



The American Soldier, 1950

A North Korean force of about 10 divisions invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950 and drove the South Korean Army to the south. Stunned by this deliberate Communist aggression, the free world turned to the United Nations. The U.N. Security Council demanded immediate cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of the North Koreans. When that demand failed, the Security Council urged United Nations members to furnish military assistance to the South Korean Republic. The United States and other United Nations members soon responded. President Truman appointed General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to lead the new United Nations Command, and in turn General MacArthur assigned command of ground troops in Korea to the U.S. Eighth Army.

American forces entered Korea piecemeal to trade space for time. During July, American and South Korean troops steadily fell back to the southeast under constant North Korean pressure. Alarmed by the rapid shrinkage of U.N.-held territory, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, the Eighth Army commander, early in August abandoned the strategy of trading space for time and ordered a final stand along a 140-mile perimeter around Pusan. While the North Koreans were losing irreplaceable men and equipment during repeated attempts to crack Eighth Army's defenses, the U.N. forces grew in combat power and acquired an offensive capability. The results were seen in September when General Walker's forces acting in concert with an amphibious landing at Inch'on drove the North Koreans facing them out of South Korea.

All of the troops in this painting wear summer combat clothing that had been supplied to U.S. Army forces in the Pacific theater by the end of World War II. These were the herringbone-twill, two-piece summer combat or fatigue uniform, the M1 steel helmet, and the flesh-out leather combat boot. These stocks of apparel had been shunted from one Pacific island to another after World War II and finally into Japan. The troops are members of the 2d Infantry Division (Indian Head) as shown by their shoulder patches, an Indian Head on a white star, superimposed on a black shield.

In the right foreground is an automatic rifleman armed with a Browning automatic rifle, .30-cal., M1918A2. In the left foreground his assistant carries extra ammunition for the automatic rifle and is armed with a rifle, .30-cal., M1 as is the KATUSA (Korean Augmentation to the United States Army) soldier directly behind them.

In the right background is a multiple .50-cal. machine-gun motor carriage M16, and in the left background is a medium tank, M26.