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Washington Failures Blamed For Korea Intelligence Fiasco

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U. S. HDQ. IN KOREA, Aug. 8 (CTPS)—The failure of American intelligence at the start of the Korean war was partly local and partly due to a lack of Washington co-ordination.

These points are notable:

1. Intelligence in Korea failed to predict the enemy's June 25 D-day.

2. Technical intelligence in Washington failed to give the military advisers in Korea a true picture of the Russian T-34 tanks used so successfully in the first month of the war.

Had Accurate Dope

3. American officers in Korea had accurate information on the North Korean military build-up at all times. But intelligence was fooled by the numerous false invasion alarms.

The South Korean army was alerted twice in May and once in June by such false alarms. The Americans had grown so accustomed to them that they scoffed when President Rhee and Premier Mo warned an attack was imminent.

Such alerts—now recognized as inspired from North Korea—date back to 1947. American intelligence knew and reported these facts on the enemy's capabilities:

1. The North Korean army included more than 100,000 men. Of these, 2,000 tankers were trained in Russia. There was at least one regiment of tanks and between 50 and 100 planes.

2. The build-up of army strength began in January with new draft levies supplementing five Russian-trained divisions.

3. A zone three miles deep was cleared north of the 38th parallel during the spring. The Americans were not sure whether this was standard iron curtain technique or to prevent military news from seeping through.

4. The North Korean army was

disposed along the border in three defense lines capable of stopping any South Korean attack.

The intelligence picture during June was clouded by Russian-inspired political maneuvers. These included sudden permission for a United Nations representative to visit the north; the dispatching of three North Koreans to the south, and the offer to exchange Cho Man Sik, a famous political leader held prisoner in the north, for several Communists held by the south.

None of these maneuvers was successful. But they produced maximum confusion and misled intelligence experts. Two days before the invasion, American advisers who had checked the latest estimates were told flatly there would be no invasion for a considerable time.

Veterans Brought In

The intelligence experts noted that from 30,000 to 60,000 Korean veterans had been shipped from Manchuria and Siberia to swell the enemy ranks. Two divisions of Red Koreans had fought on the German front during the war.

The failure of Washington to emphasize the danger of the Russian tanks led to fatal complacency. Almost no information on their armor and armament was available in Seoul when the war broke, although it was in files. The American advisers did not believe the bazookas and 47 MM. anti-tank guns with which the South Korean army was supplied were capable of stopping these tanks. This disbelief continued until the inadequately equipped GIs learned it the hard way.