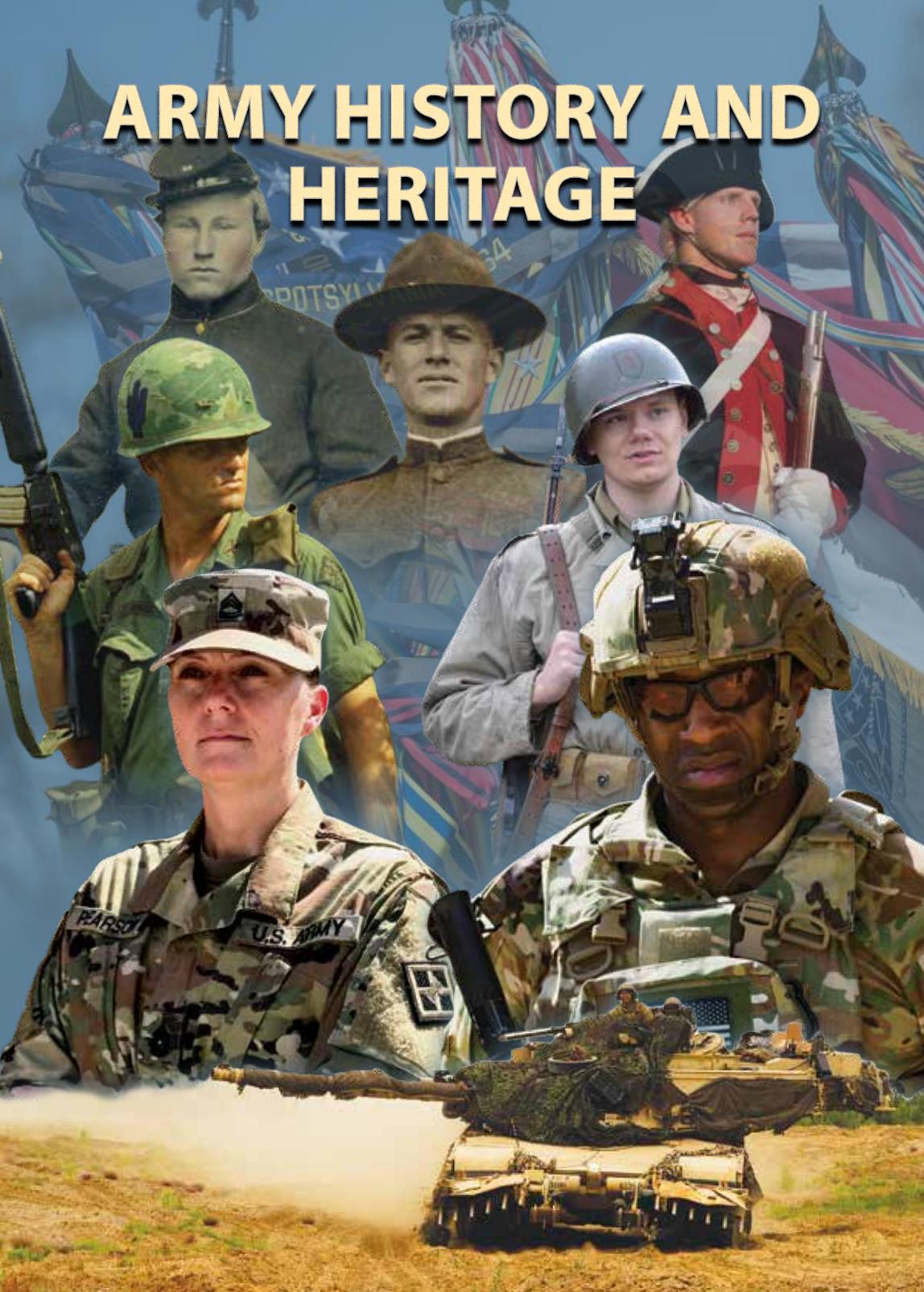


ARMY HISTORY AND HERITAGE



General Paul E. Funk II, United States Army

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Foreword by General Paul E. Funk II, United States Army



Center of Military History
United States Army
Washington, D.C. 2022

FOREWORD

This book is dedicated in honor and in memory of General William W. Hartzog, the ninth commanding general of the Training and Doctrine Command and a historian at heart. He wrote the initial version of this book, *American Military Heritage*, “to provide a reference that could help drill instructors and other Army leaders instill an appreciation for the lore and traditions that make up the Army’s rich heritage.”

The study and understanding of military history and appreciation of our proud and rich heritage are critical to personal and professional growth for soldiers. They are the foundation that allows us to expand our expertise within the profession of arms. They lay the cornerstone for our personal contribution to our Army, and give us the means to leave it in a better place than we found it.

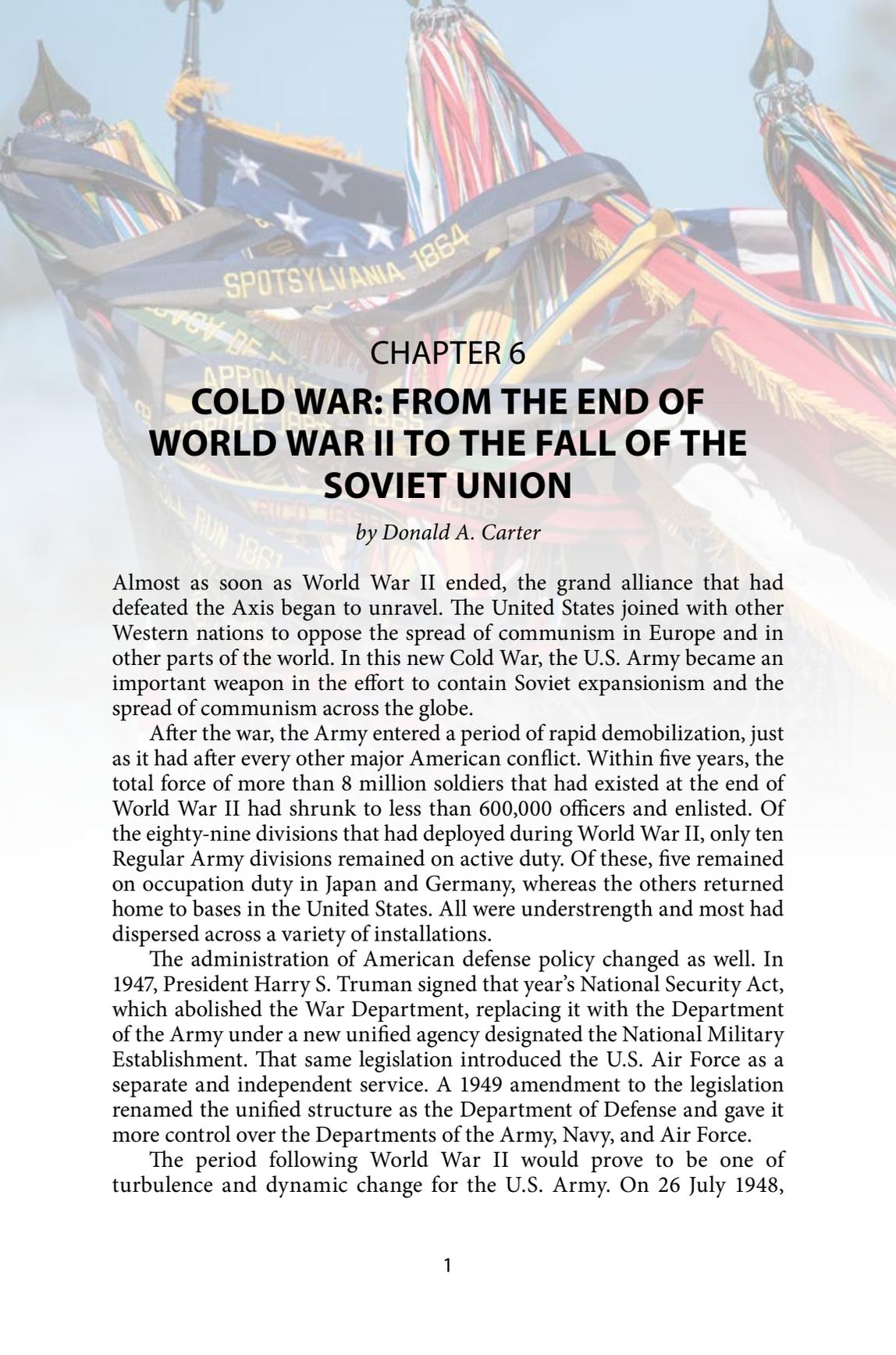
We stand on the shoulders of the exceptional men and women, who, for nearly 250 years, have made history and forged our shared heritage. Our history is our incredible legacy. It connects the current generation of soldiers to our departed but not forgotten brethren. It demonstrates that no matter how much time has passed, we continue to be the most lethal and powerful Army in the world. History reminds us that we serve for something far greater than ourselves and that we are willing to endure incredible sacrifices for the love of our great nation.

A professional Army continuously strives for excellence and self-improvement. Learning from significant historical events can be painful, informative, and incredibly inspirational. Let us strive to learn from the lessons of those proud warriors who came before us, so that we never need to relive the trials of the past.

Victory Starts Here!

Fort Eustis, Virginia
7 January 2022

GENERAL PAUL E. FUNK II
17th Commanding General,
U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command



CHAPTER 6

COLD WAR: FROM THE END OF WORLD WAR II TO THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION

by Donald A. Carter

Almost as soon as World War II ended, the grand alliance that had defeated the Axis began to unravel. The United States joined with other Western nations to oppose the spread of communism in Europe and in other parts of the world. In this new Cold War, the U.S. Army became an important weapon in the effort to contain Soviet expansionism and the spread of communism across the globe.

After the war, the Army entered a period of rapid demobilization, just as it had after every other major American conflict. Within five years, the total force of more than 8 million soldiers that had existed at the end of World War II had shrunk to less than 600,000 officers and enlisted. Of the eighty-nine divisions that had deployed during World War II, only ten Regular Army divisions remained on active duty. Of these, five remained on occupation duty in Japan and Germany, whereas the others returned home to bases in the United States. All were understrength and most had dispersed across a variety of installations.

The administration of American defense policy changed as well. In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed that year's National Security Act, which abolished the War Department, replacing it with the Department of the Army under a new unified agency designated the National Military Establishment. That same legislation introduced the U.S. Air Force as a separate and independent service. A 1949 amendment to the legislation renamed the unified structure as the Department of Defense and gave it more control over the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

The period following World War II would prove to be one of turbulence and dynamic change for the U.S. Army. On 26 July 1948,

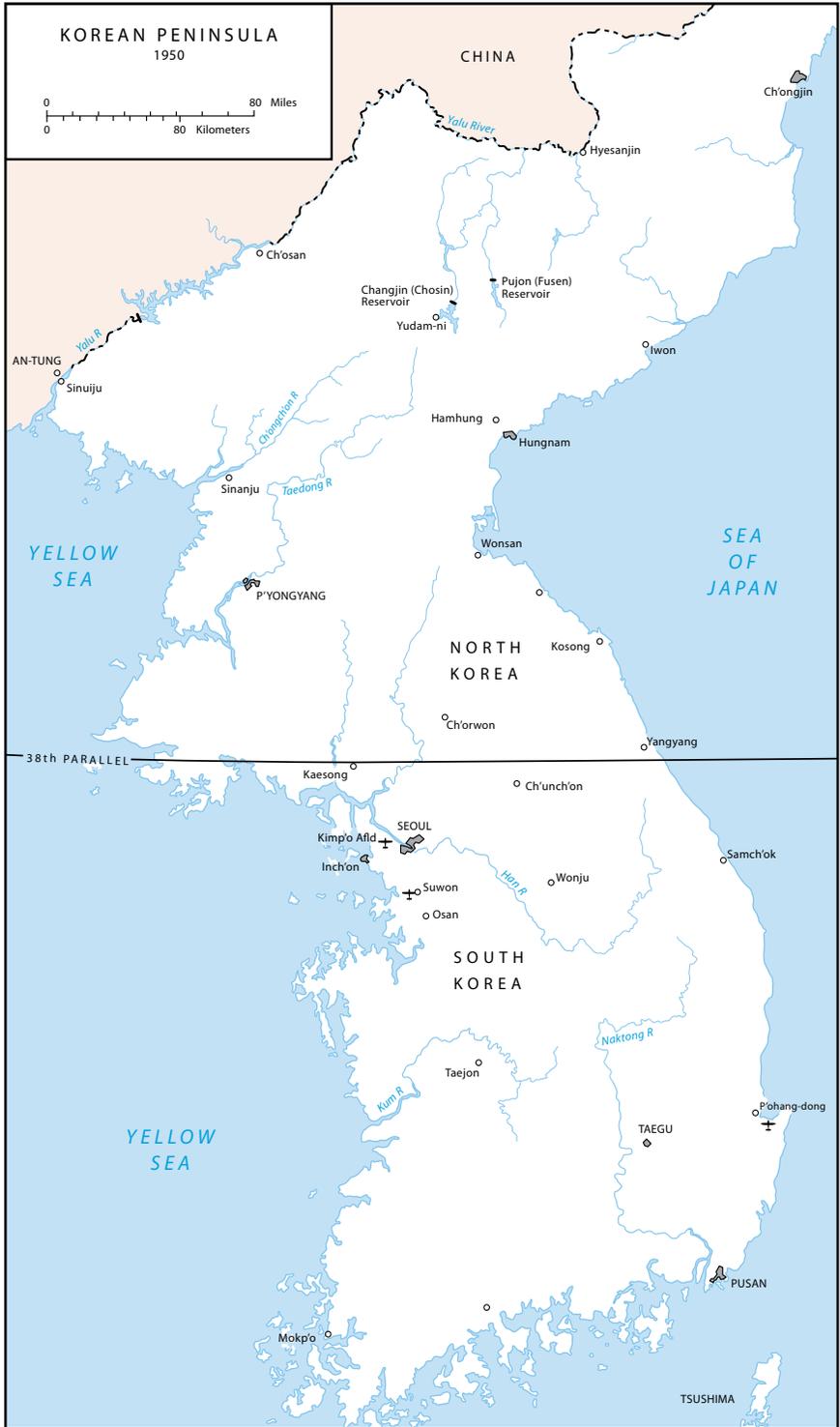
President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 that abolished segregation in the U.S. military. Although Army leaders initially resisted such dramatic social change, by the early 1950s, the service was well along toward integration and had eliminated all-Black units from its organization. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, commanders did not have enough White soldiers to replace those killed or wounded, thus expediting the integration of Black soldiers into the formerly all-White units.

War began on the Korean Peninsula on 25 June 1950 when North Korean forces crossed into South Korea, driving toward its capital city, Seoul. After the United Nations (UN) Security Council voted to oppose the incursion, President Truman ordered U.S. military forces to intervene. The first elements of the U.S. 24th Infantry Division met the leading edge of the North Korean advance on a small section of hills 20 miles south of Seoul. The North Koreans quickly routed the small American force and continued their advance, pushing the South Korean and American forces into a perimeter surrounding the port city of Pusan (Busan). Over the next several weeks, the United States poured soldiers and equipment into the fight, accompanied by smaller contributions from allied nations.

Allied fortunes changed for the better on 15 September 1950 when U.S. Army and Marine units landed behind the North Korean lines at Inch'on (Incheon) harbor. The leader of the United Nations Command, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, had planned the operation to coincide with an attack by the forces near Pusan led by the Eighth U.S. Army commander, Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker. The combined operation broke the back of the North Korean offensive and UN troops began a drive northward. By mid-October, they were approaching the Yalu River, marking the border between North Korea and China. In late October, Communist China entered the war in support of North Korea and the nature of the war changed.

The influx of hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops drove the UN Forces steadily south again. The new Eighth Army commanding general, Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, soon stabilized the retreating allies, and what had been a war of maneuver bogged down into stalemate. The two armies faced each other from reinforced positions occupying the rugged hills and mountains of central Korea. Finally, on 27 July 1953, the adversaries signed an armistice that ended hostilities on the peninsula.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, after his election in November 1952, aimed to move American defense policy in a different direction. The former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe during World War II had been appalled at the cost and destruction of the recent conflicts. He believed that atomic weapons offered a better option for keeping the peace, at a cost far less than that of maintaining large conventional forces. Under his military policy, dubbed the New Look, the United States devoted



Map 1



Pfc. Robert Smith (*left*) and Pvt. Carl Fisher of the 27th Infantry Regiment, dug in and firing at North Korean positions, 4 September 1950. (*U.S. Army*)

the bulk of its military budget toward building its atomic arsenal and a substantial strategic air force.

Within this context, the Army of the 1950s struggled to maintain its position as an equal member of the nation's armed forces. Larger percentages of the nation's defense budget went to the Air Force and the Navy, which maintained the assets to strike with atomic weapons. Without such weapons at their disposal, Army leaders searched for ways to adapt to an atomic battlefield. As a result, most Army research and development during the period focused on producing rockets and missiles capable of delivering an atomic payload. In 1956, the Army reorganized its forces to operate on a nuclear battlefield. The new formation, the Pentomic Division, proved unworkable and short-lived.

Alternatively, the Army looked to other supplemental missions to solidify its role in the Eisenhower defense policy. Since the redeployment of the U.S. Seventh Army to Europe in 1950 and the commitment of its five divisions to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), the Army's mission of forward deployment to Europe to defend against a potential Soviet attack remained its most important assignment. Nike Ajax and Nike Hercules missiles replaced older air-defense artillery weapons at Army sites near major American and allied cities and sensitive military areas. Also, on 1 February 1958, the nation's first successful satellite launched into orbit atop a modified Army Jupiter missile. Scientists working at

the Army Ballistic Missile Agency produced much of the research and hardware for initial United States space exploration efforts.

By the late 1950s, another mission had captured the Army's attention. Communist-inspired insurgencies in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa led Army leaders to devote an increasing amount of thought and resources toward developing counterinsurgency and counter guerrilla capabilities. This foresight paid off in 1961, when newly elected President John F. Kennedy included those specialties in his overall defense policy. As a result, the Army not only received additional funding to refurbish much of its conventional weapons, vehicles, and equipment, but also was able to increase the strength of its Special Forces units from 1,500 to almost 9,000. Although units throughout the Army would conduct counterinsurgency and counter guerrilla training on a regular basis, the Special Forces units would become the acknowledged experts in what became known as unconventional warfare.

The expanding insurgency in Vietnam provided the opportunity for the United States and the Army to test these evolving skills. Ever since the defeat of French colonial forces by Vietnamese nationalist fighters at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the United States had played a steadily growing role in advising the military forces of South Vietnam and assisting with the newly independent nation's civic development. Although Special Forces units provided a large portion of these advisers, by 1963, regular Army helicopter and support units had also joined the effort.

By 1965, however, it had become clear to American political and military leaders that the advisory effort was not enough to quell the attacks by the growing communist insurgency in South Vietnam. In March 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered U.S. marines to deploy to South Vietnam to defend the large airfield at Da Nang. Shortly thereafter, he authorized the Army to send roughly 20,000 logistical troops to support an American buildup. At the same time, he approved the movement to Vietnam of the first Army combat troops, the 173d Airborne Brigade, to defend the growing number of American installations. In July, Johnson announced plans to increase the number of Americans in South Vietnam to 175,000.

For the next seven years, U.S. armed forces engaged in active combat against the Viet Cong (South Vietnamese communist insurgents) and North Vietnamese regulars. At its peak when troop withdrawals began in 1969, U.S. strength in South Vietnam exceeded 500,000 military personnel. Typical patterns of combat in Vietnam involved helicopter assaults against suspected enemy positions in order to flush out elusive opponents. U.S. divisions conducted a number of large-unit sweeps across areas of suspected guerrilla and North Vietnamese military concentration. American advisers helped to train South Vietnamese Army units and



Map 2



Combat operations at Ia Drang Valley, Vietnam, November 1965 (U.S. Army)

often accompanied them into battle. Despite many battlefield successes, the war settled into a stalemate.

Active campaigning against an implacable and difficult-to-eradicate enemy exacted a heavy toll in terms of casualties and economic costs. By the late 1960s, the war had become unpopular in the United States, particularly in cities and on college campuses where antiwar demonstrations and riots became a regular feature on nightly television newscasts. In late January 1968, the Viet Cong launched a major offensive that coincided with the Lunar New Year holiday. The Tet Offensive shocked many political leaders who had believed that the enemy no longer possessed the resources to launch a nationwide attack. After a sharp struggle against the Communists at Saigon, Hue, and numerous provincial capitals, the Americans and South Vietnamese defeated the North Vietnamese regulars and crushed the Viet Cong network that had facilitated the assault. Public opinion in the United States, however, had turned decisively against the war.

Between 1969 and 1972, U.S. military forces continued to prosecute the war, but in ever-dwindling numbers. In 1969, newly elected President Richard M. Nixon ordered U.S. military leaders to begin bringing American troops home. In a process he termed Vietnamization, he directed them to gradually turn the responsibility for fighting the war over to the South Vietnamese. Although U.S. Army units would participate in limited incursions into Cambodia and Laos

in 1970 and 1971, combat operations in Southeast Asia began to wind down. When the United States withdrew airpower support, in 1975, a massive invasion of Communist forces from North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia overran the South Vietnamese and brought all of Vietnam under their control.

The end of the war in Vietnam left the U.S. Army in a weakened condition. Racial tensions, the vocal antiwar movement, and the expansion of drug addiction across the force all served to undermine discipline, morale, and cohesion throughout the Army. Often, soldiers returned home to hostile public reactions, as many across the nation had become suspicious of the military and the U.S. government. Rebuilding the force from within as well as restoring public confidence posed the next critical task for the Army's leaders.

Much of the public's dissatisfaction with the military had to do with its distaste for the draft. Recognizing this, the Nixon Administration ended the draft in 1973 in favor of creating an all-volunteer force. The Army instituted a number of reforms to ensure it could recruit and retain the high-quality volunteers it needed. After experimenting with relaxed standards and increased privileges, Army leaders learned that keeping good soldiers in the service relied upon better training and an increased sense of professionalism. A reduction in the size of the postwar Army also helped to stabilize retention rates.

One way to improve recruitment was to increase the size of the pool of available recruits. Army leaders reviewed policies within the service to improve opportunities for minority groups and to guarantee equal treatment for all. They also began to expand opportunities for women. Between 1973 and 1978, the number of women recruited into the Army rose from 10,900 a year to 25,130 a year. The Army opened to women many jobs that previously it had reserved for men.

Military operations in the aftermath of Vietnam indicated that the Army, and in fact the entire U.S. defense establishment, required further reform. A failed multiservice attempt to rescue American hostages held in Iran in 1980, and a hastily launched intervention in the Caribbean island of Grenada in 1983, illustrated an urgent need for all of the services to better coordinate their actions and communicate more effectively. In 1986, Congress passed the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act, overhauling headquarters functions within the three military departments and improving the ability of the services to work together as a team.

The Army had the opportunity to assess the progress of its reforms in 1989 when elements of the 82d Airborne Division and the 75th Ranger Regiment took part in Operation JUST CAUSE, a joint action to overthrow a corrupt government in Panama. During the assault, U.S. soldiers



Map 3

demonstrated enhanced skills in night fighting and communications, particularly with other participating services.

Perhaps the greatest factor in preparing a next generation Army was the development and procurement of major weapons systems to replace those that had seen little improvement since the triumph in World War II. In the early 1970s, the Army began to develop a family of systems that would allow it to dominate on a modern, high-intensity battlefield. The M-1 Abrams main battle tank, the M-2 Bradley armored fighting vehicle, the AH-64A Apache attack helicopter, the UH-60A Black Hawk utility helicopter, and the Patriot air defense missile became known as “The Big Five” as they made their way through research, development, and procurement. By the mid-1980s, all five had begun to reach soldiers in the field. These and other new developments in weapons, equipment, and doctrine—including AirLand Battle, the basis of the Army’s European warfighting doctrine in the 1980s and 1990s—prepared the United States Army to meet whatever challenges it might face in the future.

TIMELINE

1948

26 July: President Truman signs Executive Order 9981 ending segregation in the United States armed forces.

1948–1949

Berlin Airlift. After Russian forces blocked American and British road and rail access to West Berlin, the western allies supplied the city by air for eleven months until the Russians lifted the blockade.

1950

24 November: The United States reactivates U.S. Seventh Army and begins deploying it to Europe in support of NATO.

Korean War (1950–1953)

1950

25 June: North Korean forces invade South Korea

5 July: Understrength 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, 24th Infantry Division (Task Force SMITH) becomes first U.S. Army unit to engage North Koreans

August–September: U.S. and UN Command forces defend perimeter around South Korean port city of Pusan

15–28 September: General MacArthur lands U.S. forces at Inch'on

Late October–Early November: Chinese Communist forces intervene, attacking South Korean forces and American units near the China-Korea border

1951

27 September–13 October: 2d Infantry Division with French allies battle for Heartbreak Ridge

1953

27 July: Cease-fire signed at Panmunjom

1957

23 September: President Eisenhower sends troops from the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock, Arkansas, to help enforce school desegregation

1958

16 July–25 October: President Eisenhower sends Army and Marine Corps forces to Lebanon to intervene in the country's civil war

1961

13 August: Soviet and East German forces begin construction of the Berlin Wall, a series of brick and barbed wire barriers separating East and West Berlin

1965

30 April–21 September: Troops of the 82d Airborne Division land in Dominican Republic to assist with peacekeeping efforts



Vietnam War (1965–1973)

1965

7 May: 173d Airborne Brigade, first U.S. Army combat troops, deploy to Vietnam

14–18 November: Battle of Ia Drang

1968

31 January–30 April: Tet Offensive

1970

29 April–22 July: Cambodian Incursion

1971

8 February–25 March: South Vietnamese ground forces, heavily supported by U.S. Army artillery and aviation units, invade Laos

1972

23 August: Last U.S. Army combat troops leave Vietnam

Operation EAGLE CLAW (1980)

24–25 April: Unsuccessful attempt to rescue U.S. hostages in Iran

Operation URGENT FURY (1983)

25–29 October: U.S. invasion of Grenada

1986

1 October: President Ronald W. Reagan signs Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act

Operation JUST CAUSE (1989–1990)

20 December–31 January: U.S. invasion of Panama

1991

26 December: Dissolution of the Soviet Union



General Matthew B. Ridway
(U.S. Army)

PEOPLE, ARTIFACTS, AND EVENTS

Born in 1895 and graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1917, **Matthew B. Ridgway** served in a number of posts in the United States, South America, and the Philippines before World War II. In August 1942, the Army named him commander of the 82d Airborne Division. He parachuted into Sicily and Normandy with the 82d before becoming commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps in August 1944. He continued in that position through Operation MARKET GARDEN, the Battle of the Bulge, and the end of the war.

After his successes during World War II, Ridgway rose to even greater heights during the early Cold War. In December 1950, he took command of the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea after Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker's death in a vehicle accident. Under his leadership, UN forces halted Communist advances and began to push the enemy northward. Then, after briefly serving as the Supreme Allied Commander for NATO forces in Europe, he returned to Washington, D.C. in August 1953 to become the Army chief of staff. In that position, he frequently battled with Eisenhower over the president's desire to diminish both the size and budget of the Army. Ridgway initiated several studies designed to modernize the service's organization and doctrine. His personal intervention with Eisenhower helped to convince the president not to commit U.S. military forces to assist the French in Vietnam. When Eisenhower chose not to nominate Ridgway to a second term as chief of staff, the General retired in 1955. However, he remained a frequent confidant and adviser to subsequent presidents.



Cornelius H. Charlton was born in Eastgulf, West Virginia, on 24 July 1929. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1946 at the age of seventeen. His early assignments included occupation duty in Europe and service in an engineering battalion at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. On 2 June 1951, while serving as a squad leader with the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, Sergeant Charlton took charge of his infantry platoon when his platoon leader was killed. Despite being wounded himself, he led his platoon in three separate attacks against enemy positions on Hill 543 near the village of Chipo-ri, South Korea. During the final assault, an enemy grenade killed Sergeant Charlton as his soldiers swept over the position. For his actions, he received the Medal of Honor posthumously.



Martha Raye with Special Forces soldiers in Vietnam (*U.S. Army*)

Martha Raye was an American singer, actor, and entertainer who performed in movies and television from the 1930s through the 1980s. During World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, she was a frequent participant in USO (United Service Organizations) and other sponsored tours to entertain the troops overseas. Because of her willingness to visit isolated camps in dangerous territory, she was a particular favorite of the Special Forces units in Vietnam. Out of respect for her courage, they made her an honorary lieutenant colonel and presented her with her own Green Beret. On several occasions in Vietnam, she assisted in the hospital wards and aid stations. Troops came to know her as Colonel Maggie. In 1968, she received the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award at that year's Academy Awards and, in 1993, President William J. Clinton presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She died in 1994 and was buried with full military honors in the Fort Bragg Main Post Cemetery in North Carolina, home of her beloved U.S. Army Special Forces.



Capt. Lewis Millett in Korea
(U.S. Army)

Very few soldiers could match the extraordinary exploits of Col. **Lewis L. Millett**, a veteran of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. After brief service in the Massachusetts National Guard, the Army Air Corps, and the Canadian Army, he served as an antitank gunner in the 1st Armored Division and participated in campaigns in North Africa, Salerno, and Anzio. As a captain and company commander in the 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, during the Korean War, Millett led his soldiers in a bayonet charge against enemy troops defending a hilltop position. For his actions, President Truman presented Millett with the Medal of Honor and the location subsequently became known throughout the U.S. Army in Korea as Bayonet Hill.



Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division prepare to fire a training round from a Davy Crockett at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, 14 May 1962. (National Archives)

Perhaps no single weapons system better exemplified the Cold War and the military's fascination with atomic weapons than the **Davy Crockett launcher**. During the mid-1950s, the Army struggled to remain relevant to national defense policy as the Eisenhower administration emphasized atomic weapons, missiles, and air power as a more cost-efficient approach toward national security. As part of a concerted effort to demonstrate that the Army could also operate in an atomic environment, the service developed the Davy Crockett atomic weapons system. Looking like a large recoilless rifle mounted on a jeep or ground tripod, it launched a 100- or 300-pound atomic projectile out to a distance of about 4,000 meters.

Although the system seemed to meet the Army's need for an immediately available atomic fire support weapon, it presented several shortcomings. Its limited range meant that firing crews would have to operate close to or within the blast and fallout radius of the atomic explosion. More importantly, the system lacked a means of close civilian control that the military had applied to other atomic devices. Military and civilian leaders alike worried about the possibility of junior personnel inadvertently initiating an atomic exchange. As a result, the Army only deployed the Davy Crockett with units for a brief time, between 1961 and 1971.



MIM-3 Nike-Ajax missile
(U.S. Army)

During the early days of the Cold War, the Army struggled to retain a significant role in a national defense policy dominated by atomic weapons and the strategic air forces. One area in which the service looked to assert its preeminence was continental air defense. Entering service in 1954 was the **Nike-Ajax antiaircraft missile**. The Army deployed batteries of these air defense weapons in the United States to protect major cities and military bases and in Europe as a defense against Soviet bomber attacks. At its peak deployment, almost 300 batteries of missiles surrounded the majority of northern and coastal cities. Although the Ajax was the world's first operational guided surface-to-air missile, it had a limited range and effectiveness against high-speed aircraft or missiles. Technological developments throughout the 1950s soon rendered the Nike-Ajax obsolete and in 1959, the Army began to deploy the more effective Nike Hercules. Although all of the services continued to develop more effective air defense systems, the threat of attack by multiple waves of nuclear-armed missiles eventually made ground based defense systems impractical and unaffordable.

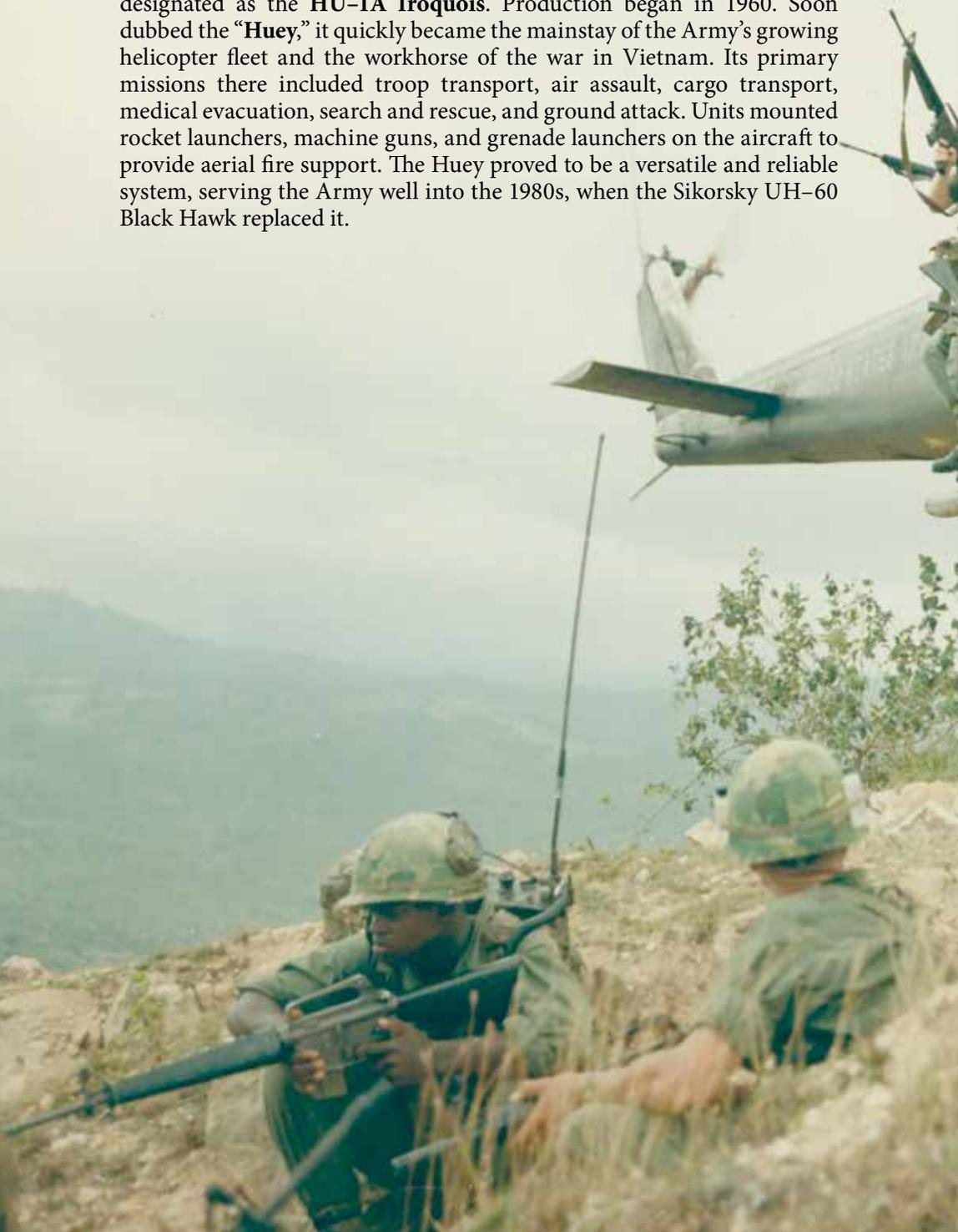


M. Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez receives the Medal of Honor from President Ronald W. Reagan, 1981. (*White House Photographic Collection*)

Raul Perez “Roy” Benavidez was born in Cuero, Texas, in 1935. When both of his parents died of tuberculosis, he and his younger brother moved to El Campo, where they lived with their grandfather, aunt and uncle, and eight cousins. Benavidez joined the Texas Army National Guard in 1952 and, in 1955, switched to Army active duty. After completing airborne training in 1959, he reported to the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg. He later applied for and qualified for Army Special Forces and, in 1965, went to Vietnam to serve as an adviser to an Army of the Republic of Vietnam infantry regiment. During that tour, he stepped on a landmine and the Army evacuated him back to the United States. Despite a medical conclusion that he would never walk again, Benavidez undertook an excruciating rehabilitation program and, more than a year later, walked out of the hospital on his own.

As a master sergeant, Benavidez returned to Vietnam in 1968. On 2 May, he responded to a call for assistance from a Special Forces patrol under siege by a North Vietnamese battalion near Loc Ninh. Armed only with a knife and his medical bag, he jumped from a helicopter into the patrol’s position. Despite numerous bullet, bayonet, and shrapnel wounds, he continued to provide medical attention to numerous wounded comrades, saving the lives of at least eight. When one of the North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the battalion broke into the position and stabbed him with a bayonet, Benavidez pulled out his own knife and dispatched the enemy. After the fight, the Army once again evacuated him to the United States for another lengthy convalescence. In 1981, President Ronald W. Reagan presented M. Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez with the Medal of Honor.

After the Korean War, the Army identified a need for a new helicopter to serve as a medical evacuation, observation, and general utility aircraft. The service selected a prototype developed by Bell Helicopter, originally designated as the **HU-1A Iroquois**. Production began in 1960. Soon dubbed the “**Huey**,” it quickly became the mainstay of the Army’s growing helicopter fleet and the workhorse of the war in Vietnam. Its primary missions there included troop transport, air assault, cargo transport, medical evacuation, search and rescue, and ground attack. Units mounted rocket launchers, machine guns, and grenade launchers on the aircraft to provide aerial fire support. The Huey proved to be a versatile and reliable system, serving the Army well into the 1980s, when the Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk replaced it.





Soldiers from Troop B, 1st Reconnaissance Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, exit a UH-1 aircraft during Operation OREGON, 24 April 1967.
(National Archives)



BGM-71 TOW missile, variant M220. First produced in 1970, the TOW missile has been in the Army's inventory for more than fifty years. (U.S. Army)

Throughout the Cold War, the most significant military threat facing the U.S. Army was the possibility of war in Europe against the Soviet Union and its allies. U.S. and NATO military planners realized that they could not match the potential invading force on a tank-to-tank basis. As a result, the West devoted considerable research toward an effective and affordable means of engaging enemy tanks and heavy armor from a defensive position. After several less than fully successful efforts, the Army's Ballistic Research Laboratories produced a prototype tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missile, which it christened "TOW." Delivery of the **TOW missile** to Army units in the field began in 1970. The weapon was sufficiently versatile that soldiers could use it from ground-mounted tripods, a variety of modified wheeled and tracked vehicles, and helicopters. In Vietnam, U.S. Army Huey helicopters fired TOW missiles in support of South Vietnamese forces in May 1972 near An Loc, breaking up an enemy armored assault. South Vietnamese ground forces continued to employ the missiles against North Vietnamese tanks for the remainder of the war. The U.S. Army employed variations of the TOW missile during the Gulf War, Afghanistan, and Iraq. It remains in service in the U.S. armed forces as well as numerous allied nations around the world.



M1 Abrams tank at Grafenwöhr Army Base, West Germany, 1986
(*Wikimedia Commons*)

By the mid-1960s, the U.S. Army's M-60 main battle tank, an improved version of the post-World War II M-48 Patton tank, was becoming obsolete. After a failed collaboration with the Germans to develop a replacement, the U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command went to work on a new design. On 12 November 1976, the Department of Defense awarded Chrysler Corporation a \$20 billion contract to begin production of the **M-1 Abrams Main Battle Tank**. Named for former Army Chief of Staff General Creighton W. Abrams Jr., the tank entered service with Army units in 1980. Significant innovative features included a multifuel turbine engine, Chobham composite armor, a computer fire control system, and a pressurized crew compartment to provide protection from chemical and biological hazards. Although initial models mounted a 105-mm. main gun, later variants included a 120-mm. gun similar to those employed by other NATO allies. The Abrams remains the primary battle tank of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps today and the United States has provided variations to numerous allied nations around the world.

In 1956, the newly reactivated 101st Airborne Division began a series of tests and exercises to evaluate its reorganization into a new structure. The **Pentomic Division**, as the Army designated it, consisted of five battle groups instead of the traditional three regiments. Each battle group consisted of four rifle companies, a 4.2-inch mortar battery, and a company containing headquarters and service support elements. Division artillery would consist of two battalions: one a 105-mm. howitzer battalion with five batteries; the other a mixed battalion fielding two 155-mm. howitzer batteries, an 8-inch howitzer battery, and an Honest John rocket battery. Division support would be austere, with most elements that the division did not require on a regular basis removed to higher headquarters.

The goal of the reorganization was twofold. With the Army facing continued personnel cuts under the Eisenhower administration, Chief of Staff General Maxwell D. Taylor hoped to shrink the size of the Army's divisions. The new organization would reduce the airborne division from 17,490 to 11,486 troops and the infantry division from 18,804 to 13,748. Army leaders chose not to reorganize the armored divisions because they believed their flexible combat command structure was already well-suited for atomic warfare. In addition to reducing their size, Taylor hoped the new organizations would help adapt them to the modern battlefield. The addition of atomic-capable weapons, particularly in the field artillery units, would offset the loss of some of its other firepower. In May 1957, General Taylor announced that all of the Army's airborne and infantry divisions would undergo the transformation by the end of 1958.

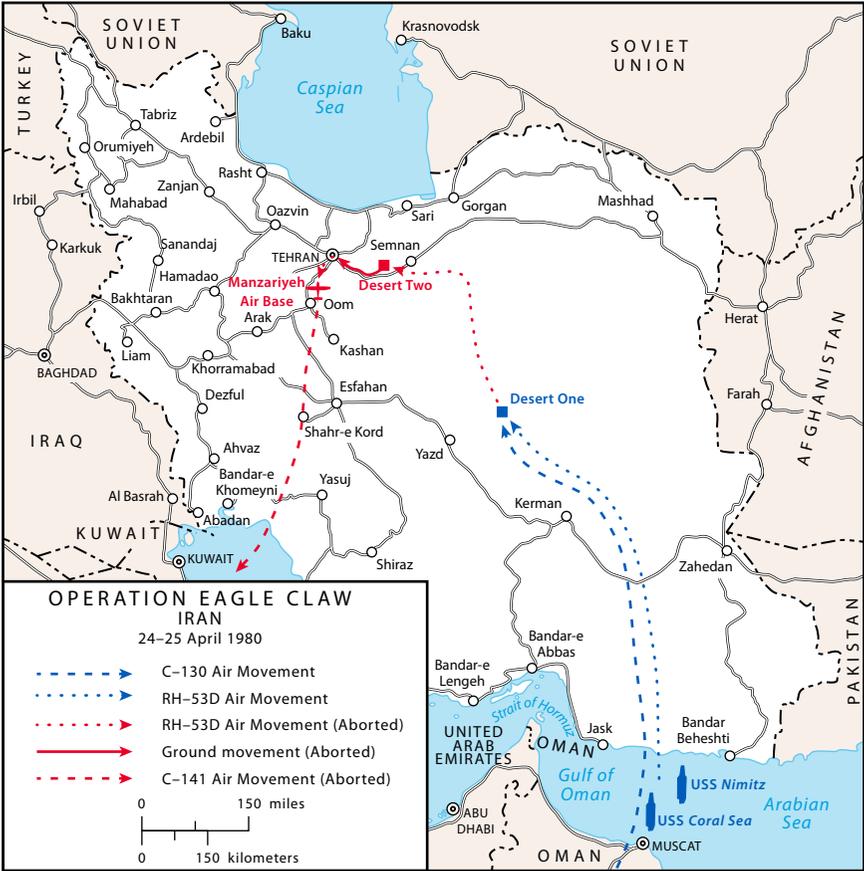
Ultimately, the new organization proved to be poorly suited for the modern battlefield. Removing most of a division's organic transportation left it relatively immobile in an environment where dispersion and mobility were essential. Commanders found that the loss of key fire support elements left them without the firepower they had employed under previous organizations. Finally, the five-sided structure proved to be unwieldy and difficult to command and control, particularly without the improved communications systems that had yet to be developed. In May 1961, the new Chief of Staff General George H. Decker approved a new formation, labeled Reorganization of Army Divisions. Within three years, all Army divisions had converted to the new model.

On 4 November 1979, Iranian college students and supporters of the Iranian Revolution overran the American embassy in Tehran and took fifty-two U.S. diplomats and citizens hostage. After months of negotiations failed to make any progress toward freeing them, President James E. “Jimmy” Carter authorized the Defense Department to launch a rescue attempt.

The mission, code-named **Operation EAGLE CLAW**, faced complications from the start. The extended distance between where the Iranians were holding the hostages and available airfields was too far to traverse for most rotary aircraft available to the United States. High winds and unpredictable weather in the region also would prove significant. Ultimately, the plan for rescue would involve all four branches of the military, which further complicated command relationships and required extensive coordination measures.

As planned, eight Sea Stallion helicopters from the aircraft carrier USS *Nimitz*, 60 miles off the coast of Iran, would fly 600 miles to a remote stretch in the Iranian desert, 200 miles southeast of Tehran, a location denoted as Desert One. There, they would rendezvous with six U.S. Air Force C-130 aircraft flying 1,000 miles from an island off the coast of Oman and carrying teams of soldiers from Army Rangers, Army Special Forces, and the newly formed Delta Force. Once on the ground, the helicopters would refuel and transport the soldiers to Tehran, where they would assault the compound housing the hostages and effect their release. Once notified of a successful rescue, a separate company of Army Rangers would capture an abandoned airfield about 60 miles southwest of Tehran, where two C-141 Starlifters would fly in to evacuate all personnel.

The operation went poorly from the very beginning. Soon after the first C-130s landed at the improvised airstrip at Desert One, delivering soldiers, equipment, and fuel, they were met by Iranian vehicles traveling on a nearby dirt road. One vehicle, a fuel truck, continued toward the aircraft until an Army shoulder-fired missile destroyed it. Helicopters flying from the *Nimitz* ran into foul weather. Two returned to the aircraft carrier with instrument malfunctions, and a third reported hydraulic problems after arriving at Desert One. With only five aircraft now available for the mission, the various element leaders agreed to abort it. As the teams prepared to depart, one of the helicopters struck the rear stabilizer of one of the C-130s, which exploded and killed eight troops. The remaining mission personnel boarded the C-130s and departed the site, abandoning the remaining helicopters.



Map 4

The failed rescue attempt marked the nadir of American military readiness and capabilities in the post-Vietnam era. Subsequent investigations identified deficiencies in mission planning, command and control, and interservice operability. These studies ultimately prompted reform of the Defense Department, much of which was included in the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols legislation. The failed operation also led to the establishment of U.S. Special Operations Command, a joint organization with overall control over each service's special operations forces.

