

## **HUMAN WAVE ATTACKS (Summary of Wikipedia Talk article).**

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I've never heard the term "human wave" used otherwise than in connection with Chinese attacks in Korea, even then probably erroneously. If taken to mean an attack by unsupported infantry aiming to overwhelm technologically superior defenders by sheer weight of numbers, I would strongly dispute that the Somme was an example. The Somme was a battle fought over many months with massive artillery support using a variety of tactical deployments, but none of them a "human wave". I question the premise of the entire article.

Now we have supposed "human wave" tactics (used, per the article, largely by untrained armies with no artillery support) being used in Normandy beach landings (probably the best planned and supported operation in history) and by tanks in the Western Desert. There seems to be no coherent understanding of what is meant by "human wave tactics" or how and when they were used.

OK, let me suggest what I think a human wave attack is, in the form of a new lead or stub article, and see if anyone disagrees:

A human wave attack is a pejorative term for an attack by massed infantry on a defended enemy position, intended to overwhelm the defenders by sheer weight of numbers and regardless of inevitable high casualties. The term implies both a lack of tactical subtlety by the attacker, and the defender's ability to inflict horrific casualties on the defender, usually through superior firepower, training or technology. It also suggests a callousness of the attacker towards its own troops, and therefore the term is likely to be used only by the defender or a later commentator; it is doubtful whether any attacker has ever used the term, or whether it has ever appeared in a tactical manual. Human wave tactics would normally only be used by an attacker who lacks firepower and the ability to maneuver, but whose main advantage is in numbers of men. His men may be poorly trained, though highly motivated: great physical courage and esprit de corps is required to advance unflinchingly into superior enemy fire.

The term is most often used to describe the mass tactics of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the Korean War. Although abandoned by the PLA by 1953, similar tactics were used by the Viet Minh in the early stages of the siege of Dien Bien Phu, and were re-adopted by the PLA in the Third Indochina War against Vietnam. The use of human wave tactics by the PLA is attributed to political teaching that will and enthusiasm were more important than firepower and military training. The PLA's political motivation of its troops emphasized the need to advance straight at the enemy. Human wave tactics were costly in lives and often failed to achieve their military objectives. Their use in the Third Indo-China War is a rare example of an army with superior firepower (the PLA) throwing away its advantage by the use of human wave tactics.

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Although most massed attacks by infantry before the age of modern firepower could be (and sometimes are) described as human waves, the criticism implied by the term and the implied acceptance of high casualties from the defenders' superior firepower mean the term is unhelpful to describe earlier conflicts. Early examples of mass infantry charges against superior defensive firepower include Pickett's charge at the battle of Gettysburg and the Zulu attacks on British troops in the Zulu War.

Notice the Chinese term 人海戰術 have no constraint on attack or defense, it merely means the general tactics used in a war with more soldiers than the opponent. Defending with sheer size without any assault still suffice as this tactics as long as the men are not separated to multiple strategic grounds making the enemy able to get them one by one with less number.

The Chinese tactics in Korea was definitely NOT to attack straight at the enemy; the Chinese were very good at infantry maneuvers. One of their specialties was infantry infiltration, followed by coordinated attacks from several directions, creating the impression that they were far superior in numbers, even on the occasions when they weren't.

I think the article makes pretty clear that the term "human wave attack" has its problems; it isn't really a useful term, and it's certainly a defender's POV term, but it is established enough by usage to merit an article. The source I used attributed human wave attacks to the early part of the Chinese intervention in Korea, after which more sophisticated and successful tactics were used.

As discussed above, I don't think "human wave attack" is a particularly useful term, but the article exists to examine the concept as understood in English; to my mind it is a very limited one, derived largely from the UN defenders' perception of the PLA's tactics early in its intervention in Korea, and probably having very little to do with the actual PLA tactical doctrine. It doesn't help anyone's understanding to speculate about whether other historical tactics could be considered to be human wave tactics.

The term is not only used by the UN defenders like you said, and it is very improbable to assume the sources are not related without actually checking them. Therefore I am against removing them like you did. Also, more sources could be given to cover my point in the terms 人海戰術 is indeed equivalent to Human Wave attack/tactics. You can check here and see that the terms are being used in translations. (search for human-wave and 人海战术, which is in simplified Chinese characters.) A Chinese dictionary from Chinese University of Hong Kong and a Korean dictionary also confirms this. It is not speculated, but well sourced that the original term used by the UN is actually a valid term and used in sources you have removed.

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The problem with the article was that it had become a huge POV list of situations that editors thought might be described as human waves, including tank battles, seaborne invasions and the entire Franco-Prussian War. I have no problem with properly-referenced material relating to the Iran-Iraq war being added to the article - the references you quote are all effectively the same source (Library of Congress studies) and i could not follow them through because there was no reference to the particular page or paragraph, except the one you detailed.

I agree that is a source for saying there were human wave tactics used by the Iranians, although without more detail I'm not sure how much it adds to the article and I leave to you or others the question of whether a US military commentary on Iran from 1987 should be regarded as authoritative. I also don't mind the Sun Tsu quote being reinstated, by way of colorful background. I still don't understand what you are saying about Chinese or Korean terms, but articles should describe topics, not define words, and the fact that similar terms may exist in other languages doesn't really take us anywhere.

I am talking about the Chinese term as the basis of the term Human Wave attack used to describe the PLA tactics. Also, since the term Human Wave attack means attacking with swarms of soldiers, sourced sections that describe the use of swarms of soldiers should be kept, at least to a certain extent. It is not speculation but a direct relation between examples of swarms of soldiers being used. Can the term be used on tanks or other stuff, that is not my concern. I have no objection in removing the unsourced sections, but if the sections are sourced, we cannot make the assumption that they are not related.

The crux of the issue may be that a human wave attack in English does not mean just "attacking with swarms of soldiers". It is pretty well defined in the lead of the article. It's a pejorative term for throwing men unsupported against defenders with superior firepower to overwhelm them with sheer numbers, regardless of casualties. As to sources, the fact that a statement may be sourced does not of itself make it relevant, or a good contribution to the article. What we really need here is sources about human wave attacks in general, not about specific examples.

I think Cyclopaedic has nailed it by saying "the fact that a statement may be sourced does not of itself make it relevant". Particularly for these types of article, we need to be very careful to avoid coming to our own conclusions as editors about what the source is depicting. For example, a source might describe an action that to us is indeed a human-wave attack, but if the source doesn't explicitly characterize it that way, we shouldn't either. We couldn't even weasel-word it and say "X can be regarded as an example of a human-wave attack" unless we can show a source that does indeed regard it as such. The sources you mention are undoubtedly fine in themselves, but they need to support the edit in the context its being used. It doesn't take much knowledge of military history to come up with possible examples - both World Wars, Vietnam, Korea, maybe even Agincourt - but (disregarding WP:OR and

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**WP:SYNTH), this is really just stuffing the article in one area to make up for its deficiencies in others. As has been mentioned, what's ideally needed is a scholarly source that actually discusses the concept.**

**Still, the main point I am stating here is about the sources were assumed to be irrelevant, without checking. I am sure Cyclopaedic is trying to create a better article, but the assumption made on the sources that they are not related is to a certain extent assuming bad faith that they are not related. If they are verified to be not relevant, fine, remove them, but if they have never been verified, they should not be removed.**

**Human wave attacks were also used in Iran-Iraq war.**

**It is doubtful whether there is such a thing as a human wave attack as a military tactic. But it is a well-known term, and it is most often applied to the Chinese in Korea. We can't say that is "incorrect", because that depends on what your definition of the term is. I would like to see some sourced material on what Chinese tactics early in the Korean War actually were, but given the common use of the term to describe those tactics we can't just deny that they used a human wave.**

**Just a heads up so that there is no misunderstandings. O'Dowd's book is a good resource on explaining on what role does the Chinese military political systems plays in the Chinese "human wave attack", but he did not spent time on explaining how does a human wave attack actually carried out as an infantry tactic. Thus this book had made errors which contradict reports from numerous historians and veterans of the Korean War.**

**To list one example, O'Dowd describes the Chinese "human wave attack" as bugle blowing hordes that come as a mass of disorganized mobs, but Roy Edger Appleman, a combat historian that prepared the official US Army's history of the Korean War, stated that this is just a "myth". Patrick Roe, one the Marines at Chosin and the official historian of the Chosin Few, further elaborated that while the appearance of the Chinese "human wave attack" may be chaotic, it is not a disorganized rush by green recruits.**

**Finally, most of the studies of PLA during the Korean war have stated that besides the political indoctrinations, the fact that Chinese army has no reliable communications links between HQ and field units, which prevented field units from receiving any orders once a battle has begun, also played an important role on why Chinese keeps on rushing fortified enemy positions in "human waves". In short, O'Dowd's work's scope is too narrow to accurately describe what a "human wave attack" is.**

**Can someone mention the JAPANESE BANZAI ATTACKS. I mean that is like the greatest example of human wave attack and not even mentioned here! Connect it to Banzai attack.**

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Regarding "Banzai attacks" above; not quite...the Great War had the most & largest massed human wave attacks in human history. The Somme, Verdun, Belleau Wood, to name a few.

Then find a military history book that explicitly say "Somme, Verdun, Belleau Wood are human wave attacks."

According to O'Dowd's book, which is the only military book I can find that tries to define the concept of human wave attack, mass infantry charge made during WWI resembles human wave attack...but I found no specific examples from WWI that were labeled as human wave attack.

I remember reading a memoir about the Korean War where big waves of heavily drugged Koreans wandered up to the British lines. The Koreans were too drugged to be effective.

According to current scholar consensus, the description of "drugged soldiers" is an inaccurate, biased and somewhat racist term used by Western/South Korean popular media to describe stubbornness of the Communists fighting style. The bottom line is that there is currently no proof that anyone is drugged during the Korean War. Furthermore, memoirs are not reliable sources on military sciences.

They weren't drugged, merely told that if they hesitated they would be instantly shot for cowardice by their political commissars. Combine that with a lifetime's worth of Communist indoctrination under Mao, and you've got yourself an army willing (like the Soviets of WWII) to charge into machine gun fire without hesitation. Remember the Chinese machine gunners found chained to their guns and frozen solid during the Chosin Reservoir campaign? This is all verifiable, btw. Truth is often more unsightly than even propaganda.

Funny, if it is verifiable, where is the source? Even in George, Alexander L. (1967), *The Chinese Communist Army in Action: The War and its Aftermath*, it stated that Chinese battlefield execution is "not verifiable", despite the threat of death is used to keep man in line. Furthermore, Chinese army was suffering manpower shortage throughout early 1951 that captured deserters were directly pressed back into service instead of capital punishment...did you even bothered to study the topic in detail before crying POV?

### **Human wave attack and its relations with numbers, skills and persistence**

I am assuming that the scope of this article is about the human wave attack as a real world infantry tactic, not a popular culture lexicon, I just want to point out that there are currently no direct connections between human wave attack tactic and the number, skills and persistence of an attacking force.

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The only military science definition from my research on the human wave attack tactic is that it is a frontal attack where the attacker would try to dump as many infantrymen as possible and as fast as possible onto the defender's position, so that the ensuing melee battle would either destroy the defender or force them to fall back. Unless another editor can provide an alternative definition that is properly cited in established infantry tactic studies, please note that the current definition does not require a fixed relationship between the attacker and the defender's strength, nor does it require the attackers to be at a specific skill level, nor does it require the attacker's intention to be suicidal. The only two prerequisites for human wave attack are that the attackers must have a strong morale system to motivate/force soldiers to charge, and that the attackers must disregard all covers for a high speed charge.

This is just a reminder that it is not NPOV nor accurate to tag everything as "human wave attack" just because the attacker vastly outnumbers the defender, and/or the attacker's soldiers are poorly trained/equipped, and/or the attacker is suicidal, and/or the attacker is engaged in attrition warfare. These conditions are signs that an attacker could be using the human wave attack tactic, but they are not prerequisite for human wave attack. Furthermore, since this article's scope is about military science, not about popular culture lexicon, popular media such as magazines, newspapers and memoirs are generally not reliable sources in defining what is a human wave attack tactic (or any military science topics in general).

### **Infantrymen are Humans**

I was rather surprised that the greatest slaughter in the history of man; the Great War, also known as World War One was not included in this article, although it had a lead in with, "massed infantry assaults were stopped after 1917, etc." The Somme occurred before 1917 so I reverted it back, after I noticed it had been deleted some time ago by an editor. Which caused some questions: Why was referenced material deleted to begin with; when NON-referenced material (Banzai charges for example) were retained?

Then I noticed that the re-mover of the WWI piece, stated that he "thought it was absurd", further stating that he saw no "Human Wave Assaults" mentioned in the referenced material, as he had looked it up.

The article is about INFANTRY attacks as stated twice in the introduction paragraph of the article. The reference book(s) stated infantry attacks. Most people know, whether they served in the military or not, what an infantryman is...he's a human being! Therefore, a massed infantry attack is a human wave attack if they are attacking in WAVES; which 100,000 Infantrymen did at the Somme in 1916.

Then I read some of the above discussions concerning this "Human Wave" topic, and it sounded to me, as a neutral party, that the conversation went roughly like this, using laymen's

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language as an example: "The soldiers were killed by volleys of rifle fire" and the other person says, "No they weren't, they were killed by firearms." Or, "the person was driving a car", and the other person replies, "no he wasn't, he was driving an automobile!"

Gentlemen, sometimes people make things so complicated they've forgotten what they originally were trying to say. A car is an automobile (although it could be part of a train if used in a different context); and a rifle is a firearm (although people could get specific about what type of firearm). And an infantryman is a man, a human being, and if 100 or 500 or 100,000 infantrymen make a frontal assault into the mouths of waiting machine guns...then it "can be" or "could be" called a human wave attack. Those men are not tanks making a frontal attack by the waves, they're not warships making a frontal attack wave after wave, they're MEN (or they used to be from the Vietnam War and beyond).

If the authors of this article want to separate "INFANTRYMEN" from "HUMAN BEINGS" then it will have to become a non-military topic. The introduction paragraph clearly states INFANTRY and the article is clearly titled HUMAN WAVE ATTACKS, so they are the same. If editors of this piece do not want WWI mentioned, the greatest example of mass waves of Human Beings "going over the top" to their deaths; then the creators of this article must change the introduction to read "People charging...in mass, etc." and not mention SOLDIERS at all.

It is not a human wave attack if you do not have a source that explicitly uses the term "human wave attack". By your logic then anything that include infantry charges counts as human wave attacks, which is plainly wrong.

I've added several new quotes from the existing sources to try and buttress the section on the Korean War. As it stood, it was carefully worded by somebody with an axe to grind in order to portray the Chinese troops as super-soldiers (who put a priority on "minimizing casualties") while the US were simply morons who fought poorly and then overinflated the numbers of enemies in order to make their losses seem justified.

In actuality, all 5 of the sources state clearly that Chinese platoons (while not attacking in huge "waves" of the sort seen in the Russians in WWII, for example) did most definitely "disregard casualties" while conducting short attacks. This was part of their training and part of the control their commanders and commissars exercised over them, including the regularly-exercised right to execute those "lacking [proper] spirit". The source that claims they tried to minimize casualties is bullshit, to be kind, since none of the other sources say anything about such a claim and in fact expressly point out that if the target was important enough, the Chinese were willing to launch human wave attacks for days if need be, taking thousands of casualties in the process.

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**This is not intended as a pejorative against the Chinese, but it is a critical and basic reality of the Chinese short attack that is confirmed by all the present sources. I should note that the People's Republic of China currently refuses to acknowledge they ever used such a tactic and refuses to use the term "human wave". Any attempt to manipulate the existing references should thus be considered as propaganda from the PRC and should be reverted on site.**

**First of all, where did "disregard casualties" have anything to do with this topic? Did you even try to define the term "human wave attack" before crying propaganda? The studies of Chinese infantry tactic has two schools of thoughts, one is on the political system as indicated by George's "The Chinese Communist Army in Action: The War and its Aftermath", another school of thought is on Chinese infantry tactic in practice as indicated by sources such as Roy Appleman and US army studies. What gives you the right to disregard one school of thought over the other? Although we both agreed on the fact that Chinese launch numerous waves small fire teams until either the defense is wore down or everyone is dead, political control is only part of the equation - did you even consider the other factor such as that Chinese has no radio/communication system, as shown in numerous combat studies? And finally, you tried so hard to imply that Chinese lives are expendable, when none of the sources you said I "misquoted" came up with the same conclusion...what are you trying to pull here?**

**\* "Since it was not expected that the first wave would necessarily achieve a breakthrough on their own," which sources explicitly stated this?**

**\* "and this made it difficult for UN defenders to target large masses of Chinese troops for artillery or close air support strikes." SLA Marshal said nothing about artillery or close air support, only that it is hard to target. Furthermore, in SLA Marshal's book The River and the Gauntlet (which I believe he got his research from), he stated that Chinese forces advance when UN forces are reloading, take cover when UN forces are firing, and each firing interval can only take down few Chinese in front of them despite the numbers, it obviously has nothing to do with artillery and close air support.**

**\* Why did you take out reference Mahoney, Kevin (2001), Formidable Enemies: The North Korean and Chinese Soldier in the Korean War, despite the fact that it is vetted by established Korean War historian such as Allan R. Millett? And that fact that Chinese timed their advance to minimized casualty according to UN firearm reload patterns as confirmed by SLA Marshal?**

**\* Why did you take out that fact that Chinese has no radio, despite the fact that it has been attributed by numerous historians for Chinese launching suicide attacks (also termed "tactical suicide" by Bevin R. Alexander)?**

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\* "This form of overwhelming attack, often conducted without even the possibility of retreat," Which sources explicitly said no retreat allowed?

\* "ending with the rather bitter punchline" the source you cited said the Marine derisively cried out "How many hordes are there in a Chinese platoon?" when hearing news report...that doesn't sound bitter IMO. Similarly Patrick C. Roe of the Chosin Few stated that the term "horde" has nothing to do with mass numbers Chinese (one Marine said "I shot three hordes while capturing two"), while Bevin R. Alexander interpreted the joke as mocking the term "human wave"...none of it sounded bitter.