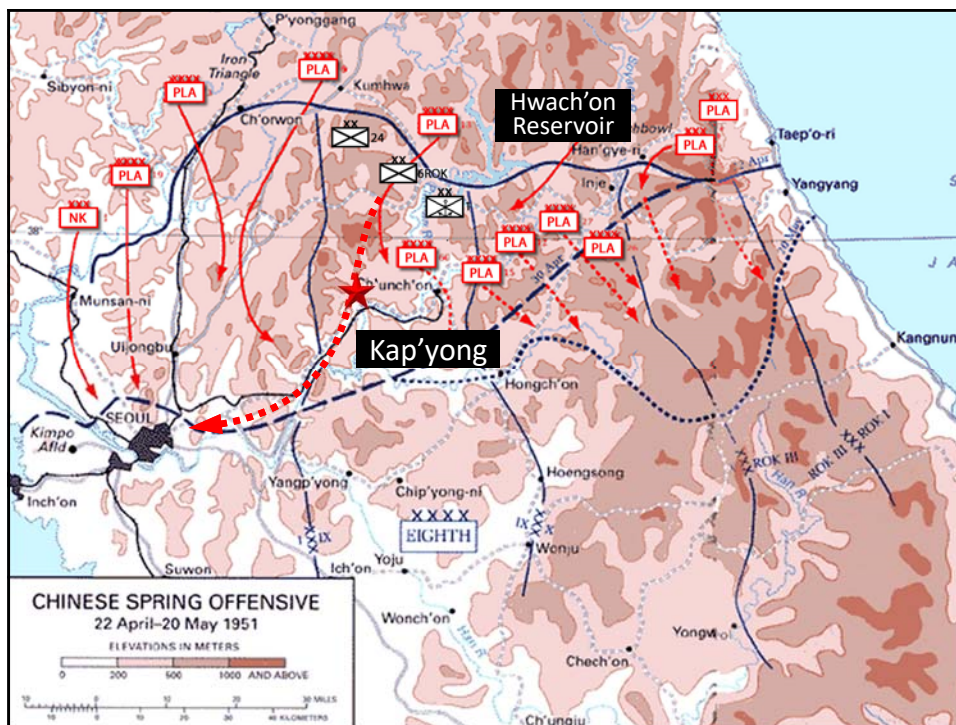


Earlier in the morning I had been wounded in the fore part of my head (following a misguided Napalm strike). I must have looked a sight. I was sitting there, stunned and no doubt feeling a bit sick and sorry for myself. I then saw the most appalling apparition. A man with no flesh - his hands were dripping flesh - completely naked. As he walked, I saw these huge bloated feet. The sticks and the stones came up through his feet. He sat down next to me. I didn't know who he was. He looked at me and said, 'Jesus, Nugget, you're having a bad day'.

'Nugget' Dunque-stretcher-bearer

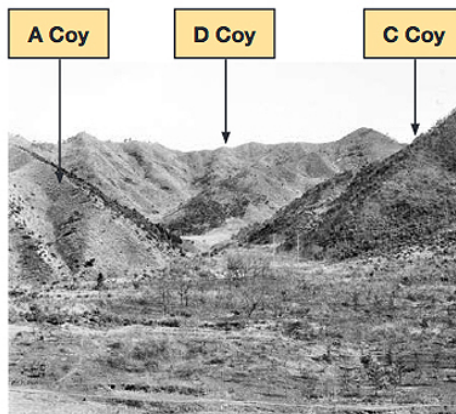
An epic battle in a forgotten war

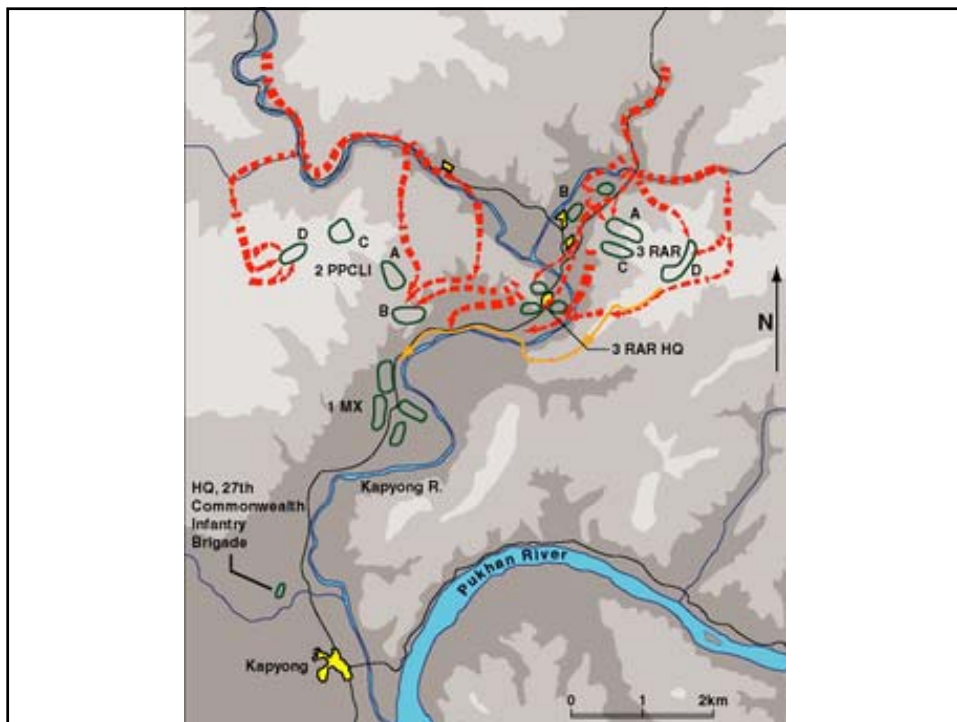
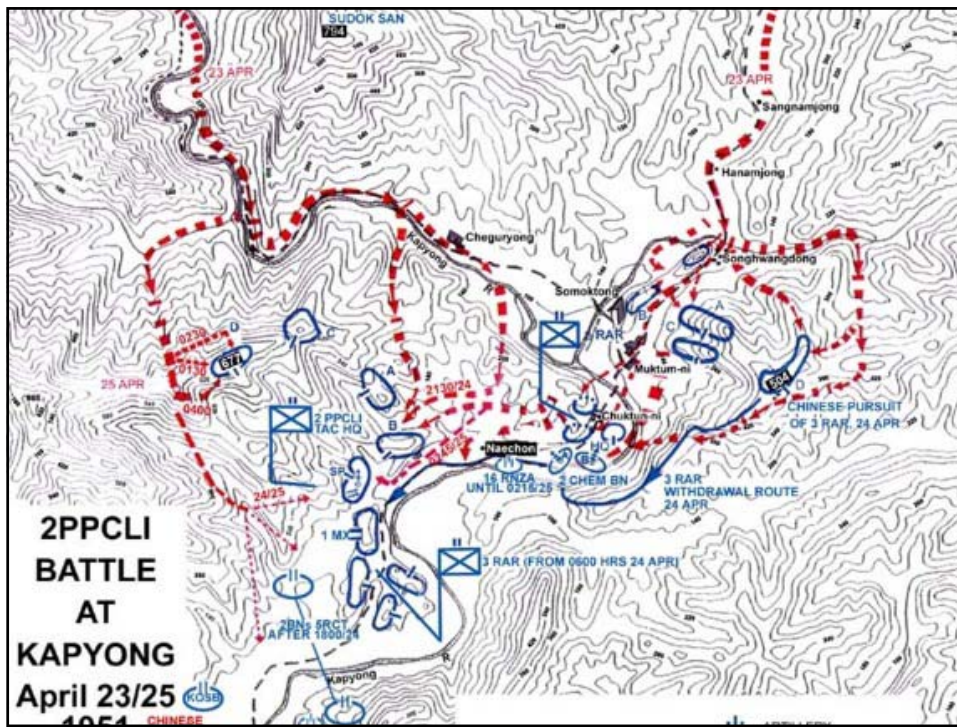
- The Chinese launched their massive Fifth Phase Offensive on the night of 21/22 April 1951 to drive the United Nations forces into the southern part of the Korean peninsula.
- The Chinese began with offensive with an assault on the ROK 6th Division west of the Hwach'on Reservoir in the centre of the UN line. The weight of the enemy attack broke through the division, exposing the flanks of the adjacent U.S. 24th Infantry Division in the X Corps sector to the west and the U.S. 1st Marine Division to the east.
- A follow-on Chinese push the next day completed the collapse of the 6th ROK and advanced south toward Kap'yong, twenty miles southwest of the reservoir. Astride a main east-west route to Seoul, Kap'yong opened a traditional invasion route.
- Survivors of the 6th ROK hurriedly fled south ahead of the Chinese desperate to avoid being overrun and wiped out.

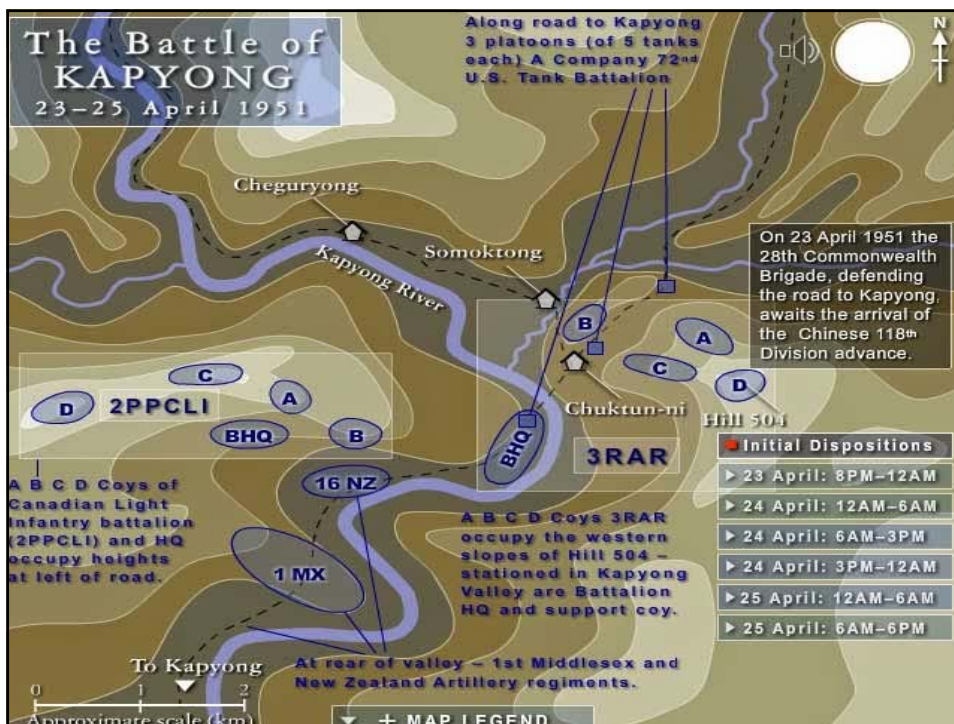
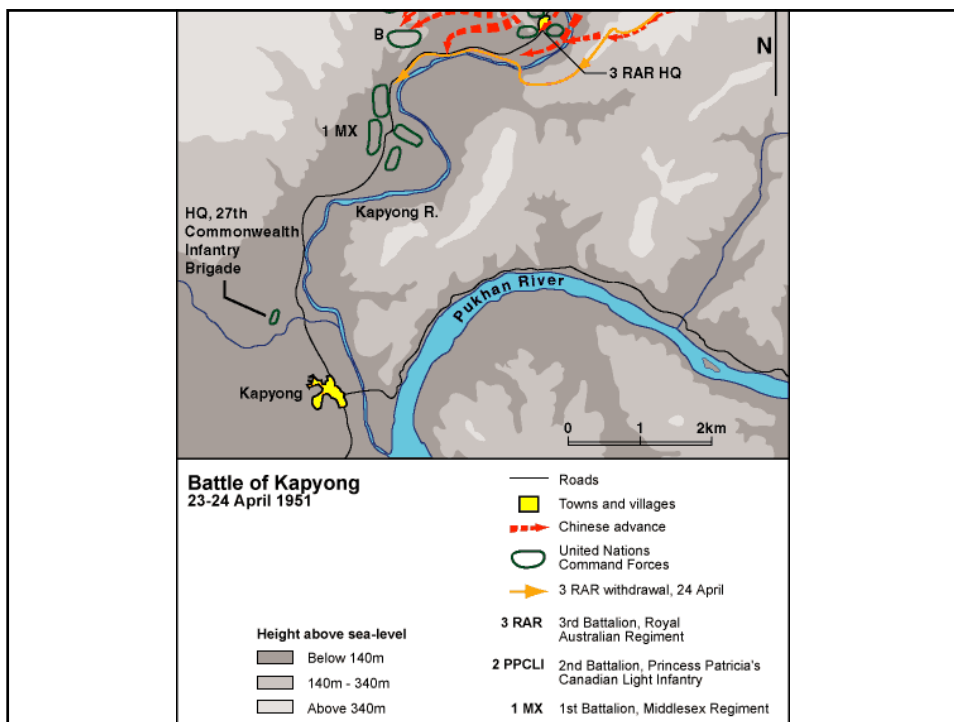


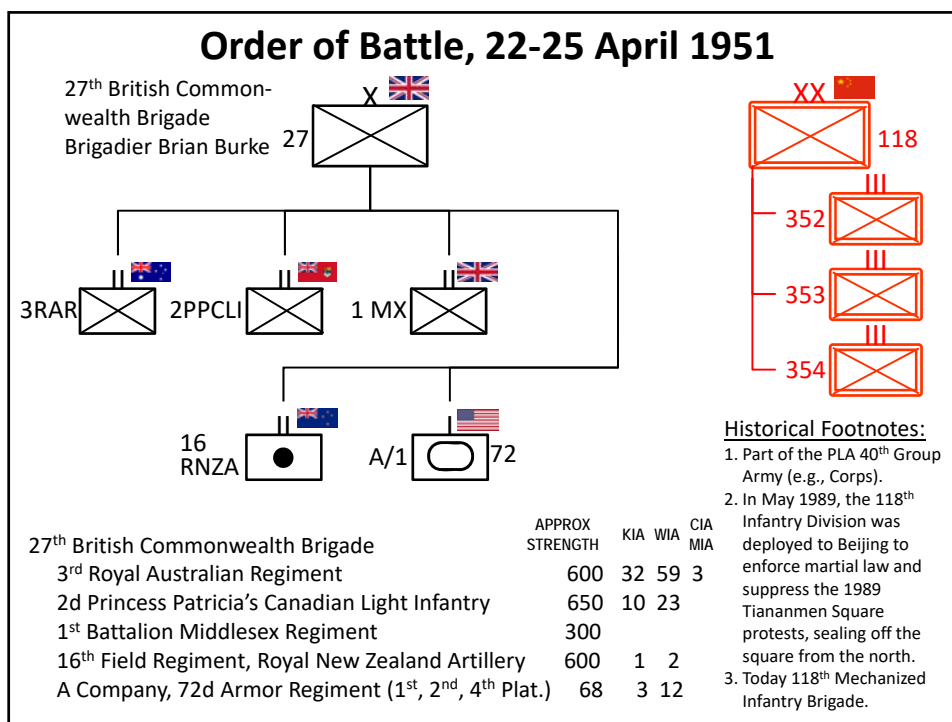
An epic battle in a forgotten war

- The 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) took part in one of the most significant battles since the end of World War II. The fighting took place near a ruined town called Kapyong, which lay astride a main east-west communications routes south of the battle-line.



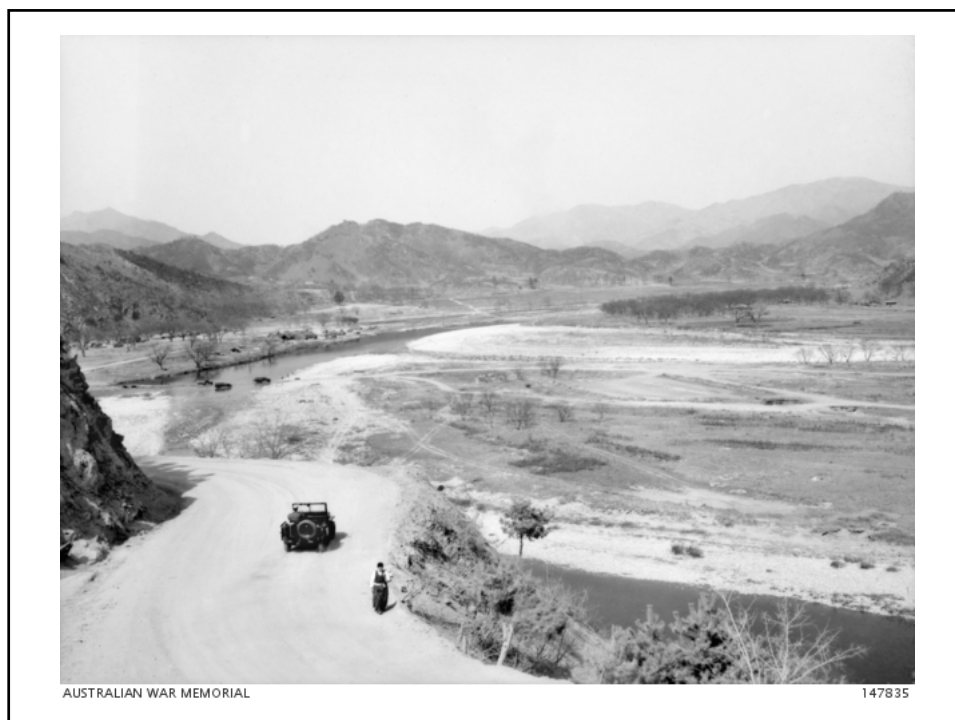






The Battle of Kapyong

- In late April 1951, the retreating Chinese and North Korean forces regrouped and counter-attacked in the western and west-central sectors of the front.
- Van Fleet launched his offensive on 21 April, only to meet a much heavier Communist offensive on the night of 22 April. An estimated 337,000 Chinese were driving for Seoul in the main thrust and 149,000 were attacking in the central sector. These were supported by an additional 214,000 to make a total of some 700,000 Communist troops facing 418,000 UN personnel spread across the width of the Korean Peninsula.
- The Chinese quickly overran the 6th ROK (South Korean) division defending one of the major approach routes, the valley of the Kap'yong River. Overwhelmed, they were in danger of being wiped out and fled, joining queues of civilians fleeing as well.



The Battle of Kapyong

- The 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade—consisting of 3RAR (Aus), 2PPCLI (Can), 1st Middlesex Bn (UK) and support, was called up from reserve to the Kap'yong Valley to cover retreat of 6th ROK Division. They were ordered to protect the South Korean withdrawal through the Kap'yong River valley (about 20 km south of the 38th parallel in central Korea).
- General Hoge ordered the British 27th Brigade to block the Kap'yong River valley behind the South Koreans to prevent enemy forces from flowing down the valley and cutting Route 17 at Kap'yong town.
- Brigadier Burke was to establish a blocking position four miles north of town where the Kap'yong River flowing from the northwest was joined by the tributary from the northeast. Commonwealth forces could cover both approaches from hill masses rising on either side of the junction of the Kap'yong and its tributary.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

147838

- Burke organized the block with the 3d Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, on Hill mass on the east to block the valley approach from the northeast and 2d Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, on the crest and slopes of Hill 677 to control the Kap'yong valley.
- Four American units-all but one platoon of Company A, 72d Tank Battalion; Company B, 2d Chemical Mortar Battalion; and Companies B and C, 74th Engineer Combat Battalion-moved up in support:
 - The tankers taking position with the Australians
 - The mortarmen setting up in a small lateral valley behind Hill 504.
 - The engineers bivouacked along the Kap'yong about a mile in rear of the blocking position.

23 April 1951

- Less than three kilometres across at its widest point, the Kapyong Valley was dominated by the surrounding hills.
- A defensive position was quickly established with the 3rd Royal Australian Regiment on Hill 504, the 2 PPCLI on Hill 677, and the 1st Middlesex Regiment (a British unit) situated south of the Canadians.
- On 23 April, the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR), under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Ferguson, and the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, under Lieutenant Colonel Jim Stone, occupied prominent hills on either side of the seven-kilometre-wide valley, where a small tributary joined the Kapyong River.
- Also forward were headquarters units, tanks and artillery. The 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, were to the rear.



- Doubtful that the division was in position or condition to perform better than it had the night before and thus fearful that the supporting battalions were out on a limb, the corps artillery officer authorized the 213th Field Artillery Battalion to withdraw behind the 27th Brigade's blocking position at the first sign of another ROK rout.
- Alerted to the possibility of a repeat performance by the South Koreans, Brigadier Burke prepared to pull out the New Zealanders and Middlesex battalion and at dark placed the forces at the blocking position on a 50 percent alert



Evening 23 April 1951

- Early in the evening, retreating South Koreans streamed past the Commonwealth position, with Chinese forces closely intermingled. Soon afterwards a platoon of American tanks supporting 3 RAR was overrun. The Kapyong valley was too large an area to defend with the forces available, and the brigade was spread very thinly.
- The Chinese launched most of their attacks at night, in successive waves, using an intensive and aggressive approach of mortars, grenades and machine gun fire close to the front.
- Throughout the night the Chinese repeatedly pressed the Australian positions, attacking in waves over their own dead and wounded. During the night of April 23, the Australians came under heavy attack, holding out until the next day. The Australians bore the brunt of the initial attack and after heavy combat were forced to withdraw, with 155 casualties, late on 24 April.

Morning 24 April 1951

- At dawn, A Company, under the command of Major Bernard "Ben" O'Dowd, found that the Chinese had infiltrated its position, but a counter-attack was able to eject them.
- Meanwhile B Company discovered Chinese occupying some old bunkers on a small knoll. Hand-to-hand fighting ensued with grenades and bayonets.
- C Company, under the command of Captain Reg Saunders, was in position to reinforce both A and B Companies.
- "Major O'Dowd directed the radio operator to contact anyone. The American 1st Marine Division answered but their operator refused to believe who our operator was speaking for. Major O'Dowd took the phone and demanded to speak to the commanding officer. USMC General Smith came on the phone and told O'Dowd 3RAR had been wiped out the night before. Major O'Dowd replied, 'I've got news for you, we are still here and we are staying here.'"

24 April 1951

- Fighting continued throughout the day with the Australians holding their positions, and the Chinese also engaging D Co.
- Late on 24 April, with position now untenable, the Australians were forced into a fighting withdrawal down a ridge to the valley, where they rejoined the brigade. Their withdrawal was supported by the 16th NZ Field Artillery Regiment.
- The retreat left the Canadians exposed and, at 10:00 p.m. on April 24, the communist assaults on the Canadians began. For two days a battalion of roughly 700 Canadian troops defended a crucial hill in the front lines of the Korean War against a force of about 5,000 Chinese soldiers.
- Canadian Gerald Gowing stated: "We were surrounded on the hills of Kap'yong and there was a lot of fire. We were pretty well out of ammunition and out of food too. We did get some air supplies dropped in, but we were actually surrounded . . . that was a scary moment, let me tell you."



The Battle of Kapyong

- The danger was not yet over and the morning of the 25th saw an intermittent exchange of fire. Relentless waves of Chinese soldiers almost overran the position of D Company.
- With his men securely entrenched below ground, company commander Captain J. G. W. Mills, desperate and overrun, called for an artillery strike on the position of his own 10 Platoon.
- A battery of New Zealander guns obliged, firing 2,300 rounds of shells in less than an hour, destroying the Chinese forces on that position.
- The following night, Private Kenneth Barwise recovered the lost Vickers machine gun position in D Company, grabbed the gun, and ran back to his platoon. He had also single-handedly killed six Chinese soldiers during the attack on D Company, earning the Military Medal.



- At one point in the battle, 400 Chinese soldiers descended on a single Canadian company of roughly 100 men, but the attack was repelled with numerous examples of valour:
 - Private Wayne Mitchell, despite being wounded, charged the enemy three times with his Bren gun. He earned the Distinguished Conduct medal for his efforts.
- Amid the fighting, Stone refused to allow his men to withdraw — believing that the hill was a critical strategic point on the UN front — thereby stemming the tide of the Chinese offensive. While they defended the hill, the Canadians were cut off, and had to be supplied via air drop, allowing them to continue the fight until the Chinese retreated.
- Having found the Canadian position unassailable, the Chinese made no further attacks.
- The enemy was soon cleared from one side of the Canadians, and a supply line was re-established.

The Battle of Kapyong

- By the afternoon of 25 April the road through to the Canadians had been cleared of Chinese and 2 PPCLI was relieved by a battalion of the 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division .
- On Anzac Day 1951, the Australians rested after a long fight.
- The holding action of the Australians and Canadians at Kapyong allowed the UN forces to consolidate their troops for the next stage of operations.
- The Canadians WWII veterans like Stone utilized their experiences in fighting on the rugged terrain of Sicily and Italy and applied it to the hills of Korea to good effect, but at a price. There were 23 Canadian casualties, including 10 soldiers killed, as well as an estimated 2,000 Chinese casualties.
- Thirty-two Australians were killed and 53 were wounded for their part in stalling the Chinese advance and preventing Seoul from falling into enemy hands

The Battle of Kapyong

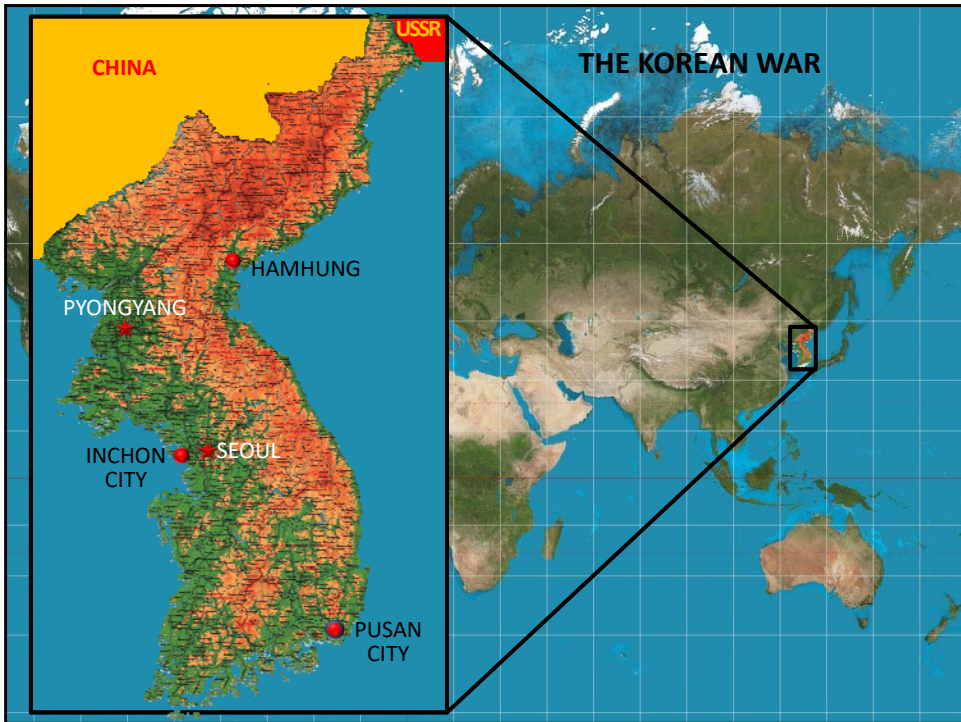
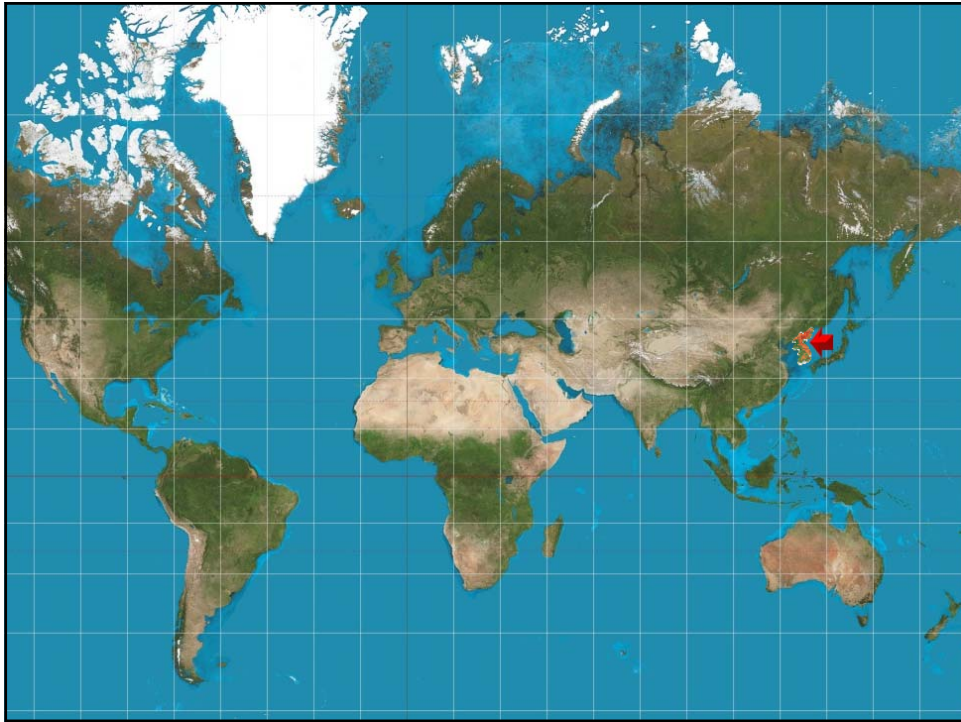
- Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Ferguson was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for leadership.
- Lieutenant Colonel James R. Stone was awarded a second bar to his DSO for courageous leadership under fire.
- The Australian and Canadian battalions both received United States Presidential Distinguished Unit Citations for their part in the battle, as did Company A of the 72nd Tank Battalion.
- The 16th Field Regiment was awarded a ROK Presidential Citation by Dr Syngman Rhee.



The Aftermath of Kapyong

- The battle contributed significantly to the defeat of the general Chinese offensive against the South that spring, protecting the capital city of Seoul from re-occupation, and plugging the hole in the UN line to give the South Koreans time to retreat. The wider Communist offensive of 1951 was halted about a week after the battle, and from that point on the Korean conflict became largely a war of patrols and enemy harassment, rather than large-scale attacks, as the front lines stabilized and the two sides embarked on peace talks.
- The Korean War soon moved into a new phase as truce negotiations began in July 1951 and the front lines began to stabilize. For the Commonwealth contingent, the remainder of the conflict became largely a “war of patrols,” with few large-scale battles taking place. On July 27, 1953, an armistice finally ended the active fighting.





THE KOREAS ARE DIVIDED

Japan had controlled Korea for 35 years by 1945. On 6 August, the US dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. On 8 August, the USSR declared war on Japan and occupied some of Japan's territory, including landing at three points in northern Korea. Japan surrendered 15 August.

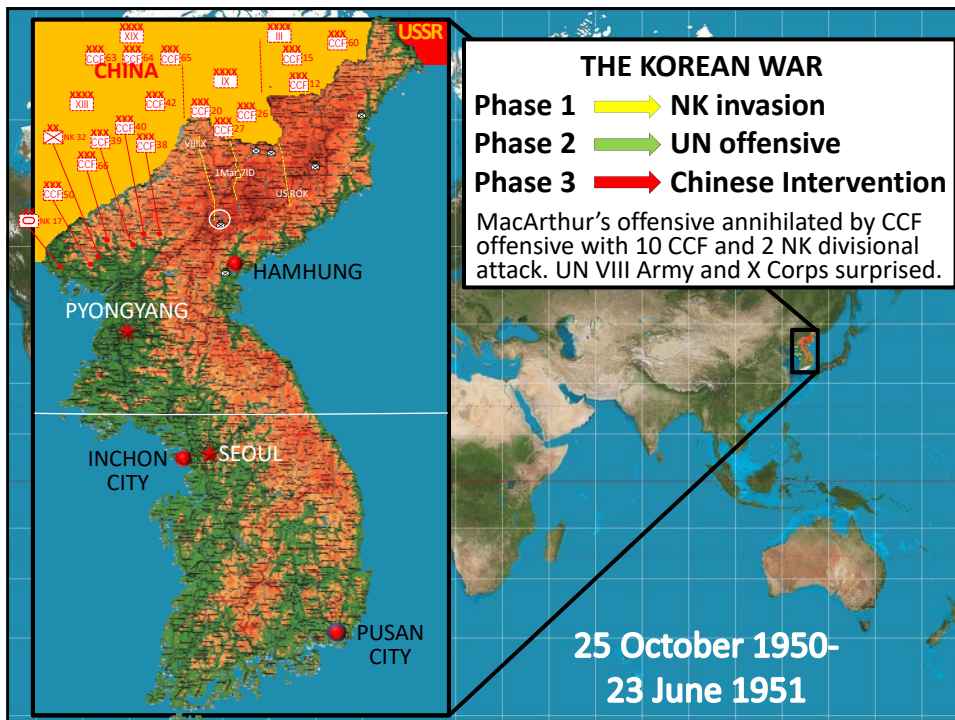
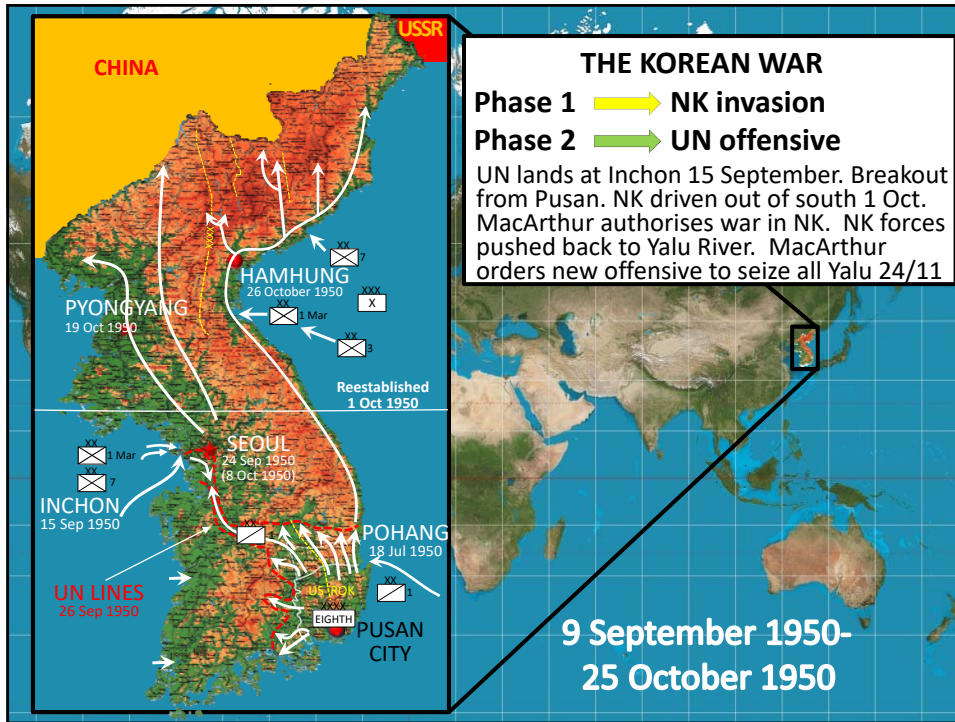
Already concerned about administration of the Philippines and Japan, US State Department officials* arbitrarily divided Korea along the 38th Parallel, ceding the north to the Soviet Union.

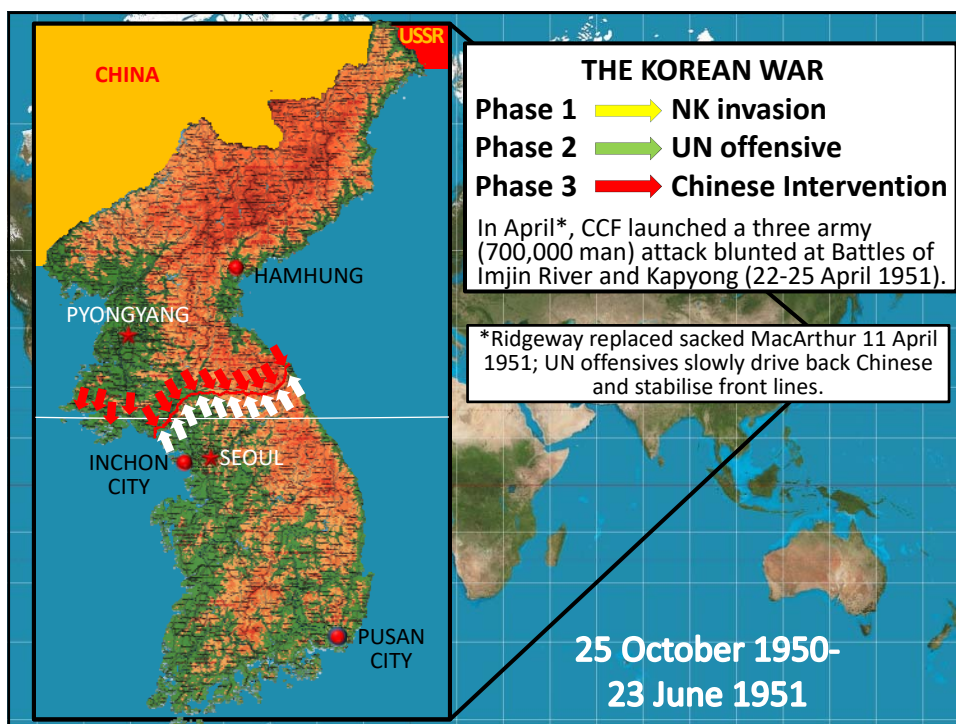
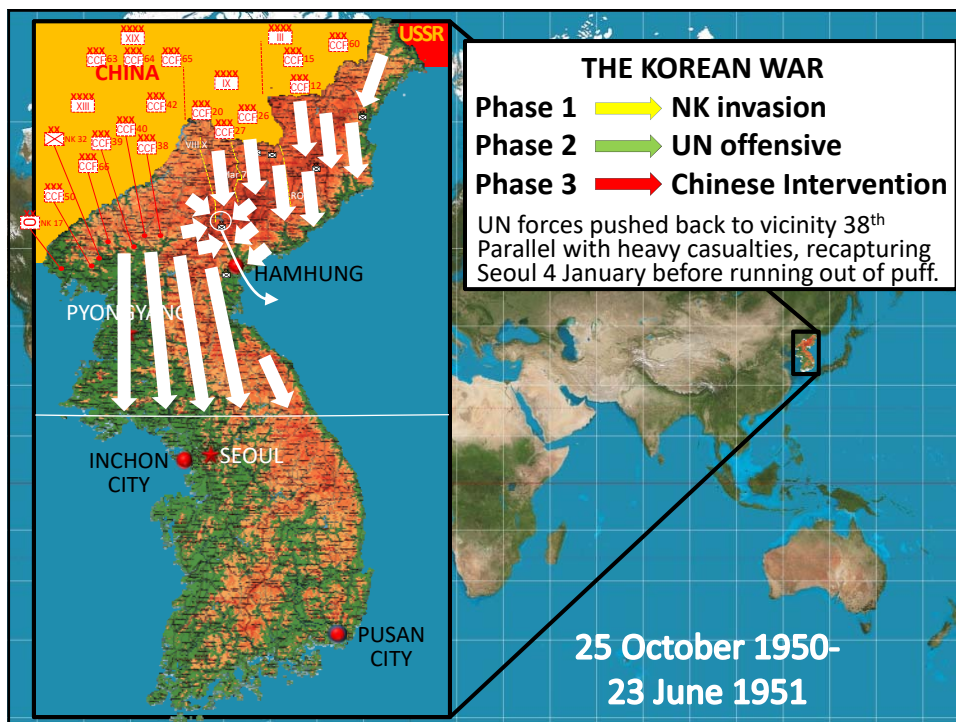
* Specifically, Dean Rusk and Charles Bonesteel

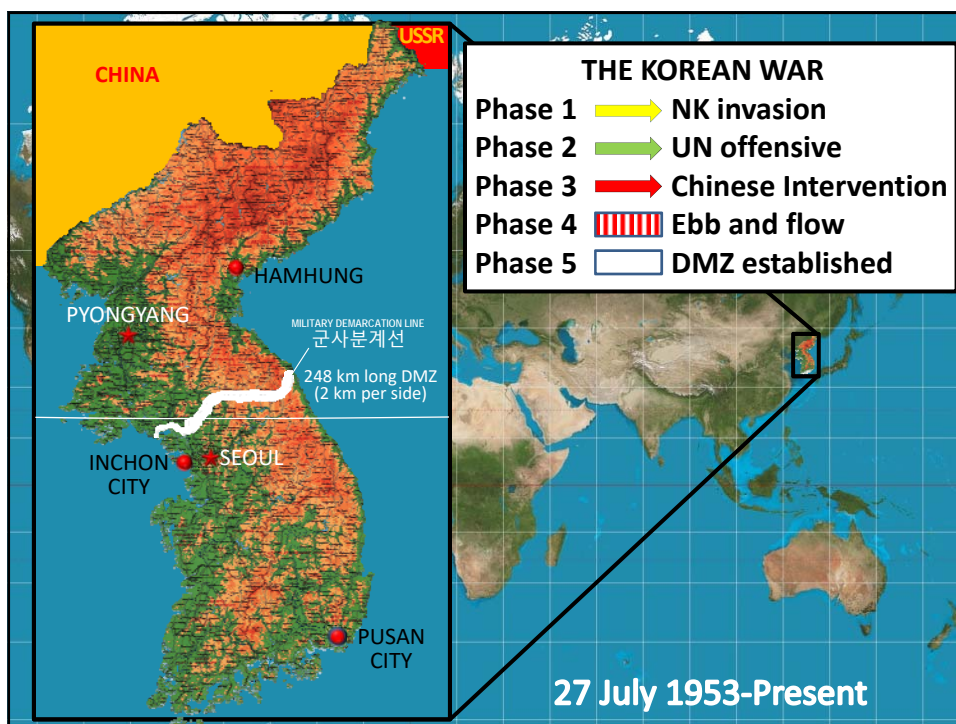
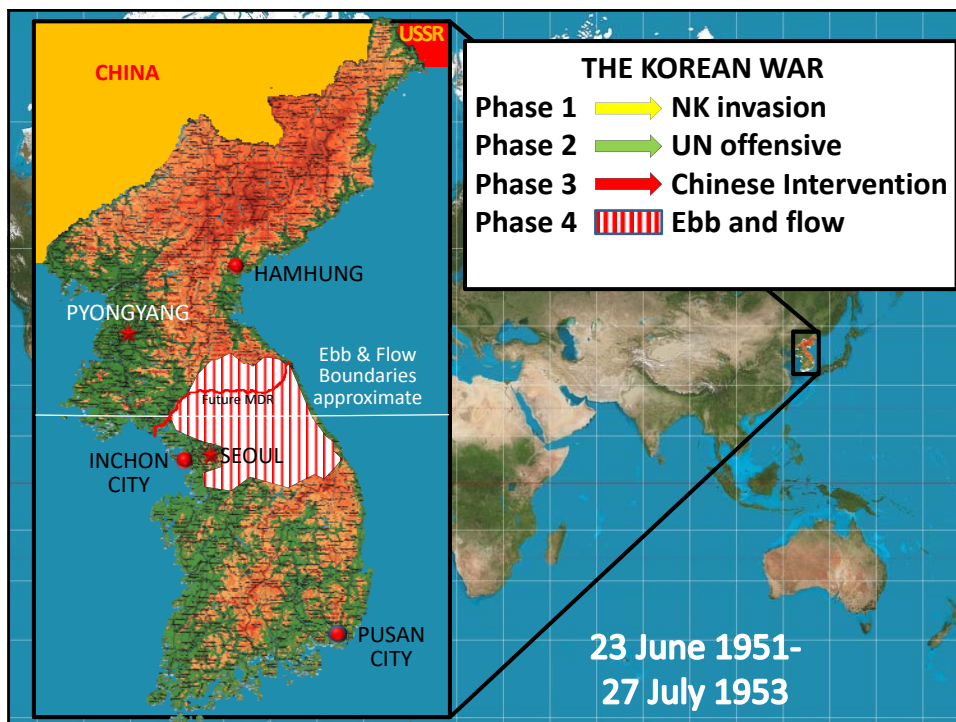
THE KOREAN WAR
Phase 1 → NK invasion

Following a massive artillery barrage across the 38th Parallel, North Korea launches an attack of ten divisions backed up by Korean-crewed Soviet tanks in four prongs. UN pushed back to Pusan Perimeter.

25 June 1950-
15 September 1950

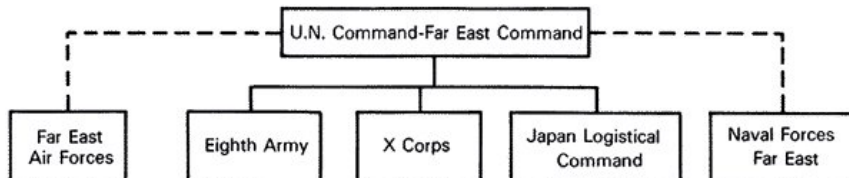






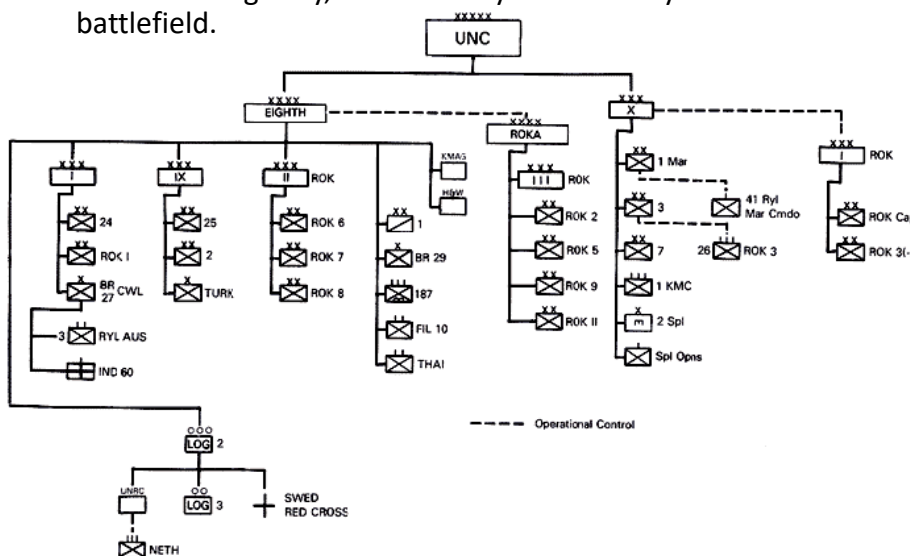
Strategic Direction

- The war was being run, for the most part, off of maps by the United Nations Command in Japan.



- Twenty-two nations had committed forces.
- Control on the ground in Korea was split between two major commands:
 - The U.S. Eighth Army managed activities in the western half of Korea
 - The U.S. X Corps managed those on the right.
- The two commands were physically separated by the virtually impassable Taebaek Mountains.

- General Douglas MacArthur, initial UN Commander was relieved for cause by President Truman and replaced by LTG Matthew Ridgeway, who virtually immediately stabilized the battlefield.



Lessons (un)learned

- The Chinese had made mistakes similar to those of the Japanese on the Kokoda Trail in 1942.
- The terrain was rugged and mountainous.
- There were no roads to enable them to bring forward supplies and reinforcements quickly.
- Forward troops were fighting at great distances, for foot soldiers, from their support bases and logistic elements.
- Although both pressed ahead vigorously, flushed with the success of early victories, they were soon exhausted when brought to battle by determined defenders in their path.
- Their attempt at a dramatic coup de main was frustrated and they had to withdraw, regroup and make the more elaborate but also more obvious preparations required for a major set-piece offensive against a stout enemy who was in good heart following his own success.

Turning disaster to stalemate

- The Chinese launched their Spring Offensive (Fifth Phase Attack) with some 700,000 to 1,000,000 men around the time General MacArthur was dismissed by President Truman.
- Under General Matthew Ridgeway, the UN forces had blunted the impetus of the offensive by the end of April. Australia's **Battle of Kap'nyong** (22-25 April) occurred in this phase.
- The Chinese launched a second impulse on 15 May, but were halted within five days.
- At the end of May, the UN counterattacked the exhausted Chinese and inflicted heavy losses.
- Fresh Chinese troops were thrown in, and the UN counterattack stopped at "Line Kansas" at the end of May.
- The remainder of the war involved little territory change.