

My Associated Press colleagues and I were deeply disturbed to see the Big Lie about No Gun Ri perpetuated in Armchair General as a result of the bizarre, six-year-old, one-man campaign by Robert Bateman to deceive and confuse readers on the subject.

This has gone on so long that there's no way to deal with it in a few words, and so I ask for your patient, sincere attention to this letter. I might also say that we at AP are aware that Bateman, as a military man, tends to get the benefit of a doubt from military editors, reviewers and publishers, one that is in no way deserved.

We were particularly distressed to see this material published without any attempt at fact-checking or consultation with the professional journalists being maligned. The "Editor's Letter" column makes clear that you haven't read our original No Gun Ri journalism, let alone our book, "The Bridge at No Gun Ri," published in 2001 by Henry Holt, a prestigious publisher of history.

If you had read this solid, deeply researched reporting (the original story is among the items here attached), you would have seen through Bateman's gross deceptions.

Let me briefly note some salient points that you seem unaware of, in part no doubt because Bateman covers up crucial facts about No Gun Ri. I'll follow that with a one-minute demolition of Bateman's flagrant fabrications and imaginings.

The facts:

1. After years of rejecting the No Gun Ri allegations, the Army conducted a 14-month investigation and reversed its position in 2001, confirming the core substance of the AP reporting: The U.S. military killed an undetermined number of South Korean refugees at No Gun Ri "by the effects of small-arms fire, artillery and mortar fire, and strafing."
2. When the original journalism was published in 1999, the AP had more than three dozen eyewitnesses to the NGR killings - 24 South Korean survivors and at least 15 American ex-soldiers. Since then, as a result of the Pentagon investigation and research on our book, the number of eyewitnesses has nearly doubled.
3. The additional eyewitnesses include, for example, a retired command sergeant major located by Army investigators who testified that his patrol entered one No Gun Ri tunnel and saw 200-300 bodies stacked up inside, most apparently dead. Read our original story, not Bateman's misrepresentations, to see how AP handled the question of casualties. In fact, here is a link to the AP on-line package, where, among other things, you can hear ex-soldiers attest to the events at No Gun Ri....

<http://customwire.ap.org/specials/interactives/nogunri/>

4. Army and AP archival research has turned up at least 19 U.S. military documents from the Korean War's early months showing that U.S. senior commanders resorted repeatedly

to a policy of indiscriminately shooting South Korean refugees. Here is a link to those documents....

<http://www.henryholt.com/nogunri/documents.htm>

Since 1999, dozens of No Gun Ri-like incidents from 1950 have been reported to the ROK Defense Ministry.

5. Most recently, a Harvard historian uncovered a letter to the State Department from the U.S. ambassador in South Korea, dated the day the NGR killings began, saying the U.S. military had adopted a policy of shooting refugees who approach U.S. lines. That letter is attached, along with the AP story about it. More can be learned from the book "Collateral Damage" (Routledge 2006) by historian Sahr Conway-Lanz, now Nixon archivist at the U.S. National Archives.

These may be distasteful facts, Jerry, but they're facts. Contrary to AP's "assertions" being "outrageous" and "false," as you write, the AP's story becomes stronger all the time. What's outrageous and false is what we read in *Armchair General*.

In reading our story, you'll see that AP never calls No Gun Ri a "massacre," an "atrocitiy," "deliberate" or a "war crime," all words ascribed to us in *Armchair General*. In reading our story, you'll find that Ed Daily, the man with second-hand, not first-hand, information about NGR, was not AP's "chief eyewitness," as you contend. You'll have to look deep into the story, to the 55th paragraph, to find him. No single source or witness was essential to the story. Furthermore, far from "showing little interest" in investigating Daily's credibility, it was the AP that did days of records research and got Daily to admit he couldn't have been at No Gun Ri. In the end, Daily was no more than a strange sideshow. He's been irrelevant to No Gun Ri for six years.

Bateman's fictions, on the other hand, are allowed to go on and on. Perhaps they're so boldly concocted, they're convincing. But it's difficult for us to understand how his article could have been published without key questions being raised. For example:

1. Bateman says repeatedly that "35" people were killed at No Gun Ri. Was he asked the basis for this? He cites no basis in the article. That's because there is none. Absolutely none. It's a number he plucked from thin air, a number he likes better than the "hundreds," or "200," or "400" estimated by Americans and Koreans who actually were there.

2. He writes flatly of "two guerrillas" among the refugees. Was he asked the basis for this? He cites no basis, because there is no basis. It's a fabrication. On page 120 of his book, he cites _ but doesn't reproduce _ an "S-4 log" as the basis for the "two guerrillas." That log is attached to this e-mail. I challenge you to find the two guerrillas there. What you will find instead is the seed of his deception, and you'll understand better how he works. (See the middle column of *Armchair General's* page 37: Every word of the paragraph "Soldiers collected..." is a fabrication. Ask him what it's based on; don't accept

double talk. Precisely which soldiers, from which unit, where and when? Where is this recorded? Where is it recorded that forensic specialists found spent cartridges from this same imagined gun? Precisely where were they found? Who made this connection?)

3. In his *Armchair General* article, Bateman doesn't even mention the shooting of refugees under the NGR bridge. That is the central element of the entire NGR story and is covered extensively in the Army inspector-general's report, but it interferes with Bateman's made-up story line.

4. In the final column on page 37, Bateman baselessly states there was no air attack on the refugees. But the Army's own investigation recognized that there was.

5. In that same column, Bateman writes that he made "a careful examination of the civilian eyewitness accounts." This is a particularly reprehensible passage, since he has not gone to Korea and has never talked to Korean survivors, lest they upset his fantasies. Beyond a few brief quotes in AP articles and our book, he has never seen the voluminous civilian accounts of No Gun Ri. And yet he denigrates and dismisses the Korean survivors, as if the victims and best witnesses were simply unimportant. Moreover, he smears them with a gratuitous accusation of attempted fraud. In our view, this alone should be reason enough for an informed reader to dismiss his work as unprofessional, slipshod and indefensible.

What we have here is fiction masquerading as history. We've identified (in a 26-page critique we can send you) well over 100 appalling omissions, fabrications, distortions, misreadings of military documents and other serious errors and untruths in Bateman's book. This "military historian" can't even read company morning reports correctly. In a nationally televised (C-SPAN2) panel discussion in 2004, at the Pritzker Military Library in Chicago, the host, John Callaway, sharply upbraided Bateman for deigning to publish such a book about the Korean War without bothering to research the Korean component. "Why do a project if you can't do it right?" he asked.

But beyond Bateman's made-up nonsense, we are mystified when people who should know better seem to accept without question that The Associated Press, the 160-year-old, not-for-profit, bedrock institution of news in America, would engage in some kind of corporate conspiracy to publish "outrageous falsehoods" about an event as important as No Gun Ri. Our reporting was the product of more than a year of intensive, sophisticated archival research and scores of extensive interviews, by a team with decades of professional experience, a team that includes military veterans and a Vietnam War-era Saigon bureau chief, and whose editors included a Korean War veteran.

Up against that, to see a nationally distributed magazine instead accept at face value - without checking facts - a distorted and ill-informed article, by someone who claims to be a "historian" but who depends on invented "facts" and contrived "evidence" in support of imaginary events, is, to say the least, disturbing.

We hope this makes it emphatically clear that the AP inquiry and report on No Gun Ri was anything but a "rush to judgment." We think it would be most fair and honorable on your part if *Armchair General* were to offer its readers a second look at this issue, one that would present the truth, with all its uncertainties and gaps, and repair some of the damage done to our professional reputations by repetition of highly inaccurate, irresponsible and insulting claims about how we do our jobs and the journalism product that results. My colleagues and I will stand by to hear from you and *Armchair General* about that.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Charles J. Hanley
Special Correspondent, International Desk
The Associated Press