



Silver Wings, Golden Valor: The USAF Remembers Korea

Office of Air Force History, U.S. Air Force

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To some people, the Korean War was just a “police action,” preferring that euphemism to what it really was — a brutal and bloody war involving hundreds of thousands of air, ground, and naval forces from many nations. It was also termed a “limited war,” in that it took place in a small region of the world versus the worldwide conflict that had ended less than five years earlier. But this “police action,” this “limited war,” cost an estimated 2.4 million military casualties on both sides, while at least another 2 million civilians were also casualties. The United States military alone suffered 33,742 killed and another 103,234 wounded. The war in the air was as bloody and violent as that on the ground. The United Nations air forces lost 1,986 aircraft, with the USAF sustaining 1,466 of these. Air Force personnel casualties totaled 1,841, including 1,180 dead. These losses were far greater than can be accounted for in the glib terms “police action” and “limited war.” As the years passed following the end of the war, Korea receded in memory. Another war — in Southeast Asia — became lodged in the public’s mind, and the Korean War became “forgotten.” But to those veterans and historians alike participating in the proceedings recorded in this volume, their reminiscences and perspectives provide the reader with compelling arguments why the Korean War deserves to be remembered.

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