



# **Whirlybirds: U.S. Marine Helicopters in Korea: Marines in the Korean War Commemorative Series**

*Ronald J Brown*

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On Sunday, 25 June 1950, Communist North Korea unexpectedly invaded its southern neighbor, the American-backed Republic of Korea (ROK). The poorly equipped ROK Army was no match for the well prepared North Korean People's Army (NKPA) whose armored spearheads quickly thrust across the 38th Parallel. The stunned world helplessly looked on as the out-numbered and outgunned South Koreans were quickly routed. With the fall of the capital city of Seoul imminent, President Harry S. Truman ordered General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief, Far East, in Tokyo, to immediately pull all American nationals in South Korea out of harm's way. During the course of the resultant noncombatant evacuation operations an unmanned American transport plane was destroyed on the ground and a flight of U.S. Air Force aircraft were buzzed by a North Korean Air Force plane over the Yellow Sea without any shots being fired. On 27 July, an American combat air patrol protecting Kimpo Airfield near the South Korean capital actively engaged menacing North Korean planes and promptly downed three of the five Soviet-built Yak fighters. Soon thereafter American military forces operating under the auspices of the United Nations Command (UNC) were committed to thwart a Communist takeover of South Korea. Thus, only four years and nine months after V-J Day marked the end of World War II, the United States was once again involved in a shooting war in Asia.

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