

UN Command Security Battalion

Joint Security Area

CAPTAIN KEITH A. MCKINLEY

When I learned I was being assigned to the Republic of Korea, I assumed I would be serving in an infantry battalion in the 2d Infantry Division. Instead, I was assigned to the United Nations Command Security Battalion-Joint Security Area (UNCSB-JSA). When I got there, my first question was, "What exactly is the JSA and what does it do?" The liaison officer described it as a "unique" organization composed of both U.S. and Republic of Korea (ROK) soldiers. It is, indeed, unique in many ways.

The UNCSB-JSA is located on Camp Bonifas, not more than a few hundred meters from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). (Camp Bonifas is named in honor of Major Arthur G. Bonifas, who was attacked and killed by North Korean troops in the Joint Security Area, along with First Lieutenant Mark T. Barrett, on 18 August 1976.) Every day, soldiers of the United Nations Command are bombarded with communist propaganda, spread in the form of loudspeaker announcements, or large "Hollywood" type signs that litter the North Korean landscape.

Soldiers of the JSA are specially selected and go through a detailed screening before assignment. The battalion is about 60 percent ROK soldiers and 40 percent U.S. soldiers under U.S. command.

Because of its proximity to the DMZ, the UNCSB-JSA maintains a rigid pass and leave policy and offers few of the comforts that soldiers from many other units take for granted. Alerts are called often to test the unit's ability to react to any crisis within the DMZ, and soldiers

are prepared to deploy on a moment's notice.

Missions

The UNCSB-JSA's stated mission is *to provide the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, a secure environment in which to conduct negotiations with North Korean representatives.* The Joint Security Area (Pan Mun Jom)—an area 800 meters square, composed of buildings, checkpoints, and road networks—is the designated location for all armistice related talks. The Military Demarcation Line cuts through the middle of Pan Mun Jom.

Life on Camp Bonifas focuses on five very different mission cycles that are rotated among the UNCSB-JSA platoons. This rotation gives platoons a change of mission every five days, which helps eliminate boredom and complacency. Thus, the cycle repeats itself every 25 days. The following are the five missions the battalion performs every day:

Conduct security operations within the JSA. Of all the activities that take place inside the JSA, security operations receive the most attention from the UNCSB-JSA staff. The battalion staff anticipates any and all contingencies, usually in the worst-case scenarios. Leaders and soldiers alike learn a complex array of actions that demand swift and effective responses. All the soldiers of the UNCSB-JSA platoons and squads train daily on these drills. They rehearse contingencies constantly, and if adverse actions do arise in the area, soldiers are well trained to handle and eliminate a wide range of threats.

Secure and conduct civil affairs in the village of Tae Song Dong. After the armistice was signed in 1953 and all other villages within the DMZ were removed or destroyed, each side was able to maintain one village. The South chose Tae Song Dong (also known as "Freedom Village"), and the North chose Ki Jong Dong (better known as "Propaganda Village"). These towns stand less than two kilometers from each other, each represented by two large flagpoles.

The Tae Song Dong platoon has the daily mission of providing security for the farmers of the community, which includes escort to and from high-risk farming areas near the Demarcation Line and keeping an accurate record of civilian personnel who are inside the DMZ.

Provide security and logistical support to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC). When the NNSC was formed at the signing of the armistice in 1953, its original purpose was to monitor troop concentrations and movements inside the Korean peninsula. Czechoslovakia and Poland were designated to monitor forces in North Korea; Switzerland and Sweden were assigned to monitor those in South Korea.

All countries of the NNSC were neutral during the Korean War and had free access throughout the peninsula to help enforce the armistice agreement. In the early 1990s, however, the North Koreans, who were starting to get tired of the "outdated" agreement, began putting pressure on the NNSC in the North. Soon afterward, the Czechoslovakian

delegation disbanded, leaving only the Polish commission. Finally, in 1993, the Polish commission withdrew its personnel, but Poland is still an NNSC member.

Today, the NNSC continues to show support for the armistice agreement by the neutral nations' presence in Pan Mun Jom, but their mission has changed. The Swiss and the Swedish have no counterparts in the North, and they do not have free authority to cross the Demarcation Line as they did in the early 1990s.

Conduct a DMZ orientation program. The DMZ Orientation Program (also known as the "Tour Program") is the mission for which the JSA is best known. The focus of this program is to provide a historical perspective on the Korean armistice, show visitors that the U.S. still has soldiers deployed to Korea, and give tourists an opportunity to see outstanding U.S. and Korean soldiers.

Secure and operate Camp Bonifas. More than 150,000 tourists visit the DMZ every year. Everyone from the President of the United States to a South Korean elementary student has at one time or another ridden a bus through the DMZ. Every week, the Battalion S-1 can expect at least one or two distinguished visitors to enter through the Camp Bonifas gate. Tours are conducted in English, Korean, and Japanese.

In addition to these five missions, the JSA is assigned the "be prepared" missions of conducting Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs) and retrograde operations.

Because of the battalion's proximity to the DMZ, the battalion considers NEO missions among its highest priorities. The UNCSB-JSA can expect to evacuate more than 600 noncombatants at one time. These noncombatants include Tae Song Dong residents, Korean civilian employees, daily tourists, and NNSC delegates. To be prepared for these missions, the battalion conducts NEO exercises often, and many of the civilians take part in the training.

The UNCSB-JSA is commanded by an American lieutenant colonel—usually one who has previously served in



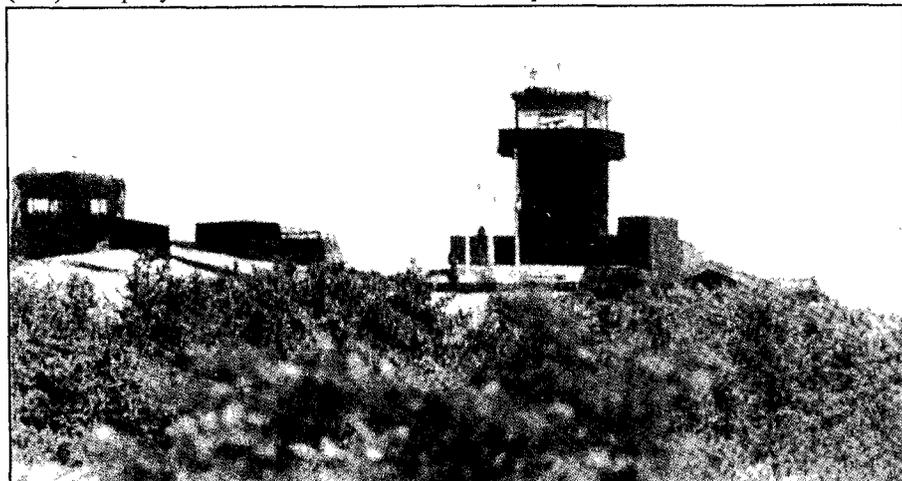
Curious North Korean guards observe from the other side of the DMZ.

Korea. The deputy commander is a ROK major, who works closely with the battalion commander on all matters. The battalion has an American executive officer (XO) who heads the staff in much the same way as other U.S. battalions. Two sergeants major, one U.S. and one ROK, advise the commander on issues pertaining to the soldiers of either army. Even though there are leaders from two different armies, the UNCSB-JSA command group operates under a single command structure.

The UNCSB-JSA has a very different task organization from that of other U.S. light infantry battalions. The battalion has two organic companies—a Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) and a Joint Security Force (JSF) Company.

The HHC has the standard sections and platoons that support all battalions in the U.S. Army, but with a few additions. First, it has a civil affairs platoon, which is responsible for the daily civil operations in Tae Song Dong. This platoon is kept busy providing security for the villagers and tracking daily farming activities within the DMZ. The HHC also has a Military Police platoon, whose responsibilities range from the security of Camp Bonifas to support for the NNSC.

The JSF Company is made up of four light infantry platoons and a headquarters section. The soldiers and officers in this company are all ROK personnel, except for a few American support personnel in the headquarters section. The headquarters section consists of an



Observation Post Ouellette, the only U.S. guard post in the DMZ.

American XO and a small handful of U.S. supply personnel. The XO holds an important position in the company because he is the link between the ROK company commander (his boss) and the American supply system.

Aside from the battalion's two organic companies, other forces help the UNCSB-JSA accomplish its missions. The battalion has a strong relationship with its close neighbor on the DMZ, the famous 1st ROK Division. This division has a long history throughout the Korean War, and its pride and reputation are still strong today. The JSA and 1st ROK units work closely together and are vital in the mutual support of missions. Forces from the 2d U.S. Infantry Division also support the UNCSB-JSA.

The JSA's main challenges are the language barrier and cultural differences. Because of the ratio of U.S. and

ROK soldiers, communication is an everyday problem. Daily battalion operations are conducted in English, and all ROK soldiers have at least a basic understanding of the English language. Still, so much is lost in translation, especially when military terms, symbols, and jargon are used. (Most U.S. soldiers have little or no knowledge of Korean.)

In addition, the two cultures are diverse, and it is sometimes hard to keep this in mind when working in a battalion consisting of soldiers of both armies. The two armies have different military protocols and procedures. Even an everyday action in one army may be totally unfamiliar to the other. For example, a ROK company commander asked me why U.S. enlisted soldiers did not render salutes to senior enlisted soldiers, which is common military custom in the ROK army.

In summary, the UNCSB-JSA offers the most demanding and diverse range of missions on the Korean peninsula, if not in the entire U.S. Army. Soldiers who serve in this unit will leave with a greater respect for both the ROK and U.S. governments. They will also realize that tactical decisions made inside the Joint Security Area can have strategic level results because of the high visibility of U.S. forces serving within the Security Area.

Captain Keith A. McKinley served as the assistant operations officer for the UNCSB-JSA. He previously served as a rifle platoon leader, support platoon leader, and antiarmor executive officer in 3d Battalion, 327th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and now commands Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry. He was commissioned through the ROTC program at Chicago State University and also holds a degree from Indiana University Northwest.
