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## Short History of the Korean War

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facilities in the region, 2) an expanded base structure in Micronesia, and 3) relocation to new facilities in the South China Sea. Bowen believes that none of these options is satisfactory in itself, but a combination of locations could replicate the advantages we now enjoy in the Philippines.

Despite differing perspectives, all of the authors contribute to a sense that Philippine and U.S. positions are sharply at odds on a wide range of issues. Both sides have different threat perceptions, and consequently different approaches to regional and national security issues. Moreover, the political will to renegotiate the agreement may be eroding. On the Philippine side there is increasingly strident resentment of perceived U.S. involvement in the domestic political process; on the U.S. side there is growing concern about the erosion of Mrs. Aquino's support, the threat to the bases from insurgency, and major budgetary and operational limits in meeting Filipino negotiating demands. Sadly, unless a high degree of statesmanship is forthcoming from both sides, Bowen's paper on relocation options may prove to be the most useful part of this book.

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Stokesbury, James L. *A Short History of the Korean War*. New York: William Morrow, 1988. 276pp. \$8.95

Stanton, Shelby L. *America's Tenth Legion: X Corps In Korea, 1950*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1989. 342pp. \$24.95

James L. Stokesbury's *A Short History of the Korean War* is a splendid introduction to the war. Only 276 pages long including a useful index, this smoothly written book manages to be both narrative and interpretive and gives a satisfying feeling of completeness. Stokesbury correctly divides the war into two parts which he calls the "War of Maneuver" and the "War of Posts."

Part I, "War of Maneuver," begins with an introductory chapter complete with background information that leads to the North Korean invasion and the United Nations retreat to the Pusan Perimeter. The stumbling performance of the U.S. Eighth Army is treated fairly. The corresponding performance of the Army of the Republic of South Korea looks better, in retrospect, than it did at the time.

The United Nations resurgence comes, of course, with the Inchon landing on 15 September 1950, with the U.S. Marines in the starring role, but not blatantly so. Following are chapters, with titles to suit, of the UN drive "To the Yalu"; "The Chinese Intervention," which turned UN victory into near-debacle; the furore surrounding "The Dismissal of MacArthur"; and, in "Approaching a Stalemate," Ridgway's masterful offensives of Spring 1951 which led to the armistice talks.

Part II, "War of the Posts," covers the down side of the war, when the United States knuckled under to its European partners in the United Nations, and allowed operations to stagnate into positional warfare, horrifically reminiscent of the Western Front in World War I.

There is a chapter on "The Air Battle" which summarizes the superb accomplishments of tactical aviators in gaining air superiority and eventually almost uncontested control of the air, and the disappointing results of both the bombing of North Korea and aerial efforts to interdict the battlefield.

There is no corresponding separate chapter on the naval war. Amphibious aspects are, however, proportionately well-covered. Carrier air and mine warfare get brief mention.

Shelby Stanton's *America's Tenth Legion* is quite a different book but, in its way, equally good. Stokesbury has covered the entire war. Stanton confines himself to the operations of the U.S. X Corps from the landing at Inchon in September to the evacuation from Hungnam in December 1950, scarcely more than three months, but a time in which the fortunes of war gyrated wildly.

Stanton's title, *America's Tenth Legion*, is clever, but its meaning is not immediately apparent until one remembers that William Manchester entitled his biography of MacArthur *American Caesar*; then the connection between MacArthur's X Corps and Julius Caesar's famed Tenth Legion becomes obvious.

X Corps was formed by MacArthur to undertake the Inchon landing. Its original composition was the U.S. 1st Marine Division and the U.S. 7th Infantry Division. It had its own tactical air command, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. Later, after the Wonsan landing in October, it would add the U.S. 3d Infantry Division. In those later operations X Corps also had operational control, more or less, of the Republic of Korea's I Corps.

To the disappointment of the Marines, MacArthur gave command of X Corps, not to Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., a superbly successful division commander in World War II and whose Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, was providing the preponderance of troops, but to his own Chief of Staff, Army Major General Edward ("Ned") M. Almond.

Stanton's book is thorough. It takes the reader through the organization of the X Corps, the landing at Inchon, the battle for Seoul, the reembarkation for the landing at Wonsan, and the wild pursuit of the defeated North Koreans into the mountains of Central Korea and toward the Yalu. Then the Chinese came into the war. The Eighth Army under Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, operating to the west along the Seoul-Pyongyang axis, was routed. The X Corps, independent of Eighth Army because of a whim of MacArthur's, fought its own fight and fell back, to be evacuated chiefly from Hungnam. The operations of the 1st Marine Division at Chosin

Reservoir is put into the perspective of these other actions. As with Stokesbury, the performance of the South Koreans comes off better than in other earlier accounts.

A reader, looking at Stanton's carefully assembled order of battle and at the opposing numbers, might wonder, as some of us wondered then, "what if the decision had been made not to have withdrawn to the south, but to hold on at Hungnam?"

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Flesch, Ron. *Redwood Delta*. New York: Berkeley Books, 1988. 272pp. \$3.95

Miller, John Grider. *The Bridge at Dong Ha*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989. 181pp. \$16.95

These books recount the exploits of two U.S. Marines in Vietnam, one a private first class, the other a captain. They are remarkable for showing the American fighting man at his best: courageous, skillful and resolute. Happily, both authors understood that they needed no scatological detail, vulgarity or profanity. In fact the PFC, Ron Flesch, writing twenty-three years after the event, has produced a totally clean manuscript without in any way reducing the drama of the action.

During 1965 and 1966, Flesch served in Vietnam as a member of Delta Company, 1st Battalion (Redwood), 9th Marines, in the Danang area and spent a year in almost

continual patrolling, skirmishing and fighting in defense of the airfield complex. The Marines' search for the Viet Cong led them into frequent contact with villagers and the problems attendant thereto. Graphic action on almost every page reveals the joys of small-unit infantry combat—field operations day and night in heat, rain and mud, attack, defense, ambush, scouting, patrolling, the ballistic crack of small arms fire, the whump of mortars and grenades, the thrill of stepping on a mine or booby trap, the casualties.

Although Redwood Delta was a regular Marine rifle company, and not one of the Combined Action units used with success by the Marines, the company made good progress in driving the Viet Cong out of the villages and in gaining the confidence of the villagers and their chiefs. Flesch and his comrades understood the problem of pacification and sympathized with the beleaguered civilians. The picture emerges of some very effective fighting Marines, tough, upbeat, basically cheerful through it all—not the murderous psychopaths so often portrayed by disaffected authors. On one of his last days in Vietnam Flesch was promoted to lance corporal, a small reward for one year of hard and dangerous service, but the new lance corporal remains unimbittered, still true to corps and country. *Semper Fidelis!*

Captain John Walter Ripley, USMC, served as advisor to the 3rd Battalion of Vietnamese Marines in the spring of 1972, in the area below