

United Nations Command Joint Security Area

By LTC John Rhodes

The United Nations Command Security Battalion-Joint Security Area (UNCSB-JSA) was established during the Korean War to provide security and logistical support to the United Nations

Command (UNC) elements involved in the

armistice negotiations. The unit

was founded on May 5,

1952, and has been sta-

tioned at Panmunjom,

South Korea, since. On

July 20, 1954, it was

awarded the Meritorious

Unit Citation for its out-

standing performance during

Operations Big Switch,

Comeback and Rainbow,

which involved the repatria-

tion and exchange of more

than 100,000 prisoners of war,

displaced persons and

refugees between the United

Nations Command and the



U.S. Army/Edward N. Johnson



Driedprawns at en.wikipedia



U.S. Army

Above left, flags of the Republic of Korea (ROK), the United Nations and the United States fly above Observation Post Ouellette. Left, Camp Bonifas is the base camp of the United Nations Command Security Battalion-Joint Security Area (UNCSB-JSA). The camp is named after CPT Arthur G. Bonifas, one of two U.S. Army officers murdered by North Koreans in 1976. Top, from South Korea, a U.S. soldier faces North Korea and ROK and North Korean military personnel.

Korean People's Army/Chinese People's Volunteer Army. By late 1954, the mission of the UNCSB-JSA changed to its present one. This mission includes securing and assisting in all operations of the United Nations Command sector of the joint security area (JSA) at Panmunjom; conducting counterinfiltration patrols within the unit's operational area; providing civil affairs administration and security to the village of Daeseong-dong (Freedom Village) inside the demilitarized zone (DMZ); securing and controlling access into the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission Headquarters area; supporting the operations of the Swiss/Swedish component of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission; conducting the DMZ education and orientation program; providing security; and securing and operating key facilities on Camp Bonifas.



On August 18, 1976, North Korean security guards used axes to murder two U.S. Army officers assigned to the UNC component of the JSA.



U.S. Army

Unit History

The most forward-deployed unit in the Republic of Korea, the soldiers of the JSA have proudly—and with good reason—adopted “In Front of Them All” as their motto. In 1967, a North Korean commando force attacked the UNCSB-JSA base camp (then called Camp Kitty Hawk) adjacent to the joint security area, killing three soldiers and wounding 24 soldiers and civilians. In 1968, North Koreans ambushed a UNCSB-JSA truck en route from Camp Kitty Hawk to the joint security area, killing four soldiers and wounding two more. Two UNCSB-JSA officers were killed and eight soldiers wounded in 1976, during the infamous ax murder incident at Panmunjom, when a numerically superior North Korean force attacked the UNC soldiers who were guarding a civilian work detail trimming a tree inside the JSA.

As a result, on August 21, 1976, the UNCSB-JSA participated in Operation Paul Bunyan, when United Nations Command elements chopped down the tree that was the focal point of the ax murder incident. Inside the joint security area were all of the regular personnel, accompanied by another platoon, more than 50 martial arts experts from the Republic of Korea (ROK) Special Forces and about 15 unarmed combat engineers to cut down the tree. Flying south of the DMZ were B-52 bombers, fighters and attack helicopters. All South Korean forces and U.S. personnel were placed on full combat alert. In addition, just off the coast, the aircraft carrier USS *Midway* (CV 41) sailed with her full combat escort.

The eyes of the world again focused on the JSA on November 23, 1984, when a Soviet citizen fled from his North

Korean-sponsored tour group and dashed across the military demarcation line to freedom. North Korean guards armed with pistols and rifles pursued the defector into the United Nations Command sector of the JSA. A firefight broke out, which lasted 30 minutes and resulted in one UNCSB-JSA guard killed and one wounded, while the North Koreans suffered three killed and five wounded. The Soviet defector was protected throughout the battle and subsequently evacuated to Camp Bonifas.



USAF/SrA Jeffrey Allen

Villagers from Daeseong-dong, the only ROK village within the South Korean side of the demilitarized zone, harvest rice from paddies. Residents of the village receive benefits such as modern homes and allocations of farmland but must abide by various restrictions.

Daeseong-dong

The UNC Security Battalion is responsible for implementing civil affairs and security within this unique village. Security for Daeseong-dong is provided through a security company that guards the village 24 hours a day. In daylight hours, they provide security for the farmers while they work in the fields; at night, they guard the village itself while the residents sleep.

All residents have modern homes and substantial allocations of farmland. Each family farms an average of 17.5

LTC John Rhodes is the commander of the United Nations Command Security Battalion-Joint Security Area.

The North Korean flag atop a massive flagpole marks the entrance to the virtually uninhabited North Korean village of Gijeong-dong (Propaganda Village), just a mile from Daeseong-dong in the ROK.

acres of land while most South Korean farmers tend only 1 to 4 acres. Each Daeseong-dong family earns the U.S. equivalent of \$82,000 per year from their harvests. The 213 residents in the village must spend a minimum of 240 nights each year in the village to maintain their residency. They also live under some very severe restrictions: They must be in the village by nightfall, and inside their homes with the doors and windows secure by midnight.

Across the military demarcation line, 1,800 meters from Daeseong-dong, is the village of Gijeong-dong, or Propaganda Village. It was given this name because of the extensive speaker system throughout the area that, until June 2004, broadcast propaganda six to 12 hours a day idolizing Kim Jung Il as a great leader and inviting the citizens of Daeseong-dong as well as the rest of the Republic of Korea to defect to this so-called village of paradise. Defectors would find it rather lonely, however, as the village is mostly uninhabited.

The UNCSB conducts numerous activities through the Eighth Army Good Neighbor Program, which fosters better communication with and understanding of the villagers, including a Christmas trip to Lotte World, a very popular amusement park in Seoul, and a Christmas party at the U.S. dining facility on Camp Bonifas. Soldiers from the battalion also teach English to elementary school students twice a week.

Operations

The UNCSB-JSA has distinguished itself in many operations since the signing of the armistice agreement, including Operation Breaches Buoy in November 1968 (the return of the crew of the USS *Pueblo*) and Operation Runaway in February 1970 (the return of 39 Korean civilians who were skyjacked while on a Korean airline flight). From September 10 through November 26, 1984, the UNCSB-JSA supported Operation Transfer, the exchange of relief goods in and around Daeseong-dong. The exchange was conducted by the International Red Cross and North and South Korea in the wake of severe floods throughout the peninsula earlier that year.

With the 1984 Soviet defector firefight still a vivid memory, the soldiers of the UNCSB-JSA reacted to and safeguarded the defection of a Chinese army major and his wife in 1989. JSA soldiers were able to protect more than 60 visitors in Panmunjom at the time of the defection as well as



U.S. Army/Edward Johnson

ascertain the intentions of and escort the Chinese couple to safety without a shot being fired. Two weeks later, UNCSB soldiers flawlessly executed Operation Exodus (the orderly return of a South Korean dissident, "Miss Im," through Panmunjom), which proved successful in simultaneously keeping tensions from erupting into violence and spoiling North Korea's anti-U.S. propaganda effort. This resulted in a third Army Superior Unit Award to the unit.

In 1991, the UNCSB-JSA was formally recognized by the president of the Republic of Korea for its success in maintaining a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula; the battalion was awarded the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation.

In addition to ensuring the success of humanitarian operations, UNCSB-JSA personnel provide security and assistance for all JSA visitors. Among the foreign dignitaries and heads of state who have visited are former President of the United States George W. Bush, former President of the Republic of Korea Kim Dae-jung, former Australian Prime Minister John Howard, and former U.S. Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice.

U.S. Army soldiers serve 12 months here; ROK soldiers serve 24 months. Soldiers from both armies must meet above-average standards as well as have clean military and civilian records.

The UNCSB-JSA also provides protection and security to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission. The ROK and U.S. Army battalion commanders meet with Swiss and Swedish colonels twice a month to coordinate protection, security and other logistical support for the many distinguished visitor events that occur in the camp. Nearly every head of state will have either lunch or dinner at the camp, and the UNCSB-JSA will provide the support required to make the event successful.

In recognition of the battalion's commitment to superior performance, the UNCSB-JSA has received a host of awards and commendations. Throughout its history, the UNCSB-JSA



U.S. Army and ROK soldiers from Camp Bonifas exit a CH-47 helicopter after conducting a joint evacuation exercise in the Republic of Korea in 2009.

has been awarded the Meritorious Unit Citation, the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation and seven Army Superior Unit Awards. In addition, it twice won the Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA) Maintenance of Excellence Award, the EUSA and Department of the Army Supply of Excellence Award, and the EUSA Safety and Motor Vehicle Safety Awards.

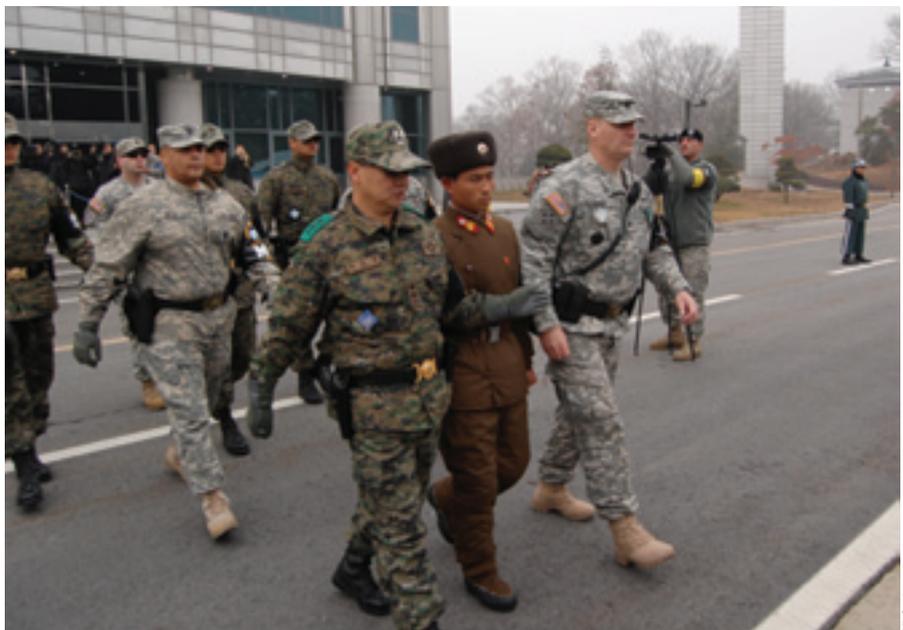
ROK-U.S. Alliance

The combined UNC-JSA battalion is the only combined Korean-American forces battalion on the Korean Peninsula. All operations are coordinated and executed jointly to further unite and strengthen the bond between the two nations, illustrated during the quarterly JSA noncombatant evacuation rehearsals. February 2009 marked the first time that the ROK army (ROKA) planned evacuation training for all noncombatants inside the JSA and that U.S. forces rode in ROKA helicopters. After aiding the evacuation of the noncombatants, both the U.S. and ROK forces moved to the pickup zone, where they were evacuated by CH-47 helicopters. The primary objective of this training was to improve standing operation orders, carry out the mission smoothly in case of combat situations and augment the transition of operational control to the ROK army.

ROK-U.S. security and humanitarian operations are not the only activities inside the joint security area. Both forces are working towards strengthening their alliance, not only through operations, but through recreational activities as well.

Soldiers in the JSA have found ways to relax and enjoy themselves at frequent sporting events and cookouts. Indeed, lifelong friendships are formed while on duty together. On Easter Sunday, 2009, JSA veterans returned to Korea and spent the day touring the region they once protected.

For more than 45 years, the soldiers of the UNCSB-JSA have stood on the front line of freedom 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As the most forward-deployed unit on the peninsula, the UNCSB-JSA proudly stands face-to-face with the forces of the Korean People's Army to preserve the armistice and help bring about potential peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. ★



U.S. Army and ROK forces participate in a recent Korean People's Army repatriation. U.S. and ROK soldiers of the UNC's joint security battalion compose the only combined Korean-American forces battalion on the Korean Peninsula.