



THE KOREAN WAR

The genesis of the Korean War occurred four decades before 1950, when Japan annexed Korea in 1910. After the defeat of the Japanese in the Second World War, the United States and the Soviet Union divided the Korean peninsula into two zones of control. The Americans controlled Korea south of the 38th parallel, the Soviets the area north of the parallel.

The Korean War began when in the pre-dawn hours of 25 June 1950 the Korean People's Army launched a massive offensive into South Korea. They drove the Republic of South Korea's forces down the peninsula, capturing the capital, Seoul. South Korean and hastily deployed United States Army units fought delaying actions as they were forced further down the Korean peninsula, which allowed defensive positions to be set up around the port city of Pusan.

Australia was involved in Korea from 1950 until 1957 as part of the United Nations Command forces. Australia's allies in this operation were the United States, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, and Turkey. India, the Scandinavian countries, and Italy provided medical units.

The Australian Army was represented initially by the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, which arrived in Pusan on 27 September 1950. It had been stationed in Japan, as part of the British Commonwealth Occupying Force since 1946 and fought through the dramatic first phase of the war in Korea during which the major Australian battles at Kapyong and Maryang San took place. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment also joined the war later, each on a one-year tour of duty.

The Royal Australian Navy had nine ships operating during the war: the aircraft carrier *Sydney*, the battle-class destroyers *Bataan*, *Warramunga*, *Anzac* and *Tobruk*, and the river-class frigates *Murchison*, *Shoalhaven*, *Condamine* and *Culgoa*. The Royal Australian Air Force deployed No. 77 Squadron, first flying Mustangs and then the Gloster Meteor F8.

More than 17,000 Australians served during the Korean War, of whom 340 were killed and over 1200 wounded, and a further 29 became prisoners of war.

[Two Gloster Meteors fly over Kimpo airfield in Korea, c. 1952. \(AWM P00660.001\)](#)



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