



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A131342

Generals meet along the central Korean fighting front. Pictured from left are MajGen Oliver P. Smith, USMC, LtGen James A. Van Fleet, USA, and MajGen William M. Hoge, USA. LtGen Van Fleet replaced Gen Ridgway as commander of the U.S. Eighth Army.

uncharacteristically fierce resistance and was stalled almost three miles from its final objective, and the Chinese still controlled the Hwachon Dam.

This situation became serious when the enemy opened some of the dam's sluice gates on 8 April sending a massive wall of water around the river bend and onto the Chunchon flood plain. Luckily, the low level of water within the reservoir and the fact that not all the gates were opened kept the damage to a minimum. Only one bridge was knocked out, although several other pontoon bridges had to be disconnected until the rising water subsided. In the end, this man-made flash flood only raised the river level about a foot downstream. Still, the pent-up waters of the reservoir represented a potential threat to future operations. Accordingly, seizure of the dam itself or destruction of the gate

machinery became a high priority. Unfortunately, several Army ground attacks and a night raid failed to achieve that goal. The latter was a water-borne raid by Army rangers paddling rubber assault boats, not an amphibious assault as is sometimes claimed; and, contrary to some sources, no Marine units were involved in either the planning or execution. Failure to take or knock out the Hwachon Dam meant its capture unexpectedly became the next major Marine task for Operation Dauntless.

The Marines began arriving at the Kansas Line as scheduled on 10 April, but not all units were in place until two days later when Korean Marines relieved the last elements of the 1st Cavalry Division. Seizing the Hwachon Dam as well as securing the main supply route leading north to Kumhwa and reaching the

Wyoming Line were now the objectives for an expanded Operation Dauntless. With this in mind, General Smith assigned his division an intermediate phase line. The Quantico Line included the heights overlooking the Hwachon Dam and the hills north of the village of Hwachon, while the exact positions held on the Marine left flank were to be tied to the advances made by the 6th ROK Division. This was the plan when the 1st Marine Division deployed along the line of departure. Then, Operation Dauntless was suddenly postponed.

Although a time of general tranquility on the Central Front, the break between operations was one of international tumult. Its root cause was President Harry S. Truman's decision to relieve General MacArthur of command. This unexpected announcement was greeted for the most part by stunned silence in Korea, but created a considerable stateside uproar known as "the great debate."

General Ridgway was named the new commander of United Nations forces and was in turn replaced as Eighth Army commander by Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet, USA. A former football coach, 59-year-old "Big Jim" Van Fleet was an aggressive leader who favored expending fire and steel instead of men. A veteran of both World Wars and the general officer who had seen the most frontline combat in the European theater during World War II, Van Fleet had recently served with the Joint Military Aid Group that saved Greece from Communist insurgents. Like-minded Generals Van Fleet and Ridgway made a good team. This was fortunate because Ridgway had planned Operation Dauntless, but Van Fleet was going to have to carry it out. Obviously,



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A7862

After 10 days of patrolling and preparation of defensive works on Line Kansas, the 5th Marines resumed the advance toward Line Quantico.

the new commander needed a few days to “snap in” before leading a new offensive.

Van Fleet was greeted with some ominous news. In the wake of Operation Ripper intelligence officers began to grasp that another Communist offensive was near, the fifth such major effort since the CCF intervened in Korea the previous fall. Prisoners of war reported the attack could begin within one week, and captured documents claimed the ultimate goal was to eject U.N. forces from Korea after the Communists celebrated May Day in Seoul. To this end more than 700,000 CCF and NKPA troops had been amassed. The enemy’s main force, 36 Chinese divisions, gathered inside the Iron Triangle. About half of the NKPA divisions were also poised to strike in the east. Although the time and place of the expected offensive had been generally deduced, an unforeseen development—a deep penetration of South Korean lines far from the enemy’s planned main effort—unexpectedly placed the Marines of the 1st Division in the center of the action, and the period from late April until mid-May featured a

series of desperate fights and some intricate maneuvers that kept the enemy at bay until the Chinese Spring Offensive lost its momentum.

CCF Spring Offensive

Spring finally arrived in mid-April. The days were generally warm and sunny with the temperature reaching into the mid-60s. The nights were mostly clear and cool, but there was no longer the need for heavy winter clothing or arctic sleeping bags. All of the snow had melted, and patches of flowers were sprouting up among the scrub pines. And, although there were still a few April showers, the heavy rains let up and the mud was finally drying out.

Thanks to the high-level turmoil caused by the sudden change of command, the 1st Marine Division spent 10 quiet days on the Kansas Line before beginning Operation Dauntless on 21 April. The IX Corps objective was the Wyoming Line, but the Marines were also given an intermediate objective labeled Quantico Line, which included the Hwachon Dam and

the meandering Pukhan River as well as Route 17 and a line of hills north and west of the village of Hwachon.

At 0700 on the 21st, the 1st Marine Division resumed the attack with the 7th Marines on the left, the 5th Marines in the center, the Korean Marines on the right, and the 1st Marines in reserve. The 5,000- to 9,000-yard advance, in the words of one regimental commander, was “made into a vacuum.” Strangely, there was almost no sign of the enemy other than a few pieces of lost equipment and the ashes of a few cooking fires—the flotsam and jetsam left behind when any large body of troops moves out in hurry. Korean Marines made the only significant contact by killing one straggler and capturing another. About the only reminder that an unseen enemy was lurking nearby was a green haze of deliberately set fires that hugged the damp earth.

The lack of enemy activity was welcome, but it was also baffling. The front was eerily quiet, too quiet for many wary veteran Marines who felt something big was about to break. Lieutenant Colonel John L. Hopkins, commanding officer of 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, thought this “strange atmosphere of silence . . . was much like the stillness which had preceded the first CCF attack on Yudam-ni on 27 November.” This nearly universal feeling of unease along the front lines was supported by several ominous signs. Aerial observers suspected the enemy was up to no good, but could not be specific because the area was shrouded by smoke that masked troop movements. There were unconfirmed reports of several thousand troops on the move, but the Marines spotted no actual enemy. Enemy prisoners of war taken in other sectors indicated



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By 22 April the Marines had seized and held Line Quantico. To the north Chinese Communist Forces were poised to attack and the IX Corps zone was to be the target area for the attempted breakthrough. Heavy machine gun teams were the backbone of the defense.

that at least four CCF armies were poised to take on IX Corps, and they named 22 April as the date of the attack. A particularly disturbing bit of information was that the 6th ROK Division on the Marine left had opened a 2,500-yard gap, and all physical contact with that unit had been lost. Numerous patrols failed to find the elusive South Koreans. Consequently, on the eve of what appeared to be a major enemy effort the Marine western flank was dangling.

At 0830 on the morning of 22 April, preceded by low-flying observation aircraft and jeep-mounted ground reconnaissance units, the 1st Marine Division proceeded up the Chunchon Corridor west of the Hwachon Reservoir. Unlike the day before, however, this time the enemy harassed the Marine advance with small arms, automatic weapons, and mortar fire. Captain Robert L. Autry's Reconnaissance Company, aided by a tank detachment, entered

Hwachon village under intermittent fire. They found more than a dozen badly wounded men left behind by the Communists and spotted several dozen more fleeing north. The 7th Marines, commanded by pre-war China veteran and World War II artilleryman Colonel Herman Nickerson, Jr., who had relieved the ailing Colonel Homer Litzenberg, advanced several miles on the left flank with only one man wounded. Air strikes hit suspected enemy assembly areas and possible field fortifications. The 5th Marines moved up Route 17 and occupied the hills on either side of a slender valley encompassing the village of Hwachon against moderate to heavy fire. Korean Marines seized the Hwachon Dam and the heights protecting it, but were then pinned down for a while by accurate enemy indirect fire. Total losses when the Marines reached Quantico Line were five men (two American and three Korean) killed

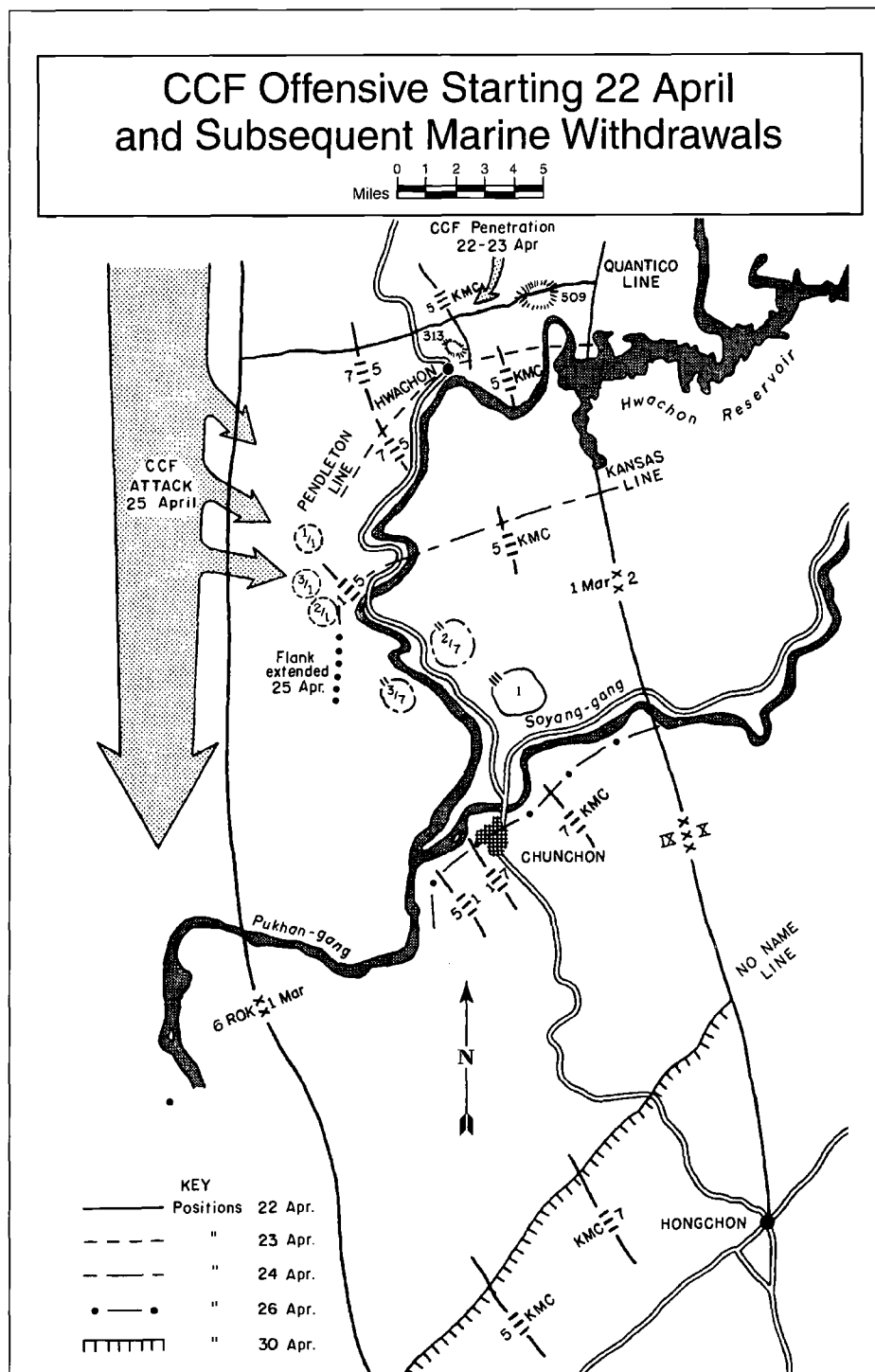
and two dozen wounded (20 U.S. and four Korean).

At the end of the day, the 1st Marine Division was at the Quantico Line arrayed on a nearly straight line north and west of the Hwachon Reservoir with the 7th Marines, 5th Marines, and the Korean Marines from left to right. Two tank companies (B and C, in support of the 5th and 7th Marines, respectively) were forward deployed. The 11th Marines, reinforced by corps artillery (including the 8-inch guns of the 213th and 17th Field Artillery Battalions and the 155mm howitzers of the 92d Armored Field Artillery) was set up in the flat land just behind the front line troops. The Army guns were positioned near the west flank so they could reinforce either the ROKs or U.S. Marines as needed. Artillery ammunition trucks and prime movers jammed the narrow road making resupply and overland travel difficult. The 1st Marines was in reserve several miles away across the Pukhan River at Chunchon.

Enemy resistance seemed to be stiffening, but there was no reason for alarm as the Marines settled in on the night of 22-23 April. The evening promised to be crisp and clear with a full moon. At about 1800, General Smith issued instructions for the 1st Marine Division to continue its advance to seize the Wyoming Line at 0700 the next morning. These orders, however, were overcome by events three-and-a-half hours later. Although unrealized at the time, nearly 350,000 enemy troops were pushing silently forward between Munsan-ni in the west and the Hwachon Reservoir in the east. The CCF Fifth Phase Offensive was underway just as the enemy prisoners had predicted. Furious mortar and artillery barrages struck United Nations lines all across the

front before midnight. The first blows on IX Corps' front were not directed at the Marines, but at the shaky 6th ROK Division on their left, which was hit full force. That hapless unit simply evaporated as its frightened soldiers fled the field of battle. Facing only token resistance, the CCF 40th Army was on its way south in full gear by midnight. Soon, a 10-mile penetration was created and the 1st Marine Division was in serious jeopardy. Some of the toughest fighting of the Korean War marked the next 60 hours, and the magnificent defenses of Horseshoe Ridge and Hill 902 were reminiscent of similar heroic Marine stands at Les Mares Farm in World War I and Guadalcanal's Bloody Ridge during World War II.

The dull mid-watch routine at the 1st Marine Division command post was interrupted when the duty officer was informed at about 2130 that the Chinese had penetrated South Korean defenses and were headed toward Marine lines. Not long after the message arrived the vanguard of a long line of demoralized South Korean army soldiers began filing in. By midnight, the Reconnaissance Company and Captain Donald D. Pomerleau's Military Police Company were rounding up stragglers and placing them under guard at the ferry site just south of the 5th Marines' command post. These dejected remnants of the 6th ROK Division reported their unit was in full retreat and further noted that thousands of enemy troops were rapidly moving south. Despite attempts to reconstitute the division as a fighting force, the 1st Division's liaison officer called and said: "to all intents and purposes, the 6th ROK Division had ceased to exist." This was alarming news because the Marine left flank was wide open, and the division's



main supply route and all crossing points of the Pukhan River were at great risk.

The first U.S. troops to confirm the disaster on the left were cannoneers from Army artillery units that earlier had been sent west to shore up the South Koreans. Elements of the battered 987th Armored Field Artillery came pouring back into the American lines

after being ambushed. The ill-fated artillery unit had lost about half of its 105mm howitzers to the ambush, and the 2d Rocket Artillery Battery lost all of its weapons when its defensive position was overrun. As Lieutenant Colonel Leon F. Lavoie, commanding officer of the 92d Armored Field Artillery Battalion acidly observed: "there had been more

Private First Class Herbert A. Littleton

On the night of 22 April 1951, radio operator Herbert A. Littleton serving with an artillery forward observer team of Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, sacrificed his life to save the lives of his team members.

Born in 1930, in Arkansas, he attended high school in Sturgis, South Dakota, where he played football and basketball and then worked for Electrical Application Corporation in Rapid City. Shortly after his eighteenth birthday, he enlisted in the Marine Corps, received recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, and additional training at Camp Pendleton before being sent to Korea with the 3d Replacement Draft in December 1950. His Medal of Honor citation read, in part:

Standing watch when a well-concealed and numerically superior enemy force launched a violent night attack from nearby positions against his company, Private First Class Littleton quickly alerted the forward observation team and immediately moved into an advantageous position to assist in calling down artillery fire on the hostile force.

When an enemy hand grenade was thrown into his vantage point, shortly after the



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arrival of the remainder of the team, he unhesitatingly hurled himself on the deadly missile, absorbing its full, shattering impact in his own body. By his prompt action and heroic spirit of self-sacrifice, he saved the other members of his team from serious injury or death and enabled them to carry on the vital mission that culminated in the repulse of the hostile attack.

Private First Class Littleton's heroic actions were later memorialized at Camp Pendleton by a marksmanship trophy, a baseball field, and a street, all named in his honor.

— Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR (Ret)

artillery lost in Korea up to that point than there was lost in the whole of the European theater in the last war by American forces.”

By 2224, the impact of the disaster on the left was apparent, so all plans to attack the next day were abruptly canceled. Units along the forward edge of the battlefield were placed on full alert with orders to button up tight. Commanders hurriedly sent out combat patrols to locate the enemy and to try fix his line of march,

while the Marines at the main line of resistance dug in deep and nervously checked their weapons. In addition, Smith ordered Colonel McAlister to send Lieutenant Colonel Robley E. West's 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, up from Chunchon to tie in with the artillery and tanks located in the valley on the far west flank. West's battalion was soon on trucks headed for its new position, but the convoy could only creep along over roads choked with panic-

stricken South Korean soldiers escaping the battle zone. Captain John F. Coffey's Company B led the way. At about 0130, while still 1,000 yards short of its assigned position, the long column of vehicles stopped at the tight perimeter formed by the 92d Armored Field Artillery Battalion, which a short time before had established a road block, collected more than 1,800 South Koreans, and attempted by machine gun and bayonet with little success to deploy them to slow the Chinese advance. Moving west, Coffey's company assisted in the extricating the 987th Artillery's 105mm howitzers that were stuck in the mud. After as many guns as possible were freed, Coffey returned to friendly lines where the 1st Battalion was manning a wooded semi-circular ridge with Captain Thomas J. Bohannon's Company A on the right, Captain Robert P. Wray's Company C in the center, and the 81mm mortars of First Lieutenant Wesley C. Noren's Weapons Company on relatively level ground in the immediate rear. Company B was promptly assigned the battalion left flank.

The enemy began probing Marine lines around 2300 on 22 April and then mounted an all-out assault to turn the Marine flanks about three hours later. The 7th Marines on the left was the hardest hit U.S. unit. Enemy mortar, automatic weapons, and small arms fire began at about 0200 on the 23d. This reconnaissance by fire was followed by a very determined ground assault an hour later. Shrieking whistles, clanging cymbals, and blasting bugles signaled the onslaught. Up and down the line grizzled veterans of the Chosin Reservoir walked the lines to settle down young Marines who had not yet experienced a terrifying “human wave” ground assault. Noncommissioned officers force-



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Near the Quantico Line, a Marine 75mm recoilless rifle crew were light enough to be carried up and down Korea's mountainous terrain. opposes the Chinese Communist attack on 23 April. Recoilless rifles provided long-range pinpoint accuracy, but

fully and profanely reminded their charges not to use grenades until the enemy was close at hand, and more than one of them tried to calm the new men by remarking about the frightening cacophony: "Those guys sure could use some music lessons!"

At least 2,000 enemy troops hit Major Webb D. Sawyer's outmanned 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, full force. That attack by the CCF 358th Regiment, 120th Division, primarily directed at Captain Eugene H. Haffey's Company C and Captain Nathan R. Smith's Company A, was repulsed by hand-to-hand fighting that lasted almost until dawn. Private First Class Herbert A. Littleton, a radioman with the forward observer team attached to Company C, was standing the mid-watch when

the enemy appeared. He sounded the alarm then moved to an exposed position from which he adjusted supporting arms fires despite fierce incoming machine gun fire and showers of enemy grenades. Forced back into a bunker by enemy fire, Littleton threw himself upon a grenade to save his comrades in that crowded space at the cost of his own life. He was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor for his selfless actions that night. Heavy fighting—much of it grenade duels and close quarters combat—lasted several hours. Enemy mortar fire and small arms continued throughout the night and into the next day. As always, supporting arms were a critical Marine advantage. The 11th Marines ringed the endangered position with a wall of steel, and

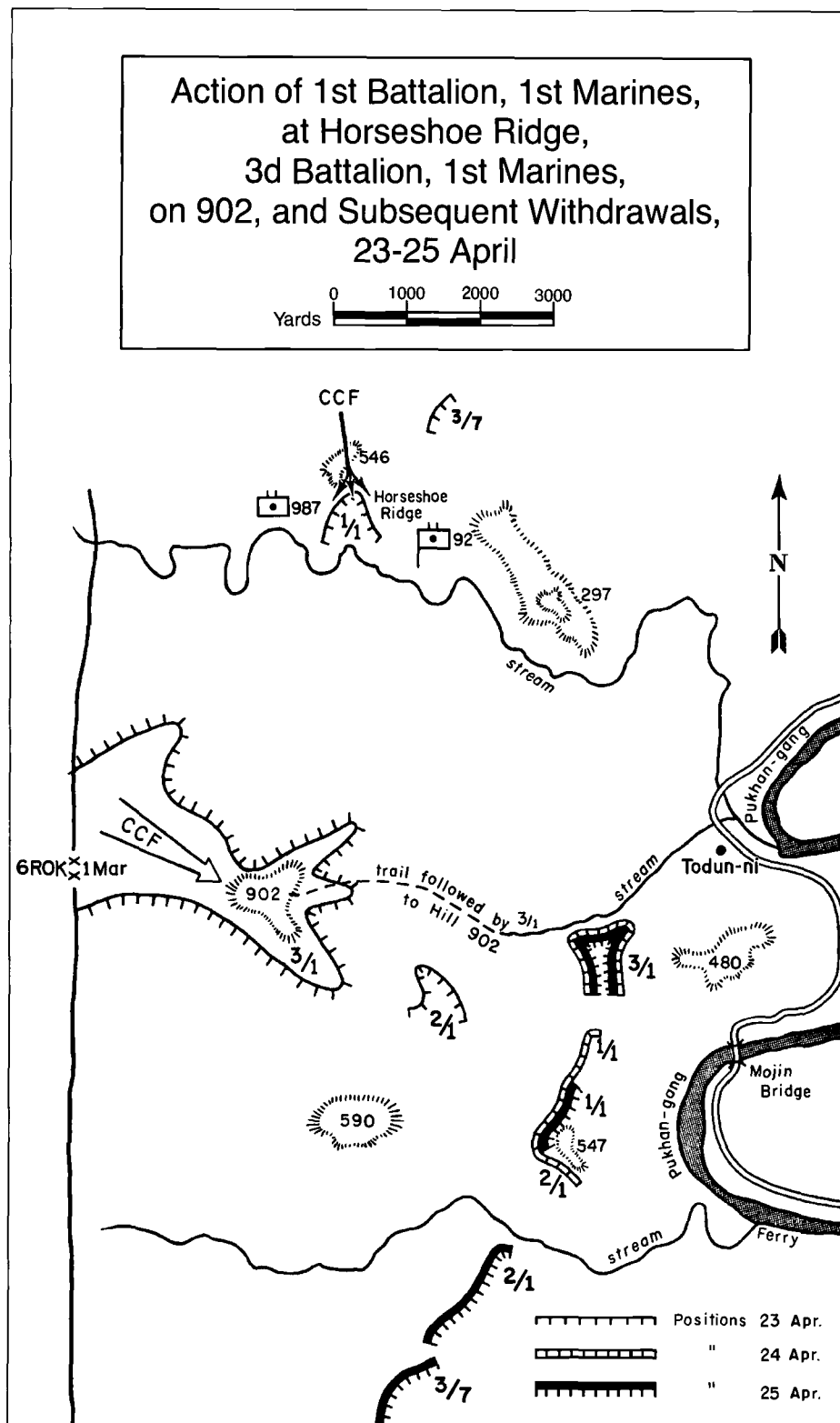
Marine tanks successfully guarded the lowland approaches.

In the division's center, Chinese infiltrators silently slipped through the 5th Marines' outpost line to occupy Hill 313. A futile counterattack was quickly launched, but despite tremendous heroism (three Marines received the Navy Cross for their actions) the assault platoon was held in check and suffered heavy casualties. It was not until the next morning that elements of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 5th Marines, retook the hill. At around 0300, Korean Marines on the right came under heavy attack in the vicinity of Hill 509. The stalwart Koreans threw back successive enemy attacks throughout the long night and had ejected the enemy by the next morning. Particularly hard hit was a single

The timely arrival of the reserve 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, eased the pressure on Major Sawyer's 1st

zon. Eight Marine Corsairs swooped over the battlefield guided onto their targets by aerial observers flying vulnerable OY observation aircraft; Marine Fighter Squadron 323 flew in support of the 5th Marines while Marine Fighter Squadron 214 worked over the Chinese in the 7th Marines' zone. The retreating enemy was slaughtered by this blitz from above. Enemy casualties by all arms were estimated to be well above 2,000 men. By noon on the 23d, it was obvious the Marines had won the first round, but it was also obvious that the fight was far from over. For his skillful and aggressive leadership in securing the division's vital flank, Major Sawyer, the recipient of two Silver Stars for the Chosin Reservoir campaign, was awarded a Navy Cross.

Although the Marines held fast and remained a breakwater that stemmed the onrushing Red tide, the Chinese were still pouring through South Korean army lines. "The position of the 1st Marine Division was beginning to appear to some persons," noted Major Martin Sexton, "very similar to the situation at the Chosin Reservoir." On the Marine left a deep envelopment threatened. As a result General Hoge ordered the 1st Marine Division to fall back. Consequently, General Smith passed the word for his units to retire to new defensive positions on the Pendleton Line at 0935. This would be no small feat. The enemy threat was so great that Smith was forced to place the entire 1st Marine Division on the high ground north of the Chuncheon Corridor to protect the vital Mujon Bridge and several ferry crossings. This was a bold move because the Marines would have an unfordable river at their back and there was no division reserve in place. It also required a complex set of maneu-





National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-429642

A Bell HTL-4 light helicopter waits for a badly wounded Marine to be loaded on board for a trip to a rear area hospital. These bubble-top aircraft saved lives by cutting the amount of time it took seriously wounded men to get to medical attention.

vers whereby the Marines would have to defend the Pukhan River line, and at the same time move back to Chunchon. General Smith would have to carefully coordinate his supporting arms as well as effect a passage of lines under fire. Air and artillery would keep the enemy at bay while armor and the division's heavy weapons protected the avenues of approach and the river crossings. Smith's plan was to give ground rapidly in the north while slowly pulling back in the south, letting his westernmost units alternately pass through a series of blocking positions. Engineers would finally blow the bridges once the rear guard made it over the river. A key element was the Marine aviators whose fighter-bombers would be guided onto their targets by airborne spotters to delay enemy pursuit. All hands were called upon to contribute during this fighting withdrawal. Cooks, bakers, and typists—even a downed pilot—were

soon shouldering M1 rifles or carrying stretchers under fire. Just as at the Chosin Reservoir, the creed that "every Marine is a rifleman regardless of his military occupational specialty" saved the day.

General Smith wanted to form a semi-circular defense line that arched southwest atop key ground from the tip of the Hwachon Reservoir west for a few miles then bending back along the high ground abutting the Pukhan River and over looking the Chunchon Valley. To do this he immediately ordered the rest of the 1st Marines forward from Chunchon to hold the hills in the southwest while in the north he instituted a "swinging gate" maneuver whereby the Korean Marines anchored the far right, the 5th gave ground in the center, and the 7th Marines pulled back in echelon to link up with the 1st Marines

Fighting continued throughout the day. In the west, the 7th Marines had its own 3d Battalion

and the attached 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, to cover the retrograde. The hard-hit 1st Battalion pulled back covered by fires from the 2d Battalion. Major Maurice E. Roach Jr.'s 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, seized some fiercely held high ground while Lieutenant Colonel Robley E. West's 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, fought off repeated enemy probes that lasted until nightfall. Units of the 1st Marines held the southernmost positions. The remaining two reserve battalions had moved out of their assembly areas that morning, crossed the Pukhan River, then occupied a pair of hills protecting the main supply route and several crossing points. Actually, the arrival of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 1st Marines, was a close run thing. The Marines had to virtually race up the hills to beat the Chinese who were also on the way to take what was obviously the most important terrain feature in the area. Hill 902 (actually a 4,000-foot mountain top) dominated the road to Chunchon and protected the concrete Mojin Bridge as well as two ferry sites. Its defense became the focal point of the Marine retrograde. In the center, Colonel Richard W. Hayward's 5th Marines moved back under scattered small arms and mortar fire, but encountered no enemy ground units. On the division right, Korean Marines pulled back and then dug in just before being ranged by enemy mortar and artillery fire. Unfortunately, the 1st Marine Division's line was fragmented, not continuous, with units of the 1st and 7th Marines holding widely separated battalion-sized perimeters located atop key terrain. The 11th Marines, reinforced by several Army artillery battalions, was busy registering defensive fires as night fell on 23 April.

That day also marked the first mass helicopter medical evacua-

tion in history. All of VMO-6's Bell HTL-4 "bubble top" helicopters (able to carry two litter cases and one man in the observer seat) were airborne at first light. Fifty critically wounded men were flown out by these Marine "egg-beaters" between 0600 and 1930. A total of 21 sorties (22.6 flight hours) were made from Chunchon to the front lines then back to the 1st Medical Battalion collecting and clearing station. Every flight encountered some type of enemy fire, but there were no losses of aircraft or personnel. Captain Dwain L. Redalin logged 9.7 flight hours while carrying 18 wounded men to safety. First Lieutenant George A. Eaton accounted for 16 more evacuations. The final flight had to be guided in with hand-held lights because the airfield had been officially blacked out. Ground personnel and flying officers alike were formed into provisional platoons and assigned defense sectors in case the enemy broke through, and all excess material and equipment was loaded on trucks for movement back to Hongchon that night.

On the night of 23-24 April, the 1st Marines caught the brunt of the CCF *120th Division* attack. In the north, the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, still under the operational control of Colonel Nickerson's 7th Marines, was dug in on Horseshoe Ridge. This was a key position which, if lost, would split the 1st Marine Division wide open and allow the enemy to defeat it in detail. Farther south, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 1st Marines, manned separate perimeters on Hill 902 overlooking the flat lands of the Chunchon Corridor. These positions constituted the last line of defense, and if they were lost the division would be surrounded and cut off. In short, the situation that night was as desperate as any in

Technical Sergeant Harold E. Wilson

Born in 1921, in Birmingham, Alabama, Harold E. Wilson enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve and was assigned to active duty in April 1942. During World War II, he served 27 months overseas stationed on Midway Island. In addition to his Pacific service, he was stationed at Parris Island, South Carolina; Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; and Portsmouth, Virginia. Sergeant Wilson was honorably discharged in 1945.

Recalled to active duty in August 1950, he was assigned to Company G, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, and participated in the Wonsan landing and was wounded during the Chosin Reservoir Campaign. In March 1951, he was awarded a Bronze Star Medal for "fearless and untiring leadership" of his platoon. While serving as a platoon sergeant, his bravery on the night of 23-24 April 1951 brought an award of the Medal of Honor, with a citation that read, in part:

Wilson braved intense fire to assist the survivors back into the line and to direct the treatment of casualties. Although twice wounded by gunfire, in the right arm and the left leg, he refused medical aid for himself and continued to move about among his men, shouting words of encouragement. After receiving further wounds in the head and shoulder as the attack increased in intensity, he again insisted upon remaining with his unit. Unable to use either arm to fire, and with mounting casualties among our forces, he resupplied his men with rifles and ammunition taken from the wounded.

After placing the reinforcements in strategic positions in the line, [he] directed effective fire until blown off his feet by the bursting of a hostile mortar



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A46634

round in his face. Dazed and suffering from concussion, he still refused medical aid and, despite weakness from loss of blood, moved from foxhole to foxhole, directing fire, resupplying ammunition, rendering first aid and encouraging his men.

Following the April 1951 action, Wilson was evacuated to the Yokosuka Naval Hospital in Japan and five months later returned to the United States. He was awarded a meritorious promotion to master sergeant in 1951 and commissioned as warrant officer in 1952. After a number of assignments, he assumed the post of Adjutant, Marine Corps Engineer Schools, Camp Lejeune, in December 1962, and a year later, was assigned to Force Troops, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, serving as adjutant and personnel officer of the 2d Tank Battalion.

During the Vietnam War, Chief Warrant Officer Wilson served with Marine Aircraft Group 13 prior to being assigned as the 6th Marine Corps District's personnel officer in November 1968. He retired from the Marine Corps in 1972 and died in Lexington, South Carolina, on 29 March 1998.

— Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR (Ret)

the history of the Marine Corps.

The Marines were hit by artillery, mortar, small arms, and automatic weapons fire all through the night. The 1st and 7th Marines on the left flank were probed as Chinese forces searched for crew-served weapons positions and weak spots in the line. The four-hour fight for Horseshoe Ridge began at about 2000. There, the men of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, managed to blunt an attack by the CCF 358th Regiment in savage hand-to-hand fighting. Farther north, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, repelled enemy probes all night long. As part of that action, the "Redlegs" of the Army's 92d Armored Field Artillery Battalion acquitted themselves well by repelling a dawn ground attack using machine guns and direct fire artillery to eliminate several hundred enemy troops, while continuing to deliver fire for the hard-pressed Marines on Horseshoe Ridge. Marine M-26 Pershings from Lieutenant Colonel Holly H. Evans' 1st Tank Battalion eventually

joined the hard-fighting cannoneers, scattering the enemy with deadly flat-trajectory fire. Enemy stragglers were cleared out by joint Army-Marine patrols before the Army artillerymen displaced to new positions.

The enemy's main thrust that night, however, was directed farther south where the CCF tried to turn the open Marine flank but instead ran headlong into Lieutenant Colonel Virgil W. Banning's 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, atop Hill 902. A series of full-scale assaults began at about midnight. The CCF 359th and 360th Regiments repeatedly crashed into the 3d Battalion's exposed perimeter, but all efforts to eject the determined defenders were unsuccessful. After enemy mortars pounded Banning's Marines for several hours a "human wave" ground assault almost cracked First Lieutenant Horace L. Johnson's Company G. That this did not happen was a tribute to the actions of Technical Sergeant Harold E. "Speed" Wilson.

Despite being wounded on four separate occasions, he refused evacuation and remained in command of his platoon. Unable to man a weapon because of painful shoulder wounds, Wilson repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire while distributing ammunition and directing tactical movements even though he was hit several more times. Wilson was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his stirring leadership that night. The Marines took heavy casualties during fierce hand-to-hand fighting, but the Chinese were unable to dislodge them. At 0930 on 24 April, the battered Marines were almost out of ammunition and their ranks had been severely thinned, but they were still standing tall. The Chinese plan to trap and annihilate the 1st Marine Division had been a costly failure.

General Hoge ordered the Marines to pull back to the Kansas Line as part of a general realignment of IX Corps. This would not be an easy maneuver because it would require disengaging under fire and making several river crossings. To do this, General Smith had to restore tactical unity prior to movement. The 1st Marines was reunited on the morning of the 24th when 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, which had been hotly engaged while attached to the 7th Marines for the past few days, rejoined the regiment. Concurrently, the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, conducted a fighting withdrawal protected by Marine, Navy, and Air Force air strikes and artillery fire by Marine and Army units. The battered 3d Battalion passed through the 2d Battalion and then both units fought their way back to the high ground covering the river crossing. The regiment was under continuous fire during the entire movement and suffered numerous casualties

A Marine 105mm howitzer battery near Sapyong-ni fires on suspected enemy positions. The guns of the 11th Marines rendered outstanding fire support regardless of time of day or weather limitations.

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enroute. At the same time, Major Roach's 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, set up farther south on Hill 696 to defend the Chunchon-Kapyong road as well as the southern ferry sites. This key position, the southernmost high ground, dominated the Chunchon Corridor and the Pukhan River and would be one of the last positions vacated. On the right, the 5th Marines and the Korean Marine battalion pulled back harassed by only scattered resistance. The resultant shortening of the division front allowed Smith to pull the 7th Marines out of the lines and use it as the division reserve. By the evening of 24 April, the 1st Marine Division's lines resembled a fishhook with the Korean Marines at the eye in the north, the 5th Marines forming the shank, and the 1st Marines at the curved barb in the south. The 7th Marines, less the 3d Battalion, was charged with rear area security and its 1st and 2d Battalions were positioned to protect river crossings along the route to Chunchon as well as the town itself.

The 24th of April was another busy day for Marine aviators as well. First Lieutenant John L. Scott evacuated 18 wounded in his HTL-4 to become the high-rescue-man that day. Another HTL-4, piloted by First Lieutenant Robert E. Mathewson, was brought down near Horseshoe Ridge by enemy fire. Mathewson escaped unhurt, but had to wave off a rescue attempt by First Lieutenant Harold G. McRay because enemy fire was so intense. The downed pilot was promptly given a rifle and joined his fellow Marines as they broke out of the Chinese encirclement. Over the battlefield an OY observation plane flown by Technical Sergeant Robert J. Monteith, struck a Corsair in midair and crashed. He and his artillery spotter, First Lieutenant Roscoe F. Cooke, Jr.,



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A8030

MajGen Oliver P. Smith bids farewell to division staff officers before turning command over to MajGen Gerald C. Thomas, center, on 25 April. BGen Lewis B. Puller, the assistant division commander, would follow Smith a month later.

were both killed when their plane spun out of control, hit the ground, and burned.

The 1st Marines again bore the brunt of Chinese probes on the night of 24-25 April, but accurate close-in fires by 105mm and 155mm howitzers kept potential attackers at a distance. The 2d Battalion repelled an enemy company in the only major action of the evening. But the Chinese were still lurking in the west as became evident when patrols departing friendly lines in that area quickly struck an enemy hornet's nest the following morning. One such patrol was pinned down less than 200 yards from friendly lines. Another platoon suffered 18 casualties and had to be extricated from an ambush by tanks. On the

other hand, 5th Marines and Korean Marine scouts ventured a mile to the north without contact. Air and artillery plastered the western flank, but enemy machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire continued to hit Marine positions. In the 1st Marines' zone Chinese gunners found the 3d Battalion command post, wounding Colonel McAlister; Lieutenant Colonel Banning; Major Reginald R. Meyers, the executive officer; and Major Joseph D. Trompeter, the operations officer. Banning and Meyers had to be evacuated, and Major Trompeter took over the battalion. Colonel McAlister refused evacuation and remained in command of the regiment.

It was obvious the Chinese were biding their time until they could



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A8362

Marine infantry and vehicles start the long haul back to Chunchon, where they would defend along the south bank of the Soyang River until service units could move their large supply dumps.

gather enough strength for another try at the Marine lines. There was continual pressure, but the 11th Marines artillery harassment and interdiction fires, direct fire by Marine tanks, and an exemplary air umbrella prevented a major assault. Enemy action was limited to only a few weak probes and a handful of mortar rounds as the Marines moved back. The 1st Marine Division reached the modified Kansas Line in good order. Despite suffering more than 300 casualties in the last 48 hours, the Marines handled everything the enemy threw at them and still held a firm grip on the IX Corp right flank when the Chinese Fifth Phase, First Impulse Offensive ground to a halt.

During this very brief break in the action a new division commander took over. Major General Gerald C. Thomas became the 1st Marine Division's commanding general at a small ceremony attended by the few available staff members on the afternoon of 25 April. Thomas had been awarded a battlefield commission in recogni-

tion of his outstanding combat performance during World War I, then pulled sea duty and fought in the Banana Wars between the World Wars. His experience as a highly respected staff officer in the Pacific during World War II prepared him to handle a division, and his post-war duties at Headquarters Marine Corps and Quantico gave him a good look at the "big picture" as well. Despite the hurried nature of the command change and the fact that it occurred in the midst of a complex combat action, the transition was a smooth one that did not hinder operations.

The first order General Thomas received was one no aggressive commander relishes. He was told to pull the 1st Marine Division back to a new position where Korean laborers were toiling night and day to construct a defensive bulwark. The Marine movement was no isolated withdrawal. All across the front, the United Nations Command was breaking contact in order to man a new main line of resistance known as the No Name Line. This unpressured retrograde

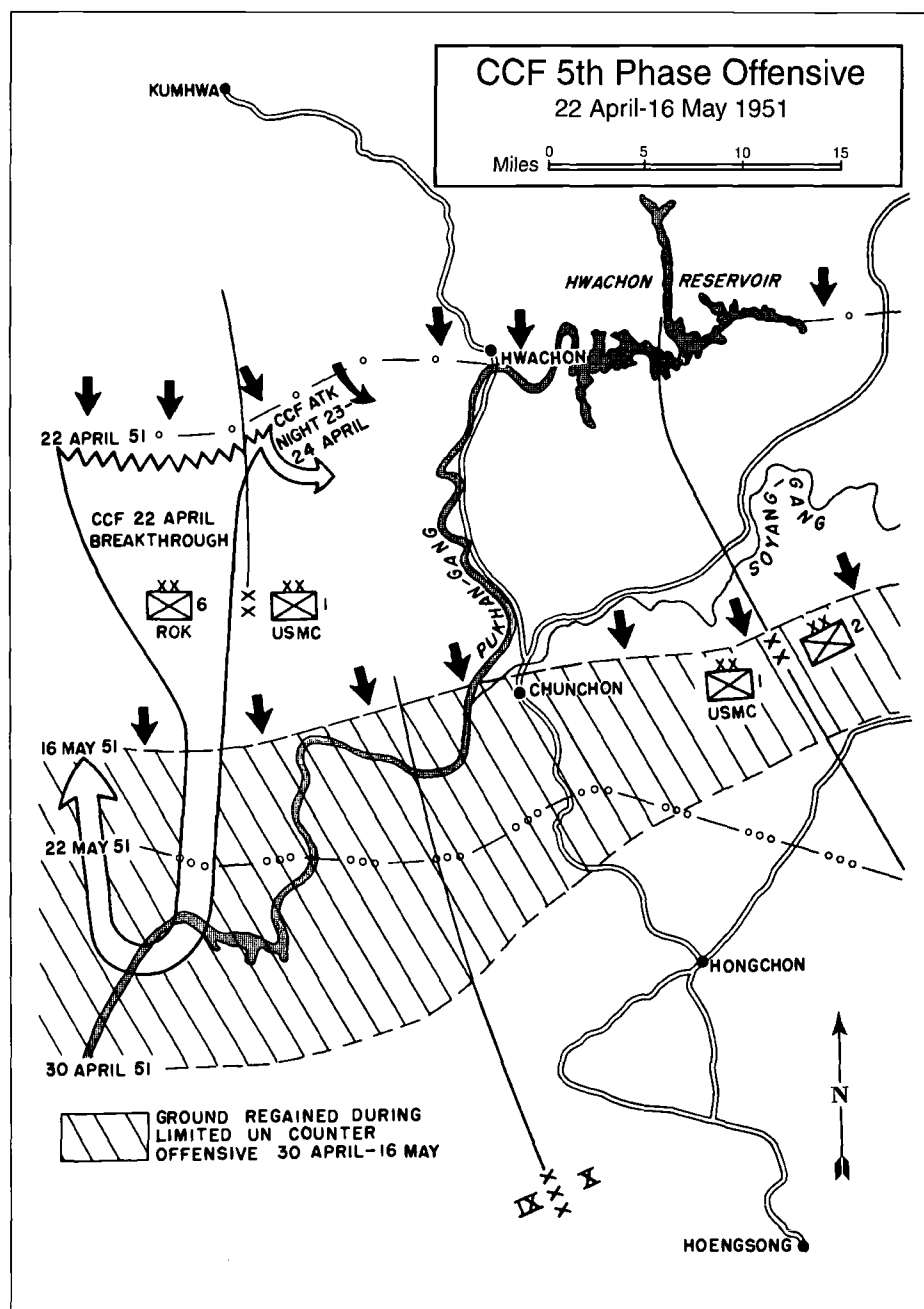
marked a radical change in U.N. tactics. As will be recalled, upon taking charge of Eighth Army General Ridgway adopted mobile defensive tactics to deal with enemy attacks. Instead of "hold your ground at all cost," he instituted a "roll-with-the-punches" scheme whereby U.N. units traded ground to inflict punishment. To do this Ridgway insisted that his troops always maintain contact with both the enemy and adjoining friendly forces during retrograde movements. This time, however, General Van Fleet decided to completely break contact. He opted to pull back as much as 20 miles in places. There, from carefully selected positions, his troops could trap exposed attackers in pre-planned artillery kill zones at the same time air power pummeled ever-lengthening enemy supply routes. In hindsight, this sound combined-arms approach fully utilized United Nations Command strengths while exploiting enemy weaknesses, but at the time it befuddled many Marines to have to abandon hard-earned ground when there seemed to be no serious enemy threat. Such was the case when the 1st Marine Division was told to fall back to a section of the No Name Line located near Hongchon far to the south.

This movement would be done in two stages. The first leg of the journey was back to Chunchon where the rifle units would cover the support units as they pulled out. When that was accomplished the combat units would continue on to the No Name Line. Luckily, there was no significant enemy interference with either move. The initial departure began at 1130 on 26 April. The 5th Marines and Korean Marines retired first, followed by 1st Marines, with 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, attached. A curtain of close air support supple-

mented by rocket and artillery fires shrouded these movements. All units, except the rear guard, were safely across the meandering Pukhan River before dark. The last remaining bridge across the chest-deep river was blown up at 1900, forcing 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, and 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, to wade across the chilly barrier in the middle of the night. The movement back to Chunchon was completed by noon, and the Marines took up defensive positions along the southern banks of the Soyang River on the afternoon of the 27th without incident. The only enemy encountered during the pull-back was one bewildered Chinese straggler who had inadvertently fallen in with the Marine column in the darkness. Needless to say, he was more than somewhat surprised to discover himself in the midst of several thousand Americans when daylight came.

On 28 April, the second phase of the withdrawal began. The Marine retrograde was again unpressured, but it took three days to finish the move south due to serious transportation problems. Finally, on 30 April, the Marines settled in at the No Name Line with the 5th Marines on the left, the 1st Korean Marine Regiment in the center, the 1st Marines on the right, and the 7th Marines in reserve.

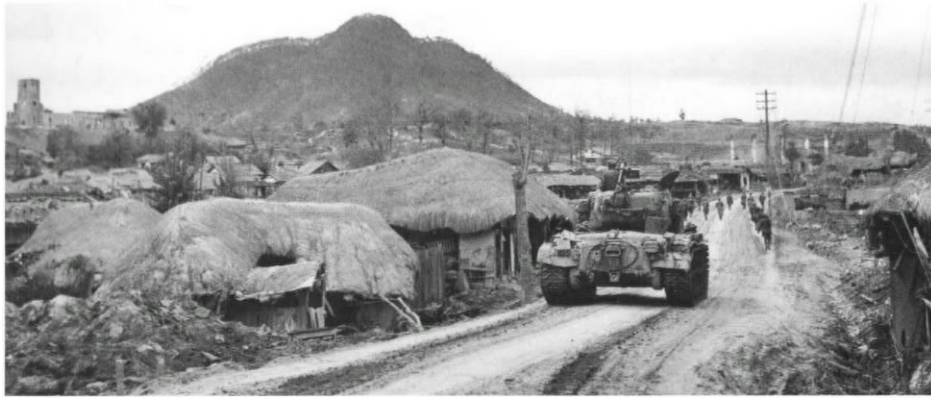
The month of April cost the Marines 933 casualties (93 killed, 830 wounded, and 10 missing), most lost during the First Impulse of the Chinese Fifth Phase Offensive. The enemy enjoyed some local successes, but overall their attacks fell far short of expectations. The U.N. counteroffensive had been stopped in its tracks, but what little ground the enemy gained had been purchased at a fearful cost; the CCF lost an estimated 70,000 men. The headlong U.N. retreat the Chinese expected



did not materialize. This time there was no "bug out," to use a popular phrase of the day. Instead, most breaks in the line were quickly sealed, and the United Nations Command was holding firm at the No Name Line. By the last day of April, it was apparent to both sides that the Communists would not be parading through the streets of Seoul on May Day as their leaders had promised.

The first days of May were so quiet that no Marine patrols made contact. This temporary lull, how-

ever, was about to end because a Second Impulse Offensive was aimed at eastern Korea. To meet this threat, General Van Fleet redeployed his command. As part of this reorganization the 1st Marine Division was taken from IX Corps and was once again assigned to Major General Edward M. Almond's X Corps (it will be recalled that the Marines landed at Inchon, liberated Seoul, and fought their way out of the Chosin Reservoir as part of X Corps). This was easy to do because the 1st



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A155669

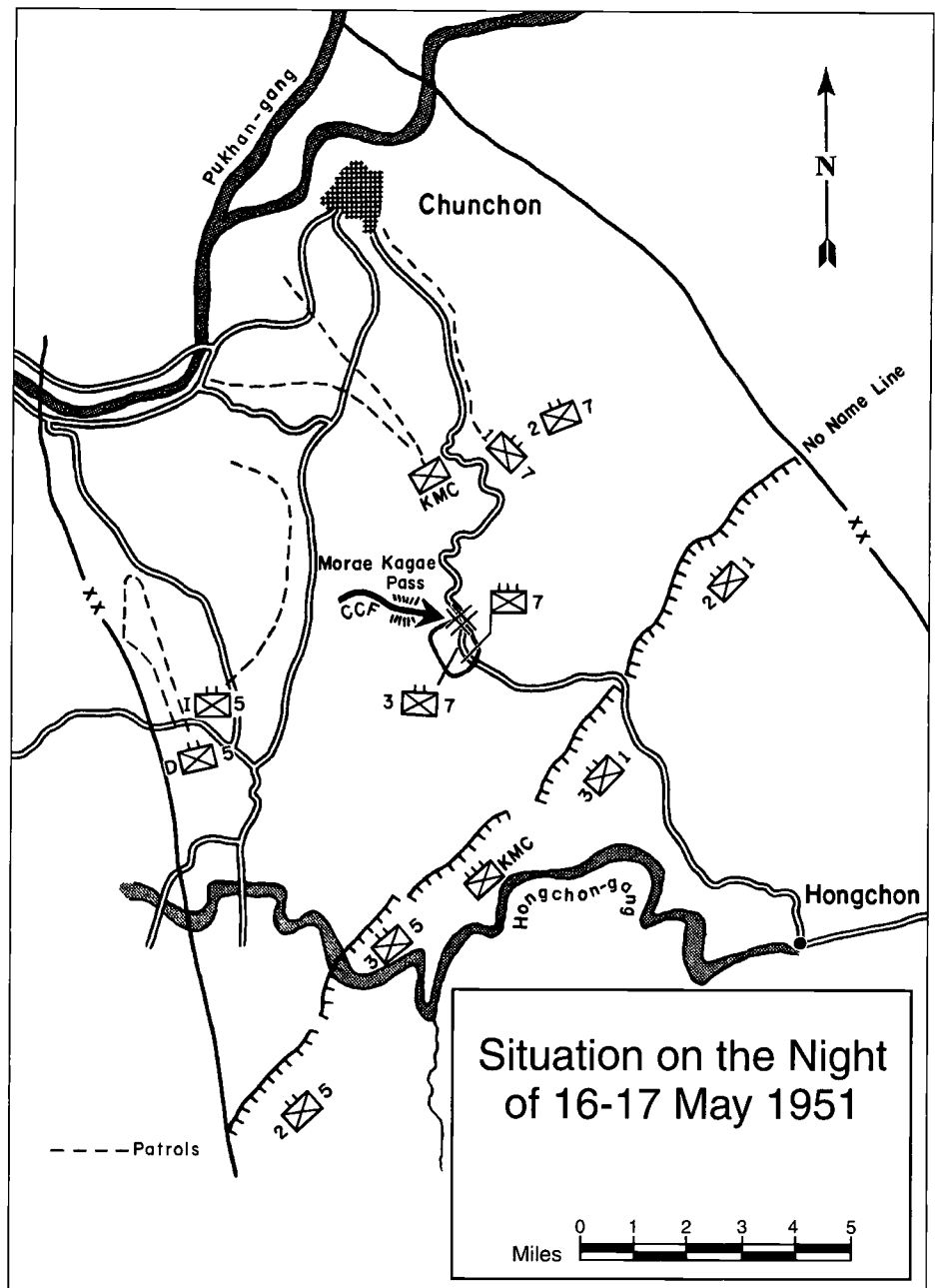
A tank-infantry patrol from 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, moves through the deserted city of Chuncheon. The ebb and flow of Korean fighting ended when the U.N. lines stabilized after the Marines reached the Punchbowl in June 1951.

Nickerson's 7th Marines onto some high ground over looking the Chuncheon Valley with orders to keep the road open and be prepared to fight its way out if the Chinese came down in force. Thomas also protested that shooting a unit of fire each day was a wasteful practice, one that would surely cause an ammunition shortage sooner or later. He was overruled in this case.

The expected Second Impulse of the Fifth Phase Offensive fell upon units of the Republic of

Marine Division was located on the IX and X Corps boundary. That imaginary line was simply shifted about 12 miles west, and only one battalion of the 5th Marines had to actually move. Other than that the only action required was to redraw the grease pencil lines on tactical maps.

The next two weeks were devoted primarily to improving defensive positions, but some tactical issues came to the fore. General Thomas was particularly disturbed by two Eighth Army orders. First, the 1st Marine Division was told to establish an "outpost line of resistance" to maintain contact with the enemy, provide early warning of a major attack, and delay the enemy advance as long as possible. Second, the 11th Marines was ordered to shoot a unit of fire each day whether there were observed targets or not. Thomas felt he could adequately cover his zone of action using aerial observation and long-range reconnaissance patrols, so he protested the placement of an entire battalion outside of 105mm artillery range. When told that the post must be manned, Thomas requested that an entire regiment be located at the exposed position. When this request was granted, he sent Colonel



Korea Army in the east on 16 May, and soon a 30-mile penetration threatened the U.S. 2d Infantry Division on the Marine right. That night Chinese forces entered the Marine zone in regimental strength where the 5th Marines and the Korean Marines had several company-sized patrol bases well north of the main line of resistance in the left and center sections respectively. To the right, Colonel Nickerson's 7th Marines had Lieutenant Colonel John T. Rooney's 1st Battalion patrolling the Chunchon Road, 2d Battalion (now commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Wilbur F. Meyerhoff, formerly the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, commanding officer) manning the outpost, and Lieutenant Colonel Bernard T. Kelly's 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, holding Morae Kogae Pass—a vital link on the road leading from the forward edge of the battle area back to the main front line. Well aware that whoever controlled the

pass controlled the road, the Chinese made Morae Kogae a key objective. Under cover of darkness, they carefully slipped in behind the Korean Marines and headed straight for the pass, which they apparently thought was unguarded. The assault force unexpectedly bumped into the northern sector of the 7th Marines perimeter at about 0300 and a furious fight broke out. Within minutes the 11th Marines built up a wall of fire at the same time the infantrymen initiated their final protective fires. Burning tracer rounds crisscrossed all avenues of approach and exploding shells flashed in the night as Marine artillery pinned the enemy in place from the rear while Marine riflemen knocked them down from the front. In spite of the curtain of steel surrounding the Marine positions, the quilt-coated enemy closed the position. Amid the fierce hand-to-hand fighting First Lieutenant Victor Stoyanow led a counterat-

tack to throw the enemy back out of Company I's lines. The critical battle for the pass did not end until daybreak when the Chinese vainly tried to pull back but were instead caught in the open by Marine artillery, mortars, and some belated air strikes. The Chinese lost an estimated 530 men. By actual count, they left behind 112 dead, 82 prisoners, and a wealth of abandoned weapons that included recoilless rifles, mortars, machine guns, and even a 76mm antitank gun. Marine losses in this one-sided battle were seven dead and 19 wounded.

The following day, 18 May, the 1st Marine Division performed a very tricky maneuver to readjust defensive dispositions that allowed the U.S. 2d Infantry Division to move east to reinforce its right flank which was bearing the brunt of the new Chinese offensive. The 7th Marines pulled back to the No Name Line to relieve the 1st Marines which then sidestepped east to take over an area previously held by the U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Regiment and the 5th Marines swung over from the far left flank to relieve the 38th Infantry Regiment on the extreme right.

By noon on the 19th, all four regiments (1st Korean Marine, 7th Marines, 1st Marines, and 5th Marines) were aligned from left to right on the modified No Name Line as the enemy's offensive lost its momentum. That same day, Colonel Wilbur S. Brown, an experienced artilleryman known throughout the Marine Corps as "Big Foot" because of his large feet, took over the 1st Marines. There was also a change at division headquarters. Brigadier General William J. Whaling—an avid sportsman and Olympic marksman who commanded regiments at Guadalcanal, New Britain, and Okinawa during World War

Col Francis M. McAlister, left, extends congratulations to Col Wilbur S. Brown, as the latter assumed command of the 1st Marine Regiment.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A8654





National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A133537

A Grumman F7F Tigercat armed with napalm flies over North Korea seeking a suitable target. The twin-engine, single-seat, carrier-borne Tigercats were primarily used as night fighters, but sometimes conducted bombing and aerial reconnaissance missions.

II—became the assistant division commander on 20 May.

The final action of the Chinese Spring Offensive occurred at about 0445 on 20 May when Major Morse L. Holladay's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, caught elements of the CCF 44th Division in the open. The Marines on the firing line opened up with everything they had as Major Holladay directed rockets, artillery, and air support during a five-hour battle that cost the enemy 152 dead and 15 prisoners. This action marked the end of Marshal Peng's attempts to drive the 1st Marine Division into the sea. The enemy, short of men and supplies after the previous month's heavy combat, had finally run out of steam and was now vulnerable.

With the Chinese Fifth Phase Offensive successfully blunted, General Van Fleet was ready to shift back into an offensive mode to exploit what was clearly a devastating Communist defeat. The United Nations Command had come through the last month with relatively light casualties and for the most part had only ceded territory on its own terms. Many Marine veterans of both campaigns, however, later recalled that the hard fighting to hold the Pendleton Line was as desperate as any they encountered at the

Chosin Reservoir. The 1st Marine Division not only weathered the storm, it had given the enemy a bloody nose on several occasions and performed many complex maneuvers well. Reiterating his experiences in Korea, General Smith said that blunting the Chinese counterattacks in April "was the most professional job performed by the Division while it was under my command." Likewise, by the time the CCF

Spring Offensive ended General Thomas remarked that he commanded "the finest division in Marine Corps history."

Marine Air Support

Major General Field Harris' 1st Marine Aircraft Wing comprised of two aircraft groups, Colonel Boeker C. Batterton's Marine Aircraft Group 12 (MAG-12) and Lieutenant Colonel Radford C. West's Marine Aircraft Group 33 (MAG-33), and flew more than a dozen different aircraft types. Lieutenant Colonel "J" Frank Cole's Marine Fighter Squadron 312 (VMF-312), Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Wyczawski's VMF-212, Major William M. Lundin's VMF-214, and Major Arnold A. Lund's VMF-323 all flew "old reliable and rugged" propeller-driven Chance-Vought F4U-4 Corsair fighter bombers. Lieutenant Colonel Neil R. MacIntyre commanded the "hottest" squadron, VMF-311, which flew Grumman F9F-2B

A VMF-323 "Death Rattler" F4U armed with 5-inch rockets and napalm readies for take off from the Badoeng Strait (CVE 116). At least one Marine squadron was on board an aircraft carrier at all times during the spring of 1951, as this duty rotated among the Corsair squadrons.

Photo Courtesy of LtCol Leo J. Ihli, USMC



1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 1951

Marine land-based tactical and support aircraft, except for the observation planes and helicopters attached to the 1st Marine Division, comprised the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in Korea. The wing had two aircraft groups (MAGs -12 and -33) that flew more than a dozen different aircraft types in 1951. Its most famous airplanes were World War II vintage F4U Corsairs and brand new F9F Panther jets, but also included in the combat aircraft mix were F7F Tigercat and F4U-5N Corsair all-weather fighters. Most Marine land-based aircraft were under the operational control of the U.S. Fifth Air Force, and the Joint Operations Center coordinated most air operations. Marine carrier-based aircraft, on the other hand, were under the operational control of the U.S. Navy task forces to which their respective carriers were assigned. A few utility aircraft (SNBs and TBMs) were assigned to headquarters squadrons. The aircraft of VMO-6 (OY "Sentinels," as well as HO3S and HTL helicopters) flew in direct support of the 1st Marine Division. Marine R4Q Packets and parachute riggers of the 1st Air Delivery Platoon supported the U.S. Air Force Combat Cargo Command. Marine transport planes (R4D Skytrains and R5D Skymasters) flew in support of the Naval Air Transport Service and the Combat Cargo Command.



1st Marine Aircraft Wing

Marine Aircraft Group 33
 Marine Aircraft Squadron 12
 Marine Wing Service Squadron 1
 Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron 1
 Marine Fighter Squadron 212
 Marine Night-Fighter Squadron 513
 1st 90mm AAA Gun Battalion
 Marine Night-Fighter Squadron 542
 Marine Fighter Squadron 323
 Marine Air Control Group 2
 Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 2
 Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron 3
 Marine Fighter Squadron 214
 Marine Fighter Squadron 312
 Marine Fighter Squadron 311
 Detachment, Marine Transport Squadron 152

Supporting Naval Air Transport Service

Marine Transport Squadron 242
 Marine Transport Squadron 152
 Marine Transport Squadron 352

Attached to 1st Marine Division

Marine Observation Squadron 6

and Sikorsky HO3S and Bell HTL helicopters, was attached to the 1st Marine Division and did not come under the operational control of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. Other Marine aircraft serving the Korean theater but not part of the wing included Marine transport planes such as four-engine Douglas R5D Skymasters and twin-boom Fairchild R4Q Packets.

Normal operational relationships were disrupted by the CCF Winter Offensive, which forced retreating U.N. forces to close air bases at Yonpo, Wonsan, Seoul, Kimpo, and Suwon as they pulled back. The few airfields still in U.N. hands in early January 1951 could not handle all United Nations Command aircraft, and the resulting ramp space shortfall scattered Marine air assets throughout Korea and Japan. This unanticipated diaspora placed Marine squadrons under several different control agencies. The "Checkerboard" Corsairs of VMF-312 were in Japan at Itami Air Base on the island of Honshu along with the wing rear support units. The other three Corsair squadrons were carrier-borne. The "Devil Cats" of VMF-212 were on the light carrier USS *Bataan* (CVL 29) under the operational control of combined Task Group 96.8 operating in the Yellow Sea near Inchon, while VMF-214's "Black Sheep" were on the USS *Sicily* (CVE 118) and the "Death Rattlers" of VMF-323 were flying off the USS *Badoeng Strait* (CVE 116) under the operational control of U.S. Navy Task Force 77 in the Sea of Japan. The only land-based fighter squadron still in Korea was the "Panther Pack" of VMF-311 operating from airfield K-9 at Pusan. Unfortunately, the Panther jets were temporarily out of service due to mechanical and electronic teething problems serious enough to ground the entire squadron until

Panther jets. Lieutenant Colonel David C. Wolfe led Marine Night (All-Weather) Fighter Squadron 513 (VMF[N]-513) mounted in F4U-5N Corsair night fighters. The other night fighter squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Max J. Volcansek, Jr.'s VMF(N)-542, flew twin engine Grumman F7F-3N Tigercats. Wing headquarters had specially config-

ured General Motors (TBM) Avenger single-engine torpedo bomber radio relay planes, F7F-3P and F4U-5P photo reconnaissance planes, Douglas twin-engine R4D Skytrain and SNB light utility transports. Major Vincent J. Gottschalk's Marine Observation Squadron 6 (VMO-6), flying Consolidated OY Sentinel light observation planes

it could be pulled back to Japan for maintenance. The two Marine night fighter squadrons, the "Flying Nightmares" of VMF(N)-513 and the "Tigers" of VMF(N)-542, were in Japan under the direct control of U.S. Fifth Air Force flying air defense missions as part of the 314th Air Division. VMO-6 was attached to and collocated with the 1st Marine Division at Masan. Two Marine transport squadrons supported the Naval Air Transport Service. Colonel William B. Steiner's Marine Transport Squadron 352 (VMR-352) shuttled between California and Hawaii, while Colonel Deane C. Roberts' VMR-152 flew two legs, one from Hawaii to Japan and the other from Japan to Korea.

All four Marine fighter-bomber squadrons flew daily sorties during the first week of January. Their missions included close air support for the Eighth Army, combat air patrols, armed reconnaissance,

Calling "Devastate Baker." A Marine pilot serving with a ground unit directs a close air support mission. The assignment of Marine aviators to ground units ensured proper ground-to-air liaison.

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A9458



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A132120

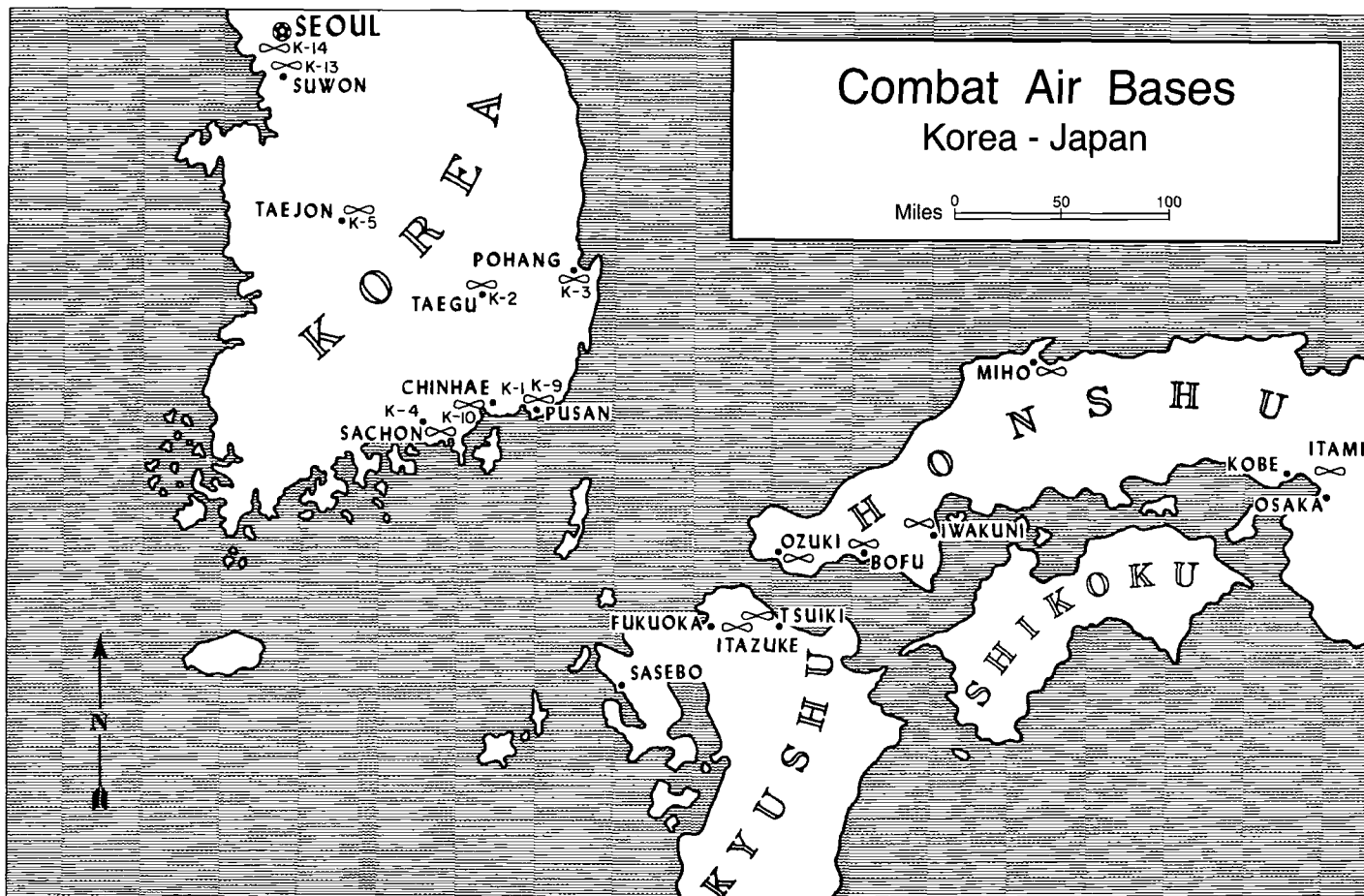
A Vought F4U Corsair from VMF-214 is guided into position for take-off on its way to a close air support mission. The bent-wing, single-seat, propeller-driven "Dash Fours" featured six .50-caliber machine guns.

coastal surveillance, and interdiction bombing. By mid-month the wing administrative and service units, the Corsairs of VMFs-214 and -323, and VMF-311's jets were temporarily ensconced at Itami until facilities at Bofu on Honshu and K-1 (Pusan West) in Korea were activated. Wing headquarters stayed at Itami, MAG-33 was slated to move to Bofu once the airfield was operational, and MAG-12 was temporarily assigned to K-9 (Pusan East) until all of its squadrons returned to Korea.

This Japanese interlude was a period of transition for Marine aviation. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was reorganized, some command changes occurred, and several moves were accomplished. As part of the wing reorganization, squadrons were realigned among the air groups. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing had to be realigned because its elements were going to be split up, some operating from air bases in Japan while others would be stationed in Korea, and one squadron would be afloat.

Lieutenant Colonel Paul J. Fontana replaced Lieutenant Colonel Radford C. West as MAG-33's commanding officer. New squadron commanders included Major Donald P. Frame (VMF-312), Major Stanley S. Nicolay (VMF-323), Major James A. Feeley, Jr. (VMF-214), and Lieutenant Colonel Claude H. Welch (VMF-212). Lieutenant Colonel James R. Anderson took over both night fighter squadrons (VMF(N)-513 and VMF(N)-542) in February, a unique arrangement that lasted until VMF(N)-542 returned to the United States in mid-March. The squadrons slated to move to Bofu were assigned to MAG-33 and the squadrons returning to Korea were assigned to MAG-12. In addition, the night fighter squadrons returned to Marine control.

This temporary turmoil was a source of irritation, but it was far less ominous than an emerging doctrinal issue. The 1st Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing were separated for the first time since they arrived in the Far



East. Marine land-based aircraft had been under the titular control of the Fifth Air Force for months, but a verbal agreement between Marine General Harris and U.S. Air Force General Earl E. Partridge allowed the wing to regularly sup-

port ground Marines. As the wing pulled back to Japan, however, Harris' de facto control of Marine air was lost and this agreement went by the wayside. Thereafter, all land-based wing aircraft would be under the operational control of

the Fifth Air Force, and all missions would be assigned by the Fifth Air Force-Eighth Army joint operations center. Leery veteran Marine aviators foresaw procedural and allocation problems and, needless to say, there was great trepidation by all

A Sikorsky HO3S helicopter sits on a mountaintop landing zone while Navy Corpsmen prepare three wounded Marines for evacuation. In addition to standard command, liaison,

and observation duties, these helicopters also often flew search and rescue missions behind enemy lines.

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-439571

