

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

THE WASHINGTON POST
Saturday, December 30, 1950

MacArthur Puzzles Pentagon

By Drew Pearson

Trouble is continuing between Washington and Tokyo over General MacArthur's faulty intelligence. Ever since MacArthur's "bring the boys home by Christmas" statement and the failure to spot 200,000 Chinese Communists in North Korea, Washington has been skeptical about the supreme commander's intelligence reports.



Willoughby

Because of this skepticism, it was hinted, after the tragic retreat from North Korea, that MacArthur should replace his intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Charles Willoughby. However, this has not been done.

Meanwhile MacArthur's public statements in Tokyo are frequently at complete variance with the confidential reports cabled back by his intelligence chief, and Washington, in turn, is puzzled as to which to believe.

For instance, MacArthur estimated publicly on December 2 that there were about 500,000 Chinese troops in Korea. (This was in direct contrast to his estimate just six days before that there were not enough Chinese in Korea to interfere with getting the boys home by Christmas.) On December 4, however, MacArthur upped his estimate to more than one million Chinese in Korea or on the border, while on December 15 he announced that "a bottomless well of Chinese Communists manpower continues to flow into Korea."

Opposite Reports

However, this was not what his intelligence chief was meanwhile cabling the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On December 8, just two days after MacArthur had announced his million-man Chinese army estimate, General Willoughby cabled as follows:

"Units believed to be on Eighth Army front are, west to east: Elements 50th CCF (Chinese Communist Field) Army, elements 66th Chinese CCF Army; 39th CCF Army; 40th CCF Army; 38th CCF Army; 42nd CCF Army."

If all these six Chinese armies were of full strength with no casualties—which is doubtful—the total Chinese force which sent the U. N. Eighth Army into a 120-mile retreat in less than two weeks was only 96,000 men.

Yet the U. N. Eighth Army had more than 100,000 front-line combat troops, not counting engineers and service troops behind the lines.

for the continuation of the offensive; or of continuing to objectives according to their set schedule."

This is interpreted in the Army Department as meaning that the Chinese were slow-moving, had only limited objectives, and never expected to run us out of North Korea so quickly.

If his intelligence is correct, Chinese manpower did not total anywhere near a million men, nor even near 500,000 men, but only 285,000 plus 150,000 North Koreans. In addition, the Chinese,

according to Willoughby, lacked fire-power, air strength, artillery, could not travel with any speed, while their high command, being "stereotyped," could not regroup easily to take advantage of the U. N. retreat.

These are some of the facts which don't show up in the press dispatches from Tokyo. The inescapable conclusion is that either Willoughby is wrong or the MacArthur press communiques have been deceiving the American public.

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Since his early December estimate, General Willoughby has increased his figures on Chinese over-all strength. But even the revised figures do not materially change the picture. He now estimates that the total Chinese strength in Korea facing not only the Eighth Army, but previously facing the Tenth Corps around the Hungnam beachhead, is 285,000 plus 150,000 North Koreans.

The size of the U. N. forces is a military secret. But it can be stated that they are somewhat more than the Chinese strength.

It is supposed to require a manpower superiority of 3 to 1 to launch a successful offensive. Furthermore, it is an indisputable fact that we have complete control of the air while the Chinese have almost no artillery except that captured from us. Thus, even assuming the Willoughby estimates are considerably off, the Pentagon is puzzled over our precipitous 120-mile retreat. The immediate retreat is, of course, explained by the fact that we were spread too thin, but not the continued 120-mile retreat.

Poor Chinese Weapons

In mid-December, General Willoughby cabled the following description of Chinese arms equipment: "Battalion CCF Army with three grenades and rifle or Russian submachine gun per man and 300 North Korean army stragglers crossed Taedong."

In other words, each Chinese soldier had no more than three hand grenades and a rifle or submachine gun. This is extremely light firepower for an attacking army, but it has been about the average Chinese armament. Chinese troops have had no means of carrying ammunition other than ox or mule carts, and each man goes into battle with most of his ammunition on him, plus his rice for the next few days.

Another of Willoughby's intelligence cables to Washington about mid-December is interesting: "Lack of CCF on Eighth Army front. Due to deep withdrawal executed by Eighth Army, it is evident that enemy, lacking any great degree of mobility, has been unable to regain contact."

This is interpreted in the Pentagon as saying that the Chinese, lacking any means of transportation, were unable to keep up with the fast retreat of the Eighth Army. In other words, we failed to keep contact with the enemy, one of the fundamental rules of military strategy.

Another of General Willoughby's reports at about the same time, states: "Those well-versed in Chinese military operations stress an inherent lack of elasticity in planning and similar inelasticity in staff and command structure. Such deficiencies can only result in stereotyped campaigns, and hold offensive action to slow succession of limited objectives."

"It follows, then," continued General Willoughby, "that CCF high command, being unable to predict degree of success for his initial offensive of November 28, was confronted by the problem of immediately realigning his forces