



“The Frontlines of Freedom”: *The 1967 Incident at Guard Post Ouellette and the Military Armistice Commission*

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Abstract

The Korean War Armistice Agreement established the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) as a boundary and buffer zone between the two Koreas. While the DMZ operates as a core space for the armistice system on the Korean Peninsula, it is also a space where that Armistice Agreement is violated, such as by the concentration of military forces and military clashes. This article examines the laws and agencies regulating the DMZ and the Armistice Agreement by examining the conflict at Guard Post Ouellette. GP Ouellette sits about 50m from the MDL and in the Military Armistice Commission Headquarters Area at Panmunjom. In April 1967, just below GP Ouellette, five North Korean soldiers were killed for violating the MDL. This article examines the political and military symbolism of GP Ouellette and the clash between North Korean and American forces that occurred there, examining the Armistice Agreement and subsequent agreements, as well as the working methods and vulnerabilities of related organizations (Military Armistice Commission and Joint Observer Teams). It is argued that these institutional limitations have made possible the militarization of the DMZ and are the major causes behind the instability of both the DMZ and the armistice.

Keywords: Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), Panmunjom, Joint Security Area (JSA), Military Armistice Commission Headquarters Area (MACHA), Guard Post Ouellette, Armistice system on the Korean Peninsula, Armistice Agreement, United Nations Command (UNC), Joint Observer Team (JOT), Cold War

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Introduction

The Korean War left behind three legacies: a document in the form of the Armistice Agreement, the space known as the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), and the actor known as United Nations Command (UNC). The space of the DMZ is regulated by the comprehensive and legally binding document known as the Armistice Agreement, and the agency maintaining this includes the Military Armistice Commission (MAC), to which both the North Korea side (North Korean People's Army and Chinese People's Volunteers) and the UNC are parties. But, as it is well known, the Armistice Agreement has become a dead letter, and much time has passed since the MAC ceased to operate.¹ For this reason, south of the DMZ, the UNC regulations that solidified the Armistice Agreement and the MAC's subsequent agreements have become the de facto regulations enforcing the armistice and regulating the DMZ (Hahn 2020).

What was the reason behind the nullification of the Armistice Agreement, which stipulated the DMZ's existence, and what were the consequences of such a change? While the direct acts of military force by both North and South Korea and North Korea's withdrawal from the Military Armistice Commission in 1994 were decisive factors (Yi 2001; Choi 2003), we must not forget that such a breakdown came despite the MAC and its subsequent agreements. This is because while the MAC adhered to and monitored the Armistice Agreement, later agreements altered the Armistice Agreement. For instance, when both the North Korean and UNC parties of the MAC swiftly agreed to the militarization of DMZ civil police and the downsizing of Joint Observer Teams (JOT), they increased the likelihood of military clashes, and simultaneously stymied their capacity to investigate such occurrences.

One axis of DMZ infringements was the North Koreans and the UNC.

1. However, the Armistice Agreement's regulatory power and matters regarding responsibility of the MDL, the DMZ, and the five West Sea islands remain recognized. Additionally, despite North Korea's non-participation (from 1994) in the Military Armistice Commission, the UNC continues to maintain the MAC. See Choi (2004) and Hyo-won Lee (2012).

Generally, it is easy to believe that these are military clashes between North and South Korean forces, and it is the UNC and ROK-US alliance's job to control them. Of course, aspects of that are true, but military clashes and tensions along the DMZ are not as one-sided as they may seem. While it is clear that the DMZ was once a site of military clashes and conflict between North and South Korea, it was equally the site of clashes between North Korean troops and those of the UNC. Each side clashed directly and militarily with the other along the DMZ, and each time there was a violation of the Armistice Agreement, both used the MAC as an opportunity to censure and protest the other, leading to further tensions.

This article discusses the incident at Guard Post Ouellette, a clash between North Korean troops and UNC forces (de facto USFK) that took place in 1967. The incident at Guard Post Ouellette presents an extremely critical case for understanding the MAC's subsequent agreements, the militarization of the DMZ, and how violations of the armistice were handled and conducted. Guard Post Ouellette is a guard post (GP) directly overseen by UN forces, is located merely a few hundred meters from the Joint Security Area (JSA), and is one of the destinations many sitting US presidents have visited following 1990, as well as being a platform for them to speak to North Korea and the world. That is, the incident at Guard Post Ouellette can be regarded as an illustrative case of how two core stipulations of the Armistice Agreement—the space of the DMZ and the agency that administrated it—operated in reality, what their limitations were, while also showing the complex character of the UNC as both a supervisor of the armistice and one axis of military clashes.

In large part, the primary focus of research related to the MAC to date has been on its capacity and purpose or on the forms of clashes. Yi Mun-hang, a former special advisor to the UNC and war archivist and analyst for the MAC, kept a record of his experiences, creating a record of the incidents and atmosphere surrounding Panmunjom as well as the number of cases in which either side went to the MAC to accuse the other of violating the Armistice Agreement (Yi 2001). Using the *Analysis of Transcripts of Meetings of the Military Armistice Commission* (1980) summarized by the National Unification Board, Kim Bo-yeong summarized the central issues brought

before the MAC in the 1960s as being the fortification of military power, the militarization of the DMZ, and the infiltration of spies (2003). In his edited volume, Kim Yong-hyeon analyzed articles in the *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Rodong sinmun* and found that in the years between the 1953 ceasefire and 2000, military clashes between North and South Korea primarily took the form transgressions of the land, aerial, and maritime demarcation lines, local provocations and shellings, and injuries and deaths (2018).

In a different vein, Hong Seok-ryul used the Panmunjom axe murder incident, among others, to analyze the complicated relationship between South Korea and the United States, suggesting that the institutional agencies for peace on the Korean Peninsula have been ineffectual (2003). Park Tae-kyun used the United States' renunciation of paragraph 13, subparagraph (d) of the Armistice Agreement to analyze the introduction of new weapons to Korea and the atrophying of the activities of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Committee (2003). Both Hong Seok-ryul and Park Tae-kyun's studies are significant in that they historically clarify the systemic instability of the Korean Armistice Agreement. The current study carries on in the same vein as these two aforementioned works. In addition to this, the causes and actors of DMZ conflict in the late 1960s are to be found in the structural, historical, and institutional backgrounds. In particular, as the structural background of Guard Post Ouellette incident, I analyze the agreement following the Armistice Agreement in terms of the transformation of the Armistice Agreement, with attention given to the Vietnam War and President Johnson's visit to Korea as the historical background. In this, I attempt to discern the limitations of the Military Armistice Commission as the cause of the crisis.

This article is the first study to discuss incidents that occurred at the guard posts within the Military Armistice Commission's headquarter region along the DMZ, as well as related laws and agencies that contextualize those incidents. Focusing on incidents that took place at Guard Post Ouellette and the surrounding area, this study examines how the Military Armistice Commission was established according to the Armistice Agreement, and how it then supplemented and/or modified the Armistice Agreement, as it maintained the DMZ, as well as how it handled violations of the ceasefire

agreement. First, by looking at the visits paid to Guard Post Ouellette by US presidents and the messages delivered there, I examine the politico-military symbolism of this particular guard post and attempt to uncover the make-up and meaning of the Military Armistice Commission's Headquarters Area (MACHA) based on the GP's location and standing. Next, I examine the causes of military clashes between North Korean forces and US forces at this location, as well as how they were handled. In uncovering the causes of such incidents, I analyze the subsequent agreements of the MAC, and while following the procedure for handling these incidents, I elucidate the significance of the MAC's administration of the armistice, as well as its limitations. That is, I endeavor to shine a light on the ineffectuality of the subsequent agreements to the Armistice Agreement and the limitations of the agencies that supervised it.

The primary resources that I use are newspapers from South and North Korea, transcripts of meetings of the Military Armistice Commission, reports of the Joint Observer Teams, and official US government documents. In particular, despite the transcripts of MAC meetings being the most crucial for the analysis of the supervision of the ceasefire by the MAC following the signing of the Armistice Agreement, these have yet to be fully used in any research. This is also the case for JOT reports. This study makes the first use of the transcripts of the MAC meetings and JOT reports² to look at the subsequent agreements related to the DMZ, and the MAC's procedures for handling infractions of the DMZ and armistice. In addition, I utilize articles from North and South Korean newspaper, materials from the US Department of State, materials from the libraries of US presidents

2. Military Armistice Commission (MAC) Meetings, RG 59, Records of Korean Armistice Agencies, 1953–1974 [Entry A1 5420] (hereafter designated with *n*th iteration and date of meeting); "Meeting of Joint Observer Team Number Two Military Demarcation Line Marker Number 0109," April 7, 1967, RG 554, Korean Armistice Implementation Records, 1951–1980, Team 2: Minutes of Meetings of Joint Observer Teams, 1953–1967; United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission, Office of the Secretariat, "From Joint Observer Team Number Nine to The Military Armistice Commission," August 17, 1953, Significant JOT Investigations 1954, RG 554, Korean Armistice Implementation Records, 1951–1980, General Records, 1951–1957.

who visited the DMZ, while also cross-analyzing UNC regulation 551-4 to examine the standing and incidents of Guard Post Ouellette, as well as the MAC's administration of the armistice.

“The Frontlines of Freedom”

North Korea Facing the DMZ: “Why the USFK Exists”

On June 30, 2019, US President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in visited Panmunjom and GP Ouellette in the DMZ. It was the first time that the leaders of South Korea and the United States had visited this place jointly. The media gave meaning to it as not a warning message to North Korea, but as a message emphasizing peace on the Korean Peninsula.³ Following this, the two leaders headed to Panmunjom via Camp Bonifas. That afternoon, Trump became the first sitting US president to cross the Military Demarcation Line, thus beginning the Koreas-US DMZ summit, and the North Korea-US summit.

However, Trump was not the first US president to visit Panmunjom or GP Ouellette. A total of five sitting American presidents have visited the DMZ: Ronald Reagan (November 1983), Bill Clinton (July 1993), George W. Bush (February 2002), Barack Obama (March 2012), and Donald Trump (June 2019). All visited Guard Post Ouellette, with the exception of Reagan, who visited Guard Post Collier. However, the purpose and message of past presidential visits to Panmunjom and GP Ouellette were very different from that of President Trump in 2019.

Ronald Reagan was the first US president to visit the DMZ. Reagan arrived at Camp Liberty Bell (now Camp Bonifas), belonging to the US Army's 2nd Infantry Division, where he attended church service, then headed to Guard Post Collier. What Reagan emphasized during his visit to

3. “Han-mi jeongsang, choejeonbang gyeonggye choso ouellet-e cheot gongdong bangmun” (Korea-US summit, First Joint Visit to Ouellette, the Front-line Guard Post), *Hankook ilbo*, June 30, 2019. <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201906301791098026>.

Camp Liberty Bell and Guard Post Collier was a warning to North Korea, the position of US forces as being "on the frontlines of freedom," and the sacrifice of two US Army officers in the Panmunjom axe murder incident of August 1976. He called the DMZ "proof of the relationship between strength and freedom." Reagan then contrasted South and North Korea, the former a free world "where energy and prosperity abound," the latter a "communist system based on hatred and oppression."⁴ Reagan's perceptions of and approach to the DMZ as reflected in his comments there was repeated in subsequent visits to the area by sitting US presidents.

In July 1993, Bill Clinton visited Guard Post Ouellette and the Panmunjom Joint Security Area. A decade had passed since Reagan's visit to Guard Post Collier, and four months had passed since in March 1993 when North Korea had declared its withdrawal from the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Guard Post Ouellette was located one kilometer north of Guard Post Collier and only 50 meters from the Military Demarcation Line. Clinton's visit was essentially the closest any sitting American president had come to North Korea. When subsequent US presidents visited the DMZ, they followed Clinton's precedent and went to Guard Post Ouellette, the closest GP to the MDL.

Clinton visited the GP's watchtower and observed North Korea's Kijeong-dong (Ki Jong Dong) and the DMZ area through a telescope. He remarked that "anyone who has been here knows why we are stationed here," and adding, "we should be proud of our forces stationed here." After returning from Guard Post Ouellette, Clinton visited the Bridge of No Return, then heard a history of the 1976 Panmunjom axe murder incident. Finally, he sent a threatening message regarding North Korea developing nuclear capabilities, remarking, "If they ever try to use them [nuclear weapons], it would be the end of their country" (*Kyunghyang shinmun*, July 13, 1993).

George W. Bush visited Guard Post Ouellette on February 2, 2002, one

4. "Remarks to American Troops at Camp Liberty Bell, Republic of Korea," <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-american-troops-camp-liberty-bell-republic-korea>.

year into his presidency. This was one month after spotlighting North Korea as part of an “axis of evil” in his State of the Union address. At a joint press conference with South Korean president Kim Dae-jung, Bush called North Korea a regime that possessed the world’s most dangerous weapons, and openly indicated hostility by remarking that the United States “mustn’t allow them to threaten us.” However, the same day at Dorasan Station, part of the project to restore the Gyeongui rail line, he signed a railroad sleeper: “May this railroad unite Korean families.”

Ten years later, on March 25, 2012, President Barack Obama visited Camp Bonifas and GP Ouellette. He was about to run for re-election. To troops at Camp Bonifas, he remarked, “You are at freedom’s frontier,” continuing, “the contrast between South Korea and North Korea could not be clearer, could not be starker, both in terms of freedom, but also in terms of prosperity.”⁵ Though Obama’s trip to Panmunjom came 30 years after Reagan’s, their perceptions and remarks were nearly identical.

Incumbent presidents of the United States, without exception, emphasized the North Korean threat, the protection of liberalism, and the sacrifice of the US military at the JSA in Panmunjom. The camps and GPs they visited were all given names symbolizing the protection of freedom against communist aggression. Camp Bonifas, which began as Camp Liberty Bell, was renamed after Arthur G. Bonifas, a victim of the Panmunjom axe murder incident, on the tenth anniversary of that incident in 1986. Ouellette and Collier GPs are named after Joseph Ouellette and Gilbert G. Collier, who were killed in the Korean War. Ouellette and Collier were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration awarded by the United States government to military personnel. In other words, the GPs and guard battalion camps in the Panmunjom area visited by US presidents were all places that reaffirmed the North Korean threat and the reason for the existence of US forces in Korea. The Panmunjom JSA was a symbol of

5. At a joint press conference after the summit between US and Korea that same day, Obama contrasted the standards of living in North and South Korea, stressing the superiority of the liberal system (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/03/25/remarks-president-obama-and-president-lee-myung-bak-joint-press-conferen>).

Korean division and a corridor for overcoming that division, but the United States used the Panmunjom JSA as a place to reaffirm the legitimacy of the UNC (the de facto US Forces Korea).

United Nations Command Guard Posts in the Military Armistice Commission’s Headquarters Area

What made Guard Post Ouellette so special that it became a required stop on visits of sitting American presidents to Korea? Let us take a look at the guard post’s location and objective. Figure 1 shows a simplified map of the Military Armistice Commission Headquarters Area as set forth in UNC Regulation 551-4 (2019). This map clearly illustrates the locations of the Joint Security Area, the KPA MACHA and UNC MACHA, and the UNC’s guard posts.

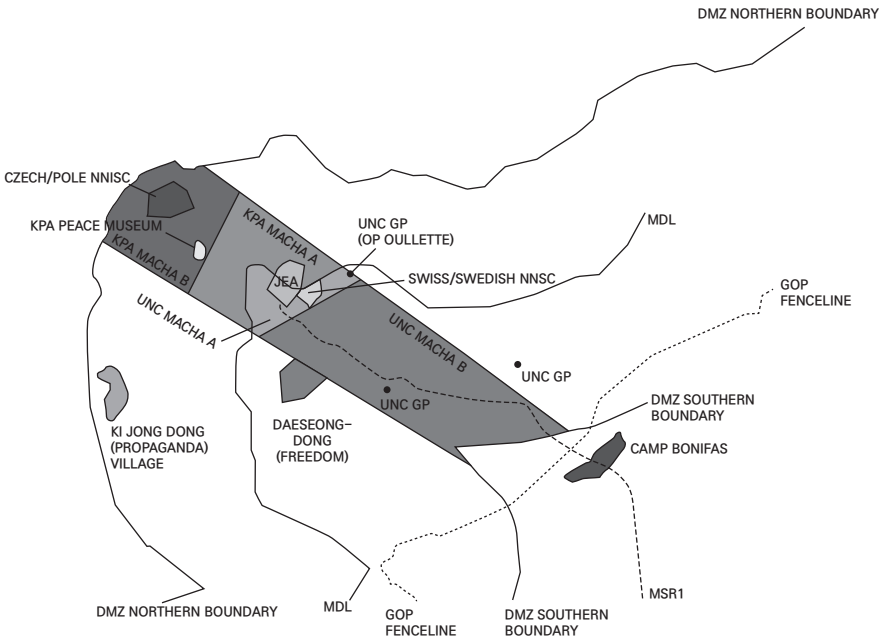


Figure 1. Military Armistice Commission Headquarters Area

Source: UNC REG. 551-4, May 13, 2019.

The place marked as the “Joint Security Area” is what is commonly referred to as Panmunjom, which is bisected by the Military Demarcation Line. There, North Korean People’s Army (KPA) and UNC forces perform joint security. This is where the main and secondary conference rooms for the MAC, as well as the NNSC (Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission) meeting room are located. To the south of these are the Peace House and Freedom House, and to its north is Panmungak. This latter is the site of the 1976 Panmunjom axe murder incident often referenced by US presidents, and is where the 2018 inter-Korean summit and 2019 Korea-United States summit took place. Up until now, the Joint Security Area has been the center of attention, but the MACHA encompasses a much larger area than just the JSA. In fact, the JSA is a particular zone installed within MACHA Sector A, where there are meeting rooms for use by the administrators of the armistice, where both the sides of the MDL are guarded by their respective forces.

The Military Armistice Commission Headquarters Area was established by the Armistice Agreement and agreements by the Military Armistice Commission.⁶ It is an area stretching from the JSA to the Southern Limit Line and the Northern Limit Line—that is, an area 1.5 to 1.7 kilometers wide blocked off within the DMZ. The area is divided into the KPA MACHA and the UNC MACHA. The road labelled “MSR 1” is state highway 1, stretching between Munsan and Kaesong. The MACHA is divided into Sectors A and B, with Guard Post Ouellette lying on the border of the UNC Sector A. The MACHA is “less than 900 meters from the Joint Security Area, and not more than 600 meters from the Swedish/Swiss Camp of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission.”⁷ The UNC GP located in Sector B is Guard Post Collier, which Reagan visited. Camp Bonifas was situated directly south of the Southern Limit Line. Daeseong-dong runs

6. The Armistice Agreement laid out that “the military Armistice Commission shall locate its headquarters in the vicinity of Panmunjom” (paragraph 25), and on this basis, the Military Armistice Commission established the “Agreement on the Military Armistice Commission Headquarters Area, its safety, and the reduction of it,” in the 25th Military Armistice Commission Meeting of October 19, 1953.

7. 243rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, April 8, 1967.

along the western face of the UNC MACHA.

In the UNC MACHA, both Guard Post Ouellette and Guard Post Collier are UNC GPs. UNC Regulation 551-4 (2019) defines GPs as structures where "UNC flags are to be flown" and "with the predominant purpose to provide a fighting position in case of KPA infiltration."⁸ That is to say, these two GPs have the purpose of providing a tactical position in the event of battle. In addition, the 2nd Infantry Division stationed at Camp Bonifas only 400m away from the Southern Limit Line directly supervises it under the name of the UNC security battalion.

Of these facilities, Guard Post Ouellette lies directly adjacent to the MDL. Depending on the source, its distance from the MDL is given as anywhere between 25 to 80 meters,⁹ which shows just how close the GP lies to the MDL. Essentially, if a person were to come down from the GP, they would be met with the MDL. For this reason, it would be easy for anyone on either side to mistakenly cross the MDL in this area directly north of the GP. Such was the case when on December 7, 1979, US soldiers switching shifts lost their way, and ended up crossing the MDL and wandering into a North Korean minefield, ending with a casualty (Yi 2001, 210). When, at approximately two a.m. on August 28, 1982, PFC Joseph T. White, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division, defected to North Korea, he did so in the vicinity of Guard Post Ouellette (Neff 2019).

In sum, as a post administrated by the UNC with the purpose of providing a fighting position, Guard Post Ouellette belongs to the MACHA Sector A. Additionally, all sitting US presidents after the 1990s visited the GP and looked out toward North Korea. For them, the DMZ and Guard Post Ouellette constituted the frontlines where a hostile regime and the free

8. UNC Reg. 551-4, May 13, 2019, 56.

9. Different sources have described the distance differently. The *Hankyoreh* described it as 25 meters (March 25, 2012), the *Kyunghyang shinmun* claimed 50 meters (July 13, 1993). However, at the time of the incident there, North Korea claimed the distance to be 80 meters at the 243rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting (April 8, 1967). Later extensions to the guard post mean that there is a possibility that the distance between it and the MDL has diminished.

world touched. By visiting a GP only 50 meters from North Korea, these presidents pressured North Korea and highlighted the justification and necessity of US forces in Korea. To these sitting American presidents, the DMZ and Guard Post Ouellette were a space that flaunted the superiority of the free world and the ROK-US alliance. While the post-Cold War era was ensuing across the globe, US leaders used their visits to the DMZ to justify and stress the Cold War—North and South Korea as symbolic of the contest between communism and liberalism, the superiority of the free world, and justification of the presence of USFK.

Occurrence and Questions Regarding the GP Ouellette Incident of April 1967

This site that US presidents proclaimed to be the frontline of freedom, and where they justified the presence of US forces in Korea and the US-Korea alliance, located closest to the MDL and within Sector A of the Military Armistice Commission Headquarters Area under the jurisdiction of the UNC security battalion, was also the scene of a North Korean soldier's death after a shoot-out between UNC and KAP forces.

Though it is hardly known, this incident at Guard Post Ouellette was quite shocking at the time. This was because for 50 minutes on April 5, 1967, a shoot-out involving automatic firearms ensued at a guard post near Panmunjom, ultimately resulting in more than one death. What ensued were “the worst tensions in the 13 years since the ceasefire,”¹⁰ and North Korea, which suffered the casualties, was even more aghast, proclaiming, “[we] must make the provocateur pay a thousand times over.”¹¹ On April 6, 1967, the press office of North Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs called an immediate press conference regarding this incident, gathering foreign reporters and ambassadors and asserting that North Korean civil police

10. *Kyunghyang shinmun*, April 8, 1967.

11. *Rodong sinmun*, April 8, 1967.

officers were had been killed by US forces.¹² Funerals for the dead North Korean soldiers were held in Pyongyang on April 7. Commander of the North Korean People's Army, Ho Bong-hak, gave the eulogy. Also in attendance were the chief secretary of the Hwanghaebuk-do Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, chief secretary of the Kaesong City Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, chair of the Hamgyeongbuk-do People's Committee, chair of the Kaesong People's Committee, along with other high-ups in the party, organizations of political authority, and social organizations, in addition to military personnel, laborers, farmers, and young students. A large number of floral wreaths, including one from Kim Il-sung, were present.¹³ And mass rallies decrying the US military's aggression were held in major cities in North Korea until April 10.¹⁴ While the incident at Guard Post Ouellette was quite the focus of people's attention at the time, it was quickly forgotten by all parties: North Korea, South Korea, and the United States. Why did the shoot-out at Guard Post Ouellette occur, and how was it handled? Where did things go awry?

At 1:30 in the afternoon on April 5, 1967, North Korean DMZ security guards mistakenly crossed the Military Demarcation Line. This was discovered by US forces in the area and Guard Post Ouellette, which stands high overlooking the DMZ and Panmunjom. UNC forces shot at the North Koreans, leading to a firefight. As a result, five North Korean military police were killed, and one injured.¹⁵ Though the case seemed simple enough, UNC and KAP assertions about the details of the occurrence and responsibility, as well as how it was to be handled differed as starkly as those in the film *Rashomon* (1950).

First, let us look at the account of North Korea, which suffered five deaths in the engagement. North Korea asserted that seven of their civil police officers were performing their regular patrol, when US soldiers, who

12. *Rodong sinmun*, April 7, 1967.

13. *Rodong sinmun*, April 8, 1967.

14. *Rodong sinmun*, April 9, 1967; April 11, 1967.

15. Though Mun-hang Yi did not document the event in detail, he did write of it: "North Korean police who had mistakenly crossed the MDL by about 10 meters shot at the guard post and were killed" (Yi 2001, 245).

were staked out, and those in the US guard post used machine guns and automatic firearms to fire hundreds of rounds. As a result, they claimed, five civil police were killed, and one injured.¹⁶ Furthermore, the North Korean side claimed that the UNC had moved the bodies of the North Korean personnel south of the MDL.¹⁷

However, the UNC forces party to this claimed otherwise. At the meeting of the Military Armistice Commission held on April 8, the UNC detailed the events as follows (emphasis added):

- At approximately 1330 hours [1:30 p.m.] on 5 April 1967, three UN Command DMZ Police were performing routine maintenance. They were approximately 30 meters from their guard post. The area where the three North Korean soldiers were first detected was approximately 50 meters in front of [the UNC] guard post.
- Because of the apparent hostile actions of the three North Korean soldiers with arms in hand, advancing toward our guard post and because of other incidents [perpetrated by North Korea], a firefight started between the advancing North Korean soldiers and our three DMZ police.
- This intrusion by your armed soldiers was a highly provocative act. It was a hostile action directed against our personnel and constituted a clear threat to the safety of our DMZ police and our guard post.¹⁸

The UNC claimed that the North Korean soldiers crossed the MDL and came into the UNC sectors, and their advances posed a clear threat to the three UNC DMZ civil police and UNC guard post, thus causing the firefight. Additionally, they claimed that the three deaths that occurred were a result not of UNC fire, but automatic firearms used by guard posts north of the border.

Yet despite their seeming clarity, there are points of ambiguity in the UNC's contentions. First, while the UNC censured the origins of the

16. *Rodong sinmun*, April 6, 1967; April 7, 1967.

17. 243rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, April 8, 1967.

18. 243rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, April 8, 1967.

firefight-MDL crossing, they do not clearly state who it was that fired first. Second is the matter of the location of each side's DMZ police. If the three UNC DMZ police who were performing routine maintenance were 30 meters from their guard post, and the North Korean police were 50 meters in front of the guard post, then it would appear that the North Korean police were merely a few meters from the MDL. Furthermore, the precise location of this spot 30 meters from the guard post of the UNC police, and exact nature of the situation are unclear. Third, the UNC claimed that directly following the start of the firefight, firearms at the North Korean base were used, but it is unclear when exactly the UNC GP commenced firing.

South Korean newspaper reports of the following day, focusing primarily on the act of Northern aggression, show continuity with the UNC's position. However, regarding whether this was a preemptive attack by the North and the timing of additional fire, the tone of the *Kyunghyang shinmun* and *Dong-A Ilbo* reports differed slightly. In regards to the start of the firefight, the *Kyunghyang* reported that North Korea shot at the UNC guard post, while the *Dong-A Ilbo* made no mention of who initiated the firefight, merely reporting that a firefight had occurred.¹⁹ Moreover, there were differences in their reporting over whether the location of the UNC patrol team who participated in the firefight were at the guard post²⁰ or if they were on route back to the guard post after laying mines.²¹ It is also unclear whether the additional fire that came from the North's guard post was immediate,²² or not.²³

In order to investigate and deal with the conflict, the activities of the MAC and JOT were started. At 10 am the following morning, April 6, each side's Joint Observation Team No. 2 met in the vicinity of Military Demarcation Line Marker 109 and surveyed the scene.²⁴ The investigation took place over two days, April 6 and 7, and during this field survey, the

19. *Kyunghyang shinmun*, April 6, 1967; *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 6, 1967.

20. *Kyunghyang shinmun*, April 6, 1967.

21. *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 6, 1967.

22. *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 6, 1967.

23. *Kyunghyang shinmun*, April 6, 1967.

24. *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 8, 1967; *Kyunghyang shinmun*, April 8, 1967.

North took two bodies that had been in the UNC sector. On April 8, the 243rd meeting of the Military Armistice Commission convened. Both sides claimed to have been the one to call for the convening of the Military Armistice Commission and to suggest a Joint Observation Team investigation. Moreover, they each asserted that the findings of the JOT's investigation validated their own stance.

North Korea asserts that it was they who proposed a field investigation by Joint Observation Team No. 2. The *Rodong sinmun* reported that at 1830 (6:30 pm) hours on April 5, the North had suggested an on-the-spot investigation to the US side, but that the United States did not arrive at the scene.²⁵ As a result of the site investigation of April 6, the North Koreans asserted that civil police performing their regular duties North of the MDL had been killed by hundreds of rounds fired from the US guard post, and that their bodies had been confirmed to have been found north of the MDL.²⁶ Moreover, the North also claimed that they were the ones who called for convening the Military Armistice Commission on April 8.²⁷

However, the UNC side yet again stressed it was they who had convened the MAC meeting,²⁸ following this, they went down the record log of who had proposed the joint investigation and the convening of the MAC. UNC representatives continued to insist that they were the first to call for the joint investigation of the JOT and the convening of the MAC. They also claimed that their team had been present at 1830 hours on April 5 as the North had proposed, but that representatives from the North did not appear.²⁹

When one compiles the varied coverage in North and South Korea together with the transcripts of the MAC meeting and extrapolates from that, the details of the incident are as follows: At approximately 1:30 pm on April 5, seven North Korean soldiers came in proximity to the MDL. There

25. *Rodong sinmun*, April 6, 1967.

26. *Rodong sinmun*, April 7, 1967.

27. 243rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, April 8, 1967.

28. "Let me make this very clear: This is our meeting. We called it, and I'm going to show you why we called it" (243rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, April 8, 1967).

29. 243rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, April 8, 1967.

was a total of five deaths and one injury. Three of these men had crossed the MDL, and four remained in the North's territory. At GP Ouellette, they immediately fired at the North Korean forces crossing the MDL. This firefight snowballed, and a guard post north of the MDL provided cover fire. This firefight lasted for roughly 50 minutes. As a result, three North Korean soldiers who had been in UNC territory and two who had been in the North's territory were killed, and one was injured. On the night of April 5, North Korea took back one of the bodies that had been in UNC territory, and at the time of investigation of the scene on April 6, they retrieved the remaining two bodies. No injuries or casualties were sustained on the UNC side. The evening of the 5th, the day of the incident, both sides sent proposals to the other suggesting a joint investigation, but neither arrived at the site at the time that the other had suggested.

Still, there are lingering questions. What was the cause of the GP Ouellette incident? Was a violation of the Military Demarcation Line by three North Korean soldiers in broad daylight so threatening as to necessitate a firefight at the GP? Why did the US military at Ouellette recognize it as a threat to themselves and the GP and fire immediately? How did the military armistice committee manage the case? How could the investigation results of the JOT prove the claims of both sides? Rather than being limited to the incident at Guard Post Ouellette, however, these questions are connected to a set of far more fundamental questions. First, these are issues regarding the location and status of Guard Post Ouellette and the carrying and use of weapons by civil police—that is, issues about the militarization of the DMZ. Second, the conflict at GP Ouellette was a touchstone of the DMZ and the late 1960s. Third, these are issues directly linked to how agencies supervising the ceasefire, such as the MAC and JOTs, operate. The first and second questions concern the context of the incident, while the last issues concern crisis situations and the administration of the ceasefire, as well as the results of the incident at GP Ouellette.

Background of the DMZ Military Conflict in the Late 1960s and the Limitations of the MAC

The Militarization of the DMZ: Subsequent Agreements to the Armistice Agreement by the MAC

Let us take a look at the fundamental cause of the incident at Guard Post Ouellette and how it was handled. As for its background, there are two main factors. First is the militarization of the DMZ, and second is the political situation on the Korean Peninsula, including the military clashes along the DMZ in 1967.

The militarization of the DMZ was discussed from the very first convening of the Military Armistice Commission on July 28, 1953. While the Armistice Agreement had fundamentally declared that the DMZ would be demilitarized, there were a number of matters that had been set aside following the ceasefire to which the MAC would have to provide answers. Chief among them was the admittance of civil police to the DMZ, and the number of personnel as well as the type of weapons the MAC would allow them to carry.³⁰ One of the very first topics the MAC discussed was this very question.

It was the communists (North Korea and China) who first proposed that the civil police carry weapons. At the first meeting of the Military Armistice Commission, the Communists suggested that police personnel not exceeding 1,000, and to include civil police, be brought in and allowed to carry pistols, rifles, grenades, carbines, Tommy guns, among other weapons.³¹ That is, they not only proposed the immediate dispatch of a thousand police officers armed with grenades and semi-automatic firearms, but by phrasing it as “including the civil police” they allowed for the dispatch of soldiers. The communist side added that the Tommy gun was the North’s weapon corresponding to American army’s carbine, and reiterated their

30. Paragraph 10 of Article 1 of the Armistice Agreement.

31. 1st Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 28, 1953.

support for soldiers carrying Tommy guns and carbines.³² At the same time, the UNC argued only pistols should be allowed. Arguing that submachine guns were weapons of war and tools used against the most violent insurgents, the UNC proposed a compromise on pistols and rifles.³³

Finally, at the fourth meeting of the MAC, North Korea and China agreed to the carrying of pistols and rifles, coming to a consensus that automatic weapons able to fire more than one round when the trigger was pulled would not be allowed.³⁴ However, there were no objections to the use of military police as civil police. With this, both sides agreed to the use of military police as civil police, and agreed on the weapons they could carry with them. They had essentially agreed to admit armed soldiers to the DMZ and soon a total of two thousand armed military police (MP) were active within the DMZ.³⁵

What would happen if these military police crossed the MDL, accidentally or intentionally, or began to fire at their adversaries? The possibility of such border-crossings was also discussed at meetings of the MAC. During the second MAC meeting, they initially agreed to the installation of MDL marker signposts,³⁶ but at their third convening, the dangers of crossing the MDL were rediscussed alongside the issue of weapons that could be carried by civil police. North Korea and China stated that since the Armistice Agreement maps clearly marked the MDL, they would strictly adhere to the agreement and there would be no crossing of the demarcation line.³⁷ This was asserted in order to win the authorization for civil police to carry submachine guns. At the same time, the UNC felt

32. 3rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 30, 1953; 4th Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 31, 1953.

33. 3rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 30, 1953; 4th Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 31, 1953.

34. 4th Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 31, 1953.

35. At the 17th MAC meeting (September 7, 1953), the UNC side announced they had increased the number of civil police from 625 to 1,000 (17th Military Armistice Meeting, September 7, 1953).

36. 2nd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 29, 1953.

37. 2nd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 29, 1967; 3rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 30, 1967.

that it was necessary to mark the demarcation line in reality. They felt that it would be difficult to avoid accidental crossings relying on maps alone, and wanted there to be no room for misunderstanding by establishing a physical border.³⁸

In the end, it was agreed that civil police would be allowed to carry weapons, and that MDL markers would be installed. Though they had imposed a restriction that excluded automatic rifles, soon enough a total of two thousand armed military police, including with automatic rifles,³⁹ were permitted to move within the DMZ. MDL markers were installed in order to confirm the physical boundary line, but both sides still accidentally or intentionally crossed the MDL. Such occurrences led to firefights on both sides, which in turn escalated to include supplementary fire from guard posts that functioned as forward outposts. The guard posts on either side constructed in proximity to the MDL made the physical distance between the two sides even closer, and heightened the possibility of clashes.⁴⁰ Neither side abided by the Armistice Agreement maps, the MDL markers, the regulations limiting the weapons that could be carried by civil police, or the clause of the Armistice Agreement forbidding the construction of military facilities within the DMZ. The incident at Guard Post Ouellet on April 4, 1967 in the vicinity of MDL marker No. 0109 was a consequence of this.

North and South Korea's Vietnam War Support and DMZ Conflicts

The context of the times must also be considered when examining the incident at Guard Post Ouellette. The incident occurred at the time when

38. 3rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, July 30, 1967.

39. From August 1953, DMZ civil police had simply worn armbands saying they were civil police, but had in fact been carrying rifles and bayonets, among other weaponry. United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission, Office of the Secretariat, "From Joint Observer Team Number Nine to The Military Armistice Commission" (August 17, 1953); Significant JOT Investigations 1954, RG 554, Korean Armistice Implement Records, 1951–1980, General Records, 1951–1957.

40. GPs were military facilities that completely violated the clauses of the DMZ in the Armistice Agreement. For more on the construction of GPs in the DMZ between the ceasefire and the 1960s, see Hahn (2019, 174–176).

military clashes along the DMZ and across the Korean Peninsula were reaching a fever pitch.

South Korea normalized diplomatic relations with Japan under the regional integration strategy pursued by the United States. And in March 1966, South Korea and the United States agreed to send additional South Korean troops to Vietnam. North Korea interpreted the improvement of South Korea-Japan relations as the establishment of a South Korea-US-Japan triangular military alliance and a threat to itself. North Korea also strengthened its armed offensive against South Korea by supporting North Vietnam (Hahn 2003).

It was in October 1966 that North Korea strengthened its armed offensive against South Korea. The 2nd Conference of the Workers' Party of Korea Representatives on October 5, 1966, was an important moment of change, both in North Korea's internal politics and in its policy toward South Korea. At this time, Kim Il-sung (general secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea) emphasized support for North Vietnam and the prompt "reunification of the country [Vietnam]" (Hong 2012, 62–63). In addition, as it pursued an economic and defense policy, North Korea's defense expenditures increased from 10 percent of the total budget to 30 percent. Then, during the 18 days between October 15 and November 2, 1966, North Korea conducted 12 surprise attacks in the DMZ, resulting in the death of 24 South Korean and American soldiers.⁴¹

Moreover, US President Johnson's visit to Korea (October 31, 1966–November 2, 1966) and a tour of the Western Front provided North Korea with justification for a "legitimate provocation." The purpose of Johnson's visit was to express appreciation for the Korean military's dispatch of troops to Vietnam and to request additional dispatches (Park 2015, 30). On November 1, Johnson inspected the 26th Division of the ROK Army and the 36th Engineer Combat Group, USFK, in Uijeongbu on the Western Front, although not in the DMZ.⁴² On the November 2, he announced that the United States would provide expeditious support for any armed attack

41. *Kyunghyang shinmun* November 5, 1966; see also Mun-hang Yi (2001, 16).

42. *Dong-A Ilbo* November 1, 1966.

against South Korea and that it would not reduce USFK. After Johnson's tour of the Western Front, North Korea accused the US and South Korea of exacerbating tensions at the MDL and conducting extensive military exercises.⁴³ After Johnson's visit to Korea, the commander of the US Army, Pacific, the commander of the US Air Force, Pacific, and the US ambassador to the United Nations visited Korea to inspect frontline units, claiming they did so on Johnson's instructions.⁴⁴

At 3:15 am on November 2, the last day of Johnson's visit to Korea, an incident occurred 400 meters from the southern limit of the DMZ, killing six Americans and injuring one and killing one KATUSA soldier.⁴⁵ The South Korean media reported this incident as "a North Korean provocation that inflicted the most damage on USFK since the ceasefire."⁴⁶ At the plenary session of the Military Administration Committee, the UNC also criticized the North's provocations that had been occurring mid-October 1966 as both very intentional and cruel.⁴⁷ The November 2 conflict occurred 13 hours after Johnson had inspected the Western Front, and Johnson heard the news while still in Korea. Five months later, the conflict at GP Ouellette occurred.

However, the North Korean attack on US forces on November 2 was retaliation for a South Korean attack on North Korean forces on October 26 (Park 2015, 29–30). On October 26, 1966, South Korean forces attacked a North Korean regimental headquarters, killing a significant number of North Koreans, and the North Korean forces retaliated in the early morning hours of the day after Johnson inspected the frontline units.

The intentional and brutal provocations that began in October 1966 continued into 1967. Both North Korea and the UNC stated that the aspects and scale of the other's provocations were completely different than they had been before, and the level of vituperation soared. According to official US

43. *Rodong sinmun* April 7, 1967.

44. *Rodong sinmun* April 7, 1967.

45. 232nd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, November 4, 1966. A KATUSA (Korean Augmentation to the United States Army) is a Korean national who as part of his required military service serves as an augmentee attached to US forces in Korea.

46. *Dong-A Ilbo* November 3, 1966; *Dong-A Ilbo* November 4, 1966.

47. 232nd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, November 4, 1966.

documents, prior to 1967, North Korea had hardly ever engaged in a firefight, but starting in 1967, preemptive and deliberate firefights skyrocketed.⁴⁸ South Korean attacks north of the DMZ had become serious enough that the United States was starting to grow concerned.⁴⁹ Yet even the North Korea newspaper *Rodong sinmun* reported that US forces continuing to carry out provocations was exacerbating tensions. In particular, in February and March 1967, according to the *Rodong sinmun* report, the number of shells and rounds that US forces fired into the North was nearly equivalent to all the shells and rounds they had fired in the 13 years since the ceasefire, strongly lambasting them for maneuvering to provoke war.⁵⁰ Both North Korea and the US saw their adversary's provocations as having reached their highest point in 13 years.

The Ouellette incident occurred six months after the change in North Korea's foreign policy toward South Korea of October 1966, and five months after the North Korean army attacked the US on November 2. This was a time when intentional provocations, rather than accidental encounters, were becoming more frequent. In broad daylight in April 1967, three North Korean soldiers who had crossed the MDL were perceived as "obvious threats" and fired upon from GP Ouellette. This encounter was attributed to the November 1, 1966 incident, as well as North Korea's intentional "series of hostilities."⁵¹

The DMZ was established to prevent the recurrence of hostilities, and the Military Armistice Commission was established as an organization to manage the DMZ. However, at this time, the DMZ had become a place of recurring hostilities, and the MAC, an armistice management body, faced fundamental limits in properly managing it. For this reason, the DMZ conflict in 1967 eventually led to war crises, such as the Blue House surprise

48. "Report Prepared by the Office of National Estimates of the Central Intelligence Agency," Washington, June 23, 1967, *FRUS* 1964-68 KOREA.

49. "Telegram from the Embassy in Korea the Department of State" Seoul, November 29, 1966, *FRUS* 1964-68 KOREA; Telegram From the Embassy in Korea the Department of State" Seoul, September 19, 1967, *FRUS* 1964-68 KOREA.

50. *Rodong sinmun*, April 7, 1967.

51. 243rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, April 8, 1967.

attack incident and the Pueblo incident in January 1968.

Activities and Limitations of the MAC JOT

Handling of violations of the DMZ is to be done by discussions of a convened MAC, and an on-site inspection by the JOT. The MAC supervises the enactment of the Armistice Agreement, and has the jurisdiction to handle violations via consultations. It is made up of representatives from both the communist and UNC sides, and if one side requests that the MAC be convened, the other must acquiesce. The JOT, which operates under the aegis of the MAC, is similarly made up of personnel from both sides, and has jurisdiction to investigate violations of the DMZ.⁵²

Both sides were active when it came to convening the MAC or suggesting a joint investigation. Even at the time of the incident at Guard Post Ouellette, each side claimed to have been the first to call for the convening of the MAC and proposing a joint investigation. Why was that the case? What did it mean to be the first to call for convening the MAC?

One significant factor was the Armistice Agreement regulation calling for the convening of the MAC when a violation is discovered. That is, to propose the convening of the MAC itself was an act of discovering and protesting the violation of the agreement by the opposing party. An example of this is the *Rodong sinmun* reporting how the North Korean side immediately requested a joint investigation the day following the incident at Guard Post Ouellette.⁵³ Similarly, South Korea's *Dong-A Ilbo* published, "Memorandum of Complaint Against NK Puppet Regime" (April 6, 1967), "UNC Calls to Convene MAC" (April 6, 1967), and "Complaint Over NK

52. In addition to the MAC, another organization meant to advise the ceasefire is the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC). The NNSC is made up of four senior officers, with two members coming from neutral nations selected by the UNC (Sweden and Switzerland) and two members coming from neutral nations selected by the communist side (Poland and Czechoslovakia). However, here the term "neutral nation" refers to nations whose combat forces did not participate in hostilities in Korea. Beneath the NNSC, were the Neutral Nations Inspection Teams.

53. *Rodong sinmun*, April 6, 1967.

Soldiers' Infiltration" (April 8, 1967). These articles all emphasize how the UNC had called to convene the MAC and protested the actions of North Korea. As such, this had the effect of turning their counterpart's violations of the Armistice Agreement into a *fait accompli*.

Another reason for being the first to convene the MAC is that it effectively demonstrated the efforts a given side was making to handle a crisis situation. In fact, at the 243rd meeting of the Military Armistice Commission, the UNC side claimed to have called for the meeting numerous times, saying, "our side was making a very genuine and sincere and repeated effort to bring this situation under control just as quickly as possible." They continued, criticizing the North Koreans by saying, "it revealed very clearly that your side had an evident reluctance to cooperate and was resorting to quibbling."⁵⁴

Yet another question that arises is how exactly both sides could claim that the findings of the joint investigation vindicated their respective positions. This concerns the make-up and methods of JOT operations, as well as the limitations of the JOT's authority and role.

In Article 2, paragraphs 26 and 27 of the Armistice Agreement, it states the JOT is meant "to assist the Military Armistice Commission in supervising the carrying out of the provisions of this Armistice Agreement pertaining to the Demilitarized Zone and to the Han River Estuary" and that "the Military Armistice Commission, or the senior member of either side thereof, is authorized to dispatch Joint Observer Teams to investigate violations of this Armistice Agreement reported to have occurred in the Demilitarized Zone or in the Han River Estuary." On August 28, 1953, the MAC agreed on the specific regulations of the work to be done by JOTs.⁵⁵ JOTs are made up of two to three field-grade officers from each side. Their duties are to investigate violations of the armistice agreement in the DMZ and Han River Estuary, to supervise the DMZ work and MDL signage, the

54. 243rd Military Armistice Commission Meeting, April 8, 1967.

55. "Secretaries for [the UNC] side have examined the regulations on the work of Joint Observation teams, and proposes that the MAC authorize them." "[The North Korean and Chinese] side agrees to the commission authorizing these regulations" (15th Military Armistice Commission Meeting, August 28, 1953).

exhumation of bodies and their exchange, as well the exchange of displaced citizens. In addition, they are to submit an activity report once per week to the MAC following a joint investigation. Essentially, the JOT is the singular organ with the authority to freely investigate sites along the DMZ and create reports.

However, as regulations regarding the JOTs became more detailed in the MAC, its role also was modified and reduced. Both sides in the MAC agreed to reduce the organization and its functions. On December 30, 1953, at a meeting of the MAC Secretariat, a motion to abolish the weekly JOT reports was ratified (Defense Intelligence Agency 1986, 103). Following this, a measure to reduce the total number of JOTs was discussed when the UNC suggested that the number be brought down from 10 to seven at the 35th MAC meeting, held on January 10, 1954.⁵⁶ At first, the North Koreans agreed to this number, then they suggested the number be brought down to six. The UNC agreed to this, then ratified an amendment to the general provisions bringing the number of teams down to six (March 19, 1954). But once more, the UNC suggested that the number of JOT be reduced to four, which the North Koreans countered with five. The ratification of a proposition reducing the number to five came at a meeting of the MAC Secretariat on July 18, 1955 (Defense Intelligence Agency 1986, 103–104).

When infringements on the DMZ occurred, both sides convened the Joint Observer Teams, but in reality, there was very little investigation into anything of importance. The North Koreans convened a JOT a total of 37 times between 1957 and 1963 in order to investigate infiltration of armed Southern spies and border crossings, as well as to repatriate people (Yi 2001, 207–208). The UNC side convened a JOT a total of 17 times between 1953 and 1963 in order to investigate infiltration of armed North Korean spies in the DMZ, the construction of fortified camps, border-crossings by police, and shootings. In the years between 1966 and 1968, when military clashes between the two sides were concerningly fierce, JOT investigations were proposed a total of 40 times, yet North Korea refused all but one (Yi 2001, 207–208, 245). The single exception was the incident at Guard Post Ouellette.

56. 35th Military Armistice Commission Meeting, January 10, 1954.

Even if the JOT did manage to conduct an investigation, their findings were far from illuminating. At times they would neglect to submit any report, and at worst, one side ended up shelling JOT investigators from the other side as they inspected signage along the MDL (Yi 2001, 208). That was not all. Seldom was there ever a consensus reached on the findings of their investigations. The majority of reports they created represented assertions by both sides concerning the incident in question. This was because the reports that they submitted to the MAC enumerated the assertions of both sides. Regarding the incident at Guard Post Ouellette, the reason that both sides were able to claim that the findings of the JOT investigation vindicated their own claims was rooted in the JOT's very construction and method of reporting.

Figure 2 is a photo of the JOT investigation into the events at Guard Post Ouellette. In it, we see both sides standing in front of MDL marker No. 109, surveying the scene. The investigation spanned the two days between April 6 and 7. From the UNC side, Colonel Arthur H. Kennedy participated, and from the North Korean side, Lt. Col Bae Mun-sik took part. On April 7, they each read aloud what they had prepared based on their investigation on April 6, and these presentations were included in the JOT report. That is to say, the JOT report enumerated each side's argument verbatim.⁵⁷ At the regular meeting of the MAC as well, both sides reiterated their arguments based on the investigation reports each side had prepared and completed. The so-called facts reported on in the media were these one-sided claims made by the respective parties.

Strictly speaking, the incident at Guard Post Ouellette was not properly handled. Though press in both North and South Korea covered the incident with gravity, a single bout of fierce debate by the MAC was essentially all that came of it. Neither side made any promises to discuss or prevent the recurrence of a similar event, while each side took the opportunity afforded by the MAC meeting to justify their actions and reprimand their

57. "Meeting of Joint Observer Team Number Two Military Demarcation Line Marker Number 0109," April 7, 1967, RG 554, Korean Armistice Implementation Records 1951-1980, Team 2: Minutes of Meetings of Joint Observations Teams, 1953-1967.



Figure 2. Site inspection by JOT following the GP Ouellette incident

Source: Dong-A Ilbo, April 8, 1967. Site inspection and meeting of JOT No. 2. Each side's officer in charge, parties to JOT No. 2, stand in front of MDL marker no. 0109 performing their site inspection.

counterpart. And then, it was forgotten.

North Korea conducted a large-scale funeral for the fallen soldiers in Pyongyang, using it as anti-US propaganda, but following that, it is difficult to find any mention of the incident. Because North Korean personnel had clearly crossed the MDL, it would have been impractical for North Korea to remember this event and continuously utilize it for their own devices. At the same time, the UNC would not want to recall an event in which their own GP, or people directly below it, fired first, killing North Korean soldiers. The US balked at the UNC being named as responsible for violating the DMZ. In particular, they feared that issues regarding the presence and status of the UNC would be discussed at the UN General Assembly (Hahn 2019, 184–186). Furthermore, it is clear that they did not want it to be known that the location of the DMZ clash was a UNC GP located within the MACHA. This attitude is in stark contrast to how Captain Arthur Bonifas and First Lieutenant Mark Thomas Barret, who were killed in the Panmunjom axe murder incident, were continuously remembered and revived.

Conclusion

The incident at Guard Post Ouellette, referred to at the time as "the largest firefight since the ceasefire" was soon forgotten. Though directly following the incident a large-scale funeral was held in Pyongyang including a days-long mass rally, nothing followed. The United States also did not want the UNC to be named as responsible for the clash at the DMZ. Both sides harbored great responsibility for the violation of the DMZ, and as such, they did not want to remember it. In this way, Guard Post Ouellette became forgotten as the site of a direct military clash between UNC forces and North Korean forces. Instead, it garnered attention with visits to the GP by sitting US presidents from the 1990s, who called it the "frontline of freedom." These presidents climbed up to the UNC guard post in the MACHA, only 50 meters from the MDL, from which they pressured North Korea and compared the regimes of the two Koreas as they looked down at North Korea. In stressing the superiority of the liberal system and the justifications for USFK, they continuously harkened back to the Cold War and upheld it.

The 1967 incident at Guard Post Ouellette was a military clash between North Korean forces and UNC forces (de facto US forces). While it came about when three North Korean police crossed the MDL, it was the three US soldiers and the Guard Post Ouellette's immediate jump to fire that turned this occurrence into an *incident*. The firefight went on for approximately 50 minutes, expanding to include fire from a North Korean GP, and resulted in the additional deaths of two North Korean soldiers, to bring the total killed to five, along with one injured. In the media and at the meeting of the MAC, both North Korea and the UNC asserted their acts were justified, and criticized their counterpart's provocation.

The cause of the incident at Guard Post Ouellette is indeed rooted in more fundamental problems. The militarization of the DMZ was a structural cause and one that was initiated in the MAC's subsequent agreements to the Armistice Agreement. The MAC agreed to allow military police to be used as civil police, and allowed them to carry weapons. Guard posts constructed on both sides of the MDL and in proximity to it reduced the physical distance between the two sides and increased the likelihood of clashes. Both

sides failed to adhere to the Armistice Agreement's maps, the MDL markers, the regulations restricting civil police from carrying weapons, and the clause in the Armistice Agreement prohibiting the construction of military facilities within the DMZ. Furthermore, the political situation on the Korean Peninsula in the 1960s was increasing military tensions along the DMZ. North Korea's support of North Vietnam, its offensive against South Korea, the dispatch of South Korean troops to South Vietnam, and Johnson's visit to South Korea formed the background to exacerbating the military clashes along the DMZ. The firefight that ensued on April 5, 1967, near MDL marker No. 0109 was the outcome.

Handling of the armed encounter at Guard Post Ouellette was mismanaged due to limitations of the organizations meant to supervise the implementation of the Armistice Agreement, such as the MAC and its affiliated organization, the JOT. The JOT, which worked under the MAC and was the singular organization granted the ability to freely investigate incidents within the DMZ and to report findings, had its capacity and role reduced directly following the ceasefire. Considering the instances of violations of the DMZ, where consensus was seldom ever reached between the two parties, it would be no exaggeration to say that there was no hesitation when it came to reducing the role of this central instrument meant for maintaining the demilitarization of the DMZ and investigating infractions. Moreover, even when the JOT was called to act, the JOT investigation report was submitted to the MAC listing allegations that were not agreed upon by both sides. The report only contained the logic and arguments of both sides. Consequently, though the MAC functioned as a forum for dialogue, at the same time it effectively repeated and exacerbated the claims made by each side regarding the incidents it investigated. Such limitations of the organization supervising the ceasefire were a critical reason for the armistice along the DMZ and on the Korean Peninsula being maintained with such precarity.

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