TOP-SECRET
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: November 21, 1950

SUBJECT: Situation in Korea
(Notes on meeting in Pentagon, 2:30 PM)

PARTICIPANTS: Secretary Marshall
Mr. Lovett
Mr. Harriman
General Bradley
General Collins
General Vandenberg
Admiral Sherman
Mr. Face
Mr. Acheson
Mr. Hark
Mr. Matthews
Mr. Jessup

COPIES TO:
The Secretary
Mr. Matthews
Mr. Hark
Mr. Nitsch

SECRETARY ACHESON outlined the situation in accordance with the memorandum which had been prepared.

MR. LOVETT said they had received nothing from General MacArthur to indicate he could not accomplish his mission. He inquired about the attitude of other members of the UN and whether we could count on their continuing support.

SECRETARY ACHESON and Mr. HURST pointed out the anxiety which other friendly members of the UN felt about our becoming more deeply involved perhaps finally in war with Communist China.

GENERAL MARSHALL expressed satisfaction that Mr. Acheson had stated his belief that General MacArthur should push forward with the planned offensive. He expressed some doubt about the establishment of the zone and assured that if one were established south of the River another would have to be established to the north. If there were a UN Commission in the zone it would have to have military protection. He preferred to consider first the political action based on the premise that General MacArthur will succeed in his pending military offensive. The time for making political proposals would be after MacArthur had had such a success.

SECRETARY
SECRETARY AHMEDON pointed to the possibility that there might be partial success without either complete success or failure. He noted that we had discouraged the UK from pressing its proposal for a zone. He noted the difficulty of securing agreement on a demilitarized zone on both sides of the border. The zone on the south side only would be better than continuing the war but we would want to be sure that the zone was not being used for the build-up of further Chinese forces.

MR. LLOYDT raised the question whether instead of negotiating for a zone it would not be better as a matter of fact if General MacArthur withdrew to a defensible line after pressing his offensive forward successfully to the River.

SECRETARY AHMEDON stressed the need for finding a way of terminating the Chinese intervention in the war and also stressed the sensitive area of the northeast province from the Soviet point of view. From the point of view of our partners in the UN, it is desirable to find some kind of an agreement and we are searching for something which would be useful instead of harmful to General MacArthur.

GENERAL MARSHALL stressed again the desirability of our making proposals while the UN forces are advancing instead of waiting until other members of the UN advance proposals which might be unacceptable.

GENERAL VANDERBERG, at this point and later, emphasized his doubt whether we could find any solution which would satisfy the Chinese Communists, particularly in view of the Secretary's interpretation of their long-range fears.

SECRETARY AHMEDON suggested the possibility of some kind of UN assurances which might suffice for the present and give us time. We do not have an interminable responsibility for the relations between Korea and China.

GENERAL HALEY, GENERAL COLLINS and GENERAL VANDERBERG discussed from a military point of view the probable positions which it would be advantageous to hold. They agreed that it would not be useful to hold the line at the River but rather the high ground back of the River.

GENERAL COLLINS pointed out on the map a line, perhaps beginning with a small river which comes in about ten miles east of the mouth of the Yalu and then following the high ground which runs at a distance from ten to twenty-five miles back of the River. This line would be followed up to the main bend in the frontier which has now been reached by our forces, after which the line could come down more or less directly to the Coast.

ADMIRAL SHRIEMAN emphasized the sensitivity of the Russians to the region near the Siberian frontier and the desirability of alleviating Russian anxieties lest they in turn put the heat on the Chinese to maintain their intervention.
GENERAL MARSHALL indicated that patrols would probably be utilized in the area beyond the high ground on the River boundary and that ROK forces could be used for this.

GENERAL COLLINS suggested that General MacArthur, after the attack is well launched and is succeeding, could announce that it was his intention only to go forward to destroy the North Korean units and that he intended to hold the high ground overlooking the Taku with ROK forces, assigning the rest of the UN forces to rear areas while elections were being held and the government being set up.

MR. JOSEPH queried whether there was any real difference between the space between the high ground on the River which the Chiefs had referred to and the zone to which Secretary Acheson had originally referred.

There was then considerable discussion of the relative advantages of an announcement of intention as against a negotiated arrangement.

MR. LOWETT thought it would be weakness if we burdened ourselves with self-imposed limitations without a negotiated settlement.

GENERAL VANDERBERG seemed to share this view.

SECRETARY ACHESON stressed that if we could get the Chinese Communists to take through negotiation what we would do any way (namely, holding the line of the high ground) that would be very satisfactory. One could defer until later the details about administration of the area between the line held and the River. It might be possible to ignore the status of this area.

GENERAL MARSHALL stressed his belief that we should take the initiative in suggesting a solution and not wait until somebody else had proposed something. He seemed to favor the possibility of an announcement of intention by General MacArthur either formally or informally through the press. This could be followed by negotiation.

MR. HARRISON also stressed the sensitivity of the northeast area near the Soviet frontier.

After Secretary Acheson, General Marshall and Mr. Harrison withdrew, the conversation continued without introducing major new elements in the Korean situation. The Chiefs seemed to agree that if it was decided that it would be desirable to concentrate on the line which General Collins had indicated, some changes in MacArthur's directive would be desirable in order to assure him that he did not need to occupy all of the rest of the territory. They all seemed to be agreed on the importance of leaving the northeast province alone.
There was a brief discussion of what would happen if General MacArthur's offensive bogged down. There was no consensus on what could be done at that time.

ADVISER SHIRAHAMA, supported by General Vandenberg, took the view that we would probably have to tell the Chinese Communists that they must either quit or we would have to hit them in Manchuria.

There seemed to be some agreement with the view that as an expedient through the winter one could hold back a line which would be the desirable objective and that this would not represent a defeat.

GENERAL COLLINS particularly, but the other Chiefs as well, stressed their concern with the long-range future and the need for getting our divisions out in order to use them elsewhere. This led to some talk about the possible increase of FMX forces.

GENERAL BRADLEY said that MacArthur contemplated leaving ten divisions, of which he now had about eight, and that this reached more or less the limit of FMX capacity.

GENERAL COLLINS, supported by the other Chiefs, strongly rejected the possibility of using units from other countries.

Mr. Lovett raised the question of the possible use of Chinese Nationalists under such circumstances.

Mr. RusK suggested that this would have to be weighed from a military point of view against the need for these forces to defend Formosa or their ultimate use against south China.

Mr. Jessup suggested the employment of Chinese Nationalist forces in Korea would almost certainly lead to full involvement in hostilities with the Chinese Communists.

Mr. RusK pointed out that it was most likely that the British would refuse to have their troops fight along side of Chinese Nationalists against the Chinese Communists and suggested that 10,000 British troops were of more value than 30,000 Chinese in Korea.

Mr. Batting asked whether this would not indicate that we should find some other way to raise more American troops so that we would be in a position to send the expected divisions to Europe provided we could not draw two divisions from Korea as had been planned. He pointed to the great importance from the aspect of the German situation of getting American forces into Europe as soon as possible.

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There was general agreement with this but GENERAL COLLINS said they were clear that they should not attempt to send National Guard units overseas and that they did not have sufficient Regular Army units readily available here.

SECRETARY FACE said they had been worried about this situation.

GENERAL COLLINS said they probably could send one armored division to Europe.

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