

What Korea Is Teaching The Air Force

What is the Air Force learning from the Korean War?

The answers to this question are being examined with almost microscopic intensity ten thousand miles from Seoul—at Langley Field, Virginia, home of the Tactical Air Command. There Major General G. O. Barcus, deputy chief of TAC, and Brigadier General H. L. Sanders recently discussed new doctrines that not only breach the Air Force's old strategic-bombing dogma but also lead to an even more daring new concept of inter-continental mobility.

According to the generals, the war has taught the Air Force two important things. First, tactical methods learned the hard way in the Second World War not only still apply but are even more effective with today's weapons and matériel. Second, and perhaps more important, the gap between strategic and tactical bombing is growing rapidly indistinguishable.

TAC was reorganized twice during 1950. The first change gave the command administrative and operational control over its airmen, and set up the 9th Tactical Air Force at Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina, with orders to go on perpetual combat alert for duty in any part of the globe at any moment. This reorganization gave TAC administrative control over its units for the first time. "For example," said Sanders, "I once had a fighter group that was administered by a higher command at another station. If we needed mechanics to service aircraft and the higher command decided, say, that our lawns needed mowing, those trained mechanics cut grass."

The second reorganization made TAC a full-fledged command reporting directly to General Hoyt S. Vandenberg on the same level as the Strategic and Continental Air Commands. Ko-



Major General G. O. Barcus

rea forced the change. The mission of the tactical people includes gaining air superiority; close support of troops; interdiction of enemy supply and artillery; photoreconnaissance for Army and Air Force; delivery of men and supplies; rescue and evacuation.

"The first lesson we've learned in Korea," General Barcus said, "is that you can't 'compartmentalize'—in ex-Secretary Symington's words—tactical and strategic bombing.

"It is unsound to think of strategic targets as confined to factories and tactical targets as confined to troops or installations near the battlefield. It is unsound to consider heavy bombers as *strategic* planes, and fighters, short-range bombers, and such as being *tactical* planes. If there has to be a difference—and it is artificial—call it 'strategic and tactical employment of aviation' if you wish. It's all bombing. A good example of what I mean is General 'Rosy' O'Donnell's B-29 attack in Korea in direct support of front-line ground troops."

The biggest problem confronted by air units in Korea has proved to be close support work at night or in bad weather. "We can do interdiction at any time," Barcus explained. "Knocking out a fixed geographic target like a bridge can be done through radar and instrument bombing. But we absolutely fail today to destroy specific targets such as moving tanks in weather that restricts the pilot's vision. The human eye is still the only means to get on such targets." The Air Force now is working on devices to overcome this difficulty.

The war has also led the Air Force to several important technical conclusions: The old-type aviation air-to-ground rockets developed in the last war are almost worthless compared to the new shaped-charge missiles. However, jet fighters, including our standby, the Lockheed F-80, have exceeded all expectations. Bombing techniques developed in the last war with piston engines work even better with the new jets. "The piston engine, as far as we are concerned, is as dead as the dodo bird," Sanders said.

The chief objection to jets is still the one forecast ten years ago by Sir Frank Whittle, their originator: the fuel problem. Jets are fuel hogs at low altitudes, and a new method of stepping up their power, called "afterburning," makes the problem worse.

In the immediate future TAC equipment will include the Lockheed F-80 for training; the latest version of that same plane, the F-94C; the Republic F-84 fighter; and the North American B-45, a four-jet bomber.

Finally General Barcus talked about a problem that the Chinese advance in Korea had made terribly urgent: air transport and the need for increased mobility of both air and

ground units. TAC now controls all tactical air carrier groups in the United States (that is, all military transport planes not operated by the armed forces' "airline"—the Military Air Transport Service). Air transport has played a huge part in Korea. In a full-scale atomic war, it could become even more vital if any of our beachheads and harbors abroad—logical military targets—were knocked out by atomic attack.

"Theoretically we can haul an army by air anywhere," the general said, "and supply it by air. The sole question is: Can the nation afford the expense of building and fueling the equipment?"

Perhaps the most interesting new development in the transport field is the Fairchild XC-120 "pack plane." The revolutionary feature of this craft is that its cargo hull can be unhooked from beneath the fuselage, much as a trailer can be disconnected from a truck, and then the fuselage can be flown back to a supply point as far as 700 miles away to pick up another "pod" of cargo.

A new "combat zone" transport, the Chase XC-123, can take sixty troops right up behind the front lines, land on any improvised field and return for more.

The big four-engined Douglas C-124 is the new long-range mainstay. It can transport troops and supplies, including tanks, within a combat radius of about 2,000 miles.

One airborne division—roughly 13,200 fully equipped troops—would make 412 C-124 planeloads, and the division's 140 M-24 medium tanks would make up 140 more loads. One infantry regiment—3,000 to 5,000 men—plus its medium tanks, can be flown 2,000 miles in 256 C-124 planeloads.

Today the bulk of our modern military transport equipment is, as might be expected, in Korean service. According to Generals Sanders and Barcus, "a large number" of additional C-124s are now on order. They declined to specify how many of the other types they expected to get. With the experience of the last war and the Berlin Airlift behind them, the TAC generals are confident that they could carry and support a full army to an "airhead" at any point on the globe.

—ALBERT DOUGLAS

At Home & Abroad

The H-Bomb's First Victims

In the valley of the red, sluggish Savannah River, it was, until recently, hard to believe that tomorrow could bring anything but some accustomed event—the arrival of a new litter to a hunting bitch, the burst of the first boll of cotton, or simply another day of bleaching heat.

When the Atomic Energy Commission announced a few months ago that in this valley it was going to build the world's first plant devoted to producing materials for the hydrogen bomb, the people who live in the district to be taken over—some 1,500 families—were bewildered and angry. It was not that the government was going to make another experiment in destruction, but that their own long-successful experi-



ment in peaceful living was brought to certain and final failure.

Choosing the site from a hundred they had studied, AEC engineers and surveyors could not have known that they were putting the plant down in a place whose residents had tacitly agreed that they would live in a deliberate isolation, resisting the blandishments of urban, industrial America.

The feeling in the valley has been that no man deserves less than the one who willingly leaves it. "No use to go gallivantin' around when we've had so many good things here," Mister Golly Dunbar was saying the other day around the stove in "the long store" at Ellenton, South Carolina. "I went away a couple of times and all I did was long to come back, back to the smell of ripe pears and the sight of hawks swoopin' through the high pines."

The man who commands a knowledge of the valley's history and of its terrain and waters is sure to stand in well with his neighbors. To know indisputably where Mister Walker lived before he lived where he lives now, to be able to guide a skiff around a submerged stump in the swamp—these have been immeasurable assets.

"I don't know any set of people who do less travelin'," said "Captain" L. B. Willis, conductor on the three-car train that makes a daily run from Augusta, Georgia, at the Savannah River's fall line, to Port Royal, South Carolina, on the sea. "They may get on in the mornin' and ride ten miles to go visitin', and then come back with me that night. They've lived along the river for generations, and they don't seem to want to be bothered."

From Ellenton, a small town in the center of the 250,000-acre tract the government is taking over, the farthest orbit of a man's movements has not heretofore been hard to fix. He might go twenty-four miles to Aiken, the county seat, to look up a deed or, in legal extremity, accuse an enemy or defend a friend, or himself, in county court. Only the wealthiest, who cannot find what they want in the long store, go twenty miles to Augusta, an astonishingly remote city of 71,500 that has