

confirmed at 274 killed and 73 wounded and estimated at 494 killed and 370 wounded,³⁶ the figure represented more than a third of an enemy battalion permanently lost in addition to about a battalion and a half put out of action temporarily. Distributed among the number of battalions that participated in the two actions, the total number of casualties lost some impact. What remains significant, however, are the cost and results—369 counted and 953 estimated casualties for not one inch of ground.

Marine losses in the Hook battle were 70 killed, 386 wounded (286 evacuated), and 39 missing, of whom 27 were later definitely known to have been captured. This was the second highest number of Marines taken prisoner in any single action during the Korean fighting.³⁷ Such a large number was attributed to the tactics of the Chinese infantry, which followed the preparatory barrages so closely—at times even advancing into the rolling barrages—that the enemy was able to surprise and capture a considerable number of Marine outpost defenders. Nearly all of the 27 were captured in the enemy's first rushes against the two outposts and MLR. In the diversion on Reno, an additional 9 Marines were killed and 49 wounded (29 evacuated).

Perhaps as significant as any result of the Hook fighting is the amount of supporting fires the Chinese provided their infantry. Calculations of total incoming ran from 15,500 to 34,000 rounds during the 36-hour engagement. The 1st Marine Division reported conservatively that the enemy expended between 15,500–16,000 artillery and mortar rounds; estimates by supporting arms units put the total at the higher level. In any event, the 12,500 rounds the 7th Marines received during the first 24 hours represented the heaviest bombardment any Marine regiment had been subjected to up to that time. Moreover, it had now become clearly evident that the enemy could stockpile a plentiful supply of ammunition, despite attempts

³⁶ The CCF casualty figures were derived from a comparison of reports of participating Marine battalions, the 7th Marines, and division. In addition to these losses caused by Marine infantry units were enemy casualties listed by the artillery and tank battalion command diaries and records of participating air squadrons; these supporting arms figures amount to 468 casualties, more than one-third the total number.

³⁷ During the Task Force Drysdale operation, in November 1950, more than 40 Marines had been seized by the enemy. Maj James Angus MacDonald, Jr., "The Problems of U.S. Marine Corps Prisoners of War in Korea" (M.A. thesis, Univ. of Maryland, 1961), App. G, pp. 261–262, hereafter MacDonald, *POW*



DOD Photo A 160346

Marine Division Redeploys to West Korea—5th Marines units en route to new sector in April 1952 are slowed by muddy roads and spring thaws. Below, Korean washwomen labor at daily tasks while 1st Tank Battalion convoy moves up to new fighting area.

DOD Photo A 160984





DOD Photo A 164524

Surveillance of the Enemy—Men of the Reconnaissance Company, 1st MarDiv, scan CCF positions across the Imjin River. Below, Marines empty 75mm shell cases from armored amphibian after a shoot-out on Independence Day, 1952.

DOD Photo A 162962





DOD Photo A 173690

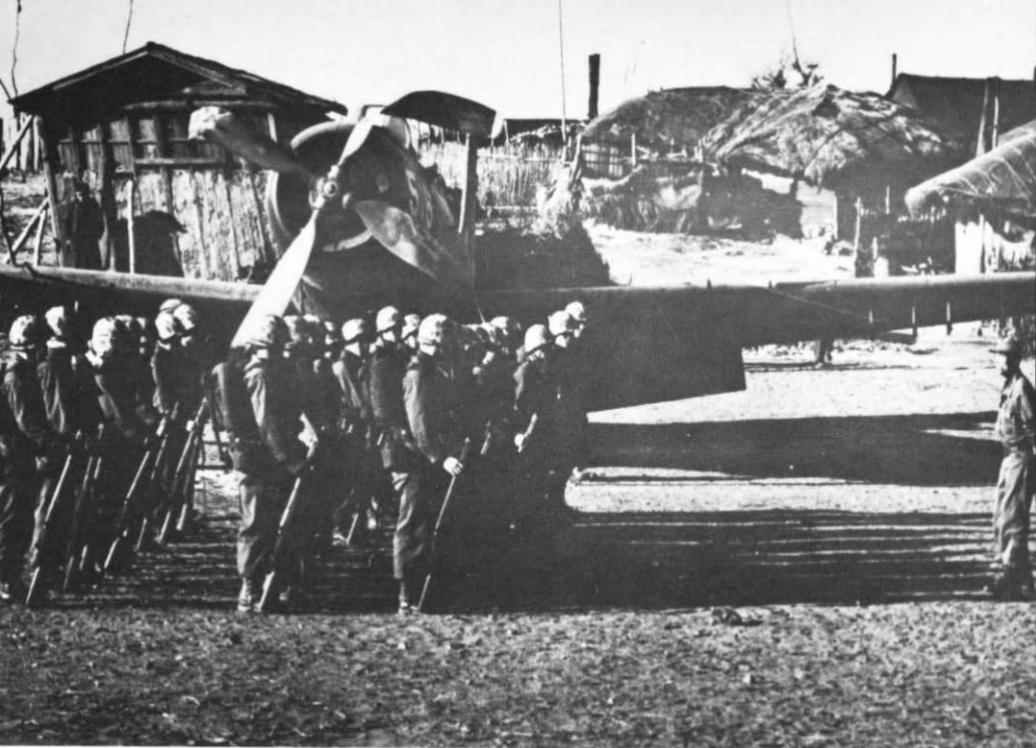
Scene of See-Saw Fighting—View of enemy-held outpost Yoke as seen from Marine trenches. Below, clothing and equipment packed in a "survival bomb" dropped to Marine pilots awaiting rescue. Pilots of VMJ-1 are briefed on the day's mission over North Korea.

DOD Photo A 134927



DOD Photo A 134103





Official USN Photo

Island Marines—Korean Marine platoon undergoes instruction at Yo-do, ECIDE. Damaged AD-4 had crash landed at Briscoe Field nearby and was awaiting salvage. Below, Marine tank-infantry unit in stand-by position during truce sessions at Panmunjom.

DOD Photo A 162782





DOD Photo A 162952

Amphibious Exercise—Caterpillars of 1st Shore Party Battalion pull floating dock ashore during 1st Marines training at Tokchok-to. Below, HMR-161 choppers airlift 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery to new firing positions during August 1952 maneuver.

DOD Photo A 163906





DOD Photo A 16448

Main Logistic Link to the Front—View of the Freedom Gate Bridge from eastern shore of Imjin. This bridge was the only one left standing after August 1952 floods. Below, the FDC bunker of 1st Battalion, 11th Marines CP. From this nerve center, fire missions are relayed to the batteries by radio.

DOD Photo A 163812





DOD Photo A 162984

DOD Photo A 165569

On Guard at Critical Site—Korean Marines clean their 3.5-inch bazooka at blocking position near Hill 155. Gen Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., CMC, observes fire placed on CCF position during frontline visit to 1st MarDiv. Below, AU Corsair of Deathrattler Squadron ready for action.

DOD Photo A349270





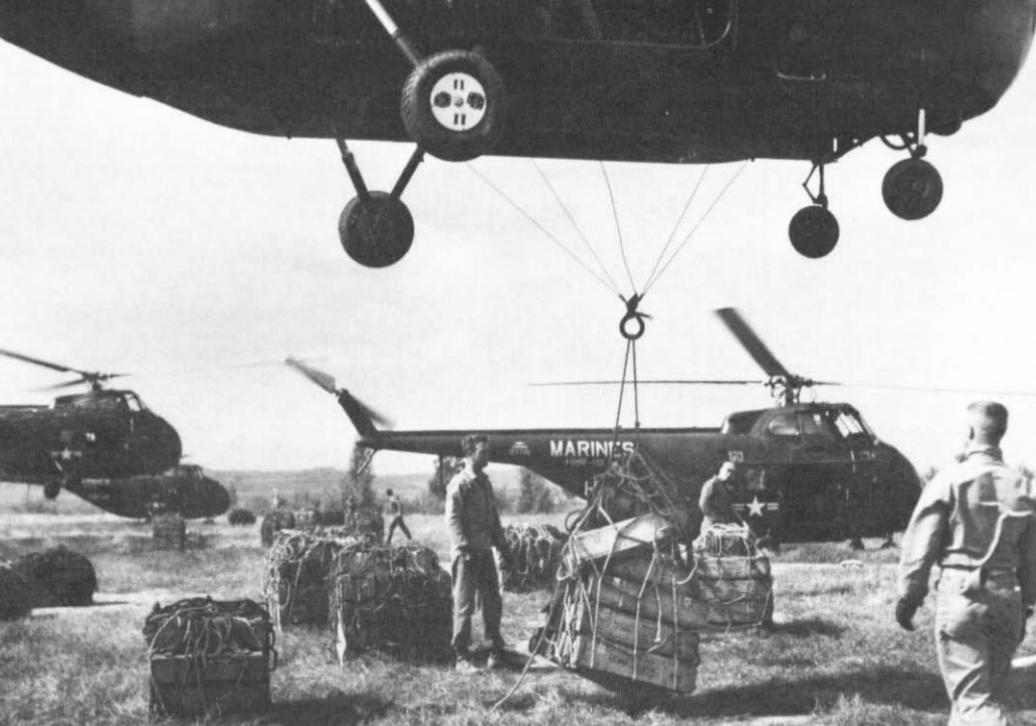
DOD Photo A 164153

DOD Photo A 164151

Battle Humor—Marine replacements moving up to front at Bunker Hill get friendly warning of occupational hazards. The versatile "Weasel" hauls ammo and supplies to the MLR. Below, Marine OP reports on Chinese dispositions during August 1952 battle.

DOD Photo A 165141





DOD Photo A 166041

Operation Haylift—Cargo lift from 1st Air Delivery Platoon area to MLR sector occupied by 7th Marines. Cargo net slung under copter body greatly increased airlift capability. Below, BGen Robert O. Bare, ADC, inspects pre-fabricated bunker at Marine outpost.

DOD Photo A 167201

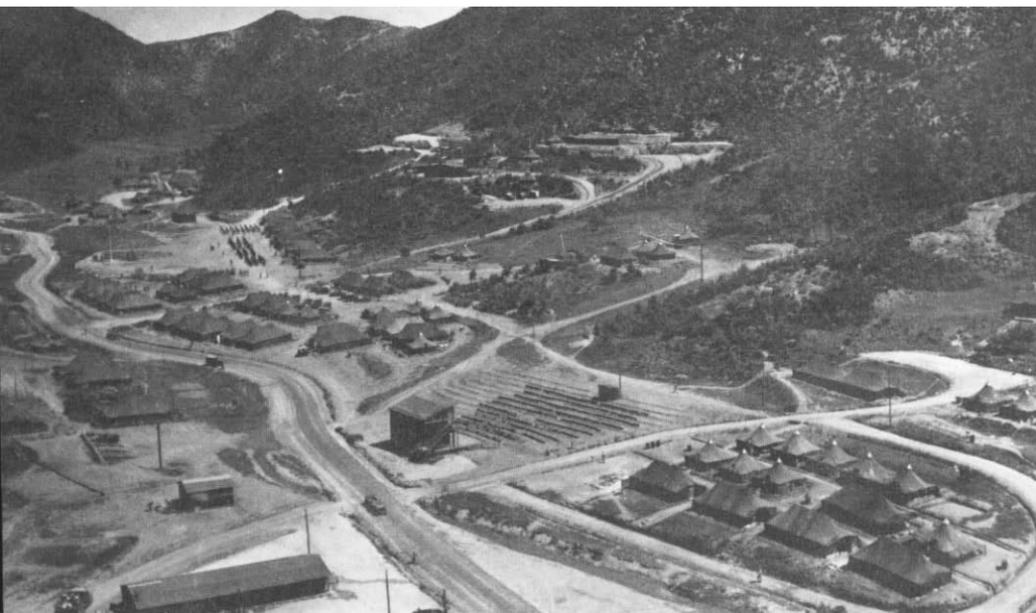




DOD Photo A 133865

Debriefing—Marine pilots of MAG-33 report to BGen Clayton C. Jerome, 1st MAW CG, upon return from June 1952 air strike, biggest to date. Below, aerial shot of 1stMarDiv CP at Yong-ri, as viewed from mess hall, looking north.

DOD Photo A 164363





DOD Photo A 162261

River Patrol—Amtracs of the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, Kimp'o Provisional Regiment, on the Imjin River. Below, F7F Tigercat of 1st MAW, carrying napalm bomb, approaches target.

DOD Photo A 133537





DOD Photo A 166423



DOD Photo A 167466

Support for Battle of the Hook—Marines heading for embattled Hook carry machine gun ammunition. Note bandoliers. Captured CCF equipment taken in October 1952 battle included prima cord, cartridges, Soviet hand grenades. Below, VMO-6 helicopter returning from front lines lands at Field #19.

DOD Photo A 346322





DOD Photo A 168980

KANSAS Line—This recently completed secondary line is occupied by 1/7 while in reserve in late 1952. Below, tactical problems are reviewed (from left) by MajGen Edwin A. Pollock, CG, 1st MarDiv; LtGen Paul A. Kendall, I Corps Commander; and Col Russell E. Honsowetz, AC/S, G-3, 1st MarDiv.

DOD Photo A 165743





DOD Photo A 171273

Combat Surveillance—Marine counter mortar radar crew receives instruction on adjustment of electronic equipment. Below, regimental inspection of KMC troops by Col Kim Suk Bom, CO, 1st Regiment.

DOD Photo A 165936





DOD Photo A 168468

Combat Interlude—Cardinal Spellman celebrates Christmas Mass before 2,500 bareheaded Marines in December 1952. Below, the Black Watch Pipe and Drum Corps honors Marines during their 177th Anniversary celebration, November 1952.

DOD Photo A 166804





USN Photo 44757

Truce Talks Resumed—Marine helicopter approaches truce site at Panmunjom as negotiations reopen in October 1952. Below, Master Sergeant Theodore H. Hughes, 1st MAW, presents 900,000 won (equivalent to \$150,000) to Bishop Mousset, of Little Flower's Orphanage in Pohang. Money was donated by MAG 33 Staff NCO Club.

DOD Photo A 132432



of UN aircraft to interfere with the enemy's flow of supplies to the frontline.³⁸

With regard to combat tactics, the attacks during 26–27 October confirmed earlier reports that extremely heavy use of preparatory barrages by the enemy signalled an imminent infantry attack on the area. Defensive concentrations of apparently unlimited quantity typified Communist artillery support for their attacking forces. Meticulous policing of the battlefield, an established Chinese practice, was also apparent during the Hook battle. In order to prevent identification of his combat units, the enemy also took pains to ensure that assault troops remove all papers and unit insignia before going forward of their own lines.

Two other previously reported tactics were corroborated during the late October battle for the Hook. One was the presence of cargo carriers with the attacking force. These soldiers, estimated by the division to comprise as high as 75 percent of the total number of Chinese troops committed, carried shovels, lumber, extra rations, medical aid equipment, and stocks of ammunition. One Marine evacuated from a bunker reported on a method of bunker searching by the Chinese. "English speaking Chinese were yelling into bunkers for Marines to 'Come out and surrender.' When there was no evidence of surrender, the Chinese would use bangalore torpedoes and satchel charges to destroy and seal bunkers."³⁹

In one respect the enemy deviated from his usual tactics. During the battle for the Hook Marines who took prisoners made the discovery that the Chinese employed close-up relief forces. Prior to an offensive action, the enemy positioned a reserve just to the rear of the assault unit. After the attack had started, and at the appropriate time, the commander would signal the fresh force forward to take over the mission of the old unit. In this manner, the enemy hoped to sustain his drive or to retain a newly-won position.

Though the foresight appeared appropriate, the result was not always what had been anticipated. In the earlier part of the month,

³⁸ Comments by Dr. Robert F. Futrell, USAF Historian, in ltr to Dir, MCHist, HQMC, dtd 2 Feb 70: "The Air Force position about the accumulation of munitions at frontline units was that by exercising supply discipline and refraining from combat, the enemy could hoard and build supply over a period of time."

³⁹ 1stMarDiv PIR 738, dtd 2 Nov 52, p. 3. The Chinese also used hand grenades in searching the bunkers. All of these explosives had been widely employed during World War II.

during a fight in another I Corps sector, the Communists had rushed a reserve force forward to consolidate the defense of an outpost immediately after its capture. In the Hook fighting, a fresh unit, which had been placed immediately to the rear of the assault troops, was ordered forward to keep the attack alive. Both attempts failed. Marines attributed this lack of success to the Communists' apparent inability to organize or reorganize quickly, a difficulty which was believed to have resulted from the scarcity of officers in forward areas.⁴⁰

Discussing the defense of the Hook area, Lieutenant Colonel Dulacki commented shortly after the battle ended:

The Chinese seemed to gain their greatest tactical advantage during action on "The Hook" by assaulting friendly positions directly under their own artillery and mortar barrages. The effects on defending Marines were twofold: heavy incoming either physically trapped them in their bunkers, or the Chinese, having overrun our positions through their own barrages, took the defenders by surprise as they left their bunkers to man their fighting holes. It is therefore considered imperative that in future instances of heavy enemy supporting fires, all Marines physically occupy an individual shelter from which their fighting positions are readily accessible.

Marines gained a false sense of security by taking cover, in groups, inside bunkers. In some cases, groups of three or four Marines were killed when a bunker caved in on top of them. Had they been spread out along the trenchline, but under individual cover, it is believed that far fewer casualties would have resulted, and also the position would have been better prepared for defense. The false sense of security gained by being with comrades inside a bunker must be overcome.⁴¹

Another factor bothered the 1/7 commander. He directed unit leaders to exercise closer control over the care and cleaning of weapons under their custody. During the Hook fighting, the malfunctioning of weapons due to improper cleaning and loss of some rifles "in the excitement to gain cover" caused the Marines to take casualties that might otherwise have been prevented.

These same deficiencies were also observed by General Pollock, and he ordered their immediate correction. Lieutenant General Hart, CG FMFPac, whose inspection of the division coincided with the Hook battle and who saw the trenches after they had been leveled, noted that shallow trenches and bunkers built above the ground did

⁴⁰ 1stMarDiv PIR 741, dtd 5 Nov 52, Encl. 2, p. 2.

⁴¹ 1/7 ComdD, Nov 52, App. VI.

not offer sufficient protection from intensive enemy shelling. He directed that more emphasis be placed on the digging of field fortifications and bunkers.⁴²

In considering not only how the fight was conducted but why, one has only to go back to the first part of October and recall the situation that existed along the 1st Marine Division line. During the hotly contested outpost battles early in the month, the Chinese had attempted to outflank the division by seizing key terrain in the left and right sectors. Where the enemy had been unsuccessful, he returned later in the month for another major assault. On the night of the 26th the endeavor was in the division right. A new blow against the left was not far off.

⁴² CG, FMFPac ComdD, Nov 52, App IV, Encl (8), Anx G, p. 4. During the Hook fighting, General Hart also witnessed the helicopter deployment of the 4.5-inch rockets. He was impressed with the progress that had been made in this helicopter-ground team performance, particularly the speed and efficiency with which these weapons could be set up to fire and then displaced to a new position.

CHAPTER VI

Positional Warfare

A Successful Korean Defense—Six Months on the UNC Line—Events on the Diplomatic Front—The Marine Commands During the Third Winter—1st MAW Operations 1952-1953 Behind the Lines—The Quiet Sectors—Changes in the Concept of Ground Defense—Before the Nevadas Battle

A Successful Korean Defense¹

IN BOTH THE EARLY and late October outpost battles the Chinese had attempted to seize critical terrain on the flanks of the 1st Marine Division. Although the majority of these attacks failed, the enemy had acquired six outposts early in the month—three in the western Korean Marine Corps sector and three north of the right regimental line. On the last day of October, two hours before midnight, the CCF again struck the Marine left flank. This time their efforts were directed against four outposts that screened Hill 155, the most prominent terrain feature in the entire KMC regimental zone. The fighting that developed was brief but very sharp and would be the most costly of all KMC clashes during this third winter of the war.

The latest enemy attack came as no real surprise to Korean Marines of the 5th Battalion, occupying COPs 39, 33, and 31 in the northern regimental sector, or 2d Battalion personnel at COP 51 in the southern (western) half of the MLR. (Map 19.) The four outposts assisted in defense of the MLR (particularly Hill 155 just inside the MLR), afforded observation of CCF approach routes,

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: 1stMarDiv ComdDs Oct–Nov 52; 1stMarDiv PIRs 737–738, dtd 31 Oct–1 Nov 52; KMC Regt UnitRpts 238–244, dtd 24–30 Oct 52.

and served as a base for friendly raids and offensive operations. Hill 155 overlooked both the wide Sachon Valley and Chinese frontline positions to the west. This critical Korean hill also commanded a view of the Panmunjom peace corridor, Freedom Gate Bridge, and the Marine division area east of Line JAMESTOWN in the KMC sector. Hill 155 had further tactical importance in that it protected the left flank of Paekhak Hill, the key ground in the entire 34-mile expanse of JAMESTOWN within 1st Marine Division territory.

Actually, the probability of a determined enemy attack against the four outposts had been anticipated since early October following CCF seizure of three positions (former COPs 37, 36, and 86) in their strike against the KMC regimental OPLR. The enemy had then proceeded to organize an OPLR of his own with the two northern outposts, COPs 37 and 36, and informally occupied another position to the south and one toward the north in the vicinity of COP 39. "With this OPLR once firmly organized, the enemy will have an excellent jump-off point towards our OPs 39 and 33, his next probable objectives," KMC officers reasoned.²

Sporadic probes throughout the month in the COP 39 and 33 areas indicated continued enemy interest in the positions. COP 51, to the south, was considered another likely target because of its location immediately east of COP 86, previously annexed by the CCF.

Prior to attacking the four outposts on 31 October, the Chinese had signaled their intentions by sharply stepping up artillery and tank fire against the sector. During the 24-hour period ending 1800 on 30 October, a total of 1,881 rounds crashed on KMC positions, most of these against the two northern outposts, COPs 39 and 33. Nearly 1,500 rounds fell the next day. More than 50 sightings of enemy troops and weapons in the forward area were also reported. By contrast, during the previous week less than 15 observations of enemy activity had been made daily and, on the average, only about 200–340 rounds of fire had fallen in the entire sector. Despite this comparatively moderate rate of hostile fire, at least one Korean Marine was killed and three wounded in late October from well-placed Chinese mortar or artillery rounds striking the outposts.

After the two days of heavy shelling, the regiment warned in its daily report issued only two hours before the full-scale attack began:

² KMC Regt UnitRpt 216, dtd 4 Oct 52, p. 2.

The enemy has made a consistent two-day effort to destroy friendly outpost positions. Last night, at 1830, two enemy companies were observed in an apparent attempt to attack OPs 39 and 33. Artillery fire broke up the attempt, but continued enemy artillery today indicates further attack is probable tonight. If enemy artillery preparation is indicative, a simultaneous attack against outposts 39, 51, 33, and 31 can be considered probable. . . .³

These earlier observations and predictions as to the enemy's action were shortly confirmed when the CCF launched its new ground attack.

Beginning at 2200,⁴ the enemy delivered an intensive eight-minute 76mm and 122mm artillery preparation against the four outposts. Chinese assault forces from four different infantry regiments then launched a simultaneous attack on the positions. Moving in from the north, west, and south, two CCF companies (3d Company, 1st Battalion, 581st Regiment and 2d Company, 1st Battalion, 582d Regiment) virtually enveloped the northern outpost, COP 39. Two more CCF companies (unidentified) lunged against the two central outposts, COPs 33 and 31, a company at each position.⁵ The southern and most-heavily defended post, COP 51, where a company of Korean Marines was on duty, was assailed by four Chinese companies (4th Company, 2d Battalion, 584th Regiment; 4th and 6th Companies, 2d Battalion, 585th Regiment; and 1st Company, 1st Battalion, 585th Regiment). Even though the enemy exerted his strongest pressure against COP 51, the position held and the Chinese broke off the attack there earlier than at the other outposts.

At COP 31 a heavy fire fight raged until 0155, when the defending KMC platoon halted the Chinese and forced them to make a partial withdrawal. To the northwest, at COP 33, the enemy encountered less resistance from the two squads manning the outpost. The Chinese achieved some success in penetrating the defenses and occupied several positions. After heavy close fighting and friendly artillery support, the Koreans expelled the invaders at 0515.

³ KMC Regt UnitRpt 243, dtd 31 Oct 52, pp. 5-6.

⁴ The attack on the 31st took place after the KMC 5th Battalion had taken over the right regimental sector, at 1700, from the 3d Battalion. The Chinese often deliberately timed their outpost attacks to coincide with a relief of lines. Company personnel of both the 5th and 3d Battalions were on line during the fighting. KMC Regt UnitRpts dtd 1 Nov 52, p. 4; 245, dtd 2 Nov 52, p. 4.

⁵ KMC Regt UnitRpt 244, dtd 1 Nov 52, pp. 1,4. A different account as to size of attacking units is given in Maj Kang Shin Ho, ROKMC ltr to Dir, MCHist, HQMC, dtd 30 Apr 70, which states two reinforced enemy companies assaulted COP 33 and an estimated enemy battalion struck COP 31.

The enemy's efforts appeared to have been most successful, temporarily, at COP 39, the northern post and one nearest to Hill 155. Although the Chinese wrested some ground from the KMC platoon, artillery fires continued to punish the enemy and by 0410 had forced him to pull back. A small hostile force returned at 0600 but after a 15-minute exchange of small arms it left, this time for good. At about this same time the last of the Chinese had also withdrawn from the two central outposts, 33 and 31.

In terms of sheer numbers, the enemy's strongest effort was made against COP 51. This was the most isolated of the Korean positions and, at 2,625 yards, the one farthest from the MLR. Ironically, in the week preceding the attack COP 51 was least harassed by hostile artillery although it had received 20 rounds of 90mm. tank fire, more than any other position. On the 31st, elements of three companies struck the southwestern trenches and defenses, while a fourth attempted to break through from the north. As it turned out the action here was the least intense of the outpost clashes. After initial heavy fighting the Chinese seemed reluctant to press the assault even though they vastly outnumbered the Korean company deployed at the outpost. In the early morning hours the enemy broke contact and by 0330 had withdrawn from COP 51.

During the night approximately 2,500 rounds of CCF artillery and mortar fire lashed the positions. Korean Marines, aided by friendly artillery, repelled the assault and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. Supporting fires included more than 1,200 rounds of HE shells from the KMC 4.2-inch Mortar Company. Chinese casualties were listed as 295 known killed, 461 estimated wounded, and 9 POWs. Korean Marine losses were 50 killed, 86 wounded, and 18 missing.⁶ By first light the Korean outposts had thrown back the enemy's latest well-coordinated attack. This ended the last significant action of October in the 1st Marine Division sector.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Six Months on the UNC Line⁷

The KMC Regiment's battle in late October marked the end of two months of heavy fighting in the division sector. October had witnessed the most intense combat in more than a year. As the third Korean winter approached outpost clashes and small unit actions along the rest of the UNC frontline began to slacken. During November and December, neither side appeared eager to pursue the offensive. Chinese aggressiveness declined noticeably.

Despite other action initiated by the enemy, the I Corps sector remained the chief Communist target. On 19 November, the British 1st Commonwealth Division successfully withstood what was initially a company-size attempt to capture the Hook. In sharp fighting between 1900 and 0430, Black Watch and reinforcing Canadian units repulsed a determined battalion-strength CCF assault, killing more than 100 Chinese.⁸ Marine and I Corps artillery units fired almost continuously throughout the night in support of the Hook defenders. Fighting flared again, briefly, in December in the I Corps sector when Chinese soldiers attempted to overrun outposts on the Imjin River line, but were thrown back by the ROK 1st Division. The enemy then tried to seize key terrain forward of the U.S. 2nd Division, but was again halted.

Elsewhere before the end of the year, the CCF captured one outpost in the IX Corps area, to the right of I Corps, but suffered a telling defeat at the hands of the Ethiopian battalion during an attempt to crack this sector of the U.S. 7th Division line. After a brief fire fight the Chinese were forced to withdraw, leaving 131 CCF dead in the Ethiopian positions. North Korean efforts to seize critical ground in the X and ROK I Corps sectors, at the far eastern end of the EUSAK line, was similarly broken up by the U.S. 40th and ROK 5th Divisions.

By the end of 1952 General Van Fleet had not only revitalized his defenses with recent rotation of frontline units but had also

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: Barclay, *Commonwealth*; Cagle and Manson, *Sea War, Korea*; Clark, *Danube to Yalu*; Field, *NavOps, Korea*; Futrell, *USAF, Korea*; Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front—United States Army in the Korean War* (Washington: OCMH, DA, 1966), hereafter Hermes, *Truce Tent*; Miller, Carroll, and Tackley, *Korea, 1951-1953*.

⁸ For details of this action see Canadian Department of National Defence ltr to Dir, MCHist, HQMC, dtd 8 Jan 70 in v. V, Korean comment file.

strengthened his line by inserting another division in the critical and long-troublesome Chorwon-Kumhwa sector of IX Corps, on the I Corps right flank. With these changes by late December there were 16 EUSAK divisions on line—11 Korean, 3 U.S. Army, 1 Marine, and 1 British Commonwealth—plus 4 divisions in reserve (1 Korean and 3 U.S. Army). Nearly 75 percent of the UNC line had been entrusted to Republic of Korea units. Their performance was a tribute to growing ROK military proficiency and justified the EUSAK decision to assign to ROK troops a greater role in the Allied ground defense.

The slow pace of infantry action during the last two months of 1952 continued into the new year. Raids by small UNC units highlighted the limited combat during January and February. During the following month the battlefront tempo accelerated, due in part to expanded patrol activities. A number of sharp clashes in No-Man's-Land resulted in several Communist setbacks but led the enemy to make an increased use of ambushes. These traps initially caught the UNC troops by surprise, inflicting heavy casualties on them. But by far the most severe fighting of the new year resulted when the Chinese renewed their fierce outpost and main line of resistance attacks in March.

Again, the western I Corps sector was the major combat area as enemy pressure mounted along the front. This was believed due, in part, to the "growing Chinese sensitivity to the I Corps raids"⁹ as well as an attempt by the CCF to regain the initiative as they began to send out larger forces to probe and assault UNC positions. On 17 March, the Chinese launched a battalion-size attack against Hill 355 (Little Gibraltar). This MLR position was defended by elements of the U.S. 2d Infantry Division, on line immediately east of the Marine division, in the sector customarily occupied by the 1st Commonwealth Division. (The Army unit had relieved the British division on 30 January.) A second large-scale assault on the hill that month was also turned back.

On 23 March, a Chinese Communist regiment attempted to capture three outposts manned by the U.S. 7th Division, at the far right of the I Corps line. Hills 225 (Pork Chop Hill) and 191 held. The enemy's main effort was against Hill 266 (Old Baldy), defended by units of the division's Colombian battalion. One attack carried the position,

⁹ Hermes, *Truce Tent*, p. 392.

despite company strength reinforcements of the original defenders. Two strong UN counterattacks the next day to retake the outpost failed, and the Chinese retained the crest of Old Baldy. Although the CCF had gained their objective in Hill 266, the battles on the three hillocks had cost the enemy 750 casualties, according to 7th Division records.

In one respect, the nature and extent of ground operations affected the type of air activity over North and South Korea during the winter of 1952-1953. Introduction of PRESSURE strategy, which had embodied the policy of the Far East Air Forces since mid-1952, brought more aircraft in close support of Eighth Army ground troops, a change that pleased the corps commanders. When the heavy outpost fighting throughout October diminished to only occasional skirmishes in November, there was temporarily a decreased need for large numbers of CAS sorties. As a result more planes became available for PRESSURE attacks. These strikes at first appeared to be reverting to the previous STRANGLE strategy since railroads were often the targets. But interdiction of the transportation system was only part of the PRESSURE aerial concept which also called for striking enemy production, repair, and storage facilities. The Allied strategy in conducting its air offensive remained the same: to make the bombing hurt the Communists so that they would end their deliberate delaying tactics in the truce sessions and join the UNC in effecting a Korean settlement.

During the winter FEAF maintained a steady air pressure against the Communists. Major raids were made from time to time, but the number of strategic targets was gradually disappearing due to repeated UNC air attacks. Further, much of the enemy logistical net had gone so deeply underground during the prolonged stalemate that UN bombing and rocket attacks were having only a limited destructive effect. The U.S. B-29s, which had carried the fight to the enemy since the first week of the Korean conflict, found their last worthwhile objectives in stockpiles hidden in North Korean towns and villages. For the Fifth Air Force fighters there was little opportunity to increase their skill in air-to-air combat, since the Communist fliers continued to take evasive action and avoid "dogfights."

Naval aviation contributed importantly to UNC air operations from September 1952 to March 1953. On the first day of this period,

three carriers staged the largest all-Navy Korean air strike to date, which simultaneously attacked an oil refinery at Aoji and other targets in the northeastern corner of Korea. Less than two weeks later, two carriers launched another assault in the same part of the country. The significance of these September strikes stemmed from the almost complete lack of enemy response. Apparently the Communists in this area had felt secure and protected, their territory being next to the Chinese border. In fact, their location close to the sanctuary had ruled out bombings proposed earlier. Strikes in this part of Korea were particularly suited to carrier planes of the Seventh Fleet, whose mobile airfields brought the targets within easy striking range along approaches that would not violate the Manchurian haven.

Perhaps the greatest naval contribution to the air war were the Cherokee strikes, so named after the commander of the Seventh Fleet, Vice Admiral Joseph J. Clark, because of his Indian ancestry. This new type of deep air support attack, which came into use in October 1952, employed the maxim of mass delivery of ordnance. Usually, targets were immediately behind the enemy MLR but beyond the range of friendly artillery. In May 1952, when the rail interdiction program was being phased out and Admiral Clark's pilots were faced with a decreasing number of prime industrial targets, the fleet commander had theorized that he could most effectually damage the enemy by bombing supply dumps, artillery positions, and reserve forces immediately to the rear of the Chinese MLR. As the admiral reasoned, the enemy could not fight the kind of war he was waging "and still have *all* his forces, supplies, and equipment underground. *Some* of his stocks of supplies had to be above ground, out of sight and out of range of our artillery."¹⁰

Eighth Army welcomed the increased support that would result from the strikes, but FEAFF expressed concern about the lack of top-level coordination. Admiral Clark had proposed that a EUSAK corps commander be allowed to authorize the attacks, which employed 24 to 36 aircraft. The Fifth Air Force initially maintained that it should control Cherokee strikes, just as it did the CAS missions. The matter was finally resolved in November.

Following a high-level conference it was decided that attacks

¹⁰ Quoted in Cagle and Manson, *Sea War, Korea*, p. 461.

inside the bomblines would be subjected to FAF coordination and that a minimal amount of tactical control would be exercised by the corps commander. Eighth Army gave a big assist to the Navy by moving the bomblines to within 3,000 meters (nearly two miles) of the outpost line. A line was also drawn approximately 25 miles beyond the bomblines, separating the area of "general support" from "interdiction." Thereafter, the Cherokee strikes were effectively conducted against enemy installations outside the 3,000-meter line but within 20,000 meters of the ground front. General Clark, CinCUNC, had high praise for the strikes, which the Seventh Fleet employed until the end of the war.

Surface ships of the fleet were in much the same static warfare situation as the ground and air components of the United Nations Command. Aside from the Kojo demonstration in mid-October, the fleet had little diversification in its daily routine other than to maintain the siege around Wonsan. This operation had started in mid-February 1951 and had grown from the original plan to seize certain strategically-placed islands on both coasts into an attempt to isolate the entire port and city of Wonsan. Each day Allied minesweepers cleared the harbor; at night the enemy sampan fleet resowed the fields. Daily, usually during mine-clearing operations, ships of Task Force 95 fired on batteries in the mountains beyond the city and at other military targets in and around Wonsan. From time to time heavy units of the Seventh Fleet bombarded the area to keep the enemy off-balance and to partially deter the solid buildup of Communist arms and defenses just north of the 39th Parallel.

*Events on the Diplomatic Front*¹¹

For many of the UNC military personnel, the stalemated combat situation in Korea had become a depressing, no-win daily routine by the end of 1952. Back in the States, the Korean War was not only unpopular and ill-supported, but the slow progress of the conflict had also dulled public interest. In the course of the Presidential

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: 1stMarDiv ComdD, Dec 52; Berger, *Korea Knot*; Clark, *Danube to Yalu*; Hermes, *Truce Tent*; Robert Leckie, *Conflict—The History of the Korean War, 1950–1953* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), hereafter Leckie, *Conflict*; Rees, *Korea*.

election campaign the question of Korea had become increasingly a matter of widespread national concern. Two weeks before election day the Republican candidate, former General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower,¹² had vowed to bring the Korean fighting to an end. As a first step toward accomplishing this he had pledged, if elected, to visit the battlefield.

Some had labeled Eisenhower's statement, "I will go to Korea" as a mere pre-election gesture. The general intended to act on this pledge and, following his election, began a four-day visit to Korea on 2 December 1952. Part of the President-elect's brief tour in Korea was spent at General Pollock's command post. Here, on 3 December, the Marine ground chief briefed his future Commander in Chief on current Marine division operations. Generals Clark, Van Fleet, and Kendall accompanied Eisenhower and his party. This included General of the Army Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as Charles E. Wilson and Herbert Brownell, Jr., the new designates for Secretary of Defense and Attorney General, respectively.

Though General Eisenhower's promise to visit Korea personally to see the situation first-hand and his subsequent election had renewed American hopes for an early peace in Korea, negotiations there had been deadlocked since 1951 on the exchange of prisoners. Disagreement on this issue thus became the major obstacle which was not overcome until the truce was signed nearly 20 months later. The Communists insisted on repatriation to their native land of all NKPA and CCF prisoners held by the United Nations Command. More than 60,000 of the 132,000 enemy captives held by the UNC in South Korean POW camps did not wish to return to Communism, a fact which had been borne out by a UN survey.

To draw attention from this unpopular position the Communists, through the civil and military links existing in the POW camps, had staged a series of riots in the spring of 1952. The worst, at Koje Island (just off the coast of Pusan) lasted six days, largely because the Communist prisoners planned for, and successfully carried out, the capture of the UN camp commander. His release, on 12 May, was effected only after the new commander signed, under duress, a

¹² Eisenhower had resigned his commission, following his return to the States in April to seek election.

statement which the Communists immediately exploited in an effort to discredit the validity of the prisoner survey.

The propaganda gains had enabled the Communists to occupy a commanding position at the truce talks. In the meantime, the UN had offered several plans until, on 28 April, Admiral Joy presented "what we called our final package proposal."¹³ By instituting the tactic of calling a recess whenever the Communists had nothing constructive to offer, a recommendation of Admiral Joy's, the UN regained the advantage of the conference table. The talks continued but with no appreciable progress. On 8 October 1952, after continued Communist intransigence, Brigadier General William K. Harrison, who had become the senior UN delegate in late May, took the initiative in recessing the truce talks. This unexpected action, which caught the enemy off-guard, followed three separate proposals made by Harrison for ending the POW controversy. All had been promptly rejected by the Communist delegation. As General Harrison had informed one of its spokesmen, the North Korean General Nam Il:

We are not terminating the armistice negotiations, we are merely recessing them. We are willing to meet with you at any time that you are ready to accept one of our proposals or to make a constructive proposal of your own, in writing, which could lead to an honorable armistice . . . Since you have offered nothing constructive, we stand in recess.¹⁴

After October, while the truce negotiations were in a period of indefinite recess, liaison officers at Panmunjom kept the channels of communication open between the Communist and UNC sides. Several developments along other diplomatic lines about this time were to prove more fruitful and lead the way to solution of the POW dispute and, in fact, to the end of the war.

In mid-November, an attempt was made to end the prisoner exchange impasse through a resolution introduced by India at the United Nations session. The compromise measure recognized the United States position, namely, that force should not be used in returning prisoners to their homeland. This principle was to become known as the concept of voluntary repatriation.

To reconcile the widely conflicting Communist and UNC views on handling of prisoners, the Indian proposal suggested that a

¹³ Joy, *Truce Negotiations*, p. 156. The proposal was a "complete armistice agreement," not merely another offer to solve the prisoner question.

¹⁴ Quoted in Berger, *Korea Knot*, p. 153.

repatriation commission be established. This body was to be composed of representatives of two Communist and two Allied nations. It would function within a designated demilitarized zone in Korea through which all prisoners would be received and processed. Each prisoner was to be given a choice of being returned to his homeland or not. Both sides would have the opportunity of explaining to reluctant nationals "their rights" of repatriation. If these persuasive efforts failed and a man still chose not to return to his country, he would then be referred to a special political conference established by the armistice agreement.

Should this four-member repatriation commission still not agree on settlement of the nonrepatriates, a final determination was then to be made by an official named by the commission or UN General Assembly. Many UNC nations favored the Indian proposal. U.S. official reaction was frankly skeptical and critical, well aware that the many vague aspects of the proposal could easily be exploited by the Communists to the disadvantage of the individual POW. Despite the promise of a good many headaches in its implementation, the UN adopted the compromise Indian resolution in December 1952 by a vote of 54 to 5.

Later that same month the Executive Committee of the League of Red Cross Societies, meeting in Geneva, adopted another feature of the Indian resolution proposing an exchange of sick and wounded POWs in advance of a truce. As General Clark observed, "It was hardly an auspicious omen for an armistice, yet it was the action which set in motion a chain of events which finally resulted in cease-fire."¹⁵

On another front, State Department officials advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff that a resolution similar to that of the Red Cross would probably be introduced when the UN reconvened on 24 February. Following a JCS suggestion that a "feeler" proposition be first made to the Communists, General Clark wrote the NKPA and CCF leaders on 22 February. His letter was addressed to North Korean Premier Kim Il Sung and General Peng Teh-huai, the CCF military commander. Delivered through the Panmunjom liaison officers, it requested the immediate exchange of sick and wounded POWs. As both diplomatic and military leaders doubtfully awaited the results,

¹⁵ Clark, *Danube to Yalu*, p. 240.

a totally unexpected and far-reaching event, the death of the Russian leader, Premier Joseph Stalin, jolted the Communist world. Its repercussions soon extended to the truce tent at Panmunjom and decisively affected the progress of negotiations there.

*The Marine Commands During the Third Winter*¹⁸

Although renewed negotiations to bring the war to a close were under way with the enemy in late 1952 and early 1953, action on the battlefield continued the tedious routine of the war. An exception to the general lethargy across the front occurred on 22 November in the right regimental sector. A predawn raid was conducted by the 1st Marines, which had advanced to the front upon relief of the 7th Marines after their battle of the Hook. With the left and right battalion sectors manned by 1/1 and 3/1, respectively, Lieutenant Colonel Charles E. Warren's 2/1, in regimental reserve, had been ordered to provide a company to raid Chinese positions across from COPs Reno and Vegas. Drawing the assignment was Company D (Captain Jay V. Poage).

Code-named WAKEUP, the raid was conducted in a manner typical of many earlier forays against Chinese strongpoints. Its results, too, in most respects were similar to the outcome of previous raids. Artillery preparation of the objective area was accomplished, the infantry assaults were somewhat short of the targets due to heavy CCF defensive fires, and the prisoner-taking part of the mission was unfulfilled. Counterbalancing this, and what made the raid of value to the regiment, was the information gained about enemy defenses and Chinese reaction to the raid. It was one of the rare occasions during which the CCF did not employ artillery fire while their positions were under attack, using instead mortars and automatic weapons against Marine assault forces.

Raids such as WAKEUP, patrols, and ambushes became the pattern of action in late November and in December. Earlier in November some changes in the MLR dispositions had taken place. On 3 Novem-

¹⁸ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: 1stMarDiv ComdDs, Nov 52-Jan 53; 1stMar ComdDs, Nov 52-Feb 53; 5thMar ComdD, Dec 52; 7thMar ComdDs, Nov 52, Jan 53; 11th Mar ComdDs, Jan-Feb 53; 2/1 ComdD, Nov 52; 1st MAW ComdD, Jan 53; MAG-12 ComdD, Jan 53; MAG-33 ComdD, Oct 52; MACG-2 ComdD, Feb 53.

ber, at 2345, the 1st Battalion of the Black Watch, 29th Infantry Brigade, 1st Commonwealth Division, had relieved 1/7 of the Hook sector responsibility, ending Marine occupation of that part of JAMESTOWN.¹⁷ And, on 16 November, the 7th Marines itself had been replaced in line by the 1st Marines. In between these changes of command on the frontlines, Generals Pollock and Jerome had received many congratulations and well wishes from combat commands and from government officials in the States. The occasion was the 177th birthday of the Marine Corps. Both of these senior commanders passed on to their Marines not only the Commandant's Anniversary message but also the congratulations of the UNC commander, General Clark.

Though the Commonwealth division had taken over the Hook area from the infantry Marines, the division's participation in defense of the British sector had not completely ended. On 18-19 November, the 11th Marines expended more than 2,000 rounds to repel Chinese attacks on the Hook. This firing by the artillery regiment helped to repay the British for their "cooperation and outstanding artillery and tank support during the engagements of 26-28 October . . ." ¹⁸ And as the Commonwealth division commander, Major General M. M. Austin-Roberts-West, had himself reported to General Pollock the day following the Hook attack, "All hands on the Hook much appreciated the prompt and effective support given last night. Grateful if you would pass on their thanks to all concerned." ¹⁹

Throughout December 1952 and January 1953, the lull in ground fighting continued. Mass Cherokee strikes by Admiral Clark's Navy and Marine fliers had begun for the Marine division on 17 December, when the bomblines were moved in nearer to the MLR for expanded operations. In noncombat activities, later that month Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York and Vicar for Catholic Chaplains of the Armed Forces, conducted a Christmas Mass at the division CP. On the 31st, His Eminence visited the 1st MAW at K-3 (Pohang). There he delivered an address to about 1,000

¹⁷ At this time a new limiting point between the division and British division was also established. This slightly reduced Marine division frontage to 33 miles and allowed the two MLR regiments to shorten their lines and maintain somewhat larger reserve units. *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 5, Chap. 8, p. 8-23.

¹⁸ CG, 1stMarDiv msg to GOC, 1stComWelDiv, dtd 29 Oct 52, in 1stMarDiv ComdD, Oct 52, App. II, p. 6.

¹⁹ GOC, 1stComWelDiv msg to CG, 1stMarDiv, dtd 19 Nov 52, in 1stMarDiv ComdD, Nov 52, App. I, p. 3.

Marines, shook hands with nearly all of them, and later heard confessions for many. Another special guest, not long afterward, was Episcopal Bishop Austin Pardue, of the Pittsburgh Diocese, who held Holy Communion at the division chapel.

The passing of 1952 and the arrival of the new year was not marked by any special observance on the battlefield. For that matter there was, it seemed, no change to note; the Marines, like the rest of the Eighth Army troops, maintained much the same regular, reduced, wintertime schedule. Activity of Marine infantry units consisted of aggressive patrolling and raids, and improvement of the secondary defenses of Lines WYOMING and KANSAS. Units in division reserve, during January, also participated in MARLEX (Marine Landing Exercise) operations.

No major ground action had taken place in December, although Marine patrols, on a half dozen occasions, had engaged as many as 50 enemy for brief clashes and fire fights. January was a different story, however. On 8 January, a 7th Marines raiding party, reinforced by air, artillery, and tank support, skirmished with 85 Chinese in the Hill 134 area not far from COP 2, overlooking Panmunjom. Ten days later, the 1st and 7th Marines, together with the artillery regiment, took part in Operation BIMBO. This was another attempt, by combined infantry-artillery-tank-air action, to create the impression that CCF objective areas were under attack.

BIMBO began with heavy preparatory fires by the 11th Marines, including the 155mm projectiles hurled by 4/11, that inflicted early damage to CCF personnel and materiel. At 0630, on 18 January, frontline battalions of the two participating infantry regiments opened fire; reserve battalions assisted with indirect machine gun fire. Armored vehicles added to the effect of the ruse by shelling Chinese emplacements from prepared MLR positions. Marine attack planes streaked in to unload flaming napalm. In response to the BIMBO mock attack, the Chinese directed mortar fire into suspected Marine avenues of approach and assembly areas. Forward observers on JAMESTOWN could detect some enemy troop movement. (Marine artillery took these formations under intensive fire), but as in similar feint operations in the past, the enemy again failed to pick up the bait. The operation lasted approximately an hour and a half.

During the winter months, a number of command changes had occurred in the Marines' combat organizations in Korea. In the 1st

Marine Aircraft Wing, the rotation of commanders began at the very top when, on 8 January, General Jerome handed over the wing colors to Major General Vernon E. Megee. During a ceremony at wing headquarters that day, Air Force Generals Weyland and Barcus paid tribute to General Jerome's "exceptionally meritorious service" as 1st MAW CG since April 1952 by presenting him with the Distinguished Service Medal.

The incoming wing commander, General Megee, had been a Marine flyer for 20 years, having received his wings in 1932. His Marine Corps career began more than a decade earlier, with enlistment in 1919. Commissioned in 1922, he served in infantry, artillery, and expeditionary billets before undergoing pilot training in 1931. Following school, staff, and command assignments, Major Megee was named advisor to the Peruvian Minister of Aviation from 1940–1943. During World War II, Colonel Megee was sent overseas as 3d MAW Chief of Staff in early 1944. As Commander, Control Unit One, he participated in the Iwo Jima campaign, earning the Legion of Merit. Later, at Okinawa, he commanded all Marine Corps Landing Force Air Support Control Units. After promotion to brigadier general in 1949, General Megee was named Chief of Staff, FMFLant. Receiving his second star in 1951, he served as Commanding General at Cherry Point, El Toro, and Air FMFPac prior to his assignment in Korea.²⁰

Within the wing and the division, every one of the top commands experienced changes of commanding officers in late 1952 and early 1953:

1st Marines—Colonel Hewitt D. Adams took over from Colonel Layer on 21 November;

5th Marines—Colonel Lewis W. Walt relieved Colonel Smoak on 10 December;

7th Marines—Colonel Loren E. Haffner took command from Colonel Moore on 5 November;

11th Marines—Colonel James E. Mills vice Colonel Sea on 22 February;

MACG-2—Colonel Kenneth D. Kerby relieved Colonel Jack R. Cram on 16 February;

²⁰ DivInfo, HQMC, Biography of LtGen Vernon E. Megee, 1959.

MAG-12—Colonel George S. Bowman, Jr. vice Colonel Condon on 13 January;

MAG-33—Colonel Louis B. Robertshaw succeeded Colonel Herbert Williamson on 22 October.

*1st MAW Operations 1952-1953*²¹

The heavy ground fighting across the Eighth Army front in October 1952 had drawn heavily upon units of the 1st MAW. That month Marine pilots logged their greatest number of sorties—3,897—since June 1951.²² As a result of the intense infantry action in the 1st Marine Division sector another air record was established—365 casualty evacuations by HMR-161 during October. This was a peak number to that time for the helicopter transport squadron for which med evac was a secondary mission. These "mercy missions" were not limited only to wounded Marine infantrymen or downed aviators.

Whenever and wherever immediate air rescue was needed, the choppers were sent. In July 1952, HMR-161 evacuated "650 Army and Air Force troops as well as 150 Koreans"²³ from a flooded river island. On the night of 18 January 1953, a helicopter retrieved five Marines from an uncharted minefield after one of the group had accidentally stepped on a mine. On 13 March, HMR-161 sent three helicopters aloft in an attempt to save five men from the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion who had become trapped in mud near the edge of the Imjin, and later that month the squadron dispatched a chopper to rescue a hunter marooned in the middle of the Han River.

Almost obscured in the magnificent record of the mercy missions, especially the hazardous casualty evacuations by the VMO-6 pilots, were the problems encountered by the observation and helicopter

²¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt Eval Rpts* No. 5, Chap. 9 and No. 6, Chap. 10; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Nov 52; 1st MAW ComdDs, Oct 52, Jan-Feb 53; MAG-12 ComdDs, Nov 52, Jan 53, Mar 53; MAG-33 ComdDs, Nov 52, Jan-Mar 53; VMA-121 ComdDs, Nov-Dec 52, VMF-115 ComdDs, Nov-Dec 52; VMF(N)-513 ComdDs, Oct 52-Jan 53; HMR-161 ComdDs, Jul 52, Nov-Dec 52, Jan 53; Futrell, *USAF, Korea*; Montross, *SkyCav*.

²² A total of 1,362 CAS sorties were flown, with 443 for the 1st Marine Division. Interdiction missions numbered 1,842, plus additional miscellaneous and air reconnaissance flights. 1st MAW ComdD, Oct. 52.

²³ Montross, *SkyCav*, p. 189.

squadrons. Under operational control of the division and administrative control of the wing, the squadrons found themselves exposed to overlapping command authority which sometimes resulted in conflicting directives from higher headquarters. Some squadron personnel felt that establishment of a helicopter group under the 1st MAW might have solved many of the organizational problems, but such a unit was never established in Korea, partly because only one helicopter squadron (plus half of the observation squadron) existed.

Another organizational difficulty beset VMO-6. With two types of aircraft and two unrelated missions (med evac for the HTL and HOSS copters; observation and artillery spotting for its little OYs and, later, OE-1s), the squadron found supply and maintenance problems doubled and operational control of its rotary and fixed wing sections extremely complex. Attachment of the VMO-6 choppers (for evacuation, administrative, and liaison missions) to HMR-161 was suggested as a possible solution to these difficulties, but was never done.

Other problem areas became apparent during the winter of 1952-1953. Accompanying the freezing weather were difficulties in starting and, for a brief time, in flying the helicopters. In order to overcome the engine starting problem on emergency evacuation missions, HMR-161 preheated its number one standby aircraft every two hours during the extreme cold. Dilution of engine oil with gasoline and use of warming huts (the latter, a scarcity) were also employed to cut down cold weather starting time.

Not related to freezing Korean temperatures were two additional problems, one navigational and the other mechanical. In January, the helicopter squadron put into use a jeep-mounted homing device for operations in reduced visibility. It proved unsatisfactory due to interference from other radio transmitters in the area, a difficulty never resolved during the rest of the war. The mechanical problem lay with the rotary winged aircraft in HMR-161. On 27 March, all of its HRS-2 choppers with more than 200 hours on the main rotor blades were grounded. Discovery in the States that minute .002-inch cuts on the blade surface had occurred during fabrication resulted in the grounding. New blades were promptly flown to Korea from both Japan and the United States, and the squadron again became fully operational on 2 April.

Evaluation of transport helicopter techniques continued during the period despite ever-present minor difficulties. At least one new HMR-161 tactical maneuver was scheduled each month to evaluate existing procedures and determine full operational capabilities of the aircraft. During these landing exercises both the infantry and helicopter commanders and their staffs had the opportunity to further develop vertical envelopment techniques that would soon be the new trademark of U.S. Marine Corps operations.

Most of the time HMR-161 operations drew more attention than those of VMO-6, but pilots in the latter unit had a host of division Marines who could attest to the skills and critical role performed by helicopter fliers in the composite observation squadron. VMO-6 had pioneered the night casualty evacuation service, and during the active fighting in Korea, had flown out more than 1,000 Marines from frontline medical facilities to better-equipped ones in the rear areas. These flights were made in all kinds of weather and without the benefit of adequate instrumentation or a homing device. No other Eighth Army helicopter unit made regularly scheduled night frontline evacuations.²⁴

The courage of these VMO-6 pilots was recalled nearly 15 years later by a former executive officer of the 1st Marines:

The flying of the evacuation helicopters from the jury-rigged and inadequate landing sites was nothing short of miraculous. I've always contended those pilots of the observation squadron received far less credit than they deserved. They used to fly at night, to frontline landing strips, where I had difficulty walking without barking my shins.²⁵

During the latter part of 1952 and the first months of 1953, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing command relationships underwent a significant change. On 26 January 1953, General Megee forwarded a memorandum request to General Barcus. The paper outlined specific recommendations for restoring 1st MAW tactical elements to wing operational control, even though the Marine wing would continue as a tactical component of Fifth Air Force. In the proposal, CG, 1st MAW pointed out (as had his predecessors) that the existing command structure, in effect, completely bypassed the Marine wing

²⁴ A relatively small number of night med evac flights was also being flown by HMR-161. During March 1953, for example, in transferring 283 casualties to the hospital ships, squadron helicopters made only 15 flights at night.

²⁵ Col Glenn R. Long ltr to Hd, HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 11 Jun 67.

commander. It had prevented him from exercising normal tactical command functions, even though he was fully responsible for the performance of his air groups and squadrons to FEAF/FAF orders. The 1st MAW commander's proposal was intended to counter previous Air Force objections and demonstrate that more normal command relations would "enhance, rather than reduce [1st MAW] operational efficiency and effectiveness."²⁶

At the same time, having been informally advised in an earlier conversation that CG, FAF would approve at least some of the requests made, General Megee implemented changes in his G-2 and G-3 staff sections. This reorganization was aimed at carrying out the increased functions which would result from approval of the request. Operational control of Marine tactical squadrons by FAF since 1951 had "relegated 1st MAW to the status of an administrative headquarters, forcing its G-2 and G-3 sections partially to atrophy."²⁷ To effect the changes in command relationships and establish the wing on an operational basis, the G-2 and G-3 sections were expanded. By the nature of their organization these were not capable of either targeting or tactical planning. In the intelligence section, a Target Information Sub-section was established to compile data on the mission targets (and accompanying photographs) received from FAF and to evaluate the desired objectives.

Upon receipt of this information, the G-3 planning group accomplished the target solution, prepared general tactics for conducting the strike, (number of planes, amount and kind of ordnance, approach routes to be used) and provided post-strike target evaluation. The chiefs of these sections jointly presented the completed information to the wing commander each afternoon. He selected the targets and forwarded via teletype and air courier to the wing G-3 representative at FAF headquarters a report of intended operations, providing a lead time of 36-48 hours.

As soon as the OP INTENT (Operations Intentions Report) was on its way to General Barcus for approval, the 1st MAW intelligence section began to prepare the target dossiers (including photographs, flak analysis, and related identification information) on each of the approved targets. The compiled dossiers were then sent to the ap-

²⁶ *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, p. 10-76.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

propriate tactical squadron. At this point, still perhaps a half-day before issuance of the FAF orders, the squadrons received two major advantages over the previous system:

- (1) Adequate photo intelligence employed for the first time since FAF had assumed operational control of 1st MAW; and
- (2) A substantial lead time advantage for proper briefing of pilots and arming of aircraft.

After the strike, and usually within an hour, Marine planes photographed the targets for damage assessment. These photos were annotated and an assessment report prepared. This information was then presented by the G-2 and G-3 to the wing commander. Immediately thereafter, prints of the photographs were distributed to the appropriate tactical units, thus making post-strike photography more freely available on a regular basis to the participating tactical units.

In a letter dated 18 February, General Barcus approved most of the 1st MAW commander's specific requests, but retained full control over General Megee's squadrons used in close air support. This was due to the fact that EUSAK-FAF joint policy required CAS mission requests to be approved by JOC, in accordance with daily Eighth Army priorities, which allocated the aircraft for each request. Returned to operational control of the Marine wing were planes used on interdiction, armed reconnaissance and general support activities—the planes on strikes beyond the bomblines, the photo, and all-weather (night) squadrons. FAF also retained control over assignment of missions to VMC-1, the electronics unit.

Although some of the Marine wing tactical squadrons thus newly enjoyed the advantages of flying under their own commander's wings, 1st MAW headquarters staff members had to pay for these benefits. An increased work load swamped the G-2 section, where 7 photo interpreters were kept busy 16 hours a day, 7 days a week. Marine personnel processed and reviewed an average of 100,000 prints per month and these were "only those from that portion of the VMJ-1 effort devoted to 1st MAW operations."²⁸ Expansion of 1st MAW headquarters to set up a tactical planning capability pointed to a deficiency in the wing organization T/O, a weakness that existed during the rest of the war.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10-80.

While General Barcus earlier had General Megee's recommendations under study, a radio news broadcast back in the States momentarily resulted in poor publicity for the Marine Corps. On 1 February a nationally syndicated columnist reported instances in which friendly troops had been bombed and strafed by U.S. aircraft. Marine Corps planes were the most careless, the broadcaster alleged, basing his statement on incomplete information. The news story had developed from an unfortunate publicity release issued by FEAF dealing with a MAG-33 incident. The phrasing implied that Marine aviators were "guilty of gross carelessness resulting in casualties among their own ground troops."²⁹

Actually, of the 63 incidents in which friendly casualties had resulted from aircraft flown by FAF units between January and October 1952, 1st MAW pilots were responsible for 18, or 28.5 percent of the total number of incidents and majority of casualties. What was left unsaid, however, in the unfavorable publicity was that with approximately 14.5 percent of the aircraft represented in FEAF, Marine fliers had been accomplishing monthly totals of between 30 to 40 percent of all Eighth Army CAS missions. They also performed virtually all of the very close air support jobs (50 to 100 yards out from the MLR) which further reduced the comparative percentage of Marine "carelessness."

It was true, of course, that on rare occasions freak accidents did kill and injure UN troops, despite the continual training of pilots and controllers in strike procedures and target identification. The position taken by the two senior Marine commanders in Korea was that although any CAS incident involving friendly troops was highly regrettable, it was in the same category as "short" mortar and artillery rounds and just as unavoidable.

Target identification, low visibility flying conditions, and ballistic computations made the task of precision close air support an enormous one. If anything, it was almost a wonder that more accidents did not happen. Despite the similarity of Korean geography, an unending panorama of almost identical hilltops, ridges, and streams, the pilot had to release ordnance at the proper altitude and speed, and in a balanced (trim) flight. While conducting his dive the pilot's view could be blocked by cloud formations and his attention dis-

²⁹ *PactFlt EvalRpt* No. 5, p. 9-81.

tracted by anti-aircraft fire which required evasive action. Even when the ordnance had been properly released, prevailing wind conditions could affect the flight path of the bombs. This, in addition to human error and mechanical factors, such as the occasional malfunctioning of parts, also affected the accuracy of bombing.

Throughout the November 1952–March 1953 period, 1st MAW squadrons continued to provide the bulk of close air sorties to the 1st Marine Division, in keeping with General Barcus' policy stated earlier in 1952. Between November and January there had been a lull in the heavy ground fighting that had prevailed in October and little need to request air strikes. When enemy forces opposing the division began to grow more active in February, however, the requirement for air support to 1st MarDiv greatly increased. During this month 1st MAW aviators reached an all-time high in the percentage of their total CAS sorties devoted to the division—two of every three wing close support sorties went to General Pollock's infantry regiments.

On the critical issue of close air support, the Marine division had become better satisfied by the end of 1952 with the quantity of air support received from FAF. A continuing difficulty, however, was the delayed response to requests for immediate CAS. For the wing, several other conditions existed which bothered General Megee. One was that the VMA-312 carrier-based squadron was not utilized to any great extent in execution of CAS missions. This detrimental condition saddled the wing commander with an "unqualified" squadron. It also prevented pilots from practicing a highly developed skill they were responsible for maintaining, although later in the war this condition was gradually alleviated. Two other difficulties—centralized control of CAS mission assignments by JOC and the prevailing differences between the Marine and Air Force/Army CAS communications systems and request procedures—were never rectified.³⁰

One long-standing difficulty, though not a CAS matter, had been solved early in the winter. Following a series of mechanical troubles with the F3D-2 aircraft in VMF(N)-513 and prolonged delay in receipt of blast tube extensions for its 20mm guns, the squadron finally became fully operational on 1 November with its complement of 12 of the new jet Skyknight aircraft. Almost as soon as the

³⁰ *PctFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, p. 10–80.

F3D-2s were ready for night work, FEAF had put them to escorting B-29s on bombing runs over North Korea. With the F3D escort and changes in B-29 tactics, bomber losses, which had been severe, decreased sharply. Enemy attackers became fewer and fewer so that by February, air-to-air opposition was encountered only infrequently. Instead of sending up groups of night fighters at the escorted B-29s, the enemy would fly a single jet across the bomber formation. If a Skyknight followed, one or two MIG-15s, well to the rear and higher than the decoy, would attempt to gun down the Skyknight in its pursuit. But because of the F3D tail warning radar, the Marine radar operator could detect the enemy plane in its approach for the kill before it got within effective firing range.

Lieutenant Colonel Hutchinson's VMF(N)-513 pilots soon established an enviable record for Marine aviation, netting by 31 January five enemy jets without loss of a single F3D. In addition to the jets, the squadron downed a piston engine plane and scored a probable destruct on another. During its first three months of operations with the Douglas Skyknights—the first Navy-Marine jet night-fighter to arrive in the Korean combat theater—the squadron earned two night-kill records. It also quickly proved the design theory and proposed tactics for the Skyknights that enemy aircraft could be located, intercepted, and destroyed purely by electronic means.

While on a night combat air patrol in the vicinity of Sinuiju airfield early on 3 November, Master Sergeant H. C. Hoglund picked up a contact on his intercept radar, which a ground radar station had passed on to him, and notified the pilot, Major William T. Stratton, Jr. After losing and reestablishing radar contact, Major Stratton made a visual sighting of a jet exhaust straight ahead. When he had been cleared to proceed, the Flying Nightmare's pilot sent three bursts of 20mm into the other plane, identified as a YAK-15. Three explosions followed and the aircraft plunged towards the airfield directly below. This marked the first time that an enemy jet had been destroyed at night by use of airborne intercept radar equipment in a jet fighter.

Five days later the team of Captain Oliver R. Davis and Warrant Officer Dramus F. Fessler bagged the first MIG-15 for the squadron. Captain Davis expended only 20 rounds of 20mm cannon fire in his aerial victory, which took place northwest of Pyongyang near the Yellow Sea.

The next two months brought new distinction to Marines in -513. Shortly after dark on 10 December, First Lieutenant Joseph A. Corvi had departed on a night combat patrol mission. About 35 miles northwest of Chinnampo, his radar operator, Master Sergeant D. R. George, picked up a target on his scope. Since the "bogey" (an unidentified aircraft, believed to be hostile) was three miles distant, the pilot quickly closed on the contact and shot it down. Almost immediately another blip appeared on the radar screen. Lieutenant Corvi turned to the new attack and began approaching it, but because of the slower speed of the enemy plane the Marine pilot was able to fire only one short burst before overtaking it. An instant before passing the enemy aircraft, Lieutenant Corvi saw it disappear from the radar screen, but neither member of the Flying Nightmares crew had made a visual sighting with the plane itself, listed as a probable kill. What these two Marines had accomplished with their earlier encounter was the first attempt to destroy an enemy aircraft without use of a visual sighting by means of lock-on radar gear.

All-weather squadron crews continued to demonstrate the F3D-2 capability for destruction of hostile aircraft by electronic intercept during January. The first MIG-15 downed was by Major Elswin P. (Jack) Dunn and Master Sergeant Lawrence J. Fortin, his radar operator. On 28 January Captain James R. Weaver and Master Sergeant Robert P. Becker destroyed another of the Russian fighter-interceptors in an aerial duel. The final kill came on the 31st when the new squadron commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert F. Conley (who had taken over VMF(N)-513 on the 20th) accompanied by Master Sergeant James M. Scott bagged the Marine fighter pilots' 12th MIG of the war.

While VMF(N)-513 wrote several records in the sky, other MAG-33 and -12 squadrons also made their contribution during the winter of 1952-1953. In MAG-12, a highly successful noontime strike was launched on 16 November by 21 attack planes from VMAs-121 and -212 against a hydroelectric plant 25 miles southeast of Wonsan. For this exploit the group received the plaudits of the Fifth Air Force CG, General Barcus. Lieutenant Colonel John B. Maas, Jr.'s VMF-115 (he had succeeded Lieutenant Colonel Coln as CO on 29 September) helped all Marines celebrate their 177th birthday by sending 22 Panthers against enemy troops and supply

shelters. On these strikes each MAG-33 aircraft was armed with 760 rounds of 20mm and 4 napalm tanks (500 pounds each), the first time that 4 tanks that large had been dropped from a fighter-bomber. This was part of the 98 sorties flown by 1st MAW against 21 enemy targets on the 10 November anniversary date. During December 1952, the frequency of combat flights by VMF-115 enabled the squadron to surpass its old (August 1951) monthly sortie record. The Panther jet fliers set this new mark of 726 effective sorties in the last 31 days of the year.

More honors came to wing pilots in the new year. On 8 January, three MAG-12 squadrons flew more than 28 combat sorties. Some, in support of the 1st Marine Division near the Panmunjom corridor, by VMAs-121, -212, and -323, produced outstanding results, earning the praise of General Pollock. Among the participating pilots was Lieutenant Colonel Barnett Robinson (VMA-212), who a week earlier had taken command of the squadron from Lieutenant Colonel Dobson.

Between 9-14 January, MAG-33 participated in a USAF-USMC joint operation to strike the rail system at Sinanju, 45 miles north of the enemy capital, and at Yongmi-dong, to the northwest across both the Chongchon and Taedong Rivers. During the six-day Operation PARALYSIS, Marine and Air Force jet squadrons flew flak suppression and interdiction missions, knocking out ground-based air defense weapons and damaging and destroying bridges, rails, and rolling stock. At night FEAFF Bomber Command, with Flying Nightmare escorts, worked over the communications net, including repair facilities; during daylight, the fighter-bombers attacked marshalling yards near Sinanju, where railroad cars were stacked up awaiting repair of the river bridges. Bomb assessments and intelligence reports showed that two major rail lines were inoperative for 16 days and that, as General Barcus had predicted, the Chinese "hurriedly increased their antiaircraft defenses in the Chongchon estuary and shot down seven fighter-bombers."³¹

Following this operation, Colonel Robertshaw's jets from VMFs-115 and -311 achieved extremely effective close air support in strikes flown 24 January in the I Corps area. About a month later, with an F9F as an airborne command post and with Lieutenant Colonel Walt

³¹ Futrell, *USAF, Korea*, p. 582.

Bartosh on his wing, the MAG-33 commander directed the operations of 208 USAF and Marine aircraft on another mass strike. The two-day mission was flown on 18-19 February against the North Korean tank and infantry school southwest of Pyongyang. More than 240 buildings were destroyed in 379 sorties. The attack was one of the largest all-jet fighter-bomber strikes of the war. Colonel Robertshaw thereby became the first Marine to lead such a large joint air-strike force from a CP aloft. And the next month, on 8 March, the Group CO flew the first Marine jet night MPQ mission, dropping six 250-pound bombs from an F9F-2 Panther on an enemy ammunition dump.

*Behind the Lines*³²

The Marine aviation command, like the division, found that its commitment to a large-scale land campaign in Korea considerably increased its requirements for nonorganic support, compared with normal amphibious combat operations. The wing fell heir to more of the permanent problems because its organization was less suited to the heavy support requirements of prolonged combat. Whereas the 1st Marine Division received adequate support through the FMFPac Service Command, the wing did not since the service command had been tailored more for support of ground organizations. Moreover, the command relations established in Korea underscored this situation, with the 1st Combat Service Group placed under CG, 1st Marine Division. The wing received emergency logistical support from VMR (Marine transport squadron) units. This was not an adequate substitute for the various ground support agencies essential for employment of the wing's full combat potential.

Major problems pertaining to service and support functions of 1st MAW units resulted from the use of amphibious Tables of Organization throughout the period of prolonged land combat without making a T/O adjustment for the actual combat mission being performed. What the wing had recommended to solve its long-standing support and supply problems was either to strengthen its

³² Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt Eval Rpts* No. 5, Chaps. 8, 9, No. 6, Chaps. 9, 10; 1stMarDiv ComdDs. Jan-Feb 53; 1/1 ComdD, Feb 53; HMR-161 ComdD, Feb 53; Montross, *SkyCav*.

organic logistical structure or to increase it by the attachment of appropriate units. It was emphasized that "prolonged Wing operations under Air Force control with logistical support derived from four different services, each at the end of its supply pipeline, brought clearly into focus the requirement for centralized control and monitoring of Wing requisitions and supplies."³³

A step toward expanding the amphibious T/O of the wing was made in 1953 with the request from CG, 1st MAW to CG, FMFPac for a detachment of the 1st Combat Service Group to provide electronics logistical support. It was further recommended that the electronics section be made organic to the wing to meet its need for this type of service unit.

Unlike the division, existing T/Os made it impossible for the wing to consolidate and control resupply requests from subordinate units and then to monitor the requisitions until parts or supplies were received by the users. This lack of a central wing supply agency had, for some time, impaired the effective, sustained performance of 1st MAW ground electronics equipment in Korea. CG, FMFPac concurred with the proposal. He requested an increase in the wing T/O of four additional electronics supply personnel to be attached to the wing for this purpose. The basic problem of establishment of a combat service group tailored to fully meet 1st MAW needs in the field remained unresolved, however.

Supply problems in the division were less complicated. On 11 November 1952, General Pollock submitted a letter to the theater commander requesting approval of a special list of equipment in excess of certain Tables of Organization and Equipment within the division. The requirements of the Marine land war mission in Korea dictated the need for additional equipment, primarily crew-served weapons and automatic rifles. Approval was given on 19 January 1953 by CG, AFPE (Army Forces, Far East). All equipment received through this program was to be returned upon the departure of the Marine division from Korea.

During the cold months that ended in March 1953, the division continued its evaluation of experimental clothing and equipment. Items of winter wear generally proved to be highly satisfactory. The thermal boot, in particular, gave excellent service. On the other hand,

³³ *PacFlt EvalRpt* No.6, p. 10-133.

the leather combat boot did not fully measure up to expectations. Most of its deficiencies were caused by the rapid wearing of the composition sole. One clothing item, the armored vest, had undergone further testing. In November, delivery of the vests to the division had been completed, including 400 sets of the new lower torso armor. Recent issue of this additional type of body armor appeared highly effective in reducing combat casualties; its extended coverage also raised morale.

Though their ability to halt successfully a Chinese bullet or exploding shell was being improved on, thanks to armored wear, the Marines' opportunity to keep the enemy from division outposts or MLR areas was still being hampered by occasional ammunition shortages. From time to time during the winter months there was some relief from the grenade and howitzer firing restrictions that had been in effect before the Hook fighting. The cutback on use of 81mm mortar shells continued, however, as the supply level of these projectiles remained dangerously low.

A new shortage, this one in fuel, developed during the winter. In January 1953 it became necessary to reduce the distribution of gasoline for motor vehicles to .829 gallons per man per day, a drop of 17 percent from the previous month's allocation. Diesel fuel was cut back to 1.41 gallons, or 7 percent less than the December ration. By February, however, the crisis had passed and vehicles returned to a less restricted operating schedule. No extreme hardship had been experienced by the Marines during the fuel drought. It was considered that "prolonged operation under such restrictions would result in a marked decrease in efficiency since many essential activities may be temporarily postponed, although not entirely eliminated."³⁴

The month of February also witnessed the largest helicopter supply lift in Korea. HAYLIFT I, the previous September, had tested the feasibility of transporting Class I, III, and V supplies to a frontline infantry regiment for five consecutive days. HMR-161 and the 7th Marines had turned out an excellent test performance of the rotary craft in this logistical operation. It then became the task for the infantry and helicopters to run a resupply operation for two frontline regiments for a five-day period. HAYLIFT II, conducted 23-27 February, was the code name for this test.

³⁴ 1stMarDiv ComdD, Jan 53, p. 3.

Both the planning and execution of the February operation followed the general pattern of HAYLIFT I, but on a much larger scale. As in September, division ordnance and service battalions moved the supplies to helicopter loading zones near Lieutenant Colonel Carey's HMR-161 air strip. It had been estimated that 130 tons each day would have to be lifted to supply the two MLR regiments, the 7th and 5th Marines. On the first day, this figure was exceeded by 30 tons. A request by A/1/5 on 24 February for support during an emergency operation necessitated additional ammunition³⁵ and helicopters to be diverted from those resupplying the 7th Marines. By the third day, a backlog of supplies had accumulated in the loading areas. In order to eliminate this buildup and to replace ammunition expended that morning by 1/5, HMR-161 on 25 February transported 200 tons in a single day, thereby establishing a new record. This represented 392 lifts made in 138.4 hours flying time. Maximum time for unloading a chopper was 54 seconds; the minimum, 28 seconds.

The last two days of HAYLIFT II, although less eventful, contributed to a resupply tonnage record five times greater than that set by HAYLIFT I. On the last day, when fog grounded their aircraft for a second time during the morning, Marines were again reminded of an operational limitation of the helicopters. In the end, though, the accomplishments far out-weighed this shortcoming. During the five days, a total of 1,612,406 pounds of supplies had been lifted to the two frontline regiments. Not one crewman or helicopter was lost. The operation contributed significantly to the February record for the greatest number of combat hours (765), total hours (1,275.5), combat flights (575), and total flights (1,183) flown by HMR-161 for any one-month period during the Korean fighting. For the rest of the war, the February 1953 gross lift of 2,018,120 pounds would also rank as the largest amount transported by HMR-161 for a single month.

³⁵ The following month, HMR-161 engaged in a four-day ammunition resupply operation for the division. Except for one day, the 22d, all available helicopters were assigned to that mission, beginning 20 March. HMR-161 also had a new CO by that time, Colonel Owen A. Chambers who had taken over from Lieutenant Colonel Carey on 15 March.

*The Quiet Sectors*³⁶

Two frontline units in the division MLR seldom became involved in setting records or bitter contests with the enemy, even though they carried out important roles in the sector defense. These were the Kimpo Provisional Regiment and 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, both located on the left flank of the Marine line. The Kimpo Provisional Regiment had been organized as a component of the 1st Marine Division a week after its arrival in the west, specifically for defending that vital sector at the extreme left of the UNC line. The next month the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion had been assigned part of Line KANSAS between the KPR and KMC sectors.

Because it was set apart from the Korean mainland on the north and east by the Han River,³⁷ Kimpo Peninsula afforded little opportunity for its occupants to engage the enemy directly in infantry clashes. Artillery thus became the normal medium for carrying on the limited hostilities as they existed in this sector between the Communists and UNC opponents. Hostile forces opposing the KPR were deployed in company-sized strongpoints across the river, occupying numerous fortified heights on the north bank of the Han estuary. Enemy strength³⁸ was estimated to be 7 infantry companies, supported by 7 artillery batteries and 40 mortar positions. Sporadic mortar and artillery rounds fell in the sector, with little harm. Occasionally, enemy counterbattery fire caused minor damage to the LVTs of the command. During 1952, the first year of the existence of the Kimpo regiment, 15 June had stood as the record day for the number of enemy artillery rounds received. Between 1900-2100 a total of 588 shells had fallen in the sector.

As part of its normal defense mission, personnel of the regiment spent a large part of their time controlling civilians and regulating traffic, especially water travel. Certain counterintelligence problems confronted the Kimpo Provisional Regiment. A large civilian popu-

³⁶ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: KPR ComdDs, Jun, Aug, Oct-Dec 52, Jan-Mar 53; 1st AmTracBn ComdDs, Mar-Dec 52, Jan-Mar 53.

³⁷ On the west, the Yom River similarly separates the Kimpo Peninsula from Kanghwa-do Island, second in size of all Korean islands and a base for friendly intelligence operations.

³⁸ Identified as elements of the 195th CCF Division of the 65th CCF Army and an unidentified CCF division, in a revised EOOB issued in December. Previously, units of the 193d CCF Division were at the front in this far western sector. KPR ComdDs, Oct-Dec 52.

lation, numbering nearly 80,000 natives, lived within the regimental sector. Local restrictions set by the National Police on Kimpo (who cooperated with the KPR in security matters) included the STAYBACK LINE to the north of the peninsula. As a rule, no civilians other than those with daytime farming permits, were allowed beyond this line. Numerous regulations were also issued to control boat traffic. Surrounded by rivers on three sides, there was ample opportunity for enemy agents or line crossers to infiltrate the defense line, despite continuous screening by friendly outposts and waterborne patrols.

Two months after the "heavy" June shelling came the August floods, which were more destructive than the artillery had been. The rest of the summer and fall followed a fairly regular, uneventful pattern with customary defense duties, rotation of frontline units, and training exercises. Among the latter were four helicopter demonstrations in October and a five-hour communication CPX (Command Post Exercise) the following month.

One episode toward the end of the year created a temporary stir in the daily routine. In late November, two Communist espionage agents and their North Korean guides were apprehended on the west bank of the Han, almost directly east of the Kimpo Airfield. They had crossed the Imjin-Han Rivers by boat, using this normal infiltration route to penetrate the Marine defense net. The agents were seized by National Police on 22 November and their North Korean guides two days later. It was unusual for agents and guides to be captured so closely together. Normal defense measures of the peninsula had assigned separate northern, western, and southern sector units for protection against possible amphibious or overland attacks or—far more likely—enemy infiltration.

The following month four more "roving" two-man outposts were established in the western coastal area of the southern sector. Manned from sunset to 30 minutes after sunrise daily by either KPR military personnel or National Police, the outposts occupied different positions each night. They were responsible for checking for proper identification and enforcing the rigid 2100-0500 curfew hours. Another unusual occurrence took place the last four nights of December when a single-engine light aircraft dropped propaganda leaflets in Colonel Harvey C. Tschirgi's³⁹ sector.

³⁹ Colonel Tschirgi had taken command of the KPR on 1 December from Colonel Richard H. Crockett, who previously relieved Colonel Staab (the original KPR commander) on 31 August.

Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Dobervich, the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion (minus Company A at KPR, and Company B at Pohang), reinforced by the Division Reconnaissance Company, had manned positions on the KANSAS line since April 1952. By the end of May, the battalion had inserted an additional unit, a provisional company,⁴⁰ in the KANSAS secondary defense line. In July, the amtrac company relieved the reconnaissance company on line, the latter then becoming part of Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division. All amphibian tractor battalion units assigned to ground defense missions received special refresher training in infantry operations, including the employment of forward observers.

During the first summer in the west, the mainland-based amphibian organization continued its KANSAS defense mission. The battalion also instituted a training program for patrolling the Han River by tractor. (Company A, attached to the KPR, had conducted waterborne patrols of the Yom since June. The unit also manned outposts along that river.) Headquarters and Service Company assisted the U.S. Army in laying a signal cable across the river during August, the same month Lieutenant Colonel Dobervich relinquished unit command to Lieutenant Colonel Edwin B. Wheeler. In late August the battalion sent 58 of its members to help augment 1st Marines ranks, thinned by the fierce Bunker Hill fighting.

Through the end of 1952, the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion continued its KANSAS mission. Although the sector had witnessed relatively little action for some months, several incidents about this time varied the generally quiet daily routine. In October, Company B (Major Charles W. Fitzmaurice) sent out an amphibious patrol to capture prisoners (Operation CAT WHISKER). The plan was to cross the Han in a rubber boat and set up an ambush after reaching the enemy shore, but a storm-angered river, with a strong tide boosted by heavy winds, prevented landing of the boat. Two months later, another snare—this one set by the enemy—was partially successful. Several hours after dark on 1 December, the jeep assigned to the battalion commander, Major George S. Saussy, Jr.,⁴¹ was being

⁴⁰ Comprising a platoon from Company B and several headquarters elements, the provisional company was disbanded on 14 June when Company B that had been supporting MAG-33 at Pohang was reassigned to the battalion.

⁴¹ Formerly the executive officer, Major Saussy took over unit command on 7 November, when Lieutenant Colonel Wheeler was transferred to the 5th Marines. Lieutenant Colonel Frank R. Wilkinson, Jr., became the next commanding officer on 16 March 1953.

driven on the MSR by Private First Class Billy J. Webb, its operator and only occupant.

Suddenly shots rang out from the side of the road. Within a few seconds, 23 bullets from a Russian-made submachine gun had struck the jeep; the driver, astonishingly, received only a knee wound. No trace of the ambushers could be found by the friendly patrol dispatched to investigate the incident. An activity of an entirely different nature that same month was the assignment of battalion LVTs to break up the heavily encrusted ice that had formed around and endangered supports of three bridges in the I Corps area. A rash of minor incidents involving would-be, but unsuccessful, enemy infiltrators also took place during the winter months in the amtrac sector. In November, three agents attempted to cross the Imjin on their way to the division area, but were engaged by a battalion patrol. After a brief fire fight, friendly artillery was called down on the retreating boat and it was believed destroyed. Enemy agents on foot were engaged by National Police or Marine listening posts again in January and March and deterred from their espionage missions.

Commitment to an infantry role in the KANSAS line, meanwhile, had permitted little time for operation of the battalion tractors. In December, construction began on a storage park for those LVTs not in use. By placing the non-operating tracked vehicles in a single area, the battalion could handle routine maintenance with just a few men. This facility, located at Ascom City, was completed early in 1953. By March, a total of 34 tractors had been placed there in caretaker status. Implicit in this economy measure was the requirement that all stowed tractors could revert to combat status, if necessary, on a 48-hour alert.

*Changes in the Concept of Ground Defense*⁴²

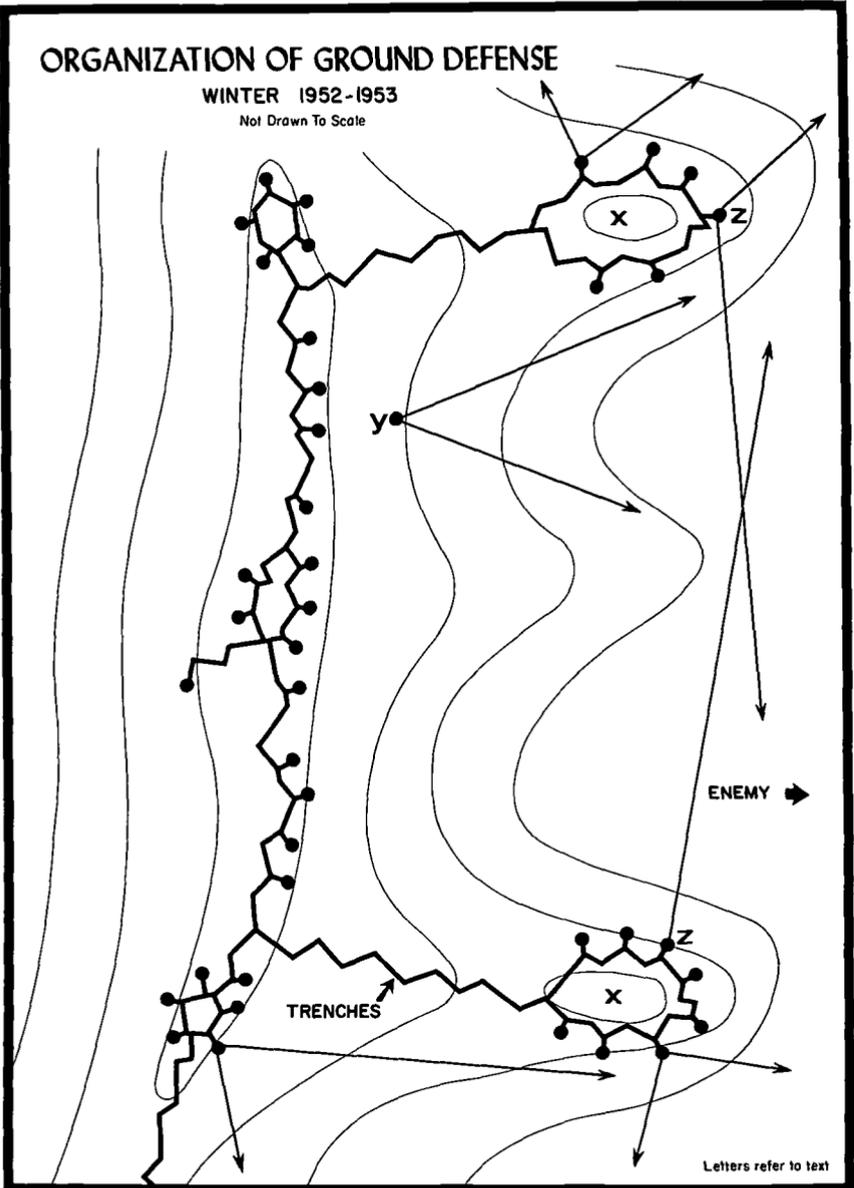
During the winter months of 1952-1953, the 1st Marine Division modified the organization of its tactical defense, although it retained the basic concept of the combat outpost system as the backbone

⁴² The material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 5, Chap. 8.

ORGANIZATION OF GROUND DEFENSE

WINTER 1952-1953

Not Drawn To Scale



MAP DIAGRAM 20

K.White

of MLR defense.⁴³ Development of much of the KANSAS line and parts of the Marine MLR during this period reflected several new ideas on how the ground defense could be better organized. Recent experience during Communist attacks had shown that defensive emplacements and positions could be dug deeper and below ground to withstand massed enemy fires. Contrary to traditional concepts, it had also been found that centering the defense on the military crest⁴⁴ of a hill was not always the best procedure. Emplacement of machine guns downslope or in low firing positions to cover draws or flat ground was not entirely suitable to the Korean terrain, enemy, or nature of positional warfare.

Altered defense concepts, beginning in October, took the following form:

(1) The trace of defensive positions followed the topographical crest (A) rather than military crest (B) of key terrain features. (Map diagrams 20 and 21 illustrate these changes.)

(2) Fighting positions and emplacements were dug a short distance downslope (C) from the topographical crest.

(3) Trenches on the topographical crest permitted easier, faster, and more protected access to fighting positions from the reverse slope and support area (D).

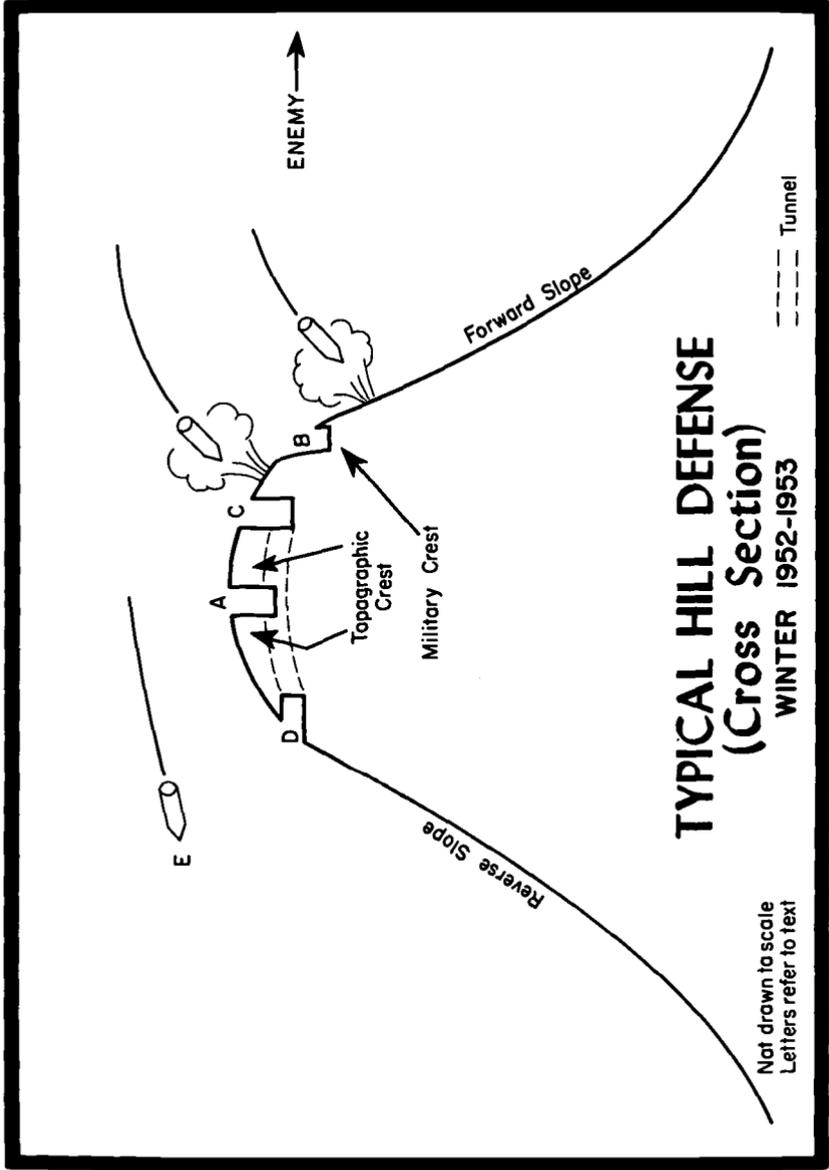
(4) Positions on the topographical crest were less vulnerable to enemy artillery because it was more difficult for the enemy to adjust his fire on these positions than on trenches dug along the military crest. Many shells simply passed over the top (E) of the hill.

(5) Certain hills and noses were selected and organized so that trenches and gun emplacements, encircling the crest, would form mutually supporting positions (X).

(6) Machine guns were moved from the draws (Y) to hilltops and noses (Z) where better long-range observation and fields of fire existed.

⁴³ The 1st Commonwealth Division, to the Marine right, utilized a different defense system. Instead of relying on the COPs forward of the main line of defense as major deterrent positions, the British preferred to include all strategic terrain features within the MLR itself. They followed a policy of active patrolling to the front and, at night, occupied selected ground sites, preferring to fight the enemy from their main battle positions rather than from more isolated COP positions. *PactFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9, pp. 9-92, 9-93.

⁴⁴ The military crest is that point along the slope of a hill from which maximum observation up and down the hill can be obtained. The topographical crest is the highest point on a hill or ridge.



Another change in the improvement of field fortifications came into use during the winter months. A different type of barbed wire obstacle, called "Canadian," "random," or "double-apron" wire, began to find favor with Marine infantrymen. Canadian wire consisted of two parallel rows of three-strand barbed wire fencing, erected about three feet apart. The void was filled in with additional barbed wire, placed at random, but connected to the parallel fences.⁴⁵ The new type barbed wire appeared more effective for several reasons. Besides being simple and fast to emplace, Canadian wire merely became more entangled by artillery shelling, which quickly ripped apart the standard double-apron barbed wire previously used in COP slope defenses.

*Before the Nevadas Battle*⁴⁶

As the Marine division continued to revamp and strengthen its primary defenses, a change of pace on the battlefield was gradually being felt. Only a few major raids had taken place during November, December, and January, and these involved no transfer of real estate. Casualties had been light. Artillery rounds, both incoming and outgoing, had dropped substantially. By February, however, it became apparent that the period of winter inactivity was nearing an end.

Taking the initiative in the renewed action was the 5th Marines, occupants of the right regimental sector since 25 January. The next month the regiment conducted three successful daytime raids against fortified enemy positions. Targets for the initial action, on 3 February, were two consistently troublesome hills, 31 and 31A in the Ungok Hill mass, north of the left battalion sector.

Since all battalions of the 5th Marines were to be involved either directly or indirectly in Operation CLAMBAKE, the initial planning and actual execution of the raid was to be carried out by the

⁴⁵ Commenting on the heavy destruction of Hook fortifications by CCF preparation, one 7th Marine company commander stated: "Enemy artillery and mortars did tend to destroy the protective wire. We noted especially that the Canadian 'Random Wire,' although it tended to move about under fire, did hold together and continue to offer good protection." *McLaughlin ltr.*

⁴⁶ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdDs, Feb-Mar 53; 1stMar ComdD, Mar 53; 5thMar ComdDs, Feb-Mar 53; 7thMar, 11thMar, 1st TkbN, 1/5, 2/5, 1/7 ComdDs, Feb 53.

regimental commander, Colonel Walt. CLAMBAKE required especially thorough coordination of the heavy fire support since it was to be launched with a tank-artillery feint against several CCF positions (Hill 104, Kungok, and Red Hill) generally west of the Ungok objective area. The two target hills were to be assaulted by reinforced platoons from Company A (Captain Don H. Blanchard) of the reserve battalion, 1/5, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Jonas M. Platt, who was responsible for the later planning stages of the raid. It was anticipated that intensive air and artillery preparation on the feint objectives and movement of gun and flame tanks during the diversion would gain the element of surprise for the assault platoons. Thus the Marines hoped to take prisoners, the main purpose of the raid, and to kill enemy troops and destroy their defenses.

During the five weeks of preparation, every aspect of the maneuver was thoroughly reviewed and rehearsed. All participating units took part in the planning conferences. Routes were reconnoitered, mines cleared, and fire concentrations plotted and registered. MAG-12 pilots studied the target areas from the nearby Marine MLR. Six rehearsals, including practice in casualty evacuation, uncovered potential problem areas. Final rehearsal was held 1 February, with artillery and air preparation made against the feint objectives. Four close air support strikes were conducted that day and the next as part of the plan to divert enemy attention from the CLAMBAKE destruction mission.

Shortly after first light on 3 February, three platoons of tanks rumbled across the MLR to assault the feint area. A heavy "false" artillery preparation by 1/11 was also placed on the three western enemy hills as well as direct fire from gun and flame tanks. The two Marine assault forces, one against each hill, moved out armed with flamethrowers, 3.5-inch rockets, machine guns, grenades, satchel charges, bangalore torpedoes, and automatic weapons. Enemy forces occupying the positions made three separate counterattack attempts, which were blunted by Marine supporting arms. During the infantry attack, friendly air hovered on station and artillery fired continuous counterbattery and counter mortar fire.

With the exception of the change of withdrawal route of one of the assault teams, the 5th Marines reported that the operation was carried out according to plan. Company A tanks had swung left across the frozen rice paddies to provide left flank security for the

infantry and to interdict trenchlines that connected with the Ungok objective. Intense enemy fire lashed the armored vehicles as they approached Kumgok and Red Hill as well as those supporting tanks that remained on the MLR.⁴⁷ Air, artillery, infantry, and tanks produced an estimated 390 Chinese casualties (including 90 known KIA) in addition to damaged or destroyed trenchlines, tunnels, caves, bunkers, and weapons of the enemy. Marine losses were 14 killed and 91 wounded. One flame tank was lost.

As in the case of the 1st Marines WAKEUP raid in November 1952, CLAMBAKE was important not so much in accomplishing its primary mission (actually, no POWs were taken) as in lessons learned. One of these was to reemphasize the fact that thorough preparation helped to ensure smooth coordination of infantry and supporting arms. In his report of the operation, Lieutenant Colonel Platt wrote, "minute planning to the last detail along with carefully executed rehearsals are basic to success in actions of this type."⁴⁸ He further noted that "confidence and enthusiasm stimulated by the rehearsals are assets which cannot be overlooked."⁴⁹ The battalion commander also commented on the importance of planning for both troop withdrawal and maintaining a flexible schedule of fires by supporting arms. Air,⁵⁰ artillery, and tanks all employed fire plans that could be readily adjusted to meet the changing tactical situation.

On the ground, flame was found to be the best weapon for neutralizing the well-fortified CCF caves. From Company A, 1st Tank Battalion (Captain Hunter) came information about Chinese 3.5-inch rocket launcher teams used in antitank defense. Several of these tank-killer teams had run down the trenchline holding small bushes in front of them. The enemy then boldly advanced through a hail of bullets to within 15–20 yards of the Marine tank before opening fire with their rockets. Short bursts of flame from headquarters tanks soon caused even the most intrepid to beat a hurried retreat.

⁴⁷ For a detailed account of the tank action in the CLAMBAKE raid see Col Clyde W. Hunter ltr to Dir MCHist, HQMC, dtd 6 Jun 70, in v. V, Korean comment file.

⁴⁸ 1/5 ComdD, Feb. 53, App. IVc, dtd 19 Feb 53, p. 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ In order to assure better close air support during the assault, an SOP for the air-borne tactical controller was proposed and drafted by MAG-12 for 1st MAW approval. The plan utilized the marking of targets by rocket and subsequent corrections to be made by the FAC. This enabled MAG-12 aircraft "to scramble, fly a CAS mission at the Division front and be back at the field at K-6 in approximately 40 minutes." Col Wayne M. Cargill ltr to Dir MCHist, HQMC, dtd 8 Jan 70.

Concluding his after-action report of CLAMBAKE, the regimental commander, Colonel Walt, observed:

In addition to inflicting large numbers of casualties and destruction upon the enemy, the operation served a secondary purpose, none the less important. It provided excellent training and experience for the various infantry and supporting arms staffs involved, helping to develop them into a smoothly functioning infantry-air-artillery-tank team.⁵¹

Shortly before the end of the month, the 5th Marines made another major assault. As in the earlier CLAMBAKE, this raid was again in two-reinforced-platoon size and made during the early daylight hours of 25 February. This time the objective was a single height, Hill 15 (Detroit), two miles east of the CLAMBAKE objective. Lieutenant Colonel Oscar F. Peatross⁵² 2/5, manning the extreme right sector of the division, gave the assignment to Company F, then under Captain Harold D. Kurth, Jr. Planning for Operation CHARLIE, a standard-type kill, capture, and destroy raid, was carried out in much the same detailed manner as the earlier 1/5 raid.

CHARLIE differed somewhat in concept in that the 2/5 operational plan attempted to gain surprise by launching the attack during the BMNT⁵³ period as well as in use of smoke to screen enemy observation. Supporting arms preparatory fires had been carefully plotted, including the precision destruction aerial bombing that had proved so effective in the CLAMBAKE assault. In actual execution of CHARLIE, however, bad weather prevented the use of almost all the planned pre-D-Day and D-Day air strikes. Upon reaching the Detroit objective area assault Marines "found the majority of enemy installations were relatively undamaged, even though subjected to heavy bombardment by other supporting arms."⁵⁴ Artillery preparatory fires had been employed successfully to isolate the battle area and howitzer and tank missions supported the raid.⁵⁵

⁵¹ 5th Mar ComdD, Feb 53, App. VI, dtd 20 Feb 53, p. 3.

⁵² Lieutenant Colonel Peatross had succeeded Lieutenant Colonel McLaughlin as battalion CO on 11 Sep 52.

⁵³ Beginning morning nautical twilight is that period before sunrise or after sunset (BENT, or beginning evening nautical twilight) when visibility is limited to approximately 300 yards.

⁵⁴ 5thMar ComdD, Feb 53, App. VI, dtd 28 Feb 53, p. 5.

⁵⁵ In nearly three hours of firing, the 11th Marines and its reinforcing and attached units, including the 1st Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, expended 11,881 rounds. Indicative of the meticulous planning that preceded an operation such as CHARLIE is the 11th Marines report of this raid. 11thMar ComdD, Feb 53.

Between the time of CLAMBAKE and CHARLIE a series of Marine and enemy small units actions erupted which were soon to become a way of life for the MLR combatants. By sporadic outpost attacks and increasing their use of artillery, the Chinese were beginning to demonstrate a more aggressive attitude than in recent months. On the night of 12-13 February, a CCF platoon supported by mortars and artillery probed COP Hedy (Hill 124), in the right battalion of the center regimental sector, held by Lieutenant Colonel Barrett's 3/7. On the next night, it was the Korean Marines who turned aggressor. Two of their platoons raided Hill 240, on the west bank of the Sachon, nearly three miles north of the mouth of the river. The following night, a 7th Marines patrol moving into ambush positions was itself stalked by a large CCF patrol. When reinforcements, including armored vehicles, moved out from the MLR to support the Marines, the Chinese hastily withdrew.

Three more contacts were made before the end of the month along the division front. On 19 February CCF soldiers, in two-platoon strength, engaged KMC sentries forward of COP 33, located about a mile east of the action the previous week. After the initial exchange of small arms fire, the Koreans moved back to the outpost and called down supporting fires on the Chinese. Artillery and mortars tore into the attackers causing numerous casualties and forcing the enemy to withdraw. On the morning of 22 February, a raiding party from the 5th Marines assaulted a smaller enemy force at Hill 35A, approximately 1,300 yards southwest of the Ungok hills. In this second raid staged by the 5th Marines that month, assault troops (H/3/5) used flamethrowers in the early stages of the action to help clear enemy trenches of hostile grenade throwers.

Late the next night a 7th Marines unit, consisting of a reinforced platoon and four M-46 tanks, set out to raid Yoke, located near the peace corridor five miles north of Freedom Bridge. The assault against that position never came off. At 2137 as the B/1/7 platoon moved into preliminary positions on Hill 90, north of the ultimate objective, a Chinese company ambushed the patrol from three sides. When the Marines closed with the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting, a support platoon was sent from the MLR. After an intense 30 minute fire fight, the CCF began withdrawing at 0138. Enemy losses were listed as 45 counted KIA, 33 estimated KIA, and 35 estimated WIA. As a result of the assault, orders for the 7th Marines raid on

Yoke were cancelled. Marine casualties numbered 5 killed, 22 wounded.

Whereas February was characterized by a marked increase in ground contacts between Marines and their CCF adversaries, during the first part of March the Chinese again assumed an inactive posture. Marine patrols reported few contacts. Except for a KMC raid on 3 March, little action that could be considered a sizable engagement took place until after midmonth. On the 16th there was a brief skirmish involving a 5th Marines combat patrol near Reno and a short fire fight between Carson defenders and an enemy squad. The next night a Chinese platoon, waiting near Vegas for a Marine patrol to pass by, was itself put to flight by the patrol.

Two encounters with the CCF on 19 March marked the heaviest action yet of the month. Early that morning, a predawn raid was staged by B/1/5 (Captain Theodore J. Mildner) at Hill 31A, one of the Ungok twin objectives in CLAMBAKE the previous month. The March ITEM raid employed 111 Marines. One platoon was to make the assault and the second platoon to support the operation and assist in casualty evacuation. Following a series of nearly a dozen air strikes on the objective and artillery preparation, Captain Mildner's two assault platoons jumped off from the MLR check point at 0518. As usually happened in such operations, the preliminary fire drove the Chinese to reverse slope defenses. No enemy POWs were taken and at 0700 the Marine units disengaged, due to casualties sustained from enemy shelling and machine gun fire.⁵⁰

Earlier that same date, two attacks had been made simultaneously by the enemy on outposts in the center regimental sector, where the 1st Marines had relieved the 7th on 10 March. At 0105 one CCF company struck in the vicinity of Hedy while a second lunged at Esther, about 1½ miles east. When a G/3/1 reconnaissance patrol operating forward of COP Esther observed enemy movement, the Marines pulled back to the outpost, alerting it to the impending attack. After a heavy incoming artillery barrage, the enemy assaulted the outpost, but when a three-hour effort failed to carry the position,

⁵⁰ Prior to the raid various combinations of flamethrower fuels and pressure were extensively used. The purpose was to determine the maximum effective range of the flamethrower teams in order to "neutralize the hand-grenade throwing potential of the enemy, this being one of the major problems confronting assault elements on other raids." Final tests resulted in flame being thrown more than 40 yards up hill. 1/5 ComdD, Mar 53, App. IVf, p. 3.

the attackers withdrew. By that time the Chinese company which had hit COP Hedy had also broken off the attack.

Actually the fight in Captain Carl R. Gray's Company H sector, to the rear of Hedy, was mainly at the MLR, for the Chinese indulged in merely a brief fire fight at the latter outpost, bypassing it in favor of a crack at JAMESTOWN. The main line of resistance failed to yield to the enemy thrust, which was supported by 2,400 rounds of mortar and artillery fire along the MLR and outposts.

After being thwarted by Hedy-Esther defenses, the enemy shifted his efforts westward to the 1st KMC area. The Korean regiment received the brunt of the enemy's minor infantry probes immediately preceding the Nevada Cities battle. Late on 25 March a series of skirmishes broke out in the 1st Marines sector between one-or-two platoon size Chinese infantry forces and Marine outpost defenders. Following a quiet daylight spell on the 26th, the Chinese resumed the offensive with a probe at COP Dagmar. This coincided with what developed into a massive regimental assault unleashed against Carson, Reno, and Vegas, outposts in the 5th Marines sector, to the right. There Colonel Walt's regiment would shortly be the target of the bloodiest Chinese attack to date on the 1st Marine Division in West Korea.

CHAPTER VII

Vegas

The Nevada Cities—Supporting Arms—Defense Organization at the Outposts—Chinese Attack on 26 March—Reinforcements Dispatched—Massed Counterattack the Next Day—Push to the Summit—Other Communist Probes—Three CCF Attempts for the Outpost—Vegas Consolidation Begins—Aftermath

*The Nevada Cities*¹

AS THE THIRD WINTER OF WAR in Korea began to draw to an inconclusive end in late March 1953, some 28,000 Marines of the 1st Division stationed on the western front suspected that coming weeks would bring a change of pace. Consider just the matter of basic logistics. Rising temperatures, tons of melting snow, and the thawing of the Imjin River, located north of the rear Marine support and reserve areas, would turn vital road nets into quagmires to tax the patience and ingenuity of men and machinery alike.

With the arrival of another spring in Korea there was strong likelihood that the Chinese Communists facing the Marines across a 33-mile front of jagged peaks and steep draws would launch a new offensive. This would enable them to regain the initiative and end the stalemate that had existed since October when they were rebuffed in the battle for the Hook.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PadFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv, 1stMar, 5thMar, 11thMar, 1/5, 2/5, 3/5 ComdDs, Mar 53; 5thMar ComdD, Apr 53, Special Action Rpt Period 26-30 Mar 53, "Battle of the Cities," hereafter 5thMar SAR "Cities"; Maj Norman W. Hicks, "U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1952-1953 with Special Emphasis on Outpost Warfare" (M.A. thesis, Univ. of Maryland, 1962), hereafter Hicks, *Outpost Warfare*; 1stLt Peter Braestrup, "Outpost Warfare," *Marine Corps Gazette*, v. 37, no. 11 (Nov 53) and "Back to the Trenches," *Marine Corps Gazette*, v. 39, no. 3 (Mar 55); MSgt Robert T. Fugate, "Vegas, Reno, and Carson," *Leatherneck*, v. 36, no. 6 (Jun 53), hereafter Fugate, "Vegas."

Winning new dominating hill or ridge positions adjacent to the Marine MLR, in that uneasy No-Mans-Land buffer zone between the CCF and UN lines, would be both militarily and psychologically advantageous to the Communists. Any new yardage or victory, no matter how small, could be exploited as leverage against the "Wall Street capitalists" when truce talks resumed at the Panmunjom bargaining table. Further, dominant terrain seized by the CCF would remain in Communist hands when the truce went into effect. Although wise to the tactics of the Chinese,² UN intelligence had not anticipated the extent or intensity of the surprise CCF attack that opened up at 1900 on 26 March when the Communists sent battalions of 700 to 800 men against Marine outposts of 50 men.

The late March attack centered primarily on a trio of peaks where Marines had dug in three of their key outposts—Carson, Reno, and Vegas. Rechristened from earlier, more prosaic names of Allen, Bruce, and Clarence, respectively, the Nevada Cities hill complex was located approximately 1,500 yards north of the MLR fronting the 5th Marines right sector. The trio was the province of 1/5, which manned the western (left) part of the regimental area. Ultimately, however, reverberations ran through nearly 10,000 yards of division front, from the two Berlin outposts, 1,000 yards east of Vegas, to COP Hedy, midpoint in the 1st Marines center sector. Continuous attacks and counterattacks for possession of the key Vegas outpost raged unabated for five days. The action escalated into the bloodiest fighting to date in western Korea, resulted in loss of a major outpost, and the killing or wounding of nearly 1,000 Marines. It was a partial success for the enemy, but he paid a high price for the real estate: casualties amounting to more than twice the Marine losses, including 800 known killed and a regiment that was decimated by the Marine defenders.

The three Nevada outposts lay just below the 38th Parallel, approximately 10 miles northeast of Panmunjom and the same distance north of the Marine railhead at Munsan-ni. Possession of the area would give the Communists improved observation of I Corps MLR positions to the west. Indeed, the enemy had cast covetous eyes

² Since the first of the year division intelligence reports had given the CCF the capability of mounting limited objective attacks ranging from company to regimental size. *PacFlt EvalRpt*, p. 9-28, quoting 1stMarDiv PIR 860, dtd 4 Mar 53.

(an ambition translated into action through his well-known creeping tactics) on the semi-circular net of outposts since the preceding summer.

Mindful of this, the I Corps commanding general back in September had stressed the importance of holding key terrain features that could be of major tactical value to the enemy. This included Bunker Hill and COP Reno, both considered likely targets for renewed enemy aggression in the future. Particularly, the enemy had indicated he wanted to annex Reno. The object of increasing hostile attacks since July 1952, Reno was the closest of the three Nevadas to CCF lines and tied in geographically with two of the enemy's high ground positions—Hill 190, to the northeast, and Hill 101, overlooking the site of the destroyed village of Ungok. (See Map 22.)

Reno's companion outpost on the right, Vegas, at 175 meters, was the highest of the three while Carson, on the left flank, was nearest JAMESTOWN and also assisted in defense of Reno and Vegas. Each of the three outposts was manned by a rifle platoon (40 Marines plus two Navy hospital corpsmen), heavily reinforced with weapons company personnel. A small hill between Reno and Vegas, known as the Reno Block, further supported the Nevada Cities complex and at night was defended by a reinforced squad.

Since they commanded the historic Korean invasion route to Seoul, 30 air miles south, the strategic importance of the Nevada outposts had been one of the reasons for transfer of the Marines from East Korea to the West, in 1952. Both Reno and Vegas, moreover, overlooked Chinese rear area supply routes. This was a matter of special concern to the enemy at this time since he had recently doubled his stockpiling efforts and wanted to prevent UNC intelligence from learning about the build-up. Possession of the Nevada hills would enable the Chinese to harass the Marines at even closer range and—hopefully—to conduct new thrusts at the MLR which would ultimately weaken the UNC position.

In mid- and late March, the units forward in the 1st Marine Division sector of the main defense line, JAMESTOWN, remained much as they had been in recent months. Left to right, the defending components were the Kimpo Provisional Regiment, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, 1st Korean Marine Corps Regimental Com-

bat Team (1st KMC/RCT),³ 1st Marines, and 5th Marines. One change had occurred when the 1st Marines relieved the 7th in the center sector earlier in the month. The latter was now in division reserve in the Camp Rose rear area. Before long, this regiment was to see more offensive action in a hotly contested, five-day period than it had during its entire recent tour on line. Overall, the 1st Marine Division continued as one of the four infantry divisions in the I Corps sector of EUSAK⁴ and, in fact, the month itself marked exactly one year since the Marines had arrived on the western front.

Occupying the far eastern end of the division sector, the 5th Marines, under command of Colonel Walt,⁵ had been assigned to the MLR since late January. The regiment manned six miles of the JAMESTOWN front. It was flanked on the left by the 1st Marines while to the right its neighbor was the 38th Regiment, 2d Infantry Division, U.S. Army.

Since 20 February, the western part of the 5th regimental sector had been held by Lieutenant Colonel Platt's 1/5, with Companies A, B, and C on line, from left to right. The battalion area held four outposts. COP Ava was tucked down near the boundary between the 1st and 5th Regiments, while the Nevada, or Three Cities, triangle screened the central part of the latter regimental sector. A Company A squad⁶ outposted Ava, some 325 yards forward of the main line. Personnel of Company C were stationed on Carson and Reno. Vegas had a unique command situation. Due to its proximity to the boundary between 1/5 and 3/5, Vegas came under operational control of the former battalion while personnel charged with its defense belonged to Company H of 3/5.

The right flank of the regimental sector was the responsibility of 3/5, which had moved to the front on 23 March, under Lieutenant

³ The 1st KMC Regiment had been redesignated the 1st KMC/RCT on 15 Dec 52. Continuing under opcon of the 1stMarDiv, the Korean RCT consisted of four infantry battalions, plus attached artillery, armor, engineer, and service units. *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 5, Chap. 8, p. 8-64.

⁴ To the Marine division right were the U.S. 2d Infantry, ROK 1st, and U.S. 7th Infantry Divisions.

⁵ No stranger to the 5th Marines, Colonel Walt had served with this regiment during World War II at Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester, and Peleliu. He had commanded, on separate occasions, 2/5 and 3/5 and had earned two Navy Crosses for combat leadership and bravery.

⁶ Normally Ava was a squad-size outpost. Prior to and during the late March attacks, all 5th Marine COPs were strengthened.

Colonel Robert J. Oddy. Companies H, G, and I were forward, in that order from the west, with George personnel on duty at the two reinforced squad size outposts, Berlin and East Berlin. In regimental reserve was Lieutenant Colonel James H. Finch's 2/5.

Westward along JAMESTOWN from Colonel Walt's 5th Marines was the center regimental sector, held by the 1st Marines commanded by Colonel Adams. (See Map 23.) The extreme western part of the regimental line came to a juncture with KMC territory just as it looped around the critical Panmunjom peace corridor. This left battalion sector was manned by Lieutenant Colonel George A. Gilliland's 2/1. Companies E, D, B from 1/1,⁷ and F were forward, outposting COPs 1, 2, Marilyn, Kate, and Ingrid. To the right 3/1, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ernest G. Atkin, defended Hedy, Bunker, Ginger, Esther, Dagmar, and Corinne, with Companies H, G, and I on line. Occupying the area adjacent to the secondary defense installations, WYOMING and the western part of the KANSAS line, was Lieutenant Colonel Frederick R. Findtner's reserve 1/1. And located to the rear of the 1st and 5th Regiments was the 7th Marines (Colonel Haffner), in reserve,⁸ and the division rear support units, also south of the Imjin.

*Supporting Arms*⁹

In support of the three infantry regiments were the artillerymen, guns, and howitzers of Colonel Mills' 11th Marines. Two of its three light battalions, 1/11 and 3/11, provided 105mm direct fires to the 5th and 1st Marines, respectively. The general support battalion was 2/11, prepared to reinforce the fires of 1/11. The regimental medium battalion, 4/11, was in general support of the division, as was the 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery. To the southwest of the divi-

⁷ Company B from 1/1 had been assigned to operational control of 2/1 when the latter unit relieved 1/7 on line on 10 March. The increased personnel enabled the battalion to position a company-size detachment at the strategic high ground, COP 2, that overlooked Panmunjom and the critical truce talk site.

⁸ Regimental command changed 27 March when Colonel Glenn C. Funk, former commanding officer of the 1st Shore Party Battalion, was assigned to the 7th Marines, succeeding Colonel Haffner, who became G-2.

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chaps. 9, 10; 1stMarDiv, 11thMar, 1st TkBn ComdDs, Mar 53; 1st MAW, MAGs-12, -33 ComdDs, Mar 53.

sion sector, the 75mm guns of the 1st KMC Artillery Battalion, also attached to the 11th Marines, were in direct support of the 1st KMC/RCT. Newly formed the preceding month, the 1st Provisional Antiaircraft Artillery-Automatic Weapons Platoon had the mission of defending two of the Imjin River Bridges—Freedom and Spoonbill—in the division sector.

In addition to organic and attached units of the 11th, four I Corps artillery components, located within division territory, further reinforced 11th Marines capabilities. The 623d Field Artillery Battalion, with batteries in the 5th and 7th Marines sectors, like 4/11 consisted of 155mm howitzers. Three heavy artillery units were also available for counter-battery missions. These 8-inch howitzers belonged to Battery C of the 17th Field Artillery, Battery B of the 204th Field Artillery, and the 158th Field Artillery Battalion. These Army units were assigned to general support of I Corps, reinforcing Marine fires on call, and were under operational control of the 159th Field Artillery Battalion Group.

Active armored support for the division's ground troops during March was provided by three of the four companies from the 1st Tank Battalion. Company A's M-46s, flame tanks, and retrievers, well forward in the right sector, were in direct support of the 5th Marines; Company D tanks were assigned to the 1st Marines. Company B functioned as the forward reserve unit, ready to move into firing positions on the MLR if the tactical situation called for it. The rear reserve unit, Company C, conducted refresher training and performed equipment checks on the rest of the battalion tanks. The battalion commander, since May 1952, was Lieutenant Colonel John I. Williamson.

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, with a personnel strength of 6,400, was located throughout Korea. Wing headquarters, Marine Air Control Group 2, and Marine Air Group 33, with its F9F day jet fighters and the VMJ-1 photo reconnaissance squadron operated from K-3, Pohang. VMF(N)-513, with all weather jet fighters, flew out of K-8, Kunsan, on the west coast, 105 miles below Seoul. MAG-12 and its squadrons of attack ADs and Corsairs was relatively near the 1st Marine Division sector, at K-6, Pyongtaek, 30 miles southeast of Inchon. Marine Wing Service Squadron 1, with its heavy maintenance capability, remained at Itami, Japan.

Tactical control had been altered radically the previous month

when the Fifth Air Force had relinquished its command of Marine pilots and planes and they returned to operational control of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing for the first time since the early days of the war. Direction of the helicopters in HMR-161 and VMO-6 used in transport and reconnaissance missions had for some time been closer to home; both squadrons were under 1st Marine Division operational control. HMR-161 was based at A-17, in the vicinity of the 1st Marine Division command post. VMO-6, a composite unit consisting of single-engine OE-1 observation planes and a copter section of the HTL-4 and the new larger HO5S-1 craft, was located at A-9, three miles south of division headquarters. The squadron provided regularly scheduled helicopter evacuation of night frontline combat-casualties, artillery spotting flights, and airborne control of air strikes. Both squadrons performed routine liaison and reconnaissance, administrative, and resupply flights.

*Defense Organization on the Outposts*¹⁰

Carson (Hill 27), furthest west of the three Nevada Cities was, at 820 yards, also nearest the Marine main line of resistance. It overlooked enemy terrain to the northwest and dominated an important approach from that same direction—the Seoul road. Organized as a perimeter defense position, Carson security was oriented toward two major Chinese strongpoints. These were the twin-peaked Ungok Hill mass (31-31A), approximately 650 yards west of the Seoul road which lay between Ungok and Carson, and Hill 67 (Arrowhead), an equal distance due northwest. Other critical features in the immediate Carson vicinity included, on the right, the west finger of Reno; the ridgeline south from Reno to a point known as "Ambush Alley," in the vicinity of enemy Hill 47; and the ridgeline approaches by the two listening posts—Fox finger and George finger. (See Map 24.)

Little cover or concealment existed, other than that offered by the trenchline and a cave used as living quarters. Four weapons positions—light machine guns and Browning automatic rifles—covered

¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: 1/5, 3/5 ComdDs, Mar 53; 5thMar SAR "Cities."

A major blocking position, some 100 yards south, and to the rear of Reno itself was covered by troops posted in the trenchline. Left of the forward trench, protective wire was placed across the topographical crest. This left finger had good observation to Ungok and Arrowhead but also served as an approach to Carson. Most likely enemy approach, however, was considered to be the ridgeline from Hill 150, on the north. The Seoul road, rear trenchline, and valley to the right were alternate approaches. Twenty-four hour security at Reno included an automatic rifleman at the Gate, at Post 1, on the forward trench, and Post 2, which was at the extreme right of the rear trench. Ten machine gunners were also detailed as night watch on the guns. During the daytime they were responsible for maintenance of ammunition and weapons which consisted of 18 M-1 rifles, 6 BARs, 5 A-4 LMGs, 2 flamethrowers, 1 carbine, and 7 pistols.

The biggest defense problem at Reno stemmed from restricted fields of fire. Able gun, for instance, covered the rear of the topographical crest and Hills 31 and 67, on the left. But dead space masked its effectiveness practically from the base of Hill 67 to the gun itself. The Baker gun, protecting the reverse slope, had a lateral firing range of from 10 to 30 feet. Charlie gun maintained an unlimited sector of fire, approximately 180 degrees, and Dog gun covered the rear. As there were no prepared machine gun positions, they were fired from the parapet protecting both the fighting holes and firing positions in the trenchline. Two fighting holes were manned by BARs and two were used as machine gun posts.

Customarily 40 to 43 men were on duty at COP Reno. In fact this number had been viewed dubiously as being "far too many to man defensive positions at any one time," by the commanding officer of the 1/5 Weapons Company during a survey earlier in the month, noting that "about 20 could adequately defend the position."¹¹ A six-man force was detailed as a permanent working party for the improvement of fortifications. Sound power phones linked all positions and field phones connected the forward observer with gun positions. Overall, for proper defense, Reno depended heavily upon support fires from Carson and Vegas, on its right flank. Morale was

¹¹ 1/5 ComDD, Mar 53, Inspection of COP Reno Report, by Capt Henry A. Checklou, dtd 12 Mar 53, p. 4.

main enemy avenues of approach. These and two listening posts were each manned by two men after 1800 and throughout the night. Of Carson's customary strength of 38 (1 officer and 37 enlisted), 28 stood watch and worked on fortifications at night. A six-man security team was on duty during the day. All posts connected by land line to battalion headquarters, where a 24-hour phone watch was maintained. Sound power phones and radios also provided communication with the company CP.

Nearly 350 yards of trenchline encircled the outpost. Most was in good condition, five or more feet deep and two feet wide. The main trench on the reverse slope was in spots shallow, only three to five feet, and a new trench was being dug. Fields of fire for small arms protection were considered good, although some of the 28 fighting holes were overly close to culvert and sandbag overheading, which prevented complete fire coverage of forward slopes. Adequate fire support could be given along the southern slope of the west finger extending from COP Reno, which was also mutually supporting with that of the Reno Block. Forward observer teams for the 60mm and 81mm mortars provided observation for supporting arms. The arsenal of weapons at Carson included 4 A-4 light machine guns, 2 flamethrowers, 2 3.5-inch rocket launchers, 9 Browning automatic rifles, 36 M-1 rifles, 2 carbines, 2 pistols, and 4 grenade launchers.

Some 450 yards northeast, COP Reno (Hill 25) was dug in on a ridgeline that fronted enemy Hill 25A (also known as Hill 150), immediately north. Approximately 1,600 yards away from the MLR, Reno was the central of the three outposts and also the one most distant from Marine lines. West to east, critical terrain consisted of five enemy positions—Hills 31, 67, 25A, 190, and 153—and friendly companion outpost Vegas, on the right flank. (See Map 25.)

Two main trenches led into the outpost, a reverse slope fortification. The forward trench, perpendicular to the ridgeline fronting the position, was approximately 20 yards long and 8 feet deep. The second, to the rear and about the same length, traversed the outpost in an east-west direction. Approaching from the entrance, or "Gate" of the MLR, the two trenches joined on the left, forming a 90 degree angle. A cave, located in the arc between the trenches, provided overcrowded living quarters where personnel slept either on the dirt floor or atop sandbags, since there were no bunkers at Reno. Ammunition supplies, as well as the corpsman's first aid facilities, were cached in the cave.

considered "very good to excellent" with Reno personnel being relieved every 8 to 10 days.

Vegas (Hill 21), the highest of the three outposts, was located approximately 1,310 yards in front of the MLR. Observation of the surrounding terrain from the east slope of enemy Hill 190 on the north, clockwise to the ridge south of Reno had been pronounced "excellent" on an inspection trip made earlier the day the outposts were attacked. From north to south this observation included in its 180-degree sweep, enemy hill mass 57 to the right, friendly outpost Berlin, the MLR, key Marine defense highpoints, Hills 229 and 181 in the 1st Marines rear sector, and intervening terrain. (See Map 26.)

The north-south ridge leading to COP Reno masked the view from Vegas on the west. To the north full observation was partially limited by outpost Reno itself and enemy Hills 150, 153, and 190. The latter was particularly strategic for two reasons. First, it shielded a major assembly area. And, although the Chinese had observation of the entire right battalion MLR from Hill 190 on the north, Vegas prevented enemy close-in view of Marine rear areas. It also dominated the approach to a major Marine observation point, Hill 126, to the rear of the front lines in the western part of the 3/5 sector.

Organized as a perimeter defense, Vegas was surrounded by 250 yards of trenchline. The forward, or north trench, averaged four feet in depth but deepened to about eight feet as it progressed to the rear. The most solidly constructed part was the western portion. A center communication trench was in good condition between the rear and topographical crest. From this point to the forward trench its depth decreased to about four feet. The trench leading back to the MLR, about five feet deep and two wide, was in good condition. A total of 13 fighting holes had been constructed.

Outpost troops, numbering approximately 40, consisted of six fire teams, heavy weapons and machine gunners, two 81mm mortar crews and two artillery observers, one corpsman, and a wireman at night. Strength was reduced during the day, with replacements to make up the normal complement arriving on position early each evening.

Major approaches to Vegas included the large draws to the west and north of the outpost, the ridgeline to the COP from Hill 153 to the northwest, and the rear trenchline. Several ancillary trenchlines to the east tended to reinforce this latter approach. A hindrance to the enemy, however, was the slope leading into the draw west of the

outpost. For security purposes, the perimeter was divided into three sectors, each manned by two fire teams augmented by heavy weapons personnel. The outpost detachment stood nighttime posts on a 50 percent basis and remained within the several living bunkers or other shelters during daylight hours because of heavy shelling and sniper fire. Incessant enemy pressure at the exposed outpost made it expedient to rotate infantry Marines at Vegas every three days and observers, at the end of four or five days.

Weapons on position included two flamethrowers, one 3.5-inch bazooka, four machine guns, three pistols, and other small arms. Fields of fire at Vegas, rated fair to good, were generally restricted due to the proximity of overheading. Most of the light machine guns had plunging fields of fire except for the approach along the ridge-line from Hill 153, covered by grazing fire. A fighting hole to the left of Able Gate, which overlooked the trenchline leading to the MLR, was manned during the day. No other sentries or listening posts were in effect. Nine sound power phones were operative. Three were located in the CP bunker (connecting to C/1/5, G/3/5, and the CP net); one, each, at the four main posts, the rear Able Gate, and the cave.

Other than periodic work being done by 10 Korean Service Corps personnel in clearing out the trenches, no construction was in process at Vegas. KSCs, lugging their traditional A-frames and guided by Marines, also ran a nightly "supply train" to Vegas as they did to Carson and Reno. Sufficient personnel manned the outpost for adequate defense, although an inspecting officer opined that the "one 3.5 rocket launcher on position did not appear to be necessary for defense of this type position."¹²

¹² 1/5 ComdD, Mar 53, Inspection of COP Vegas Report, by Capt Henry A. Checklou, on 26 Mar, dtd 31 Mar 53, p. 4.

*The Chinese Assault of 26 March*¹⁸

Until the final days of March, the CCF units opposite the 5th Marines had shown little aggressiveness. Regimental reports had officially cited Chinese actions as having been "extremely limited" other than their expected resistance to patrols and the Marine ITEM raid staged earlier in the month by the 1/5 two-platoon unit on Hill 31A, part of the Ungok complex. The enemy posture had, in fact, been described as one "reluctant to meet our patrols except in their positions."¹⁴

A regimental patrol policy early in March established as SOP a minimum of four reconnaissance and two combat patrols in each MLR battalion sector daily. Nevertheless, 3/5 had reported no contact with the enemy for the three-day period prior to the attack which was launched at 1900 on 26 March. Since the middle of the month, 1/5 had conducted nearly a dozen night combat patrols and ambushes in one- and two-squad strength to test the enemy in the Carson-Reno-Vegas area. Terminology of the operation orders read that the Marines were to make contact, capture prisoners, and deny the ground to the enemy, an injunction that—in view of events shortly to transpire—was to turn out more prophetic than anticipated.

That last Thursday in March 1953 was clear, almost unseasonably warm. Just after darkness had settled down over the Korean ridges, gullies, MLR, outposts, and rice paddies, the enemy suddenly made his presence known. Up until that time it had been an average day of activity, and there had been no especially ominous overtones to the start of the night.

Suddenly, at 1900, small arms and machine gun fire cracked from enemy strongholds on Hills 44, 40, 35, and 33, and tore into the left and center part of the 1/5 sector. Almost immediately, a heavy mortar and artillery preparation of 15 minutes duration exploded all along the 5th Marines MLR. A Chinese rifle platoon and half a dozen machine guns on Hill 140, about 500 yards west of Kumgok, directed additional fire on the sector.

¹⁸ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnl, 26-27 Mar 53; 1stMarDiv PIR 883, dtd 27 Mar 53; 1st MAW PIRs 86-53, dtd 27 Mar 53, 87-53, dtd 28 Mar 53; 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 1/1, 2/1, 3/1, 1/5, 2/5, 3/5, 2/7, 1/11, 2/11, 3/11, 4/11, 1st TkBn ComdDs, Mar 53; 1stMar SAR, 18-28 Mar 53; 5thMar SAR "Cities"; Fugate, "Vegas."

¹⁴ 1/5 ComdD, Mar 53, dtd 4 Apr 53, p. 2.

At the same time 5th Marines outposts Carson and Reno, each manned by a reinforced rifle platoon from C/1/5, came under attack from Chinese mortars and 76mm artillery. Approximately 1,200 mortar rounds struck COP Carson by 1920. As men of D/2/5, some of whom had been detailed to Carson earlier that night for an ambush, reported, "one round per second from Chinese 60mm and 82mm landed in or around [our] position during the first 20 minutes of the engagement. Thereafter, one round was received every 40 seconds until about 2200."¹⁵ Interdiction fires also raked Marine rear areas and supply routes. Counterbattery fire struck Marine direct support artillery positions in the 5th's regimental sector while heavy shelling of the MLR and its battalion CPs shattered wire communication between those installations and their advance outposts.

Within ten minutes, Vegas, furthest east of the four OPs in 1/5 territory, became the object of serious enemy attention. Outposts Berlin and East Berlin, meanwhile, still further east in the 3/5 sector proper were also engaged by fire from hostile small arms and mortars from Chinese occupying Hills 15 (Detroit), 13 (Frisco), and 98 to the northeast. As the coordinated fire attack raged throughout the 5th Marines regimental front, preparatory fire and diversionary probes hit the 1st Marines sector. Outposts Hedy, Bunker, Esther, and Dagmar, in the center regimental area, were struck by small arms, mortars, and artillery shells a few minutes before 1900. Platoon and squad strength limited attacks were conducted against Dagmar, Hedy, and Esther, and enemy units were sighted moving in front of the KMC, further west along the MLR.

At precisely 1910, a force of 3,500 Chinese from the 358th Regiment, 120th Division, 46th CCF Army began to swarm down from Ungok, Arrowhead, Hill 25A, and Hill 190 and launched a massive assault in regimental strength against the 5th Marines sector. (Map 27.) Elements of six companies from three battalions converged on the area from three directions. Two enemy platoons of the 1st Company, 1st Battalion from Ungok struck Carson while one infantry company each, initially, began a direct assault on Reno and Vegas. Units from the 3d Company, 1st Battalion, from Arrowhead and Hill 29, crossed the Seoul road to hit Reno in a direct frontal

¹⁵ 1/5 ComdD, Mar 53, p. 10.

assault. Elements of the 7th Company, 3d Battalion moved down from Hill 190, a mile north, to encircle the left flank of Reno and thus strike from the rear of the Marine position. Other Chinese soldiers of the 8th Company, 3d Battalion, supported by the 9th Company, moved some 500 yards south of their ridgeline positions on Hill 25A and 155 immediately north of Vegas to attack the outpost head-on.

Another enemy unit, the 2d Company, 1st Battalion, swept south from Hill 57A and made diversionary probes of the two most remote outposts of the entire 1st Marine Division line, Berlin and East Berlin in the 3d Battalion sector. These two smaller positions, each manned by a reinforced squad-size detachment from G/3/5, were to be successful in driving off the enemy's less determined efforts there with a rain of small arms, mortar, and artillery fires.

As the enemy regiment advanced toward its objectives in a coordinated three-pronged attack, Marine artillery fired protective boxes and VT on the outposts and routes of approach from the west, north, and east. Defending infantry also called down organic 60mm and 81mm mortar barrages. Actually, prior to the Chinese onslaught at 1900, 1/11, the direct support battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Olin W. Jones, Jr.) for the 5th Marines, began a registration and had laid its howitzer fires on the active area. The artillery regiment had also set up conference calls linking its four organic battalions and supporting Army units. The fire plan for the 11th Marines provided for its three light battalions (1/11, 2/11, and 3/11) to cover enemy approaches and assembly areas, deliver protective boxing and VT fires requested by the outposts, and furnish counter mortar missions called in by forward observers. Medium battalions (4/11 and the 623d Field Artillery) were to reinforce defensive fires and destroy hostile mortars and artillery emplacements. Heavy 8-inch howitzer support (Battery C, 17th FA Battalion and Battery A, of the 204th) would silence enemy counterbattery weapons.

As it happened on the night of the 26th, Marine tanks, in addition to artillery, were also registered before the time of the actual attack. Eleven of Captain Hunter's Company A tanks had earlier rumbled into firing position on the MLR to provide mechanized support for an infantry raid scheduled at dawn the next morning.

Despite this immediate response of Marine fire support, the Chinese invaders outnumbered the platoons holding the outposts by a 20 to

1 ratio. The sheer weight of numbers was the decisive factor. By 1935 the enemy had penetrated the lower trenches of both Carson and Reno. An hour after the onset of the attack, at 2000, the Marines were throwing back Chinese forces with bayonets, knives, rifles, and bare fists in the close, heavy fighting at Carson. There, where 54 men had been on duty at the time of initial attack, the outpost was successfully holding off the Communists. Four reinforcing squads quickly dispatched by battalion were designed to further strengthen the position. At 2000, just when D/1/5 and C/1/5 relief squads were leaving for the outpost, the Chinese unexpectedly began to release their grip on Carson as they concentrated on the two more isolated COPs, Reno and Vegas, that were further from the MLR.

No other attempt was made by the enemy to occupy Carson that night or the next day. Barrage fires gradually ceased as the enemy began to withdraw about 2135. Sporadic bursts of his 60mm and 82mm mortars and 76mm guns, however, continued to rock the position until midnight.

Developments at Reno and Vegas, by 2000, were vastly more ominous. At Reno, two companies of CCF soldiers thrust into the position from a frontal and flank attack. Within a half hour they made their way into the trench defenses. Although VT fires placed on the outposts and WP flare shells outlined the enemy for the gunners, Chinese in overpowering numbers continued to batter the Marine post. Due to the lack of fighting trenches, bunkers, and to limited fields of fire, Reno defenders fell back on a cave defense within a half hour of the assault.¹⁶

A message received at 2030, requesting more VT rounds and reinforcements, indicated that the enemy had sealed all entrances to the cave and that the men were suffering from lack of air. Of the 40 Company C Marines on the outpost at the time of attack an hour and a half earlier, only 7 were then reported still able to fight. More illumination to enable friendly machine guns and rockets to chop up the enemy was furnished by artillery and a flare plane that arrived on station at 2205. Two Marine tanks, in position behind Reno, were alerted and put their 90mm fires to good use on the enemy and his weapons emplacements.

¹⁶ At both Reno and Vegas the Marines had moved into the caves for protection from VT fire. This was the plan in event of an overwhelming enemy attack. In contrast, the detachment at Carson fought from covered fighting holes and employed the cave there only to get their wounded out of direct fire. 5thMar SAR "Cities," pp. 2-3.

Meanwhile, at Vegas, the situation was also deteriorating. More than a hundred Chinese had moved up under the perimeter of exploding shells and Marine defensive fires into the lower trenches by 1950, less than an hour after the enemy's first volley. Ten minutes later, the Marines were forced to give way to the overwhelming number of enemy soldiers which began to swarm over the outpost.

In addition to the sudden force and onslaught of the enemy, communication difficulties also plagued Marine detachments on the outposts, particularly at Vegas. Enemy mortar and artillery, aimed at the mainline CPs, had wrecked the ground lines. As early as 1940, communications between the 1st Battalion CP and Vegas went dead and continued to be broken despite repeated attempts to reestablish contact. Carson and Reno also had wire troubles about this time, but radio contact was shortly established. For the most part, operational reports and orders during the night and early morning hours were sent over company and battalion tactical nets. The intensity of the Chinese fire was not restricted just to forward positions; the 1/5 CP, a mile south of the MLR, at one point received up to 100 rounds per minute.

Reinforcements Dispatched¹⁷

While the Marines on the outposts were trying to drive off the enemy, reinforcements back at the MLR and in the reserve ranks quickly saddled up. A F/2/5 advance platoon dispatched to Reno at 2015 by way of the Reno Block was ambushed near Hill 47 an hour later by two enemy squads which had moved south to cut off Marine reinforcements. After a fire exchange, the platoon made its way to the blocking position. Another relief unit, from Company C, 1st Battalion, that jumped off for Reno 15 minutes later had poorer luck. The men had scarcely gone a half mile before being shelled. After briefly taking cover the Marines moved out again, only to draw fire from the enemy at Hill 47. Advancing for a third time, the Company C two-squad unit was again halted by fire from two hostile

¹⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnl, 26-27 Mar 53; 1stMarDiv PIR 883, dtd 27 Mar 53; 1st MAW PIR 86-53, dtd 27 Mar 53; 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar, 1/5, 2/5, 3/5, 2/7, 1/11 ComdDs, Mar 53; 1stMar SAR; 5thMar SAR "Cities"; VMO-6, HMR-161 ComDs, Mar 53; MacDonald, *POW*; USMC Biog.

platoons. By this time 10 Marines had been wounded and evacuated.

A D/2/5 reinforcement platoon ordered to Vegas, at 2129, encountered strong opposition in the Block vicinity; but it threw back the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting and prevented him from gaining fire supremacy at the position. Leading units of F/2/5, meanwhile, had been ordered to operational control of 1/5 to augment the earlier Company C platoon at the Block and then move north with them to Reno. After being issued ammunition and hand grenades at the Company C supply point, the "F" 1st Platoon left the MLR at 2227, with the 2d Platoon filing out in column 400 yards behind them. Under a constant rain of 76mm artillery and 82mm and 122mm mortar shells—and with casualties for one platoon reaching as high as 70 percent within minutes—the F/2/5 men fought their way into the trenches at the Block. Here they joined the depleted ranks of Company C which had established a base of fire. Despite the incessant barrage of Chinese incoming that continued to inflict heavy casualties, the Marines maintained their precarious grip on the Block and cleared out large numbers of Chinese attempting to infiltrate the trenches and approaches from the north and south to the Marine position.

While the Reno and Vegas relief units were pinned down at the Block, the situation at the outposts remained critical. Throughout the night new waves of Communist soldiers poured out from their positions behind Chogum-ni, Hills 31 and 31D. When a company of enemy troops were observed at 2100 massing near Chogum-ni for a new assault, it was quickly disposed of by Marine artillery and Company A tankers. At Reno where the immediate situation was the most grim, a message at 2145 reported the enemy still in the trenches, trying to dig down into the cave while the Marines were attempting to work their way out by hand. The final report from Reno received late that night, about 2300, was weak and could not be understood.

At Vegas, meanwhile, communications failure continued to complicate defensive measures at the outpost. Because of this, on the order of regimental commander, Colonel Walt, operational control had been transferred, at 2119, from 1/5 to 3/5. Three minutes before midnight all contact with Vegas was lost. As with Reno, reinforcements sent out with the mission of buttressing the Vegas detachment had been delayed. When it became evident that the Company D platoon had been pinned down at the Block, a platoon from E/2/5 jumped off at 2323 for the Vegas position.

Shored up to reinforced company strength, the composite unit at the Block had prepared to move on for the ultimate relief of C/1/5 forces at Reno. Chinese firepower and troops continued to lash the position, however. There seemed to be no limit to the number of reserve troops the enemy could throw into the attack. At 2157, two Chinese platoons had hit the Block. Twenty minutes later, another two platoons struck. By 2300, the Marines had repulsed three attacks, numbering more than 200 troops, amid a continuing withering avalanche of bullets and shells. Shortly before midnight, a full enemy company had deployed south from Reno to the Block, but had been largely cut down by friendly 90mm tank fire and VT rounds from 1/11. Reinforced and reorganized, the Marines again prepared for a counterpunch on Reno.

By midnight on the 26th, after five blistering hours of battle—to develop into five days of intense conflict and continuing counterattacks—the early efforts of the enemy were partly successful. Two of the Nevada Hill outposts had fallen, and Marine attempts to strengthen them were initially being thwarted by Chinese troops that had overflowed the Block and southward toward the MLR. COP Carson was holding. But the enemy was in control of Reno and Vegas and was using the Reno position to mass troops and firepower to further brace his continuing assault on Vegas.

Initially, the 5th Marines had expected to launch an immediate counterattack to regain Reno. In the early hours of the 27th, however, it became apparent this plan would have to be revised. Reinforcing elements from the 5th Marines, composed largely of F/2/5, had been unable to mount out effectively from the Block for Reno. At 0144, the commanding officer of Company F, Captain Ralph L. Walz, reported he had one platoon left. Between then and 0220 his diminishing unit had rallied for attack three times. It had successively engaged the enemy in fire fights, one of 30 minutes' duration, evacuated its wounded, regrouped, and then had come under heavy incoming again. Countermortar fire had been requested and delivered on active enemy positions at Arrowhead, Hills 29, 45, and 21B, some 500 yards northwest of Vegas.

But as the Marines girded their defending platoon at the Block to company-plus size, the Chinese had done likewise, throwing in continuous rounds of new mortar attacks and additional troops. When, at 0246, another hostile company was seen spreading south from

Reno toward the Block, the 1st Battalion directed artillery fires on the enemy and ordered its troops to disengage and return to the MLR. By 0300, early efforts to retake Reno were suspended. Relief forces from Companies F and C were on their way back to the battalion area. Ground action had ceased.

During these early attempts to rescue Reno and its defenders on the night of 26–27 March, Marine elements had struggled for more than four hours trying to get to Reno, but the enemy had completely surrounded it. At Reno itself, the Marine in command of the outpost when the Chinese struck, Second Lieutenant Rufus A. Seymour, machine gun platoon commander of C/1/5, had been taken prisoner along with several of his men. Of the Marines originally on duty there, all but five had been killed. Casualties of the Reno reinforcing units were later estimated by the regimental commander as being “as high as 35 percent, with many dead.”¹⁸

A 21-year-old Navy hospital corpsman from Alexandria, Virginia,¹⁹ attached to a Company C relief platoon from 1/5, helped save many Marine lives that night in the Reno Block area. He was Hospitalman Francis C. Hammond, who lost his own life but was awarded posthumously the nation’s highest honor for bravery under fire. For more than four exhausting hours the young hospitalman helped others to safety, even though he had been struck early in the fighting and was hobbling around with a leg injury. When his unit was ordered to withdraw from its attack against a strongly fortified CCF position, Hammond skillfully directed the evacuation of wounded Marines and remained behind to assist other corpsmen. Shell fragments from a mortar blast struck him, this time, fatally.

The Vegas reinforcing units, in those dark early hours of the 27th, had come closer to their objective. Shortly after midnight two platoons, composed of elements from D/2/5 and C/1/5, had reached a point 400 yards from the outpost, in the vicinity of the entrance to the communication trench. When the enemy threw in powerful new assault forces at Vegas, F/2/7, a company from the regimental reserve, came under operational control of 3/5 and moved out from the MLR to reinforce the position. By 0300 the first relief platoon,

¹⁸ Statement by LtGen Lewis W. Walt, as cited in Eloise Engle, *Medic* (New York, N.Y.: John Day, May 1967), p. 211.

¹⁹ In 1956, a newly-completed school in Alexandria, Virginia was named the Francis C. Hammond High School and dedicated in his memory.

despite heavy and continuing Chinese barrages, got to within 200 yards of the outpost. At this time, however, it was found that the enemy was in control of Vegas as well as Reno. Marines from D/2/5, C/1/5, E/2/5, and F/2/7 relief forces, on order, began to pull back to the MLR at 0417. Initial attempts to regain control of the two outposts were temporarily halted, and instead it was decided to launch a coordinated daylight attack.

At about the same time, 0430, the boundary between 1/5 and 3/5 was moved 250 yards westward to give 3/5 total responsibility for Vegas, although operational control had been transferred seven hours earlier the previous night.

Enemy casualties for the eight hours of action were heavy. An estimated 600 Chinese had been wounded and killed. Marine losses were also heavy. In the action First Lieutenant Kenneth E. Taft, Jr., Officer-in-Charge at Vegas, was killed and, as it was later learned, some of his H/3/5 defenders had been captured by the Chinese. By midnight the two line battalions, 3/5 and 1/5, had reported a total of nearly 150 casualties,²⁰ and this figure did not include those wounded or killed from the relief platoons and companies being shuttled into action from the 2/5 reserve battalion. One platoon from E/2/5 had arrived at the Company C supply point about 0210 and, together with a provisional unit from Headquarters and Service Company, 1/5, began to evacuate casualties in front of the MLR. By 0325, a total of 56 wounded had passed through the C/1/5 aid station and a cryptic entry in the G-3 journal noted that "more who are able are going back to assist in evacuation of casualties."

Similar recovery efforts were being made at the same time in the 3d Battalion. Two alternate routes for evacuation were in effect. From a checkpoint located just south of the MLR in the H/3/5 sector, casualties were taken to the Company H supply point and thence to the battalion aid station, or else to the KSC camp from which they were evacuated to the 1st Battalion aid station. VMO-6 and HMR-161 helicopters flew out the critically-injured to USS *Haven* and *Consolation* hospital ships at Inchon Harbor and transported blood from supply points to Medical Companies A, E, and C

²⁰ 1/5 and 3/5 ComdDs, Mar 53. At this time 1/5 had suffered 5 killed, 30 wounded, 21 wounded not evacuated, 39 missing (personnel at Reno), or 95. Reports from 3/5 showed 1 killed, 8 wounded/evacuated, and 40 missing (at Vegas), or 49.

forward stations. Excepting the original personnel killed or missing at Reno and Vegas, 1st Battalion forces from Companies C and F dispatched to Reno had returned to the MLR by 0445. Vegas units, ordered to disengage later than the Reno reinforcements, were back by 0530.

Diversionary probes by the Chinese during the night of the 26th at the 3/5 right flank outposts Berlin and East Berlin, as well as in the 1st Marines sector, had been beaten back by the Marines. Following the preassault fire at 1900, a CCF company had sent two platoons against Berlin and one against satellite East Berlin, both manned by Company G. These reinforced squad outposts, both only about 325 yards forward of the MLR, had stymied the enemy's attempts. Boxing fires and VT on approach routes had forced the Chinese to retreat at 2115. Ten minutes later Company G reported that communication, which had temporarily gone out, had been restored. One squad dispatched by the 3d Battalion to Berlin and a second, to East Berlin an hour later, further buttressed the companion positions.

Action in the 1st Marines center regimental sector had also been relatively brief. Immediately after the 1900 mortar and artillery preparation, the Chinese in company strength attempted to penetrate outposts Hedy, Bunker, Esther, and Dagmar. Shelling had been heaviest at Dagmar and, shortly after 1900, two squads of Chinese began to assault the outpost with automatic weapons and satchel charges. Machine guns positioned on enemy Hills 44, 114, and 116 and small arms fire from Hill 108 supported the attack. The enemy was hurled back at all places except Dagmar where approximately 25 Chinese breached the wire entanglement.

Two hours of intense, close fighting in the trenches followed as the 27 defending Marines, directed by outpost commander Second Lieutenant Benjamin H. Murray of I/3/1, strongly resisted the invaders. More than 300 rounds of mortar and artillery fire supported the action. A counterattack from the MLR led by the I/3/1 executive officer, Second Lieutenant John J. Peeler, restored the position, and at 2120 the CCF finally withdrew. Less determined efforts had been made by the enemy at Esther and Bunker. By 2200 the Chinese had departed from the scene there, too. Altogether, the 1st Marines sector skirmishes had cost the CCF 10 killed, 20 estimated killed, and 17 estimated wounded to Marine casualties of 4 killed and 16 wounded.

*Massed Counterattack the Next Day*²¹

While the 5th Marines reorganized during the morning hours of the 27th for a new attack to recapture the lost outposts, General Pollock ordered mortars, tanks, and artillery, including rockets, to neutralize the Reno and Vegas areas and enemy approaches.

From the time of the 1900 attack the preceding evening until the temporary break in fighting eight hours later, at 0300, early estimates indicated 5,000 rounds of enemy mixed fire had been received in the "Wild" sector (code name for the 5th Marines, and appropriate it was for this late-March period). And this did not include the vast number of shells that had fallen on the three Nevada COPs. During the same period 1/11, in direct support of the 5th, reported it had delivered some 4,209 rounds on the enemy. Throughout the early hours, two battalions from the 11th Marines continued to pound away at Reno and Vegas with neutralizing fires to soften enemy positions, deter his resupply efforts, and silence those mortars and batteries that were troubling the Marines.

By 0330 observation planes from VMO-6 had made 28 flights behind enemy lines which enabled artillery spotters to direct nearly 60 fire missions on CCF active artillery, mortars, and self-propelled guns. From nightfall on the 26th through 0600 the following morning a total of 10,222 rounds of all calibers had been fired by Marine cannoners supporting the 1st Division in its ground battles from Berlin to Hedy.

Revised intelligence reports from the 5th Marines S-2, Major Murray O. Roe, meanwhile, indicated that between 1900 on the 26th and 0400 the next day the Chinese had sent 14,000 rounds of mixed mortar and artillery crashing into Marine positions. It was also determined that a reinforced regiment had initially hit the Carson, Reno, and Vegas posts.

Early on the 27th, at 0345 as the 5th Marines prepared for the

²¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, 27 Mar 53; 1stMarDiv PIR Nos. 882-4, dtd 26-28 Mar 53; 1st MAW PIR 86-53, dtd 27 Mar 53, 87-53, dtd 28 Mar 53, 88-53, dtd 29 Mar 53; 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 1/5, 2/5, 3/5, 2/7, 1/11, 2/11, 3/11, 4/11, 1st TkBn ComdDs, Mar 53; 5thMar SAR "Cities"; 11thMar "Artillery in the Defense of Outpost Vegas, 26-30 Mar 53," hereafter 11thMar SAR "Arty Defense"; MAGs-12, -33, VMAs-212, -323; VMFs-115, -311, VMF(N)-513 ComdDs, Mar 53; Fugate, "Vegas"; USMC Biog.

counterattack, the division reserve, 2/7 (Lieutenant Colonel Alexander D. Cereghino), was placed under operational control of the 5th Marines. (Previously put on alert the battalion had moved into an assembly area behind 1/5 shortly after midnight, and its F/2/7 had taken part in the predawn relief attempt.) During the early morning hours a section of Skyknights, from Lieutenant Colonel Conley's night fighter squadron, VMF (N)-513, had made radar controlled bombing runs to strike CCF artillery positions in the Hill 190 area and enemy troops at Hill 98. Precisely at 0650, friendly Panthers from VMF-115 began arriving on station to help the neutralizing artillery fire on Reno and Vegas. Originally, a dawn ground attack had been envisioned for Reno, but that was delayed to wait for air support.

A tentative H-Hour was set for 0900 with a dual jump-off for both Reno and Vegas. At 0930 the attacks still had not begun due to communication difficulties. While division Marines were waiting to get off the ground, 1st MAW pilots were enjoying a busy morning. By 0930, six four-plane air strikes had been completed by VMF-115 (Lieutenant Colonel Stoddard G. Cortelyou) and -311 (Lieutenant Colonel Francis K. Coss) plus sorties by Air Force Thunderjets. Tankers from Company A had also gotten in a few licks when two groups of Chinese were seen carrying logs for bunker support into Reno; one group was wiped out, the other got by.

Shortly after 1100, friendly artillery batteries began delivering smoke on Hills 57A and 190, two enemy high points of observation. The fire plan was modified to eliminate an early 10-minute preparation on objective areas. (Basically, the artillery plan for counterattack was that employed in the 19 March Operation ITEM raid on Ungok, because of the proximity of Ungok to the Vegas hills. This plan consisted of massed fires on the objective, with countermortar and counterbattery fires on known artillery positions. To this prearranged plan were added those new mortar and counterbattery targets located by air observers during the night of 26-27 March.) This time, the preparatory fires were to be on call, as was the 90mm fire support from the tankers. A further change was made when it was decided to limit the assault to Vegas and not retake Reno but rather neutralize it by fire.

While artillery, air, mortars, and tanks pounded the objective, assault elements of D/2/5 from the regimental reserve, under Captain

John B. Melvin, prepared for jump-off. At 1120 the company crossed the line of departure in the 3/5 sector of the MLR and immediately came under heavy fires from enemy infantry and artillery units. Within a half hour after leaving the battalion front for Vegas, Dog Company had been pinned down by Chinese 76mm artillery, had picked itself up, and been stopped again by a plastering of 60mm and 82mm shells falling everywhere in its advance. By 1210 only nine men were left in Captain Melvin's 1st Platoon to carry on the fight. The Marine unit continued to claw its way through the rain-swollen rice paddies and up the muddy slopes leading from the MLR to within 200 yards of the outpost. In 10 minutes, heavy incoming began to take its inevitable toll and enemy reinforcements were flowing towards Vegas from the CCF assembly point on Hill 153.

Between noon and 1300, four enemy groups of varying size had pushed south from Hill 153 to Vegas. At this time still another group, of company size, moved in with its automatic weapons and mortars. Within the next 15 minutes, a reinforced CCF platoon made its way from the Reno trench to Vegas while still another large unit attempted to reinforce from Hill 21B. As enemy incoming swept the slopes and approaches to Vegas, Marine artillery and tank guns fired counterbattery missions to silence the Chinese weapons. In the skies, VMA-121 ADs and the sleek jet fighters from MAG-33 squadrons VMF-115 and -311 continued to pinpoint their target coordinates for destruction of enemy mortars, trenches, personnel bunkers, and troops.

Back at the battalion CP two more companies were being readied to continue the Vegas assault. The Provisional Company of 2/5, commanded by Captain Floyd G. Hudson, moved out at 1215. Close on its heels, E/2/5 left the Company H checkpoint in the 3/5 sector for the zone of action. At 1305 the counterattack for Vegas was raging in earnest, with Company D riflemen on the lower slopes, chewing into the enemy with their grenades, BARs, M-1s, and carbines. Two hours after the original jump off time, four Marines crawled out of the trenches at Vegas and by 1322 were going over the top, despite incoming that "literally rained on the troops." Assault commander Melvin recalled:

It was so intense at times that you couldn't move forward or backward. The Chinese 60mm mortars began to bother us about as much as fire-crackers. It was the 120mm mortars and 122mm artillery that hurt the most.

The noise was deafening. They would start walking the mortars toward us from every direction possible. You could only hope that the next round wouldn't be on target.²²

Meanwhile, Company E, 5th Marines, under Captain Herbert M. Lorence, had moved up from the rear and, at 1440, was ordered to pass through Company D ranks, evacuate casualties, continue the attack, and secure the crest of Vegas. Although Captain Lorence's men succeeded in moving into Company D positions, the deluge of Chinese mortar and artillery was so heavy that Company E was unable to advance beyond this point. At 1530, a new Marine company, F/2/7 (Captain Ralph F. Estey), was dispatched from the MLR to buttress the assault. By this time elements of D/2/5 had reached the right finger of Vegas but were again pinned down by intensive enemy artillery and mortars.

Within the first hour after leaving the battalion line, the Company F Marines nearly reached the advanced positions of 2/5, and Company D, which had been in the vanguard since 1100, returned to the regimental CP. During the next hour, however, heavy shelling slowed the Marine advance. At 1730, as Company F prepared to make its first major assault, a deluge of 60mm and 82mm mortar shells, 76mm and 122mm bursts, and machine gun bullets rained on the troops. As the men crawled forward slowly, planes from VMA-323 which had arrived on scene two hours earlier, continued to smoke the enemy's posts on Hills 190 and 139. Captain Hunter's tanks also moved into their MLR positions to zero in their 90mm rifles on the CCF stronghold at the Vegas northern crest.

By 1800, Company F was continuing the Marine counterattack to regain Vegas and was approximately 400 yards from the outpost summit. Combining with Company E Marines, for a total strength of three platoons in position, Captain Estey was able to retake part of the objective. After an intense 90-minute fire fight and hand-to-hand fighting in the lower trenches, E/2/7 advanced to the right of the outpost where at 1930 it began to consolidate. In the next half hour, two platoons of Company F moved out from the right finger of Vegas to within 50 yards of the peak, before being forced back by Chinese machine gun fire and mortars lobbed from the Able (left) gate on Vegas. The enemy company occupying the outpost resisted the attacking Marines with mortars, grenades, and small arms

²² Fugate, "Vegas," p. 20.

fire. In addition, the CCF employed firing positions at Reno for their machine guns, heavy mortars, and artillery supporting the Vegas defense and periodically reinforced their troops from the newly captured Reno outpost.

It was a busy night for Marines and corpsmen alike. One, whose split-second improvisations in the blazing zone of action were in the best Hippocratic tradition, was Hospital Corpsman Third Class William R. Charette. Attached to F/2/7, he was assisting a Marine when an enemy grenade landed but a few feet away. Charette immediately threw himself on the injured man, taking the full shock of the missile with his own body. Since the force of the blast had ripped away his helmet and medical aid kit, he tore off his clothing to make bandages. Another time, while attending a seriously wounded Marine whose armored vest had been blown off, the hospitalman removed his own to place around the injured man. Without armored vest or helmet, Charette continued to accompany his platoon in the assault. As a Marine observer, Staff Sergeant Robert S. Steigerwald, commented, "HM3 Charette was everywhere seemingly at the same time, performing inexhaustibly."²³

Throughout the night the enemy counterattacked but was unsuccessful in driving the Marines off the outpost. Between 1830 and midnight, F/2/7 repulsed three enemy onslaughts and engaged in sporadic fire fights. Although pushed back from the summit, Company F Marines set up a perimeter defense at the base of Vegas where the troops dug in for the rest of the night. Their opposite numbers, from 1st MAW, were also on the scene. As follow-up to the day's unremitting air bombardment of enemy installations, night fighters of VMF(N)-513 and MAG-12 Corsairs from VMAs-212 and -323 made nine MPQ strikes between 1830 and 0115 unleashing 24½ tons of explosives on CCF hill defenses and supply strongpoints.

Gradually, heavy incoming on Vegas began to lift, and from midnight through the early hours of the following morning most of the enemy's artillery and mortar fires switched from Vegas to the Marine companies on the MLR. Intermittent small arms fire still cracked and punctuated the night from enemy positions on Hills 57A, Detroit, and Frisco, to the northeast of Vegas.

²³ Statement cited in personnel record of HMC(SS) William R. Charette, USN. He was the only corpsman during the Korean War who was awarded the Medal of Honor and lived to receive it.

*Push to the Summit*²⁴

Although the composite two-platoon unit of Marines from F/2/7 and E/2/5 had partially won Vegas back in 10 hours of savage fighting on 27 March, after earlier groundwork by D/2/5, it was a precarious hold. Marines had attained the lower slopes but the Chinese still clung to the northern crest. As it turned out, three separate company-sized assaults were going to be needed to dislodge the enemy.

The initial Marine action on the 28th began at 0335 when 105mm and 155mm howitzers of the 1st, 2d, and 4th Battalions, 11th Marines, belched forth their streams of fire at the pocket of enemy troops on the northern slopes preparatory to the forthcoming Marine infantry assault. This 2,326-round pounding was aimed at Chinese assembly areas and weapon emplacements, with much of the preparation zeroed in on active mortars.

Within a half hour the weary men of F/2/7, who had spent a wakeful night in the lower Vegas trenches, moved to within hand grenade range of the objective in their first attempt to gain the summit. An intense shower of small arms and mortar fire, however, forced them to pull back to the south slopes. While Captain Estey's troops reorganized for the next assault, air strikes joined the big guns, mortars, and tanks in battering the enemy's position on the outpost and supply routes thereto. Shortly after sunup, a lone AU from VMA-213, followed a half hour later by a VMA-323 Corsair, arrived on station. They laid a smoke screen three miles across the front between Arrowhead and the far eastern Marine-U.S. Army boundary to assist four early-morning air strikes. Soon afterwards, eight ADs from Lieutenant Colonel John E. Hughes' VMA-121 were in the skies to support the Vegas attack in the opening round of aerial activity that would see day-long bombing and strafing runs by five 1st MAW squadrons.

A new Marine assault at 0600 was repulsed and Company F pulled back to a defilade position 375 yards south of Vegas and regrouped.

²⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnl, 28 Mar 53; 1stMarDiv PIR 884, annex 340-MISP-53-12, POW Rpt and 1stMarDiv PIR 885, annex 340-MISP-53-13, POW Rpt; 1st MAW PIRs 88-53, dtd 29 Mar 53 and 89-53, dtd 30 Mar 53; 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 1/5, 2/5, 3/5, 2/7, 1/11, 1st TkBn ComdDs, Mar 53; 5thMar SAR "Cities"; 11thMar SAR "Arty Defense"; MAGs-12, -33, VMAs-212, -323, VMFs-115, -311 ComdDs, Mar 53; Fugate, "Vegas"; USMC Biog.

Again friendly planes from VMA-121 and -323, tanks, artillery, and mortars plastered the enemy in a new series of preparatory fires, beginning at 0920; and again Captain Estey's F/2/7 men jumped off in attack. By 1015 the Marines had made their way across the height to within 15 yards of the trench line on the left finger of Vegas. There they came under continuous small arms and grenade bursts from the crest and battled the Chinese in an intense 22-minute fire fight.

It was during this onslaught by Company F for the crest of Vegas that Sergeant Daniel P. Matthews so defiantly routed the enemy to save the life of a wounded comrade that his action gave renewed spirit to those witnessing it. A squad leader of F/2/7, Matthews was in the thick of a counterpunch against solidly dug-in hill defenses that had repelled six previous assaults by Marine forces. The 21-year-old California Marine was coolly leading his men in the attack when the squad suddenly was pinned down by a hostile machine gun located on the Vegas crest. When he saw that its grazing fire prevented a corpsman from removing to safety a wounded Marine who had fallen in full range of the weapon, Matthews acted instinctively.

Quickly working his way around to the base of the enemy machine gun position, he leaped onto the rock fortification that surrounded it. Taking the enemy by surprise, he charged the emplacement with his own rifle. Severely wounded within moments, the Marine continued his assault, killed two of the enemy, dispatched a third, and silenced the weapon. By this action, Sergeant Matthews enabled his comrades on the ground to evacuate the injured Marine, although Matthews died before aid could reach him.²⁵

Back at battalion, E/2/5, with D/2/7 in column behind it, had moved out to relieve Captain Estey's redoubtable F/2/7 forces. By noon, Captain Lorence's Company E had completed passage of lines through Company F. The latter unit, now numbering 43 effectives after its six assaults on 27-28 March to regain the Vegas high ground, returned to base camp.

Heavy air attacks, meanwhile, were assisting the artillery in blasting out Communist defenses of the Vegas area. Between 0950 and

²⁵ The Marine NCO was to be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, presented a year after the action, on 29 March 1954.

1300, seven four-plane strikes by pilots of Colonel Bowman's MAG-12 had swept the outpost area and hill lairs of the enemy at 57A, the east slope of Reno, Tumae-ri (40D), 190, and resupply points. Within one 23-minute period alone, 28 tons of bombs were laid squarely on the Vegas position. Supported by air, mortars, and artillery, Company E was 400 yards from the objective, and, by 1245, forward elements had moved up to within 150 yards of the crest. As Marine supporting fires lifted from Vegas to enemy assembly areas on Hills 150, 153, and 190, E/2/5 launched its final assault at 1301. Although small arms, bursts of mortar and enemy artillery fire traced their every move, the Marines' hard-hitting attack brought them to the top of Vegas where they literally dug the Chinese out of their defenses.

At 1307, the Marines had secured their position and recaptured the Vegas outpost. At approximately the same time the Marine reinforcing unit, D/2/7, was ordered to return to MLR, since the objective had been gained. The Marine in charge of the E/2/5 platoon that retook Vegas was Staff Sergeant John J. Williams, who had taken over the 1st Platoon after its leader, Second Lieutenant Edgar R. Franz, had been wounded and evacuated. Almost immediately after securing Vegas at 1320, the Chinese launched a counterattack and Company E came under a renewed barrage of incessant artillery and mortar shells, exploding at the rate of one round per second in the Marines' newly gained trenches.

Marine firepower from the tankers' 90mm rifles and the protective fire curtain placed around the outpost by the artillery batteries, however, deterred this heavy enemy effort. For the next hour Captain Lorence's men continued with mopping up chores. Gradually and fitfully the Chinese resistance began to slacken. By 1401 definite control of Vegas was established, except for the topographical crest at the northernmost point. Resupply and consolidation of the outpost began at once, with Vegas under 3/5 administration and Major Benjamin G. Lee, operations officer of 2/5, in command.

Two prisoners had been taken during the day's action, one by E/2/5 during its afternoon assault and the other by F/2/7 early in the day. The soldier seized by a fire team from Company E was a 21-year-old wounded litter bearer attached to the attacking force, 3rd Battalion, 358th Regiment. He told 5th Marines interrogators that for the preceding three months the mission of the 358th Regiment (a component of the 40th CCF Army, under operational control

of the 46th CCF Army) had been to prepare to occupy the Vegas and Reno outposts before the expected UN spring offensive could be launched. The two key installations overlooked CCF supply routes. Furthermore, occupation of these two hills, the Chinese believed, would serve as a valuable tactical example to the 46th Army, whose ranks at this time were composed of nearly 65 percent recruits. The POW also reported that prior to the CCF attack on Reno and Vegas, men of his regiment had practiced throwing hand grenades every day for the past two weeks. No political classes had been held during this period as practical proficiency, apparently, took priority over theoretical indoctrination.

The other Chinese prisoner, captured by Company F at 0610, was a grenadier with the 9th Company, 3d Battalion, 358th Regiment. Prior to the attack, his unit had occupied reverse slope positions on Hills 25A and 155 as reinforcements for the 8th Company. Each CCF battalion, he revealed, "held a front of approximately 1,000 meters, utilizing one company on line with two in support."²⁶ This remark interested interrogators since it contradicted the normal pattern of enemy employment. According to the grenadier, the mission of the 3d Battalion had been to attack Vegas, while the 1st Battalion (to the west of the 3d on the Chinese MLR) was to secure Reno. Hill 190.5, an enemy strongpoint, had several antiaircraft machine guns on its reverse slope, he declared, and was the location as well of the forward CP of the 3d Battalion, 358th Regiment.

For the next five hours, from 1440 to 1930, the Marines dug in on the crest and slopes of Vegas, buttressing their positions for the new Chinese attack sure to come. A muster of the rag-tag group left from the day's 10 hours of fighting revealed a total strength of only five squads—58 effectives from E/2/5 and 8 from F/2/7. Uppermost in the minds of all the men, regardless of their diminished numbers, was the ironclad conviction that "we intend to stay."²⁷

Their leader, Major Lee, was no less determined. At 42, he was a Marine veteran of 19 years, a former sergeant major from World War II and holder of the Silver Star and Purple Heart for service at Guadalcanal. Now he had volunteered for this hazardous duty of holding together segments of the Vegas enclave until the Marines could once again possess the entire hilltop outpost. Under his direc-

²⁶ 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnl, dtd 28 Mar 53.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

tion the troops promptly began to prepare individual fighting holes in the best possible tactical positions and to emplace their weapons. Personnel from Captain Lorence's E/2/5 held the hard-won Vegas crest, while 150 men from F/2/5 committed later in the afternoon strengthened the rear trenches.

Air bombardment, prior to the 28th, had not been employed extensively against Vegas itself. The goal had been to recapture the outpost and drive the Communists out without unnecessarily destroying its defenses. Chinese tenacity in exploiting the Marine weapons positions at COP 21, while augmenting them, had made it apparent that the Vegas defense network would have to be reduced to retake the position. Altogether, during the day 33 missions (more than 100 CAS sorties) were flown by AUs, ADs, F4Us, and F9Fs of the 1st Marine Air Wing to support division ground action in regaining the advance outpost. All morning long, powerful attack planes from three MAG-12 squadrons had winged in from nearby K-6. Pilots from VMA-121, VMA-212 (Lieutenant Colonel Louis R. Smunk), and VMA-323 (Lieutenant Colonel William M. Frash) had flown the bombing runs.

In the early afternoon they were joined by the speedy, stable Panther jets from VMF-115 and VMF-311, of MAG-33 (Colonel Robertshaw), based further away at K-3. Between 1300 and 1800, a series of three four-plane F9F assaults were launched north of the Marine MLR by VMF-311, while another strike was made further east in support of the Army 2d Infantry Division's Old Baldy operations. These planes, together with two divisions from VMF-115, dumped a total of 23 tons of bombs and 3,100 rounds of 20mm shells on CCF trenches, bunkers, mortars, and caves at Vegas, Reno, and Hill 25A. Additionally, VMF-115 Panthers flew four single-sortie daytime MPQ missions north of the bomblines to damage and destroy enemy resupply points.

*Other Communist Probes*²⁸

Although the Chinese made it plain that their main interest was in the Vegas outpost area, spotty probes also took place in Colonel

²⁸ The material in this section is derived from: 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53; 1stMar Div PIRs 884-5, dtd 28-29 Mar 53; 1stMar ComdD, Mar 53; 1stMar SAR.

Adams' 1st Marines sector. On the 27th, at about 2310, two enemy squads milled around the wire defense at outpost Kate, but Marine small arms, BARs, and mortars routed them after a 15-minute fire fight. At midnight, a CCF reinforced platoon reconnoitered Dagmar and Esther, for the second successive night, supported by small arms and automatic weapons fire from Chinese Hills 114 and 44. The enemy platoon started to rush the forward slope at Dagmar, but Company I defenders pulled back to the reverse side and directed VT-fuzed shells on the enemy.

Following this barrage the Marines reoccupied their position, with the help of MLR machine guns, mortars, and artillery from the 3/11 direct support battalion. (Now commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Alfred L. Owens, who had succeeded Lieutenant Colonel Pregnall on 25 March.) The enemy reinforced with a second platoon, as did the Marines. After intense close-in fighting in the Dagmar trenches for two hours, the Chinese withdrew. An enemy squad also engaged Bunker and Hedy; but again, 3/11 VT-fuzed concentrations and the organic outpost defenses sent him off handily. Enemy casualties for the evening's activity were 15 dead, 25 more estimated killed, and 23 estimated wounded.

The following night the Chinese briefly harassed outpost Hedy, using as cover an abandoned Marine tank just east of the outpost, as well as the MLR to the rear of COP Bunker. Marine bullets and mortar shells dictated a quick retreat, however. Several minor contacts with the enemy had also been made during the two-day period in the 1st KMC sector. The most menacing were heavy enemy sightings on the 27th of some 200 Chinese in the area west of the old outposts 36 and 37, but no major action developed.

Three CCF Attempts for the Outpost²⁹

As darkness blanketed No-Man's-Land on the night of the 28th, ground fighting flared up anew at 1955. The Chinese had begun another one of their nightly rituals, the first of three counterattacks

²⁹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnl, 28-29 Mar 53; 1stMarDiv PIRs 884-6, dtd 29-31 Mar 53; 1st MAW PIR 89-53, dtd 29 Mar 53; 5th Mar, 7thMar, 11th Mar, 1/5, 2/5, 3/5, 2/7, 1/11, 3/11, 4/11 ComdDs, Mar 53; 5thMar SAR "Cities"; 11thMar SAR "Arty Defense"; Fugate, "Vegas."

to win back the disputed territory from the Marines. Vegas reported heavy incoming, including not only the usual assortment of mortar and artillery fires but direct 3.5-inch rocket hits. Enemy troops, estimated at nearly a battalion, began approaching from Reno. By way of answer two Marine light artillery battalions, 1/11 and 2/11, together with the medium 155mm howitzers of 4/11 and the Army 623d Field Artillery, lashed a 4,670-round barrage to interdict the approaching enemy. Ripples from the 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery reinforced the howitzers in thwarting this initial enemy assault. On the right flank of the outpost an intense 20-minute fire fight broke out at 2023, but the Vegas defenders beat back the intruders. For an hour the enemy, supported by heavy mortar and artillery fires from Reno and his own positions at Vegas, tried unsuccessfully to force the Marines to withdraw.

Carson, which had been relatively undisturbed for the past two days, also came under attack at this time from automatic weapons and mortars directed on its north slope by the enemy holed up behind Hills 67 and 31. For the rest of the night an enemy company prowled around the area, but the defense at Carson, plus artillery and mortar fire support from JAMESTOWN, sent the Chinese off in the early morning hours with their ambitions thwarted.

At Vegas, meanwhile, outpost commander Major Lee at 2130 radioed battalion headquarters that he was preparing for a new enemy counterattack. It was not long in coming. Less than an hour later, the Chinese were again storming from Hill 153, and Marine boxing fires picked off the advancing enemy. At 2230 Major Lee's riflemen, deployed about 25 yards from the peak, were holding Vegas, surrounded by Chinese on the southern face of the position. For a brief period the enemy took the high ground but then gave it up under pressure from the defending Marines. Close by, another sharp fire fight erupted; then subsided for about an hour. At 2300 a new onslaught of Chinese reinforcements made the third major attempt of the evening to recapture the Vegas position. Two enemy companies descended. Within a half hour another massive fire fight had broken out, and the battle was raging across the shell-scarred hilltop. Major Lee reported to G-3 heavy enemy sightings of at least 200 Chinese on the top slopes challenging Marine possession of the Vegas crest and attempting to smoke their positions. At 0045, hostile forces had surrounded the outpost and seized part of the

Vegas height, but 11th Marines fires walled off the enemy and prevented penetration. Flare planes circling overhead lighted the target and cannoneers of both sides concentrated on the crest. The heaviest Marine shoot of the night-long artillery duel, a 6,108-round barrage, rained down on enemy troops and trenches shortly before midnight.

Altogether, during the night of 28–29 March, two battalions of Chinese troops had made three separate, unsuccessful ventures to retake the Vegas crest, but were thrown back by Marine mortar, artillery, and tank fires. At 0130, following a heavy 37-minute artillery and mortar concentration, the enemy began to withdraw, but not before venting his displeasure with a resounding blast of small arms and bazooka fire from the Reno hill. In their departure, the Chinese were given an assist by Company E, 7th Marines, which had broken through the enemy encirclement of Vegas in the early morning hours to join E/2/5 and F/2/5 defending forces and help drive the invaders off all but the northern tip of the hill. Now under Captain Thomas P. Connolly, E/2/7 ascended the high ground, passing through F/2/5 ranks in preparation for the ultimate relief of E/2/5.

For the next two hours the 11th Marines battalions, together with the 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery, sealed off the outpost and blistered enemy fortifications at Reno with a total of 4,225 rounds. Air observers on station fired 10 missions between midnight and 0430. Twenty minutes later, the artillerymen unleashed still another preparation to dislodge the unyielding CCF dug in at the Vegas topographical crest. Heavier fires from the 155mm howitzers of 4/11 and the 623d Field Artillery Battalions followed on more than two dozen active mortar and artillery targets.

A new assault by Marine infantrymen (E/2/7, E/2/5, and F/2/5) at 0450 recaptured the critical northern segment of the outpost. Elation over this encouraging turn of events was dampened, however, by loss of several Marine leaders in the early morning foray. Shortly before 0500, Major Lee and Captain Walz were killed instantly by a 120mm mortar round during an intensive enemy shelling. Another Marine casualty early on the 29th was First Lieutenant John S. Gray. A forward observer from C/1/11, he was mortally wounded by an enemy mortar blast when he left his foxhole to crawl closer to the Vegas peak and thus better direct artillery fires on the enemy. At the time of his death, Lieutenant Gray was reported to have been at Vegas longer than any other officer.

*Vegas Consolidation Begins*³⁰

Only a few surviving enemy were seen when Marines of F/2/5 and E/2/7 moved out to consolidate the position after daybreak. This task was completed without contact by 0830. In the meantime, the Vegas defense was reorganized with two reinforced platoons on the main portion and a third occupying the high ground. A smoke haze placed around the outpost screened the work of the Marines. Individual foxholes were dug and automatic weapons emplaced. Major Joseph S. Buntin, executive officer of 3/5, had taken over as the new outpost commander. Corpsmen and replacement weapons—machine guns, mortars, BARs, rockets—had arrived. The morning supply train brought KSC personnel and Marines with engineering tools to begin work on trenches, fighting holes, weapons dugouts, and bunker fortifications.

By noon, excavation work on the shell-pocked trench system was well under way, with all of it dug waist deep and the majority as deep as a man's shoulder. Daylight hours between 1000 and 1600 on the 29th were relatively quiet with only light ground activity. Rainy weather that turned road nets and fighting trenches into boot-high muck and giant mud holes further slowed the action. Artillerymen completed countermortar and smoke missions, and in the skies air observers directed fire throughout the day on 19 enemy resupply and target points until dusk when rain and light snow forced them to return to base.

At 1850, the Chinese launched what in some respects was a carbon copy action of the night of the 26th. Once again there was sudden heavy incoming and then shortly after dusk the CCF struck in a new three-pronged attack to overrun Vegas. This time three companies of Chinese approached both flanks of the outpost from their positions on Reno and Hill 153. In addition to his infantry weapons, the enemy was supported by heavy mortars and artillery. But the Marines' mortars, illuminating shells, and big guns replied immediately. Ten minutes

³⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnl, 29-31 Mar 53; 1stMarDiv PIRs 885-887, dtd 29-31 Mar 53; 1st MAW PIRs 8-53, dtd 29 Mar 53 and 90-53, dtd 30 Mar 53; 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 1/5, 2/5, 3/5, 2/7, 1/11, 2/11, 3/11, 4/11, 1st TkBn ComdDs, Mar 53; 5thMar SAR "Cities"; 11thMar SAR "Arty Defense"; MAGs-12, -33, VMAs-212, -323, VMFs-115, -311 ComdDs, Mar 53; Fugate, "Vegas."

after the enemy's latest incursion, a massed counterfire from five artillery battalions joined in the heaviest single barrage of the entire Vegas defense action. This massed fire of 6,404 rounds blasted the Chinese assault battalion and sent it reeling back with heavy losses. Two rocket ripples also tore into the Chinese troops.

In addition to the medium and heavy firing batteries, two heavy mortar units, Companies A and C of the 461st Infantry Battalion, had that day gone into position in the 5th Marines sector in general support of 1/11. Other fires came from the 8-inch howitzer unit, Battery C, 424th Field Artillery Battalion, also newly assigned to the 17th Field Artillery Battalion that day in general support of the 1st Marine Division.

Although another enemy attack was quickly repulsed at 2045 in a brisk, savage fight, shortly before midnight the Chinese reappeared, moving up from behind the right finger of Hill 153. This was believed to be an attempt to recover their casualties, but Marine artillery, mortars, and rocket bursts sent them fleeing within ten minutes. Still the enemy obstinately refused to give up his goal of retaking the high ground at COP 21. In the early morning hours of the 30th, he again returned to hit the outpost in his second battalion-strength attack within six hours. Again he struck from Reno and Hill 153, and again he attempted to cut off the outpost Marines by encircling the position. Heavy pounding by artillery, mortar, and boxing fires snuffed out the enemy's attack and by 0215 the Chinese had left the Vegas domain—this time, it was to prove, for good. Their casualties for this latest attempt had been 78 counted killed, 123 more estimated killed, and 174 estimated wounded.

With sunup, the Marines at the battered outpost again repaired the damage of the night's visits from the Chinese and continued work to improve their trenches and gun emplacements. Clearing weather enabled air observers and pilots to follow a full flight schedule. VMA-212 and VMA-323 were again over the Vegas skies during the morning hours and shortly before noon a joint mission by eight AU's, a division from each squadron, dumped nearly 10 tons of bombs on enemy trenches, mortars, bunkers, and troops at Hill 25A across from Reno to discourage Chinese rebuilding efforts. Both flew afternoon sorties to destroy strongholds at Hill 21B, at Reno, now in possession of the enemy, and to make smoke screen runs. Early in the day, Company F of 2/5 came up from the 2/5 CP to fill in on the

MLR and Berlin outposts for Company G from 3/5. Later in the afternoon, G/3/5 relieved E/2/7 on Vegas and Major George E. Kelly, S-3 of 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, succeeded Major Buntin as the new outpost commander.

Two comments, casually made at the time, perhaps typify the grim staying power of the Marines who defended Vegas. As Corporal George C. Demars, Company F platoon guide, 5th Marines, observed, "The guys were like rabbits digging in. The fill-ins [reinforcements] gotten by the Company during the reorganization, jumped right in. We didn't know half the people on the fire teams, but everybody worked together."³¹ Second Lieutenant Irvin B. Maizlish, assigned as a rifle platoon commander of F/2/5 on the 25th, the day before the fighting broke out, and who had the dubious distinction of being one of the few officers of those originally attached to the company not wounded or killed, recalled: " I checked the men digging in at Vegas . . . I've never seen men work so hard . . . I even heard some of them singing the Marine Corps Hymn as they were digging. . . ."³²

The last direct confrontation with the enemy at Vegas had occurred that morning, about 1100, when five Chinese unconcernedly walked up to the outpost, apparently to surrender. Then, suddenly, they began throwing grenades and firing their automatic weapons. The little delegation was promptly dispatched by two Marine fire teams. Three CCF soldiers were killed and two taken prisoners, one of whom later died.

As darkness fell on the 30th, Marine artillery fired heavy harassing and interdiction missions and regimental TOTs on enemy supply routes and assembly areas. Although the shoot was dual-purposed, both to prevent another Chinese attempt at retaking Vegas and to foil a possible diversionary probe elsewhere in the division sector, neither situation developed. For the fourth consecutive night, giant searchlights from the Army's 2d Platoon, 61st Field Artillery Battery illuminated the battlefield to spotlight the enemy withdrawal routes. Two of the quadruple .50 caliber machine gun mounts from the 1st Provisional AAA-AW Battery were also displaced to MLR positions in anticipation of trouble, but the CCF had apparently had enough of a thoroughly bloodied nose from the Marine fighters and decided to call it quits.

³¹ Fugate, "Vegas," p. 74.

³² *Ibid.*

By daybreak, the Vegas sentry forces could report that things had been relatively quiet—the first time in five interminably long nights—and Companies D and E, 5th Marines, which had been watchdogging it at the outpost moved back to the MLR. At 0800, the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, reverted to parent control, and by noon, reliefs were under way not only for Vegas but for Corinne, Dagmar, Hedy, and Bunker in the 1st Marines sector. A 5th Marines body recovery detail, meanwhile, had moved out to search the draws.

If ground action was light on the 31st, supporting arms activity was a different story, starting with seven MPQ drops on enemy artillery positions and ammunition caves in the early hours of darkness. Between 0650 and 1900, 23 air strikes were flown in the Vegas-Reno area by VMA-121 ADs and AUs of -212 and -323, MAG-12 squadrons, as well as three quartets of Air Force Thunderjets dispatched by Fifth Air Force. Artillery fired a total of 800 rounds on 156 enemy concentrations, again with 4.2-inch mortars from the 461st Infantry Battalion reinforcing 1/11 fires on hostile mortars, ammunition dumps, and supply points. If the outgoing was aimed at discouraging Communist plans for new acquisitions, *their* incoming had dropped to a new low in comparison with the heightened activity of the past five days. A total of 699 rounds was reported in the division sector, most of it falling in 5th Marines territory.

*Aftermath*³³

Recapture and defense of the Vegas outpost was one of the intense, contained struggles which came to characterize the latter part of the Korean War. The action developed into a five-day siege involving over 4,000 ground and air Marines and was the most bloody action that Marines on the western front had yet engaged in. Its cost can be seen, in part, by the casualties sustained by the 1st Marine Division.

³³ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53; 1stMarDiv PIR 887, dtd 31 Mar 53; 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 3/5 ComdDs, Mar 53; 11thMar SAR "Arty Defense"; Hicks, *Outpost Warfare*; MacDonald *POW*; Jane Blakeney, *Heroes—U.S. Marine Corps, 1861–1955* (Washington, D.C.: Blakeney, 1957); Leckie, *Conflict*; Fugate, "Vegas"; MSgt Roy E. Heinecke, "A Year in Korea," *Leatherneck*, v. 36, no. 11 (Nov 53); *New York Times*, 29–31 Mar 53; *Washington Post*, 29–31 Mar 53.

The infantry strength of two battalions was required to retake Outpost Vegas and defend it against successive Chinese counterattacks. A total of 520 Marine replacements were received during the operation. Marine casualties totaled 1,015, or 116 killed, 441 wounded/evacuated, 360 wounded/not evacuated, and 98 missing, of which 19 were known to be prisoners. Losses for the critical five-day period represented 70 percent of division casualties for the entire month—1,488 killed, wounded, and missing (not including 128 in the KMC sector).

Enemy casualties were listed conservatively as 2,221. This represented 536 counted killed, 654 estimated killed, 174 counted wounded, 853 estimated wounded, and 4 prisoners. The Marines, moreover, in the five days of furious fighting had knocked out the 358th CCF Regiment, numbering between 3,000 and 3,500 men, and destroyed its effectiveness as a unit.

Throughout the Vegas operation, the 1st Marine Air Wing had flown 218 combat missions against the Nevada Cities hills (63 percent of the entire month's total 346 CAS missions), bombing and strafing enemy weapons positions, bunkers, ammunition dumps, trenches, and troops. On the 27th and 28th, while heavy fighting raged in both the Marine and 7th Army Division sectors, Marine Air Group 33 pilots flew 75 sorties—resulting in their highest daily sortie rate and air hours since December 1952. The March 28th date was a noteworthy one for MAG-12, too. It established a new record for combat sorties and bomb tonnage unloaded on the enemy in a single day; the group executed 129 sorties and dropped 207.64 tons of bombs and napalm.

Although restricted on two days by weather conditions, close air support was effectively used throughout the Vegas Cities operation. A total of 81 four-aircraft flights dropped approximately 426 tons of explosives in CAS missions. Smoke and flare planes—despite a shortage of both flare planes and flares³⁴—were employed throughout the period as were the rotary aircraft of the two helicopter squadrons, the latter for casualty evacuation operations.

Tanks, provided by the Company A direct support tank company, were used day and night, firing from nine positions along the MLR. Their effective use to mark air targets was of particular importance in connection with their support role, while the tank light also helped

³⁴ CG, 1stMarDiv msg to COs, 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar, KMC, KrR, dtd 31 Mar 53, in 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53, App. II, p. 9.

to provide illumination of the objective area in hours of darkness. Approximately 7,000 rounds of 90mm tank ammunition were fired.

During these five tense days the enemy deluged Marine positions with 45,000 rounds of artillery, mortar, and mixed fire. Indicative of the savage pounding the Vegas area took is the fact that incoming Chinese artillery for the full two-week period from 1–15 March totaled only 3,289 rounds. Marine efforts to defend, counterattack, secure, and hold the Vegas outpost against repeated Chinese assaults were "marked by maximum use of and coordination with various supporting arms and organic weapons."³⁵ Three light artillery battalions, two medium battalions, two 8-inch batteries, one 4.5-inch rocket battery, and two companies of 4.2-inch mortars fired a combined total of 104,864 rounds between 27–31 March; the 11th Marines and its heavy Army reinforcing elements, in support of 5th and 7th Marines units, executed 332 counterbattery and 666 countermortar missions. Of the total number fired, 132 were air observed.

The artillery shelling was the hottest during a 24-hour period ending at 1600 on 28–29 March. During this time 35,809 rounds were fired (33,041 from the four Marine battalions). This even surpassed the previous record of 34,881 rounds fired during a one-day period in the Bunker Hill defense of August 1952. A new one-day battalion total for West Korean fighting was also set on the 28th; 1/11 fired 11,079 rounds, exceeding the record of 10,652 set by 3/11 during the Bunker Hill fighting.

Marines at a rear area supply point achieved another record. In a 24-hour period, during the heavy fighting on 28–29 March, 130 men handled 2,841 tons of ammunition. Second Lieutenant Donald E. Spangler, an ammunition platoon commander with the 1st Ordnance Battalion, who had but 13 hours' sleep in the entire five days of fighting, proudly noted that his unit had "more than doubled the tonnage that the U.S. Army says a man can handle in 14 hours."³⁶

As for the men on the front line, besides the Medal of Honor winners, 10 Marines were awarded the Navy Cross, the nation's second highest combat award. Nine citations were for the Vegas action and one for the 1st Marines defense of Dagmar, in staving off an enemy penetration on the night of the 26th.

³⁵ 5thMar SAR "Cities," p. 8.

³⁶ Heinecke, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

Battlefront tactics employed by the CCF in its assault of the Vegas Cities outposts were largely consistent with their previous strategy. As in the past, the enemy launched simultaneous attacks against several Marine positions in attempt to fragment defensive artillery firepower. Characteristically, the enemy preceded his thrust with heavy preassault concentrations of artillery and mortar fire. He also took advantage of the twin ploys of surprise and overwhelming strength, with wave after wave of Chinese rolling over the objective. Innovative techniques consisted of scaling ladders, fashioned from lightweight but sturdy bamboo, which were used to traverse Marine wire defenses, and of having an artillery liaison officer attached to infantry squads to better direct supporting fires during the attack. Analysis of Chinese firepower tactics indicated deliberate counterbattery efforts by the CCF, although this employment of artillery was secondary to its support of ground troops.

Actually, the Chinese attack on the forward Marine outposts the night of the 26th appeared to have been part of an overall reinvigorated spring assault. Opening gun of this offense had been fired three nights earlier, on the 23d, when they swept over an Army hill defense at Old Baldy, 25 miles northeast of the Marine Vegas Hills. Despite heavy Allied gunfire and bombing by Air Force and Marine planes under Fifth Air Force flight orders, the Chinese had clung to the hill, burrowed deeply, and resisted all efforts to be dislodged. After three days of fighting, U.S. 7th Division troops had abandoned the Old Baldy hill at dawn on the 26th. The CCF, apparently emboldened by this success, that same night had launched a series of probes at nine UN outposts on the Korean far western front in an attempt to further extend their frontline acquisitions.

Following the loss of Reno, a new outpost, Elko, was established on Hill 47, southeast of Carson and 765 yards from the MLR, to prevent the enemy from using the Hill 47 position as an attack and patrol route to the MLR. In addition to this new platoon-strength outpost, the Marines substantially shored up Vegas from its former platoon garrison to a detachment consisting of 2 officers and 133 enlisted men.

Headlines had told Americans at home and the free peoples around the world the story of the "Nevada Cities" in Korea and the Marines' five-day stand there to prevent loss of critical UNC territory. The event that marked an official "well done" to the Marines themselves

was a message from the Commandant, General Shepherd, who on 30 March sent the following dispatch to General Pollock, CG, 1st Marine Division:

Have followed the reports of intensive combat in the First Marine Division sector during the past week with greatest sense of pride and confidence. The stubborn and heroic defense of Vegas, Reno, and Carson Hills coupled with the superb offensive spirit which characterized the several counterattacks are a source of reassurance and satisfaction to your fellow Marines everywhere. On their behalf please accept for yourself and pass on to every officer and man of your command my sincere congratulations on a task accomplished in true Marine Corps fashion.³⁷

In turn, General Pollock congratulated the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing of General Megee and its six participating squadrons (VMAs-121, -212, -323, VMFs-115, -311, and VMF(N)-513). Citing the close air support missions of the Marine flyers during the operation, General Pollock noted that the air strikes of the 28th were "particularly well executed and contributed materially to the success of the 1st Marine Division in retaking and holding the objective."³⁸

Plaudits had also come to the 1st Marine Division from the Korean Minister of Defense, Pai Yung Shin,³⁹ the day immediately preceding the Vegas attack. On 25 March, the Korean Presidential Unit Citation streamer,⁴⁰ for action from 26 October 1950 to 15 February 1953, had been placed on the division colors in ceremonies at the division command post, attended by the Korean Defense Minister; Vice Admiral Woon Il Sohn, Chief of Korean Naval Operations; Major General Hyan Zoon Shin, Commandant of the Korean Marine Corps; General Pollock, division commander, and his troops. The event marked the fourth Korean PUC awarded to Marine units since the beginning of the war.

A directive at the end of the month put the 7th Marines on the alert to move into 5th Marines positions in the right regimental sector. This was to be accomplished on 4-5 April when, after 68 days on line, the 5th Marines moved south to Camp Rose to become the

³⁷ CMC msg to CG, 1stMarDiv, dtd 30 Mar 53, cited in 1stMarDiv ComdD, Mar 53, App. I, p. 7.

³⁸ CG, 1stMarDiv msg to CG, 1st MAW, dtd 31 Mar 53, in MAG-12 ComdD, Mar 53, App. VII-3.

³⁹ CROKMC ltr to CMC, dtd 2 Feb 1971, hereafter *ROKMC Comments*.

⁴⁰ See Appendix G for complete text of citation. Previous awards were as follows: 1stProvMarBrig (for 2 Aug-6 Sep 50 period), 1st MAW (3 Aug 50-26 Feb 51), and 1stMarDiv (15-27 Sep 50).

division reserve regiment. The prospect of a new stage in the off-and-on truce negotiations had also come late in the month. On 28 March, the Communists informed the UN of their willingness to discuss the Allied proposal for return of sick and wounded prisoners. This exchange had originally been suggested by the UN more than a year earlier, in December 1951. Notification of the new Chinese intentions came, ironically, on a day when the Vegas outpost fighting was at its height.

As the month closed on the Vegas chapter, Marines on line and in the reserve companies who had just sweated through the bloodiest exchange of the war on the I Corps front to date added their own epitaph. With a touch of ungallantry that can be understood, they called the disputed crest of Vegas "the highest damn beachhead in Korea."

CHAPTER VIII

Marking Time (April-June 1953)

The Peace Talks Resume—Operation LITTLE SWITCH—Interval Before the Marines Go Off the Line—The May Relief—Training While in Reserve and Division Change of Command—Heavy May-June Fighting—Developments in Marine Air—Other Marine Defense Activities—The Division Is Ordered Back to the Front

*The Peace Talks Resume*¹

IT WAS APRIL 1953, but it wasn't an April Fool's mirage. On 6 April, representatives of the United Nations Command and the Communist delegation sat down at the Panmunjom truce tents to resume the peace talks that had been stalemated six months—since October 1952. If there was a word that could be said to reflect the attitude of American officials and private citizens alike—for that matter, the atmosphere at Panmunjom itself—it was one of caution—not real optimism, not an unbridled hopefulness, but a wearied caution born of the mountains of words, gulfs of free-flowing dialogue and diatribe, and then ultimate plateaus of intransigence that had marked negotiations with Communist leaders since the original truce discussions had begun in July 1951.

Diplomatic maneuverings had been underway since the end of 1952 for the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of both sides. This was considered a first step towards ending the prisoner of war

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv, 1st EngrBn ComdDs, Apr 53; Berger, *Korea Knot*; Clark, *Danube to Yalu*; Hermes, *Truce Tent*; Leckie, *Conflict*; M/Sgt Robert T. Fugate, "Freedom Village," *Leatherneck*, v. 36, no. 7 (Jul 53), hereafter Fugate, "Freedom Village."

dispute and achieving an ultimate truce. A resolution introduced in mid-November by India at the United Nations session dealing with settlement of nonrepatriate prisoners had been adopted in early December. Later that month the Red Cross international conference had officially gone on record favoring the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners in advance of a truce. A letter written on 22 February by the UNC commander, General Clark, calling for the immediate exchange of ailing prisoners had been delivered to the NKPA and CCF leaders.

Initially, the Communist answer was an oppressive silence that lasted for more than a month. During this time the Communist hierarchy had been stunned by the death, on 5 March, of Premier Stalin. Then, on 28 March, in a letter that reached General Clark at Tokyo in the middle of the night, came an unexpected response from the two Communist spokesmen. They not only agreed unconditionally to an exchange of the sick and injured prisoners but further proposed that "the delegates for armistice negotiations of both sides immediately resume the negotiations at Panmunjom."²

This favorable development astonished not only the United Nations Commander but the rest of the Free World as well. Several steps were quickly put in motion. The UN Commander's reply to the Kim-Peng offer was expressed in such a way that resumption of full negotiations was not tied in as a condition for the preliminary exchange of ailing POWs. President Eisenhower, commenting on the new Communist proposals at his 2 April press conference, stated he thought the country should "now take at face value every offer made to us until it is proved unworthy of our confidence."³ He also further enjoined major military commanders and subordinates to avoid anything that might be contrary to this view when they made public remarks or issued press releases.

In Korea, the Munsan-ni Provisional Command was established on 5 April under the Commanding General, Eighth Army, in the vicinity of the 1st Marine Division railhead at Munsan-ni. The command was to prepare for the many housekeeping details involved in the receiving and orderly processing of all UNC prisoners. The anticipated exchange itself was dubbed Operation LITTLE SWITCH.

² Leckie, *Conflict*, p. 373.

³ CG, Eighth Army msg to CG, 1stMarDiv and others, dtd 4 Apr 53, in 1stMarDiv ComdD, Apr 53, App. I, p. 1.

Two Army officers, one Marine Corps, and one ROKA representative were designed to direct the administrative machinery of the provisional command. Heading the organization was Colonel Raymond W. Beggs, USA.

The Marine representative, Colonel Wallace M. Nelson, was named commanding officer of the United Nations Personnel and Medical Processing Unit. His responsibility was not limited to the obvious medical aspects of the exchange, but extended to other details involving clothing issue, personnel, security, chaplains, food, communication, motor transport, engineering, and the operation of unit headquarters. Among those matters to which the Munsan-ni command directed its immediate attention was the setting up of a temporary facility for Communist prisoners currently held in UNC camps at Koje, Cheju, and Yongcho Islands and a hospital near Pusan. Arrangements were also made for an interpreter pool, debriefing teams, and press center facilities.

As the new week began on Monday, 6 April, and the world looked to Panmunjom for the next set of signals in the war, a new stage developed in the truce negotiations. Within five days after the talks had begun, both sides agreed to return the disabled prisoners in their custody. Final papers for the preliminary exchange were signed at noon on 11 April by Rear Admiral John C. Daniel, USN, for the United Nations Command, and Major General Lee Sang Cho, of the Communist delegation. The week-long transfer of sick and wounded POWs was scheduled to begin 20 April, at Panmunjom.

The Communists announced they intended to release 600 sick and wounded UNC prisoners (450 Korean, 150 non-Korean), a figure which Admiral Daniel called "incredibly small."⁴ For its part, the UNC indicated that it planned to free nearly ten times that number of North Korean and Chinese POWs. Communist and Allied representatives also agreed that truce talks would be resumed at Panmunjom, once the prisoner exchange was completed.

Security precautions went into effect at both Panmunjom⁵ and the

⁴ Hermes, *Truce Tent*, p. 415.

⁵ With resumption of truce negotiations, the 1st Marines, whose left battalion sector was immediately adjacent to the Panmunjom neutral zone between the two battle lines, took certain precautionary measures. The regiment set up radio communication with the UN base camp at Munsan and reactivated its rescue task force. This unit was on alert to evacuate the UN truce team from Panmunjom in the event of Communist hostile action or any threat to security. While the talks were in session, a forward covering

entire Munsan-ni area, 10 miles southeast, on the first day of the prisoner talks. All facilities at both Panmunjom and Munsan-ni were placed off limits to Eighth Army personnel not directly involved in the operations. Regulations were strictly enforced. Even before the negotiations opened at Panmunjom, actual construction work for LITTLE SWITCH was well under way by Marine engineers. "Operation RAINBOW," as the building of the facilities for the POW exchange was called, began 5 April.

In a little over a day—actually 31 working hours—a task force of less than 100 Marine construction personnel had erected the entire Freedom Village POW recovery station at Munsan-ni. The special work detachment was composed of men from Company A, 1st Shore Party Battalion, under Major Charles E. Gocke, and attached to the engineer battalion; utility personnel from Headquarters and Service Companies; and a Company D platoon, 1st Engineer Battalion.⁶

Early Sunday morning the Marines moved their giant bulldozers, earth movers, pans, and other heavy duty equipment into Munsan-ni. Ground leveling started at 0800 and work continued around the clock until 0100 Monday. After a five-hour break the men dug in again at 0600 and worked uninterruptedly until 2000 that night. Furniture, tentage, and strongbacking stored at the 1st Engineer Battalion command post, meanwhile, had been transported and emplaced. When it was all done the Freedom Village complex, like ancient Gaul, had been divided into three parts. The command area comprised receiving lines, processing and press tents, and related facilities for United Nations troops. Adjacent to this was the 45th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital tent, completely wood-decked, equipped for mass examinations and emergency treatment. Across the road from the UN site proper was the area reserved for returning South Korean prisoners, who would form the bulk of the repatriates.

Altogether the three camp areas represented some 35,100 square feet of hospital tentage, 84 squad tents, and 5 wall tents. Gravel to

group, composed of a reinforced rifle company and 1st Tank Battalion platoon, occupied the high ground east of Panmunjom at COP 2. Here the Marine rescue force maintained close surveillance of the enemy in the Panmunjom peace corridor as well as the safe arrival and departure of the UN truce team shuttled in by helicopter or motor convoy. 1stMar ComD, Apr 53, pp. 5, 14 and App. II, pp. 1-4.

⁶ The battalion's new commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Francis "X" Witt, Jr., who a week earlier had succeeded Lieutenant Colonel Francis W. Augustine.

surface three miles of standard combat road, plus two miles of electrical wiring, was hauled and installed. More than 100 signs, painted in Korean and English, were erected, as well as the large one that stretched clear across the road at the Freedom Village entrance. Six welcome signs were raised above the UN and ROK processing tents, while another mammoth Korean-English sign was installed at the Panmunjom exchange site.

Special areas for ambulance parking; helicopter landing strips; five 50-foot flagpoles; graded access roads and foot paths; sanitation facilities; and storage areas for food, blankets, and medical supplies were also constructed. And timing was important. It had been anticipated that the prisoner exchange might take place on short notice. For this reason 1st Marine Division work and processing teams had conducted their rehearsals so that they could complete all duties within 36 hours after first receiving the "go ahead" signal for the switch.

Operation LITTLE SWITCH⁷

Nine days after the truce talks were temporarily suspended, 11 April, Operation LITTLE SWITCH (code-named Little Swap) began the morning of Monday, 20 April. By the time it ended on 26 April, a total of 6,670 North Korean and Chinese Communist prisoners had been returned by the UNC. The enemy released 684 captives,⁸ of whom 149 were Americans. Among them were 15 Marines, 3 Navy corpsmen who had been attached to the 1st Marine Division, and a Navy aviator. The first day Allied prisoners—walking, some hobbling along on crutches, and others carried on litters—were delivered in two groups. The initial 50 men reached Panmunjom at 0825, and the second group, two hours later. The first Marine freed

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap 9; Commander Naval Forces, Far East (ComNavFE), "Operation Little Switch-Apr 53"; ComNavFE Rpt of Intelligence Processing; ComNavFE Rpt, 24 Jul 53; FMFPac ComdD, Apr 53 (#1); FMFPac ComdD, May 53 (Pt. 2), rpt LtCol Fisher to CG, FMFPac, subj, "Debriefing of Returned POWs"; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Apr 53; MacDonald, *POW*; Clark, *Danube to Yalu*; Hermes, *Truce Tent*; Leckie, *Conflict*; Fugate, "Freedom Village"; *New York Times*, 19-21 Apr 53; *Washington Post*, 19-21 Apr 53.

⁸ The 684 UNC prisoners returned in LITTLE SWITCH represented 471 South Koreans, 149 Americans, 32 British, 15 Turks, 6 Colombians, 5 Australians, 2 Canadians, 1 Greek, 1 South African, 1 Filipino, and 1 Netherlander.

was Private Alberto Pizarro-Baez, H/3/7, a Puerto Rican, who had been captured at Frisco in the early October 1952 outpost clashes. Later that day, another POW taken in the same action, Private Louis A. Pumphrey, was also released.

Early moments of the exchange were tense as UNC sick and wounded captives were shipped in a long line of CCF ambulances from Kaesong, five miles northwest of Panmunjom, down the neutral corridor past enemy lines to the exchange point. Despite the fact that all official papers and agreements had been concluded more than a week earlier, no one was absolutely sure until the last moment that the prisoner exchange would actually take place. The mechanics of the transfer operation itself, as it turned out, went off practically without hitch. One minor unsavory incident had occurred when 50 North Korean prisoners in UNC custody en route from Pusan to Panmunjom, had dumped their mess kits into garbage cans, noisily complaining about breakfast.

There was also a long taut moment of uneasy silence when the first Communist ambulance pulled up in front of the Panmunjom receiving center. An American MP, who in the excitement had gotten his orders confused, forgot to tell the enemy driver where to turn. The ambulance almost went past the center. A UN officer raced out to the road and motioned to the driver, who backed around and pulled into the parking lot.

One of the first things the liberated POWs saw was the big sign "Welcome Gate to Freedom" raised the preceding night over the Panmunjom receiving tents. Here they could get a cup of coffee and momentarily relax before starting the long one-and-a-half hour ambulance trip south to Freedom Village. The returnees were outfitted in blue Communist greatcoats, utilities, caps, and tennis shoes. Some of the men were bearded; some wore thin smiles; some had half-hidden tears in their eyes. Primarily, there was a subdued and businesslike air to the day's proceedings, however, with a marked absence of levity. Admiral Daniel, whose UNC liaison group had negotiated the exchange, in commenting on the smoothness of the first day's operation observed: "It's been a tremendous emotional experience for us all. Not much was said between us here, but we are all very happy."⁹

⁹ *New York Times*, dtd 20 Apr 53, p. 1.

From Panmunjom all Allied prisoners were taken to Freedom Village at Munsan where they received a medical check, and the more seriously wounded were flown to a field hospital near Seoul. The first American prisoner to reach Freedom Village was an Army litter patient, Private First Class Robert C. Stell, a Negro. Helicoptered in from Panmunjom at 1007, he was treated "like a 5-star general by all hands, including General Clark, UN commander."¹⁰ By noon the routine, agreed upon in the earlier exchange talks, was moving along evenly and would be in effect throughout the week-long exchange. The Communist quota was 100 prisoners freed daily, in two groups of 50 each, while the Allies returned 500. Thirty Americans were among the 100 UNC men released that first day.

Upon their arrival at Freedom Village the Marine POWs, all of whom had been wounded prior to being captured, were greeted by representatives of the 1st Marine Division. In addition to General Clark, other ranking officials on hand included Lieutenant General Maxwell D. Taylor, new EUSAK commander, Major General Pollock, 1st Marine Division CG, Brigadier General Joseph C. Burger, in one of his first public duties since assuming the post of assistant division commander on 1 April, and Dr. Otto Lehner, head of the International Red Cross inspection teams.

Each Marine prisoner was met by a 1st Division escort who gave him physical assistance, if necessary, as well as a much-prized possession—a new utility cap with its Marine Corps emblem. Recovered personnel received a medical examination. Waiting helicopters stood by to transport seriously sick or wounded Marines to the hospital ships *Haven* and *Consolation* riding at anchor in the Inchon harbor. Chaplains chatted as informally or seriously as a returnee desired. Newspapers and magazines gave the ex-prisoners their first opportunity in months to read unslanted news. And a full set of utility uniforms, tailored on the spot for proper fit, were quickly donned by Marines happy to discard their prison blues.

Although returnees received their initial medical processing at Freedom Village, no intelligence processing was attempted in Korea. Within 24 hours after their exchange, returned personnel were flown to K-16 (Seoul) and from there to Haneda Air Force Base at

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Tokyo. Upon arrival at the Tokyo Army Hospital Annex, a more detailed medical exam was conducted, including a psychiatric interview by officials from the newly formed Special Liaison Group of Commander, Naval Forces, Far East. Lieutenant Colonel Regan Fuller, USMC, was designated by ComNavFE as OIC of the detailed briefing of all returned personnel at Tokyo. Other Marine officers participating in the debriefings included Lieutenant Colonel Thell H. Fisher and Major James D. Swinson, of FMFPac headquarters; Major Jack M. Daly, representing the 1st Marine Division; and Captain Richard V. Rich, of the 1st Marine Air Wing.

Each Marine returnee was interviewed by a two-man debriefing team that consisted of a Marine and a Navy officer, the latter usually a counterintelligence expert. The three-phase interrogation averaged 9–12 hours and covered personal data, counterintelligence, and a detailed military questionnaire. The latter, particularly, sought information about UN personnel still held captive by the enemy. Since all of the 15 Marine POWs had been captured relatively recently (either in the October outpost contests or the Vegas battle the previous month), the information they had about the enemy was of limited intelligence value. From debriefing reports of Marine returnees, many of whom brought address books with them, it was learned that at least 115 more USMC and Navy prisoners were alive and still held in POW camps.

Upon completion of counterintelligence processing, returned personnel were available for press interviews. Long-distance telephone calls to parents or other family members were arranged by the Red Cross. Summer service uniforms and campaign ribbons were issued, pay provided, and administrative records updated by representatives dispatched by Colonel John F. Dunlap, Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Yokosuka.

All of the 19 Marine and Navy POWs had been released by 25 April. After final processing and clearance for return to the U.S. the men were flown home, via Hawaii, in three groups that departed 28 April, 30 April, and 4 May. Each was accompanied by a Marine Corps officer. Members of the first contingent of POWs arrived at Travis Air Force Base, California, on 29 April, thereby completing their 7,000-mile journey from Communist prison camps. Another small group of POWs considered possible security risks were airlifted directly from Japan to Valley Forge Hospital, near

Philadelphia, for further interviewing. No Marines were among them. With the initial prisoner exchange completed, staffs of the major Far East commands began to prepare for the final return of all POWs. Operation BIG SWITCH would take place after the ceasefire that, hopefully, was not too far away.

On the day that Operation LITTLE SWITCH ended, 26 April, plenary truce talks resumed at Panmunjom. The stormy issue of repatriation of prisoners, which had already prolonged the war by more than a year, was still the one major problem preventing final agreement. There was indication, however, that the Communists appeared to be softening on their rigid insistence of forced repatriation. And, on 7 May, the Communists accepted the UN proposal that nonrepatriate prisoners be kept in neutral custody within Korea (rather than being removed to a foreign neutral nation) and offered an eight-point armistice plan. With modifications, this ultimately became the basis for the armistice. While discussions and disagreements continued on this proposal, another real problem developed from a totally different source.

Since early in April rumblings had been heard, through the polite ambassadorial circuits, that Syngman Rhee, the aging South Korean president, was dissatisfied with major truce issues. In particular, he was disturbed over the possibility that Korea would not become reunited politically. Further, Rhee gave indication that he might take some kind of action on his own. The Korean leader had advised President Eisenhower that if any armistice was signed that permitted Chinese Communist troops to remain south of the Yalu, with his country divided, he would withdraw ROK military forces from the UN command. Since South Korean troops, backed by American specialized units, presently manned the bulk of the UNC front line, Rhee's threat to remove them from General Clark's command presented harrowing possibilities.

Meanwhile, on 13 May, General Harrison, senior UN representative at Panmunjom, made a counterproposal to the Communist plan. This incorporated three measures aimed at reconciling differences in the long-controversial repatriation issue.¹¹ Arguments flew back and

¹¹ In brief, these were: (1) that the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) take custody of Chinese nonrepatriates but give Korean POWs the option of settling either in North or South Korea, as they wished; (2) that troops from just one

forth at Panmunjom, with a temporary recess called in the talks; but on 4 June the Communists accepted this UN final offer. The dispute of 18 months' duration had ended and the Allied principle of voluntary repatriation had won out in the end. About the only homework left for the negotiating teams was to map out final details of the Demilitarized Zone.

President Rhee now even more violently denounced the projected armistice plan. He declared that he and the Koreans would fight on alone, if necessary. South Korean delegates boycotted the Panmunjom truce meetings, and Rhee began a campaign to block the cease-fire. Final agreement on the POW issue was reached 8 June. It provided that the NNRC offer a "civilian status" to former POWs who did not exercise their right of repatriation within four months after being taken into custody by the commission. Those POWs who desired asylum would be set free. The South Korean National Assembly unanimously rejected the truce terms the following day.

Revision of the truce line, to correspond to current battle positions, and other concluding details of the truce were being settled by 17 June. On 18 June, chaos suddenly replaced progress. Acting on orders from Rhee, during early morning hours ROK guards at the South Korean prisons released approximately 27,000 North Korean anti-Communist POW inmates (the majority of the large group of NKPA who did not wish to be repatriated). They quickly escaped and became absorbed into the civilian populace of South Korea. Immediately the Communists charged the Americans with complicity and demanded to know whether the United Nations Command was able to control its South Korean ally or not.

For the next two weeks the American ambassadorial and military team tried to restore some measure of international good grace and hope to the crisis. Daily talks (and pressure) took place with Rhee, as well as with the Communist negotiators, to set the course back on track again in the direction of a final truce agreement. At the end of June, UNC Commander Clark was authorized by Washington to work out a way in which it would be possible to sign the tenuous armistice—without the Koreans, if necessary.

country (India) be used to guard nonrepatriates, rather than the unwieldy five-nation force earlier proposed by the Communists; and (3), that specific procedures, which were clearly spelled out, be followed for granting political asylum to returning prisoners who refused repatriation.

*Interval Before the Marines Go Off the Line*¹²

Shortly after the heavy Vegas fighting in late March, Colonel Funk's 7th Marines, which had been in reserve, exchanged positions with the 5th Marines. The new line regiment assumed responsibility for the critical, action-prone right sector of the MLR on 4-5 April. In the center part of JAMESTOWN, the 1st Marines of Colonel Adams continued to man the MLR and its 12 outposts, including the strategic COP-2 tucked down by the Panmunjom peace corridor. With the resumption of truce talks on 6 April, this position had again taken on renewed importance with its tank-infantry covering force of 5 armored vehicles and 245 Marines on call at all times.

After its relief from the MLR in early April the 5th Marines, as the new division reserve unit, assumed the regular missions of serving as a counterforce for Marines in the I Corps sector, if required; maintenance of the secondary KANSAS line; and a rigorous training program. On 10 April, the 3d Battalion moved out to the KANSAS position for a two-day field exercise. By midmonth, spring thaws and heavy rains had so weakened the trench and bunker fortifications of KANSAS that an all-out effort was temporarily diverted from refresher training to reconstruction. The 2d Battalion, meanwhile, under Operation Plan 24-53, pursued an intensive five-day shore-based training program, 7-11 April, in preparation for its coming amphibious exercise, MARLEX XX. On the 13th, BLT 2/5 under Lieutenant Colonel Finch, with armored amphibian, tank, amtrac, and 1/11 detachments, proceeded to the landing area, Tokchok-to, one of the WCIDE command offshore islands southwest of Inchon. Battalion assault companies hit the southern Tokchok-to beaches on D-Day, 15 April, according to schedule, although high winds and rough seas subsequently modified the exercise.¹³

Not long afterward a training exercise involving UNC personnel got underway when the 5th¹⁴ and 1st Marines, together with the

¹² Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Apr 53; 1stMarDiv PIRs 896-900, dtd 8-12 Apr 53; 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 2/5, 1/7, 2/11, 1st TkBn ComdDs, Apr 53; VMAs-121, -212, -323, VMFs-115, -311, VMF(N)-513 ComdDs, Apr 53.

¹³ Official records are at variance on this point. The 2/5 command diary indicates that the battalion continued the exercise on 16-17 April, returning the latter date. The 5th Marines report categorically indicates that MARLEX XX was cancelled on 15 April, because of the weather.

¹⁴ Now under a new regimental commander, Colonel Tschirgi, who had joined the 5th Marines on 14 April, succeeding Colonel Walt, newly assigned division G-3.

artillerymen, combined with the Army, ROK, and Commonwealth Division on 20 April for a four-day I Corps command post exercise (CPX) EVEREADY GEORGE, not far from Seoul.

Along the division front the war was still a daily survival contest, despite the promising outlook at Panmunjom. The most ambitious attempt by the Chinese during the month took place over a three-day period in the right regimental sector, not long after the 7th Marines had moved to the MLR. On 9 April, following a heavy two-hour ballistic downpour of 2,000 rounds of enemy mortar and artillery, a reinforced company of about 300 Chinese soldiers launched a strong probe against Carson at 0345. Attacking in two echelons, the enemy approached from the direction of Arrowhead on the north and the Reno ridgeline. In an hour's time, the enemy had reached the Marine trenches and protective wire, at some places, and was being unceremoniously repulsed by the 1/7 detachment at Carson. For an hour and a half a heavy fire fight raged at the outpost while intruders and defenders battled at pointblank range to settle the dispute.

A reinforcement platoon, from 4/2/7, dispatched from the MLR at 0530, made it as far as the newly established Marine outpost at Elko, about 400 yards southeast of Carson, before being held up by a heavy shower of mortar rounds, and small arms fire. Tankers from the Company A direct element¹⁵ plus a section (two tanks) from the regiment's armored platoon leveled their lethal 90mm fires to discourage the enemy, as did the defender's barrage of 60mm, 81mm, and 4.2-inch mortars.

Two rocket ripples and 22 defensive fire concentrations unleashed by 2/11, also in direct support of Lieutenant Colonel Henry C. Lawrence Jr.'s 1st Battalion, plus additional reinforcing fires by batteries of 1/11 and 4/11 drove off the enemy at 0700. As a security measure, a company from the regimental reserve (E/2/7) was assigned to Carson to buttress the position and assist in reorganizing the outpost defense. The enemy's activity had cost him 60 known dead. Additional casualties were estimated to be 90 killed and 70 wounded. Marine losses numbered 14 killed, 4 missing, 44 wounded/

¹⁵ Throughout the three-day action, gun tanks from Companies A and B (the forward reserve unit) and the regimental antitank company fired a total of more than 1,469 90mm shells to neutralize enemy positions and weapons.

evacuated, and 22 non-seriously wounded. Meanwhile, beginning at 0715, Marine prop-driven attack AUs from VMAs-212 and -323 and ADs from VMA-121 were aloft over prime Chinese targets to perform CAS missions and MPQ drops.

Between the morning's first strike and midafternoon the three MAG-12 squadrons completed 43 sorties and blasted enemy hills and weapons positions north of Carson with a total of 67½ tons of bombs. Later that night three Chinese platoons, operating in small units, reappeared in the Carson-Elko-Vegas vicinity to recover casualties. Although they reached an unoccupied caved-in bunker 50 feet from Carson, the enemy's nocturnal activity only cost him more casualties from the COP's defense fires: 15 known dead, 15 estimated killed, 7 known wounded, and 27 estimated wounded.

The following day, Panther jets from Marine Fighter Squadrons 311 and 115 contributed to the further destruction of hostile emplacements, but the enemy himself was nowhere to be seen. Again that night, ground-controlled radar bombing runs were made by VMA-121 and VMF(N)-513 to help keep the enemy off balance. In the early-morning hours of the 11th, however, a band of 30 grenade-slinging Chinese renewed the assault on 7th Marines positions by attacking the reverse slope of Elko. This ambition was deterred by outpost organic weapons and box-me-in fires. After a brief fire fight the CCF withdrew, and the two MAG-33 squadrons later that morning returned to station for CAS strikes against CCF trouble spots. Another raid on Carson began at 2115 that night when 70 Chinese moved out from Ungok to the west ridge of the Marine position. Ten minutes later, Marine 81mm and 4.2-inch mortars, artillery, machine guns, and tanks forced them back with approximately 20 CCF killed and wounded to show for their efforts.

A brief repeat action occurred the following night when two squads of Chinese reappeared at Elko, but they were dispatched by Marine infantry, artillery, and armor direct fires following a 15-minute spirited exchange. During the night of the 12th¹⁶ Chinese probes and harassing efforts diminished. Other than a few spotty, abortive skirmishes in the KMC sector, this pattern of reduced enemy effort would continue for the next several weeks, until after the change of the Marine line in early May. As the peace talks at Panmunjom were

¹⁶ This same date was significant because it marked the first time a searchlight-guided night close air support mission was flown by 1st MAW in the division sector.

beginning to show some progress, enemy psychological warfare efforts in the KMC, 1st, and 7th regimental sectors became more zealous, an indication of the Chinese attempt to increase their propaganda offensive. This included not only loudspeaker broadcasts and propaganda leaflet fired in mortar shells but a more unusual tactic, on 6 April, of enemy messages dropped over the COP Vegas area by airplane.

Little ground action took place in the division sector throughout the rest of the month. During the last three days of April, as the operational period for the Marines drew to an end, both infantry and artillery units noticed an unusual lull across the front. Marine patrols made few contacts, and there was a sharp decrease in the heavy enemy sightings of midmonth. Chinese incoming, in fact, during the latter part of the month decreased markedly, with a total of 873 rounds compared to the 4,149 tallied during the 1-15 April period. An average of 58.2 rounds daily made it, in fact, the quietest period in the Marine division sector since the holiday calm of late December when only 84.2 rounds had fallen the last 10 days of the month.

*The May Relief*¹⁷

By late April, plans had moved into high gear for relief of the 1st Marine Division by the 25th U.S. Infantry Division and transfer of the Marines to U.S. I Corps reserve at Camp Casey. Although the Marine division had been in active defense positions for 20 months (first in the eastern X Corps and, for the past year, on the western front), some observers noted that there was a reluctance to turn over their presently occupied positions and that the Marines were coming out "under protest from commanders who wanted the Division to remain on the line."¹⁸

For its part, the 25th Division, commanded by Major General Samuel T. Williams, was to shift over to the I Corps far west coastal area from its own neighboring IX Corps sector on the right. Marine association with the Army division went back to the early days of

¹⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdDs, Apr-May 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, 22 Apr-13 May 53; 1stMar ComdDs, Apr-May 53; 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar ComdDs, May 53; 1st EngrBn ComdDs, Apr-May 53; Hermes, *Truce Tent*.

¹⁸ News story (AP), Robert D. Tuckman, Seoul, dtd 12 May 53, 1stMarDiv ComdD, May 53, App. IX, p. 1.

the war.¹⁹ In August 1950, when the Korean Conflict was then only a few weeks old, the 25th Division, with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and the Army's RCT-5, had spearheaded the first UN counteroffensive on the far southern front, in the Sachon-Chinju area. Now fresh from its own recent period in reserve²⁰ the 25th Division, including its attached Turkish Brigade, was to take over the 33-mile 1st Marine Division line, effective 5 May. Marine armor and artillery, however, would remain in support of the 25th Division and transfer to I Corps control.

Another change at this time affected the designation of the United Nations MLR. Called Line JAMESTOWN in the I Corps sector (and variously in other parts of the EUSAK front as MISSOURI, DULUTH, MINNESOTA, and CAT), the Allied front was redesignated simply as "main line of resistance," beginning 28 April, and was to be so known in all future orders and communications throughout the entire Eighth Army. A further modification dropped the reference "in Korea" from the acronym EUSAK, the title becoming "Eighth U.S. Army."

In the Marine sector, the last few days of April were a study in contrasts. While Marine frontline infantrymen and cannoners were having a comparatively peaceful interlude during this period of minimal CCF activity, division engineers were the proverbial colony of beavers. Following up their rigorous schedule in early April of building Freedom Village from scratch within 36 hours, engineer personnel moved out from the division sector late that month to begin construction of the rear area camps that would shortly be occupied by the Marines while in I Corps reserve.

Located approximately 15 miles east of the Marine MLR, the Camp Casey reserve complex consisted of three major areas. They were: the central one, Casey, which gave its name to the entire installation and would house the new division CP and 5th Marines; Indianhead, to the north, where the 7th Marines, 1st KMC Regiment, Division Reconnaissance Company, machine gun and NCO schools

¹⁹ The two divisions had also seen combat together early in WW II, at Guadalcanal. Col R. D. Heintz, Jr. ltr to Dir, MCHist, HQMC, dtd 27 Sep 70, hereafter *Heintz ltr*.

²⁰ Soon after assuming command of the Eighth Army, in mid-February, General Taylor had begun to stress the need for a complete eight-week training program for reserve divisions before reentering the line, detailed rehearsal of patrols, and more frequent rotation of artillery battalions to maintain their basic mobility. Hermes, *Truce Tent*, p. 391.

were to be established; and Britannia, to the south, assigned to the 1st Marines. Motor transport, engineer, and medical units in support of the respective regiments were to locate nearby.

On 27 April, the day after resumption of truce talks at Panmunjom, Company A engineers began the work of clearing the camp site, erecting prefabricated buildings, and pioneering roads in the 7th Marines northern area. Two days later the 1st KMC Engineer Company was also detailed to Indianhead for work on the 1st KMC Regimental camp. Company C engineers and Company A, 1st Shore Party Battalion, attached to the Engineer Battalion, meanwhile moved into the Casey sector to ready the relocated Division CP and the 5th Marines camp.

Tactical relief of the 1st Marine Division officially began 1 May. By the time it was over, four days later, more than 2,370 truckloads of Marine personnel and equipment had been used in the transfer to Camp Casey. Described another way: if placed bumper to bumper in a continuous convoy, this would have extended more than six miles, the length of the MLR held by a Marine regiment in any major defense sector. As a preliminary step in the relief, on 29 April the division assumed operational control of several incoming Army artillery units (the 8th, 64th, 69th, and 90th Field Artillery Battalions, and the 21st Antiaircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion) plus elements of the Turkish command, including the TAFC Field Artillery Battalion. By midafternoon, the first of the Army infantry relief personnel had also arrived in the division sector, when elements of the three battalions of the 35th Infantry Regiment had reported in to respective 1st Marines²¹ host units, preparatory to assuming responsibility for the center sector of the Marine line.

On 1 May the 5th Marines, then in reserve at Camp Rose, took over responsibility for the 14th Infantry Regiment, designated as the Army maneuver unit. Later that day, when Colonel Tschirgi's regiment closed its headquarters and moved out by motor march to Casey, control of the Army unit transferred to the division. The same day, the 1st KMC/RCT artillery battalion—which, like the 11th Marines units, was to remain on line although KMC infantry personnel were to move to I Corps reserve—came under control of

²¹ The regiment was newly-commanded by Colonel Nelson, the former UN Personnel and Medical Processing Unit officer, who succeeded Colonel Adams as CO, 1st Marines on 1 May.

1 Corps; two days later an Army armored unit, the 89th Tank Battalion, rolled into position in the KMC rear support area and came under division command.

The 7th Marines right regimental sector, with its critical Nevada Cities and two Berlin positions, became the new home for the Turkish battalions of Brigadier General Sirri Acar in a four-day phased operation, beginning 0115 on 3 May. Actual bulk displacement of the first Marine MLR units and their respective outposts got underway on this date, when responsibility for the 7th Marines left battalion sector transferred from 2/7²² to the 1st Battalion, TAFC, and the 7th Marines battalion began displacing to Indianhead. On the same day the division opened its advance command post at Camp Casey.

The first Marine sector to complete the relief was the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, to the south of the Munsan-ni railhead; at midnight on 4 May, with the assumption of sector responsibility by the Army Task Force Track, it moved to the logistical complex at Ascom City where it opened its new CP. Throughout the BMNT hours of 4 and 5 May, Marine positions were transferred to the incoming organic and/or attached units of the U.S. Army 25th Division. Relief of three of the major sectors in the Marine division line was thus well under way by the early hours of the 5th. Final relief and its elaborate phasing operations were completed that morning. On the left flank, the 1st KMC was relieved at 1030 by the incoming U.S. Army 27th Infantry;²³ 30 minutes later, the 1st Marines was replaced in the line by the Army 35th Infantry; and on the right, the 7th Marines sector was taken over by the TAFC. (See Map 28.)

Sharply at 1120 on 5 May,²⁴ the U.S. Army 25th Division assumed responsibility for defense of the MLR in what had been the 1st Marine Division sector for more than 13 months. At the same time all 25th Infantry Division units under operational direction of the division also reverted to parent control. In addition to the Kimpo Regiment, several small Korean Service Corps and medical units retained in the sector also came under Army command.

²² On 23 April, 2/7 had relieved 1/7 in the left battalion sector and 1/7 became the regimental reserve. There was no change in 3/7's location in the right sector. These were the positions for transfer with the Turkish troops in early May.

²³ *ROKMC Comments.*

²⁴ Final relief was largely complete at this time. Exceptions were the 7th Marines reserve battalion, 1/7, relieved by TAFC forces at 0350 the following day and a few remaining Marine rear echelon elements that closed out the sector on 7 May.

I Corps Operation Orders No. 31 and 32 had directed that the 11th Marines remain on line in the sector attached to I Corps Artillery, with a general support mission of reinforcing the fires of the 25th Division artillery, and a secondary task of coordinating counter-battery support. The medium battalion, 4/11, and the 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery, furnished general support for I Corps. Regimental and battalion CPs, as well as the rocket battery, continued to occupy their same locations. A change affected the KMC artillery battalion, however; when transferred to I Corps artillery control it displaced from the Marine sector, with a new general support role of reinforcing the I Corps line.

Also on 5 May, at 1130, the 1st Tank Battalion²⁵ passed to 25th Division control. Two companies, C and B, were assigned to the TAFC (which had no armored units) in the left and right battalion areas, respectively. Company D vehicles came under command of the 35th Infantry Regiment, in the center sector; while A, the remaining company, was designated as the single reserve unit. This was a modification of the Marine system of maintaining two tank companies in reserve, one a short distance behind the MLR and the other, at the armored battalion CP near Munsan-ni. A change in tactics also took place when the Marine tanks came under Army operational control. It had been the Marine practice to retain the tanks at the company CP from where they moved to prepared firing slots at the request of the supported infantry unit.

When the 1st Tank Battalion was attached to the 25th Division, the armored vehicles were shifted to firing slots near the MLR where they occupied semifixed positions.²⁶ Armored personnel carriers (APCs) were assigned by the Army to Company B and used by both B and C as resupply vehicles to haul food, water, fuel, and ammunition to the tanks on line. Also as part of the relief, control of the KMC tank company was transferred from the Marine 1st Tank Battalion to I Corps, although the company still continued in its same location in the old KMC sector.

²⁵ The 1st Tank Battalion was now commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. McCoy, who had relieved Lieutenant Colonel Williamson on 16 April 1953.

²⁶ The tanks were not kept in exposed firing positions at all times. They were parked in protected, defilade revetments and were periodically driven into the firing slots to zero in on targets of opportunity. One tank might thus use any of several slots, and in cases of major attacks reserve tanks could reinforce. LtCol Robert J. Post ltr to Dir, MCHist, HQMC, dtd 28 May 70, hereafter *Post ltr*.

Also remaining in their same positions were MASRT-1 (Marine Air Support Radar Team One), in support of the 25th Infantry Division, MTACS-2 (Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron Two), and VMO-6. The mobile air support section of the observation squadron, however, had moved with the 1st Marine Division to the new Casey area for participation in the coming MARLEX operations scheduled during the reserve training period.

Thus with the relief completed, components of the old Marine division front, from left to right, were: the Kimpo Provisional Regiment; Task Force Track; the 27th Infantry Regiment; 35th Infantry Regiment in the center sector, including its armor and heavy mortar company and 2d and 3d Battalions forward, replacing the 1st Marines 3d and 1st Battalions; and in the right sector, the Turkish Brigade 4.2-inch mortar company and its 1st and 3d Battalions initially located²⁷ in the MLR positions vacated by the 2d and 3d Battalions, 7th Marines.

In addition to the 1st Marine Division railhead and truckhead at Munsan-ni and Ascom City, a subsidiary railhead/truckhead was opened at Tongduchon-ni, two miles southwest of the new division CP at Casey. No change was made in the airhead at K-16. Effective with the 5 May change, remaining elements of the division CP staff at Yongji-ri joined the advance elements at Casey. As the Marines moved off the front lines they received "well-done" messages from the Commandant, General Shepherd, and the U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander in Chief, Admiral Arthur W. Radford, as well as the new I Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Bruce C. Clarke²⁸ who cited the "excellence of the planning, coordination and cooperation which enabled the operation of the past few days to be successfully accomplished."²⁹

²⁷ Later, the Turkish forces were to place three battalions forward [adding the 2d], with a fourth in reserve.

²⁸ General Clarke had succeeded General Kendall on 10 April 1953.

²⁹ CG, I Corps msg to CGs, 1stMarDiv, 25th InfDiv, dtd 6 May 53, in 1stMarDiv ComdD, May 53, App. I, p. 2.

Training While in Reserve and Division Change of Command³⁰

While the division was in reserve, its tactical mission consisted of preparation for commitment on I Corps order as a counterattack force in any of the four division sectors of I Corps. Division Operation Plan 7-53 implemented this I Corps Plan "RESTORE" and set forth the designated blocking positions in the 25th Army, Commonwealth, 1st ROK, and 7th Army Division sectors in event of threatened or actual enemy penetration of the MLR.

The 1st Marine Division's Training Order 8-53, issued on 6 May, the day after the relief was officially effected, outlined the training to be accomplished during the eight-week reserve period, 10 May-5 July. Following a few days' interval devoted to camp construction and improvement of facilities, an active training program commenced. Its objective was the continued improvement of amphibious and ground offensive combat potential of all personnel. Three major regimental combat team MARLEXES were scheduled.³¹ The training syllabus called for a four-phased progressive schooling from individual to battalion and regimental level conducted in all phases of offensive, defensive, and amphibious warfare. Weaponry familiarization, small unit tactics, and combined unit training, with tank-infantry deployment and integration of helicopters at company-level exercises, were emphasized, culminating in a week-long field maneuver.

Lectures were to be kept to a minimum, with at least 50 percent of the tactical training conducted at night. Specialty training in intelligence, signal communications, antitank and mortar, machine gun, mine warfare, and staff NCO schools was also prescribed. Numerous command post exercises were programmed to obtain a high standard of efficiency in both battalion and regimental-level

³⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt Eval Rpts* No. 5, Chap 6, No. 6, Chaps. 7, 9; 1stMarDiv ComdDs, May-June 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, 22 Apr-30 Jun 53; 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 1st EngrBn, HMR-161, VMO-6 ComdDs, May-June 53; Field, *NavOps, Korea*.

³¹ Relief from the Eighth Army defense line provided the first opportunity for expansion of the 1st Marine Division amphibious training to regimental level. Amphibious training in battalion-sized MARLEXES had been under way since June 1952, upon transfer of the Marines to the western coastal sector. This had, in fact, "produced an extra dividend as [their] amphibious retraining program, conducted throughout the summer in the Tokchok Islands, was apprehensively observed by the enemy." Field, *NavOps, Korea*, p. 430.

staff functioning. It was the first time the division had been in reserve since a brief two-week period in late July–August of 1951. A brisk 40-44 hour week, plus organized athletics, insured that the training period was to be fully utilized.

No time was lost getting under way. At a staff conference with battalion commanders on 11 May, General Pollock, division CG, stressed the importance of using the time they were in reserve for enhancing division combat-readiness. Even as he spoke, his 5th Marines had the day before boarded ships at Inchon and were en route to the Yongjong-ni landing area for MARLEX I. Since the 5th Marines, in division reserve, had been the first of the regiments to displace and on 1 May had turned its sector over to the incoming 14th Infantry Regiment, it got the jump on training during the reserve period. Regimental Operation Plan 12-53, of 28 April, had outlined requirements for the 5th Marines RCT LEX 1; from 2-9 May the regiment had participated in a week of intensive amphibious training, including reduced and normal distance CPX dry runs for the coming MARLEX.

With ships from CTE 90.85,³² and air defense by VMFs-311 and -115, Colonel Tschirgi's RCT-5 made the D-Day landing on 13 May with its two assault BLTs securing the objective. An unexpectedly shallow beach gradient and difficulties encountered in unloading vehicles from the causeway resulted in less than a 100 percent performance rating. These were deficiencies that might have been prevented had not the customary rehearsal been cancelled the previous day when a heavy fog obscured the landing beaches. Besides regimental antitank and 4.2-inch mortar units, participating support elements included Company D, 1st Tank Battalion; Company A, 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion; Company C, 1st Engineer Battalion; 1/11; and helicopters from HMR-161 and VMO-6.

Meanwhile, on 15 May, command post and subordinate units from the 1st, 5th (less RCT-5 currently deployed in MARLEX I), and 7th Marines and support elements took part in a one-day division CPX at Camp Casey stressing mobility, security and operational procedures. Another CPX on 22-23 May by 11th Marines and engineer personnel emphasized dispersion, camouflage, and message handling

³² CTE 90.85 constituted the MARLEX training element of TF-90, Amphibious Force Far East, redesignated Amphibious Group Western Pacific earlier that month.

under simulated combat conditions. Units of the three infantry regiments plus the KMCs training with the 7th Marines at Indian-head combined in a CPX-FEX (command post-firing exercise) on 26-27 May. Realism bowed to current ordnance supply economics in that ammunition was carried for individual weapons, but it would "not be loaded except on specific orders from an officer."³³

The CPX-FEX was held as a trial exercise for an Eighth Army CPX scheduled later in the month, which was postponed indefinitely on 29 May because of the critical battlefront situation and continuing enemy attacks across the EUSAK front. Extensive preparations were also underway for MARLEX II, with RCT-7, from 2-10 June; and concluding MARLEX III, scheduled 14-23 June, with RCT-1.

Armor and advance regimental elements had left for the Ascom City-Inchon staging area by 1 June, preparatory for departure to the Yongjong-ni beaches on the Korean west coast in the vicinity of Kunsan. The troop list included approximately 250 officers and 4,450 enlisted from Colonel Funk's 7th Marines and support units, including USN and KMC. Infantry personnel from the regiment's three battalions formed the three assault teams plus a reserve battalion composed of 475 Korean Marines designated as BLT 5/KMC. Regimental support units included Company C, 1st Engineer Battalion; Company D, 1st Medical Battalion; Company C, 1st Shore Party Battalion; Company B, 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion, and various motor transport, amphibian truck, military police, and helicopter detachments.

R-Day on 5 June went off per schedule. Despite intelligence estimates which cheerily predicted that only "nine days of rain can be expected during the month of June",³⁴ RCT-7 drew one out of the barrel with its D-Day landing, 6 June. This took place during heavy rains and decreased visibility which threw the boat waves off phase by minutes and required more than the allotted time for HMR-161 troop and cargo lifts.

Use of a 144-foot-long M-2 steel treadway pontoon bridge loaned by the Army, emplaced from the end of the causeway to the beach high water mark, was considered highly successful. It solved unloading problems encountered in the earlier MARLEX, in that all heavy equip-

³³ 1stMarDiv msg to addrees in 1stMarDiv G-3 Jn1, dtd 22 May 53.

³⁴ MAR RCT LEX II, Opn Plan I, App. 1 to Annex B, dtd 9 May 53, p. 1, in 7thMar ComdD, May 53.

ment and vehicles were landed on the designated beaches. Further experimentation with this novel employment of the M-2 was recommended to test the coupling system of bridge and causeway during periods of heavy surf. On the minus side, shore party officers noted that night transfer operations had been hindered because of the lack of running lights on the amtracs.

On 9 June, as RCT-7 was on the way back from its amphibious exercise, a directive from ComNavFE (Vice Admiral Robert P. Briscoe) notified the division of cancellation of the forthcoming RCT MARLEX III. All available shipping was being held on 24-hour readiness for the expected final repatriation of POWs (Operation BIG SWITCH). All afloat training exercises by Marine, Army, and Navy units between 6 June and 15 October were to be cancelled.

The division was host to ranking I Corps, Eighth Army, Korean, and 1st Commonwealth officials when a special helicopter assault demonstration was staged 11-12 June at Camp Casey. Two rocket launcher sections, 14 HMR-161 copters, and 2/5 infantrymen were deployed to show the diverse combat capabilities of the aerial workhorse. While in I Corps reserve, the division was also host—and winner—of the I Corps Pistol Matches. And 3/11, which the previous month had taken the Army Training Test 6-2 (a) Modified, was notified the battalion had scored 92.91 percent and received congratulations from the CGs, I Corps Artillery and Eighth Army.

A change of command within the 1st Marine Division took place on 15 June with the arrival of Major General Randolph McC. Pate. The retiring CG, General Pollock, was presented the Distinguished Service Medal by the I Corps commander, General Clarke, for his "outstanding success in the defense of Carson, Vegas, and Elko." The previous month, General Pollock had received the Korean Order of Military Merit, Taiguk for his active part in the formation, development, and training of the Korean Marine Corps. Attending the change of command ceremonies were General Megee, CG 1st MAW, General Schilt, CG AirFMFPac, and other Marine, I Corps, Commonwealth, and Korean senior officers.

The new 1st Marine Division CG was coming to his Korean post from Camp Lejeune, N. C. where (like General Pollock before him) he had most recently commanded the 2d Marine Division. Commissioned originally in the Marine Corps Reserve in 1921, General Pate was to later rise to four-star rank. Prior to World War II,

he had seen expeditionary service in Santo Domingo, in 1923-1924, and in China from 1927-1929, and also served in Hawaii. For his outstanding service and skill in complicated staff duties, first at Guadalcanal, and later during amphibious operations at Peleliu, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa, General Pate had been awarded the Legion of Merit and a Gold Star in lieu of a second Legion of Merit.

After the war, he had served two tours as head of the Division Reserve, in 1946 and 1951. Other assignments included Director of the Marine Corps Educational Center at Quantico and Deputy Director of Logistic Plans in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.³⁵

*Heavy May-June Fighting*³⁶

After the early May change of lines, the Chinese lost little time in testing the new UNC defenses. Shortly after 0200 on 15 May, the CCF directed a two-battalion probe on the Carson-Elko-Vegas trio and the Berlin-East Berlin outposts newly held by the Turkish brigade. Supported by heavy concentrations of mortar and artillery, one battalion of enemy soldiers moved against each of the two major defense complexes. Marine Company C tanks, occupying the firing slots that night, accounted for heavy enemy losses in the action, estimated at 200 CCF killed and 100 wounded. Assisting the TAFC Field Artillery Battalion in throwing back the attack were 1/11, 2/11, and 4/11 which sent 3,640 rounds into the sharp four-hour engagement.

The TAFC defense was further reinforced later that day with 21 air strikes against hostile personnel and weapons positions north of the Turkish sector. Adding their weight to the clash, 3/11 and the rocket battery also brought their guns into action, for a combined 5,526 Marine rounds³⁷ dispatched against the enemy.

³⁵ DivInfo, HQMC, Biography of Gen Randolph McC. Pate, Jan 56, rev.

³⁶ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdDs, May-Jun 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, 15 May, 28-30 May 53; 11thMar, 2/11, 1st TkBn ComdDs, May-Jun 53; 1st MAW ComdD, May 53; 1st MAW PIR 136-53, dtd 14-15 May 53 and PIR 150-53, dtd 28-29 May 53; VMAs-121, -212, -323, VMFs-115, -311 ComdDs, May 53; *Hermes, Truce Tent*; Miller, Carroll, and Tackley, *Korea, 1951-1953*.

³⁷ Total ammunition expenditure by the 11th Marines and the 25th Division artillery batteries was 11,527 rounds, to the Chinese output of approximately 10,000 rounds. 11thMarDiv ComdD, May 53, p. 13.

It was not until 25 May, after the UNC had made its final offer at the truce talks, however, that CCF artillery really began to open up on the Nevada complex. The increased activity by hostile pieces, during the 25–27 May period, was duly noted by the artillery Marines who laconically reported, "Operations followed the recent pattern: enemy shelling of the Turkish Brigade increased during the afternoon; no contacts were reported."³⁸

This latter situation changed abruptly on 28 May. Beginning at 1800, major elements of the Chinese 120th Division launched simultaneous attacks over 17,500 yards of I Corps front that stretched from COP-2 eastward to that consistent trouble-spot, the Nevada Cities, on to the Berlins, and finally the Hook area in the adjacent Commonwealth Division sector. Supported by heavy artillery fires, one CCF battalion moved in towards Carson and Elko. Another battalion,³⁹ under cover of smoke, attacked central COP Vegas, while a third struck Berlin and East Berlin on the right flank. Three hours after the initial attack, defenders at Carson and Elko were engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the Chinese.

By midnight the men of the 35th Infantry had beaten back the attack at COP-2. The Turks, likewise, were still in possession of the two Berlin (platoon-strength) outposts, but Commonwealth forces were involved in a pitched battle at Ronson and Warsaw. The situation was even grimmer at this time in the Nevada Cities area outposted by the TAFC. Although the Turkish troops continued to hold Vegas, where 140 men were dug in, Carson (two-platoon size) had fallen and Elko (platoon-strength) was heavily besieged. Shortly thereafter, the 25th Division ordered that the TAFC withdraw from the latter position to its own MLR. The diversionary attack against Berlin-East Berlin had been broken off and the twin positions were secured.

During the first six hours of the attack, the night of 28–29 May, Colonel Mills' 11th Marines, now under I Corps command, had sent 9,500 rounds crashing into Chinese strongpoints, while Marine air observers directed eight missions against active enemy artillery positions. Ripples from the 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery, transferred to the

³⁸ 11thMar ComdD, May 53, dtd 27 May, p. 19.

³⁹ Some historians indicate that the 120th Division initially sent four battalions forward in the action, with two against the main objective, Vegas. Hermes, *Truce Tent*, p. 463.

Commonwealth sector to support the Hook defense, were fired on CCF troop activity there. Another curtain of flame engulfed the Carson intruders. When the fighting started, 15 Marine tanks were positioned in the Turkish sector. Company B and C vehicles, under Captains James M. Sherwood and Robert J. Post, relentlessly pounded the approaching CCF columns, while Company D was put on a 30-minute standby. As the action developed, additional tanks were committed until 33 were on line at one time or another.⁴⁰

When savage Chinese pummeling of the 25th Division outposts continued the following day, Colonel Nelson's 1st Marines was transferred at 1315 to operational control of I Corps. The regiment's three infantry battalions, antitank, and heavy mortar companies promptly moved out from their Britannia headquarters and within two hours had relocated at 25th Division bivouac areas south of the KANSAS line in readiness for counterattack orders. The 1st Marine Division Reconnaissance Company was similarly ordered to 25th Division control to relieve a 14th Infantry Regiment reserve company in position along the east bank Imjin River defenses.

Overhead, close air support runs were being conducted by pilots of Marine Attack Squadrons 212, 121, and 323. A series of seven 4-plane strikes hit repeatedly from noon on those Chinese troops, hardware, and resupply areas north of the 25th Division line. The aerial assault continued late into the night with MPQ missions executed by VMA-121 and WMF-311.

During the 29th, control of the Vegas outposts—where 1st Division Marines had fought and died exactly two months earlier—changed hands several times between the indomitable Turkish defenders and the persistent Chinese. By dark, the CCF had wrested the northern crest from the TAFC which still held the southeastern face of the position. In the 24-hour period from 1800 on the 28th through the 29th, the 11th Marines had expended 41,523 rounds in 531 missions. At one point in the action Chinese counterbattery fire scored a direct hit on Turkish gun emplacements, knocking six howitzers

⁴⁰ Discussing the Army employment of tanks in fixed MLR positions, Lieutenant Colonel Post recalled that although many Marine tankers were originally opposed to this procedure, "I am forced to confess that it worked well in that static defensive situation." A major advantage resulting from this change was that tanks effectively linked the MLR with rear area CPs through land line and radio. While initial preparatory fire often tore out the phone lines, the radios worked well and this was "generally the only reliable means of communications with the scene of action." *Post ltr.*

out of action from the explosions of charges already loaded. As a result 2/11, under its new battalion commander, Major Max Berueffy, Jr., took over the direct support mission of the TAFC Brigade. Marine artillery spotters on station from 0450 to midnight directed 42 fire missions on CCF guns, while the rocket battery unleashed 20 ripples against troop activity, one of which caused 50 WIAs. Although an Allied counterattack early in the day had restored Elko to friendly control, the enemy refused to be dislodged from Carson.

I Corps had previously regarded the defensive positions of the Nevada complex as "critical," with the TAFC having been "instructed to hold them against all enemy attacks."⁴¹ By midday on the 29th, however, the I Corps commander, General Clarke, and 25th Division CG, General Williams, had apparently had a change of mind. The Vegas strength was down to some 40 Turks. Altogether more than 150 men under the 25th command had been killed and another 245 wounded in defense of Nevada positions. It appeared that the Chinese, constantly reinforcing with fresh battalions despite estimated losses of 3,000, intended to retain the offensive until the outposts were taken.

With Carson and Vegas both occupied by the enemy, the Elko position became untenable without the support of its sister outposts. Six times the CCF had crossed over from Carson to Elko to try to retake the latter position, but had been thus far deterred by Allied firepower. Accordingly, at 2300, the 25th Division ordered its reserve 14th Regiment, earlier committed to the Elko-Carson counterattack, to withdraw from Elko and the Turks to pull back from Vegas to the MLR. By daybreak the withdrawal was completed and 25th Division and Turkish troops had regrouped on the MLR.

The Army reported that more than 117,000 rounds of artillery and 67 close air support missions had buttressed the UNC ground effort. Official estimates indicated that in the three-day action the Chinese had fired 65,000 rounds of artillery and mortar, "up to this point an unprecedented volume in the Korean War."⁴² The Marine artillery contribution from its four active battalions during this 28-30 May period totaled 56,280 rounds in 835 missions.

⁴¹ *Hermes, Truce Tent*, p. 462.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 464.

During the three-day siege, 15 to 33 Marine tanks poured their lethal 90mm projectiles on the enemy from MLR firing slots. At times the action was so heavy that the tanks were refueled on line. As they ran out of ammunition and fuel, "armored utility vehicles of the battalion, with a basic load of ammunition aboard, maneuvered beside the tanks in position and rearmed them on the spot,"⁴³ to permit virtual uninterrupted tank firing. One Marine was killed in the action the first night. Although 4,162 rounds of Chinese fire fell near the tank positions, no damage to materiel was reported. For their part the M-46s and flames were responsible for 721 enemy deaths, an estimated 137 more killed, 141 wounded, and an estimated 1,200 injured.

During the second day of action, nearly 20 missions were flown by Corsairs and Skyraiders of the three Marine attack squadrons and the jet fighters of VMF-311 and -115. Altogether throughout 28-30 May, Marine aircraft had flown no less than 119 sorties for the inflamed sectors of the U.S. Army 25th Division and adjacent British 1st Commonwealth Division. Of these, 99 were in support of the sagging Carson-Elko-Vegas-Berlins line.

Ground action ceased the following day as rain drenched the battlefield, although the 11th Marines reported sightings of more than 200 Chinese soldiers, most of them on the three recently lost outposts. Benched while the fierce battle was going on, the 1st Marines remained under operational control of I Corps as a possible contingency force from 29 May to 5 June. On the latter date, following the Eighth Army decision not to retake the Carson-Elko-Vegas outposts, the regiment reverted to Marine control and returned to Camp Britannia. The previous day the Communists had agreed on all major points of the UNC final offer and it appeared that a cease-fire was close at hand.

Diplomats and military leaders both felt this latest Chinese assault was to show a strong military hand and win dominating terrain features along the MLR. Thus the enemy would be able to improve his defensive posture when final battlelines were adjusted at the truce. It was not believed that the CCF effort was an attempt to expand their operations into a general offensive. In any event, the Nevada positions were downgraded from their previous designation as major outposts. I Corps also decreed no further effort would be

⁴³ 1st TkBn ComdD, May 53, p. 3.

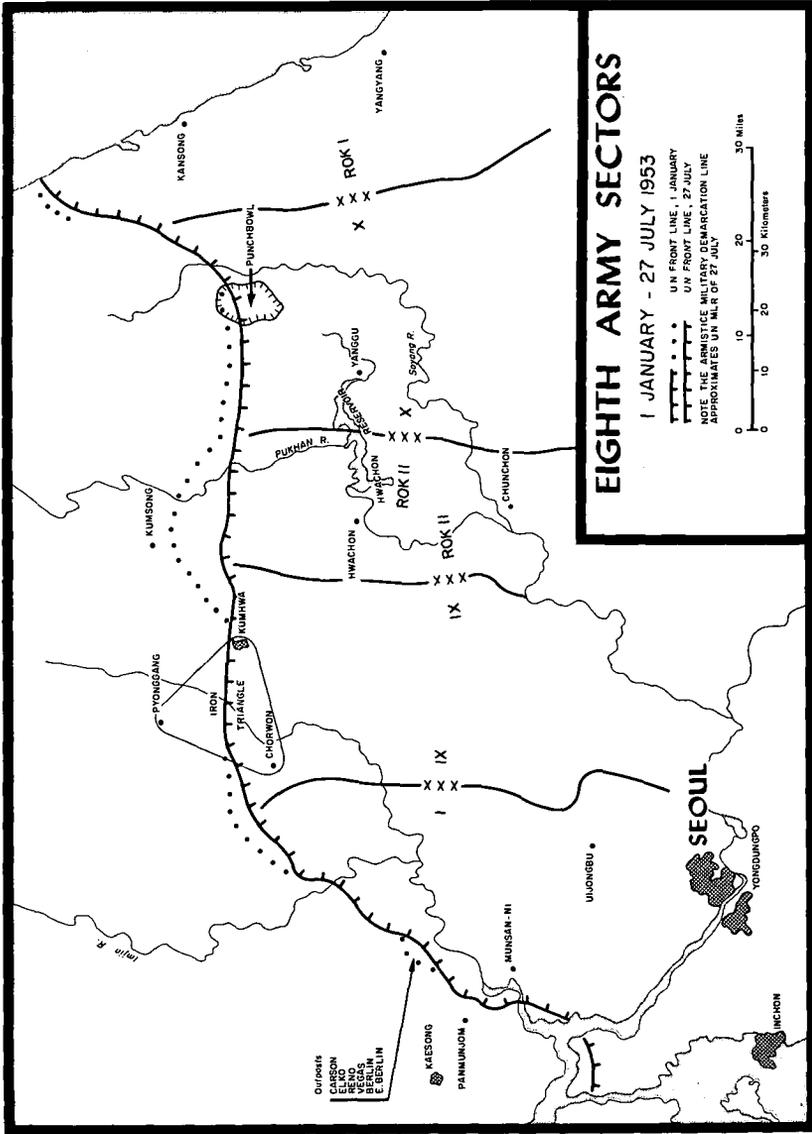
made to retake them and that a "reevaluation of the terrain in view of the destruction of the defensive work indicates these hills are not presently essential to defense of the sector."⁴⁴

If things were now relatively quiet along the battlefield of the I Corps coastal sector, the situation had begun to heat up in the central part of the UNC defense line. On 10 June, following a CCF realignment of troops and supply buildup that had not gone unnoticed by Eighth Army intelligence officials, elements of the CCF 60th and 68th Armies struck the ROK II Corps area, on the east-central front. (See Map 29.) Advancing south along both sides of the Pukhan River with two divisions, the Chinese struck at the ROK II defense line which originally had bulged out to form a salient in the Kumsong vicinity. Within six days the ROK line had been forced back 4,000 yards. In subsequent assaults the enemy made new penetrations further west in the ROK II MLR. Although the main Communist thrust was directed against the ROK II Corps, secondary attacks were also made in the X Corps sector east of ROK II, in the Punchbowl area manned by the ROK 20th Division. It was the heaviest, all-out drive since the CCF spring offensive of April-May 1951, when the UNC had been pushed south approximately 30 miles across the entire Korean front.

By 18 June, the CCF assaults started to settle down. During the nine days of flaming action, ROK units had suffered some 7,300 casualties to enemy losses of 6,600. Boundaries had been redrawn and three ROK divisions had been redeployed in counterattacks to plug holes in the line that the Chinese had punched open. Nearly 15,000 yards of ROK front had been pushed 4,000 yards south and several hill positions east of the Pukhan had been lost.

The brief respite ended 24 June when the CCF again directed heavy blows against the ROK troops, ignoring other UN forces in the Eighth Army line. It was generally considered a retaliatory move for the 18 June mass release of anti-Communist prisoners by South Korean President Rhee. This time the major target of the renewed Chinese offensive was the ROK 9th Division, in the IX Corps sector immediately west of the ROK II Corps. On 25 June the 1st ROK Division on the eastern flank of I Corps, to the right of the 1st

⁴⁴ CG, I Corps msg to CG, 7thInfDiv, CG, 25thInfDiv, CG, 1stMarDiv, GOC, 1stComWelDiv, CG I Corps Arty, dtd 9 Jun 53 in 1stMarDiv ComdD, Jun 53, App. 1, p. 1.



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MAP 29

Commonwealth Division, was pounded by another Chinese division. Significantly, the date was the third anniversary of the invasion of South Korea.⁴⁵ The 7th Marines, training in I Corps reserve, was put on standby status. The regiment was removed the following day when the 1st KMC/RCT (minus its 3d Battalion) was instead placed in readiness,⁴⁶ and subsequently moved out from its Indianhead area to be committed as a relief force in the left sector of the 1st ROK line.

By the 26th, the persistent Chinese probes of the 1st ROK sector had resulted in several forward outposts being overrun. To help stem the action the Marine 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery was displaced on I Corps Artillery order from its regular position (in the right regimental sector) 20 miles east to support the hard-pressed ROK division. On at least two occasions the battery placed ripples between ROK positions only 600 yards apart and it was felt that these "continued requests for fire close to friendly troops attested to the gunnery of the unit."⁴⁷ Between that date and the 30th, the rocket battery remained in the ROK sector, firing a total of 25 ripples. For the 25th Infantry Division sector, however, the front continued undisturbed throughout the entire month of June.

*Developments in Marine Air*⁴⁸

While the division was in I Corps reserve during the greater part of the April-June period, the 6,800-man 1st Marine Aircraft Wing

⁴⁵ The strong likelihood of such attacks at this time had been noted by Eighth Army in a warning issued the previous day that reminded all commanders to be "particularly alert" at this time. CG, 8th Army msg to CG, 1stMarDiv and addrees, G-3 Jnl, dtd 24 Jun 53.

⁴⁶ This change was due to the existing policy of not having a United States unit serving under operational control of a Korean commander. Had the 7th Marines or other U.S. unit been so committed, it is expected that a provisional task force would have been created for the assignment, under a non-Korean commander. *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9, p. 9-20. Actually, the 7th Marines alert on the 25th was of such short duration that no mention of it appears in the regimental command diary, although the fact is so noted in division records. The 1st KMC/RCT was ordered to move out from the Indianhead area at 1630 on 26 June and came under operational control of 1st ROK Division at 1540, 27 June. By 0100 the following day, it had relieved 11th ROK Regiment. *ROKMC Comments*.

⁴⁷ 11thMar ComdD, Jun 53, p. 15.

⁴⁸ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt Eval Rpts* No. 4, Chap 10, No. 5, Chap 9, No. 6, Chaps. 9, 10; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Apr 53; 1/7 ComdD, Apr 53, App. IV, Rpt of Night Air Strikes; 1st MAW, MAGs-12, -33, VMAs-121, -212, -323, VMFs-115, -311, VMF(N)-513, VMJ-1 ComdDs, Apr-Jun 53; VMA-312 ComdDs, Apr-May 53; VMA-251 ComdD, June 53; VMO-6 ComdD, Apr 53; Futrell, *USAF, Korea; Hermes, Truce Tent*.

continued its missions as an operational component of Fifth Air Force. For the Marine air arm it was a time of a major tactical innovation, a number of new air records set, and rapid personnel changes in the squadrons.

Shortly before the Marine division went off the line, a new method of close air support at night was introduced. This employed the use of two or more ground controlled 24-inch searchlights located on prominent terrain features along the MLR in the 7th Marines left battalion sector where the missions were to be flown. Enemy-held reverse slopes—in some cases less than 500 yards from Marine positions—were thereby pinpointed by the powerful intersecting searchlight beams. These long pencil-shaped beams created an excellent artificial horizon and enabled pilots to make bombing or strafing runs with a high degree of accuracy even on the blackest of nights. Manned by ANGLICO personnel, the lights were employed either for target location or illumination (both shadow and direct). A tactical airborne observer in an OE light liaison plane of VMO-6 directed the searchlight teams and controlled the missions.

A week of experimentation and trial runs to perfect the night close air support (NCAS) was conducted by several VMF(N)-513 pilots under direction of Colonel Jack R. Cram. Formerly CO of Marine Air Control Group Two at K-3, he had extended his tour in Korea to complete work on the new program. On 12 April, the first night of operations, Major Charles L. Schroeder and Second Lieutenant Thomas F. St. Denis flew two night support missions in F7F Tigercats. Although employed only a few weeks prior to the division going into reserve on 5 May, the new system rated an enthusiastic response from both pilots and ground commanders, all the way up to the division CG. As the latter reported to the Commandant following the first week of night close support missions, "results . . . exceeded all expectations."⁴⁹

Between 12 April and 5 May, the night fighter squadron conducted 58 NCAS sorties in the division right sector employing this

⁴⁹ CG, 1stMarDiv msg to CMC, dtd 18 Apr 53; in 1stMarDiv ComdD, Apr 53, App. II, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Confirmed damage assessment in this period: 75 enemy KIA, 5 WIA; 25 bunkers, 12 personnel shelters, 20 mortar positions, 32 automatic weapons positions, 1 ammunition bunker, and 1 37mm AA position destroyed; 1 supply area, 3 weapons damaged; 1,545 yards trenchline destroyed; and 190 secondary explosions or fires. Due to operating conditions, these figures represented only 80 percent of the total flights made on which TAOs confirmed results. VMF(N)-513 ComdDs, Apr-May 53.

new control system with excellent results.⁵⁰ The procedure was a marked success and made it possible to provide continuous 24-hour-a-day close support to Marine infantry units. It was considered a supplement to, not a replacement for the MPQ. (radar controlled bombing) missions of MASRT-1. Plans called for F9F aircraft to be integrated into the program, since the F7F Tigercats were being replaced by jets. Allied psychological warfare teams on 17 April introduced a different theme in their broadcasts to the enemy: that of the dangers to the CCF from the new searchlight marking of targets. As a Marine training bulletin noted: "It is believed that this method of attack by aircraft is particularly demoralizing to the enemy because he is unable to anticipate where the strike will hit, and therefore has no means of defending himself against it."⁵¹

Another tactical improvement about this same time dealt with artillery flak suppression in support of close support aircraft. Two refinements made in the procedure in the late spring of 1953 involved firing of HE rounds during the actual run of planes over the target. Basically, the plan consisted of releasing a TOT or VT concentration on the most lucrative enemy antiaircraft positions within a 2,500-yard circle around the strike area. A continuous rain of HE-fuzed projectiles was placed on these targets for a three-minute period, during which Marine planes made their runs.

Favorable results were achieved in that new system tended to keep enemy antiaircraft gunners off-balance for a longer period of time and thus decreased the danger to friendly attacking aircraft. On the other hand, pilots quickly noted that this became an "unimaginative employment of an unvarying flak suppression schedule which Communist AA gunners soon caught onto and turned to their own advantage."⁵²

With respect to squadron hardware, Marine combat potential increased substantially during the spring months with the phasing out of F7Fs in Night Fighter Squadron 513 and introduction of the new F3D-2 twin-jet Skyknight intruder. By late May the Allocation of 24 of these jet night fighters had been augmented by 4 more jets from the carrier USS *Lake Champlain* and the squadron "assumed its primary night-fighter mission for the first time in the

⁵¹ *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9, p. 9-106, quoting 1stMarDiv Training Bulletin No. 5-53, dtd 10 Jun 53.

⁵² *PctFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 10, p. 10-70.

Korean War."⁵³ While the sturdy, dependable Tigercats⁵⁴ made their final contribution to the United Nations air effort early in May with the experimental NCAS program, the new Skyknights continued the squadron's unique assignment inaugurated in late 1952 as night escort to Air Force B-29 bombers on their strike missions. Not a single B-29 was lost to enemy interceptors after 29 January 1953. The capabilities of the skilled Marine night-fighters were noted in a "well done" message received by the CO, VMF(N)-513 in April from the Air Force.⁵⁵

Organizational changes within the wing included the arrival, on 29 May, of a new MAG-12 unit to replace the "Checkerboard" squadron. VMA-332 (Lieutenant Colonel John B. Berteling) was slated to operate on board the USS *Bairoko* (CVE-115) for the F4U carrier-based squadron VMA-312⁵⁶ due for return to CONUS. Veteran of 33 months of combat while attached to the wing as West Coast (CTE 95.1.1) aerial reconnaissance and blockade squadron, VMA-312 (Lieutenant Colonel Winston E. Jewson) was officially relieved 10 June. The change, moreover, was the first phase of a new personnel policy, carrier unit rotation, that was expected to implement a unit rotation program for land-based squadrons. It was anticipated that the new unit rotation program would eliminate inherent weakness of the individual pilot rotation system and thus increase the combat effectiveness of the wing.⁵⁷

During the period other organizational changes included transfer of administrative control of VMF(N)-513 on 15 May from MAG-

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 10-99.

⁵⁴ Also characterized by squadron members as the "tired old Tigercats" in reference to the war-weary, 1945-vintage aircraft. VMF(N)-513 ComdD, May 53, p. 6.

⁵⁵ CO, 19th Bomber Group (Col Harvey C. Dorney, USAF) msg to CO, VMF(N)-513 (LtCol Robert F. Conley), n.d., reading: "19th Bomber Group Airborne Commander and crews participating in attack on Sinanju Bridge Complex, 11 April, have high praise for night fighter protection. All feel that without their protection severe damage or loss of B-29's would have resulted." VMF(N)-513 ComdD, Apr 53, p. 6.

⁵⁶ Prior to early May, VMA-312 had been based aboard the USS *Bataan* (CVL-29). The carrier itself was scheduled for relief from the Korean Theater shortly before the new afloat MAG-12 squadron reported in, and a transfer was made by 312 to the new, larger escort carrier on 8 May.

⁵⁷ Comments *PctFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 10, p. 10-33: "Severe tactical operations weakness developed throughout the war in Korea which can be traced directly to the individual pilot rotation system. These weaknesses are inherent in any system which precludes pre-combat unit training of pilots in the tactical squadron with which they later go into combat. The situation is aggravated further when pilots, many of them inadequately pre-combat trained, are rotated through combat engaged units so rapidly that squadron esprit cannot develop to a degree which will insure a high standard of tactical efficiency."

33 to MAG-12.⁵⁸ The squadron, with its new twin-engined jet fighters, moved from K-8 (Kunsan) further up the coast to the MAG-12 complex at K-6 (Pyongtaek), upon completion of the new 8,000-foot concrete runway there. This phased redeployment of nightfighter personnel and equipment began in late May and was concluded on 6 June without any interim reduction of combat commitments. Replacement of the squadron F7F-3Ns with F3D-2s was also completed in early June.

Late that month, plans were underway for two additional changes: the Marine photographic squadron, VMJ-1, was due to be separated administratively and operationally from MAG-33 on 1 July and revert to 1st MAW; and Marine Wing Service Squadron One (MWSS-1) was to be deactivated, effective 1 July.

The change of command relationships between CG, FAF and CG, 1st MAW earlier in the year⁵⁹ which had restored operational control of certain designated Marine air units to the wing commander, increased the efficiency of 1st MAW operations. Despite the fact that VMJ-1 at times contributed nearly 40 percent to the total FAF input of all daylight combat photographs,⁶⁰ aerial intelligence (both pre- and post-strike photos) supplied to wing and group headquarters was considered inadequate. As a MAG-33 intelligence officer commented with some exasperation as late in the war as May 1953:

The Section continued to experience difficulty in obtaining 1:50,000 scale overlays of friendly MLR and OP positions. These overlays are important for making up target maps for close support missions, but they are continually held up for long periods by higher echelons, and, if received here at all, are then often too old to be considered reliable.⁶¹

Similarly, at the individual squadron level, the carrier unit VMA-312 shortly before its relief, reported: "The one limitation on squadron activities continued to be photo coverage of the strikes. With limited facilities available, the squadron has no clear cut pictures of strike results."⁶² Return of VMJ-1 to operational control of General

⁵⁸ MAG-12, since 1 April, had been under Colonel Edward B. Carney, who assumed command upon reassignment of Colonel Bowman to the States.

⁵⁹ See Chapter VI.

⁶⁰ The magnitude of the VMJ-1 work load "can be gauged by one day's peak effort of 5,000 exposures, which, if laid end to end, would cover a strip of ground one and one half miles long." *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 4, Chap. 10, p. 10-67.

⁶¹ MAG-33 ComdD, May 53, p. H-2.

⁶² VMA-312 ComdD, May 53, p. G-2.

Megee ultimately "gave the Wing adequate photo-intelligence for the first time since commencement of combat operations in Korea."⁶⁸

Indoctrination of new replacement personnel within the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing took a swift upturn during the spring period. Pilots who had completed 100 combat missions were transferred to staff duty elsewhere in the wing in Korea or rotated States de. The average squadron personnel strength ran to 88 percent of 100 for enlisted; and officer strength, considerably less, frequently dipped as low as 61 percent. Under the 100-missions policy, it was a time of rapid turnover of unit commanders, too, as witnessed from the following squadron diary entries:

VMA-212—Lieutenant Colonel James R. Wallace assumed command from Major Edward C. Kicklighter, effective 19 June; the latter had been squadron ExO and acting CO in interim period following 30 April departure of former CO, Lieutenant Colonel Smunk;

VMA-323—Lieutenant Colonel Clarence H. Moore vice Lieutenant Colonel Frash, on 11 April; and Major Robert C. Woten succeeding Lieutenant Colonel Moore on 27 June;

VMA-121—Major Richard L. Braun vice Lieutenant Colonel Hughes, on 21 April;

VMF(N)-513—Lieutenant Colonel Ross S. Mickey vice Lieutenant Colonel Conley, on 6 May; in June, Lieutenant Colonel Robert L. Conrad, acting CO, named CO for Lieutenant Colonel Mickey, hospitalized for injuries received in a May aircraft accident;

VMJ-1—Lieutenant Colonel Leslie T. Bryan, Jr. vice Lieutenant Colonel William M. Ritchey, on 15 May;

VMF-311—Lieutenant Colonel Arthur M. Moran vice Lieutenant Colonel Coss, on 21 April; Lieutenant Colonel Bernard McShane vice Lieutenant Colonel Moran, on 1 June;

VMF-115—Lieutenant Colonel Lynn H. Stewart vice Lieutenant Colonel Warren, 5 June.

With respect to CAS activities, excellent weather in April—only a single day of restricted flying—brought the 1st MAW air tally that month for its land-based squadrons to 3,850 effective combat sorties (440 more by *VMA-312*) and 7,052.8 combat hours. This was a substantial increase over the preceding months. Not surprisingly, the average daily sortie rate for the month was correspondingly high: 128.3. Of 1,319 CAS sorties the largest proportion, 579 and 424 (43.9 percent, 32.1 percent), were for Marine and ROK operations, respectively.

⁶⁸ *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 10, p. 10-65.

The outstanding day of the month was 17 April. During the 24-hour reporting period, 262 sorties were completed by MAGs-33 and -12 pilots,⁶⁴ who expended a combined total of 228.3 tons of bombs and 28,385 rounds of 20mm ammunition. For the two MAG-33 fighter bomber squadrons, it represented maximum effort day. Preparation had been made a week earlier to devise the targeting and best all-round flight schedules for ordnance and line sections. Objective areas for the mass attack were picked by the wing G-3 target selection branch and approved by the EUSAK-Fifth Air Force JOC. It was decided that "flights of eight aircraft staggered throughout the day would offer the best efficiency in expediting reloading and refueling with not more than sixteen aircraft inactive on the flight line at one time."⁶⁵ Throughout the day, from 0410 to 2030, VMFs-311 and -115 continuously pounded designated targets in support of the U.S. 7th and 3d Infantry Divisions.⁶⁶ Commented MAG-33:

Hitting an all-time high in the annals of memorable days, this, the seventeenth of April not only further proved MAG-33's ability to cripple the enemy's already diminishing strength but it also allowed VMF-115 to set records in total airborne sorties launched in a single day plus a record total ordnance carried and expended in one day by jet type aircraft.⁶⁷

VMF-115 alone, with 30 pilots and 23 aircraft, had flown 114 sorties and delivered 120 tons of bombs on North Korean targets.

A sample of the intensity of this maximum day was a series of three early-morning interdiction strikes led by three VMF-115 pilots that launched the effort. Led by Lieutenant Colonel Joe L. Warren, Major Samuel J. Mantel, Jr., and Major John F. Bolt, the 23 attacking Panther jets lashed the objective with 22.35 tons of ordnance and 4,630 rounds of 20mm ammunition. The three missions destroyed half of

⁶⁴ Between 15-18 April the west coast carrier squadron was under a FEAF order restricting normal interdiction missions. This was to protect UNC sick and wounded POWs in transit from China to Kaesong for final exchange at Panmunjom. VMA-312 air operations were held to CAS along the bomblines. "Marine fliers of the 'Checkerboard' squadron proved adept at this unusual role [CAS support missions along the front lines], and received a 'well done' from JOC Korea as the Corsairs flew more than 100 close air support sorties from 16-18 April." *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 10, p. 10-110.

⁶⁵ MAG-33 ComdD, Apr 53, p. 51.

⁶⁶ Their respective locations were: 7th Division, at the extreme right of I Corps sector; and further east, the 3d Division occupied the corresponding right flank of IX Corps sector. VMF-311 concentrated on the 7th Division targets while VMF-115 efforts were devoted primarily to the 3d Division.

⁶⁷ MAG-33 ComdD, Apr 53, p. 51.

the buildings and inflamed 95 percent of the target area in the enemy supply concentration point T'ongch'on on the Korean east coast.

By contrast, wing operations in May were considerably hampered by the bad weather peculiar to this time of the year in Korea. Restricted flying conditions were recorded for 18 days of the month. A total of 153 CAS sorties were flown for the Marine division before its 5 May relief from the front lines. Of the wing's 3,359 sorties⁶⁸ during the month, 1,405 were for close support to forward units beating back Communist encroachment efforts. The allocation of CAS sorties was 412 for U.S. infantry divisions (including 211 for the 25th Division occupying the customary Marine sector); 153 for the 1st Commonwealth Division at the Hook which the Communists assaulted on 27-28 May as part of their overall thrust against western I Corps defenses; 412 sorties for ROK units; and 63, miscellaneous. Heaviest action for Marine aviators took place towards the end of the month to thwart enemy blows in the I Corps sector where Army and Turkish units were attempting to repulse the Chinese.

The renewed effort of the Chinese Communists against UNC ground forces in late May continued sporadically the following month. A number of new records were set by Marines flying CAS assignments under the Fifth Air Force. During the intense mid-June attacks on the ROK II Corps area and adjacent X Corps sector, MAGs-12 and -33 pilots chalked up some busy days. Between 10-17 June, Marine, Navy, and Air Force aircraft had flown 8,359 effective sorties, the bulk of this massive FAF effort to buttress the crumbling ROK defense. Of this number, Marine sorties totaled 1,156, or nearly 14 percent. (Combat sorties for the 1st MAW throughout June came to 3,276 despite 23 days of marginal to nonoperational weather.) Marine pilots scored as high as 48 percent of a single day's interdiction strikes made by FAF. This occurred 15 June when the 1st MAW flew a record-breaking 283 sorties, followed by another peak 227 sorties the next day.

Actually, when the ground situation in the ROK II Corps front began to deteriorate on 12 June, the new Fifth Air Force commander, Lieutenant General Samuel E. Anderson, "waived the [3,000 foot] minimum-altitude restrictions on his fighter-bombers and ordered his wings to give all-out support to the Eighth Army."⁶⁹ The Seventh

⁶⁸ This figure does not include sorties by VMA-312 (carrier-based), VMO-6, or HMR-161, the latter two under operational control of the 1st Marine Division.

⁶⁹ Futrell, *USAF, Korea*, p. 631.

Fleet commander, Admiral Clark, likewise kept his carriers on line for seven days and ordered its naval pilots to "team with Marine and Fifth Air Force airmen for a close-support effort exceeding anything up to that time."⁷⁰ When the ROK II Corps defenses cracked open on 15 June, temporary clearing weather "allowed General Anderson and Admiral Clark to hit the Reds with everything they had. FEAF planes flew a total of 2,143 sorties of all kinds for the largest single day's effort of the war."⁷¹

Commenting on this heavy action period, 14–17 June, a dispatch to General Megee from the new FAF commander, who had succeeded General Barcus the previous month, noted:

The figures are now in. From 2000, 14 Jun 53, to 0001, 17 Jun 53, Fifth Air Force units flew a total of 3,941 combat sorties. The cost was 9 pilots lost, 11 aircraft lost, 11 aircraft major damage, 42 aircraft minor damage. The results: 1 enemy offensive stopped cold. I very deeply appreciate the splendid efforts of all members of the 5th AF at all levels. Only a concerted team effort made the foregoing possible.⁷²

This came, incidently, only five days after receipt by the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing of the Korean Presidential Unit Citation.⁷³ The award cited the wing's "outstanding and superior performance of duty" between 27 February 1951 and 11 June 1953. During this period Marine fliers executed more than 80,000 combat sorties for UNC divisions.

The fighter-bombers of MAG-33 and the MAG-12 attack planes saw heavy action during 24–30 June when the Chinese again concentrated their attention on ROK divisions in the UNC line. Peak operational day was 30 June. Marine squadrons alone executed 301 sorties, including 28 percent of the CAS and 24 percent of total FAF interdiction missions. It was also an outstanding day for MAG-12 which "outdid itself by flying 217 combat sorties against enemy forces. The 30th of this month saw MAG-12 establish a new ordnance record when an all-time high of 340 tons of bombs and napalm were drop-

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² CG, FAF msg to CG, 1st MAW, dtd 17 Jun 53, in 1st MAW ComdD Jun 53 (Vol I), p. 3 and App., IV (Vol III).

⁷³ Presentation of this second Korean PUC to the 1st MAW was made by South Korean President Rhee in impressive ceremonies 12 June at MAG-33 headquarters, K-3. Among the many ranking military officials attending the ceremony was Admiral Radford, former CinCPacFlt, and newly-appointed Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

ped on North Korea."⁷⁴ Contributing heavily to this accomplishment was Marine Attack Squadron 121. It unleashed 156 tons of ordnance, a squadron record. It was believed this also established an all-time record for tonnage expended on the enemy by a Marine single-engine propeller squadron.

*Other Marine Defense Activities*⁷⁵

Like their counterparts on the Korean mainland, the Marines, naval gunfire teams, and ROK security troops comprising the West Coast and East Coast Island Defense Commands felt the alternating pressure build-up and slow-down that typified the closing months of the war. At both installations the defense had been recently strengthened, more or less by way of response to a CINCPacFleet intelligence evaluation in December 1952. This alerted the isolated island forces to the possibility of a renewed Communist attempt to recapture their positions. The Allied east coast defense structure at Wonsan, right at the enemy's own front door just above the 39th Parallel, was considered particularly vulnerable.

As in the preceding months, the mission of the west coast island group remained unchanged—namely, the occupation, defense, and control of its six island components. These, it will be remembered, were: Sok-to, Cho-do, Paengyong-do (command headquarters), Yongpyong-do, and the two lesser islands at Taechong-do and Tokchok-to.⁷⁶ Formal designation of the island commands was modified on 1 January 1953. At this time the West Coast and East Coast Island Defense Elements (TE 95.15 and TE 95.23) were redesignated as Task Units (TU 95.1.3 and TU 95.2.3) respectively. Korean Marines, who represented the bulk of these task units, were provided from the 2d KMC Regiment, the island security force. This unit constituted the main defense for the important U.S. Marine-controlled islands off the Korean west and east coasts.

⁷⁴ MAG-12 ComdD, Jun 53, p. C-1.

⁷⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt Eval Rpts* No. 5, Chaps. 2, 8, No. 6, Chaps. 2, 9; WCIDE(U) ComdDs, Oct 52-Jun 53; ECIDE(U) ComdDs, Oct 52-Jun 53; Cagle and Manson, *Sea War, Korea*; Field, *NavOps, Korea*.

⁷⁶ Locations given on WCIDE map, Chapter II.

Approximately 17 Marine officers and 100 enlisted men were assigned to the western coastal complex, with two battalions of Korean Marines fleshing out the garrison defense. The primary mission of this island group was to serve as offshore bases for UNC intelligence activities, including encouragement of friendly guerrilla operations conducted by anti-Communist North Korean personnel. Artillery based on the Marine-controlled islands provided both defensive fires and counterbattery missions against enemy guns sited on the nearby mainland.

The secondary mission of WCIDU, that of training Korean troops in infantry and weapons firing exercises, continued to be hampered somewhat by faulty communication. As one officer observed, the training program to qualify selected KMCs for naval gunfire duties "met with only modest success, due primarily to the language barrier and lack of communications equipment in the Korean Marine Corps. Personnel who had received this training did prove to be extremely helpful in accompanying raiding parties on the mainland in that they were able to call for and adjust fires."⁷⁷

Enemy pressure against the West Coast Islands, both from Communist shore guns and bombing, had increased during the fall and winter of 1952. Cho-do, shaped roughly like a giant downward-plunging fish, as previously noted had been bombed in October for the first time in the history of the command. This new trend was repeated for the next two months. By way of response, two 90mm guns were transferred to Cho-do from Kanghwa-do (a more peaceful guerrilla-controlled island northwest of Inchon) for use there as counterbattery fire against aggressive mainland batteries. The islands of Sok-to and Paengyong-do had likewise been bombed during this period, although no damage or serious casualties resulted. In December, enemy shore guns fired 752 rounds against Task Force 95 (United Nations Blockading and Escort Force) ships charged with responsibility for the island defense, in contrast to the 156 rounds of the preceding month.

Intelligence in December from "Leopard," the friendly Korean guerrilla unit at Paengyong-do, also reported the presence of junks, rubber boats, and a nearby enemy artillery battalion off Chinnampo, believed to be in readiness to attack the island. A captured POW,

⁷⁷ *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9, p. 9-128. See also Chapter II.

moreover, on 22 December reported that elements of the 23d NKPA Brigade located on the mainland across from Sok-to would attempt to seize the island group before the end of the year. The next day, shortly after dusk, when a concentration of 200 rounds⁷⁸ of 76mm suddenly fell on Sok-to, and another 125 rounds struck neighboring Cho-do, it looked as if it might be the beginning of trouble. Naval gunfire (NGF) spotters on the islands directed the fire from UNC patrol boats cruising the Yellow Sea. This counterbattery fire quickly silenced the enemy guns. Again, at the end of the month, West Coast islands were alerted for an invasion, but it never materialized.

A matter of continuing concern to the command during the fall and winter months was the North Korean refugee problem. So serious was the situation, in fact, that it had warranted a directive from the TF 95 commander (Rear Admiral John E. Gingrich). In the early fall, a large number of refugees had filtered into the West Coast Islands, raising serious doubts as to their feeding and ultimate survival during the Korean winter. Through the United Nations Civil Assistance Command, a tentative date of September had been set for evacuating these North Korean refugees to South Korea. By November the question of their relocation was still not settled, although the feeding problem had been eased somewhat by two LST-resupply loads of emergency rations and grain by CTF 90.

Activities followed a fairly consistent pattern during early 1953, with harassing fire striking the islands from the North Korean shore batteries and sporadic bomb and propaganda drops. Periodically USAF pilots who had strayed off course, planes from the nearby British carriers HMS *Glory* or *Ocean*, or Marine fliers from USS *Badoeng Strait* or *Bataan* made emergency landings on the beach airstrips at Paengyong-do for engine repairs or refueling. Logistical support continued to be a problem, due to the peculiarities of the joint ordering system through the Army. In January the western islands had unfilled requisitions dated from as early as February 1952. Official unit reports also noted the difficulty of obtaining medical supplies either promptly or in full.

In April, with the hot-cold cease-fire talks again taking one of their spasmodic upswings, WCIDU commander, Colonel Harry N. Shea,

⁷⁸ An average day's enemy harassment consisted of 4, 7, 10, or at the most approximately 28 rounds of fire. WCIDE ComDs, *passim*.

conferred with American and British naval officials regarding CTG 95.1's (Royal Navy Commander, West Coast Blockading and Patrol Group) Operation PANDORA. This called for the evacuation of Sok-to and Cho-do, the two WCIDU islands north of the 38th Parallel, at the time of the armistice.

Increased naval gunfire and artillery missions against active enemy mainland targets, caves, and observation posts gave the two new 90mm guns delivered to the Sok-to garrison the month before and the pair already at Cho-do, as well as their gun crews, some unscheduled practice. Marine garrison personnel at the two islands and nearby patrol ships were busy 25 days of the month knocking out or neutralizing Communist mainside batteries. Late that month, the battleship USS *New Jersey* stationed off the east coast, sailed around the Korean peninsula to add its 16-inch guns to the bombardment. Enemy shelling of the two western islands increased in June, with 1,815 rounds expended in response by the two Marine gun sections.

During June, as it appeared the end of the war was in sight, the first phase of PANDORA got underway with the evacuation by CTF 95 of approximately 19,425 partisans, their families, and refugees from Sok-to and Cho-do to islands south of the 38th Parallel. A new WCIDU commander, Colonel Alexander B. Swenceski, had also arrived by this time, since the average tour of duty was but a brief four months at both island commands.

Across the Korean peninsula, the east coast Allied off-shore island defense centered on a cluster of islands in Wonsan Harbor. Situated more than 100 miles north of the battleline, these strategically-placed islands comprised the northernmost UN-held territory in Korea. The East Coast Island Defense Command numbered approximately 35 Marines, 1,270 Korean Marines, and 15 Naval personnel. Headquarters for TU 95.2.3 was Yo-do, the largest installation, which was garrisoned by approximately 300 Korean Marines and a limited detachment of USMC and USN personnel. Smaller defense forces were located on the other islands under ECIDU command.⁷⁹ In addition, an improvised NGF spotting team was also stationed at the three forward islands (Mo-do, Tae-do, and Hwangto-do). Mission of the ECIDU was a defensive one: to hold the islands as a

⁷⁹ See Chapter II and ECIDE map.

base for covert intelligence activities. The island defense system existed for the purpose of "containing and destroying any enemy forces who escape detection or who press home an attack in the face of Navy attempts at their destruction."⁸⁰

Individual island commanders were responsible for the defense of their small parcels of seaborne real estate, control of both defensive and offensive NGF missions in the area, and evaluation of intelligence regarding enemy troop locations, the movement of supplies north, or new emplacements of hostile guns. Fire support for the ECIDU islands, exposed to the enemy shore batteries above the 39th Parallel, was available from Task Force 95, which maintained a task group of ships off both the east and west coasts. Aircraft and ships of Task Force 77 (Seventh Fleet Striking Force), operating off the East Korean coastline, were also on call. In December, for instance, the Corsairs of TF 77 had resumed their rail-bridge interdiction. All-out attacks on railroad and highway bridges, as well as bombing runs on the 90-mile stretch of east coast railroad from Hungnam to Songjin, were undertaken to cut off supplies being moved north for Communist industrial use.

February marked the second anniversary of the siege of Wonsan by the UNC, the longest blockade of a port in recent U.S. history. Some naval authorities by this time argued that the venture had become one of doubtful merit which "should never have been undertaken, but its long history made it difficult to abandon without apparent admission of defeat."⁸¹ In any event, the month also signaled increasing attention paid by hostile shore batteries to the little island enclave. For seven consecutive days, 9-15 February, the harbor islands were targets for enemy mixed artillery and mortar shells. Minor materiel damage and casualties were sustained at Yo-do during a Valentine's Day bombardment, 14 February.

Altogether, the enemy harassed the harbor islands for 16 days during the month, expending 316 rounds, compared with 11 days in January. Hostile fire, not limited to the Wonsan Harbor islands, was also directed against friendly ships USS *DeHaven* and USS *Moore*. These provided counterbattery fire and were, in turn, fired upon, the nearest shells landing only 400 yards from the two vessels.

⁸⁰ ECIDE ComdD, Oct 2, p. 1.

⁸¹ Field, *NavOps, Korea*, p. 434.

This attack, also on 14 February, was described as an "unusually determined and precise"⁸² effort. The enemy, moreover, did not appear to take his usual precautions with respect to disclosing his positions. The fact that a Communist shore battery would cease fire when subjected to friendly counterbattery, with other positions then immediately taking up the delivery, "indicated some sort of central control for the first time."⁸³ The I Corps, NKPA artillery units across from the Wonsan Island command revealed the "heavy, effective artillery capability of enemy batteries which encircle Wonsan Harbor."⁸⁴

Unseasonably good weather the latter part of February improved the transportation and supply situation. With the bitter cold and wind subsiding, maintenance crews could repair the ravages of the past several months. Craft, up to LCVP size, were hoisted in on a large pontoon for repair. For most of December and January, "this small, physically remote Marine Corps command,"⁸⁵ as the ECIDU commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heintz, Jr. himself described it, had been snowbound. Winds howled in excess of 40 knots, and temperatures dropped to 10° below at night. Personnel at the command island, Yo-do, subsisted on C rations for eight days. With boating operations suspended because of the high winds, it was not possible to send supplies or water to Hwangto-do which for several days relied solely on melted snow.

The prolonged foul weather, moreover, interrupted all classified radio communications between the ECIDU and the outside world. Crypto guard for the Wonsan islands was maintained by elements of the East Coast TG 95. Coded and decoded security radio messages had to be picked up by patrol boat which could not reach the islands during extreme conditions of icy seas and heavy snows.

As with the men on the front line, the Communists stepped up their pressure and gunfire against the island command Marines during March. The record⁸⁶ 524 rounds which fell on the ECIDU islands

⁸² *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 2, p. 2-5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ ECIDE(U) ComdD, Feb 53, p. 1. Seventh Fleet intelligence estimated that there were no less than "21 active batteries emplaced on Wonsan Bay and within range of our islands." *Heintz ltr.*

⁸⁵ ECIDE(U) ComdD, Jan 53, p. 3.

⁸⁶ Another record at this time was the spate of senior visiting officers. Seven times during the month no less than 15 flag and general officers had taken their turn inspecting the ECIDU command headquarters at Yo-do. Services represented were the Marine

in March doubled the following month when the command received 1,050 rounds from active mainland batteries. In April the persistent NKPA artillerymen kept up a continuing bombardment of the eastern coastal UNC islands, missing only three days of the entire month, that caused nine casualties when a direct hit was made on the Tae-do CP bunker. It was the highest rate of incoming since UN occupation of the islands. Another April record was enemy mine laying, which increased sharply in both the WCIDU and ECIDU command areas. A total of 37 mines were sighted, the highest number since August 1952. Communist shore gunners, in addition to harassment of the island themselves, fired 2,091 rounds against TF 95 ships, another all-time high.

With respect to personnel, the situation had improved markedly. An increase in ECIDU command strength authorized by CG, FMFPac in March provided for an additional 9 Marine officers, 38 enlisted Marines, and 6 Navy personnel. These were exclusive of the current detachments of 1st ANGLICO shore party and naval maintenance personnel, and represented nearly a 40 percent strength increase.⁸⁷ Not long afterward the new ECIDU commander, Lieutenant Colonel Hoyt U. Bookhart, Jr., arrived to succeed Lieutenant Colonel Heintz, who had held the position since the preceding November.

As with the WCIDU force, by late spring it appeared that the days of UNC control and occupation of the east coast islands were numbered. In view of the imminent armistice, a CinCFE directive of 11 June called for the evacuation of all civilians, supplies, and equipment "in excess of immediate needs."⁸⁸ This was a preliminary step towards full evacuation of the islands once the armistice agreement was reached. Accordingly, on 11 June, as evacuation of the friendly west coast partisans got under way, villagers from Yo-do, the largest and ECIDU headquarters site, and the far northern island of Yang-do were similarly moved south. The evacuation was completed by mid-June.

Corps, U.S. Army, Korean Marine Corps, ROK Navy, and ROK Army. "One local statistician computed the total number of stars for the month (one side of the collar only) as 38," the monthly report brightly noted. This was believed possibly an all-time high for any headquarters in the Korean theater, short of the Eighth Army. ECIDE(U) ComdD, Mar 53, p. 1.

⁸⁷ The previous T/O for the ECIDU was 5 officers and 30 enlisted USMC, 15 USN attached primarily to the Navy maintenance unit, and 55 officers and 1,217 enlisted KMCs.

⁸⁸ ECIDE(U) ComdD, Jun 53, p. 1.

*The Division is Ordered Back to the Front*⁸⁹

A rash of political activity in June markedly affected the tenor of military operations in Korea. Intensified Communist aggression broke out north of ROK sectors in the Eighth Army line, largely as a reaction to President Rhee's unprecedented action on 18 June of freeing, with the help of ROK guards, approximately 25,000 North Korean anti-Communist prisoners at POW camps in the south. Other anti-Communist POWs at Camp No. 10, near Ascom City, staged violent break-out attempts at that same time and Company A, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion passed to operational control of the camp commanding officer there to help prevent a repetition of any such incidents in the future. Following a recess of truce talks, pending a clarification of the status of the current military-diplomatic agreements, key delegates held crisis meetings at Panmunjom and Tokyo to get the beleaguered talks back on track.

Despite the furor, signing of the armistice agreement was expected shortly. As a result, the Munsan-ni Provisional Command was reorganized with the 1st Marine Division assigned the responsibility of reactivating the United Nations Personnel and Medical Processing Unit for the anticipated post-truce exchange of prisoners of war. This was to be conducted along lines similar to that for Operation LITTLE SWITCH, the initial limited exchange. The Division Inspector was named processing unit commander and functional sections (S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4, interpreters, messing, medical, engineer) were also activated. As the division training tour in I Corps reserve drew to a close, a number of regimental CPXs were held during June. And the 5th Marines drew a new assignment: training in riot control. Following civilian demonstrations that had erupted in various populated areas of Eighth Army, including the I Corps sector, the regiment was ordered "to be prepared to move in battalion size increments, to be employed as army service area reserve in suppression of civil disturbances anywhere in army service area."⁹⁰

While the Marine infantry regiments concluded their training period, the 1st Tank Battalion, Kimpo Provisional Regiment, and Division Reconnaissance Company remained under operational con-

⁸⁹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv, 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar ComdDs, Jun 53.

⁹⁰ 5thMar ComdD, Jun 53, p. 1.

trol of the frontline U.S. 25th Infantry Division. Marine artillerymen likewise continued under orders of CG, I Corps Artillery, in the forward area, reinforcing division artillery fires. Tentative plans were underway for movement of the 1st Marine Division back to its former position on the MLR in early July. After the signing of the cease-fire, the division would comply with provisions of the truce agreement by closing out its former MLR and withdrawing to designated positions two kilometers south of the former defensive positions.

CHAPTER IX

Heavy Fighting Before the Armistice

Relief of the 25th Division—Initial Attacks on Outposts Berlin and East Berlin—Enemy Probes, 11–18 July—Marine Air Operations—Fall of the Berlins—Renewal of Heavy Fighting, 24–26 July—Last Day of the War

Relief of the 25th Division¹

FOR THE FIRST WEEK OF JULY the 1st Marine Division continued its mission as I Corps Reserve and its two-month period of intensive combat training that had begun on 5 May. Planning got under way on 1 July, however, for return of the division to its former sector of the MLR, as the western anchor of I Corps, in relief of the 25th Infantry Division.

Marine infantry components were directed by I Corps to effect the transfer of operational control during the night of 7–8 July. Tank and artillery units—already in the division sector throughout the reserve period—were to make whatever minor relocations were necessary at suitable times thereafter. Division Operation Plan 10–53 ordered the 7th Marines to reassume its responsibility for the right regimental sector of the MLR, eastward to the 1st Commonwealth boundary. The 5th Marines, which had been in reserve at the time of the May relief of lines, was assigned to the center sector of the MLR, while the 1st Marines was designated as divisional reserve.

Relief of the 25th Infantry Division by Marine units got underway on 6 July when the first incoming elements of Colonel Funk's 7th Marines moved up to the right regimental sector manned jointly by

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *Pac Flt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ltr to CMC 3/cpc, A16-13, n.d., Subj: Berlin and East Berlin Action, Rpt of, in 1stMarDiv Summary of Activities, Jul 53 (G-3) file (Records Group 127, 61A-2265, Box 74, FRC, Alex., Va.), hereafter *CG, 1stMarDiv, Berlin Rpt*; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Jul 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, 1-9 Jul 53; 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar, 11th Mar, 1st TkBn, 1/7, 2/7, 3/7, 2/11 ComdDs, Jul 53.

the U.S. 14th Infantry Regiment and the Turkish Armed Forces Command. Advance personnel reported into the left sector, to be taken over by the Marine 1st Battalion, and at 1400 the 3d Battalion relieved the TAFC reserve battalion in the rear area.

Two platoons from the Marine regiment's 4.2-inch Mortar Company, meanwhile, also began their phased relief of the Turkish Heavy Mortar Company. The incoming mortar crews had some unexpected early target practice. As the men took up their active MLR firing positions in the right battalion sector, they were promptly forced to put their tubes into action to silence a troublesome machine gun, enemy mortars, and hostile troops behind the Jersey Ridge to the north and Reno and Elko on the west. That evening the 2d Battalion opened its new command post in the eastern sector, occupied by two TAFC battalions.

Sharply at 0455 on 7 July, the 7th Marines assumed responsibility for the right regimental sector and came under operational control of the 25th Division. Shortly after noon that day, forward units of 1/7 reached the 25th Division sector after a three hour motor march from Camp Indianhead, through driving rains in their second day without letup. At the battalion sector, 1/7 joined the advance echelon of 40 men who had arrived the previous day and took over its MLR positions from the 14th Infantry. Additional 7th Marines units reporting in throughout the day and assuming new locations were the weapons, mortar, and antitank companies.

The first of Colonel Tschirgi's 5th Marines returned to their center regimental sector before dawn that same day to begin their relief of the Army 35th Infantry Regiment. At 0300 the 3d Battalion assumed responsibility for the eastern half of the MLR. By late afternoon, antitank personnel and the 2d Battalion were in line, the latter taking over the western battalion sector at 1716. In the rear regimental area, early elements of Colonel Nelson's 1st Marines, locating just south of the Imjin River, had begun to arrive by 1300. The regiment would assume ground security for the Spoonbill and Libby (formerly X-Ray) bridges in the sector as well as MASRT #1.

No one needed to remind the 1st Marine Division that the territory it was moving back into was not the same—with respect to defense posts in the right regimental sector—that it had left two months earlier. Three of its six outposts there (Carson, Elko, Vegas) had fallen to the enemy in the late-May battle, despite the formid-

able resistance of the defending Turks. Outpost Ava remained at the far western end of the line, with the Berlin-East Berlin complex in the right battalion area. Some 6,750 yards of intervening MLR—more than four miles—lay in between, bereft of any protective outposts to screen and alert the defending line companies to sudden enemy assaults. The Marines were thus returning to a main line of resistance considerably weakened in its right regimental sector.

As the 1st Division CG, General Pate, observed:

Vegas [had] dominated the enemy approaches to Berlin from the north and northwest and therefore made Berlin relatively secure. Berlin, in turn, dominated the enemy approaches from the north and northwest to East Berlin and made East Berlin relatively secure. The loss of Outpost Vegas to the CCF placed Berlin and East Berlin in very precarious positions and negated their being supported by ground fire except from the MLR.²

Ground support fire from the MLR, moreover, tended to be only moderately successful in supporting the outposts because of the nature of the terrain. A major Communist stronghold, Hill 190, lay northeast of the Carson-Elko-Vegas complex. Since Berlin (COP 19) and East Berlin (COP 19-A) were sited on extensions of this same hill mass, the enemy could make sudden "ridgeline" attacks against the Berlins. With buffer outpost Vegas now lost, the likelihood of CCF success in such attacks was "immeasurably increased."³

*Initial Attacks on Outposts Berlin and East Berlin*⁴

It did not take the Chinese long to exploit this situation. At about 2100 on 7 July, while the relief of lines was in progress, the two Berlin outposts and newly-located MLR companies of Lieutenant Colonel Cereghino's 2d Battalion (from the left: D, F, and E), were greeted by a heavy volume of Chinese mortar and artillery fire. The barrage continued unremittingly, followed by waves of a reinforced Chinese battalion that swept over the two platoon-sized outposts,

² CG, *1stMarDiv, Berlin Rpt.*, p. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chaps. 9, 10; CG, *1stMarDiv, Berlin Rpt.*; 1stMarDiv ComdD, July 53; 1stMar Div G-3 Jnls, 1-10 Jul 53; 1stMarDiv PIR 992, dtd 8-9 Jul 53; 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 1st TkBn, 1/7, 2/7, 3/7, 2/11, 4/11 ComdDs, Jul 53; 1st MAW, VMF-311, VMO-6, HMR-161 ComdDs, Jul 53; Hicks, *Outpost Warfare*; MacDonald, *POW*.

from the direction of Vegas. By 2345 defending Marines at both outposts were engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, identified as elements of the 407th Regiment, 136th Division, 46th CCF Army.

Berlin, manned at the time by TAFC⁵ and Marine personnel, was unexpectedly strengthened by a Company F reinforced squad that had been dispatched on an earlier ambush patrol in the vicinity of the outpost. At East Berlin, however, the overwhelming hordes of Chinese soldiers advanced to the trenchline of the steep forward slope and quickly locked with the Marines at point-blank range. Despite the coordination of MLR machine gun, 60mm, 81mm, and 4.2-inch mortar, and artillery fires from 2/11⁶ and 4/11, the enemy overran the outpost at 2355 after heavy, close fighting. Chinese mortar and artillery barrages, by midnight, had continuously disrupted the Marine communications net at East Berlin, and by 0130 radio relay was also out at Berlin proper.

A provisional platoon from Headquarters and Service Company of 2/7 was quickly ordered to reinforce the main line against any attempted breakthrough by the Chinese. This was a distinct possibility since the Berlins were only 325 yards from the MLR, nearer than most outposts. Men from Companies H and I of the rear reserve 3d Battalion (since 26 May commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Paul M. Jones) were also placed under operational control of 2/7 and ordered to forward assembly areas in readiness for a thrust against the enemy at East Berlin.

At 0355 a Company F squad jumped off for the initial counter-attack. This was made at 0415, without artillery preparation, in an attempt to gain surprise for the assault. It was thrown back. A second Company F unit, by 0440, was on its way to reinforce the first but got caught by 25 rounds of incoming, with 15 men wounded. It continued on, however, but an hour later the Marines were ordered to disengage so that the artillerymen could place TOT fire on the area preparatory to a fresh attempt to dislodge the enemy soldiers.

⁵ Discussing this phase of operations, the 2/7 commander stated: "As it turned out we were in great shape with both Marines and Turks fighting side by side in some instances. We had a great rapport with the Turks in that they had previously relieved 2/7. In fact, they made us honorary members of their battalions, giving each 2/7 Marine one of the unit patches." Col Alexander D. Cereghino ltr to Dir MCHist, HQMC, dtd 19 Jun 70.

⁶ On 7 July, 2/11 had become the direct support battalion for the 7th Marines.

During the early morning hours of 8 July, large numbers of Chinese were seen at their new Vegas and Reno strongholds. Marines of the 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery blanketed hostile troops there and at the Berlin outposts with four ripples. On another occasion, a time-on-target mission launched by the 2/11 direct support battalion, landed in the midst of an enemy company assembled on Vegas. Friendly firepower by this time consisted of all four battalions of the 11th Marines, as well as seven Army and Turkish artillery battalions still emplaced in the area during the relief period and thus under tactical control of 25th Division Artillery.

Throughout 7–8 July, 11 Marine tanks from Company B placed 800 shells on enemy installations and troops. In the characteristic pattern, use of Marine armor heightened unfriendly response. The tanks drew in return 2,000 rounds of Chinese mortar and artillery on their own positions, but without any serious damage. Elements of the Army 14th Infantry Regiment Tank Company, still in the area, also opened up with some additional shells and bullets.

Despite the Chinese attack, the relief of lines continued during the night. In the center MLR sector, the 5th Marines had taken over regimental responsibility at 2130, with 3/11 becoming its direct supporting unit. And in the western half of the 7th Marines line—about the only undisturbed part of the regimental sector—1/7 had routinely completed its battalion relief at 0335 on 8 July.

At 0630 it was confirmed that East Berlin, an extension of the ridge on which Berlin was located, was under enemy control. Better news at first light was that Berlin,⁷ 500 yards west, had repulsed the enemy, a fact not definitely known earlier due to communication failure. At this time, G-3 reported that 18 effectives were holding Berlin, and 2/7 assigned an 18-man reinforced squad to buttress the defense. It was not considered feasible to send a larger reinforcement "since the Berlin area [could] accommodate only a small garrison."⁸

Meanwhile, another 7th Marines counterforce was being organized for a massed assault to retake East Berlin. At 1000, under cover of a thundering 1,600-round mortar and artillery preparation by Marine and TAFC gunners, a reinforced two-platoon unit from Companies

⁷ The ridge on which COP Berlin was located was split by two valleys. Both of these and the ridge itself served as approaches to the Marine MLR. *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9, p. 9–169.

⁸ *CG, 1stMarDiv, Berlin Rpt*, p. 2.

George and How, launched the attack. The unlucky H/3/7 platoon, in the lead, got caught between well-aimed Chinese shells and the Marines' own protective wire. In less than 15 minutes the platoon had been reduced to 20 effectives, with Company G passing through its ranks to continue the attack. By 1123 the Marines were in a violent fire fight and grenade duel in the main trenchline at East Berlin.

Tank guns, meanwhile, blasted away at Chinese troops, bunkers, active weapons, and trenches. On call they placed their fire "only a few yards in front of the friendly attacking infantry and moved this fire forward as the foot troops advanced."⁹ Heavy countermortar and artillery rounds were also hitting their mark on forward, top, and reverse slopes of East Berlin to soften the Chinese defenses. A few minutes later the 3d Battalion men had formed for the assault. During the heavy hand-to-hand fighting of the next hour the Marines "literally threw some of the Chinese down the reverse slope."¹⁰ Gaining the crest of the hill, the Marines by force and fire dispatched the enemy intruders. At 1233 they were again in possession of East Berlin. With just 20 men left in fighting condition at the outpost, a reinforcing platoon from I/3/7 was dispatched to buttress the assault force.

North of the 7th Marines sector four F9F Panthers, led by the commanding officer of VMF-311, Lieutenant Colonel Bernard McShane, found their way through the rainy skies that had restricted aerial support efforts nearly everywhere. In a noon MPQ mission, the quartet delivered five tons of ordnance on Chinese reinforcement troops and bunkers.

Promptly at 1300—a half hour after retaking the outpost—the 7th Marines effected the relief of the last Turkish elements at Berlin and occupied the twin defense positions. And by 1500 on 8 July, the 1st Marine Division assumed operational control of the entire division sector from the Army 25th Infantry Division. Relief of individual units would continue, however, through several more days. At the same time, the mission of the 11th Marines, since 5 July under a new regimental commander, Colonel Manly L. Curry, changed from general support of U.S. I Corps, reinforcing the fires of the 25th Division Artillery, to direct support of the Marine Division.

⁹ 1st TkBn ComdD, Jul 53, p. 2.

¹⁰ Hicks, *Outpost Warfare*, p. 136.

The 1st Tank Battalion similarly took over its regular direct support role. Other units under temporary Army jurisdiction, such as the Kimpo Provisional Regiment and Division Reconnaissance Company, reverted to Marine control.

During the rest of the day, gunners of the 11th Marines continued their fire missions despite reduced visibility that hindered surveillance by the OY spotting planes and forward observers. Only 42 Chinese were sighted during the daytime, although shortly before dusk a CCF group reportedly heading toward the Berlins area southwest from Frisco was taken under fire. Estimates of enemy incoming throughout the 7-8 July action from 17-odd battalions of Chinese artillery dug in across the division sector was placed at 19,000 rounds of all types. Marine and Army-controlled battalions, for their part, pounded Chinese strongholds with a total of 20,178 rounds.

That night Colonel Funk authorized a 3d Battalion platoon to bolster the MLR. Five tanks were also ordered to locate in the Hill 126 area, the Marine high-ground terrain feature to the rear of the frontlines. This foresight was well rewarded. During the late evening hours strange motor noises "sounding like a convoy pulling in and then back out again"¹¹ floated over the Korean hills and the tanks immediately swept suspected hostile installations with their 90mm guns. Later that night of 8-9 July, the Chinese suddenly renewed their probing efforts at the battered Marine outposts. Moving in from Vegas, an estimated reinforced enemy company attacked Berlin at 0104, then brushed on to East Berlin. An intense fire fight ensued off and on for nearly two hours at the two posts. Marine 81mm and 4.2-inch mortars, plus artillery illumination, boxing fires, and tanks blunted the assaults. At 0315 the enemy broke contact and action quieted down at both locations.

Throughout the rest of the day, eight Company C¹² armored vehicles assisted the infantrymen in consolidation of positions. A total of 25 rounds of shells and 19,140 rounds of .30 and .50 caliber

¹¹ 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnl, dtd 9 Jul 53.

¹² On 9 July Company C relieved Company B on the MLR in support of the 7th Marines. Both tank companies had been in action with the TAFC during the entire 60-day period the division was in I Corps reserve. Due to the rotation system, however, Baker Company had been on line longer and transferred to the rear ranks for a "much needed rest and rehabilitation." 1st TkBn ComdD, Jul 53, p. 3.

machine gun bullets were expended on CCF strongpoints and troops during a 24-hour firing period that ended at 1700.

Because of the casualties at Berlin, an H/3/7 reinforcement squad was sent to augment the Marine force there. Losses suffered by the 7th Marines for the two successive nights were 9 killed, 12 missing,¹³ 126 wounded and evacuated, and 14 with minor wounds. The cost to the CCF was 30 known dead, and an estimated 200 killed and 400 wounded.

With the Marines back on line, VMO-6 and HMR-161 which were under division operational control again resumed normal combat routine. Returning on 8 July to their forward airstrip in the center regimental sector, VMO-6 helicopters made eight frontline helicopter evacuations. Observation planes that same day conducted four artillery spotting missions behind enemy lines. HMR-161, assuming normal operations on 10 July, resupplied Marine division outposts with 1,200 pounds of rations, water, and gear as part of its 25.3 hours flight time this first day back in full service.

*Enemy and Marine Probes, 11-18 July*¹⁴

After the flare-up on the Berlin front, there was relatively little action for the next 10 days. Marines continued the relief of the last of the outgoing 25th Division units. When this was completed on 13 July, 1st Marine Division units, including the 1st KMC/RCT¹⁵ and 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, were all back in their accustomed sectors. They thus rejoined the 1st Tank Battalion, 11th Marines, Kimpo Regiment, and Division Reconnaissance Company which had remained on line throughout the period. The July relief was one that could hardly be characterized as routine. Interfering elements had included not only the Chinese but torrential summer rains. These

¹³ Later it was determined that only two were actually captured and they were subsequently repatriated. MacDonald, *POW*, p. 211.

¹⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Jul 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, 10-17 Jul 53; 1stMarDiv PIRs 923-930, dtd 10-17 Jul 53; 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 2/5, 1/7, 3/7, 2/11 ComdDs, Jul 53; Hermes, *Truce Tent*.

¹⁵ The 1st KMC/RCT turned over its sector of the 1st ROK Division front to the 1st ROK Regiment at 1800 on 8 July and relieved the U.S. 27th Infantry Regiment on 12 July. *ROKMC Comments*.

had continued virtually nonstop from 5–8 July causing bridge and road washouts, rerouting of supply trucks, and juggling of manifests at a time when the regiments were using an average of 90 transport vehicles daily.

Forward of the MLR the regular nightly patrols probed enemy territory, often with no contact. On at least three occasions division intelligence reported entire 24-hour periods during which the elusive Chinese could not be sighted anywhere in No-Man's-Land by friendly patrols operating north of the Marine division front.

More rain,¹⁶ continual haze, and ground fog for 6 of the 10 days between 9–18 July not only reduced the activity of air observers and Marine pilots, but apparently inspired the ground-digging Chinese to pursue—at least across from the division sector of I Corps—a more mole-like existence than ever. Enemy troop sightings during the daytime decreased from as many as 310 CCF to a new low of 14. Incoming, for one 24-hour period, totaled no more than 48 rounds of Chinese artillery and 228 of mortar fire that struck Marine positions, causing only slight damage.

The same could not be said for their mines. One 7th Marines reconnaissance patrol located a new minefield staked out with Soviet antipersonnel mines (POMZ-2) of an unfamiliar type with both pull and tension fuses. It appeared that mines which had lain dormant during the winter months had suddenly come to life with the warm weather, or else been recently re-laid. Nearly a dozen were uncovered by 5th and 7th Marines patrols, soon after their return to the front, and sometimes the discovery came too late. Probably the worst day was 12 July when four Marines were killed and eight wounded as a result of accidentally detonating mines.

At the same time, in the 5th Marines sector near the vicinity of truce corridor COP-2, the persistent voice of the Dragon Lady taunted Marines with such lackluster gambits as "Surrender now! What is

¹⁶ Spoonbill Bridge was submerged under 11 feet of water and destroyed by the pressure against it on 7 July. Flood conditions existed again on 14–15 July when the Imjin crested at 26 feet at Libby Bridge. Roads in the vicinity were impassable for three days. Resupply of forward companies was made via Freedom Bridge. One command diary writer, discussing the elaborate series of six moves made by 1/1 during July, added a touch of unconscious humor when he observed, "During the month, it seemed as if the Battalion was constantly on the move . . . Rain hampered these moves considerably. The weather between moves was generally clear and dry." 1/1 ComdD, July 53, p. 1; 1st TkBn ComdD, Jul 53, pp. 5, 11–12, 23; *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9, pp. 9–68, 9–136.

your girl doing back home?" in the stepped-up pace of its midnight propaganda broadcasts.

The regular nightly patrols checked in and out, performing their mission routinely. Even during this last month of the war, when word of the final truce agreement was expected daily, fire fights ensued. On 12 July, a 5th Marines 13-man reconnaissance patrol clashed briefly north of COP Esther, while a 7th Marines platoon-size combat patrol brushed with a Chinese squad west of Elko in an 18-minute fire fight. The same night the 11th Marines reported increased enemy sightings of 318 CCF soldiers—the most seen since the Berlin probe of 7–8 July. No follow-up was made. The Chinese were busy with major offensives elsewhere along the UNC front, devoting their primary efforts to ROK divisions on the central and eastern sectors of the Eighth Army line. Apparently they fully intended to "demonstrate to the South Koreans that continuation of the war would be a costly business."¹⁷

Along the Marine front, three patrol contacts took place on the night of 16–17 July. Two of them were grim reminders that despite the promising look (and sound) of the peace talks, for those men lost the toll of the war was as final and unremitting as it had been at any time during the past three years of combat. The first was a routine maneuver for a 5th Marines 13-man combat patrol that, at 2252, engaged an enemy squad just north of outpost Hedy. After an eight-minute fire fight the enemy withdrew, with two Chinese soldiers counted dead and one wounded and no friendly casualties.

Not so lucky was a 2/5 reconnaissance patrol. At midnight, its 15 members encountered a band of 30 to 40 Chinese, deployed in a V-shaped ambush in the Hill 90 area, an enemy stronghold two miles east of Panmunjom. The Marines set up a base of fire, beating off the enemy with their rifles, BARs, mortars, and bare fists. Reinforcements and artillery fires were called in. The first relief unit was intercepted by vicious mortar shelling which wounded the entire detail. A second relief squad, also taken under mortar fire, continued the action in an intense fire contest that lasted nearly two hours. In the meantime, the direct support artillery battalion, 3/11, reinforced by 1/11, showered 280 rounds of countermortar on Chinese long-range machine guns and mortars barking from the surrounding hills.

¹⁷ *Hermes, Truce Tent*, p. 470.

During the engagement the Chinese made several attempts to capture prisoners. When the enemy finally began to withdraw, CCF casualties were 10 known dead, an estimated 9 more dead, and 3 wounded. Seven Marines were found to be missing after the Chinese broke contact. A 5th Marines platoon that extensively screened the battalian front during the hours of darkness on the 17th returned at 2210 with six bodies.

The third encounter took place not long after midnight in the 7th Marines territory. This brief skirmish was also to have an unpleasant aftermath and, inadvertently, fulfill the psywar broadcast of the previous day that had warned Marines "not to go on patrols or be killed." As it was leaving the Ava Gate (250 yards northwest of the outpost proper) at 0045, a 30-man combat patrol from Company A was challenged on three sides by 40-50 CCF employing small arms, automatic weapons, grenades, and mortars. After a 15-minute fire exchange, during which the patrol lost communications with its MLR company, the enemy withdrew. Six CCF had been counted dead, and 12 more estimated killed or wounded.

Upon returning to the outpost, a muster of the men engaged in the action showed four Marines were missing. A rescue squad recovered three bodies. When, several hours later, daylight hampered movements of the search party, 2/11 laid down a smoke screen to isolate the sector. Between 0050 and 0455, its gunners also directed 529 rounds of close support and countermortar fire on Chinese troops and active weapons in the area. The recovery unit continued to sweep the area for the last missing man until 0545 when it was decided that the search would have to be terminated with negative results. Marine casualties from the encounter were 3 killed, 1 missing, 19 wounded (evacuated), and 2 nonseriously wounded.

The following day patrol activity and enemy contacts quieted down. Action shifted to the 1st KMC/RCT sector. Here, during the late hours of the 18th, four Korean combat patrols brushed quickly and briefly with Chinese squad and platoon units in light skirmishes of but a few minutes duration. The Korean Marines killed 2 of the enemy and estimated they accounted for 16 more.¹⁸

The only activity in the Marine right regimental sector occurred when a 7th Marines 36-man combat patrol, on prowl the night of

¹⁸ *ROKMC Comments.*

17–18 July, advanced at 0112 as far as hand-grenade range of the Chinese trenchline at Ungok. Undetected by the enemy, a patrol member fired a white phosphorus rifle grenade squarely at the CCF machine gun that was harassing the friendly MLR. The Marines then engaged 15 Chinese defending the position in a brief 20-minute skirmish. Although two men were wounded,¹⁹ the Company C patrol members in a somewhat roguish gesture as they left also planted a Marine Corps recruiting sign at their FPOA (Farthest Point of Advance), facing the enemy.

*Marine Air Operations*²⁰

If the monsoon rains of July hung like a shroud over the infantryman, they were an even more serious impediment to air operations of MAGs-12 and -33. There were 24 days of restricted flying when the weather at home base or target area was recorded as marginal to non-operational. On 12 full days air operations were cancelled entirely. Precipitation for July rose to 7.38 inches, with 22 days of rain recorded throughout the month. The generally unfavorable weather conditions not only limited the normal support missions flown by 1st MAW but delayed the arrival of VMA-251²¹ en route from Japan to relieve VMA-323.

¹⁹ One, who died that morning, was squad leader Sergeant Stephen C. Walter, posthumously presented the Navy Cross. Also awarded the nation's second highest combat medal for extraordinary heroism in a patrol action on 16–17 July was Private First Class Roy L. Stewart, of the 5th Marines.

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpts* No. 4, Chap. 10, No. 5, Chap. 9, No. 6, Chap. 10; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Jul 53; 1stMarDiv PIR 924, dtd 10–11 Jul 53; 1st MAW, MAGs-12, -33, VMAs-121, -212, -251, -323, VMF(N)-153, VMF-311 ComdDs, Jul 53; Field, *NavOps, Korea*; Futrell, *USAF, Korea*.

²¹ Marine Attack Squadron 251 (Lieutenant Colonel Harold A. Harwood) administratively joined MAG-12 on 6 July for 323, which had rotated back to MCAS, El Toro three days earlier. Movement of -251 aircraft to Korea could not take place, however, until 12 July. When VMA-323 (Major Woten) departed, the famous "Death Rattlers" had the distinction of being the Marine tactical (VMA/VMF) air squadron in longest service during the Korean War. The unit's final combat mission on 2 July brought its total Korean operations to 20,827 sorties and 48,677.2 hours. On 6 August 1950, roaring up from the flight deck of the USS *Badoeng Strait*, the VMA-323 Corsairs (then VMF-323) had launched their opening blow against North Korean installations, led by Major Arnold A. Lund, CO. The initial Marine air offensive action of the Korean War had been flown three days earlier by VMF-214. This unit was reassigned to CONUS in November 1951, giving the Death Rattlers the longest continuous service flight record. Jul 53 ComdD, 1st MAW, p. 2; *USMC Ops Korea-Pusan*, v. I, pp. 89–90, 98; VMF-214 Squadron History, HRB.

During July the wing's nearly 300 aircraft (250 operational, 43 assigned to pool status in Korea) flew 2,688 combat sorties²² and 5,183.1 combat hours. The bulk of the sorties, 1,497, were CAS operations flown for 19 different UNC divisions. Nearly 900 supported the 12 ROK divisions involved in the heavy fighting on the central UNC sector. Approximately 250 of the CAS sorties were for the 1st Marine Division, with more than 200 being day or night MPQ drops and the rest, daytime CAS runs. No night close support missions were conducted.

When nearly a week of inclement weather finally lifted, Colonel Arthur R. Stacy's²³ MAG-33 pilots based at Pohang welcomed a brisk change in the tempo of operations. In seven MPQ strikes on 11 July, they hurled 13 tons of ordnance on Chinese fortifications north of the 7th Marines sector. It was the wing's first active day in support missions for the 1st Marine Division, newly back on the line.

During the interim period of 9-18 July, between the two Berlin outpost attacks, F9F jet fighters from MAG-13 again carried out approximately 35 MPQ missions for the division. (MAG-12 attack planes, during this time, were assigned to the flaming central Allied line.) Nearly 20 of these were on a single day, 14 July, when VMFs-311 and -115 Panther jets roared over enemy country from morning to sundown unleashing 25 tons north of the Marine troubled right regimental sector and 9 more tons on hostile emplacements near the western end of the division line.

In middle and late July, however, the majority of missions by Marine fliers bolstered UNC operations in the central part of the Allied front where a major enemy counterthrust erupted. The peak operational day for MAG-33 pilots during this period occurred 17 July when 40 interdiction and MPQ missions (136 combat sorties) were executed for Army and ROK divisions. The corresponding record day for Colonel Carney's MAG-12 aviators was 19 July when 162 combat sorties were flown on heavy destruction missions to support UNC action.

²² Individual reports by the two groups result in a slightly higher figure. MAG-12 recorded 2,001 combat sorties (including more than 400 flown by carrier-based VMA-332, not in the 1st MAW sortie rate). MAG-33 listed 945 sorties, or a combined group total of 2,946 for the month. ComdDs Jul 53 MAG-12, p. C-1 and MAG-33, p. 1.

²³ Colonel Stacy was group commander until 24 July, when he was detached for assignment to 1st MAW as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2. He was succeeded at MAG-33 by Colonel John L. Smith.

Marine exchange pilot Major John F. Bolt, of VMF-115, chalked up a record of a different kind on 11 July. Attached to the Fifth Air Force 51st Fighter-Interceptor Group, he shot down his fifth and sixth MIG-15 (the previous four having been bagged since 16 May) to become the first Marine jet ace in history. Major Bolt was leading a four-plane F-86 flight in the attack on four MIGs east of Sinuiju and required only 1,200 rounds of ammunition and five minutes to destroy the two enemy jet fighters. Bolt thereby became the 37th jet ace of the Korean War.

Earlier in the month, Navy Lieutenant Guy P. Bordelon won a Silver Star medal and gold star in lieu of a second Silver Star. Attending the K-6 ceremonies were General Megee and Admiral Clark, 1st Wing and Seventh Fleet commanders. Bordelon, flying with the Marine Corsair night fighters, had downed four of the harassing "Bedcheck Charlie" planes. A member of VC-3 attached to MAG-12, Lieutenant Bordelon on 17 July made his fifth night kill and was subsequently awarded the Navy Cross.

On the minus side, the 1st Marine Air Wing this last month of the war suffered a higher rate of personnel losses on combat flights than in any month since June 1952.²⁴ Captain Lote Thistlethwaite and Staff Sergeant W. H. Westbrook, of VMF(N)-513, were killed in an air patrol flight on 4 July. (Two nights earlier, the same squadron had lost a Navy pilot and crewman on temporary duty with the night-fighters when their F3D-2 similarly failed to return to Pyongtaek.) Another MAG-12 casualty was Captain Carl F. Barlow, of VMA-212, killed 13 July on a prebriefed CAS mission when he crashed while flying instruments.

On 17 July, Captain Robert I. Nordell, VMF-311, flying his third mission that day, and wingman First Lieutenant Frank L. Keck, Jr. were hit by intense automatic weapons fire while on an interdiction flight. Their planes reportedly went down, at 2000, over the Sea of Japan. After a four-day air and surface search conducted by JOC, they were declared missing and subsequently reclassified killed in action. Another MAG-33 pilot listed KIA was Major Thomas M. Sellers, VMF-115, on exchange duty with the Air Force, shot down 20 July in a dogfight after he had scored two MIG-15s.

²⁴ Wing casualties for July 1953 were listed as three killed, seven missing, and two wounded in action. Names of enlisted crew members on flights are not always given in air diaries, which accounts for the discrepancies.

Two days earlier a VMO-6 pilot, First Lieutenant Charles Marino, and his artillery spotter, First Lieutenant William A. Frease, flying a flak suppression mission, were struck by enemy fire and crashed with their ship in the 5th Marines center regimental sector.

*Fall of the Berlins*²⁵

Despite their preoccupation with other corps sectors on the central front of the Eighth Army line, the Chinese had not forgotten about the Berlin complex held by the Marines. On the night of 19-20 July,²⁶ the enemy lunged against the two Marine outposts in reinforced battalion strength to renew his attack launched 12 days earlier. Beginning at 2200, heavy Chinese mortar and artillery fire struck the two COPs and supporting MLR positions of the 3d Battalion, which had advanced to the front on 13 July in relief of 2/7.²⁷ In the center regimental sector, 5th Marines outposts Ingrid and Dagmar, and the line companies were also engaged by small arms, mortar, and artillery fires. An attempted probe at Dagmar was repulsed, aided by 3/11.

Concentrating their main assault efforts on the Berlins, however, the Chinese forces swarmed up the slopes of the outposts at 2230, with more troops moving in from enemy positions on Jersey, Detroit, and Hill 139, some 700 yards north of Berlin. The Chinese struck first at East Berlin, where 37 Marines were on duty, and then at Berlin, held by 44 men. Both positions were manned by First Lieutenant Kenneth E. Turner's Company I personnel and employed the maximum-size defenses which could be effectively utilized on these terrain features.

²⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; *CG, 1stMarDiv, Berlin Rpt*; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Jul 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, 19-21 Jul 53; 1stMarDiv PIRs 933-934, dtd 19-21 Jul 53; 1stMar ComdD, Jul 53; 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 3/1, 3/5, 1/7, 2/7, 3/7, 1/11, 2/11 3/11, 4/11, 1stTkBn ComdDs, Jul 53; 1stMar Preliminary Special Action Report, period 8-27 Jul 53 in ComdD, Jul 53, hereafter 1stMar SAR "Berlins"; MAGs-12, -33, VMAs-121, -212 ComdDs, Jul 53.

²⁶ The 19th of July, ironically, was the date that truce negotiators working at Panmunjom had reached final agreement on all remaining disputed points. Staff officers were scheduled to begin drawing up details of the armistice agreement and boundaries of the demilitarized zone. USMA, *Korea*, p. 51.

²⁷ Company E and a detachment of the 81mm mortar platoon from the 2d Battalion remained on line. They were attached to the 3d Battalion when the sector command changed.

By 2300 hostile forces were halfway up Berlin. Continuous volumes of small arms and machine gun fire poured from the defending MLR companies. Defensive boxes were fired by 60mm, 81mm, and 4.2-inch mortars. Eight Company C tanks augmented the close-in fires, with their lethal direct-fire 90mm guns tearing into Chinese troops and weapons. Within two hours after the initial thrust, the 11th Marines had fired 20 counterbattery and 31 countermortar missions. Artillerymen from 2/11 and 1/11 had expended 1,750 rounds. In addition, 4/11 had unleashed 124 of its 155mm medium projectiles. More countermortar fire came from the TAFC Field Artillery Battalion. Despite the heavy fire support, by midnight the situation was in doubt and at 0146 the twin outposts were officially declared under enemy control. Nearly 3,000 rounds of incoming were estimated to have fallen on division positions by that time, most of it in the 7th Marines sector.

During the early morning hours of the 20th, Marine tank guns and continuous shelling by six²⁸ artillery battalions wreaked havoc on Chinese hardware, reinforcing personnel, supply points, and fortifications. Reserve units from 2/7 were placed on 30-minute standby, with Companies D, E, and F already under 3/7 operational control. Battalion Operation Order 20-53, issued at 0400 by Lieutenant Colonel Jones, called for Easy and Dog to launch a two-company counterattack at 0730 to restore Berlin and East Berlin respectively. Incoming, meanwhile, continued heavy on the MLR; at 0520, Company I, located to the rear of the contested outposts, reported receiving one round per second.

The Marine assault was cancelled by I Corps a half hour before it was scheduled to take place. A decision subsequently rendered from I Corps directed that the positions not be retaken.²⁹

²⁸ Three Marine, one TAFC, and two Army battalions.

²⁹ At a routine conference that same morning attended by CG Eighth Army (General Taylor), CG I Corps (General Clarke) and CG 1st Marine Division, the earlier decision about not regaining the outposts was affirmed. General Taylor maintained the positions "could never be held should the Chinese decide to exert sufficient pressure against them" and recommended instead that the sector be organized on a wide front defense concept. Actually, following the initial Berlins attack of 7-8 July, a discussion about possible readjustment of the Marine sector defense had been initiated by General Pate. A staff study recommending that just such a "strongpoint" concept (rather than the customary linear defense) be adopted had been completed by Marine Division officials on 15 July. I Corps staff members had concurred with the study and it was awaiting consideration by CG, I Corps when the Berlins were attacked for the second time on 19 July. *CG, 1stMarDiv, Berlin Rpt*, pp. 3-4.

Since the outposts were not to be recaptured,³⁰ efforts that day were devoted to making the two hills as untenable as possible for their new occupants. Heavy destruction missions by air, armor, and artillery blasted CCF defenses throughout the day. Air observers were on station from 0830 until after dark, with nine CAS missions conducted by MAG-12 pilots from VMA-121 and -122. The day's series of air strikes on the Berlin-East Berlin positions (and Vegas weapons emplacements) began at 1145 when a division of ADs from Lieutenant Colonel Harold B. Penne's³¹ -121 hurled nine and a half tons of ordnance on enemy bunkers and trenches at East Berlin.

The artillery was having an active day, too. Six firing battalions had sent more than 3,600 rounds crashing against the enemy by nightfall. The 1st 4.5-inch rocketeers also contributed four ripples to the melee. Heavy fire missions were requested and delivered by the Army 159th Field Artillery Battalion (240mm howitzers) and 17th Field Artillery Battalion (8-inch howitzers) using 11th Marines airborne spotters. The precision fire on enemy positions, which the air spotters reported to be "the most effective missions they had conducted in Korea"³² continued for several hours. By 1945 the big guns had demolished the bunkers and all but 15 yards of trenchline at East Berlin. For their part the Chinese had fired an estimated 4,900 rounds of mortar and artillery against the 3d Battalion right hand sector in the 24-hour period ending at 1800 on the 20th.

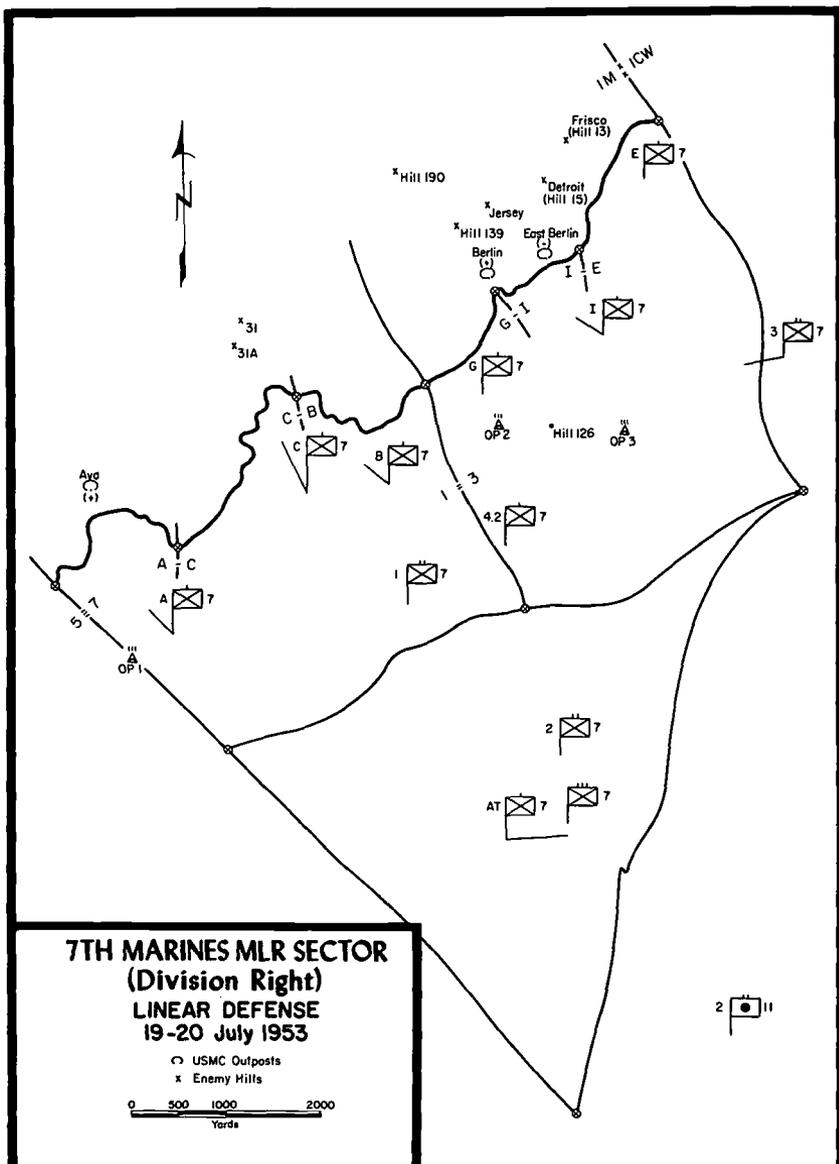
Armored vehicles, meanwhile, during 19-20 July had expended 200 rounds of HE and WP shells and 6,170 machine gun rounds.³³ Tank searchlights had also effectively illuminated enemy positions on the East Berlin hill. The tankers' performance record included: 20 Chinese bunkers and 2 57mm recoilless rifles destroyed; an estimated 30 enemy soldiers killed; a dozen more firing apertures, caves, and trenchworks substantially damaged.

³⁰ Commenting on this point, the I Corps commander noted: "The outposts in front of the MLR had gradually lost their value in my opinion because, between the MLR and the outposts, minefields, tactical wire, etc. had made their reinforcement and counter-attacks very costly." Resupply was thus restricted to narrow paths on which the CCF had zeroed in and "holding poor real estate for sentimental reasons is a poor excuse for undue casualties." Gen Bruce C. Clarke, USA, ltr to Dir, MCHist, HQMC, dtd 20 May 70.

³¹ The new squadron commander had taken over 16 July from Major Braun.

³² BGen Manly L. Curry ltr to Dir, MCHist, HQMC, dtd 28 May 70, hereafter *Curry ltr.*

³³ Tank and artillery ammunition allocations had been cut 50 percent the afternoon of the 19th, with a subsequent reduction of normal destruction missions and elimination of H&I fires. ComdDs Jul 53 1st TkBn, p. 3 and App. 2, p. 4 and 1/11, p. 5.



Between noon and the last flight of the day, when a trio of AUs from Lieutenant Colonel Wallace's VMA-212 attacked a northern enemy mortar and automatic weapons site, 35 aircraft had repeatedly streaked over the Berlin territory and adjacent Chinese strongpoints. Strikes by VMA-121 at 1145, 1320, 1525, 1625, 1700, 1750; and VMA-212 at 1413, 1849, and 1930 had released a combined total of 69½ tons of bombs and 6,500 rounds of 20mm ammunition on hostile locations.

The Chinese casualty toll during this renewed flareup in the fighting on 19-20 July was conservatively placed by 3/7 at 75 killed and 300 wounded. It was further believed that "the enemy battalion was so weakened and disorganized by the attacks that it was necessary for the CCF to commit another battalion to hold the area captured."³⁴ Regimental reports indicated that 6 Marines had been killed, 56 listed missing,³⁵ 86 wounded and evacuated, and 32 not seriously wounded.

As a result of the critical tactical situation and number of casualties suffered during the Berlins operation, the 7th Marines regimental commander requested that units of the division reserve be placed under his control to help check any further aggressive moves of the enemy. For it now appeared that the Chinese might continue their thrust and attempt to seize Hill 119 (directly south of Berlin and East Berlin) in order to be in position to deny part of the Imjin River to UNC forces after signing of the armistice.

While the lost outposts were being neutralized on the morning of the 20th, the CO of the incoming 1st Marines, Colonel Nelson, also ordered an immediate reorganization and strengthening of the MLR. This employed the defense in depth concept, used by the British Commonwealth Division in the sector adjacent to the Marines on the east. The wide front defense concept was fully developed with one company occupying a portion of the MLR to the rear of the Berlin complex, known as Hill 119 or more informally, Boulder City. Three

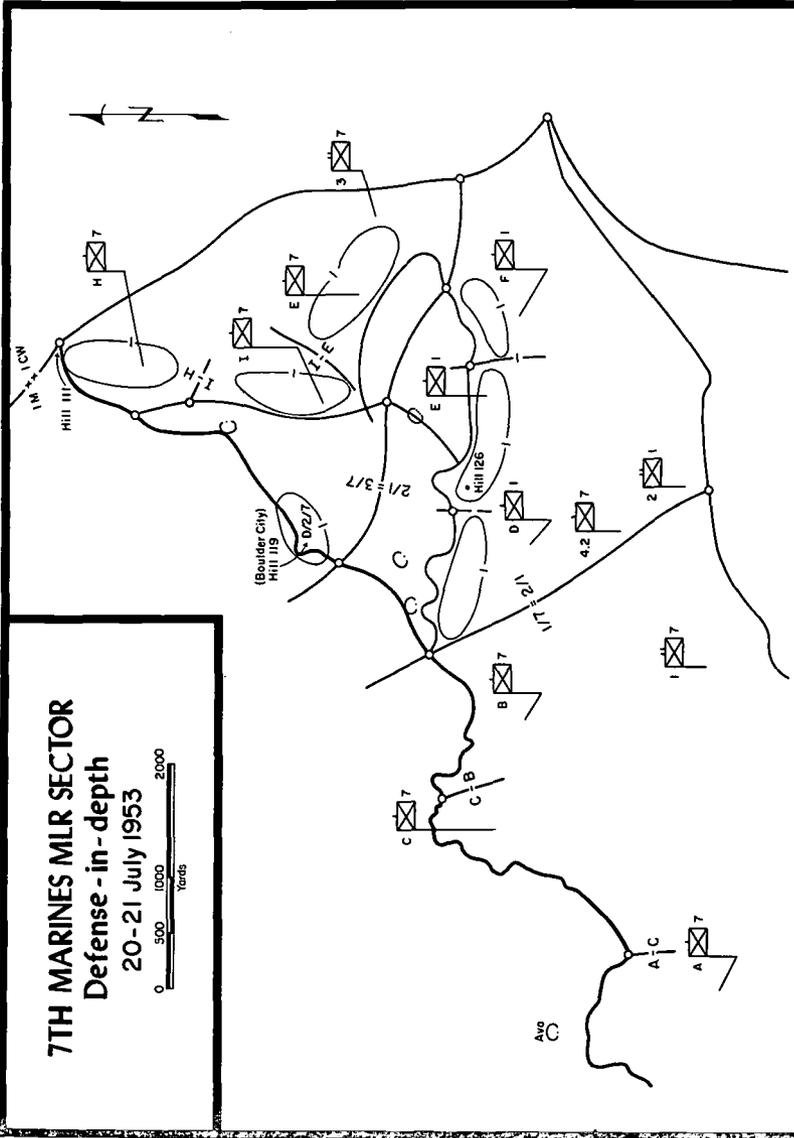
³⁴ 3/7 ComdD, 20 Jul 53, p. 5. With respect to the number of enemy casualties that night, battalion, regimental, artillery support, and division command diaries given differing accounts. Other figures cited are: 9 CCF killed, between 234-284 estimated killed, and 630 estimated wounded.

³⁵ Subsequently, it was learned that of 56 Marines unaccounted for at the time, 12 were actually captured. They were returned after hostilities ended. Several men from 1st Marines units under operational control of the 7th were also taken in this battle. MacDonald, *POW*, pp. 212, 268-269.

7TH MARINES MLR SECTOR

Defense - in-depth

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companies organized the high ground to the right rear of the MLR east to Hill 111, the limiting point on the boundary between the Marine and Commonwealth divisions. Three more companies fortified the Hill 126 area to the rear and left of Berlin to its juncture with the western battalion sector held by Lieutenant Colonel Harry A. Hadd's 1/7. (See Maps 30 and 31.)

The afternoon of the 20th, 2/1 (Lieutenant Colonel Frank A. Long) was transferred to 7th Marines control and positioned in the center of the regimental MLR, as the first step in the scheduled relief of the 7th, due off the line on 26 July. For the next three days the regiment continued to develop the sector defense to the rear of the MLR. Elements of the regimental reserve, 2/7, were employed to reinforce the 3/7 sector. Initially, on 20–21 July, F/2/7, under operational command of 3/7, was assigned the mission of reinforcing Hill 119. Later a 2/1 platoon was also ordered to strengthen the position.

Incoming 1st Marines platoons and companies from the 2d and 3d (Lieutenant Colonel Roy D. Miller) Battalions augmented the forces at the two critical Hill 119 and 111 locations. As it turned out, 1st Marines personnel returning to the front from division reserve were to see the last of the war's heavy fighting in the course of their relief of the 7th Marines. Ultimately, the regimental forward defense, instead of being divided into two battalion sectors as before, now consisted of three—a left, center, and right sector. By 23 July the depth reorganization had been completed and these sectors were manned by 1/7, 2/1, and 3/7. (See Map 32.)

*Renewal of Heavy Fighting, 24–26 July*³⁰

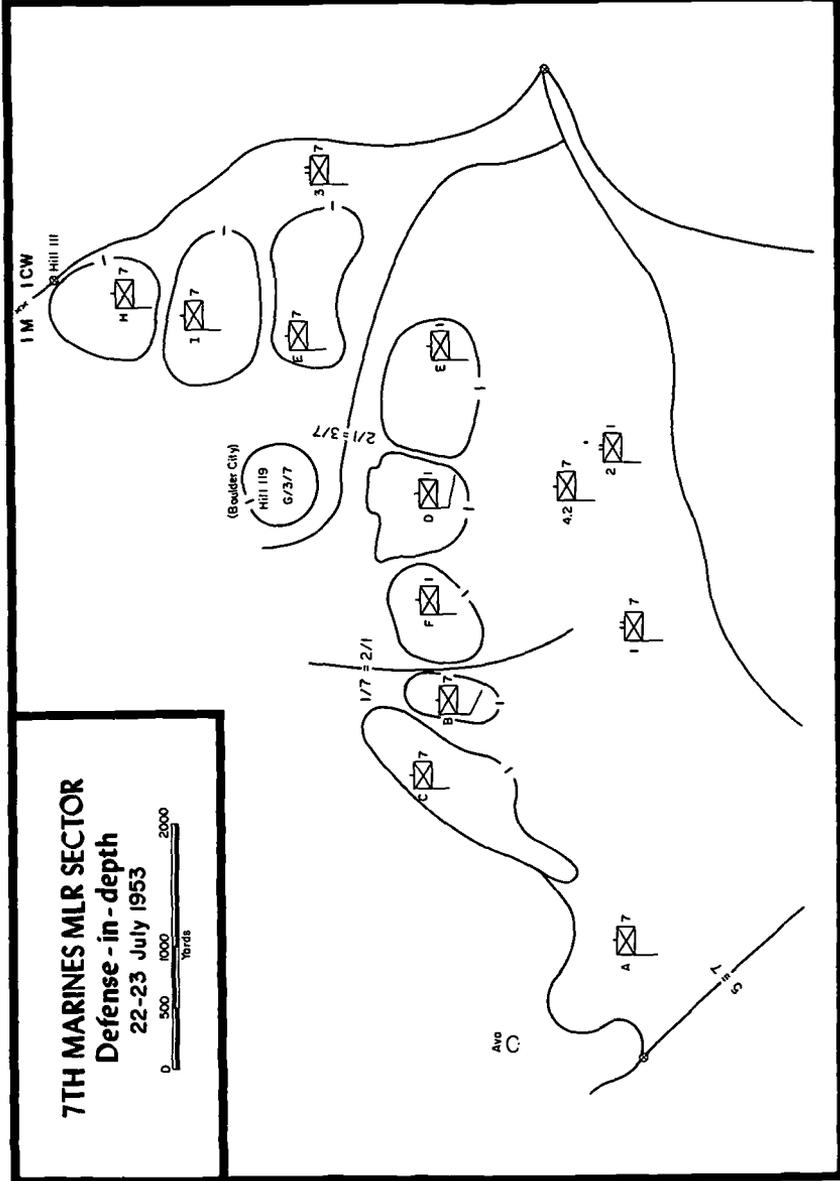
Sightings of enemy troops for the next few days were light. A large scale attack expected on the 21st by the 5th Marines at Hedy and Dagmar failed to materialize. Instead, a token force of a dozen Chinese dressed in burlap bags made a limited appearance at Hedy be-

³⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Jul 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, dtd 21–28 Jul 53; 1stMarDiv PIRs 935–941, dtd 21–27 Jul 53 and 942, dtd 7 Aug 53; 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar, 11th Mar, 3/1, 3/5, 2/7, 3/7, 1/11, 2/11, 3/11, 4/11, 1st TkBn ComdDs, Jul 53; 1stMar SAR "Berlins"; MAGs-12, -33, VMAs-121, -212, -251, VMFs-115, -311 ComdDs, Jul 53; Hicks, *Outpost Warfare*; Hermes, *Truce Tent*; Miller, Carroll, and Tackley, *Korea, 1951–1953*; Martin Russ, *The Last Parallel: A Marine's War Journal* (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1957); USMA, *Korea*.

7TH MARINES MLR SECTOR

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fore departing, minus three of its party, due to Marine sharp-shooting skills. In the skies, MAG-33 fliers from VMF-115 and -311 had been transferred by Fifth Air Force from exclusive missions for the central and eastern UNC front (the IX, ROK II, and X Corps sectors) to join VMA-121 in MPQ flights supporting the 1st Marine Division. During the 21-23 July period, despite layers of thick stratus clouds and rain that turned off and on periodically like a water spigot, more than 15 radar missions were executed by the three squadrons.³⁷ They unleashed a gross 33-ton bomb load on CCF mortar and 76mm gun positions, supply areas, CPs, bunkers, and trenches.

The lull in ground fighting lasted until late on the 24th. Then, at 1930, a heavy preparation of 60mm, 82mm, and 120mm mortars combined with 76mm and 122mm artillery shells began to rain down on Boulder City. Men of G/3/1, under command of First Lieutenant Oral R. Swigart, Jr., were deployed at that time in a perimeter defense of the position having that morning completed the relief of G/3/7.

Enemy troops were reported massing for an assault. One regiment located by forward observers behind Hill 139, some 700 yards northwest of Berlin, was taken under fire at 1940 by artillery and rocket ripple. At 2030, following their usual pattern of laying down a heavy mortar and artillery barrage, the CCF began to probe the MLR at Hills 119 and 111 in the Marine right battalion sector. They hit first at Hill 111, the far right anchor of the division line, currently held by 7th Marines personnel. Then the CCF moved westward to Hill 119. Their choice of time for the attack once again coincided with the relief of 7th Marines units by the 1st Marines.³⁸ When the assault began, H/3/1 was moving up to relieve H/3/7 at the easternmost point of the line in the Hill 111 vicinity, and Company I was preparing to relieve I/3/7, to its left.

The Communist troops temporarily penetrated Hill 111 positions. At Boulder City, where the main force of the CCF two-battalion unit

³⁷ One additional flight expending three 1,000-lb. bombs was made 22 July by a single AD from replacement squadron VMA-251. This was the unit's first combat sortie in support of the 1st Marine Division after its indoctrination flights. VMA-251 also flew four MPQ flights for the 7th Marines in the early hours of 24 July, the day the outposts were attacked again. VMA-251 ComdD, Jul 53.

³⁸ A similar incident had occurred on 7 July when the 7th Marines was attacked while in the process of relieving a regiment of the 25th Infantry. *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, p. 9-58.

had struck, they occupied a portion of the trenchline. Attempting to exploit this gain, the Chinese repeatedly assaulted the Berlin Gate, on the left flank of Company G's position and the East Berlin Gate, to its right. Marine units of the two regiments posted at the two citadel hills were heavily supported by MLR mortar, artillery, and tank fires. No artillery spotter or CAS flights were flown through the night, once again due to weather conditions.

By 2120, the bulk of Chinese soldiers had begun to withdraw from Hill 111, this attack apparently being a diversionary effort. But the enemy's main thrust continued against the central Hill 119 position. Here the close, heavy fighting raged on through the morning hours, with enemy troops steadily reinforcing from the Jersey Ridge and East Berlin, by way of the Berlin Gate, the best avenue of approach to forward positions of Hill 119. At approximately 2100, the Chinese hurled a second attack against Hill 119 in the strength of two companies, supported by intense mortar and artillery fire. An hour later hand-to-hand combat had developed all along the 700 yards of the forward trenches. Company G men of the 1st Marines were down to half their original number, ammunition was running low, and evacuation of casualties was slowed by the fact that two of the eight corpsmen had been killed and most of the rest were themselves casualties.

By midnight, the front, left, and right flanks of the perimeter had been pushed back to the reverse slope of the hill and a 1st Marines participant commented "... only a never-say-die resistance was keeping the enemy from seizing the remainder of the position."³⁹ At 0015, the thinning ranks of G/3/1 Marines (now down to 25 percent effectives) were cheered by the news that Company I men were about to reinforce their position. This latter unit itself suffered 35 casualties while moving into the rear area, when the Chinese intercepted a coded message and shifted a substantial amount of their mortar and artillery fires to the rear approaches of Hill 119.

In response to the enemy bombardment, Marine artillery fires crashed against the Chinese continuously from 2100 to midnight. Four ripples were launched in support of the Hill 119 defenders. In one of the regiment's most intense counterbattery shoots on record, the 11th Marines in three hours had fired 157 missions. By 2400, an

³⁹ 1stMar SAR "Berlins," Aug 53, p. 4.

estimated 6,000 to 8,000 hostile rounds had fallen in the division sector.

Meanwhile, the Chinese were also attempting to punch holes in the 5th regimental sector. In a second-step operation, rather than striking simultaneously as was customary, the enemy at 2115 had jabbed at outposts Esther and Dagmar in the right battalion of the 5th Marines. The reinforced Chinese company from the 408th Regiment quickly began to concentrate its attention on Esther, outposted by Company H Marines. During the heavy fighting both Marines and Chinese reinforced. By early morning, the enemy had seized part of the front trenchline, but the Marines controlled the rear trenches and reorganized the defense under rifle platoon commander, Second Lieutenant William H. Bates. The Chinese unsuccessfully attempted to isolate the position by heavy shelling and patrolled vigorously between Esther and the MLR.

Marines replied with flamethrowers and heavy supporting fires from the MLR, including machine guns, 81mm and 4.2-inch mortar boxes. Three tanks—a section from the regimental antitank platoon and one from Company A—neutralized enemy targets with 153 rounds to assist the 3d and 2d Battalions. The 3/11 gunners supporting the 5th Marines also hurled 3,886 rounds against the Chinese in breaking up the attack. After several hours of strong resistance, the Chinese loosened their grip, and at 0640 on the 25th, Esther was reported secured.

By this time an enemy battalion had been committed piecemeal at the position. The action had developed into the heaviest encounter of the month in the 5th Marines sector. During that night of 24–25 July, more than 4,000 artillery and mortar rounds fell in the outpost vicinity; total incoming for the regimental sector throughout July was recorded at 8,413 rounds. Twelve Marines lost their lives in the battle, with 35 wounded and evacuated, and 63 suffering minor injuries. A total of 85 CCF were counted dead, 110 more estimated killed, and an estimated 250 wounded.

Back at the Berlin Complex area of the 7th Marines where the major action centered, intense shelling, fire fights, and close hand-to-hand combat continued through the early morning of the 25th. Chinese infiltrators had broken through a substantial part of the trenchwork on the forward slope of Boulder City. For a while they temporarily occupied the rocky, shrub-grown hill crest as well.

A swift-moving counterattack launched at 0130 by 1st Marines from Companies G and I, led by Captain Louis J. Sartor, of I/3/1, began to restore the proper balance to the situation. At 0330 the MLR had been reestablished and the Marines had the controlling hand. By 0530 the Hill 119 area was secured, with four new platoons from Companies E of the 7th and 1st Marines aiding the defense. Scattered groups of Chinese still clung to the forward slopes, and others vainly tried to reinforce by the Berlin-to-Hill 119 left flank trenchline.

Direct fire from the four M-46s on position at Boulder City⁴⁰ had helped disperse hostile troop concentrations. The tanks had also played a major communication role. Although surrounded by enemy forces during the peak of the fighting, two of the armored vehicles were still able to radio timely tactical information to higher echelons. This Company C quartet, plus another vehicle from the 7th Marines antitank unit, between the time of the enemy assault to 0600 when it stabilized, had pumped 109 HE, 8 marking shells, and 20,750 .30 caliber machine gun bullets into opposition forces.⁴¹ Five tanks from the 1st Marines AT company located to the west of the Berlin site meted out further punishment to enemy soldiers, gun pits, and trenches.

Sporadic fighting and heavy incoming (at the rate of 60-70 rounds per minute for 10 minutes duration) also rained down on eastern Hill 111 in the early hours of the 25th. Assault teams with flame-throwers and 3.5-inch rocket launchers completed the job of clearing the enemy out of Marine bunkers.

Altogether the Communists had committed 3,000 troops across the Marine division front during the night of 24-25 July. Between 2200 and 0400, a total of 23,725 rounds had been fired by the 11th Marines and 10 battalions under its operational control in the division sector. This included batteries from the 25th Division Artillery, I Corps Artillery, and 1st Commonwealth Division Artillery.⁴² The

⁴⁰ One participant remarked: "I think the Boulder City action . . . is the classic example of where the Army system worked well. The tanks were generally given credit for saving the position, and I seriously doubt our ability to have done the job under the previous system which would have required the tanks to move to the scene after the action had begun." *Post ltr.*

⁴¹ In retaliation, between 2200 and 0600, the four tanks at Hill 119 drew 2,200 rounds of enemy mortar and artillery.

⁴² The British were not hampered by any ammunition restrictions at this time. The excellent liaison between the 11th Marines and Commonwealth Division Artillery resulted in a humorous incident. After the battle of 24-25 July, a young British artillery

artillery outgoing represented 7,057 rounds to assist the 5th Marines at outpost Esther and 16,668 in defense of Boulder City.

On the morning of 25 July, the Chinese at 0820 again assaulted Hill 119 in company strength. Marine mortar and artillery fire repulsed the attack, with heavy enemy losses. See-saw action continued for most of the rest of the day on the position. No major infantry attempt was made at Hill 111. Intense hostile shelling was reported here at 1100, however, when the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, still in operational control of the area, began receiving 125 to 150 rounds per minute. The last of the Chinese marauders were forced off the forward slope at Boulder City at 1335. For some welcomed hours both Marine positions remained quiet. A conservative estimate by 3/7 of the toll for the enemy's efforts were 75 CCF killed and 425 wounded.

Air support that morning was provided by 32 of the sleek, hard-hitting F9Fs from VMF-115 and -311. Working in tandem over Chinese terrain directly north of the right regimental sector, the two squadrons, between 0616 and 1036, flew nine MPQ missions. In the aerial assault, they bombarded the enemy with more than 32 tons of explosives.

Twelve Marine tanks had a workout, expending 480 HE and 33 WP shells and 21,300 rounds of machine gun ammunition in direct fire missions. The traditional inequity of battlefield luck was plainly demonstrated between a section (two) of armored vehicles near the Hill 111 company CP and a trio located at Boulder City. It was practically a standoff for the former. Together they were able to fire only 71 high explosive shells, drawing a return of 1,000 rounds of CCF 60mm mortar and 122mm cannon shells. Blazing guns of the three tanks in the Hill 119 area, meanwhile, during the 24-hour firing period had sent 158 HE, 10 WP, and 17,295 bullets to destroy hostile weapons and installations and received but 120 mortar and another 120 rounds of artillery fire.

The 11th Marines were also busy as heavy firing continued on

officer arrived at a Marine regimental CP. He identified himself as being from the unit that had provided artillery support to the Marines the previous night, for which he was profusely thanked. Before his astonished audience he then unrolled an impressive scroll. This proved to be a bill enumerating the various types and amounts of projectiles fired and specifying the cost in pounds sterling. When he felt the Marine staff was properly flabbergasted, he grinned and conceded waggishly: "But I am authorized to settle for two bottles of your best whiskey!" *Curry ltr.*

Chinese policing parties and those enemy batteries actively shelling MLR positions. By late afternoon, 13,500 rounds of Chinese mortar and artillery had crashed against the 7th Marines right sector—the highest rate of incoming for any 24-hour period during the entire Berlin action. For its part, the regiment and its medium and heavy support units completed 216 counterbattery missions and sent 36,794 rounds of outgoing into Chinese defenses between 2200 on 24 July and 1600 on the 25th.

Meanwhile, during 25 July, Colonel Nelson's men continued with their relief of the 7th Marines. At 1100 Major Robert D. Thurston, S-3 of 3/1, assumed command of Hill 119 and reorganized the embattled Company G and Company I personnel, 1st Marines. That night, at 1940, E/2/1 and F/2/7 effected the relief of the composite George-Item men. At the eastern Hill 111 Company H, 1st Marines had assisted Company H, 7th Marines during the day in clearing the trenchworks of the enemy; then at 1815, the 1st Marines unit completed its relief of H/3/7 and took over responsibility for the MLR right company sector. Not long after, beginning at 2130, 1st and 7th Marines at the critical Hill 119 complex were attacked by two enemy companies. MLR fire support plus artillery and tank guns lashed at the enemy and he withdrew. Between 0130 and 0300 the Chinese again probed Hills 111 and 119, gaining small parts of the trenchline before being driven out by superior Marine firepower. Marine casualties were 19 killed and 125 wounded. The CCF had suffered 30 known dead, an estimated 84 killed, and 310 estimated wounded.

With dawn on the 26th came the first real quiet the battlefield had known for two days. Small enemy groups tried to reinforce by way of the Berlin trenchline, only to be stopped by Marine riflemen and machine gunners. Hostile incoming continued spasmodically. At 1330 the 1st Marines assumed operational control of the right regimental sector, as scheduled, and of the remaining 7th Marines units still in the area.⁴³ By this time Marine casualties since 24 July numbered 43 killed and 316 wounded.

That night the Communists, knowing the armistice was near and that time was running out for seizing the Boulder City objective,

⁴³ Seventh Marines units were Companies D and E, and elements of the 4.2-inch Mortar Company.

made their final attempts at the strongpoint. Again they attacked at 2130. Defending 1st Marines were now under Captain Esmond E. Harper, CO of E/2/1, who had assumed command when Major Thurston was seriously wounded and evacuated. They fought off the Chinese platoon-size drive when the enemy advanced from Berlin to the wire at Hill 119. Shortly after midnight another Chinese platoon returned to Hill 119 in the last skirmish for the territory, but Marine small arms and artillery handily sent it home. At 0045, a CCF platoon nosed about the Hill 111 area for an hour and twenty minutes. Again the Marines discouraged these last faltering enemy efforts. Action at both hills ceased and what was to become the concluding ground action for the 1st Marine Division in Korea had ended.

Despite impressive tenacity and determination, the Chinese Communist attacks throughout most of July on the two Berlin outposts and Hills 119 and 111 achieved no real gain. Their repetitive assaults on strongly-defended Boulder City up until the last day of the war was an attempt to place the Marines (and the United Nations Command) in as unfavorable a position as possible when the armistice agreement was signed. While talking at Panmunjom, the Communists pressed hungrily on the battlefield for as much critical terrain as they could get under their control before the final cease-fire line was established.

Had the enemy succeeded in his assaults on the two hill defenses after his earlier seizure of the Berlins, under terms of the agreement UNC forces would have been forced to withdraw southward to a point where they no longer had free access to all of the Imjin River. If the Chinese had taken Boulder City this would have also provided the CCF a major high ground position (Hill 126) with direct observation into Marine rear areas and important supply routes.

From the standpoint of casualties, the last month of the Korean War was a costly one, with 181 infantry Marines killed in action and total losses of 1,611 men.⁴⁴ This was the highest rate for any month during 1953. It was second only to the October 1952 outpost battles⁴⁵ for any month during the year the 1st Marine Division defended the line in West Korea. The closing days of the war pro-

⁴⁴ Casualty breakdown: 181 killed, 86 missing, 862 wounded and evacuated, 474 wounded (not evacuated), and 10 non-battle deaths.

⁴⁵ During this period 186 Marines were killed and 1,798 listed as casualties.

duced the last action for which Marines were awarded the Navy Cross. These Marines were Second Lieutenant Bates, H/3/5; First Lieutenant Swigart, G/3/1; Second Lieutenant Theodore J. Lutz, Jr., H/3/1; and Sergeant Robert J. Raymond, F/2/7, who was mortally wounded.

The 7th and 1st Marines, as the two regiments involved during July in the Berlin sector defense, sustained high monthly losses: 804 and 594, respectively. Forty-eight men from the 7th Marines and 70 from the 1st Marines were killed in action. In contrast, the 5th Marines which witnessed little frontline action during the month (except for a sharp one-night clash at Outpost Esther), suffered total monthly casualties of 150 men, of whom 26 lost their lives. Chinese losses were also high: 405 counted killed, 761 estimated killed, 1,988 estimated wounded, 1 prisoner, or 3,155 for the month of July.

In their unsuccessful attempts to dislodge the Marines from their MLR positions the Chinese had pounded the right regimental flank with approximately 22,200 artillery and mortar shells during the last 24–27 July battle. In reply, 11th Marines gunners and supporting units had expended a total of 64,187 rounds against CCF strong-points. The enemy's increased counterbattery capabilities in July, noted by division intelligence, also received particular attention from the artillerymen. A record number of 345 counterbattery missions were conducted during the period by Marine and Army cannoners.

More than 46,000 rounds of outgoing had been fired by the Chinese in their repeated attempts of 7–9, 19–20, and 24–27 July to seize the Berlin posts and key MLR terrain. Operations during this final month, as the 2/11 commander was to point out later, on numerous occasions had verified the wisdom of leaving "direct support artillery battalions in place during frequent changes of frontline infantry units."⁴⁶

Armored support throughout the 24–27 July period consisted of more than 30 tanks (Company C, AT Company elements of the 1st and 7th Marines, a section of flames, and Company D platoon) on line or in reserve. Marine tankers used a record 1,287 shells and 54,845 bullets against the CCF, while drawing 4,845 rounds of enemy mixed mortar and artillery.

The enemy's attack on Marine MLR positions, beginning 24 July,

⁴⁶ Col Gordon H. West ltr to Dir, MCHist, HQMC, dtd 1 Jul 70, hereafter *West ltr*.

constituted the major action in the I Corps sector the final 10 days of the war. During this period the Chinese probed I Corps positions 25 times (8 in the Marine, 5 in the 1st Commonwealth, 6 in the 1st ROK, and 6 in the 7th Infantry Division sectors).

In other parts of the Eighth Army line, the last large-scale action had broken out east of the Marine sector beginning 13 July when major elements of six Chinese Communist divisions penetrated a ROK unit to the right of the IX Corps. As the division's right and center fell back, units withdrew into the zones of the IX and ROK II Corps on the east. General Taylor directed that a new MLR be established south of the Kumsong River, and a counterattack 17-20 July by three II Corps divisions attained this objective.

Since the armistice agreement was imminent, no attempt was made to restore the original line. The Chinese had achieved temporary success⁴⁷ but at heavy cost. Eighth Army officials estimated that CCF casualties in July reached 72,000 men, with more than 25,000 of these dead. The enemy had lost the equivalent of seven divisions of the five Chinese armies committed in attacks upon the II and IX Corps sectors.

*The Last Day of the War*⁴⁸

Representatives of the Communist Forces and the United Nations Command signed the armistice agreement that marked the end of the Korean War in Panmunjom at 1000 on Monday, 27 July 1953. The cease-fire, ending two years of often fruitless and hostile truce negotiations, became effective at 2200 that night. After three years, one month, and two days the so-called police action in Korea had come to a halt.

⁴⁷ Minor realignments of the military line of demarcation were made in the center sector to include a few miles of territory gained by the Communists in their massive July offensive there. Clark, *Danube to Yalu*, p. 292; Futrell, *USAF, Korea*, p. 640; Leckie, *Conflict*, p. 385.

⁴⁸ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9; 1stMarDiv ComdD, Jul 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, 26-28 Jul 53; 1stMarDiv PIR 941, dtd 27 Jul 53; 1stMAW ComdD, Jul 53; 1stMar, 5thMar, 7thMar, 11thMar, 3/1, 3/5, 2/7, 4/11 ComdDs, Jul 53; 1stMar SAR "Berlins"; HRS Log Sheet, dtd 21 Aug 67 (n.t., about Korean War Casualties, prepared on request for Policy Analysis Br., HQMC); Leckie, *Conflict*; Capt C. A. Robinson and Sgt D. L. Cellers, "Land of the Morning Calm," *Midwest Reporter* (Jul 68).

Actually, final agreement on the armistice had been expected since late June. By mid-July it was considered imminent, even though the CCF during these waning days of the war had launched several major counteroffensives against ROK troops defending the central part of the Eighth Army line as well as the Marines in the western I Corps sector.

With the final resolution of hostilities at 1000, a flash message went out immediately to the 26,000 Marines of General Pate's division directing that there be "no celebration firing related in any way to the advent of the armistice."⁴⁹ Fraternalization or communication with the enemy was expressly forbidden. Personnel were reminded that firing of all weapons was to be "restricted to the minimum justified by the tactical situation."⁵⁰ No defensive firing was to take place after 2145 unless the Marines were actually attacked by enemy infantry. Each frontline company was authorized to fire one white star cluster at 2200, signalling the cease fire.

The signing of the armistice agreement on 27 July thus ended 36 months of war for the Marines in Korea. On that date, the 1st Marine Division initiated plans for its withdrawal to defensive positions south of the Imjin River. One regiment, the 5th Marines, was left north of the river to man the general outpost line across the entire division front. A transition was made at this time from the customary wide-front linear defense to a defense in depth, similar to that employed in the July Boulder City battle.

Briefly, the armistice agreement decreed that both UNC and Communist forces:

Cease fire 12 hours (at 2200, 27 July) after signing of agreement;

Withdraw all military forces, supplies, and equipment from the demilitarized zone (2,000 yards from line of contact) within 72 hours after effective time of ceasefire;

Locate and list all fortifications and minefields in the DMZ within 72 hours, to be dismantled during a subsequent salvage period;

⁴⁹ Msg 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnl, dtd 27 Jul 53, quoting Cease Fire and Armistice Agreement, IUS-OP-9-53.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Replace combat personnel and supplies on a one-for-one basis, to prevent any build-up; and

Begin repatriation of all POWs, with exchange to be completed within two months.

The 1st Marine Division began that afternoon to close out its existing MLR⁵¹ and withdraw to its designated post-armistice main battle position located two kilometers to the south, in the vicinity of the KANSAS Line. This tactical withdrawal was to be completed no later than 2200 on 30 July.

By early afternoon the three infantry regiments had been ordered to furnish mine teams to mark, remove, and clear minefields. For units of the 1st and 7th Marines deployed at the Boulder Hill Outpost—quiet only since 0300 that morning—the cease-fire news understandably carried a “let’s see” reaction as the men “waited cautiously throughout the day in their fortifications for the White Star Cluster which would signify the end . . .”⁵² Convincing the men at shell-pocked Boulder City that a cease-fire was to take place within a few hours would have been a difficult task that day, however, even for the Commandant.

The Marine infantrymen who had been the target of the last heavy Communist attacks of the war might well have had a special sense of realism about the end of hostilities. Between the skirmish with Chinese attacking units in the early hours of the 27th and mine accidents, a total of 46 Marines had been wounded and removed from duty that last day of the war and 2 others declared missing in action.

For the more free-wheeling artillerymen of the 11th Marines, that final day was one of fairly normal operations. During the day, 40 counterbattery missions had been fired, the majority in reply to Communist batteries that came alive at dusk.⁵³ A total of 102 countermortar missions were also completed, bringing the total outgoing that last month to 75,910 rounds. Action of the regiment

⁵¹ See Map 33 for Eighth Army dispositions on the last day of the war.

⁵² 1stMar SAR “Berlins,” p. 5.

⁵³ The CO of the direct support artillery battalion in the defense of Boulder City, recalled that “on the evening of the 27th, with the Armistice only hours away, 2/11 received heavy Chinese artillery fire apparently directed at the batteries. Of the many rounds . . . 80% were duds and no damage was done. Numerous time fuzed shells detonated hundreds of meters above ground. We figured that they were using up old rounds to keep from hauling them back north.” *West ltr.*

continued until 2135, just ten minutes before the preliminary cease-fire which preceded the official cease-fire at 2200.

For the 7,035 Marine officers and men on duty with General Megee's 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, the day was also an active one. That final day of the war Corsairs, Skyraiders, and Pantherjets from the wing mounted 222 sorties and blasted the enemy with 354 tons of high explosives along the front. Banshees from VMJ-1 flew 15 reconnaissance sorties during the day for priority photographs of enemy airfields and railroads. Last Marine jet pilot in action was Captain William I. Armagost of VMF-311. He smashed a Communist supply point with four 500-pounders, at 1835, declaring his flight felt "just like the last winning play of a football game."⁵⁴

The wing closed out its share of the Korean War 35 minutes before the cease-fire. A VMA-251 aviator, Captain William J. Foster, Jr., dropped three 2,000-pound bombs at 2125 in support of UN troops. The distinction of flying this final Marine mission over the bomblines had gone, fittingly, to the wing's newly-arrived "Black Patch" squadron. At sea, U.S. and British warships ended the 17-month naval siege by shelling Wonsan for the last time, and at 2200 the ships in the harbor turned on their lights. In compliance with the terms of the armistice, full evacuation of the WCIDU and ECIDU islands north of the 38th Parallel started at 2200. Island defense forces off both coasts at this time began a systematic destruction of their fortifications as they prepared to move south.

As early as 2100 Marine line units reported seeing Chinese soldiers forward of their own positions, policing their areas. An hour later large groups of enemy were observed along the division sector. Some "waved lighted candles, flashlights, and banners while others removed their dead and wounded, and apparently looked for souvenirs."⁵⁵ A few attempts were made by the Chinese to fraternize. One group approached a Marine listening post and asked for water and wanted to talk. Others hung up gift bags at the base of outpost Ava and shouted, "How are you? Come on over and let's have a

⁵⁴ 1st MAW ComdD, Jul 53 (Folder 3), CTF-91 msg to ComNavFE, dtd 27 Jul 53.

⁵⁵ 1stMarDiv, ComdD, Jul 53, p. 2. One Marine officer, Major General Louis Metzger, who at the time was Executive Officer, Kimpo Provisional Regiment, recalled how voices of the Chinese Communists' singing and cheering drifted across the Han River that night. "It was an eerie thing . . . and very depressing." MajGen Louis Metzger comments on draft MS, dtd 1 Jul 70, hereafter *Metzger comments*.

party," while the Marines stared at them in silence.⁵⁶ The last hostile incoming in the 1st Marine Division sector was reported at 2152 when five rounds of 82mm mortar landed on a Korean outpost, COP Camel.

Marines on line that night warily scanned the darkness in front of their trenches. Slowly at first, then with increasing rapidity the white star cluster shells began to burst over positions all along the line. Thousands of flares illuminated the sky and craggy hills along the 155-mile front, from the Yellow Sea to Sea of Japan. The war in Korea was over. Of the men from the one Marine Division and air wing committed in Korea during the three-year conflict, 4,262 had been killed in battle. An additional 26,038 Marines were wounded. No fewer than 42 Marines would receive the Nation's highest combat decoration, the Medal of Honor, for outstanding valor—26 of them posthumously.

⁵⁶ 1stMarDiv ComdD, *op. cit.*, and Rees, *Korea*, p. 434.

CHAPTER X

Return of the Prisoners of War

Operation BIG SWITCH—Circumstances of Capture—The Communist POW Camps—CCF "Lenient Policy" and Indoctrination Attempts—The Germ Warfare Issue—Problems and Performance of Marine POWs—Marine Escape Attempts—Evaluation and Aftermath

*Operation BIG SWITCH*¹

BETWEEN AUGUST 1950, the month that the first Marine was taken prisoner and July 1953, when 18 Marine infantrymen were captured in final rushes by the CCF, a total of 221 U.S. Marines became POWs.² The majority of them—nearly 90 percent—ultimately returned. After the conclusion of hostilities, Marine POWs were among the UNC fighting men returned in Operation BIG SWITCH.

The new mission of the 1st Marine Division, with the cease-fire, called for organization of the Post Armistice Battle Positions and establishment of a No-Pass Line approximately 200 yards south of the Demilitarized Zone boundary. In addition to maintaining a defensive readiness posture for full-scale operations if hostilities

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chaps. 9, 10; 1stMarDiv ComdDs, Jul-Sep 53; 1stMarDiv G-3 Jnls, Jul-Aug 53; 1st MAW ComdD, Jul 53; 11thMar, MAG-33 ComdDs, Jul 53; HRS Subject File VE23.2.S8 "CMC Statements on Korean POWs"; HRS Subject File #1 "Prisoners of War—Korea—General"; HRS Subject Files "Prisoners of War—Korea—News Clippings, folders #1, #2, #3"; Korea War casualty cards from Statistical Unit, Casualty Section, Personal Affairs Br, Code DNA, HQMC; MacDonald, *POW*; Berger, *Korea Knot*; Clark, *Danube to Yalu*; T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War—A Study in Unpreparedness* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963), hereafter Fehrenbach, *Kind of War*, quoted with permission of the publisher; Field, *NavOps, Korea*; Hermes, *Truce Tent*; Leckie, *Conflict*; Rees, *Korea*; USMA, *Korea*; MSgt Roy E. Heinecke, "Big Switch," *Leatherneck*, v. 36, no. 11 (Nov 53), hereafter Heinecke, "Big Switch"; *Life* Magazine, Jul-Aug 53 issues; *New York Times*, 5 Aug-6 Sep 53; *Washington Post*, 5 Aug-6 Sep 53.

² Marine Corps prisoners, including their unit designations and date of release (or death), are listed in MacDonald, *POW*, pp. 249-273.

resumed, the Marine division was charged with control of the Munsan-ni area and assisting in repatriation of prisoners of war. Obviously, since the Panmunjom release point for receiving the POWs was located in the Marine zone of action, the division—as in the earlier LITTLE SWITCH prisoner exchange—would play a major part in the final repatriation.

With the armistice and ending of the war expected almost daily, the Munsan-ni Provisional Command was activated and reorganized in June. Once again, the 1st Marine Division was responsible for the United Nations Personnel and Medical Processing Unit, organized along lines similar to those used during the preliminary exchange. The division inspector, Colonel Albert F. Metzke, was designated Processing Unit Commander. Sections under his direction were staffed by Marine and naval personnel. The normal command structure was reinforced by special engineer, medical, interpreter, food service, chaplain, security, signal, supply, and motor transport teams. Planning for the project, like all military operations, was thorough and continuous.

As in April, the Munsan-ni Provisional Command assumed responsibility for handling the UN repatriation at Panmunjom as well as supervision of the receiving and processing of ROKA personnel. Brigadier General Ralph M. Osborne, USA, was placed in charge of the command, with headquarters at the United Nations Base Camp. The RCT landing exercise for the 1st Marines, scheduled in July, was cancelled because of shipping commitments for Operation BIG SWITCH, as the Navy Amphibious Force readied itself for the repatriation of prisoners. By the end of July, the 1st Marine Division was supporting "approximately 42,400 troops with Class I [rations] and 48,600 with Class III [petroleum products] due to the influx of units and personnel participating in Operation BIG SWITCH."³

Several days before the exchange, however, it became evident that the old site of the Gate to Freedom used in the April exchange would have to be abandoned. It was found inadequate to handle the larger number of returning prisoners—approximately 400 daily—to be processed in the new month-long operation. The new site, Freedom Village, near Munsan-ni contained an old Army warehouse which was renovated by the 1st Division engineers and transformed

³ *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 9, p. 9–134.

into the 11th Evacuation Hospital where the UN Medical and Processing Unit was located. Members of the division Military Police Company provided security for the exchange area. Marines from practically every unit of the division were assigned duties at the United Nations Processing Center. As General Clark, UNC Commander later recalled:

Preparations for Big Switch were necessarily elaborate. At Munsan we had a huge warehouse stocked high with clothing, blankets, medical equipment and other supplies for the returning POWs. At Freedom Village nearby we had a complete hospital unit ready. It was one of the Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals (MASH) which had done such magnificent work close to the front through most of the war.⁴

On 5 August, the first day of BIG SWITCH, Colonel Metzke took a final look around the processing center. Readiness of this camp was his responsibility. If anyone had real understanding of a prisoner's relieved and yet shaken reaction to new freedom it was this Marine Colonel. Chosen by the United Nations Command to build and direct the enlarged Freedom Village, Colonel Metzke himself had been a prisoner of war in World War II. He knew from personal experience how men should be treated and what should be done for them early in their new freedom. For many, this was after nearly three long years in Communist prison camps. That morning, as described by an observer:

Members of his [Colonel Metzke's] command stood by their cubicles, awaiting the first signal. The 129 enlisted Marines, corpsmen, doctors and other UN personnel had held a dress rehearsal only the day before. Everything was ready.⁵

Fifteen miles northwest another group of Marines assigned to the Provisional Command Receipt and Control section waited almost in the shadow of the famous "peace pagoda" at Panmunjom. UNC receiving teams, each headed by a Marine Corps major, "watched the road to the north for the first sign of a dust cloud which would herald the approach of the Communist convoy."⁶ The United Nations POWs had been assembled at Kaesong and held there in several groups, preparatory to the return. The exchange agreement had specified that the repatriation would begin at 0900. Precisely

⁴ Clarke, *Danube to Yalu*, pp. 298-299.

⁵ Heinecke, "Big Switch," p. 44.

⁶ *Ibid.*

at 0855 the Communist convoy, led by three Russian-made jeeps, each carrying one CCF and two NKPA officers, moved out from the Communist side of the peace corridor. Trucks and ambulances followed the jeeps.

As they approached the exchange site, "a Marine officer bellowed the familiar naval command, 'Marines, man your stations!'"⁷ Rosters of the UNC prisoners in the trucks and ambulances were then presented to the Marine team captains who checked the lists. As they called the names, "thin, wan, but smiling men shuffled from the trucks to the medical tents."⁸

Official receipt of the POWs at Panmunjom was by the Munsan-ni Provisional Command Receipt and Control Officer, assisted by 35 officers and enlisted men from the 1st Marine Division. After their screening by medical officers, UN returnees not in need of immediate medical aid were transferred by ambulance to Freedom Village at Munsan-ni for further processing. Helicopter priority went to litter patients too weak to travel by ambulance. POWs requiring prompt treatment were loaded aboard the HMR-161 carriers and flown to the 11th Evacuation Hospital at Freedom Village.

Seriously injured men were transferred directly to the Inchon hospital ships for embarkation to the United States, or were air-evacuated to Japan. South Korean repatriates were processed and went their way to freedom through nearby Liberty Village, the ROK counterpart of Freedom Village. A huge map was used to check progress of the POW convoys en route from Panmunjom to Freedom Village. The departure of ambulances and helicopters from Panmunjom was radioed ahead to Freedom Village, where medical personnel and vehicles lined the landing mat.

At Munsan-ni, the newly-freed men received a more thorough physical exam and the rest of their processing. Here they were again screened by medical officers to determine their physical condition. Able-bodied POWs were escorted to the personnel data section where necessary administrative details were recorded and their military records brought up to date. Those medically cleared were available for press interviews. New clothing issue, individually tailored, probably as much as anything emphasized to a prisoner that his particular Korean War was over. And nearly all of them found

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁸ *Ibid.*

news⁹ awaiting them in letters from home. When all basic details were completed, returnees went into the recreation and refreshment section. Commonplace iced tea, coffee, ice cream (the favorite), milk, sandwiches, cigarettes, and the latest periodicals were luxuries. In their weakened condition, the POWs could be served only light fare; the big steaks would come later.

The first Marine and fifth man in the processing line on the initial day, 5 August, was Private First Class Alfred P. Graham, Jr., of H/3/5. Although too weak to enter the press room, the 21-year-old repatriate told newsmen later in Tokyo of being fed a diet of cracked corn during his prison camp stay and of being forced to carry firewood 11 miles each day. The second Marine returned that day, and the 34th man to enter Freedom Village, was Sergeant Robert J. Coffee, of the 1st Signal Battalion. Captured in November 1950, he had been wounded just before being taken prisoner and had received little medical treatment. Like other returnees, Coffee stated that the treatment had been very poor while he was in the hands of the North Koreans but that it had improved somewhat after he was turned over to the Chinese.

Third and last Marine to come through the line was Private First Class Pedron E. Aviles, previously with the Reconnaissance Company of Headquarters Battalion. Knocked unconscious with a rifle butt while battling the enemy on a patrol on 7 December 1952, he regained consciousness to find himself a prisoner of the CCF.

On the second day, three more USMC infantrymen traveled that final road to freedom. They were Private First Class Francis E. Kohus, Jr., of A/1/7; Corporal Gethern Kennedy, Jr., I/3/1; and Private First Class Bernard R. Hollinger, H/3/5. Like the preceding three, their stories bore a similar pattern: usually they had been captured only after having been wounded or clubbed unconscious. As with other UNC prisoners being released daily, they told of the physical cruelty of their North Korean captors and the mental strain under the Chinese. Observers noted that many of the men released this second day were in much poorer physical condition than the initial returnees. In fact, one ROK prisoner was found to have died

⁹ For at least two Marines their return home was news in itself. Captain Paul L. Martelli, VMF-323, had been reported KIA. First Lieutenant Robert J. O'Shea, of division headquarters, the son of Marine Brigadier General George J. O'Shea (Ret), had also been thought dead by his family. He had been reported missing in July 1951 and had not been carried on the official POW list released the following December.

in an ambulance while en route to Liberty Village.

Mostly the repatriates asked questions about their old outfits: "Do you know if any of the other guys on the outpost got back off the hill?" and "Did we finally take the damn thing?" "Where's the 24th Division now?"¹⁰

Technical Sergeant Richard E. Arnold was one of the two Marine combat correspondents at Freedom Village during BIG SWITCH. He described his impressions of the returning men—in some cases, coming home after 30 months' confinement in North Korean POW camps, and others, as little as 30 days:

All are relieved and some a little afraid . . . It's their first hour of freedom, and most tell you that they can still hardly believe it's true. Some are visibly shaken, some are confused—and all are overwhelmed at the thought of being free men once again.¹¹

As in prison life everywhere, the POWs told of the hated stool pigeons, the so-called "progressives." These were the captives who accepted (or appeared to accept) the Communist teachings and who, in turn, were treated better than the "reactionary" prisoners who resisted the enemy "forced feeding" indoctrination. Continued the Marine correspondent:

They don't talk much. When they do, it's . . . mainly of progressives and reactionaries—the two social groups of prisoner life under the rule of Communism, the poor chow and medical care, and of the desire to fight Communism again.

When you ask, they tell you of atrocities committed during the early years of the war with a bitterness of men who have helplessly watched their friends and buddies die. Of forced marches, the bitter cold, and the endless political lectures they were forced to attend.¹²

One of the last—possibly *the last*—Marine captured by the Chinese was Private First Class Richard D. Johnson, of G/3/1. The 20-year-old machine gunner had been in the final battle of the war, the Boulder City defense, and was taken 25 July, just two days before the signing of the truce. Private First Class Johnson was returned the 19th day of the exchange. Another Marine seized in

¹⁰ HRB Subject File: "#1, 'Prisoners Of War—Korea—General,'" HQMC Div Info release, n.d., n.t.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

that same action was Private First Class Leonard E. Steege, H/3/7. As he entered the gate, he momentarily shook up Corporal James E. Maddell, a military policeman on duty at Freedom Village. Maddell said the last time he saw Steege was during the fighting for the outpost. "He was a dead Marine then," Maddell said, "but I guess it was just a case of mistaken identity."¹³

Captain Jesse V. Booker of Headquarters Squadron 1, the first Marine POW of the war, who had been captured on 7 August 1950, was also one of the earliest MAW personnel released. Booker and First Lieutenant Richard Bell, VMF-311, were returned to UNC jurisdiction on 27 August, the first Marine aviators to be sent back.

In addition to the regular issue of Marine utilities, gold naval aviator's wings, donated by 1st MAW fliers, were pinned on the chests of returning pilots by Wing General Megee and Division General Pate. Also welcoming Marine returnees at Freedom Village were Brigadier General Verne J. McCaul, the new Assistant Wing Commander; General Burger, ADC; and Colonel Metze, who also "found time during the busy days to greet and talk with every Marine and Navy Corpsman who passed through."¹⁴ Among those dignitaries¹⁵ present for the occasion were General Taylor, EUSAK CG; General Clarke, I Corps Commander; Secretary of the Army, Robert T. Stevens; and various U.S. senators.

During August enlisted POWs were recovered in large numbers. Officers, generally, did not arrive at Kaesong—the first step to Panmunjom—until about 21 August. After that date they were gradually returned to friendly control.

Even as late as 26 August there was considerable concern over the fate of hundreds of Allied officers not yet repatriated. Some early returning officers told of colonels, majors and captains who had been sentenced up to ten years for forming "reactionary groups" in camp. One field grade officer had been sentenced to a long prison term on

¹³ Heinecke, "Big Switch," p. 48.

¹⁴ 1stMarDiv ComdD, Aug 53, App. VI, p. 12.

¹⁵ As the exchange got underway, General Mark Clark was on a trip to the U.S. Unable to greet the returning prisoners, as he had at LITTLE SWITCH, the UNC Commander had a welcoming letter waiting for each repatriate. A booklet especially prepared for returning POWs which contained a quick fill-in on world news and sports events they may have missed as prisoners was also given each returnee. *Washington Post*, dtd 5 Aug 53, p. 3.

¹⁶ HRS Subject File: "#1. "PRISONERS OF WAR—Korea—General," *Washington News* article, dtd 26 Aug 53 from Panmunjom, "Officers' Fate Worries Army," by Jim G. Lucas.

the eve of the armistice.¹⁶ A similar thing nearly happened to Captain John P. Flynn, VMF(N)-513, long a thorn in the side of his Communist captors. Like a number of UNC airmen falsely charged with waging germ warfare, he vigorously denounced these allegations. "Even as late as the end of August the Marine was threatened with nonrepatriation, and his experience formed the basis for an episode in the novel *A Ride to Panmunjom*."¹⁷

Between 5 August-6 September, 3,597 U.S. servicemen were returned during Operation BIG SWITCH, including 129 ground and 28 air Marines. This 157 figure represents a total of 42 officers and 115 enlisted repatriated during this second and final POW exchange. Of the 27 Naval personnel freed, at least 6 were hospital corpsmen serving with the 1st Marine Division when they were taken. Counting the 157 Marines released in Operation BIG SWITCH and the 15 wounded POWs sent back in April, a total of 172 division and wing Marines were returned in the two POW exchanges.

Although the switch took place over a five-week period, 38 Marines, or 24 percent, were not released until late in the proceedings, in September. As one author noted, "It was Communist policy to hold the 'reactionaries' . . . to the last."¹⁸

Two of the best-known Marine "reactionaries" who had openly defied their Communist jailers during their entire period of captivity, were then-Lieutenant Colonel William G. Thrash, a VMA-121 pilot, and then-Major John N. McLaughlin, taken POW in November 1950. McLaughlin was released on 1 September and Thrash on 5 September in a group of 275 Americans returned, the largest number for any single day's transfer since the exchange began. The most famous U.S. prisoner held by the Communists was Major General William F. Dean. Formerly commander of the U.S. Army 24th Division, he had been captured in August 1950 after the fall of Taejon.

Ever since Operation BIG SWITCH got under way, every returnee had been asked if he had seen or heard of General Dean. None had. Many UN officers felt—uneasily—that he would probably be the last officer to be sent back. In fact, he emerged from imprisonment on 4 September "to be greeted with cheers at Freedom Village."¹⁹ Major Walter R. Harris and the most senior Marine captured

¹⁷ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 225.

¹⁸ Fehrenbach, *Kind of War*, p. 651.

¹⁹ *Life Magazine*, v. 35, no. 11 (15 Sep 53), p. 42.

during the war, Colonel Frank H. Schwable, later to be the central figure in a Court of Inquiry, were among the last nine Marines returned on 6 September, the final day of the switch. And so, one by one, the last 160 American POWs passed through Panmunjom. All were men marked by the enemy as "war criminals."

One Army sergeant, who freely admitted he could "never adequately describe how he felt when he knew he was going home"²⁰ recalled those final moments as a newly-freed prisoner:

At 1100 his truck pulled up at Panmunjom, the last convoy of American POWs to be exchanged. A huge, moustached Marine master sergeant walked up beside the truck, called out: "I will call out your last name. You will answer with your first name, middle initial, and Army serial number . . ."

"Schlichter!"

Schlichter [Charles B., Sgt.], barked out his response, and stepped down.

"Sergeant," the big Marine said gravely, "glad to have you home."

"Fella, you don't know how glad I am," Schlichter said.²¹

In the preliminary prisoner exchange, the week-long "LITTLE SWITCH" in April 1953, all of the returned Marine personnel were men who had been wounded at the time of their capture. They were recently-captured POWs, deliberately segregated by the enemy from early captives. All of these home-coming Marines had been captured since May 1952. Generally speaking, they had all been fairly well-treated.

During Operation BIG SWITCH, by contrast, 41 Marines were repatriated who had spent nearly three years as Communist prisoners of war. The majority of USMC returnees in this second exchange, however—a total of 91—had been captured relatively recently, in 1952 and 1953, and 25 had been held since 1951.

Throughout Operation BIG SWITCH, the Allied Command transferred a total of 75,799 prisoners (70,159 NKPA and 5,640 CCF) seeking repatriation. The Communist returned 12,757 POWs. In addition to the 3,597 Americans, this total represented 1,312 other UNC troops (including 947 Britons, 228 Turks, and small numbers of Filipinos, Australians, and Canadians) and 7,848 South Koreans.

The BIG SWITCH exchange went relatively smoothly, marred for a while only by the unruly behavior of some Communist diehard POWs. In a manner reminiscent of their earlier camp riots, the

²⁰ Fehrenbach, *Kind of War*, p. 651.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Communist POWs put on a blatant propaganda show for the benefit of world newsreel cameras. As the train carrying CCF and North Korean prisoners moved into the Panmunjom exchange point, enemy POWs noisily shouted Communist slogans, defiantly waved Communist flags, and hurled insults at UN forces. Some POWs stripped off their [U.S. provided] uniforms, "tossing them contemptuously to the ground."²² Others spat in the faces of U.S. supervising officers, threw their shoes at jeep windshields, and sang in Korean and Chinese "We will return in the Fall."²³

Marine division and wing elements were designated responsible for the security of nonrepatriated enemy POWs. By terms of the armistice agreement, these were held by UNC custodial forces from India. In commenting on the airlift operations, performed largely by HMR-161, the UNC Commander noted:

We had to go to great lengths to live up to our pledge to Syngman Rhee that no Indian troops would set foot on South Korean soil. Therefore, we set up an airlift operation which carried more than six thousand Indians from the decks of our carriers off Inchon by helicopter to the Demilitarized Zone. It was a major undertaking which just about wore out our helicopter fleet in Korea.²⁴

One of the recommendations made by military officials after the April LITTLE SWITCH exchange was that all interrogation of returning POWs be done either in America or on board ship en route home, rather than in Tokyo. This system was followed and worked out well. The POWs boarded ships at Inchon, following their clearance at Freedom Village. Interrogation teams, in most cases, completed this major part of their repatriation processing before docking at San Francisco. Two weeks of recuperation, good food and rest aboard ship enabled many POWs to arrive home in far better shape for reunion with their families than they had been in when received initially at Panmunjom.

As in LITTLE SWITCH, Marine and Navy personnel were processed by members of the Intelligence Department of Commander, Naval Forces Far East, augmented by officers from other Marine staffs. Marine officers who conducted the shipboard interrogations again included Lieutenant Colonel Fisher, ComNavFE liaison officer, as

²² *Life Magazine*, v. 35, no. 7 (17 Aug 53), p. 22.

²³ Metzger comments.

²⁴ Clark, *Danube to Yalu*, p. 299.

well as Lieutenant Colonel William A. Wood, Major Stewart C. Barber, and First Lieutenant Robert A. Whalen. All returning POWs were queried in depth by counterintelligence personnel about enemy treatment and atrocities, questionable acts committed by that small proportion of our own men whose conduct was reprehensible, and routine military matters. A security dossier was prepared on each prisoner, and all data about him went into his file case. The LITTLE SWITCH reports had indicated earlier—and this was subsequently confirmed—that some U.S. servicemen were definitely marked for further detailed questioning and scrutiny.

*Circumstances of Capture*²⁵

As the Commandant, General Shepherd, was to testify later during an investigation, "the prisoner of war question had never been a major problem [in the Marine Corps] due to the extremely limited number of Marines taken prisoner."²⁶ As one returnee at BIG SWITCH bluntly put it: "You fought until they reached you with a bullet or a rifle butt—that was the end."²⁷

Of the 221 U.S. Marines captured during the Korean War, more than half—121—were seized after 20 September 1951. For the Marine Corps this date marked the time when "warfare of position replaced a warfare of movement throughout the remaining 22 months of the conflict in Korea."²⁸ Both in the X Corps sector in eastern Korea where the 1st Marine Division was located at that time, as well as later on the Korean western front, the Marine Corps was denied its traditional aggressive fighting role. The Marines (along with the rest of the UNC forces) ceased offensive operations, were reduced to making limited attacks, and were under order from higher echelons to "firm up the existing line and to patrol vigorously forward of it."²⁹

²⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: HRS Subject File: VE 23.2.S8 "CMC Statements on Korean POWs"; HRS Subject File: "Korea--Korean War--General"; MacDonald, *POW*; Montross, Kuokka, and Hicks, *USMC Ops Korea—East-Central Front*, v. IV; Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1967), hereafter Ridgway, *Korean War*; Heinecke, "Big Switch."

²⁶ HRS Subject File: "VE 23.2.S8—CMC Statements on Korean POWs," CMC Statement dtd 14 Apr 54, p. 2.

²⁷ Heinecke, "Big Switch," p. 58.

²⁸ Montross, Kuokka, and Hicks, *USMC Ops Korea*, v. IV, p. 201.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

The mission of the Marine division thereby evolved into "an aggressive defense of their sector of responsibility" as records duly phrased it. On a larger scale, the nature of the Korean War, from about November 1951 on, reverted to that of July and August,³⁰ characterized primarily by minor patrol clashes and small unit struggles for key outpost positions. This became the pattern for the remainder of the war. It changed only when the decreed mission of an "active defense of its sector" by a UNC unit became this in fact. Normal defense then escalated into sharp, vigorous fighting to retain friendly key ground positions being attacked by the enemy. One American writer, in a discussion of the British defense in depth concept (adopted by the Marine Corps late in the war), went so far as to blame heavy Marine casualties in Korea on EUSAK's outpost system.³¹

Approximately half of the 100 Marines taken prisoner by September 1951—43—had fallen into enemy hands during the last two days of November 1950. They had been part of the ill-fated Task Force Drysdale,³² a composite Royal Marine-USMC-Army convoy that was ambushed by the Chinese en route to the Chosin Reservoir. These facts are relevant to a better understanding of the Commandant's statement that, traditionally, few Marines become prisoners of war.

Overall, the survival rate for Marines taken captive during the Korean War was 87.8 percent. Even for the worst year, 1950, when NKPA treatment was more ruthless and brutal than the CCF (and in any event, for those men longest-held), the Marine survival rate was 75 percent. Marine Corps statistics show that of 221 Marines captured, 194 (43 officers, 151 enlisted) returned, and 27 or 12.2 percent died.³³ Only a few Marines were afflicted with "give-up-itis," the malady that struck countless POWs and took a heavy toll of

³⁰ In July 1951, fighting had quieted down all along the UNC front, as a result of truce talks initiated by the Communists. This conveniently provided the enemy, at that time hard-pressed, a much-needed breathing spell. The lull in ground fighting continued until late August when the truce negotiations were suspended.

³¹ HRS Subject file "Korea—Korean War—General," article *Washington Times-Herald*, dtd 20 Aug 53, by Walter Simmons, p. 27.

³² For further details of this action, see MacDonald, *POW*, pp. 33–43; Montross and Canzona, *USMC Ops Korea—Chosin*, v. III, pp. 140–141, 225–235; and Reese, *Korea*, p. 162.

³³ Records indicate that 3 officers and 18 enlisted died while in captivity. Three officers and 3 enlisted POWs were also presumed to have died. MacDonald, *POW*, pp. 257–259.

lives. Included among these 194 returnees were the 172 men from the two POW exchanges, as previously noted; plus a group of 18 Marines captured in 1950 who escaped and rejoined USMC units in May 1951; two enlisted men who escaped less than a week after being taken; and two others released by the enemy after less than a month's captivity.

In a pure statistical oddity, the survival percentage for both Marine officers and enlisted (as well as the overall return rate) turned out to be the same: 87 percent.

Without going into an analysis here of the possible relevant factors, it is interesting to note that 62 percent of all U.S. captured military personnel returned after the Korean War and that roughly 38 percent died while imprisoned.³⁴ During World War II, the death rate for U.S. prisoners held by the Axis powers was approximately 11 percent.

Circumstances accounting for the capture of Marines during the Korean War were, as in every war, an occupational hazard. In most cases, prisoners were taken in one of two situations. One occurred when overwhelming numbers of hostile forces suddenly surrounded and overran a small outpost, and either killed or captured a high proportion of its defenders. The second resulted from the well-known increasing accuracy of CCF anti-aircraft fire. Halfway through the war it began to take its toll of 1st MAW pilots with similarly predictable results: either death or capture. Simple mischance and the human error of confused directions caused at least two ground Marines to blunder into enemy territory.³⁵

A brief review of the Korean War, chronologically, illustrates how some of the men of the 1st Marine Division wound up as prisoners. In the first week of August 1950, leading elements of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and the 1st MAW air squadrons arrived in Korea. Soon thereafter the Marine Corps was in the thick

³⁴ The number of American servicemen returned was approximately 4,428 of 7,190 captured during the war. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1966 edition, "Prisoners of War—Korean War," p. 519B. Earlier DOD "Tentative Final Report of U.S. Battle Casualties in the Korean War," cited by MacDonald, *POW*, p. 230, indicated 7,140 Americans were captured, 4,418 recovered, and 2,701 died. Either way, the percentages remain the same.

³⁵ A similar mishap had dire consequences for Major General Dean of the Army. Cut off from his unit, he was attempting to return to the U.S. line. Lacking a compass he walked to the southwest—and thereby into NKPA hands—instead of the southeast where U.S. troops were then heavily engaged in the fierce battle of the Pusan Perimeter.

of these early-moving offensives: at the Pusan Perimeter; the September Inchon-Seoul amphibious landings; Fox Hill at Toktong Pass, Yudam-ni, the Task Force Drysdale operation, all in November; and the October-December Chosin Reservoir campaign, including the two-day movement from Hagaru to Koto-ri in early December. Marine infantry, military police, tankers, motor transport personnel, and artillerymen were listed MIA in these operations.

Altogether, 79 Marines were captured during the first year. November 1950, when 58 Marines were lost to the enemy, would rank as the most costly month of the entire war in terms of Marines seized in combat. The first air POW, Captain Booker, was shot down 7 August while flying a reconnaissance mission from the USS *Valley Forge*. (This was the same date that infantrymen of the Marine Provisional Brigade saw their initial heavy fighting in what was then considered only a "police action.") Captain Booker was to remain the only Marine pilot in enemy hands until April 1951.

One ground Marine captured during the hectic days of August 1950 escaped before ever becoming listed as a casualty. Although Private First Class Richard E. Barnett thus does not technically qualify as a POW statistic, he still holds the distinction of being both one of the first Marine captives and one of the few to escape.³⁶

Few Marines were taken during 1951. Of the 31 seized throughout the entire year, 13 were from the division and 18 from the wing. The Marines were engaged in antiguerrilla activities until late February when a general advance was ordered by U.S. IX and X Corps to deny positions to the enemy. The 1st Marine Division was committed near Wonju, as part of the IX Corps. A second offensive, Operation RIPPER, was launched in March, and for the next six weeks small inroads were made against CCF forces. Relieved in the Hongchon area the next month by elements of the U.S. 2d and 7th Divisions, the Marines continued to operate as part of the IX Corps. Their mission was to secure objectives north of the 38th Parallel.

³⁶ A radio-jeep driver, Private First Class Barnett, was returning to his unit when he made a wrong turn and, instead, came upon a group of North Koreans. The enemy fired and halted the vehicle, quickly taking Barnett prisoner. Beaten, searched, and interrogated, the Marine was placed in a heavily-guarded cellar. For several days he was given only a few crackers to eat. On the third night, unaccountably, the Koreans took him along on an attack. As they neared the objective, Barnett noticed that all but one of his NPKA guards had gotten ahead of him. He deliberately fell, throwing a rock in the face of the nearby guard, and raced for safety. Successfully eluding his captors, Private First Class Barnett later rejoined his own forces. MacDonald, *POW*, pp. 8-10.

On 21 April the 1st Marine Division launched its attack, on IX Corps order, encountering moderate to heavy resistance. Throughout the first half of 1951, only five Marine infantrymen were captured.

Truce negotiations, as earlier noted, began at Kaesong on 10 July 1951 and ground fighting slowed. When the Communists broke off the truce sessions in late August General Van Fleet, then EUSAK commander, ordered an offensive by the X Corps to seize the entire Punchbowl. Along with other X Corps divisions, the Marines attacked on 31 August. They secured initial objectives, and then moved north to the Soyang River to seize additional designated objectives. Following the bitter action in the Punchbowl area, the Marines were involved in consolidating and improving their defenses.

As the battle lines became comparatively stabilized in 1951, the enemy began to develop his AA defenses to peak efficiency. Marine pilots engaged in CAS, observation, interdiction, and armed reconnaissance missions began to encounter accurate and intense ground fire.³⁷ Aircraft losses increased, and with them, the number of USMC aviators who fell into enemy hands. More than half of the Marine POWs taken during the year—18 of 31—were on 1st MAW station lists. Captive airmen represented VMF-323, VMF(N)-513, Hedron MAG-33 (Headquarters Squadron 33), VMO-6, VMF-312, VMF-311, and VMA-121.

The year 1952, like 1950, saw a large number of Marines taken into hostile custody—a total of 70. As the year began, CCF and UNC ground forces had settled down to a bunker warfare system often compared to the trench warfare of World War I. Air activity remained much as it had the preceding year. Air losses decreased, however, with only 11 pilots becoming POWs, in contrast to the 59 infantry Marines captured. In March, the 1st Marine Division moved from the X Corps zone of action on the east-central front to the I Corps western coastal flank. Here the Marines encountered “steadily increasing aggressiveness as the enemy launched larger and more frequent attacks against outpost positions.”³⁸ Probes, patrol

³⁷ One Marine who had conducted volunteer AAA reconnaissance missions over North Korea was Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. May, CO of the 1st 90mm AAAGunBn. In December 1951 he was lost in such a mission—the same flight in which Lieutenant Colonel Thrash, of VMA-121, was captured. MajGen A. F. Binney ltr to Hd, HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC, dtd 14 Sep 66.

³⁸ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 139.

actions, and aggressive defense of the MLR and its outposts took their toll.

Enemy pressure reached its height in October, when 41 Marine infantrymen were seized, the second highest number taken in any month during the war. In the COPs Detroit and Frisco defense of 6–7 October, the 7th Marines listed 22 MIA, of whom 13 became POWs, practically all of them being wounded prior to capture. On 26 October, the Communists lunged at 7th Marines COPs Ronson and Warsaw, adjacent to the main battle position, the Hook. In the ensuing action, 27 Marines were “marched, carried, or dragged off the hill and taken into the Chinese lines.”³⁹ Surprisingly, all 27 were recovered alive in the prisoner exchanges the following year.

Of the 11 Marine airmen who became statistics on a POW list in 1952, 4 were shot down in an ill-fated 10-day period beginning 6 May. Again, all-too-accurate hostile AA fire was the villain. In similar incidents during the year, two Marines engaged in “good Samaritan” aerial activities became POWs for their efforts. In February, First Lieutenant Kenneth W. Henry, an AO assigned to the Marine detachment aboard the light cruiser USS *Manchester*, and Lieutenant Edwin C. Moore, USN, whirled off in the cruiser’s HO3S to attempt rescue of a downed Navy fighter pilot, Ensign Marvin Broomhead. In the bright early afternoon, as Henry was maneuvering the helicopter sling, their ship suddenly crashed—apparently from enemy machine gun fire intended for a combat air patrol operating in the vicinity. Two of the three men—Broomhead and Henry—were injured, but managed to drag themselves to a hidden position and waited to be rescued. Instead, they were discovered shortly before midnight by a Chinese patrol.

A similar mishap occurred on 16 May to First Lieutenant Duke Williams, Jr., of VMF-212. Searching for a crashed pilot, his plane was struck by AA and he managed to jump. His parachute blossomed down into the midst of 15 waiting Koreans who had gathered to take him prisoner.

During the last seven months of hostilities in Korea, from January–July 1953, 41 Marines were captured. These included a VMO-6 pilot and air observer in the little OE-1 spotting planes shot down

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

in two separate incidents, plus 39 ground Marines trapped in the vicious outpost struggles of March and July. Except for two Marines who died, the rest were freed a few months after their capture during Operation BIG SWITCH.

Summarizing it another way, of the 221 Marines captured during the three-year conflict:

- 49 were officers and 172 enlisted;
- 190 were ground personnel and 31 aviators;
- of the 190 ground troops, 19 were officers and 171 enlisted;
- of the 31 aviators, 30 were officer pilots and 1 was enlisted.

The 7th Marines, which was the unit on line at the time of several major CCF attacks, had the highest number of POWs in the division. A total of 70 men, or 59.3 percent⁴⁰ of the 118 infantry Marines taken, were from the 7th. The record during this 1950–1953 period for the others is as follows: 1st Marines, 15 POWs; 5th Marines, 33; and the division artillery regiment, the 11th Marines, 14. Six pilots from Marine Fighter Squadron 312 found themselves unwilling guests in North Korea. Four other units—VMO-6, VMF-323, VMF-311, and VMF(N)-513—each had five members who served out the rest of the war as POWs.

*The Communist POW Camps*⁴¹

The Communist POW camp system, under Chinese direction, began in late December 1950. Marines captured in November and December, along with U.S. Army troops, British Commandos, and other Allied personnel, were forced-marched north to Kanggye, not far from the Manchurian border.⁴² In the bitter cold, while winter howled through North Korea, the column of prisoners limped its way to its final destination, arriving the day after Christmas. Several

⁴⁰ Recapitulation of facts from MacDonald, *POW*, pp. 260–269 and *passim*.

⁴¹ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: MacDonald, *POW*; Montross, Kuokka, and Hicks, *USMC Ops Korea—East-Central Front*, v. IV; Barclay, *Commonwealth*; Fehrenbach, *Kind of War*; Leckie, *Conflict*; Rees, *Korea*.

⁴² Although some American prisoners were taken in the summer of 1950, it was not until the late autumn that large numbers of men taken in several major engagements created a need for a permanent prison-camp system. Rees, *Korea*, p. 330.

of the group, including Marines, perished during the four-day march—victims of malnutrition, untreated combat wounds, pneumonia, the stinging, freezing wind, and subzero temperatures. Usually, “the Communists moved them [the prisoners] by night, because they feared the United Nations air power which . . . ranged over the whole of North Korea.”⁴³

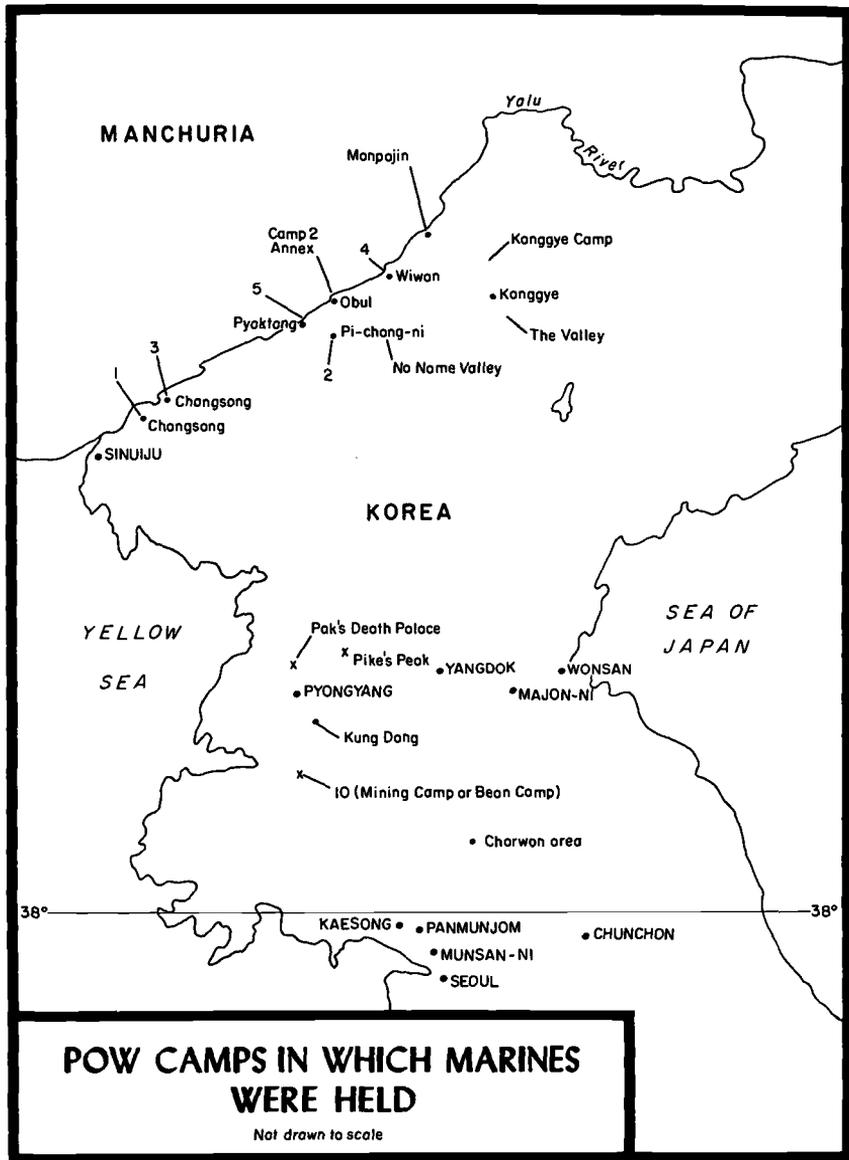
During the first three months of 1951, a network of POW camps was developed along the southern shores of the Yalu River. Occupants of the forlorn villages were evacuated, and newly captured UNC prisoners moved in. The main camp operation at this time was in the Kanggye area. This was a temporary indoctrination center established in October 1950 before the development of regular POW camps. (For various CCF camp locations, see Map 34.) Ultimately a group of a half dozen or so permanent camps were developed northeast of Sinuiju, along a 75-mile stretch of the Yalu.

By early 1951, Major McLaughlin, a captured Marine staff officer previously attached to X Corps, was senior officer among the Kanggye prisoners which included a heterogeneous collection of U.S. 7th Division soldiers, U.S. Marines, 18 Royal Marine Commandos, and Navy hospitalmen. UN personnel were scattered throughout several farmhouses, with no attempt made to segregate the enlisted and officers. The Chinese designated prisoner squads of 8–12 men, depending on the size of the room to which they were assigned. CCF-appointed squad leaders were those prisoners who appeared more cooperative.

In direct opposition to orders, Major McLaughlin set about establishing communication between the small scattered POW groups, despite ever-present surveillance. He tried to achieve effective control of the POWs so that a united front of resistance against the enemy could be maintained. At mass indoctrination meetings, held regularly every few days, the Marine officer issued instructions to enlisted personnel through five Marine noncommissioned officers. As one ex-prisoner recalled, the “cold, smoke-filled barn was the locale for wide-spread exchange of information between the many little groups.”⁴⁴ Daily routine at Kanggye stressed study and political indoctrination. Squad leaders were responsible for lectures and dis-

⁴³ Fehrenbach, *Kind of War*, pp. 423–424.

⁴⁴ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 63.



cussions on assigned topics in Marxian dialectical materialism. The curriculum was more intense than most college courses. On the other hand, physical treatment of inmates—except for chronic malnutrition and grossly inadequate medical care—at Kanggye was less brutal than at most of the other prisoner compounds.

Interrogations went hand-in-hand with indoctrination. Prisoners were grilled regularly on order of battle, close air support, naval gunfire methods, UN aircraft, weapons, unit locations, and other tactical information. The Chinese were even more interested in the life histories and biographical data of their captives. POWs were required to answer "economic questionnaires" and at frequent intervals compelled to write elaborate self-criticisms of their political attitudes and class backgrounds. The CCF were satisfied only when prisoners—whose original truthful answers had been rejected—revised their own family status and income statistics downward. POWs, being interrogated, often found the Chinese arguing with them over such far-away matters as the prisoner's parents or his own family annual income and social level.

In March 1951, after an indoctrination period of about eight weeks, the Kanggye POWs were transferred, and the camp itself was later abandoned. The officers were relocated at Camp 5, Pyoktong, while the majority continued the march westward to the newly opened Camp 1, at Chongsong.

Despite its numerical designation as Camp 5, the Pyoktong compound had been organized two months earlier and was the first of the permanent CCF centers. It became the headquarters of the entire prison-camp system. Approximately 2,000 UNC prisoners were interned here by the early part of the year. They were housed in native huts. New inmates arrived regularly from temporary collection centers in the south, where they had been held for months. Sometimes they were marched to the Yalu during the Korean winter while still wearing their summer fatigues. Pyoktong offered little chance for escape. The compound, situated on a barren peninsula that jutted out into the Yalu Reservoir, was so secure that the Communists did not even surround it with barbed wire or employ searchlights. It was hemmed in on three sides by fast water currents, while the one exit from the peninsula was closely guarded.

Conditions were far more severe here than at Kanggye. A starvation diet and complete lack of medical care quickly had their

inevitable effect. Pneumonia, dysentery, and malnutrition were rampant. The basic diet of boiled corn or millet resulted in associated deficiency diseases, such as beriberi and pellagra. Between 20 and 30 prisoners died daily. Many experts, nonetheless, felt that "if the Chinese during the winter of 1950-51 killed their prisoners by deliberate neglect, the North Koreans who had handled the captives before they became primarily a Chinese responsibility killed them by calculated brutality."⁴⁵

Although now junior to some Army and Air Force officers, Major McLaughlin was elected by his fellow officer-prisoners to represent them. Recognized by the Chinese as a staunch non-cooperative and dedicated trouble-maker, the enemy concentrated their pressure on the Marine officer—and he was subjected to intimidation, maltreatment, and threats of death.

As they had at Kanggye, the CCF attempted to organize progressive groups to write peace appeals, propaganda leaflets, and articles condemning the United States for the war. Typically, progressive POWs (usually weaker, less resilient members) who went along with the Communist propaganda conditioning, received better rations and treatment. Rugged resisters, on the other hand, could dependably expect to stand a considerable amount of solitary confinement, usually in an unspeakably foul, vermin-infested "hole." Here a POW was forced to remain in a debilitating, crouched position usually 56 hours or more. Throughout the war a good many Marines were to know this particular enemy treatment. One Marine artilleryman, Second Lieutenant Roland L. McDaniel, tied to a Korean POW in the hole for 10 days, emerged with pneumonia and tuberculosis.

In addition to the POW compounds at Pyoktong and Chongsong, other sites where Marines were held were Camp 3, at Changsong (nearby and with a nearly identical name to Camp 1), primarily for enlisted personnel, and at "The Valley." This was a temporary medical processing center in the Kanggye area. Marine inmates here were often confined to a pig pen. Largely because of the filthy conditions of this camp, the death rate quickly earned the Valley the opprobrious name of Death Valley.

Another cluster of POW camps was located further south. These

⁴⁵ Rees, *Korea*, p. 330.

were primarily run by the North Koreans, and were transit camps where prisoners were collected and interrogated before being moved north by truck or on foot to the permanent establishments. Among them were collection centers at Kung Dong and Chorwon, and Camp 10, south of the North Korean Capital Pyongyang. The latter was also known variously as the Mining Camp, the Gold Mine, or Bean Camp—this due to its prevailing diet. At this southernmost Communist camp, POWs were required to dig coal in the nearby mine shafts. Loads of coal were then hauled in small hand carts over icy roads to the camp, a task made more difficult by the prisoners' skimpy mealtime fare.

The most notorious of all the camps, however, was Pak's Palace,⁴⁶ the interrogation center near Pyongyang. POWs also called it Pak's Death Palace for its chief interrogator, a sadistic North Korean officer, Major Pak. Captain Martelli, a F4U fighter pilot from VMF-323 shot down in April 1951, was the first Marine processed through Pak's, where POWs were continuously threatened and beaten with little or no provocation. Another Marine aviator, Captain Gerald Fink, VMF-312, upon being asked during interrogation here why he had come to Korea won a sentence of several days solitary confinement in the hole for his forthright answer: "to kill Communists." Second Lieutenant Carl R. Lindquist, also of VMF-312, was the only one of 18 Marine officers captured in 1951 not processed through Pak's before being sent north.

Gradually the Chinese developed the policy of segregating officer and enlisted personnel. Commenting on this procedure, one British observer offered the following:

By this means the lower ranks were deprived of their leaders and for a short time this had a depressing, and generally bad, effect. It was not long, however, before the natural leaders among the rank and file asserted themselves. The standard of leadership naturally varied in different compounds; but in all there was some organization and in some it was highly efficient. It was . . . the policy of the Chinese . . . to discourage the emergence of thrustful leaders. . . . Consequently, clandestine rather than open leadership was usual.⁴⁷

By midyear, noncommissioned officers were also separated from the enlisted men, in an attempt to better control prisoners. In

⁴⁶ The Secretary of Defense Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War later adjudged Pak's to have been "the worst camp endured by American POWs in Korea." MacDonald, *POW*, p. 104.

⁴⁷ Barclay, *Commonwealth*, p. 190.

October of 1951 another one of the Yalu River Camps was set up. This was Camp 2, at Pi-chong-ni, which thereafter served as the main officers camp. The next month a POW column of nearly 50 men, including 6 Marines, left Kung Dong for these northern camps on a death march that covered 225 miles in two weeks. During the excruciating march, prisoners had been forced to strip naked and wade across the Chongsong River, a procedure which caused several deaths and cases of frostbite. One British participant, however, recalled that the "Marines banded together during the terrible march, and the Royal Marines were drawn close to the U.S. Marines."⁴⁸

In December 1951 the Communist and UNC forces exchanged lists of captured personnel. The list of 3,198 American POWs (total UNC: 11,559) revealed that 61 Marines were in enemy hands. Nine others, captured late in the year, were still in temporary collection points and thus not listed. Although Marines represented only a small portion of the total POWs, they were present in most of the nearly dozen regular camps or collection points then in existence. In any event the 1951 POW list⁴⁹ gave a picture of the growing Communist camp system.

As 1951 was drawing to an end, the Camp 2 commandant, a fanatical Communist named Ding, ordered UNC prisoners to prepare and send a New Year's greeting to the commander of the CCF, General Peng Teh-huai. Senior UN officer, Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Brown, USAF, was determined that the prisoners would not sign the spurious holiday message. Major McLaughlin voluntarily organized Marine resistance, and senior officers of other nationality groups followed suit. No greetings were sent. As usually happened, an informer reported the organized resistance and furnished names of the reactionary leaders. The following month, the six ranking officers were sentenced to solitary confinement, ranging from three to six months, for their "subversive activities."

The episode marked the first really organized resistance to the Chinese. "Although the principals were subjected to months of solitary confinement, coercion, torture, and very limited rations during the bitterly cold months of early 1952, their joint effort laid the

⁴⁸ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 127.

⁴⁹ Negotiations broke down at this point. No other list was offered by Communist officials until the first exchange of wounded POWs, 17 months later, in the April 1953 LITTLE SWITCH operation. Montross, Kuokka, and Hicks, *USMC Ops Korea*, v. IV, p. 223.

foundation for comparatively effective resistance within Camp 2 during the remainder of the war."⁵⁰

In January 1952, Major McLaughlin and the other five officers were removed to begin their long tours of solitary confinement. Although the remaining Marine officers at Pi-chong-ni had "formed a tightly knit group and consulted among themselves on every major issue,"⁵¹ the atmosphere within the camp itself became highly charged and strained. Suspicion of informers and opportunists was rampant. The officers at Camp 2 were generally agreed that Marine Lieutenant Colonel Thrash, who arrived in June, was largely responsible for restoring discipline. He issued an all-inclusive order about camp behavior for all personnel which read, in part:

Study of Communist propoganda would not be countenanced. If study was forced on them, POWs were to offer passive resistance and no arguments.

If prisoners were subject to trial or punishment they were to involve no one but themselves.

There would be no letters written using any titles or return address which might prove beneficial to the Communists for propoganda value.⁵²

Expectedly, it was not long before Lieutenant Colonel Thrash's efforts to influence and organize his fellow officers outraged CCF officials. In September he was removed from the compound, charged with "Criminal Acts and Hostile Attitude against the Chinese People's Volunteers." The Marine airman spent the next eight months in solitary. Here he was subjected to constant interrogation, harassment, and duress. On one occasion he was bound, severely beaten, and thrown outside half naked in sub-zero weather. Shock of the severe temperature rendered him unconscious, and he nearly died. Throughout his eight-month ordeal there were demands that he cooperate with the "lenient" Chinese upon his return to the compound.

During 1952, the Communists developed the system of keeping newly-captured Marines (and other UNC troops) apart from those taken prior to January 1952 who had suffered more brutal treatment. Beginning in August, noncommissioned officers were also segregated. They were removed from Chongsong (Camp 1) and taken further

⁵⁰ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 138.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

north along the Yalu to the "Sergeants Camp" (Camp 4) at Wiwon. Although a few Marines had been interned at the Camp 2 Annex, at Obul, from late 1951 on, they were not sent there in any sizable number until mid-1952.

Adjacent to a steeply-walled valley, the Obul camp was also known as "No Name Valley." Although the inmates of the annex were aware of other POWs in the main compound and throughout the valley, they were under heavy guard to prevent contact between the groups. An Air Force officer, the senior member, and Major Harris, the ranking Marine, went about organizing the prisoners in a military manner. In order to exchange information, notes were hidden under rocks at common bathing points or latrines. Messages were baked in bread by POWs on kitchen detail, and songs were loudly sung to convey information. Hospitalized POWs, meanwhile, were held at the Pyoktong (Camp 5) hospital or, in the southern sector, at a second hospital a few miles north of Pyongyang. Other locations where prisoners were confined in 1952 were "Pike's Peak," also in the same general southern area, and the Manpo Camp on the Yalu.

For POWs incarcerated behind the bamboo curtain, 1952 marked several other developments. It was the year that American airmen began to receive special grilling and threats from their Communist captors. This was in connection with the germ warfare hoax, to be discussed later. It was also the year that Marine POWs at Pi-chong-ni (Camp 2) observed their own traditional 10 November Marine Corps birthday ceremony. Eggs, sugar, and flour were stolen for a cake surreptitiously baked and suitably decorated with the Marine Corps globe and anchor. Another group accomplished the task of bootlegging rice wine. When the special date arrived, the Marine officers toasted the President, Commandant, and Marine Corps and spiritedly sang the National Anthem and Marine Corps hymn. One of the invited guests, Quartermaster Sergeant James Day of the Royal Marines, later recalled the reaction of other prisoners:

Firstly some were apprehensive in case of trouble with the Chinese, and its always consequent rash of gaol [jail] victims. Some thought it a little childish, and not worth the trouble of interrupting the daily routine of the place. And I feel that quite a lot were rather envious that the small band of USMC should be able to get together and do this sort of thing quite seriously, quite sincerely, and with no thought of any consequence.⁵³

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

This same month the Chinese staged a "Prisoner of War Command Olympics" at Pyoktong. Although most Marines opposed the idea of participation in the event, because of its inevitable propaganda exploitation by the CCF, the decision rendered by the senior UN officer was that POW athletes would be represented. Much improved quality food was served for the occasion, Communist photographers were everywhere, and a CCF propaganda brochure (with articles written by POW turncoats) was later distributed in Geneva purportedly to show the healthy recreational activities available to UNC prisoners. An Air force pilot, in describing the performance of Major McLaughlin, noted that "his skill as an athlete helped restore the prestige of the officers torn down by the enemy's propaganda."⁵⁴

More important, he defied the guards by deliberately circulating among the enlisted men (often younger, impressionable, less mature individuals) to point out lies in enemy propaganda tactics designed to slander the U.S. government and its leaders. The Marine officer also collected names of American POWs held in isolated places who it was suspected the enemy might attempt to hold as hostages at the end of the war—possibly as a bargaining tool for the granting of a seat to Red China in the UN.

During the last year of the war although a number of prisoners were still being captured in some of the most savage attacks unleashed by the enemy, the lot of the average POW had improved. More attention was being paid to the former pitiful medical care. The men were more warmly clad, even though still huddled into filthy, crowded huts. And the monotonous poor chow had improved. Most POWs, although carefully kept from learning developments of the outside world, naturally suspected that some reason lay behind the changes. And so there was: the Communists had no desire to repatriate skeletonized prisoners.

CCF "Lenient Policy" and Indoctrination Attempts⁵⁵

As early in the war as July 1951, the CCF was seeking propaganda benefits out of its so-called "lenient" policy toward captured United

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁵⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: MacDonald, *POW*; Barclay, *Commonwealth*; Clark, *Danube to Yalu*; Fehrenbach, *Kind of War*; Leckie, *Conflict*; Rees, *Korea*.

Nations personnel. Basically, this could be described as "calculated leniency in return for cooperation, harassment in return for neutrality, and brutality in return for resistance."⁵⁶ Others have characterized the CCF psychological techniques of indoctrination as monotonous and single-minded "repetition, harassment and humiliation."⁵⁷

In some respects, it is true that the Chinese treatment of prisoners appeared to be more humane than that of the North Koreans. The latter freely used physical cruelty and torture, to the point of being barbaric.⁵⁸ Sometimes it appeared that Allied POWs did not receive any harsher treatment from the CCF than did local civilian prisoners.

Whereas the NKPA regularly resorted to physical brutality, the Chinese "introduced a more insidious form of cruelty."⁵⁹ Although they used physical violence less often, it was usually more purposeful and combined with deliberate mental pressure. CCF officials announced that treatment of captives would be "fair and lenient," but that wrongdoers would be publicly punished. Usually this CCF punishment took the form of less drastic methods—solitary confinement, prolonged interrogation, and a reduced diet. Even under this decreed lenient policy, however, no relief parcels were delivered to POWs, nor were any neutral observers ever allowed to inspect the prison camps.

In any event, the Chinese were considerably more effective than the NKPA in their intelligence activities. Often their skilled interrogators were officers who spoke excellent English. Occasionally, they had even attended such U.S. schools as the University of Chicago and had considerable insight into American psychology, customs, and values—even slang. Interrogation sessions usually employed recording devices and sometimes were further equipped with one-way mirrors. One Marine, subjected to frequent interrogation, was kept

⁵⁶ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 61. One former Marine POW commented: "The 'lenient policy' applied to the 'liberated soldiers,' who had supposedly been 'liberated' from the American capitalists by the Chinese People's Volunteers. Unless a prisoner accepted this absurd concept, he was a 'war criminal' and subject to being treated as such. The North Vietnamese use this same characterization ('war criminal') in reference to U.S. POWs when queried by U.S. representatives at the Paris talks." MajGen John N. McLaughlin ltr to Dir, MCHist, HQMC, dtd 17 Jul 70.

⁵⁷ Rees, *Korea*, p. 337.

⁵⁸ There were, for example, instances when POW columns were being marched north and the NKPA treatment was so rough that "Chinese guards intervened to protect the prisoners from the North Koreans." MacDonald, *POW*, p. 43.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

awake by the Chinese who slapped his face and blew smoke in his eyes.

From early 1951 to the end of the war UNC prisoners were subjected to a systematic attempt at mass conversion to Communism. This intensive indoctrination effort—like the riots of Communist prisoners in Allied POW camps and the CCF germ warfare fabrications—was designed to gain a propaganda advantage. From highest-ranking officer to lowly private, no one was immune to this thought-reform process. General Dean, prize Communist captive, who was subject to three years of intense Marxist-Leninist indoctrination, upon his release commented wryly, "I'm an authority now on the history of the Communist Party and much of its doctrine."⁶⁰

English-speaking POWs, both American and British, particularly became the target for Communist thought-control conditioning. Many experts have discussed glowingly the superb example and iron discipline—both on the battlefield and in POW camp—displayed by the Turkish soldiers. This is true, and their outstanding performance is to their credit as a national group. The fact remains, however, that the Turks were long-term professional soldiers. Usually they were left alone by the Communists who neither spoke their language nor needed them for propaganda purposes. As a rule all non-American troops of the United Nations received better treatment than American and British personnel.

The basic tenet of the Communist party line was that this aggressive war against the peace-loving people of Korea had been caused by American imperialists seeking additional foreign markets. All UNC soldiers were, therefore, by simple definition war criminals who deserved no better treatment than death. But as most UN soldiers were misguided and misled by their capitalist rulers they would "not be shot if they admitted their mistakes and showed themselves to be progressive"⁶¹ by becoming properly indoctrinated.

Often, the thought-reform processing started long before prisoners reached their permanent camps, while they were under initial interrogation in the transit collection center. Captain Samuel J. Davies, Anglican Chaplain of the British Gloucestershire Regiment,⁶² noted

⁶⁰ Rees, *Korea*, p. 334.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

⁶² Davies was the only one of the four captured UNC chaplains who survived the war. During his imprisonment, he visited hospitalized POWs at the makeshift hospital near Camp 2 and held weekly community services. Another well-remembered chaplain

that lecture subjects presented to his officer group at one North Korean temporary collection center included:

- Corruption of the UN by the American warmongers;
- The Chinese Peoples' right to Formosa;
- The Stockholm Peace Appeal;
- Progress in Peoples' China;
- Churchill, tool of the Truman-MacArthur-Dulles Fascist clique;
- The Soviet Union heads the World Peace Camp.⁶³

Systematically the enemy ground away at theory and practice of Communism, with its superiority to American democracy. From emphasis on the Korean War as imperialist aggression, the programmed thinking then dealt with shortcomings of western countries (particularly Southern lynchings, poor treatment of Negroes, and colonialism) to the idyllic socialism in people's democracies where "everyone is equal." "Together with the emotional pressures involved, this dramatic presentation of Marxism-Leninism to prisoners who often not only failed to comprehend why they had fought in Korea, but even the rudiments of democracy itself, was bound to have some sort of effect."⁶⁴

Compulsory lectures and discussions often went on until 2200. Together with the unceasing indoctrination efforts, the CCF attempted to maintain complete control over every aspect of POW life. Each camp was divided into POW companies (ranging from 60 to 300 men), platoons, and squads. Squad leaders, appointed by the Chinese, reported regularly to authorities the opinions of men in their group. "Converted" progressives were responsible for much of the internal policing. Every prisoner with reactionary tendencies was isolated. The varied pressures of hunger, fear, constant threats of torture, coercion, nonrepatriation, anxiety, and guilt⁶⁵ were used to break him down.

In an attempt to convert the Marines and other prisoners to their own beliefs, the Communists prohibited the use of the term "prisoner of war." Instead they used the phrase "newly liberated friends"

was Captain Emil J. Kapaun, Chaplains Corps, USA. The Catholic priest stole food and sneaked into the enlisted compounds at Camp 5 to distribute it. His heroic behavior and selfless interest in his fellow-men were an inspiration to fellow POWs. MacDonald, *POW*, pp. 77, 136.

⁶³ Rees, *Korea*, p. 336.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁶⁵ Some analysts have pointed out that the Lenient Policy with its "emphasis on confession and repentance, and its propaganda exploitation" closely resembled POW indoctrination tactics developed by the Russians with their German prisoners in World War II. Rees, *Korea*, p. 338.

and insisted the POWs do likewise. They also denounced religion as a superstition and device for controlling people's minds. Curiously, POWs were often permitted to retain whatever religious articles they had on them when captured, so that Bibles, rosaries, etc., were available for squad groups that sought to hold informal religious discussions and readings. Such religious expression was, of course, strictly forbidden. It might be noted here that Marines, as a group, did not appear to be any more or less interested in religious services than other POWs.

By mid-1952 the compulsory lectures were considered a failure, and the emphasis shifted to "voluntary" study groups led by progressives. More insidious methods of indoctrination were being used—books, papers, and articles written by camp progressives. Personal interrogation and indoctrination had proved it could have a more powerful effect than attempts at mass conversion. Then, too, the Chinese had by this time perfected another propaganda tool that admirably suited their purposes. It was to have even still more effective, far reaching results.

*The Germ Warfare Issue*⁶⁶

Besides their routine interrogations and indoctrinations, by 1952 the Communists had found a new angle to exploit. This was to have strong repercussions on the treatment of some captured personnel. And, ultimately, it was to affect American public reaction to the entire Korean War and to shake the nation's confidence in some of its fighting men who became POWs.

The germ warfare issue developed from an incident in January 1952 when the Communists shot down a U.S. Air Force B-26 bomber. Several months later, in May, the enemy propaganda campaign moved into high gear when the navigator and pilot both purportedly confessed that they took part in a raid in which germ bombs were dropped on North Korean towns. After the CCF successfully extracted false confessions from the two USAF officers, the enemy exposed both prisoners to a select group of Oriental medical specialists

⁶⁶ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: MacDonald, *POW*; Fehrenbach, *Kind of War*; Leckie, *Conflict*; Rees, *Korea*.

and newspapermen. The two Americans apparently performed according to plan, and a relentless flood of Communist propaganda was unleashed on the world.

While the allegation of bacteriological warfare was not new in the Korean War, it was not until 1952 that the Chinese successfully exploited it. After suffering their first reverses in Korea in September 1950, the Communists charged that Americans were waging germ warfare. Even after they regained the tactical initiative in late 1950 they continued their campaign of vilification. In early 1951, while the UNC battled epidemics of smallpox, typhus, and amoebic dysentery prevalent among the civil population and within the POW camps, the CCF branded medical efforts to curb the diseases as experiments in germ warfare. A formal complaint was made by the CCF to the United Nations in May 1951; thereafter, the germ warfare charges lay dormant for the rest of the year.

The effect of the two airmen's "confessions" in 1952 was far-reaching. From that time until the end of hostilities "captured aviators of all services were subjected to a degree of pressure and coercion previously unknown by prisoners of war. Prior to the turn of the year aviation and ground personnel received relatively the same treatment in Communists' hands. After January 1952, aviators were singled out for a special brand of treatment designed to wring bacteriological warfare confessions from them."⁶⁷ North Korean officials joined the CCF spokesmen in loudly denouncing American bacteriological attacks. As the campaign gained momentum, an elaborate, cleverly-concocted "War Crimes Exhibit" was set up in Peiping in May. Similar displays were later on view at the UNC officers' camp at Pi-chong-ni, including hand-written and sound-recorded confessions by the two American pilots, as well as a convincing array of photos depicting the lethal "bomb containers."

All the while air personnel were being put under acute stress to confess alleged war crimes. Captured Marine aviation personnel encountered this new subject in their interrogations. Lieutenant Henry, captured in February, was asked about germ warfare. Major Judson C. Richardson, of VMF(N)-513, during interrogations at Pak's was told he would never leave Korea when he denied that the U.S. was waging bacteriological warfare. Master Sergeant John T. Cain,

⁶⁷ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 175.

VMO-6, a well-known Marine enlisted pilot whose plane was shot down in July 1952, was questioned, confined to the hole, and taken before a firing squad when he refused to acknowledge American participation. Captain Flynn was also subjected to intensive and brutal interrogation by North Korean and Chinese Communist Air Force personnel who sought a confession. Others were to meet similar pressure and be questioned until their nerves shrieked.

On 8 July 1952, the first of a chain of events occurred that was to link the Marine Corps with the spurious bacteriological warfare propaganda. Colonel Frank H. Schwable, 1st MAW Chief of Staff and Major Roy H. Bley, wing ordnance officer, were struck by Communist ground fire while making a reconnaissance flight. The enemy had little difficulty in compiling Colonel Schwable's biography. Although he repeatedly maintained he had just arrived in Korea and had not yet received an assignment, he was in uniform with insignia and full personal identification. A Department of Defense press release issued two days later gave considerable data, correctly identifying him as the Marine Wing Chief of Staff. The Chinese knew they had a prize.

Two weeks after his capture, the colonel was taken to an interrogation center where he remained in solitary confinement until December. He quickly became aware of CCF intentions to utilize him for their propaganda mill. He was interrogated relentlessly, badgered, accused of being a war criminal, fed a near-starvation diet, denied proper latrine privileges, refused medical and dental attention, and subjected to extremes of temperature. Ultimately the discomfort, almost constant diarrhea, extreme pain from being forced to sit in unnatural positions, fatigue, and naked threats wore him down. At the same time he was also convinced that had he continued to resist Communist demands for a confession the enemy would have affixed his forged signature to a document to achieve their ends. He later commented:

In making my most difficult decision to seek the only way out, my primary consideration was that I would be of greater value to my country in exposing this hideous means of slanderous propaganda than I would be by sacrificing my life through non-submission or remaining a prisoner of the Chinese Communists for life, a matter over which they left me no doubt.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

General Dean, held in solitary confinement for much of his three years' captivity, stated the greatest problem facing a prisoner of war is "maintaining his judgment—he has no one on whom he can try out his ideas before turning them into decisions."⁶⁹ Possibly this was also Colonel Schwable's problem. Many drafts of his confession were made before the Chinese were satisfied that specific details reinforced the information earlier obtained in other prisoners' false statements. The confession that finally evolved in December cleverly combined factual order of battle data and technical terminology to create a most convincing lie. It was more sophisticated than efforts of earlier captives and was, unquestionably, damaging.

*Problems and Performance of Marine POWs*⁷⁰

Problems faced by Marine and other UNC prisoners ranged from the fundamentals of sheer survival to more abstract questions involving honor and duty that have less sharply defined interpretations. Was it, for instance, a prisoner's duty to overtly resist the enemy at all costs and on all possible occasions? Or was an attitude of passive resistance that created less hostility and attention better in the long run? Were such passive techniques liable to render a POW unable to continue making fine distinctions in his conduct and behavior so that he unwittingly went over the line to become a collaborator with the enemy? What about a ranking POW's responsibility of leadership?

In a practical, day-in, day-out way, every prisoner had to decide for himself as to how actively or passively he would resist the enemy. In a number of cases Marine (and other Allied) POWs gave deliberately false or misleading information in response to threats, coercion, or maltreatment. Three Marines at Pak's regularly held counsel "to determine their courses of action and to coordinate their false stories."⁷¹ Captain Fink's list of ships, all sunk in World Wars I and II, was similar to the story told by an Air Force officer of the new B-108 bomber (three B-36s).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁷⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: *PacFlt EvalRpt* No. 6, Chap. 10; MacDonald, *POW*; Fehrenbach, *Kind of War*.

⁷¹ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 121.

Not infrequently a POW faced threats of death, reduced rations, still worse medical care, solitary, or physical beatings and torture if he failed to make some response to questions. Major Richardson finally wrote untruthful answers to five questions about the Navy, although his NPKA interrogators told him his lies were detected. Master Sergeant Cain authored a fanciful report about the Fleet Logistic Wing, an organization about which he knew nothing, not too surprisingly since it did not exist. He later admitted, however, that he felt he'd "made a mistake at that time [his first interrogation] by lying about inconsequential things."⁷²

Expressed in simplistic terms, a spirit of cohesion and of group identity seemed to be the key factor in—to use a bromide that is particularly apt here—separating the men from the boys. Even when avowed reactionary leaders were removed to serve one of their many solitary tours, there seems little doubt that their example served to instill a spirit of resistance (either open or underground) in fellow POWs. This was particularly true when the leadership gap was filled by the next senior man and the chain of command remained unbroken.

Prisoners who were able to rise above their own personal situation (*i.e.*, to adjust, without giving in) and to assist others seemed, unquestionably, to have gained greater resiliency and determination. Whether this is a cause-or-effect reaction, however, might be a grey area difficult to pinpoint precisely. In any event, glimpses of Marines from behind the barbed wire indicated that steadfastness under pressure, ingenuity, and outstanding leadership earned them the respect of fellow prisoners as well as a place in Marine Corps history.

Even in a situation as inhospitable and hazardous as a POW camp, it is not surprising that characteristic behavior and certain distinctive personality traits tend to show through, no matter what. Captain Fink, captured early in the war, endured unspeakable humiliations at the hands of the North Koreans. Although he felt his morale was at its lowest point at this time, and was not sure he could go on, he was later responsible for providing a high degree of civility for POWs confined to Camp 2. His most notable artistic and mechanical

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

achievement was probably the construction of an artificial leg⁷³ for USAF Major Thomas D. Harrison. This prosthetic was so expertly fashioned that its owner could play volley ball using his new limb! Fink also built stethoscopes for POW doctors, using resonant wood and tubing stolen from Chinese trucks. After a discussion with other POWs on the need for a religious symbol in camp, the resourceful Marine made a 22-inch crucifix, christened "Christ in Barbed Wire."⁷⁴ His efforts on behalf of religion earned him a 10-day sentence in the hole.

Captain Arthur Wagner, VMF(N)-513, spent an unusually long six-month tour at Pak's during 1951. For new captives headed in that direction, the word via USMC grapevine was that he "could be trusted."⁷⁵ Captain Wagner counselled other prisoners at Pak's, helped chop wood, draw water, cook, ease the burden of sick POWs, and resisted the Communists at every turn.

Another member of the same squadron, Captain Flynn, had completed 59 combat missions against the enemy in North Korea before being shot down in May 1952.⁷⁶ While captive, the veteran Marine fighter pilot withstood intense interrogation, influenced others to suppress CCF-inspired talks made by progressives, and strengthened morale by planning a group escape. He was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment by a mock court. Throughout it all, according to Master Sergeant Cain, the POWs "owed much to Flynn who kept them amused."⁷⁷ First Lieutenant Robert J. Gillette's "reactionary" attitude resulted in his being placed in the hole on several occasions. Once, at No Name Valley, he managed to scribble a novel on toilet paper which subsequently provided some light moments for fellow prisoners. And First Lieutenant Felix L. Ferranto, 1st Signal Battalion, spent more than two years of his 33 months' imprisonment in solitary confinement or isolated with small units of "non-coopera-

⁷³ A hollowed-out compartment of the leg was used to hide written records on deaths, atrocities, and other administrative data. Ultimately, the records were brought back to the U.S. The Air Force officer was a cousin, interestingly enough, of the chief Allied truce negotiator, General Harrison. MacDonald, *POW*, p. 227, and *Washington Post*, dtd 5 Aug 53, p. 1.

⁷⁴ The crucifix was brought back to freedom by Camp 2 POWs and later placed in the Father Kapaun High School, in Wichita, Kansas. MacDonald, *POW*, p. 172.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁷⁶ Parachuting from his burning plane after it was struck by hostile AA fire, Captain Flynn duplicated an earlier action from World War II. In July 1945 he had bailed out of an aircraft similarly hit by fire while on a combat patrol over Japan. Biog File, HRS, HistBr, G-3 Div, HQMC.

⁷⁷ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 185.

tive" POWs. The CCF pronounced him a "hopeless capitalist, an organizer with an 'unsincere attitude.'" ⁷⁸

The type of amiable accommodation that could sometimes be made, without compromising one's standards, was once successfully demonstrated by Captain Jack E. Perry, VMF-311 briefing officer. On a bombing run his F9F fuel tank was hit, and he parachuted down. Seized almost immediately by the Chinese, his captors "showed him bomb holes from numerous strikes in the area, and they pointed out several wounded soldiers. Then, as he describes it, 'They laughed like hell,' Although Captain Perry failed to see anything funny, he laughed along with them.'" ⁷⁹

Three Marines captured during the Korean War had suffered a similar fate in World War II. Ironically, Staff Sergeant Charles L. Harrison, of the Military Police Company; Warrant Officer Felix J. McCool, of 1st Service Battalion; and Master Sergeant Frederick J. Stumpges, Headquarters Company, were all captured in the same 29 November 1950 action. Comparisons of treatment by the Communists and Japanese were inevitable. A survivor of the Bataan Death March, Stumpges felt that although the Japanese confinement was more difficult physically, imprisonment in North Korea was a far worse mental ordeal. "They [the Communists] were around all the time and you could never speak your mind." ⁸⁰

The other two Marines similarly thought that the Japanese were more brutal but had more character. Harrison, captured at Wake Island, said he admired them because "they really believed in their cause and were loyal to it." ⁸¹ The Chinese, on the other hand, he characterized as employing "false friendship and deceit." ⁸² McCool, who had spent 70 hours in a slimy, lice-infested hole for refusing to confess to a phony charge of rape and pillage, knew that he "hated the Chinese Communists far more than he had hated the Japanese." ⁸³

Master Sergeant Cain had distinguished himself by flying little OE reconnaissance planes 184 hours and had 76 combat missions in one month. Just before his capture, Cain had paid for six months' education for nine Korean youngsters who lived near his air base.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁸⁰ *New York Times*, dtd 30 Aug 53, p. 2.

⁸¹ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 79.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

Because of his graying hair and lack of rank insignia, Sergeant Cain was mistaken for a senior officer. In fact, the Chinese insisted that he was Lieutenant Colonel Cain, CO of VMF-121. His equal amount of insistence that he was not a Marine officer, plus his refusal to reveal any significant information, made him a particular nuisance to the CCF. He was subjected to intensive interrogation sessions, confined to the hole, and stood at attention for periods of five to eight hours. Describing the occasion on which he thought it was all over, Sergeant Cain related that he:

. . . was taken to a hillside, blindfolded, and placed in front of a firing squad. He heard rifle bolts click. The commander of the firing squad asked if he was ready to tell all.⁸⁴

When the Marine sergeant replied that he was not going to talk, the Chinese returned him to solitary confinement. Eventually, after questioning him for 84 days, the CCF gave up trying to indoctrinate him in the ways of Communism. Major Harris, senior officer of the Obul complex, freely acknowledged that Sergeant Cain "assumed more than his share of duties and responsibilities and set an example for all to follow."⁸⁵

*Marine Escape Attempts*⁸⁶

As the Korean War came to a close, assessments were being made of America's role in it. Operation BIG SWITCH swung into high gear and national attention focused on the returning POWs and their experiences in Communist camps. The widely-accepted statement was that no prisoners had escaped. Even more discrediting was the prevailing belief that, "worse, not a single American attempted to escape from captivity."⁸⁷ These reported facts are not borne out by the actual record.

In May 1951, a group of 18 Marines and a U.S. Army interpreter found their way back to American control through a combination of fortuitous events and quick thinking. All of the Marines had been captured several months earlier, in the 28 November-11 De-

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

⁸⁶ Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is derived from: MacDonald, *POW*; Korean War casualty cards from Statistical Unit, Casualty Section, HQMC.

⁸⁷ Leckie, *Conflict*, p. 389.

ember period, the majority on the night of 29–30 November. There were peculiar circumstances connected with their escape. In early April, a group of nearly 60 UNC prisoners had been brought south by the enemy from the Majon-ni area. Presumably they were to perform working details in the rear of Communist front lines.

While a larger number of prisoners, both Army and Marine, were marched westward to Pyoktong, First Lieutenant Frank E. Cold and a group of 17 enlisted were sent further south to the general Chorwon area, not far from the 38th Parallel. In the meantime the Chinese launched their spring counteroffensive on 22 April. It appears that, subsequently, the Marines and Army interpreter, Corporal Saburo "Sam" Shimamura, who had been attached to the 1st Marine Division, were told they would be taken to the area in which the Marine division was operating and released there.

The group was then trucked southeast to Chunchon, just below the Parallel, under guard, and marched toward the vicinity of the front lines. On 24 May, while in proximity to the main battle area, an artillery preparation suddenly registered nearby. The CCF guards fled, while the prisoners ran in the opposite direction, heading for high ground where they successfully eluded the guards. For the rest of that day and night the escapees quietly watched Communist troops retreat past them. The next day, 25 May, the Marines fashioned make-shift air panels from wallpaper they stripped from a ruined Korean house in the area. They spelled out "POWS—19 RESCUE." Their signal attracted the attention of an Army observation pilot who radioed their position to an Army reconnaissance unit.

Three Army tanks were dispatched and escorted the ex-prisoners to safety. They entered friendly lines in the vicinity of Chunchon, "the first and only group of prisoners to experience Communist indoctrination and to reach freedom after a prolonged period of internment."⁸⁸ Two members of the unit⁸⁹ were of special interest.

⁸⁸ MacDonald, *POW*, p. 84, reporting news stories in *The Washington Post*, dtd 27 Aug 53, p. 7, and *Saturday Evening Post*, 25 Aug 51, p. 109.

⁸⁹ Roster of this May 1951 escape group: 1stLt Cold, H&S/3/7; MSgt Dunis, Military Police Co; SSgt Harrison, MPCo; SSgt James B. Nash, MPCo; Sgt Charles W. Dickerson, 1stTkBn; Sgt Morris L. Estess, 1stSigBn; Sgt Paul M. Manor, A/7 MT Bn; Cpl Clifford R. Hawkins, 1stTkBn; Cpl Ernest E. Hayton, 1stTkBn; Cpl Frederick G. Holcomb, 11thMar; Cpl Leonard J. Maffioli, 1stTkBn; Cpl Theodore R. Wheeler, 1stServ Bn; Cpl Calvin W. Williams, Hq, 1stDiv; PFC John A. Haring, 7thMar; PFC Theron L. Hilburn, 1stTkBn; PFC Charles M. Kaylor, W/2/7; PFC Paul J. Phillips, A/7 MTBn; and PFC Charles E. Quiring, 5thMar. MacDonald, *POW*, pp. 260–263.