

The Organization and Activities of the US Army Signal Corps Photo Unit: Perspectives of War Photography in the Early Stages of the Korean War*

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In research on the history of photography related to the Korean War, only a small number of studies have focused on the organization, activities and visual features of war photography of the Korean War. In particular, the organization and activities of the military photographers have hardly been examined. It is virtually unknown that Sgt. Charles R. Turnbull, Private First Class (PFC) Ronald L. Hancock and Cpl. Robert Dangel, who were the military photographers for General Douglas MacArthur, were immediately sent to Korea just after the outbreak of the Korean War to carry out their mission. They belonged to A Company (Photo), 71st Signal Service Battalion, which was attached to the Photo Division, GHQ-FEC (General Headquarters, Far East Command). The existing wartime photographs from the period June 28 to July 5, 1950 were mostly produced by these three men, along with Lt. F.J. Winslow, photo officer in the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG). They carried out their activities until the end of July 1950, moving freely between the wartime front and rear, photographing American, South and North Korean troops, and civilians. Their work reflects the chaos of the times and displays conflicting viewpoints, a reality made possible by the fact that there was comparatively little censorship in the early stages of the war. This study focuses on the perspectives of these four military photographers, which differed greatly from the perspectives of later Korean War photographers, who tended to reflect the official position of the US Army.

Keywords: Korean War, 71st Signal Service Battalion, military photographers, combat photography, viewpoints, perspectives

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