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Koreans—page I

WITH THE KOREAN "TIGER" DIVISION, SOUTH VIETNAM—During a sustained surveillance operation one mile from the Cambodian border, ~~with~~ a 1300 man South Korean battalion, flanked by American units, dug its foxholes and interlocking trenchlines eight feet deep into the red fudge-like <sup>clay.</sup> ~~soil.~~ Each command post and fighting bunker was roofed with three tiers of huge logs made to withstand withering Communist mortar barrages.

An American helicopter pilot, delivering supplies into the battle zone, exclaimed, "This looks just like the old Japanese pillboxes of World War II."

He was so impressed he started filming with his home movie camera. "This really makes our troops look sick, doesn't it?" He said. ~~It's~~ I've flown the American and the Australian troops around but the ROK's are by far the best." The troopers from the Republic of Korea are commonly called ROK's by the American GI's; some Koreans affectionately call each other ROK-heads.

One Korean officer explained proudly, "We know the American troops don't dig in—but we do. We can never find the American trenches." He laughed modestly, "but sometimes when we leave an area we turn over trenches to the Americans."

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In Saigon, one Western diplomat explained, "The Koreans are the same army that kicked the British out of Singapore and Burma in World War II. They are the old Japanese army—with an American veneer."

The mission of the ROK Tiger Division—which reached the Yalu River during the Korea War—is to secure and keep open the infamous Route 19, the major artery for logistical supplies from the South ~~China~~ <sup>China</sup> Sea to the Communist-infested jungled highlands near Cambodia. In early 1965, the Communist, for the first time in the history of the current Vietnam conflict, established a twenty five mile frentline along the highway—thus severing Vietnam in half—and held it for several days. This was the lowest obb of the Vietnam war.

Today, a measure of the Tiger Division's effectiveness is that the ~~300~~ <sup>760</sup> square mile area of their responsibility is the only major chunk of the country that un-escorted, un-armed jeeps can drive the ~~roads~~ <sup>Roads</sup> at night. Even in the Saigon area, American troops drive in armed convoys once they ~~breach~~ <sup>Reach</sup> the city limits of the semi-besieged capital. More than sixty miles of ~~roads~~ <sup>Roads</sup> are open to day and night traffic troughout the Korean-secured area; this correspondent ~~rode~~ <sup>rode</sup> with the Vietnamese province chief throughout the tiniest of village ~~roads~~ <sup>roads</sup> without escort. Vietnamese population that has returned to government anti-Communist control has increased by eighty percent.

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Critics of American military tactics within Vietnam believe more emphasis should be placed on deploying American units to defend Vietnamese villagers, as the ROK's do, rather than launching large-scale offensive operations into non-populated, Communist-controlled jungle strongholds.

If the Tiger Division has quickly earned the reputation of being the most effective unit in Vietnam, it is also often accused of being the most "ruthless" not only to the Viet Cong, but also to the Vietnamese population. This widespread accusation was articulated by one American officer who explained matter-of-factly.

"If the ROK troops receive a single shot from a village on an operation, that village is gone. The Vietnamese villagers are terrified of the Koreans. On one operation in February, the ROK's were sent up north to secure the road. Once the villagers along the road heard the Koreans were coming, they all bugged out—no one would stay around to see what happened. But, if the ROK's go into a village and do not receive fire, they greet that village with open arms."

Koreans officers hotly deny they mistreat the local population during the heat of battle, and the division headquarters staff has <sup>(AUM)</sup> ~~launched~~ a massive psychological warfare operation saying that the Korean troops have come to help the Vietnamese villagers.

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The total <sup>— Man</sup> 45000 Korean military commitment to Vietnam, beside <sup>S/</sup> the Tiger Division of 14000 troops, includes in other parts of Vietnam the White Horse Division, one Marine Regiment, one engineering battalion, and one surgical unit.

To date, since their arrival in March, 1965, Korean forces have killed 5459 Communists, captured 1439 prisoners and 1226 weapons and detained 3621 suspects. Total Korean casualties were: 518 killed, 1398 wounded. In short, for every Rok soldier killed in action, ten Communists were killed.

"My regiment has killed <sup>800</sup> ~~500~~ Viet Cong," Col. Shin Hyun Su, commander of the 1st Cavalary Regiment explained. "May be some number of innocent people are included in this figure. I'm very, very sorry; very, very sorry, but war causes this.

"I've lost alot of Korean soldiers too. When the tiger Division left Korea, the wives of many of men came to me and pleaded that I take good care of their husbands. Now, I'm about ready to go home and at night I worry what I can say to these wives of my dead soldiers."

But, it is in civic action for the Vietnamese villagers even more than their military operation that the Koreans clearly outshine other allied troops in Vietnam. With great modesty, Korean officiers explained that, "we are Asian like <sup>the</sup> Vietnamese and we have the some traditions, customs and philosophies."

While the Koreans have spent much more time than the Americans attempting to learn Vietnamese language, the old Korean sergeants communicate with the grey-bearded village chiefs by writing Chinese characters on pieces of paper or the palm <sup>S/</sup> of their hands.

Korean troops, many of them rice-paddy farm boys, often volunteer to help Vietnamese villagers plant or harvest rice or weave the thatch roofs for a new village to be re-built. The Korean form of Karate, called Tao Kwon Do is taught to hundreds of Vietnamese soldiers and students. Medical aid stations, made of ammunition boxes, are constructed in the popular Oriental design of eight-sided buildings. It is a little-known fact that extensive guerrilla warfare was also fought behind the lines in the Korean War--and Korean officers and men, unlike American commanders in Saigon, see a vast difference between the conventional aspects of the Korean War and the guerrilla warfare aspects.

Almost incessantly during one's stay, Korean officers repeat, "You know Mao Tse-Tung's doctrine that the people are the water and guerrilla are the fish. So, if we segregate the civilian from the guerrillas, and secure the area for a certain period, the Communist will become dried fish."

The Korean's penny-pinching lack of waste, in comparison at the relative extravagance of the American ~~effort~~<sup>effort</sup>, is an impressive part of their all-Asian civic action program. The 60th Artillery Battalion, for example, built a dam of used artillery boxes, expended artillery shells, and American-donated cement. Each Korean trooper donated 200 grams from his daily rice ration to pay Vietnamese villagers for their labor. As a result, 5000 Vietnamese farmers could raise the three crops of rice a year instead of two.

In another example, troops of the Capital Regiment collected all the ~~scrap~~<sup>scraps</sup> of blown-up bridges, ~~and~~<sup>and</sup> downed airplanes, and ammunition casings that had ~~bomb~~<sup>Bombard</sup>

Col. Shin explained:

"Your remember the French Group Mobile 100 was annihilated along Route I9, and the hard-care of that Group included the Korea Regiment--the French ~~ix~~ troops that came from the Korean War direct to the French Indo-China War. Now Korean troops hold the road which the French troops from Korea lost. It is very strange for us.

The Korean troops used the collect<sup>ion</sup> of steel scrap souvenirs of many previous battles to construct a statue of a single soldier.

"This is a monument to the dead," Col. Shin explained. "All the soldiers of all countries who died along Route I9."