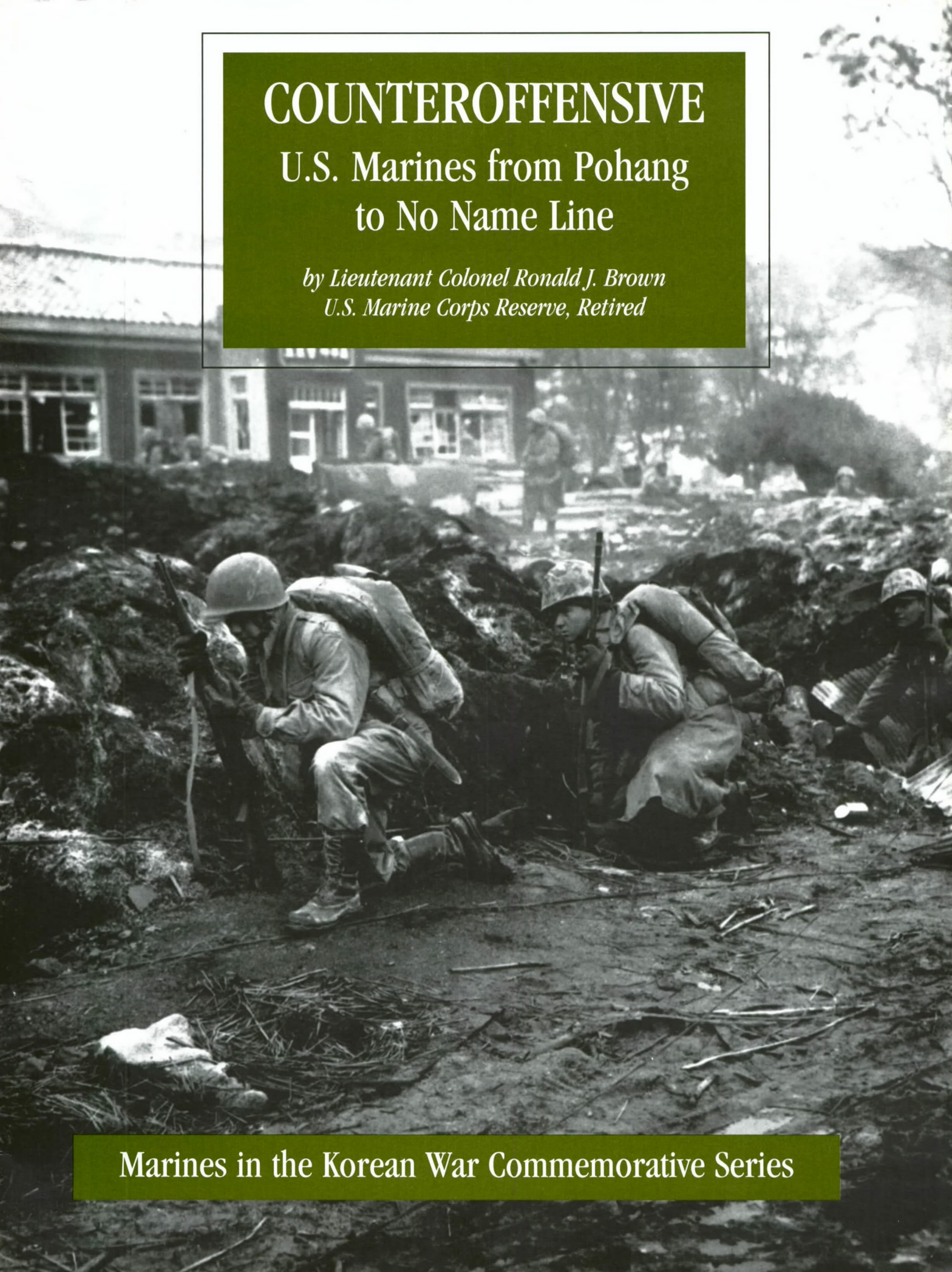
COUNTEROFFENSIVE

U.S. Marines from Pohang to No Name Line

by Lieutenant Colonel Ronald J. Brown
U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Retired



Marines in the Korean War Commemorative Series

U.S. Marines from Pohang to No Name Line

by Lieutenant Colonel Ronald J. Brown, USMCR (Ret)

At Hungnam, the 1st Marine Division, following the withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir, embarked all of its equipment and personnel in record time and sailed for Pusan. The trip south for the half-starved, half-frozen Marines was uneventful except for the never-closed chow lines, salt-water showers, a complete change of clothes, and a widespread outbreak of colds or mild cases of pneumonia. "For the first time in weeks we felt clean," wrote one Marine, "and our lice were gone forever—washed down a drain-hole into the cold Sea of Japan." In addition to a scrub down and new dungarees, there was a good deal of conjecture and discussion on the possible employment of the division; many hoped that instead of landing at Pusan, the convoy would proceed directly to Japan or the United States and relief by the 2d Marine Division. Both officers and enlisted men alike held that it was impossible to visualize the employment of the division in the near future and that rest, reorganization, and rehabilitation was an absolute necessity. Then, too, there were those who had fought around the Pusan Perimeter and were "not too happy or not too eager to see the dreadful country they had fought over." Regardless of the speculation, the convoy steamed on, and on 16 December arrived at Pusan. Although several tank landing ships sailed past Pusan and put in at Masan, a majority of the division's Marines traveled by rail and road from Pusan 40 miles west to their new area outside the small seaport untouched by war.

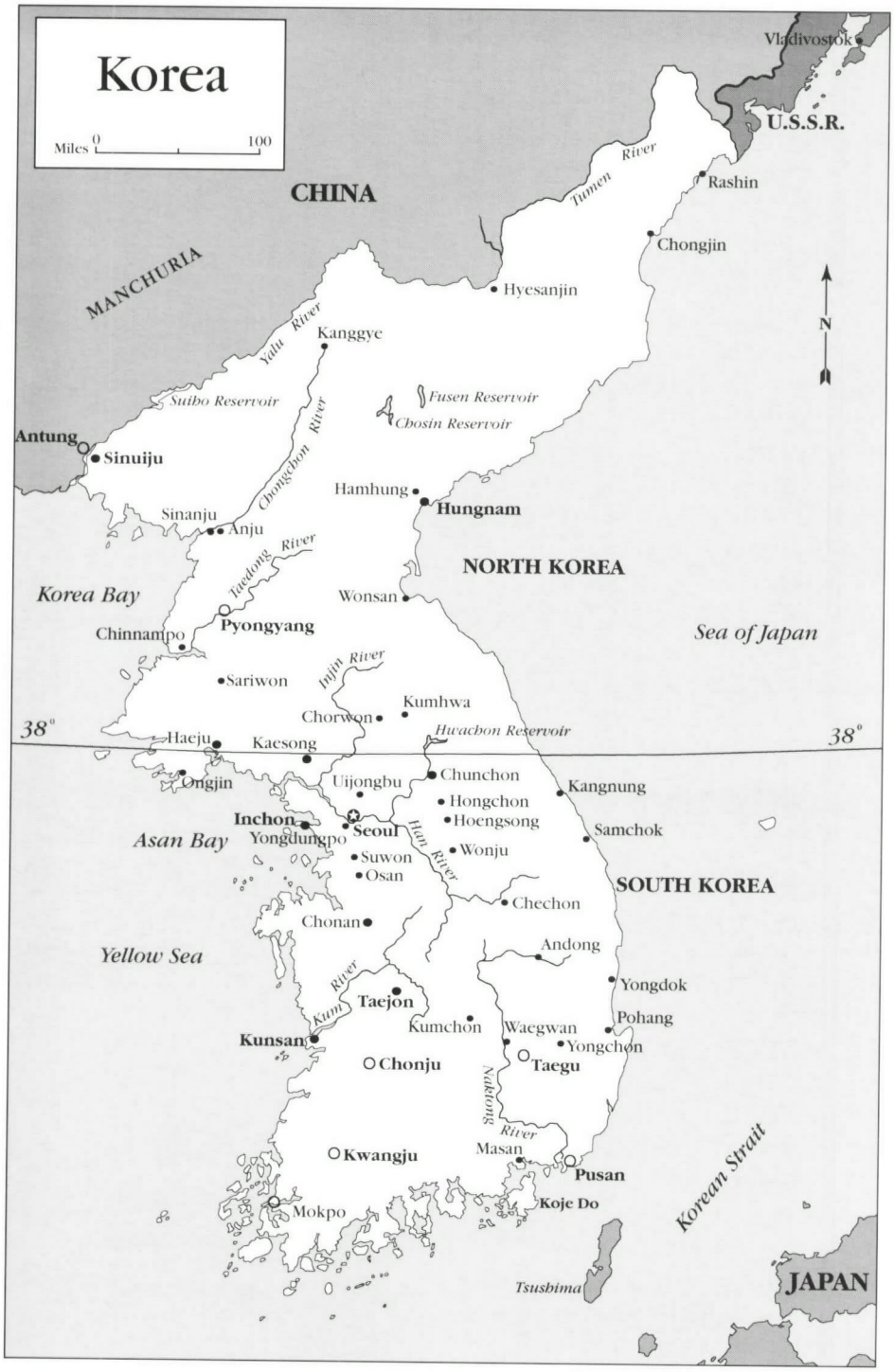
In an area previously occupied by the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, a tent city quickly sprang up—pyramidal tents for all members of the command and squad tents for each battalion. Hospital tents and mess halls were erected and with the help of Korean laborers mess tables and other improvements soon began to appear. A large barracks in the outskirts of Masan served as the administrative headquarters for the regiments, while the division's service and support units occupied areas near the docks and south of town. The men observed the division's first Christmas in Korea with a memorable display of holiday spirit despite a chilling drizzle. A choir from the 5th Marines serenaded the division headquarters with carols, many attended a series of shows put on by troupes of U.S. Army and Korean entertainers, and the U.S. Navy sent Christmas trees and decorations. It was not only a time to be thankful, but also a period of rapid recuperation from fatigue and nervous tension.

As 1950 drew to a close the military situation in Korea was so bleak American policy makers were seriously contemplating the evacuation of U.S. forces from that embattled country, and American military leaders had already formulated secret contingency plans to do so. The Korean Conflict had been raging for six months during which time the fighting seesawed up and down the 600-mile length of the mountainous peninsula with

Gen Douglas MacArthur, America's longest-serving soldier, was Commander in Chief, Far East, and also commanded the multinational United Nations forces in Korea. Although the situation appeared ominous in early 1951, MacArthur later said he never contemplated withdrawal and "made no plans to that effect."
Department of Defense Photo (USA) SC362863

ON THE COVER: *Marines are crouched and ready to move again as fire slackens near Wonju.* National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6630

AT LEFT: *Marine riflemen hug the ground as they advance under fire during Operation Ripper.* National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6862



first one side and then the other alternately holding the upper hand. With 1951 only a few days away the Communist forces—consisting of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) reinforced by "volunteers" from the People's Republic of China, known as the Communist Chinese Forces (CCF)—appeared on the verge of victory. In a series of stunning blows that began the previous November, the United States-led United Nations Command had been pushed back from the Yalu River at the North Korean-Chinese border all the way south of the 38th Parallel, which divided North and South Korea. A momentary lull in the action, however, allowed the energetic new United Nations field commander, Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway, USA, to rally his troops just as the outlook was darkest. This fortuitous event began a dramatic reversal of fortunes, a turnaround so startling that within six months it was the Communists who were on the ropes.

The combined NKPA and CCF armies had more than a half million men inside Korea while the United Nations Command numbered only about two-thirds that many. The U.N. commander was American General of the Army Douglas MacArthur who was concurrently Commander in Chief, Far East. The major Service components of the Far East Command were the Eighth Army, the Fifth Air Force, and elements of the Seventh Fleet. Recently appointed Lieutenant General Ridgway commanded the Eighth Army; Major General Earl E. Partridge, USAF, the Fifth Air Force; and Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble, USN, the Seventh Fleet. Major General Oliver P. "O. P." Smith's 1st Marine Division and Major General Field Harris' 1st Marine Aircraft Wing were the two major Marine units in Korea. Unlike today's expeditionary force structure, at that time there was no Marine component headquarters so the non-Marine theater commander was the only common superior officer for both the division and aircraft wing in Korea. The nearest senior Marine was Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, in Hawaii, who was responsible for the logistical support of both the division and wing. Despite the fact that no official direct command link existed between Marine air and ground units in Korea, the respective Marine commanders maintained close liaison and carefully coordinated their actions.

Several important new com-

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A6087

The general staff of the 1st Marine Division assembled for an informal photograph shortly after the New Year. Pictured from left are: Capt Eugene R. Hering, USN, Division Surgeon; Col Alpha L. Bowser, Jr., G-3; Col Bankston T. Holcomb, Jr., G-2; MajGen Oliver P. Smith, Commanding General; Maj Donald W. Sherman, Assistant G-1; BGen Edward A. Craig, Assistant Division Commander; Col Edward W. Snedeker, Chief of Staff; and Col Francis M. McAlister, G-4.

mand relationships developed after the Marines' fighting withdrawal from the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir. Marine aircraft, which had provided superb close air support for Marine ground units for the previous five months, would no longer be on direct call. Instead, the potent Marine air-ground team was broken up so land-based aircraft of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing could be incorporated into the Fifth Air Force. The U.N. ground command also underwent some changes. The 1st Marine Division passed from X Corps to Eighth Army control in mid-December 1950, just about a week before the tough and energetic Army paratrooper, General Ridgway, was named Eighth Army commander after his predecessor, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, USA, was killed in a traffic accident.

The Masan Bean Patch

After the ordeal at the Chosin Reservoir, the 1st Marine Division moved to Masan in southern Korea where it became part of Eighth Army reserve. Concurrently, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was flying from aircraft carriers and airfields in Korea but was about to temporarily deploy to Japan. On the home front, three replacement drafts (the 3d, 4th, and 5th) were either already enroute or were preparing to ship out. Hopefully, their arrival would bring the depleted Marine ranks in Korea back up to strength before the next round of combat began.

The battered 1st Marine Division spent two weeks licking its wounds in a rest area known as the "Bean Patch" about 200 miles south of the main line of resistance. Its three rifle regiments, each of which was led by a future lieutenant general, occupied the agricultural flat lands on the north-

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-424655

Marines encamped near Masan in the wake of their return from the Chosin Reservoir. The area had been a rest area when the 5th Marines fought to save the Pusan Perimeter four months earlier.

ern outskirts of Masan, which gave the area its name. Division headquarters and most of the combat support and service elements, including the helicopters and observation aircraft of Major Vincent J. Gottschalk's Marine Observation Squadron 6 (VMO-6), were located nearby. The 1st Marine Division was in very good hands. Devout, pipe-smoking, white-haired O. P. Smith was tall and thin with a scholarly manner, factors that led some observers to remark that he looked more like a preacher than a Marine general. Fortunately, appearances can be deceiving. Smith's performance as a commander thus far in Korea had been outstanding. A respected military analyst studying the Chosin campaign noted that Smith was a careful planner and superb tactician who repeatedly resisted pressure to execute rash orders issued by his corps commander, actions that probably saved the 1st Marine Division from piecemeal destruction.

The 1st Marine Division was also blessed with four of the finest regimental commanders in Korea. The 1st Marines was led by legendary Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, whom General Ridgway proudly lauded as "a man of indomitable spirit . . . the officer with the most combat experience in Korea." The 5th Marines commander was lanky Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray, another seasoned combat veteran. An "Old China Hand" who fought at Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan during World War II, Murray brought the 5th Marines ashore in August 1950, and ably led his regiment through every Marine engagement in Korea thus far. He would later gain some literary notoriety as the role model for the fictional "High Pockets" Huxley in Leon Uris' best selling novel *Battle Cry*. Colorful, fiery-tempered, hard-driving Colonel Homer L. Litzenberg, Jr., commanded the 7th Marines.

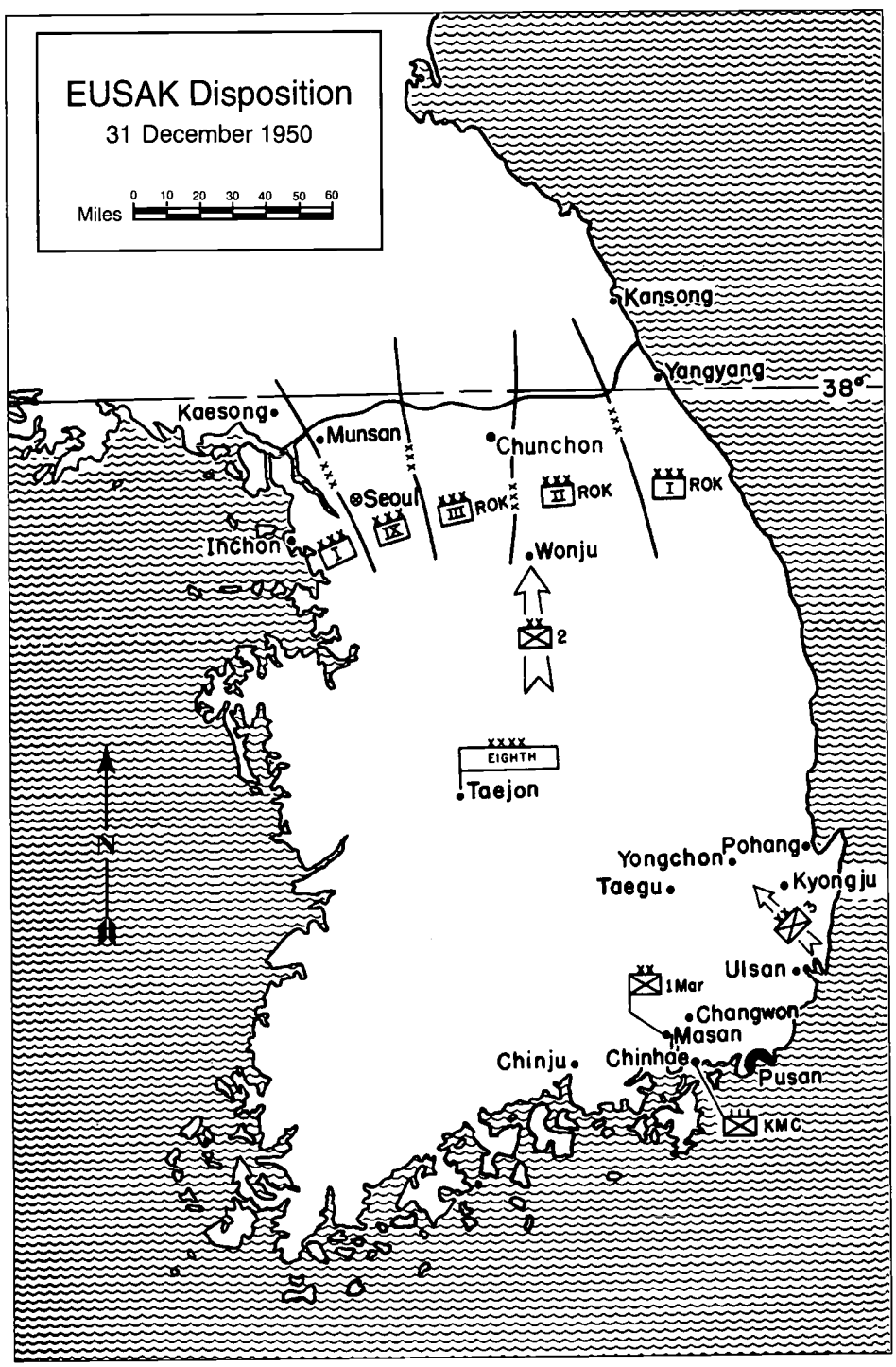
Lieutenant Colonel Carl A. Youngdale led the division's artillery regiment. Youngdale served with the 14th Marines of the 4th Marine Division throughout World War II. In 1950, he came to Korea as the 11th Marines' executive officer and then took over the unit when its commander, Colonel James H. Brower, was evacuated from the Chosin Reservoir in November. Almost two decades later Major General Youngdale would command the 1st Marine Division in Vietnam.

On New Year's Eve the Communists opened their Third Phase Offensive. This massive attack pushed overextended U.N. lines back under heavy pressure, and the United Nations Command was forced to cede the South Korean capital city of Seoul to the enemy for a second time. But this fighting withdrawal was not at all like the helter-skelter retreats following the North Korean invasion of June 1950. This time the Eighth Army fell back in good order to a series of preplanned defensive lines, the last of which would be, if needed, just outside the port of Pusan much farther back than the original Pusan Perimeter. American units traded ground for time while inflicting maximum casualties upon their advancing foe. In short, the U.N. lines were bending but not breaking, and there was no sense of panic. "We came back fast," General Ridgway admitted, "but as a fighting army, not as a running mob. We brought our dead and wounded with us, and our guns, and our will to fight."

Fortunately, the United Nations Command stemmed the oncoming tide so the 1st Marine Division never had to assume the role of rear guard. Instead, the division rested, rehabilitated, restored broken equipment, rearmed, and absorbed almost 3,000 replacements during the last days of 1950, most filling shortages in the infantry and artillery regiments. Daily security patrols were mounted with the purpose of making a reconnaissance of roads and questioning Korean civilians about the nature of guerrilla activity in the area, but no enemy were encoun-

tered and there was no evidence of any inclination on the part of the enemy or guerrillas to harass the division.

There were many high-level visitors at Masan during the division's brief stay. General Ridgway dropped in to inspect the Marines and observe field training. "He fully expected to find a division which was so weary and so beaten up, and perhaps even with a defeatist attitude after all he'd read and heard about the Chosin Reservoir," as Colonel Alpha L. Bowser, the division's assistant chief of staff for operations, later noted. But "much to his surprise the thing that impressed him most, everywhere he went in the division, and everybody he talked to, [was] their attitude about what they were doing to get themselves back in shape to get back into the battle." Very satisfied with what he saw, he complimented General Smith for the division's quick recovery. Although it was short of men and equipment, Ridgway still deemed the 1st Marine Division his most effective combat unit. He was, in fact, holding the Marines in reserve in case the pending crisis in the north worsened. Should the U.N. lines break, Ridgway wanted the 1st Marine Division to hold open a corridor to the port of Pusan and then act as a rear guard to cover the U.N. evacuation. Ridgway "gave the impression to us that he was a commander, with plenty on the ball, who had combat experience and the will to fight," recalled Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, the assistant division commander.



Among other noteworthy visitors was Captain John Ford, USNR, the famous motion picture director, who had been recalled to active duty by Rear Admiral Arthur W. Radford, commanding the Pacific Fleet, who felt the Navy and Marine Corps had not received enough war coverage. Ford gathered background for a documentary he was filming, and some film clips shot at Masan were later used in the feature film "Retreat Hell." Also on hand was military historian Colonel Samuel L. A. Marshall, USAR, who interviewed numerous Marines for a classified report about infantry combat in Korea, portions of which were later published in his book *Battle at Best.* The most welcomed visitors, however, were entertainer Bob Hope and his traveling USO show. The Marines at Masan thoroughly enjoyed a chance to laugh heartily, and many of them stared in awe at the first American women they had seen in months.

Sleep, sports, and good chow

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A5640

During the brief stay at Masan, Marines rested, gained back some of their lost weight, and found time to engage in an impromptu volleyball game. Despite the efforts of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, to scrape the bottom of the manpower barrel, the division was still short more than 3,500 officers and men.

were the watchwords at Masan. As Lieutenant Colonel Francis F. Parry, 3d Battalion, 11th Marines' commanding officer, remarked: "We had so much turkey it was coming out of our ears." Impromptu softball, basketball, touch football, and volleyball games became daily rituals, and these were occasionally followed by a well appreciated, albeit limited, beer ration. Weapons familiarization and small unit tactics dominated the training schedule. And as was done prior to the trek down from Hagaru-ri, the division's medical staff examined all personnel, surveying the men for those who, noted Lieutenant Colonel Parry, might have "hidden the fact that they were frostbitten or didn't consider it was worthy of note till we got down to Masan." The serious cases were evacuated. Although the men eventually were allowed go into town, visit the stores, and purchase a lot of useless things, such as artificial flowers and non-regulation fur hats, "there was no liberty," Parry recalled. "A few troops got drunk on native brew and went blind and a few of them caught a venereal disease, but there was no liberty to amount to anything, no recreation that could properly let the troops relax and enjoy themselves for a while, such as could have been obtained in Japan." Despite a fortnight's respite and frantic efforts to bring the 1st Marine Division back up to full strength, General Smith was still short of men, tanks, and communications equipment when the call to return to action finally came.

Notwithstanding the short period of recuperation, fatigue among the officers and men of the division was apparent after more than four months of combat. Concerned, General Smith told his unit commanders that "we had to get our men in hand, do everything we could for them, but not let them begin to feel sorry for themselves." Some of the officers and men, primarily the commanding officers, noted Lieutenant Colonel Parry, "started to lose a little of their zip and hard-charging qualities. Some of the battalion commanders of the 5th who had been through three campaigns were getting to be pretty sick men. They weren't charging up hills the same way they had when they first got there."

In early January, the Communist's strategic goal was to

Veterans of the exhausting Chosin Reservoir campaign used their time at the Masan to hone basic military skills. Here Marines review marksmanship techniques under the watchful eye of a noncommissioned officer.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A5628

Lieutenant General Matthew Bunker Ridgway, USA

Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway was called suddenly to Korea to take over the Eighth U.S. Army following the death of its previous commander, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker. When Ridgway arrived the Eighth Army was in disarray, its morale shattered by heavy losses suffered during the longest withdrawal in American military history. The new Eighth Army commander promptly engineered, to use the words of General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "a battlefield turnaround unlike any within American History." Within four months the United Nations Command had regained all lost territory south of the 38th Parallel. As military historian Colonel Harry G. Summers, a veteran of Korea, noted: "Under Ridgway the Eighth Army toughened up and became as good a fighting force as this country has ever fielded." Just as his troops were about to reenter North Korea, General Ridgway was again unexpectedly thrust into higher command when he replaced General Douglas MacArthur as commander of United Nations forces in April 1951.

The son of an artillery colonel and a West Point graduate, Ridgway was an intellectual and diplomat as well as a superb tactical commander. He possessed brains, courage, and decisiveness—traits that served him well in Korea. His peacetime military assignments included overseas stints in the Far East, Latin America, and Europe. In 1942, he was given command of the elite 82d Airborne Division and led the unit in operations against Axis forces in Sicily, Italy, and France. He was "a kick-ass man," one subordinate said, who became known among his men as "Tin-tits" because of the hand grenades so prominently strapped to his chest. Taking command of XVIII Airborne Corps in 1944, Ridgway participated in the Battle of the Bulge and subsequent operations leading to Germany's surrender in 1945. He was serving as the deputy Army chief of staff for plans in Washington, D.C., when his call to Korea came.

Unlike his predecessor, General Ridgway was given a free hand in Korea. When he asked for instructions, General MacArthur simply told him: "The Eighth Army is yours, Matt. Do what you think best." Following an initial tour of the combat area, Ridgway was astonished at the decided lack of morale and purpose, shoddy discipline, and atmosphere of defeat. Problems meant opportunity for the battle-hardened, disciplined paratrooper. First, the men of the Eighth Army needed an adequate answer from their commanding general to the question: "What are we fighting for?" "To me the issues are clear," he wrote:

> It is not a question of this or that Korean town or village. Real estate is, here, incidental. It is not restricted to the issue of freedom for our South Korean Allies, whose fidelity and valor under the severest stresses of battle we recognize; though that freedom is a symbol of the wider issues, and included among them.

The real issues are whether the power of Western civilization, as God has permitted it to flower in our own beloved lands, shall defy and defeat Communism; whether the rule of men who shoot their prisoners, enslave their citizens, and deride the dignity of man, shall displace the rule of those to whom the individual and his individual rights are sacred; whether we are to survive with God's hand to guide and lead us, or to perish in the dead existence of a Godless world.

If these be true, and to me they are, beyond any possibility of challenge, then this has long since

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC360069

ceased to be a fight for freedom for our Korean Allies alone and for their national survival. It has become, and it continues to be, a fight for our own freedom, for our own survival, in an honorable, independent national existence.

The sacrifices we have made, and those we shall yet support, are not offered vicariously for others, but in our own direct defense.

In the final analysis, the issue now joined right here in Korea is whether Communism or individual freedom shall prevail, and, make no mistake, whether the next flight of fear-driven people we have just witnessed across the HAN, and continue to witness in other areas, shall be checked and defeated overseas or permitted, step by step, to close in on our own homeland and at some future time, however, distant, to engulf our own loved ones in all its misery and despair.

Ridgway not only was determined to recapture moral leadership, but also insisted that the Eighth Army needed to return to infantry combat fundamentals. He sternly ordered his corps commanders to prepare for coordinated offensive action, and he forcefully reminded his division and regimental commanders to get off the roads, to take the high ground, and to use perimeter defenses. He studied previous campaigns and recognized a pattern to Communist operations; they would advance, attack, and then suddenly break contact until resupplied. Ridgway decided the answer was to fall back in an orderly manner trading space to inflict casualties then, once the Communists stopped, to attack and relentlessly pursue them. His plan proved to be very successful. Ridgway's offensive, also known as the "meat-grinder" because of heavy Chinese and North Korean casualties, had by early spring 1951 resulted in the recapture of Seoul and the recovery of all of South Korea by mid-April, when he left to take over as theater commander in Tokyo.

Although Marines admired General Ridgway's offensive spirit and his professionalism, they were disappointed with two of his high-level decisions. First, he pulled the 1st Marine Division away from the sea and began to use that highly trained amphibious unit as just another infantry division; second, he acquiesced to the breakup of the Marine air-ground team by allowing Marine aircraft squadrons to be directly controlled by the Fifth Air Force. Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, commander, viewed both of these actions as tactical mistakes. Previously, General MacArthur—who had commanded Marine units in the Southwest Pacific during the World War II and fully appreciated their unique capabilities—always kept the very successful Marine air-ground team intact, and he usually tried to keep the Marines near the sea as well. For a variety of reasons, Ridgway did not.

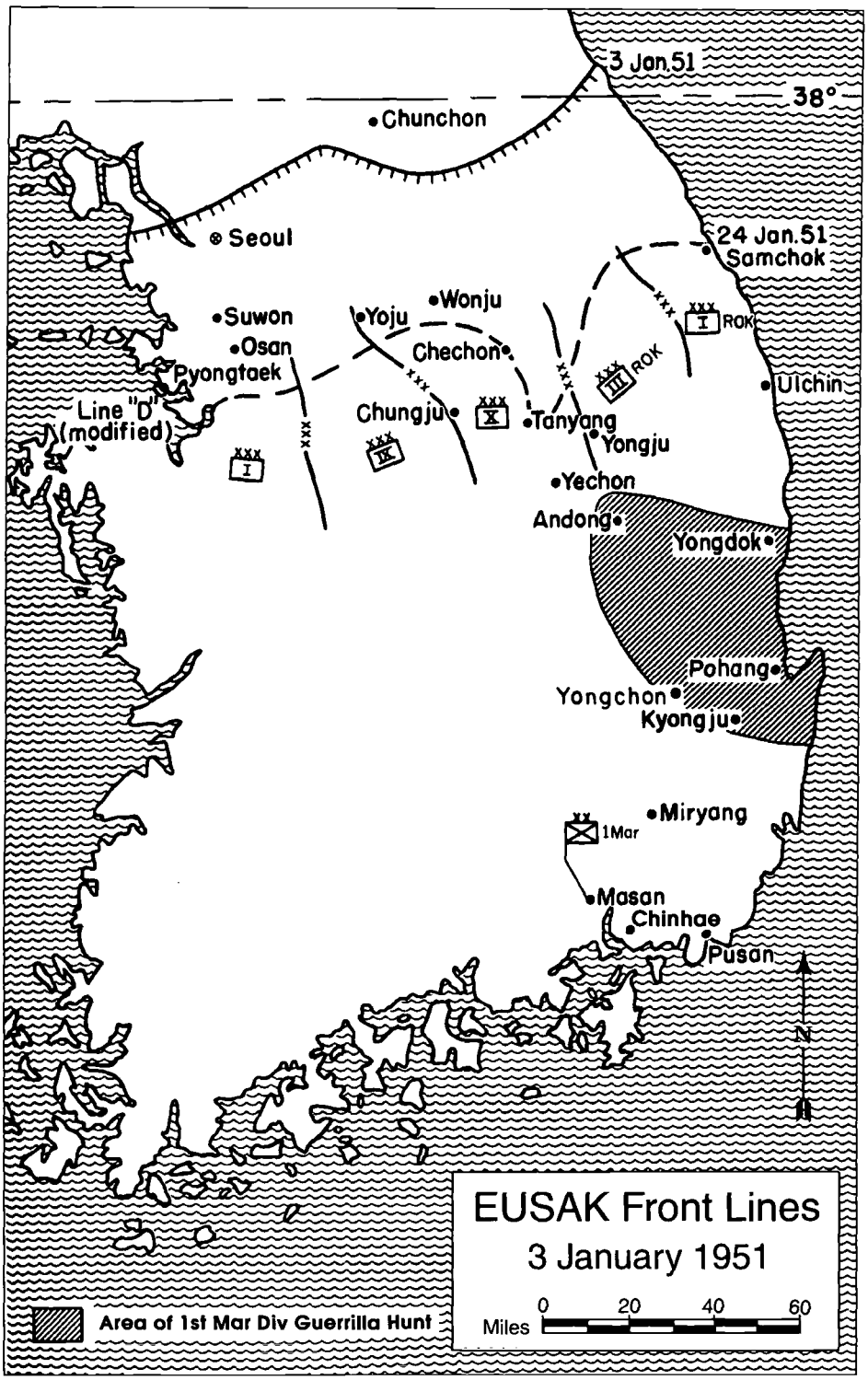
As theater commander, General Ridgway reorganized the U.S. Far East Command to make it a true joint headquarters, never meddled in the tactical handling of forces in Korea, and maintained a good relationship with his superiors in Washington. After leaving the Far East, Ridgway succeeded General Dwight D. Eisenhower as Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe and in 1953 he was named Chief of Staff of the Army. His tenure as Army Chief of Staff was a series of bitter quarrels with what he took to be President Eisenhower's refusal to remember, "most of what counts in battle is the Infantry." A few months short of mandatory retirement, he left the Army in June 1955. He later served as executive director of various business firms until his death in 1993 at the age of 93.

Military historians frequently hold him up as the epitome of the modern "soldier-statesman," but it was the men who served with him in battle who had the most praise. As Major William L. Bates, Jr., commanding officer, Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, and later operations officer, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, said of General Ridgway at the time: "He is a real, down-to-earth, honest-to-God soldier. He is a general who can visit a battalion, go into the attack with it, watch it operate, remain several hours, and never try to tell you how to run your own outfit. He is personally courageous and spends much of his time following Patton's suggestion of letting the troops see you at the front. He has sound ideas on the employment of infantry troops, and he knows how to fight, small and large scale. He is, I would guess, the best field commander the Army has had in a long time."

---

divide Korea in half, to separate the U.S. and South Korean forces. The Chinese first carried the main attack aimed at Seoul and Inchon. The NKPA attacked Korean-held Line D from Hoengsong in central Korea not long after the CCF mounted its western offensive. Farther east, North Korean commander General Kim Chaek wanted to drive straight down the center of the peninsula to capture the U.N. staging area at Taegu. His plan was to take Wonju with a frontal attack by Major General Pang Ho San's *V Corps* while outflanking the U.N. lines from the east using Lieutenant General Choe Hyon's *II Corps*; the *III Corps* was his reserve. All went well at first. *II Corps* cracked through the South Korean lines and proceeded down Route 29 peeling off divisions to cut the U.N. line of retreat. The *27th Division* invested Chechon; the *31st Division* attacked Tanyang; the *2d Division* cut Route 29 north of Yongju; and the *10th Division* headed for Andong. If all went according to plan, the United Nations Command would lose control of its main supply route and be denied passage to the port at Pusan. This, combined with the loss of Seoul and Inchon, would effectively end the war.

The Third Phase Offensive presented problems, but General Ridgway was confident his revitalized Eighth Army could handle the situation. Obviously, Ridgway's first priority was to stop the



Chinese, so he committed the bulk of his forces near the west coast. He knew that once the Chinese offensive was blunted he could safely shift forces to central Korea. The U.S. 2d Division, the only American unit he had available for the Central Front, was hastily sent forward to defend Wonju. Ridgway's decisive actions set the stage for all Marine combat operations in the spring of 1951.

While the Marines were resting in the Bean Patch, the struggle shifted from Seoul to central Korea. Fighting in knee-deep snow and bitter cold, outnumbered U.N. defenders grudgingly fell back as the enemy poured through a gap in Republic of Korea (ROK) Army lines, endangering Wonju, a vital road and rail junction south of Hoengsong. Responding to this threat, General Ridgway flashed a series of messages to Smith's headquarters. One of these was a warning order for elements of the 1st Marine Division to be ready to move 65 miles northeast to Pohang-dong, a sleepy fishing village about a third of the way up Korea's east coast, in order to protect Eighth Army lines of communication and backstop some shaky Korean divisions. The Pohang area had great strategic importance because it included a significant stretch of the Eighth Army main supply route (National Route 29), housed several key road junctions, included the only protected port on the east coast still in U.N. hands, and was the site of one of the few modern airfields (Yongilman, a former Japanese fighter base labeled "K-3" by the Americans) in eastern Korea. This mission was confirmed on 8 January, but it had by then been modified to include the entire 1st Marine Division which was not assigned to a corps, but would instead be directly under Eighth Army operational control. The division staff cut orders on the 9th, and the Marines began moving out the next day with the maneuver elements going by truck and the support units by air, rail, and ship. The brief Masan interlude was over. The 1st Marine Division was headed back into action.

The Pohang Guerrilla Hunt

Marine activities along the east coast of Korea in late January and early February of 1951 eventually came to be known as the "Pohang Guerrilla Hunt" by the men of the 1st Marine Division. This period began with a week-long movement from Masan to Pohang that

started with the departure of the 1st Marine Division vanguard, "Chesty" Puller's 1st Marines organized as a regimental combat team, on 10 January. A motor convoy carried elements of the 1st Marines; the division Reconnaissance Company; the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines; Company C, 1st Engineers; and Company D, 1st Medical Battalion, on a tedious 10-hour journey from Masan to Yongchon. Upon arrival at Uisong the next day, the regimental combat team, later dubbed "Task Force Puller" by General Smith, began patrolling a 30-mile section of road. Two days later, the reinforced 1st Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Donald M. Schmuck, a Colorado native and Peleliu veteran, moved 15 miles north to occupy Andong. A key crossroads about 40 miles inland from the sea, it was the site of X Corps rear headquarters as well as two dirt airstrips (one of which was long enough to handle cargo planes, but the other able only to service light observation aircraft and helicopters). As the 1st Marines edged closer to Andong, Puller was convinced, despite General Ridgway's promise to keep the division intact, that the next step would be to attach his unit to X Corps and he would be "off to the races again." Puller, as General Smith later noted, "was apprehensive about being put out on a limb. The basic difficulty was that he had no confidence in the staying power of the Army units deployed north of Andong. Puller felt they might 'bug out' and leave him 'holding the bag.' As far as the Division was concerned, "RCT-1 was strong enough to protect its own withdrawal if it came to that." With the arrival of the division's two other regimental combat teams, soon-to-be colonel, Raymond Murray's 5th Marines patrolled the coast from Pohang to Yongdok and defended the main airfield, while Colonel Homer Litzenberg's 7th Marines occupied

1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Jan-Feb51

A 75mm recoilless rifle position covers a likely avenue of approach in the vicinity of Andong. Crew-served recoilless rifles were more reliable and had much greater range than the individually carried 3.5-inch rocket launchers.

An aerial photograph of Pohang shows the rugged, irregular hill masses where North Korean guerrillas sought refuge. This village on Korea's east coast was the 1st Marine Division's base of operations in January and February 1951.

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC346705

centrally located Topyong-dong. The last Marine units disembarked from tank landing ships at Pohang on 17 January.

Although there was some limited discussion about small-scale amphibious operations by General Ridgway when he visited the 1st Marine Division command post at Pohang, these never came to fruition. Instead, he ordered the Marines to defend an east-west line just north of the Andong-Yongdok Road and to simultaneously protect the north-south-running Eighth Army main supply route. General O. P. Smith faced a dilemma because he was at first uncertain about which of these assignments should receive the highest priority. Should he deploy to guard against an all-out attack on the main line of resistance by Communist regular forces from the north or be prepared for counter-guerrilla operations against small groups of infiltrators? Intelligence reports indicated that the latter was the most likely course of action. Small enemy bands had already proved extremely troublesome by intermittently cutting supply lines and occasionally attacking outposts between Wonju and Taegu so continued guerrilla actions were considered probable. General Smith was well aware that the Marines would not be manning an exposed position. Several South Korean divisions screened the Marine northern flank, the Sea of Japan protected his eastern flank, and hilly terrain made the western approaches inaccessible to armor. Smith, therefore, decided to emphasize mobile security operations and made linear defense a secondary mission.

The enemy threatening Pohang was believed to consist of about 6,000 light infantry troops from Major General Lee Ban Nam's widely respected *10th NKPA Division*. (Post-war analysis revealed that before its destruction by the 1st Marine Division, the *10th Division* inflicted more casualties and captured more equipment than any other North Korean unit.) Although a division in name, the *10th* was short of personnel and lacked artillery, armor, and motor transport. Its only support weapons were a few heavy mortars and some heavy machine guns. These shortfalls limited General Lee's tactical options to hit-and-run raids, roadblocks, and ambushes. The *10th Division* was, therefore, expected to conduct low-intensity operations remaining under cover during the day and attacking only in darkness. General Lee's troops seeped south through a hole in the fluid South Korean lines east of the Hwachon Reservoir in central Korea during the U.N. retreat in late-December 1950, and the division's lead elements were thought to be just arriving in the Pohang area in mid-January.

The 1st Marine Division zone of action was roughly 40 miles square, an area composed of 1,600 square miles of extremely rugged interior terrain enclosed by a semi-circular road network joining the coastal villages of Pohang and Yongdok with the inland towns of Andong and Yongchon. Seventy-five miles of the vital Eighth Army main supply route were located inside the Marine zone. That part of the supply route ran north from Kyongju to Yongchon then bent about 25 miles westward until it once again turned north to pass through Andong. A secondary road (Route 48) joined Andong in the northwest corner with centrally located Chinbo and Yongdok on the coast. The valley lowlands were dotted with small villages whose adjoining terraced rice paddies edged roadways and agricultural flat lands. The center of the Marine area of responsibility consisted of snow-capped mountains traversed only by a series of winding trails and narrow pathways that worked their way up and down the steep ridges. The weather was generally cold and often damp with frequent snow flurries, but

A Sikorsky HO3S sets down at a landing zone in the Pohang sector of operations. These utility helicopters were invaluable in providing communications in the search for Communist guerrillas.

1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Jan-Feb51

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6145

In a long, winding, single-file column, a Marine rifle company inches its way down a steep mountain path before assaulting a guerrilla-held village in the valley below. The "guerrilla hunt" was marked by numerous small-scale clashes with enemy discovered by such patrols.

with little accumulation. The occasional high winds and overcast hindered flight operations and limited visibility.

On 16 January, General Smith opened a forward command post at Sinhung, about five miles southeast of Pohang. Division Operations Order 3-51 assigned the Marines three missions. One was to protect the Kyongju-Pohang-Andong portion of the main supply route. A second was to secure the village of Andong and the two nearby airstrips. The third mission was to prevent penetration in force of the Andong-Yongdok defense line. Widely known throughout the Marine Corps as a "by-the-book" man, Smith kept this image intact by mounting a textbook anti-guerrilla campaign. The long-service veterans of the 1st Marine Division were well aware of the travails of guerrilla warfare. A few senior officers and veteran sergeants had fought local insurgents during the so-called "Banana Wars" between the World Wars, some others had fought Chinese guerrillas in North China after World War II, and most field grade officers had closely studied the *Small Wars Manual* at Quantico. These veteran campaigners knew that counter-guerrilla operations were primarily small unit actions that tested individual stamina and required strong leadership at the fire team, squad, and platoon levels. Accordingly, General Smith decentralized operations. He created five defensive areas, formed mechanized task forces to patrol the roads, and saturated the hilly terrain with infantry patrols to keep the enemy constantly on the move. The 1st Marines, at Andong, was assigned Zone A in the northwest; the 5th Marines manned Zone B from Yongchon in the southwest quadrant; the 7th Marines operated out of Topyong-dong in Zone C, a centrally located 20-by-25 mile corridor running north from Pohang; the 11th Marines held a narrow coastal strip north of Pohang known as Zone D; and Lieutenant Colonel Harry T. Milne's 1st Tank Battalion operated in Zone E southeast of Pohang. The light utility aircraft of VMO-6 were in general support.

Anti-guerrilla doctrine called for constant vigilance by static units and aggressive action by mobile forces. A commander's primary concern was force protection, and the best way to accomplish that was to keep the enemy off balance. Guerrillas had to be located, engaged, rendered ineffective, and relentlessly pursued to do this. For large units (regiments or battalions) the favored tactics were "raking" (later known in Vietnam as "search and destroy") operations and encirclements ("cordon and search"). Smaller infantry units relied upon saturation patrols to find, fix, and eliminate the enemy. Most of these so-called "rice paddy patrols" consisted of fire teams and squads operating from platoon or company patrol bases. The 5th Marines was particularly aggressive and once had 29 such patrols in the field at the same time. Ambushes were an effective way to keep the enemy off balance by hindering movement and destroying small units piecemeal. Squad- and platoon-sized ambushes set up nightly along mountain trails or fanned out to cover likely avenues of approach to nearby villages. Motorized road patrols consisted of machine gun-mounted jeeps that roved the main supply route at irregular intervals. Convoys were escorted by gun trucks, tanks, or self-propelled guns.

The anti-guerilla campaign placed a heavy burden on the firing batteries of the 11th Marines. Once the patrols had tracked down groups of enemy troops, the regiment's batteries had to fire on

short notice and in any direction. "It was not uncommon to see a battery sited by platoon—two guns to the east, two to the west, and two to the south," noted Lieutenant Colonel Francis Parry. "Two platoons might be laid for low-angle fire and the other for high-angle fire to enable it to reach over and behind a nearby ridge . . . . I doubt if field-artillery batteries anywhere ever surpassed the sophistication and competence . . . demonstrated routinely in January and February of 1951."

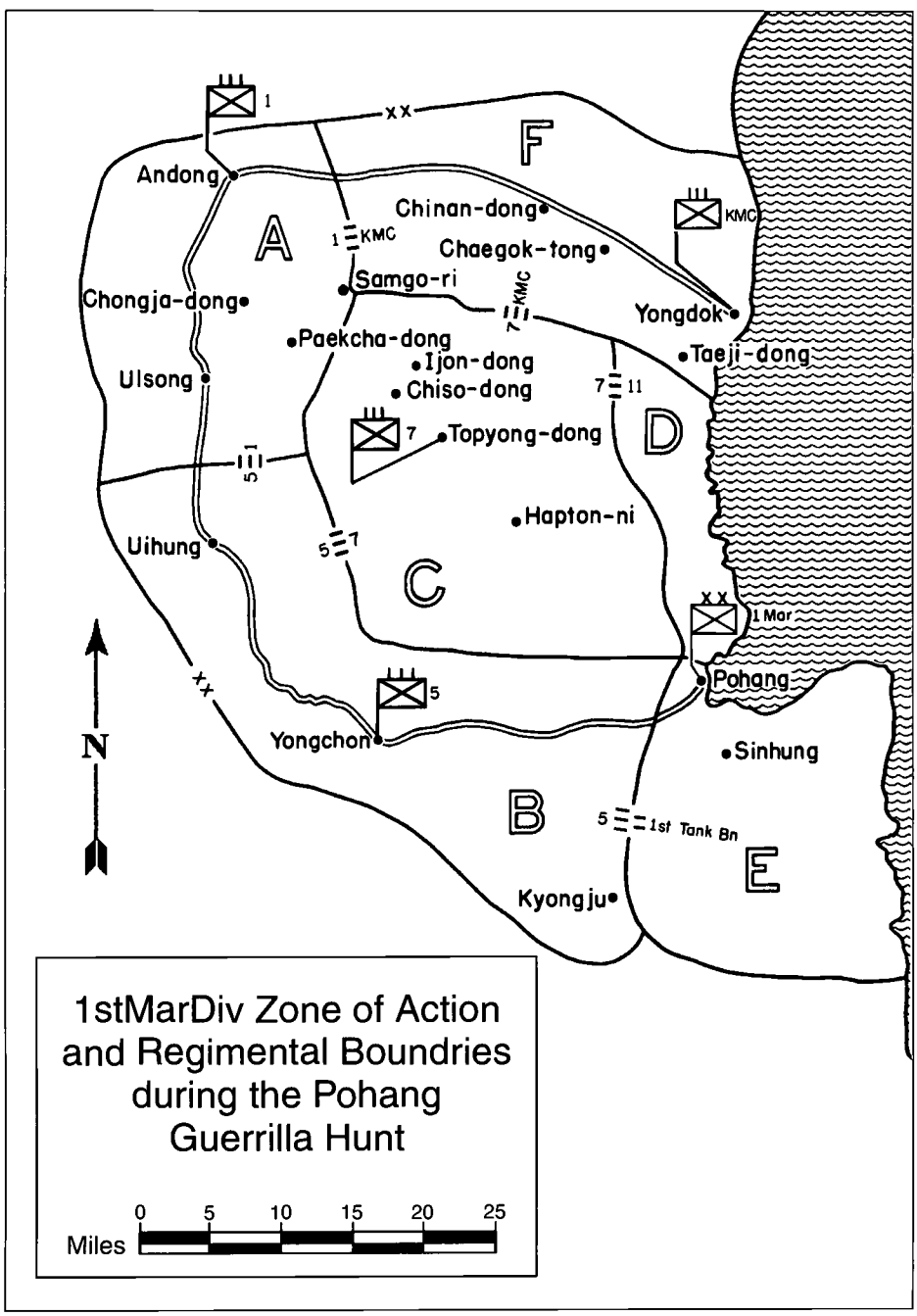
Although aggressive, the patrols soon took on an air of routine, according to Private First Class Morgan Brainard of Company A, 1st Marines:

> Each day was much like the one before: we would board trucks in the morning following chow and in full gear minus packs, roll out five miles or more to some predetermined spot, dismount, and undertake a sweep of the nearby hills and valleys, clearing all the villages in our path. And then we would return to camp in late afternoon, wash ourselves in the battalion shower tent (a real luxury), have chow, clean our gear, write letters and engage in bull sessions until it was time to stand watch.

The constant patrols harried the NKPA and kept it on the run. General Lee's troops were forced to break up into ever-shrinking groups just to survive. Soon, hard-pressed guerrilla bands were reduced to foraging instead of fighting, and the situation was so well in hand that the Marines could be relieved in order to fight elsewhere by mid-February.

The first contact with the enemy in the Pohang zone occurred on the afternoon of 18 January. A patrol from Lieutenant Colonel Thomas L. Ridge's 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, discovered an unknown number of North Koreans east of Andong. The enemy quickly fled, but three of their numbers were captured after a wild chase. These prisoners from the *27th Regiment* confirmed their parent unit was the *10th NKPA Division* and reported that elements of that division's *25th* and *29th Regiments* were also in the area. Four days later a patrol from the 1st Marines discovered an estimated enemy battalion near Mukkye-dong south of Andong just before sunset and promptly got the best of a one-sided exchange of small arms and mortars. Captain Robert P. Wray's Company C suffered no casualties while the NKPA lost about 200 killed or wounded. Unfortunately, nightfall prevented full pursuit. The enemy escaped under cover of darkness by breaking into squad- and platoon-sized exfiltration groups.

On 24 January, Colonel



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6080

Col Homer L. Litzenberg set up his command post in a ravine near Topyong-dong. The 7th Marines was assigned to the centrally located Sector D during the Pohang guerrilla hunt.

Litzenberg's 7th Marines began a three-day raking operation to clear the enemy from its zone of action. The *In Min Gun* retaliated by hitting the regimental command post at Topyong-dong and the 1st Battalion three miles to the northwest, but both attacks by the *25th NKPA Regiment* failed. On the 26th, Major Webb D. Sawyer's 1st Battalion isolated an enemy company atop Hill 466 that held the attackers at bay with mortars, small arms, and hand grenades. The Marines answered with their own artillery, mortars, and automatic weapons. The outgunned enemy quickly abandoned the position after suffering an estimated 50 dead and about twice that many wounded. That same afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel Robert L. Bayer's 2d Battalion repulsed a NKPA counterattack and counted 44 enemy dead in the aftermath. During the entire operation, Colonel Litzenberg reported enemy losses at about 250 killed and 500 wounded with a dozen prisoners taken. These one-sided fights left little doubt about who held the upper hand. Consequenly, General Lee ordered his troops to cease offensive operations until

A tank-led column from Company C, 1st Tank Battalion, stands by as a patrol from the 5th Marines searches a nearby village for guerrillas. The 90mm gun of the M-26 Pershing tank in the foreground and the 75mm gun of the following M-4 Sherman tank provided the requisite firepower.

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6076

they could withdraw into the mountains to regroup. "They appear," noted General Smith, "to be as confused as we are."

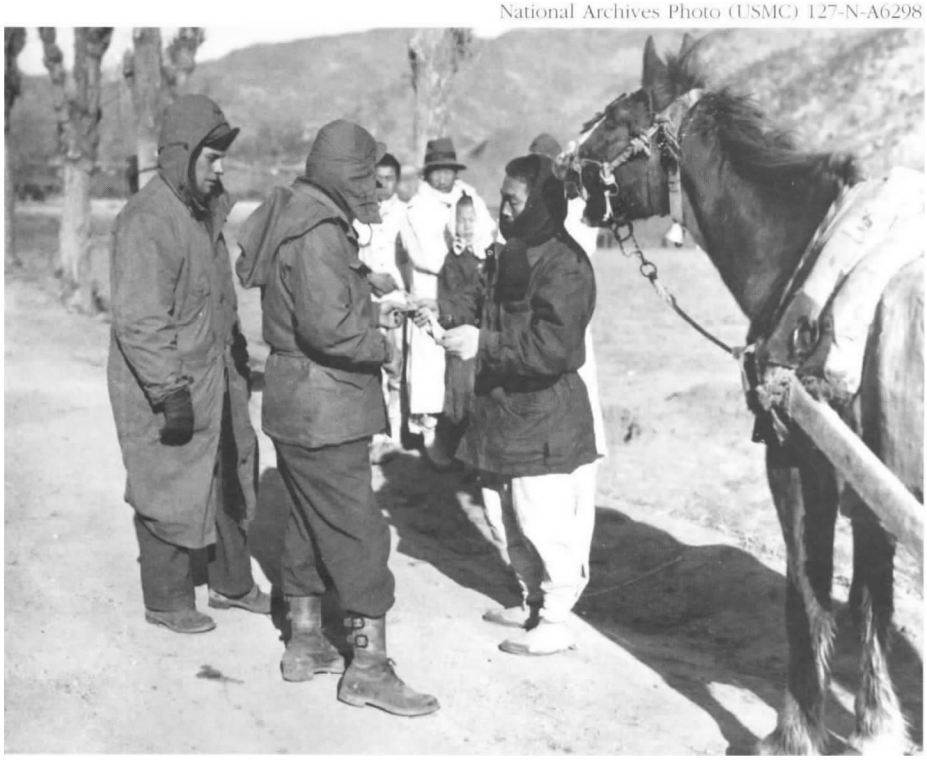
The actions at Pohang thus far typified the frustrations of anti-guerrilla warfare. On every occasion the Marines hammered their opponents but were unable to pin down the elusive enemy so decisive action could be affected. "It became a game," Colonel Litzenberg reported. "We would find them about 1400 in the afternoon, get our artillery on them, air on them, and then they would disappear. The next day we would have to find them again." This disconcerting pattern continued throughout January and February 1951, much as it had in the Philippines at the turn of the century and would again in Vietnam little more than a decade later. But as Litzenburg noted, "the operations in this area constituted a very, very successful field exercise from which we derived great benefit." "It was excellent training for the new replacements," echoed General Smith's aide de camp, Major Martin J. Sexton. "It gave them the opportunity of getting a conditioning, and an experience of the hardest type of warfare, mountainous warfare, and fast moving situations. They also had the opportunity to utilize supporting fire of all types, including naval gunfire."

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6142

A tired platoon patrol pushes up another hill as it pursues fleeing remnants of the 10th NKPA Division. *Such marches provided excellent physical conditioning while at the same time developing unit cohesion and tactical proficiency.*

A Marine sentry and his interpreter check passes and obtain information from Korean civilians passing through a roadblock near Andong. Far from supporting the Communists, the inhabitants readily reported North Korean guerrilla movements to the Marines.

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6298



A welcome addition to the 1st Marine Division in late January was Colonel Kim Sung Eun's 1st Korean Marine Corps (KMC) Regiment. The Korean Marine regiment brought four rifle battalions (1st, 2d, 3d, and independent 5th). The original Korean Marines had trained under the tutelage of the 5th Marines while enroute to Inchon the previous September. They fought well beside the 1st Marine Division during the liberation of Seoul before being detached for other duties. The Korean Marines were attached administratively to the 1st Marine Division on 21 January, but were not trucked up from Chinhae until about a week later. On 29 January, Marine Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Harrison, a veteran of pre-war service with the 4th Marines in Shanghai and now the senior Korean Marine advisor, finally reported that the Korean Marine command post was in place at Yongdok. General Smith created a new sector in the northeast to accommodate the new arrivals. This area, Zone F, included

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6645

As two Marines guard a captured North Korean soldier, a corpsman administers first aid to him. While the number of counted enemy dead was low, there was little doubt that the total North Korean casualties were crippling.

Yongdok, Chaegok-tong, and Chinandong. The 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions patrolled subsectors in Zone F while the 5th Battalion worked with the 1st Marines. The U.S. Marines provided combat and logistics support for their South Korean counterparts. The Korean Marines acquitted themselves well at Pohang, just as they had before and would again. In fact, the 1st KMC Regiment would become the 1st Marine Division's fourth rifle regiment for the remainder of the Korean War. The bond between Korean and American Marines was a strong one; so strong that when asked by a reporter about the oriental soldiers nearby, an anonymous U.S. Marine rendered the ultimate compliment when he replied: "They're Marines!"

It soon became obvious that the NKPA had bitten off more than it could handle. Enemy prisoners confirmed signal intercepts and agent reports that the *10th NKPA Division* had been ordered to leave Pohang to rejoin the NKPA *II Corps*. Concurrently, aerial observers noted a general movement to the west out of the 7th Marines' Zone C into Zones A and B (1st and 5th Marines, respectively). The resulting attempts to slip out of the Marine noose resulted in several very one-sided clashes during the first week of February. On the night of 31 January-1 February, a company-sized patrol from the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, engaged an estimated enemy battalion near Sanghwa-dong. The enemy suffered about 50 casualties and three North Koreans were captured along with several mortars and small arms. A few days later Lieutenant Colonel Allan Sutter's 2d Battalion and Lieutenant Colonel Virgil W. Banning's 3d Battalion pushed fleeing NKPA troops into blocking positions manned by the Korean Marines' 22d Company during a successful "hammer-and-anvil" combined operation. In the 7th Marines zone of action, Lieutenant Colonel Wilbur F. Meyerhoff's 3d Battalion killed about 45 NKPA in a sharp action northwest of Wolmae-dong, and Lieutenant Colonel Bayer's 2d Battalion overcame fierce resistance to take Hill 1123. To the southwest, a trap set by Lieutenant Colonel John W. Stevens II's 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, turned out to be a bust, but Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Tapplett's 3d Battalion destroyed four roadblocks, killed 30 enemy, and captured three more in the vicinity of Yongchon. Lieutenant Colonel Harold S. Roise's 2d Battalion occupied Hill 930 after ejecting some stubborn defenders. Along the northern coast, Colonel Kim's Korean Marines took Paekcha-dong and forced its defenders to scatter. A unique approach was tried on 4 February when a loudspeaker-equipped Marine Douglas

MajGen Smith pins a single star on newly promoted BGen Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller on 2 February 1951. Not long thereafter Puller, arguably the best-known Marine in modern history, took command of the division when MajGen Smith temporarily took over IX Corps.

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6175