

TASK FORCE SMITH, SOUTH KOREA
3rd BCD-K STAFF RIDE
By Tyrone D. Scott, Staff Historian UNC/CFC/USFK

On Friday July 1st the 3rd Battlefield Coordination Detachment-Korea (3rd BCD-K) conducted a Staff Ride at the Task Force Smith battle site. Their duty station is Osan Air Base, a few miles away from the site. The detachment is a Combined Forces Command (CFC) unit that is composed of American and Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) Soldiers. Therefore, the ROKA members also participated in the Staff Ride with the assistance of their interpreter. The 3rd BCD-K synchronizes air support from the Korean Air Operations Center at Osan Air Base with ground forces. They visited the site of the first U.S. Army engagement with the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) almost 61 years to the day of the battle.

Dr. Lewis Bernstein, United Nations Command (UNC)/Combined Forces Command (CFC)/United States Forces Korea (USFK) Command Historian and Mr. Tyrone Scott, UNC/CFC/USFK Staff Historian, supported the event as subject matter experts. USFK Regulation 870-1 directs the Command History Office to support unit commanders and staff chiefs by offering professional development activities like staff rides. The Staff Ride is a professional development opportunity for Service-Members serving in Combat Arms, Combat Support, or Combat Service Support roles.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles B. Smith led the delaying force identified as Task Force Smith. He set up a defensive position three miles north of Osan with about 540 Soldiers

on July 5th, 1950. Task Force Smith had no armor, no effective antitank weapons, and no air support. The NKPA overwhelmed Task Force Smith with troops and armor. The engagement lasted about eight hours and resulted in an American defeat. Colonel Smith mustered only 250 Soldiers the next day, which was approximately half of his original force.

3rd BCD-K Commander, Colonel David A. Danikowski, said, "To accomplish a staff ride that's more than just a tour we had to prepare in advance. The officers, NCO's and Soldiers did great work to research the tactics, the strategic setting, the operational conditions, the enemy forces, the equipment they had, and the conditions they were facing. Having that background when we came to the physical site we would appreciate not only what happened; but also some of the emotional connection to the Soldiers and the hardships that they faced; also an appreciation for the terrain."

Sergeant First Class (SFC) Rufus Irick, 3rd BCD-K Plans and Targeting NCO, recognized benefits of the Staff Ride. He noted one of them was, "...being able to actually take a look at what happened in the past and being able to apply the lessons learned then to what we do today." Warrant Officer (WO 4) Scott Ketchuck, added, "The results were very good because we portioned off tasks; logistics, fire support, and a strategic overview of Korea."

Overall, the 3rd BCD-K enriched their team cohesion and enhanced their practical application of Army Doctrine on the Task Force Smith Staff Ride.



Major Jong Suk Kim (ROKA and in the center), 3rd BCD-K Assistant Operations Officer, asks a question through the interpreter, PFC Hyung Jin Lee (ROKA), to Dr. Bernstein about Task Force Smith.



Colonel Tae Baek Lee (ROKA and in the center), 3rd BCD-K Deputy Commander, asks a question through the interpreter, PFC Hyung Jin Lee (ROKA), to Dr. Bernstein about Task Force Smith.



Interpreter, PFC Hyung Jin Lee (ROKA and in the center), provides translation of English and Korean questions and comments at Task Force Smith.



3rd BCD-K Commander, Colonel David A. Danikowski, provides an overview of the Task Force Smith Staff Ride to his unit.



Dr. Lewis Bernstein (Center) answers questions from 3rd BCD-K members during the Task Force Smith Staff Ride.



Sergeant First Class (SFC) Rufus Irick (Left) provides a synopsis of the significant events that occurred during the July 1950 Task Force Smith battle.