

Supplying United Nations Troops in Korea

Major Pierre P. Kirby, *Transportation Corps*

Student, The Transportation School, Fort Eustis, Virginia

The views expressed in this article are the author's and are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or the Command and General Staff College.

—The Editor

Although warfare in itself is strictly an un-businesslike venture, getting supplies to the front can be put on a business basis. When fighting erupted overnight in Korea, the movement of all the accoutrements of war to that unhappy peninsula was a hurried and unscheduled operation. Men went into battle in an ever increasing crescendo as nation after nation committed forces on the side of freedom. Getting vitally needed supplies to these fighters was an important and urgent task.

Emergency Methods

Cargo planes racked up thousands of hours of flying time and all available rail, truck, and shipping transportation were hastily thrown into action. The job was being done, but not efficiently. Overtime for labor, special ship chartering, round-the-clock schedules, hasty unplanned loading of cargo, and other emergency factors added up to high operating costs.

Efforts to rectify this were thwarted by a rapidly changing tactical situation. Heavy fighting imposed

enormous demands for emergency equipment which was thrown into combat immediately upon arrival. The tactical situation, changing almost daily, discouraged the setting up of large, permanent storage and supply depots on the peninsula. Land held today by United Nations troops might be either bypassed or far from the front tomorrow.

Inadequate Korean Ports

Ports from which United Nations forces could operate in Korea were few. Their restricted capacity to unload and process cargo caused entanglements and bottlenecks in the existing supply system. Stock-piling goods to ensure immediate combat availability was precluded because of the limited capabilities of the depots. Supply men of the Japan Logistical Command (re-designated United States Army Forces, Far East) were thus forced to ship limited amounts with greater frequency to lessen the danger of overcrowded ports and depots.

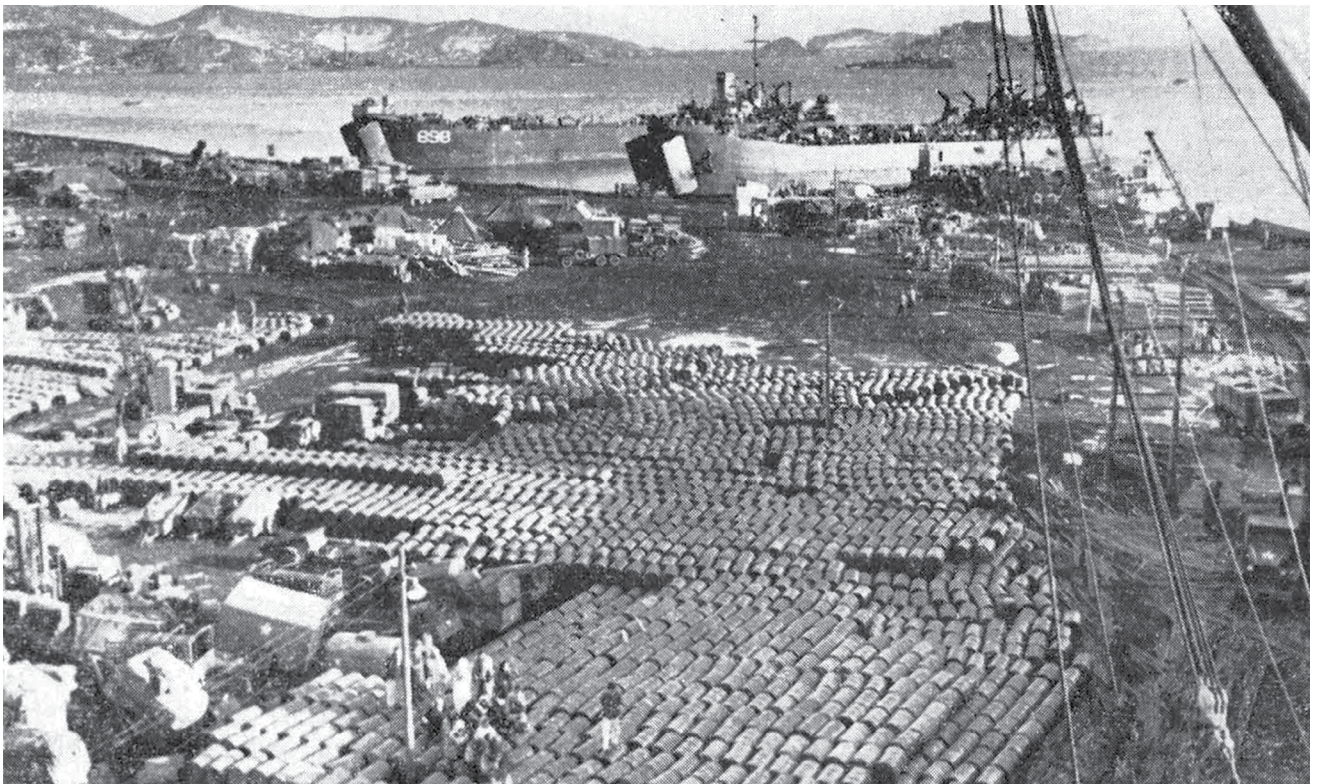
Advanced Information Lacking

These factors, coupled with uncertain delivery dates and the lack of advance information on ship departures from the United States, resulted in the shipment of most of the vital goods directly to depots and warehouses in Japan, for transshipment to Korea at a later date. Meanwhile, such staple items as food and

Supplying the men at the fighting front can be put on a firm business basis. The Japan Logistical Command has saved about 3/4 million dollars a month through its programmed movement of supplies to Korea.



The best equipment the world has to offer now flows smoothly through supply channels to ships, to ports, to depots, and to the United Nations fighting man. Above, LSTs unloading equipment and men on the beach during the invasion of Inchon, Korea. Below, supplies and equipment being stock-piled at a Korean port.—Department of Defense photos



ammunition frequently had to be airlifted on a call-as-needed basis from the Japan Logistical Command's (JLC) storage depots in Japan. The tremendous supply system that clothed, fed, and equipped the fighting United Nations armies needed rejuvenation, and quickly.

Programmed Movement

The Commander in Chief, Far East, in response to the increasing needs of field commanders and mounting logistical problems, ordered that a joint study be undertaken to devise a system of programmed movement of supplies to Korea. The commander specified that the program must:

1. Adequately supply front-line troops at all times.
2. Cut down the tremendous expense involved in emergency operations and cargo shipment of war supplies.
3. Substantially decrease the emergency nature of supply support.
4. Provide reasonable stocks of supplies in Korea for future needs.
5. Effect maximum shipments direct from the United States to Korea.

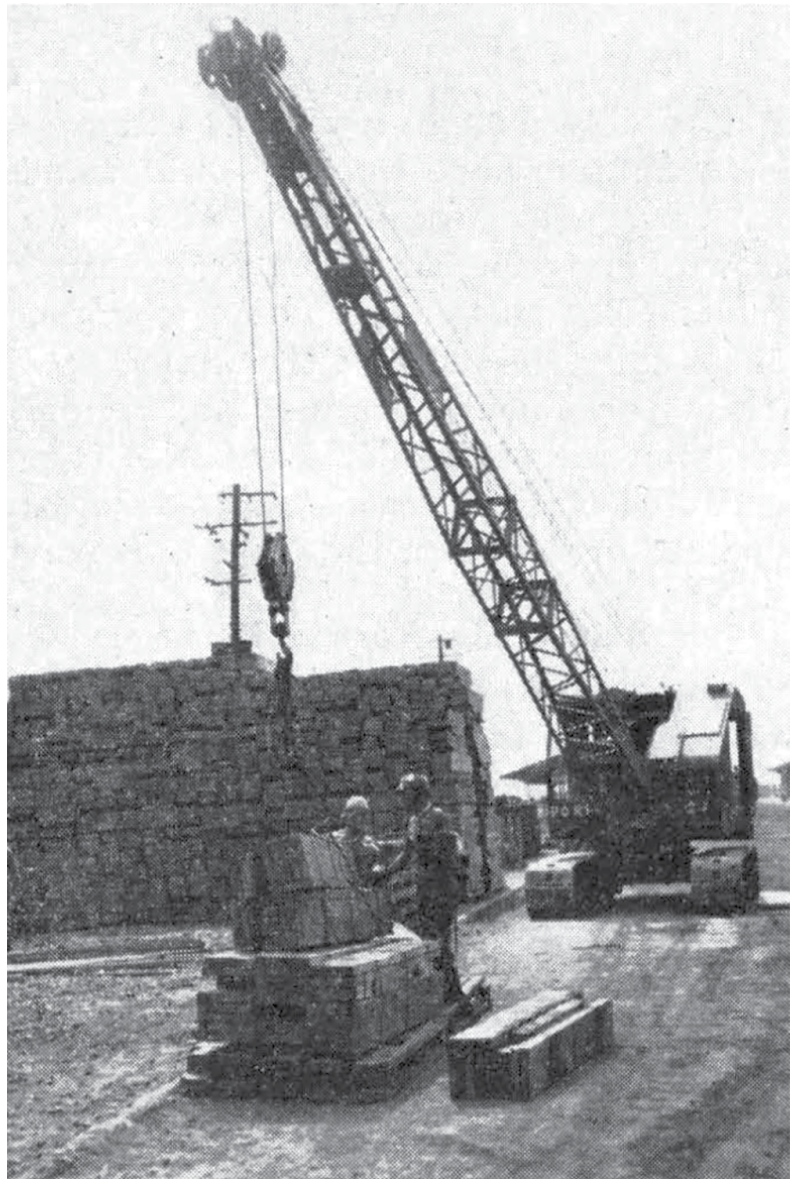
By the spring of 1951 sufficient equipment had been stock-piled throughout the theater and the tactical situation had stabilized enough to provide the basis for a system of "programmed movement of supplies." Programmed movement can best be defined as the movement of specific quantities by specific facilities during stated periods of time.

Programmed movement of cargo and personnel is not a new idea, but JLC's specific technique for movement of supplies from Japan to Korea is new. Whereas the order and shipping cycle for supplies from the United States to the Far East Command is 120 days, the cycle from Japan to Korea is only 60 days. The Department of the Army's program of cargo and personnel movements is published using bulk projections of cargo to move within specific periods. JLC's program lists in detail

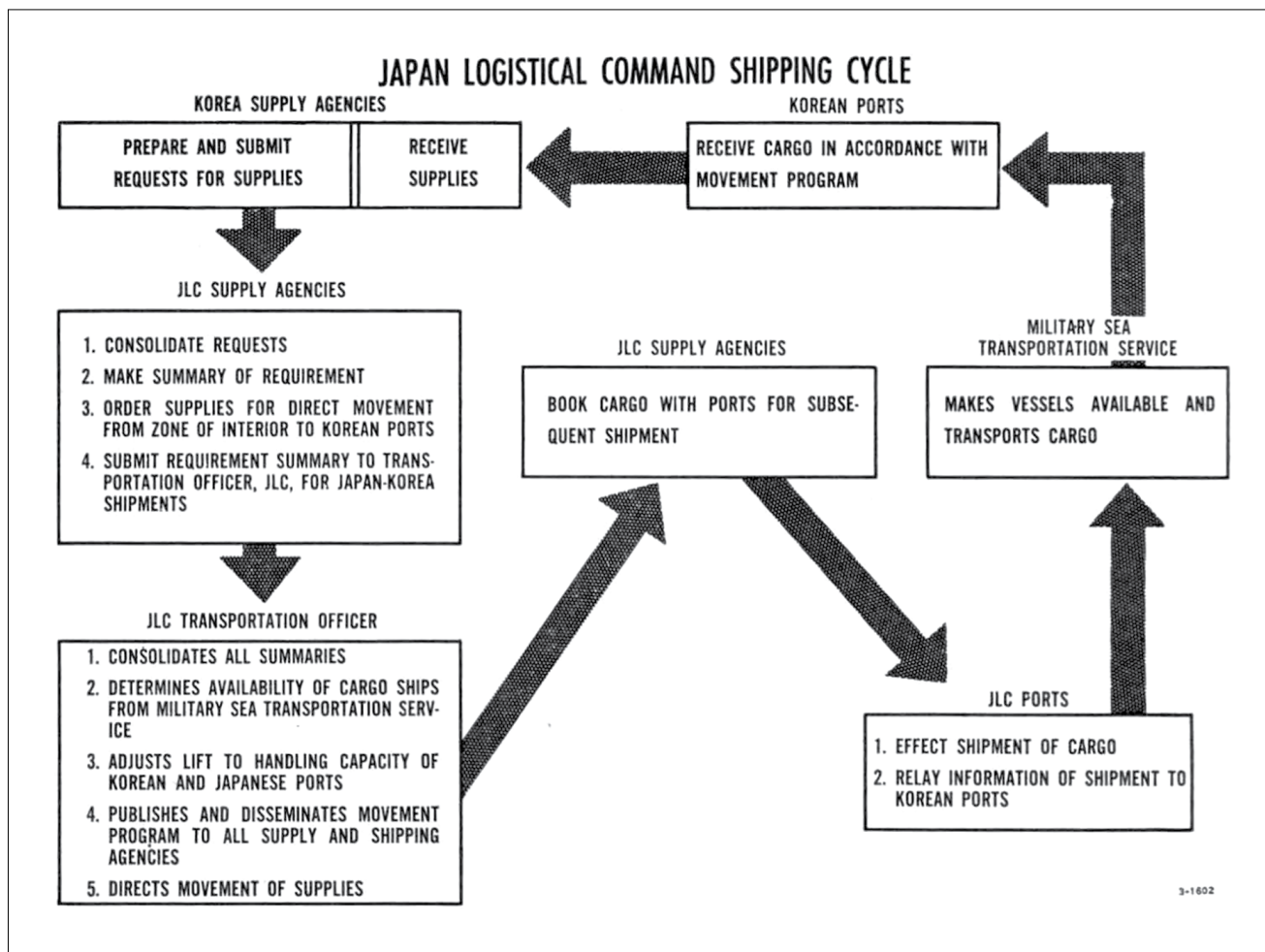
individual totals of supplies to be moved by service, class, commodity, point of origin, outloading port in Japan, and receiving port in Korea.

Calendar of Actions

Briefly, in JLC's support of the Korean effort, programmed movement meant the steady movement of supplies to Korea in accordance with a preconceived plan. This preconceived plan, wrought from time-tables, charts, and professional know-how, is called a *calendar of actions*. The calendar is the nucleus of the programmed movement, listing in detail precise steps to be taken by the many agencies concerned in



Supplies, stock-piled in Japan, waiting for scheduled shipment to troops in Korea.



the major supply movement. It details, within a given shipping cycle, the deadlines for submission of requisitions, publication date for movement programs, booking of cargo, shipping of goods, and dates for departures and arrivals.

The using organizations order equipment from supply agencies in Korea who in turn notify JLC's supply agencies of their needs. The orders are consolidated and catalogued by service, class of supply, quantity, present location of stocks, and final destination. Separate consolidations, or summaries, are submitted for shipments from Japan to Korea, and for anticipated deliveries from the United States to Korea during a designated 15-day delivery period. The summaries are turned over to the JLC transportation officer for action.

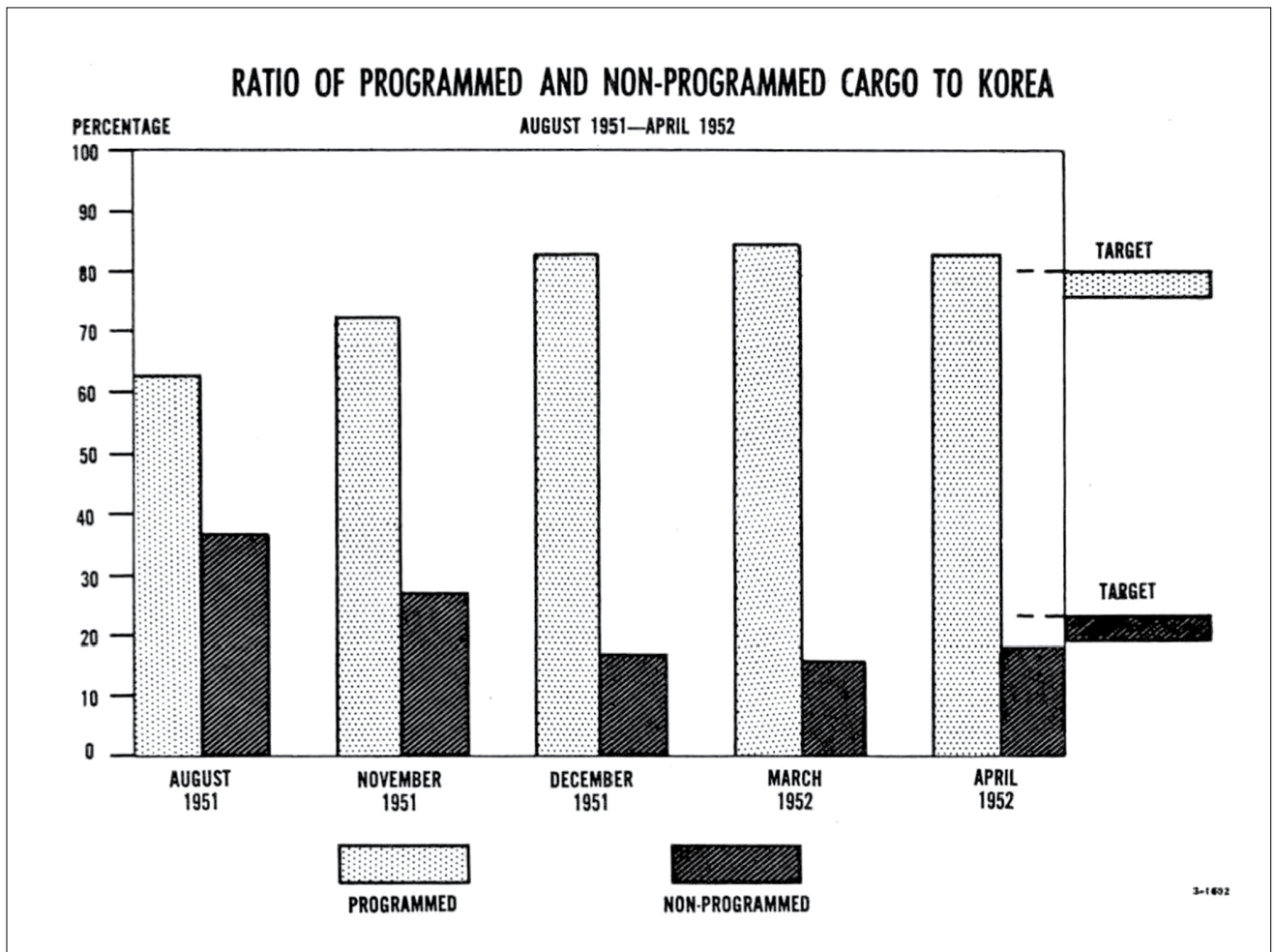
The transportation officer plans shipping movements, tonnages, and port calls for cargo and shipping. By the use of JLC's calendar he can plot the answers to the maze

of facts, figures, and shipping requirements before him, preparing a sound, all-inclusive movement program that will start gears turning, and equipment rolling.

First, contacts with Korean ports are made. What are the present, and the future, port capabilities? What are the physical facilities of the receiving agencies to unload ships, and the capacity of depots to store cargo? What plans are being made to move cargo out to front-line units immediately after delivery?

Second, Japanese ports which are expected to take part in the cycle are consulted. The amount of tonnage that these ports can process during the given cycle period is computed and charted.

With the full capacities of the Korean and Japanese ports before him, the transportation officer refers to his shipping charts. Tonnage, requested by technical services on a bulk basis, is transformed to tonnage-per-type cargo, in view of the limited processing abilities of Korean ports.



Finally, liaison with the Military Sea Transportation Service establishes the number of ships that will be placed at his disposal for the operation.

Movement Program

On the basis of the assembled information the “movement program” is published. The program contains all the essential elements necessary to start cargo rolling from supply depots to cargo ships, and from cargo ships to Korean ports. Schedules, shipping requirements, types and quantity of cargo, point of origin, and destination are then established.

After publication, a conference with Army, Navy, Air Force, and Military Sea Transportation Service representatives is called. Difficulties are ironed out, last-minute changes are made, and a supplement to the movement program, reflecting the changes, is published.

After the conference, the “movement” goes into high gear. Copies of the program supplement are

rushed to all concerned. The program is the go-ahead signal for many impatient men with a job to do. The program is the *work order* and JLC’s machinery begins to hum. The printed program:

1. Serves as a request to the Military Sea Transportation Service so that shipping space may be provided for the movement of cargo.
2. Authorizes supply agencies in Japan to book cargo at appropriate ports for shipment to Korea.
3. Directs ports to accept bookings from supply agencies in Japan.
4. Directs ports to effect the timely shipping of equipment.
5. Informs ports in Korea and receiving depots of their forthcoming workload.

As soon as the loading of cargo is completed at ports in Japan, information governing the movement is relayed to Korea, to permit planning for its reception.

Co-ordination is the byword of the entire program. The ground work is finished. With co-ordination, the job of transporting, processing, and loading for shipment will carry the supplies through to the men at the fighting front. Troops now receive their supplies at the specified time. The best equipment the world has to offer now flows smoothly through supply channels to ships, to ports, to depots, and to the United Nations fighting man; and JLC is constantly improving the program through the introduction of new methods and procedures.

Logistics men point out that at the present time all classes of supply (excluding perishable goods) are moving to Korea on a "programmed" basis. Some 83 percent of all goods shipped are moving in accordance with a preconceived plan. Improved vessel utilization, better stowage efficiency, and faster turn-around time has resulted in more supplies being shipped in less time.

The costly Red Ball express (a premium service combining expedited rail and truck delivery to Japanese ports, then by connecting cargo ship to Korea) has been reduced to a minimum.

The establishment of additional ports and unloading beaches in Korea has resulted in a

substantial increase in the amount of goods that can be shipped.

Estimated Savings

With the program in full force, approximately 50 percent of all supplies are now programmed from the United States directly to Korea. This direct support results in an estimated savings of \$465,000 each month for the taxpayer.

The suspension of expedited service (rail, truck, and ship) made possible through the movement program has resulted in an additional savings of \$135,000 a month.

Cargo ships now travel with full holds and carry emergency equipment on top decks. The jam-packed and efficient utilization of all storage space now nets a savings of approximately \$215,000 a month.

Totaled together, the savings effected by JLC's programmed movement amount to almost 3/4 million dollars each month.

Moreover, logistical support for Korea has become, for the most part, a routine process, whereas prior to programming it consisted of a continuous series of crises.

Our victory in World War II and our successes in Korea were dependent on mobility and fire power. We acquired mobility by having available ample supplies of motor vehicles. While our fire power was dependent on reliable and accurate weapons supplied with adequate quantities of ammunition, it was equally dependent on the means of getting the ammunition to the men who could use it at the time they needed it—the men on the firing line.

General J. Lawton Collins

To view "Supplying United Nations Troops in Korea" as it was originally published in April 1953, visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/JF-22/Original/Kirby.pdf>.