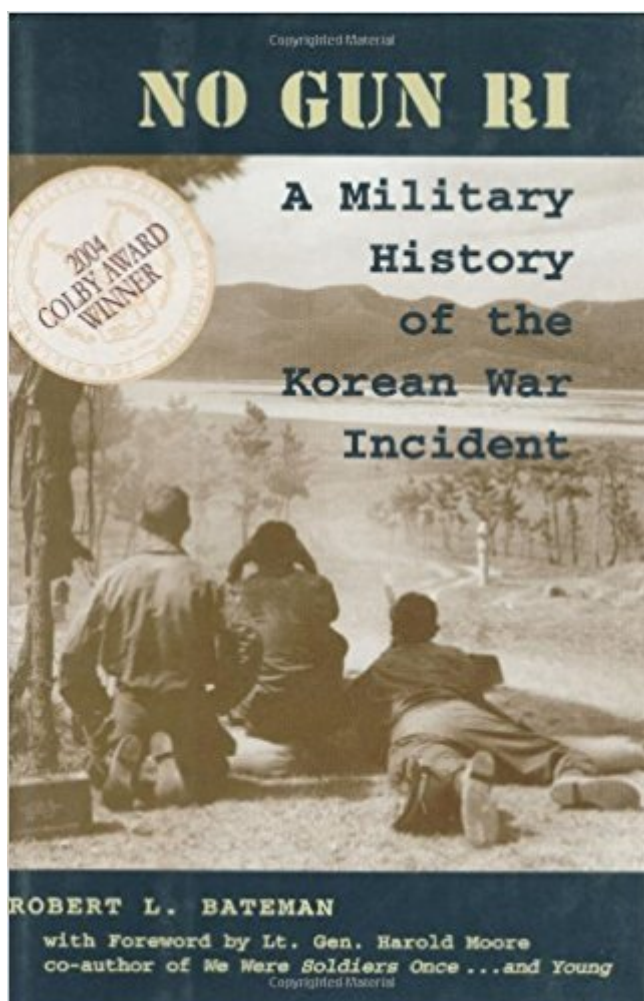


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# No Gun Ri: A Military History Of The Korean War Incident



## Synopsis

Compelled by the known fallacies in the Pulitzer Prizewinning Associated Press story of the alleged slaughter of South Korean refugees at No Gun Ri, Major Bateman, an academic historian and professional soldier, presents an alternate explanation of the events through the perspective of the soldiers and their commanders, the 1948-50 South Korean civil war, and the broader state of U.S. military policy and force readiness. In a solid historical analysis of the incident he debunks the AP allusion to a widespread massacre of civilians by U.S. forces at No Gun Ri and shows how veterans who allegedly witnessed this event and influenced others were not even present. Told concisely with extensive documentation from previously overlooked sources.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Major Robert Bateman served with the 7th Cavalry Regiment, was associate professor of history at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and is currently an Army fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He resides in northern Virginia.

This book refutes claims made in the AP article, and companion book *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare From the Korean War*. Written by a military historian, it addresses every claim of atrocities with a jaundiced eye and one by one proves them false. Detailed and thorough.

This is an excellent piece of military history in general and Korean War history in particular. Only Appleman's *East of Chosin* dissects the anatomy of a tragedy in Korea with as much sense of impending, inevitable doom and finality as Bateman's book does. Bateman achieves something few

authors and historians do: weave diverse social, political, and military events so that they can help us understand a major event. Other authors would be content enough to 'merely' point out that Daily, Flint, and Hesselman weren't even near No Gun Ri at the time the alleged atrocities occurred. That's the 'what did he know, and when did he know it' school of journalism. But Bateman has a much more powerful message. It begins as follows:--American soldiers were never made aware that this area of Korea was rife with guerrilla battles between South Korean communist sympathizers and Rhee's army and militias. They never knew many civilians were armed and aligned with the NKPA.--The American army had no recent experience conducting combat operations in their rear areas. They often left a task to the ROKs, who were notoriously brutal for slaying prisoners. The US army complained they did this so swiftly there wasn't even time to obtain intelligence from the guerrillas!--While infiltration was probably not a tactic used all that often by the NKPA, nonetheless American outrage against its use was not based on racist views. It was based on the moral conviction that it was not a 'legitimate military ruse.' His contrast of German infiltration at the Battle of the Bulge, with that of the Koreans in the Naktong battles, is powerful and moving. It is part of a larger subsection Fear and Military Reality which is an excellent discourse on the moral conflicts presented by the combatants and noncombatants in a military theater.--The famous order 'no refugees to cross front line. Fire everyone trying to cross front line' was never widely disseminated. It was a phone call that never reached the men at No Gun Ri. There is much more. Lack of training at the Battalion level or higher meant the forces were easily dispersed and communications disrupted. The stripping of the units NCOs and Officers (for the 24th infantry division) meant there were not experienced men on site to keep the units coherent and issue their own orders. Commissioned officers would be able to distinguish between legal and illegal orders such as the one above. All this makes his speculation about what happened at No Gun Ri more credible than Hanley's. Bateman doubts an 'execution style massacre' occurred. Certainly mortar fire was a mistake, but 'two way fire was exchanged' between the Korean refugees and US Soldiers. Calling in air fighters to strafe the refugees? Impossible, says Bateman: US soldiers FM radios could not talk to fighter AM radio sets. Even if an unintentional strafing occurred, says Bateman, casualties would be nowhere near the hundreds Koreans claimed. Nor could a bombing run have 'bent the railway like still chopsticks.' Aerial photographs after US forces left the area revealed it completely intact. And by the way, where are the bodies? The rest of the book returns to the larger story behind this No Gun Ri incident. It is almost amusing to watch Bateman peel apart Daily's military record. Flint and Hesselman weren't present at No Gun Ri either, though their stories are less colorful. Bateman's chapters on the media, its evolving concept of 'free press' and relationships with the

military are helpful in making clear to the reader just how a story like Hanley's can take on a life of its own. Bateman's liner notes state he 'expressly rejects the notion of media bias.' The reader might ask, why? Isn't it clear between the lines the glee Hanley felt in having 'nailed America' with committing an atrocity? Isn't it similarly clear that Haneley is steeped heavily in contemporary journalism's contempt for the west? How else do you explain reporters culling six witnesses from a pool of 130 simply because the former 'supported the thesis put forward' by the Korean claimants? Why didn't the Associated Press scour the same Service records Bateman used to reveal Daily was an imposter? All of the material presented in Bateman's book is designed to do two things. First, explain why an event like No Gun Ri would be inevitable in the course of a war such as that fought in Korea. Second, explain why it was unlikely that such an event, if it occurred, would be an intentional act by US soldiers. Compare that with Hanley's forays into US foreign policy, US 'arrogance' and meddling in Korean 'internal' affairs, fond wishes by Korean farmers that the NKPA would arrive any second to liberate them from Rhee henchmen, ad nauseum. What has that got to do with the agony suffered in the vicinity of that trestle? In the books 'Afterward' the statistical and survey methods necessary to obtain unbiased reportage on an issue of this magnitude are made clear. The reader begins to see the sophistication and patience, the thoroughness and contemplation necessary to assemble an interpretation of 'facts' fifty years after an event occurs. Pay particular attention to Bateman's focus on the comments of Colonel Nist, and the dignified process by which he interviewed veterans of this War. The former shows how sharp he is as a detective; the latter shows how trained he is as a researcher. I think you will be tempted to reach the same conclusion Bateman and the US government did: "neither documentary evidence nor US citizens statements reviewed by the US Review Team support a hypothesis of deliberate killing of Korean civilians."

No Gun Ri, A Military History of the Korean War Incident slams home the vital difference between history and journalism. While one prefers the variations inherent in the spoken word, the other requires evidence in support of oral assertions. Bateman takes the entire Associated Press, up to and including their now-president Boccardi, to task for the utter failure to check their sources. Journalism, good journalism anyway, rests upon the idea of "accuracy, accuracy, accuracy" according to Bateman. Bateman makes it clear that something bad happened at No Gun Ri, something avoidable and something about which the United States should not be proud. But, significantly, it wasn't what the AP wrote about, it bears no resemblance to their version of events. Bateman goes to great lengths to point out that he's in favor of free and open journalism, that he

admires the ideas and ideals of journalism. What annoyed him (and apparently led to this book) is sloppy and casual tabloid-like journalism passing itself off as "in depth" or "definitive." It is this sin which he pressed against the AP and their three reporters. In the reporting of their version of the events at No Gun Ri the Associated Press team led by Charles Hanley demonstrated that they were not interested in confirming the identities or presence of their "witnesses" before they published their story to a global audience...something that one would rather expect when writing a story about the one of the largest accusations of deliberate mass murder. In this I have to agree with Bateman. Journalism is a good thing. Some journalists (and in this case the AP as an institution) were downright sloppy. It's a sad statement about the state of the Pulitzer that the historical misdirection the AP passed off as "news" won the Pulitzer. ...One wonders why the AP has not returned their ill-gotten gains (they won the 1999 Pulitzer Prize before the...nature of their sources was revealed by Bateman) nor apologized for the shoddy work they did in their story and the "advocacy journalism" they foisted off as history in their follow up book. With more than 30 pages of footnotes, allowing any reader to fully reconstruct his research in-depth, Bateman sets the standard for historians working in military history as well as any journalists that confuse the process which results in accurate and reliable (read: reproducible and proveable) history with on-the-spot "gotcha" journalism.

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