



Initial Burden: An Account of the American and British Naval Forces Present at the Outset of the Korean War

Michael Steffan

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This is the story of the ships that responded to the foggy and chaotic start to the Korean War. The invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950 came as a complete surprise to the West. The North Koreans attacked without warning and such ferocity that it was unclear whether the Republic of South Korea would survive. When the conflict erupted, the post-World War II navies of the United States and Great Britain had been dramatically reduced in size, strength, and perceived need. The limited U.S. and British naval forces that responded to the onslaught of the communist incursion had no intel regarding North Korea's war plan or the possible military intentions of the Soviet Union. The crisis was fraught with tension as the first days and weeks of the suddenly hot "Cold War" unfolded. From atomic considerations, evacuations, air and submarine threats, surface gunnery actions, airstrikes, shore bombardments, special ops, to amphibious landings and mine warfare, the naval forces present at the beginning of the war had to do it all in this eye-opening display of the vital importance of sea power. With 39 photographs, 6 maps, and 272 footnotes, this history not only tells the story of the initial stage of the war at sea in Korea but goes on to follow the service careers and fates of the warships and other vessels after their unexpected and volatile nexus in the summer of 1950.

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