



## [The Korean War](#)

### **In A Nutshell**

In 1950, the new Cold War suddenly turned hot when Communist North Korea invaded anticommunist South Korea. The United States immediately intervened in the conflict by sending combat troops to aid the South. The Americans halted the North Korean advance, then drove the North Koreans into retreat by launching a brilliant amphibious assault far behind enemy lines. By October 1950, it appeared likely that the Americans would not only save South Korea, but liberate North Korea from Communist control as well. However, just as victory seemed at hand, Communist Red China launched its own surprise intervention, inflicting heavy casualties while driving the Americans back into the South. After 1951, the war settled into a frustrating stalemate along entrenched battle lines not far from the 38th parallel—the same line that had divided North and South Korea before the war began. Active combat involving American forces in Korea ended in 1953 with the signing of a cease-fire.

Nearly 36,000 American soldiers lost their lives in Korea in a war that ultimately ended in a frustrating draw. America's failure to achieve total victory in Korea, just a few years after defeating much more powerful enemies in World War II, hinted at the new challenges confronting American military power in the Cold War era. In an age of nuclear weapons, total victory might prove impossible to obtain.

Korea has been called "the forgotten war," "the century's nastiest little war," "a sour war," and "the coldest winter." It was an unwanted conflict that dragged on interminably and ended with

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no satisfying resolution. As events in Vietnam would soon painfully prove, Korea was only a sign of things to come.

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## **Brain Snacks - Trivia**

In 1950, there was less than fifty miles of paved road in all of North and South Korea *combined*. The Korean conflict was never officially declared a "war" by any of the foreign nations involved in the territorial struggle between the northern and southern halves of the peninsula. Throughout the 1950-53 period, Korea was officially deemed a "United Nations peace action."

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