Meeting of the President with Congressional Leaders

11 A.M., Friday, December 1, 1950

The President opened the meeting at 11:05 A.M. by asking General Bradley to give a summary of the military situation.

General Bradley arose and, with the aid of a large map of Korea, gave a full description of the current military situation in Korea. He described the disposition of American and other United Nations troops, and the estimated disposition of attacking communist forces.

At the conclusion of his summary, the President asked if anyone wished to ask questions of General Bradley.

Senator Connally asked why General MacArthur’s forces were split into two armies, one in the east and one in the west.

General Bradley said that there was a very high range of mountains down the center of Korea and that there were very poor lateral communications between the east coast and the west coast. MacArthur probably could maintain better communications between groups on the east and on the west by radio through Tokyo than he could by overland communications through the mountains. As for the answer to the question of why General MacArthur had pushed some of his units up toward the northeastern corner of Korea, General Bradley...
assumed that he was trying to carry out his United Nations mission of covering as much of Korea as possible, in order to hold elections north of the 38th parallel.

Senator Gurney wanted to know if General MacArthur would consolidate his divided forces, those on the east and those on the west.

General Bradley said he did not know but he doubted if it could be done right away.

Senator Wiley wanted to know how many prisoners we had captured.

General Bradley said about 175,000 and, in reply to a second question of Senator Wiley's, he said he did not know where the prison camps were or exactly where those prisoners were.

Senator Wiley asked what kind of planes are being used against us.

General Bradley responded that M-17's are being used in fairly large numbers.

Senator Wiley inquired about the adequacy of our Intelligence.

General Bradley said that undoubtedly General MacArthur was unaware of the size of the concentration of enemy forces or he would
not have undertaken exactly the kind of operations that he did and
he would have been better prepared to meet the attack.

Senator Wiley wanted to know what was indicated at Vladivostok.

General Bradley responded "Nothing different from normal."

Senator Bridges said he understood that, other than United
States and Republic of Korea troops, there were only about 70,000
United Nations troops in Korea. He asked General Bradley for details
about the troops of these other United Nations countries.

General Bradley said there were two brigades of British
troops, totaling about 3,000 men at the front. There was one brigade
of Turkish troops amounting to about 1,000 men. There was one battalion
of French, and various units from the Philippines and Thailand.

General Bradley did not know how many men were in those
latter units or whether there were forces from any other countries
in the front lines.

The Vice President inquired if there were any Australians
in Korea.

General Bradley replied that Australian planes were there
but no ground troops.

The President asked if there were any Canadians in Korea.
General Bradley said the Canadians were finishing their training and they had not yet arrived.

Representative McCormack asked if it was not true that it was a well-known fact that the Chinese communists had been present in Manchuria in large numbers.

General Bradley replied "Yes."

Mr. McCormack asked "Isn't there a Command Intelligence at MacArthur's headquarters?"

General Bradley replied yes, there is Field Intelligence in Korea. He assumed that Congressman McCormack was interested in knowing why General MacArthur's forces were unaware of the large numbers of Chinese communists in North Korea until they attacked.

The point is that the Chinese came across the Yalu River at night in small numbers, and they march down through Korea in short columns, also at night. It is very difficult to pick up these columns by air reconnaissance and since they move in such small groups it is difficult even for our Intelligence on the ground to make an accurate estimate of communist strength.

Senator McCollum asked how many United States troops were in Korea.
General Bradley said there were about 135,000, with a large number of service troops in addition.

Senator McFadden wanted to know how many enemy troops there were.

General Bradley responded that there were about 300,000.

Senator Loomis asked how many additional enemy troops were in Manchuria and other near-by areas.

General Bradley said he would refer that question to General Smith.

General Smith said that he would give that and related facts in a few minutes when he displayed his maps, on which such information was posted.

The Vice President wanted to know to what extent our Commanders could obtain information beyond the Manchurian border.

The President said that General Smith could give such information as could be given on that subject.

Senator Wiley wanted to know if the figure of 135,000 included the Marines.

General Bradley said that it did.
Senator Wherry asked if General MacArthur could hold a
line in Korea.

General Bradley said that he could not say.

Senator Wherry wanted to know why our Intelligence could
not see this attack by the communists coming.

General Bradley said that he would repeat what he had said
before, that the mountains and the communists' habit of moving in
small columns at night made Intelligence and observation very diffi-
cult.

Senator Wherry said that there certainly had been a consider-
able increase of communist strength which had been taking place with-
out our having known about it.

The President interrupted the questioning of General Bradley
by saying that unfortunately there was a limit on the time that could
be spent and he thought it would be well for General Smith to bring
his maps in.

(General Smith set up on the easel a large map showing
the Soviet Union, its satellite countries, and the neighboring areas.)

General Smith said he would begin by mentioning a few facts
about Western Europe, since what was happening in Korea had a very
direct relationship with events in Europe. He said that in the past 10 days events in the Soviet areas of Europe had been very quiet and this in itself was a disquieting fact. The Russians appear to have completed very large scale maneuvers in which some 300,000 men had taken part. Their maneuvers had been concentrated on airborne troops and river crossings. Between 60 and 70 percent of the Soviet armed strength was estimated to be west of the Ural Mountains.

Turning to Asia, General Smith continued, several significant events had taken place recently in Siberia. The most significant of these, from the Intelligence point of view, was a change in the administration and organization of Soviet armed forces. These Soviets, said General Smith, have always been reluctant to give too much power to military commanders. But in Siberia, they have very recently established a single combined command for the ground, air and naval forces. The new Commander is named Malinkovsky(1). This man now has a semi-autonomous command in Siberia and his appointment may have considerable significance.

General Smith then turned briefly to the training and equipping of satellite armed forces, and he also discussed the production of combat aircraft by the Soviet Union.

Mr. McCormack wanted to know how many Soviet troops were being trained for airborne operations.
General Smith said he did not know but he would give the figures on troop transports which could be used by the Soviets for airborne operations.

Mr. McCormack wanted to know what significance General Smith attached to this large scale airborne activity.

General Smith replied that the Soviets undoubtedly were training their airborne troops for European operation.

Mr. McCormack wanted to know, if there were a third world war, would it be important for us to have a bridgehead on the continent of Europe.

General Smith said that "He represented the enemy," and from that point of view, an American bridgehead would certainly be important.

Senator Murphy wanted to know how General Smith got his figures.

General Smith said the military figures came from military attachés, from defectors, from deserters, and from "other means."

Senator Murphy asked General Smith if he used all sources.

General Smith responded "We have no morals." (Laughter greeted this statement.)

(At this point, General Smith set up a second map, showing)
the general area of China. He gave a description of the armed forces of the various groups in China, Korea, Indo-China, and Manchuria. He placed considerable emphasis on the effectiveness of Guerrillas in China.)

Senator Werry asked what kind of equipment the Guerrillas had.

General Smith responded that it was very poor and that efforts were under way to improve it.

Senator Werry wanted to know what kind of help was being given to the Guerrillas.

General Smith said he could not answer that question in detail, but that assistance was being given in the form of money, advice, and "objectives." (General Smith then discussed the military situation in Indo-China.)

Senator Loebs wanted to know if the French had any good modern weapons, or if they had obtained any from us.

General Smith responded that the French had plenty of weapons, that we were shipping additional ones to them, but that most of their difficulty seemed to be that they lacked "drive."

Senator Loebs wanted to know if the Chinese communists had any jets.
General Smith said yes, and that it was apparent that the
Chinese were working very hard to improve their airfields and the
logistic situation for their airforce.

Senator Bridge asked what General Smith would say about
India's performance.

General Smith remarked that that question reminded him of
the old definition of "wump" -- a fellow with his "wump" on
one side of the fence and his "wump" on the other. He said that Nehru
was reluctant to face up to the realities of life, but that his
government was convinced of the desirability of lining up with the
West. He would characterize India's present position as one of
"reluctant neutrality."

The President asked that India not be discussed further,
and that no reference be made outside of the room to General Smith's
remarks about India, because the diplomatic situation was very deli-
crate and the Department of State was working very hard at Lake Success
and elsewhere to bring India around.

General Smith seemed somewhat embarrassed at this point and
said that he was sorry he had spoken about India; he would not if he
had realized the Secretary of State was present.
(It was now 11:10 A.M., and the President said he would have to ask General Smith to stop because he knew that a number of the members of Congress were anxious to get back to the Hill as close to 12 o'clock as possible.)

The President then said that ever since the outbreak in Korea the end of June, we had been working on our defenses and our foreign policy. We had been working very hard on the strength of our military forces; he had sent up one supplemental budget estimate in September and now he was sending up another one. The Budget estimate he would send up early this afternoon would represent the result of many months of study but that it had been raised significantly in the last few days because, as a result of the attack of the Chinese communists, we were going to step up procurement of military supplies.

(The President then read extracts from his Message to Congress and the supplemental appropriation request.)

The President said that he would explain what he had just read fully in the Message he was sending along with the appropriation request. Furthermore, the members of the Cabinet, and the representatives of the Department of Defense and the Bureau of the Budget would be available to answer questions for members of Congress.
The President stressed that the promptness with which the Congress provided these funds would be of material help to the Government in meeting the present critical international situation. The President said "I hope you can consider this carefully, and act fast. I have been anxious for you to get all the facts about the situation with which we are faced. That is why I have had General Smith and General Bradley here to talk with you today. I want you to know the facts on which these estimates are based."

The President continued that he and everybody else in the Government had been trying very hard to keep the trouble in the Far East from spreading and that he had been in day and night conferences with people from State and Defense to make sure that the program he was sending to Congress was the right kind of program that would meet the situation and give us the defenses we need.

The President said he hoped that Congress would find time to handle other important matters that related to the national defense.

The President pointed out again that it was important that these appropriations be provided promptly because the military procurement program had been stepped up about a year and a half.

"We are trying to get ready by mid-52 what we wanted for mid-51."

Senator Bridges asked if the funds which had already been provided had been committed.

The President responded that they had.

Senator Wherry asked if he had understood correctly that the President was going to send up a Message, as well as the routine appropriation request.

The President said that was correct but that he had wanted it for the members of Congress to hear from him first before they read about it in the newspapers. Also, he wanted them to hear about the military situation.

Congressman Mahon asked if his understanding was correct, that this estimate was as far as the President wanted to go at this time.

The President said that was correct, that the $17 billion he was asking for today was as much as he could take at this time. "I'll come down in January with the '52 budget and other things."

Senator Wherry asked if he understood correctly that this was a supplemental estimate and that next year we would have a new military budget.

The President said that was correct.
Senator Wiley remarked that he had noticed that Berlin was coming to Washington.

Senator Connally interrupted to say that it was Aden, not Berlin, who was coming.

Senator Wiley wanted to know if there was any assurance from our Allies that there was some hope, that in case the Russians hit Europe we could expect real cooperation from the Europeans.

The President said of course we had that hope and we had definite assurances from the Allies that they would stick with us. All of our program, he continued, is to strengthen our Allies.

Representative Teber asked if most of the supplemental estimate of $17 billion was for United States forces, or was most of it for these Allies.

The President said it was mostly for the United States.

Budget Director Lawton remarked that all of it was for the United States.

The President asked all those in the room to remember that the information they had been told was extremely secret.

"Don't tell anybody — not even your wives, what you heard here today is something I don't even hear unless I push these people into telling me."
Senator Connally concurred and said he thought everybody ought to be very careful not to talk when they left this meeting.

We can't talk, the Senator said, about the military briefing, and all the figures about appropriations will be in the President's Message.

Senator Russell said that he was sorry he had heard all he had heard — he didn't think he talked in his sleep and he hoped he wouldn't tonight.

The President closed the meeting by remarking again that all the information, except the Budget figures, had been top secret and he wanted everybody to remember that. He thanked the members of Congress for having come down to the White House.