

# AOTEAROA

Our Whakapapa,  
Our Stories



Conflict: Korean War



## **The Korean War**

The Korean War remains one of New Zealand's lesser-known conflicts. A small unit of volunteer soldiers departed to a far-off battlefield to secure a stalemate, not a victory, and for many decades were seen as a 'forgotten force'.

For the troops on the ground this war was far from trivial. New Zealand soldiers found themselves vastly outnumbered in a desperate fight to prevent the collapse of the United Nations army and the loss of South Korea. Their efforts won the respect of our allies, changed the way our army was formed and fought, and helped to secure a free South Korea to the present day.

This booklet will discuss the following topics:

- Foundation: The Turbulent History of Korea
- Foundation: The Cold War
- Foundation: 1950 - Retreat, Attack, Retreat
- Going to War
- The Men of Kayforce
- The Equipment of Kayforce
- The Battle of Kap'yong
- Success and Stalemate
- The War at Home
- The Legacy of Kayforce



*A military scene from Korea's Goryeo period (918-1392).*

### **Foundation: The Turbulent History of Korea**

By 600AD the Korean peninsula was ruled by three kingdoms: Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla. Silla made an alliance with the Chinese Tang Empire, and together they brought Goguryeo and Baekje under Silla rule as the first unified Korean state. The alliance broke down when Tang refused to withdraw its soldiers and occupied half of the peninsula, so Silla spent the next decade fighting to expel the Tang from its territory. Silla ruled the peninsula for two hundred years, but broke apart as Baekje and Goguryeo (now called Goryeo) reclaimed their old lands. When the three kingdoms united again it was under Goryeo, which later became known as Koryo and then Korea.

Art and the Buddhist religion flourished in Goryeo Korea. Koreans invented a printing press two centuries before Europeans, and thriving trade led to the rise of a skilled bureaucracy. This prosperity made Korea a tempting target. Ögedei Khan, son of the infamous warlord Genghis Khan, had led the Mongols to victory all across Asia and into Europe. The Mongol Empire would become the largest land empire in history, and Korea was a prime target for conquest. Over the space of thirty years, the Mongols launched six invasions which devastated Korea and forced the Koreans to become the vassal (servant state) of the Mongol Empire.

After eighty years the rule of the Mongols collapsed, and Korea enjoyed a golden age under the early Joseon Dynasty. Joseon kings such as Sejong the Great promoted science and education, and the Korean military began to adopt gunpowder weaponry. During this period Korea had to fend off several invasion attempts by Japan, who wanted to conquer the entire peninsula and expand into China. Aided by

Chinese soldiers, Korea raised a regular army as well as civilian militias known as the 'righteous armies' and attempted to hold back the more experienced and better-equipped Japanese forces. The key to victory was the Korean navy which used armoured 'turtle ships' to defeat Japan's warships and cut off the invading army's supplies. The Korean navy was led to victory by Admiral Yi Sun-sin, who had never fought a sea battle prior to the invasion but is now regarded as one of the greatest naval commanders in history.

This defeat of Japan in 1598 was a high-water mark for Joseon Korea. The ruling class became politically divided, and powerful factions repeatedly overthrew each other in an attempt to gain control. Corruption spread, and Korea became vulnerable to outside influence and meddling.



*Left: Traditional Korean 'Hanbok' clothing at the time of the Joseon dynasty.  
Right: Hwaesong Fortress, built during the later Joseon period.*

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century was a difficult time for Korea. Their coastal territories were invaded by France in 1866, the United States of America in 1871, Japan in 1875 and Great Britain in 1885. Furthermore, a Japanese-backed coup in 1884 had nearly toppled the government and was only thwarted by the intervention of Chinese soldiers. Japan had long cast a hungry eye toward Korea, and waged several wars which dismembered the influence of China and Russia, effectively placing Korea under Japanese rule without going to war with Korea itself. In 1905 Korea was made a 'protectorate' of Japan, and in 1910 it was annexed as a part of Imperial Japan.

The Japanese attempted to degrade and destroy Korean culture, banning the use of the Korean language for writing and forcing Koreans to take Japanese names. Tens of thousands of Korean cultural artifacts were looted and taken to Japan, land was brought under Japanese settlers, and Korean peasants were heavily taxed and forced to labour on construction projects.

These hardships were accentuated by the Second World War. Five million Koreans were conscripted to work in factories and mining, and almost seven hundred thousand were shipped to Japan itself. Maltreatment in Japan led to the deaths of sixty thousand Korean workers, and an unknown number of Korean forced labourers (estimates range from ten thousand to forty thousand) were killed by the atomic

bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Around two hundred thousand Korean women were taken as sex slaves for the Japanese military, and a small number of Koreans were used for human experimentation by the Japanese biological warfare detachment, Unit 731.

Following the defeat of Japan in the Second World War it was hoped that Korea would once again become a free and united nation. Political and ideological pressures during the Cold War would disrupt these plans and lead to the division that sparked the Korean War.

### **Supporting Images**

*General Yun Gwan on campaign*, unknown artist. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%EB%B6%81%EA%B4%80%EC%9C%A0%EC%A0%81%EB%8F%84%EC%B2%A9-%EC%B2%99%EA%B2%BD%EC%9E%85%EB%B9%84%EB%8F%84.jpg>

*Wolha Jeongin*, Shin Yun-Bok, c.1805. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hyewon-Wolha-jeongin-2.jpg>

Hwaesong Fortress, KIMJUNGWOOK, 2016. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%ED%99%94%EC%84%B1\\_%ED%96%89%EA%B6%81.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%ED%99%94%EC%84%B1_%ED%96%89%EA%B6%81.jpg)



*Left: A booklet produced by the U.S. government instructing citizens on how to prepare for an atomic attack.*

*Right: Chinese Communists celebrate the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin.*

### **Foundation: The Cold War**

The Cold War was a global power struggle between factions (sometimes called '**blocs**' or '**spheres**').

- **The West** was the bloc of nations that were either allied with the United States of America through NATO or opposed to the Soviet Union. New Zealand was a Western nation.
- **The East** was the bloc of nations opposing the West. Many of these followed the Soviet Union, but China and Cuba eventually drifted away from Soviet influence.
- **The Non-Aligned Movement** opposed the aggression of both blocs and sought to peacefully develop its member nations.

These three factions were also known as the **First, Second and Third Worlds**.

Because the First World countries tended to be well-developed and the Third World countries were poorer, these terms are still used today to describe nations' development levels.

East and West had united to defeat the Axis of Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan during the Second World War, but as the victorious nations sought to rebuild the world it became increasingly clear that each side was trying to influence the newly created and liberated nations. Growing rivalry, suspicion and hostility between the Eastern and Western blocs led each side to view the other as its enemy, but without directly declaring war between the superpowers. Instead, each side used spies, propaganda and proxy wars (where the superpowers funded small countries fighting against each other for influence) to tip the scales in their favour.

Korea was a victim of this new 'Cold' war. The northern half of the peninsula was occupied by the Soviet Union, while the southern half was occupied by the United

States of America. The border was set as a straight line along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, and had been decided in the space of half an hour by panicked American commanders who feared a total Soviet takeover. Theoretically, this division was only supposed to last until a united Korean government could be established. In this new post-war age, Korea occupied a vital strategic position between China and Japan, and neither bloc wanted the other to have more influence over it.

The result was that negotiations for a united government broke down, and the occupied halves became the two Koreas we recognise today: communist North Korea (officially the *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, or DPRK), and an initially autocratic South Korea (officially the *Republic of Korea* or ROK). Both claimed to be the sole true government of the Korean peninsula. The situation was further complicated by the end of the Chinese Civil War, which saw a communist government in control of mainland China and eager to support North Korea since the North Koreans had lent help and volunteers in the Civil War.

### **Supporting Images and Links**

Yarwood, V. (2002), *Kiwis in Korea: When the Cold War ran hot*, NZ Geographic <https://www.nzgeo.com/stories/kiwis-in-korea-when-the-cold-war-ran-hot/>

Images:

*Survival Under Atomic Attack*, U.S. Civil Defense Office, 1950. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:SurvivalUnderAtomicAttack.jpg>, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

*Chinese Communists celebrate Joseph Stalin's birthday*, unknown, 1949. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stalin\\_birthday2.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stalin_birthday2.jpg), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## **Foundation: 1950 - Retreat, Attack, Retreat**

The opening stages of the Korean War were a disaster for South Korea and the United States. South Korea's army was accustomed to fighting communist guerrillas but was unprepared to face the full strength of the North Korean military, while the US only had around 300 soldiers on the peninsula. The North Korean army was backed by tanks and heavy artillery (South Korea had neither), and when war began on 25 June 1950 they overran the South Korean army and quickly took key cities such as Seoul.

The United States hadn't expected war to break out in Korea, and with the prospect of a total North Korean victory hasty measures were needed to shore up South Korea's collapse. The US rushed troops to Korea and threw them into battle, often with disastrous results as these unprepared and outnumbered soldiers were overwhelmed by the sweeping North Korean advance. Simultaneously, the US worked with the United Nations (UN) to create an intervention force, the United Nations Command, that would draw together an international army to defend South Korea. Australia, the United Kingdom, Thailand, Canada, Turkey, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Greece, France, Colombia, Belgium, South Africa, Netherlands, Luxembourg and New Zealand would all join South Korea and the United States as part of this army.

By August, North Korea had conquered all but a small pocket of land around the southeastern city of Busan (then known as Pusan). The month-long Battle of the Pusan Perimeter was a desperate last stand by the United Nations to prevent the annihilation of South Korea, and to buy time to prepare a counterattack. North Korea launched massive assaults along a 140km front, but the line held and UN air and sea superiority provided vital support for the defending troops.



*Left: North Korean T-34 tanks lie destroyed following the Battle of the Pusan Perimeter. North Korea lost 239 tanks in the battle, shattering its armoured strength.*

*Right: US Marines land at Incheon.*



As the North Koreans broke their strength against the Pusan Perimeter, the United Nations launched a surprise attack at the coastal city of Incheon, deep inside North

Korean-held territory, on 15 September 1950. This attack, on a coastline thought to be unassailable due to dangerous currents and steep seawalls, caught North Korea off-guard and marked the start of the UN counter-offensive.

The North Korean army, shattered and in danger of being surrounded and destroyed, fled back toward the North. Within the space of a week the North had been expelled from South Korea entirely. Now, with South Korea liberated and the United Nations army on the border with the North, a fateful decision was made. General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the UN forces, wished to cross into North Korea and complete the destruction of the North Korean army. The Soviet Union and India argued that now was the time to stand down and start peace talks instead. Ominously, communist China was now warning that any incursion into North Korea would be seen as a threat against China and might provoke a response.

By October 1950 the decision had been made: the UN army would continue their offensive, with the objective of destroying the North Korean military and forcibly unifying North and South under the South Korean government. In the space of a month North Korea was almost entirely conquered, and the concerned Chinese government raised an army of 'volunteers' (in reality regular army units disguised as volunteers) to intervene, declaring the "War to Resist America and Aid Korea". This first Chinese intervention caught the UN army by surprise and initially met with success, but the UN managed to stabilise their line and the exhausted Chinese were forced to withdraw. It appeared that the threat from China was over, so the UN prepared a final offensive to crush North Korea once and for all.



*Left: US troops retreat during the Chinese counter-offensive.*



*Right: the UN destroys the port of Hungnam on Christmas Eve 1950 to prevent its capture by North Korea.*

This was a trap. China had used its first attacks to discover which UN units were weakest, and to probe for gaps in the UN line. The 'volunteers' had now prepared an enormous surprise attack: three hundred thousand soldiers lay in wait entirely undetected by their targets. On 25 November the UN army was hit with a massive attack that immediately smashed holes in their lines and led to the encirclement of 30,000 troops at Chosin. With temperatures dropping as low as  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , the 'Chosin Few' held out for 17 days against a Chinese force four times their size, and were eventually forced to stage a break-out in order to survive. The rest of the UN army

retreated back to the South Korean border. China had succeeded in restoring North Korea, but much like the UN in October it now felt over-confident and wanted to unify Korea under the North. As such, preparations were made for a second strike into the South.

As 1951 began, the United Nations prepared once again to defend South Korea against an overwhelming attack from the north. It was at this moment that a new unit arrived on the battlefield: 16 Field Artillery Regiment, Royal New Zealand Artillery. New Zealand was about to get its first taste of action on the Korean battlefield.

### **Supporting Images**

*Napalm Bomb Victims*, US Army, 1950. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Waegwan\\_Tanks.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Waegwan_Tanks.jpg), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

*Lieutenant Baldomero López leading his men under fire over the seawall at Inchon several minutes before his death*, unknown US Marine, 1950. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lopez\\_scaling\\_seawall.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lopez_scaling_seawall.jpg), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

*A column of the 1st Marine Division during their breakout from the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir*, Corporal Peter McDonald, USMC, 1950. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chosin.jpg>, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

*Hungnam is blown up as USS Begor stands by, 24 Dec. 1950*, US Navy, 1950. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:KoreanWar\\_Hungnam.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:KoreanWar_Hungnam.jpg), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## Going to War



*A Loch-class frigate. Two Loch-class frigates, HMNZS Tutira and HMNZS Pukaki, were sent to the Korean peninsula at the outbreak of the war.*

New Zealand's decision to join the Korean War was not made lightly. In 1947 we had become an independent nation, so we were no longer socially or politically obliged to follow the British Empire if it chose to go to war in Korea, nor had our army planners prepared to fight a land war in Asia. Up until the Korean War broke out, New Zealand was acting under the assumption that the next war would be between the Soviet Union and the West, and that New Zealand troops would deploy to the Middle East and Persia (now Iran) to fend off a Soviet invasion there.

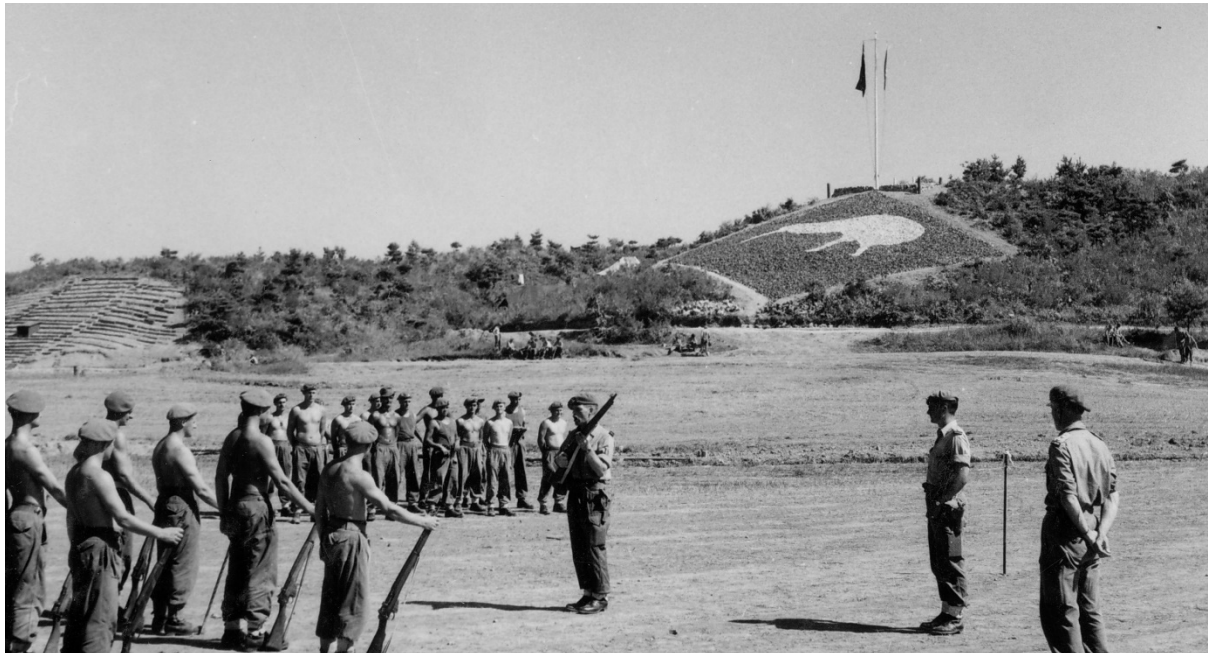
In the event, New Zealand was one of the first countries to sign up for the United Nations Command, volunteering forces only four days after the war began. Our early contribution was limited to the presence of two Navy frigates, HMNZS *Tutira* and HMNZS *Pukaki*, which had supported the defence of the Pusan Perimeter and the amphibious landings at Incheon. These ships were appreciated, but the United Nations requested ground troops to help reinforce the defence of South Korea. Our government debated this request, with some members skeptical that a unit could be raised, trained and equipped within six months, but on 26 July 1950 the decision was made to raise a unit of soldiers to protect Korea: **K-Force** or, more commonly, **Kayforce**.

Unlike our army in the two World Wars, Kayforce wasn't simply a deployment of existing army units. Instead, the decision was made to create a volunteer force of both serving soldiers and new civilian recruits, in order to preserve our existing army for other uses. More than 2000 men visited recruiting offices on the first day, and almost 5000 had volunteered by the end of the week.

### Supporting Images

*HMS Loch Eck* (later HMNZS *Hawea*), Imperial War Museum, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:HMS\\_Loch\\_Eck\\_1944\\_IWM\\_FL\\_9588.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:HMS_Loch_Eck_1944_IWM_FL_9588.jpg), W Haig Parry, Middlesbrough, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## The Men of Kayforce



*Kayforce troops parade in front of 'Kiwi Hill' in Korea.*

1100 soldiers were selected to train as the first deployment of Kayforce. They would operate 34 artillery guns, divided into three batteries of eight guns; Peter, Roger and Queen; plus a small reserve. When the situation in Korea later devolved into stalemate, the government decided that Kayforce's men would be replaced after 18-24 months' service, but with the option to re-enlist. The size of the unit rose to 1500 men, and around 3800 men served in Korea (with a further 1300 serving as part of the Navy's deployment).

Up to 15% of Kayforce was Māori, at a time when Māori made up only 6% of the national population. Unlike our soldiers in the Second World War, there was no attempt to separate Māori servicemen into their own units – officially, the Army now emphasised integration. This was significant, as it meant that non-Māori soldiers had a greater exposure to Māori culture and community through their Korean service. A Māori chaplain arrived in 1953, and his presence helped to maintain morale and discipline among the men. A Māori concert party and haka competitions provided further opportunities for Kayforce to experience and enhance Māori culture among its soldiers.

Collectively, these contributions increased the Māori profile within New Zealand's armed forces. Māori made up around a quarter of soldiers sent to Malaya in 1958, and approximately half of the troops deployed to Vietnam. In the decade following the Korean War, Māori traditions and culture experienced a resurgence across New Zealand in the so-called 'Māori renaissance'. This in turn fed back into the Army; in 1994 Anthony Birks, Chief of General Staff, requested permission from the 28<sup>th</sup> Māori Battalion and the Māori Queen, Te Atairangikaahu, to transform the New Zealand Army into an official iwi – Ngāti Tumatauenga – and to construct an army marae.

Alongside the 16<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, Kayforce also included 10 Company, Royal New Zealand Army Service Corps (RNZASC), and 'Charlie' Troop of the NZ Corps of Signals. The RNZASC provided over 400 personnel for transportation and logistics duties, while the signals troop was responsible for building and maintaining communication lines between our units and our allies.

### **Supporting Images and Links**

Henderson, H., Green, D., & Cooke, P. (2008). *The Gunners: A History of New Zealand Artillery*. Raupo.

McKenzie, P. *How the NZ Army became an iwi*. <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/peter-mckenzie-on-army-as-an-iwi-for-monday>

Image: K2378, National Army Museum collection, <https://www.armymuseum.co.nz/the-forgotten-war/>

## The Equipment of Kayforce



*Left: Kayforce's 25pdr guns being towed on campaign.*

*Right: A 25pdr gun set up in a firing pit. Note the walls on either side made out of earth-filled ammunition tins.*

Kayforce's primary weapon was the **Ordnance Quick-Firing 25-pounder Artillery Gun**, often referred to as the 25pdr. Designed in the 1930s, the 25pdr saw widespread use in the Second World War and was considered one of the outstanding artillery weapons of the war. It could fire an 11½kg shell every 15-20 seconds against targets up to 10 kilometres away with deadly accuracy, and could even be used as an anti-tank gun at close range.

The 25pdr was made deadlier by the introduction of Variable Time fuses toward the end of the Second World War. Shells fitted with these fuses (VT Shells) could be set to automatically explode at a specified altitude, rather than relying on manual timers or impact with the ground. A battery equipped with VT shells was able to unleash a devastating hail of shrapnel on attacking infantry, and this gave Kayforce the ability to punch well above its weight for such a small unit.

Nine-tenths of Kayforce had no previous experience with artillery, so the first wave of recruits were put through an intensive two-month training regime at Waiouru in October (see training film below). By December 1950, the unit was ready and deployed to Korea.

The changing Korean battlefield meant that the 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment often needed to shift firing locations, particularly in the early stages of the war. As a result, hastily dug firing pits were usually fortified with a mix of sandbags and empty ammunition tins (filled with earth to absorb shrapnel and bullets). These also helped to prevent the sides of the gun-pit from collapsing under the shock of their gun-blasts.

One disadvantage faced by the Kayforce men was the lack of appropriate cold-weather clothing. Standard NZ Army winter uniform might have been suitable for deployment back home, but with Korean winter temperatures frequently dropping below 0°C the men needed more layers and better insulation to stay warm. The troops were initially forced to obtain jackets and other clothing from their allies until improved supplies were sent from New Zealand. Gloves were also in high demand –

bare hands stuck to the freezing metal of the guns and couldn't be removed without tearing off their skin. Conversely, the Korean summers were hot and men had to be issued with shorts, singlets and mosquito nets.

### **Supporting Images and Links**

*Kayforce training in New Zealand* [newsreel] <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/video/kayforce-training-new-zealand>

Henderson, H., Green, D., & Cooke, P. (2008). *The Gunners: A History of New Zealand Artillery*. Raupo.

Images: K2541, K2252, National Army Museum collection, <https://www.armymuseum.co.nz/the-forgotten-war/>

## The Battle of Kapyong



*Left: The battlefield at Kapyong as viewed from the Australian position.*

*Right: Kayforce's gunners in action*

New Zealand's gunners would prove their merit at the Battle of Kapyong in April 1951. At the time, the United Nations Command was still trying to hold the line against China's counterattack, and fierce battles were taking place around the South Korean capital of Seoul, which had already been captured twice by enemy forces. Kayforce had taken part in Operation Killer and Operation Ripper, two UN strikes that had liberated Seoul a second time, but the Chinese volunteers had regrouped for another attack and once again threatened to overrun Seoul's defences. As part of the 27<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Brigade, Kayforce was right in the path of this new attack, at a place called the Kapyong Valley on the highway to Seoul.

The first warning Kayforce had of the Chinese attack was when the South Korean troops protecting their position unexpectedly retreated past them. Our gunners were now exposed and in the direct path of the Chinese assault. Forced to conduct a fighting retreat, the gunners fired barrages closer and closer to their own lines, eventually resorting to point-and-shoot gunnery as the enemy came too close for complex calculations.

Kayforce escaped this danger, but were quickly needed to support our allies along the line. UN forces at Kapyong were outnumbered 10 to 1 in some areas, and relentless Chinese attacks threatened to shatter their thin defences. Over the course of four days and nights, Kayforce shifted fire again and again to prevent British, Australian and Canadian positions from being overrun, dropping their shells within 50 metres of allied troops. From time to time they also fired smoke shells to cover our allies when they needed to retreat. The constant barrage made Kayforce's 25pdrs hot enough to blister and peel the paint from their barrels.

The fighting at Kapyong was hard, but the Chinese attacks were repeatedly broken up by accurate, deadly artillery fire. Chinese Marshal Peng Dehuai realised that further attacks would be unsuccessful, and the Battle of Kapyong ended on Anzac

Day, 1951. 47 UN soldiers lost their lives, but possibly killed more than a thousand Chinese soldiers. Kayforce's gunnery had been crucial in holding the UN line, and in gratitude for our actions the South Korean government awarded 16 Field Artillery the South Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

### **Supporting Images and Links**

Korean War veteran Laurie Valentine describes the chaos leading up to the Battle of Kapyong: 'Laurie Valentine describes the battle of Kapyong', URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/sound/laurie-valentine-describes-battle-kapyong>

Images:

*The Kap'yong Valley*, Phillip Oliver Hobson, 1952, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kapyong\\_South\\_Korea\\_1952\\_\(AWM\\_HOBJ3147\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kapyong_South_Korea_1952_(AWM_HOBJ3147).jpg), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

*New Zealand 25pdrs in action*, Phillip Oliver Hobson, 1951, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NZ\\_artillery\\_25\\_pounder\\_Korea\\_1951\\_\(AWM\\_HOBJ2238\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NZ_artillery_25_pounder_Korea_1951_(AWM_HOBJ2238).jpg), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## Success and Stalemate



*A recreated scene of Kayforce gunners manning a 25pdr during the harsh Korean winter.*

For the remainder of 1951, Kayforce provided fire support as the United Nations attempted to stabilise the front and push back the Chinese volunteers. Our gunners supported the UN assault at the First Battle of Maryang-san in October, in which a small force of Commonwealth soldiers successfully dislodged a larger Chinese force.

Toward the end of 1951 the Chinese brought in heavy artillery of their own, so Kayforce had to adapt their tactics and provide 'counter-battery' fire aimed at disabling or destroying enemy guns.

By the end of 1951, two important lessons had been learned. Firstly, the UN realised that they'd never be able to break through the Chinese lines like they did with the North Koreans. Secondly, the Chinese realised that massed infantry assaults would be doomed to failure as long as artillery units like Kayforce were inflicting such heavy losses on them. Consequently, the war settled down into a stalemate, punctuated by limited attacks from each side. Kayforce got into a daily routine of sending about a hundred shells over at the Chinese each morning for breakfast, and over the course of the campaign they fired over three quarters of a million shells, more than any other Commonwealth artillery unit in the war.

Toward the middle of 1953, China sensed that armistice negotiations would soon produce a ceasefire and made one final push to seize as much territory as possible before this could happen. Kayforce fired continuously for two days to fend off this attack. An armistice was signed on 27 July 1953 and, while not a peace treaty, it effectively ended the active phase of the war. Kayforce was gradually reduced in size as the threat in Korea diminished, and was eventually disbanded in 1954 (some New Zealanders stayed in Korea until 1957). As of 2020, North and South Korea are still technically at war but have enjoyed half a century of relative peace. The frontline that Kayforce helped to stabilise in the 1950s remains as the North Korean-South Korean

border to this day, divided by a strip of empty land called the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ).

The Army and Navy lost 45 men during their deployment, 33 of whom were killed during the active phase of the war. A further two New Zealanders were killed while serving with Australian forces.

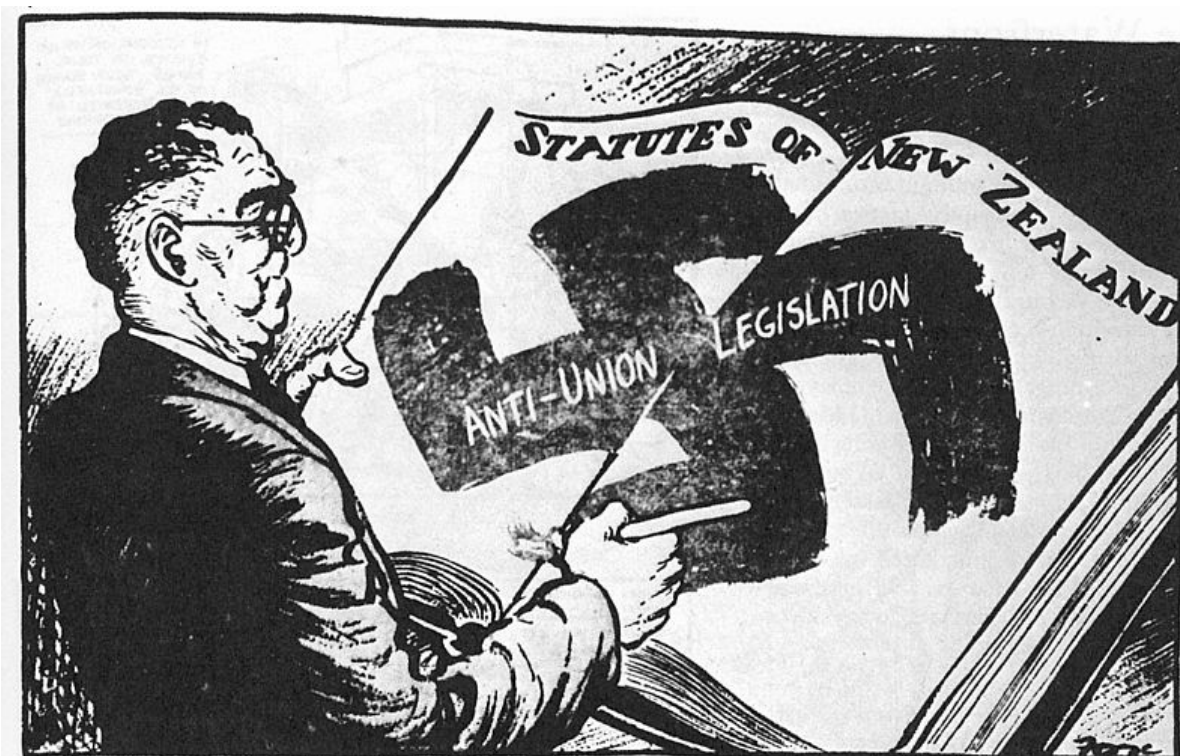
### Supporting Images and Links

Image: National Army Museum collection, <https://www.armymuseum.co.nz/visit/exhibitions/korea/>

Animation: Border Changes during the Korea War  
<https://wikipics.io/media/info/22.gif>

### The War at Home

Unlike the Second World War, in which all New Zealanders were affected by rationing, labour shortages and other restrictions, the impact of the Korean War was less obvious to general society. Kayforce was a small unit fighting in a faraway war that never threatened New Zealand's shores or traditional allies, so the everyday Kiwi's emotional connection to Korea was virtually non-existent. Low casualties also reduced the impact of the war on NZ communities.



BLOTTING THE BOOK

*The 1951 waterfront dispute was a bitter clash between the government and the Waterside Workers' Union. Accusations of communism and fascism were thrown back and forth, as this cartoon*

For many New Zealanders, the most important issue of 1951 was the 'waterfront dispute', the largest industrial action in our history. As many as twenty thousand watersiders (dock-workers) were striking for a pay rise, as they had been made to

work long hours during and after the Second World War without adequate compensation. The strike lasted for 151 days and led to the deployment of Army and Navy personnel to take over port operations. The National government painted the watersiders' leaders as Communist agents working to undermine NZ. The government used the situation to grant itself emergency powers including press censorship and the outlawing of strikes, and took advantage of the situation to hold a snap election and cement its power. Thus, for many New Zealanders the great battle against Communism seemed to be taking place at home, rather than the distant sideshow in Korea.

Ordinary New Zealanders may not have paid much attention to the war, but it soon had an unexpected effect on the direction of New Zealand's economy. The United States was concerned that if the war went on too long, or expanded to a wider war between other East-aligned powers, they might suffer a shortage of supplies. As a precaution, the US attempted to buy up large quantities of strategically important resources. One such resource was wool, and the resulting wool boom made Kiwi sheep farmers rich as wool prices tripled overnight. This was the start of a golden age for NZ agriculture, and sheep numbers doubled within the next twenty years.

### **Supporting Images and Links**

'Impact of the war', URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/korean-war/impact>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 30-Jun-2020

NZ Postwar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAEGM9IGTKM>

Image: Neville Colvin (1951), *Blotting the Book*, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## **The Legacy of Kayforce**

After the war, many veterans of Korea felt like they had been a 'forgotten force'. The Korean War was not a total war requiring everyone to pitch in and endure hardships like the First and Second World Wars, so many at home were essentially unaffected by its progress. Later, the vividly televised horrors of the Vietnam War would overshadow Korea in public memory. Despite these perceptions, the Korean War was a turning point for New Zealand's military strategy, its alliances, and the composition of the New Zealand Defence Force.

The war in Korea alerted NZ to the real dangers of war in the Asia-Pacific region. Our next major conflicts, in Malaysia and Vietnam, were conducted as part of a security strategy to contain threats in our own area of the world rather than us tagging along with European wars. In September 1954, we signed the Manila Pact with Australia, France, the Philippines, Pakistan, Thailand, the UK and the US. This created the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), to co-ordinate an allied strategy in Asia.

Korea also brought us closer politically to the United States of America. In 1951 Australia, NZ and the US signed the ANZUS Treaty, pledging to protect each other in case one was attacked. Despite being a defensive treaty, the US used ANZUS to pressure NZ into providing military support in the Vietnam War. Britain, our traditional ally, would not participate in Vietnam, so this involvement continued New Zealand's transition from loyal Dominion to independent nation.

The achievements of New Zealand's all-volunteer force in Korea set the standard for future deployments. Since the Boer War, NZ had relied on large-scale volunteering from its citizens in times of crisis. Indeed, Kayforce had to be raised because the government wasn't sufficiently prepared to send our small regular army overseas. Following the Korean War, the Government decided to maintain the New Zealand Army as a regular combat-ready force, self-sufficient and able to be deployed where needed on short notice. Throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and up until the present day, the New Zealand Army has remained a small but well-trained and specialised fighting force capable of holding its own alongside our allies.