

# Bridge at No Gun Ri

노근리 다리

South Korean citizens brought the claim -- of a large-scale killing of civilians by the American military early in the Korean War. The U.S. government dismissed it. Now a dozen U.S. Army veterans have spoken, in AP interviews, supporting the story of No Gun Ri.

Associated Press Special Report

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
CHARLES J. HANLEY  
and MARTHA MENDOZA  
Associated Press Writers

It was a story no one wanted to hear: Early in the Korean War, villagers said, American soldiers machine-gunned hundreds of helpless civilians, under a railroad bridge in the South Korean countryside.

When the families spoke out, seeking redress, they met only rejection and denial, from the U.S. military and their own government in Seoul. Now a dozen ex-GIs have spoken, too, and support their story with haunting memories from a "forgotten" war.

These American veterans of the Korean War say that in late July 1950, in the conflict's first desperate weeks, U.S. troops -- young, green and scared -- killed a large number of South Korean refugees, many of them women and children, trapped beneath a bridge at a place called No Gun Ri.

In [interviews](#) with The Associated Press, ex-GIs speak of 100, 200 or simply hundreds dead. The Koreans, whose claim for compensation was rejected last year, say 300 were shot to death at the bridge and 100 died in a preceding air attack.



*A 1960 photo of the bridge taken by and obtained from the villagers who brought the claim against the United States. (AP Photo)*



American soldiers, in their third day at the warfront, feared North Korean infiltrators among the fleeing South Korean peasants, veterans said. "It was assumed there were enemy in these people," ex-rifleman Herman Patterson of Greer, S.C., told The AP.



American commanders had ordered units retreating through South Korea to shoot civilians as a defense against disguised enemy soldiers, according to once-classified documents found by the AP in months of researching U.S. military archives and interviewing veterans across the United States.

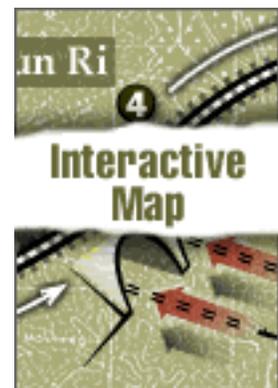
Six veterans of the 1st Cavalry Division said they fired on the refugee throng at the South Korean hamlet of No Gun Ri, and six others said they witnessed the mass killing. More said they knew or heard about it.  [video](#)

"We just annihilated them," said ex-machine gunner Norman Tinkler of Glasco, Kan.

After five decades, none gave a complete, detailed account. But ex-GIs agreed on such elements as time and place, and on the preponderance of women, children and old men among the victims. They also disagreed: Some said they were fired on from beneath the bridge, but others said they don't remember hostile fire. One said they later found a few disguised North Korean soldiers among the dead. But others disputed this.

Some soldiers refused to shoot what one described as "civilians just trying to hide."

The 30 Korean claimants -- [survivors and victims' relatives](#) -- said it was an unprovoked, three-day carnage. "The American soldiers played with our lives like boys playing with flies," said Chun Choon-ja, a 12-year-old girl at the time.



Armed with new evidence that U.S. GIs had confirmed much of their account, the Korean claimants called for a U.S. investigation into the killings.

"We hope the U.S. government will meet our demands and console the wandering souls of those who died an unfair death," the claimants said in a statement.

In the end, the Koreans have said in a series of [petitions](#), some 300 refugees lay dead under the bridge's twin arches. About 100 others were killed in a preceding attack by U.S. Air Force planes, they say.

That would make No Gun Ri one of only two known cases of large-scale killings of noncombatants by U.S. ground troops in this century's major wars, military law experts note. The other was Vietnam's My Lai massacre, in 1968, in which more than 500 Vietnamese may have died.

From the start of the 1950-53 conflict, North Korean atrocities were widely reported. But the story of No Gun Ri has remained undisclosed for a half-century, despite sketchy news reports in 1950 implying U.S. troops may have fired on refugees.



No Gun Ri's dead were not alone. Veterans told the AP of two smaller but similar refugee killings in July and August 1950. They also told of refusing orders to fire on civilians in other cases.

Hundreds more South Koreans were killed on Aug. 3, 1950, when retreating U.S. commanders blew up two bridges as refugees streamed across, according to ex-GIs, Korean eyewitnesses and declassified documents.

The Americans wanted to deny the crossings to the enemy, reported massing more than 15 miles away. But the general overseeing one bridge-blowing, the 1st Cavalry Division commander, had sought to stop the refugee flow as well. He told a correspondent he was sure most refugees were North Korean guerrillas.

For decades in U.S.-allied South Korea, the No Gun Ri claimants were discouraged from speaking out. After they filed for compensation in 1997, their claim was [rejected](#) by the South Korean government on a technicality.

The U.S. military has said repeatedly it found [no basis](#) for the allegations. On Wednesday, just after the AP report was released, Pentagon spokesman P.J. Crowley said, "We just have no information in historical files to lend any clarity to what might have happened in July 1950.

AP research also found no official Army account of the events.

Defense Secretary William Cohen said on Thursday that the claims could be examined if there were new evidence.

"I am not aware of any evidence that would support or substantiate those claims. But to the degree that any substantive information is forthcoming, we certainly would look at it," he told a press conference in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Speaking at press conference in Washington later Thursday, Army Secretary Louis Caldera promised a "complete and thorough review," of the allegations.

The South Korean government said it will investigate whether the survivors' claims are true or not.

"With keen attention, we'll try to verify the truth of all related things concerning the case," Foreign Ministry spokesman Chang Chul-kyun said. "Any further action will be decided after those efforts are finished."

Some elements of the No Gun Ri episode are unclear: What chain of officers gave open-fire orders? Did GIs see gunfire from the refugees or their own ricochets? How many soldiers refused to fire? How high in the ranks did knowledge of the events extend?

[The Korean conflict](#), which ended in stalemate, began on June 25, 1950, when the communist North invaded and sent the South Korean army and a small U.S. force reeling southward toward the peninsula's tip.

American units rushed from Japan to stop the North Koreans were poorly equipped and ill-trained. The [1st Cavalry](#) went in with little understanding of Korea. Half its sergeants had been transferred to other divisions. Teen-aged riflemen and young officers with no combat experience were thrust overnight into a hellish war, told to expect guerrilla fighting and be wary of the tens of thousands of South Korean civilians pouring south with retreating Americans.  [video](#)

The untested 7th Cavalry Regiment, part of the 1st Cavalry Division, reached the front July 24. Within a day many of its 2nd Battalion infantrymen were scattering in panic, tossing away weapons, at word of an enemy breakthrough nearby.

Records show that on the third day, July 26, the battalion's 660 men were regrouped and dug in at No Gun Ri, a hamlet 100 miles southeast of Seoul,

South Korea's capital. Word was circulating that northern soldiers disguised in white peasant garb might try to penetrate U.S. lines via refugee groups.

The refugees who approached the 2nd Battalion's lines on July 26 were South Koreans ordered out of two nearby villages by American soldiers, who warned them the North Koreans were coming, Korean claimants told the AP.

Declassified records show that 1st Cavalry Division soldiers did move through that village area the previous three days.

As the refugees neared No Gun Ri, leading ox carts, some with children on their backs, American soldiers ordered them off the southbound dirt road and onto a parallel railroad track, the South Koreans said. Ex-sergeant George Preece remembered the way was being cleared for U.S. Army vehicles.

What then happened under the concrete bridge cannot be reconstructed in full detail five decades later. Some ex-GIs poured out chilling memories of the scene, but others offered only fragments, or abruptly ended their interviews. Over the three days, no one saw everything: Koreans were cowering under fire, and Americans were dug into positions over hundreds of yards of hilly terrain.

But old soldiers in their late 60s or 70s identified the No Gun Ri bridge from photographs, remembered the approximate dates, and corroborated the core of the Koreans' account: that American troops kept the refugees pinned under the bridge in late July 1950, and killed almost all of them.

"It was just wholesale slaughter," Patterson said.

Both Koreans and several ex-GIs said the killing began when American planes suddenly swooped in and strafed an area where the white-clad refugees were resting.



*Min Young-ok, seated right, poses with young relatives in 1942, in this photo obtained from a family member. Her family claims she was killed at No Gun Ri.*

*(AP Photo)*

Bodies fell everywhere, and terrified parents dragged children into a narrow culvert beneath the tracks, the Koreans told the AP.

Declassified U.S. Air Force mission reports from mid-1950 show that pilots sometimes attacked "people in white," apparently because of suspicions North Korean soldiers were disguised among them. The report for one mission of four F-80 jets, for example, said the airborne controller "said to fire on people in white clothes. Were about 50 in group."

Forward controllers in light planes directed pilots to such unplanned targets in midflight. The Korean claimants say a light plane circled their area immediately before the strafing.

But ex-GIs said the strafing may have been a mistake. A company commander had called for an airstrike, but against enemy artillery miles up the road, they said.

Veteran Delos Flint remembers being caught with other soldiers in the strafing and piling into a culvert with refugees. Then "somebody, maybe our guys, was shooting in at us," he said. He and his comrades eventually slipped out.

Retired Col. Robert M. Carroll, then a 25-year-old first lieutenant, remembers battalion riflemen opening fire on the refugees from their foxholes.

"This is right after we get orders that nobody comes through, civilian, military, nobody," said Carroll, of Lansdowne, Va.

That morning, the U.S. 8th Army had radioed orders throughout the Korean front that began, "No repeat no refugees will be permitted to cross battle lines at any time," according to declassified documents located at the National Archives in Washington.

Two days earlier, 1st Cavalry Division headquarters issued a more explicit order: "No refugees to cross the front line. Fire everyone trying to cross lines. Use discretion in case of women and children."

In the neighboring 25th Infantry Division, the commander, Maj. Gen. William B. Kean, told his troops that since South Koreans were to have been evacuated from the battle zone, "all civilians seen in this area are to be considered as enemy and action taken accordingly." His staff relayed this as "considered as unfriendly and shot."

Military experts in the law of war told the AP they had never heard of such blanket "kill" orders in the U.S. military.  video

"An order to fire on civilians is patently an illegal order," said retired Col. Scott Silliman of Duke University, an Air Force lawyer for 25 years.

Carroll said he "wasn't convinced this was enemy," and he got the rifle companies to cease firing on the refugees. The lieutenant then shepherded a boy to safety under a double-arched concrete railroad bridge nearby, where shaken and wounded Koreans were gathered. He said he saw no threat.



**Photo Essay /  
Panoramas**



"There weren't any North Koreans in there the first day, I'll tell you that. It was mainly women and kids and old men," recalled Carroll, who said he then left the area and knows nothing about what followed.

The Americans directed the refugees into the bridge underpasses -- each 80 feet long, 23 feet wide, 30 feet high - - and after dark opened fire on them from nearby machine-gun positions, the Koreans said.

Veterans said Capt. Melbourne C. Chandler, after speaking with superior officers by radio, had ordered machine-gunners from his heavy-weapons company to set up near the tunnel mouths and open fire.

"Chandler said, 'The hell with all those people. Let's get rid of all of them'," said Eugene Hesselman of Fort Mitchell, Ky. " ... We didn't know if they were North or South Koreans. ... We were there only a couple of days and we didn't know them from a load of coal."

Ex-GIs believe the order was cleared at battalion headquarters, a half-mile to the rear, or at a higher level. Chandler and other key officers are now dead, but the AP was able to locate the colonel who commanded the battalion, Herbert B. Heyer, 88.

Heyer, of Sandy Springs, Ga., denied knowing anything about the shootings and said, "I know I didn't give such an order." Veterans said the colonel apparently was leaving battalion operations to subordinates at the time.

The bursts of gunfire killed those near the tunnel entrances first, the Korean claimants said.

"People pulled dead bodies around them for protection," said Chung Koo-ho, 61. "Mothers wrapped their children with blankets and hugged them with their backs toward the entrances. ... My mother died on the second day of shooting."

***[Editor's Note: Edward L. Daily says he now recognizes he could not have been at the scene and instead learned of it second-hand from soldiers who were there. [Full Story](#)]***

Recalled machine-gunner Edward L. Daily: "Some may have been trying to crawl deeper for protection. When you see something like that and you're frightened, you start to claw."

During three nights under fire, some trapped refugees managed to slip away, but others were shot as they tried to escape or crawled out to find clean water to drink, the Koreans said.

Veterans disagreed on whether gunfire came from the underpasses.

Some, like ex-sergeant James T. Kerns of Piedmont, S.C., said the Americans were answering fire from among the refugees. Hesselman said, "Every now and then you'd hear a shot, like a rifle shot." But others recalled only heavy barrages of American firepower, not hostile fire. "I don't remember shooting coming out," said ex-rifleman Louis Allen of Bristol, Tenn.

The Koreans said the Americans may have been seeing their own comrades' fire, ricocheting through from the tunnels' opposite ends. That's possible, said Preece.

"It could actually have happened, that they were seeing our own fire. ... We were scared to death," said Preece, a career soldier who later fought in Vietnam.

On July 28, the 7th Cavalry was told to prepare to pull back again early the next morning. The final barrage still echoes in the memories of old soldiers.

"On summer nights when the breeze is blowing, I can still hear their cries, the little kids screaming," said Daily, of Clarksville, Tenn., who went on to earn a battlefield commission in Korea.



*Chun Choon-ja, left, and Chung Koo-ho, point at bullet scars in a railway underpass in No Gun Ri, April 20, 1998.  
(AP Photo / Ahn Young-joon)*

Sounds of slaughter haunt Park Hee-sook's memory, too. [▶ video](#)

"I can still hear the moans of women dying in a pool of blood," said Park, then a girl of 16. "Children cried and clung to their dead mothers."

Not everyone fired, veterans said.

"Some of us did and some of us didn't," said Flint, of Clio, Mich., the soldier who had been briefly caught in the culvert with the refugees. "... I wouldn't fire at anybody in the tunnel like that. It was

civilians just trying to hide."

Kerns, a machine gunner, said he fired over the refugees' heads. "I would not fire into a bunch of women."

Once the fury subsided, Kerns said, he, Preece and another GI found at least seven dead North Korean soldiers in the underpasses, wearing uniforms under peasant white.

But Preece, of Dunville, Ky., said he doesn't remember making such a search or even hearing that North Koreans were found. None of the other veterans, when asked, remembered seeing North Koreans.

Kerns also said weapons were recovered. Hesselman said someone later displayed a submachine gun. Preece recalled only "hearsay" about weapons.

All 24 South Korean survivors interviewed individually by the AP said they remembered no North Koreans or gunfire directed at the Americans.

Secret U.S. military intelligence reports from those days, since declassified, place the North Korean front line four miles from No Gun Ri on July 26, when the refugees entered the underpasses.

Early on July 29, the 7th Cavalry pulled back. North Korean troops who moved in found "about 400 bodies of old and young people and children," the North Korean newspaper Cho Sun In Min Bo reported three weeks later.

Some ex-GIs today estimate 100 or fewer were killed. But those close to the bridge, from Chandler's H Company, generally put the total at about 200. "A lot" also were killed in the strafing, they say.

The North Koreans buried some dead in unknown locations and surviving relatives buried others, the villagers said. Because families then scattered across South Korea, the claimants said, they have the names of only 120 dead, primarily their own relatives.

The war, in all, claimed an estimated 1 million South Korean civilian casualties -- killed, wounded or missing. Almost 37,000 Americans died.

At 1st Cavalry headquarters, division commander Maj. Gen. Hobart R. Gay was told South Korean refugees were killed by North Korean troops in a crossfire at No Gun Ri, the division information officer recalled. "I think that's what he believed," said Harold D. Steward, an ex-colonel from San Diego.

Relevant unit documents say nothing about a crossfire, about North Korean soldiers killed under a bridge, or anything else about No Gun Ri.

One battalion lieutenant located by the AP said he was in the area but knew nothing about the killing of civilians. "I have honestly never, ever heard of this from either my soldiers or superiors or my friends," said John C. Lippincott of Stone Mountain, Ga. He said he could have missed it because "we were extremely spread out."

The villagers say they tried to file a compensation claim with a U.S. claims office in Seoul in 1960, but were told they missed a deadline. Later, they say, Korean police warned one man, survivor Yang Hae-chan, to keep quiet about the 1950 events. But as authoritarian South Korea liberalized in the 1990s, they revived their case and sent petitions to Washington. None was acknowledged, they say.  video



*Maj. Gen. Hobart R. Gay,  
commander of the U.S. 1st  
Cavalry Division. (AP Photo/File)*

In August 1997, a claim signed by 30 petitioners was filed with South Korea's Government Compensation Committee. Having researched histories, they pointed a finger at the 1st Cavalry.

In response, the U.S. Armed Forces Claims Service said there was "no evidence ... to show that the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division was in the area." A lower-level South Korean compensation committee said people were killed at No Gun Ri but it had no proof of U.S. involvement. In April 1998, the national panel rejected the case, saying a five-year statute of limitations expired long ago.

The AP subsequently reconstructed unit movements from map coordinates in declassified war records. They showed that four 1st Cavalry Division battalions were in the area at the time of the alleged incident.

Months of tracing veterans -- some 130 interviews by telephone and in person -- then pinpointed the companies involved. The AP also pored through hundreds of boxes of once-secret documents at the National Archives and other repositories to find pieces of the story.

The [laws and customs of war](#) condemn indiscriminate killing of civilians, even if a few enemy soldiers are among a large number of noncombatants killed, military experts note. The Korean War record shows Army courts-martial only for individual murders of Koreans, nothing on a large scale.  [video](#)

As for civil liability, the U.S. government is largely protected by U.S. law against foreign claims related to "combatant activities." The Korean claimants say the killings were not combat-related -- the enemy was miles away.

"We want the truth, justice and due respect for our human rights," they wrote in a 1997 petition to President Clinton.

One ex-GI objects that ``a bunch of lawyers" can't run a war.

"War is not just," said Norman Tinkler. ``There's things that goes on that we can't comprehend, but it has to be done. And it's the individual that has to make the decision."

But others who were there said No Gun Ri didn't have to happen. The refugees could have been screened up on the road or checked out under the bridge, Kerns and Hesselman said.  [video](#)

"The command looked at it as getting rid of the problem in the easiest way. That was to shoot them in a group," said Daily. Today, he said, "we all share a guilt feeling, something that remains with everyone."

The late Col. Gilmon A. Huff, who took over the 2nd Battalion from Heyer three days after the pullback from No Gun Ri, was interviewed before his death earlier this year and said he knew nothing of what happened at the bridge.

But he "heard" about refugee killings and told his men it was wrong, Huff said at his Abbeville, S.C., home.

"You can't kill people just for being there," he told the AP.

The bridge at No Gun Ri still stands today. For 49 years its concrete was deeply scarred by bullets -- until railroad workers this month patched over the holes.

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AP Investigative Researcher Randy Herschaft contributed to this report.

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FOR THE WIRE

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Background

### Incident at No Gun Ri

#### Army Says GIs Killed South Korean Civilians

By ROBERT BURNS  
AP Military Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) \_ The Army acknowledged Thursday that American soldiers shot to death an "unknown number" of South Korean refugees early in the Korean War, but said there was no evidence they were ordered to do so. "I deeply regret that Korean civilians lost their lives at No Gun Ri," President Clinton said, stopping short of an apology.

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#### Ex-GI Acknowledges Records Show He Couldn't Have Witnessed Killings

By CHARLES J. HANLEY  
AP Special Correspondent

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. (AP) \_ One of the Korean War veterans who described the U.S. Army killing of refugees at No Gun Ri says he now recognizes he could not have been at the scene and instead learned of it second-hand from soldiers who were there.

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#### U.S. Army -- 1st Cavalry Division

Table of Organization

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## Timeline of a 'Forgotten War'

By The Associated Press

A chronology of the Korean conflict, sometimes called America's "forgotten war."

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## No Gun Ri -- Transliterating From Korean Can Confuse

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
Associated Press Writer

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) -- Variations in translating from one alphabet to another produce various spellings for the South Korean village where the 1950 mass killing took place. Different documents and maps call it No Kun Ri, Ro Keun Ri, No Keunri, Rok In Ri and No Gun Ri.

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### **Strafing Incidents**

## Witnesses Say U.S. Bombs Set Off Cave Inferno, Killed Hundreds

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
Associated Press Writer

When the American firebombs hit, villagers said, hundreds of terrified refugees trapped in the cave rushed for the entrance. But only a dozen escaped with their lives.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노군리 다리

## Documents

### **The Incident at No Gun Ri**

#### [The Army's Report on No Gun Ri, Jan. 11, 2001](#)

The report concludes that U.S. soldiers killed civilians at No Gun Ri during the Korean War.

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#### [Order From Maj. Gen. William Kean on July 27, 1950](#)

The 25th Infantry Division commander ordered that, since all South Koreans were to have been evacuated from the combat zone, any civilians seen were to be considered enemy.

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#### [Communications Log for the 25th Infantry Division, July 26, 1950](#)

The highlighted entry notes that Maj. Gen. William Kean, commanding general of the division to the right of the 1st Cavalry Division, wanted civilians in the combat zone considered as enemy.

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#### [Order From 8th Army Headquarters to All U.S. Combat Units](#)

Amid confusion over how to handle refugees, the 8th Army, commanding the entire Korean battlefield, orders all units to keep refugees from crossing their lines southward, and then outlines a plan for an organized evacuation.

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## Operations Log of the 8th Cavalry Regiment

This communications log shows that on July 24, 1950, at 10 a.m., the 1st Cavalry Division's operations staff ordered division units not to allow any refugees to cross the front lines.

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## Survivors' Petition

September 10th, 1997

"Dear President Clinton;

We, the remaining families of the Korean War victims who were killed or wounded by U.S. soldiers from July 26th to 29th, 1950, are petitioning for your recognition of the incident, a formal apology and compensation.

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## Army Finds No Evidence of Killings

Dated March 22, 1999; addressed to Victor W.C. Hsu, a director at the U.S. National Council of Churches who had written to the Pentagon on behalf of the Korean claimants; signed by John P. McLaurin, III, deputy assistant secretary for military personnel management and equal opportunity policy, Department of The Army.

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## U.S. Military Rebuttal of Korean Compensation Claim

Responding to a compensation claim filed by Korean villagers in connection with the events at No Gun Ri, the U.S. Armed Forces Claims Service asserted that the 1st Cavalry Division was not in the area at the time. The historical record proves otherwise.

## Articles of War

The Articles of War were the military laws in force at the time of the incident at No Gun Ri.

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## The 1st Cavalry Division's War Diary

There is no mention of the events at No Gun Ri in this entry, the day the 7th Cavalry Regiment withdrew from the scene of the killings.

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## 1st Cavalry Division Association's Statement on the Events at No Gun Ri

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### **Destruction of a Naktong River Bridge**

### 'Up With the Bridge Went Hundreds of Refugees'

In a now-declassified narrative sent to an Army historian Aug. 24, 1953, Maj. Gen. Hobart R. Gay described how, as 1st Cavalry Division commander in 1950, he ordered the destruction of a bridge over South Korea's Naktong River at the cost of many refugee lives.

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### **Strafing Incidents**

### Policy on Strafing Civilian Refugees

This memo, dated July 25, 1950, discusses whether the Air Force should continue strafing civilian refugees, in compliance with Army "requests."

## Mission 35-1 Debriefing From July 20, 1950

This is a declassified after-mission report filed by a squadron intelligence officer after he debriefed four F-80 fighter-bomber pilots returning from a combat mission over South Korea July 20, 1950. The pilots reported strafing "people in white clothes, " at the direction of a controller ("Angelo Yoke"). Refugees and other ordinary Koreans generally wore white.

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## Mission 35-4 Debriefing From July 20, 1950

The pilots reported strafing people who "could have been refugees."

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## Mission 35-3 Debriefing From July 31, 1950

The pilots reported strafing people who "appeared to be evacuees."

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### **Mass Executions**

## Letter From General Walker to the U.S. Ambassador

In this declassified letter, the general commanding all U.S. troops in South Korea tells the U.S. ambassador that Gen. MacArthur wants the matter of summary executions turned over to the U.S. embassy.

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## Report Detailing Mass Executions

A U.S. Army military police sergeant describes to his superiors what he witnessed at the site of a mass execution of Koreans by the South Korean military police.

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노근리 다리

## Video

### Incident at No Gun Ri



**Norman L. Tinkler, Korean War veteran**

Six veterans of the 1st Cavalry Division said they personally fired on the refugee throng at the South Korean hamlet of No Gun Ri, and six others said they witnessed the mass killing. More said they knew or heard about it.



**Bruce Cumings, Historian**

The 1st Cavalry went in with little understanding of Korea. Half its sergeants had been transferred to other divisions.



**Gary Solis, Military law expert**

Military experts in the law of war told the AP they had never heard of such blanket "kill" orders in the U.S. military.



**Park Hee-sook, South Korean survivor**

"I can still hear the moans of women dying in a pool of blood," said Park, then a girl of 16. "Children cried and clung to their dead mothers."



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The villagers say they tried to file a compensation claim with a U.S. claims office in Seoul in 1960, but were told they missed a deadline. Later, they say, Korean police warned one man, survivor Yang Hae-chan, to keep quiet about the 1950 events.



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### **Eugene Hesselman, Korean War veteran**

Some ex-GIs who were there said No Gun Ri didn't have to happen. The refugees could have been screened up on the road or checked out under the bridge, Kerns and Hesselman said.



### **Park Sun-yong, South Korean survivor**

"I saw an American soldier and begged for mercy. I shouted to him that we were not bad people, not communists. But he shot at us again.

## **Bridge Demolitions**



### **The Bridge at Tuksong-dong**

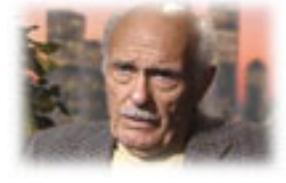
Soldiers of the 14th Combat Engineers were going about the business of destroying the bridge over the Naktong River.

## **Strafing Incidents**



### **Hong Won-ki, survivor of an alleged U.S. attack**

Hong says he survived an air attack that killed both his parents and four relatives. In the alleged Jan. 12, 1951 incident Hong says a U.S. plane attacked a group of refugees heading south on a dirt road near Yong-in.



### **Jim Becker, former AP war correspondent**

Becker describes the scene when he encountered the frozen bodies of Korean civilians along a road south of Seoul as he traveled north with U.S. troops on Jan. 26, 1951.



### **Hong Won-ki, survivor of an alleged U.S. attack**

Hong says the refugees were crossing a small frozen stream that crossed the road when the attack came. Hong and his three sisters were the only people to survive the attack, but one of the sisters died from an injury suffered during the attack, Hong says.



### **Robert Dewald, former Air Force pilot**

Dewald describes a mission over a dry riverbed in which he recalls seeing people who appeared to be civilians.



## Survivors of the alleged attack

Lee Byong-hoon describes how 30 American planes flew over hundreds of refugees huddled along the sandy banks of a stream on Jan. 15, 1951. Choi Heung-sup, a survivor of the same attack, says a bullet went through his ankles.



## Jim Becker, former AP war correspondent

Becker says that Chinese soldiers could not have been responsible for the deaths of the Korean civilians that he came across when traveling north with U.S. troops on Jan. 26, 1951.



## Robert Dewald, former Air Force pilot

Dewald says refugee groups were probably strafed during some missions.

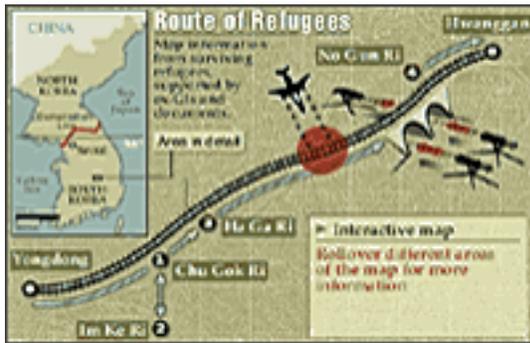


## Jim Becker, former AP war correspondent

Becker says Army personnel did not show him any evidence of infiltrators among the group of dead Korean civilians that he came across when traveling north with U.S. troops on Jan. 26, 1951.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리



Interactive map with details of the route of the South Korean refugees.



Official overlay map showing position of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

## Other Incidents



On Aug. 3, 1950, the U.S. Army blew up two bridges over the Nakdong River to deny them to the enemy, killing hundreds of South Korean refugees.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리다리

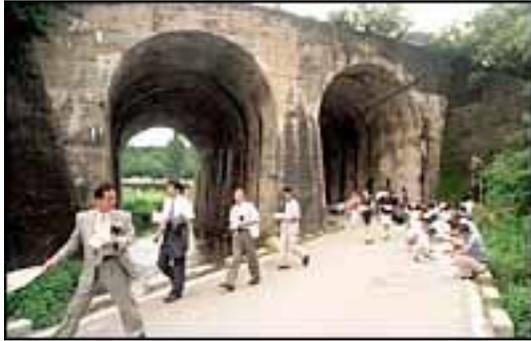


Photo Essay



Panorama

The road leading to the tunnels under the railroad bridge.



Panorama

Inside the tunnel where survivors claim refugees were shot and killed by U.S. troops.

To view the panoramas, download the [\*\*IPIX plug-in\*\*](#).

Once the IPIX panorama has finished loading, move your cursor over the image. Your cursor will change into a hand icon (to rotate the image) or a magnifying glass icon (to zoom into or out of the image). The closer the hand icon is to the edge of the image, the faster the panorama will rotate.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Victims

Survivors say about 400 people were killed at No Gun Ri, although documents filed with their claim list only 120 names. This discrepancy may be due to the fact that many families were wiped out entirely, leaving no one to report their deaths. Other victims or their families have since scattered across Korea and have not joined the claim.

Several victims are noted only by family name. These are women and children for the most part. Korean customs at the time of the incident offer an explanation as to why full names aren't known:

-- Infant mortality was so high in the 1950s that many Korean parents did not register their children's births until a few years had passed. Many did not even name them.

-- Families often registered housewives by their last names only in family lineage books. When a man had more than one wife, she was often not registered.

Name, sex, estimated age at time of death

From Chu Gok Ri			From Im Ke Ri			From elsewhere		
Seo Byong-jik	m	46	Lee Ja-son	f	69	Kal Kun-ok	m	81
Seo Mun-sam	m	65	Yang Hae-yong	m	17	Kal Yong-i	m	54
Kim Il-soon	f	50	Yang Hae-in	m	4	Song Jae-ok	f	14
Lee Soon-kum	f	52	Yang Ke-soon	f	42	Lee Soon-sok	f	46
Chung Koo-ok	f	22	Chung Hyun-mook	m	2	Sohn Hyun-kyu	m	43
Chung Koo-soon	f	27	Chung Jo-woong	m	26	Koo Chul-dong	m	54
Kim Kook-hun	m	3	Chung Jong-rae	m	7	Koo Hoi-woo	m	21
Hwang Eun-young	f	44	Park Chil-bong	m	41	Chang Man-im	f	54
Chung Young-sook	f	3	Kim Dal-jae	m	66	Park Hee-soon	f	--
Lee Sung-nam	f	50	Won Ho-yol	f	13	Lee, her daughter	f	1
Kim Ke-soon	f	19	Sohn Im-soon	f	14	Kim Jam-sun	f	46
Nam Hee-yong	f	39	Sohn Sang-tae	m	42	Kim Takami	f	8
Chung Young-hee	f	20	Lee, his wife	f	40	Kim Kimbo	m	21

Chung Jong-ja	f	3	Sohn	f	10	Kim Shigeo	m	19
Chung Jin-koo	m	1	Park Chang-ha	m	24	Lim Kannan-i	f	44
Park Young-soon	f	47	Park's wife	f	22			
Seo Kan-nani	f	5	Park, his son	m	1			
Min Young-ok	f	32	Park June-ha	m	52			
Chung Soon-ye	f	3	Sohn Soon-nam	f	50			
Chung Koo-sung	m	1	Kim Im-soon	f	26			
Chun Kyong-moon	m	54	Lim Soon-ja	f	3			
Kim Ae-shim	f	31	Park Nae-yong	m	42			
Chun Tae-bom	m	2	Yang Mal-soon	f	39			
Chun Joon-pyo	m	26	Park Sang-ha	f	12			
Chung, his wife	f	23	Park Hwa-soon	f	5			
Chung Koo-pil	m	5	Lee Bong-yong	m	51			
Chung Koo-hee	f	2	Kim Kap-yon	f	46			
Kim Dae-hak	f	44	Lee Won-shik	m	17			
Chang Won-ki	m	23	Lee Young-shik	m	16			
Park Myong-ja	f	4	Lee Chang-shik	m	14			
Park Il-yong	m	2	Lee Dal-soon	f	11			
Park Young-koo	m	3	Lee Bong-ja	f	55			
Kim	f	40	Cho Dae-in	m	3			
			Sohn Jong-i	f	62			
			Park Chang-ki	m	4			
			Cho Chung-koo	m	50			
			Chung Sun-boon	f	45			
			Cho Chong-rae	f	16			
			Cho Nam-yol	m	13			
			Cho Kil-jin	m	10			
			Cho Nam-gak	m	3			
			Lee	f	61			
			Song Jae-soon	f	20			
			Kim Im-soon	f	25			
			Lee Jong-son	f	15			
			Lee Jong-sop	m	12			
			Kim Choon-boon	f	45			
			Chun Young-ja	f	18			
			Lee	f	71			
			Kim Cha-soon	f	51			
			Lee Bok-soon	f	40			
			Ahn Moon-sam	m	73			
			Kang Soon-hee	f	55			
			Park	f	22			

<b>Ahn</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Park</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Kim</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Kim</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Kim</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Cho Hong-koo</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Cho Dong-soon</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Lee, his wife</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>--</b>
<b>No Rang-i</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>His wife</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>--</b>
<b>Their son</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chung Pan-sok</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Park, his wife</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Chung Jin-joo</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chung Soon-duk</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chung Soon-mo</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Min Eun-soon</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Cho (An infant boy born and killed in the tunnel)</b>		

# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Other Incidents

### Witnesses, 1950 Documents Say South Koreans Shot Thousands of Prisoners

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
Associated Press Writer

South Korean soldiers and police, observed at times by U.S. Army officers, executed more than 2,000 political prisoners without trial in the early weeks of the Korean War, according to declassified U.S. military documents and witnesses.

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### Korean, U.S. Witnesses, Backed by Military Records, Say Refugees Were Strafed

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
CHARLES J. HANLEY  
and MARTHA MENDOZA  
Associated Press Writers

In 1950-51, as war refugees flooded South Korea's roads, American jets repeatedly attacked groups of Koreans in civilian clothes on suspicion they harbored enemy infiltrators, according to declassified U.S. military documents and Korean and American witnesses.

## Veterans: Other Incidents of Refugees Killed by GIs During Korea Retreat

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
CHARLES J. HANLEY  
and MARTHA MENDOZA  
Associated Press Writers

On a single deadly day in August 1950, six weeks into the Korean War, a U.S. general and other Army officers ordered the destruction of two strategic bridges as South Korean refugees streamed across, killing hundreds of civilians, according to ex-GIs, Korean eyewitnesses and U.S. military documents.

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## Army's Report on No Gun Ri, Jan. 11, 2001

The report concludes that no orders were given to U.S. soldiers to kill civilians at No Gun Ri during the Korean War.

- [Executive Summary \(110k\)](#)
- [Secretary of the Army Action Memorandum \(1MB\)](#)
- [Table of Contents \(18k\)](#)
- [Chapter 1 - Introduction \(185k\)](#)
- [Chapter 2 - Background and History \(790k\)](#)
- [Chapter 3 - Combat Operations in July 1950 \(224k\)](#)
- [Chapter 4 - Analysis of Interview Data \(281k\)](#)
- [Chapter 5 - Key Issue Analysis and Findings \(161k\)](#)
- [Appendix A - Records Research \(94k\)](#)
- [Appendix B - Analysis of Forensic Evidence \(117k\)](#)
- [Appendix C - Imagery Research and Analysis \(3MB\)](#)
- [Appendix D - Joint Coordination \(23k\)](#)
- [Appendix E - Supporting Documents \(25MB\)](#)

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## Army Says GIs Killed South Korean Civilians

By ROBERT BURNS  
AP Military Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) \_ The Army acknowledged Thursday that American soldiers shot to death an "unknown number" of South Korean refugees early in the Korean War, but said there was no evidence they were ordered to do so. "I deeply regret that Korean civilians lost their lives at No Gun Ri," President Clinton said, stopping short of an apology.

Reversing its long-held stance that no U.S. troops were involved, the Army said: "It is clear, based upon all available evidence, that an unknown number of Korean civilians were killed or injured" by small-arms fire, artillery and mortar fire and strafing by U.S. warplanes in the vicinity of the hamlet of No Gun Ri.

Clinton said the Army's findings, after 15 months of investigation, are a "painful reminder of the tragedies of war."

At a Pentagon news conference, Defense Secretary William Cohen echoed the president's remark but said "neither Americans nor Koreans should bury this history." Nonetheless, he said, the Korean War was fought in a just cause, and that must be remembered, too.

"Our war effort protected and eventually preserved the liberty of the people of the Republic of Korea," Cohen said.

A joint U.S.-South Korean statement said, "In the desperate opening weeks of defensive combat in the Korean War, U.S. soldiers killed or injured an unconfirmed number of Korean refugees in the last week of July 1950 during a withdrawal under pressure in the vicinity of No Gun Ri."

In explaining the killings, the Army said U.S. soldiers "were not ordered to attack and kill civilian refugees," although some veterans interviewed by Army investigators said they received orders to "stop civilians" and some believed this meant they were authorized to use deadly force to prevent unarmed

civilians from passing near No Gun Ri.

The Army cited "conflicting statements and misunderstandings" about whether orders were given, but its investigators concluded that no oral or written orders were given to "shoot and kill" South Korean civilians at that time.

South Korean survivors denounced the findings, and the South Korean government has resisted the U.S. conclusion that no orders were given.

"Any final report that does not deal with the responsibility of commanders has a serious defect," Chung Koo-do, spokesman for the survivors' group, said in Seoul. "It can't be construed as anything other than a Pentagon attempt to whitewash the massacre."

"America has no justice or conscience," said his father, Chung Eun-yong, a former policeman who lost two children in the No Gun Ri killings.

The South Korean government issued the findings of its own investigation. The report stressed the difficulties in establishing whether American soldiers were ordered to kill at No Gun Ri, but did not rule out that possibility.

"Based on testimonies by some veterans and the circumstance surrounding the incident, we believe that orders were sent to the 2nd Battalion of the 7th Regiment (of the U.S. Army) to use weapons such as mortars as a warning on refugees and some soldiers opened a concentrated fire on refugees refusing to be controlled.

"But we could not find out whether there were orders to shoot at refugees, what such orders exactly said, where such orders originated and what chain of command they came down because officers in command positions have died or given negative testimonies, there was a lack of related documents and veterans involved in the actually shootings gave negative testimonies about the existence of such orders."

Although it declined to assign blame to any military leaders, the U.S. Army's acknowledgment that GIs killed civilian refugees near No Gun Ri reverses its previous assertions that there was no evidence of U.S. military involvement in the killings.

Lt. Gen. Michael Ackerman, the Army inspector general who spearheaded the investigation, told reporters that the inquiry was unable to pinpoint anyone in the chain of command who could be assigned blame for what occurred at No

## Gun Ri.

"If we could have found the smoking gun it would have been in this report," Ackerman said.

Cohen ordered the new Army investigation in September 1999 after The Associated Press published a report describing the No Gun Ri shootings. The report won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize. After reviewing more than a million documents and interviewing American veterans who were present at No Gun Ri, the Army concluded that while some facts may never be known, the shootings were not deliberate and were not done on orders from superiors.

Among ex-GIs interviewed earlier by the AP, about 20 recalled orders to shoot; a dozen said they either fired on refugees or were witnesses. Other veterans said they didn't remember, or declined to talk about No Gun Ri. One said he didn't recall orders, but had fired on his own.

The AP also found wartime documents showing at least three high-level Army headquarters and an Air Force command ordered troops to treat as hostile any civilians approaching U.S. positions. At the time, U.S. forces were in retreat, and thousands of refugees fled for their safety as the North Korean army advanced south.

Two days before the No Gun Ri incident, the 8th Cavalry Regiment communications log instructed: "No refugees to cross the front line. Fire everyone trying to cross lines. Use discretion in case of women and children."

The Army's report said, in essence, that the killing of civilians was an unavoidable accident of war.

"What befell civilians in the vicinity of No Gun Ri in late July 1950 was a tragic and deeply regrettable accompaniment to a war forced upon unprepared U.S. and Republic of Korea forces," the investigative report concluded.

At the Pentagon news conference, Charles Cragin, who helped oversee the investigation, said U.S. soldiers were acting out of fear that North Koreans disguised as refugees were infiltrating their lines.

"Soldiers were not aiming at innocent civilians for the purpose of killing innocent civilians," Cragin said. "What they perceived was a threat to themselves." He said it was an unfortunate example of the "fog of war."

The joint statement said some U.S. soldiers fired at the refugees hiding in a railroad tunnel and other locations at No Gun Ri. "They did so either to control the refugees' movements or because they believed they had received small arms fire from those locations. As a result, an unknown number of refugees was killed or injured."

Donald P. Gregg, former ambassador to South Korea and chief spokesman for an eight-member U.S. advisory panel that oversaw the Pentagon investigation, said the final report was an improvement on an earlier draft that he said contained "a lot more lawyerly lubrication."

"It was not a good show," he said, referring to No Gun Ri, "and we thought the report owned up to that fairly directly. "I hope also there was a recognition that earlier on they (the Army) had not done a decent job of looking into the allegations. It was the AP's report that caused them (the allegations) to be looked at more definitively."

Despite the finding that U.S. soldiers killed refugees, the United States did not address demands of survivors and family members for compensation. Instead, Clinton said a memorial would be built to honor "these and all other innocent Korean civilians" killed during the 1950-53 war. He said the United States would establish a scholarship fund "as a living tribute to their memory."

"On behalf of the United States of America, I deeply regret that Korean civilians lost their lives at No Gun Ri in late July 1950," Clinton said in a written statement. "The intensive, yearlong investigation into this incident has served as a painful reminder of the tragedies of war and the scars they leave behind on people and on nations."

A seven-page Statement of Mutual Understanding between the United States and South Korea described the American soldiers as "young, under-trained, under-equipped and new to combat," and their leaders as untested in battle.

Units operating near No Gun Ri "were under the command and control of leaders with limited proven experience in combat. They were unprepared for the weapons and tactics of the North Korean forces that they would face and the speed of the North Korean advance," the joint statement said.

Although the investigations of No Gun Ri have raised highly sensitive issues, Clinton stressed that the two governments are still committed to their long-standing alliance and to honoring the dignity of all who served and died in the war, which began when communist North Korea invaded the South in June

1950.

The U.S.-South Korean defense alliance dates to the outbreak of the war. It has been strained in recent years by tensions over relations with a more diplomatically active North Korea, protests over the presence of U.S. troops in South Korea and a lengthy negotiation this year to renew the legal basis on which American forces are permanently stationed there.

In its 1999 report, the AP quoted former soldiers and Korean survivors as saying a large number of refugees were killed by U.S. troops over a three-day period in late July 1950. Ex-GIs spoke of 100, 200, or simply hundreds, killed. The Koreans, who are seeking compensation from the United States, say 300 were shot to death and 100 died in a preceding air attack.

The Army concluded that it was not possible to say how many were killed or injured, but that the number is lower than South Koreans estimate.

The Army report addressed the testimony of Edward Daily of Clarksville, Tenn., one of a dozen ex-GIs cited in the AP's original story as saying he witnessed the civilian killings. Daily later acknowledged he could not have been at No Gun Ri, and must have gotten information secondhand from 7th Cavalry comrades.

The Army maintained that Daily's "conversations with Korean and American witnesses contaminated their memories." AP interviews were conducted with veterans who did not know Daily, and the AP's story was published before Daily met with Korean survivors.

In its report, the Army raised questions about whether wounds suffered by two veterans quoted by the AP, Delos K. Flint of Clio, Mich., and Eugene Hesselman, of Fort Mitchell, Ky., meant they were evacuated and were not at No Gun Ri. Despite some discrepancies, military documents obtained by the AP, including medical records released by the veterans, support their statements that they were there.

The report said five veterans asserted they were misquoted by the AP. Interview transcripts confirm the quotes of each one.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Ex-GI Acknowledges Records Show He Couldn't Have Witnessed Killings

By CHARLES J. HANLEY  
AP Special Correspondent

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. (AP) -- One of the Korean War veterans who described the U.S. Army killing of refugees at No Gun Ri says he now recognizes he could not have been at the scene and instead learned of it second-hand from soldiers who were there.

Wartime documents found in government archives by The Associated Press show that the ex-soldier, Edward L. Daily, 69, of Clarksville, was in another unit elsewhere in Korea when 7th Cavalry Regiment companies fired on the South Korean civilians in late July 1950.

His credibility had come under fire in recent news reports, seven months after an AP article cited Daily among a dozen ex-soldiers supporting the allegations of two dozen survivors that U.S. troops killed a large number of refugees at No Gun Ri, a hamlet in central South Korea.

"I have to agree with your records. I can't dispute them," Daily said in an AP interview after reviewing the relevant documents. Asked whether he agreed the records showed he could not have been at No Gun Ri, he replied simply, "Yes."

His accounts of what happened at No Gun Ri, given to the AP in 1998 and other news organizations later, may have stemmed from years of veterans' reunions and hearing from men who participated in or witnessed the killings, Daily said.

"I still feel as though I was at No Gun Ri," he said, his voice haggard and slow. "I did not intend to be deceptive."

The archival documents show that Daily did join a 7th Cavalry combat unit in March 1951, months after No Gun Ri. In fact, he is a past president of the 7th U.S. Cavalry Association \_ a veterans' group \_ and has written two published

histories of the regiment in Korea, in which he mentions himself as a front-line soldier, both in 1950 and 1951.

In recent years, Daily has been a Veterans Administration hospital outpatient under treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder \_ that is, psychological problems related to his wartime experiences.

Last September's AP report prompted the U.S. and South Korean governments to launch investigations. Thus far, Defense Department investigators have interviewed more than 100 veterans and others, including Daily, and senior Pentagon officials told The New York Times on May 12 they had determined that U.S. troops killed a large number of civilians at No Gun Ri. A source close to the South Korean investigation said it had reached a similar conclusion.

Defense Secretary William Cohen later said no conclusions could be reached until a final report, which is not expected for several months.

The shootings occurred at a time when American commanders, in retreat before the North Korean army, feared that enemy infiltrators were disguised among such refugee groups.

The Korean survivors say about 300 villagers, mostly women and children, were killed by U.S. ground troops under and around the No Gun Ri railroad trestle, and about 100 in an earlier U.S. air attack. Veterans generally spoke of 100, 200 or "hundreds" killed.

Daily was the seventh of nine veterans quoted in the original AP story.

His description of what happened at No Gun Ri was generally consistent with that of other veterans and Korean survivors. He was one of 10 who have told the AP that orders were issued at the scene to fire on refugees. Daily also spoke of still hearing, a half-century later, "the little kids screaming" from under the trestle.

His accounts became more prominent in other news organizations' reports following up on the AP story.

While investigating the No Gun Ri allegations in 1998, AP was referred to Daily by another veteran because of his detailed knowledge of the 1st Cavalry Division's operations in the Korean War. On the 7th Cavalry Association's roster of veterans, Daily had long been listed as a member of the regiment's H

Company in July 1950.

But reports earlier this month on a privately owned veterans' website, ``Stripes.com," and in U.S. News & World Report magazine noted that a sketchy reconstructed Army personnel record said he actually belonged to another 1st Cavalry Division unit at the time, the 27th Ordnance Maintenance Co.

The record had to be reconstructed because a 1973 fire destroyed millions of Army personnel files, including Daily's.

In their original AP interviews, some 7th Cavalry veterans referred to Daily's presence at No Gun Ri; one described Daily's machine-gun position at the trestle. But veterans recently have told reporters their ``recollections" of Daily may have stemmed from conversations with him at reunions.

Executive Editor Jonathan Wolman issued a statement on May 15 saying the AP ``stands behind its carefully researched report," which won this year's Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting.

He noted that Daily was first mentioned in the 56th paragraph of the AP report, and ``the tale of No Gun Ri does not fall on the words of Mr. Daily."

The AP conducted exhaustive research at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis to find still more material relating to Daily's military service.

The documents it has found include company rosters, morning reports and special orders from 1949-51 bearing repeated personnel notations for Daily within the 27th Ordnance Maintenance Company, complete with his unique military service number.

Among other things, the 12 documents show him assigned to the company in March 1949 in Japan, sent on temporary duty to another Japanese location, returning from temporary duty, having his enlistment period extended, having his military specialty changed from clerk to mechanic, and finally being assigned to the 7th Cavalry's H Company in March 1951, seven months after No Gun Ri. Until then, H Company morning reports and rosters include no mention of Daily.

The 27th Ordnance Maintenance, a rear-area unit responsible for maintaining everything from howitzers to binoculars, was deployed to Korea with the 7th Cavalry and the rest of the division in July 1950.

Its morning reports show it was headquartered 18 miles from No Gun Ri during the shootings there, although the possibility remains that individual soldiers may have been near No Gun Ri, which was beside a main road. The reports generally do not locate specific soldiers, but one indicated a 27th Ordnance Maintenance man was wounded a few miles from No Gun Ri.

"I only remember being with Company H, 7th Cavalry Regiment," Daily said after being shown the newly uncovered documents. "But I have reviewed your records that you have obtained, and I cannot dispute them."

That would also raise doubts about Daily's descriptions of two other incidents reported in last year's AP stories: the killing of several dozen refugees in an encounter days after No Gun Ri, and the death of hundreds of refugees when the U.S. Army deliberately blew up a large bridge. Other ex-GIs also described those incidents to the AP, and the general who ordered the bridge blown confirmed those refugee deaths in an official history.

Questions also have arisen about Daily's claims, some reported by other news organizations, to have received a battlefield promotion to lieutenant and several medals for valor, and to have been held prisoner by the North Koreans for several weeks.

Asked whether some of those claims might be untrue, he said, "Maybe it could be. Whatever records they come up with I can't dispute them."

One recently traced document is a special order noting his discharge in 1952 as a sergeant, not a lieutenant.

Daily had offered some documents and other material, including an Army driver's license, to support his contention he was in H Company in 1950. In the future, he said, he will show those unauthenticated documents only to Pentagon investigators.

Daily, a tall, curly-haired man who in the past looked fit and young for his age, appeared drawn and thinner during the interview. He said he had suffered a "mini-stroke" earlier this month, and blamed it on the stress of the renewed public attention.

Daily said he began attending annual reunions of the 7th U.S. Cavalry Association and two other "Cav" groups in 1986. He said fellow war veterans would sometimes, in brief conversations, discuss the 1950 killings, without

knowing the village's name.

“No Gun Ri was not known, at that bridge site, there was only the mention of a large number of civilians killed under the bridge site,” Daily said.

Asked why he decided to respond to media queries about No Gun Ri in 1998, Daily said he felt compassion for the Korean survivors who were seeking the truth in the face of Pentagon denials that the No Gun Ri killings could have occurred.

“I was sympathetic with those people and what they had gone through over their many years of suffering and pain,” he told a reporter. “I thought it would be appropriate to talk to you about No Gun Ri.”

Pentagon investigators interviewed Daily about No Gun Ri in early April. After his credibility then came under public suspicion, a Pentagon spokesman said it would not affect the overall investigation. “Ed Daily is just one guy of many we've been talking to,” Maj. Thomas Collins said.

Reached Thursday, Collins said the Army would have no comment beyond saying that the inspector general's office remains interested in re-interviewing Daily.

U.S. investigators have been grappling with discrepancies in fragmentary 50-year-old memories. Documents from the time also can be fragmentary and ambiguous; none that has come to light mentions the events at No Gun Ri.

The AP's research in 1998 uncovered standing orders at the warfront for U.S. troops to fire on civilian-clad Koreans, to guard against disguised infiltrators. Investigators are trying to determine which officers may have issued on-scene orders to fire on refugees.

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AP Investigative Researcher Randy Herschaft contributed to this report.

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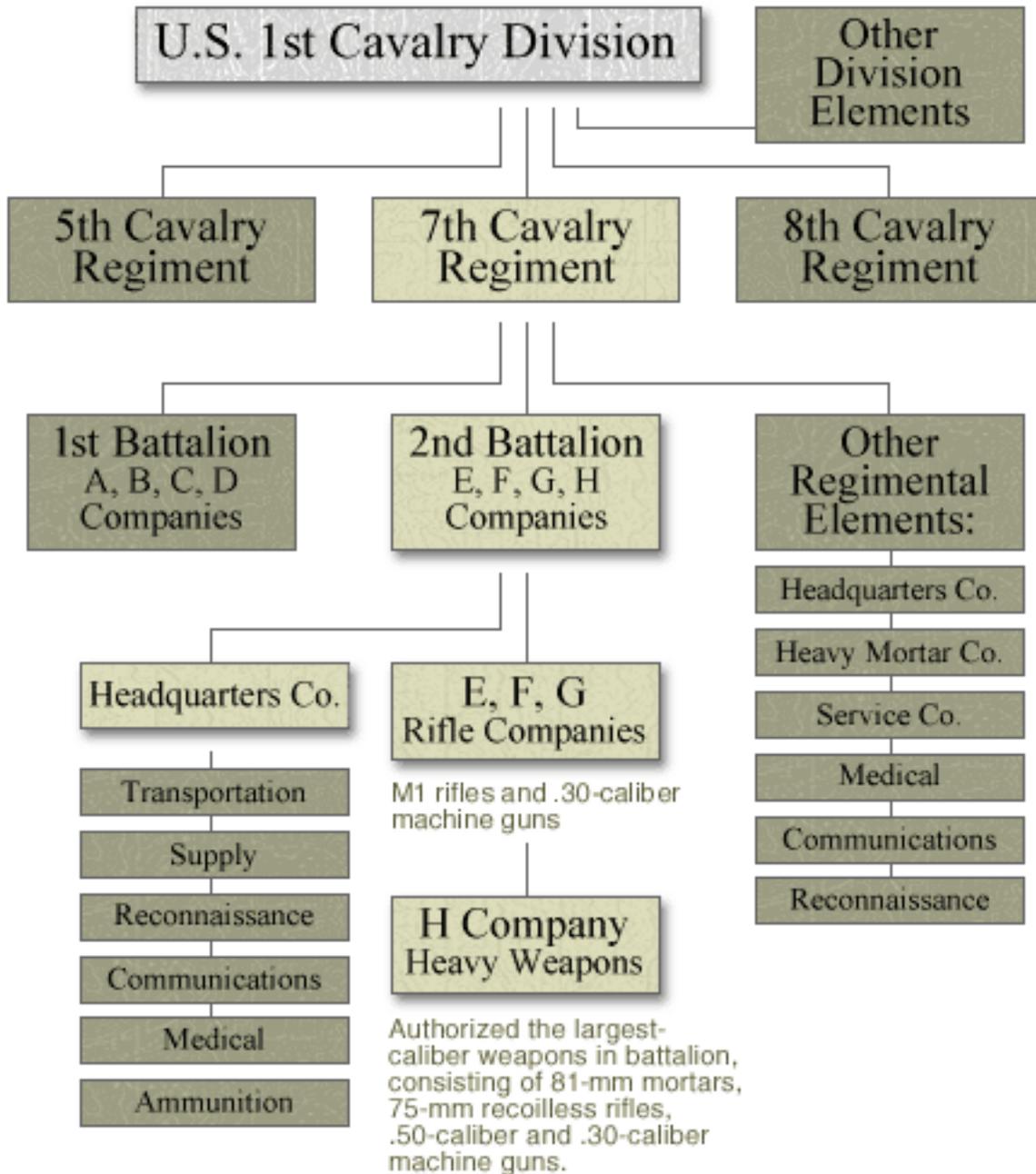
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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## TABLE OF ORGANIZATION (Korean War)

The 1st Cavalry Division had an authorized manpower strength of 15,000 - 16,000. But in July 1950 it was considerably understrength. For example, regiments had two battalions, not the standard three.



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## Timeline of a 'Forgotten War'

By The Associated Press

A chronology of the Korean conflict, sometimes called America's "forgotten war":

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### 1950

June 25 -- Communist North Korea invades U.S.-supported South Korea.

June 28 -- Invaders capture Seoul, southern capital.

July 5 -- First U.S. troops join battle, are driven back.

Aug. 4 -- South Korean and U.S. troops, organized as U.N. Command, withdraw into Pusan Perimeter defense line.

Sept. 15-22 -- U.S. troops come ashore far behind North Korean lines at Inchon. Pusan Perimeter forces push north to join them.

Sept. 27 -- U.N. forces recapture Seoul.

Oct. 19 -- U.N. forces capture Pyongyang, northern capital.

Oct. 25 -- Chinese army attacks U.N. Command in North Korea.

Nov. 7-Dec. 9 -- In east, U.S. Marines encircled at Chosin Reservoir fight way to sea and later evacuation. In west, U.S. Army's 2nd and 25th divisions are battered.

---

## 1951

Jan. 4 -- Chinese capture Seoul.

March 18 -- U.N. counter-offensive retakes Seoul.

July 10 -- Truce talks begin.

August-October -- Battles rage for limited front-line territory.

November -- Stalemate sets in along front.

---

## 1952

July-August -- U.S. air strikes all but destroy Pyongyang.

Oct. 8 -- Talks deadlock, are recessed.

---

## 1953

March 30 -- Talks resume.

July 27 -- Korean armistice agreement signed, continuing the division of Korea.

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## No Gun Ri -- Transliterating from Korean Can Confuse

By Choe Sang-Hun  
Associated Press Writer

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) -- Variations in translating from one alphabet to another produce various spellings for the South Korean village where the 1950 mass killing took place. Different documents and maps call it No Kun Ri, Ro Keun Ri, No Keunri, Rok In Ri and No Gun Ri.

The confusion arises in part because many characters in the Korean alphabet do not have corresponding, same-sounding letters in the Roman, or Western, alphabet. No single transliteration system was widely used at the time of the Korean War, or even today, and Korean names often appear with different spellings in various English translations.

In addition, U.S. soldiers writing reports during the war didn't always grasp the precise pronunciation of a locality's name.

Similar confusion was found in the English spellings of Chu Gok Ri and Im Ke Ri villages, near No Gun Ri, whose names were variously spelled as Joo Gok Ri, Chu Gok Ni, Im Gye Ri, and Im Kye Ri.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Witnesses Say U.S. Bombs Set Off Cave Inferno, Killed Hundreds

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
Associated Press Writer

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — When the American firebombs hit, hundreds of terrified refugees trapped in the cave rushed for the entrance, villagers said. But only a dozen escaped with their lives.  video

The "Cave of the Crying Stream," its ancient name, was filled that day with the cries of the dying, they recalled.

Survivors and other witnesses said as many as 300 civilian refugees were killed in the U.S. air attack at the cavern near Youngchoon, 90 miles southeast of Seoul, on Jan. 20, 1951, in the seventh month of the Korean War.

The victims were local villagers and refugees from elsewhere taking shelter in the 150-yard-long cave, named for the sound made by a stream that flows through it during monsoon rains. Declassified U.S. military documents show that American pilots sometimes attacked civilian-clad groups in South Korea on suspicion they harbored enemy infiltrators.

South Korean refugees poured into the Youngchoon area in January 1951 as a Chinese offensive pushed U.S. and South Korean forces deeper into South Korea. An official U.S. military history indicates the Chinese front line was several miles north of Youngchoon at the time.



*Refugees flee south through Tanyang in this Jan. 19, 1951 file photo. The next day, about 12 miles northeast of Tanyang, a firebomb attack by U.S. planes killed some 300 such refugees sheltering in a cave, local villagers say.*

*(AP Photo/Sgt. Peter Replenas, National Archives)*

In the dim light of kerosene lamps, the refugees had spread straw mats on the cave floor and huddled there with their luggage. People occasionally moved outside to prepare food. Children dashed in and out to play. From a nearby hill, Kim Ok-yi, then 25, saw an observer plane circling over the cave entrance. Then four American planes flew in and dropped bombs that "looked like fuel drums and sent columns of fire soaring when exploded," Kim said.



*This July 1950 file photo shows a Lockheed F-80 Shooting Star jet fighter. (AP Photo/File)*

They may have been napalm, gasoline-gel bombs heavily used by U.S. forces in the Korean conflict.

The fire quickly spread inside, survivors said, and smoke reeking of gasoline filled the cave. People stampeded toward the narrow entrance. Parents shouted for their children. "People fell over each other. Most of them suffocated," said Cho Byong-woo, then 19. Cho was saved when his father threw him over the fire at the entrance, but he lost two uncles in the cave.

People rushing outside were then strafed by the planes, Cho said.

"An 11-year-old friend of mine, Kang-won, was running with his mother. Then a big bullet hit him. It cut his hand off and slashed his stomach like a razor. His bowels spilled out and he died on the spot," Cho said.

In an unexplained postscript, two American soldiers arrived by helicopter two or three weeks later, went inside the cave and took some photographs, villagers said.

After the bombing, local people pulled out bodies to look for family members. But most bodies remained inside, unclaimed. "When we had floods, we used to see skeletal human remains floating out of the cave," Kim said. "Those who died the tragic death in the cave are still waiting for an explanation."

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# **DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY INSPECTOR GENERAL**

## **NO GUN RI REVIEW**



**January 2001**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Following the release of the Associated Press story concerning the matter on September 29, 1999, the United States (U.S.) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) initiated independent, but cooperative, reviews of the incident at No Gun Ri. This story brought to the forefront the earlier efforts of Korean citizens to secure an official inquiry into their claims surrounding certain events that occurred in the vicinity of No Gun Ri, including the firing upon Korean refugees at the double railroad overpass and an air strike on the railroad track.

Over the last year, the U.S. Review Team has conducted an exhaustive factual review by examining over a million documents from the National Archives, conducting interviews with approximately 200 American witnesses, and analyzing the interview transcripts and oral statements of approximately 75 Korean witnesses. The U.S. Review Team also closely examined press reports, aerial imagery, and other forensic examination results. This U.S. Report reflects the U.S. Review Team's factual findings based upon all the evidence available on the incident.

Unfortunately, the passage of 50 years greatly reduces the possibility that we will ever know all of the facts surrounding this particular event. A large number of factors, including but not limited to trauma, age, and the media, influenced the recollection of Korean and U.S. witnesses. By comparing and contrasting all of these available information sources, the U.S. Review Team has developed a clearer picture of the events that occurred in the vicinity of No Gun Ri in July 1950. The findings of the U.S. Review Team have been organized into several key issues, which describe the Team's conclusions regarding what occurred at No Gun Ri based upon all the information available half a century later.

### **I. Background - The Korean Account**

The Korean villagers stated that on July 25, 1950, U.S. soldiers evacuated approximately 500 to 600 villagers from their homes in Im Gae Ri and Joo Gok Ri. The villagers said the U.S. soldiers escorted them towards the south. Later that evening, the American soldiers led the villagers near a riverbank at Ha Ga Ri and ordered them to stay there that night. During the night, the villagers witnessed a long parade of U.S. troops and vehicles moving towards Pusan.

On the morning of July 26, 1950, the villagers continued south along the Seoul-Pusan road. According to their statements, when the villagers reached the vicinity of No Gun Ri, U.S. soldiers stopped them at a roadblock and ordered the group onto the railroad tracks, where the soldiers searched them and their personal belongings. The Koreans state that, although the soldiers found no prohibited items (such as weapons or other military contraband), the soldiers ordered an air attack upon the villagers via radio communications with U.S. aircraft. Shortly afterwards, planes flew over and dropped

bombs and fired machine guns, killing approximately 100 villagers on the railroad tracks. Those villagers who survived sought protection in a small culvert underneath the railroad tracks. The U.S. soldiers drove the villagers out of the culvert and into the larger double tunnels nearby (this report subsequently refers to these tunnels as the “double railroad overpass”). The Koreans state that the U.S. soldiers then fired into both ends of the tunnels over a period of four days (July 26-29, 1950), resulting in approximately 300 additional deaths.

## **II. Department of Defense Review Directives**

On September 30, 1999, the Secretary of Defense directed the Secretary of the Army to lead a review to determine "the full scope of the facts surrounding these [No Gun Ri] press reports." On October 25, 1999, the Secretary of the Army directed The Inspector General to conduct a thorough review of the allegations, pursue every reasonable lead to determine the facts, and then prepare and submit a report of the findings with regard to the allegations.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense established a Steering Group chaired by the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) to oversee the conduct of the review. In addition, the Secretary of Defense invited eight distinguished Americans, who are not affiliated with the Department of Defense, to advise on the conduct of the review based upon their expertise in academia, journalism, the Korean War, and U.S.-ROK relations.

## **III. Department of the Army Inspector General Review Effort**

The Inspector General developed a four-phase concept plan: Preparation; Research and Interviews; Review and Analysis; and Production of the Final Report. The Inspector General then formed the No Gun Ri Review Team (U.S. Review Team) into a Research Team and an Interview Team. The research effort, led by an Army historian, began in October 1999. The Research Team consisted of Department of the Army military and civilian members augmented by a United States Air Force research team, an imagery analyst, a Korean linguist, and professional research assistants from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The researchers examined over one million pages of text from the National Archives and other repositories and approximately 45,000 containers of United States Air Force reconnaissance film.

The interview process started on December 29, 1999, after the Interview Team located former soldiers assigned to the major combat units that passed through the Yongdong-Hwanggan area in mid- to late July 1950. The Interview Team and Air Force researchers culled through over 7,375 names to locate and interview approximately 200 U.S. veterans. While every effort was made to make this a comprehensive sample, the U.S. Review Team had no power to compel a witness to grant an interview and no authority to issue subpoenas or to grant immunity. In fact, eleven veterans contacted by the U.S. Review Team declined to be interviewed. The U.S. Review Team did review,

however, the published accounts of some witnesses who declined to be interviewed by the Team.

#### **IV. U.S. and ROK Cooperation**

The Department of the Army and the Department of Defense worked in close cooperation with the representatives of the government of the Republic of Korea who were conducting a parallel review of the allegations. Members from the U.S. Review Team, the Republic of Korea Investigation Team (ROK Review Team), and government officials from both countries met on approximately a dozen occasions in both the United States and Korea, to include the Secretary of the Army's meetings with President Kim Dae-Jung and Minister of National Defense Cho Song-Tae in January 2000. The U.S. Review Team provided the ROK Review Team with copies of all relevant documents and other information discovered in the course of the review in support of the ROK's parallel investigation. On two occasions, the U.S. Review Team supported working visits by a ROK Review Team researcher to the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. The U.S. Review Team provided full access to, and funded the reproduction costs of, any materials already gathered by the U.S. researchers. No information was withheld.

#### **V. Organization of the U.S. Report**

The U.S. Review Team conducted this review and prepared this report fully aware of the political, military, and emotional significance of the allegations. This report is not intended as a point-by-point response to the media and Korean accounts. The report presents an independent assessment of the facts derived directly from an exhaustive review of primary and secondary sources, the statements of U.S. veterans and Koreans, ballistic and pathology forensics, and imagery analysis.

The report consists of an Executive Summary, five chapters, and five appendices. Chapter 1 (Introduction) outlines the purpose, background, and overall organization and conduct of the review. Chapter 2 (Background and History) describes the ground events unfolding on the Korean Peninsula in July 1950. Chapter 3 (Combat Operations - July 1950) examines the state of U.S. intelligence and U.S. ground forces in July 1950 and provides a day-by-day account of the tactical operations of the 1st Cavalry Division in the vicinity of No Gun Ri during the last week of July 1950. This chapter also includes research on U.S. and allied air operations in the Yongdong-Hwanggan area for the same time period. Several photographs from 1950 are inserted between Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 4 (Analysis of Interview Data) provides the analysis of interviews of American and Korean witnesses. The review of witness statements identifies areas of consensus between statements and outlines possible sequences of events. Finally, Chapter 5 (Key Issue Analysis and Findings) synthesizes the analysis of documentary research and witness interviews into a thorough, fact-based set of findings.

The appendices supplement the material in the main body of the report. Appendix A (Research Methodology) documents in detail the methodology used in the research of the historical records. Appendix B (Forensic Evidence) provides an analysis of the forensic evidence associated with the No Gun Ri site. This appendix discusses the sources of Korean casualty estimates, analysis of the ballistic evidence collected by Korean authorities, and an analysis of the USAF reconnaissance film taken over the No Gun Ri area on August 6, 1950. Appendix C (Imagery Analysis) contains the analysis of the August 6, 1950, USAF reconnaissance photograph performed by the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA). This appendix includes the NIMA response to the ROK Investigation Team's questions concerning this analysis. Appendix D (Joint Cooperation) discusses the actions taken to ensure a cooperative and coordinated effort between the ROK and U.S. Review Teams, including joint meetings and the exchange of documents and other information. Appendix E (Supporting Documents) contains explanatory charts and maps.

## **VI. Findings**

Given the challenge of ascertaining facts a half century after their occurrence, the U.S. Review Team made findings when possible, identified possibilities, and noted when the evidence was not sufficient to identify a possibility or reach a finding about what may have occurred at No Gun Ri in July 1950 based upon an analysis of available information. A summary of its factual findings has been organized into several key issues. These issues were identified and developed in coordination with the Office of the Secretary of Defense Steering Group, U.S. Outside Experts, and counterparts from the Republic of Korea.

### **A. Key Issue 1: Condition of U.S. Forces in July 1950**

**Background.** U.S. soldiers were young, under-trained, under-equipped, and unprepared for the fight they would wage against the North Korean People's Army (NKPA). The soldiers of the Army of Occupation in Japan functioned primarily as a constabulary in a conquered land and not as combat-ready warfighters.

Their lack of combat preparedness was a direct result of deficiencies in training, equipment, structure, personnel strength, and leadership. Proper training areas were not available to conduct more than small-unit training. Classes for critical specialties such as maintenance and communications were also inadequate. Most of their equipment, including ammunition, was of World War II vintage, and had been poorly stored and maintained. The three infantry regiments in the 1st Cavalry Division had only two of the three battalions normally assigned. Likewise, each regiment lacked its authorized tank company, and the division artillery battalions contained only two of the normal three firing batteries. In response to a requirement to bring the 24th Infantry Division up to strength prior to that division's departure for Korea, the 1st Cavalry Division transferred nearly 800 men, most of them from the top four senior non-commissioned officer grades, to the 24th. This loss of non-commissioned officers with

whom the soldiers had trained weakened the cohesion of the division and significantly reduced the number of leaders with combat experience at the small-unit level.

**Finding.** Based on the documentary evidence, as well as the statements by U.S. veterans, the U.S. Review Team concluded that most American units and soldiers were not adequately prepared for the combat conditions that they confronted in Korea in June and July 1950. No experience or training equipped them to deal with an aggressive enemy that employed both conventional and guerilla warfare tactics or with a large refugee population, which the enemy was known to have infiltrated. Shortages of experienced Non-commissioned officers, along with inadequate equipment and doctrine, made it difficult for individuals or units to adapt to these conditions.

## **B. Key Issue 2: U.S. and ROK Refugee Control Policies**

**Background.** The U.S. troops were completely unprepared for the stark reality of dealing with the numerous, uncontrolled refugees who clogged the roads and complicated the battlefield to an unexpected degree. Early on in the war, U.S. forces encountered the NKPA practice of infiltrating soldiers dressed as civilians among large refugee concentrations. Once behind American lines, these infiltrated soldiers would then conduct guerilla-style combat operations against American rear-area units and activities.

In late July 1950, the ROK government and the Eighth U.S. Army Headquarters issued refugee control policies to protect the U.S. and ROK forces from NKPA infiltration and attacks from the rear. Additionally, these policies were aimed at reducing the adverse impact of large refugee concentrations on main supply routes, which stymied the U.S. and UN troops' ability to rush ammunition forward and evacuate casualties to the rear. These U.S. and ROK refugee policies depended heavily upon the constant presence of, and coordination with, the ROK National Police to handle the uncontrolled refugee population.

Despite comments attributed to Major General Gay, the 1st Cavalry Division Commander, that he would not employ the Korean National Police in his division's area of operations, his refugee policy directive of July 23, 1950, made the National Police responsible for handling refugees. The movement of civilians and refugees in the 1st Cavalry Division area was restricted to specific hours and for specific purposes by a limited number of people, and the National Police were responsible for enforcing the policy.

On July 26, 1950, the Eighth U.S. Army Korea (EUSAK), in coordination with the ROK government, established and disseminated a plan to control refugee movement which:

- precluded movement of refugees across battle lines at all times, prohibited evacuation of villages without general officer approval, and established a National Police responsibility,
- prescribed procedures for Korean National Police to clear desired areas and routes,

- strictly precluded Korean civilian movement during the hours of darkness, and
- established requirements for disseminating the policy.

The Eighth Army's policy was intended to deny the NKPA their widely used infiltration tactic while also safeguarding civilians by prohibiting refugees from crossing battle lines (battle lines are the areas where there is contact with the enemy or contact is about to occur). The policy did not state that refugees could not cross friendly lines and contains instructions for the handling of refugees in friendly areas (friendly lines are the forward troop positions not in contact with the enemy). The policy emphasized the Korean government's responsibility for the control and screening of refugees to provide for their welfare. Nothing in this policy was intended to put refugees at risk.

Most veterans from the 7th Cavalry Regiment interviewed by the U.S. Review Team were enlisted men during the Korean War and did not receive copies of policies from higher headquarters. In general, most U.S. veterans remembered warnings that there were North Korean infiltrators among the refugees. The veterans who remembered more specific details about refugee control remembered specific actions to be taken; for example, keep refugees off the roads, do not let refugees pass, or search refugees and let them pass.

**Finding.** From its study of the refugee control policies in effect during the last week of July 1950, the U.S. Review Team found that the Eighth U.S. Army published, in coordination with the ROK government, refugee control policies that reflected two predominant concerns: (1) protecting U.S. and ROK troops from the danger of NKPA soldiers infiltrating U.S. - ROK lines; and (2) precluding uncontrolled refugee movements from impeding flows of supplies and troops. The published 1st Cavalry Division refugee control policy dated July 23, 1950, reflected the same two concerns. The task of keeping innocent civilians out of harm's way was left entirely to ROK authorities. By implication, these policies also protected refugees by attempting to ensure they were not in harm's way.

### **C. Key Issue 3: Tactical Situation July 22-29, 1950**

**Background.** The 1st Cavalry Division relieved the 24th Infantry Division northwest of Yongdong on July 22, 1950. The 7th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division arrived in Pohangdong, Korea, on July 22, 1950, and the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, moved forward to the Yongdong area. With friendly forces outnumbered by the NKPA, the Eighth Army developed a strategy to withdraw behind the last defensible terrain feature, the Naktong River. As events developed, the 1st Cavalry Division withdrew from Yongdong through a series of delaying actions in accordance with the Eighth Army strategy and to avoid a threatened envelopment. On the evening of July 25, 1950, the 7th Cavalry Regiment was supporting the 5th Cavalry Regiment in positions east of Yongdong.

Sometime during the night of July 25, the 7th Cavalry received a report that a breakthrough had occurred in the sector to the 7th Cavalry Regiment's north.

**Finding.** The U.S. Review Team found that, in the early morning hours of July 26, 1950, the 2nd Battalion of the 7th Cavalry Regiment, without specific orders but believing they were being enveloped, conducted a disorganized and undisciplined withdrawal from a position east of Yongdong to the vicinity of No Gun Ri. They spent the remaining hours of July 26 until late into that night recovering abandoned personnel and equipment from the area where the air strike and machine-gun firing on Korean refugees is alleged to have occurred. On July 26, 1950, at 9:30 at night, 119 men were still unaccounted for. It will probably never be possible to reconstruct the activities of the scattered soldiers of the 2nd Battalion.

The U.S. Review Team determined that the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, arrived in the vicinity of No Gun Ri in the afternoon of July 26, 1950. They relieved the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, and established their position east of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

The U.S. Review Team found that there was repeated contact reported between the 7th Cavalry and enemy forces in the vicinity of No Gun Ri on July 27 and July 28. The records indicate by this time that the 7th Cavalry had been told that there were no friendly forces to the west and south of No Gun Ri (i.e. back toward Yongdong). The 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, reported an enemy column on the railroad tracks on July 27, which they fired upon. On July 29, the battalion withdrew as the NKPA advanced.

The U.S. Review Team concluded that based on the available evidence, the 7th Cavalry Regiment was under attack, as they believed, between July 27 and July 29, 1950, when in position near No Gun Ri.

#### **D. Key Issue 4: Assembly and Movement of Villagers**

**Background.** The U.S. and ROK policy in July 1950 stated generally that Korean civilians should not evacuate their villages. The U.S. Review Team could not determine the reasons why the refugees gathered in Im Gae Ri, but this gathering of refugees was probably not the result of any U.S. action. Some witnesses stated that the Americans told them that they were being moved for their safety. Some U.S. veterans remember escorting refugees from villages, but these veterans cannot remember the villages' names or the dates the evacuations occurred. Therefore, the U.S. Review Team cannot rule out the possibility that U.S. soldiers told the villagers at Im Gae Ri to evacuate the village.

While the U.S. Review Team cannot rule out the possibility that the villagers were moved, there was no sound military reason for soldiers to travel approximately three miles off their designated movement route to the village of Im Gae Ri during a hasty withdrawal for the purpose of encouraging an additional 400 refugees onto the already crowded roads and further aggravating the congested conditions. It is also unlikely that the soldiers would have performed this evacuation given the widespread knowledge and fear of North Korean infiltrators believed to be present in refugee concentrations.

Some 7th Cavalry Regiment veterans recalled displacing South Koreans from unknown villages on unknown dates. The U.S. Review Team found that the 7th Cavalry Regiment was not in the vicinity of Im Gae Ri on July 25 based upon official records of the Regiment's positions. Some veterans of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment indicated that they evacuated or escorted Korean civilians from unknown villages in late July and early August 1950. A patrol from the 5th Cavalry Regiment may have told the villagers who had assembled at Im Gae Ri to leave.

**Finding.** The U.S. Review Team could not determine the reasons why the refugees gathered in Im Gae Ri, but the U.S. Review Team concluded that this gathering of refugees was probably not the result of U.S. action. Based on some of the available evidence, the U.S. Review Team cannot rule out the possibility that U.S. soldiers told the villagers at Im Gae Ri to evacuate the village, but the soldiers who did so were not from the 7th Cavalry Regiment.

#### **E. Key Issue 5: Air Strikes in the Vicinity of No Gun Ri**

**Background.** Korean witnesses describe an air strike / strafing around noon on July 26, 1950 on the railroad tracks. The Korean witnesses describe the effects of machine gun fire and explosions.

The U.S. Review Team could not locate any records to substantiate the occurrence of an air strike / strafing incident in the vicinity of No Gun Ri around noon on July 26, 1950. While there are mission reports for July 26, 1950, that could not be located, the missions can be accounted for through other reports. The only documented USAF air strike in the immediate vicinity of the Hwanggan area occurred southwest of No Gun Ri on July 27. This air strike was a friendly fire incident in which a F-80 accidentally strafed the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment's command post at 7:15 in the morning. The strafing destroyed two U.S. trucks but claimed no lives.

The friendly strike on the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, caused the 7th Cavalry Regimental Commander to request immediately that he be assigned a Tactical Air Control Party in order to control aircraft in his area and thereby preclude further friendly-fire incidents. Only a Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) with a jeep-mounted AN/VRC-1 radio could talk to the Air Force elements, including the strike aircraft. There was only one TACP operating in support of the 1st Cavalry Division during this period of time. This TACP was not located in the vicinity of No Gun Ri during the period of July 26 to July 29, 1950. Ordinary soldiers could not communicate on their radios with aircraft. Although it was possible for the Army to request an air strike from the Air Force, the process was cumbersome and took considerable time because the request had to be processed through Army and Air Force channels.

No U.S. Air Force veteran that the U.S. Review Team interviewed participated in, or had any knowledge of anyone participating in, the strafing of civilians in the vicinity of

No Gun Ri in late July 1950. U.S. Air Force interviewees vividly recalled stern verbal policies implemented to prevent the attack of non-combatants.

The Navy discovered no evidence of naval aircraft operating in the vicinity of No Gun Ri on July 26 or 27. However, on July 28, Navy aircraft from the *USS Valley Forge* were directed into the area and attacked a railroad tunnel occupied by enemy troops and other targets forward of the 7th Cavalry in the direction of Yongdong with bombs and machine guns.

The Defense Intelligence Agency found 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron photographs of the No Gun Ri area dated August 6 and September 19, 1950. The Air Force Team showed these photographs to four retired photo interpreters of national reputation, all of whom agree that the photographs show no signs of bombing or strafing on the railroad tracks. A NIMA photo interpreter maintains that some patterns near the tracks approximately 350 yards from the double railroad overpass show “an imagery signature of probable strafing” but no bomb damage. The location of the probable strafing is in the same relative location identified by the Korean witnesses as that location where they were strafed.

**Finding.** An exhaustive search of U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy records and interviews with U.S. pilots did not identify an air strike in the No Gun Ri area on July 26, 1950. The number of Korean witness statements describing the strafing and the photograph interpretation by NIMA does not permit the U.S. Review Team to exclude the possibility that U.S. or allied aircraft might have hit civilian refugees in the vicinity of No Gun Ri during an air strike / strafing on July 26, 1950. On July 27, 1950, an air strike did in fact occur on the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry's position near No Gun Ri that both the Air Force and Army recorded in official documents. On July 28, there was also an air strike on NKPA forces near 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. Assuming Korean civilians were near the positions of these strikes, they could have been injured.

The U.S. Review Team concluded that strafing may have occurred near No Gun Ri in the last week of July 1950 and could have injured or killed Korean civilians but that any such air strikes were not deliberate attacks on Korean civilians. The U. S. Review Team concluded that any air strikes / strafing occurring on July 26 took place under the same conditions as the air strikes / strafing on July 27, specifically an accidental air strike / strafing caused by the misidentification of targets and not a pre-planned strike. An accidental air strike / strafing could have happened due to several factors: target misidentification, lack of reliable communications, absence of a Tactical Air Control Party in the 7th Regiment, and the fluid nature of the battlefield. It was not a pre-planned strike on civilian refugees.

## **F. Key Issue 6: Ground Fire in the Vicinity of No Gun Ri**

**Background.** Some U.S. and Korean witness statements indicate that U.S. ground forces fired toward refugees in the vicinity of No Gun Ri during the period July 26-29, 1950, as discussed below. According to the Korean description of the events on

July 26, 1950, refugees were strafed or bombed on the railroad tracks. Some fled the area or hid in ditches and others went into the double railroad overpass tunnel where they were fired upon from different locations for a period of up to four days, with the heaviest fire occurring on July 26 (which was the first day they report spending in the double railroad overpass).

In interviews, some U.S. veterans stated they saw or heard firing of various types including machine-gun, mortar, artillery, and rifle fire, near unidentified individuals in civilian clothing outside the tunnels / bridges in the vicinity of No Gun Ri. Only a few veterans interviewed by the U.S. Review Team stated they fired toward civilians in the vicinity of No Gun Ri. Two veterans fired over the heads of or into the ground in front to keep the civilians pinned down or to prevent them from moving. Several other veterans stated they either received hostile fire from, or saw hostile fire coming from, the civilian positions in the double railroad overpass and elsewhere. They also stated that they returned fire, or observed fire being returned, on the civilian positions as a response to the hostile fire they received or observed. Some veterans also remember intermittent NKPA and U.S. artillery and mortar fires.

Official records indicate that the NKPA attacked the 7th Cavalry on July 27 and 28, and the 7th Cavalry employed every means at its disposal to defend itself, including the use of small-arms fire, mortars, and artillery.

**Finding.** Although the U.S. Review Team cannot determine what happened near No Gun Ri with certainty, it is clear, based upon all available evidence, that an unknown number of Korean civilians were killed or injured by the effects of small-arms fire, artillery and mortar fire, and strafing that preceded or coincided with the NKPA's advance and the withdrawal of U.S. forces in the vicinity of No Gun Ri during the last week of July 1950. These Korean deaths and injuries occurred at different locations in the vicinity of No Gun Ri and were not concentrated exclusively at the double railroad overpass.

Some U.S. veterans describe fire that lasted for a few to 60 minutes. Some Korean witnesses describe fire day and night on the tunnel for as long as four days. Because Korean estimates of the length of time they spent in the tunnel are so inconsistent, the U.S. Review Team drew no conclusion about the amount of time they spent in the tunnel.

The firing was a result of hostile fire seen or received from civilian positions or fire directed over their heads or near them to control their movement. The deaths and injuries of civilians, wherever they occurred, were an unfortunate tragedy inherent to war and not a deliberate killing.

## **G. Key Issue 7: Issuance of Orders to Fire on Refugees**

**Background.** To determine if soldiers or pilots were issued orders to attack and fire on refugees in the vicinity of No Gun Ri, the Review Team reviewed documents and

conducted interviews with Army and Air Force veterans. Based upon the available evidence, which included the statements of veterans, documents, and the absence of documents, the U.S. Review Team concluded that U.S. commanders did not issue oral or written orders to fire on refugees in the vicinity of No Gun Ri between July 25 and 29, 1950.

Pilots were not ordered to attack and kill civilian refugees in the vicinity of No Gun Ri. Air strikes in the vicinity of No Gun Ri on July 26 were either the result of a misidentification of a target or an accident as discussed above. No USAF veteran that the U.S. Review Team interviewed participated in, or had any knowledge of anyone participating in, the strafing of civilians in the vicinity of No Gun Ri in late July 1950. U.S. Air Force interviewees vividly recalled stern verbal policies implemented to prevent the attack of non-combatants. In interviews, pilots stated that they sought out targets such as tanks, trucks, moving troops, and groups of men in uniform. Pilots fired when they were told a target was hostile and fired back when fired upon.

The U.S. Review Team found two documents that refer to an unknown Army request to the Air Force and the Navy to strafe civilian or refugee columns. The first reference is in a memorandum by COL T.C. Rogers, Fifth Air Force ADVON (Korea), dated 25 July 1950. The second reference is a Naval Activity Summary for the same date from the Aircraft Carrier *Valley Forge*. The U.S. Review Team could not find any originating request from the Army that prompted these two references. The Rogers' memorandum actually recommends that civilians not be attacked unless they are definitely known to be North Korean soldiers or have committed hostile acts. The Navy document stated that the first pass over personnel would be a non-firing run to identify if civilians were present. If the target was determined to be hostile, a firing run would follow.

Soldiers were not ordered to attack and kill civilian refugees in the vicinity of No Gun Ri. The veterans interviewed said that deadly force was not authorized against civilian refugees who posed no threat to the unit, and they were not given orders to shoot and kill civilian refugees in the vicinity of No Gun Ri. However, the U.S. Review Team found that soldiers who were in the vicinity of No Gun Ri were given an order to stop civilians and not to let them pass their position. Some soldiers did believe if civilian refugees did not stop, they could use deadly force to prevent them from passing.

Several other veterans stated they observed firing at the civilians in response to perceived hostile fire from the positions near the double railroad overpass and elsewhere. Based on veterans' interviews, the U.S. Review Team found that soldiers believed that they could take action in self-defense against civilians; that is, if they were fired upon or if they saw actions that indicated hostile intent. Some veterans said they observed firing in the direction of the double railroad overpass in response to fire from that location. Return fire in this case would have been an action in self-defense, and no orders were required. Two veterans fired over the heads of civilians, or into the ground in front to keep the civilians pinned down or prevent them from moving. The U.S. soldiers were repeatedly warned that North Korean soldiers wore civilian clothing over

their uniforms in order to infiltrate U.S. positions. The U.S. soldiers were also told that North Korean soldiers would hide within refugee columns.

In interviews with the U.S. Review Team, several veterans stated that they assumed there was an order to fire on civilians because artillery and mortar fires were used that may have hit civilians. These veterans had no information to support their assertions. When interviewed, the veterans said they did not know who gave the order, they did not hear the order, they did not know when the order was given, and they personally did not receive the order. Former officers of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, that the U.S. Review Team interviewed remain adamant that the battalion commander issued no order to fire on refugees at any time.

There are references that appear to authorize firing on Korean civilians in Army records. The first reference was an abbreviated message that appeared in an 8th Cavalry Regiment message log dated 10:00 AM on July 24, 1950, that stated: "No refugees to cross the frontline. Fire everyone trying to cross the lines. Use discretion in case of women and children." The U.S. Review Team found no similar entry in the records of the 1st Cavalry Division, its other two regiments (the 5th and 7th Cavalry Regiments), or in the records of units subordinate to the 8th Cavalry Regiment. The U.S. Review Team found no evidence that the 8th Cavalry message was transmitted to the 5th or 7th Cavalry Regiments or any other subordinate element of the division. In interviews, U.S. veterans in the vicinity of No Gun Ri do not recall instructions to fire on civilian refugees. The 7th Cavalry Regiment was the unit in the vicinity of No Gun Ri on July 26. By July 26, 1950, the last elements of the 8th Cavalry Regiment were withdrawing from the vicinity of No Gun Ri to the division rear near Hwanggan.

The refugee control policy set by the 1st Cavalry Division Commander in his order of July 23, 1950, titled "Control of Refugee Movement" makes no mention of the use of force by soldiers. It stated: "Municipal authorities, local police and the National Police will enforce this directive." The U.S. Review Team concluded that the 8th Cavalry Regiment log entry did not constitute a 1st Cavalry Division order to fire upon Korean civilians at No Gun Ri.

The second reference was a 25th Infantry Division Commander's memorandum to commanders issued on July 27, 1950. On July 25, 1950, the 25th ID Activities Report stated: "Refugees and Korean Civilians were ordered out of the combat zone in order to eliminate possible serious traffic problems and to aid in blocking the infiltration of North Korean Forces through the lines. These instructions were passed to the civilians through the Korean Police." The July 27, 1950, memo to Commanders reads: "Korean police have been directed to remove all civilians from the area between the blue lines shown on the attached overlay and report the evacuation has been accomplished. All civilians seen in this area are to be considered as enemy and action taken accordingly." The area "between the blue lines" was in front of the 25th Infantry Division's main line of defense, an area about to be occupied by the enemy. Two things are clear: actions had been taken in conjunction with the Korean National Police to clear the civilians out of the danger area, and those actions were intended to ensure that

noncombatants would not find themselves in harm's way when the advancing NKPA subsequently made contact along the Division's front. After the area was cleared, anyone caught in civilian clothes and suspected of being an enemy agent was to be turned over to the Counter-Intelligence Corps immediately and not to the Korean Police. There is nothing to suggest any summary measures were considered against refugees or people dressed like refugees. The 25th Infantry Division was not located in the vicinity of No Gun Ri during the last week of July 1950.

**Finding.** Based upon the available evidence, and despite some conflicting statements and misunderstandings, the U.S. Review Team concluded that U.S. commanders did not issue oral or written orders to shoot and kill Korean civilians during the last week of July 1950 in the vicinity of No Gun Ri.

A veteran stated that soldiers could have misunderstood the order not to let refugees pass or to stop refugees. Some veterans did believe that if a civilian would not stop, they could use deadly force to prevent civilians from passing.

Some veterans stated that there was an order to shoot civilians at No Gun Ri but had no information to support their assertions. These soldiers did not know who gave the order, did not hear the order, did not know when the order was given, and personally did not receive the order. As a result, the U.S. Review Team concluded that these veterans assumed that an order was given because artillery and mortars were fired. The U.S. Review Team also considered media statements quoting veterans who claimed that an order to shoot Korean civilians was given at No Gun Ri. The U.S. Review Team was unable to confirm these reports because the witnesses either were not at No Gun Ri at the time or refused to speak to the U.S. Army.

Although the U.S. Review Team found four references (entry in the 8th Cavalry Regiment Message Log, 25th Infantry Division Commander's order, Colonel Rogers' memorandum, and an extract from the U.S. Navy's Aircraft Carrier *Valley Forge* Activity Summary) discussing actions against civilians, it did not find evidence of an order given to soldiers by a U.S. commander, orally or in writing, to kill Korean civilians in the vicinity of No Gun Ri in the last week of July 1950.

## **H. Key Issue 8: Number of Korean Deaths and Injuries**

**Background.** After taking the statements of U.S. veterans and securing the professional evaluation of the August 6, 1950, aerial reconnaissance photograph by the National Imagery and Mapping Agency and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, the U.S. Review Team asked the ROK Review Team to provide information on the number of casualties. The U.S. Review Team's research revealed no official records of refugee deaths or injuries in the vicinity of No Gun Ri between July 26 and July 29, 1950.

The initial Associated Press articles reported hundreds of people killed. Korean witness estimates range between 60 -100 dead in the double tunnel and 50 - 150 dead or injured from strafing / bombing. Several U.S. veterans describe a lower number of

dead or injured civilians. The soldiers did not check the areas where civilians came under fire to determine whether there were dead bodies, and some estimates appear to be guesswork or to be based on recollections not related to No Gun Ri.

At three different meetings, ROK officials reported an unverified number of 248 casualties, which they stated was provided to them by the Yongdong County Office. But the ROK Review Team acknowledges that the estimated figure of 248 is not considered factual and will have to be substantiated by an additional investigation at some future date by the ROK government.

**Finding.** Based on the available evidence, the U.S. Review Team is unable to determine the number of Korean civilians who were killed or injured in the vicinity of No Gun Ri. During their investigation, the ROK Review Team reported that the Korean survivors' organization claimed an unverified number of 248 South Korean civilians killed, injured, or missing in the vicinity of No Gun Ri between July 25 and 29, 1950. This report was recorded by the Yongdong County Office. The ROK Steering Group, at a ROK-U.S. Steering Group meeting on December 6-7, 2000, in Seoul, ROK, reiterated the claim of 248 casualties.

The actual number of Korean casualties cannot be derived from the U.S. veteran statements and Korean witness statements. The U.S. Team believes that number to be lower than the Korean claim. An aerial reconnaissance photograph of the No Gun Ri area taken on August 6, 1950, shows no indication of human remains or mass graves in the vicinity of the No Gun Ri double railroad overpass. Korean burial customs, farming in the area, lack of reliable information, wartime disruptions of the countryside, and the passage of time preclude an accurate determination of the numbers involved.

## **Conclusion**

During late July 1950, Korean civilians were caught between withdrawing U.S. forces and attacking enemy forces. As a result of U.S. actions during the Korean War in the last week of July 1950, Korean civilians were killed and injured in the vicinity of No Gun Ri. The U.S. Review Team did not find that the Korean deaths and injuries occurred exactly as described in the Korean account. To appraise these events, it is necessary to recall the circumstances of the period. U.S. forces on occupation duty in Japan, mostly without training for, or experience in, combat were suddenly ordered to join ROK forces in defending against a determined assault by well-armed and well-trained NKPA forces employing both conventional and guerilla warfare tactics. The U.S. troops had to give up position after position. In the week beginning July 25, 1950, the 1st Cavalry Division, withdrawing from Yongdong toward the Naktong River, passed through the vicinity of No Gun Ri. Earlier, roads and trails in South Korea had been choked with civilians fleeing south. Disguised NKPA soldiers had mingled with these refugees. U.S. and ROK commanders had published a policy designed to limit the threat from NKPA infiltrators, to protect U.S. forces from attacks from the rear, and to prevent civilians from interfering with the flow of supplies and troops. The ROK National Police were supposed to control and strictly limit the movements of innocent refugees.

In these circumstances, especially given the fact that many of the U.S. soldiers lacked combat-experienced officers and Non-commissioned officers, some soldiers may have fired out of fear in response to a perceived enemy threat without considering the possibility that they might be firing on Korean civilians.

Neither the documentary evidence nor the U.S. veterans' statements reviewed by the U.S. Review Team support a hypothesis of deliberate killing of Korean civilians. What befell civilians in the vicinity of No Gun Ri in late July 1950 was a tragic and deeply regrettable accompaniment to a war forced upon unprepared U.S. and ROK forces.

# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Order From Maj. Gen. William Kean on July 27, 1950

The 25th Infantry Division commander ordered that, since all South Koreans were to have been evacuated from the combat zone, any civilians seen were to be considered enemy.

 **SECRET** 

Headquarters 25th Inf Div  
Sangju, Korea  
27 July 1950

MEMO TO:

Commanding Officers, All Regimental Combat Teams  
Staff Sections, This Headquarters

Korean police have been directed to remove all civilians from the area between the blue lines shown on the attached overlay and report the evacuation has been accomplished.

All civilians seen in this area are to be considered as enemy and action taken accordingly.

OFFICIAL: KEAN  
Maj Gen USA

REFERENCE  
G-3

**SECRET**

SECRET

1365

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Communications Log for the 25th Infantry Division, July 26, 1950

The highlighted entry notes that Maj. Gen. William Kean, commanding general of the division to the right of the 1st Cavalry Division, wanted civilians in the combat zone considered as enemy.

HEADQUARTERS 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
GI JOURNAL  
CONT'D 26 JUL 50

Time In	Out	SerNo	Time Dated	Incidents, Orders, Messages, etc.
2000	2000	727	260600K	Hsg fr BUSAK Cite GX 20514 Sit Rpt.
2015	2015	728	260710K	Hsg fr BUSAK Cite GX 20515 HGI Weather Report.
2020	2020	729	261100K	Hsg fr CO 24th RCT re location of Am & combat back by 2d Bn.
	2030	730	262000K	Hsg to CG BUSAK regarding location of stragglers collect point and so location of straggler line.
2045	2045	731	261155K	Hsg fr BUSAK: Cite GX 20322 HGO Report of Mine.
2100	2100	732	261150K	Hsg fr CO 27th Inf Regt re location of 1st and 2d Bn.
2100		733		GRO Recd for rpt as of 1800 hrs 26 Jul 50.
	2130	734		R/S to AG rear: Subj: Publication of Awards of Decorations.
2145		735		Tel Call fr Col Grenelle to Maj McGovern re request for personnel and auth for 2 constr teams in Sig Co.
2200	2200	736		CG (Kean) directed we notify Chief of Police that all civilians moving around in combat zone will be considered as unfriendly and shot. Action taken: MP notified to have chief of police report here to be informed.
2315		737		Periodic Report No 13, this hq.
2400		738		Hsg fr CG to CT's all troops stay away of line (1097-1526) (1097-1511) (1092-1511) (1092-1498) (1085-1498) (1085-1498) (from 0500 to 2400 27 Jul 50.
2400		739		Daily Logistical Report No 12.
2400		740		Items for Activities Report - On 25 Jul 16 additional Police and 4 MP's were furnished to assist in control of refugees.  On 26 Jul 16 additional Police and 1 Platoon were furnished 24th RCT to assist in control of refugees and stragglers.

On 26 Jul 16 additional Police and 1 Pl...  
furnished 24th RCT to assist in control of ...  
lers.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Order From 8th Army Headquarters to All U.S. Combat Units

Amid confusion over how to handle refugees, the 8th Army, commanding the entire Korean battlefront, orders all units to keep refugees from crossing their lines southward, and then outlines a plan for an organized evacuation.

Ser No- 80 - Fm: 8A: Controlled movement of all refugees. 261000K Jul 50

THIS MSG IN FOUR PARTS CMA SUBJECT CLN Controlled Movement of All Refugees pd part one cln effective immediately the fol procedure will be adhered to by all commands relative to the flow or movement of all refugees in battle areas and rear areas pd No repeat no refugees will be permitted to cross battle lines at any time cma movement of all Koreans in groups will cease immediately cma no areas will be evacuated by Koreans without a direct order from CG EUSAK or upon order of Div commanders cma each div will be assigned three national police liaison officers to assist in clearing any area of the civilian populace that will interfere with the successful accomplishment of his mission pd Part two cln procedure for clearing areas pd Div commanders will inform national police officers of the area or sector to be evacuated cma the route of drift for all evacuees and the time the area will be cleared pd National police will immediately clear area by notifying populace cma manning control points at the area of drift cma informing organized refugee parties that will move in groups by a predetermined route to a predetermined concentration area pd Food cma water and comfort items for these refugees will be provided by the Vice Minister of Social Affairs through the National Police pd All refugees will move along their predetermined route to selected concentration areas from sunup till sundown pd This will be a controlled movement under the direct supervision of the Nat Police and representatives of the office of Korean Welfare Affairs pd Part three cln movement of Korean civilians during the hours of darkness pd There will be absolutely no repeat no movement of Korean civilians cma as individuals or groups in battle areas or rear areas cma after the hours of darkness pd Uniformed Korean Police will rigidly enforce this directive pd Part Four cln to accomplish the procedure cma as outlined in this directive cma leaflets will be prepared and dropped in all areas fwd and rear of the battle line to effectively disseminate this information pd Nat Police will further disseminate this information to all Korean civilians by means of radio cma messenger and the Press pd

Ser No 80

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Communications Log of the 8th Cavalry Regiment

This communications log shows that on July 24, 1950, at 10 a.m., the 1st Cavalry Division's operations staff ordered division units not to allow any refugees to cross the front lines. The relevant text reads: "No refugees to cross the front line. Fire everyone trying to cross lines. Use discretion in case of women and children."

2020	S-3	Arty firing region (75.20-79.33)
2020	S-3	There will be centered lit net established at the following points same time tonight, 23 July 1950. 1070-1460.85 1070-1460.4 1070-A-1460.1 1080-1460 No net report there to division. No regard altogether.
2040	TO	2nd plst 1st Bn to establish fixed road block (1070.5-1470.5) Motor patrols from 2nd Bn to road to N.
0645	2nd Bn	2nd Bn negative (1st Cav)
0647	1st Bn	1st Bn Small arms fire and mortar fire. Night tank on road 600 yds ahead of 1st Bn, located on front line. (1st Cav)
0735	1st Bn 2nd Bn	Call from 2 tanks (76mm or 80mm guns) camouflaged vicinity river (1060.4-1470.6) afternoon 23 July. Received no fire (1st Cav)
0730	Air	F-51a burning seen KIMPOI (1060.4-1470.6) F-51s recon area 2nd Bn.
0745	1st Bn	Enemy patrol working around N flank. Enemy troops concentrated E flank. Notified 2nd Bn.
0800	S-3	274th Inf Regt under attack.
0800 0800	Air 1st Bn	Tanker moving SW on road from PHEONK (Square 1050-1490) (Div) Cross Zug in (1 Co) (1090.9-1470.9) TIME 0800.
0900	2nd Bn	Co E sighted 300 NK's yds in front of Co E position. Arty HQ contacted via phone. If confirmed, will use arty. Will keep contact with us. Notified S-3.
1000	G-3 Lt	No refugees to cross the front line. Fire everyone trying to cross lines. Use discretion in case of women and children.
1020	Div Arty	Surrounded Korean carrying radio at 1070.5-1475.4.
1020	2nd Bn	Road block at White water pond. Est 1 Plt w/auto equip. Recaptured 2nd tank. Co E sent 2 tanks and 1st Bn plst to eliminate them.
1025	1st Bn	Troops, horse & truck arty being concentrated in KUMSAL (1040.8-1470.6) B-26 strike to be made. (Div)
1035	2nd Bn	Road from PUNG PUNG to 1st Bn under HQ fire. Co E under attack. (Div)

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## Survivors' Petition

Eun-yong Chung  
Representative of Petitioners  
of No Gun Ri Incident  
797-7 Kasuwon-dong, So-gu Taejon,  
Republic of Korea, 302-241

His Excellency Bill Clinton  
President, The United States of America  
September 10th, 1997

"Dear Mr. President;

We, the remaining families of the Korean War victims who were killed or wounded by U.S. soldiers from July 26th to 29th, 1950, are petitioning for your recognition of the incident, a formal apology and compensation.

We had previously sent similar letters to you via the U.S. Embassy in Korea on July 5th and October 5th of the year 1994. We are deeply regretful of not having received your response yet.

The incident took place during the Korean War in No Gun Ri, Hwanggan Myon, Yongdong Kun, North Chungchong Province. It was an atrocity against innocent Korean refugees, committed by armed U.S. troops.

Even though it has been 47 years since the slaughter of July 26th through July 29th, 1950, the incident still lives in our hearts and our minds daily. We are still suffering from the vivid memory of this unforgettable day.

Some survivors live with permanently disfigured bodies (without one eye or nose and so on). Others are in sorrow because they live without their families. About 400 souls roam around high above the killing field.

We had communicated with the Judicial Major, John G. Warthen of the Office of Compensation of American Forces in 1994. He insisted that the incident

happened during an active combat activity, therefore, the U.S. government is not legally liable for any compensation.\*

Ever since we submitted our petition to the Office of Petition in Seoul, which was established and operated by the U.S. government in October 1960, we have been adamantly and honestly claiming that the massacre occurred before the arrival of the North Korean army.

The atrocious act was not committed during warfare. We request that you review the following references sincerely and take proper measures to allow us our basic human rights.

---

## Summary of the Incident

The following is an account and testimony of those who survived the incident:

At the beginning of the Korean War, around noon of July 23, 1950, two American soldiers and one Korean policeman arrived at Chu Gok Ri, Yongdong Eup, Yongdong Gun, North Chungchong Province. They ordered the villagers to evacuate the village at once, because that area would become a dangerous battle field.

Most of the villagers who heard that command took refuge in Im Ke Ri (a mountain village), which was located about 2 kilometers away from their hometown.

On the evening of July 25th, 1950, a group of American soldiers rushed into Im Ke Ri and ordered the villagers to gather together. They promised to take the villagers to a safe place, towards Pusan (City).

About 500 to 600 refugees, led by the American soldiers, walked through Chu Gok Ri, towards the south. When the group of refugees arrived at Ha Ga Ri, Yongdong Eup, which is about 1.5 kilometers away from Chu Gok Ri, it was late in the evening.

The American soldiers then led all of the refugees into a nearby stream, and ordered them to stay there that night. Overnight, many refugees witnessed a long parade of U.S. troops and vehicles towards Pusan.

At dawn, July 26th, the refugees had found that the U.S. soldiers had disappeared. Therefore, the refugees marched south on their own, following

the Seoul-Pusan freeway where no one else was there except the refugees.

Around noon of July 26th, 1950, when the refugees group arrived at No Gun Ri, Hwanggan Myon, Yongdong Gun, suddenly four or five American soldiers appeared and stopped them from moving ahead. These soldiers commanded the refugees to stand on the railroad tracks and inspected the personal belongings of the refugees. Of course the American soldiers could not find any weapon.

However they sent a radio message for a machine gun and bomb raid towards the refugees. Then the soldiers fled. Shortly afterwards, planes flew over and dropped bombs on the refugees, and fired machine guns at the refugees.

From this unlawful and brutal attack many refugees were killed. Those who survived escaped into a water tunnel just below the railroad. After a while, U.S. soldiers forced the survivors out of the small water tunnel and pushed them all into larger tunnels nearby.

Then from July 26th to July 29th, 1950, U.S. soldiers constantly fired bullets at both openings of the tunnels, killing lots of people each time. The refugees had to make barricades with the dead bodies, and hid under blankets hoping that bullets wouldn't reach the inside. From the 26th to the 29th, the villagers had nothing to eat nor to drink.

Whoever stepped out from the tunnels was immediately shot. Only a few men managed to escape during the nights.

U.S. medics visited the tunnels a couple of times during the period. U.S. soldiers were supposed to treat the wounded. However they were just observing the situation of the refugees.

The U.S. soldiers disappeared on the 29th.

---

We can never imagine why U.S. soldiers had to kill these innocent refugees over the four-day period. However, one thing we are sure of is that it was not an accident. Also it didn't happen during a combat with the North Korean Army. The U.S. soldiers deliberately killed the innocent villagers of Im Ke Ri, Chu Gok Ri, etc.

We are testifying that U.S. soldiers assaulted Korean civilians before North

Koreans occupied the areas of the massacre. At this time 118 people have been identified as victims, 100 people were murdered, and 18 people were left with severe injuries. There is an estimated 400 people who were killed.

The list of the murdered victims was attached to the petition of July 5, 1994, addressed to you. And more cases have been reported afterwards.

The incident should be considered as a "war crime" against the humanity, under international law.

We sincerely hope that you will find it in your heart to sympathize with us and share the pains of the bereaved families. The victim's families are still suffering today from this nightmare of a tragedy.

Please conduct a thorough investigation on the survivors and the actual site, and find out which of the 1st Cavalry Division committed such a grave mistake. We want the truth, justice and due respect for our basic human rights.

We thank you for your kind attention again. May God bless you and your country.

Respectfully yours,  
(SIGNATURE)  
Eun-yong Chung  
Representative of Petitioners  
of No Gun Ri Incident"

---

\* On Oct. 28, 1994, the U.S. Armed Forces Claims Service of the U.S. military command in Seoul responded to Mr. Chung's petition filed to then-President Kim Young-sam, which arrived at the command through the South Korean Defense Ministry.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
United States Armed Forces Claims Service, Korea  
Unit #15311  
APO AP 96205-0084

Dear Mr. Chung,

Your petition of July 1994 to Mr. Kim Young Sam, the President of the Republic of Korea, has been referred to this Service for reply.

You alleged in your letter that a large group of Koreans were killed and injured by US soldiers who were fighting against the North Koreans during the Korean War in 1950.

It appears that the incident giving rise to your claims arose directly from a combat activity of the Armed Forces.

The United States is not legally liable for such claims resulting from an act of the Armed Forces of the United States in combat.

It is regretted that a favorable answer cannot be given to your claim.

Sincerely,  
(SIGNATURE)  
John G. Warthen  
Major, Judge Advocate  
Generals Corps  
Commander

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## Army Finds No Evidence of Killings

Dated March 22, 1999; addressed to Victor W.C. Hsu, a director at the U.S. National Council of Churches who had written to the Pentagon on behalf of the Korean claimants; signed by John P. McLaurin, III, deputy assistant secretary for military personnel management and equal opportunity policy, Department of The Army.

Dear Mr. Hsu:

This is in further reply to your letter of December 18, 1998, concerning the deaths of innocent villagers in the Nokuen-ri area of Korea during the summer of 1950.

The Army's Center of Military History reviewed the enclosures to the packet created by The National Council of Churches in Korea and also available U.S. Army records for the Korean War for July 1950 located in the National Archives and Records Administration. Their review found no information to substantiate the claim that U.S. Army soldiers perpetrated a massacre of South Korean civilians at Nokuen-Ri. They examined several Record Groups at the National Archives that contain records of the U.S. Army in the Korean War. These records include:

- a. Army Adjutant General Command Reports, 1949-1954
- b. Operational Records of the 1st Cavalry Division and its organic regiments, the 5th, 7th and 8th for the period July 7, to August 1, 1950.
- c. Operational Records of the 25th Infantry Division and its organic regiments, the 24th, 27th and 35th for the period July 7, to August 1, 1950.
- d. The Eighth U.S. Army War Diaries for July 1950
- e. Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General, War Crimes Division, Historical Reports of War Crimes Division, 1952-1954.
- f. Records of the Office of the Inspector General, Indexes to the Formerly Secret Correspondence, 1917-1954.

The period of time, 26-29 July 1950, was one of great stress and chaos with U.S. Army units conducting a fighting retreat against the invading North Koreans and facing heavy odds. Frequent relocation of friendly units,

difficulties in supervising refugee withdrawal, the prevalence of fighting during limited visibility, the communist practice of using civilians to test for minefields and of infiltrating disguised as civilians, and the technological limits of air and artillery coordination combined to make very real the danger of potential civilian casualties. Our research, however, produced no evidence to demonstrate U.S. Army involvement with the death of the villagers of Nokuen-Ri, Korea, in 1950.

I hope you find this information of assistance,

Sincerely.

(Signature)

John P. McLaurin, III  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
(Military Personnel Management  
and Equal Opportunity Policy).

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## U.S. Military Rebuttal of Korean Compensation Claim

Responding to a compensation claim filed by Korean villagers in connection with the events at No Gun Ri, the U.S. Armed Forces Claims Service asserted that the 1st Cavalry Division was not in the area at the time. The historical record proves otherwise.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES CLAIMS SERVICE, KOREA

UNIT #15311  
APO AP 96205-0084

유 군 성  
주한 미군 피상사부스  
부대 고유번호 15311  
문우 96205-0084

FXJX-CSK+S 97-KS-0473-0517

Chongju District Compensation Committee  
c/o Chongju District Prosecutor's Office  
193-1, Segok-dong, Chongju-city Chungbuk-do

충청북도 청주시 수곡동 93-1번지  
청주지방 경찰청 내  
청주지구 백상실외회 귀중

Gentlemen: 김 경:

This is in reference to SOFA claim numbers 97-CJ-002 to 97-CJ-046 submitted by Mr. 손 등한우, 1950년 7월 27일 자기곶의 부드 드는 형제 및 자매들이 부상 혹은 피살 당했다고 Chong Sin Ung and 44 others for the alleged injuries and/or deaths of their family 주장하여 장신용씨를 비롯한 44명의 지방관들이 제기한 정밀 손해대상 신청사건 사건번호 청주 97-경-002호에서 통 068호에 대한 피상입니다.

The claimants assert that their family members were injured or killed during a bombing and shooting by the Allied Forces during the Korean War. The claimants allege the victims 또는 피상되었다고 주장하고 있습니다. 신청인들이 주장하는 내용에서 보면 were attempting to take refuge from the battle zone when they were injured or killed.

당시 피려자들이 전주지식후 의하여 국민간의 오묘다 군인들에 의하여 부상 또는 피상 당했다고 These claims must be denied for several reasons. First, there is no evidence to support 주장하고 있습니다. 이들의 피상신청은 다음과 같은 몇가지 이유를 근거로 기차 시가지 인근 the claim nor is there any evidence to show that the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division was in the 수었습니다. 그 첫번째 이유로, 이들 피상신청을 뒷받침 할 수있는 증거가 없으며, 사건이 발생 area where the incident allegedly occurred. Additionally, it appears that the alleged,

area where the incident allegedly occurred. Additionally, it appears that the alleged,

• 있다고 주장하는 그 장소에 어떤 비 격! 기갑사단 병력이 주둔 했었다는 사실을 나타내는 입증  
incident giving rise to the claims arose directly from combat activities of the armed  
지도 또한 없습니다. 한편 이진 배상신청을 작성 시킨 것으로 주장하는 그 사건이 군인들의 전투  
forces. Paragraph 11 of Article XXIII, Claim, of the US-ROK SOFA, precludes the payment  
활동중 직접적으로 발생한 것으로 나타내고 있습니다. 한미 군대 지위협정 제23조, 인사영구권.

키 공보역사

18 87.12.12.

함수 제정승장  
김신익

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P.3

of claims arising incident to combat activities. If, in fact, there were any cases...  
제11항은 전투활동에서 발생하는 사건에 의한 배상신청은 그 지금을 배제하고 있습니다. 설혹,  
during the time frame alleged by the claimants, payment would be prohibited based upon  
주장하는데도, 사실 불의의 인명피해가 그 시설, 그 장소에서 발생했다 해도, 이들의 배상신청의  
this provision.

지금은 상기 조항에 의하여 금지되는 바입니다.

Finally, these claims are barred by the applicable statute of limitations. SOFA claims  
마지막으로, 이들 손해배상신청 사건들은 적용될 수 있는 소멸시효에 의하여 그 신청이 금지  
must be filed within three years after the incident giving rise to the claim occurred.  
되어 있습니다. 군대 지위협정에 의한 손해배상신청 시효는 사건 발생일로부터 3년 이내에 제출  
A claim presented under AR 27-20 must be filed within two years after it accrues. As the  
하여야 하며, 미 육군규정 제27-20조에 의한 손해배상 신청은 사건발생 일로부터 2년내에 제출해야  
alleged incident giving rise to these claims occurred 47 years ago, these claims are not  
합니다. 이진 신청인들이 주장하는 피해는 무려 47년전에 야기된 사건임으로 이들 신청의 지금은  
payable.

불가능 합니다.

For the above reasons, this Office is returning Foras 2 and 3 unsigned. It is deeply  
위에 열거한 근거에 의하여, 본 사무소는 교환양식 2 및 3호를 무서명 회송하는 바입니다.  
regretted that a favorable reply cannot be given to these claims.

아울러 이들 배상신청 사건들에 대하여 호의로운 처함을 하지못함을 매우 유감으로 생각합니다.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.

귀축의 지속적인 협조에 감사 드립니다.

Sincerely, 경 구.

*Kelly B. White*

KELLY B. WHITE

Attorney.

Chief, Foreign Claims

켈리 비. 화이트

변호사.

대외 배상 과장

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## Articles of War

The Articles of War were the military laws in force at the time of the incident at No Gun Ri.

**Article 92. Murder -- Rape:** Any person subject to military law [who commits] found guilty of murder [or rape] shall suffer death or imprisonment for life, as a court-martial may direct; but if found guilty of murder not premeditated, he shall be punished as a court-martial may direct. Any person subject to military law who is found guilty of rape shall suffer death or such other punishment as a court-martial may direct: Provided, That [but] no person shall be tried by court-martial for murder or rape committed within the geographical limits of the States of the Union and the District of Columbia in time of peace.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## The 1st Cavalry Division's War Diary

There is no mention of the events at No Gun Ri in this entry, the day the 7th Cavalry Regiment withdrew from the scene of the killings.

29 July 1950: The 3d Battalion of the 21st Inf Regt was attached to the 1st Cav Div and ordered to establish a road block on the road southwest of Kumchon in the vicinity of Hwan-ni. The Battalion CP was set-up near Hwan-ni (1104-1458).

One Battalion of the 5th Cav Regt reported that the enemy was on its right front flank and partially on its left flank. Little was known at that time of the actual status of the operation in front of their lines except that the enemy was attempting to envelope and infiltrate their lines.

The 8th Cav Regt CP moved from (1099.0-1479.0) to (1098.5-1480.9). The 1st Battalion moved from (1091.0-1483.5) to (1093.8-1482.1). The 2d Battalion moved from (1092.5-1379.8) to (1092.9-1480.9).

At 0530 hours the 2d Battalion, 7th Cav Regt received the order to withdraw. During the night movement they received tank and artillery fire. The 1st Battalion withdrew ahead of the 2d Battalion, slightly mixing up the plan and causing some delay. By 0820 hours elements of the 1st and 2d Battalions had passed the Hwanggan railroad station heading into their new area. Extensive patrols to the front as well as flanks were initiated. Refugees continued to be evacuated and caused much trouble. A 1st Battalion patrol located 6 enemy soldiers moving south on a trail at (92.85-76.75). At 2100 hours the I&R Platoon was dispatched to block the road between the 8th Cav Regt on their right and the 2d Battalion, 7th Cav Regt.

During this day's action, considerable confusion existed. The 27th Regt was being relieved by elements of the 5th RCT. Other elements of the Division were ordered to withdraw. The infiltration tactics of the enemy and the large numbers of refugees made movement and communications very difficult. Units were not aware, in all cases, of proposed movements of adjacent elements of the Division. This resulted in flanks being exposed and units who thought they were in reserve found themselves to be facing the enemy.

Div Arty continued firing defensive missions for withdrawing troops with excellent results. Further displacement took place to new positions near Kumchon. Effects of firing were successful in repulsing several enemy attacks and it was believed that several vehicles were knocked out or neutralized. The enemy continued to follow every movement of Div Arty units and infiltration became worse. Prearranged defensive missions were fired during

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## 1st Cavalry Division Association's Statement on the Events at No Gun Ri

The 1st Cavalry Division Association has 24,700 active members, most of them veterans of service in the division. When informed generally of the AP's findings about 1st Cavalry Division actions at No Gun Ri, the association issued this statement:

We of the 1st Cavalry Division Association appreciate the opportunity to comment on this story. Based on the information we have, we make no judgment on the decisions made, the orders issued, nor the actions that were taken on or about 26 July, 1950 -- nearly 50 years ago. It is clear that the commanders involved -- only two days into combat in Korea -- were faced with the threat of loss of tactical integrity of their units and of mission failure, created by infiltrating refugees mixed with North Korean soldiers. The decisions made on that battlefield should not be second-guessed now. The lessons learned from the engagement were recorded decades ago and, hopefully, have served usefully in later experiences.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## 'Up With the Bridge Went Hundreds of Refugees'

By The Associated Press

In a now-declassified narrative sent to an Army historian Aug. 24, 1953, Maj. Gen. Hobart R. Gay described how, as 1st Cavalry Division commander in 1950, he ordered the destruction of a bridge over South Korea's Naktong River at the cost of many refugee lives. In the manuscript Gay refers to himself as "the Division Commander."



*Maj. Gen. Hobart R. Gay,  
commander of the U.S. 1st  
Cavalry Division. (AP Photo/File)*

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Authority NND 509048

By OK NARA Date 9/15/91

... By nightfall of the 2d of August all troops were across the Naktong except the rear guard of the 1st Battalion of the 8th Cavalry. Orders were to blow both the railroad and the foot-bridge at Waegwan. The Division Commander gave orders that no one could order the bridge blown but he himself. At dusk thousands upon thousands of refugees were on the west side of the Naktong and as the rear guard of the 8th Cavalry would start across the bridge, they would follow them. The Division Commander ordered the rear guard to go back to the west side and hold back the refugees and when all was set they would run across the bridge to the east side so it could be blown. This scene was repeated several times, but each time the refugees were on the heels of the rear guard. Finally it was nearly dark. There was nothing else to be done. The Division Commander gave the order to blow the bridge. It was a tough decision because up in the air with the bridge went hundreds of refugees.

The Division, practically intact, was across the Naktong. So far its part in the Korean campaign had not been too glorious and certainly not to the liking of anyone in the Division. ...

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리다리

## Policy on Strafing Civilian Refugees

This memo, dated July 25, 1950, discusses whether the Air Force should continue strafing civilian refugees, in compliance with Army "requests."

*Secret*

ADVANCE HEADQUARTERS  
FIFTH AIR FORCE  
APO 970, Unit 1

25 July 1950

MEMO TO GENERAL TIMBERLAKE

**Subject: Policy on Strafing Civilian Refugees**

**I. THE PROBLEM:**

1. To determine the policy for guidance of all Fifth Air Force units in regard to strafing of civilian refugees on the highways.

**II. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM:**

2. It is reported that large groups of civilians, either composed of or controlled by North Korean soldiers, are infiltrating U. S. positions.

3. The army has requested that we strafe all civilian refugee parties that are noted approaching our positions.

4. To date, we have complied with the army request in this respect.

**III. DISCUSSION:**

5. Our operations involving the strafing of civilians is sure to receive wide publicity and may cause embarrassment to the U. S. Air Force and to the U. S. government in its relation with the United Nations.

6. It appears that such civilian groups are marching on the highways through U. S. ground positions. It is not understood why the army is not screening such personnel or shooting them as they come through if they desire such action. Further, it is felt that more suitable targets are available for the air effort, the destruction of which would be of more value to the army in the long run.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

7. For the protection of the Air Force, it is recommended

*Secret*

that a policy be established whereby Fifth Air Force aircraft will not attack civilian refugees, unless they are definitely known to contain North Korean soldiers or commit hostile acts.

8. It is further recommended that we so inform 8th Army Headquarters.

(1)

*Secret*

TURNER C. ROGERS  
Colonel, USAF  
D C/S Operations

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Mission Debriefing Report

This is a declassified after-mission report filed by a squadron intelligence officer after he debriefed four F-80 fighter-bomber pilots returning from a combat mission over South Korea July 20, 1950. The pilots reported strafing "people in white clothes, " at the direction of a controller ("Angelo Yoke"). Refugees and other ordinary Koreans generally wore white.

The report was found at the U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

SECRET

35TH FIGHTER BOMBER SQUADRON  
8TH FIGHTER BOMBER GROUP  
APO 929

Mission 35-1, 20 July 1950

1. 4 F-80's (Wayne, Dewald, Stark, Hall) Takeoff 0910 Landing 1130
2. One F-80 aborted due to lack of hydraulic pressure.
3. Weather Check and Rocket Firing.
4. No aircraft lost.
5. No aircraft down in friendly territory.
6. No casualties.
7. A. No enemy aircraft encountered.  
B. One jeep, two buildings with some people in white clothings strafed, results unobserved.
8. Takeoff to target. Contacted Mellow who directed flight to Yuseng. Were to cover both roads Northwest of Yuseng to river. One jeep was destroyed on road going West of river. Some people in white clothes were strafed three to four miles south of Yuseng. Controller told flight that Taejon was still held by friendly troops, and town was not to be strafed. Angelo Yoke said to fire on people in white clothes. Were about 50 in group. Number hit unknown.
9. A 3 F-80

9. A 3 F-80  
EB Six rockets, five fired on target area, one brought back.  
C. Negative  
D. Negative
10. Weather CAVU
11. No observations.
12. No enemy air opposition.
13. No enemy ground opposition.
14. No further reports.

Fletcher E. Meaders  
1st Lieutenant, AF  
Intelligence Officer  
n

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Mission Debriefing Report

This is a declassified after-mission report filed by a squadron intelligence officer after he debriefed four F-80 fighter-bomber pilots returning from a combat mission over South Korea July 20, 1950. The pilots reported strafing people who "could have been refugees." The report was found at the U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

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35TH FIGHTER BOMBER SQUADRON  
8TH FIGHTER BOMBER SQUADRON  
APO 929

Mission 35-4, 20 July 1950

1. 4 F-80's (Meaders, Daugherty, Boyce, Mankros) Takeoff 12:40 Land 13:45
2. 4 F-80
3. Strafing and Rocket mission.
4. No aircraft lost.
5. No aircraft down in friendly territory.
6. No casualties.
7. A. No enemy aircraft encountered.  
B. Four small artillery pieces damaged.
8. Takeoff to Taesjon. Contacted Mesquite King. In area at 1330K. Were told to strafe Chin-Nyong, where concentration of troops and equipment were in buildings. All troops were in buildings. No troops or equipment seen. Many troops seen in river areas directly South of Yusong. Could have been refugees because much baggage was seen piled on river banks. Were strafed by order of controller. Number of people hit unknown. Some had uniforms on. Some field pieces, camouflaged as excarts were hit. Four damaged, on road between Yusong and Chin-Nyong. Over target about 30 minutes.
9. A. 4 F-80  
B. 8 rockets, 7 fired, 1 jettisoned.  
C. Negative.  
D. Results unobserved.
10. Weather scattered clouds at 3000 to 4000 feet. 3/10 at 5000 feet.

- D. POSITIVE OBSERVATIONS.
10. Weather, scattered clouds at 3000 to 4000 feet. 3/10 at 5000 feet.
  11. No enemy air opposition.
  12. No enemy ground opposition.
  13. Negative
  14. No further information.

Fletcher E. Meaders  
1st Lieutenant AF  
Intelligence Officer

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Mission Debriefing Report

This is a declassified after-mission report filed by a squadron intelligence officer after he debriefed four F-80 fighter-bomber pilots returning from a combat mission over South Korea July 31, 1950. The pilots reported strafing people who "appeared to be evacuees." The report was found at the U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

35TH FIGHTER BOMBER SQUADRON  
8TH FIGHTER BOMBER GROUP  
APO 929

Mission 35-3, Contour Roger, 31 July 1950.

1. 4 F-80's (Son, Gilliam, Wimer, Small) Takeoff: 0740. Landing times: 0920.
2. 4 F-80.
3. Strafing and rockets with Mellow control.
4. No aircraft lost.
5. No aircraft down in friendly territory.
6. No casualties.
7. A. No enemy aircraft encountered.  
B. 5 trucks destroyed, 1 truck damaged.
8. Flew over at 21,000, contacted Mosquito Mike in Kochang area. Proceeded up road from Kochang to Yanggong-Ni, 35/39 North 127/08 East. Strafing 1 truck 1 mile south of Kochang, destroyed it. Several vehicles and supplies observed on small road 1 mile west of Yanggong-Ni. Fired rockets and 50 cal destroyed 1 truck with direct rocket hit. Destroyed three more trucks. 1 northward two south of Yanggong-Ni. Made 5 strafing passes on big truck at 35/39 North 128/00 East, damaging it. Strafing sand bar in river where people and fox holes were seen. People appeared to be evacuees.
9. A. 4 F-80.  
B. 15 minutes

9. A. 4 F-80.  
B. 15 rockets.  
C. 45000 feet, 40 degrees glide angle, released at 1000 feet.  
D. Got better accuracy with steeper angle.
10. Weather: 3/10 scattered at 5 to 6000 feet. 10 mi visibility.
11. Small arms fire observed in Kochang. Saw 8 more big trucks 2 miles east of Yanggong-Ni. Trucks were loaded. Appeared that much more straw was used in camouflage.
12. No enemy air opposition.
13. No enemy ground opposition except noted in item 11.
14. No further remarks.

Fletcher E. Meadors  
1st Lieutenant AF  
Intelligence Officer

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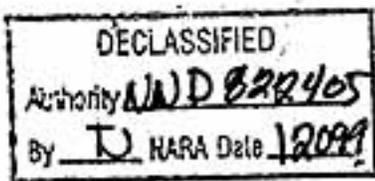
# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Letter From General Walker

In this declassified August 1950 letter, the general commanding all U.S. troops in South Korea tells the U.S. ambassador in South Korea that supreme commander Gen. Douglas MacArthur wants the matter of summary executions turned over to the U.S. embassy.

(Note: The "APO San Francisco" address actually belongs to 8th Army headquarters in Taegu, South Korea.)

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

HEADQUARTERS.  
 EIGHTH UNITED STATES ARMY (EUSAK)  
 APO 301, C/O PM  
 SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

18 August 1950

THE COMMANDING GENERAL

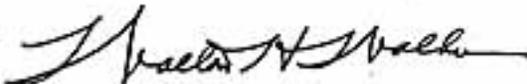
The Honorable John J. Muccio  
 American Ambassador  
 American Embassy  
 Taegu, Korea

My dear Mr. Ambassador:

I am enclosing herewith copies of documents concerning executions allegedly by agencies of the Republic of Korea. General MacArthur has directed that I present this matter to you for consideration and such action as you deem appropriate.

I present this matter to you for consideration and such action as you deem appropriate.

Faithfully yours,



WALTON H. WALKER  
Lieutenant General, United States Army  
Commanding

- 2 Incls:  
1 - 545th Military Police  
Co, Ltr 11 Aug 50  
2 - Hq 1st Cav Div, A C of  
S, G-2, Ltr 10 Aug 50

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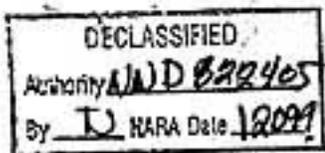
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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Report Detailing Mass Executions

In this declassified report, a U.S. Army military police sergeant describes to his superiors what he witnessed at the site of a mass execution of Koreans by the South Korean military police at a spot among the mountains south of Taegu, South Korea on the afternoon of Aug. 10, 1950.

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES



~~TOP SECRET~~  
545th Military Police Company  
Taegu, Korea

*Downgraded*  
*Apr. 21, 1958*  
*by authority of Lt. Col.*  
*11 August 1950* *Grand, G-2.*

SUBJECT: Shooting of Prisoners of War by South Korean Military Police

TO: [REDACTED] 545th Military Police Company

Between the hours of 1500 and 1630, 10 August 1950, while on routine patrol on the highway between Taegu and Waegwan, Korea, a large volume of gunfire was investigated by the undersigned and Pfc Raut. This gunfire came from a canyon near the top of the mountain that is situated approximately eight miles north of Taegu.

Investigation disclosed that the South Korean Military Police, under the command of a Captain of the South Korean Army, were in the process of the killing of a group of Korean Nationals, estimated to be between 200 and 300 persons, including some women and at least one girl. It is the opinion of the undersigned that this child was approximately 12 or 13 years of age.

The methods used by the Koreans in the executions were the placing of about 20 of the condemned persons in a line on the edge of a cliff, and behind each of the victims was placed one Military Policeman with a carbine of American Army current issue. At the command of fire, given by the commanding officer of the group, the military police fired at the head of the prisoner that was in front of him. It was noted in several of the shootings, that due to poor aim of the weapon, the prisoner was not killed instantly, but it was necessary for several other shots to be fired into the body of the victim, and in some cases the mercy shot was not administered, and at about three hours after the executions were completed, some of the condemned persons were still alive and moaning. The cries could be heard coming from somewhere in the mass of bodies piled in the canyon. One man was lying a short way apart from the main mass of bodies, and even though unconscious, was noted to be still breathing.

A survey was made by the undersigned of the prisoners that remained on the side of the mountain awaiting their turn to be shot, and it was noted that the hands were tied behind by trussing two of the condemned persons together, and the hands were tied so tightly that there were cries of severe pain coming from the prisoners. One of the women prisoners, a girl of about 19 years, had fallen and in the fall the flesh had been torn from her hands. Extreme cruelty was noted from the Military Policemen to the condemned persons such as striking them on the head with gunbutts, and kicking

women prisoners, a girl of about 19 years, had fallen and in the fall the 1954 had been torn from her hands. Extreme cruelty was noted from the Military Policemen to the condemned persons such as striking them on the head with 'gunbutts, and kicking them on the body for no reason.

The Commanding Officer of the execution group, stated that the prisoners were being killed as they were "spies." No other information was given.

The bodies were not properly buried, but were partly covered with dirt and brush, and the cartridge cases were left on the ground. In the event of the fall into the hands of the red army of this area, all of the evidence left by the South Korean Military Police would indicate that the killings were perpetrated by the American Army and not the South Korean Army. The bodies had been stripped of clothing and it would be hard to determine whether the victim was civilian or North Korean Military Personnel.

Certified a true copy of the original:

*H. H. Mix*  
H. H. MIX  
WOJG, USA

/s/ Frank Pearce, Sgt 1/c  
FRANK PEARCE, Sgt 1/c  
Division Investigator  
1st Cavalry Division  
Taegu, Korea

*Incl. #1*

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Witnesses, 1950 Documents Say South Koreans Shot Thousands of Prisoners

EDITOR'S NOTE -- In reports last fall, The Associated Press told of the killing of South Korean refugees by the U.S. Army in 1950. The following report looks at yet another hidden dimension of the Korean conflict, mass executions of South Korean prisoners by the South Korean government.

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
Associated Press Writer

**DOKCHON, South Korea (AP) —** South Korean soldiers and police, observed at times by U.S. Army officers, executed more than 2,000 political prisoners without trial in the early weeks of the Korean War, according to declassified U.S. military documents and witnesses.

Supreme commander Gen. Douglas MacArthur became aware of at least one of the mass shootings, according to documents originally classified "top secret."

The new information, detailed in reporting by The Associated Press and a Korean researcher, substantiates what some historians have long believed: Large numbers of South Korean leftists arrested by the right-wing regime were secretly killed as its forces retreated before the North Korean army in mid-1950, apparently to keep them from collaborating with the communist invaders.



*In this U.S. Army photograph, once classified top secret, South Korean soldiers walk among some of the 1,800 South Korean political prisoners killed at Taejon, South Korea, in July 1950.*

*(AP Photo/National Archives, Major Abbott/U.S. Army)*

Subsequently, during their brief occupation of the south, the North Koreans executed many suspected rightists. Those killings, once discovered, were widely publicized in the Western press.



## Documents



Information about the South Korean government's mass executions was suppressed for decades under this country's former military rulers. Relevant South Korean records were destroyed, researchers believe. But victims' families recently began speaking out, and human bones have been unearthed at mass burial sites.

Witnesses describe brutal mass shootings. A retired South Korean admiral told the AP that 200 people, never put on trial, were taken offshore to be shot and dumped into the sea. Villagers in the Dokchon area remembered truckloads of civilians, trussed together, brought to the hills here and executed by South Korean military police.

The AP learned it was a U.S. Army account of those Dokchon killings that reached MacArthur. Although the legendary U.S. commander also commanded the South Korean military at the time, he referred this report on its actions to American diplomats "for consideration" and "such action as you deem appropriate."

The U.S. ambassador, John Muccio, later reported back that he urged President Syngman Rhee and Defense Minister Shin Sung-mo to end summary executions deemed illegal and inhumane.

"I urged Captain Shin to see that the Korean Army, Police and Youth Groups carry out executions of captured members of the enemy forces, including guerrillas, only after due process of law has been observed and that when carried out they should be in a humane manner," Muccio wrote in an Aug. 25, 1950, letter to MacArthur's top subordinate, the U.S. 8th Army commander Lt. Gen. Walton L. Walker.

South Korean soldiers had shown "extreme cruelty" toward the condemned prisoners at Dokchon, a U.S. military



*Political prisoners are shown on the ground at Taejon.*

*(AP Photo/National Archives, Major Abbott/U.S. Army)*

police investigator, Sgt. 1st Class Frank Pearce, said in a written report to his company commander on the shootings here.

He and other American witnesses reported that 200 to 300 prisoners, including women and a girl 12 or 13 years old, were killed by South Korean military police on Aug. 10, 1950, on a mountain near this hamlet 250 kilometers (155 miles) southeast of Seoul, South Korea's capital.

A South Korean officer told the Americans the prisoners were "spies" \_ not North Korean soldiers or guerrillas.



Wm. J. Castello/AP

Pearce, who went to the scene after hearing gunfire, said the Korean soldiers placed 20 prisoners at a time on the edge of a cliff and shot them in the back of the head. Because of poor aim, some did not die immediately.

"At about three hours after the executions were completed, some of the condemned persons were still alive and moaning. The cries could be heard coming from somewhere in the mass of bodies piled in the canyon," Pearce wrote in his one-page report.

Local Korean witnesses today echo Pearce's description of cruel treatment. Several times in mid-1950, military trucks loaded with people in white peasant clothing drove up the winding mountain pass, and shooting later echoed through the valley, villagers said.

"A truck pulled up with seven or eight people. They were all tied together, so they had difficulty getting off the truck. The soldiers kicked them and hit their heads with the butts of their rifles," Bae In-soo, 83, told the AP. "They dragged the poor people in the gully and shot them."

"Whenever we heard the shootings," recalled Bae Choon-dal, 79, "police came later and press-ganged us to bury the bodies. We hastily threw some

dirt over the bodies and ran away as quickly as possible. It was a dreadful time."

The documents found by the AP consist of two brief U.S. Army reports on the Dokchon shootings and the high-level correspondence that resulted. In one note, Muccio's top aide, Everett Drumright, told the ambassador he had protested previous such shootings \_ in the city of Taejon in early July.

Those earlier executions are recounted in other declassified documents, accompanied by photographs, found by researcher Lee Do-young at the U.S. National Archives and published in January in the Seoul newspaper Hankook Ilbo.

In that material, which was reviewed by the AP, the U.S. Army attache at the embassy, Lt. Col. Bob E. Edwards, reported that 1,800 political prisoners were executed over three days at Taejon, 150 kilometers (93 miles) south of Seoul. A U.S. Army major took photos of the killings with Edwards' camera. The report and photos were sent to the U.S. Army intelligence staff in Washington.



*Human bones lie scattered in the abandoned cobalt mine pit in Kyongsan.*

*(AP Photo/Mal Magazine)*

Edwards wrote that he believed "thousands of political prisoners were executed within few weeks after fall of Seoul to prevent their possible release by advancing enemy troops. Orders for execution undoubtedly came from top."

After the Hankook Ilbo stories, Seoul's Defense Ministry said it would investigate reports of mass executions.

The AP located the declassified documents on Dokchon while investigating what happened at No Gun Ri, South Korea, July 26-29, 1950, when witnesses say U.S. forces killed about 400 South Korean refugees. American veterans acknowledged to the AP that their unit killed many civilians there. Both Washington and Seoul are investigating.

The AP's No Gun Ri report last September spurred South Koreans to go public with other painful episodes from the 1950-53 war, including accounts of mass killings of fellow citizens by soldiers and police.

Rhee's government had fought a guerrilla war with indigenous left-wing elements in the late 1940s. In mid-1950, it feared leftists would collaborate with the North Koreans sweeping down the peninsula. Tens of thousands were arrested, historians say.

"There was no time for trials for them. Communists were streaming down. It (summary execution) was a common practice at that time," said retired Rear Adm. Nam Sang-hui, 74, now living in New York City.

Following orders as a navy commander in early July 1950, Nam said, he authorized three ships to carry 200 people out to sea off the eastern port of Pohang, where they were shot by police and their bodies were thrown into the sea, weighted with stones.



*Nam Sang-hui, a retired South Korean admiral, poses in New York on Feb. 15, 2000. Nam says 200 people were killed off the South Korean coast in three naval vessels in July 1950. (AP Photo/Jim Cooper)*

"It happened during a critical situation for South Korea. We should not judge these incidents through the standards of peacetime," Nam said.

Relatives say many execution victims had nothing to do with communism and were not convicted of any crimes.

"You cannot kill people just because you think they were unreliable or there is something wrong with their ideology," said researcher Lee, a U.S.-educated psychologist who said his father, a government official, was among 210 people killed by policemen and soldiers on Aug. 20, 1950, on the southern island of Cheju.

Lee said those executed included children, students, teachers and even rightist youth leaders against whom local policemen bore grudges.

Lee, citing the Taejon killings, blames U.S. authorities as well.

"The Americans cannot escape the charge that they condoned, if not supported, the massacres. After all, those soldiers killed these people with rifles and bullets the Americans gave them, while American officers stood behind their backs taking pictures," Lee said.

Reports of such mass shootings appear to have circulated routinely among U.S. Army staff officers.

"The South Korean police have been quite busy in the Yunchon, Sangju, Hamchang vicinity disposing of South Korean communists," a secret U.S. intelligence report said matter-of-factly on Aug. 22, 1950. It said U.S. officers declined a South Korean invitation to witness one mass execution.

Ambassador Muccio's August intervention apparently had little impact. Scattered news reports of the time, along with Korean witnesses and U.S. war veterans today, tell of many instances in which scores of alleged communist sympathizers or collaborators were summarily executed by South Korean forces sweeping back toward Seoul in September 1950. By April 1951, South Korea's top commander, Lt. Gen. Chung Il-kwon, felt compelled to order his troops to stop "physically assaulting civilians" in South Korea.

The North Koreans also carried out large-scale killings. One U.S. Army report said they slaughtered thousands of anti-communist South Koreans, and some captured American GIs, before their retreat.

After Rhee's government was toppled in 1960, the South Korean Parliament began investigating alleged summary executions during the war, but the investigation ended abruptly in 1961 when the military seized power. It remained a taboo subject through decades of military rule, until the liberalization of the 1990s.

Victims' families have petitioned the South Korean government for investigations of at least 10 alleged civilian massacres by South Korean police and soldiers. They led local journalists to two abandoned mine pits where piles of bones were discovered, including skeletal remains of



*Lee Bok-ryong, 71, points to a bullet-scarred wall of an abandoned cobalt mine on Jan. 13, 2000, in Kyongsan, South Korea, where he says a large number of people were shot to death by South Korean military police in mid-1950. (AP Photo/Mal Magazine)*

children.

"Our first goal is simple, to let the world know that this massacre of a gigantic scale really took place," said Lee Bok-ryong, 71, who lost his father in the national purge.

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AP Investigative Researcher Randy Herschaft contributed to this report.

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FOR THE WIRE

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Korean, U.S. Witnesses, Backed by Military Records, Say Refugees Were Strafed

EDITOR'S NOTE -- In reports this fall, The Associated Press told of the killing of South Korean refugees by the U.S. Army in 1950. The following report looks at yet another hidden dimension of the Korean conflict, air attacks on civilians.

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
CHARLES J. HANLEY  
and MARTHA MENDOZA  
Associated Press Writers

In 1950-51, as war refugees flooded South Korea's roads, American jets repeatedly attacked groups of Koreans in civilian clothes on suspicion they harbored enemy infiltrators, according to declassified U.S. military documents and Korean and American witnesses.

Large numbers of refugees were killed in some cases, witnesses told The Associated Press. In one strike, they said, U.S. firebombs killed 300 civilians trapped in a cave.

After-mission reports from the Korean War show that U.S. Air Force pilots, flying in support of retreating U.S. troops in mid-1950, sometimes questioned their targets.

In one, pilots said a Korean group strafed at an airborne controller's



*This U.S. Army photo, dated Feb. 4, 1951, was released with the following caption: "Three Korean women, hit by fire bomb when they were caught in a U.N. air strike against the communist forces, rest at an air station near Suwon, Korea." U.S. warplanes made heavy use of gasoline-gel napalm bombs in air strikes at that time.*

*(AP Photo/Eugene Fox, U.S. Army)*

instruction "could have been refugees." In another declassified report they said their target "appeared to be evacuees."

Some of those pilots, in recent AP interviews, said they did worry at times they were machine-gunning innocents.

"We were concerned, very concerned," said Air Force retiree Herman Son of St. Louis. He said it "was by no means clear on the surface who these people were."

Some ex-pilots said they remember breaking off attacks when they realized their targets were civilians. The situation was spelled out in an after-mission report six weeks into the war.

"Pilots have difficulty in determining whether personnel in enemy-held territory are noncombatants or not," reads the report by pilots in Son's 35th Fighter-Bomber Squadron. "Leaflets should be dropped on them warning them to keep out of sight or that they will be strafed."



The new information, on which the Pentagon had no direct comment, sheds light on yet another hidden side of the "forgotten war" of 1950-53, a conflict in which U.S. airpower often proved pivotal.

## Documents



Previous AP articles, in September and October, cited U.S. veterans, Korean witnesses and declassified documents in reporting that hundreds of other South Korean refugees were killed by U.S. Army troops in mid-1950 as the retreating Americans struggled to defend South Korea against a North Korean invasion.

American ground commanders feared that enemy soldiers, disguised in the common white clothing of civilians, were joining South Korean refugee columns in order to penetrate U.S. lines. Documents found in declassified military archives show that some troops were ordered to shoot approaching civilians \_ orders that military law experts say were illegal.

"People in white" became Air Force targets as well, according to the once-secret Air Force files examined by the AP.

"Some people in white clothes were strafed three to four miles south of Yusong," an after-mission report by four 35th Squadron pilots noted on July

20, 1950. A spotter aircraft, or controller, "said to fire on people in white clothes," the debriefing report said.

The AP located the declassified debriefings at the U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., and at the National Archives in College Park, Md., while investigating what happened at No Gun Ri, South Korea, July 26-29, 1950, when witnesses say U.S. warplanes killed about 100 refugees and U.S. Army troops then killed about 300 more.



*An F-80 jet fighter and a T-6 "Texan," foreground, are seen flying over Williams Air Force Base in Arizona in this Oct. 6, 1950 file photo. (AP Photo/File/Defense Department)*

The AP reported in September that Army veterans confirmed their unit killed a large number of civilians at the No Gun Ri railroad bridge. The U.S. and South Korean governments immediately ordered investigations. The AP later reported hundreds of other refugees were killed in other U.S. Army operations in mid-1950.

Advised in advance of the AP's report on the air war, chief Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon reiterated that completing the No Gun Ri probe is the first priority. "Then the department will decide if other incidents warrant further study," he said.

Since the No Gun Ri report was published, the South Korean Defense Ministry has received petitions relating to at least 37 incidents in which U.S. forces allegedly killed South Korean civilians indiscriminately during the 1950-53 war, the ministry says. The petitions ask for investigations, and some for compensation. Most of those publicly reported relate to air attacks on refugees.



*Hong Won-ki, speaking Dec. 9, 1999, describes the air strike that killed his mother and father in January of 1951 at Yong-in, south of Seoul. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)*

"I want to ask the U.S. government why," said survivor Hong Won-ki, who has petitioned Washington for an accounting of a strafing in which his parents were killed. "It was clear that we were refugees." [video](#)

Witnesses say they refrained from speaking out after the war because they feared reprisals from the South Korean military, which ruled the country until 1992.

Some of the reported U.S. air attacks on refugees occurred in January 1951, another period of retreat, when U.S. forces and South Korean refugees were driven deeper into South Korea by an

offensive by North Korea's Chinese allies, but when American warplanes still monopolized South Korean skies.

Local villagers said American bombing and strafing killed about 300 South Korean civilians on Jan. 20, 1951, at a cave where they took refuge in Youngchun, 90 miles southeast of Seoul, South Korea's capital. The Chinese front line was several miles to the north, a U.S. Army history shows.

The area outside the cave was busy with people coming and going, villagers said. An observer plane circled and then four planes dropped incendiary bombs near the cave's entrance, setting fire to household goods just inside, they said. Most victims suffocated from smoke.

"People yelled and cried for their children," said Cho Bong-won, 64. "People choked and fell."

Earlier that week, 60 miles to the west, another 300 South Korean refugees were killed by a U.S. air attack as they jammed a storage house at the village of Doon-po, said survivor Kim In-tae, 58.

Kim, now a Presbyterian minister, said the planes bombed the location after the refugees set a fire outside to keep warm. "I woke up from the piles of corpses after three days," Kim said.

The petition from Hong Won-ki, a retired newspaper executive, describes an air attack on Yong-in, 30 miles south of Seoul, after refugees rushed outside to wave at approaching U.S. planes, and a second strafing the next day, Jan. 12, 1951, after his family left the village and trekked south with other refugees.

As American planes neared, the group crouched down with their baggage over their heads "to show that we were just refugees," said Hong, 14 at the time. But one plane strafed them, killing Hong's parents and other refugees, he said.

On Jan. 15, villagers said, planes returned to Yong-in, still crowded with refugees. They described strafings and apparent napalm attacks. "Each time a plane swooped down and sprayed bullets, about 20 or 30 people fell," said Kim Young-kyu, then 14.

A former AP war correspondent described the aftermath of a large-scale strafing around the same time, a few miles from Yong-in and possibly linked to those attacks.





*Former AP staffer Jim Becker glances through Korean War mementos at his home in Honolulu on Dec. 11, 1999. (AP Photo/Ronen Zilberman)*

Jim Becker, 74, said in an interview he saw the frozen bodies of at least 200 Koreans in civilian clothes along a road south of Seoul as he traveled north with U.S. troops on Jan. 26, 1951.  video

"There were women and children. It was a dreadful sight," said Becker, now chairman of Hawaiian public television.

His AP report at the time noted the U.S. military's contention that the refugee column had been strafed by American planes more than a week earlier because "intelligence learned that Chinese soldiers were hiding among them."

But no weapons could be seen, and an Air Force press officer who returned to the scene with him couldn't point to evidence of infiltrators, Becker said.

American military photographs from that area and time period show Korean civilians badly burned from U.S. napalm attacks. The photos, found by the AP at the National Archives, originally were classified for U.S. Army staff distribution only.

Other South Korean reports have surfaced about air attacks on civilians in July and August 1950, around the time of No Gun Ri, including attacks on a schoolhouse full of children and on refugees heading south near No Gun Ri a few days before the strafing and killings there.

Accounts of attacks on civilians in white in the July-August period are supported by available [Air Force debriefings](#), the reports that intelligence officers compiled in meetings with pilots after each four-plane mission. A sampling from three missions of the 9th and 35th Fighter-Bomber Squadrons:



**Airborne Targeting**



\_"Many troops seen in river areas directly south of Yusong. Could have been refugees because much baggage was seen piled on river banks. Were strafed by order of controller. Number of people hit unknown. Some had uniforms on."

\_"Strafed sand bar in river where people and foxholes were seen. People

appeared to be evacuees."

\_"Strafed white-shirted group in the hills just south of highway causing them to scatter and inflicting numerous casualties."



*In a Dec. 9, 1999 interview at his home in Salem, Ore., Al Wimer recalls missions he flew as a fighter pilot in the Korean conflict.  
(AP Photo/John Klicker)*

Besides attacks on tanks and trucks of the advancing enemy, the debriefings tell of strafings and rocketings of fishing boats, houses, schools and entire villages in South Korea. Sometimes controllers assigned the targets, sometimes apparently not.

The young officers who flew F-80 jets for the 35th Squadron, now mostly retired colonels in their 70s, remember their misgivings.

"It was troubling. It truly was," said Alvin L. Wimer of Salem, Ore., an F-80 pilot traced by the AP. He found he had noted his concerns in his personal log in 1950, next to a mission on which he and fellow pilots reported they "strafed 25 personnel in white civilian clothing crossing river."

"Twice we were directed to strafe these people who were dressed like civilians," Wimer said after reviewing reports on a half-dozen of his missions. "Now whether they were (civilians) or not, we have no

way of knowing."

In the war's first weeks, rumors about infiltrators dressed in white "were floating around our operations ready room," he recalled.

"Sometimes we never really did know for sure, because the enemy could wear white," ex-pilot Ralph G. Hall, of Leander, Texas, said of their targets.

Robert H. Dewald said pilots were briefed to be careful to distinguish between civilians and enemy troops, but it's "very likely" refugees were

strafed.  video

The ex-pilot specifically recalled one white-clad group in a dry riverbed. "We very well may have shot at them," said Dewald, of Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

The fuel-guzzling F-80 jets, in their first combat tryout, were flying long distances from Japan and often could spare only minutes in the target area. Dropping from 30,000 feet, the 400-mph jets depended on prop-driven controller planes at low altitudes to direct them.

But the 35th Squadron's commander in 1950 said he didn't always accept the judgment of controllers, code-named "Mosquitoes."

"I know one time a Mosquito pilot directed me to go in, but I could just tell by looking that it looked more like refugees than anything else, and I just refused to do it," said retired Col. Ray Lancaster of Stephenville, Texas.

The Mosquito unit report for July 1950 said the controllers, sometimes handling 16 fighters at once, lacked good maps and often didn't know friendly from enemy territory.

"We were ill-prepared to fight that war," said the 35th Squadron's Herman Son. "Not only in terms of equipment and personnel, but we didn't have a system and communications network to control and coordinate air and ground operations."

Ex-Mosquito pilot George F. Kroman of Cheyenne, Wyo., remembered the suspicions about "people in white" but said he never targeted them. He added, however, "I'm sure civilians were killed."

American air strikes on South Koreans quietly stirred high-level concern.

A newly declassified 1952 study said a South Korean defense official told the Air Force it should have taken South Korean officers along on combat sorties "to avoid the confusion and destruction caused by mistaken assaults."



*A victim of napalm bombing near Suwon, Korea, is shown in this Feb. 1, 1951 file photo.*

*(AP Photo/File/National Archives)*

The mission reports uncovered by the AP impart "a sense of the chaos and confusion that reigned," said the author of a new book on the Korean air war, West Point historian Lt. Col. Conrad Crane.

Military legal experts note that targeting noncombatants is forbidden by treaties and the customary laws of war, but enforcement was clearly lax in 1950. Duke University's Scott Silliman also said air warfare is a "more ambiguous combat environment" than what faced U.S. soldiers at No Gun Ri, for example.

"You can identify and perceive the difference between combatants and noncombatants more readily when you are on the ground in closer proximity than at 3,000 or 4,000 feet at 500 mph," said Silliman, a retired Air Force colonel.

To Hong Won-ki, however, what happened at Yong-in demands an investigation as much as No Gun Ri.

"I ask you to clarify what happened that tragic day of Jan. 12, 1951," Hong wrote in his Oct. 19 petition to President Clinton. "We need to make sure that this kind of tragedy does not repeat itself."

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AP Investigative Researcher Randy Herschaft contributed to this report.

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# Bridge at No Gun Ri 노근리 다리

## Veterans: Other Incidents of Refugees Killed by GIs During Korea Retreat

EDITOR'S NOTE -- The Associated Press recently reported on the killings of up to 400 South Korean refugees at the hamlet of No Gun Ri during the 1950-53 Korean War. That story briefly mentioned other incidents in which, witnesses said, refugees died at U.S. hands. Here is a follow-up report on those episodes.

By SANG-HUN CHOE  
CHARLES J. HANLEY  
and MARTHA MENDOZA  
Associated Press Writers

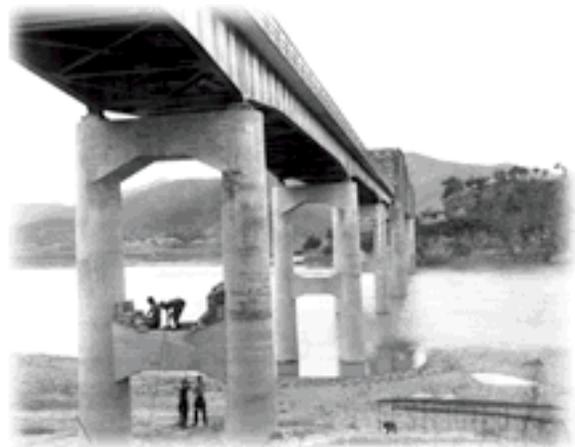
On a single deadly day in August 1950, six weeks into the Korean War, a U.S. general and other Army officers ordered the destruction of two strategic bridges as South Korean refugees streamed across, killing hundreds of civilians, according to ex-GIs, Korean eyewitnesses and U.S. military documents.

An old soldier recalled the critical moment at one bridge.

"I said, 'There are people!' And they said, 'You have to blow it! There's no other way!' ex-Army engineer Joseph M. Ipock of Jackson, N.J., told The Associated Press.

The AP learned of the bridge blowings and two other incidents, machine-gun and mortar attacks on refugees, while interviewing ex-GIs about what happened at No Gun Ri, South Korea, in late July 1950. In that case, as reported Sept. 29, veterans corroborated Korean accounts of hundreds of refugees killed at U.S. hands.

One bridge blowing, with its refugee deaths, was also recorded briefly in an



*Members of the U.S. Army's 14th Combat Engineer Battalion prepare demolition charges for a bridge crossing the Naktong River near Tuksong-dong, South Korea, on Aug. 2, 1950, early in the Korean War. (AP Photo/Buckley, U.S. Army)*

official Army chronicle, but not until 10 years after the event.

The trail of dead civilians, many of them women and children, has been a hidden underside to a well-known chapter in U.S. military history, the southward retreat of three Army divisions into a defensible perimeter across South Korea's Naktong River in July-August 1950.

The withdrawal was often confused. The U.S. Army itself told South Korean civilians, citizens of an allied nation, to head south. But the AP found in researching declassified Army documents that U.S. commanders also issued standing orders to shoot civilians along the warfront to guard against North Korean soldiers disguised in the white clothes of Korean peasants. Military lawyers call those orders illegal.



*This is a view of a highway bridge (1) and a rail bridge (2) spanning the Naktong River in the Waegwan area of South Korea, after sections were blown by U.S. Army troops in August 1950. Smoke from artillery rises from a village, left center. (AP Photo /FILE/ U.S. Army)*

Just days into his first combat command, the 1st Cavalry Division's Maj. Gen. Hobart R. Gay told reporters he was sure most of the white-clad columns pressing toward American lines were North Korean guerrillas.

"We must find a means to hold these refugees in place," the division commander said.

Days later, on Aug. 3, 1950, Gay waited on the east bank of the Naktong River as his division retreated across the bridge at Waegwan, the last crossing open to North Korean units reported massing more than 15 miles to the west.

His troops had failed in repeated efforts to turn back the flood of refugees, even firing warning shots over their heads.

"Finally, it was nearly dark," Gay later wrote to an Army historian. "There was nothing else to be done."

Then he gave a fateful command.

***[Editor's Note: Edward L. Daily says he now recognizes he could not have been at the scene and instead learned of it second-hand from soldiers who were there. [Full](#)***

## Story]

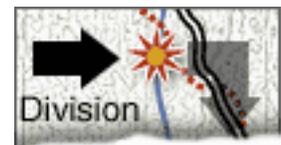
"General Gay stood up in the front of his jeep and shouted out, 'Blow the son of a bitch!'," veteran Edward L. Daily recalled.

The pre-set charges exploded, rapid fire, shattering the supports, dropping one of the bridge's hulking spans into the muddy waters of the Naktong.

"They went right down," remembered ex-lieutenant Daily, of Clarksville, Tenn. "It was like a slow-motion movie. All those refugees went right down into the river."

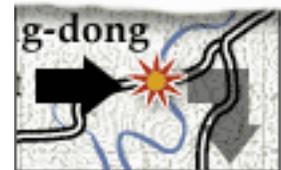
"It was a tough decision," Gay wrote the historian, "because up in the air with the bridge went hundreds of refugees."

The division's 1950 war diary did not report the refugees' deaths. But this later narrative by Gay, who died in 1983, led to a brief mention in an official war history published in 1960.



**Blown Bridges**

What happened earlier that August day, however, 25 miles downriver at the village of Tuksong-dong, has never been reported.



Ex-sergeant Carroll F. Kinsman remembers the streams of white-clad humanity shuffling across the 650-foot-long Tuksong-dong bridge -- women clutching children, old men, overloaded ox carts.

"We stayed up all that night and searched them," Kinsman, a veteran of the 14th Combat Engineers Battalion, said in an AP interview. They found no infiltrators, he said. [video](#)

Retreating Americans had not yet sighted North Korean units near the river around Tuksong-dong on Aug. 3, the declassified record shows. But American officers knew the enemy would arrive eventually. Pressed by a timetable, they proved unable to keep the refugees back from the bridge, rigged for instant demolition.

Soldiers fired over the heads of those crowding across, and tried to warn them the bridge would be blown up, said the veterans, men in their 60s or 70s.



*Kim Bok-jong, 73, left, gestures while standing with his brother Kim Bok-hee, 66, under the rebuilt Tuksong-dong bridge on the Nakdong River in South Korea, Oct. 5, 1999. The elder Kim said many people died when the original bridge was blown up by the U.S. Army on Aug. 3, 1950. (AP Photo / Ahn Young-joon)*

"They tried to stop the refugees from coming across and they wouldn't stop. They were abutment to abutment," ex-engineer Leon L. Denis of Huntsville, Ala., recalled in an AP interview before his death Aug. 31.

The men of Company A, 14th Engineers, had taken two days to set 7,000 pounds of explosives on the steel-girder bridge. When the detonation order came at 7:01 a.m., "it lifted up and turned it sideways and it was full of refugees end to end," said Kinsman, of Gautier, Miss.

"These people were on the bridge, and you saw the spans of steel flying and you knew they were killed," said ex-GI Rudolph Giannelli of Port Saint Lucie,

Fla., driver for Col. Richard W. Stephens, the 21st Infantry Regiment commander who was the last officer across the bridge.

In separate AP interviews, Kinsman, Denis and Giannelli said hundreds of civilians were killed. Ipock said he could see only 30 or 40 refugees from his vantage point.

"There was people on that bridge when it went up," Ipock said. "And during war that's the story. They're up there and they pull the plunger and that's it."

Kim Bok-jong, 73, a Korean who said he was 200 yards from the bridge, out of view around a hill, remembered that "people rushed back toward us and said many people died when the Americans blew up the bridge."

The dying did not end there, he said. Panicked refugee families stranded on the far shore tried to swim the river, Korea's largest.

"Many -- I mean many -- people drowned," Kim told the AP. "... Women with kids were exhausted before reaching the southern bank and disappeared under water. Sometimes kids were abandoned in the middle of the river."

The veterans said they don't know who gave the detonation order at Tuksong-dong. The operation was noted in the 14th Engineers report with a simple

"Results, excellent."

From the bridges, the U.S. Army units moved into defensive positions along the Naktong, in what came to be known as the Pusan Perimeter. They had arrived at the river after weeks of retreat through South Korea -- and after countless, sometimes bloody encounters with refugees.

Four 1st Cavalry Division veterans told the AP that on Aug. 2, the day before the bridge blowings, they were among several dozen soldiers retreating toward the Naktong and being trailed by perhaps 80 white-clad Koreans.

In mid-afternoon, five North Korean soldiers -- disguised in white -- appeared in front of the Americans, they said. Veteran Edward L. Daily said the North Koreans opened fire and were quickly killed. Another ex-GI, Eugene Hesselman, remembered it differently, saying the intruders surrendered and were led away.

Because it was believed they came from among the refugees, said Hesselman, of Fort Mitchell, Ky., "we got orders to eliminate them (the refugees). And we mowed them all down. The Army wouldn't take chances."

Scattering too late, every man, woman and child was killed, Daily said. He and veteran Robert G. Russell said they found about 10 disguised North Korean soldiers among the dead. Hesselman said he doesn't recall that infiltrators were found.

"I didn't like to do it," said Russell, of West Fargo, N.D. "It was just pure survival at the time."

About a week earlier, a half-dozen 1st Cavalry Division veterans recounted, mortar fire was directed at possibly a few hundred refugees moving down a railroad track about 100 miles southeast of Seoul.

Americans had been ambushed the night before by North Koreans who mingled with refugees, said ex-GI James McClure. Now, he said, he spotted another white-clad group, including women and children, through his binoculars, and put in a call to a command post.

"The colonel contacted mortar and decided to kill them instead of allowing them through the line," said McClure, of Federal Way, Wash. He could not recall the colonel's name.

When the mortar fire hit, "there were legs, arms and bodies flying everywhere," McClure recounted. Veteran Henry Matthias of Baltimore said he believes about 70 refugees were killed.

Matthias said he and GIs around him didn't fire because "the North Koreans were coming in, but they were a long way away." Other ex-GIs said North Korean uniforms and weapons were found on bodies afterward.

Some officers and other Korean War veterans drew a distinction between killing civilians simply because of suspicions of enemy among them, and destroying a bridge -- a strategic necessity -- with refugees on it.

But others, looking back, said refugees on targeted bridges should have been protected -- for example, by deploying soldiers to hold them back and retrieving the soldiers later by boat.

Three days after blowing the Waegwan bridge, Gay did send boats across the Naktong, to bring over 6,000 stranded refugees from the west bank, the declassified record shows.

The North Koreans did not appear in force on the west bank between Waegwan and Tuksong-dong until Aug. 7, four days after the bridges were blown, the record shows.

From a 50-year vantage point, historians are beginning to look anew at those first desperate weeks of the Korean War.

"Civilians were in the way, their friendliness could not be counted on, they were scary and it was unclear who the enemy was," Marilyn Young, a New York University history professor, said in an interview. "The U.S. Army was taking the population as a whole as the potential enemy."

Killing of noncombatants was then -- as now -- a crime under the international law of war and the [U.S. military code](#), military law experts note.

Although reports of [North Korean atrocities](#) were widespread at the time, possible war crimes by American troops were not an issue during the 1950-53 war, a West Point specialist noted.

"This now will change the way we look at the Korean War," said Gary D. Solis, a law professor at the U.S. Military Academy.

Last year the South Korean government rejected, on a technicality, a [compensation claim](#) filed by survivors of the bloodshed at No Gun Ri in July 1950. But after the AP published its No Gun Ri report, in which U.S. veterans said their unit killed a large number of refugees under a railroad trestle at that South Korean hamlet, the U.S. Army and Seoul government announced investigations.

In addition, since the Sept. 29 AP report, accounts have surfaced in South Korea and the United States of still other civilian killings at U.S. hands in the Korean War.

Those reports have yet to be corroborated. But Defense Secretary William Cohen said last week that after investigating No Gun Ri, "we'll see if there's substance to the other allegations." He did not specify what new allegations the Pentagon may look at.

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AP Investigative Researcher Randy Herschaft contributed to this report.

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