

Korean War - Summary

- a. In 1949 the Soviets had tested an atomic bomb; U.S. started work on the hydrogen bomb, and the race was on
- b. Following WWII the Korean Peninsula had been split into 2 parts on the 38th parallel. The Soviets held the North and the US controlled the South. Both set up governments. Kim Il-Sung asked permission from the Soviets and then attacked South Korea in June 1950.
- c. Truman felt that if the US did not respond other nations would fall to the Communists. He sent General MacArthur to defend South Korea, and asked the United Nations to hear the matter. The Soviets boycotted the UN meeting and the UN authorized the use of force against North Korea.
- d. War was never declared or approved by Congress – Truman declared the fighting a “UN Police Action”.
- e. By early September the UN troops had been pushed back into the SE corner of S Korea.
- f. MacArthur counterattacked at Inchon on Sept. 27 and forced the Communists back to the 38th parallel.
- g. China warned the US if it pushed the attack into N. Korea it would counter-attack, MacArthur thought they were bluffing and pushed into N. Korea on November 24. On November 26 the Chinese counterattacked and moved into S Korea.
- h. MacArthur felt that all-out war should be pursued and publicly stated that the atomic bomb should be dropped on China (killing the peace talks that were ongoing)
- i. Truman wanted a war with the limited goal of stopping Communist expansion – MacArthur disagreed often and very vocally. Truman fired MacArthur for insubordination.
- j. Most Americans supported MacArthur, and a Congressional committee was formed to look into Truman’s actions.
- k. The UN force pushed the Chinese and N Koreans back to the 38th parallel. A peace treaty was signed setting up new borders for N and S Korea that were virtually identical to where they were before the war.