



Korean Service Corps cargo carriers use A-frames to carry food and ammunition to a regiment of the 1st Marine Division on ridges of the central mountains in Korea on June 8, 1951. (Courtesy photo)

The Korean Service Corps Battalion

■ By Maj. Michael J. Lee

The special relationship forged in war between U.S. Soldiers and the Korean Service Corps (KSC) remains as strong today as it was more than 60 years ago. Just as it was before the forklift replaced the A-frame carrier, the KSC Battalion is an integral part of meeting critical needs on the Korean Peninsula.

The KSC Battalion consists of 2,185 paramilitary personnel who work to make it South Korea's premier organization for providing support to U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) and Eighth Army. Some of the hall-

marks of the KSC Battalion are its flexibility, adaptability, and continual ability to meet new and emerging requirements.

The Birth of the A-Frame Army

Facing a severe fighting strength shortage along the Busan perimeter during the Korean War, Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker, the Eighth Army commander, knew an infusion of Korean manpower could relieve his Soldiers of supply distribution duties and get them back into the fight.

Korean President Syngman Rhee

responded to Walker's call for manpower by signing an emergency decree on July 25, 1950, that directed the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army to provide civilian carriers to haul supplies to the front line. The result was the creation of the Civilian Transportation Corps, which later was renamed the Korean Service Corps. Thus began a unique relationship between the Korean people and the Eighth Army.

For the duration of the Korean War, the KSC carried ammunition, fortification materials, food, and supplies to

U.S. Soldiers and Marines fighting on the front line. Despite harsh weather and the threat of hostile action, KSC members (usually referred to as KSCs) traveled by foot through steep, rugged terrain that was inaccessible by vehicle.

KSCs served at Pork Chop Hill, Old Baldy, Carson, Vegas, and numerous other locations that are famous for the most intense fighting of the Korean War. They brought supplies and helped build bunkers during the day and evacuated the dead and wounded before nightfall.

U.S. Soldiers nicknamed the KSC the “A-frame Army” for its wooden backpacks. The KSC grew to more than 133,000 personnel at the height of the war.

The KSC Battalion Organization

Today the KSC Battalion, a flagged battalion commanded by a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, is task organized into 17 organic companies geographically dispersed across the peninsula from Panmunjom in the north to Busan in the south.

The KSC Battalion is the largest battalion in the U.S. Army and executes mission command for 2,188 Soldiers and paramilitary KSCs who provide heavy equipment transporter (HET) support, fire support, air traffic control, water survival training, maintenance, medical evacuation, and linguistic support to USFK and Eighth Army. The battalion also provides multifunctional support to the garrisons throughout Korea.

On order, it expands to wartime strength to provide continuous support to U.S. forces on the peninsula. The KSC Battalion is a part of the Materiel Support Command–Korea of the 19th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

The KSC Battalion Mission

The KSC Battalion provides mission command for the Korean Peninsula’s only HET company, the 7th KSC Company (HET), which transports combat platforms in support of the 2nd Infantry Division to various

training areas in the northern corridor just south of the Korean Demilitarized Zone.

The 7th KSC Company’s HETs conducted 1,651 missions and drove more than 72,460 miles moving combat platforms in 2013. All of these miles were driven with zero at-fault accidents. This is a prodigious

achievement considering the inherent risk associated with routinely moving combat platforms at night.

Equally impressive is the Incheon Reception Center, where a section of the 28th KSC Company supports all branches of military personnel, their dependents, and Department of Defense civilians traveling to and from the ROK. The Incheon Reception Center processed over 27,000 travelers over the course of a year.

The KSCs at the Incheon Reception Center provide the first impression of Korea to arriving travelers. The KSC reception team meets inbound personnel at customs, escorts them to the reception center desk, and arranges their onward transportation.

The KSC Battalion has a large linguistic support mission, providing linguists in support of USFK and Eighth Army. The linguists go through a rigorous selection process and must be able to perform written, sequential oral, and simultaneous oral translation from English to Korean and from Korean to English.

These linguists support USFK, the command groups of the Eighth Army and 2nd Infantry Division, and many other organizations and events throughout the peninsula. A pool of 10 translators is always poised to support ROK ministry-level meetings, engagements with ROK Army counterparts, and combined exercises.

“Fight Tonight” Readiness

As a member of a paramilitary unit with a go-to-war mission, each KSC receives Army combat uniforms, individual protective equipment, and a full set of organizational clothing and individual equipment. Each KSC is also issued a complete set of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear

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gear that includes an M50 protective mask.

The KSC Battalion leverages planned individual and collective training events to maintain its go-to-war readiness to the same standard as Soldiers. KSCs also participate in 40 hours of mandatory Army warrior training (AWT) each year. Through AWT, KSCs maintain proficiency in the 21 AWT tasks that include first aid, weapons familiarization, map reading, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense.

Twenty percent of each organic KSC company is combat lifesaver certified. The AWT and combat lifesaver certifications paid off in huge dividends when a Soldier collapsed at Camp Stanley in June 2013. Two KSCs who heard the commotion ran to the scene and saved her life by performing CPR.

One of the hallmarks of the KSC Battalion’s paramilitary force is its preparedness for war. Just as they did during the Korean War, KSCs will perform active service alongside Eighth Army on a future Korean battlefield. The mobilized KSC wartime companies will become an integral part of the team and help meet pressing and critical needs and gaps.

The KSC Battalion conducts mobilization exercises to test its ability to expand to wartime strength. The battalion tests its mobilization stations’

ability to conduct full-scale operations one or more times a year.

For instance, the battalion conducted an Eighth Army-wide KSC mobilization rehearsal of concept (ROC) drill in November 2013 with staff from USFK, Eighth Army, and Eighth Army major subordinate commands participating. Host nation guests who participated in the ROC drill came from the ROK Ministry of National Defense, ROK Army, and ROK Ministry of Security and Public Administration.

The KSC Battalion expands to division-level-plus strength and has well over 100 companies when mobilization is complete. The battalion conducts category I (unskilled labor) and category II (skilled labor) muster exercises to hone its coordination skills with the ROK government and to validate the ROK government's ability to send war-time mobilized KSCs to the KSC mobilization stations during a contingency operation.

The KSC Good Neighbor Program

Mindful of the importance of reaching out to the host-nation community, the KSC Battalion runs a dynamic good neighbor program (GNP). The battalion annually sponsors approximately 60 GNP events that affect a wide range of communities across the ROK.

The KSC GNP makes a difference in people's lives by providing school scholarships, textbook coupons to students, and food donations to needy families; spending time entertaining the elderly; and providing many other types of help and support to the community.

Repositioning of Forces

The Land Partnership Plan and the Yongsan Relocation Plan will be implemented in stages over the next six years. They will result in much consolidation at Camp Humphreys.

The KSC Battalion will remain an organization that is optimally balanced to support the repositioning of

forces on the peninsula. The battalion will use the repositioning of forces to drive change, taking on new mission sets and geographically posturing the KSC workforce to best support Eighth Army and USFK.

Since its establishment more than 64 years ago, the Korean Service Corps has served alongside USFK and Eighth Army continuously. The Korean Service Corps is the ultimate representation and best possible example of the strong relationship between the United States and the Republic of Korea.

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The 22nd Korean Service Corps Company, located at Camp Humphreys, Korea, provides shallow water egress training for 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade Soldiers, pilots, and crew members. (Photo by Kwak Tong Hyon)