

President Harry S. Truman. He implemented the containment strategy to deal with Communism but believed in strengthening at-risk nations with American military equipment and advisers, rather than deploying large U.S. conventional forces overseas. Indeed, he acted to reduce U.S. defense expenditures during the 1945-1950 period.

NA 80-G-K-4192 courtesy NHC

38th parallel eventually elected Rhee as the first President of the Republic of Korea, formally established on 15 August 1948. The following month Kim Il Sung announced his leadership of a second political creation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

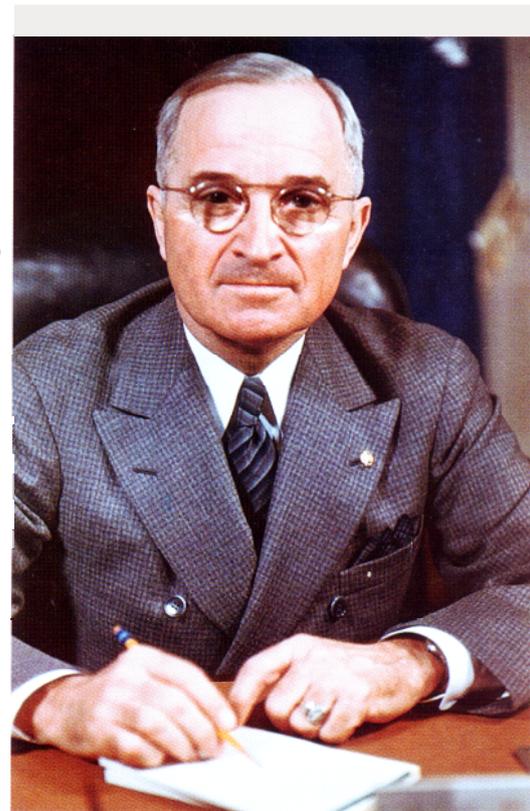
During the next year and a half, the two Korean governments engaged in low-level hostilities. They sent agents, saboteurs and raiding forces across the 38th parallel and fought artillery duels along the dividing line. In the last six months of 1949 alone, there were over 400 "border incidents."

With the establishment of friendly regimes in their respective occupation zones, the USSR and the U.S. withdrew their occupation forces. The Soviet armed forces left behind a military advisory group and large amounts of World War II-vintage munitions and equipment, including tanks, artillery and combat aircraft. The North Korean armed forces continued to grow in numbers and capability under Soviet tutelage.

Except for the 500-man Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAAG), the United States withdrew all of its forces from Korea by June 1949. They left behind large quantities of small arms and ammunition, but, unlike the Soviets, no tanks, medium or heavy artillery or combat aircraft. The administration

of Harry S. Truman opposed giving Rhee such "offensive" weapons, fearing that he would try to unify Korea by force. The Americans thought Rhee's new government needed only U.S. training of its armed forces, modest arms supplies and economic and political support.

The simultaneous draw down of U.S. conventional forces and reliance on military advisers and assistance reflected the Truman administration's global approach to the threat posed by the Soviet Union and its allies after World War II. In 1947, President Truman proclaimed a new strategy for dealing with the Communists' militant and expansive policies—containment. The United States and her allies would prevent the spread of Communist ideology and Soviet influence by



strengthening the economies, political systems and military organizations of friendly countries. The containment strategy anticipated using U.S. ground troops, tactical aircraft units, combat fleets and other conventional forces to defend only vital national interests.

## Reduced Forces

At the end of World War II, the U.S. armed forces comprised 12-million men and women who had answered the greatest call to the colors in American history. This massive establishment fielded 95 infantry, armor, airborne and Marine divisions; 92,000 aircraft; 1,307 warships; and 82,000 landing craft. But, with the war now over, the American public clamored to "bring the boys home." Operation Magic Carpet and similar move-

ments transported millions of American soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines home to the United States and then discharged them from the military.

Another motivation for the reduction of the military establishment was Truman's desire to improve America's financial health. Being the "Arsenal of Democracy" in World War II had been a great drain on the public treasury of the United States and had disrupted