**The Korean War and why there are two Koreas**

By History.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 1.11.18

On June 25, 1950, the Korean War began. About 75,000 soldiers from North Korea attacked South Korea. This was part of the Cold War (1945-1991). The Cold War was a larger conflict. It was fought between the United States and the Soviet Union. In July 1950, American troops entered the Korean War. They helped South Korea. U.S. officials believed the war was needed. They thought it would stop the spread of communism. Under communism, one political party controls everything about a country's government and people. The Soviet Union was communist. So was North Korea. The Two Koreas After World War II (1939-1945), the United States and Soviet Union gained control of Korea. They split the country into north and south sections. The Soviets controlled the north. The Americans controlled the south. By the end of the 1940s, two new countries had formed. The northern half was communist-controlled. The southern half was friendly to the United States.

**The Korean War And The Cold War**

U.S. troops tried to beat back the North Korean attack. This effort went badly for a while. The North Korean army was strong. The south's armies were not. U.S. troops leading South Korean troops finally pushed the North Korean army out of South Korea. Then U.S.-led troops kept heading north. They came close to the Chinese border with North Korea. The Chinese government was also communist. It supported North Korea. The Chinese sent troops into North Korea. This pushed back the U.S.-led forces. The Chinese also warned the U.S. to keep its forces away from the Chinese border. Otherwise, the U.S. would face a wider war. President Harry Truman did not want a wider war. He was afraid it could lead to nuclear war. It might even lead to World War III. General Douglas MacArthur was the commanding general of U.S. forces in Korea. He did want a wider war. He believed anything less was giving in to the communists. MacArthur publicly criticized Truman's ideas. Truman fired MacArthur for disobeying orders.

**The Korean War Reaches A Stalemate**

In July 1951, peace talks began. The talks dragged on for two years. Still, the fighting continued. Finally, an agreement was reached on July 27, 1953. It drew a new border. The agreement gave South Korea an extra 1,500 square miles of land. It also created a 2-mile-wide zone between the two sides. This zone still exists today.

**Casualties Of The Korean War**

Nearly 5 million people died in the war. More than half were civilians. Almost 40,000 Americans died and more than 100,000 were wounded.