



***Tiger Hunters: Special Operations in Korea
(Behind the Lines of the Chinese and North Korean Forces 1950-1953)***

By COL Douglas C. Dillard

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368 pages**

Reviewed by Maj Timothy Heck, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve

COL Douglas Dillard's *Tiger Hunters* is part memoir and part historical scholarship about partisan and special operations during the Korean War. Based extensively on his experiences in Korea as a leader in the 8240th Army Unit, which handled unconventional warfare and partisan operations, Dillard's work helps fill the gaps in official histories and other special operations-focused histories of the war. *Tiger Hunters* provides an insight into the difficulties of fighting an unconventional war with limited resources, minimal training, and in an environment that did not fully embrace either special operations or joint warfare.

The struggles and problems Dillard and his compatriots experienced serve as a reminder of the applicability and timelessness of the Special Operations Forces Truths developed long after the end of the Korean War. Dillard's history consistently reminds the reader that competent special operations forces cannot be created after emergencies occur. South Korean partisans, many of whom were refugees, were given minimal training, unclear mission orders, and were then dropped behind North Korean lines in an attempt to obtain intelligence and conduct partisan operations as early as August 1950. These partisans, understandably, suffered large losses and led to the reorganization of special operations in Korea and its slow professionalization. Despite the reorganization and expansion of training cadres, assisted by the disbanding of the Ranger companies at the division level in 1951, the partisan and line-crossing operations Dillard describes were still fraught with dangers.

Dillard divides his work into two sections. The first, which deals with airborne insertion of partisans, forms the bulk of the book. This section is largely based on Dillard's recollections of his time in the 8240th's AVIARY program, buttressed by historical research. The second section concerns line-crossing and tactical intelligence-gathering operations in support of division-level intelligence objectives. At the end of the second section, Dillard presents abbreviated recollections of the Korean and Chinese agents conducting both partisan and line-crossing operations in Korea.

Tiger Hunters helps fill gaps in the special operations picture of the Korean Conflict. As such, it has a place on special operations reading lists or in detailed studies of the war in Korea. Readers familiar with special operations and partisan efforts during the Vietnam War, such as those presented by Kenneth Conboy and Dale Andrade in *Spies and Commandos: How America Lost the Secret War in North Vietnam*, will find striking similarities to the problems that plagued partisan operations in Korea and Vietnam. In both, agents were doubled, teams were dropped to waiting enemy forces, and overall the operations saw limited success.