PEACEKEEPING MISSION FOR THE KOREAN CRISES

World War II divided Korea into two along the 38th Parallel. The Korean crisis arose amidst the Cold War tension. In the bipolar world of the 1950s, Cold War was a rivalry between two superpowers. It was an ideological war led by USSR in the East and the US in the West. The Korean war was one of the several military conflicts that occurred during the cold war.

Source: https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War#/media/1/322419/214640

The Korean Crisis was initiated on 25th June 1950, when the northern half in alliance with Communist China, aided by the Korean People's Army (KPA) and Chinese troops, started to intervene in the southern liberal democratic half. The KPA rapidly marched towards the south and trapped the South Korean and US troops in a small perimeter around the port of Pusan. The US rather than advancing a war on North Korea reached out to the United Nations to find a non-violent way to control the situation. The newly formed international organization was quick to respond, and it established the first-ever United Nations Command (UNC) on 7th July 1950. The UNC signifies the world's first attempt at collective security under the United Nations system. United Nations Security Council Resolutions 83 and 84 provided the international legal authority for member states to restore peace on the Korean Peninsula, and they designated the US as the leader of the unified command termed as UNC. This was the first time the UN deployed armed troops to get control of the situation. The Korean crisis gave birth

to the UN Peacekeeping forces in which troops from countries like India, the US, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa were deployed to maintain a ceasefire and pave way for negotiations.

After three years of violent confrontations and countless attempts to negotiate justice for both these countries, on 27th July 1953, the war came to an end. An Armistice agreement was signed between both countries which stated that Korea will remain a divided country. The agreement also ordered for creation of a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) and the Custodian Force India (CFI) for supervision of Armistice and the disposal of prisoners of war.

Source: Forgotten tales of courage and valour: The Bucket Brigade - The Economic Times (indiatimes.com)

The CFI was made up of 5 RAJ RIF, 6 JAT, 3 DOGRA, and 3 GARH RIF along with ancillary services grouped under the 190 Infantry Brigade. Maj Gen S.P.P. Thorat, DSO, was nominated as the General Officer Commanding (GOC). Subsequently, there was an accretion of one more battalion to the brigade. In all 5,230 Indian troops were deployed in Korea. The forces left India in five batches in August-September of 1953 [1]. On the arrival in Korea, the CFI took over approx. 25,000 prisoners under protection.

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[1] Citation from- Stories of Heroism Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra Winners by DR. B.C. Chakravoty Pg no 24-25

Prisoners of War in Korea under the protection of the Custodian Forces of India being released

Source: Photo credit: Private photo of Lt. Gen. Matthew Thomas (70 years of the Korean War: India's lesser-known role in halting it | Research News, The Indian Express)

Source: Forgotten tales of courage and valour: The Bucket Brigade - The Economic Times (indiatimes.com)

Apart from strengthening the peacekeeping force by taking hold of the mediatory roles, India supported the UN peacekeeping mission in Korea by providing a medical contingent, 60 PARA Field Ambulance under the command of Lt. Col Rangaraj, earned a special place for themselves by selflessly providing immediate medical support to injured soldiers. By the end of their tenure, 60 PARA Field Ambulance had treated approximately 195,000 cases and had performed around 2,300 field surgeries. The Indian contingent did not differentiate between the casualties of the KPA and the UN forces but provided aid to the casualties of both sides along with treating the Prisoners of war and civilians. The brave hearts of 60 PARA Field Ambulance contingent won several gallantry awards like the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) and the Vir Chakra (VrC). In this deployment, Col. N B Banerjee received the 2nd highest gallantry award an MVC, two officers namely Maj. V Rangaswamy and Capt. NC Das along with one operating room assistant Nk Ratan Singh received VrC.

War-weary civilians passing a stalled M26 Pershing tank during the Korean War, June 1951

Source: https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War#/media/1/322419/214640

Even when the search for peace was in full swing, a war was fought to establish peace. An estimated 50 million civilians and soldiers d lost their lives in Korea. Many feared that this war might turn into a full-fledged confrontation between the superpowers and lead to World War III.

However, quick action from UN eased the situation and brought peace through negotiations. The Korean war taught the world that till such time as we are not ready to give up our traditional perspective of security and power, we need a peacekeeping force to ensure peace and non-violence.

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5. Picture 4 and 5- Source: https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War#/media/1/322419/214640
6. Picture 6- Source: Forgotten tales of courage and valour: The Bucket Brigade - The Economic Times (indiatimes.com)
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8. Picture 8- Source: Forgotten tales of courage and valour: The Bucket Brigade - The Economic Times (indiatimes.com)
9. Picture 9- War-weary civilians passing a stalled M26 Pershing tank during the Korean War, June 1951 Source: https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War#/media/1/322419/214640