanced budget.”

The Department of Defense, established by the National Security Act of 1947, now oversaw the nation’s military forces. The Army had been shrunken from the cap of 8.2 million men set in World War II by Franklin Roosevelt to fewer than 600,000. Some 111,400 Army personnel were in the Far East when the Korean War erupted. The Eighth Army had enjoyed the relative comfort of occupation duty in Japan, but they were unprepared for war when it came.

The other services faced different problems. The Marine Corps was concerned that the administration would curtail its role and greatly reduce its strength. The Navy and the newly independent Air Force had fought a bitter inter-service battle over scarce military funds only a year before. However, defense budgets would grow dramatically in response to the war, and their effects would be felt as the war progressed.

MacArthur valued airpower. In the circumstances of the Korean War, he used it to support ground troops, to interdict enemy supplies, and to conduct pinpoint bombing;

28 Frank Pace was Secretary of the Army and had earlier served as Truman’s head of the Bureau of the Budget. Frank Pace, Oral History Interview by Jerry N. Hess, 22 January 1972, Washington, D.C. Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, (accessed 21 February 2008), http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/pacej2.htm#73.


32 Lewis, The American Culture of War, 191.

33 For a more complete account of this competition, see: Jeffrey G. Barlow, Revolt of the Admirals: the Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950 (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy, 1994).

34 Congress’s final authorization for 1951 was topped $48 billion, more than 250% of the 1950. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 113.
he did not apparently anticipate that the same aircraft could not effectively or efficiently fill all these roles.  He considered the needs of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) to be much less vital than his own. MacArthur’s confidence that American airpower – even under restrictions – could cut the Chinese-North Korean border and isolate the Korean battlefield, proved to be excessively optimistic.

FEAF was the largest overseas US Air Force command and was responsible for defending the Western Pacific, stretching from the waters separating Soviet-held Sakhalin Island from Hokkaido in the north to the waters south of what was still French Indochina, to include the Japanese Islands, Okinawa, Iwo Jima, Guam, and the Philippines. For this, FEAF had 33,625 personnel and 1,172 aircraft. It was more than 6,000 personnel short of its authorized strength when the war began, and since many of its aircraft were either in storage or in salvage condition, fewer than half of the planes were in operational units.


36 Lt Gen Curtis LeMay, commander of SAC, understandably sensed this and was opposed to his units being siphoned off to fight in Korea, to the detriment of his command’s deterrent power. Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, Volume I, 1907-1960* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1989), 335.


The largest component of FEAF was the Fifth Air Force, which was defending Japan.\textsuperscript{40} Fifth Air Force had eight squadrons of aging F-80 Shooting Star fighters, but these were intended for air defense: they lacked the under-wing pylons necessary for carrying bombs, and their range was severely limited unless drop tanks became available quickly.\textsuperscript{41} Budget cuts had meant that pilot training with the high velocity aircraft rockets useful for close air support (CAS) operations had been reduced.\textsuperscript{42} FEAF was also short of engineering support, navigators, and bombardiers.\textsuperscript{43} Since its mission had been defensive, the Fifth Air Force lacked a significant force of B-29 medium bombers,\textsuperscript{44} which had to be sent in July from their bases in Guam to Okinawa and from Strategic Air Command bases in the United States. The bombers became part of an ad-hoc unit designated Bomber Command (Provisional), led by Major General Emmett “Rosie” O’Donnell.\textsuperscript{45}

The two most senior airmen in Korea in 1950, Lieutenant General George Stratemeyer and Major General Earle Partridge,\textsuperscript{46} already had solid records of long-term service behind them. Both had the personalities and preparation to fit them for active service in Korea.

\textsuperscript{40} Futrell, \textit{The United States Air Force in Korea}, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{42} Futrell, \textit{The United States Air Force in Korea}, 59.
\textsuperscript{46} Partridge was appointed lieutenant general and commander of FEAF on 11 April 1951. Personal Message from Vandenberg to Partridge, 11 April 1951, Gen. Earle E. Partridge service records, from Persons of Exceptional Prominence Records, Maxwell AFB, AL.
Stratemeyer, a 1915 graduate of West Point, had served in military aviation since 1917. He became a brigadier general and commander of Maxwell, Alabama’s Air Corps Training Center just before the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor brought the US into the Second World War and he commanded the Army Air Forces in the India-Burma Sector of the China-Burma-India theater during the war itself. He had proven himself able to negotiate around the “Byzantine maneuvers” common to the region’s politics, to organize the men under him into an effective fighting command, and represent Army Air Force and American concerns in the region.

In his youth in Massachusetts, Partridge hoped his mechanical interests would qualify him for admission to MIT or to Worchester Technical College. This did not occur, and when the US entered the First World War, Partridge served in the Army in France as an enlisted man; afterward he attended Norwich Military College for a year and then reenlisted in the Army and was accepted by West Point, where he graduated in 1920. During Partridge’s time as a cadet, MacArthur was serving as its superintendent. Like Stratemeyer, Partridge remained in the military during the lean interwar years.

Partridge loved to fly, and he found that the small size of the Air Corps did at least mean that there were flying opportunities for eager pilots. In World War II, Partridge served in the European theater; he became a brigadier general in December

---

51 Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 12-3.
of 1942, commanded the Third Bomb Division from late June 1944 through the end of
the war, and commanded the entire Eighth Air Force in the first post-war months.\(^5^4\)
Even before being awarded the second star of a major general, Partridge had
accumulated over 15,000 hours of flight time.\(^5^5\) In the years just after World War II,
Partridge served in Japan, and he was acting FEAF commander when the North
Koreans invaded South Korea.\(^5^6\)

The first year of the war, from the summer of 1950 until the middle of 1951, was
distinct from the remainder of the conflict. The first year witnessed dynamic changes in
the course of the war. The UN’s objectives shifted from the preservation of South Korea
to the liberation of North Korea back to the defense of the South and the battle lines
 ebbed and flowed across almost the whole of both Koreas. In contrast, while the last
two years of the war also saw serious fighting and heavy casualties, the battle lines
were relatively fixed.

Although NSC-68 had not been meant to reverse Kennan’s influence, it
emphasized retention of soil out of Communist hands over the maintenance of
defendable strongpoints; it resulted instead in a perimeter defense.\(^5^7\) NSC-68 aimed to

\(^{5^4}\) “Headquarters 3D Bombardment Division, APO 559,” 21 June 1944, Gen. Earle E. Partridge service
records, from Persons of Exceptional Prominence Records, Maxwell AFB, AL; Robert P. Fogerty,
Historical Studies, Maxwell AFB (accessed 11 March 2008),

\(^{5^5}\) Report to USAF Adjutant General, 14 December 1948, and letter from Lt Gen I.H. Edwards to Maj Gen.
Earle E. Partridge, 11 June 1948, in Gen. Partridge service records, from Persons of Exceptional
Prominence Records, Maxwell AFB, AL.

\(^{5^6}\) Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 564.

\(^{5^7}\) Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 90, 102.
bring to bear power that was sufficient to resist aggression yet avoid (if possible) the escalation of a conflict, was a delicate path fraught with challenges and hazards.58

MacArthur chaffed under limitations created by Washington, D.C. and the capitols of other UN nations. MacArthur considered the restraints the Truman administration imposed to be threatening and dangerous and disliked Truman’s Asian policy.59 Blair wrote that MacArthur viewed Truman’s prohibition of the use of Formosan (Taiwanese Nationalist) forces against the Communist Chinese to be “either madness or traitorous, or both.”60 Certain of the importance of Asia, convinced of his own infallibility, and surrounded by subordinates whose loyalty to him was personal and extreme, MacArthur resisted limitations coming from Washington.61 He was set on a collision course with the White House, culminating in his relief in April 1951.

Massive turnover followed MacArthur’s relief during the first year of the Korean War. Among his most loyal subordinates, Major Generals Ned Almond, Charles Willoughby, and Courtney Whitney, also left the Far East shortly thereafter. MacArthur’s immediate Air Force subordinate, General Stratemeyer, suffered a heart attack just weeks after MacArthur’s removal and he soon retired. Coincidentally, Fifth Air Force commander General Partridge was reassigned, reluctantly, to the United States to oversee the Air Force’s Research and Development Command.62

58 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 111.
59 Truman, Memoirs by Harry S Truman: Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope, 354-5, 430.
60 In the Far East as a whole, MacArthur considered Truman’s policy of keeping Formosa out of conflict with China to be, at best, folly. Blair, MacArthur, 280.
61 Other UN members influenced Washington, as when American pilots were finally forbidden to cross the Yalu River when chasing intercepting fighter planes based in China. Futrell, The United States Air Force in Korea, 223.
The Air Force was caught between the President and his field commander as tensions over restrictions mounted, climaxing in MacArthur’s relief. Restrictions on FEAF airmen added additional burdens to the war they fought, and the tensions that emerged between MacArthur and Washington brought further complications. Stratemeyer was a hardworking officer who valued cooperative efforts. Stratemeyer’s attitude placed him near the conflict between his hero (MacArthur) and his superiors in Washington (Truman and Air Force Chief of Staff Hoyt Vandenberg).

Often, MacArthur used airpower without much regard for the USAF or Washington. Responding to the troops’ needs on the battlefield, MacArthur directed that B-29s be used for ground attack missions to support the beleaguered UN ground troops; he was disinterested in returning SAC units to the US, and he seemed confident that B-29s would successfully hug neutral and inviolable Chinese airspace when flying already challenging bridge-busting operations.\(^63\) In directing the tactical use of B-29s, Stratemeyer was more pliant than his vocal Vice Commander for Operations, Major General O.P. Weyland.\(^64\) Although MacArthur had faith in airpower, his estimates of the capabilities of what Vandenberg later described as having been a “shoestring air force” on a restricted battlefield were too high.\(^65\)

---


\(^{64}\) Stratemeyer did raise some objections, but they were less forceful than those made by Weyland. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, 125-6; Thomson and Nalty, *Within Limits*, 11.

Asked long after the war if he thought that the USAF and the Navy had believed they could “handle the situation” in Korea independently of ground forces, Finletter described the views held by airmen themselves:

I doubt very much whether General Vandenberg thought that because that was giving an optimism to the capacity of air power which I don't think he shared. In general I must say that the attitude of the Air Force officials with whom I was in constant touch, did not go into these beliefs as to the excessive ability of the Air Force to do everything. That was not their attitude at all. They felt that air had a very, very important role and a role which was constantly increasing, but, nevertheless, there was no such idea that air could handle the whole aspect of a military operation. I never heard any Air Force officer say that.66

Partridge and Stratemeyer respected each other and worked well together, but they were different men. Stratemeyer, in the years between his heart attack in 1951 and his eventual death in 1969, took part in movements to rescue Senator Joe McCarthy politically.67 In contrast, Partridge preferred to keep political issues at arm's length, displaying in his war diary and in his interviews an interest in the military tasks before him and not to political battles.

In defending its interests globally, Washington considered it vital that the Korean War not expand: a bigger war would draw even more on the already over-burdened US military, whose budgets had been slashed in the wake of victory in World War II; a vastly expanded war could conceivably morph into a disastrously bloody third world war. On the other hand, it was believed that ceding victory to North Korea would merely encourage the Communists to launch “brushfire” wars worldwide. This context must be borne in mind when considering the UN response to Chinese involvement in the Korean War. Also, the focus on Europe continued, as shown by Army Chief of Staff Collins

writing after the war, “[w]e still considered Korea strategically unimportant in the context of a possible global war, in which Russia, not China, would be the chief antagonist.”

Partridge commanded the Fifth Air Force, which bore a weighty burden in conducting much of the air war and supporting the UN ground forces fighting in Korea, while also carrying out its original responsibility of securing the defense of the Japanese islands. Farther from direct contacts with MacArthur and closer to the battlefield, Partridge, in his war diary, did not shower effusive praise on MacArthur.

Partridge seems not to have taken much interest or pleasure in political wrangling; his diary dealt far more extensively with operations and his work in commanding the Fifth Air Force’s effort. He enjoyed a hands-on approach to command and he remarked after the war that, “Some commanders do things one way, some another. I was able to fly, do I did.” Thus, he flew nearly every type of available Air Force during his service in Korea.

The cooperation Partridge extended to his Army counterparts – both those commanding the Eighth Army and those commanding X Corps – contrasted with the

69 Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497; Lt Gen Earle E. Partridge, diary entry for 26-7 June 1950, Korean Diary, A1844, Index 1802, Air Force Historical Research Association, Maxwell AFB, AL.
70 Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 405. While Partridge said this in reference to his service in World War II, it accurately synopsizes his method of leading Fifth Air Force during the Korean War as well.
71 Partridge’s aide in Korea, Colonel Frank Merritt, said in 1977 that Partridge “had flown in every airplane that he [Partridge] had in his inventory in the theater.” Col Frank Merritt, interview, 8 December 1977, Roll 0000033545, transcript, Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, USAF Academy, Colorado Springs, CO, 436. With the exception of the F-82, this may well have been correct. Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 353, 389, 399, 623.
competitive infighting endemic in much of the forces under MacArthur’s command.\footnote{72}{The Walker-Almond rivalry was "a characteristic manifestation of the Dai-Ichi atmosphere in the field." David Rees, Korea: the Limited War (New York: St. Martin's, 1964), 125; Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 67, 601-3; Partridge, Korean Diary.}

Whereas Eighth Army commander Walton Walker thought of Partridge as a brother, he felt like “kind of a stepchild” in the Far East command at large.\footnote{73}{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 16 November 1950, The Three Wars, 285.} Walker had served admirably in the European Theater in World War II, but his service there made him seem alien to MacArthur’s circle, whose forces had been on service in the Pacific.\footnote{74}{Lewis, The American Culture of War, 91.} Walker encountered particular antagonism from MacArthur’s Chief of Staff, Major General Ned Almond, who also Walker’s subordinate as commander in charge of X Corps.\footnote{75}{D. Clayton James, The Years of MacArthur: Triumph & Disaster, 1945-64 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 380-1; Rees, Korea: the Limited War, 125. Unfortunately, Walker’s records were largely lost in a flood of his birthplace of Belton, Texas.}

Partridge worked strenuously and successfully with both Walker and Major General Matthew B. Ridgway, who succeeded Walker as Eighth Army commander in December. As he had done with Walker, Partridge took Ridgway on observation flights over the battlefield when he took over command of the Eighth Army.\footnote{76}{Partridge, letter from Ridgway to Vandenberg, 6 June 1951, Personal and Official Correspondence, A1849, Index 2274, Air Force Historical Research Association, Maxwell AFB, AL; Gen Matthew B. Ridgway, The Korean War: How We Met the Challenge, How All-Out Asian War Was Averted, Why MacArthur Was Dismissed, Why Today’s War Objections Must Be Limited (Garden City, NY: Da Capo, 1967), 105.} Ridgway would also note in his postwar book the substantial Air Force cooperation which Partridge extended to him during the war.\footnote{77}{Ridgway, The Korean War, 104.}

Like Generals MacArthur, Stratemeyer, Walker, and Ridgway, Partridge was a West Pointer; like Walker and Ridgway, his World War II service had been almost
completely in the European theater. Partridge’s first real contact with General MacArthur had come in the last days of peace, when Defense Secretary Louis Johnson and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Omar Bradley toured the Far East to review the American military situation there.\textsuperscript{78}

Partridge said later that as acting commander of FEAF, he was “just sitting there, [...] holding down Stratemeyer’s chair” while the latter was at a conference in Puerto Rico.\textsuperscript{79} Johnson, Bradley, and a few aides, were briefed by the various services throughout the Far East. Partridge recalled that, displeased with what they found, they “chewed the Army out up one side and down the other,” complimented FEAF, and said little to the Navy. Within days, before the group had even returned to Washington, D.C., North Korean forces were pouring southward across the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel.\textsuperscript{80} War had come to Korea, and it caught the Eighth Army unprepared.

MacArthur wanted to defeat the Communist invaders. Washington was determined to keep the war from spreading. For a time, the course of action would be the same – to rush forces into the theater in attempts to stop the North Korean advance.

\textsuperscript{78} In an oral history, Partridge stated that this visit was made a week before the Korean War broke out. Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 564.

\textsuperscript{79} Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 564-5.

\textsuperscript{80} Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 565; 332.
Secretary of the Army Pace, in an oral history after the war, recalled
Washington’s first response to the news of the North Korean attack:

One of the interesting facts is that the original decision to go in was made on the
basis of the belief that this could be handled by air and naval forces. It was not
originally contemplated that land forces would participate. I think that if it had
been contemplated, that land forces would participate, the decision would have
been considerably harder to make, but on the basis that it could be handled by
Air and Navy the decision was much simpler.81

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Pace continued, at first believed that American
involvement could be limited to air support for the ROK forces.82 Truman directed
MacArthur’s first wartime trip to South Korea to better understand the situation.83

Air power, initially used to assist and protect the evacuation of American
nationals from the South Korean capital at Seoul, entered combat on 27 June.84 This
involvement was restricted, however, to attacking Communist forces that had already
crossed the 38th parallel into the South.

Despite optimistic hopes in Washington, Republic of Korea (ROK) forces quickly
collapsed in the face of North Korea’s attack.85 In the first days of the war, MacArthur
and the Truman administration believed and hoped that American airpower – without
American ground forces – would be able to bolster the ROK army and defend South

81 Pace, Oral History Interview, 22 January 1972, (accessed 21 February 2008),
http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/pacefj2.htm#73.
82 Pace, Oral History Interview, 22 January 1972, (accessed 21 February 2008),
http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/pacefj2.htm#73.
84 Partridge, diary entry for 26-7 June 1950, Korean Diary; Futrell, The United States Air Force in
Korea, 12.
85 Futrell, The United States Air Force in Korea, 13; Pace, Oral History Interview, 22 January 1972,
http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/pacefj2.htm#73
Korea. With the ROK’s military collapse, however, UN ground troops nevertheless became necessary, and they were added because both MacArthur (who requested forces) and Truman (who sent them) quickly realized this.86

MacArthur was actually surprised by the news of Truman’s prompt and firm response to the North’s aggression. Partridge had been in the same teleprinter room as MacArthur when word was received from Washington that FEAF’s air power would be used to intervene in Korea; MacArthur said, “I don’t believe it, I can’t understand.”87 “He was astonished, nothing less, that Truman would make such a decision.”88 “I didn’t think they would do it. I didn’t think they would do it,” he recalled MacArthur repeating.89

In the first days, the Truman administration may have been bolder than MacArthur had expected, but the two were in agreement that the aggression had to be met and defeated.

The war was fundamentally a ground conflict in which infantry bore the heaviest burden,90 and MacArthur determined that with the elimination of the ROK forces, “[o]nly the immediate commitment of [foreign, anti-Communist] ground troops” could “stop the Communists from rushing their tank columns” across the peninsula.91 Airpower nonetheless played an important role from the outset in combating the Communist assault.

86 According to Partridge, however, MacArthur expressed identical surprise upon learning that Truman had approved the commitment of American ground forces. Gen. Earle E. Partridge, Interview by Lt. Col Jon Reynolds, Maj Robert S. Bartanowicz, and Capt. Phillip S. Meilingler, 16 February 1978, Roll 0000033545, transcript, Maxwell AFB, AL, 289; Futrell, The United States Air Force in Korea, 13; Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, 46.
87 Partridge, interview, 16 February 1978, Roll 0000033545, 289.
88 Partridge, interview, 16 February 1978, Roll 0000033545, 289.
90 Lewis, The American Culture of War, 83, 88.
91 MacArthur, Reminiscences, 333.
MacArthur had, in his memoir, asserted that he had been surprised by Truman’s method of entering war “step by hesitant step” without consulting Congress of the field commander.\(^\text{92}\) MacArthur’s actions in the war’s initial days had not all been done with approval or consultation with the president; Y’Blood noted that “MacArthur anticipated the release of his air units [by Washington] by almost a day.”\(^\text{93}\)

MacArthur approved FEAF attacks north of the 38th Parallel on 29 June. This was welcomed by FEAF, which for three days had seen Communist stockpiles of supplies and masses of troops north of the parallel – and thus safe from action by FEAF.\(^\text{94}\) A jubilant Stratemeyer, armed with MacArthur’s support, wired Partridge and Timberlake.\(^\text{95}\) That afternoon, a B-26 mission crossed the 38th Parallel. Eighteen planes struck Pyongyang’s main airfield, shooting one North Korean airplane down and destroying 25 more on the ground.\(^\text{96}\)

Washington authorization for UN aircraft to enter North Korean airspace came late in the afternoon of on 29 June, Washington time. This moment was 30 June in Korea, however, and MacArthur had already anticipated Washington’s decision by having hours earlier given General Stratemeyer approval to launch raids.\(^\text{97}\) Y’Blood

\(^\text{94}\) Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, 36.
\(^\text{95}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 29 June 1950, *The Three Wars*, 47.
\(^\text{96}\) Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, 98.
noted that this was “not […] the last time he [took] action without consulting either the JCS or the President.”\textsuperscript{98}

Wanting to prevent the loss of another nation to Communism, Truman approved MacArthur’s requests to bring American forces into the conflict. Initially, Truman’s concern meant that he agreed with actions MacArthur took, and as a result of their tacit agreement about the urgency of the crisis, MacArthur acted before approval of his requests came about.\textsuperscript{99}

Partridge recalled being asked by MacArthur on one occasion early in the war, “[c]an the Fifth Air Force stop these columns that are coming down from North Korea?” Partridge was not positive, having not seen the particular area being referred to, so he replied “General, I don’t know how big these columns are or where they are, how well they are protected … So I would be reluctant to say that the Fifth Air Force can stop them. All I can say is that we will do our best.”\textsuperscript{100}

MacArthur wanted airpower to play substantial roles in winning the victory he sought in Korea. In the coming weeks and months he would use B-29s as “flying artillery” and direct that it seal North Korea’s border with China. He would also resist the return of loaned SAC units back to the US. Restrictions, which were in place from the outset of the war,\textsuperscript{101} and a long North Korean border with China made MacArthur’s expectations overly optimistic.

\textsuperscript{98} Y’Blood, \textit{The Three Wars}, 48 footnote #48.  
\textsuperscript{99} Thomson and Natly, \textit{Within Limits}, 8.  
\textsuperscript{100} Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 648.  
\textsuperscript{101} Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 599.
In July, the issue at hand was not victory but survival. Air attacks and a vain stand by Task Force Smith of the US 24th Infantry Division could not prevent the 130,000-strong NKPA from seizing all of the peninsula except for a pocket around the port of Pusan.\textsuperscript{102} The troops defending South Korea came from many nations, most were either Korean or American.\textsuperscript{103} The fighting ability of the Eighth Army soldiers were, at first, impeded by the comforts of their previous assignment as occupiers of Japan. Their defense of Korea was hampered by shortages in manpower and supplies, which had been diverted to the preparation for an amphibious assault at Inchon.\textsuperscript{104} All told, 15 UN member countries sent ground combat troops to Korea, and a smaller number sent naval or air force contingents and medical services provided by military personnel or by civilians.\textsuperscript{105} Since those UN member countries also generally were trying to recover from the demands of World War II. As a result, the United States bore the heaviest burden on the ground, at sea, and in the air.\textsuperscript{106} Air power harried North Korean forces. However, the effects were limited by several factors, such as weather and skillful Communist efforts.\textsuperscript{107}

The Twentieth Air Force’s 19th Bombardment Wing (the only B-29 unit which was part of FEAF at the outset of the war) was immediately shifted from Guam to

\begin{enumerate}
\item Lewis, The American Culture of War, 92-3; Thompson and Nalty, Within Limits, 2.
\item In late September, Pusan was defended by 76,000 Eighth Army troops and 75,000 were in the ROK Army. Appleman, United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, 574.
\item Ridgway, the Korean War, 30.
\item Rottman, Korean War Order of Battle, 117.
\item Rottman, Korean War Order of Battle, 118.
\item Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 July 1950, The Three Wars, 63.
\end{enumerate}
Okinawa. The B-29s, organized into the FEAF Bomber Command (Provisional), flew their first mission on 13 July, striking marshalling yards in Wonsan, North Korea in an attack using radar.

Other B-29 units arrived from SAC on a temporary basis. FEAF needed reinforcements, and Vandenberg had no trained reserves in the United States to send. Vandenberg felt that at that time the need to destroy high-priority targets in North Korea outweighed the diverting of SAC units.

LeMay, fearing that his command would be slowly bled away by the war in Korea, objected to the idea of transferring planes piecemeal to Korea from SAC. As a result, two full bomb groups – rather than ten aircraft – were sent from SAC to bolster FEAF. It is difficult to imagine this solution having greatly comforted SAC’s commander. The 22nd and 92nd Bomb Groups arrived in July but were sent back to the United States by November. The 96th and 307th Bomb Groups, sent soon thereafter, were stationed in Yokota, Japan and Kadena AB, Okinawa, respectively. These latter two groups had been added by Vandenberg in the hope that they would be used for a


\[109\] This mission was flown by the 22nd and 92nd Bomb Groups, borrowed from the Strategic Air Command. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 13 July 1950, *The Three Wars*, 70.

\[110\] Futrell, *The United States Air Force In Korea*, 46.


concerted strategic bombing campaign. They began war work in August and continued for the duration of the war.

North Korea had few strategic targets, and by early July it was already clear that much of the North Korean military supplies were being provided by China. Strategic bombing beyond the peninsula was out of the question, so if these supplies were to be kept away from the enemy’s frontline soldiers, attacks interdicting road and rail traffic would be necessary.

Nearly all of the B-29s’ missions in Korea were therefore flown for interdiction of the enemy’s lines of communication (LOC) and ground support for troops in the battle area. SAC was focused on establishing deterrence through atomic weapons capability, and from its perspective, its B-29s were poorly used in Korea. It was disinterested in the combat experience gleaned by crews (who were typically reservists) flying aircraft that were being phased out in favor of more effective models of bombers being developed.

The B-29 was a tool from the previous war. It had been used at high altitude in daylight raids and then later under Curtis LeMay had flown lower-altitude night missions, and then at lower altitudes night attacks to bludgeon Japanese industry

114 The two groups were absorbed by their respective wings when the USAF reorganized its structure, but the men and machines flying and fighting continued their work. Rottman, Korean War Order of Battle, 72, 74-7.
116 Strategic sites comprised only 2.5% of the targets which B-29s struck in Korea. Keaney, Strategic Bombers and Conventional Weapons, 11.
and cities late in World War II, and a pair of specially modified Superfortresses had helped bring the largest war in history to a conclusion through the use of the first nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{119} Most B-29s, however, were capable of carrying only high explosive or incendiary (conventional, non-nuclear) ordinance. They “were nearly obsolete” by the time of the Korean War.\textsuperscript{120}

When he had approved air operations against North Korea itself, MacArthur had intimated that interdiction would be emphasized and he “assured Stratemeyer that he could ‘run his show as he saw fit.’”\textsuperscript{121} The deteriorating situation on the ground led MacArthur to direct Stratemeyer to divert incoming air units, including the B-29 bombers loaned by SAC, away from strategic or interdiction targets and toward ground support.\textsuperscript{122} This continued as Eighth Army forces under Major General Walton Walker gradually strengthened the Pusan Perimeter. Stratemeyer “complied but objected to the use of the big bombers against targets better suited to fighter-bombers.”\textsuperscript{123}

Since Stratemeyer viewed the war effort in Korea fundamentally as an emergency that demanded cooperation between UN members and among the military services, he abided by MacArthur’s directive despite its contradicting Air Force thought. He accepted his chief’s directive and was committed to seeing to it that badly needed ground support was achieved.


\textsuperscript{121} James, \textit{The Years of MacArthur: Triumph & Disaster}, 449.

\textsuperscript{122} James, \textit{The Years of MacArthur: Triumph & Disaster}, 449.

\textsuperscript{123} Thompson, “Chapter 13: The Air War over Korea,” \textit{Winged Shield, Winged Sword}, 11.
Yet Army Major General Almond, well known for his allegiance to MacArthur and for his truculence toward others, severely criticized the USAF’s work in Korea as inadequate. His verbal assaults on the conduct of aerial operations prompted an exchange between Stratemeyer and MacArthur early in the war. Stratemeyer responded forcefully on 10 July 1950, after the FEAF’s operations deputy Brigadier General Jarred Crabb got “static” from General Almond.\footnote{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 61.}

To disprove Almond’s allegations that FEAF was not helping as much as it could, Stratemeyer emphasized USAF’s cooperative spirit. Affirming the existing policy of prioritizing ground support to help the embattled foot soldiers, he directed B-29 bombers to attack enemy supplies in transit to the frontline and focused the Fifth Air Force entirely on tactical support for the UN ground troops.\footnote{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 61.} He also wrote a memo to MacArthur followed by a meeting with him. In the memo he asserted that he wanted “to perform in the same manner and to gain the same confidence that you had in” MacArthur’s previous air commanders during World War II.\footnote{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 61.} A sense of glad assurance can easily be read in Stratemeyer’s diary when a twenty minute conversation with MacArthur yielded positive results:

\begin{quote}
[MacArthur] gave me entire confidence and support in every question I raised. He stated he had the same confidence in me that he ever had in Generals [George] Kenney and [Ennis] Whitehead and emphasized that I would run my show regardless of instructions as I saw fit.\footnote{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 61.} 
\end{quote}

\footnote{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 61.}

\footnote{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 61. These commanders were General George C. Kenney and Lt. General Ennis C. Whitehead. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 61 footnotes #93 and #94.}

\footnote{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 62.}
Stratemeyer noted two days later that Almond relayed to him that MacArthur “expresses appreciation for those [ground support] B-29 strikes.”

Stratemeyer’s high-priority “redline” message to the USAF Chief of Staff Hoyt Vandenberg and the SAC leader, Lieutenant General Curtis LeMay shows that while he attempted to balance his obligations (to Vandenberg and to MacArthur), Stratemeyer prioritized his allegiance to MacArthur above the others:

CINCFE [Commander-in-Chief, Far East] considers and I agree ground situation in Korea so critical that every possible effort must be used to break up motorized concentrations on roads in battle areas. He fully understands that this is emergency procedure only. He is most enthusiastic about the results obtained from the Far East Air Forces since our commitment to combat.

Stratemeyer’s message to General Vandenberg was worded in a reassuring and almost euphemistic tone which suggested that the FEAF commander understood that the tactical use of B-29s would rankle Air Force brass. LeMay “had a low regard for the war overall” and was convinced that in flying tactical missions the B-29s were “being misused as ‘flying artillery.’” Therefore, Stratemeyer sought to describe the targets as being “concentrations on roads” (perhaps with an eye toward implying interdiction operations) and noting that this is an “emergency procedure” and that MacArthur understood so.

Stratemeyer, Vandenberg, and LeMay were unenthused about the tactical application of B-29s. Misapplication had significant repercussions. Stratemeyer recorded in his diary that:

\[128\] Stratemeyer, diary entry for 12 July 1950, The Three Wars, 68.
\[129\] Stratemeyer, Redline to Vandenberg and LeMay from Stratemeyer, 10 July 1950, diary entry for 10 July 1950, The Three Wars, 62.
The results of the missions yesterday proved that we were in error in putting the B-29s on a close ground support target. However, since General MacArthur personally directed same, we did it yesterday and will do it again today. Because of the B-29 strike, all of our B-26s yesterday hit bridges and other targets that were B-29 targets. The B-26s should have been used on the columns, motorized vehicles, tanks, etc. They were used this way as a result of orders issued by General Partridge and General Dean in close contact with their forward CPs (command posts).  

Tactical application of B-29s therefore forced B-26s to bomb bridges instead of interdicting troop movements. Partridge directed the B-26s to attack bridges the enemy’s supplies to its frontline troops would be interrupted.  

Stratemeyer attempted to convince MacArthur to put a stop to this problem as soon as possible. Perhaps toward that end, he recommended to MacArthur’s Intelligence officer, Major General Charles Willoughby, that the North Koreans be warned that air power would be unleashed on strategic and interdiction targets.

Vandenberg and General Collins visited the theater in mid July to get “a firsthand estimate of the situation.” However, Stratemeyer instructed Partridge “that while General Vandenberg was here we would not discuss the improper use of the B-29s as I agreed with General MacArthur to use them as close support because of the ground situation.”

Vandenberg met with Stratemeyer, MacArthur, and Partridge. On 14 July, Vandenberg met with MacArthur. Meeting with Vandenberg and Collins in mid-July,
when the Communists’ fortunes still seemed very good, MacArthur nurtured ambitious hopes and indicated that he was confident in the ability of a major interdiction effort to choke off North Korea’s supply line.\(^{136}\) Collins wrote that MacArthur had said that he hoped to block off support to North Korea from Manchuria or China. He was sure that the Communists would try to reinforce the Koreans but was equally sure this could be prevented by medium-bomber attacks. … He said that in the aftermath of operations, the problem would be to ‘compose and unite Korea.’ He added that it might be necessary to occupy all of Korea, though this was speculative at that time.\(^{137}\)

Stratemeyer, also at the meeting, noted that

he [Vandenberg] very explicitly and masterfully explained to General MacArthur the use of ground support aviation and the use of strike B–29s. General MacArthur agreed with everything General Vandenberg said and so announced himself. He (General MacArthur) did however point out that there would be times when we would have to use B–29s in close support.\(^{138}\)

Stratemeyer would have been content if Vandenberg’s tour had not included discussions of the B-29s’ tactical missions, and his words to Partridge show that he intended not to allow FEAF leaders to bring the issue to discussion. Vandenberg told General Norstad that MacArthur “expressed satisfaction with Air Force contribution to date, calling it superior.”\(^{139}\)

The previous day, 13 July 1950, MacArthur had directed Stratmeyer to focus FEAF’s B-26s and B-29s against NKPA troops, and the day after his discussion with Vandenberg (15 July), MacArthur informed Eighth Army commander Walton Walker that FEAF’s medium bombers would be used “against battle-front targets whenever Eighth

\(^{136}\) This plan, Operation Bluehearts, had to be scrapped immediately because the American 24th Infantry Division and the remaining ROK forces were unable to hold back the NKPA. Collins, War in Peacetime, 115.

\(^{137}\) Collins, War in Peacetime, 82-3.

\(^{138}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 14 July 1950, The Three Wars, 71.

\(^{139}\) Norstad was the Air Force’s acting Vice Chief of Staff. Stratemeyer, Redline from Vandenberg to Norstad, diary entry for 14 July 1950, The Three Wars, 70-1.
Army requested it.”\textsuperscript{140} Stratemeyer received a directive from MacArthur ordering B-29s to attack the airfield and marshalling yards at Kimpo, which had recently been captured by the enemy, while also using B-29s for ground support. Limited resources compelled him to prioritize one or the other, and the FEAF Commander emphasized the ground support role, writing that “continued use of B-29s in ground support” was “my decision.”\textsuperscript{141}

Struggling to appease both his masters – by flying the missions Tokyo wanted and keeping this from Washington – Stratemeyer endeavored to return B-29s to an interdiction role, as the USAF would have preferred. Stratemeyer’s diary emphasized occasions in which he delineated Air Force doctrine. General Almond was called into MacArthur’s office:

\textit{While General Almond was present, I very emphatically stated that you can not [sic] operate B–29s like you operate a tactical Air Force – it must be well-planned, well-thought-out and an operation that should not be changed daily if we wanted to get the best effect out of the ‘29s. General MacArthur agreed with me in the presence of General Almond. It is my opinion that henceforth, as a result of this conference with General MacArthur, that our relationship with Far East Command staff will be better.}\textsuperscript{142}

The hopeful close to this entry shows a definite note of exaggerated optimism.

One can, however, also detect that Stratemeyer had faith that MacArthur’s “[agreement] in the presence of General Almond” was genuine and that it would compel Almond (whose loyalty to MacArthur was also extreme) to act more cooperatively.\textsuperscript{143}

He noted similar events at a meeting two days later:

\textsuperscript{140} Appleman, \textit{United States Army in the Korean War}, 120.
\textsuperscript{141} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 15 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 75.
\textsuperscript{142} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 18 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 77.
\textsuperscript{143} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 18 July 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 77.
General MacArthur agreed with me in the presence of General Almond where we had a discussion reference the airdrome missions. During this discussion I pointed out to General MacArthur, in General Almond’s presence, that … my target section and Far East Command target section should get together and come to a mutual agreement in order to avoid presentation to General MacArthur for decision. He, General Almond, and I agreed that should and could be done.

I also pointed out to General MacArthur that still in the lower sections of the staff, the officers in effect believe that you (General MacArthur) had not approved my Wonsan strike and in General MacArthur’s presence I urged the Chief of Staff to eliminate this feeling in order that we can get a ball team and eliminate the dissension between his staff and mine. General Almond agreed to do this.

After returning to General MacArthur’s office, his [MacArthur’s] remarks to me were: “Strat, we always have that kind of thing,” to which I replied, “I know it, but we ought to eliminate it when it crops up.” He agreed.144

Stratemeyer was confident that contemporary difficulties would be only temporary. He assumed that his own loyalty and eagerness to work as part of a team were traits shared among MacArthur’s subordinates.

On 20 July, Stratemeyer confirmed that Major General Emmett O’Donnell (commanding the B-29s under FEAF’s control in the Korean War) would cooperate as “a member of the ballteam.”145 He emphasized to Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy that inter-service friction would distract from the common goal: “we are pulling for one cause and that is the destruction of the Communist Forces in Korea.”146 Stratemeyer’s report to USAF Vice Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Lauris Norstad stated that “cooperation between the services" was a major priority and indicated that it was “as near perfection as possible.”147

144 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 19 July 1950, The Three Wars, 79.
145 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 20 July 1950, The Three Wars, 80.
146 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 9 July 1950, The Three Wars, 60.
147 Stratemeyer, Message from Stratemeyer to Norstad, diary entry for 23 August 1950, The Three Wars, 129.
It was through this lens that Stratemeyer would view tactical use of B-29s. MacArthur directed that the bombers be used to support the embattled ground troops in August, and Stratemeyer acquiesced. The team effort would sometimes call for individual sacrifices, as in this context using weapons less effectively than was possible, and perhaps Stratemeyer felt such acts would be forgivable provided that the goal remained common. However, if the “ballteam” fractured – if the goals of the nation, the Supreme Commander, and the Air Force ceased to be the same – a dilemma would arise for Stratemeyer.

General Weyland, in contrast to Stratemeyer, argued strenuously against B-29s being diverted during frequent crises from their interdiction role. Using his past experience as a tactical air leader in World War II, he recognized that Almond’s GHQ Target Group needed to be superseded by an organization better qualified to determine targets. Air Force historian Frank Futrell noted that, after goading Almond into citing the argument that the B-29s should be used tactically during emergencies, Weyland countered that “even though the Pusan perimeter was taking shape and growing stronger, ‘emergencies’ were becoming almost routine.”

Stratemeyer convinced MacArthur of this and creation of the Far East Target Selection Committee, including senior officers from the Army and the Air Force, was approved on 22 July. The Air Force was ultimately able to retain decision-making

149 Futrell, The United States Air Force in Korea, 125-6.
150 Thompson, “Chapter 13: The Air War over Korea,” Winged Shield, Winged Sword, 12; Stratemeyer, Lt. General, introduction, The Three Wars, 12.
151 Among the Target Group’s shortcomings were that it directed bombers to myriad targets very near the battle zone, and it chose targets from outdated maps, leading it to target “bridges” that spanned small
powers in its operations despite a maneuver by Almond to foist on FEAF a cumbersome General Headquarters panel of Army officers dictating targets to the Air Force; Futrell attributed the Air Force’s success in this episode to the confidence MacArthur had in his air chief.\(^\text{152}\)

On the evening of 3 August, MacArthur declared support for a strong interdiction plan, thus ending a dispute sparked by Almond’s July criticisms of FEAF. MacArthur’s statement “delighted” Stratemeyer, who noted in his diary that the B-29s would now be used according to Air Force doctrine.\(^\text{153}\) He was happy that the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) Bomb Group, the only such unit which was permanently part of FEAF, could at last be reoriented away from ground support “back to targets that will really isolate the battlefield.”\(^\text{154}\) He eagerly planned to mount a strong interdiction effort utilizing all three of his medium bomb groups.\(^\text{155}\)

However, although MacArthur approved use of the B-29s to conduct a major interdiction campaign, he also allowed the continued use of B-29s in ground support for the troops heavily besieged around Pusan.\(^\text{156}\) A 16 August ground support carpet bombing by nearly 100 B-29s at Waegwan dropped nearly 1000 tons of explosives on a field devoid of NKPA troops; not only Partridge and O’Donnell but also Army


\(^{153}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 3 August 1950, *The Three Wars*, 93.

\(^{154}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 3 August 1950, *The Three Wars*, 93.

\(^{155}\) Futrell, *The United States Air Force In Korea*, 128.

Walker objected that, without concrete information about the precise location of enemy forces during an emergency, the B-29s should not be used in tactical roles.\textsuperscript{157}

Although Stratemeyer dissuaded MacArthur from ordering a similar attack on a nearby area on 19 August,\textsuperscript{158} MacArthur suggested to Stratemeyer two weeks later that “if I were you, as the overall Air Force commander and because of the seriousness of the ground situation in Korea, I would utilize every airplane that I had, including the B-29s to assist in the latest all-out effort that the North Koreans are mounting against General Walker’s ground forces.” Stratemeyer answered that he intended to do just that.\textsuperscript{159}

General O’Donnell controlled “all medium bomber wings and strategic reconnaissance assets.”\textsuperscript{160} The B-29s were all under this organization because they had not been stationed in Japan prior to the war. O’Donnell was concerned about the misapplication of his force, which Stratemeyer had promised to use in tactical operations “wherever in our opinion they will favorably affect the ground situation.”\textsuperscript{161}

Recognizing that special circumstances called for emergency measures, he did not reject the idea of ever using B-29s to support ground troops, but he urged that this support be made as effective as possible. Thus he sent a lengthy protest to Stratemeyer, beginning by acknowledging that North Korea’s few strategic targets could

\textsuperscript{157} Appleman, \textit{South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu}, 352-3.

\textsuperscript{158} Appleman, \textit{South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu}, 353.

\textsuperscript{159} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 1 September 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 157.

\textsuperscript{160} This command was formed on 8 July 1950 at Yokota Air Base in Japan. Rottman, \textit{Korean War Order of Battle}, 76.

\textsuperscript{161} Stratemeyer, Memo from Stratemeyer to MacArthur, diary entry for 1 September 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 159.
be destroyed quickly and “that the continued gravity of the ground situation would dictate diversion of medium bombardment aircraft to tactical usage from time to time.”

He also described how the B-29’s technical shortcomings as a tactical weapon: bombarding at low altitude caused self-inflicted damage to the planes, which already suffered from “unwieldiness or clumsiness.” He indicated that by using visual bombing methods (rather than relying solely on navigational aids for targeting), flying at more appropriate altitudes, and using cluster bombs, these difficulties could be addressed. O’Donnell summed up by urging that B-29s not be sent out “aimlessly” flying in the general battle area in search of targets of opportunity” or radio directives from the ground, which “[was] not an efficient way to utilize the weapon.”

Stratemeyer read O’Donnell’s letter and “[p]assed Rosie’s comments on to D/Ops [Director of Operations] and for them to keep me aware of any unusual operations in which B-29s are to be used. MacArthur needed to protect his beleaguered ground forces in the first months of the Korean War. Using the weapons on hand, this meant using B-29s as “flying artillery” during emergencies, discarding the plane’s original design and purpose. Air Force personnel, including Stratemeyer, argued “that you can not operate B–29s like you operate a tactical Air Force.” Yet the need for ground support existed, and Stratemeyer’s B-29 crews responded.

---

Frustrated that the “Europhiles” in Washington refused to see “that it is Asia which has been selected for the test of Communist power” and that Asia deserved to be America’s foreign priority ahead of Europe, MacArthur declared to the National Encampment of the Veterans of Foreign Wars that the war in Korea was “the focal and turning point in [the Far East’s] struggle for freedom.”\textsuperscript{168} MacArthur’s public airing of such views met with consternation from Truman.\textsuperscript{169} Washington did not want to risk a larger war.

Interdiction missions would take American airmen deep into North Korea. The Joint Chiefs were sensitive to news of any border violations by American pilots, since North Korea shared a long northern border with China and also had a short border with the Soviet Union. Stratemeyer dealt with reports of possible violations by having incidents investigated and verified. It was believed that a navigational error by an F-51 pilot led him to misidentify and strafe Antung, China on 27 August. Stratemeyer responded by directing Partridge to make a top secret investigation of the incident and Stratemeyer saw to it that MacArthur and Vandenberg were kept informed of its findings.\textsuperscript{170}

On 2 September, Vandenberg sent a redline cautioning Stratemeyer and MacArthur to prevent pilots from again accidentally entering Manchurian airspace

\textsuperscript{168} Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 118.


\textsuperscript{170} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 30 and 31 August 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 150.
because such violations had “the gravest political implications.”\(^{171}\) Stratemeyer was struck by the harsh tone of the message, feeling that the message had “indicate[d] that the crossing of the border by an F-51 was condoned – and that we had not attempted to carry out the directives from the Joint Chiefs.”\(^{172}\) The Joint Chiefs treated MacArthur, who was senior to them in experience but not in authority, with near deference.\(^{173}\) Partridge intervened to urge that the pilot be censured by his wing commander and retained for duty.\(^{174}\) Stratemeyer replied by expressing confidence in Partridge’s judgment and giving him authority to determine disciplinary action.\(^{175}\) Border violations would become a bigger issue later, when the battle lines moved into North Korea and ground forces approached China and the USSR.

The ground support effort, although justified by the dangers facing the American, other UN, and South Korean ground troops, did mean that B-29s were at times pulled away from interdiction. One study by a Royal Air Force Wing Commander concluded that the intense ground support effort by B-29s at the outset of the war cost the UN an important opportunity to isolate the battlefield through interdiction.\(^{176}\)

Direct support and the interdiction campaign which MacArthur authorized in early August seriously damaged the NKPA forces, assisting the breakout by Eighth Army. In

\(^{171}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 2 September 1950, *The Three Wars*, 159-60.

\(^{172}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 2 September 1950, *The Three Wars*, 159-60.


\(^{174}\) Stratemeyer, letter from Partridge to Stratemeyer quoted in diary entry for 14 September 1950, *The Three Wars*, 186. Partridge was generally inclined not to meet out harsh official punishments on fliers whose mistakes were not the result of negligence. “You can’t criticize people who are doing their best,” Partridge later said regarding fliers making navigational errors in Korea. Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 622.

\(^{175}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 14 September 1950, *The Three Wars*, 186.

\(^{176}\) Wing Commander J.E. Johnson’s study was published as “Tactical Aviation in Korea,” in *Air-Ground Operations* on 30 October 1950. Y’Blood, footnote, *The Three Wars*, 312, footnote #6.
the first three months of the war, airmen claimed to have killed almost 40,000 enemy soldiers and to have destroyed 450 tanks and 6,000 other vehicles.\textsuperscript{177} Ground support through September accounted for the majority of all UN combat air sorties.\textsuperscript{178} UN interrogators sampled over 800 North Korean prisoners of war; among the leading causes of low enemy morale were shortages in food, tactical aircraft, and a lack of arms and equipment.\textsuperscript{179} Since the purpose of interdiction was to accentuate shortages by destroying enemy supplies, the UN air effort was clearly having an impact on the enemy. By mid September, the North Korean troops around Pusan had been weakened by ground and air efforts.

\textsuperscript{177} Futrell, \textit{Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine}, 297.

\textsuperscript{178} Interdiction was the next largest emphasis; ground support sorties lagged behind interdiction and sometimes also countered air sorties from October 1950 through May 1953. Schlight, \textit{Help From Above}, 134.

\textsuperscript{179} These were the first, second, and fourth leading causes of low morale. Lack of training ranked third, just above the lack of arms. More than 300 of the POWs had listed either the shortage of food or tactical aircraft as the factor most demoralizing to them. Futrell, \textit{the United States Air Force in Korea}, 171-3.
On 15 September, in a coup MacArthur had envisioned since the previous July, a UN amphibious force designated X Corps entrusted to Major General Ned Almond landed at Inchon and cut off the faltering NKPA’s LOC. Eighth Army soon began its breakout from Pusan in an operation that would have been tactically supported by B-29s, if weather had not intervened. Fewer than one in three of their 100,000 soldiers caught between X Corps in the west and Eighth Army in the south. North Korean forces were routed.

The Joint Chiefs, who previously had raised objections to the proposed operation, became much less willing to challenge MacArthur’s judgment. The success at Inchon also prompted Truman to alter the UN war aim from the defense of South Korea to the destruction of the Communist North.

To help the Eighth Army and its Fifth Air Force support work in concert, Partridge saw to it that his own headquarters was always near the Eighth Army’s headquarters. “That’s the only way to cooperate,” he recalled after the war. “If you get the headquarters separated, you cannot cooperate adequately.” Partridge and Walker daily attended each others as well as their own commands’ briefings. In the UN advance that followed Inchon, Walker’s Eighth Army and Almond’s X Corps did not exhibit the same cooperation among ground forces. They were not in direct contact with each other, and

---

183 Lewis, *The American Culture of War*, 100.
184 Lewis, *The American Culture of War*, 100.
this added a further burden to the Fifth Air Force, which was supporting both.\textsuperscript{185} Partridge flew between the two ground commands’ headquarters to ensure that, at least regarding the use of airpower, there was coordination.\textsuperscript{186}

The retention of SAC wings in the Korean theater would hamper the conversion process by which SAC would exchange its B-29s for newer aircraft capable of nuclear warfare needed to deter the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{187}

On 27 September, Stratemeyer responded by advocating the prompt return to SAC of two of its B-29 groups in the Far East. That day, Washington authorized MacArthur to send troops across the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel to complete the victory over the North Koreans, and the Joint Chiefs had that day ordered a cessation of attacks against strategic targets.\textsuperscript{188} All but one of North Korea’s 18 strategic targets had been neutralized, and the remaining target, an oil storage facilities at Rashin, was considered too near the USSR to be worth the risk of violating Soviet airspace.\textsuperscript{189} With the war seemingly won, there would be little reason to keep many SAC units in the Far East when they could otherwise be reequipped with newer aircraft.\textsuperscript{190}


\textsuperscript{188} Thompson and Nalty, \textit{Within Limits}, 21.

\textsuperscript{189} Futrell, \textit{The United States Air Force in Korea}, 195; Stratemeyer, Memo from Stratemeyer to MacArthur, “Return of Medium Bomb Groups to the Zone of the Interior,” 27 September 1950, diary entry for 27 September 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 207.

\textsuperscript{190} Stratemeyer, Memo from Stratemeyer to MacArthur, “Return of Medium Bomb Groups to the Zone of the Interior,” 27 September 1950, diary entry for 27 September 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 207.
Perhaps to demonstrate the capability of airpower and that the departure of two groups of B-29s did not mean the end of substantial air support, Stratemeyer met with MacArthur to propose “a major B-29 strike against several of the most important remaining military targets in the P’yongyang area.” Stratemeyer outlined an attack by 100 bombers against the North Korean capital, and he emphasized that Fifth Air Force tactical missions would be stepped up to compensate for the one-day standdown which the B-29s would require in preparation for the attack; casualties and aircraft losses in both the air support at the front and the Pyongyang raid would be minimized because the Fifth Air Force’s fighter-bombers and Bomber Command’s medium bombers performing work for which they had been designed.191

Stratemeyer thought he had authority to order an operation of this size against the enemy’s capitol, but he asked MacArthur to confirm this. In case authorization would be needed, Stratemeyer submitted to MacArthur a radio message justifying that the several separate targets in the city be struck simultaneously to limit losses to anti-aircraft fire; this was to be sent to the Joint Chiefs if they needed to be persuaded to approve the mission.192

MacArthur confidently asserted that this was unnecessary and that he and Stratemeyer already possessed the authority to launch a 100 bomber mission; he approved the attack the same day, and Stratemeyer wrote in his diary:

Reference the one bang [italicized as underlined in original] attack on military targets in the P’yongyang area, [MacArthur] approved my paper of this date (27 Sept) at 1815 hours and he very emphatically stated that there was no reason for

him to send my draft signal to the Joint Chiefs of Staff! Hooray! God bless his soul!193

However, MacArthur was disinclined to agree to the two SAC groups returning to the US until he knew whether his forces would cross the 38th parallel into North Korea.194 He seemed little concerned with the needs of SAC, which had been specifically presented to him in Stratemeyer’s 27 September memo.195

The next day, however, MacArthur telephoned Stratemeyer to say that Washington had directed that surrender terms be offered to the North Koreans, so he was asking that the Pyongyang attack be held up temporarily. MacArthur said, Stratemeyer wrote in his diary, “that if he had no offer from the North Koreans to his [MacArthur’s] surrender [ultimatum] that he would give me the green light to go ahead with the attack. Again, God Bless his soul!”196 This notation, particularly the phrase “God bless his soul!” indicated the degree of Stratemeyer’s esteem of MacArthur. One can also read an attitude of independence in MacArthur, who was little inclined to acknowledge limits to his own authority.

The Joint Chiefs’ message a few days later indicated that MacArthur had taken substantial liberty in approving the raid and advising Stratemeyer against asking the Joint Chiefs for prior permission. The Joint Chiefs wrote to MacArthur, who forwarded the message to Stratemeyer:

195 Of at least marginal interest is the issue of what use MacArthur envisioned for the B-29s in a war north of the 38th parallel. An advance deep beyond the 38th parallel would liberate much of North Korea from enemy hands, and there were already virtually no remaining strategic targets. Perhaps MacArthur thought he could continue to use the B-29s for ground support, or he may have thought they would deter China from interceding on behalf of the North.
We do not know what your views or plans are in this connection under the existing circumstances. Because of the serious political implications involved it is desired that you advise the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for clearance with higher authority, of any plans you may have before you order or authorize such an attack or attacks of a similar nature.\footnote{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 31 September 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 214-5.}

The Joint Chiefs objected to the idea of a hundred bombers striking the North Korean capital, inviting accusations that FEAF was targeting civilians.\footnote{It is unclear how the Joint Chiefs became aware of the attack. Stratemeyer’s diary does not refer to having sent a message to them, which is not completely surprising since MacArthur had assured him it would not be necessary. The meticulous Futrell could offer only that the Joint Chiefs had been informed “somehow.” Stratemeyer, \textit{The Three Wars}; Futrell, \textit{The United States Air Force in Korea}, 205.}

Although the members of the Joint Chiefs often deferred to MacArthur, they were aware of international opinion and directed that they be notified prior to major air attacks.\footnote{Ridgway noted that this deference was particularly acute after Inchon, when MacArthur’s controversial plan succeeded beyond anyone else’s expectation. Also, although the Joint Chiefs had more authority than MacArthur, they had less experience and seldom asserted their authority over him. Ridgway, \textit{The Korean War}, 62.} MacArthur replied, not by acknowledging their higher authority, but by backpedaling from the approval he had given Stratemeyer just four days earlier:

I have no present plans or purpose to bomb the enemy capital at P’yongyang and at no time has consideration been given to attempt any operation designed to do more than destroy its military installations. I am trying to end the campaign with as little added loss of life and destruction of property as is possible. In the case of P’yongyang, if it becomes a citadel of defense against our attacking ground forces, I would plan to use such air concentrations as might become necessary to minimize our own losses. At present, however, I have no intention of launching an all-out bombing attack of the nature to which you refer.\footnote{Stratemeyer, diary entry for 31 September 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 215.}

MacArthur drew a dubious distinction between an “all-out” raid which the Joint Chiefs countermanded and the “one bang” raid which he approved one day and disavowed the next.
Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin was apparently unmoved by news that UN forces might defeat North Korea.\textsuperscript{201} He was willing to allow Chinese troops to die over North Korea, however. On 1 October, he suggested to Peking that five or six Chinese divisions masquerading as “volunteers” be moved into North Korea toward the 38th parallel.\textsuperscript{202}

Chinese officials were considering this when, a week later, a pair of F-80s of the 49th Fighter-Bomber Group strafed a Soviet airbase.\textsuperscript{203} In the overcast, they had mistaken their position. Although reconnaissance flights the next day failed to determine if a violation had occurred, Stratemeyer’s study led him to conclude that an incident had taken place.\textsuperscript{204} Stratemeyer concluded that this violation had been the result of “pilot error and poor judgment,” and he radioed Partridge that “General MacArthur and I are most unhappy about this violation.”\textsuperscript{205}

In discussion with Stratemeyer, MacArthur was evidently less concerned than Stratemeyer may have thought. MacArthur had suggested that the pilots ’s proposition to use Article 104 of the \textit{Manual for Courts-Martial}; this would expedite the disciplinary process by bypassing a court martial and handling the infraction as a minor offense.\textsuperscript{206} It would seem that MacArthur’s concern about border violations was in fact distinctly less than that of Vandenberg or Stratemeyer, a fact which apparently escaped

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{201} Gaddis, \textit{The Cold War}, 45.
\textsuperscript{202} Xiaoming Zhang, \textit{Red Wings Over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea} (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2002), 65, 72.
\textsuperscript{203} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 and 12 October 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 226, 229.
\textsuperscript{204} The Soviets had accused the US of a violation that was suspiciously similar to the alleged events of 8 October. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 10 October 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 227.
\textsuperscript{205} Stratemeyer, Stratline from Stratemeyer to Partridge, diary entry for 10 October 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 227.
\textsuperscript{206} It would be amended in May 1951 to become Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 12 October 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 230 footnote #62.
\end{flushright}
Stratemeyer’s attention. Partridge quietly dealt with the two pilots and their commander, Colonel Stanton T. Smith. Smith was sent to lead a Joint Operations Center, and one of the pilots was sent to Japan to serve as a general’s aide.

On 15 October, MacArthur met with Truman at Wake Island. There are many competing theories seeking to explain why the two men met at this particular time. One, advanced by historian John Spanier, suggested that the meeting had been prompted by the 8 October strafing of the Soviet base. Among the issues Truman and MacArthur discussed was the possibility of intervention in the war by China or the Soviet Union. MacArthur said there was “very little” chance that either the Soviet Union or China would intervene.

Confident in himself and his troops, he told Truman that:

If they interfered in the first or second months it would have been decisive. We are no longer fearful of their intervention. … They have no Air Force. Now that we have bases for our Air Force in Korea, if the Chinese tried to get down to Pyongyang there would be the greatest slaughter.

---

208 Col Merritt, interview, 8 December 1977, Roll 0000033545, transcript, 414.
209 Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War*, 111. Spanier’s book gives the date of the incident as 9 October, but the date in Stratemeyer’s diary shows that it was 8 October.
Victory in Korea would require slicing North Korea adrift from China. North Korea’s long border with Manchuria offered good opportunities to the Chinese Communists to support their client with supplies and men. MacArthur had vowed that if the Chinese intervened, there would be “the greatest slaughter.” To prevent China from being able to intervene, FEAF would have to cut the main bridges linking the two countries.

In September and October 1950, Truman, MacArthur, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the National Security Council had all been attempting to estimate the likelihood of Chinese intervention.\textsuperscript{212} On 3 October, the United Nations Command Intelligence had pointed to evidence that China had already inserted a considerable force into Korea of twenty divisions and that these forces had been present since 10 September.\textsuperscript{213} By the fall, the resistance, bolstered by quiet infusions of Chinese ground and air forces, stiffened. Partridge had noted on 2 October that his pilots were spotting enemy swept-wing jets on the ground and “the flak situation” was growing worse.\textsuperscript{214}

By 13 October 1950, Communist China’s dictator Mao Tse Tung was convinced that MacArthur’s move across the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel, which had been approved by the UN on 7 October, threatened his dominance over China and merited Communist Chinese military intervention.\textsuperscript{215} The People’s Volunteer Army entered North Korea in force on 19 October.\textsuperscript{216}


\textsuperscript{213} Collins, \textit{War in Peacetime}, 174.

\textsuperscript{214} Partridge, diary entry for 2 October 1950, \textit{Korea Diary}.

FEAF meanwhile prepared to take its part in completing the UN victory. Two days earlier, on 17 October, Stratemeyer permitted the Fifth Air Force to launch missions to within 50 miles of the Yalu, although a “chop line” still insulated the northernmost portions of Korea from the full weight of Partridge’s planes. The aim was to continue to conduct missions over the shrinking amount of Korean territory still separating the advancing UN forces from the Chinese border, and to ensure that these missions would neither endanger friendly forces nor enter Chinese airspace.

That day, Stratemeyer also proposed a raid to destroy Sinuiju by incendiaries and high explosives. The border city was dangerous for several reasons, including that it was a rail center for rolling stock moving in from China, it was the temporary seat of the North Korean government, it possessed “considerable industrial capacity.” Since the city was directly across the river from China, the attack would demand greater precision than radar bombing in night or cloud would allow, so Stratemeyer added that the raid was to be made by visual means.

The concluding paragraph, below, expressed confidence that the mission could be achieved without challenging the restrictions imposed on the Air Force:

---


216 Zhang, *Red Wings Over the Yalu*, 65, 76.

217 Attacks north of the “chop line” could be conducted in emergency situations and with full reports sent to FEAF to keep it informed. USAF Historical Study, *United States Air Force Operations in the Korean Conflict, 25 June – 1 November 1950*, 80.

218 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 17 October 1950, *The Three Wars*, 236.

219 Industry in northern Korean had helped support the Japanese war machine in World War II, but American planners were unsure of exactly the degree to which North Korea was sustaining its war effort. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, 183; Stratemeyer, Memo, “Subject: Destruction of Sinuiju,” from Stratemeyer to MacArthur, diary entry for 17 October 1950, *The Three Wars*, 236-7.

I have no mental reservations as to the ability of the Far East Air Forces to carry out this attack without violating Manchurian territory. I propose, if the recommendation for an attack is approved, that it be carried out under the on-the-spot supervision of a general officer and the actual attack made only upon his order. G.E.S. [italics added]221

The approaches to the Sinuiju bridges would have been treacherous, but Stratemeyer’s proposal did not address the bridges and called instead for the destruction of the city and military facilities in and around it.

GHQ in the Far East promptly answered that “[t]he general policy enunciated from Washington negates such an attack unless the military situation clearly requires it. Under present circumstances this is not the case.”222 Washington, too, wanted “to insure against such a possibility” of accidentally strafing or bombing on the Chinese side of the Yalu; an additional caution was given against radar bombing, to avoid friendly fire casualties as the war appeared to wind down.223 Stratemeyer acknowledged Washington’s reply, adding that the “[o]nly objectives remaining for Bom Com [FEAF Bomber Command, Provisional] are a very few bridges.”224 Sinuiju’s defenses remained strong in late October.225 At this point that the 22nd and 92nd groups returned to the United States, reducing FEAF’s B-29 strength from five to three groups.226

222 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 18 October 1950, The Three Wars, 237.
223 TS 5003 from Twining to Stratemeyer, 18 October 1950, Vandenberg Papers.
224 Redline from Stratemeyer to Twining, 19 October 1950, Vandenberg Papers.
225 Stratemeyer, diary entries for 25 August, 18 October, 19 October, 1 November 1950, The Three Wars, 135, 239, 241, 250.
226 The 98th and 307th Groups remained on loan, and the 19th Group was part of FEAF. Air Force Historical Research Agency, The USAF in Korea: Campaigns, Units, and Stations, 72-7.
Chinese People’s Volunteer Army (PVA) forces dealt South Korean troops a blow on 25 October.\(^{227}\) The character of the fighting changed on the following day, when the pursuit the UN forces had enjoyed for ten days was replaced by bitter fighting.\(^{228}\) The Republic of Korea (ROK) II Corps was quickly smashed.\(^{229}\) Partridge and Walker, on one of their frequent battlefield air reconnaissance flights together on 28 October, witnessed the fighting that the Chinese would refer to as the First Campaign. The Chinese broke off at the beginning in November. Walker had given some ground in an effort to prevent over-extension of his forces from ushering in a disaster.\(^{230}\) Walker correctly suspected that the well-equipped troops his men had just fought were Chinese rather than North Korean.\(^{231}\) This was confirmed when Partridge presented Walker with a map from C.I.A. operative Donald Nichols showing Chinese forces in the peninsula.\(^{232}\) It was clear that China was supporting the Communist cause in Korea with combat troops. More men and supplies were in Manchuria across the river.

American planes venturing over northwestern North Korea were greeted by flak and jets, and on 1 November, the Communists reoccupied the Sinuiju airfield with a force of jets and Yak propeller-driven fighters.\(^{233}\) F-80s arrived, destroying or damaging seven of the parked planes but losing a jet to flak.\(^{234}\) Half a dozen enemy swept-wing

\(^{227}\) Zhang, Red Wings Over the Yalu, 76.
\(^{228}\) Partridge, diary entry for 5 November 1950, Korean Diary.
\(^{229}\) Ridgway, the Korean War, 54; Partridge, diary entry for 5 November 1950, Korean Diary.
\(^{230}\) Partridge, diary entry for 5 November 1950, Korean Diary.
\(^{231}\) Partridge, diary entry for 3 November 1950, Korea Diary.
\(^{233}\) Partridge happened to be on a two-day hunting trip in Japan at the time. Partridge, diary entry for 2 November 1950, Korea Diary. The Air Force concluded that the jets were either Yak-7s or MiG-15s. Confidential Priority message from Vandenberg to Stratemeyer, 2 November 1950, Vandenberg Papers.
\(^{234}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 1 November 1950, The Three Wars, 250-2.
jets fought American pilots in F-51s and F-80s. The area would later be known as “MiG Alley.”

Upon returning from his two-day hunting trip in Japan, Partridge was glad that his fliers had discovered and promptly strafed the planes at Sinuiju’s airfield, but the mood was still “glum” and he intended to stop further development of the area into a Communist bastion. These challenges needed to be countered, and Partridge believed the answer was to have wider latitude in combating the growing Chinese People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF).

Partridge reported to Stratemeyer that Communist resistance in Sinuiju was growing. The new Communist planes, including MiG-9 and MiG-15 jets, were contributing to the headaches of Eighth Army commander Walker as well, because they quickly began making appearances over the battlefield.

On 2 November, Partridge called for permission to burn Sinuiju to destroy the antiaircraft artillery which was being built up. He also asked for “clearance to pursue our enemy across the Manchurian border.” He warned that the city was directing increasingly thick and accurate anti-aircraft fire at UN planes.

Partridge’s request on Stratemeyer’s desk when arrived at his office on the morning of 3 November, and he discussed the issue with MacArthur by noon. Stratemeyer sent a letter to MacArthur asking that American pilots be granted authority

---

236 Partridge, diary entry for 2 November 1950, *Korean Diary*.
238 Partridge, diary entries for 5 and 6 November 1950, *Korean Diary*.
239 Partridge, diary entry for 2 November 1950, *Korean Diary*.
for “hot pursuit,” following Communist interceptor jets across the Chinese border as they returned to airspace on the Manchurian side of the border. Unless this authority were granted, enemy jets could engage and disengage from air combat at will. Stratemeyer discussed the matter with MacArthur before noon:

He [MacArthur] indicated that due to the entire situation the UN and Washington must act and it was not his intention to refer this matter to higher authority until more information was received that the Chinese Communists were actually engaged in strength against our forces in Korea. His words were: “I want to muddle over this a bit longer.”

The Communists’ sanctuary was galling to fliers, who recognized that UN restrictions gave the enemy sanctuaries, threatened their lives and, by extension, the UN effort as well. But as Futrell explained in the USAF’s official history, the idea of “hot pursuit” was “fraught with international complications.”

During the meeting, Stratemeyer won both MacArthur’s approval to attack antiaircraft batteries in Sinuiju with napalm and to his agreement to urge that Washington accept “hot pursuit.”

Stratemeyer wrote that MacArthur “stated that he realized that there were not many targets left for the ‘29s but he wanted to get them back in the business.”

Stratemeyer estimated that, “with a couple of days of stand-down,” 75 B-29s could be

---

244 Futrell, The United States Air Force In Korea, 223.
245 Armed reconnaissance flights by planes carrying machine guns, cannon, and napalm could make visual attacks, but putting an end to Sinuiju’s resistance would require more.
246 Stratemeyer told MacArthur that he would send a copy of this message to Vandenberg. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 3 November 1950, The Three Wars, 254.
launched in a strike; there were, however, no targets for such an operation.247

Stratemeyer wrote that MacArthur

then stated that he wanted from me the very best study that I could make to prove that the Chinese Communists, in force, both on the ground and in the air, were operating in and over North Korea.

I told him of the signal that I had received from Vandenberg wherein he (Vandenberg) was a bit worried about the Russian jets that had appeared over North Korea and that I had been called on by Vandenberg to submit our best estimate of the situation as he (Vandenberg) wanted that data in order to reinforce me with F-84Es (jets) if the need arose.248

Vandenberg and Stratemeyer concluded that various types of Communist jets in northwestern North Korea were operating from Sinuiju south of the Yalu and that MiGs were operating from Antung north of it in China, and “that most likely pilots were NK or Chinese Communist or both.”249 It also read that “[t]hus far, only token air forces [have been] employed conforming in general with [the] pattern in ground forces.”250

Stratemeyer estimated that China had perhaps 300 aircraft in four areas, one of them the Antung border area just across the Yalu from Sinuiju.251 Stratemeyer also reported on recent early encounters with – for the moment, small numbers – of jets over North

247 Stratemeyer told MacArthur that he would send a copy of this message to Vandenberg. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 3 November 1950, The Three Wars, 254.

248 Stratemeyer told MacArthur that he would send a copy of this message to Vandenberg. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 3 November 1950, The Three Wars, 254.


251 The other areas were Canton, Nanking, and Shanghi. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 3 November 1950, The Three Wars, 256. The Chinese Air Force (People’s Liberation Army Air Force, or PLAAF) was rapidly building at this point. The PLAAF claimed 13% of the defense budget (equal to 5.39% of the total state budget). “The emergence of the PLAAF as a modern air force was almost entirely the product of China’s own military doctrines and concepts. There was no preexisting PLA air arm.” Zhang, Red Wings Over the Yalu, 82-3.
Korea, although these planes were not then confirmed as Chinese. This, too, was copied and hand carried to MacArthur.

Stratemeyer requested that MacArthur authorize B-29s to burn Sinuiju, and MacArthur answered, “Strat, I have no objection to the destruction of military targets anywhere in North Korea, but I do not want barracks buildings or any other facility in Sinuiju destroyed at this time.” Confident that the war was approaching a victorious end, MacArthur had expected to occupy the city; he did not want to destroy resources he anticipated soon being able to use. MacArthur explained to Stratemeyer that he planned to take Sinuiju and had directed his naval personnel to examine its harbor facilities.

Stratemeyer continued to press MacArthur, suggesting that burning, if not Sinuiju, then other towns such as Kanggye in northern North Korea would serve as a lesson. Stratemeyer’s diary summarized MacArthur’s agreement:

[MacArthur] said, “Burn it [Kanggye] if you so desire,” and then said, “Not only that, Strat, but burn and destroy as a lesson any other of those towns that you consider of military value to the enemy.” He stated that he realized that there were not many targets left for the ‘29s but he wanted to get them back in the business.

That evening, Stratemeyer was telephoned by Far East Acting Chief of Staff Major General Doyle O. Hickey, who told him that “MacArthur had approved the Partridge wire to burn Sinuiju by the Fifth Air Force.”

---

was encountering new resistance which he correctly supposed was Chinese, and UN forces had been nudged back from their positions approaching Sinuiju. Pressure from the Fifth Air Force impeded the Chinese pursuit of the retreating UN forces. The situation on the ground led MacArthur to pose hard questions which agitated Walker, who perhaps thought that a little firmness from the Eighth Army commander would restore the situation. Walker was greatly upset by MacArthur's tone, and Walker responded with what Partridge characterized in his diary as "a good straightforward statement" estimating the situation and the Eighth Army's actions. Walker explained to MacArthur why the advance had been stopped:

An ambush and surprise attack by fresh, well-organized and well-trained units, some of which were Chinese Communist Forces, began a sequence of events leading to complete collapse and disintegration of ROK II Corps of three divisions.

Walker, continued, reaffirming that the present challenge had not altered his resolve or offensive spirit:

There has never been and there is now no intention for this Army to take up or remain on a passive perimeter or any other type of defense. Every effort is being made to retain an adequate bridgehead to facilitate the resumption of the attack as soon as conditions permit.

Walker had been bothered by a pair of statements made almost simultaneously which had clearly contradictory implications. Partridge called one a "reasonably critical statement" of Walker which had been dictated over the phone to reach him. In one

258 Futrell, The United States Air Force in Korea, 220.
259 Partridge, diary entry for 6 November 1950, Korean Diary; Stratemeyer, diary entry for 3 November 1950, The Three Wars, 254.
260 Partridge, diary entry for 6 November 1950, Korean Diary.
261 Collins, War in Peacetime, 196.
262 Collins, War in Peacetime, 197.
hand was a statement that “said that he [MacArthur] didn’t understandy [sic] why on one day we were making good progress in closing with the Manchurian border and the next day we were withdrawing with the implication of a crushing defeat.” In Walker’s other hand was a press statement MacArthur had released which announced that the war against North Koreans was over and the fighting was now against the Chinese Communist Forces.  

On 4 November, warning orders were issued to the Fifth Air Force and to Bomber Command. Stratemeyer submitted an “Estimate of the Situation” to MacArthur, stating that “if Russia entered the conflict openly it would mean World War III which in my estimation was not in the cards.” On 5 November, MacArthur delineated what FEAF was to accomplish:

> Every bridge across the Yalu River, from the Russian - Korean-Manchurian border, southwest across the Yalu, is a target and will be destroyed. We must not and cannot violate the border; consequently, no part of the bridges, from the Manchurian side from the center over, will be hit. The bridge targets will be the Korean side of the river and the abutments thereto.

Stratemeyer evidently did not protest that destroying half a bridge while also not flying over China would be difficult if not impossible. MacArthur’s decision came as he was

---

263 Partridge, diary entry for 6 November 1950, *Korean Diary*.


266 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 5 November 1950, *The Three Wars*, 258.

267 Stratemeyer recorded that MacArthur directed that the bridges be hit and that the Yalu not be crossed, but Stratemeyer’s diary does not include any commentary suggesting that he felt the raid would be impossible. Stratemeyer, Memo, diary entry for 5 November 1950, *The Three Wars*, 258-9.
cautioning the Joint Chiefs against “hasty conclusions” would be “premature,” instead urging patience in awaiting “a more complete accumulation of military facts.”

The aim was to isolate the battlefield. Stratemeyer’s instructions, dispatched to Partridge and O’Donnell, read:

On 5 November 50, General MacArthur directed the following action: A. “Destroy the Korean end of all international bridges on the Korean-Manchurian border.” I interpret this as meaning the first overwater span out from the Korean shore. … There must be no violation of the border. The border cannot and must not be violated.” D. “A maximum effort will be made by FEAF for the next two (2) weeks. Combat crews are to be flown to exhaustion if necessary.” [italics added]

Stratemeyer noted below the transcribed signal that “Peking officially acknowledge[d] a Chinese Communist force of ‘volunteers’ in North Korea,” but although he was willing to broadly define military targets, he was nevertheless insistent that the attacks not violate official Chinese neutrality or airspace. The raid was scheduled for 7 November.

On 5 November, more than half of Kanggye was destroyed by incendiaries from the 19th Group. The Joint Chiefs, reading reports, noticed that MacArthur’s directives emphasized that Chinese airspace not be violated. MacArthur’s sudden caution, contrasting distinctly from the attitude he had shown in his message to them a day earlier, suggested that events in the Far East might have been changing quickly, and in what ways the Joint Chiefs did not know. Until they were informed of the situation, they

---

269 Blair, Forgotten War, 392-3. The part of these instructions dealing with the border will subsequently be revisited.
270 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 5 November 1950, The Three Wars, 260-1.
271 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 5 November 1950, The Three Wars, 261.
272 Futrell, The United States Air Force in Korea, 221-2.
would side with caution. On 6 November (Washington time), the Joint Chiefs directed that bombing attacks within five miles of the Chinese border be postponed.\textsuperscript{273}

\textsuperscript{273} Futrell, \textit{The United States Air Force in Korea}, 222.
BURNING BRIDGES

General Stratemeyer’s dilemma stemmed from conflicting responsibilities. It was his duty to oversee the air support for General MacArthur; however, MacArthur seemed uninhibited by Washington’s authority, and Stratemeyer was also answerable to General Vandenberg in Washington. Stratemeyer’s dilemma would surface when MacArthur and Washington disagreed about the role of bomber units loaned to FEAF and as Washington demanded that it be kept informed of planned missions that could adversely affect international opinion or might provoke general war.

A stumbling block arose the morning the Sinuiju raid was to take place. At 0330 on 7 November, Brigadier General Jarred Crabb (FEAF Deputy of Operations) called Stratemeyer to say that a redline from Vandenberg had countermanded the order.\textsuperscript{274}

Stratemeyer promptly abided by the Joint Chiefs’ order as soon as he discovered that it had unambiguously rejected the attack. Unaware, however, that the Joint Chiefs had sent a similar message to MacArthur, he responded that “[the] mission [was] ordered by CINCFE [MacArthur, Commander in Chief, Far East]. Any change in mission must come from CINCFE.”\textsuperscript{275} The mission for 7 November was cancelled, and Stratemeyer was prepared to cancel it again for 8 November if “a green light” did not come by 0830 Korean time.\textsuperscript{276} Since the bombardiers would need to do their work visually rather than using radar, a twilight attack would be unacceptable.

\textsuperscript{274} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, The Three Wars, 262. Futrell’s account diverges on this point: “Weather prevented the all-out attack planned for 7 November, but on the following day the Fifth Air Force and the FEAF Bomber Command executed maximum-strength strikes against Sinuiju. Futrell, The United States Air Force in Korea, 223.

\textsuperscript{275} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, The Three Wars, 262.

\textsuperscript{276} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, The Three Wars, 262-3.
Stratemeyer was deeply annoyed to find that the Joint Chiefs had signaled MacArthur to stop the raid, and that his redline reply was therefore embarrassingly inappropriate. Colonel H.R. Warren (FEAF Director of Operations) and General Crabb had neglected to mention that Vandenberg’s redline included the phrase “issuing now MacArthur,” which Stratemeyer considered crucial. “Had I known this, my entire actions throughout the rest of the night would have been different. As a result of the JCS signal to MacArthur, we stood down the attack.”

Stratemeyer was unsettled by the episode, and he was unable to sleep. Instead, he arrived at his office at 0710 and half an hour later held a conference with Crabb, Warren and Major General Laurence Craigie (FEAF vice commander for administration and plans). He “very emphatically pointed out to them that the crux of Vandenberg's message was ‘issuing now MacArthur,’ and they should have told me this immediately.” Stratemeyer was embarrassed and angry that by having been insufficiently informed, he had issued a rather impertinent message to the Joint Chiefs.

Washington had learned of the planned Sinuiju raid from Stratemeyer. MacArthur’s memoir does not suggest that he knew Stratemeyer had notified Washington. In their postwar books, Truman, Collins, and Acheson apparently concluded that Stratemeyer had included information about the raid in his daily telecom message as a tip-off, so that the war in Korea could be kept limited. Although Stratemeyer did inform the Joint Chiefs of the plan, he had sent information to

---

278 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, *The Three Wars*, 262; for 10 July 1950 footnote #96, 62.
Vandenberg about many aspects of operations, such as record numbers of sorties flown in single days or the first use of incendiaries in the war.281

A perhaps more accurate notion is that Stratemeyer recognized that the raid was important and that he was notifying the Joint Chiefs for that reason. It is also possible, after the planned Pyongyang raid, that he sought to confirm his and to some degree MacArthur’s authority to launch such a large mission on targets of such considerable political importance.

Historians Wayne Thompson and Bernard Nalty pointed out that Stratemeyer’s message to Vandenberg “might have gone unnoticed,” but for a passage noting that stray bombs might detonate on Chinese soil.282 Finally, as Y’Blood’s research contends, Stratemeyer did not object to waging a larger war if it would defeat the Communists.283

MacArthur responded angrily to Washington’s cancellation of the Sinuiju raid. He at first considered making an ultimatum that would have precipitated his resignation, but an aide calmed him down so he decided instead to send the Joint Chiefs a biting apologia for the raid urging its reconsideration of the attack:

Men and material in large force are pouring across all bridges over the Yalu from Manchuria. This movement not only jeopardizes but threatens the ultimate destruction of the forces under my command…. The only way to stop this reinforcement … is the destruction of these bridges … [by] maximum [use] of our air [power for] destruction…. Under the gravest protest that I can make, I am suspending this strike [at Sinuiju] and carrying out your instructions…. I trust that

281 The incendiaries he mentioned were the bombs that destroyed Kanggye. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 5 November 1950, The Three Wars, 259.
282 Thompson and Nalty, Within Limits, 27; Thompson, “Chapter 13: Air War Over Korea,” Winged Shield, Winged Sword, 12.
the matter be immediately brought to the attention of the President as I believe your instructions may well result in a calamity of major proportion. Stratemeyer was pleased with MacArthur’s reply, agreeing with it “one hundred percent.”

Both General Whitney (MacArthur’s military secretary) in his biography of MacArthur, and General MacArthur in his memoir published the same year, lambasted Washington’s restrictions. Somewhat suspiciously, the two books use almost identical text in criticizing Washington’s hesitation and restrictions. Whitney and MacArthur agreed that the prohibition from attacking Rashin, the only untouched item on the North Korea’s short list of strategic targets, was “Most incomprehensible of all.” Stratemeyer had shown interest in bombing Rashin back in September, and he had

284 Blair, MacArthur, 298-9.

285 Major General Doyle Hickey, Deputy Chief of Staff, Far East Command, read MacArthur’s reply over the phone to Stratemeyer before 0600 on 7 November. Stratemeyer’s response to Hickey’s request for comment was, “Doyle, it is one hundred percent.” Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, The Three Wars, 262.

286 The Rashin excepts below are almost completely identical:

Little by little his weapons were being taken away from him. First he had been forbidden ‘hot’ pursuit of enemy planes that had attacked our own. Then he had been denied the right to bomb the Manchurian hydroelectric plants along the Yalu. Then that order had been broadened even to include every plant in North Korea which was capable of furnishing electric power to Manchuria and Siberia. Most incomprehensible of all was the refusal of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to let MacArthur freely bomb the important supply center at Racin, which was not in Manchuria but in northeastern Korea. Racin was a depot to which the Soviet Union forwarded supplies from Vladivostok for the North Korean Army. Courtney Whitney, Maj Gen., MacArthur: his Rendezvous with Destiny (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 402.

I was even more worried by a series of directives from Washington which were greatly decreasing the potential of my air force. First I was forbidden “hot” pursuit of enemy planes that attacked our own. Manchuria and Siberia were sanctuaries of inviolate protection for all enemy forces and for all enemy purposes, no matter what depredations or assaults might come from there. Then I was denied the right to bomb the hydroelectric plants along the Yalu. The order was broadened to include every plant in North Korea which was capable of furnishing electric power to Manchuria and Siberia. Most incomprehensible of all was the refusal to let me bomb the important supply center of Racin, which was not in Manchuria or Siberia, but many miles from the border, in northeast Korea. Racin was a depot to which the Soviet Union forwarded supplies from Vladivostok for the North Korean Army. I felt that step-by-step my weapons were being taken away from me. MacArthur, Reminiscences, 365.

287 The two books use exactly the same words. MacArthur, Reminiscences, 365; Whitney, MacArthur: his Rendezvous with Destiny, 402.
recorded cheerily that summer that “we did scare hell out of the Ruskies … when we bombed Rashin”\(^{288}\) and patrolled in Korea across [from the] Manchurian border opposite Antung;” nevertheless, his diary entries do not suggest at all that he found the prohibition against attacking Rashin (or “Racin,” or “Najin”) to be the “most incomprehensible of all” the Joint Chiefs’ restrictions.\(^{289}\)

Stratemeyer directed the Fifth Air Force to continue “armed reconnaissance” flights with napalm, rockets, and machine guns to continue within the swath of territory five miles from the Chinese border which was off-limits to the B-29s.\(^{290}\) Furthermore, Stratemeyer met with MacArthur to “[discuss] hamstrung restrictions imposed by JCS.” At MacArthur’s direction, Stratemeyer wrote a draft radio message for MacArthur to send to the JCS.\(^{291}\) This message stated:

> [The] Joint Chiefs of Staff’s restrictions against crossing border convey to enemy full initiative in action against our aircraft near Yalu River. I view with grave alarm your instructions to me which give sanctuary to enemy equipped with modern jet fighters. … his numbers are increasing and if this trend continues unchecked, his air operations will soon constitute a most serious threat to overall operations of United Nations forces. I must be authorized to release my aircraft to strike on and above Manchurian soil. I cannot over emphasize the gravity and seriousness of the prospects in the light of the directives under which I am [sic] now forced to operate. I therefore strongly urge that I be given authority to dispatch my aircraft across the Manchurian border in pursuit and attack both in the air and on the ground. I consider this authority mandatory if I am to protect United Nations troops which are now engaged against Chinese Communist troops. [italics added]\(^{292}\)

\(^{288}\) Rashin was not actually bombed, although ineffective radar bombing had been done in that area on 12 August. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, 192.


\(^{290}\) Stratemeyer notified Vandenberg via redline and MacArthur via courier that these were continuing. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, *The Three Wars*, 263.

\(^{291}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, *The Three Wars*, 263.

\(^{292}\) Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, *The Three Wars*, 263.
The closing acknowledged that proper authority was the purview of Washington, not the Dai Ichi building, where MacArthur had held court since 1945. Stratemeyer’s draft was conclusive evidence disproving any notion that Stratemeyer had aimed to warn Washington of the war’s expansion.

The Joint Chiefs replied at 1647 Washington time (7 November in the theater, still 6 November in Washington) by renewing the postponement order and “urgently” asking for “your estimate of situation and reason for ordering bombing Yalu River bridges as indicated in telecom this date.” Historian Thomas Y’Blood summarized MacArthur’s reply as “alarmist and suddenly full of urgency,” and was totally in contradiction to the confident view he had given just days earlier.

The Joint Chiefs noted that “the situation” had “considerably changed from that reported in [the] last sentence [of] your [November 4 message] which was our last report from you.” Washington approved attacks on the Korean ends of the bridges, provided that neutral airspace was not violated, and the Joint Chiefs also asked that it be kept better informed of changes in the situation. According to MacArthur’s memoir, however:

[all that resulted was a modification [by the Joint Chiefs] of the order to permit the bombing of the “Korean end of the Yalu bridges.” I asked Stratemeyer to study the conditions under which the bombing of the Yalu was to be permitted. He reported: “It cannot be done – Washington must have known it cannot be done.”

293 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, The Three Wars, 264.
294 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 November 1950, The Three Wars, 267.
MacArthur did not venture to explain why Stratemeyer would reject the Joint Chiefs’ directive as impossible when its substance was the same as MacArthur’s own 5 November orders to destroy the Korean half of the Yalu’s bridges without flying over Chinese territory. Futrell explained that “[d]oubtless Stratemeyer did recognize that to attack the bridges without violating Manchurian territory would be a difficult to impossible task.”297 Yet this, too, cannot explain Stratemeyer reacting in different ways to the same command.

The bombers struck Sinuiju on 8 November. Seventy B-29s leveled the town with incendiary cluster bombs, and Stratemeyer sent word to MacArthur that “the town was gone.”298 But although three one-thousand pound bombs had been reported dropped “on the first over-water span of the Sinuiju-Antung bridge” and the result was “excellent,”299 the bridge was not destroyed and initial estimates proved to have been overly optimistic. The damage done to the bridges was less extensive than had been hoped.300

The next day, Navy dive bombers, too, were unable to destroy the rail bridge, although they did wreck the city’s highway bridge.301 Destroying the bridges, Blair wrote, was “a difficult, nearly hopeless task” involving an approach studded with Chinese anti-aircraft fire and patrolled by MiGs.302

299 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 8 November 1950, The Three Wars, 268.
301 Futrell, The United States Air Force in Korea, 224.
302 Blair, MacArthur, 299.
Worse, when B-29s returned on 13 November to try again, one of the attacking planes had encountered trouble when a bomb caught in the bomb bays; the plane’s attitude caused the bomb to fall upon Antung, China, across the border.\textsuperscript{303} Upon learning of this, Stratemeyer notified MacArthur and Vandenberg.\textsuperscript{304} This was the kind of situation that Stratemeyer had forewarned Washington about prior to the planned 7 November attack.

Stratemeyer told MacArthur that since the alleged incident was an accident, he was not greatly concerned.\textsuperscript{305} MacArthur evidently was, and he urged that Washington not be informed of the incident. “Strat,” MacArthur said, “I do not admit anything. We’ll make no report of this. […] I propose to fight it if we are called on for a report.”\textsuperscript{306} Stratemeyer agreed not to “admit too much myself,” but when he told MacArthur that he had notified Vandenberg, the commander’s response was to remark, “that’s too bad, Strat.”\textsuperscript{307} Stratemeyer then explained that the sensitive nature of the border and the issue of violations prompted his immediately notifying Washington, and then MacArthur forgave Stratemeyer for reporting it to Vandenberg.\textsuperscript{308}

Stratemeyer’s dilemma arose once more. He did not hide the incident of the hung bomb from Vandenberg, but “[s]ince General MacArthur indicated he was not going to report this, I did not list CINCFE – or O’Donnell – as an info addressee on the

\textsuperscript{303} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 13 November 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 280.
\textsuperscript{304} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 13 November 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 280.
\textsuperscript{305} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 13 November 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 280.
\textsuperscript{306} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 13 November 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 280.
\textsuperscript{307} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 13 November 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 280.
\textsuperscript{308} Stratemeyer wrote that “I told him that because of the border violations why it had to be done and MacArthur indicated that was all right.” Stratemeyer, diary entry for 13 November 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 280.
following redline to Vandenberg, but did send them both copies of the dispatch” explaining the incident.  The result was that both men knew the details of the incident, that MacArthur knew what Vandenberg had been told, and that Vandenberg remained unaware of how much MacArthur knew of the events. It could be guessed from Stratemeyer’s actions that he felt that he could balance his conflicting duties by keeping both superiors informed while giving fuller information to MacArthur.

The rail bridge at Sinuiju stood, and Chinese traffic continued to flow. Of the Yalu bridges, MacArthur had been particularly interested in the destruction of Sinuiju’s two main bridges. In the months to come, Stratemeyer would launch more attacks against Sinuiju’s link with China.

Yet, inexplicably, MacArthur claimed that the 8 November attack against Sinuiju’s link to China had succeeded. The following day, he “optimistically told Washington he could ‘deny reinforcements coming across the Yalu in sufficient strength’ to pose any real threats to his forces.” Subsequently, unaware that large numbers of Chinese troops and substantial supplies were already in North Korea, he also claimed that the attacks “had ‘isolated the battlefield.'”

ON MACARTHUR’S “BALLTEAM”

In the months between MacArthur’s November altercation with the Joint Chiefs over attacking the Sinuiju bridges and MacArthur’s relief the following April, Stratemeyer remained dedicated to serving as “a member of the ballteam.” Stratemeyer was, in the view of FEAF Vice Commander Major General Lawrence Craigie, overly generous with awards to his men (a tendency which Stratemeyer shared with MacArthur). Partridge believed that he was perhaps too tolerant of personnel who were underperforming. If these were foibles of Stratemeyer’s, they must be viewed in the context of his unquestionable faith and confidence in his personnel. At the operational level, Partridge worked to ensure that Fifth Air Force’s support continued to be effective and useful as the UN armies reacted to and eventually countered the Chinese assault.

In the second week of November, Partridge was not optimistic that his request for “hot pursuit,” would be approved. Seeking to “to make our position crystal clear,” Partridge also requested permission to strafe Chinese air bases. Partridge’s request climbed to higher levels of authority, and on 13 November 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson told representatives of other UN nations that the US might allow “hot

312 Stratemeyer had used this expression when confirming that O’Donnell would use B-29s to support ground troops. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 20 July 1950, The Three Wars, 80.
316 Partridge, diary entry for 6 November 1950, Korean Diary.
pursuit. Policy-makers in Washington worried about the agonizing possibility of a wider and bloodier war, and concern was matched or surpassed in other UN member capitols. The reactions of Britain and France were so negative that by 24 November Defense Secretary George Marshall dropped the idea. Partridge’s pilots would have to fight Chinese MiGs on the enemy’s terms.

Also on 24 November Stratemeyer, joined by MacArthur, Partridge, Walker, and others, toured headquarters of the 24th Division; Stratemeyer and MacArthur also watched a UN parachute drop into Pyongyang. Stratemeyer was thrilled upon his return to Tokyo. “[T]his salute of my sixtieth birthday by the greatest American alive … is something I’ll never forget,” Stratemeyer wrote, remembering fondly that MacArthur had presented a cake prepared at the American Embassy and invited him to sit at his left at a table with seats only for the two of them.

“To me,” Stratemeyer wrote, “this was the highlight of my military career.” To the diary he confided his ongoing esteem for the Supreme Commander:

For the record, I make this statement: - General of the Army Douglas MacArthur is the most courageous, brilliant, valiant of men, and the greatest leader I have ever seen or known. In all my career, I have never come in contact with a mind and manner equivalent to his, and, with it all, he is human and constantly thinks of those who work for him. As I’ve said before, “God bless him.”

317 Futrell, The United States Air Force In Korea, 223.
318 Truman’s memoirs enunciate this concern. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, 463.
319 Futrell, The United States Air Force In Korea, 223. It is important to remember that, while American ground troops were accompanied by some troops from other UN members, the air combat was almost exclusively American. Therefore restrictions imposed on airpower presented added difficulties to the American fliers but did not adversely affect many servicemen from the other UN members’ contingents in Korea. The other UN members were willing to place restrictions on American airmen for the sake of limiting the Korean War.
320 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 24 November 1950, The Three Wars, 299.
322 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 24 November 1950, The Three Wars, 299.
Sadly, what Stratemeyer noted as the highlight of his career was also the eve of the Chinese assault that would dash all hopes to a swift end to the Korean War. But the 24 November birthday party evoked in Stratemeyer an esteem that was, if anything, larger than it had been before.

The following day, China’s Second Campaign slammed into the UN forces which MacArthur had expected to soon complete his victory and return home by Christmas. Instead, UN forces were forced back deep into South Korea, and X Corps forces fought their way out of difficult positions in the Chosin Reservoir and were evacuated.\(^3\) Air power had to be used to destroy supplies, equipment, and bridges abandoned by retreating UN forces.\(^4\) Although Air Force Chief of Staff Hoyt Vandenberg supported Stratemeyer’s advice to consider the use of atomic weapons at the close of November 1950 and the Truman administration itself entertained the concept the following spring, nuclear weapons were never used.\(^5\) China had proclaimed that its forces in Korea were composed of “volunteers,” and since the US and other UN members wanted to avoid war with China, the fiction stood.\(^6\)

By 27 November, Partridge was concerned, because of the bad situation on the ground, about the dangerous way in which the Eighth Army and X Corps had allowed themselves to separate, and because of continued orders to the UN ground troops to

---


\(^5\) TS 4060 from Vandenberg to Stratemeyer, Vandenberg Papers; Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 59.

\(^6\) “[I]t has been clearly established that Chinese Communist troops are also opposing UN forces.” Since China regarded its forces in Korea as “volunteers” rather than acknowledging that they were PLA, and so the US was able to do the same and prevent the war from extending to China. Secret memo by the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency to the President, 1 November 1950, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950. Korea. Volume VII* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950), 1024. (accessed 27 February 2008). http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1950v07

71
advance. 327 Partridge responded with renewed efforts to improve the communications system, an important issue since the separated ground commands’ link to each other and to their air support was through the efforts of the Fifth Air Force’s personnel and equipment.

Partridge warned that in Tokyo the dire reality of the new attack was not sufficiently understood. “I feel that the situation is more critical than General Stratemeyer realizes and I sent him a Stratline 328 message with my own estimation of the situation.” 329 He called Stratemeyer early in the evening of 27 November and sent a Stratline message a few hours afterward. 330 The message noted that the enemy forces, strong and skilled at night infiltrations, were pushing UN forces into making “a general withdrawal over the entire front,” and the Fifth Air Force headquarters in Pyongyang was being prepared for evacuation. 331 Stratemeyer received the message but was livid when he learned that a copy of it had been sent to a liaison officer in the Far East Command. This had been done on the authority of General Crabb who Stratemeyer browbeat:

> in very plain language told General Crabb that I didn’t like it – that [it] was a violation of confidence between me and my commanders and that in the future any personal message to me would not be passed out of his headquarters

327 Partridge, diary entry for 27 November 1950, Korean Diary.
328 “Stratline” was a term Stratemeyer used for high-priority messages he sent to his subordinates; Partridge used the term here for a message directed to Stratemeyer.
329 Partridge, diary entry for 27 November 1950, Korean Diary.
331 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 27 November 1950, The Three Wars, 309-10. As noted in the introduction, Partridge moved the Fifth Air Force headquarters to be near the headquarters of Eighth Army. His Vice Commander, Major General Edward J. Timberlake, had already begun moving an advanced group there, in preparation for the rest of headquarters’ arrival. Partridge, diary entry for 19 November 1950, Korean Diary.
without my personal approval. Of course, Crabb said he was sorry, but that doesn’t help matters.”

Stratemeyer quickly called Hickey, getting his assurance “to treat it as strictly a personal message from Partridge to me and not in any sense as an official message as far as the Far East Command is concerned.”

Stratemeyer did notify Vandenberg the following day that Partridge had reported that the “[g]round situation on [the] right flank of Eighth Army [is] bad.” Vandenberg was anxious to protect Fifth Air Force, because he believed that its destruction could mean the loss not only of Korea but also possibly of Japan as well. Vandenberg’s tone seems to have been non-committal, assuring Stratemeyer that SAC had been “on a constant state of readiness for some time,” but suggesting that the Fifth Air Force protect itself through dispersal of its forces rather than the commitment of additional ones.

On 30 November Stratemeyer spoke with MacArthur, carrying with him two redlines he intended to send Vandenberg. One proposed that RB-45 jet reconnaissance aircraft be used to run high-altitude reconnaissance of Manchurian airbases to prepare for possible strikes to neutralize the new Communist air strength.

332 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 27 November 1950, The Three Wars, 309.
333 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 27 November 1950, The Three Wars, 309.
335 Vandenberg expressed concern that the crowded USAF airbases were potentially vulnerable targets if the strong PLAAF forces present in Manchuria chose to attack them in “a Pearl Harbor type” attack. Stratemeyer, Redline TS 108 from Vandenberg to Stratemeyer, diary entry for 29 November 1950, The Three Wars, 311.
336 VC 0459 CG from Vandenberg to Stratemeyer, 30 November 1950, Vandenberg Papers; Redline 108 from Vandenberg to Stratemeyer, 28 November 1950, Vandenberg Papers, Washington, D.C.
The other requested that more SAC groups be prepared for deployment in Korea, and that “this augmentation should include atomic capabilities.”

MacArthur, who was considering the possible introduction of Formosan ground forces to the war, hearing the two proposed messages, said he could not concur in the first; the second message went to Washington. It may have been a moment of caution that prompted MacArthur to object to the B-45 missions. A reconnaissance mission flown by a jet – and of a bomber design – violating Communist airspace might seem to be a sufficiently hostile act to provoke a major Communist response.

Stratemeyer thought MacArthur, who had just returned from a meeting with Walker and Almond for which he had called them away from their commands at a critical moment, seemed depressed. The following day, it was 30 November in the United States. Truman feared it might be the dawn of the third world war, and he remarked to reporters that the use of nuclear weapons was being considered; a concerned British Prime Minister Clement Atlee convinced Truman to backpedal. Truman was disinterested in expanding the war, and it was fundamentally worried that a Korean War might become a world war.

UN forces, being pushed back by the Chinese, needed to stabilize and hold a line to avoid being pushed off the peninsula. MacArthur conferred with Army Chief of Staff J. Lawton Collins on 4 December 1950; Stratemeyer was present and noted the

“unequared and superior statesmanlike discussion that emanated from General MacArthur,” who was considering a possible UN withdrawal to two beachheads, one around Inchon and Seoul in South Korea and the other at Hungnam on North Korea’s eastern coast.  

Stratemeyer supported the idea of withdrawals because they would stretch the enemy’s lines of communication, and “the farther they become extended, the more we can kill.” However, Stratemeyer argued for the Eighth Army and X Corps to be joined in a single position, even if it meant retreating to the Pusan area. An orderly retreat into South Korea would prevent the Fifth Air Force and the Eighth Army from losing equipment; it would shorten the UN’s LOC and it would lengthen that of the Chinese; and it would offer the UN the opportunity to return to the offensive. Furthermore, Stratemeyer was “convinced, as were all present, that we could hold the Pusan perimeter almost indefinitely.”

In conferences with Collins on 7 December, MacArthur stated that a Chinese advance across the 38th parallel might be answered by a UN withdrawal to Pusan. Stratemeyer was confident that his argument was responsible for this change in plan:

I am convinced that the memorandum that I sent to General MacArthur last night caused a complete reversal of the decisions made on 4 December – to the one which is in entire agreement with my memorandum. … Again, it is my opinion

343 If these withdrawals were to have taken place, Eighth Army was to have occupied the former and X Corps the latter. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 4 December 1950, The Three Wars, 325-6.
344 Stratemeyer, memo from Stratemeyer to MacArthur, diary entry for 6 December 1950, The Three Wars, 336.
347 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 December 1950, The Three Wars, 338.
that my memorandum played an important part in the new approved plan for Korea.\textsuperscript{348}

Stratemeyer may also have influenced MacArthur in his planning. However, the Joint Chiefs had also argued that a single front was preferable to a pair of disconnected beachheads,\textsuperscript{349} so it is unclear whether Stratemeyer had as great an influence on MacArthur as he evidently thought he did according to the 7 December diary excerpt above.

The harsh winter saw a lull in attacks against Sinuiju’s bridges. Destroying a bridge would be of little import as long as the river itself was frozen. Furthermore, the approaches to the bridges were just as tortuous as they had been in November; Stratemeyer wrote that MacArthur “couldn’t give me the green light on violating the air space over Manchuria any more than I could give it to Partridge and Partridge could give it to his wing commanders.”\textsuperscript{350}

Partridge noted in his diary in mid December, when UN personnel were struggling to recover from a dangerous situation, that

Gen. MacArthur proceed[ed] to extol at great length and high superlatives, the virtues of the X Corps and the magnitude of their accomplishments. He indicated without equivocation that no criticism could be leveled at them. He absolved them from blame for anything which might have happened.\textsuperscript{351}

In the dark days of the Chinese attack, MacArthur’s rhetoric remained grandiose.

Walker died in a jeep crash on 23 December. Partridge was saddened by the loss of his friend, and concerned for the troops about the “absence of the Army’s leader

\textsuperscript{348} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 December 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 339.
\textsuperscript{349} Futrell, \textit{The United States Air Force in Korea}, 240.
\textsuperscript{350} Stratemeyer, diary entry for 22 December 1950, \textit{The Three Wars}, 359.
\textsuperscript{351} Partridge, diary entry for 11 December 1950, \textit{Korean Diary}. 
at this particularly critical time.” Fortunately, Partridge’s efforts also led to strong cooperation with the incoming Eighth Army commander General Matthew B. Ridgway. UN resistance stiffened under Ridgway’s leadership.

Late in 1950, Air Force Secretary Finletter had assigned University of Colorado President Dr. Robert L. Stearns to travel to the Far East and evaluate the USAF contribution to the war effort. Just before Christmas of 1950, Stratemeyer wrote Stearns in praise of MacArthur:

I have a request to make of you personally which is that upon your return to Washington you emphasize, if you agree with me, to those in authority the greatness of Douglas MacArthur. … I know of no individual in our armed services today who more correctly utilizes our three armed services as a team than does he. In my opinion his generalship, his leadership, his command ability, and the admiration and loyalty of all those who work for him are outstanding. Our people should not let the recent reverse on the ground that happened in Korea in any way hurt him professionally.

MacArthur and Stratemeyer responded similarly when, early in January 1951, Vice Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Nathan Twining (in Vandenberg’s absence) wrote Stratemeyer to reiterate restrictions which had been placed on American air power because the UN had not declared China an “aggressor” in the war.  MacArthur

---


353 Ridgway wrote later that when inter-service frictions arose, they were less the “jealous quarrels” trumpeted in newspaper headlines than the “product of honest convictions of honorable men of broad experience and lifetime service.” Furthermore, he cited Partridge’s cooperation as evidence that “in an overseas combat zone these ‘differences’ almost never arise.” Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway (Ret.), *The Korean War: How We Met the Challenge, How All-Out Asian War Was Averted, Why MacArthur Was Dismissed, Why Today’s War Objectives Must be Limited* (New York: Da Capo, 1967), 103.

354 Lewis, *The American Culture of War*, 111.

355 Crane, “Raiding the Beggar’s Pantry,” 900.


remarked that it seemed like “just a brush-off,” to which Stratemeyer concurred.

MacArthur then said,

Strat, I can’t understand why the people back in Washington don’t understand the combined use of air power and Navy power. We simply cannot afford to meet the enemy in Asia — or in Europe — on the ground. By the utilization of air power and Navy power, and, in combination, our great potential could be made to be felt.358

“This is a thought,” Stratemeyer confided to his diary, “in which I agree …. I left General MacArthur’s office with that feeling of great admiration for a great leader and a great man.”359

MacArthur and Stratemeyer agreed the following month that, since it was useful for operations in the Far East, Guam should remain under its command rather than be brought under the responsibilities of the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Command.360 Retaining Guam fit into the context of MacArthur’s desire to keep the resources already under his control and bring new ones, notably the Seventh Fleet, into his hand as well.361

Ridgway began inching back up the peninsula with the forces that had been pushed back in the winter.362 Cooperation with Partridge continued, and despite bad weather and long transit distances from base to battle area, air support was given

---------------------------
360 Stratemeyer, radio message from Stratemeyer to Twining, diary entry for 20 February 1951, Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer, 427.
361 Stratemeyer’s message to Twining added that MacArthur was unhappy with the “present tenuous naval cmd [command] relationships” and wanted the Seventh Fleet brought temporarily under his command. Stratemeyer, radio message from Stratemeyer to Twining, diary entry for 20 February 1951, Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer, 427.
362 Lewis, The American Culture of War, 113.
during Operation Killer in late February and Operation Ripper in March. Seoul was liberated in mid-March, and Fifth Air Force’s support was found to have wrought more havoc on the Chinese forces (at this point withdrawing) than the pilots had themselves estimated. Ridgway’s advance, however, was halted not by overwhelming enemy strength, but by a change in direction from Washington: the political objective would again be only the defense and preservation of South Korea.

With the Spring, the importance of the Yalu bridges renewed. The bridges, especially the railroad bridge, were important targets to prevent the transportation of Chinese materiel – and men – into North Korea. Stratemeyer considered the railroad bridges particularly important because effective shipment by train would be very difficult to improvise without a rail bridge, whereas truck traffic could proceed across a pontoon bridge or across a permanent bridge.

Stratemeyer ordered more bombing against Sinuiju’s bridges:

It is desired that the Korean ends of the key bridges over the Yalu River be taken under attack and destroyed, starting at Sinuiju, as soon as possible utilizing Tarzon bombs. It is desired that careful coordination and planning be effected between FEAF Bomber Command and Fifth Air Force to assure the greatest possible effect with greatest safety to friendly aircraft. Power stations and dams will not repeat not be attacked.

---

This message implied that attacks on Sinuiju be conducted wholly with 12,000-pound Tarzon bombs.\textsuperscript{368} Five days later, on 28 March, Stratemeyer clarified that implication by notifying Partridge and O'Donnell that he had “not intended to limit these attacks to the utilization of Tarzon bombs,” which were relic munitions of World War II unfamiliar to the crews now attempting to use them, and which lacked enough destructive force to destroy the sturdily constructed bridges.\textsuperscript{369}

On 21 March, Washington had notified MacArthur that it intended to begin negotiations to end the conflict in Korea. MacArthur reacted by releasing a communiqué declaring the Chinese military unable to achieve their goals, despite “the inhibitions which now restrict the activity of the United Nations forces.”\textsuperscript{370} Effectively, MacArthur called upon the Chinese commander to surrender.\textsuperscript{371} MacArthur claimed that he had written this before getting word of Washington's peace initiative, but the effect was to thwart the attempts at negotiations.

When Defense Secretary George C. Marshall expressed displeasure at MacArthur's actions, Stratemeyer was puzzled. Stratemeyer told MacArthur that he “could not understand” Marshall. “Why, Strat,” MacArthur answered, “that old man has gone nuts.”\textsuperscript{372}

\textsuperscript{368} Tarzon bombs, like Razon bombs, were early guided weapons. Razon bombing had been suspended in December 1950; overall in Korea, Razon bombs had a controllability rate of less than 70%, although this was improving. Bombing with the new bombs encountered many problems and was ended in May 1951. Y’Blood, \textit{The Three Wars}, 293 footnote #142.


\textsuperscript{370} MacArthur, \textit{Reminiscences}, 387.

\textsuperscript{371} MacArthur, \textit{Reminiscences}, 388.

\textsuperscript{372} “[T]hat old man” was in fact a year younger than MacArthur. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 3 April 1951, \textit{The Three Wars}, 464; Stratemeyer, diary entry for 3 April 1951, \textit{The Three Wars}, 465 footnote #169.
On 7 April 1951, 23 B-29s attacked the railroad bridge at Sinuiju. Interception by MiGs led to the destruction of two Communist jets and damage of two others, although a B-29 was downed and all but one of the crew lost.373 “Results at this time are unknown. I hope and pray we got this bridge.”374 They did not get the bridge.

Another attack would have to be made. Before it occurred, Stratemeyer was startled by news from Washington. Stratemeyer wrote in his diary:

To say that I was stunned - and shocked - expresses it lightly. Even this morning (12 April 1951), after an almost sleepless night, I cannot understand why our President could be so wrongly influenced as to remove General MacArthur. To me, it means capitulation of our government and all that it has stood for to our “Pinkish” State Department, the British government, and Moscow. Every Red, regardless of his place in the world, was gleeful at this drastic order.375

In the atmosphere of the Far East, in the shadow of Douglas MacArthur, and in the heat of a war that in no way could seem limited to the men risked in combat, the order replacing MacArthur must surely have seemed an impossible surprise.

Admiral Joy and Stratemeyer promptly visited MacArthur to express their condolences. MacArthur’s countenance was friendly and gracious, and Stratemeyer wrote that MacArthur “warned us both to watch our steps because of our loyalty to him and because of the work that we had done for him.”376 MacArthur also told the two men that their pending promotions would likely be cancelled because of their loyalty for him,

373 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 April 1951, The Three Wars, 471.
374 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 7 April 1951, The Three Wars, 471.
375 This entry is for 11 April even though it was written the following day. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 11 April 1951, The Three Wars, 476.
376 This entry was made on 12 April but described the events of 11 April. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 11 April 1951, The Three Wars, 477.
neither man was awarded the fourth star rank for which MacArthur had nominated them.  

Partridge apparently received the news with relative equanimity, although he too had been startled by it:

[N]aturally the flap was tremendous. The manner in which the relief was made was summary, to say the least. … Needless to say, almost everyone was sunned [sic] by this turn of events. In reviewing the messages which the President sent and which were released to the press, it would appear that Truman feels that MacArthur has talked publicly on matters of State Department policy when he should have remained quiet and, in fact, had been ordered directly to do so.

Partridge had been taken aback by the method in which MacArthur had been relieved, and this had indeed been complicated by the fact that the press learned of his removal before he did.  

Ridgway, too, was surprised when Secretary of the Army Pace (who was then with him at the front) relayed that he had just learned that MacArthur had been relieved and Ridgway was now to become Supreme Commander of the South Pacific.

One of the largest air battles of the war occurred on 12 April, when FEAF bombers and escorts battled 100 or more MiG fighters. The bombing results were vexing to Stratemeyer, who was reeling from the previous day’s news:

---


378 Partridge, diary entry for 11 April 1951, Korean Diary.

379 Blair, MacArthur, 317.


Apparently we failed to get the bridge. … I will send a redline to Vandenberg early tomorrow morning reference this. … It looks as though we have another “rubber” bridge which I intend to get.  

Although the photo assessment showed excellent bomb patterns, the bridge was not substantially damaged. A quarter of the heavily escorted B-29s involved had been destroyed or damaged; it was a sobering loss rate, and the destruction or damage of a similar proportion of the intercepting MiGs seemed little consolation.  

The bridges connecting Sinuiju and Antung, despite repeated attacks, were never destroyed and traffic continued to flow. On 16 April 1951, Stratemeyer told Hickey “that it was my opinion that 60 to 70 percent of all personnel and supplies came into North Korea from Manchuria over the Antung-Sinuiju bridge.” Sinuiju’s railroad bridge was a stubborn target, having resisted repeated attempts using conventional and guided bombs dropped during multiple raids. 

Stratemeyer’s heart attack would come just weeks later, causing his eventual retirement from the military after three and a half decades of service. Historian Thomas Y’Blood described Stratemeyer as being:

intensely loyal to his superiors. In MacArthur’s case, [Stratemeyer’s] loyalty was perhaps carried to an extreme, but [he] was neither the first nor the last to fall under the MacArthur spell. He was not one, however, to buckle under whatever whims a senior officer might have.

---

382 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 12 April 1951, The Three Wars, 477.
383 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 13 April 1951, The Three Wars, 478.
384 The American force consisted of 36 B-29s (one of which carried a Tarzon bomb), 34 F-86s, and 54 F-84s. post-strike photos were taken by an RB-45. Three Superfortresses were destroyed and seven more were damaged in clashes with MiGs. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 13 April 1951, The Three Wars, 478.
385 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 16 April 1951, The Three Wars, 481.
There was an inner circle of MacArthur confidants, and historian Clayton James argued that Stratemeyer remained, despite all his loyalty, in the “second echelon” of followers, behind Almond and intelligence chief Willoughby. Of this list of subsidiary confidants, Stratemeyer (and MacArthur’s personal pilot) showed “extreme devotion” almost unparalleled by even MacArthur’s most notable defenders.

MacArthur and his top airmen forcefully emphasized resisting the aggression, and initially Truman had gone along with this. Ultimately, however, the President and his administration, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, came down against risking escalation, and because MacArthur failed to conform he was removed. “What we faced in the attack on Korea,” Truman wrote in his 1956 presidential memoir, “was the ominous threat of a third world war.” Years afterward, Finletter offered one explanation for MacArthur’s ouster:

I think it was right. He and the President had different concepts as to the handling of the war and this was a case where the President’s views were the controlling ones. It was necessary to get somebody who was in accord with the President’s attitude on the matter.

They were determined to keep the war in Korea limited so as to prevent a general war from breaking out. Washington was particularly concerned that the war would expand to include the Soviet Union as a formal belligerent. Steps thought likely to drastically widen the war and bring Soviet involvement were met with concern in

389 James, The Years of MacArthur: Triumph & Disaster, 384.
390 Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope, 463.
Washington, although there was less fear of the prospect of Chinese entry.393 “I was disturbed to find General MacArthur’s views and mine so far apart,” Truman wrote in 1956, “General MacArthur was ready to risk general war. I was not.”394

MacArthur, however, did not consider the probability of a general war with the Soviet Union to be great, but rather a remote possibility. Historian Clayton James wrote that MacArthur “abhorred the possibility of a war with the Soviet Union as much as did his superiors in Washington.”395 During the war, Stratemeyer viewed the situation as MacArthur did.396

During his retirement, during which his health suffered from a second heart attack, Stratemeyer continued to voice his opinion. He called on Americans to “call Red China’s bluff,” to organize an “American Foreign Legion” of anti-Communist troops in the Far East, and to “reserve [the nation’s] real power for the real enemy, ‘the Soviet,’ and not fritter it away on Korean type actions.”397

---


394 Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, 416.


396 Stratemeyer, diary entry for 4 November 1950, The Three Wars, 256.

A POST-MORTEM ON RESTRICTIONS

Through extensive experience, dedication, and talent, Partridge retired in 1959 as a full general, the rank which had eluded Stratemeyer. Partridge participated in several Air Force oral history interviews, which recorded some of his recollections and opinions from his service. In the course of these several interviews in the decades following the Korean War, Partridge retrospectively reconsidered the merits of the restrictions Washington had imposed on airmen fighting in Korea.

The longest of these interviews, conducted over a period of three days in April 1974 by historians Tom Sturm and Hugh Ahmann, explored Partridge’s entire military career, from his entering the West Point class of 1920 to his role as commander of the North American Air Defense four decades later. Another, shorter, interview covering the Korean War era was held in 1978; Partridge mentioned his Korean War service in an Air Force historical questionnaire in 1966 as well.

He was reluctant during these interviews, however, to delve into the political debates which he had scrupulously avoided when he served. The strong relationships Partridge had with the US ground leaders in Korea were probably what made political infighting of no interest to him. Partridge had, during the war, supported a more aggressive prosecution of the air war, but he had done so because he believed it would protect his airmen from growing Chinese air strength that UN restrictions shielded. He also believed it would “make our position [in the war] crystal clear.”398 In 1966, Partridge asserted again that:

[i]n spite of all that has been said about the employment of air power in Korea, it is my firm conviction that air power was decisive in the early stages of that war

and that it could have been decisive later. In the first days of the war in Korea, the U.S. Army was in desperate straits and was repeatedly saved by the timely assistance of the Air Force.\(^{399}\)

During the war, Walker had said that American airpower prevented Korea from being a catastrophe at its outset, and on repeated occasions Partridge referred to this statement when he asserted that airpower had made a decisive contribution.\(^{400}\) Given Partridge’s successful and extensive cooperation with ground commanders during the war, it would seem that Partridge had not necessarily meant the word “decisive” to imply that ground troops and combat would be unneeded to secure victory.

In his 1974 oral history, Partridge discussed his superiors in the theater, Stratemeyer and MacArthur. Partridge had known Stratemeyer since the 1930s, and in his 1974 oral history Partridge noted that he and Stratemeyer were:

very good and personal friends. He [was] just too kind; he [was] just too sure that everybody [was] honest, straightforward, and so on. He [was] far too prone to praise people when they [didn’t] deserve it. I have a lot of decorations, and he gave me quite a few of them. I thought he was overdoing it, but that’s his way of commanding, but just patting people on the back. I have a high regard for him.\(^{401}\)

Regarding MacArthur in the same interview, Partridge replied:

He was just absolutely a remarkable man. He had a tremendous memory .... He spoke extraordinarily well, if dramatically, and very impressively. He was bold


\(^{401}\) Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 662.
when he should be, and he knew when to get out, and so on. I was very much impressed.402

This was the most extensive and fulsome praise Partridge gave MacArthur during the interview. Although the description of MacArthur was positive, it did not resemble Partridge’s own description of his regard for his friend Stratemeyer, nor did it approach the esteem which Stratemeyer lavished on MacArthur.

Partridge did nonetheless defend MacArthur’s reputation from possible criticisms. The Eighth Army’s unpreparedness, and the tragedies which resulted from it, might have been laid at MacArthur’s feet. Partridge confirmed that MacArthur had indeed been aware of the weaknesses of Eighth Army, but this weakness was not MacArthur’s fault. He had been aware of the pre-war deterioration of the Eighth Army, but “[h]e didn’t allow it to happen. It happened in spite of anything anybody could do about it.”403

Partridge pointed to “peculiar policies” in the Army which encouraged soldiers to “travel, get educated, and see the world,” producing troops “interested in almost anything else but getting combat-ready.”404 Eighth Army had undeniably faced serious challenges, ranging from poor discipline to inadequate space for training in Japan of understrength Eighth Army units.405 Partridge mentioned that Walker worked to emphasize training and said that Major General William Kean commanding the 25th division

403 The italics were underlined in the original transcript. Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 582-3.
405 Lewis, The American Culture of War, 92.
was getting along to where he could have regimental maneuvers and not fly apart. The rest of them were still trying to get up to where they could have *battalion* maneuvers. [italics as underlined in original]406

However, Kean’s force was an exceptional case. The Eighth Army’s troops were generally unprepared for the war.

Partridge was also asked if MacArthur understood the use and capability of airpower. Partridge replied, “Yes, he sure did. He attributed his success in coming from Australia to Japan [in World War II] to the Fifth Air Force. The Fifth Air Force could do no wrong, I'll tell you.”407 However, Partridge did not delve into MacArthur’s use of airpower during the Korean War. When asked for his opinion of MacArthur’s use of airpower, Partridge’s answers sounded positive but vague, lacking any specific examples of MacArthur’s understanding of the use of airpower. Since Partridge was not involved in the Fifth Air Force’s work in World War II but commanded it during the Korean War, his answer was all the more puzzling. The interviewers did not press this issue, instead choosing to move on to the next item on their list of topics to discuss.

Later in the interview, Partridge was presented with a question about MacArthur’s views on war: “What’s your judgment of MacArthur’s statement that ‘There is no substitute for victory’?” Partridge replied simply, “[that is] absolutely right. Next?”408 Ahmann next asked if this view was “a general consensus of the military in Korea?” Partridge answered “sure.”409 It was one of MacArthur’s favorite expressions, and he

407 Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 582.
408 Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 650.
409 The game was between the Army and Air Force, and Stratemeyer and Walker had jointly contributed a statement that “Football, as well as other sports, has many attributes which are vital to success, such as teamwork, determination to win, and clean, hard sportsmanship.” It continued that “[g]ood clean athletic
had used it many times before his famous 1951 letter to Representative Joseph Martin which catalyzed his relief from command.\footnote{Ridgway, \textit{The Korean War}, 144; Partridge, \textit{Subject Letters}.} Partridge had referred to one of these other times the expression had been used.\footnote{Before the war, the “Rice Bowl” was a football game in Tokyo between the Army and Air Force teams; Stratemeyer and Walker had jointly contributed a statement that about the importance of “teamwork, determination to win, and clean, hard sportsmanship.” A photo of MacArthur, with the caption, “There is no substitute to victory,” also appeared in materials related to the game. Partridge, \textit{Subject Letters}.}

Ahmann clarified that he was referring to the letter to Representative Martin stating that the military was being constrained; Ahmann asked if military personnel in the Korean theater agreed with MacArthur that the military was being constrained by politicians. Such talk, Partridge said, did “[n]ot [happen] around me. We were winning our part of it [the war]. All you can do is do your best, and let the boss figure out what to do next. When they say ‘whoa’ you have to whoa, stop, regroup, and try to find out what you do next.”\footnote{Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 651.} Partridge said that, hearing that MacArthur had been relieved:

> I was disappointed. We were getting along fine. All of a sudden, there he goes. … I knew he had been in to talk to the President [at Wake], but I didn’t know what happened.\footnote{Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 641.}

This closely reflected Partridge’s reaction to the news in 1951.

Strurm asked if Partridge had tried to use airpower beyond the Yalu. He answered, “I didn’t, but MacArthur did, and look where he landed. That’s what he wanted to do. He wanted to attack with air across the Yalu River. He was right, too, I
might tell you.”  

414 Partridge, interview, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, 596.


your question.”417 Partridge also noted MacArthur’s commitment to achieve victory, to “win or bust,” because “he was determined to end it with a victory.”418

One of the interviewers419 asked, “What were your feelings on going north of [the] Yalu at that time? It may have changed since then.”420 Partridge replied with a profoundly changed view from the one he had given four years earlier:

I thought that we were going to put into effect a policy of hot pursuit, and we talked about it, but I don’t think it ever jelled …. If you were attacked you were allowed to press home the attack on the enemy, but as for going over the Yalu and past the Yalu to make attacks on airfields and things like that, no.421

Interestingly, he remembered having been more hopeful that “hot pursuit” would be authorized than he seemed to have been at the time, according to his war diary.422 Furthermore, he implied that crossing the Yalu would have been a mistake.423 When asked if he had supported attacks of this type, he answered, “I didn’t have a chance to and I wouldn’t have unless I’d been forced to do it [because] we had a bigger war on our hands right here without going out looking for more.”424

With regard to confronting Chinese airpower in a more unrestricted way, his 1978 remarks contrast with his war diary. In the postwar, he debated the merits and dangers of neutralizing the PLAAF and thereby risking a larger war. Through the mid-1970s,

418 The “it” Partridge uses probably refers to the war in Korea, although conceivably it might refer to MacArthur’s own career. Gen. Partridge, interview, 16 February 1978, Roll 0000033545, 290, 309.
422 Gen Partridge, diary entry for 6 November 1950, Korean Diary.
423 Gen Earle E. Partridge, interview, 16 February 1978, Roll 0000033545, transcript, 303.
Partridge had agreed with MacArthur that UN airpower should have been allowed a freer hand.\textsuperscript{425} The postwar statements of Stratemeyer and MacArthur were positive and respectful, but they did include critiques free of the effusive, almost worshipful praise which Stratemeyer had so often put in his own war diary when describing MacArthur.

Stratemeyer’s opposition to restrictions coincided with his subjective view of MacArthur. Partridge had disliked restrictions because in his view they needlessly endangered his airmen. The steady constancy of this priority – his airmen and cooperation with personnel they helped on the ground – helped Partridge be more objective in his perspective. Because Partridge was objective, he was capable of reassessing the restrictions and drawing his own conclusion.

\textsuperscript{425} Partridge sympathized with an unrestricted air effort during the war and again in 1974, and in 1966 he had expressed confidence that airpower could have been decisive if restrictions had been lifted. His view changed between 1974 and 1978; his opinion of airpower in Korea changed, but whether the outcome of the Vietnam War impacted this change is unclear.
Airpower helped preserve South Korea and it helped assist and sustain ground forces fighting Communist troops. MacArthur tried to use airpower to pursue victory, even though the UN restricted his actions and the US government at home struggled to define its objective in the war.

General MacArthur had faith in airpower. During the war, he was confident: that B-29s could be used successfully against ground targets; that the five SAC B-29 groups on loan to the Far East were more useful there under his charge than in the United States as deterrence against the Soviet Union; that airpower – even working under UN restrictions – could destroy the Yalu bridges, and thereby isolate the Korean battle area from the North’s Chinese patron.

Stratemeyer had closer contact with MacArthur and saw the war much as MacArthur did. As FEAF commander, Stratemeyer was more likely than Partridge to have been drawn into the political fray that accompanied the military struggle. The diplomatic talents which had served Stratemeyer so well during World War II fell away when he sided with MacArthur and other hard-liners during his service in Korea. This continued during the retirement induced by his heart attack shortly after MacArthur’s relief. MacArthur’s unique personality and charisma had a powerful effect, and Stratemeyer was not the only person drawn into MacArthur’s orbit.

---

426 MacArthur’s view was indicated by his reluctance to return SAC groups in late September on the grounds that they would be useful in a campaign into North Korea, despite the lack of appropriate targets. Stratemeyer, diary entry for 27 September 1950, The Three Wars, 210.

427 Although he had criticized the restrictions and in his memoir pointed out Stratemeyer’s criticism of them as well, MacArthur declared that with air power he could “deny reinforcements coming across the Yalu.” Appleman, South to the Natkong, North to the Yalu, 765.


position necessarily placed him between MacArthur and Washington. As these confrontations increased, Stratemeyer seemed convinced that only a fool or a traitor would attempt to find a “substitute for victory.” Stratemeyer was a dedicated member of MacArthur’s camp. Disinterested in political battles, Partridge successfully avoided the controversy surrounding MacArthur. When Partridge requested that restrictions on airpower be lifted, it was because he considered restrictions operationally problematic.430

It is clear now that the Soviet Union was disinterested in entering the war, and MacArthur, Stratemeyer, and Partridge had correctly estimated this in the first months of the conflict. From hindsight, it may appear that a broader use of airpower would not sparked World War III between the United States and the Soviet Union, although it might easily have brought an expanded, formal war with Communist China. It is impossible to know with certainty whether attacking Chinese airfields would have been effective. The attacks against the Sinuiju bridges in which MacArthur had placed high hope had not succeeded in isolating the battlefield, and an expanded war would have introduced unintended and unforeseeable consequences of its own.

Although most of the B-29s that flew the first Sinuiju mission on 8 November bombed the city rather than the bridges,431 the addition of the bridges as targets expanded the purpose of the mission. No longer designed simply to maintain the UN’s control of the air and destroy a potential new North Korean capital, MacArthur

430 Entries in Partridge’s diary from the time he requested “hot pursuit” indicated his interest in achieving tactical cooperation with the Eighth Army and with X Corps; it implied also that the presence of Chinese-based aircraft over the battlefield hampered this. Partridge, diary entries for 2-6 November 1950, Korean Diary.

transformed the Sinuiju raids into also being an attempt to interdict the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army from entering the peninsula.

MacArthur expected FEAF bombers to “isolate the battlefield,”\textsuperscript{432} as he had earlier successfully expected the Marines to land successfully at Inchon and turn the tide of the war. In his book, Ridgway frequently described the Inchon landing as a “5,000-to-1” operation, after which MacArthur felt confident continuing to take huge risks at high odds.\textsuperscript{433} Any assumption that restricted airpower could completely cut North Korea’s Chinese lifeline would have posed a tremendous risk on an enormous task.

MacArthur’s strident confidence that airpower isolate the battlefield may have flattered Stratemeyer. The Communists’ determination and their ingenuity in supplying their forces, the presence of large numbers of PVA troops and supplies already in Korea before the Sinuiju raids, and restrictions the US and other UN members’ governments imposed all frustrated airmens’ efforts. The airpower available in 1950 could not fulfill MacArthur’s dream.

While Stratemeyer worked to fulfill MacArthur’s visions of airpower, Partridge led the Fifth Air Force in its battle to protect Korea and assist the other UN forces fighting Communism. Individual American pilots occasionally and accidentally flew beyond North Korea’s northern boundary, but FEAF did not violate the Yalu border. Partridge at the time had disfavored restrictions, but long after the war had ended, Partridge’s view of airpower restrictions changed. It was correct, he concluded in 1978, to have kept the war limited. It was important not to have crossed the Yalu.

\textsuperscript{432} Blair, \textit{MacArthur}, 300.

\textsuperscript{433} To emphasize his point, Ridgway at various times followed “5,000-to-1” with the words “shot,” “gamble,” and “wager.” Ridgway, \textit{the Korean War}, 33, 40, 77.


Merritt, Col. Frank. Interview, 8 December 1977, Roll 0000033545, transcript, Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, USAF Academy, Colorado Springs, CO.
Mobilization: the U.S. Army in World War II (accessed 20 February 2008),
http://www.history.army.mil/documents/mobpam.htm


---. Interview by Tom Sturm and Hugh N. Ahmann, 23-25 April 1974, Roll 0000032497, transcript, Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, USAF Academy, Colorado Springs, CO.

---. Korean Diary, A1844, Index 1802, Air Force Historical Research Association, Maxwell AFB, AL.

---. Personal and Official Correspondence, A1849, Index 2274, Air Force Historical Research Association, Maxwell AFB, AL

---. Persons of Exceptional Prominence Records, Official Military Personnel File, Maxwell AFB, AL.

---. Subject Letters, 3/1/51-5/1/51, A1858, Index 1314, Air Force Historical Research Association, Maxwell AFB, AL.


Vandenberg Papers, Washington, D.C.


