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Chapter 6. Action on Hill 342
The Perimeter on Hill 342

Convinced that he was encountering only sniper fire, Cahill ordered Buettner to stay behind and keep the platoon moving up a draw affording cover. Then, ignoring enemy marksmen, the young officer climbed up to the crest and entered a grim little company perimeter under constant rifle and machinegun fire from its front and both flanks.

It was 0830 when the Army company commander greeted Cahill and explained his defenses. It had been customary, he said, to man a broad front during the day and draw back into a tight perimeter at night. But the intense enemy fire of the previous night had not diminished after daybreak, with the result that his men still occupied their night perimeter. The Army officer added that he had returned his mortars to the base of the hill, since they had drawn too much fire to be effective. Deployed around a triangular perimeter conforming to the shape of 347's peak were the remnants of his three shattered platoons.

While Cahill appraised the situation, his platoon labored up the hill under prodding by Buettner and other NCO's. Well up the southeastern slope, the column suddenly came under automatic weapons fire from invisible enemy positions. The exhausted Marines set up weapons along the hillside and fired at area targets. Despite the blistering sun and whine of bullets, NCO's led their fire teams and squads up toward the peak.

When the Marines reached Cahill, he learned that 1 man had been killed and 6 wounded, including Staff Sergeant Robert Robinson, platoon sergeant, and Sergeant Thomas Blackmon, platoon guide. A number of heat casualties were recuperating far down the slope, and one Marine had suffered an emotional collapse. Blackmon, despite a mortal wound, had been so intent on joining his platoon leader at the crest that four weary men were required to carry him down the hillside to safety. Three other able-bodied Marines also had to assist wounded men down the hill.

Of the 52 men who had set out the previous night, only 37, including those recovered from heat sickness, finally reached Cahill. As they assembled on the reverse slope of 342, a group of soldiers on the crest broke under a heavy volume of enemy fire and bolted from the perimeter. The Army company was on the verge of panic until a young Army lieutenant restored order and led the men back to their foxholes.

Cahill and his remaining NCO's crawled around the perimeter to insert Marines in positions among those of the Army troops. This psychology was sound, for each infantryman, eyeing his Army or Marine neighbor, prided himself on setting a high standard of military conduct. From that time on, every man discharged his responsibility in a most exemplary manner.

Two more Marines had been killed instantly while being led to their positions by Sergeant Jack Macy. These casualties brought the platoon's total to 3 KIA and 8 WIA.

It is not likely that Cahill's men were interested enough in historic dates to recall that it was the eighth anniversary of the Marine landing on Guadalcanal in World War II. For at noon, the fight on Hill 342 took on aspects of a siege. Swarms of North Koreans inched upward toward the crest, taking advantage of cover and concealment as they kept a steady stream of rifle and machinegun fire cutting across the hilltop. Despite the visual handicap resulting from the enemy's use of smokeless powder, the Marines and soldiers returned the fire with determination.

Due to the urgency of the situation on 342, the 2d Battalion, 5th RCT, ordered its company to remain on the crest with Cahill's platoon. Plans were already underway for a larger Marine force to clear the high ground.

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Chapter 6. Action on Hill 342
Call for Artillery Fires

In the meantime Cahill used his initiative to improve the situation. With his SCR-300, he called for Army artillery fire to silence the Communist mortars. When the first shells were fired for registration, he searched the perimeter and located an artillery forward observer. Accurate bursts were laid on likely looking mortar OP's in enemy territory, yet the Communist tubes continued to fire.

With ammunition and water in critical supply, the Marine officer radioed 3/5's CP and requested an air drop. Taplett's Tactical Air Control Party relayed the message to the Brigade Air Section, and an Air Force R4D transport flew over the restricted drop area atop Hill 342. The precious supplies tumbled from the big plane—into enemy territory. A single recovered packet contained carbine cartridges, the one type not needed.

The Brigade Air Section then turned the mission over to VMO-6. Every 5-gallon water can owned by the squadron was donated, and the more maneuverable OY-2's were able to drop them within the confined perimeter. Unhappily, the containers burst upon striking the ground, so that the parched hill defenders were able to salvage only a few mouthfuls of water apiece.

Sergeant Macy reacted with vigor. With Cahill's permission, he organized a few volunteers into a patrol to search for water. Descending the perilous southeastern slope under fire, the little group struck out for the village of Taepyong-ni, located along the base of 342's eastern spur and facing Hill 99 across the valley.

As the afternoon wore on, the Army-Marine defenders clung to their precarious perch, despite swollen tongues and Communist fire. The enemy had succeeded in surrounding the entire peak with a ring of fire. Several more casualties were inflicted on the infantry company, and a Marine machinegunner was killed instantly by a sniper who had worked his way to the south of the perimeter.

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Chapter 6. Action on Hill 342
Task Force Kean Stalled

Although the night of 6–7 August had been uneventful for 3/5's front lines around Chindong-ni, Taplett's CP near the base of Hill 255 came under sporadic shelling between 0100 and 0400. The first messages from Cahill, received about 0600, caused anxiety over the fate of his platoon.[12]

At 0200 that morning, a long column of trucks had set out from Changwon, carrying Lieutenant Colonel Harold S. Roise's 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. The head of the convoy reached Chindong-ni about 0500 and entered the truck turn-around in a schoolyard at the base of Hill 255.[13] As 2/5 unloaded, the turn-around became a bottleneck of vehicles, men, and equipment which slowed movement on the MSR itself almost to a standstill. To make matters worse, the heavy traffic gradually pounded the schoolyard into a quagmire, so that trucks bogged down and added to the confusion.

While Roise was assembling his battalion, the entire area came under heavy mortar and artillery fire from the north. The sudden shelling, which caused 2/5's first battle casualties, brought all traffic on the road from Changwon to an abrupt halt.

Although the Marines of the 2d Battalion were well covered behind Hill 255, bursts from shells striking the trees high on the ridge filled the air with fragments. Before the enemy mortars ceased, 1 Marine had been killed and 11 wounded, including Captain George E. Kittredge, Jr., commander of Company E.[14]

Lieutenant Colonel Murray, whose headquarters was behind Roise's unit in the convoy, was still north of Chindong-ni when the column slowed almost to a standstill. He radioed 2/5's commander and told him to keep the trucks moving despite the shelling. Roise replied that the muddy schoolyard, not enemy fire, was the main cause of the delay. Thus Murray received the first of many object lessons in Korean geography. He sat patiently in his jeep, while the column inched into Chindong-ni.[15]

After the regimental commander arrived in Chindong-ni, the 3d Battalion, less Cahill's platoon, reverted to his control. Because of the battle in progress on Hill 342 and enemy activity to the north of the village perimeter, Murray ordered 2/5 to occupy and defend an expanse of 255 above Company H's positions. He directed 1/5 (following his headquarters in the column from Changwon) to occupy Hill 99, thus relieving Company G to bolster Taplett's lines on lower 255.[16]

General Craig arrived at Chindong-ni shortly after 0700, just in time to be warmly greeted by the enemy shelling as he stepped from his helicopter. Since the Brigade attack scheduled for 7 August hinged on the 5th RCT's success at the Tosan junction, Craig quickly arranged for a telephone line to that unit, so that his CP would be in constant contact.[17]

News from the front was not good. At 0630, after air and artillery preparations, the 5th RCT had jumped off on schedule. Just beyond the line of departure, it came to a sudden halt as a result of increased enemy activity north of the road. Elements of the NKPA 6th Division, paying little attention to the plans of Task Force Kean, had launched an attack of their own above the MSR.

The situation on Hill 342 kept the entire 2d Battalion, 5th RCT, tied down in a fight to hold the Chinju road open. With the help of Cahill's platoon on the crest, this mission was being accomplished; but the battalion was temporarily lost to its regiment, and the road itself was choked with men and vehicles unable to move.[18]

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Chapter 6. Action on Hill 342
General Craig Assumes Control

The Brigade was ordered to provide a battalion for the relief of the Army unit on Yaban-san, so that the 5th RCT could strike harder at the road junction 2 1/2 miles to the west.[19]

Just as 2/5 was ascending Hill 255, Lieutenant Colonel Murray received word from Brigade of the Marine commitment. The 5th Marines commander canceled Roise's orders and directed him to relieve both Cahill's platoon and the 2d Battalion, 5th RCT, and to seize the remainder of Hill 342.[20]

At 1120 on 7 August, General Craig received a telephone message from General Kean directing the Brigade commander to assume control of all troops in the Chindong-ni area until further orders. With this overall responsibility, Craig went forward to observe the 5th RCT in action. He ascertained by personal reconnaissance that enemy resistance was light, although few friendly gains were being made because of the scattered and confused nature of the fighting.[21] The MSR between Sangnyong-ni, at the base of Hill 342's spurs, and the vital Tosan junction was jammed with men, vehicles, and equipment, while infantrymen probed the surrounding high ground in an effort to weed out snipers and infiltrators.

When 2/5 reached the road junction at which Cahill had been met by the Army guide during the night, Lieutenant Colonel Roise ordered Company D to move up the north fork, tracing the base of 342's eastern spur, and seize both the spur and great hill itself. Company E, now commanded by 1st Lieutenant William E. Sweeney, was to pass behind Sangnyong-ni and seize the west spur. Such a deployment would leave the battalion spread thinly, but Roise's orders were to protect the wide valley formed by the two long ridges. This could be done only by occupying both spurs and 342 itself.[22]

Outside of Chindong-ni, Major Morgan J. McNeely, 2d Battalion S–3, had picked up Captain John Finn, Jr., CO of Company D, and the two officers drove ahead by jeep to the village of Taepyong-ni at the eastern base of Hill 342. The staff officer informed Finn that Dog Company was to relieve a 5th RCT unit on the high ground above the clump of thatched huts. Both McNeely and an Army guide said that the Marines would meet no organized resistance in their climb.[23]

Having spent a sleepless night on the road from Changwon to Chindong-ni, Finn's infantrymen were fagged. It was now midafternoon, and the heat began to take its toll of Dog Company.

Just as the leading elements reached Finn at Taepyong-ni—30 minutes after McNeely's departure—the column came under rifle and machinegun fire from the high ground above the road and from the hamlet of Tokkong-ni across the valley on the right. The Marines thought they were being shot at by Army troops, but the chatter of Communist "burp guns"[24] soon convinced them that they were meeting enemy resistance.[25]

Finn ordered his men into the rice paddies bordering the road. Calling his platoon leaders, he told them that there was no real intelligence, but that the fire from Tokkong-ni would be ignored due to the company's mission on 342. He assigned routes of ascent to each platoon. The 2d, under Second Lieutenant Wallace J. Reid, would push through Taepyong-ni and on up the hill at its juncture with the spur. On the left, Second Lieutenant Edward T. Emmelman would lead his 3d Platoon to the top of the spur. The 1st Platoon, commanded by Second Lieutenant Arthur A. Oakley, would hold the right flank and ascend the southern slopes of 342 itself.[26]

Company D met scattered opposition. By the time it moved over the crest of the spur, five Marines had been wounded. The sun, however, had been more effective; for twelve men were completely unconscious from the 100° heat, and the rest of the company had neared the point of exhaustion.

Finn ordered his executive officer, First Lieutenant Robert T. Hanifin, Jr., to set up headquarters and the

60-mm. mortars on the high ground directly above Taepyong-ni. It was already early in the evening when Hanifin established a thin perimeter of headquarters personnel to safeguard the CP.[27]

In the meantime, Finn was leading his three rifle platoons up the same southeastern approach to 342's summit which Cahill's platoon had scaled 12 hours earlier. The company commander could no longer overlook the combined effects on his men of heat and overexertion. A few hundred yards from the summit, he radioed Roise that Company D was exhausted. During the halt, Lieutenant Oakley climbed to the summit to contact the Army and Marine defenders. He returned just before dark with Cahill and the Army company commander.[28]

In the hurried conference that followed, the Army officer advised Finn against finishing the rugged climb and assured him that his soldiers and Cahill's platoon could defend the peak through the night. Informed of this by radio, Roise allowed Company D to hold its present position and relieve at dawn.[29]

Earlier in the day, Lieutenant Sweeney had led Company E up the lower tip of 342's western spur, then along the ridgeline toward the large hill mass. At intervals the company came under long range, ineffectual machinegun fire. But, as in the case of Finn's unit, the heat and terrain were more damaging than enemy bullets. At dusk, Company E had reached the midway point along the ridge, and there it dug in for the night.

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Enemy Attack at Dawn

Under cover of darkness, Red Korean troops wormed their way around the little perimeter on the summit of Hill 342. Just before dawn the soldiers and Marines were greeted by bursts of short-range rifle and machinegun fire. The defenders returned the fire and hurled grenades down the slopes, but a small force of North Koreans succeeded in crawling close enough to launch an assault against the northeast leg of the triangle.[30]

A fierce hand-to-hand struggle ensued at the point of contact, and the Communists were thrown back down the hill. One of Cahill's men died of bayonet and gunshot wounds, and another Marine and several soldiers were wounded.[31]

Finn's men struck out for the summit shortly after daybreak on 8 August. With three platoons abreast along the southern face of 342, Dog Company pushed upward swiftly, brushing aside light resistance. Upon reaching the perimeter, the Marines came under a storm of fire from NK positions which ringed the northern half of the hill.[32]

The relief was effected, nevertheless, and Cahill's thinned squads descended Hill 342 together with the shattered Army company. The Marine platoon had lost 6 killed and 12 wounded—more than a third of the 52 men who had set out from Chindong-ni.[33] But its determined stand with the beleaguered Army unit had saved the height and frustrated the Communist attempts to establish a bastion overlooking the MSR.

Company D fared no better than its predecessors at consolidating the crest of 342 and clearing upper slopes which were crawling with North Koreans. Finn's unit took several casualties in the fire fight that accompanied and followed the relief of the original defenders. Two of those killed in action were Second Lieutenants Oakley and Reid. The only surviving platoon leader, Lieutenant Emmelman, received a serious head wound as he was pointing out targets to a Marine machinegunner.[34]

Captain Finn, seeing Reid's motionless form lying ahead of the company lines, crawled forward to recover the body. Having moved only a short distance with his burden, the company commander himself was struck in the head and shoulder by enemy bullets Barely conscious and almost blinded by blood, Finn crept back to his lines on his hands and knees.

A corpsman administered first aid and Company D's first sergeant helped the officer down the steep slope.[35] On the way the pair met Lieutenant Hanifin, who was leading company headquarters and the mortar section to the high ground from their positions of the previous night. Finn informed the executive officer that he was now in command of the company.[36]

Reaching the summit, Hanifin had just enough time to reorganize his defensive positions and emplace the 60-mm. mortars before the Communists launched another attack. Again Marine rifles, machineguns, and grenades scorched the northern slopes. Again the enemy was beaten back, leaving the hillside littered with dead. But Company D's casualties had mounted meanwhile to 6 killed in action and 25 wounded.[37]

About 1130, as the fire fight slackened, Roise phoned Hanifin from his OP on the eastern spur. The conversation had no sooner begun when the company commander collapsed from heat exhaustion. A veteran NCO and a young officer promptly filled the command vacuum. Company D's gunnery sergeant, Master Sergeant Harold Reeves, assumed control of the three rifle platoons with the confidence of long experience. Second Lieutenant Leroy K. Wirth, a forward observer of 1/11, took responsibility for all supporting arms, including the planes of MAG–33 circling overhead. The NCO of almost 30 years service and the young officer repeatedly ranged forward of the front lines to spot enemy positions for air strikes and make new appraisals of the situation.

Company D remained steady, and never again did the North Koreans seriously threaten the hilltop.[38]

The 2d Battalion, 24th Infantry, was scheduled to relieve 2/5 on Hill 342 during the afternoon of 8 August; but the Army unit was unable to reach the area for reasons to be explained later. Informed of the change in plans, Roise kept his battalion busy with consolidation of positions and evacuation of casualties.

Company E moved forward a few hundred yards along the western spur of 342 and dug new foxholes. Captain Andrew M. Zimmer reported from regiment, where he had been an assistant S–3, and took command of Company D.[39]

Although the North Koreans continued to harass the “iron triangle” on the crest, there was no more hard fighting. A few additional casualties were taken by Zimmer’s company, most of them occurring while Marines tried to retrieve airdropped supplies which had fallen wide of their mark.[40]

During the fighting on 342, Major Walter Gall, commander of 2/5’s Weapons Company, had dispatched a small patrol to eliminate the enemy machineguns in Tokkong-ni. After a brief fire fight which cost three friendly casualties, the withdrawal of the patrol left the Communists still entrenched in the village. When the Marines returned to Weapons Company lines on the eastern spur, First Lieutenant Ira T. Carr turned his 81-mm. mortars on Tokkong-ni and brought the enemy fire to an end.[41]

The night of 8–9 August was relatively quiet on 342. Obviously weakened by casualties, the enemy gave the Marine positions a wide berth. NKPA harassing fires consisted of periodic bursts from long-range machineguns and antitank guns.[42] There was desultory sniping during the morning of the 9th, but Brigade intelligence reported a gradual withdrawal of the enemy northward.[43]

That afternoon Company D was relieved by an Army unit when 2/5 turned over responsibility for the hill to the 2d Battalion, 24th Infantry. The fight had made veterans out of the men Zimmer led down to the road, but the company paid with 8 dead and 28 wounded.[44]

Documents taken from enemy dead disclosed that the defenders of Hill 342 had been opposed by elements of the 13th and 15th Regiments of the NK 6th Division. Lieutenant Cahill qualified his report of 150 enemy dead as “conservative,”[45] and 2/5 set the total at 400 after its fight.[46] The actual number of fatalities inflicted by Marine-Army infantry and supporting arms probably lies somewhere between these two estimates.

At any rate, the Red Korean commander had committed at least two rifle companies supported by machineguns, mortars and artillery. The force thrown against Yaban-san could be estimated at 500 to 600 troops, and they had failed in their attempt to cut the MSR.[47]

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Chapter 7. Advance to Kosong

WHILE 2/5 AND the 1st Platoon of Company G were fighting the enemy and weather on 7 August, Lieutenant Colonel Taplett's 3d Battalion sat out an ominous calm at Chindong-ni. From their positions on Hills 255 and 99, Captain Fegan and Lieutenant Bohn periodically called for supporting fires to check enemy movement in the northern approaches to the village.

At 1015 Second Lieutenant Lawrence W. Hetrick and his 3d Platoon, Company A Engineers, completed the laying of the first Marine minefield, located across the Haman road a half mile above Chindong-ni.[1]

Lieutenant Colonel Newton's 1st Battalion reached the village in the afternoon of the 7th and relieved Company G's two platoons on Hill 99. Bohn took his company back across the valley and deployed on the lower slopes of 255 facing the Haman road. These positions were hit by close-in sniper fire during the night of 7–8 August, and at dawn the Marine infantrymen were startled to discover four NK soldiers emplaced less than 100 yards away in the valley. Both the enemy position and its occupants were quickly destroyed.[2]

Shortly after daybreak on 8 August—while Cahill was being relieved on Yaban-san—the Marines of Company H noted a column of troops climbing Hill 255 from the direction of the Haman road. Believing the newcomers to be ROK soldiers, Fegan's men watched as the long file reached the high peak beyond the plateau forward of the Marine positions. When the group set up facing Company H, Fegan became skeptical enough to alert his riflemen and machinegunners. His precautions were timely, for the visitors immediately opened fire on the Marines.[3]

This surprise attack had a critical effect on the Task Force Kean sector. In possession of the high ground above 3/5, the North Koreans were able to block the Masan-Chindong-ni stretch of the MSR, leaving most of the American ground forces out on a limb for supply and reinforcement purposes. Thus when the 2d Battalion, 24th Infantry, advanced from Masan to relieve both 3/5 and 2/5 on their respective hills, it was driven off the fire-swept road north of Chindong-ni.[4]

Upon being informed of the enemy's presence, Taplett ordered Company H to attack and destroy the Communist position. Fegan called his two platoon leaders[5] while the Marine infantrymen in the line exchanged shots with the enemy across the plateau. After a quick briefing, Second Lieutenant John O. Williams led his 1st Platoon to the long tableland.[6]

Echeloned to the right, the skirmish line pushed aggressively over the open area, firing on the enemy as it moved forward. The platoon closed to within 30 yards of the Communist-held peak, but showers of hand grenades and continuous machinegun fire pinned down the attackers. Fegan sent a message forward, directing Williams to work around the enemy's left flank. Although one fire team succeeded in reaching the rocks below the NK positions, the flanking maneuver failed.

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Heavy NKPA Resistance

The 3d Platoon had taken several casualties. Marines still in the open area were unable to advance, while those who had attempted the envelopment could only cling to the steep slopes above the MSR. When some of this group were struck by enemy fire, the impact sent them rolling helplessly down the sharp incline.

Convinced that Williams could not carry the peak, Fegan ordered him to pull his platoon back toward the line of departure and reorganize. While the withdrawal was in progress, the company commander ordered the 3d Platoon to pass through the 1st and continue the attack. There was no response to the order.[7]

Fegan realized that the men were momentarily unnerved after witnessing the failure of the first attack. The company commander, therefore, assumed control and personally led the 3d Platoon forward on the plateau. Halfway across the open area, the new skirmish line passed through Williams' outfit as it was reforming.

The Marines of the 3d Platoon responded with confidence to Fegan's leadership. They crossed the tableland in a wedge formation with 1 squad at the apex and the other 2 slightly withheld. Air strikes and artillery preparations had little effect against the rocky crag beyond the plateau, so that the final assault was fought to a finish with small arms and grenades.[8]

Staff Sergeant John I. Wheatley, one of the prime movers, fell wounded along with several of his men. Sergeant Edward F. Barrett, shot in the elbow and hip, lay helpless, exposed to enemy fire, until Captain Fegan carried him back to safety.

The 3d Platoon gained the rocky summit and worked its way through the NKPA position, a foxhole at a time, while the enemy resisted to the death. Corporal Melvin James[9] hit the Red Korean left flank with his squad and drove deep into the enemy position. The NKPA right flank was rolled up by a vigorous assault sparked by Technical Sergeant Ray Morgan and Private First Class Donald Terrio[10] as each knocked out a Communist machinegun and its crew.

Having wiped out the main enemy position, the 3d Platoon advanced northward about 200 yards to a gulf where the high ground fell away abruptly. Beyond this depression rose the highest step of the ridgeline's rugged staircase: Hill 255 with a height of more than 800 feet above the MSR. The three squads held up here to await further orders.

How Company's fight up to this time had cost the Marines 6 dead and 32 wounded.[11]

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Chapter 7. Advance to Kosong
Assault on Hill 255

A column of NKPA reinforcements bound for Hill 255 was spotted during the action by Company G from its positions facing the Haman road. The enemy platoon struck out across the valley from the high ground north of Hill 99, then attempted to ascend 255 via the same route used by comrades at dawn.

The Marines of Company G and their supporting arms cut loose with a hurricane of fire. And after scattering in panic, the enemy survivors scuttled back to their starting point.[12]

Lieutenant Colonel Murray, upon being informed of the progress made by How Company, directed Taplett to halt the attack and dig in for the night. While Fegan's men were carrying out this order under NKPA artillery and mortar fire, MAG–33 and the Marine artillery roared into action. The saddle north of How Company's lines was pounded so mercilessly that the enemy pulled back from Fegan's immediate front. Throughout the night of 8–9 August, 1/11 and 3/5's mortar platoon dropped a steel curtain across the battalion front, with the result that no enemy activity was noted.[13]

The systematic reduction of enemy positions on Hill 255 the next morning was a triumph of supporting arms. Marine artillery shells led off at 0825, followed by Marine air which worked the enemy over with the first close-support payload of napalm recorded so far in the Korean conflict. And four minutes before Company H launched its final attack on the hill, airborne TAC reported the objective neutralized.[14]

Fegan's men scaled the peak against negligible opposition. Two knocked-out machineguns and a few enemy dead were all that remained at the summit.[15]

The plan for eliminating the threat to the MSR called for a Marine advance along Hill 255 to grid line 1350. North of this boundary, the ridge would be cleared by Army troops approaching from Masan.

Company H sighted soldiers of the 24th Infantry at 1125 as they moved southward to the grid line, and the long ridge was considered secure. It had been no light price, however, that 3/5 paid to open the MSR. Casualties on Hill 255 totalled 16 dead and 36 wounded, and since nearly all had been taken by Company H, Fegan's outfit was reduced by 25 percent.[16]

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Chapter 7. Advance to Kosong
Confusion at Tosan Junction

On the whole, Task Force Kean's scheduled drive on Chinju and Sachon had not met with much success during the first 48 hours. The only advance was made on the right, where the 35th Infantry seized its first objective and inflicted an estimated 350 casualties on the enemy.[17]

In his capacity as provisional commander of all units along the Masan-Chinju axis, General Craig was directing the Army operations at the front and in the rear areas of the Task Force sector. Thus on 8 August he ordered the 5th RCT to continue its attack and take Tosan, so that his Marines could make progress on the road to Sachon.

After preparatory fires, the Army regiment again pushed forward toward its immediate objective. Enemy resistance was much heavier than on the day before; nevertheless, some gains were made from the starting point near the village of Singi. The attack was also slowed by the narrow MSR carrying the entire traffic load for the Task Force. Heavy fighting above the road on Hills 255 and 342 added to the congestion and confusion on the vital artery.

Lieutenant Colonel Newton's 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, had been ordered to move forward from Chindong-ni at 0600, 8 August, with the mission of attacking along the south fork of the Tosan junction preparatory to seizing a regimental objective which would be designated later.[18]

Leaving its positions on Hill 99 at the assigned time, the battalion was stalled immediately at the bridges on the MSR below. The road was still clogged with soldiers and Army vehicles, making it impossible for the Marine unit to proceed.[19]

General Craig, who was in the vicinity, told Newton to hold up until the situation at the front became clarified. Company B, commanded by Captain John L. Tobin, was ordered back up on the hill it had just descended; and the battalion waited, three miles from its line of departure.[20]

Finally the word came to move up. While 1/5 worked its way along the crowded road, Newton walked ahead and reached the CP of the 1st Battalion, 5th RCT, located on a hillside between Singi and Oryong. There he learned that the Army unit's companies were already on the high ground all around the junction and that the rice paddies between the battalion CP and these companies were full of North Koreans. The Army commander considered his subordinate units cut off.[21]

Shortly afterwards, at about 1400, the head of 1/5's column reached Newton and again came to a halt, a mile and a half from its line of departure.

Arriving on the scene at this time was a dispirited Army staff sergeant, dripping with mud and water. He said that he had just returned from Hill 308, south of the road junction, where his unit was heavily engaged with the enemy. And he added that Communist machineguns covering the wide rice paddy between 308 and the MSR had forced him to crawl almost the whole distance.[22]

Lieutenant Colonel Murray, while driving from Chindong-ni to the front, was stopped on the road by Major General Kean himself. The 25th Division commander directed the Marine officer to arrange for a night relief of the 1st Battalion, 5th RCT. Kean stated that he would inform Brigade headquarters of this change in plans as soon as possible.[23]

It had become a question as to whether Task Force Kean or the NKPA 6th Division controlled Tosan. Newton radioed the 5th Marines commander and asked for enlightenment. Murray, having just finished his conversation with General Kean, ordered the battalion commander to postpone the jumpoff until nightfall.[24]

After withdrawing to the outskirts of Sangnyong-ni, 1/5 went into an assembly area beneath the western spur of Hill 342. There the battalion commander received specific orders to relieve the 1st Battalion, 5th RCT, on positions southwest of Tosan at midnight, 8 August, and secure the troublesome road junction once and for all. [25]

Newton was to have his battalion at the Army CP no later than 2300, when it would be furnished guides to lead the way across the broad rice paddy to Hill 308. As it proved, the Marine unit actually reached the designated rendezvous at 2200. But even though an hour early, Newton discovered that the soldiers on 308 were already withdrawing. Moreover, no guides had been provided.[26]

The Marine battalion continued westward through Singi and stopped on the MSR about a half-mile short of Tosan. Here a narrow dike branched south from the road, and the soldiers were returning along this trail from Hill 308 to the MSR. Since the footpath was pointed out as Newton's route of approach, he had little choice but to wait until the Army troops made the crossing. This was accomplished shortly after midnight, and the column of Marines was left alone in the night on unfamiliar ground reported to be crawling with enemy.[27]

The promised guides reported for duty at this time. They turned out to be two South Korean civilians. Without further ado, the advance on Sachon was launched when a long single file of skeptical Marines fell in behind two unknown natives whose loyalty had to be accepted on faith.

Following the 1,200-yard trail in the darkness was time-consuming as well as nerve-chilling. A misstep on the narrow, slippery dike usually meant a spill into the muck and filth of the paddy for some hapless infantryman. Not only would he delay all those behind, but he would not be as fragrant as a rose in the nostrils of his comrades when he regained the dike.

Finally the head of the file reached the base of Hill 308, having encountered not a single enemy on the way. As more and more men threaded their way in from the paddy, tactical integrity was slowly regained. Dawn of 9 August was already breaking when the rear of the column completed the crossing.[28]

Daybreak brought a radio message from Murray, directing 1/5 to continue the attack to the southwest immediately and seize Hill 308. With Tobin's company leading, the battalion ascended the northern slopes in a long column. The climb took the Marines more than 1,000 feet upward and 2,000 yards to the south. Before the summit was reached, the relentless sun and terrain had taken its toll of Newton's infantrymen. Fortunately, enemy resistance amounted to mere sniping; and by noon, 9 August, the massive terrain feature belonged to the Brigade. [29]

At 1700 that afternoon Craig's operational control of all troops in the area came to a close. At the end of the 54-hour period of the Marine general's overall command, the road junction had been cleared, and both Army and Marine columns were making progress toward the objective.

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Chapter 7. Advance to Kosong
Brigade Artillery in Support

Nearly all the infantry actions of the first 3 days owed a good deal to the support of the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines. Consisting of three 4-gun batteries, Lieutenant Colonel Ransom M. Wood's outfit had relieved the 8th Field Artillery Battalion at Chindong-ni on the eve of D-day. Since the terrain afforded no suitable alternate areas, the Marine gunners moved into the positions vacated by the Army artillery, partly in the village and partly on the outskirts.

A total of 87 rounds were fired that first night in support of the 5th Marines, with the FO's reporting good results. Before long, however, enemy counterbattery fires searched out friendly positions in the village. Early the next morning a Marine battery took a direct hit from an NKPA 122-mm. shell. Two men were killed and 8 wounded by a blast which destroyed a 105-mm. howitzer. Thus, reversing the usual rule, the artillery suffered heavier casualties than the infantry at the jumpoff of the Brigade attack.[30]

The gunners needed no further admonitions to dig foxholes, gunpits and ammunition pits. During the confused fighting around Chindong-ni, it was not unusual to have one battery laid on an azimuth generally east, another west, and a third to the north.

"I think that this is one of the most important lessons we learned in fighting infiltrating troops," commented Wood; "artillery must be able and always prepared to fire in any direction on a moment's notice."[31]

From 7 to 9 August, with the battalion displacing forward as the infantry advanced, 89 missions and 1,892 rounds were fired. Targets consisted largely of enemy mortar positions. The terrain offered some knotty problems in firing close support missions, due to steep slopes; but the OY's of VMO–6 did a good job of spotting.

Fifty ROK policemen were attached to 1/11 at this time to be used as security troops. Wearing bright green uniforms and rubber shoes upon arrival, they became the responsibility of the battalion to feed, equip and train in marksmanship, sanitation and ammunition handling. The rice-eating Koreans turned up their noses at American food for a few days, but soon they could compete with any chow-hounds in the outfit. [32]

Another difficulty was experienced in convincing the newcomers that NKPA prisoners were to be brought in alive. Many personal scores remained to be paid off in war-torn Korea, but eventually the ROK's learned to control their hatred for the invaders.

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Chapter 7. Advance to Kosong
Encounter With Japanese Maps

As the men of 1/5 were consolidating their hilltop and searching for water to relieve heat prostration cases, Murray radioed Newton to withdraw his unit to the road below and continue the attack to Paedun-ni. The regimental commander was determined to speed up the advance to the south, since intelligence had reported no enemy on the high ground south of Hill 308.[33]

With almost half of Companies A and B stricken by heat sickness, Newton had no choice but to leave them in position on the high ground for the time being. He descended the hill to form a tactical column with Headquarters and Weapons Companies and an attached platoon of tanks.

Reaching the low ground northwest of Hill 308, the battalion commander discovered that his Japanese maps, as usual, bore only a slight resemblance to the actual ground.

During the early weeks in Korea, the map situation was a thorn in the side of every tactical commander. Not only were maps of local areas extremely scarce, but the few available were of early Japanese vintage, almost consistently at variance with the terrain. Grid systems were confusing, villages misnamed and misplaced, and roads either not illustrated at all or else plotted inaccurately. Lack of contouring left the conformation and extent of ridges entirely to the imagination of the map reader. These shortcomings were a constant source of concern; for troop leaders often were misled, even to the extent of getting completely lost.

On the ground itself, there is an intersection called Oso-ri some 600 yards south of the Tosan junction. The routes leading both south and west from this crossroads go to Paedun-ni. An unimproved road, the southward passage is more rugged, while the other, being good by Korean standards, follows a smoother course through the town of Taesil-li.

Newton s map showed only the latter improved road, so he formed his column and headed it toward Taesil-li, a thousand yards west of the intersection.[34] Murray’s map showed both roads, but in this case the southern route was erroneously drawn in as the better road. It was thus Murray’s intention that 1/5 use this avenue of approach. And since he had spoken of it as the “improved” road, Newton was misled into choosing the route to Taesil-li.[35]

The quickly formed column of tanks and infantry had gone only a few hundred yards when the point stopped at a stretch of road littered with land mines. A call went out for a demolitions team. From his CP near Chindong-ni, Captain George W. King dispatched his 1st Platoon, Able Company Engineers. Arriving at the scene, the Marine troubleshooters discovered the obstacles to be merely American antitank mines, apparently spilled on the road from an Army vehicle.

About this time, Lieutenant Colonel Murray arrived at Oso-ri and informed 1/5’s commander that he was on the wrong road. Newton reasoned that his unit was following the correct route. After comparing the conflicting maps, the regimental commander studied the terrain and directed Newton to pull his column back and take the road to the south. Then Murray returned to Sangnyong-ni, climbed into an observation plane, and was flown over the route to confirm his decision.[36]

There was no small amount of confusion as the long column of tanks, infantrymen, and engineers pulled back along the narrow road to the intersection. And it was unfortunate for 1/5 that General Craig reached the area while the milling was at its worst. Unaware of what had taken place earlier, the Brigade commander did not refer to the delay and congestion in the most soothing terms.[37]

While the column was being reformed on the southern road, villagers from Taesil-li informed the

Marines that a badly wounded American was lying in the hamlet. Craig's jeep driver sped to the clump of thatched huts and returned with a soldier who was more dead than alive, having been left behind by retreating NKPA forces. The man was rushed to the rear for medical attention, while Craig stayed forward to supervise the attack. [38]

The long file of Marines and tanks began moving southward along the winding road below Hill 308. Newton had notified his company commanders of the change, so that they could meet him by descending the western slope of the high ground.

About a mile south of the confusing intersection, the point of 1/5's column rounded a sharp curve. It was greeted by a lone North Korean machinegun hidden in a native hut at the center of the bend. While a Marine brigadier watched with professional satisfaction, a team of infantrymen with a rocket launcher closed on the hut and quickly destroyed the enemy position.

It was late afternoon as the column resumed its march to the south. Covering several hundred more yards without incident, it reached the top of a 400-foot pass where the road knifed between Hills 308 and 190. There Newton was joined by Companies A and B from Objective One.[39] The 1st Battalion was ordered to hold up and take defensive positions astride the pass.

Thus, the drive toward Sachon had finally taken shape, and the Brigade was entering its own zone of responsibility. As darkness fell on 9 August, 1/5 was in position 2 miles south of the Tosan line of departure, and General Craig had already set in motion plans for a night attack.

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Chapter 7. Advance to Kosong
Ambush at Taedabok Pass

On 9 August the Brigade commander was convinced that the absence of resistance in 1/5's path indicated unpreparedness on the part of the enemy. To exploit the advantage, he ordered Murray to execute a night attack and capture Paedun-ni before daylight, 10 August.[40]

At 1600 on 9 August, the Brigade was relieved of mopping up duties in the Chindong-ni area, leaving 2/5 immediately available to the 5th Marines commander. The 3d Battalion was delayed overnight by several hours of security duty until Army units could take over.[41]

Lieutenant Colonel Roise's battalion, having been relieved on Hill 342, entrucked at Sangnyong-ni in the evening and reached its assembly area near Hill 308 at 2100. Two hours later the unit marched southward on the new MSR to make the night attack on Paedun-ni. Passing through 1/5's lines at 0115, 10 August, the weary Marines pressed on toward their target against no resistance.

The point of the column included three M–26's of First Lieutenant William D. Pomeroy's tank platoon. At 0500, with the advance elements only a short distance from Paedun-ni, the lead tank crashed through a concrete bridge. The badly damaged vehicle proved to be wedged immovably between the two abutments.

The second tank, while attempting to negotiate a narrow bypass next to the bridge, threw a track in the center of the stream and stalled the long column behind. Two hours elapsed before the advance could be resumed. South Korean laborers constructed a bypass for light vehicles next to the bridge, and an engineer tractor-dozer arrived to build a detour for heavy trucks and tanks.

Click here to view map

Reaching Paedun-ni at 0800, 2/5 reconnoitered the town and found it clear of enemy. By 0930 the battalion column was reformed and pounding the dusty road south.

Murray decided to shuttle troops by truck from Paedun-ni to Kosong, since the 8-mile stretch was believed to be free of enemy. The heavier vehicles being tied up at the collapsed bridge, some delay resulted in motorizing the first increment of 2/5.

General Craig arrived on the scene by helicopter in mid-morning. Not satisfied with the progress of the advance, he ordered Murray and Roise to march on Kosong with "all speed." When the infantry column was a short distance out of Paedun-ni, the 5th Marines commander managed to get five 2 1/2-ton trucks forward to help transport the first serial to the target.

A motorized column was formed of 4 lead jeeps carrying a Reconnaissance Company detachment, followed by part of Company D aboard 6 more jeeps and the 5 trucks. Owing to the shortage of vehicles, Captain Zimmer's first echelon included only the 1st and 2d Platoons, the 60-mm. mortars, an assault squad, and one machinegun section.

Lacking either air or artillery support, the column rolled southward with orders to occupy Kosong and coordinate a defense of the city with its mayor. The remainder of 2/5 continued on foot until more vehicles could be provided

The road makes a sharp turn 2 1/2 miles southwest of Paedun-ni to climb through Taedabok Pass, a defile about 1,000 yards long. Just beyond, at the village of Pugok, a sharp turn to the left skirts the base of a large hill overlooking the entire length of the pass.

The first jeep of the reconnaissance detachment was almost abreast of Pugok at 1500 when NKPA machineguns opened up from the big hill at the bend. Enemy automatic weapons on the high ground above the

pass raked the vehicles filled with Dog Company men.

As the Marines were taking cover in roadside ditches, a Communist antitank gun opened fire from the large hill and hit one of the jeeps. The reconnaissance troops gradually withdrew from their exposed positions and fell back on Zimmer's group. After sizing up the situation, the Company D commander ordered his 1st Platoon to seize the high ground on the right side of the road about midway through the pass. No resistance was met, so that the Marines set up their weapons quickly and returned the Communist fire. Meanwhile the 2d Platoon moved up on the right after clearing small enemy groups from the high ground on both sides of the road at the entrance to the defile.

Zimmer had spotted the location of the enemy's antitank gun, and Marine 60-mm. fire put an end to this nuisance. The effort used up all the mortar ammunition, and the Company D commander decided to wait in position for Brigade supporting arms. Two tanks arrived at 1630, and their 90-mm. guns drove the enemy into hiding.

While Marine tanks and air were working over the hill, 3/5 reached Paedun-ni after being relieved of its final security mission in the Chindong-ni area. Murray ordered Taplett to be prepared to pass through 2/5 and continue the attack.

The 3d Battalion reached the entrance to Taedabok Pass in trucks shortly after the arrival of the 2d Battalion troops who had followed their motorized column on foot. Some confusion resulted on the narrow road after Murray's arrival while he waited to confer with Taplett. Unable to find Roise, the two officers climbed the high ground on the left. From this vantage point they could see Kosong, 5 miles away. The regimental commander ordered Taplett to pass through 2/5 immediately and continue the attack.

Company G had already crossed the line of departure and was deploying to assault the hill at the road bend when Murray located Roise in Zimmer's area to the right of the road. The exact location of enemy positions remained in some doubt. In order to clear up the uncertainty, Major McNeely volunteered to lead out a patrol. About 1730, therefore, Roise's S/3 took off in a jeep with a radio operator and a fire team from Dog Company.

By this time, Taplett had a fairly accurate picture of the situation in mind. From his OP on the high ground to the left of the road, he saw that McNeely was headed for danger. The 3/5 commander radioed Bohn to stop the jeep, but it was too late. McNeely and his men vanished from sight around the bend where the road skirted the large hill, and the Marines heard a furious clatter of machinegun and small arms fire.

The fate of the patrol remained in doubt as Company G moved out to the attack, with First Lieutenant Jack Westerman's platoon in the lead. Communist fire held up the advance, but Bohn sent Second Lieutenant Edward F. Duncan's platoon on a sweeping envelopment to the right which outflanked the enemy and drove him from the high ground. Westerman was then able to reach the crest with his platoon. From this position he could see McNeely's bullet-riddled jeep, but that officer and his five men were stretched out motionless on the ground beneath and behind the vehicle.

Click here to view map showing Paedun-ni & Taedabok Pass

Click here to view map showing Kosong

At great risk, Westerman made a dash to the jeep and brought back McNeely, mortally wounded. Enemy fire prevented further rescues, but it was ascertained that 3 men had been killed outright and 2 severely wounded. These survivors could only continue to take cover behind the wrecked vehicle until 3/5 troops advanced.

When Company G jumped off again, the men were held up by two concealed machineguns at the far end of the road bend. Taplett committed How Company on the left side of the MSR, and Fegan seized the hill opposite Bohn's position. It was almost dark before the Marines could silence the 2 enemy machineguns around the bend, and at 2015 Murray ordered 3/5 to secure for the night and defend the 2 hills already occupied. On the premise that the enemy had prepared an ambush for rescue parties approaching the wrecked jeep, it was decided to wait until morning to bring back the wounded men.

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Chapter 7. Advance to Kosong
The Seizure of Kosong

The night passed quietly except for scattered rifle fire along the 3d Battalion's 700-yard front. To carry out General Craig's orders for 11 August, the two rifle companies prepared to continue the attack on Kosong at first light.[42]

The enemy had different plans. At the crack of dawn a small force of North Koreans emerged from the fog and charged recklessly into Company G's front. There was a furious hand-to-hand clash as the attackers converged on Bohn's OP in the center of the line. The company commander directed the defense amid grenade explosions, one of which drove a fragment into his shoulder. At his side Staff Sergeant Charles F. Kurtz, Jr., called down effective 60-mm. mortar fire on the Reds while throwing grenades and ducking submachinegun bursts.

The melee ended after a half hour with Company G driving the battered remnants of the NKPA platoon back down the hill. Despite his wound, Bohn stayed with his company and reorganized it for the attack on Kosong. He also had the satisfaction of overseeing the evacuation of the two wounded survivors of McNeely's ill-fated patrol.

At 0800, the Brigade moved out in a route column, with 3/5 as the advance guard and Company G in the role of advance party. Bohn's point consisted of Second Lieutenant John D. Counselman's 3d Platoon, whose leading element, under Corporal Raymond Giaquinto, was on the MSR with flank guards slightly withheld on each side.

The Brigade column moved swiftly. About a mile beyond the line of departure, Giaquinto braked his roadbound unit in the face of doubtful ground ahead. Simultaneously, the flank guards surged forward and wrapped around the suspected area. Then Giaquinto's force raced down the road, and the 3 prongs of the point converged on an enemy machine-gun emplacement, killing the 5 occupants before they could fire a shot.

With Bohn calling the shots and Giaquinto setting the pace, the point swept aside three more enemy positions along the route. The effective combination of limited frontal attacks and envelopments brought the head of the column to the bridge north of Kosong at 1000. Here Company H passed through on the road and pushed into the town.

Using 1 rifle platoon and 2 tanks, Fegan easily cleared northern Kosong of light resistance. Then he gradually wheeled his force to the right, tracing the road to Sachon. His other two platoons continued southward with the mission of seizing a high hill below Sunam-dong.

General Craig reached Kosong by jeep just as Taplett was setting up his CP in a schoolyard north of the town. A small group of enemy snipers suddenly opened up from positions in and around the schoolhouse, and the Brigade commander observed sniper teams of 3/5's headquarters spring into action and destroy the North Koreans.

Shortly after Fegan entered Kosong, Bohn swung his company to the southwest from above the town, drove through the western suburbs and launched an attack against Hill 88 below the Sachon road. Approaching the hill, Company G sustained a few casualties while eliminating a stubborn Communist pocket in the low ground on its right flank.

MAG–33 preceded the attack on Hill 88 with a thundering air strike on 100 enemy entrenched along the crest. This attack coupled with a thorough shelling by 1/11, shattered the Reds' will to fight, and Company G found only evidence of a hasty flight when it reached the summit at 1330.

General Craig ordered Taplett to cancel all further missions around the captured town and attack toward Sachon immediately. Company G was quickly recalled from Hill 88; the high ground above Sunam-dong was ignored, and Fegan assembled his unit at the western edge of Kosong preparatory to leading the attack.

Just as Company H was reforming, a jeep ambulance driven by Corps-man William H. Anderson raced into the area to pick up casualties from Bohn's earlier skirmish below Hill 88. Passing through Fegan's troops, the vehicle failed to make the turn southward and sped toward Sachon. Two enemy antitank guns lying in wait west of Kosong blasted the jeep as it rounded a bend, killing Anderson and spilling two passengers out of the wrecked vehicle.

Fegan led two M–26 tanks to the bend, and Technical Sergeant Johnnie C. Cottrell quickly destroyed the North Korean position. Three rounds from his 90-mm. gun wiped out the last NKPA opposition in the area, and the 3d Battalion moved out for the drive on Sachon.

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Chapter 8. Fight on Two Fronts

MARINE AIR AND artillery had a field day on 11 August 1950 that the rifle companies will never forget. The occasion was known as “the Kosong Turkey Shoot,” and it was a victory won entirely by supporting arms.

It happened just as 3/5 was about to enter Kosong. As a preliminary, 1/11 was called upon just before noon for preparatory fires. Shells from the 105’s landed in the town, sending up geysers of rubble in the bright sunlight. Then, suddenly, the Marine artillery flushed out a column of enemy vehicles making a frantic dash for safety.

This flight explains the light resistance which the Marine infantry met in Kosong. But the enemy could hardly have chosen a less propitious moment, for he had merely escaped from the frying pan into the fire. Overhead, to his sorrow, was a division of VMF–323 planes from the *Badoeng Strait*, which the forward TACP had sent on a search and attack mission just beyond the town.[1] Major Lund and his pilots were thus presented with a fabulous target of opportunity—an estimated 100 vehicles of the NKPA 83d Motorcycle Regiment, including jeeps, motorcycles and troop-carrying trucks.[2]

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Chapter 8. Fight on Two Fronts
The Kosong Turkey Shoot

The Corsairs came screaming down in low-level strafing runs the entire length of the column for the purpose of bringing it to a halt. Vehicles crashed into one another or piled up in the ditch while enemy troops scrambled out for cover. The Soviet-made jeeps and motorcycles were now sitting ducks for F4U's which worked over individual targets with rocket or 20-mm. fire. After the Marine planes had set about 40 vehicles on fire, they were relieved by another flight of VMF–323 machines and Air Force F–51's which added the finishing touches to the picture of destruction.[3]

Under the circumstances the enemy put up a creditable fight. Lund and his low-flying pilots encountered fierce small arms and automatic weapons fire. Two of the four Corsairs in the first flight were badly damaged and had to try for emergency landings. Lieutenant Doyle Cole ditched into the bay just as General Craig was making a tour of inspection by helicopter; and the Brigade commander operated the hoist which pulled the dripping flier up to safety.

Captain Vivian Moses was not so fortunate. While putting his crippled plane down in enemy territory, he was thrown unconscious from the cockpit and drowned in a rice paddy a few minutes before a VMO–6 helicopter arrived. Only the day before, this gallant Marine pilot had been rescued by helicopter, after being shot down behind the NKPA lines, and flown back unhurt to his carrier. Despite this experience, Captain Moses volunteered for duty on 11 August, when he became the first death casualty of MAG–33.

Several hours later, after securing Kosong and resuming the attack toward Sachon, the Marine ground forces caught up with the scene of chaos left by the F4U's. Among the twisted and charred vehicles were some that the enemy had abandoned in perfect condition. Tolerant NCO's relaxed discipline for a moment while their men tried out the motorcycles with sidecars and the sleek, black Soviet jeeps, most of which had gone into the attack practically new. Almost identical in design to American jeeps, these vehicles were found to be powered by familiar Ford-type engines—a throwback to United States Lend Lease to Russia in World War II.

Generals Craig and Cushman surveyed the wreckage from a helicopter next day. This strike, however, was only one of the more dramatic examples of the Brigade air-ground team in action. MAG–33 aircraft were constantly orbiting on station over the front line as the ground forces advanced. Flown by infantry-trained pilots briefed on the local ground situation, the Corsairs were available for employment on short notice. It was a simple and flexible system; and the fact that VMF–214 and VMF–323 were based on the two carriers meant that they could arrive on station with more fuel and ordnance for strikes as compared to Japan-based squadrons.[4]

Overall control of tactical air operations in Korea was exercised by the Fifth Air Force. Marine aviation units, as components of an integrated Fleet Marine Force, operated in support of the Brigade as their highest priority, and in support of other UN forces as a lower priority. After checking in with Fifth AF TACC at the Joint Operations Center (JOC), Marine aviation units came under Marine operational control when supporting Brigade ground forces. When providing tactical air support for other UN forces, Marine air units operated under the Air Force-Army system for tactical air support.

The Brigade control organization included 3 battalion TACP's and 1 regimental TACP, each consisting of an officer and 6 enlisted men, and each equipped with a radio jeep, portable radios and remoting equipment. MAG–33 provided a Brigade control agency consisting of the Air Support Section of MTACS–2. Other Brigade units associated with control of aircraft were:

(1) The Air Section of the Brigade Staff, consisting of the Brigade Air officer and six enlisted men

responsible for planning as well as tactical control and coordination of supporting aircraft;

(2) The Brigade observation section, consisting of the tactical air observer, three gunnery observers, and the OY and rotary-wing aircraft of VMO–6.

Carrier-based Marine aviation units maintained a TAC and one or more flights of aircraft on station during daylight hours. Night heckler and intruder missions of VMF(N)–513 from Itazuke reported to the Fifth AF TACC and were routed by that agency to the Air Support Section (MTACS–2) with the Brigade. During the early Brigade operations, with the Air Force TACC located at Taegu, delays of incoming flights reporting to JOC were caused by overloaded communications nets. An improvement resulted when such flights by-passed JOC and reported directly to the Air Support Section of Brigade. And when JOC moved back to Pusan, improved communications resulted in incoming flights reporting first to JOC again.

The Brigade control agency (Air Support Section) made use of the following communications for the control of tactical air operations:

(1) TAR net connecting battalion TACP's, the regimental TACP, and the Air Support Section, and monitored by the Brigade Air Section. This was an HF net.

(2) TAD net connecting above-named agencies as well as TAC flights of support aircraft and on occasion the TAO. This was a VHF net of four frequencies used to brief and control aircraft reporting for support missions.

(3) TAO net connecting observation aircraft, the Brigade CP (Air Section) and the Air Support Section. This was an HF net.

(4) An administrative (HF) net connecting the Air Support Section and the carriers *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait.*

The workings of the control organization of the Brigade air-ground team in the Pusan Perimeter have been described as follows in the survey of the Marine Corps Board Study:

"Battalion TACP's made requests for air support missions direct by TAR net to the Air Support Section. The regimental TACP and Brigade Air Section monitored this net. The Brigade control agency having received a request for a mission, contacted the TAC and the Flight Leader (FL) of the aircraft orbiting on station awaiting a mission. The TAC and the FL were then directed to the vicinity of the TACP from whom the request had originated.

"The TACP controlled the execution of the mission in accordance with the wishes of the battalion commander. The TACP gave the location of the target to the TAC. The latter designated the target to the FL and his flight of supporting aircraft. The unit being supported marked its front lines. The TAC directed the attacking aircraft in making attacks on the target. His directions related to the technique of attacking specific targets with aircraft. Control of the attack was exercised by the ground unit being supported.

"In many instances the TAC or the TAO would locate targets not yet located by ground units. This was often done in response to a request from ground units. Both the TAC and TAO located targets beyond the vision of ground units, and both were capable of, and did, designate these targets to flights of supporting aircraft and directed attacks on such targets, when requested to do so by ground units. Conditions favored delegating control to forward TACP's beyond convenient VHF range between them and the Brigade (Air Support Section). Brigade attack formations frequently consisted of battalions in column. The forward battalion was free to employ air support at a moment's notice."

This was the situation on the afternoon of 11 August 1950 as the 3d Battalion of the 5th Marines attacked toward Sachon, followed by 2/5 in trace. Overhead a flight of VMF–323 Corsairs orbited on station, and OY observers reported the enemy to be pulling back rapidly toward Sachon.

How Company led the Marine attack, with lead tanks employing reconnaissance by fire. At 1800, after the column had covered several miles, a lone enemy machinegun in a valley on the left held up the advance by wounding three Marines. By the time the tanks silenced the weapon with .50-caliber fire, it was decided to halt.

Taplett deployed his battalion on two hills north of the road, and the infantrymen settled down for a quiet night.

The gravel crunchers could thank air and other supporting arms for an impressive demonstration of power that day. There was even the suggestion of an amphibious operation in the Brigade advance, for an LST followed the column and anchored near the fishing village of Tanghong-ni after the securing of Kosong.

This was LST QO119, a supply ship manned by Team No. 1 of Major William L. Batchelor's Company A, 1st Shore Party Battalion. Team No. 2 set up forward dumps along the MSR as the infantry advanced, while No. 3 unloaded supplies and equipment at the Masan railhead. Shore Party personnel also assisted in salvage operations, which were conducted mainly at Changwon.[5]

LST QO119 was not only the workhorse of normal Shore Party missions; it served also as an improvised hospital ship. For the Medical Section and Company C, 1st Medical Battalion, had an extra responsibility these sweltering days in caring for victims of heat prostration as well as the wounded. Thus it may have set some sort of a record when casualties were evacuated at one time by land, sea and air—motor ambulance, LST and helicopter.

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Chapter 8. Fight on Two Fronts
The Changchon Ambush

At sundown on 11 August, as Taplett's battalion dug in for the night on the road to Sachon, the enemy seemed to be disorganized if not actually demoralized. For the first time since the invasion began, a sustained Eighth Army counterattack had not only stopped the Red Korean steamroller but sent it into reverse.

With the Marines a day's march from Sachon, the Army 5th RCT was running a dead heat on the shorter Chinju route to the north, where opposition had been light the last 2 days. It might even have appeared on the evening of the 11th that the combined operation had turned into a friendly rivalry between two outfits racing toward their final objective by parallel roads. But any such assumption would have been premature, as General Craig and his staff well realized. They looked for further resistance and were not disillusioned. Within the next 48 hours, in fact, Craig's men were destined to carry out one of the most astonishing operations in the history of the Marine Corps—simultaneous BLT attacks in opposite directions on two fronts 25 miles apart.

There was no hint of any such development at 0630 on the morning of 12 August, when the 1st Battalion of the 5th Marines passed through the 3d Battalion with a mission of seizing Sachon. If anything, the front was too quiet to suit veteran NCO's, who suspected the enemy of being up to no good. The column moved out behind a 15-man detachment of Recon Company acting as the point under the command of Captain Kenneth J. Houghton. Next came Baker Company with the 1st, 2d, and 3d Platoons in that order. Two Marine tanks were sandwiched in between the 1st and 2d Platoons, and three more M–26's brought up the rear of Captain Tobin's company, followed by the main body of the battalion.

No opposition awaited the column. This unnatural calm continued for 4 1/2 hours as the Marines advanced about 11 miles. At noon, with Sachon only 4 miles away, Houghton and the point rounded a bend into the thatched-hut hamlet of Changchon. The first enemy soldiers of the day were sighted when two skulking figures took cover. Several Marines opened fire, and in reply the hills on both sides of the road erupted into flame. [6]

The enemy had obviously planned to allow the entire column to come within range. But the trap was sprung prematurely as NKPA machine-guns blazed away from the high ground in front and on both flanks. Captain Tobin immediately sent the 1st Platoon to the aid of the point. First Lieutenant Hugh C. Schryver led his men forward along the roadside ditches, and at the cost of three casualties they reinforced the thin line of Recon troops returning the enemy's fire.

Next, the company commander ordered First Lieutenant David S. Taylor's 2d Platoon to move up behind three Marine tanks. The M–26's were unable to maneuver off the road because of the danger of bogging down in rice paddies, but as mobile fortresses they added to Marine fire power.

Click here to view map

Tobin's whole company became more or less pinned down when the 3d Platoon and headquarters, farther back on the road, received automatic weapons fire from Hill 250 on the right. Newton immediately requested the battalion air controller, First Lieutenant James W. Smith, to call for a strike in this area. This was the only supporting arm available at the moment, since the mortar and artillery crews were just setting up their weapons in hastily selected positions.

After the Corsairs worked over Hill 250, Tobin ordered Second Lieutenant David R. Cowling's 3d Platoon to attack the high ground. A rifle platoon and machinegun section had been sent forward from Able Company by the battalion commander, and Newton gave these reinforcements the mission of seizing Hill 301,

also on the right side of the road.

As Cowling's men were crossing the open rice paddy, the Marine tank guns and mortars added their fires to the air strike. But enough enemy machineguns survived to catch the 3d Platoon in a crossfire which forced it to fall back with 1 man killed and 4 wounded. The Able Company contingent occupied Hill 301 meanwhile without meeting any resistance.

During the course of these actions, the FAC reported to Newton that 2 of the Corsairs overhead had 5 minutes of time left. The battalion commander directed that they search for targets of opportunity along the road leading from Changchon to Sachon. The result was a repetition on a small scale of the Kosong turkey shoot, for the Marine planes surprised a little column of enemy vehicles and personnel. After the Corsairs unloaded their remaining ordnance, the road was strewn with twisted and burning vehicles.

The 3d Platoon fell back on Hill 301 as Newton ordered Captain John R. Stevens to secure the nearby high ground on the right side of the road with the rest of his Able Company troops. This left Hill 250 as the center of enemy resistance on the right. A total of 113 Marine mortar rounds were delivered on these positions, followed by a second air strike. The concentration of fire finally silenced the enemy's remaining machineguns, and the Baker Company right flank was secured.

The other two Baker Company platoons and Houghton's men had their hands full meanwhile on the left flank. They kept up a brisk fire fight from the roadside ditches until the Marine artillery took charge of the situation. One enemy position after another was knocked out in this quarter as Newton called for three more air strikes. These preparatory fires enabled the 1st and 2d Platoons to attack on the left after a laborious crossing of an intervening rice paddy.

The Marines proceeded to clean up the remaining NKPA positions methodically. A climax was reached when Lieutenant Taylor spotted an enemy group approaching the crest of Hill 202 from the reverse slope. He sent Technical Sergeant F. J. Lischeski with a squad to prepare a welcome. The veteran NCO coolly formed a line along the ridge and directed his men to wait until the enemy came within 75 feet before opening fire.

It would be hard to find a more striking example of Marine infantry firepower. Of the 39 men in the NKPA group, all were killed outright in a matter of seconds except a single officer. This survivor was so badly wounded that he died on the way to the regimental CP.

The fight had lasted all afternoon, and darkness fell before Company B could complete its movement to the high ground on the left side of the road and set up a perimeter of defense. It was estimated that an enemy company was operating in the area, covering the retreat of sorely battered elements of the NKPA 6th Infantry Division and 83d Motorcycle Regiment.

Marine losses were 3 killed and 13 wounded. After the securing of the high ground to the right, casualties were evacuated by road on the lee side of slowly moving tanks which provided shelter from enemy fire on the left.

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Chapter 8. Fight on Two Fronts
Marines Ordered to New Sector

The Marines of 1/5 anticipated that the next day's advance would take them to Sachon. At midnight on 12 August, however, Lieutenant Colonel Newton received orders from the regimental commander to form the battalion on the road at 0630 in preparation for a lift by trucks to another sector, where the Marines were to reinforce Army units.

While Newton's men were fighting at Changchon, the Brigade commander had come up against a most unusual command situation. It began late on the morning of the 12th, when General Craig received orders from CG Task Force Kean, directing him to move a reinforced Marine rifle battalion back to Chindong-ni. General Kean emphasized that the shift be made without delay. Infiltrating enemy forces had penetrated far back in the rear to overrun positions of Battery C, 555th ("Triple Nickel") Field Artillery Battalion and Headquarters and Able Batteries, 90th Field Artillery Battalion, supporting the 25th Division. The MSR being endangered, Marine reinforcements were urgently needed for a counterattack.[7]

At 0800 that morning Craig had set up his CP at Kosong. It was his custom to keep a terse and factual record of events from day to day, and the following chronological account is derived from entries in the Brigade commander's field notebook:

"1130—Received telephonic orders from CG 25th Div. stating that enemy was attacking in force across our MSR near Chindong-ni. He directed that I send one reinforced battalion to rear at once to give assistance to 24th Infantry engaged in that area and to recapture artillery pieces.

"1200—Proceeded by helicopter to CP 5th Marines to give necessary instructions. Made two landings en route to gather trucks for troop lift.

"1300—The reinforced 3d Bn., 5th Marines, now on way to Chindong-ni area.

"1330—Sent my G–3, LtCol Stewart, and LtCol Taplett, CO of 3/5, by helicopter to bridge indicated by CG 25th Div. to reconnoiter and formulate plans prior to arrival of battalion. Marines to operate directly under 25th Division for this action.

"1400—We are out on a limb with only two battalions left and Sachon still to take. Went to leading elements to check. They were engaged in a heavy fire–fight at an attempted ambush position. Air brought to bear and helped, plus artillery. Enemy positions taken by 1/5, which dug in on high ground while 2/5 was disposed to protect rest of Brigade column.

"1730—Returned to Brigade CP at Kosong and received orders to proceed via helicopter to Masan to confer with CG 25th Division.

"1815—On flight to Masan I detoured to Chindong-ni area to make sure by air observation that 3/5 had arrived and apparently was not having any trouble.

"1830—Arrived Masan and was directed by General Kean to commence a tactical withdrawal from Sachon.

"1945—Returned by helicopter to my Kosong CP in early darkness and issued necessary orders."

The preparations for withdrawal lowered the spirits of Marines who believed that they had broken the back of enemy resistance in the Sachon area. This reaction may even be noted in the first paragraph of the Brigade withdrawal order:

"1. GENERAL SITUATION. Following Brigade rapid advance from Chindong-ni to Sachon in which this Brigade attacked, overcame, and pursued the enemy, the 25th Infantry Division has directed the withdrawal

of this Brigade in order to hold a defensive position and mop up enemy resistance in the zone of action of elements of the 25th Division."

Click here to view map

It would later be known that the basic reason for the Brigade withdrawal was a decision by the Eighth Army command and staff. The enemy had crossed the river Naktong, the last natural barrier of the Pusan Perimeter, and this emergency had caused the Marines to be pulled back in readiness for a counterattack in the Naktong bulge.

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Chapter 8. Fight on Two Fronts
Attack of 3/5 to the Rear

The foregoing chronology makes it evident that General Craig could never have handled this situation in an afternoon without helicopter transportation. Jeeps could not have reached so many destinations over narrow, twisting roads choked with traffic; and fixed-wing planes, even the adaptable OY's, could not have landed wherever the Brigade commander willed. Marine helicopters set a good many precedents in Korea, and the events of 12 August 1950 established the usefulness of these versatile machines for command and staff flights.

Early that afternoon, as Craig had directed, Stewart and Taplett flew back to the Chindong-ni area for reconnaissance and planning prior to the arrival of 3/5. The Brigade commander had been able to give them very little initial information. About 2,000 to 2,500 enemy had infiltrated to the vicinity, according to Army estimates. The two Marine officers were instructed to fly to a bridge over a dry stream bed, where they would be met and briefed by a 25th Division liaison officer awaiting them in a jeep with a red air panel on the hood.[8]

Stewart and Taplett found the bridge, though no jeep was in sight. After landing in the stream bed, they discovered a camouflaged Army light tank; but the officers of the armored company could not offer any enlightenment.

A number of wire lines lay in the roadside ditch, and the Marine officers checked them, one by one. At length, by a process of trial and error, they found a line leading to the 25th Division CP and talked to the G–3. He instructed them to "look the situation over" and decide upon a course of action to eliminate enemy activity in the area and provide security for the remaining artillery unit—a battery of the 159th Field Artillery Battalion which had been attached to the 555th. Then the Marine officers were to report to General Barth, ADC of the 25th Division, upon his arrival in the area to take the overall command.

Ever since the jump-off of 7 August, the operations of Task Force Kean had been distinguished for informality. Oral orders were the rule rather than exception, with unusual latitude of decision being permitted to officers in the field. After their telephone conversation, Stewart and Taplett made a helicopter reconnaissance of the area, followed by a flight back over the MSR to locate 3/5. Upon their return, they encountered Colonel John Daly, USA, CO of the 555th Field Artillery Battalion. Battery C of that unit, he informed them, had been surprised the night before, along with two batteries of the 90th, and completely overrun about 3,000 yards up the stream bed. They were destroyed as a fighting force, though scattered survivors and wounded men remained in the area. Daly briefed the Marine officers as to the location of enemy forces; and they decided to seize two key ridges commanding the MSR, which ran parallel to the stream bed. The troops of 3/5 were just then piling out of the trucks at the debarkation point, and Taplett ordered them to attack without waiting for Barth, since it would soon be dark.

These Marines, contrary to standing operating procedure, had turned their backs on the roar of battle at Changchon early that afternoon and ridden away in the opposite direction. Then, to complete the mystery, they traveled 25 miles to the rear to assault a ridge which was supposedly secured. How Company jumped off with George following in trace. Colonel Daly provided a 15-minute artillery preparation, though he had no orders, and Taplett's FAC managed to summon a flight of Corsairs with partial loads aboard, including napalm. No one had any idea of the enemy's strength, and after receiving some fire from the ridge, Captain Fegan picked the locations for an air strike. How Company moved in rapidly afterwards against such light resistance that the Marines seized the first position without a single casualty. Only one casualty was inflicted upon the enemy, who apparently had put up a rearguard fight while withdrawing.

At 1900, when General Barth arrived, he asked when the Marine battalion would be ready to attack. Taplett replied that he already had one company on the first objective, and the 25th Division ADC congratulated the Marines on their promptness. He approved Taplett's course of action and gave his sanction for the seizure of the rest of the dominating high ground the following morning.

Again the Marines received the most cordial cooperation from the Army. General Barth ordered several light tanks and three M–44 armored personnel carriers to support the attack at 0700 on 13 August. The same Army artillery battery was assigned to the operation, and Battery C of the 11th Marines took part after arriving the night before. As it proved, the infantry needed little assistance to seize the remaining objectives against negligible resistance. By 1000 the Marine rifle companies were in full possession of the two commanding ridgelines. No casualties were suffered or inflicted.

Despite the lack of opposition, the enemy had not pulled out of the area. When Lieutenant Colonel Murray made a helicopter flight to drop a message to survivors of the 555th, his helicopter was ambushed in a defile by NKPA marksmen concealed on both sides. Only the pilot's skillful maneuvering got them out safely, and they were unable to complete their mission.

A plan for the Marines to advance to the west across the valley floor while the Army 5th RCT attacked rearward to meet them was considered by the 25th Division. Taplett's battalion would have been accompanied by 2/5, then on the way to the Chindong-ni area. But this scheme of maneuver was canceled, and the 2d Battalion of the 5th RCT relieved 3/5 on 14 August. By that time, as will be related later, other elements of the Brigade were on the way to an assembly area at Miryang in preparation for an operation in another sector.

At least the attack by 3/5 enabled elements of the 25th Division to rescue survivors of the artillery batteries who straggled back. Both Taplett and Stewart believed that enemy numbers in the area had been much smaller than the original Army estimate of 2,000 to 2,500 men. The 3/5 commander wanted to complete his mission by attacking to recover the howitzers and other lost equipment while the opportunity still existed. But he was unable to accomplish this aim because of orders for Brigade withdrawal, and the artillery pieces were never recaptured. Air strikes were called to destroy them after the relief of the Marine battalion, and the area itself was abandoned a few days later when 25th Division units fell back before renewed NKPA attacks.

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Chapter 8. Fight on Two Fronts
Enemy Dawn Attack at Changchon

On the other Marine front, 25 miles distant, 1/5 had a return engagement before dawn on 13 August with the enemy in the Changchon area. Company commanders had received orders the night before to alert their units at 0400 for the withdrawal. General Craig's Op Order 10–50 was a complete and well planned field order, despite the need for haste; but the enemy interrupted with a surprise attack launched from concealed positions occupied under cover of darkness.[9]

Baker Company's defense setup for the night on Hill 202 consisted of the 3d, 1st, and 2d Platoons tied in from left to right in that order. The action began at 0450 with enemy automatic weapons fire. Marine 60-mm. mortar illuminating shells revealed an NKPA infiltration on the right in the area of the 2d Platoon.

This effort soon proved to be a diversionary attack for the purpose of masking the main blow. At 0455 3 enemy flares went up, 2 red and 1 green. They were the signal for an assault on the left flank at the other end of the Baker Company position. The enemy, as a wounded Marine NCO put it afterwards, was "right on top of the 3d Platoon in a few seconds" with grenades and burp guns.[10]

This was one of the occasions when the Marines were painfully reminded that the NKPA 6th Division had been made up originally of veterans of the Chinese civil war, conditioned by experience for the rigors of night fighting. Marine security had not been at fault, yet the enemy had managed to creep forward in uncanny silence to positions within grenade-throwing distance.

In an instant the Marine position was overrun, with the machinegun section being wiped out except for two men. Communication troubles added to the confusion. Platoon radios had been rendered inoperative by mud and water while crossing rice paddies, and telephone wires were believed to have been cut. Two runners were killed during Tobin's efforts to maintain contact with the hard pressed troops on the left flank. A third runner got through with orders for the remnants of the platoon to fall back within the perimeter of the adjacent 1st Platoon.

The troubles of Baker Company were compounded at this stage when the enemy turned two of the Marines' own machineguns against them.

Click here to view map

During the next hour the fight became a slugging match. When the first gray light of dawn permitted some visibility, Baker Company 3.5" rocket launchers knocked out the two Marine machineguns being fired by the enemy. The left flank was holding well when the 60-mm. mortars ran out of ammunition. To make matters worse, the artillery FO's radio took destructive hits from machinegun fire just as the enemy changed the direction of his attack. Now his main effort was being channeled up the draw between the 1st and 2d Platoons for the obvious purpose of splitting the company and beating it in detail. The attackers had been bled white by casualties, however, and Tobin's men had little difficulty in beating off the new assault.

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Chapter 8. Fight on Two Fronts
Breaking Off Action

Battalion orders were received through Able Company to disengage at 0630 and pull down from the high ground to the trucking point at Newton's CP. Tobin was now depending on Company A radios for 4.2" and 81-mm. mortar support which slowed up enemy efforts. As his first move toward breaking off action, he ordered his 3d and 1st Platoons to withdraw into the perimeter of the 2d.[11]

By this time the enemy had fallen back toward the lower levels of Hill 202. Small arms fire had slackened but the Marines still received mortar bursts.

Tobin ordered his executive officer, Captain Francis I. Fenton, to take the wounded across the rice paddies to the road with the 3d Platoon and Headquarters troops. The company commander remained on the hill to cover this movement with the other two platoons. After Fenton got well underway, Tobin ordered the 2d Platoon down to the road. Then, a squad at a time, the remaining Marines disengaged; and the Baker Company commander came off Hill 202 with the last squad at 0815. The entire movement had been accomplished with precision, and a final air strike kept the enemy quiet at the climax.

Considering the fury of the fighting on Hill 202, a Marine casualty list of 12 KIA, 18 WIA, and 8 MIA was not as large as might have been expected. The idea of men missing in action is always disturbing to Marine officers, but it was considered a moral certainty that the eight casualties of this type were killed when the enemy overran the machinegun section on the Baker Company left flank.[12] Before leaving Hill 202, Captain Tobin asked permission to lead an attack for the purpose of recovering the bodies. He believed that he could retake the lost ground in an hour, but his request could not be granted at a time when the battalion was belated in carrying out Brigade withdrawal orders.[13]

It fell to the engineers and armor to cover the rear after the infantry pulled out. Midway between Sachon and Kosong, the MSR is joined by a road from Samchonpo, a minor seaport on the tip of the peninsula. In order to block this approach to the Brigade's southern flank, General Craig ordered the engineers to mine the road. First Lieutenant Nicholas A. Canzona was assigned to the task with a detachment of his 1st Platoon of Able Company, 1st Engineer Battalion. After laying an extensive field, this officer discovered to his embarrassment that he had erred in arming nearly half of the mines with wrong fuses, so that they were harmless. Apparently the moral effect was enough, however, to keep the enemy at a distance.

Lieutenant Hetrick's 3d Platoon of the engineer company brought up the Brigade rear on the morning of 13 August to crater roads, lay anti-tank minefields and destroy bridges and culverts. Personnel left behind for such missions had the privilege of riding the rearmost tank to catch up with the column.[14] Thus the withdrawal proceeded systematically and was completed without enemy interference.

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Chapter 9. The Battle of the Naktong

THE MOVEMENT OF the Brigade to Miryang was completed by rail, LST and shuttling trucks on 15 August. For the infantry, it meant the first hot meal in Korea, and the bivouac area seemed a cool, green paradise as compared to the sun-scorched hills the men had been climbing under fire this past week. A grove of stately trees provided shade; and thanks to the frugality of peasants who picked up every twig, the grass and moss were like a well-swept carpet. There the troops of the Brigade slept under the stars that night and swam in the nearby Miryang river. It was a veritable reunion for Leathernecks who swapped tales of experiences in the recent combats

Being Marines, they realized of course that this was merely an interlude between operations. The Brigade had passed under operational control of the 24th Infantry Division upon arrival in the Miryang area. And on the 15th General Craig reported to General Church's CP to be briefed on the situation in the Naktong Bulge, where the next assault would be launched.

The ability of the Russians to cross the widest rivers in World War II, using only determination and field expedients, constantly amazed *Wehrmacht* generals with much better equipment.[1] This know-how seemed to have been passed on to the NKPA, judging by the crossings of the Han and Kum Rivers early in the Korean conflict. On 6 August 1950, the Red Koreans gave a repeat performance when they forced a 1,000-man bridgehead across the Naktong river, thus breaching the last natural barrier protecting the lifeline from Pusan to Taegu.

The 24th Infantry Division was unsuccessful in its immediate attempts to dislodge the enemy.[2] Wading through chest-deep water by night, pulling crude rafts loaded with vehicles, heavy weapons and supplies, the North Koreans placed an entire reinforced regiment on the east bank by 8 August. Termite tactics during the next 2 days broadened their foothold until the Naktong Bulge was overrun by most of the NKPA 4th Division.

Consisting of the 5th, 16th, and 18th Infantry Regiments and strongly supported by artillery and armor, the 4th Division was among the most distinguished of the major Communist units. With the 107th Tank Regiment attached at the outset of the invasion, it had breezed through Uijongbu before sharing in the capture of Seoul. On 5 July 1950, the 4th became the first NKPA outfit to tangle with the newly arrived United States Army forces. Task Force Smith delayed it a few hours near Osan, despite the Reds' great advantage in numbers and armor. Later, after capturing Nonsan and aiding in the reduction of Taejon, the unit was selected to spearhead the assault over the Naktong.

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Chapter 9. The Battle of the Naktong
Task Force Hill Organized

In an effort to plug the hole in the Pusan Perimeter, General Walker attached the 9th Infantry (2d Infantry Division) commanded by Colonel John G. Hill, to the 24th Division. In turn, General Church placed Colonel Hill in control of all units in his southern zone and ordered a counterstroke against the Naktong Bulge.

Task Force Hill attacked on 11 August but lost its momentum in a confused situation which found the enemy attacking at the same time. Reinforced to a strength of three infantry regiments, Hill's provisional unit again struck out against the bridgehead on 14 and 15 August. After encountering a stone wall of resistance, the task force was ordered to cease the attack and defend the ground it occupied east of the enemy pocket.[3]

This was the situation as outlined to General Craig at the planning conference, and he was also briefed on the topography of the target area. The Naktong Bulge west of Yongsan results from a bend in the river resembling a stubby thumb pointing westward. Bounded on three sides by the stream, with its inland border formed by a long valley, the bulge is an isolated terrain feature—a fortress of mountains topped by Hill 311, the key height.

As the Yongsan road reaches the Bulge from the east, it turns southwest, winds around Hill 311, and stops at the tip of the "thumb" where a ferry links it to the road west of the river.

Guarding the eastern approach to the natural fortress are two hills astride the Yongsan road—Finger Ridge to the north and Hill 207 to the south. The former is set off on the east by a deep gully containing the village of Tugok. Eastward from Hill 207 and directly below Tugok is Obong-ni Ridge—so called because of a village by that name at its eastern base.

Not only had the NKPA 4th Division overrun the Naktong Bulge; it had pushed on along the road to Yongsan, seizing Hill 207, Tugok, and both Finger and Obong-ni Ridges. These latest gains and the Bulge itself were being consolidated by elements of all three regiments.

Although units were somewhat depleted, at least 6 infantry battalions occupied the area, supported by 4 mortar companies, over 100 machineguns, and several artillery pieces. There were 4 or more T34 tanks within the bridgehead, and a signal and engineer company for overall support. As the spoils of earlier victories, particularly the one at Taejon, enemy arms were generously augmented by a number of American carbines and two 105-mm. howitzer.[4]

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Chapter 9. The Battle of the Naktong
Planning the Next Operation

It was decided by General Church and General Craig at their conference of 15 August that the entire 24th Division, Reinforced, would assault the enemy bridgehead at 0800, 17 August, after strong air and artillery preparations. The 19th and 34th Infantry would converge on the Bulge from the northeast. In the center, the 9th RCT and the Marine Brigade would strike frontally astride the MSR, the former on the north of the road and the latter on the south. The 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, was to hold blocking positions in the south to protect the left flank of the Brigade.[5]

On 15 August, front lines in the center of the zone were on Hill 125 and Observation Hill, both defended by the 9th RCT. A thousand yards to the rear, the 34th Infantry occupied Cloverleaf Hill and adjacent high ground. Before the attack, the Brigade was to relieve the 34th on position so that the Army unit could move to the north for its assigned mission. Then, at H-hour, the Marines would jump off from Observation Hill and seize Obong-ni Ridge—Objective One. Simultaneously, the 9th RCT would drive forward through Tugok and take Finger Ridge, from which it was to support the Brigade's advance. The 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, would be under operational control of the 24th Division artillery commander, and priority for all supporting fires would go to the Marines.[6]

During the planning, General Church emphasized that Cloverleaf Hill must remain occupied and defended until Brigade Objective One was seized. He considered this hill of utmost importance in blocking the MSR to the 24th Division CP and Miryang. This collateral responsibility would tie up a number of Brigade troops and have strong influence on the tactics used against Obong-ni Ridge.[7]

Before the conference closed, Church promised Craig that 145 Army trucks would be available the next day to transport the Marines from their Miryang bivouac to an assembly area near the line of departure.[8]

At 1900, 15 August, Craig briefed his staff and unit commanders. The next morning the Brigade commander flew by helicopter to Church's CP and received the actual attack order, which was identical with the planning of the previous day.[9]

Later on the 16th, Craig drove to the front to reconnoiter the area marked for the Brigade jump-off. He visited the 9th RCT command post where Colonel Hill informed him that the Army unit was in good condition as it stood by for the great attack.[10]

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Chapter 9. The Battle of the Naktong
Reconnaissance of Terrain

After Craig's reconnaissance, Lieutenant Colonel Murray arrived at the front to discuss the tactical plan with the 9th RCT Commander. Although Colonel Hill spoke confidently of his outfit's readiness for the attack, Murray observed that the ranks of soldiers on Observation Hill and Hill 125 were thin and the men obviously wearied by the fighting of the previous 5 days.[11]

With this impression in mind, the 5th Marines commander studied the terrain soon to be his regiment's battleground. Between Observation Hill and Obong-ni Ridge, a 300-yard rice paddy was flanked to the north of the road by the 9th RCT positions on Hill 125. Across the MSR from the northern tip of Obong-ni Ridge was the congested village of Tugok. West of the hamlet and northwest of Brigade Objective One was long, low Finger Ridge, target of Hill's RCT.[12]

Murray quickly concluded from the terrain that both regiments should not attack together and become exposed simultaneously in the low ground ahead. Since Obong-ni Ridge was closer than the Army objective and dominated both Tugok and Finger Ridge, Murray suggested that the 5th Marines jump off alone at 0800, 17 August. If the 9th RCT would support him by fire from Hill 125, he would take Obong-ni Ridge and return the courtesy while the Army unit cleared Tugok and seized its objective. And though offering his plan on a tactical basis, Murray also took into consideration the condition and numbers of Hill's troops.[13]

The 9th RCT commander agreed, and the responsibility of delivering the first punch lay with the 5th Marines.[14]

Time and chance were against the Brigade throughout 16 August and the following morning. Banking on the use of 145 Army trucks, Craig and Murray hoped to move quickly on the 16th, in order to have one infantry battalion take over Observation Hill and the other two available for the attack on the 17th. Unfortunately, only 43 trucks were actually provided, with the result that time schedules were thrown off and troops forced to march long distances the night before the attack.[15]

At 1900, 16 August, Lieutenant Colonel Taplett's 3d Battalion entrucked at Miryang and rode to the 5th Marines CP about 3,000 yards behind the front. Dismounting, 3/5 marched to Cloverleaf Hill and relieved the 34th Infantry on position. Control of the area south of the MSR passed to Taplett at 0445, 17 August.[16]

The 2d Battalion proceeded on foot to its assembly area near Cloverleaf Hill at 0130 on the 17th, and Lieutenant Colonel Roise's men got little sleep as they prepared for the jump-off a few hours later. Owing to the shortage of trucks, the 1st Battalion arrived at the forward assembly area several hours later than planned.[17]

Overloaded trucks had shuttled Lieutenant Colonel Wood's artillery battalion forward on 16 August. Although registration fires were completed by evening, the haste of the displacement and the doubtful information at the front left much to be desired from the standpoint of accuracy.[18]

While Obong-ni Ridge was known to be heavily defended, it was generally thought that Hill 207—Brigade Objective Two—would be the hard nut to crack. And the potential of Objective Three, towering Hill 311, was by no means minimized in preattack estimates.[19] Later events proved these assumptions to be the reverse of reality, but Marine planners could do no better with the meager intelligence then available.

The regimental commander and General Craig concluded that a frontal assault on Obong-ni Ridge with a column of battalions was the only answer to the problems posed by the terrain and situation.

Since the Brigade commander had been specifically charged with the security of the MSR, it was necessary that 3/5 remain in position on Cloverleaf Hill until Objective One was taken. Taplett's battalion had a

second responsibility in guarding the Brigade's left (south) flank, because Craig considered the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, too far out to provide the required close-in protection.[20]

The Brigade commander, unaware of Murray's arrangement with Colonel Hill, could not have envisioned an approach to the enemy's left through the 9th RCT zone. He expected the Army unit to advance side by side with the Brigade and give supporting fire as directed by General Church. On the other hand, an envelopment of the enemy's right seemed out of the question. Using the southern approach to Obong-ni Ridge would have created a gap of several thousands yards in the center of the critical area, and the low, barren marshland to the left would have impeded the movement of tanks and the employment of the 5th Marines' integral supporting arms.[21]

Lieutenant Colonel Murray's reasoning closely paralleled that of his superior. He did not visualize an envelopment from the north because he expected a comparable effect from supporting fire by the 9th RCT. An attempt to flank the North Korean right would have placed the attacking unit far from the power consolidated along the MSR. The enemy situation in the hills and swamps to the south was unknown, and the Marine regimental commander did not relish the thought of one or two of his battalions becoming isolated in that remote area. Then too, the southern peaks on Obong-ni Ridge were considerably higher and more rugged than those nearer the MSR. So it seemed logical to Murray to retain depth and strength by striking frontally, quickly gaining a foothold on the lower, northern reaches of the ridge, then exploiting the penetration rapidly and vigorously.[22]

When asked about his tactical plan by General Craig, he stated that the 5th Marines would attack in a column of battalions, 2/5 seizing Objective One, 1/5 passing through to take Hill 207, and 3/5 completing the reduction of the bulge by following with an assault on Objective Three. [23]

The Brigade commander voiced his concurrence, and the plan was put in motion.[24]

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Chapter 9. The Battle of the Naktong
Air and Artillery Preparation

Obong-ni Ridge sprawled across the Marine front like some huge prehistoric reptile. Its blunt head overlooked the MSR below Tugok, and the elongated body stretched to the southeast more than 2,000 yards before losing its identity in a complex of swamps and irregular hill formations. The high, narrow spine was marked by a series of peaks, beginning with Hill 102 at the neck, followed by 109, 117, 143, 147, and 153. There were still other peaks to the southeast, but so small and irregular as to be almost indistinguishable.

A procession of steep spurs, separated from one another by pronounced gullies, ran down from the numbered peaks to the rice paddies far below. At the top of a gully extending down from the saddle between Hills 109 and 117 was a fault caused by erosion of the red clay and shale. Gaping like an ugly wound, the raw blemish inspired one of the ridge's first names— "Red Slash Hill." It was also dubbed "No Name Ridge" by some of the newspaper correspondents.

Click here to view map

Marine air and artillery were to pound the ridge on 17 August from 0725 to H-hour, 0800, after which MAG–33 would strafe the hill to cover the advancing infantrymen.[25] Brigade artillery fired its preparation as planned; but due either to the hasty registration of the previous day or to error on the part of observers, the shelling was not effective against the enemy on Objective One. It was so inacurrate, in fact, that many officers of 2/5 thought there had been no preparation at all.[26] To make matters worse, air attacks scheduled to begin at 0725 did not materialize until 0740; and the 18 Corsairs assigned to the job had time for only one strike before H-hour.[27]

The two rifle companies of the 2d Battalion jumped off abreast at 0800. On the right was Captain Zimmer's Company D, emerging into the open from the road cut between Hill 125 and Observation Hill.[28]

Zimmer ordered the 2d Platoon into reserve on the southern spur of Hill 125 and established his OP there. The 3d Platoon, commanded by Second Lieutenant Michael J. Shinka, stepped from the road bend below the spur into the rice paddy. Advancing behind this unit were the 1st Platoon and a rocket section, the latter stopping in positions along the road bend to protect the MSR.

Halfway across the rice paddy, Staff Sergeant T. Albert Crowson led his 1st Platoon to the right from behind the 3d, and both units approached the base of the ridge on line. On Shinka's left was the 2d Platoon of Company E. An eerie silence pervaded the front while the assault platoons crossed the wide open area unmolested.

Providing covering fire from its positions on Hill 125, Technical Sergeant Sidney S. Dickerson's 2d Platoon was hit by long-range machinegun bursts from Hills 117 and 143 on Obong-ni. Company D's first two casualties were taken.

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Chapter 9. The Battle of the Naktong
Company D on Objective

While General Craig watched from the road cut, and Lieutenant Colonel Roise from his OP on Observation Hill, Company D's assault platoons began to ascend the objective. Gradually turning its back on the village of Tugok, Crowson's unit traced the draw on the right of the spur leading to Hill 102, while Shinka led his 3d Platoon up the gully on the left. The infantrymen were almost halfway up the slope when a battalion of the NKPA 18th Regiment opened fire with dozens of machineguns.

Despite the hail of lead, Shinka and Crowson edged their units upwards. The fire from Hills 117 and 143 finally became so intense, however, that the 3d Platoon was momentarily unable to emerge from its gully. Almost simultaneously, enemy machineguns poured it into the 1st Platoon, pinning that unit down and inflicting heavy casualties.

Again pushing upward despite mounting casualties, the 3d Platoon attempted to assault Hill 109 about 1000. Communist automatic weapons and a shower of hand grenades from the crest sent the thin skirmish line of Marines reeling back down the barren slope.

As the 3d Platoon came under increasing machinegun and mortar fire from Hills 117 and 143, Zimmer decided to commit his reserve. Realizing the apparent futility of pressing the attack up the 3d Platoon's gully, he ordered Dickerson to attempt an assault through the draw in which the 1st Platoon was pinned down.

The 2d Platoon crossed the rice paddy, following the route used earlier by the 3d. Reaching the draw in which the latter was regrouping after its abortive assault, Dickerson led his men over Hill 102's spur, attempting to gain the avenue of approach being used by Crowson's unit. In the process he came under heavy automatic weapons fire from both flanks—Hills 117 and 143 on the left, and the hillside north of Tugok across the MSR.

At this time the company commander spotted North Korean positions above the village and realized why his pinned-down 1st Platoon was taking so many casualties. From their vantage point in the 9th RCT zone, the Communists were firing on the flank and rear of the Marines along the northwest approaches of Objective One.

Zimmer requested that 2/5 lay supporting fires on Tugok. When he got no response, his forward observer, Lieutenant Wirth, transferred the mission to 1/11. But the 105's had scarcely begun firing when they were cut off because the impact area was in the 9th RCT's zone. The company commander turned his own 60-mm. mortars on the enemy machineguns, only to discover that the target lay beyond effective range.

Zimmer had more success with supporting arms when the enemy posed another threat. Practically all the machinegun fire had been coming from the north and south of Hills 102 and 109, while the enemy on these summits relied on rifles and vast numbers of hand grenades. Then, apparently shaken by the 3d Platoon's tenacity, the Communists tried to wheel a heavy machinegun into position on the saddle between the northernmost peaks. Twice the mounted weapon was hauled up, and twice pulled back under heavy Marine fire. By this time Zimmer had requested battalion to use a 75-mm. recoilless rifle on the target. When the persistent North Koreans wheeled the machinegun onto the saddle a third time, one round from a Marine 75 obliterated gun and crew.

With only 15 men left in his platoon, Shinka prepared for a second assault on Hill 109. Following an air strike at 1100, the Marines stormed the high ground and overran enemy positions on the crest. Only a squad of North Koreans could show similar determination on the reverse slope, but the enemy's small-scale counterattack was stopped cold by Company D's riflemen.

One of the few Marines who reached Obong-ni's summit during 2/5's attack and lived to tell the story, Shinka later related the events following his seizure of Hill 109:

"Fire from Hill 143 was gaining in intensity, and they had observation over our position. Fire was also coming from the hill to our front [Hill 207]. I reported the situation to Captain Zimmer. A short time later phosphorus shells were exploding in Hill 143. This slowed the fire but it never did stop.

"My resupply of ammo did not arrive. Running short of ammo and taking casualties, with the shallow enemy slit trenches for cover, I decided to fall back until some of the fire on my left flank could be silenced. I gave the word to withdraw and take all wounded and weapons. About three-quarters of the way down, I had the men set up where cover was available. I had six men who were able to fight.

"I decided to go forward to find out if we left any of our wounded. As I crawled along our former position (on the crest of Hill 109), I came across a wounded Marine between two dead. As I grabbed him under the arms and pulled him from the foxhole, a bullet shattered my chin. Blood ran into my throat and I couldn't breath. I tossed a grenade at a gook crawling up the slope, didn't wait for it to explode, turned and reached under the Marine's arms and dragged him as far as the military crest.

"Another bullet hit my right arm, and the force spun me around. I rolled down the hill for a considerable distance before I could stop myself.

"I walked into my lines and had a battle dressing tied on my face and arm. I learned that the ammo was up and that a relief was contemplated; and then I walked back to 2/5's aid station where they placed me on a jeep and took me to regimental aid."

Lieutenant Shinka was later awarded the Bronze Star for this action.

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Chapter 9. The Battle of the Naktong
Attack of Company E

At 0800 Lieutenant Sweeney had ordered his 1st and 2d Platoons of Easy Company into the attack from their line of departure on the southern portion of Observation Hill. Although the boundary separating the zones of Companies E and D extended from the left of Hill 109 and down through the red slash, Sweeney centered his advance on the village of Obong-ni, directly below Hills 143 and 147.[29]

The leading platoons encountered nothing more than scattered shots crossing the rice paddy. Before they could gain a foothold on the slope of the objective, however, heavy fire from the village ripped into the skirmish line.

In the center, Second Lieutenant Nickolas A. Arkadis led his 1st Platoon through the hail of bullets and drove through the village to the slopes of the ridge. On the right the 2d Platoon faltered and lost its momentum. Then a number of North Korean machineguns poured in flanking fire from Hills 147 and 153.

Sweeney, from his OP on the southern slope of Observation Hill, tried to get an artillery mission on the two dominating peaks, but his forward observer was unable to contact the rear. Nor could the 4.2 mortar observer be located.

Faced with the necessity of giving his assault elements some protection, the company commander committed 2d Lieutenant Rodger E. Eddy's 3d Platoon, sending it to the spur on the left of the village. Working its way up the nose which led to Hills 147 and 153, Eddy's unit was able to concentrate its fire on the enemy-held peaks and relieve pressure on the other two platoons.

With enemy fire gradually increasing from new positions on the lower slopes of the ridge to the south of the village, Sweeney ordered the mortar section and all of his headquarters personnel into the valley to block the southern approach through the rice paddy. Leaving this flank guard in command of his executive officer, First Lieutenant Paul R. Uffelman, the company commander rushed to the base of the objective. Every single man in his unit was now committed.

Sweeney found the 2d Platoon leaderless and disorganized. The 1st had fought its way well up the slope, aided by excellent supporting fire from 2/5's 81-mm. mortars. As that dogged group of Marines neared the crest, it was stopped when a friendly artillery barrage fell short, searing the skirmish line with white phosphorus.
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Late morning found part of the company closing on the crest; but shortly before 1130, the attackers were ordered to pull back in preparation for an air strike by MAG–33. The planes came in quickly, and some of Company E's men, within 25 yards of the summit, were caught in the strafing.

During the hammering by the Corsairs, the 3d Platoon slipped back 100 yards, leaving the critical left flank open to enemy-infested peaks 147 and 153. This time the hail of enfilade fire from Communist machineguns caught the remnant of Easy Company rifleman exposed on the higher slopes, and the Marine advance crumbled.

By noon on 17 August, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines was wobbling. In 4 hours of fighting it had lost 23 dead and 119 wounded, practically all of the casualties being taken by the 2 rifle companies. Every officer in the Brigade could lament the lack of a third company in each battalion; for just when 2/5's assault needed the added punch of a reserve unit, the outcome of battle had to rest on the failing strength of six depleted rifle platoons. The ridge could not be taken.

This was unfortunate, since there was clear evidence that the NKPA 4th Division was weakening. Although not apparent to the men of Companies D and E, their repeated attempts to carry the ridge had torn gaps

in the enemy's defenses. Bodies, weapons and wreckage were strewn along the entire northern crest.[30]

Marine air and artillery, having settled down after a fumbling start, not only blasted the North Korean lines, but also wrought havoc throughout the entire bridgehead. A large number of enemy mortars and field pieces were knocked out, troop concentrations cut down or scattered while trying to reinforce the front lines, and supply points obliterated. There were definite signs of increasing confusion in the enemy's rear.[31]

General Craig had become alarmed at the lack of activity in the 9th RCT's zone, resulting in the enemy being left free to pound the Brigade's right flank from the Tugok area. When he inquired concerning the Army's supposed failure to advance on schedule, he first learned of the prebattle agreement reached by Murray and Hill. It was then that he requested the village be taken under fire.

Deeply concerned himself over the situation on the right, particularly since no supporting fire at all had been received from the 9th RCT, Murray tried to contact Hill and request that he commit his regiment. Unable to get the message through immediately, he was forced to leave the matter dangling while directing the conduct of the battle.[32]

About 1300 the 5th Marines commander ordered the 1st Battalion to pass through the 2d and seize Obong-ni Ridge. While Newton moved his unit forward from its assembly area, MAG–33, 1/11 and Able Company tanks laid down devastating fires on the blackened objective.

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Chapter 10. Obong-ni Ridge

SHORTLY AFTER 1330, WHILE reporting his situation to the battalion commander, Captain Zimmer was wounded by enemy machinegun fire which ripped into his OP and caused several other casualties. Crawling to the company CP on the reverse slope of the spur, he turned his command over to Lieutenant Hanifin, who went forward. Zimmer then joined the steady stream of casualties returning through the road cut to the battalion aid station.[1]

On the way, he met Captain Tobin leading Company B forward for the attack, and paused long enough to warn him about the enemy guns in Tugok.

Company D, its part in the battle having come to an end, prepared to withdraw to positions on Observation Hill. The long list of wounded for 17 August included the names of Dickerson and Wirth.[2]

Newton established his OP near that of Roise on Observation Hill. The 1st Battalion CP and aid station were set up with those of 2/5 immediately behind the road cut, while farther back Major John W. Russell placed 1/5’s Weapons Company in position.

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Chapter 10. Obong-ni Ridge
Company B to the Attack

Tobin deployed his 3d Platoon and machineguns on the forward slopes of Observation Hill to support Company B's attack. The 1st and 2d Platoons, the latter on the left, crossed the rice paddy and at 1500 passed through Company D on the slopes of the objective. Lieutenant Schryver led his 1st Platoon toward Hill 102 along the same avenue used by Crowson before him, while Lieutenant Taylor moved the 2d Platoon up the gully leading to the saddle between 102 and 109.

On Observation Hill Captain Tobin noted the rapidity of the advance and called his executive officer, Captain Fenton, preparatory to joining the two assault units. While briefing his assistant at the road bend, he was felled by a burst of machinegun fire. Fenton directed the evacuation of the seriously wounded officer, then took command of the company and joined the attackers on the ridge.

By this time both assault platoons had been pinned down, the 1st about two-thirds of the way up the slope, the 2d only half that distance. The latter was taking heavy casualties from Communist guns on Hills 109, 117, and 143, Taylor himself sustaining a mortal wound.

Fenton and his gunnery sergeant, Master Sergeant Edward A. Wright, were stalled with the 2d Platoon. Since Schryver's unit was also held up, the company commander radioed Observation Hill and committed his 3d Platoon.

Schryver realized that the main obstacle to his advance was the fire hitting his flank from Tugok, and he requested a fire mission from 1/5's Weapons Company. As 81-mm. mortar shells rained down on the village, the 1st Platoon worked westward to the spur above the MSR and outflanked the NKPA 18th Regiment. A quick assault carried Hill 102 at 1710.

With Schryver's men driving down from the south and Company B's machineguns pouring fire on peaks 117 and 143, the 2d Platoon barreled its way up the draw and seized Hill 109 at 1725.

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Chapter 10. Obong-ni Ridge
Advance of Company A

Leaving the line of departure from the southern reaches of Observation Hill, the 1st and 2d Platoons of Company A crossed the rice paddy while Marine air and artillery savagely blasted the forward and reverse slopes of the objective. The two assault units, each with a machinegun section attached, passed through Company E at 1500 and scrambled up the scarred hillside. [3]

Sweeney's battle-worn company withdrew, carrying its dead and wounded back to Observation Hill. The list of casualties included Lieutenant Arkadis, wounded while spearheading the unit's advance.

As Company A's assault wave passed the halfway point of ascent, it met only sniping fire from the crest and forward slopes of Obong-ni Ridge. But any delusions that the enemy had quit were soon shattered when the summit suddenly came alive with Communist machineguns.

Intense fire poured down on the attackers, and Marines pitched forward to roll limply down the hillside. First Lieutenant Robert C. Sebilian, leading the 1st Platoon up the draw between Hills 109 and 117, ignored the storm of steel and urged his men forward. Standing fully exposed while pointing out enemy positions to his NCO's, the young officer was struck by an explosive bullet which shattered his leg. Technical Sergeant Orval F. McMullen took command and resolutely pressed the attack.

The 1st Platoon reached the saddle above the draw just as Company B was taking Hill 109. When McMullen tried to advance southward to 117, he and his men were pinned down by a solid sheet of Communist fire.

On the left, North Korean guns had already cut Second Lieutenant Thomas H. Johnston's 2d Platoon in half. The pint-sized platoon leader proved to be a giant in courage. He pushed doggedly up the draw between Hills 117 and 143, but casualties bled his skirmish line white and finally brought it to a stop.

Marines watching the battle from Observation Hill saw Company A's attack bog down, despite the ceaseless pounding of Hills 117 and 143 by Brigade supporting arms. Startled, the observers noted a lone figure who bolted forward from the 2d Platoon's draw and stubbornly scrambled up the hill. It was Johnston attempting a single-handed assault on the core of enemy resistance.

The astonished onlookers saw him reach the saddle north of Hill 143. That he survived to this point was remarkable enough, yet he continued to push forward. Then, at the base of the blazing peak, the little figure sagged to the ground and lay motionless.

Technical Sergeant Frank J. Lawson immediately took over the platoon, displaying outstanding leadership in his attempt to continue the attack. Communist guns and grenades prevailed, however, and again the line of infantrymen stalled. The 2d Platoon now consisted of a squad.

Captain Stevens radioed Lieutenant Colonel Newton from his OP and requested permission to commit his 3d Platoon, then deployed on Observation Hill as battalion reserve. The request granted, First Lieutenant George C. Fox led the platoon forward into the rice paddy just as a heavy mortar barrage fell in the area. One of Fox's men was killed outright.

Moving quickly to Obong-ni Ridge and ascending the slope, the 3d Platoon was joined by Lawson and the remnants of Johnston's outfit. The skirmish line passed the critical halfway point, and again enemy machineguns and grenades opened up.

Twice Fox attempted to develop an assault, failing both times to get his platoon through the curtain of fire above the gully. While Technical Sergeant Stanley G. Millar was reorganizing the skirmish line, the platoon

leader and Private First Class Benjamin C. Simpson of the 2d Platoon made an attempt to reach Johnston.

The pair climbed to a point above the gully from which Simpson could see the fallen officer. Assured now that Johnston was dead, and unable to recover the body because of interlocking machinegun fire across the area, Fox and the rifleman slid down the draw to the 3d Platoon lines.

By this time Stevens had moved to the base of Obong-ni Ridge, but he had lost radio contact with the three units high on the hillside. He could see the combined 2d and 3d Platoons; but the 1st was out of sight, leaving the company commander unaware of a limited success that could have been exploited.

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Chapter 10. Obong-ni Ridge
Defeat of Enemy Tanks

Shortly after 2/5's jump-off on 17 August, the M–26's of the 3d Platoon, Able Company Tanks, moved forward of the road cut and supported the advance by 90-mm. and machinegun fire. The Marine armor, led by Second Lieutenant Granville G. Sweet, concentrated on heavy NKPA weapons along the crest of Objective One and knocked out at least 12 antitank guns and several automatic weapons. In return, 1 M–26 withstood 3 direct hits by enemy mortars, and the 4 vehicles combined were struck by a total of 23 antitank projectiles. Neither tanks nor crews were bothered appreciably, and only one man was slightly wounded.[4]

After the 1st Battalion had passed through 2/5, a section of tanks moved forward on the road and blasted several North Korean positions in Tugok. When Company B seized the northern tip of the objective, Sweet led all his vehicles back to the tank CP, 1,000 yards east of Observation Hill.

At 2000, while still refueling and replenishing ammunition stocks, the tankmen learned that four enemy T–34's were approaching the Brigade lines on the MSR. The Marine armor was clanking toward the front within a matter of seconds. About 300 yards from the road cut, the tankmen had to jump from their vehicles to remove trucks blocking the MSR. Then, approaching the narrow defile, Sweet ordered his 1st Section to load with 90-mm. armor-piercing shells.

Company B, consolidating its positions on Hills 102 and 109, had first noticed the four NKPA tanks and a column of infantry moving toward its lines at 2000. Corsairs of MAG–33 screamed down immediately, destroying the fourth armored vehicle and dispersing the Red riflemen. The first three tanks came on alone, passed Finger and Obong-ni Ridges, and approached the road bend at Hill 125.

Preparing a reception for the T–34's were the 1st 75-mm. Recoilless Gun Platoon on Observation Hill, and the rocket section of 1/5's antitank assault platoon on Hill 125. As the first enemy tank reached the bend, it took a hit in the right track from a 3.5" rocket. Shooting wildly, the black hulk continued until its left track and front armor were blasted by Second Lieutenant Paul R. Fields' 75's. The enemy vehicle burst into flame as it wobbled around the curve and came face to face with Technical Sergeant Cecil R. Fullerton's M–26.

Still aimlessly firing its 85-mm. rifle and machinegun, the T–34 took two quick hits from the Marine tank's 90-mm. gun and exploded. One North Korean got out of the burning vehicle but was cut down instantly by rifle fire. He crawled beneath the blazing wreckage and died.

The second T–34 charged toward the bend, taking a 3.5 rocket hit from Company A's assault squad. Weaving crazily around the curve, with its right track damaged, the cripple was struck in the gas tank by a rocket from 1/5's assault section before meeting the fury of Field's recoilless rifles. It lurched to a stop off the road behind the first tank, and the 85-mm. gun fired across the valley into the blue yonder.

By this time a second M–26 had squeezed next to that of Fullerton on the narrow firing line, and the two Marine tanks blasted the T–34 with six 90-mm. shells. Miraculously, the Communist vehicle kept on shooting, although its fire was directionless. Marine armor poured in seven more rounds, which ripped through the turret and exploded the hull.

Before the kill, one Red tankman opened the turret hatch in an effort to escape. A 2.36" white phosphorus round, fired by a 1st Battalion rocket man, struck the open lid and ricocheted into the turret. The enemy soldier was knocked back into the tank as the interior turned into a furnace.

The third T–34 raced around the road bend to a stop behind the blazing hulks of the first two. Marine tanks, recoilless rifles, and rockets ripped into it with a thundering salvo. The enemy tank shuddered, then erupted

in a violent explosion and died.

Thus the Brigade shattered the myth of the T–34 in five flaming minutes. Not only Corsairs and M–26's, but also every antitank weapon organic to Marine infantry had scored an assist in defeating the Communist armor.

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Chapter 10. Obong-ni Ridge
End of the First Day

Throughout 17 August the evacuation of dead and wounded had been a major concern of every Marine, from fire team leaders up to the Brigade commander. Men risked their lives dragging casualties off the blazing slopes of Obong-ni Ridge to relative safety at the base. Litter bearers plodded back and forth across the fire-swept rice paddy, and a steady stream of wounded passed through the 1st and 2d Battalion aid stations behind the road cut. Medical officers of the two battalions, Lieutenants (jg) Bentley G. Nelson and Chester L. Klein, worked tirelessly with their corpsmen.

In the rear, Lieutenant Commander Byron D. Casteel had to commandeer every ambulance in the area—including 16 Army vehicles—to evacuate wounded to and from his 5th Marines aid station. So acute was the shortage of hospital corpsmen that the Brigade's Malaria and Epidemic Control Unit was used to reinforce the regimental medical staff. Even so, the hospital tents were busy for a straight 18 hours.[5]

The small number of deaths from wounds attested to the speed and effectiveness of helicopter evacuations; for the pilots of VMO–6 were ferrying the more serious casualties from the regimental aid station to the Army's 8076 Surgical Hospital at Miryang, some 20 miles away.

While medics toiled to save lives, the spiritual needs of casualties were filled by the inspiring labor of the 5th Marines' naval chaplains, Lieutenant Commander Orlando Ingvolstad, Jr., Lieutenant William G. Tennant, and Lieutenant (jg) Bernard L. Hickey. A familiar figure at the front, frequently exposed to enemy fire as he administered to fallen Marines, was Lieutenant Commander Otto E. Sporrer, beloved chaplain of 1/11.

Two serious obstacles to the various missions behind the front were the dud-infested area east of Observation Hill and a section of collapsed MSR in the river bed occupied by the 5th Marines CP. First Lieutenant Wayne E. Richards and his 2d Platoon, Able Company Engineers, spent most of 17 August at the tedious task of removing unexploded missiles from the forward assembly areas. The engineers' 1st Platoon had to tear down part of an unoccupied village for material to reinforce the sinking road over which the jeep ambulances and supply trucks were struggling.

As the sun dropped behind Obong-ni Ridge, activity on the MSR continued unabated, although the battle for Objective One had diminished to a crackle of rifle fire and occasional machinegun bursts.

Company A had been unable to take Hills 117 and 143, still bristling with enemy automatic weapons. At 2030, shortly after the smashing victory over North Korean armor, Captain Stevens contacted his 1st Platoon and learned that it was on the saddle between peaks 109 and-117. Although tied in on the right with Company B, the platoon was separated by a 100-yard gap from Stevens' other two platoons on the slopes to the left.[6]

The company commander called Fox, Lawson, and McMullen together near the base of the ridge to consult them on continuing the attack. All platoon leaders advised against it, since darkness was falling and their units needed rest, food, water, and ammunition. Moreover, the enemy's bold tank attack had convinced the infantry leaders that a larger counter-stroke by the Communists was imminent, and they wanted time for preparation.[7]

Stevens informed Newton of the situation by radio, and the battalion commander ordered him to discontinue the attack and tie in with Fenton's unit for the night. It was already dark when the 2d and 3d Platoons shifted to the right from their positions below Hills 117 and 143.

Company B had been busily consolidating its high ground since the seizure of Hills 102 and 109 earlier in the evening. While Fenton's machineguns dueled with those of the Reds on 117, his 1st and 2d Platoons

deployed defensively on the forward slopes of the two captured peaks, and the 3d went into reserve on the reverse slope.[8]

Company A's front extended left from the southern part of Hill 109—where the 1st Platoon was linked to Fenton's unit—to the center of the saddle toward 117. There the line bent down in an arch, formed by the 2d Platoon, to the spur below the enemy-held peak. Able Company's left was actually perpendicular to the ridgeline, for Fox's 3d Platoon was deployed up and down Hill 117's spur.[9]

To complete the Brigade front, Headquarters Company of 1/5 was to have extended across the rice paddy from Observation Hill and tied in with Company A's left flank. Due to the casualties and workload of the headquarters troops, this connection was never made, with the result that Fox's platoon remained dangling.[10]

When General Craig returned to his CP near Yongsan on the night of 17 August, he was not unduly concerned about the tactical situation. Although the Brigade had been thinned by heavy casualties, Murray's disposition in depth across a narrow front gave the Marines the advantages of concentrated strength and firepower. If the enemy attempted his usual night envelopment, both 2/5 and 3/5 could strike back from their reserve positions on Observation and Cloverleaf Hills.[11]

Across the MSR, the 9th RCT had launched its attack earlier in the evening, clearing Tugok and seizing Finger Ridge against negligible resistance. By darkness, the 19th and 34th Regiments were also sitting on their objectives to the north, leaving the 4th NKPA Division clamped in a vice. To the southeast, the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, was holding its blocking position with no difficulty.[12]

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Chapter 10. Obong-ni Ridge
Enemy Counterattack on Ridge

Late on 17 August, when the attack on Obong-ni Ridge ceased, General Craig sent a message to his subordinate commanders, directing them to ". . . consolidate positions for night, account for location of each individual and be prepared for counterattack; carefully prepare plan of fires for night to include plans for fires within and in rear of positions; wire in where possible in front line elements."[13]

Long after nightfall, the weary Marines of both front line companies were still digging foxholes and organizing their defenses. While this work continued in spite of sporadic Communist fire from Hill 117, the South Korean laborers were transporting supplies to the ridgeline or carrying casualties back to the rear.

Captain Stevens established Company A's command post at the top of the draw leading to the saddle between Hills 109 and 117. His 60-mm. mortar section set up its weapons in the gully itself.

Shortly before 2200, the telltale whine and rattle of mortar shells cut through the darkness and the men of Able Company crouched in their holes. The explosions were followed by a shower of fire as white phosphorus enveloped the center of the company area. Almost every man in the gully was painfully wounded, leaving Stevens without a mortar section. The edge of the barrage hit the 3d Platoon's area, wounding Fox and several of his men. Two riflemen had to be evacuated, but the platoon leader and the others applied first aid and remained in the line.

After this brief flurry the front settled down to an ominous quiet interrupted only occasionally by North Korean guns to the south.

At 0230 on 18 August, the Marines of Company A heard enemy movement on Hill 117. Suddenly there was a hail of bullets from Communist machineguns on the peak, and hand grenades began to roll down into the Marine positions. A North Korean platoon made a few bounds from the high ground and landed almost literally on top of Stevens' depleted 2d Platoon.

Simultaneously, Company B's position on Hill 109 was struck hard by two platoons advancing up the draw to the west. Heedless of illuminating shells fired by 1/5's 81-mm. mortars, the enemy assaulted methodically by alternately throwing small groups of grenadiers and submachinegunners against Marine positions. The NKPA infantrymen were covered by a heavy volume of automatic weapons fire pouring down from Hill 117.

An enemy squad emerged from the gully west of the saddle between peaks 102 and 109, attempting to divert strength from Fenton's main defensive effort to the south. Failing in this effort, the group fell back to fire harassing shots.

Company A's 2d Platoon slugged it out with three times its own numbers for a full half hour. This stand was due largely to the courage and leadership of Lawson, who stuck to his guns and refused evacuation, though wounded three times. About 0300, with Marines on the right devoting more attention to the heavier attack against Hill 109, the exhausted survivors of the 2d Platoon were overrun and the Brigade line penetrated.

For some unknown reason, enemy troops did not pour down the eastern slopes after the breakthrough. Only one squad drove through, and it split Company A in half by invading Stevens' CP, directly behind the 2d Platoon's lines. The company commander and his headquarters were slowly forced down the draw by the methodical grenade and submachinegun fire from above.

The remainder of the North Korean platoon which had hit Company A remained on the crest for a joint effort with the larger force striking Hill 109. Stevens' 1st Platoon, with its left flank now exposed on the saddle, gradually fell back and curled around the southern face of 109.

Although Company B's left front held firm against the two-platoon assault, a few Reds slipped by the

Marine foxholes and charged into Fenton's CP on Hill 109. Rocket gunners, mortarmen and clerks responded to the challenge and quickly eliminated the attackers.

When Fenton became aware that the saddle south of Hill 109 had been taken, he tightened his left flank by drawing it in to his 3d Platoon's reverse slope positions. This portion of his defense now took the shape of a football, and successfully withstood pressure from the south.

By 0400 Stevens had temporarily lost control of Company A, although the situation looked worse than it actually was. While the company commander stabilized his center near the bottom of the draw, his executive officer, First Lieutenant Fred F. Eubanks, Jr., made single-handed forays up the gully. He was eventually aided in his private war by the company's machinegun officer, Second Lieutenant Francis W. Muetzel. After the breakthrough, the latter had been wounded and left for dead in his foxhole behind the 2d Platoon. Upon regaining consciousness, he made his way down the draw, fighting it out with enemy soldiers until he reached the Marine lines. Company A's 3d Platoon along the spur below Hill 117 enjoyed a seemingly illogical immunity during the counterattack. Although isolated after the penetration and deployed ideally from the enemy's point of view, Fox's men had only occasional brushes with Red infantrymen who displayed a remarkable lack of interest. After the platoon leader learned of the situation on his right, he redeployed into an elongated perimeter which included a few survivors of the 2d Platoon.

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Lieutenant Colonel Newton, when notified of Company A's withdrawal on the left front, called down such a tremendous volume of artillery fire on enemy approaches that 1/11 asked him to conserve a few shells for the Brigade attack scheduled for 0700. The battalion commander replied that the Brigade would be fighting to retake Objective One at 0700 if his beleaguered companies did not get maximum supporting fire. While the artillerymen continued to pound Obong-ni Ridge, Newton's 81-mm. mortars, strengthened by 2/5's entire stock of ammunition, added to the hot metal thrown at the enemy. It can only be conjectured why the NKPA thrust against the Brigade lines never developed above the company level, but Newton's generosity with high explosives probably did not encourage Communist aspirations.

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Chapter 10. Obong-ni Ridge
Obong-ni Ridge Secured

By dawn of 18 August, the North Korean attackers had spent their strength, leaving Company B in undisputed control of Hills 102 and 109. As if in frustration, enemy machineguns on 117 spat angrily at the Marines while the few surviving Red infantrymen withdrew to their lines.

Stevens prepared at first light to complete the unfinished business of the previous day. Thanks to the heroism of his wounded gunnery sergeant, Technical Sergeant Paul A. Hodge, the company commander had regained contact with Fox before dawn and was able to prepare for an attack. At 0700, after moving forward to the 3d Platoon's area and clearing with Newton, he ordered Fox to continue the attack and seize Hill 117.

The platoon leader shouted to his men who arose as a body to begin the ascent. When a lone Red machinegun broke the silence on 117, Stevens spotted the weapon immediately and called for an air strike. Within seconds a Marine fighter plane glided over the 3d Platoon and dropped a 500-pound bomb squarely on the enemy position. The response from Marine air had been so prompt that every one of the attackers was knocked off his feet and one of Fox's automatic riflemen was killed.

While the echoes of the shattering explosion were still reverberating through the morning haze, the thin skirmish line of Marines scrambled up the slope and carried Hill 117. McMullen's 1st Platoon drove in from 109, and the North Koreans fled in panic from the crest and reverse slope positions. A full company of Reds raced down the western slope, with Stevens' riflemen and machinegunners firing from the crest to rip into the enemy groups.

Capitalizing on a psychological advantage, Company A wheeled southward to sweep the crest. Fox, using a skirmish line of only 20 men, assaulted Hill 143 and took the peak against light resistance. A quick call to Newton brought Stevens immediate permission for maximum exploitation.

The 3d Platoon attacked Hill 147 vigorously, and though a few Red soldiers fought to the bitter end, the majority again chose to flee. The high ground was taken easily.

As the Marines moved over the crest of 147, they saw 150 enemy troops in formation halfway down the western slope. The withdrawal commenced in an orderly column of fours but the formation broke down quickly under Marine fire and turned into a routed mob.

Fox turned his attention to Hill 153, Obong-ni's crowning peak, reasoning that it would be the logical place for the enemy's last-ditch stand. But it was the same old story when the 3d Platoon rushed to the summit—abandoned weapons and equipment, a few scattered dead, and blasted foxholes. There was a variation, however, when a supposed clump of scrub pines arose from the reverse slope and rushed downward in headlong flight. The Leathernecks were reminded of Birnham Wood in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as the camouflaged North Koreans disappeared with the agility of mountain goats before Marine marksmen could score more than a few hits.

While the 1st and 2d Platoons consolidated the central peaks, the 3d combed the southern reaches below Hill 153 without incident. The 1st Platoon, Able Company Engineers, patrolled the swampland south of the ridge and secured Fox's left flank with a minefield extending from the southern crest to the valley below and eastward across the swamp. By midafternoon all of Obong-ni Ridge belonged to the Brigade.

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Chapter 10. Obong-ni Ridge
Supporting Arms Clear the Bulge

At midnight, 17 August, Lieutenant Colonel Murray had issued 3/5 a warning order for continuing the attack on the 18th. Shortly after dawn, Taplett and his two company commanders, Fegan and Bohn, visually reconnoitered Hill 207—Objective Two—from vantage points north and south of the MSR. Then, while the battalion commander set up his OP on the northern part of Obong-ni Ridge, Companies G and H advanced to an assembly area at the base of the Ridge.[14]

Click here to view map

Taplett called down heavy artillery, air, and mortar preparations on Objective Two. Occasionally he shifted fires to blast large groups of enemy fleeing to Hill 207 from Company A's advance on Obong-ni Ridge.

Directly south of Finger Ridge, two large spurs form the northern approach to Hill 207. Company H emerged into the open at 1000 from the MSR between Obong-ni and Finger Ridges and attacked up the eastern spur. Following Fegan's unit was Company G, which veered to the right and advanced up the western spur. The two infantry units slowly ascended, separated by a deep gully, while the 3d Platoon of Able Company tanks fired overhead and to the flanks from its positions in the valley.

When Fegan's unit was halfway up the eastern spur, the Marine tankmen saw a platoon of North Koreans attempting to flank the attackers. Machinegun and 90-mm. fire from the M–26's killed or dispersed the Reds at a range of 300 yards.

As Lieutenant Williams worked How Company's 1st Platoon close enough for an assault of the summit, several NKPA soldiers rose from their holes and threw down hand grenades. The Marines hit the deck until the missiles exploded, then bounded up and rushed the crest. Unnerved by Williams' perfect timing, most of the North Koreans fled southward along the ridge. The remainder died in their positions during a brief but bitter fight.

Moving up on Fegan's right, Bohn's men pushed over the western half of the objective, finding only a handful of enemy who were quickly destroyed. Company G's assault completed the seizure of Objective Two at 1237.

During the last minutes of the fight on Hill 207, the entire Naktong Bulge suddenly swarmed with panic-stricken remnants of the 4th NKPA Division. What had been a retreat of small forces now became a widespread rout. Enemy troops poured down from Objective Two, some scurrying up the slopes of Hill 311 across the MSR, others making for the Naktong River.

Air, artillery, and mortars were now offered a profusion of targets by an enemy who ordinarily did not reveal himself during daylight hours. MAG–33 plastered the suspected CP of the 18th NKPA Regiment on a peak south of 207, shattering communications equipment and weapons. Other Marine planes alternated strafing runs with 1/11's continual artillery barrages along the river banks, where enemy troops were gathering by the hundreds.

Victory turned into slaughter when the Brigade supporting arms concentrated on the masses of Communists plunging into the river. All artillery having been turned loose on the river crossings, Taplett used his mortars, machineguns, and the supporting tanks to cut down targets in the valley and on Hills 207 and 311. He requested permission to attack the latter immediately, but was told to remain on Objective Two while the Brigade gave all of its attention to the astounding situation at the river.

At 1530 Companies G and H descended Hill 207. They were met at the bottom by First Lieutenant Pomeroy's 1st Platoon of tanks and escorted across the valley to the base of Hill 311—Objective Three. In

advance of the infantrymen, MAG–33 scorched the high ground with napalm while artillery, mortars, and 75-mm. recoilless rifles worked over the slopes.

Again Fegan and Bohn moved up companion spurs which converged on their target, the 1,000-foot height. Progress was good until Company H came within 200 yards of the crest. Then a volley of rifle fire from the summit and forward slopes forced the Marines to the ground. Although confronted by only a platoon, Fegan was at a disadvantage. Scrub growth not only concealed the Communist riflemen, but also prevented the use of Company H's machineguns. Maneuver to the right or left was impossible, since the steep draws on either side were well covered by camouflaged enemy positions. Several Marines who tried to advance frontally were cut down by rifle fire.

The enemy platoon's defense was not based on the usual machinegun fire and grenade throwing. With calm, business-like efficiency, NKPA riflemen kept Company H pinned to the ground, finally wounding Fegan himself as the officer attempted to regain the initiative. After his evacuation, the attack bogged down completely.

At 1730, Company G had reached the southern portion of the long, narrow crest by brushing aside light resistance. Turning its attention northward, the company entered into a small-arms duel with the Communist force opposing Fegan's unit. When supporting arms failed to dislodge the enemy rifleman, Bohn enveloped the troublesome pocket by sending Cahill's 1st Platoon around to the left (west).

The young platoon leader completed the maneuver just before nightfall and overran the Reds on the northern half of the summit. But the enemy on the forward slopes facing Company H suddenly showed fight. The 1st Platoon, pushed rearward a short distance by the surprise resistance, slugged it out at close quarters.
Click here to view map

With darkness closing in and the platoon so far beyond Marines lines, Bohn ordered it to withdraw. Cahill, wounded himself, reported on his return that the platoon had suffered 10 casualties, including 2 killed.

Taplett ordered the two companies to deploy defensively in their present positions. Thus, during the quiet night of 18–19 August, Companies G and H faced the enemy pocket at right angles to each other.

Earlier on the 18th Lieutenant (jg) Robert J. Harvey, 3d Battalion surgeon, had the unpleasant task of examining an abandoned Army aid station under the bridge near the tip of Finger Ridge. The improvised hospital had been overrun during Army reverses a week before; and about 30 dead found by the Marines bore mute evidence of the enemy's brutality in dealing with captured wounded and medical personnel.

At 0610 on the morning of 19 August, 3/5's 81-mm. mortars prepared the way for the final drive on Objective Three. Following close in the wake of the mortar bursts, Second Lieutenant Thomas P. Lennon led Company H through evacuated enemy positions. He reached the northern part of Hill 311 without meeting any opposition.

This last Brigade objective was secured at 0645, leaving 1/5 atop Obong-ni Ridge, 2/5 on Hill 207 to which it had displaced on the 18th, and 3/5 in possession of the dominating height of the Naktong Bulge. The reduction of the enemy bridgehead cost the Marines 66 dead, 1 missing in action, and 278 wounded.

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Chapter 11. Second Naktong

IT WAS ALL over but the mopping-up operations. Battalion areas were carefully patrolled on 19 August to clear them of NKPA snipers or stragglers. During this process a patrol ranging along the Naktong river discovered three enemy 122-mm. howitzers hidden in a strip of woods on a hill. The pieces had not been touched by Marine air or artillery. What was more surprising, they were emplaced in a column to fire over one another—something new and wonderful that the Marines had never seen before.[1] General Craig concluded that these howitzers had fired the shells which landed on Marine positions to the bitter end.

The next day the Brigade commander took a helicopter to 24th Division Headquarters to confer with General Church. There he was informed that the Marines had been detached from 24th Division operational control to Eighth Army reserve. Church complimented the Brigade warmly on its performance, and letters of commendation were later received both from him and CG EUSAK.

At 1300 on the 21st Craig arrived by helicopter at a new Brigade bivouac area near Masan that was to be recorded in capital letters as the Bean Patch. It was just that—a bean patch large enough to accommodate a brigade. But from this historic spot the Marines were to fight their way around the peninsula during the next 5 months and complete the circuit to their identical starting point.

General Craig arrived along with the Brigade advance elements. After setting up his CP, he reported to General Kean, of the 25th Division, who was in control of the bivouac area. Kean divulged that the situation in his sector had deteriorated. The enemy had made several penetrations, and Brigade assistance might be required in the event of further breakthroughs. As it was, Kean had been authorized by Eighth Army to employ Brigade artillery along with his own; and 1/11 proceeded the next day to the familiar Chindong-ni area in support of 25th Division Infantry.

Orders were received from Eighth Army for the Brigade infantry to be prepared to counterattack in the 25th Division sector as part of its reserve mission. General Craig and Lieutenant Colonel Stewart made a helicopter reconnaissance of the areas of greatest activity, but events proved that the Marine rifle battalions were not needed.

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Chapter 11. Second Naktong
The Famous Bean Patch

Unit training, including the checking and firing of all weapons, was conducted at the Bean Patch; and Marine patrols were sent out to the rear of the 25th Division to watch for infiltrating forces. Patrols in rugged country were fed hot meals delivered in special containers by the versatile helicopters of VMO–6.

Truckloads of supplies rolled in daily from Pusan, including some of the equipment left behind at the docks when the Brigade landed. But no tentage was available, and the exhausting marches of combat had forced the men to discard everything except fighting tools. In the lack of shelter tents, therefore, the Marines lived in the open at the Bean Patch.

General Craig conferred on 23 August with General Kean and a distinguished visitor, General J. Lawton Collins, Chief of Staff, USA. Collins was keenly interested in Marine methods of knocking out NKPA tanks and requested Craig to prepare a memorandum on the subject.

That evening the entire Brigade attended an outdoor entertainment given on an improvised stage by South Korean girls, who sang and played native instruments which sounded out of tune to Western ears. Translations of the songs were forthcoming, since some of the girls were English-speaking refugees from Seoul University. Afterwards, General Craig addressed the Brigade, paying a high tribute to his Marines for their conduct in battle. NKPA prisoners, he said, had told G–2 interviewers that they earnestly wished to steer clear of "the Americans in yellow leggings."

Letters from home and beer from Pusan [2] contributed to good Marine morale, even though no liberty was granted to nearby towns. On the 29th an honor guard of 87 Marines received Purple Heart medals at a ceremony attended by President Syngman Rhee, who arrived in a helicopter provided by VMO–6. General Craig had paid an official call on him the day before at Chinhae, being most courteously received. And after the presentation of medals, President Rhee gave a talk to the Marines.

He confided to Craig afterwards that he would like to confer some sort of an award on every man in the Brigade for heroic service in Korea. This was undoubtedly the inception of the Korean Presidential Unit Citation which the Brigade later received from the ROK executive.

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Chapter 11. Second Naktong
Planning for Inchon Landing

General Craig, it may be recalled, had insisted that replacements be sent to the Brigade. Thanks to his determination, a long column of trucks arrived at the Bean Patch with more than 800 Marines just landed at Pusan.

Some of the 5th Marines outfits had been so thinned by combat that an appeal was made for volunteers from supporting units to serve temporarily in rifle companies, with the privilege of returning to their former status after the emergency. The hearty response was a tribute to Marine morale as well as Marine basic training which made every man a potential rifleman. Engineers, shore party troops and headquarters personnel came forward in such numbers that some could not be accepted after the arrival of replacements eased the situation.

No attempt was made at the Bean Patch to form the newcomers into third rifle companies. They were simply used to build up the strength of the present companies and given intensive unit training.

Rumors of an impending Marine amphibious operation had already filtered down to every PFC, and there were wild speculations as to when and where. At least, it could hardly be denied that the Brigade would soon be taking another voyage; for convoys of trucks left the Bean Patch every day laden with heavy supplies and equipment to be unloaded at Pusan.[3]

This was once that lower-echelon “scuttlebutt” came close to the mark. In fact, planning for the Inchon landing had already gone so far that General Craig sent his chief of staff, G–3 and G–4 to Tokyo to confer with staff officers of the 1st Marine Division about the projected operation.[4]

Major General Oliver P. Smith, CG of the 1st Marine Division, had relieved General Erskine early in July when the latter was sent on a secret State Department mission. As the ADC of the Division during the fight for Peleliu in 1944, Smith knew how tough an amphibious operation can become when it encounters unexpected obstacles. He was determined to keep his Division intact with its three infantry regiments, the 1st, 5th, and 7th Marines. And after his arrival in Japan with the advance party, he returned a firm negative to proposals that the 5th Marines and other Brigade troops remain with the Eighth Army.

It would be putting the case mildly to say that this was the eleventh hour. The 1st Marine Division (less the 7th Marines) had landed at Kobe from 28 August to 3 September. And though a typhoon caused a good deal of damage, little time was lost at the gigantic task of unloading mixed-type shipping and combat-loading it into assault-type shipping. The LST’s had to be ready to sail for the target area by 10 September, and the transports by the 12th.

The Marines at the Bean Patch would have been flattered to know that they were the objects of an official tug of war at Tokyo. It was maintained by the EUSAK command and staff that Army morale would be hurt by taking the Brigade away from the Pusan Perimeter at a critical moment. On the other hand, General Smith contended that he needed the Brigade all the more urgently because the 7th Marines,[5] sailing belatedly from San Diego, would not be able to reach Inchon until a week after the proposed D-day of 15 September 1950.

The Marine general was informed that the decision would depend upon the tactical situation in Korea. On 30 August he sent a dispatch to X Corps—the new Army tactical organization activated by CINCFE especially for the Inchon operation—requesting that the Brigade be released from its Army commitments on 1 September. In response, General MacArthur issued an order restoring the unit to the 1st Marine Division on the 4th.[6]

At this point the enemy rudely interrupted by launching an all-out offensive against the Pusan Perimeter on 1 September, and General MacArthur’s order was rescinded. Even though most of the Brigade’s heavy

equipment was at the Pusan docks, waiting for shipping, GHQFEC decided that General Craig's troops should again be used as "firemen" to extinguish an NKPA conflagration.

Colonel Edward H. Forney, the Marine officer recently named deputy chief of staff of X Corps, suggested to General Smith the possibility of substituting an Army unit, the 32d Infantry of the 7th Infantry Division, for the 5th Marines. Smith demurred on the grounds that these troops had not been trained for amphibious warfare.

On 3 September, with D-day less than 2 weeks away, a conference was held in Tokyo to decide the question once and for all. X Corps was represented by General Wright, the G–3, and General Edward S. Almond, the new commanding general and former chief of staff, GHQFEC. COMNAVFE (Admiral Joy), COMSEVENTHFLT (Admiral Struble) and COMPHIBGRUONE (Admiral Doyle) were the Navy officers present. General Almond opened the discussion by reiterating that the 32d Infantry would be substituted for the 5th Marines. In reply, General Smith mentioned the complications of an amphibious assault landing and urged that the operations plan be amended if the untrained Army regiment were to be employed.

Another solution, offered by Admiral Struble, was baited with reciprocal concessions. He suggested that the Brigade be employed briefly for counterattacks in the Pusan Perimeter, but that meanwhile the 32d or some other 7th Infantry Division regiment be moved from Japan to Korea. There it would become a floating reserve for EUSAK, thus releasing the Brigade units to take their former places in the 1st Marine Division for the Inchon operation. This compromise was finally accepted, and orders were issued for the Brigade to be withdrawn from Eighth Army control at midnight on 5 September.

The first intimations to reach the troops at the Bean Patch were received on the 1st, at 0810, when the Brigade was alerted for a possible move by CG EUSAK to an unknown destination. At 1109 came the warning order for a road lift to the Miryang assembly area. The confirmation followed at 1215, with all units being scheduled to move out at 1330.[7]

The Marines had another date with destiny.

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Chapter 11. Second Naktong
Return to the Naktong Bulge

General Craig set up his CP in the Miryang area at 1800 on 1 September. Billeting officers, having gone ahead by helicopter, were prepared to take care of Brigade units as they arrived. Among them was the 1st Battalion of the 11th Marines, which had been returned from 25th Division control to the Brigade.

The news from the front was depressing. Heavy attacks had been received all day along the 2d and 25th Infantry Division fronts. An enemy penetration of 4,000 yards was made at the expense of the 2d Division, with the old familiar Naktong Bulge being occupied again by Red Koreans who had gained a firm foothold on the east bank of the river. This meant that General Craig's men, now under operational control of the 2d Division, were likely to revisit some scarred parcels of Korean real estate they had hoped never to see again. Major General Lawrence B. Keiser, commanding the 2d Division, informed the Brigade commander that several of his companies had been cut off by enemy advances which pushed his lines back almost to Yongsan.[8] There was a good deal of NKPA infiltration, he added, in his rear.

It had been a full day, and at 2230 that night Craig received orders from the Eighth Army to move the Brigade at first light to a reserve position south of Yongsan and in the rear of the 9th Infantry of the 2d Division.

At 0630, on 2 September, the 2d Battalion of the 5th Marines arrived at its assigned covering position on the road leading to Yongsan. The remainder of the Brigade moved out to assembly positions during the day.[9]

Craig proceeded by helicopter at 0830 to the 2d Infantry Division headquarters for a conference with Keiser to plan the move of the Brigade into his lines. Afterwards, the Marine general devoted the rest of the morning to reconnaissance of the terrain by helicopter. On the way he stopped at Lieutenant Colonel Murray's CP and learned that the 5th Marines units were well established along the road leading to the front.

The planning conference for the projected counterattack began at 1430 in the 2d Infantry Division CP. General Craig was accompanied by his assistant G–3, Major Frank R. Stewart, Jr., since his regular G–3 had not yet returned from the 1st Marine Division briefing at Tokyo. General Keiser and his staff officers emphasized the gravity of the situation in the 2d Division sector. They wanted General Craig to counterattack that very afternoon on a widely extended front, but he objected on both counts.

As for the time element, he pointed out that the hour was late. Some of his units were not even in their assembly positions, and others were still detraining or in trucks. Smoke and haze had resulted in such low visibility that planes could not operate effectively. Finally, Craig's TACRON had not arrived and he was out of touch with the aircraft carriers. He did not wish to commit his force piecemeal without air support; and in the end the Army staff officers agreed with him on the advisability of the Marines attacking in the morning.[10]

Next came a discussion as to the nature of the Marine counterattack. Craig cited the risks and disadvantages of advancing on too wide a front. He suggested that the 2d Infantry Division specify the Marine objectives and allow him to attack in such formations as he deemed most effective. Keiser and his staff assented, and the Marine officers hurried back to the Brigade CP.

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Chapter 11. Second Naktong
All-Out NKPA Offensive

Glancing at the big picture, there could be no doubt that the enemy was making an all-out effort to smash through the Pusan Perimeter. Late in August it became evident that he was massing troops. The blow fell in the early morning hours of 1 September. The direction of the main attack remained in doubt until that afternoon, when it was revealed as a bid for a breakthrough in the Naktong Bulge which would expose the Pusan-Taegu lifeline.

Despite heavy casualties of the past 2 months, NKPA overall strength was estimated as high as 133,000 men as the result of filling the ranks with hastily trained replacements. Thirteen infantry regiments, 3 security regiments and the remnants of the original 3 armored regiments were believed to be participating in the offensive. [11]

For 2 months the Eighth Army had been purchasing time with space, and the enemy realized that time was now fighting on the side of the United Nations. The first ground force unit sent by a member nation to reinforce United States and ROK troops was the British 27th Infantry Brigade, which landed and took over a sector early in September. But the enemy knew that other UN contingents had been promised.

The reorganized ROK army, moreover, had recovered from its early disasters and was giving a good account of itself in the northern sectors of the Pusan Perimeter. There the 1st, 3d, 6th, 8th, and Capital Divisions had not only maintained their tactical integrity throughout August but even delivered several counterattacks.[12]

The NKPA numerical superiority, in short, could not last much longer. It was now or never if the invaders hoped to batter their way to Pusan, and Pyongyang staked everything on a final offensive.

The brunt fell upon the United States 2d Infantry Division. Troops from four enemy divisions were identified on this sensitive front, well supported by armor and artillery. Within a few hours pressure became so great that EUSAK decided to send the Marine mobile reserve to the aid of the Army troops.

Not only was the terrain familiar to Marines who had fought their way up Obong-ni Ridge, but they were renewing acquaintance with the same enemy outfit. For G–2 reports confirmed that the NKPA 4th Infantry Division was back again at the old stand—or at least such survivors as had emerged with a whole skin from their defeat of 17–18 August in this area.

Perhaps because of the large numbers of new recruits filling the ranks, the retreaded outfit followed in reserve just behind the NKPA 9th Infantry Division as it crossed the Naktong and drove eastward. The 9th was one of the enemy units hastily raised from constabulary forces for purposes of the invasion. Assigned to guard duty at Seoul throughout July and half of August, the troops devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the pleasant mission of forcing South Koreans to “volunteer” as soldiers or laborers against their own people. Thus the division could be considered a fresh and rested outfit, though deficient in training and combat discipline as compared to the older NKPA units.

Troops from the enemy’s 2d and 10th Divisions were also identified on the front of the United States 2d Infantry Division, but the Marines had no contacts with these units.[13]

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Chapter 11. Second Naktong
The Marines Jump Off

General Keiser's operational directive for the 3 September counterattack was half a page in length. As in the case of the first Naktong counter-stroke, the Marine brigade was placed opposite the center of the Bulge, with the mission of driving westward "to restore former 9th Infantry positions." This time, however, Craig's force was scheduled to jump off 4 miles east of Observation Hill; for the North Koreans were knocking at the gates of Yongsan.

The Brigade's line of departure was a long north-south ridgeline about a thousand yards west of Yongsan and directly south of Myong-ni. This high ground was occupied on 2 September by the 9th Infantry. When the Marines passed through the next morning, the Army unit was to swing northward to attack on the Brigade right. Still farther north, the 23d Infantry had orders to hold positions on the right of the 9th and maintain contact with friendly units by patrolling.[14]

On the Brigade's left, a special task force of the Army's 72d Tank Battalion and 2d Engineer Battalion was to attack southward from Il-li to the Naktong River line below the Bulge. There it would link with the 25th Division's right.

The fact that the Communists upset the plan by smashing through the 9th Infantry lines on the night of 2–3 September was both bad and good news from the standpoint of the Marines. It was bad because an overextended friendly unit had been shattered by many times its numbers and forced into a disorganized withdrawal. It was good because the enemy was plowing ahead at full steam, obviously unaware that he was shortly due for a blow that would find him off balance and send him reeling.

Low hanging clouds and smoke made for poor visibility on the morning of the 3d when General Craig set out on his customary prebattle reconnaissance by helicopter. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Stewart, who had just returned from the 1st Marine Division planning conferences at Tokyo.

"We couldn't see anything but an occasional mountain peak," Craig recalled at a later date. "After flying around for some time, we had almost decided to return to the CP and complete the tour by jeep. Then Colonel Stewart noticed a hole in the clouds, and we dropped to an altitude where we had a good view of the front." [15]

What Craig and Stewart saw was a long column of Marines fighting their way toward the line of departure.

Lieutenant Colonel Murray's plan of attack for the 5th Marines called for the 1st and 2d Battalions to advance westward astride the Yongsan road, with 2/5 on the right. Taplett's 3d Battalion would initially be in reserve, blocking the southern approaches to Yongsan.[16]

At 0450, 3 September, 2/5 detrucked about 800 yards from Yongsan and marched forward in a route column. Moving into the town a short time later, the Marines received small arms fire from snipers hidden in buildings, ditches and culverts. Most of them were liquidated as the column pushed through to the road junction at the western end of Yongsan by 0630.[17]

At this fork a secondary route branches from the main road through the large village of Myong-ni, about 2,000 yards northwest of Yongsan.

Although still 1,000 yards from the designated line of departure, the 2d Battalion came under moderate fire from its right front. Moreover, dawn had brought indications of considerable activity and confusion ahead of the Marines. Ignoring the fire, Roise went forward about 500 yards to a low hill lying athwart the MSR. There he was jolted by the discovery that the 9th Infantry's lines had collapsed.[18]

On the right of the road there was no friendly situation worthy of the name. To the left of the MSR, an Army tank unit was parked behind the little hill which Roise had reached, and to the front were 4 of its tanks—2 destroyed and 2 abandoned. Included in the wreckage ahead were 2 burned-out NKPA T–34's.

Three hundred yards to the west, on the high ground south of the main road, Army troops were retreating from 1/5's line of departure. The soldiers had buckled under an onslaught by the NKPA 9th Division, which had launched an all-out attack at first light.[19]

Having observed evidence of the confusing situation from their helicopter, Craig and Stewart landed some distance behind Yongsan and proceeded forward by jeep and foot. The Brigade commander located 1/5's CP south of Yongsan and discovered that the battalion was slightly out of position. During 2/5's delay in moving through the city, Murray had ordered Newton to swing westward and align his unit for the attack as best he could. Darkness, coupled with confusion caused by the Army's withdrawal and 2/5's fight, had caused the 1st Battalion to move south of Chukchon-ni instead of Yongsan, as planned. Craig instructed 1/5's commander to make a 500-yard correction northward during the actual attack.[20]

Roise was meanwhile taking the situation in hand north of the MSR. At 0645 he called Marine tanks forward to cover the withdrawal of 9th Infantry troops from the high ridge in 1/5's zone.

Second Lieutenant Robert M. Winter led his platoon of M–26's into hull defilade next to 2/5's OP on the low hill and unleashed overhead fire in support of the Army troops. The pursuit by the North Koreans began to lag.

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Chapter 11. Second Naktong
Progress of Brigade Attack

Despite enemy artillery fire in the 2d Battalion zone, Companies D and E jumped off from the road junction at 0715 to clear the Yongsan-Myong-ni road and secure the 5th Marines' right flank.[21]

While this move was in progress, the last of the 9th Infantry troops vacated 1/5's line of departure to the left front. Roise immediately smothered that ridgeline with fire from Marine tanks, artillery, air, mortars, and machineguns.

Despite this blanket of steel, enemy guns from the high ground were able to fire across the MSR at Company E as it cleared a series of hills below Myong-ni. These hills had been designated 2/5's line of departure the previous day, but now were considered part of the first objective.

At 0800, when Captain Samuel Jaskilka reported that Easy Company had completed its mission, Roise ordered Company D to push through Myong-ni and take the hill just northwest of that village.
Click here to view map

By this time the entire Brigade was shifting into high gear. Winter's tanks on the little hill straddling the MSR were joined by the 1st Platoon, Able Company Engineers. The Army armored unit behind the southern portion of the hill suddenly went into hull defilade and added its firepower to that of the Marine M–26's. Craig, Snedeker and Stewart crawled to the crest of the hill on the right side of the MSR and studied the front from positions between the Marine tanks and Roise's OP.

The NKPA 9th Division had been stopped in its tracks when the Brigade's supporting arms connected. Then the Reds concentrated their fire on the little hill where Craig's OP was located. Lieutenant Winter was shot through the neck and one of his men wounded while aiding him. Before being evacuated, the painfully wounded tank officer offered General Craig a bottle of whiskey left in his M–26.

Chaplains Sporrer and Hickey were taken under machinegun fire as they walked forward on the MSR toward the hill. "It's lucky they're poor shots," said Sporrer as a second and third burst cracked over his head. The two chaplains arrived just in time to administer to the wounded being carried off the hill by the engineers.

At 0855, the 1st Battalion jumped off from below Chukchon-ni. The attack having been launched too far to the south, Companies A and B had to veer northwest as they advanced toward the enemy-held ridge 1,000 yards away. Fenton's unit was on the right, gradually closing on the MSR as it moved forward.

To the south, Stevens deployed his 1st, 2d, and 3d Platoons from right to left in that order, the latter being slightly withheld to protect the open left flank.

As the men of 1/5 waded into the knee-deep muck of the rice paddy, they came under long-range small-arms fire from their objective. Newton countered immediately by plastering the ridge with artillery and mortar fire. The advance continued and only a few casualties were taken by the time the companies reached a drainage ditch midway across the rice paddy. Here the long skirmish line paused to check its direction and place the wounded on dikes where they would be seen by corpsmen.

During the advance from the drainage ditch to the base of the ridge, 1/5's commander frequently called on air, artillery and mortars to blast enemy automatic weapons on the crest and forward slopes of the objective. Company A had the added support of an Army tank destroyer which gave overhead fire from the hill south of Chukchon-ni. On one occasion Marine 75's joined with the Army weapon to silence Communist guns in a small village at the base of the ridge.

Throughout the rice-paddy crossing, the Marines were constantly meeting Army stragglers, some of

whom had been isolated in enemy territory for as long as three days. Most of the soldiers were wounded, and all were weaponless and near exhaustion.

At 1100 Fenton and Stevens radioed Newton that they were ready for the assault, and the battalion commander immediately showered the objective with 81-mm. mortar fire to smother North Korean machineguns.

Beyond the edge of the rice paddy in Company A's zone, a sharp step led to the gentle incline at the base of the ridge. After a few yards, the gradual slope gave way to a steep rise which shot up abruptly to the crest of the high hill.

Lieutenant Muetzel's 2d Platoon held up at the step, using its protection against enemy fire while 1/5's mortar barrage was falling. During the pause Technical Sergeant McMullen brought the 1st Platoon into position on Muetzel's right and Lieutenant Fox aligned his 3d Platoon on the left.

As soon as the supporting fire lifted, Muetzel jumped to his feet and shouted the command to assault. Every man in Company A's skirmish line responded by scrambling up the hillside. The Marines made such a fearful racket that a whole company of alarmed North Koreans suddenly jumped up from concealed foxholes on the forward slope and fled toward the summit.

The panic-stricken Reds were easy targets for Company A's riflemen and BAR men. Halting on the gentle incline, the Marines carefully took aim and killed most of the enemy soldiers. When the Communist survivors disappeared over the crest, Company A again surged upward and within minutes carried the summit.

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Chapter 11. Second Naktong
Assault on Hill 117

The 1st Battalion secured its initial objective about noon on 3 September. Company B's next target was a continuation of the ridge running parallel to the MSR for 1,000 yards and topped by 4 conspicuous peaks. Able Company's second objective was a hill stretching across its front beyond a 200-yard valley. This hill was connected to Stevens' first objective by a narrow razorback ridge on the right which offered a poor route of approach.[22]

The two companies paused on their newly won positions to reorganize, evacuate wounded, and wait for a resupply of ammunition. There they came under heavy fire from the reverse slopes of their first objective and the high ground to the west. Several casualties were taken before Corsairs, requested by Newton, appeared for an air strike. As the Marine fighter planes unloaded their ordnance, large groups of enemy broke. Most of the Reds fled down the northern slopes, crossed the MSR and ascended Hill 117 in 2/5's zone.

Newton reacted to reports of the rout by throwing heavy artillery fire across the enemy's avenues of retreat. The hillsides and road were soon littered with bodies and equipment.

While 1/5's attack on its first objective was in progress, Company D had secured the 5th Marines' right flank by clearing Myong-ni of moderate resistance and seizing the hill to the northwest of the large village. The new company commander, First Lieutenant H. J. Smith, reported to Roise that he was receiving considerable machinegun and mortar fire from Hill 117. This high ground lay directly across 2/5's front, stretching northward from the MSR to a point about 500 yards west of Myong-ni.

Smith's reports, together with the news of the enemy's withdrawal to Hill 117 from 1/5's zone, led Roise to order Company D to attack the high ground from the north and cut off the North Korean retreat. Shortly after 1200, Smith's company jumped off to the southwest from its positions above Myong-ni and fought across the rice paddies circling the objective.

Company E could not advance from the chain of hills won earlier in the day because of enemy troops along the high ridge in Baker Company's zone south of the MSR. But Jaskilka's men supported the attack on 117 by fire.

A platoon of 75's from First Lieutenant Almarion S. Bailey's AntiTank Company, taking positions on Jaskilka's right, quickly knocked out an enemy gun on the objective. The Communists answered with 85-mm. fire from a concealed T–34 tank, killing 2 and wounding 7 of the recoilless rifle crews.

Company D gained a foothold on one of Hill 117's spurs against light resistance. As the unit advanced south toward the crest, however, enemy troops pouring across the MSR from 1/5's zone had boosted the ranks of the defenders to approximately two battalions. Smith's company was caught in its isolated position 500 yards from the rest of 2/5 and blasted by North Korean artillery, mortars, and automatic weapons. Casualties mounted at such a staggering rate that the Marines were hard put to retain their foothold on the northern tip of the hill.

While the 2d Battalion was maneuvering and fighting on the right of the road, the 2d Platoon of tanks pushed westward along the MSR from its early morning position 500 yards west of Yongsan. The Brigade armor became heavily engaged with enemy antitank weapons, and several casualties were taken as Marines exposed themselves from unbuttoned M–26's to spot Communist emplacements. Second Lieutenant John S. Carson, who had taken over the platoon after Winter was wounded, fell before enemy machinegun fire and died instantly.

Going into hull defilade on another low hill overlooking the MSR, the 2d Platoon surprised three T–34 tanks on the road ahead and quickly destroyed them with 90-mm. fire. The tankmen then turned their guns on a

wealth of targets spread across the front: Red antitank weapons, machinegun positions, troop concentrations, and groups either retreating or attempting to reinforce.

About noon, Second Lieutenant Sweet's 3d Platoon joined the 2d and added its firepower to the fusillade. Another T–34 was knocked out when Sweet's men blasted a thicket suspected of concealing an antitank gun. A fifth North Korean tank went out of action when it was abandoned by its crew on the left side of the road.

In the afternoon of 3 September, enemy resistance across 1/5's front weakened proportionately as it grew stronger in the 2d Battalion zone. Newton launched his attack on Objective Two at 1510, after MAG–33 and 1/11 had softened up the North Korean positions.[23]

Company B drove down the ridgeline paralleling the MSR and in little more than an hour had seized its part of the objective, a peak directly across the road from Hill 117. During the 1,000-yard advance, Fenton reported another large group of enemy fleeing to 2/5's zone. The information was quickly relayed to Roise, who had ample reason by this time to curse the fortunes of war.

In Company A's zone, Stevens and his platoon leaders worked out a classic scheme of maneuver for seizing Hill 91, their part of the battalion objective. McMullen's 1st Platoon and the company machineguns were to remain in position as the base of fire, while Muetzel's 2d Platoon feinted across the 200-yard valley to the front. Fox's 3d Platoon, earmarked for the main effort, would then circle to the south and flank the enemy's right.
Click here to view map

Muetzel's unit jumped off with Company B at 1510, crossed the low ground, and ascended a draw leading to Hill 91. The Marines miscalculated, however, and climbed too far up the slope, so that they came within grenade range of the crest and were pinned down by machinegun fire. The platoon was split, with Muetzel and two squads on the left of the draw and Corporal Raymond E. Stephens and his squad on the right.

During the preparatory artillery barrage, Fox had led his platoon around to the enemy's right flank, concealed en route by a rice-paddy bank. Not knowing when the supporting fire would lift, he withheld his squads from an assault line by a wide safety margin. Thus when the artillery ceased, the North Koreans had time to come out of their holes and hit the envelopment with small arms fire. Fox was wounded, and command passed to Technical Sergeant George W. Bolkow who worked the platoon up into the enemy positions.

The 3d Platoon's assault was sparked by Corporal Virgil W. Henderson and his 3d Squad, who worked to the rear of a troublesome machinegun position and destroyed it. During the attack Henderson was painfully wounded in the jaw by a Communist bullet.

Since both forward platoons had SCR 300 radios, Muetzel heard the report that Fox was wounded. Concluding that the envelopment had failed, the 2d Platoon leader requested and received permission to make a frontal assault on Hill 91 from his position on the forward slopes. Enemy mortar fire had added to the woes of Muetzel's diversionary thrust. And though an OY–2 of VMO–6 had given information leading to the destruction of the mortar position, the beleaguered platoon leader sought the relative safety of a frontal assault.

Corporal Stephens, acting on his own initiative across the draw, had worked his squad up to the razorback ridge and around the enemy's left flank. Thus the hapless North Koreans on Hill 91 were hit by a "triple envelopment" when Stephens struck from the north, Muetzel from the east and Bolkow from the south.

Company A reported its objective seized at 1630, and Newton ordered Stevens and Fenton to dig in for the night.

Both Roise and Newton were confronted by serious space factors on the night of 3–4 September. The 2d Battalion's front was more than 2,000 yards long and formed a right angle. A gap of 500 yards stretched between Company D's precarious position on the northern tip of Hill 117 and Easy Company's lines below Myong-ni. This left Smith's depleted unit isolated and Jaskilka's right dangling.

The 1st Battalion's right flank was exposed more than 1,000 yards along the MSR; and its front was almost a mile in length, with a 200-yard valley separating the two rifle companies. The Brigade Reconnaissance

Company was deployed on high ground far out on Newton's left flank, but this was hardly ample protection for the many avenues of approach in the south.

Exhibiting his characteristic faith in high explosives, Newton called on the 1st Platoon, Able Company Engineers, to contribute their sundry lethal devices to 1/5's infantry defense. Beginning at 1800, 3 September, one group of engineers fanned out to the front and right flank of Company B's lines. Despite fire from Hill 117 and enemy positions to the west, the demolitions men strung out dozens of antipersonnel mines, hand grenades, and blocks of TNT wrapped with 60-penny spikes. Before darkness set in, Baker Company's forward slopes had the potential of an active volcano.

In Company A's zone, Technical Sergeant David N. Duncan and Sergeant Bryan K. White led the other half of the engineer platoon in laying a similar field of obstacles. Duncan crowned his handiwork with a 40-pound shaped charge hooked up in a gully with a trip wire.

Staff Sergeant Saweren J. Dennis and his 2d Squad of engineers crept forward at midnight 1,000 yards on the MSR and laid an antitank minefield across the road near the southern tip of Hill 117. On the way Dennis discovered an enemy antitank minefield embedded in the road. Although the engineers had never seen a Russian wooden-box mine before, knowledge gained from the study of intelligence manuals during the Brigade's sea voyage enabled them to detect, remove, and disarm every mine in the field during darkness. The work was delayed a few minutes when Dennis traced a clanking sound to the roadside ditch and killed a Communist soldier frantically trying to insert a loaded magazine into his submachinegun.

Before the engineers completed their work and retired to 1/5's lines, Nature added an obstacle of her own to any enemy plans for a counterattack. A rainstorm broke, and the heavy downpour, accompanied by unseasonably icy winds, wrought misery on friend and foe alike for the rest of the night.

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Chapter 12. Mission Completed

THE CASUALTIES OF 2/5 for 3 September totaled 18 dead and 77 wounded, most of them being taken by Company D. Lieutenant Colonel Murray ordered the 3d Battalion to pass through the 2d, therefore, and continue the attack on the right of the MSR at 0800 the next morning. The 1st Battalion was to resume its advance south of the MSR, while the Reconnaissance Company far out on the left would move forward to a new blocking position. [1]

Shortly after dawn on the 4th, the 1st Platoon of engineers went forward and removed the mines ahead of 1/5's positions. Preparatory fires by 1/11 at 0750 routed a group of enemy on the peak on Baker Company's front, and the Marine riflemen had a field day as the Reds threw away their weapons and pelted westward.

Companies A and B jumped off at 0800 and advanced rapidly over the high ground south of the MSR against negligible resistance. The attackers frequently observed small groups of enemy fleeing in all directions, and many of the Communists were cut down by Brigade air, artillery, and armor. Twelve prisoners were captured before 1/5 reached its half of Brigade Objective One at 1505. This was the high ground south of the MSR at Kang-ni, over 3,000 yards from the line of departure.

Shortly after 0800, 3/5 had launched a two-pronged assault against Hill 117, core of the NKPA 9th Division's resistance the previous day. Company G advanced through Easy Company's lines just above the MSR and pushed across the intervening rice paddies. The Marines charged over a small knoll in their path but found the enemy positions unoccupied except for several dead. Bohn quickly led the company to the southern slopes of Hill 117, which was strangely quiet by comparison with the tumult of the previous day. In capturing the southern half of the hill, Company G killed only 15 North Koreans.

Simultaneously with Bohn's advance, Company H swung wide to the right and passed through the thin ranks of Dog Company on the northern tip of Hill 117. The attackers drove south against negligible resistance and quickly linked with Company G, securing the objective at 0840.

A connecting road runs from Myong-ni to the MSR, tracing the eastern base of Hill 117. Since engineers on the previous night had located the enemy minefield east of the junction on the main road, Taplett moved his headquarters to the MSR via the connecting road. The lead vehicle, a personnel carrier loaded with communications men, struck a Communist mine on the secondary route east of the newly captured objective. The resulting explosion caused 10 casualties.

By noon the engineers had cleared the road of several Russian-type mines identical to those found during the night. The two anti-vehicular minefields were among the first such obstacles encountered by the UN forces in the Korean conflict.

After seizing Hill 117, Companies G and H continued the attack westward by advancing abreast on the high ground north of the MSR. Contact with 1/5 on the left was maintained, but the 9th Infantry on the right soon fell behind and disappeared from sight.

At 1045 Company G ran into machinegun fire coming from the 3/5 area of the Brigade objective, the hill north of Kang-ni. Taplett blasted the hill with Marine air and artillery, and the North Koreans were in full retreat within an hour. MAG–33 and 1/11 rained death on the retreating Reds and continued to pound the hill preparatory to an assault by Company G. Bohn led his troops forward and secured the objective at 1515.

Looking across the stream bed to the north of their new positions, the Marines of George Company spotted enemy infantry escorting a T–34 tank and withdrawing into the 9th Infantry zone. The Communist column was quickly dispersed by machinegun fire.

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Chapter 12. Mission Completed
Collapse of NKPA 9th Division

Marines following up the 3,000-yard advance along the MSR saw a picture of devastation unequalled even by the earlier defeat of the NKPA 4th Division. Hundreds of enemy dead were strewn along the road, hillsides and ridgelines. On the MSR between Hill 117 and Kang-ni lay a long column of North Koreans who had been caught by Marine air and artillery while attempting to reinforce Red lines. The dead leader was a lieutenant colonel whose briefcase contained a lengthy artillery treatise among other less scholarly documents.[2]

In addition to knocked-out and abandoned Communist tanks, vehicles, mortars, and antitank guns, the countryside was littered with enough small arms, ammunition, and gear to equip several hundred men. Even the North Korean paymaster had been caught in the sweeping tide of Brigade arms, and Marines distributed a huge quantity of worthless currency among themselves.

Not only did the Marines reap a harvest of enemy materiel; they also recaptured a great quantity of United States Army equipment lost during the Communist drive. American tanks, artillery pieces, mortars, vehicles, small arms, and ammunition and supply dumps were turned over to the 2d Division by the Brigade.

The destruction of the enemy camp left Army and Marine intelligence officers inundated by captured enemy documents. Muster rolls, ledgers, maps, orders, textbooks, and propaganda material were heaped into separate piles.

Late in the afternoon of 4 September, the 9th Infantry moved into positions on the high ground northeast of 3/5. This completed the advance to Phase Line One of the 2d Division's counterattack plan. The second phase line on G–3 maps was drawn through Hill 125 and Observation Hill, 3,000 yards west of Kang-ni.

When informed that the Brigade had completed the first part of its mission, General Keiser authorized General Craig to advance toward Phase Line Two.

Beyond Kang-ni, the Brigade's right boundary became the MSR, so that 3/5 could not advance westward from its half of Objective One. Major Charles H. Brush, Murray's S–3, radioed Newton and passed on orders for the battalion commander to take the next piece of high ground, Cloverleaf Hill, just south of the MSR at Hwayong-ni, about a thousand yards away.

The 1st Battalion struck out through the intervening rice paddy, Company A on the left and Baker Company just below the MSR. Fenton's unit had hardly begun the advance when it was stopped by heavy machinegun fire coming from the high ground north of Hwayong-ni. Newton then called for an air strike on the ridge and also requested 3/5 to keep it covered with supporting fire during Company B's attack.

Enemy resistance evaporated with accustomed rapidity, and the Marines reported Cloverleaf Hill secure at 1800. Murray then ordered both front line battalions to establish night defenses and be prepared to continue the attack at 0800, 5 September.

The extent and trace of the Brigade front line on the night of 4–5 September was almost identical to that of 24 hours before. Again Newton's battalion was in front on the left by a good 1,000 yards, and Companies A and B were stretched across a line almost a mile long, with the left flank wide open.

Separated from both 1/5 on the left and the 9th Infantry on the right, the 3d Battalion established a perimeter defense, even though it was in the center of the counterattack zone.

There was considerable tension and excitement after darkness on 4 September, although the Brigade lines were never seriously threatened. The engineers were busy in 1/5's zone until after midnight, creeping to the front and flanks to lay mines. The 3d Battalion was shelled heavily throughout the night, and 1/5's CP took direct hits

killing 1 Marine and wounding 2 others. One of the wounded was Second Lieutenant James R. Young, Newton's Assistant S–3. The artillery liaison officer, First Lieutenant Joris J. Snyder, was knocked unconscious for several hours, though he received not a scratch from the 120-mm. explosion a few yards away.

At 0230 night-fighter planes of Major Joseph H. Reinburg's VMF(N)–513 bombed the North Korean mortar position causing most of the damage, and the shelling slackened appreciably. Completing this mission, the Marine pilots dumped general purpose and fragmentation bombs on enemy vehicles and troops in the area.[3]

Companies G and H reported movement forward of their lines before dawn, and 3/5's 81-mm. mortars quickly illuminated the front, disclosing several small groups of enemy. There was a flurry of fire, but the Reds gave no indication of organizing for an assault. One of the groups, either by error or suicidal folly, stumbled into the area of Taplett's CP. A listening post of Weapons Company took the intruders under fire, killing an NKPA officer and routing the others.

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Chapter 12. Mission Completed
Attacks of 5 September

Marines of the 3d Battalion were startled at daybreak, 5 September, when a company of North Koreans attacked the 9th Infantry's left flank in full view of 3/5's positions on the adjacent high ground. George, How, and H & S Companies poured machinegun fire into the mass of Reds at ranges of 600–1,000 yards. Most of the Red attackers were cut down before they could flee into the hills west of the Army lines.[4]

Company B, on its high ground south of Hwayong-ni, heard the firing in 3/5's area at daybreak and steeled itself for a possible counterattack from the right flank. When Newton received word of the abortive attack on the 9th Infantry, he ordered his two rifle companies to prepare to move out at 0800 as planned.

The Marines of Companies A and B were organizing their attack formation on Cloverleaf Hill when two Air Force P–51's came in for an uncontrolled air strike on the high ground north of Hwayong-ni. Strafing the ridge from north to south, the planes riddled Cloverleaf Hill as they pulled out of their dives. The 2 exposed companies were showered with bullets, and it seemed miraculous that only 1 Marine was wounded.

At 0820, 1/5 jumped off to the west to seize the Brigade's portion of Phase Line Two—Hill 125 and Observation Hill. Beyond these hills lay Obong-ni Ridge, blocking the path to the Naktong River, third and final phase line of the 2d Division counterattack. Because of its tactical importance and great significance, battle-scarred Obong-ni was designated a special objective, apart from the phase lines.

Half a mile west of Hwayong-ni the MSR makes a right-angle turn to the south, proceeds in that direction for 1,000 yards, then resumes its westward course through the cut between Hill 125 and Observation Hill.

Companies A and B, with the latter on the right, moved rapidly through the rice paddy below the MSR after leaving their line of departure on Cloverleaf Hill. At the road bend mentioned above, the MSR turned across Baker Company's front. When Fenton's unit crossed over to the base of the high ground leading to Hill 125, Companies A and B were separated by the MSR as it resumed its westward course. Stevens' unit started up the long eastern slopes of Observation Hill, while Fenton's men secured the eastern extension of Hill 125.
Click here to view map

Obong-ni Ridge rumbled its first greeting to 1/5 at 0935 when mortars and artillery fired at the Marine attackers from emplacements around the hill. The Reds were answered immediately by 1/11 and Newton's 81-mm. mortar platoon; and the rifle companies continued the advance to Phase Line Two, securing their objectives at 1100.

Murray ordered 1/5 to hold up until the 9th Infantry tied in on Fenton's right. Communist automatic weapons on Obong-ni Ridge fired on the Marines sporadically during this interlude.

At 1000, while 1/5 was attacking to the west, the 3d Battalion had swung southward behind Cloverleaf Hill to take positions on the 5th Marines' left. This was in preparation for Murray's contemplated assault on Obong-ni Ridge by two battalions. It was planned that Newton's unit would take the northern half of the long hill and 3/5 the southern portion.

Company G led the 3d Battalion advance through the rice paddy south of Cloverleaf Hill. Artillery and 75-mm. recoilless guns paved the way by raking possible enemy hiding places, enabling the infantrymen to proceed rapidly. Bohn's destination was Hill 91, a shoe-like projection jutting out from the southern reaches of Obong-ni Ridge. Reaching the base of the high ground, Bohn requested that supporting fires be lifted. Attached tanks, 75's, and 1/11 immediately shifted their destruction to Obong-ni Ridge.

Company G started up the slopes of Hill 91, while an attached 75-mm. recoilless gun obliterated a wheel-

mounted machinegun and its crew going into position on the crest. The Marines had climbed only a few yards when Bohn was ordered by Taplett at 1230 to withdraw the company to Observation Hill.

Company H, then passing between Hill 91 and Observation Hill on its way to Obong-ni's eastern approaches, received the same order from the Battalion commander. The assault on the ridge had been canceled, and Murray was concentrating his regiment along the MSR.

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Chapter 12. Mission Completed
Two Marine Tanks Killed

Throughout the Brigade advance on 5 September, the Marines were hampered by heavy rain and fog which prevented MAG–33 and VMO–6 from operating effectively. Thus the enemy was offered a rare opportunity to mount a daylight attack.[5]

After Company B received orders to hold up on Hill 125, Fenton ordered his men to dig foxholes along the rain-soaked crest facing Tugok village and Finger Ridge to the west and Obong-ni Ridge to the southwest. The company commander directed the attached 1st Platoon of tanks to remain in the road cut, just to the rear of the famous bend around the forward slopes of Hill 125. Peering through the rain and fog, the Marine tankmen could see the dead, black hulls of the three T–34's knocked out by the Brigade 2 weeks earlier.

At 1420 the sporadic sniping from the front suddenly increased to the intensity of preparatory fire, and Baker Company was pinned down on its ridgeline positions. The northern tip of Obong-ni Ridge blazed with NKPA machineguns, whose chatter was soon joined by that of automatic weapons concealed in Tugok and at the northern base of Observation Hill. A Communist antitank gun on Finger Ridge added its voice intermittently to the chorus.

Fenton's radio went dead just as he reported the situation to Newton at his OP on the high ground to the east. As luck would have it, every other radio in the company area was inoperative because of the mud and rain; and Fenton was unable to warn the Marine tanks in the road cut that enemy armor and troops were advancing toward the road bend from the west.

As the Communist vehicles swung into the turn, a company of Red soldiers left the road and assaulted Company B's positions by advancing up the draw on the Marines' left front. The intense overhead fire supporting the Red Infantry enabled them to get well up the forward slopes. Meanwhile, a squad of North Koreans advanced up the draw leading from Tugok and harassed Fenton's right front.

To stop the attack, the Marines were forced to man the crest of Hill 125. Thus exposed to the enemy's supporting fire, Company B had to pay a heavy price in casualties.

During the advance of the Communist armor, it was determined that the first 2 of the 3 vehicles were T–34 tanks and the last a tracked armored personnel carrier. Fenton immediately deployed his assault squad on the slopes below his left flank to meet the threat on the MSR.

Lieutenant Pomeroy, unaware of the enemy tanks around the bend, advanced his M–26's so that the machineguns on Obong-ni Ridge could be taken under massed fire. Thus, as the first Marine tank reached the bend, its 90-mm. gun was pointing to the left front, a quarter turn away from the enemy armor.

The lead T–34 fired on the Marine vehicle as soon as it came into view. Before the turret of the M–26 could be turned to take aim, several more 85-mm. projectiles struck; and the Brigade lost its first tank to enemy action. The second M–26 in column tried to squeeze by the first to render assistance, and it too was knocked out by 85-mm. fire in the restricted passageway.

The crews of both Marine tanks managed to get out of their vehicles through the escape hatches. Some of the wounded were aided by the engineer mine-clearance team accompanying the tank column.

Since the road bend was now blocked, the remainder of Pomeroy's tanks could do nothing but park in the road cut. It was Marine infantrymen who stepped in at this point and blunted the NKPA victory on the MSR.

Company B's assault squad plastered the lead T–34 with 3.5" rocket fire and stopped it cold. Shortly afterwards, the 1st Battalion's assault platoon reached the fight scene and went into action with its 3.5's. In short

order the infantrymen had completed the destruction of the first tank, knocked out the second, and destroyed the enemy personnel carrier.

The historic road bend, as seen through the rain and mist, had become a graveyard of armor. A total of 8 steel monsters were sprawled there in death: 5 T–34's and 1 armored carrier of the NKPA, and 2 Pershing tanks of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade.

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Chapter 12. Mission Completed
The Brigade's Final Action

On Hill 125 the fight reached a climax as Marines exchanged grenades and small-arms fire with the North Koreans slithering up the slopes in the driving rain. Company B had used all of its 60-mm. mortar shells and was running low on grenades and small arms ammunition. Enemy automatic weapons on the ridges to the front were still cutting down the Marine defenders at 1500 when Fenton sent a runner to Newton requesting more ammunition.[6]

The endurance contest was still in progress half an hour later, as the 9th Infantry moved into positions on the high ground north of Hill 125. Having no communications with his own supporting arms, Fenton sent a messenger to the Army unit commander, asking that he place artillery fire on the Marine front.

When Army shells began falling in answer to the request, 1/5's 81-mm. mortars belatedly got into the fight and worked over the forward slopes of Hill 125 to within 50 yards of Company B's positions. The heavy supporting fire turned the tide, and enemy pressure slackened considerably.

During the final stage of the enemy's attack, Company A was being relieved on Observation Hill by 3/5. Stevens told his platoon leaders to leave their grenades and extra ammunition on the hill, since his orders were to withdraw to the rear. While the relief was taking place, however, Company A was ordered to reinforce Fenton's unit against the enemy's attack on Hill 125. Muetzel's 2d Platoon, after recovering its ammunition, was augmented by a machinegun section, mortar squad, and two SCR–300 radios, before the young officer led the unit across the MSR to lend a hand.

When Stevens' relief by 3/5 was completed, he added the 1st Platoon to Company B's reinforcements, and himself withdrew to Cloverleaf Hill with the 3d Platoon as ordered.

The reinforcements were fed into Fenton's line as fast as they reached the summit of Hill 125. By this time every man in Company B had been committed to the forward wall — mortarmen, clerks, signalmen, and all. Lieutenant Howard Blank combined his Able Company mortars with those of the defenders and immediately followed up the artillery and 81-mm. fire which had blunted the attack. These final concentrations of 60-mm. mortar fire on Obong-ni and Finger Ridges and the forward slopes of Hill 125 ended the enemy attack. The surviving Reds withdrew to Tugok.

At 1600, during the dying minutes of the Brigade's final action in the Pusan Perimeter, Newton was ordered back to the regimental CP for a conference. The executive officer, Major Merlin R. Olson, took over 1/5 from the battalion OP on the ridge east of Hill 125.

The 5th Marines commander had called the leaders of his battalions to brief them on General Craig's last field directive, which began with the long awaited words:

"THIS MY OPN ORDER 22–50 X COMMENCING AT 2400 5 SEPT BRIG MOVES BY RAIL AND MOTOR TO STAGING AREA PUSAN FOR FURTHER OPERATION AGAINST THE ENEMY X PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF MOVEMENT 5TH MARS WILL STAND RELIEVED BY ELMS OF 2ND INF DIV COMMENCING AT DARKNESS . . . CONCEAL FROM THE ENEMY ACTIVITIES CONNECTED WITH YOUR WITHDRAWAL . . ."

Taplett's 3d Battalion had sustained 24 casualties from artillery and mortar fire between its occupation of Observation Hill and the time it was relieved by a company of the 23d Infantry shortly after midnight. Plodding rearward through mud and driving rain, 3/5's long column began its three-and-a-half-mile march to an entrucking point 2,000 yards west of Yongsan.

Following 3/5 were the weary, mud-soaked troops of the 1st Battalion. Having successfully defended Hill 125 at a cost of 2 killed and 23 wounded, Baker Company had filed down to the road after being relieved by another company of the 23d Infantry. Muetzel brought up the rear with Company A's contingent, and a battalion column was formed at Olson's check point east of Hill 125.

By dawn of 6 September, the two battalions were loading aboard trucks to follow the rest of the Brigade. Numbed by fatigue and icy rain, the bent forms huddled together in the cargo vehicles had no regrets as they bade good-bye to the Pusan perimeter.

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Chapter 12. Mission Completed
Brigade Embarkation at Pusan

The movement to Pusan was completed by the morning of 7 September, and the Brigade troops found themselves back at the docks where they had landed a little more than a month before. In fact, the docks were to be their bivouac area during the next 6 days; the men slept in the open and took their meals on board the transports in which they would soon be sailing around the peninsula.

The survivors of the Naktong fights—even the latecomers who had joined the Brigade at the Bean Patch—felt old and worn when they saw the large draft of shiny new Marines just landed as third rifle companies organized with their own NCO's and platoons. The veterans had forgotten how young and untroubled a Marine could look; how neat and clean he could appear in a recently issued utility jacket.

The new companies were immediately assigned to their battalions. It was another job for officers and NCO's who had the responsibility of replacing equipment lost in action as well as servicing ordnance, motor transport and other heavy equipment which had been sent from the Bean Patch to Pusan late in August.[7]

General Craig and his staff had their headquarters in one of the Pusan University buildings. There was no opportunity for planning, let alone rehearsals, for the forthcoming amphibious assault at Inchon. Craig and his officers had all they could do to get the Brigade ready for embarkation.

Among the tasks to be accomplished in less than a week, it remained to give some weapons training to the 3,000 troops of the 1st Korean Marine Regiment. This newly raised unit, attached to the Brigade for embarkation, was to make a name for itself within the next year and become the fourth rifle regiment of the 1st Marine Division. But in September 1950 there were great gaps in the training of the KMC's. The men kept their rifles scrupulously clean, and they could strip an M–1 expertly, but few of them had ever fired a shot.

Marine NCO's had the hazardous duty of giving the eager and excited KMC's their first target practice after eight rounds of ammunition for each man had been acquired. No Marine casualties resulted, fortunately, but puffed and bruised cheeks were the rule among Koreans having their first experience with an M–1's recoil.

There was, of course, no end of "scuttlebutt" going the rounds of the Marines as to their destination. One day the troops were lined up in formation and read a long lecture on the hydrographic aspects of the west coast port of Kunsan. It is to be hoped that this red herring made some impression upon the Koreans who were listening, since Pusan was a headquarters of enemy spies. As for the Marines, most of them concluded that at least Kunsan could be eliminated from the list of possible objectives.

The secret was well kept by Brigade officers in the higher echelons. Two engineer officers, First Lieutenant Ernest P. Skelt and Commissioned Warrant Officer Willard C. Downs, were given the secret mission of constructing wooden scaling ladders for the next operation. This project gave rise to more rumors, but it is safe to say that few men in the ranks knew the answer when the Brigade was deactivated at 0001 on 13 September 1950. The components immediately resumed their old unit designations in the 1st Marine Division and sailed to take part in the amphibious assault on Inchon scheduled for the 15th.[8]

The Pusan Perimeter
Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Chapter 12. Mission Completed
Results of Brigade Operations

As the mountains behind Pusan faded from sight, General Craig and his men could reflect that the Brigade's 67 days of existence had been productive. Altogether, the Marine air-ground team had fought three difficult offensive operations in a month while traveling 380 miles with a third of its organic transportation plus Army vehicles.

Total casualties for the Brigade included 148 KIA, 15 DOW, 9 MIA (seven of whom were later reclassified as KIA after recovery of the bodies) and 730 WIA.[9] It was estimated that the Marines inflicted total casualties of 9,900 killed and wounded on opposing NKPA units. Enemy losses of arms and equipment were on such a scale as to impair the effectiveness of the forces concerned.

In its initial operation, as a component of Task Force Kean, the Brigade had the major part in the first sustained Eighth Army counterattack—the military equivalent of a hard left jab which rocks an opponent back on his heels. General MacArthur, when reporting to the United Nations, asserted that "this attack not only secured the southern approaches to the beachhead, but also showed that the North Korean forces will not hold under attack."[10]

The Communist drive in this sensitive area came closest of all NKPA thrusts to the vital UN supply port of Pusan. Up to that time the NKPA units spearheading the advance—the 6th Infantry Division and the 83d Motorcycle Regiment—had never suffered a reverse worth mentioning since the outset of the invasion. Then the counterattack by the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade hurled the enemy back 26 miles in 4 days from the Chindong-ni area to Sachon.

It was estimated that the Marine air-ground team killed and wounded 1,900 of the enemy while destroying nearly all the vehicles of an NKPA motorized battalion in addition to infantry armament and equipment. The enemy threat in this critical area was nullified for the time being, and never again became so serious. Marine efforts assisted Army units of Task Force Kean in taking new defensive positions and defending them with fewer troops, thus freeing some elements for employment on other fronts. Finally, the Marines earned more time and space for the building up of Eighth Army forces in preparation for a decisive UN counteroffensive.

The next Brigade operation, the first battle of the Naktong, ranks with the hardest fights of Marine Corps history. The enemy, after showing skill and aggressiveness in breaching the last natural barrier of the Pusan Perimeter, widened his Naktong bridgehead and took strong defensive positions in preparation for an all-out offensive while still maintaining his material superiority.

Only two Eighth Army units were available for a counterattack—the 27th Infantry and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. The Army regiment being needed in reserve on the southern front, the "firemen of the Pusan Perimeter" were placed under the operational control of the 24th Infantry Division on the central front. There the Marines had the mission of clearing the enemy from Obong-ni Ridge and two other large hill masses of the Naktong Bulge.

The NKPA 4th Infantry Division had taken maximum advantage of strong defensive terrain in accordance with the precepts taught by Soviet and Chinese Communist military instructors. This enlarged bridgehead was credited by CINCFE with giving the enemy the capability of mounting a serious threat to the main railroad from Pusan to Taegu.

It took a bitter and costly effort on the part of the Brigade, but the result was the most smashing defeat ever given an NKPA major unit up to this time. This reverse turned into a rout and slaughter toward the end as

Marine air, artillery, armor, and mortars inflicted terrible losses. Broken NKPA forces were cut down in flight or while trying to swim the Naktong.

If the Brigade's first operation may be likened to a hard left jab, the fight in the Naktong Bulge is comparable to a solid right dealing a knockdown blow. The enemy lurched back to his feet, it is true, but the three rifle regiments of the NKPA 4th Infantry Division had to be filled up with hastily trained recruits.

Arms ranging from rifles to howitzers were abandoned as impediments by the routed Communists, so that the rebuilt NKPA 4th Infantry Division needed new armament and equipment of all sorts. General MacArthur's summary of the action, reported to the UN Security Council on 18 September 1950, stated that "attacks by the United States 24th Division and the Marines eliminated a major penetration of the Naktong defense line on 18 August. Here, the enemy 4th Division was decisively defeated, lost its bridgehead, and was thrown westward across the Naktong River, suffering very heavy losses in both personnel and equipment."

Never before had a major NKPA unit taken such a staggering defeat. As evidence of recent victories won over United States troops, the 4th Infantry Division had brought captured American machineguns and 105-mm. howitzers into the Naktong Bulge. Among the most important results achieved by the Brigade, therefore, was the hurt done to Red Korean morale.

Not only was the enemy's Naktong bridgehead liquidated; he also lost heavily in time, which was becoming more valuable to him than space if he hoped to profit from his rapidly dwindling advantage in numbers. Not until 10 days later did the Communists establish another bridgehead in the Naktong Bulge area, and then it was their misfortune to encounter the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade again.

During the early morning hours of 1 September 1950, the enemy made his final effort to smash through to Pusan. Again the 27th Infantry was needed on another front, so that the Marines, as the only other mobile reserve unit, were committed under the operational control of the 2d Infantry Division. The seriousness of the situation in the Naktong Bulge is indicated by the fact that the enemy had enlarged his new bridgehead with a penetration of about 4,000 yards in the sector of the 2d Division. Elements of four enemy divisions had been identified on the central front when the Marines jumped off on the morning of 3 September.

The Brigade's 3-day fight did not end as decisively as the first battle of the Naktong. That is because it was an unfinished fight. The Marines were pulled out on the night of 5 September, after gains of 2,500 to 3,000 yards that day, and it can only be conjectured what General Craig and his men might have accomplished during the next 48 hours.

As it was, the Brigade had a prominent part in disrupting the enemy's effort to sever the Pusan-Taegu lifeline. Heavy losses both in personnel and equipment were inflicted on NKPA forces, and the Marines helped to reduce the enemy's new bridgehead by 8,000 to 10,000 yards.

Not only had the enemy lost the battle; he had lost the war, as it proved, for EUSAK staff officers were even then planning a great UN counterstroke in the Pusan Perimeter. This drive was to be in conjunction with the amphibious assault on Inchon.

The turning point in the UN fortunes of war owed in no small measure to the three counterattacks by the Marines in the Pusan Perimeter. As for the overall effects, it would be hard to improve upon the analysis and evaluation in the Marine Corps Board Study:

"A careful examination of any of these operations in which Marines engaged discloses that a single failure would have a profound effect upon the entire UN effort. . . . On 3 separate occasions the Brigade was attached to the defending UN forces at points of dangerous enemy penetrations and 3 times Marine units spearheaded the counterattacking elements and effectively stopped the enemy's efforts, seizing the initiative from him, inflicting serious losses upon him, and forcing the abandonment of immediate attempts at decisive penetration."[11]

The Pusan Perimeter
Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Chapter 12. Mission Completed
Summaries and Conclusions

No Marine tactical organization of history ever did more than the Brigade to uphold the tradition of the Corps as a force-in-readiness. The transition from activation to embarkation took only 6 days, and it may be recalled that the Brigade became the first United States unit to get into the fight after crossing the Pacific from the American mainland.

Although the components had been hastily thrown together without opportunity for training or rehearsals, there were singularly few instances of tactical fumbling during the early actions. Some of the men had their only weapons familiarization instruction in actual battle, when they fired new arms for the first time. But thanks to the steadying influence of combat-wise company officers and NCO's, the Marines of the Brigade soon gained competence.

The Brigade command and staff faced unusual problems arising from such factors as emergency situations, hurried planning, oral orders, incomplete intelligence, and lack of adequate maps. There were decisions now and then which officers would not have made if they had been endowed with the wisdom of knowledge after the event. But on the basis of information at the time, the Brigade command and staff need no whitewashing from history. Marine victories, on the other hand, may be attributed in large degree to a high order of leadership and professional ability in the upper echelons as well as on the company and platoon level.

It might have been argued that it was a waste to commit amphibious specialists to the operations of mountain warfare. But Marines were also trained as infantry, and gravel-crunching fighting men were needed to correct an illusion held by many of their countrymen. Atomic bombs, guided missiles, jet planes, and other marvelous new weapons had convinced a large section of the public that the day of push-button warfare was at hand. These Americans sincerely believed that wars could be waged at long distance, and the Marines of the Brigade served their country well by demonstrating that even in the tactical millenium it was necessary to seek out the enemy and close with him. For if there was any outstanding figure of the conflict in Korea, it was some second lieutenant making split-second decisions which meant life or death for a platoon holding a hill position against enemy attack in the darkness.

The three squadrons of MAG–33 provided support which the Brigade reported as "the best close air support in the history of the Marine Corps . . . outstanding in its effectiveness." Army infantry officers were frankly envious on occasion; and Colonel Paul L. Freeman, USA, commanding the 23d Infantry, commented that "the Marines on our left were a sight to behold. Not only was their equipment superior or equal to ours, but they had squadrons of air in direct support. They used it like artillery. It was 'Hey, Joe—This is Smitty—Knock the left of that ridge in front of Item Company.' They had it *day and night.* It came off nearby carriers, and not from Japan with only 15 minutes of fuel to accomplish mission."[12]

The UN forces, of course, had complete supremacy in the air. On two occasions the Marines of the Brigade were briefly strafed by NKPA night hecklers making a "scalded-cat" raid. During the interlude at the Bean Patch an enemy plane winged its way under cover of darkness to cut loose with a brief burst of machinegun bullets before disappearing into the night. But United States Air Force planes had virtually destroyed the little NKPA air force during the first few weeks of the war, so that the men of the Brigade were virtually unopposed in the air.

The time interval between a request for Marine air support and the actual delivery varied according to local conditions, but the ground forces seldom had cause for complaint. All-weather Squadron VMF(N)–513,

based at Itazuke, Japan, was prevented by reason of faulty communications and liaison from responding to every request for dawn, dusk or night support during early Brigade operations, but such missions were flown effectively in the Naktong Bulge. Meanwhile, the Corsairs of VMF–214 and VMF–323, orbiting on station and always available for short notice employment, gave fresh proof that the Navy-Marine concept of carrier-based tactical aircraft was sound in practice. Following are the statistics of MAG–33 operations in Korea from 3 August to 14 September 1950:

Click here to view table

Demands on the time of the original 4 helicopters of VMO–6 made it necessary to fly 2 more machines in from Japan. The rotary-wing aircraft had so many “firsts” to their credit in the Pusan Perimeter that a major tactical innovation was obviously in the making. The flights of General Craig, Colonel Snedeker and Lieutenant Colonel Stewart alone were enough to indicate that the helicopter was capable of working a revolution in command and staff procedures.

Altogether, the participation of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was an important factor in stopping the NKPA invasion in August 1950 and punishing the invaders so severely that they were ripe for a crushing defeat the following month. The Marines, moreover, did a great deal to restore the national pride of countrymen who had been hurt and bewildered by the outcome of the first month’s operations.

It was humiliating to read on the front page that only 5 years after reaching our greatest military strength of history, United States troops were being pushed around by Asiatic peasants of a Soviet-trained organization calling itself the North Korean People’s Army. Perhaps these Americans did not remember that the decline in our Armed Forces was due to overwhelming popular demands for the disbanding of our victorious armies of 1945. At any rate, the United States paid the penalty of unpreparedness in 1950 when its first ground-force units were beaten by better trained and equipped NKPA troops. Worse yet, correspondents at the front intimated that these defeats were due to the softness of our youth. It was charged that United States troops had been so pampered by motor transport that they could no longer march, let alone fight.

The Marines helped to change all that. The Marines and the better Army units proved that they were more than a match for the enemy when it came to marching as well as fighting. The Marines did their best to restore the pride of Americans who read about the advance to Kosong or the fight on Obong-ni Ridge. The Marines, in short, deserved the pat on the back conveyed in a dispatch to the Brigade on 23 August 1950 from their Commandant, General Clifton B. Cates:

“I AM VERY PROUD OF THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR AIR-GROUND TEAM. KEEP ON HITTING THEM, FRONT, FLANKS, REAR, AND TOPSIDE! WELL DONE!”

The Pusan Perimeter

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Appendix A. Glossary of Military and Aeronautical Terms

AKA—Attack cargo ship

APA—Attack transport ship

ADC—Assistant Division Commander

BAR—Browning automatic rifle

BLT—Battalion landing team

CCF—Chinese Communist Forces (refers to entire Chinese force employed in Korea)

CG—Commanding general

CINCFE—Commander in Chief, Far East

CincPacFlt—Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet

CINCUNC—Commander in Chief, United Nations Command

CNO—Chief of Naval Operations

CO—Commanding officer

COMNAGFE—Commander Naval Air Group Far East

COMNAVFE—Commander Navy Far East

COMPHIBGRUONE—Commander Amphibious Group One

COMSEVENTHFLT—Commander Seventh Fleet

COS—Combined Operations Section

CP—Command Post

CSG—Combat Service Group

CTF—Commander Task Force

CVG—Carrier Air Group

DOW—Died of wounds

EUSAK—Eighth United States Army in Korea

FAC—Forward Air Controller

FEAF—Far East Air Force

FECOM—Far East Command

FL—Flight leader

FMF—Fleet Marine Force (Pac = Pacific; Lant = Atlantic)

GHQFEC—General Headquarters, Far East Command

HF—High frequency (radio)

InfDiv—Infantry Division

JCS—Joint Chiefs of Staff

JOC—Joint Operations Center

KIA—Killed in action

KMC—Korean Marine Corps

KVA—Korean Volunteer Army

LST—Landing ship, tank

MAG—Marine Aircraft Group

MCBS—Marine Corps Board Study

MGCIS—Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron

MIA—Missing in action

MSR—Main supply route

MTACS—Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron

NCO—Noncommissioned officer

NK—North Korea (n)

NKPA—North Korean Peoples Army

OP—Observation post

OY—Light observation plane

POL—Petroleum oil lubricants

POW—Prisoner of war

ProvCasCo—Provisional Casual Company

RCT—Regimental Combat Team

ROK—Republic of Korea

SAC—Supporting Arms Center

SAR—Special Action Report

SecNav—Secretary of the Navy

TAC—Tactical Air Coordinator

TAC X Corps—Tactical Air Command, X Corps

TACC—Tactical Air Control Center

TACP—Tactical Air Control Party

TACRON—Tactical Air Control Squadron

TAD—Tactical Air Direction

TADC—Tactical Air Direction Center

TAO—Tactical Air Observer

TAR—Tactical air request

T/E—Table of equipment

T/O—Table of organization

UN—United Nations

VHF—Very high frequency (radio)

VMF—Marine fighter type aircraft (squadron)

VMF (N)—Marine night fighter type aircraft, all-weather (squadron)

VMO—Marine observation type aircraft (squadron)

VMR—Marine transport type aircraft (squadron)

WIA—Wounded in action

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Appendix B. Command and Staff List of the First Provisional Marine Brigade

7 July—13 September 1950

Commanding General: BrigGen Edward A. Craig

Deputy Commander: BrigGen Thomas J. Cushman

Chief of Staff: Col Edward W. Snedeker

G–1: Maj Donald W. Sherman

G–2: LtCol Ellsworth G. Van Orman

G–3: LtCol Joseph L. Stewart

G–4: LtCol Arthur A. Chidester

Special Staff Section

Adjutant: Capt Harold G. Schrier

Supply Officer: Maj James K. Eagan

Air Officer: Maj James N. Cupp

Signal Officer: Maj Elwin M. Stimpson

Air Observer: Capt Edwin L. Rives

Signal Supply Officer: 1stLt Joseph E. Conners

Engineer Supply Officer: Capt William R. Gould

Liaison Officer: LtCol Edward R. Hagenah

Brigade Surgeon: Capt Eugene R. Hering, Jr., USN

Brigade Dental Officer: LtComdr Jack J. Kelly, USN

Headquarters and Service Battalion

(32 officers—183 enlisted men)

Commanding Officer: Maj Richard E. Sullivan

Executive Officer: Capt Samuel Jaskilka (to 18 Aug 50)

CoComdr, Hq Co: 1stLt Nathaniel F. Mann, Jr.

Detachment, 1st Signal Battalion

(4 officers—99 enlisted men)

DetComdr: Capt Earl F. Stanley

Company A, 1st Motor Transport Battalion

(6 officers—112 enlisted men)

Commanding Officer: Capt Arthur W Ecklund

Company C, 1st Medical Battalion

(5 officers—94 enlisted men)

Commanding Officer: Comdr Robert A. Freyling, USN

Company A, 1st Shore Party Battalion
(12 officers—213 enlisted men)
Commanding Officer: Maj William L. Batchelor
Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion
(9 officers—209 enlisted men)
Commanding Officer: Capt George W. King
Detachment, 1st Ordnance Battalion
(5 officers—119 enlisted men)
DetComdr: 1stLt Meyer La Bellman
Company A, 1st Tank Battalion
(9 officers—173 enlisted men)
Commanding Officer: Capt Gearl M. English
PlatComdr, 1st Plat: 1stLt William D. Pomeroy
PlatComdr, 2d Plat: 2dLt Robert M. Winter (to 3 Sep 50, WIA); 2dLt John S. Carson (3 Sep 50, KIA)
PlatComdr, 3d Plat: 2dLt Granville G. Sweet
1st Battalion, 11th Marines
(44 officers—474 enlisted men)
Commanding Officer: LtCol Ransom M. Wood
Executive Officer: Maj Francis R. Schlesinger
Headquarters Battery:
Commanding Officer: Capt James W. Brayshay
Service Battery:
Commanding Officer: 1stLt Kenneth H. Quelch
Battery A:
Commanding Officer: Capt James D. Jordan
Battery B:
Commanding Officer: Capt Arnold C. Hofstetter
Battery C:
Commanding Officer: Capt William J. Nichols, Jr.
Detachment, 1st Service Battalion
(11 officers—161 enlisted men)
DetComdr: Capt Thomas M. Sagar
Detachment, 1st Combat Service Group
(5 officers—104 enlisted men)
DetComdr: Maj Thomas J. O'Mahoney
Detachment, Reconnaissance Company
(2 officers—37 enlisted men)
DetComdr: Capt Kenneth J. Houghton

Detachment, Military Police Company

(2 officers—36 enlisted men)

DetComdr: 1sLt Nye G. Rodes

1st Amphibian Tractor Company

(10 officers—244 enlisted men)

Commanding Officer: Maj James P. Treadwell

1st Amphibian Truck Platoon

(1 officer—75 enlisted men)

Commanding Officer: 1stLt James E. Condra

VMO—6

Commanding Officer: Maj Vincent J. Gottschalk

5th Marines

(132 officers—2452 enlisted men)

Commanding Officer: LtCol Raymond L. Murray

Executive Officer: LtCol Lawrence C. Hays, Jr.

S–1: 1stLt Alton C. Weed

S–2: Maj William C. Esterline

S–3: LtCol George F. Waters, Jr. (to 29 Aug 50); Maj Charles H. Brush, Jr.

S–4: Maj Harold Wallace

Special Staff, 5th Marines:

Chaplain: LtComdr Orlando Ingvolstad, Jr., USN

Medical Officer: Lt (jg) William E. Larsen, USN (to 11 Aug 50); LtComdr Byron D. Casteel

Supply Officer: Capt John V. Huff

Motor Transport Officer: Capt William F. A. Trax (to 15 Aug 50); 1stLt James O. Alison

Ordnance Officer: CWO Bill E. Parrish

Disbursing Officer: Capt Kenneth L. Shaw

Communications Officer: Maj Kenneth B. Boyd

Naval Gunfire Officer: Lt Jerry C. Ragon, USN

Air Officer: 1stLt Leo R. Jillisky

1st Battalion, 5th Marines:

Commanding Officer: LtCol George R. Newton

Executive Officer: Maj Merlin R. Olson

CO, H & S Company: Capt Walter E. Godenius

CO, Company A: Capt John R. Stevens

CO, Company B: Capt John L. Tobin (to 17 Aug 50, WIA); Capt Francis I. Fenton, Jr.

CO, Weapons Company: Maj John W. Russell

2d Battalion, 5th Marines:

Commanding Officer: LtCol Harold S. Roise

Executive Officer: LtCol John W. Stevens, II

CO, H & S Company: 1stLt David W. Walsh

CO, Company D: Capt John Finn, Jr. (to 8 Aug 50, WIA); Capt Andrew M. Zimmer (to 17 Aug 50, WIA); 1stLt Robert T. Hanifin, Jr. (to 22 Aug 50); 1stLt H. J. Smith

CO, Company E: Capt George E. Kittredge (to 7 Aug 50, WIA); 1stLt William E. Sweeney (to 18 Aug 50); Capt Samuel Jaskilka

CO, Weapons Company: Maj Walter Gall (to 10 Aug 50); Maj Theodore F. Spiker

3d Battalion, 5th Marines:

Commanding Officer: LtCol Robert D. Taplett

Executive Officer: Maj John J. Canney

CO, H & S Company: 1stLt Arthur E. House, Jr. (to 22 Aug 50); 1stLt Harold D. Fredericks

CO, Company G: 1stLt Robert D. Bohn

CO, Company H: Capt Joseph C. Fegan, Jr. (to 18 Aug 50, WIA); Capt Patrick E. Wildman

CO, Weapons Company: Capt Patrick E. Wildman (to 19 Aug 50); Maj Murray Ehrlich

Forward Echelon, 1st Marine Air Wing

Commanding General: BrigGen Thomas J. Cushman

Chief of Staff: Col Kenneth H. Weir

Marine Air Group 33:

Commanding Officer: Col Allen C. Koonce (to 20 Aug 50); Col Frank G. Dailey

Deputy Commander: LtCol Norman J. Anderson

Executive Officer: LtCol Radford C. West

CO, VMF–214: LtCol Walter E. Lischeid

CO, VMF–323: Maj Arnold A. Lund

CO, VMF(N)–513: Maj Joseph H. Reinburg

CO, Hq Squadron: Capt Norman D. Glenn

CO, Service Squadron: LtCol James C. Lindsay

CO, MTACS–2: Maj Christian C. Lee

The Pusan Perimeter

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Appendix C. Citations and Commendations

September 29, 1950

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

The President of the Republic of Korea takes profound pleasure in citing for outstanding and heroic performance of duty on the field of battle during the period 2 August 1950–6 September 1950.

THE FIRST UNITED STATES PROVISIONAL MARINE BRIGADE for the Award of THE PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

The First United States Provisional Marine Brigade was a vital element in the first major counterattack against the enemy.

In late July and early August 1950, the enemy had swept through the Chulla Provinces and had rapidly approached along the south Korean coast to a point only 35 miles from the vital port of Pusan. Together with the 25th Infantry Division, the First United States Provisional Marine Brigade, from 7 August to 12 August 1950, played a major role in attacking and driving back the enemy.

During the period 17 August to 20 August 1950 in conjunction with the 24th Infantry Division and units of the 2d Infantry Division, the First United States Provisional Marine Brigade attacked a great pocket of enemy forces who had successfully crossed the Naktong River and established a firm beachhead on the eastern bank. The Brigade attacked with such determination and skill as to earn the admiration of all who saw or knew of its battle conduct.

Later, on the night of 31 August–1 September, the enemy again launched an all-out offensive against the United Nations Forces. The First United States Provisional Marine Brigade was in Army reserve at that time. With the 2d Infantry Division, the Brigade again was committed in almost the same area of its earlier action against the Naktong pocket in the neighborhood of Yongsan. Again the gallant Marine forces were instrumental in preventing the enemy from capturing their objective and cutting the north-south lines of communication of the United Nations Forces.

The brilliant performance of duty in combat in Korea of each individual of the First United States Provisional Marine Brigade is in accord with the highest traditions of the military service.

This citation carries with it the right to wear the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon by each individual of the First United States Provisional Marine Brigade which served in Korea in the stated period.

(Signed) SYNGMAN RHEE

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the FIRST PROVISIONAL MARINE BRIGADE, REINFORCED for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from 7 August to 7 September 1950. Functioning as a mobile, self-contained, air-ground team, the First Provisional Marine Brigade, Reinforced, rendered invaluable service during the fierce struggle to maintain the foothold established by friendly forces in the Pusan area during the early stages of the Korean conflict. Quickly moving into action as numerically superior enemy forces neared the Naktong River on the central front and penetrated to within 35 miles of Pusan in the southern sector, threatening the integrity of the entire defensive perimeter, this hard-hitting, indomitable team counterattacked serious enemy penetrations at three different points in rapid succession. Undeterred by roadblocks, heavy hostile automatic weapons and highly effective artillery fire, extremely difficult terrain and intense heat, the Brigade met the invaders with relentless determination and, on each crucial occasion, hurled them back in disorderly retreat. By combining sheer resolution and esprit de corps with sound infantry tactics and splendid close air support, the Brigade was largely instrumental in restoring the line of defense, in inflicting thousands of casualties upon the enemy and in seizing large amounts of ammunition, equipment and other supplies. The brilliant record achieved by the unit during the critical early days of the Korean conflict attests to the individual valor and competence of the officers and men and reflects the highest credit upon the First Provisional Marine Brigade, Reinforced, and the United States Naval Service."

All of the First Provisional Marine Brigade except the First Amphibian Tractor Company participated in operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from 7 August to 7 September 1950.

The following reinforcing units of the First Provisional Marine Brigade participated in operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from 7 August to 7 September 1950:
Forward Echelon, First Marine Aircraft Wing (less ground personnel)
Marine Air Group Thirty-Three, Reinforced (less ground personnel)
Marine Observation Squadron Six plus Helicopter Section, Headquarters Squadron
Air Support Section of Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron Two
United States Army: Counter Intelligence Corps and Military Intelligence Special Detachment personnel attached to the Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, First Provisional Marine Brigade.

For the President,
(Signed) R. A. ANDERSON
Secretary of the Navy

HEADQUARTERS
EIGHTH UNITED STATES ARMY KOREA (EUSAK)
Office of the Commanding General
APO 301
22 August 1950
Subject: Commendation

Thru: Commanding General, 24th Infantry Division
To: Commanding General, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade

1. It gives me great pleasure to commend you, your officers and men, for the part your organization played in the successful attack which began 17 August 50 against a determined enemy occupying a bridgehead east of the NAKTONG RIVER in the vicinity of KUJIN-SAN and ended only when the bridgehead had been eliminated with great loss of men and equipment to the enemy.

2. Through excellence in leadership and grit and determination in all ranks, your organization helped materially in preventing the enemy from penetrating our lines at a critical time. In so doing it has upheld the fine tradition of the Marines in a glorious manner and by close cooperation has proved unification of the services a success.

3. Please accept my sincere thanks and congratulations. I ask that you convey to your splendid command, the traditional “Well Done.”

WALTON H. WALKER
Lieutenant General, United States Army
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS
24TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 24, 28 August 1950
To: Commanding General, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, APO 25

1. I am pleased and privileged to add my personal commendation to that of the Army Commander. And, on behalf of all officers and enlisted personnel of my command, I desire to express our sincere appreciation for the decisive and valiant offensive actions conducted by your command which predominately contributed to the total destruction of the Naktong pocket.

2. The esprit, aggressiveness and sheer determination continuously displayed by all personnel of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in the face of fierce enemy resistance and counteraction has aroused the highest admiration of every member of my command.

JOHN E. CHURCH
Maj Gen, USA
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS
1ST PROVISIONAL MARINE BRIGADE, FMF (REINFORCED)
c/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, Calif.
9 Sep 1950
From: The Commanding General

To: All officers and men of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, FMF (Reinforced)
Subj: Letter of commendation from the Commanding General, Eighth United States Army in Korea, of 22 August 1950 with first endorsement by the Commanding General, 24th Infantry Division
Encl: (1) Copy of subj ltr and endorsement

1. It is with extreme pride in your accomplishments that I publish to all officers and men of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade the enclosed copy of a letter from the Commanding General, Eighth United States Army in Korea, and endorsement by the Commanding General, 24th Infantry Division, United States Army, commending the Brigade.

2. The realization that your professional skill, esprit de corps, outstanding bravery, and determination to succeed in all missions has been specifically commended by the Army and Division Commanders under whom the Brigade was serving at the time is indeed a source of gratification to me as it will also be to you.

(Signed) E. A. Craig
E. A. CRAIG

The Pusan Perimeter
Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

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The Inchon-Seoul Operation

Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Foreword

THE INCHON LANDING was a major amphibious operation, planned in record time and executed with skill and precision. Even more, it was an exemplification of the fruits of a bold strategy executed by a competent force. The decision to attack at Inchon involved weakening the line against enemy strength in the Pusan Perimeter in order to strike him in the rear. It involved the conduct of an amphibious attack under most difficult conditions of weather and geography.

The stakes were high and the risk was fully justified. Had it not been for the intervention of the Chinese Communist Army, the offensive generated by the Inchon attack would have resulted in a complete victory for our arms in Korea. A study of the record of this operation will disclose, with arresting clarity, the decisive power that is to be found in highly trained amphibious forces when their strength is applied at the critical place and time.

--Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps

The Inchon-Seoul Operation

Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Preface

THIS IS THE second volume of a series dealing with United States Marine Operations in Korea during the period 2 August 1950 to 27 July 1953. Volume II presents in detail the operations of the 1st Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing as a part of X Corps, USA, during and immediately following the Inchon Landing on 15 September 1950.

In order to tell a complete story of this historic amphibious operation, the authors have described the mobilization of the Marine Corps reserves to form the components of the Division and Aircraft Wing; the movement to the staging area and the hurried planning for an amphibious landing; the withdrawal of the 1st Provisional Brigade and Marine Air Group 33 from the embattled Pusan Perimeter to amalgamate with the larger force for D-day at Inchon; the seizure of Seoul and its environs, and finally the withdrawal on 7 October to prepare for the Wonsan operation.

Again, this is primarily a Marine Corps story. Activities of other services are presented in sufficient detail only to set this operation in its proper perspective.

Grateful acknowledgment is made for the valuable information furnished by the scores of officers and men consulted by interview or letter and for the assistance provided by the Current History Branch of the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army.

Maps included herein were prepared by the Reproduction Section, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia.

--Maj. Gen. T.A. Wornham, USMC, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3

The Inchon-Seoul Operation

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Chapter 1. The Communist Challenge

NO SPOT ON earth could have seemed farther removed from war's alarms than Yellowstone Park on the tranquil Sunday afternoon of 25 June 1950. Yet it was here that Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., Commanding General of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (FMFPac), had his first news of Communist armed aggression in Korea and the resulting threat to world peace.

Appointed to his new command only nine days before, he was motoring from the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico to the West Coast. From Yellowstone Park he advised Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, of his readiness to proceed to Hawaii and the Far East. His offer was accepted, and a Marine plane from El Toro transported him from Salt Lake City to San Francisco. There he boarded the first available plane to Pearl Harbor, arriving in the early morning hours of 2 July.[1]

On this date, with the Korean conflict only a week old, the armed forces of the United States were already committed. From the outset the United Nations had viewed the Red Korean invasion of the Republic of Korea as a challenge issued to free nations by World Communism. The so-called North Korean People's Republic had been set up after World War II as a Communist puppet state, and the army of invasion was both trained and armed by Soviet Russia.

More than half of the troops in the original North Korean People's Army (NKPA) were veterans of the victorious Chinese Communist forces in the Chinese Civil War. Weapons and equipment, all the way from T–34 tanks to Tokarev pistols, had been made available by the Soviet Union; and Soviet instructors prepared the invading army for its surprise attack of 25 June on the Republic of Korea.[2]

There could have been little doubt as to the outcome. Although the ROK army included eight divisions and a regiment, estimated at some 98,000 men in all, it could not compare with the NKPA establishment of about equal numbers. The difference lay in the purposes for which the two forces had been organized during the joint Soviet-American occupation of Korea after World War II. While Red Army officers created the NKPA as an instrument of aggression, American instructors trained the ROK troops for frontier defense and internal security. They had neither tanks nor combat aircraft, and their heaviest artillery consisted of a few battalions of 105mm howitzers. It was scarcely more than a lightly armed constabulary which crumpled at the first shock of NKPA columns led by Soviet-made tanks and supported by Soviet-made bombing planes. The four ROK divisions deployed along the frontier were routed, and Seoul fell to the invaders on the third day.

The reaction of the United Nations was prompt and decisive. On 27 June the UN Security Council denounced the NKPA attack as a breach of world peace and called upon member nations to aid the Republic of Korea. The United States and 52 other nations approved this resolution, which was opposed only by the Soviet Union and two of its satellites.[3]

As the NKPA tanks entered Seoul, just evacuated by American nationals, President Truman ordered American air and sea forces in the Far East to support the shattered ROK army. With the U.S. Seventh Fleet protecting Formosa, Task Force 77 bombed and bombarded points on the Korean coast. Far East Air Forces (FEAF), consisting of eight and a half combat groups commanded by Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, USAF, flew interdictory strikes meanwhile from bases in Japan against NKPA supply lines.

Within a few days the NKPA air force, consisting of about 100 Yak-type planes, was driven from the skies except for occasional night raids. It would appear that a mountainous peninsula of few good roads would be a favorable area for strategic bombing, since our naval forces were denying the sea lanes to the enemy. Yet the FEAF bombers could not prevent the aggressors from bringing up supplies at night by means of truck, animal,

and human transport. The columns of invasion were doubtless hampered, but they continued to roll on southward in spite of interdictory strikes.

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief, Far East (CinCFE), concluded on 29 June, during his first flying visit to the front, “that air and naval action alone could not be decisive, and that nothing short of the intervention of U.S. ground forces could give any assurance of stopping the Communists and of later regaining the lost ground.”[4] Unfortunately, he had only the four understrength divisions of the Eighth U.S. Army at his disposal in the Far East. During the two World Wars the United States had been able to raise and train armies while allies held the line. But no such respite was forthcoming in Korea, and the first U.S. ground forces at the front consisted of a small task force flown from Japan—an incomplete battalion reinforced by a battery of artillery.

The date was 2 July 1950. And on this same Sunday, CinCFE sent a request to Washington for the immediate dispatch of a Marine regimental combat team (RCT) with appropriate air to the Far East.

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Chapter 1. The Communist Challenge
Authorization of Marine Brigade

It is not quite a coincidence that 2 July happened also to be the date of General Shepherd's arrival at Pearl Harbor. Previous decisions in Washington had made it virtually certain that General MacArthur's request would be granted, and CG FMFPac was on his way to the Far East to prepare for the reception of the Marine reinforcements.

The first step had been taken on 28 June. General Clifton B. Cates, Commandant of the Marine Corps, conferred at the Pentagon with Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations. He urged that troops of the Fleet Marine Force be employed, and CNO promptly informed Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, Commander of Naval Forces, Far East (ComNavFE), that a Marine RCT could be made available if General MacArthur desired it.[5]

CinCFE had hoped that an entire Marine division could be sent to the Far East. But after being briefed by Admiral Joy as to the limitations of Marine Corps numbers, he had to content himself with the request for an RCT.

Admiral Sherman acted at once. With the approval of JCS and the President, he ordered Admiral Radford to transport the Marine units across the Pacific. This was the inception of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade (Reinf.), which was activated on 7 July with three squadrons of Marine Aircraft Group 33 as its air component.[6]

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Chapter 1. The Communist Challenge
First Conference on Inchon Landing

While General Shepherd stopped for a few days at Pearl Harbor, the possibility of an Inchon amphibious operation was mentioned officially for the first time at a conference in Tokyo attended by two Marine officers.

On 4 July a party given by the American colony was interrupted by a message for Brigadier General William S. Fellers, commanding general of Troop Training Unit, Amphibious Training Command, Pacific Fleet, and Colonel Edward S. Forney, commanding Mobile Training Team Able of that organization. As specialists in amphibious techniques, they were summoned along with Army and Air Force officers to a meeting at Headquarters, FECOM, presided over by General MacArthur's chief of staff, Major General Edward M. Almond, USA.[7]

The Marine officers were in Japan as a result of General MacArthur's belief in the efficacy of amphibious tactics. Early in 1950, several months before the outbreak of the Korean conflict, he had foreseen the necessity of recovering lost ground by means of a ship-to-shore assault if an enemy ever won a foothold in the Japanese Islands. His request for amphibious instructors to train U.S. Army troops in Japan had found the Navy and Marine Corps ready with units set up for just such a purpose.[8]

The oldest was the TTU organization of the Phib Tra Pac established originally on 15 August 1943 to prepare Army as well as Navy and Marine forces for amphibious operations. After making a distinguished record in World War II, TTU created a permanent place for itself during the following five years.[9]

A group of TTU officers and enlisted men under the command of Colonel Forney made up Mobile Training Team Able in the spring of 1950. Sailing from San Diego in April, these Marines were accompanied by a second group of amphibious specialists, the ANGLICO (Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company) instruction team commanded by Lieutenant Edward B. Williams, USN.[10]

The ANGLICOs, composed of both Navy and Marine Corps personnel, evolved in 1949 to assist Army units lacking the forward air control and naval gunfire control units which are integral in Marine divisions. Growing out of the responsibility of the Marine Corps for the development of those phases of landing force operations pertaining to tactics, techniques, and equipment employed by landing forces, the first company was formed in answer to the request of Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, USA, for a unit capable of giving an Army division this sort of amphibious fire support. After taking part in the MIKI exercises with the Sixth Army in Hawaii during the autumn of 1949, this ANGLICO split up into instruction teams assigned to various Army units. [11]

Training Team Able and Lieutenant Williams' ANGLICO team reached Japan just in time to cooperate with a third organization of amphibious specialists, Rear Admiral James H. Doyle's Amphibious Group (PhibGru) One of the Pacific Fleet. The three teams were given a mission of training one regiment from each of the four Eighth Army divisions in Japan. But the instruction program had only been launched when it was interrupted by the Korean conflict.

PhibGru One and the ANGLICO team were immediately assigned to new duties in connection with the sea lift of Eighth Army troops to Korea. They had just begun this task when orders came for Admiral Doyle and his staff, in the USS *Mount McKinley* at Sasebo, to proceed by air on 4 July to the conference at Tokyo.[12] There at FECOM Headquarters, they met General Fellers, Colonel Forney, and the Army officers who had been summoned from the Independence Day celebration of the American colony.

At the conference it was made plain that the concept of an Inchon landing had originated with General

MacArthur. Even at this early date, he envisioned not only a ship-to-shore assault on some east or west coast seaport, preferably Inchon, but also a drive inland to cut enemy communications and envelop Seoul. The Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group (JSPOG) headed by Brigadier General Edwin K. Wright, U.S.A. (FECOM G–3) was then drawing up the outline of such an amphibious attack plan. Code-named Operation BLUE-HEARTS, it called for a landing in the Inchon area by a Marine RCT and an Army assault force in coordination with a frontal attack from the south by the 24th and 25th Divisions. Inchon had been designated the objective area for the amphibious assault, and the date would depend upon the availability of troops for the combined operation. [13]

It would be an understatement to say that the naval and Marine officers were impressed by the boldness of MacArthur's thinking. At a time when he could send only a battalion-size force to the aid of the shattered ROK army, his mind had soared over obstacles and deficiencies to the concept of an amphibious operation designed to end the war at a stroke.

It was an idea that fired the imagination. But the amphibious specialists of TTU and PhibGru One had been trained to view the risks with a realistic appraisal. Their admiration was tempered by caution, therefore, when they took into account the difficulties.[14]

The end of World War II had found the United States at a peak of military strength never before attained in the Nation's history. Then, within a year, the popular clamor for the immediate discharge of citizen-soldiers had left the Army with scarcely enough troops for the occupation of strategic areas in the Far East. It took vigorous recruiting to fill the ranks in time of peace, and on 25 June 1950 the U.S. Eighth Army in Japan included the 7th, 24th, and 25th Infantry Divisions and the 1st Cavalry (dismounted) Division. Infantry regiments were limited to two battalions.

In the lack of trained amphibious assault troops, a definite decision could not be reached at the conference of 4 July. But it was proposed by FECOM officers that Major General Hobart H. Gay's 1st Cavalry Division be employed as the Army assault force of the proposed Inchon operation. PhibGru One and Training Team Able were to give the troops all possible amphibious training, and Colonel Forney was assigned on 5 July as the G–5 (Plans) of the division.[15]

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Chapter 1. The Communist Challenge
General Shepherd in Tokyo

The activation of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade on 7 July freed General Shepherd to continue his trip to the Far East. That evening, accompanied by his G–3, Colonel Victor H. Krulak, he took off from the Pearl Harbor area on the flight to Tokyo.

Upon his arrival, CG FMFPac was acquainted by General Almond with the deteriorating military situation. As a first step toward sending U.S. ground forces to Korea, CinCFE had set up the GHQ Advanced Command Group under the command of Brigadier General John H. Church, USA. After beginning the reorganization of the ROK forces, it was absorbed on 3 July by Headquarters, U.S. Armed Forces in Korea. And with the establishment next day of the Pusan Logistical Command (Brigadier General Crump Garvin, USA), a start was made toward handling the mountains of supplies which would be required.[16]

On 4 July the initial contact of U.S. ground forces with the enemy took place near Osan. The little task force from Major General William F. Dean's 24th Infantry Division could not attempt anything more ambitious than delaying actions. But preparations were afoot to send the rest of the division to Korea as soon as possible, to be followed by Major General William B. Kean's 25th Infantry Division.

The first fire fights occurred on 5 and 6 July in the vicinity of Osan. It was evident at once that the enemy held a great superiority in arms and equipment. Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, USA, who had been one of Patton's favorite subordinates, commented after his first visit to the Korean front that the NKPA units appeared equal to the Germans who were his adversaries in World War II.[17]

Accounts of the early actions in Korea were depressing to FECOM officers.[18] Many plausible excuses may be found for men snatched from occupation duties and rushed piecemeal into action against great material odds. The nation as a whole must share the blame when willing troops are sent to the firing line without adequate preparation, as were the first U.S. units. Eighth Army officers had done their best under the circumstances, but a scarcity of maneuver areas in Japan had restricted training exercises to the battalion and company levels. Divisions with barely 70 percent of their full complement of troops were armed with worn World War II weapons, some of which proved unserviceable for lack of spare parts and maintenance personnel. Division tank units, equipped with light M–24 tanks because of poor roads and bridges in Japan, operated at a handicap against the enemy's new Soviet T–34 tanks; and American 2.36-inch rocket launchers knocked out NKPA armor only at fairly close ranges.[19]

At this stage the ground forces were particularly dependent upon air support because of shortages of artillery. But since the mission of the Air Force in Japan had been primarily of a defensive nature, neither the organization nor equipment was available for effective air-ground cooperation on the tactical level. As a consequence, FEAF units had to confine their tactical efforts largely to targets of opportunity, and 24th Infantry units had to do without such support when it was most needed.[20]

Altogether, the so-called "police action" in Korea proved to be one of the toughest assignments ever given to American soldiers.

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Chapter 1. The Communist Challenge
Request for a Marine Division

General Shepherd's few days in Tokyo were filled with conferences, and history was made on 10 July during the course of a conversation with General MacArthur at FECOM Headquarters.

The commander in chief was not optimistic about the situation at the front. Not only had the NKPA invasion developed into a formidable threat at the end of the first two weeks, but the possibility of Red Chinese or Soviet armed intervention could not be dismissed.

President Truman had named General MacArthur as supreme commander of UN forces after the Security Council passed a resolution on 7 July calling for a unified effort in Korea. General Walker was soon to be appointed to the command of the Eighth Army in Korea (EUSAK), assuming control of all ROK ground forces.

The personnel situation had grown critical. After being completely routed, the ROK troops were now in process of reorganization into five divisions. Meanwhile, the U.S. 25th Infantry Division was being sent to Korea as rapidly as possible; and it had been decided to withdraw the 1st Cavalry Division from consideration as the landing force of the proposed Inchon operation. Not only were these troops lacking in amphibious training, but they were needed as infantry reinforcements. Thus it was planned for the combat-loaded 1st Cavalry Division to make a landing at the East Coast port of Pohang-dong, under the direction of ComPhibGru One and Mobile Training Team Able, before proceeding to the front. This would leave only the 7th Infantry Division in Japan, and it was being stripped of troops to fill out units of the other three.

The outweighed UN forces were still limited to delaying actions. But General MacArthur hoped that space could be traded for time until the arrival of stateside units enabled him to take the offensive. At his urgent request, the 2d Infantry Division and 2d Engineer Special Brigade had been alerted in the United States for immediate movement to the Far East. Port dates commencing on 20 July had been assigned, and General Wright expressed his opinion that these units might be employed along with the recently activated 1st Provisional Marine Brigade to initiate the first UN counterstroke.[21]

The only hope of an early UN decision, General MacArthur told CG FMFPac at their conference of 10 July, lay in the launching of an amphibious assault to cut supply lines in the enemy's rear. This situation, he added, reminded him of the critical days of World War II in the Pacific, when troops trained in amphibious techniques were urgently needed to make ship-to-shore landings on Japanese-held islands.

In a reminiscent mood, MacArthur recalled the competence shown by the 1st Marine Division while under his control during the New Britain operation of 1943–1944. If only he had this unit in Japan, he said, he would employ it at his first opportunity as his landing force for the Inchon assault.

Shepherd, who had been assistant division commander of the 1st Marine Division during the New Britain landings, immediately suggested that the UN supreme commander make a request that the 1st Marine Division with appropriate Marine air be assigned to him. This possibility had apparently been put aside by MacArthur after being limited to an RCT in his request of 2 July. He asked eagerly if the Marine general believed that the division could be made available for an Inchon landing as early as 15 September. And Shepherd replied that since the unit was under his command, he would take the responsibility for stating that it could be sent to Korea by that date, minus the infantry regiment and other troops of the Brigade.[22]

Thus was history made without pomp or ceremony during the conference at FECOM Headquarters.

The date was 10 July, but it was already D-minus 67 for thousands of American young men. On farms and in offices, in cities and villages from coast to coast, these civilians had no inkling that just 67 days later they

would be fighting their way ashore in a major amphibious operation. For they were Marine reservists, and the 1st Marine Division could not be brought up to full strength without calling them back into uniform.

Shepherd realized, even while assuring MacArthur that the division could be made combat-ready by 15 September, that the activation of the Brigade had left the division with less than the strength of a single RCT. Nearly as many men would be required to bring it up to full strength as were contained at present in the entire Fleet Marine Force.[23] But so great was his confidence in the Marine Corps Reserve that he did not hesitate to take the responsibility.

Nor did MacArthur lose any time at making up his mind. That very day, 10 July, he sent his first request to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a Marine division.

As the conference ended, Shepherd found the UN supreme commander “enthusiastic” about the prospect of employing again the Marine outfit that had been his reliance seven years before in the New Britain operation. He planned to stabilize the front in Korea as soon as possible, he said, as a prelude to the landing in the NKPA rear which he believed would be decisive.[24]

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Chapter 1. The Communist Challenge
America's Force-in-Readiness

Long before the New Britain landing, Cates and Shepherd had learned from first-hand experience as junior officers how decisive a force-in-readiness can be. The lieutenant from Tennessee and the lieutenant from Virginia took part in June 1918 with the Marines who stopped the Germans by counterattacking at Belleau Wood. In terms of human tonnage, two Marine regiments did not cut much of a figure in the American Expeditionary Force. What counted was the *readiness* of the Marines and a few outfits of U.S. Army regulars at a time when most of the American divisions had not yet finished training.

More than three decades later, as CMC and CG FMFPac, both Marine generals were firm advocates of the force-in-readiness concept as a basic mission of the Marine Corps. It was a mission that had evolved from practice rather than theory. During the half century since the Spanish-American War, there had been only two years when U.S. Marines were not on combat duty somewhere. It had long been a tradition that the Marines, as transitory naval forces, might land on foreign soil without the implication of hostilities usually associated with invasion. This principle was invoked, along with a liberal interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, by the State Department from 1906 to 1932 in the Caribbean and Central America. As a means of supervising unstable governments in sensitive strategic areas, Marines were sent to Cuba, Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and China for long periods of occupation.[25]

U.S. Marines were not only web-footed infantry during these overseas operations; they also distinguished themselves as scouts, cannoneers, constabulary, engineers, and horse marines. As modern warfare grew more complex, however, the time came when the Leather-necks could no longer sail on a few hours' notice as a "gangplank expeditionary force" made up of men detailed from the nearest posts and stations. No longer could such light weapons as machine guns, mortars, and mountain howitzers serve as the only armament necessary for seizing a beachhead.

The Fleet Marine Force evolved in 1933, therefore, to fill the need for a corps of highly-trained amphibious specialists capable of carrying out a major ship-to-shore assault against modern defensive weapons. New landing craft as well as new landing tactics and techniques were developed during the next ten years, and the reputation of the Marine Corps as a force-in-readiness was upheld in the amphibious operations of World War II.

During these three eventful decades of Marine development, General Cates and General Shepherd had participated in all the stages while ascending the ladder of command. Thus in the summer of 1950, they were eminently qualified for leadership in the task of building the 1st Marine Division up to war strength for the amphibious operation which General MacArthur hoped to launch on 15 September.

As a prerequisite, the sanction of Congress and authorization of the President had to be obtained before the Marine Corps Reserve could be mobilized. General MacArthur's request of 10 July for a Marine division went to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who referred it to General Cates. The Commandant could only reply that it would be necessary to call out the Reserve, and no action was taken on this first request. It was enough that a beginning had been made, and CMC put his staff to work on the necessary studies and plans.

General Shepherd was meanwhile winding up his visit to Tokyo by conferring with Admirals Joy and Doyle and Generals Almond and Stratemeyer. The Air Force general tentatively confirmed (subject to discussion with his staff) the assignment of Itami Airfield in Japan to Marine air units. He also informed CG FMFPac that he accepted as valid the principle of employing Marine air in support of Marine ground forces.[26]

The air situation in Korea had struck General Shepherd as abounding in paradoxes. He noted that "B-29's

are employed against tactical targets to the dissatisfaction of all concerned—the Air Force because of misemployment of its planes, and the ground forces because of the results achieved. Carrier aircraft, despite the wealth of close support targets available, were committed against deep and semi-strategic targets. Jet fighters, with little enemy air to engage, have been assigned to close support work despite a fuel restriction which holds them to no more than 15 minutes in the combat zone. Only a very limited number of aircraft adaptable to tactical support missions are available (F–51 and B–26) and there appears to be urgent need for suitable close support aircraft along with competent air-ground liaison units."[27]

These conclusions had much to do with a Marine policy, dating back to World War II, of insisting whenever possible on Marine close air support for Marine ground forces. Without disparaging other techniques, Marines believed that their own fliers, trained in Marine infantry methods, could provide the most effective tactical air for Marine infantry.

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Chapter 1. The Communist Challenge
Planning for the Pohang Landing

While General Shepherd was flying back to Pearl Harbor, a succession of sleepless nights awaited the officers of PhibGru One, the ANGLICO group, and Training Team Able. Upon the shoulders of these amphibious specialists fell the task of drawing up the orders, planning the loading, and mounting out the troops of the 1st Cavalry Division for its landing of 18 July at Pohang-dong.

It was not even certain, when the division commenced loading at Yokohama on 14 July, that Pohang-dong could be held by the ROKs long enough for a landing to be effected. Three reinforced NKPA divisions were making the enemy's main thrust down the Seoul-Taejon axis. They were opposed only by weary 24th Infantry Division units fighting delaying actions while falling back on Taejon and the line of the river Kum. Along the east coast and the mountains of the central sector, five regrouped and reorganized ROK divisions held as best they could. Two of these units in the center were being relieved by the U.S. 25th Infantry Division, which completed its movement to Korea on the 14th.

As a preliminary step in the Pohang landing, a reconnaissance party of Army, Navy, and Marine officers flew from Tokyo on 11 July into the objective area. They returned two days later with valuable information about the beaches, depths of water, and unloading facilities.

"Because of the extraordinary speed with which the landing at Pohang-dong was conceived, planned, and executed," said the report of ComPhibGru One, "there was no opportunity for conventional and orderly planning. . . . Since all echelons of the planning force were installed in offices at GHQ in Tokyo, it was possible to employ the quickest and most informal ways of doing business. Telephone conversations and oral directives were used in place of dispatches, letters, and formal orders."[28]

Lack of amphibious shipping in the area made it a Herculean labor to provide boat servicing gear, general securing gear, debarkation nets, towing bridles, and boat and vehicle slings in less than a week. By 14 July, however, enough shipping to move the four embarkation groups of the division had been assembled at Yokohama—two MSTS transports, two AKAs, six LSUs, and 16 LSTs in addition to LCVPs and LCMs.

The transport group and screen got under way on the 15th for a rendezvous near the objective area on D-day with the tractor group. Naval aircraft of Rear Admiral John M. Hoskins' carrier group of the Seventh Fleet were on call to provide support; but at 0558 on the 18th, the armada was unopposed as it steamed into Yongil Bay. CTF 90 signaled orders for the carrying out of Plan Baker, calling for a landing against little or no enemy resistance. By midnight the *Mount McKinley*, *Union*, *Oglethorpe*, and *Titania* had been completely unloaded, and the LSTs had accounted for 60 percent of their cargoes. Altogether, 10,027 troops, 2,022 vehicles, and 2,729 tons of bulk cargo were put ashore on D-day.

The Second Echelon consisted of six LSTs, three APs, and four Japanese freighters, while six LSTs made up the Third Echelon. These ships discharged their cargo from 23 to 29 July, having been delayed by Typhoon GRACE. And on the 30th, ComPhibGru One, as CTF 90, reported that the operation had been completed and no naval units were now at the objective.[29]

Viewed superficially, the uncontested Pohang landing may have seemed a tame affair to stateside newspaper readers. Nevertheless, it was a timely demonstration of Navy and Marine Corps amphibious know-how and Army energy, and it came at a critical moment. The important communications center of Taejon had to be abandoned by 24th Infantry Division units on 20 July, and it was growing apparent that the Eighth Army would be hard-pressed to retain a foothold in Korea until reinforcements from the States could give the United

Nations a material equality. It was a time when every platoon counted, and the fresh regiments of General Gay's division were rushed to the Yongdong area two days after their landing to relieve weary and battered elements of the 24th Infantry Division.

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Chapter 2. The Minute Men of 1950

ON 18 JULY 1950, it was D-minus 59 for the Marine reservists who would hit the beaches at Inchon. These young civilians were doubtless more interested in major league baseball standings at the moment than in hydrographic conditions at the Korean seaport they would assault within two months. Yet the proposed amphibious operation moved a long step closer to reality on the 18th when Major General Oliver P. Smith left Washington under orders to assume command of the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, California.

A graduate of the University of California in 1916, General Smith had been commissioned a Marine second lieutenant at the age of 24 in the first World War. After serving in Guam during that conflict, he saw duty at sea and in Haiti during the early 1920's, followed by studies at the Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia, and duty as an instructor in the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico.

In Paris, while attached administratively to the office of the U.S. Naval Attache, he took the full two-year course at the École Superieure de Guerre, and afterwards he was an instructor for three more years at the Marine Corps Schools. He had an extensive experience of hard-fought amphibious operations during World War II as a regimental commander in the Talasea, New Britain, landing, as ADC of the 1st Marine Division at Peleliu, and as deputy chief of staff of the U.S. Tenth Army on Okinawa. Returning with the rank of brigadier, he became Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools; and after putting up a second star, the tall, slender, white-haired general served as Assistant Commandant at Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington.

At the outbreak of the Korean conflict, Major General Graves B. Erskine had commanded the 1st Marine Division. Following his assignment to a secret State Department mission in southeast Asia, General Smith was named as his relief.

The division had meanwhile been reduced to 3,386 officers and men as compared to a strength of 7,789 on 30 June 1950. It had been stripped of its principal operating elements to build up the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, which numbered about 5,000 officers and men when it sailed from San Diego to the Far East on 14 July under the command of Brigadier General Edward A. Craig. [1]

At El Toro, the near-by Marine Corps Air Station, it was the same story. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, with a total strength of 4,004 officers and men on 30 June, provided most of the 1,548 officers and men of Marine Aircraft Group 33, the air component of the Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman, who was also deputy Brigade commander.[2]

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Chapter 2. The Minute Men of 1950
Expansion to Full Peace Strength

General Smith had known before his arrival at Pendleton that his first task would be the building up of the 1st Marine Division to full peace strength. As early as 12 July, a dispatch from CNO had warned CinCPacFlt that this expansion would take place, including the elements of the Brigade.[3] And on 15 July General Shepherd directed Brigadier General Harry B. Liversedge, temporary CG 1st Marine Division, to extend the work day and work week while intensifying training and making preparations to expand.[4]

The 15th was also the date of General MacArthur's second request for a war-strength Marine division with its own air for employment in his proposed Inchon amphibious assault. General Shepherd advised CMC that same day as to the composition of cadres to facilitate the rapid expansion of the 1st Marine Division.[5]

Already it was becoming apparent that this build-up would allow little time for training. Fortunate it was, therefore, that the Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing had participated in an intensive training program during recent months. Following are the principal exercises:

Oct 1949: Air lift field exercise involving movement of a reinforced battalion and air command to San Nicholas Island, Calif. One Marine aircraft group carrier-embarked for participation in Operation MIKI with Sixth Army in Hawaii.

Nov 1949: Field exercise involving a reinforced regiment and supporting aircraft.

Dec 1949: Combined field exercise—a simulated amphibious assault extending over a period of seven days—involving all principal elements of the Division and Wing.

Jan 1950: Participation by elements of Division in Operation MICOWEX 50, stressing the use of the transport submarine and helicopter in amphibious operations.

Feb 1950: Field exercise involving a reinforced regiment with supporting air.

Mar 1950: Land plane and seaplane air-lift exercise involving seizure of San Nicholas Island by a reinforced battalion and a Marine air command.

May 1950: Participation by a majority of Division and Wing elements in DEMON III, an amphibious demonstration for students of Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth. Participation by Wing in two-week major advanced base field exercise, with intensive training in close support.

Jun 1950: Continuation of training in lesser air-ground problems, field exercises and command post exercises. [6]

Counterparts of nearly all of these exercises might have been found in the training program for the 2d Marine Division and 2d Marine Aircraft Wing on the North Carolina coast. Operation CAMID at Little Creek, Va., was similar to DEMON III. All principal FMFLant elements participated in Operation CROSSOVER at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in the spring of 1950, and a Marine aircraft group was embarked aboard a carrier in the Mediterranean. Other elements of the Wing took part in PORTREX, an Army-Navy amphibious exercise in the Caribbean, and in SWARMER, an Army-Air Force airborne exercise in North Carolina. Units of both the Division and the Wing were represented in the annual Amphibious Command Post Exercise at Lejeune; and throughout the winter and spring a succession of smaller ground, air, and air-ground exercises emphasized close support and amphibious landings.

Posts and stations were meanwhile conducting annual weapons qualification firing tests and individual

training as required by USMC General Order No. 10. This program was designed to maintain the basic military proficiency of men not serving with the Fleet Marine Force. It is significant, however, that a large proportion of them had reported to such duty directly from FMF units, in accordance with the rotation policy.

The program for the Organized Reserve included both armory and active duty summer training. Air and ground units of reservists were “adopted” during their summer training by similar units of the Fleet Marine Force, which supervised the exercises and provided instructors. By the summer of 1950, a large proportion of the reservists had progressed beyond basic training into advanced individual and unit training, so that they could be classed as “nearly combat ready” at the time of the 1st Marine Division expansion.[7]

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Chapter 2. The Minute Men of 1950
Mobilization of Marine Corps Reserve

Shortcomings in quantity rather than quality of Marine personnel made expansion a problem on 19 July 1950, when General MacArthur sent his third request to the Pentagon for a Marine division with appropriate air. Again the Joint Chiefs referred the matter to General Cates, who was prepared with two plans worked out in detail by his staff—Plan ABLE, providing third rifle companies and replacements for the Brigade; and Plan BAKER, designed to bring the 1st Marine Division up to full war strength by calling reservists to active duty.

These plans were based on the personnel statistics of 30 June 1950. The grand total of 74,279 Marines on active duty at that time (97 per cent of authorized strength) was distributed as follows:
Operating Forces—engaged directly in carrying out assigned missions and tasks = 40, 364
Supporting Establishment—comprising trained administrative and supply personnel = 24,552
Special Assignment—including all personnel serving with organizations outside the regular establishment = 3,871
Non-Available—made up of personnel hospitalized, confined, or en route = 5,492
TOTAL = 74, 279

A breakdown of the Operating Forces reveals that the Fleet Marine Force numbered 27,703 men, the security detachments included 11,087, and 1,574 Marines were afloat. Of the 11,853 in FMFPac, 7,779 were in the 1st Marine Division, and 3,733 in the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. The 15,803 Marines in FMFLant included 8,973 in the 2d Marine Division and 5,297 in the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing.[8]

These figures make it evident that the 1st Marine Division could not be brought up to war strength of about 25,000 troops without drawing upon the 33,527 (77 per cent of authorized strength) in the ground forces of the Organized Reserve, and the 6,341 (94 per cent of authorized strength) in the aviation forces. The ground personnel were distributed among these units:

Twenty-one infantry battalions; 16 rifle companies; seven 105mm howitzer battalions; five 155mm howitzer battalions; one 155mm gun battalion; two 40mm gun batteries; two tank battalions; three amphibian tractor battalions; one amphibian truck company; one signal company (supplementary); six signal companies; one engineer battalion; 15 women's reserve platoons.

Aviation units consisted of 30 Marine fighter squadrons (VMF) and 12 Marine ground control intercept squadrons (MGCI).

The Organized Reserve was exceeded as a reservoir of potential man power by the Volunteer Marine Corps Reserve, which had a total of 90,044 men and women on 30 June 1950. This total included 2,267 volunteer reservists on continuous active duty with the regular establishment, about 5,000 training in some 200 volunteer training units, and 1,316 in the Fleet Reserve.

Altogether, the strength of all Marine reserve components (less volunteer reservists on active duty) amounted to a total of 128,959, or nearly double the number of Marines in the regular establishment.[9]

Behind every Marine regular, figuratively speaking, stood two reservists who were ready to step forward and fill the gaps in the ranks. Thus it was scarcely far-fetched when some inspired public information officer coined the phrase "Minute Men of 1950" for these recent civilians who made it possible for the 1st Marine Division to hit the beaches at Inchon.

Events moved swiftly on 19 July. Only a few hours after the receipt of CinCFE's third request, the mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve was authorized by President Truman with the sanction of Congress. Headquarters Marine Corps, on the hill overlooking the Pentagon, was ablaze with lights that summer night; and

decisions were made which enabled four important steps to be taken next day:

(1) a warning to Reserve District directors that the Organized Reserve would soon be ordered to active duty;

(2) notification to commanding generals to expect some 21,000 Organized Reservists shortly at Marine Barracks, Camp Pendleton, and about 5,800 at Marine Barracks, Camp Lejeune;

(3) orders issued by CMC, with the approval of CNO, to discontinue the practice of discharging reservists at their own request;

(4) the first reservists—22 units with a total strength of 4,830 men—ordered to active duty with a delay of ten days.[10]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were still not convinced that a Marine force could be embarked to meet General MacArthur's deadline of 10 September without stripping FMFLant units to a dangerous extent. On the advice of Admiral Sherman, they informed CinCFE on 20 July that a Marine division could not be sent before November or even December.

General Shepherd had a great deal to do with shaping the ultimate decision. On the 20th, when CNO conferred with Admiral Radford on the question of a Marine division, the Commander of the Pacific Fleet in his turn asked the opinion of the Marine general. General Shepherd replied that a Marine amphibious striking force could be raised for the proposed Inchon landing without seriously weakening the Fleet Marine Force as a whole. This striking force, he predicted, would prove to be "the key of achievement of a timely and economical decision for our arms."[11]

The Marine general's statement was one of the main factors in causing the Joint Chiefs to advise MacArthur on the 22d that they were reconsidering their stand. During the next 48 hours, as dispatches sped back and forth across the Pacific, a compromise was reached. CinCFE was promised his Marine division in time for his target date—but it was to be a division minus one RCT. In other words, the infantry regiment of the Brigade would be supplemented by another RCT and supporting troops with appropriate Marine air. But the Joint Chiefs were adamant in their decision that MacArthur must wait until autumn or even winter for his third RCT.

These preliminaries cleared the way so that General MacArthur's request was finally approved by JCS on 25 July, the day when General Smith took over command of the 1st Marine Division. The Marine Corps was directed to build the division (less one RCT) up to full war strength, and a date of departure of 10–15 August for the Far East was set.

A 50 percent reduction in Marine security forces within the continental limits of the United States was authorized by CNO on that same date. This meant that an additional 3,630 regulars would be enabled to report for service with the 1st Marine Division.

On the morning of the 26th a courier from Washington arrived at Camp Pendleton with a communication for General Smith indicating that the expanded 1st Marine Division would be composed of four types of personnel: (1) Brigade units, to be combined with the Division upon arrival in the Far East; (2) units of the 2d Marine Division, to be ordered to Camp Pendleton to augment elements of the 1st; (3) regular personnel to be called in from posts and stations; and (4) final deficiencies to be filled by men from the Marine Corps Reserve who met minimum combat experience requirements.[12]

Congress passed legislation on 27 July authorizing the President to extend for one year all enlistments in the armed forces, both regular and reserve, which were due to expire before 9 July 1951. This gave the assurance of a stable body of troops.

On the 31st, with the first reservists arriving at Camp Pendleton and the first contingents leaving Camp Lejeune for the West Coast, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CNO to expand the 2d Marine Division to war strength while increasing the number of Marine tactical air squadrons from 16 to 18.[13] Obviously, the 1st and 2d Divisions could not be built up simultaneously without serious delays, and priority must be given to the 1st. It

was equally obvious, moreover, that this expansion must be largely accomplished during the first week of August if the troops were to be made ready for embarkation between the 10th and 15th.

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Chapter 2. The Minute Men of 1950
The Influx at Camp Pendleton

The first build-up troops to reach Camp Pendleton were three Organized Reserve units which arrived on 31 July—the 13th Infantry Company, of Los Angeles; the 12th Amphibian Tractor Company, of San Francisco; and the 3d Engineer Company, of Phoenix, Arizona. This was the beginning of an inundation which kept the camp keyed to a 24-hour day and a 7-day week. A torrent of troops poured into the vast military reservation by bus, train, and plane at all hours of the day and night. Confusion seemed to reign from the tawny California hills to the blue Pacific; and yet this seeming chaos was under the control of veteran officers and NCOs who had mounted out before. Accommodations for the newcomers were not de luxe, but men were being processed, assigned, fed, and equipped as rapidly as they arrived. The tramp of feet could be heard all night long as details of troops drew clothing and equipment or reported for medical examinations.

A total of 13,703 Marines reached Camp Pendleton during this busy week. Counting the personnel already on hand, troops of four categories were represented:
Officers and men remaining in 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton after dispatch of the Brigade = 3,459
Officers and men reporting from posts and stations up to 4 August = 3,630
Officers and men reporting from the 2d Marine Division from 3 to 6 August = 7,182
Officers and men selected as combat-ready out of the total of about 10,000 reservists reporting by 7 August = 2,891
TOTAL = 17,162

The expansion took place in two phases. First, of course, came the bringing of the 1st Marine Division (less one RCT) up to war strength, including augmentation personnel and supplies for the units of the Brigade. Next, the organization of a third reinforced infantry regiment, the 7th Marines, was directed by a letter from CMC to CG 1st Marine Division on 4 August.[14]

Headquarters Marine Corps naturally foresaw the necessity for replacement and rotation troops. The importance of the Reserve in this long-range expansion program may be seen by glancing ahead at the statistics of the next few months. Units of these recent civilians continued to report at such a rate that by 11 September 1950 the Organized Reserve (Ground) had in effect ceased to exist! In other words, all acceptable personnel had already reported for active duty, and the total of 33,528 officers and men represented a 90.02 percentage of availability.

The record of the Volunteer Reserve proved to be equally good after it was ordered to active duty on 15 August 1950. During the next seven and a half months, down to 31 March 1951, the Volunteer Reserve furnished 51,942 of the 84,821 reservists on active duty. As to the quality of these troops, about 99 per cent of the officers and 77.5 per cent of the enlisted were veterans of World War II.[15]

Many of the first reservists to report at Camp Pendleton made unusual sacrifices. Although they had the privilege of being discharged at their own request as late as 18 July 1950, the unexpectedness of the Korean conflict worked hardships in some instances. Reservists with several dependents or just establishing themselves in a business or profession had to settle their affairs hurriedly. There was little applause when the Minute Men of 1950 departed from home communities which were on a basis of business and pleasure as usual. The Korean conflict was still regarded as a “police action” which would be ended shortly. Nobody dreamed that within its first year it would become the fourth largest military effort of our nation’s history.

The Marine Corps was as lenient as could reasonably be expected when it came to granting delays and

deferments. On 1 August a board of eight officers at Marine Corps Headquarters initiated daily meetings to consider such requests emanating from the various Reserve districts. Two weeks later the Commandant gave Reserve District directors the authority to grant delays for periods up to six months after judging each case on its individual merits. But even after every concession had been made that could be reconciled with the national interest, it was a wrench for hundreds of reservists to make the sudden plunge from civil into military life.

There were instances of men seeking deferment by using political influence or pleading physical disability. But such cases were rare as compared to the great majority who reported promptly and declared themselves combat-ready.

In the selection of reservists for the division, two categories were recognized—combat-ready and noncombat-ready. The first applied to men whose records proved that they had been members of the Organized Reserve for two years and had attended one summer camp and 72 drills or two summer camps and 32 drills. Veterans of more than 90 days' service in the Marine Corps also qualified. All other reservists were classified as noncombat-ready.

When lost or incomplete records complicated the equation, a reservist's own opinion could not be accepted as proof of his fitness for combat. This ruling had to be made because so many men were found to have more spunk than training. Officers of a reservist's unit were questioned before a decision was reached, and any man feeling the need of further training could be removed without prejudice from immediate consideration for combat.

Standards were so strictly observed that only about half of the reservists qualified as being combat-ready. This group broke down into the 15 per cent accepted for the 1st Marine Division and the 35 per cent assigned to posts and stations to relieve regulars who joined the division. The remaining 50 per cent consisted of men placed in the noncombat-ready or recruit class.[16]

The emergency found the Organized Aviation Reserve with 30 VMF and 12 GCI squadrons generally up to peacetime strength. Of the 1,588 officers, about 95 per cent were combat-experienced, and only about 10 per cent of the enlisted men stood in need of basic training. It was a comparatively simple task, therefore, to comply with the order of 23 July calling for six VMF and three GCI squadrons to report to El Toro. Their mission was to build up to war strength the units of the 1st MAW which had been stripped to mount out MAG–33.

On 3 August the remaining nine GCI squadrons of the Organized Aviation Reserve were ordered to El Toro.[17] By this time the buildup was so well in hand that Major General Field Harris, commanding the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, conferred with General Smith about aviation shipping for the embarkation.

This veteran Marine pilot, a native of Kentucky, had been commissioned a second lieutenant in 1917 after graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy. Three years of service with Marine ground forces in Cuba and the Philippines were followed by Headquarters duty at Washington and flight training at Pensacola. Designated a naval aviator in 1929, he held various Marine air commands before participating as colonel and brigadier general in the Guadalcanal, Northern Solomons, and Green Island air operations of World War II. On his return, he was appointed Assistant Commandant (Air) and Director of Aviation.

In the autumn of 1946, after Operation CROSSROADS had given a glimpse into the tactical future, Generals Shepherd, Harris, and Smith were named as a Special Board "to orient the effort of the Marine Corps away from the last war and toward the next." The result was recommendations leading to experiments with rotary wing aircraft as a means of tactical dispersion in amphibious operations against an enemy employing atomic weapons. Thus the Marine Corps worked out new helicopter combat techniques which were soon to create tactical history with the Brigade and Division in Korea.[18]

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Chapter 2. The Minute Men of 1950
Embarkation of 1st Marine Division

It is a curious circumstance that not until 8 August did General Smith himself have his first information as to the Inchon landing. The basic directive of 25 July had merely specified that the main body of the Division would embark from San Diego, prepared for combat. The commanding general did not learn even unofficially about the time and the place of the proposed operation until he was told by General Fellers. While reporting at Camp Pendleton on his return from Japan, the TTU commander gave General Smith an informal account of the conference which took place on 4 July at FECOM Headquarters in Tokyo.[19]

On the following day, 9 August, the Division issued Operation Order No. 1–50, which provided for the movement of the Division (less the Brigade and one RCT) to the Far East to report upon arrival to CinCFE for operational control. Embarkation was to be carried out in accordance with Embarkation Plan No. 1–50 of 6 August.

By this date, 17,162 Marines in Camp Pendleton were eligible for reassignment to the 1st Marine Division. There was no time, of course, for much training. On 2 August the Division issued Training Bulletin No. 36–50 as a general guide providing for some rudiments of individual and small-unit instruction. But about all that could be accomplished was conditioning training and test firing of weapons. As a result, many of the weapons issued directly to units were found to be defective, having been in storage since 1945.[20]

The war news from Korea at this time lent an atmosphere of grim realism to preparations at Camp Pendleton. On 2 August the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade had landed at Pusan, the day following the debarkation of two U.S. Army units, the skeletonized 2d Infantry Division and the 5th RCT. The original destination of the Marines had been Japan, but during the voyage the military situation deteriorated so rapidly that on 25 July a landing in Korea was ordered by CinCFE.

Following the capture of Taejon on 20 July, the Red Korean columns of invasion speeded up their “end run” around the Eighth Army’s open left flank. Driving eastward as well as southward, the enemy made such progress during the next ten days that on 31 July the UN forces were pushed back into a chain of defensive positions in southeast Korea. This was the Pusan Perimeter, which must be held if the vital line of communications from the supply port to Taegu was to be maintained.

The Marines jumped off east of Masan on 7 August with the Army 5th RCT and elements of the 25th Infantry Division in the first sustained counterattack mounted by UN forces. General Craig had control of Army as well as Marine units during the most critical period of the initial two days, and carrier-based MAG–33 squadrons provided tactical air support. Enemy resistance was so shattered by the 9th that the Red Korean machine of invasion went into reverse for the first time.

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From the 9th to the 13th, when they were relieved, parallel columns of Army and Marine assault troops drove from Chindong-ni nearly to Chinju, a distance of about 40 miles by the seacoast route. It was only a local setback for the enemy, to be sure, but it had a heartening effect for tired UN forces which had known only delaying actions so far.

It also added to the problems of staff officers at Camp Pendleton and Pearl Harbor, since replacements must be sent to the Brigade. With this in mind, the Commandant had begun the organization of the 1st Replacement Draft of approximately 800 men on the date of Brigade activation. These troops, however, were absorbed into the 1st Marine Division when it expanded to war strength, as was a second draft (also designated

the 1st Replacement Draft) of 3,000 men.[21]

On 3 August the 1st Marine Division was directed by FMFPac to send 10 officers and 290 enlisted men to the Brigade by airlift. This draft was to be ready to move from Camp Pendleton by MATS planes on 9 August, but not until five days later did it finally proceed to San Francisco by rail and fly to Japan.

On the 23d another draft of 10 officers and 300 enlisted men from Marine posts in Hawaii and Guam was sent by air to Japan, these troops being replaced by the same number of noncombat-ready Marines airlifted from Camp Pendleton. This process was twice repeated early in September, when two more drafts totaling 20 officers and 590 men flew to Japan to provide replacements and third companies for the 5th Marines of the Brigade.[22]

Logistics offered as many problems as personnel at Camp Pendleton, since both the Brigade and Division units had been on peace tables of organization and equipment. The 30–day replenishment stock, held in readiness for such an emergency, was also based on peace strength tables. Thus it was found that the specification of "requirements" was best determined in most instances by making out requisitions based on the difference between T/E for peace and war.

Narrow time limits did not permit the assembly of supplies and equipment delivered at Camp Pendleton under the relentless pressure of urgent deadlines. FMFLant air and ground units arriving from Camp Lejeune brought their own organization equipment, which was staged through the Recruit Depot at San Diego. Much of the heavy equipment from the Barstow, California, Annex, Depot of Supplies, was delivered dockside and loaded without further inspection. Not until arrival at Kobe, Japan, were such items as the LVTs finally given a mechanical checkup.[23]

Ammunition was delivered from the depots to the Naval Station, San Diego, for loading. The following units of fire were specified by Division Embarkation Plan 1–50:

(1) 3 UF in hands of 1st Marines, LVT, tank, and artillery units; 1 UF in hands of all other units;

(2) 2 UF in hands of 1st Ordnance Bn for the 1st Marines, LVT, tank, and artillery units;

(3) 4 UF in the hands of the 1st Ordnance Bn for other units.[24]

Even after all items of initial supply had been assembled, the problem was by no means solved. Since the Division and Wing would be operating under Army and Air Force control, it became necessary to establish a long-range policy for resupply. The best answer seemed to be the procedure adopted by the Brigade, providing that the Army and Air Force furnish all supplies not peculiar to the Marine Corps. The latter would be provided by Marine or Navy agencies automatically in 30–day increments, with 120 days of resupply allotted to ground units and 90 days to air units. Thereafter, supply was to be requisitioned as needed. And in the lack of a service command as such, the G–4 section of FMFPac was committed to the task of preparing and submitting resupply requisitions for items in this category.[25]

Five hundred civilians were employed to help with the reconditioning of motor transport and other heavy equipment which had been "in mothballs" at Barstow since the end of World War II. Such items had to be put through the shops in many instances and restored to operating condition before delivery. The enormous supply depot in the California desert erupted with activity as trains of flatcars and long columns of motor trucks were routed to San Diego.

The actual loading and embarkation were conducted almost according to schedule in spite of such handicaps as inadequate dock facilities, the reception of supplies and equipment from a variety of sources, a shortage of stevedores, and piecemeal assignments of shipping. Only 54 stevedore crews were available out of the 90 requested, and commercial ships were necessary to supplement naval shipping. Nevertheless, the loading began on 8 August and was completed by the 22d. The following 19 ships were employed to mount out the main body of the 1st Marine Division:

LST 845; LSM 419; two APAs, the USS *Noble* and USS *President Jackson;* five APs, the USNS *General Buckner,* USNS *General Weigel,* USS *Marine Phoenix,* USNS *General Meigs* and USS *General Butner;*

and ten AKs, the SS *Dolly Thurman,* SS *Green Bay Victory,* SS *Noonday,* SS *African Patriot,* SS *Twin Falls Victory,* SS *Southwind,* SS *American Press,* SS *American Victory,* SS *Alma Victory,* and SS *Belgian Victory.*[26]

Generals Shepherd and Cates arrived for the main embarkation on the 13th and 14th respectively, accompanied by Major General Franklin A. Hart and Brigadier General Edwin A. Pollock. While these general officers were being acquainted with the progress made so far, the AKA *Titania* blew out two boilers after being about 20 percent loaded. Since the repairs would require about ten days, a commercial freighter was provided as a last-minute replacement.

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Chapter 2. The Minute Men of 1950
Build-up of 7th Marine Regiment

One of the purposes of General Shepherd's visit was to discuss with General Cates the problems of organizing and embarking the 7th Marines (Reinf.). The activation of this unit had been directed on 10 August 1950, when an officer of the G–1 Section, Headquarters FMFPac, delivered orders to Camp Pendleton.[27]

This was the result of a change of mind on the part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. After reconsideration, they decided that it would be feasible to raise a third RCT much sooner than had at first seemed possible, though not in time for MacArthur's assault landing. Arrival in Japan about 20 September seemed to be the earliest date that could be managed.

Of the 17,162 eligible Marines at Camp Pendleton at that time, the regulars in excess of those required to mount out between the 10th and 15th were placed in the rear echelon of the division as a cadre for the third infantry regiment.[28] The following troops were made available to draw upon for the formation of the 7th Marines:

Officers and men from 2d Marine Division = 1,822
Officers and men of 3d Bn, 6th Marines in the Mediterranean = 735
Officers and men of Marine Corps Reserve selected as combat-ready = 1,972
Officers and men of rear echelon of Division, and from posts and stations = 1,109
TOTAL = 5, 638[29]

Colonel Homer L. Litzenberg was designated as commanding officer on the date of activation, 17 August 1950. The Chief of Naval Operations directed the regiment to embark for the Far East not later than 3 September. These components were included in the build-up:

3d Battalion, 11th Marines; Company D, 1st Tank Battalion; Company D, 1st Engineer Battalion; Company C, 1st Shore Party Battalion (including two Shore Party communication teams from Signal Com-party, Signal Battalion); Company D, 1st Motor Transport Battalion; Company E, 1st Medical Battalion.

Forming the nucleus of the regiment, the 6th Marines, at peace strength and less two battalions, arrived from Camp Lejeune on 16 August. The 3d Battalion of this FMFLant regiment, then stationed afloat in the Mediterranean, was ordered to proceed through the Suez Canal to become part of the 7th Marines upon arrival in Japan.

While the other elements were being absorbed at Camp Pendleton, a conference attended by General Smith, Major General Alfred H. Noble, and Colonel Litzenberg was held to discuss rear echelon personnel and the formation of RCT–7. The following troops were found to be available to take care of casuals and retain custody of such division supplies and equipment as had not yet been embarked:

Marine Corps: 224 officers, 1,029 enlisted
Navy: 11 officers, 35 enlisted

Not included in these figures were 197 noneffective enlisted personnel, a rocket battery, a motor transport company, and the organizational rear echelon of eight officers and 28 men. It was decided that General Noble, as FMFPac representative, would examine MOSs, to determine how many men would be transferred to the 7th Marines or retained for FMF units to be activated later. The need was also foreseen for rear echelon working parties to relieve personnel of units mounting out.[30]

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Chapter 2. The Minute Men of 1950
Staff Groups Flown to Japan

Although the 1st Marine Division had enough problems at Camp Pendleton to keep a full war-strength staff busy, several of the key members were in Korea with the Brigade. The complete Division staff was never integrated until after the landing at Inchon. On 7 August, however, a dispatch from CinCFE requested that the "Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, and planning group capable of developing Division embarkation and landing plans be airlifted" to the Far East.[31]

General Smith decided that this flight could best be made in two echelons. The first, which took off for Japan at 1400 on 16 August 1950, included a group of 12 officers and six enlisted men selected to initiate planning:

G-2: Col B. T. Holcomb, Jr., and TSgt W. O'Grady
Asst. G-2: Maj J. G. Babashanian and Cpl J. N. Lareau
G-3: Col A. L. Bowser, Jr., and Sgt G. O. Davis, Jr.
Asst. G-3: LtCol F. R. Moore
Asst. G-4: LtCol C. T. Hodges
Asst. Emb. Off.: Capt R. E. Moody and PFC H. J. McAvinue
Shore Pty. Off.: Maj J. G. Dibble
Signal Off.: LtCol A. Creal and Cpl L. Shefchik
Asst. G-1: LtCol B. D. Godbold
Fire Sup. Coord.: LtCol D. E. Reeve and SSgt P. Richardson
Naval Gunfire Off.: LtCol L. S. Fraser
Air Off.: Capt W. F. Jacobs

General Smith stayed at Camp Pendleton for two more days until he was assured that the main body of the Division had sailed. Then he accompanied the second echelon of planners which departed by air at 1410 on 18 August:

CG: MajGen O. P. Smith
C/S: Col G. A. Williams and Cpl C. V. Irwin
Aide to CG: Capt M. J. Sexton and PFC W. D. Grove
G-1: Col H. S. Walseth and Cpl W. P. Minette
Asst. Signal Off.: Capt A. J. Gunther and MSgt F. J. Stumpges
G-4: Col F. M. McAlister
Engineer Off.: Maj E. P. Moses, Jr.
Embark Off.: Maj J. M. Rouse
Amtrac Off.: Maj A. J. Barrett
Motor Trans. Off.: Maj H. W. Seeley, Jr.
Ordnance Off.: Maj L. O. Williams[32]

The departure of the commanding general coincided with the closing of the Division CP at Camp Pendleton. There were still several thousand Marines of the rear echelon left under the control of General Noble in the sprawling installation, but the brown California hills looked down upon a scene of strange and brooding quiet as compared to the activity of the past three weeks.

It was D-minus 28 for the men of the 1st Marine Division.

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Chapter 3. Operation Plan CHROMITE

THE SCARS OF WAR heal rapidly. From the air General Smith could see jungle covering the battlefields of Guam. Iwo Jima looked as untouched as if it had never been the scene of Marine casualties exceeding the losses of the Union army at Gettysburg. Even fire-blasted Tokyo had recovered to a surprising extent from the terrible bombings of 1945.

Now, five years later, the United States had entered upon a new military effort. As the Marine general landed at Haneda Airfield on the afternoon of 22 August 1950, he was met by Admiral Doyle and driven to the *Mount McKinley,* tied up at the dock in Tokyo harbor. And though assigned to the cabin reserved for the landing force commander, CG 1st MarDiv found it an ironical circumstance that he did not yet know the prospective D-day and H-hour of the landing.[1]

He had not long to wait for such data. The advance section of the Marine planning group being already aboard the *Mount McKinley*, he was quickly informed by Colonel Bowser, the G–3 of the incomplete Division staff. D-day at Inchon had been tentatively set for 15 September, and the landing must be made during the high tide of late afternoon. It meant assaulting a port of 250,000 prewar population over the mud flats and seawalls, with little opportunity to consolidate positions before nighfall. Nor would there be time for training and rehearsals, since the troops would reach Japan barely in time to unload and reload in amphibious shipping before proceeding to the objective area.

General Smith learned further that a new command structure, to be known as X Corps, was being hastily erected by FECOM especially for the operation. No announcement had been made of a project still classified as Top Secret, but it was known to the planning group that General Almond would command a corps not yet activated. The 1st Marine Division would be under his control as the landing force.

Admiral Doyle, an old hand at amphibious warfare, was not happy about Inchon when he considered the naval aspects. Initiated at Guadalcanal and Tulagi in 1942, he had taken part in some rugged ship-to-shore assaults of World War II. Afterwards, as Commander of Amphibious Shipping for the Pacific Fleet, he had made a career of it. And Admiral Doyle considered Inchon a hard nut to crack. He refused to admit that any amphibious operation was impossible as long as the United States Navy remained afloat, but he did maintain that Inchon bristled with risks.

In twenty minutes that Tuesday afternoon General Smith heard enough to convince him that the forthcoming assault would take a great deal of doing. But there was no time for discussion. For at 1730, just two hours after stepping from his plane, he had an appointment with the commander in chief.

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Chapter 3. Operation Plan CHROMITE
Interview with General MacArthur

Arriving on the minute at the Dai Ichi building, General Smith reported to FECOM Headquarters. He was met by an aide, who escorted him to General Almond's office. On the way down echoing corridors, he responded at frequent intervals to the salutes of sentries who presented arms with fixed bayonets.[2]

The offices of CinCFE and his chief of staff were connected by an imposing conference room with paneled walls and pillars along one side. General Smith had an opportunity to survey his surroundings at leisure before General Almond appeared. The new X Corps commander explained that his chief had a habit of taking a long afternoon break and would arrive later.

Of medium height and stocky build, Almond gave the impression at the age of 58 of a buoyant temperament and restless energy. A native Virginian and graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, he had been an ETO division commander in World War II. After joining MacArthur's staff, he became one of the most loyal officers of a group noted for devotion to their famous chief.

Almond greeted the reserved, white-haired Marine general cordially. He launched at once into the topic of the Inchon operation, expressing the utmost confidence in the ability of the UN forces to prevail.

It was the initial contact of the two men. Mutual respect was not lacking, but differences in temperament made it inevitable that these generals would not always see eye to eye. History teaches that this is by no means a deplorable situation when kept within reasonable bounds. Character can be as decisive a factor as logistics, and some of the greatest victories of the ages have been won by colleagues who did not agree at times. Friction, in fact, is more likely to sharpen than to blunt military intellects; and Smith's precision had potentialities of being a good counterpoise for Almond's energy.

While they were discussing the tactical problems, the commander in chief returned to his office. He summoned his chief of staff for a brief conference, then requested that Smith be presented.

MacArthur shook hands warmly, grasping the Marine general's elbow with his left hand. Without the celebrated "scrambled eggs" cap, he looked his 70 years in moments of fatigue, but the old fire and dash were not lacking. The very simplicity of his attire—shirtsleeves and open collar—made a dramatic contrast to the military pomp and ceremony surrounding him in this former Japanese commercial building, one of the few earthquake-proof and air-conditioned structures in Tokyo.

In a cigarette-smoking age, both MacArthur and Smith preferred the calm comfort of a pipe. The commander in chief lit up and puffed reflectively a moment. Then he leaned back in his chair and gave his concept of the Inchon operation. But it was more than a concept in the usual military sense; it was a vision of a victory potent enough to end the Korean conflict at a stroke. And it was more than confidence which upheld him; it was a supreme and almost mystical faith that he could not fail.

He granted, of course, that there were difficulties and risks. Evidently Almond had mentioned Smith's reservations, for he proceeded to reassure the Marine general. His voice full of feeling, he expressed his deep conviction that the war could be won in a month at Inchon, and that the 1st Marine Division could win it. The enemy, he explained, had committed nearly all of his troops in the Pusan Perimeter. Thus the Marines would not be heavily opposed when they stormed ashore at Inchon and drove inland to cut the main NKPA line of communications at Seoul.

MacArthur said he knew that the Marines had high standards, having commanded them in the New Britain operations of the last war. He realized that the Marines strove for perfection, and the Inchon landing was

bound to be somewhat helter-skelter by the very nature of things. But there was no doubt, he affirmed, that the victory soon to be gained by the 1st Marine Division would make 15 September 1950 a glorious date in American history.

His voice was charged with fervor as it rose and fell eloquently. Once General Smith made a move as if to depart, but the commander in chief motioned him back to his chair. At last he brought the conversation to a close by standing suddenly, grasping the Marine general's hand, and bidding him a cordial good-bye.

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Chapter 3. Operation Plan CHROMITE
Conferences in Tokyo

It was sometimes an awkward situation for Navy and Marine officers in general, and Admiral Doyle and General Smith in particular. In many respects they appeared doubters and pessimists in contrast to FECOM staff officers who reflected General MacArthur's shining confidence. But as amphibious specialists, carrying a heavy load of responsibility for the landing, they had to give serious thought to the risks at Inchon.

This was brought home forcibly to the Marine general on the morning of the 23d, when he attended a meeting conducted by Major General Clark L. Ruffner, Chief of Staff of the future X Corps. Although the conference proceeded according to the usual form, General Smith felt that it departed at times from the realism which he considered an essential of sound amphibious planning. It was announced, for instance, that after taking Inchon, the 1st Marine Division was to cross the Hah and attack Seoul, although X Corps had neither equipment nor materiel for bridging the sizeable river.[3]

A review of the background disclosed that after CinCFE decided on 10 July not to use the 1st Cavalry Division as his landing force, he briefly considered two other Army outfits. The 2d Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Lawrence B. Keiser, was then under orders to embark from the West Coast. Some of the personnel had been given amphibious training by an ANGLICO instruction team and had taken part in Operation MIKI, but the division as a whole was much understrength. The same difficulty led to the elimination of Major General David G. Barr's 7th Infantry Division in Japan, which had supplied troops to units at the front until only a cadre remained.

The assurance on 25 July of a war-strength Marine division took care of the *who* question. Next came the problems of *when* and *where* an amphibious assault could be best mounted. JANIS (Joint Army and Navy Intelligence Studies) reports indicated that the east coast of Korea, though of lesser importance in military respects, offered such hydrographic advantages as unusually moderate tides and a general absence of shoals. In forbidding contrast, the shallow west coast waters could be navigated at most points only by means of narrow channels winding through the mud flats.[4]

Of all the west coast seaports, Inchon was probably the least desirable objective when considered strictly from the viewpoint of hydrographic conditions. From first to last, however, Inchon was Douglas MacArthur's choice. FECOM staff officers ventured to suggest two alternatives, Wonsan on the east coast and Kunsan on the west coast, but the commander in chief replied that neither was close enough to the enemy's main line of communications to suit his purposes. He would settle for nothing less than Inchon.

So much for the place. As to the time, the choice was even more limited. The tidal range varied from an average spring tide5 height of 23 feet to an occasional maximum of 33 feet. Landing craft required a tide of 25 feet to navigate the mud flats of the harbor, and the LSTs must have 29 feet. Only during a few days in the middle of September and October were those depths provided by spring tides of the next 12 weeks. MacArthur rejected an October date as being too late in the season, so that 15 September became D-day by virtue of elimination.

A late afternoon H-hour was also a choice of necessity. Islands, reefs, and shoals restricted the approach to the outer harbor, and currents ranging from three to six knots multiplied the chances of confusion. This meant that daylight landings were necessary for all but small groups.

Much of the inner harbor was a vast swamp at low water, penetrated by a single dredged channel 12 to 13 feet deep.[6] The duration of spring tides above the prescribed minimum depth averaged about three hours, and during this interval the maximum in troops and supplies must be put ashore. Every minute counted, since initial

landing forces could not be reinforced or supplied until the next high water period.

Time and tide seemed to have combined forces to protect Inchon from seaborne foes. As if such natural obstacles were not enough, the target area provided others. Two islands, Wolmi-do and Sowolmi-do, located in a commanding position between the inner and outer harbors, were linked to each other and to Inchon by a causeway. In advance of intelligence reports, it must be assumed that rocky, wooded Wolmi-do would be honeycombed with hidden emplacements for enough guns to create a serious menace for the landing craft.

This critical terrain feature must somehow be reduced as a preliminary to the main landing during the high tide of late afternoon. Inchon being situated on a hilly promontory, the “beaches” were mere narrow strips of urban waterfront, protected by seawalls too high for ramps to be dropped at any stage of the tide. Once past these barriers, the troops would have about two hours of daylight in which to secure an Oriental city with a population comparable to that of Omaha.

But the amphibious assault was only the first phase of the operation as conceived by CinCFE. After taking Inchon the landing force had the task of driving some 16 miles inland, without loss of momentum, to assault Korea’s largest airfield before crossing a tidal river to assault Korea’s largest city.

And even this ambitious undertaking was not the whole show. For a joint operation was to be carried out meanwhile by Eighth Army forces thrusting northward from the Pusan Perimeter to form a junction with the units of the Inchon-Seoul drive. This double-barreled assault, it was believed, would shatter North Korean resistance and put an end to the war.

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Chapter 3. Operation Plan CHROMITE
Inception of X Corps

The time, the place, the landing force, the main objectives—these essentials of the proposed Inchon-Seoul operation had been pretty well settled, at least to General MacArthur's satisfaction, by the first week of August. But even though he had his assault troops, there was as yet no headquarters organization.

Admiral Sherman urged early in August that the commander in chief call upon General Shepherd and the facilities of the FMFPac organization at Pearl Harbor. Since there was so little time left before D-day—only a fraction of the time usually allotted to the planning phase of a major ship to shore assault—he felt that amphibious know-how and experience were required. He proposed, therefore, that steps be taken to obtain the approval of Admiral Radford, who had jurisdiction over FMFPac.

The need for a headquarters organization was discussed on 7 August by the Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group (JSPOG) of FECOM. Brigadier General Wright, G–3 of FECOM, received a memorandum from the other members of the staff recommending that the gap be filled in one of two ways—either by putting into effect Admiral Sherman's plan, or by sponsoring the organization of a provisional corps headquarters. General Wright favored the first course of action, as did Brigadier General Doyle G. Hickey, FECOM deputy chief of staff. Ultimately, however, the FECOM chief of staff decided in favor of the latter command arrangement.[7]

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Chapter 3. Operation Plan CHROMITE
Final Conference on Inchon

The questions of *when* and *where* and *who* had been answered to some extent. But as late as 23 August, a good many variations of opinion existed as to *how* the amphibious assault was to be accomplished.

The natural obstacles of the Inchon harbor area were so disturbing that Doyle suggested an alternative to MacArthur and Almond. Since the purpose of the landing was to drive inland and cut the enemy's communications, urged ComPhibGru One, why not select a west coast objective with fewer hydrographic difficulties? He proposed the Posung-Myon area, about 30 miles south of Inchon on the west coast, where better approach channels and beaches were believed to be available in a more lightly populated locality. A landing at this point, Doyle contended, would not be attended by the risks and restrictions of Inchon, yet after securing a beachhead the troops would be in position to strike inland at the enemy's main line of rail and highway communications in the vicinity of Osan.[8]

Smith was favorably impressed. He brought up the subject on 23 August, when he and Barr had a meeting with Almond. The X Corps commander did not concur, though conceding that Posung-Myon had possibilities as an area for a subsidiary landing in connection with the Inchon assault. Nor was Doyle able to obtain MacArthur's consent to the alternate objective.

It was the Marine general's third conference of the day. From the X Corps meeting he had gone directly to the regular conference at GHQ, and thence to the talk with Almond and Barr. He came away from all three meetings with the conviction that CinCFE and his staff were not to be swerved by his objections. It was definitely to be Inchon on 15 September, and Smith instructed his planning group to proceed accordingly.

Doyle made a last attempt at 1730 that afternoon to present a comprehensive picture of the risks and difficulties inherent at Inchon. This final conference on the subject of a west coast landing was attended by some of the nation's highest ranking officers—General J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff; Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations; General Shepherd, CG FMFPac; Lieutenant General Idwal H. Edwards, U.S. Air Force; as well as other high-ranking staff officers who had flown out from Washington. It was no secret in Tokyo military circles that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were present for the purpose of studying General MacArthur's plans for the Inchon landing. It was also generally known that doubts and misgivings had been expressed at various times when the project was discussed at the Pentagon. General Collins stated candidly at a later date that the purpose of his Tokyo visit was ". . . to find out exactly what the plans were. Frankly, we were somewhat in the dark, and as it was a matter of great concern, we went out to discuss it with General MacArthur. We suggested certain alternate possibilities and places. . . ."[9]

Admirals Joy and Doyle also attended the meeting, and FECOM was represented by Generals Almond, Ruffner, and Wright. The conference room on the sixth floor of the Dai Ichi building proved too small for the audience, and members of the PhibGru One team had to wait their turn in Almond's adjoining office. One by one, at eight-minute intervals, Doyle's officers took turns at being presented to MacArthur, who listened gravely while puffing at his pipe. The following amphibious specialists were heard:

Cdr Edmund S. L. Marshall, USN: Navigation
Lt Charles R. Barron, USN: Aerology
LtCol William E. Benedict, USMC: Military Aspects
LCdr Jack L. Lowentrout, USN: Beach Study
LCdr M. Ted Jacobs, Jr., USN: Seabees Pontoon Causeway Plans

LCdr Clyde E. Allmon, USN: Ship to Shore Plans
LCdr Arlie G. Capps, USN; Gunfire Support
Cdr Theophilus H. Moore, USN: Air Support[10]

The officers spoke of the natural obstacles. They asserted that it would be the peak of optimism to hope for a strategic surprise at Inchon, for the enemy also knew that only a few days each autumn month offered a tidal range sufficient to float the landing craft and supply ships over the mud flats of the harbor.

They contended that even a tactical surprise was out of the question, since Wolmi-do must be neutralized before landings could be made on the mainland. Otherwise, the vulnerable column of landing craft would be exposed to a slaughter from the flanking fire of the island`s guns.

The Navy group pointed out further that it must also be assumed that the enemy would not neglect a good opportunity to sow both moored and magnetic mines in the channels the shipping must take. And to cap all the other natural and man-made risks, there was danger at the height of the typhoon season that Nature would intervene and scatter the amphibious armada during its approach to the objective area.

The presentation lasted for nearly an hour and a half. At the conclusion, Admiral Doyle summed up by giving his opinion. “The best I can say, ”he told the commander in chief,” is that Inchon is not impossible.“

General MacArthur heard the amphibious specialists to a finish without his imperturbability being shaken. Even the onlookers who could not partake of his perfect faith were impressed. There was something magnificent about this old warrior in shirtsleeves and open collar, calmly smoking his pipe while hearing his plan dissected. Daring and optimism are supposed to be the exclusive prerogatives of youth, yet this smiling septuagenarian was not only the oldest officer at the conference, he was also the most confident and assured! After the PhibGru One presentation ended, he took 45 minutes for his comments. Speaking with eloquence, he declared that the natural obstacles and practical difficulties of the proposed Inchon operation were more than balanced in the strategic scale by the psychological advantages of a bold stroke. About 90 percent of the NKPA forces were fighting in the Pusan Perimeter. A combined offensive by X Corps and the Eighth Army would have the effect of placing the enemy between the hammer and anvil.

Referring to the Kunsan landing favored by General Collins and Admiral Sherman, CinCFE asserted that this objective was too far south for a fatal blow to be dealt the invaders. He cited a historical precept in Wolfe’s victory at Quebec, made possible by audacity in overcoming natural obstacles that the enemy regarded as insurmountable. He recalled the amphibious victories he himself had won in the Southwest Pacific, with the Navy and sometimes the Marine Corps sharing in the glory. And he ended on a dramatic note with a single, prophetic sentence spoken in a tense voice:

“We shall land at Inchon and I shall crush them!”[11]

As the officers filed out into the noisy, teeming Tokyo street, most of them felt certain that the last word had been said. It was still possible, of course, for the Joint Chiefs to overrule CinCFE; and it was not likely that all of their doubts had been laid to rest. Nevertheless, the Navy and Marine planners proceeded on the basis that a final decision had been reached that August afternoon.

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Chapter 3. Operation Plan CHROMITE
Brigade Victory in Korea

Before his arrival at Tokyo, General Shepherd had paid a flying visit to the headquarters of the Brigade in Korea immediately after the Marines stormed and seized Obong-ni Ridge. Just as General Craig's men had taken part from 7 to 13 August in the first sustained UN counterattack, so this Army and Marine effort a week later became the first rout of a major NKPA unit. After putting up a fierce struggle to hold their bridgehead on the east bank of the river Naktong, the veteran troops of the NKPA 4th Division were shattered by repeated Marine attacks. Carrier-borne Corsairs of MAG–33 had a turkey shoot at the expense of panic stricken enemy soldiers who abandoned their arms in a wild flight. Some of the fugitives were shot down while trying to swim the river.

Despite this encouraging little victory, it was still nip and tuck on the central front of the Pusan Perimeter. With the U.S. 2d Infantry Division and 5th RCT now in line, the Eighth Army strategy of trading space for time had resulted in whittling down the enemy's material superiority. But the invaders still held the material advantage, and there were signs that they would soon launch an all-out effort to smash through to Pusan.

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Chapter 3. Operation Plan CHROMITE
The Marine Amphibious Mission

General Shepherd, after being informed as to the Tokyo conferences, accompanied General Smith on the morning of 24 August to a meeting with Admirals Sherman, Radford, Joy, and Doyle. It was generally agreed that not enough weight had been given to amphibious considerations in the final decision to attack at Inchon. Navy opinion held that one more attempt should be made to propose another landing point with fewer hydrographic objections. The area south of Inchon had been investigated by Navy UDT and Marine amphibious scouts of the Reconnaissance Company, 1st Marine Division, who had sailed to the Far East with the Brigade. As a preliminary, this group had embarked on the USS *Horace A. Bass* (APD–124) and gone ashore undetected to stage several raids during the period 12–16 August on the enemy's main line of communications along the west coast. Three tunnels and two railway bridges were destroyed without the loss of a man.[12]

Next the raiders successfully carried out a survey and reconnaissance of available landing beaches during the period 22–25 August in the Posung-Myon area. Their findings impressed General Shepherd so much that before his departure from Tokyo he called on CinCFE to make a last plea for reconsideration of the landing area. General MacArthur, however, remained firm in his preference for Inchon.[13]

The meeting of the admirals and Marine generals on the 24th broke up with a general agreement that the decision as to Inchon on 15 September must be accepted as the basis for final planning. That same afternoon General Smith instructed his planning group to begin work on a scheme of maneuver.

Modern amphibious tactics were in their infancy during World War I when an appalling object lesson seemed to have been left by the Allied disaster at Gallipoli in 1915–16. Brilliant in strategic conception, this major amphibious operation might have knocked Turkey out of the war and opened the unlocked back door of Austria and Germany. Unfortunately, the execution fell short; and the failure was too often charged to amphibious warfare itself rather than a wholesale violation of its basic principles.

In 1920 the new Marine Corps Schools at Quantico became the center of Marine amphibious study and research. Marine units participated in fleet problems at Panama and Culebra during the post-war years; and in 1927 the Joint Board of the Army and Navy (fore-runner of JCS) stated in a directive that the Marine Corps had the mission of "special preparation in the conduct of landing operations."[14]

During the early 1920s the writings of a brilliant Marine officer, Major Earl H. Ellis, had a tremendous influence on current amphibious thought. Predicting that Japan would strike first in the Pacific and win initial successes, he drew up a strategic plan for assaults on Japanese-mandated islands which was approved by Major General John A. Lejeune, Commandant of the Marine Corps. Later known as Operation Plan No. 712, this Top Secret document helped to shape the ORANGE plans adopted by the Joint Board of the Army and Navy for offensive operations against Japan if it came to war.

After making good progress in the early 1920s, with landing exercises being held annually, the Marine amphibious program bogged down from 1927 to 1932 because of the necessity of sending expeditionary forces to China and Nicaragua. The turning point came in 1933, a memorable date in the evolution of modern amphibious warfare. It was then that Major General John H. Russell, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, urged that a staff be set up at Quantico to plan for the organization of a mobile Marine striking force. This force, under the Commandant, and fully prepared for service with the fleet, was to be in readiness for tactical employment subject to the orders of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Navy. General Russell further proposed that the old name "Expeditionary Force" be discontinued and "Fleet Marine Force" adopted as a name better expressing this

mission.[15]

After the acceptance of these recommendations, the Commandant ordered classes discontinued at the Marine Corps Schools and a concerted effort applied to the preparation of a new amphibious manual. Both the Army and Navy had treated some of the procedures in existing manuals, but it remained for the Marine Corps in 1934 to put out the first complete work of the sort. Known as the *Tentative Manual on Landing Operations,* it became either directly or indirectly the guide for exercises and maneuvers of the Navy and Marine Corps down to World War II.

Most of its suggested procedures were endorsed with revisions in the Navy's *Fleet Training Publication 167,* published in 1938. This work in its turn became the model three years later for the Army's first basic field manual for landing operations.[16]

Training exercises were held every year, usually at Culebra or Vieques in the Caribbean and San Clemente Island off San Diego. At the suggestion of the Fleet Marine Force, the Navy purchased Bloodsworth Island in Chesapeake Bay as the first amphibious gunfire range used for that purpose alone.

Schools were set up to train Army and Navy as well as Marine officers as specialists in fire control parties. Air support was closely integrated with naval gunfire, shore artillery, and troop movements. Technology came to the aid of tactics when the Fleet Marine Force encouraged and supervised the designing of strange new amphibious craft and vehicles. Concepts were actually based in several instances on landing craft not yet developed and the confidence of the Marine Corps in American inventiveness proved to be justified.

Thus the Nation entered World War II with a system of offensive tactics which opened Europe, Africa, and the islands of the Pacific to American invasion without incurring a single major defeat. Not only was the United States ahead of the enemy in the development of amphibious operations but the Axis Powers never found the key to an adequate defense. In an often quoted summary, the British military critic and historian, Major General J. F. C. Fuller, has asserted that these techniques were "in all probability . . . the most far-reaching tactical innovation of the war."[17]

During the next few years the Marine Corps was twice officially given the major responsibility for American amphibious tactics. The National Security Act of 1947 made it the function of the Corps "to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure and defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign."[18]

At the so-called Key West Conference the following spring (March 11–14, 1948), the Secretary of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff restated the Marine Corps' mission to include that of developing "in coordination with the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, the tactics, technique, and equipment employed by landing forces in amphibious operations. The Marine Corps shall have primary interest in the development of those landing force tactics, techniques, and equipment which are of common interest to the Army and the Marine Corps."[19]

During these post-war years, the Marine Corps was grappling with the new amphibious problems posed by atomic weapons. It was fitting, therefore, that the three men who formed the Special Board for this research—Generals Shepherd, Harris, and Smith—should have been at the forefront in 1950 when the Marine Corps faced its next amphibious test. As veterans of World War II operations, they could recall the scramble for the beaches of Bougainville, the fight for Bloody Nose on Peleliu, the off-the-cuff landing on Oroku Peninsula in Okinawa. There had been some tense moments in those battles, but never had Marine generals contemplated an objective which held more potentialities for trouble than the harbor area at Inchon.

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Chapter 4. The Planning Phase

THE CHAMPION GLOBE-TROTTERS of the 1st Marine Division were the men of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines. Before returning to their homes from Korea, these military tourists would have traveled entirely around the world by various forms of land, water, and air transportation.

The unit was originally an element of the 6th Marines, FMFLant, serving afloat with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. On 12 August 1950 the CP aboard the USS *Yellowstone* at Suda Bay, Crete, received a message from CNO ordering the battalion to the Far East. Lieutenant Colonel Frederick R. Dowsett, deputy commander, noted that the dispatch had bypassed such channels as CMC and the Sixth Fleet.[1] This irregularity, he learned later, was explained by the urgency of an order which had been framed by Admiral Sherman while General Cates was present. It directed that the APA *Bexar* arrive on 14 August at Suda Bay and depart two days later with the troops.

The rub was that these Marines were dispersed on various ships all over the Mediterranean.

Given the rush job of picking up the scattered elements of the battalion was the USS *Leyte*, which was due to return to Norfolk for refitting afterwards and thence to the Far East via the Panama Canal. Not only did the carrier complete its assignment before the deadline, but the *Bexar* also arrived at Suda Bay on the evening of the 14th. Both ships had hardly dropped anchor when the LCVPs and LCMs were shuttling troops and cargo to the transport and the AKA *Montague*, which was to accompany it to the Far East.[2]

On the 16th the two vessels departed according to schedule by way of Port Said and the Suez Canal. Security regulations were rigidly enforced, with only one stop being made when the vessels anchored at Ceylon for six hours to take on fuel. Marine officers were figuratively as well as literally at sea, since they had no idea of the specific mission awaiting the battalion in the Far East. Unaware of plans for the Inchon landing, they envisioned the troops being employed as the ship-based raiding party of some American task force.

Meanwhile their future teammates of the 7th Marines were preparing to embark from San Diego. Colonel Litzenberg and his officers had made a good start at Camp Pendleton even before the activation date of 17 August 1950. In order to build up from cadres of former 6th Marines' troops, this regiment received the largest proportion of combat-ready reservists of any major unit in the 1st Marine Division—about 50 per cent, counting the augmentation personnel to bring 3/6 up to war strength when it would be taken into the outfit in Japan.[3]

CNO had set 3 September as the date of embarkation. But Headquarters, FMFPac, prepared the embarkation plans while the regimental staff solved problems of organization and equipment so effectively that the 7th Marines sailed on the 1st, thus beating the deadline by two days.[4]

Orders came to El Toro on 16 August for the overseas movement of the remaining elements of the 1st MAW. Units affected were Wing Headquarters Squadron 1 and MAG–12, comprising Headquarters Squadron 12, Service Squadron 12, VMF–312, VMF–212, VMF(N)–542, and the rear echelon of VMF(N)–513.

VMF–312 and the rear echelon of VMF(N)–513 were loaded on the USS *Sitkoh Bay* with their aircraft and sailed on 24 August. Three days later VMF–212 and VMF(N)–542 embarked on the USS *Cape Esperance*, and the USNS *General Morton* weighed anchor with the remaining components on 1 September.[5] This completed the overseas movement of the 1st MAW, since General Harris and his staff had departed from El Toro by air for Japan the day before.

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Chapter 4. The Planning Phase
Working Around the Clock

The first echelon of the 1st Marine Division planning group had its preliminary briefing on 19 August, and the tractor elements of the Attack Force were scheduled to sail for the objective area on 9 September. This left an interval of 20 days for most of the Inchon planning—probably the shortest period ever allotted to a major amphibious assault.

Less than one-fourth of the officers and men of the 1st Marine Division staff were on the *Mount McKinley* when planning commenced. At that time the distribution of the staff was as follows:[6]
Click here to view table

The Marine planners aboard the *Mount McKinley* were short on elbow room as well as personnel, time, and equipment. Although it was an advantage to have the planning groups of the Attack Force and Landing Force together, the ship did not provide enough space for both without crowding. Moreover, the already undermanned Marine contingent had to be further reduced late in August by sending several officers to Kobe to meet incoming units. Thus the G–2 section, to cite one example, consisted of only two officers, one of whom was detached on this duty for a week.

"The issuance of and adherence to a planning schedule was utterly impossible," commented the 1st Marine Division report. "Only by a virtual 'around the clock' working day, concurrent . . . planning by Attack Force (ComPhibGru One) and Landing Force (1st MarDiv), willing teamwork by both, and especially the amphibious 'know-how' of key staff members gained by long experience, was it possible to complete and issue . . . plans and orders for a most difficult . . . landing operation. The time-space factor denied any coordinated orientation, prohibited even the most elementary rehearsal, made it difficult to distribute orders, and gave subordinate units very little time for formulation and distribution of their plans."[7]

Command relationships during the embarkation and assault phases were as follows:
Click here to view table

All the top commanders were concentrated in Tokyo with the arrival of Admiral Struble on 25 August. This facilitated the planning and allowed important decisions to be worked out in conferences between the principal commanders.[8]

Planning was based mainly on studies made by ComPhibGru One as prospective Attack Force Commander. It was conducted entirely on a concurrent basis by the Attack Force and Landing Force groups aboard the *Mount McKinley*. No step was taken by either without the full knowledge and consent of the other.

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Chapter 4. The Planning Phase
X Corps Scheme of Maneuver

Army planning had been initiated by the Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group until 16 August, when the "Special Planning Staff" was set up at GHQ to issue directives for Operation Plan CHROMITE. Published on 12 August as CinCFE Operation Plan No. 100–B, it was based on these assumptions:

(a) that the North Korean ground advance would be stopped in time to permit the build-up of our forces in South Korea;

(b) that our forces in South Korea would be built up to the capability of mounting effective offensive operations against NKPA forces opposing them;

(c) that we retain air and naval supremacy in the area of operation;

(d) that the NKPA ground forces would not receive major reinforcements from the USSR or Red China;

(e) that there would be no major change in the basic disposition of the NKPA forces.[9]

It was understood from the beginning that the Special Plans Staff, headed by General Ruffner, would be the nucleus of the future X Corps staff. In order to have the benefit of specialized amphibious knowledge, ten Marine and two Navy officers of TTU Mobile Training Team Able were assigned on 19 August:

Col H. A. Forney:	Deputy Chief of Staff
LtCol J. Tabor:	Asst Coordinator, FSCC
LtCol C. E. Warren:	Asst G–4
Maj J. N. McLaughlin:	Asst G–3
Maj J. F. Warner:	Asst G–3
Maj C. P. Weiland:	Air Officer, FSCC
Maj V. H. Vogel:	Asst G–4
Capt H. S. Coppedge:	Asst G–2
Capt T. A. Manion:	Asst Signal Officer, FSCC
Capt V. J. Robinson:	Target Info Officer
Lt L. N. Lay, USN:	Asst Surgeon
Lt W. A. Sheltren, USN:	Asst NGF Officer, FSCC[10]

These officers did not begin their new assignment in time to contribute to the preliminary X Corps overall scheme of maneuver. The main provisions, as communicated to General Smith at General Ruffner's briefing conference of 23 August, were as follows:

(1) The 1st Marine Division, as the landing force, was to seize the urban area of Inchon (line A–A); to capture a beachhead (line B–B); to advance as rapidly as possible and seize Kimpo Airfield (line C–C); to clear out the south bank of the Han River (line D–D); to cross the river, seize Seoul and secure the commanding ground to the north (E–E); and, finally, to fortify and occupy this line with reduced forces until relieved (apparently by the 3d Infantry Division, still in the United States), whereupon the Division was to recross the Han and seize a line (F–F) about 25 miles southeast of Seoul.

(2) The 7th Infantry Division was to land behind the Marines and advance on their right flank to seize the commanding ground south of Seoul and the south bank of the river (line D–D); to continue the advance to phase line (E–E); and to conduct a reconnaissance in force to the south (line F–F). There, on the line from Suwon to Kyongan-ni, the 7th Infantry Division and 1st Marine Division would form the strategic anvil as Eighth Army forces advanced from the Pusan Perimeter in the role of hammer.

(3) The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was to furnish air support, air direction, and air warning for the Corps with units operating from Kimpo Airfield. It was also to be prepared to operate a control center ashore on order. [11]

The Special Plans Staff gave General Smith a study explaining the purposes of these maneuvers. “The B–B line in this study appeared to be a suitable beachhead line,” he commented, “and we decided to concentrate our efforts on plans for its seizure. Subsequent operations would be reserved for later consideration.”[12]

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Chapter 4. The Planning Phase
Intelligence Planning for Inchon

Good planning, of course, depended on accurate intelligence. All possible information about the objective area had been gathered by the staff of PhibGru One before the arrival of the 1st Marine Division planners. Air Force planes had taken hundreds of photographs at every stage of the tide. Hydrographic reports and navigation charts had been studied. Army and Navy men familiar with Inchon during the American occupation after World War II were interrogated as well as NKPA prisoners captured by the Eighth Army.

Although a great deal of useful data was compiled, some disturbing questions remained. How high were the sea walls of Inchon? Were the mud flats suitable for landing either troops or vehicles at low tide? Approximately how many NKPA guns were hidden on Wolmi-do?… These were some of the intelligence gaps which must be filled before an effective plan could be drawn up for an assault landing.

PhibGru One made its material available to the G–2 Section of the 1st Marine Division, and the two staffs worked together on the *Mount McKinley* in close cooperation. Attached were the 163d Military Intelligence Service Detachment (MISD) and the 441st Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) Team. Both of these units had been furnished by FECOM and consisted of Army commissioned and enlisted personnel as well as native Koreans serving in liaison, interpretation, and translation capacities.

Even when a question could not be answered conclusively, it was up to the G–2 sections of the Attack Force and Landing Force to arrive at a conclusion for planning purposes. For instance, it was never satisfactorily determined from available sources—JANIS publications, strategic engineering studies, Naval Attaché reports, and photographic interpretation reports—whether LVTs would be able to traverse the mud flats of the Inchon harbor area. And since there remained some doubt, planning proceeded on the assumption that the answer was negative. This proved to be the correct as well as the prudent decision, later developments revealed.

Another G–2 planning problem concerned the effect that the height of the sea walls would have upon the landing. Photographs at hourly stages of the tide made it appear that the masonry was too high for the dropping of ramps at any time. As a solution, G–2 officers hit upon a device reminiscent of the storming of castles during the Middle Ages. Scaling ladders were recommended with the suggestion that they be built of aluminum with hooks at one end to be attached to the masonry. Construction was started at Kobe, but the order could be only partially filled before D-day, and wooden ladders were built as substitutes.

It is hardly necessary to point out the importance of estimates as to the numbers and defensive capabilities of the enemy. Yet the G–2 sections on the *Mount McKinley* were up against a peculiar situation cited in the 1st Marine Division report:

"Our accumulated knowledge of the enemy's military tactics, prior to our landing at Inchon on 15 September 1950, consisted almost in its entirety of knowledge about the enemy's offense. . . . With but few exceptions, UN forces were forced to take a defensive stand and denied the opportunity to study large scale enemy defensive tactics from actual combat. Thus it was that our assault landing was made with relatively little prior knowledge regarding the enemy's probable reaction to a large-scale offensive of this nature, particularly when it involved the penetration into the very heart of his newly acquired domain"[13]

Photographic coverage showed the Inchon harbor area to be honey-combed with gun positions and other defensive installations. On the other hand, daily aerial observation indicated that most of them were not occupied.

G–2 conclusions during the planning phase often had to be based on such conflicting evidence, even though the penalties of faulty interpretation might be drastic. But after being viewed with due suspicion, signs of

negative enemy activity were finally accepted as valid in estimates of light to moderate NKPA resistance.

"Sadly lacking as was information on the objective area," commented the Division G–2 report, "more so was that on the enemy in the area." Early in September, however, the Attack Force and Landing Force concurred in the initial X Corps estimate of 1,500 to 2,500 NKPA troops in the immediate area, consisting largely of newly raised personnel.[14]

Radio reports of first-hand observations in the objective area, though coming too late for initial planning purposes, confirmed some of the G–2 estimates. This dangerous mission was undertaken by Lieutenant Eugene F. Clark, a naval officer on General MacArthur's JSPOG staff. U.S. and British Marines provided an escort on 1 September when the British destroyer *Charity* brought him from Sasebo to a point along the coast where the South Korean patrol vessel PC 703 waited to land him at Yonghung-do, an island about 15 miles southwest of Inchon.[15]

Clark went ashore with a small arsenal of firearms, grenades and ammunition, as well as 30 cases of C rations and 200 pounds of rice. He quickly made allies of the 400 friendly Korean inhabitants of the island and organized his own private little "army" of about 150 youths from 14 to 18 years old. These "troops" were posted about Yonghung-do for security, since the near-by island, Taebu-do, was occupied by 400 NKPA soldiers within wading distance at low tide.

The naval officer had no illusions as to what his fate might be in the event of capture. Day and night, he kept a grenade within reach, since he did not intend to be taken alive. When the long expected enemy attack from Taebu-do materialized, he commandeered a "one-lung" South Korean motor sampan and fought it out with the NKPA motor sampan escorting boats filled with soldiers. The enemy began the strange "naval" battle with a few badly aimed rounds from a 37mm tank gun. Clark and his crew of three friendly Koreans finished it with a long burst from a .50 caliber machine gun. After sinking the NKPA motor sampan, he destroyed another boat with 18 soldiers aboard and captured three prisoners for questioning.

One night the intrepid lieutenant rowed a dinghy to the Inchon sea wall. When the tide went out, he tested the mire by wading in it up to his waist. This experience led to the sending of a radio report, "Inchon not suitable for landing either troops or vehicles across the mud."

Korean youths, posing as fishermen, brought intelligence which Clark included in his daily radio messages. One of these spies made an effort to count the guns on Wolmi-do and describe the locations. Others took measurements of the Inchon sea wall and penetrated as far inland as Seoul to report numbers and positions of NKPA troops.

Clark declined all offers to evacuate him. As the climax of his exploit, he managed to restore the usefulness of the lighthouse on Palmi Island which the enemy had put out of commission. This structure, the former entrance beacon for Inchon by way of Flying Fish channel, served him as a refuge when he had to leave Yonghung-do hurriedly just ahead of NKPA troops who landed in force and butchered 50 civilians of both sexes. Clark, who received a Silver Star, stuck it out on Palmi until midnight of 14 September, when he turned on the beacon light to guide the amphibious task force.

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Chapter 4. The Planning Phase
The Landing Force Plan

The decisions behind the Landing Force Plan—1st Marine Division OpnO 2–50—obviously had to be made without benefit of Lieutenant Clark's reports, since the publication date was 4 September 1950.[16] It is to the credit of these conclusions, therefore, that so few of them had to be corrected in the light of first-hand evidence from the objective area.

Although CG X Corps was the assigned Expeditionary Troops Commander, planning on the Corps level was concerned almost entirely with the exploitation phase following the seizure of the beachhead. All Landing Force planning was done on the *Mount McKinley* by the Division in close coordination with PhibGru One.

The first consideration, as viewed by the Navy planners, was that the tides, currents, and tortuous channels of Inchon made necessary a four-hour daylight approach to the transport area. This meant that 1130, at low tide, was the earliest hour of arrival; and not until about 1700 would the next high tide provide enough water for an assault landing.

On 15 September a maximum high tide of 31 feet could be expected at 1919. Evening twilight came at 1909. It was estimated initially that 23 feet of water would take the LCVPs and LVTs over the mud flats, but that 29 feet were necessary for the beaching of the LSTs.

In view of these conditions, PhibGru One planners concluded that 1700 was the best time for landing the LCVPs and LVTs, and it was decided to beach the LSTs at about 1900. Simultaneous landings of troops on Wolmi-do and the mainland were contemplated.

This was the point of departure for Division planners. They maintained that Wolmi-do was the key terrain feature, and that it should be secured first in a separate landing. The logical course, according to the Marines, would be to utilize the morning high tide for the seizure of this island commanding the waterfront. The enemy would be given the whole day in which to prepare for the attack on the mainland; but the Landing Force could also utilize this period for cleaning up Wolmi-do and moving in supporting artillery.

It was typical of the harmony prevailing between the two planning groups on the *Mount McKinley* that PhibGru One immediately accepted the concept of a double-barreled attack. The rub was that a night approach would be necessary to assault Wolmi-do at 0600 on the morning high tide, and the Navy doubted the feasibility of a movement of the slow-moving and unmaneuverable APAs, AKAs, and LSTs through winding, mud-lined channels in the darkness.

At length a compromise was reached with the decision to employ DD, APD, and LSD types primarily, which were more maneuverable in addition to being equipped with radar navigational instruments.[17]

The morning landing on Wolmi-do was to be made with a single battalion of the 5th Marines, to be designated by the Brigade. On the mainland the remaining two battalions would land with the evening high tide on RED Beach, just north of the causeway connecting the island with the city, while two battalions of the 11th Marines landed in support on Wolmi-do. Meanwhile the 1st Marines was to hit BLUE Beach, southeast of the urban area. And after driving rapidly inland to consolidate their positions before nightfall, the two Marine regiments were to make a junction in the morning and seize the beachhead while the 17th ROK Regiment (later replaced by 1st KMC Regiment) mopped up the city streets.

Marine G–4 planners suggested one of the most daring of all the calculated risks. This was the decision to use LCVPs for the RED Beach landings because their comparative speed would clear the landing area for the beaching of eight LSTs—all that could be crammed into the narrow confines of this strip of urban waterfront.

Each was to be loaded with ammunition, rations, water, and fuel. Obviously these Navy workhorses, nicknamed "large slow targets", would be easy marks for NKPA shore guns, but this was a chance that had to be taken if the assault troops were to be adequately supplied.

There was not time, of course, to unload and retract the ships during the period of evening high tide. They must be unloaded during the night and taken out on the morning tide.

Since it was not considered feasible to land LSTs on BLUE Beach, that area would not be developed beyond the needs of the immediate assault. For this purpose, 16 preloaded LVTs were to be used as floating dumps until the 1st Marines could link up with the other regiment.

These were the essentials of the Landing Force plan. H-hour was ultimately determined from a study of late photographs which brought about a slight change in estimates. Since a tide of 25 feet (two feet higher than the initial estimate) appeared to be necessary for the LCVPs and LVTs to reach the sea wall, H-hour was set at 1730 instead of 1700. The completed Landing Force plan provided for these steps:

(1) BLT–3 of RCT–5 to land on Beach GREEN at L-hour on D-day and seize Wolmi-do.

(2) RCT–5 (- BLT–3) to land on Beach RED at H-hour, seize Objective O-A, effect a juncture with RCT–1, and prepare for further operations to the east in coordination with RCT–1 to seize the FBHL.

(3) RCT–1, to land on Beach BLUE, with two battalions in assault, seize Objective O–1, and prepare for further operations to the east in coordination with RCT–5 to seize the FBHL.

(4) 11th Marines (– 3d Bn) (96th F. A. Bn, USA, attached) to land 1st and 2d Bns on Beach GREEN at H-hour, occupy positions on Wolmi-do and support seizure of the beachhead with priority of fires to RCT–1. Remainder of artillery to land on call.

(5) ROK Marines, initially in Division reserve, to land over Beach RED on call and conduct operations to occupy the city of Inchon in coordination with RCT–5.

(6) 1st Tank Bn (–) (Reinf.) to be prepared to land on order one company in LSU on Beach GREEN, remainder of battalion on order on beaches to be designated.

(7) 1st Engr Bn (–) to land on Beach RED or in harbor on order, assume control of detached companies on order, and support seizure of beachhead as directed. Priority to opening and maintaining MSR along southern edge of the city to RCT–1 zone of action.

(8) 1st Shore Party Bn (–) to land on order on Beach RED or in harbor and assume control of shore party activities on Beaches RED and GREEN.

(9) 1st Amph Trac Bn to transport and land elements of RCT–1 on Beach BLUE and continue support of RCT–1 until released.

(10) 2d Engr Spl Brig, USA (Reinf.) to furnish ships platoons and augment Division shore party as requested. After landing and when directed, to assume operational control of Division shore party and responsibility for control of all port operations. To provide logistical support of 1st MarDiv.

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Chapter 4. The Planning Phase
Availability of Brigade Troops

The old recipe for rabbit stew began, “First, catch your rabbit.” And while the Landing Force plan was being formulated, General Smith had no assurance for a few days that he could count on having the whole of his landing force available.

General Almond informed the Marine general on 23 August that the release of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade for participation in the Inchon landing would depend on the military situation. He seemed doubtful and added that the withdrawal of the Marines would be bad for Eighth Army morale.

The Attack Force and Landing Force began their planning, however, on the basis of Brigade availability. It had been the intention of CinCFE to employ a full Marine division, but an embarkation date of 1 September would not permit the 7th Marines to arrive in time. This left the 1st Marines as the only RCT of the Landing Force unless the 5th Marines and other Brigade units could be released.

On 30 August, Smith brought up the issue again in a dispatch to X Corps, whereupon CinCFE issued an order making the Brigade troops available to the Division on 4 September.

This might have settled the issue if the enemy had not launched an all-out offensive on 1 September to smash through the Pusan Perimeter. Although the Brigade had already sent heavy equipment to Pusan for embarkation, the Marines were rushed up to the front on 2 September as a mobile reserve. That same day the order for their release was revoked.

There could be no doubt about the gravity of the military situation. Thirteen NKPA divisions were making a final effort, and the Marines were needed in the Naktong Bulge sector, where the Korean Reds were attempting to cut the Pusan-Taegu lifeline.

On the other hand, time was also running out for the Inchon planners. Colonel Forney, the new deputy chief of staff for X Corps, informed Smith on 2 September that Almond planned to use the 32d Infantry of the 7th Infantry Division if the 7th Marines could not arrive in time for the Inchon landing. Recently, the cadres of this Army division had been brought up to strength with 8,000 South Koreans. The remaining 12,000 U.S. troops had received no adequate amphibious training, though instructors from Training Team Able had made a start with some of the units.

This turn of affairs resulted in a meeting in General Almond’s office. The Navy was represented by Admirals Joy, Struble, and Doyle; the Army by Generals Almond, Ruffner, and Wright; and the Marines by General Smith.

Wright opened the discussion by stating that Walker needed the Brigade troops urgently as a mobile reserve to hold the line in the current NKPA offensive. Almond conceded that the question of Brigade availability must be decided on a basis of Eighth Army requirements and tactical considerations. But if the 5th Marines could not be released, he reiterated his decision to substitute the 32d Infantry for the Inchon operation.

Admiral Joy declared that the success of the Inchon assault depended on the employment of Marines trained in amphibious techniques; and he called upon Smith for his opinion. The Marine general said that a hastily instructed unit could not be expected to take the place of a combat-experienced regiment in the Landing Force, and that last-minute substitutions of this sort could not be made in complicated ship-to-shore landings without courting trouble. He added that it would be necessary in such an event to land in column on one beach instead of two, with the 1st Marines in advance of the 32d Infantry. These comments had the support of Doyle, who agreed that the availability of the 5th Marines might mean the difference between success and failure at Inchon.

At this point Admiral Struble commented that the issue boiled down to the need for a mobile Eighth Army reserve. He suggested as a compromise that a regiment of the 7th Infantry Division be embarked and moved to Pusan as a floating reserve to be landed in an emergency as a substitute for the 5th Marines. This solution was accepted. Almond called up Eighth Army Headquarters immediately, and within an hour Wright telephoned to inform Smith that the Brigade would be relieved at midnight on 5 September.[18]

As it turned out, the 17th Infantry of the 7th Infantry Division was embarked and transferred to Pusan to substitute for the 5th Marines, with Marine officers of Training Team Able assisting in the outloading. After the amphibious assault, the regiment landed administratively at Inchon to rejoin its parent unit.

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Chapter 4. The Planning Phase
Naval Gunfire and Rockets

At a conference on 1 September called by Admiral Struble and attended by Admirals Richard W. Ruble, John M. Higgins, and Sir William G. Andrewes (RN)[19] in addition to Generals Ruffner and Smith, it was tentatively agreed that the cruisers would begin the bombardment on the morning of D-minus 1, and the destroyers that afternoon after a napalm air strike had been conducted against Wolmi-do on D-minus 4.

At another naval gunfire conference two days later, the napalm strike was delayed until D-minus 3. On 8 September, when Admiral Struble held his final meeting, PhibGru One and the 1st Marine Division agreed on the scope and timing of naval gunfire support. It was decided, therefore, that the bombardment would commence on D-minus 2 and be repeated if necessary on D-minus 1.[20]

During the following week, plans were worked out in detail. The beachhead was divided into 52 target areas, including two on Wolmi-do and one on Sowolmi-do. In the channel to the west and southwest of the port, imaginary lines marked off three fire support areas for the ships, numbered in order from south to north.
Click here to view map

On D-day the four cruisers would stand in from 13,000 to 15,000 yards offshore in Fire Support Area I, while the destroyers in FSAs II and III manned stations 800 to 6,000 yards from the beach. The three LSMRs would first support the Wolmi-do landing from close-in positions to the north and west of the island. Later, for H-hour, one of the rocket ships was to remain northward to soften up RED Beach, and the other two would displace to the vicinity of BLUE Beach.[21]

From L-minus 45 to L-minus 2, the cruisers and destroyers would dump a total of 2,845 shells on Inchon and its outlying island, each ship concentrating on specifically assigned target areas. From L-minus 15 to L-minus 2, each of the three LSMRs would saturate Wolmi-do with 1,000 5–inch rockets. Most of the ships were to cease fire two minutes before the landing on GREEN Beach, when Marine planes strafed possible enemy positions for final shock effect. Four of the destroyers would continue to pound Inchon targets with 55 shells during the short air attack.

Another intricate piece in the mosaic of destruction was the mission assigned to one LSMR for the period immediately preceding and following the landing of 3/5. The lone rocket ship would lumber parallel to Wolmi-do's shoreline, across the front of the advancing first wave, and pour 40mm shells into the beach area. Clearing the route of approach to GREEN Beach just in time for the landing craft to speed by, the LSMR was to continue southward along the coast and direct its heavy automatic fire at the slopes in advance of the attacking troops.

Once Wolmi-do was secured, the full fury of the support ships would rain down on targets in the Inchon area. From H-minus 180 to H-minus 5, the cruisers and destroyers were scheduled to blast their assigned targets with a total of 2,875 shells. Chiming in at H-minus 25 with 2,000 rockets apiece, the LSMRs would pulverize RED and BLUE Beaches until five minutes before the landings by the two Marine regiments. At that time, all ships must cease fire to clear the way for strafing Corsairs and Navy Skyraiders.

The meticulous planning left nothing to chance, even with the assumption that a foothold would be successfully established by darkness. During the night of D-day, the cruisers would expend an additional 250 shells on interdictory missions, and the destroyers were authorized to fire a total of 300 5–inch rounds on call from the infantry. To help thwart any possible enemy ambitions at dawn of D-plus 1, the cruisers would be prepared to unload 300 shells for interdiction and call fires, while the destroyers stood poised with the same number of high-explosive missiles plus 300 illuminating shells.

Other details of the elaborate plan dealt with the coordination of naval gunfire, air, artillery, mortars, and rockets. At certain times, for example, Marine and Navy gunners could fire only below a maximum trajectory of 1100 feet, so that planes, whose minimum altitude was set at 1500 feet, could pass safely over Inchon during strikes on adjacent areas. During those periods when close support Corsairs were scheduled to descend on beachhead targets, all other heavy weapons would fire completely clear of broad circles defining strike areas for the air missions.

More tables and instructions in the formidable appendixes of Admiral Doyle's operation order assigned shore fire control parties their ships and radio frequencies, ships their battery missions and ammunition allowances, and a host of other tasks and responsibilities.

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Chapter 4. The Planning Phase
Air Support for Inchon

Air support, of course, was closely related to naval gunfire planning. After the arrival of CG 1st MAW and his staff at Tokyo on 3 September, part of the group proceeded at once to Itami Air Force Base while General Harris and selected staff members remained at Tokyo for planning conferences.

Air support planning for Inchon was based on the decision that the sky over the objective area was to be divided between the organic air units of JTF–7 and X Corps.

JTF–7 counted on its fast carrier task force, TF–77, to gain air supremacy and furnish deep support and interdiction strikes. Close support for the landing was to be provided by the two squadrons of TG–90.5, on board the CVEs *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait*, which had been the main air components of MAG–33 in support of the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade. In addition, the Attack Force commander could also call upon the aircraft of TF–77 for close support.

Organic air support for X Corps was to be the mission of the Tactical Air Control set up under the operational control of the corps commander and the direct command of General Cushman. The inspiration for this organization came from Marine officers on the staff of X Corps. Their suggestions were accepted by General Almond, who used his authority as FECOM chief of staff to put the idea into effect.

MAG–33 was designated by General Harris from the Forward Echelon, 1st MAW, to serve as TAC X Corps, with VMFs 212 and 312 in addition to VMF(N)–542 and the rear echelon of VMF(N)–513. These units were not to be assigned, however, until X Corps assumed control of operations in the objective area, whereupon they would be based at Kimpo Airfield. Meanwhile, they remained under the administrative control of ComNavFE and MAG–12, with headquarters at the Itami AFB in Japan. The two Marine carrier-based squadrons and the forward echelon of VMF(N)–513, having come out to Korea in August as units of MAG–33, continued to be assigned temporarily to that group for administrative purposes.[22]

TAC X Corps was activated on 8 September, just six days before its components landed in Japan. 1st MAW planners designated the Air Support Section of MTACS–2, which had controlled air support for the Brigade, to continue in that capacity for the Landing Force and later for the entire X Corps. Arrangements were made with the Combat Cargo Command, FEAF, to airlift aviation fuel and ammunition from Japan to Kimpo Airfield, after its capture, until such supplies could be transported by sea.

Marine air units were also affected, of course, by the planning which the 1st Marine Division air and naval gunfire representatives of the Fire Support Coordination Center had already accomplished. Working aboard the *Mount McKinley* in conjunction with their opposite numbers of PhibGru One, the FSCC group had been busy since its arrival in Japan on 18 August. Planning was conducted with the CO 11th Marines after the artillery regiment landed in Japan, and the resulting decisions coordinated with air and naval gunfire plans.

The 1st MAW completed its planning on 9 September. General Cushman was designated Tactical Air Commander, X Corps, on that date and departed for the objective area the next day with the air elements scheduled to proceed by ship.

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Chapter 5. Embarkation and Assault

On 30 August, ComNavFE issued his Operation Plan 108–50, assigning to JTF–7, of which X Corps was a part, the mission of seizing by amphibious assault a beachhead at Inchon.

X Corps OpnO No. 1 was dated on the 28th, though not received by Division until the 30th. By that time, Division planning had made so much progress that Embarkation Order 1–50 was issued on the last day of the month, followed on 4 September by the final draft of Division OpnO 2-50. Operations orders of JTF–7 and TF–90 were issued concurrently.

This meant that the assault RCTs, contrary to amphibious doctrine, were to receive rigid landing plans drawn up completely by the Division. Lack of time caused this variation from usual procedure, but General Smith had confidence in the ability of his troops to overcome the handicap. “Under the circumstances,” he asserted, “adoption of such methods was justified by the common background and training of all elements and individuals in amphibious doctrine, procedures, tactics, and techniques.”[1]

The most that could be done was to summon Brigade staff officers from Korea for a conference. Colonel Edward D. Snedeker (Chief of Staff), Captain Eugene R. Hering, Jr., USN (Brigade Surgeon), Lieutenant Colonel Arthur A. Chidester (G–4), and Major Donald W. Sherman (G–1) arrived on board the *Mount McKinley* for a conference on 28 August and the following day. The Brigade G-3, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph L. Stewart, reported as liaison officer on the 31st. When he returned to the front, the 5th Marines was attacking, and he discussed landing schedules with Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray while the regimental commander directed the action.

“This,” remarked General Smith, “was hardly in accordance with accepted procedure for planning amphibious operations.”[2]

The recommendation of Brigade staff officers that the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, be designated for the assault on Wolmi-do was accepted by Division planners. Colonel Snedeker also proposed that the 1st Korean Marine Corps (KMC) Regiment of nearly 3,000 men be substituted for the 17th ROK Regiment, which he said was committed in the Pusan Perimeter and might not be available. The change was approved by GHQ on 3 September, with the Eighth Army being directed to provide weapons for the newcomers.

This was the beginning of a relationship that would find the KMCs serving with distinction alongside the men of the 1st Marine Division and eventually becoming a fourth infantry regiment of the Division. Activated in 1949 by the Republic of Korea, the unit took part in anti-guerrilla operations until the NKPA invasion. After the outbreak of hostilities, the KMCs fought creditably in UN delaying actions in southwest Korea. The turning point came when they were attached to the 1st Marine Division and sent to Pusan for test-firing of their new weapons before embarking for Inchon. Immediately the Koreans commenced to model themselves after U.S. Marines so assiduously as to win respect for their spirit and rugged fighting qualities.[3] They were quick to learn, despite the language handicap, and showed aptitude in mechanical respects.

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Chapter 5. Embarkation and Assault
Landing of 1st Marine Division

The main body of the 1st Marine Division troops landed at Kobe from 29 August to 3 September. Marine officers sent in advance to that seaport had found the authorities there "very cooperative" and brought back to Tokyo a billeting plan which General Smith approved. Since the facilities in and about Kobe were limited, two large APs were designated as barracks ships, thus making available a Marine labor pool at the docks.

At best, every hour was needed for the tremendous task of transferring cargo from merchant type shipping into assault shipping.[4] There was cause for anxiety, therefore, when a telephone message informed the command of the 1st Marine Division on 3 September that Typhoon JANE had struck Kobe with winds of 74 miles per hour. First reports had it that the *Marine Phoenix* was on the bottom with all of the Division's signal gear. Several ships were said to have broken their moorings and gone adrift; the docks were reported under 4 feet of water, and loose cargo on the piers had been inundated by breakers.

Later accounts proved to be less alarming. The *Marine Phoenix*, having merely developed a bad list as a result of shifting cargo, was soon righted. Nor was the other damage as serious as had at first been supposed. But 24 hours were lost from the tight reloading schedule while Typhoon JANE kicked up her heels, and time was one commodity that could not be replaced. All operations at Kobe had to be speeded up to pay for this delay.

On 4 September the *Mount McKinley* set sail for Kobe, arriving at 1445 the next day to be welcomed by an Army band at the pier. The soothing powers of music were needed by Marine officers who learned that fire had broken out in the hold of the *Noonday* as she belatedly approached Kobe. This "Jonah" had taken so long to load at San Diego that she lagged behind the others, and now large quantities of much-needed Marine clothing were apparently ruined by water when the fire was extinguished. Once again the Army came to the rescue with wholehearted cooperation by taking the water-soaked boxes to a reclamation depot where the garments were dried, repackaged and sent back to the docks in time for loading out on the originally scheduled ships.

Only the most basic troop training could be conducted at Kobe to supplement the individual and amphibious instruction the men had received on shipboard. At this time, moreover, an order from the Secretary of the Navy made it necessary to reduce the size of the landing force by withdrawing about 500 Marines who had not yet reached their 18th birthday. They were transferred to the 1st Armored Amphibian Tractor Battalion, which was to be left behind at Kobe when the Division embarked for Inchon.

This unit had been organized at Camp Pendleton in accordance with a directive from the Commandant. It was found necessary, however, to transfer most of its combat-ready men to the 1st Tank Battalion in order to bring that outfit up to full strength. The tank battalion was given priority because its vehicles would be used throughout the operation while the armored amphibians might be employed only occasionally. As a consequence, the 1st Armored Amphibian Tractor Battalion left San Diego with new personnel lacking in the skills to make it fully combat ready.

Lieutenant Colonel Francis H. Cooper, the commanding officer, recommended at Kobe that the unit be withheld from action until drivers, gunners, and maintenance crews could be properly trained. General Smith and his staff concurred, having learned that a trained Army unit, Company A of the 56th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, could be made available. Orders were given for Cooper's battalion to remain at Kobe, therefore, with the 17-year-old Marines attached.

Several other U.S. Army units were to take part along with the Marines—the 96th Field Artillery Battalion, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, the 73d Engineer (c) Battalion, the 73d Tank Battalion, the 50th

Engineer Port Construction Company, and the 65th Ordnance and Ammunition Company. These units comprised a total of about 2,750 troops.

Plans called for the commanding officer of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade to head a logistical task organization which also included several Marine units—the 1st Shore Party Battalion, the 1st Combat Service Group, and the 7th Motor Transport Battalion. The Shore Party troops were to initiate unloading at the objective, whereupon the over-all control would pass to the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, on order, to insure continuity of development of unloading facilities.[5]

Division service units, in accordance with current directives, were to carry the 30-day replenishment of spare parts appropriate to the unit concerned. Although the Combat Service Group had neither spare parts nor supplies, it was to have custody of both after the landing. Thus the units would be freed immediately to move away from the beach in support of the Division as it drove toward Kimpo and Seoul.[6]

At Kobe the men of the 1st Marine Division were required to leave the full clothing bags they had brought from San Diego and embark for Inchon with field transport packs containing only the most essential items. This meant that some 25,000 sea bags must be stored at the Japanese port in such a way that future casualties and rotation drafts could reclaim their personal effects without delay. As a reminder of the grim task ahead, provisions must be also made to return to proper custody the effects of deceased personnel.

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Chapter 5. Embarkation and Assault
Plan to Seize Kimpo Airfield

Intelligence reports on the eve of embarkation did not depart from earlier estimates of a maximum of 2,500 NKPA troops in the objective area. From 400 to 500 were believed to be garrisoning Wolmi-do, 500 defending Kimpo, and the balance stationed in and about Inchon.[7] Despite the estimates of low to moderate enemy resistance, however, General Smith differed with the command of X Corps when a commando-type raid on Kimpo was proposed.

The question came up on 8 September at a conference held at Kobe on the *Mount McKinley* and attended by Generals Hickey and Smith, Admiral Doyle and Colonel Louis B. Ely, USA. Ely commanded the newly formed X Corps Special Operations Company composed of 124 U.S. Army troops briefly trained by TTU instructors in demolitions, individual combat and ship-to-shore movements in rubber boats.[8] General Almond's plan called for this company, reinforced by Marines, to embark at Kobe on 10 September in a British frigate and transfer to a South Korean picket boat. Upon arrival at the objective area on D-day, the raiders were to paddle three miles in rubber boats to the north of the Attack Force, land under cover of darkness, and move inland for a surprise attack on Kimpo at dawn.

General Almond felt it necessary to seize the airfield at the earliest possible moment. Surprise, he felt, would reduce the risks. General Smith pointed out, however, that Colonel Ely's men would have to row their rubber boats against a strong tide and cross a wide expanse of mud flats on foot. His radios could only reach four miles, and his presence in the 1st Marine Division's zone of action would restrict the use of naval gunfire and air support. Finally, said the Marine general, it was not certain that the raiders could hold the airfield even if they took it.[9]

This conference did not settle the issue. Colonel Williams, the Division chief of staff, was requested in a telephone call followed by a dispatch from the G–1 Section of GHQ to turn over 100 specially qualified Marines to Ely's company. Smith sent a dispatch requesting reconsideration. He cited the battle casualties of the Brigade, which had not been replaced, and the 500 under-age Marines to be left behind at Kobe. As a final objection, many of his best qualified men had already embarked on the LSTs.

General Shepherd sent a dispatch supporting the 1st Marine Division commander, and the order from GHQ was recalled.[10]

Another proposal by General Almond to speed up the drive inland from the beachhead was relayed to General Smith aboard the *Mount McKinley* on 9 September by Brigadier General Henry I. Hodes, ADC of the 7th Infantry Division. This was a plan to land a battalion of the 32d Infantry on GREEN Beach, Wolmi-do, with a mission of racing across the causeway on the late afternoon of D-day and moving rapidly down the road to seize the high ground south of Seoul, more than 20 miles inland. The 1st Marine Division was requested to furnish five tanks in support of the enterprise tentatively scheduled to take place while two battalions of Marine artillery were landing on Wolmi-do and two Marine rifle regiments were landing on the Inchon beaches.

This idea struck Smith as being extremely optimistic. Without going into the tactical objections, he decided that the scheme was logistically impracticable.[11]

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Chapter 5. Embarkation and Assault
Shipping Assigned to Marines

The embarkation at Kobe was not completed without some confusion. Much of the equipment was in its original containers and had never been checked or identified. Large quantities of Class I, III, and V supplies, distributed throughout the incoming shipping, had to be reassembled and reassigned for the outloading. In the lack of suitable storage areas near the piers, Classes III and V were off-loaded into Japanese barges and held in floating storage until they could be reloaded into assault shipping.[12]

Inter-pier transfer of cargo was avoided whenever possible by berthing incoming shipping so that units could load directly into assault shipping. Unfortunately, this could not be done in some instances, since the LST landing was outside but adjacent to the pier area.

Facilities for the embarkation of the Brigade at Pusan were satisfactory, with pier space for three APAs and one AKA at one pier and an LSD at another. All of the assigned LSTs could beach simultaneously along the sea wall.

Only Marine amphibious experience enabled the Division to complete its tremendous task at Kobe in spite of the time lost as a result of Typhoon JANE. The shipping tentatively assigned by X Corps consisted of one AGC, six APAs, eight AKAs, three LSDs, one LSM, three APDs, 12 LSUs, and 47 LSTs. This last figure included 17 Navy-manned and 30 SCAJAP (Japanese-manned) LSTs. The troop list of approximately 29,000 men was broken down by the Division into the following six embarkation groups with their assigned shipping:

ABLE: Division Troops--1 AGC; 1st CSG--2 APAs, 5 AKAs, 9 LSTs, 1 LSM, and 3 LSUs (towed to objective area by tugs

BAKER: 1st Marine (Reinf)--1 APA; 1st Amtrac Bn--12 LSTs

CHARLIE: 5th Marines (Reinf)--3 APAs; 73d Tank Bn, USA--12 LSTs, 3 APDs, and 1 LSD with 3 LSUs

DOG: 11th Marines--1 AKA and 6 LSTs

EASY: 1st Tank Bn--2 LSDs with 3 LSUs each and 4 LSTs (later increased to 6)

FOX: 2d Engr Spec Brig, USA--1 AKA; 96th FA Bn, USA--4 LSTs

Four of these groups were to embark from Kobe while CHARLIE mounted out from Pusan and FOX from Yokohama, Yokosuka, and Camp McGill in Japan.[13] The main body of the Division's third rifle regiment, the 7th Marines, was scheduled to land in Japan on 17 September. Colonel Litzenberg, the commanding officer, arrived at Itami Airfield on the 6th, having flown from Camp Pendleton ahead of his troops to make arrangements.

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Chapter 5. Embarkation and Assault
Movement to the Objective Area

Command relationships during the assault and embarkation phase were as follows:
Click here to view table

The movement of JTF–7 to the objective area was planned in the most exacting detail, owing to the dispersion of the ships to begin with, the need for secrecy, and the limited time. Another complication entered the picture at the last minute, when a second typhoon loomed on the Pacific horizon with considerably more menace than its exotic name would imply.

Navy meteorologists had been plotting the movement of Typhoon KEZIA since the first signs of turbulence near the Marianas Islands on 6 September. Generating winds of 100 miles per hour three days later, the typhoon was churning a steady course toward the East China Sea and Tsushima Strait, where it was expected to hit on 12 or 13 September. The timing could not have been worse as far as Admiral Doyle and General Smith were concerned. KEZIA threatened to strike the ships of the task force during the last stages of embarkation and the first phase of the approach to Inchon. And any serious disruption of the Navy's delicate timetable would place the 15 September deadline hopelessly beyond reach.

With the carriers, cruisers, and destroyers scheduled to be in the Yellow Sea, beyond the path of the storm, Admiral Doyle's amphibious vessels were the most imperiled elements. The Attack Force Commander planned to move his ships to the objective area in six increments, three of them loading in Japan, one in Pusan, and two at both places simultaneously. Because of the last two, certain rendezvous areas were designated so that fragments of a group could converge at sea to form the whole. Obviously, then, the mathematics of navigation was a dominant factor. Success hinged on coordination in terms of hours, not weeks or days.

Each of the six increments had its own time schedule for an independent voyage. The route to Inchon was marked off on maps by a chain of check points, the most significant of which bore the code names ARKANSAS, IOWA, and CALIFORNIA. The first two, lying in the East China Sea off the southwestern tip of Korea, formed the junction of the sea lanes from Japan and Pusan. Consequently, there was no alternative to their remaining fixed in the direct path of the oncoming typhoon. Point CALIFORNIA was important in that it marked the end of the open sea phase and the beginning of the treacherous offshore approach to Inchon via Flying Fish and East channels.[14]
Click here to view map

The departure schedule for the Attack Force was set out in Doyle's Operation Order 14–50 as follows:

Pontoon Movement Group (2 ATFs, 3 LSUs, 1 YTB, 1 YW): Yokohama, 5 Sep.
LSMR Movement Element (3 LSMRs): Yokohama, 9 Sep.
Tractor Movement Element A (LSM, 1 AMS, 1 AM, 1 ARS, 2 LSDs, 36 LSTs): Kobe, 10 Sep.
Tractor Movement Element B (1 ARL, 1 PF, 1 PCEC, 12 LSTs): Kobe, 10 Sep.
Transport Movement Group (5 APAs, 8 AKAs, 1 AP, 2 PFs): Kobe, 12 Sep.
Advanced Attack Group (Wolmi-do) (1 LSD, 3 APDs): Pusan, 13 Sep.

The chart shows the basic pattern, which would evolve only after considerable shuffling and secondary routing. For instance, two vessels of the cumbersome Pontoon Movement Group, carrying vital equipment for the expansion of Inchon's port facilities, would not leave Sasebo until 11 September. They were to join the slow Yokohama convoy near Point IOWA the same day. Tractor Elements A and B, the latter trailing at a distance of six miles, would pick up the Pusan LSTs at IOWA on 13 September. The Kobe contingent of the Transport

Movement Group was to pass through Point ARKANSAS on the 14th, joining the *Cavalier, Pickaway, Henrico,* and *Seminole* from Pusan.

All ship movements took place on schedule until the morning of 11 September, when angry ocean swells off the coast of Japan marked the approach of KEZIA. Winds at the center of the typhoon were estimated at 125 miles per hour, but Admiral Doyle based his decisions on the assumption that the storm would curve off to the north instead of colliding with the invasion armada in full force. He was taking a calculated risk, therefore, when he ordered the Transport Movement Group at Kobe to weigh anchor on the 11th, a day ahead of schedule, and proceed to the objective area. The LSTs, already on their way, were now out of danger; and Doyle believed that advancing the sailing date would enable the AKAs and APAs to escape the worst of the typhoon.

The *Mount McKinley,* with Doyle, Smith, and their staffs aboard, departed Kobe at 1030 on the 11th. As the ship rolled and pitched in heavy seas, the Attack Force Commander remarked that KEZIA was one of the worst storms he had ever encountered.[15]

This was also the opinion of Captain Cameron Briggs, USN, then fighting it out with KEZIA in an effort to reach Sasebo with the carrier *Boxer* and its 96 planes plus 14 extra aircraft taken aboard at Pearl Harbor. It was necessary to launch these spares and land them on Okinawa before he could finally make port on the 12th and prepare to mount out two days later for Inchon.[16]

On 12 September the *Mount McKinley* overtook the AKAs and APAs. They had reversed course, apparently on the assumption that they could not get around the typhoon. If Doyle had not ordered the heaving vessels to circle about and follow the flagship through the storm, their chances for meeting the 15 September deadline at Inchon would have vanished like the wind-whipped spray.[17]

There was no joy in the troop compartments as the transports plowed through mountains of water. But Doyle was winning his gamble that the typhoon would slowly veer off to the north, and starting the Transport Group a day early proved to be a sound decision. Thanks to the admiral's judgment and resolution, every ship weathered the storm and approached Point ARKANSAS on schedule.

After rounding Kyushu on 12 September, the *Mount McKinley* docked at Sasebo that evening to pick up General MacArthur with his party of GHQ and X Corps officers. The proper ship for this purpose was Admiral Struble's flagship, the USS *Rochester*. But CinCFE preferred the *Mount McKinley* despite the fact that an AGC was designed for the staffs of an Attack Force and Landing Force and had no accommodations suited to a party including seven general officers. The ship was warped in by two tugs and CinCFE came aboard. General Shepherd had previously been assigned by General MacArthur to his staff for temporary duty as amphibious adviser and personal liaison officer to the 1st Marine Division. The Marine general was accompanied by Colonel V. H. Krulak, G–3 of FMFPac, and his personal aide, Major J. B. Ord.

In less than an hour the *Mount McKinley* was back on the high seas, straining through the darkness toward Korea.[18]

All elements of the Attack Force completed the last leg of the voyage without incident on 14 September. Headquarters of the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, rode the only cripple, an LST partially incapacitated by an engine breakdown. Fortunately, an ocean-going tug was on hand to tow the ailing vessel at eight knots—sufficient speed to get her to the objective area on time.

The Yellow Sea was quiet as the columns of ships closed on Point CALIFORNIA and Korea's coastline. Nothing was taken for granted, and the approach was carefully screened to the very end by Admiral Andrewes' fast Blockade and Covering Force.

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Chapter 5. Embarkation and Assault
Air and Naval Bombardments

The softening up of Wolmi-do had begun on 10 September, when the Marine fliers of TG–95.5 made napalm attacks designed to burn off the trees screening NKPA artillery. Six planes of VMF–323 and eight planes of VMF–214 took off from the CVEs at 0600 and scorched the eastern side of the island. The next flight of 14 planes found it necessary to orbit for a few minutes until the smoke cleared sufficiently for them to continue the work of destruction.

Lieutenant Clark's reports had led G–2 officers to believe that enemy defensive installations on Wolmi-do were more formidable than had at first been supposed. As if in support of this conclusion, the Marine fliers of the second strike were greeted with small-caliber anti-aircraft fire both from the island and mainland. A third attack, launched from the decks of the *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait* shortly before noon, left the hump-backed island in flames from one shore to another.

After the CVEs returned to Sasebo for replenishment the next day, the carrier-based Navy planes of TF–77 worked over both Wolmi-do and Inchon on 12 and 13 September. It was now the turn of the destroyers, and Admiral Higgins had planned a bold venture. Instead of risking collision or grounding in a night approach, he decided to forego the advantages of surprise and attack in broad daylight. And instead of avoiding NKPA fire, he intended to goad the enemy into retaliations which would reveal the positions of NKPA guns on Wolmi-do.

The hazards of the operation were increased by the fact that a ROK PC boat had discovered an NKPA craft laying mines on the morning of the 10th. This confirmed Admiral Struble's opinion that the Inchon area offered the enemy excellent opportunities for this form of warfare. Not only would the muddy waters make detection difficult, but crippled ships would block the narrow channel.

It was not a pleasant prospect. And the outlook became darker on the morning of 13 September when four mines were spotted in Flying Fish Channel. The U.S. cruisers *Toledo* and *Rochester* and the British cruisers *Kenya* and *Jamaica* had dropped off in support as the six destroyers carried out their mission. Pausing only to detonate the mines with 40mm rounds, the cans moved up within 800 yards of Wolmi-do to fire down the enemy's throat while the four cruisers poured in 6- and 8-inch salvoes and the planes of TF–77 made bombing runs.[19]

It had been long since the Navy issued the historic order "Prepare to repel boarders!" But Admiral Higgins did not overlook the possibility of NKPA infantry swarming out over the mud flats to attack a disabled and grounded destroyer. And though he did not issue pikes and cutlasses, the crews of the *Gurke, Henderson, Swanson, Collett, De Haven,* and *Mansfield* were armed with grenades and Tommy guns for action at close quarters.

The enemy endured half an hour of punishment before obliging Higgins by opening up with the shore guns of Wolmi-do. The *Gurke* and *DeHaven* took hits, and five NKPA shells found the *Collett.* The total damage was insignificant, however, and the casualties amounted to one man killed and eight wounded. These results cost the enemy dearly when the cruisers and destroyers silenced the NKPA guns shortly after they revealed their positions.

On the return trip the destroyers found eight more mines and exploded them. This proved to be all, for the enemy had neglected an opportunity to make the waters around Inchon dangerous for the attack force. The next morning, when the destroyers paid another visit to Wolmi-do, the shore guns appeared to have been effectually silenced. The DDs fired more than 1,700 5-inch shells and drew only a few scattered shots in reply.

Meanwhile, the Marine planes of VMFs -214 and -323, having returned from Sasebo, cooperated by spotting for the cruisers and launching napalm strikes before and after the bombardment.

On the evening of 14 September, after five days of continual pounding, Wolmi-do was a blasted piece of real estate as the Marines of 3/5 prepared to hit GREEN Beach in the morning.

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Chapter 5. Embarkation and Assault
Marine Landings on GREEN Beach

The pre-dawn stillness of the Yellow Sea was shattered as the Corsairs of VMFs–214 and –323 flashed up from the decks of the *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait.* To the west the planes of Task Force 77 were assembling in attack formations above the *Valley Forge, Philippine Sea,* and *Boxer.* Squadron after squadron droned eastward through the blackness, and the first aircraft began orbiting over the objective area at 0454.[20]

Two hours earlier, Advance Attack Group 90.1, under Captain Norman W. Sears, USN, had glided into the entrance of Flying Fish channel. Led by the *Mansfield,* the column of 19 ships snaked through the treacherous passage while captains and navigators sweated over radar scopes. Lieutenant Clark's handiwork provided a welcome relief midway along the route, when the glimmering beacon on Palmi-do guided the vessels past one of the more dangerous points in the channel. Minutes after air cover began to form over Inchon, the ships eased into the narrows west of Wolmi-do and sought assigned battle stations. Training their big guns on the port city were the cruisers *Toledo, Rochester, Kenya,* and *Jamaica,* comprising one of the three Fire Support Units under Admiral Higgins. Other support vessels scattered throughout the waters of the objective area were the destroyers *Collet, Gurke, Henderson, Mansfield, De Haven, Swenson,* and *Southerland;* and this array of fire power was further supplemented by the three bristling rocket ships, LSMR's 401, 403, and 404.[21]

The control ship, *Mount McKinley,* its flag bridge crowded with star-studded commanders, steamed into the narrows just before dawn. No sooner had the gray shoreline become outlined in the morning haze than the 6- and 8-inch guns of the cruisers belched sheets of orange flame in the direction of Inchon; and at 0545, the initial explosions rocked the city and reverberated throughout the channel. There was a deafening crescendo as the destroyers hammered Wolmi-do with their 5-inch guns. Radio Hill, its seaward side already burnt and blackened from previous bombardments, was almost hidden by smoke when Marine planes streaked down at 0600 to smother the island with tons of rockets and bombs.[22]

Captain Sears, reporting to the *Mount McKinley,* confirmed L-hour at 0630. To this end, Lieutenant Colonal Robert D. Taplett's landing force was boated by 0600, and the LCUPs and LSUs rendezvoused while Marine air continued to soften up the target.[23]

Air attacks ceased at 0615, but Wolmi-do enjoyed only a momentary respite before the most unnerving blow of all. In strange contrast to the sleek men-o'-war and nimble aircraft, three squat LSMRs closed on the island from the north, a few hundred yards offshore. Phalanxes of rockets arose from the decks of the clumsy ships, arched steeply, and crashed down. One of the rocket ships, taking a southerly course, passed GREEN Beach and dumped salvo after salvo along the slopes and crest of Radio Hill.

When the LSMR cleared North Point of Wolmi-do, seven LCVPs darted across the line of departure and sped shoreward with 3/5's first wave.[24] Rockets and 40mm shells were still ripping the southern half of the island when one platoon of Company G and three platoons of Company H stormed GREEN Beach at 0633. Two minutes later, the second wave of landing craft ground to a halt on the sand, bringing the remainder of both assault companies.

The Marines were confronted by a scene of devastation almost devoid of enemy resistance. Only a few scattered shots greeted the assault force as it punched inland. The failure of UDT men to clear away all of the wrecked small craft cluttering the beach had left 3/5 a landing strip less than fifty yards wide. Consequently, each wave had to contract like an accordion, and there was considerable crowding during the first crucial minutes of the landing. But even at this stage, the potent Marine air arm offered a final measure of protection to the

infantrymen splashing ashore. Pilots swung their F4Us fifty yards ahead of the assault troops and hosed the routes of advance with machine-gun bullets.

Click here to view map

After a brief pause for reorganization at the beach, First Lieutenant Robert D. Bohn's Company G wheeled to the right and drove up the northern slopes of Radio Hill, Objective 1-A. Only half-hearted resistance was met along the way, most of the scattered and numb North Koreans preferring to surrender rather than face the inevitable. At 0655, Sergeant Alvin E. Smith, guide of the 3d Platoon, secured the American flag to a shell-torn tree on the crest.

At this point General MacArthur rose from the swivel chair in which he had been viewing the operation on the flag bridge of the *Mount McKinley*. "That's it," he said. "Let's get a cup of coffee."

Meanwhile, the Wolmi-do assault continued as Captain Patrick E. Wildman, after detaching a small force from Company H to clear rubble-strewn North Point, attacked across Wolmi-do toward the Inchon causeway with the rest of his unit. How Company's mission was to seize Objective 2-B, which included the eastern nose of Radio Hill and the shoreline industrial area facing Inchon.

At 0646, the three LSUs comprising the third wave squeezed into the narrow beach and disgorged the armored detachment of Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, under Second Lieutenant Granville G. Sweet. Ten tanks were landed in all—six M-26s, one flame-thrower, two dozers, and one retriever. The big vehicles crunched inland a short distance to await calls from the infantry.

Lieutenant Colonel Taplett ordered his free boat to the beach at 0650. Fifteen minutes later, he radioed the *Mount McKinley* and *Fort Marion* that his assault companies were advancing on schedule.

It was ironic that 3/5's reserve company should encounter the angriest hornets' nest on Wolmi-do. Landing in the fourth wave at 0659, Captain Robert A. McMullen's Company I moved through North Point in trace of the How Company detachment which supposedly had cleared the area. Suddenly a flurry of hand grenades clattered on the rubble, and the surprised Marines scattered for cover. Regaining their composure after the explosions, the infantrymen determined the source of trouble to be a by-passed string of enemy emplacements dug into a low cliff at the shoreline facing Inchon. There appeared to be about a platoon of North Koreans, who would rise from their holes intermittently, fling grenades inland, then disappear from sight.

Item Company's interpreter crawled toward the cliff during a lull, bellowing to the Reds that their predicament was hopeless and exhorting them to surrender. When the Communists responded to this advice by throwing more grenades, McMullen signalled Sweet's tanks into action. The M-26s and Marine riflemen took covering positions, while the dozer tank, directed by McMullen himself, rumbled into the troublesome pocket and systematically sealed the die-hard Reds in their holes.

Another bit of drama unfolded before the reserve troops when they closed on the causeway terminus in the wake of How Company's advance. From one of many caves drifted noises indicating the presence of several occupants, hitherto unnoticed. While riflemen covered the entrance, a Marine tank drove forward and fired two rounds into the interior.

Muffled explosions shook the area, and billows of black smoke streaked with flame rolled out of the cave. Wide-eyed, as though watching ghosts emerge, the Marines of Company I saw thirty enemy soldiers stagger out of the blazing recess and throw up their hands.

Less than an hour after landing, 3/5 controlled half of Wolmi-do. Company H, having cleared the causeway terminus, was pivoting southward to clean out the ruins of the industrial area. Engineers, close on the heels of the infantry, advanced 25 yards out on the pavement leading to Inchon and laid an antitank mine field. George Company had advanced about 400 yards and was clearing the northern crest of Radio Hill. Action up to this point is best summed up in Taplett's message to the *Mount McKinley* at 0745:

"Captured 45 prisoners. Meeting light resistance."

Nor did the situation change as Company G occupied the dominating peak of Radio Hill, some 105 meters high. The enemy lacked the will to fight, despite the fact that he had sufficient weapons and a formidable defensive complex from which to fire them. Frightened, dejected Red soldiers continued to surrender singly or in small groups, and Taplett exulted over the amazingly light casualties sustained by his battalion.

Since Company H found the going slow in the shambles of the industrial area, the battalion commander ordered Lieutenant Bohn to seize the whole of Radio Hill. Accordingly, George Company troops rushed across the ridgeline to the eastern spur. This done, Bohn dispatched a force to clear the western reaches of the high ground. By 0800, Radio Hill became the property of the 1st Marine Division, and with the prize went control of the island and Inchon Harbor.

When the news of 3/5's success blared from the loudspeaker on the flag bridge of the *Mount McKinley*, the commander in chief, wearing his famous leather jacket and braided campaign cap, withdrew to his cabin and penned a spirited message to Vice Admiral Struble aboard the *Rochester:*

"The Navy and Marines have never shone more brightly than this morning.

"MACARTHUR"

Consolidation of Wolmi-do required the reduction of an enemy outpost on Sowolmi-do, the small lighthouse station connected to the southwestern tip of the island by a causeway 750 yards long and 12 yards wide. An islet of about 500 square yards, Sowolmi-do was topped by a low hill with the navigational beacon on the summit. Before bothering with this tiny, isolated target, Taplett put his larger house in order.

By previous plan, the three rifle companies of 3/5 took up defensive positions generally facing Inchon. Item Company occupied North Point, Wildman's unit the slopes above the industrial area, and Company G the crest of Radio Hill. While the battalion dug in, mopping-up operations throughout the island continued to net more prisoners and reveal the extent of North Korean fortifications. Radio Hill was ringed by mutually supporting trenches and emplacements, all of which had brought only a negligible return on the Reds' investment in time and labor. Parked on the western nose of the ridge were two intact 76mm antitank guns that could have wrought havoc on landing waves approaching GREEN Beach. Fortunately, these weapons had been exposed to the 40mm fire of the LSMR covering the beach assault, and their crews had lacked the stomach to man them.

More antitank guns were scattered around the terminus of the causeway leading to Inchon, leaving some question as to whether they had been rushed to the defense of the island or were marked for displacement to the city.

North Point, once a luxurious resort, was honeycombed with caves used both for storage and for bomb shelters. The swimming pool, one of the few structures still recognizable after the bombardment, was converted by the Marines into a prisoner-of-war stockade.

More than 300 cast-iron antipersonnel mines were found attached to the barbed wire entanglement stretched along the west coast at the base of Radio Hill. The explosives were removed and disarmed by Technical Sergeant Edwin L. Knox and his detachment from Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion. Though the North Koreans had been helpful in placing these mines in so obvious a location, they had, oddly enough, failed to employ similar obstacles on the beaches, roads, and paths around the island.

Prior to the midmorning advance on Sowolmi-do, total casualties for the 3d Battalion were 14 wounded—an incredibly small price for a critical terrain feature commanding the approaches to Korea's major west coast port. Evacuation plans so carefully laid out by the 1st Medical Battalion worked smoothly. In the early phase of the operation, LCVPs returning from GREEN Beach delivered Marine casualties to the *Fort Marion*, whose normal medical complement had been augmented by a special surgical team. Men with particularly bad wounds were transferred to the *Mount McKinley* after being administered first aid. As the battle developed, navy medical corpsmen of 3/5 established a collecting point on a small pier which could be reached by ambulance boats even during low water.

Shortly before 1000, Taplett ordered Company G to seize Sowolmi-do. Bohn in turn assigned the mission to one infantry squad reinforced with machine guns and a section of tanks, all under the control of Second Lieutenant John D. Counselman, leader of George Company's 3d Platoon. Although the islet was by no means an objective of formidable proportions, the attackers eyed their route of approach over the long strip with misgivings. Their skepticism was not unfounded, for they neared the entrance to the causeway only to be stopped cold by heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from the other end. A platoon of North Koreans, almost literally at the end of a rope, preferred to fight it out.

Taplett ordered the tank-infantry team to hold up while he radioed a mission to Marine air. A few minutes later, Corsairs of VMF-214 nosed down and scorched the objective with napalm.

Sweet's tanks, preceded by an engineer mine-clearance team and followed by the column of infantrymen, rumbled onto the rock bed tracing the seaward edge of the causeway. As the task force filed across the exposed route, 81mm shells from 3/5's mortar platoon rattled overhead and tore into the Communist emplacements. Enemy fire was reduced to a light patter, and the observers on Radio Hill breathed a sigh of relief when the attackers gained the far end of the causeway at 1048.

Covered by tank fire, the Marine infantry quickly fanned out and closed with the defenders. There was a sharp outburst of small-arms racket, interspersed with the clatter of machine guns; then a few scattered volleys and the main fight was over at 1115. Mopping up with grenades and a flame thrower continued for almost another hour, owing to the number of caves and the determination of a few Red soldiers.

Nineteen North Koreans surrendered and 17 were killed, including some hapless warriors who tried to swim to the mainland. Despite the size of the islet, eight Reds succeeded in hiding out from the attackers; and General Craig, after landing on Wolmi-do with the ADC group in the evening, observed the fugitives escape to the mainland.[25]

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Chapter 5. Embarkation and Assault
The Two Harbor Islands Secured

Three Marines were wounded on Sowolmi-do, bringing 3/5's total casualties for the day to 17 WIA. In return, Taplett's battalion could count 136 prisoners and 108 enemy dead. Since interrogation of captives established the original number of Red defenders at 400, it could be concluded that some 150 more Communist fatalities lay entombed in sealed emplacements and caves throughout the island.

The Wolmi-do garrison was part of a 2,000-man force committed to the defense of Inchon by NKPA headquarters in Seoul. Represented were elements of the 226th Marine Regiment, to which two companies of the 2d Battalion, 918th Coast Artillery Regiment were attached with their Soviet-manufactured 76mm guns. The spiritless resistance encountered by 3/5 was the natural reaction of green troops to the awesome power of modern combined arms; for the North Korean marines and their artillerymen were largely recent conscripts with sketchy training and no experience. It remained to be seen how the other 1,600 Red troops would respond to the later assaults on RED and BLUE Beaches.

Mopping-up operations on the island were completed by noon, and with the support ships standing silent in the narrows, an oppressive quiet settled on the objective area. Gradually the phenomenal tide rolled back from its morning high of more than 30 feet. By 1300 the waters had receded, leaving 3/5 perched on an island in a sea of mud. For the next several hours Taplett and his men were on their own, speculating whether an enemy force might suddenly rush out of Inchon's dead streets in an attempt to cross the mud flats, or whether a Red tank column would abruptly streak from the city and make for the causeway.

Nothing happened. The air of unreality caused by the stillness of the Oriental seaport weighed down on the nerves of the entire attack force. As the afternoon wore on, the Marines detected movement here and there, but the distant figures were identified as civilians more often than not. Captain McMullen, studying the RED Beach area from his OP on North Point, reported possible enemy "field pieces" on Cemetery Hill. What he actually sighted were the tubes of the mortar company of the 226th NK Marine Regiment, as will be shown later.

At Taplett's OP on Radio Hill, the Shore Fire Control Party Officer, Second Lieutenant Joseph R. Wayerski, searched Inchon intently through his binoculars. On one occasion he called down naval gunfire on small groups of people stirring in the inner tidal basin area to his right front, but when further observation revealed the figures to be civilians raiding a pile of rice, the Marine officer promptly cancelled the mission. Wayerski's lone tactical target of importance was a section of trench on Observatory Hill in which he once spotted about 20 enemy soldiers on the move. He smothered the earthworks with 30 5-inch shells from the *Mansfield*, and what North Koreans remained chose other avenues from that point on.

Taplett and others of his headquarters picked out enemy gun emplacements right at the waterfront near the Inchon dry dock. After the report went out to the *Mount McKinley*, red pencils throughout the task force circled the locale on maps for special attention during the pre-H-Hour bombardment.

Thus, the 3d Battalion enjoyed an almost uneventful interlude during its isolation. An occasional mortar round or long-range machine gun burst was the feeble reminder that Inchon still remained in enemy hands.

While the infantry lolled in relative ease and safety, service and support elements, attached to 3/5 for the landing, set the stage at GREEN Beach for the logistical follow-up so vital to amphibious operations. First Lieutenant Melvin K. Green's team from Shore Party Group A, having unloaded its LSUs in record time, established dumps for ammunition, rations, and other field necessities. Personnel of the Ordnance Battalion, Combat Service Group, and Service Battalion engaged in backbreaking toil to alleviate the headaches of a harried

beachmaster. Signalmen scurried about, setting up their equipment and creating the familiar maze of wire. The reconnaissance detachment of the 11th Marines probed around the island's desolation in search of battery positions for the howitzers scheduled to roll ashore on the evening tide.

The narrow strip of sand on North Point would have appeared crowded and hopelessly confused to the inexperienced eye, but old hands knew that order would gradually emerge, as if by magic, from the "early rush hour"—that necessary evil inherent in all assault landings.

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches

THE CONCEPT OF the amphibious envelopment of the North Korean Peoples Army, together with the actual assault on Inchon by United States Marines, constituted heresy to that school of wishful thinkers which sprang to life as World War II faded in the first brilliant flashes of the Atomic Age. Widely accepted and noisily proclaimed was the belief, perhaps sincere, perhaps convenient, that the nuclear and aeronautical sciences had relegated armies, navies, and man himself to insignificant positions in the waging of war. The massing of ships and field forces, it was argued, was a thing of the past; for the next war, if humanity dared risk another, would be decided in weeks or even days with the power unleashed by electronic and mechanical devices—many of which in 1950 were still in rudimentary stages on drawing boards.

This was the controversial "push-button" theory of war which left the peace-loving nations of the world unprepared in 1950 for violent aggression by the tough little peasant army of North Korea, supported by some 100 tanks and a few hundred artillery pieces. And to the premature acceptance of this theory by a large section of the American public may be attributed many of the major shortcomings of the Inchon assault, as it unfolded in the evening of 15 September. That the operation succeeded despite these shortcomings and the myriad natural handicaps amounts almost to a tactical miracle.

In the words of General Smith, ". . . half of the problem was in getting to Inchon at all."[1] The tremendous obstacles overcome in solving that "half of the problem" have already been treated at length; and it remains now, in the short space of a chapter, to show how the other half became history.

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches
The Assault Plan

Aboard the *Henrico* and *Cavalier* in the Inchon narrows on 15 September were the 1st and 2d Battalions, 5th Marines, yanked out of the Pusan Perimeter ten days earlier. Having had no time for a rehearsal and only a few days for planning on the basis of admittedly sketchy intelligence, these two units would scale the sea wall of RED Beach and plunge into the dense waterfront area of the sprawling seaport.

The mission of the 5th Marines (less 3/5 on Wolmi-do) was to seize the O-A Line, a 3,000-yard arc encompassing Cemetery Hill on the left (north), Observatory Hill in the center, and thence extending the last 1,000 yards through a maze of buildings and streets to terminate at the inner tidal basin. Each battalion would land in a column of companies, Lieutenant Colonel George R. Newton's 1st, on the left, seizing Cemetery Hill and the northern half of Observatory Hill; while Lieutenant Colonel Harold S. Roise's 2d secured the remainder of the latter, the hill of the British Consulate, and the inner tidal basin.[2]

Landing nearly three miles southeast of the 5th Marines, the 1st Regiment would seize BLUE Beach, a north-south strip fronting a suburban industrial area. BLUE Beach One, on the left, was 500 yards wide, flanked on the north by the rock revetment of a salt evaporator that jutted into the water at a sharp angle to the shoreline. A wide drainage ditch, about which little was known besides the fact that it existed, formed the south boundary. Just inland a dirt road—the sole exit from the beach—skirted the north end of a steep knoll that ran the whole width of the landing site. There being no revetment at the waterline, Marine planners hoped that amphibian tractors could crawl ashore with the assault troops.[3]

Click here to view map

BLUE Beach Two, connected to One by the drainage ditch, also extended 500 yards. Like RED Beach it was fronted by a rock sea wall. On the right half, the wall retained one side of a narrow ramp that jutted southward like a long index finger. Behind the ramp lay a cove, its shoreline at a right angle to the sea wall. During the assault, Marines would scale the waterfront of BLUE Two from LVTs, while the cove around the corner on the right, unofficially dubbed "BLUE Beach Three," was investigated as a possible supplementary landing site.[4]

Preceded by a wave of LVT(A)s of Company A (Reinf), 56th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, USA, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 1st Marines, would land abreast on BLUE One and Two respectively. With two companies initially in the assault, each of the infantry battalions was to drive forward and secure its portion of the O–1 Line. This four-mile arc bent inland as far as 3,000 yards to include four main objectives, assigned as follows:

2d Battalion (BLUE One)

ABLE: A critical road junction about 1,000 yards northeast of the beach.

DOG: Hill 117, 3,000 yards northeast of the beach, commanding Inchon's back door and the highway leading to Seoul, 22 miles away.

3d Battalion (BLUE Two)

CHARLIE: The seaward tip of Hill 233, a long east-west ridge beginning 1,500 yards southeast of the beach and blocking off the stubby Munhang Peninsula, which projected southward.

BAKER: A small cape, topped by Hill 94, to the right of Objective Charlie and flanking BLUE Beach.[5]

While a question may arise as to the choice of landing the 5th Marines in the very heart of Inchon, it must be remembered that immediate seizure of the port facilities was vital to the success of the operation. Hitting the beaches at only two-thirds infantry strength, the 1st Marine Division could not swell to the overwhelming

proportions of an invasion force. A modern harbor for rapid build-up and exploitation by X Corps figured inherently in MacArthur's strategy.

If RED Beach thus constituted the critical objective, then the selection of BLUE Beach for a supporting landing followed in logical sequence. Once on the O–1 Line, the 1st Marines would flank the single overland approach to the peninsular seaport, thereby presenting the NKPA garrison with the grim alternatives of early flight, capitulation, or strangulation. Without this leverage on Inchon's flank and rear, the 5th Regiment could easily be swallowed up by two square miles of dense urban area.

Four assault battalions would have two hours of daylight in which to bridge the gap between planning and reality. From overhead and behind they could expect a preponderance of heavy fire support, but ahead lay enemy and hydrographic situations still clouded by question marks.

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches
Beginning the Ship-to-Shore Movement

As the early afternoon of 15 September wore on, the continued silence of Inchon beckoned temptingly to Lieutenant Colonel Taplett on Wolmi-do. Having studied the city over a prolonged period without detecting any significant evidence of Communist defensive capability, he radioed Division headquarters for permission to move a strong tank-infantry force across the causeway. The battalion commander believed that 3/5 could launch either an effective reconnaissance in force or an actual assault on RED Beach. Although his estimate of the enemy potential was shortly borne out, the degree of risk in Taplett's bold plan drew a firm "negative" from the *Mount McKinley*.[6]

Busy with last-minute details aboard the command ship, General Smith at noon had radioed General Craig instructions to land on Wolmi-do on the evening tide and set up an advance echelon of the division command post with the ADC group. Smith did not desire to land the remainder of his headquarters until D–plus 1, when there would be more room for dispersion within the expanding beachhead.[7]

The Landing Force Commander could look down from the flag bridge at 1400 and note the first signs of activity on the water. A few special landing craft were beating the forthcoming traffic rush as they sped toward the various ships to which they were assigned as command boats.

At the same time, the central control vessel, *Diachenko* (APD 123), edged forward to its key station 3,000 yards southwest of the BLUE Beach line of departure. Lieutenant Commander Allmon checked the set and drift of the current and radioed his observations to Admiral Doyle. Estimated at three and a half knots, the run of current was heavier than expected. After receiving the Senior Control Officer's report, the Attack Force Commander confirmed 1730 as H-Hour.[8]

The confirmation went out to the entire Joint Task Force at 1430, and Admiral Higgins' fire support ships immediately commenced the final bombardment of Inchon. His four cruisers and six destroyers poured shells into the seaport for the next three hours, smashing every landmark of tactical importance and starting fires that blazed across the whole waterfront.

Under the calculating eyes of tactical air observers and coordinators in F4Us droning high above the objective area, VMFs-323 and -214 and three squadrons of Navy Skyraiders alternately blasted Inchon, integrating their strikes with naval gunfire from H-minus 180 minutes onward. Simultaneously, Fast Carrier Task Force 77 kept another 12 planes in the air continuously for deep support missions designed to freeze all enemy activity within a radius of 25 miles.

As if enough obstacles did not confront the landing force already, rain squalls began drifting past Inchon during the bombardment. Gradually the storm clouds merged with the thick smoke boiling up from the city, and heavy overcasts settled over large areas, particularly in the vicinity of BLUE Beach.[9]

Assault troops of the 5th Marines scrambled down cargo nets on the *Henrico* and *Cavalier* to fill landing craft splashing into the water from booms and davits. Nearly 200 LCVPs and 70 LCMs soon were joined by 12 LSUs and 18 LVT(A)s, 164 LVTs, and 85 DUKWs disgorged from the yawning wells of the LSTs, wherein the Marines of the 1st Regiment had made ready for battle.[10]

Guided by Lieutenant Commander Ralph H. Schneeloch, USNR, the *Horace A. Bass*, RED Beach control vessel, slowly steamed toward the line of departure, a long file of assault craft trailing behind like a brood of ducklings. Lieutenant Theodore B. Clark, USN, ordered the *Wantuck* to the head of the boat lane to BLUE Beach, and PCEC 896, under Lieutenant Reuben W. Berry, USN, took station off Wolmi-do to regulate the waves

scheduled for the administrative landing on GREEN Beach.[11]

At 1645, the 18 Army LVT(A)s comprising the first wave of the 1st Marines crossed the line of departure and headed for BLUE Beach. Crawling at four knots, the armored vehicles had three quarters of an hour to cover the 5,500 yards to the target. The LCVPs, capable of twice the speed of the amphibian tractors, left the inner transport area near the *Diachenko's* station for the five-mile trip northward to the RED and GREEN boat lanes. [12]

The roar of the fire support ships increased in volume during the approach of the landing craft until, at 1705 (H-minus 25), Admiral Higgins signaled the LSMRs into action. At once the cruisers and destroyers fell silent. Again missiles soared from the squat rocket ships in high arcs that sent them plunging into the RED and BLUE landing areas. Upwards of 6,000 rockets detonated in the seaport during the next twenty minutes, further numbing the defenders but at the same time increasing the density and volume of the overcast.[13]

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches
Seizure of Cemetery Hill

The critical moment of every amphibious assault was now at hand—the moment when intelligence and planning would be put to the test of actuality. On the bridge of the *Mount McKinley* high-ranking Army, Navy, and Marine Corps officers gathered again about General MacArthur, seated in a swivel chair. They listened for the second time that day as the loud speaker gave a blow-by-blow account of developments reported by aerial observers.

Everything that air attacks and naval gunfire could do to soften up the target had been done, yet no one could be sure just what sort of opposition the troops would encounter on RED and BLUE Beaches. It might be as fainthearted as that brushed aside by 3/5 on Wolmi-do; or it might be that another Tarawa awaited on those cramped strips of urban waterfront lying between the mud flats of the harbor and the dark, crooked streets of the Asiatic town and environs. The enemy had been given ample time in which to prepare for a defense of the mainland.

Even the possibility of undetected mines or surprise NKPA air attacks at the last minute had not been overlooked. Although the Attack Force continued to exercise control from the TADC on the *Mount McKinley* of all aircraft operating in its assigned area, an alternate control agency had been installed on the USS *George Clymer,* utilizing an emergency hookup and a control unit attached to TAC, X Corps. All nets were manned and communications set up to permit a rapid shift of control to General Cushman in case of disaster.

With H-hour only minutes away, the sky above the objective was murky and the wind whipped rain as well as stinging spray into the faces of the Marines in the assault waves. Only the Marine and Navy flyers upstairs could see the panorama of the waterborne attack—the cruisers and destroyers standing silent in the background, LSMR rocket flashes stabbing the false twilight ashore, the landing craft trailing pale wakes behind them like the tails of comets. The pilots observed the LCVPs to the left of Wolmi-do fan out at the line of departure and touch the sea wall of RED Beach minutes later. To the right of the little island, however, they saw the leading waves of the 1st Marines disappear in a blanket of gloom. For while the smoke and moisture-laden air had obscured parts of the 5th Marines' zone of action ashore, it had completely blotted out BLUE Beach and half the length of the 1st Regiment's boat lanes. Because of this development and other factors which posed special problems for the 1st Marines, the narrative will treat each landing separately, beginning with that of the 5th Regiment on the left.

Eight LCVPs had crossed the line of departure at H-minus 8 and sped toward RED Beach with the first wave of the 5th Marines. Starting from the left, boats numbered one through four carried parts of two assault platoons of Company A, 1st Battalion, whose mission was to seize Cemetery Hill and anchor the regimental left. In boats five through eight were troops of Company E, 2d Battalion, whose task included clearing the right flank of the beach and taking the hill of the British Consulate.[15]

From Wolmi-do 3/5's machine guns, mortars, and supporting M-26s cut loose with a hail of bullets and high explosive to cover the landing. Technical Sergeant Knox lead an engineer team forward to clear the causeway, in order that the detachment of Able Company Tanks could advance to the mainland after the initial assault waves hit the beach.

As the landing craft passed the midway point of the 2,200-yard boat lane, the heaving LSMRs ceased firing, so that Lieutenant Colonel Walter E. Lischeid and Major Arnold A. Lund could lead in VMFs–214 and –323 for final strikes on both RED and BLUE Beaches. Navy Skyraiders joined in at the request of Captain John R. Stevens, commander of Company A; and the FAC of 1/5, First Lieutenant James W. Smith, controlled their

strafing passes as the first wave came within 30 yards of the sea wall.[16]

Although the tide was racing in fast, the wall still projected about four feet above the ramps of the landing craft. The Marines readied their scaling ladders. On the right the boats of Company E touched the revetment at 1731. Up went the ladders as the assault troops hurled grenades over the wall. Following the explosions, the Marines from the four boats scrambled to the top of the barrier one by one. The ladders slipped and swayed as the LCVPs bobbed next to the wall. But they served their purpose, and in short order every man of Second Lieutenant Edwin A. Deptula's 1st Platoon was on the beach.

There were no casualties from the few stray bullets cracking through the air. Filtering through smoke and wreckage, the platoon moved inland to cover the landing of the second and third waves, carrying the remainder of Easy Company.

On the north of RED Beach, three of the four LCVPs with the leading elements of Company A bumped the sea wall at 1733. Boat number one, carrying Technical Sergeant Orval F. McMullen and half of his 1st Platoon, was delayed offshore by an engine failure. The remainder of the 1st, under the platoon guide, Sergeant Charles D. Allen, scaled the wall from boat number two in the face of heavy fire from the north flank and from submachine guns in a bunker directly ahead. Several Marines were cut down immediately, the others being unable to advance more than a few yards inland.

Boat number three, with Second Lieutenant Francis W. Muetzel and a squad of his 2d Platoon, touched a breach in the sea wall under the muzzle of an enemy machine gun protruding from a pillbox. The weapon did not fire as the Marines scrambled through the gap and onto the beach. A second squad and a 3.5-inch rocket section joined from boat number four. Gunfire crackled far off on the left, barely audible amid the road of fighter planes strafing fifty yards ahead. Muetzel and his men jumped into a long trench which paralleled the sea wall a few feet away. It was empty. Two Marines threw grenades into the silent pillbox, and the six bloody North Koreans who emerged in the wake of the hollow explosions were left under guard of a Marine rifleman.

Just beyond the beach loomed Cemetery Hill, its seaward side an almost vertical bluff. To avoid getting trapped if the enemy opened up from the high ground, Muetzel attacked toward his objective, the Asahi Brewery, without waiting for the remainder of his men in the tardy second wave. The skirmish line raced across the narrow beach, ignoring padlocked buildings and flaming wreckage. Passing to the south of Cemetery Hill, the 2d Platoon entered the built-up area of the city and marched unopposed up a street to the brewery.

On the left of Company A's zone, the beached half of the 1st Platoon made no progress against the flanking fire and the Communist bunker to the front. The 3d Platoon, under First Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez, landed in the second wave, and McMullen finally got ashore with the other half of the 1st. Both units crowded into the restricted foothold and casualties mounted rapidly. Enemy guns had felled Lopez as he climbed ashore and moved against the bunker with a grenade. Unable to throw the armed missile because of his wound, the young officer was killed when he smothered the explosion with his body to protect his men. Two Marines attacked the emplacement with flame throwers. They were shot down and their valuable assault weapons put out of action.

The situation on the left was at its worst when Captain Stevens landed in Muetzel's zone at H-plus 5. Learning of Lopez' death and unable to contact McMullen, he ordered his executive officer, First Lieutenant Fred F. Eubanks, Jr., to "take over on the left and get them organized and moving."[17] Time was of the essence, since Cemetery Hill, objective of the 1st Platoon, yet remained in enemy hands. Succeeding waves would be landing hundreds of Marines in the shadow of the cliff within the next half hour. Stevens also radioed Muetzel, whose small force had just reached the brewery without suffering a casualty, and ordered the 2d Platoon back to the beach to help out.

Muetzel immediately formed his unit in column and struck out on the return trip to the waterfront. Nearing Cemetery Hill again, he noted that the southern slope of the vital objective was an excellent route of approach to the top. In planning Company A's part of the operation, Stevens had once told him that the 2d

Platoon could expect to help seize the high ground if the job proved too rough for the 1st alone.[18] With a creditable display of judgment and initiative, Muetzel launched an assault on the key to RED Beach.

The Marines moved rapidly up the incline, flushing out about a dozen Red soldiers who surrendered meekly. Gaining the summit, they drove forward and saw the entire crest suddenly come alive with infantry-crewmen of the 226th NKPA Regiment's mortar company. Spiritless and dazed from the pounding by air and naval gunfire, the North Koreans to a man threw down their weapons, filed quietly from trenches and bunkers, and marched to the base of the hill where a small detachment kept them under guard. Hardly a shot had been fired by the 2d Platoon, still without a single casualty, and the capture of Cemetery Hill had required about ten minutes.

During the attack on the high ground, Eubanks had taken the situation in hand on the left of the beach. He first bested the bunker's occupants in a grenade duel, then ordered the emplacement fired by a flame thrower. Just as Muetzel prepared to dispatch assistance from the top of Cemetery Hill, the 1st and 3d Platoons broke out of the pocket, drove inland to the edge of the city, and made physical contact with the 2d.

At 1755, Stevens fired an amber star cluster signifying that Cemetery Hill was secured for the 5th Marines. The half-hour fight in the north corner of RED Beach had cost Company A eight killed and 28 wounded.

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches
RED Beach Secured

After landing in 2/5's first wave, the 1st Platoon of Company E pushed inland 100 yards to the railroad tracks against no resistance whatsoever. Captain Samuel Jaskilka was ashore with the rest of the Company by H-plus 10, and reorganization took place quickly near the Nippon Flour Company buildings, just south of the beach. Deptula's platoon then moved unopposed down the railroad tracks and seized the British Consulate, Regimental Objective C, at 1845. Simultaneously, another platoon cleared the built-up area across the tracks on the lower slopes of Observatory Hill. These rapid accomplishments secured the 5th Marines' right flank, giving an added measure of protection to 22 more waves of landing craft and LSTs scheduled for RED Beach.

Still in enemy hands, however, was Observatory Hill, reaching well over 200 feet above the center of the regimental zone to buttress the arc of the O–A Line. Company C of the 1st Battalion, landing in the fourth and fifth waves shortly before 1800, was to take Objective A, northern half of the critical terrain feature. To Dog Company of 2/5 was charged the southern half, designated Objective B.

That the attack did not go off as planned stemmed from a series of mishaps which began as far out as the line of departure. Despite the fact that Lieutenant Commander Schneeloch was using standard control procedures from the *Bass*, including radio contact with the beach, there was a mixing of waves starting with number four.[19] This development reflected the lack of a rehearsal in the hurried preparations for the operation, and the end result was that parts of Companies C and D, both in the second assault echelon, landed over the wrong beaches.[20] After landing, Charlie Company had the added disadvantage of being without its company commander for a crucial 12 minutes. Captain Poul F. Pedersen was delayed when the fifth-wave commander, who shared his boat, decided to tow a stalled LCVP left behind by the preceding formation.[21] When he finally reached his company, the job of reorganization was much more difficult than it would have been had he arrived at the beach on schedule. With troops pouring over the sea wall from succeeding waves, what had begun as intermingling at the point of overlap in the center of the landing area had grown to temporary congestion and confusion.

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches
LSTs Under Enemy Fire

Out in the channel, the first of eight LSTs[22] heralded the climax of the ship-to-shore movement at 1830 by crossing the line of departure and heading for the sea wall. Prior to the approach, ships' officers had spotted the close fighting on the north flank of RED Beach as they peered through binoculars from their respective bridges. Later, noting the growing knot of Marines in the center of the waterfront area, they concluded that the assault troops could not advance inland. This impression was strengthened by an abrupt procession of gun flashes on Observatory Hill where, owing to the delay in the attack by Companies C and D, a handful of enemy soldiers had recovered from shock sufficiently to set up machine guns. A few North Korean mortar crews in the city also came to life and manned their weapons.

LST 859, leading the pack, came under mortar and machine-gun fire as it waddled toward its berth about 1835. Gun crews on the ship reacted by opening up with 40mm and 20mm cannon, spraying Cemetery and Observatory Hills and the right flank of the beach. Next in the column of ships, LSTs 975 and 857 likewise commenced firing after taking hits from mortars and machine guns. Enemy automatic weapons touched off a fire near ammunition trucks on LST 914, trailing fourth, but sailors and Marines quickly brought the blaze under control. Guns on the latter ship remained silent as a result of dispatch orders received by the captain after leaving the line of departure.[23]

Lieutenant Muetzel and his platoon were chased by LST fire from the crest of Cemetery Hill to the slope facing Inchon—where they came under fire from a Red machine gun in a building on Observatory Hill. Fortunately, a 40mm shell from one of the LSTs crashed into the building and obliterated the enemy position. There were no casualties in Muetzel's outfit, but Lieutenant Colonel Roise's 2d Battalion did not fare as luckily from the misdirected shooting by the American ships. Weapons and H&S Companies of 2/5 had landed about 1830 and were just proceeding inland when LST fire seared their ranks, killing one Marine and wounding 23 others. "If it hadn't been for the thick walls of the Nippon Flour Company," remarked Roise later, "the casualties might have been worse."[24]

All eight of the supply vessels were intact in their berths by 1900. Guns fell silent as soon as the LSTs touched the sea wall and contact was established with the infantry.

On the beach, meanwhile, Second Lieutenant Byron L. Magness had reorganized his 2d Platoon of Company C and, on his own initiative, attacked Observatory Hill. Second Lieutenant Max A. Merritt's 60mm mortar section followed closely behind, but the rest of the company remained fragmented in the landing area. Sparked by Technical Sergeant Max Stein, who was wounded while personally accounting for a North Korean machine gun, the provisional force advanced rapidly in the gathering darkness and at 1845 seized the saddle between Objectives A and B on Observatory Hill. This was just about the time when the LSTs stopped firing.[25]

Since their single flare misfired and they were not able to raise Lieutenant Pedersen by radio, Magness and Merritt were unable to inform the beach of their success. In the meantime, Company B, 1/5's reserve, had landed in the 2d Battalion zone, the waves having swerved to that area to avoid small-arms fire peppering their assigned approach on the left. Captain Francis I. Fenton, Jr., led the unit through a mixed group on the waterfront to an assembly area near the base of Cemetery Hill. When he discussed the beach situation by radio with the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Newton ordered him to take over Charlie Company's mission and assault the northern half of Observatory Hill.[26]

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches
Fighting on Observatory Hill

Darkness had fallen when Company B drove up the slopes of Objective A in a two-pronged attack. Six Marines were wounded in brief skirmishes with North Korean die-hards along the way. Gaining the summit at 2000, Fenton deployed three platoons on line, making contact with the Magness-Merritt force dug in on the saddle to the right. With Objective A seized and Able Company deployed on top and to the flanks of Cemetery Hill, Newton radioed the 5th Marines at 2240 that 1/5's segment of the O-A Line was secured.[27]

In the right of the 5th Marines' zone, the 2d Battalion had also been making gains, despite the handicaps of mixed boat waves, LST fire, poor visibility, and, finally, enemy action.[28] It will be recalled that Company E suffered no casualties in landing and clearing the waterfront as far south as Objective C, the British Consulate. Next to hit the beach was First Lieutenant H. J. Smith's Company D, part of which went ashore in 1/5's zone. Assembling later near the base of Observatory Hill, the unit prepared to carry out its mission of seizing Objective B, the southern half of the big ridge.

Although 2d Battalion overlays show that Easy Company bore no responsibility for the crest of Observatory Hill, Smith's men somehow got the impression that part of Jaskilka's force was already on the summit. Its tactics based on this misunderstanding, Company D formed a simple route column, with Second Lieutenant Ray Heck's 1st Platoon leading the way, and marched up a street to the top of the hill. The vanguard troops cleared the first peak in the company zone without opposition and continued along the road to the second, expecting to meet men of Company E. They were greeted, however, by machine-gun fire from an enemy squad entrenched to the right of the street.

The Marines tumbled into positions on the left. Grenades and small-arms fire flew back and forth across the road during a brisk exchange that lasted about 15 minutes. One of Heck's men was killed and three others wounded. The company corpsmen was hit but refused evacuation until he had first administered to the other casualties and seen them off to safety. Company D's executive officer, First Lieutenant Michael J. Dunbar, went forward with Lieutenant Colonel Roise, the battalion commander, and was wounded by a ricochet.

The enemy troops were driven off just as darkness closed in, leaving the Marines to grope for night defensive positions on unfamiliar ground. Eventually Lieutenant Smith formed a line with all three rifle platoons deployed on the forward slopes of Objective B. Out of battalion reserve came Second Lieutenant Harry J. Nolan's platoon of Company F to bridge the gap between Company D and the Magness-Merritt positions in 1/5's zone on the left.

With Cemetery and Observatory Hills secured, the only portion of the O-A Line not yet under control was the extreme right, anchored on the inner tidal basin. Since the night was pitch black, Roise felt apprehensive about sending troops any farther into the city. In answer to a query, Lieutenant Colonel Murray, whose regimental headquarters had landed at 1830 and set up near the terminus of the Wolmi-do causeway, emphasized to Roise that where the O-A Line could not actually be defended from a suitable tactical standpoint, it must at least be outposted. The battalion commander forthwith dispatched a two-squad patrol from Fox Company to the tidal basin, and the small force returned from the 1,000-yard prowl into the city at 2300, having seen no sign of the enemy. Roise reacted by committing Company F, less its platoon on Observatory Hill, to a defensive perimeter on the right flank. Shortly after midnight, Captain Uel D. Peters deployed the company next to the tidal basin as ordered; and the 5th Marines' O-A Line, though not manned in entirety, came as close to tactical reality as the tangled black depths of the seaport would allow.

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches
1st Marines on BLUE Beach

As mentioned earlier, the overcast resulting from rain squalls and smoke had completely blotted out BLUE Beach by H-hour, 1730. This fact in itself would have sufficed to upset a precise landing procedure; but at this point in the narrative, it is timely to review some of the other problems which had beset the 1st Marines since the inception of the plan for the Inchon assault.[29]

In the short space of weeks, the regiment had been brought up to war strength by the rapid convergence on Camp Pendleton of Marines—in units or as individuals, both regular and reserve—from all over the United States; it had embarked at San Diego and crossed the Pacific; and it had reloaded and embarked from Japan for a combat operation designed to quench a major conflagration. There had been time for only the sketchiest training above the company level. The new 1st Marines had never operated tactically as a regiment, nor had it ever been concentrated in one place as an organizational entity up until the time it hit BLUE Beach.

During the planning phase in Kobe, battalions had to combat-load their LSTs according to an X factor, while awaiting the prescribed tactical plans that would be handed down from higher echelon at the last minute. Intelligence on the enemy and beach conditions was practically non-existent; and the speculative studies and inadequate photos available could be kept only a few hours before being passed on to the next unit in line.

Whenever Marines are given a difficult assignment, the United States Navy invariably draws its own full measure of handicaps. A typical example of the problems confronting naval planners was this case, cited by Major Edwin H. Simmons, of 3/1:

“I was aboard LST 802, which was carrying H&S Company and elements of Weapons Company. The ship had just been recovered from the island trade. Her captain had been flown out to Sasebo from the States, given a pick-up crew and two weeks to condition the ship and crew for an amphibious landing. Despite his best efforts, the 802 had three major breakdowns and had to drop out of convoy several times. At one point it appeared as though the battalion command group would have to be taken off the 802 if they were to get to Inchon in time.”

In connection with BLUE Beach itself, officers of the 1st Marines had only a vague impression of offshore conditions and the accessibility of the landing site. As already noted, the current in the channel was underestimated, and so little was known about the consistency of the mud flats that each landing craft contained planking for emergency use by the assault troops.

The sole exit from BLUE One was the dirt road already mentioned. On aerial photos the drainage ditch separating BLUE One and Two appeared to be some kind of a road over which tractors could crawl ashore. No one was certain, and “BLUE Beach Three,” the cove on the right, was ruled out as a possible landing area early in the planning. At the last minute, however, recent aerial photos and studies led to the conclusion that both the inlet and the ramp at the southern tip of BLUE Two might be good approaches after all. Acting on this information while en route to the target area, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas L. Ridge, commanding officer of 3/1, decided to explore personally the right flank with his executive officer at the outset of the assault. If the ramp, BLUE Three, or both were accessible to LVTs, Ridge would divert later assault echelons on a “follow me” basis.

Thus vital questions were to remain unanswered until the officers and men of the 1st Marines got their first look at BLUE Beach. It was keenly disappointing, therefore, when they stared from the line of departure on the afternoon of 15 September and saw, instead of the distant shoreline, a murky wall rolling seaward from the blazing waterfront.

As noted previously, the line of departure was 5,500 yards—3.2 miles—from the beach, a distance

requiring 45-minute trips for the slow-moving LVT waves. The ship-to-shore movement got off to a bad start owing to the current, which scattered some of the landing formations during the rendezvous phase. Other obstacles entered the picture in rapid succession, one of them best described by Lieutenant Clark, BLUE Beach Control Officer:

"At about H-50, while press boats and the initial waves of LVT(A) and LVT were milling around the BLUE Beach control vessel[*Wantuck*], mortar fire was received in the immediate vicinity. This created some confusion until a destroyer spun around on her anchor and silenced the battery. This was the beginning of the end of the well-planned ship-to-shore movement for BLUE Beach."[30]

Other shortcomings that took on special significance because of the overcast were the lack of compasses and radios in the amphibian tractors and the inexperience of many of the crews. The first wave, consisting of the Army LVT(A)s, was escorted shoreward from the line of departure by Navy guide boats, manned by UDT crews who possessed both the compasses and seamanship necessary to pierce the smoke screen and find the distant beach on time.[31] Wave number two, only a minute behind and close enough to benefit by the expert guidance, did not fare too badly. The ragged formation of number three, however, indicated mounting difficulties at the line of departure. From a study of numerous accounts, the experience of Major Simmons appears to have been typical:

"Wave 5 cleared the 802 about 1630. We had been told that a wave guide would pick us up and lead us to the line of departure. . . . Time was passing and we were feeling desperate when we came alongside what was apparently the central control vessel. I asked the bridge for instructions. A naval officer with a bull horn pointed out the direction of BLUE Two, but nothing could be seen in that direction except mustard-colored haze and black smoke. We were on our way, and our path crossed that of another wave. I asked if they were headed for BLUE Two. Their wave commander answered, 'Hell no, we're the 2d Battalion headed for BLUE One.' We then veered off to the right. I broke out my map, but the LVT driver had no compass. . . . With no confidence in its accuracy within a steel hull, I got out my lensatic compass and made a best guess as to the azimuth of our approach line."[32]

The nine LVT(A)s leading off for Lieutenant Colonel Alan Sutter's 2d Battalion thrashed through the gloom and crawled ashore on BLUE One at 1730, on schedule. Meeting no opposition at the beach, they rumbled northward to the road skirting the knoll in order to penetrate the interior. The exit was blocked by an earth slide resulting from the naval bombardment of the high ground, and the column of amphibious vehicles ground to a halt.

At H-plus 1, most of the eleven LVTs of the second wave crunched ashore with elements of two assault companies. The remainder, with troops of Fox Company embarked, had grounded in mud about 300 yards offshore. The Marines had to wade to the beach, and they lost several pieces of communications gear in potholes en route. Company D, on the left, was to have remained aboard the tractors for the drive inland, while the troops of Company F debarked at the beach, cleared the knoll, and continued overland on foot. The latter scheme of maneuver unfolded as planned, and the Marines encountered no resistance when they swept to the top of the high ground. Dog Company, meanwhile, had also dismounted because of the blocked road.

The third wave groped ashore through the smoke at H-plus 4, bringing the remainder of both assault companies and raising the total strength on BLUE One to 30 tractors and over 600 men. Noting that the beach was getting crowded, Lieutenant Colonel Sutter ordered his free tractor to pull alongside the revetment of the evaporator on the left. When his battalion headquarters had debarked on the wall, he turned his attention seaward that he might signal the succeeding three waves, carrying the rest of 2/1, to do likewise. He looked and waited in vain, however, for the LVT formations did not materialize out of the offshore haze.

Meanwhile, Companies D and F reorganized quickly to continue the attack. Looking inland from the knoll, officers and NCOs could catch glimpses of the unfamiliar terrain only between billows of smoke. Several landmarks loomed ahead that were not marked on the inaccurate tactical maps. Many others that had been

recorded were ablaze, and the numerous fires would make direct compass marches difficult. Moreover, since the enemy situation inland was open to conjecture, dispersed tactical formations would add to the problem of controlling the Marine advance.

Despite these disadvantages, Sutter pressed the attack. Easy Company in battalion reserve, together with part of Weapons and H&S, had not landed, nor had all of the vital signal equipment for supporting arms. But further waiting and delay was out of the question, since only about an hour of daylight remained.

Company D struck out for Regimental Objective ABLE, the junction on the left flank 1,000 yards away, and Company F drove northeast in the direction of Objective DOG, Hill 117. It was almost dark when the last of the 600 troops plunged forward into the unknown, leaving LVT crews behind to open the road with picks and shovels.

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches
Ending the Ship-to-Shore Movement

The nine LVT(A)s comprising 3/1's first wave had closed on the sea wall of BLUE Beach Two shortly after H-hour.[33] Nosing their vehicles toward the drainage ditch on the left, the drivers apparently eyed the muck and conformation of the restricted passageway with some skepticism, for they backed off and exchanged fire with scattered enemy soldiers shooting from just beyond the waterfront.

Wave number two passed through the Army tractors and bumped the sea wall ten minutes late with the leading elements of Companies G and I, the former on the left. Since the landing echelons had intermingled in the cloudy boat lane, some LVTs of the third wave arrived with those of the second. This accounted for Lieutenant Colonel Ridge's tractor reaching the beach one increment ahead of schedule. The battalion commander and his executive officer, Major Reginald R. Myers, immediately swung their separate vehicles around to the right flank, Ridge heading toward the ramp while the other officer continued around the corner in the direction of BLUE Three.

On the left of BLUE Two, meanwhile, the amphibians carrying Captain George C. Westover's Company G formed a column and crawled into the drainage ditch.[34] Troops of First Lieutenant Joseph R. Fisher's Item Company simultaneously scrambled up their aluminum ladders and deployed just beyond the sea wall in the face of moderate small arms fire. As had been anticipated, some of the metal scaling devices bent and buckled under the strain, delaying troop debarkation from the landing craft crowding the revetment. Assault elements of Captain Lester G. Harmon's Company C, 1st Engineer Battalion, reached the beach and anchored cargo nets over the wall to speed up the landing.[35]

The lead tractor in George Company's column bellied down in the mud of the drainage ditch, blocking five other LVTs behind. Westover ordered his troops to dismount and move forward along a road near the beach. After a brief period of reorganization, Company G fanned out for the drive inland, its mission being to block a lowland corridor and secondary access road leading to BLUE Beach out of the east.[36]

Just about the time Westover's LVTs bogged down in the ditch on the left, the tractors transporting Ridge and Myers crawled ashore over the ramp and BLUE Beach Three respectively, setting a precept for the mounting number of landing craft lying off BLUE Two. A heavy volume of traffic was thus diverted to the cove, and the appreciable gain in time far outweighed the intermingling which developed by landing troops at a right angle to those scaling the sea wall.

Click here to view map

In recalling the situation ashore as of 1800 (H-plus30), Colonel Lewis B. Puller, the regimental commander, later observed:

"I personally landed on BLUE Beach with the 3d wave. My reason for doing so was, exactly, that there was a strong possibility of confusion and disorganization under the circumstances: namely, the unavoidable necessity of landing the regiment without a rehearsal, without even a CPX . . . The reorganization of the assault battalions was accomplished with remarkable speed and effectiveness. I recall being, at the time, extremely gratified that my prior concern in this connection was not warranted."[37]

Despite the initial delays at the ditch and sea wall, Companies G and I cleared the beach rapidly. Of the few casualties taken during the first 30 minutes ashore, most were caused by an enemy machine gun in a tower about 500 yards inland. LVT fire silenced the weapon, and the Marine infantry plunged forward through a labyrinth of blazing buildings and smoke-filled streets. On the left, George Company groped almost straight ahead

toward the lowland corridor as Item veered sharply southward to attack Objective CHARLIE, the seaward tip of Hill 233.

While the assault units fought inland, the gathering darkness created one more formidable handicap for the last wave serials leaving the line of departure far out in the channel. The four Navy guide boats, mentioned earlier as having escorted the first wave, were exactly 28 short of the number prescribed by amphibious doctrine for a landing of the Inchon assault's magnitude.[38] For this reason the guide boats took station on either side of the boat lanes after the initial run, since it was manifestly impossible for them to help out in any other way. The limited visibility, however, just about negated their worth as stationary markers, owing to the fact that some landing craft formations were losing their direction even before they entered the boat lanes.

In describing the situation as it developed at the line of departure Lieutenant Clark later commented:

"The BLUE Beach Control Officer was unable to contact LVT wave commanders or wave guide officers by radio at any time during the initial assault. The control officer was aware that waves or groups of LVTs and boats were landing at the wrong places but was helpless to prevent it without communications. As a last resort, Casualty and Salvage landing craft were dispatched to assist the initial wave guides (members of UDT 1) in rounding up vehicles and leading or directing them to BLUE Beach."[39]

Since current and smoke fought relentlessly against tractors seaward of the line of departure, not all of the vehicles could find the control ship. If they did, it was next to impossible to come in close enough to get instructions shouted from the bridge. Thus many wave commanders, amtrac officers, and infantry leaders gave orders to head shoreward on their own initiative. They went in with waves and fragments of waves, displaying the kind of leadership that made the operation an overwhelming success in spite of the obstacles. This was the case with the three waves of 2/1 that failed to arrive at BLUE One. They found their way ashore, some of the LVTs landing on BLUE Two, others diverted to BLUE Three; but the important thing was that they got there.[40]

The most serious error of the day, again offset by initiative and decision, involved Lieutenant Colonel Jack Hawkins' 1st Battalion, landing in regimental reserve.[41] About H-hour, Puller radioed Hawkins and ordered him to cross the line of departure with LCVP waves 21 through 25, carrying the whole of 1/1. Had the approach to the beach gone smoothly, the battalion would have begun landing at approximately H-plus 45 (1815).

Because of conditions in the channel and boat lanes, as already described, a searchlight on the control ship now beamed the supposed course to the beach. Actually, the whole area had become so clouded that the light was mistakenly pointed toward the outer tidal basin, some 45 degrees off course to the northeast.

Moving in the designated direction, the first two of the reserve waves reached the sea wall of the basin; and the Marines, believing they were at the revetment of BLUE Two, began debarking. Hawkins, following in the third wave (wave number 23), caught the error as his boat passed within sight of two outlying islands between the basin and the salt evaporator jutting out from the left of BLUE One. About the same time, Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Rickert, executive officer of the 1st Marines, noticed some of the errant landing craft from his free boat between the line of departure and BLUE One. He intercepted a group of the LCVPs and reoriented them.

In the meantime, Hawkins cruised the length of the basin wall and shouted instructions to the troops of the first two waves. Most of Company B had already debarked and a few of the empty boats had left for the channel. Able Company, having just begun to land, promptly reembarked in its LCVPs. In short order, the battalion reformed at sea and headed toward BLUE Two. Owing to the lack of boats, one platoon of Baker Company remained on the tidal basin all night. Hiking to rejoin the company on the mainland next morning, this platoon rounded up an impressive bag of prisoners.

Upon reaching BLUE Two in darkness, Hawkins found Company C, which had avoided the detour owing to the sixth sense of a boat coxswain, organizing and setting up local security. The battalion commander led most of 1/1 forward to a night assembly area along the railroad tracks, half a mile inland. Major David W. Bridges, battalion S–3, was left behind to organize late-comers as they arrived from the tidal basin.

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Chapter 6. Hitting the Beaches
Seizure of the O–1 Line

The tactical situation ashore had meanwhile begun to crystallize for the 1st Marines. In the 2d Battalion zone, Dog Company occupied Objective A, the road intersection, at 2000. Two hours later, Fox Company reported that it occupied enough of Objective D, Hill 117, so that it could cover the Inchon-Seoul highway with fire.

The attack from the beach had cost Sutter's unit one KIA and 19 WIA as compared to enemy losses of 15 prisoners and an estimated 50 dead.

On the right of the regimental zone, Ridge's 3d Battalion was also making good progress against light resistance. Item Company reported at 1900 that it was on Objective C, the western nose of Hill 233. Half an hour later, George company began deploying in blocking positions across the corridor and road at the center of the O–1 Line. This movement was completed about 2030.[42]

The 1st Platoon of How Company passed seaward of Item at 2030 and pressed a night attack against a company of North Koreans on objective B, the small cape topped by Hill 94. After a token resistance, the Reds abandoned their well-prepared entrenchments, leaving 30 dead and wounded to be counted by the Marines.

How Company (less 1st and 2d Platoons) covered the low ground between George and Item, finally occupying a blocking position about 400 yards behind the O–1 Line.

With the seizure of Hill 94, the critical portions of the O–1 Line were secured. There was, however, a good deal of activity within the perimeter for several more hours. Major Bridges of 1/1 collected about 100 late-comers at BLUE Three and led them forward in search of the battalion assembly area. Composed of men from H&S, Able and Baker Companies, the little force not only missed its destination but made one of the deepest penetrations of the day, finally halting on a hill to the left of George Company's front lines.

Shortly after Bridges set up a defensive position for the night, his position was invaded by an Easy Company contingent in search of the 2d Battalion. Reoriented to some degree, the visitors reached Dog Company's intersection much later. The 2d Battalion CP had meanwhile intercepted a group from Major Whitman S. Bartley's Weapons Company at the trail junction selected in the darkness for the initial battalion CP. At one or the other of these points, the misdirected portions of Sutter's battalion were directed to their parent units. All personnel were present or accounted for before dawn.[43]

Two other troop movements completed the tactical mosaic of the 1st Marines. The 2d Platoon of How Company was to pass through Item's lines on Objective C at 2330 and outpost the summit of Hill 233, some 2,000 yards farther along the ridge and beyond the regimental front. After setting out on schedule, the small unit covered about half of its rugged journey upon reaching Hill 180, an intermediate height. With most of the night gone and his troops wearied by the climb, the platoon leader radioed for permission to halt and his request was granted.

Another venture into the unknown was made by an even smaller unit. Second Lieutenant Bruce F. Cunliffe's 60mm section of Fox Company had somehow mingled with 3d Battalion troops during the drive inland. When he led his men through the darkness in search of 2/1, the section ranged forward of friendly lines and into unexplored territory near Hill 117.

The surprise was mutual when these Marines stumbled into a small NKPA patrol. But a brief fire fight in the darkness was enough for the Red soldiers, who took to their heels and left three dead. Cunliffe's force, which had no casualties, spent the rest of the night in uneventful isolation.

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Chapter 7. Securing the Beachhead

OF ALL THE calculated risks taken at Inchon, perhaps the most daring was the decision to ground eight LSTs abreast on RED Beach immediately after the assault troops landed. The Navy workhorses were vulnerable enough at best, and on this narrow strip of waterfront they were lined up so close to one another that shots fired by a blindfolded enemy could scarcely have missed.

Not all the NKPA shells and bullets did miss, for that matter. But fortune as usual blessed the bold, and such enemy rounds as found their targets did not touch off tons of napalm, gasoline, and ammunition.

Only with reluctance had the planners accepted the risk of landing thin-skinned supply vessels before the immediate battle area was secured. But Inchon was not a typical amphibious operation. The tremendous tidal range created an unprecedented situation; and if vital supplies were not landed on the evening high tide, the assault troops must pass a precarious first night without adequate quantities of ammunition, water, and gasoline.

Dusk had fallen, with visibility further reduced by smoke and rain squalls, when the vessels wallowed into RED Beach. The reconnaissance element of Shore Party Group Able had gone ahead with the assault troops to erect landing guides during the last moments of daylight. While the men were working under fire, one of the beach markers was riddled by enemy machine guns as it was being erected.

The H&S Company of Lieutenant Colonel Henry P. Crowe's 1st Shore Party Battalion came in with the first of the LSTs, and other elements of Groups Able and Baker followed in short order. Each of the eight vessels brought a cargo consisting of 50 tons of ammunition, 30 tons of rations, 15 tons of water, and five tons of fuel. These special loads were in addition to the normal cargo of engineer and shore party equipment and combat vehicles. Every LST was limited to 500 short tons, however, in order to insure that it could be beached without trouble.[1]

The last of the LCMs had not yet unloaded and retracted on RED Beach when the first of the LSTs appeared slightly ahead of schedule. Naval officers managed to hold the LSTs back until the beach had cleared, and the eight vessels made a successful landing in spite of treacherous currents combined with low visibility. Two of them grounded momentarily on the mud flats but butted their way through to the beach. And though the sea wall temporarily prevented several vessels from lowering bow ramps effectively, the LSTs at each end of the line were able to discharge cargo over their ramps.[2]

Bulldozers were first on the beach. They moved along the sea wall under enemy fire, pushing down sections of masonry which interfered with unloading operations.

LST 973 had no more than grated ashore when a Red Korean mortar shell exploded among the drums of motor fuel. Gasoline flooded the main deck and leaked down to the crew quarters through holes made by shell fragments. Orders were given to cut off electric motors and enforce all possible precautions, and the vessel miraculously escaped a conflagration even though it took further hits from enemy machine-gun fire.[3]

LST 857 ran into a ROK PC boat while heading in toward the beach, but no harm was done to either vessel. Hits from NKPA mortar and machine-gun fire punctured eight drums of gasoline without any of them bursting into flame. This was one of the LSTs which fired back at enemy gun flashes. During the exchange a sailor was killed and another knocked unconscious when an enemy projectile damaged one of the LST's gun mounts.

LST 859, which had a sailor wounded by enemy mortar fragments, hit RED Beach with all guns blazing away. When the vessel beached, it was immediately boarded by Marines who helped themselves to ammunition while shouting to sailors in the well deck to stop firing. The same message was slammed home more

authoritatively when First Lieutenant William J. Peter, Jr., appeared on deck, as directed by Lieutenant Colonel Newton, and demanded that the LST's guns cease at once.[4]

This put an end to the bombardment of shore positions. "No LSTs fired after my ship beached," commented Lieutenant Trumond E. Houston, USN, commander of LST 799 at the extreme left of the line. "Earlier LSTs beaching had opened fire on targets unknown to me, but my command had received very firm orders not to open fire due to the danger of firing into our own forces."[5]

As dusk shaded into darkness, the Marines on and around Cemetery Hill extended their lines into the city. Even at the climax of the military drama there was an unexpected note of comedy—assault troops were to discover shortly that among the ammunition brought by the LSTs, some useless .22 caliber cartridges testified to the haste of departure from Camp Pendleton.[6] There was enough M-1 ammunition, however, so that the enemy had no cause to complain of being neglected by the Marines.

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Supplies on RED and BLUE Beaches

It was absolutely essential that the LSTs unload in time to retract on the morning high tide and allow other cargo vessels to take their places. This meant an all-night job for the 1st Shore Party Battalion, which was to initiate unloading on both beaches for the organization composed also of the 1st Combat Service Group, the 7th Motor Transport Battalion, and the U.S. Army 2d Engineer Special Brigade, with the latter in control.

The vehicles came off the LSTs first—about 450 of them, all told—and darkness had fallen when the unloading of cargo got into full swing. Congestion on the 650-foot strip of beach did not permit normal location and employment of dumps. It was catch-as-catch-can for the shore party troops and engineers, with the cargo being off-loaded and stockpiled wherever space could be found. Later, as the tactical situation improved, designated dumps were established.

The men went about their work under the floodlights, heedless of scattered enemy small-arms fire which continued throughout the night. At a glance the unloading presented a scene of noisy chaos, yet everything was so well under control by midnight that the accomplishment of the mission within prescribed time limits was assured.

In the morning the eight LSTs were retracted according to schedule as a like number approached the beach to discharge cargo. Two of them grounded in the mud flats too far out for unloading, but the supply problem was already so well solved that this setback was not serious.

On BLUE Beach it was not the intention to develop the area beyond the needs of the initial assault, so that a comparatively small shore party element was required. Only such equipment as could be carried by hand was taken ashore in the LCVPs and LVTs.

The reconnaissance element of Shore Party Group B (—) had landed with the assault troops, followed by the rest of the group at 1930. Provisions for the use of pre-loaded LVTs having been made in the assault phase supply plan, the shore party troops set out flanking lights to mark the entire BLUE area as a single beach. This was in preparation for the arrival of the 24 LVTs bringing pre-loaded supplies to sustain the attack in the morning. Ten of these vehicles were so delayed by adverse currents that a receding tide left them high and dry. Officers of the 1st Marines decided that the supplies were not critical enough to warrant unloading by hand over the mud flats, and the job was postponed until the LVTs could be floated in on the morning high tide. While they were discharging on BLUE–3, the LCVPs came in with other gear which was unloaded and stored in the regimental dump.

Prison stockades were set up on both beaches the first night. The LSTs continued to unload most of the Division supplies on RED Beach in spite of treacherous currents, the tidal range and the mistakes made by Japanese crews. BLUE Beach was closed on D-plus 1, having served its purpose, and the shore party personnel transferred to GREEN Beach, where facilities for unloading LSTs had been improved. Supplies landed there could be trucked across the causeway, and on D-plus 2 the shore party troops on RED Beach were also relieved and sent to Wolmi-do.

The 2d Engineer Special Brigade retained control of all logistical operations in the Inchon port area on 17 September as vessels began to discharge at Pier No. 2, designated as YELLOW Beach. There were assurances by this time that the engineers would soon have the tidal basin partially operative, thus adding materially to the capacity of the harbor.[7]

The 1st Combat Service Group remained in control of consolidated dumps. This organization was the storage agency for all X Corps supplies with the exception of ammunition and engineering materials, both of

which were handled by Army personnel. Owing to the shortage of trucks, the 7th Motor Transport Battalion was held in the port area under control of the engineer brigade.

The lack of enough motor trucks for port operations was alleviated by the restoration of rail transportation much sooner than had been expected. Although the planners did not count on this factor before D-plus 30, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade rounded up Korean crews and speeded up the tremendous task of putting the Inchon-Seoul line back in working order. As early as D-plus 1 a switch engine and six cars were operating in the Inchon yards. Three days later the first train, carrying 1,200 Marines, was dispatched over the 5-mile run from Inchon to Ascom City. As the ground forces advanced, the engineers followed close behind the front with rail transportation which handled a total of 350,000 rations, 315,000 gallons of fuel, 1,260 tons of ammunition, and 10,000 troops before the Division was relieved.

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Surgical Teams on the Beaches

Casualties of the Landing Force on D-day amounted to 20 KIA, 1 DOW, 1 MIA, and 174 WIA in addition to 14 of non-battle classification. Medical officers regarded the operation as a landmark because of the four Navy surgical teams, each composed of three doctors and ten corpsmen, which went in behind the assault troops on the LSTs. Similar teams had been employed in the later operations of World War II, but Inchon had the distinction of being the first amphibious assault in which carefully planned medical techniques were integrated with military operations.

The surgical teams had been drilled and rehearsed in Japan for their tasks. Patients requiring immediate surgery on the night of D-day were evacuated to LST(H) 898, where an improvised operating room had been installed. During the assault phase, 42 military and 32 civilian casualties were treated instead of the 300 which had been expected. Such an unqualified success was achieved that the teams were recalled to Japan afterwards to act as instructors. Within a year the numbers of Navy surgical teams had grown to a total of 22 on standby duty in the Far East.[8]

Captain Eugene R. Hering, (MC) USN, had served in the Pusan Perimeter as the Brigade Surgeon. From a study of maps and intelligence reports, he tentatively selected a site for the Division hospital on the eastern outskirts of Inchon.

The 1st Medical Battalion, commanded by Commander Howard B. Johnson, (MC) USN, consisted of an H&S Company and five letter companies. Able and Baker were hospital companies, while Charlie, Dog, and Easy functioned as collecting and clearing companies. The last was organized for attachment to the 7th Marines when that regiment landed at Inchon.

Medical planning necessarily had to be hurried. In view of the unusual landing conditions at Inchon, it was decided to revert the clearing platoons, normally attached to infantry regiments, to Division control when they reached the transport area.

Three casualty teams, each consisting of a medical officer and six hospital corpsmen—one team from Able Company, and two from Baker—landed from separate LSTs on D-day with a mission of caring for initial casualties. Supporting collection sections of Charlie and Dog Companies landed with the assault troops of the two rifle regiments.

The reconnaissance group and the two hospital companies arrived on D-plus 1, followed by the H&S Company with equipment for the hospital set up in a schoolhouse. It was opened at 1500 on D-plus 2, with 47 casualties being received the first day.

These were the forerunners of a total of 5,516 patients to be treated by the 1st Medical Battalion for all causes during the entire Inchon-Seoul operation. Most of them were WIA cases, but such ailments as acute appendicitis, hernia, piles, and sprains are also recorded.

Of the 2,484 surgical patients, only nine died after reaching the first aid station, and among them were six deaths following major surgery. The proportion of patients surviving after evacuation, therefore, reached the figure of 99.43 per cent. This meant that the chances were about 199 to 1 that a wounded Marine would live.

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Chapter 7. Securing the Beachhead
Artillery and Tank Operations

The planners, anticipating the need of artillery support for the assault on the mainland, had hoped that DUKWs could land two battalions of Colonel James H. Brower's 11th Marines on GREEN Beach for this mission. There was some reason to believe that these vehicles could cross the mud flats at low tide, thus enabling the 105s to get in position on Wolmi-do and registered before the Inchon landing. In the end, however, it was decided that this plan was not feasible, and the 1st and 2d Battalions of the artillery regiment landed on the evening tide while the rifle regiments were hitting the beaches at Inchon. A delay of an hour and a half occurred as a result of the confused maneuvering of ships in the inner harbor. It was not until 2150, therefore, that the 1st and 2d Battalions were prepared to deliver massed fires in support of the 5th and 1st Marines respectively.[9] Fortunately, the lack of this support at H-hour had not been a grave handicap in view of the light resistance encountered on the beaches.

Low visibility and lack of targets limited the fires to a few rounds the first night. Next day the artillery landing was completed when 4/11 went ashore on RED Beach, followed on D-plus 2 by the 96th Field Artillery Battalion, USA. Plans for the drive inland called for 1/11 and 2/11 to fire in direct support of RCT–5 and RCT–1 respectively. Support was to be provided by 4/11 for RCT–5 and by the Army battalion for RCT–1.[10]

The problems of tank support for the Inchon operation had given the planners many a headache. BLUE Beach was dismissed from consideration because of the mud flats, and the possibilities at RED Beach were not encouraging. GREEN Beach offered the best prospects for landing tanks, though it was recognized that they would be stranded if the enemy destroyed the causeway connecting Wolmi-do with the mainland.

The consequences of the hasty embarkation from Camp Pendleton had borne down heavily upon the 1st Tank Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Harry T. Milne. Crews trained with the M–4A3 (Sherman) and 105mm howitzer were suddenly equipped with the M–26 (Pershing) and its 90mm gun. With the exception of Company A, which saw action with the Brigade, few of the men had had any experience either at driving or firing the new tanks. The flame tank platoon of Headquarters Company had received some training at Barstow, but most of the personnel of Baker, Charlie, and Dog Companies were limited to shipboard instruction.

The men of the Company A platoon which landed on GREEN Beach in support of 3/5 were veterans of several fights with NKPA tanks and infantry in the Pusan Perimeter. In the evening of D-day they supported the landing on RED Beach and moved across the causeway to the mainland at dusk. There they joined the other two platoons of Able Company and the flame tank platoon, which landed with the LSTs in support of the 5th Marines.

At 1700 on D-day a reconnaissance team went ashore on Wolmi-do to prepare for the landing of B Company, which took place late the following afternoon. YELLOW Beach, in the inner harbor, was operative for the landing of Company C on 18 September, and Company D was to arrive later with the 7th Marines.[11]

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Chapter 7. Securing the Beachhead
The Attack on D-plus 1

The night of 15–16 September passed quietly for both of the infantry regiments. At 2000 on D-day the 3d Battalion crossed over the causeway from Wolmi-do to rejoin RCT–5. The most dramatic action on either regimental front was an episode in the Cemetery Hill area. Two Marines mistakenly wandered out in front of the high ground and were cut down by enemy fire from a cave at the base of the hill, just below the lines of Company A, 5th Marines. Repeated attempts to reach the fallen men were thwarted by submachine gun fire from the recess, until a ROK interpreter, threatening the use of tanks, persuaded the occupants to surrender. As a squad of North Koreans filed out in submission, troops from Able Company rushed forward to get their two comrades. One of the Marines was already dead; the other lay mortally wounded.[12]

In the middle of the night, the 1st and 5th Marines received General Smith's OpnO 3–50, directing them to attack after dawn. Murray's regiment, by previous plan, would march through the southern part of Inchon, leaving the heart of the seaport to be cleared by the KMC. About three miles inland, the 5th Marines would reach the O–2 Line coming abreast of Puller's front of the night before. (Thus, the O–1 and O–2 Lines were one and the same in the 1st Marines zone). Tied in along the Inchon-Seoul Highway at Hill 117, the two regiments would drive eastward to the O–3 Line, approximately five miles inland. This last arc was the goal specified in Smith's attack order.[13]

Murray's tactical plan was dictated by the simple necessity of getting out of Inchon as quickly as possible. The 5th Marines would therefore attack in a column of battalions, with Roise's 2d in the lead, followed by the 1st and 3d in that order. Two hills, located north of the highway on the outskirts of the city, were designated Regimental Objectives D and E. In taking this high ground, 2/5 would automatically control the 5th Marines' segment of the O–2 Line and seal off the Inchon Peninsula in conjunction with the 1st Marines. This would leave a secure pocket for the great ship-to-shore build-up commencing on the morning tide.

Following a brief orientation at dawn, Captain Jaskilka led Company E forward from the British Consulate. Unopposed, the column passed the inner tidal basin, where Fox Company fell in behind. In the meantime, Company D left its positions atop Observatory Hill and brought up the rear of the battalion formation. Inchon's streets were strangely quiet during 2/5's advance. Frightened civilians peeped from windows and alleyways, but the enemy was nowhere to be found. The sprawling seaport seemed dead.

Inconsistencies of the Oriental enemy were exposed in a striking contrast of scenes at 0700. Nearing the edge of the city, Easy Company was preparing to veer off the road and attack Objective D. The troops were encountering no resistance whatsoever, and it was obvious that the North Koreans had abandoned Inchon in haste during the night. Only five miles away, however, six T–34 tanks were rumbling along the highway in broad daylight, headed toward the seaport without infantry escort.

An eight-plane strike of VMF–214 intercepted the enemy armor at the village of Kansong-ni. As the Corsairs swept down on the first pass, one of the tanks was enveloped in flaming napalm. Another was disabled when a rocket hit blew off its tracks. A third was left seemingly helpless on the road, squatting in a pool of motor fuel which poured out of its wounds.[14]

Marines of 2/1 watched the show with enthusiasm from the top of Hill 117, less than two miles away. The joy of victory went flat, however, when one of the planes failed to pull out of its dive. Captain William F. Simpson, the pilot, was killed as the F4U crashed beside the highway.[15]

A second flight of VMF–214 descended on Kansong-ni with a vengeance. Rocket fire destroyed one T–

34, and a direct bomb hit knocked another off the road. It will be shown shortly that these two tanks must have been the same pair that were severely damaged by napalm and rockets during the first strike. When panicky NKPA crewmen fled to nearby thatched huts for concealment, the dwellings were promptly razed by napalm. Marine pilots, assuming incorrectly that all six tanks lay dead beneath the pall of smoke and flame, turned their attention to other targets in the area. They bombed an enemy jeep and weapons carrier standing in the open, then strafed two other motor vehicles which had been cleverly camouflaged.[16]

It would soon become more apparent why Red leaders in Seoul had sacrificed precious armor in a clearly hopeless thrust against the swelling beachhead. Communications were destroyed, so that NKPA defense forces fought or fled as isolated units. Adequate reserves were not at hand initially, with the result that stop-gap detachments were fed piecemeal into battle, only to be flattened by the Marine steamroller. In short, the North Koreans lost control. And when they attempted to regain it, time had run out.

While Marine air hammered the enemy's armored column, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, deployed outside Inchon. Having made sight contact with Lieutenant Colonel Sutter's troops on Hill 117 at 0730, Captain Jaskilka led Easy Company off the road and toward Objective D the left. Fox Company continued along the pavement several hundred more yards, then also veered northward in the direction of Objective E. Neither company met opposition, and both were atop their respective hills at 0930.[17]

Meanwhile, Company D had advanced eastward on the highway with a platoon of Able Company tanks. There was the occasional whine of a sniper's bullet overhead as the column moved rapidly to its junction with the 1st Marines. At 0900, while Easy and Fox Companies were climbing their objectives, Dog made contact with 2/1 at Hill 117.[18]

It was its opposite of the 1st Marines that Dog Company of 2/5 met at Hill 117. Fox Company of 2/1 had been clearing the eastern reaches of the big ridge since 0615, and Easy was to spend all morning and afternoon securing high ground and a village about a mile off on the right flank. When the attack along the highway resumed shortly after 0900, Company D of the 5th Marines and a platoon of A/Tanks took the lead. Fox and Dog Companies of 2/1 followed in trace and on the right as the formation advanced rapidly against nothing heavier than sniper fire. By 1100, elements of both battalions were deployed at Sogam-ni, just a few hundred yards short of smoking Kansong-ni. Since the former hamlet bordered the O–3 Line, the Marines held up to await further orders.[19]

To the south of the highway, the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, reorganized in the center of Puller's zone and moved forward as regimental reserve. Simultaneously, the 3d Battalion began its sweep of the Munhang Peninsula, Companies G and I attacking generally southward from Hill 233. Since the broad front was studded with high ground and villages, Lieutenant Colonel Ridge relied on LVT transport whenever possible to regain momentum lost to hill-climbing and searching. Resistance on the peninsula proved negligible, although once again the capture of prisoners and materiel revealed enemy potential unused. Among the weapons abandoned by the North Koreans were quantities of rifles and machine guns, a battery of Russian-made 120mm mortars, and four coastal guns, the latter pointing menacingly toward the ships of the Attack Force anchored in the channel.[20]

Although 1/1 and 3/1 did not reach their portion of the objective until later in the day, Division Headquarters realized by mid-morning that enemy resistance as far out as the O–3 Line could be discounted. Now that the tremendous obstacles of the actual landing had been overcome, the tactical advantage of the moment swung from the Red commander at Seoul to General Smith. Owing to the conformation of the Inchon and Munhang Peninsulas, which were linked together inland like Siamese twins, the O–3 Line formed a front three miles long with both flanks bounded by water. A glance at the map will show the beachhead thus set off as an ideal foothold. To North Koreans thinking in terms of counterattack, the vacuum rapidly being filled by the Landing Force was a defensible bottleneck. To the Marines, on the other hand, it was the gateway to freedom of

maneuver for an overland offensive.

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Chapter 7. Securing the Beachhead
Advance to the Force Beachhead Line

Opening the gate was the subject of General Smith's OpnO 4–50, issued by dispatch at 1045, D-plus 1. He directed Puller and Murray to continue the attack from the O–3 Line, seized the Force Beachhead Line (FBHL), and thereby conclude the assault phase of the amphibious operation. The order also marked off a new Tactical Bomb Line,[21] behind which Marine Air was forbidden to strike without ground coordination.

Roughly the shape of a right angle, the FBHL corresponded to X Corps Phase Line BB. Like the O–3 arc, it was anchored on the sea at both ends. The east-west leg of the angle, five miles long, lay above and almost parallel to the Inchon-Seoul Highway. The north-south leg, about seven miles inland, added a third projection, the Namdong Peninsula, to the beachhead. Encompassing the built-up centers of Ascom City and Mahang-ri on the main road, the apex of the FBHL pointed northeast toward Kimpo Airfield like an arrowhead.
Click here to view map

The Inchon-Seoul Highway remained the boundary between the 1st and 5th Marines. Lieutenant Colonel Murray's order went out to the latter before noon, directing a two-pronged assault. The 2d Battalion would jump off from the O–3 Line and trace the course of the highway, clearing the hills and villages on the left. Simultaneously, the 3d was to swing sharply northward from behind 2/5 and attack high ground overlooking the east-west leg of the FBHL. The 1st Battalion would remain in regimental reserve.[22]

There were a number of reasons why Colonel Puller's scheme of maneuver was more complex. Not only was the 1st Marines' front much wider and the terrain more difficult, but the rapid advance had left troops units scattered throughout a zone of action some 15 square miles in area. There was considerable shuffling to be done before the regiment could deploy along the highway for the drive to the east.

The 2d Battalion would continue along the MSR, clearing the high ground on the right and coordinating with 2/5 on the left. To the south, the 1st Battalion would move up on the right of the 2d as quickly as the rugged terrain allowed. The 3d, after clearing the Munhang Peninsula, was to pass into regimental reserve subsequent to being relieved on the right flank by the Reconnaissance Company. Swinging around a sharp cove of salt pans and mud flats, the latter unit would patrol the Namdong Peninsula to secure the Division right.[23]

At 1335, the 5th Marines attacked against minor resistance on the north of the highway. Moving into Kansong-ni, the vanguard of 2/5 and its tank escort approached a sharp bend where the road veered northward for about a mile to avoid two large hills. Around the curve were the enemy tanks believed to have been knocked out by VMF-214 earlier in the day.

A section of Marine armor turned left off the pavement just short of the bend. The two M–26s crawled to the top of a knoll from which they could cover the infantry, as the latter advanced around the corner. Looking down from their vantage point, the tank crews saw three intact T–34s parked in column on the highway, about 300 yards beyond the turn. Hatches on the Communist vehicles were buttoned, with the 85mm guns leveled at the road bend.[24]

The M–26s opened up immediately. Twenty rounds of 90mm armor-piercing (AP) ammunition crashed into the enemy armor. There was no return fire, probably because the Red crews had not time to elevate and traverse their manually-operated guns. In the space of a few minutes, each of the T–34s exploded and burst into flame. The crews did not escape.[25]

The Marine attack rolled past the blazing hulks. Nearby were two other wrecked T–34s, obviously the victims of the air attack. If the pilots of VMF–214 had attacked a total of six enemy tanks, one of the vehicles

must have escaped before the ground troops reached the scene.[26]

Tracing the north-south stretch of highway that led to Ascom City, Dog Company of RCT–5 marched a thousand yards beyond the bend and ascended a high hill on the west side of the road. Company F swung out to the left, crossed the railroad tracks running parallel to the highway, and seized the high ground adjacent to that held by Company D. Both assault units encountered only sniping, but it was early evening before the two hills and surrounding low ground had been searched thoroughly.[27]

Lieutenant Colonel Roise ordered 2/5 to dig in for the night. He was about 3,000 yards short of the highway's intersection with the FBHL, but his battalion held the commanding ground. Companies D and F defended the approach to Ascom City, which sprawled out on the low ground just forward of their positions. Company E, in reserve, set up a perimeter in the battalion rear.[28]

Lieutenant Sweet's five M–26s, which had supported the day-long advance from RED Beach, were relieved at dusk by the 1st Platoon of Able Company tanks. In addition to their score of three T-34s, Sweet's veterans of the Pusan Perimeter had captured an impressive tally of enemy materiel: three NKPA trucks, two 76mm AT guns, two 122mm mortars, and a pair of Russian-manufactured jeeps.[29]

During 2/5's attack along the MSR, the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines was occupied with the hills overlooking that portion of the FBHL to the northwest. Lieutenant Colonel Taplett had launched his drive at 1330 with Companies G and I in the assault and H in reserve. On the left, George Company seized its high-ground objective at 1440, while Item took an extra hour to clear adjacent Hill 137. There were no Marine casualties during a rapid advance that netted 12 enemy prisoners.[30]

Patrols from 3/5 ranged westward to the sea, and eastward to the edge of Ascom City, where Item Company troops discovered an enemy ammunition dump and vehicle park. Location of these undefended prizes was promptly reported to the 5th Marines CP.[31]

South of the Inchon-Seoul Highway, the 1st Marines attacked from the O–3 Line at 1600. Sutter's 2d Battalion drove forward on the right of the MSR and passed below Kansong-ni without incident. Continuing a thousand yards farther, Company D scaled the rugged slopes of Hill 186, cleared the summit, and dug in. Fox Company climbed the same high ground shortly afterwards and went into position on the left of Dog and overlooking the highway. Thus 2/1's front for the night was across the road and slightly to the rear of the high ground positions occupied by Company D of 2/5. Easy Company returned from its independent mission on the right flank and set up a reserve position in the vicinity of Kansong-ni, just rearward of Sutter's CP at the base of Hill 186.[32]

The enemy attitude in the 2d Battalion's zone gradually had developed from occasional sniping early in the day to a pattern of definite light resistance as the Marines surged over Hill 186. Though most of the North Koreans fled after firing a few rounds, their token efforts cost the battalion four killed and 10 wounded. These figures are noteworthy in view of the fact that total losses for the whole Division on D-plus 1 were four KIA and 21 WIA.[33]

Sutter's troops exacted a comparatively stiff price from the Reds in return, for it was estimated that 120 of the enemy were killed or wounded. Moreover, the Marines captured more than 30 prisoners, 70 rifles, 10 machine guns, and an ordnance dump loaded with small-arms ammunition.[34]

Elsewhere on the 1st Marines front there was considerably more hiking than combat. The 3d Battalion completed its sweep of the Munhang Peninsula about 1600 and assembled at the southern tip of the O–3 Line to await relief by the Reconnaissance Company.[35] In the course of rounding up NKPA prisoners and abandoned weapons, 3/1 had encountered a group of Korean villagers, headed by their schoolmaster, who called themselves the Young People's Anti-Communist Resistance League. They had armed themselves with Russian rifles and light machine guns left behind by enemy troops fleeing inland.[36]

In the center of Puller's zone, the 1st Battalion had moved rapidly to fill the gap between the 2d and 3d.

Attacking into the vacuum left by the retreating enemy, Hawkins' unit drove two mountainous miles beyond the O–3 Line, finally stopping for the night on high ground about 2,500 yards south of 2/1's positions on Hill 186. The break in the regimental front was protected when 3/1 shifted northward and formed a reserve perimeter to the rear of the lines, after being relieved on the right at 1700 by Captain Kenneth J. Houghton's Reconnaissance Company. Assuming responsibility for the Division's southern flank, the Recon troops set up a night defense at the base of the Namdong Peninsula with their front linked to that of 1/1 on the left.[37]

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Chapter 7. Securing the Beachhead
Displacement Ashore of Division CP

The establishment of a Division CP on shore was delayed by the necessity of utilizing every minute of the limited periods of high tide for the movement of troops, supplies, and equipment. General Smith decided on D-day that it would not be advisable to displace his CP ashore until General Craig and the ADC group (former headquarters of 1st ProvMarBrig) were able to set up adequate communications. With this object in mind, the ADC group landed on the evening high tide of D-day to locate an advance echelon on Wolmi-do.

Not much could be done that evening. And in the morning Craig informed CG 1st MarDiv that the island was too crowded. He reported that he and Lieutenant Colonel Stewart had discovered a likely spot on the southeast outskirts of Inchon and recommended that the CP be moved without delay.[38] General Smith approved and the move started at once.

Meanwhile, a good deal of military housekeeping had been accomplished in the Inchon port area. Lieutenant Colonel John H. Partridge's 1st Engineer Battalion was given the task of making a survey of beach exit roads with a view to opening up an MSR between RED and BLUE Beaches.

After elements of Company A hit GREEN Beach, the remaining troops of the battalion had landed on the two beaches and assisted short party units at unloading water, ammunition, and rations. This work was so well along by the morning of D-plus 1 that the engineers opened up the MSR betweeen the two beaches and assigned personnel for improvement and maintenance. A water point was established at the north end of RED Beach with 31 distillation units, and 125,000 gallons were issued during the next six days.[39]

The new Division CP on the outskirts of Inchon was ready by the afternoon of D-plus 1, and General Smith said goodbye to General MacArthur on the bridge of the *Mount McKinley.* The commander in chief wished him well and enjoined him to take Kimpo Airfield at the first opportunity.[40]

The Marine general landed at YELLOW Beach at 1730. Upon arrival at the CP, he sent a dispatch to Admiral Doyle, informing him that he was assuming responsibility for the conduct of operations ashore at 1800 on 16 September. Thus ended the amphibious assault phase, almost exactly 24 hours after the first wave of Marines set foot on RED Beach.

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Chapter 8. On to Kimpo

ON SUNDAY MORNING, D-plus 2, General Smith was directed as Landing Force Commander to re-establish civil government in Inchon. Although parts of the Korean seaport had been burned or battered into rubble, thousands of refugees were returning to the ruins of their homes after having fled during the bombardments. The KMC Regiment, operating under the control of RCT–5, had been given the task of screening the remaining inhabitants for their loyalty. No fault could have been found with the thoroughness of these Korean allies who were perhaps inclined to be too zealous when they suspected subversion.

General Smith concluded that the best procedure was to find loyal Korean officials and uphold their authority. He consulted Rear Admiral Sohn Won Yil, the ROK Chief of Naval Operations, and learned that the former mayor of Inchon had fled during the original NKPA invasion and never returned. Admiral Sohn vouched for the loyalty of one of the political prisoners, Pyo Yang Moon, who had been the losing candidate for the mayoralty in the last election. The Marine general decided to install him as Inchon's chief executive and issued a proclamation to that effect in Korean as well as English.

Induction ceremonies were held on the morning of 18 September on the portico of the city hall, a once imposing edifice which bore the scars of war. About 700 prominent citizens attended as the Marine interpreter led in singing the Korean national anthem. After the proclamation had been read in both languages, General Smith made a few remarks and the new mayor responded. A ROK Marine guard of honor officiated, and Admiral Sohn brought the occasion to a close with a brief address.

Steps were taken immediately to bury the civilian dead, to care for the orphans, to distribute food and clothing to the distressed, and to establish a civilian hospital and police force.[1]

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Chapter 8. On to Kimpo
Operations on Other Korean Fronts

Dispatches received from the Pusan Perimeter revealed that the Eighth Army had jumped off according to schedule on the 16th in its joint offensive. Although gains were negligible the first day, this effort was pinning down NKPA troops who might otherwise have reinforced the defenders of Kimpo and Seoul.

Several other operations had been mounted on both coasts as diversions to keep the enemy guessing as to where the lightning would strike. Kunsan, it may be recalled, had been briefly considered by X Corps planners as an alternate amphibious objective. Early in September this west coast seaport was selected as the chief target of feints during the preparations for the Inchon landing. General Stratemeyer's Fifth Air Force bombers initiated strikes on rail and highway communications within a 30-mile radius. That same day a hit-and-run amphibious raid on Kunsan was planned at Admiral Joy's headquarters in Tokyo. As a result, Colonel Ely sailed with his company on the British frigate *Whitesand Bay* and raided the Kunsan waterfront on the night of 12 September. Three casualties were incurred from enemy machine-gun fire.

The Seventh Fleet added to the deception by singling out Kunsan for carrier air strikes and naval gunfire bombardments to give the impression of softening up an objective for amphibious assault. Chinnampo, the seaport of Pyongyang, also appeared to be threatened when it was bombarded by a British task force.

On the east coast the USS *Missouri*, just arrived from the United States, poured 16-inch shells into Samchok on 14 September while a Navy helicopter did the spotting. The cruiser *Helena* and three U.S. destroyers added their metal to the bombardment.[2]

D-day at Inchon was the date of a landing of ROK guerrillas behind the NKPA lines at Changsa-dong, a coastal town about midway between Yongdok and Pohang-dong. After the ROK merchant marine LST struck submerged rocks and grounded, it was used as an improvised fortress by the guerrillas, who retreated from the NKPA forces when their ammunition ran short. The only two Americans, an Army lieutenant and sergeant, radioed for help; and the cruiser *Helena* provided naval gunfire for the Navy relief expedition which took off the survivors.

How much these diversions on both Korean coasts may have contributed to a surprise at Inchon is a moot question. It might even be argued that the enemy was not surprised, since an intercepted NKPA radio message warned Pyongyang on 13 September that United Nations vessels were approaching Inchon and planes bombing Wolmi-do. The senders deduced that an amphibious landing was forthcoming and assured NKPA Headquarters that defensive units were being stationed where they would repulse the UN forces.[3]

This would make it appear doubtful that a surprise had been achieved. But it is the opinion of Admiral Struble that "the actual results in the Inchon-Seoul area clearly indicate surprise . . . . While the message was apparently sent, and was a good report, there is no evidence that the enemy headquarters accepted the report. It is possible that a later report that the enemy bombarding ships were retreating from Inchon may have confused the issue. In any event, only a short time was available to take advantage of strong defensive positions and certainly not enough time to mine the harbor." [4]

An excellent analysis of the outcome is to be found in Admiral Doyle's official report. After paying tribute to the pre-D-day bombardments by the cruisers and destroyers, plus the air strikes by planes of TF–77 and TG–90.5, he concluded that "the assault itself was successful only through the perfect teamwork that existed between the participating Naval and Marine elements. The successful accomplishment of the assault on Inchon demanded that an incredible number of individual and coordinated tasks be performed precisely as planned. Only

the United States Marines, through their many years of specialized training in amphibious warfare, in conjunction with the Navy, had the requisite know-how to formulate the plans within the limited time available and execute those plans flawlessly without additional training or rehearsal."[5]

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Chapter 8. On to Kimpo
Landing of RCT-7 in Japan

Dispatches were received on D-plus 2 at the new Division CP to the effect that the 7th Marines was preparing to embark that day from Kobe and land at Inchon on 21 September.

The 3d Battalion of this regiment, it may be recalled, had originally been a unit of the 6th Marines on FMFLant duty with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. Upon being ordered to the Far East, the unit sailed from Crete to Japan by way of the Suez Canal and Indian Ocean. Lieutenant Colonel Dowsett, the battalion commander, did not know throughout the voyage what specific mission awaited his men.

They later met at Kobe their new regimental commander, Colonel Litzenberg, who had flown to Japan ahead of the other two battalions sailing from San Diego. He informed Dowsett that his battalion was now a part of the 7th Marines and named him executive officer of the regiment. Major Maurice E. Roach succeeded to the command of the newly designated 3/7.

A formidable task awaited the 7th Marines in Japan. The officers of the staff, not having served with the Division before, were unfamiliar with references and terms in directives dealing with the Inchon landing. Problems of integrating the regiment into the operations of the division were solved only by intensive application.

A reshuffling of the regiment had to be accomplished meanwhile before embarking for Inchon. The purpose was to spread the hundreds of reservists throughout the three battalions instead of having them concentrated in several companies.[6]

It took some remarkable adjustments to get the regiment ready for embarkation from Kobe only 17 days after sailing from San Diego. But it meant that the 7th Marines would get into the fight at least a week sooner than Division planners had anticipated.

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Chapter 8. On to Kimpo
Destruction of NKPA Tank Column

The amphibious assault phase was left behind on D-plus 2 when the 1st and 5th Marines jumped off from the western outskirts of Ascom City to initiate their drive inland. With the exploitation phase coming next, command relationships would be as follows:

Click here to view table

The night of 16-17 September had been quiet all along the Division front. It was so quiet, in fact, that the troops of 2/5 paid no particular heed to a truck which drove through their lines on the Inchon-Seoul Highway about midnight. Not until the vehicle penetrated a few hundred yards into Marine territory was it stopped by curious tank crews of Able/Tanks' 1st Platoon, whose M–26s were deployed across the road in deep anti-mechanized defense. The startled occupants of the stray truck turned out to be an NKPA officer and four enlisted men, but they were no more surprised than the Marines who stepped out of the darkness and took them prisoner. [7]

Apparently, neither the tank crews nor anybody else in the area attached any special importance to the strange truck incident. In a few hours, however, an epic of smoke, flame, and twisted steel would attest to the significance of this scrap of evidence. The fact of the matter was that the Red leaders in Seoul did not know the exact location of the 1st Marine Division.

It will be recalled that Dog Company of 2/5 occupied a hill on the west side of the highway as the attack on D-plus 1 ground to a halt. About 200 yards beyond the company front was a large knoll that nosed into the center of Ascom City. Observing that the highway turned sharply to the east and passed through a cut at the base of the knoll, Lieutenant H. J. Smith decided to outpost the natural roadblock in strength. At dusk, therefore, he dispatched the 2d Platoon, under Second Lieutenant Lee R. Howard, to man the advance position along with machine-gun and rocket-launcher attachments.[8]

As the first rays of dawn creased the sky on 17 September, Howard and his troops were entrenched in a compact perimeter atop the knoll. Several hundred yards to the rear, the 1st Platoon of A/Tanks was augmented in its blocking position by 3.5-inch rocket launchers of 2/5 and the 75mm recoilless rifles of the 5th Marines. Just across the road from this formidable array were more 75s and 3.5s of the 1st Marines, emplaced with Fox Company of 2/1 on Hill 186.[9]

Records of the 5th Marines describe this bristling gauntlet as ". . . a temporary defensive position in depth . . ." It was more like a giant torpedo.

Sometime before daybreak, a North Korean column formed on the Inchon-Seoul Highway a few miles east of Ascom City.[10] In the van were six sleek T–34s of the 42d NKPA Mechanized Regiment. Perched atop the tanks and strung out for about a hundred yards were 200 Red infantrymen, comprising a mixed representation of the 18th NKPA Division in Seoul. The enemy force was on its way to block the advance of the 1st Marine Division along the highway.

It was obvious that the Communist soldiers had little or no knowledge of the situation ahead. For as they neared Ascom City at the crack of dawn, some were still sitting comfortably on the tanks and eating breakfast. Others laughed and jabbered as they trailed along the road.

Lieutenant Howard saw them approaching his Dog Company outpost on the knoll. He reported to Smith, who passed the word to Roise at 2/5's CP, first one tank, then three, and finally six. Roise took the information with the proverbial grain of salt, supposing it to be a delusion of youth and inexperience. Just as quickly as that

impression formed in his mind, it was shattered by the first reverberations of the battle.
Click here to view map

The attitude of the enemy soldiers as they neared his outpost convinced Howard that they were unaware of the proximity of Marine lines. He let the head of the column slip by on the road below, therefore, until the tanks began to round the bend leading to Dog Company's MLR. Then the platoon leader shouted the order, and his men opened up with machine guns, rifles, and BARs.[11]

The Red infantry went down under the hail of lead like wheat under the sickle. Soldiers on the tanks were knocked to the road, where many were ground under as the big vehicles lurched and roared crazily in reaction to the surprise.

Corporal Okey J. Douglas moved part way down the knoll and closed on the lead T–34 with his 2.36-inch rocket launcher. A few well-placed rounds, fired calmly at a range of 75 yards, killed the armored vehicle on the spot. Continuing the single-handed assault, Douglas damaged tank number 2 just as the main Marine position exploded into action.

Under attack by the outpost, the cripple and the four unharmed T–34s had continued around the road bend, some of them spilling off the curve in an attempt to deploy in the adjacent rice paddy. All five were taken under fire by First Lieutenant William D. Pomeroy's M–26s, about 600 yards away. Within five minutes, the Marine 90mm guns threw 45 rounds of AP at the enemy armor.

Recoilless rifles of Second Lieutenant Charles M. Jones' platoon (5th Marines AT Co) added their hot metal at a range of 500 yards, and the 75s with the 1st Marines across the road also erupted. Simultaneously, Second Lieutenant James E. Harrell ordered the 3.5-inch rocket launchers of 2/5's assault platoon into action.

The T–34's didn't have a chance. All of them exploded under the heavy fusilade; and when the smoke cleared, they were heaps of burning wreckage. Scattered around the dead tanks and along the road were the bodies of 200 Red infantrymen. So rapid and complete was the enemy's destruction that only one Marine casualty—slightly wounded—resulted from the fight.

It was only natural that conflicting claims would arise among the participants in the short, violent clash. To Pomeroy's tank crews, it appeared that the M–26s accounted for the five T–34s with little or no assistance from infantry arms. This was a reasonable conclusion on their part, owing to the limited visibility from the buttoned vehicles and the fact that their 90mm guns unquestionably wrought the greatest destruction on the NKPA machines. Since so many weapons were firing simultaneously from various other positions, however, and since the T–34s were wrecked so completely, kills and partial kills were also claimed by the recoilless rifles of both regiments. Moreover, the 3.5-inch rocket gunners of 2/5 and 2/1 believed that some of their rounds found the mark in the midst of the furor. It is known, for instance, that Private First Class Walter C. Monegan, Jr., rocket man in the assault squad of Fox Company, 1st Marines, closed on the enemy vehicles after they had rounded the bend and fired his weapon at point-blank ranges.

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Chapter 8. On to Kimpo
General MacArthur Visits the Front

The acrid odor of high explosives still lingered in the fresh morning air as a column of jeeps came slowly around the bend from the rear. General MacArthur was making his first visit to the front. With him and Admiral Struble were Generals Almond, Shepherd, Smith, Ruffner, Hodes, Wright, and a group of X Corps staff officers. Several jeeps filled with newspaper correspondents and photographers followed close behind the military cortege. [12]

Grimy Marines of RCT–5, their eyes dazzled by the glitter of starry insignia, gazed in wonder at this sudden revelation of the pomp and circumstance of war. The generals and admirals in their turn were equally impressed by the destruction these Marines had wrought—the warm corpses beside the road, the blazing heaps of twisted metal that had been T–34 tanks only a few minutes before.

The Marine driver parked the leading jeep on a culvert and General MacArthur leaped down to survey the spectacle. Instantly he was surrounded by cameramen snapping pictures which would soon appear on stateside front pages. All America was rejoicing at the turning tide in Korea after the humiliating weeks of delaying operations.

Early that morning CinCFE had been met by General Smith at YELLOW Beach and welcomed to the 1st Marine Division CP, a Quonset hut with a dirt floor. There the commander in chief was briefed by the Division G–2 and G–3 on the military situation.

The second stop was at the 1st Marines CP. CinCFE informed Colonel Puller and Admiral Sohn that he was awarding each of them a Silver Star. Reaching into the pocket of his leather jacket, he discovered that he had no medals with him.

“Make a note of that,” he enjoined an aide as the correspondents busily scribbled on their pads.

Next, the route of the procession led to the zone of RCT–5 and the scene of the Marine tank ambush. It was not exactly a happy occasion for General Smith, who felt a heavy responsibility for the lives and welfare of the 1st Marine Division’s distinguished guests. Not only was the commander in chief indifferent to danger, but the Marine general had similar cause to worry about others making the tour of inspection. For instance, there was Frank Lowe, a 66-year-old retired National Guard major general visiting Korea as President Truman’s personal observer. Astonishingly hardy for his age, this admirer of the Marines took personal risks which gave concern to Smith. Another source of anxiety was the attractive correspondent of a New York newspaper, Marguerite Higgins, who had hit RED Beach on the heels of the Landing Force.

Both she and Lowe were on hand when the column of jeeps stopped to survey the results of the tank ambush. Smith scanned the landscape with apprehension, devoutly hoping that some hidden foeman would not choose this moment to obliterate several visiting generals with a well-aimed mortar round. It was with relief that he departed with MacArthur for a visit to the CP of the 5th Marines. And it was just as well that he did not learn until later what happened shortly after his departure. First Lieutenant George C. McNaughton’s platoon, hearing a suspicious noise, had flushed seven armed NKPA soldiers out of a culvert—the culvert on which General MacArthur’s jeep had been parked! A few rifle shots persuaded them to surrender as the only survivors of the enemy expedition.[13]

The caravan of distinguished visitors proceeded meanwhile to the CP of the 5th Marines, raising a cloud of dust that could be seen for miles. Lieutenant Colonel Murray and General Craig were next to be awarded Silver Stars by General MacArthur. His tour of inspection ended with a look at the Marine stockade in Inchon, where

671 NKPA prisoners were held, and a survey of the defenses of Wolmi-do.

When the Marine general returned to his CP, he found Major General James M. Gavin, USA, waiting to make a detailed study of Marine close air support and the weapons employed. The day ended with Ruffner and Hodes conferring with Smith on plans for the employment of the 32d Infantry, due to land the next day as the first unit of the 7th Infantry Division to go ashore. Plans were made for the Army unit to assume responsibility at 1200 on 19 September for the zone of action on RCT–1's right flank.[14]

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Chapter 8. On to Kimpo
The Drive to Kimpo Airfield

On the evening of D-plus 1, General Smith had issued OpnO 5–50, directing the 1st and 5th Marines to attack toward Corps Phase Line CC the next morning.[15] The actual jump-off on 17 September was delayed about an hour by the intrusion of the ill-fated Red tank column.

Both in scope and in shape, Phase Line CC was an enlargement of the FBHL. Beginning on the coast above Inchon and running parallel to the Inchon-Seoul Highway, the line extended inland about eight miles to bend around Kimpo Airfield. It then ran southward, intersecting the highway two miles east of Sosa and finally terminating at an inlet not far from the Namdong Peninsula.

The 5th Marines' tactical plan was of necessity an ambitious one, since approximately two-thirds of the Division's projected 19-mile frontage lay in Murray's zone. On the left, an attached KMC battalion would attack northward to the phase line, taking high ground Objectives One, Two, and Three en route. Roise's 2d Battalion was to advance in the center on a northeasterly course, which included Objectives ABLE, BAKER, and CHARLIE, the latter being Kimpo itself. Newton's 1st Battalion would follow the 2d initially, then take over the regimental right and seize Objectives EASY and FOX, two sprawling hills just beyond the phase line.[16]

The 3d KMC Battalion passed through 2/5's lines at 0700 for the purpose of clearing the western outskirts of Ascom City before driving toward its numbered objectives to the north. That the initial mission was accomplished only with considerable difficulty and assistance will be shown later. Afterwards the Korean Marines made rapid progress, as they advanced over flatlands almost devoid of enemy resistance.
Click here to view map

Lieutenant Colonel Roise launched 2/5's attack at 0900. Company E led the long route column eastward on the Inchon-Seoul Highway through the carnage left by the defeat of the Red tank thrust. Having marched about a mile, the vanguard of the battalion turned left on a secondary road that traced the eastern edge of Ascom City.[17]

This expansive urban area would prove to be a thorn in the side of the 5th Marines for the next 24 hours. Originally a large Korean village called Taejong-ni, Ascom City became the site of a huge service command of the United States Army during the occupation of South Korea after World War II. The few acres of small buildings and thatched huts had grown into almost two square miles of residential, industrial, and storage area. Caves, large warehouses, hundreds of other buildings, and a complex network of streets made it an ideal hiding place for fragments of a broken enemy, as the Marines were shortly to learn.

Marching northward through the outskirts, Easy Company of 2/5 was repeatedly held up by small pockets of resistance among the dwellings on both sides of the road. Captain Jaskilka's veteran infantry reduced the enemy positions methodically, but the whole morning was used up in the process. Simultaneously with the main advance, the 2d Platoon of Fox Company marched through the heart of Ascom City and screened 2/5's left flank. Second Lieutenant Tilton A. Anderson, the platoon leader, reported everything quiet in his zone, although his men did not have time to check all of the side streets and blocks of buildings.[18]

Having cleared the eastern fringe of the city by noon, Roise looked in vain for the branch road shown on his map as leading to Objective Able and Baker, some four miles distant. The chart was inaccurate, and only a time-consuming reconnaissance could locate the correct route. It was already 1400 by the time Company E led off on the hike.

While 2/5 was having its troubles in the eastern outskirts, Lieutenant Colonel Taplett's 3d Battalion

stepped in to help the Korean Marines on the other side of Ascom City. In regimental reserve, 3/5 was scheduled to occupy a series of assembly areas throughout the day, moving forward by bounds behind the assault elements. The morning displacement, into the western edge of Ascom City, took place before the KMC attack had cleared the suburb as planned. Using his initiative, Taplett committed his battalion against moderate resistance that was holding up the South Koreans.[19]

Company G went into action and knocked out a Communist machine-gun emplacement in the city. Next, a George Company patrol attacked a strong enemy force deployed among the buildings. The North Koreans fled after a hot fight, leaving behind 18 dead at a cost of three wounded to the Marines. Item and How Companies also spread out through the maze of streets, and there were several more skirmishes before the “assembly area” was secured. The Korean Marines then passed through and attacked to the north, as mentioned earlier.[20]

The 1st Platoon of A/Tanks, having silenced other enemy positions in the city, made contact with 3/5 at 1500. Leaving the built-up area, Lieutenant Pomeroy led his M–26s in search of 2/5, in order to support that unit’s drive on Kimpo. His armor was escorted by Lieutenant Anderson’s rifle platoon, which had just completed its independent mission in Ascom City without incident. Finding a road to the northeast proved as much of a headache to Pomeroy as it had to Roise, particularly since his big vehicles could not use the same route over which 2/5’s infantry column had advanced an hour earlier.[21]

Extending his quest northward, the tank platoon leader found a road that not only paralleled the infantry’s path but also led to within a few hundred yards of Kimpo, now about five miles distant. The M–26s proceeded approximately a mile on the new route and were stopped by a damaged bridge. First Lieutenant Wayne E. Richards rounded up a party of Korean natives to help his 2d Platoon of A/Engineers repair the span. During the layover, Pomeroy’s force was beefed up by another platoon of M–26s, brought forward by Captain Gearl M. English, the company commander, and by a long column of rolling stock from 2/5’s headquarters.[22]

Meanwhile, the leading elements of Roise’s infantry reached the foot of Objectives Able and Baker, two large hills about 4,000 yards due south of Kimpo. There being no evidence of the enemy in the area, the battalion commander did not waste time by committing whole rifle companies to the high ground. At 1600, Lieutenant Deptula’s 1st Platoon of Easy Company ascended Objective Baker, while the rest of the battalion waited on the road below. The hill was laced with vacant entrenchments, and once on the summit, Deptula further observed that objective Able was unoccupied. Moreover, he reported by radio that it appeared to be clear sailing over the low ground leading to the airfield.[23]

Acting on this information, Roise promptly launched his attack on Kimpo, one of the major tactical objectives of the Inchon-Seoul operation. A left face by the roadbound column put the troops of 2/5 on line for the assault. Easy and Dog Companies, the latter on the left, advanced rapidly against only desultory sniper fire.

Captain English’s tanks arrived propitiously, entering far out to the left front of the attacking infantry. At a point 1,000 yards south of the airfield, the M–26s came under moderate small-arms fire. Lieutenant Anderson’s rifle platoon dismounted and engaged the small force of North Koreans, knocking out one automatic weapon with grenades. The Marine armor put down the remaining resistance with seven rounds of 90mm High Explosive (HE) followed by a thorough hosing with bow machine-gun fire.[24]

Just as this action subsided, Company D of 2/5 swept through the area, picked up a platoon of tanks, and continued toward the airfield. The other platoon of armor swung to the right to support Easy Company’s attack. By 1800, the Marines were on the southern tip of Kimpo’s main runway. Aside from sporadic long range fire from the east, there was no opposition worthy of note.[25]

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Chapter 8. On to Kimpo
Action at 5th Marines CP

Over a mile long and three-quarters of a mile wide, Korea's principal airdrome was no mean target to secure. Scattered around the field were more than half a dozen villages, and the runways themselves were lined by scores of plane revetments and emplacements. It was already dusk when Roise ordered his two assault companies to take the objective "with all speed," but by nightfall the infantry and tanks had cleared only the southern portion of the runway.[26]

Rather than stretch a single defensive line to the point of diminishing returns, the battalion commander deployed his three rifle companies in separate perimeters, each one a tightly knit strong point. Easy Company dug in on the east of the main runway and Dog on the west. Company F deployed to the south of the airfield, paying particular attention to the main road and a pair of intersections that tied in secondary routes. In a central perimeter was 2/5's CP, and Able Company Tanks took up positions in Company D's area. Just before dark, Lieutenant Deptula's platoon had raced northward to outpost the village of Soryu-li, several hundred yards beyond Company E's lines.[27]

While 2/5 was investing the southern reaches of Kimpo, Lieutenant Colonel Newton's 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, pressed the attack on the regimental right. Encountering no resistance, Company A occupied the southern portion of Objective Easy at 1900. Company B ascended the northern half of the high ground without incident later in the evening. With Charlie Company on another hill to the west, 1/5 settled down for the night some 1,500 yards southeast of the 2d Battalion's lines. Two miles to the rear, 3/5 deployed in regimental reserve around a critical road junction midway between Kimpo and Ascom City.[28]

During the afternoon of 17 September, as the assault elements of the 5th Marines rolled forward over a relatively quiet front, regimental headquarters suddenly found itself in the center of an angry hornets' nest. Lieutenant Colonel Murray's CP had just displaced to the north of the railroad station in Ascom City, when Commissioned Warrant Officer Bill E. Parrish walked across the tracks to reconnoiter a site for his ordnance dump. Gaining the summit of a small knoll, the officer and his NCO assistants were met by a heavy fusilade from the orchard and rice paddy beyond. Parrish was killed instantly and two of his men seriously wounded.[29]

Cries of help brought First Lieutenant Nicholas A. Canzona's 1st Platoon of A/Engineers, which had just arrived at Murray's CP. In a brief clash around the orchard, the engineers killed ten enemy diehards. South Korean police swept through the adjoining rice paddy and came up with seven prisoners.

About the same time, Major James D. Jordan's party arrived in the area to select a position for Battery A of 1/11. Again small-arms fire crackled. Two of Jordan's NCOs, Technical Sergeants Kenneth C. Boston and Donald Comiskey, plowed through the hail of lead and killed four more North Koreans.[30]

North of the railroad, still another Marine was killed and one more wounded not far from Murray's headquarters. For obvious reasons a tight perimeter of engineers and H&S Company troops was drawn around the CP during the night. Nevertheless, a Red officer stumbled through the line in the darkness and seriously wounded Second Lieutenant Lawrence Hetrick of A/Engineers.

At dawn on 18 September the regimental commander and his staff were awakened by the chatter of an enemy submachine gun a few yards from the CP. Holed up in a grain field with one Communist rifleman, the officer who had shot Hetrick fought fanatically against a whole platoon of engineers. Another Marine was wounded before the suicidal stand was crushed by grenades and rifle fire.

There were no regrets when Murray's headquarters took leave of Ascom City and displaced to Kimpo.

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Chapter 8. On to Kimpo
Enemy Counterattack at Kimpo

The air at Kimpo was charged with tension during the night of 17-18 September. Troops of 2/5, manning perimeters which had been laid out on unfamiliar ground during darkness, had every reason to believe that the North Koreans would not give up the airfield without a fight.

But there were troubles enough in the North Korean camp, where confusion and panic seemed to be the order of the day. Intelligence on the enemy garrison in the Kimpo area presents a scrambled picture so characteristic of the Communist organization throughout the Inchon-Seoul operation.[31] It appears that elements of the NKPA 1st Air Force Division were charged with the operation of the airfield. Under the command of 40-year-old Chinese-trained Brigadier General Wan Yong, the division was comprised of the following units or, more often than not, mere fragments thereof:

Division Headquarters
- 1st Co, Engineer Bn, Fighters Regt
- 3d Co, Engineer Bn, Fighters Regt
- 3d Plat, Gunners Co
- 2d Co, 1st Bn, 1st Regt
- 2d Bn, 1st Regt
- Finance Co, 3d Technical Bn
- Supply Co

The Kimpo force was augmented by a motley mixture of poorly trained troops from the 226th and 107th NKPA Regiments and the separate 877th Air Force Unit. In the face of the Marine advance, Colonel Han Choi Han, commander of the 107th had fled across the Han River, leaving the remnants of his regiment to an obvious fate. Major Kung Chan So, leader of the 877th AF Unit, was killed in action on 17 September. Of the 400 men originally assigned to this organization, only five remained in combat by 18 September.

Crowded into undesirable terrain between the airfield and the Han River, the Red troops were demoralized and bewildered by the rapid advance of the 5th Marines. Only the fanaticism of a few officers and NCOs prevented the complete collapse that would have resulted from the lack of tangible assistance from the North Korean leaders in Seoul. And it was no boost to sagging morale that white clothing had been issued by the Supply Company, so that the Red soldiers could quickly change to the traditional Korean garb when defeat was imminent, and dissolve in the local populace.

In the counterattack against the airfield, which was designed to uproot a full-strength Marine battalion backed by tanks and other heavy fire support, the celebrated night tactics of the Communists fizzled completely. With only a few hundred men at most, the rest having slipped away to safer parts, the North Koreans further reduced their strength by trying to develop three widely separated attacks. That they launched these assaults with only rifles and submachine guns serves to make the story more incredible.

The first move was in company strength against Lieutenant Deptula's isolated platoon outpost in Soryu-li, far to the north of Easy Company lines.[32] Deployed on both sides of a road junction in the village, the Marines heard the enemy column approaching about 0300. Deptula held fire until the Red vanguard marched into the center of his position. Sergeant Richard L. Martson then jumped to his feet, bellowed "United States Marines!" and opened up with his carbine on full automatic. A sheet of rifle and BAR fire poured into the column from the roadsides, and a dozen North Koreans went down in a heap. The remainder fled.

The Communist commander rallied his soldiers for three more thrusts against the Marine platoon. In between the attacks, his gravel-voiced exhortations ground the air. The will to fight was lacking, however, and each time, the attackers barely brushed the Marine position before darting back into the night.

A T-34 tank was finally brought up to buttress another North Korean assault. Without AT weapons to stop the armored vehicle rumbling down the road toward his platoon, Deptula retracted southward in the direction of 2/5's main positions. The outpost had suffered only one KIA and one WIA in blunting the four attacks. It was not pursued during the withdrawal.

Deptula's platoon gained Company E's lines at 0500, just before the perimeter received enemy small-arms fire from the west. Captain Jaskilka, supposing it to be coming inadvertently from Dog Company, forbade his men to reply. He stood up and yelled, "Hey! Cease fire, you guys, this is Easy Company!" Fortunately, the enemy's aim must have been disturbed by the spectacle of a Marine officer giving orders, for Jaskilka escaped without a scratch after discovering his mistake. This enemy force proved to number about two squads, and just at that moment the main NKPA force hit from the east. Easy Company was thus engaged on two fronts, with Jones' recoilless gun platoon taking on the attack from the west while the 2d Platoon bore the brunt of the assault from the east.[33]

Click here to view map

The 2d Battalion's southernmost position, manned by Company F, had been active throughout the night. Lieutenant Harrell's assault platoon together with Richards' engineer outfit was entrenched around an overpass within the southeastern arc of the company perimeter. In the first hours of 18 September, a North Korean lieutenant and his five-man demolition team tried to reach the bridge in an apparent attempt to destroy it. Sergeant Ray D. Kearl opposed the intruders single-handedly, killing the Red officer and three of his men, and driving the remaining pair back into the night. Before daybreak, another enemy patrol approached on the road and was annihilated.

It proved that these and other scattered incidents were the prelude to the third and final attack against the airfield, which was launched from the south at dawn. This last maneuver by the Reds, however, was checked even before it began, for the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, spotted the attackers moving across its front toward Kimpo. Baker Company took the North Koreans under fire immediately, and the battalion commander called down heavy mortar and artillery concentrations.

Most of the Communist column was disorganized and dispersed before it could reach 2/5's southern defenses. The lone platoon that did connect with Company F's perimeter engaged the Marines at the overpass. Harrell's troops and the engineers poured small-arms fire and white phosphorus rockets into the attackers. Staff Sergeant Robert J. Kikta, defying enemy bullets as he moved among his men shouting encouragement, fell mortally wounded. Sergeant David R. DeArmond, normally a bulldozer operator for A/Engineers, was killed behind his machine gun.

After the short, bitter clash, the surviving North Koreans retreated through the rice paddies and hills leading to the Han River. Companies E and F, supported by A/Tanks, fanned out from their perimeters and mopped up. In 1/5's zone, Lieutenant Colonel Newton committed Charlie Company against the withdrawing enemy and inflicted more casualties.

Kimpo and the surrounding villages were secured by 1000, 18 September. Half an hour later, Lieutenant Colonel Roise ordered Company D, supported by tanks, recoilless rifles, and heavy machine guns, to seize Regimental Objective Dog—Hill 131, which dominated the banks of the Han River north of the airfield. Advancing under cover of naval gunfire, the Marines occupied the high ground unopposed at 1145.[34]

In the 24 hours since leaving Ascom City, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, had suffered four KIA and 19 WIA in driving over nine miles of hills and rice paddies.[35] The rapid advance cost the North Koreans 100 dead in 2/5's zone, ten prisoners, and one of the finest airdromes in the Far East.

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Chapter 9. Marine Air Support

AT 1000 ON the morning of 18 September an HO3S–1 helicopter became the first American aircraft to land on Kimpo Airfield since June. Mopping up operations had scarcely been completed, following the enemy counterattack, when Captain Victor A. Armstrong of VMO–6 made a vertical approach with General Shepherd and Colonel Krulak as passengers. They were greeted by General Craig, the ADC, who had just arrived in a jeep.

The field was in surprisingly good shape, considering the fighting it had seen within the last few hours. As evidence that the enemy had been surprised, one Russian-built fighter of the Yak III type and two Stormovik type aircraft were found “relatively undamaged” and turned over to Air Force Intelligence.[1] Several other Yaks and Stormoviks had been destroyed by the enemy.

On the return trip, Armstrong was requested by his passengers to fly them across the Han for a preview of the outskirts of Seoul. Except for scattered small-arms fire, the helicopter was allowed to proceed without being molested by the enemy. There were few signs of extensive NKPA preparations to be seen at this time.[2]

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Chapter 9. Marine Air Support
Helicopters and OYs in Support

VMO–6, the composite observation squadron commanded by Major Vincent J. Gottschalk, had already made a name for itself in the Pusan Perimeter actions. Consisting of eight HO3S–1 helicopters and an equal number of OY planes, this former Brigade unit came under the operational control of the 1st Marine Division and the administrative and logistical control of MAG–33. During the Inchon assault, VMO–6 was based on SCAJAP LST QO79 in the harbor except for an Oy attached to each of the two CVEs.

The first of a long sequence of helicopter rescue missions during the Inchon-Seoul operation took place on D-plus 1 when First Lieutenant Max N. Nebergall picked up a Navy pilot who had ditched in Inchon harbor. Flights carried out by other aircraft were reported as three reconnaissance, two artillery spot, three beach reconnaissance, and one utility.[3]

VMO–6 displaced ashore the next day to an airstrip improvised near the Division CP by the Marine engineers. This was the beginning of liaison, utility, reconnaissance, evacuation, and rescue flights on a dawn-to-dark basis.

Division air and naval gunfire representatives of the Fire Support Coordination Center followed VMO–6 ashore on the 16th. During the planning phase they had worked with their opposite numbers of PhibGru One and with the 11th Marines after the Division landed at Kobe. Although some of the officers and men embarked for Inchon in the *Mount McKinley*, the materiel and 90 percent of the personnel arrived in the *President Jackson.* At 1400 on D-plus 2 the FSCC became operational after all elements and their equipment reported to the Division CP. Responsibility for the coordination of supporting arms ashore was assumed at 0630 on 16 September for air, at 1500 on the 17th for artillery, and at 1800 on the 18th for naval gunfire.[4]

The rapid advance of Marine ground forces during the first three days meant that Major Robert L. Schreier's 1st Signal Battalion had a job on its hands. The main body reached the objective area on board the *President Jackson,* and the first units ashore were the battalion and regimental ANGLICO teams, most of which had embarked in LSTs. When the ADC group displaced from Wolmi-do to Inchon, radio facilities were maintained without a hitch.

Radio and message center facilities met all requirements during the night of 16–17 September. Teletype (through radio carrier) was initiated between the Division CP and Corps, afloat on the *Mount McKinley*. And by the morning of D-plus 2, such progress had been made that wire communication was established not only with both advancing infantry regiments but also with most of the battalions.[5]

Enemy resistance was so ineffectual from 16 to 18 September that the Marine infantry regiments were able to advance without much flank protection. The three battalions of the 11th Marines did more displacing than firing in their efforts to keep pace, and men and vehicles of the Signal Battalion were kept busy at laying wire.

Security was provided for the left, or northern, Division flank by the attack of the KMC Regiment (less the 2d Battalion, left behind for police duties in Inchon) under the control of the 5th Marines. Attached to the regiment for possible use in calling down naval gunfire were two Shore Fire Control Parties. Objectives on Corps Phase Line CC were reached without much difficulty after the initial KMC setbacks described in the previous chapter.[6]

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Chapter 9. Marine Air Support
Marine Air Units at Kimpo

There had been little or no urgent need for close air support until 18 September, when RCT–1 met stubborn opposition in the Sosa area. Thus the capture of Kimpo in comparatively good condition was a timely boon, since it meant that land-based Marine tactical air support could be initiated as soon as Captain George W. King's Able Company Engineers made the field operative with temporary repairs.

This was the conclusion of Generals Harris and Cushman, commanding the 1st MAW and TAC X Corps, when they visited Kimpo by helicopter on the afternoon of the 18th. They advised CG X Corps accordingly, and that evening he ordered the deployment of MAG–33 to the captured airfield with its headquarters and service squadrons.

The tactical squadrons figured in an administrative switch that has sometimes puzzled chroniclers of Marine air operations. By order of General Harris, the following reassignments were directed to take effect on 21 September 1950:

From MAG–33 to MAG-12—VMF–214, VMF–323, and VMF (N)–513;

From MAG–12 to MAG-33—VMF–212, VMF–312, and VMF (N)–542.[7]

Both MGCIS–1 and MTACS–2 were already ashore at Inchon under the operational control of the 1st Marine Division. Aircraft and flight echelons of the tactical squadrons were to be flown to Kimpo on the 19th from Itazuke and Itami airfields in Japan, with the remaining elements following by surface shipping. Thus MAG–33 would consist of these units:

HqSq-33: 74 officers, 177 enlisted, 251 total
SMS-33: 29 officers, 538 enlisted, 567 total
VMF-212: 32 officers, 154 enlisted, 186 total
VMF-312: 53 officers, 221 enlisted, 274 total
VMF(N)-542: 54 officers, 291 enlisted, 345 total
MTACS-2: 34 officers, 190 enlisted, 224 total
MGCIS-1: 19 officers, 185 enlisted, 204 total
TOTAL: 295 officers, 1,756 enlisted, 2,051 total[8]

VMFs–214 and 323 would continue to operate from the carriers *Sicily* and Badoeng Strait, with the night-fighters, VMF(N)–513 being based as usual at Itazuke AFB in Japan. The only difference was that a scratch of the pen had transferred these units from MAG–33 to MAG–12. It was their responsibility to support the advancing ground forces during the critical period while the other three tactical squadrons were making the move from Japan to Kimpo.

Control of tactical air support had passed from the TADC on the *Mount McKinley* to the Air Support Section of MTACS–2 on D-plus 2, after the Landing Force Commander signified his readiness to assume it. Calls for close air support were increasing as the enemy recovered from the first shock of invasion. On the 18th and 19th, the three fighter squadrons of MAG–12 flew a total of nearly 50 close support sorties controlled by the Air Support Section of MTACS–2. Napalm, 20mm ammunition, rockets, and 500-pound bombs were used to blast NKPA troop concentrations in the zone of the 1st Marines.[9]

Logistical as well as tactical and administrative problems had to be solved. During the planning phase, it may be recalled, Colonel Kenneth H. Weir (C/S TAC X corps) had learned that X corps would not have enough trucks to support air operations at Kimpo by transporting aviation gasoline and aircraft munitions from Inchon. As

a solution, arrangements were made to accept the offer of FEAF Combat Cargo Command to provide logistical support; and these totals in tonnage were flown in from Japan during the first week:
18 Sep.: 16 tons ammo, 8 tons avgas, 0 tons oil
19 Sep.: 73 tons ammo, 28 tons avgas, 5 tons oil
20 Sep.: 151 tons ammo, 86 tons avgas, 0 tons oil
21 Sep.: 219 tons ammo, 88 tons avgas, 11 tons oil
22 Sep.: 268 tons ammo, 153 tons avgas, 5 tons oil
23 Sep.: 139 tons ammo, 80 tons avgas, 0 tons oil
24 Sep.: 118 tons ammo, 81 tons avgas, 16 tons oil[10]

This proved to be the largest total for a single week during the Inchon-Seoul operation. In addition, about 1,025 tons of POL and 425 tons of ammunition were trucked from Inchon to Kimpo during the entire period, and the forward echelon of VMR–152 flew in spare parts and items of urgently needed equipment.

Headquarters of the 1st MAW remained at Itami AFB in Japan, though General Harris made frequent trips to Kimpo. The chief task of the Wing during the Kimpo air operations was furnishing administrative and logistical support to TAC X Corps and MAG–33.

TAC X Corps set up its headquarters at Kimpo Airfield on 19 September, followed by MTACS–2, MGCIS–1, and VMO–6. The first fighter squadron of MAG–33 to arrive at the new base was VMF(N)–542. Lieutenant Colonel Max J. Volcansek, Jr., the commanding officer, and five pilots landed their F7F-3Ns at 1830 on the 19th after a flight from Itami AFB. This was the baptism of fire for a majority of the squadron's pilots. Numbering 54 officers and 274 enlisted men when it left El Toro, VMF(N)–542 had only 20 trained night fighter pilots. The remainder were volunteer reservists qualified by "a good experience level and a desire to become night fighters."[11]

The squadron claimed the distinction of flying the first Marine combat mission from Kimpo at 0735 on the 20th when four of the F7F–3N aircraft destroyed two enemy locomotives after expending some 3,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition. The Corsairs of Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Wyczawski's VMF–212 and two aircraft of Lieutenant Colonel J. Frank Cole's VMF–312 also landed at Kimpo on the 19th and got into action the following day. Conditions were primitive at the outset. In the lack of refueling facilities, the first strikes had to be flown on fuel remaining in the aircraft, and bombs were loaded by hand.[12]

It had been an achievement to have two tactical squadrons of MAG–33 in action less than 48 hours after the reconnaissance landing by Generals Harris and Cushman. This accomplishment owed a great deal to the care shown by the 5th Marines to keep damage at a minimum. Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, CG FEAF, expressed his appreciation of this factor in a letter to General Smith:

"I want to take this opportunity of expressing my admiration and gratification for the manner in which elements of your Division recently captured Kimpo Airfield and so secured it as to make it available for use by Far East Air Forces and Marine Corps aircraft in the shortest possible time."[13]

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Chapter 9. Marine Air Support
Progress of Eighth Army Offensive

General MacArthur had intended the Eighth Army to be the hammer and X Corps the anvil of a great joint operation. During the first few days, however, it sometimes appeared as if these roles were reversed. On 18 September, after a penetration of 16 miles on the X Corps front, the attacking forces in the Pusan Perimeter had just begun to inch ahead against desperate NKPA resistance. In some sectors, indeed, the enemy not only put up a stubborn defense but counterattacked vigorously.

The Eighth Army now consisted of the U.S. I Corps (IX Corps did not become operational until 23 September) and the ROK I and II Corps. General Walker's command was already on the way to becoming the most cosmopolitan army in which Americans have ever served. Contingents of British ground forces had reached the front; and before the end of the year, 40 countries of the United Nations would have offered assistance, either military or economic, to the fight against Communism.

Most of this aid had not yet materialized on 16 September, but the Eighth Army had overcome its disadvantage in numbers of trained troops, thanks to NKPA losses, when it jumped off all along the line in southeast Korea. In the north the 1st Cavalry Division, 24th Infantry Division, ROK 1st Division, and British 27th Brigade launched a determined attack along the Taegu-Waegwon axis to win a bridgehead across the Naktong. It was nip-and-tuck for the first three days, and not until the 19th did the UN forces fight their way across the river against the last-ditch opposition of the 1st, 3d, 10th, and 13th NKPA Divisions.[14]

Still farther north, the enemy relinquished little ground until the 18th. On that date the ROK 3d Division recaptured the east coast port of Pohang-dong, which the invaders had taken in their drive during the first week of September.

In the south, the U.S. 2d and 25th Infantry Divisions and attached ROK units were held up for three days by the NKPA 6th and 7th Divisions. The deadlock lasted until 19 September, when the enemy fell back in the Masan area along the southern coast.[15]

Major Joseph H. Reinburg's VMF(N)–513, operating out of its Itazuke base, played a conspicuous role in the first days of Walker's offensive. Although specialists in night-fighting, the Marine pilots flew 15 daylight close support missions for Army units from 17 to 19 September. Enemy troops, tanks, vehicles, and artillery were scored during every strike, as the planes ranged the entire extent of the Pusan Perimeter.[16]

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Chapter 9. Marine Air Support
Division CP Displaces to Oeoso-ri

So much progress had been made by this date on the X Corps front that General Smith displaced the 1st Marine Division CP from the eastern outskirts of Inchon to Oeoso-ri, about a mile and a half southeast of Kimpo Airfield. This forward location was selected by General Craig with a view to preliminary Division planning for the crossing of the Han, which would entail a reshuffling of units.

Oeoso-ri having been an American housing area during the post-World War II occupation, duplex houses and Quonset huts were available. General Smith arrived by helicopter on the afternoon of the 19th, and the new CP opened at 1645. During the next few days the area was treated to intermittent artillery fire, apparently from a single well-hidden gun somewhere in the Seoul area. It was an embarrassment to Marine artillery officers, who were never able to locate the offending weapon, but no great harm was done.

By this time General Smith could look forward to the arrival of more units at the front. On D-day the strength of X Corps on paper had been 69,450 ground force troops. In addition to the 1st Marine Division and 7th Infantry Division, there were such major units as the 93d and 96th Field Artillery Battalions, the 73d Tank Battalion, 56th Amphibian Tank and Tractor Battalion, the 2d Engineer Combat Group. In GHQ UNC Reserve were the 3d Infantry Division and the 187th Airborne RCT.[17]

The 3d Division had not sailed for the Far East in time to take part in the Inchon-Seoul operation. The 187th Airborne RCT, due to land at Inchon on 23 September, had been the answer to General MacArthur's requests in July for paratroops to land behind the enemy's lines in conjunction with the amphibious assault planned as Operation BLUEHEARTS. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided against flying an airborne RCT to Japan at the time, the 11th Airborne Division was later directed to organize and train such a unit for service in the Far East. On account of the large proportion of new troops filling out a skeleton unit, General Collins stipulated that the 187th was not to be committed for an airdrop before 29 September. It was decided, therefore, that the RCT would be given an initial mission of protecting the left flank of the 1st Marine Division.

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Chapter 9. Marine Air Support
Advance of RCT-1 to Sosa

Preliminary planning for the crossing of the river Han began as soon as the Division staff settled down in the new CP. The reshuffling of various units had to wait, however, until both Marine regiments took their assigned objectives of 18 and 19 September. Throughout the 17th, while Murray's regiment drove northeastward toward Kimpo, the 1st Marines had continued the attack from Ascom City along the Inchon-Seoul Highway. As mentioned previously, Monegan's rocket launcher and the 75mm recoilless rifles, emplaced in 2/1's positions on Hill 186, helped smash the North Korean tank-infantry column at dawn. It appeared that a second enemy force was supposed to have closed on Marine lines by taking a parallel course through the hills south of the highway. The Red infantry, in about company strength, was spotted moving along the high ground toward Company D's front on Hill 186. Fox Company dispersed the column with mortar fire and then notified Dog to be on the alert. [18]

Though the North Koreans were stopped cold, they did not flee with the usual rapidity. Their base of operations seemed to be Hill 208, a land mass that began near Mahang-ri on the highway and spread southward across most of the 2d Battalion front. Lieutenant Colonel Sutter's attack plan committed Easy Company on the left of the road, Fox on the right, and Dog in the high ground to the south. No sooner had the companies jumped off than they became involved in scattered, stubborn fighting with Red soldiers on and around Hill 208.[19]

Howitzers of the 11th Marines raked the high ground ahead of the attackers, and Sutter's troops measured off slow but steady progress. In the low ground bordering the highway, enemy troops had taken cover in the fields on both sides of a road block about 500 yards from Mahang-ri. Second Lieutenant Robert C. Hanlon's 2d Platoon of Easy Company was pinned down by fire from three sides. Second Lieutenants Johnny L. Carter and George E. McAlee started forward with reinforcements, but McAlee was wounded by several bullets. After summoning a corpsman, Carter got through to Hanlon, and they called for 3.5-inch rockets and 75mm recoilless fire on huts sheltering enemy soldiers. The two officers then led an advance which took the platoon to a small hill on the right of the road block, where the other two platoons moved up abreast. About 20 NKPA troops were estimated to have been killed.[20]

Click here to view map

At noon, Companies F and D had secured Hill 208 overlooking the FBHL, but it remained for E to break into Mahang-ri on the highway. By this time 3/1 had entered the fight with an armored column. Company G, led by First Lieutenant Robert L. Gover's 1st Platoon of Baker Company Tanks, punched down the road in an attempt to pierce the screen of Red resistance with the rest of 3/1 in column close behind. The M–26 crews spotted an 85mm gun protruding from a thatched hut and destroyed the camouflaged T–34 before it could fire a shot. An infantry platoon riding the Marine tanks was forced to dismount at Mahang-ri and deploy, while the armor fired from the road at numerous targets of opportunity. The village was finally secured shortly before 1600, and small bands of enemy were seen darting eastward to take up new positions along the highway.[21]

The advance to Mahang-ri and the FBHL had carried the 1st Marines 3,000 yards from its starting point at Ascom City. As the attack continued late in the afternoon, the next objective was Corps Phase Line CC, whose boundaries were defined in the previous chapter. Midway between Mahang-ri and the phase line was the town of Sosa, and it was from this locale that North Korean soldiers were pouring westward to delay the Marine advance on the highway.

Since the 5th Marines had veered to the northeast to attack Kimpo, its boundary with the 1st had moved

well to the left of the highway. Henceforth, Puller's regiment would have to go it alone on the main road. This was the case as the 2d and 3d Battalions butted against enemy delaying forces between Ascom City and Mahang-ri, and the isolation became more pronounced as they attacked toward Sosa late on the 17th.

Sutter's unit advanced on the left of the highway with Companies E and F in assault. George Company of 3/1, transported in LVTs and followed by the rest of the battalion, moved along the road behind the 2d Platoon, Baker Company Tanks. There is a defile halfway between Mahang-ri and Sosa, and at this spot the North Koreans chose to make a determined stand. Second Lieutenant Bryan J. Cummings nosed his lead M–26 into the pass, while infantry moved to the shoulders on either side against light opposition. Suddenly the troops and lone tank were hit from the front by a heavy volume of small-arms, anti-tank, and mortar fire.[22]

The Marine infantry was thrown back by the intensity of the outburst, the most severe they had yet encountered. As luck would have it, the engine of Cummings' tank went dead at this inopportune moment, and the big vehicle stalled. Remembering that infantry had been riding on top of his M–26, the platoon leader opened the hatch to make a quick check. He yanked a lone rifleman inside and buttoned up just as Red soldiers scrambled down the embankment.

Fumes from the 90mm gun choked the Marines in the vehicle as they listened to the clamor of North Koreans on the hull. The infantryman who had been pulled to safety by Cummings suddenly went berserk and had to be knocked out. Then the officer was forced to choose between two evils: either his crew must succumb to the acrid fumes or take its chances on opening the pistol port for ventilation. He opened the port. A grenade bounced inside, and the ear-shattering explosion within the steel enclosure wounded Cummings, the rifleman, and one of the tank gunners. At this moment the semi-conscious Marines resigned themselves to the worst.[23]

Help was on the way, however, and it was timed to the split second. Just as the grenade exploded, Sergeant Marion C. Altaire's M–26 moved to the mouth of the defile and "scratched the back" of the beleaguered vehicle with bow machine-gun fire. Riddled Red soldiers were swept from the top of Cummings' tank and piled up alongside. Within a few minutes, a VMF–214 flight appeared over the pass, and the planes peeled off to bomb, rocket, and strafe the high ground.[24]

As the tide of battle swept past, Cummings and his men opened the hatch, coughing and choking, and drank in long breaths of fresh air. It took them a moment to realize that they were back again in the land of the living after one of the closest calls that Marines have ever experienced.

Company G of 3/1 fought back on the right of the MSR and gained the high ground above the pass. Simultaneously, Staff Sergeant Arthur J. MacDonald led the second section of Cummings' tank platoon into the defile, and the M–26s laid down heavy 90mm and machine-gun fire on the crescent of North Korean emplacements ahead. A total of six enemy AT guns was destroyed, but not before the weapons had knocked a track off Cummings' vehicle and damaged two others to a lesser extent.[25]

The 2d Battalion drove to the top of the high ground on the left of the road, and the Marines enjoyed a small-scale "turkey shoot" as the North Koreans pulled out and pelted toward Sosa. While the assault units consolidated their holdings, the remainder of the 2d and 3d Battalions moved into the area around the defile and dug in for the night.

The 1st Marines' attack along the highway had netted 4,800 yards. Despite repeated clashes in the course of the day, 2/1 lost only one killed and 28 wounded, and Company G of the 3d Battalion suffered six WIA. Enemy losses included 250 killed and wounded, 70 prisoners, one T–34 tank, several AT guns, and large quantities of small arms and ammunition.[26]

Action on the Division's southern flank involved little more than hill climbing and foot races for the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, and the Division Reconnaissance Company. After jumping off in the morning of D-plus 2, Lieutenant Colonel Hawkins' infantry fanned out through a maze of twisting valleys and ridges. The battalion encountered only light resistance, which invariably evaporated under pressure, and by dark the assault elements

had gained 4,000 yards. Hawkins then deployed his troops for night defense on the high ground south of 3/1's positions overlooking the highway defile.[27]

On the right of the 1st Battalion, Captain Houghton's Reconnaissance Company reached the tip of the Namdong Peninsula. The Recon troops spent two days, the 17th and 18th, patrolling this spacious tactical vacuum. A number of dispirited prisoners were collected and caches of arms and munitions uncovered. One of the more significant discoveries was a small arsenal in which Russian-type wooden box mines were being manufactured and stored in quantity. First encountered by Able Company engineers in the Pusan Perimeter, these crude but effective explosives would become serious obstacles to the Marine advance in the days ahead.[28]

The night of 17–18 September passed quietly for the 1st Marines. During the hours of darkness, Ridge requested intermittent naval gunfire to interdict Sosa and Hill 123, where he believed enemy defenses to be located. Jump-off fires were also planned for the morning in addition to air strikes. Captain P. W. Brock's HMS *Kenya* poured in more than 300 6-inch rounds with good results. "Our Royal Navy ally not only supported the battalion to the maximum of its naval gunfire desires," said Ridge, "but volunteered to render more than was requested."[29]

Shortly after first light on D-plus 3, the 2d Battalion attacked along the highway with Easy Company on the left of the road and Dog on the right. Premature air bursts from an artillery preparation resulted in two KIA and three WIA among the troops of Company E.[30]

Ridge's 3d Battalion boarded a column of LVTs, DUKWs, and jeeps, then rumbled down the highway through 2/1's assault companies. In striking contrast to the previous day's advance, there was a conspicuous absence of NKPA infantry along the way. The Marines brushed aside light opposition, including an antitank roadblock at Sosa's outskirts, and captured the town at noon. Covered by Baker Company Tanks, 2/1 moved into defensive positions on the right side of the railroad about a mile beyond the built-up area, and the 3d Battalion deployed on Hill 123 just across the tracks.[31]

On the Division's right, 1/1 gained another 4,000 yards in the course of 18 September. In its third consecutive day of attack, the battalion had yet to encounter anything more formidable than steep hills and vapid enemy bands. Hawkins built his night defenses along a mountainous two-mile front south of 2/1's position overlooking the highway.

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Chapter 9. Marine Air Support
Reports of Enemy Build-up

There was little activity in the 5th Marines' zone of action during the 1st Regiment's drive on Sosa. After helping 2/5 smash the dawn counterattack at Kimpo, Company C, 1st Battalion, attacked Objective Fox under cover of an artillery preparation. Lieutenant Pedersen's unit seized the high ground against light opposition at 0930, while the remainder of 1/5 remained entrenched at Objective Easy, captured the previous day.[32]

Murray's CP displaced to Kimpo at 1245 on the 18th, and the regiment spent the rest of the day patrolling from its positions which ringed the airfield. On the 5th Marines' left, the 3d Battalion of the KMC was joined by 1/KMC in searching out the base of the Kumpo Peninsula. A new security force was added to the Division sector when the 17th ROK Regiment landed at Inchon and fanned out to comb the troublesome area between Ascom City and the sea.[33]

The General Situation Map gives the disposition of friendly and suspected enemy elements as of late afternoon on 18 September. This date is particularly important in that the Marine division, regimental, and battalion headquarters were swamped by a torrent of intelligence which indicated for the first time the future patterns of organized NKPA resistance.

Beginning on the left of the broad arc of the 1st Marine Division's front, repeated reports told of enemy concentrations north and south of the Han River in the area of the Kumpo Peninsula.[34] Upwards of 1,000 troops were sighted by natives and air observers, and it was believed that the North Koreans were organizing for an attempt against Kimpo. A strike by four Navy Skyraiders caught part of the Red force exposed on both banks of the Han northeast of the airfield. After killing an estimated 50 of the enemy and dispersing the remainder, the Navy pilots reported the area "still active."

Marine Air in turn warned of a build-up of Communist troops and equipment in the vicinity of Haengju and Hill 125, directly across the Han from 2/5's position north of Kimpo. East of the airfield, the enemy was withdrawing from the 5th Marines' zone toward Yong dungpo, using the Hill 118 area as an intermediate rallying point. Moreover, interrogation of two NKPA officers captured near Kimpo disclosed that a Communist regiment was already committed to the defense of Yongdungpo. Since this large industrial suburb of Seoul rambled across the 1st Marines' path to the Han, Colonel Puller knew well in advance that trouble lay ahead of his regiment.

Further evidence that storm clouds were gathering over the highway came from a number of sources in Sosa. Informants were almost unanimous in their predictions that the approaches to Yongdungpo would be sown liberally with land mines.

VMF–214, which provided effective close air support for the 1st Marines' attack through Sosa, reported destroying huge enemy stock-piles hidden in and around buildings on the sand spit between Yongdungpo and Seoul. The squadron also sighted six enemy tanks far beyond Marine lines and killed two of them with direct napalm hits. Its sister unit, VMF–323, likewise scoured the Division front and radioed similar findings to Tactical Air Control.

Other reports from scattered sources placed approximately 3,000 North Koreans in Seoul—with more on the way. Air spotters noted heavy traffic south from the 38th Parallel and north from the Suwon area. Tanks, troops, and vehicles from the latter not only were heading for the capital but also were veering off toward Yongdungpo and the Division right flank.

Thus, the Marines faced the possibility of major interference from: (1) the Kumpo Peninsula; (2) the Haengju locale on the north bank of the Han; (3) the area around Hill 118 between Kimpo Airfield and

Yongdungpo; (4) Yongdungpo itself; (5) Seoul; and (6) the direction of the Division's right (southeastern) flank. Strangely enough for an enemy who was at his best with the artful dodge, only the two flank threats failed to measure up to expectations.

The North Koreans gave a preview of the changing picture on the afternoon of 18 September when, at 1415, the first shells of a sustained mortar barrage crashed into 3/1's positions on Hill 123. During the next hour, 120mm eruptions traced accurate paths back and forth along the ridge, and 30 Marines were cut down by the whirring fragments. Moving through the explosions with near-miraculous immunity, the 3d Battalion's senior medical officer, Lieutenant Robert J. Fleischaker, (MC) USN, remained fully exposed to the barrage while administering to the wounded. "He never thought of his own safety when men needed his services," commented Lieutenant Colonel Ridge.[35]

Click here to view map

South of the highway, enemy gunners ranged in on 2/1's lines at 1800, adding 14 more Marines to the casualty rolls. Lieutenant Colonel Sutter and his S–3, Captain Gildo S. Codispoti, narrowly escaped injury when two mortar rounds hit the battalion CP. The explosions wounded Captain Albert L. Williams, commander of Company E, and Warrant Officer Bartley D. Kent, the battalion supply officer.[36]

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Chapter 9. Marine Air Support
Orders for Crossing the Han

Late in the afternoon of the 18th, both Corps and Division issued orders within a period of two hours for crossing the Han. In OpnO 6-50, the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division directed RCT–5 to seize crossing sites along the south bank the next day and be prepared to cross on order while RCT–1 continued its attack along the highway toward Yongdungpo.

Much more territory was taken in by X Corps Operational Instructions No. 1, which ordered the 1st Marine Division to reconnoiter the river on the 19th and cross the next day. Then, after enveloping enemy positions on the north bank in the vicinity of Seoul, the Marines were to seize and secure both the city and the high ground to the north.

Since the Corps did not concern itself much with ways and means, General Smith asked for a conference at 0930 the next morning with General Almond. He informed the X Corps commander that he and his staff had already given considerable thought to the question of a crossing site. A preliminary Marine study had disclosed that three abandoned ferry crossings met military requirements: one downstream from Kimpo Airfield; one at Yongdungpo in the zone of the 1st Marines; and one opposite Kimpo near the village of Haengju. The first was too far from Seoul, and the second too near; but the Haengju site seemed to satisfy all conditions, subject to General Craig's verification by helicopter reconnaissance.[37]

Next to be discussed was the problem of bridging material. The X Corps engineer officer, Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Rowny, reported that Corps had no material other than that brought by the 1st Engineer Battalion of the Marines. Fortunately, that unit's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Partridge, was prepared to meet the emergency. Although he did not have enough floating bridge material to span such a wide stream, he reported to General Smith that he could have one 50-ton raft in operation to support the assault of troops crossing in LVTs, and another shortly afterwards. These rafts would take the tanks and vehicles across, and Partridge added that later his engineers might be able to put together an actual bridge by combining floating and Bailey components.[38]

The two Marine regiments had been in effect the infantry of X Corps up to this time. But Almond promised the Marine general that the 32d Infantry of the 7th Infantry Division would be moved up on the right flank of RCT-1. This Army unit, it may be recalled, had made an administrative landing at Inchon on the 18th and gone into an assembly area under 1st Marine Division control. The other two regiments of the 7th Division were the 31st Infantry, due to arrive on the 20th, and the 17th Infantry, still attached to the Eighth Army.

The X Corps commander lost no time at ordering the 32d to move up on the right, after reverting to the control of the 7th Division, to relieve the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines. This was the first of a series of maneuvers carried out on the 19th in preparation for the river crossing. On the left, the 2d Battalion of the KMCs advanced against negligible opposition to occupy the high ground south of the Han and provide flank protection for the crossing.

A more intricate maneuver was carried out when 1st Battalion of the 5th Marines was relieved west of Yongdungpo by its opposite of RCT–1, which had sideslipped to the left after the 32d Infantry moved up in protection of the regiment's right flank. This shift was not accomplished without some fighting, the account of which belongs in a forthcoming chapter dealing with the battle for Yongdungpo.

Another preliminary step was taken on the 19th when the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion was relieved of its mission of supporting the 1st Marines. All LVTs were withdrawn as the unit displaced by motor march to

the vicinity of Kimpo Airfield, a distance of about 18 miles.[39]

The 1st Shore Party Battalion was also concerned in planning for the river crossing. On the 19th this unit reverted to Division control and displaced to the vicinity of Oeoso-ri. Meanwhile, a reconnaissance detail reported to the CP of the 5th Marines with a mission of selecting DUKW, LVT, and ferry sites. The shore party battalion was also to have the responsibility of establishing evacuation stations and supply dumps on both banks after the crossing while exerting LVT and DUKW traffic control.[40]

Except for the 1st Battalion, the 5th Marines had no trouble on the 19th while advancing to its assigned positions on the south bank of the Han. All objectives were occupied against little or no opposition, placing the regiment in position for the crossing.

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Chapter 10. Crossing the Han

THE CP OF the 5th Marines had a holiday atmosphere during the afternoon of 19 September. An already large group of newspaper and magazine correspondents had been reinforced by new arrivals flown in from Tokyo to report the crossing of the Han. The gathering might have been mistaken for a journalistic convention, and Lieutenant Colonel Murray and his regimental planners could scarcely make themselves heard. Finally it became necessary to request the gentlemen of the press to leave, so that the battalion and company commanders could be summoned for briefing and orders.

The CP was located in a basement room of the Kimpo Airfield administration building. Coleman lanterns lighted the scene as Murray gave a brief talk to his officers, seated about him on boxes and bedrolls. There had been little time for planning, said the regimental commander, but he was confident of success. General Craig, who made a helicopter reconnaissance of the river and roads leading to Seoul, had recommended the old ferry crossing to Haengju. The river was about 400 yards wide at this site, which was about a mile from the Kaesong-Seoul railroad and main highway to Seoul. Hill 125, as the principal terrain feature, was an isolated knob rising nearly 500 feet and located on the right of the landing point. To the left was the village of Haengju, bordered by dikes and rice paddies.

Regimental planning, said Murray, had been conducted in compliance with 1st MarDiv OpnO 7-50, issued at 1430 that afternoon. The 5th Marines was directed to cross the Han in the vicinity of Haengju, seize Hill 125 and advance southeast along the railroad to the high ground dominating the Seoul highway. The units attached for the operation were the 2d Battalion, KMC Regiment, the Division Reconnaissance Company, Company A of the 1st Tank Battalion, and Company A of the 56th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, USA. In addition, the 11th Marines had been directed to give priority in artillery fires to the 5th Marines, while the 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Shore Party Battalion and 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion were in direct support.

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Chapter 10. Crossing the Han
Swimming Team Leads the Way

Major William C. Esterline, the S–2 of the 5th Marines admitted that intelligence as to conditions on the north bank left much to be desired. He mentioned the reports of an enemy build-up on the other side of the river, and he added that a POW had told of enemy mining activities along the road to Haengju. But in spite of these warning notes, his listeners got the impression that 5th Marines' planning was based on assumptions of light resistance.

Major Charles H. Brush, Jr., the S–3, announced the hastily formulated regimental plan. Houghton's Recon Company was to lead the advance by sending a swimming team across shortly after nightfall. If the swimmers found the other bank clear of the enemy, they were to signal for the rest of the men to follow in LVTs. Recon Company then had the mission of seizing a bridgehead consisting roughly of the triangle formed by Hills 95, 125, and 51. After securing these objectives, about 1,500 yards apart, Recon was to defend until Taplett's 3d Battalion crossed at 0400, with Bohn's and McMullen's companies in assault and Wildman's in reserve. While they passed through Recon and attacked toward Seoul, Roise's 2d Battalion would follow in column two hours later, with Newton's 1st Battalion remaining in reserve and crossing on order as the KMC battalion protected the regiment's left flank. Tanks and vehicles would be ferried across on 50-ton floating bridge sections.[1]
Click here to view map

No alternate plan was provided. After the briefing ended at 1700, Houghton and Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence C. Hays, Jr., executive officer of RCT–5, climbed a hill on the south bank and inspected the old ferry crossing and the opposite shore. They saw no enemy activity. Houghton was so optimistic that he asked permission to swim across at dusk but Murray denied the request.[2]

The swimming team consisted of Houghton, Second Lieutenant Dana M. Cashion, and ten enlisted men, accompanied by two Navy reserve officers, Lieutenant Horace Underwood and Ensign John Seigle. The first went along as interpreter, and the other as public information officer with a tape recorder. General Lowe had asked permission to cross in the LVTs; and when the Division commander refused, the 66-year old observer showed a card signed by President Truman, requesting that he be allowed to go anywhere. Even this passport did not swerve General Smith, who decided that Lowe must wait to accompany the reserve battalion.[3]

It was a dark and moonless night when the swimmers trudged through the muddy grain fields to the river bank, carrying two small rubber boats in which to tow the arms and equipment. After checking the current and making allowances for drift, they stripped to their skivvies and slipped into the tepid water shortly after 2000. Only two or three sets of rubber fins were available, but speed was not expected of men using a slow breast stroke to avoid making noise or ripples. These precautions became all the more necessary after a Marine shell or aerial bomb set fire to a native house on the far bank and the flames cast a lurid glow over the water. Apparently the swimmers had not been observed when they scrambled ashore, dripping, about 2040. They encountered two Koreans at the water's edge and overpowered them without much difficulty. Lieutenant Underwood questioned the captives in their native tongue and reported that they were escaping from Seoul.[4]

Houghton ordered Lieutenant Cashion and four enlisted men out on patrol duty with a mission of reconnoitering Hill 125 and the Haengju area. The Recon commander remained at the beach, where Gunnery Sergeant Ernest L. DeFazio and the other members of the swimming team guarded the prisoners and prowled the immediate area without encountering enemy. There were so few signs of NKPA activity that Houghton decided even before the return of Cashion's patrol to give the signal for the rest of the company to cross. And it was when

the LVTs revved up on the south bank, shattering the night's stillness, that hell broke loose.[5]

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Chapter 10. Crossing the Han
Marine LVTs Grounded in Mud

The men in the amtracs had the problem of advancing five miles by road from Kimpo to an embarkation site they had never seen, crossing a river in the darkness, and seizing three objectives on a basis of map reconnaissance. First Lieutenant Ralph B. Crossman, executive officer of Recon Company, had received oral orders without an overlay or an opportunity to take notes during the briefing at the Fifth Marines CP. His first message by SCR–300 from Houghton came about 2000, warning that the swimming team was taking to the water. This was the signal for the amtracs to start their road trip. They were on the way when Houghton prematurely radioed the familiar words:

"The Marines have landed and the situation is well in hand."[6]

An hour later the Recon commander came in again with a message that no enemy had been encountered. He directed his executive officer to cross in LVTs with the three platoons of Recon Company and the attached platoon of Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion, which had a mission of mining road blocks after the objectives were secured.

Crossman acknowledged this message but replied that he could not reach the river bank for nearly an hour. He had assigned the three objectives to his platoon commanders, directing that they take their orders from Houghton upon reaching the other bank. SCR–300 communications were frequently blurred, however, or blasted off the air altogether by the more powerful radios of the tractors. Thus the possibilities for confusion were multiplied as the nine amtracs proceeded in column to the embarkation point, clanking and revving up thunderously in preparation for the crossing.[7]

The din was deafening enough to arouse even an enemy who had not shown much fight so far in the zone of RCT–5. Hill 125 suddenly came to life as NKPA bullets whipped the water and mortar shells exploded among the LVTs or along the beach occupied by Houghton's swimmers. Although Cashion's patrol reported no enemy encountered on Hill 125, his men came under fire from that quarter on their return to the beach. One of them, Private First Class Alphonse O. Ledet, Jr., was reported as missing in action, and it was assumed that Communists bullets had cut him down.[8]

The embarkation area was so cramped that Crossman had found it necessary to send the LVTs across the river in column, with First Lieutenant Francis R. Kraince's 1st Platoon in the lead, followed by Second Lieutenant Philip D. Shutler's 2d Platoon and the 3d commanded by Second Lieutenant Charles Puckett. Kraince was to seize Hill 125 while Shutler attacked Hill 51 and Puckett went up against Hill 95.

The three platoons were accompanied by a 4.2-inch mortar forward observer team, two 105mm FO teams from the 11th Marines, and a squad of engineers. Communications on the SCR–300 net were so badly jammed, however, that Houghton and Crossman were figuratively as well as literally in the dark on opposite sides of the river. Crossman's final messages from Kraince and Shutler reported that four of their amtracs had drifted from the course and grounded in the mud. He ordered both officers to extricate themselves while Puckett, who had not yet left the south bank, covered them with fire. Just then DeFazio radioed that Houghton and his team were planning to swim to the LVTs. This was the last word from the north bank received by Crossman, who lost all radio contact afterwards with anyone except the 5th Marines.[9]

At the height of the pandemonium on the north bank, the two Korean prisoners attempted to escape. Both were killed by Marines of the swimming team.[10]

Houghton's first thought had been to swim out and guide the LVTs to the north bank. But the enemy had

shown such unexpected resistance as to justify the withdrawal of the swimming team. The rubber boats and excess equipment were hidden along the shore and some of the weapons thrown in the river to prevent capture. [11] Then the swimmers started their return trip through water churned by mortar shells, chiefly Marine 4.2-inch bursts falling short. One of these projectiles exploded so near to Houghton as to knock him out momentarily, and he was assisted to a grounded LVT by Corporal James Morgan. The Recon commander suffered a sprained back and double vision from the concussion, and two men of the team were slightly wounded. DeFazio led the remaining swimmers to the south bank.

There he learned that all the amtracs had returned except the four reported grounded. Most of the Recon troops on these stranded vehicles had chosen to swim or wade back to the south bank. These stragglers were collected on the northern tip of Hill 131 by Captain John F. Paul and Corporal James P. Harney of the amtracs and shuttled to Kimpo as fast as they returned.[12]

DeFazio took care of his casualties, then set out with eight men in search of Houghton. It was low tide by this time, but wading through the mud proved to be more tiring than swimming. After finding Houghton in a dazed condition on one of the grounded LVTs, the sergeant agreed with Kraince and Shutler that the approach of dawn made it necessary to abandon the two amtracs which were still stuck. They returned on the two that the officers had succeeded in extricating. Thus at daybreak the swimming expedition ended in the CP of the 5th Marines, with DeFazio reporting to Murray and Brush after seeing his commanding officer on the way to a field hospital.[13]

The crews and troops on the LVTs retained a confused impression of the night's events. Master Sergeant Edwin L. Knox, who crossed with the engineers in the second amtrac, could not understand why the column withdrew. The vehicles were dispersed in every direction after some became stuck, and it was on his LVT that Captain Houghton received first aid.[14]

It was not officially established who gave the order for the return of the LVTs when they neared the north bank, if indeed such an order was ever given. But all participants agreed that it was for the best. Events had proved that too much dependence was placed in assumptions of little or no resistance, despite G–2 warnings of an enemy build-up in the Haengju area. And even if Recon Company had landed, the task of taking three hills in a night attack without previous reconnaissance would probably have been too much for a unit of 126 men against an enemy estimated by Houghton at a battalion.

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Chapter 10. Crossing the Han
Daylight Assault Crossing by 3/5

At dawn on the 20th the command and staff of the 5th Marines rebounded from this preliminary reverse with vigor and firmness. General Craig, the ADC, summed up the viewpoint of Murray and his officers when he commented:

"The eyes of the world were upon us. It would have looked bad for the Marines, of all people, to reach a river and not be able to cross." [15]

It was decided at 0430 that the 3d Battalion would make a daylight assault crossing just two hours later. The revised plan called for LVTs to cross at the Haengju site in waves of two to six vehicles. Troop units would be organized into boat teams, and the plan provided for a 15-minute artillery preparation by the 1st and 4th Battalions of the 11th Marines.[16]

Many of the Marine shells fell short, so that little benefit was derived from the barrage by the assault troops. On the other hand, enemy fire from Hill 125 was only too well placed. About 200 hits were taken by the first wave of amtracs from 14.5mm antitank projectiles and small caliber high explosive shells as well as machine-gun bullets. The armor plate prevented any infantry losses, and only four casualties were suffered by the crews.

Battalion objectives, according to the revised plan, were designated ABLE, BAKER, and CHARLIE—Hills 125, 51, and 95. Captain McMullen's Item Company landed at 0650 in the first wave, followed by How and George. While discharging troops, the LVTs were exposed to more machine-gun and antitank fire, resulting in several infantry casualties.[17]

Item Company, it may be recalled, consisted of newcomers who had arrived at Pusan to make up third infantry companies just before the Brigade embarked for Inchon. Barring a few World War II men, these troops had known no combat experience before they hit GREEN Beach at Wolmi-do. They acquitted themselves like veterans in the Han crossing, however, as platoon leaders organized them under fire after they piled out of the amtracs.

The only covering fires at first were provided by the 50-caliber machine guns of First Lieutenant Stanley H. Carpenter's platoon of amtracs, which had taken the first wave across. Then four Corsairs of VMF–214 struck the enemy on Hill 125 while Captain Joseph N. Irick of the amtracs led four of his vehicles eastward to a position where they could direct 50 caliber fire on the NKPA positions.

Item Company's plan of attack called for a two-pronged assault on Hill 125 (Objective ABLE) from the northwest by First Lieutenant William F. Sparks' 3d Platoon on the right, attacking up the main spur paralleling the river, while First Lieutenant Elmer G. Peterson's 2d Platoon attacked on the left after riding a few hundred yards inland on LVTs. Second Lieutenant Roy E. Krieger's 1st Platoon was to remain on call in reserve.

Item Company had it hot and heavy from the beginning. The two assault platoons overcame such difficulties as bogged-down amtracs, intermingled units, and bullet-swept open areas before getting in position to return the Communist fire. The first phase ended on a plateau about halfway up the hill when enemy machine guns cut down most of the mortar section before the Marines could gain a foothold.

At this point it became necessary for the 3d Platoon to fall back and redeploy. Contact had been lost momentarily with Peterson's men; but after he appeared on the left, McMullen called up his reserve unit to pass through the 3d Platoon. Sparks having been wounded, First Lieutenant Wallace Williamson took command of his men, now reinforced by an engineer squad and troops from company headquarters. The revamped 3d Platoon was

sent out to envelop the enemy left while Krieger hit the center and Peterson worked his way around the NKPA right.

This time the plateau was carried in a single rush. But casualties had reduced the company to the point where another reorganization was necessary before attacking the military crest. Although Captain McMullen had been wounded, he remained in action to lead the final assault.

The 1st and 3d Platoons were clawing their way upward when Peterson radioed from the left that he could see enemy soldiers in flight from the peak to the low ground north of the hill mass. One of the VMF–214 Corsairs also reported Communists streaming down the eastern slopes with Marine planes in hot pursuit. Thanks to their efforts, not many Korean Reds were left on the crest when the panting Marines arrived to finish the job. More lucrative targets were presented by the foes racing down the eastern slopes. Marine rifles and BARs cut down many of these fugitives when they attempted to change into civilian clothes to avoid capture.

It was estimated that the enemy had 200 killed on Objective ABLE. The other two battalion objectives offered little or no resistance to troops who rode in column from the beaches on LVTs—How Company to seize Hill 95, and George Company attacking Hill 51. Thus at a total cost of 43 casualties—most of them in Item Company—the 3d Battalion had secured its three objectives by 0940.

Among the other results of the successful assault crossing was the salvaging of the two grounded LVTs, both of which had been in the enemy's field of fire. The equipment left on the north bank by the swimming team was also recovered, and PFC Ledet showed up unharmed. After being assigned to an observation post, he had inadvertently been left behind as missing in action when the Reds opened fire. But he kept his head throughout his lonely night's vigil and was able to give a good report of enemy numbers and activities.

At 1000 on the 20th the first wave of amtracs crossed the river with troops of 2/5. This battalion had orders to remain in the LVTs while passing through 3/5 and continuing the attack. The scheme of maneuver called for a sharp turn to the right at Hill 51, and the next objectives, DOG and EASY, consisted of the high ground on either side of the Kaesong-Seoul Railroad about three miles east of Haengju.

Company A of the 56th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, USA, was to follow with the 2d Battalion of the KMC regiment in DUKWs. These troops had a mission of providing security for the rear of the 5th Marines.

The 1st Battalion of that regiment was alerted to be ready to cross the Han at 1330 and move into an assembly area near Hill 95, prepared to continue the attack toward Seoul.

Once the plan has been told, it would be repetitive to describe a performance which put it into effect without incident. At 1400 the regimental CP displaced across the river to the vicinity of Sojong, about two miles northeast of the Haengju crossing site. Fifteen minutes later the 2d Battalion reported that it had secured Objectives DOG and EASY. Troops of that unit had ridden the LVTs as far as Sojong, where they encountered a swamp and a bridge too small for anything larger than a jeep. The infantry proceeded on foot while a few LVTs and a platoon of tanks crossed over a railroad bridge. About 30 prisoners, believed to be the remnants of enemy forces on Hill 125, were taken on Objective EASY. They were hiding in a cave and surrendered after a couple of warning rounds fired by a platoon of the Army amtrac troops supporting the battalion. Company D dug in on Objective EASY and Company E on Objective DOG while Company F covered the gap between.[18]

The 3d Battalion went into an assembly area a mile north of Hill 95. And after 1/5 moved a company to Hill 125 to secure the landing area for the night, the 1st Marine Division had a firm bridgehead on the north bank of the Han.

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Chapter 10. Crossing the Han
Departure of General MacArthur

General Shepherd and Admiral Struble witnessed the crossing from a vantage point on the south bank, where they had a good view of the fight for Hill 125.[19] Both accompanied General MacArthur that afternoon, when he made a final tour of the front before his departure for Tokyo.

The caravan of jeep-borne officers and reporters stopped first at the crossing area, then proceeded to the zone of the 1st Marines, where the battle for Yongdungpo was going on full blast. General MacArthur got out of his jeep and continued on foot along rice paddies where Marines were still flushing out snipers. This meant a period of anxiety for General Smith which lasted until the responsibility for the safety of the commander-in-chief passed to General Barr in the zone of the 7th Infantry Division.

On the afternoon of the 21st the Marine general saw MacArthur off at Kimpo on his plane for Tokyo. Never had the old warrior worn his famous “scrambled egg” cap with more verve. Barely a week had gone by since the Marines scrambled ashore on RED and BLUE Beaches, yet most of the major objectives had already been taken—Inchon, Kimpo, Yongdungpo, the north bank of the Han, and the approaches to Seoul. In the Pusan Perimeter meanwhile, the Eighth Army had been hitting the enemy hard in its joint offensive.

This was the score on D-plus 7. But perhaps the famous septuagenarian recalled with pardonable complacency that as late as D-minus 7, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had reiterated doubts of the Inchon landing which they had expressed on several previous occasions. MacArthur was warned that if the operation failed, the entire United Nations cause in Korea might be plunged into serious difficulties. The commander in chief replied with superb assurance, “I and all of my commanders and staff officers, without exception, are enthusiastic and confident of the success of the enveloping operation.” [20]

Such confidence could not be withstood. But it was not until 8 September 1950 that the Joint Chiefs of Staff finally acquiesced in an operation they had never entirely approved—an operation scheduled to take place in just one week.

It may be that Douglas MacArthur was recalling this exchange of views as he stood in the sunlight of Kimpo Airfield, his eyes flashing and his chin outthrust. There is no tonic like victory, and he looked 20 years younger than his actual years as he decorated General Smith with a Silver Star just before the plane took off.

“To the gallant commander of a gallant division!” said the commander in chief by way of citation.

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Chapter 10. Crossing the Han
Supporting Arms of Bridgehead

Even success did not alter the conviction of Navy and Marine amphibious specialists that risks had been assumed in the Inchon landing which might have resulted in disaster. It was taking no credit away from General MacArthur for his unshakeable faith in victory to conclude that fortune had smiled in some instances when a frown would have been costly.

The teamwork of Marine supporting arms was never shown to better effect than in the establishment of a bridgehead over the Han. Lieutenant Colonel Partridge's engineers, of course, were on the job from the beginning. It was up to them to get the tanks across the river as soon as possible, in case the infantry needed the support of armor. Approaches and ferry landings had to be constructed for this purpose; and just six hours after the initial infantry crossing, the engineers had their first six-float M4A2 raft in operation. It had taken them four hours to build.[21]

The 2d Platoon of Able Company, 1st Tank Battalion, crossed the river at 1410 on 20 September and moved up in support of 3/5. The 1st Platoon followed at 1600 and the 3d Platoon late that afternoon, after the engineers completed a second raft.

When the KMCs attempted to cross in DUKWs, the clumsy vehicles bogged down several yards from the river on the south bank. Partridge suggested to the KMC commander that his troops build a makeshift corduroy approach off the main route which Marine engineers were constructing to the embarkation point. The Korean officer agreed with Partridge that this was a sensible solution and soon had his men gathering logs.

Neither of them dreamed that they had stirred up an international incident which called for a decision on the division level. American policy makers had felt it necessary to lean backwards to avoid giving Communist propagandists any excuse to charge us with recruiting Koreans for "slave labor." It was an extremely sensitive subject, and Partridge was astonished at the repercussions. At last General Craig visited the ferry site and ruled that it was a closed incident after finding all explanations satisfactory. It was further decided—for mechanical rather than political reasons—to take the KMCs across in amtracs rather than waste any more time on DUKWs. [22]

On the night of the 20th, Partridge and Colonel McAlister, the Division G–4, interviewed a captured NKPA engineer major at Kimpo Airfield. The prisoner informed them that the bombed highway bridge between Yongdungpo and Seoul had been damaged beyond repair with the means at hand. This agreed with the conclusions of the Marine officers on the basis of aerial observation. Prospects for a span over the Han seemed dim as Partridge was leaving McAlister's quarters. That very evening, however, Lieutenant Colonel Rowny, chief of the X Corps engineers, telephoned to announce that materials for a floating bridge unit had been accumulated by the Army in Japan and would be flown to Korea shortly. Up to this time, with rafts the only solution, the Marine engineers had supplied all the materials. But Rowny announced that Corps would assume the responsibility after the arrival of enough materials for a floating bridge unit.[23]

Military operations could not wait a week or ten days for the new span, and the Marine ferry plus amtracs and DUKWs [24] had to nourish the assault on Seoul. With this end in view, the 1st Shore Party Battalion reverted to Division control on the 19th and displaced from Inchon to Oeoso-ri. By nightfall the entire battalion was bivouacked in this area.

On the 20th, after establishing a forward CP at Kimpo Airfield, the shore party troops of Baker Company moved up to the Han in support of the 5th Marines, followed by two teams from Able Company. Evacuation

stations and supply dumps were set up on both banks. Other shore party missions were maintaining LVT and DUKW traffic control, providing guides for the amtracs, posting security at the crossing sites on both banks, and effecting unit distribution of supplies upon request by the DUKWs and LVTs.

Control of the ferry site, known as BAKER Ferry, became the responsibility of Baker Company of the 1st Shore Party Battalion. Teams 1 and 2 were employed on the south bank, and Team 3 plus headquarters troops on the other shore. Traffic control was of the utmost importance, since ferry operation had to be limited to periods of low tide, and during idle intervals a long line of vehicles accumulated. Most of them were trucks containing cargo to be reloaded in LVTs and taken across the river. The shore party men had the duty of keeping the traffic flowing as smoothly as possible, both on land and water, and special regulations were enforced to prevent the LVTs from colliding with the ferries. With the establishment of a third ferry, the problem of supplying the troops across the river was pretty well solved.[25]

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Chapter 10. Crossing the Han
Command Ashore Assumed by X Corps

A military ceremony was held on 21 September when the commanding general of X Corps established his CP in Inchon and assumed command at 1700 of all forces ashore. It was stated in some reports that command had been transferred from the commander of JTF–7 to the commander of X Corps. But officers familiar with amphibious doctrine pointed out that at no time prior to landing did CG X Corps relinquish command; and only through him did the commander of JTF–7 exercise command.[26]

The date was also significant for the 1st Marine Division in that its third rifle regiment, the 7th Marines, landed at Inchon with Major Francis F. Parry's 3d Battalion of the 11th Marines attached. Before the ships reached the inner harbor, Colonel Litzenberg went ashore and reported at the Division CP. Informing General Smith that troop units in the convoy had been vertically loaded for maximum flexibility, he asked what troops the Division commander desired to have unloaded first.

"An infantry battalion," said General Smith.

"And what next?"

"Another infantry battalion," said the commanding general.

Colonel Litzenberg began unloading at once, and by 2200 his CP had opened at Wonjong-ni, two miles south of Kimpo Airfield, while H&S Company and the 3d Battalion (Major Maurice E. Roach) occupied near-by assembly areas. The 2d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Thornton M. Hinkle) had reached an assembly area at Hill 131, a mile north of Kimpo, by 0100 on 22 September with a mission of providing security for the airfield and a river crossing site. The 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Raymond G. Davis) was given the duty of unloading the ships of the convoy.[27]

It appeared for a few hours on 21 September that the enemy might be planning to retake Kimpo Airfield. At 0730 a report came to the 3d Battalion, KMC Regiment, warning of an attempted NKPA crossing of the Han in the area about seven miles northwest of the field. Air strikes were called immediately with the result of dispersing the enemy. At 1310, however, an estimated two NKPA battalions were reported in front of KMC positions by the air liaison officer attached to the battalion. All units in the Kimpo area were alerted to the possibility of attack. The CO of the 1st Shore Party Battalion was designated as coordinator of defensive forces consisting of his unit, and elements of the 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Ordnance Battalion, and 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion. Army troops of the 56th Amphibian Tractor Battalion were also ordered to Kimpo.

With an NKPA attack threatening, some concern was felt about an enemy Yak type aircraft—fueled, armed, and ready for flight—which had been discovered in a revetment on the edge of the airfield by First Lieutenant Edward E. Collins of the Ordnance Battalion and later of the 5th Marines. The plane was hastily disarmed and painted with U.S. markings, so that it could be flown to Japan in case the enemy overran Kimpo.[28]

Although the NKPA threat did not materialize, there could be no doubt of an enemy build-up within striking distance. And it was on this sensitive left flank that the support of naval gunfire was most effective.

As early as 19 September the 1st and 5th Marines had advanced beyond the range of the light cruisers and destroyers. The battleship *Missouri* was made available the next day, but targets in Seoul proved to be too distant for her maximum range, and no further efforts were made to call upon the battleship's 16-inch rifles. In the Kimpo area, however, naval gunfire was at its best, and a total of 535 8-inch shells were fired from 21 to 24

September by the *Toledo* and *Rochester*. These fires were requested by Lieutenant Wayerski in support of patrol actions by the 3d KMC Battalion. One of the KMC attacks wiped out a company-size pocket of Red Korean resistance in the vicinity of Chongdong—about three miles northwest of the airfield on the south bank of the Han—with a loss to the enemy of 40 counted dead and some 150 prisoners.[29]

After the Han crossing, the 1st Marine Division found itself in the position of advancing astride an unbridged tidal river with the northern flank wide open. Generals Smith and Craig depended on VMO–6 helicopters for their visits to the 5th Marines front. Those rotary-winged aircraft were in increasing demand for evacuating serious casualties; and the commanding general directed that such missions be given priority over command and liaison flights. This meant that Smith and Craig were occasionally "bumped." In such instances they crossed the river by LVT or waited until their helicopter could return.

At the time of the Han crossing, the general plan of the 1st Marine Division had been for RCT–5 to clear the north bank and open up crossing sites for RCT–1 in the Yongdungpo area. That regiment would then cross to seize South Mountain, just north of the crossing site, thus forming an enclave in Seoul proper. Further objectives were to be seized by RCT–1 to the north and east while the KMC Regiment passed through RCT–5 to attack the center of the city. Here a political motive entered the picture, since it was desired to have Koreans take a prominent part in the liberation of the former ROK capital. To the north, on the left flank of the Division, it was planned for RCT–7 to seize objectives to protect the flank and cut off the escape of the enemy. Meanwhile, RCT–5 would revert to Division reserve as soon as the tactical situation made it possible.

So much for the plan. Before it could be put into execution, stiffening NKPA resistance made it necessary to consider revisions.[30] Not only was the hilly terrain northwest of Seoul well suited to defensive operations, but it had been a training area as far back as the Japanese overlordship, with fields of fire accurately charted. Moreover, it had become evident by the 21st that the enemy was about to exchange a strategy of delaying operations for one of defending to the last ditch. The 1st Marines had already experienced the new NKPA spirit at Yongdungpo, and on the 21st the 5th Marines contented itself with limited advances for the purpose of seizing high ground from which to launch the assault on Seoul.

The attack on the 21st was launched astride the railroad by the 3d Battalion to the north and the 1st Battalion between the railroad and the river. After passing through the 2d Battalion, Taplett's men seized three hills and by dusk were digging in on Hill 216, about six miles east of Hill 125 and the ferry landing site.

The 1st Battalion had meanwhile advanced to Hill 96, about 3,000 yards southeast of yesterday's Objective DOG, now occupied by the 2d Battalion in reserve. Further gains of some 2,500 yards to the southeast took the battalion to Hill 68, between the railroad and river, which was seized and held for the night.

Enemy resistance ranged from light to moderate in both battalion zones. Between them, the 1st Battalion of the KMCs moved up to Hill 104, just north of the railroad and south of Sachon Creek.[31]

This was the situation across the river at nightfall on the 21st. The 5th Marines was in position to grapple with the enemy for possession of Seoul. Hill 104, in the center of the 5th Marines front, was only 5,000 yards west of the Government Palace in the northwest section of the city. Less than three miles, yet officers and men alike realized that they would have to fight for every inch of the way. If anyone had any doubts, he had only to watch the flashes of gunfire stabbing the night sky to the southeast, and he had only to listen to the unremitting roar of gunfire. For at Yongdungpo the 1st Marines had been slugging it out with the enemy for the last three days in a battle for the rambling industrial suburb.

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Chapter 11. The Fight for Yongdungpo

IF YONGDUNGPO is lost, Seoul also will fall." This was the warning note sounded during the conferences of the Red Korean military leaders in Seoul. So important did they consider the industrial suburb that a regiment of the 18th NKPA Division was assigned to the defense of the built-up area on the south bank of the Han.[1]

Slogans of this sort were a favorite form of Communist inspirational literature, and they may have served to buck up the defenders. From the tactical standpoint, however, the quoted catch phrase was illogical. Yongdungpo was untenable. Squatting on the low ground at the confluence of the Kalchon and Han Rivers, the town was an isolated landmark of only symbolic significance. It was separated from Seoul by two miles of sand and water, and the only connecting links, the old railroad and highway bridges, had long since been destroyed. Thus, what had once been a vital communications hub south of the Han was now a veritable dead end.

While the Reds in Seoul were able to ferry troops and materiel across the exposed river and sand spit by night, they could not hope by this primitive method to meet the logistical requirements of a regimental garrison confronted by a modern juggernaut of combined arms. Nevertheless, the North Koreans chose to make a fight of it, and in addition to the hundreds of troops in Yongdungpo, they sent over considerable artillery and armor that could have been put to better use in the defensible terrain around Seoul.

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Chapter 11. The Fight for Yongdungpo
Three Hills Taken by 1/5

Hill 118 was the principal terrain feature between Kimpo Airfield and Yongdungpo, the dominating peak being about three miles from the former and two from the latter. Giant spurs from the main ridge extended northward toward the Han and eastward to the bed of the Kalchon, beyond which lay Yongdungpo. At the end of one easterly projection were the twin caps, Hills 80 and 85. Paralleling the Han River, a modern highway led from Kimpo, passed north of Hill 118, skirted 80 and 85, then bridged the Kalchon to enter Yongdungpo from the northwest.

It will be recalled that the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, occupied high ground generally east of Kimpo Airfield at the close of 18 September. During the night, Lieutenant Colonel Murray ordered the unit to seize Hills 80 and 85 the next day. To gain these gates to Yongdungpo, it would be necessary to take Hill 118; and the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Newton, formulated his plan accordingly.[2] Company B would leave its positions on old Objective EASY at dawn and envelop Hill 118 from the south. Company C would attack frontally from Objective FOX, assist the enveloping force by taking one of 118's spurs, then continue eastward to seize 80 and 85. Company A was to remain behind an Objective EASY for the purpose of guarding the approaches to the airfield.

At dawn of 19 September, Company C atop Objective FOX was greeted by a hail of mortar and small-arms fire. Under this shield part of a 500-man enemy force attacked the Marine position from the east, while the remainder attempted to move along the Yongdungpo-Kimpo Highway, obviously bent on reaching the airfield. Other large NKPA concentrations were spotted at the base of Hill 118.

Charlie Company's organic weapons roared into action along with the battalion 81s. While the Marine fire cut swaths through the exposed enemy ranks, Baker Company lunged forward to envelop Hill 118 according to plan. Air and artillery paved the way so effectively that Captain Fenton's unit gained the commanding peak about 1100 without suffering a casualty. This left the North Korean attackers, who had been contained by Charlie Company, trapped between Objective Fox and Hill 118. After losses of 300 dead and 100 prisoners, the Red Force broke into a few small bands that fled across the highway to the fields and villages bordering the Han. Company C's casualties in stopping the attack and moving forward to its spur on Hill 118 were two killed and six wounded.[3]

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As the two assault companies reorganized on the newly won ridge, Fenton spotted a large number of Red troops on Hill 80, now about 1,000 yards away. He directed an air strike from his advance position, and the Corsairs not only cut down many of the North Koreans but completely routed the survivors. While the planes worked over the enemy positions on the high ground, the Marines of Company B observed a growing throng of NKPA soldiers in the vicinity of the Kalchon Bridge leading to Yongdungpo. Some of the Reds were milling around, but others were filing across the undamaged span and disappearing into a knot of warehouses and huts at the far end. Fenton radioed for artillery fire just as Communist machine guns and an AT weapon opened up on Baker Company from positions across the bridge. Four times firing for effect with "battery four rounds," the Marine howitzers sent a total of 96 shells crashing into the enemy positions within the space of a few minutes. The explosions neutralized the bridge area, but the span itself was badly damaged in the process.[4]

First Lieutenant Pedersen led Company C along the highway toward Hills 80 and 85 at 1430. Owing to the press of time, the area between the road and the Han River was not cleared, with the result that small bands of

enemy were left free to roam the fields and make their presence felt later. The 3d Platoon, under Second Lieutenant Harold L. Dawe, Jr., peeled off the column and attacked Hill 80 shortly after 1500. Following at an interval of 500 yards, Second Lieutenant Robert H. Corbet's 1st Platoon continued along the pavement toward Hill 85. A platoon of A/Tanks supported the two-pronged assault along with Charlie Company's mortars and machine guns, and by 1650 the two heights were secured. In the wake of the air strike called down by Fenton, the attacking infantry had encountered practically no opposition.

Yongdungpo, bristling with Communist armament, rumbled its challenge from the low ground 500 yards east of Hill 85. Taken under heavy fire by artillery, mortars, and small arms, Company C was forced to dig in on the reverse slopes of its high ground, there to await the expected counterattack after nightfall.

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Chapter 11. The Fight for Yongdungpo
Enemy Minefields Encountered

As noted previously, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 1st Marines, spent the night of 18–19 September astride the Inchon-Seoul Highway a mile east of Sosa. The 1st Battalion, deployed over a broad front in the hills south of the road, was to be relieved in the morning by the 32d Infantry, so that Colonel Puller could shift his regiment to the left. Since the relief did not take place as early as expected, Puller ordered his 2d and 3d Battalions to attack at 1030, leaving 1/1 in position to await replacement by the Army unit.[5]

On the left of the highway, 3/1 jumped off from Hill 123 with Companies H and I in the assault. The battalion's mission was to clear a rambling ridge complex that extended more than three miles before stopping short of Hill 118. Assigned as a final objective was the terminal height, Lookout Hill, facing western Yongdungpo across the wide bottomland of the Kalchon.[6]

Considering the formidable cross-compartment approach, the assault companies led by the battalion S–3, Major Joseph D. Trompeter, made good progress against enemy resistance described as "light but stubborn." At a cost of two killed and 15 wounded, the Marines combed the vertical wilderness and seized Lookout Hill late in the evening. The attack was almost too successful, for the battalion was now out on a limb. The closest friendly forces were on Hill 118, several hundred yards to the north, and along the Inchon-Seoul Highway, about a mile to the south, as will be shown.[7]

The 2d Battalion could boast comparable success along the highway in the course of 19 September, but gains were made under far different circumstances. Spearheaded by Charlie Company Tanks commanded by Captain Richard M. Taylor, the battalion had advanced only 500 yards in the morning when the lead M–26 was enveloped in a violent explosion. With one track and two road wheels destroyed, the steel monster settled into the crater left by the detonation of a wooden box mine.[8]

Simultaneously, the infantrymen of Company F came under heavy small-arms fire from Hill 72 to the right front. In an attempt to sight in on the enemy positions, other tanks tried to bypass the mine field in the highway, only to discover that explosives were concealed in both road shoulders as well. Howitzers of the 11th Marines registered on Hill 72, and during the ensuing bombardment a VMF–214 flight appeared overhead to lend further assistance.[9]

Despite his generous use of supporting arms, Lieutenant Colonel Sutter was forced to commit all three rifle companies to the fight. Tank gunners tried to detonate mines embedded in the road with machine-gun fire, but without success.[10] It remained for First Lieutenant George A. Babe's 2d Platoon, Charlie Company Engineers, to remove the obstacles under fire. Darting forward on the bullet-swept highway, the engineers placed "snowball" charges of C–3 on the wooden boxes, then took cover while the mines exploded.[11]

After 2/1 had driven the enemy from the area with the assistance of Marine air and artillery, the job of clearing the 250-yard mine field proceeded under less hair-raising conditions. To get the armor back into the fight as soon as possible, Babe ignored the explosives embedded in the highway shoulders. Word was passed back to this effect, but several jeeps and trucks were lost later when drivers failed to heed the warning.[12]

While the tanks remained on the sideline, Companies D and F punched about a mile down the highway against continuing resistance, which gradually solidified at Hill 146. Like 72, this ridge was on the right side of the road, in the 32d Infantry's zone of action. Since the Army unit had yet to enter the picture, the Marine flank was becoming more and more exposed with each forward bound by 2/1.[13]

Sutter had no choice but to commit troops beyond his zone. Not only were the Reds entrenched on Hill

146 with machine guns and field pieces, but they had blocked the highway with trees and other encumbrances. Thus, while Fox Company seized a knoll on the left, Dog Company invaded Army territory and battled its way to the top of Hill 146's western spur. VMF–214 plastered the peak itself, and the 11th Marines shelled enemy positions across the whole battalion front.[14]

It was 1300 when the mine field to the rear was finally cleared, enabling Charlie Company Tanks to move forward in an attempt to overtake Sutter's infantry. Within sight of the fighting around Hill 146, the armor ground to a halt before the roadblock of trees, rice bags, and other debris.[15] A dozer tank rumbled ahead, smashed through the first obstruction, then went up in a cloud of smoke. Under the litter on the road lay a second mine field, 75 yards long.[16]

Again the tank men watched from behind as engineers cleared the highway and 2/1 drove forward out of sight. By 1730, the Marine infantry had completely smashed the main enemy concentration on the highway. When the surviving Reds fled, they exhibited the same determination that had characterized their stand throughout the day. Weapons and equipment were strewn along the road, and the Marines captured a truck loaded with mines as further evidence of the hasty retreat.[17]

Sutter ordered 2/1 to hold up at 1900 and dig in astride the highway. The 4,800-yard advance had cost the Marine unit four killed and 18 wounded, against 350 casualties and five prisoners for the North Koreans. Since all written and personal accounts agree that 19 September amounted to almost one continuous fire fight for the 2d Battalion, the amazing contrast in friendly-enemy loss figures must be attributed to the sound employment of Marine supporting arms.[18]

As mentioned earlier, 2/1's positions for the night were a mile southeast of the 3d Battalion on Lookout Hill. Company E entrenched on high ground to the left of the highway—4,000 yards from Yongdungpo—while D and F manned a long, low hill on the right. Because the latter height ran parallel to the road, the line formed by Dog and Fox was at a right angle to that held by Easy. Sutter's choice of this L-shaped defense would shortly prove to be an extremely wise one.

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Chapter 11. The Fight for Yongdungpo
NKPA Counterattacks of 20 September

The right flank of the 1st Marines was bare. Not until 1200, 19 September, did the 32d Infantry begin relieving 1/1 in its old positions southeast of Sosa. Liaison between the Marine and Army units at this time was weak. Apparently many of the Marines were unaware that General Barr's OpnO No. 2,[19] for the 7th Infantry Division did not call for a jump-off by the 32d until 0630 on the 20th. At that time the Army regiment would attack a series of objectives which included Hill 146 and other high ground above the road.[20] Thus, the schedules north and south of the highway were running one day apart, and it would take the enemy himself to straighten the line when he slammed the gates of Yongdungpo.

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, entrucked below Sosa for its circuitous journey from the right flank of the regiment to the left, where it was to relieve the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, on Hills 118, 80, and 85. The 11-mile trip via Sosa and Wonjong-ni was uneventful, except that the troops had to dismount at the latter village and proceed on foot over the primitive road. With the first increment to arrive at Wonjong-ni, Captain Robert H. Barrow, commanding Company A of 1/1, set a rugged pace to get his troops on top of Hill 118 before dark. Relieving Company B of 1/5, he expected Charlie Company to pass through and replace its opposite of the 5th Marines on Hills 80 and 85.

It was dusk, and Companies B and C were still on the move when Hawkins of 1/1 met Newton of 1/5. They briefly discussed the lay of the land, the latter's tactical disposition, and the requirement that 1/5 assemble at Kimpo within a matter of hours to prepare for the river-crossing next day. Time, space, and terrain factors were too great, Hawkins concluded, for his battalion to assume all positions then occupied by the other. To facilitate the rest of the relief, which now would take place in darkness, he ordered Charlie Company to occupy Hill 118 with Able and directed Baker to dig in on a southern extension of the big ridge.[21]

Having relieved Fenton on Hill 118 before nightfall, Barrow enjoyed the opportunity to reconnoiter 1/5's area and to realize the tactical significance of Hills 80 and 85. When it became apparent that Company C would not arrive before dark, he radioed the battalion S–3 for permission to move his company to the twin peaks immediately, explaining that Charlie Company of 1/5 could remain in position no later than 2100. Since Hawkins had already decided against taking over too much unfamiliar ground after daylight, Major Bridges turned down the request. Thus, at 2100, with no relief in sight, the 5th Marines' unit withdrew from the two heights as ordered. Company C of 1/1 reached Hill 118 at 2200 and went into position with Barrow's outfit for the night. Unknown to the enemy, Hills 80 and 85 had become a no-man's-land.[22]

While the battalions of the 1st Marines settled down for the night in a three-mile arc facing western Yongdungpo, the North Korean commander within the town organized part of his garrison for two separate thrusts against the closing vise. In one case he would win by default; in the other he would see more of his limited resources go down the drain.

Just before dawn of 20 September, the Marines on Hill 118 were alerted by a furious clatter of small arms and automatic weapons far out to the east. Daylight disclosed that the enemy was "assaulting" Hills 80 and 85. When the North Koreans finally discovered that their objectives were unoccupied, they abruptly ceased firing, surged over both crests, and entrenched in about company strength. An attempt was made to extend the counterattack to Hill 118, but Companies A and C, backed by a flight of VMF–323, threw the Reds back with ease.[23]

During the early morning blackness which found the enemy filling the vacuum on Hills 80 and 85, a

stronger North Korean force—estimated at a battalion—marched out of Yongdungpo toward 2/1's positions astride the Inchon-Seoul Highway.[24] In the van of the Red column were five T–34 tanks preceded, oddly enough, by a truck loaded with ammunition. Other vehicles, laden with less sensitive supplies, were safely interspersed among the infantry in the long file.

It will be remembered that Companies D and F, the latter in the fore, occupied high ground positions parallel to and south of the highway. Farther back, Easy Company's line tied in at a right angle and extended to the north of the road. The troops of Fox Company, tense with anticipation in their advance deployment, heard the first distant sounds of clanking armor and racing engines sometime before 0400. The noise grew steadily louder until, at 0430, the shadows of the ammunition truck and T–34s passed beneath the Marine defenses and continued along the road toward Easy Company's lines. At the latter, Private Oliver O'Neil, Jr., rose from behind his machine gun and shouted a challenge to the truck, which by this time was well out in front of the enemy tanks. O'Neil was cut down by automatic fire in answer, and pandemonium broke out on the highway.

Obviously the North Koreans had stumbled into it again, just as they had done at Ascom City. Two T–34s stopped short of Easy Company's front and opened up wildly. Companies D and F in turn exploded with machine guns, small arms, grenades, and mortars against the flank of the enemy column, while E fought to deny further passage along the road. Under the hail of fire from above, the Red soldiers milled about in panic and were slaughtered. Some flung themselves into roadside ditches, where the crowding only increased the odds of destruction. Others sought escape by scrambling up the slopes—into the very muzzles of Dog and Fox Company weapons.

The T–34s began to lurch back and forth like trapped animals. Owing either to mines laid by Marine engineers or a grenade thrown from above, the ammunition truck exploded in a brillant spectacle of pyrotechnics. In the midst of the furor, Private First Class Monegan moved across the hillside from Company F's front with his rocket launcher. Observing his progress against the backdrop of flames from the truck, his comrades either held or shifted their fire to protect him.

Monegan closed on the lead tank and wrecked it with one 3.5-inch projectile. Approaching the second T–34 under intense fire, he paused and took aim with imperturbability. Again his rocket connected with a roar, and the black hulk on the road turned into a blazing furnace. Silhouetted against the hillside, the Marine leveled his weapon at a third armored vehicle just as it was pivoting around to retreat. But at this moment an enemy machine gun found the mark, and Monegan—killer of tanks—fell dead.

Although the North Korean attack was thus smashed at the outset, fighting along the highway continued until daylight. In addition to the two T–34s destroyed, another was captured intact with its crew. The 11th Marines closed the "back door" of the highway with a curtain of high explosive, thereby sealing the fate of the Red battalion.

Dawn of 20 September revealed a scene of utter ruin across the Marine front. The highway was littered with burnt NKPA trucks, tanks, and equipment. Heaped on the road, in ditches, and along hillsides were 300 enemy dead.[25]

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Chapter 11. The Fight for Yongdungpo
Recapture of Hills 80 and 85

For the most part, fighting around Yongdungpo on 20 September was a contest of the giants. Supporting arms of both sides exchanged heavy blows, and the 1st Marines reported with business-like frankness that it was ". . . leveling the southern part of Yongdungpo, which is infested with enemy." North Korean mortars, tanks, and field pieces pumped hundreds of rounds out of positions in the center of town and the eastern outskirts. Marine planes and howitzers replied by smothering Red concentrations and emplacements with literally thousands of missiles of all types.

The 4th Battalion, 11th Marines, commanded by Major William McReynolds, fired 28 concentrations in the course of the day; and Lieutenant Colonel Merritt Adelman's 2d Battalion expended 1,656 rounds in 21 missions. It was the precision firing of these two units which had supported 2/1 so effectively during the pre-dawn counterattack.[26]

Battery C, 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battalion, FMF, moved to advance positions in the morning to increase the pressure on the Yongdungpo garrison. Land counterpart of the LSMRs which rocked the Inchon waterfront on D-day, this unit had seen little action to date, owing to the lack of M48 fuses for its missiles. Banking on substitute detonating devices (M51 for 105mm and 155mm Howitzer shells), First Lieutenant Eugene A. Bushe ordered his gunners to fire a test salvo of 24 rockets. No visible effect being noticeable from his OP, the battery commander then called for a full ripple of 144—enough high explosive to flatten a good portion of the town. Again the big missiles plowed into the target area with a dull thud, and Bushe withdrew his battery to the rear. The M48 fuses did not arrive until 28 September, with the result that the potent Marine rocket artillery was sidelined until the closing days of the operation.[27]

Colonel Puller's tactics during the bombardment on 20 September were designed to align the 1st Marines for the actual assault of Yongdungpo, planned for the next day. It was necessary to occupy in strength all the final approaches to the town, so that the full weight of the regiment could be brought to bear against the defending garrison. From left to right, therefore, the schedule of operations on the 20th was as follows: (1) 1st Battalion to seize Hills 80 and 85; (2) 3d Battalion to remain in position on Lookout Hill; and (3) 2d Battalion to advance to the first of two highway bridges which spanned branches of the Kalchon just outside of Yongdungpo.

These limited attacks would also provide time for the 32d Infantry to catch up on the right. The day's mission for the Army unit was to attack over a six-mile front and secure, among other objectives, towering Tongdok Mountain south of the MSR and two miles from Yongdungpo.[28]

Shortly after first light, Lieutenant Colonel Hawkins reached the crest of Hill 118 and established his OP. He was in time to see Able and Charlie Companies repulse disconnected Red elements moving on the Marine lines from Hills 80 and 85. While the battalion commander issued his order for the attack, Major William L. Bates, Jr., commander of 1/1's Weapons Company, set up his "supporting arms center" to cover the impending assault.[29]

Hawkins gave Company C the mission of taking Hills 80 and 85.[30] Deciding on a southerly approach, the company commander Captain Robert P. Wray ordered his 2d Platoon to lead off by clearing a village sprawled across the route to the lower peak. Second Lieutenant John N. Guild moved out at the head of the skirmishers and led them over 500 yards of intervening low ground. Nearing a knoll which topped the clump of thatched huts, the platoon came under heavy small-arms fire and was stalled.

Wray immediately committed the rest of his company in a two-pronged attack which wrapped around the

flanks of Guild's line and smashed through the North Korean resistance. After a hot fire fight, the surviving Reds fled to Hill 80, and Company C occupied the village and knoll by early afternoon. The executive officer, First Lieutenant James M. McGee, led a six-man patrol eastward to clean out a small nest of holdouts, while Wray reorganized the company for the assault on the twin caps.

Charlie Company's tactics in advancing on the enemy's southern flank were ideal from the standpoint of Weapons and Able Companies, which supported the attack from Hill 118. The two units could actually witness the progress of the assault troops across the 1st Battalion's front, so that mortars and machine guns at the base of fire had only to shift gradually leftward to support the Marine advance.

Late in the afternoon, Wray launched a double envelopment of Hill 80. Second Lieutenant Henry A. Commiskey led his 3d Platoon around to the right, and Second Lieutenant William A. Craven's 1st swung through the low ground on the left. A few huts concealing snipers were demolished by 3.5-inch rockets, but otherwise the Marines met little resistance as they moved over the crest of the objective early in the evening. With the first signs of darkness already in the sky, Wray lost no time in preparing for his third double envelopment of the day.

The remnants of the North Korean company were entrenched on the crest and forward slopes (facing the Marine attack) of Hill 85, obviously intent on making a determined stand. Anticipating Charlie Company's tactics, the Red leader had bent back both flanks to prevent encroachments on the sides or rear. Thus, though both Marine assault platoons swung out to stab at the enemy flanks, the Communist disposition actually relegated each maneuver to a separate frontal attack.

Craven's platoon and Charlie Company machine guns, under First Lieutenant Francis B. Carlon, covered the attackers from a base of fire on the northern slopes of Hill 80. Moving aggressively through a hail of bullets, the 2d Platoon on the left crossed the low ground and drove up the western incline of the objective. Almost to the top, Guild was grievously wounded by a machine-gun burst.

Click here to view map

On the right, Lieutenant Commiskey paved the way in the face of heavy resistance. Nearing the crest of Hill 85, the officer abruptly bounded ahead of his platoon and went over the top. He jumped into a machine-gun emplacement and was dispatching the last of five occupants when his lead skirmishers caught up with him. He ran forward again to clean out another North Korean position in a single-handed attack. By this time, the Reds on the eastern side of the hill had had enough. Those who still had hides to save pelted down the northern slopes in the direction of the mouth of the Kalchon River, where the stream was spanned by the now damaged bridge.

Guild's platoon, inspired by its leader who remained in action despite a mortal wound, gained the summit shortly after Commiskey's unit. Captain Wray, following closely behind, later described his meeting with Guild on the slope as follows:

"He stayed on his feet and turned toward where I was climbing 20 yards behind him. He dropped at my feet and made every effort to remain conscious long enough to tell me how his squads were attacking and pleading with me to keep them attacking. I called for a corpsman; he tried to refuse, saying that he had a wounded man who needed one more than he did."

Lieutenant Guild died shortly afterwards.

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Chapter 11. The Fight for Yongdungpo
1st Marines in Position

During the morning phase of Charlie Company's attack, Hawkins and the others on Hill 118 were racked by frustration of a type seldom experienced by Marines in the history of the Corps. It will be recalled that the ground between the Kimpo-Yongdungpo Highway and the Han River was not cleared in the course of 1/5's attack on Hills 80 and 85 on 19 September. Since the 5th Marines' unit had withdrawn to cross the Han at Haengju, and since Charlie Company of 1/1 had chosen a southern route in recapturing the twin heights, enemy bands in hiding along the river bank were unmolested. The potential danger in the area was not realized, however, until too late.

From Kimpo came a "weasel" of the 1st Signal Battalion, the crew calmly stringing wire into the 1st Marines' zone as the vehicle rattled along the highway. Just short of the Kalchon bridge, the little tractor struck a mine and was ambushed by a party of North Koreans. The power-packed Marine infantry on Hill 118, less than a thousand yards away, watched helplessly as the communications men were either killed or captured. No sooner had the Reds disappeared into the brush with two prisoners than a Marine truck, belonging to A/Engineers, cruised down the highway with four unsuspecting passengers. Captain Barrow ordered his troops to fire over the vehicle, hoping that the driver would hear the bullets in the air and turn back. But the truck continued on into the ambuscade, where it was stopped by an enemy fusilade.[31]

The engineers piled out and plunged into a rice paddy in an attempt to escape. Three of them made it. The fourth, Private First Class Clayton O. Edwards, was tracked down and captured. Although the Marine was out of ammunition and already wounded, one heroic warrior of the NKPA stepped forward and bayoneted him in the shoulder after he had surrendered. Edwards later escaped from a POW train fleeing before the UN drive into North Korea.

Not long after these incidents, Captain Richard F. Bland led Baker Company of 1/1 through the area and secured Hill 55 and the nearby villages on the bank of the Han. The North Koreans pulled out and crossed the Kalchon to join the Yongdungpo garrison.

With fighting going on to the right and left, 3/1 sat quietly on Lookout Hill during 20 September without suffering a casualty. An occasional break in the orange and black pall over Yongdungpo allowed the Marines a glimpse of the wrecked railroad and highway spans which once had bridged the Han to Seoul.

The ROK capital was still a long way off for the 1st Marines; and the 2d Battalion, now on the regimental right and in its sixth straight day of the assault, was more concerned with the immediate foreground. After smashing the Red attack in the morning of the 20th, Sutter's unit jumped off at 0645 against scattered resistance along the Inchon-Seoul Highway. The assault elements reached the bridge spanning the western branch of the Kalchon at 1230, and the battalion commander immediately ordered engineers to inspect the long concrete structure. It was reported to be in good enough condition to support M–26 tanks for the attack on Yongdungpo the next day.[32]

While the battalion dug in on the west side of the stream, the Marines eyed the 2,000-yard stretch of highway leading ahead to a second span, bridging the Kalchon's eastern branch at the very edge of the blazing town. A high ridge on the right of the road—technically in the 32d Infantry's zone of action—was a beehive of North Korean activity. Anticipating the effect of this commanding position on his attack the following day, Sutter contacted Lieutenant Colonel Charles M. Mount, USA, commanding the 2d Battalion of the 32d, for permission to shell the height. The Army officer approved the request at 1300, but more than *seven hours* elapsed before the necessary clearance filtered through 7th Division, X Corps, and 1st Marine Division to reach the 11th Marines.

When the howitzers finally opened up, darkness prevented effective observed fire from being delivered on the enemy strong point.[33]

Out of sight and earshot of 2/1 during 20 September, Colonel Charles E. Beauchamp's 32d Regiment, in its first day of actual combat, paid with seven killed and 36 wounded in taking Tongdok Mountain and part of "Copper Mine Hill." Using the Inchon-Anyang road as an MSR, the Army unit lost three tanks in a field of over 150 wooden box mines. Beauchamp himself narrowly escaped death or serious injury when his jeep struck one of the explosives, killing the driver and wounding a radio operator. By nightfall, the 32d was deployed far out on the right of the Marines on the Inchon-Seoul Highway; and the 31st Infantry, having landed at Inchon earlier in the day, went into position even farther southward.[34]

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Chapter 11. The Fight for Yongdungpo
Assault of Yongdungpo

There was no infantry action during the night of 20–21 September. Both sides were steeling themselves for the ordeal each knew would commence at dawn. The Red commander in Yongdungpo threw up formidable earthworks to block the approach over the Kalchon from Hills 80 and 85 in the northwest; and he concentrated a strong force between the two tributaries in the southwest. That edge of town facing due west, though most defensible, he left unguarded, with the result that a single Marine rifle company would hasten his demise.

Marine artillery thundered all night long, and the glare from flaming Yongdungpo rolled back the darkness in an ever broadening arc. Shortly after dawn, the Marines of Company B, 1st Battalion, threaded across the wreckage of the Kalchon bridge under cover of machine-gun, mortar, and tank fire from Hill 85. Reaching the eastern bank, the attackers swept over a knoll over-looking the Han on the left, which the North Koreans had left undefended. The assault inched forward toward the town, first through sporadic small arms resistance, then into a deadly cross-fire from several automatic weapons.[35]

Baker Company was now confronted by two dikes which the Reds had converted into a main line of resistance. One of the barriers paralleled the Han River north of Yongdungpo; the other ran the entire length of the western edge of town. Where they met to form a point facing the Kalchon bridge and the Marine advance, a reinforced company of North Koreans was deployed across each levee in strong, mutually supporting positions.

Captain Bland chose wisely in directing his attack against the northern dike alone. By this decision he not only kept his left flank and rear protected by the Han, but also maintained local superiority in numbers over the Reds immediately confronting him. Grinding slowly forward with heavy casualties, Company B rolled up the length of enemy entrenchments on the levee and pushed eastward 2,000 yards by afternoon. The Marines then formed a line with their backs to the Han and shot it out with the Communists on the second dike at a range of 500 yards. At this point the attack stalled, and the fight settled down to one of attrition. Casualties on both sides mounted rapidly under the ceaseless exchange of machine-gun, mortar, and tank fire.[36]

Part of Bland's difficulty owed to the random deployment of all opposing forces at this time, as indicated on the charts of the 11th Marines. Noting that Company B's positions were along the Han north of Yongdungpo, the artillerymen expressed reluctance to fire on the enemy-held dike to the "rear" in answer to Lieutenant Colonel Hawkins' repeated requests from his OP on Hill 85. It was a matter of the howitzers pointing generally north toward Seoul, while Bland's outfit, at the moment, was trying to head south. The misunderstanding was finally cleared up late in the afternoon, and Marine air joined the artillery in pounding the southern barrier. The Reds held stubbornly under the battering, and at darkness Hawkins sent Charlie and Weapons Companies across the bridge to form a perimeter with Baker for the night.[37]

The narrative will now switch to the action in the 2d Battalion zone, leaving the separate attack of Company A to be taken up in detail later.

Sutter's unit jumped off at 0630 on the 21st with Companies D and E in the assault. The infantry crossed the first bridge without incident, then fanned out to move on the second. It was no surprise when the North Koreans on the intermediate ridge to the right of the highway suddenly threw heavy fire across the Marine front, but it was disconcerting to Sutter that his calls for artillery fire met with the same delay as on the previous day. He therefore shelled the high ground with attached 4.2-inch mortars on his own initiative, before ordering Companies E and F to attack the enemy bastion.[38]

Meanwhile, Captain Welby Cronk led Company D forward on the left of the highway against a strongly

defended dike fronting the Kalchon's western branch. Progress was slow and casualties severe, but the Marines closed to within 100 yards of the barrier by noon. There they dug in and slugged it out, while the 2d and 3d Platoons of Charlie Company tanks alternated in ripping the Communist trenches with 90mm, delayed-action shells.

Heavy fighting continued on the right side of the road until evening. Companies E and F fought part way up the slopes of the ridge and suffered heavily during the close exchange with the Reds on the crest. Since the enemy was still in control of most of the high ground at dusk, Sutter ordered the assault units to withdraw into 2/1's zone and dig in with Dog Company. VMF–214 covered the hot disengagement—one of the most difficult of all tactics—under a masterful job of forward air controlling by First Lieutenant Norman Vining, Sutter's FAC. After bombing and rocketing from 75 to 100 yards beyond the Marine front, the Corsairs closed to within 30 yards for strafing runs to shield the retracting line of infantry.[39]

Click here to view map

The seventh straight day in the assault had cost the 2d Battalion 11 killed and 74 wounded, bringing its total casualties since D-Day to 28 KIA and 226 WIA. Partially because of these crippling statistics, Colonel Puller, at 1530 on the 21st, had committed 3/1 to the relief of the battle-weary outfit. The reserve battalion swung northeast from Lookout Hill to flank the enemy dike positions facing Company D from the eastern tributary. Crossing the Kalchon against light resistance, the attackers ran into trouble at the fortified levees fronting southwestern Yongdongpo.

After heavy machine guns of 3/1 bested a battery of Communist automatic weapons, Companies G and I, the latter on the right, attacked astride the stream branch. Progress was slow, but at a cost of 11 killed and 18 wounded, the Marines rolled up the heavily defended dike and reached the bridge entering the city. Darkness fell with the 3d Battalion entrenching to the north of the 2d, both units along the left side of the Inchon-Seoul Highway.[40]

To the south of the 1st Marines, the 32d Infantry met with considerable success during its attack over a mountainous nine-mile front. The 1st Battalion on the right mopped up Copper Mine Hill, then seized the high ground around Anyang against "light sniper fire." In the left of the Army zone and adjacent to the Marines, 2/32 took its objective south of Yongdungpo against light-to-moderate resistance. Thus, at a cost of two KIA, 28 WIA, and one MIA, the regiment succeeded in cutting the railroad and highway leading from Suwon to Seoul via Anyang and Yongdungpo. Difficulties in Marine-Army liaison and coordination throughout 21 September stemmed from the fact that neither realized the size of the gap between them. The map will show that the 32d's route of advance was planned to miss Yongdungpo by two miles, not even coming close to the NKPA strong point which gave the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, so much trouble.[41]

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Chapter 11. The Fight for Yongdungpo
Able Company on a Limb

With the coming of night on 21 September, there was grave apprehension in the 1st Marines over the fate of one rifle company. In the course of the day, the Reds had staved off major penetrations by two Marine battalions in the southwest and the better part of another in the northwest. Incredibly enough, one Marine unit of some 200 men had swept through the space in between and cleared the very heart of Yongdungpo; so that when darkness fell, the isolated force was anchored in the rear of the enemy, a good mile and a half beyond the closest friendly units.

Company A of the 1st Battalion had jumped off from below Hill 80 on the morning of the 21st, after Baker Company was slowed by the dike positions east of the Kalchon bridge. In committing the unit to an attack through a mile of open rice paddies, Lieutenant Colonel Hawkins was gambling with high stakes for surprise.[42]

Captain Barrow employed the classic approach-march formation. Forward on the left was Second Lieutenant John J. Swords' 3d Platoon; on the right front was the 2d, under Second Lieutenant Donald R. Jones. To the left rear was First Lieutenant William A. McClelland's 1st Platoon, with the dual mission of company reserve and flank guard. In the right rear were the 60mm mortars, a section of heavy machine guns of Weapons Company, and the assault squad. Light machine gun sections were attached to each rifle platoon, so that they could be employed to the front or flanks on a moment's notice. Barrow's six-foot, four-inch frame loomed between the two assault platoons.

To say that these Marines were tense and expectant as they plodded across the broad, flat expanse would be an understatement. Far off on the left and right, small arms crackled continuously at the bridge entrances to Yongdungpo. Marine planes were swooping down in the distance, the hollow eruptions of their ordnance adding to the incessant rumbling of artillery and mortars.

Almost hidden from view by the high grain stalks, Company A swept through the rice paddies against no opposition whatever. Its advance was rapid until the 3d Platoon was slowed by muck which marked the beginning of the Kalchon's bed. Heads craned eagerly to the front and flanks as progress dropped to a snail's pace for several minutes.

The crucial moment seemed certainly at hand when the assault line stepped forward from the concealment of the rice and waded into the stream, completely exposed to the wide bank and parallel dike beyond. Still, not an enemy shot was fired. Dripping mud and water, the green-clad figures in the van surged ashore and over the dike. The rest of the men followed, unbelieving, close behind.

Retaining the same tactical formation, ready to engage in any or all directions, Company A marched into Yongdungpo. The first buildings were 100 yards ahead of the levee. Barrow channeled his advance astride the main east-west street. Although buildings and dwellings were many, the layout was not dense; and the Marines were able to keep their ranks open and enjoy good all-around observation.

The place seemed empty and dead. By noon Able Company was several hundred yards within the town, its careful search of buildings and side streets having failed to uncover a flicker of enemy resistance. Barrow could tell from the din far out on either flank that he was well ahead (eastward) of Baker Company and the 2d Battalion. He radioed for instructions, and Hawkins told him to keep going.

Halfway through town, Barrow noted on his map that the Inchon-Seoul Highway was now converging on his right, so that it would meet the company's attack route just east of Yongdungpo. Because of the furious clatter along the stretch of highway out of sight on the southwest (2/1's fight), he ordered the reserve platoon to shift

from the left side to the right. No sooner had McClelland completed the move than his men spotted an enemy column advancing down the highway in the direction of 2/1's front. The Reds were chanting a spirited military air when the 3d Platoon opened up and cut the formation to ribbons.

Simultaneously, the two lead platoons began firing on individuals and small groups in the streets of eastern Yongdungpo. Astonished at the sight of a large Marine force in the very heart of their bastion, most of the North Koreans took to their heels. But there were other Reds "in the rear with the gear" who obviously did not recognize the attackers. After glancing curiously from distant streets, they went calmly about their business.

Swords' 3d Platoon barreled through town on the left of the street and broke into the open. A dike topped by a road lay across the Marine front, and the platoon leader led his men into a hasty defense on top. From this position they could cover the vast sand spit with its airfield and approaches to Seoul. Looking north, they observed a large body of enemy soldiers withdrawing from Baker Company's zone onto the spit. Light machine guns took the North Koreans under fire immediately, and the section of heavies sent forward by Barrow joined in shortly afterwards. Caught by surprise in the open, the Red outfit suffered heavy casualties before the survivors could fan out and disappear.

The rest of Company A moved up on the right of the 3d Platoon, occupying more of the dike and the junction with the Inchon-Seoul Highway. It was at this point that Company A—if it could hold the ground—had an opportunity to deal the Yongdungpo garrison a mortal blow. For the road junction turned out to be the enemy's supply center.

Across the intersection lay what appeared at first glance to be a huge coal pile. Actually it was a camouflaged mountain of ammunition. During a fire fight with a small group of North Koreans taking cover behind the explosives, one Marine set off the dump with a grenade. The whole countryside shook with the detonation, and the great cloud of smoke that shot into the air marked Able Company's isolated position for the rest of the 1st Marines on the outskirts of town.

While part of the unit dug in on the dike, the remainder inspected and cleared the area around the intersection. A five-story building on the near corner was jammed with captured U.S. Army medical supplies, field equipment, ammunition, and enemy ordnance. The Marines could not use the heavy caliber ammo but they did help themselves to blood plasma for their wounded.

Throughout the afternoon, the Reds made repeated attempts to regain the vital area by throwing small assault parties against Able Company from the south. Each attack was smashed, and darkness found the Marines firmly entrenched on the dike, hoping only that their limited supply of ammunition would last throughout the night. A weak SCR300 battery prevented further communications with the battalion CP.

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Chapter 11. The Fight for Yongdungpo
Yongdungpo Secured

If the Marine Corps Schools ever enlarges its varied curriculum to include "The Defense of a Dike," Captain Barrow's tactical disposition on the night of 21–22 September 1950 can be taken as a unique precedent. Able Company's commander chose to defend a 100-yard stretch of the levee just north of the intersection. Here the macadam road ran about 25 feet above ground level, and the incline on either side sloped gently. The Marines staggered their foxholes alongside, some high on the slope, others low. Machine guns and BARs were emplaced along the shoulders at the top, so that automatic fire could be directed in volume in any direction. Since all of their ammunition had been fired during the afternoon counterattacks, the 60mm mortar crews laid aside their tubes and went into the line as infantry.[43]

Company A's perimeter for the night thus had the shape of a long sausage, with the 3d Platoon in an arc at the northern end, the 1st defending the west side, and the 2d in position on the east. From their foxholes on the top and sides of the levee, the Marines commanded the sand spit, the road on the dike, Yongdungpo's eastern exits, and the vital intersection with the Inchon-Seoul Highway.

Fortunately, they had dug their holes deep. At dusk came the telltale rattling, revving, and clanking from the direction of 2/1's front; and five unescorted T–34s loomed on the Inchon-Seoul Highway, headed toward the intersection. They turned left just short of the crossroads and proceeded in column along a street that paralleled Company A's dike.

The Marines on the levee crouched low in their holes. Cruising majestically like a file of battleships, the tank column cut loose with a hail of machine-gun fire and salvoes of 85mm shells at a range of 30 yards. Able Company's rocket gunners, whose total experience with the 3.5-inch launcher was limited to the firing of a few practice rounds, popped up from their holes and let fly. One of the tanks exploded in a convulsion of flame and smoke, its turret twisted askew as though some giant hand had torn the steel cap from the body.

The other four tanks continued to the end of the perimeter, then reversed course past the Marine line a second time, pumping a steady stream of steel into the western slope of the dike. Reaching their starting point at the Inchon-Seoul Highway, they turned back and made another round trip, with Marine rocket fire damaging two more vehicles and sending them limping off the field. The remaining pair, upon completing the second circuit, again reversed course and made a final pass—the fifth—on the Marine lines. Clearing the perimeter, they rumbled into town and disappeared.

Click here to view map

Fantastic as it may seem, Company A sustained a single casualty, a concussion case, during the half hour of sustained heavy caliber pounding at pistol ranges. Tremendous muzzle velocity had embedded the 85mm, armor-piercing shells deep in the slope of the dike in the split second before each explosion; and Marine foxholes proved to be sufficient protection against the raking machine-gun fire.

Between 1900 and 2100 it was relatively quiet. McClelland's platoon, facing town, killed a few Reds attempting to remove stores from the five-story building. Then the long expected report reached Barrow by sound-power telephone: Swords' platoon, manning the northern arc of the perimeter, could hear a large enemy force approaching its front.

The counterattack hit shortly after 2100. Transmitting a running account of the sharp fire fight by phone, Swords assured his company commander that he was "having no trouble." After 15 minutes of failure, the Reds withdrew for a breather. They struck in the same place half an hour later and were thrown back again, despite any

inspiration derived from a display of multi-colored flares and wild cries of “banzai.”

By midnight, the 3d Platoon had withstood five such onslaughts, each appearing to be in about company strength. Before the last attack, a captive Red officer escaped from Company A’s POW “compound” east of the dike and ran northward into the blackness, shouting repeatedly, according to Barrow’s ROK interpreter, “Don’t attack any more! They’re too strong for you!”

Apparently his advice was heeded, much to the relief of the Marines, whose ammunition supply was becoming dangerously low. At midnight, following the enemy’s fifth unsuccessful attempt against Swords’ position, the fight for Yongdungpo came to an end for the 1st Marines. There was scattered firing throughout the night, but the North Koreans, denied access to their vital supplies, quickly withered on the vine.

At dawn, Company A counted 275 dead and 50 automatic weapons around its perimeter, principally in front of the 3d Platoon. The four T–34 tanks which had withdrawn into town were found abandoned.

The 1st and 3d Battalions attacked at 0800 against negligible resistance and converged on the isolated unit, making the historic link-up in short order. The enemy was gone, except for the hundreds of dead that littered the borders of the city. He had left behind practically all of his heavy armament, equipment, and supplies.

Continuing the advance on the 22d, the 1st Marines surged eastward beyond Yongdungpo, then spent the remainder of the day reorganizing and patrolling. On the 23d, the regiment moved almost unopposed to the bank of the Han, 3/1 seizing Hill 108 which dominated the battered bridges. Late that night Puller received orders to effect the river-crossing early next morning.

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Chapter 12. Main Line of Resistance

DURING THE NIGHT of 21–22 September an NKPA shell crashed through the roof of the native house serving as CP of the 5th Marines northwest of Seoul. The explosion wounded Lieutenant Colonel Hays so severely that the regimental executive officer required immediate evacuation. Lieutenant Colonel Murray, who escaped with a slight cut, directed that the CP be moved to a cave on the reverse slope of a hill.

Thus did the enemy serve notice that henceforward the battle for the northwest approaches to Seoul would be furiously contested. Yongdungpo had been taken by the 1st Marines only after a grim, three-day struggle in which the Korean Reds made their first real stand as distinguished from delaying operations. And now it was the turn of the 5th Marines to meet opposition such as that regiment had not encountered since D-day.

Two new NKPA units had much to do with the sudden stiffening of resistance. One was the 78th Independent Regiment, commanded by Colonel Pak Han Lin. This unit, numbering about 2,000 recruits in July, was organized into three battalions of infantry supported by medical, motorcycle, weapons, reconnaissance, mortar and 76mm gun companies, and an engineer platoon.

Another recent arrival which won the respect of the Marines for rugged fighting qualities was the 25th Brigade of 4,000 to 5,000 troops. Commanded by Major General Wol Ki Chan, who had reportedly studied in Russia in 1947, the unit was made up of four heavy weapons battalions and an infantry battalion in addition to engineer, 120mm mortar, heavy artillery, and brigade artillery battalions.[1]

It was literally a fight to the death for these two NKPA outfits, which were all but wiped out of existence by the Marines of RCT-5 during the battle for Seoul. But while they lasted, the 78th Regiment and 25th Brigade put up a determined and at times desperate resistance in hill country well adapted to defense.

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Chapter 12. Main Line of Resistance
Three Hills Designated 105

The grapple for the northwest approaches to Seoul began in deadly earnest at 0700 on the morning of 22 September. From north to south, the three assault battalions of the reinforced 5th Marines were the 3d on the left, the 1st KMC in the center, and the 1st on the right. They were jumping off from the high ground about three miles southeast of Haengju along a line bounded by Hill 216 on the north, 104 in the center, and 68 on the south.

Misunderstandings in regard to routes and unit boundaries were made inevitable by maps disagreeing as to place names and heights of ridges. Added to the confusion was the fact that each battalion zone had a Hill 105 as one of its final objectives. (Staff officers played safe by designating them 105–N, 105–C, and 105–S to indicate north, central and south.)

Ahead of the Marines lay a hill complex which constituted a great natural bastion of interlocking heights and fields of fire. Spurs and defiles leading from one ridge to another enabled NKPA troops to move up in concealment and launch counterattacks in the most unexpected quarters.

Casualties of the next three days were the heaviest for a comparable period that RCT–5 had suffered in Korea. Added to previous totals, it meant that 17 of the original 18 platoon leaders were killed or wounded in a 50-day period, and five of the six company commanders who landed with the Brigade.[2]

Grim as the outlook was, the Marines of the 2d Battalion enjoyed a sideshow on the eve of battle when Sergeant James I. Higgins and a companion made a prize of an enemy locomotive. Knowing nothing about operating it, they found a simple but effective solution by firing up and opening throttles or depressing levers until the gauges were at the halfway mark. This policy of moderation led to success. The locomotive took off with ponderous docility, and Higgins managed to bring it to a safe stop near the regimental CP. His exploit was not applauded, however, by supply officers taking alarm from the dense clouds pouring out of the smokestack. They did not relish the idea of providing enemy artillery with a target marker, visible for miles, in an area full of exposed Marine ammunition. As a result of their anxiety, Higgins was promptly invited to keep rolling until he reached the rear.[3]

The 2d Battalion remained in reserve while the 1st KMC Battalion jumped off in the center from Hill 104. Heavy resistance was met immediately. In fact, NKPA detachments infiltrated all the way to Hill 104 itself, though it had been secured by 3/5 the previous afternoon. They poured small-arms fire into KMCs already taking a pounding from mortar and artillery fire, and the battalion was held up until the high ground to the front could be cleared by artillery and air strikes.[4]

On the left, 3/5 also ran into trouble after deceptively easy progress at first. At 0700 all three companies jumped off from Hill 216, secured by Item Company the day before. The new objective, as directed by 5th Marines' Operations Order 24-50, was Hill 296.

This height was reported by How Company as taken at 0945. It was not realized at the time that Hill 296 was actually the bastion of the Red Korean defense complex northwest of Seoul if its three southern spurs were considered. Attached to the main land mass like the roots of an ulcerated molar were Hills 56, 88, and 105–N, with 105–C, 72, and 105–S describing an arc to the southward. Nearly all of these positions would have to be reduced before the road could be opened to Seoul.

Only long-range small-arms fire from Hill 338 was encountered by How Company at the outset, but enemy pressure steadily increased from the southern spurs of 296. An NKPA counterattack in estimated company strength was repulsed with heavy enemy losses, including some 40 prisoners, by Marine riflemen supported by

tanks. Communist pressure was soon renewed, however, with How Company receiving heavy small-arms, automatic, AT, and mortar fire.

Patrols from the other two companies, ranging to the northeast of Hill 216 in the early afternoon, met determined opposition. A reinforced rifle platoon of Item Company encountered an NKPA force, in estimated company strength, defending the village of Nokpon-ni. During the ensuing fight the Marines lost two men killed and 11 wounded. Action was broken off at dusk, when the 3d Battalion received oral orders to defend against an enemy infiltrating from the south, southeast, and northeast in attempts to regain lost ground.

The fight for Hill 296 had only begun.[5]

South of the railroad, 1/5 had about 2,000 yards to cover to its objective, Hill 105–S. The battalion plan of maneuver called for Baker Company to deliver fire support while Able passed through Charlie and advanced to the base of the hill. Meanwhile, Charlie was to envelop the objective from the right. When the three Able platoons moved into position, they were pinned down by enemy automatic fire from the forward slope of 105–S. First Lieutenant Joseph A. Schimmenti of 3/A and his men had a grim reminder of American reverses earlier in the war when they found a 50–caliber machine gun and ammunition of U.S. manufacture which the enemy had abandoned.[6]

Schimmenti was severely wounded and First Lieutenant Nathaniel F. Mann, Jr., killed before Able Company won a foothold on the lower slopes of 105–S. It took until 1500 for Charlie Company, supported by a machine gun section, to complete its wide swing and close in on the right of the enemy's positions. Baker Company passed through Able meanwhile and attacked the forward slopes. At 1720, after an intense mortar, air, and artillery preparation, the 1st Battalion needed only 15 minutes in which to secure the objective. The three companies had taken losses of 12 killed and 31 wounded during the day.[7]

Close air support was provided for RCT–5 by the MAG–33 squadrons which had begun tactical operations at Kimpo on the 20th. Although they were still in process of moving to the airfield from Japanese bases, VMF–212 and VMF(N)–542 flew strikes in support of all three assault battalions. Of the two carrier-based squadrons, VMF–323 almost doubled its usual number of daily missions on 22 September.[8]

Click here to view map

Just before nightfall, Lieutenant Colonel Murray directed 1/5 to pull back to Hill 68 with one company while holding Hill 105–S with the other two. This shift was made necessary by the fact that the KMCs had been compelled to withdraw to Hill 104, their starting point. As a consequence, the center of the line was more than 1,000 yards in the rear of the battalions on the right and left. The company on Hill 68 was to provide covering fires in the morning, therefore, when the KMC battalion would renew its attack in an effort to regain lost ground.

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Chapter 12. Main Line of Resistance
RCT-7 North of the Han

On D-plus 8 the 1st Marine Division had its third rifle regiment in line for the first time. OpnO 9–50, issued at 1200 on 23 September, directed the 7th Marines (less 2d Battalion) to cross the Han into a zone of action in the rear of the 5th Marines.

In response to verbal instructions and a fragmentary warning order the day before, the regimental headquarters and 3d Battalion crossed late on the morning of the 23d. Colonel Litzenberg set up his CP on the north bank at 1710, and his men had their first contact with the enemy the following morning. A 3d Battalion patrol ranging to the north of the battalion zone of action encountered an estimated 200 NKPA troops, and Marine air and artillery supported a successful attack.[9]

Division orders called for the relief of 2/7 on the 24th in the area northwest of Kimpo by the 2d Battalion of the 187th Airborne RCT, USA. The Marine unit was directed to cross the Han that afternoon, followed by the 1st Battalion, which had completed unloading at Inchon.

It had been decided by the Division command and staff to give the 7th Marines time for shaking down instead of committing the newcomers immediately to the attack on Seoul. The regiment was assigned a series of five objectives along a ridgeline extending from the ferry crossing at Haengju on a gentle arc to a point north of the city. Protecting the north flank and rear of the 5th Marines was a primary mission, and Colonel Litzenberg was also directed to prevent the escape of the enemy to the northward.[10]

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Chapter 12. Main Line of Resistance
Attack Continued by RCT-5

On the morning of the 23d the 1st KMC Battalion was directed to attack from Hill 104 at 0700 to straighten out the line. The 1st and 3d Battalions of the 5th Marines were to remain in position and assist the advance by fire.

Heavy and immediate resistance was encountered from NKPA troops dug in on Hill 56. Although the KMCs made a valiant effort, they were soon stopped cold. Only slight gains resulted at an excessive cost in casualties from artillery, mortar, and automatic weapons fire.[11]

Lieutenant Colonel Roise moved his CP forward at 1300 to the western base of Hill 104. While his 2d Battalion assembled under cover of that height, he conferred with Lieutenant Colonel Murray after receiving orders to pass through the KMCs and continue the attack on Hill 56. Both officers realized the advantages of swinging around to hit the enemy from the left after approaching along the low ground. But it was already midafternoon and this movement could not be completed before darkness. The only alternative was a line-buck in the center if Hill 56 was to be taken that day. And since the line had to be stabilized and the KMCs pulled back in reserve to give the regimental defense some depth, Murray and Roise agreed that the situation called for a frontal assault without delay.[12]

At this stage the Marine officers did not realize that Hill 56 was part of the enemy's main line of resistance. It seemed logical to them that he would make his final stand on the next ridgeline, crowned with Hills 105–C and 105–N. As for the repulses suffered by the KMCs, it was a logical assumption that their inexperience had been a contributing factor. In view of these circumstances, a brief artillery preparation and the support of a platoon of tanks seemed sufficient when Companies D and F attacked and E contributed fires from the eastern slopes of Hill 104.[13]

Captain Peters' Fox Company was to lead off on the right, south of the railroad, and seize the portion of the objective below the railroad tunnel. From this high ground, his men could then support First Lieutenant H. J. Smith's Dog Company, moving forward under cover of a sunken road, to assault Hill 56 north of the tunnel. About 1,000 yards of rice paddies had to be crossed at the outset, and the expected support of the tanks in this low ground failed to materialize. The leading M–26 bogged down in a wide ditch which prevented the advance of the other four. One of them remained in the paddies to give supporting fires while three took a new route along the railroad tracks. Fox Company received increasingly heavy casualties meanwhile on the way across the low ground.

Peters ordered Second Lieutenant S. E. Sansing's mortar section forward, but the officer reported afterwards that his radio did not pick up the message. This left the three assault platoons without 60mm support as they climbed the lower slopes of Hill 56 and became heavily engaged with NKPA troops just below the railway tunnel.[14]

Apparently the Reds so overrated the weight of Company F's assault that they lost the topographical peak of Hill 56 by default. Whether their timely withdrawal from Dog Company's initial objective was meant to be permanent is not known, for they might have been caught flatfooted while shifting troops against Fox. Nevertheless, Company D emerged from the sunken road in a column of platoons and moved onto the high ground in its zone against negligible opposition.

Lieutenant Heck's 1st Platoon, according to plan, then pivoted leftward to spearhead the attack on the final objective, Smith's Ridge—named by the men after their company commander. Halfway into the connecting

saddle, the Marines were caught in the open by a heavy burst of fire from a large knoll on the southern tip of the wooded ridge. Heck fell mortally wounded, and his senior NCO, Staff Sergeant T. Albert Crowson, went down with a shattered leg. In the space of a few minutes, more than half of the exposed platoon became casualties.[15]

Startled by the intensity of enemy reaction from this unexpected quarter, Smith personally retrieved the battered 1st Platoon, while the 2d and 3d were clearing the northeastern slopes of Hill 56. Then, owing to the lateness of the hour, he deployed Company D defensively on that high ground for the night. There was no contact with Fox Company or any other friendly unit. This fact, coupled with the evidence of strong enemy positions on Smith's Ridge, led the company commander to reconsider carefully his plans for the postponed attack.[16]

Fox Company had meanwhile been heavily engaged along the eastern slopes of Hill 56 in the vicinity of the railway tunnel. Peters ordered Lieutenant Anderson to lead his 2d Platoon against the strong NKPA positions just beyond the tunnel. Only 27 men were left to fight it out at close quarters with an entrenched enemy estimated by the platoon leader at company strength. The Communist force was wiped out in exchanges of small-arms fire and grenades at murderous ranges, but the effort took a frightful toll of the 1st Platoon in KIA and WIA casualties. Only seven able-bodied men were left when Peters ordered a withdrawal to the company position south of the tunnel.[17]

All of Anderson's wounded and most of his dead were brought back, and he combined his remnants with the survivors of Lieutenant Nolan's 2d Platoon. A gap of about 50 yards separated their position from First Lieutenant Albert F. Belbusti's isolated 3d Platoon as Fox Company dug in for the night.[18]

No fault could be found with the over-all plan of attack, providing as it did for each assault company to seize ground from which it could support the advance of the other. But as darkness approached, it became evident that the 2d Battalion had bargained for more North Korean real estate than it could handle. The two isolated companies had no choice but to cling desperately to their scorched holdings while organizing to meet an expected NKPA counterattack.

Although the other two battalions of the 5th Marines had defensive missions on 23 September, enemy threats and encroachments kept them occupied. On Hill 296, in the zone of 3/5, Weapons Company took a good deal of satisfaction in firing a captured NKPA howitzer to break up hostile troop concentrations in the vicinity of Nokpon-ni. How Company remained in contact with the enemy all day, supported by 50-caliber and 90mm fires from Marine tanks.[19]

Click here to view map

It was in the How Company zone that Taplett's men first made the acquaintance of "Fireproof Phil." This was the name applied to a gigantic NKPA officer, towering head and shoulders over his troops, who exposed himself with contempt for Marine bullets. Not only his burly build but his light complexion gave some of the Marines the conviction that he was Russian. At any rate, Fireproof Phil was both fearless and lucky. Machine gun bullets and mortar rounds seemed to bounce off his frame. Finally, the tanks paid the honor of making him the special target of 90mm ammunition, and still Fireproof Phil always had the benefit of a minor miracle at the last moment.[20]

Combat leadership by enemy officers and NCOs was outstanding in the operations north of Seoul. On Hill 105–S the 1st Battalion came under pressure all day on 23 September. Movement was impossible for the men of Baker and Charlie Companies, and supplies of water, food, and ammunition had to wait for darkness. Enemy smoke pots created a haze restricting air activities, but it did not prevent a timely strike flown by Lieutenant Colonel Lischeid and five planes of VMF–214 to break up a threatened enemy counterattack on Hill 105–S. This was one of six close support missions completed on the 23d by that squadron in the zone of RCT–5.[21]

Why the enemy did not launch a counterattack that night against the hard-hit assault companies of the 2d Battalion is one of the mysteries of the war. But the weary Marines on the slope of Hill 56 attributed their respite to effective and unremitting artillery support. All night long the howitzers of the 11th Marines lit up the night sky

like heat lightning in the rear and crashed like thunder in front as they scourged the NKPA positions.

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Chapter 12. Main Line of Resistance
Modified Plan of Corps Attack

Up to this time the Corps plan of attack had called for the 1st Marines to clear the south bank of the Han and cross in the vicinity of Yongdungpo to join the 5th Marines in an assault on Seoul from the west and southwest. In view of the location of the boundary between the 1st Marines and the 7th Infantry Division, this meant that the Army troops would not participate in the attack on the city.

General Almond had already made it plain in conversations with General Smith that it was highly desirable to take Seoul by 25 September as GHQ wished to announce the liberation just three months to the day after the NKPA invasion.

The subject came up again during a conference at Corps Headquarters on 23 September. Almond proposed that Smith send RCT–1 around to attack Seoul from the southeast while RCT–5 continued its assault from the northwest. This plan struck the Corps commander as promising to maneuver the enemy out of the city sooner than the attack as formerly conceived.

Smith replied that the NKPA forces defending Seoul had proved to be much stronger than had been expected. He said he was convinced that the enemy would put up a fight from street to street regardless of any flanking maneuvers. The Marine general added that the fierce opposition met by RCT–5 had demonstrated that the western approaches to Seoul were too much for one regiment to handle, and he urged that no change be made in the original plan of crossing RCT–1 northwest of Yongdungpo to aid the attack. This plan, Smith asserted, would offer the advantage of keeping the 1st Marine Division together; for when the 1st and 5th Marines had penetrated well into the city, the 7th Marines could be brought around from the northwest to deliver the *coup de grace*.[22]

Differences between commanders are not remarkable, and it is noteworthy that Corps and Division usually managed in the Inchon-Seoul operation to reach an acceptable solution. Such was the case when General Almond reconsidered on the 23d and agreed to allow the 1st Marines to cross northwest of Yongdungpo, as originally planned, and take part in a two-regiment attack on Seoul from the west and southwest. In place of the 1st Marines, the 32d Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division was to cross the Han and enter Seoul from the southeast. Amphibian tractors for the operation would be furnished by the 1st Marine Division.

Revised 1st Marine Division plans called for RCT–1 to take position on the right flank of RCT–5 after the crossing, then pivot to the northeast and continue the attack through the heart of the city. RCT–7 (less one battalion in Division reserve) would have the mission of advancing across the northern approaches to protect the left flank and prevent the enemy from escaping while RCT–5 sliced through the western edge of the built-up area. Thus the burden of capturing Seoul fell chiefly upon Colonel Puller’s regiment.

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Chapter 12. Main Line of Resistance
Climax of the Marine Assault

As the eastern sky turned gray on the Saturday morning of 24 September, the men on the firing line northwest of Seoul knew that the time had come. They knew with the instinct of battle-wise troops that supporting arms had done all they could. Now it was up to the infantry to come to grips with the enemy. Supporting arms could only sue for victory and it was up to the infantry to collect.

The two companies of 2/5 were still clinging by their eyelashes to the scarred slopes of Hill 56. All three of the Company F platoon leaders, Nolan, Anderson, and Belbusti were carrying on in spite of wounds. Corporal Welden D. Harris, who had killed three Red Koreans in hand-to-hand combat the day before, refused to be evacuated after a second wound.[23]

The survivors of Captain Peters' outfit could not say too much in praise of the support given continuously throughout the night by Captain Arnold C. Hofstetter's Baker Battery of the 11th Marines. There were indications that several incipient NKPA counterattacks had been broken up during the night by the bombardment.

In the Dog Company zone the night had been relatively uneventful except for sniping, though the enemy could be heard digging new positions and bringing up ammunition.

The regimental scheme of maneuver, as outlined in OpnO 26–50, called for the 2d Battalion to continue the attack, with Hill 105–N as a final objective. This meant going up against practically the entire Hill 296 defense system, since Smith's Ridge and all of Hill 88 also remained to be seized. An estimated 2,500 enemy troops, well supported by automatic weapons, mortars, and artillery were defending every foot of defensible ground in front of the two thinned companies of 2/5.

It was intended that 3/5 should assist by attacking down the principal eastern spur of 296 to outflank the enemy and contribute supporting fires. Taplett's men were to be relieved in gradual stages on Hills 216 and 296 by elements of the 1st Battalion. As a preliminary, Newton was to send out a patrol to secure a portion of the river bank on the right flank of Hill 105–S in preparation for the crossing of the Han by the 1st Marines that morning. The reserve company of 1/5 would then commence the relief of the 3d Battalion while the 1st Battalion of the KMC Regiment remained in an assembly area in the rear of the 5th Marines and elements of the 7th Marines protected the left flank. Units of 1/5 were to continue to defend 105–S—seized and held at a total cost of 27 KIA and 72 WIA—until the crossing of the 1st Marines and the relief of 3/5 had been completed.[24]

Two small enemy counterattacks were repulsed without much trouble by elements of 3/5 on Hill 296 before dawn. Company H remained in contact with the enemy on the eastern slopes until 1550, when Company G moved around the right flank and a coordinated attack was launched against moderate NKPA artillery, mortar, and AT fires. Relief of Item Company and other 3/5 troops remaining on Hill 216 was completed by the 1st Battalion at 2000. Casualties of the 3d Battalion for the day were five killed and 33 wounded.[25]

The movements of these two battalions were subsidiary to the main attack launched by 2/5 on 24 September. H-hour at 0630 was preceded by a 20-minute artillery preparation and an air strike by VMF–323 planes. Lieutenant Colonel Roise planned to bring up Easy Company from reserve on Hill 104 and push it forward between Dog and Fox while those companies completed the seizure of Hill 56 and cleared the heavily wooded spur to the north known as Smith's Ridge, linking up with the main land mass of Hill 296. Easy Company would then take the lead in a battalion attack aimed at Hills 88 and 105–N as the final objectives.

Fox Company jumped off on the eastern slope of Hill 56. Nolan having been evacuated, Anderson led

what was left of the 2d and 3d Platoons—a total of some 20 riflemen. Belbusti commanded about the same number in the combined assault on the heavily defended finger of high ground east of the tunnel. Counting machine gunners, mortar-men, and troops bringing up ammunition, Fox Company had been reduced to fewer than 90 effectives, including wounded men refusing evacuation.

Corsairs of VMF–323 swooped down to drop 500-pound bombs less than a hundred yards in front of the attackers. Thanks to such close air support, Fox Company soon seized high ground which enabled the men to gain fire superiority.[26] At this point they took cover to make use of their advantage in an exchange of small-arms and automatic fire.

Dog Company, with two platoons still almost at full strength, had at least a dozen walking wounded who elected to keep on fighting. Ground mist and smoke from burning huts made for low visibility when the men jumped off in a column of platoons. The enemy opened up from Smith's Ridge as the Marines came within close range, pinning them down for two hours by concentrated and accurate artillery, mortar, AT, and automatic fire. One of the Marine tanks moving up the road in support was disabled by a mine and another became inoperative after a direct hit by an NKPA mortar shell on the motor hatch.[27]

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Chapter 12. Main Line of Resistance
The Epic of Dog Company

The large knob across the sunken road from Hill 56 remained to be taken before Dog Company completed its mission by advancing northward to clear the enemy from the wooded spine of Smith's Ridge. After the attack stalled with heavy casualties Lieutenant H. J. Smith ordered every available man into line, including personnel of company headquarters. Two Marine machine guns were kept in action at a cost of repeated casualties as First Lieutenant Karle Seydel made five consecutive trips under fire to bring up ammunition.

At some points the opposing forces were within long grenade-throwing distance. In these exchanges the Marines had a pronounced advantage because of stronger arms and the control developed by baseball.

Both sides attempted without success to break the deadlock by sending out detachments for flanking movements. Sergeant Robert Smith of McNaughton's platoon led a squad in a wide end sweep to the north, only to meet such fierce NKPA opposition that Smith and eight of his men were killed, including a corpsman. Only three wounded Marines ever got back.[28]

At 1000 the company commander sent the first of three messages to inform the battalion CP of his situation and request reinforcements. Roise could only reply that Easy Company, his reserve unit, was irrevocably committed to the attack on the final objectives. During the course of the battle the battalion commander himself was wounded by a mortar fragment but returned to the CP after having his arm dressed.[29]

When Second Lieutenant George Grimes' 60mm mortar section ran out of ammunition, the survivors fought as riflemen. Two platoon leaders, McNaughton and Lieutenant Howard, were wounded but continued in action.

About 1030, as the smoke and mist cleared, the howitzers of the 11th Marines and the 81mm mortars of 2/5 poured it into the enemy positions along the wooded ridge. The men on the firing line had another welcome assist when four Corsairs of VMF–323 roared in to make passes with bombs, rockets, and napalm.

Lieutenant Smith had 44 effectives left as he alerted his men for the assault. McNaughton, Seydel, Grimes, and First Lieutenant Karl Wirth were the other officers still on their feet. Platoons, sections, and squads had ceased to exist as units when the 44 men of Dog Company moved out of their foxholes and swarmed over the high ground that had held them up for more than two hours.

First impressions under more normal circumstances would have been shocking, for the position held more enemy dead and dying than the Marines had ever seen before in Korea. The entire area was honey-combed with foxholes, trenches, and bunkers, which had become the graves of Red Koreans cut down by Marine air and artillery. There they had died at their posts, crowded together so closely that every shell, bomb, or rocket had caused frightful carnage. The dead outnumbered the living, in fact, for the men of Dog Company met unexpectedly weak resistance from the few NKPA effectives who trusted to their weapons instead of their feet.[30]

Lieutenant Smith paused to regroup in a skirmish line for the final attack to clear the remainder of the ridge. Again the Marines seemed to prevail by sheer moral ascendancy as the assault went forward by leaps and bounds. But the victory was bought at the cost of the company commander's life, for Smith was killed at the head of his men.

Only five additional casualties were taken in this phase, but Marines dropped from exhaustion until McNaughton, as acting commander, had just 26 able-bodied men left at the finish. They were greeted by the strange spectacle of three enemy officers exhorting about 150 Red Koreans to retreat. No second invitation was

needed, and the Marines had a “turkey shoot” at the expense of foemen scurrying down the eastern and northern slopes in the direction of Seoul.[31]

Seydel was the only officer left unwounded when Dog Company notified the Battalion CP at 1300 that objectives had been secured. Fox Company reported about two hours later that it also had seized all assigned ground and was digging in after a mopping-up period.[32]

Casualties had not been heavy on the east side of the ridge as compared to the day before. The Company F attack consisted of two prolonged fire fights in which the Marines seized better positions and made good use of their advantage. After reaching the objective, they took cover and proceeded systematically to cut the enemy down to size with the support of VMF–214 planes. Captain Peters then sent both platoons forward to eliminate an NKPA force firing on them from a distance. Anderson’s men passed through a small built-up area and took cover behind a stone wall on the enemy’s flank. Opening fire on Communists about 300 yards away in an open field, they made short work of the opposition.[33]

Second Lieutenant Wiley J. Grigsby, the machine gun platoon leader, was killed in the day’s final Fox Company attack. Anderson’s composite platoon had three men killed and three wounded. Among the casualties was Corporal Harris, who received a mortal wound after twice refusing evacuation. He was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.[34]

The attack of Easy Company on Hill 105–N was delayed until after the other two companies took their objectives. At 1500, after moving up from battalion reserve, Jaskilka’s men ran into heavy enemy mortar and automatic fire soon after passing Hill 56. Two tanks of the 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Tank Battalion were knocked out, one by an AT mine and the other by a direct hit of a mortar shell. The remaining three tanks could not have continued in action except for the efforts of Staff Sergeant Stanley B. McPherson of Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion, who went ahead and cleared a path through the enemy mine field. By some miracle he survived the hail of NKPA fire unhurt, and the tanks went on to destroy two enemy AT guns and several machine gun emplacements.

The main enemy stronghold appeared to be Hill 72, a conical height located between Hills 105–N and 105–C and enfilading both of them. Not enough daylight remained on 24 September to mount an assault on this position, and the effort was put off until the following morning.[35]

Marine air had a busy day. Lieutenant Colonel Lischeid’s VMF–214, repeating the pattern of the day before, launched strikes of five aircraft every two hours in support of 2/5 attacks northwest of Seoul—a total of six missions. Not only was the city a flak-trap, but Marine pilots were flying Corsairs from which the armor around the air-cooler system had been removed by order of BuAer as a peacetime economy measure and never restored. As a consequence, NKPA small-arms fire was likely to hit the oil lines and send a machine down in flames.[36]

A 1st MAW record for combat sorties flown in a day by a single squadron was set on the 24th by VMF–212 with 12 flights and 46 sorties. Close support missions were about equally represented along with search and attack.[37]

Nightfall of this eventful day found 2/5 in possession of ground containing the most enemy dead in a small area ever seen in the Inchon-Seoul operation. Lieutenant Colonel Roise estimated that 1,500 NKPA bodies were left on Hill 56 and Smith’s Ridge, and the command of the 1st Marine Division put the figure at 1,750 enemy killed in the Hill 296 defenses.[38]

Survivors of Dog Company agreed that in spite of such frightful losses, the Red Koreans had enough able-bodied men left at the finish to make mincemeat of the 26 attackers who took Smith’s Ridge. But this Marine effort seemed to break the heart of enemy resistance in the Hill 296 defense complex, thus giving fresh proof of Napoleon’s famous dictum, “The moral is to the material in war as three to one.”

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Chapter 12. Main Line of Resistance
River Crossing of RCT–1

The battle for Seoul entered its final stage on the 24th with the river crossing of the 1st Marines. At first light a site about 2,000 yards southwest of Hill 105–S was cleared by Charlie Company of the 1st Engineer Battalion. Extensive mine-clearing operations at the crossing site area caused delays, and it was 0800 when reconnaissance and assault elements of 2/1 embarked in the LVTs of Company A, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion. Sutter's troops completed their crossing at 0945 against scattered and ineffectual fire, and made contact that afternoon on the north bank with elements of Company C, 5th Marines.[39]

For lack of a ferry, the 1st Marines had no tank support at the crossing site. Plans had been made to send Baker Company, 1st Tank Battalion, around by the Haengju ferry to join the infantry north of the river. As it worked out, however, the armor was delayed by a fight on the north bank which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Hill 79, about 4,000 yards from the crossing site, had been assigned to the 1st Marines by Division OpnO 10–50 as an objective. The 2d Battalion began a rapid advance toward this point after moving into position on the north bank abreast of the 5th Marines on a 1,500-yard front.

The 1st Battalion and Regimental Headquarters were next to cross. Puller ordered Hawkins and his men to drive eastward along the river and pass through the 2d Battalion. Since that unit was rapidly advancing at the time, one of the 1/1 staff officers looked dubious.

"You'll just have to advance a little faster," explained the veteran regimental commander.[40]

This proved to be a practical even if not exactly a school solution. On the march the 1st Battalion had the same experience as the 2d when small-arms and automatic fire came from Hill 105–S, supposedly secured by 1/5. Again the enemy was demonstrating his ability to hide out behind the Marine lines and make the most of his nuisance value. The 2d Battalion had two men killed and nine wounded by harassing fires, and the 1st suffered four casualties while passing through at 1300 to continue the attack.

Effective Marine artillery and 4.2-inch mortar fire supported the advance. After drawing out of range of Hill 105–S, Hawkins and his men encountered long-range small-arms fire, and roads into the city were mined. Hill 79 was located in the southwest section of Seoul itself, commanding a good view of the railroad marshaling yards and industrial area. After seizing the objective at 1500, the men celebrated by raising an American flag, thus precipitating a friendly race with the 5th Marines in exuberant ceremonies of this sort.

At 1515 the 3d Battalion was relieved by the Division of its mission of defending Hill 108, south of the wrecked Han bridges, and reverted to regimental control for a river crossing completed at 2000. On the north bank Ridge's outfit was thought to have pulled the last fangs of enemy resistance on Hill 105–S after his men in their turn came under fire from hidden opponents. Since this height dominated the new regimental CP, Company I was given the mission of outposting the height. A small but lively fire fight took place at dusk, and the Marines bagged ten prisoners at a cost of one man killed and two wounded.[41]

The 3d Battalion went into an assembly area near the crossing site for the night. Hawkins set up a perimeter defense on the objective, and the 2d Battalion occupied positions about 2,000 yards in the rear. A few probing attacks were received from enemy patrols on Hill 79, but Marine artillery and 4.2-inch mortars made short work of these attempts.

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Chapter 13. Seoul as a Battlefield

ON THE MORNING of 25 September 1950, with RCT–1 across the river, the 1st Marine Division was in a position for the first time since D-day to launch an attack of all three regiments abreast.

This was but one of the portents indicating that the days of the North Korean People's Army were numbered. Exactly three months had passed since the invasion of the Republic of Korea, and now the forces of the Communist puppet state were reeling under blows from two directions. While X Corps pounded inland to seize the NKPA main communications hub, the Eighth Army had smashed through the Pusan Perimeter and was driving northward to place the enemy between two fires.

The big break in South Korea came on 23 September. Up to that time, the NKPA 5th, 8th, 12th, and 15th Divisions had put up a stubborn resistance on the northern front of the Pusan Perimeter against six ROK divisions. Then the enemy crumpled and the ROKs began an advance (see map in end papers) that would take them 70 miles during the ensuing week.[1]

It was much the same story along the Kumchon-Taejon axis of the central front. There the U.S. I Corps, comprising the U.S. 24th Infantry and 1st Cavalry Divisions, the 1st ROK Division, and the British 27th Brigade, drove a deep salient into the line of the 1st, 3d, 13th, 10th, and 2d NKPA Divisions. UN gains of 35 miles were made from the 22d to the 25th.

In the south the U.S. 2d and 25th Divisions had hurled the NKPA 6th, 4th, 9th, and 7th Divisions back from the vicinity of Masan to the Chinju area. This gain of about 15 miles from 21 to 23 September was only a prelude as the two U.S. divisions pressed their advantage against a retreating enemy.[2]

The ultimate purpose of the joint Eighth Army and X Corps offensive must already have been made alarmingly apparent to NKPA generals. Not only was the Eighth Army salient along the Kumchon-Taejon axis being extended northwest, but a X Corps regiment was driving southeast toward a junction. This was the 31st Infantry of the 7th Infantry Division, which had been given the mission of following in the trace of the 32d, then wheeling southward toward the Suwon area to meet the elements of the 1st Cavalry Division spearheading the Eighth Army advance. Thus was the drawstring being rapidly pulled on the remnants of the invading NKPA army, soon to have its main routes of escape cut off by UN forces.

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Chapter 13. Seoul as a Battlefield
Two More River Crossings

After nearly a week of commanding a division in combat on both sides of an unbridged tidal river, Generals Smith and Craig now had a consolidated front north of the Han, with RCT–1 on the right, RCT–5 in the center, and RCT–7 on the left. The 11th Marines was in position on the south bank. The 1st, 3d, and 4th Battalions lined up northwest of Yongdungpo, while the 2d Battalion and the U.S. Army 96th Field Artillery emplaced to the east of that shattered suburb.[3]

Two more river crossings took place on 25 September. First, the 32d Infantry of the 7th Infantry Division moved to the north bank in accordance with the revised Corps plan. The Marine 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion (less Company B) and the Army's Company A, 56th Amphibian Tractor Battalion had to make a 25-mile round trip that night to bring the troops to an embarkation point about 5,000 yards east of the railroad bridge at Yongdungpo. Scattered enemy small-arms and artillery fire was received during the crossing, resulting in a few casualties among crews and soldiers. The LVTs took the troops about 200 yards inland, where they advanced on foot to their objectives on South Mountain without encountering any opposition other than long-range harassing fires.[4]

Later that same day the 17th ROK Regiment, under the control of the 7th Infantry Division, crossed in the LVTs. It was hoped by United Nations leaders that this unit, known as the Seoul Regiment, could take part in the liberation of the ROK capital. Apparently the second river crossing of the day alarmed the enemy, for it drew mortar and artillery fire in greater volume and accuracy than had been encountered before.

The support given to the two crossings by the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion was commended by General Barr in a letter to General Smith. "Despite long hours, loss of sleep, maintenance difficulties, and exposure to fire," said the commanding general of the 7th Infantry Division, "the personnel of your battalion performed so magnificently that I have nothing but praise to offer. If at any time in the future elements of this Division are called upon to cross a river, it is my sincere wish that they may be supported by the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion."[5]

From South Mountain the troops of the 32d Infantry looked down upon the city. They could not enter as yet because of the danger of interfering with the fires of the 1st and 5th Marines. But the 32d and the ROK unit were assigned a zone of action by Corps for an advance on the right of the Marines when the time came for a concerted effort.

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Chapter 13. Seoul as a Battlefield
Division Attack of 25 September

At 0700 on the 25th the 1st Marine Division launched the final phase of its attack on Seoul. The following objectives were assigned by Division OpnO 11–50:

RCT–1, with the 2d KMC Battalion attached, was to seize the part of Seoul within its zone of action and Objective ABLE, consisting of the high ground beyond the northeastern outskirts and about six miles from the jump-off positions. The zone of action, ranging from a mile to a mile and a half wide, carried the attack through the heart of the city, with South Mountain on the right and Ducksoo Palace on the left. Mopping-up operations were assigned to the KMCs, who would revert to their own regimental control afterwards.

RCT–5, with the Division Reconnaissance Company and 1st KMC Battalion attached, was to seize that part of Seoul within its zone of action and Objective BAKER, comprising the high ground overlooking the Seoul-Uijongbu road six miles from the line of departure. About a mile and a half wide, this zone included the northwest section of the city and the Government Palace, though the regiment would be operating in open country after an advance of about two miles. The KMCs were to be used for mopping up after RCT–5.

RCT–7 had the mission of protecting the left flank of the Division and seizing Objective CHARLIE—the high ground astride the Seoul-Kaesong road about six miles northwest of the center of Seoul in the vicinity of Chonsong-ni.

The KMC Regiment (less the 1st and 2d Battalions) was designated the division reserve. It was to be prepared to resume control of detached battalions and occupy Seoul.

The 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne RCT, with Special Operations Company attached, was to continue under operational control of the 1st Marine Division and protect the Corps left flank west and south of the river Hah.[6]

Following the artillery and air preparation, 3/5 and 2/5 jumped off abreast from left to right in an attack on the remaining defenses of the Hill 296 complex. Roise's objective was Hill 105–N. He was to be supported by fires from Taplett's men, attacking down the slopes of Hill 296 in an advance that would eventually pinch out the 2d Battalion, which would go into reserve. The 1st Battalion had completed its relief of 3d Battalion elements on Hills 216 and 296, thus placing it in position to move up on the left of the 3d.[7]

During the air strikes, VMF–214 had its second pilot fatality in two days when Lieutenant Colonel Lischeid was shot down in flames over the western edge of the city. His death brought to light a curious train of circumstances. It was recalled that the squadron had lost its first pilot on D-plus 2 when enemy fire killed Captain Simpson in plane No. 17. Two days later, while inspecting the new No. 17 on the flight deck of the *Sicily*, Technical Sergeant George C. Underwood received a mortal wound from an accidental discharge of the guns. Major Robert Floeck was flying this Corsair when he met his death on 23 September, but the machine was saved. And it was in plane No. 17 that the squadron commander crashed on the 25th. This was enough for Captain John H. Thach of the *Sicily*, and he issued an order banning the number forever on the carrier.[8]

Within two hours of Lischeid's death, two other squadron commanders were shot down, Lieutenant Colonel Wyczawski of VMF–212 and Lieutenant Colonel Volcansek of VMF(N)–542. Both escaped with moderate injuries, but in the space of a few minutes Volcansek had pressed his luck within a hair's breadth of the point of no return. Wounded, his plane badly damaged by enemy fire from Seoul, the squadron commander stubbornly led his flight in two more passes on Red positions. Approaching Kimpo, he was forced to keep the battered F7F–3N at almost 200 knots—twice the landing speed—to prevent its stalling.

There was no alternative but to bail out. When he jettisoned the canopy, his altimeter needle wavered around the 1,000-foot mark. Slipstreams from the twin engines pinned him to the cockpit as the plane continued losing altitude. In desperation he kicked violently at the stick with both feet. The aircraft lurched downward and Volcansek was thrown clear, the big tail of the machine missing him by inches as both plummeted earthward. A few seconds after the officer's chute opened and broke the fall, his feet touched earth a few miles northwest of Kimpo. Within 45 minutes he was aboard a helicopter rattling back to the airfield.[9]

It was the last day for the *Sicily* and VMF–214 in the Inchon-Seoul operation. That evening the CVE left the area for maintenance work, and the *Badoeng Strait* took over with VMF–323.

Easy Company led the attack of 2/5 on the 25th, with Dog on the left and Fox in reserve. The advance was supported by a platoon of tanks as well as fires from 3/5 on Hill 296. An effective artillery preparation aided the advance, but Captain Jaskilka's men were enfiladed by enemy mortar and automatic fire from Hill 72. Lieutenant Deptula's platoon led the assault and seized this position by 1335 after suffering heavily along the way. Lieutenant Seydel commanded the remnants of Dog Company which jumped off from Smith's Ridge and took Hill 88 at 1320.[10]

While Fox Company moved up to occupy Hill 72, an airstrike was called on Hill 105–N at 1310, and the artillery bombardment began 15 minutes later in preparation for the final assault by Easy Company. Second Lieutenants James W. Epley and Samuel L. Eddy, Jr., led the advance with their platoons, and Hill 105–N was reported as secured at 1545.

The 2d Battalion, with the exception of Deptula's platoon had met moderate opposition as compared with the last two days. It was in the zone of the 3d that the enemy put up his most stubborn resistance on 25 September. George and How Companies, the latter on the exposed left flank, led the attack on the remaining NKPA positions along the two southeastern spurs of Hill 296. Initial progress was slow, the attackers being harassed by long range fires from Hill 338 on the left and 105–N on the right. Lieutenant Colonel Murray directed the battalion to hold up until the situation around 105–N clarified. Resuming the attack against mounting resistance on the left, at 1435, the two companies reached their objectives two hours later and made contact with 2/5 on the right.[11]

Since 105–N capped the terminus of the lower of 3/5's two spurs, the whole length of the 1,000-yard projection was tagged with that number. This fact accounts for both Roise and Taplett reporting that they were in possession of the height. Actually, 2/5 was on 105–N, and George Company of 3/5 held an unnumbered peak to the north on the same ridge.[12]

Company H, in moving down the huge spur on the open left flank, had taken heavy casualties before reaching its objective, an intermediate peak. Just as Item Company was passing through to continue the attack at about 1700, the Marines were hit hard by a force of 200 Reds, who advanced under cover of accurate supporting fire. The close-in fire fight raged until after nightfall, and both depleted companies were hard-pressed to hold their own. Weakened by the loss of 100 dead, the enemy finally withdrew, thereby allowing Item Company to take over the front line while How reverted to battalion reserve.[13]

Thus, the 3d Battalion was now in position to pinch out the 2d on the morrow and to trace Item Company's spur into the very heart of Seoul. In preparation for the assault of Hill 338, Newton's 1st Battalion had shifted to the regimental left, where, with the Division Recon Company and the 1st KMC Battalion, it blocked the precipitous approaches to 216 and 296.

In the zone of the 7th Marines, the 2d Battalion had jumped off at 0630 and occupied Objective CHARLIE at 1215 without meeting resistance. Patrols of the 1st Battalion devoted the day to reconnoitering the area between RCT–7 and RCT–5, maintaining contact with both. The 3d Battalion was employed defensively along roads and trails in an arc around the ferry crossing site at Haengju.[14]

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Chapter 13. Seoul as a Battlefield
Tank Victory on Hill 105-S

In preparation for the attack of the 1st Marines, the 3d Battalion moved forward before daybreak in a column of companies. Passing eastward through the 2d Battalion, Ridge's men began a sharp wheel to the north. The 1st Battalion, on Hill 79, withdrew slightly, pivoting on its left flank in order to reorient its direction of attack and tie in with the 3d Battalion on the left.

Thus did RCT–1 carry out the Corps plan of maneuver on the morning of the 25th by making a 90-degree change of direction, after advancing eastward to Hill 79, and driving straight northward toward the heart of Seoul. It was necessary to jump off without tank support, however, since the assigned armor had been delayed by a fight on the way.

The 2d and 3d Platoons of Captain Bruce F. Williams' Baker Company, 1st Tank Battalion, had crossed the river at the Haengju ferry on the 24th. Reports of enemy mines along the railroad leading into Seoul caused Lieutenant Babe's 2d Platoon of Company C Engineers to be attached to the tanks. And since the column was to pass through the zone of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, a depleted infantry platoon of Company F was attached under the command of Staff Sergeant Arthur Farrington.

Owing to the shift of 1/5, a gap existed at this time between the zones of the 1st and 5th Marines; and the little task force entered this area with the infantry at the point and the engineers sandwiched between the tanks—a total of some 50 men supporting the armor. About half of the gap between the regiments had been safely traversed when the head of the column received a few scattered shots from the slope of Hill 105–S.

After being supposedly secured by 1/5, with a final mopping up by 3/1, this troublesome position now erupted into enemy small-arms fire that could only have come from at least a company-size pocket of resistance. Lieutenant Babe was severely wounded before he could carry out his plan of sending Farrington's platoon around to envelop the left flank of the NKPA troops entrenched on the slope. After Technical Sergeant Pasquale Paolino took command of the engineers, his men and the infantry platoon were so badly outnumbered that Captain Williams considered pulling them inside the tanks and withdrawing. Then it occurred to him to send a flame-thrower tank, escorted by Staff Sergeant Altaire's M–26, around the enemy's left flank by way of a primitive trail leading southward from the railway tracks.[15]

This maneuver had a spectacular success. The flame tank moved into a position enabling it to sear the length of the NKPA trenches with bursts of napalm. When the terrified Red Koreans fled down the slope, they became targets for the machine guns of Lieutenant Cummings' platoon of tanks.

Sergeants Paolino and Farrington had meanwhile been organizing an infantry and engineer base of small-arms fire from men taking cover along the railroad embankment and the lower slopes of the hill. The engineer NCO noticed that enemy grenades were being lobbed from three thatched huts below the NKPA trenches on the left flank. Closer inspection revealed the mouth of a cave, concealed by the third house and extending back into Hill 105–S.

Paolino, after getting Williams' permission to direct tank fire, banged on the hull of Cummings' M–26 and indicated the huts and mouth of the cave as targets. A few 90mm rounds destroyed the huts; but before Cummings could fire into the cave, eight or ten NKPA soldiers came out with upraised hands. When they were allowed to surrender unharmed, the example had an amazing effect as a seemingly endless file of enemy troops poured out of the cave. Altogether, 131 prisoners were taken, in addition to an estimated 150 killed, on a hill first reported secured two days before. Apparantly the undiscovered cave had provided a refuge for nearly 300 Red

Koreans.

Among the captives, as the Marines discovered later were two women in uniform who had evidently been armed. Because of the NKPA reputation for treachery, it was considered necessary to search them; but they were treated with respect and provided with garments more appropriate to their sex. In spite of the consideration shown them, the incident resulted in sensational articles in stateside publications after the women reached the rear and claimed mistreatment on the grounds that they were nurses.

Two wounded engineers and an infantry casualty were the price of the Marine success after a surprise encounter had been turned to the disadvantage of the enemy. Since the NKPA prisoners were more than double the numbers of the engineers and infantry, they were placed between two M–26s when the column resumed the march.

It was 1200 when Cummings reported to Colonel Puller at the intersection of the railroad and a boulevard with street car tracks leading into the heart of the city. The tanks took the lead, joining 3/1 in its fighting advance up both sides of the north-south boulevard. Enemy mines knocked out two of the M-26s, one of them being Cummings' tank, but both were retrieved in spite of heavy NKPA fire.

Successive road blocks consisting of earth-filled rice bags were stubbornly defended by enemy infantry supported by NKPA automatic, AT, and mortar fire from the roof tops. The Marines pressed forward methodically and by evening the 3d Battalion had penetrated about 2,000 yards into the city to occupy positions astride the streetcar line and on the western slopes of Hill 97. The 1st Battalion, on the high ground to the right, had advanced about 2,000 yards when both assault units tied in for the night with defensive positions on Hill 82. The 2d Battalion, as regimental reserve, deployed in the rear of the 1st to protect the right flank and rear.[16]

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Chapter 13. Seoul as a Battlefield
Night Attack Ordered by Corps

The battle for Seoul took a sudden and unexpected new turn at 2009 on the night of 25 September 1950 when the following X Corps flash (plain) message was received at the CP of the 1st Marine Division:

"Info addressee (X Corps TacAir Commander) reports enemy fleeing city of Seoul on road north of Uijongbu. . . He TacAir] is conducting heavy air attack and will continue same. You will push attack now to the limit of your objectives in order to insure maximum destruction of enemy forces. Signed Almond."[17]

The Division G–3 immediately called the Corps G–3 for corroboration. Colonel Bowser questioned the ability of night air observation to determine whether the movement out of the city consisted of urban refugees or enemy troops. He was informed, however, that the intention of Corps was for the attack to begin at once.

General Smith then called the X Corps chief of staff for confirmation, pointing out the inadvisability of attacking at night in an unfamiliar Oriental city of the size and complexity of Seoul, particularly as there was no indication of the enemy fleeing from the Division front. But General Ruffner replied that General Almond himself had dictated the message and it was to be executed without delay.[18]

General Smith gave the attack order to the commanding officers of the 1st and 5th Marines, directing them to coordinate their efforts and confine them to avenues of advance which could be identified at night. His order was receipted by the 1st Marines at 2205 and the 5th Marines at 2215 just a few hours after the NKPA counterattack hit the 3d Battalion of Murray's regiment.

While the two rifle regiments made preparations to jump off, the order was relayed to the 7th and 11th Marines. Colonel Puller coordinated hastily with the 5th Marines and supporting arms for an attack scheduled to begin at 0145 on 26 September, following a 15-minute artillery preparation.[19]

At 0138, deciding that the preparation was inadequate, he notified the assault battalions to "stand fast, preparatory fires to be repeated." A new jump-off time of 0200 was set, but at 0153 a dramatic interruption came in the form of a flash message from the 3d Battalion of the 1st Marines. Lieutenant Colonel Ridge reported that a heavy enemy attack, supported by tanks and self-propelled guns, was moving down the main avenue leading from the center of the city to the southwest in the zone of the 1st Marines.[20]

It was the enemy's misfortune that 3/1 had sent out a patrol of eight Marines and three natives under Corporal Charles E. Collins to make contact with a similar patrol from the 5th Marines. But at 0130 the clamor of a fire fight about 400 yards in front of 3/1 was followed by the return of members of the patrol who gave the alarm. Corporal Collins was still missing when Major Simmons heard the sound of tracked vehicles and was warned that two enemy tanks were approaching the George Company roadblock defended by heavy machine guns, 3.5-inch rocket launchers and 75mm recoilless guns.[21]

These weapons accounted for the destruction of one enemy tank and the hasty retreat of the other. The Division attack scheduled for 0200 was indefinitely postponed, of course, until 3/1, astride the principal avenue of approach, could deal with a large-scale enemy counter-attack launched by an estimated battalion of infantry and about 12 tanks supported by self-propelled guns and mortars. A terrific concentration of Marine artillery was called down upon an NKPA effort that reached its peak about 0230. High-angle Marine howitzer and 81mm mortar fire almost literally blasted the attacking column out of existence, and enemy infantry action was negligible afterwards.[22]

At 0315 the artillery liaison officer informed Puller that the three battalions of the 11th Marines must cease barrage fire at the penalty of burning out the tubes of their howitzers. During the comparative lull the T–34s

continued to attack at intervals until daybreak, and the last two tanks were killed at 0630.[23] About that time Corporal Collins returned safely after having been given up as dead. Exposed to friendly as well as enemy fire all night, he had made his way back through enemy-held areas in a disguise of Korean civilian garments.

POW interrogation and examination of the ground revealed that seven enemy tanks and two self-propelled guns were destroyed or disabled by Marine mines, rockets, mortars, or artillery. An estimated 475 to 500 infantry of the NKPA 25th Brigade had been killed and many more wounded, and the Marines took 83 prisoners at a relatively light cost in casualties.[24]

At 0500, as 3/1's fight in the city was tapering off, another Red force of battalion strength hit the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry, on South Mountain. A section of the Army unit's front was overrun, but a counter-attack restored the line by 0700. Finally driven from the ridge, the North Koreans left behind 394 dead and 174 prisoners, according to the regimental report.[25]

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Chapter 13. Seoul as a Battlefield
Entrapment of Dog Company, RCT–7

On the morning of 26 September it may have occurred to some of the Marines that yesterday's announcement by X Corps of the capture of Seoul was a bit premature. The lines of the Division remained where they were the night before, with only the difference that hundreds of enemy dead gave testimony of a busy night.

Division OpnO 12–50, isued at 1230 on the 26th, directed a continuation of the attack on Seoul, the principal change from the last order being the commitment of the 7th Marines. This regiment, augmented by the Division Recon Company and 5th KMC battalion, was given the mission of pinching out the 5th Marines about 1200 yards beyond the Government Palace and attacking abreast of the 1st Marines toward the northeast. In the 7th's zone of advance north of the city lay Objectives DOG (northern half of Hill 338), EASY (Hill 342), FOX (Hill 133), GEORGE (Hill 343), and BAKER (Hill 171)—as rugged an order of terrain as any outfit could be served. Puller's regiment, with the 2d KMC Battalion attached, would drive northward from Hills 97 and 82 in lower Seoul, clear the center of the city, then wheel to the right to take Objective ABLE, Hill 133 in the northeastern outskirts.

The 5th Marines, with the 1st KMC Battalion attached, was to support Litzenberg's attack until being pinched out, whereupon it had orders to assemble in Division reserve and relieve elements of the 7th Marines. The KMC Regiment was still under orders to resume control of its detached battalions for the occupation of Seoul. The 3d Battalion, however, was detached from the 1st Marine Division and ordered to report to the 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne RCT, for operational control in Kumpo Peninsula operations. Responsibility for the security of Kimpo Airfield now rested upon X Corps.[26]

Click here to view map

Thus, the Marine front prior to the assault formed a semicircle extending from the Kaesong Highway in the northwest to Hill 82 in the south, and the concave side faced Seoul like a giant scythe poised to mow down the last remnants of NKPA resistance.

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Colonel Litzenberg dispatched Dog Company of the 7th Marines southwest along the Kaesong Highway at 0630 on 26 September. The mission of the unit was to approach Seoul and make contact with the 5th Marines on the right. In the van of the column was the company machine gun officer, First Lieutenant William F. Goggin. For a while it seemed as though this untried unit was reaping the laurels earned by its battle-weary relatives of the 1st and 5th Marines, since hundreds of Koreans lined the highway to welcome the "victors" with resounding cheers.[27]

Progress was marked off rapidly in the absence of enemy resistance. The Marines passed through Hoengjeoe-ri, and by 0900 the great slopes of Hill 296 loomed up on the right and those of 338 on the left. Tracing the road through the narrow valley between, the company approached the Sodaemun Prison at the northwest corner of Seoul. Suddenly the column came under machine-gun fire from a high tower about 400 yards down the road. The initial burst caused several casualties, including Lieutenant Goggin, and the Marines quickly deployed on both sides of the road. Several more enemy machine-guns and rifles opened up from hillside positions only a hundred yards away. Since the throngs of well-wishers along the highway had prevented the use of flank guards, Company D was caught flatfooted in the low ground by the hail of lead.

After a few minutes, other Red weapons began firing from the lower slopes of Hills 296 and 338, directly to the flanks, and encirclement seemed imminent. Dog Company's commander, Captain Richard R. Breen,

reacted by ordering the 2d Platoon to attack the high ground around the prison. Simultaneously, First Lieutenant Paul P. Sartwell set up two 60mm mortars on the road and silenced one of the North Korean emplacements. Directing his crews from an exposed position, the young officer was wounded three times before finally being put out of action.

First Lieutenant Edward H. Seeburger closed on the prison with his 2d Platoon, while First Lieutenant Paul V. Mullaney's 1st ascended the slopes of Hill 338 on the left. The 3d, under First Lieutenant James D. Hammond, Jr., remained in position along the road. When the assault platoons were stopped on the high ground by stiffening resistance, Company D settled down in an elongated perimeter for a battle of survival. There was no artillery support, but Marine air assisted by pounding the crescent of Red positions.

The S–3 of the 7th Marines, Major Raymond V. Fridrich, radioed Captain Breen and asked about the situation. Though now wounded himself, Breen stated that he could hold his ground. A small tank-infantry column was dispatched from regiment to reach the beleaguered force with ammunition and supplies. By this time, however, the Reds had set up in the rear of Dog Company, and the relief force was turned back.

Faced with the bleak fact that it was now surrounded, Company D withdrew 1000 yards to a defensible road cut between Hills 296 and 338. The Marines completed the move with their wounded and dead at 1600. After being resupplied by air drop in their tight perimeter, they prepared grimly for an all-night stand.

Elsewhere in the 7th Marines' zone, 26 September would be remembered as much for exhausting marches and climbs as for enemy contacts. In the morning the 1st Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Davis, had taken over flank responsibility far to the northeast along the Kaesong highway, thereby relieving the 2d (less Company D) and 3d for the advance on Seoul. The 2d Battalion then moved out in trace of Dog Company, but according to plan veered leftward into the hills at Hoengjeoe-ri, one mile short of the ambuscade. While 2/7 reconnoitered the high ground above the village, Major Roach's 3d Battalion completed an eight-and-a-half-mile forced march to gain an assembly area in preparation for the assault of northern Hill 338.

At 1400 Fox and Easy Companies of 2/7 attacked eastward from the height above Hoengjeoe-ri to seize Hill 343. After an advance of 1000 yards, they were stopped cold by heavy fire from the direction of Hill 338 to the south. Lieutenant Colonel Hinkle ordered 2/7 to dig in short of the objective, since any further progress would only make his right more vulnerable to the enemy guns on the flank.

Click here to view map

Captain Thomas E. Cooney led Company G of 3/7 through Hoengjeoe-ri about 1700, circled the northern half of Hill 338, then launched a two-platoon assault on the crest. His Marines gained the north summit against no opposition, but Company H, led by Captain Nicholas L. Shields, was taken under fire in a draw to the right and held up on the slopes for the night.[28]

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Chapter 13. Seoul as a Battlefield
Last Fight on Hill 296

While the 7th Marines were fighting uphill on 26 September, the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, punched downward in a bitter contest to clear the last NKPA resistance from the Hill 296 complex. The attack was launched early in the morning after preparatory fires by artillery and 81mm mortars. Item Company on the left was to sweep the remainder of the giant spur which descended into the very heart of Seoul. George, upon jumping off from the ridge above Hill 105–N, would clear the low ground on Item's right.

Dissatisfied with the accuracy of the preparatory barrages, and underestimating the enemy's strength and determination, Captain McMullen called off supporting arms and based the success of his two-platoon assault on organic company weapons alone. No sooner had the Marines lunged downhill than great gaps were torn in the skirmish line by fire from swarms of North Koreans on the lower slopes. Both assault platoon leaders were wounded before an intermediate knoll was taken, and McMullen was forced to commit his reserve to bolster the hard-hit 3d Platoon on the right.

Continuing the attack under the personal leadership of its commander, the entire company waded into a maze of entrenchments manned by 200 enemy soldiers. In the close-in fighting that followed, the Reds were driven from their emplacements to seek cover farther down the spur. The depleted ranks of Item Company ground to a halt.

There followed a brief calm—abruptly shattered when the North Koreans rallied and counterattacked uphill against the company center. A wild melee enveloped the ridgeline, and the tactical situation gradually became a blur. Just as it seemed the Marines' hold on the lower spur would be pried loose, Lieutenant Williamson plowed into the tumult at the head of a small supply party. Ammunition distributed in the heat of the fighting tipped the scales in favor of the Marines, but not before McMullen was carried from the field as a result of his seventh battle wound in two wars.

The heavy fighting finally eased toward the close of the day. Although the last organized defenses of the enemy were smashed, Company I was too badly battered to seize the tip of the spur before nightfall. Abreast on the right, First Lieutenant Charles D. Mize led Company G into defensive positions after a day of inching forward against stubborn opposition in the low ground.[29]

Other units of the 5th Marines experienced little action during 3/5's day-long engagement. While the 2d Battalion mopped up in its zone south of the 3d, the 1st KMC Battalion moved into position between the latter and the Reconnaissance Company, now manning the topographical peak of Hill 296 in the northwest. To the rear of 3/5, the 1st Battalion enjoyed a quiet interlude in regimental reserve.

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Chapter 13. Seoul as a Battlefield
1st Marines in the Heart of Seoul

Early in the morning of 26 September, the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, moved out of reserve to pass through the 3d on the streetcar line and continue the attack northward into the center of Seoul. On the right of Puller's zone, 1/1 prepared to descend Hill 82 and clear the main railroad station and adjoining slopes of South Mountain, where increasing enemy activity had been noted below the positions of the 32d Infantry.[30]

Sutter's unit completed the passage of lines at 0900 and attacked along the boulevard with Fox and Easy Companies in the assault. Leading the advance up the street were the tanks of Baker Company, Cummings' M–26 in the van. The young officer's machine had proceeded only a few yards when it struck an American M6 mine, overlooked by Marine engineers while they were removing their hasty field of the previous night. Not only did the explosion wreck the tank, but it also caused several casualties among the infantry on either side.

The attack edged forward in the second day of the "Battle of the Barricades." Every 200–300 yards, fanatical Red detachments manned rice-bag barriers about eight feet high and five feet thick, stretching the whole width of the street. It fell to the M–26s to smash the emplacements and silence the NKPA antitank guns behind each one. Marine tank action in turn hinged on mine clearance by supporting engineers, who looked to flanking infantry for covering fire. Thus was a system of three-party teamwork developed and perfected during the roar of battle.

Aiding the Communists behind the barricades were other North Koreans who fired their rifles and submachine guns from roof tops, windows, and side streets. The Marine infantry, therefore, had to defend in every direction as it attacked to the front. Intense heat from burning buildings along the street added to the handicaps, and the constant discovery of South Korean civilians, including women and children, huddled in the rubble further strained the taut nerves of men who looked for trouble from every quarter.

It was a dirty, frustrating fight every yard of the way, perhaps best described by Puller himself, who reported that "progress was agonizingly slow." A principal deterrent to speed was the fact that all supporting tanks simultaneously expended their ammunition and fuel, so that all had to return to the rear for replenishment at the same time. During their absences from the fight, the infantry understandably chose to await their return rather than pay heavily in casualties by assaulting barricades with small arms alone.

At one point in the street battle, an enemy soldier darted from behind a building and charged a flame tank advancing behind two lead M–26s. Ignoring the Marine infantrymen, who gaped in disbelief, the North Korean hurled a huge satchel charge over the engine compartment of the armored vehicle, then escaped unharmed as the explosion rocked the area. The flame tank was wrecked, but the crew escaped serious injury with the assistance of supporting infantry. Apparently a suicide squad of NKPA demolitions men had been assigned the mission of destroying Marine armor in this fashion, for several other Red soldiers tried single-handed assaults shortly afterwards. The riflemen of 2/1 were alert for the later attempts, however, and the enemy fanatics were cut down before inflicting further damage.

The crucial period in the 2d Battalion's day-long fire fight came as Captain Goodwin C. Groff's Fox Company approached a street junction below Hill 97. It had been planned that this unit would advance through the intersection and continue along the streetcar line, while Company E, moving behind in column, veered off on the right branch. Enemy resistance against Fox's advance proved so fierce that Captain Norman R. Stanford by-passed the fork and threw Easy Company's weight in support of the other unit. The North Korean strong point crumbled under the two-company onslaught, but not before Stanford and several others were added to the casualty

rolls.[31]

By dark, 2/1 had measured off a hard-won gain of 1200 yards. Lieutenant Colonel Sutter ordered the battalion into defensive positions astride the boulevard a scant 100 yards from the tip of the ridge spur which was costing Item Company, 5th Marines, so dearly.

In the right half of Puller's zone on 26 September, the 1st Battalion stamped out a hornets' nest around the main railroad station, nestled at the foot of South Mountain.[32] Charlie Company had led off the early morning attack in the wake of a preparation by air, artillery, and mortars. After descending Hill 82 in a column of platoons, the company formed on line along a stream paralleling the rail yard. Then, at a signal from Captain Wray, the platoons crossed over, wheeled to the north, and advanced up the tracks by leaps and bounds.

Though the over-all intensity of enemy resistance in this quarter could be termed only moderate, the random deployment of the Reds among buildings and train cars made the going slow and costly for the Marines. After clearing out the yard, the attackers converged on the station house itself and drove the last North Koreans from the building during a sharp exchange. The interior of the bullet-pocked structure produced only a handful of enemy dead, but in one corner were heaped the bodies of several South Korean women and children. It was obvious that the latter had been gunned by Communist executioners, since their sheltered location within the building was ample protection against the small arms of the advancing Marines.

By darkness, Company C was in undisputed control of the railroad terminal, a patrol led by Lieutenant Carlon having mopped up the fringe area. To the right, Company A had secured the park promontory on the northwestern tip of South Mountain in conjunction with Baker Company's drive which included the nose jutting out below.

East of the 1st Marines, the 32d Infantry's zone was the scene of considerable activity throughout 26 September. After the 2d Battalion repulsed the enemy's pre-dawn counterattack, the 3d jumped off at 0800 from positions a mile and a half east of South Mountain. Its objective, Hill 106, lay more than 3000 yards away, just south of the highway leading eastward out of Seoul. Approaching the base of the ridge, Company L surprised and destroyed a strong NKPA position, while Company I swept up the objective itself against light opposition.

Reaching the summit, the company commander called an air strike on an enemy column marching out of Seoul on the highway. As the planes broke up the Red formation, Company L, reinforced with tanks and additional infantry, drove down the road to mop up and block the escape route.[33]

In the day-long attack, 3/32 and its supporting armament accounted for 500 enemy dead, five tanks, 45 vehicles, three artillery pieces, and two ammunition dumps, according to regimental reports. The remainder of the 32d, now augmented by the 2d Battalion, 17th Infantry, in addition to the 17th ROK, saw spots of heavy fighting during the mop-up and consolidation on and around South Mountain. Casualties for the 32d, as reported on 26 September, were six KIA, 92 WIA, and three MIA. Most of those reported the following day—32 KIA, 33 WIA, and nine MIA—could also be traced to action on the 26th.[34]

Thus the Army regiment, having been impressively blooded in its eight days of action, could lay claim to clearing both South Mountain and that 15 per cent of Seoul's built-up area east of the great height.[35]

In the course of the day, the 1st Marines had made patrol contact with the 5th Marines in the left rear and with Army elements atop South Mountain on the right flank. Prospects for the morrow appeared much brighter at Division and Corps levels, where there must have existed some apprehension over the complicated maneuvering which had denied the attackers a solid front until they were in the heart of the sprawling capital.

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Chapter 13. Seoul as a Battlefield
Objective Secured

The twenty-seventh of September dawned as the day of reckoning. Applicable to the tactical situation in Seoul was the old law of physics, that two bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time. With X Corps troops pouring into the city and environs to share them with the Communist garrison, it was axiomatical that one side or the other would shortly have to go.

Oddly enough, despite the electrified atmosphere, the night of 26–27 September had passed quietly, even for Dog Company, 7th Marines, isolated in the road cut between Hills 296 and 338.[36] At dawn a tank-infantry team supported by engineers of Company D, 1st Engineer Battalion, advanced down the Kaesong Highway against negligible resistance and escorted the beleaguered rifle company back to the 7th Marines CP at Hoengjeoe-ri.

While the anticlimatical "rescue" was taking place, the 3d Battalion jumped off in the attack, supported by fire from the 2d on the left, to clear the northern reaches of Hill 338. How Company pressed forward up the draw on George's right but was stalled by heavy fire which suddenly erupted on the slopes above. The 3d Platoon, under Second Lieutenant Paul E. Denny, broke through in its zone, only to be recalled by Shields when the rest of the company failed to regain the lost momentum. Captain Richard H. Sengewald's Item Company, en route to take positions on the left of George, paused to assist Shields' outfit for a short time. After further attempts by Company H to gain the summit were unsuccessful, Sengewald led his unit to the north and attacked the right flank of the NKPA elements scattered indiscriminately over the remote humps of Hill 338. The situation on the northern half of the towering objective did not change appreciably in the course of the day.

Colonel Litzenberg developed further pressure against the enemy's right by ordering 2/7 to continue the attack against Hill 343 in mid-morning. On the right of the battalion zone, Captain Walter D. Phillips, Jr., led Company E forward in the face of stubborn enemy resistance from the crest. Owing to steady North Korean fire and the rugged terrain, gains were measured off by the yard, both for Phillips' unit and for Captain Elmer J. Zorn's Fox Company on the left. By nightfall, nevertheless, the Marines had mastered the situation to the extent that Company E sat firmly entrenched atop Hill 343—2500 yards from its starting point.

More force was applied to Litzenberg's flanking lever north of Seoul when Company G was withdrawn from its ridgeline on Hill 338 and ordered to attack eastward to seize Hill 342, which loomed above the capital building in the northern tip of Seoul. Circling through the low ground north of Hill 338, the company passed safely through an extensive minefield that had been conveniently marked off by friendly South Koreans. As the Marines approached the base of their objective and came under heavy sniper fire, Captain Cooney ordered the 1st Platoon, under Second Lieutenant Arthur R. Mooney, to set up a base of fire on intermediate high ground in order to support an assault by the 2d and 3d.

The plan backfired, for the 1st Platoon became engaged in a hot fire fight as it moved toward the designated position. The two assault units fared no better when, without the expected covering fire, they were hit by a hail of lead on the lower slopes of Hill 342. Several officers and NCOs were killed or wounded within a matter of minutes, and the scattered fighting that continued until nightfall brought about no significant change in the local situation.

Thus, the day ended on Litzenberg's "Seoul Front" with the 7th Marines in control of Hill 343 but sharing parts of 338 and 342 with the NKPA. The story would not be complete, however, without a brief visit to the regiment's "Haengju Front," several miles to the west, which had crackled with activity during the early

afternoon. About 1200, a company of North Koreans emerged from the northern hills and attacked toward the old ferry crossing at Hill 125. On the way the Reds had the misfortune to stumble into Captain David W. Banks' Able Company of 1/7, manning a blocking position at Ryokoku. (See map of Han River crossing). To avoid the danger of infiltration in the bustling bridgehead, Lieutenant Colonel Davis promptly committed Company C, under Captain Richard F. Delamar, III.

Despite their disadvantages in numbers and fire power, the dogged Reds extended the fight sufficiently to involve even a platoon of Captain Myron E. Wilcox's Baker Company. After a prolonged clatter, the engagement ended almost as abruptly as it had begun; and the immediate result was that all Communist troops above the ferry site withdrew to Kaesong.

The 7th Marines claimed 375 enemy killed and 34 taken prisoner in the fighting which ranged its vast front from 23 to 27 September. The spoils of war included the strangely unbalanced assortment of four machine guns, six rifles and 600 bayonets.

While the 2d and 3d Battalions of Litzenberg's regiment struggled among the massive ridges north of Seoul on the 27th, the 1st and 5th Marines struck at the vital nerve center of the ROK capital. The regimental attacks through the center of the city began as separate thrusts in the morning, but as the day wore on they took on aspects of a coordinated foot race. It could even be said, finally, that the battle became a flag-raising contest between the two Marine units, as the last NKPA resistance died in heaps of rubble and torn rice bags.

At 0645, the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, jumped off to clear the tip of Hill 296's troublesome eastern spur. For the first time in longer than they cared to remember, the infantrymen were greeted not by a sheet of small-arms and machine-gun fire, but by occasional, erratic pops from the rifles of dispirited snipers. Groping through the smoke and haze boiling up from the shattered city, Companies G and I swept the high ground by 0730 and—at long last—slowly filtered through the first streets of western Seoul. In short order they were encountering the expected barricades and minefields. There was a hint of stiffening opposition, but it quickly dissolved as the riflemen, backed by supporting tanks and engineers, ground forward relentlessly.[37]

By 0930, George Company made contact with the 1st Marines on the right.[38] Less than an hour later, after wheeling northward 3/5 controlled Middle School and adjacent high ground—the springboard for the assault on the capital building 1000 yards away. At 1200, Lieutenant Colonel Taplett ordered Companies G and I to continue the attack, guiding on the two Red flags which whipped the wind defiantly on both sides of the great dome ahead. Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion moved up behind and prepared to advance on the left of the 3d. Its mission in the final assault was to seize the craggy peak of Hill 338, which reared upward on the left of the capital building like a grim fortress.[39]

On the right of the 5th Regiment, the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines had smashed through another series of rice-bag barriers on the boulevard and at 1057, the United States colors unfurled above the French Consulate. A furious fight exploded around the city's main intersection, where the principal streetcar lines crossed to form an X not far from Middle School. Company D, spearheading 2/1's drive, waded into the fray with determination. Lieutenant Cummings, who by this time appeared to have a remarkable affinity for heavy trouble, again lost his tank to enemy mines, but not before he had knocked out two Russian 76mm self-propelled guns emplaced in the middle of the intersection. Staff Sergeant MacDonald's M–26 obliterated an NKPA truck with two 90mm rounds when the vehicle tried to escape with a howitzer and its crew.[40]

The afternoon of 27 September was a time of climax as the 1st Marine Division front surged forward of Middle School and the central intersection. Though beaten and faltering, the North Koreans still managed to fight stubbornly here and there; but their over-all deployment no longer bore any semblance of tactical integrity.

By early afternoon the Reds facing the 5th Marines broke and fled. Troops of 3/5 poured into the government compound, their final objective, and secured it at 1508. The North Korean flags were struck, and in their place rose the United States colors. Somewhat awed by the historic import of their accomplishment, young

Marine riflemen wonderingly probed the spacious halls and chambers of the huge building that shortly would be reoccupied by the government of the Korean Republic.[41]

On the left of the 3d Battalion, Company A of 1/5 had launched its attack on Hill 338 at 1300 in the wake of devastating preparations by air, artillery, and mortars. Second Lieutenant Nicholas M. Trapnell led off with the 1st Platoon, which seized an intermediate piece of high ground against moderate resistance. The 2d Platoon, under Second Lieutenant Edward E. Collins, then drove forward on the left of the ancient wall leading to the crest of the objective; but the attack was stopped by heavy mortar and small-arms fire. Marine air thundered down to rake the target with machine guns and rockets. The ground troops followed up with heavy concentrations of 60mm and 81mm mortars. Moving closely behind the supporting fire, the 1st Platoon overran a knob situated below the dominating peak. The 2d Platoon then resumed its advance on the left of the wall, and the 3d, under Technical Sergeant George W. Bolkow, took the lead on the right. It was the latter unit that smashed through the last resistance and secured the cliffs at the summit of Hill 338 at 1850.[42]

While the 5th Marines completed its final mission in Seoul, 2/1 on the right continued along the streetcar line which curved below the government buildings to run eastward to the far edge of the city. Since the 7th Marines had been slowed in the hills north of the capital, the expected tie-in on the left flank did not occur, and Puller's troops had to go it alone through the dense maze of streets in eastern Seoul. At 1530 infantrymen of 2/1 raised the American flag over the Russian Consulate, just to the right of the curve in the boulevard. Seven minutes later the flag also waved above the United States Consulate, about 350 yards farther off on the flank.[43]

To the right of 2/1, the 1st Battalion was making good progress after a slow start against stiff opposition. Charlie Company had been held up at the outset in the neighborhood of the railroad station, but supporting tanks, including flame throwers, had paved the way by blasting and burning a formidable nest of NKPA automatic weapons and AT guns. One armored vehicle was disabled by a mine and another by antitank fire before the Marines finally broke through. As the battalion pivoted eastward in accordance with the general plan, both Charlie Company and Able on the right hammered through the usual barricades and suicide detachments.[44]

The 32d Infantry and elements of the 17th enjoyed a relatively quiet day on and around South Mountain, for these units had only to hold firm in their positions until the 1st Marines could complete its wheeling movement and come abreast, facing east.[45]

Shortly before 1630, 2/1 was pounding eastward through a stretch of the streetcar line south of the government compound. Fire poured into the ranks of Dog Company from three sides, and Marines sweltered in the heat of burning buildings that offered dubious protection. Corsairs screamed down to plaster enemy positions only a block ahead of the foremost infantry. Immediately after each pass by the gull-winged planes, Second Lieutenant Carl B. Thompson, Jr., led his 1st Platoon in the assault with covering fire provided by supporting tanks.[46]

There was a final surge up the street by the green-clad riflemen and BAR-men, and then it was all over. At 1630 enemy resistance across the 1st Regiment's front abruptly collapsed, with the result that the Battle of Seoul came to an end. Snipers and bypassed pockets remained to be mopped up by the Marines, KMC units, and South Korean Police; but the NKPA had clearly quit the fight and abandoned the city. The 1st and 2d Battalions of the 1st Marines marched rapidly through desultory sniper fire to the eastern part of town, where they dug in for the night.[47]

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AS RAPIDLY as the advance of the troops permitted, preparations were made for the restoration of civil government to Seoul. A group of former city officials had arrived by plane from Pusan; and on 26 September, Mayor Lee opened a temporary office in Yongdungpo. The police chief, construction engineer, and the health and welfare officials also resumed their old duties.

Collecting points were set up for handling the civilian wounded. The following statistics, comprising the patients treated for all causes by the 1st Medical Battalion of the 1st Marine Division, show that Korean civilians were second in numbers only to the Marines themselves:

U.S. Marine:	2,811
Korean civilian:	1,908
U.S. Army:	358
KMC and ROK:	322
U.S. Navy:	78
POW: [1]	39

The problem of food for a city with a pre-war population of a million and a half was met during the advance when stores of rice and other supplies were turned over to Seoul officials by the Marines. Medical supplies found in the city were redistributed for use in Seoul and Inchon hospitals as well as the hospital established at Yongdungpo by Captain Hering, the Division Surgeon, expressly for the treatment of civilian wounded.

A shipment of some 50 tons of rice through X Corps, plus large amounts located in Seoul by the Marines, enabled the officials to take over without critical food shortages. On the 28th, Mayor Lee moved into the city hall at Seoul and acted immediately to re-establish police authority, clear destroyed areas and provide for the restoration of such public utilities as water and electricity.[2] These prompt measures did much to ease the hardships of thousands of returning refugees.

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Operations of 28 September

The 5th Marines passed an uneventful day on 28 September, having taken its assigned objectives and been pinched out by the 1st Marines on the right and the 7th Marines on the left, as planned. An assembly area was established in the vicinity of the Women's University, and though the regiment sent out patrols, no enemy were encountered.[3]

The 7th Marines put in a busy day at seizing objectives which consisted of the high ground north of Seoul on both sides of the main highway from the capital to Uijongbu. Opposition was light to moderate, with the stiffest resistance occurring in areas which indicated that the enemy intended to put up a fight to protect his escape route to Uijongbu. Seventy-five tons of American-made dynamite and explosives, captured by the 7th Marines, were believed to have been originally supplied to the ROK forces before the war and abandoned during the NKPA invasion.[4] Total advances for the day ranged from 1,500 yards in the zone of the 3d Battalion to 2,600 yards in the zone of the 2d Battalion.

When the 1st Marines jumped off at 0645 on the 28th, the 1st and 2d Battalions were in assault. The 3d Battalion remained in an assembly area in the rear and continued mopping up along with the 2d KMC Battalion. Although organized resistance in the city had been broken, the 1st Battalion met stubborn resistance from enemy groups and encountered many mines. The 2d Battalion, on the left, made headway against light opposition.

These attacks cleared the remainder of Seoul and took the assault battalions to Hill 133 (Objective ABLE) commanding the city on the northeast.[5]

General Smith visited the CPs of all three regiments on the 28th by helicopter. He found Colonel Puller at the Ducksoo Palace, near the intersection of the streetcar lines. Colonel Litzenberg's CP was located a short distance to the west, and Lieutenant Colonel Murray had established his headquarters in the Women's University on the northwest outskirts of the city.

Later that day Generals Smith and Craig displaced the Division CP from Oeoso-ri to a barracks area in Seoul, southwest of South Mountain. The two Marine generals took over a former infirmary, but they decided that the mortuary slab was too depressing and had that fixture removed.[6]

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Liberation Ceremonies at Seoul

Planning for impressive liberation ceremonies at Seoul had begun while the street fighting was at its height. The 1st Marine Division was requested by Corps to furnish two honor guards and a band. Musical instruments having been left behind in Japan, air shipment was prescribed.[7]

General MacArthur had hoped to hold the liberation ceremony at Seoul on 25 September, just three months to the day after the launching of the NKPA invasion. The enemy, however, was not co-operative with respect to this date; and even on the morning of the 29th, three NKPA counterattacks were repulsed on the outskirts of the city. As it proved, General MacArthur vetoed plans for a ceremony with band music. “I will personally conduct the proceedings without being introduced,” said his message to X Corps, and he specified that there be no honor guard.[8]

Two pre-dawn counterattacks on the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, were not auspicious beginnings for the day of the liberation exercises. The first occurred at 0445 on 29 September, when the OP, located on a spur projecting forward of the MLR and defended by a rifle platoon, was infiltrated by an estimated 70 to 100 NKPA troops. A second enemy attack hit the left flank of the battalion shortly afterwards. Both attempts were repulsed with total losses of 48 to the Communists, and the Marines had casualties of 4 KIA and 28 WIA, most of them resulting from hand grenades.[9]

Another assault, launched by the enemy at 0600 in the zone of action of the 7th Marines, was repulsed without trouble. Most of the fighting on 29 September was done by this regiment, which pushed forward to gain all the rest of its objectives before nightfall.

At dawn, in preparation for the liberation ceremony, Marine guards were unobtrusively stationed along the route of approach from the new floating bridge to the Government Palace. This duty fell chiefly on 3/1, with elements of the 5th Marines being responsible for security in the western part of the city.

General MacArthur and President Syngman Rhee drove directly to the Palace after separate arrivals at Kimpo Airfield. The guests included Korean dignitaries and United Nations officials in addition to high-ranking representatives of military organizations.

The commander in chief opened the ceremony with a moving five-minute address ending with the Lord’s Prayer. The rumble of artillery could be heard at times, and some of the guests glanced up apprehensively at the shattered skylight overhead.

“Occasional falls of glass from the dome and drifting smoke and ashes were part of the scene,” commented a Marine officer. “Unheeded noise of rifle shots punctuated the talks. Grim Marines from Puller’s regiment surrounded the seated audience. . . . The youth of the guards was offset by the tall, gray-haired figures of Generals Smith and Barr at the front of the audience. They were patently the men who had borne precisely and capably the load of decision.”[10]

With the 1st Marine Division still responsible for security, it was a relief to General Smith when the distinguished visitors departed unharmed. Not all the mines had been removed from the streets as yet, and it was suspected that snipers might still be lurking in the ruins.[11]

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Crumbling of NKPA Resistance

Although more hard fighting lay ahead in the Inchon-Seoul operation, X Corps alerted its major units on 29 September to the possibility of a new amphibious landing on the east coast of Korea. This was one of the earliest announcements of the planning which led to the Wonsan landing and the advance to the Chosin Reservoir, but the history of those events belongs in the next volume of this series.

The new operation was suggested by the rapid disintegration of the main body of the NKPA invasion forces. In a single day, 26 September, elements of the 1st Cavalry Division had advanced more than 100 miles; and a total of about 23,600 prisoners were taken by the Eighth Army before the end of the month. Enemy resistance was still encountered, to be sure, and sometimes it was of a desperate nature as Red Korean troops fought to escape encirclement. But all hope and heart had gone out of the Communist cause. One Eighth Army column sliced across the peninsula to Kunsan while other spearheads drove northward and ROK units pushed up the east coast nearly to Samchok. NKPA opposition was crumbling everywhere as demoralized invasion troops threw away their weapons and changed to civilian clothes in the hope of making their way to North Korea through the ever tightening Eighth Army cordon.[12]

The X Corps troops in the Seoul area had enough on their hands to finish the old operation before starting a new one. 1st Marine Division OpnO 13–50, issued at 2000 on 29 September, provided for the securing of the captured city by these means:

(1) a continuation of the attack to the east;

(2) the conduct of reconnaissances in force to the north and northwest;

(3) the relief of elements of the 7th Infantry Division north of the river Han;

(4) the seizure of prescribed blocking positions.[13]

The Division plan of maneuver called for the three Marine rifle regiments to take blocking positions forming a rough semi-circle defending Seoul from three sides—the 5th Marines to the northwest, the 7th Marines to the north, and the 1st Marines to the northeast. Responsibility for the area north of the Han river and west of the Pukhan River had passed to the 1st Marine Division, and at 1500 on 30 September the following missions were assigned by OpnO 14–50:

“RCT–1—To protect the right flank of the Division and be prepared to assemble in Division reserve by battalions for a motor lift. Blocking positions, as assigned by OpnO 13–50, consisted of high ground from two to five miles northeast of Seoul.

“RCT–5—To continue reconnaissance in force with minimum of a reinforced battalion to Suyuhyon and establish a blocking position; to protect the left flank of the Division; and to be prepared to provide a reinforced rifle company for Task Force Kumpo, on order. These attachments to be made: 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, and one battery of 50th AAA Battalion, USA; Company A, 1st Tank Battalion; Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion; and a company from the 1st Motor Transport Battalion.

“RCT–7—To advance rapidly and seize blocking positions in the vicinity of Uijongbu. These attachments to be made: 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, and one battery of 50th AAA Battalion, USA; Company D, 1st Tank Battalion; and one company of the KMC Regiment.

“The KMC Regiment (less the 1st and 3d Battalions and one company of the 5th Battalion, with a detachment of ANGLICO attached) was meanwhile to advance to the east and seize blocking positions at the junctiton of the Han and Pukhan rivers where the road leading northeast from Seoul reaches that point. The 1st

KMC Battalion had been attached to the 7th Infantry Division, and the 3d Battalion was operating on the Kumpo Peninsula.

"Task Force Kumpo, when activated on Division order, was to consist of the 3d KMC Battalion and Battery C, 50th AAA Battalion, USA, plus a 5th Marines rifle company and a tank detachment, if required. As it proved, however, X Corps held responsibility for the defense of this area until 2 October, when the 187th Airborne RCT was relieved by Task Force Kumpo."[14]

Two more small fire fights awaited the 5th Marines in carrying out the missions assigned by Division OpnO

14–50. At 1030 on 1 October, while patrolling the extensive area of regimental responsibility, a detachment of 2/5 made contact with an NKPA force estimated at 150 to 200 men. Air strikes and mortar fire soon took the fight out of the enemy, who left 30 dead behind.

At 0600 on 1 October the 3d Battalion, reinforced with a battery of artillery and a platoon of tanks and engineers, moved out toward Suyuhyon. Charlie Company of 1/5 followed in trace to protect the battalion rear and provide security for returning motor transport.

Two road blocks were cleared before the battalion tied in for the night on high ground just short of the objective. Then, at 0230 the next morning, the enemy struck in estimated company strength. The attempt was repulsed by machine-gun fire, and 67 Red Korean bodies were found at daybreak in the attack area. At 0700 the column resumed the march to Suyuhyon, which was occupied without further incident.[15]

The 1st Marines found little difficulty in carrying out all missions assigned by Division OpnO 14–50. In fact, the regiment had only a few minor patrol actions after taking blocking positions northeast of Seoul.

Colonel Litzenberg's men were now making the main effort of the 1st Marine Division. Preparations for the drive to Uijongbu began with every indication that the enemy was bent upon flight. A patrol from the 3d Battalion found 30 Korean bodies beside a wall, including several women and a child, whose hands had been bound behind them before they were shot. The victims, according to a POW, were members of the families of ROK soldiers.[16]

Positions had been consolidated by the late afternoon of 30 September in readiness for the jump-off in the morning. The 7th Marines might well have been called Task Force Litzenberg at this stage for it was reinforced by Major Parry's 3d Battalion of the 11th Marines, Captain Lester T. Chase's Company D of the 1st Tank Battalion, Captain Byron C. Turner's Company D of the 1st Engineer Battalion, and Captain Kim's Company C of the 5th KMC Battalion.

The drive to the new objective began at 0630 on 1 October in a column of battalions. Air reconnaissance had made it appear likely that any NKPA resistance would probably take advantage of a tactical bottleneck, about halfway to Uijongbu, where steep and rocky ridges overlooked a narrow defile through which the road passed. Colonel Litzenberg and his staff decided to maneuver by sending the 1st Battalion to make a broad feint to cover the entry of the 3d Battalion into the defile with tank support while the 2d Battalion followed in reserve.

Lieutenant Colonel Davis secured his preliminary objectives, then swiftly spread out on both sides of the defile for his feint. Unfortunately, Major Roach was delayed by an enemy mine field, which brought the 3d Battalion and the tanks to a halt while the engineers cleared the way. Davis' simulated attack had meanwhile disclosed that the enemy was entrenched in depth along the high ground on each side of the defile. Both Marine battalions took heavy NKPA artillery and mortar fire before halting for the night.[17]

Click here to view map

At least the day's attacks had unmasked the enemy's positions and exposed them to savage attacks by the Corsairs of VMF–312. RCT–7 continued the attack at 0630 on the 2d, with Roach on the left of the road and Davis on the right. About halfway through the defile the 3d Battalion was pinned down by a concentration of NKPA artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire. Again the tanks were held up while the engineers cleared away

mines, working in a hail of bullets. The tanks of the 1st Platoon repaid the favor by closing in on two huts sheltering NKPA troops and killing an estimated 35. Here an attached dozer tank, without blade, had a freakish accident when two men in the turret were wounded by enemy fire down a 105mm gun tube while the breech was open.

The 1st Battalion managed to cross the stream east of the defile and seize the high ground just beyond. But the day ended with gains of only 300 yards in the defile.

Roach's men returned to the attack in the morning, supported by the tanks of the 2d Platoon. Again VMF–312 flew one close air support sortie after another. Major Charles E. McLean was hit by enemy AA fire but crash-landed his plane in friendly territory. First Lieutenant Robert O. Crocker was killed in action shortly after being brought down by NKPA small-arms fire.

VMF–312 fliers intercepted an enemy convoy and First Lieutenant Franklin Stratton reported the destruction of seven out of eight trucks. The tanks also gave the infantry helpful support, firing 167 90mm rounds during the day and an estimated 20,000 machine gun rounds at enemy troops along the ridge.

While 1/7 cleared the high ground on the east side of the road and 3/7 on the west side, Colonel Litzenberg directed Major Webb D. Sawyer [18] to pass between them with 2/7 and drive directly along the highway. Progress was satisfactory from the start. When Sawyer's men began to overrun abandoned NKPA artillery pieces and supply dumps, they pounded ahead with the realization that enemy resistance was broken.

At five that afternoon the 2d Battalion entered the ruins of Uijongbu, evacuated by the enemy. The last large-scale fight of the Inchon-Seoul operation had ended in a smashing victory for the Division's youngest regiment.

Identifications showed that the Marines had been opposed by three battalions of the 31st Regiment of the 31st NKPA Division. Elements of the 17th and Seoul Divisions and of an artillery battalion were also encountered. These troops had been supported by 13 tanks, of which four were killed by Marine air attacks and two captured in a damaged condition by 2/7 after the others escaped.

The three-mile advance of RCT–7 on 3 October had resulted in the cutting of lateral communications to the east and west of Uijongbu and the securing of an important blocking position on the X Corps final phase line. Losses of 13 killed and 111 wounded were suffered by the regiment in the three-day fight.

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Last Days of Inchon-Seoul Operation

The climax of the battle was witnessed by General Cates, who visited the front on 3 October, accompanied by Major Generals Edwin A. Pollock and Clayton C. Jerome. After being briefed at the Division CP by the G–1, G–2, G–3, and G–4, the Commandant inspected the positions of RCT–1 and RCT–5 by helicopter before taking a jeep tour along the road to Uijongbu to watch Colonel Litzenberg's men slug their way forward into the battered town.[19]

That evening the fighting virtually came to an end, for the 1st Marine Division had a total of only seven casualties during the last four days of the Inchon-Seoul operation. The rifle regiments had only to maintain their blocking positions while patrolling to front and flank.

Operations on the Kumpo Peninsula, which had been sputtering intermittently ever since the occupation of the airfield, also drew to a close.[20] Responsibility for the area having passed from Corps back to Division on 2 October, elements of the 187th Airborne RCT were relieved by Task Force Kumpo, consisting of the 3d KMC Battalion, a detachment from the 1st Signal Battalion, and Battery C of the 50th AAA Battalion, USA.

Naval gunfire had found its greatest mission of the exploitation phase in support of the widely assorted units which protected the left flank of X Corps at various times. The 187th, being short on artillery, had relied on the naval gunfire and spot teams commanded by Lieutenant (jg) Leo D. McMillan, USN, and First Lieutenant J. E. Dolan, of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines. These officers and their men remained with Task Force Kumpo after it relieved the 187th, but patrols reported no enemy contacts after 2 October. The chief activity on the peninsula was listening to the baseball games of the World Series, which came in clearly over the radios of the naval gunfire teams.[21]

As directed on 5 October by OpnO 15–50, the last to be issued by the Division in the Inchon-Seoul Operation, the major Marine units were scheduled to close into staging areas in Inchon as follows:

5th Marines:	1800 on 5 October
11th Marines:	1700 on 6 October
1st Marines:	Prior to darkness, 6 October
7th Marines:	Midafternoon, 7 October
KMC Regiment:	Prior to darkness, 7 October

An impressive ceremony was held on the 6th, when the cemetery established by the Marines on the outskirts of Inchon was taken over by the United Nations. After an invocation by Chaplain R. M. Schwyhart of the 1st Marine Division, General Almond made a few remarks and laid a wreath on the grave of an unknown soldier. Then General Smith, General Barr, and Colonel Lee performed the same ceremony over Marine, Army, and ROK graves. Volleys were fired, taps were sounded, and the dedication ended with the national anthems of the United States and Korea.[22]

There could be no doubt, as the Marines prepared to mount out for a new amphibious operation, that the NKPA invaders had been knocked out of the war by the combined X Corps and Eighth Army offensives. The Red Korean retreat had become a rout, and Marine staff officers considered it doubtful whether the enemy could hold the east coast port of Wonsan long enough to defend it against the proposed new Marine assault landing.[23]

It was apparent, in fact, that only the active intervention of Red China or the Soviet Union could save the North Korean People's Republic from imminent collapse. At this time, however, it did not seem likely that any such attempt would be made.

And so it was that one of the most remarkable amphibious operations in Marine Corps annals came uneventfully to an end on 7 October 1950. Early in the morning the Division CP displaced from Seoul to a housing area just north of Ascom City. At 0935, in accordance with X Corps OpnO 5, General Smith reported to Admiral Doyle, ComPhib-Gru One, for duty as commander of the landing force for the proposed Wonsan assault. And at 1200 the Inchon-Seoul operation passed into history when the last troops of the 7th Marines were relieved in the Uijongbu area by elements of the Eighth Army.

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Chapter 14. The Drive to Uijongbu
Summaries and Conclusions

At this stage the men of the 1st Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing were still too close to the operation to see it clearly in detail. If there was any one overwhelming impression they all had in common, it was a sense of the speed with which events had raced toward a climax.

This was by no means an illusion. Hundreds of Marine reservists had watched baseball games or enjoyed picnics with their families on the Fourth of July, never dreaming that shortly after Labor Day they would be scrambling out of landing boats to assault a flaming Asiatic seaport on the other side of the earth!

Speed was an essential if the assault landing were to be completed on the prescribed D-day. But there was no place for the proverbial haste that leads to waste. It had to be the speed of precision—an acceleration of men and events made possible by the amphibious know-how of a Navy-Marine Corps team that had worked together throughout the Pacific operations of World War II.

Sometimes this acceleration was so unobtrusive as to pass almost unnoticed. Shipping does not grow on trees, particularly the enormous amounts of shipping required for a major amphibious operation. Yet the U.S. Navy made it appear a simple and routine matter to assemble from all the seven seas an invasion fleet made up of craft ranging from cruisers to rowboats.

The Marines, as the Landing Force, worked hand-in-hand with the Attack Force commanded by Rear Admiral James H. Doyle, who had no superior in the world of 1950 as an amphibious specialist. From preliminary planning to final execution, Doyle and his staff officers of PhibGru One supplied a precision which had much to do with the success of an operation holding so many potentialties of disaster.

Looking back, some of the Marine participants could hardly recall a full night's sleep from 25 July 1950, the date of the order directing that the 1st Marine Division be brought up to full war strength, until 7 October 1950, when the operation came to a victorious end. From the mobilization at Camp Pendleton to the street fighting in Seoul, it was often necessary to utilize the hours of darkness ordinarily devoted to rest. At Kobe, for instance, there were so few copies of the plans for the Inchon landing that they were circulated on a 24-hour schedule for study by Marine officers who took turns.

The acceleration of the 1st Marine Division in 64 days from a peace-time basis to the capture of Seoul has been summarized as follows:

"(a) Expansion from a reduced peace strength (less the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade) to a reinforced war strength, less one RCT, was completed in a period of approximately 15 days.

"(b) Administrative sea lift and movement of over 15,000 personnel, organic equipment, and partial resupply from San Diego to the Far East Command commenced in less than three weeks after expansion was ordered.

"(c) Debarkation and unloading from administrative shipping, and re-embarkation and reloading at Kobe, Japan for the assault landing at Inchon were done in a period averaging about seven days per unit, two days of which were lost due to a heavy typhoon in the Kobe area.

"(d) Completed planning and the issuance of the complete operation order for the amphibious landing at Inchon were accomplished 17 days after the receipt of the initial directive.

"(e) The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was disengaged from active combat with the enemy on the South Korean front at midnight on 5 September, moved to Pusan, and outloaded in combat shipping in less than 7 days.

"(f) A successful assault landing was executed at Inchon, Korea, on 15 September under some of the most adverse landing conditions in the history of amphibious operations.

"(g) The Force Beachhead Line approximately six miles from landing beaches was seized within 24 hours after the main landing on Beaches RED and BLUE.

"(h) Kimpo Airfield, a primary objective of the operation in the 1st Marine Division's zone of action, was captured 50 hours and 35 minutes after H-Hour, D-Day.

"(i) The first assault crossing of the Han River (400 yards wide at the crossing site) was executed by RCT–5, employing LVTs, DUKWs, and pontoon ferries, less than five days after landing at Inchon.

"(j) The remainder of the Division crossed the Han River without bridging, and after intense fighting completed the seizure of Seoul 12 days after landing at Inchon.

"(k) The effectiveness of the Marine air-ground team and close air support doctrine were reaffirmed with outstanding success.

"(l) The ability of Marine units to participate in extended land operations, provided additional transportation requirements are met during the emergency, was demonstrated in the Inchon-Seoul operation."[24]

In any such summary, it is understood that credit for the accomplishments of the 1st Marine Division was shared by the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. Two more days of fighting remained for the squadrons at Kimpo after the relief of the ground forces, since Marine air operations cover the period from 7 September to 9 October 1950. Altogether, 2,774 combat sorties were flown by the five Marine squadrons during this 33-day period, most of them in close support of infantry units. Following are the totals:

VMF–214: 16 days in action, 484 combat sorties
VMF–323: 22 days in action, 784 combat sorties
VMF–212: 19 days in action, 607 combat sorties
VMF–312: 10 days in action, 288 combat sorties
VMF(N)–542: 19 days in action, 573 combat sorties
TOTAL: 2,774 combat sorties[25]

"No enemy air operations of any significance were encountered," stated the TAC X Corps report. "Some enemy antiaircraft fire from light to moderate was encountered. Most of this AA fire was of small caliber."

Eleven Marine planes (not counting VMO–6 aircraft) were shot down by NKPA ground forces. Six pilots and a crewman were killed in action and two pilots wounded.

As an example of the types of missions, the 326 combat sorties flown by VMF–322 fell into these categories: close air support, 163; reconnaissance, 99; rescue cover, 18; deep support, 17; helicopter escort, 8; photo escort, 6; combat air patrol, 6; tactical air control, 4; leaflet, 2; R4D escort, 2; message drop, 2. In addition, the squadron was credited with 151 noncombat sorties.

There could be no question that Marine close air support had won the esteem of Army infantry units. Generals Harris and Cushman were the recipients of many spontaneous comments of appreciation from individuals as well as formal endorsements. (See Appendix L for the record.)

On the other hand, the Marines had cause to be grateful for the deep support and interdiction strikes provided by the Naval fast carrier planes of JTF–7 in combination with the Fifth Air Force, which was committed primarily to the support of the Eighth Army in South Korea. During the first two weeks of September, JTF–7 had responsibility for the gradual isolation of the Inchon target area by means of air operations conducted as far as 150 miles north of the objective and 100 miles to the south.

The air defense of our forces at sea and in the Inchon area, and the air interdiction operations of the first five or six days of the landing—these were carried out largely by Naval air effort under Commander JTF–7. Mutual assistance between JTF–7 and the Fifth Air Force was provided for, with coordination being achieved by the delineation of areas for each.[26]

VMO–6, under the control of the 1st Marine Division and administration control of MAG–33, completed a total of 643 helicopter and OY flights in 515 hours. Of the 139 seriously wounded men evacuated by helicopter from the firing line, a large proportion owed their lives to the speed and ease with which they were transported to the hospital. The helicopters also were credited with twelve rescue missions of friendly pilots shot down behind the enemy lines.[27]

In the long run, of course, it took the co-ordinated efforts of ground, air, and sea forces to win the final victory in one of the most unusual and difficult amphibious operations of all time. And though this book is limited to an account of Marine activities primarily, the Marines who took part would be first to acknowledge how much the final victory owed to the efforts of other ground forces—the U.S. Army units, the KMC Regiment, and the ROK contingents.

Many of these units, like the Marines, had been handicapped by a hasty build-up which allowed little or no time for special training and rehearsals. No greater feat of organization was recorded in 1950 than the creation of a new 7th Infantry Division from the bare bones of the old in only a few weeks. The Marines saw more of the 32d Infantry than General Barr's other units, for it was this regiment which protected the right flank during critical periods of the advance on Seoul while elements of the 187th Airborne RCT were responsible for the security of the left flank.

The Army artillery units, amphibian tractor troops, and AAA companies also deserve their full share of credit for the victory. And though the Marines were not often in contact with the ROKs, they realized how much these allies had contributed, often under the most adverse circumstances.

Naturally, the Marines felt a special interest in the KMC Regiment, which they had trained and equipped. The KMCs repaid this feeling by the valor with which they fought in every phase of the operation from the mopping up of Inchon to the battle for Seoul.

The Inchon landing and its exploitation have been made the subject of a study by officers of the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, who summed up the over-all effects as follows:

"(a) The amphibious envelopment at Inchon produced a decisive threat to the North Korean forces which led directly to the rapid disintegration of their front on the Pusan Perimeter. The 1st Marine Division was the landing force in this amphibious envelopment.

"(b) It completed the dislocation of the enemy's entire logistical system by the capture of Seoul, which, together with the combat action of other UN forces, shattered the enemy in all of South Korea, causing the complete rout of the North Korean forces. The 1st Marine Division played a principal role in the capture of Seoul.

"(c) The successful completion of the campaign made available to UN forces the port facilities of Inchon and the extensive Seoul communications complex for carrying offensive action into North Korea.

"(d) By the direct action of the 1st Marine Division, the enemy's potential was reduced by the capture of 4,692 POWs, by inflicting 13,666 casualties on the enemy, by destroying 44 tanks, and by destroying or capturing much other material."[28]

In view of such far-reaching results, total casualties for the 1st Marine Division of 366 KIA, 49 DOW, 6 MIA, and 2,029 WIA cannot be considered excessive for an operation fraught with so many calculated risks. No man's life was given in vain, for the Communist challenge to the free nations was met in Korea and the aggressors beaten so decisively that the world would soon have had peace except for the intervention of Red China.

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Chapter 14. The Drive to Uijongbu
MacArthur's Report to United Nations

Again it is worthy of emphasis that the victory was not won by any one nation or any one branch of the military service. As far as this country is concerned, the Inchon-Seoul operation was conducted jointly by the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. General Douglas MacArthur was spokesman for all of them late in September 1950, in these extracts from the Sixth Report of the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, to the Security Council of the United Nations:

"Events of the past two weeks have been decisive. The strategic concepts designed to win the war are rapidly proving their soundness through aggressive application by our ground, sea, and air forces.

"The seizure of the heart of the enemy's distributing system in the Seoul area has completely dislocated his logistical supply to his forces in South Korea and has quickly resulted in their disintegration. Caught between our northern and southern forces, both of which are completely self-sustaining because of our absolute air and naval supremacy, the enemy is thoroughly shattered through disruption of his logistical support and our combined combat activities.

"The prompt junction of our two forces is dramatically symbolic of this collapse.

"The obstacles to this wide envelopment were not only the enemy opposition, but also the natural obstacles of poor beaches fronted by miles of mud flats, a narrow channel and an extraordinary tidal range of over 29 feet. The success demonstrated a complete mastery of the technique of amphibious warfare, clockwork coordination, and cooperation between the units and services participating. There was nothing noteworthy about the North Korean opposition, but there could have been. The potential was there. The North Koreans were proceeding with the construction of coastal fortifications, dug-in tanks and guns of all calibers, beach defenses and mining operations. Had this development been delayed for as much as a month, the enemy would have been ready and the assault, if possible, would have been more costly to United Nations forces."

At no time, not even when the United Nations forces were fighting with their backs to the wall at Pusan, did the commander in chief ever have any doubts as to the outcome. It was fitting, therefore, that he should have summed up the results of the combined Eighth Army and X Corps offensives in this conclusion written after the securing of Seoul:

"A successful frontal attack and envelopment has completely changed the tide of battle in South Korea. The backbone of the North Korean army has been broken and their scattered forces are being liquidated or driven north with material losses in equipment and men captured."

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Appendix A. Glossary of Technical Terms and Abbreviations

AAA(AW)Bn—Antiaircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion (USA)

AD—Destroyer Tender

AE—Ammunition Ship

AerialDelPlat—Aerial Delivery Platoon

AF—Air Force; Store Ship

AGC—Amphibious Force Flagship

AH—Hospital Ship

AK—Cargo Ship

AKA—Assault Cargo Ship

AKL—Cargo Ship—Light

AKS—Stores Issue Ship

AM—Minesweeper

AmphTracBn—Amphibious Tractor Battalion

AmphTrkBn—Amphibious Truck Battalion

AMS—Auxiliary Motor Minesweeper

ANGLICO—Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company

AO—Oiler

AOG—Gasoline Tanker

AP—Transport

APA—Assault Transport

APD—High Speed Transport

ARG—Repair Ship—Internal Combustion Engines

ARH—Repair Ship—Heavy Hull Damage

ARL—Repair Ship—Landing Craft

ArmdAmphBn—Armored Amphibian Battalion

ARS—Salvage Vessel

AT—Antitank

ATF—Ocean Tug—Fleet

AV—Seaplane Tender

AVP—Seaplane Tender, Small

Bchmstr Unit—Beachmaster Unit

BLT—Battalion Landing Team

Bn—Battalion

CA—Heavy Cruiser

CG—Commanding General

CICDet—Counter-Intelligence Corps Detachment (USA)

CinCFE—Commander in Chief, Far East

CinCPacFlt—Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet

CL—Light Cruiser

CMC—Commandant of the Marine Corps

CNO—Chief of Naval Operations

CO—Commanding Officer

Co—Company

ComAirSupGrp—Commander Air Support Group

ComCarDiv—Commander Carrier Division

ComNavFE—Commander Navy Far East

ComPhibGruOne—Commander Amphibious Group One

CP—Command Post

C/S—Chief of Staff

CSG—Combat Service Group

CTF—Commander Task Force

CV—Aircraft Carrier

CVE—Aircraft Carrier—Escort

CVL—Aircraft Carrier—Light

DD—Destroyer

DDE—Escort Destroyer

DDR—Radar Picket Destroyer

DOW—Died of wounds

DUKW—Amphibious Truck.

Emb Off—Embarkation Officer

EngrBn—Engineer Battalion

EngrPortConstCo—Engineer Port Construction Company (USA)

EngrSpecBrig—Engineer Special Brigade (USA)

ETO—European Theater of Operations

EUSAK—Eighth United States Army in Korea

FABn—Field Artillery Battalion (USA)

FAC—Forward Air Controller

FBHL—Force Beachhead Line

FEAF—Far East Air Force

FECOM—Far East Command

F4U—Vought “Corsair” Fighter

FMF—Fleet Marine Force (Pac-Pacific; Lant-Atlantic)
FO—Forward Observer
FSA—Fire Support Area
FSCC—Fire Support Coordination Center
F7F-3—Grumman “Tigercat” Night Fighter
Fum & Bath Plat—Fumigation and Bath Platoon
GCI—Ground Control Intercept
GHQ—General Headquarters
H & S Co—Headquarters and Service Company
HO3S-1—Sikorsky Helicopter
HqBn—Headquarters Battalion
HqCo—Headquarters Company
HqSq—Headquarters Squadron
InfDiv—Infantry Division (USA)
interv—Interview
JANIS—Joint Army-Navy Intelligence Studies
JCS—Joint Chiefs of Staff
JSPOG—Joint Strategic Planning and Operations Group
JTF—Joint Task Force
KIA—Killed in Action
KMC—Korean Marine Corps
LCM—Landing Craft, Mechanized
LCVP—Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel
LSD—Landing Ship, Dock
LSM—Landing Ship, Medium
LSMR—Landing Ship, Medium-Rocket
LST—Landing Ship, Tank
LSU—Landing Ship, Utility
LVT—Landing Vehicle, Tracked
LVT(A)—Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Armored)
MAG—Marine Air Group
MAW—Marine Air Wing
MedBn—Medical Battalion
MGCIS—Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron
MIA—Missing in action
MOS—Military Occupational Specialty
MPCo—Military Police Company
MTACS—Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron

MTBn—Motor Transport Battalion
NCO—Noncommissioned Officer
NGF—Naval Gunfire
NK—North Korea(n)
NKPA—North Korean Peoples Army
OCMH—Office of the Chief of Military History (USA)
Off—Officer
OP—Observation Post
OpnO—Operation Order
OrdAmmCo—Ordnance Ammunition Company (USA)
OrdBn—Ordnance Battalion
OY—Consolidated-Vultee light observation plane
PC—Submarine Chaser
PCEC—Escort Amphibious Control Vessel
PF—Frigate
PhibGru—Amphibious Group
PhibTraPac—Training Command, Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet
PIR—Periodic Intelligence Report
Plat—Platoon
POL—Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants
POW—Prisoner of War
RAF—Royal Air Force
RcnCo—Reconnaissance Company
RCT—Regimental Combat Team
RktBn—Rocket Battalion
ROK—Republic of Korea
SAC—Supporting Arms Center
SAR—Special Action Report
SCAJAP—Supreme Commander Allied Powers, Japan
ServBn—Service Battalion
SigBn—Signal Battalion
SigRepCo—Signal Repair Company (USA)
SPBn—Shore Party Battalion
SpOpnsCo—Special Operations Company (USA)
TAC—Tactical Air Coordinator
TAC X Corps—Tactical Air Command, X Corps
TacAir—Tactical Air
TADC—Tactical Air Direction Center

T-AP—Transport Operated by MSTS

T/E—Table of Equipment

TF—Task Force

TG—Task Group

T/O—Table of Organization

UDT—Underwater Demolitions Team

UF—Unit of fire

UN—United Nations

UNC—United Nations Command

USA—United States Army

USAF—United States Air Force

USMC—United States Marine Corps

USN—United States Navy

VMF—Marine fighter type aircraft (squadron)

VMF (N)—Marine night fighter type aircraft, all-weather (squadron)

VMO—Marine observation type aircraft (squadron)

VMR—Marine transport type aircraft (squadron)

WIA—Wounded in action

WP—White phosphorous

YMS—Motor Minesweeper

YTB—Harbor Tug, Big

YW—District Barge, Water (self-propelled)

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Appendix C. Task Organization of Marine Division for Inchon Landing

In order to present a concise picture of the Task Organization of the 1st Marine Division (Reinf), FMF, for the period of 1 August-7 October 1950, task organizations are presented for the following five conditions:

(1) Completion of mobilization of the Division (less 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and RCT-7) at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, 12 August.

(2) Organization for landing at INCHON, KOREA, 15 September.

(3) RCT-7 task organization on arrival INCHON, KOREA, 21 September.

(4) Intermediate temporary attachments and detachments during the period 15 September-7 October.

(5) Completion of INCHON-KIMPO-SEOUL operation on 7 October.

The detailed Task Organizations are as follows:

(1) Completion of Mobilization on WAR "K" series T/O, 12 August.

1st Marine Division, (Reinf) FMF	MajGen O. P. SMITH
HqBn, 1stMarDiv, less Brig Det	LtCol M. T. STARR
1st SigBn, less Brig Det, 2 SP Comm Sects & Det Anglico	
Carrier Plat, FMF	Maj R. L. SCHREIER
1st ServBn, less Brig Det	LtCol C. L. BANKS
1st OrdBn, less Brig Det	Maj L. O. WILLIAMS
1st MT Bn, less Cos A and D; 1st Amph Trk Co, FMF, less 1 Plat	LtCol O. L. BEALL
1st Med Bn, less Cos A and E	Comdr H. B. JOHNSON, USN
1st EngrBn, less Cos A and D	LtCol J. H. PARTRIDGE
1st SP Bn, less Cos A and C	LtCol H. P. CROWE
1st Tk Bn, less Cos A and D; Tk Plat AT Co, 1st Mar	
Tk Plat AT Co, 5th Mar	LtCol H. T. MILNE
1st Amph Trac Bn, FMF, less Cos A and D	LtCol E. F. WANN
1st Armd Amph Bn, FMF, less 1st Plat Co A and Cos C and D	LtCol F. H. COOPER
1st CSG, SC, FMF, less BrigDet; 1st Fum & Bath Plat, SC, FMF	
1st Aerial Del Plat, SC, FMF	Col J. S. COOK
7th MT Bn, SC, FMF	Maj J. F. STEPKA

1st Mar, less Tk Plat, AT Co; Cos
C, F, and I, Reinf, 5th Mar — Col L. B. PULLER
11th Mar, less 1st and 3rd Bns;
Btry C, 1st 4.5” Rkt Bn, FMF — Col J. H. BROWER

(2) Organization for landing at INCHON, KOREA (1st Prov Mar Brig disbanded 13 September, units and detachments reverted control parent organizations of division). Task Organization from Annex “A”, 1st Mar Div Op Order 2-50 as derived from X Corps Op Order No. 1.

1st Marine Division (Reinf) FMF — MajGen O. P. SMITH
HqBn, Reinf, 1stMarDiv, less dets
163rd Mil Int Service Det
441st CIC Det
1st Sig Bn, Reinf, less dets;
Det, 205th Sig Rep Co USA
Carrier Plat, FMF
Det, 4th Sig Bn, USA
1st Serv Bn, less Dets
1st MT Bn
1st Ord Bn, less dets
Det, MTACS-2
Blt-3, RCT-5 — LtCol R. D. TAPLETT
3dBn, 5th Mar
Det, ANGLICO, 1st Sig Bn
Det, Co A, 1st Tk Bn
Recon Det, 11th Mar
Team 1, SP Gp A
1stPlat, Co A, 1st SP Bn
SP Comm Sqd, 1st Sig Bn
Amm Sqd, 1st Ord Bn
Det, Rat Sec, 1st Ser Bn
Det, 1st CSG, (SP Aug)
Det, Bchmstr Unit, USN
RCT-5 — LtCol R. L. MURRAY
5th Mar, less 3dBn & Tk Plat, AT Co
Co A, 1st Engr Bn
Co C, 1st Med Bn
Det Anglico, 1st Sig Bn
ROK Marine Bn

SP GP A, less Team 1;
Co A, 1st SP Bn, less 1 Plat
Evac Sec, 1st SP Bn
Det, Ord Sup Plat, CSG
Det, Auto Sup Plat, CSG
Det, Engr Sup Plat, CSG
Det, CS Plat, CSG
Det, Sig Sup Plat, CSG
SP Comm Sec, 1st Sig Bn
Det, 1st CSG (SP Aug)
Det, Bchmstr Unit, USN
1st Traffic Plat, MP Co
Police Sqd, MP Co
FO & Ln Sec, 1st Bn, 11th Mar
Co A, 1st Tk Bn, less det
Det, Sig Co, 1st Sig Bn

RCT-1 Col L. B. PULLER
1st Mar, less Tk Plat, AT Co
Co A, Reinf, 56th Amph Trac Bn, USA
Btry C, 1st 4.5” Rkt Bn, FMF
Co C, Reinf, 1st Engr Bn, less det;
Water Sup Sec
Co D, 1st Med Bn, less det
Det ANGLICO, 1st Sig Bn
SP Gp B, less Team 3;
Co B, 1st SP Bn, less 1 Plat & Equip Sec
Evac Sec, 1st SP Bn
Amm Plat, less 1 Sqd, 1st Ord Bn
Rat Sec, 1st Ser Bn
Fuel Sec, 1st Ser Bn
SP Comm Sec, 1st Sig Bn
Det, Bchmstr Unit, USN
Det, 1st CSG (SP Aug)
2d Traffic Plat, MP Co
Police Sqd, MP Co

FO & Ln Secs, 2d Bn, 11th Mar	
11th Mar, less 3d Bn, reinf	Col J. H. BROWER
96th FA Bn, USA	
Det, Co B, 1st Engr Bn	
1st Amph Trk Co, FMF	
1st Tk Bn, less dets, reinf	LtCol H. T. MILNE
Tk Plat, AT Co, 1st Mar	
Tk Plat, AT Co, 5th Mar	
1st Engr Bn, less dets	LtCol J. H. PARTRIDGE
1st SP Bn, less dets	LtCol H. P. CROWE
H&S Co, 1st SP Bn, less dets	
SP Comm Sec, 1st Sig Bn	
Team 3, SP Gp B	
3d Plat, Co B, 1st SP Bn	
Equip Sec, Co B, 1st SP Bn	
SP Comm Sec, 1st Sig Bn	
Det, Ord Sup Plat, CSG	
Det, Auto Sup Plat, CSG	
Det, Engr Sup Plat, CSG	
Det, Sig Sup Plat, CSG	
Det, GS Plat, CSG	
Det, Depot Plat, CSG	
Rcn Co, 1st MAR Div	Capt K. J. HOUGHTON
1st Amph Trac Bn, FMF	LtCol E. F. WANN
VMO-6	Maj V. J. GOTTSCHALK
ROK Marine Regt (-)	Col SHIN, KMC
2d Engr Spec Brig reinf	Col J. TWITTY, USA
1st CSG, SC, FMF, less dets	
1st Fum & Bath Plat	
1st Aerial Del Plat	
Naval Beach Gp 1, less dets	
7th MT Bn, SC, FMF	
73d Engr (C) Bn, USA	
50th Engr Port Const Co, USA	
65th Ord Amm Co, USA	

(3) RCT-7 Task Organization on landing at INCHON, KOREA, 21 September. Attachments reverted to parent control on arrival assembly areas.

RCT-7	Col H. L. LITZENBERG

7th Mar
3d Bn, 11th Mar
Co D, 1st MT Bn
Co D, 1st Tk Bn
Co D, 1st Engr Bn
Co E, 1st Med Bn
Co C, 1st SP Bn
Det, 1st Sig Bn (ANGLICO
2 & 2 SP Comm Sec)

(4) Intermediate temporary attachments and detachments during the period 15 September-7 October.

18 Sept-32nd RCT USA attached 1st Mar Div
19 Sep-SpOpnsCo USA attchd 1st Mar Div
32nd RCT detached 1st MarDiv reverted to 7th Inf Div
23 Sep-17th ROK Regt attchd 1st Mar Div
17th ROK Regt detached 1st Mar Div
24 Sep-3d Bn, 187th Airborne RCT USA Attchd 1st Mar Div 3d Bn, KMC Regt detached 1st Mar Div attached 3d Bn, 187th AB RCT 1st Amph Trac Bn, FMF, less 3 Cos, detached 1st Mar Div attchd 7th Inf Div Co A, 1st Amph Tk and Trac Bn, USA, detached 1st Mar Div attchd 7th Inf Div
25 Sept-3d Bn, 187th AB RCT detached 1st Mar Div, attchd X Corps 3d Bn, KMC Regt det 3d Bn, 187th AB RCT attchd 1st MarDiv 161st KMC Bn (redesignated 5th KMC Bn) attchd 1st Mar Div Sp Opns Co, USA detached 1st Mar Div, attchd 3d Bn, 187th ABRCT
26 Sep-3d Bn KMC Regt detached 1st Mar Div, attchd 187th AB RCT
(TF ABLE)
29 Sep-1st Amph Trac Bn, less 3d Cos, detached 7th Inf Div attchd 1st Mar Div
96th FA Bn, USA detached 1st Mar Div
30 Sep-50th AAA(AW) Bn attached 1st Mar Div
3 Oct-50th AAA(AW) Bn detached 1st Mar Div

(5) Completion of INCHON-SEOUL operation, 7 October, and prior to mounting out at INCHON.

1st Marine Division Reinf, FMF	MajGen O. P. SMITH
HqBn, 1st MarDiv	
163d MISD	
441st CIC	
Civ Asst Team	LtCol M. T. STARR
1st Sig Bn	
Carrier Plat, FMF	Maj R. L. SCHREIER
1st Serv Bn	LtCol C. L. BANKS
1st Ord Bn	Maj L. O. WILLIAMS
1st MT Bn	

1st Amph Trk Co, FMF	LtCol O. L. BEALL
1st Tk Bn	LtCol H. T. MILNE
1st Med Bn	Comdr H. B. JOHNSON, USN
1st SP Bn	LtCol H. P. CROWE
1st Engr Bn	LtCol J. H. PARTRIDGE
1st Mar	Col L. B. PULLER
5th Mar	LtCol R. L. MURRAY
7th Mar	Col H. L. LITZENBERG
11th Mar	
Btry C, 1st 4.5" Rkt Bn, FMF	Col J. H. BROWER
1st Amph Trac Bn, FMF	
less Co D	LtCol E. F. WANN
1st Armd Amph Bn, FMF	
less Cos C & D	LtCol F. H. COOPER
7th MT Bn, SC, FMF	Maj J. F. STEPKA
1st CSG, SC, FMF less dets;	
1st Fum & Bath Plat	
1st Aerial Del Plat	Col J. S. COOK

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Appendix D. Supplies and Equipment for Inchon

1st Marine Division Embarkation Order 1-50 of 31 August 1950 provided that the following supplies and equipment would be embarked in assigned shipping:

a. Class I

(1) Rations: 30 days as follows:

For attached Army units and 5th Marines (Reinf)

Individual Assault Type C: 5 days

(Combat Unit Loaded: 5 days)

Operational Type B: 25 days

(Unit Loaded: 25 days)

PX Accessories Pack: 30 days

(Combat Unit Loaded: 5 days)

(Unit Loaded: 10 days)

(Convoy Loaded: 15 days)

For 1st Marine Division (Reinf) (Less Army elements and 5th Marines [Reinf]): 5 days

Operational Type B (Convoy Loaded)

Food Packet, Individual Assault 1A1: 2 days

(In hands of individuals: 1 day)

Individual Combat, Type C: 10 days

(Combat Unit Loaded: 5 days)

(Unit Loaded: 5 days)

PX Accessories Pack: 30 days

(Combat Unit Loaded: 5 days)

(Unit Loaded: 10 days)

(Convoy Loaded: 15 days)

Small Detachment 5 in 1 Type: 5 days

(Unit Loaded: 5 days)

Individual Combat Type C

(Convoy Loaded-Corps Reserve: 150,000 Rations)

(In hands of 1st Serv Bn)

(2) Water

(a) All water containers filled, not less than 5 gallons per man combat loaded; 5 gallons per man to be unit loaded.

(b) Assault Elements: 2 filled canteens per individual.

(c) Others: 1 filled canteen.

b. Class II

(1) Essential Class II items as determined by unit commanders. Vehicles to be loaded on priority basis within available space.

(2) Initial (less chemical warfare) in hands of units.

(3) Chemical warfare in hands of 1st Serv Bn.

(4) 30 day replenishment in hands of appropriate service units.

(5) All distillation units to have high priority for unloading.

(6) No special services gear to be lifted in assault shipping.

(7) Tentage: not to exceed 10% of T/E allowance.

(8) Other Class II in accordance AdOrder 2-50.

c. Class III

(1) Vehicle tanks 3/4 full. Jeeps-1 filled expeditionary can (5 gal); all other vehicles: 2 filled cans (5 gal each).

(2) Replenishment: 30 days

Assault units:

(Combat Unit Load: 15 days)

(Unit Load: 15 days)

Other Units:

(Combat Unit Load: 5 days)

(Unit Load: 25 days)

d. Class IV

(1) In accordance with AdOrder 2-50.

e. Class V—5 units of fire

(1) Assault Units

(Combat Unit Load: 2 U/F)

(Unit Load: 3 U/F)

(2) Other than Assault Units

(Combat Unit Load: 1 U/F)

(Unit Load: 4 U/F)

(3) Flame thrower fuel: 15 U/F

(Combat Unit Load: 5 U/F)

(Unit Load: 10 U/F)

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Appendix E. Task Organization of Joint Task Force Seven

JOINT TASK FORCE SEVEN: VAdm Arthur D. Struble

Task Force 90--Attack Force: RAdm James H. Doyle

92.1 Landing Force: MajGen Oliver P. Smith

1st Marine Division (Reinforced)

92.11 Regimental Combat Team 1: Col Lewis B. Puller

92.11.1 Battalion Landing: LtCol Jack Hawkins

Team 1, 1st Marines

92.11.2 Battalion Landing: LtCol Alan Sutter

Team 2, 1st Marines

92.11.3 Battalion Landing: LtCol Thomas L. Ridge

Team 3, 1st Marines

92.12 Regimental Combat Team 5: LtCol Raymond L. Murray

92.12.1 Battalion Landing: LtCol George R. Newton

Team 1, 5th Marines

92.12.2 Battalion Landing: LtCol Harold R. Roise

Team 2, 5th Marines

90.00 Flagship Element

Mount McKinley (AGC): Capt Carter A. Printup

Eldorado (AGC; RAdm Lyman K. Thackrey embarked): Capt Joseph B. Stefanac

90.01 Tactical Air Control Element: Cdr Theophilus H. Moore

Tactical Air Squadron 1

90.02 Naval Beach Group Element: Capt Watson T. Singer

90.02.1 Headquarters Unit

90.02.2 Beachmaster Unit: LCdr Martin C. Sibitzky

90.02.3 Boat Unit 1: LCdr Herman E. Hock

90.02.4 Amphibious Construction Battalion: LCdr M. Ted Jacobs, Jr.

90.02.5 Underwater Demolition Team Unit: LCdr David F. Welch

90.03 Control Element: LCdr Clyde Allmon

Diachenko (APD): LCdr James R. Wilson

90.03.1 Control Unit Red: LCdr Ralph H. Schneeloch, Jr.

Horace A. Bass (APD): LCdr Alan Ray

90.03.2 Control Unit Green: Lt Reuben W. Berry

PCEC 896: Lt Reuben W. Berry

90.03.3 Control Unit Blue: Lt Theodore B. Clark
Wantuck (APD): LCdr John B. Thro
90.04 Administrative Element: Capt Virginius R. Roane
90.04.1 Service Unit
Consolation (AH): Capt Charles M. Ryan
12 LSU (plus additional LSUs on arrival; 12-20 LSU)
90.04.2 Repair and Salvage Unit: Cdr Emmanuel T. Goyette
Lipan: LCdr Howard K. Smith
Cree: Lt George E. Poore
Arikara (3 ATF): LCdr Kenneth A. Mundy
Conserver (ARS): Lt James L. Thompson
Askari (ARL): LCdr Robert J. Siegelman
YTB 406
Gunston Hall: Cdr Charles W. Musgrave
Fort Marion: Cdr Noah Adair, Jr.
Comstock (3 LSD): Cdr Emmanuel T. Goyette
90.1 Advance Attack Group: Capt Norman W. Sears
92.12.3 Advance Landing Force Unit
Battalion Landing Team 3: LtCol Robert D. Taplett
    5th Marines
90.11 Transport Element: Capt Norman W. Sears
Fort Marion: Cdr Noah Adair, Jr.
3 LSU embarked
90.11.1 Transport Unit: Cdr Selden C. Small
Horace A. Bess: LCdr Alan Ray
Diachenko: LCdr James R. Wilson
Wantuck: LCdr John B. Thro
90.2 Transport Group: Capt Virginius R. Roane
George Clymer: Capt Raymond S. Lamb
Cavalier: Capt Daniel J. Sweeney
Pickaway: Capt Samuel H. Crittenden, Jr.
Henrico: Capt John E. Fradd
Noble (5 APA): Capt Michael F. D. Flaherty
Union: Capt Gerald D. Zurmuchlen
Alshain: Capt Robert N. S. Clark
Achernar: Capt Crutchfield Adair
Oglethorpe: Capt Paul F. Heerbrandt
Seminole: Capt Henry Farrow

Thuban: Cdr Erle V. Dennett
Whiteside: Capt Eugene L. Lugibihl
Washburn (8 AKA): Capt James A. Prichard
President Jackson (AP): Capt Charles A. Ferriter
Gunston Hall (3 LSU embarked): Cdr Charles W. Musgrave
Comstock (3 LSU embarked): Cdr Emmanuel T. Goyette
90.3 Tractor Group: Capt Robert C. Peden
LST 611: Lt Delmar E. Blevins
LST 715: Lt Willie J. Gros
LST 742: Lt Robert B. Leonnig
LST 802: Lt Vladimir Fedorowicz
LST 845: Lt John F. Butler
LST 1048: Lt Rayburn M. Quinn
LST 1123: Lt Charles L. Wall
LST 1134: Lt William B. Faris
LST 1138: Lt Mike Stapleton
LST 857: Lt Dick Weidemeyer
LST 859: Lt Leland Tinsley
LST 898: Lt Robert M. Beckley
LST 914: Lt Ralph L. Holzhaus
LST 973: Lt Robert I. Trapp
LST 799: Lt Trumond E. Houston
LST 883: Lt Charles M. Miller
LST 975 (17 LST): Lt Arnold W. Harer
SCAJAP LSTs (30 LST)
LSM 419: Lt John R. Bradley
90.4 Transport Division 14: Capt Samuel G. Kelly
(7th RCT U. S. Marines and MAG 33 embarked; did not arrive Inchon until 21 Sept.)
Bayfield: Capt William E. Ferrall
Okanogan: Capt Timothy F. Donohue
Bexar: Capt Clarence E. Coffin, Jr.
Thomas Jefferson (4 APA): Capt Tyrrell D. Jacobs
Algol: Capt John A. Edwards
Winston: Capt Jack Maginnis
Montague (3 AKA): Capt Henry P. Wright, Jr.
Catamount: Cdr Kenneth Loveland
Colonial (2 LSD): Cdr Thomas J. Greene
90.5 Air Support Group: RAdm Richard W. Ruble

90.51 CVE Element: RAdm Richard W. Ruble
Badoeng Strait: Capt Arnold W. McKechnie
Sicily (2 CVE): Capt John S. Thach
90.52 CVE Screen: Cdr Byron L. Gurnette
Hanson (DDR): Cdr Cecil R. Welte
Taussig: Cdr William C. Meyer
George K. MacKenzie: Cdr William R. Laird, Jr.
Ernest G. Small (3 DD): Cdr Franklin C. Snow
90.6 Gunfire Support Group: RAdm John M. Higgins
90.61 Cruiser Element: RAdm John M. Higgins
90.6.2 Fire Support Unit 1: RAdm John M. Higgins
Toledo: Capt Richard F. Stout
Rochester: Capt Edward L. Woodyard
HMS *Kenya*: Capt P. W. Brock, RN
HMS *Jamaica*: Capt J. S. C. Salter, D.S.O., O.B.E., RN
90.62 Destroyer Element: Capt Halle C. Allan, Jr.
90.6.2 Fire Support Unit 2: Capt Halle C. Allan, Jr.
Mansfield: Cdr Edwin H. Headland
De Haven: Cdr Oscar B. Lungren
Lyman K. Swenson (3 DD): Cdr Robert A. Schelling
90.6.3 Fire Support Unit 3: Cdr Robert H. Close
Collett: Cdr Robert H. Close
Gurke: Cdr Frederick M. Radel
Henderson: Cdr William S. Stewart
90.63 LSMR Element: Cdr Clarence T. Doss, Jr.
90.6.4 Fire Support Unit 4: Cdr Clarence T. Doss, Jr.
LSMR 401: LCdr Melvin E. Bustard, Jr.
LSMR 403: Lt Frank G. Schettino
LSMR 404 (3 LSMR): Lt George M. Wrocklage
90.7 Screening and Protective Group: Capt Richard T. Spofford
Rowan (DD): Cdr Alan R. Josephson
Southerland (DDR): Cdr Homer E. Conrad
Bayonne: LCdr Harry A. Clark
Newport: LCdr Percy A. Lilly, Jr.
Evansville: LCdr Elliot V. Converse, Jr.
HMS *Mounts Bay*: Capt J. H. Unwin, D.S.C., RN
HMS *Whitesand Bay*: LCdr J. V. Brothers, RN
HMNZS *Tutira*: LCdr P. J. H. Hoare, RNZN

HMNZS *Pukaki* (7 PF): LCdr L. E. Herrick, D.S.C., RNZN
RFS *La Grandiere* (8 PF): Cdr Urbain E. Cabanie
Pledge (AM): Lt Richard Young
Partridge: Lt(jg) Robert C. Fuller, Jr.
Mockingbird: Lt(jg) Stanley P. Gary
Kite: Lt(jg) Nicholas Grkovic
Osprey: Lt(jg) Philip Levin
Redhead: Lt(jg) T. R. Howard
Chatterer (6 AMS): Lt(jg) James P. McMahon
90.8 Second Echelon Movement Group: Capt Louis D. Sharp, Jr.
92.2 7th Infantry Division (Reinforced)
General G. M. Randall: Capt Alexander C. Thorington
General J. C. Breckinridge: Capt Fremont B. Eggers
General H. W. Butner (3 AP): Capt Dale E. Collins
Fred C. Ainsworth
General Leroy Eltinge
Aiken Victory
Private Sadao S. Munemori (4 T-AP)
SS *African Rainbow*
SS *African Pilot*
SS *Robin Kirk*
SS *Helen Lykes*
SS *Meredith Victory*
SS *Empire Marshall*
SS *Mormacport*
SS *Lawrence Victory*
SS *Southwind*
SS *Beaver Victory*
SS *Robin Goodfellow*
SS *California Bear*
90.9 Third Echelon Movement Group: Capt Albert E. Jarrell
X Corps troops
General William A. Mann (AP): Capt Charles H. Walker
General William Weigel
Marine Phoenix (2 T-AP)
SS *Robin Trent*
SS *Dolly Turman*
SS *Charles Lykes*

SS *Twin Falls Victory*
SS *American Veteran*
SS *American Attorney*
SS *Empire Wallace*
SS *Green Bay Victory*
SS *P. & T. Navigator*
SS *Luxembourg Victory*
SS *Belgium Victory*
SS *Bessemer Victory*
SS *Cotton State*
91 Blockade and Covering Force: RAdm Sir William G. Andrewes, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., RN
HMS *Triumph* (CVL): Capt A. D. Torlesse, D.S.O., RN
HMS *Ceylon* (CL): Capt C. F. J. L. Davies, D.S.C., RN
HMS *Cockade*: LtCdr H. J. Lee, D.S.C., RN
HMS *Charity*: LtCdr P. R. G. Worth, D.S.C., RN
HMCS *Cayuga*: Capt Jeffry V. Brock, D.S.C., RCN
HMCS *Sioux*: Cdr P. D. Taylor, RCN
HMCS *Athabaskan*: Cdr R. T. Welland, D.S.C., RCN
HMAS *Bataan*: Cdr W. B. M. Marks, RAN
HMAS *Warramunga*: Cdr O. H. Becher, D.S.C., RAN
HNethMS *Evertsen* (8 DD): LtCdr D. J. Van Doorninck
ROK NAVAL FORCES: Cdr Michael J. Luosey, USN
Paik Doo San (PC 701): Cdr Chai Yong Nam, ROKN
Kum Kang San (PC 702): Cdr Lee Hi Jong, ROKN
Chi Ri San (PC 704; 4 PC): LCdr Hyun Sibak, ROKN
YMS 302
YMS 303
YMS 306
YMS 307
YMS 501
YMS 502
YMS 503
YMS 510
YMS 512
YMS 515
YMS 518 (11 YMS)
TASK FORCE 77--FAST CARRIER GROUP: RAdm Edward C. Ewen (in Philippine Sea)
Carrier Division 1: RAdm Edward C. Ewen

Philippine Sea (CV): Capt Willard K. Goodney
Carrier Division 3: RAdm John M. Hoskins
Valley Forge (CV): Capt Lester K. Rice
Carrier Division 5
Boxer (CV): Capt Cameron Briggs
77.1 Support Group: Capt Harry H. Henderson
Worcester: Capt Harry H. Henderson
77.2 Screen Group: Capt Charles W. Parker
DesDiv 31: Capt Charles W. Parker
Shelton: Cdr Charles B. Jackson, Jr.
James E. Kyes: Cdr Fran M. Christiansen
Eversole (3 DD): Cdr Charles E. Phillips
Higbee (DDR): Cdr Elmer Moore
DesDiv 111: Capt Jeane R. Clark
Wiltsie: Cdr Carrol W. Brigham
Theodore E. Chandler: Cdr William J. Collum, Jr.
Hamner (3 DD): Cdr Jack J. Hughes
Chevalier (DDR): Cdr Blake B. Booth
DesDiv 112: Capt Bernard F. Roeder
Ozbourn: Cdr Charles O. Akers
McKean: Cdr Harry L. Reiter, Jr.
Hollister (3 DD): Cdr Hugh W. Howard
Frank Knox (DDR): Cdr Sam J. Caldwell, Jr.
CortRon 1
Fletcher: Cdr W. M. Lowry
Radford (2 DDE): Cdr Elvin C. Ogle
TASK FORCE 79--COMMANDER SERVICE SQUADRON 3: Capt Bernard L. Austin
79.1 Mobile Logistic Service Group: Capt John G. McClaughry
Cacapon (Initially): Capt John G. McClaughry
Passumpsic (Initially; 2 AO): Capt Frank I. Winant, Jr.
Mount Katmai (AE): Capt Albert S. Carter
Graffias (AF): Capt William W. Fitts
79.2 Objective Area Logistic Group: Capt Philip H. Ross
Navasota (Initially; AO): Capt Robert O. Strange
Virgo (AKA): Capt Philip H. Ross
Grainger (AK): Cdr Horace C. Laird, Jr.
Hewell: Lt Stanley Jaworski
Ryer: Lt Gurley P. Chatelain

Estero (3 AKL): Lt Tom Watson

79.3 Logistic Support Group: Capt Bernard L. Austin

Piedmont: Capt James R. Topper

Dixie (2 AD): Capt Jose M. Cabanillas

Kermit Roosevelt (ARG): Cdr Lester C. Conwell

Jason (ARH): Capt William B. Epps

Cimarron (AO): Capt Stanley G. Nichols

Warrick: Capt George Fritschmann

Uvalde (2 AKA): Capt Louis F. Teuscher

Nemasket (AOG): Lt Harry F. Dixon

Karin (AF): LCdr Berley L. Maddox

79.4 Salvage and Maintenance Group

Mataco (ATF): Lt Frank P. Wilson

Bolster (ARS): Lt Billis L. Whitworth

TASK FORCE 99--PATROL AND RECONNAISSANCE FORCE: RAdm George R. *Henderson*

Curtiss (AV): Capt Anson C. Perkins

Gardiners Bay (AVP): Capt Frank G. Raysbrook

Salisbury Sound (AV): Capt Francis R. Jones

99.1 Search and Reconnaissance Group: Capt Joseph M. Carson

99.11 Patrol Squadron 6: Cdr Arthur F. Farwell, Jr.

99.12 88th Squadron RAF: Squadron Leader P. Helme

99.13 209th Squadron RAF: Squadron Leader P. Le Cheminant

99.2 Patrol and Escort Group: Capt Joseph M. Carson

99.21 Patrol Squadron 42: Cdr Gordon F. Smale

99.22 Patrol Squadron 47: Cdr Joe H. Arnold

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Appendix F. Final Troop List of Division for the Inchon Landing

Below, as nearly as can be determined, is the troop list of the 1st Marine Division (Reinf) for the Inchon Landing. The list is correct as to units included, but it has been difficult to reconcile the totals given for units.

Headquarters Bn: 916 actual strength
1st Serv Bn: 873
lst Sig Bn: 652 (Includes Carrier Platoon, FMF.)
Ist MT Bn: 686
1st Med Bn: 566
1st Am Trk Co: 244
1st Ord Bn: 533
1st Shore Party Bn: 648 (Includes Detachments of Naval Beach Group 1.)
1st Engr Bn: 1,038
1st Tank Bn: 811 (Includes Anti-tank Platoons of the Anti-tank Companies of the 1st and 5th Marines.)
11th Marine: 2,360 (Includes Battery C, 1st 4.5” Rocket Bn, FMF.)
1st Marines: 3, 850
5th Marines: 3,611
7th Marines: 0
1st Am Trac Bn: 868
1st CSG: 1,291 (Includes 1st Fumigation and Bath Plat., FMF; 1st Aerial Delivery Plat., FMF; and Naval Beach Group 1 [less dets. with the 1st Shore Party Bn].)
7th MT Bn: 430
Det MTACS-2: 55
VMO-6: 62
Total Marine Corps and Navy: 19,494

Korean MC Regt: 2,786

Co A, 56th Am Trac Bn, USA: 151
Hq Det, USA: 38
Sig Det, USA: 37
96th FA Bn, USA: 388
2d Engr Spec Brig, USA: 952
73d Engr (c) Bn, USA: 724
50th Engr Port Const Co., USA: 214

65th Ord Amm Co., USA: 256

Total U.S. Army: 2,760

GRAND TOTAL: 25,040

The following units of the Division did not participate in the Inchon Landing:

RCT-7, en route to the Far East

Administrative Center Pusan, Korea

Division Administrative Center, 1st Armd Amph TracBn, 17-year-olds and casuals at Kobe, Japan

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Appendix G. Summary of Operation Orders Issued by 1st Marine Division for the Inchon-Seoul Campaign

1-50, 9 Aug 50: Movement of the Division to the Far East

2-50, 4 Sep 50: Inchon Landing

3-50, 15 Sep 50 (2328): Seizure of Objective O-3 short of the FBHL

4-50, 16 Sep 50 (1045): Seizure of FBHL

5-50, 16 Sep 50 (1600): Capture of Kimpo Airfield. Prepare to seize Corps Phase Line C-C

6-50, 18 Sep 50 (1814): Seizure and preparation of crossing of Han River by 5th Marines. 1st Marines to continue attack relieved on the right (south) flank by the 32nd Infantry now attached to 1st MarDiv

7-50, 19 Sep 50 (1430): Crossing of the Han River by the 5th Marines and uncovering crossing sites by 1st Marines

8-50, 20 Sep 50: Continuation of attack by 5th Marines toward Seoul to uncover the northern approaches of the main Seoul bridge sites. Continuation of attack by 1st Marines to seize the southern and western approaches and the Seoul ridge sites, prepared to cross the Han River in that vicinity

9-50, 23 Sep 50 (1200): Continuation of attack by 1st Marines to seize high ground south of the road and rail bridges leading to Seoul prepared to cross the Han River. Continuation of attack by 5th Marines to uncover the bridge sites. Crossing of the Han River at Haengju by the 7th Marines to seize objectives covering the north flank of the Division

10-50, 23 Sep 50 (2200): Crossing of the Han River by the 1s Marines. Continuation of the attack by the 5th Marines. 7th Marines to continue or Mission assigned by 1st MarDiv OpnO 9-50

11-50, 24 Sep 50 (2400): Continuation of the attack with all three regiments to capture Seoul and the high ground north thereof

12-50, 26 Sep 50 (1230): Continuation of the attack to capture Seoul. Boundary between 5th and 7th Marines changed to pinch out 5th Marines beyond the Government Palace. The 7th Marines to make an enveloping attack from the northwest

13-50, 29 Sep 50 (2000): Continuation of the attack to the east to secure Seoul and conduct a reconnaissance in force to the northwest prepared to relieve elements of the 7th Infantry Division north of the Han River. Seizure of prescribed Corps blocking positions

14-50, 30 Sep 50 (1500): Continuation of the attack and prescription of blocking positions to be occupied by the Division

15-50, 5 Oct 50: Movement of the Division to staging area in the vicinity of Inchon in anticipation of the move in assault shipping to Wonsan

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Appendix I. Congratulatory Messages

The following messages, of a commendatory nature, were transmitted to the 1st Marine Division by the X Corps upon completion of the Inchon-Seoul Campaign.

From CG, X Corps to CG, 1st Marine Division under date of 28 September 1950

"On this date the X Corps attained one of its distinct objectives—the securing of the city of Seoul. In recognition of the heroic efforts of the officers and men of the 1st Marine Division I extend my deepest thanks and my continuing admiration for a task well done." Signed Edward M. Almond, Major General, United States Army, Commanding.

From the President to General MacArthur

"I know that I speak for the entire American people when I send you my warmest congratulations on the victory which has been achieved under your leadership in Korea. Few operations in military history can match either the delaying action where you traded space for time in which to build up your forces, or the brilliant maneuver which has now resulted in the liberation of Seoul. I am particularly impressed by the splendid cooperation of our Army, Navy, and Air Force. I wish you would extend my thanks and congratulations to the commanders of those services—Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, Vice Admiral Charles T. Joy and Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer. The unification of our arms established by you and by them has set a shining example. My thanks and the thanks of the people of all the free nations go out to your gallant forces—soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen—from the United States and the other countries fighting for freedom under the United Nations Banner. I salute you all, and say to all of you from all of us at home, 'well and nobly done.' " Signed Harry S. Truman.

From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to General MacArthur

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff are proud of the great successes you have achieved. We realize that they would have been impossible without brilliant and audacious leadership and without the full coordination and the fighting spirit of all forces and all arms. From the sudden initiation of hostilities you have exploited to the utmost all capabilities and opportunities. Your transition from defensive to offensive operations was magnificently planned, timed, and executed. You have given new inspiration to the freedom-loving peoples of the world. We remain completely confident that the great task entrusted to you by the United Nations will be carried to a successful conclusion."

From CG, X Corps to all units of the X Corps under date of 2 October 1950

"It is desired that this message be disseminated to all members of your command. The achievements of

the U. N. forces comprising the X Corps should be a pride and inspiration to all who participated in the recent operations so successfully concluded and which resulted in the liberation of Seoul, the capital city of Korea. Your efforts have greatly contributed in freeing the Republic of Korea of the forces of Communism that threatened to enslave her people. Koreans may now take their rightful place among the freedom-loving people of the world. History will long remember the feat of arms that you, through your untiring efforts and superb valor have accomplished. I am proud of the units comprising the X Corps. Each of you should be proud of the unit in which you serve, the nation it represents, and your part in this military operation. I am confident that the tasks that are before us will be accomplished with the same splendid cooperation, leadership, and determination that you have so recently displayed." Signed Major General Edward M. Almond, Commanding General, X Corps.

Division Commander's Message to the 1st Marine Division upon Completion of the Inchon-Seoul Campaign

On 8 October 1950, the Division Commander issued Division Memorandum No. 192-50, quoted below, in recognition of the accomplishments of the 1st Marine Division during the Inchon-Seoul Campaign:

"1. Upon completion of the campaign in the Inchon-Seoul area of Korea I desire to express my appreciation and admiration of the superb manner in which all hands have cooperated in bringing to a successful conclusion a very difficult operation.

"2. From the time the decision was made to bring the Division to war strength and to commit it in Korea until the city of Seoul was captured, urgency has been the order of the day. Urgency has been necessary because tidal conditions dictated that a landing at Inchon be made on September 15th. For the Division this meant that its elements in the United States had to be brought to war strength immediately, had to be re-equipped and, in the absence of amphibious shipping, had to be loaded on such other ships as could hurriedly be made available. Upon arrival in Kobe, Japan, there was the pressing necessity of reloading in minimum time in amphibious shipping, with the disruption caused by a destructve typhoon. Elements of the Division comprising the First Provisional Marine Brigade were not released from combat in South Korea until midnight of September 5th and between that date and September 12th were required to move to Pusan, re-equip and mount out.

"3. It is now history that the First Marine Division did meet its commitments, did land at Inchon on September 15th under conditions which required the maximum of coordination, aggressive action, and devotion to duty; went on to capture the Kimpo airfield three days after landing, to effect a difficult amphibious crossing of the Han River, and to liberate the city of Seoul by driving the North Korean invaders far beyond its limits.

"4. I fully appreciate, and I am sure the American people now fully appreciate and realize, that only well-trained and determined troops, completely devoted to duty, could have accomplished what the First Marine Division did in Korea. You have established your place in history. The memory of those who made the supreme sacrifice in the accomplishment of this mission will forever remain an inspiration to all Marines."

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Appendix K. Comments on Close Air Support Provided by 1st Marine Aircraft Wing

HEADQUARTERS
7TH INFANTRY DIVISION ARTILLERY
Office of the Commanding General
APO 7
10 January 1951
Subject: Marine Air Support
To: Commandant, United States Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.
Thru: Commanding General, 7th Infantry Division, APO 7.

1. In my capacity as Division Artillery Commander and Fire Support Coordinator of the Seventh Infantry Division I have been able to observe closely the most effective system of close air support currently used by the Marines. During the period 19 September to 20 December 1950, close air support of this division was furnished almost exclusively by the First Marine Air Wing.

2. In an effort to parallel as nearly as possible the Marine system of controlling close support air this division had attached to it the Far East Detachment, ANGLICO, FMF, Atlantic. This detachment was augmented by nine (9) Tactical Air Control Parties, Fifth U. S. Air Force, trained in the Marine system of control by the ANGLICO detachment. This enabled the placement of Tactical Air Control Parties with each infantry battalion. Such placement proved to be ideal and gave the battalion commander a means of controlling and coordinating the close air support he received.

3. It is worthy to note that in 57 days of combat 1024 sorties were flown by Marine Aircraft in close support of the division without a single casualty among our own troops due to friendly air action. This record I attribute to the fact that adequate control was available with front line units. In many instances Marine planes were bombing and strafing within 200 yards of our front lines.

4. I wish to express my appreciation for the superior cooperation of Captain Charles E. Crew, 023897, USMC, Far East Detachment, ANGLICO, FMF, Atlantic and his enlisted assistants during the period 19 September 1950 to 20 December 1950. In his capacity as Marine Air Liaison Officer to the Seventh Infantry Division Captain Crew functioned as a member of the division team with a common objective. The excellent air support received by this division was due in no small part to the enthusiastic manner in which Captain Crew performed. Unfortunately, I was not able to observe the work of the other two Marine Forward Air Controllers attached to the division. Reports indicate that they performed equally as well.

5. Again, allow me to reemphasize my appreciation for the outstanding air support received by this division. The Marine system of control, in my estimation, approaches the ideal and I firmly believe that a similar system should be adopted as standard for Army Divisions.

(s) HOMER W. KIEFER

Brigadier General, USA
Commanding

[1st Endorsement]
Subject: Marine Air Support
Headquarters, 7th Infantry Division, APO 7 12 January 1951
To: Commanding General, X Corps, APO 909

I wish to express my own appreciation to all members of the 1st Marine Air Wing who assisted in the fine air support given to the 7th Infantry Division and also to commend Forward Air Controllers, Captain Edward P. Stamford and 1st Lieutenant Jack R. Grey as well as Captain Crew for outstanding performances of duty in connection with the support.
(s) DAVID G. BARR
Maj Gen., USA
Commanding

[2nd Endorsement]
Headquarters, X Corps, APO 909, 16 January 1951
To: Commanding General, Eighth United States Army, APO 301

1. The effective close air support rendered by the 1st Marine Air Wing through the Forward Air Controllers with the 7th Infantry Division greatly aided in the successful accomplishment of X Corps operations. The actions of the personnel concerned are worthy of commendation, and I wish to add my appreciation for their assistance.

2. Further, I wish to emphasize the statements of General Kiefer in paragraph 5, basic letter, in which he endorses the Marine system of Tactical Air Control. It has proved itself on every occasion.
(s) EDWARD M. ALMOND
Major General, United States Army
Commanding
Comments on Close Air Support

[3rd Endorsement]
CHO FEC-SCAP
AG RECORDS
FIEDAG 330.13
4795
AG 373 KAR (10 Jan 51)
Subject: Marine Air Support
Hq Eighth U.S. Army Korea (EU AK), APO 301 30 JAN 1951
TO: Commander-in-Chief, Far East, APO 500

I note with gratification the splendid spirit of cooperation that existed between the 1st Marine Air Wing and the 7th Infantry Division in recent combat operations. I congratulate not only Captain Crew, Captain Stamford, and Lieutenant Grey but all officers and men of the 1st Marine Air Wing for their magnificent performance.

(s) M.B. RIDGWAY
Lieutenant General, United States Army
Commanding

[4th Endorsement]
AG 330.13 (10 Jan 51) GA
General Headquarters, Far East Command, APO 500, 4 February 1951
To: Commander, United States Naval Forces, Far East, Navy No. 1165

Commander-in-Chief, Far East, takes pleasure in forwarding this correspondence which again illustrated the outstanding support that Marine Air is providing ground forces in the Korean operations.

By Command of General MacArthur
(s) K.B. BUSH
Brigadier General, USA
Adjutant General

CNFE/P15 05/RVW/the
Serial: 1213 12 Feb 1951
Fifth Endorsement on CG, 7th INFDIVART ltr of 10 Jan 1951
From: Commander Naval Forces, Far East
To: Commandant, United States Marine Corps
Via: (1) Commanding General, First Marine Air Wing
(2) Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet
Subj: Marine Air Support

1. Readdressed and forwarded.

2. Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, takes great pleasure in forwarding correspondence and desires to recognize also the outstanding performance of duty of Marine Corps personnel concerned.

(s) C. T. JOY

The Inchon-Seoul Operation
Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Appendix L. Presidential Unit Citation

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

FIRST MARINE DIVISION, REINFORCED

for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from 15 September to 11 October 1950. In the face of a determined enemy and against almost insurmountable obstacles, including disadvantageous tidal and beach conditions on the western coast of Korea, the First Marine Division, Reinforced, rapidly and successfully effected the amphibious seizure of Inch'on in an operation without parallel in the history of amphibious warfare. Fully aware that the precarious situation of friendly ground forces fighting desperately against the continued heavy pressure of a numerically superior hostile force necessitated the planning and execution of this extremely hazardous operation within a period of less than thirty days, and cognizant of the military importance of its assigned target, the Division moved quickly into action and, on 15 September, by executing three well-coordinated attacks over highly treacherous beach approaches defended by resolute enemy troops, captured the island of Wolmi-do, the city of Inch'on and Kimp'o Airfield, and rendered invaluable assistance in the capture of Seoul. As a result of its aggressive attack, the Division drove the hostile forces in hasty retreat over thirty miles in the ensuing ten days, completely severed vital hostile communication and supply lines and greatly relieved enemy pressure on other friendy ground units, thereby permitting these units to break out from their Pusan beachhead and contributing materially to the total destruction of hostile ground forces in southern Korea. The havoc and destruction wrought on an enemy flushed with previous victories and the vast accomplishments in turning the tide of battle from a weakening defensive to a vigorous offensive action reflect the highest credit upon the officers and men of the First Marine Division, Reinforced, and the United States Naval Service."

The following reinforcing units of the First Marine Division participated in operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from 15 September to 11 October 1950:

Fleet Marine Force Units and Detachments: Radio Relay Platoon, 1st Signal Operations Company; Battery C, 1st 4.5 Inch Rocket Battalion; 1st Amphibian Truck Company; 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion (less Company "D"); 1st Combat Service Group, Service Command; 1st Fumigation and Bath Platoon; 1st Aerial Delivery Platoon; 7th Motor Transport Battalion, Service Command; 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion; Detachment Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron Two; Team #1, First Provisional Historical Platoon; Marine Observation Squadron Six; Marine Aircraft Group Thirty-Three, Reinforced, including Headquarters Squadron Thirty-Three, Marine Service Squadron Thirty-Three, Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron One, Marine

Fighter Squadron Two Hundred Twelve, Marine Fighter Squadron Two Hundred Fourteen, Marine Fighter Squadron Three Hundred Twelve, Marine Fighter Squadron Three Hundred Twenty-Three, Marine Night Fighter Squadron Five Hundred Thirteen, and Marine Night Fighter Squadron Five Hundred Forty-Two.

United States Navy Units: Naval Beach Group One.

United States Army Units: Detachment 205th Signal Repair Company; Detachment 4th Signal Battalion; 163rd Military Intelligence Service Detachment; Company "A" Reinforced, 56th Amphibian Tractor Battalion; 96th Field Artillery Battalion; 441st Counter-Intelligence Corps Detachment; 2nd Engineer Special Brigade; 73rd Engineer (C) Battalion; 50th Engineer Port Construction Company; 65th Ordnance Ammunition Company; 32nd Regimental Combat Team; Special Operations Company; 3rd Battalion, 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team; and the 50th Antiaircraft Artillery Air Warning Battalion.

For the President,

(s) DAN A. KIMBALL

Secretary of the Navy

The Inchon-Seoul Operation
Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

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The Chosin Reservoir Campaign

Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Foreword

THE BREAKOUT of the 1st Marine Division from the Chosin Reservoir area will long be remembered as one of the inspiring epics of our history. It is also worthy of consideration as a campaign in the best tradition of American military annals.

The ability of the Marines to fight their way through twelve Chinese divisions over a 78-mile mountain road in sub-zero weather cannot be explained by courage and endurance alone. It also owed to the high degree of professional forethought and skill as well as the "uncommon valor" expected of all Marines.

A great deal of initiative was required of unit commanders, and tactics had to be improvised at times on the spur of the moment to meet unusual circumstances. But in the main, the victory was gained by firm discipline and adherence to time-tested military principles. Allowing for differences in arms, indeed, the Marines of 1950 used much the same fundamental tactics as those employed on mountain roads by Xenophon and his immortal Ten Thousand when they cut their way through Asiatic hordes to the Black Sea in the year 401 B.C.

When the danger was greatest, the 1st Marine Division might have accepted an opportunity for air evacuation of troops after the destruction of weapons and supplies to keep them from falling into the enemy's hands. But there was never a moment's hesitation. The decision of the commander and the determination of all hands to come out fighting with all essential equipment were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Marine Corps.

--Gen. R. McC. Pate, USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps

The Chosin Reservoir Campaign

Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Preface

THIS IS THE THIRD in a series of five volumes dealing with the operations of the United States Marine Corps in Korea during the period 2 August 1950 to 27 July 1953. Volume III presents in detail the operations of the 1st Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing as a part of X Corps, USA, in the Chosin Reservoir campaign.

The time covered in this book extends from the administrative landing at Wonsan on 26 October 1950 to the Hungnam evacuation which ended on Christmas Eve. The record would not be complete, however, without reference to preceding high-level strategic decisions in Washington and Tokyo which placed the Marines in northeast Korea and governed their employment.

Credit is due the U.S. Army and Navy for support on land and sea, and the U.S. Navy and Air Force for support in the air. But since this is primarily a Marine Corps history, the activities of other services are described here only in sufficient detail to show Marine operations in their proper perspective.

The ideal of the authors has been to relate the epic of the Chosin Reservoir breakout from the viewpoint of the man in the foxhole as well as the senior officer at the command post. Grateful acknowledgment is made to the 142 Marine officers and men who gave so generously of their time by contributing 338 narratives, letters, and interviews. In many instances this material was so detailed that some could not be used, because of space limitations. But all will go into the permanent Marine archives for the benefit of future historians.

Thanks are also extended to the Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as Marine officers, who offered valuable comments and criticisms after reading the preliminary drafts of chapters. Without this assistance no accurate and detailed account could have been written.

The maps contained in this volume, as in the previous ones, have been prepared by the Reproduction Section, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia. The advice of officers of the Current History Branch of the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, has also been of aid in the preparation of these pages.

--Maj. Gen. E. W. Snedeker, USMC, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3

The Chosin Reservoir Campaign

Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Chapter 1. Problems of Victory

IT IS A LESSON of history that questions of how to use a victory can be as difficult as problems of how to win one. This truism was brought home forcibly to the attention of the United Nations (UN) heads, both political and military, during the last week of September 1950. Already, with the fighting still in progress, it had become evident that the UN armies were crushing the forces of Communism in Korea, as represented by the remnants of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA).

Only a month before, such a result would have seemed a faint and unrealistic hope. Late in August the hard-pressed Eighth U.S. Army in Korea (EUSAK) was defending that southeast corner of the peninsula known as the Pusan Perimeter.

"Nothing fails like success," runs a cynical French proverb, and the truth of this adage was demonstrated militarily when the dangerously over-extended NKPA forces paid the penalty of their tenuous supply line on 15 September 1950. That was the date of the X Corps amphibious assault at Inchon, with the 1st Marine Division as landing force spearheading the advance on Seoul.

X Corps was the strategic anvil of a combined operation as the Eighth Army jumped off next day to hammer its way out of the Pusan Perimeter and pound northward toward Seoul. When elements of the two UN forces met just south of the Republic of Korea (ROK) capital on 26 September, the routed NKPA remnants were left only the hope of escaping northward across the 38th parallel.[1]

The bold strategic plan leading up to this victory—one of the most decisive ever won by U.S. land, sea and air forces—was largely the concept of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, USA, who was Commander in Chief of the United Nations Command (CinCUNC) as well as U.S. Commander in Chief in the Far East (CinCFE). It was singularly appropriate, therefore, that he should have returned the political control of the battle-scarred ROK capital to President Syngman Rhee on 29 September. Marine officers who witnessed the ceremony have never forgotten the moving spectacle of the American general and the fiery Korean patriot, both past their 70th birthdays, as they stood together under the shell-shattered skylight of the Government Palace.[2]

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Chapter 1. Problems of Victory
Decision to Cross the 38th Parallel

"Where do we go from here?" would hardly have been an oversimplified summary of the questions confronting UN leaders when it became apparent that the NKPA forces were defeated. In order to appraise the situation, it is necessary to take a glance at preceding events.

As early as 19 July, the dynamic ROK leader had made it plain that he did not propose to accept the pre-invasion *status quo.* He served notice that his forces would unify Korea by driving to the Manchurian border. Since the Communists had violated the 38th Parallel, the aged Rhee declared, this imaginary demarcation between North and South no longer existed. He pointed out that the sole purpose of the line in the first place had been to divide Soviet and American occupation zones after World War II, in order to facilitate the Japanese surrender and pave the way for a democratic Korean government.

In May 1948, such a government had come about in South Korea by popular elections, sponsored and supervised by the UN. These elections had been scheduled for all Korea but were prohibited by the Russians in their zone. The Communists not only ignored the National Assembly in Seoul, but also arranged their own version of a governing body in Pyongyang two months later. The so-called North Korean People's Republic thus became another of the Communist puppet states set up by the USSR.

That the United Nations did not recognize the North Korean state in no way altered its very real status as a politico-military fact. For obvious reasons, then, all UN decisions relating to the Communist state had to take into account the possibility of reactions by Soviet Russia and Red China, which shared Korea's northern boundary.

At the outbreak of the conflict on 25 June 1950, the UN Security Council had, by a vote of 9–0, called for an immediate end to the fighting and the withdrawal of all NKPA forces to the 38th Parallel.[3] This appeal having gone unheeded, the Council on 27 June recommended "... that the Members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.'[4] It was the latter authorization, supplemented by another resolution on 7 July, that led to military commitments by the United States and to the appointment of General MacArthur as over-all UN Commander.

These early UN actions constituted adequate guidance in Korea until the Inchon landing and EUSAK's counteroffensive turned the tide. With the NKPA in full retreat, however, and UN Forces rapidly approaching the 38th Parallel, the situation demanded re-evaluation, including supplemental instructions to the military commander. The question arose as to whether the North Koreans should be allowed sanctuary beyond the parallel, possibly enabling them to reorganize for new aggression. It will be recalled that Syngman Rhee had already expressed his thoughts forcibly in this connection on 19 July; and the ROK Army translated thoughts into action on 1 October by crossing the border.

Click here to view map

The UN, in its 7 July resolution, having authorized the United States to form a unified military force and appoint a supreme commander in Korea, it fell upon the Administration of President Harry S. Truman to translate this dictum into workaday reality. Aiding the Chief Executive and his Cabinet in this delicate task with its far-reaching implications were the Joint U.S. Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The Army member, General J. Lawton Collins, also functioned as Executive Agent of JCS for the United Nations Command in Korea, thus keeping intact the usual chain of command from the Army Chief of Staff to General MacArthur, who now served both the U.S. and

UN.[5]

Late in August, two of the Joint Chiefs, General Collins and Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, USN, had flown to Japan to discuss the forthcoming Inchon landing with General MacArthur. In the course of the talks, it was agreed that CinCUNC's objective should be the *destruction* of the North Korean forces, and that ground operations should be extended beyond the 38th Parallel to achieve this goal. The agreement took the form of a recommendation, placed before Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson on 7 September.[6]

A week later, JCS informed MacArthur that President Truman had approved certain "conclusions" relating to the Korean conflict, but that these were not yet to be construed as final decisions. Among other things, the Chief Executive accepted the reasoning that UN Forces had a legal basis for engaging the NKPA north of the Parallel. MacArthur would plan operations accordingly, JCS directed, but would carry them out only after being granted explicit permission.[7]

The historic authorization, based on recommendations of the National Security Council to President Truman, reached General Headquarters (GHQ), Tokyo, in a message dispatched by JCS on 27 September:

"Your military objective is the destruction of the North Korean Armed Forces. In attaining this objective you are authorized to conduct military operations, including amphibious and airborne landings or ground operations north of the 38th Parallel in Korea, provided that at the time of such operations there has been no entry into North Korea by major Soviet or Chinese Communist Forces, no announcement of intended entry, nor a threat to counter our operations militarily in North Korea. . . ."

The lengthy message abounded in paragraphs of caution, reflecting the desire of both the UN and the United States to avoid a general war. Not discounting the possibility of intervention by Russia or Red China, JCS carefully outlined MacArthur's courses of action for several theoretical situations. Moreover, he was informed that certain broad restrictions applied regardless of developments:

". . . under no circumstances, however, will your forces cross the Manchurian or USSR borders of Korea and, as a matter of policy, no non-Korean Ground Forces will be used in the northeast provinces bordering the Soviet Union or in the area along the Manchurian border. Furthermore, support of your operations north or south of the 38th parallel will not include Air or Naval action against Manchuria or against USSR territory. . . ."[8]

Thus MacArthur had the green light, although the signal was shaded by various qualifications. On 29 September, the new Secretary of Defense, George C. Marshall, told him in a message, ". . . We want you to feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed north of 38th parallel. . . . "[9]

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Chapter 1. Problems of Victory
Surrender Message to NKPA Forces

Meanwhile, a step was taken by the U.S. Government on 27 September in the hope that hostilities might end without much further loss or risk for either side. By dispatch, JCS authorized MacArthur to announce, at his discretion, a suggested surrender message to the NKPA.[10] Framed by the U.S. State Department, the message was broadcast on 1 October and went as follows:

"To: The Commander-in-chief, North Korean Forces. The early and total defeat and complete destruction of your Armed Forces and war making potential is now inevitable. In order that the decision of the United Nations may be carried out with a minimum of further loss of life and destruction of property, I, as the United Nations Commander-in-Chief, call up on you and the forces under your command, in whatever part of Korea situated, forthwith to lay down your arms and cease hostilities under such military supervision as I may direct and I call upon you at once to liberate all United Nations prisoners of war and civilian internees under your control and to make adequate provision for their protection, care, maintenance, and immediate transportation to such places as I indicate.

"North Korean forces, including prisoners of war in the hands of the United Nations Command, will continue to be given the care indicated by civilized custom and practice and permitted to return to their homes as soon as practicable.

"I shall anticipate your early decision upon this opportunity to avoid the further useless shedding of blood and destruction of property."[11]

The surrender broadcast evoked no direct reply from Kim Il Sung, Premier of North Korea and Commander in Chief of the NKPA. Instead, the reaction of the Communist bloc came ominously from another quarter. Two days after MacArthur's proclamation, Red China's Foreign Minister Chou En-Lai informed K. M. Panikkar, the Indian Ambassador in Peiping, that China would intervene in the event UN forces crossed the 38th Parallel. He added, however, that such action would not be forthcoming if only ROK troops entered North Korea. [12]

It will be recalled that the JCS authorization of 27 September permitted operations north of the Parallel" . . . provided that at the time of such operations there has been no entry into North Korea by major Soviet or Chinese Communist Forces, *no announcement of intended entry, nor a threat to counter our operations militarily in North Korea.* . . . "[13] In view of the last two provisos, MacArthur's plans for crossing the border could conceivably have been cancelled after Chou's announcement. But optimism over the course of the war ran high among the United Nations at this time, and CinCUNC shortly received supplemental authority from both the UN and JCS—the one establishing legal grounds for an incursion into North Korea, the other reaffirming military concurrence at the summit. In a resolution adopted on 7 October, the United Nations directed that

"All appropriate steps be taken to ensure conditions of stability throughout Korea and all constituent acts be taken . . . for the establishment of a unified, independent and democratic Government in the Sovereign State of Korea. . . ."[14]

Since the enemy had ignored his surrender ultimatum, MacArthur could attend to the UN objectives only by occupying North Korea militarily and imposing his will. JCS, therefore, on 9 October amplified its early instructions to the Commander in Chief as follows:

"Hereafter, in the event of open or covert employment anywhere in Korea of major Chinese Communist units, without prior announcement, you should continue the action as long as, in your judgment, action by forces

now under your control offers a reasonable chance of success. In any case you will obtain authorization from Washington prior to taking any military actions against objectives in Chinese territory."[15]

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Chapter 1. Problems of Victory
MacArthur's Strategy of Celerity

Anticipating his authority for crossing the 38th Parallel, CinCUNC on 26 September had directed his Joint Special Plans and Operations Group (JSPOG) to develop a plan for operations north of the border. He stipulated that Eighth Army should make the main effort in either the west or the east, and that however this was resolved, there should be an amphibious envelopment on the opposite coast—at Chinnampo, Wonsan, or elsewhere.[16] Despite recommendations of key staff members, MacArthur did not place X Corps under EUSAK command for the forthcoming campaign but retained General Almond's unit as a separate tactical entity under GHQ.[17]

JSPOG, headed by Brigadier General Edwin K. Wright, MacArthur's G-3, rapidly fitted an earlier staff study into the framework of Cin CUNC'S directive. And the following day, 27 September, a proposed Operation Plan (OpnPlan) 9–50 was laid before the commander in chief.[18] This detailed scheme of action evolved from two basic assumptions: (1) that the bulk of the NKPA had already been destroyed; and (2) that neither the USSR nor Red China would intervene, covertly or openly.

Eighth Army, according to plan, would attack across the 38th Parallel, directing its main effort in the west, along the axis Kaesong-Sariwon-Pyongyang (see Map 1). JSPOG designated the latter city—capital of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea—as final objective of the first phase. Further, it recommended that EUSAK'S drive begin in mid-October, to be followed within a week by a X Corps amphibious landing at Wonsan on the east coast. After establishing a beachhead, Almond's force would attack 125 road miles westward through the Pyongyang-Wonsan corridor and link up with General Walker's army, thereby trapping North Korean elements falling back from the south.[19]

JSPOG suggested that both commands should then advance north to the line Chongju–Kunuri–Yongwon–Hamhung–Hungnam, ranging roughly from 50 to 100 miles below the Manchurian border. Only ROK elements would proceed beyond the restraining line, in keeping with the spirit and letter of the 27 September dispatch from JCS.[20]

Major General Doyle O. Hickey, acting as CinCUNC'S chief of staff during General Almond's tour in the field, approved the JSPOG draft of 28 September. It thereby became OpnPlan 9–50 officially. MacArthur forwarded a summary to JCS the same day, closing his message with this reassurance:

"There is no indication at present of entry into North Korea by major Soviet or Chinese Communist Forces."[21]

Within three days, he received word from the Joint Chiefs that they approved his plan.[22] On 2 October it became the official operation order for the attack.[23]

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Chapter 1. Problems of Victory
Logistical Problems of Advance

On 29 September, the day before he received the JCS endorsement of his plan, General MacArthur arrived in Seoul to officiate at the ceremony restoring control of South Korea to the legal ROK government. During the visit, he met with the principals named in the Task Organization of OpnPlan 9–50:
Eighth U.S. Army: LtGen Walton H. Walker, USA
Naval Forces Far East: VAdm C. Turner Joy, USN
Far East Air Forces (FEAF): LtGen George E. Stratemeyer, USAF
X Corps: MajGen Edward M. Almond, USA

Missing from the top-level conference, Major General Walter L. Weible, USA, of the Japan Logistical Command, probably was already aware of things to come.[24]

MacArthur outlined his concept of operations in North Korea to those present. He set 20 October as D-Day for the Wonsan amphibious assault by the 1st Marine Division, which, with all X Corps Troops, would embark for the operation from Inchon. The 7th Infantry Division, also a part of X Corps, would motor 200 miles to Pusan and there load out for an administrative landing behind the Marines.[25]

Initial overland routing of the 7th Division was made necessary by problems arising out of Inchon's limited port facilities. General MacArthur gave EUSAK the logistic responsibility for all UN Forces in Korea, including X Corps. To carry out this charge, General Walker could rely on only two harbors, Pusan and Inchon. There were no other ports in South Korea capable of supporting large-scale military operations. Meeting the tight Wonsan schedule would require that X Corps have immediate priority over the whole of Inchon's capacity, even with the 7th Division being shunted off on Pusan. And it still remained for Walker to mount and sustain Eighth Army's general offensive *before* the Wonsan landing!

In the light of logistical considerations, then, Wonsan had more than mere tactical significance as the objective of X Corps. Its seizure would open up the principal east-coast port of Korea, together with vital new road and rail junctions. But while MacArthur had decided on an amphibious assault by a separate tactical unit as the proper stroke, there existed a school of dissenters among his closest advisers. Generals Hickey and Wright had recommended that X Corps be incorporated into EUSAK at the close of the Inchon-Seoul Operation. Major General George L. Eberle, MacArthur's G–4, held that supplying X Corps in North Korea would be simpler if that unit were a part of Eight Army. And General Almond himself, while hardly a dissenter, had expected his corps to be placed under General Walker's command after the Seoul fighting.[26]

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Chapter 1. Problems of Victory
Naval Missions Prescribed

Logistical problems were magnified by the tight embarkation schedule laid out for the amphibious force. In submitting its proposed plan for North Korean operations to General MacArthur on 27 September, JSPOG had listed the following "bare minimum time requirements:"
For assembling assault shipping: 6 days
For planning: 4 days
For loading: 6 days
For sailing to Wonsan: 4 days

Thus it was estimated that the 1st Marine Division could assault Wonsan 10 days after receiving the order to load out of Inchon, provided that shipping had already been assembled and planning accomplished concurrently.[27]

Following CinCUNC'S meeting in the capitol building on the 29th, General Almond called a conference of division commanders and staff members at his X Corps Headquarters in Ascom City, near Inchon. MacArthur's strategy was outlined to the assembled officers, so that planning could commence on the division level. Almond set 15 October as D-Day for the Wonsan landing. He based this target date on the assumption that Eighth Army would pass through and relieve X Corps on 3 October, the date on which the necessary shipping was to begin arriving at Inchon.[28]
Click here to view map

On 29 September, the 1st Marine Division was still committed tactically above Seoul, two regiments blocking and one attacking. If the first vessels began arriving at Inchon on 3 October, the assault shipping would not be completely assembled until the 8th, according to the JSPOG estimate. Four days would be required to get to the objective, leaving two days, instead of the planned six, for outloading the landing force. Neither Major General Oliver P. Smith, Commanding General (CG) 1stMarDiv, nor his staff regarded this as a realistic schedule.[29]

The Marine officers came away from the conference without knowledge of the types and numbers of ships that would be made available to the division. And since they had no maps of the objective area and no intelligence data whatever, it was manifestly impossible to lay firm plans along either administrative or tactical lines.[30]

Vice Admiral Joy, Commander Naval Forces Far East (ComNavFE), issued his instructions on 1 October in connection with the forthcoming operations. To Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble's Joint Task Force 7 (JTF-7), which had carried out the Inchon attack, he gave these missions:

"1. To maintain a naval blockade of Korea's East coast south of Chongjin.
"2. To furnish naval gunfire and air support to Eighth Army as directed.
"3. To conduct pre-D-Day naval operations for the Wonsan landing as required.
"4. To load and transport X Corps to Wonsan, providing cover and support en route.
"5. To seize by amphibious assault, occupy, and defend a beachhead in the Wonsan area on D-Day.
"6. To provide naval gunfire, air, and initial logistical support to X Corps at Wonsan until relieved."[31]

Admiral Joy's directive also warned: "The strong probability exists that the ports and possible landing beaches under control of the North Koreans have been recently mined. The sighting of new mines floating in the area indicates that mines are being seeded along the coast."[32]

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Chapter 1. Problems of Victory
X Corps Relieved at Seoul

The related events, decisions, and plans of September 1950 had unfolded with startling rapidity. Before the scattered UN forces could shift from one phase of operations to another, a transitional gap developed during the early days of October. Orders might flow forth in abundance, but not until MacArthur's land, sea and air forces wound up one campaign could they begin another. Thus, from the standpoint of Marine operations, the first week of October is more a story of the Inchon-Seoul action than of preparations for the Wonsan landing.

On 2 October, when Eighth Army commenced the relief of X Corps, General Almond ordered the 7th Infantry Division to begin displacing to Pusan by motor and rail.[33] There was as yet no such respite for the 1st Marine Division, which on the same day lost 16 killed in action (KIA) and 81 wounded (WIA). Practically all of the casualties were taken by the 7th Regiment, then approaching Uijongbu on the heels of the enemy.[34]

Despite the limited planning data in the hands of the 1st Marine Division, General Smith's staff put a cautious foot forward on 3 October.[35] Word of the pending Wonsan operation went out by message to all subordinate units, with a tentative task organization indicating the formation of three Regimental Combat Teams (RCTs).

The 1st and 7th Marines were earmarked to launch the amphibious attack. Each would plan on the basis of employing two battalions in the assault. These battalions were to embark on LSTs and hit the beach in LVTs. All tactical units were to combat-load out of Inchon. And although still uninformed as to available shipping, the Marine planners named likely embarkation groups and listed tentative arrangements for loading tanks and amphibious vehicles.[36]

The following day saw the publication of X Corps OpnO 4, specifying subordinate unit missions. The 7th Infantry Division, together with the 92d and 96th Field Artillery (FA) Battalions, was instructed to mount out of Pusan and to land at Wonsan on order (see Map 2). These tasks were assigned to the 1st Marine Division:

"1. Report immediately to the Attack Force Commander (Commander, Amphibious Group One) of the Seventh Fleet as the landing force for the Wonsan attack.

"2. Seize and secure X Corps base of operations at Wonsan, protect the Wonsan Airfield, and continue such operations ashore as assigned.

"3. Furnish logistic support for all forces ashore until relieved by Corps Shore Party."[37]

As Almond's order went out for distribution on 4 October, EUSAK's 1st Cavalry Division, bound for Kaesong, passed through the 5th Marines northwest of Seoul. Simultaneously, the II ROK Corps began assembling along the road to Uijongbu, captured by the 7th Marines the previous day.[38]

After 20 days in the line, the weary battalions of the 5th Marines retired on 5 October across the Han River to an assembly area at Inchon. They were followed on the 6th by the 1st Regiment, and on the next day by the 7th Marines. The withdrawal of the latter unit completed the relief of X Corps, and General Almond's command officially re-reverted to GHQ Reserve.[39]

October 7th also marked the displacement of the 1st Marine Division command post (CP) to Inchon, where planning and reality had finally merged to the extent that preparations for Wonsan could begin in earnest. Two days earlier, Vice Admiral Struble had re-created JTF–7 out of his Seventh Fleet; and by publication of his OpnO 16–50 on the same date, 5 October, he set in motion the operational elements involved in the projected amphibious envelopment. His new task organization, almost identical to that which had carried out the Inchon Operation with historic dispatch, was as follows:

TF95 (Advance Force): RAdm Allen E. Smith
TG 95.2 (Covering & Support): RAdm Charles C. Hartman
TG 95.6 (Minesweeping): Capt Richard T. Spofford
TF 90 (Attack Force): RAdm James H. Doyle
TF 79 (Logistical Support Force): Capt Bernard L. Austin
TF 77 (Fast Carrier Force): RAdm Edward C. Ewen
TG 96.8 (Escort Carrier Group): RAdm Richard W. Ruble
TG 96.2 (Patrol & Reconnaissance): RAdm George R. Henderson
TG 70.1 (Flagship Group): Capt Irving T. Duke

Struble, who had directed the Inchon assault from the bridge of the USS *Rochester*, would now fly his flag in the recently arrived USS *Missouri*, the sole American battleship in commission at this early stage of the Korean war.[40]

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Chapter 1. Problems of Victory
Joint Planning for Wonsan Landing

The Seventh Fleet directive of 5 October dispatched both the Fast Carrier and the Patrol and Reconnaissance Forces of JTF-7 on the usual search and attack missions preliminary to an amphibious assault. Task force 77, consisting of the carriers *Boxer, Leyte, Philippine Sea* and *Valley Forge*, escorted by a light cruiser and 24 destroyers, was under orders to direct 50 per cent of the preparatory air effort against the local defenses of Wonsan. Simultaneously, the Advance Force, with its cruisers destroyers and mine sweeping units, would close in to shell the target and wrest control of the offshore waters from the enemy.[41]

Click here to view map

Topographic and hydrographic studies made available to the Attack and Landing Forces showed Wonsan to be a far more accessible target than Inchon (see Map 3). Nestling in the southwestern corner of Yonghung Bay, 80 miles above the 38th Parallel, the seaport offers one of the best natural harbors in Korea. A vast anchorage lies sheltered in the lee of Kalma Peninsula which, finger-like, juts northward from a bend in the coastline. Tides range from seven to 14 inches, fog is rare, and currents are weak. Docks can accommodate vessels drawing from 12 to 25 feet, and depths in the bay run from 10 fathoms in the outer anchorage to 15 feet just offshore.[42]

Beaches around Wonsan are of moderate gradient, and the floor at water's edge consists of hard-packed sand. Though slightly wet landings might be expected, amphibious craft could easily negotiate any of the several desirable approaches. The coastal plain, ranging from 100 yards to two miles in depth, provides an acceptable lodgment area, but the seaward wall of the Taebaek mountain range renders inland egress difficult from the military standpoint.

In 1940, the population of Wonsan included 69,115 Koreans and 10,205 Japanese, the latter subsequently being repatriated to their homeland after World War II. Under the Japanese program of industrialization, the city had become Korea's petroleum refining center. The construction of port facilities, railways, and roads kept pace with the appearance of cracking plants, supporting industries, and huge storage areas.

Two airfields served the locale in 1950. One of these, situated on the coast about five miles north of the seaport, was of minor importance. The other, known as Wonsan Airfield, on Kalma Peninsula across the harbor, ranked high as a military prize. Spacious and accessible, it was an excellent base from which to project air coverage over all of Korea and the Sea of Japan. The Japanese first developed the field as an air adjunct to the naval base at Wonsan; but after World War II, a North Korean aviation unit moved in and used it until July 1950. Thereafter, with the skies dominated by the UN air arm, Wonsan Airfield temporarily lost all military significance. Its vacant runways, barracks, and dispersal areas were given only passing attention in the UN strategic bombing pattern, although the nearby industrial complex was demolished.

In addition to being situated on an excellent harbor, Wonsan is the eastern terminus of the Seoul-Wonsan corridor, the best of the few natural routes across the mountainous nation. This 115-mile road and rail passageway, once considered as a possible overland approach for X Corps, separates the northern and southern divisions of the Taebaek range, which rises precipitously from Korea's east coast to heights of 5000 feet. Railroads and highways, primitive by western standards, also trace the seaward base of the Taebaek Mountains to connect Wonsan with Hamhung in the north and Pusan far to the south. Still another road and railway leads to Pyongyang, 100 miles across the narrow neck of the peninsula in the western piedmont.

The climate along Korea's northeast coast is comparable to that of the lower Great Lakes region in the United States. Mean summer temperatures range between 80 and 88 degrees, although highs of 103 degrees have

been recorded. Winter readings drop as low as –7 degrees, but the season is usually temperate with winds of low velocity. Despite light snowfalls and moderate icing, the period from October through March is best suited to military operations, for the heavy rains of spring and summer create difficulties on the gravel-topped roads.

Although members of Admiral Doyle's Amphibious Group One (PhibGruOne) staff met with planners of the 1st Marine Division at Inchon early in October, it soon became apparent that the projected D-Day of 15 October could not be realized. Maps and intelligence data necessary for planning did not reach the Attack Force-Landing Force team until 6 October. The relief of X Corps by EUSAK was completed, not on 3 October as General Almond had anticipated, but on the 7th.

Moreover, the first transport vessels to reach Inchon ran behind schedule, and they had not been pre-loaded with a ten-day level of Class I, II, and V supplies, as was promised. Planning and outloading consequently started late and from scratch, with the result that D-Day — was moved progressively back to a tentative date of 20 October."[43]

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Chapter 2. The Wonsan Landing

ON 6 OCTOBER 1950, after the arrival of the initial assault shipping at Inchon, General Smith ordered the 1st Marine Division to commence embarkation on the 8th. Similar instructions were issued by X Corps the following day.[1] Thus, the first troops and equipment were to be loaded even before the G–2 Section of the Landing Force could begin evaluating the enemy situation at the objective, since it was not until 8 October that the intelligence planners received X Corps' OpnO 4, published four days earlier. Summing up the outlook at the time, G–2 later reported:

"Inasmuch as subordinate units of the Division were scheduled to embark aboard ship some time prior to 15 October 1950, it was immediately obvious that preliminary intelligence planning, with its attendant problems of collection, processing, and distribution of information, and the procurement and distribution of graphic aids, would be both limited and sketchy . . . Fortunately . . . the section [G–2] had been previously alerted on the projected operation, and while elements of the Division were yet engaged with the enemy at Uijongbu, had requested reproductions of some 100 copies of pertinent extracts of the JANIS (75) of Korea. Thus it was . . . that subordinate units would not be wholly unprepared for the coming operation."[2]

General Smith's OpnO 16–50, published on 10 October, climaxed the accelerated planning at Inchon. Worked out jointly by the staffs of PhibGruOne and the 1st Marine Division, this directive covered the Wonsan attack in detail and pinpointed subordinate unit responsibilities.

Kalma Peninsula was chosen as the point of assault, with two beaches, YELLOW and BLUE, marked off on the eastern shore. Ten high-ground objectives described the semicircular arc of the beachhead, which focused on Wonsan and fanned out as far as five miles inland. The 1st and 7th Marines were to hit YELLOW and BLUE Beaches, respectively and drive inland to their assigned objectives. The 5th, upon being ordered ashore, would assemble west of Wonsan, prepared for further operations. Two battalions of the 11th Marines were to land on call in direct support of the assault units, and the remainder of the artillery would initially function in general support.

Other subordinate units drew the usual assignments. The Reconnaissance Company, after landing on order, was to screen the Division's left flank by occupying specified objectives. Attached to the 1st and 7th Regiments respectively, the 5th and 3d Korean Marine Corps (KMC) Battalions would also go ashore on call.[3]

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Chapter 2. The Wonsan Landing
ROK Army Captures Wonsan

At 0815, 10 October, coincidentally with the publication of 1stMarDiv OpnO 16–50, troops of I ROK Corps, advancing rapidly up the east coast of Korea, entered Wonsan. By evening of the next day, the ROK 3d and Capital Divisions were mopping up minor resistance in the city and guarding the airfield on Kalma Peninsula. [4]

Overland seizure of the 1st Marine Division's amphibious objective did not come as a surprise either at GHQ in Tokyo or at General Smith's CP aboard the *Mount McKinley* in Inchon Harbor. General MacArthur had, in fact, prepared for this eventuality by considering an alternate assault landing at Hungnam, another major seaport, about 50 air miles north of Wonsan. On 8 October, therefore, the JSPOG completed a modified version of CinCFE OpnPlan 9–50. Eighth Army's mission—the capture of Pyongyang—remained unchanged in this draft, but X Corps would now land ". . . in the vicinity of Hungnam in order to cut the lines of communications north of Wonsan and envelop the North Korean forces in that area."

Although the choice of a new objective seemed logical on the basis of the ROK Army's accomplishment, certain logistical obstacles at once loomed in the path of the alternate plan. Not unaware of the most imposing of these, JSPOG commented:

"The harbor at Wonsan cannot accommodate at docks the large vessels lifting the 7th Division. Since most of the amphibious type boats are carried on ships lifting the 1st Marine Division, the plans for off-loading the 7th Division will have to be revised."[5]

But the plans for off-loading the 7th Division could not be revised. If the Army unit was to land within a reasonable length of time, it would have to go in on the heels of the 1st Marine Division, using the same landing craft. If the ship-to-shore movement took place at Hungnam, the 7th Division would be ill-disposed for beginning its overland drive to Pyongyang as planned; for it would have to backtrack by land almost all the way to Wonsan. On the other hand, if the Army division landed at Wonsan while the Marines assaulted Hungnam, the Navy would be handicapped not only by the lack of landing craft but also by the problem of sweeping mines from both harbors simultaneously.

From the standpoint of Admiral Joy in Japan and Admiral Doyle in Korea, there was insufficient time for planning a new tactical deployment of X Corps at this late date. And the time-space handicap would be compounded by serious shortages of mine sweepers and intelligence information. Joy was unsuccessful on 8 October in his first attempt to dissuade MacArthur from the new idea. On the 9th, unofficial word of the pending change reached General Smith at Inchon, just as his staff wound up work on the draft for the Wonsan assault. ComNavFE persisted in his arguments with the commander in chief, however, with the final result that on 10 October the original plan for landing the whole X Corps at Wonsan was ordered into effect.[6] Coming events were to uphold the Navy viewpoint; for while the Wonsan landing itself was delayed several days by enemy mines, it was 15 November before the first ships safely entered the harbor at Hungnam.[7]

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Chapter 2. The Wonsan Landing
Marine Loading and Embarkation

On 11 October, the day after he opened his CP on the *Mount McKinley*, General Smith learned that the Hungnam plan had been dropped. The 1st Marine Division continued loading out in accordance with X Corps OpnO 4, even though its objective had already been captured.[8]

During the period 4–10 October, Admiral Doyle had assembled at Inchon an assortment of Navy amphibious vessels, ships of the Military Sea Transport Service (MSTS), and Japanese-manned LSTs (SCAJAP).[9] With the arrival of Transport Squadron One on 8 October, the total shipping assigned to the landing force consisted of one AGC, eight APAs, two APs, 10 AKAs, five LSDs, 36 LSTs, three LSUs, one LSM, and six commercial cargo vessels ("Victory" and C-2 types).[10]

Loading a reinforced division, several thousand Corps troops and thousands of tons of supplies and equipment proved to be an aggravating job under the circumstances. Pressure on the attack and landing forces for an early D-Day only magnified the shortcomings of Inchon as a port. Limited facilities and unusual tide conditions held dock activity to a series of feverish bursts. Moreover, many ships not part of the amphibious force had to be accommodated since they were delivering vital materiel. The assigned shipping itself was inadequate, according to the Division G–4 and "considerable quantities" of vehicles had to be left behind. Much of the trucking that could be taken was temporarily diverted to help transport the 7th Infantry Division to Pusan; and although unavailable for port operations when needed, it returned at the last minute to disrupt out-loading of the Shore Party's heavy beach equipment.[11] Out of conditions and developments such as these grew the necessity for postponing D-Day from 15 October, the date initially set by General Almond, to the 20th.

For purposes of expediting embarkation and economizing on shipping space, X Corps directed the 1st Marine Division to out-load with less than the usual amount of supplies carried by a landing force.[12] Resupply shipping would be so scheduled as to deliver adequate stocks of Class I, II, III, and IV consumables ". . . prior to the time they would be needed," even though when "they would be needed" was anybody's guess at this stage of the war.[13]

In anticipation of a rapid advance to the west (which did not materialize), Division G–4 not only assigned 16 pre-loaded trucks and trailers to each RCT, but also earmarked three truck companies and more trailers as a mobile logistical reserve. These supply trains would stay on the heels of the attacking regiments in order to maintain ammunition dumps as far forward as possible in a fast-moving situation.[14]

On 8 October, ComNavFE directed Admiral Doyle and General Smith to effect his OpnPlan 113–50.[15] Coincidentally, the first contingents of the 5th Marines boarded the *Bayfield* (1/5), *George Clymer* (2/5), and *Bexar* (3/5). Three days later, on the 11th, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray, commander of the reserve regiment, opened his CP in the *Bayfield*, and his unit completed embarkation.[16]

Although reserve and administrative elements of the 1st and 7th Marines loaded earlier, the four assault battalions of these regiments could not begin embarkation until 13 October, owing to the fact that the LSTs had been used for shuttle service around Inchon Harbor. General Smith opened his CP in the *Mount McKinley* at 1200 on the 11th.[17] The last of the landing ships were loaded by high tide on the morning of the 15th, and later that day all of them sailed for the objective. By evening of the 16th, most of the transports were on the way, but the *Mount McKinley* and *Bayfield* did not depart until the next day.[18]

Broken down into seven embarkation groups, the landing force and X Corps troops leaving Inchon comprised a grand total of 1902 officers and 28,287 men. Of this number, 1461 officers and 23,938 men were on

the rolls of the 1st Marine Division, the breakdown being as follows:
Marine officers: 1119
Marine enlisted: 20,597
Navy officers: 153
Navy enlisted: 1002
U.S. Army & KMC officers attached: 189
U.S. Army & KMC enlisted attached: 2339[19]

Even in the last stages of loading and during the actual departure, new orders had continued to flow out of higher headquarters. It will be recalled that General Smith issued his OpnO 16-50 for the Wonsan assault on 10 October. An alternate plan, to be executed on signal, went out to subordinate units the same day, providing for an administrative landing by the Division on RED Beach, north of Wonsan, instead of Kalma Peninsula.[20]

As a result of discussions during a X Corps staff conference on 13 October, a party headed by General Almond flew to Wonsan the next day.[21] The purpose of his visit was to reconnoiter the objective and to explain his latest operational directive to the I ROK Corps commander, who would come under his control.[22] This new order, published on the 14th, called for an administrative landing by X Corps and a rapid advance westward along the Wonsan—Pyongyang axis to a juncture with EUSAK. Assigned to the 1st Marine Division was an objective northeast of Pyongyang, the Red capital.[23]

It was this tactical scheme, then, that prevailed as the Marines departed Inchon from 15 to 17 October and the 7th Infantry Division prepared to embark from Pusan. General Smith, of course, placed into effect his alternate order for a landing RED Beach.[24] While there may be a note of humor in the fact that on 15 October ComPhibGruOne issued his OpnO 16–50 for the “assault landing” at Wonsan, it must be remembered that the ship-to-shore movement would remain essentially the same from the Navy’s standpoint, regardless of the swift march of events ashore.

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Chapter 2. The Wonsan Landing
Two Weeks of Mine Sweeping

Mine sweeping for the Wonsan landing commenced on 8 October, when Task Group 95.6, commanded by Captain Spofford, began assembling for the mission of clearing a path ahead of the 250-ship armada bringing the 1st Marine Division and other units of X Corps. It had been known for a month that the waters of the east coast were dangerous for navigation. The first mine was discovered off Chinnampo on the west coast on 7 September, and four days later Admiral Joy ordered the United Nations Blocking and Escort Force to stay on the safe side of the 100-fathom line along the east coast. But it was not until 26 and 28 September that more definite information was acquired the hard way when the U.S. destroyer *Brush* and the ROK mine sweeper *YMS 905* were damaged by east coast mines.[25]

On the 28th ComNavFE issued his OpnO 17–50 covering operations of mine sweepers in Korean waters. The herculean task awaiting the 12 available American vessels of this type may be judged by the fact that more than a hundred had been employed off Okinawa in World War II.

Although the exact date remained unknown, it was a safe assumption that North Korean mining activities, beginning in late July or early August, were speeded by the Inchon landing, which aroused the enemy to the peril of further amphibious operations. Russian instructors had trained Korean Reds at Wonsan and Chinnampo in the employment of Soviet-manufactured mines. Sampans, junks, and wooden coastal barges were used to sow a field of about 2000 in the harbor and approaches to Wonsan.[26]

Captain Spofford's TG 95.6 commenced its sweep off Wonsan on 10 October after a sortie from Sasebo. Unfortunately, the three large fleet sweepers, *Pledge, Pirate,* and *Incredible,* were not well adapted to the shallow sweeping necessary at Wonsan. More dependence could be placed in the seven small wooden-hulled U.S. motor mine sweepers *Redhead, Mocking Bird, Osprey, Chatterer, Merganser, Kite,* and *Partridge,* which were rugged even though low-powered. Spofford's two big high-speed sweepers, *Doyle* and *Endicott,* had their limitations for this type of operation; and the nine Japanese and three ROK sweepers lacked some of the essential gear.[27]

The U.S. destroyers *Collett, Swenson, Maddox,* and *Thomas* were in the Wonsan area as well as the cruiser *Rochester.* On the 9th the *Rochester's* helicopter sighted 61 mines in a reconnaissance, and the next day the observer found them too numerous to count. In spite of these grim indications, rapid progress the first day led to predictions of a brief operation. By late afternoon a 3000-yard channel had been cleared from the 100-fathom curve to the 30-fathom line. But hopes were dashed at this point by the discovery of five additional lines of mines.[28]

On 12 and 13 October the naval guns of TG 95.2 bombarded Tanchon and Songjin on the northeast coast. While the USS *Missouri* treated the marshaling yards of Tanchon to 163 16 inches rounds, the cruisers *Helena, Worcester,* and *Ceylon* fired at bridges, shore batteries, and tunnels in the Chongjin area.[29]

Spofford tried to save time on the morning of the 12th by countermining as 39 planes from the carriers *Leyte Gulf* and *Philippine Sea* dropped 50 tons of bombs. It was found, however, that even the explosion of a 1000-pound bomb would not set off nearby mines by concussion.[30] According to Admiral Struble, "The results of this operation simply bore out our experience in World War II, but were tried out on the long chance that they might be effective in the current situation."[31]

The 12th was a black day for the sweeping squadron. For the steel sweepers *Pledge* and *Pirate* both were blown up by mines that afternoon and sank with a total of 13 killed and 87 wounded. Rescue of the survivors was handicapped by fire from enemy shore batteries.[32]

While the blast of a half-ton bomb had not been powerful enough, Spofford reasoned that depth charges might start a chain reaction in which mines would detonate mines. But a precision drop by naval planes met with no success, and there was nothing left but a return to the slow, weary, and dangerous work of methodical sweeping.[33]

The flying boats, Mariners and Sunderlands, were called upon to assist by conducting systematic aerial searches for moored and drifting mines, which they destroyed by .50 caliber machine-gun fire. Soon an effective new technique was developed as the seaplanes carried overlays of Hydrographic Office charts to be marked with the locations of all mines sighted. These charts were dropped to the sweepers and were of considerable assistance in pinpointing literally hundreds of mines.[34]

On the 18th one of the Japanese sweepers, the *JMS–14,* hit a mine and went down. In spite of this loss, the end seemed in sight. No attempt was being made to clear all the mines; but with a lane swept into the harbor, it remained only to check the immediate area of the landing beaches. So hopeful did the outlook appear that it was more disillusioning when the ROK *YMS 516* disintegrated on 19 October after a terrific explosion in the supposedly cleared lane. Thus was TG 95.6 rudely introduced to the fact that the sweepers had to deal with magnetic mines in addition to the other types. The mechanism could be set to allow as many as 12 ships to pass over the mine before it exploded. This meant, of course, that the sweepers must make at least 13 passes over any given area before it could be considered safe.[35]

The *Mount McKinley* having arrived off Wonsan that same day, Admiral Doyle and General Almond, with six members of the X Corps staff, went by boat to the battleship *Missouri* for a conference with Admiral Struble. CJTF–7 asserted that he would not authorize the administrative landing until the magnetic mines were cleared from the shipping lane—a task which he estimated would take three more days. This announcement led to General Almond's decision to fly ashore in the *Missouri's* helicopter on the 20th and establish his CP in Wonsan. [36] So rapidly had the situation changed, it was hard to remember that this date had once been set as D-Day when the Marine landing force would fight for a beachhead.

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Chapter 2. The Wonsan Landing
Operation Yo-Yo

Shortly after 1700 on the afternoon of 19 October, a rumor swept through the 250 ships of the Tractor and Transport Groups. “War’s over!” shouted the excited Marines. “They’re taking us back to Pusan for embarkation to the States.”

Rumor seemed to have the support of fact on this occasion, for compass readings left no doubt that the armada had indeed executed a maritime “about face” to head southward. What the men on the transports did not know was that the reversal of direction had been ordered for purely military reasons as a result of the conference that day on the *Missouri.*

It was puzzling enough to the troops the following morning when the ships resumed their original course. But this was nothing as compared to their bewilderment late that afternoon as the Tractor and Transport Groups turned southward again.

Every twelve hours, in accordance with the directive of CJTF–7, the fleet was to reverse course, steaming back and forth off the eastern coast of Korea until the last of the magnetic mines could be cleared from the lane in preparation for an administrative landing at Wonsan.[37]

Marines have always been ready with a derisive phrase, and “Operation Yo-Yo” was coined to express their disgust with this interlude of concentrated monotony. Never did time die a harder death, and never did the grumblers have so much to grouse about. Letters to wives and sweethearts took on more bulk daily, and paper-backed murder mysteries were worn to tatters by bored readers.

On the 22d, at CJTF–7’s regular daily meeting, Admirals Struble and Doyle conferred in the destroyer *Rowan* with Admiral Smith and Captain Spofford. It was agreed that the sweeping could not be completed until the 24th or 25th, which meant that Operation Yo-Yo might last a week.[38]

The situation had its serious aspects on LSTs and transports which were not prepared for a voyage around Korea taking nearly as long as a crossing of the Pacific. Food supplies ran low as gastro-enteritis and dysentery swept through the crowded transports in spite of strict medical precautions. The MSTS transport *Marine Phoenix* alone had a sick list of 750 during the epidemic. A case of smallpox was discovered on the *Bayfield*, and all crewmen as well as passengers were vaccinated that same day.[39]

On the 23d, as the *Mount McKinley* proceeded into the inner harbor at Wonsan, there could be no doubt that the final mine sweeping would be completed by the 25th. Operation Yo-Yo came to an end, therefore, when Admiral Doyle directed the amphibious fleet to arrive on the 25th, prepared for an administrative landing. The order of entry called for the Transport Group to take the lead, followed by the vessels of the Tractor Group.[40]

On the morning of the 25th, Admirals Struble and Doyle held a final conference with General Almond and Captain Spofford. By this time they had decided to land the Marines over YELLOW and BLUE Beaches on Kalma Peninsula, as originally conceived in 1stMarDiv OpnO 16–50. The inner harbor of Wonsan would remain closed until completely clear of mines, and then it would be developed as a supply base.[41]

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Chapter 2. The Wonsan Landing
Marine Air First at Objective

The sense of frustration which oppressed the Marine ground forces during Operation Yo-Yo would have been increased if they had realized that the air maintenance crews had beaten them to Wonsan by a margin of twelve days. Even more humiliating to the landing force troops, Bob Hope and Marilyn Maxwell were flown to the objective area. On the evening of the 24th they put on a USO show spiced with quips at the expense of the disgruntled Leathernecks in the transports.

Planning for Marine air operations in northeast Korea had been modified from day to day to keep pace with the rapidly changing strategic situation. On 11 October, when ROK forces secured Wonsan, preparations for air support of an assault landing were abandoned. Two days later Major General Field Harris, CG 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and Tactical Air Command X Corps (TAC X Corps), flew to Wonsan. After inspecting the airfield he decided to begin operations without delay.[42]

These developments, of course, were accompanied by amendments to the original plan which had assigned Marine Fighter Squadrons (VMFs)–214 and –323 the air support role in the naval task force, with Marine Aircraft Group (MAG)–12 to be landed as soon as the field at Wonsan was secured.

In response to changing conditions, VMF-312 aircraft flew from Kimpo to Wonsan on the 14th, and R5Ds lifted 210 personnel of the advance echelons of Headquarters Squadron (Hedron)–12, Service Squadron (SMS)–12, and Marine All-Weather Fighter Squadron (VMF(N))–513. Two LSTs sailed from Kobe with equipment of MAG-12, and Combat Cargo Command aircraft of Far East Air Force began flying in aviation gasoline. Bombs and rockets were flown to Wonsan by the planes of VMF(N)–513.[43]

On the 16th, VMFs–214 and –323 departed Sasebo for station off Wonsan in the CVE's *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait.* From the following day until the 27th these two fighter squadrons were to provide air cover for the mine sweeping operations off Wonsan and the ensuing 1st Marine Division administrative landing.[44]

TAC X Corps OpnO 2-50, issued on 15 October, had contemplated the opening of the port at Wonsan and arrival of the surface echelon within three days. Until then the two squadrons at Wonsan airfield were to be dependent on airlift for all supplies.

The unforeseen ten-day delay in clearing a lane through the mine field made it difficult to maintain flight operations. Fuel was pumped by hand from 55-gallon drums which had been rolled along the ground about a mile from the dump to the flight line. Muscle also had to substitute for machinery in ordnance sections which had only one jeep and eight bomb trailers for moving ammunition.[45]

Despite such difficulties, air operations from the new field were speeded up when General Almond landed to establish the X Corps CP at Wonsan on the 20th, after taking control of I ROK Corps. Armed reconnaissance sorties were flown regularly and attacks made on retreating bodies of NKPA troops. On the 24th a VMF–312 flight surprised a column of about 800 Korean Reds near Kojo, 39 miles southeast of Wonsan, and scattered it with heavy losses.

There were administrative as well as operational problems to be solved. If an assault landing had been carried out at Wonsan, the provision for air support would have been planned in a manner similar to that of Inchon. But the change to an administrative landing caused the 1st MAW to be placed under the control of the Far East Air Forces. This was in accordance with a CinCFE directive to the effect that when both FEAF and Naval air were assigned missions in Korea, coordination control would be exercised by CG FEAF. He had in turn delegated that control north of the 38th parallel, including close-support operations of carrier-borne planes, to CG Fifth Air

Force.

An effort was made at first by MAG–12 officers to comply with Fifth AF procedures, which required the schedule for any given day's strikes to be submitted to that headquarters by 1800 the previous day. Obviously, the distance separating X Corps in Wonsan from Fifth Air Force Headquarters in Seoul made it virtually impossible to get clearance in time. This issue was speedily settled by a conference in which Major General Earle E. Partridge, USAF, CG Fifth Air Force, gave General Harris oral permission to plan and execute supporting missions for X Corps in northeast Korea while awaiting clearance from the Fifth AF.

His decision was made on the basis of a liberal interpretation of the authority of CG 1st MAW to take action "in emergencies." In practice, the arrangement worked out smoothly during this preliminary period, and on 12 November CG Fifth Air Force confirmed his oral agreement with a written directive.

Direction of air operations in support of X Corps was exercised by MAG–12 for the 1st MAW from 15 October to 9 November. Night operations did not begin until late in October for lack of runway lights at Wonsan, so that VMF(N)–513 flew daytime missions along with VMF–312. The two carrier-based squadrons conducted flights in a similar manner. Aircraft reported at designated times to specified Tactical Air Control Parties (TACPS) for operations directed by a daily Fifth AF order, some of them in response to previously submitted requests of ground units for air support.

Major Vincent J. Gottschalk's Marine Observation Squadron (VMO)–6 was under the operational control of the 1st Marine Division, though it was under the administrative direction of MAG–12. Two helicopter pilots, Captain Wallace D. Blatt and First Lieutenant Chester C. Ward, flew from Kimpo to Wonsan on 23 October. The rest of the squadron had proceeded by LST. A flight echelon of helicopters, commanded by Captain Victor A. Armstrong, VMO–6 executive officer, remained temporarily at Kimpo at the request of the Fifth Air Force to evacuate casualties of the 187th Airborne RCT in the Sukchon area.[46]

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Chapter 2. The Wonsan Landing
MacArthur Orders Advance to Border

From all that has gone before, it might be expected that UN strategy and tactics, after frequent modification, had finally been decided upon by mid-October 1950. This was not the case, and a brief recapitulation of events in western and central Korea is now necessary in order to set the scene for the sweeping changes that followed.

General Walker's Eighth Army, as mentioned earlier, had deployed along the 38th Parallel after relieving X Corps above Seoul on 7 October. Two days later, armored elements of the 1st Cavalry Division crossed the boundary to spearhead the U.S. I Corps drive on Sariwon and Pyongyang. The former city was secured on 17 October with the help of the 27th Commonwealth Brigade, while the 24th Infantry Division moved up the west coast on the left of the Kaesong-Sariwon-Pyongyang axis.[47] The 1st Cavalry Division continued the attack toward Pyongyang on the 18th, entering the Red capital with the 1st ROK Division the next day. Pyongyang was secured on 21 October, and elements of the 1st Cavalry Division also occupied the undefended port city of Chinnampo, 35 miles to the southwest.[48]

A vertical envelopment on 20 October had come as a dramatic supplement to the attack on Pyongyang. The 187th Airborne RCT parachuted successfully into the Sukchon-Sunchon area, about 30 miles north of the city, thereby cutting the two principal NKPA escape routes to Manchuria. After watching the drop from his plane, General MacArthur stopped off at Pyongyang and declared that the surprise stroke had closed the trap on the enemy. At his Tokyo headquarters the next day, he predicted that the war would end shortly.[49]

In mountainous central Korea on the right flank of I US Corps, the 6th ROK Division had been leading the rapid advance of South Korean forces under EUSAK. With Hwachon captured on 8 October, the division went on to take the vital hubs of Chorwon on the 10th and Kumhwa on the 11th. It made contact with ROK Capitol Division elements from Wonsan the following day. During the next 24 hours, the 6th Division advanced 20 miles, and the 7th and 8th ROK Divisions fanned out to exploit the deepening penetration. On 14 October the 6th closed on Yangdok, about midway between Wonsan and Pyongyang.[50]

Thereafter the ROK forces in the center of the peninsula began veering northwest, so that by 22 October, the day after Pyongyang fell to I Corps, the vanguard 6th Division was bearing down on Kunu-ri,[51] about 45 air miles to the north of the capital.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that a trans-peninsular drive by X Corps was no longer necessary after mid-October. In fact, both in Washington and in Tokyo the attitude prevailed that the Korean war was nearing an end. President Truman had deemed a meeting of minds appropriate at this time, and he flew to Wake Island for a conference with General MacArthur on 15 October.[52]

Various aspects of American policy in the Far East were discussed at the meeting, but the Korean situation ranked high on the agenda. When asked by President Truman about the chances of Russian or Chinese interference in the war, General MacArthur replied, "Very little." His conclusion agreed with that held by many in high government circles, although officials in both Washington and Tokyo realized that the possibility of Communist intervention could not be dismissed entirely.

MacArthur stated that about 300,000 Chinese troops were stationed in Manchuria, of whom from 100,000 to 125,000 had been deployed along the Yalu River boundary with Korea. He estimated that only 50,000 to 60,000 of these troops could get across the river. If they attempted to move on Pyongyang, he said, they would be "slaughtered," owing to the proximity of UN air bases.

The commander in chief added that Russia had no troops immediately available for a thrust into the peninsula. It would take six weeks for a Soviet division to assemble at the border, and by that time winter would have set in. And while Russia had a fairly good air force in Siberia and Manchuria, tactical support of Chinese ground troops would be difficult to control. “I believe Russian air would bomb the Chinese as often as they would bomb us,” MacArthur remarked.[53]

Part of the conference dealt with the rehabilitation of Korea and the eventual departure of UN troops after the fighting had ceased. MacArthur expressed his belief that organized resistance would end by Thanksgiving (23 November). He hoped to withdraw EUSAK to Japan by Christmas, leaving X Corps, reconstituted with the 2d and 3d U.S. Infantry Divisions and other UN detachments, as a security force until peace and order were fully restored. All present seemed to agree that elections should be held early to achieve stability in the re-united country, and that the ROK Army must be made tough enough to deter the Chinese Communists from any aggressive moves.

The conference ended on a note of general optimism. President Truman pinned a Distinguished Service Medal on the commander in chief (his fifth), and the latter boarded his plane and departed shortly after the meeting.

Once back in Tokyo, MacArthur issued on 17 October a new order that would become effective if Pyongyang fell before X Corps landed at Wonsan (as was the case four days later). This draft established parallel zones of action for EUSAK and X Corps in North Korea, with the Taebaek Range as the dividing line. The restraining line for UN Forces was advanced as much as 60 miles to a lateral drawn through Chongsanjangsi-Koingdong-Pyongwon-Toksil-li-Pungsan-Songjin (see Map 1). ROK Forces, of course, would still drive all the way to the borders of Manchuria and the USSR.[54]

On 24 October, just as the 1st Marine Division was preparing to land at Wonsan, General MacArthur did away with the restraining line altogether. The original restriction on the advance of UN elements, he told his subordinate commanders, was based on the possibility of enemy capitulation. Since there appeared to be no prospect of a formal surrender, he now authorized Generals Walker and Almond to use whatever of their ground forces were necessary to secure all of North Korea. And he enjoined them “. . . to drive forward with all speed and with full utilization of all their force.”[55]

The commander in chief received a message from JCS the next day, telling him that they considered his new order “not in consonance” with their 27 September authorization, which had stipulated a policy of using only ROK ground forces in the provinces bordering Russia and Manchuria. The matter had caused some concern in Washington, the Joint Chiefs said, and they wanted to know MacArthur’s reasons for making the decision.[56]

In reply they were informed that the commander in chief’s decision was a “matter of military necessity,” since the ROK Army lacked both the strength and the seasoned commanders required for securing North Korea. MacArthur added that the 27 September authorization had “. . . merely enunciated the [restraining line] provision as a matter of policy,” and had admitted the possibility of JCS instructions being modified in accordance with developments. He stated further that he possessed the authority to so modify from Secretary of Defense Marshall himself, who had told him “. . . to feel unhampered tactically and strategically . . .” Assuring the Joint Chiefs that he understood the reasons for their apprehension, he warned that “. . . tactical hazards might even result from other action than that which I have directed.”[57]

And there the matter rested.

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Chapter 2. The Wonsan Landing
Landing of 1st Marine Division

It was at a X Corps staff meeting on 18 October that General Almond disclosed MacArthur's plan for parallel zones of action and the new Chongsanjansi-Songjin restraining line in North Korea. Upon establishing his CP at Wonsan two days later, he accordingly assumed command of all UN and ROK forces north of the 39° 10' parallel and east of the Taebaek Range.[58]

By this time the ROK Capitol Division was occupying Hamhung, Hungnam, and nearby Yonpo Airfield, all of which had been captured on 17 October during the swift drive northward.[59] The ROK 3d Division had one regiment at Wonsan, another at Kojo, and the third en route to Hamhung.[60]

On the 21st, General Almond requested CJTF-7 to land one battalion of Marines at Kojo immediately, for the purpose of relieving the ROK regiment defending that locale. He contended that Navy LSTs could beach there safely, since SCAJAP ships had already done so. Learning of the proposed landing, Admiral Doyle argued against it and Admiral Struble forbade it on the ground that the military requirement did not justify the risk incident to negotiating unswept waters. Thus the landing was called off, although the Marines had not heard the last of Kojo.[61]

On 22 October, General Smith issued a new plan based on the proposed X Corps deployment as far north as the Chongsanjangsi-Songjin line. The 1st Marine Division would now occupy the southern part of the extended corps zone, with each regiment responsible for the security of its assigned sector.[62] But again planning went for naught when, two days later, General Almond received MacArthur's order to disregard the restraining line and use whatever forces necessary to drive rapidly to the Manchurian and Soviet borders. On 25 October, therefore, X Corps directed the 1st Marine Division to concentrate one RCT in the Hamhung area and to relieve elements of the I ROK Corps at the Chosin and Fusen Reservoirs. South Korean troops had already begun their advance on these vital power centers, some 50 to 60 air miles north of Hamhung.[63]

It was also on the 25th that the 1st Marine Division finally began its administrative landing at Wonsan—as anticlimactic a landing as Marines have ever made. Five LSTs loaded with Engineer, Shore Party, and Combat Service Group elements beached on Kalma Peninsula in the evening. Since the approaches had not been declared clear until late afternoon, the main ship-to-shore movement was delayed until the next day. Thus, 26 October actually became D-Day—or "Doyle Day," as it was referred to by an impatient General Almond.[64]

At first light on the 26th, landing craft clustered around the transport vessels in the swept channel as troops spilled down debarkation nets. The first of 39 scheduled waves were shortly on the way, with amphibious craft of every description churning the water.[65] LSUs began disgorging armor of the 1st Tank Battalion at 0730, and the big machines, fitted with deep-water fording adapters, thrashed through the surf and onto the loose sand.[66] Simultaneously, swarms of vehicles of the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion crawled ashore shuttling troops and cargo.[67]

At 0900, LSTs landed the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 1st Marines on YELLOW Beach, while Colonel Lewis B. Puller's regimental headquarters splashed ashore out of landing craft dispatched from the *Noble.* The reserve battalion, 2/1, remained on board ship until the 28th. By 1700, the 3d Battalion was in position for the night and the 1st was well on the way to Kojo for a special mission. In the midst of the landing, Colonel Puller received a message from General Smith congratulating him on his being selected for promotion to brigadier general.[68]

Troops of the 7th Marines marched ashore on BLUE Beach without incident and the assembled

battalions moved to assigned areas north of Wonsan. At 1300, Colonel Homer L. Litzenberg opened his regimental CP at St. Benedict's Abbey, which had been gutted by the retreating Communists.[69]

Advance parties of the 5th Marines began landing over both beaches at 0800. Priority was given to unloading the reserve unit's cargo, and the majority of troops remained on board transports for the night. Most of the regiment debarked the next day and assembled about three miles northwest of Wonsan, where Lieutenant Colonel Murray established his CP at 1800.[70]

Only the 2d Battalion and several reconnaissance parties of the 11th Marines landed on the 26th. The remainder of the artillery regiment went ashore the next day and bivouacked at the coastal town of Munpyong-ni, five miles above Wonsan. Colonel James H. Brower, the regimental commander, detached 2/11 to the 1st Marines at 1715 on 27 October, but the other battalions ". . . remained in a mobile state awaiting further orders."[71]

The Wonsan landing, though tactically insignificant at the moment, was a major logistical undertaking to such units as the 1st Engineer Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel John H. Partridge), the 1st Shore Party Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Henry P. Crowe), and the 1st Combat Service Group (Colonel John H. Cook, Jr.).

Representatives from these and other support and service units had flown to the objective area several days before the Division's arrival. After completing an inspection of Wonsan, the Shore Party detachment employed 500 North Korean POWs and 210 civilians to improve landing sites and beach exits. This work continued 24 hours a day for nine days, until the vanguard LSTs grated ashore on Kalma Peninsula in the evening of 25 October.[72] At this point, Shore Party Group C (Major George A. Smith) assumed responsibility for YELLOW Beach in the north, and Group B (Major Henry Brzezinski) took over BLUE Beach.

With the arrival of the first waves of LSTs, LSUs, LVTs, and landing craft in the morning, there began a routine of unremitting toil that would abate only after all of X Corps had landed weeks later. Because of the shallow offshore gradient, many amphibious craft could not reach the beach with their heavy cargoes, and the Shore Party troops had to construct ramps which projected 30 feet into the water. These improvised piers were made of rice bags filled with sand, with the result that their maintenance required considerable effort in men and heavy equipment. A pontoon causeway constructed on 27 October lessened the difficulties connected with getting troops ashore, but other problems persisted.

One of these had to do with a sandbar that stretched across the boat lanes about 50 yards from the coast. Heavier craft frequently grounded here, and while some could be towed ashore by tractor dozers (TD–18s) and LVTs, others had to be unloaded in the water by cranes operating off the ramps and from barges.

Once men and supplies finally reached dry land, there was the difficulty of transporting them inland over the loose sand and around the sprawling dunes of the peninsular beaches. Trucks and trailers often bogged down to such depths that they had to be uprooted and towed by LVTs or dozers. This tied up the overworked tracked vehicles when they were badly needed elsewhere.

The Combat Service Group established its Class I, III, and V dumps according to plan on 26 October, but Class II and IV supplies arrived on the beach ". . . in a completely mixed condition," owing to the haste of the out-loading at Inchon. From D-Day onward, from 1500 to 2000 Korean civilians were hired daily to help segregate and issue supplies.

Upon the completion of mine sweeping in the inner harbor, the intact port facilities of Wonsan became operative on 2 November. During the next nine days, the Combat Service Group dispatched by rail to Hamhung 3900 tons of ammunition alone. On 9 November, the group was attached to X Corps for operational control, thereafter assuming specific responsibility for such varied tasks as: operation of all port facilities; unloading all X Corps elements; transporting all equipment and supplies to inland dumps and supply points; casualty evacuation; maintenance of an airhead at Wonsan Airfield; providing local security; traffic control in the port and its environs; and providing field maintenance for all units in the Wonsan area.

The magnitude of the logistical operation can be imagined from a survey of statistics mentioned in Shore

Party reports. By 31 October, when the 1st Marine Division's landing was completed, a total of 24 cargo vessels, 36 LSTs, and one LSM had been unloaded. Bulk cargo in the order of 18,402 tons had moved across the beaches along with 30,189 personnel and 4731 vehicles. During the same period, 2534 troops were out-loaded with 70 vehicles and 4323 POWs. And in November, as the MAG–12 elements and the rest of X Corps poured ashore, the total of ships handled soared to 76 cargo and 52 LSTs, adding 30,928 personnel, 51,270 tons of supplies, and 7113 vehicles to the short-lived buildup in Northeast Korea.

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Chapter 3. First Blood at Kojo

IT WAS PERHAPS inevitable after the NKPA collapse that an end-of-the-war atmosphere should prevail. This attitude was found in the CP as well as the foxhole. General MacArthur, while witnessing the Eighth Army paratroop landings north of the captured enemy capital, was quoted by the newspapers as saying:

"The war is very definitely coming to an end shortly. With the closing of that trap there should be an end to organized resistance."[1]

As another straw in the wind, General Smith had received a dispatch from ComNavFE on 21 October which stated that on the conclusion of hostilities it was his intention to recommend to CinCFE that the 1st Marine Division be returned to the United States, less an RCT to be stationed in Japan.[2]

On the 24th the Marine commander learned that X Corps had received a document, for planning purposes only, providing that the Corps commander would become commander of the occupation forces. These were to consist of a single American division, probably the 3d Infantry Division, while the remainder of the Eighth Army returned to Japan.[3]

Such indications seemed less reassuring after an incident which occurred at Wonsan on the evening of D-day. Two Marines, gathering firewood on the beach, had been blown to pieces by a booby trap. They were the only casualties from enemy action in the Wonsan landing.[4]

As early as 24 October the Marine division CP aboard the *Mount McKinley* had been advised of an ancillary mission. Immediately following the landing one battalion was to be sent 39 miles south of Wonsan to the small seaport of Kojo. There it was to protect a supply dump of the ROK I Corps.[5]

X Corps issued OI 13 on the 25th but General Smith did not receive his copy until two days later. Corps orders now assigned the Marine division a zone of action more than 300 road miles from north to south and 50 road miles in width. The missions prescribed for the Marines were those of an occupation rather than a fighting force:

"(1) To land on beaches in the vicinity of Wonsan.

"(2) To relieve all elements of I ROK Corps in Kojo and zone.

"(3) To protect the Wonsan-Kojo-Majon-ni area, employing not less than one RCT, and patrolling all roads to the west in zone.

"(4) To advance rapidly in zone to the Korean northern border.

"(5) To be prepared to land one Battalion Landing Team (BLT) in the Chongjin area rapidly on order.

"(6) To assist the 101st Engineer Group (C) (ROK) in the repair of the Yonghung-Hamhung railroad, employing not less than one engineer company."[6]

The 1st Marine Division in turn assigned these tasks to the following units in OpnO 18–50, issued at 0800 on the 28th but communicated orally to most of the designated commanding officers during the preceding 48 hours:

"(1) RCT–1 to relieve elements of I ROK Corps in Wonsan-Kojo-Majon-ni zone, establish necessary road blocks to prevent movement into the area, patrol roads, and destroy enemy in zone. RCT–1 to maintain one reinforced battalion at Kojo until further orders.

"(2) RCT–7 to relieve elements of I ROK Corps along the Hamhung-Chosin Reservoir road, advance rapidly to the northern tip of the reservoir and Changjin, prepared for further advance to the northern border of Korea, and to destroy enemy in zone.

"(3) RCT–5 to move to an assigned zone behind RCT–7, relieve elements of I ROK Corps in the vicinity

of Fusen Reservoir, establish necessary road blocks to prevent movement into the area, patrol the roads and destroy the enemy.

"(4) BLT1/5 to be activated on order. Upon activation to report to the designated commander for operational control and landing in the vicinity of Chongjin.

"(5) The 11th Marines, reinforced and less detachments, from an assembly area in the vicinity of Hamhung, to be prepared for operating in the zone of any RCT."[7]

Two of the objectives mentioned in these orders, Chongjin and the northern border of Korea, were more than 300 road miles north of Wonsan. With the exception of the main coastal route, most of the roads in the 1st Marine Division zone were mere mountain trails, unfit for tanks or heavy vehicles.

OpnO 18–50 was modified the next day to provide for attaching the 1st Battalion, KMC Regiment, to the 5th Marines, and the 5th KMC Battalion to the 1st Marines. The security of the Munchon and Yong-hung areas (13 and 32 miles north of Wonsan respectively) was assigned for the time being to the 5th Marines, reinforced by Company A of the 1st Tank Battalion.

On the 27th General Smith moved from the *Mount McKinley* at 1000 to the new Division CP, a mile north of Wonsan. An old Russian barracks, it was too small and badly in need of repairs. The building occupied by the 1st Marine Air Wing was in even worse shape, but carpenters were soon busy at boarding up windows and doors blown out by bombs.[8]

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Chapter 3. First Blood at Kojo
1/1 Sent to Kojo

A holiday spirit prevailed among the men of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, as they entrained on the morning of 26 October 1950 at a railhead near the Wonsan airfield. Physical activity was a treat after the monotony and confinement of Operation Yo-Yo, and 1/1 had been selected for the Kojo mission. Immediately after the landing on YELLOW Beach at 0900 that morning, preparations were made for departure by rail of the rifle companies at noon. Supplies and reinforcing units were scheduled to follow on the 27th on a second train and a convoy consisting of 1/1 and Motor Transport Battalion vehicles; Battery F, 2d Battalion, 11th Marines; 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Engineer Battalion; and a detachment of Company D, 1st Medical Battalion.[9]

At 1330 a wheezing Korean engine manned by a Korean crew pulled out of Wonsan with the rifle companies riding in gondola cars. It was a bright blue day, with a hint of frost in the air; and not a sign of enemy resistance appeared along the 39-mile route, though several tunnels might have been utilized for a guerrilla attack.

Upon their arrival late that afternoon, Kojo proved to be the most attractive town the men had seen in Korea—an almost undamaged small seaport flanked by the white beaches and sparkling blue waters of the bay.

There remained for the Marines the task of relieving ROK units and protecting an area consisting of a coastal plain about 5000 yards in diameter which stretched from the bay to a semicircle of hills ranging from 150 to 600 feet in height (see Map 4). The ROK officers assured the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jack Hawkins, that his men would find their duty at Kojo a tame assignment. They admitted that small bands of escaping NKPA soldiers had sometimes raided the villages for rice, but added that ROK patrols had scoured the hills without meeting any organized resistance.

The night passed uneventfully for the battalion in a perimeter northwest of Kojo while the ROKs occupied outposts along the southern fringe of the coast plain. In the morning the Marines found the rice paddies glazed with the first ice of the autumn. After completing the relief of the 2d Battalion of the 22d ROK Regiment at 1200, they watched with amusement that afternoon as the Koreans crowded into the gondola cars with their women, children, dogs, and chickens for the ride back to Wonsan. When it seemed that the train could not hold another human being, a ROK officer barked out an order and everyone squeezed farther back with audible sighs and grunts. At last, as a grand climax, the officer shouted a final command and the entire trainload of Koreans sat down simultaneously, like collapsing dominoes.

It was an ironical circumstance that the ROKs on the overcrowded train took with them the remnants of the supply dump that 1/1 was assigned to guard. However important this dump may have been in its heyday, it had apparently been consumed by the ROKs to the point where only a few drums of fuel oil remained along with other odds and ends.

That afternoon the train and truck convoys arrived without incident, bringing supplies and all reinforcing units except the artillery. And though the Marines at Kojo did not neglect security precautions, they had seen nothing during their first 24 hours to hint that an organized enemy was about to launch a surprise attack.

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Chapter 3. First Blood at Kojo
Marine Positions in Kojo Area

Lieutenant Colonel Hawkins faced a problem in selecting positions for his battalion.

"Mindful of my mission—to protect the supply dump until removed—I had to dispose the battalion in a way designated to accomplish this end [he commented]. The supply dump was located at the railroad station in the flat ground south of Kojo—a point difficult to defend, since it was on low ground and could be approached by the enemy from any direction. I considered the most likely direction of enemy approach to be from the south along the coastal road or through the valley leading toward Kojo from the southwest. Therefore, I decided to place Company B in outpost positions to cover these approaches. . . . The remainder of the battalion would be deployed on the hill massif west of Kojo, prepared to defend the area or counterattack if necessary to prevent loss of the supplies at the railroad station. I did not consider this disposition ideal by any means from the standpoint of defensive strength, but it appeared to be the best possible disposition in the complex terrain to protect the supply dump. . . . Also, I did not have reason to expect an organized attack by large enemy forces. In the event such a contingency should occur, it was planned that Company B, the outpost, would withdraw to the main battle position."[10]

Click here to view map

Captain Wesley B. Noren's Baker Company positions were about two miles south and southwest of Kojo across an expanse of rice paddies. From east to west the company held three isolated points of high ground:

1st Platoon (First Lieutenant George S. Belli), reinforced by one section of light machine guns and one 3.2" rocket launcher squad, on the east slope of Hill 109;

3d Platoon (Master Sergeant Matthew D. Monk) and Company Headquarters, reinforced by one section of heavy machine guns, one section of light machine guns, a 75mm recoilless rifle, one squad of 3.5" rocket launchers and a flame thrower, on high ground to the west and south of the 1st Platoon;

2d Platoon (First Lieutenant George G. Chambers), reinforced by one section of 81mm mortars, one section of light machine guns, a 75mm recoilless rifle and one squad of 3.2" rocket launchers, on Hill 185.

The remainder of 1/1 occupied positions west of Kojo. Captain Robert P. Wray's Charlie Company held a continuous line of foxholes in the hills that rose from the rice paddies a mile and a half north of Baker Company's positions. From west to east were First Lieutenant Francis B. Conlon's 2d Platoon, First Lieutenant William A. Craven's 1st and Second Lieutenant Henry A. Commiskey's 3d. About 250 yards to the east were two platoons of Captain Robert H. Barrow's Able Company. On the slopes north of Barrow stood Colonel Hawkins' CP and the tubes of First Lieutenant Edward E. Kaufer's 4.2" Mortar Platoon. Captain Barrow's third platoon occupied the topographical crest of Hill 117.[11]

While the Marines organized their positions during the afternoon of 27 October, a column of refugees "almost as long as the eye could see" appeared in the valley southwest of Kojo headed for the seaport. Colonel Hawkins estimated that there were 2000 to 3000 people in the column. Since he did not have the time to examine all the refugees before darkness, Hawkins had them herded into the peninsula northeast of Kojo for the night.[12]

After a quiet afternoon on the 27th, the first hint of enemy opposition came at 1600 when a wire team was fired upon in the vicinity of Hill 185. Two hours later a truck and a jeep borrowed from the S—3, Major David W. Bridges, received fire from the high ground west of Hill 109. Both were abandoned after the truck broke down, and a Baker Company patrol had a brief fire fight at 1900 when it recovered the vehicles.[13]

These first indications of Red Korean activity in the Kojo area were attributed to the forays of guerrilla

bands. Not until after the battle did the Marines learn from POW interrogations that the enemy consisted of an estimated 1000 to 1200 men of the 10th Regiment, 5th NKPA Division. This regiment, commanded by Colonel Cho Il Kwon, former director of the Communist Party at Wonsan, was believed to have its CP in the large village of Tongchon, about two miles south of the Baker Company outposts. Other units of the NKPA division, which was credited with a total strength of 7000 to 8000 men, occupied areas farther to the south.[14]

After the Red Korean collapse, the 2d, 5th, and 10th NKPA Divisions had maintained their organization, though much depleted in strength by casualties. Withdrawing to the Wonsan area, they kept to the secondary roads and raided the villages for food. It is a tribute to Communist discipline that the outfits had not lost their cohesion at a time when their cause seemed to be collapsing. But the 5th NKPA Division was one of the units made up almost entirely of Koreans who had served in the Chinese Civil War, and its officers were fanatically dedicated to Communist principles.[15]

Only well trained and led troops could have launched the attacks which hit both ends of the Baker Company's chain of outposts simultaneously about 2200, after the first few hours of darkness had passed in comparative quiet punctuated by occasional shots. Normal security measures were taken on a cold night with a 50 per cent watch—one rifleman remaining on the alert in the two-man foxholes while the other burrowed for warmth into a partially closed sleeping bag. The 81mm and 60mm mortars were registered on the hills just beyond the 2d and 3d platoons.[16]

These two units came under attack shortly before First Lieutenant Carlon's position at the extreme west of Charlie Company's line was assailed. In each instance the enemy infiltrated within grenade throwing distance before his presence was detected. Past contacts with American soldiers had given the Red Koreans some knowledge of the language, and for purposes of deception the NKPA assault troops shouted phrases in broken English:

"Come this way! . . . Don't shoot! We're friends."[17]

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The All-Night Fight of Baker Company

The surprise was devastating, particularly in the Baker Company zone. On the eastern slope of Hill 109 the 1st Platoon had no inkling until men yelled warnings from the foxholes just as the enemy grenades exploded and Red Koreans in estimated strength of two platoons overran the position. Seven Marines were killed before they could get out of their sleeping bags, and others lost contact in the darkness.

The 3d Platoon and Company CP were attacked from three points to the south and southeast. Marine 60mm mortars fired within 50 yards of the front line while the 81s laid down a barrage directly forward of the position. After a brief and bitter struggle, Communists believed to number three platoons were repulsed.

In the Charlie' Company zone, Lieutenant Carlon's position was hardest hit. The North Koreans closed within ten feet before they were noticed. During the confused fighting which followed, the enemy won a brief foothold. An estimated 20 Marines were cut off but got back safely the next morning.

After recovering from the initial surprise the Charlie Company outposts repulsed all further attacks. Wray's men lost 6 killed and 16 wounded during the night's encounters but could count 92 Korean bodies the next morning.

At 2215 the 3d Platoon of Baker Company had a second attack at the same points as the first one. The Red Koreans appeared to Captain Noren to be exceptionally well disciplined and controlled in spite of heavy casualties inflicted on them by combination of mortar, machine-gun and small-arms fire, and grenades.[18]

The plight of Belli's platoon was first made known when 2/B on Hill 185 received a message to the effect that 1/B had withdrawn from Hill 109 with 30 men missing. The retirement was made possible by the brave stand of Sergeant Clayton Roberts, who covered the movement with a light machine gun until he was surrounded and killed.

The 3d Platoon beat off another attack meanwhile as the enemy closed in from the left rear as well as the front. With machine-gun fire coming from both directions, Noren informed the battalion CP at 2350 that his position was untenable and asked permission to with draw. His request being granted, he directed Lieutenant Chambers to pull back from Hill 185, covering the withdrawal of 3/B with 81mm fire.

The intersection of the dike and railway track was designated as the meeting place for the three Baker Company platoons. Noren covered the rear of the 3/B withdrawal while his executive officer, First Lieutenant Chester B. Farmer, took charge of the point. Opposite Hill 109 they encountered Staff Sergeant Robert Fisher and five men whom Belli had directed to remain at the dike and pick up stragglers while the rest of 1/B continued to pull back.

Fisher reported that the attack on Hill 109 had been conducted with skill and discipline. Whistles and red and green flares were used for signaling by Communists who cut off a listening post and overran a squad on the right flank. The assault force numbered 160, according to POW testimony.

The methodical, position-by-position withdrawal of the three Baker Company platoons was conducted so skilfully that remarkably few casualties resulted. Noren lost all contact for a short time when enemy fire severed the antenna on his last operative SCR–300. At about 0215 Chambers' platoon was last to reach the meeting place, having beaten off several attacks during its withdrawal from Hill 185. With another large-scale enemy assault threatening, Noren organized a 360° defense on both sides of the railway track just south of the village of Chonchon-ni. One Marine was killed and six wounded by enemy fire received from the west as well as east.

Fox Battery of the 11th Marines had arrived in the Kojo area about midnight and set up its guns on the

beach northeast of the town at about 0200.[19] Baker Company had no radio in operation, however, until parts of two damaged SCR—300's were combined into one to restore communication. Contact was made with the 4.2" mortars, which registered about 0300, directed by Captain Noren, and broke up the NKPA attack. The 81mm mortars made it hot for the enemy in Chonchon-ni, and at 0330 the Communists apparently disengaged to withdraw east of the railway track and northward toward Kojo. Marine artillery had registered by 0400, but all was quiet in the area the rest of the night.

Although a few NKPA mortar shells were received, enemy equipment appeared to be limited for the most part to automatic weapons, small arms, and grenades. There were indications that Korean civilians had been used in several instances as human shields for an attacking force.[20]

The NKPA withdrawal to Kojo led to the Marine speculation that the Communists meant to make enforced recruits of some of the hapless residents allotted a refuge in the peninsula north of the town. As it proved, they were not harmed by the NKPA troops. The last enemy effort, just before dawn, was an attack in platoon strength on Second Lieutenant John J. Swords' Able Company platoon by Reds who had infiltrated through Kojo. A brief fight ensued on Hill 117 as the Marines beat off the assault at the cost of one man killed and two wounded.

Baker Company elements had meanwhile resumed their withdrawal along the railway track north of Chonchon. All was quiet at first light when Noren began the task of evacuating his wounded in ponchos through rice paddies which were knee-deep in mud and water under a thin skin of ice. Marines came out from the Able Company positions to lend a hand.

The evacuation had nearly been completed when about 200 enemy troops suddenly moved out from Kojo in a westerly direction across the rice paddies. Whether they meant to interfere with the evacuation or merely to escape was never made clear. For the Marines of Able and Baker Companies as well as the gunners of Fox Battery opened up in broad daylight and found lucrative targets. An estimated 75 Communists were killed and wounded before the rest scurried out of range into the hills west of the coastal plain.

Some contact was maintained with the enemy until 1000 by elements of Charlie Company, then the action was gradually broken off as the planes of VMF(N)–513 came in low with close support.[21] Although the strikes by air were largely uncontrolled because of poor radio communications between the Forward Air Controller (FAC) and the planes, they were very helpful to the Marines on the ground.[22]

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2/1 Ordered to Kojo

The radio message bringing the first news of the Kojo fight was sent by 1/1 at 0418 on the 28th. Owing to transmission difficulty, it was picked up by the 7th Marines, relayed to the 1st Marines at 0700, and telephoned to the 1st Marine Division.[23] It stated briefly that the battalion had been under attack since 1700 by an estimated 1000 enemy and had suffered a large number of casualties. Helicopters were requested for air evacuation and an LSTH for water evacuation of the wounded. Air support was required, the message continued, adding that the destroyer in direct support of the battalion had not yet arrived on station.

At 0830 an officer from 1/1 reported in to 1st Marines CP with a further account. He reported a platoon of B Company cut off and estimated 150 casualties.[24]

A third report from 1/1 reached the CP of the 1st Marine Division as an intercepted radio message at 1238 on the 28th while General Almond was conferring with General Smith. Sent from Kojo at 1000, the message said:

"Received determined attack from South North and West from sunset to sunrise by large enemy force. Estimated from 1000 to 1200. One company still heavily engaged. Civilian reports indicate possibility 3000 enemy this immediate area. Have suffered 9 KIA, 39 WIA, 34 MIA [Missing in Action] probably dead. Two positions overrun during night. If this position is to be held a regiment is required. Enemy now to South North and West of us but believe road to North is still open. Harbor is in our hands and ROK LST has been here. Shall we hold here or withdraw to North? ROK supply dump . . . removed. Request immediate instructions. Send all available helicopters for wounded. Suggest send instructions by both radio and helicopters."[25]

The Corps and Division commanders agreed immediately that Kojo should be held, since a large-scale NKPA attack appeared to be in the making. Another factor in this decision was the ROK supply dump. Nobody at the Division CP seemed to know as yet that it had been removed, but General Smith directed his G–3 to issue the necessary orders to send Colonel Puller, CO of the 1st Marines, and a battalion of reinforcements to Kojo. Within five minutes Colonel Alpha L. Bowser, 1stMarDiv G–3, telephoned Corps to request that a train be assembled on the Wonsan siding immediately for a battalion lift.[26]

Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, ADC of the 1st Marine Division, was on his way to a conference at the 1st Marines CP when he met General Almond and Colonel Puller, and the three compared notes from their jeeps. Craig informed them that action toward the providing of transportation had already been initiated by Division. A request had later been made for a second destroyer to provide gunfire support (the first having already arrived) and an LSTH for casualty evacuation. Another LST had been requested for the purpose of sending tanks to Kojo, since the road and bridges would not bear the weight of armor.

The possibility of a major engagement taking place at Kojo seemed to be confirmed by two later reports 1/1 sent at 1415 and 1840. The first relayed prisoner of war statements to the effect that an estimated 7000 men of the NKPA 5th Division were located at Tongchon.[27] The second, a radio message, read:

"Reinforcement train has not arrived as of 1800. NK prisoners revealed large enemy force plans attack over position tonight. Recommend LVTs with LSTs stand by at daylight in case of emergency evacuation necessary. In view of large numbers of troops facing us as previously reported and fact enemy on all sides except seaward, consider situation critical. Request higher authority visit."[28]

By that time Colonel Puller and the troops were on the way. Making up a train and loading it with a reinforced battalion and extra supplies in three and a half hours had been something of an administrative feat,

particularly when the battalion was just coming off landing craft. Yet Lieutenant Colonel Allan Sutter's 2/1 and the Regimental Command Group pulled out for Kojo at 1630 and a second train followed two hours later.[29]

Upon arrival at 2230, CO 1stMar learned that there had been no major enemy contact since 1000. Lieutenant Colonel Hawkins had contracted his unit that afternoon to his main position along the high ground forming a semicircle around Hill 117. The 2d Battalion and supporting arms having tied in with the 1st for the night, Colonel Puller concluded that no further cause for alarm existed. And since the battery positions at Kojo were limited, he radioed General Smith that more artillery would not be needed.[30]

Seventeen Marines previously listed as MIA by 1/1 had returned unhurt to their units on the 28th after being cut off during the confusion of the night's fighting. Marine air had all but obliterated Tongchon that afternoon while the U.S. destroyers *Hank* and *English* were bombarding Kojo.

The request for water as well as air evacuation of serious casualties had resulted in immediate action. Within an hour after receiving the message, CTF–90 had the transport *Wantuck* on the way with a surgical team, and VMO–6 sent five helicopters which flew 17 wounded men to a hospital ship at Wonsan on the 29th.[31]

Ten tanks of Company C, 1st Tank Battalion, were loaded in LST 883 at Wonsan on the 28th, but the ship was delayed by running aground. Upon arrival at Kojo the next day, it again became necessary for the LST to be pulled off the bar by a tug. By this time the military situation was so well in hand that the tanks were taken back to Wonsan without being unloaded.[32]

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Security Provided for Wonsan Area

Responsibility for the security of the Wonsan area having been assigned to the 1st Marines, something of an administrative problem was created on the 28th by the order sending 2/1 to reinforce 1/1 at Kojo. For the 3d Battalion of the regiment had departed that same day to relieve a ROK unit at Majon-ni, 28 miles west of Wonsan. Since this left no troops to patrol roads in the Wonsan area and maintain blocking positions at Anbyon, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, and 5th KMC Battalion were attached to the 1st Marines for those missions.

Also available to the 1st Marines for such security duties as guarding the Wonsan airfield and harbor area were the 1st Shore Party Battalion, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, and Company B of the 1st Armored Amphibian Tractor Battalion.[33]

By the morning of the 29th, moreover, it had already become apparent that one or both of the battalions in the Kojo area could soon be spared. When General Craig arrived by helicopter, he found the situation well in hand.[34]

About 60 percent of the seaport had been destroyed by air strikes and the guns of the destroyers when a patrol consisting of Dog and Fox Companies combed the ruins on the morning of the 29th without finding any evidences of enemy occupation. Meanwhile an Easy Company patrol ranged to the west of the coastal plain with equally negative results.[35]

Captain George B. Farish of VMO–6 was making a reconnaissance flight when he discerned the word HELP spelled out in rice straw near a straw-stack a mile northeast of Tongchon. A Marine crawled out from concealment, and the pilot landed his helicopter to pick up PFC William H. Meister, who had been hiding since losing touch with his unit during the enemy night attack on Hill 109. This was the first of four such rescues completed by Farish that day.[36]

On the afternoon of the 29th, Captain Noren led a patrol along the railway track south of Kojo and retraced the route of his fighting withdrawal in the darkness. In the vicinity of Hill 109, where Lieutenant Belli's platoon had been surprised, he found 12 Marine bodies. None had been despoiled by the enemy of arms or equipment.

Pushing farther south, Noren encountered sniper fire from the ruins of Tongchon, destroyed by Marine air, and called for more strikes. The Corsairs flushed out a group of 20 enemy troops, 16 of whom were cut down by the machine guns of the Baker Company patrol.[37]

By the 29th, when General Almond made a trip of inspection to Kojo, it was possible to revise the original Marine casualty list as the MIA casualties were reduced. The final count was 23 KIA, 47 WIA and four MIA.[38]

Twenty-four wounded Marines were evacuated to Wonsan that day by APD. LST 883, when it returned to Wonsan with the tanks, took the bodies of 19 Marines and 17 prisoners.

Enemy losses, in addition to 83 POW, were estimated at 250 KIA and an unknown number of WIA on the basis of more than 165 bodies found by Marine patrols. Curiously enough, the Communists had shown little interest in the equipment which fell into their hands, and two Marine 75mm recoilless rifles, rendered inoperative, were recovered with their carts and ammunition in the vicinity of Chonchon-ni. Almost all abandoned equipment was found in usable condition.[39]

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Marines Relieved at Kojo

Each of the Marine rifle companies set up outposts in front of its zone. Morning and afternoon patrolling, with air on station, went on during the last two days of October with negative results. Harassing and interdiction fires were also continued until 1/1 departed.

LST 973 arrived off Kojo at 1430, 31 October, and disembarked the 5th Battalion of the KMC Regiment. Lieutenant Colonel Hawkins' battalion, accompanied by Colonel Puller, left Kojo at 0700 the next morning on the return trip of the LST. The ship docked at Wonsan at 1230 on 2 November. That afternoon 1/1 relieved elements of the 1st Tank Battalion at the road block near Katsuma, four miles southeast of Wonsan.

Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., CG FMFPac, who was acting in an informal capacity as amphibious adviser to General MacArthur, inspected 2/1 at Kojo by helicopter on 31 October. Having arrived at Wonsan that day with Colonel Victor H. Krulak, his G–3, he conferred at X Corps Headquarters with Admiral Struble and Generals Almond and Smith.[40]

Among the other subjects of discussion was the news that Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) prisoners had been taken in the area north of Hamhung by ROK units which were soon to be relieved by the 7th Marines. Several clashes with organized Chinese forces during the last days of October had also been reported by elements of the 1st Cavalry Division of the Eighth Army in western Korea.

The 7th Marines had been given the mission of spearheading the Marine advance to the northern border of Korea as directed in Corps orders. After parkas and other cold weather clothing had been issued from the beach dumps at Wonsan, the regiment completed the movement to Hamhung by motor convoy from 29 to 31 October. By this time the Corps drive to the Yalu was shifting into second gear, with the I ROK Corps far in advance along the coastal highway. Two U.S. Army units were soon to be involved. The 7th Infantry Division, which landed at Iwon from 29 October to 8 November, had Corps orders to push on toward the border; and it was planned that the 3d Infantry Division, due to land its first units on the 8th at Wonsan, would relieve 1st Marines units south of Hamhung.[41]

Corps orders of 2 November called for 2/1 to return to Wonsan immediately. The southern boundary of X Corps was to be moved 70 miles farther south, effective on the departure of the battalion from Kojo. In order to cover the new zone, the KMC regiment had already been detached from the 1st Marine Division and given responsibility for the Corps zone south of the 39th Parallel. The relief of the 2d Battalion of the 5th Marines was completed by KMC elements that same day at Anbyon, eight miles southeast of Wonsan, thus freeing that unit for a motor lift northward to rejoin its regiment.[42]

Lieutenant Colonel Sutter's 2/1 and the artillery battery departed Kojo the following day. A small train and a truck convoy sent from Wonsan were used chiefly for the transport of supplies, and most of the troops traveled by shanks' mare. The column was on the way when the report came that the rail line had been blown up at Anbyon by guerrillas. The battalion halted there and set up a perimeter for the night which included both the train and truck convoys. At 0730 in the morning the convoys moved out again for Wonsan. Delayed slightly by another rail break, Sutter completed the movement at noon.[43]

The track-blowing incident gave evidence that the Marines must deal with a third type of enemy. In addition to the NKPA remnants, and the forces of Red China, it now appeared that account must be taken of thousands of uprooted Koreans prowling in small bands for food and loot—the flotsam of a cruel civil war. Called guerrillas by courtesy, they were actually outlaws and banditti, loyal to no cause. And by virtue of their very

furtiveness, they were capable of doing a great deal of mischief to organized forces.

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Chapter 4. Majon-ni and Ambush Alley

FROM A DISTANCE the Y-shaped mountain valley, encircled by peaks and crossed by two swift, clear streams, might have been taken for a scene in the Alps. This impression was borne out by the village of Majon-ni, which nestled close to the earth, as seen from afar, with the tranquil and untroubled air of a Swiss hamlet.

On closer inspection, however, such first impressions could only prove to be illusory. The most prominent building in the Korean village was a new schoolhouse with the onion-shaped dome of Russian architecture. An incongruous and pretentious structure for such a small peasant community, it had been erected not so much for the instruction of children as the indoctrination of adults in Communist principles.

Majon-ni, in short, had been for five years a hotbed of forced culture in the doctrines of the Communist puppet state set up in northern Korea after World War II by the occupation forces of Soviet Russia. And it was here that the 3d Battalion of the 1st Marines arrived on 28 October 1950. Relief of elements of the 26th ROK Regiment at 1600 enabled those troops to return to Wonsan in the vehicles which had brought 3/1.[1]

The Marines had been assigned the mission of “setting up a defensive position at Majon-ni, destroying enemy forces, and denying them the use of this road net.” In addition, the unit was “to patrol roads to the north, south, and west, and keep the road open between Majon-ni and Wonsan.”[2]

This last directive was soon modified by oral instructions relieving the battalion from the responsibility of keeping open the Wonsan-Majon-ni road. The reason for the change was apparent when the troops of 3/1 covered the 28-mile route by motor lift in two echelons on the afternoon of the 28th. After leaving the seaport and alluvial plain, the shelf-like road twists precariously through a 3000-foot pass. This stretch abounds in hairpin turns and deep gorges which are ideal for setting a tactical trap, and the route was soon to be known to the troops as Ambush Alley. Although traversable by tanks, it offered too much danger from road-blocks and landslides to permit the dispatch of the iron elephants.[3]

Click here to view map

The strategic importance of the Majon-ni area derived from its position at the headwaters of the river Imjin and the junction of roads leading east to Wonsan, south to Seoul, and west to Pyongyang. They were being traveled extensively at this time by NKPA troops escaping northward in civilian clothes after the collapse of the Red Korean military effort.

It was natural that the 1st Marine Division, with a zone of more than 15,000 square miles to control, should be ordered to occupy such an important road junction and potential assembly area as Majon-ni.[4] Thus the Marines of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas L. Ridge’s reinforced battalion were sent as a blocking and screening force.

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Chapter 4. Majon-ni and Ambush Alley
Marine Units Tied In for Defense

In addition to H&S, Weapons, and the three rifle companies, the task organization consisted on 28 October of Battery D of the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, the 3d Platoon of Company C, 1st Engineer Battalion, and detachments from ANGLICO, 1st Signal Battalion; Company D, 1st Medical Battalion; and H&S Company, 1st Marines.[5]

The battalion commander and his S-3, Major Joseph D. Trompeter, decided after a survey of the terrain that the commanding ground was too far from the village and too rugged for company outposts. The logical solution seemed to be a battalion perimeter combined with daytime company OPs and vigorous patrolling of the three main roads. In order to tie in all units of a perimeter 3770 yards in circumference, it was necessary to create provisional platoons of such H&S, artillery and engineer troops as could be spared from their regular duties. Even so, the defense was spread thin in places.

The schoolhouse was the obvious place for the battalion CP. Communication within the perimeter was by telephone, with wires laid from the CP to artillery and mortar positions as well as company and platoon CPs. Radio communication was established with the regiment and the division but due to the terrain remained irregular at best.

First Lieutenant Leroy M. Duffy and his engineers were assigned the task of constructing on OY strip on the east side of the perimeter which was completed on 2 November. A parallel cliff made it necessary to land planes at a dangerous angle, but no better site could be had in this steep-sided valley.
Click here to view map

Topography also limited Captain Andrew J. Strohmenger's cannoneers, who were almost literally "firing out of a barrel." Close-in support was out of the question in the bowl-like valley ringed with peaks, but the six howitzers were emplaced so that they could be swung to fire on any avenue of approach, especially toward the three roads leading into Majon-ni.[6]

No difficulty was found in deciding on a water point, for tests established the purity of the water from both branches of the Imjin flowing through the perimeter. Lieutenant Duffy explained that he added chlorine only because the Marines were accustomed to the flavor.

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Chapter 4. Majon-ni and Ambush Alley
Political Aspects of Mission

The Marine mission had its political as well as military side. Major Edwin H. Simmons, CO of Weapons Company, was given the responsibility for defending the three road blocks of the perimeter with Weapons Company personnel. At each of them he stationed a heavy machine gun section and a 3.5" rocket launcher section. These barriers were also ports of entry where all Korean transients were searched for weapons. When a group of 20 to 30 accumulated, they were escorted under guard to the prison stockade, just across the road from the battalion CP.[7]

There they were “processed” by the Civil Affairs Section, consisting of 12 Marine enlisted men under the command of First Lieutenant Donald M. Holmes and Master Sergeant Marian M. Stocks, known facetiously as the mayor and sheriff respectively of Majon-ni. Their decisions were based largely on the findings of the 181st Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) team and the battalion S–2, Second Lieutenant Frederick W. Hopkins. The CIC specialists proved to be indispensable by contributing daily intelligence based on civilian as well as POW interrogations.

As might be supposed, the question of whether a transient was an escaping NKPA soldier or a harmless peasant might have perplexed Solomon himself. But the Marines came up with a simple off-the-cuff solution. Time did not permit a lengthy screening, and each Korean was given a brief examination with the aid of interpreters. If his head was still close-cropped in the NKPA manner, if his neck showed a tanned V-line recently left by a uniform, if his feet bore the tell-tale callouses left by military footgear—if he could not pass these three tests, the transient was sent to the prison stockade as a fugitive Red Korean soldier. Now that Chinese Communist troops had been encountered both on the X Corps and Eighth Army fronts, it was all the more important that battlewise NKPA elements should be prevented from joining their new allies if Red China intervened.

Some of the prisoners were admittedly NKPA veterans, weary of the war and ready to give up voluntarily. Manifestations of this spirit caused Lieutenant Colonel Ridge to send a radio request for an air drop of surrender leaflets.

The first full day’s operations, on 29 October, resulted in 24 prisoners being taken. But this was a trickle as compared to the torrent which would follow until an average daily rate of 82 was maintained during the 17 days of the operations.

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Chapter 4. Majon-ni and Ambush Alley
Roads Patrolled by Rifle Companies

Each of the rifle companies was given the mission of sending out daily motorized or foot patrols while manning, as required, company OPs. The three roads were assigned as follows:
George Company (Captain Carl L. Sitter), the road to Wonsan;
How Company (Captain Clarence E. Corley, Jr.) the road to Seoul;
Item Company (First Lieutenant Joseph R. Fisher), the road to Pyongyang.[8]

All patrols reported negative results throughout the first four days. Nevertheless, a system of artillery and 81mm mortar harassing and interdiction fires on suspected Red Korean assembly areas was put into effect. Major Simmons was designated the Supporting Arms Coordinator (SAC), and OYs were used for artillery spotting and to call air strikes when planes were on station.[9]

The battalion commander emphasized to his officers the necessity for maintaining as good relations with the inhabitants as security would permit. Strict troop discipline was to be maintained at all times, and the villagers were allowed their own mayor and council along with such laws or customs as did not conflict with the Marine mission.[10] A policy of justice and fairness had its reward when the inhabitants warned the CIC team of an impending attack by organized NKPA troops.

POW interrogations and reports by civilians identified the enemy unit as the 15th NKPA Division, including the 45th, 48th, and 50th regiments, commanded by Major General Pak Sun Chol. Following the NKPA collapse, the division had been able to maintain its organization while infiltrating northward from the Pusan Perimeter and raiding the villages for food. The mission was reported to be the occupation and control of the upper Imjin valley as a base for guerrilla operations, with the Majon-ni road junction being designated one of the main objectives.[11]

Enemy numbers were said to reach a total of 11,000. But that figure, like most Oriental estimates of numbers, had to be taken with the traditional grain of salt.

At any rate, the Marines had no further doubt on the morning of 2 November that they were opposed by a resolute enemy skilled at guerrilla tactics. Second Lieutenant Harvey A. Goss' platoon of How Company, reinforced with 81mm mortars, light machine guns, an artillery forward observer (FO) team and a FAC, was ambushed in a deep gorge five miles south of Majon-ni while conducting a motorized patrol. The Marines, raked by rifle and automatic small-arms fire from an unseen enemy hidden along the heights on both sides, got off only the message, "We've been hit, send help, send help" before the radio was hit.[12]

Effective deployment in the narrow road was prevented by stalled vehicles. Casualties were mounting when Second Lieutenant Kenneth A. Bott and PFC Donald O. Hoffstetter ran the gauntlet of fire in a jeep. They reached Majon-ni unhurt although one tire of the jeep had been shot.

The 3/1 CP was delayed in summoning air because of the difficulties in radio transmission.[13] This break in communications alarmed Major Simmons, acting as SAC. He persuaded the pilot of an OY to fly him over the scene of the ambush. From his point of vantage Simmons had a good view of the deployment of Captain Corley's remaining two rifle platoons, riding artillery trucks and reinforced with heavy machine guns and 81mm mortars, which had been sent out from Majon-ni to extricate the patrol. The 81mm mortars were set up just off the road and began pounding the North Korean cliffside positions. PFC Jack Golden, a one-man task force, climbed with a 94-pound heavy machine gun to a height where he could fire down on the Communists. Marine Corsairs came on station, somewhat tardily because of the poor radio communication, and the remnants of the enemy

disappeared into the hills.

Lieutenant Robert J. Fleischaker, (MC) USN, the battalion medical officer, and his assistants cared for the less critical Marine casualties. One man died during the night but most of the others were evacuated during the next day in three helicopter flights—much to the astonishment of the natives. Fleischaker and his assistants also treated Korean civilians on occasion, and the saving of a village boy's life by an emergency appendectomy did much to gain the good will of the community.[14]

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Chapter 4. Majon-ni and Ambush Alley
Air Drop of Supplies Requested

Radio communication between Majon-ni and Wonsan was so uncertain, because of the intervening hill mass, that it was possible to get through for only a few hours at night. The surest means of communication was a written message carried by helicopter or OY pilots, who had to insure delivery to regiment after landing at the Wonsan airfield.[15]

The supply problem had already begun to pinch before the first week ended. A convoy came through from Wonsan without molestation on 29 October, but it was the last for a week. On 1 November, just to play safe, Lieutenant Colonel Ridge requested a practice air drop which went off satisfactorily. His judgment was upheld on the morning of the How Company ambush when a 3/1 supply convoy was attacked seven miles west of Wonsan (see Map 5) and forced to turn back.

First Lieutenant James D. Beeler commanded the George Company rifle platoon escorting the column of supply vehicles which was under the charge of Second Lieutenant James L. Crutchfield of H&S Company. The third truck in line, loaded with diesel fuel and C–3 composition,[16] burst into flames after running into a hail of enemy rifle and automatic weapons bullets. Meanwhile the first two trucks continued until they came to a roadblock created by blowing a crater. Turning around under intense fire, they got back to the point of original ambush just as the other vehicles were trying to reverse direction; and in the confusion two trucks went off the narrow road, making a total of three lost.

A flight of three VMF–312 Corsairs led by Lieutenant Colonel J. Frank Cole dispersed an enemy force estimated at 200 to 300 men. The convoy was extricated and brought back to Wonsan after the 1st Marines sent out a task force consisting of four tanks, a tank dozer and six trucks filled with infantry. Personnel losses in the ambush were nine men killed and 15 wounded.[17]

Ridge now had to call for an air drop in earnest. Gasoline, rations, grenades and artillery, mortar and machine gun ammunition to a total of more than 21 tons were packaged at the Wonsan airfield on 2 November by Captain Hersel D. C. Blasingame's 1st Air Delivery Platoon. Four hours after the receipt of the message, the Air Force C–47s released 152 parachutes over the Majon-ni perimeter. This was one of the 141 replenishment missions of the Air Delivery Platoon in November, amounting to 864 man-hours of flying time and 377 tons of supplies dropped.[18]

Less than the usual amount of breakage resulted, but Colonel Puller considered it so necessary to push a truck convoy through to Majon-ni that he assigned a rifle company as guards. This mission fell to Captain Barrow's Able Company, reinforced by one platoon of Captain Lester G. Harmon's Company C engineers, Technical Sergeant Shelly Wiggins' section of 81mm mortars, and Second Lieutenant Harold L. Coffman's section of 75mm recoilless rifles. Thirty-four supply vehicles were in the column which left Wonsan at 1430 on 4 November.[19]

The late hour of departure was a handicap; and though an OY flew reconnaissance, the convoy had no FAC. A TACP jeep well back in the column could communicate with the OY, which relayed the message to the two VMF–312 Corsairs on station.

Barrow reasoned that because so many of the enemy road-blocks required engineer equipment, it would be advisable for Harmon's vehicles to lead, followed by First Lieutenant William A. McClelland's infantry platoon. This scheme promised well when four undefended crater roadblocks were encountered and speedily filled in by the engineers. The fifth, however, was the scene of an ambush by Red Koreans occupying the steep

heights on both sides of the narrow, winding road.

The engineers soon had a hot fire fight on their hands. Taking cover behind the vehicles, they gave a good account of themselves. But the stalled trucks delayed the infantry platoon coming to their aid; and lack of a FAC resulted in less effective close air support than the Corsairs usually rendered. Thus, with the early November dusk approaching, Captain Barrow decided on a return to Wonsan.

By a near-miracle the trucks turned about safely on the narrow shelf that passed for a road. As the enemy long-range fire increased, Barrow ordered lights out when the column commenced its eight-mile return trip. In the darkness a truck loaded with 20 Marines missed a hairpin turn and plunged over the edge. Fortunately, the accident happened at one of the few spots where the vehicle could land on a wooded shoulder instead of hurtling through space to the rocky valley floor several hundred feet below. It was found that nothing worse than broken bones and concussion had resulted after a human chain brought the injured men back up to the road.

Lights were turned on and the convoy got back without further trouble. Barrow reported to his regimental commander at Togwon that his losses amounted to eight men wounded and 16 injured in addition to five vehicles destroyed.

Colonel Puller assured him that his failure had been due to an unavoidably late start and lack of a FAC rather than faulty judgment.

The following morning, after departing Wonsan at 0830, the air controller was not needed. Barrow had put into effect a new tactical plan based on the premise that the guerrillas of Ambush Alley would be waiting as usual for the sound of approaching trucks. He prepared a surprise, therefore, by directing his infantry platoons to take turns at leading the column on foot, keeping a thousand yards or more in advance of the vehicles.

The scheme worked to perfection as Second Lieutenant Donald R. Jones' platoon rounded a bend near the scene of yesterday's ambush and surprised about 70 guerrillas as they were eating. The ambushers had in effect been ambushed. The Marines opened up with everything they had, and only a few of the Reds escaped with their lives. There was no further trouble after the convoy got under way again, arriving at Majon-ni early in the afternoon of 5 November without a single casualty. Losses of 51 killed and three prisoners were inflicted on the enemy.

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Chapter 4. Majon-ni and Ambush Alley
First Attack on Perimeter

The supplies were no less welcome than the Marines who brought them, for the CIC team had warned of an attack on Majon-ni at 0100 the following night. Colonel Puller placed Able Company under the operational control of 3/1 for the defense, and the commanding officer assigned the three rifle platoons and their reinforcing elements a sector between How and George Companies on the perimeter.

This addition to his strength made it possible for Lieutenant Colonel Ridge to send out his executive officer, Major Reginald R. Myers, in command of a motorized patrol large enough to cope with a reported enemy build-up of 2000 to 3000 men about six miles northwest of Majon-ni on the Pyongyang road. Intelligence received by Corps indicated that this force was assembling in an old mining area, and a 3/1 reconnaissance in force was ordered.

The Marine task force, consisting of George and Item Companies, plus elements of Weapons Company, was supported by artillery from Majon-ni. Nothing more formidable was encountered than a few guerrillas firing at long-range, but Myers brought back 81 willing prisoners.[20]

That night at 0130, trip flares and exploding booby traps were the prelude to the first NKPA probing attacks on the perimeter. The enemy was half an hour late, but otherwise the assault developed pretty much as the CIC team had predicted, even to the identification of elements of the 45th Regiment of the 15th NKPA Division. The assailants showed no disposition to close, and the assault turned into a desultory fire fight. At 0500, with a fog reducing visibility almost to zero, the enemy could be heard but not seen in his assault on the battalion OP. This position was located on the How Company front and manned by wiremen and artillery and mortar FO teams. When their ammunition ran out, these Marines were forced to withdraw; but Captain Thomas E. McCarthy, Second Lieutenants Charles Mattox and Charles R. Stiles with an assortment of H&S Company personnel recaptured the position the moment that the fog lifted. The enemy withdrew into the hills after the Corsairs came on station, and the action ended at 0730 with two wounded Marines representing the casualty list of 3/1 in the engagement.[21]

Able Company returned to Wonsan that morning with 619 of the prisoners who had been accumulating at Majon-ni until the stockade was almost overflowing with Korean humanity. Captain Barrow packed the captives into open trucks covered with tarpaulins. This precaution was taken in order not to advertise the nature of the cargo while passing through Ambush Alley, since it might be embarrassing if the guerrillas attempted to liberate prisoners who outnumbered their keepers three to one.

Simultaneously with the return of Able Company, Colonel Puller ordered his 2d Battalion (—) to proceed via the Majon-ni road to Munchon-ni. Lieutenant Colonel Sutter’s mission was similar to that of Lieutenant Colonel Ridge at Majon-ni: to block enemy movement along the trails leading north and to screen civilians. The hamlet of Munchon-ni squatted near the top of the highest pass along Ambush Alley. Trucks could be supplied for only one reinforced rifle company —Easy—which departed Wonsan at 0830.

Four miles short of the objective, the motorized column entered a horseshoe bend large enough to contain all the vehicles. On the left of the road was a sheer drop, and on the right rose cliffs 200 feet in height. The last truck had just entered the bend when the first was stopped by a landslide roadblock. As the column ground to a halt the enemy opened up with rifles and automatic weapons from well camouflaged positions in the high ground at the far end of the horseshoe.[22]

The Marines scrambled out of the trucks and returned the fire. But it was necessary to attack in order to

dislodge the enemy, and during the advance Easy Company took a total of 46 casualties—8 KIA and 38 WIA—in addition to six wounded truck drivers. Five of the seven officers were wounded, including the company commander, Captain Charles D. Frederick.

It was estimated that the roadblock had been defended by about 200 Red Koreans, who left 61 counted dead behind them and probably removed at least as many wounded. Fifty cases of 120mm mortar ammunition were destroyed by the Marines and 300 cases of small arms cartridges.

At 1615 Sutter and the remainder of the 2/1 force arrived on the scene from Wonsan just as Able Company and its prisoners appeared from the opposite direction. Helicopters having already evacuated the Easy Company's critical casualties, Able Company brought the lightly wounded and prisoners to Wonsan without further enemy interference. Sutters' force proceeded to Munchon-ni as originally planned.

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Chapter 4. Majon-ni and Ambush Alley
KMC Battalion Sent to Majon-ni

At Majon-ni an OP manned by two squads of Lieutenant Ronald A. Mason's 2d Platoon of How Company was threatened with encirclement on the 8th when a Red Korean force gradually built up to an estimated 250 men worked around to the rear. The other two platoons of the company, reinforced with heavy machine guns and an Item Company platoon, were sent out from the perimeter. Artillery and mortars helped to scatter the enemy in confusion with estimated 40 per cent losses. Marine casualties were one man killed and ten wounded.[23]

On 10 November, reflecting the concern of CO 1st Marines over enemy activity in the Majon-ni area, the 3d KMC Battalion arrived as reinforcements together with a convoy of supplies. CO 3/1 assigned the unit to the sector in the perimeter recently vacated by Able Company of 1/1.[24]

The celebration of the 175th birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps was not neglected at Majon-ni. Somehow the cooks managed to bake a prodigious cake, with thinly spread jam serving as frosting, and all hands were rotated a few at a time to their company CPs to receive a slice.[25]

That afternoon an OY of VMO-6 spotted an estimated 300 enemy troops about four miles west of Majon-ni. Under direction of the aerial observers, Captain Strohmenger's howitzers broke up this concentration.[26]

The CIC team warned that another attack on the perimeter by the 45th NKPA Regiment would take place on the night of 11–12 November. As a prelude, General Pak made an effort to terrorize inhabitants who had kept the team informed of his plans and movements. Some of the villagers took his threats seriously enough to prepare for a hurried leavetaking, but the Civil Affairs section reassured them and put a curfew into effect.[27]

After such a menacing build-up, the second attack on the perimeter fizzled out like a damp firecracker. A few probing jabs, beginning at 0130, were followed by a weak main assault on the KMC front which was easily repulsed. The enemy tried again to overrun the OP but gave up the attempt after stumbling into a field of "Bouncing Betty" mines. At 0600 the last action of the Majon-ni operation came to an end as the Communists withdrew. Friendly losses were two men killed and six wounded.[28]

This was the final appearance of the 15th NKPA Division, which apparently abandoned Majon-ni as an objective and transferred its guerrilla operations southward along the Imjin valley. The relief of the Marines and KMCs on position began the next afternoon as elements of the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, U.S. 3d Infantry Division, arrived to take over the perimeter.

The Army column, including 34 Marine supply vehicles, had moved out from Wonsan at 1030 the day before. Although 2/1 (less Dog Company) had maintained its blocking positions at Munchon-ni, the convoy was stopped a few miles beyond the Marine outposts by a wrecked bridge and three large craters. Guerrillas poured in small-arms fire from the high ground which resulted in two soldiers being killed and four wounded. Two Marine trucks and a jeep were destroyed.

Extensive repairs to the road being needed, Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Blanchard, the commanding officer of 1/15, formed a defensive perimeter for the night. The column reached Majon-ni without further incident at 1530 on the 13th.[29]

Following relief by the Army unit, the Marine battalion departed at 1015 on the 14th by truck for the Wonsan area. A total of 1395 prisoners had been taken during the 17 days of Majon-ni—a large proportion of them voluntary—and more than 4000 Korean transients screened. Enemy battle casualties were estimated at 525 killed and an unknown number wounded.[30]

Losses of the Marine battalion numbered 65—16 KIA, 4 DOW and 45 WIA. Nonbattle casualties were remarkably low, owing to strict enforcement of sanitary and health regulations.[31]

The vulnerability of a tenuous MSR must also be taken into account, and casualties of nine killed and 81 wounded or injured were incurred by Marines escorting supply convoys through Ambush Alley.

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Chapter 4. Majon-ni and Ambush Alley
Movement of 1st Marines to Chigyong

From the 1st Marines in the Wonsan area to the 7th Marines leading the northward advance, a distance of more than 130 road miles separated the elements of the 1st Marine Division. But the arrival of more U.S. Army units made possible a first step toward concentration.

On 29 October the 17th RCT of the 7th Infantry Division had begun landing at Iwon (see Map 2), about 60 air miles northeast of Hungnam. Other units and reinforcing elements followed until all had completed unloading by 8 November—a total of 28,995 troops, 5924 vehicles, and 30,016 short tons of cargo.[32]

Transports had been sent by CTF–90 on 31 October to Moji, Japan, for the first units of the 3d Infantry Division. The 65th RCT landed at Wonsan on 5 November, but it was not until the 18th that the last elements arrived.[33] All four of the major units of X Corps—the two Army divisions as well as the 1st Marine Division and I ROK Corps—were then in the zone of operations, even though dispersed over a wide area.

The commanding generals of both Army units were “old China hands.” Major General Robert H. Soule, CG 3d Infantry Division, had been U.S. military attaché in Nationalist China during the last months of the civil war. During this same period Major General David G. Barr, CG 7th Infantry Division, was senior officer of the United States Military Advisory Group in China.[34]

On 31 October, by order of ComNavFE, JTF–7 had been dissolved and the TG 95.2 Support and Covering Group passed to the operational control of CTF–90, Admiral Doyle. As the center of gravity of X Corps gradually shifted to the north, General Almond moved his advanced CP from Wonsan to Hamhung on 2 November and the remainder of his headquarters on the 10th. He was joined four days later by Admiral Doyle and his staff as the *Mount McKinley* anchored off Hungnam.[35]

The 1st Marine Division CP had displaced from Wonsan to Hung-nam on 4 November as the 5th and 7th Marines carried out assignments in the north. This movement included 2/5, which had been under the operational control of the 1st Marines for patrolling missions in the Wonsan area. Not until a week later was General Smith able to plan the northward advance of Colonel Puller’s regiment. On the 12th, X Corps OpnO 6 directed the 3d Infantry Division to relieve elements of the 1st Marines. The mission of the Army division was to protect the left flank of X Corps and prepare for an advance to the west.[36]

For a time it had appeared that 1/1, which had the responsibility for security in the Wonsan area after its return from Kojo, might be sent to Chongjin, 220 air miles northeast of Wonsan, in accordance with X Corps OI–13 of 25 October. This battalion was designated for the mission in 1stMarDiv OpnO 10–50, issued on 5 November, but four days later X Corps cancelled this requirement.[37]

Before departing the Wonsan area, Puller’s headquarters had another false alarm. Small craft sighted by air on 8 November, and two mysterious explosions, led to the report that 500 to 1000 enemy boats were attempting an amphibious landing ten miles north of Wonsan. An armored patrol of Company C, 1st Tank Battalion, was sent to investigate but reported no contact.[38]

X Corps directed that upon the relief of the Marines by the 3d Infantry Division, the 3d and 5th KMC Battalions, which had been under the operational control of RCT–1, would then be attached to the Army unit.[39]

After lack of transport imposed a delay of two days, 1/1 initiated the northward movement of RCT–1 by rail and closed Chigyong, eight miles southwest of Hamhung, by 1820, 14 November. A motor convoy followed.[40]

Relief of 2/1(–), which had been holding screening and blocking positions on Ambush Alley, was

completed on the 15th by the 3d Battalion of the 15th Infantry. Other Army elements relieved Dog Company in the rear area near Wonsan. On the 16th 2/1 moved by rail to Chigyong, followed by 3/1 and the last elements of RCT–1 the next day.[41]

Thus the 1st Marine Division achieved a relative and temporary degree of concentration. The farthest distance between components had been reduced from 130 to less than 60 miles by the middle of November, but a new dispersion of units was already in progress.

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Chapter 5. Red China to the Rescue

UP TO THIS TIME the 1st Marine Division had virtually been waging two separate wars. In the southern zone, as was related in the last two chapters, blocking and screening operations were conducted by RCT-1 against NKPA remnants. RCT-7, with RCT-5 in reserve, had meanwhile been confronted in the north by some of the first Chinese Communist troops to enter the Korean conflict.

In order to trace the movements of these two Marine regiments, it will be necessary to go back over chronological ground previously covered. Division OpnO 18-50, issued on 28 October to implement X Corps OI-13 and supplementary telephone orders received from Corps, assigned RCT-7 the mission of proceeding from Wonsan to Hamhung, prepared for an advance to the Manchurian border 135 miles to the north. RCT-5 was assigned a zone behind RCT-7 (see end-paper maps).

Plans for the northward advance brought up the vital problem of providing security for the 78-mile main supply route (MSR) and the parallel railway stretching along the coast from Wonsan to Hamhung. Division orders of the 28th assigned RCT-5 (less 2/5), temporarily under the operational control of RCT-1, the responsibility for the security of the Munchon and Yonghung areas, 16 and 57 miles north of Wonsan respectively. Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, attached to RCT-5, had orders to establish blocking positions on three main roads joining the MSR from the west.[1]

RCT-7, after being partially issued cold weather clothing at Wonsan, moved by road and rail to the Hamhung area during the last three days of October. The 1st Motor Transport Battalion and Division Reconnaissance Company were attached along with other reinforcing units, since this regiment had been designated to lead the advance of the 1st Marine Division to the Manchurian border.[2]

RCT-5 completed a motor march meanwhile from its assembly area near Wonsan to assigned positions along the Wonsan-Hamhung MSR. General Almond's OI-15 (30 October) had directed the dispatch of two Marine RCTs to the Hamhung area, which meant that Lieutenant Colonel Murray's regiment was to follow RCT-7. On the 31st General Smith ordered him to advance a battalion to Chigyong, eight miles southwest of Hamhung. Murray selected his 1st Battalion and directed that one of its companies be detached to relieve an RCT-7 company guarding the Advance Supply Point at Yonpo Airfield, five miles southwest of Hungnam.[3]

Two additional Marine units were assigned to assembly areas along the MSR. The 1st Tank Battalion (less Company C, attached to the 1st Marines) moved up to Munchon and regained its Company A. Since the landing of the 11th Marines (less the battalions attached to RCTs) the artillery regiment (-) had occupied positions at Munpyong-ni, five miles northwest of Wonsan.[4]

When four days passed without enemy contacts along the MSR, General Almond decided to expedite the movement of RCT-5 to the Hamhung area. In a conference with General Smith on 2 November, he outlined a plan for using patrols instead of blocking positions. Under this system RCT-1, with elements of the 1st Tank Battalion, would be made responsible for MSR security as far north as Munchon. The 54-mile stretch between Munchon and Chigyong would be assigned to the Special Operations Company, USA, and Korean agents, both under Corps control. As soon as these arrangements could be put into effect, RCT-5 would be free to advance to Hamhung. That same day, 2 November, the 2d Battalion was released from operational control of RCT-1 and moved to Hamhung.[5]

Ironically, the 2d was also the date of the first guerrilla raid on the MSR. A patrol from the 1st Tank Battalion was sent by Division to the aid of the Special Operations Company, which had reported an attack west of Munchon resulting in a wound casualty and loss of equipment. The Marines drove the guerrillas back into the

hills.[6]

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Chapter 5. Red China to the Rescue

Chinese in X Corps Zone

Red Korean guerrilla activities were overshadowed by confirmation of reports that organized CCF units had appeared in the X Corps zone as well as on the Eighth Army front. After crossing the Yalu, they had secretly infiltrated through the mountains, marching by night and hiding by day from air observation. Their numbers and intentions remained a mystery at this date, but late in October the 8th U.S. Cavalry Regiment and the 6th ROK Division were surprised by Chinese in northwest Korea and badly mauled.[7]

First-hand evidence of CCF penetrations in northeast Korea was obtained by three Marine officers of RCT-7. Shortly after arrival in the Hamhung area, the regimental commander sent out reconnoitering parties in preparation for the northward advance of 1 November. The 1/7 patrol on 31 October consisted of a fire team in three jeeps led by Captain Myron E. Wilcox and First Lieutenants William G. Graeber and John B. Wilson. As a result of their visit to the CP of the 26th ROK Regiment of the 3d ROK Division, which RCT-7 was scheduled to relieve near Sudong (see Map 7) on 2 November, the Marine officers reported to their regimental headquarters that they had seen one Chinese prisoner.[8]

As a matter of fact, the ROK regiment took 16 Chinese prisoners in all. They were identified as belonging to two regiments of the 124th CCF Division, one of the three divisions of the 42d CCF Army. This force had crossed the Yalu about 16 October, according to POW testimony, and moved southward without being observed into the Chosin Reservoir area during the following ten days.[9]

Not only was Colonel Litzenberg aware that he would be facing Chinese adversaries in this area; he also suspected that they had infiltrated toward his left rear. He sent a patrol consisting of 20 men and five jeeps of Recon Company as far as Chigyong on the 31st without making any enemy contacts. The following morning CO RCT-7 ordered Recon Company in 21 jeeps to conduct a reconnaissance to the Huksu-ri area, approximately 45 miles northwest of Hamhung. After bypassing a blown bridge, First Lieutenant Ralph B. Crossman’s force dug in for the night 4500 yards short of its objective. Shots were exchanged several times that night and early the following morning with North Korean guerrillas in company strength, but the patrol returned with a negative report as far as Chinese forces were concerned.[10]

News was received on 1 November of the heavy losses taken by the 1st Cavalry Division at the hands of the Chinese in northwest Korea. There was no change, however, in Corps orders calling for the advance of Litzenberg’s regiment to the border. Koto-ri, 23 road miles north of Majon-dong, was the first objective. The right flank of the Eighth Army was about 60 air miles southwest of Majon-dong, so that RCT-7 must advance without protection for its left flank except for Division Recon Company, which was to be relieved as soon as possible by RCT-1.

“Under these circumstances,” commented General Smith at a later date, “there was no alternative except to continue forward in the hope that the Eighth Army situation would right itself and that we would succeed in our efforts to close up the entire 1st Marine Division behind RCT-7.”[11]

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Chapter 5. Red China to the Rescue
Introducing the New Enemy

Here it is hardly a digression to pause for a brief survey of the organization, tactics and aims of the new enemy who was about to prolong the Korean conflict by intervening on behalf of the beaten NKPA. The powerful, ever-ready military instrument which the Chinese Reds knew as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had been forged and tempered in the fires of civil strife. It came into being in the late summer of 1927 during the abortive Nanchang rebellion. Following their defeat, the Communists found a refuge in Kiangsi Province of south China and gained strength as disaffected Kuomintang units came over to their side.[12]

The infant PLA managed with difficulty to survive the first four "bandit suppression campaigns" waged by Chiang Kai-shek. When he launched his fifth in 1933, the Chinese Reds planned the celebrated "Long March" which has become one of their most cherished traditions. Breaking out of Chiang's encirclement in October, 1934, they took a circuitous, 6000-mile route to avoid Nationalist armies. Of the 90,000 who started, only 20,000 were left a year later when the PLA reached Yenan in Shensi Province.[13]

This destination in northwest China gave the Communists a refuge with Mongolia and Soviet Russia at their backs. There Mao Tse-tung and his colleagues alternately fought and negotiated with the Government. Finally, in 1941, the Communists and Nationalists agreed to cease fighting one another in order to make common cause against the Japanese invaders.

The Communists took advantage of their membership in the People's Political Council—a Nationalist-sponsored organization which theoretically united all factions in China against the Japanese—to continue their "boring-from-within" tactics. Chiang's estimate of his troublesome allies was summed up in a quotation attributed to him in 1941:

"You think it is important that I have kept the Japanese from expanding. . . .I tell you it is more important that I have kept the Communists from spreading. The Japanese are a disease of the skin; the Communists are a disease of the heart."[14]

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Chapter 5. Red China to the Rescue
Communist Victory in Civil War

In late 1945, with the Japanese no longer a menace, the grapple for mastery began anew. Chiang Kai-shek held the material and moral advantage as a result of the arms and other assistance supplied by the United States.

The Nationalists controlled all the important centers of population and industry and the major lines of communication. The Communists, with their backs to the wall, eagerly accepted the United States proposal for a cease fire in January 1946. General George C. Marshall, as personal representative of President Truman, flew out to Nanking in December, 1945, and tried for 12 months to arrange a workable compromise between two irreconcilable ideologies. Meanwhile, the Reds retrained and reequipped their forces with the vast supply of weapons which had fallen into their hands as a result of the collapse of the Japanese Army in Manchuria in August, 1945. By the spring of 1947, they were ready again for war. They denounced the truce and recommenced military operations. From that time the balance of power swung steadily in their favor.[15]

Although the PLA had seized the initiative, the Government still had an army of about 2,700,000 men facing 1,150,000 Reds, according to estimates of American military advisers in China. But Chiang was committed to a positional warfare; his forces were dangerously over-extended, and for reasons of prestige and political considerations he hesitated to withdraw from areas of dubious military value. Mao's hard and realistic strategy took full advantage of these lapses. As a result the Communists won the upper hand in Manchuria and Shantung and by the end of the year had massed large forces in central China.

Early in 1948, the year of decision, the PLA recaptured Yenan along with thousands of Government troops. But the most crushing Communist victory of all came with the surrender of Tsinan, the capital of Shantung, and its garrison of 85,000 to 100,000 Nationalists.

In his summary of Nationalist reverses, Major General David G. Barr, senior officer of the United States Military Advisory Group in China, reported to the Department of the Army on 16 November 1948:

"No battle has been lost since my arrival due to lack of ammunition and equipment. Their [the Chinese Nationalists'] military debacles in my opinion can all be attributed to the world's worst leadership and many other morale destroying factors that lead to a complete loss of will to fight."[16]

By the early spring of 1949 the military collapse of the Nationalists had gone so far that the enemy controlled the major centers of population and the railroads from Manchuria south to the Yangtze Valley. Nanking, Hangkow, and Shanghai were soon to fall into the hands of Communists whose military strength increased every day as they captured Nationalist arms and were joined by Nationalist deserters. Perhaps the best summary of the Chinese Civil War was put in a few words by Dean Acheson, the U.S. Secretary of State:

"The Nationalist armies did not have to be defeated; they disintegrated."[17]

In addition to the aid extended during World War II, Washington had authorized grants and credits to Nationalist China amounting to two billion dollars since V-J Day. Nor was American assistance confined to arms and monetary grants. From 1945-1947 the occupation of certain key cities in North China, e. g., Tientsin, Peiping, Tsingtao, [18] etc., by sizeable U.S. Marine forces held those bases secure for the Nationalist government and permitted the release of appreciable numbers of Chiang's soldiers for offensive operations, who would otherwise have been tied up in garrison type duty.[19]

The Marines, upon their withdrawal, were directed to turn over vast stores of weapons and munitions to the Chinese Nationalists. In addition, the Nationalists were "sold" large quantities of military and civilian war

surplus property, with a total procurement cost of more than a billion dollars, for a bargain price of 232 million. [20]

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Chapter 5. Red China to the Rescue
Organization of the CCF

Although the victorious army continued to be called the People's Liberation Army by the Chinese Reds themselves, it was known as the Chinese Communist Forces by commentators of Western nations. At the head of the new police state were the 72 regular and alternate members of the Central Committee, or Politburo. Formed at the Seventh Party Congress in 1945, this body consisted for the most part of Mao's close associates—leaders identified with the revolutionary movement from the beginning.

From top to bottom of the Chinese state, the usual Communist dualism of high political and military rank prevailed. The highest governing body, the People's Revolutionary Military Council, consisted of leaders holding both positions. After they determined policies, the execution was left to the General Headquarters of the army. [21]

This organization comprised a general staff section, a rear Services section and a general political bureau. The largest CCF administrative unit was the field army, which reported directly to Headquarters. Composed of two or more army groups, the field army had a small headquarters of its own.

The army group, as the largest unit encountered by UN forces, was comparable to an army in the American military system. CCF army groups in Korea consisted of two to four armies with an average total strength of 60,000-120,000 troops. Equivalent to an American corps was the CCF army, an organization including three infantry divisions and an artillery regiment. Thus the average strength of a CCF army was about 30,000 men.

The CCF infantry division, with a paper strength of 10,000 men, averaged from 7,000 to 8,500 men in Korea, according to various estimates. Triangular in organization, it included three infantry regiments and an artillery battalion.

Divisional units consisted of reconnaissance and engineer companies of about 100 men, a 150-man transport company, a 100-man guard company, and a 60-man communications company. Transport companies had only draft animals and carts, since little motor transport was organic to a CCF division at that time.

The CCF infantry regiment, averaging about 2,200 men in the field, broke down into the following units: three infantry battalions; an artillery battery of four to six guns; a mortar and bazooka company; a guard company; a transportation company; a medical unit with attached stretcher personnel (often composed of impressed civilians) and a combined reconnaissance and signal company.

The CCF infantry battalion, with an authorized strength of 852 men and an actual strength of perhaps 700, consisted of a mortar and machine gun or heavy weapons company, a signal squad, a medical squad and a small battalion headquarters in addition to the three rifle companies of about 170 men each. Each of the latter was composed of a headquarters platoon, a 60mm mortar platoon and three rifle platoons.

The CCF artillery battalion, organic to every division, must be considered theoretical rather than actual as far as Korean operations of 1950 are concerned. As a rule, only a few

horse-drawn or pack howitzers were brought into action by an infantry division depending chiefly on mortars.

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Chapter 5. Red China to the Rescue
The Chinese Peasant as a Soldier

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the CCF, from the viewpoint of a Western observer, was the lack of any official provision for the honorable discharge of a soldier. Once he became a cog in the CCF military machine, a man remained in the ranks until he was killed, captured, became a deserter, or was incapacitated for active service by reason of wounds, disease or old age.

Theoretically depending on a "volunteer" system, the recruiting officers of the CCF knew how to apply political or economic pressure so that a man found it prudent to become a soldier. After putting on a uniform, he was vigorously indoctrinated in political as well as military subjects.

Both self-criticism and criticism of comrades were encouraged at platoon meetings held for that purpose. Every recruit was subjected to a course of psychological mass coercion known to the Chinese as *hsi-nao* and to the non-Communist world as "brain-washing." Spying on comrades and reporting political or military deviations was a soldier's duty.[22]

Inured to hardships from birth, the peasant in the ranks did not find that the military service demanded many unwonted privations. He was used to cold and hunger, and he could make long daily marches on a diet which the American soldier would have regarded as both insufficient and monotonous. It would appear, however, that some of the Western legends about Oriental stoicism and contempt for death were a little far-fetched. At any rate, the CCF had to deal with the problem of straggling from the battlefield; and U.S. Marines in Korea could attest that on occasion the Chinese soldier showed evidences of fear and low morale. Nor was he as much of a fanatic as might have been expected, considering the extent of his political indoctrination.

Although the CCF departed in most respects from the Chinese military past, the policy of organizing units along ethnic lines was retained. Men from the same village were formed into a company; companies from the same area into battalions; and battalions from the same province into regiments or divisions. Replacements were drawn from the localities where the unit was originally recruited.[23]

On the other hand, the Chinese Reds broke with both Nationalist and Communist tradition in their policy of avoiding a permanent rank system. Officers (in Korea denoted by red piping on their sleeves) were divided into company, field, and general groups. The company commander and political officer held about equal authority in an infantry unit, and the only NCOs mentioned in CCF field reports are sergeants and squad leaders.[24]

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Chapter 5. Red China to the Rescue
CCF Arms and Equipment

The CCF depended on a wide assortment of weapons, so that it was not uncommon to find several different kinds of rifles of varying calibers in the same regiment. Japanese arms acquired after the surrender of 1945; Russian arms furnished by the Soviets; and American, German, Czech, British, and Canadian arms taken from the Chinese Nationalists—these were some of the diverse sources. And it is a tribute to the adaptability of the Chinese Reds that they managed to utilize such military hand-me-downs without disastrous confusion.

Paper work was at a minimum in a force which kept few records and numbered a great many illiterates. As for logistics, each soldier was given a four-day food supply in the winter of 1950-1951 when he crossed the Yalu—usually rice, millet or soy beans carried in his pack. Afterwards, food was to be procured locally by extortion or confiscation, though the Communists were fond of using such euphemisms as “purchase” or “donation” to denote those processes.[25]

The CCF soldiers who fought in Korea during the winter of 1950-1951 wore a two-piece, reversible mustard-yellow and white uniform of quilted cotton and a heavy cotton cap with fur-lined ear flaps. Issued to the troops just before crossing the Yalu, the quilted cotton blouse and trousers were worn over the standard summer uniform and any other layers of clothing the soldier may have acquired.

The first CCF units in action had canvas shoes with crepe rubber soles. Later arrivals were issued a half-leather shoe or even a full leather boot. Chinese footwear was of poor quality and few of the troops wore gloves in cold weather. The consequence was a high rate of frostbitten hands and feet.[26]

The CCF soldier usually carried a shawl-like blanket in addition to the small pack containing his food as well as personal belongings. These were few and simple, for it could never be said that the Chinese Reds pampered their soldiers.

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Chapter 5. Red China to the Rescue
China's "Hate America" Campaign

It was essentially an Asiatic guerrilla army which came to the rescue of beaten Red Korea in the autumn of 1950. CCF strategic aims had been summed up years before by Mao Tse-tung himself:

"We are against guerilla-ism of the Red Army, yet we must admit its guerrilla character. We are opposed to protracted campaigns and a strategy of quick decision while we believe in a strategy of protracted war and campaigns of quick decision. As we are opposed to fixed operational fronts and positional. warfare, we believe in unfixed operational fronts and a war of maneuvers. We are against simply routing the enemy, and believe in a war of annihilation. We are against two-fistism in strategic directions and believe in one-fistism. We are against the institution of a big rear and believe in a small rear. We are against absolute centralized command and believe in a relatively centralized command."[27]

Mao was held in such reverence as a veteran Chinese Communist leader that long passages of his writings were committed to memory. His strategic ideas, therefore, deserve more than passing consideration. In the first place, his concept of war itself differed from that of Western nations.

"There are only two kinds of war in history, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary," he wrote. "We support the former and oppose the latter. Only a revolutionary war is holy."[28]

From the Western viewpoint, Mao's followers had fought four different wars in close succession—against the Chinese Nationalists from 1927 to 1936; against the Japanese from 1937 to 1945; against the Nationalists in a second war from 1946 to 1949; and against the United Nations, beginning in 1950. But Mao and his colleagues saw this period as one prolonged war in which revolutionists were pitted against counter-revolutionary adversaries. The fact that the conflict had lasted for a generation did not disturb Communist leaders who envisioned a continual state of war "to save mankind and China from destruction."

"The greatest and most ruthless counter-revolutionary war is pressing on us," continued Mao. "If we do not hoist the banner of revolutionary war, a greater part of the human race will face extinction."[29]

Early in December, 1949, following Red China's victory over the Nationalists, Mao arrived in Moscow for a series of talks with Stalin which lasted until 4 March 1950. The decisions reached in these conferences are not known, but it was probably no coincidence that the Communist puppet state in North Korea violated the world's peace a few months later. It is perhaps also significant that the head of the Soviet Military Mission in Tokyo, Lieutenant General Kuzma Derevyanko, was absent from Tokyo during the same period and reported in Moscow.[30]

It was the Year of the Tiger in the Chinese calendar, and a "Resist America, Aid Korea" movement was launched in Red China when the United States came to the aid of the Republic of Korea. Every dictatorship must have some object of mass hatred, and Mao found the United States ideal for the purpose. A "Hate America" campaign was inaugurated after the CCF intervention, with the following serving as an example of anti-American propaganda:

"This [the United States] is the paradise of gangsters, swindlers, rascals, special agents, fascist germs, speculators, debauchers, and all the dregs of mankind. This is the world's manufactory and source of such crimes as reaction, darkness, cruelty, decadence, corruption, debauchery, oppression of man by man, and cannibalism. This is the exhibition ground of all the crimes which can possibly be committed by mankind. This is a living hell, ten times, one hundred times, one thousand times worse than can possibly be depicted by the most sanguinary of writers. Here the criminal phenomena that issue forth defy the imagination of human brains. Conscientious

persons can only wonder how the spiritual civilization of mankind can be depraved to such an extent.”[31]

Communist doctrine held that the people must be incited by such propaganda to a constant high pitch of emotional intensity for the sacrifices demanded by total war. The prevalence of illiteracy made it necessary to depend largely on street-corner loud speakers blaring forth radio harangues. Realistic broadcasts of the torture and execution of political deviates were also heard at times, and such spectacles were exhibited for the edification of the public.[32]

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Chapter 5. Red China to the Rescue
CCF Strategy and Tactics

CCF strategy was so rudimentary at first that its basic tenets could be summed up in a 16-word principle adopted by the Central Committee:

"Enemy advancing, we retreat; enemy entrenched, we harass; enemy exhausted, we attack; enemy retreating, we pursue."[33]

But as time went on, other principles were added. Mao favored a planned defensive-offensive as the only valid strategy against superior enemy numbers. He made it plain, however, that any withdrawal was to be merely temporary as the preliminary to advancing and striking at the first advantageous opportunity. And he reiterated that annihilation of the enemy must always be the final goal of strategy.[34]

It was in the field of tactics that the essentially guerrilla character of the CCF was most fully revealed. Since Communist dialectics insisted that there was a correct (Marxist) and an incorrect ("petty bourgeois" or "opportunist" or "reactionary") way of doing everything, CCF tactics were reduced to principles whenever possible.

A generation of warfare against material odds had established a pattern of attack which proved effective against armies possessing an advantage in arms and equipment. One Marine officer has aptly defined a Chinese attack as "assembly on the objective."[35] The coolie in the CCF ranks had no superior in the world at making long approach marches by night and hiding by day, with as many as fifty men sharing a hut or cave and subsisting on a few handfuls of rice apiece. Night attacks were so much the rule that any exception came as a surprise. The advancing columns took such natural routes as draws or stream beds, deploying as soon as they met resistance. Combat groups then peeled off from the tactical columns, one at a time, and closed with rifles, submachine guns, and grenades.

Once engaged and under fire, the attackers hit the ground. Rising at any lull, they came on until engaged again; but when fully committed, they did not relinquish the attack even when riddled with casualties. Other Chinese came forward to take their places, and the build-up continued until a penetration was made, usually on the front of one or two platoons. After consolidating the ground, the combat troops then crept or wriggled forward against the open flank of the next platoon position. Each step of the assault was executed with practiced stealth and boldness, and the results of several such penetrations on a battalion front could be devastating.[36]

The pattern of attack was varied somewhat to suit different occasions. As an example of an action in which the CCF used mortars, the following is quoted from a Marine field report:

"Five to nine men [CCF] patrols were sent out forward of the main body in an attempt to locate or establish [our] front lines and flanks. After these patrols had withdrawn or been beaten off, white phosphorus mortar shells were dropped about the area in an attempt to inflict casualties. By closely watching the area for movement in removing these casualties, they attempted to establish the location of our front lines. After establishing what they believed were the front lines, white phosphorous shells were dropped in the lines and used as markers. While this was taking place, the assault troops crawled forward to distances as close as possible to the front lines . . . [and] attacked at a given signal. The signal in this particular instance was three blasts of a police whistle. The attacking troops then rose and in a perfect skirmish formation rushed the front line."[37]

It might be added that this attack resulted in a CCF penetration on a platoon front. Friendly lines were restored only by dawn counter-attacks.

The ambush was a favorite resort of Chinese commanders. Whatever the form of attack, the object was

usually fractionalization of an opposing force, so that the segments could be beaten in detail by a local superiority in numbers.

CCF attacking forces ranged as a rule from a platoon to a company in size, being continually built up as casualties thinned the ranks. Reports by newspaper correspondents of “hordes” and “human sea” assaults were so unrealistic as to inspire a derisive Marine comment:

“How many hordes are there in a Chinese platoon?”

After giving CCF tactics due credit for their merits, some serious weaknesses were also apparent. The primitive logistical system put such restrictions on ammunition supplies, particularly artillery and mortar shells, that a Chinese battalion sometimes had to be pulled back to wait for replenishments if the first night’s attack failed. At best the infantry received little help from supporting arms.[38]

POW interrogations revealed that in many instances each soldier was issued 80 rounds of small arms ammunition upon crossing the Yalu. This was his total supply. The artillery and mortars were so limited that they must reserve their fire for the front line while passing up lucrative targets in the rear areas. Some attempts were made to bring reserve stocks up to forward supply dumps about 30 miles behind the front, but not much could be accomplished with animal and human transport.

A primitive communications system also accounted for CCF shortcomings. The radio net extended only down to the regimental level, and telephones only to battalions or occasionally companies. Below the battalion, communication depended on runners or such signaling devices as bugles, whistles, flares, and flashlights.[39]

The consequence was a tactical rigidity which at times was fatal. Apparently CCF commanding officers had little or no option below the battalion level. A battalion once committed to the attack often kept on as long as its ammunition lasted, even if events indicated that it was beating out its brains against the strongest part of the opposing line. The result in many such instances was tactical suicide.

After these defects are taken into full account, however, the Chinese soldier and the Korean terrain made a formidable combination. Ironically, Americans fighting the first war of the new Atomic Age were encountering conditions reminiscent of the border warfare waged by their pioneer forefathers against the Indians. These aborigines, too, were outweighed in terms of weapons and equipment. But from time immemorial the night has always been the ally of the primitive fighter, and surprise his best weapon. Thus the Americans in Korea, like their ancestors on the Western plains, could never be sure when the darkness would erupt into flame as stealthy foes seemed to spring from the very earth.

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Chapter 6. The Battle of Sudong

THE COASTAL PLAIN of the Songchon estuary is one of the most spacious flatlands in all North Korea. Its 100 square miles divide into two irrigation districts, which regulate cultivation in a virtual sea of rice paddies. The Songchon River, swollen by tributaries in its descent from the northern hinterland, nourishes this agricultural complex before flowing into the Sea of Japan.

Flanking the mouth of the waterway are the port city of Hungnam to the north and the town of Yonpo, with its modern airfield, to the south. Eight miles upstream lies Hamhung, an important transportation center with a population of approximately 85,000 Koreans and Japanese in 1940.

Hamhung straddles the main railroad connecting Wonsan and Sonjin as it follows the coastal route to the border of Soviet Russia. A narrow-gauge line (2' 6") stems from Hungnam and passes through Hamhung before penetrating into the mountainous heart of North Korea. Parallel to this railroad is the only highway that could be utilized by the transport of the 1st Marine Division for its advance to the north.

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Chapter 6. The Battle of Sudong
The MSR from Hungnam to Yudam-ni

Soon the eyes of the world would be fixed on maps of the narrow, winding 78-mile stretch of dirt and gravel road leading from the supply port of Hungnam to the forlorn village of Yudam-ni at the western tip of the Chosin Reservoir. Distances in road miles between points along the route are as follows:
Hungnam to Hamhung: 8 miles
Hamhung to Oro-ri: 8 miles
Oro-ri to Majon-dong: 14 miles
Majon-dong to Sudong: 7 miles
Sudong to Chinhung-ni: 6 miles
Chinhung-ni to Koto-ri: 10 miles
Koto-ri to Hagaru: 11 miles
Hagaru to Yudam-ni: 14 miles
TOTAL: 78 miles

The first half of the distance—the 43 miles from Hungnam to Chinhung-ni—is traversed by a two-lane road passing through comparatively level terrain. Rolling country is encountered north of Majon-dong, but it is at Chinhung-ni that the road makes its abrupt climb into a tumbled region of mile-high peaks. There are few straight or level stretches all the rest of the 35 miles to Yudam-ni, but the route from Chinhung-ni to Koto-ri is the most difficult.

Funchilin Pass, comprising eight of these ten miles, represents an ascent of 2500 feet for a straining jeep or truck. The road is merely a twisting, one-way shelf, with a cliff on one side and a chasm on the other.

About two miles south of Koto-ri the trail reaches a rugged plateau region. There it rejoins the railway along the Changjin River, though the narrow-gauge line was operative only from Hamhung to Chinhung-ni.

Hagaru, at the southern tip of the Chosin Reservoir, with highways branching off on both sides of that body of water, was an important communications center before the war. And even though many buildings had been flattened by bombing, the town was still impressive as compared to such wretched mountain hamlets as Koto-ri and Chinhung-ri.

The road from Hagaru to Yudam-ni climbs from the tableland at the foot of the Chosin Reservoir and winds its way up to 4000-foot Toktong Pass. Descending through gloomy gorges, it finally reaches a broad valley leading to Yudam-ni, where roads branch off to the north, west, and south from a western arm of the Reservoir.
Click here to view map

This was the 78-mile main supply route that would soon be claiming its page in history. In only a few weeks it would be known to thousands of Marines as *the* MSR, as if there never had been another.

Officers and NCOs of the 7th Marines, which was fated to be the first United States unit to defeat the Chinese Communists in battle, were given a verbal preview of the MSR and the part it might play in their future. This was as the result of a flight of inspection made by Major Henry J. Woessner on 30 October, following a briefing at the X Corps CP in Wonsan. The S-3 of the 7th Marines was fortunate enough to arrive just in time to hear the briefing given General Barr by General Almond. Pointing to the map, the X Corps commander indicated that the 7th Infantry Division would push northward to Hyesan-jin on the Yalu. Meanwhile the Marines were to head for the border by way of Chinhung-ni, Koto-ri and Hagaru while the 3d Infantry Division took over responsibility for the rear area.

"When we have cleared all this out," concluded General Almond, pointing again to the map, "the ROKs will take over, and we will pull our divisions out of Korea."[1]

At the X Corps CP, Woessner met a U.S. Army liaison officer just returned from the 26th ROK Regiment with a report of that unit's encounter with Chinese Communists. The ROKs had been north of Sudong when they collided with the new enemy and were pushed back, after taking 16 prisoners.

Colonel Edward H. Forney, ranking Marine officer on the X Corps staff, arranged for Major Woessner to make a reconnaissance flight over the Hamhung-Hagaru route in an Air Force T-6. The S-3 saw no sign of enemy troop movements all the way to the northern end of the Chosin Reservoir, but he did not fail to note the formidable character of the terrain through which the new MSR passed.

When he returned that evening with his report, Colonel Litzenberg called a meeting of officers and NCOs at the regimental CP. In an informal talk, he told them that they might soon be taking part in the opening engagement of World War III.

"We can expect to meet Chinese Communist troops," he concluded, "and it is important that we win the first battle. The results of that action will reverberate around the world, and we want to make sure that the outcome has an adverse effect in Moscow as well as Peiping."[2]

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Chapter 6. The Battle of Sudong
ROKs Relieved by 7th Marines

On 1 November the 7th Marines trucked out of Hamhung to an assembly area midway between Oro-ri and Majon-dong. Moving into position behind the 26th ROK Regiment without incident, Colonel Litzenberg ordered a reconnaissance which took Lieutenant Colonel Raymond G. Davis' 1st Battalion about four miles northward to the South Korean positions above Majon-dong. Late that afternoon the regiment secured for the night in a tight perimeter.[3]

Attached to the regiment were the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines (Major Francis F. Parry); Division Reconnaissance Company (First Lieutenant Ralph B. Crossman); Company D, 1st Engineer Battalion (Captain Byron C. Turner); 1st Motor Transport Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Olin L. Beall; Company E, 1st Medical Battalion (Lieutenant Commander Charles K. Holloway); and detachments from the 1st Signal Battalion, 1st Service Battalion, and Division Military Police Company.[4]

Intelligence based on the questioning of the 16 prisoners taken by the ROKs had revealed that they had been attacked by elements of the 370th Regiment of the 124th CCF Division. Along with the 125th and 126th, the other two divisions of the 42d CCF Army, the 124th had crossed the Yalu during the period 14–20 October. After marching southeast via Kanggye and Changjin, the unit deployed for the defense of the Chosin Reservoir power complex while the 126th pushed eastward to the Fusen Reservoir and the 125th protected the right, flank of the 42d CCF Army.[5]

X Corps G-2 officers concluded that these CCF forces were "probably flank security" for the enemy's 4th Army Group across the peninsula in the EUSAK zone.[6] The G-2 section of the 1st Marine Division arrived at this interpretation:

"The capture by the 26th ROK Regt. of 16 POWs identified as being members of the 124th CCF Division . . . would seem to indicate that the CCF has decided to intervene in the Korean War. It would indicate, also, that this reinforcement is being effected by unit rather than by piecemeal replacement from volunteer cadres. However, until more definite information is obtained it must be presumed that the CCF has not yet decided on full scale intervention."[7]

Division intelligence officers concluded their analysis with the comment, "The advantage to be gained by all-out intervention, at a time when the NK forces are on the verge of complete collapse, is not readily apparent."[8]

There was little activity in the valley on 31 October and 1 November. The ROKs, upon learning that they would be relieved shortly by the 7th Marines, withdrew from advance positions near Sudong to a valley junction about four miles south of that town. Here, at 0600 on 2 November, they were hit by an enemy "counterattack" which, since it was of about two-platoon strength and of only 30 minutes duration, amounted really to a CCF combat patrol action.[9]

Shortly after this clash, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond G. Davis' 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, moved out of the regimental assembly area and marched toward the ROK lines at Majon-dong in route column. Major Webb D. Sawyer's 2d Battalion followed at an interval of 500 yards, while overhead the Corsairs of VMF-312 orbited on station for reconnaissance and close air support missions.[10]

The passage of lines proceeded smoothly and quietly, save for the drone of aircraft as they probed the reaches of the valley. It was over by 1030. Thereafter, progress to the front was slow and watchful. Led by Company A, under Captain David W. Banks, the 1st Battalion took ineffectual long-range CCF fire with only a

few casualties. Batteries G and H of 3/11 displaced forward during the morning, and at noon Battery I opened up with the first of 26 missions fired by the artillery battalion that day.

Though second in the tactical column, 2/7 was responsible for high ground on both sides of the MSR, dominated on the left by Hill 698. Company D ascended the eastern slopes early in the afternoon to relieve a ROK unit that apparently had been unable to hold the crest. When the South Koreans saw the Marines approaching, they promptly abandoned their position about midway up the slope and headed for the rear.

Click here to view map

Dog Company continued up the exposed hillside. Scattered enemy shots from the top of the ridge gradually merged into a pattern of light resistance as the Marines climbed higher. Captain Milton A. Hull ordered his troops to halt, deployed his machine guns for return fire, and radioed for an air strike. Within a few minutes a flight of Corsairs swept down and worked over the ridgeline.

Hull's only assault route traversed a barren area about 50 yards from the crest. His two assault platoons, fully exposed to the enemy's observation, inched upward by fire and movement, taking casualties, and finally reached the top. Their foothold on the ridgeline did not discourage the Red Chinese, who continued to pour fire from skillfully camouflaged positions. To prevent continued attrition among his now exhausted troops (by this time they had climbed some 1600 vertical feet from ground level over an average gradient of 25 per cent), Hull recalled the two platoons to the eastern slopes and radioed for supporting fire.

This fire was not forthcoming. Company D held a line near the summit until about 2200 when Easy Company passed through to occupy a small plateau about 150 yards below the crest for the night.

Meanwhile, down in the valley, Litzenberg's "walking perimeter" completed a 1300-yard advance by 1630. Owing to the nature of the terrain, with the attendant 360-degree vulnerability, the regimental commander stipulated that the 7th Marines' column extend not less than 4000 (the minimum distance which would allow for close-in artillery support) nor more than 6000 yards in length. This allowed sufficient depth for over-all protection, with no loss of mutual support among the three infantry battalions.

Enemy resistance had flared up now and then in the course of the day, but Marine supporting arms so ruled the valley that no serious challenge by the Chinese developed. VMF-312 flew 12 close support missions in the Sudong area, and VMF(N)-513 assisted with several more. The whole precipitous skyline on either side of the regiment was blasted with 500-pound bombs, 20mm shells, and high-velocity rockets.

By way of reply to the heavy shelling and bombing, Chinese mortars and at least one small artillery piece began to fire sporadically as the day wore on. A 120mm mortar round struck 1/7's CP at 1700 and wounded three men.

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Chapter 6. The Battle of Sudong
CCF Counterattack at Sudong

Although the unit commanders of the 7th Marines anticipated more fighting with the new enemy, they probably did not suspect what the night held in store when the regiment dug in at dusk on 2 November. They did not know that the 371st Regiment, 124th CCF Division, was massed to the north and west, nor that the 370th Regiment occupied high ground east of the MSR in strength—both units within easy striking distance of Litzenberg's perimeter. The 372d Regiment, in reserve, stood poised in its hidden encampment several miles to the rear.[11]

Leading elements of the 7th Marines deployed defensively less than a mile south of Sudong (see Map 8). To the right of the MSR, Able Company's 3d, 2d, and 1st Platoons, in that order, formed a line which extended across Hill 532 and part way up a spur of massive Hill 727, then bent rearward sharply to refuse the east flank. Emplaced along the road in anti-mechanized defense was the company's 3.5-inch rocket squad. The 60mm mortar section and company CP set up in the low ground behind the spur, but Captain Banks himself decided to spend the night in an OP with his rifle platoons.

Lieutenant Colonel Davis of 1/7 deployed Charlie Company (-) across the MSR from Able, on the northeast slopes of Hill 698.[12] To the rear, headquarters and one platoon of Company B dug in on an arm of the same hill, while the other two platoons went into position on the lower reaches of Hill 727 behind Company A. One platoon of Charlie Company, Davis' CP and the battalion 81mm mortars were located in low ground behind Able Company and the elements of Baker on the right of the road.

South of 1/7 lay Major Sawyer's 2d Battalion with Company D at the foot of Hill 698, E on its crest and slopes, and F spread along the steep incline of 727. Sawyer's CP and elements of the 7th Marines' Anti-tank and 4.2-inch Mortar Companies were situated in a shallow meadow along the road beneath the Fox Company positions. Several hundred yards to the rear, south of a sharp bend in the road, Major Maurice E. Roach's 3d Battalion deployed in what was in effect a second perimeter protecting the regimental train, 3/11, and Litzenberg's CP on the valley floor. Tieing in at the MSR, Companies H and I occupied ridges on the left and right of the road respectively, while G(-) arched through the low ground as the southernmost element of the regiment. Colonel Litzenberg was concerned about the valley which joined the Sudong Valley below Oro-ri lest it contain Chinese. He had Major Roach make a helicopter reconnaissance during the afternoon. Roach sighted nothing.[13]

Except for the occasional thump of an incoming mortar round, night settled on the valley and the Marine perimeter with deceptive quiet. Deceptive, since at Sudong two CCF battalions were poised to smash at the 7th Marines with a well-coordinated double envelopment.

At 2300, Davis' 1st Battalion reported itself under attack from the right flank, the enemy apparently descending the higher slopes of Hill 727. This announcement was somewhat premature, as the Marines of Company A were merely experiencing the infiltration and probing that precede almost every Communist assault. At 2400, 2/7 reported two enemy battalions on the left flank.[14] During the first hour of 3 November, sobering messages were received from Litzenberg's northernmost units. What had begun at 2300 as a staccato of small-arms fire swelled in volume by imperceptible degrees until Hills 698 and 727 were engulfed in a ceaseless din. And by 0100 the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 7th Marines bent under the weight of a full-scale attack on both flanks.

Avoiding the obvious approach through the corridor leading south from Sudong, the commander of the

371st CCF Regiment had dispatched a battalion along each of the ridgelines bordering the valley. Bursting flares and bugle calls signaled when the two assault units came abreast of the Marine positions on the lower reaches of Hills 727 and 698. Then, treading swiftly and silently in their rubber sneakers, the Chinese infantrymen swept down obliquely and struck Able and Fox Companies on the east and Baker on the west. Charlie on the slopes of Hill 698 was undisturbed. Where the Chinese met resistance, they slugged it out at close range with grenades and submachine guns. Where they found gaps, they poured through and raced to the low ground. To the Marines, the specific CCF objectives were not readily apparent in those hectic hours before dawn, for the enemy seemed to be everywhere.[15]

Shortly after the battle was joined high on the hillsides, Marines at Able Company's CP heard the clanking sounds of a tracked vehicle on the MSR to the north. When the machine passed the rocket section at the roadblock without incident, they dropped their guards momentarily, believing it to be a friendly bulldozer. The big vehicle rumbled into the CP and stopped, one headlight glaring at exposed mortar crews and headquarters personnel.

"Tank!" shouted Staff Sergeant Donald T. Jones, section chief of Able Company's 60mm mortars.

It was a Russian T-34, one of the five remaining to the 344th North Korean Tank Regiment, supporting the 124th CCF Division. The troops at the roadblock had been caught napping.

A burst of machine-gun fire from the tank sent the lightly armed Marines scurrying for cover. The armored vehicle quickly withdrew to the road and drove farther south, into 1/7s' CP. After a short, inquisitive pause, it rumbled toward the 1st Battalion's 81mm mortar positions. The Russian 85mm rifle flashed four times in the darkness, but the shells screamed harmlessly over the mortars and detonated in the high ground beyond.

Rocket launchers of Charlie Company and the recoilless rifles of 7th Marines Antitank Company opened up from positions around 1/7's headquarters. At least one 75mm round struck home, and the belt of sandbags around the T-34's turret began to burn. The tank swung back onto the MSR and headed north. Approaching Able Company's roadblock, through which it had entered the Marine position, it took a hit from the 3.5-inch rocket section. In reply, one 85mm shell at pistol range all but wiped out the Marine antitank crew. The enemy vehicle, trailing flame and sparks, clanked around a bend in the road and disappeared.

Not long after this astounding foray, the fighting on Hills 698 and 727 spread down to the MSR. The 1st and 2d Platoons of Company A, pressed now from three directions and suffering heavy casualties, retracted to the 3d Platoon positions at the tip of the spur. Some of the men were cut off and forced back on the Baker Company elements east of the MSR. Ultimately, one of the two Company B platoons in this area was driven down to the low ground, and the other forced to fall back. Later they counterattacked and recovered their foxholes.

West of the MSR, the remainder of Company B fought off assaults on its left flank and rear by Chinese who had skirted around Charlie Company's advance positions.[16] Lieutenant Colonel Davis sent the battalion reserve, Lieutenant Graeber's 2d Platoon of Baker, to reinforce the hard pressed left platoon. Attempting to lead his men across the MSR, Graeber found the route effectively blocked by the enemy in the river bed.

Descending now from both sides of the road, enemy infantrymen swarmed over the valley floor. They overran most of the 7th Marines 4.2-inch Mortar Company and captured one of its tubes. They seriously threatened the 1st and 2d Battalion CPs and the AT Company in the same general idea. High on the slopes in 2/7's zone, Companies E and F were beset by small bands of infiltrators. And though these two companies held their ground, the Reds found their flanks, slipped behind them, and entrenched at the key road bend separating 2/7 from 3/7 to the south. The principal Marine unit at the sharp curve in the MSR was Battery I, whose position in the low ground became increasingly precarious as the night wore on.

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Chapter 6. The Battle of Sudong
Two Marine Battalions Cut Off

Dawn of 3 November revealed a confused and alarming situation in the valley south of Sudong. Enemy troops shared the low ground with Marine elements between the 1st and 2d Battalion CPs, and they had blown out a section of the MSR in this locale.[17] The 2d Battalion's commander later remarked, "When daylight came, we found that we were in a dickens of a mess. The rifle companies were well up in the hills, and the Chinese were occupying the terrain between the CP and the companies."[18]

Between 2/7 and 3/7, a company of Reds had dug in on a finger of high ground overlooking the road bend and Battery I from the east. Scattered Chinese forces roamed Hills 698 and 727 almost at will. On the latter height, elements of the 371st CCF Regiment had been reinforced by a battalion of the 370th, so that pressure against the right flank of 1/7 and 2/7 continued long after daybreak.[19]

With his lead battalions thrown back on the defensive, Colonel Litzenberg relied on overwhelming superiority in supporting arms to tip the scales on 3 November and regain the initiative. While the regimental 4.2-inch mortars fired, howitzers of Batteries G and H thundered almost ceaselessly the whole night long from positions within 3/7's perimeter. Battery I, after being extricated from the enemy dominated road bend at 1100 with the help of a platoon of G Company, added its metal to the bombardment. In the course of the day, the 18 field pieces of the battalion fired a total of 1431 rounds in 49 missions.[20]

VMF—312 provided constant air cover after first light. Its planes not only scourged enemy assault troops left exposed on the ridges, but also searched out and attacked CCF artillery positions and vehicles. This squadron alone flew 18 close support missions on 3 November, the alternating flights being led by Major Daniel H. Davis, Captain Harry G. C. Henneberger, Captain George E. McClane, and First Lieutenant Shelby M. Forrest.[21] VMF (N)—513 dispatched a flight of night fighters to Sudong at 0910 under Major Robert L. Cochran. After raking enemy troops with 1500 rounds from their 20mm cannon, Cochran and his three pilots unloaded three general purpose and fragmentation bombs along with 15 high-velocity rockets.[22]

As much supporting fire fell within the 7th Regiment's perimeter as outside. Since the crack of dawn it had been the principal mission of the advance Marine elements to eject scores of Chinese troops, individuals and small bands, who were scattered along the hillsides and valley floor within the zones of the 1st and 2d Battalions. While accomplishing this task, the Marines established a tactical principle for coming weeks: that to nullify Chinese night tactics, regardless of large-scale penetrations and infiltration, defending units had only to maintain position until daybreak. With observation restored, Marine firepower invariably would melt down the Chinese mass to impotency.

This was the case on 3 November, although the melting down process was a savage, all-day affair. With the help of air, artillery, and mortars, the 1st Battalion cleared the low ground by midmorning and restored its right flank later in the day. The Chinese in the valley were crushed, the main group being annihilated by the heavy machine guns of Weapons Company as they attempted to march northward along the railroad in column at daylight. Counted enemy dead in 1/7's zone alone amounted to 662.[23]

The main effort in the 2d Battalion's zone was aimed at the CCF concentration on the spur of Hill 727 overlooking the bend in the MSR. Owing to this barrier, Litzenberg had to call for an airdrop of supplies to sustain his leading elements on 3 November.[24] Major Sawyer ordered Company D, on the base of Hill 698 to the south of the roadblock, to move up the valley, cross the river, and clean out the spur at Hill 727. Finding the low ground blocked by heavy fire, Captain Hull circled to the left along the incline of Hill 698, intending to come

abreast of the Chinese strong point before striking at it across the MSR.[25]

Meanwhile, Captain Walter D. Phillips' Easy Company, perched on the side of Hill 698, struggled to secure the peak of that hill mass. A rush by First Lieutenant John Yancey's 2d Platoon at about 0800 secured a small plateau about 50 yards below the crest against the opposition of one Chinese soldier. First Lieutenant Robert T. Bey's 3d Platoon then passed through and frontally assaulted the peak only to be thrown back by what Bey calls "the most concentrated grenade barrage this writer has had the dubious distinction to witness." Following an air strike at about 1400 Easy Company secured the crest with its 40 Chinese dead.[26]

With all of the rifle companies involved in fire fights or security missions, Litzenberg resorted to supporting arms and headquarters troops to knock out the roadblock. From his regimental CP he dispatched First Lieutenant Earl R. Delong, Executive Officer of the AT Company, with a reserve 75mm recoilless rifle and a makeshift crew. Delong moved into position opposite the strong point at a range of 500 yards, while air and artillery hammered the enemy positions.[27]

Simultaneously, the Division Reconnaissance Company ascended the high ground east of the MSR in the vicinity of Litzenberg's headquarters, then advanced northward along the ridge to envelop the roadblock. This unit, just returned from an active, overnight patrol to Huksu-ri, moved into a hillside position and took the rear of the Chinese under fire across an intervening gulley.[28]

Delong's 75 had begun firing high explosive and white phosphorus into the enemy's front; and Company D, after cleaning up the scattered resistance on the slopes of Hill 698, closed on the roadblock under cover of two air strikes and prepared to assault. The Chinese, obviously shaken by the pounding of supporting arms, had commenced a withdrawal into the hills east of the roadbend when Hull's men began their assault. From Recon Company's positions, Lieutenant Crossman called for air and artillery to catch the retreating Reds in the open. But the request was turned down because Dog Company troops were already filtering through the objective area. By 1810 the roadblock was eliminated, although Dog Company had to withstand two counterattacks before its hold on the spur was secure. The Chinese had left behind 28 dead, strewn among the boulders and recesses of a natural redoubt.[29]

The main enemy encroachments having been smashed, the 7th Marines' MSR was again clear for traffic, save for long-range harassment by an occasional CCF rifleman hidden in the hills. At dusk, trucks streamed northward from the regimental CP to deliver supplies to the 1st and 2d Battalions and to evacuate about 100 battle casualties from those units. The wounded were rushed to the Division Hospital and the 121st Army Evacuation Hospital in Hungnam.[30]

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Chapter 6. The Battle of Sudong
End of NKPA Tank Regiment

The coming of darkness on 3 November marked the finish of the first phase. Litzenberg's perimeter remained essentially the same as on the previous day, the only changes being Company D's occupation of the high ground east of the road bend, Recon Company's assumption of local security at the regimental CP, and 3/11's tighter concentration within the zone of 3/7. What few light contacts occurred during the night were decided quickly by Marine artillery and mortars.[31]

Later intelligence evaluations proved that these contacts could have involved only CCF patrols or stragglers, for it was in this same period that the 370th and 371st CCF Regiments withdrew some three miles from Sudong to a defense line established by elements of the 372d Regiment north of Chinhung-ni. The two assault units had paid a high price for failure during the 2–4 November fighting. The 371st Regiment lost the equivalent of five companies out of its 1st and 3d Battalions, with the total dead estimated at 793. And the 3d Battalion, 370th Regiment, was reduced by the destruction of two companies.[32]

It was a wobbly 124th CCF Division, then, that dug in with heavy machine guns and mortars on two massive hills, 987 and 891, flanking the MSR about two miles north of Chinhung-ni. The depleted 344th NKPA Tank Regiment could not avail itself of such defensible terrain, for until Marine engineers widened the tortuous cliff road through Funchilin Pass it would not accommodate armor.[33]

Apparently the Chinese Communists had left their North Korean comrades of the 344th to fend for themselves. The NKPA unit had already dwindled considerably from its original organization of three armored and three infantry companies. On 2 November it comprised only five T-34s and their crews. One of these machines, after being damaged during the single-handed raid on the 7th Marines' perimeter that night, was abandoned the next day. The NKPA crews put the remaining four vehicles into camouflaged positions next to the MSR at Chinhung-ni, where they waited resignedly at a tactical dead-end.[34]

Colonel Litzenberg was aware of the probability of further resistance along the road, since on 3 November Marine air had reported approximately 300 enemy trucks—in groups of 15 or 20—on the move south of the Chosin Reservoir.[35] At dawn of 4 November, after a night of relative calm around the old perimeter, he ordered his subordinates to conduct vigorous patrolling preparatory to continuing the advance.[36]
Click here to view map

Troops of 1/7 moved forward in the early light and scouted the valley as far north as the edge of Sudong. They met no opposition and returned to the perimeter. Litzenberg then formed the 7th Marines in column, with the Reconnaissance Company in the lead, followed by 1/7 and 3/7 in that order. He left the 2d Battalion in position on Hills 698 and 727 to protect the regimental flanks.[37]

Recon Company moved out in jeeps at 0800, First Lieutenant Ernest C. Hargett's 1st Platoon in the point. Entering Sudong a short time later, the vanguard rounded a bend in the middle of town and surprised a group of CCF soldiers. In a 30-minute fight, Hargett's men killed three and captured about 20. The 2d and 3d Platoons of the Reconnaissance Company meanwhile inspected the high ground above Sudong without opposition.

Lieutenant Crossman reorganized his company in column on the road and set out for Chinhung-ni with Second Lieutenant Donald W. Sharon's 2d Platoon in the lead. About the same time, 1000, the 1st Battalion moved out of the 7th Marines' perimeter south of Sudong and traced Crossman's route through the low ground.

At Chinhung-ni the highway runs along the east side of the river while the railroad traces the west side.

The narrow-gauge track enters the village over a bridge spanning a branch stream. Just beyond is Samgo station, which served as a railhead for the cable-car system of Funchilin Pass. As the Reconnaissance Company approached Chinhung-ni on 4 November, a small group of Chinese soldiers milled around the train cars and buildings of Samgo Station. They probably had some tactical connection with the four T-34 tanks camouflaged opposite them across the river and road; but the two forces seemed oblivious not only of each other but also of the Marines bearing down on them.

Lieutenant Sharon's platoon advanced rapidly from Sudong at 1400, followed closely by the rest of the Reconnaissance Company and a section of 75mm recoilless rifles. About 2000 yards south of Chinhung-ni they halted on sighting fresh tank tracks but quickly moved out again on orders of Lieutenant Colonel Davis. At the highway entrance to Chinhung-ni, Sharon's troops unknowingly passed the first T-34, hidden on the right of the road. Coming abreast of the second Communist tank, which also remained undetected for the moment, the Marines spotted the Chinese soldiers across the river at Samgo Station and opened fire.

The CCF infantrymen scattered under the hail of small-arms fire and many of them were cut down. This was fortunate for Company C of 1/7, which was marching along the railroad tracks and just then nearing the bridge south of the station, where it could have been taken under enfilade fire by the enemy soldiers and tanks.

It was during the exchange with the Chinese that Sharon and his men spotted the second North Korean tank under a pile of brush on the right of the road. The platoon leader, accompanied by Staff Sergeant Richard B. Twohey and Corporal Joseph E. McDermott, climbed upon the dormant vehicle. Suddenly the periscope began to revolve. McDermott smashed the glass and Twohey dropped in a grenade. With Sharon they jumped to the ground just as the grenade exploded inside the machine.

The tank engine roared and the vehicle lurched toward the three Marines. Twohey jumped on it again and dropped another grenade down the periscope. After the dull thump of the second explosion, the T-34 stopped dead and began smoking.

By this time Staff Sergeant William L. Vick's 75mm recoilless gun section and 3.5-inch rocket crews of Company C had moved up. Together they gave the *coup de grace* to the damaged T-34. Simultaneously, Sharon's men saw a thatched hut farther down the road disintegrate as tank number three emerged, its 85mm rifle swinging menacingly toward the valley crowded with Marines and vehicles. First Lieutenant Raymond J. Elledge fired his 75s from their carts, and Company C's rocket launchers opened up. The T-34 took hits but rumbled on. Seconds earlier, First Lieutenant Dan C. Holland, Forward Air Controller for 1/7, had radioed overhead Corsairs for assistance. One of the gull-winged planes plummetted out of formation and unleashed a pair of five-inch rockets. They were direct hits. The T-34 blew up and died on the road.[38]

Sharon and his men moved forward cautiously. While passing the blazing hulk, they spotted enemy tank Number Four, camouflaged against a hillside just ahead. At almost the same moment, Marines passing Chinhung-ni stumbled upon docile tank Number One in the midst of their formation. Recoilless rifles and rocket launchers blasted the machine, and its crew climbed out and surrendered. Sharon then led the antitank crews through the river bed toward the fourth T-34. The Communist tankmen, entrenched on the slope behind their empty vehicle, gave up without a fight. The tank itself was knocked out by 3.5-inch rockets and 75mm shells; and the 344th NKPA Tank Regiment ceased to exist.

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Chapter 6. The Battle of Sudong
The Fight for How Hill

After the destruction of enemy armor, Colonel Litzenberg began deploying the 7th Marines in perimeter around the valley junction at Chinhung-ni. The advance had netted about 6000 yards by midafternoon, and the remaining daylight was needed to bring all elements forward and consolidate the newly won ground.[39]

Aware that the Chinese were at the top of Funchilin Pass but not that he was directly under their guns, the regimental commander at 1600 ordered Reconnaissance Company to patrol some 2000 yards into Funchilin Pass and outpost the southern tip of Hill 891. The high ground selected for the outpost coincided with the eastern half of the Chinese forward line, and it would later be remembered as "How Hill" in honor of Company H of 3/7.[40]

As 1/7 dug in on the heights flanking Chinhung-ni, Recon Company, with Second Lieutenant Charles R. Puckett's 3d Platoon leading, advanced in motorized column about a mile into the pass. At this point, Hill 987 looms up on the west and the highway veers sharply to the east for approximately 1000 yards. After a hairpin turn, the road climbs on a parallel line almost to its starting point, then resumes its northerly course, clinging to the rocky wall of Hill 891 which rises abruptly from the chasm that separates it from Hill 987.

Puckett's platoon had approached the road bend warily, for a sizeable enemy group had been spotted earlier near the base of Hill 987 across the gorge. At 1630 the first two jeeps of the column eased around the curve and immediately came under fire from Hill 987 to the left, 891 to the front, and from a CCF patrol to the right, on the road itself.[41]

Click here to view map

For 45 minutes Puckett and his men were pinned to the road and hillside, and only darkness and a strike by Marine air finally enabled the whole column to withdraw to the 7th Marines' lines. The clash cost Recon two killed and five wounded, and heavy machine-gun fire had destroyed the two lead jeeps.[42]

During the relatively quiet night of 4–5 November, Colonel Litzenberg issued his order for the next day's advance. The 1st Battalion was to hold the flanks at Chinhung-ni while 3/7, followed at a distance of 500–1000 yards by 2/7, passed through and attacked into Funchilin Pass. Major Parry's 3/11 and the 4.2 Mortar Company were to support the infantry by high-angle fire from positions south of Sudong.[43] Resistance could be expected, for even as the 7th Marines peacefully sat out the hours of darkness, the night fighters of VMF(N)-513 were bombing and strafing enemy convoys around the southern tip of the Chosin Reservoir.[44]

At 0700 Lieutenant Hargett's 1st Platoon of Recon Company departed Chinhung-ni along the MSR to patrol on the right flank. Reaching the hairpin curve, the platoon was pinned down by enemy fire at exactly the same place where Puckett's unit had come to grief. VMF-312 and 3/11 promptly went into action, and Hargett ultimately withdrew his patrol under the shield of their supporting fire. Marine casualties were four wounded.[45]

Major Roach's 3d Battalion moved out for the attack at 0800, passing through the high-ground positions of 1/7 on either side of Chinhung-ni. Company I advanced toward Hill 987 and G toward 891 (see Map 10). Both units were hit hard by small-arms and machine-gun fire as they came abreast of the road bend; and for the remainder of the day, the "advance was negligible."[46]

From 1000 onward, the second phase of the battle roared to a climax as a duel between supporting arms. In 26 missions during 5 November, the batteries of 3/11 threw 943 shells into the enemy positions. The Chinese answered with counterbattery fire from their 122mm mortars, but toward the end of the day these weapons were silenced by Marine howitzer barrages. A forward observer with Company G reported an enemy ammunition dump destroyed. This information was later verified by a POW who mentioned the following additional losses in

CCF mortars: 10 crewmen killed and 17 wounded, one mortar destroyed, two mortars put out of action, and the dispersal of “most of the remaining personnel.”

VMF-312 flew 37 sorties in 90 hours of close support combat on the 5th. Between Chinhung-ni and the Chosin Reservoir, 21 enemy trucks were destroyed. Pilots reported that “the surrounding ridges were filled with enemy troops” and that their strikes against these Chinese were “extremely effective.” Led by Major Cochran and Captain Otis W. S. Corman, flights from VMF (N)-513 blasted troops, buildings, supply vehicles, and gun emplacements scattered from Koto-ri at the top of Funchilin Pass to Hagaru at the reservoir. General Smith, during a helicopter visit to Litzenberg’s CP, remarked that a “considerable number of planes . . . really worked the place over.”[47]

On the ground, the fight ended at dusk with the Chinese retaining their firm grip on these well camouflaged positions studding Hills 891 and 987 despite heavy losses.[48] Marine casualties were light, for it was the tortuous terrain in conjunction with enemy bullets, not enemy fire alone, that obstructed the attackers. Since General Smith earlier in the day had named Koto-ri as the 7th Marines’ immediate objective, Colonel Litzenberg ordered the 3d Battalion to resume the advance at 0800 the next morning.

The night of 5–6 November witnessed only minor contacts around the regimental perimeter. Some 200 Korean laborers accounted for most of the activity during darkness as they carried supplies to forward Marine positions and evacuated casualties to the rear.

Major Roach’s plan for 6 November called for How Company, supported by the fire of George, to envelop the southeast slope of Hill 891 while Item continued its attack on Hill 987. At about 0800 First Lieutenant Howard H. Harris led How Company out of its reserve position. It took him until nearly 1500 to traverse the rugged landscape and get into position. Meanwhile, Item Company under First Lieutenant William E. Johnson had beaten off one counterattack and edged about 300 yards closer to Hill 987, with its most effective opposition coming from bunkers on a spur overlooking the MSR.

Captain Thomas E. Cooney had been wounded twice the previous day while leading Company G against the trenches and foxholes on the southern tip of Hill 891. Except for a feint by one platoon along the MSR into the hairpin turn, his company spent the day in a long-range fight with the Chinese defenders.

Lieutenant Harris led his men over the high ground behind G into positions to the east. Cooney’s experience showed that the only possible approach to Hill 891 was to flank it from the southeast. Although the fresh company arrived sometime after 1400, its attack was held up until about 1600 to await air. Following a strike by two Corsairs, the howitzers of 3/11 and the regimental 4.2 mortars began pounding the Chinese positions.

How Company jumped off at about 1615. Two assault platoons, led by Second Lieutenants Robert D. Reem and Minard P. Newton, descended into the intervening gulley at the tip of the hairpin curve. During a quick reorganization in the low ground, machine guns were posted to cover the ascent. Then the platoons started up towards the enemy-held summit through companion draws, Harris accompanying Newton’s outfit on the left.

The powdery soil of the steep slope made climbing difficult and exhausting. About a hundred yards up, Newton’s platoon began receiving light fire, followed a few yards farther by a hail of grenades and machine gun slugs. The Marines inched forward and were stopped by the Chinese fire. On the right, meanwhile, Reed climbed against no opposition, so it appeared that the envelopment was working. Unexpectedly, the two draws converged near the top of the hill, with the result that the platoons met.

Lieutenant Harris revised his plans by directing Newton, with his left squad supporting by BAR fire, to lead Reem to the top of the hill. Once there, Newton was to swing right and Reem left to envelop the Chinese positions. Newton worked a squad up onto a nose extending out from the summit. The Chinese replied with a renewed barrage of grenades and counterattacked Newton’s left. Sergeant Charlie Foster, seeing apparent victory turning into defeat, lunged forward to break up the attack. He reached the top and died but the men behind him

repulsed the Reds.

During the close fighting on the left, Lieutenant Reem had gathered his squad leaders for instructions preparatory to the final assault on the right. An enemy grenade fell into the midst of the group, and Reem was killed as he smothered the explosion with his body. Staff Sergeant Anthony J. Ricardi took over the platoon.

At about 1800 Harris radioed Roach that his troops were exhausted. Although it was already dusk, he was bringing up his reserve platoon, he said, for the Chinese still held the crest in strength. Company H had taken only eight casualties, but ammunition was low and the approaching darkness prevented the dispatching of more fresh troops. The battalion commander relayed the report to Colonel Litzenberg, who immediately ordered the company to disengage and withdraw. The fighting descent under cover of a 4.2 mortar and artillery bombardment brought Company H back within the lines of 3/7 by 2000 with its six wounded and the body of Lieutenant Reem.

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Chapter 6. The Battle of Sudong
Disappearance of CCF Remnants

Darkness on the night of 6 November descended like a cloak over the 124th CCF Division. In the morning the Chinese had vanished. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, encountered no opposition whatever as it occupied the southern tips of Hills 891 and 987. [49]

The mysterious disappearance of this unit, following the equally strange withdrawal of the Chinese Reds who made the first CCF contacts in the EUSAK zone, aroused no end of speculation. Officers of the 7th Marines believed that enemy losses had been heavy enough for a disabling effect. This opinion was confirmed the following year when a Marine Corps Board visited Korea for a special analytical study of Marine operations of 1950, based on all Army and Marine records available at that time as well as interviews and interrogations. The Board concluded that "the 124th CCF Division was estimated to have been rendered militarily noneffective." [50]

Following the enemy's disappearance on the night of 6–7 November, the 7th Marines occupied the southern reaches of Hills 891 and 987 while reconnoitering to the top of 891. The rest of the day and all the next was devoted to consolidating positions along the MSR and sending out patrols in a vain search for the vanished 124th CCF Division.[51]

On 8 November, General Almond visited the 7th Marines. Upon hearing of the valor of Captain Cooney at "How Hill," he awarded that officer the Silver Star medal on the spot. There being neither pendant nor citation available, the Corps Commander pinned a slip of paper to Cooney's jacket in the brief ceremony. Scrawled on the fragment was the inscription, "Silver Star Medal for Gallantry in Action—Almond." [52]

While the 7th Marines advanced astride the MSR, a volunteer patrol of fifteen men, led by First Lieutenant William F. Goggin of 2/7, traced a lonely, circuitous route in the mountains to the west. Having left Chinhung-ni at 1200 on 8 November, the scouting party covered some 25 miles through perpendicular wilds during the following 26 hours. This journey brought it to the Chosin Reservoir plateau at a point just southwest of Koto-ri.

Lieutenant Goggin, his slight wound the only scar of the patrol's single clash with Chinese, radioed Colonel Litzenberg that Koto-ri was clear of enemy. He then led his party southward, and in the evening of the 9th, returned through the lines of 3/7.[53]

The Marines had been told that big game animals were hunted before the war in the mountains of northeast Korea. But not until the otherwise calm night of 9–10 November did a four-legged enemy invade the positions of RCT-7. Near the cable-car trestle, midway through Funchilin Pass, an unfriendly bear, no doubt a Russian bear, paid a nocturnal visit to the 1st Platoon of George Company. An unnamed Marine PFC, awakened in his sleeping bag, swore afterwards that the animal was wearing a hammer and sickle emblem. However this may be, the intruder was routed by his startled yell and disappeared into the night. [54]

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Chapter 6. The Battle of Sudong
Koto-ri Occupied by 7th Marines

At 0830 on 10 November—the Marine Corps Birthday—the 1st Battalion passed through the 3d and emerged from Funchilin Pass onto the open plateau. Koto-ri (designated as Objective One) was occupied without opposition an hour and a half later. Litzenberg halted his column and drew up a perimeter around the mountain village.

Upon reaching the Koto-ri plateau the 7th Marines was first to meet a new enemy who would take a heavier toll in casualties than the Chinese. This was General Winter, who has won many a historic campaign. When the first cold blasts struck, "our men were not conditioned for it," commented Litzenberg. "The doctors reported numerous cases where the men came down to the sickbay suffering from what appeared to be shock. Some of them would come in crying; some of them were extremely nervous; and the doctors said it was simply the sudden shock of the terrific cold when they were not ready for it." [55]

The Marines recovered quickly after "thawing out," and platoon warming tents, heated by camp stoves burning fuel oil, were set up at Koto-ri. Buckets of steaming water were provided for the warming of "C" rations.

Hot weather, however uncomfortable it may be, is fighting weather as compared to sub-zero cold which seems to numb the spirit as well as flesh. Cold weather clothing is a handicap to movement and the use of firearms; and some weapons, particularly the carbine, are not dependable at low temperatures. It was probably as well for morale that the Marines at Koto-ri could not foresee that this was only the beginning of a prolonged operation in sub-zero weather without a parallel in the nation's history. [56]

Until 13 November, when the 7th Marines advanced toward Hagaru, patrols from Koto-ri repeatedly sighted bands of Chinese in the distance. Except for a fight on 11 November in which C Company claimed to have inflicted 40 casualties on the enemy and lost four killed and four wounded, there was little action. With a little pressure on the ground or from the air, the enemy vanished, and thus the uneasy calm continued.[57]

While the 7th Regiment had been fighting, marching, and climbing toward the Chosin Reservoir in early November, the 5th Marines peacefully combed the approaches to the Fusen Reservoir to the east. After detaching 1/5 to Division control on 4 November and stationing 3/5 near Oro-ri, Lieutenant Colonel Murray sent the 2d Battalion into the Sinhung Valley to relieve the 18th ROK Regiment. The relief took place at 1145 on the 4th, and Lieutenant Colonel Harold S. Roise deployed 2/5 around a valley junction five miles north and 15 miles east of the then embattled 7th Marines. [58]

Roise's mission was twofold: to block the Sinhung corridor while determining the strength and disposition of the enemy, if any; and to check certain northerly routes shown on maps as possibly leading to either the Fusen or Chosin Reservoirs, or both. Reconnaissance patrols in squad strength and combat patrols of reinforced platoons and company size fanned out in a broad arc during 5–9 November. They determined that no usable route led to either reservoir from the south, but that the highway continuing northeast from the town of Sinhung, leading to the 7th Infantry Division's zone and the Manchurian border, would carry military traffic. From 7 November, Roise's troops made daily contact with Army patrols coming down the highway, but no units tried to penetrate the apparent screen of enemy defenses close to the Fusen Reservoir. [59]

Major Merlin R. Olson, 1/5's Executive Officer, led Companies A and B on 7 November in a reconnaissance in force to Huksu-ri, that annoying road junction west of Oro-ri. On the 8th Olson's force had a running fight with North Koreans before being recalled while still short of his objective. Olson's recall resulted from reports of 2000 North Koreans moving towards the MSR. [60]

On 8 November, Company D (Reinf) made an overnight trek deep into a branch valley northwest of Sinhung, reaching a point about 10 miles due east of Koto-ri. One CCF soldier was captured while asleep in a house. He said he belonged to the 126th Division and that Red China would commit a total of 24 divisions against the UN forces in Korea. [61]

On 9 November, Colonel Murray received orders to concentrate his regiment along the MSR leading to the Chosin Reservoir. During the next two days he deployed the 1st and 3d Battalions at Majon-dong and Chinhung-ni respectively. The ambush of a Charlie Company patrol on the 10th delayed the departure of 1/5 from the Chigyong area. The patrol had to be rescued by a battalion attack the next day before the force could move to Majon-dong. [62] On the 13th while operating out of Majon-dong a 1/5 patrol ran into 50–150 enemy who inflicted 7 KIA and 3 WIA before withdrawing. [63]

The 2d Battalion moved out of the Sinhung Valley on 13 and 14 November to relieve the 7th Marines of the responsibility for defending Koto-ri and thus free Colonel Litzenberg's regiment for the advance to Hagaru and the north. Lieutenant Colonel Roise's battalion had completed its mission without firing more than a few shots and with a total prisoner bag of 12 North Koreans and one Chinese. [64]

Although the new enemy had seemingly evaporated from the path of the 1st Marine Division, there was good reason to believe that he was not forsaking his aggressive designs in North Korea. For in addition to the ominous but questionable predictions of Chinese POWs, eye-witness accounts of pilots of VMF (N)-542 provided G-2 officers with information of the gravest portent in early November. The Marine airmen made nightly strikes from the 1st to the 9th against Sinuiju at the mouth of the Yalu, and they repeatedly reported a steady stream of trucks moving into northwest Korea from Antung, Manchuria. Time after time they blasted Sinuiju with bombs, rockets, and 20mm shells, and though parts of the city were continuously aflame, it still seethed with activity. They described southward bound traffic as "heavy, "very heavy," and even "tremendous," and at least one convoy was reported to be "gigantic." [65]

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ON 4 NOVEMBER, WHILE RCT–7 was at the height of its fight with the Chinese, the Division CP displaced from Wonsan to Hungnam. General Craig, the ADC, who inspected the area on the 2d, recommended the abandoned Engineering College on the western outskirts as the best location. During his visit he was shown a knoll outside the city where the bodies of some 200 Korean civilians were laid out in a perfect row. All had been victims of the retreating NKPA forces.[1]

A location in Hamhung would have been preferred, but available sites were already taken by X Corps. General Smith flew to Hungnam by helicopter and opened the new CP at 1100 on the morning of the 4th. That evening a train carrying 160 officers and men of Headquarters Battalion and the Division staff arrived at 2130 from Wonsan. En route it had been fired on by guerrillas but no casualties resulted.[2]

A perimeter defense, consisting of two outposts and eight machine-gun positions, was set up to command all likely approaches to the new CP. Defensive wiring and trip flares were installed, with the gun positions and outposts being connected by telephone.

During these proceedings everyone was blissfully unaware of the existence of 250 tons of NKPA high explosive, stored only 600 yards from the CP in three connecting caves. Undiscovered for a week, this enemy cache was believed capable of demolishing the command post. A 16-man security detachment was placed on guard until the explosive could be removed and detonated.[3]

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Attacks on Wonsan-Hungnam MSR

Protection of the Wonsan-Hungnam MSR took on added importance as the 1st Marine Division speeded up its move to the north. This responsibility, it may be recalled, was shared by Division and Corps on 3 November in accordance with a decision by General Almond. The 1st Marines and elements of the 1st Tank Battalion maintained security from Wonsan 15 miles northward to Munchon, while the 1st Battalion of the 5th Marines was responsible from Hamhung southward to Chigyong. This left the 54-mile stretch between Chigyong and Munchon without any protection except the patrols of the Korean CIC agents and the Special Operations Company, USA, both under Corps control.

On 4 November this company reported that large numbers of North Koreans were moving into the area to the west. That same afternoon Corps notified Division that a group of mounted guerrillas had fired on railway police in the yards at Kowon, 15 miles north of Munchon.[4]

On 6 November, immediately after landing at Wonsan, the 65th RCT of the 3d Infantry Division (less one battalion, placed temporarily under 1st Marine Division control for the Majon-ni operation) was ordered by Corps to relieve elements of the 96th Field Artillery Battalion, USA, which had been recently sent to Yonghung. The Army RCT was assigned a mission of protecting the Yonghung-Kowon area and patrolling to the west (see map on Page 122).[5]

The Wonsan-Hamhung rail line took on special importance after the announcement that water transportation would be delayed until enemy mines were cleared from the harbor at Hungnam. This made it necessary for the 1st Marine Division to send daily supply trains from Wonsan.[6] The first two completed the run without incident, but after departing Wonsan at dusk on the 6th the third train was halted at Kowon by the destruction of rails ahead. North Korean guerrillas attacked the train, guarded by a lieutenant and 38 men from Company C of the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion.[7]

The detachment was taken by surprise in the darkness by foes firing from both sides of the track. When the Marines attempted to reverse the train, the enemy wounded the engineer and put a hole in the boiler with grenades. In the darkness the guard became separated into two groups, the smaller of which was surrounded in a car. The guerrillas fired through the wooden sides, forcing the Marines to the floor, and threw grenades through the windows until all ten men were killed or wounded, only two of them surviving.

The remaining 29 men of the guard made a stand on an embankment about 200 yards from the track. Six Marines were wounded in the ensuing fire fight. The train guard broke off the action and withdrew to the area of the Army artillery battalion.

An empty train from Hamhung, guarded by a platoon from Company A of the Amtracs, was halted at 1700 on the afternoon of 6 November by railway officials at Yonghung. Reports of guerrilla activity in the area had proved to be only too well founded when elements of the 96th Field Artillery Battalion were attacked early that morning. Their perimeter south of the town was breached with losses to the Army unit of equipment and ammunition.

The 2d Battalion of the 65th RCT, which arrived at Yonghung late that afternoon, had its baptism of fire within a few hours. Guerrillas in estimated strength of 500 to 800 attacked at 0300 on the 7th, inflicting casualties of six killed and 14 wounded. Troops of the 96th Field Artillery Battalion also came under attack, as did elements of the 4th Signal Battalion, USA. Company D of the 1st Tank Battalion sent a Marine tank and “Weasel” (M–29) to evacuate the wounded with the assistance of the Amtrac platoon guarding the empty train at Yonghung.[8]

At 1400 that afternoon the empty train resumed its run to Wonsan. Only two miles had been covered when the locomotive and six cars were derailed by a split rail and wrecked just south of Yonghung. Personnel losses amounted to one man killed and 14 injured.[9]

At almost exactly this same hour the fourth supply train was stopped south of Kowon by a blown section of track. The guard proceeded on foot to investigate and encountered the depressing spectacle of the third supply train, abandoned by the enemy after being plundered. One ammunition car was still burning and in another riddled car the bodies of the trapped Marines were found. So extensive was the damage to tracks and switches that rail service could not be resumed until 9 November.[10]

The Corps commander summoned General Smith to Wonsan that morning for a conference on measures for the security of the rail line. It was decided that only daytime runs would be made thereafter, with the train guard increased from 38 to 50 men. The 65th RCT, the 26th ROK Regiment and a battery of the 96th Field Artillery Battalion were placed under the temporary control of the 1st Marine Division with a mission of guarding bridges and other key points.[11]

General Smith worked out a plan for the ROK regiment to drive the guerrillas southward from the Chigyong area toward the 65th RCT at Yonghung. As it proved, elements of both units were given Corps commitments which prevented this maneuver from being put into effect. They remained only a few days under nominal Division control, being used for a variety of security missions along the Wonsan-Hamhung MSR.[12]

By 9 November, when the Division supply trains resumed their runs, 95 loaded cars had accumulated at Wonsan. The 1st Combat Service Group continued to route supplies northward from the railhead at the Wonsan airfield. Corps orders required troops to ride in open gondola cars.[13]

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Appraisals of the New Enemy

It is understandable that an atmosphere of uncertainty should have enveloped military decisions of this period. With the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the UN command groping their way through a fog of war, division commanders in Korea could not be expected to see very far ahead.

Disconcerting as it had been to have the Chinese appear in the first place, it was even more disturbing to have them break off contact and vanish so inexplicably. Nevertheless, General MacArthur and his staff had a fairly accurate idea of CCF numbers at this time. On 2 November the UN command estimated that 16,500 Chinese Communist soldiers had crossed the Yalu and 450,000 CCF regulars were in Manchuria. Three days later, Major General Charles A. Willoughby's intelligence summary warned that the Chinese had the potential to start a largescale counteroffensive.[14]

General MacArthur, reporting to the United Nations for the first half of November, stated that 12 CCF divisions had been identified in Korea, indicating a total of perhaps 100,000 troops. Nine of these units had appeared on the Eighth Army front and three in the X Corps zone north of Hamhung.

"At the same time," the report continued, "United Nations aerial reconnaissance disclosed heavy troop movements near the border, in Manchuria, and into Korea."[15]

Quite as important as the new enemy's numbers was the question of his intentions. Did the CCF divisions consist merely of so-called volunteers making a demonstration to encourage the beaten NKPA remnants? Or were the Chinese contemplating an all-out military intervention?

President Truman asked JCS on 4 November to obtain from General MacArthur an estimate of the situation.[16] The general's reply stated that it was "impossible to authoritatively appraise the actualities of Chinese Communist intervention in North Korea." He recommended " . . . that a final appraisement should await a more complete accumulation of military facts."[17]

During the next three days the issue of bombing bridges across the Yalu posed a question that has remained a controversial subject ever since. General MacArthur was granted permission, after being at first refused, but cautioned "that extreme care be taken to avoid violation [of] Manchurian territory and airspace."[18]
Click here to view map

In two messages of 7 November, the UN commander confirmed his original appraisal to the effect that the Chinese were not making a full-scale intervention. But he conceded that reinforcements might enable the new enemy to stop the UN advance or even throw it into reverse. He planned a resumption of the initiative, he said, in order to take "accurate measure . . . of enemy strength." And he repeated that the restriction of his bombing operations provided "a complete sanctuary for hostile air immediately upon their crossing of the Manchuria-North Korean border." This factor, he warned, could "assume decisive proportions. . . ."[19]

On this same date, with the wary phase of UN strategy at its height, General Almond flew to Hungnam to confer with General Smith. The X Corps commander still wore another hat as General MacArthur's chief of staff; and though he could not function actively in this position, he kept in close touch with strategic aims at Tokyo. Thus the cautious spirit of the UN commander's messages of 7 November was reflected in Almond's changed viewpoint. Where he had previously urged haste in the X Corps drive to the border, he was now disposed to put on the brakes and carry out that mission with less scattering of forces.

The prospect of a winter campaign was discussed, and the Marine general recommended that only enough territory be held for the security of Hamhung, Hungnam and Wonsan. Almond believed that Hagaru

should also be included, but he agreed that a greater degree of concentration was advisable.[20]

As day after day passed without further CCF contacts of importance, however, operations again took on the character of an occupation rather than a drive which might end in a collision with a powerful new enemy.

X Corps OpnO 6, issued at 2400 on 11 November, called for an advance to the border by I ROK Corps on the right, the 7th Infantry Division in the center and the 1st Marine Division on the left. The 3d Infantry Division, with the 26th ROK Regiment attached, was to have the responsibility for the Wonsan-Yonghung area after relieving elements of the 1st Marine Division; the Marines were directed to take blocking positions at Huksu-ri and Yudam-ni. In the Corps rear, the 1st KMC Regiment (–) had a zone to the south and west of Kojo.

The Marine zone on the Yalu, about 40 miles in width, was approached and bounded by two roads branching off from the Changjin area. One of them ended at Huchanggangu and the other at Singalpajin. From that point the zone of the 7th Infantry Division extended east to Hyesanjin (where the border turns north at a right angle) and thence again eastward to the Hapsu area. I ROK Corps was to operate from the line Hapsu-Chuchonhujang and drive northward along the coast with Chongjin as an objective.[21]

Such a dispersion of forces, depending for supplies on poor secondary roads through wild mountain regions, could hardly have been contemplated if large-scale CCF opposition were expected. As a further indication of renewed confidence, General MacArthur asked informally and indirectly that X Corps do everything possible to assist the Eighth Army in its drive to the Yalu. This request was conveyed in a personal letter of 11 November from General Wright, G–3 of FECOM, to the Corps commander.[22]

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The Turning Point of 15 November

The date of General Almond's reply, the 15th, is worthy of recognition as a turning point. For it was also the occasion of messages from the UN commander-in-chief and the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division which had an effect on strategy. Indeed, the entire course of the Chosin Reservoir campaign was channeled into new directions as a result of the concepts advanced in these three communications of 15 November 1950.

Obviously the gap of 80 miles separating the Eighth Army from X Corps would have to be reduced before much help could be given by the latter. General Almond replied to General Wright in a letter proposing that X Corps attack to the west of the Chosin Reservoir while also continuing to advance northward in zone to complete its original mission.

That same day, while the letter was en route to Tokyo, General MacArthur came to a far-reaching decision. In a radio message he directed the X Corps commander to develop, as an alternative to OpnO 6, a plan for reorienting his attack to the west on reaching Changjin in order to cut the Chinese MSR, as represented by the Manpojin-Kanggye-Huichon road and rail line.

This was the first indicated change in mission, according to the X Corps command report, since CINCFE's directive late in October calling for a drive to the border. The amendment "was made necessary," the report continued, "by the enemy build-up in front of the Eighth Army and the fact that the enemy action had halted the first attempt . . . to advance Eighth Army to the border. An estimate of the Eighth Army situation . . . fixed the relative combat power as 100,000 UN to 100,000 enemy with UN forces having air superiority and superior artillery support. . . .The enemy was given an offensive capacity which he could implement with an estimated reserve of 140,000 CCF troops north of the Yalu River. In view of the enemy's offensive capacity, Eighth Army adopted a conservative plan to make a general advance with the main effort in the center generally parallel to the enemy MSR (Huichon-Kanggye). This course of action was designed to meet any course of action which might be adopted by the enemy. To assist the Eighth Army advance, X Corps was to initiate a main attack to the West from the Chosin Reservoir area, cutting the enemy MSR at Mupyong-ni, and advance in a northwesterly direction to the Yalu River line at Manpojin."[23]

By a coincidence it was also on Wednesday, 15 November, that General Smith wrote a letter which foreshadowed future military events. Addressed to General Clifton B. Cates, Commandant of the Marine Corps, this communication made it plain that the 1st Marine Division commander and his staff did not share in the renewed optimism as to the course of the UN war effort. Not only did the Marines accept the possibility of imminent and formidable CCF intervention, but they were making preparations to meet it.

"So far our MSR north of Hamhung has not been molested, but there is evidence that this situation will not continue. . . .

"Someone in high authority will have to make up his mind as to what is our goal. My mission is still to advance to the border. The Eighth Army, 80 miles to the southwest, will not attack until the 20th. Manifestly, we should not push on without regard to the Eighth Army. We would simply get further out on a limb. If the Eighth Army push does not go, then the decision will have to be made as to what to do next. I believe a winter campaign in the mountains of North Korea is too much to ask of the American soldier or marine, and I doubt the feasibility of supplying troops in this area during the winter or providing for the evacuation of sick and wounded."

The letter mentioned such preparations as the work done by Marine engineers to strengthen the

Hamhung-Hagaru road for tanks and heavy vehicles. Plans had been approved, added General Smith, for an airstrip at Hagaru capable of landing cargo planes for resupply and casualty evacuation.

He emphasized that he did not mean to be pessimistic. “Our people are doing a creditable job,” he said; “their spirit is fine, and they will continue to do a fine job.” But in conclusion he reiterated his doubts about his “wide open left flank” and his concern over “the prospect of stringing out a Marine division along a single mountain road for 120 air miles from Hamhung to the border.”[24]

General Smith had no more than finished dictating his letter when two Navy officers called at the CP—Rear Admiral Albert K. Morehouse, chief of staff to Admiral Joy, and Captain Norman W. Sears, chief of staff to Admiral Doyle. Both were old acquaintances of the Marine general, who had led the assault landing force on Peleliu in 1944 while Sears commanded an LST group. Smith felt that he could speak frankly, therefore, and expressed his concern over the aspects of the strategic situation he had discussed in the letter.[25]

CinCFE had requested in his message of the 1st that the plan for re-orienting the X Corps attack be submitted to him as an alternative to OpnO 6. General Almond put his staff to work on the 16th, and that same day Draft No. 1, of OpnO Plan 8 was completed. This was a concept of an attack on Kanggye by means of a drive westward from Changjin.[26]

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Changes in X Corps Mission

Almond disapproved the first draft on the grounds that the MSR of the Corps element making the effort would be too far extended. He requested the preparation of a new plan based on the concept of an advance farther south on the Hagaru-Mupyong-ni axis and west of the zone of the 1st Marine Division. The X Corps commander also directed:

(1) That the Hamhung-Hagaru road be developed as a Corps MSR with intensive effort on the part of Corps troops, including Corps engineers;

(2) That an RCT of the 7th Division be assigned the mission of seizing Changjin in order to protect the right flank of the 1st Marine Division.

The Corps commander considered that Changjin and Mupyong-ni were too widely separated as objectives to be assigned to a single division, not to mention the difficult terrain. His staff worked for four days on Draft No. 2 of OpnO Plan 8 before submitting it to him. He accepted it with several modifications and directed that the third draft be taken to Tokyo by Lieutenant Colonel John H. Chiles, the Corps G–3, for presentation to GHQ.

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Marine Preparations for Trouble

General Smith, for his part, lost no time in putting into effect his preparations for trouble in the shape of a formidable CCF attack. The completion of mine clearance at Hungnam had opened that port on 15 November, thus easing the transportation situation. That same day the 7th Marines occupied Hagaru, being greeted by a temperature of four degrees below zero which threatened an early and bleak winter.

Only four days previously, X Corps OpnO No. 6 had directed the 1st Marine Division to take up blocking positions to the west, at Huksu-ri and Yudam-ni, while continuing the northward advance to the Yalu. This meant a further dispersion at a time when Smith hoped to reduce the 163 road miles separating his infantry battalions.

In order to carry out the Corps directives, Division OpnO 21–50 of 13 November assigned the following tasks:

"RCT–1—to seize Huksu-ri;

"RCT–7—to seize Hagaru, and, on order, to seize Yudam-ni;

"RCT–5—to protect the MSR from positions at Majon-dong, Chinhung-ni and Koto-ri, while preparing to pass through RCT–7 in the Hagaru area and advance to Changjin (approximately 40 miles northward);

"Division Reconnaissance Company—to screen the Division right flank by operating in the Soyang-ni–Sinhung valley to the east Division boundary."[27]

In connection with the mission of RCT–7, the words "on order" deserve special notice. For the commanding officer was directed by Smith's oral instructions to take up blocking positions at Toktong Pass, about halfway between Hagaru and Yudam-ni, until additional units of the Division could be moved up to the Hagaru area. In other words, the Division commander believed that the possibilities of large-scale CCF intervention were such as to justify caution in the drive to Yudam-ni.[28]

Not only would the concentration of the Marine units ease General Smith's concern over the tactical situation; it would also greatly simplify the administrative load. Colonel Bowser has commented, "Division was faced with the problem of handling a division scattered from Wonsan and Majon-ni in the south to the heavy engagement of the 7th Mar in the north. Add to this the problem of guerrilla bandits between Wonsan and Hungnam/Hamhung as well as a completely unknown situation to the West, and you have a task of considerable magnitude for any division staff."[29]

RCT–1 was delayed several days by lack of railway facilities in its move 70 miles northward to Chigyong after being relieved in the Wonsan area by the 3d Infantry Division.[30] But most of the other Marine units had been pulled up—a battalion or even a company at a time—as far as the Hungnam area. Along the new MSR north of Hamhung, the column of advance on 15 November consisted of these units:

Hagaru—RCT–7;

Koto-ri—2d Battalion, RCT–5;

Chinhung-ni—3d Battalion, RCT–5; Battery K, 4th Battalion, 11th Marines; Detachment 1st Ordnance Battalion; Detachment 1st Service Battalion; 1st and 2nd Platoons, Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion; Company B (less 3d Platoon), 1st Engineer Battalion;

Majon-dong—1st Battalion RCT–5; Company D, 1st Tank Battalion.

The Division command and staff took a dim view of the possibility of completing "the race to the Yalu" before winter. It was already too late, if sub-zero temperatures were any indication; and preparations must now be

made for tactical and logistical support of a midwinter campaign in the mountains. Among the most essential provisions were the selection of a forward base, the construction of airstrips along the MSR, and the strengthening of the road to make it fit for tanks and heavy vehicles.

Hagaru, at the foot of the Chosin Reservoir, had been recommended by General Craig as the best location for a forward base when he visited here on the 15th. The commanding generals of the Division and Wing arrived for a tour of inspection the next day. General Harris made the trip at the express request of General Almond, who believed that a strip long enough to land R4Ds was necessary to insure resupply and casualty evacuation in a midwinter emergency. One of the few comparatively flat pieces of real estate in northeast Korea was found just south of the town. The black loam promised to make a hard surface in freezing weather, so that the prevailing arctic temperatures offered at least one consolation.[31]

An OY strip had been completed on 13 November at Koto-ri, but heavier engineer equipment was needed at Hagaru. Before it could be brought forward, the road from Chinhung-ni to Koto-ri required strengthening and widening. This task had already been assigned to Lieutenant Colonel Partridge, commanding the 1st Engineer Battalion. After a survey by jeep, he decided to begin operations at the highest point of the one-way dirt road.

"By working down," he explained, "we could first of all provide for what we considered to be a dangerous accumulation of snow, and the problem of land slides. . . . The work on the road involved a good bit of drainage in order to insure that the melting snows from day to day during the sunlight hours would not filter across and destroy the road bed. It involved demolitions and drilling and a good deal of dozer and grader work."[32]

Enough progress had been made by 18 November so that armor could be sent forward to support RCT–7. Only the day before, the 1st Tank Battalion had begun functioning with its Headquarters and Service Companies at Soyang-ni, eight miles northwest of Hamhung. The road between Chinhung-ni and Koto-ri was still impassable for M–26 (Pershing) tanks until the engineers could widen some of the turns. But Lieutenant Colonel Harry T. Milne, the battalion commander, organized a provisional tank platoon consisting of two M4A3 (Sherman) tanks from Headquarters Company and four dozer tanks from Company D at Majon-dong. They proceeded without incident on the 18th to Hagaru, operating as a gun platoon.[33]

Opening the mountain road to heavy traffic made it possible on the 18th to begin work on the Hagaru airstrip. Five large dozers with pans of eight cubic yards capacity arrived at the site the next day, and Company D of the 1st Engineer Battalion tackled the job of hacking out a runway from ground frozen as hard as granite. Plans called for a cut of 90,000 cubic yards and a fill of 60,000 for a 3200-foot runway. The rub was that engineering field manuals prescribed a runway of 3600 feet for R4Ds or C–47s at sea level, plus an additional 1000 feet for each 1000 feet of altitude. And since Hagaru was about 4000 feet above sea level, it could only be hoped that pilots were right in estimating that a strip of 3000 to 4500 feet might do in a pinch.[34]

The 19th also dated the establishment of the Supply Regulating Station at Hagaru for the purpose of building up stockpiles. Prior to this time, the 1st Service and 1st Ordnance Battalions had been in charge of division dumps at Hamhung. Supplies arrived by rail after being unloaded from the ships at Wonsan by the 1st Shore Party Battalion and the 1st Combat Service Group.

The completion of mine clearance made it possible to order the latter organization to Hungnam by sea to operate in-transit depots for X Corps. Practically all Division supplies were soon being received by sea at this port, where the 1st Combat Service Group separated the incoming cargo into proper classifications and forwarded it to the dumps at Hamhung. Port operation was the responsibility of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, USA. After the project got into full swing, from 2000 to 2500 Korean laborers were employed at Hungnam and as many as 6000 tons of cargo unloaded in 24 hours.[35]

A limited amount of rolling stock was available for the narrow-gauge railway from Hungnam to

Chinhung-ni. But it was up to the Marines to put the line back into operation, for the X Corps Railway Transportation Section already had its hands full with the Wonsan-Hamhung route. The 1st Service Battalion was authorized to make the attempt, and enough Korean crews were rounded up to operate the trains. Chinhung-ni thus became the railhead for supplies trucked the rest of the way to Hagaru.[36]

Preparations were also made for large-scale casualty evacuation to the Division hospital at Hungnam. H&S, A and B Companies of the 1st Medical Battalion remained there to set up the Division hospital while D, C and E Companies were attached to RCTs 1, 5 and 7 respectively. As the Division center of gravity shifted northward, medical officers foresaw the need of a hospital-type facility at Hagaru in addition to the clearing stations contemplated at Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni. Plans were approved, therefore, for Companies C and E to pool their resources at Hagaru and establish a medical supply dump. Additional surgical teams were to be flown to Hagaru in an emergency by Companies A and B from the hospital at Hungnam.

Meanwhile the hospital ship *Consolation,* commanded by Captain John W. McElroy, USNR, prepared to move from Wonsan to Hungnam. There the Division hospital had been enlarged to 400 beds, and an additional 100 to 150 were planned for the new annex at Hamhung. In order to speed up casualty evacuation, several heated railway cars were equipped for that purpose on the 35-mile narrow-gauge line from Chinhung-ni.[37]

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Supplies Trucked to Hagaru

Provisions for the advance of RCT–5 east of the Chosin Reservoir were included in Division OpnO 22–50, issued at 0800 on 17 November. As a preliminary, RCT–7 was given a two-fold mission: (1) to protect the Division left flank between Hagaru and Yudam-ni with a minimum of a battalion; and (2) to relieve elements of RCT–5 and protect the MSR in zone from positions in the vicinity of Hagaru, Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni.

RCT–5 was assigned these missions: (1) to pass a minimum of a battalion through RCT–7 at Hagaru; (2) to move up the east side of the Chosin Reservoir and seize Sinhung-ni, about 7 miles northeast of Hagaru; and (3), on order, to seize the road junction at Kyolmul-ni, some 20 miles north of Hagaru.

Division Reconnaissance Company was to screen the left flank of the MSR in the vicinity of Majon-dong, and the 11th Marines to maintain its 4th Battalion in that area prepared for employment in the north on order.

OpnO 22–50 directed the Supply Regulating Detachment (1) to establish a truckhead at Hagaru after taking over and consolidating the dumps of RCT–7; (2) to control traffic between Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni; and (3) to support RCTs 5 and 7, with priority to RCT–5. The following supply levels were fixed:

Classes I and III, five days;

Class V, 1 Unit of fire;

Classes II and IV, as required for all troops operating to the north and west of Koto-ri.[38]

Although the advance westward to Huksu-ri remained the mission of RCT–1, the shortage of rail and motor transport slowed the movement from Wonsan to Chigyong. The last elements had not arrived on the 18th when Corps asked and received the consent of Division to the employment of the 26th ROK Regiment for the attack on Huksu-ri, with the understanding that the objective would be turned over to RCT–1 at a later date. On the morning of the 19th the ROK unit left Chigyong to execute its mission.[39]

Two days later RCT–1 was relieved of this responsibility when Corps verbally notified Division that Huksu-ri had been placed within the modified boundary of the 3d Infantry Division. This was confirmed the next day by X Corps OI 17, which also directed the Division to establish blocking positions at Yudam-ni.[40]

Up to this time General Smith had not been able to make much progress toward Yudam-ni without dispersing his units to an extent which he regarded as imprudent. But with the availability of RCT–1 to occupy positions on the MSR behind the other two infantry regiments, he could now push ahead.

As an added factor, the 1st Marine Division had just acquired a new unit. Early in November Admiral Joy had inquired if General Smith could use the 41st Independent Commando, Royal Marines. This British unit of 14 officers and 221 enlisted men, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Douglas B. Drysdale, and attached to ComNavFE in Japan, had requested service with the U.S. Marines. Smith replied that he would be glad to have these fine troops. Highly trained in reconnaissance, they could operate with the Division Reconnaissance Company in protecting the flank of the Marine advance. The British Marines arrived at Hungnam on the 20th and reported to the 1st Marine Division.[41]

Division OpnO 23–50, issued at 0800 on the 23d, directed the Commandos to locate and destroy enemy forces on the left flank, ranging as far as 13 miles west of Koto-ri. It was hoped that the British unit and the Division Reconnaissance Company might flush out CCF troops beyond the reach of routine infantry patrols. Other tasks assigned to elements of the Division were as follows:

“RCT–7—to seize Yudam-ni and maintain one battalion in that position;

"RCT–5—to seize Kyolmul-li (20 miles north of Hagaru) and be prepared to seize Toksil-li (10 miles northwest of Kyolmul-li) and Tuan-di (15 miles northeast of Kyolmul-li) on order;

"RCT–1—to relieve elements of RCT–7 in the vicinity of Hagaru and Koto-ri and protect the Division MSR from positions in the vicinity of Hagaru, Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni;

"1st Tank Battalion (less detachments)—to protect the MSR from positions in the vicinity of Majon-dong and Soyang-ni;

"1st Engineer Battalion—to support Division operations with priority to the maintenance of the MSR and construction of the airfield at Hagaru."

OpnO 23–50 also provided that the Supply Regulating Station Detachment continue operation of the truckhead at Hagaru and stock supplies at the following levels: Classes I and III, 8 days; Classes II and IV, as required; and Class V, one and one-third U/F for all troops operating to the north and west of Chinhung-ni.[42]

The trucking facilities of the Division had been strained to the limit ever since the Wonsan landing. Shortly afterwards the bulk of the 7th Motor transport Battalion was taken under the operational control of X Corps, and it became necessary to attach the 1st Motor Transport Battalion to RCT–7. On 19 November, however, the 1st MT (less detachments) had passed to the control of the 1st Supply Regulating Detachment at Hagaru. There the truckers not only built up the stockpile of supplies but rendered the best support that units of the division had known so far along the MSR.[43]

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Chosin Reservoir
Confidence of UN Command

General MacArthur did not appear to be shaken by EUSAK G–2 reports during the third week of November which called attention to a formidable CCF build-up on both sides of the Yalu. On the contrary, a UN order of the 20th, giving directions for the conduct of troops at the border, indicated that an occupation rather than a fight was expected:

"Elements of minimum size only will be advanced to the immediate vicinity of the geographical boundary of Korea. No troops or vehicles will go beyond the boundary between Korea and Manchuria, or between Korea and the USSR, nor will fire be exchanged with, or air strikes be requested on forces north of the northern boundary of Korea. Rigid control of troop movements in vicinity of northern boundary will be exercised. *Damage, destruction or disruption of service of power plants will be avoided.* No personnel, military or civilian, will be permitted to enter or leave Korea via the Manchurian or USSR border. Commanders will insure that the sanctity of the international border is meticulously preserved."[44]

The italicized sentence emphasizes an assumption which had made converts in high State Department as well as Defense circles in Washington. The Chinese, according to this conjecture, were concerned chiefly with defending their Manchurian frontier and guarding the power complexes along the Yalu. As evidence, it was pointed out that early in November the Sinuiju radio described the CCF troops crossing the river as a "volunteer corps" for the protection of the hydro-electric plants along the Yalu serving Mukden, Dairen and Port Arthur. Proceeding from this premise, it was a logical conclusion that if no provocation were given these forces, a large-scale fight might be avoided.[45]

General MacArthur, after receiving a qualified permission to bomb the Yalu bridges, had enjoined UN airmen not to violate territory or air space on the other side of the river. This meant that the bomber crews must take much greater risks, since their restricted axes of approach and flight paths were known to enemy antiaircraft gunners in advance. Moreover, CCF jet fighters could attack and retire to the sanctuary of Manchuria when hard-pressed.[46]

Despite these handicaps, Air Force and Navy bombers knocked out four of the twelve international bridges and damaged most of the others. These efforts doubtless imposed delays, but troops and supplies continued to cross throughout November.[47] After arrival in North Korea, they seemed to vanish into that void of mystery which had swallowed up Chinese Communist troops ever since they broke off contact.

Students of history may have recalled at this time that one of the most significant engagements of modern history was known as the Battle of the Yalu. From a tactical viewpoint, to be sure, the clash of 30 April 1904 was not a great affair. The Japanese army, after disembarking at Chemulpo (Inchon) and marching up the Korean peninsula, numbered five times the Russian force which opposed the crossing of the Yalu at Uiji, just east of Sinuiju. A Japanese victory was doubtless to be expected, yet a new page of history had opened. For the first time in modern chronicles, an Asiatic army had successfully challenged a European army with the weapons and tactics of the Machine Age.

Now, nearly half a century later, history was repeating itself as another Asiatic army crossed the Yalu with unknown capabilities and intentions. If the Chinese Communists were merely sending a force to guard the hydro-electric complexes and frontier, hopes of peace by Christmas might be realized. But if the invaders were secretly massing for an all-out counter-offensive, a great new war might soon be flaming up from the ashes of the old.

Little fault can be found with current G–2 estimates of CCF numbers, which hold up surprisingly well even when viewed with the wisdom of hindsight. Quite as much depended on interpretations of CCF intentions by the UN command, and there can be no doubt that an end-of-the-war atmosphere prevailed on the eve of the Eighth Army offensive of 24 November.

Thanksgiving Day, which fell on the 23d, was celebrated both in Korea and the United States in a spirit of rejoicing over a victorious peace which seemed almost within grasp. It was a tribute to American bounty as well as organizational genius that the troops in Korea were served a dinner which would have done credit to a first-rate Stateside restaurant. The menu, as proposed by X Corps to component units, included shrimp cocktail, stuffed olives, roast young tom turkey with cranberry sauce, candied sweet potatoes, fruit salad, fruit cake, mince pie and coffee.[48]

As an item of good news for this Thanksgiving, it was learned the day before that the 17th Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division had reached the Yalu at Hyesanjin. Not a single Chinese soldier had been encountered by troops who had troubles enough with sub-zero temperatures and mountain roads.[49]

Since the first week of November, in fact, there had been no clashes of any importance with the invaders from Red China. On the 24th, as usual, the front was quiet everywhere except for minor patrol contacts. Yet this was the D-day of the great Eighth Army offensive, and the stirring communique of the commander-in-chief was read to all troops in Korea. It was a message in the bold spirit of Inchon, and no one could doubt the confidence of the UN command after hearing these words:

“The United Nations massive compression envelopment in North Korea against the new Red Armies operating there is now approaching its decisive effort. The isolating component of the pincer, our air forces of all types, have for the past three weeks, in a sustained attack of model coordination and effectiveness, successfully interdicted enemy lines of support from the north so that further reinforcement therefrom has been sharply curtailed and essential supplies markedly limited. The eastern sector of the pincer, with noteworthy and effective naval support, has now reached commanding enveloping position, cutting in two the northern reaches of the enemy’s geographical potential. This morning the western sector of the pincer moves forward in general assault in an effort to complete the compression and close the vise. If successful, this should for all practical purposes end the war, restore peace and unity to Korea, enable the prompt withdrawal of United Nations military forces, and permit the complete assumption by the Korean people and nation of full sovereignty and international equality. It is that for which we fight.”

/s/ DOUGLAS MACARTHUR, General of the Army, United States Army, Commander-in-Chief”[50]

Eighth Army troops found it something of an anticlimax, after this message, to jump off without meeting any large-scale opposition. General MacArthur, who flew to the front for the occasion, watched from his plane as the UN columns moved out unmolested, as if conducting a motor march.

“The Army offensive began, as scheduled, at 1000 hours on 24 November,” said the EUSAK report. “Since for some time there had been little contact with enemy forces the advance of EUSAK elements was in the nature of a meeting engagement, with little or no resistance in the initial stage. Across the Eighth Army front as a whole, advances were made from 4000 to 16,000 yards.”[51]

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Chosin Reservoir
Marine Concentration on MSR

On this same day Lieutenant Colonel Chiles presented X Corps OpnPlan 8, Draft 3, at Tokyo. It was approved at UNC Headquarters with only one modification—the shifting of the proposed boundary between X Corps and Eighth Army farther to the south in the zone of the 1st Marine Division.

This plan was the basis of X Corps OpnO 7. Issued on the 25th, it provided for a reorientation of the X Corps attack to provide more assistance for Eighth Army. H-hour was to be 0800 on the 27th, and the principal units of X Corps were assigned these tasks:

"1st Marine Division—to seize Mupyong-ni and advance to the Yalu;

"7th Infantry Division—(1) to attack from east side of Chosin Reservoir and advance to Yalu in zone; (2) to secure Pungsan area, coordinating with 1 ROK Corps;

"1 ROK Corps—to advance from Hapsu and Chongjin areas, destroying enemy in zone to north boundary of Korea;

"3rd Infantry Division—(1) to gain and maintain contact with the right flank of Eighth Army in zone; (2) to protect the left flank of X Corps; (3) to support the 1st Marine Division on X Corps order; (4) to protect harbor and airfield at Wonsan; (5) to destroy enemy guerrillas in zone."[52]

A Corps warning order, issued on the evening of the 24th, was supplemented by a briefing session at Corps Headquarters at 1000 the next morning. General Smith learned that his division was to be the northern arm of the pincers in the "massive compression envelopment" while the 7th Infantry Division took over the previous Marine mission of advancing east of the Chosin Reservoir to the Yalu.[53]

The new Marine boundary cut across Korea to the north of Eighth Army. From Yudam-ni the Marine route of advance led to Mupyong-ni 55 miles to the west. This objective was about halfway between Huichon in the south and Kanggye in the north (see map, Page 130). From the latter, which was believed to be the assembly area of the NKPA remnants, a good road led about 40 miles north to Manpojin on the Yalu.

In accordance with Corps OpnO 7, the rear boundary of the 1st Marine Division had been moved north to a line just south of Hagaru. The 3d Infantry Division had the responsibility for the area south of Hagaru, but this unit had so many other commitments that it could assign few troops to the task. General Smith was granted permission, therefore, to retain garrisons at Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni. This left the 3d Infantry Division responsible for the protection of the MSR from Sudong southward to Hamhung.[54]

Corps OpnO 7, in short, provided for a wide envelopment to be spearheaded by the 1st Marine Division on 27 November. The other arm of the pincers, of course, was to be the Eighth Army; but on the evening of the 25th came the disturbing news that its right wing, the II ROK Corps, had been hurled back by a surprise CCF counterstroke. This reverse took place in the vicinity of Tokchon, about 70 air miles southwest of Yudam-ni.[55]

EUSAK intelligence reports, as it proved, were not far off the mark in estimating enemy strength on the Eighth Army front at 149,741 troops at this time.[56] During the past few days, however, estimates of probable enemy courses of action had been so reassuring as to justify the confidence of CinCFE's communique on D-day. Even the setback of the 25th was not regarded as alarming.

"With the possible exception of the relatively vague situation on the east flank," said the next day's G–2 report, "the enemy reaction to the EUSAK attack has been one of active defense with local counterattacks in strength." The enemy's probable course of action was believed to be "an active defense in depth along present lines employing strong local counterattacks in conjunction with continued guerrilla activities with bypassed units;

limited air activity; and further reinforcement by CCF or USSR forces."[57]

On the X Corps front the reorientation of the attack to the west gave General Smith a long-sought opportunity to collect his dispersed units and achieve a relative degree of concentration. The release of RCT–1 from its Huksu-ri mission made it possible to bring that infantry regiment up behind the other two. This move in turn enabled RCT–5 to advance east of the Chosin Reservoir and RCT–7 to push on to Yudam-ni.

Progress might have been more rapid for all units if adequate transportation had been available for RCT–1 in the Chigyong area. Only by using vehicles of the 11th Marines was it possible to move 1/1 to Chinhung-ni, where it relieved the 3d Battalion of the 5th Marines on 23 November. During the next two days the 2d Battalion and RCT–1 Headquarters relieved 2/5 at Koto-ri. After the return of the vehicles, 3/1 (less Company G, left behind for lack of trucks) was lifted to Hagaru on the 26th to relieve the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines.[58]

All three battalions of RCT–5 were operating east of the Chosin Reservoir by 24 November. Until supply levels were built up at Hagaru, however, General Smith kept a careful check on the advance in this quarter. The farthest penetration took place on the 25th when a platoon-size patrol of 3/5, reinforced by two tanks, drove nearly to the northern end of the Reservoir. Scattered enemy groups were flushed out and an abandoned 75mm gun destroyed after a pursuit resulting in five Chinese killed and one captured. This was one of the few encounters in an area combed by patrols from all three battalions, and no signs of large-scale enemy activity were reported by Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Taplett, CO of 3/5, after a helicopter reconnaissance.[59]

Meanwhile RCT–7 began its move to Yudam-ni. This objective had first been mentioned as early as 11 November in X Corps OpnO 6. But until RCT–1 could be brought up to the MSR, the Division Commander limited the advance to the vicinity of Toktong Pass. There an estimated 150 to 200 enemy resisted with machine-gun fire but were scattered with the aid of air strikes and artillery support.

On the 23d, in accordance with Division OpnO 23-50, the 1st Battalion led the advance of RCT-7. During the next two days Lieutenant Colonel Davis's reinforced battalion methodically cleared booby-trapped but undefended road blocks and scattered small groups of enemy along the route. The men of 1/7 belatedly celebrated Thanksgiving on the 24th with a full, hot turkey dinner—their last full meal for 17 days—and seized battered Yudam-ni the next day against negligible resistance.[60] The 3d Battalion, regimental headquarters, and 3/11 (–) followed.

Marine operations east of the Chosin Reservoir came to an end at 1200 on the 25th with the relief of RCT–5 by the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, 7th Infantry Division. Corps orders called for this unit to remain under operational control of the 1st Marine Division until the assumption of command in the area by the CO, 31st Infantry. All elements of RCT–5 were to be relieved by the following noon for the mission of advancing to Yudam-ni and then passing through RCT–7 to lead the attack toward Mupyong-ni.[61]

This was in accordance with Division OpnO 24–50, issued at 0800 on the 26th to implement the provisions of Corps OpnO 7. The jump-off was to be at 0800 on 27 November, with the first objective the road junction at Yongnim-dong (27 road miles west of Yudam-ni), in preparation for further advance on order to the high ground about one mile south of Kogae-gol and 35 miles west of Yudam-ni. Other provisions of OpnO 24–50 were as follows:

"RCT–7—to seize and secure Yudam-ni without delay, and when passed through by RCT–5, to protect the Division MSR from Sinhung-ni (7 miles west of Hagaru) to Yudam-ni;

"RCT–5—to pass through RCT–7 west of Yudam-ni by 0800, 27 November, advance to the west and seize first objective, prepared for further advance;

"RCT–1—in Division reserve, to occupy positions in the vicinity of Chinhung-ni, Koto-ri and Hagaru for the protection of the MSR;

"11th Marines—less detachments, to provide general support from positions in the vicinity of Yudam-ni;

"41st Commando—reinforced, to move to Yudam-ni prepared for operations to the southwest to protect

Division left flank;

"Reconnaissance Company—to move to Yudam-ni and reconnoiter to the north in co-ordination with operations of RCT–7."[62]

General Smith, flying by helicopter from Hungnam to Yudam-ni on the morning of the 26th, could survey the MSR below him and reflect with satisfaction that it was now easier to count the Marine outfits south of Chinhung-ni than those to the north. These included the 1st Tank Battalion with the exception of the provisional platoon at Hagaru and the 2d Platoon of Company D at Chinhung-ni. Transportation had not yet been provided for the 41st Commando, but the new unit was scheduled to move up in convoy on the 28th with Headquarters Battalion when the Division CP displaced from Hungham to Hagaru. By that time only service units and a few platoons of tanks and engineers would be left in the rear area.

At Hagaru the C–47 airstrip was taking shape as the dozers hacked away at the frozen earth night and day, working under flood lights in the darkness. Companies C and E of the 1st Medical Battalion had set up clearing stations and built up dumps of medical supplies. Troop units at Hagaru and Yudam-ni had two days' supplies of rations and fuel, but only a unit of fire was stockpiled at Hagaru in addition to the half unit carried by the troops.

Marine motor columns were winding along the narrow, twisting mountain road from Hagaru to Yudam-ni in preparation for the attack in the morning. Upon arrival at Lieutenant Colonel Davis's 1/7 CP, General Smith learned to his discomfort that the hovering ability of a rotary-wing aircraft is curtailed at high altitudes. The helicopter dropped like a stone the last ten feet, but fortunately no injury resulted to passenger, pilot or machine.[63]

On the 26th intelligence arrived at Hamhung from the 7th Marines, reporting capture of three soldiers from the 60th CCF Division. They asserted that the 58th, 59th, and 60th Divisions of the 20th CCF Army had reached the Yudam-ni area on the 20th. According to these enlisted men, Chinese strategy envisioned a move south and southeast from Yudam-ni to cut the MSR after two Marine regiments passed.[64]

X Corps had received similar reports of Chinese movement southeast from Yudam-ni as well as air reports of enemy activity north and northeast of the Chosin Reservoir. Six Chinese divisions had now been identified in northeast Korea but both Corps and Division intelligence estimates of probable enemy action continued to be optimistic. Although Chinese attacks on the division's MSR or along the Huichon-Huksu-ri-Hamhung axis were not ruled out, G–2 officers seemed to consider a continued westward withdrawal more likely.[65]

Division planning went ahead on the assumption of commander and staff that the enemy would be met in strength in the mountainous country west of Yudam-ni. This was the basis for the decision to pass the relatively fresh 5th Marines through the 7th for the attack westward.[66]

It was a cold, clear Sunday afternoon when General Smith returned to Hungnam. From his helicopter he could see for several miles on either side, and no signs of enemy activity were discerned in the snow-clad hills. After his arrival at the Division CP, however, the Marine general was informed that the situation had gone from bad to worse in west Korea. The II ROK Corps on the right flank had disintegrated on the 26th under a second day's heavy blows, thus exposing the 2d Infantry Divisions and Turkish Brigade to flank attack. In short, the Eighth Army offensive had been brought to a standstill before the Marines could jump off in the morning as the other arm of the United Nations envelopment.

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Chapter 8. Crisis at Yudam-ni

THE 2D BATTALION, vanguard of the 5th Marines, completed its move from the east coast of the Chosin Reservoir to Yudam-ni during the afternoon and evening of 26 November. After deploying his command south of the village, Lieutenant Colonel Roise and his S-3, Major Theodore F. Spiker, made a reconnaissance in preparation for the next day's attack.[1]

Yudam-ni lies in the center of a broad valley surrounded by five great ridges, named in relation to their direction from the village: North, Northwest, Southwest, South, and Southeast. Beginning at the rim of the valley, each of these ridges extends several thousand yards and includes many peaks, spurs, and draws, certain of which took on special significance as the crisis at Yudam-ni unfolded.

Click here to view map

A finger of the Chosin Reservoir reaches toward Yudam-ni in the valley between North and Southeast Ridges. The other four corridors radiating from the valley are highway routes. Lieutenant Colonel Roise surveyed the westerly road, which leaves Yudam-ni between Northwest and Southwest Ridges. His assigned objective encompassed distant spurs of these heights, bordering the road about a mile and a half west of the village.[2]

The 7th Marines (-) was disposed in perimeter around Yudam-ni on terminal hills of four of the five ridges: D and E Companies (attached to 1/7) on North Ridge, 3/7 on Southwest, and 1/7 on South and Southeast.[3] Since the high ground occupied by 3/7 overlooked the route of attack and Roise's objective, Colonel Litzenberg[4] later in the day specified a new destination for 2/5, a pass ten miles west of Yudam-ni. It was a big order, but Litzenberg's troops would support the 5th Marines' outfit by making limited advances along the skylines of Northwest and Southwest Ridges. With this protection on his flanks initially, Roise could concentrate more strength for the drive through the low ground.[5]

Nightfall of 26 November was accompanied by an abrupt temperature drop to zero degrees Fahrenheit. The north wind screamed across the frozen reservoir and lashed the Marines on the valley floor and hillsides around Yudam-ni. At 2200, a group of half-frozen company commanders gathered within the flapping walls of Roise's blackout tent to receive their orders. The attack was to start at 0800 the next morning, with 2/5 passing through the 7th Marines in a column of companies. Recoilless rifles and 4.2-inch mortars of the 5th Marines would support the advance, along with First Lieutenant Wayne E. Richards' 2d Platoon of Able Company Engineers. Two Corsairs of VMF-312 and a spotter plane from VMO-6 were to provide aerial reconnaissance and close air support.[6]

In other wind-blown tents, 7th Regiment officers learned of their missions as assigned by Colonel Litzenberg. The 3d Battalion would move farther along the crest of Southwest Ridge on 27 November and also seize the terminal peak, Hill 1403, of Northwest Ridge across the MSR, in order to support 2/5's attack more effectively. Dog and Easy Companies were to patrol North Ridge and the west coast of the Reservoir, while 1/7 scouted both South and Southeast Ridges and their adjoining corridors. Particular attention would be paid to the valley running southward between these hill masses, for therein lay the vital road to Hagaru.[7]

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Chapter 8. Crisis at Yudam-ni
Marine Attack on 27 November

The Yudam-ni perimeter was quiet throughout the long, frigid night of 26-27 November. At dawn the basin and hillsides came alive with parka-clad figures stamping and clapping life back into leaden limbs. Gradually they began to cluster around small fires to thaw out the morning rations and their weapons.

Companies G and H of 3/7 jumped off in the attack at 0815, the former to extend the foothold on Southwest Ridge, the latter to seize Hill 1403, terminal height of Northwest Ridge. Led by Captain Leroy M. Cooke, How Company advanced unopposed and secured its objective by midmorning.[8] Captain Cooney's Company G moved rapidly 1200 yards along the crest of Southwest Ridge and occupied a commanding peak, Hill 1426, at 0845 without meeting opposition. But when Cooney resumed the advance, his troops almost immediately came under fire from enemy positions on another peak 500 yards away.[9]

During 3/7's operations on the high ground the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, had marched out of Yudam-ni and launched the main attack along the road. Company F, under Captain Uel D. Peters, led 2/5 as it passed beneath the steep walls of Southwest and Northwest Ridges. The first objective was a long spur of the latter height, 500 yards across a draw from the 7th Marines on Hill 1403. Approaching the mouth of the draw on the right of the road, Fox Company was hit by long-range small-arms fire from enemy emplacements on the objective. About the same time, 0935, a message from the VMO-6 spotter plane told of CCF positions all across the front. Captain Peters held up momentarily to appraise the situation, and engineers moving behind his outfit began to clear the first of nine unmanned enemy roadblocks that obstructed the MSR.
Click here to view map

According to plan, Company F ascended part way up the slopes of Hill 1403 and then advanced across the front of the 7th Marines to the head of the long draw that set off the Communist-held spur. Simultaneously, 4.2-inch and 81mm mortar crews positioned their weapons along the road to support this envelopment. The flatlands south of Yudam-ni trembled as the 105mm howitzers of Lieutenant Colonel Harvey A. Feehan's 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, opened up at 1015 with a 15-minute preparation.[10]

While Company F moved overland to strike at the left (north) flank of the CCF position, Captain Samuel S. Smith's Dog Company edged forward along the MSR to the mouth of the draw. Like the earlier unit, it was met by a hail of bullets. The regimental 4.2-inch mortars opened fire on the crest of the spur, and recoilless rifles slammed 75mm shells into bunkers just now sighted on the forward slopes. At 1115, after ground supporting arms had partially neutralized the CCF positions, Corsairs of VMF-312 blasted the objective with rockets and bombs.

In the wake of the air strike, First Lieutenant Gerald J. McLaughlin led Fox Company's 1st Platoon against the enemy's north flank, the rest of the company supporting the assault by fire from Hill 1403. Most of the Chinese defenders fled to the west, and McLaughlin's troops cleared the northern half of the spur by 1300, capturing three Red soldiers. The 2d Platoon, commanded by Second Lieutenant Donald J. Krabbe, then passed through to secure the southern half, overlooking the road. Although the attackers encountered only negligible local resistance, they were slowed by heavy machine-gun fire sweeping in from a peak 1000 yards farther west.

During Company F's action on the high ground, Dog Company filed around the road bend at the south end of the spur and moved toward a valley junction a few hundred yards away. This fork is dominated by Sakkat Mountain to the west; and the Chinese, in order to block the Marine advance, had dug tiers of entrenchments on the eastern slopes of the massive height. Frontal fire from these positions converged on Company D's column. Faced by such formidable resistance and terrain Lieutenant Colonel Roise discontinued the attack. At 1430 he

ordered Fox Company to set up on Northwest Ridge for the night, and Dog to deploy defensively across the MSR on a spur of Southwest Ridge.

On the crest of the latter, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, had found progress increasingly costly during the afternoon of 27 November. The peak beyond Hill 1426 was occupied by Company G at 1500,[11] bringing that unit on line with Dog Company of 2/5 in the low ground to the north. Like the 5th Marines' outfit, Company G was now confronted with the broad crescent of CCF fortifications buttressed by the defensive complex on Sakkat Mountain. Machine-gun barrages drove the 7th Marines' unit off the hilltop, and Company I of 3/7 rushed forward from the high ground overlooking Yudam-ni to add its firepower in support. Baker Company of 1/7, on patrol in the valley between Southwest and South Ridges, ascended into the bullet-swept zone at 1230 to help out. When it became heavily engaged, elements of Company C were ordered forward from the Yudam-ni vicinity as reinforcement. Thus parts of three battalions, 2/5, 3/7, and 1/7, felt the storm of steel and lead on Southwest Ridge throughout the afternoon.

While fighting raged in an arc from south to west on the 27th, another danger area was discovered to the north and northeast, completing a vast semicircle of known CCF concentrations in proximity to Yudam-ni. A patrol from Company D of 2/7, moving over North Ridge along the west coast of the reservoir, ran into heavy machine-gun and mortar fire about 4000 yards from the village. Marine air struck at the entrenchments of an estimated enemy company, and at 1645 the patrol withdrew with several casualties to Company D's lines on the southern tip of North Ridge.

At dusk on the 27th a general calm settled over Yudam-ni, broken only occasionally by scattered exchanges of small-arms fire. The main Marine attack had netted about 1500 yards, placing 2/5 on the objective originally assigned by the regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel Murray. That the Chinese did not allow this battalion to advance three more miles, to its new objective and into hopeless entrapment, seems inconsistent in view of the CCF plans for the night of 27-28 November. The auxiliary attack by 3/7 won 1200 more yards of the crest of Southwest Ridge, and the occupation of Hill 1403 by How Company of that battalion represented a gain of about 2000.

In a few hours, the Marines would give thanks that their successes on 27 November had been modest ones.

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Chapter 8. Crisis at Yudam-ni
Marine Dispositions Before CCF Attack

The units of Yudam-ni will be listed counter-clockwise, beginning with those on North Ridge, according to the positions they occupied around the perimeter on the night of 27-28 November. North Ridge, bounded on the east by the reservoir and on the west by the valley separating Northwest Ridge, lay closest to the village and was therefore of immediate tactical importance. Facing this hill mass from Yudam-ni, one sees four distinct terminal heights: Hill 1167 on the right, Hills 1240 and 1282 in the center, and the giant spur of Hill 1384 on the left. Companies D and E of the 7th Marines, occupied Hills 1240 and 1282 respectively. Since the combined front of these two units was a mile wide, they concentrated on their assigned hilltops and relied on periodic patrols to span the gaping, 500-yard saddle between. Although both flanks of each company dangled "in the air," they were backed by two-thirds of the 5th Marine Regiment in the valley of Yudam-ni.[12]

The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, had arrived from the east coast of the Chosin Reservoir at noon on the 27th, while the attacks to the west were in full progress. Lieutenant Colonel Taplett placed his unit in an assembly area at the base of North Ridge, beneath the large, unoccupied spur leading to Hill 1384. The 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, did not complete its move to Yudam-ni from the east side of the reservoir until after dark. Lieutenant Colonel John W. Stevens, II, secured for the night in the valley below Hills 1282 and 1240; and with Taplett's nearby command, 1/5 thus comprised a formidable reserve behind the thin high-ground defenses of Companies D and E of 2/7.

To the left of North Ridge, going round the clock, Company H of 3/7 dug in on the crest of Hill 1403, terminal height of Northwest Ridge. Farther to the left, in the broad draw through which Company F had earlier enveloped the CCF-held spur, Company E of 2/5 took up strong blocking positions. The latter unit was not tied in with the 7th Marines' troops on Hill 1403, there being a steep and rugged gap of about 200 yards on the intervening hillside. Easy Company's line extended up the left side of the draw and connected with Fox's on the northern tip of the newly won spur. Company F manned the remainder of that finger of high ground, its left flank overlooking the road separating Southwest Ridge.

As mentioned before, Company D, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, occupied a finger of Southwest Ridge jutting out toward the road and directly opposite Fox Company's spur. To the left, but beyond physical contact, Companies G and I of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, defended the topographical crest of Southwest Ridge. As an example of altitudes and distances involved around the perimeter, the latter company, perched atop Hill 1426 (meters), sat 1200 feet above the valley floor at Yudam-ni[13] and at a lineal distance of a mile and a half from the village. To its left rear, 2000 yards away on the same hill mass, Company A of 1/7 defended a terminal peak, Hill 1294, overlooking the broad valley separating South Ridge. A platoon of Company C, 1/7, was deployed on the valley floor to block that avenue into Marine artillery positions.

South Ridge, capped by a conical peak jutting 1600 feet skyward, points at Yudam-ni and the reservoir like a great arrowhead. Company B of 1/7, after returning from the active patrol mentioned earlier, entrenched on the tip, Hill 1276, to cover the deep gorge between South and Southeast Ridges. In this narrow ribbon of low ground, the MSR from Yudam-ni travels southward four miles before turning abruptly east into Toktong Pass. Company C of 1/7, less one platoon, occupied a spur of Southeast Ridge near the sharp turn—three miles from the Valley of Yudam-ni and five from the village itself.

Even farther out on a tactical limb was Fox Company of 2/7, which had departed Hagaru at noon on 27 November[14] to take up hilltop positions in the center of Toktong Pass. Its mission, like that of Company C, was

to guard the vulnerable MSR between Hagaru and Yudam-ni. But it was seven miles from the friendly perimeter at Hagaru on the one side and over two mountainous miles from Company C on the other. Fox Company, numerically and geographically, appeared to be fair game for some CCF regiment on the prowl—although appearances are sometimes deceiving.

This, then, was the disposition of the 5th and 7th Marines in the evening of 27 November: a total of ten understrength rifle companies of both regiments on the high ground around Yudam-ni; two battalions of the 5th in the valley near the village; and two rifle companies, Charlie and Fox, of the 7th in isolated positions along the 14-mile route to Hagaru.

The regimental command posts of Colonel Litzenberg and Lieutenant Colonel Murray were located at Yudam-ni along with the usual headquarters elements, except for the Antitank Company of the 7th Marines, at Hagaru. Also at Hagaru were Lieutenant Colonel Randolph S. D. Lockwood's headquarters of 2/7,[15] and Weapons Company (—) of that battalion. For this reason, Companies D and E, on Hills 1240 and 1282 at Yudam-ni, came under temporary control of 1/7.

Despite the lack of tanks, [16] the Yudam-ni perimeter encompassed an impressive array of Marine supporting arms. The 1st and 4th Battalions, together with Batteries G and I of the 3d, represented almost three-fourths of the fire power of the 11th Regiment. The 48 howitzers—thirty 105mm and eighteen 155mm—were emplaced in the expansive flats generally south of the village, in the direction of South and Southeast Ridges. In position to the north were the 75mm recoilless rifles of the 5th Marines and the 4.2-inch mortar companies of both infantry regiments.

The Yudam-ni lines bristled with enough firepower to give any commander confidence, but the supply situation was not reassuring. Although Captain Robert A. Morehead and a detachment from the 1st Service Battalion arrived during the 27th to begin establishment of a division dump, the supply level was low. The dumps of the 5th and 7th Marines contained about 3 days' rations, 3 days' POL, and 2 U/F of small arms ammunition in addition to amounts in the hands of the troops. Very little artillery ammunition was available beyond that held by the firing batteries. During the 27th Colonel Litzenberg sent his S-4, Major Maurice E. Roach, to Hagaru to arrange for the dispatching of about five truckloads each of rations, POL, and ammunition. They arrived late on the evening of the same day—the last supplies to get through from Hagaru. That same evening Lieutenant Colonel Beall, commanding officer of the 1st Motor Transport Battalion, led all the organic vehicles (except 40-50) of the 5th and 7th Marines back to Hagaru with the intent of returning them the following day loaded. The Chinese, who had already invested the road, for some reason permitted the trucks to pass. Beall reached Hagaru without incident. The trucks were never able to return.[17]

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Chapter 8. Crisis at Yudam-ni
The Battle of Northwest Ridge

At 1830, two hours after the looming mass of Sakkat Mountain had blotted out the sun on 27 November, Yudam-ni was pitch black. The temperature dropped to 20 degrees below zero.[18]

On Northwest Ridge the infantrymen of 3/7 and 2/5 slowly grew numb from the penetrating cold. Trigger fingers, though heavily gloved, ached against the brittle steel of weapons, and parka hoods became encrusted with frozen moisture. In the cumbersome shoe-pacs, perspiration-soaked feet gradually became transformed into lumps of biting pain.

When men are immobilized for hours in such temperatures, no amount of clothing will keep them warm. Yet, even more disturbing to the Marines on the Yudam-ni perimeter was the effect of the weather on carbines and BARs. These weapons froze to such a degree that they became unreliable or, in some cases, completely unserviceable. The M-1 rifle and Browning machine guns showed stubborn streaks but retained their effectiveness, provided they had been cared for properly.

While the Marines sat in their holes and cursed the frigid night, the quiet hills around them came alive with thousands of Red Chinese on the march. Unseen and unheard, the endless columns of quilted green wound through valleys and over mountain trails leading toward the southern tips of North and Northwest Ridges. These were the assault battalions of the 79th and 89th CCF Divisions. With seven other divisions they comprised Red China's 9th Army Group led by Sung Shin-lun, one of the best field commanders in the CCF. Lin Pao, commanding the 3d Field Army, had dispatched Sung's army group to northeast Korea specifically to destroy the 1st Marine Division. The knockout blow, aimed at the northwest arc of the Yudam-ni perimeter, amounted to a massive frontal assault. Another CCF division, the 59th, had completed a wide envelopment to the south, driving in toward South Ridge and Toktong Pass to cut the MSR between Hagaru and Yudam-ni.[19]
Click here to view map

This was the main effort of the CCF in northeast Korea: three divisions against two regiments of Marines. And in addition to the advantage of mass, the Reds held the trump cards of mobility and surprise. They enjoyed superior mobility because they were unencumbered by heavy weapons and hence could use primitive routes of approach in the darkness. They had the advantage of surprise because their practice of marching by night and hiding by day had concealed their approach to a large degree from UN air observation. To offset these odds, the outnumbered Marines would have to rely on superior firepower, command of the air, and another weapon called *esprit.*

By 2100, Northwest Ridge was crawling with Chinese only a few hundred yards from the positions of Campanies E and F, 5th Marines, and Company H, 7th Marines. The enemy troops, padding silently in their rubber sneakers, had as yet given no hint of their presence. To divert attention, the Red commander sent a patrol against 2/5's roadblock on the MSR between Northwest and Southwest Ridges. Troops of Company D, 5th Marines, exchanged grenades with the Chinese and killed two of them. The remainder they quickly dispersed with mortar fire.

Simultaneously with the thrust at the roadblock, small enemy teams probed Fox Company's line on the spur of Northwest Ridge, vanishing into the night after each light contact. These disturbances in the center of 2/5's zone enabled CCF infiltrators and grenadiers on the northern tip of the spur to crawl undetected within a few yards of the limiting point between Company F and Company E on the right. Bugle calls cut through the darkness, and the grenadiers began heaving their missiles while the submachine gunners opened up. The din of this first

attempt to unnerve the defenders lasted several minutes. Then came a sustained mortar bombardment of Marine front lines. While the shells rained down, the Chinese opened fire with crew-served automatic weapons emplaced all across Northwest Ridge.

At 2125 the mortar eruptions began to walk toward the Marine rear. Whistles screeched, enemy machine guns fell silent, and the first Chinese assault waves hurled themselves against the juncture of Companies E and F. The enemy attacked on an extremely narrow front in order to maintain control. His troops advanced in column within grenade range, then deployed abruptly into skirmish lines that flailed the Marine positions ceaselessly and without regard to losses.

The machine guns and rifles of Companies E and F piled the attackers in grotesque heaps up and down the front, but the pressure of human tonnage was unremitting. Ultimately, the Reds broke through on the northern tip of the spur, where the two units were joined. They poured troops into the gap, and as they attempted to roll back the newly exposed flanks, they overran part of Fox Company's right wing platoon. Captain Samuel Jaskilka, commanding Easy Company in the draw, dispatched a light machine-gun section and a squad from his 3d Platoon (deployed in the rear) to reinforce his 1st Platoon at the edge of the breakthrough. The latter unit, under Second Lieutenant Jack L. Nolan, held firm and bent back its left to prevent encroachment on the rear. Staff Sergeant Russell J. Borgomainero, of the 1st Platoon, deployed the reinforcements to contain the penetration, while 2/5's 81mm mortars laid barrages on the salient.

At 2215, as the attack against Companies E and F was reaching its height, Lieutenant Colonel Roise ordered H&S Company of 2/5 to deploy for the immediate defense of his command post. The Chinese, blocked in their attempts to get behind Easy Company, continued to stab at the rear of Fox. If their envelopment succeeded, they could swarm over the headquarters and supporting arms positions of the 2d Battalion.

Roise's precaution proved unnecessary. As fast as the Red commander sent troops into the salient, they were cut down by mortar, machine-gun, and rifle fire. The few who did worm their way into Marine supporting positions died in individual combat. At 2230, on the right of Company E's front, the 2d Platoon turned its machine guns on a native hut 200 yards up the draw and set it ablaze. The brilliant illumination exposed all CCF troops in the narrow corridor and on the adjoining slopes; and the Marines commenced a turkey shoot that ended at 2400 with the virtual annihilation of the main enemy force.

The Chinese maintained their grip on the northern tip of the spur, however, and fought off patrols from Easy Company trying to re-establish contact with Fox. Since the gap remained, leaving the enemy in position to fire on the Marine rear, Roise shifted the reserve platoon of Company D to Fox Company's side of the salient. This redeployment, in conjunction with Company E's earlier action on the other side, converted the penetration area into a gantlet for the Chinese. Already weakened by casualties numbering in the hundreds, the Red commander apparently wrote off the salient as a net loss, for he never used it again.

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Chapter 8. Crisis at Yudam-ni
Chinese Seize Hill 1403

At 2135, just as the first assault waves were pounding 2/5's front, the vanguard of another enemy force began to feel out the lines of Company H, 3/7, on Hill 1403 to the north. Captain Cooke's three platoons were deployed in an arc from the road to the peak of the hill to protect the line of communication to the valley of Yudam-ni. Out of physical contact with all friendly elements, How Company was assailable from every direction, as the Chinese quickly discovered.[20]

Following a half hour of lightning probes, the enemy launched a strong attack against First Lieutenants Elmer A. Krieg's platoon on the right front. Communications with Cooke's CP went out almost immediately, and in the space of a few minutes the Marine right flank collapsed under the weight of CCF numbers. Krieg shifted his remaining men to the left and joined Second Lieutenant Paul E. Denny's platoon.

At the company CP on the reverse slope, Captain Cooke and his forward observers radioed for all available supporting arms. The prompt barrages by artillery and mortars in the valley stopped the Communists on the right half of the summit and enabled Cooke to reorganize his forward platoons. As the supporting fires lifted, he personally led an assault to restore the right flank. But the CCF machine guns and grenades smashed the counterattack, and Cooke was cut down at the head of his men.

Second Lieutenant James M. Mitchell, executive officer, temporarily took command of Company H. When word of Cooke's death reached 3/7's CP, Lieutenant Colonel William F. Harris[21] dispatched Lieutenant Harris (no relation), recently returned to duty after illness, to take over the beleaguered unit.

The younger Harris, who had been out of action since shortly after the "How Hill" battle in early November, safely ascended the enemy-infested slopes of Hill 1403 in the darkness. About midnight he reached How Company's positions and found all of Cooke's officers wounded but one, Lieutenant Newton. The platoons of Krieg and Denny were badly depleted, but Harris moved Newton's platoon from the left flank to the right. Newton's men regained enough ground in a counterattack to cement the company's position.

After these first attacks against 2/5 and H/7 over the two-mile breadth of Northwest Ridge, the Chinese remained generally inactive for a period of about two hours. They had paid heavily for minor gains—so heavily that fresh battalions were called from reserve to stamp out the Marine resistance on the tip of the ridge. And at 0300, several hundred CCF riflemen, grenadiers, and submachine gunners commenced the second general assault, striking at 2/5 and Company H simultaneously.

In the low ground at the center of the two-mile front, Jaskilka's Easy Company threw a curtain of machine-gun fire across the draw in the path of 300 Chinese advancing frontally. The first enemy ranks marched into the fire lanes and were mowed down like rows of grain. The CCF soldiers in subsequent formations apparently viewed the grisly, corpse-strewn corridor with misgivings, for they stopped several hundred yards up the narrow valley and took cover. Thereafter, the main fighting in Company E's zone involved long-range exchanges of machine-gun and mortar fire, although clashes at close quarters occasionally flared up on the flanks.

Approximately 200 Communist troops had concentrated meanwhile against Fox Company on the spur to the left, where the ground afforded more cover and space for maneuver. Stumbling over a carpet of their own dead, the Reds thrust repeatedly at the center of the Marine line. They inflicted many casualties on the defenders and ultimately overran two machine-gun positions. But this was the sum total of their success; and fighting on the north half of the spur, at the edge of the gap between Companies E and F, continued sporadically for the rest of the night with neither side gaining any appreciable advantage.

On the right of the 2d Battalion, the second CCF onslaught had struck the front and both flanks of Company H on Hill 1403. Human cannon fodder of Red China was hurled against the Marine positions for a full hour, but Lieutenant Harris' command held. H Company's roadblock, commanded by Sergeant Vick, decisively beat off a Chinese attack in the valley; and at 0400 Lieutenant Colonel Harris ordered the hard pressed company to pull back toward the rear of Easy Company, 2/5. Two hours later How Company completed its fighting withdrawal.

The loss of Hill 1403 posed a grave threat to the whole defensive network around the village. Not only were the Chinese now ideally situated to strike at the rear of 2/5 and sever it from the two regiments, but in sufficient strength they could attack the rear and flanks of the Marine units on North and Southwest Ridges. Moreover, at dawn, they would be looking down the throats of some 2000 Marines on the valley floor.

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Chapter 8. Crisis at Yudam-ni
Fighting at 3/5's CP

The partially successful assault on Northwest Ridge involved two regiments, the 266th and 267th, of the 89th CCF Division. Operating abreast of this force, the 79th Division had meanwhile advanced over the rugged spine of North Ridge toward the two isolated companies of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, occupying terminal Hills 1282 and 1240 of that huge land mass. Elements of the 79th Division's three regiments were in the fore, and each regiment was apparently disposed in a column of battalions. Facing south toward the Marine positions on North Ridge, the CCF order of battle, with probable objectives assigned, was as follows:
237th Regt: Hill 1384 (Unoccupied)
235th Regt: Hill 1240 (D/7)
236th Regt: Hill 1167 (Unoccupied)

For reasons unknown, the commander of the 235th Regiment did not include Hill 1282 in his plan for seizing the high ground above Yudam-ni. He ordered his 1st Battalion to take only Hill 1240, and the commanding officer of that unit in turn assigned the mission to his 1st and Special Duty Companies. After these two outfits had seized the objective, the 2d and 3d Companies would pass through and, in conjunction with other CCF forces in the locale, ". . . annihilate the enemy at Yudam-ni."[22]

Approaching the terminal high ground in darkness, the 1st Battalion, 235th Regiment, veered off its course and mistakenly ascended a spur toward Hill 1282. The 3d Battalion, 236th Regiment, keeping contact as it advanced on the left, participated in the error and wound up at the foot of Hill 1240. Thus confronted with this precipitous mass instead of low, gently sloping Hill 1167, the 3d Battalion floundered for several hours and did not take part in the first attack against the Marine perimeter. It did, however, send out the usual screen of infiltrators.

At 2200, submachine gunners and grenadiers of the 1st and Special Duty Companies, 1/235, commenced the preliminaries against Company E, 7th Marines on Hill 1282, believing they were engaging a Marine platoon on Hill 1240. The harassing force was driven off after failing to disrupt the Marine defenses. Almost two hours later, at 2345, Company D of 2/7 reported enemy infiltration on Hill 1240 a thousand yards to the east. Both Marine companies cancelled the patrols scheduled for the long saddle connecting their positions and went on a 100% alert.

Captain Phillips, commanding Easy Company, had arranged two platoons in perimeter around the summit of Hill 1282, and the third he had deployed to the right rear, on a spur that dipped toward Yudam-ni. At midnight, after a period of silence across the company front, the initial CCF assault wave slammed into the northeastern arc of the perimeter, manned by First Lieutenant Yancey's platoon. Marine firepower blunted this frontal attack, and the Reds tried to slip around the east side of the hilltop. They ran head-on into First Lieutenant Bey's platoon entrenched on the spur and were thrown back.

Resorting to grinding tactics, the Chinese repeatedly assaulted Company E's position from midnight to 0200. Whistles and bugles blared over the reaches of North Ridge, and the charging squads of infantry met death stoically, to the tune of weird Oriental chants. When one formation was cut to pieces by machine-gun fire and grenades, another rose out of the night to take its place. By 0200, as the first attack began to taper off, the northeastern slopes of Hill 1282 lay buried under a mat of human wreckage. An hour later, the 1st and Special Duty Companies of the 1st Battalion, 235th CCF Regiment, had ceased to exist, having lost nearly every man of their combined total of over 200. Company E's casualties had been heavy, but the Marines still held Hill 1282.

Click here to view map

On Hill 1240, a thousand yards to the east, infiltrators of the 3d Battalion, 236th CCF Regiment, probed Dog Company's perimeter while Easy was under attack. By 0030, some of the harassing parties had side-slipped through the saddle separating Hill 1282 and opened fire on the 5th and 7th Regimental headquarters in Yudam-ni.

The sniping from the slopes of North Ridge did not surprise the Marines in the valley, for they had long been preparing for a possible threat from that direction. Early in the evening, Lieutenant Colonel Taplett had re-deployed 3/5 from an assembly area just north of the village to a broad tactical perimeter in the same locale. Companies H and I, the latter on the right, he positioned facing Northwest Ridge—specifically Hill 1403. Two platoons of Company G held blocking positions near the base of Southwest Ridge, and the third manned an outpost on the slopes of that high ground. At the bottom of North Ridge, in the draw between Hill 1282 and the spur of 1384, Taplett established his CP with H&S and Weapons Companies providing local security.

When 3/5's commander learned that the spur of Hill 1384 was unoccupied, he dispatched a platoon of Company I to an outpost position 500 yards up the slope. About 300 yards behind the Item Company unit, on a portion of the spur directly above the battalion CP, a platoon of South Korean police deployed with two heavy machine

guns.

At 2045, fifteen minutes before any other unit on the Yudam-ni reported a contact, the outpost platoon of Item Company began receiving fire from above. This harassment, probably involving advance elements of the 237th CCF Regiment, continued sporadically for several hours, throughout the period of the first Communist attacks against other fronts.

In the valley at 2120, a few men of How Company, 7th Marines, entered 3/5's positions barefooted and partially clothed. Taplett, personally noting the time of their arrival, questioned them in the battalion aid station, and they told how their 60mm mortar position on Hill 1403 had been seized by the Chinese.[23]

The battalion commander returned to his CP, and after listening to the far-off din of the initial Communist attacks, placed his perimeter on a 100% alert at 0115. Half an hour later, the Item Company platoon on the spur of Hill 1384 reported an increase in enemy fire coming from above. A message from H/7 next warned that CCF troops were moving around Hill 1403 to cut the MSR. Company I observed activity in that quarter shortly afterwards, and at 0218 opened fire on an enemy platoon, which promptly retracted.

A few minutes later, a company—possibly two companies—of Chinese swept down the spur of Hill 1384, overran the Item Company platoon outpost, and continued on towards the police platoon. The South Koreans, after inflicting heavy casualties on the Reds with their two machine guns, vacated the high ground. Enemy troops then spread out along the crest and poured plunging fire into H&S and Weapons Companies defending the draw.

Weapons Company, on the far side of the depression, held its ground, but H&S, directly under the gun, shortly fell back across the MSR. Taplett's CP was left in a no man's land, with enemy bullets raining down out of the night and Marine fire whistling back from across the draw and road. Upon learning of the withdrawal, the battalion commander elected to remain in the tent in order to keep telephone contact with his rifle companies, which were as yet uninvolved. He did not consider the situation too serious, and it seemed as though the police platoon's machine guns had taken the sting out of the enemy assault.

Except for a few individuals, the Chinese did not descend from the spur. Nor did they direct much fire at Taplett's blackout tent, which they probably took to be unoccupied. Inside, the battalion commander studied his maps, received reports and issued instructions over the field phone while his S-3, Major Thomas A. Durham, sat nearby with pistol drawn. Major John J. Canney, the executive officer, left the CP to retrieve H&S Company and was killed as he approached the MSR. Private First Class Louis W. Swinson, radio operator, whose instrument had proved unreliable in the severe cold, took position outside the tent and covered the approaches with his rifle.

This unique situation—a battalion commander under fire in an exposed position while his rifle companies lay peacefully entrenched several hundred yards away—lasted for over an hour.

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Chapter 8. Crisis at Yudam-ni
The Battle of North Ridge

At approximately 0300, when Taplett, Durham, and Swinson began their lonely vigil, the 79th CCF Division launched another assault on North Ridge (see Map 16).[24] As a result of the enemy's first attack, and in anticipation of the second, Colonel Murray earlier had moved elements of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, into position behind 3/5.

Second Lieutenant Nicholas M. Trapnell's 1st Platoon of Company A left the battalion assembly area in the valley at 0100 and started up the steep incline of Hill 1282. Climbing the icy slopes by day was difficult enough, but darkness and a minus-20-degree temperature made it a gruelling and perilous ordeal. Trapnell's outfit did not reach the crest until after 0300, when the CCF assault was at the height of its fury and Company E was facing imminent annihilation. The Able Company unit moved into position with Lieutenant Bey's platoon on the spur jutting back from the peak. As yet, the full force of the Chinese drive had not spread to this area.

The Red commander of the 1st Battalion, 235th Regiment, used his 3d Company for the second attack against the cap of Hill 1282. With the few survivors of the 1st and Special Duty Companies attached, the fresh unit probably numbered about 125 troops. In squads of eight to ten, the Chinese struck again and again at the perimeter on the summit, and the two depleted platoons of Easy Company dwindled to a mere handful of tired, desperate Marines. First Lieutenant Robert E. Snyder's 3d Platoon of A/5, having been sent up from the valley shortly after Trapnell's outfit, arrived as reinforcements. Snyder did not have contact with Bey and Trapnell, whose platoons were still intact, so he integrated his men with the remnants of the two platoons on the peak.

Both sides suffered crippling losses during the close fighting on Hill 1282. The Reds finally drove a wedge between the Marine defenders on the summit and the platoons of Bey and Trapnell on the spur. According to Bey:

"It soon became obvious that a penetration had been made to our left. The positions atop the hill and the Command Post area were brightly illuminated by flares and other explosions. By this time [approximately 0400] nothing but Chinese could be heard on the telephone in the command post and my Platoon Sergeant, Staff Sergeant Daniel M. Murphy, requested permission to take what men we could spare in an attempt to close the gap between the left flank of the platoon and the rest of the company. I told him to go ahead and do what he could."[25]

Click here to view map

Meanwhile, the center and rear of Easy Company's perimeter was reduced to the chaos of a last stand. Yancey, already wounded, was hit again as he tried to reorganize the few Marine survivors on the peak. First Lieutenant Leonard M. Clements, the other platoon leader, fell wounded as did First Lieutenant William J. Schreier of the mortar section and Lieutenant Snyder. Captain Phillips, hurling grenades in the midst of the melee, was killed. His executive officer, First Lieutenant Raymond O. Ball, took command of Company E, shouting out encouragement as he lay immobilized by two wounds. He was hit several more times before he lapsed into unconsciousness and died after reaching the aid station. Lieutenant Snyder took command.

By 0500, CCF infantrymen of the 3d Company, 1/235, occupied the summit of Hill 1282, still believing it to be Hill 1240. The remnants of the platoons of Yancey, Clements, and Snyder had been driven to the reverse slope in the west, while the units of Trapnell and Bey clung to the crest of the southeastern spur, overlooking Yudam-ni. Up to this point, Chinese casualties on Hill 1282 probably numbered about 250, with Marine losses approximating 150. Easy Company had been reduced to the effective strength of a rifle platoon (split in two), and

the pair of A/5 platoons paid with upwards of 40 killed and wounded during the brief time on the battle line; only six effectives remained of Snyder's platoon.

The danger from enemy-held Hill 1282 was compounded by the success of the 3d Battalion, 236th Regiment on Hill 1240 to the east. At about 0105 the Chinese who had previously been content only to make probing attacks on Captain Hull's Dog Company shifted to a full-scale assault. Sergeant Othmar J. Reller's platoon, holding the northwest portion of the company perimeter, beat off three attacks before being overrun at about 0230. First Lieutenant Richard C. Webber, the machine gun platoon leader, attempted to plug the gap with the available reinforcements but was prevented by a fire fight outside the Company CP. First Lieutenant Edward M. Seeburger's platoon holding the perimeter on the right (east) was under too heavy an attack to extend to the left and tie in with Webber. The Chinese overran Hull's CP at about 0300, and he ordered Seeburger and First Lieutenant Anthony J. Sota, commanding the rear platoon, to reorganize at the foot of Hill 1240.

Captain Hull, wounded, his command cut to the size of a few squads, rallied his troops on the hillside and led a counterattack against the crest. The surprised Chinese recoiled and the Marines won a small foothold. Then the enemy smashed back from the front, right flank, and right rear. Hull was wounded again but continued in action as his hasty perimeter diminished to the proportions of a squad position. With the approach of dawn, he had only 16 men left who could fight. The enemy was on the higher ground to his front, on both flanks, and on the slopes in his rear.

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Chapter 9. Fox Hill

OF THE MARINE artillery units at Yudam-ni, those most directly imperiled by CCF gains on North Ridge were Major Parry's 3d Battalion and Battery K of the 4th. The latter, under First Lieutenant Robert C. Messman, lay beneath the southeastern spur of Hill 1282, having gone into position at 2100 on 27 November. Rearward of King Battery, 3/11 was positioned below the steep slopes of Hill 1240 where its 105s had fired in direct support of the 7th Marines on 26 and 27 November (see Map 12).[1]

The 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, which had arrived at Yudam-ni early on the 27th to support the 5th Regiment, was emplaced in the valley between the tips of South and Southwest Ridges. Major William McReynolds, commanding the 4th Battalion, reached the perimeter with his outfit later. He had two batteries in action by 1900 and all three by 2300 on the low ground separating South and Southeast Ridges. Battery K, firing under the direction of 1/11 pending the arrival of the parent unit, then reverted to McReynolds' control, although it did not displace rearward to 4/11's positions until the next day.

The TD-14 bulldozers of the 11th Marines had proved to be no match for the eight-inch frostline around the Reservoir, with the result that all batteries and security positions sat fully exposed on the concrete-like flatlands. Incoming mortar fire harassed the artillerymen throughout the day of 27 November, and after dark CCF flat trajectory weapons stepped up the tempo of bombardment. Marine casualties in the valley were light, however, for the enemy gunners seemed unable to group their erratic pot shots into effective barrages.[2]

It was the imminent threat of Communist infantry attack from North Ridge that weighed down on the artillerymen of the 11th Regiment during the predawn hours of 28 November. Since the beginning of the CCF onslaught, they had been firing their howitzers almost ceaselessly in a 180-degree arc, and ammunition stocks were fast dwindling to a critical level. Their gun flashes providing brilliant targets for enemy infiltrators, they could reasonably expect a full-scale assault in the event of the dislodgment of Easy and Dog Companies from Hills 1282 and 1240. The effect of countermoves by Colonels Litzenberg and Murray would not be known until after dawn, and meanwhile the Marine gunners kept on firing their howitzers while the black outline of North Ridge loomed ever more menacing.

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Chapter 9. Fox Hill
Encirclement of Company C of RCT-7

While the 79th and 89th CCF Divisions pounded the northwest arc of the Yudam-ni perimeter during the night of 27–28 November, the 59th completed its wide end-sweep to the southeast and moved against the 14-mile stretch of road to Hagaru. At the moment the Communist effort in that quarter could be considered a secondary attack, but if ever a target fulfilled all the qualifications of a prime objective, it was this critical link in the MSR—the very lifeline to most of the 1st Marine Division's infantry and artillery strength.

During the 27th Captain Wilcox's Baker Company of the 7th Marines patrolled along South Ridge. As darkness fell, it was heavily engaged and incumbered with a number of litter casualties. With the permission of the regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel Davis led Captain John F. Morris's Charlie Company (–) down the MSR to positions across the road from Hill 1419. Aided by Charlie Company, Baker was then able to withdraw and return to Yudam-ni with Davis while Morris and his reduced company took up positions on Hill 1419.[3]

He deployed his two rifle platoons and 60mm mortar section in a crescent on the lower slopes of the eastern spur, facing the distant crest. At 0230, five hours after Yudam-ni came under attack, a CCF force descended from the high ground and struck the right flank.[4]

After overrunning part of First Lieutenant Jack A. Chabek's platoon and inflicting heavy casualties, the Reds lashed out at the left flank of the crescent-shaped defense. Here Staff Sergeant Earle J. Payne's platoon, less one squad in an outpost on higher ground, bent under the weight of the attack and was soon in danger of being driven out of position. Captain Morris reinforced the platoons on each flank with men from his headquarters and the mortar section. The reshuffling was accomplished in the nick of time and just barely tipped the scales in favor of the defenders. A seesaw battle raged until after dawn on the 28th when, with the help of artillery fire from Yudam-ni, the Marines drove the Chinese back into the hills.

Although the critical pressure eased at daybreak, Company C remained pinned down by enemy fire coming from every direction, including the crest of Hill 1419 directly above. The Chinese were in absolute control of the MSR to the south, toward Toktong Pass, and to the north, in the direction of Yudam-ni. Morris had taken about 40 casualties—a dangerously high proportion, since he had only two of his three rifle platoons. His radio had been knocked out by enemy bullets, and the 60mm mortar section was left with but a few rounds of ammunition. For want of communication, he could get no help from the Marine Corsairs on station overhead.

The outpost squad from Payne's platoon could not be contacted in its position on the higher slopes of Hill 1419. Corporal Curtis J. Kiesling, who volunteered to search for the lost unit, was killed by CCF machine-gun fire as he attempted to scale the rugged incline. Other men of Company C repeatedly exposed themselves in order to drag wounded comrades to the relative safety of a draw leading down to the MSR.

Surrounded and outnumbered, Morris had no alternative but to await help from Yudam-ni. He contracted his perimeter on the hillside east of the road, and from this tiny tactical island, for the rest of the morning, his men watched Communist troops jockey for position around a 360-degree circle.

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Chapter 9. Fox Hill
Fox Company at Toktong Pass

Where Morris had taken a reduced infantry company into its lonely assignment on the MSR, Captain William E. Barber went into position at Toktong Pass on the 27th with a heavily reinforced outfit.[5] His Fox Company of 2/7, augmented by heavy machine gun and 81mm mortar sections of Weapons Company, numbered 240 officers and men. At the midway point of the pass, Barber chose an isolated hill just north of the MSR for his company perimeter. He placed the 3d Platoon (First Lieutenant Robert C. McCarthy) on the summit, facing generally north, with the 1st (First Lieutenant John M. Dunne) on the right and the 2d (First Lieutenant Elmer G. Peterson) on the left. The 3d Platoon formed a hilltop perimeter with two squads forward and the third in reserve to the rear. Tied in on each flank, the 1st and 2d Platoons stretched down the respective hillsides and bent back toward the MSR. These two were connected on the reverse slope by company headquarters and the rocket squad. Just below, at the base of the hill next to the road, were Barber's CP together with the 81mm and 60mm mortar sections. All machine guns, including the heavies from Weapons Company, were emplaced with the rifle platoons.

During the first half of the night of 27–28 November, Toktong Pass rumbled with the reverberations of truck convoys—the final serials of 1/5 and 4/11 outbound for Yudam-ni and Lieutenant Colonel Beall's empty trucks inbound for Hagaru. It was after 2000 before the last trucks climbed to the summit, then nosed downhill, whining and roaring through the night as they made the twisting descent. Chinese Communists had already launched their first attacks against Southwest Ridge at Yudam-ni, but Fox Company's perimeter remained quiet, even during the first hour of 28 November.

It was actually too quiet at 0115 when Lieutenant McCarthy inspected the 3d Platoon positions atop Fox Hill, now glittering in the light of a full moon. Finding his men numbed by the severe cold, he called together his squad leaders and admonished them to be more alert. A short time later, during his next inspection, McCarthy heard the proper challenges ring out at every point.

There was no lack of watchfulness at 0230. For it was then that Chinese in estimated company strength lunged out of the night and assaulted the north, west, and south arcs of Company F's perimeter. On the summit, the two forward squads of McCarthy's platoon were overwhelmed almost immediately, losing 15 killed and nine wounded out of a total of 35 men. Three others would later be listed as missing. The eight uninjured fell back to the reserve squad's position on the military crest to the rear, and the enemy took over the topographical peak.

Fighting with small arms and grenades also raged on the hillside to the left, where the Chinese attempted to drive a wedge between the 2d and 3d Platoons. Repeated assaults were hurled back with grievous losses to the Reds, and they apparently threw in fresh units in their bid for a critical penetration. That they failed was due largely to the valor of three Marines who made a determined stand at the vital junction: PFC Robert F. Benson and Private Hector A. Cafferatta of the 2d Platoon, and PFC Gerald J. Smith, a fire team leader of the 3d. These men, assisted by the members of Smith's team, are credited with annihilating two enemy platoons.

While the enemy had undoubtedly planned the attack on the two rifle platoons with typical precision, it seems that he literally stumbled into the rear of Fox Company's position. Corporal Donald R. Thornton, member of a rocket launcher crew, reported that a group of Chinese walking along the MSR suddenly found themselves at the edge of Barber's CP and the mortar positions. The Communist soldiers recovered from the surprise and closed in aggressively, forcing the company commander and the mortar crews to ascend the hill to a protective line of trees. An embankment where the MSR cut through the base of the hill prevented pursuit by the Chinese. When

they tried to climb over it they were cut down by small-arms fire; when they hid behind it they were riddled by grenades that the Marines rolled downhill; when they finally gave up and tried to flee, they were shot as they ran into the open.

On the right (east) side of the perimeter, the 1st Platoon was engaged only on the flanks, near the summit where it tied in with the 3d and down the slope where it joined the headquarters troops and mortar crews defending the rear.

Fighting around the 270° arc of the perimeter continued until after daybreak. Despite losses of 20 dead and 54 wounded, Fox Company was in complete control of the situation. Lieutenant McCarthy described the breaking-off action as follows:

"By 0630, 28 November, the Chinese had received so many casualties that the attack could no longer be considered organized. Few Chinese remained alive near the company perimeter. Individual Chinese continued to crawl up and throw grenades. A Marine would make a one-man assault on these individuals, shooting or bayoneting them. The attack could be considered over, although three Marines . . . were hit by rifle fire at 0730. We received small arms fire intermittently during the day, but no attack."

McCarthy estimated that enemy dead in front of the 2d and 3d Platoons numbered 350, while yet another 100 littered the 1st Platoon's zone and the area at the base of the hill along the MSR.[6]

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Chapter 9. Fox Hill
Marine Counterattacks on North Ridge

As Companies C and F of the 7th Marines were fighting on the MSR in the hours just before dawn of 28 November, the first of a series of Marine counterattacks commenced at Yudam-ni. It was essential to the very survival of the 5th and 7th Regiments that the Chinese be driven back, or at least checked, on the high ground surrounding the village.

Lieutenant Colonel Taplett, operating his CP in the no man's land at the base of North Ridge, ordered Company G of 3/5 to counterattack the spur of Hill 1384 at about 0300.[7] The platoon of George Company outposting Southwest Ridge was left in position, but the other two platoons, under Second Lieutenants John J. Cahill and Dana B. Cashion, moved out abreast shortly after 0300. Driving northward aggressively, they crossed the MSR, "liberated" Taplett's CP, and cleared the draw in which Weapons Company of 3/5 was still entrenched. Troops of H&S Company followed the attackers and reoccupied their old positions in the gulley.

Cahill and Cashion, displaying remarkable cohesion on unfamiliar ground in the darkness, led the way up Hill 1384. Their men advanced swiftly behind a shield of marching fire and routed the few[8] Chinese on the spur. The position earlier vacated by the police platoon was recaptured, and the Marines saw numerous enemy dead in front of the South Korean machine gun emplacements. About 500 yards beyond the battalion CP the two platoons halted until daylight. The seven men who had formed the Item Company outpost on Hill 1384 arrived shortly afterwards and were integrated into Cashion's platoon.

He continued the attack soon after daybreak, with Cahill's platoon giving fire support. Cashion and his men plunged into enemy territory along the ridge line leading northward to the topographical crest of Hill 1384, about 1000 yards distant. They had reached the final slopes when Taplett received the radio message, almost incredible to him, that the two platoons were nearing the peak of Hill 1384. He directed them to discontinue the attack and withdraw to the top of the spur. There they were to establish a defense line overlooking Yudam-ni until receiving further orders. The spirited drive led by the two young officers had taken considerable pressure off the Marine units in the valley west of the village. One immediate effect was that approximately 80 officers and men of How Company, 7th Marines, were able to retire into 3/5's perimeter from the slopes of Hill 1403 on Northwest Ridge.

To the east of 3/5, a second successful counterattack by the 5th Marines brought stability to yet another critical point. Company C of 1/5 had deployed shortly after midnight to back up 3/5, in the event of a break-through in the valley. Owing to the adverse developments on Hills 1282 and 1240, however, it was later placed under operational control of the 7th Marines. One platoon left for Hill 1240 in the middle of the night to reinforce D/7, and the remainder of the company, led by Captain Jack R. Jones, ascended 1282 to assist E/7 and the two platoons of A/5 earlier committed.[9]

Charlie Company moved up a draw with Jones and his executive officer, First Lieutenant Loren R. Smith, in the van of the column, followed by the 1st and 2d Platoons and the 60mm mortar section. Light machine-gun sections were attached to the rifle platoons. The climb took almost two hours in the predawn darkness, the company frequently halting while Jones questioned wounded men descending from the top. Numb from cold, shock, and loss of blood, they could give no intelligible picture of a situation described as grim and confused.

At approximately 0430, the head of the column came under heavy fire from above as it reached a point just below the military crest, about 100 yards from the summit of 1282. Here, Jones found Staff Sergeant Murphy

from E/7's 3d Platoon which, along with Trapnell's, was out of sight on the spur to the right. Also out of sight but far to the left were Snyder's platoon of A/5 and a handful of men of Easy Company. While CCF grenades and small-arms fire rained down, Murphy explained that E/7's main position had been overrun and that he was attempting to form a holding line in the center with some 20 survivors of the summit battle.

Jones quickly deployed his two platoons for the attack, the 2d under Second Lieutenant Byron L. Magness on the right, the 1st under Second Lieutenant Max A. Merrit on the left. Murphy's small contingent joined the formation. Second Lieutenant Robert H. Corbet set up his 60mm mortar section to support the advance, then took a place in the assault line. Down in the valley the 81mm mortars of 1/5 opened up with a preparatory barrage. Artillery could not fire because of the short distance between friendly and enemy lines, and the first flight of Corsairs was not yet on station.

The frontal attack against the 3d Company, 1st Battalion, 235th CCF Regiment began shortly after daybreak. Jones personally led the Marine skirmishers against more than 50 enemy soldiers armed with machine guns and grenades. His troops moved upward through a hail of fire and overran the Communists after a savage clash that included hand-to-hand fighting. The Marines then deployed with the just-arrived 2d Platoon of Able Company bridging the gap between Jones and Trapnell in time to thwart the advance of enemy reinforcements.

According to enemy reports, only six or seven men survived the 3d Company's defeat. One of them happened to be the company political officer, who conveniently had retired from the battle line during the crucial stage of the struggle. At 1/235's CP, a few hundred yards to the rear, he was given a platoon of the 2d Company "in order to evacuate the wounded and to safeguard the occupied position on Hill 1282. . . ." The fresh unit ascended the northern slopes of the height while Jones' company was battling its way up from the south. By the time the Red soldiers of the 2d Company neared the summit, they were confronted from above by the muzzles of Marine rifles and machine guns. The whole story unfolds in CCF records as follows:

"As soon as the 1st Platoon [2d Company] advanced to the 3d Company's position its assistant company commander came up with the platoon. At that time, the enemy [C/5] counterattacked very violently. Accordingly, the assistant company commander ordered the 1st Platoon to strike the enemy immediately and determinedly. Before the 1st Platoon's troops had been deployed, Lee Feng Hsi, the Platoon Leader, shouted: 'Charge!' So both the 1st and 2d Squads pressed forward in swarms side by side. When they were within a little more than ten meters of the top of the hill they suffered casualties from enemy hand grenades and short-range fire. Consequently, they were absolutely unable to advance any farther. At that time, the assistant company commander and the majority of the platoon and squad leaders were either killed or wounded.

"While the 1st and 2d Squads were encountering the enemy's counterattack, the 3d Squad also deployed and joined them in an effort to drive the enemy to the back of the hill. As a result, more than half of the 3d Squad were either killed or wounded. When the second assistant platoon leader attempted to reorganize, his troops suffered again from enemy flanking fire and hand grenades. Thus, after having fought for no more than ten minutes, the entire platoon lost its attacking strength and was forced to retreat somewhat to be able to defend firmly the place it held."

Meanwhile, according to Chinese accounts, Tsung Hui Tzu, commandeer of the 2d Company, had arrived at the CP of 1/235 with his 2d Platoon at 0620. Noting that his 1st Platoon was in trouble, he said to the leader of the 2d, "There are some enemy soldiers on the hill [1282] in front of us; attack forward determinedly."

The 2d Platoon jumped off immediately with two squads abreast and one trailing. Within 30 meters of the crest, the Reds attempted to rush Charlie Company's position behind a barrage of hand grenades. The assault failed. On the right the assistant platoon leader fell at the head of the 4th squad, which was reduced to three survivors. Tsung, the company commander, rushed forward and led the 6th squad on the left. He was wounded and the squad cut to pieces. Incredibly, the platoon leader ordered the three remaining men of the 4th squad to assault the summit again. They tried and only one of them came back. The 5th squad, advancing out of reserve,

had no sooner begun to deploy than it lost all of its NCOs. “As it mixed with the 4th and 6th squads to attack, they suffered casualties again from enemy flanking fire and hand grenades from the top of the hill. Therefore, the entire platoon lost its combat strength, with only seven men being left alive.”

Not only was the commanding officer of 1/235 down to his last company, but that company was down to its last platoon. Forever hovering in the rear, the 2d Company’s political officer, Liu Sheng Hsi, ordered the platoon to “continue the attack.” The assault began with two squads forward, led by the platoon leader and his assistant. They charged uphill into the teeth of Charlie Company’s position. Like all the others, they were ground into the mat of corpses on the blood-soaked snow. To complete the suicide of the 1st Battalion, 235th Regiment, the reserve squad of this last platoon was committed. A few minutes later, “. . . there were only six men left.”

The 2d Company paid for its failure with 94 of the original 116 officers and men. This loss, added to those of the 1st, 3d, and Special Duty Companies, would place 1/235’s casualties on Hill 1282 at approximately 400, including practically all the company commanders, platoon leaders, and NCOs. It can be assumed that nearly all of the wounded succumbed, since evacuation was well nigh impossible with Marines in control of the summit for the next 24 hours.

Marine losses were not light. Able and Charlie Companies of 1/5 together suffered 15 KIA and 67 WIA. Easy Company of 2/7, according to best estimates, made its stand at a cost of about 120 killed and wounded.

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Chapter 9. Fox Hill
Deadlock on Hill 1240

At daybreak of 20 November, several of Easy Company's casualties still lay in their foxholes on the forward slopes of Hill 1282. To recover them was an undertaking of great risk, even after the defeat of 1/235; for CCF survivors continued to fire at the summit from positions on the lower slopes. Captain Jones directed the evacuation and repeatedly ran forward of his lines to rescue half-frozen Marines who were immobilized by wounds.[10]

Headquarters personnel of 1/5 spent the whole morning removing casualties from 1282 and carrying them to the battalion and regimental aid stations, which soon were filled to overflowing. In the meantime, Able Company joined Charlie on the crest and assimilated the depleted platoons of Trapnell and Snyder. A new defensive line was drawn across the vital peak with C/5 in the center, A/5 on the right, and E/7, now under the command of Lieutenant Bey, on the left. By mid-morning, despite the continued exchange of fire with CCF troops on the slopes, there was no doubt that the Marines would hold the hill.[11]

This was not the case 1000 yards to the right, where daybreak had found the shattered remnants of D/7 clinging to a toehold on Hill 1240 and beset from every direction by troops of the 3d Battalion, 236th CCF Regiment.[12] The 3d Platoon of C/5, which had been dispatched from the valley at 0400 to help, was delayed by darkness and terrain. Second Lieutenant Harold L. Dawe's small relief force became hotly engaged on the lower slopes, far short of Dog Company's position, but made a fighting ascent after dawn.

Initially Dawe missed contact with the beleaguered outfit, but afterwards the two forces cleared the Chinese from 1240. From his position on the northeastern spur of the hill he could see the enemy massing on the reverse slopes of 1240 and 1282. Communications were out and he could not call for fire. At about 1100 the Reds counterattacked with an estimated two or more battalions and forced Dawe to withdraw about 150 yards. There his depleted platoon and the 16 remaining men of Dog Company held under heavy mortar fire until relieved by B/5 at 1700. The price of a stalemate on Hill 1240 was to Dawe about half of his platoon, and to Hull practically his whole company.

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Chapter 9. Fox Hill
The Fight for Northwest Ridge

To the left of North Ridge, dawn of 28 November revealed a tactical paradox on the looming massif of Northwest Ridge. Both Marines and Red Chinese occupied the terminal high ground, and it was difficult to determine which had emerged victorious from the all-night battle. How Company, 7th Marines, had withdrawn from Hill 1403, and from this commanding peak soldiers of the 89th CCF Division could observe and enfilade the whole of Yudam-ni valley. In addition to the 80 officers and men of How Company who had pulled back to the lines of 3/5 during the early morning, another group found its way to the rear of Easy Company, 2/5, as mentioned earlier.[13]

The appearance of the latter contingent at 0430 was a cause of consternation to Lieutenant Colonel Roise. His rifle companies had thrown back repeated CCF attacks along the draw and spur on the left of the 7th Marines' outfit, but the loss of 1403 now offset his victory and gravely imperiled his line of communications to the rest of the 5th Marines at Yudam-ni, a mile to the rear. Nevertheless, 2/5 continued to hold. At 0600 Company E counterattacked and drove the Chinese from the northern tip of the spur which they had occupied during the night. Fox Company, its right flank now restored and in contact with Easy, lashed out at 0800 and recaptured the two machine guns overrun by the enemy four hours earlier. Fifteen CCF soldiers who had found their way into the rear of Company F some time in the night were destroyed. Easy Company, after its successful counterattack on the spur, drove off a large Communist force attempting to move against its right flank.[14]

Incredibly, 2/5's losses for the night-long fight were 7 KIA, 25 WIA, and 60 weather casualties. Chinese dead piled across the front of Easy and Fox Companies numbered 500, according to a rough count.[15] There was no estimate made by How Company, 7th Marines, of enemy losses on Hill 1403.

At 0145 on the 28th, Roise had received Murray's order to continue the attack to the west after daybreak, so that 3/5 could move forward, deploy, and add its weight to the X Corps offensive. Events during the night altered Murray's plans, of course, and at 0545 the regimental commander alerted Roise to the probability of withdrawing 2/5 to Southwest Ridge later in the morning. The battalion commander, not realizing the extent of the crisis at Yudam-ni, thought a mistake had been made when he checked the map coordinates mentioned in the message. Despite the fact that his whole front was engaged at the time, he was prepared to continue the westward drive, and he questioned regimental headquarters about the "error" which would take his battalion rearward. Needless to say, the correctness of the map coordinates was quickly confirmed.[16]

Lieutenant Colonel Murray visited Colonel Litzenberg at dawn on the 28th, while elements of the 5th Marines were counterattacking the Chinese forces on North and Northwest Ridges. They agreed that the enemy had appeared in sufficient strength to warrant a switch to the defensive by both regiments, and Murray cancelled the scheduled westward attack by his 2d and 3d Battalions. At 1100 he ordered 2/5 to pull back to Southwest Ridge, tying in on the left with 3/7 on the same hill mass, and on the right with 3/5, whose line extended from the valley northwest of Yudam-ni to the crest of North Ridge.[17]

Orders officially halting the northwestward advance and directing the 5th Marines to coordinate positions with the 7th Marines were sent by General Smith at 1650.[18] Twenty-three minutes earlier he had ordered the 7th Marines to attack to the south and reopen the MSR to Hagaru.[19]

To coordinate better the defense of the new perimeter, Murray moved his CP from the northwestern edge of Yudam-ni to the center of the village, where the 7th Marines' headquarters was located. He spent most of his time thereafter with Litzenberg, while Lieutenant Colonel Joseph L. Stewart, his executive officer, ran the 5th

Regiment command post.[20] Through constant contact and a policy of close cooperation in all matters, the two regimental commanders and their staffs came up with joint plans for the defense of Yudam-ni and the ultimate breakout to Hagaru.

The first of these plans had to do with the realignment of forces at Yudam-ni and the rescue of Charlie and Fox Companies, 7th Marines. Early in the afternoon of 28 November, 2/5 began withdrawing from Northwest Ridge a company at a time, with Company E providing covering fire as rear guard. The battalion's displacement to Southwest Ridge was completed by 2000 against CCF resistance consisting only of harassing fires.[21]

Directly across the valley of Yudam-ni, Company I of 3/5 relieved the elements of 1/5 on Hill 1282 of North Ridge in late afternoon. George and How Companies of 3/5 deployed in the low ground to protect the corridor approaches to Yudam-ni from the northwest. Lieutenant Colonel Stevens, keeping the bulk of 1/5 in reserve, dispatched Company B at 1400 to relieve the battered handful of Marines on Hill 1240.

While this reshuffling took place on the 28th, Colonel Litzenberg listened anxiously to the grim reports from his 1st Battalion, which had set out in the morning to retrieve both Charlie and Fox Companies from their encircled positions on the MSR leading to Hagaru.[22] Able Company led off for the relief force at 1015, entering the gorge between South and Southeast Ridges. Five hours of fighting, marching, and climbing took it to a point about three miles from the Yudam-ni perimeter and one mile short of Company C's position. Here, while moving through the high ground east of the MSR, the vanguard met heavy resistance and was stopped cold.

Lieutenant Colonel Davis, who was following with the remainder of the 1st Battalion, committed Company B to a flanking movement west of the road. Air and 81mm mortars supported the auxiliary attack and routed the Chinese. Both companies advanced to high-ground positions abreast of Charlie Company's perimeter, then bent toward the MSR to provide a protective crescent between the beleaguered outfit and the enemy-infested ground to the south.

By now it was dark. Fox Company, according to plan, was supposed to have fought its way from Toktong Pass. Owing to the burden of casualties and the ring of Chinese around its distant hilltop, it was not able to do so. Litzenberg, concerned lest 1/7 be similarly trapped in the gorge, recalled Davis to Yudam-ni. The relief force returned at 2110 with Charlie Company and its 46 wounded.

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Chapter 9. Fox Hill
Second Night's Attacks on Fox Hill

Fox Company, with 54 wounded on its hands, spent an active day at the top of Toktong Pass.[23] After the Chinese attacks subsided in the morning, Barber's men collected ammunition and weapons from Marine casualties and Communist dead. Included among enemy arms were several of the familiar U.S. Thompson submachine guns and Model 1903 Springfield rifles.

At 1030 a flight of Australian F-51s (Mustangs) blasted CCF positions around Toktong Pass, particularly a rocky promontory several hundred yards to the north on Hill 1653, which the enemy already had transformed into a redoubt. Within the Marine perimeter, the wounded were placed in two tents on a sheltered hillside where Navy corpsmen attended them constantly. According to Lieutenant McCarthy's account, the medics, "by candlelight . . . changed the bandages, slipped men in and out of sleeping bags, warmed C-rations for the men, and melted the morphine syrettes in their mouths before the injections. Because the plasma was frozen the corpsmen had to watch men die for the lack of it."

During late morning and the afternoon, Barber sent out patrols to screen the areas immediately beyond his lines. The scouting parties met only sniper fire, but other evidence of enemy activity indicated that Fox Hill was completely surrounded. An appeal for resupply by air was answered later in the day when Marine R5Ds dropped medical kits and ammunition at the base of the hill. At a cost of two wounded, the precious supplies were recovered before sundown.

Fox Company's perimeter for the night of 28–29 November was the same as before, except that the ranks were noticeably thinner. Nevertheless, a feeling of confidence pervaded the men on the hilltop; they believed implicitly that they could hold. They believed it despite the fact that strong relief columns from both Yudam-ni and Hagaru had been unable to break through to them.

All was quiet on Fox Hill until 0215, when CCF mortar rounds killed one Marine and wounded two others in the 3d Platoon, now reduced to some 20 able-bodied men. About 40 Chinese made a penetration in this area after a series of probing attacks all along the line. One Marine crew turned its light machine gun about and brought it to bear on the bunched-up attackers with deadly effect. A gap in the lines on both flanks caused the platoon to pull back about 20 yards. At sunrise, however, Staff Sergeant John D. Audas led a counterattack which regained the lost ground at a cost of only two wounded.

The second night's fighting cost Fox Company a total of five killed and 29 wounded. Both Captain Barber and Lieutenant McCarthy suffered leg wounds, but continued in action after receiving first aid. The company commander directed that the open ground on Fox Hill be marked with colored parachutes from the previous day's air drops. This provision resulted in accurate drops and easy recoveries when Marine transport planes arrived at 1030 on the 29th with ammunition and supplies. Shortly afterwards First Lieutenant Floyd J. Englehardt of VMO–6 landed with batteries for the SCR-300 and 619 radios. Although his helicopter was damaged by hits from long-distance Chinese fire, he managed to take off safely.

Air drops that afternoon by C–119s of the Combat Cargo Command missed the marked zone at times, and much of the mortar ammunition landed about 500 yards to the west of the perimeter. Lieutenant Peterson, already twice wounded, led Marines who recovered some of the rounds but were pinned down by CCF fire and got back, one at a time, with difficulty. At dusk, under cover of fire from How Battery, another detail recovered the ammunition without enemy interference.

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Chapter 9. Fox Hill
Not Enough Tents for Casualties

The night of 28–29 November passed with only minor activity in the Yudam-ni area for the infantry of RCT-5; but the regimental surgeon, Lieutenant Commander Chester M. Lessenden (MC) USN, had his hands full. During the fighting of the previous night the joint aid station had been west of Yudam-ni. Tents sheltering the wounded were riddled by enemy small-arms fire from the North Ridge battle, and on the morning of the 28th the aid station displaced to a safer location southwest of Yudam-ni. The seriously wounded filled the few tents initially available, and the others were protected from freezing by being placed outdoors, side by side, and covered by tarpaulins while lying on straw. Primitive as this hospitalization was, DOW cases were no more than might have been expected under better conditions.[24]

The crowding in the aid stations was much relieved on 30 November by the erection of sufficient tentage by 4/11 to provide shelter for approximately 500 casualties.

"Everything was frozen," said Lessenden later in an interview with Keyes Beech, a press correspondent. "Plasma froze and the bottles broke. We couldn't use plasma because it wouldn't go into solution and the tubes would clog up with particles. We couldn't change dressings because we had to work with gloves on to keep our hands from freezing.

"We couldn't cut a man's clothes off to get at a wound because he would freeze to death. Actually a man was often better off if we left him alone. Did you ever try to stuff a wounded man into a sleeping bag?"[25]

The joint defense plan for the night of 28–29 November provided for RCT-5 to take the responsibility for the west and north sectors, while RCT-7 was to defend to the east, south and southwest. Enemy mortar fire was received during the night in both regimental zones, but there were few infantry contacts. This lack of activity could only be interpreted as a temporary lull while the enemy regrouped for further efforts.

As for the next attempt to relieve Fox Company and open the MSR to Hagaru, the joint planners at Yudam-ni decided on the night of the 28th that all troops of the two regiments now in line were needed for defense. There were actually no men to spare for a relief column, and yet Division had ordered the effort to be made. The solution seemed to be a composite battalion consisting of perimeter reserve units. In order to replace these troops, personnel were to be assigned from headquarters units and artillery batteries. This was the genesis of the Composite Battalion, consisting of elements from Able Company of 1/5, Baker Company of 1/7 and George Company of 3/7, reinforced by a 75mm recoilless section and two 81mm mortar sections from RCT-7 battalions. These troops were directed to assemble at the 1/7 CP on the morning of the 29th, with Major Warren Morris, executive officer of 3/7, in command.[26]

At 0800 the striking force moved out southward with the dual mission of relieving Captain Barber and opening up the MSR all the way to Hagaru. After an advance of 300 yards, heavy machine-gun fire hit the column from both sides of the road. Groups of Chinese could be plainly seen on the ridges, affording remunerative targets for the 81mm mortars and 75 recoilless guns. Forward air controllers soon had the Corsairs overhead to lead the way. At a point about 4500 yards south of Yudam-ni, however, Marine planes dropped two messages warning that the enemy was entrenched in formidable force along the high ground on both sides of the MSR.

Similar messages were delivered by the aircraft to the regimental CP at Yudam-ni. They caused Colonel Litzenberg to modify the orders of the Composite Battalion and direct that it relieve Fox Company and return to Yudam-ni before dark.

By this time Morris' troops had become engaged with large numbers of Chinese who were being

constantly reinforced by groups moving into the area along draws masked from friendly ground observation. Litzenberg was informed on a basis of air observation that Morris was in danger of being surrounded, and at 1315 he sent an urgent message directing the force to return to Yudam-ni. Contact was broken off immediately with the aid of air and artillery cover and the Composite Battalion withdrew without further incident.

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Chapter 9. Fox Hill
The Turning Point of 30 November

The Yudam-ni area had a relatively quiet night on 29–30 November. But even though there was little fighting, the continued sub-zero cold imposed a strain on the men when at least a fifty per cent alert must be maintained at all times. This was the third virtually sleepless night for troops who had not had a warm meal since the Thanksgiving feast.

"Seldom has the human frame been so savagely punished and continued to function," wrote Keyes Beech. "Many men discovered reserves of strength they never knew they possessed. Some survived and fought on will power alone."[27]

Certainly there was no lack of will power on Fox Hill as Captain Barber called his platoon leaders together at about 1700 on 29 November and told them not to expect any immediate relief. Chinese attacks, he warned, might be heavier than ever this third night, but they would be beaten off as usual.

The area was quiet until about 0200 on the 30th, when an Oriental voice called out of the darkness in English, "Fox Company, you are surrounded. I am a lieutenant from the 11th Marines. The Chinese will give you warm clothes and good treatment. Surrender now!"[28] The Marines replied with 81mm illumination shells which revealed targets for the machine guns as the Chinese advanced across the valley from the south.

Thanks to the afternoon's air drops, Fox Hill had enough mortar ammunition and hand grenades for the first time, and good use was made of both. An estimated three CCF companies were cut to pieces at a cost of a single Marine wounded.

At sunrise, as the Corsairs roared over, all tension vanished on Fox Hill. For it was generally agreed that if the Chinese couldn't take the position in three nights, they would never make the grade.

The troops in the Yudam-ni area also felt that the enemy had shot his bolt without achieving anything more than a few local gains at a terrible cost in killed and wounded. It was recognized that some hard fighting lay ahead, but the morning of the 30th was a moral turning point both in the foxhole and the CP.

It was evident even on the platoon level at Yudam-ni that big events were in the wind. Marine enlisted men are traditionally shrewd at sizing up a tactical situation, and they sensed that a change was at hand. For three days and nights they had been on the defensive, fighting for their lives, and now the word was passed from one man to another that the Marines were about to snatch the initiative.

The regimental commanders and staff officers had a worry lifted from their minds when a helicopter brought the news that Hagaru had passed a quiet night after repulsing large enemy forces in a dusk-to-dawn battle the night before. It would have added enormously to the task of the Yudam-ni troops, of course, if the Chinese had seized that forward base with its air strip and stockpiles of supplies. Thus it was heartening to learn that a single reinforced Marine infantry battalion and an assortment of service troops had beaten off the attacks of large elements of a Chinese division at Hagaru. The following two chapters will be devoted to an account of that critical battle and its aftermath before returning to Yudam-ni.

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Chapter 10. Hagaru's Night of Fire

THE IMPORTANCE of Hagaru in the Marine scheme of things was starkly obvious after the Chinese cut the MSR. Hagaru, with its supply dumps, hospital facilities and partly finished C–47 airstrip, was the one base offering the 1st Marine Division a reasonable hope of uniting its separated elements. Hagaru had to be held at all costs, yet only a reinforced infantry battalion (less one rifle company and a third of its Weapons Company) and two batteries of artillery were available for the main burden of the defense.

Owing to transportation shortages, the 3d Battalion of the 1st Marines did not arrive at Hagaru until after dusk on 26 November. Even so, it had been necessary to leave George Company and a platoon of Weapons Company behind at Chigyong for lack of vehicles.[1]

The parka-clad Marines, climbing down stiffly from the trucks, had their first sight of a panorama which reminded one officer of old photographs of a gold-rush mining camp in the Klondike. Tents, huts, and supply dumps were scattered in a seemingly haphazard fashion about a frozen plain crossed by a frozen river and bordered on three sides by low hills rising to steep heights on the eastern outskirts. Although many of the buildings had survived the bombings, the battered town at the foot of the ice-locked Chosin Reservoir was not a spectacle calculated to raise the spirits of newcomers.

It was too late to relieve 2/7 (–) that evening. Lieutenant Colonels Ridge and Lockwood agreed that Fox Company, 7th Marines, and Weapons Company (–) of 2/7 would occupy positions jointly with 3/1. The hours of darkness passed quietly and relief was completed the next day. Fox Company then moved to its new positions near Toktong Pass.

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Four-Mile Perimeter Required

On the morning of 27 November, of course, an all-out enemy attack was still in the realm of speculation. But it was evident to Lieutenant Colonel Ridge, CO of 3/1, that one to two infantry regiments and supporting arms would be required for an adequate defense of Hagaru. With only a battalion (–) at his disposal, he realized that he must make the best possible use of the ground. For the purposes of a survey, he sent his S–3, Major Trompeter, on a walking reconnaissance with Major Simmons, CO of Weapons Company and 3/1 Supporting Arms Coordinator.

After a circuit of the natural amphitheater, the two officers agreed that even to hold the reverse slopes would require a perimeter of more than four miles in circumference (see Map 17). The personnel resources of 3/1 would thus be stretched to an average of one man for nearly seven yards of front. This meant that the commanding officer must take his choice between being weak everywhere or strong in a few sectors to the neglect of others. In either event, some areas along the perimeter would probably have to be defended by supporting fires alone.[2]

"Under the circumstances," commented General Smith, "and considering the mission assigned to the 1st Marine Division, an infantry component of one battalion was all that could be spared for the defense of Hagaru. This battalion was very adequately supported by air, and had sufficient artillery and tanks for its purposes."[3]
Click here to view map

The terrain gave the enemy two major covered avenues of approach for troop movements. One was the hill mass east of Hagaru, the other a draw leading into the southwest side of the town, where the new airstrip was being constructed. Nor could the possibility of a surprise attack from some other quarter be dismissed entirely, since CCF observers would be able to watch Marine preparations from the surrounding hills in daylight hours.

Lieutenant Colonel Ridge decided that final troop dispositions must depend not only on terrain but equally on intelligence as to enemy capabilities. Until he had more information, the units of 3/1 were to remain in the areas formerly occupied by 2/7.

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Attempts to Clear MSR

The Battalion CP had been set up in a pyramidal tent at the angle of the road to Yudam-ni. Most of the day on the 27th was given over to improving positions. At the southwest end of the perimeter, First Lieutenant Fisher's Item Company took over from Captain Barber's Fox Company, the only rifle company of 2/7 remaining at Hagaru.

On the strength of preliminary S–2 reports, Ridge instructed the commanders of his two rifle companies to improve their sectors, which included the entire south and southwest curve of the perimeter. All the Division Headquarters troops except one motor convoy had reached Hagaru by the 27th, and it was due to leave Hungnam the next morning. The new Division CP was located in the northeast quarter of town, near the long concrete bridge over the frozen Changjin River. Rows of heated tents surrounded a Japanese type frame house repaired for the occupancy of General Smith, who was expected by helicopter in the morning. Already functioning at the CP were elements of the General Staff Sections and Headquarters Company.[4]

The busiest Marines at Hagaru on the 27th were the men of the 1st Engineer Battalion. While a Company B platoon built tent decks for the Division CP, detachments of Company A were at work on the maintenance of the MSR in the area, and Company D had the job of hacking out the new airstrip. Apparently the latter project had its "sidewalk contractors" even in sub-zero weather, for this comment found its way into the company report:

"Dozer work [was] pleasing to the eye of those who wanted activity but contributed little to the overall earth-moving problem of 90,000 cubic yards of cut and 60,000 cubic yards of fill."[5]

Motor graders and scrapers with a 5.8 cubic yard capacity had been moved up from Hamhung. So difficult did it prove to get a bite of the frozen earth that steel teeth were welded to the blades. When the pan was filled, however, the earth froze to the cutting edges until it could be removed only by means of a jack hammer.

The strip was about one-fourth completed on the 27th, according to minimum estimates of the length required. Work went on that night as usual under the flood lights.[6] Not until the small hours of the morning did the first reports reach Hagaru of the CCF attacks on Yudam-ni and Fox Hill.

Some remnants of 2/7 were still at Hagaru, for lack of transportation, when Lieutenant Colonel Lockwood, commanding officer of the battalion, received a dispatch from Colonel Litzenberg directing him to proceed to Toktong Pass and assist Fox Company. At 0530 he requested the "loan" of a rifle company of 3/1 to reinforce elements of Weapons Company (–), 2/7. Lieutenant Colonel Ridge could spare only a platoon from How Company, and at 0830 the attempt was cancelled. An hour later Weapons Company and three tanks from the 2d Platoon of Company D, 1st Tank Battalion, made another effort. They pushed half-way to the objective, only to be turned back by heavy Chinese small-arms and mortar fire from the high ground on both sides of the road. Supporting fires from 3/1 helped the column to break off contact and return to Hagaru at 1500.[7]

No better success attended a reinforced platoon of How Company, 3/1, accompanied by three Company D tanks, when it set out on the road to Koto-ri. On the outskirts of Hagaru, within sight of Captain Corley's CP, the men were forced to climb down from their vehicles and engage in a hot fire fight. They estimated the enemy force at about 50, but an OY pilot dropped a message warning that some 300 Chinese were moving up on the flanks of the patrol. The Marines managed to disengage at 1530, with the aid of mortar and artillery fires from Hagaru, and returned to the perimeter with losses of one killed and five wounded.[8]

A similar patrol from Item Company, 3/1, struck off to the southwest of the perimeter in the direction of Hungmun-ni. Late in the morning of the 28th, this reinforced platoon encountered an estimated 150 enemy and

called for artillery and mortar fires. After dispersing this CCF group, the patrol routed a second enemy detachment an hour later after a brief fire fight.[9]

Any lingering doubts as to the extent of the Chinese attack on the MSR were dispelled by reports from the OY and HO3S–1 pilots of VMO–6. They disclosed that defended enemy road blocks had cut off Yudam-ni, Fox Hill, Hagaru, and Koto-ri from any physical contact with one another. The advance units of the 1st Marine Division had been sliced into four isolated segments as CCF columns penetrated as far south as the Chinhung-ni area.[10]

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Intelligence as to CCF Capabilities

There was no question at all in the minds of Lieutenant Colonel Ridge and his officers as to whether the Chinese would attack at Hagaru. As early as the morning of the 27th, the problem had simply been one of when, where, and in what strength. It was up to the S–2 Section to provide the answers, and upon their correctness would depend the fate of Hagaru, perhaps even of the 1st Marine Division.

Second Lieutenant Richard E. Carey, the S–2, was a newcomer to the battalion staff, recently transferred from a George Company infantry platoon. His group consisted of an assistant intelligence chief, Staff Sergeant Saverio P. Gallo, an interpreter, and four scout observers.[11] There were also two CIC agents assigned to 3/1 by Division G–2.

At Hagaru, as at Majon-ni, the Marines had won respect at the outset by allowing the Korean residents all privileges of self-government which could be reconciled with military security. The police department and town officials had been permitted to continue functioning. They in turn briefed the population as to restricted areas and security regulations, particularly curfew. Korean civilians entering Hagaru through Marine road blocks were searched before being taken to the police station where they were questioned by an interrogation team from the S–2 Section.

Hagaru's resemblance to a gold-rush mining camp was heightened on the 27th by a tremendous influx both of troops and Koreans from outlying districts. A large truck convoy from Headquarters Battalion arrived to set up the new Division CP, and detachments from various Marine or Army service units entered in a seemingly endless stream. The Korean refugees had much the same story to tell; most of them came from areas to the north and west of Hagaru, and they had been evicted from their homes by large numbers of CCF troops.

Carey instructed his CIC agents to converse with incoming Koreans and learn everything possible about the enemy situation. Again, as at Majon-ni, people who had been thoroughly indoctrinated with Communism were found "highly co-operative." As untrained observers, however, their estimates of CCF numbers and equipment could not be taken too literally. Since their statements agreed that the enemy was in close proximity, Carey decided to take the risk of sending his two CIC agents on the dangerous mission of establishing direct contact. They were enjoined to make a circuit of the perimeter, mingling whenever possible with the Chinese and determining the areas of heaviest concentration.

The results went beyond Carey's fondest expectations. Not only did his agents return safely from their long hike over the hills, but they brought back vital information. Well led and equipped Chinese Communist units had been encountered to the south and west of Hagaru. And since Marine air also reported unusual activity in this area, it was a reasonable assumption that the enemy was concentrated there approximately in division strength.

This answered the questions as to "how many" and "where." There remained the problem as to "when" the attack might be expected, and again on the 28th Carey sent out his CIC agents to make direct contact. "I expected little or no information," he recollected, "but apparently these men had a way with them. Upon reporting back, they told me that they had talked freely with enemy troops, including several officers who boasted that they would occupy Hagaru on the night of 28 November."

Major enemy units were reported to be five miles from the perimeter. Dusk was at approximately 1800, with complete darkness setting in shortly afterwards. Adding the estimate of three and a half hours for Chinese movements to the line of departure, the S-2 Section calculated that the enemy could attack as early as 2130 on the night of the 28th from the south and west in division strength.[12]

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Chapter 10. Hagaru's Night of Fire
Positions of Marine Units

These intelligence estimates were accepted by Lieutenant Colonel Ridge as the basis for his planning and troop dispositions. As the main bastion of defense, the tied-in sectors of How and Item Companies were extended to include the south and southwest sides of the perimeter—nearly one-third of the entire circumference—in a continuous line 2300 yards in length, or more than a mile and a quarter. Each platoon front thus averaged about 380 yards, which meant that supporting arms must make up for lack of numbers.[13]

East Hill, considered the second most likely point of enemy attack, was to be assigned to George Company on arrival. Captain Sitter's outfit had orders to depart the Chigyong area on the morning of the 28th, so that it could be expected at Hagaru before dark.

The southeast quarter of the perimeter, between East Hill and the left flank of How Company, was to be held by the following units: (1) Weapons Company (less detachments reinforcing the rifle companies and its 81mm mortars emplaced near the battalion CP) manning a road block on the route to Koto-ri and defending the south nose of East Hill; (2) Dog Company, 1st Engineer Battalion (less men at work on the airstrip), occupying the ground south of the concrete bridge; and (3) Dog Battery, 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, which had the mission of covering 75 per cent of the perimeter with observed indirect fire and 25 per cent with direct fire.

These dispositions left a gap between Weapons Company and the engineer and artillery units on the west bank of the Changjin River. But this stretch of frozen marshland was so well covered by fire that an enemy attack here would have been welcomed.

The first reports of the CCF onslaughts at Yudam-ni and Fox Hill, as interpreted by Lieutenant Colonel Ridge, "clearly indicated that no time was to be lost at buttoning up the Hagaru perimeter." He called on Colonel Bowser, the Division G–3, on the morning of the 28th and recommended that an overall defense commander be designated with operational control over all local units. Ridge also requested that George Company and the 41st Commando be expedited in their movement to Hagaru.

Before a decision could be reached, General Smith arrived by helicopter and opened the Division CP at 1100. A Marine rear echelon had remained at Hungnam to cope with supply requirements. Colonel Francis A. McAlister, the G–4, left in command, accomplished during the forthcoming campaign what General Smith termed "a magnificent job" in rendering logistical support.[14]

The CP at Hagaru had been open only half an hour when General Almond arrived in a VMO–6 helicopter to confer with the Division commander. Departing at 1255, he visited the 31st Infantry troops who had been hard hit the night before by CCF attacks east of the Chosin Reservoir. On his return to Hamhung, the Corps commander was informed that CinCFE had directed him to fly immediately to Tokyo for a conference. There he learned that the Eighth Army was in full retreat, with some units taking heavy losses both in personnel and equipment. Generals Almond, Walker, Hickey, Willoughby, Whitney, and Wright took turns at briefing the commander in chief during a meeting which lasted from midnight to 0130.[15]

At Hagaru it was becoming more apparent hourly to Ridge that his prospects of employing Captain Sitter's company on East Hill were growing dim. As he learned later, the unit had left Chigyong that morning in the trucks of Company B, 7th Motor Transport Battalion, commanded by Captain Clovis M. Jones. Sitter was met at Koto-ri by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Rickert, executive officer of RCT–1, and directed to report to the regimental S–3, Major Robert E. Lorigan. Efforts to open up the road to Hagaru had failed, he was told, and it would be necessary for George Company to remain overnight at Koto-ri.[16]

The probability of such an outcome had already been accepted by Ridge on the basis of the resistance met on the road to Koto-ri by his How Company patrol. With this development added to his worries, he received a telephone call at 1500 from Colonel Bowser, informing him that he had been named defense commander at Hagaru by General Smith.[17]

Just ten minutes later a single CCF shell, assumed to be of 76mm caliber, exploded in the Battalion CP area and fatally wounded Captain Paul E. Storaasli, the S–4. The perimeter was so cluttered with tents and dumps that artillery fire at random could hardly have been wasted; but the enemy gun remained silent the rest of the day, doubtless to avert Marine counter-battery reprisals.

Only three hours of daylight remained when the newly designated defense commander summoned unit commanders to an initial conference. It was not made clear just what troops had been placed under his operational control. “A primary reason,” commented Ridge, “was that no one knew what units were there, this being compounded by the numerous small elements such as detachments, advance parties, etc., of which many were Corps and ROK units. Hence, the Battalion S-1 and his assistants were a combination of town criers and census takers. We did, however, get most of the commanders of major units (if such they could be called) to the initial conference, but the process of locating and identifying smaller units was thereafter a continuous process which we really never accurately completed.”[18]

The larger outfits could be summoned to the conference by telephone but it was necessary to send out runners in other instances. With George Company not available, the question of defending East Hill loomed large. Ridge decided against all proposals that one of the two rifle companies be used for that purpose. On the strength of the S–2 report, he preferred to concentrate as much strength as possible against an attack from the southwest. This meant taking his chances on East Hill with such service troops as he could scrape up, and it was plain that a strong CCF effort in this quarter would have to be met in large part by fire power from supporting arms.

The two main detachments selected for East Hill (excluding the south nose) were from Dog Company of the 10th Engineer (C) Battalion, USA, and elements of X corps Headquarters. Since the mission called for control of mortar and artillery fires as well as tactical leadership, two officers of Weapons Company, 3/1, were assigned—Captain John C. Shelnutt to the Army engineer company, and First Lieutenant John L. Burke, Jr., to the Headquarters troops. Each was to be accompanied by a Marine radio (SCR 300) operator.

Smaller detachments were later sent to East Hill from two other service units—the 1st Service Battalion, 1st Marine Division, and the 4th Signal Battalion of X Corps.

The Antitank Company of the 7th Marines defended the area to the north of East Hill. Next came How Battery, 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, which had the primary mission of supporting Fox Company, 2/7, on the hill near Toktong Pass. But by moving gun trails the cannoneers could with some difficulty fire on the 270º arc of the perimeter stretching from the right flank of Item Company around to the north nose of East Hill.

Between the sectors held by How Battery, 3/11, and Item Company, 3/1, were troops of five Marine units: Regulating Detachment, 1st Service Battalion; 1st Motor Transport Battalion; Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 2 (MTACS–2); Division Headquarters Battalion; and H&S Company 3/1. The only other unit in this quarter was Weapons Company (–), 2/7, which held the road block on the route to Yudam-ni.

At the conference it was decided that since Lieutenant Colonel Charles L. Banks’ Regulating Detachment had taken the lead in organizing the Supply Area on the north side of Hagaru, the arc of the perimeter east of the river and west of East Hill was to be made into a secondary defense zone. Banks thus became in effect a sub-sector commander. The only infantry troops in the Supply Area being detachments of 2/7 units, it was also agreed that tactical decisions concerning the zone should be discussed with the two ranking battalion officers — Lieutenant Colonel Lockwood, the commander, and Major Sawyer, the executive.[19]

These matters having been settled, the conference broke up shortly after 1700 and the various commanders hastened back to their outfits to make last-minute preparations for the night’s attack. A strange hush

had fallen over the perimeter, broken only by the occasional crackle of small-arms fire, and the damp air felt like snow.

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CCF Attack from the Southwest

How and Item Companies were ready. All platoon positions were well dug in, though the earth was frozen to a depth of six to ten inches.

The men of Item Company used their heads as well as hands after Lieutenant Fisher managed to obtain a thousand sandbags and several bags of C3. This explosive was utilized in ration cans to make improvised shape charges which blasted a hole through the frozen crust of snow and earth. Then it became a simple matter to enlarge the hole and place the loose dirt in sandbags to form a parapet.[20] This ingenious system resulted in de luxe foxholes and mortar emplacements attaining to the dignity of field fortifications.

Both company fronts bristled with concertinas, trip flares, booby traps, and five-gallon cans of gasoline rigged with thermite bombs for illumination. Three probable routes of enemy attack channeled the low hills to the southwest—a main draw leading to the junction between the two company sectors, and a lesser draw providing an approach to each. The ground in front of the junction had been mined, and two tanks from the Provisional Platoon were stationed in this quarter. Detachments from Weapons Company also reinforced both rifle companies. Thus the six platoons faced the enemy in the following order:

Click here to view table

Beginning at 1700, hot food was served to all hands in rotation. A fifty per cent alert went into effect after dark as the men were sent back on regular schedule for coffee and a smoke in warming tents located as close to the front as possible. The first snowflakes fluttered down about 1950, muffling the clank of the dozers at work as usual under the floodlights on the airstrip behind the How Company's sector. Just before 2130, the expected time of CCF attack, both company commanders ordered a hundred per cent alert, but the enemy did not show up on schedule. It was just over an hour later when three red flares and three blasts on a police whistle signaled the beginning of the attack. Soon trip flares and exploding booby traps revealed the approach of probing patrols composed of five to ten men.

A few minutes later, white phosphorus mortar shells scorched the Marine front line with accurate aim. The main CCF attack followed shortly afterwards, with both company sectors being hit by assault waves closing in to grenade-throwing distance.

The enemy in turn was staggered by the full power of Marine supporting arms. Snowflakes reduced an already low visibility, but fields of fire had been carefully charted and artillery and mortar concentrations skillfully registered in. Still, the Communists kept on coming in spite of frightful losses. Second Lieutenant Wayne L. Hall, commanding the 3d Platoon in the center of Item Company, was jumped by three Chinese whom he killed with a .45 caliber automatic pistol after his carbine jammed. The third foe pitched forward into Hall's foxhole.

On the left flank, tied in with How Company, First Lieutenant Robert C. Needham's 2d Platoon sustained most of the attack on Item Company. The fire of Second Lieutenant James J. Boley's 60mm mortars and Second Lieutenant John H. Miller's light machine guns was concentrated in this area. It seemed impossible that enemy burp guns could miss such a target as Lieutenant Fisher, six feet two inches in height and weighing 235 pounds. But he continued to pass up and down the line, pausing at each foxhole for a few words of encouragement. By midnight the enemy pressure on Needham's and Hall's lines had slackened, and on the right flank Second Lieutenant Mayhlon L. Degernes' 1st Platoon received only light attacks.

This was also the case on the left flank of How Company, where Second Lieutenant Ronald A. Mason's

2d Platoon saw little action as compared to the other two. A front of some 800 yards in the center of the 2300-yard Marine line, including two platoon positions and parts of two others, bore the brunt of the CCF assault on How and Item Companies.

Captain Corley had just visited his center platoon when the first attacks hit How Company. Second Lieutenant Wendell C. Endsley was killed while the company commander was on his way to Second Lieutenant Roscoe L. Barrett's 1st Platoon, on the right, which soon had its left flank heavily engaged.

Never was CCF skill at night attacks displayed more effectively. Barrett concluded that the Chinese actually rolled down the slope into the How Company lines, so that they seemed to emerge from the very earth. The 3d Platoon, already thinned by accurate CCF white phosphorus mortar fire, was now further reduced in strength by grenades and burp gun bursts. About this time the company wire net went out and Corley could keep in touch with his platoons only by runners. The battalion telephone line also being cut, he reported his situation by radio to the Battalion CP.

Two wiremen were killed while trying to repair the line. The Chinese continued to come on in waves, each preceded by concentrations of light and heavy mortar fire on the right and center of the How Company position. About 0030 the enemy broke through in the 3d Platoon area and penetrated as far back as the Company CP. A scene of pandemonium ensued, the sound of Chinese trumpets and whistles adding to the confusion as it became difficult to tell friend from foe. "Tracers were so thick," recalled Sergeant Keith E. Davis, "that they lighted up the darkness like a Christmas tree."[21]

Corley and five enlisted men operated as a supporting fire team while First Lieutenant Harrison F. Betts rounded up as many men as he could find and tried to plug the gap in the 3d Platoon line. This outnumbered group was swept aside as the next wave of CCF attack carried to the rear of How Company and threatened the engineers at work under the floodlights.

A few Chinese actually broke through and fired at the Marines operating the dozers. Second Lieutenant Robert L. McFarland, the equipment officer, led a group of Dog Company engineers who counter-attacked and cleared the airstrip at the cost of a few casualties. Then the men resumed work under the floodlights.[22]

The Battalion reserve, if such it could be called, consisted of any service troops who could be hastily gathered to meet the emergency. Shortly before midnight Ridge sent a platoon-strength group of X Corps signalmen and engineers under First Lieutenant Grady P. Mitchell to the aid of How Company. Mitchell was killed upon arrival and First Lieutenant Horace L. Johnson, Jr., deployed the reinforcements in a shallow ditch as a company reserve.

About midnight the fight had reached such a pitch of intensity that no spot in the perimeter was safe. The Company C medical clearing station, only a few hundred yards to the rear of Item Company, was repeatedly hit by machine gun bullets whipping through the wooden walls as surgeons operated on the wounded. The Division CP also took hits, and a bullet which penetrated General Smith's quarters produced unusual sound effects when it ricocheted off pots and pans in the galley.[23]

The Chinese seemed to be everywhere in the How Company zone. Shortly after midnight they surrounded the CP, portable galley and provision tent. "It is my personal opinion," commented Captain Corley, "that if the enemy had decided to effect a major breakthrough at this time, he would have experienced practically no difficulty. However, he seemed content to wander in and around the 3d Platoon, galley and hut areas."[24]

The Chinese, in short, demonstrated that they knew better how to create a penetration than to exploit one. Once inside the How Company lines, they disintegrated into looting groups or purposeless tactical fragments. Clothing appealed most to the plunderers, and a wounded Marine in the 3d Platoon area saved his life by pretending to be dead while Communists stripped him of his parka.

About 0030 the Battalion CP advised Corley by radio that more reinforcements were on the way. Lieutenant Johnson met the contingent, comprising about 50 service troops, and guided them into the company

area, where they were deployed as an added reserve to defend the airstrip.

Item Company was still having it hot and heavy but continued to beat off all CCF assaults. Elements of Weapons Company, manning the south road block, came under attack at 0115. Apparently a small enemy column had lost direction and blundered into a field of fire covered by heavy machine guns. The hurricane of Marine fire caught the Communists before they deployed and the result was virtual annihilation.

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East Hill Lost to Enemy

Half an hour later, with the situation improving in the How Company zone, the Battalion CP had its first alarming reports of reverses on East Hill. The terrain itself had offered difficulties to men scrambling up the steep, icy slopes with heavy burdens of ammunition. These detachments of service troops, moreover, included a large proportion of newly recruited ROKs who had little training and understood no English.
Click here to view map

The largest of the East Hill units, Company D of the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion, commanded by Captain Philip A. Kulbes, USA, was composed of 77 American enlisted men and 90 ROKS. Combat equipment (in addition to individual weapons) consisted of four .50 caliber machine guns, five light .30 caliber machine guns, and six 3.5 rocket launchers.[25]

The Army engineers had arrived at Hagaru at 1200 on the 28th, shortly before the enemy cut the MSR. After being assigned to the East Hill sector during the afternoon, the company used the few remaining hours of daylight to move vehicles and gear back to an equipment park in the perimeter. It was 2030 before the four platoons got into position on East Hill after an exhausting climb in the darkness with heavy loads of ammunition. Some use was made of existing holes, but most of the men were not dug in when the Chinese attacked.

On the left the collapse of a ROK platoon attached to X Corps Headquarters led rapidly to confusion everywhere on East Hill. Captain Shelnutt, the Marine officer assigned to the Army engineers, found that he could not close the gap by extending the line to the left. Nor did the men, particularly the ROKs, have the training to side-slip to the left under fire and beat off flank attacks. The consequence was a general withdrawal on East Hill, attended in some instances by demoralization. Shelnutt was killed as the four engineer platoons fell back some 250 yards in "a tight knot," according to Lieutenant Norman R. Rosen, USA, commander of the 3d Platoon.

This was the situation as reported by the Marine radio operator, PFC Bruno Podolak, who voluntarily remained as an observer at his post, now behind enemy lines. At 0230 a telephone call to Colonel Bowser from the 3/1 CP was recorded in the message blank as follows:

"How Company still catching hell and are about ready to launch counterattack to restore line. About an hour ago, enemy appeared on East Hill. A group of enemy sneaked up to a bunch of Banks' men and hand-grenaded hell out of them and took position. Sending executive officer over to see if we can get some fire on that area. Should be able to restore the line but liable to be costly. Reserve practically nil. Do have a backstop behind the break in How lines on this side of airstrip, composed of engineers and other odds and ends."[26]

At 0400 there was little to prevent the enemy from making a complete breakthrough on East Hill and attacking the Division CP and the supply dumps. A friendly foothold had been retained on reverse slopes of the southern nose, but the northern part was held only by artillery fires. Along the road at the bottom of East Hill a thin line of service troops with several tanks and machine guns formed a weak barrier.

All indications point to the fact that the Chinese themselves were not in sufficient strength to follow up their success. Their attack on East Hill was apparently a secondary and diversionary effort in support of the main assault on the sectors held by How and Item Companies. At any rate, the enemy contented himself with holding the high ground he had won.

Some of the defenders of East Hill had fought with bravery which is the more admirable because of their lack of combat training. Battle is a business for specialists, and Lieutenant Rosen relates that the Army engineers "had a great deal of difficulty with our weapons because they were cold and fired sluggishly. We had gone into

action so unexpectedly that it had not occurred to us to clean the oil off our weapons." As an example of the difficulties imposed by the language barrier, the officers were given to understand by the ROKs that they had no more ammunition. "Weeks later," commented Rosen, "we found that most of them had not fired their ammunition this night, but continued to carry it."[27]

In view of such circumstances, the service troops put up a creditable if losing fight in the darkness on East Hill. The 77 Americans of the Army engineer company suffered losses of 10 KIA, 25 WIA, and nine MIA; and of the 90 ROKs, about 50 were killed, wounded, or missing, chiefly the latter.[28]

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Chapter 10. Hagaru's Night of Fire
The Volcano of Supporting Fires

As usual, the men in the thick of the fight saw only what happened in their immediate area. The scene as a whole was witnessed by a young Marine officer of Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion, on duty at a sawmill two miles north of Hagaru. From the high ground he could look south down into the perimeter, and the awesome spectacle of a night battle made him think of a volcano in eruption. Gun flashes stabbing the darkness were fused into a great ring of living flame, and the thousands of explosions blended into one steady, low-pitched roar.[29]

Seldom in Marine history have supporting arms played as vital a part as during this night at Hagaru. It is possible that a disaster was averted on East Hill when the Marines of Captain Benjamin S. Read's How Battery shifted trails and plugged the hole in the line with howitzer fires alone. Lieutenant Colonel Banks and Major Walter T. Warren, commanding the antitank company of the 7th Marines, acted as observers. Reporting by telephone to the gun pits, they directed the sweating gunners so accurately that an enemy attack would have come up against a curtain of fire.[30]

Captain Strohmenger's Dog Battery had been attached to 3/1 so long that a high degree of co-ordination existed. His 105s fired about 1200 rounds that night, and POW interrogations disclosed that enemy concentrations in rear areas were repeatedly broken up.

When CCF guns replied, shortly before midnight, there was danger of a fuel or ammunition dump being hit and starting a chain reaction of detonations in the crowded perimeter. Strohmenger ordered five of his howitzers to cease fire while he moved the sixth out about 150 yards to act as a decoy. Its flashes drew fire from the enemy, as he had hoped, revealing the positions of the Chinese artillery. Dog Battery officers set up two aiming circles and calculated the range and deflection. Then the command was given for all six Marine howitzers to open up. The enemy guns were silenced for the night. A later survey established that two CCF 76mm guns had been destroyed and two others removed.[31]

The 60mm mortars of the two rifle companies fired a total of more than 3200 rounds; and on both fronts the heavy machine guns of Weapons Company added tremendously to the fire power. Illuminating shells being scarce, two Korean houses on the Item Company's front were set ablaze by orders of Lieutenant Fisher. The flames seemed to attract CCF soldiers like moths, and the machine guns of the two tanks stationed here reaped a deadly harvest. Curiously enough, the Chinese apparently did not realize what excellent targets they made when silhouetted against the burning buildings.

By 0400 it was evident that the enemy's main effort had failed. No further attacks of any consequence were sustained by the two rifle companies. It remained only to dispose of the unwelcome CCF visitors sealed off in the How Company zone, and at 0420 Captain Corley rounded up men for a counterattack.

"It will be just as dark for them as for us," he told his NCOs.

Second Lieutenant Edward W. Snelling was directed to fire all his remaining 60mm mortar ammunition in support. Corley and Betts led the service troops sent as reinforcements while Johnson advanced on the left. A bitter fight of extermination ensued, and by 0630 the MLR had been restored. How Company, which sustained the heaviest losses of any Marine unit that night, had a total of 16 men killed and 39 wounded, not including attached units.[32]

After it was all over, the stillness had a strange impact on ears attuned the whole night long to the thump of mortars and clatter of machine guns. The harsh gray light of dawn revealed the unforgettable spectacle of hundreds of Chinese dead heaped up in front of the two Marine rifle companies.[33] Shrouds of new white snow

covered many of them, and crimson trails showed where the wounded had made their way to the rear.

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Chapter 10. Hagaru's Night of Fire
Marine Attacks on East Hill

But even though the enemy's main attack had failed, his secondary effort on East Hill represented a grave threat to perimeter security. At 0530 Ridge decided to counterattack, and Major Reginald R. Myers volunteered to lead an assault column composed of all reserves who could be scraped together for the attempt.

It was broad daylight before the Battalion executive officer moved out with an assortment of Marine, Army, and ROK service troops, some of them stragglers from the night's withdrawals from East Hill (see Map 18). Their total strength compared to that of an infantry company. About 55 separate units were represented at Hagaru, many by splinter groups, so that most of Myer's men were strangers to one another as well as to their officers and NCOs.

The largest Marine group was the platoon led by First Lieutenant Robert E. Jochums, assistant operations officer of the 1st Engineer Battalion. Clerks, typists, and truck drivers were included along with Company D engineers. Armed with carbines or M-1s and two grenades apiece, the men carried all the small arms ammunition they could manage. Few had had recent combat experience and the platoon commander knew only one of them personally—a company clerk whom he made his runner.

It was typical of the informality attending this operation that a Marine NCO with a small group attached themselves to Jochums, giving him a total of about 45. They had an exhausting, 45-minute climb up the hill to the line of departure, where Myers directed them to attack on the left of his main force.

The early morning fog enshrouded East Hill and Myers' attack had to wait until it cleared. The jump-off line lay along a steep slope with little or no cover. From the outset the advancing troops were exposed to scattered small-arms fire as well as grenades which needed only to be rolled downhill. New snow covering the old icy crust made for treacherous footing, so that the heavily laden men took painful falls.

Myers' little task force can scarcely be considered a tactical organization. His close air support was excellent; but both artillery and mortar support were lacking. Jochums did not notice any weapons save small arms and grenades.

"Our plane assaults were very effective, especially the napalm attacks," he commented on the basis of a personal log kept at the time. "During these strikes, either live or dry runs, the enemy troops in the line of fire would often rise and run from their positions to those in the rear."[34]

Marine air came on station at 0930 as VMF–312 planes peeled off to hit the enemy with napalm and bombs. The squadron flew 31 sorties that day at Hagaru, nearly all in the East Hill area. Enemy small-arms fire crippled one aircraft; but the pilot, First Lieutenant Harry W. Colmery, escaped serious injuries by making a successful crash landing within the perimeter.[35]

All accounts agree that the ground forces met more serious opposition from the terrain at times than from the enemy. So cut up into ridges and ravines was this great hill mass that the troops seldom knew whether they were advancing in defilade or exposing themselves to the fire of hidden adversaries. Thus the attack became a lethal game of hide-and-seek in which a step to the right or left might make the difference between life and death. On the other hand, when the Corsairs provided shooting gallery targets by flushing out opponents, only a few men could get into effective firing position along the narrow, restricted ridges before the Communists scuttled safely to new cover.

It took most of the energies of the attackers to keep on toiling upward, gasping for breath, clutching at bushes for support, and sweating at every pore in spite of the cold. At noon, after snail-like progress, the force

was still far short of the main ridge recognized as the dividing line between friendly forces and the enemy. By this time more than half of Myers' composite company had melted away as a result of casualties and exhaustion. Jochums saw no more than 15 wounded men in the attacking force during the day. He noted about the same number of dead Chinese. As for enemy strength, he estimated that the total may have amounted to a company or slightly more.

It was his conviction that "three well organized platoons could have pressed the assault without serious consequences and seized the immediate highest objective. What was behind that I am unable to say, but I feel that taking this high ground would have solved the problem."[36]

Most of the friendly casualties were caused by the grenades and grazing machine-gun fire of concealed opponents who had the law of gravity fighting on their side. Jochums was painfully wounded in the foot but continued with his platoon. "The age-old problem of leadership in such an operation," he concluded, "may be compared to moving a piece of string—pulling it forward will get you farther than pushing."

Enemy small-arms fire increased in volume when Myers' remnants, estimated at 75 men, reached the military crest of the decisive ridge. There the groups in the center and on the right were halted by the Chinese holding the topographical crest and reverse slope. On the left Jochums' men managed to push on to an outlying spur before being topped by CCF fire from a ridge to the northeast. Jochums' position was still short of the commanding high ground, yet it was destined to be the point of farthest penetration on East Hill.

Myers ordered his men to take what cover they could find and draw up a defensive line "short of the topographical crest" while awaiting a supporting attack.[37] This was to be carried out by elements of Captain George W. King's Able Company of the 1st Engineer Battalion, which had been stationed at a sawmill two miles north of Hagaru to repair a blown bridge. These troops reached the perimeter without incident at noon and proceeded immediately to the assault.

First Lieutenant Nicholas A. Canzona's 1st Platoon led the column. Orders were to ascend the southwestern slope of East Hill, pass through Myers' force and clear the ridge line. But after completing an exhausting climb to the military crest, the engineer officer was directed to retrace his steps to the foot. There Captain King informed him that a new attack had been ordered on the opposite flank, from a starting point about 1000 yards to the northeast.

Moving to the indicated route of approach, Canzona began his second ascent with two squads in line, pushing up a spur and a draw which became almost perpendicular as it neared the topographical crest. Only his skeleton platoon of about 20 men was involved. There were neither radios nor supporting arms, and a light machine gun was the sole weapon in addition to small arms and grenades.

Upon reaching the military crest, the engineers were pinned down by CCF machine-gun fire along a trail a few feet wide, with nearly vertical sides. Only Canzona, Staff Sergeant Stanley B. McPhersen and PFC Eugene B. Schlegel had room for "deployment," and they found the platoon's one machine gun inoperative after it was laboriously passed up from the rear. Schlegel was wounded and rolled downhill like a log, unconscious from loss of blood.

Another machine gun, sent up from the foot, enabled the platoon to hold its own even though it could not advance. Canzona put in a request by runner for mortar support, but only two 81mm rounds were delivered after a long delay. It was late afternoon when he walked downhill to consult King, who had just been ordered to withdraw Company A to a reverse slope position. Canzona returned to his men and pulled them back about half-way down the slope while McPherson covered the retirement with machine-gun fire. The winter sun was sinking when the weary engineers set up a night defense, and at that moment the howitzers of How Battery cut loose with point-detonation and proximity bursts which hit the Chinese positions with deadly accuracy.

Canzona estimated the enemy strength in his zone at no more than a platoon, which might have been dislodged with the aid of artillery or even mortar fire.[38]

About 500 yards south of the engineers, Major Myers held a defensive position with his remaining force of about two platoons. The Battalion CP had reason to believe that the outposts on East Hill would be relieved shortly by George Company, with the 41st Commando in perimeter reserve. Both had departed Koto-ri that morning in a strong convoy which also included an Army infantry company, four platoons of Marine tanks, and the last serial of Division Headquarters Battalion.

It was still touch and go at Hagaru at dusk on the 29th, but the defenders could take satisfaction in having weathered the enemy's first onslaught. General Smith, courteous and imperturbable as always, visited the Battalion CP to commend Ridge and his officers for the night's work. Two rifle companies had inflicted a bloody repulse on several times their own numbers, and the counterattacking forces on East Hill had at least hung on by their eyelashes.

In the final issue, a bob-tailed rifle battalion, two artillery batteries and an assortment of service troops had stood off a CCF division identified as the 58th and composed of the 172d, 173d, and 174th Infantry Regiments reinforced with organic mortars and some horse-drawn artillery. Chinese prisoners reported that the 172d, taking the principal part in the attacks on How and Item Companies, had suffered 90 per cent casualties. Elements of the 173d were believed to have figured to a lesser extent, with the 174th being kept in reserve.[39]

This was the situation in the early darkness of 29 November, when the disturbing news reached Hagaru that George Company and the Commandos were being heavily attacked on the road from Koto-ri and had requested permission to turn back.

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Chapter 11. Task Force Drysdale

BEFORE THE CHINESE struck at Yudam-ni, they had penetrated 35 miles farther south along the MSR. At Chinhung-ni, on the night of 26 November, the Marines of the 1st Battalion, RCT–1, exchanged shots in the darkness with several elusive enemy groups making "light probing attacks."

Lieutenant Colonel Donald M. Schmuck, the new battalion commander, had set up a defensive perimeter upon arrival with his three rifle companies reinforced by 4.2-inch mortar and 75mm recoilless rifle platoons.[1] The identity of the enemy on the night of the 26th was not suspected, and patrols the next day made no contacts. At 1900 on the 27th, however, another light attack on the perimeter was repulsed. During the next two days, patrol actions definitely established that Chinese in estimated battalion strength were in a mountain valley to the west, hiding in houses by day and probing by night apparently in preparation for a determined attack.

Schmuck decided to strike first. On the 29th, a Baker Company reconnaissance patrol searched out the enemy positions, and the next day the battalion commander led an attacking force composed of Captain Barrow's Able Company and part of Captain Noren's Baker Company, reinforced by 81mm and 4.2-inch mortars under the direction of Major William L. Bates, Jr., commanding the Weapons Company.

While First Lieutenant Howard A. Blancheri's Fox Battery of 2/11 laid down supporting fires, the infantry "ran the Chinese right out of the country," according to Major Bates' account. "We burned all the houses they had been living in and brought the civilians back with us. We had no more difficulty with the Chinese from that valley."

The Communists were found to be warmly clothed in new padded cotton uniforms and armed with American weapons presumably captured from the Nationalists. An estimated 56 were killed by the ground forces before the Corsairs of VMF–312 took up a relentless pursuit which lasted until the enemy remnants scattered into hiding. Some of the Chinese were mounted on shaggy Mongolian ponies.[2]

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Chapter 11. Task Force Drysdale
CCF Attacks on 2/1 at Koto-ri

During this same period, Lieutenant Colonel Sutter's 2d Battalion of RCT–1 had several hard-fought encounters with the new enemy. After arriving at Koto-ri on the 24th, he set up a perimeter defense facing west, north, and east which included a 4.2-inch Mortar Platoon as well as Easy Battery of 2/11, commanded by Captain John C. McClelland, Jr. Some commanding ground was left unoccupied, but Sutter believed that a tight perimeter offered advantages over widely separated blocking positions. In addition to 2/1, the regimental CP and H&S Company, the AT Company (–), the 4.2 Mortar Company (–), Company D of the 1st Medical Battalion and the 2d Battalion of the 11th Marines (less Batteries D and F) were at Koto-ri.

The perimeter, second in importance only to Hagaru as a base, was to be jammed during the next few days with hundreds of Marine and Army troops held up by CCF roadblocks to the north. On 27 November, the enemy made his presence known. A motorized patrol of platoon strength from Captain Jack A. Smith's Easy Company, supported by a section of tanks, engaged in a fire fight with about 25 Chinese in the hills west of Koto-ri. Two wounded CCF soldiers were left behind by the dispersed enemy. At this point the patrol proceeded on foot until it was stopped by the fire of an estimated 200 Communists dug in along ridge lines. At 1600 the Marines returned to the perimeter with two men wounded.

Click here to view map

Enemy losses were reported as eight killed and 15 wounded in addition to the two prisoners. Upon being questioned, these Chinese asserted that they belonged to a Chinese division assembling to the west of Koto-ri with a headquarters in a mine shaft.[3]

There could be no doubt the next day that the enemy had swarmed into the area in fairly large numbers. A Marine outpost on a hill northeast of the perimeter received heavy small-arms fire at 0845 and was reinforced by a platoon from Easy Company. Finally these troops had to be withdrawn and an air strike called on the hill to evict the enemy.

At 1058 General Smith ordered Colonel Puller to push a force up the MSR to make contact with the tank patrol being sent south from Hagaru and to clear the MSR.[4] Groups of Chinese, sighted during the day to the north, west and east, were taken under artillery fire by Captain McClelland's battery. Reconnaissance planes landing at the Koto-ri OY strip reported CCF roadblocks on the way to Hagaru; and at 1330 Captain Gildo S. Codispoti, the S–3, dispatched Captain Welby W. Cronk's Dog Company in vehicles with orders to open up the route. Following in Dog Company's wake came the last serial of Division Headquarters troops, on its way to Hagaru.[5]

Less than a mile north of the perimeter, the convoy ran into a storm of rifle and automatic weapons fire from Chinese entrenched along the high ground on both sides of the road. The Marines of Dog Company piled out of their vehicles and deployed for a hot fire fight, supported from Koto-ri by 81mm mortars of Captain William A. Kerr's Weapons Company. Two platoons swung around to clear the enemy from the ridge. The other platoon and the Headquarters troops advanced along the road.

At 1615 a platoon from Captain Goodwin C. Groff's Fox Company was ordered out to assist in evacuating casualties. But as the afternoon wore on, it grew apparent that the Chinese were in greater strength than had been anticipated, and all troops were directed to return to Koto-ri at 1735. They did so under cover of strikes by the Corsairs of VMF–312.

Marine losses numbered four KIA or DOW and 34 WIA. Enemy casualties were estimated at 154 killed

and 83 wounded in addition to three prisoners taken from a unit identified as the 179th Regiment of the 60th CCF Division. Captured Chinese weapons included 130 rifles, 25 machine guns, and two cases of grenades.

That evening George Company of 3/1, 41st Commando, Royal Marines, and Baker Company of the 31st Infantry, 7th Infantry Division, arrived at Koto-ri on their way to Hagaru (see Map 20). Colonel Puller and his S–3, Major Lorigan, organized the newcomers into a task force under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale, CO of the British unit, with orders to fight its way to Hagaru the following day.

Luckily the enemy did not elect to attack the overcrowded perimeter on the night of the 28th. Every warming tent was packed to capacity, and a CCF mortar round could hardly have landed anywhere without doing a good deal of damage.

After a quiet night the Chinese began the new day by digging emplacements in the hills to the west under harassing fire from F Company. The howitzers of Easy Battery and the mortars of 2/1 provided supporting fires for Task Force Drysdale when it moved out at 0945 followed by a convoy of Division Headquarters troops. A platoon of Easy Company, 2/1, went along with corpsmen and ambulances to assist in evacuating any early wounded back to Koto-ri. Stubborn CCF resistance resulted in casualties from the outset, and it was 1600 before the Easy Company escort platoon got back to the perimeter.

The Chinese, keeping the perimeter under observation all day, evidently concluded that the northern rim, defended by Easy Company, offered the best opportunity for a penetration. Marine air strikes were called on the Chinese swarming over the near-by high ground during the last minutes of daylight, but enemy mortar rounds hit Easy Company at 1745. They were followed by bugle calls and whistle signals as the CCF infantry attacked from the high ground to the northeast.

The assault force was estimated at company strength, with the remainder of a battalion in reserve. Unfortunately for the Chinese, they had made their intentions clear all day with unusual activity in the surrounding hills, and Easy Company was not surprised. Major Clarence J. Mabry, the 2/1 executive officer, could be heard above the machine guns as he shouted encouragement to Marines who poured it into the advancing Communists. They came on with such persistence that 17 managed to penetrate within the lines, apparently to attack the warming tents.[6] All were killed. In addition, about 150 CCF bodies lay in front of the sector when the enemy withdrew at 1855, after suffering a complete repulse.

It was conjectured that the Chinese had interpreted the return of the Easy Company platoon late that afternoon as an indication that a gap in the line needed to be hastily plugged. But the supposed weak spot did not materialize, and at 1935 the enemy signed off for the night after pumping four final mortar rounds in the vicinity of the Battalion CP without doing any harm. Losses of 2/1 for the day were six KIA and 18 WIA, total CCF casualties being estimated at 175 killed and 200 wounded. Ten heavy machine guns, seven LMGs, 12 Thompson submachine guns, 76 rifles, four pistols, and 500 grenades were captured.

That was all at Koto-ri, where Recon Company arrived during the day to add its weight to the defense. But during intervals of silence the sound of heavy and continuous firing to the north gave proof that Task Force Drysdale was in trouble.

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Chapter 11. Task Force Drysdale
Convoy Reinforced by Marine Tanks

Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale's plan of attack had called for his British Marines to lead out at 0930 and seize the first hill mass to the east of the road. Captain Sitter's George Company of 3/1 was to follow and pass through to attack Hill 1236, with Baker Company of the 31st Infantry in reserve. LtCol Sutter, assisted by his staff, had the responsibility for planning and coordinating preparatory artillery and mortar fires from Koto-ri and attaching an air liaison officer to the task force.[7]

The first hill was taken without meeting serious resistance, but Sitter came up against well entrenched CCF troops when he attacked Hill 1236, about a mile and a half north of Koto-ri. It was nip and tuck until Master Sergeant Rocco A. Zullo fired his 3.5 rocket launcher at a range of 200 yards. Several rounds brought the Chinese out of their holes and the Marines took possession of the hill.

Click here to view map

The Commandos and George Company moved up about a mile astride of the road toward the third objective, Hill 1182. There the enemy resisted strenuously with well-placed mortar as well as machine-gun fire from strong positions on the high ground. The impetus of the attack had been stopped when Sitter received orders from the task force commander to break off action, withdraw to the road, and await new instructions.

Drysdale had received a message from RCT–1 at 1130 advising him that the armor of Company D (less 2d platoon), 1st Tank Battalion, would be available to him at 1300. He decided to wait, therefore, and re-form the column before continuing the advance.

The two platoons of Company D tanks, reinforced by the tank platoon of the AT Company, RCT–5, reached Koto-ri at noon after moving out that morning from Majon-dong. Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, departed Tongjong-ni, just south of Majon-dong, but did not arrive at Koto-ri until 1500. The 2d Platoon being attached to Sutter's battalion, the remainder of the company was directed to bring up the rear of the Task Force Drysdale, which by that time had renewed its attack. Thus the convoy was made up of the following components, including the elements which joined in the late afternoon of 29 November:

41 Ind. Commando, RM: estimated strength = 235

Co. G, 3/1: estimated strength = 205

Co. B, 31st Infantry, USA: estimated strength = 190, estimated vehicles = 22

Det. Div. Hq. Bn.: estimated strength = 62, estimated vehicles = 17

Det. 1st Sig. Bn.: estimated strength = 8, estimated vehicles = 4

Det. 7th MT Bn.: estimated strength = 12, estimated vehicles = 22 (Trailers are included among the vehicles. George Company, 3/1 lacked organic transport and was mounted in the vehicles of 7thMTBn. For similar reasons ServCo, 1stTkBn, supplied the transportation for the 41st Commando and 377th Transportation Truck Company, USA, for B/31stInf.)

Det. Serv. Co., 1st Tank Bn.: estimated strength = 18, estimated vehicles = 31

Co. B(-), 1st Tank Bn.: estimated strength = 86, estimated vehicles = 23, estimated tanks = 12

Co. D(-), 1st Tank Bn.: estimated strength = 77, estimated vehicles = 22, estimated tanks = 12

Tank Plat., AT Co., RCT-5 estimated strength = 29, estimated tanks = 5

TOTALS: estimated strength = 922, estimated vehicles = 141, estimated tanks = 29

At 1350 the head of the column had resumed the advance, with the order of march as shown below:

Click here to view table

Shortly after moving out, Sitter's men were hit by heavy small-arms fire from houses on the right of the road. The company commander went forward and requested the tanks to open up with their 90mm guns, and the Chinese flushed out of the houses were destroyed by machine-gun fire.

Progress was slow because of the necessity of further halts while the tanks blasted out pockets of CCF resistance. Enemy mortar as well as small-arms fire was encountered, and a round scored a direct hit on one of the trucks carrying personnel of 3d Platoon of George Company, wounding every man in the vehicle.

Further delays resulted while the tanks made their way over roadblocks or around craters. For the three infantry companies, the advance consisted of brief periods of movement alternated with interludes in which the troops scrambled out of the trucks to engage in fire fights. Finally, about 1615, the column ground to a complete halt about four miles north of Koto-ri. At that time the tanks of Company B were just leaving the 2/1 perimeter to join the convoy.

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Chapter 11. Task Force Drysdale
The Fight in Hell Fire Valley

Drysdale and Sitter were informed by the tank officers that they thought the armor could get through, but that further movement for the trucks was inadvisable in view of road conditions and increasing enemy resistance. The task force commander requested a decision from Division Headquarters as to whether he should resume an advance which threatened to prove costly. It was a difficult choice for General Smith to make, but in view of the urgent necessity for reinforcements at Hagaru he directed Drysdale to continue.[8]

The tanks had to refuel, so that more time was lost. CCF fire was only moderate during this delay, thanks to the air strikes of VMF-321 planes directed by Captain Norman Vining. When the column stopped, the vehicles had pulled off into a dry stream bed. Upon resuming the advance, unit integrity was lost and infantry elements mingled with headquarters troops.

Click here to view map

Not far south of the halfway point to Hagaru, increased enemy fire caused an abrupt halt in a long valley. The high ground rose sharply on the right of the road, while on the left a frozen creek wound through a plain several hundred yards wide, bordered by the Changjin River and wooded hills. This was Hell Fire Valley—a name applied by Drysdale—and it was to be the scene of an all-night fight by half the men of the convoy (see Map 21).

Such a possibility was far from their thoughts when they piled out of the trucks once more, as they had done repeatedly all day, to return the enemy's fire. It did not even seem significant when an enemy mortar shell set one of the trucks in flames at the far end of the valley, thus creating a roadblock and splitting the column. The enemy took advantage of the opportunity to pour in small-arms and mortar fire which pinned down the troops taking cover behind vehicles or in the roadside ditches and prevented removal of the damaged truck. During this interlude the head of the column, consisting of Dog/Tanks, George Company, nearly three-fourths of the 41st Commando and a few Army infantrymen, continued the advance, with Drysdale in command, in obedience to orders to proceed to Hagaru at all costs. Left behind in Hell Fire Valley were 61 Commandos, most of Company B, 31st Infantry, and practically all the Division Headquarters and Service troops.

Lieutenant Colonel Arthur A. Chidester, assistant Division G–4 and senior officer caught south of the roadblock, ordered the barred vehicles to turn around and attempt a return to Koto-ri. Before his orders could be carried out, a Chinese attack severed the convoy about 200 yards to the north of him. Other enemy attacks cut the road south of the stalled convoy, both Chidester and Major James K. Eagan being wounded and captured.

Shallow ditches on either side of the road and the unused narrow-gauge railway were utilized by the isolated troops as protection from the fire of the Chinese occuping the high ground rising abruptly at the right. The valley was about a mile long, covered with a frozen crust of snow; and far from affording much cover, it offered the enemy a convenient approach to the rear by way of the wide plain and frozen river.

The Chinese fire was not heavy at first. But when darkness put an end to Marine air strikes, the enemy became increasingly bolder. Even so, there was no attempt for several hours to close within grenade-throwing distance. During this interlude the defenders had time to recover from their confusion and take defensive positions.

As nearly as the scene can be reconstructed from confused and contradictory accounts, one large and three small perimeters were strung out over a distance of perhaps 1200 yards from north to south. Toward the north, near the outskirts of the village of Pusong-ni, was the largest perimeter. It contained the troops caught north

of the second fracture of the column and was led by Major John N. McLaughlin.[9] His hodgepodge of 130 to 140 men included Captain Charles Peckham and part of his B Company, 31st Infantry; Warrant Officer Lloyd V. Dirst and a group of Marine MPs; some Commandos, Associated Press photographer Frank Noel, and assorted Marine service and headquarters troops.

The three smaller perimeters appear to have resulted from the splintering of a larger group originally containing nearly all the men caught south of the second cut in the convoy. Major Henry J. Seeley, Division motor transport officer, attempted to form a perimeter with these men but was frustrated by Chinese attacks which forced the men to fall back in small groups. About 300 yards south of McLaughlin's perimeter the remnants of two Army platoons crouched in a drainage ditch. Apparently several Marines, including CWO Dee R. Yancey, were with them. Some 30 yards farther down the ditch were Captain Michael J. Capraro, the Division PIO, First Lieutenant John A. Buck, General Craig's aide, and about 15 headquarters troops. A few other Marines clustered around Major Seeley, perhaps a hundred yards south of Capraro's group.[10]

There was some hope at first that the tanks of Baker Company, 1st Tank Battalion, would come to the rescue. But the Marine armor ran into heavy opposition near Hills 1236 and 1182 along the road cleared only a few hours before by Task Force Drysdale.

When attacking a convoy, the Chinese usually strove to split the motorized column into segments suitable for tactical mastication. That is what happened to Baker Company. The tanks and trucks nearest to Koto-ri got back without much trouble at 2110 after the enemy cut the column into three groups. The middle group, comprising most of the service trucks, was hit hardest. Lieutenant Colonel Harvey S. Walseth, the Division G–1, was wounded as this group finally fought back to Koto-ri at 0230 after heavy losses in trucks. This left the tank platoon which had proceeded farthest; and it formed a tight perimeter for the night about half a mile south of Seeley's position, boxed in by friendly artillery fires from Koto-ri. At dawn the tanks returned to Koto-ri without further enemy interference.

No knowledge of these events reached the beleaguered troops in Hell Fire Valley. They continued to hope that the tanks might arrive to the aid of men who had no weapons larger than a single 75mm recoilless in addition to rifles, carbines, and grenades. There were also a few 60mm mortars but no ammunition for them.

Fortunately, no determined Chinese attacks were received up to midnight. Looting the trucks proved more alluring than fighting to the Asiatics, and their officers contented themselves with keeping the perimeters pinned down and enveloped on three sides.

Not until the early hours of 30 November did the Communists resort to probing attacks by small groups armed with grenades. The headquarters and service troops gave a good account of themselves in the fire fight. Signalmen, clerks, cooks, truck drivers, military policemen—the Marines of Hell Fire Valley included a good many veterans of World War II, and they proved as steady as the tough combat-trained Commandos. Once again the value of the Marine Corps insistence on good basic training showed itself.

Major McLaughlin sent reconnaissance parties south in an unsuccessful attempt to link up with the other perimeters. He decided, therefore, to remain in his positions and fight off the Chinese until air could come on station at dawn. The wounded were placed in the deepest of the three ditches and Army medics gave first aid.

As the night wore on, McLaughlin's situation became increasingly grave. By 0200 his men were out of grenades. An Army crew performed valiantly with the 75mm recoilless, firing at enemy mortar flashes until all the soldiers were killed or wounded and the gun put out of action. Twice McLaughlin's men drove the Chinese from their mortars only to have them return.

Some of the Commandos managed to slip out of the perimeter in an effort to reach Koto-ri and summon assistance. But an attempt by Noel and two men to run the gantlet in a jeep between 0200 and 0300 ended in their capture before they proceeded a hundred yards.

At about 0430 the Chinese sent their prisoners to the perimeter with a surrender demand. McLaughlin,

accompanied by a Commando, went out to parley through an interpreter in the hope of stalling until help arrived, or at least until some of the men escaped.

"Initially I demanded a CCF surrender!" he recalls. "But it made little impression."

The Marine officer stalled until the Chinese threatened to overrun the perimeter with an all-out attack. They gave him ten minutes to discuss the capitulation with his officers. McLaughlin went from one to another of the approximately 40 able bodied men he had left. Some had no rifle ammunition at all and none had more than eight rounds. For the sake of his wounded, he consented to surrender on condition that the serious cases be evacuated. The Chinese agreed and the fight in Hell Fire Valley ended.

McLaughlin succeeded in killing enough time so that more men were given the opportunity to slip away while the enemy relaxed his vigilance during the prolonged negotiations. Largest of these groups was composed of the survivors of the three small perimeters. Capraro and Buck, both of whom were slightly wounded, managed to unite with the Army infantrymen just north of them and nine Commandos, who joined them at about 0200. An hour and a half later they linked up with the Marines under Seeley, who led the combined group in a withdrawal to the high ground across the river. Outdistancing their CCF pursuers, after shooting down several, they made it safely to Koto-ri.

Other groups, including three more Commandos and 71 Army infantrymen, also contrived to straggle back to the 2/1 perimeter.

Although the Chinese did not keep their word as to evacuation of the wounded, they did not interfere with the removal of the more critical cases to a Korean house. When the enemy retired to the hills for the day, an opportunity was found to evacuate these casualties to Koto-ri.[11]

An accurate breakdown of the Task Force Drysdale casualties will probably never be made, but the following estimate is not far from the mark:

41st Commando: 18 KIA/MIA, 43 WIA
Co. G, 3/1: 8 KIA/MIA, 40 WIA
Co. B, 1/31: 100 KIA/MIA, 19 WIA, 22 vehicles lost
Div. Hq. Bn.: 25 KIA/MIA, 25 WIA, 18 vehicles lost
1st Sig. Bn.: 4 KIA/MIA, 2 WIA
7th MT Bn.: 2 KIA/MIA, 3 WIA, 4 vehicles lost
Serv. Co., 1st Tank Bn.: 5 KIA/MIA, 6 WIA, 30 vehicles lost
Co. B(-), 1st Tank Bn.: 12 WIA
Co. D(-), 1st Tank Bn.: 8 WIA, 1 vehicle lost
Plat, AT Co., RCT-5: 1 WIA
TOTALS: 162 KIA/MIA, 159 WIA, 75 vehicles lost

"The casualties of Task Force Drysdale were heavy," commented General Smith, "but by its partial success the Task Force made a significant contribution to the holding of Hagaru which was vital to the Division. To the slender infantry garrison of Hagaru were added a tank company of about 100 men and some 300 seasoned infantrymen. The approximately 300 troops which returned to Koto-ri participated thereafter in the defense of that perimeter."[12]

The head of the Task Force Drysdale column, with the Company D tanks leading George Company and the Commandos, was not aware at dusk on the 29th that the convoy had been cut behind them. There had been previous gaps during the stops and starts caused by enemy fire, and it was supposed at first that the thin-skinned vehicles would catch up with the vanguard.

Progress was fairly good, despite intermittent fire from the high ground on the right of the road, until the tanks reached a point about 2200 yards from Hagaru. There the column was stopped by concentrated CCF mortar and small-arms fire. One of the tanks was so damaged by a satchel charge that it had to be abandoned, and several

vehicles were set afire. After Drysdale was wounded the command passed to Sitter, who formed his force into a perimeter until the repulse of the Chinese permitted the march to be resumed.[13]

Several pyramidal tents just outside the Hagaru perimeter were assumed to be occupied by friendly troops until enemy in the vicinity destroyed two George Company trucks and caused several casualties. Later it was learned that the tents had been originally occupied by troops of the 10th Engineer Battalion and abandoned when the Chinese attacked on the 28th.

At 1915, Captain Sitter reported to Lieutenant Colonel Ridge, who directed that George Company and the 41st Commando spend the night in perimeter reserve. After their all-day fight, the men of the column could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw the Marine engineers at work on the airstrip under the floodlights.

Contrary to expectations, the hours of darkness on 29–30 November passed in comparative quiet at Hagaru except for CCF harassing fires. It was not a coincidence that the enemy kept his distance. Attacks on the East Hill and Item and How Company positions of 3/1 actually had been planned and partly executed by troops of the 58th CCF Division, according to POW testimony. They were broken up by Marine air attacks and supporting fires which hit the assembly areas.

The effectiveness of these fires owed a good deal to the intelligence brought back to Lieutenant Carey, the Battalion S–2, by CIC agents who circulated among Chinese troops on 27 and 28 November. The Battalion S–2 had a work table at the CP beside Major Simmons, the SAC, who directed six sorties of the night hecklers of VMF(N) –542. He guided the planes through the darkness to their targets with a fiery arrow as converging machine-gun tracer bullets crossed over suspected CCF assembly areas.

The 81mm mortars of Weapons Company, 3/1, fired about 1100 rounds during the night, and the corresponding unit of 2/7 made a noteworthy contribution. The following day, according to Carey, Chinese prisoners reported that “most of the units employed around Hagaru were very badly hit.”[14]

A few white phosphorus mortar rounds fell in the lines of How and Item Companies, and a CCF green flare caused an alert for an attack which never materialized. In the early morning hours of the 30th an enemy concentration appeared to be taking place on the Item Company front, but intensive 60mm mortar fire put an end to the threat.

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Chapter 11. Task Force Drysdale
Attack of George Company on East Hill

At 0800, the battalion commander ordered George Company to retake East Hill while the Commandos remained in reserve. Sitter's plan called for his 1st and 2d platoons, commanded by Second Lieutenants Frederick W. Hopkins and John W. Jaeger respectively, to pass through Myers' group, then make a sharp left turn and attack on either side of the ridge. First Lieutenant Carl E. Dennis' 3d Platoon and two platoons of Able Company engineers were to follow in reserve.

Click here to view map

Slow progress caused the George Company commander to modify the plan by giving his 3d platoon and the two engineer platoons the mission of enveloping the CCF right flank (see Map 22). Lieutenant Dennis led the attack, with First Lieutenant Ernest P. Skelt's and Lieutenant Canzona's engineer platoons following.

Neither of the George Company attacks was successful. The trampling of hundreds of feet over the snow had made the footing more treacherous than ever; and once again the combination of difficult terrain and long-range Chinese fire accounted for failure to retake East Hill. Sitter's request to set up defense positions on the ground previously occupied by Myers was granted. Meanwhile Dennis' platoon and the engineers were directed to withdraw to the foot of the hill, so that the Corsairs could work the CCF positions over with rockets and bombs.

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Chapter 11. Task Force Drysdale
High Level Command Conference

Although the Marines at Hagaru had little to do with the higher levels of strategy, it was evident that the continued retreat of the Eighth Army in west Korea must ultimately affect the destinies of X Corps. Of more immediate concern was the deteriorating situation of the three battalions (two infantry and one artillery) of the 7th Infantry Division east of the Chosin Reservoir. Brigadier General Henry I. Hodes, assistant division commander, informed General Smith at noon on the 29th that the Army troops had suffered approximately 400 casualties while falling back toward Hagaru and were unable to fight their way out to safety. At 2027 that night, all troops in the Chosin Reservoir area, including the three Army battalions, were placed under the operational control of the Marine commander by X Corps. The 1st Marine Division was directed to "redeploy one RCT without delay from Yudam-ni area to Hagaru area, gain contact with elements of the 7th Inf Div E of Chosin Reservoir; co-ordinate all forces in and N of Hagaru in a perimeter defense based on Hagaru; open and secure Hagaru-Koto-ri MSR."[15]

On the afternoon of the 30th a command conference was held at Hagaru in the Division CP. Generals Almond, Smith, Barr, and Hodes were informed at the briefing session that a disaster threatened the three Army battalions.[16]

Almond was also much concerned about the attacks on the Marine MSR. He had been given a firsthand account that morning by the senior Marine officer on the X Corps staff, Colonel Edward H. Forney, who had just returned from Koto-ri.[17]

At the Hagaru conference the X Corps commander announced that he had abandoned any idea of consolidating positions in the Chosin Reservoir area. Stressing the necessity for speed in falling back toward Hamhung, he promised Smith resupply by air after authorizing him to burn or destroy all equipment which would delay his withdrawal to the seacoast.

The Marine general replied that his movements must be governed by his ability to evacuate his wounded. He would have to fight his way out, he added, and could not afford to discard equipment; it was his intention, therefore, to bring out the bulk of it.[18]

Almond directed Smith and Barr to draw up a plan and time schedule for extricating the Army battalions east of the Reservoir. Those two generals agreed, however, that not much could be done until the Yudam-ni Marines arrived at Hagaru, and the conference ended on an inconclusive note. That same afternoon X Corps OpnO 8–50 was received. It defined the Corps mission as "maintaining contact with the enemy to the maximum capability consistent with cohesive action, oriented to the Hamhung-Hungnam base of operation."[19]

The decision to concentrate X Corps forces in that area meant the evacuation of Wonsan. General Harris lost no time in directing MAG–12 to move from Wonsan Airfield to Yonpo. Hedron–12 and the three combat squadrons began shifting personnel and equipment at once. Transfer of the aircraft was completed on 1 December. In many instances the planes took off on combat missions from Wonsan and landed at Yonpo, so that the ground forces were not deprived of air support.[20]

High level naval commanders were already preparing for an evacuation of northeast Korea if matters came to the worst. Admiral Joy foresaw as early as the 28th that if the retreat of the battered Eighth Army continued, X Corps would have to choose between falling back and being outflanked. In view of the time needed to collect the enormous quantities of shipping required, he warned Admiral Doyle on that date that a large-scale redeployment operation might be necessary. Doyle in turn directed his staff to commence planning for

redeployment either by an administrative outloading or by a fighting withdrawal.[21]

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Chapter 11. Task Force Drysdale
CCF Attacks of 1 December at Hagaru

During the early hours of darkness on 30 November, it appeared that Hagaru might have a second quiet night. Three bugle calls were heard by Item Company at 2015, and the enemy sent up a green flare an hour later. But no unusual CCF activity was reported until 2330, when small patrols began probing for weak spots in the Item Company lines.

The enemy could scarcely have chosen a less rewarding area for such research. As usual, Lieutenant Fisher had built up an elaborate system of concertinas, trip flares, and booby traps; and his sandbagged foxholes and weapon emplacements afforded his men maximum protection. At midnight, when the enemy came on in strength, each successive assault wave shattered against the terrific fire power which a Marine rifle company, aided by artillery, tanks, 81mm mortars, and heavy machine guns, could concentrate.

Several times the enemy's momentum carried him to the Item Company foxholes but no Communists lived to exploit their advantage. On one of these occasions Sergeant Charles V. Davidson, having expended his ammunition, proved that cold steel still has its uses by bayoneting the last of his attackers.[22]

Again, as on the night of the 28th, the enemy had chosen to launch his major attack against Marine strength, though his daytime observation must have disclosed the preparations for a hot reception in the Item Company sector. An estimated 500 to 750 Chinese were killed on this front at a cost to Fisher's men of two KIA and 10 WIA.[23]

The Chinese also repeated themselves by carrying out another attack on East Hill which ended in a second costly stalemate. The western slope up to the military crest was held by the following units from right to left: First Lieutenant Ermine L. Meeker's 1st Platoon of Baker Company engineers; the 2d, 1st, and 3d Platoons of George Company; and Lieutenant Skelt's 3d Platoon of Able Company Engineers. To the left of Skelt, near the foot of the hill, were Lieutenant Canzona's 1st Platoon of Able engineers; two tanks of the AT Company, 2/7; and elements of Lieutenant Colonel Banks' 1st Service Battalion.[24]

The action began shortly before midnight with one of those comedy situations which develop on the grimmest occasions. The sign or password was "Abraham" and the countersign "Lincoln," but two Company A engineers on a listening post did not pause for the customary exchange. Having been jumped by what their startled eyes took to be a Chinese regiment, they sprinted downhill yelling, "Abraham Lincoln! Abraham Lincoln!" as they slid into Skelt's lines with the enemy close behind.

His engineers had no leisure for a laugh. Within a few seconds they were mixing it in a wild melee with Communists who seemed literally to drop on them from above. Meanwhile, George Company was hard hit by well aimed mortar fire which threatened to wipe out Lieutenant Hopkins' 1st Platoon. The ensuing double-headed CCF attack bent back the left flank of George Company, with both the 1st and 3d Platoons giving ground.

On the left Skelt's platoon was pushed down to the foot of the hill by superior enemy numbers after exactly half of his 28 men were killed or wounded. Here the fight continued with Banks' service troops lending a hand until the Chinese were exterminated.

This penetration was a hollow triumph for the enemy. No friendly forces being left in the center, the How Battery howitzers walked shells up and down the western slope. Mortars and machine guns chimed in, and Lieutenant Canzona's platoon was in position to direct the fire of the two tanks of AT Company 2/7.

The scene became bright as day after an enemy artillery shell set 50 drums of gasoline ablaze in a Supply Area dump. Like an enormous torch, the flames illuminated the battle so vividly that General Smith looked on

from the doorway of his CP, some 1200 yards away. Several bullets pierced the roof and walls during the night.

Again, as in the fight of 28–29 November, Marine fire power blocked the gap on the central and northwest slopes of East Hill. Marine and Army service troops took a part in the fighting which is the more creditable considering that they were ordered out in the middle of the night, placed in a provisional unit with strange troops, and marched off into the darkness to attack or defend at some critical point.

Lieutenant Meeker's engineer platoon, on the right of George Company, had a long-drawn fire fight but got off with losses of one man killed and three wounded. At 0100 the CCF pressure on Sitter's troops was so heavy that Lieutenant Carey, former commander of the 1st Platoon, was taken from his S–2 duties to lead a group of reinforcements which he described as "all available hands from the CP or any other units in Hagaru who could spare personnel." Carrying as much ammunition as possible, he arrived at the George Company CP to find Sitter still commanding in spite of his wound. Scarcely a full squad was left of Carey's old outfit when he helped to restore the lines.

It was necessary for Ridge to send a further reinforcement consisting of British Marines of the 41st Commando before George Company's left flank was secured. A counterattack at daybreak regained lost ground, and the situation was well under control when air came on station at 0900.

Thus ended another night of confusion and frustration for both sides on East Hill. While the Chinese attack had been better organized and in larger force than the effort of the 29th, it was too little and too late for decisive results in spite of heavy losses. On the other hand, George Company and its reinforcing elements had suffered an estimated 60 men killed and wounded.

Although the Marines of Hagaru could not have suspected it on the morning of 1 December, the enemy had, for the time being, shot his bolt. His first two large-scale attacks, as POW interrogations were to confirm, had used up not only the personnel of a division but most of the limited supplies of ammunition available. Thus it is probable that the following estimates of CCF casualties, as published in the 3/1 report, for the period of 28 November to 5 December, were nearer to accuracy than most such summaries:

"(1) 58th CCF Division: Estimated casualties of 3300 for the 172d Regiment; 1750 each for the 173d and 174th Regiments.

"(2) 59th CCF Division: Estimated 1750 casualties for the 176th Regiment. No other units identified."

The known Chinese dead in the two night battles amounted to at least 1500; and if it may be assumed that three or four times that number were wounded, the total casualties would have crippled an enemy infantry division of 7500 to 10,000 men, plus an additional regiment. Considering the primitive state of CCF supply and medical service, moreover, it is likely that hundreds died of wounds and privations behind their own lines.

The losses of 3/1 at Hagaru were given as 33 KIA, 10 DOW, 2 MIA, and 270 WIA—a total of 315 battle casualties, nearly all of which were incurred from 28 November to 1 December.[25] There are no over-all casualty figures for Marine or Army service troops, but it is probable that their total losses exceeded those of 3/1.

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Chapter 11. Task Force Drysdale
Rescue of U.S. Army Wounded

Casualties estimated as high as 75 per cent were suffered by the three U.S. Army battalions east of the Reservoir. At 2200 on the night of 1 December, the first survivors, most of them walking wounded, reached the Marine lines north of Hagaru with tales of frightful losses suffered in the five days of continual fighting since the first CCF attack on the night of 27–28 November.

Following this action Colonel Allan D. MacLean, commanding the 31st Infantry, had set up a perimeter near Sinhung-ni with the 3d Battalion of his regiment and the 1st Battalion of the 57th Field Artillery. Along the shore farther to the north, Lieutenant Colonel Don C. Faith, USA, held a separate perimeter with the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry (see Map 20).[26]

Both positions were hard hit by the Chinese on the night of 27–28 November and isolated from each other. During the next 24 hours they beat off CCF attacks with the support of Marine and FEAF planes, and Faith fought his way through to a junction with the Sinhung-ni force.

When the senior officer was killed, Faith took command of all three battalions. Immobilized by nearly 500 casualties, he remained in the Sinhung-ni perimeter, where he was supplied by air. On the 29th General Hodes sent a relief force in company strength from 31st Infantry units in the area just north of Hagaru. These troops, supported by several Army tanks, were hurled back by superior CCF numbers with the loss of two tanks and heavy personnel casualties.

On 1 December, fearing that he would be overwhelmed in his Sin-hung-ni perimeter, Faith attempted to break through to Hagaru. After destroying the howitzers and all but the most essential equipment, the convoy with its hundreds of wounded moved out under the constant cover of Marine close air support, controlled by Captain Edward P. Stamford, USMC.[27]

Progress was slow and exhausting, with frequent stops for fire fights. There were many instances of individual bravery in the face of adversity, but losses of officers and NCOs gradually deprived the units of leadership. As an added handicap, a large proportion of the troops were ROKs who understood no English.

The task force came near to a breakout. At dusk it was only four and a half miles from Hagaru when Faith fell mortally wounded and the units shattered into leaderless groups.[28] Soon the column had ceased to exist as a military force. A tragic disintegration set in as wounded and frostbitten men made their way over the ice of the Reservoir in wretched little bands drawn together by a common misery rather than discipline.

By a miracle the first stragglers to reach Hagaru got through the mine fields and trip flares without harm. Before dawn a total of about 670 survivors of Task Force Faith had been taken into the warming tents of Hagaru.

Lieutenant Colonel Beall, commanding officer of the 1st Motor Transport Battalion, made a personal search in the morning for other survivors. Finding more than his jeep could carry, he organized a task force of trucks, jeeps, and sleds. The only CCF opposition to the Marines came in the form of long-distance sniping which grew so troublesome late in the afternoon that the truckers set up a machine gun section on the ice for protection. Far from hindering the escape of the Army wounded, the Chinese actually assisted in some instances, thus adding to the difficulty of understanding the Oriental mentality.[29]

Of the 319 soldiers rescued by Beall on 2 December, nearly all were wounded or frostbitten. Some were found wandering about in aimless circles on the ice, in a state of shock.

A company-size task force of Army troops from Hagaru, supported by tanks, moved out that day to bring in any organized units of the three shattered battalions which might have been left behind. Known as Task Force

Anderson after Lieutenant Colonel Berry K. Anderson, senior Army officer at Hagaru, the column met heavy CCF opposition and was recalled when it became evident that only stragglers remained.[30]

Beall and his men kept up their rescue work until the last of an estimated 1050 survivors of the original 2500 troops had been saved. A Marine reconnaissance patrol counted more than 300 dead in the abandoned trucks of the Task Force Faith convoy, and there were apparently hundreds of MIA. The 385 able-bodied soldiers who reached Hagaru were organized into a provisional battalion and provided with Marine equipment.[31]

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Chapter 11. Task Force Drysdale
First Landings on Hagaru Airstrip

Casualty evacuation had become such a problem by 1 December that Captain Eugene R. Hering, (MC) USN, the Division surgeon, called at General Smith's CP that morning. He reported that some 600 casualties at Hagaru were putting a severe strain on the limited facilities of C and E Companies of the 1st Medical Battalion. It was further estimated that 500 casualties would be brought in by the Yudam-ni units and 400 from the three Army battalions east of the Reservoir.[32]

Although both figures were to prove far too low, they seemed alarmingly high at a time when only the most critical casualties could be evacuated by helicopter or OY. Flying in extreme cold and landing at high altitudes where the aircraft has less than normal lift, the pilots of Major Gottschalk's VMO-6 saved scores of lives. From 27 November to 1 December, when the transports took over, 152 casualties were evacuated by the OYs and helicopters—109 from Yudam-ni, 36 from Hagaru, and seven from Koto-ri.[33]

Altogether, 220 evacuation flights and 11 rescue missions were completed during the entire Reservoir campaign by a squadron which on 1 November included 25 officers, 95 enlisted men, eight OY–2 and two L5G observation planes and nine HO3S–1 Sikorsky helicopters. First Lieutenant Robert A. Longstaff was killed by enemy small-arms fire near Toktong Pass while on an evacuation flight, and both Captain Farish and Lieutenant Englehardt had their helicopters so badly riddled by CCF bullets that the machines were laid up for repairs.[34]

Two surgical teams from Hungnam had been flown to Hagaru by helicopter, but the evacuation problem remained so urgent on 1 December that the command of the 1st Marine Division authorized a trial landing on the new airstrip. Only 40 per cent completed at this time, the runway was 2900 feet long and 50 feet wide, with a 2 per cent grade to the north.

It was a tense moment, at 1430 that afternoon, when the knots of parka-clad Marine spectators watched the wheels of the first FEAF C–47 hit the frozen, snow-covered strip. The big two-motored aircraft bounced and lurched its way over the rough surface, but the landing was a success. An even more nerve-racking test ensued half an hour later when the pilot took off with 24 casualties. It seemed for a breath-snatching instant that the run wouldn't be long enough for the machine to become airborne, but at last the tail lifted and the wings got enough "bite" to clear the hills to the south.

Three more planes landed that afternoon, taking off with about 60 more casualties. The last arrival, heavily loaded with ammunition, collapsed its landing gear on the bumpy strip and had to be destroyed and abandoned.[35]

At the other end of the evacuation chain, clearing stations had been established by X Corps at Yonpo Airfield to receive and distribute casualties. A 30-day evacuation policy was maintained, and the casualties to remain in the area went to the 1st Marine Division Hospital in Hungnam, the Army 121st Evacuation Hospital in Hamhung, and the USS *Consolation* in Hungnam harbor. Casualties requiring more than 30 days of hospitalization were flown from Yonpo to Japan, though a few critical cases were evacuated directly from Hagaru to Japan.[36]

It was planned for incoming transports at Hagaru to fly both supplies and troop replacements. Meanwhile, on 1 December, the 1st Marine Division had its first C–119 air drop from Japan. Known as "Baldwins," these drops consisted of a prearranged quantity of small arms ammunition, weapons, water, rations, and medical supplies, though the amounts could be modified as desired.[37]

Air drops, however, did not have the capability of supplying an RCT in combat, let alone a division. At

this time the Combat Cargo Command, FEAF, estimated its delivery capabilities at only 70 tons per day; and even though in practice this total was stepped up to 100, it fell five short of the requirements of an RCT. Fortunately, the foresight of the Division commander and staff had enabled the Supply Regulating Detachment to build up a level of six days' rations and two units of fire at Hagaru.[38] This backlog, plus such quantities as could be delivered by Baldwin drops, promised to see the Division through the emergency.

Infantrymen are seldom given to self-effacement, but at nightfall on 1 December only an ungrateful gravel-cruncher could have failed to pay a silent tribute to the other services as well as to the supporting arms of the Marine Corps. Navy medics, FEAF airmen, Army service units—they had all helped to make it possible for the Marines to plan a breakout. Yet it is likely that the 1st Engineer Battalion came first in the affections of wounded men being loaded in the C–47s for evacuation.

In just twelve days and nights the engineers of Company D had hacked this airstrip out of the frozen earth. Marine infantrymen could never forget the two critical nights of battle when they looked back over their shoulders from combat areas at the heartening spectacle of the dozers puffing and huffing under the floodlights. In a pinch Lieutenant Colonel Partridge's specialists had doubled as riflemen, too, and several platoons were riddled with casualties. Thanks in large part to the engineers, the Hagaru base was no longer isolated on 1 December. And though the enemy did not yet realize it, he had lost the initiative on this eventful Friday. The Marines at Yudam-ni were coming out, and they were coming out fighting with their casualties and equipment.

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Chapter 12. Breakout From Yudam-ni

THE FIRST STEPS toward regaining the initiative were taken by the Marine command as early as 29 November. Upon being informed that the composite battalion had failed to open up the MSR south of Yudam–ni, General Smith concluded that it was a task for a regiment. At 1545 that afternoon he issued the following orders to RCTs 5 and 7:

"RCT–5 assume responsibility protection Yudam-ni area adjusting present dispositions accordingly. RCT–7 conduct operations clear MSR to Hagaru without delay employing entire regiment."[1]

That same evening the Division CP received X Corps OI 19, providing that an RCT be redeployed from the Yudam-ni area to Hagaru.[2] No further directives from Division were necessary to implement this instruction, since it had been anticipated in General Smith's orders.

Upon receipt, the two Yudam-ni regimental commanders began joint planning for measures to be taken. The unusual command situation at Yudam-ni, in the absence of the assistant division commander, was explained by Colonel Litzenberg:

"The 5th and 7th Marines were each acting under separate orders from the Division. The Division would issue orders to one regiment with information to the other, so that Division retained the control; and, of course, the 4th Battalion, 11th Marines, in general support of both regiments, was not actually under the control of either of us. Lieutenant Colonel Murray. . . operated in very close coordination with me, sometimes at his own command post and sometimes at mine. We called in [Major] McReynolds, the commander of 4/11, discussed the situation with him, and thereafter Lieutenant Colonel Murray and I issued orders jointly as necessary. . . . This command arrangement functioned very well. There was never any particular disagreement."[3]

For purposes of planning the supporting fires for the breakout, an artillery groupment was formed and Lieutenant Colonel Feehan given the responsibility of coordination. It was further agreed that no air drops of 155mm ammunition would be requested because of the greater number of 105mm rounds which could be received with fewer difficulties.[4]

The problems of the two RCTs, commented General Smith, could not be separated. "The only feasible thing for them to do was pool their resources. . . . The assignment of command to the senior regimental commander was considered but rejected in favor of cooperation."[5]

At 0600 on the 30th, the two RCTs issued their Joint OpnO 1–50, which called for the regroupment of the Yudam-ni forces in a new position south of the village and astride the MSR as a first step toward a breakout.[6] Thus in effect the two RCTs and supporting troops would be exchanging an east-and-west perimeter for one pointing from north to south along the road to Hagaru. Not only was the terrain south of the village more defensible, but a smaller perimeter would serve the purpose.

Lieutenant Colonel Winecoff, Assistant G–3 of the Division, flew to Yudam-ni on the 30th to observe and report on the situation. He was given a copy of Joint OpnO 1–50 for delivery to General Smith on his return to Hagaru.[7]

That same afternoon, during a conference with General Almond at Hagaru, the Marine commander received X Corps OpnO 8, directing him to operate against the enemy in zone, withdrawing elements north and northwest of Hagaru to that area while securing the Sudong-Hagaru MSR. And at 1920 that evening, Division issued the following dispatch orders to RCTs 5 and 7:

"Expedite execution of Joint OpnO 1–50 and combined movement RCT–5 and RCT–7 to Hagaru prepared for further withdrawal south. Destroy any supplies and equipment which must be abandoned during this

withdrawal."[8]

As a prerequisite, a good deal of reorganization had to be effected at Yudam-ni. In order to provide a force to hold the shoulders of the high ground through which RCT–7 would advance, it was decided to put together another composite battalion.

The new unit consisted of George Company, 3/7, Able Company, 1/5, and the remnants of Dog and Easy Companies, 2/7, combined into a provisional company under Captain Robert J. Polson; a section of 81s each from 2/7 and 3/7's Weapons Companies; and a communications detachment from 3/7. Major Maurice E. Roach, regimental S–4 placed in command, realized that such a jury-rigged outfit might be subject to morale problems. Noting that one of the men had made a neckerchief out of a torn green parachute, he seized upon the idea as a means of appealing to unit pride. Soon all the men were sporting green neckerchiefs, and Roach gave the new unit added distinction by christening it the Damnation Battalion after adopting "Damnation" as the code word.[9]

Beginning in the early morning hours of the 30th, regroupment was the chief activity at Yudam-ni. Enemy opposition during the night took the form of scattered small-arms fire varied with minor probing attacks. This comparative lull lasted until 0710, when Item Company of 3/5 beat off an enemy assault on Hill 1282 (North Ridge) with the support of Marine air strikes and 81mm mortar fire. In the same area George Company had a brisk fire fight from 1315 to dusk.

Click here to view map

The plan of the regroupment envisioned a gradual withdrawal from the north and west of Yudam-ni by RCT–5 for the purpose of relieving units of RCT–7 and enabling them to extend the perimeter southward from the village (see Map 23). It fell to 2/5 to execute the most difficult maneuver of the day. Roise's battalion held a line stretching from Hill 1426 on Southwest Ridge along the high ground to 3/5's positions on Hill 1282. After disengaging with the help of Marine air and artillery, 2/5 gave up Hill 1426 and pulled back nearly a mile, relieving elements of 3/7 on the left. Roise's new line included Hill 1294 on Southwest Ridge, overlooking the MSR, and extended northeast to Hill 1282 as before. Meanwhile 1/5 continued to hold a defensive line from Hill 1240 eastward to Hill 1167.

These movements freed 3/7 to re-deploy to new positions astride the MSR about 4000 yards south of Yudam-ni. In this same general area, 1/7 continued to block the valley to the southwest while holding Hill 1276, of South Ridge, about 2500 yards south of the village.

"The question of whether we should make these movements during daylight or at night was a difficult one," said Colonel Litzenberg. "We finally decided to make the movements in daylight when we could have advantage of observation for air cover and artillery. The movement, piecemeal by battalion, was successfully executed."[10]

The enemy took surprisingly little advantage of the readjustment. Movements were completed in an orderly and methodical manner as the units drew rations and ammunition for the breakout. Preparations were made for the destruction of all equipment which could not be carried out, and air drops of ammunition and other supplies were received.

As a solution for the problem of casualty evacuation, General Smith had suggested the construction of an OY strip. A start was made at 0900 on the 30th by the TD–18 dozers of Major McReynolds' artillery battalion, but the area came under enemy fire the next day and the nearly completed strip could be used only twice.[11]

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Chapter 12. Breakout From Yudam-ni
Joint Planning for Breakout

The plan, as finally agreed upon, called for a combination of the two solutions. Since it was essential to relieve hard-pressed Fox Company and secure vital Toktong Pass prior to the arrival of the main column, one force would advance across country. And since it would have been physically impossible to carry the wounded over the mountains, the main body would fight its way along the road to Toktong Pass.[12]

The over-all plan for the Yudam-ni breakout, after being flown to Hagaru by helicopter for General Smith's approval, was incorporated into Joint OpnO 2–50. This directive, later modified by fragmentary orders, was issued in the morning of 1 December 1950.

It meant dispensing with the vehicles and heavy equipment of the cross-country force. Only the barest military necessities could be taken by men loaded down with ammunition while struggling through snowdrifts.

The unit selected for the attempt was the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Davis. The plan of maneuver called for him to strike off across the mountain tops under cover of darkness on the night of 1 December. As the other units moved out astride the MSR from Yudam-ni to Hagaru, 3/5 was to be the advance guard.

Lieutenant Colonel Taplett's battalion had the mission of passing through 3/7 to seize the commanding ground on both sides of the road and lead the way for the rest of the Yudam-ni troops. Thus the attacks of 1/7 and 3/5 would converge in the general area of Fox Hill and Toktong Pass.

The point of the advance was to be the only Marine tank to reach Yudam-ni while the MSR was still open. It was left stranded after the recall of the crew to Hagaru; but Staff Sergeant Russell A. Munsell and another crewman were flown up from Hagaru by helicopter at Colonel Litzenberg's request. They were to man Tank D–23 when it moved out with the point. Plans also called for a battery of 3/11 to advance near the head of the column, so that it could go into position near Sinhung-ni and provide covering fires for the rearguard while other artillery units displaced.

The 4th Battalion of the 11th Marines had orders to fire most of its 155mm ammunition before departure. All the men who could be spared from this unit were formed into nine provisional infantry platoons. Two were assigned to reinforce the 7th Marines and three to the 5th Marines; four were retained under Major McReynold's command to protect the flanks of the vehicle train. It was further prescribed that the guns of 4/11 were to bring up the rear of the convoy, so that the road would not be blocked in the event of any of its vehicles becoming immobilized.

Only drivers and seriously wounded men were permitted to ride the trucks in the middle of the column along with critical equipment and supplies. Since all additional space in the vehicles would doubtless be needed for casualties incurred in the breakout as well as Fox Company casualties, it was decided not to bring out the dead from Yudam-ni. A field burial was conducted by chaplains for 85 officers and men.[13]

All available Marine aircraft were to be on station. Moreover, carrier planes of TF 77 had been released from other missions by the Fifth AF to reinforce the aircraft of the 1st MAW in direct support of the Yudam-ni troops.

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Chapter 12. Breakout From Yudam-ni
The Fight for Hills 1419 and 1542

The transition from planning to execution began on the morning of 1 December. Only the 1st and 3d Battalions of RCT–5 were left to the north of Yudam-ni, and pulling them out was to prove equivalent to letting loose of the tiger's tail.

The 3d Battalion began its withdrawal at 0800, followed 90 minutes later by the 1st. The initial phases of the maneuver were carried out without great difficulty. The first major problem came when 3/5's last unit, George Company, pulled down from Hill 1282 (see Map 24). There the Marines had been in such close contact with the enemy that grenades were the main weapon of both sides. The problem of preventing the Chinese from swarming over the top of the ridge at the critical moment and pursuing the Marines down the slope was solved by First Lieutenant Daniel Greene, the FAC, with a dummy run by close supporting aircraft. While the first pass of the Corsairs kept the Communists down, Captain Chester R. Hermanson commenced his withdrawal. As soon as his men moved out at a safe distance he signalled to the FAC, who called for live runs of Marine air in coordination with the fires directed by the artillery liaison officer, First Lieutenant Henry G. Ammer. First Lieutenant Arthur E. House's 81mm mortar platoon also rendered skillful support during the withdrawal.[14]
Click here to view map

The ancient ruse was so successful that George Company disengaged without a single casualty. Ammunition left behind by the rifle platoons was detonated just as the rockets, bombs, and napalm of the Corsairs hit the Chinese, followed by artillery and mortar shells. Hill 1282 seemed to erupt in one tremendous explosion. While Captain Hermanson's men crossed the bridge south of the burning town, an engineer demolitions crew waited to destroy the span.

The rear guard unit for the withdrawal of the two battalions was First Lieutenant John R. Hancock's Baker Company of 1/5. He felt that his best chance would be to "sneak off" Hill 1240. Accordingly he requested that no supporting fires be furnished Baker Company, except at his request. Making very effective use of his light machine guns to cover his withdrawal with a spray of fire, Hancock disengaged without a casualty.

The next stage of the regroupment was carried out in preparation for the attacks of 3/5 and 1/7. In order to clear the way on both sides of the MSR, 3/7 (minus How Company) moved out at 0900 on 1 December to attack Hill 1542 while How Company went up against Hill 1419.

Joint OpnO 1–50 was modified meanwhile by verbal instructions directing 2/5, instead of 3/5, to relieve 1/7 on Hill 1276, thus freeing Colonel Davis' battalion for its assigned mission. The 1st Battalion of RCT–5 took positions stretching from Hill 1100 on the west side of the MSR to the low ground southeast of the arm of the Reservoir. This meant that after 3/7 (–) seized Hill 1542, three Marine infantry battalions would occupy a defensive line about three and a half miles in length, stretching diagonally northeast from that position to the arm of the Reservoir, with Hill 1276 as its central bastion.[15]

Shortly before dusk Lieutenant Colonel Taplett's 3/5 arrived in position to pass through Lieutenant Colonel Harris' 3/7. The two battalion commanders agreed that 3/5 would execute the movement even though 3/7 had not yet secured its objectives, and 3/5 attacked astride the MSR at 1500.[16]

Harris' battalion had been having it hot and heavy all day on Hills 1419 and 1542 after jumping off at 0900. These objectives were too far apart for a mutually supported attack and the Chinese defended the difficult terrain with tenacity.

Item Company, reinforced by artillerymen and headquarters troops, made slow progress west of the road

against the Chinese dug in on Hill 1542. At 1700 George Company moved into position on the left. Both companies attempted an assault but the 3/7 report states, “Each attack by ‘I’ Co and ‘G’ Co never reached full momentum before it was broken up.” One platoon of Item Company reached the military crest before being repulsed. When night fell, the Marines were still on the eastern slopes of 1542.[17]

On Hill 1419, about 1000 yards east of the road, How Company of 3/7 met stiff opposition from Chinese dug in along four finger ridges as well as the main spur leading to the topographical crest. It became evident that How Company alone could not seize the hill and about noon Able Company of Davis’ battalion joined the attack, on How’s left.

The heavy undergrowth gave concealment to the enemy, though it also offered footholds to the Marines scrambling up the steep and icy slopes. Air strikes were laid down just ahead of them, blasting the Chinese with bombs, rockets, and 20mm fire. Artillery support, however, was limited by the relative blindness of the forward observer in the brush, but mortars succeeded in knocking out several enemy positions. How Company’s attack had come to a standstill because of casualties which included Lieutenant Harris. First Lieutenant Eugenous M. Hovatter’s Able Company regained the momentum, thanks to the efforts of First Lieutenant Leslie C. Williams’ 1st Platoon. Aided by How and by Baker, which was committed late in the afternoon, Able Company secured Hill 1419 about 1930. Thus the jump-off point for the 1/7 advance across the mountain tops had been seized.

After setting up hasty defenses, Davis directed that all dead and wounded be evacuated to 3/5’s aid station on the road. How Company was attached to his battalion by order of Colonel Litzenberg, since all units had been thinned by casualties. Then the battalion tail was pulled up the mountain and the last physical tie broken with other Marine units in the Yudam-ni area.[18]

The Marines had seized the initiative, never again to relinquish it during the Chosin Reservoir campaign.

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Chapter 12. Breakout From Yudam-ni
March of 1/7 Over the Mountains

Planning at the battalion level was done by Davis, his executive officer, Major Raymond V. Fridrich, and his S-3, Major Thomas B. Tighe. It was decided to take only two of the 81mm mortars and six heavy machine guns. They were to be manned with double crews, so that enough ammunition could be carried to keep them in action.

Pack-set radios (AN/GRC–9) were to provide positive communications in case the portable sets (SCR–300) would not reach to the Yudam-ni perimeter. The artillery liaison officer was to carry a pack set (SCR–610) to insure artillery communication.[19]

All personnel not sick or wounded were to participate, leaving behind enough walking wounded or frostbite cases to drive the vehicles and move the gear left behind with the regimental train. Extra litters were to be taken, each serving initially to carry additional mortar and machine gun ammunition; and all men were to carry sleeping bags not only for the protection of the wounded but also to save their own lives if the column should be cut off in the mountains for several days. Every man was to start the march with an extra bandolier of small arms ammunition, and personnel of the reserve company and headquarters group were to carry an extra round of 81mm mortar ammunition up the first mountain for replenishment of supplies depleted at that point.

After driving the enemy from the topographical crest of Hill 1419, the four companies were not permitted a breathing spell. Davis feared the effects of the extreme (16 degrees below zero) cold on troops drenched with sweat from clawing their way up the mountain. He pressed the reorganization with all possible speed, therefore, after no enemy contacts were reported by patrols ranging to the southeast. And at 2100 on the night of 1 December the column set out in this order:

Baker Company, First Lieutenant Kurcaba
1/7 Command Group, Lieutenant Colonel Davis
Able Company, First Lieutenant Hovatter
Charlie Company, Captain Morris
Headquarters Group, Major Fridrich
How Company, Second Lieutenant Newton

The night was dark but a few stars showed over the horizon in the general direction to be taken. They served as a guide, with a prominent rock mass being designated the first objective.

The snow-covered peaks all looked alike in the darkness, and the guide stars were lost to sight when the column descended into valleys. Repeated compass orientations of the map examined by flashlight under a poncho never checked out. The artillery was called upon to place white phosphorus on designated hills, but the splash of these rounds could seldom be located.

The point was slowed by the necessity of breaking trail in snow that had drifted knee-deep in places. After a path had been beaten, the icy footing became treacherous for the heavily burdened Marines. Some painful falls were taken on the downhill slopes by men who had to climb the finger ridges on hands and knees.

Apparently the enemy had been caught by complete surprise, for the Marines had the desolate area to themselves. A more immediate danger was loss of direction, and the head of the column veered off to the southwest while crossing the second valley. A drift in this direction would eventually take the battalion toward the enemy-held road to Hagaru (see Map 25), which had been scheduled by the Marine artillery for harassing and interdiction fires.

Radio failures kept Kurcaba, at the point, from receiving messages sent in warning. An attempt was made to communicate by word of mouth, but the shouts from behind often did not penetrate to ears protected from the cold by parka hoods. At last the loss of direction became so alarming that Davis himself hurried forward with his radio operator and runner. In the darkness he lost touch with them and floundered on alone, panting and stumbling.

It took such effort to overtake the point that he did not make it until the men were scrambling up the next steep ridge. There the westward drift was corrected just in time, for the battalion was running into its first CCF opposition.

The column had been heading up Hill 1520, the eastern and western slopes of which were held by the enemy. An increasing volume of small-arms fire was received as Davis gave his company commanders orders to reorganize units in preparation for attack. Exhausted though the men were, they summoned a burst of energy and advanced in two assault columns supported by 81 mm mortars and heavy machine guns. Now the exertion of carrying extra ammunition paid dividends as Baker and Charlie Companies closed in on a CCF position held in estimated platoon strength. Some of the Chinese were surprised while asleep or numbed with the cold, and the Marines destroyed the enemy force at a cost of only a few men wounded.

The attack cleared the enemy from the eastern slope of Hill 1520, but distant small-arms fire was received from ridges across the valley to the east. Davis called a halt for reorganization, since the troops had obviously reached the limit of their endurance. Suddenly they began collapsing in the snow—"like dominoes," as the commanding officer later described the alarming spectacle. And there the men lay, oblivious to the cold, heedless of the Chinese bullets ricocheting off the rocks.

A strange scene ensued in the dim starlight as company officers and NCOs shook and cuffed the prostrate Marines into wakefulness. The officers could sympathize even while demanding renewed efforts, for the sub-zero cold seemed to numb the mind as well as body.

Davis had even requested his company commanders to check every order he gave, just to make sure his own weary brain was functioning accurately. At 0300 he decided to allow the men a rest—the first in 20 hours of continuous fighting or marching under a double burden. As a preliminary, the battalion commander insisted that the perimeter be buttoned up and small patrols organized within companies to insure a 25 per cent alert. Then the pack radio was set up to establish the night's first contact with the regimental CP, and the men took turns at sleeping as an eerie silence fell over the wasteland of ice and stone.

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Chapter 12. Breakout From Yudam-ni
Attack of 3/5 on 1-2 December

Returning to the Yudam-ni area, it may be recalled that Lieutenant Colonel Taplett's 3/5 had passed through 3/7 at 1500 on 1 December with a mission of attacking astride the MSR to lead the way for the main column. Tank D-23, a How Company platoon and a platoon of Able Company engineers set the pace, followed by the rest of How Company and the other two rifle companies. After an advance of 1400 yards the battalion column was stopped by heavy CCF fire from both sides. How and Item Companies fanned out west and east of the road and a longdrawn fire fight ensued before the Marines cleared the enemy from their flanks at 1930.[20]

Artillery support for the breakout was provided by 1/11 and 3/11 (minus Battery H). The plan called for 1/11 to take the main responsibility for furnishing supporting fires at the outset while 3/11 displaced as soon as possible to the vicinity of Sinhung-ni, whence the last lap of the march to Hagaru could be effectively covered. The 1st Battalion would then join the vehicle column and move with it to Hagaru.[21]

Taplett gave 3/5 a brief rest after securing his first objectives—the high ground on both sides of the road just opposite the northern spurs of Hill 1520. Then he ordered a renewal of the attack shortly before midnight. How Company on the right met only moderate opposition, but was held up by the inability of Item Company to make headway against Chinese dug in along the western slope of Hill 1520. Neither 1/7 nor 3/5 had any idea at the moment that they were simultaneously engaged on opposite sides of the same great land mass, though separated by enemy groups as well as terrain of fantastic difficulties. So rugged was this mile-high mountain that the two Marine outfits might as well have been in different worlds as far as mutual support was concerned.

Item Company stirred up such a hornet's nest on the western slope that Captain Harold O. Schrier was granted permission by the battalion commander to return to his jump-off position, so that he could better defend the MSR. There he was attacked by Chinese who alternated infantry attacks with mortar bombardments. Radio communication failed and runners sent from the battalion CP to Item Company lost their way. Thus the company was isolated during an all-night defensive fight. Second Lieutenant Willard S. Peterson took over the command after Schrier received a second wound.

Taplett had ordered his reserve company, George, and his attached engineers into defensive positions to the rear of Item Company. The engineers on the right flank were also hit by the Chinese and had several wounded, including the platoon comander, First Lieutenant Wayne E. Richards, before repulsing the attack.

Counted CCF dead in the Item Company area totaled 342 at daybreak on the 2d, but the Marines had paid a heavy price in casualties. Less than 20 able-bodied men were left when George Company passed through to renew the attack on Hill 1520. For that matter, both George and How Companies were reduced to two-platoon strength. Taplett requested reinforcement by an additional company, and was assigned the so-called Dog-Easy composite company made up of the remnants of 2/7. This outfit moved directly down the road between George and How Companies.[22]

It took George Company until 1200 to secure the western slope of Hill 1520. The composite company ran into difficulties meanwhile at a point on the MSR where the Chinese had blown a bridge over a deep stream bed and set up a roadblock defended by machine guns. While George Company attacked down a long spur above the enemy, Dog-Easy Company maneuvered in defilade to outflank him. Lieutenant Greene, the FAC, directed the F4Us on target and the ground forces were treated to a daring exhibition of close support by Corsairs which barely cleared the ridge after pulling out of their runs. The roadblock was speedily wiped out, but the vehicle column had to wait until the engineers could construct a bypass. Then the advance of 3/5 was resumed, with

George and How Companies attacking on opposite sides of the MSR, and the composite company astride the road, following the tank and engineer platoons.

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Chapter 12. Breakout From Yudam-ni
The Ridgerunners of Toktong Pass

All the rest of their lives the survivors of the two spearhead Marine battalions would take pride in nicknames earned during the breakout from Yudam-ni. For Taplett's outfit it was "Darkhorse," after the radio call sign of the battalion, while Davis' men felt that they had a right to be known as the "Ridgerunners of Toktong Pass."

At daybreak on 2 December, 1/7 corrected its westward drift of the previous night and attacked toward Hill 1653, a mountain only about a mile and a half north of Fox Hill. Davis' men got the better of several fire fights at long range with CF groups on ridges to the east, but the terrain gave them more effective opposition than the enemy.[23]

The radios of 1/7 could not contact Marine planes when they came on station, and relays through tactical channels proved ineffective. Moreover, all efforts to reach Fox Company by radio had failed. This situation worried the Battalion commander, who realized that he was approaching within range of friendly 81 mm mortar fire from Fox Hill.

The ancient moral weapon of surprise stood Davis and his men in good stead, however, as the column encountered little opposition on the western slope of Hill 1653. How Company, bringing up the rear with the wounded men, came under an attack which threatened for a moment to endanger the casualties. But after the litters were carried forward, Newton managed to keep the Chinese at a respectful distance without aid from the other companies. Charlie Company was given the mission of seizing a spur covering the advance of Able and Baker companies east from Hill 1520 to Hill 1653. The command group had just passed Morris on this position when the radio operator shouted to Davis:

"Fox Six on the radio, sir."

Captain Barber's offer to send out a patrol to guide 1/7 to his position was declined, but Fox Company did control the strike by planes of VMF-312 which covered the attack of Kurcaba's company on the final objective—a ridge about 400 yards north of Fox Hill. Aided by the air attack and supporting 81 mm mortar fires, Baker Company seized the position and Able Company the northern portion of Hill 1653. It was 1125 on the morning of 2 December 1950 when the first men of Baker Company reached Fox Company's lines.

Able Company held its position on Hill 1653 until the rest of the battalion was on Fox Hill. After grounding their packs, men from the forward companies went back to help carry the 22 wounded men into the perimeter. While supervising this task, the regimental surgeon, Lieutenant Peter A. Arioli, (MC) USN, was instantly killed by a Chinese sniper's bullet. There were no other death casualties, though two men had to be placed in improvised strait jackets after cracking mentally and physically under the strain. Both died before evacuation was possible.

The first objective had been reached, but there was to be no rest until Toktong Pass was secured. Baker Company paused on Fox Hill only long enough for Kurcaba's men to eat a hasty meal of air-dropped rations. Then they moved out to seize the high ground commanding the vital terrain feature at a point where the road describes a loop from north to south. Able Company followed shortly afterwards and the two outfits set up a single perimeter for the night while the rest of the battalion manned perimeters on the high ground east of Fox Hill. Barber's men remained in their positions.

Five days and nights of battle had left Fox Company with 118 casualties—26 KIA, 3 MIA, and 89 WIA. Six of the seven officers were wounded, and practically all the unwounded men suffered from frostbite and

digestive ills.

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Chapter 12. Breakout From Yudam-ni
CCF Attacks on Hills 1276 and 1542

While the two spearhead battalions advanced, the Marine elements in the rear could not complain of being neglected by the enemy. All three infantry battalions were kept busy with CCF attacks which persisted from midnight until long after daybreak (see Map 24).

Lieutenant Colonel Roise's 2/5, which had been designated as rearguard, was hit on Hill 1276 in the early morning hours of 2 December. Under cover of rifle and machine-gun fire, the Chinese advanced on the Fox Company positions with their "inverted wedge" assault formation. Testimony as to its effectiveness is found in the 2/5 report:

"The [Chinese] . . . used fire and movement to excellent advantage. They would direct a frontal attack against our positions while other elements of their attacking force moved in closer to 'F' Company flanks in an attempt at a double envelopment. Then in turn the forces on both flanks would attack while the forces directly to our front would move closer to our position. In this, the enemy, by diverting our attention in the above manner, were able to maneuver their forces to within hand grenade range of our positions."

One Fox platoon, assailed from three sides, was forced to withdraw at 0110 and consolidate with the rest of the company. At 0200 the FAC requested an air strike from two night fighters on station. The aircraft were directed on the target by 60mm mortar white phosphorus bursts and conducted effective strafing and rocket runs within 200 yards of the Marine front line. In all, five aircraft of VMF(N)-542 were employed with excellent results during the night.

At 0230 Roise directed Fox Company to retake the left-flank hill from which the platoon had been driven. Two attempts were made before daybreak with the support of 4.2-inch mortar fire, but enemy machine guns stopped the assault. At 0730 an air strike was requested. After strafing and rocket runs, Fox Company fought its way to the crest, only to find the position untenable because of machine-gun fire from the reverse slope. At 1000 the Corsairs blasted the enemy for 25 minutes with napalm and 500-pound bombs, and CCF troops were observed vacating the objective area. It was nearly time for the battalion to displace as the rearguard, however, and the enemy was left in possession of a scarred and scorched piece of real estate.

Both Dog and Easy Companies received probing attacks which the Chinese did not attempt to push home. At daybreak some of them broke and ran along the Dog Company front, throwing away their weapons as they scattered in disorder. Marine fire pursued the retreating Communists and cut down many of them. Captain Arthur D. Challacombe's provisional company of artillerymen on Dog Company's right counted over 50 dead in front of its positions.[24]

On the eastern flank 1/5 came under attack about 2100 by 75-100 Chinese who crossed the arm of the reservoir on ice. Mortar and artillery fire drove them back at 0100 with heavy losses, but attempts at infiltration continued throughout the night. In the morning 51 CCF dead were counted in front of one Charlie Company machine gun, and total enemy KIA were estimated at 200.[25]

At the other end of the Marine line, a CCF attack hit 3/7(–) on Hill 1542. The assault force, according to the enemy report, consisted of Sung-Wei-shan's 9th Company, 3d Battalion, 235th Regiment, the 5th Company of 2/235, and apparently two other companies of 3/235. All were units of the 79th CCF Division, and their mission was "to annihilate the defending enemy before daylight."[25]

George and Item Companies of 3/7, following their repulse from the upper reaches of Hill 1542, had formed a defensive perimeter on the eastern slope. As reinforcements the depleted units were assigned a

composite outfit known as Jig Company and consisting of about 100 cannoneers, headquarters troops, and any other elements which could be hastily put together. First Lieutenant Alfred I. Thomas, of Item Company, was placed in command of men who were for the most part strangers to him as well as to one another.

Sung led the 9th Company's attacking column. Although the Chinese account states that his men were advancing from the northwest toward the topographical crest of Hill 1542, they actually held the summit. Their attack was downhill, though some climbing of spurs and finger ridges may have been necessary. After reconnoitering to a point within 25 yards of the Marines, the Chinese jumped off at 0430 with the support of fires from battalion weapons. Relying on the "inverted wedge," the attackers bored in alternately right and left while seeking an opportunity for a knockout blow. The 2d Platoon on the Chinese left took a severe mauling, losing its commander and almost half of its men. The other two platoons had heavy casualties but succeeded in routing the jury-rigged Jig Company. Since it was a composite outfit not yet 24 hours old, there is no record of either its operations or losses. Apparently, however, a majority of the men straggled back to their original units. Lieutenant Thomas, who had commanded ably under difficult circumstances, rejoined First Lieutenant William E. Johnson's Item Company with such men as he had left. The Marines gave ground slowly under Chinese pressure until daybreak, when they held positions abreast of George Company, which had not been heavily engaged.

The two companies were reduced to a total of fewer than 200 men. After being reinforced by H&S Company personnel, they formed a defensive line in an arc stretching from the MSR about 1100 yards and taking in the eastern slopes of Hill 1542.[27]

Apparently the Communists, like military forces everywhere, did not err on the light side when estimating the casualties of opponents. The Marine losses for the night were listed in the CCF report as "killed, altogether 100 enemy troops." This figure, indicating total casualties of several hundred, is manifestly too high. Owing to the loss of 7th Marines records, the statistics for Item Company are not available, but it does not appear that more than 30 to 40 men were killed or wounded.

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Chapter 12. Breakout From Yudam-ni
Advance of Darkhorse on 2-3 December

Several CCF daylight attacks in platoon strength were received between Hills 1542 and 1276 during the morning hours of 2 December. All Marine units in this area were in process of disengaging, so that the emphasis was placed on breaking off action rather than attempting to defend ground soon to be evacuated.

The vehicle train in the rear made slow progress during the afternoon of 2 December. Infantry strength was not sufficient to occupy all the commanding terrain during the passage of the motor column, and CCF groups infiltrated back into areas vacated by Marine riflemen. Effective air support reduced most of these efforts to harassing attacks, but Marine vehicle drivers were singled out for special attention, making it necessary to find replacements among near-by troops.

To 1/5 fell the mission of furnishing close-in flank protection on the left. Marine air and artillery supported infantry attacks clearing the flanks and the column jolted on with frequent halts. The night passed without incident except for a CCF attack on 3/11. George Battery gunners had to employ direct fire to repulse the Communists, and a 105mm howitzer was lost as well as several vehicles.

Darkhorse, leading the way, was meanwhile fighting for nearly every foot of the road during the advance of 2 December. George Company on the left went up against Hill 1520 while Dog-Easy moved astride the MSR. By noon George had secured its objective. Dog-Easy advanced against moderate resistance to a point about 300 yards beyond Hill 1520 where a demolished bridge had spanned a rock ravine as the road turns from south to east. Here Chinese automatic weapons fire halted the column until a strike by 12 Corsairs cleared the enemy from the ravine. On the right Captain Harold B. Williamson's How Company was to have joined in the attack, moving through the high ground south of the bend in the road. A Chinese strongpoint delayed its advance and How was pinned down by heavy enemy fire while attempting to cross a stream bed halfway to its objective. The last air strike of the day freed Captain Williamson's unit, which secured its objective after dark. During the last minutes of daylight, the engineer platoon, now commanded by Technical Sergeant Edwin L. Knox, constructed a bypass around the blasted bridge. About 1900 the first vehicles followed the tank across.

Click here to view map

Taplett's battalion continued its slow progress with George and How Companies clearing the high ground on opposite sides of the road while Dog-Easy moved astride the MSR. At about 0200 on the 3d the advance came to a halt 1000 yards short of Fox Hill. Dog-Easy, which had suffered heavy casualties, particularly among its key NCOs, had reached the limit of exhaustion, and 3/5 secured for the rest of the night. Not until daylight did How Company discover that it had halted 300 yards short of its final objective, the hill mass southwest of Fox Hill.

At dawn on 3 December the ground was covered with six inches of new snow, hiding the scars of war and giving a deceptively peaceful appearance to the Korean hills as the Marine column got under way again with Sergeant Knox's engineers at the point, just behind Sergeant Munsell's lone tank. Alternately serving as engineers and riflemen, this platoon came through with 17 able-bodied men left out of the 48 who started.

Dog-Easy Company having been rendered ineffective by its casualties, Taplett moved George Company down from the left flank to advance astride the road. First Lieutenant Charles D. Mize took over the reorganized outfit, assisted by Second Lieutenant August L. Camaratta. The two riddled Dog-Easy platoons were combined with George Company under the command of Second Lieutenant John J. Cahill and Technical Sergeant Don Faber.

Cahill had the distinction of leading the platoon which fought the first action of Marine ground forces in the Korean conflict. But it hardly seemed possible on this sub-zero December morning that the encounter had taken place barely four months before, or that the temperature that August day had been 1020 in the non-existent shade. Korea was a land of extremes.

Darkhorse was not far from a junction with the Ridgerunners. The night of 2-3 December had passed quietly in Toktong Pass, where the five companies occupied separate perimeters. The Marines on Fox Hill lighted warming fires in the hope of tempting the enemy to reveal his positions. The Chinese obliged by firing from two near-by ridges. One CCF group was dug in along a southern spur of the hill held by Able and Baker Companies, and the other occupied a ridge extending eastward beyond Toktong Pass in the direction of Hagaru.

Simultaneous attacks in opposite directions were launched by 1/7. Davis led Morris' and Newton's companies against the CCF force barring the way to Hagaru. Tighe moved out with Kurcaba's and Hovatter's companies meanwhile against a larger CCF force on high ground south of the big bend in the road. This stroke took the Chinese by surprise. As they fell back in disorder, the Communists did not realize that they were blundering into the path of the oncoming Marines of Williamson's How/5, attacking south of the MSR. Colonel Litzenberg, who had been informed by radio, turned to Lieutenant Colonel Murray and said, "Ray, notify your Third Battalion commander that the Chinese are running southwest into his arms!"[28]

Taplett was unaware that Tighe's attack was forcing about a battalion of Chinese into his lap. He had spotted the Chinese in strength on the high ground south of the road when day broke. Attempts to lay artillery on the Chinese having failed because of the range from Hagaru, the 3/5 commander called for an air strike. The overcast lifted just as the Corsairs came on station. They hit the demoralized Communists with napalm and rockets while the 81mm mortars and heavy machine guns of the two converging Marine forces opened up with everything they had. Probably the greatest slaughter of the Yudam-ni breakout ended at 1030 with the CCF battalion "completely eliminated," as the 3/5 report phrased it, and How Company in possession of the CCF positions.

At 1300 on 3 December, after Davis had cleared the enemy from the ridge northeast of Toktong Pass, the basic maneuver of the breakout was completed by the junction of 3/5 and 1/7. Several more fights awaited Taplett's men on the way to Hagaru, but at Toktong Pass they had fulfilled their mission. That the victory had not been gained without paying a price in casualties is indicated by the following daily returns of effective strength in the three rifle companies:

Click here to view table

This is a total of 243 battle and nonbattle casualties as compared to the 144 suffered by the same units during the CCF attacks of 27 to 30 November.

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Chapter 12. Breakout From Yudam-ni
Entry into Hagaru Perimeter

When the truck column with its wounded men reached Toktong Pass, it halted to receive the casualties of 1/7, 3/5, and Fox Company of 2/7. Lieutenant Commander John H. Craven, chaplain of the 7th Marines, helped to assist the litter cases into vehicles. Since there was not room for all, the walking wounded had to make room for helpless men. They complied with a courage which will never be forgotten by those who saw them struggling painfully toward Hagaru alongside the truck column.[29]

When the tank leading the 3/5 column reached Toktong Pass it halted only long enough for Colonels Taplett and Davis to confer. D–23 then moved out and the four companies of 1/7 came down from their hillside positions and fell in behind.

Stevens' 1/5, having leap-frogged 3/5, followed next on the way to blocking positions farther east on the MSR. Taplett remained in Toktong Pass until after midnight, acting as radio relay between Colonels Litzenberg and Murray, by now in Hagaru, and 2/5 in the rear. At about midnight the 3/5 commander sent G and H Companies into the vehicle column to furnish security for the artillery, and an hour later the remainder of the battalion joined the column. Roise's 2/5, which had passed through 3/7 came next, followed by Harris' rear guard.

Interspersed among the infantry were elements of artillery and service troops with their vehicles, and the column became more scrambled after each halt.[30] Two observation planes of VMO–6 circled overhead to give warning of enemy concentrations. Marine planes were on station continuously during daylight hours, strafing and rocketing to the front and along both flanks. A total of 145 sorties, most of them in close air support of troops advancing along the Hagaru–Yudam-ni MSR, were flown on 3 December by the following units:[31]
VMF-214: 36 sorties
VMF-323: 28 sorties
VMF-212: 27 sorties
VMF-312: 34 sorties
VMF(N)-513: 7 sorties
VMF(N)-542: 13 sorties
TOTAL: 145 sorties

At the other end of the route the Royal Marine Commandos, reinforced by a platoon of tanks, were sent out from Hagaru at 1630 on 3 December, to drive the Chinese from the road leading into that perimeter.

Thanks to excellent air support, 1/7 met no opposition save harassing attacks. One of Davis's flanking patrols reported the flushing out of a few Chinese so exhausted by cold and hardships that they had abandoned their weapons and holed up together for warmth. If these Marines had been in a mood for such reflections, they might have recalled that the American press of late had been bemoaning the supposed decline of the nation's young manhood. UN reverses in the summer of 1950 had led editorial writers to conclude that our troops had neither the legs for long marches nor the backs for the bearing of military burdens. Mechanization had gone so far, they lamented, that we had become the servants rather than the masters of our own wheeled and tracked vehicles.

The Marines of Davis' battalion might have taken a grim satisfaction, therefore, in encountering Chinese peasants, inured all their lives to privations, whose will to fight had been broken by the hardships of the past week. These Marines had not known a full night's sleep during that week. They had subsisted on a diet of crackers varied with canned rations thawed by body heat. They had been under continuous nervous pressure as

well as physical strain, and yet they were able to summon one last burst of pride when the point neared the Hagaru perimeter at 1900 on 3 December 1950. Several hundred yards from the entrance a halt was called while the men closed up into a compact column.[32] Then they came in marching, their shoulders thrown back and their shoepacs beating a firm tread on the frozen road.

The Marines at the head of the column were followed by the walking wounded and the vehicles loaded with more serious cases, some of whom had been strapped to the hoods. All casualties were given medical care and the remaining troops taken into warming tents for hot coffee. Many of them appeared dazed and uncomprehending at first. Others wandered about aimlessly with blank faces. But there were few who had suffered any psychological disturbances that could not be cleared up with a good night's sleep and some hot food.

Troops of 4/11 and 3/5 were due to arrive next at Hagaru while 1/5 and 2/5 echeloned companies forward along the MSR to provide flank protection. Not all the Chinese had lost aggressiveness, but the column had little difficulty until 0200 on 4 December. Then it came to a abrupt halt when prime movers of eight 155mm howitzers ran out of diesel fuel. As far back as Sinhung-ni 150 gallons had been requested but none had been delivered.[33] While the troops ahead, including G and H of 3/5, continued on towards Hagaru, unaware of the break, a bad situation developed around the stalled guns.

Following the halting of the convoy Major Angus J. Cronin, in charge of 4/11's vehicle column, and his handful of truck drivers and cannoneers drove off a platoon of Chinese. These Marines were soon joined by Lieutenant Colonel Feehan's 1/11 and Able Company of 1/5. By the time Lieutenant Colonel Taplett arrived, the 155s had been moved off the road by Captain O. R. Lodge of 4/11, who continued in spite of a wound until more severely wounded in the head.

Roise and Stevens arrived shortly afterwards and the three battalion commanders drew up a hasty plan. While 3/5 built up a base of fire a platoon of Easy Company, 2/5, would move through the ridge north of the road to knock out the Chinese strong point. Up to this time there had been few and minor instances of panic during the breakout from Yudam-ni. But some confusion resulted when the enemy took advantage of the delay to blow a small bridge ahead and increase his rate of fire. Thus a new roadblock awaited after the howitzers were removed, and two truck drivers were killed while the engineers repaired the break. Other drivers bypassed the bridge and made a dash for safety by crossing the little stream on the ice.

A comparatively few men, giving way to panic, were endangering the entire column. Behind one of the fleeing trucks an angry warrant officer pounded in pursuit, shouting some of the most sulphurous profanity that Lieutenant Colonel Taplett had ever heard.[34] This was CWO Allen Carlson of Baker Battery, 1/11. He disappeared around a bend in the road, only to return a moment later with a chastened driver towing a 105mm howitzer. Carlson hastily recruited a crew and set up the piece beside the road for point-blank fire at the enemy position while Taplett directed the fire of a 75mm recoilless rifle.

A Charlie Battery howitzer and a 1/5 heavy machine gun added their contribution as a platoon of Easy Company, 2/5, attacked under cover of air strikes. The Chinese position was overrun at 0830 at an estimated cost to the enemy of 150 dead. Two other attacks were launched by infantry units of Roise's battalion on the high ground to

the left before the MSR was cleared.

When the 155mm howitzers were pushed off the road, it had been assumed that they would be retrieved. Only 1000 yards farther down the MSR was a cache of air-dropped diesel fuel, but efforts to bring back replenishments were frustrated by enemy fire. Attempts at recovery by the British Marines failed later that day, and orders were given for the destruction by air of the eight stalled howitzers plus a ninth which had previously been abandoned after skidding off the road. This was the largest loss of weapons in the Yudam-ni breakout.

At 1400 on 4 December the last elements of the rearguard, 3/7, entered the perimeter and the four-day operation passed into history. Some 1500 casualties were brought to Hagaru, a third of them being in the non-

battle category, chiefly frostbite cases. It had taken the head of the column about 59 hours to cover the 14 miles, and the rear units 79 hours.

"Under the circumstances of its execution," commented General Smith, "the breakout was remarkably well conducted. Since centralized control of the widespread elements was a difficult task, particularly with a joint command, unit commanders were required to exercise a high degree of initiative .... The spirit and discipline of the men under the most adverse conditions of weather and terrain was another highly important factor contributing to the success of the operation and also reflecting the quality of the leadership being exercised."[35]

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Chapter 13. Regroupment at Hagaru

THE MARINES AT Hagaru would have been astonished to learn how much anxiety over their "encirclement" was being currently felt in the United States. It had been a rude shock for Americans who believed that the troops in Korea would be "home by Christmas" to realize that the unexpected Chinese intervention had created virtually a new war. This war, moreover, was apparently going against the UN forces. On Thanksgiving Day the victory over Communist aggression had seemed almost complete, yet only a week later the headlines announced major reverses. The Eighth Army was in full retreat, and an entire Marine division was said to be "trapped."

So disturbing were the reports from Korea, newspaper readers and radio listeners could scarcely have imagined the mood of confidence prevailing at Hagaru after the arrival of the troops from Yudam-ni. Even prior to that event, few Marines had any doubts as to the ability of the Division to fight its way out to the seacoast.

The Hagaru perimeter presented a scene of bustling activity during the first days of December. Trucks and jeeps bounced along the bumpy roads in such numbers as to create a traffic problem. Twin-engined planes roared in and out of the snow-covered airstrip at frequent intervals throughout the daylight hours. Overhead the "Flying Boxcars" spilled a rainbow profusion of red, blue, yellow, green and orange parachutes to drift earthward with heavy loads of rations, gasoline and ammunition.

The busy panorama even had its humorous aspects. Parka-clad Marines displaying a five-day growth of beard went about with their cheeks bulging from an accumulation of Tootsie Rolls—a caramel confection much esteemed by Stateside youngsters for its long-lasting qualities. The Post Exchange Section had originally brought merchandise into Hagaru on the assumption that it would be established as a base. No space in vehicles was available for its removal and the commanding general directed that the entire remaining stock, $13,547.80 worth, chiefly candies and cookies, should be issued gratuitously to the troops.[1] Tootsie Rolls proved to be a prime favorite with men who would have scorned them in civilian life. Not only were they more tasty than half-frozen "C" rations, but they resulted in no intestinal disorders. Moreover, they were useful as temporary repairs for leaking radiators.

There was nothing during the daytime to indicate the presence of CCF troops near Hagaru. Even in hours of darkness the enemy was quiet throughout the first five nights of December. Apparently the Chinese were powerless to renew the attack until reinforcements and replenishments of supplies and ammunition reached the area.

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Chapter 13. Regroupment at Hagaru
4312 Casualties Evacuated by Air

Evacuation of the wounded was the chief problem on 2 December, when it became evident that previous estimates of losses at Yudam-ni and among the Army troops east of the Reservoir were far too low. A total of 914 casualties were flown out by the C-47s and R4Ds that day and more than 700 on the 3d. Captain Hering and his assistants had assumed that the Air Force evacuation officer was screening the casualties until he informed them that this was not his responsibility. The Division surgeon then set a Spartan standard. He passed personally on all controversial cases and approved for evacuation only those in as bad shape as Lieutenant Commander Lessenden, the 5th Marines surgeon who had refused to be flown out and continued on duty after both feet were painfully frozen. Apparently it was not too severe a test for men who could stand the pain, since Lessenden suffered no permanent injuries.[2]

Captain Hering had to use his medical authority in several instances to overcome the objections of Yudam-ni casualties who declined evacuation, though in obvious need of hospitalization.[3]

The liaison airstrip at Koto-ri had been of little use, since it was outside the perimeter and exposed to enemy fire. But the completion of a new strip on the 2d made it possible to evacuate about 47 casualties that day from the 2/1 perimeter.[4]

More than 1400 casualties remained at Hagaru on the morning of 5 December. They were all flown out before nightfall, making a total of 4312 men (3150 Marines, 1137 Army personnel and 25 Royal Marines) evacuated from Hagaru by air in the first five days of December, according to Marine figures.[5] X Corps estimated a total of 4207 for the same period.[6]

R4Ds of the 1st MAW, flying under Wing operational control, were represented in the flights to and from Hagaru as well as the C-47s of the Combat Cargo Command, FEAF.[7] The large-scale casualty evacuation was completed without losing a man, even though the aircraft landing on the rough strip careened precariously as they bounced along the frozen runway. Only two planes could be accomodated simultaneously at first, but Marine engineers widened the 2900-foot strip until six planes could be parked at a time.

A four-engine Navy R5D made a successful landing with stretchers flown in from Japan. After taking off with a load of wounded, the pilot barely cleared the surrounding hills, and it was decided to risk no further evacuations with such large aircraft. Two crash landings marred operations on the field. An incoming Marine R4D, heavily loaded with artillery ammunition, wiped out its landing gear on the rough surface and was abandoned after its load had been put to good use by the gunners. A second accident involved an Air Force C-47 which lost power on the take off and came down just outside the Marine lines without injury to its load of casualties. Troops from the perimeter were rushed out immediately to rescue its occupants but the plane had to be destroyed.[8]

Not until long later were final official casualty reports rendered for the period of the Yudam-ni regroupment and breakout. Regimental figures are not available, and the totals included the losses suffered by the troops at Hagaru during the night of 30 November-1 December. Following are the figures for the 1st Marine Division as a whole throughout this five-day period:

Click here to view table

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Chapter 13. Regroupment at Hagaru
537 Replacements Flown to Hagaru

At 1359, on 3 December, X Corps issued OI 22, directing the 1st Marine Division to withdraw all elements to Hamhung area via the Hagaru-Hamhung axis as rapidly as evacuation of wounded and other preparations would permit.[9] General Almond flew to Hagaru that same day for a conference with General Smith. Nothing further was said about destruction of equipment. At that very time, in fact, various critical items were being salvaged and flown out from Hagaru when space on planes was available.

Surplus weapons had accumulated as a result of casualties and the Marine general wished to avoid the destruction of any material that could be removed by air without interfering with casualty evacuation. It was particularly necessary to salvage and fly out the parachutes and packages used for air drops, since a critical shortage of these had been reported from Japan. Before leaving Hagaru, the Division also planned to evacuate large quantities of stoves, tents, typewriters, rifles, machine guns and damaged 4.2" mortars.[10]

Space in empty planes landing at Hagaru was utilized not only for bringing in equipment and medical supplies, but also replacements. Since the Wonsan landing some hundreds of Marines, most of them wounded in the Inchon-Seoul operation, had returned from hospitals in Japan. These men, upon reporting at Hungnam, were temporarily assigned to the Headquarters Battalion, since the Division had no provision in its T/O for a replacement organization. Ordinarily they would have been returned to their units, but enemy action made this procedure impossible until the completion of the airstrip.

During the first five days of December, therefore, 537 replacements were flown to Hagaru, fit for duty and equipped with cold-weather clothing. Those destined for the 1st Marines were assigned to the 3d Battalion for perimeter defense, and personnel for the 5th and 7th Marines joined those units after their arrival at Hagaru.

Major General William H. Tunner, USAF, the chief of the Combat Cargo Command, expressed astonishment during his visit of 5 December on learning about these replacements. He had come to offer his C-47s for troop evacuation after the casualties were flown out, but General Smith explained that all able-bodied men would be needed for the breakout.

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Chapter 13. Regroupment at Hagaru
Air Drops of Ammunition

Visitors and press correspondents arrived daily at Hagaru in the empty C-47s and R4Ds. Among them was Miss Marguerite Higgins, reporter for the New York *Herald-Tribune.* General Smith ruled that for her own protection, considering the possibility of enemy attack, she must leave the perimeter before nightfall.

French and British publications were represented as well as most of the larger American dailies and wire services. At one of the press conferences the question arose as to the proper name of the Marine operation. A British correspondent had intended to refer to it as a “retreat” or “retirement,” but General Smith held that there could be no retreat when there was no rear. Since the Division was surrounded, he maintained, the word “retreat” was not a correct term for the coming breakout to the coast.[11]

General Smith and Lieutenant Colonel Murray were interviewed for television by Charles de Soria, who also “shot” Marines on infantry duty and casualties awaiting evacuation. These pictures and recordings were later shown in the United States under the title *Gethsemane*.

The correspondents were astonished to find the Hagaru perimeter so lacking in enemy activity. This quiet was shattered at 2010 on 5 December when two B-26s bombed and strafed the area. Marine night fighters were absent on a search mission, but one was recalled to offer protection against further efforts of the sort. A possible explanation was advanced by First Lieutenant Harry S. Wilson, of VMF(N)–542, who reported that he had received orders by radio to attack Hagaru. It was his conviction that Chinese use of captured radio equipment accounted for the B–26 attack.[12]

The interlude of CCF inactivity gave the 1st Marine Division an opportunity to build up a stock of air-dropped ammunition and supplies. Poor communications had prevented the obtaining of advance information as to the requirements of the Yudam-ni troops, and their needs had to be estimated by the assistant G–4.

It was planned that units moving out from Hagaru would take only enough supplies for the advance to Koto-ri. Materiel would be air-dropped there to support the next stage of the breakout.

The C–119s of the Combat Cargo Command were called upon to fly in the largest part of the total of the 372.7 tons requested for air delivery at Hagaru. C-47s and R4Ds were available for some items, particularly of a fragile nature; and specially packaged small drops to meet specific needs could be made by planes of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

Officers and men of the Headquarters Battalion at Hagaru were ordered to assist the 1st Regulating Detachment in the operation of the Hagaru airhead. Army service troops were also assigned to the task, and dumps were set up adjacent to the drop zone for the direct issuing of supplies. The major items requested were artillery, mortar and small arms ammunition, hand grenades, gasoline and diesel oil, rations, and communication wire.[13]

There is no record of the amounts actually received. Pilots sometimes missed the drop zone so far that the containers were “captured” by the enemy or landed in areas where recovery was not feasible because of enemy fire. In other instances, the supplies fell near the positions of front-line units which issued them on the spot without any formalities of bookkeeping.

Breakage rates were high, due to the frozen ground. About 70 per cent of the POL products and 70 to 80 per cent of the rations were recovered in usable condition. Of the artillery ammunition delivered to the drop zone, 40 per cent was badly damaged and only 25 per cent ever reached the gun positions. About 45 per cent of the small arms ammunition was recovered and usable. A hundred per cent of the requested mortar ammunition and 90

per cent of the 81mm rounds were put into the air over the drop zone, though the damage rate was nearly as high as that of the artillery shells.[14]

In spite of the seemingly low percentages of receipts as compared to requests, it was considered that the Hagaru air drops had been successful on the whole. “Without the extra ammunition,” commented General Smith, “many more of the friendly troops would have been killed. . . . There can be no doubt that the supplies received by this method proved to be the margin necessary to sustain adequately the operations of the division during this period.”[15]

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Chapter 13. Regroupment at Hagaru
Planning for Breakout to Koto-ri

The need of the Yudam-ni troops for recuperation was so urgent that 6 December was set as the D-day of the attack from Hagaru to Koto-ri. On the recommendation of his staff, General Smith decided that the need of the troops for rest and regroupment outweighed the advantages of a speedy advance, even though the enemy would be allowed more time to get his forces into position along the MSR.

Another factor influencing this decision was the thinning of the command group and staff sections of the Division. It will be recalled that General Craig, the Assistant Division Commander, had recently been returned on emergency leave to the United States. Colonel Walseth (G-1) was wounded on 30 November, while Lieutenant Colonel Chidester, had been MIA since that date. Colonel McAlister (G–4) had been directed to remain at Hungnam to co-ordinate logistic functions.

A serious handicap to planning was the shortage of staff personnel. This was due in part to the casualties suffered by the last convoy of Headquarters troops to move up from Hungnam. Moreover, the office force had been depleted by calls for reinforcements to defend the perimeter.

By dint of working round the clock, however, planning for the breakout to Koto-ri was completed on Schedule. OpnO 25–50, issued at 0800 on 5 December, provided for an advance of the 1st Marine Division at first light the following morning on the Koto-ri-Chinhung-ni-Majondong axis to close the Hamhung area. The principal subordinate units were assigned these tasks:

"(a) RCT–5 (3/1 attached) to relieve all elements on perimeter defense in the Hagaru area by 1200, 5 December; to cover the movement of RCT–7 out of Hagaru to the south; to follow RCT–7 to the south on the Hagaru-ri–Koto-ri–Chinhungni axis; to protect the Division rear from Hagaru to Koto-ri; and to follow RCT–7 from Koto-ri to the Hamhung area as Division reserve.

"(b) RCT–7 to advance south at first light on 6 December on the Hagaru–Koto-ri–Chinhung-ni axis to close the Hamhung area.

"(c) RCT–1 (–) to continue to hold Koto-ri and Chanhung-ni, protecting the approach and passage of the remainder of the Division through Koto-ri; and to protect the Division rear from Koto-ri to the Hamhung area."[16]

All personnel except drivers, relief drivers, radio operators, casualties and men specially designated by RCT commanders, were to march on foot alongside motor serials to provide close-in security. It was directed that vehicles breaking down should be pushed to the side of the road and destroyed if not operative by the time the column passed. During halts a perimeter defense of motor serials was to be established.

Nine control points were designated by map references to be used for reporting progress of the advance or directing air drops. Demolitions to clear obstacles from the front and to create them to the rear were planned by the Division Engineer Officer.

Division AdminO 20–50, which accompanied OpnO 25–50, prescribed that the troops were to take enough "C" rations for two days, equally distributed between individual and organic transportation. Selected items of "B" rations were to be loaded on organic vehicles, and the following provision was made for ammunition:

"On individual, up to 1 U/F per individual weapon; on vehicle, minimum 1 U/F, then proportionate share per RCT until dumps depleted or transportation capacity exceeded."

Helicopter evacuation was indicated for emergency cases. Other casualties were to be placed in sleeping

bags and evacuated in vehicles of the column.

Two Division trains were set up by AdminO 20–50. Lieutenant Colonel Banks commanded Train No. 1, under RCT–7; and No. 2, under RCT–5, was in charge of Lieutenant Colonel Milne. Each motor serial in the trains was to have a commander who maintained radio communication with the train commander.

Truck transportation not being available for all supplies and equipment at Hagaru, a Division destruction plan was issued on 4 December, making unit commanders responsible for disposing of all excess supplies and equipment within their own areas. “Commanding officer 1st Regulating Detachment is responsible for destruction all classes supplies and equipment remaining in dumps,” the order continued. “Unit commanders and CO 1st Regulating Detachment report types and amounts of supplies and equipment to this headquarters (G–4) prior to destruction. Permission to use fuel and ammunition for destruction purposes must be obtained from this headquarters (G–4).”

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Chapter 13. Regroupment at Hagaru
3/1 Relieved by RCT–5 at Hagaru

General Smith held conferences on 4 and 5 December of senior unit commanders. During the afternoon of the 4th General Almond arrived by plane and was briefed on the plan for the breakout. In a brief ceremony at the Division CP he presented the Distinguished Service Cross to General Smith, Colonel Litzenberg and Lieutenant Colonels Murray and Beall.

The night of 5–6 December was the fifth in a row to pass without enemy activity at Hagaru. But if Division G–2 summaries were to be credited, it was the calm before the storm. For the Chinese were believed to be assembling troops and supplies both at Hagaru and along the MSR to Koto-ri. Up to this time seven CCF divisions, the 58th, 59th, 60th, 76th, 79th, 80th and 89th, had been identified through POW interrogations. But there were evidences that the 77th and 78th were also within striking distance.[17]

At 1200 on 5 December the 5th Marines relieved 3/1 of the responsibility for the defense of the Hagaru area. Division elements other than infantry were withdrawn from the front line, leaving Lieutenant Colonel Murray's three battalions, with 3/1 attached, disposed around the perimeter as follows:

1/5—From the Yudam-ni road around the north of Hagaru and astride the Changjin Valley to a point at the base of the ridge about 1,000 yards east of the bridge over the Changjin River.

2/5—In position on western slopes of East Hill.

3/5—From the south nose of East Hill west across the river to link up with 3/1 south of the airstrip.

3/1—South and southwest of airstrip in sector formerly held by How and Item Companies of 3/1.[18]

Not only were the CCF positions on East Hill a threat to Hagaru; they also dominated the road leading south to Koto-ri. Thus the plan for the breakout called for simultaneous attacks to be launched at first light on the 6th—RCT–5 to regain the enemy-held portion of East Hill, and RCT–7 to lead the advance of the Division motor column toward Koto-ri.

A plan for air support, prepared by the command and staff of the 1st MAW, was brought to Hagaru by Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman, Assistant Wing Commander, on 5 December. Aircraft were to be on station at 0700 to furnish close support for the attack on East Hill. Along the MSR to Koto-ri an umbrella of 24 close support aircraft was to cover the head, rear and flanks of the breakout column while search and attack planes scoured the ridges flanking the road and approaches leading into it. Support was also to be furnished after dark by the night hecklers. All strikes within three miles of either side of the MSR were to be controlled by the ground forces while the planes were free to hit any targets beyond.

The concentration of aircraft covering the advance south from Hagaru was one of the greatest of the whole war. Marine planes at Yonpo would, of course, continue approximately 100 daily sorties to which VMF–323 would add 30 more from the *Badoeng Strait*. The Navy's fast carriers, *Leyte*, *Valley Forge*, *Philippine Sea*, and *Princeton* were to abandon temporarily their deep support or interdiction operations and contribute about 100 or more attack sorties daily. The Fifth Air Force was to add more power with additional U.S. and Australian fighter-bombers as well as medium and heavy bomber interdiction beyond the bomb line. To augment the carrier support for the X Corps consolidation and possible redeployment by sea, VMF-212 had departed Yonpo on 4 December and was re-equipping in Itami for return to battle aboard the newly arrived USS *Bataan*. The *Sicily* was also heading for the area to take back aboard the Corsairs of VMF-214 on 7 December.[19]

Continuous artillery support, both for RCT-5 and RCT-7, was planned by the 11th Marines. Two batteries of the 3d Battalion and one of the 4th were to move out at the head of the RCT-7 train, the two from 3/11

to occupy initial positions halfway to Koto-ri to support the attack southward to that objective, and the 4/11 battery to take position in Koto-ri and provide general support northward in combination with the battery of 2/11 attached to that perimeter. The remaining batteries of the 3d and 4th Battalions would provide initial support from Hagaru southward until ordered to move out.

The three batteries of 1/11, with D/11 attached, were to support the operations of RCT-5 in a similar manner. Two batteries would move out at the head of the regimental train to positions halfway to Koto-ri, the remaining two would fire to the south in support of withdrawing units and then displace when the first two were in position.[20]

Throughout the night of 5–6 December, the darkness was stabbed by flashes as the artillery at Hagaru fired concentrations to saturate the area along the Hagaru-Koto-ri axis. In order to prevent cratering of the road the 155's fired VT rounds. A secondary purpose of this bombardment was to expend profitably the surplus of ammunition which could not be brought out.[21]

At daybreak on the 6th the Division Headquarters broke camp. General Smith had decided to fly the command group to Koto-ri in advance of the troops, so that planning could begin immediately for the breakout from Koto-ri southward. General Barr visited during the morning and was informed that the 7th Infantry Division casualties who had reached Hagaru had been flown out. The remaining 490 able-bodied men (including 385 survivors of Task Force Faith) had been provided with Marine equipment and organized into a provisional battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Anderson, USA. This battalion was attached to the 7th Marines and sometimes referred to as 31/7.

Throughout the morning General Smith kept in close touch with the progress of RCT-7 toward Koto-ri. At 1400 a reassuring message was received from Colonel Litzenberg, and the commanding general took off from Hagaru by helicopter. Ten minutes later he and his aide, Captain Martin J. Sexton, landed at Koto-ri. The other members of the command group, following by OY and helicopter, set up in a large tent at Koto-ri and started planning for the next stage.[22]

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Chapter 13. Regroupment at Hagaru
East Hill Retaken from Chinese

Meanwhile, at Hagaru, Lieutenant Colonel Murray had designated his 2d Battalion for the assault on East Hill. At 0700 on 6 December, as the 4.2" mortars began their planned preparation, the 7th Marines had already initiated the breakout to Koto-ri. When Marine planes arrived on station at 0725, a shortage of napalm tanks limited the air attack to bombing, rocket and strafing runs. These had little apparent effect on the objective. Further air strikes were directed by the FAC, First Lieutenant Manning T. Jeter, Jr., who was severely wounded while standing on the crest to direct the Corsairs to the target. Captain David G. Johnson, the air liaison officer, took his place. A total of 76 planes participated in the day's air attacks.

At 0900 Captain Smith's Dog Company moved out to the assault (see Map 26) with First Lieutenant George A. Sorenson's 3d Platoon in the lead, followed by the 2d and 1st Platoons in that order.[23] Attacking to the northward, Sorensen was pinned down by fire from Objective A before he had covered 50 yards. This was the enemy's main forward position on East Hill, which he had held against Marine attacks ever since seizing it in the early morning hours of 29 November. First Lieutenant John R. Hinds replaced Sorensen, after that officer was wounded. While he engaged the enemy frontally, First Lieutenant George C. McNaughton's 2d Platoon poured in flanking fires and First Lieutenant Richard M. Johnson's 1st Platoon executed a flanking movement.
Click here to view map

Chinese resistance suddenly collapsed about 1100. Thus it seemed almost an anticlimax that East Hill, after holding out against the Marines more than a week, should have been retaken at a cost of one man killed and three wounded. About 30 CCF dead were found.

As events were to prove, however, this was but the first round in a hard-fought 22-hour battle for the hill mass. The next phase began at 1130, when Roise ordered Captain Peters' Fox Company to relieve Smith so that Dog Company could resume the attack against Objective B, a ridge about 500 yards to the southeast. The lower slopes of this position were now being cleared by 2/7.

After a 10-minute artillery preparation, the three platoons of Dog Company jumped off at 1250. The Chinese put up a stubborn resistance and it took until 1430 to seize the new objective. Marine casualties were moderate, however, and Captain Smith set up three platoon positions along the ridge running to the south whence he could control the road leading out of Hagaru.

Late in the day the enemy appeared to be massing for a counterattack in the saddle between the two objectives. Johnson called an air strike and all Dog and Fox Company troops within range opened up with everything they had as McNaughton led a patrol against the Chinese in the saddle. Caught between the infantry fires and the rocket and strafing runs of the Corsairs, the CCF survivors surrendered en masse to McNaughton and his platoon. About 220 prisoners were taken to set a record for the 1st Marine Division in the Reservoir campaign.[24]

At the request of Captain Smith, the saddle between the two Marine companies was occupied by reinforcements consisting of an officer and 11 men from the regimental AT Company and an officer and 32 men from the 4th Signal Battalion, USA. Shortly after dark the enemy launched a vigorous counterattack. Tanks and 81mm mortars fired in support of Marines who made good use of 2.36" white phosphorus rockets at close range.

Although the Chinese endured frightful casualties, they returned again and again to the attack until midnight. It was evident that they considered this a fight to a finish for East Hill, and at 0205 they renewed the assault against all three companies of the 2d Battalion as well as Charlie Company of the 1st Battalion.

The struggle during the next three hours was considered the most spectacular if not the most fiercely contested battle of the entire Reservoir campaign even by veterans of the Yudam-ni actions. Never before had they seen the Chinese come on in such numbers or return to the attack with such persistence. The darkness was crisscrossed with a fiery pattern of tracer bullets at one moment, and next the uncanny radiance of an illumination shell would reveal Chinese columns shuffling in at a trot, only to go down in heaps as they deployed. Marine tanks, artillery, mortars, rockets and machine guns reaped a deadly harvest, and still the enemy kept on coming with a dogged fatalism which commanded the respect of the Marines. Looking like round little gnomes in their padded cotton uniforms, groups of Chinese contrived at times to approach within grenade-throwing distance before being cut down.

The fight was not entirely one-sided. The Marines took a pounding from CCF mortars and machine guns, and by 0300 Dog Company was hard-pressed in its three extended positions pointed like a pistol at the heart of the enemy's assembly areas. Both McNaughton and the executive officer, First Lieutenant James H. Honeycutt, were wounded but remained in action.

This was the second time in three months that Dog Company had spearheaded a Marine attack on a desperately defended hill complex. Northwest of Seoul in September, only 26 able-bodied men had survived to break the back of North Korean resistance. The company commander, First Lieutenant H. J. Smith, had died a hero's death at the moment of victory, and First Lieutenant Karle F. Seydel was the unit's only unwounded officer.

Now another Smith commanded Dog Company, and Seydel was killed as enemy pressure from front and flank threatened to overwhelm the three riddled platoons. Casualties of 13 KIA and 50 WIA were taken in the battle for East Hill as Dog Company and the provisional platoons fell back fighting to the former Objective A and tied in with Fox Company.

Click here to view map

Along the low ground at the northern end of East Hill the Chinese were beaten off with ruinous losses by Jaskilka's Easy Company of 2/5, Jones' Charlie Company of 1/5 and three Army tanks (see Map 27). Enemy troops had to cross a comparatively level expanse which provided a lucrative field of fire for Marine supporting arms. Heaps of CCF dead, many of them charred by white phosphorus bursts, were piled up in front of the Marine positions.

Next, the Chinese hit Captain James B. Heater's Able Company of 1/5, still farther to the left, and overran several squad positions. One platoon was forced to withdraw to the rise on which the Division CP had previously been located. The lines were restored at 0546 with the help of Lieutenant Hancock and his Baker Company, which had been in reserve. Altogether the 1st Battalion had suffered casualties of ten killed and 43 wounded, while the counted CCF slain numbered 260 in front of Charlie Company and 200 in the area of Able Company. George Company of 3/1 also beat off a Chinese attack on the south of the perimeter. With the coming of daylight these Marines found that they had one of the Chinese withdrawal routes under their guns. Mortar and rifle fire annihilated one group of about 60 enemy and another group of 15 Reds surrendered.[25]

The new day revealed a scene of slaughter which surpassed anything the Marines had seen since the fight for the approaches of Seoul in September. Estimates of CCF dead in front of the 2d Battalion positions on and around East Hill ran as high as 800, and certain it is that the enemy had suffered a major defeat.

When Marine air came on station, the Chinese as usual scattered for cover. About 0200 Murray ordered 3/5, which had not been in contact with the enemy during the night, to displace to the south at the head of Division Train No. 2, followed by 1/5 and Ridge's battalion of the 1st Marines. This meant that Roise's men with a platoon of tanks and the engineers in charge of demolitions would be the last troops out of Hagaru.

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Chapter 13. Regroupment at Hagaru
Attack of RCT-7 to the South

During the 22-hour battle on East Hill the 7th Marines had been attacking toward Koto-ri (see Map 28). On the eve of the breakout the gaps in the infantry ranks were partially filled with 300 artillerymen from the 11th Marines, bringing Litzenberg's strength up to about 2200 men. 7th Mar OpnO 14–50 called for the advance to be initiated at first light on 6 December as follows:

"1st Battalion—to move out at 0430 to clear the ground to the right of the river;

"2d Battalion—supported by tanks, to attack as advanced guard along the MSR;

"Provisional Battalion (31/7)—to clear the ground to the left of the MSR;[26]

"3d Battalion—to bring up the rear of the regimental train, with George Company disposed along both flanks as security for the vehicles."[27]

Daybreak revealed a peculiar silvery fog covering the Hagaru area.[28] The 1st Battalion, with Charlie Company in assault, had as its first objective the high ground southeast of Tonae-ri. No resistance was encountered, though 24 Chinese were surprised asleep in their positions near the objective and 17 of them killed.

The 2d Platoon of Dog Company, 1st Tank Battalion, was attached to 2/7 when the advance guard jumped off at 0630 from the road block south of Hagaru. Almost immediately the column ran into trouble. Upon clearing the road block the lead dozer-tank took three hits from a 3.5 bazooka. Within twenty minutes the column came under heavy fire from CCF positions on the high ground on the left. Fox Company, in the lead, was allowed to pass before the enemy opened up on the Battalion Command Group, Dog-Easy Company and Weapons Company. The fog prevented air support initially. When it lifted, First Lieutenant John G. Theros, FAC of 2/7, brought in Marine aircraft and 81mm fire on the CCF position.[29] It took a coordinated attack by the two infantry companies and the tanks, however, before the resistance could be put down and the advance resumed at 1200. Two and a half hours later the upper reaches of this hill were cleared by D/5.

Click here to view map

After 2/7 and air smothered the initial Chinese resistance, Fox Company and the platoon of Dog/Tanks advanced down the road. About 4000 yards south of Hagaru they met the next resistance. Although the Chinese positions were in plain sight of 1/7, neither 2/7 nor air could spot them. Colonel Litzenberg and Lieutenant Colonel Lockwood atempted to coordinate mortar fires from 2/7 with observation from 1/7, but were unsuccessful because of poor radio communications. Following an erratic artillery barrage and some good shooting by the tanks, Fox Company cleared the enemy position about 1500, aided by a Dog-Easy flanking attack and the Provisional Battalion. In order to assist 2/7, Baker Company of 1/7 came down from the ridge west of the river to act as right flank guard.

Meanwhile 1/7 continued to push ahead methodically to the right of the MSR as the three rifle companies leapfrogged one another. Enemy contact was continual but no serious opposition developed during the daytime hours. On the left flank the Provisional Battalion had several fire fights, while the advance was uneventful for the 3d Battalion following in the rear of the regimental train.

About 5000 yards had been covered by dusk. Enemy resistance stiffened after dark, as had been anticipated. The planners had realized that the movement could have been made in daylight hours with fewer losses in personnel and equipment. But intelligence of the expected arrival of CCF reinforcements influenced the decision to continue the march throughout the night even at the cost of increased opposition. By noon long lines of Chinese could be seen along the sky line to the east of the road moving towards the MSR. Air attacked these

reinforcements but could not stop their movement, as later events proved.

About 8000 yards south of Hagaru, in Hell Fire Valley, a Chinese machine gun on the left stopped the 2d Battalion at 2200. The column was held up until midnight before Army tank fire knocked out the enemy gun. After covering 1200 more yards a blown bridge caused another halt while Dog Company engineers made repairs. Movement was resumed at 0200 when a second blown bridge resulted in a delay of an hour and a half before it could be bypassed.

Dawn brought a significant innovation in air support. Circling above the 11-mile column inching toward Koto-ri was an airborne Tactical Air Direction Center (TADC) installed in an R5D of VMR-152 and operated by Major Harlen E. Hood and his communicators from MTACS-2. Major Christian C. Lee, Commanding Officer of MTACS-2, had made arrangements when he realized that with his radios packed in trucks and jeeps he could not control close air support effectively. Only the addition of one radio to those standard in the aircraft was necessary to provide basic communications, but when being readied for the predawn takeoff the mission faced failure because an engine wouldn't start. Minus a refueler truck, the crew chief, Technical Sergeant H. C. Stuart, had worked all night to pour 2400 gallons of gas into the craft by hand. Now, in the bitter cold of dawn, he set about to overhaul the starting motor. Two hours later Major John N. Swartley was piloting the plane over the MSR.[30]

No trouble was encountered by 2/7 along the last few miles of the route and the battalion was first to arrive at Koto-ri. Meanwhile, the 3d Battalion had been assigned the additional mission of replacing the Provisional Battalion as protection for the left flank as well as rear of the 7th Marines train. A brief fire fight developed at about 2100 as the Chinese closed to hand-grenade range. Lieutenant Colonel Harris deployed George and Item Companies around the vehicles and drove the enemy back to a respectful distance. Between 0200 and 0430, Item Company of 3/7 and a platoon of tanks were sent back up the road to clear out a troublesome Chinese position near Hell Fire Valley.

About 0200, during a halt for bridge repairs, the 7th Marines train was hit by enemy fire. The regimental command group suffered most. Captain Donald R. France and First Lieutenant Clarence E. McGuinness were killed and Lieutenant Colonel Frederick W. Dowsett was wounded. While Lieutenant (jg) Robert G. Medemeyer, (MC), USN, gave first aid, Chaplain (Lieutenant (jg)) Cornelius J. Griffin entered an ambulance to console a dying Marine. CCF machine gun bullets shattered his jaw and killed Sergeant Matthew Caruso at his side. Lieutenant Colonel Harris and Major Roach supervised the deployment of How Company troops to beat off the attack.

About 0530 Lieutenant Colonel Harris disappeared. A search was made for him to no avail and he was listed as a MIA. It was later determined that he had been killed.

The 1st Battalion of RCT-7, after a relatively uneventful march over the high ground west of the river, moved down the slope to join the regimental column. Major Warren Morris assumed command of the 3d Battalion, which reached Koto-ri about 0700. At about 1100, after a brief rest, the men were ordered together with Lockwood's troops to move back up along the MSR to the north and set up blocking between Koto-ri and Hill 1182 to keep the road open for other units of the Division.[31] While carrying out this mission, the 2d Battalion helped to bring in 22 British Marines who had been stranded ever since the Task Force Drysdale fight on the night of 29–30 November. Their plight was not known until 4 December, when an OY pilot saw the letters H-E-L-P stamped out in the snow and air-dropped food and medical supplies.

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Chapter 13. Regroupment at Hagaru
Advance of the Division Trains

By 1700 on 7 December all elements of RCT-7 were in the perimeter at Koto-ri. Division Train No. 1 was due next, and the planners had hoped that the rifle battalions would clear the way for the vehicles. As it proved, however, the Chinese closed in behind RCT-7 and attacked the flanks of the convoy, with the result that the service troops actually saw more action than the infantrymen.

One of the causes may be traced to the fact that Division Train No. 1 had to wait at Hagaru until 1600 on the 6th before RCT-7 made enough progress toward Koto-ri to warrant putting the convoy on the road. About 2000 yards south of Hagaru elements of the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, were hit in the early darkness by CCF mortar and small-arms fire. The gunners of George and How Batteries deployed as infantrymen and repulsed the enemy at the cost of a few casualties.

Upon resuming the march, a second fire fight took place after 1500 more yards had been covered. Several vehicles, set afire by Chinese mortar shells, blocked the road and brought the convoy to a halt. At daybreak the enemy swarmed to the attack in formidable numbers. It was nip and tuck as all pieces of How Battery and three howitzers of George Battery were emplaced between the trucks of the 1st MT Battalion.

There was no opportunity to dig in the trails of guns employing time fire with fuses cut for ranges of 40 to 500 yards. But the Chinese were stopped cold by two hours of continuous fire after approaching within 40 yards. All but about 50 of an estimated 500 to 800 enemy were killed or wounded before the remainder fled, according to the estimate of the gunners.[32]

The convoy of the Division Headquarters Company also had to fight its way. Small arms ammunition had been distributed throughout the column, and light machine guns were mounted on top of truck loads. All able-bodied men with the exception of drivers and radio operators walked in single file on either side of the vehicles carrying the wounded.

Progress was slow, with many halts caused by CCF fire. At 0130 several trucks were set aflame by enemy mortar shells and 2.36 rockets. Headquarters troops deployed in roadside ditches while two machine guns manned by bandsmen kept the Chinese at a distance. At 0200 the clouds cleared enough to permit strikes by night hecklers of VMF (N)-513. They stopped the Chinese until just before daylight, when a company-size group penetrated within 30 yards of the convoy. During this fight First Lieutenant Charles H. Sullivan, who measured six feet four and weighed 240 pounds, emptied his carbine at advancing Chinese. Then he hurled it like a javelin to drive the bayonet into the chest of an opponent at 15 feet.

Under the coaching of the MTACS commander, Major Lee, two more night fighters—Major Albert L. Clark and First Lieutenant Truman Clark—pinned the Chinese down with strafing runs as close as 30 yards from the Marine ground troops. At dawn Major Percy F. Avant, Jr., and his four-plane division from VMF-312 dumped about four tons of explosives and napalm on Chinese who broke and ran for cover. The fire fight had cost Headquarters Battalion 6 KIA and 14 WIA.[33]

The MP Company, just forward of Headquarters Company, had the problem of guarding about 160 Chinese prisoners. Captives unable to walk had been left behind at Hagaru, where Lieutenant Colonel Murray directed that the wounded be given shelter and provided with food and fuel by the departing Marines. The prisoners escorted by the MPs were lying in the middle of the road during the attack when the enemy seemed to concentrate his fire on them while shouting in Chinese. A scene of pandemonium ensued as some of the able-bodied prisoners attempted to make a break. Now the Marines as well as the enemy fired into them and 137 were

killed in the wild melee.

When the convoy got under way again, two Communists were captured and 15 killed after being flushed out of houses in the village of Pusong-ni. At daybreak a halt was called in Hell Fire Valley for the purpose of identifying bodies of MPs and Headquarters troops, killed in the Task Force Drysdale battle, which were to be picked up later. Attempts to start the looted and abandoned vehicles met with no success and the convoy continued the movement to Koto-ri without incident, arriving about 1000 on the 7th.

At this hour the last Marine troops had not yet left Hagaru, so that the column as a whole extended the entire 11 miles of the route. Division Train No. 2 had formed up during the afternoon of the 6th, but was unable to start until after dark. At midnight the train had moved only a short distance out of Hagaru. Lieutenant Colonel Milne requested infantry support and 3/5 was given the mission of advancing at the head of the column, along with the 5th Marines regimental train, to eliminate enemy resistance.[34] Taplett had only two companies, one of which proceeded astride the road while the other echeloned to the left rear. The late start proved to be a blessing, since Division Train No. 2 completed most of its movement by daylight under an umbrella of Marine air and met only light and scattered resistance. The head of the column reached Koto-ri at 1700, and at 2300 all of the major Division units were in the perimeter except 2/5, the rear guard [35]

Both 1/5 and 3/1 had formed up in Hagaru on the morning of the 7th and moved out as rapidly as traffic would permit, which was slow indeed. They were accompanied by the 41st Commando, which had earned the esteem of all U.S. Marines by valor in combat. British imperturbability was at its best when Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale held an inspection shortly before departing Hagaru. Disdainful of the scattered shots which were still being heard, the officers moved up and down the rigid lines, and men whose gear was not in the best possible shape were reprimanded.

By 1000 nobody was left in the battered town except Roise's battalion, First Lieutenant Vaughan R. Stuart's tank platoon and elements of Able Company, 1st Engineer Battalion, commanded by Captain William R. Gould. This unit and CWO Willie S. Harrison's Explosive Ordnance Section of Headquarters Company engineers were attached to the 5th Marines for the mission of the demolitions at Hagaru.[36]

Gould had formed five demolitions teams, each composed of an officer and four to six men. On the evening of 6 December they began preparations for burning stockpiles of surplus clothing and equipment along with the buildings of the Hagaru train yard. There was also the duty of placing charges in the dumps of mortar and artillery ammunition which could not be transported to Hagaru.

One of the main problems was the disposal of a small mountain of frozen surplus rations. A team of engineers spent hours on the 6th at the task of smashing cans and crates of food with a bulldozer and saturating the dump with fuel oil.

The Able Company engineers came under the operational control of the 2d Battalion after the other units of the 5th Marines departed. Demolitions were to await the order of Lieutenant Colonel Roise on the morning of the 7th. Hagaru was full of combustibles, however, and fires of mysterious origin sent up dense clouds of smoke before the engineers touched off the oil-soaked food supplies and the buildings of the train yard.

As the Marines of 2/5 pulled back toward the southern tip of East Hill, smoke blotted out the surrounding area so that enemy movements could not be detected. Worse yet, premature explosions sent up fountains of debris just as the engineers were setting up their fuses for a 20-minute delay. Detonations shook the earth on all sides. Rockets sliced through the air, shells shattered into vicious fragments, and large chunks of real estate rained down everywhere. Roise was understandably furious, since his troops were endangered during their withdrawal. By a miracle they came off East Hill without any casualties, and the engineers were the last Marines left in Hagaru. Soon the entire base seemed to be erupting like a volcano. Visibility was reduced to zero when the engineers pulled out, after setting a last tremendous charge to blow the bridge.

So compelling was the lure of loot that small groups of Chinese came down from the high ground toward

the man-made hell of flame and explosions. Between clouds of smoke they could be seen picking over the debris, and the Marine tanks cranked off a few rounds at targets of opportunity.

It is not likely that any of Roise's weary troops paused for a last sentimental look over their shoulders at the dying Korean town. Hagaru was not exactly a pleasure resort, and yet hundreds of Marines and soldiers owed their lives to the fact that this forward base had enabled the Division to evacuate all casualties and fly in replacements while regrouping for the breakout to the seacoast.

If it had not been for the forethought of the Division and Wing commanders, with the concurrence of General Almond, there would have been no R4D airstrip, no stockpiles of ammunition, rations and medical supplies. And though the Marines might conceivably have fought their way out of the CCF encirclement without a Hagaru, it would have been at the cost of abandoning much equipment and suffering much higher casualties.

Only a few weeks before, this Korean town had been merely an unknown dot on the map. But on 7 December 1950 the name was familiar to newspaper readers and radio listeners all over the United States as they anxiously awaited tidings of the breakout. Already it had become a name to be remembered in U.S. Marine annals along with such historical landmarks as Belleau Wood, Guadalcanal, Peleliu and Iwo Jima.

Prospects of a warm meal and a night's sleep meant more than history to Roise's troops when the column moved out at last shortly after noon, with the engineers bringing up the rear to blow bridges along the route. A pitiful horde of Korean refugees followed the troops—thousands of men, women and children with such personal belongings as they could carry. Efforts on the part of the engineers to warn the refugees of impending demolitions were futile. Although these North Koreans had enjoyed for five years the "blessings" of Communist government, the prospect of being left behind to the tender mercies of the Chinese Communists was so terrifying that they took appalling risks. Knowing that a bridge was about to blow up at any instant, they swarmed across in a blind panic of flight. Never did war seem more harsh or its victims more pathetic.[37]

The rear guard had less air and artillery support than any of the preceding troops, yet CCF opposition was confined to scattered small-arms fire all the way to Hell Fire Valley. There the enemy lobbed over a few mortar shells during a long halt at dusk, but the rest of the advance was uneventful. Gould's engineers took chances repeatedly of being cut off when they fell behind to burn abandoned vehicles or blow bridges. On several occasions a small group found itself entirely isolated as the infantry and even the refugees pushed on ahead. Luckily the engineers made it without any casualties, and by midnight the last troops of the 1st Marine Division had entered the perimeter at Koto-ri.

Thus the first stage of the Division breakout came to a close. In proportion to total numbers, the service troops of Division Train No. 1 had taken the heaviest losses—six killed and 12 wounded for the Division Headquarters Company; one killed and 16 wounded for the Military Police Company; four killed and 28 wounded for the 1st Motor Transport Battalion; one killed and 27 wounded for the 1st Ordnance Battalion; and three killed and 34 wounded for the 3d Battalion of the 11th Marines. Battle casualties for the entire 1st Marine Division, including those of the East Hill battle, were as follows:

Click here to view table

About 38 hours were required for the movement of some 10,000 troops and more than 1,000 vehicles. The new arrivals filled the perimeter at Koto-ri to the bursting point, but there was to be no pause at this point. Division OpnO 26–50, issued at 1815 on the 7th, before the last troops had arrived, provided for the advance to be resumed from Koto-ri at first light the following morning.

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Chapter 14. Onward from Koto-ri

THE PROGRESS of the 1st Marine Division breakout depended in no small degree on the reliable communications provided by the division radio relay linking up Hagaru, Koto-ri, Chinhung-ni, and Hungnam. At 1440 on 6 December the vehicles of the Hagaru relay terminal joined Division Train No. 1, whereupon the station at Koto-ri became in turn the terminal.[1]

This station was located on the highest point of ground just south of the Koto-ri perimeter. And though it was outside the defense area, the Chinese did not bother it until the Marines were breaking camp. Then the opposition consisted only of harassing small-arms fires instead of the attack which might have been expected.[2]

In fact, the enemy did not launch another large-scale assault on Koto-ri after his costly repulse on the night of 28-29 November. Although the perimeter was surrounded throughout the first six days of December, incipient CCF attacks were broken up in the enemy's assembly areas. Excellent observation as well as casualty evacuation was provided by the OYs taking off from the Koto-ri airstrip. They were the eyes of an impressive array of Marine fire power—tanks, 4.2-inch, and 81mm mortars as well as aircraft and Captain McClelland's Easy Battery of 2/11.

"The artillery 105's and the mortars did a grand job," commented Major Bartley. "They were always available, shifted their fires quickly and accurately, and serviced their pieces amazingly well in the cold weather."[3]

As a further asset, the Koto-ri perimeter was defended by adequate numbers in comparison to Hagaru during the first critical week of CCF attacks. On 30 November, when Baker Company of the 1st Tank Battalion returned to Koto-ri after the Task Force Drysdale battle, three platoons of tanks were added to the Dog Company platoon already attached to 2/1. The next day Colonel Puller's RCT-1 (-) was further strengthened by the arrival of the 2d Battalion of the 31st Infantry, 7th Infantry Division, the last unit to reach Koto-ri from the south. These Army troops had been ordered to Hagaru, but owing to the changing situation they were directed by X Corps on 1 December to remain at Koto-ri. Under the operational control of Colonel Puller, 2/31 took over a sector at the southern end of the perimeter.

Sporadic CCF small-arms fire was received on each of the first six days of December, and enemy troop movements were observed at all points of the compass. On several occasions a few mortar shells were lobbed into the perimeter. Not a single Marine casualty was suffered during the period,[4] though CCF losses were estimated at 646 killed and 322 wounded.

Daily air drops were required to keep the perimeter supplied with ammunition, rations, and other essentials. Captain Norman Vining, the Battalion FAC, who had once been a carrier landing signal officer, guided planes to satisfactory drop zones with makeshift paddles. One day a case of .30 caliber cartridges broke free from its chute and hurtled through the top of Lieutenant Colonel Sutter's tent during a conference. Narrowly missing several officers, it hit the straw at their feet and bounced high into the air before landing on a crate used as a table.

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Chapter 14. Onward from Koto-ri
Assembly of Division at Koto-ri

Koto-ri being second only to Hagaru as an advance base, Colonel Puller at times had responsibilities which are usually shouldered by an ADC. On 29 November he had been the organizer of Task Force Drysdale, and on 6 December it became his task to make ready for the reception of the 10,000 troops from Hagaru.

Although the Koto-ri perimeter was already overcrowded, Puller directed that hot food and warming tents be provided for all Hagaru troops upon arrival. More than 14,000 men would then be organized for the next stage of the breakout. Strength estimates were as follows:[5]

Marine garrison at Koto-ri: 2,640
U.SArmy units at Koto-ri: 1,535
Royal Marine Commandos at Koto-ri: 25
Marines arriving from Hagaru: 9,046
U.SArmy troops arriving from Hagaru: 818
Royal Marine Commandos arriving from Hagaru: 125
ROK police attached to RCT-5: 40
TOTAL: 14,229

Puller dealt with the problem of casualty evacuation at Koto-ri by ordering that the OY strip be lengthened so that larger aircraft could land. The engineers of Charlie Company started the job on 6 December, and progress speeded up as the Dog Company engineers arrived next day from Hagaru with their heavy equipment.

The strip had been widened by 40 feet and extended by 300 on 7 December when the first TBM landed. These planes had been borrowed from the Navy and 1stMAW administrative flight lines and assigned to VMO-6. They could fly out several litter patients and as many as nine ambulatory cases. Captain Alfred F. McCaleb, Jr., of VMO-6 and First Lieutenant Truman Clark of VMF(N)-513 evacuated a total of 103 casualties. The carrier landing training of the Marines stood them in good stead as Captain Malcolm G. Moncrief, Jr., a qualified landing signal officer of VMF-312, directed the TBMs to their landings at Koto-ri with paddles.[6]

The clearing station established at Koto-ri by Company D of the 1st Medical Battalion (Lieutenant Commander Gustave T. Anderson (MC), USN, had a normal bed capacity of only 60 but somehow continued to handle a total of 832 cases, including non-battle casualties. The Company D medics were assisted during their last few days at Koto-ri by Captain Hering, the Division surgeon, and Commander Howard A. Johnson (MC), USN, the CO of the 1st Medical Battalion. Captain Richard S. Silvis (MC), USN, surgeon of the 2d Marine Division, on temporary duty in Korea as an observer, also took an active part.[7]

Surgical assistance was welcomed by the Company D medics, since operations at Koto-ri were performed under the most difficult conditions. Only tents being available for patients, the hundreds of casualties brought from Hagaru added to the necessity for speedy evacuation. About 200 cases were flown out on the 7th by TBMs and liaison aircraft. By the following morning the engineers had lengthened the OY strip to 1750 feet, but a heavy snowfall put an end to nearly all air activity. In spite of the risks involved, one Air Force C-47 did get through to Koto-ri, where it could be heard but not seen while circling blindly about the perimeter. By a miracle the plane landed safely and took off with 19 casualties. The following day saw air evacuation of casualties in full swing, with about 225 being flown out to clear the hospital tents of all serious cases.[8]

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Chapter 14. Onward from Koto-ri
Activation of Task Force Dog

A large tent in the middle of the perimeter served both as office and sleeping quarters for General Smith and his staff. Planning was immediately resumed after they arrived at Koto-ri on the afternoon of 6 December. Before leaving Hagaru it had been recognized that the enemy might be saving his main effort for the mountainous ten-mile stretch from Koto-ri to Chinhung-ni. In such terrain a mere CCF platoon could do a great deal of mischief, and the planners agreed that it would be necessary for 1/1 to attack northward from Chinhung-ni and clear the road. This meant that the battalion must be relieved by an Army unit, and a request was made verbally to General Almond.[9]

X Corps had received orders on 1 December for the 3d Infantry Division to assemble in the Wonsan area prepared for further operations, possibly to join the Eighth Army in west Korea. Although General Almond initiated execution of the order immediately, he sent the highest ranking Marine officer on his staff, Colonel Forney, and the Corps G–2, Lieutenant Colonel William W. Quinn, to Tokyo to explain the implications of the withdrawal of this Army division from northeast Korea. Following a conference with General Hickey, GHQ Chief of Staff, the Division was released back to X Corps on the 3d, and General Almond ordered it to return to the Hamhung area to protect this vital port area and to assist the breakout of the 1st Marine Division by relieving 1/1 at Chinhung-ni.[10]

At 2115 on 6 December the 1st Marine Division requested by dispatch that the relief be completed the next day in order to free 1/1 for the attack to the north. The relief column, designated Task Force Dog and commanded by Brigadier General Armistead D. Mead, ADC of the 3d Infantry Division, consisted of the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, the 92d Armored Field Artillery Battalion, plus detachments of engineers, signalmen, and antiaircraft troops. Brushing aside some Chinese roadblocks, it arrived at Chinhung-ni on the afternoon of the 7th and relieved 1/1 immediately.[11]

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Chapter 14. Onward from Koto-ri
Air Drop of Bridge Sections

Another problem which the 1st Marine Division planners had faced at Hagaru called for an engineering solution. As early as 4 December the commanding general was notified that a critical bridge three and a half miles south of Koto-ri (see Map 29) had been blown by the enemy for the third time. At this point water from the Chosin Reservoir was discharged from a tunnel into four penstocks, or large steel pipes, which descended sharply down the mountainside to the turbines of the power plant in the valley below. Where the pipes crossed the road, they were covered on the uphill side by a concrete gatehouse, without a floor. On the downhill side was the one-way bridge over the penstocks which the enemy had thrice destroyed. Between the cliff and the sheer drop down the mountainside there was no possibility of a bypass. Thus the gap of 16 feet (24 feet, counting the abutments) must be spanned if the Division was to bring out its vehicles, tanks and guns.[12]

Following the destruction of the original concrete bridge, the enemy had blown a temporary wooden structure and an M-2 steel treadway span installed by Army engineers. No prefabricated bridging was available at Hagaru, and time did not permit the construction of a timber trestle bridge. The possibility of Bailey bridge sections was considered but rejected for technical reasons. Finally, after a detailed study of the break from the air on 6 December, Lieutenant Colonel Partridge estimated that four sections of an M-2 steel treadway bridge would be required. Prospects did not appear bright when a bridge section was badly damaged on the 6th after being test-dropped at Yonpo by an Air Force C-119. Nevertheless, it was decided to go ahead the next day with the drop at Koto-ri.[13]

Click here to view map

There were four U.S. Army treadway bridge (Brockway) trucks at Koto-ri, two of which were operative. After conferring with First Lieutenant George A. Babe of the 1st Engineer Battalion and Colonel Hugh D. McGaw of the 185th Engineer (C) Battalion, USA, Partridge decided to request a drop of eight sections in order to have a 100% margin of safety in case of damage.

After analyzing the causes of the unsuccessful test drop, Captain Blasingame of the Air Delivery Platoon had larger parachutes flown to Yonpo from Japan, accompanied by Captain Cecil W. Hospelhorn, USA, and a special crew of Army parachute riggers. Blasingame and a hundred-man work detail from the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion worked all night at Yonpo to make ready for the drop next day by eight C-119s of the Air Force.

At 0930 on 7 December three of the 2500-pound bridge sections were dropped inside the Koto-ri perimeter and recovered by the Brockway trucks. The remaining five sections were delivered by noon, one of them falling into the hands of the Chinese and one being damaged.

Plywood center sections were also dropped so that the bridge could accommodate any type of Marine wheel or tracked vehicle. Thus the tanks could cross on the metal spans only, while the trucks could manage with one wheel on the metal span and the other on the plywood center.[14]

All the necessary equipment having been assembled at Koto-ri by the late afternoon of the 7th, the next problem was to transport it three and a half miles to the bridge site. Colonel Bowser, the Division G-3, directed the engineers to coordinate their movements with the progress made by RCT-7 the following morning. Lieutenant Colonel Partridge attended a briefing conducted by Colonel Litzenberg on the eve of the assault, and it was agreed that the trucks with the bridge section would accompany the regimental train. First Lieutenant Ewald D. Vom Orde's First Platoon of Company D engineers was designated as the escort. First Lieutenant Charles C. Ward's engineers led the 7th Marines' trains. Both platoons were assigned the task of installing the bridge sections.

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Chapter 14. Onward from Koto-ri
Division Planning for Attack

On the assumption that the gap over the penstocks would be successfully spanned, the 1st Marine Division issued OpnO 26–50 at 1850 on 7 December. Although the last operation order had specified the Hamhung area as the objective, it was found necessary at Koto-ri to give more explicit instructions for the advance to the southward.

The plan was simple. Recognizing the sharp cleft of Funchilin Pass as the most difficult defile of the entire breakout, General Smith ordered the seizure of the heights overlooking the pass from the north end of Hill 1081, dominating the road through the pass. In its details the plan shaped up as follows:

"(1) RCT-7 (reinforced with the Provisional Army battalion) to attack south from Koto-ri at 0800 on 8 December and seize Objectives A and B—the first being the southern extension of Hill 1328, about 2500 yards southwest of Koto-ri, and the other the second nose due south of Koto-ri.

"(2) RCT-5 to attack and seize Objective D (Hill 1457, two and a half miles south of Koto-ri) while RCT-7 continued its attack and seized Objective C (a nose dominating the MSR two and three-fourths miles south of Koto-ri).

"(3) At 0800, as RCT-7 jumped off at Koto-ri, the 1st Battalion of RCT-1 was to attack from Chinhung-ni and seize Objective E (Hill 1081, three miles to the north).

"(4) RCT-1 (less the 1st Battalion but reinforced by 2/31) was to protect Koto-ri until the Division and regimental trains cleared, whereupon it was to relieve RCTs 5 and 7 on Objectives A, B, C and D.

"(5) Upon relief by RCT-1, RCTs 5 and 7 were to proceed south along the MSR to the Hamhung area.

"(6) RCT-1 was to follow RCT-5 and protect the Division rear."[15]

Artillery plans provided for one battery of 2/11 and one of 3/11 to answer the calls of RCT-7 for supporting fires. The other batteries of 3/11 were to move south with the motor column while two batteries of 1/11 supported RCT-5. The remaining battery of 3/11 was attached to 2/11 with a mission of moving south to Chinhung-ni and taking a position from which to support the withdrawal of RCT-1 as rear-guard. Easy Battery of 2/11, left behind at Koto-ri, was laid to fire to the north and west, while Fox Battery of 2/11 and the 92d Armored Field Artillery Battalion at Chinhung-ni supported the attack of 1/1 on Hill 1081.

The plan of the 1stMAW for air support was essentially the same as the one which proved so effective during the advance from Hagaru to Koto-ri.

An object lesson of that movement had been the personnel and equipment losses suffered by the Division trains as a consequence of a late start. The planners were determined not to repeat this mistake. As a further precautionary measure, General Smith directed that the tanks form the last elements of the motor column.[16] Thus in the event of a breakdown on the twisting, single-lane road, it would not be necessary to abandon all the vehicles behind a crippled tank.

As for the enemy situation, G-2 summaries indicated that early in December the CCF 26th Corps, consisting of the 76th, 77th and 78th Divisions, reinforced by the 94th Division of the 32d Corps, had moved down from the north and taken positions on the east side of the MSR between Hagaru and Koto-ri. There they relieved the 60th Division, which moved into the area south of Koto-ri. The 76th and 77th Divisions occupied positions along the MSR in the Koto-ri area, while the 78th and 94th Divisions were apparently held in reserve. Elements of the 89th Division, operating from the mountainous area southwest of Koto-ri, conducted harassing operations against the MSR in the vicinity of Chinhung-ni as well as Koto-ri.

The 60th CCF Division held prepared positions on the high ground south of Koto-ri commanding Funchilin Pass and the MSR leading to Chinhung-ni. That these positions included Hill 1081, the dominating terrain feature, was revealed by prisoners taken in the vicinity by patrols of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, prior to 8 December.

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Chapter 14. Onward from Koto-ri
Battle of 1/1 in the Snowstorm

Division plans had not called for the swirling snowstorm which reduced visibility to 50 feet and precluded air support at first light on 8 December. In spite of weather conditions, the assault battalions of RCT-7 moved out from Koto-ri on schedule after 1/1 attacked northward from Chinhung-ni.

The planners had realized that the success of the movement to Chinhung-ni would depend to a large extent on the seizure of Objective E—Hill 1081. On 2 December Lieutenant Colonel Schmuck had led a reconnaissance patrol into Funchilin Pass as far north as this position. Sighting large numbers of Chinese on both sides of the road, he called for artillery fires with good effect. This reconnaissance did much to establish Hill 1081 as the key terrain feature.

Although 1/1 had patrolled aggressively, the battalion had engaged in no large-scale actions so far in the Reservoir campaign. The men were fresh, well-rested and spoiling for a fight when they moved out at 0200 on 8 December from an assembly area south of Chinhung-ni after being relieved by Task Force Dog.

Schmuck's battle plan provided for the three companies to advance in column along the MSR in the pre-dawn darkness. Since orders were to attack at 0800, a start at 0200 was considered necessary in order to make the six-mile approach march.

Captain Wray's Charlie Company, in the lead, was to take Objective 1, the southwestern nose of Hill 1081, and hold it while the other two companies passed through to carry out their missions. Captain Barrow's Able Company was to attack east of the MSR and fight its way to the summit of Hill 1081; and Captain Noren's Baker Company to advance to the left flank, along the slopes between Barrow and the MSR.[17]

The combination of snow and darkness reduced visibility almost to zero as 1/1 set out along the slippery MSR five hours before daybreak. All heavy equipment had been sent to the rear from Chinhung-ni, and the only vehicles were two ambulances and a radio jeep.

In the snow-muffled silence of the night the men took on protective coloring as feathery flakes clung to their parkas. Objective 1 was seized shortly after dawn, following a difficult approach march against negligible resistance. The battalion commander prepared for the next phase by bringing up 81mm mortars and an attached platoon of 4.2s and emplacing those weapons in Wray's position. He also directed that the five attached Army self-propelled quad-.50 caliber and twin 40mm guns of B Company 50th AAA (AW) Bn be moved to a little rise off to the left of the road in the vicinity of the village of Pehujang. From this position they covered the MSR as far as the bridge over the penstocks.

At 1000 the main attack was set in motion. Baker Company advanced along the wooded western slope of Hill 1081 as Barrow attacked up the hogback ridge leading to the summit. The snowstorm fought on the side of the Marines by hiding their movements from the Chinese occupying the high ground east of the MSR around the great horseshoe bend where the road passed under the cable car line.

Noren's men saw hundreds of enemy footprints but met only scattered opposition until they came to the first CCF roadblock on their left flank. There they were stopped by two machine guns, but a Marine patrol worked around on the uphill side and routed the Communists with a machine gun and 60mm mortar attack.

In the absence of air and artillery support, the 4.2s and 81mm mortars emplaced in the Charlie Company position were called upon whenever visibility permitted. Surprise was Noren's best resource, however, when Baker Company came up against the CCF bunker complex on the western slope of Hill 1081. The enemy had so little warning that the Marines found a kettle of rice cooking in the largest bunker, an elaborate log and sandbag

structure which had evidently been a CCF command post. The entire complex was taken after a brief but savage fight in which all defenders were killed or routed. Schmuck set up his CP in a captured bunker, where he and his officers soon discovered that several regiments of Chinese lice had not yet surrendered.

Only enough daylight was left for the sending out of patrols, whereupon Noren secured for the night. His losses amounted to three killed and six wounded.

Barrow's men had no physical contact with Baker Company while clawing their way upward along an icy ridge line too narrow for deployment. A sudden break in the snow afforded the Able Company commander a glimpse of a CCF stronghold on a knob between him and his objective, the topographical crest of Hill 1081. The drifting flakes cut off the view before he could direct mortar fire, but Barrow decided to attack without this support and rely upon surprise. Advancing in column along the steep and narrow approach, he sent Lieutenant Jones with two squads of the 2d Platoon to execute a wide enveloping movement on the left. Lieutenant McClelland's 1st Platoon had a similar mission on the right. Barrow himself led Staff Sergeant William Roach's 3d Platoon in a front attack.

It took more than an hour for the two flanking forces to get into position. Not until they had worked well around the Chinese bunker complex did Barrow give the signal for attack. Perhaps because silence had been enforced during the stealthy advance, the assault troops yelled like Indians as they closed in on the foe. Out of the snowstorm Barrow's men "erupted with maximum violence," and the enemy was too stunned to put up much of a fight. The only effective resistance came from a single CCF machine gun which caused most of the Marine casualties before Corporal Joseph Leeds and his fire team knocked it out, killing nine Communists in the process.

More than 60 enemy bodies were counted after the Marines cleaned out the bunkers and shot down fleeing Chinese. Barrow's losses were 10 men killed and 11 wounded.

By this time it was apparent that the Chinese had held an integrated system of bunkers and strong points extending to the summit of Hill 1081. The battalion had been strictly on its own all day, all contact with the infantry of Task Force Dog having ended with the relief. When communications permitted, however, 1/1 could count on the excellent direct support of the 92d Armored Field Artillery Battalion, USA, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Leon F. Lavoie. The Army cannoneers had set up near Fox Battery of 2/11, using the fire control data of this Marine artillery unit.

The night was clear, promising air and artillery support in the morning, as Able Company consolidated in the captured CCF positions. Although the battalion aid station was only 700 yards away, the terrain was so difficult that litter bearers took several hours to struggle down with the Marine wounded. About midnight the Chinese interrupted with an attack in estimated platoon strength, but Barrow's men drove them off with CCF losses of 18 killed.

The rest of the night passed quietly, and Baker Company had no disturbance on the high ground overlooking the MSR.

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Chapter 14. Onward from Koto-ri
Advance of RCT-7 and RCT-5

While these events were taking place, the attack to the south from Koto-ri also fell short of the day's objectives. Colonel Litzenberg's plan called for two of his four battalions (the fourth being the Provisional Battalion of Army troops) to clear the high ground on either side of the road so that a third battalion could advance astride the MSR, followed by the reserve battalion and regimental train.

Major Morris, commanding 3/7, had been assigned the task of attacking on the right at 0800 and seizing Objective A, the southernmost of the cluster of hills known collectively as Hill 1328. He made such slow progress against CCF and small-arms fire that at 1100 Colonel Litzenberg suggested the commitments of 3/7's reserve company. "All three companies," replied Morris, "are up there—fifty men from George, fifty men from How, thirty men from Item. That's it![18]

Early in the afternoon of 8 December, Litzenberg committed his reserve, 2/7, to assist 3/7. Lockwood's battalion was on the road south of 3/7 and attacked west in an attempt to get in the rear of the enemy holding up 3/7. Easy and Fox Companies attacked abreast and by 1800 the two battalions had joined on the northeastern slopes of the objective. In view of the approaching darkness, however, the attack was postponed until morning, and the troops consolidated for the night short of the objective, which was seized the following morning.

Litzenberg's plan for the seizure of the heights overlooking the northern entrance to Funchilin Pass provided for the Army Provisional Battalion to take Objective B. The soldiers jumped off at 0800, on the left of the MSR, supported by two tanks of the 5th Marines AT Company. By 0900 the battalion had secured its objective without meeting any resistance. Litzenberg then ordered a further advance of 800 yards to the northwestern tip of Hill 1457. At 1330 the Army troops secured their second objective, still without resistance and tied in with 1/5 for the night.[19]

Lieutenant Colonel Davis having become regimental executive officer after Dowsett was wounded, Major Sawyer took over command of 1/7. His plan called for the battalion to advance about 2000 yards down the road and wait for 3/7 to come up on his right flank. Then the two battalions would move along together.

The 1st Battalion jumped off at 0800 and reached its phase line without opposition. First Lieutenant Bobbie B. Bradley's platoon advanced down the road to gain contact with the Chinese while the remainder of the battalion halted. When 2/7 began its attack in support of 3/7, Sawyer's battalion moved out. Bradley's patrol having run into opposition from the northern reaches of Hill 1304, Companies A and C moved west of the MSR in a double envelopment of the enemy position. Company B continued the advance towards Objective C, meeting a heavy cross fire from Chinese to their front and on Hill 1304. Lieutenant Kurcaba was killed and Lieutenants Chew Een Lee and Joseph R. Owen wounded. First Lieutenant William W. Taylor took command and managed to clear the enemy from his front just before dusk.

Able and Charlie Companies faced less resistance in overrunning the foxholes and two bunkers on Hill 1304. With dusk falling, Sawyer did not attempt a further advance. Able and Charlie Companies dug in on Hill 1304 while Baker set up a perimeter slightly short of Objective C. The first serials of the truck convoy had moved closely on the heels of 1/7 and had to be backed up to a level area near Objective A. There they formed a perimeter reinforced with H&S and Weapons Companies of 1/7.[20]

Division OpnO 26-50 had directed Lieutenant Colonel Murray's RCT-5 to await orders before attacking Objective D. It was nearly noon on the 8th before the 1st Battalion, in assault, was directed to move out from Koto-ri.

Lieutenant Colonel Stevens followed the MSR for a mile, then sent two companies out to the left to occupy the objective, Hill 1457. Baker Company seized the intervening high ground and set up to cover the attack of Charlie Company up the slopes of the ridge leading to the objective. Charlie Company fell in with a patrol from the Army Provisional Battalion attached to the RCT-7, and the two combined forces to drive the enemy off the high ground about 1550. A weak Chinese counterattack was easily repulsed, and at 1700 as darkness fell Baker and Charlie Companies tied in with the Army troops while Able Company formed its own perimeter overlooking the MSR. In reserve, the 41st Commando moved into the high ground behind 1/5 to guard against infiltration.[21]

The day's story would not be complete without reference to the Treadway bridge train, which moved out about 1400 on the 8th in the trace of 1/7. Instructions were to install the sections at the first opportunity, but the site had not been secured as darkness approached. A few Chinese mortar rounds falling in the vicinity of the vulnerable Brockway trucks influenced a decision to return them closer to Koto-ri.[22]

Summing up the attacks of 8 December, weather and terrain had done more than the enemy to prevent all assault units of the 1st Marine Division from securing their assigned objectives. Casualties had not been heavy, however, and for the most part the troops were in a position for a renewal of their efforts in the morning.

As for the Koto-ri perimeter, the 8th had passed with only scattered small-arms fire being received by the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 1st Marines, in Division reserve. All day the Dog Company roadblock, on the route to Hagaru, was like a dam holding back the human torrent of Korean refugees. From this throng rose a low-pitched wail of misery as homeless men, women, and children huddled without shelter in the snowstorm of the 8th. It was a distressing spectacle to the Marines in the perimeter, yet the refugees could not be admitted because of the probability that Chinese soldiers had infiltrated among them, watching for an opportunity to use hidden weapons. There was little the Marines could offer by way of succor except medical care in some instances. Two women gave birth during the bitterly cold night of the 8th with the assistance of Navy medics. In the morning the crowd of refugees, swollen by new arrivals, waited with the patience of the humble to follow the Marine rear guard to the seacoast.[23]

White is the color of mourning in Korea, and snowflakes drifted down gently over the common grave in which 117 Marines, soldiers, and Royal Marine Commandos were buried on the 8th at Koto-ri. Lack of time had prevented the digging of individual graves in the frozen soil.[24] Although the necessity of conducting a mass burial was regretted, all available space in planes and vehicles was needed for the evacuation of casualties.

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Chapter 14. Onward from Koto-ri
Marine Operations of 9 and 10 December

New snow sparkled in the sunlight as the day of 9 December dawned bright, clear, and cold. A brief reconnaissance convinced Captain Noren that in the early darkness of the previous evening he had stopped one ridge short of his objective—the northwest slopes of Hill 1081, covering the approach to the cable underpass. Baker Company of 1/1 moved forward without CCF interference to the position.

Captain Barrow had his men test-fire their weapons before mounting the final assault on the dominating knob of the hill. This proved to be a wise precaution, since many of the mechanisms had frozen. After thawing them out, Able Company attacked in column with the 1st Platoon in the lead. Although the assault troops had the benefit of excellent air, artillery, and mortar support, they came under intense small-arms fire from Communists occupying camouflaged log and sandbag bunkers. McClelland's men were hard hit but his left flank squad worked its way forward in brief rushes to positions within 200 yards of Objective E, the topographical crest of Hill 1081. At this point Staff Sergeant Ernest J. Umbaugh organized a squad grenade attack which wiped out the first CCF bunker.

A stretch of about 175 yards, swept bare in places by the icy wind, now lay between the Marines and the final knob. Barrow perceived that this deadly CCF field of fire could be skirted by troops working their way around a shelf jutting from the military crest. Under cover of fire from his 60mm mortars and a strike by four Corsairs, he brought up his 2d and 3d platoons. While McClelland profited by the cover of scrub trees to come up behind the objective, Jones built up a base of fire to cover the direct assault of Roach's platoon as it stormed up the crest. McClelland had to contend with the enemy's last-ditch stand in two log bunkers which the 1st platoon knocked out by tossing grenades through the embrasures. The Communists resisted to the last gasp, but at 1500 the Marines were in undisputed possesion of Hill 1081.

Sergeant Umbaugh paid with his life at the moment of victory, and Barrow had only 111 able-bodied men left of the 223 he had led out from Chinghung-ni. But the Marines had won the decisive battle of the advance from Koto-ri; they held the key height dominating Funchilin Pass, though 530 counted enemy dead testified to the desperation of the CCF defense.

Able Company had the most spectacular part, but the victory owed to the united efforts of all three rifle companies and supporting arms. While Barrow held the crest of the hill, Noren pushed farther along the cable car track, meeting stubborn resistance from scattered enemy groups.[25]

The collapse of CCF resistance on Hill 1081 had a beneficial effect on the Marine advance from Koto-ri. RCT-7 continued its attack on the morning of the 9th with effective air and artillery support. Lieutenant Hovatter's Able Company of 1/7 seized the remainder of Hill 1304 while Lieutenant Taylor's Baker Company moved south to Objective C. The Army Provisional Battalion occupied the high ground between Objectives C and D.

These movements were carried out against ineffectual enemy resistance or none at all. Whenever a few Communists dared to raise their heads along the MSR, the airborne TADC in the R5D had the communications equipment to control aircraft on station and to direct their employment in response to ground force units.

The 1st Battalion of RCT-5 maintained its positions on Objective D (Hill 1457) all day. At Koto-ri the other two battalions and regimental headquarters made preparations to move out the following day.

As a preliminary to the withdrawal of RCT-1 (-) from Koto-ri, the 3d Battalion was relieved in its positions along the perimeter by the 41st Commando. Lieutenant Colonel Ridge's men then moved out to relieve

3/7 on Objective A and occupy Objective B. The 2d Battalion of RCT-7 (less a company with the regimental train) outposted the MSR between Objectives A and C at about 1630.[26]

Captain Morris' Charlie Company and a platoon of Baker Company, 1/7, moved down the MSR and secured the bridge site after a short fight. While Charlie Company outposted the area, the Baker platoon crossed behind the broken bridge and suddenly found about 50 Chinese in foxholes. "They were so badly frozen," reported Sawyer, "that the men simply lifted them from the holes and sat them on the road where Marines from Charlie Company took them over."[27] Late in the afternoon a patrol from 1/7 attempted to make contact with 1/1 by moving down the MSR. Chinese fire forced the men off the road and they scrambled across the defile below the overpass and into 1/1's lines.[28]

Lieutenant Colonel Partridge arrived with Weapons Company, 1/7, and the bridge sections followed in the Brockway truck. Even the enemy lent a hand when Communist prisoners were put to work as laborers. After the abutments were constructed, a Brockway truck laid the treadways and plywood panels in position so that both trucks and tanks could cross.

At about 1530, three hours after the start, the bridge was in place. Partridge drove his jeep to the top of the pass to inform Lieutenant Colonel Banks, Commanding Division Train No. 1, that he could begin the descent.

Sawyer's troops had not been idle that afternoon and a total of about 60 CCF prisoners were taken during attacks to drive the enemy back from the bridge site. At about 1700 Partridge returned, and an hour later the first elements of the Division trains began to cross. Only a few vehicles had reached the other side when a disastrous accident threatened to undo everything that had been accomplished. A tractor towing an earth-moving pan broke through the plywood center panel, rendering it useless. And with the treadways spaced as they were, the way was closed to wheeled vehicles.

A first ray of hope glimmered when an expert tractor driver, Technical Sergeant Wilfred H. Prosser, managed to back the machine off the wrecked bridge. Then Patridge did some mental calculations and came up with the answer that a total width of 136 inches would result if the treadways were placed as far apart as possible. This would allow a very slight margin at both extremes—two inches to spare for the M-26s on the treadways; and barely half an inch for the jeeps using the 45-inch interval between the metal lips on the inboard edges of the treadways.

Thanks to skillful handling of the bulldozers the treadways were soon respaced. And in the early darkness Partridge's solution paid off when the first jeep crossed, its tires scraping both edges. Thus the convoy got under way again as an engineer detachment guided vehicles across with flashlights while Sawyer's troops kept the enemy at a distance.[29]

Advance reports of the bridge drop had brought press representatives flocking to Koto-ri in casualty evacuation planes. David Duncan, of *Life,* a former Marine, took realistic photographs of the troops which attracted nation-wide attention. Keyes Beech sent out daily reports while making notes for a book about his adventures in Korea. Miss Marguerite Higgins, who refused to be outdone by male colleagues, was twice requested to leave Koto-ri before nightfall by Marine officers who respected her pluck as a reporter but felt that the perimeter was no place for a woman in the event of an enemy attack.

Hundreds of words were written about the bridge drop. Some of these accounts were so dramatized as to give Stateside newspaper readers the impression that the span had been parachuted to earth in one piece, settling down neatly over the abutments. Headlines reported the progress of the 1st Marine Division every day, and front-page maps made every American household familiar with the names of such obscure Korean mountain hamlets at Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni.

General Shepherd and Colonel Frederick P. Henderson flew up to the perimeter on the 9th for a conference with General Smith. Before their departure they were informed that all remaining casualties at Koto-ri would be evacuated that day.[30]

All night long on 9-10 December an endless stream of troops and vehicles poured across the span that was doubtless the world's most famous bridge for the moment. "The sensation throughout that night," recalled Lieutenant Colonel Partridge in retrospect, "was extremely eerie. There seemed to be a glow over everything. There was no illumination and yet you seemed to see quite well; there was artillery fire, and the sound of many artillery pieces being discharged; there was the crunching of the many feet and many vehicles on the crisp snow. There were many North Korean refugees on one side of the column and Marines walking on the other side. Every once in a while, there would be a baby wailing. There were cattle on the road. Everything added to the general sensation of relief, or expected relief, and was about as eerie as anything I've ever experienced in my life."[31]

Advancing jerkily by stops and starts, the column met no serious opposition from Chinese who appeared to be numbed by cold and defeat. Prisoners taken that night brought the total up to more than a hundred during the movement from Koto-ri to Chinhung-ni. Some of them were suffering from gangrene, the result of neglected frozen limbs, and others showed the effects of prolonged malnutrition. These captives testified that CCF losses from both battle and non-battle casualties had been crippling.

At 0245 on the morning of the 10th the leading elements of the 1st Battalion, RCT-7, began to arrive at Chinhung-ni. A traffic regulating post had been set up at that point the day before by Colonel Edward W. Snedeker, Division Deputy Chief of Staff, for the purpose of controlling the movement of Marine units to the south.[32]

The remaining elements of RCT-7 were strung out from Objective C to the cableway crossing of the MSR. Traffic moved without a hitch until 0400, when two trucks bogged down in a U-shaped bypass across a partially frozen stream about 2000 yards beyond the treadway bridge. Major Frederick Simpson, commanding the 1st Divisional Train, had the vehicles pushed off to one side while the engineers built up the road. After a delay of three hours the column got under way again, with the first vehicles reaching Chinhung-ni at 0830. Ultimately both Division trains got through without a fight, thanks to avoiding the delays which had caused so much trouble during the advance from Hagaru to Koto-ri.[33]

Following the trains, the 7th Marines moved through the Pass. Lieutenant Colonel Lockwood's 2/7 (less Company E, guarding the regimental train) led the way for the regimental command group, the Provisional Army Battalion, 3/7 and the 3d Battalion of the 11th Marines.[34]

During the early morning hours of the 10th George Company of 3/1 beat off an attack on Objective A by an enemy force estimated at 350 men. This was the only noteworthy instance of CCF activity otherwise limited to scattered shots, and it was believed that the Communists were side-slipping southward, parallel with the MSR. Confirmation of that assumption came at 1200, when Able Company of 1/1 sighted Chinese marching in platoon and company columns through the valley only about 1000 yards east of Hill 1081. Almost simultaneously other dense CCF columns crossed the field of fire of the attached Army self-propelled AAA guns while pouring around an adjacent slope. Lieutenant Colonel Schmuck called immediately for air strikes and artillery fires. Able Company hit the enemy with 4.2" and 81mm mortar rounds, and the Army teams cut loose with .50 cal. and 40mm bursts. The slaughter continued for an hour as the Chinese kept on moving southward with that fatalism which never failed to astonish the Marines.

Baker Company of 1/1 launched an assault with close air support at 1300 on a CCF strong point adjacent to the railroad and north of the battalion's positions overlooking the MSR. Noren's men found 3.5 "rocket launchers their most effective weapon when clearing the Communists from heavily timbered and sandbagged bunkers. Excellent close air support was received, though two Marine KIA casualties resulted from an error by Navy planes.[35]

All day the seemingly endless column of vehicles and troops wound southward along the twisting mountain road. At 1030 General Smith and key members of his staff displaced from Koto-ri and proceeded by C-47 and helicopter to the rear CP of the Division at Hungnam. By 1800 both Division trains, all elements of RCT-7

and the 1st, 3d, and 4th Battalions of the 11th Marines had closed Chinhung-ni. There the infantrymen entrucked for Hungnam.[36]

The 5th Marines column followed the 7th, with 3/5 leading the way and 2/5 close behind. Just south of Objective A a brief fire fight was necessary to silence a CCF machine gun, whereupon the movement continued without further incident until the two battalions reached Chinhung-ni at dusk. The 1st Battalion was not relieved by 2/1 until 1800 and did not close Chinhung-ni until the early morning hours of the 11th.[37]

The withdrawal of RCT-1 (–) and attached units from Koto-ri commenced on the afternoon of the 10th. The 3d Battalion, it will be recalled, had relieved RCT-7 units the day before on Objectives A, B and C, and the 1st Battalion occupied Objective E. The regimental plan called for 1/1 to hold the Hill 1081 area and protect the MSR until the other units of the regiment passed through, whereupon Schmuck's battalion was to pull out with the tanks at the end of the column as the rear guard.

The movement from the Koto-ri perimeter commenced at 1500 when H&S Company of RCT-1 departed. The 2d Battalion (–) of the 11th Marines fell in behind, followed in order by a detachment of the 185th (C) Engineers, USA, the 2d Battalion of the 31st Infantry, USA, the 2d Battalion of RCT-1, the Division Reconnaissance Company and Lieutenant Colonel Milne's tank column, consisting of Companies B and D of the 1st Tank Battalion, the Tank Company of the 31st Infantry, USA, and the Tank Platoon of the 5th Marines AT Company.[38]

As the last elements left Koto-ri the 92d FA Battalion at Chinhung-ni began laying heavy concentrations on the evacuated base. Only scattered shots were received by the tail of the column from Chinese troops mingling with the Korean refugees. Several small enemy groups on the flanks of the column were taken under fire and dispersed. [39] But with 3/1 guarding Objectives A, B and C, no serious opposition developed during the first stage of the withdrawal.

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Chapter 14. Onward from Koto-ri
Completion of Division Breakout

At dusk on 10 December all indications made it appear that the movement of the 1st Marine Division southward would be completed according to plan with only minor losses of personnel and equipment. Following the seizure of Hill 1081, casualties had been comparatively light and enemy resistance ineffectual. Then, between midnight and 0100 on 11 December, two reverses occurred in areas the Marines supposed to be safe.

The MSR south of Chinhung-ni was under the protection of troops of the 3d Infantry Division—Task Force Dog at Chinhung-ni, and two battalions of the 65th Infantry in the vicinity of Sudong and Majon-dong. It was manifestly impossible, of course, for the Army troops to guard every yard of the road, for the rugged terrain offered many potential ambush sites. [40] Guerrilla activity had been reported near Sudong, but the division trains and the 5th and 7th Marines had passed through without incident.

On the afternoon of the 10th, Korean civilians warned of an impending attack by Chinese soldiers who had infiltrated into this village. As previously indicated, Colonel Snedeker had arrived at Chinhung-ni the previous afternoon. At his suggestion Task Force Dog sent out an infantry patrol which returned with a report of no enemy activity.

At dusk an attack on the traffic turnaround outside Sudong caused Snedeker to halt all traffic at Chinhung-ni until the MSR was cleared. After a fire fight in the darkness, elements of the 65th Infantry reported at dusk that the enemy roadblock had been cleared, and the Marine column resumed its movement southward. [41]

During the next few hours Colonel Snedeker's worst problem was lack of transport. The Division had requested that the maximum number of trucks, ambulances and narrow-gauge freight cars be collected at Majon-dong, the new railhead. Only about 150 trucks were actually made available, however, 110 of them being from Division service units in the Hungnam area.

In spite of this shortage, the flow of traffic was being maintained when an explosion of CCF activity brought every thing to a stop at Sudong shortly after midnight. Mountain defiles had usually been the scene of enemy ambushes, but this time the Chinese swarmed out from behind houses in the village with grenades and burp guns. Several truck drivers of the RCT-1 regimental train were killed by the first shots and their vehicles set on fire. In the flickering light a confused fight ensued as trucks to the rear stopped. The Marines of the RCT-1 train resisted as best they could, but leadership was lacking until Lieutenant Colonel John U. D. Page, USA, and Marine PFC Marvin L. Wasson teamed up as a two-man task force which routed a group of about 20 Chinese at the head of the vehicle column. The valiant Army artillery officer paid with his life, and Wasson received two wounds from a grenade explosion. Pausing only for first aid, he got back into the fight as another Army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Waldon C. Winston, commanding the 52d Transportation Truck Battalion, USA, directed a counterattack by Marine and Army service troops. Harry Smith, a United Press correspondent, also had a part in the action.

Wasson called for a machine gun to cover him while he fired three white phosphorus rounds from a 75mm recoilless at a house serving the enemy as a stronghold. It burst into flames and the survivors who ran out were cut down by machine-gun fire. The Marine PFC, a jeep driver who was dubbed "The Spirit of '76" by Winston, then volunteered to help push trucks of exploding ammunition off the road.

Winston gradually brought order out of chaos, but it was daybreak before the MSR was cleared so that the column could start moving again. The RCT-1 regimental train had suffered casualties of eight killed and 21

wounded, while equipment losses consisted of nine trucks and an armored personnel carrier.

Lack of infantry protection was a factor in another reverse which occurred at the tail of the Division column. General Smith's final orders for withdrawal provided that the tanks were to come out behind the 1st Marines' train with the infantry of that regiment bringing up the rear. [42] Thus a breakdown in the armored column would not block the road for wheeled vehicles, yet the tanks would have protection against close-in attack.

The 1st Marines prepared detailed plans for the leapfrogging of battalions during the final withdrawal phase. In effect these called for 2/1 to relieve 1/5 on Objective D and remain there until relieved in turn by 2/31. The Army battalion would hold until 3/1 passed through, then follow Ridge's battalion down the MSR. After 2/1, 3/1 and 2/31 had passed through Lieutenant Colonel Schmuck's positions around Hill 1081, 1/1 would follow as rear guard. [43]

The first departure from plan occurred when Lieutenant Colonel Sutter discovered, after starting up Hill 1457, that Objective D was so far from the road and so steep that most of the night would be required merely for the battalion to make the climb. No enemy having been sighted, he asked permission to return to the road and continue along the MSR. This request was granted by Colonel Puller and 2/1 resumed the march, followed by 2/11(-), 2/31 and H&S Company of RCT-1 in that order. Lieutenant Colonel Ridge's 3/1, which remained on Objectives A, B and C until 2100, fell in at the end of the regimental column. [44]

About midnight, after waiting for 3/1 to move down the pass, the the tank column began its descent with only Recon Company as protection. Lieutenant Hargett's platoon of 28 men guarded the last ten tanks and the other two platoons screened the middle and head of the column. [45] Behind the last machine, approaching as close as they dared, were the thousands of refugees. CCF soldiers had mingled with them, watching for an opportunity to strike, and Hargett had the task of keeping the Koreans at a respectful distance.

Progress was slow as the 40 tanks inched around the icy curves with lights on and dismounted crewmen acting as guides. Shortly before 0100 the ninth machine from the rear had a brake freeze which brought the tail of the column to a halt for 45 minutes. The rest of the tanks clanked on ahead, leaving the last nine stranded along the MSR southwest of Hill 1457 and about 2000 yards from the treadway bridge. The enemy took advantage of the delay when five CCF soldiers emerged in file from among the refugees as a voice in English called that they wished to surrender. [46]

Hargett went to meet them cautiously, covered by Corporal George A. J. Amyotte's BAR. Suddenly the leading Chinese stepped aside to reveal the other four producing hidden burp guns and grenades. Hargett pulled the trigger of his carbine but it failed him in the sub-zero cold. The former all-Marine football star then hurled himself at the enemy group, swinging his carbine. He crushed a Chinese skull like an eggshell, but a grenade explosion wounded him as the ambush developed into an attack from the high ground on the flank as well as the rear.

Before the remaining four Chinese could do Hargett any further harm, Amyotte shot them down, one by one. The fight turned into a wild melee in which friend could hardly be distinguished from foe.

Hargett's platoon slowly fell back until the last tank was lost to the enemy along with its crew. The men in the next to last tank had buttoned up and could not be aroused to their danger by banging on the hull with rifle butts. While making the effort Hargett was stunned by an enemy explosive charge which blew PFC Robert D. DeMott over the sheer drop at the side of the road, leaving him unconscious on a ledge. The other men of his platoon believed that he had been killed and continued their withdrawal, only to find the next seven tanks abandoned with their hatches open.

Amyotte, wearing body armor, was covering the retirement, firing from prone, when a CCF grenade exploded after landing squarely on his back. The Chinese must have suspected black magic when he went on cooly picking off opponents as if nothing had happened. [47]

It was a precarious situation for Hargett and his remaining 24 men. But they fought their way out without further casualties, and meanwhile tank crewmen had succeeded in freeing the brake of the lead tank and driving two tanks down the road. One of them was brought out by Corporal C. P. Lett, who had never driven before. “I’m going to get this tank out of here even if I get killed doing it!” he told Hargett. By sheer determination, coupled with luck, he maneuvered around the obstacles ahead and down the icy road to safety.

Captain Gould and his demolitions crew of engineers had been waiting for hours to blow the treadway bridge after the last elements of the Division crossed. With the passage of the two tanks and Hargett’s platoon, it was believed that all Marines who could be extricated were safely over the span. On this assumption, which later proved to be erroneous, CWO Willie Harrison set off the demolition charges.

The losses of the Recon platoon were three men MIA (two of them later changed to KIA) and 12 wounded. Crews of the two rear tanks were missing and presumed dead. [48] Hargett’s losses would have been more severe except for the fact that some of his men were wearing Marine body armor made of light-weight plastics.

To another man of Hargett’s platoon went the distinction of being the last Marine out at the finish of the Chosin Reservoir breakout. When durable PFC DeMott recovered consciousness, after being blown over the brink by the CCF pack charge explosion, he found himself precariously perched on a ledge overhanging the chasm. Slightly wounded, he managed to climb back on the road, where he encountered only Korean refugees. Upon hearing a tremendous detonation he realized that the bridge had been blown. He remembered, however, that pedestrians could cross through the gatehouse above the penstocks, and he came down the mountain with the refugees to Chinhung-ni. There he was given a welcome befitting one who has cheated death of a sure thing.

The remaining tanks made it safely to Chinhung-ni without benefit of infantry protection other than what was afforded by Recon Company.[49] Lieutenant Colonel Schmuck did not receive a copy of 1stMar *OpnO* 16-50, he explained, his only information being a Frag O designating 1/1 as rear guard and “a hasty, 30-second conference” with Colonel Puller when the 1st Marine command group passed through. “I was informed,” he added, “that the tanks were in the rear of the 1st Marines, that 2d Bn, 31st Infantry was bringing up the rear, and that as soon as that unit passed, I would employ my battalion as rear guard. . . . No mention at all was made of the Reconnaissance Company. In order to check off the units that passed endlessly through my lines, I established a check point at the incline railway overpass and kept a close record of movement.”

A great deal of intermingling of units was observed by the 1/1 commander. At 0300, after sighting the lights of the tanks, he gave orders for Able Company to commence the withdrawal, in order “to consolidate my battalion for the rear guard action prior to daybreak. . . . When the first tanks reached my position, I was first startled to find no 2/31 accompanying them and then flabbergasted to discover that the Recon Company was somewhere out there ‘screening’ the movement. This canceled my carefully laid covering plan.” [50]

No further trouble resulted for the tanks and Recon Company. Ahead of them the infantry units continued the movement southward from Chinhung-ni chiefly by marching because of the shortage of trucks. Lieutenant Colonel Sutter’s men proved that footslogging is not a lost art by covering the 22 miles from Koto-ri to Majon-dong in a 20-hour hike with packs, heavy parkas, individual weapons and sleeping bags. [51]

Battle casualties of the division for the final stage, the attack from Koto-ri southward, were as follows: Click here to view table

At 1300 on 11 December the last elements of the Division cleared Chinhung-ni. Majon-dong had been left behind at 1730 without audible regrets; and by 2100 all units, with the exception of the tanks, had reached assigned assembly areas in the Hamhung-Hungnam area. The armored column arrived at the LST staging area of Hungnam half an hour before midnight, thus bringing to an end the breakout of the 1st Marine Division. [52]

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Chapter 15. The Hungnam Redeployment

"WAVE AND LOOK HAPPY!" These were the first words to greet some of the weary, unshaven Marines upon arrival in the Hamhung-Hungnam area. They grinned obligingly in response to the press photographers snapping pictures of the motor column from the roadside. They were happy indeed to be back in a world of hot meals and hot baths. They were happy to be alive.

Marines and attached Army troops found it astonishing as well as flattering to learn that such expressions as "epic" and "saga" and "miracle of deliverance" were being applied to the breakout in American newspapers. The press correspondents in turn were astonished to learn that never for a moment had the men doubted that they would slug their way out to the seacoast.

"The running fight of the Marines and two battalions of the Army's 7th Infantry Division from Hagaru to Hamhung—40 miles by air but 60 miles over the icy, twisting mountainous road—was a battle unparalleled in U.S. military history," commented *Time*. "It had some aspects of Bataan, some of Anzio, some of Dunkirk, some of Valley Forge, some of the 'Retreat of the 10,000' (401–400 B.C.) as described in Xenophon's *Anabasis*."

Not until the Marines had fought their way as far as Chinhung-ni, the weekly newsmagazine continued, did there appear to be much hope that they would come out as an organized force. Then "for the first time it looked as if most of the 20,000 [Marines] would get through."[1]

By reading contemporary press accounts it is possible to recapture the mood of the American public upon realization of the disaster which had overtaken the Eighth Army. "It was defeat—the worst defeat the United States ever suffered," reported *Time* in the issue of 11 December 1950. "The Nation received the fearful news from Korea with a strange-seeming calmness—the kind of confused, fearful, half-believing matter-of-factness with which many a man has reacted upon learning that he has cancer or tuberculosis. The news of Pearl Harbor, nine years ago to the month, had pealed out like a fire bell. But the numbing facts of the defeat in Korea seeped into the national consciousness slowly out of a jumble of headlines, bulletins, and communiques; days passed before its enormity finally became plain."[2]

Newsweek called it "America's worst military licking since Pearl Harbor. Perhaps it might become the worst military disaster in American history. Barring a military or diplomatic miracle, the approximately two-thirds of the U.S. Army that had been thrown into Korea might have to be evacuated in a new Dunkerque to save them from being lost in a new Bataan."[3]

The situation in west Korea was depressing enough. But at least the Eighth Army had a line of retreat left open. It was with apprehension that the American public stared at front-page maps showing the "entrapment" of the 1st Marine Division and attached U.S. Army units and British Marines by Chinese forces. Press releases from Korea did not encourage much expectation that the encircled troops could save themselves from destruction by any means other than surrender. In either event the result would be a military catastrophe without a parallel in the Nation's history.

The first gleam of hope was inspired by the news that the Marines had seized the initiative at Yudam-ni and cut a path through Chinese blocking the route to Hagaru. Then came the thrilling reports of the air drops of supplies at Hagaru and the mass evacuation of casualties by air. Much of the humiliation felt by newspaper readers was wiped clean by pride as General Smith's troops fought through to Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni in sub-zero cold. The air drop of the bridge sections was a dramatic climax to the realization that what had been a hope was now a fact—the Chosin Reservoir troops had saved themselves and inflicted a major defeat on the Chinese Communists in the doing. Testimony of POWs had left no doubt that the mission of the three CCF corps was the

annihilation of the surrounded United States forces, but the result had been enemy losses which did not fall far short of annihilation of the CCF units themselves.

It was in a spirit of prayerful thanksgiving, therefore, that Americans read about the column of grimy, parka-clad men which came out of the mountains of northeast Korea on 11 December 1950. They had come out fighting and they had brought their wounded and most of their equipment out with them.

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Chapter 15. The Hungnam Redeployment
Marines Billeted in Hungnam Area

As late as 9 December it had been General Smith's understanding that the 1st Marine Division would occupy a defensive sector south and southwest of Hungnam. Then Colonel McAllister at Hungnam was notified by X Corps that plans for the defense of the Hungnam area had been changed, so that the Marines were to embark immediately for redeployment by water to South Korea. General Smith was informed on the 10th, and so promptly was the new plan put into effect that the first Marine units were already loading out before the last elements of the Division arrived at Hungnam.[4]

No changes were necessary in the plans for the reception of Marine units in the Hungnam area worked out by Colonel Snedeker and Colonel McAllister on orders of General Smith. On 8 December, Snedeker had issued detailed instructions which designated defensive sectors for RCT-1 at Chigyong and for RCT-5 and RCT-7 in the vicinity of Yonpo Airfield. The 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion was charged with making such preparations to receive the returning troops as putting up tents, installing stoves, erecting heads and equipping galleys.[5]

The Navy, as usual, was ready. On 15 November, it may be recalled, General Smith had candidly expressed his misgivings about the strategic outlook to Admiral Morehouse and Captain Sears. Morehouse was chief of staff to Admiral Joy, ComNavFE, and Sears served in a like capacity under Admiral Doyle, CTF-90. This frank discussion had not fallen upon deaf ears; and on the 28th, only a few hours after the first CCF attacks at Yudam-ni, ComNavFE alerted CTF-90 as to the possible need for a redeployment operation by sea. The following day Joy advised that events in the Chosin Reservoir area made it desirable for ships of TF-90 to be on six hours' notice either in Korean waters or at Sasebo, Japan.[6]

CTF-90 commenced planning immediately for either an administrative or emergency outloading. His OpnO 19–50, issued on the 28th for planning purposes, provided for half of the amphibious force to conduct redeployment operations on the east coast under Doyle as ComPhibGruOne, while the other half had a similar mission on the west coast under Admiral Thackrey, ComPhibGruThree.

At this time ComPhibGruThree and most of the amphibious units were in Japanese ports for upkeep and replenishment. All were directed by Admiral Joy on the 29th to proceed to Sasebo.

ComPhibGruOne had just completed the opening of Hungnam as a major resupply port and was preparing to withdraw to Japan with the remaining amphibious force. On 30 November, however, the deteriorating situation of ground forces in Korea made it necessary for all units of TF-90 to be in Korean waters. The emergency appeared to be more critical on the west coast, and two-thirds of the smaller amphibious ships were allotted to the Inchon area while the transports were divided equally between Inchon and Hungnam.

The first week of December was devoted to planning and preparing for a redeployment of X Corps by sea which appeared more likely every day. Mine sweeping operations were resumed at Hungnam to enlarge the swept anchorage area and provide swept channels for gunfire support ships.

X Corps OpnO 9–50, issued on 5 December, provided for the defense of the Hungnam area by setting up a perimeter with a final defense line about seven miles in radius. Pie-shaped sectors of fairly equal area, converging on the harbor, were assigned to the following major units from east to west—1st ROK Corps (less one division at Songjin), 7th Infantry Division, 3d Infantry Division (with the 1st KMC Regiment(-)), and the 1st Marine Division. The Marine sector included Yonpo Airfield.

On 8 December a conference held on board the *Mount McKinley* by ComNavFE and CTF-90 was

attended by Vice Admiral Struble, Com7thFlt, Rear Admiral John M. Higgins, ComCruDivFive, and Lieutenant General Shepherd, CG FMFPac.

General Shepherd was present as "Representative of Commander Naval Forces, Far East, on matters relating to the Marine Corps and for consultation and advice in connection with the contemplated amphibious operation now being planned."[7]

General Almond was directed on the 9th to redeploy to South Korea and to report to the commanding general of the Eighth Army after assembling in the Ulsan-Pusan-Masan area. He was to release the 1st ROK Corps as soon as possible to the ROK Army in the Samchok area. An assembly area in the vicinity of Masan, widely separated from the other units of X Corps, was specified for the 1st Marine Division.

CTF-90 was assigned the following missions:

"(1) Provide water lift for and conduct redeployment operations of UN forces in Korea as directed;

"(2) Control all air and naval gunfire support in designated embarkation areas;

"(3) Protect shipping en route to debarkation ports;

"(4) Be responsible for naval blockade and gunfire support of friendly units East Coast of Korea, including Pusan;

"(5) Be prepared to conduct small-scale redeployment operations, including ROK forces and UN prisoners of war;

"(6) Coordinate withdrawal operations with CG X Corps and other commands as appropriate;

"(7) Support and cover redeployment operations in the Hungman or other designated Korean embarkation area."

No such large-scale sea lift of combined Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine elements, not to mention the ROK units, had been attempted since Okinawa. The time was so short, moreover, that action could not wait on detailed planning and organization. In any event the job had to be done.

An enormous fleet of shipping must be assembled from every available source in the Far East. More than 100,000 troops must be embarked, and it was estimated at first that 25,000 Korean refugees must be evacuated, though this figure had to be nearly quadrupled. Mountains of supplies and thousands of vehicles must be outloaded from a comparatively small port. While these activities were in progress, the perimeter must be protected with naval gunfire and aircraft against an enemy credited by X Corps G-2 estimates with the capabilities of launching an attack of six to eight depleted divisions against the Hamhung-Hungnam area.

It was aptly dubbed "an amphibious landing in reverse," since the plan called for the methodical shrinking of the perimeter, under cover of air strikes and naval gunfire, until the last platoon of the ground forces had embarked. Then would come the grand finale of the demolitions.

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Chapter 15. The Hungnam Redeployment
Embarkation of 1st Marine Division

The Wonsan evacuation was instructive as a rehearsal for the Hungnam redeployment. From 2 to 10 December, Lieutenant Colonel Crowe's 1st Shore Party Battalion had charge of the outloading while sharing the defense of the harbor with a battalion from the 3d Infantry Division and two KMC battalions. Another Marine outfit, Company A of the 1st Amphibian Truck Battalion, speeded up the operation by making hundreds of round trips between docks and ships with DUKWs.[8]

Air cover and naval gunfire from supporting ships of TE-90.21 was so effective that Wonsan had no enemy interference worth mentioning. Covering missions continued to be fired until the last friendly troops withdrew, and operations were completed without the necessity of destroying UN supplies and equipment. Altogether, 3834 troops, 7009 Korean civilians, 1146 vehicles, and 10,013 bulk tons of cargo had been outloaded when the operation was completed on 10 December. One detachment of Shore Party troops sailed for Pusan with the DUKWs in preparation for unloading the 1st Marine Division upon its arrival at that port.

The Hungnam evacuation plan, as outlined in X Corps OpnO 10–50, issued on 11 December, provided for the immediate embarkation of the 1st Marine Division and the 3d ROK Division. A smaller perimeter than the original concept was to be defended meanwhile by the 7th and 3d Infantry Divisions, with the latter having the final responsibility. Major units were to withdraw gradually by side-slipping until only reinforced platoons remained as covering forces holding strong points. Plans called for naval gunfire and air support to be stepped up as the perimeter contracted.

CTF-90 assumed control of all naval functions on 10 December after approving loading plans made at a conference of Navy officers and representatives of X Corps. Colonel Forney, Deputy Chief of Staff, X Corps, was appointed Corps evacuation control officer with responsibility for the operation of the Hungnam port and was assigned a small staff. Major Richard W. Shutts, of General Shepherd's party, was placed in charge of the Operations Section. Two more former TTUPac Marines on the X Corps staff were assigned sections—Major Charles P. Weiland, the Loading Section; and Major Jack R. Munday, the Navy Liaison Section. Lieutenant Colonel Harry E. Moisell, USA, headed the Movement Section, and Captain William C. Cool, USA, the Rations Section.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles E. Warren served as Colonel Forney's executive officer until he was incapacitated by pneumonia and relieved by Lieutenant Colonel Crowe.

The 2d Engineer Special Brigade, USA, was responsible for operation of the dock facilities, traffic control in the dock areas, and for furnishing Japanese stevedores, winch operators, cargo handling equipment, and dunnage. A reinforced company from the 1st Shore Party Battalion worked the LST and small craft beaches while controlling the lighterage for ships loading in the stream.

It was decided on 11 December that 1st Marine Division staging to assembly areas should commence immediately. Loading had to be expedited so that ships could be used for a second and even third turn-around. Embarkation Order 3-50, issued by the Division on the 11th, assigned vehicle and cargo assembly areas to units, and an embarkation control office was set up in the dock area.

As compensation for the cramped confines of the Hungnam harbor, the tidal range was less than a foot as compared to the maximum of 31 feet at Inchon. And though the docks had space for only seven ships, Major Weiland planned to double-berth four additional ships and load them from the outboard side. In addition, 11 LSTs could be handled simultaneously—seven at GREEN Beach One, and the others at GREEN Beach Two.

Marine units awaiting shipping remained on a standby basis, ready to begin loading at once upon assignment of space by the embarkation officer. The Division rear CP at Hungnam had become the only CP with General Smith's arrival; and on the 11th General Craig, the ADC, returned from emergency leave.

General MacArthur flew to Yonpo Airfield on the 11th for a brief conference with General Almond and approved the X Corps plan. A date of 27 December was set for Corps units to pass under the control of the Eighth Army in South Korea.

The outloading of the 1st Marine Division was making good progress on the 12th when General Smith visited the docks on a tour of inspection. That evening he and General Shepherd attended a dinner at the Corps CP in honor of General Almond's 58th birthday. The Army was represented by Major Generals Barr, Soule, and Clark L. Ruffner, X Corps Chief of Staff.

By the following day the 5th and 7th Marines were ready to sail. Embarkation officers loaded their ships by sight, planning as they went along. Not knowing in advance what type of ship might be assigned, they found that carefully calculated stowage diagrams were out of the question. Under these circumstances, amphibious training and experience were invaluable.

Space in the tent city established by X Corps to the rear of the LST beaches had been made available to Marine units awaiting embarkation. Most of them, however, moved directly from their bivouac areas to the beach.

While the Marines were outloading, the two Army divisions defending the perimeter had only minor patrol actions. Their artillery supplied most of the interdiction fires at the outset, with naval gunfire giving the deep support. Vigorous air support by Navy, Air Force, and Marine planes also did much to discourage any hostile intentions the enemy may have had.

MGCIS-1, the ground control intercept squadron at Yonpo, stopped directing the high altitude fighters on 11 December and passed over to the USS *Mount McKinley* the task of keeping the perimeter clear of any enemy planes. Over-all control of air still remained ashore with MTACS-2.

At 1500 on the 13th General Smith went aboard the USS *Bayfield* and opened the Division CP. As his last duty on shore, he attended memorial services held by the Division at the Hungnam Cemetery. While the commanding general paid his tribute to the honored dead, Chinese POWs were making preparations for the interment of the last bodies brought down from Chinhung-ni.

The Marine loading was completed on the 14th. At a conference that day with CTF-90 on board the *Mount McKinley,* General Smith inquired as to the possibility of having the ships carrying the Marines unload at Masan instead of Pusan, thus saving a 40-mile movement by truck. Admiral Doyle pointed out that this procedure was not feasible because of the lack of lighterage facilities at Masan. The additional turn-around time, moreover, would have delayed the evacuation of remaining Corps units.

The 14th was also the day when Marine air strikes from Yonpo ended with the departure of the last of the Wing's land-based fighters for Japan. Shortly after midnight the Air Defense Section of MTACS-2 passed control of all air in the Hungnam area to the Navy's Tactical Air Control Squadron One of TF-90 aboard the USS *Mount McKinley.* The Marine squadron then set up a standby TACC aboard an LST until the final withdrawal on 24 December.

At 1030 on 15 December, as the *Bayfield* sailed, the curtain went down on one of the most memorable campaigns in the 175-year history of the Marine Corps. A total of 22,215 Marines had embarked in shipping consisting of an APA, an AKA, 3 APs, 13 LSTs, 3 LSDs, and 7 commercial cargo ships.

The Yonpo airlift continued, however, until 17 December when the field was closed and a temporary airstrip nearer the harbor was made available to twin-engine R4D's for the final phase of the air evacuation. The only Marine units left in Hungnam were a reinforced Shore Party company, an ANGLICO group and one and a half companies (88 LVTs) of the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion. They passed under the operational control of X Corps to assist in the outloading of Army units. Also, Colonel Boeker C. Batterton, commanding MAG-12, had

moved to Hungnam for the final evacuation of his air group from Yonpo and to arrange for loading its heavy equipment and remaining personnel aboard SS *Towanda Victory*. Then on 18 December he flew his command post to Itami.[9]

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Chapter 15. The Hungnam Redeployment

The Last Ten Days at Hungnam

With ten days remaining for the embarkation of the two Army divisions, the problem of Korean refugees threatened to disrupt the schedule. But CTF-90 contrived somehow to find the shipping, and the homeless Koreans were willing to put up with any hardships to escape from Communist domination. It became standard practice to embark at least 5000 on an LST, not counting children in arms, and no less than 12,000 human sardines found standing room on one commercial cargo ship.[10]

The most fragile link in the complex chain of operations was represented by the two 390-ton diesel electric tugs. No others were available, nor were spare parts to be had, yet both tugs had clocked more than 5000 running hours since the last overhaul. Thus it seemed almost a miracle that neither broke down for more than three hours in all, and repairs were made with materials at hand.

On the 18th, when the last ROKs sailed for Samchok, the 7th Infantry Division was in the midst of its outloading. By 20 December all troops of this unit had embarked, according to schedule. Responsibility for the defense of Hungnam then passed to Admiral Doyle as General Almond and his staff joined CTF-90 on board the flagship *Mount McKinley*. General Soule's 3d Division now manned the shore defenses alone.[11]

When the perimeter contracted to the immediate vicinity of Hungnam, following the evacuation of Hamhung and Yonpo Airfield, two cruisers, seven destroyers, and three rocket-firing craft covered the entire front from their assigned positions in mine-swept lanes. A total of nearly 34,000 shells and 12,800 rockets was fired by these support ships, with the battleship *Missouri* contributing 162 16-inch rounds at the finish of the bombardment. About 800 more 8-inch shells and 12,800 more 5-inch shells were expended at Hungnam than during the naval gunfire preparation for the Inchon landing.

Seven embarkation sites were employed (see Map 30). From left to right they were designated as PINK Beach, BLUE Beach, GREEN One and Two Beaches, and YELLOW One, Two, and Three Beaches. The 7th RCT, holding the left sector, was to embark from PINK Beach. BLUE and GREEN One Beaches were assigned to the 65th RCT in the center, while the 15th RCT had GREEN Two and the three YELLOW Beaches.

H-hour had been set at 1100 on the 24th, and seven LSTs were beached at 0800 to receive 3d Infantry Division troops. Soon the three regiments were reduced to as many battalions which acted as covering forces while the other troops fell back to assigned beaches. All withdrawals were conducted methodically along specified routes by units using marking panels. Then the battalions themselves pulled out, leaving only seven reinforced platoons manning strong points. The Hungnam redeployment came to an end when these platoons boarded an LST after a search for stragglers. Air and naval gunfire support had made it an uneventful finish except for the accidental explosion of an ammunition dump on PINK Beach, resulting in two men killed and 21 wounded.

All beaches were clear by 1436 on Sunday afternoon, the 24th, with Able and Baker Companies of the Amtrac Battalion sticking it out to the end. Marines of these units provided fires to cover the flanks of the last withdrawals and manned 37 LVTs evacuating Army troops from PINK Beach. With the exception of three LVTs lost in the ammunition dump explosion on that beach, all LVTs and LVT(A)s were safely reembarked on LSDs at the finish of the operation.[12]

Remarkably few supplies had to be left behind for lack of shipping space. Among them were 400 tons of frozen dynamite and 500 thousand-pound bombs. They added to the tumult of an awe-inspiring demolitions scene. The entire Hungnam waterfront seemed to be blown sky-high in one volcanic eruption of flame, smoke,

and rubble which left a huge black mushroom cloud hovering over the ruins.
Click here to view map

The chill, misty dawn of Christmas Day found the *Mount McKinley* about to sail for Ulsan with CTF-90 and Generals Almond and Shepherd after an eminently successful operation. It had been pretty much the Navy's show, in the absence of enemy interference, and the final statistics were staggering—105,000 military personnel, 91,000 Korean refugees, 17,500 vehicles, and 350,000 measurement tons of cargo loaded out in 193 shiploads by 109 ships.

"With naval, air and surface units effectively isolating the beachhead, we were able to take our time and get everything out," commented Admiral Joy on 26 December. "Admiral Doyle has turned in another brilliant performance. We never, never contemplated a Dunkirk—not even faintly."[13]

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Marines Arrive at New Assembly Area

While the remaining X Corps units completed outloading at Hungnam, the Marines were landing at Pusan and proceeding by motor march to their new assembly area in the vicinity of Masan. General Craig, the ADC, had gone ahead with the advance party from Hungnam and made arrangements for the reception of the Division.[14]

News from the front in West Korea was not encouraging as the Eighth Army planned further withdrawals, for G-2 reports indicated that the advancing Chinese were about to launch a great new offensive shortly. Despite the persistent rumors that all Korea might be evacuated by UN forces, General MacArthur insisted in his special communique of 26 December that operations "were skilfully conducted without loss of cohesion and with all units remaining intact. . . .

"In its broad implications I consider that these operations, initiated on 24 November and carried through to this [Hungnam] redeployment, have served a very significant purpose—possibly in general result the most significant and fortunate of any conducted during the course of the Korean campaign.

"The might of a major military nation was suddenly and without warning thrown against this relatively small United Nations Command but without attaining a decision.

"Due to intervening circumstances beyond our power to control or even detect, we did not achieve the United Nations objective.

"But at a casualty cost less than that experienced in a comparable period of defensive fighting on the Pusan perimeter, we exposed before too late secret political and military decisions of enormous scope and threw off balance enemy preparations aimed at surreptitiously massing the power capable of destroying our forces with one mighty extended blow."[15]

Questions as to the proper evaluation of the Eighth Army withdrawal turned into a controversy during coming months with political as well as military implications. Press representatives, military critics and soldiers of other nations, while crediting MacArthur with a great victory at Inchon, were for the most part of the opinion that the Eighth Army withdrawal of November and December was a costly reverse.[16]

Marine officers in Korea had no first-hand knowledge of EUSAK operations. It was obvious, however, that an Eighth Army retirement south of the 38th Parallel had made it desirable if not actually necessary for X Corps to withdraw from northeast Korea, even though General Almond held that a Hamhung-Hungnam perimeter could be defended throughout the winter.

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Chapter 15. The Hungnam Redeployment
Contributions of Marine Aviation

The close coordination of aviation with the ground forces in the Chosin campaign was due in large measure to the assignment of additional pilots to the 1st Marine Division as forward air controllers. They had been plucked from 1st Marine Aircraft Wing squadrons barely in time to join their battalions before embarking at Inchon. Increasing the number of FACs to two per battalion did much to bring air support down to the company level when needed.[17]

Air units frequently had to rely upon charts with place names, grid coordinates, and scales different from those in the hands of the ground troops. Here the Marine system of the man on the ground talking the pilot onto the target by reference to visual land marks paid off.

Cloudy, stormy weather was common. Three night fighter pilots were lost because of icing, disorientation, and insufficient radio aids to navigation. Two VMF-212 land-based pilots saved themselves from destruction only by landing on the *Badoeng Strait* with their last drops of gas.

With the approach of winter and cold weather, aircraft on the landing strips had to be run up every two hours at night to keep the oil warm enough for early morning takeoffs. Ordnance efficiency dropped. Planes skidded on icy runways. Once, after a six inch snow, 80 men and ten trucks worked all night to clear and sand a 150-foot strip down the runway at Yonpo.[18]

As early as mid-November it once took hours of scraping and chipping on the *Badoeng Strait* to clear three inches of glazed ice and snow off the decks, catapults, arresting wires, and barriers. Planes which stood the night on the flight deck had to be taken below to the hangar deck to thaw out. On another occasion VMF-214 had to cancel all flight operations because 68-knot winds, heavy seas, and freezing temperatures covered the *Sicily's* flight deck and aircraft with a persistent coat of ice.

One pilot of VMF-323 had to return shortly after takeoff because water vapor froze in his oil breather tube in flight. With the back pressure throwing oil all over his windshield and billowing black vapor and smoke out of his cowl, he landed only to have the front of his Corsair burst into flames when the escaped oil dripped on the hot exhaust stacks. Quick work by the deck crews extinguished the fire.

A hazard as great as being shot down was a crash landing or bail-out at sea, where the water was cold enough to kill a man in 20 minutes. Survival clothing and equipment was so bulky that pilots could barely get into their cockpits.

Maintenance and servicing problems ashore, complicated by dirt, dust, and the scarcity of parts, kept mechanics working to the point of exhaustion. Insufficient trucks forced the ground crews to refuel and arm planes by hand, often from rusting fuel drums. Two destructive crashes, one fatal, were attributed to accumulated water in gasoline.

Aboard ship until mid-November, VMF-214 was able to keep 91 per cent of its planes operative. When suddenly deployed ashore to Wonsan, its aircraft availability dropped to 82 per cent and at Yonpo to 67 per cent. Once back at sea again in December, it jumped up to 90 per cent.

Basic difference in close air support doctrine between the Navy and Marines and Air Force were resolved by close and friendly liaison between the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and the Fifth Air Force commands; by a Marine aviator attached to the Joint Eighth Army-Fifth Air Force Operations Center at Seoul; and by indoctrination of non-Marine units of the X Corps in the Marine-Navy style of close air support. Difficulties in inter-service communications slowed Fifth Air Force operations orders to carrier squadrons, both Navy and

Marine. Messages were routed via FEAF and ComNavFe in Tokyo and arrived hours late. Ashore, even MAG-12 during the first two weeks at Wonsan received its Fifth Air Force mission orders six to 36 hours late. A direct radio teletype between 1st MAW and 5thAF headquarters alleviated the situation. And when the CG 1st MAW received full control of the air over the X Corps area on 1 December, these problems were eased.

Actual control of air support for the scattered ground units demonstrated close cooperation between the Navy and Marine Corps. This was evident from the time the Navy's Tactical Air Control Squadron One on the USS *Mount McKinley* passed control to the Air Defense Section of MTACS-2 at Hamhung to the time that control returned to the ship in the Hungnam evacuation.

When the Marines had control, the ship stood by as an emergency TACC and acted as a radar reporting station for MTACS-2. When control was passed back afloat, the Air Defense Section of MTACS-2 stood by as a standby TACC aboard an LST until the last man was pulled off the beach. Furthermore, three officers from MGCIS-1 went aboard *Mount McKinley* to help out as Air Defense controllers. They were experienced. All through the Wonsan-Chosin campaign, the MGCIS had directed the defensive fighter patrols, circling Wonsan and Yonpo, to check all unidentified aircraft before the latter got close enough to do any damage. MGCIS-1 also steered lost planes to base in bad weather, occasionally vectored them into the GCA radar-controlled landing pattern, and even assisted MTACS-2 in directing air support planes to FACs.[19]

Tactical air support in the X Corps zone was directed to the ground units by the Air Support Section of MTACS-2. From 26 October to 11 December, 3703 sorties in 1053 missions were controlled by the TACPS of Marine, Army, and ROK units. Close air support missions accounted for 599 of the total (468 for 1st Marine Division, 8 for 3d Infantry Division, 56 for 7th Infantry Division, and 67 for ROKs). The remaining 454 missions were search and attack.[20]

When FAC communications failed from valley to valley, aircraft became radio relays and controllers. This was highlighted by the airborne TADC, orbiting over the road from Hagaru.

Approximately half of the Marine air missions were in support of non-Marine ground units. The ROK and the U.S. Army units were not as well supplied with experienced FAC's as the 1st Marine Division. In these areas four Air Force "Mosquitos" (AT-6 "Texan" training planes) were assigned to X Corps to assist in the control of air support.[21]

When shore-based Marine air support was about to cease with the closing of Yonpo air field, VMF-214 and VMF-212 quickly moved their operations aboard carrier; and during the final phases of the Hungnam evacuation, almost half of the Marine tactical air strength was operating from carrier bases. VMF-214 flew back aboard *Sicily* on 7 December without missing a mission and VMF-212, which had moved to Itami on 4 December to draw and test a new complement of carrier Corsairs, was aboard the USS *Bataan* eight days later. When the month ended, still another squadron, VMF-312, was polishing up its carrier landing technique for seaborne duty.[22]

The outcome of the Hagaru withdrawal owed much to air-dropped supplies and to casualty evacuations by General Tunner's Combat Cargo Command (CCC). Assisting Combat Cargo in Marine support were the Wing's R4D twin engine transports and TBM World War II type torpedo bombers, both of which were flown largely by the field-desk pilots on the Wing and Group staffs. Most of the Marines' share of the heavy airlifting, however, was done by the four engine R5D transports of Colonel Dean C. Roberts' VMR-152. Early in October this squadron had been temporarily shifted from the trans-Pacific airlift of the Navy's Fleet Logistics Air Wing to support the Marines in the Wonsan campaign. In Korea its operations were controlled by the Combat Cargo Command, which committed an average of five Marine R5D's a day into the CCC airlift. In such missions these transports supported all UN units from Pyongyang to Yonpo and points north. Marine transports not committed by the CCC for general UN support in Korea were available for Wing use. From 1 November until Christmas, VMR-152 safely carried five million pounds of supplies to the front and evacuated more than 4000 casualties.[23]

The Chosin Reservoir campaign opened two new chapters in Marine aviation history. The first was the use of the airborne TADC to control the air support of the division column between Hagaru and Chinhung-ni. The second was the appearance of VMF-311, the first Marine jet squadron to fly in combat. Beginning on 10 December the newly arrived squadron flew interdiction missions for four days from Yonpo. Then it moved to Pusan to operate for the remainder of the month with 5th Air Force jets streaking up the long peninsula to cover the withdrawal of the Eighth Army.[24]

Appreciation for the assistance given by Marine aviation to Marine ground forces was expressed in a letter of 20 December from General Smith to General Harris, the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Air Wing. The Division Commander said:

"Without your support our task would have been infinitely more difficult and more costly. During the long reaches of the night and in the snow storms many a Marine prayed for the coming of day or clearing weather when he knew he would again hear the welcome roar of your planes as they dealt out destruction to the enemy. Even the presence of a night heckler was reassuring.

"Never in its history has Marine Aviation given more convincing proof of its indispensable value to the ground Marines. A bond of understanding has been established that will never be broken."[25]

The story of air support in the Chosin Reservoir campaign would not be complete without a summary of the results of VMO-6. Marines took a proprietary interest in Major Gottschalk's squadron, which had put into effect the helicopter techniques worked out at Quantico by the experimental squadron, HMX-1. Some of these techniques were having their first test in combat, for the development of rotary-wing aircraft in 1950 was at a pioneer stage comparable to that of fixed-wing aircraft in the first year of World War I. On 28 October, VMO-6 had a strength of 25 officers, 95 enlisted men, ten light fixed-wing aircraft (eight OY-2s, two L5Gs) and nine HO3S-1 helicopters. From that date until 15 December the squadron made 1544 flights for a total of 1624.8 hours. The principal missions were as follows:

"Reconnaissance—OYs, 393; helicopters, 64; Transportation—OYs, 130; helicopters, 421; Evacuation—OYs, 29; helicopters, 191; Liaison—OYs, 35; helicopters, 90; Artillery spot—OYs, 39; helicopters, 0; Utility—OYs, 26; helicopters, 60; Rescue—OYs, 0; helicopters, 11."[26]

But statistics can give no idea of the most significant achievement of VMO-6 in the Reservoir campaign. For during the most critical period the only physical contact between units separated by enemy action was provided by the OYs and helicopters. The importance of this contribution can hardly be overestimated.

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Losses Sustained by the Enemy

Marine losses in northeast Korea, as reported to the Secretary of the Navy, included a total of 4418 battle casualties from 26 October to 15 December 1950—604 KIA, 114 DOW, 192 MIA, and 3508 WIA. The 7313 non-battle casualties consisted largely of minor frostbite and indigestion cases who were soon restored to active duty.[27] Eight Marine pilots were KIA or died of wounds, four were MIA, and three were wounded. General Smith estimated that a third of the non-battle casualties were returned to duty during the operation.[28]

Enemy losses for the same period were estimated at a total of 37,500–15,000 killed and 7500 wounded by Marine ground forces, plus 10,000 killed and 5000 wounded by Marine air. Not much reliance can be placed in such figures as a rule, but fortunately we have enemy testimony as to heavy losses sustained by the Chinese Communists.

This evidence goes far toward explaining why they did not interfere with the Hungham redeployment.

Contrary to expectations, Chinese military critiques have been candid in admitting failures and unsparing in self-criticism. Among captured documents are summaries of the operations of the three CCF armies encountered by the Marines in the Chosin Reservoir area. These major units, representing at least 11 and probably 12 divisions, were as follows:

20th CCF Army—58th, 59th, and 60th Divisions, with the 89th Division of the 30th Army attached;
26th CCF Army—76th, 77th, and 78th Division, with probably the 94th Division of 32d Army attached;
27th CCF Army—79th, 80th, and 81st Divisions, with the 70th Division of 24th Army attached.[29]

All three armies were major units of the 9th Army Group of the 3d CCF Field Army. In mid-October the leading elements of the 4th CCF Field Army had crossed the Yalu to oppose the U.S. Eighth Army. The operations of X Corps in northeast Korea being considered a threat to the left flank, the 42d Army was detached with a mission of providing flank protection, pending relief by units of the 3d CCF Field Army. Three divisions, the 124th, 125th, and 126th were represented. While the last hovered on the left flank of the 4th Field Army, the 124th was hard hit near Sudong during the first week of November by RCT-7 of the 1st Marine Division.

In order to cover the withdrawal of the remnants, the 125th Division moved south of Hagaru from the Fusen Reservoir area. Both CCF divisions then fell back to Yudam-ni, where they were relieved by units of the 20th Army, 3d Field Army. This ended the operations of the 4th Field Army in northeast Korea.

Shortly after the appearance of the 20th Army in the Yudam-ni area, the 27th Army moved into positions north of the Chosin Reservoir. Thus the enemy had available eight divisions for the attacks of 27–28 November on the Marines in the Yudam-ni area and the three 7th Infantry Division battalions east of the Chosin Reservoir. If it may be assumed that these CCF divisions averaged 7500 men each, or three-fourths of full strength, the enemy had a total of 60,000 men in assault or reserve.

The Chinese, as we know, failed to accomplish their basic mission, which prisoners agreed was the destruction of the 1st Marine Division. In every instance the efforts of the first night were the most formidable, with enemy effectiveness declining sharply after a second or third attack. The explanation seems to be that the 12 divisions were sent into northeast Korea with supplies which would have been sufficient only if the first attempts had succeeded. The following comment by the 26th Army supports this conclusion:

“A shortage of transportation and escort personnel makes it impossible to accomplish the mission of supplying the troops. As a result, our soldiers frequently starve. From now on, the organization of our rear service units should be improved.[30]

"The troops were hungry. They ate cold food, and some had only a few potatoes in two days. They were unable to maintain the physical strength for combat; the wounded personnel could not be evacuated. . . . The fire power of our entire army was basically inadequate. When we used our guns there were no shells and sometimes the shells were duds."

The enemy's tactical rigidity and tendency to repeat costly errors are charged by the 20th Army to inferior communications:

"Our signal communication was not up to standard. For example, it took more than two days to receive instructions from higher level units. Rapid changes of the enemy's situation and the slow motion of our signal communication caused us to lose our opportunities in combat and made the instructions of the high level units ineffective. . . .

"We succeeded in the separation and encirclement of the enemy, but we failed to annihilate the enemy one by one. The units failed to carry out the orders of the higher echelon. For example, the failure to annihilate the enemy at Yut'an-ni [Yudam-ni] made it impossible to annihilate the enemy at Hakalwu-ri [Hagaru]. The higher level units' refusal of the lower level units' suggestion of rapidly starting the combat and exterminating the enemy one by one gave the enemy a chance to break out from the encirclement."

One of the most striking instances of the tactical inflexibility which stultified Chinese efforts was found at Hagaru. With only a depleted Marine Infantry battalion and service troops available to defend a perimeter four miles in circumference, the enemy needed mere daylight observation to ascertain and avoid the most strongly defended positions. Yet these were just the positions chosen for the attack, not only on the first night but also the second occasion 48 hours later.

"The [CCF] tactics were mechanical," commented the 27th Army. "We underestimated the enemy so we distributed the strength, and consequently the higher echelons were overdispersed while the lower echelon units were overconcentrated. During one movement, the distance between the three leading divisions was very long, while the formations of the battalions, companies, and units of lower levels were too close, and the troops were unable to deploy. Furthermore, reconnaissance was not conducted strictly; we walked into the enemy fire net and suffered heavy casualties."

Summing up the reasons why the Marines at Yudam-ni were not "exterminated promptly," the 27th Army concludes that it was "because our troops encountered unfavorable conditions during the missions and the troops suffered too many casualties." This would seem to be another way of saying that the Chinese failed to destroy the 1st Marine Division because they themselves were nearly destroyed in the attempt. At any rate, evidence from the enemy documents points overwhelmingly to crippling losses both from Marine fire power and non-battle casualties chargeable to lack of equipment and supplies.

The 20th Army had a hundred deaths from tetanus caused by improper care of wounds. Hundreds of other soldiers were incapacitated by typhus or ailments of malnutrition and indigestion.

More than 90 per cent of the 26th Army suffered from frostbite. The 27th Army complained of 10,000 non-combat casualties alone out of a strength of four divisions:

"The troops did not have enough food, they did not have enough houses to live in, they could not stand the bitter cold, which was the reason for the excessive non-combat reduction in personnel (more than 10 thousand persons), the weapons were not used effectively. When the fighters bivouacked in snow-covered ground during combat, their feet, socks, and hands were frozen together in one ice ball; they could not unscrew the caps on the hand grenades; the fuses would not ignite; the hands were not supple; the mortar tubes shrank on account of the cold; 70 per cent of the shells failed to detonate; skin from the hands was struck on the shells and the mortar tubes."

Testimony as to the effects of Marine fire power is also given by the 26th Army:

"The coordination between the enemy infantry, tanks, artillery, and airplanes is surprisingly close.

Besides using heavy weapons for the depth, the enemy carries with him automatic light firearms which, coordinated with rockets, launchers, and recoilless guns are disposed at the front line. The characteristic of their employment is to stay quietly under cover and open fire suddenly when we come to between 70 and 100 meters from them, making it difficult for our troops to deploy and thus inflicting casualties upon us."

The 20th and 27th Armies appear to have been bled white by the losses of the first week. Early in December, units of the 26th Army appeared on the east side of the MSR between Hagaru and Koto-ri, and this unit furnished most of the opposition from 6 to 11 December.

Seven divisions in all were identified by the 1st Marine Division; and since the taking of prisoners was not a matter of top priority with men fighting for existence, it is likely that other CCF units were encountered. The CCF 9th Army Group, according to a prisoner questioned on 7 December, included a total of 12 divisions. This POW gave the following statement:

"Missions of the four (4) armies in 9th Group are to annihilate the 1st Division which is considered to be the best division in the U.S. After annihilating the 1st Marine Division they are to move south and take Hamhung."[31]

As to the reason why the Chinese took no advantage of the Hungnam redeployment, there seems little doubt that the 9th Army Group was too riddled by battle and non-battle casualties to make the effort. This is not a matter of opinion. Following the Hungnam redeployment, as the U.S. Eighth Army braced itself to meet a new CCF offensive, UN and FECOM G-2 officers were naturally concerned as to whether the remaining 9th Army Group troops in northeast Korea would be available to strengthen the CCF 4th Field Army. It was estimated that only two weeks would be required to move these troops to West Korea, where they had the capability of reinforcing the CCF attack against the Eighth Army.

Efforts to locate the 9th Army Group were unavailing for nearly three months. Then a prisoner from the 77th Division of the 26th Army was captured by U.S. Eighth Army troops on 18 March 1951. During the following week POW interrogations established that three divisions of the 26th Army were in contact with Eighth Army units northeast of Seoul.

"The only conclusion to be drawn," comments the *Marine Corps Board Study*, "based on information collected by 1stMarDiv and X Corps, and that by UN and FEC, is that all corps of 9th Army Group had been rendered militarily ineffective in the Chosin Reservoir operation and required a considerable period of time for replacement, re-equipment, and reorganization."[32]

Thus it appears that the Marines not only saved themselves in the Chosin Reservoir fights; they also saved U.S. Eighth Army from being assailed by reinforcements from northeast Korea in the CCF offensive which exploded on the last night of 1950.

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Chapter 15. The Hungnam Redeployment
Results of the Reservoir Campaign

There could be no doubt, after taking into account the CCF mission, that the 9th Army Group, 3d Field Army, had sustained a reverse in northeast Korea which amounted to a disaster. On the other hand, it might have been asked whether a retrograde movement such as the Marine breakout, even though aggressively and successfully executed, could be termed a victory.

This question involves issues too complex for a clearcut positive answer, but it would be hard to improve upon the analysis of results in the *Marine Corps Board Study:*

"Although the operations of this phase constitute a withdrawal, despite the fact that CG 1stMarDiv characterized them as 'an attack in a new direction,' the withdrawal was executed in the face of overwhelming odds and conducted in such a manner that, contrary to the usual withdrawal, some very important tactical results were achieved. These may be summarized as follows:

"1. Extricated 1stMarDiv from a trap sprung by overwhelming enemy ground forces by skilful employment of integrated ground and air action which enabled the Division to come through with all operable equipment, with wounded properly evacuated and with tactical integrity.

"2. Outfought and outlasted at least seven CCF divisions under conditions of terrain and weather chosen by the enemy and reputedly to his liking. Although frostbite took a heavy toll of the Division it hit CCF units far harder, perhaps decisively.

"3. In the process of accomplishing '2' above, rendered militarily noneffective a large part of 9th CCF Army Group. Those units not contacted by 1stMarDiv were fixed in the Chosin Reservoir area for possible employment against the Division and consequently suffered from the ravages of sub-zero cold and heavy air attacks.

"4. As a direct result of '3' above, enabled X Corps to evacuate Hungnam without enemy interference and, consequently, as a combat effective unit with all personnel and serviceable equipment. Pressure on X Corps by 9th CCF Army Group during the seaward evacuation of the Corps, a most difficult operation, would undoubtedly have altered the result."[33]

Improvisations in tactics were now and then made necessary by unusual conditions of terrain, weather or enemy action. But on the whole the Marines saved themselves in the Reservoir campaign by the application of sound military tactics. In the doing they demonstrated repeatedly that the rear makes as good a front as any other for the militarily skilled and stout-hearted, and that a unit is not beaten merely because it is surrounded by a more numerous enemy.

Inevitably the Marine campaign has been compared to that classic of all military breakouts—the march of the immortal Ten Thousand which is the subject of Xenophon's *Anabasis.* Stranded in the hostile Persian Empire in the year 401 B.C., these Greek mercenaries cut their way to safety through Asiatic hordes. The following description of the tactics used by Xenophon and his lieutenant Cherisophus to overcome road blocks in mountain country will have a familiar ring to Marine veterans of the Reservoir:

"The enemy, by keeping up a continuous battle and occupying in advance every narrow place, obstructed passage after passage. Accordingly, whenever the van was obstructed, Xenophon, from behind, made a dash up the hills and broke the barricade, and freed the vanguard by endeavoring to get above the obstructing enemy. Whenever the rear was the point attacked, Cherisophus, in the same way, made a detour, and by endeavoring to mount higher than the barricaders, freed the passage for the rear rank; and in this way, turn and turn about, they

rescued each other, and paid unflinching attention to their mutual needs."[34]

Spears and arrows have been superseded by bazookas and machine guns, but the basic infantry tactics of the Reservoir breakout were essentially those which served Xenophon and the Ten Thousand more than 33 centuries ago. Organization, combat, training, spirit, and discipline enabled the Marines, like the Hellenes before them, to overcome numerical odds and fight their way over Asiatic mountain roads to the sea.

The over-all strategic effects of the Reservoir campaign, as summarized by the Marine Corps Board Study, were as follows:

"1. Played a prominent part . . . in enabling X Corps, a considerable segment of the total UN forces in Korea, to be withdrawn from Hungnam as a combat effective force available for employment with the Eighth Army in South Korea at a time when that Army was retreating and was in critical need of a reinforcement.

"2. Were largely responsible for preventing reinforcement of CCF forces on Eighth Army front by 12 divisions during a period when such reinforcement might have meant to Eighth Army the difference between maintaining a foothold in Korea or forced evacuation therefrom, by being instrumental in rendering 9th CCF Army Group, a force of three corps of four divisions each, militarily noneffective for a minimum period of three months."

That the breakout of the 1st Marine Division had affected American political and military policy at the highest levels was the assertion of an editorial in *Time.* Referring to what it termed the "Great Debate," in December 1950, as to whether American forces should be withdrawn from Korea, the news-magazine commented:

"When the Marines fought their way down to Hungnam through the 'unconquerable Chinese hordes,' and embarked for Pusan with their equipment, their wounded, and their prisoners, the war in Asia took on a different look. The news stories, pictures and newsreels of the Hungham action contributed more to forming U.S. policy than all the words in the 'Great Debate.' The nation—and the revitalized Eighth Army—now knows that U.S. fighting men will stay in Korea until a better place and a better opportunity is found to punish Communist aggression."[35]

General Douglas MacArthur as CINCUNC, in his 11th report of operations of UN forces in Korea, submitted the following to the United Nations Organization regarding the Chosin Reservoir operation:

"In this epic action, the Marine Division and attached elements of the 7th Infantry Division marched and fought over 60 miles in bitter cold along a narrow, tortuous, ice-covered road against opposition of from six to eight Chinese Communist Force divisions which suffered staggering losses. Success was due in no small part to the unprecedented extent and effectiveness of air support. The basic element, however, was the high quality of soldierly courage displayed by the personnel of the ground units who maintained their integrity in the face of continuous attacks by numerically superior forces, consistently held their positions until their wounded had been evacuated, and doggedly refused to abandon supplies and equipment to the enemy.

"United Nations Air Forces threw the bulk of their effort into close support of ground forces cutting their way through overwhelming numbers of Chinese Communists. The toll of the enemy taken by the United Nations aircraft contributed in large measure to the successful move of our forces from the Chosin Reservoir to the Hamhung area despite the tremendous odds against them. Air support provided by the United States Marine Air Force and Naval Aircraft in this beleaguered area, described as magnificent by the ground force commanders, represented one of the greatest concentrations of tactical air operations in history."[36]

Rear Admiral James H. Doyle attributed the successful evacuation at Hungnam in large measure to the Marine breakout. Writing to General Smith several months later, he asserted that he had "filled in what has been a neglected page in the story of the Hungnam redeployment. It is simply this: that the destruction of enemy forces wrought by the First Marine Division on the march down the hill was a major factor in the successful withdrawal; and that the destruction was so complete the enemy was unable to exert serious pressure at any time on the

shrinking perimeter. To my mind, as I told you at Hungnam, the performance of the First Marine Division on that march constitutes one of the most glorious chapters in Marine Corps history."[37]

Letters of commendation were received by the 1st Marine Division from General Cates, CMC, General Shepherd, Admiral Joy, General Collins, Chief of Staff, USA, General Almond, and many other high-ranking military leaders. But for depth of feeling, for sincerity and emotion, there was no message which appealed more to the officers and men of the Division than the concluding paragraph of this tribute from the commanding general who had guided their destinies with unswerving courage and who had come out with them, Major General Oliver P. Smith:

"The performance of officers and men in this operation was magnificent. Rarely have all hands in a division participated so intimately in the combat phases of an operation. Every Marine can be justly proud of his participation. In Korea, Tokyo and Washington there is full appreciation of the remarkable feat of the division. With the knowledge of the determination, professional competence, heroism, devotion to duty, and self-sacrifice displayed by officers and men of this division, my feeling is one of humble pride. No division commander has ever been privileged to command a finer body of men."[38]

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Appendix A. Glossary of Technical Terms and Abbreviations

ADC—Assistant Division Comander.

AdmO—Administrative Order.

AF—Air Force.

AGC—Amphibious Force Flagship.

AH—Hospital Ship.

AirDelPlat—Air Delivery Platoon.

AirO—Air Officer.

AirSptSec—Air Support Section.

AKA—Assault Cargo Ship.

AKL—Cargo, Ship, Light.

AM—Minesweeper.

AmphTracBn—Amphibian Tractor Battalion.

AmphTrkBn—Amphibian Truc Battalion.

AMS—Auxiliary Motor Minesweeper.

ANGLICO—Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company.

AP—Transport.

APA—Assault Transport.

APD—High Speed Transport.

ARG—Internal Combustion Engine Repair Ship.

ARL—Landing Craft Repair Ship. ArmdAmphBn—Armore Amphibian Battalion.

ARS—Salvage Vessel.

AT—Antitank.

ATF—Ocean Tug, Fleet.

AutoMaint Co—Automotive Maintenance Company.

AutoSupCo—Automotive Supply Company.

BB—Battleship.

BLT—Battalion Landing Team.

Bn—Battalion.

Btry—Battery.

BuMed—Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

C-47—Douglas Transport (same as R4D).

CA—Heavy Cruiser.

CCF—Chinese Communist Forces.

CG—Commanding General.

CIC—Counter Intelligence Corps, USA.

CinCFE—Commander in Chief, Far East.

CinCPacFlt—Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.

CinCUNC—Commander in Chief, United Nations Command.

CL—Light Cruiser.

CO—Commanding Officer.

Co—Company.

ComFltAirWing—Commander Fleet Air Wing.

ComNavFE—Commander Naval Forces Far East.

ComPacFlt—Commander Pacific Fleet.

ComPhibGruOne—Commander Amphibious Group One.

ComSeventhFlt—Commander Seventh Fleet.

ComUNBlockandCortFor—Commander United Nations Blockade and Escort Force.

CP—Command Post.

CR—Command Report.

C/S—Chief of Staff.

CSG—Combat Service Group.

CSUSA—Chief of Staff, U.S. Army.

CTF—Commander Task Force.

CTG—Commander Task Group.

CVE—Escort Aircraft Carrier.

CVL—Light Aircraft Carrier.

DD—Destroyer.

DDR—Radar Picket Destroyer.

DE—Destroyer Escort.

Det—Detachment.

DMS—High Speed Minesweeper.

DOW—Died of Wounds.

EmbO—Embarkation Order.

EmbO—Embarkation Officer.

EngrBn—Engineer Battalion.

EUSAK—Eighth U.S. Army in Korea.

FABn—Field Artillery Battalion (USA).

FAC—Forward Air Controller.

FEAF—Far East Air Force.

FECOM—Far East Command.

F4U—Chance-Vought “Corsair” Fighter-Bomber.

FMFPac—Fleet Marine Force, Pacific.

FO—Forward Observer.

FragOrder—Fragmentary Order.

Fum&BathPlat—Fumigation and Bath Platoon.

GHQ—General Headquarters.

Gru—Group.

H&SCo—Headquarters and Service Company.

HD—Historical Diary.

Hedron—Headquarters Squadron.

HMS—Her Majesty's Ship.

HMAS—Her Majesty's Australian Ship.

HMCS—Her Majesty's Canadian Ship.

HMNZS—Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship.

HO3S—Sikorsky Helicopter.

HqBn—Headquarters Battalion.

HQMC—Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps.

InfDiv—Infantry Division (USA).

Interv—Interview.

ISUM—Intelligence Summary.

JANIS—Joint Army-Navy Intelligence Studies.

JCS—Joint Chiefs of Staff.

JMS—Japanese Minesweeper.

JSPOG—Joint Strategic Planning and Operations Group.

JTF—Joint Task Force.

KIA—Killed in Action.

KMC—Korean Marine Corps.

Ln—Liaison.

LSD—Landing Ship, Dock.

LSM—Landing Ship, Medium.

LSMR—Landing Ship, Medium-Rocket.

LST—Landing Ship, Tank.

LSTH—Landing Ship, Tank-Casualty Evacuation.

LSU—Landing Ship, Utility.

Ltr—Letter.

LVT—Landing Vehicle, Tracked.

MAG—Marine Aircraft Group.

MAW—Marine Aircraft Wing.

MS—Manuscript. MedBn—Medical Battalion.

MedAmbCo—Medical Ambulance Company, USA.

MIA—Missing in Action.

MISD—Military Intelligence Service Detachment (USA).

MP—Military Police.

MRO—Movement Report Office.

msg—Message.

MSR—Main Supply Route.

MSTS—Military Sea Transport Service.

MTACS—Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron.

MTBn—Motor Transport Battalion.

NavBchGru—Naval Beach Group.

NavFE—Naval Forces Far East.

NCO—Noncommissioned Officer.

NK—North Korea (n).

NKPA—North Korean Peoples Army.

N.d.—Date not given.

N.t.—Time not given.

O—Officer; Order.

OCMH—Office of the Chief of Military History (USA).

OI—Operation Instruction.

OpnO—Operation Order.

OpnPlan—Operation Plan.

OrdBn—Ordnance Battalion.

OY—Consolidated-Vultee Light Observation Plane.

PCEC—Escort Amphibious Control Vessel.

PF—Frigate.

PhibGru—Amphibious Group.

PIR—Periodic Intelligence Report.

PLA—People’s Liberation Army.

Plat—Platoon.

POL—Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants.

POR—Periodic Operation Report.

POW—Prisoner of War.

QMPetDistCo—Quartermaster Petroleum Distribution Company (USA).

QMSubsistSupCo—Quartermaster Subsistence Supply Company (USA).

R4D—Douglas Transport (Navy and Marine designation of C-47).

RCT—Regimental Combat Team.

Recon—Reconnaissance.

Reinf—Reinforced.

RktBn—Rocket Battalion.

RM—Royal Marines.

ROK—Republic of Korea.

R & O File—Records and Orders File.

ROKA—Republic of Korea Army.

ROKN—Republic of Korea Navy.

SAC—Supporting Arms Coordinator.

SAR—Special Action Report.

SCAJAP—Shipping Control Authority, Japan.

Sec—Section.

SecDef—Secretary of Defense.

ServBn—Service Battalion.

SigBn—Signal Battalion.

SigRepCo—Signal Repair Company.

SitRpt—Situation Report.

SP—Shore Party.

SMS—Marine Supply Squadron.

TAC—Tactical Air Coordinator; Tactical Air Commander.

TACP—Tactical Air Control Party.

Tacron—Tactical Air Control Squadron.

TADC—Tactical Air Direction Center.

T-AP—Transport Operated by MSTS.

TBM—General Motors “Avenger” Torpedo Bomber.

TE—Task Element.

T/E—Table of Equipment.

Tel—Telephone Message.

TF—Task Force.

TG—Task Group.

TkBn—Tank Battalion.

Trk—Truck.

T/O—Table of Organization.

TU—Task Unit.

UDT—Underwater Demolitions Team.

U/F—Unit of Fire.

UN—United Nations.

UNC—United Nations Command.

URpt—Unit Report.

USA—United States Army.

USAF—United States Air Force.

USMC—United States Marine Corps.

USN—United States Navy.

VMF—Marine Fighter Squadron.

VMF (N)—All-Weather, Fighter Squadron.

VMO—Marine Observation Squadron.

VMR—Marine Transport Squadron.

WD—War Diary.

WD Sum—War Diary Summary.

WIA—Wounded in Action.

YMS—Motor Minesweeper.

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Appendix B. Task Organization of 1st Marine Division

In order to present a true picture of the Task Organization of the 1st Marine Division during its operations in northeast Korea the organization will be presented for the following periods:

1. Wonsan Landing (OpnO 16–50)
2. Advance to the Reservoir (OpnO 19–50)
3. Movement south from Hagaru (OpnO 25–50)
4. Hungnam Evacuation (OpnO 27–50)

1. Task Organization of 1st Marine Division for Wonsan Landing

1st Marine Division (Reinf), FMF	MajGen O. P. SMITH
HqBn, 1stMarDiv, less dets	LtCol M. T. STARR
163rd MISD, USA	
441st CIC Det, USA	
1st SigBn, less dets	Maj R. L. SCHREIER
Carrier Plat, FMF	
Det, 4th SigBn, USA	
2d SigRepUnit, USA	
Det, 205th SigRepCo, USA	
1st ServBn, less dets	LtCol C. L. BANKS
1st MTBn	LtCol O. L. BEALL
1st OrdBn	Maj L. O. WILLIAMS
1st SPBn, less dets	LtCol H. P. CROWE
SPCommSec, 1stSigBn	
Der, 1st CSG	
Det, NavBchGru 1	
1st MedBn, less dets	Cdr H. B. JOHNSON, USN
2d Plat, 560thMedAmbCo, USA	
7th MTBn	Maj J. F. STEPKA
1st CSG, less dets	Col. J. S. COOK
1st Fum&BathPlat, FMF	
1st AirDelPlat, FMF	
Plat, 20th QMSubsistSupCo, USA	
Plat, 506th QMPetDisCo, USA	
NavBchGru 1, less dets	

Regimental Combat Team 1	Col L. B. PULLER
1st Marines	
Det, 5th KMC Bn	
Co C, 1st EngrBn	
Co C, 1st MTBn	
Co D, 1st MedBn	
Plat, 1stArmdAmphBn	
Det, 1stSigBn	
FO & LnO Secs, 2/11	
LnDet, 1stTkBn	
SP Gru B	
Det, MP Co	
Det, 1st CSG	
Det, NavBchGru 1	
Regimental Combat Team 5	LtCol R. L. MURRAY
5th Marines	
Co A, 1st EngrBn	
Co D, 1st MTBn	
Co C, 1st MedBn	
Det, 1st SigBn	
FO & LnO Secs, 1/11	
SP Gru A	
Det, MP Co	
Der, 1st CSG	
Det, NavBchGru 1	
Regimental Combat Team 7	Col H. L. LITZENBERG
7th Marines	
Det, 3d KMC Bn	
Co D, 1st EngrBn	
Co B, 1st MTBn	
Co D, 1st MedBn	
Plat, 1stArmdAmphBn	
Det, 1st SigBn	
FO & LnO Secs, 3/11	
LnDet, 1st TkBn	
SP Gru C	
Det, MP Co	
Det, 1st CSG	

Det, NavBchGru 1	
11th Marines, Reinf	Col J. H. BROWER
Btry C, 1st 4.5" RktBn	
1st AmphTrkCo, FMF	
1st Tank Battalion, less dets	LtCol H. T. MILNE
1st Engineer Battalion, less dets	LtCol J. H. PARTRIDGE
3d KMC Battalion, less dets	Maj KIM YUN GUN
5th KMC Battalion, less dets	Col KIM TAI SHIK
1st AmphTracBn, FMF	LtCol E. F. WANN
Reconnaissance Company, 1stMar Div	1stLt R. B. CROSSMAN
VMO–6	Maj V. J. GOTTSCHALK

2. Task Organization for Advance to the Reservoir

1st Marine Division, Reinf, FMF	MajGen O. P. SMITH
HqBn, less dets	
163d MISD	
441st CIC Det	
1stSigBn, Reinf, less dets	
1stServBn, Reinf, less dets	
Co A, 7th MTBn (less 1 plat)	
Det, 1st MTBn	
1st OrdBn	
1stMedBn, less dets	
1st AmphTracBn	
Co B, 1st ArmdAmphBn (less 1st Plat)	
7th MT Bn, less dets	
1st CSG, Reinf	
1st AmphTrkCo	
1st AirDelPlat	
1st Fum&Bath Plat	
Regimental Combat Team 1	Col L. B. PULLER
1st Marines	
2/11	
Co D, 1st MedBn	
Co C, 1st TkBn	
Co C, Reinf, 1st EngrBn	
Det, 1stSigBn	
Det, 1stServBn	

Det, MP Co
Regimental Combat Team 7 Col H. L. LITZENBERG
7th Marines
3/11
Recon Co, 1stMarDiv
1st MTBn, less dets
Co D, Reinf, 1st EngrBn
Co E, 1st MedBn
Det, 1stSigBn
Det, MP Co
Det, 1stServBn
Regimental Combat Team 5 LtCol R. L. MURRAY
5th Marines
1/11
Co A, Reinf, 1stEngrBn
Co C, 1stMedBn
Co, 1stMTBn
Det, 1stSigBn
Det, MP Co
Det, 1stServBn
11th Marines, Reinf, less dets Col J. H. BROWER
Btry C, 1st 4.5" RktBn
1st Tank Battalion, Reinf, less dets LtCol H. T. MILNE
Tk Plat, 5thMar
Tk Plat, 7thMar
1st Engineer Battalion, less dets LtCol J. H. PARTRIDGE
VMO–6 Maj V. J. GOTTSCHALK

3. Task Organization for Movement South from Hagaru
(Except where noted the organization remained the same for the movement south from Koto-ri.)
1st Marine Division, Reinf, FMF MajGen O. P. SMITH
HqBn, Reinf, less dets
163d MISD
181st CIC
1stSigBn, Reinf, less dets
1st ServBn, Reinf, less dets
Co A, 7thMTBn, less dets
AutoSup Co, 1stMTBn

AutoMaint Co, 1stMTBn
1stOrdBn, less dets
1stMedBn, Reinf, less dets
1st Fum&Bath Plat
2d Plat, 506thMedAmbCo, USA
(under opn control X Corps)
1stAmphTracBn, Reinf, less dets
1st CSG, Reinf
7thMTBn, less dets
Co A, 1stAmphTracBn
1st AirDel Plat
1stSPBn (under opn control 3dInfDiv)
1stTkBn, less dets
VMO–6
Regimental Combat Team 5 LtCol R. L. MURRAY
5th Marines, less Tk Plat
1/11
Btry D, 2/11 (released to RCT 1 on passage through Koto-ri)
11th Marines, Reinf, less dets
4/11, less Btry L
Det, 96th FABn, USA
3/1 (released to RCT 1 on passage through Koto-ri)
Det, 1stSigBn
Tk Co, 31st Inf, USA
Prov Plat, 1stTkBn
Co A, 1stEngrBn (released to RCT 1 on passage through Koto-ri)
Det, 1stEngrBn
41 Commando, RM
Division Train 2 LtCol H. T. MILNE
Traffic Plat, MP Co
Det, 513th TrkCo, USA
Det, 1stMTBn
Co D, 10thEngr(C)Bn, USA
Det, 1stMedBn
Det, 1stServBn
Det, 1stSigBn
Det, 515th Trk Co, USA
Regimental Combat Team 7 Col H. L. LITZENBERG

7th Marines, less Tk Plat	
3/11	
Btry L, 4/11	(released to RCT 1 on arrival Koto-ri)
ProvBn, 31st Inf, USA	
Det, 1stSigBn	
Co D, 1stTkBn	
Co D, Reinf, 1stEngrBn	
Division Train 1	LtCol C. L. BANKS
Det, HqBn, 1stMarDiv	
Det, Hq X Corps	
Det, 1stServBn	
Det, 1stOrdBn	
Det, 7thMTBn	
Det, X Corps Ord Co, USA	
MP Co, 1stMarDiv, less dets	
1stMTBn, less dets	
Det, 1stSigBn	
AirSptSec, MTACS–2	
Det, 1stMedBn	
Regimental Combat Team 1	Col L. B. PULLER
1st Marines, less 3/1 and Tk Plat	
2/31, Reinf, USA	
2/11, less Btry D	(Btry D attached on passage Koto-ri)
Btry L, 4/11	(Btry L attached on arrival Koto-ri)
Cos A & B, 7thMTBn	
Co C, Reinf, 1stMTBn	
Det, 1stSigBn	
Det, 1stServBn	
Det, HqBn, 1stMarDiv	
Det, 1stOrdBn	
Cos B & D, 1stMedBn	
Recon Co, 1stMarDiv	
Det, 1stEngr Bn	
Det, 7thMar	
Det, 41 Commando, RM	(released to 41 Commando on passage Koto-ri by RCT 5)
Co B, Reinf, 1stTkBn	
Misc elms, USA	

4. Task Organization for Hungnam Evacuation

Forward Echelon	BrigGen E. A. CRAIG
Main Body, 1st Marine Division,	MajGen O. P. SMITH
Reinf, FMF, less dets	
Regimental Combat Team 7	Col H. L. LITZENBERG
7th Marines, less Tk Plat	
3/11	
Co D, 1stEngrBn	
1st CSG, less dets	
Det, HqBn	
1stServBn	
Co A, 7th MTBn	
Det, 1stSigBn	
1stMedBn, Reinf	
1st Fum&Bath Plat	
Regimental Combat Team 5	LtCol R. L. MURRAY
5th Marines	
1/11	
41 Commando, RM	
Co A, 1stEngrBn	
1stOrdBn	
1stMTBn	
Det, 1stSigBn	
Regimental Combat Team 1	Col L. B. PULLER
1st Marines	
2/11	
Co C, 1stEngrBn	
1stTkBn	
Tk Plat, 5th Mar	
Tk Plat, 7th Mar	
Det, 1stSigBn	
HqBn, Reinf, less dets	LtCol M. T. STARR
1stSigBn, less dets	
163d MISD, USA	
181st CIC Det, USA	
11th Marines, Reinf, less dets	LtCol C. A. YOUNGDALE
Btry C, 1st 4.5” RktBn	
1st EngrBn, less dets	

7thMTBn, less dets	
ANGLICO, 1stSigBn	
1stSPBn, less dets	LtCol H. P. CROWE
1stAmphTracBn, Reinf, FMF	LtCol E. F. WANN
Co A, Reinf, 1stAmphTrkBn, FMF	
Co B, 1stArmdAmphBn, FMF	

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Appendix C. Naval Task Organization

1. Wonsan Landing

JTF 7: VAdm A.D. Struble

TF 90 Attack Force: RAdm J. H. Doyle

TG 91.2 Landing Force (1st MarDiv): MajGen O. P. Smith

TE 90.00 Flagship Element

Mount McKinley (1 AGC)

TE 90.01 Tactical Air Control Element: Cdr T. H. Moore

TU 90.01.1 TacRon 1

TU 90.01.2 TacRon 3

TE 90.02 Naval Beach Group Element: Capt W. T. Singer

TU 90.02.1 Headquarters Unit

TU 90.02.2 Beachmaster Unit: LCdr M. C. Sibisky

TU 90.02.3 Boat Unit One: LCdr H. E. Hock

TU 90.02.4 Amphibious Construction Bn.: LCdr M. T. Jacobs, Jr.

TU 90.02.5 Underwater Demolitions Team Unit: LCdr W. R. McKinney

TG 90.1 Administrative Group: RAdm L. A. Thackery

TE 90.10 Flagship Element: Capt J. B. Stefonek

Eldorado (1 AGC)

TU 90.1.1 Medical Unit

Consolation (1 AH)

LST 898 (reported to CTG 95.2 upon arrival at objective area)

LST 975 (2 LST; reported to CTG 95.2 upon arrival at objective area)

TU 90.1.2 Repair and Salvage Unit: Capt P. W. Mothersill

Lipan

Cree

Arikara (3 ATF)

Conserver (1 ARS)

Askari (1 ARL)

Gunston Hall

Fort Marion

Comstock

Catamount

Colonial (5 LSD)

Plus other units as assigned
TU 90.1.3 Service Unit: LCdr J. D. Johnston
15 LSU
TG 90.2 Transport Group: Capt V. R. Roane
TE 90.21 Transport Division ABLE: Capt S. G. Kelly
Bayfield
Noble
Cavalier
Okanogan (4 APA)
Washburn
Seminole
Titania
Oglethorpe
Archenar (5 AKA)
Marine Phoenix (1 T-AP)
TE 90.22 Transport Division BAKER: Capt A. E. Jarrell
Henrico
George Clymer
Pickaway
Bexar (4 APA)
Union
Algol
Alshain
Winston
Montague (5 AKA)
Aiken Victory (1 T-AP)
Robin Goodfellow
1 Commercial freighter
TG 90.3 Tractor Group: Capt R. C. Peden
Gunston Hall (carrying 3 LSU)
Fort Marion (carrying 3 LSU)
Comstock (carrying 3 LSU)
Catamount (carrying 3 LSU)
Colonial (5 LSD; carrying 3 LSU)
LST 1123
LST 715
LST 742
LST 799

LST 802
LST 845
LST 883
LST 898
LST 914
LST 973
LST 975
LST 1048 (12 LST)
23 SCAJAP LSTs (23 LST)
TG 90.4 Control Group: LCdr C. Allmon
PCEC 896 (1 PCEC)
TU 90.4.1 Control Unit BLUE: Lt S. C. Pinksen
Wantuck (1 APD)
TU 90.4.2 Control Unit YELLOW: Lt A. C. Ansorge
Horace A. Bass (1 APD)
TG 95.6 Minesweeping and Protection Group: Capt R. T. Spofford
Collett (1 DD)
Diachenko (1 APD)
Doyle
Endicott (2 DMS)
Pledge
Incredible (2 AM)
Kite
Merganser
Mockingbird
Osprey
Redhead
Chatterer (7 AMS)
HMS *Mounts Bay*
HMNZS *Pukaki*
HMNZS *Putira*
LaGrandiere (French; 4 PF)
8 Japanese mine sweepers
4 Japanese mine destruction and buoying vessels
1 ROKN
1 AKL
Plus other units assigned
TG 90.6 Reconnaissance Group: Cdr S. C. Small

Horace A. Bass
Wantuck (2 APD)
UDT 1
UDT 3 (2 UDT)
TG 96.8 Escort Carrier Group: RAdm R. W. Ruble
Badoeng Strait
Sicily (2 CVE)
Taussig
Hanson
George K. Mackenzie
Ernest G. Small
Southerland
Rowan (6 DD)
TG 95.2 Gunfire Support Group: RAdm G. R. Hartman
Helena
Rochester
Toledo (3 CA)
HMS *Ceylon* (1 CL)
HMS *Cockade*
HMCS *Athabaskan*
HMAS *Warramunga*
3 DD of DesRon 9 (6 DD)
LSMR 401 (reported to CTF 90 when released by CTG 95.2)
LSMR 403 (reported to CTF 90 when released by CTG 95.2)
LSMR 404 (reported to CTF 90 when released by CTG 95.2)

2. Hungnam Evacuation

TF 90 Amphibious Force, Naval Forces Far East: RAdm J. H. Doyle
TE 90.00 Flagship Element
Mount McKinley
TE 90.01 Tactical Air Control Element: Cdr R. W. Arndt
TacRon ONE
TE 90.02 Repair and Salvage Unit: Cdr L. C. Conwell
Kermit Roosevelt (ARG)
Askari (ARL)
Bolster
Conserver (2 ARS)
Tawakoni (ATF)

TE 90.03 Control Element: LCdr C. Allmon

Diachenko

Begor (2 APD)

PCEC 882

TG 90.2 Transport Group: Capt S. G. Kelly

TE 90.21 Transport Element: Capt A. E. Jarrell

Bayfield

Henrico

Noble (3 APA)

Winston

Seminole

Montague (3 AKA)

Begor

Diachenko (2 APD)

PCEC 882

Fort Marion (3 LSU embarked)

Colonial (3 LSU embarked)

Catamount (3 LSD; 3 LSU embarked)

LST 742

LST 715

LST 845

LST 802

LST 883

LST 799

LST 898

LST 914

LST 975

LST 973

LST 1048 (11 LST)

TG 90.8 Gunfire Support Group: RAdm R. H. Hillenkoetter

St. Paul

Rochester (2 CA)

Zellars

Charles S. Sperry

Massey

Forrest Royal (4 DD)

LSMR 401

LSMR 403

LSMR 404 (3 LSMR)
Plus DD as assigned from TG 95.2
TG 95.2 Blockade, Escort and Minesweeping Group: RAdm J. M. Higgins
Rochester (CA)
English
Hank
Wallace L. Lind
Borie (4 DD)
Sausalito
Hoquiam
Gallup
Gloucester
Bisbee
Glendale (6 PF)
TG 95.6 Minesweeping Group: Capt R. T. Spofford
Endicott
Doyle (2 DMS)
Incredible (AM)
Curlew
Heron (2 AMS)
TG 96.8 Escort Carrier Group: RAdm R. W. Ruble
Badoeng Strait
Sicily (2 CVE)
Bataan (CVL)
Lofberg
John A. Bole
Mackenzie
Taussig
Ernest G. Small
Brinkley Bass
Arnold J. Isbell (7 DD)
Hanson (DDR)
Vessels attached TF 90 for operational control:
Missouri (BB)
Duncan (DDR; from 10 Dec)
Foss (DE; from 9 Dec)
Consolation (AH; from 2 Dec)

The Chosin Reservoir Campaign

Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Appendix F. Command and Staff List, 8 October-15 December 1950

1st Marine Division
Commanding General: MajGen Oliver P. Smith
Assistant Division Commander: BrigGen Edward A. Craig
Chief of Staff: Col Gregon A. Williams
Deputy Chief of Staff: Col Edward W. Snedeker
G–1: Col Harvey S. Walseth (to 28 Nov); LtCol Bryghte D. Godbold
G–2: Col Bankson T. Holcomb, Jr.
G–3: Col Alpha L. Bowser, Jr.
G–4: Col Francis A. McAlister

Special Staff
Adjutant: Maj Philip J. Costello
Air Officer: Maj James N. Cupp
Artillery Officer: Col James H. Brower (to 30 Nov); LtCol Carl A. Youngdale
Amphibian Tractor Officer: LtCol Erwin F. Wann, Jr.
Armored Amphibian Officer: LtCol Francis H. Cooper
Chaplain: Cdr Robert H. Schwyhart (ChC), USN
Chemical Warfare and Radiological Defense Officer: Maj John H. Blue
Dental Officer: Capt Mack Meradith (DC), USN
Embarkation Officer: Maj Jules M. Rouse
Engineer Officer: LtCol John H. Partridge
Exchange Officer: Capt Wilbur C. Conley
Food Director: Maj Norman R. Nickerson
Inspector: Col John A. White
Historical Officer: 2dLt John M. Patrick
Legal Officer: LtCol Albert H. Schierman
Motor Transport Officer: Maj Henry W. Seeley
Naval Gunfire Officer: LtCol Loren S. Fraser
Ordnance Officer: Capt Donald L. Shenaut
Provost Marshal: Capt John H. Griffin
Public Information Officer: Capt Michael C. Capraro (to 6 Nov); Maj Carl E. Stahley
Shore Party Officer: LtCol Henry P. Crowe
Signal Officer: LtCol Albert Creal

Special Services Officer: Capt Raymond H. Spuhler (to 29 Nov); LtCol John M. Bathum
Supply Officer: Col Gordon S. Hendricks
Surgeon: Capt Eugene R. Hering (MC), USN
Tank Officer: LtCol Harry T. Milne

Attached Units
Commanding Officer, 163d Military Intelligence Specialist Detachment, USA: Capt Fujio F. Asano, USA
Commanding Officer, 181st Counter-Intelligence Corps Detachment, USA: Maj Millard E. Dougherty, USA
Commanding Officer, 41st Independent Commando, Royal Marines: LtCol Douglas B. Drysdale, RM

Headquarters Battalion
Commanding Officer: LtCol Marvin T. Starr
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: Maj Frederick Simpson
Commanding Officer, Military Police Company: Capt John H. Griffin
Commanding Officer, Reconnaissance Company: 1stLt Ralph B. Crossman (to 23 Nov); Maj Walter Gall

1st Marines
Commanding Officer: Col Lewis B. Puller
Executive Officer: LtCol Robert W. Rickert
S-1: Capt William G. Reeves
S-2: Capt Stone W. Quillian
S-3: Maj Robert E. Lorigan
S-4: Maj Thomas T. Grady
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: Capt Frank P. Tatum
Commanding Officer, 4.2-inch Mortar Company: Capt Frank J. Faureck
Commanding Officer, Antitank Company: Capt George E. Petro

1st Battalion, 1st Marines
Commanding Officer: LtCol Jack Hawkins (to 7 Nov); LtCol Donald M. Schmuck
Executive Officer: Maj Maurice H. Clarke
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt William B. Hopkins
Commanding Officer, A Company: Capt Robert H. Barrow
Commanding Officer, B Company: Capt Wesley Noren
Commanding Officer, C Company: Capt Robert P. Wray
Commanding Officer, Weapons Company: Maj William T. Bates, Jr.

2d Battalion, 1st Marines
Commanding Officer: LtCol Allan Suttter

Executive Officer: Maj Clarence J. Mabry
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt Raymond Dewees, Jr.
Commanding Officer, D Company: Capt Welby W. Cronk
Commanding Officer, E Company: Capt Charles D. Frederick (to 6 Nov); 1stLt Harold B. Wilson (6-17 Nov); Capt Jack A. Smith
Commanding Officer, F Company: Capt Goodwin C. Groff
Commanding Officer, Weapons Company: Maj Whitman S. Bartley (to 16 Nov); Capt William A. Kerr

3d Battalion, 1st Marines
Commanding Officer: LtCol Thomas L. Ridge
Executive Officer: Maj Reginald R. Myers
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt Thomas E. McCarthy
Commanding Officer, G Company: Capt George C. Westover (to 30 Oct); Capt Carl L. Sitter
Commanding Officer, H Company: Capt Clarence E. Corley
Commanding Officer, I Company: 1stLt Joseph R. Fisher
Commanding Officer, Weapons Company: Maj Edwin H. Simmons

5th Marines
Commanding Officer: LtCol Raymond L. Murray
Executive Officer: LtCol Joseph L. Stewart
S-1: 1stLt Alton C. Weed
S-2: Maj William C. Easterline
S-3: Maj Theodore J. Spiker
S-4: Maj Harold Wallace
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt Harold G. Schrier (to 9 Oct); Capt Jack E. Hawthorn
Commanding Officer, 4.2-inch Mortar Company: 1stLt Robert M. Lucy
Commanding Officer, Antitank Company: 1stLt Almarion S. Bailey

1st Battalion, 5th Marines
Commanding Officer: LtCol George R. Newton (to 17 Nov); LtCol John W. Stevens, II
Executive Officer: Maj Merlin R. Olson
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt Walter E. G. Godenius
Commanding Officer, A Company: Capt John R. Stevens (to 17 Nov); Capt James B. Heater
Commanding Officer, B Company: Capt Francis I. Fenton (to 13 Oct); 1stLt John R. Hancock
Commanding Officer, C Company: 1stLt Poul F. Pedersen (to 6 Nov); Capt Jack R. Jones
Commanding Officer, Weapons Company: Maj John W. Russell

2d Battalion, 5th Marines
Commanding Officer: LtCol Harold S. Roise
Executive Officer: LtCol John W. Stevens, II (to 12Nov); Maj Glen E. Martin (13-21Nov); Maj John L. Hopkins
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: 1stLt David W. Walsh (to 8 Oct); Capt Franklin B. Mayer
Commanding Officer, D Company: Capt Samuel S. Smith
Commanding Officer, E Company: Capt Samuel Jaskilka (to 12 Dec); Capt Lawrence W. Henke, Jr.
Commanding Officer, F Company: Capt Uel D. Peters (to 6 Dec); 1stLt Charles “H” Dalton
Commanding Officer, Weapons Company: Maj James W. Bateman (to 10 Oct); Maj Glen E, Martin (11 Oct-12 Nov); Maj James W. Bateman (13-21 Nov); Maj Glen E. Martin

3d Battalion, 5th Marines
Commanding Officer: LtCol Robert D. Taplett
Executive Officer: Maj John J. Canney (to 28 Nov); Maj Harold W. Swain
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt Roland A. Marbaugh (to 4 Dec); Capt Raymond H. Spuhler
Commanding Officer, G Company: 1stLt Charles D. Mize (to 17 Nov); Capt Chester R. Hermanson (18 Nov-2 Dec); 1stLt Charles D. Mize
Commanding Officer, H Company: 1stLt Donald E. Watterson (to 8 Nov); Capt Harold B. Williamson
Commanding Officer, I Company: Capt Harold G. Schrier
Commanding Officer, Weapons Company: Maj Murray Ehrlich (to 18 Nov); Maj Harold W. Swain (19-28 Nov); 1stLt Hubert J. Shovlin

7th Marines
Commanding Officer: Col Homer L. Litzenberg, Jr.
Executive Officer: LtCol Frederick R. Dowsett (to 7 Dec); LtCol Raymond G. Davis
S-1: Capt John R. Grove
S-2: Capt Donald R. France (to 6 Dec)
S-3: Maj Henry J. Woessner, II
S-4: Maj David L. Mell (to 22 Nov); Maj Maurice E. Roach
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt Nicholas L. Shields (to 3 Dec); Maj Walter T. Warren (4-7 Dec; additional duty); Maj Rodney V. Reigard (additional duty)
Commanding Officer, 4.2-inch Mortar Company: Maj Stanley D. Low (to 2 Nov); 1stLt Gordon Vincent (3-18 Nov); Maj Rodney V. Reigard
Commanding Officer, Antitank Company: 1stLt Earl R. DeLong (to 20 Oct); Maj Walter T. Warren (21 Oct-8 Dec); 1stLt Earl R. DeLong

1st Battalion, 7th Marines

Commanding Officer: LtCol Raymond G. Davis (to 7 Dec); Maj Webb D. Sawyer
Executive Officer: Maj Raymond V. Fridrich
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt Elmer L. Starr (to 22 Nov); 1stLt Wilbert R. Gaul
Commanding Officer, A Company: Capt David W. Banks (to 20 Nov); 1stLt Eugenous M. Hovatter
Commanding Officer, B Company: Capt Myron E. Wilcox, Jr. (to 27 Nov); 1stLt Joseph R. Kurcaba (27 Nov-8-Dec); 1stLt William W. Taylor
Commanding Officer, C Company: Capt William E. Shea (to 16 Nov); Capt John F. Morris
Commanding Officer, Weapons Company: Maj William E. Vorhies

2d Battalion, 7th Marines
Commanding Officer: Maj Webb D. Sawyer (to 9 Nov); LtCol Randolph S. D. Lockwood
Executive Officer: Maj Roland E. Carey (to 9 Nov); Maj Webb D. Sawyer (10 Nov-8 Dec); Maj James F. Lawrence, Jr.
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt Walter R. Anderson
Commanding Officer, D Company: Capt Milton A. Hull (to 28 Nov); 1stLt James D. Hammond, Jr.
Commanding Officer, E Company: Capt Walter D. Phillips, Jr. (to 28 Nov); 1stLt Raymond O. Ball (28 Nov); 1stLt Robert T. Bey
Commanding Officer, F Company: Capt Elmer J. Zorn (to 6 Nov); Capt William E. Barber (7 Nov-3 Dec); 1stLt John M. Dunne (3-6 Dec); 1stLt Welton R. Abell
Commanding Officer, Weapons Company: Capt Harry L. Givens, Jr. (to 12 Nov); Maj Joseph L. Abel (13-19 Nov); Capt Harry L. Givens, Jr.

3d Battalion, 7th Marines
Commanding Officer: Maj Maurice E. Roach (to 10 Nov); LtCol William F. Harris (11 Nov-6 Dec); Maj Warren Morris
Executive Officer: Maj Warren Morris (to 6 Dec); Maj Jefferson D. Smith, Jr.
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt Eric R. Haars (to 29 Nov)
Commanding Officer, G Company: Capt Thomas E. Cooney (to 27 Nov); Capt Eric R. Haars (29 Nov-3 Dec); 1stLt George R. Earnest
Commanding Officer, H Company: 1stLt Howard H. Harris (to 11 Nov); Capt Leroy M. Cooke (12-27 Nov); 1stLt Howard H. Harris (27 Nov-1 Dec); 1stLt Harold J. Fitzgeorge (1-5 Dec); 2dLt Minard P. Newton
Commanding Officer, 1 Company: Capt Richard H. Sengewald (to 14 Oct); 1stLt William E. Johnson (15 Oct- 3 Dec); 1stLt Alfred I. Thomas
Commanding Officer, Weapons Company: Maj Jefferson D. Smith (to 5 Dec); 1stLt Austin S. Parker (6-10 Dec); 1stLt Robert E. Hill

11th Marines

Commanding Officer: Col James H. Brower (to 30 Nov); LtCol Carl A. Youngdale
Executive Officer: LtCol Carl A. Youngdale (to 30 Nov)
S-1: Maj Floyd M. McCorkle
S-2: Capt William T. Phillips
S-3: LtCol James O. Appleyard
S-4: Maj Donald V. Anderson
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery: Capt Albert H. Wunderly (to 7 Nov); Capt Clarence E. Hixson (15-25 Nov); 1stLt William C. Patton
Commanding Officer, Service Battery: Maj Donald V. Anderson (to 16 Nov); 1stLt Joseph M. Brent
Commanding Officer, Battery C, 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battalion: 1stLt Eugene A. Bushe

1st Battalion, 11th Marines
Commanding Officer: LtCol Ransom M. Wood (to 15 Nov); LtCol Harvey A. Feehan
Executive Officer: Maj Francis R. Schlesinger
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery: Capt James W. Brayshay (to 25 Nov)
Commanding Officer, Service Battery: 1stLt Kenneth H. Quelch
Commanding Officer, A Battery: Capt James D. Jordan
Commanding Officer, B Battery: Capt Arnold C. Hoffstetter (to 8 Oct); Capt Gilbert N. Powell
Commanding Officer, C Battery: Capt William J. Nichols, Jr.

2d Battalion, 11th Marines
Commanding Officer: LtCol Merritt Adelman
Executive Officer: Maj Donald E. Noll (to 25 Oct); Maj Neal G. Newell
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery: Capt George J. Batson
Commanding Officer, Service Battery: Capt Herbert R. Merrick, Jr.
Commanding Officer, D Battery: Capt Andrew J. Strohmenger (to 8 Dec); Capt Richard E. Roach
Commanding Officer, E Battery: Capt John C. McClelland, Jr.
Commanding Officer, F Battery: Capt George J. Kovich, Jr. (to 19 Nov); 1stLt Howard A. Blancheri

3d Battalion, 11th Marines
Commanding Officer: Maj Francis F. Parry
Executive Officer: Maj Norman A. Miller, Jr.
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery: 1stLt Michael B. Weir (to 11 Nov); 1stLt Eugene H. Brown (12-18 Nov); 1stLt John J. Brackett
Commanding Officer, Service Battery: Capt Robert A. Thompson (to 17 Oct); Capt Ernest W. Payne (18 Oct-30 Nov); Capt Samuel A. Hannah
Commanding Officer, G Battery: Capt Samuel A. Hannah (to 30 Nov); Capt Ernest W. Payne
Commanding Officer, H Battery: Capt Benjamin S. Read (to 8 Dec); 1stLt Wilber N. Herndon

Commanding Officer, I Battery: Capt John M. McLaurin, Jr. (to 30 Nov); Capt Robert T. Patterson

4th Battalion, 11th Marines
Commanding Officer: Maj William McReynolds
Executive Officer: Maj Thomas M. Coggins (to 8 Nov); Maj Maurice J. Coffey
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery: Capt Charles S. Cummings (to 25 Oct); Capt Paul L. Hirt
Commanding Officer, Service Battery: Capt Armand G. Daddazio
Commanding Officer, K Battery: 1stLt Robert C. Messman (to 27 Nov); 1stLt Robert C. Parrott (28 Nov-11 Dec); Capt Arthur D. Challacombe
Commanding Officer, L Battery: Capt Lawrence R. Cloern
Commanding Officer, M Battery: Capt Vernon W. Shapiro

1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion
Commanding Officer: LtCol Erwin F. Wann, Jr.
Executive Officer: Maj Arthur J. Barrett
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: Capt Frank E. Granucci
Commanding Officer, A Company: Maj James P. Treadwell
Commanding Officer, B Company: Capt Russell Hamlet
Commanding Officer, C Company: Maj Arthur J. Noonan

1st Armored Amphibian Battalion
Commanding Officer: LtCol Francis H. Cooper
Executive Officer: Maj Richard G. Warga
Commanding Officer, Headquarter Company: Capt Roger B. Thompson
Commanding Officer, Service Company: Capt Rex Z. Michael, Jr.
Commanding Officer, A Company: Capt Bernard G. Thobe
Commanding Officer, B Company: Capt Lewis E. Bolts

1st Combat Service Group
Commanding Officer: Col John H. Cook, Jr.
Executive Officer: LtCol Edward A. Clark
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: Capt Francis L. Miller
Commanding Officer, Maintenance Company: Maj Edward H. Voorhees
Commanding Officer, Supply Company: Maj Robert W. Hengesback
Commanding Officer, Support Company: Maj Donald B. Cooley, Jr.
Commanding Officer, Truck Company: Capt John A. Pearson (to 11 Nov); 2dLt Alan G. Copp (11-30 Nov); Capt Jack W. Temple
Commanding Officer, 1st Fumigation and Bath Company: 1stLt James L. Dumas

Commanding Officer, 1st Air Delivery Platoon: Capt Hersel D. C. Blasingame

1st Engineer Battalion
Commanding Officer: LtCol John H. Partridge
Executive Officer: Maj Richard M. Elliott
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: Capt James H. McRoberts (to 20 Nov); Maj Hewitt A. Snow; Capt Edward B. Newton
Commanding Officer, Service Company: Maj James W. McIllwain (to 22 Nov); Capt Philip A. Terrell, Jr.
Commanding Officer, A Company: Capt George W. King (to 2 Dec); Capt William R. Gould
Commanding Officer, B Company: Capt Orville L. Bibb
Commanding Officer, C Company: Capt Lester G. Harmon (to 12 Nov); 1stLt Ronald L. Glendinning
Commanding Officer, D Company: Capt Byron C. Turner

1st Medical Battalion
Commanding Officer: Cdr Howard A. Johnson, USN
Executive Officer: Cdr William S. Francis, USN
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Cdr William S. Francis, USN
Commanding Officer, A Company: Cdr Byron E. Bassham, USN
Commanding Officer, B Company: LCdr James A. Kaufman, USN
Commanding Officer, C Company: Cdr Harold A. Streit, USN
Commanding Officer, D Company: LCdr Gustave J. Anderson, USN
Commanding Officer, E Company: LCdr John H. Cheffey, USN (to 15 Oct); Lt (jg) Ernest N. Grover, USN (15-30 Oct); LCdr Charles K. Holloway, USN

1st Motor Transport Battalion
Commanding Officer: LtCol Olin L. Beall
Executive Officer: Maj John R. Barreiro, Jr.
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt George B. Loveday
Commanding Officer, A Company: Capt Arthur W. Ecklund
Commanding Officer, B Company: Capt James C. Camp, Jr.
Commanding Officer, C Company: Capt Garfield M. Randall (to 30 Nov); 1stLt Norman E. Stow
Commanding Officer, D Company: Capt Bernard J. Whitelock (9 Dec); 1stLt Philip R. Hade
Commanding Officer, Automotive Maintenance Company: Maj Edward L. Roberts
Commanding Officer, Automotive Supply Company: 1stLt Mildridge E. Mangum
Commanding Officer, Amphibian Truck Company, FMF (redesignated Company A, 1st Amphibian Truck Battalion, 15 Nov): Capt John Bookhout

1st Ordnance Battalion

Commanding Officer: Maj Lloyd O. Williams
Executive Officer: Maj Samuel A. Johnstone, Jr.
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: Capt Theodore Tunis (to 13 Nov); Capt Gordon H. Moore
Commanding Officer, Ordnance Supply Company: Capt Russel S. LaPointe (to 5 Dec); 1stLt Victor F. Brown
Commanding Officer, Ammunition Company: Capt Harvey W. Gagner (to 30 Nov); 1stLt Charles H. Miller
Commanding Officer, Ordnance Maintenance Company: Capt George L. Williams

1st Service Battalion
Commanding Officer: LtCol Charles L. Banks
Executive Officer: Maj John R. Stone
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: Capt Morse “L” Holladay
Commanding Officer, Service Company: Capt Robert A. Morehead
Commanding Officer, Support Company: Capt Richard W. Sinclair (to 27 Oct); Capt Thomas M. Sagar

1st Shore Party Battalion
Commanding Officer: LtCol Henry P. Crowe
Executive Officer: LtCol Horace H. Figuers
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company: Capt William T. Miller
Commanding Officer, A Company: Maj William L. Batchelor (to 22 Nov); Capt Nathaniel H. Carver
Commanding Officer, B Company: Maj Henry Brzezinski
Commanding Officer, C Company: Maj George A. Smith (to 24 Nov); Maj Murray F. Rose

1st Signal Battalion
Commanding Officer: Maj Robert L. Schreier
Executive Officer: Maj Elwyn M. Stimson
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: Capt Howard K. Alberts (to 14 Nov); Capt Earl F. Stanley
Commanding Officer, Signal Company: Maj Richard A. Glaeser
Commanding Officer, ANGLICO: Maj Fulton L. Oglesby (to 16 Nov); Maj Frederick M. Steinhauser

1st Tank Battalion
Commanding Officer: LtCol Harry T. Milne
Executive Officer: Maj Douglas E. Haberlie (to 1 Dec); Maj Philip C. Morrell
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: Capt Bruce W. Clarke (to 18 Nov); 1stLt Frederick L. Adams
Commanding Officer, Service Company: Capt Philip C. Morell (to 1 Dec); Maj Douglas E. Haberlie
Commanding Officer, A Company: Capt Gearl M. English (to 1 Dec); 1stLt Robert J. Craig
Commanding Officer, B Company: Capt Bruce F. Williams
Commanding Officer, C Company: Capt Richard M. Taylor
Commanding Officer, D Company: Capt Lester T. Chase (to 18 Nov); Capt Bruce W. Clarke (19 Nov-10 Dec);

1stLt Paul E. Sanders

7th Motor Transport Battalion
Commanding Officer: Maj Joseph F. Stepka (to 7 Nov); LtCol Carl J. Cagle
Executive Officer: Maj Vernon A. Tuson
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company: 1stLt Reed T. King
Commanding Officer, A Company: Capt Ira N. Hayes
Commanding Officer, B Company: Capt Clovis M. Jones
Commanding Officer, C Company: Capt Fred B. Rogers
Commanding Officer, D Company: Capt Joseph L. Bunker

Marine Observation Squadron 6 (under operational control of 1stMarDiv and administrative control of 1stMAW)
Commanding Officer: Maj Vincent J. Gottschalk
Executive Officer: Capt Victor A. Armstrong (to 13 Nov); Capt Andrew L. McVickers

1st Marine Aircraft Wing
Commanding General: MajGen Field Harris
Assistant Commanding General: BrigGen Thomas J. Cushman
Chief of Staff: Col Kenneth H. Weir (8 Oct-1 Nov); Col Caleb T. Bailey (2 Nov-15 Dec)
Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (also Deputy C/S, Air Support, X Corps): Col Edward C. Dyer
G-1: Col Raymond E. Hopper
G-2: LtCol Winsor V. Crockett, Jr.
G-3: LtCol Howard A. York (to 9 Nov); LtCol Paul J. Fontana (10 Nov-28 Nov; additional duty); LtCol Howard A. York (29 Nov-15 Dec)
G-4: Col Thomas J. Noon
Commanding Officer, Rear Echelon, Itami: Col Roger T. Carleson
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Squadron, One: Capt Earl “B” Sumerlin, Jr.

Marine Aircraft Group 12
Commanding Officer: Col Boeker C. Batterton
Deputy Group Commander: LtCol Paul J. Fontana
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Squadron 12: Maj John E. Hays
Commanding Officer, Service Squadron 12: Maj Claude H. Welch (to 4 Nov); Maj Charles E. J. McLean

Marine Aircraft Group 33
Commanding Officer: Col Frank C. Dailey
Deputy Group Commander: LtCol Radford C. West
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Squadron 33: Capt Walter “L” Hilton

Commanding Officer, Marine Service Squadron 33: LtCol James C. Lindsay

Squadrons

Commanding Officer, Marine Fighter Squadron 212: LtCol Richard W. Wyczawski

Commanding Officer, Marine Fighter Squadron 214: Maj Robert P. Keller (to 20 Nov); Maj William M. Lundin

Commanding Officer, Marine Fighter Squadron 312: LtCol “J” Frank Cole

Commanding Officer, Marine Fighter Squadron 311: LtCol Neil R. McIntyre (from 8 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Marine Fighter Squadron 323: Maj Arnold A. Lund

Commanding Officer, Marine All-Weather Squadron 513: Maj J. Hunter Reinburg (to 4 Nov); LtCol David C. Wolfe

Commanding Officer, Marine All-Weather Fighter Squadron 542: LtCol Max J. Volcansek, Jr.

Commanding Officer, Marine Transport Squadron 152: Col Deane C. Roberts

Commanding Officer, Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron 1: Maj Harold E. Allen

Commanding Officer, Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 2: Maj Christian C. Lee

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Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Appendix G. Enemy Order of Battle

1. North Korean

During operations around Wonsan the 1st Marine Division encountered fragments and stragglers from many NKPA divisions. The organized elements were chiefly from the 2d, 5th, and 15th Divisions.

2. Chinese

42d Army, 124th Division

370th Regiment

371st Regiment

372nd Regiment

In action against 7th Marines south of Sudong 2 Nov. Badly cut up in actions of 3-6 Nov.

42d Army, 125th Division

373rd Regiment

374th Regiment

375th Regiment

Not in contact. Probably to west of 124th Division.

42d Army, 126th Division

376th Regiment

377th Regiment

378th Regiment

Screened Chinese retreat to Hagaru. Never heavily engaged.

20th Army, 58th Division

172nd Regiment

173rd Regiment

174th Regiment

First in action at Hagaru 28 Nov. Badly cut up in attacks on Hagaru.

20th Army, 59th Division

175th Regiment

176th Regiment

177th Regiment

In contact with 7th Marines southwest of Yudam-ni 23 Nov. Later defended Toktong Pass.

20th Army, 60th Division

178th Regiment

179th Regiment

180th Regiment

In contact with 7th Marines southeast of Yudam-ni 25 Nov. Later moved to Funchilin Pass area.

20th Army, 89th Division

266th Regiment

267th Regiment

268th Regiment

First contacted by 7th Marines west of Hagaru 22 Nov. About 2 Dec moved south to Majon-dong area.

27th Army, 79th Division

235th Regiment

236th Regiment

237th Regiment

Attacked Yudam-ni 27 Nov.

27th Army, 80th Division

238th Regiment

239th Regiment

240th Regiment

Attacked 7th Infantry Division units east of Reservoir 27 Nov.

27th Army, 81st Division

241st Regiment

242nd Regiment

243rd Regiment

No report of contact until 13 Dec. May have been in Yudam-ni area.

27th Army, 90th Division

268th Regiment

269th Regiment

270th Regiment

No contact reported. May have been in reserve near Hagaru.

26th Army, 76th Division

226th Regiment

227th Regiment

228th Regiment

First contacts east of Hagaru 5 Dec. Suffered heavy losses around Koto-ri.

26th Army, 77th Division

229th Regiment

230th Regiment

231st Regiment

First contacts at Hagaru 5 Dec.

26th Army, 78th Division

232nd Regiment

233rd Regiment

234th Regiment

Not reported in contact. May not have reached area in time for combat.

26th Army, 88th Division

263rd Regiment

264th Regiment

265th Regiment

Not reported in contact. May not have reached area in time for combat.

The Chosin Reservoir Campaign

Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

Appendix I. Unit Citations

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

FIRST MARINE DIVISION, REINFORCED

for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action against enemy aggressor forces in the Chosin Reservoir and Koto-ri area of Korea from 27 November to 11 December 1950. When the full fury of the enemy counterattack struck both the Eighth Army and the Tenth Corps on 27 and 28 November 1950, the First Marine Division, Reinforced, operating as the left flank division of the Tenth Corps, launched a daring assault westward from Yudam-ni in an effort to cut the road and rail communications of hostile forces attacking the Eighth Army and, at the same time, continued its mission of protecting a vital main supply route consisting of a tortuous mountain road running southward to Chinhung-ni, approximately 35 miles distant. Ordered to withdraw to Hamhung in company with attached army and other friendly units in the face of tremendous pressure in the Chosin Reservoir area, the Division began an epic battle against the bulk of the enemy Third Route Army and, while small intermediate garrisons at Hagaru-ri and Koto-ri held firmly against repeated and determined attacks by hostile forces, gallantly fought its way successively to Hagaru-ri, Koto-ri, Chinhung-ni and Hamburg over twisting, mountainous and icy roads in sub-zero temperatures. Battling desperately night and day in the face of almost insurmountable odds throughout a period of two weeks of intense and sustained combat, the First Marine Division, Reinforced, emerged from its ordeal as a fighting unit with its wounded, with its guns and equipment and with its prisoners, decisively defeating seven enemy divisions, together with elements of three others, and inflicting major losses which seriously impaired the military effectiveness of the hostile forces for a considerable period of time. The valiant fighting spirit, relentless perseverance and heroic fortitude of the officers and men of the First Marine Division, Reinforced, in battle against a vastly outnumbering enemy, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

The following reinforcing units of the First Marine Division participated in operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from 27 November to 11 December 1950:

ORGANIC UNITS OF THE FIRST MARINE DIVISION: First Marine Division (less Detachment Headquarters Battalion; Detachment First Signal Battalion; Detachment First Service Battalion; Detachment Headquarters and Companies A and C, First Tank Battalion; Automotive Supply Company, First Motor Transport Battalion; Automotive Maintenance Company, First Motor Transport Battalion; Detachment First Ordnance Battalion; Detachment Headquarters and Company A, First Medical Battalion; First Shore Party Battalion; 4.5" Rocket Battery and Service Battery, Fourth Battalion, Eleventh Marines).

ATTACHED MARINE CORPS UNITS: Companies A and B, Seventh Motor Transport Battalion; Detachment Radio Relay Platoon.
ATTACHED ARMY UNITS: Provisional Battalion (Detachments, 31st and 32nd Regimental Combat Teams); Company D, 10th Engineer Combat Battalion; Tank Company, 31st Infantry Regiment; Headquarters Company, 31st Infantry Regiment; Company B, 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment; 2nd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment (less Company E); 185th Engineer Combat Battalion (less Company A).

For the President,
R. B. ANDERSON
Secretary of the Navy

GENERAL ORDERS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
No. 72
Washington 25, D.C., 9 August 1951
DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION
1. The 1st Marine Air Wing, Fleet Marine Force, is cited for outstanding performance of duty and extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy in the areas of Chosin Reservoir, Hagaru-ri, and Koto-ri, Korea, during the period 22 November to 14 December 1950. The historic role of close-support air missions flown by personnel on land and carrier based aircraft during the operations of the X Corps, United States Army, contributed immeasurably to the successful withdrawal of the X Corps when hordes of Chinese Communist and North Korean troops had encircled their positions endangering the entire operation. In their magnificent employment of close-support doctrine and in their exceedingly effective interdiction missions and night combat air patrols, the 1st Marine Air Wing flew 2,572 day and night sorties during this period, inflicting 10,313 enemy casualties and destroying 723 buildings, 144 vehicles, 17 tanks, 9 bridges, 4 locomotives, 3 command posts, 30 boxcars, 47 gun positions, and 19 supply, ammunition, and fuel dumps. These missions were flown over hazardous mountain terrain under extremely adverse weather conditions and in the face of intense enemy antiaircraft and small-arms fire. The normally ground-based Tactical Air Direction Center was ingeniously improvised into an airborne center in a C-54 aircraft without appreciable loss of efficiency in operations and the responsibility for controlling aircraft was assumed and accomplished in a remarkable manner through day and night operations by controlling personnel. Airborne tactical air coordinators also were established to supplement the airborne center to direct specific strikes in areas not under surveillance of ground control parties to the end that every available sortie was utilized to maximum effectiveness. In the evacuation of friendly casualties by cargo airplanes, the use of helicopters for rescue of air personnel shot down by the enemy and the evacuation of wounded, and the high state of aircraft availability maintained by ground personnel working under hazardous and extremely adverse conditions because of intense cold, personnel of the entire 1st Marine Air Wing displayed fortitude, courage, and marked esprit de corps. Although suffering a considerable loss of personnel and equipment during this trying period, the morale and effectiveness of the 1st Marine Air Wing were sustained at a constantly high level. The

repeated acts of valor and gallantry by the officers and men of the 1st Marine Air Wing, Fleet Marine Force, and their enviable combat record reflect great credit on the members thereof and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.

By order of the Secretary of the Army:
J. LAWTON COLLINS
Chief of Staff, United States Army

The Chosin Reservoir Campaign
Lynn Montross and Nicholas A. Canzona

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The East-Central Front

Lynn Montross, Hubard D. Kuokka and Norman W. Hicks

Foreword

Americans everywhere will remember the inspiring conduct of Marines during Korean operations in 1950. As the fire brigade of the Pusan Perimeter, the assault troops at Inchon, and the heroic fighters of the Chosin Reservoir campaign, they established a record in keeping with the highest traditions of their Corps. No less praiseworthy were the Marine actions during the protracted land battles of 1951, the second year of the Korean “police action.”

The 1st Marine Division, supported wherever possible by the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, helped stem the flood of the Chinese offensive in April. Then lashing back in vigorous and successful counterattack, the Marines fought around the Hwachon Reservoir to the mighty fastness of the Punchbowl. The Punchbowl became familiar terrain to Marines during the summer of 1951, and the Division suffered its heaviest casualties of the year fighting in the vicinity of that aptly named circular depression.

The fighting waxed hot, then cold, as the truce teams negotiated. They reached no satisfactory agreement, and the fighting again intensified. Finally, after a year of active campaigning on Korea’s east-central front, the Marines moved west to occupy positions defending the approaches to the Korean capital, Seoul.

The year of desperate fighting, uneasy truce, and renewed combat covered by this volume saw the operational employment of a Marine-developed technique—assault by helicopter-borne troops. Tactics were continually being refined to meet the ever changing battle situation. However, throughout the period, the one constant factor on which United Nations commanders could rely was the spirit and professional attitude of Marines, both regular and reserve. This is their hallmark as fighting men.

--Gen. David M. Shoup, USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps

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Preface

THIS IS THE FOURTH in a series of five volumes dealing with the operations of United States Marines in Korea during the period 2 August 1950 to 27 July 1953. Volume IV presents in detail the operations of the 1st Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, the former while operating under Eighth Army control and also as part of IX Corps and X Corps, USA, and the latter while controlled by the Fifth Air Force.

The period covered in this volume begins in the latter part of December 1950, when the Division rested in the Masan "bean patch," and continues through the guerrilla hunt, the Punchbowl fighting, and all other operations during 1951. The account ends when the Marines move to positions in the west during March 1952.

Marines did not fight this war alone; they were a part of the huge Eighth United States Army in Korea. But since this is primarily a Marine history, the actions of the U. S. Army, Navy, and Air Force are presented only sufficiently to place Marine operations in their proper perspective.

Many participants in the fighting during this period have generously contributed to the book by granting interviews, answering inquiries, and commenting on first draft manuscripts. Their assistance was invaluable. Although it was not possible to use all the plethora of detailed comments and information received, the material will go into Marine Corps archives for possible use and benefit of future historians.

The manuscript of this volume was prepared during the tenure of Colonel Charles W. Harrison, Major Gerald Fink, and Colonel William M. Miller as successive Heads of the Historical Branch. Production was accomplished under the direction of Colonel Thomas G. Roe. Major William T. Hickman wrote some of the preliminary drafts and did much valuable research and map sketching. Dr. K. Jack Bauer and Mrs. Elizabeth Tierney assisted the authors in research, and Mr. Truman R. Strobridge assisted in proofreading and preparing the index.

To the Army, Navy, and Air Force officers, as well as Marine officers and NCOs, who submitted valuable comments and criticisms of preliminary drafts, thanks are also extended. These suggestions added to the accuracy and details of the text. Additional assistance was rendered by personnel of the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army; the Division of Naval History, Department of the Navy; and the Historical Division, Department of the Air Force.

The exacting administrative duties involved in processing the volume from first draft manuscripts through the final printed form were ably managed by Miss Kay P. Sue. All manuscript typing was done expertly by Mrs. Miriam R. Smallwood.

The maps contained in this volume were prepared by the Reproduction Section, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, and the Historical Branch, Headquarters Marine Corps. Official Department of Defense photographs were used.

The Marine Corps mourns the passing of the prime author of this series and other admirable works of Marine Corps and military history. Lynn Montross, after a lengthy illness, died on 28 January 1961.

--Brig. Gen. H. W. Buse, Jr., USMC, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3

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Chapter 1. Interlude at Masan

A NEW CHAPTER in Korean operations began for the 1st Marine Division at 1800 on 16 December 1950 with the opening of the CP at Masan. By the following afternoon all units of the Division had arrived from Hungnam with the exception of VMO–6 and small groups of such specialists as the amphibian tractor troops left behind to assist with the redeployment of remaining X Corps elements to south Korea.

The 1st Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing were separated for the first time since the Inchon landing. VMF–311, the new Panther jet squadron, was flying from K–9, an Air Force field near Pusan. Operating together as an all-Marine carrier group taking part in the Hungham redeployment were the three Corsair squadrons: VMF–212 on the CVL (light carrier) *Bataan*; VMF–214 on the CVE *Sicily*; and VMF–323 on the CVE *Badoeng Strait.* The two Japan-based night fighter squadrons, VMF(N)–542 and VMF(N)–513, flying from Itazuke, patrolled the skies between Japan and Korea.

VMO–6, the observation squadron, consisting of helicopters and OY fixed-wing planes, was attached to various ships of the Seventh Fleet for rescue missions when pilots were forced into the sea. A detachment of Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron–1 (MGCIS–1) and the entire Air Defense Section of Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron–2 (MTACS–2) were also attached to the warships. They assisted in the control of hundreds of planes that flew over the Hungnam beachhead daily in support of the final stages of the X Corps evacuation.

The three Marine Corsair squadrons on the *Sicily*, *Badoeng Strait,* and *Bataan* represented the entire air strength of Escort Carrier Task Group (TG) 96.8, commanded by Rear Admiral Richard N. Ruble. Each squadron came directly under the operational command of the ship on which it had embarked. Supply, engineering, ordnance, billeting, and messing were of course provided through naval channels. The only relationship of the squadrons to their parent organization, MAG–33, derived from the administration of personnel and the storage of equipment at Itami.

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Chapter 1. Interlude at Masan

Return to the Bean Patch

Masan, the new Division assembly area, was located about 27 air miles and 40 road miles west of Pusan on the Bay of Masan, which indents the southern coast of the peninsula (Map 1). In order to prepare for the arrival of the Division, Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, the assistant division commander (ADC), had flown from Hungnam with the advance party on 12 December to make necessary arrangements.

The small seaport, which skirts the bay for about two and a half miles, was untouched by the war as compared to the ravaged towns of northeast Korea. It had a protected anchorage, dock facilities, and good rail and road communications. There was an air strip at Chinhae, a few miles to the southeast.

Some sort of cycle seemed to have been completed by veterans of the 5th Marines when they found themselves back again in the familiar surroundings of the Bean Patch on the northern outskirts of Masan. This large, cultivated field is entitled to capital letters because of its historical distinction as bivouac area of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade after the battle of the Naktong in August 1950. Barely four months had passed since that hard fight, but a great deal more history had been made during the combats of the Inchon-Seoul and Chosin Reservoir operations.

There was room enough in the Bean Patch for all three infantry regiments. Headquarters, the 11th Marines, the 1st Signal, 1st Tank, 1st Amtrac, 1st Ordnance, and 1st Motor Transport Battalions were located on the southern outskirts of town along with the 41 Independent Commando, Royal Marines. The 1st Combat Service Group, the MP Company, and the 1st Service, 1st Shore Party, and 1st Engineer Battalions occupied the dock area of Masan proper. A large building in the center of town housed the Division hospital, and the 7th Motor Transport Battalion was assigned to the Changwon area, four miles to the northeast.[1]

Peaceful as the surroundings may have seemed to troops who had just completed the 13-day running fight of the Chosin Reservoir Breakout, the Chidi San mountain mass some 50 miles northwest of Masan had been for many years the hideout of Korean bandits and outlaws. The Japanese had never been able to clear them out, and the Republic of Korea had met with no better success. After the outbreak of civil war, they made some pretense of aiding the Communist cause but were actually preying upon the ROK army and police for arms, food, clothing, and other loot. Operating in prowling bands as large as 50 or 60 men, the guerrillas were well armed with rifles, machine guns, and at times even mortars.

Click here to view map

In order to assure the safety both of its own bivouac areas and the vital port of Masan, Division promptly initiated measures to maintain surveillance over a broad belt of countryside which described an arc from Chinju, some 40 miles west of Masan, around to Changwon (Map 1). The infantry and artillery regiments and the Division Reconnaissance Company were all assigned subsectors of this security belt. Daily motor patrols of not less than platoon strength were to be conducted in each subsector for the purpose of gaining information about the roads and the guerrillas as well as discouraging their activities.[2] As it proved, however, no hostile contacts were made by the Marines during the entire Masan interlude. The guerrillas preferred to restrict their attention to the local police and civilian population.

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Chapter 1. Interlude at Masan
1st Marine Division in EUSAK Reserve

At 2240 on the 18th a dispatch from Major General Edward M. Almond, USA, commanding general of X Corps, informed the 1st Marine Division that it had passed to the operational control of the Eighth Army.[3]

Major General Oliver P. Smith reported in one of his first dispatches to EUSAK that the Marines had received fresh rations on only three days since landing in Korea. The Division commander invited attention to the importance of building up the physical condition of men who had lost weight during the Chosin Reservoir operation. An information copy went to Commander Naval Forces, Far East, (ComNavFE), who reacted promptly by ordering a refrigeration ship to Masan with 50,000 rations of turkey. The G–4 of Eusak also responded with fresh rations from time to time until the Marines, in the words of General Smith, “had turkey coming out of their ears.”[4]

Games of softball and touch football became popular in the crisp, invigorating weather as the men rapidly recuperated from fatigue and nervous tension. A series of shows was put on by troupes of U.S. Army and Korean entertainers, and the U.S. Navy sent Christmas trees and decorations.

The first Christmas in Korea was observed with a memorable display of holiday spirit by men who had cause to be thankful. A choir from the 5th Marines serenaded Division Headquarters with carols on Christmas Eve, and all the next day the commanding general and ADC held open house for staff officers and unit commanders.[5]

The United States as a whole rejoiced over the news that the last of 105,000 X Corps troops had embarked from Hungnam on 24 December without a single life being lost as a result of enemy action. President Truman spoke for the Nation when he sent this message to General MacArthur:

“Wish to express my personal thanks to you, Admiral Joy, General Almond, and all your brave men for the effective operations at Hungnam. This saving of our men in this isolated beachhead is the best Christmas present I have ever had.”

Photographers and press correspondents flocked to Masan during the holiday season for pictures and interviews about various aspects of the Chosin Reservoir campaign. Among them was Captain John Ford, USNR, a successful motion picture director who had been recalled to active duty to make a documentary film depicting the role of the Navy and Marine Corps in Korea. He used scenes in the Masan area for background material.

General Smith was informed that a motion picture company intended to produce a feature film entitled “Retreat, Hell,” based on a remark attributed to him, “Retreat, Hell, we are just attacking in a different direction!” When asked if these actually were his words, the Division commander had a diplomatic answer. He said that he had pointed out to correspondents at Hagaru that the drive to Hamhung was not a typical withdrawal or retreat, and thus “the statement attributed to me described my thinking, that of my staff and unit commanders, and my situation.”

During the Masan interlude Colonel S. L. A. Marshall, USAR, arrived as a representative of the Operations Research Office of Johns Hopkins University, which had been employed on military research projects by the Far East Command. Marshall, a well-known military analyst who had written several books about World War II operations, based his studies on personal interviews with scores of participants.

The researcher was given a free hand at Masan. Aided by a stenographer, he interviewed officers and men from privates to commanding general. The resulting thousands of words went into a classified report entitled, “CCF in the Attack (Part II), A Study Based on the Operations of the 1stMarDiv in the Koto-ri, Hagaru-ri,

Yudam-ni area, 20 November–10 December 1950."

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Chapter 1. Interlude at Masan
General Ridgway New Eusak Commander

Shortly after arrival at Masan, General Smith called a conference of unit commanders and emphasized that their task was to re-equip, resupply, repair and rehabilitate. Officers and men of replacement drafts were to be integrated and given unit training as soon as possible. Both veterans and newcomers were soon training in regimental areas assigned by Colonel Alpha L. Bowser, the Division G–3, who arranged for a 200-yard rifle range and a mortar range.

On 23 December came the news that Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, the Eighth Army commander, had been killed in a jeep accident. His successor, Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway, USA, had commanded the U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps in Europe during the final operations of World War II. Commencing his flight from Washington on the 24th, he landed at Tokyo just before midnight on Christmas day. [6]

The new commander's task was made more difficult by the fact that the Korean conflict, at the end of its first six months, had become probably the most unpopular military venture of American history, both at the front and in the United States. From a mere "police action" at first, the struggle soon developed into a major effort in which the national pride suffered humiliations as a consequence of military unpreparedness. Far from building up the morale of the troops, letters and newspapers from home too often contributed to the doubts of men who asked themselves these questions:

"Why are we here? And what are we fighting for?"

Some of the answers were scarcely reassuring. It was insinuated, for instance, that Americans were fighting "to make South Korean real estate safe for South Koreans."

"I must say in all frankness," commented General Ridgway in his memoirs, "that the spirit of the Eighth Army as I found it on my arrival gave me deep concern. There was a definite air of nervousness, of gloomy foreboding, of uncertainty, a spirit of apprehension as to what the future held. There was much 'looking over the shoulder' as the soldiers say."[7]

These criticisms were not applicable to the 1st Marine Division. "Our men were in high spirits and busily engaged in getting ready to fight again," commented Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, ADC. "In my travels around the various units of the Division, and in talking to the men, I never even once noticed any air of nervousness or apprehension. . . . When General Ridgway visited the Division at Masan he made a tour of the entire camp area and observed training and general arrangements. He stated that he was quite satisfied with the 1st Marine Division and its quick comeback after the Chosin fighting."[8]

General Ridgway learned soon after his arrival that the Eighth Army staff had prepared a plan for a phased withdrawal to Pusan in case of necessity. He called immediately for a plan of attack. Prospects of putting it into effect were not bright at the moment, but at least it served to announce his intentions.

Rumors were rife at this time that a general withdrawal from Korea, in virtual acknowledgment of defeat, was contemplated. In a letter of 1957, General Douglas MacArthur wrote an emphatic denial: "I have no means of knowing whether such action may have been seriously considered in Washington; but, for my own part, I never contemplated such a withdrawal and made no plans to that effect."[9]

Click here to view map

The front hugged the 38th Parallel during the last week of December as the Eighth Army held a defensive line along the Munsan-Chunchon-Yangyang axis (Map 2). Three U.S. divisions were in a combat zone

occupied largely by ROK units. The 24th and 25th Divisions both reduced a third in strength by casualties, remained in contact with the enemy in west Korea while the 1st Cavalry Division, also depleted in numbers, occupied blocking positions to the rear. Personnel and equipment losses suffered by the 2d Division during the CCF counteroffensive of late November had rendered it noneffective as a tactical unit until it could be reinforced and re–equipped, and the 3d and 7th Infantry Divisions had just landed in the Pusan-Ulsan area after the Hungnam redeployment.[10]

On 27 December 1950 the commanding general began a three-day tour of Eighth Army units at the front. He talked to hundreds of soldiers ranging from privates to unit commanders. There was nothing the matter with the Eighth Army, he assured them, that confidence wouldn't cure. "I told them their soldier forbears would turn over in their graves if they heard some of the stories I had heard about the behavior of some of our troop leaders in combat. The job of a commander was to be up where the crisis of action was taking place. In time of battle, I wanted division commanders to be up with their forward battalions, and I wanted corps commanders up with the regiment that was in the hottest action. If they had paper work to do, they could do it at night. By day their place was up there where the shooting was going on."

It could never have been said that this professional soldier, the son of a Regular Army colonel, had failed to set an example in his own career. As the commander of an airborne division, he had jumped along with his men in Normandy.

Seldom seen in Korea without a grenade attached to his harness, Ridgway insisted that it was not a gesture of showmanship. In mobile warfare a man might be surprised by the enemy when he least expected it, he said, and a grenade was useful for blasting one's way out of a tight spot.

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Chapter 1. Interlude at Masan
Ridgway's Declaration of Faith

After completing his tour of the combat area, the commanding general concluded that one thing was still lacking. Soldiers of the Eighth Army hadn't as yet been given an adequate answer to the questions, "Why are we here?" and "What are we fighting for?" In the belief that the men were entitled to an answer from their commanding general, he sat down in his room and wrote this declaration of faith:

"To me the issues are clear. It is not a question of this or that Korean town or village. Real estate is here, incidental. . . .

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

"If these be true, and to me they are, beyond any possibility of challenge, then this has long since ceased to be a fight for freedom for our Korean allies alone and for their national survival. It has become, and it continues to be, a fight for our own freedom, for our own survival, in an honorable, independent national existence. . . ."[11]

The deep conviction of this declaration could not be doubted. But Ridgway did not confine himself to moral leadership; he also insisted on a return to sound tactical principles. Upon learning that some of the infantry commanders in combat sectors had no knowledge of the enemy's strength or whereabouts, he ordered that aggressive patrolling be resumed at once. He directed further that every unit make a resolute effort to provide a hot reception for the Red Chinese patrols which had met too little opposition while prodding every night for soft spots along the thinly held 135-mile United Nations line.[12]

In his talks with officers and men, the new commander told them that too many weapons and vehicles had fallen into the hands of the enemy during the withdrawals in west Korea. He made it plain that in the future any man abandoning equipment without good cause would be court-martialed.

Not only did Ridgway stress the increased use of firepower; he requested in one of his first messages to the Pentagon that 10 additional battalions of artillery be sent to Korea. These guns were to provide the tactical punch when he found an opportunity to take the offensive.

Meanwhile, he had the problem of putting up a defense against a Chinese Communist offensive expected within a week. On his first day as Eighth Army commander he sent a request to President Syngman Rhee, of the Republic of Korea, for 30,000 native laborers to dig field fortifications. The energetic, 71-year-old Korean patriot provided the first 10,000 at dawn the following morning and the others during the next two days. Armed with picks and shovels, this army of toilers created two broad belts of defense, one to the north and one south of the river Han. The purpose of the first was to stop the enemy if American firepower could compensate for lack of numbers, and the second was a final line to be held resolutely.

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Chapter 1. Interlude at Masan

Marine Personnel and Equipment Shortages

Although the Marine ground forces found themselves in the unusual situation of being 200 miles behind the front, they could be sure that this respite wouldn't last. Every effort was being pushed to restore the Division to combat efficiency by a command and staff acutely aware of shortages of men and equipment. The effective strength on 29 December 1950 was 1,304 officers and 20,696 men, including 182 attached U.S. Army troops and 143 Royal Marine Commandos. This total also included 28 officers and 1,615 men who had arrived in a replacement draft of 17 December, and 4 officers and 365 men in a draft of three days later.[13]

Authorized Division strength was 1,438 officers and 24,504 men, indicating a shortage of 134 officers and 3,808 men. Most of the deficiencies were in the infantry and artillery units—29 officers and 2,951 men in the three infantry regiments, and 38 officers and 538 men in the artillery.

Division G–1 had been informed by the FMFPac representative in Japan that about 5,000 casualties were hospitalized there, and an unknown number had been evacuated to the United States because of overcrowding of hospitals in Japan. Such factors made it difficult to predict how many would return to the Division, but G–1 estimated from 500 to 1,000 in January.

The situation in regard to Division equipment might be summed up by saying that on 23 December there was a serious shortage of practically all essential items with the single exception of M–1 rifles. Upon arrival at Masan, units had been required to submit stock status reports. These lists were forwarded on 23 December to the Commanding General, Eighth Army, with a notification that requisitions had been submitted to the 2d Logistical Command, USA, in Pusan. It was requested that deliveries of supplies and equipment be speeded up, so that the Division could soon be restored to its former combat efficiency. A comparison of the totals of selected items on 23 and 31 December as listed on the following page shows that considerable progress was made during those eight days.

The 2d Logistical Command in Pusan, commanded by Brigadier General Crump Garvin, USA, deserved much of the credit for the week's restoration of Marine equipment. Progress passed all expectations, considering that General Garvin was supplying other Eighth Army units which had lost equipment during their withdrawal. [14]

Click here to view table

There still existed on 29 December a requirement for clothing and individual equipment, and the spare parts problem remained acute. Ironically, the fact that the 1st Marine Division had brought most of its motor transport out from the Chosin Reservoir was a handicap at Masan. Eighth Army units which had lost their vehicles were given priority for receiving new ones. This meant that the Marines must make the best of war-worn trucks.

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Chapter 1. Interlude at Masan
Marine Air Squadrons in Action

While the ground forces trained in the Masan area, the Corsair squadrons and the jet squadron flew combat missions. Support of the Hungnam redeployment had top priority until 24 December, when the last of the 105,000 troops were evacuated by Rear Admiral James H. Doyle's Task Force 90. Such totals as 91,000 Korean refugees, 17,500 vehicles, and 350,000 measurement tons of cargo were also recorded by the U.S. Navy's largest operation of the Korean conflict.[15]

No serious trouble was experienced from enemy action during the two weeks of the redeployment, although G–2 reports warned that several Chinese divisions were believed to be in the general area. Air strikes and naval gunfire shared the credit for this result. Nearly 34,000 shells and 12,800 rockets were fired by the support ships, and UN planes were on station or carrying out missions every moment that weather permitted. Marine fighters of VMF–212, VMF–214, and VMF–323, flying from carriers after the closing of Yonpo Airfield, made a noteworthy contribution to the success of the Hungnam redeployment.[16]

VMF–212, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Wyczawski, was assigned the task of gathering the helicopters of VMO–6 from various ships of the Seventh Fleet and returning them to the operational control of the 1st Marine Division at Masan. There the OYs of the observation squadron were waiting after an overland flight, and Major Vincent J. Gottschalk's unit was complete.

With the Hungnam redeployment ended, the Navy offered to make its primary carrier-borne air effort in support of the Eighth Army. There was no single over-all commander of Navy and Air Force aviation in Korea (other than General MacArthur himself) and the two services were working under a system of mutual agreement and coordination.[17]

The Far East Air Forces (FEAF), under Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, was the senior Air Force command in the Far East, on the same level as ComNavFE, Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy. The largest FEAF subordinate command was the Fifth Air Force, commanded by Major General Earle E. Partridge, with headquarters at Taegu, alongside that of the Eighth Army.

Strictly speaking, land-based Marine air had been under Fifth Air Force operational control throughout the Chosin Reservoir operation. Actually a verbal agreement between General Partridge and Major General Field Harris, commanding the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), had given the Marines a good deal of latitude in making decisions relative to close air support. This was often the salvation of Marine units during the breakout, when every minute counted. Later, during the Hungnam redeployment, control of Marine aircraft became the responsibility of Admiral Doyle. His control agency was Tactical Air Control Squadron–1 (TacRon–1) in his flagship, the *Mount McKinley*. TacRon–1 kept in close touch not only with the 3d Infantry Division, USA, defending the shrinking perimeter, but also with the Eighth Army and Fifth Air Force.[18]

During the last days of 1950 the four Marine air squadrons were kept busy. VMF–212 on the *Bataan* was attached to TF–77. The coastline of east Korea was its hunting grounds for such missions as knocking out warehouses, bridges, and railway tunnels between the 38th and 39th parallels.

Along the west coast, VMF–214 on the *Sicily* and VMF–323 on the *Badoeng Strait* were commanded respectively by Major William M. Lundin and Major Arnold A. Lund. These squadrons were part of Task Group-95.1 under Vice Admiral Sir William G. Andrews, RN. The Marine aviators found themselves in an organization made up of Royal Commonwealth naval forces and of French, Thai, and ROK units. TG–95.1 had the responsibility for patrolling the western coastline to prohibit enemy movement by water in military junks and by

vehicle along the littoral.[19]

VMF-311, the jet squadron commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Neil R. MacIntyre, remained the only land-based Marine air unit in Korea. The Fifth Air Force had made space for it on crowded K–9, seven air miles northeast of Pusan, when General Harris expressed a desire to keep his jets in Korea for possible defense against Red air attacks (Map 3).

Click here to view map

MacIntyre exercised his prerogative as squadron commander to fly the unit's first combat mission on 17 December. He was not, however, the first Marine aviator to pilot a jet in combat. That distinction went to Captain Leslie E. Brown on 9 September 1950. Assigned to the Fifth Air Force's 8th Fighter-Bomber Squadron as an exchange pilot, he made the first of several routine flights with an F-80 Shooting Star.

On 20 December, 17 officers and 51 enlisted men arrived at K–9 to boost VMF-311's total to 27 officer pilots and 95 enlisted men. Under Fifth Air Force control, they were employed to attack suspected CCF troop shelters, entrenchments, and gun positions on the eve of the expected enemy offensive. Missions of the jet planes averaged 12 a day at the end of the month.

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Chapter 1. Interlude at Masan
The Air Force System of Control

It was seldom realized in the middle of the twentieth century that for the first time since the Middle Ages, a single human being represented in his person a decisive tactical unit. Just as the mailed knight on his barded charger had ruled the battlefields of the medieval world, so did the pilot of a modern aircraft have the power to put an enemy battalion to flight with napalm, or to knock out an enemy stronghold with a 500-pound bomb.

A great deal depended, of course, on how the lightning of this human thunderbolt was controlled. The Marine Corps and the Air Force had different ideas on the subject. At the foundation of the Marine system was the concept that the needs of the ground forces came first, and control of air support should be exercised by the troops being supported. In each Marine infantry battalion a tactical air control party (TACP) included two aviators—one to be employed as a forward air controller (FAC) at the front, and the other as an air liaison officer in the battalion supporting arms center (SAC).[20]

In an emergency both could quickly be assigned to companies or even platoons to “talk” air strikes down on the enemy. The normal chain of command was bypassed in favor of direct radio from the TACP to the cognizant air control agency that had the authority to cross-check the request for possible conflict with other operations and to channel fighter-bombers to the attack.

Intermediate commands kept themselves informed of the over-all air picture and controlled the employment of aviation by their own subordinates as they listened in on these requests. They indicated approval by remaining silent, and disapproval by transmitting a countermand.

The hub of the Air Force system was the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) of the Fifth Air Force-EUSAK Joint Operations Center (JOC), known by the code name MELLOW. An aviator coming on duty called up MELLOW and received his instructions from JOC.

FACs were assigned to U.S. Army and British units down to corps, division, and regimental levels, and to ROK corps and divisions. Further assignment to smaller front line units was possible but entailed a good deal of time and advance planning. And even the most urgent requests had to be channeled through division and regimental levels to JOC for approval.

If a Marine FAC wasn’t able to control an air strike visually because of terrain conditions, he called for a “tactical air coordinator, airborne” (TACA) to locate the target from the air and direct planes to the attack. The Fifth Air Force also used special airborne coordinators. Known as “Mosquitoes,” they flew low-winged, two-seater North American training planes, designated T–6s by the Air Force and SNJs by the Navy.

This plan was capable under favorable circumstances of providing the Fifth Air Force-EUSAK tactical air control system with a mobile and flexible means of directing air power at the front. Its chief weakness, according to Marine doctrine, lay in the separation of air power from ground force control. The Air Force claimed the advantage of projecting tactical air power deep into enemy territory; but as the Marines saw it, this was deep or interdictory support, and not to be compared to genuine close air support.

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Chapter 1. Interlude at Masan
X Corps Conference at Kyongju

The command and staff of the 1st Marine Division could only speculate during this interim period as to what the near future might hold for them. Rumors had been circulated, during the first week at Masan, that the Division would be employed as rearguard to cover an Eighth Army withdrawal from Korea, with Pusan serving as the port of debarkation. And while plans cannot be made on a basis of rumor, General Smith and Colonel Bowser went so far as to discuss the possibility seriously. At last, on 24 December, a more definite prospect loomed when the EUSAK staff requested the Division to furnish logistical data for a move by rail and truck to Wonju, some 130 miles north of Masan.

It was not known whether an actual move was contemplated or the intention was merely to have available a plan for future use if the occasion warranted. General Smith sent the data but added a strong recommendation to the effect that any commitment of the Division be postponed until it was re-equipped and strengthened by replacements.[21]

At this time the Marine general received a copy of a map prepared by the Eighth Army staff which showed the phase lines of a 200-mile withdrawal from the combat zone to the Pusan port of debarkation. No enlightenment as to the employment of the Division was forthcoming until 27 December 1950, however, when a EUSAK dispatch directed that the Marines be detached from Eighth Army reserve and reassigned to the operational control of X Corps.[22]

A message of the 28th requested General Smith to attend a conference at the X Corps CP at Kyongju (about 60 air miles northeast of Masan) on the 30th. He was directed to bring several members of his staff with him and to assign a liaison officer to X Corps.[23]

Two VMO–6 helicopters flew him to Kyongju along with his G–3, Colonel Bowser, and his aide, Captain Martin J. Sexton. Tossed by high winds, they landed just in time to meet General Ridgway, who gave a talk emphasizing the necessity for reconnaissance and maintaining contact with the enemy.

The new plan for X Corps employment, as modified after discussion with the Eighth Army commander, called for the recently reorganized 2d Infantry Division to be placed under operational control of General Almond. It was to move out at once to the Wonju front, followed by the 3d and 7th Infantry Divisions. The 1st Marine Division was to stage to Pohangdong (Map 3) on the east coast, some 65 miles north of Pusan, with a view to being eventually employed on this same front.[24]

“Certainly no one could accuse General Almond, the X Corps commander, of defeatism,” was a tribute paid by General Smith. On the contrary, the Marine general had sometimes differed with him on the grounds that he was aggressive to the point of giving too little weight to logistical considerations and time and space factors.

It was realized at the conference that administrative decisions must depend to a large extent on the outcome of the impending enemy offensive. G–2 officers of the Eighth Army, forewarned by prisoner interrogations, were not surprised when the blow fell shortly before midnight on the last night of the year.

In spite of Air Force bombings of roads and suspected supply dumps, the Chinese Reds had been able to mount a great new offensive only three weeks after the old one ended. Attacking in the bitter cold of New Year’s Eve, they made penetrations during the first few hours in ROK-held sectors of the central and eastern fronts. By daybreak it became evident that Seoul was a major objective, with the UN situation deteriorating rapidly.

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Chapter 2. The CCF January Offensive

ON THE LAST DAY of 1950 the 1st Marine Division was alerted for two missions within an hour. At 1425 it was detached from X Corps, after only four days, and once more assigned to the operational control of the Eighth Army. The Marines were directed to resume their former mission of training, reorganizing, and replacing equipment so that they could be employed either to block enemy penetrations along the Ulchin-Yongju-Yechon axis (Map 4), or to take over a sector along the main line of resistance (MLR).

Forty minutes later another EUSAK dispatch alerted the Division to move to the Pohang-Andong area, where it would be in position to block any CCF penetration. This warning order came as no surprise, since X Corps had already contemplated such employment for General Smith's troops. In fact, General Craig and Deputy Chief of Staff Colonel Edward W. Snedeker had left Masan that very morning to select assembly areas and command posts.[1]

At a conference of G–3 and G–4 officers held at Masan on New Year's Day, it was recommended that the administrative headquarters remain in its present location when the rest of the Division moved up to Pohang. Although this headquarters had accompanied the Division CP in the past, it was believed that gains in mobility would result if the large number of clerical personnel and their increasing bulk of documents were left behind.[2] In view of the changing situation at the front, there was less danger of losing valuable records if the headquarters continued to function at Masan, maintaining contact with the forward CP by means of daily courier planes. The plan was approved by the Division commander and worked out to general satisfaction.

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Chapter 2. The CCF January Offensive
UN Forces Give Ground

Decisions were made during the first few days of 1951 in an atmosphere of suspense and strain as adverse reports came from the firing line. General Ridgway had assumed correctly, on the basis of prisoner interrogations, that the main Chinese effort would be channeled down the historical invasion corridor north of Seoul. He made his dispositions accordingly, and the Eighth Army order of battle on 31 December 1950 (Map 2) was as follows:

U.S. I Corps—Turkish Brigade, U.S. 25th Division, ROK 1st Division, from left to right northwest of Seoul. In Corps reserve, British 29th Brigade.

U.S. IX Corps—ROK 6th Division, U.S. 24th Division, from left to right north of Seoul. In Corps reserve, British Commonwealth 27th Brigade, U.S. 1st Cavalry Division.

ROK III Corps—ROK 2d, 5th, and 8th Divisions, from left to right on central front. In Corps reserve, ROK 7th Division.

ROK II Corps—ROK 3d Division, on east-central front.

ROK I Corps—ROK 9th and Capital Divisions, from left to right on eastern front.

The U.S. X Corps, comprising the newly reorganized U.S. 2d Infantry Division at Wonju and the 7th Infantry Division in the Chungju area, had been given a mission of bolstering the ROK-held line in central and east Korea and blocking enemy penetrations to the rear.

In Eighth Army reserve was the 187th Airborne RCT, with Thailand Battalion attached, in the Suwon area. Also under EUSAK operational control in rear areas were the 1st Marine Division (Masan), the 3d Infantry Division (Kyongju), the Canadian Battalion (Miryang) and the New Zealand Field Artillery Battalion (Pusan).

Altogether, the United Nations forces in Korea numbered 444,336 men as of January 1951. The cosmopolitan character of the fight against Communism is indicated by the aid given to the U.S. and ROK forces by contingents of combat troops from 13 other nations—Australia, Belgium, Canada, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.[3]

Enemy numbers at this time were estimated at a total of 740,000 men in Korea and near-by Manchuria. Seven CCF armies, the 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 42d, 50th, and 66th were identified among the troops attacking on New Year's Eve. The NKPA I and V Corps also participated. Estimated strength of the assaulting forces was 174,000 Chinese and 60,000 North Koreans.

Previously identified but not reported in contact with U.S. forces on 31 December were the 24th, 48th, 49th, and 65th CCF armies and the NKPA 1st, 3d, and 15th Divisions.

As another possibility which could not be overlooked, the five CCF armies which had opposed X Corps in northeast Korea might also take part in the new offensive. Elements of the 20th, 26th, 27th, 30th, and 32d Armies identified in that area early in December, had more than two weeks in which to reorganize and make their way to the Eighth Army front. If they got into the fight, it would mean a formidable addition to the enemy's forces.

With only five days at his disposal, after arrival in Korea, General Ridgway's preparations were limited. His dispositions could not be blamed, but it was the old story of the chain and its weakest link as the enemy scored a major breakthrough at the expense of the 1st ROK Division on the west-central front. Unfortunately, this unit represented the tactical joint between I Corps and IX Corps. The enemy widened the gap before dawn and drove on toward Seoul.

Early in the morning the EUSAK commanding general was on the road, waving his arms in an attempt to stop ROK soldiers streaming rearward in their vehicles after abandoning crew-served weapons. The short training period for these troops, their tactical inexperience, and the language barrier were the dissonant notes tolling the ominous chords of defeat. The whole front was endangered as the enemy poured through an ever widening gap, and Ridgway ordered that roadblocks be set up where MPs could halt the fugitives, rearm them, and send them back to the front. At his request, President Syngman Rhee appealed to ROK soldiers over the radio and exhorted them to make a stand. By that time it was too late to save Seoul, and the commanding general gave orders for its evacuation.

"The withdrawal was initiated in mid-afternoon on the 3d," he commented in retrospect. "I stayed on the bridge site on the north bank until dark to watch the passage of the most critical loads. These were the 8-inch howitzers and the British Centurion tanks, both of which exceeded the safety limits of the bridge under the conditions existing at the time."[4]

It was a scene of terror and despair that Ridgway never forgot. Thousands of Korean civilian refugees were making their way over the thin ice of the river Han, many of them carrying children or old people on their backs. What impressed the observer most was the uncanny silence of this mass flight in the freezing winter dusk, broken only by the sound of a multitude of feet shuffling over the ice—a sound strangely like a vast whispering. It was as if these derelicts of war were trying incoherently to confide their misery to someone.

From a strategic viewpoint, the only course left to the Eighth Army was a continued retirement south of Seoul. "We came back fast," Ridgway admitted, "but as a fighting army, not as a running mob. We brought our dead and wounded with us, and our guns, and our will to fight."[5]

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Chapter 2. The CCF January Offensive
Further Eighth Army Withdrawals

EUSAK Fragmentary Operations Plan 20, issued as an order on 4 January, called for a further withdrawal to Line D (Map 4). In preparation, X Corps had moved up to the front on the 2d, after assuming operational control of the U.S. 2d and 7th Infantry Divisions and the ROK 2d, 5th, and 8th Divisions and occupied a sector between U.S. IX Corps and ROK III Corps.[6]
Click here to view map

The U.S. 3d Division was attached to I Corps and the 187th Airborne RCT passed temporarily under operational control of IX Corps.

By 7 January the UN forces had pulled back to a modified Line D extending from Pyongtaek on the west coast to Samchok on the east and taking in Yoju and Chechon. General Ridgway sent telegrams to all corps commanders expressing dissatisfaction with the personnel and material losses inflicted on the enemy during the withdrawal. “I shall expect,” each message concluded, “utmost exploitation of every opportunity in accordance with my basic directive.”

That evening, foreshadowing the offensive operations he was contemplating, the commanding general ordered a reconnaissance-in-force by a reinforced infantry regiment north to Osan to search out the enemy and inflict maximum punishment. No contacts were made, nor did strong patrols sent out by U.S. IX Corps flush out any sizeable groups of Chinese. But the Eighth Army had served notice that it intended to regain the initiative at the first opportunity.

One more blow remained to be absorbed. On the 8th the Communists struck in the Wonju area with an attack of four divisions. Elements of the newly reorganized 2d Infantry Division were forced to give up that important highway and rail center after counterattacks failed. The enemy now directed his main effort along the Chunchon-Wonju-Chechon corridor, and North Korean guerrilla forces infiltrated through the gap between the U.S. X Corps and ROK III Corps.

The salient created by this CCF attack caused Line D to be modified again so that in the center it dipped sharply downward to Chungju before curving northeast to Samchok (Map 4).

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Chapter 2. The CCF January Offensive
Marine Aircraft in the Battle

The pilots and aircrewmen of the three carrier squadrons and the land-based jet squadron were the only Marines in a position to take an active part in the battle. With but one TACP per division, close air support was out of the question for the ROKs on New Year's Day.

Control facilities were severely strained when scores of UN fliers made use of the frequencies which the Mosquitoes employed for tactical air direction. The voices were all in the English language, but with more than one person doing the sending, shrill side noises sliced in to garble the whole into a cacophony of jungle sounds. A Mosquito trying to coach a fighter-bomber attack at the crossings of the Imjin might be drowned out by a distant pilot calling up a controller in the Hwachon Reservoir Area.[7]

As a consequence, there was no coordinated air-ground attack in direct support of the man in the foxhole. Most of the JOC effort was directed to the enemy's rear in an effort to block supporting arms, reinforcements, and supplies.

The two Marine squadrons attached to Admiral Ruble's carriers were at sea, some 80 miles south of Inchon when news of the Chinese offensive filtered through the tedious communication channels from JOC and EUSAK. Major Lund, CO of VMF–323, led an eight-plane attack which destroyed enemy trucks and some 40 huts believed to be occupied by CCF troops in a village south of the Imjin.

Another Marine air mission of New Year's Day was the flight commanded by Major Kenneth L. Reusser for the purpose of wiping out a reported CCF concentration on the central front. Unfortunately, he could not get verification that the target consisted of enemy troops. Before a decision could be made, Reusser heard a Mosquito of the 2d ROK Division calling urgently for any flier in the area to hit another CCF concentration (this time verified) in a village to the enemy's rear of the Chorwon-Hwachon area. Under the Mosquito's direction the Corsairs bombed and napalmed the village, then strafed survivors trying to escape.

VMF–212, flying with Navy (Task Force) TF–77 on the eastern side of the peninsula, had a busy New Year's Day. Two eight-plane interdiction strikes were flown in the morning against rear area targets along the coastal highways. The afternoon brought an emergency call from JOC, and the squadron "scrambled" 14 planes which hit the east flank of an extensive enemy push south of the Hwachon Reservoir.[8]

More than 300 UN fighter-bombers were sent out under JOC, or MELLOW, control on the embattled first day of 1951. On the west coast TacRon–3 received more calls for air support than TG–96.8 could fill. Rear Admiral Lyman A. Thackrey sent a request to Admiral Struble in the *Missouri* for additional carrier planes, and within a few hours the Marines of VMF-212 were detached and on their way to the west coast to join the other two Corsair squadrons of TG–96.8.

All four Marine fighter-bomber squadrons took part daily in air operations as the Chinese Reds continued their advance south of Seoul. VMF–311 was badly handicapped, however, by mechanical difficulties. Engine or radio trouble accounted for five "aborts" of the 15 sorties launched on 4 January. The remaining pilots could not make radio contacts with their assigned Mosquito controller, and had little choice other than to attack targets of opportunity.

The jets continued in action, but it was realized that they were not giving the maximum of their capabilities. By mid-January the squadron had become almost ineffective through no fault of its own. Technical representatives from the companies that had manufactured both the engine and plane were flown to K–9 (Map 3), and on the 16th all jets were grounded. These inspectors did not work on the planes; they were empowered only to

report the nature of the trouble to the airplane companies concerned. The companies in turn reported to BuAir in Washington, which sent instructions and if necessary mechanics to Itami, where major aircraft maintenance was done.

Meanwhile, the fall of Seoul meant that the Air Force was evicted by enemy action from such major fields as Kimpo and K–16 on an island in the river Han. The Sabre jets and Mosquitoes had to be pulled back, and soon the F–51s were no longer secure at Suwon from an advancing enemy.

Admiral Thackrey's Western Deployment Group completed the evacuation from Inchon of 70,000 tons of supplies, 2,000 vehicles, and about 5,000 troops.[9] As the Navy closed out activities on the west coast, TG–96.8 sent out its last combat air missions on 7 January. VMF–214 made its final reconnaissance patrols; VMF–212 flew 25 sorties in support of UN troops in central Korea; and VMF–323 took part in a series of Air Force raids on enemy troop assembly areas in the Hoengsong area.[9]

Until the last, the carrier Marines alternated their Eighth Army support missions with routine CAPs, coastal searches, and airfield bombings. Admiral Thackrey's Redeployment Group, including TacRon–3, completed its task in the Inchon area and departed on the 7th. On that same day HMS *Theseus,* flying the flag of Admiral Andrewes, was back in west coast waters as the British pilots resumed their coastal patrols and naval air support on that side of the peninsula. Within a week VMF–212 and the *Bataan* returned to fly alternate tours of duty with the pilots of the *Theseus.* The other two carrier squadrons found themselves unemployed for the time being. Not only were they out of a job, they were also homeless, since the United Nations had been forced to give up airfields at Yonpo, Wonsan, Seoul, Kimpo, and Suwon. Only K–1, K–2, K–4, K–9, K–10, and two small fields near Taegu remained (Map 2), and they would scarcely serve the needs of FEAF. Thus it was that VMF–214 and VMF–323 found a temporary haven at Itami, along with VMF–311 and most of the administrative and service units of the 1st MAW. There was nothing to do but wait until a new home could be found for the fighter-bomber squadrons.

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Chapter 2. The CCF January Offensive
1st Marine Division Assigned Mission

The Marine aviators might have found some consolation in the fact that their comrades of the ground forces were also groping in a fog of uncertainty. At the most critical period of the CCF thrust in the Wonju area, General Smith was summoned to Taegu on 8 January for a conference with General Ridgway. The Eighth Army commander proposed to attach one of the Marine RCTs to X Corps in the Andong area, about 95 air miles north of Masan. The remainder of the Division would then move to the Pohang-Kyongju-Yongchon area, some 60 air miles northeast of Masan (Map 4).

Ridgway asked the Marine general to discuss the prospect with his staff. He realized, he said, that no commander liked to have his division split up, and he assured Smith that as soon as the X Corps zone became stabilized, the RCT would be sent back to him.

They parted with this understanding, but a few hours after his return by air to Masan the following message was received from Ridgway:

"Subsequent your departure, alternate plan occurred to me on which I would like your views soonest. It follows: 1st Mar Div, under Army control, move without delay to general area outlined to you personally today, to take over responsibility at date and hour to be announced later for protection of MSR between Andong and Kyongju, both inclusive, and prevent hostile penetration in force south of Andong-Yongdok road."[10]

At 1115 on the 9th the plan was made official. An Eighth Army dispatch ordered the 1st Marine Division to move without delay to the Pohang area (Map 4), remaining under EUSAK control, with the following missions:

(a) Prevent enemy penetrations in force south of the Andong-Yongdok road;

(b) Protect the MSR connecting Pohang, Kyongju, Yongchon, Uihung, and Uisong.[11]

Based on these directives, Division OpnO 1–51 was issued at 1600 on the 9th. RCT–1 was directed to move by motor to Yongchon and to protect the MSR, Yongchon-Uisong inclusive, from positions in the vicinity of Yongchon and Uihung. The 1st and 7th Motor Transport Battalions, plus other Division elements, were ordered to provide the required trucks.[12]

General Ridgway arrived at Masan by plane on the morning of 9 January. He was met by General Smith and driven to Headquarters, where the Division staff officers and regimental commanders were presented to him. In a brief talk he reiterated the necessity for reconnaissance and for regaining and maintaining contact with the enemy. The Marine officers were told that limited offensive actions by Eighth Army units would be put into effect soon.[13]

Division OpnO 2–51, issued at 1300 on the 10th, provided for the completion of the Division movement by road and water from Masan to the objective area.[14]

Shortages both of personnel and equipment were much reduced during the first two weeks of January. Returns to duty of battle and nonbattle casualties added 945 to the Division strength. Corresponding improvements had been made in the material readiness of the Division. Early in January a large resupply shipment arrived from Kobe, and a Navy cargo ship brought supplies and equipment which had been left behind at Inchon in October. Thus the situation was generally satisfactory except for nearly 1,900 gaps in the ranks that remained to be filled.[15]

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Chapter 2. The CCF January Offensive
Replacements by Air and Sea

Facilities for air transport across the Pacific were limited, since the Army was also moving replacements to the Far East. A piecemeal process of shuttling Marines in plane-load increments could not be completed before 30 January. Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., commanding FMFPac, took a dim view of this delay. It would be better for the Division, he maintained, to receive even a part of its replacements before it went back into action. As a compromise, he proposed a combined air-sea lift which met the approval of Rear Admiral Arthur H. Radford, commanding Pacific Fleet.

Three replacement drafts were already on the way, with the 3d in Japan and the 4th and 5th at Camp Pendleton. General Shepherd scraped the bottom of the manpower barrel so closely that he dug up an additional 700 men from Marine security detachments in Japan, the Philippines, and other Pacific Ocean bases.

Seven trainloads of Marines from Camp Lejeune arrived at San Francisco on 10 January to join those from Camp Pendleton. On the same day 230 of these replacements were flown to Hawaii by the Military Air Transportation Service (MATS), by the R5D's of Marine VMR–352 and of Navy VR–5, and by the "Mars" flying boats of Navy VR–9. The next day 799 Marines sailed on the fast transport USNS *General W. O. Darby.* The remainder were transported at the rate of one plane load a day by MATS and at the rate of three or four plane loads a day by the Navy and Marine transport planes of Fleet Logistics Air Wing, Pacific (FLogAirWingPac).[16]

Five days later, on the 16th, the airlift had cleared the last Marine out of Treasure Island. On 21 January, 1,000 men of the special draft were already with the 1st Division at Pohang and the 799 on board *General Darby* were due to dock at Pusan.

It had been a fast job of coordination by the Navy, Army, Air Force, and virtually all major units of the Marine Corps. Much of the special airlift was flown by the R5Ds of VMR–352 and of VMR–152. The former, commanded by Colonel William B. Steiner, had been flying the El Toro–Tokyo flights since October, but most of its effort had been in shuttling between the mainland and Hawaii. VMR–152 had concentrated on the Hawaii–Japan leg of the long trip. During the Chosin campaign, the squadron commander, Colonel Deane C. Roberts, had maintained his headquarters and 10 planes at Itami to support the shuttle to Korea. He had barely returned to Hawaii from that job when his squadron was alerted not only for the special lift of Marine replacements but also for a return to the Far East.[17]

Hawaii had been the bottleneck in this special troop lift. Land and seaplanes were discharging their human cargo at Barbers Point, Hickam Air Force Base, and Keehi Lagoon. From there FLogAirWingPac had to space the planes over the long stretches of sea at approximately four-hour intervals. The guiding factor was other air traffic over the same route and the servicing, messing, and rescue capabilities of Guam and other points along the way, such as tiny Johnston Island. The latter was barely big enough for its single 6,100-foot runway.

VMR–152 and the Navy's VR–21 were assigned the mission of flying the long Hawaii-Japan portion of the big lift. Itami became another collection center for the airborne replacements and five of the VMR–152 planes were retained there to shuttle the troops the last 300 miles to K–3, near Pohang (Map 2). On 21 January the troop lift reached virtual completion, but Admiral Radford authorized the 1st MAW to retain a couple of R5D's at Itami a little longer. Thus the Marines were able to avoid highway and rail traffic jams in Korea by flying men and materials from troop and supply centers in Japan to K–1, K–3, or K–9.

Looking back at the troop lift from a historical distance, the observer is most impressed by its demonstration of teamwork on a gigantic scale. The Marine Corps had functioned as a single great unit, even

though a continent and an ocean separated the vanguard in Korea from the rear echelons in North Carolina.

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Chapter 2. The CCF January Offensive
The Move to Japanese Airfields

The seven remaining UN airfields in Korea were of course not enough to accommodate the 25 FEAF and Marine tactical squadrons. Logistics and lack of space proved to be knotty problems. Thirty tank cars of gasoline a day were needed for normal flight operations of K–2 alone. Yet it took these cars eight days to make the 120-mile Pusan-Taegu round trip, such was the strain put on the railway system by the CCF offensive.

FEAF had standby plans to evacuate Korea entirely in an emergency. Some of the secondary airfields of the Itazuke complex in Japan had been reevaluated for this purpose. Originally built by the Japanese for World War II, they were obsolescent by 1951 and because of weather, neglect, and misuse badly deteriorated.[18]

The most promising of these secondary airfields were Tsuika, Ozuki, and Bofu (Map 3), ranging from 30 to 65 miles east of Itazuke and facing one another around Japan's Inland Sea. Nearest to Itazuke and on the same island of Kyushu was Tsuika. Across the narrow Shimonoseki Strait, on the shore line of Honshu, were Ozuki and Bofu.

General Stratemeyer, the FEAF commander, informed General MacArthur that it was necessary to start air operations from Ozuki and Bofu as soon as possible. A good deal of work had already been done on Tsuika, even to moving a major Japanese highway in order to lengthen the runway to 7,000 feet. The Air Force general wanted to repair Ozuki for his F–51 squadrons, and Bofu was to be reserved for the 1st MAW.

This decision meant a revision of plans for the Marines. MAG–12 had recently been lifting a hundred men a day to K–1 (Pusan west) with a view to making it into a major base. These preparations came to an abrupt halt, pending the final decision on Bofu.

A Marine survey of that World War II airfield showed it to be in serious disrepair. The Air Force had already rejected it as a base for night-harassing B-26s. Although the runway was only 7 feet above sea level, a 720-foot hill complicated the traffic pattern. Nevertheless, Bofu was considered suitable for the time being, and the Air Force assured the 1st MAW that its use would be but temporary.

FEAF proposed that the Marines start flying out of Bofu immediately, operating under field conditions. There were, however, essential repairs to be made. The 5,300-foot runway remained in fair condition, but much of the taxiway was not surfaced and couldn't stand heavy use by the Corsairs. Three of the four hangars needed extensive repairs, as did the barracks and mess hall. Fuel would have to be stored in drums.

The Wing had the capability for minor construction but lacked the equipment, men, and fiscal authority to handle major work on the runways and taxiways. The Air Force offered to furnish the labor and materials, provided that the Navy pay for them. The Navy in its turn was too limited in funds to restore an Air Force field for only temporary use by Marines.

Finally, a compromise solved the problem. The Navy agreed to have the engineering work done by a detachment of its Mobile Construction Battalion 2 (Seabees) and furnish the concrete for patching the runways and rebuilding the warm-up aprons. The Air Force was to provide the pierced steel planking for the runways.

On 15 January MAG–33 sent an advance detachment of 125 officers and men to Bofu to do some of the preliminary work, and on the following day the Seabees initiated the heavy construction. The restoration of K–1 was meanwhile resumed by MAG–12.

Until these two fields were made ready, VMF–212 on the *Bataan* would be the only Marine squadron in combat.

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Chapter 2. The CCF January Offensive
Red China's "Hate America" Campaign

The middle of January was also a transition period for the 1st Marine Division. In accordance with Division Orders 1–51 and 2–51, the movement from Masan commenced at 0545 on 10 January when the first serial of RCT–1 departed by motor for the Pohang-Andong area. LSTs 898 and 914 sailed the next day with elements of the Tank, Ordnance, Engineer, and Service Battalions. The new Division CP opened at Sinhung, about five miles southeast of Pohang, at 1600 on 16 January; and by the 17th all designated motor and water lifts were completed. Thus the 1st Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing were poised to begin new operations which will be described in the following chapter.[19]

By 15 January relative quiet prevailed along the entire front; the Chinese Reds had shot their bolt. In terms of territorial gains (Map 4) the Communists could claim a victory, for they had inflicted heavy losses both in troop casualties and equipment on the UN forces. Yet the CCF January offensive could not compare with the November–December attacks either in moral or material damage done to the Eighth Army. This time the UN divisions had withdrawn for the most part in good order after the rout of ROK units at the outset. Nor were Ridgway's troops always driven from their positions by enemy action. Whenever he had an option between sacrificing men or Korean real estate, it was the latter he chose. And by his insistence on good combat discipline, he made the enemy pay an exorbitant price.

Nevertheless, the blunt fact remains that the United Nations forces had been beaten in spite of an overwhelming superiority in aircraft, artillery, armor, and transport as well as command of the sea. Stateside Americans can scarcely be blamed for asking themselves why their well-equipped divisions had been defeated twice within six weeks by an Asiatic peasant army using semiguerrilla tactics and depending largely on small arms, mortars, and light artillery.

The answer cannot be given in simplified terms. Although the Chinese Reds were represented by a peasant army, it was also a first-rate army when judged by its own tactical and strategic standards. Military poverty might be blamed for some of its deficiencies in arms and equipment, but its semiguerrilla tactics were based on a mobility which could not be burdened with heavy weapons and transport. The Chinese coolie in the padded cotton uniform could do one thing better than any other soldier on earth; he could infiltrate around an enemy position in the darkness with unbelievable stealth. Only Americans who have had such an experience can realize what a shock it is to be surprised at midnight with the grenades and submachine gun slugs of gnomelike attackers who seemed to rise out of the very earth.

Press correspondents were fond of referring to "the human sea tactics of the Asiatic hordes." Nothing could be further from the truth. In reality the Chinese seldom attacked in units larger than a regiment. Even these efforts were usually reduced to a seemingly endless succession of platoon infiltrations. It was not mass but deception and surprise which made the Chinese Red formidable.

They also had an advantage over Western soldiers in their ability to withstand hunger and cold while making long night marches. After all, the rigors of a winter campaign in Korea were not much worse than the hardships the Chinese peasant had endured all his life. Usually he was a veteran of at least five years' combat experience, for China had known little but war since the Japanese invasion of 1935. Many of Mao Tse-tung's troops, in fact, were former Nationalists who had fought for Chiang Kai-shek.

The Chinese Reds held another advantage in Korean terrain well suited to their tactical system. This factor has been ably summarized by U.S. Military Academy historians:

"The mountains are high, and the deep gorges between them are a bar to traffic even when the streams

are dry or frozen. Roads are few, and those that do exist are not suited for heavy traffic. Transportation then becomes a problem for the pack mule and the human back rather than the self-propelled vehicle. Telephone wires are difficult to lay and, with guerrillas on every hand, are doubly hard to maintain. Even radio is limited by such terrain, with a considerable reduction in range. In all, most observers have agreed that American forces have seldom fought in terrain to which modern means of war are less adaptable.”[20]

The fanaticism and political indoctrination of the CCF soldier must also be taken into account. His introduction to Communism began when he was persuaded that China’s small farms would be taken away from the hated landlords and divided among the people. This is the first stage of every Communist upheaval. Next comes a reign of terror calculated to liquidate the entire class of landlords and small shopkeepers. Communist China, almost literally wading in blood, had reached this second phase in 1951, the “year of violence.” Mass trials were held in which the People’s Tribunals, keyed up to a frenzy of fury, sentenced group after group of “Capitalist oppressors” to death without bothering about the evidence. The executions were public spectacles. An estimated million and a half of them took place in 1951 alone as loudspeakers on street corners blared out first-hand descriptions.

Drives were organized for everything in Red China. So rapidly did they multiply that humorless Communist leaders saw no absurdity in announcing a new drive to reduce the number of drives. And when the Youth League tried too zealously to please, a drive was launched “to Correct the Undesirable Habit of Filing False Reports.”[21] Under these circumstances it is understandable that great emphasis was placed on Red China’s “Hate America” drive early in 1951. The illiterate masses were made to believe that Americans praticed all manner of bestialities, including even cannibalism. This was the indoctrination of the CCF soldier in Korea, and political commissars with a captain’s authority were attached to each company to see that no backsliding occurred. In case of doubt, it was a simple matter to compel the suspected political deviate to kneel at the roadside and await a bullet from behind.

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Chapter 2. The CCF January Offensive
A Tactical Formula for Victory

It might well be inquired where Red China raised the funds, for even wars waged with human cannon fodder do not come cheaply. Much of the money was donated by new farm owners as “voluntary” contributions exceeding by far the rent and taxes of pre-Communist years. The slave labor of millions of Chinese sent to concentration camps also helped to foot the bill. In the long run, however, the Communist lords found perhaps their most effective means in the extortion of ransom from Chinese living outside the country on pain of torturing or killing relatives dwelling within its borders. Enormous sums were collected in spite of the efforts of foreign governments to put an end to this form of secret terrorism.[22]

Altogether, the army of Red China may be appraised as a formidable instrument on terrain suited to its tactics. Several of America’s foremost military thinkers were convinced, nevertheless, that Eighth Army reverses of the first few months in Korea were the penalty paid for a national preoccupation with airborne atomic weapons at the expense of preparations for limited wars.

It was only natural that the American public and its political and military leaders in Washington should have been much concerned about a weapon with the capability of wiping out a medium-size city in a minute.[23] Their anxiety was heightened by President Truman’s announcement on 23 September 1949 that Soviet Russia had exploded an atomic bomb. A great many Americans, probably a majority, sincerely believed that it was hardly worthwhile to prepare for an old-fashioned limited war when the Armageddon of the future would be fought to an awesome finish with thermonuclear weapons. National policy was shaped by this line of reasoning; and though we had every opportunity to study Chinese tactics prior to 1950, few if any preparations were made to cope with them. The outbreak of Korean hostilities found the four U.S. skeleton divisions in Japan woefully unready, both morally and materially.

At a later date three high-placed U.S. Army generals, Matthew B. Ridgway, James M. Gavin, and Maxwell D. Taylor, would retire because they could not reconcile their views with a national policy which they interpreted as placing all our strategic eggs in the basket of intercontinental bombers and guided missiles. Afterwards, as advocates of preparedness for limited as well as atomic warfare, they published books presenting their side of the case.[24]

On 15 January 1951 these developments were still in the future, of course. But even at the time it had already been made evident that the armed forces of Red China were not an exception to the age-old rule that there is no such thing as an invincible army. When they came up against well trained and led U.S. Army outfits in both of their offensives, they always had a fight on their hands and frequently a repulse.

The Marines had proved beyond doubt in their Chosin Reservoir campaign that the Chinese Reds could be beaten by ground and air firepower engendered by sound training, discipline, and combat leadership. Five Chinese armies, of three or four divisions each, were identified in northeast Korea during the November–December operations. Three of them were directly or indirectly opposed to the 1st Marine Division, with a U.S. Army battalion and smaller Army units attached. Yet the beleaguered American forces seized the initiative and fought their way for 13 days and 35 miles through enveloping CCF units which had cut the mountain MSR in five places.

Throughout the CCF January offensive, EUSAK G–2 officers anxiously sought every scrap of evidence as to the whereabouts of the five CCF armies identified in northeast Korea as late as 10 December. Even if reduced by casualties, they would have been a formidable and perhaps even decisive reinforcement to the seven

CCF armies engaged. But they did not appear. Nor were they encountered again until the middle of March 1951, when similarly numbered units filled with replacements reached the front.

The full story may never be known, since the Chinese Reds are not fond of acknowledging their disasters. But it is a likely conjecture that the fatal combination of Marine firepower and General Winter created terrible havoc among Communists who had been so certain of an immediate victory that they were neither armed, clothed, nor supplied for a 13-day campaign in subzero weather.

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Chapter 3. The Pohang Guerrilla Hunt

ON 15 JANUARY 1951 a reinforced regiment of the U.S. 25th Infantry Division drove northward from Line D (Map 4) to a point about half a mile from Suwon in the I Corps sector. VMF-212, flying from the CVE *Bataan,* supported the movement along with land-based Air Force planes. No CCF troops were encountered during a two-day thrust dignified with the name Operation WOLFHOUND. Its only importance lay in its distinction as the first Eighth Army counter-stroke in reply to the enemy's January offensive. Other EUSAK advances were soon to follow, each more ambitious than the last and bearing a more bristling code name.

General Ridgway proposed by this means to exert continual and increasing pressure on an enemy paying for victory with extended supply lines. Meanwhile, he hoped to build up the morale of his own troops without asking too much of them at first.

In less than seven weeks, from 1 December 1950 to 15 January 1951, the Eighth Army had been pushed back an average distance of 200 miles. Never before in the Nation's history had an American army given up so much ground and equipment in so short a time, and damage to morale was inevitable. Yet the commanding general was confident that a cure would be effected by better combat leadership and discipline. He planned to emphasize the need for these remedies until he restored the Eighth Army to tactical health.

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Chapter 3. The Pohang Guerrilla Hunt
The New Marine Zone of Operations

Ridgway agreed with Marine generals that the 1st Marine Division had come out of its 13-day battle in the Chosin Reservoir area with its fighting spirit undulled. Minor respiratory ills seemed to be the only consequences felt by the survivors. “A hacking cough,” recalled a Marine staff officer long afterwards, “was the symbol of the Bean Patch.”[1]

Such ills soon responded to rest and medical care, and it was a physically fit division that made the move to the new zone of operations. About one man out of three in the infantry and artillery battalions was a newcomer to Korea. These replacements were shaping up nicely, and the new operation promised to be ideal combat training.

The move took nearly a week. While the other troops proceeded by motor, LSTs 898 and 914 sailed with elements of the Tank, Ordnance, Engineer, and Service Battalions. The Division CP opened at Sinhung (Map 5), about 5 miles southeast of Pohang, on 16 January. By the following day all designated motor and water lifts were completed.

Click here to view map

On the 18th the Marines were assigned a three-fold mission by Division OpnO 3-51: (1) the protection of the Pohang-Kyongju-Andong MSR (main supply route); (2) the securing of Andong and the two airstrips in the vicinity; and (3) the prevention of hostile penetrations in force to the south of the Andong-Yongdok road. The following zones of patrol responsibility were assigned to Marine units:

Zone A—RCT-1: an area about 10 miles east and west of the Uisong-Andong road, including both Uisong and Andong.

Zone B—RCT-5: an area some 15 to 20 miles wide astride the Kyongju-Yongchon-Uisong road, including Kyongju but excluding Uisong.

Zone C—RCT-7: an area 20 to 25 miles wide from east to west and extending north from the latitude of Pohang to the Andong-Yongdok road.

Zone D—11th Marines: a strip seven miles wide along the coast astride the road from Pohang to a point about 10 miles north of Yongdok.

Zone E—1st Tank Battalion: the area bounded by the road from Pohang to Kyongju and thence to the east coast at a point about 19 miles southeast of Pohang.

Keeping open the 75-mile stretch of MSR from Pohang to Andong was considered the principal mission of the Division. Strong points were set up at Pohang, Yongchon, Uisong, and Andong.

Captured documents indicated that enemy forces in unknown numbers had already infiltrated through gaps in the eastern sectors of the Eighth Army’s Line D. Guerrilla activity was reported as far west as Tanyang, on the MSR of IX Corps, and as far south as Taejon, threatening the supply line of I Corps. Train ambushes occurred on 13 January in the Namchang area and to the south of Wonju. Other attacks took place on the rail line about 60 miles north of Taegu. In expectation of further attempts, trains were provided with a sand-bagged car, pushed ahead of the engine, to absorb the shock of land-mine explosions. Another car was occupied by guards who had the duty of dealing with direct guerrilla attacks.[2]

The tactical problem of the Marines was quite simple—on paper. About 1,600 square miles, most of them standing on end in mountainous terrain, were included in the new zone of operations. The experience of World War II had demonstrated how effective guerrilla warfare could be as an adjunct to large-scale military

operations. Officers of the 1st Marine Division had no illusions about their mission, therefore, when they received unconfirmed reports of NKPA guerrilla infiltrations behind the EUSAK lines toward Andong.

All uncertainty vanished on 18 January, shortly after the issuing of OpnO 3-51, when a patrol of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, flushed out an undetermined number of North Korean troops east of Andong. They took to their heels so earnestly that the Marines barely managed to catch three of them after a long chase.

The prisoners identified their unit as the 27th Infantry of the NKPA 10th Infantry Division. The other two regiments, the 25th and 29th, were also in the general area. All three were supported more in theory than fact by artillery, mortar, medical, and engineer units organic to the division. In reality, however, the estimated total of 6,000 troops consisted largely of infantry. A few mortars, according to the prisoners, were the largest weapons.

Following the Inchon-Seoul operation, the remnants of the badly mauled NKPA 10th Infantry Division had straggled back across the 38th Parallel to the Hwachon area. There they were reorganized by the Chinese for guerrilla operations and placed under the command of NKPA Major General Lee Ban Nam.[3]

Late in December the rebuilt division, still short of arms and equipment, departed Hwachon with a mission of infiltrating through the UN lines to cut communications and harass rear installations of the Andong-Taegu area. Shots were exchanged with United Nations troops near Wonju, but General Lee Ban Nam and his troops contrived to slip to the east through the mountains. Stealthily moving southward, marching by night and hiding by day, they were soon in a position to heckle the rear of the X Corps sector. This advantage did not last long. Before they could strike a blow, the element of surprise was lost along with the three prisoners taken by the Marines.

As the Marine units moved into their assigned zones, General Ridgway flew to Pohang to confer with General Smith. Not only did he express confidence that the Marines would soon have the situation well under control; he also suggested the possibility of small amphibious landings along the east coast. The purpose was to block a possible southward advance of the three CCF armies that had operated in Northeast Korea during the Chosin Reservoir campaign.[4]

The east coast littoral was considered the most likely route of approach. Smith was of the opinion, however, that an amphibious landing should be made in strength, if at all. And there the matter rested.[5]

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Chapter 3. The Pohang Guerrilla Hunt
1st MAW Moves to Bofu

During the operations of the first few days the Marine ground forces had to depend for air support on FEAF planes sent by JOC. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing had its hands full at this time with housekeeping activities. Work began at Bofu (Map 3) on 20 January as a Seabee detachment arrived with its graders and bulldozers. They were assisted by details of Marines from MAG–33.[6]

The job went ahead with typical Seabee efficiency. While specialists installed plumbing for the galleys and barracks, other crews graded taxiways, laid pierced steel planking, and poured concrete to patch up runways, parking ramps, and warmup aprons.

MAG-12 kept busy at the task of moving men and equipment from Itami and other Japanese fields to Korea. Aircraft of VMR-152, commanded by Colonel Deane C. Roberts, provided transportation. Since safety measures precluded the use of the K-1 runway during construction activity, K-9 substituted temporarily. As fast as the planes unloaded, passengers and gear were trucked 15 miles through Pusan to K-1.

It was a transition period in more ways than one for the 1st MAW. Following are the changes of commanders that took place during the last 2 weeks of January:

--Colonel Radford C. West, relieved by Lieutenant Colonel Paul J. Fontana as commanding officer of MAG-33;

--Lieutenant Colonel Frank J. Cole, joined MAG-33 staff as personnel officer after being relieved of VMF-312 command by Major Donald P. Frame;

--Major Arnold A. Lund of VMF-323, relieved by Major Stanley S. Nicolay and assigned to General Harris' staff as assistant operations officer;

--Major William M. Lundin, relieved of VMF-214 command by Major James A. Feeney, Jr., and transferred to the command of Service and Maintenance Squadron-33 (SMS-33).

This left only Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Wyczawski of VMF-212 and Lieutenant Colonel Max J. Volcansek, Jr., of VMF (N)-542 still in command of the tactical squadrons they brought to Korea; and the latter was to be relieved by Lieutenant Colonel James R. Anderson in February.

The only combat operations of the 1st MAW during the week of housekeeping from 16 to 23 January were carried out by VMF-212 from the deck of the *Bataan*.[7] This CVL carrier alternated with the British light fleet carrier HMS *Theseus* on the Korean west coast blockade. Their activities were coordinated by Vice Admiral Andrewes, RN, commanding the group blockading the Korean west coast.

VMF-212 sent out a morning and afternoon reconnaissance flight each day up the coastline as far as the 39th parallel. On the trip north the pilots scanned the coastal waters for small enemy shipping which might indicate reinforcement from Chinese ports on the Yellow Sea. The return trip along the highways and railroads of the littoral was made to detect signs of any new enemy activity on land. Four aircraft flew each of the two coastal sweeps; eight maintained a defensive patrol over the carrier itself; and any remaining flights were under control of JOC, with FEAF Mosquitoes providing liaison between fighter-bombers and ground forces.

To insure sea room beyond the islands and mudbanks of the west coast, the *Bataan* had to stay outside the 100-fathom curve. This meant that the pilots must fly across 65 to 80 miles of open sea in order to reach the coast. The winter weather varied from unbelievable to unbearable, and bulky, uncomfortable survival suits were a necessity. They could be a death trap, however, if a leak developed or if they were not adjusted tightly at the throat and wrists. Captain Alfred H. Agan, for instance, was shot down southeast of Inchon and had to choose

between landing in enemy territory and ditching in the sea. He tried for a small island offshore but crash-landed into the surf. Before a helicopter from the *Bataan* could fly 65 miles to the rescue, he died from the shock of icy water which partially filled his survival suit.

The pilots of VMF-212 reported an increase in enemy antiaircraft fire, particularly in CCF rear areas. They were amazed to find troops dug in along the coast as far back as 50 or 60 miles from the battle lines. These precautions were the enemy's tribute to Marine capabilities for amphibious warfare. The fear of another Inchon caused the Chinese to immobilize thousands of men on both coasts to guard against another such decisive landing far behind the front.

On the squadron's third day of sea operations, three planes were hit by rifle and machine gun fire on reconnaissance missions. One of them, flown by Captain Russell G. Patterson, Jr., was shot down behind the enemy lines but a FEAF helicopter rescued the pilot. First Lieutenant Alfred J. Ward was not so fortunate. His plane was riddled the following day by enemy fire and he crashed to his death in the midst of CCF soldiers.

Not until 22 January did the reconditioning of Bofu reach such an advanced stage that Lieutenant Colonel Fontana could set up his MAG-33 command post. VMF-312 moved in the next day and the first combat missions were launched to the vicinity of Seoul, 300 miles away. On the 24th General Harris established his headquarters. A few hours later VMF-214 and VMF-323 arrived from Itami, where they had put in an idle week, with no place to go, after their carrier duty. On the 26th, when they flew their first missions as land-based squadrons, MAG-33 was back in business and Bofu was a going concern.

No such claim could have been made for MAG-12 and K-1. Although Colonel Boeker C. Batterton set up his command post on 27 January 1951, two more weeks were to pass before the K-1 runway was fit for the flights to tactical aircraft. Meanwhile, the MAG-12 squadrons had to make out as best they could at K-9.

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Marine Rice Paddy Patrols

Operations of the first few days demonstrated to 1st Marine Division ground forces that locating the enemy was more of a problem than defeating him. Obviously, the NKPA 10th Division had few if any of the advantages which make for effective guerrilla warfare. Far from receiving any voluntary support from the inhabitants, the Korean Reds had their own movements promptly reported to the Marines. Retaliations on civilians, such as burning mountain villages, were not calculated to improve relations. Nor did the enemy possess any of the other requisites for successful operations in an opponent's rear—a base, a source of supply, good communications, and a reliable intelligence system.

If it came to a fight, there could be little doubt about the outcome. But Marine staff officers must have been reminded of the old recipe for rabbit pie which begins, "First, catch your rabbit."

Such a situation called for systematic patrolling in all Marine zones of action. Secondary roads and mountain trails were covered by "rice paddy patrols." Numbering from four men to a squad, these groups ranged far and wide on foot in an area that was more often vertical than horizontal. On a single day the 5th Marines alone had 29 of these rice paddy patrols in action.[8] No better training for replacements could have been devised. Sometimes the men were on their own for several days, depending for supplies on helicopter drops. And while casualties were light, there was just enough danger from sniping and potential ambushes to keep the replacements on the alert.

Roads fit for vehicles—especially the 75-mile stretch of MSR from Pohang to Andong—were under the constant surveillance of motorized patrols, each supported by at least one tank or 105mm howitzer. The farthest distance was 15 miles between the main Marine strong points at Pohang, Yongchon, Uisong, and Andong.[9]

Close air support was seldom needed against such an elusive enemy as the Marines faced. General Craig put in a request, however, for an air squadron to be based at Pohang or Pusan (Map 2). The two Marine all-weather squadrons, VMF(N)-513 and VMF(N)–542, were General Harris' first and second choices. They had been flying under Air Force (314th Air Division) control in the defense of Japan, a mission of dull routine and waiting for something to break the monotony of patrolling.

The twin-engined F7F–3N Tigercats of VMF(N)–542 were well equipped with electronics equipment for night interceptor work. VMF(N)–513 flew F4U–5Ns, the night-fighter modification of the latest Corsair.[10]

General Harris' plan for VMF(N)–542 to take over the duties of VMF(N)–513 at Itazuke had the approval of General Partridge. This made it possible to send the latter squadron to K-9 at Pusan to replace the VMF-311 jets, which in turn left for Itami to await corrections of engineering defects.

VMF(N)–513 flew its first combat missions from K–9 on 22 January. These consisted of routine armed reconnaissance flights and an occasional deep support mission for the Eighth Army. Not until the 25th did the squadron respond to a request from Marine ground forces. And out of 49 combat missions (110 sorties) during the remaining 6 days of the month, only three (10 sorties) were in support of the 1st Marine Division.

For routine operations the Marine ground forces found the support of VMO–6 sufficient. The nimble little OY observation planes were ideal for seeking out an enemy who had to be caught before he could be fought. And the helicopters did their part by dropping supplies, evacuating casualties, and laying wire.

Meanwhile, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing strengthened its administrative ties with the 1st Marine Division. Although the two organizations had no common operational commander other than General MacArthur, they maintained a close liaison. Harris attached two TBM Avengers to VMO–6 for use as radio relays when

ground-to-ground communications failed in the mountainous Pohang-Andong area. He also set up daily courier flights, at General Smith's request, to provide fast administrative liaison between widely dispersed Marine air and ground units in Korea and Japan.

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Operations THUNDERBOLT and ROUNDUP

On 25 January two corps of the Eighth Army jumped off in Operation THUNDERBOLT. Advancing side by side, I Corps and IX Corps had orders to launch limited objective attacks and regain solid contact with the enemy, who was obviously preparing for a new offensive.

The EUSAK commander moved his CP from Taegu to Chonan (Map 1), the I Corps headquarters, in order to maintain personal control of the operation. He requested the Navy to step up offshore patrolling on the west coast as left-flank protection. Emphasis was also placed on aerial reconnaissance, both visual and photographic, as well as deep support directed by the Mosquitoes.

Even VMF(N)–542 at Itazuke had orders to conduct long flights to Seoul and maintain continuous patrols to report any attempt of the enemy to retire across the frozen Han River. The F7F-3N pilots shot up camp areas, convoys, and other lucrative targets but found no indications of large-scale crossings over the ice.[11] So varied were the missions of the squadron that it came as no surprise to be assigned to naval gunfire spotting for the USS *St. Paul* and the other British and American cruisers shelling Inchon.

All Marine tactical squadrons were in action on 28 January for the first time since December. Nearly two-thirds of the flights from Bofu and K-9 were diverted from armed reconnaissance to troop support. A typical operation was carried out by four VMF-312 planes on their second day of duty at Bofu. After reporting to MELLOW they were directed to Mosquito Cobalt, which had received a message that enemy troops were hiding in a village just north of Suwon, occupied that day by the U.S. 35th Infantry. Under the Mosquito's direction they bombed, strafed, and napalmed some 40 buildings containing CCF soldiers.[12]

The fall of Suwon opened the way to Inchon and Seoul as Chinese resistance stiffened. Eighth Army progress was anything but reckless, but Ridgway had served notice on the enemy that he held the initiative and intended to keep it. Operation ROUNDUP followed on the heels of THUNDERBOLT. Merely a change in name was involved, for the advance continued at the same prudent pace without any important amendments to the original mission.

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Action in the Pohang-Andong Zone

The Marines in the Pohang-Andong zone had their first brush with the elusive enemy on 22 January. A patrol of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, flushed out a guerrilla force near Mukkye-dong, several miles southeast of Andong (Map 5). Captain Robert P. Wray's Charlie Company deployed for action at sunset and shots were exchanged. The Marines had no casualties and the enemy could not have suffered many losses before he disappeared into the winter dusk.

Even at this early date the Korean Reds seemed to have lost confidence in their guerrilla operations. In a message dated 23 January taken from a prisoner, the commanding general of the II NKPA Corps directed General Lee Ban Nam to withdraw if possible. It read as follows:

"Get all of your troops out of the enemy encirclement and withdraw to north of Pyongchang without delay. Liaison team sent with radio. If you will inform us of your escape route we will assist by clearing your advance. If you cannot escape, stay in the rear of enemy as guerrillas."[13]

By the 24th an enemy drift southeast from the zones of the 1st and 5th Marines to 7th Marines territory was apparent. The 1/7 command post and Company A received scattered mortar fire late that afternoon. Action picked up the next morning when dawn brought an attack by an estimated 100 guerrillas on the regimental command post. After a brisk 90-minute fire fight the Korean Reds withdrew to the east, leaving seven dead behind and taking with them an unknown number of wounded.

Later that morning the 7th Marines teamed up with the National Police against the Chiso-dong area. Nine bodies were counted as the 3d battalion seized its objective, but 1/7 was slowed by an entrenched enemy who offered an unyielding defense. The Marine battalion ground to a halt just one mile short of Chiso-dong and dug in for the night as artillery continued to pound the enemy. The air strikes on the 25th were flown by VMF(N)-513 and VMF-323, both based at K-9, but the pilots could not contact the FAC and had to make dummy runs over the enemy.

Marine planes and artillery cleared the way on 26 January as 1/7 advanced against scattered opposition. Nearly 400 guerrillas put up a ragged and futile resistance, but by 1530 Marine firepower prevailed and Chiso-dong was taken. The 2d Battalion had meanwhile occupied Hapton-ni, eight miles southeast of Topyong-dong (Map 5). A light enemy counterattack was repulsed with ease.[14] Altogether, enemy casualties for the day amounted to 161 KIA or POW.

The VMF-323 flight led by Captain Don H. Fisher and Captain Floyd K. Fulton's VMF(N)-513 flight merit recognition as the first successful instance of Marine air-ground cooperation since the Chosin Reservoir campaign.

While the 7th Marines served eviction notices on the enemy in its area, action elsewhere was light. Task Force Puller[15] hastened on the 26th to Chongja-dong, seven miles northeast of Uisong, to investigate a police report that 300 enemy had seized the town. A Marine attack, following an artillery preparation, was planned for 1500. Captain Thomas J. Bohannon led Able Company in but discovered that the shells had fallen on empty huts. [16]

During the next few days the rice paddy patrols continued to range over the countryside, searching out the enemy. Combat units were sent to areas where the G-2 red arrows indicated an NKPA build-up. On the morning of the 29th, the 5th Marines tried to organize an attack on a large enemy force reported near Chachon-dong, 12 miles west of Topyong-dong. Captain Jack R. Jones' Charlie Company, moving out at night in small

foot patrols to maintain secrecy, scoured the area in an attempt to pin down the enemy.

Marine intelligence reports had warned of a dawn raid on the town for the purpose of plundering food from the inhabitants and arms from the Korean police station. First Lieutenant Richard J. Schening, executive officer, led a scouting force ahead of the main body to reconnoiter the area. He urged that a trap be set for the enemy, and the company commander has left a description of one of the most elaborate ambushes ever attempted by the Marines during the war:

"Well before daylight, a cordon was stealthily braided around Chachon-dong and we settled down to await the raiders. A later daylight inspection of the deployment showed that the men had done a splendid job of locating themselves so as to avoid detection. They were concealed under porches, beneath the brambles, and in the heaviest foliage and trees. But no guerrilla attack materialized, probably due to a 'grapevine' warning of our movement and intent. . . . During the remaining days in the village we conducted extensive patrolling in an attempt to catch at least one guerrilla for our effort. Patrols were kept small to maintain secrecy. We even dressed Marines in clothing worn by the 'locals' and sent them out in the hills with wood-gathering details. Larger patrols up to a platoon in size were sent on combat missions at night. One thing was certain: it was easier to talk about capturing guerrillas than it was to lay a hand on them."[17]

The elusiveness of the enemy could not always be credited to effective guerrilla tactics. Often it was due to distaste for combat. As evidence of low NKPA morale, Major Yu Dung Nam, a battalion commander, was condemned to death and shot late in January because he planned to surrender, according to POW testimony. Rations were at a bare subsistence level and typhus had claimed many victims.[18]

Unrelenting Marine pressure throughout the first week of February wore the guerrillas down until groups larger than 50 men were seldom encountered. On the 3d an NKPA second lieutenant surrendered voluntarily to a RCT-7 patrol and brought three of his men with him. NKPA morale had sunk so low, he divulged, that all ranks were striving only for survival. The division commander, Major General Lee Ban Nam, had apparently become a victim of acute melancholia. He spent nearly all his time, according to the prisoner, in the solitude of foxholes dug into the slopes of hills for added protection. There he brooded constantly over his predicament, but without arriving at any better solution than alternate hiding and flight.[19]

Certainly the military situation didn't offer much to gladden this Hamlet of the rice paddies, and the Marines continued to give him fresh causes for pessimism. His footsore remnants eluded RCT-5 only to stumble into the zone of RCT-1, northeast of Uisong. Neither rest nor sanctuary awaited them, for the 1st and 2d battalions penetrated into the mountains near Sangyong to surprise and rout a force estimated at 400 men.[20]

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KMC Regiment Joins 1st Marine Division

Late in January the 1st KMC Regiment got into the fight after being attached once more to the 1st Marine Division by a EUSAK dispatch of the 21st. Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Harrison headed a new group of Division liaison and advisory officers as the four KMC battalions moved out from Chinhae by LST and truck convoy to the Pohang area. Division OpnO 4-51 (26 January) assigned the regiment Sector F, astride the Yongdok-Andong road, which had been carved out of Sectors C and D, held by the 7th and 11th Marines respectively. The KMCs were ordered to conduct daily patrolling from positions near Yongdok, Chaegok-tong, and Chinandong and prevent enemy concentrations in their sector.[21]

Although the ROK Army and Eighth Army had the responsibility for supplying the KMCs, it proved necessary for the 1st Marine Division to cope with some of the gaps in equipment and rations. Contrary to a prevalent Western belief, Koreans did not subsist on a diet of rice alone. They were accustomed to having “side dishes” with their rice, such as eggs, meat, fish, or vegetables. Colonel Kim Sung Eun, the regimental commander, had an allotment of money for these purchases, but the sum was insufficient to meet inflation prices even if there had been enough food left in a district eaten bare. As a consequence, the KMCs had to get along on a monotonous and vitamin-poor diet until the ROK Army belatedly came to the rescue with issues of food for side dishes.

On 29 January the KMC Regiment opened its CP at Yongdok. Regimental OpnO 1 of that date divided Sector F into three parts, assigning the western, central, and eastern subsectors to the 3d, 1st, and 2d Battalions respectively. The 5th Battalion was attached to the 1st Marines and assigned to patrolling operations in the Andong area.[22]

The first few days of February saw a brief flurry of activity before NKPA guerrilla resistance breathed its last gasps. Reports that the remnants of the NKPA 25th and 27th Regiments were in flight toward the zone of the 5th Marines led to a concentration for a knockout blow, but the enemy stole away to the north in the vicinity of Topyong-dong. There he discovered that he had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 1st Marines closed in from one side while the 1st and 3d Battalions of the KMC Regiment blocked roads in the vicinity of Samgo-ri and Paekcha-dong. Only a wild flight in small groups saved the guerrillas from annihilation.

The nearest approach to effective NKPA resistance was encountered on 5 February after the 1st and 2d KMC Battalions had established blocking positions in zone at the request of the 7th Marines, which was driving the enemy northward. A platoon-size patrol of the 2d KMC Battalion came up against Korean Reds dug in with 81mm mortars and heavy and light machine guns a few miles southwest of Yongdok. The KMCs were scattered with losses of 1 KIA, 8 WIA, and 24 MIA in addition to all arms and equipment, though the missing men returned later.

It was the single NKPA success of the entire campaign.

An assault was launched the following morning on this enemy stronghold by a composite KMC battalion, supported by four VMF(N)-513 aircraft which attacked with rockets and bombs. The largest combat of the guerrilla hunt appeared to be in the making, but again the enemy vanished after putting up an ineffectual resistance with small arms and mortars.[23]

An unusual air tactic was tested on 4 February in the 7th Marines zone when an interpreter in an R4D plane hailed the guerrillas by loud speaker in their own language with a demand that they surrender or suffer the consequences. Marine fighter-bombers were on station to back the threat, and about 150 supposed NKPA soldiers

came in with uplifted hands while VMF-323 planes delivered the consequences to the holdouts in the form of bombs, rockets, and napalm. Unfortunately, it developed that practically all of the prisoners were terrified civilians seeking an escape from the slave labor imposed upon them by the guerrillas.[24]

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10th NKPA Division Scattered

Reports of enemy activity were received daily from Korean civilians and police, and seldom was a smaller number than "about two thousand" mentioned. In reality, Marine patrols had difficulty in tracking down as many as ten of the skulking, half-starved fugitives split up into small bands hiding in the hills. On 5 February the situation was summed up by General Smith in reply to a EUSAK request for an estimate of the time required to complete the Marine mission:

"The original 10th NKPA Div forces in the 1st Marine Division area have been dispersed into many groups, reduced to an effective strength of 40 per cent, and are no longer capable of a major effort while dispersed. . . . It is considered that the situation in the Division area is sufficiently in hand to permit the withdrawal of the Division and the assignment of another mission at any time a new force to be assigned the responsibility for the area assumes such responsibility and the 1st Marine Division can be reassembled."[25]

Patrolling continued as usual in all Marine regimental zones during the second week in February. Some units, such as the 11th Marines and the Division Reconnaissance Company, had made few enemy contacts throughout the operation. But at least the cannoneers had found good pheasant hunting and enjoyed a change in the bill of fare.

It was just as well that the tactical situation seldom made it necessary to call for air support at this stage, since the 1st MAW was once again in the throes of moves which will be described in the following chapter. Bofu had been only a temporary base for MAG-33 squadrons which were making another transfer to K-9 while MAG-12 completed its shift to K-1.

VMO-6 took care of the reduced air requirements of the Division adequately. Another helicopter "first" was scored when First Lieutenant John L. Scott received credit for the first night casualty evacuation by a HTL (Bell), which then had no instruments for night flying. For a harrowing moment, however, it would be hard to beat the experience of Captain Clarence W. Parkins and Corpsman R. E. Krisky. While they were flying a casualty to the hospital ship *Consolation*, the patient became wildly delirious. It took the combined efforts of pilot and corpsman to subdue him and make a safe landing.[26]

Any excitement would have been welcomed by the troops in general. For the area was as tranquil as if the guerrillas had never troubled its snowbound heights. Recently arrived Marines might have been pardoned for concluding that the NKPA 10th Division and its gloomy commander were but creatures of the imagination—phantoms to be compared to the crew of the *Flying Dutchman*, that legendary ship condemned to sail on endlessly until the Day of Judgment. The NKPA 10th Division also seemed doomed to perpetual flight as its ghostly survivors made their way from crag to crag of the remote ridgelines.

Thanks to the rice paddy patrols, the replacements were ready for combat and the Division was organizing a rotation draft for return to the States. Five officers and 600 men had already been selected on a basis of combat time, wounds received, and length of service. Major General Edward A. Craig, who commanded the first Marines to land in Korea, was given a farewell dinner and congratulated on his second star. Two new brigadier generals were named, with Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller relieving Craig as ADC and Gregon A. Williams accompanying him on the voyage back to the States. Captain Eugene R. "Bud" Hering, (MC) USN, was also returning with the gratitude of all Marines for his care of casualties in the "frozen Chosin" campaign.[27]

All Marine missions in the guerrilla hunt had been successfully accomplished, so that the Division could be relieved at any time by the 2d ROK Division. There were 120 counted enemy dead and 184 prisoners. Only

estimates are available for the wounded, but there is no doubt that the total NKPA casualties were crippling. At any rate, the NKPA 10th Division was destroyed as a fighting force without accomplishing any of its objectives. Marine casualties from 18 January to 15 February were 19 KIA, 7 DOW, 10 MIA, 148 WIA, and 1,751 of a nonbattle classification, largely frostbite cases soon restored to duty.[28]

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New Mission for the Marines

On 11 February, General Smith flew to Taegu to discuss the next Marine mission with General Ridgway. The EUSAK commander spoke favorably of employing the 1st Marine Division to relieve the 24th Infantry Division in the critical Han River corridor, where recent UN advances had been made. He also recognized the advantages of committing the Marines to the east coast, so that they could be held in readiness for an amphibious operation. A third possibility was the Yoju corridor of the IX Corps zone (Map 1). As “the most powerful division in Korea,” said Ridgway, “the Marines would be astride what he considered the logical route for an expected enemy counterthrust.”[29]

No decision was reached that day. At midnight the CCF attack materialized; and the central front was the area of decision, as Ridgway had predicted.

Naturally, the next mission for the Marines had to be reconsidered in the light of this development. On 12 February EUSAK warning orders alerted the 1st Marine Division to be prepared to move to Chungju, in the rear area of the IX Corps front where the heaviest CCF attacks were taking place. The Division was further directed to make an immediate reconnaissance of the Chungju area while the 1st KMC Regiment prepared for a move to Samchok on the east coast and attachment to the ROK Capitol Division. The following day brought orders from the Eighth Army to initiate these movements on 15 February 1951.[30] Thus the Pohang-Andong guerrilla hunt came to an end with the Marines on their way to new employment in the battle line of the Eighth Army.

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Chapter 4. Operation Killer

THE CCF COUNTERATTACK which began northeast of Wonju on 11 February 1951 came in reaction to the unremitting pressure exerted during the previous month by the Eighth Army. Twice beaten during a recent six-week period and pushed back some 200 miles, EUSAK had shown amazing powers of recuperation.

"It is hard for me to put into words the magnificent competence, the fierce, combative, aggressive spirit of that force once it picked itself off the ground and waded back into the fight," commented General Ridgway in retrospect.[1]

During Operations THUNDERBOLT and ROUNDUP he had kept a tight rein on the Eighth Army by insisting on vigorous artillery preparations and close lateral contacts between units. On 10 February, however, caution was relaxed as CCF resistance suddenly collapsed west and south of Seoul. That day the U.S. 24th Infantry Division forged ahead 11,000 yards to occupy the port of Inchon and Kimpo Airfield, both so wrecked that weeks of repair would be necessary to make them operational. Seoul was within sight of the U.S. forces on the left bank of the Han when an aroused enemy struck back on the subzero night of the 11th.

Click here to view map

Apparently the CCF drive on the central front had as its objective the relieving of UN pressure on the Seoul area to the west. The CCF 40th and 66th Armies and NKPA V Corps struck in the IX Corps sector north of Hoengsong (Map 6). Two ROK divisions being dislodged by the initial blows, their retreat made necessary the withdrawal of other IX Corps units. As a consequence, Hoengsong had to be abandoned on 12 February to the Communists hammering out a salient northeast of Wonju.[2]

The UN forces were not bound by any unrealistic concept of holding ground to the last ditch. General Ridgway deemed it more important to inflict maximum punishment on the enemy at a minimum cost in casualties. While fighting on the defensive, he had already made up his mind to launch an offensive of his own to catch the Chinese off balance the moment their counterattack ground to a halt. His new limited objective operation emphasized the destruction of the enemy's fighting strength as the major objective rather than the acquisition of territory. A high attrition rate would preclude the Communists' capacity to hold and enable EUSAK commander to recover the critical hill mass north of Wonju. It was for this purpose, he informed Major General Bryant E. Moore, IX Corps commanding general, that the 1st Marine Division would be employed.

"The force which holds Wonju," he said, "has the situation in hand."[3]

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Chapter 4. Operation Killer
The Move to the Chungju Area

The 1st Marine Division had instructions to report its order of march to the Eighth Army, and to keep the Taegu headquarters informed of progress. Meanwhile, the Marines were to remain under EUSAK operational control but would pass to IX Corps control at a date and hour to be announced.

General Puller flew to Chungju with a reconnaissance party on 13 February to look over the road and select CP sites. On the following morning Major Walter Gall's Division Reconnaissance Company arrived at Chungju for patrol duty, and movement by rail and road commenced on the 15th in accordance with Division OpnO 5-51, issued the day before.

The 1st Marines, with the 7th Motor Transport Battalion attached, led the motor march, and the 5th and 7th Marines followed in that order. Tracked vehicles were outloaded by rail from Andong and Pohang in a total of 67 flat cars. Owing to a shortage of cars, Company B and H&S Company of the 1st Tank Battalion made the move of 120 miles by road. These tankers claimed the all-time Marine Corps distance record for armor.[4]

While the Marine move was in progress, the CCF counterattack went on full blast along the central front. Driving southeast from the IX Corps area to the X Corps front, the Chinese cut off and surrounded the 23d Infantry of the 2d Infantry Division, USA. Colonel Paul Freemen and his men put up a fight that is one of the classics of the war. Supported by Marine and Air Force planes, they gave more fire than they received and held out until rescued by a tank column.[5]

February was also a transition period for Marine fighter squadrons which had been more or less on the move since the middle of January. Even before the transfer to Bofu, it had been decided that K–3, four miles south of Pohang, was to be the ultimate home of MAG–33. While awaiting completion of this field, VMFs–214, –312, and –323 would find temporary lodging at K–1, near Pusan, recently assigned to MAG–12.[6]

On 6 February, Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman, assistant commanding general of the 1st MAW, radioed General Harris that K–1 would be ready to receive a squadron a day, starting on the 8th. Harris ordered Squadrons 323, 214, and 312 to make their moves on 8, 9, and 10 February respectively. Transport aircraft were to lift ground crews, extra pilots, and light equipment directly to K–1. Pilots had orders to fly combat missions en route.

By the 13th most of the vehicles, heavy equipment, and general supplies had been loaded on a train for Kobe, there to be transshipped on LSTs to Pohang. That same day Lieutenant Colonel Fontana set up his MAG–33 command post at K–3 and directed the three fighter squadrons to report from K–1.

The new field occupied a bench overlooking a wide, sandy beach. Built originally by the Japanese, the strip had 5,200 feet of concrete runway. The Air Force had extended it to 5,700 feet with pierced steel planking. This addition brought the end of the runway to the brink of a 60-foot drop-off—a hazard in the event of a "hot" landing to the northwest or too low an approach from the southeast.

Next to arrive at K–3 were the F9F–2Bs of VMF–311. Four weeks of adjustments at Itami had restored the jets to operative condition. An advance echelon went ahead to establish squadron living and operating areas, and the pilots ferried the 19 aircraft. Ground crews and equipment followed on transport planes.

Plans were made for VMF(N)–513 to move from Itami to K–3 before the end of the month. The other all-weather squadron, VMF(N)–542, now commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James R. Anderson, completed the transfer from Itami and Itazuke to K–1.

This field was also the destination of the photo pilots of Headquarters Squadron, 1st MAW, who flew their F7F–3P and F4U–5P fighters from Itami. Major Donald S. Bush commanded a unit, formerly a squadron,

which had been one of the first aviation organizations to see action in Korea. Among its accomplishments were the preliminary beach studies for the Inchon and Wonsan landings.

With the completion of the moves of February 1951, the 1st MAW was again based on Korean soil. Fifteen types of Marine aircraft were being flown. For the heavy hauling, the R4D and R5D transports shifted troops and supplies. Included among the fighters were F9F Panthers, F4U Corsairs, and two models of F7F Tigercats–a stripped-down photo plane, and a radar-armed night fighter. Stinson OY Grasshoppers, TBM Avengers, and Beechcraft SNBs rounded out the list of conventional planes. Three types of rotary-wing aircraft were represented: the Sikorsky HO3S-1, and two models of the Bell HTL.[7]

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Chapter 4. Operation Killer
Marine Planes in Action

By 15 February the brief CCF counterstroke had spent its force. Hoengsong had fallen to Communists who hammered out a salient on a 20-mile front extending as far southward as the outskirts of Wonju (Map 6). But the enemy's main purpose had failed of accomplishment, for the grip of the Eighth Army on Inchon and Kimpo Airfield was not shaken. Nor did the Chinese gain a breathing spell in their preparations for a third great offensive as a follow–up to the December and January drives.

More by coincidence than design, the Fifth Air Force launched a new system of air tactics a few days after the beginning of the CCF counterstroke. Called "Reconnaissance Plan Fighter," it was based on a division of enemy-held Korea into 22 sections. Squadrons were given the mission of making hourly surveys of the same areas, day after day, until pilots became so familiar with them that any change hinting at CCF activity would be noticed at once.[8]

If these surveys revealed any sign of any enemy concentration, either of men or supplies, JOC scrambled special bombing strikes against them.

Although Marine fliers could readily see the advantages of covering the same ground daily, it made for monotony on reconnaissance missions. Only a highly unusual spectacle would startle a pilot, but First Lieutenant Weldon R. Mitchell blinked when he saw a camel in his gunsights.[9] Shaggy little Mongolian horses were no novelty as ammunition bearers, and after recovering from his first astonishment the VMF–311 pilot cut loose with .50 caliber machine gun slugs. As he suspected, the camel's pack contained ammunition and the animal was all but vaporized in the explosion.

Major Bush's photographic unit had an important part in keeping the enemy under constant surveillance. The Fifth Air Force directed on 16 February that all photo requests were to be screened by the Fifth Air Force's 543d Tactical Support Group at Taegu. Under the tactical coordination of this Group, the Marine unit was to fill all Navy and Marine requests. When not on such missions, it would be fitted into the Fifth Air Force photographic reconnaissance program.[10]

Pinpoint photos of suspected troop areas and such terrain features as defiles, junctions, detours, and bridges were in demand. The fact had to be faced that the enemy was almost unbelievably clever at camouflage and concealment. In one instance it was found that the Chinese had constructed bridge sections which they hid by day and put to use at night.[11] On another occasion they sank a bridge by means of weights so that it remained far enough beneath the surface of the water in the daytime to avoid detection by reconnaissance aircraft.

When the photo planes carried out missions as far north as MIG Alley[12] they flew in pairs. A fighter circled overhead to protect the photo pilot from an enemy air attack while he paid full attention to the task of "shooting" the terrain with his camera.

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Chapter 4. Operation Killer
Planning for the New Operation

Adaptability to changing circumstances had already become perhaps the outstanding quality of the revitalized Eighth Army. No better example could be found than the evolution of Operation KILLER, which completed the cycle from concept to plan and execution in just three days.

On 18 February 1951, General Ridgway learned that the enemy was apparently withdrawing. IX Corps and X Corps units had probed forward that morning without meeting any opposition. Before nightfall the commanding general decided to launch a limited objectives offensive by the entire Eighth Army. He called a planning conference for the 19th and set the 21st as D-Day for the new operation.

The 1st Marine Division found itself detached from X Corps on the 19th and placed under the operational control of General Moore of IX Corps. This was not the first time in Marine Corps history, of course, when "soldiers of the sea" have fought alongside U.S. Army units in conventional land warfare. One of the best-known occasions was in World War I, when two Marine regiments distinguished themselves in France as a brigade of the U.S. 2d Infantry Division.

The Marines had been a part of X Corps in 1950, but always under tactical circumstances which permitted more or less independent operations with the support of organic aircraft. Now the Division was to be closely integrated with the other major IX Corps units, the 24th Infantry Division, the 1st Cavalry Division, the 6th ROK Division, and the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade. Marine calls for air strikes would continue to be made through JOC, as they had been since the Hungnam redeployment.

General Ridgway was on hand for the planning conference held on 19 February in General Moore's CP at Yoju and attended by officers from IX and X Corps. General Smith, Colonel McAlister, and Colonel Bowser represented the 1st Marine Division.

The scheme of maneuver called for the Marines to relieve elements of X Corps and attack in a northeasterly direction from a line of departure north of Wonju (Map 6) through the Wonju basin. The object was to cut off enemy forces which had penetrated south and east of Hoengsong, and to recover control of the roads running eastward by seizing the high ground just south of the town.[13]

In the X Corps zone to the east, on the right flank of the Marines**,** the 7th Infantry Division was to attack to the north along the Yongwol-Pyongchang road. On the other Marine flank would be elements of the 6th ROK Division.

Simultaneous advances were planned for I Corps to the west, where patrols had found evidence that Seoul was lightly held.

Two U.S. Army units were designated at the 19 February conference to support the 1st Marine Division—the 74th Truck Company and the 92d Armored Field Artillery, then en route to the Chungju area.[14] These cannoneers and their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Leon F. Lavoie, USA, were well and favorably known to the Marines, having given effective support during the Chosin Reservoir operations.

First Marine Division OpnO 6–51, issued on 20 February, directed the two assault regiments, the 1st and 5th Marines, to jump off at 0800 on the 21st and seize the first objective, the ridgeline about three and a half miles south of the high ground dominating Hoengsong (Map 6). RCT–1, with Division Recon Company and C/Engineers attached, was to pass through elements of the 2d Infantry Division in zone while RCT–5, with A/Engineers attached, passed through elements of the 187th Airborne Infantry, USA. RCT–7 had been designated the reserve regiment; but since it could not arrive from the Pohang-Andong area in time, a battalion of the 5th Marines was assigned this mission.[15]

The objective area was believed to be defended by the 196th Infantry Division of the 66th CCF Army and unknown elements of the 39th and 40th CCF Armies. Ahead of the Marines and other IX Corps units lay some uninviting terrain. Rocky heights and narrow valleys were laced by swift streams, the largest being the river Som, running from northeast to southwest through a defile cutting across the western part of the Division sector. Bordering this twisting stream was the Wonju-Hoengsong “highway”—a poor dirt road even by Korean standards. Through the right half of the Division zone an even more primitive road, scarcely fit for vehicular traffic, wound northeast from Wonju.[16]

All Eighth Army forces were to be tightly buttoned up and to keep in close physical contact while maintaining integrity of units. Patrol observation and reconnaissance were stressed by the EUSAK commanding general, and even lack of opposition would not justify a unit in advancing ahead of schedule. Again, as in previous operations, real estate was to be secondary to the inflicting of maximum personnel and materiel damage.

On the eve of Operation KILLER, a message from IX Corps emphasized to all units the necessity for making sure “that no hostile force of sufficient strength to jeopardize the safety of your forces has been bypassed. Maintenance of lateral contact between all units is of prime importance.”[17]

Marine ground force and aviation officers alike realized that the forthcoming offensive would be the first real test of the operational control of the 1st MAW by the Fifth Air Force and the Eighth Army. General Smith was uneasy about the outlook. On 13 February 1951, the day he was alerted for the move to Chungju, he had requested in a message to EUSAK that the 1st MAW be assigned to the support of his division. Both Marine ground and air officers, he said, believed that this change would fit into the JOC overall air control system without any disruption.[18] But no approval of General Smith’s proposal had been received before D-Day.

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Chapter 4. Operation Killer
The Jumpoff on 21 February

From the outset the transport and supply situation was a G–4 officer's nightmare. Heavy traffic broke the back of the MSR before the jumpoff, so that mud delayed the 5th Marines in reaching the line of departure (LD).

General Puller, the ADC, telephoned the Division commander for a decision in the event that all elements of the regiment were unable to arrive in time. This question was already under discussion between General Moore and General Smith in the new 1st Marine Division CP, just opened at Wonju. After later reports of troop arrivals reached him, Smith decided with few minutes to spare that he would attack with only the troops able to reach the LD in time—three battalions of the 1st Marines, a battalion of the 5th Marines, two battalions of the 11th Marines, and a company of tanks. Moore then confirmed 1000 as H-hour and notified Puller of the decision.

The last-minute arrival of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, reminded Smith of the occasion in France, 32 years before, when the 5th Marines of World War I had to double-time across the wheat fields in order to attack on schedule at Soissons on 18 July 1918. For at Wonju the lone battalion scrambled out of trucks on the double and advanced without taking time for reorganization.[19]

Snarled traffic conditions were complicated by the arrival of high-ranking officers for the jumpoff. General MacArthur visited the zone of the 187th Airborne RCT, recently attached to X Corps. General Ridgway and General Moore were on hand when the Marines attacked. The EUSAK commander, surveying the scene from a snow-covered embankment, was disturbed to see a Marine corporal stumbling over an untied shoe lace while carrying a heavy radio.

"I hesitated just a moment," commented Ridgway, "knowing that what I wanted to do might be misconstrued as showmanship. Then I slid down the bank on my tail, landed right at his feet, knelt down and tied his shoe. Later, when this incident was reported in the States, there were some who did report it as a theatrical gesture. This was not true. It was purely an impulse to help a fighting soldier, a man in trouble."[20]

The Eighth Army commander was not the only one to see the advantages of tobogganing in terrain consisting of mud on the sunny slope of hills and snow on the shady side. When Captain Jack R. Jones' Charlie Company of 1/5 reached its first steep decline, the Marine leading the 2d Platoon slipped and fell in the snow, sliding about a hundred feet down the embankment. The man behind him profited from his example to make a purposeful slide, as did the rest of First Lieutenant William E. Kerrigan's men.[21]

This was but one of the unwarlike incidents which enlivened the jumpoff of Operation KILLER. Seldom if ever have Marines taken part in an offensive which began so inoffensively, for 21 February was distinguished for lack of enemy resistance in the Marine zone. Only a few rounds of scattered rifle fire were encountered until late afternoon. Then the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, leading the column of attack, had two long-distance fire fights before digging in for the night. Three Marines were slightly wounded and the enemy withdrew with such casualties as he may have suffered.[22]

The word "light" could never have been applied to the resistance put up by the weather and terrain. Lieutenant Colonel Joseph L. Stewart, commanding 3/5, described it as "a mixture of thawing snow, rain, mud, and slush." His men spent the night in foxholes half filled with water. Every one of them was "wet to the bones, including his clothes, parka, weapons, and ammo."[23]

The 1st Marines led the attacking column of battalions on 22 February, with 1/1 in the lead. More long-distance small-arms fire was encountered than on the first day, but again there were no close contacts with a retreating enemy.[24]

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Chapter 4. Operation Killer
Stiffening of Chinese Resistance

Not until the 23d did either Marine regiment run into determined opposition. Then the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 1st Marines, advancing abreast, had a fight while going up against two hills of a ridge just south of the first phase objectives.

So far the Marines had found JOC air support satisfactory in quantity. The statistics show that the Fifth Air Force supported the Eighth Army during the first phase of Operation KILLER (21–24 February, inclusive) with an average of 600 sorties a day.[25] There was no room for complaint until the morning of the 23d, when an air strike the 5th Marines requested the preceding evening for 0800 failed to materialize on time. On this occasion the combination of an intense Marine artillery preparation and light enemy resistance compensated for lack of air support and the hill was taken with ease.

That afternoon it took a brisk fight to evict an enemy in estimated battalion strength from log-covered bunkers on the second hill. This time JOC responded to Marine requests with two effective air strikes. Sixty Chinese dead were counted, and the Marines reported 1 KIA and 21 WIA.[26]

On the whole, however, the 5th Marines encountered only slight resistance. “About all we did was walk—walk—walk!” recalled Captain Franklin B. Mayer, commanding Easy Company of 2/5. “I don’t think I’ve ever been so tired or footsore in my life—exception the retreat from Chosin, but not by much.”[27]

On the 24th the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 5th Marines had little trouble in taking two hills designated as the main Phase 1 objectives. The 1st Marines on the left sent a tank and infantry patrol into Hoengsong after artillery preparation and an air strike. Captain Robert P. Wray, commanding Charlie Company of 1/1 and a platoon of tanks, entered the ruins of the town only to encounter machine gun and mortar fire from the hills to the west.[28]

When the antennae were shot off two tanks, Wray directed their 90mm fire by runner and knocked out the enemy positions. After proceeding further into the town, he was recalled by his battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Donald M. Schmuck, because an aerial observer had reported that Chinese were waiting to ambush the patrol.

An air strike was directed on them while Wray rescued several survivors of “Massacre Valley,” northwest of Hoengsong, where a U.S. Army truck convoy had been ambushed during the recent CCF counterattack. The patrol returned before the ground had completely thawed. Only a few hours later a jeep passing over the same road was blown up by a land mine which killed the driver. This was one of the first object lessons illustrating the danger from enemy mines which were harmless until the midday sun thawed out the ground.

Chinese artillery fire from the hills north of Hoengsong accounted for one Marine KIA and four WIA late that afternoon before counter-battery fire by 2/11 silenced the enemy. This exchange ended the first phase of Operation KILLER at dusk on 24 February with all preliminary objectives seized.[29]

Air support had been rendered, for the most part, by Fifth Air Force planes. This gave rise to grumbling by Marine ground forces, who felt that they had been unnecessarily deprived of their own close air support. The fact was, however, that U.S. Army and British Commonwealth troops also preferred Marine air and were outspoken about it. As a disgruntled Marine ground force officer put it, Marine air was “too good for our own good.”

During the first phase of Operation KILLER most of the sorties by 1st MAW planes were in support of U.S. Army units. On 23 February the Marines flew 101 of the Fifth Air Force total of some 800 sorties for the day.[30] The experience of VMF–312 was fairly typical of the other Marine fighter-bomber squadrons. In the

morning VMF–312 took part in a 16-plane strike behind the CCF lines. That afternoon two special flights of four planes each were scrambled in support of 2d and 7th Infantry Division units of X Corps. The following morning Major Daniel H. Davis, executive officer of the squadron, scrambled with four planes and reported to a FAC attached to the Canadian and Australian battalions of the British Commonwealth Division. These troops were engaged near Chipyong-ni in the hottest fight of the first phase of Operation KILLER. After the FAC marked the CCF strongholds with white phosphorus, the Corsairs came snarling in with napalm, rocket, and strafing runs just ahead of the infantry. The enemy was driven out of positions defended by 20mm antipersonnel fire, but Major Davis paid with his life on his eighth run when he lost a wing and crashed to his death.

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Chapter 4. Operation Killer
General Smith in Command of IX Corps

On 24 February 1951 came the news that General Moore had suddenly died as the indirect result of a helicopter accident. The aircraft had plunged into the Han River, after hitting a telephone wire, and the IX Corps commander was rescued unhurt only to die of a heart attack half an hour afterwards.

Commander of the 8th Infantry Division in European operations of World War II, General Moore later became Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. As his successor, pending a permanent appointment, General Ridgway named General Smith to the command of IX Corps. When announcing this decision, the Eighth Army commander said, “General Smith is to be taken into their hearts in IX Corps, and, by definite action, made to feel that he belongs there.”[31]

Marines with an interest in Corps history could recall only two similar occasions when Marines commanded major U.S. Army units. Major General John A. Lejeune had headed the 2d Infantry Division in World War I, and Major General Roy S. Geiger led the U.S. Tenth Army to victory during the closing days of the Okinawa operation after a Japanese shell killed Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., USA.

On 24 February, with General Puller taking command of the 1st Marine Division, General Smith flew to Yoju by helicopter to begin his new duties. His military competence and complete lack of ostentation made him cordially accepted at the IX Corps CP. The following day General Ridgway arrived for a conference. Wishing to change the boundary between IX and X Corps, so as to orient the former more to the north, he directed the Marine general to reach an agreement with X Corps. He also asked for a recommendation as to future operations of the Marines, and General Smith replied that he knew of no better employment for his division than to continue attacking along the Hoengsong-Hongchon axis.[32]

The change in boundaries, as decided at a conference of corps commanders, meant that in the zone of the 1st Marine Division the 5th Marines on the right would be pinched out by the 3d ROK Division of X Corps. On the left, the zone was to be extended by bringing the 7th Marines into line to the left of the 1st Marines while the 5th Marines dropped back into reserve.[33]

Logistics became the better part of valor on 25 February as Ridgway called a halt in the fighting until enough ammunition, fuel, and other supplies could be brought up for a resumption of the attack toward the final objective, Phase Line ARIZONA (Map 6). Napoleon’s famous remark that mud should be recognized as a separate element was apt as violent rains turned all roads into swamps. Operations might have come to a standstill except for air drops. On the 25th the Combat Air Command flew 480.7 tons of freight and 1,004 passengers, followed by 604.9 tons and 1,193 passengers the following day.[34] Corps and Division engineers strove meanwhile with indigenous labor to repair the roads.

By a prodigious effort, enough progress in logistics was made so that the EUSAK commanding general could issue orders on 25 February for the second phase of Operation KILLER to commence on 1 March. He made it known that he was not satisfied with results so far. The assigned physical objectives had been taken, but the enemy’s withdrawals had saved him from the full extent of the personnel and material losses Ridgway had hoped to inflict. He called on his staff officers, therefore, for plans aiming at a new operation “having the primary intent of destroying as many enemy and as much equipment as possible and, by continued pressure, allowing the enemy no time to mount a counteroffensive.”[35] A secondary mission was that of outflanking Seoul and the area between Seoul and the Imjin River, “so that this territory may be taken either by attack from the east or by enemy default.”

The name of the new drive was to be Operation RIPPER, and it was to jump off as soon as possible after

the finish of KILLER.

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Chapter 4. Operation Killer
The Advance to Phase Line ARIZONA

From newly won positions in the high ground south of Hoengsong, the Marines could look across the soggy plain to their Phase II objectives, the hills to the north of the battered town. Hoengsong occupied a valley at the confluence of two rain-swollen streams. Thus a triangular area of low, flat ground lay between the ruins and the hills which must be taken in the final phase of Operation KILLER. The 1st and 7th Marines were the combat units, with the 5th Marines in reserve. (The KMC Regiment, it may be recalled, had been temporarily detached for service with the ROK army.)

Before the 1st and 7th Marines could launch their combined attack, the latter had to fight its way up to the point of junction after relieving elements of the 6th ROK Division.[36] The scheme of maneuver then called for Lieutenant Colonel Virgil W. Banning's 3/1 to sideslip into the zone of Major Maurice E. Roach's 3/7, in order to be in position for the advance across the Hoengsong plain. This meant a crossing of the river Som for 3/1 and a combined assault with 3/7 on the high ground along the west bank.

The problem of crossing the river, 200 feet wide and chest-deep at the most likely site, was turned over to Banning with the explanation that the engineer company supporting the regiment could not be diverted from road repairs. To meet this emergency Major Edwin H. Simmons, commanding Weapons Company of 3/1, produced a field manual with instructions for building a "Swiss bent bridge."[37] His Antitank Assault Platoon was given the task under the command of energetic Technical Sergeant Carmelo J. Randazzo, a veteran on his third enlistment.

There was no lack of trees for timbers, and rolls of telephone wire were sworn to be beyond salvaging by the battalion communications officer. The A-shaped bents, or trusses, were lashed together with wire and enthusiasm, then carried out into the ice-cold water to be attached to spars and stringers.

It was a great triumph for "war by the book." Before dark on 28 February two spans, one 120 feet long and another half that length, were linked by a sandbar in midstream. The improvised bridge stood up well next morning when the battalion crossed to the west bank. There 3/1 echeloned itself behind 3/7, which gained the first 1,000 yards under cover of a vigorous artillery preparation and belated air strikes.

On the left, Major James I. Glendinning's 2d Battalion of the 7th Marines ran into increasingly stubborn opposition from CCF mortar and small-arms fire. Before noon the attacks of both battalions of the 7th Marines were brought almost to a halt in difficult terrain which the Communists had booby-trapped. Neither artillery nor air strikes had a decisive effect against an enemy sheltered by log-covered bunkers. So many delays were encountered that it was decided in mid-afternoon to postpone the advance until the following morning, 2 March.

Artillery and air strikes supported 2/7, 3/7, and 3/1 as they attacked at 0800 west of the river. Meanwhile, 1/7 patrolled on the division left flank while maintaining contact with the 6th ROK Division.

Apparently the enemy put up a hard fight only when he could not withdraw in time to avoid one. Resistance was light on the west bank, and east of the river Lieutenant Colonel Allen Sutter's 2/1, supported by tanks, had little trouble. His battalion linked up with 3/1 in the afternoon and dug in after taking its assigned objective, Hill 208, with casualties of three men wounded.

The only determined opposition of 2 March took place during the afternoon in the zone of 2/7. There the attackers could only inch forward over rocky terrain which the enemy defended, ridge by ridge, in spite of air strikes and 1,600 artillery rounds fired by the 11th Marines.

At daybreak on the 3d the men of the 1st and 7th Marines could look to the north and see their final objectives. Five hills lay along Phase Line ARIZONA from west to east—Hills 536 and 333 in the zone of the 7th

Marines, and Hills 321, 335, and 201 in the zone of the 1st Marines.

The last two positions were in the path of 2/1, which seized them after several brisk fire fights. Casualties of three KIA and 28 WIA were incurred while inflicting losses of 70 counted CCF dead. The terrain gave 3/1 more trouble than the enemy in taking Hill 321, where the CCF troops had already begun their withdrawal.

It was in the zone of the 7th Marines that Communist resistance was hottest. The 1st battalion was summoned to cover the regimental left flank and aid in the attack of 2/7 on Hill 536 while 3/7 continued its struggle for Hill 333. Both battalions had their hardest fight of the entire operation that afternoon. They lost most of the 14 KIA and 104 WIA which the Division reported for 3 March, and the enemy still held the topographical crests.

The 1st Marines had reached the mopping-up stage on 4 March, while the 7th Marines prepared to go up against an expected last-ditch stand of the enemy on Hills 536 and 333. The parkas of the assault troops were powdered with snow as the men moved out to the attack at 0800, following an intensive artillery preparation. There was something ominous about the silence in the objective area, but no trap had been set for the attackers. The Communists actually had pulled out under cover of darkness, leaving behind only enough outpost troops for delaying operations.

Operation killer ended at nightfall on the 4th for the Marines, though mopping up continued throughout the following day. Total Marine casualties for the 8 days of fighting were 395—48 KIA, 2 MIA, and 345 WIA. Enemy losses amounted to 274 counted dead and 48 prisoners. It is certain, however, that the actual KIA and WIA figures were much higher, since the withdrawing Communists buried their dead and took their wounded with them.

Click here to view map

Any evaluation of this limited objective operation must credit it with achieving its main purpose—keeping the Communists off balance while they were striving desperately to make ready for another great offensive (Map 7). This explains why the enemy as a whole put up a half-hearted resistance. He preferred to withdraw whenever possible and fight another day.

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Chapter 4. Operation Killer
JOC Air Control System Criticized

Operation KILLER was the first real test of the JOC system as far as the Marines were concerned, and both the flying and ground-force Marines felt that it had shown grave shortcomings. Air support on 1 March proved so disappointing that General Puller, as temporary commander of the 1st Marine Division, reported the situation to General Shepherd, commanding FMFPac. His letter is quoted in part as follows:

"We are having very little success in obtaining Marine air for CAS [close air support] missions and practically no success in having Marine air on station for CAS missions. . . . Most of our CAS missions in the current operation have been Air Force or Navy Carrier planes. They do a good job and we are glad to have them, but our Marine air, with whom we have trained and operated, can do a better job. We have attempted to insure that Marine air would support us, and to cut down the delays in receiving such support, as evidenced by the attached dispatches. We have received no decision relative to our requests. Apparently, the answer is no by default."[38]

General Puller's report was obviously written for the record, since General Shepherd was present at the 1st Marine Division CP at the time. He witnessed personally the Marine attacks of 2 and 3 March and the air support they received. On the 3d, the day of heaviest fighting in the entire operation, there could be no complaint that few Marine aircraft supported Marine ground forces. The Corsairs flew 26 CAS sorties that day and cleared the way more than once for the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 7th Marines. The trouble was that air support as administered by JOC was so often late in arriving, even when requested the evening before. More than once the infantry had to go ahead with only artillery support. Such delays threw the whole plan of attack out of gear, for air and artillery had to be closely coordinated to be at their best.

General Shepherd had a series of talks with General Harris. Both then conferred with General Partridge, commander of the Fifth Air Force. They requested that he authorize the 1st MAW to keep two planes on station over the 1st Marine Division whenever it was engaged. General Partridge did not concur. He maintained that Marine aircraft should be available to him if needed elsewhere in an emergency. He did consent, however, to permit 1st MAW armed reconnaissance sorties to check in with Devastate Baker for any CAS requests.[39]

This conference did much to clear up the situation. On 5 March no less than 48 Marine sorties reported to Devastate Baker, though there was little need for them in mopping-up operations. And during the next two weeks an average of 40 sorties a day was maintained.

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Chapter 5. Operation Ripper

THE NEW IX CORPS COMMANDER, Major General William H. Hoge, USA, arrived at Yoju on 4 March 1951. He relieved General Smith the next day and a color guard turned out to render honors to the Marine commander when he returned by helicopter to his own Division CP. Upon Smith's arrival, General Puller resumed his former duties as ADC.

The jumpoff of the new operation was scheduled for 0800 on 7 March, so little time remained for last-minute preparations. The basic plan called for the drive of IX and X Corps toward the 38th Parallel on the central front. Protection was to be given on the left flank by I Corps in the area south and east of Seoul. On the right the ROK divisions had the mission of maintaining lateral security with a limited northward advance.

It was no secret that General Ridgway had been disappointed in the numbers of enemy soldiers put out of action during Operation KILLER. The primary purpose of RIPPER was to inflict as many Communist casualties as possible, and by means of constant pressure to keep the enemy off balance in his buildup for a new offensive. A secondary purpose was to outflank Seoul and the area between that city and the river Imjin, thus compelling the enemy to choose between default and a defense on unfavorable terms.[1]

CCF strategy in the early spring of 1951 was obviously conditioned by preparations for a third great offensive. The enemy's emphasis on caution is shown in a translation of a CCF training directive of this period:

"There must absolutely be no hasty or impatient attitude toward warfare. Consequently, even though we have a thorough knowledge of the enemy situation and the terrain, if one day is disadvantageous for us to engage in combat, it should be done the next day; if day fighting is disadvantageous, fighting should be conducted at night, and if engagements in a certain terrain are not to our advantage, another location should be selected for combat engagement. When the enemy is concentrated and a weak point is difficult to find, one must be created (by agitating or confusing them in some way), or wait until the enemy is deploying. Engagements must be conducted only when the situation is entirely to our advantage."[2]

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Chapter 5. Operation Ripper
Light Resistance the First Day

United Nations forces held a line extending across the peninsula from Inchon (Map 8) in the west by way of Hoengsong to the east coast in the vicinity of Chumunjin. The IX Corps order called for the 1st Marine Division to maintain lateral contact with the lst Cavalry Division on the left and the 2d Infantry Division on the right. Hongchon and Chunchon, two of the main objectives of Operation RIPPER, lay directly in the path of the IX Corps advance. Both were important communications centers which could be utilized to advantage by the enemy for his forthcoming offensive.

Click here to view map

The first phase line in the IX Corps zone was ALBANY. The Marines did not need a map to locate an objective just beyond Oum Mountain, a stark 2,900-foot peak about five and a half miles from the line of departure. Distance in this area was conditioned by terrain, and it was a natural fortress of wooded hills and swift streams that confronted the 1st Marine Division. Highways were conspicuous by their absence, and extensive maintenance would be required to utilize the Hoengsong-Hongchon road as a MSR. So few and poor were the secondary roads that it would sometimes prove necessary for vehicles to detour along the rocky stream beds.[3]

The last offensive had not developed major or prolonged resistance at any point. Yet that possibility had to be anticipated by Marine planners. At least the enemy was an old acquaintance—the 66th CCF Army,[4] commanded by General Show Shiu Kwai. The 196th Division was on the left and the 197th on the right, with the 198th in reserve. These units were believed to comprise about 24,000 men.

Wednesday, 7 March, dawned cold and clear, with snow falling in the afternoon. The Hoengsong-Hongchon road, winding through Kunsamma Pass, paralleled the boundary between the two Marine assault regiments, the 7th Marines on the left and the 1st Marines on the right. They jumped off to attack in line abreast, employing all three battalions when the broken terrain permitted, while the 5th Marines continued its patrolling activities in the Hoengsong area as Division reserve.

The 11th Marines had to ration its artillery ammunition, owing to supply shortages. JOC came to the rescue nobly by ordering MAG-33 to place 11 flights of four planes each at the disposal of DEVASTATE BAKER on D-minus-one. These aircraft reported at hourly intervals to work over targets in the area of the next day's Marine operations. For the ground forces, it was an embarrassment of riches. They had more air support than they could use at times, and DEVASTATE BAKER sent the surplus to hit reserve concentrations and other targets of opportunity in the enemy's rear.[5]

The two Marine assault regiments met with light resistance on D-Day. Both took their objectives with little trouble except for scattered bursts of machine gun fire. Total casualties for the day were seven men wounded.

It was like old times to have Marine planes supporting Marine ground forces. MAG-12 aircraft were on the job the next day, when CCF resistance stiffened without ever becoming serious. Heavy CCF mortar and small-arms fire was received by 3/1, supported by Company A of the 1st Tank Battalion. Well placed rounds by the 11th Marines silenced the enemy in this quarter, and both battalions of the 1st Marines reached their assigned positions by nightfall.

The second day's advances gave added proof that the enemy was up to his old trick of putting up a limited defense while pulling back before the Marines could come to grips. Log bunkers were ideal for these CCF delaying tactics; each was a little fortress that might enable a squad to stand off a company while larger CCF units

withdrew.

The Marine assault troops found that a preliminary treatment of napalm from MAG-12 aircraft, followed by well-aimed 90mm fire from the tanks, did much to soften up the bunkers for an infantry attack with hand grenades.

Company A of the 7th Marines had the hardest fight of all Marine units on 8 March. Second Lieutenant Clayton O. Bush and the 2d Platoon led the attack on the company objective, a hill mass to the left of Oum San. With 300 yards still to be covered, the Marines were pinned down by well aimed CCF small-arms and mortar fire, including white phosphorus. A high explosive shell scored a direct hit on the platoon, killing two men and wounding three. Bush was evacuated, with his right arm mangled. First Lieutenant Eugenous Hovatter, the company commander, ordered the 1st Platoon to pass through the 2d and continue the attack with air and tank support. The flat-trajectory fire of the 90mm rifles did much to help the company clear the enemy from the hill and the 7th Marines reached all assigned regimental objectives for the day.[6]

The Marine advance came to a halt on 9 March to wait for Army units to catch up on the right. While the 2d Battalion of the 1st Marines took blocking positions, the 1st and 7th Marines sent out patrols on both flanks in an effort to regain lateral contact. For the next two days, 1st Marine Division operations were limited to patrolling. A good deal of activity took place in the rear, however, as Marine service units moved up to Hoengsong.

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Chapter 5. Operation Ripper
Seoul Abandoned by Enemy

The advance was resumed on 11 March after the relief of 2/1 by Major Walter Gall's Division Reconnaissance Company, reinforced by a platoon of tanks. Although the enemy withdrew from most of his positions without putting up much resistance, a patrol of George Company, 3/1, had a hot fire fight on Hill 549. Opening fire at 50 yards from camouflaged, log-faced bunkers, the Chinese killed one man and wounded nine. Marine infantrymen, supported by flat-trajectory 90mm fire, approached within grenade-throwing range to destroy five bunkers and kill 16 of the defenders. As the patrol withdrew, it called on the 11th Marines to finish the job. The cannoneers were credited with several direct hits.[7]

Chinese resistance continued to be light as the two Marine regiments occupied rather than seized ground on 12 and 13 March. By the 14th all units were dug in along Phase Line ALBANY.

CCF withdrawals were also reported by other Eighth Army units. On 15 March a patrol from the 1st ROK Division of I Corps found Seoul abandoned by the enemy. The Chinese Reds had made their choice and UN forces took over a devastated city with some 200,000 civilians dragging out a miserable existence in the ruins. Dead power lines dangled over buildings pounded into rubble, and even such a famous landmark as the enormous red, brass-studded gates of the American Embassy Compound had been destroyed.

It was the fourth time that Seoul had changed hands in 9 months of war. Air reconnaissance having established that the enemy had withdrawn about 15 miles to entrenched positions in the Uijongbu area, General Ridgway enlarged the mission of I Corps by directing it to advance on the left of IX Corps.[8]

During the first phase of Operation RIPPER, from 7 to 13 March, counted casualties inflicted on the enemy by X Corps amounted to 6,543 KIA and 216 POW. IX Corps casualties during the same period were reported as 158 KIA, 965 WIA, and 35 MIA—a total of 1,158.[9]

The total strength of the Eighth Army (less the Marines) was 185,229 officers and men in March 1951. Adding the 25,642 of the 1st Marine Division, the 4,645 of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, plus 11,353 of the American Air Force and 355 attached from the U.S. Navy, 227,119 Americans were serving in Korea. This does not count 13,475 South Koreans serving in various U.S. Army divisions.[10]

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, with an authorized total of 728 officers and 4,216 enlisted men, had an actual strength of 626 and 4,019 respectively on 31 March 1951. Of an authorized 29 officers and 93 enlisted men from the Navy, 22 and 83 in these categories were on duty.[11]

Troops to the number of 21,184 from the ground forces of other United Nations were represented as follows:

United Kingdom and Australia: 10,136
Turkey: 4,383
Philippines: 1,277
Thailand: 1,050
Canada: 858
New Zealand: 816
Greece: 777
France: 749
Belgium-Luxembourg: 638
Netherlands: 500[12]

The 249,815 officers and men of the ROK Army make a total UN combat strength of 493,503. There were an additional 671 in three noncombat units: the Danish hospital ship *Jutlandia,* 186; the 60th Indian Ambulance Group, 329; and the Swedish Evacuation Hospital Unit, 156.[13]

Chinese forces in Korea, including confirmed and probable, totaled 16 armies, each comparable to a U.S. corps. Eight others were reported. Assuming that these CCF units averaged a field strength of 24,000 officers and men, the total would have been 384,000 for the 16 armies. The reorganized forces of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) were credited with five armies. Adding these 120,000 men to the 16 Chinese armies, the enemy had 504,000 troops in Korea plus whatever might have been the strength of the eight reported armies and the rear area service elements. In addition, large reserves stood just over the border in Manchuria.[14]

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Chapter 5. Operation Ripper
Second Phase of the Operation

With scarcely a pause on Phase Line ALBANY, the second phase of Operation ripper began on 14 March with a drive toward Phase Line buffalo (Map 8). Despite the difficulty of maneuver over muddy roads in mountainous terrain, an Eighth Army directive of that date called for a pincers movement to be initiated by means of a rapid advance of the 1st Marine Division on the right and the 1st Cavalry Division on the left. It was hoped that the Chinese forces south of Hongchon might be trapped and destroyed after the 187th Airborne Regiment cut off escape by landing north of the town. General Ridgway having urged his corps commanders to stress maneuver, IX Corps sent this message to division commanders:

"It is desired that more use be made of maneuver within and between division zones with a view toward trapping and annihilating the enemy through such maneuver. Movements should be less stereotyped; it is not desirable that units always advance toward the enemy abreast. Well planned and successfully executed maneuver using companies and battalions has previously been conducted; this should be extended to include regiments. This Headquarters is studying and will continue to study and order into execution the maneuver of divisions with the same intent and purpose."[15]

Both the 1st Marine Division and 1st Cavalry Division made rapid progress toward Phase Line Baker (Map 9), established by IX Corps as an intermediate control. Unfortunately for the purposes of the envelopment maneuver, the Chinese withdrew from the Hongchon area before the pincers could close or the 187th Airborne make an air drop. CCF resistance was confined to machine gun fire covering hasty retirements. The 7th Marines on the left occupied its objective without once calling for air or artillery support, and the 1st Marines was virtually unopposed. Division casualties for the 14th were six men wounded.

Click here to view map

Flash floods and roads churned into hub-deep mud were the greatest enemies of progress. Serious as the resulting supply problems were, they might have been worse but for the efforts of the recently organized Civil Transport Corps formed from members of the ROK National Guard who lacked the necessary training for military duties. There was no shortage of willing indigenous labor, for these auxiliaries received pay as well as rations and clothing. Formed into companies, they worked with the wooden "A-frames"—so-called because of their shape—used from time immemorial in Korea as a rack for carrying heavy burdens.

The Civil Transport Corps proved to be a boon for the Eighth Army. Veteran porters could manage a load of 100 to 125 pounds over ground too rugged for motor vehicles. Several hundred were attached to each regiment during Operation RIPPER.

Any lingering hope of rounding up Chinese prisoners in the Hongchon area was blasted on the 15th when evidence of Chinese withdrawal came in the form of an enemy radio message intercepted at 1230. "We cannot fight any longer," the translation read. "We must move back today. We will move back at 1400. Enemy troops will enter our positions at 1300 or 1400. Enemy troops approaching fast."[16]

Hongchon fell without a fight to the 1st Battalion of the 7th Marines on the afternoon of 15 March. Major Webb D. Sawyer, the commanding officer, sent a motor patrol through the ruins without flushing out any Chinese, but on the return trip a truck was damaged by a "butterfly bomb." This led to the discovery that the Hongchon area was covered with similar explosives that had been dropped by U.S. planes to slow up the CCF counterattacks in the middle of February.

Butterfly bombs, so-called because of the whirling vanes that controlled the drop and armed the 4-pound

projectiles, could be set for air or ground bursts. Usually, however, they were dropped in clusters to remain on the ground until disturbed. Apparently the enemy had not troubled to clear them from the Hongchon area, and that three-day task was begun by Company D of the 1st Engineer Battalion while 1/7 seized the high ground northwest of the town.[17]

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Chapter 5. Operation Ripper
Changes in 1st MAW Units

Air support for the ground forces continued to be more than adequate in quantity. Since the agreement between Generals Partridge and Harris, 40 1st MAW sorties a day had been allotted to the 1st Marine Division. The timing was not all that could have been asked on occasion, but on the whole the Marine infantry had no complaint.

The 1st MAW had undergone an extensive reshuffling of units on the eve of Operation RIPPER. VMF (N)-542 was sent back to El Toro, California, for conversion to F3D jet all weather fighters. The squadron's F7F–3N's and two F–82's were left with VMF(N)–513. The former commanding officer of 542, Lieutenant Colonel James R. Anderson, assumed command of 513. He relieved Lieutenant Colonel David C. Wolfe, who returned to the States.

The California-bound cadre of 542 included 45 officers and 145 enlisted men under Major Albert L. Clark. VMF(N)-513 was now a composite squadron, attacking from K-1 during the day with its F4U-5N's and at night with its F7F-3N's.

Another change took place when VMF-312 replaced VMF-212 on the CVE *Bataan*. The former squadron had been preparing for weeks to perform carrier duty, so that the change was made without a hitch. VMF-212, after nearly 3 months on the *Bataan*, established itself at K-3 under a new commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Claude H. Welch, who relieved Lieutenant Colonel Wyczawski.

The transportation jam in Korea made necessary the permanent assignment of a VMR-152 detachment to 1st MAW Headquarters. Transports had heretofore been sent to the Wing on a temporary basis and returned to Hawaii when missions were completed.

Mud and inadequate rail facilities doubled the demands on FEAF's aerial supply of combat forces. The Wing's courier service to Marine air and ground forces scattered over Korea reached the limit of its capabilities. As a solution General Harris requested a five-plane VMR-152 detachment on a long-term assignment, and Colonel Deane C. Roberts took command of this forward echelon at Itami.

It was now possible to handle cargo and troop transport at the cargo and passenger terminals of all Marine air bases. In one 4-day period, early in April, approximately 2,000 replacement troops were lifted from Masan to Hoengsong by the five R5Ds. About a thousand rotated veterans were flown back on the return trips. [18]

A further change involved the coordination of the Wing's air control organizations. As the enemy's air power increased, obviously the problems of UN air defense multiplied. At K-1 the Marine Ground Intercept Squadron-1 (MGCIS-1) and the Air Defense Section of Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron-2 (MTACS-2) were hard pressed to identify and control the hundreds of aircraft flying daily over Korea.

There was no adequate system of alerting these air defense stations to the effect that planes were departing or incoming. Many of them failed to send out their standard identification friend or foe (IFF) signals; and those that did so were still suspect, since U.S. electronics equipment on UN planes had fallen into enemy hands. As a consequence MGCIS-1 was kept busy vectoring air defense fighters to verify that certain bogeys were friendly transports, B-29s, or enemy bombers.[19]

In an effort to cope with the situation, General Harris requested that another Marine ground control intercept squadron, MGCIS-3 be sent to Korea. He desired that Marine Air Control Group-2 (MACG-2) also be made available to coordinate the Wing's air control functions. These units sailed on 5 March from San Francisco.

Until March 1951 the Air Force's 606th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron had participated in the air surveillance of the Pusan area from the top of 3,000-foot Chon-San—the encroaching mountain that made K-9's traffic pattern so hazardous. This Air Force unit displaced to Taejon early in March, and the MGCIS-1 commanding officer, Major H. E. Allen, moved his radio and radar vans to the mountain top to take over the job. [20]

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Chapter 5. Operation Ripper
General MacArthur Visits Marine Battalion

Following the occupation of Hongchon on the 15th, the Marine ground forces ran into stiffening enemy opposition during the next two days. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 7th Marines were pinned down by intense CCF mortar and artillery fire when attacking Hill 356 (Map 9). Three out of six friendly 81mm mortars were knocked out on 15 March in the 3d Battalion area, and at dusk 2/7 and 3/7 had barely won a foothold on the hill. [21]

The 1st Marines also met opposition which indicated that the enemy planned to make a stand on the high ground east and north of Hongchon. An intricate maneuver was executed when Lieutenant Colonel Robert K. McClelland's 2/1 swung from the right flank, where no enemy was encountered, to the extreme left. As a preliminary, the battalion had to circle to the rear, then move by truck up the MSR and through the zone of the 7th Marines as far as the village of Yangjimal (Map 9). Dismounting, the men made a difficult march across broken country toward Hill 246. At 1230 on the 15th the column deployed to attack Hill 428 in conjunction with Lieutenant Colonel Virgil W. Banning's 3d Battalion.

Easy Company (Captain Jack A. Smith) and Item Company (First Lieutenant Joseph R. Fisher) engaged in a hot fire fight with the enemy. Both sides relied chiefly on mortars, but the Chinese had the advantage of firing from camouflaged bunkers. Smith called for an air strike and four planes from VMF-214 responded immediately. Fox Company (Captain Goodwin C. Groff) and Dog Company (Captain Welby D. Cronk) were committed in the attempt to carry Hill 428, but the enemy continued to resist stubbornly until dusk. McClelland then ordered a withdrawal to night defensive positions around Hill 246. The two assault battalions had suffered 7 KIA and 86 WIA casualties. Counted enemy dead were reported as 93.[22]

Lieutenant Colonel Donald R. Kennedy's 3/5 was attached to the 1st Marines to protect the right flank as the Marines prepared to resume the attack on the morning of the 16th. But the enemy had pulled out from Hill 428 during the night and patrols advanced more than 300 yards without making contact.

Another hard action awaited the 7th Marines on the 16th, when Major Sawyer's 1st Battalion moved up to Line BAKER (Map 9). The Chinese resisted so hard on Hill 399 that the Marines had to attack bunker after bunker with grenades.

The following morning was the occasion of a visit to the front by General MacArthur. Accompanied by Generals Ridgway and O. P. Smith, he drove in a jeep from Wonju over the mountain pass to Hongchon, where Marine engineers were still clearing mines. The jeep stalled after crossing the Hongchon-gang at a ford and a tow was necessary. This did not deter the commander in chief, who had asked to visit a Marine battalion in a combat area. He was taken to the CP of Major Sawyer, whose 1/7 was mopping up on Hill 399 after the hard fight of the day before.

Five hours of riding over miserable roads had not daunted the 71-year-old veteran of two World Wars. He seemed fresh and rested as he shook hands with 1/7 officers. "Although we had not passed the word regarding General MacArthur's visit," commented General Smith, "there were dozens of cameras in evidence."[23]

IX Corps orders were received on the 17th for the 1st Marine Division to attack from Line BAKER to Line BUFFALO (Map 9). The Division plan of maneuver called for the 5th Marines to pass through and relieve the 7th Marines while the 1st Marines continued to advance on the right.

Again the enemy chose withdrawal to resistance, and five of the six Marine battalions reached Line BUFFALO on 20 March after encountering only sniper fire and a few scattered mortar rounds. Enemy opposition

was reserved for 2/1 on the 19th, when Fox Company was pinned down by enemy small-arms and mortar fire from a long, narrow ridge running north and south to the west of Hill 330.

Fortunately for the attackers, a parallel valley enabled a platoon of tanks from Baker Company, 1st Tank Battalion, to knock out unusually strong CCF bunkers with direct 90mm fire while Fox Company riflemen followed along the ridgeline with a grenade attack before the enemy had time to recover. Thanks to intelligent planning, not a single Marine was killed or wounded as the battalion dug in for the night on Hill 330.

Adopting the same tactics on the 20th, after artillery preparation and an air strike by VMF-214 and VMF-323 planes, Easy Company of 2/1 advanced along the ridgeline connecting Hills 330 and 381 while tanks moved forward on either side providing direct flat-trajectory 90mm fire. By 1315 the Marines had overrun the enemy's main line of resistance without a casualty.[24]

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Chapter 5. Operation Ripper
1st KMC Regiment Returns to Division

As the Eighth Army jumped off on 20 March from Line BUFFALO toward Line CAIRO (Map 9), the 1st KMC Regiment was attached again to the 1st Marine Division. This was the third time that Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Harrison had been directed to reorganize and reassemble a KMC liaison advisory group. The 3d Battalion of the 11th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William McReynolds, was placed in direct artillery support. When the advance was resumed, the KMCs attacked between the 1st Marines on the right and the 5th Marines on the left.[25]

The high *esprit de corps* of the KMCs shines forth from a comment written in his own English by First Lieutenant Kim Sik Tong: "The KMC ideal is to complete the mission, regardless of receiving strong enemy resistance, with endurance and strong united power, and always bearing in one's mind the distinction between honor and dishonor."[26]

The zone of the KMC Regiment was a roadless wilderness, making it necessary to air-drop ammunition and supplies for the attack on Hill 975. This was the hardest fight of the Division advance to Line CAIRO. Excellent artillery support was provided for the 2d and 3d Battalions as they inched their way forward in three days of bitter combat. Not until the morning of 24 March was the issue decided by maneuver when the 1st Battalion moved around the left KMC flank into a position threatening the enemy's right. Resistance slackened immediately on Hill 975 and the KMCs took their objective without further trouble.

The 1st and 5th Marines were already on Line CAIRO, having met comparatively light opposition from NKPA troops who had relieved the 66th and 39th CCF Armies. Apparently the enemy was using North Koreans as expendable delaying elements while massing in the rear for an offensive that could be expected at any time. A smoke screen, produced by burning green wood, shrouded the front in an almost constant haze.

Although the objectives of Operation RIPPER had been reached, General Ridgway planned to continue the UN offensive for the purpose of keeping the enemy off balance during his offensive preparations. The Eighth Army had been attacking with few and brief pauses for regrouping even since 21 February, and the commanding general wished to maintain its momentum.

An advance of the 1st Marine Division to a new Line CAIRO was ordered by IX Corps on 26 March. This was simply a northeast extension of the old line to the boundary between IX and X Corps (Map 9). There was no need for the 5th Marines to advance, and the 1st Marines and KMC Regiment moved up to the new line on schedule without opposition.

Eighth Army units had made average gains of about 35 miles during the last three weeks while driving nearly to the 38th Parallel. On 29 March, General Ridgway published a plan for Operation RUGGED. It was to be a continuation of the offensive, with Line KANSAS (Map 8) as the new objective. While other 1st Marine units were being relieved by X Corps elements, the 7th Marines was to be moved up from reserve near Hongchon and attached to the 1st Cavalry Division for the attack beyond Chunchon, evacuated by the retreating enemy.[27]

On 1 April the Marines were informed of sweeping changes in IX Corps plans. Instead of being relieved, the 1st Marine Division was to continue forward with two infantry regiments plus the KMCs. Its new mission called for a relief of the 1st Cavalry Division (with the 7th Marines attached) north of Chunchon. This modification gave General Smith the responsibility for nearly 20 miles of front.[28]

"I visited this front frequently," commented Major General A. L. Bowser, the G-3 of that period, "and it was difficult at times to even locate an infantry battalion. . . . Visitors from the States or FMFPac were shocked at

the wide frontages."[29]

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Chapter 5. Operation Ripper
38th Parallel Recrossed by Marines

Further IX Corps instructions on 2 April directed that the 1st Marines go into Division reserve near Hongchon while the 5th Marines and 1st KMC Regiment attacked. The deep, swift Soyang-gang, fordable in only a few places, lay squarely in the path of the 5th Marines. Speculations as to the method of crossing became rife just as air mattresses were issued. And though the officers denied any such intent, the troops were convinced that inflated mattresses would be used.

As it happened, the regimental executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Stewart, worked out a plan that did not include any such novelty. A narrow ford was discovered that would get the 1st and 2d Battalions across while the 3d rode in DUKWs. Light enemy opposition of a rear guard nature was encountered but the regiment completed the operation without casualties. Stewart reported to the regimental CP and learned that a jeep waited to take him on the initial lap of his homeward journey. He was the last man to leave Korea of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, which had landed at Pusan on 2 August 1950.[30]

After reaching their prescribed objectives, the 5th Marines and KMC Regiment were relieved on 5 April by elements of the 7th Infantry Division of X Corps. Meanwhile, the 7th Marines, attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, advanced northward with the 7th and 8th Cavalry Regiments. Little opposition developed and on 4 April the Marines were among the first Eighth Army troops to recross the 38th Parallel.

General Ridgway published another operation plan on 6 April 1951 and designated new Eighth Army objectives to the northward. The purpose was to threaten the buildup for the forthcoming CCF offensive that was taking place behind the enemy lines in the so-called “Iron Triangle.”

This strategic area, one of the few pieces of comparatively level real estate in central Korea, was bounded by Kumhwa, Chorwon, and Pyongyang (Map 14). A broad valley containing a network of good roads, it had been utilized by the Chinese for the massing of supplies and troops.

Experience had proved that interdictory bombing could not prevent the enemy from nourishing an offensive, even though the FEAF had complete control of the air over roads and rail lines of a mountainous peninsula. The Chinese, though hampered in their efforts, had been able to bring up large quantities of supplies under cover of darkness. General Ridgway determined, therefore, to launch his ground forces at objectives threatening the Iron Triangle, thus forcing the enemy to fight.

On 8 April, in preparation for the new effort, the 1st Marine Division was directed by IX Corps to relieve the 1st Cavalry Division on Line KANSAS and prepare to attack toward Line QUANTICO (Map 8).

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Chapter 5. Operation Ripper
Renewal of Division's CAS Problems

By this time, after three months of various sorts of operational difficulties, VMF-311 was riding a wave of efficiency. The distance from the operating base to the combat area emphasized the superior speed of the F9Fs. The Panther jets could get into action in half the time required by the Corsairs. The jets were more stable in rocket, bombing, and strafing runs. They were faster on armed reconnaissance and often were pouring it into the enemy before he could disperse. These advantages offset the high fuel consumption of the F9Fs and made them ideal planes for close air support.

On the morning of 8 April an opportunity arose for the Marine jets to help the 7th Marines. It started when 3/7 patrols encountered 120mm mortars, small arms, automatic weapons, and grenades employed by an enemy force dug in on a ridge looming over the road near the west end of the Hwachon reservoir. The battalion forward air controller radioed DEVASTATE BAKER at Hongchon for air support.[31]

At the time Major Roy R. Hewitt, an air officer on General Shepherd's FMFPac staff, was visiting the Air Support Section of Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron-2 (MTACS-2). His blow-by-blow report of events is as follows:

"a. At 0900 a request for an air support strike on an enemy mortar position was received from the 7th Marines. It took the Air Support Section until 0945 to get through to JOC and then it had to be shunted through K-1 in order to get the request in.

"b. The G-3 1st Marine Air Wing had arranged with JOC to have four (4) F9F 'scramble alert' for use by the 1st Marine Division. The F9Fs were requested, and JOC authorized their use, but when Marine Aircraft Group-33 was contacted they informed the Air Support Section that JOC had already scrambled the aircraft and sent them to another target.

"c. Air Support Section again contacted JOC, and JOC said aircraft would be on station in one (1) hour. At the end of one (1) hour JOC was again contacted concerning aircraft. This time JOC said they would have two (2) flights on station within one (1) hour. At the end of the second one (1) hour period no aircraft were received.

"d. Again the Air Support Section contacted JOC and was informed that any air support for the 7th Marines would have to be requested through the 1st Cavalry Division to which the 7th Marines were attached."[32] In fact, JOC notified DEVASTATE BAKER that any such requests from the 1st Marine Division would not be honored until the Division went back into action.

During all this time ten Marine planes—six from VMF-311 and four from VMF-214—had reported in and out of the area. They had been sent by MELLOW to work under the control of Mosquito STRATEGY, the tactical air controller (airborne) (taca) of the 1st Cavalry Division. The flights also supported the 6th ROK Division patrols on the Marines' left, hit troops in a small settlement 3 miles to the Marines' front, and aided the 7th and 8th Cavalry regiments which were encountering resistance on the commanding ground to the right. None of the flights supported the Marines.

Meanwhile, the 3/7 Marines employed artillery and tanks on the enemy positions, and late in the day a Mosquito brought in a flight of four Air Force F-80s. Major Hewitt's report continued:

"e. At the end of six (6) hours air support was finally received by the 7th Marines. It was brought in by a Mosquito who would not relinquish control of the aircraft to the Forward Air Controller who could see the target much better than the Mosquito.

"f. After having the fighters make a couple of passes the Mosquito took the fighters and went to another

target without having completely destroyed the position."

This was the beginning of a deterioration in air support for Marine ground forces that can be charged in large measure to the JOC system of control. Major Hewitt's report was read with great interest by high-ranking Navy and Marine Corps officers. By now they were devoting a lot of thought to the breakup of the Marine air-ground team.

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive

ON 10 APRIL 1951 the 1st Marine Division was poised on Line KANSAS for a drive to Line QUANTICO. Then a new IX Corps directive put on the brakes, and for 10 days Marine activities were limited to patrolling and preparation of defensive works. Boundary adjustments between the Division and the 6th ROK Division on the left extended the Marine zone about 2,000 yards to the west; and General O. P. Smith's CP was advanced to Sapyong-ni, just south of the 38th Parallel (Map 8).

Out of a blue sky came the announcement on the 11th that General MacArthur had been recalled by President Truman for failure to give wholehearted support to the policies of the United States Government and of the United Nations in matters pertaining to his official duties. General Ridgway was appointed to the UN command, and he in turn was relieved on 14 April by Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet, USA.

The new Eighth Army commander, youthful in appearance for his 59 years, was no novice at fighting Communists. In 1949 and 1950 he had been Director of the Joint Military Aid Group that saved Greece from falling into the clutches of Communism after Moscow fomented a civil war. Van Fleet also brought to his new command a World War II reputation as a vigorous leader with a preference for offensive doctrines.

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive
Prisoners Reveal Date of Offensive

Chinese prisoners taken during the first three weeks of April 1951 told all they knew with no apparent reluctance, just as Japanese captives had given information in World War II. Inconsistent as it may seem that fanatical Asian soldiers should prove so cooperative, such was the penalty the enemy paid for insisting on resistance to the last ditch. Since the possibility of surrender was not considered, CCF prisoners were taught no code of behavior and answered questions freely and frankly.

POW interrogations were supplemented by captured documents revealing that the Chinese prided themselves on a new tactical doctrine known as "the roving defensive," put into effect in the spring of 1951. It meant "not to hold your position to the death, but to defend against the enemy through movement," explained a secret CCF directive dated 17 March 1951. "Therefore, the wisdom of the roving defensive is based on exhausting the enemy without regard for the loss or gain of some fighting area or the immediate fulfillment of our aims."[1]

It was admitted that the CCF soldier must work harder, "because the troops will have to construct entrenchments and field works in every place they move." But the advantages were that "roving warfare can conserve our power, deplete the enemy's strength, and secure for us more favorable conditions for future victory. Meanwhile, the enemy will make the mistake once again, and collapse on the Korean battlefield."

The last sentence evidently refers to the UN advance of late November 1950 that was rolled back by a surprise CCF counteroffensive. Chinese strategists seem to have concluded that their "roving defensive" had made possible another such offensive victory in the spring of 1951. At any rate, prisoners questioned by the 1st Marine Division and other IX Corps units agreed that the CCF 5th Phase Offensive was scheduled to begin on 22 April 1951. The IX Corps zone was said to be the target area for an attempted breakthrough.[2]

Marine G-2 officers recalled that prisoners gave information on the eve of the CCF offensive in November 1950 that proved to be astonishingly accurate in the light of later events. For it was a paradox that the Chinese Reds, so secretive in other respects, let the man in the ranks know about high-level strategic plans. In the spring of 1951 it mattered little, since air reconnaissance had kept the Eighth Army well informed as to the enemy buildup.

Prisoners were taken in the IX Corps zone from the following major CCF units during the first three weeks of April:

20th Army (58th, 59th, and 60th Divisions), estimated strength, 24,261;

26th Army (76th, 77th, and 78th Divisions), estimated total strength, 22,222;

39th Army (115th, 116th, and 117th Divisions), estimated total strength, 19,538;

40th Army (118th, 119th, and 120th Divisions), estimated total strength, 25,319.

The 20th and 26th, it may be recalled, were two of the CCF armies opposing the 1st Marine Division during the Chosin Reservoir breakout. It was a satisfaction to the Marines that their opponents of December 1950 had evidently needed from three to four months to reorganize and get back into action.

In CCF reserve on 21 April 1951 were the 42d and 66th Armies, both located in the Iron Triangle to the enemy's rear. The former included the 124th, 125th, and 126th Divisions—the 124th being the unit cut to pieces from 3 to 7 November 1950 by the 7th Marines in the war's first American offensive action against Chinese Red adversaries.

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive
Hwachon Occupied by KMC Regiment

At 0700 on the 21st the 1st Marine Division resumed the attack toward Line QUANTICO with the 7th Marines on the left, the 5th Marines in the center, the KMC Regiment on the right, and the 1st Marines in reserve. Negligible resistance awaited the Marines and other IX Corps troops during advances of 5,000 to 9,000 yards. An ominous quiet hung over the front as green wood smoke limited visability to a few hundred yards.

On the Marine left the 6th ROK Division lost touch, opening a gap of 2,500 yards, according to a message from Corps to the 1st Marine Division. The ROK commander was ordered by Corps to restore lateral contact. This incident would be recalled significantly by the Marines when the CCF blow fell.[3]

The KMC Regiment had the mission of finishing the fight for control of the Hwachon Reservoir area. Early in April the 1st Cavalry Division and the 4th Ranger Company, USA, had been repulsed in attempts to fight their way across the artificial lake in rubber boats. The enemy retaliated by opening the penstocks and spillway gates. Considering that the dam was 275 feet high and the spillway 826 feet long, it is not surprising that a wall of water 10 feet high roared down the Pukhan Valley into areas recently occupied by IX Corps units.[4]

Both Army and Marine engineers were on the alert, having been warned by aerial observers. They cut three floating bridges loose from one bank or another, so that they could ride out the crest of the flood. Thanks to this precaution, only temporary damage and interruption of traffic resulted.[5]

The 1st Engineer Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John H. Partridge, was given the mission by Corps of jamming the gates of the dam at the open position. Compliance would have to wait, of course, until the KMCs took the dam. Partridge conferred meanwhile with Colonel Bowser, and it was decided to take no action after the anticipated capture until a demolitions reconnaissance could be made.[6]

As early as 18 April a KMC patrol had crossed the Pukhan into the town of Hwachon, which was found abandoned except for 11 Chinese soldiers, who were taken prisoner. Marine engineers installed a floating bridge on the 21st for the advance of one KMC battalion the next morning. The other two battalions were to cross the river several miles downstream by DUKWs.[7]

Corps plans for the attack were made in full realization of air reconnaissance reports for 20 and 21 April indicating that the enemy offensive buildup was in its final stages. This intelligence was gleaned in spite of all enemy efforts to frustrate the airmen. CCF spotters were placed on mountain tops to give the alarm, and relays of men fired shots to pass on warnings of approaching planes. Antiaircraft defenses were increased at such vital spots as bridges and supply areas. The Communists even went so far as to put out decoys—fake trucks, tanks, and tank cars—to lure UN fighter-bombers within range of antiaircraft guns.

These efforts resulted in 16 Marine planes being shot down from 1 to 21 April 1951. Nine of the pilots were killed, one was captured, three were rescued from enemy territory, one walked back to friendly outposts, and two managed to bail out or crash-land behind the UN lines.[8]

This total was equivalent to two-thirds of the average tactical squadron. Because of the disruption to the 1st MAW pilot replacement program, the Commandant arranged for 20 pilots to be flown to Korea to augment the normal rotation quotas.[9]

Direct opposition from enemy aircraft was also on the increase. CCF flights even reached the EUSAK battle line as unidentified light planes flew over positions or dropped small bombs. Evidently the enemy was using well camouflaged airfields in North Korea.

An air battle took place on 20 April when two VMF-312 pilots from the *Bataan*, Captain Philip C.

DeLong and First Lieutenant Harold D. Daigh, encountered four YAK fighters in the heavily defended Pyongyang-Chinnanpo area. They gave chase and shot down three of the enemy planes.[10]

Marine aircraft were on station when Marine ground forces resumed their forward movement at 0830 on the morning of 22 April. A CCF prisoner taken that very afternoon confirmed previous POW statements that the 22d was the opening day of the Fifth Phase Offensive. The front was quiet, however, as the three Marine infantry regiments advanced almost at will.

A motorized patrol of Division Reconnaissance Company, led by the commanding officer, Major Robert L. Autrey, had the initial contact with the enemy while advancing on the Division left flank. The two platoons, supported by Marine tanks, found their first indications when searching a Korean roadside hut. Although the natives denied having seen any Chinese soldiers, Corporal Paul G. Martin discovered about 50 hidden rice bowls waiting to be washed. Upon being confronted with this evidence, the terrified Koreans admitted that Chinese soldiers had reconnoitred the area just before dawn.

Farther up the road, an ammunition dump of hidden mortar shells was discovered. The enemy had also put up several crude propaganda signs with such sentiments as YOUR FOLKS LIKE SEE YOU HOME and HALT! FORWARD MEANS DEATH.

The patrol dismounted and proceeded with caution, guided by an OY overhead. Although the “choppers” were the favored aircraft of VMO-6, the OYs also earned the gratitude of the troops on many an occasion such as this. The pilot gave the alarm just before hidden Communists opened fire. Thus the Marines of the patrol were enabled to take cover, and the tanks routed the enemy force with well placed 90mm shells.[11]

The KMCs met no resistance worth mentioning when they secured the town of Hwachon and the north bank of the Pukhan just west of the reservoir. Only light and scattered opposition awaited the 5th Marines (Colonel Richard M. Hayward) and the 7th Marines (Colonel Herman Nickerson, Jr.) on their way to the occupation of assigned objectives on Line QUANTICO.

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive
CCF Breakthrough Exposes Marine Flank

For weeks the Communist forces in Korea might have been compared to an antagonist backtracking to get set for taking aim with a shotgun. There could be no doubt, on the strength of daily G-2 reports, about both barrels being loaded. And on the night of 22 April the enemy pulled the trigger.

The KMCs, after taking their objectives, reported a concentration of enemy small-arms fire. At 1800 the command of the 1st Marine Division directed a renewal of the advance at 0700, on the morning of the 23d. This order was cancelled at 2224 by a message calling for all Marine units to consolidate and patrol in zone, pending further instructions.[12]

One of the reasons for the sudden change was the receipt of a message by the 1st Marine Division at 2120, informing that the 6th ROK Division was under heavy attack to the west of the Marines. Meanwhile, an on-the-spot questioning of a CCF prisoner just taken by the KMCs convinced the command and staff of the 1st Marine Division that the CCF 5th Phase Offensive was only hours away and gathering momentum. Thanks to this timely interpretation, all forward Marine units were alerted two hours before the main blow fell.

It was on the left of the 1st Marine Division that the situation first became critical. The 6th ROK Division had never quite succeeded in closing up the gap on its right and restoring contact with the Marines. But this failure was trivial as compared to the collapse of the entire ROK division an hour before midnight, leaving a gap wide enough for a major breakthrough.

The 1st Marine Division took prompt measures to cope with the emergency. As early as 2130, the 1st Marines, in reserve just north of Chunchon, were alerted to move one battalion to contain a possible enemy threat to the Division left flank. A second message an hour later called for immediate execution. And at midnight the Division Provost Marshal was directed to stop ROK stragglers and place them under guard. The Division Reconnaissance Company received orders to aid the military police.[13]

Colonel Francis M. McAlister, commanding the 1st Marines, selected Lieutenant Colonel Robley E. West's 1st Battalion to carry out Division orders. "By midnight we were all on trucks and rolling on the roads north," wrote Second Lieutenant Joseph M. Reisler in a letter home. "Mile after mile, all the roads were covered with remnants of the ROKs who had fled. Thousands of them [were] straggling along the roads in confusion."[14]

Despite these preparations for trouble on the left flank, the KMCs on the right and the 5th Marines in the center were first in the Division to come under attack. During the last minutes of 22 April the 2d KMC Battalion had it hot and heavy on Hill 509. To the left the 1st KMC Battalion, partially encircled, notified the 5th Marines of a penetration.

The effects were felt immediately by 1/5, with its CP in Hwachon. Hill 313 was the key to the town, being located at the Hwachon end of a long ridge forming a natural avenue of approach from the northeast. Captain James T. Cronin's Baker Company of 1/5 had the responsibility for protecting the CP and shifting troops to the right flank if necessary. He sent Second Lieutenant Harvey W. Nolan's platoon to run a race with the enemy for the occupation of Hill 313. Attached in excess of T/O for familiarization was Second Lieutenant Patrick T. McGahn.[15]

About 220 yards from the summit the slope was so steep that the Marines clawed their way upward on hands and knees. The company commander posted the attached light machine gun section while Nolan, McGahn, and Sergeant William Piner organized the assault. The three squads of riflemen advanced a few yards, only to be pinned down by well directed CCF machine gun fire. Another rush brought the Marines closer to the enemy but a

stalemate ensued in the darkness. Seven of the platoon were killed and 17 wounded.

The situation in the 1/5 area was so serious that Fox Company of 2/5 (Lieutenant Colonel Glen E. Martin) sent reinforcements. At dawn, however, Hill 313 proved to be abandoned by the enemy. A vigorous KMC counterstroke had swept the Communists from Hill 509, so that the front was relatively quiet in this area. The courage and determination of the KMC Regiment were praised by General Smith, who sent this message on the morning of the 23d to Colonel Kim, the commanding officer:

"Congratulate you and your fine officers and men on dash and spirit in maintaining your positions against strong enemy attacks. We are proud of the Korean Marines."[16]

It is taking no credit away from the KMCs and 5th Marines to point out that they appear to have been hit by enemy holding attacks. The main CCF effort was directed at the left of the Division line, held by the 7th Marines.

The heaviest fighting took place in the sector of 1/7 on the extreme left, commanded by Major Webb D. Sawyer. It was obvious that the enemy planned to widen the penetration made at the expense of the 6th ROK Division. The 358th Regiment of the 120th Division, CCF 40th Army, hurled nearly 2,000 men at the Marine battalion. Charlie Company, commanded by Captain Eugene H. Haffey, took the brunt of the assault.[17]

The thin battalion line bent under sheer weight of numbers. But it did not break. It held through three hours of furious fighting, with the support of Marine and Army artillery, until the 1st Battalion of the 1st Marines came up as reinforcements under the operational control of the 7th Marines. The newcomers took a position to the left of 1/7, so that the division flank was no longer completely "in the air."

This was one of the first examples of the Corps and Division maneuvering that played such a large part throughout in the blunting of the CCF offensive. Troops were not left to continue a desperate fight when a shift of units would ease the pressure.

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive
Marine Air in Support Everywhere

At first light on the 23d the FEAF Mosquitoes and fighter-bombers went into action. The Marines had four two-plane flights of Corsairs airborne before sun-up. VMF-323 responded to a call from Baker Company, 1/5, only to find that the enemy had abandoned Hill 313. A low-flying OY of VMO-6, commanded by Major D. W. McFarland, guided the Corsairs to the withdrawing Chinese, who were worked over thoroughly. VMF-214 planes meanwhile supported 1/7 in that battalion's desperate fight at the left of the line.[18]

A pilot's-eye view showed fighting in progress from one coast to another, although the enemy was making his main effort in the IX Corps sector. The U.S. 24th Infantry Division, to the left of the 6th ROK Division, was having to bend its right flank southward to defend against the CCF penetration. Toward the rear the 27th Brigade of the British Commonwealth Division, in IX Corps reserve, was being alerted to meet the Communists head on and bring the breakthrough to a halt.

Elements of the U.S. 24th and 25th Divisions on the edge of the Iron Triangle were giving ground slowly. Seoul was obviously an objective of CCF units that had crossed the Imjin in the moonlight. But General Ridgway had decided that the city was not to be abandoned. "Considerable importance was attached to the retention of Seoul," he explained at a later date, "as it then had more value psychologically than its acquisition had conferred when we were still south of the Han."[19]

Near the junction of X Corps and I ROK Corps the 7th ROK Division had been hard hit, although the enemy attack in this area was a secondary effort. Air support helped this unit to hold its own until it could be reinforced.

Of the 205 Marine aircraft sorties on 23 April, 153 went to support the fighting front. The 1st Marine Division received 42 of these CAS strikes; 24 went to the ROK 7th Division; 59 to I Corps to check the advance on Seoul; and 28 to pound the Communists crossings the Imjin.[20]

Only about 66 percent of the landing strip at K-3 (Pohang) could be used; the remainder was being repaired by the Seabees. In order to give the Panther jets more room, VMF-212 shifted its squadrons for two days to K-16 near Seoul. A detachment of VMF-323 planes from K-1 (Pusan) also made the move. Since K-16 was only 30 miles from the combat area along the Imjin, the Corsairs were able to launch their attacks and return for rearming and refueling in an hour or less.[21]

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive
Plugging the Gap on the Marine Left

At first light on 23 April the entire left flank of the 1st Marine Division lay exposed to the Chinese who had poured into the gap left by the disintegration of the 6th ROK Division. IX Corps orders called for the ROKs to reassemble on the KANSAS line, but most of them straggled from 10 to 14 miles behind the positions they held prior to the CCF attack. The 1st Marine Division ordered Reconnaissance Company to stop ROK stragglers at the river crossing, and several groups were turned back.

The reasons for the ROK collapse are variously given. Weak command and low morale have been blamed for the debacle, yet the shattered division did not lack for defenders. No less an authority than General Van Fleet declared himself ". . . reluctant to criticize the 6th ROK Division too severely. I do not believe they deliberately threw away their equipment—I am inclined to believe such equipment was abandoned due to the terrain, lack of roads and weight. Our check at the time indicated that the Korean soldiers held on to their hand weapons. It is interesting to know that General Chang who commanded 6th ROK Division at the time . . . is today [March 1958] Vice Chief of Staff of the Korean Army."[22]

As a first step toward setting up a defense in two directions, the 1st-Marine Division received orders from IX Corps to fall back to Line PENDLETON (Map 10). This was one of the Eighth Army lines assigned to such profusion that they resembled cracks in a pane of glass. PENDLETON ran generally southwest to northeast through the 7th Marines sector, then turned eastward just north of the town of Hwachon.
Click here to view map

By occupying this line, the 7th Marines could bend its left to the south in order to refuse that flank. Still farther to the south, the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 1st Marines were to take positions facing west. Thus the line of the 1st Marine Division would face west as much as north. On the center and right the KMCs and 5th Marines would find it necessary to withdraw only about 1,000 yards to take up their new positions.[23]

It was up to 1/1 to make the first move toward plugging the gap. At 0130 on the 23d Captain John Coffey's Baker Company led the way. Moving north in the darkness along the Pukhan and then west along a tributary, the long column of vehicles made its first stop about 1,000 yards from the assigned position. Here the 92d Armored Field Battalion, USA, was stationed in support of the 6th ROK Division and elements of the 1st Marine Division. The commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Leon F. Lavoie, was an old acquaintance of 1/1, having supported that battalion during the final days of the Chosin Reservoir breakout. Lavoie was held in high esteem by the Marines, who found it characteristic of him that in this fluid situation his cannoneers were formed into a tight defensive perimeter, ready to fight as infantry if need be.

Another Army artillery unit, the 987th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, had been roughly used by the Chinese who routed the ROK division. Losses in guns and equipment had resulted, and Coffey moved with his company about 1,500 yards to the west to assist in extricating from the mud all the 105s that could be saved. Resistance was encountered in the form of machine gun fire from Chinese who had set up a road block.[24]

Upon returning to 1/1, Coffey found it occupying what was in effect an outpost to the southwest of the 7th Marines. Baker Company was assigned to the left of Captain Robert P. Wray's Charlie Company, holding the curve of a horseshoe-shaped ridge, with Captain Thomas J. Bohannon's Able Company on the right. In support, along the comparatively level ground to the immediate rear, was Weapons Company (Major William L. Bates).

With 1/1 facing in three directions to block a CCF attack, 1/7 managed to disengage and withdraw through 3/7, which occupied a position on Line PENDLETON. VMO-6 helicopters and troops of 2/7 helped to

evacuate the 1/7 casualties incurred during the night's hard fighting.
Click here to view map

During the early morning hours of the 23d the Marines of 3/1 had boarded trucks to the village of Todun-ni (Map 11) on the west bank of the Pukhan. Their assigned position was Hill 902, a 3,000-foot height dominating the surrounding terrain. The Chinese also were interested in this piece of real estate, since it overlooked the river crossing of the 1st Marine Division. Pressure to beat the Communists to the crest mounted as NCOs urged the men to their utmost efforts over steep uphill trails.

The Marines won the race. Once in position, however, it was evident to Lieutenant Colonel Banning that three ridge lines leading up to the hill mass would have to be defended. This necessity imposed a triangular formation, and he placed Captain Horace L. Johnson's George Company at the apex, with First Lieutenant William J. Allert's How Company on the left, and First Lieutenant William Swanson's Item Company on the right. The heavy machine gems of Major Edwin A. Simmons' Weapons Company were distributed among the rifle companies and the 81mm mortars placed only 10 to 20 yards behind the front lines.[25]

The KMCs and 5th Marines completed their withdrawal without interference. Thus the line of the 1st Marine Division on the afternoon of 23 April might have been compared to a fishhook with the shank in the north and the barb curling around to the west and south. The three Marine battalions plugging the gap were not tied in physically. Major Maurice E. Roach's 3/7 was separated by an interval of 1,000 yards from 1/1, and the other two Marine battalions were 5,500 yards apart (Map 11). But at least the 1st Marine Division had formed a new front under fire and awaited the night's attacks with confidence.

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive
Repulse of Communist Attacks

Bugle calls and green flares at about 2000 announced the presence of the Chinese to the west of 1/1 on Horseshoe Ridge.

"They came on in wave after wave, hundreds of them," wrote Lieutenant Reisler, whose platoon held an outpost in advance of Charlie Company. "They were singing, humming and chanting, 'Awake, Marine. . . .' In the first rush they knocked out both our machine guns and wounded about 10 men, putting a big hole in our lines. We held for about 15 minutes, under mortar fire, machine gun fire, and those grenades—hundreds of grenades. There was nothing to do but withdraw to a better position, which I did. We pulled back about 50 yds. and set up a new line. All this was in the pitch-black night with Chinese cymbals crashing, horns blowing, and their god-awful yells."[26]

For four hours the attacks on Horseshoe Ridge were continuous, particularly along the curve held by Wray's company. He was reinforced during the night by squads sent from Coffey's and Bohannon's companies. Wray realized that the integrity of the battalion position depended on holding the curve of the ridge, but his main problem was bringing up enough ammunition. Men evacuating casualties to the rear returned with supplies, but the amount was all too limited until Corporal Leo Marquez appointed himself a one-man committee. His energy equalled his courage as he carried grenades and small-arms ammunition all night to the men on the firing line. Marquez emerged unhurt in spite of bullet holes through his cartridge belt, helmet, and a heel of his shoe.

About midnight it was the turn of 3/1. These Marines had dug in as best they could, but the position was too rocky to permit much excavation. Ammunition for the mortars had to be hand-carried from a point halfway up the hill.

Several hours of harrassing mortar fire preceded the CCF effort. George Company, at the apex of the ridge, was almost overwhelmed by the first Communist waves of assault. The courage of individual Marines shone forth in the ensuing struggle. Technical Sergeant Harold E. Wilson, second in command of the center platoon, suffered four painful wounds but remained in the fight, encouraging his men and guiding reinforcements from How Company as they arrived.[27]

Steady artillery support was provided by Colonel McAlister, who rounded up a jury-rigged liaison party and three forward observer teams composed mainly of officers from the 987th AFA Battalion. They registered 11th Marines and 987th Battalion defensive fires which had a large part in stopping the CCF attack as it lapped around George Company and hit How and Item on the other two ridges.

Colonel McAlister and Colonel Nickerson paid a visit to the CP of 1/1, which remained under the operational control of the 7th Marines until morning. The two regimental commanders arranged for artillery and tank support to cover the gap between 1/1 and 3/7.[28] The enemy, however, seemed to be wary about infiltrating between the three battalion outposts. This reluctance owed in large part to the deadly flat-trajectory fire of the 90mm rifles of Companies A and B of the 1st Tank Battalion, whose commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Holly F. Evans had relieved Lieutenant Colonel Harry T. Milne that day.

Attacks on 3/1 and 3/7 also continued throughout the night. At daybreak the close air support of Marine aircraft prevented further Communist efforts, though dug-in enemy groups remained within machine gun range. Identification of Chinese bodies at daybreak indicated that the 359th and 360th Regiments, 120th Division, 40th CCF Army, had been employed.

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive
Withdrawal to the KANSAS Line

Now came the problem for the three Marine battalions of letting loose of the tiger's tail. Corps orders were received on the morning of 24 April for all units of the Division to pull back to Line KANSAS. This was in accordance with General Ridgway's policy, continued by General Van Fleet, of attaching more importance to destruction of enemy personnel than the holding of military real estate.

Some of the most seriously wounded men of 1/1 required immediate evacuation, in spite of the obvious risks. A VMO-6 helicopter piloted by First Lieutenant Robert E. Matthewson attempted a landing at the base of Horseshoe Ridge. As he hovered over the panel markings, CCF small-arms fire mangled the tail rotor. The machine plunged to earth so badly damaged that it had to be destroyed. Matthewson emerged unhurt and waved off a helicopter flown by Captain H. G. McRay. Then the stranded pilot asked for a rifle and gave a good account of himself as an infantryman.[29]

While First Lieutenant Norman W. Hicks' second platoon fought as the rear guard, First Lieutenant Niel B. Mills' first platoon of Charlie Company led the attack down the hill, carrying the wounded behind. In an attempt to rout the Chinese from a flanking hill, Mills was wounded in the neck by a bullet that severed an artery. Corpsman E. N. Smith gripped the end of the artery between his fingers until a hemostat could be applied, thus saving the lieutenant's life. Just before losing consciousness, Mills looked at his watch. It was 1000 and 1/1 had weathered the storm.[30]

The 3d Battalion of the 7th Marines, which had beaten off probing attacks all night, coordinated its movements with those of the two Marine battalions as they slowly withdrew toward the Pukhan. Despite Marine air attacks, the Communists not only followed but infiltrated in sufficient numbers to threaten the perimeter of Lavoie's cannoneers. The training this Army officer had given his men in infantry tactics now paid off as the perimeter held firm while mowing down the attackers with point blank 105mm shells at a range of 1,000 yards. The Marines of Captain Bohannon's company soon got into the fight, and the 92d repaid the courtesy by supporting 1/1 and 3/7 during their withdrawal. Counted CCF dead numbered 179 at a cost to the 92d of 4 KIA and 11 WIA casualties.[31]

As the morning haze lifted, the OYs of VMO-6 spotted for both Army and Marine artillery. DEVASTATE BAKER fed close support to the forward air controllers as fast as it could get planes from K-16 at Seoul, only a 15-minute flight away. Not only 49 Corsairs but also 40 of the Navy ADs and Air Force F-51s and jets aided the Marine ground forces in their withdrawal to Line KANSAS. To speed the fighter-bombers to their targets, some of the Marine pilots were designated tactical air coordinators, airborne (TACA). Their familiarity with the terrain was an asset as they led incoming pilots to ground force units most in need of support.[32]

It was a confusing day in the air. The mutual radio frequencies to which planes and ground controllers were pretuned proved to be inadequate. The consequence was all too often the blocking out of key information at a frustrating moment. Haze and smoke made for limited vision. The planes needed a two-mile circle for their attacks, yet the battalions were at times less than 1,000 yards apart. DEVASTATE BAKER had to deal with this congested and dangerous situation as best it could.

In addition to its strong support of Marine ground forces, the 1st MAW sent 10 sorties to the ROKs in east Korea and 57 to I Corps in its battle along the Imjin. By this time the Gloucestershire Battalion of the 29th British Brigade was isolated seven miles behind enemy lines and receiving all supplies by air-drop. The outlook grew so desperate that officers ordered their men to break up and make their way back to the UN lines if they

could. Only 40 ever succeeded.

In the former 6th ROK Division sector units of the 27th Brigade of the British Commonwealth Division had done a magnificent job of stopping the breakthrough. The 2d Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the 3d Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment distinguished themselves in this fight, which won a Distinguished Unit Citation for the division.[33]

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive
Enemy Stopped in IX Corps Sector

Spring had come at last to war-ravaged Korea and the hills were a misty green in the sunshine. Looking down from an aircraft on the warm afternoon of 24 April 1951 the Marine sector resembled a human anthill. Columns of weary men toiled and strained in every direction. Chaotic as the scene may have seemed, however, everything had a purpose. The 1st Marine Division was in full control of all troop movements, despite enemy pressure of the last two nights.

The 5th Marines and KMCs had no opposition as they continued their withdrawal. Marine air reduced to a minimum the harassing efforts of the Chinese following the 1st Marines. As front-line units disengaged and fell back, the length of the main line of resistance was contracted enough for the 7th Marines to be assigned a reserve role. The 1st and 2d Battalions were given the responsibility for the defense of Chunchon as well as the crossing sites over the Pukhan and Soyang Rivers. Major Roach had reached the outskirts of Chunchon when 3/7 was ordered back across the Chunchon, to be attached to the 1st Marines on the left flank.[34]

Throughout the night of 24-25 April the enemy probed the Marine lines, seeking in vain a weak spot where a penetration could be made. It was already evident that the breakthrough in this area had given the Communists only a short-lived advantage. By the third night they were definitely stopped. Only minor patrol actions resulted except for two attacks in company strength on 2/1 at 0050 and 0150. Both were repulsed with total CCF losses of 25 counted dead.

Contrary to the usual rule, the Marines saw more action during the daylight hours. A company-size patrol from 1/1 became heavily engaged at 1350 and three Company A tanks moved up in support. The fight lasted until 1645, when the enemy broke off action and the tanks evacuated 18 wounded Marines.

Early in the afternoon a 3/1 patrol had advanced only 200 yards along a ridgeline when it was compelled to withdraw after running into concentrated mortar and machine gun fire. Sporadic mortar rounds continued until a direct hit was scored on the battalion CP, wounding Colonel McAlister, Lieutenant Colonel Banning, Major Reginald R. Myers, the executive officer, and Major Joseph D. Trompeter, the S-3. Banning and Myers were evacuated and Trompeter assumed command of 3/1.

Losses of 18 KIA and 82 WIA for 24-25 April brought the casualties of the 1st Marines to nearly 300 during the past 48 hours.[35]

A simple ceremony was held at the 1st Marine Division CP on the afternoon of the 24th for the relief of General Smith by Major General Gerald C. Thomas. The new commanding general, a native of Missouri, was educated at Illinois Wesleyan University and enlisted in the Marine Corps in May 1917 at the age of 23. Awarded the Silver Star for bravery at Belleau Wood and Soissons, he was commissioned just before the Meuse-Argonne offensive, in which he was wounded.

During the next two decades, Thomas chased bandits in Haiti, guarded the U.S. mails, protected American interests in China, and served as naval observer in Egypt when Rommel knocked at the gates of Alexandria in 1941. As operations officer and later chief of staff of the 1st Marine Division, he participated in the Guadalcanal campaign in 1942. The next year he became chief of staff of I Marine Amphibious Corps in the Bougainville operation. Returning to Marine Headquarters in 1944 as Director of Plans and Policies, he was named commanding general of the Marines in China three years later.

General Smith had won an enduring place in the hearts of all Marines for his magnificent leadership as well as resourceful generalship during the Inchon-Seoul and Chosin Reservoir campaigns. Speaking of the

Marines of April 1951, he paid them this tribute in retrospect:

"The unit commanders and staff of the Division deserve great credit for the manner in which they planned and conducted the operations which resulted in blunting the Chinese counteroffensive in our area. In my opinion, it was the most professional job performed by the Division while it was under my command."[36]

The night of 25-26 April passed in comparative quiet for the Marines. A few CCF probing attacks and occasional mortar rounds were the extent of the enemy's activity. All Marine units had now reached the modified Line KANSAS, but General Van Fleet desired further withdrawals because the enemy had cut a lateral road.

IX Corps also directed that the 1st Marine Division be prepared on the 26th to move back to Chunchon, where it would defend along the south bank of the Soyang until service units could move out their large supply dumps. The Division was to tie in on the right with the lower extension of the Hwachon Reservoir, and contact was made in that quarter with the French battalion of the 2d Infantry Division, X Corps. On the Marine left flank the 5th Cavalry of the 1st Cavalry Division had relieved elements of the British Commonwealth Division.

Marine regimental officers met with Colonel Bowser, G-3, to plan the continued withdrawal. It was decided that four infantry battalions —1/1, 2/1, 3/5, and 3/7—were to take positions on the west bank of the Pukhan to protect the Mojin bridge and ferry sites while the other units crossed. The execution of the plan went smoothly, without enemy interference. After all other Marine troops were on the east side, 3/7 disengaged last of all and forded the chest-deep stream as a prelude to hiking to Chunchon.[37]

The enemy was kept at a discreet distance throughout the night by continuous artillery fires supplemented by ripples from Captain Eugene A. Bushe's Battery C, 1st 4.5" Rocket Battalion. An acute shortage of trucks made it necessary for most of the troops to hike. Then came the task of organizing the new Division defenses on a line running northeast and southwest through the northern outskirts of Chunchon (Map 10). Planning continued meanwhile for further withdrawals to positions astride the Hongchon-Chunchon MSR.[38]

It was apparent by this time that the enemy had been badly mauled on the IX Corps front. The Communists were now making a supreme effort to smash through in the I Corps area and capture Seoul. It was believed that they had set themselves the goal of taking the city by May Day, the world-wide Communist holiday.

In this aspiration they were destined to be disappointed. They tried to work around the Eighth Army's left flank by crossing the river Han to the Kimpo Peninsula, but air strikes and the threat of naval gunfire frustrated them. Another flanking attempt 35 miles to the southeast met repulse, and before the end of the month it was evident that the Chinese Reds would not celebrate May Day in Seoul.

Generally speaking, the Eighth Army had kept its major units intact and inflicted frightful losses on the enemy while trading shell-pocked ground for Chinese lives. The night of 27-28 April saw little activity on the IX Corps front, adding to the evidence that the enemy had shot his bolt. The next day the 1st Marine Division, along with other Eighth Army forces, continued the withdrawal to the general defensive line designated NO NAME Line (Map 10). Further withdrawals were not contemplated, asserted the IX Corps commander, who sent this message to General Thomas:

"It is the intention of CG Eighth Army to hold firmly on general defense line as outlined in my Operation Plan 17 and my message 9639, and from this line to inflict maximum personnel casualties by an active defense utilizing artillery and sharp armored counterattacks. Withdrawal south of this line will be initiated only on personal direction of Corps commander."[39]

FEAF placed the emphasis on armed reconnaissance or interdiction flights for Marine aircraft during the last few days of April. 1st MAW pilots reported the killing or wounding of 312 enemy troops on the 29th and 30th, and the destruction of 212 trucks, 6 locomotives, and 80 box cars. On the other side of the ledger, the Wing lost a plane a day during the first eight days of the CCF offensive. Of the fliers shot down, five were killed, one was wounded seriously but rescued by helicopter, and two returned safely from enemy-held territory.[40]

The shortage of vehicles slowed the withdrawal of Marine ground forces, but by the 30th the 5th

Marines, KMC Regiment, and 7th Marines were deployed from left to right on NO NAME Line. The 1st Marines went into reserve near Hongchon. On the Division left was the reorganized 6th ROK Division, and on the right the 2d Infantry Division of X Corps.[41]

Nobody was in a better position to evaluate Marine maneuvers of the past week than Colonel Bowser, the G-3, and he had the highest praise. “Whereas the Chosin withdrawal was more spectacular than the April ‘retrograde,’” he commented seven years later, “the latter was executed so smoothly and efficiently that a complex and difficult operation was made to look easy. The entire Division executed everything asked of it with the calm assurance of veterans.”[42]

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Chapter 6. The CCF Spring Offensive
1st Marine Division Returns to X Corps

UN estimates of enemy casualties ranged from 70,000 to 100,000. The Fifth Phase Offensive was an unmitigated defeat for the Communists so far, but EUSAK G-2 officers warned that this was only the first round. Seventeen fresh CCF divisions were available for the second.

General Van Fleet called a conference or corps commanders on 30 April to discuss defensive plans. In the reshuffling of units the 1st Marine Division was placed for the third time in eight months under the operational control of X Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond. The Marines were to occupy the western sector of X Corps after its boundary with IX Corps had been shifted about 12 miles to the west.[43]

Van Fleet put into effect a reshuffling of units all the way across the peninsula in preparation for the expected renewal of the CCF offensive. Thus on 1 May the UN line was as follows from left to right:

US I Corps—1 ROK Division, 1st Cavalry Division and 25th Infantry Division in line; the 3d Infantry Division and British 29th Brigade in reserve;

US IX Corps—British 27th Brigade, 24th Infantry Division, 5th and 6th ROK Divisions and 7th Infantry Division in line; the 187th Airborne RCT in reserve;

US X Corps—1st Marine Division, 2d Infantry Division, 5th and 7th ROK Divisions;

ROK III Corps—9th and 3d Divisions;

ROK I Corps—Capitol Division and ROK 11th Division.

"I don't want to lose a company—certainly not a battalion," Van Fleet told the corps commanders. "Keep units intact. Small units must be kept within supporting distance. . . . Give every consideration to the use of armor and infantry teams for a limited objective counterthrust. For greater distances, have ready and use when appropriate, regiments of infantry protected by artillery and tanks."[44]

From the foxhole to the command post a confident new offensive spirit animated an Eight Army which only four months previously had been recuperating from two major reverses within two months. The Eighth Army, in short, had been welded by fire into one of the finest military instruments of American military history; and the foreign units attached to it proved on the battlefield that they were picked troops.

With the Hwachon dam now in enemy hands, the Communists had the capability of closing the gates, thus lowering the water level in the Pukhan and Han rivers to fording depth. As a countermeasure, EUSAK asked the Navy to blast the dam. It was a difficult assignment, but Douglas AD Skyraiders from the *Princeton* successfully torpedoed the flood gates on 1 May.[45]

An atmosphere of watchful waiting prevailed during the next two weeks as the Marines on NO NAME Line improved their defensive positions and patrolled to maintain contact with the enemy. Eighth Army evolved at this time the "patrol base" concept to deal with an enemy retiring beyond artillery range. These bases were part of a screen, called the outpost line of resistance (OPLR), established in front of the MLR. Their mission was to maintain contact with the enemy by means of patrols, give warning of an impending attack, and delay its progress as much as possible.

When it came to artillery ammunition, the 11th Marines found that it had progressed from a famine to a feast. Where shells had recently been rationed because of transport difficulties, the Eighth Army now directed the cannoneers along NO NAME Line to expend a unit of fire a day. The 11th Marines protested, since the infantry was seldom in contact with the enemy. One artillery battalion submitted a tongue-in-cheek report to the effect that the required amount of ammunition had been fired "in target areas cleared of friendly patrols."[46] The requirement

was kept in force, however, until the demands of the renewed CCF offensive resulted in another ammunition shortage for the 11th Marines.

Marine tanks were directed by Division to use their 90mm rifles to supplement 11th Marine howitzers in carrying out Corps fire plans. The tankers protested that their tubes had nearly reached the end of a normal life expectancy, with no replacements in sight. This plaint did not fall upon deaf ears at Corps Headquarters and two Army units, the 96th AFA Battalion and 17th FA Battalion, were assigned to fire the deep missions.[47]

Eighth Army staff officers concluded that the enemy would launch his next effort in the center. Intelligence, according to General Van Fleet, "had noted for some 2 weeks prior to the May attack that the Chinese Communists were shifting their units to the east." Nevertheless, the blow fell "much farther east than [was] expected." [48]

Although the east offered the best prospects of surprise, a rugged terrain of few roads imposed grave logistical handicaps on the enemy. Moreover, UN warships dominated the entire eastern littoral. Despite these disadvantages, an estimated 125,000 Chinese attacked on the morning of 16 May 1951 in the area of the III and I ROK Corps between the U.S. 2d Infantry Division and the coast. Six CCF divisions spearheaded an advance on a 20-mile front that broke through the lines of the 5th and 7th ROK Divisions. Pouring into this gap, the Communists made a maximum penetration of 30 miles that endangered the right flank of the U.S. 2d Infantry Division.

General Van Fleet took immediate steps to stabilize the front. In one of the war's most remarkable maneuvers he sent units of the 3d Infantry Division, then in reserve southeast of Seoul, on a 70-mile all-night ride in trucks to the threatened area.[49]

The 1st Marine Division was not directly in the path of the enemy advance. During the early morning hours of 17 May, however, an enemy column made a thrust that apparently was intended as an end-run attack on the left flank of the 2d Infantry Division. Avoiding initially the Chunchon-Hongchon highway, Chinese in estimated regimental strength slipped behind the patrol base set up by a KMC company just west of the MSR (Map 12).

Click here to view map

For several days Colonel Nickerson and his executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond G. Davis, had been apprehensive over the security of this road on which the 7th Marines depended for logistical support. On the afternoon of the 17th they pulled back Lieutenant Colonel Bernard T. Kelly's 3/7 (less Company G) to establish a blocking position, generally rectangular in shape, at the vital Morae-Kogae pass on the Chunchon road. This move was not completed until sunset and George Company did not rejoin the battalion until midnight, so that the enemy probably had no intelligence of the new position. The main road ran along a shelf on one shoulder of the pass, but the Chinese avoided it and came by a trail from the northwest (Map 12).

The surprise was mutual. A platoon of D/Tanks, a Weapons Company platoon, and an Item Company platoon, defending the northern end of the perimeter, opened up with everything they had. A desperate fire fight ensued as the enemy replied with a variety of weapons—mortars, recoilless rifles, satchel charges, grenades, and machine guns.

Two CCF soldiers were killed after disabling a Marine tank by a grenade explosion in the engine compartment. A satchel charge knocked out another tank, and the enemy made an unsuccessful attempt to kill a third by rolling up a drum of gasoline and igniting it.

Captain Victor Stoyanow's Item Company, at the critical point of the thinly stretched 3/7 perimeter, was hard-pressed. The enemy made a slight penetration into one platoon position but was repulsed by a counterattack that Stoyanow led. Marine infantry and tanks were well supported by artillery that sealed off the Chinese column from the rear. The action ended at daybreak with the routed enemy seeking only escape as Marine artillery and mortars continued to find lucrative targets. Air did not come on station until about 1030, when it added to the

slaughter. Scattered enemy groups finally found a refuge in the hills, leaving behind 82 prisoners and 112 counted dead. Captures of enemy equipment included mortars, recoilless rifles, and Russian 76mm guns and machine guns. Friendly losses were 7 KIA and 19 WIA.[50]

1st MAW squadrons were kept busy furnishing close air support to the 2d Infantry Division and the two ROK divisions hit by the enemy's May offensive. Because of the patrolling Marine sector, the OYs of VMO-6 took over much of the task of controlling air strikes. They flew cover for the infantry-tank patrols, and in the distant areas controlled almost as many air strikes as they did artillery missions. From the 1st to the 23d of May, VMO-6 observers controlled 54 air strikes involving 189 UN planes—159 Navy and Marine F4Us, F9Fs, and ADs, and 30 Air Force F-80s, F-84s, and F-51s. About 40 percent of the aircraft controlled by the OYs were non-Marine planes.[51]

On the 18th the 1st Marine Division, carrying out X Corps orders, began a maneuver designed to aid the U.S. 2d Infantry Division on the east by narrowing its front. The 7th Marines pulled back to NO NAME Line to relieve the 1st Marines, which side-slipped to the east to take over an area held by the 9th Infantry. The 5th Marines then swung around from the Division left flank to the extreme right and relieved another Army regiment, the 38th Infantry. This permitted the 2d Infantry Division to face east and repulse attacks from that direction.

By noon on 19 May the enemy's renewed Fifth Phase Offensive had lost most of its momentum as CCF supplies dwindled to a trickle along a tenuous line of communications. That same day, when Colonel Wilburt S. Brown took over the command of the 1st Marines from Colonel McAlister, all four Marine regiments were in line—from left to right, the KMCs, the 7th Marines, the 1st Marines, and the 5th Marines. A new NO NAME Line ran more in a east-west direction than the old one with its northeast to southwest slant. Thus in the east of the Marine sector the line was moved back some 4,000 yards while remaining virtually unchanged in the west.

Enough enemy pressure was still being felt by the 2d Infantry Division so that General Van Fleet ordered a limited offensive by IX Corps to divert some of the CCF strength. While the rest of the 1st Marine Division stood fast, the KMC Regiment advanced with IX Corps elements.

At the other end of the line the Marines had the second of their two fights during the CCF offensive. Major Morse L. Holliday's 3/5 became engaged at 0445 on the 20th with elements of the 44th CCF Division. Chinese in regimental strength were apparently on the way to occupy the positions of the Marine battalion, unaware of its presence.

This mistake cost them dearly when 3/5 opened up with every weapon at its disposal while requesting the support of Marine air, rockets, and artillery. The slaughter lasted until 0930, when the last of the routed Chinese escaped into the hills. Fifteen were taken prisoner and 152 dead were counted in front of the Marine positions.[52]

From 20 May onward, it grew more apparent every hour that the second installment of the CCF Fifth Phase Offensive had failed even more conclusively than the first. The enemy had only a narrow penetration on a secondary front to show for ruinous casualties. Worse yet, from the Chinese viewpoint, the UN forces were in a position to retaliate before the attackers recovered their tactical balance. The Eighth Army had come through with relatively light losses, and it was now about to seize the initiative.

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Punchbowl

ONLY FROM THE AIR could the effects of the UN counterstroke of May and June 1951 be fully appreciated. It was more than a CCF withdrawal; it was a flight of beaten troops under very little control in some instances. They were scourged with bullets, rockets, and napalm as planes swooped down upon them like hawks scattering chickens. And where it had been rare for a single Chinese soldier to surrender voluntarily, remnants of platoons, companies, and even battalions were now giving up after throwing down their arms.

There had been nothing like it before, and its like would never be seen in Korea again. The enemy was on the run! General Van Fleet, after his retirement, summed up the double-barreled Chinese spring offensive and the UN counterstroke in these words:

"We met the attack and routed the enemy. We had him beaten and could have destroyed his armies. Those days are the ones most vivid in my memory—great days when all the Eighth Army, and we thought America too, were inspired to win. In those days in Korea we reached the heights."[1]

Communist casualties from 15 to 31 May were estimated by the Eighth Army at 105,000. This figure included 17,000 counted dead and the unprecedented total of some 10,000 prisoners, most of them Chinese Reds taken during the last week of the month in frantic efforts to escape. Such results were a vast departure from past occasions when Mao Tse-tung's troops had preferred death to surrender.

In all probability, only the mountainous terrain saved them from a complete debacle. If the Eighth Army had been able to use its armor for a mechanized pursuit, it might have struck blows from which the enemy could not recover. As it was, the Communists escaped disaster by virtue of the fact that a platoon could often stand off a company or even a battalion by digging in and defending high ground commanding the only approach. Every hill was a potential Thermopylae in this craggy land of few roads.

It was the misfortune of the 1st Marine Division to have perhaps the least lucrative zone of action in all Korea for the peninsula-wide turkey shoot. A chaos of jagged peaks and dark, narrow valleys, the terrain alone was enough to limit an advance. Even so, the Marines inflicted 1,870 counted KIA casualties on the Communists in May and captured 593, most of them during the last eight days of the month.

General Almond congratulated the Division for its accomplishment of "a most arduous battle task. You have denied [the enemy] the opportunity of regrouping his forces and forced him into a hasty retreat; the destruction of enemy forces and materiel has been tremendous and many times greater than our own losses."[2]

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack
Light Resistance at First

Priority of air support on 31 August was assigned to the two KMC battalions. They jumped off in column against light to moderate resistance, with Hill 924 as their first objective. Mine fields gave the KMCs more trouble at first than scattered NKPA mortar and machine gun fire. Forward movement and maneuver were restricted as 1/KMC passed through 3/KMC at 1445 to continue the attack against stiffening resistance.

On the right 3/7 also encountered light resistance in the morning which increased as the assault troops neared the objective. The slopes of Hill 702 proved to be heavily mined, and forward elements of 3/7 were hit by a concentration of mortar and artillery fire.

East of the river, on the regimental right flank, where Objective 1 had been occupied without a fight, 1/7 supported the attack of 3/7 with mortar fire. Both 3/7 and the KMCs were within 1,000 yards of their objectives late in the afternoon when a halt was called for the day. Casualties had been light, thanks in large measure to excellent air and artillery support.

When the attack was resumed on 1 September, 3/KMC moved through positions of 3/7 to reach, a ridgeline on the flank of the regimental objective. While 3/KMC advanced from the northeast, 1/KMC closed in from the southeast. Both battalions took heavy losses from enemy mines and mortars as well as machine guns and automatic weapons fired from hidden bunkers. The converging attack made slow but steady progress, however, until one company of 3/KMC drove within 200 meters of the top of Hill 924 at 1700. Even so, it took four more hours of hard fighting to secure the objective. That evening 2/KMC was relieved of its defensive responsibility along the KANSAS Line by 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, enabling the KMC battalion to join in the attack.

Throughout the day 3/7 slugged it out in the vicinity of 702 with an NKPA battalion. Four counterattacks were launched from Hill 602, the northeastern fork of YOKE Ridge. More than 500 men were employed in this effort, some of them penetrating briefly into 3/7 positions. Two air strikes, called by patrols of 1/7 from across the river, helped to break up the main NKPA attack, and the 11th Marines (Colonel Custis Burton, Jr.), poured in a deadly concentration of artillery fire. Lieutenant Colonel B. T. Kelly's battalion continued to be engaged until dusk.

The tenacity of the NKPA defense was demonstrated at the expense of the KMCs when they were driven from the top of Hill 924 by a surprise enemy counterattack at midnight. The Korean Marines came back strongly at daybreak and a terrific fight ensued before the North Koreans were in turn evicted shortly before noon. As a measure of the artillery assistance rendered, Major Gordon R. Worthington's 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, fired 1,682 rounds of 105 ammunition in support of the KMC's during the 24 hours ending at 1800 on 2 September. During the same period Lieutenant Colonel William McReynold's 3/11 fired 1,400 rounds in support of 3/7. The other battalions of the Marine artillery regiment, reinforced by the 196th, 937th, and 780th Field Artillery Battalions, USA, brought the number of rounds to a grand total of 8,400 for this 24-hour period.

After the securing of Hill 924, the 2d Battalion of the KMC Regiment passed through the 1st and 3d Battalions to spearpoint the attack west toward Hill 1026. In the zone of 3/7, an NKPA counterattack was repulsed at 0700 on 2 September. Two hours later George Company, supported by How Company with mortar and machine gun fire, moved out to resume the attack on Hill 602. Lieutenant Colonel B. T. Kelly ordered his battalion heavy machine guns set up in battery to deliver overhead supporting fires.

In slightly less than two hours the Marines of 3/7 swept the crest of Hill 602, securing Division Objective 2. Three company-size enemy counterattacks were repulsed before the North Koreans withdrew to the north at

1500.

The 2d KMC Battalion fought its way to a point within 800 yards of Hill 1026 before dusk. So aggressive and persistent was the NKPA defense that several light enemy probing attacks were launched during the night of 2-3 September, not only against forward Marine elements but also against the 5th Marines units on the KANSAS Line, 5 miles to the rear. The front was where you found it.

While 3/7 constructed emplacements and obstacles on Hill 602, the KMCs continued their attack on the morning of 3 September toward Hill 1026. With the extending of the 7th Marines zone to the left to decrease the width of the KMC front, 2/7 was brought up from regimental reserve to help cover a new sector that included Hill 924.

The attack led by 2/KMC collided with a large-scale enemy counterattack. It was nip and tuck for 3 1/2 hours before the North Koreans broke, but, by midmorning, the KMCs were in possession of Division Objective 3 and consolidating for defense. They were not a moment too soon in these preparations, for the enemy counterattacked at 1230 and put up a hot fight for two hours before retiring.

This action completed the battle for Corps Objective YOKE. At 1800 on 3 September, the 1st Marine Division was in full possession of the HAYS Line, dominating the entire northern rim of the Punch-bowl (Map 18). Reports from the U.S. 2d Infantry Division and 5th ROK Division, attacking in sectors to the west, indicated that the pressure exerted by the Marines was assisting these units. Large gains had been made on the west side of the Punchbowl against comparatively light resistance.

On 4 September, with all objectives consolidated, 1st Marine Division units patrolled northward from defensive positions. Plans were being formed for the second phase of the Division attack—the advance to seize the next series of commanding ridgelines, 4,000 to 7,000 yards forward of the present MLR.

The victory in the four-day battle had not been bought cheaply. A total of 109 Marine KIA and 494 WIA (including KMCs) was reported. NKPA casualties for the period were 656 counted KIA and 40 prisoners.

As evidence that the enemy had profited by the breathing spell during the Kaesong truce talks, it was estimated that NKPA artillery fire in the Punchbowl sector almost equalled the firepower provided by the organic Marine artillery and the guns of attached U.S. Army units. NKPA strength in mortars and machine guns also compared favorably with that of Marines.

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Punchbowl
Plan to Cut Off Communists

The 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team, released from IX Corps reserve, arrived in the Hongchon area on 21 May and took a position between the 1st Marine Division on the left and the 2d Infantry Division on the right. Two days later X Corps gave the Marines the mission of securing the important road center of Yanggu at the eastern end of the Hwachon Reservoir (Map 13). Elements of the 2d Infantry Division, with the 187th Airborne RCT attached, were meanwhile to drive northeast to Inje after establishing a bridgehead across the river Soyang. From Inje the 187th (reinforced) would continue to advance northeast toward its final objective, Kansong on the coast. After linking up with I ROK Corps, the Army regiment might be able to pull the drawstring on a tremendous bag of prisoners—all the CCF forces south of the Inje-Kansong road. There was, however, a big "if" in the equation. The Communists were falling back with all haste, and it was a question whether the bag could be closed in time.

Click here to view map

The 1st Marine Division jumped off at 0800 on 23 May with the 1st and 5th Marines abreast, the 1st on the left. Both regiments advanced more than 5,000 yards against negligible opposition. During the course of this attack the 1st Marines experimented by calling an air strike in the hope of detonating an entire mine field. The results were disappointing. Live mines were blown to new locations, thus changing the pattern, but few exploded. [3]

The 7th Marines was relieved on the 23d by elements of the 7th Infantry Division (IX Corps) and moved to the east for employment on the Marine right flank. The KMC Regiment, relieved by other IX Corps units, went into Division reserve.[4]

The 1st Marines, advancing on the left, reached its objectives, about two-thirds of the way to the Soyang, by noon on the 26th. The regiment reverted to Division reserve upon relief by the KMCs. In the right half of the Division zone, resistance gradually stiffened. On the 24th, the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 5th Marines ran into trouble as they started their advance toward their initial objective, three hills about 7,000 yards north of Hangye (Map 12). Both battalions were slowed by heavy enemy mortar and machine gun fire. They requested immediate artillery and air support.

Captain John A. Pearson, commanding Item Company, could observe the enemy on Hill 1051, holding up the attack with flanking fire. He directed air and artillery on the crest and on the Communists dug in along the southeastern slopes. Soon the enemy troops were seen retiring northward. This eased the pressure on the center, and Captain Samuel S. Smith's Dog Company managed to work forward and gain the summit of Hill 883 by 1300. Tanks moved up in support and at midnight Colonel Hayward reported his portion of the Division objective secured.[5]

The 7th Marines, moving forward in the right rear of the 5th, veered to the left and drove into the center of the Division zone, reaching the southern bank of the Soyang by nightfall on the 26th. That same day 2/7 overran an enemy ammunition dump and took 27 CCF prisoners, some of them wounded men who had been left behind. The captured material included 100,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition, 12,000 rounds of mortar ammunition, 1,000 rounds of artillery ammunition, 6,000 pounds of explosive charges, and 9,000 hand grenades.

Five U.S. trucks and jeeps were "released to higher headquarters." Two CCF trucks, two mules, and a horse were "integrated into the battalion transportation system and profitably employed thereafter."[6]

The 187th Airborne RCT reported on the 24th that its advance was being held up by increasing enemy

resistance.[7] It was already evident that the CCF flight had frustrated the plan of cutting off decisively large numbers in the X Corps zone. Air observation established, however, that hundreds of Chinese Reds had merely escaped from the frying pan into the fire. By fleeing westward along the south shore of the Hwachon Reservoir, they stumbled into the IX Corps zone. There the remnants of whole units surrendered, in some instances without striking a blow. Along the route they were pitilessly attacked by UN aircraft. 1st MAW units had never before known such good hunting as during the last week in May 1951.[8]

Despite the “murky instrument weather” of 27 May the all-weather fighters of VMF(N)-513 reported the killing of an estimated 425 CCF soldiers. Two F7F pilots killed or wounded some 200 Chinese Reds in the I Corps zone. On the following day the 1st MAW claimed a total of 454 KIA casualties inflicted on the enemy.[9]

Estimates of enemy dead by pilots are likely to be over-optimistic, but there can be no doubt that UN aircraft slaughtered the fleeing Communists in large numbers. Only poor flying weather saved the enemy from far worse casualties. So intent were the Chinese on escape that they violated their usual rule of making troop movements only by night. When the fog and mist cleared briefly, Marine pilots had glimpses of CCF units crowding the roads without any attempt at concealment. Napalm, bombs, and machine guns left heaps of dead and wounded as the survivors continued their flight, hoping for a return of fog and mist to protect them.

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Punchbowl
Initial Marine Objectives Secured

As the Marine ground forces advanced, they found fewer and fewer Chinese Reds opposing them. The explanation was given by a prisoner from the 12th Division, V Corps, of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA). His unit had the mission, he said, of relieving troops in the Yanggu-Inje area and conducting delaying actions. The purpose was to allow CCF units to escape a complete disaster and dig in farther north. The North Koreans, in short, were being sacrificed in rear guard delaying actions in order that the Chinese Reds might save their own skins.

U.S. interrogators asked NKPA prisoners why they put up with such treatment. The answer was that they couldn't help themselves. The Chinese had impressed them into service, armed them, and trained them after the NKPA collapse in the fall of 1950. They were under the thumb of political commissars holding life and death authority over them. Any NKPA soldier suspected of trying to shirk his duty or escape was certain to be shot like a dog. At least the man on the firing line had a chance to come out alive; the man who defied the system had none.

This attitude accounts to a large extent for the many occasions when NKPA troops literally resisted to the last man in delaying actions. Marines in general, judging by their comments, considered the Chinese Red the better all-around soldier; but they credited the Korean Red with more tenacity on the defensive.

Because of the stubborn NKPA opposition in East Korea, the Eighth Army staff and command gave some thought to the possibility of an amphibious operation in the enemy's rear by the 1st Marine Division. Plans were discussed on 28 May for a landing at Tongchon (Map 8). The Marines were to drive southward along the Tongchon-Kumhwa road to link up with the IX Corps units attacking toward the northeast along the same route. After meeting, the two forces would systematically destroy the pocketed enemy units. It was decided that 6 June would be D-day. And then, to the great disappointment of Generals Thomas and Almond, the plan was suddenly cancelled by EUSAK on 29 May after a single day's consideration.[10]

Another scheme for cutting off large enemy forces was abandoned on 28 May when the 187th Airborne got as far as Inje. Most of the CCF units having escaped, this regiment was given a new mission of securing the high ground to the north of Inje.

During the last five days of May the 5th and 7th Marines continued to advance steadily. On the morning of the 31st the 7th faced the task of breaking through a stubbornly contested pass leading into Yanggu. With a battalion on each ridge leading into the pass, Colonel Nickerson found it a slow yet precarious prelude to get the men down. Adding to their trials were some 500 enemy 76mm and mortar shells received by the regiment.

General Van Fleet, an onlooker while visiting the 7th Marines OP, shook his head wonderingly. "How did you ever get the men up those cliffs?" he asked Colonel Nickerson.

The answer was short and simple. "General," said the regimental commander, "they climbed."

As the day wore on, Nickerson called for what his executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Davis, described as "a through-the-middle play. A company of tanks [Company C, 1st Tank Battalion, commanded by Captain Richard M. Taylor] was launched up the road with infantry on foot hugging the protective cover of the steep road embankments. As the tanks drew fire, the infantry could spot the source and . . . quickly cleaned the enemy out. This rapid thrust caused the enemy defenders to flee as fire was poured into them from our center force as well as the flank attackers."[11]

By nightfall on the 31st the 7th Marines had control of Yanggu, its airfield, and the hills surrounding that

burnt-out town. The 5th Marines had reached a point 6,000 yards northeast of Yanggu, astride the north-south ridgeline between that road center and Inje.

Losses for the 1st Marine Division in May added up to 75 KIA, 8 DOW, and 731 WIA. The ratio of wounded to killed, it may be noted, is more than nine-to-one. This proportion, so much more favorable than the usual ratio, rose to an even more astonishing 15-to-1 in June. Various explanations have been offered, one of them being the spirit of cool professionalism of Marines who had learned how to take cover and not expose themselves to needless risks. But this doesn't account for the unusual ratio, and it may perhaps be concluded that the Marines were simply lucky in this operation.

The comparatively low death rate has also been credited in part to the alertness with which Marine officers adapted to changing situations. War is a grim business on the whole, but Colonel Wilburt S. Brown took an amusing advantage of enemy propaganda accusing Americans of all manner of crimes against humanity. At the outset he had requested colored smoke shells for signaling. But upon learning from POW interrogations that NKPA soldiers were terrified by what they believed to be frightful new gases, the commanding officer of the 1st Marines had an added reason for using green, red, and yellow smoke. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Colonel Merritt Adelman, commanding officer of the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, soon had to inform him that the inadequate supply was exhausted.[12] It was never renewed during Brown's command.

Major David W. McFarland, commanding officer of VMO-6, also exploited enemy ignorance. His original purpose in initiating night aerial observation by OY planes was to improve artillery accuracy. Soon he noticed that the mere presence of an OY overhead would silence enemy artillery.

"The aerial observer," McFarland explained, "was often unable to determine the location of enemy artillery even though he could see it firing, because he would be unable to locate map coordinates in the dark—that is, relating them to the ground. Fortunately, this fact was unknown to the enemy. From their observation of the OYs in the daytime, they had found that the safest thing to do whenever an OY was overhead was to take cover. This they continued to do at night."[13]

VMO-6 also put into effect an improvement of 1st Marine Division aerial photographic service at a time when the 1st MAW photo section had missions all over the Korean front. Lieutenant Colonel Donald S. Bush, commanding officer of the section, is credited with the innovation of mounting a K-17 camera on an OY. Only a 6-inch focal length lens could be installed on one of these small planes. This meant that in order to get the same picture as a jet the OY must fly at half the altitude. The pilot would be in more danger but haze problems were reduced.

The experiment was an immediate success. The Division set up a photo laboratory near the VMO–6 CP for rapid processing and printing. A helicopter stood by for rapid delivery to the units concerned.[14]

Not all the variations in tactics were innovations. Lieutenant Colonel Bernard T. Kelly, commanding officer of 3/7, revived an old device on 31 May by using indirect automatic weapons fire with good effect. Four water-cooled heavy machine guns provided long range (2,600 yards) plunging fires on the reverse slopes of hills in support of his leading elements during the final attack on Yanggu.[15]

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Punchbowl
MAG–12 Moves to K–46 at Hoengsong

Delay and uncertainty were still the two great stumbling blocks to adequate air support for the ground forces under the JOC control system. Marine officers contended that infantry units sometimes took unnecessary casualties as a consequence. Worse yet, there were occasions when the expected planes did not arrive at all.

Statistics kept by the 1st MAW and Navy during the spring of 1951 upheld these conclusions. During the Inchon-Seoul operation, the average delay in receiving air support had been 15 minutes as compared to 80 minutes in May and June of 1951. Approximately 35 minutes of this time was required to process the request through JOC. And only 65 to 70 percent of the sorties requested were ever received by Marine ground forces.[16]

Generals Shepherd and Harris had discussed the problem during the early spring of 1951 with General Partridge of the Fifth Air Force. Several compromises were reached, and for brief periods the 1st Marine Division received more air support than it could use. Unfortunately, these periods were at times of the least need. When the chips were down, the old delays and uncertainties reappeared. General Partridge commented:

"The 1st Marine Air Wing was assigned for operational control by the Fifth Air Force and it was used just as any of the other units of the Fifth were employed, that is, in support anywhere along the battle front where it appeared to be most urgently needed.

"In every action such as took place in Korea when the resources and especially the air resources are far too few, ground commanders inevitably feel that they are being shortchanged. They are trying to accomplish their objectives under the most difficult circumstances and with the minimum number of casualties and they want all the assistance from the air that they can get. I am sure I would feel the same in similar circumstances. However, there was never enough air support to satisfy everyone and I was most unhappy that this was the case.

"From time to time I was called upon to denude one section of the front of its close air support in order to bolster some other area where the situation was critical. Sometimes this worked to the advantage of the Marines as in the case of operations near the Chosin Reservoir in December 1950, and at other times it worked to their disadvantage. In retrospect, however, I would estimate that, day in and day out, the Marine ground units had more air support than any other division which was engaged."[17]

With all due respect to General Partridge, Marine officers felt that the discussion should not be limited merely to the amount of air support. It was not so much the amount as the delay and unreliability under JOC control that constituted the problem as the Marines saw it. On 24 May, while on one of his periodic tours of the Far East, General Shepherd brought up the matter of CAS with General Ridgway. He agreed with the UN commander in chief that it would be improper for a Marine division to expect the exclusive support of a Marine air wing in Korea. The main difficulty, he reiterated, lay in the slowness and uncertainty of getting air support when needed.[18]

At this time an extensive reshuffling of Air Force commanders was in progress. On 21 May General Partridge relieved Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, CG FEAF, who had suffered a heart attack. Partridge in turn was relieved by Major General Edward J. Timberlake, who assumed temporary command of Fifth Air Force until Major General Frank E. Everest arrived to take over a few days later.

The 1st MAW was also undergoing changes in command. General Harris was relieved on 29 May by his deputy commander, Major General Thomas J. Cushman. Brigadier General William O. Brice, just arrived from the States, became the Wing's new deputy commander.

After several "get acquainted" discussions, the new Air Force and 1st MAW generals agreed on a plan to

cut down delays in air support. It was a simple solution: the aircraft were merely to be brought nearer to the Marine ground forces. This was to be managed by moving the MAG-12 forward echelon from K-16 at Seoul to K-46 at Hoengsong (Map 16). The new field, if such it could be called, was nothing more than a stony dirt strip. But it was only 40 miles, or a 10- to 15-minute flight, from the firing line. The first missions from the new field were flown on 27 May. VMFs-214 and -323 kept an average of 12 Corsairs at K-46 thereafter, rotating them from K-1.[19]

On the surface this seemed to be a practical solution, especially after a four-plane alert was established at K-46 for use by the 1st Marine Division when needed. DEVASTATE BAKER was permitted to put in an alerting call directly to the field. The rub was that JOC must be called in order to make the original request. Before the planes could take off, the MAG-12 operations officer at the field was likewise required to call JOC and confirm the fact that the mission had been approved.

Communications were poor at first for the 40 miles between the field and the front. DEVASTATE BAKER got better results by calling 1st MAW Headquarters at K-l, 140 miles south, and having the Wing call K-46 and JOC. This meant delays such as General Thomas described in a letter to General Almond. On 29 May, he said, the 5th and 7th Marines were up against severe enemy fire in their attack. The TACPS had enemy targets under observation and were ready to control any aircraft they could get. The Marines requested 92 sorties and received 55. Of these, 20 were flown by Corsairs or Panther Jets, and 35 by Air Force jets and Mustangs. And though 55 sorties were considerably less than optimum air support, practically all arrived from two to four hours late. On the firing line the enemy's resistance, concluded General Thomas, was broken not by air power but by Marine riflemen.[20]

On other days the new plan made a more encouraging showing. There was, for instance, the occasion when the OYs discovered an enemy regiment near the 1st Marine Division right flank. DEVASTATE BAKER called the 1st MAW direct on 31 May for 16 fighters as soon as possible. Wing called JOC for approval to launch the flight and put in a call to K-46 to alert the planes. In just 48 minutes after the initial call from DEVASTATE BAKER, 16 pilots had jumped into their flight gear at K-46, had been briefed, and were airborne on what proved to be a timely strike with excellent results.[21]

A new tactic of night air support was introduced late in May when Marine R4D transports were outfitted to operate as flare planes. Not only did these unarmed aircraft light up targets along the front lines for the VMF (N)-513 night fighters; they were also on call for use by the 1st Marine Division. Later, on 12 June, the Navy provided the 1st MAW with PB4Y-2 Privateers for the nightly illumination missions.[22]

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Punchbowl
Fight of the 5th Marines for Hill 610

During the heyday of the battleship, every midshipman dreamed of some glorious future day when he would be on the bridge, directing the naval maneuver known as crossing the T. In other words, his ships would be in line of battle, firing converging broadsides on an enemy approaching in column. Obviously, the enemy would be at a disadvantage until he executed a 90°turn under fire to bring his battered ships into line to deliver broadsides of their own.

It was a mountain warfare variation of crossing the T that the Korean Reds were using against the Marines. Whenever possible, the enemy made a stand on a hill flanked by transverse ridgelines. He emplaced hidden machine guns or mortars on these ridgelines to pour a converging fire into attackers limited by the terrain to a single approach. It meant that the Marines had to advance through this crossfire before they could get in position for the final assault on the enemy's main position.

Click here to view map

There were two tactical antidotes. One was well directed close air support. The other was the support of tanks advancing parallel to enemy-held ridgelines and scorching them with the direct fire of 90mm rifles and 50 caliber machine guns.

On 1 June the two regiments in assault, the 5th and 7th Marines, found the resistance growing stiffer as they slugged their way forward toward Line KANSAS (Map 15). Within an hour after jumping off, 2/5 was heavily engaged with an estimated 200 enemy defending Hill 651 tenaciously. At noon, after ground assaults had failed, a request was put in for air support. Four VMF-214 planes led by Captain William T. Kopas bombed and strafed the target. This attack broke the back of NKPA opposition, and 2/5 moved in to seize the objective.[23]

Click here to view map

Early on the morning of the 2d, Lieutenant Colonel Hopkins' 1/5 moved out to secure the southwest end of the long ridge line that stretched northeast from Yanggu (Map 15) and afforded a natural avenue of approach to Taeam-san and the KANSAS line on the southern rim of the Punchbowl. The Marine advance got under way at 0915. After two four-plane strikes by VMF-214 and a "preparation" by 1/11 and the 1st Rocket Battery, the battalion attacked across a valley with Baker Company (First Lieutenant William E. Kerrigan) on the right and Charlie Company (First Lieutenant Robert E. Warner) on the left to seize the terminal point on the ridge leading to Hill 610 (Map 15). Able Company (Captain John L. Kelly) followed Charlie as Company C (Captain Richard M. Taylor) of the 1st Tank Battalion moved into supporting position.

Converging fire from transverse ridges had the Marine riflemen pinned down until the tankers moved along the valley road running parallel. Direct 90mm fire into NKPA log bunkers enabled C/1/5 to advance to the forward slope of Hill 610. The enemy fought back with machine guns and grenades while directing long-range rifle fire against 2/5, attacking along a parallel ridge across the valley.

By 1945 the last bunker on Hill 610 had been overrun. Meanwhile, 2/5 had pushed ahead some 5,000 yards to the northeast.

The capture of Hill 610 will never have its glorious page in history. It was all in the day's work for Marines who could expect a succession of such nameless battles as they clawed their way forward. That night the weary men of 1/5 were not astonished to receive a counterattack in the darkness. It was all part of the job, too. After driving off the unseen enemy, the new tenants of Hill 610 snatched a few hours of sleep. They were on their feet again at dawn, ready to go up against the next key terrain feature in a rocky area that seemed to be composed

entirely of Hill 610s.

The next knob along the ridge happened to be Hill 680, about 1,000 yards to the northeast. VMF-214 planes from K-46 napalmed and strafed the enemy, and Able Company led the 1/5 attack. During the air strike the Koreans had taken to cover in their holes on the reverse.

They were back in previously selected forward slope firing positions by the time the Marines came in sight. Close-in artillery support enabled the attackers to get within grenade range and seize the last NKPA bunker by 1400. Able Company pushed on.

Midway from Hill 680 to the next knob, Hill 692, the advance was stopped by enemy small-arms and mortar fire. An air strike was requested on the bunkers holding up the assault, but fog closed in and the planes were delayed more than two hours.

At 1600, after Able Company had renewed the assault without air support, four VMF-214 Corsairs started a target run controlled by a liaison plane from VMO-6. The foremost Marines, almost at the summit by this time, had to beat a hasty retreat to escape the napalm and 500-pound bombs being dumped on Hill 692. Fortunately, there were no friendly casualties. Some were caused indirectly, however, when hostile mortar fire caught Marines withdrawing along a connecting saddle to the comparatively safe reverse slope of Hill 680. When the danger passed, Able Company returned to the attack on 692 and routed the remaining defenders.[24]

The 1st Marine Division made it a policy thereafter that only the forward air controllers on the ground were to direct close air support along the front. Control of air strikes farther behind the enemy lines was reserved for the OYs.

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Punchbowl
1st MAW in Operation STRANGLE

Sightings of enemy vehicles during the month of May totaled 54,561—seven times those of January. This increase prompted General Van Fleet to ask the Fifth Air Force and Seventh Fleet to initiate a program of cutting off all possible enemy road traffic between the latitudes 38° 15' N and 39° 15' N.

Earlier in 1951 the interdiction program had been aimed chiefly at the enemy's rail lines and bridges. The Communists had countered by using more trucks. The new program, known as Operation STRANGLE, was to be concentrated against vital road networks. Flight leaders were briefed to search out critical spots where truck and ox cart traffic could be stopped. Roads skirting hills were to be blocked by landslides caused by well placed bombs. Where cliffside roads followed the coast, as they so often did in East Korea, naval gunfire started avalanches of dirt and rocks which sometimes reached a depth of 20 feet. Roads running through a narrow ravine or rice paddy could often be cut by a deep bomb crater.[25]

The 1st MAW was given the assignment of stopping traffic on three roads in East Korea—from Wonsan to Pyonggang, from Kojo to Kumhwa, and along a lateral route linking the two (Map 16). Since Kumhwa and Pyonggang were two of the three Iron Triangle towns, these roads were of more than ordinary importance.
Click here to view map

The Communists reacted to the new UN pressure by increasing their flak traps. UN pilots were lured with such bait as mysterious lights, tempting displays of supposed fuel drums, or damaged UN aircraft that called for investigation. The cost of the UN in planes and pilots showed an increase during the first two months of Operation STRANGLE. From 20 May to the middle of July, 20 Marine planes were shot down. Six of the pilots returned safely; two were killed and 12 listed as missing.[26]

The demands of Operation STRANGLE added to the emphasis on interdiction and armed reconnaissance by the Fifth Air Force. Statistics compiled by the 1st Marine Division for 1-17 June 1951 show that 984 close air support sorties had been requested and 642 received— about 65 percent. The ratio of Marine planes to other UN aircraft reporting to the Division was about four to one.[27]

The statistics of the 1st MAW indicate that out of a total of 1,875 combat sorties flown from 1 to 15 June 1951, about a third were close air support—651 day CAS and 19 night CAS. Of this number, 377 sorties went to the 1st Marine Division, which received more than half. Next in line were the 7th Infantry Division (41 sorties), the 3d Infantry Division (31 sorties), and the 25th Infantry Division (28 sorties).[28]

The effect of Operation STRANGLE on the enemy must be left largely to conjecture. There can be no doubt that it added enormously to the Communists' logistical problem. It is equally certain that they solved these problems to such an extent that their combat units were never at a decisive handicap for lack of ammunition and other supplies. Operation STRANGLE, in short, merely added to the evidence that interdictory air alone was not enough to knock a determined adversary out of the war, as enthusiasts had predicted at the outbreak of hostilities in Korea.

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Punchbowl
KMC Regiment Launches Night Attack

On the night of 1-2 June, Colonel Nickerson was notified that the 7th Marines would be relieved next day by the 1st Marines, which would pass through and continue the attack. The 1st Marines moved into assembly areas at 0630. Lieutenant Colonel Homer E. Hire, commanding officer of 3/1, went forward at 0800 with his command group to make a reconnaissance of the area. As his staff paused for a conference in a supposedly enfiladed location, a Communist mortar barrage hit the group by complete surprise. The artillery liaison officer was killed instantly. His assistant, two forward observers, four company commanders, the S-3 and 32 enlisted men were wounded. So hard hit was the battalion that its attack had to be postponed until the following day.[29]

The first Division objective was designated X-RAY. 2/1 had the mission of taking the high point, Hill 516 (Map 15). Across the valley 3/1 advanced up a parallel ridge. Planes from VMF-214 and VMF-323 cleared the way for the securing of this battalion's objective at 1900. Aircraft from these same squadrons also aided 2/1 in over-running the last opposition on Hill 516, where 80 NKPA dead were counted.[30]

The KMC regiment, in reserve only two days, was ordered to relieve the 5th Marines on 4 June. This would permit Colonel Hayward to shift over to the right flank, thus extending the 1st Marine Division zone 5,000 yards to the east with a north-south boundary of the Soyang river valley (Map 15). The purpose of this maneuver was to free 2d Infantry Division troops for a mission of mopping up in the X Corps rear area.

Three Marine regiments were now in line, the 1st on the left, the KMCs in the center, the 5th on the right, and the 7th in reserve. A reshuffling of units also took place in the 1st MAW when VMF-312 ended its tour of duty on the CVL *Bataan.* The replacement involved a change of carriers when VMF-323 was alerted for west coast duty on the CVE *Sicily* a week later.[31]

Ahead of the KMCs stretched the most difficult of the regimental zones of action—the main mountain range extending northeast from Yanggu to Hill 1316, known to the Koreans as Taeam-san. Along these ridges the Chinese had placed North Korean troops with orders to "hold until death."[32]

From the air, the ground in front of the KMCs resembled a monstrous prehistoric lizard, rearing up on its hind legs. The 1st Battalion was to ascend the tail and the 2d the hind legs. The two would meet at the rump, Hill 1122 (Map 15). From this position the backbone ran northeast to the shoulders, Hill 1218. Still farther northeast, along the neck, was the key terrain feature—Taeam-san, the head of the imagined reptile.

The 1st and 2d Battalions ran immediately into the opposition of an estimated NKPA regiment. In an effort to outflank the enemy, the 3d Battalion swung over to the east and attacked up the ridge forming the forelegs. Seizure of the shoulders (Hill 1218) would render enemy positions along the back, rump, hind legs, and tail untenable. Major General Choe Am Lin, commanding the 12th NKPA Division, was quick to recognize the tactical worth of this height and exact a stiff price for it.

That the KMCs could expect little mercy from their fellow countrymen was demonstrated when the bodies of ten men reported missing were found. All had been shot in the back of the head.

For five days the fight raged with unabated fury. The terrain limited the advance to a narrow front, so that the attack resembled the thrust of a spear rather than a blow from a battering ram. When the KMCs did gain a brief foothold, the enemy launched a counterattack.

At 2000 on 10 June, after six days of relatively unsuccessful fighting, the KMCs decided to gamble on a night attack. This had heretofore been the enemy's prerogative, and the Korean Reds were caught unaware in a devastating surprise. Most of the NKPA troops were attending to housekeeping duties at 0200 when all three

KMC battalions fell upon them like an avalanche. Hill 1122, the rump of the lizard, was seized; and under pressure the enemy withdrew from the shoulders. This made the fall of Taeam-san inevitable, and only mopping-up operations remained for KMCs who had suffered more than 500 casualties. General Thomas sent the regiment this message on 12 June:

"Congratulations to the KMC on a difficult job well done. Your seizure of objectives on the KANSAS Line from a determined enemy was a magnificent dash of courage and endurance. Your courageous and aggressive actions justify our pride in the Korean Marines."

Logistical support of the three regiments in the attack presented a problem to the Division supply echelons. The KMCs in the center and the 1st Marines on the left could be supplied over a narrow, winding mountain road that scaled a high pass before dropping down into an east-west valley giving relatively easy access to the center and left. The 5th Marines had to receive its supplies over another mountain road leading north of Inje, then west into the regimental zone.[33]

Both of the Division supply routes needed a good deal of engineering work before trucks could move over them freely. Landslides were frequent and many trucks skidded off the slippery trail while rounding the hairpin turns.

The 1st Marines moved northward on north-south ridges, and the KMCs in the center had spurs leading to their objectives. It was the misfortune of the 5th Marines to have a topographical washboard effect ahead. The axis of advance was south to north, but the ground on the way to the final objectives on the KANSAS Line consisted of five sharply defined ridgelines running northwest to southeast. Instead of attacking along the ridgelines Colonel Hayward's men had to climb some 1,200 feet, then descend 1,200 feet, five separate times while covering an advance of 8,000 yards (Map 15).

Artillery fired for more than two hours on the morning of 6 June to soften defenses on the next regimental objective, Hill 729. An air strike was attempted but fog with low-hanging clouds forced the flight leader to abort the mission. At 1300 the assault battalions moved across the LD against small-arms and machine gun fire. The fog lifted sufficiently at 1400 to allow four F9Fs from VMF-311 to deliver an effective attack. And by 2100 both 2/5 and 3/5 were consolidating their positions on the first of the five ridges.

This assault is typical of the fighting as the 5th Marines took the remaining four ridges, one by one, in a slugging assault on an enemy defending every commanding height. The advance resolved itself into a pattern as the Korean Reds probed the Marine lines at night and continued their tough resistance by day. For 10 days the regiment plugged ahead, step by step, with the support of artillery, air, mortars, and 75mm recoilless rifles.[34]

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Punchbowl
1st Marines Moves Up to BROWN Line

On the left flank, the 1st Marines devoted several days to consolidating its position and sending out reconnaissance patrols in preparation for an attack on the ridge just north of the Hwachon Reservoir. From this height the Communists could look down the throats of Colonel Brown's troops.

From 6 to 8 June, Lieutenant Colonel Hire's 3d Battalion led the attack against moderate but gathering resistance. A gain of 1,500 yards was made on the right flank by 2/1, commanded by Major Clarence J. Mabry after the evacuation of Lieutenant Colonel McClellan, wounded on the 5th. On the left, Lieutenant Colonel Robley E. West's 1/1 held fast as the 5th ROK Regiment, 7th ROK Division, X Corps, passed through on its way to a new zone of action to the west.

Early on the 9th, as 2/1 was preparing to launch its attack, an intense artillery and mortar barrage fell upon the lines, followed by the assault of an estimated NKPA company. The Korean Reds were beaten off with heavy losses. And though the enemy fire continued, 2/1 jumped off on schedule, fighting for every inch of ground. Colonel Brown committed 1/1 on the left. It was an all-day fight for both battalions. After taking one ridge in the morning, it was used as the springboard for an assault on the second objective. The weapons of the regimental Anti-Tank Company built up a base of fire that enabled this ridge to be secured by 1600.

The 5th ROK Regiment took its objectives by the morning of the 10th. The 1st Marines provided additional fire support by diverting all its antitank guns and tank rifles to the aid of the ROKs.

The pressure, which had been building up for several days, reached a new high on 10 June. Late that morning Colonel Brown met General Almond and the Division G-3, Colonel Richard G. Weede, at a conference. By 1100 the entire 2d Battalion of the 1st Marines was committed. On the left, Lieutenant Colonel West had to hold up the 1st Battalion until 1330, when the ROKs completed the occupation of the high ground dominating the route of advance.

For several hours it appeared that the Marines had met their match this time. A tenacious enemy defended log bunkers expertly, refusing to give ground until evicted by grenade and bayonet attacks. At every opportunity the Communists counterattacked. So effective was their resistance that at dusk the two Marine battalions were still short of their objectives in spite of casualties draining the strength of both units.

Colonel Joseph L. Winecoff, commanding officer of the 11th Marines, remained on the telephone for hours with Colonel Brown. He gave all possible artillery support, not only of his own regiment but also nearby Corps units. By nightfall, with the attacking battalions still held up, the atmosphere was tense in the regimental forward CP. Lieutenant Colonel Adelman, commanding the supporting artillery battalion, 2/11, helped to coordinate air strikes and artillery with Lieutenant Colonel Donald M. Schmuck, executive officer of the 1st Marines, and the air liaison officers.

"Everything I had ever hoped to see in years of teaching such co-ordination of fires seemed to come true that night," commented Colonel Brown at a later date. "I stayed in my regular CP until I was sure all I could do through Winecoff was done, and then went forward to see the finale. It was a glorious spectacle, that last bayonet assault. In the last analysis 2/1 had to take its objective with the bayonet and hand grenades, crawling up the side of a mountain to get at the enemy. It was bloody work, the hardest fighting I have ever seen."[35]

This was no small tribute, coming from a veteran officer whose combat service included three major wars, not to mention Nicaragua and China. It was nearly midnight before Mabry's battalion took its final objective. Casualties for the day's attack were 14 KIA and 114 WIA exclusive of slightly wounded, who were

neither counted nor evacuated. West's battalion, which seized Hill 802, overlooking the Soyang River, had won its all-day fight at a cost of 9 KIA and 97 WIA.

Unfailing support had been given throughout the daylight hours by aircraft of VMF-214. VMF(N)-513 took over on the night shift, and planes came screeching in as late as 2200 to attack moonlit targets a hundred yards ahead of the leading infantry elements.

The 1st Marines had outfought and outgamed a tough enemy. Never again, after the 10th, was the NKPA resistance quite as determined. The 3d Battalion led the other two during the next few days. There was plenty of fighting for all three, but the result was never again in doubt.

By the late afternoon of 14 June the regiment was in position on the BROWN Line. This was the unofficial name for an extension of the KANSAS Line some 3,000 yards north. It had been requested by Colonel Brown when he realized that positions along the KANSAS Line were completely dominated by the next ridge to the north.

The change made necessary a continued advance by the KMCs on the right to tie in with the 1st Marines. The so-called BROWN Line was then officially designated the modified KANSAS Line.

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Chapter 7. Advance to the Punchbowl
7th Marines Committed to the Attack

For several days General Thomas had been concerned over the heavy casualties suffered by his command. In order to give greater impetus to the Division effort, he decided to commit the reserve infantry regiment, the 7th Marines (minus one battalion held back as Division reserve) to complete the occupation of the modified KANSAS Line.

On 8 June, Colonel Nickerson's regiment (minus 3/7) moved into an assembly area between the 1st Marines and the KMCs, ready to attack in the morning. Ahead stretched a narrow but difficult zone of advance up the valley of the So-chon River (Map 15). Tank-infantry patrols went forward to select favorable positions for the jumpoff, and engineers worked throughout the daylight hours to clear the valley roads of mines. Despite their best efforts, 10 Marine tanks were lost to mines during the first week.[36]

As the two battalions advanced on the morning of the 9th they came under heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire. Nevertheless, they secured Hill 420 and dug in before nightfall.

On the 10th Rooney's 1/7 advanced along the ridgeline to support the attack of Meyerhoff's 2/7 up the valley floor. The maneuver was carried out successfully in spite of NKPA automatic weapons and mortar opposition. Contact was established with KMC forward units at dusk. Sixteen POWs were taken by the 7th Marines and 85 North Korean dead were counted on the objectives.

The two battalions continued the attack throughout the next week. The 3d Battalion of the 7th Marines remained General Thomas' sole Division reserve until he committed it on the afternoon of 18 June.

The newcomers got into the fight just in time for the enemy's all-out effort to defend the steep east-west ridge marking the BROWN Line. The nature of the terrain made maneuver impossible—a frontal assault was the only answer. Defending the ridge was the 1st Battalion, 41st Regiment, 12th NKPA Division. Waiting on the reverse slope, the enemy launched a counterattack when the Marines neared the crest. George Company, commanded by First Lieutenant William C. Airheart, met five successive repulses at the hands of superior numbers. Item Company (First Lieutenant Frank A. Winfrey) also took part in the fifth assault, and both companies held their ground near the summit when the fighting ended at dusk. They expected to resume the attack at dawn, but the enemy had silently withdrawn during the night. All three 7th Marines battalions occupied their designated positions on the BROWN Line without further interference.

By early afternoon on the 20th, the Division was in complete control of the modified KANSAS Line and construction of defenses began in earnest. The next day the 1st Marines and KMCs extended their right and left flanks respectively and pinched out the 7th Marines, which dropped back into reserve.

Thus ended two months of continual hard fighting for the 1st Marine Division, beginning on 22 April with the great CCF offensive. Few and far between were the interludes of rest for troops which saw both defensive and offensive action. After stopping the enemy's two drives, they launched a month-long counterstroke that had the enemy hardpressed at times for survival. Only the ruthless sacrifice of NKPA troops in defensive operations enabled the Chinese Reds to recover from the blows dealt them in late May and early June.

The cost in Marine casualties had been high. Throughout the entire month the 1st Marines alone suffered 67 KIA and 1,044 WIA, most of them being reported during the first 2 weeks. This was a higher total than the regiment incurred during the Chosin Reservoir operation. Reflecting on the caliber of these men, their regimental commander had this to say:

"They were war-wise when I got command; I contributed nothing to their training because they were in

battle when I joined them and I left them when they came out of the lines for a rest. They used cover, maneuvered beautifully, used their own and supporting arms intelligently, were patient and not foolhardy; but when it came to the point where they had to rely on themselves with bayonet, hand grenade and sheer guts, they could and did do that too. I have long ago given up telling people what I saw them do on many occasions. Nobody believes me, nor would I believe anyone else telling the same story of other troops."[37]

Colonel Brown, of course, paid this tribute to the troops of his regiment. But it is safe to say that any commanding officer of the 1st Marine Division would have felt that these sentiments applied equally to his own men. All the combat Marines of the 60-day battle had shown themselves to be worthy heirs of the traditions of Belleau Wood, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, and the Chosin Reservoir.

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Chapter 8. The Truce Talks at Kaesong

It is not likely that the date 25 June 1951 meant much to the Marines on the KANSAS Line. In all probability few of them recalled that it was the first anniversary of the Communist aggression which started the war in Korea.

Since that surprise attack on a June Sunday morning in 1950, some 1,250,000 men had been killed, wounded or captured in battle—a million of them from the Communist forces of Red China and the North Korean People's Republic. This was the estimate of J. Donald Kingsley, Korean reconstruction agent general for the United States. He reckoned the civilian victims of privation, violence, and disease at two million dead. Another three million had been made homeless refugees.[1]

On 25 June 1951 the Communists held less territory by 2,100 square miles than they occupied when they began their onslaught with an overwhelming local superiority in arms and trained troops. Losses of Communist equipment during the first year included 391 aircraft, 1,000 pieces of artillery, and many thousands of machine guns, automatic rifles, and mortars. North Korea, formerly the industrial region of the peninsula, lay in ruins. Cities, factories, and power plants had been pounded into rubble.

In short, the thrifty conquest planned by the Koreans and their Soviet masters had backfired. Not only had the Communist offensives of April and May been stopped; the United Nations forces had rebounded to win their greatest victory of the war's first year. While X Corps was advancing to the Punchbowl, other major Eighth Army units had also gained ground. Perhaps the most crushing blow was dealt by I Corps in its attack on the Iron Triangle. Units of two U.S. infantry divisions fought their way through extensive mine fields into Chorwon and Kumhwa on 8 June. By the end of the month, I Corps held defensive positions about midway between the base and apex of the strategic triangle that had been the enemy's main assembly area for the troops and supplies of his spring offensives.[2]

On the east-central front, units of IX Corps pushed within 10 miles of Kumsong while I ROK Corps advanced along the east coast to Chodo-ri. Thus the UN forces occupied the most favorable line they had held since the great CCF offensive early in January. From the mouth of the Imjin this line ran northeast to the middle of the Iron Triangle, eastward across the mountains to the southern rim of the Punchbowl, then northeast to the coast of Chodo–ri (Map 14).

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Communists Ask for Truce Talks

The first anniversary of the Korean conflict was overshadowed two days earlier by the news that the Communists had taken the initiative in proposing truce talks. The suggestion was made in a New York radio address of 23 June by a Soviet delegate to the United Nations—Jacob Malik, Foreign Minister of the USSR. On the 25th the idea was unofficially endorsed in a radio broadcast by the Chinese Communist government. UN officials immediately indicated their willingness to discuss preliminary terms. The outcome was an agreement that representatives of both sides would meet on 7 July at Kaesong, then located between the opposing lines in west Korea.

Why had the Communists been first to ask for a truce conference? Both Generals Van Fleet and Almond believed that the answer might have been traced to military necessity rather than any genuine desire for peace. “I felt at that time that the Chinese Communists and the North Korean armies were on the most wobbly legs that they had been on to that date,” said General Almond when interviewed shortly after his retirement in 1953. “They were punch drunk and ineffective, and I, personally, thought at that time that it was the time to finish off the effort.”[3]

Raymond Cartier, representing a Paris newspaper, probably spoke for most of the correspondents at the front when he suspected that the proposal for truce talks “was possibly just a crafty trick devised by the Communists to gain time and build up again the badly mauled Chinese armies.”[4]

It might have been recalled at this time that the Communists had used truce negotiations for military purposes during the Chinese Civil War. In 1945 and 1946, when prospects for a Nationalist victory were bright, the enemy took advantage of American peace efforts by agreeing on several occasions to meet for truce conferences. And while prolonging the talks by all manner of subterfuges, the Communists profited from the breathing spells by regrouping their forces and planning new offensives. Their final triumph, in fact, owed in no small measure to interludes when the conference table served a military purpose.[5]

History repeated itself in June and July 1951 when events of the next two years were shaped by the political decisions of a few summer weeks. Indeed, Admiral C. Turner Joy believed that the war was actually prolonged rather than shortened as a result of the negotiations.

“Military victory was not impossible nor even unusually difficult of achievement,” wrote the Senior Delegate and Chief of the UN Command delegation at the truce talks. “Elimination of the artificial restraints imposed on United States forces, coupled with an effective blockade on Red China, probably would have resulted in military victory in less time than was expended on truce talks.”[6]

Mao Tse-tung’s forces had lost face by the failure of their long heralded 5th Phase Offensive. They had been badly beaten during the UN counteroffensive. Pretensions of high CCF morale could no longer be maintained when troops were laying down their arms without a fight. Nor could charges of low UN morale be supported when the fighting spirit of the Eighth Army was being shown every day at the front.

In view of these circumstances, it would appear that the Communists had poor cards to play against United Nations trumps at a truce conference. But they played them so craftily, with such a sly sense of propaganda values, that the victors of the May and June battles were soon made to appear losers begging for a breathing spell.

To begin with, the Chinese knew that the mere public announcement of the possibility of truce talks would have a tremendous appeal in the United States, where the war was unpopular. Pressure would be brought

upon Washington to meet the enemy immediately for negotiations. And while a cease fire remained even a remote prospect, American public opinion would demand a slackening of offensive military operations with their attendant casualties.

From the outset it was apparent that the United Nations Command was no match for the Communists in low cunning. The UN suggested, for instance, that the truce teams meet on the Danish hospital ship *Jutlandia.* Here, surely, was neutral ground, since the Danes had no combat forces in Korea. Moreover, the ship was to be anchored in Wonsan harbor within range of CCF shore batteries.

The Reds won the first of many such concessions with their refusal. They insisted that the talks be held at Kaesong, and the UN Command let them have it their way. The reason for the Communist decision was soon made evident. Kaesong was in the path of the advancing Eighth Army, which meant that an important road center would be immune from attack. And though the ancient Korean town was originally in no man's land, the Communists soon managed to include it within their lines.

All delegates were requested to display white flags on their vehicles for identification. Communist photographers were on hand to snap countless pictures of UN delegates which convinced Asia's illiterate millions at a glance that the beaten United Nations had sent representatives to plead for terms. If any doubt remained, other photographs showed the unarmed UN delegates being herded about Kaesong by scowling Communist guards with burp guns.

No detail of the stage setting was too trivial to be overlooked. Oriental custom prescribes that at the peace table the victors face south and the losers face north. Needless to add, the UN delegates were seated at Kaesong with a view to enhancing Communist prestige.

Some of the propaganda schemes bordered on the ridiculous. "At the first meeting of the delegates," Admiral Joy related, "I seated myself at the conference table and almost sank out of sight. The Communists had provided a chair for me which was considerably shorter than a standard chair. Across the table, the senior Communist delegate, General Nam Il, protruded a good foot above my cagily diminished stature. This had been accomplished by providing stumpy Nam Il with a chair about four inches higher than usual. Chain-smoking Nam Il puffed his cigarette in obvious satisfaction as he glowered down on me, an obviously torpedoed admiral. This condition of affairs was promptly rectified when I changed my foreshortened chair for a normal one, but not before Communist photographers had exposed reels of film."[8]

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Patrol Bases on BADGER Line

The war went on, of course, during the negotiations. But the tempo was much reduced as the UN forces consolidated their gains, and the enemy appeared to be breaking off contact at every opportunity. Generally speaking, the Eighth Army had shifted from the offensive to the defensive. In keeping with this trend, the 1st Marine Division occupied the same positions for nearly three weeks after fighting its way to the BROWN Line.

On 22 June all three infantry regiments were directed to establish battalion-size patrol bases on the BADGER Line—1 ½ to 2 ½ miles forward of their present positions. In the 1st Marines sector 3/7 was attached to Colonel Brown and ordered to relieve 3/1 on the left flank of the regiment. The purpose was to free 3/1 to move forward and establish a patrol base on Hill 761, about 1,000 yards forward of the MLR.

While these arrangements were being carried out, General Almond called at the 1st Marines CP. He expressed surprise that the establishment of patrol bases was being contemplated by EUSAK when some of the front-line units were still in contact with the enemy.[9]

Execution of these orders was accordingly suspended. The following day, however, Division again alerted the infantry regiments to be prepared to occupy patrol bases on order. This was by direction of Corps, which in turn had been directed by EUSAK.

The Marine regimental and battalion commanders were not happy about this turn of affairs. The patrol base concept had been tried out early in May, during the lull between the enemy's two offensives, and found wanting. In theory it was a good means of keeping contact with an enemy who had pulled back out of mortar and light artillery range. In practice the enemy had shown that he could bypass patrol bases at night for probing attacks on the MLR. The bases themselves ran the constant risk of being surrounded and overwhelmed. As a final objection, a regiment was often deprived of its reserve battalion, which was the logical choice for such duty.

In compliance with orders, 3/1 moved out on 26 June and established a patrol base on Hill 761. This position received such a bombardment of large caliber mortar fire that Colonel Brown pulled the battalion back to the MLR the following day.[10]

General Thomas gave his opinion of the patrol base concept after his retirement when he summed it up as "an invitation to disaster."[11] He could only carry out orders, however, when Corps directed early in July that a patrol base be established on Taeu-san.

This 4,000-foot peak, located some 2 miles north of the MLR, afforded excellent observation eastward into the Punchbowl and westward into the So-chon River Valley. The enemy, of course, was aware of these advantages and had made Taeu-san a strongpoint of his MLR. This was clearly indicated by the stiff resistance encountered by KMC reconnaissance patrols.[12]

Nevertheless, Division G–3 was suddenly alerted on the morning of 7 July by the Marine Liaison Officer with X Corps to expect an order directing the setting up of a patrol base on Taeu-san the following day. The KMC Regiment, warned by telephone, had little time for planning and organizing an attack. Since the KMCs could not be relieved for responsibility for their sector, it was necessary to form a composite battalion of the three companies that could most conveniently be relieved. Unfortunately, they contained a large proportion of recruits, and the battalion commander was a new arrival.

There were two avenues of approach. One was along an open, fairly level, ridgeline that extended from the KMC positions. The other called for a descent into the stream-bed generally paralleling the MLR and a steep climb up a ridge leading directly north to Taeu-san.

Both routes of approach were used. One company advanced on the right by way of the stream bed and two companies took to the ridge-line on the left. The assault was to have been preceded by air strikes and an artillery bombardment, but bad weather kept the aircraft grounded.

The attack jumped off at 1030 on 8 July. All three companies were greeted by enemy mortar and machine gun fire that pinned down the company on the right. The two companies on the left won a foothold on Hill 1100, about a mile in front of Taeu-san. Here the advance ground to a halt.

These KMCs dug in for the night and repulsed a series of counter-attacks. On the morning of the 9th the KMC regimental commander, Colonel Kim Tai Shik, committed the entire 1st Battalion to the attack on the right. It had no better success than the company of the day before. Meanwhile, the two companies were driven off Hill 1100.

Colonel Gould P. Groves, senior liaison officer with the KMCs, recommended that the remnants of the two companies be withdrawn. The 1st Battalion had managed to capture Hill 1001, but it was plain that the KMC regiment could not come close to Taeu-san. On 12 July the 1st Marine Division informed X Corps that the position held by the KMCs just forward of Hill 1001 fulfilled the requirements of an advance patrol base. As far as the Marines were concerned, the sad affair was permitted to rest there.

As evidence of the valiant effort made by the KMCs, they suffered 222 casualties. A sequel to this story was written late in July after the 2d Infantry Division relieved the Marines. X Corps again ordered the capture of Taeu-san as a patrol base, and it required the commitment of the major part of the division to accomplish the task. [13]

Although the fighting had not been severe for other units of the 1st Marine Division during the first two weeks of July, the casualties (including KMC losses) were 55 KIA, 360 WIA, and 22 MIA—a total of 437. Relief of the Marines was completed by the 2d Infantry Division on 15 July, and by the 17th all units were on their way back to assembly areas in X Corps rear.

It was the second time since the landing of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade on 2 August 1950 that the Marines had been away from the firing line for more than a few days.

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Red Herrings at Kaesong

It is not changing the subject to switch to the truce talks. Kaesong was actually a second UN front.

After the preliminaries had been settled—most of them to Communist satisfaction—the UN delegation, headed by Admiral Joy, held a first meeting on l0 July 1951 with his opposite number, NKPA Major General Nam Il, and the Communist truce team. This was the first of the talks that were to drag on for two dreary years.

Nam Il, a Korean native of Manchuria, born in 1911, had been educated in Russia and had served with the Soviet army in World War II. His career in Korea began when he arrived as a captain with Soviet occupation troops in 1945. Rising to power rapidly, he took a prominent part in the creation of a Soviet puppet state in North Korea.

An atmosphere of sullen hatred surrounded the UN delegates at Kaesong. The CCF sentinel posted at the entrance to the conference room wore a gaudy medal which he boasted had been awarded to him “for killing forty Americans.” When Admiral Joy tried to send a report to General Ridgway, the messenger was turned back by armed Communist guards. These are samples of the indignities heaped upon the UN truce team. After several UN delegates were threatened by guards with burp guns, Joy protested to Nam Il, “demanding prompt elimination of such crudities.”

In order to give their battered armies more time for recuperation, the Communist delegates met every issue with delaying tactics. They proved themselves to be masters of the ancient art of dragging a red herring across the trail. Going back on their word did not embarrass them in the least if they found it to their advantage to renege.[14]

The truce negotiations were bound to have an immediate effect on military operations. In the United States it seemed a pity to newspaper readers that American young men should have to die in battle at a time when headlines were hinting at the possibility of peace. Mothers wrote to their congressmen, requesting a halt in Korean operations.

General Van Fleet minced no words after his retirement when he commented on the effect of the truce talks on strategy:

“Instead of getting directives for offensive action, we found our activities more and more proscribed as time went on. Even in the matter of straightening out our lines for greater protection, or capturing hills when the Reds were looking down our throats, we were limited by orders from the Far East Command in Japan, presumably acting on directives from Washington.”[15]

It was the opinion of Admiral Joy that more UN casualties were suffered as a consequence of the truce talks than would have resulted from an offensive taking full advantage of Red China’s military weaknesses in June 1951.

“As soon as armistice discussions began,” he wrote, “United Nations Command ground forces slackened their offensive preparations. Instead, offensive pressure by all arms should have been increased to the maximum during the armistice talks. . . . I feel certain that the casualties the United Nations Command endured during the two long years of negotiations far exceed any that might have been expected from an offensive in the summer of 1951.”[16]

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1st Marine Division in Reserve

Most of the 1st Marine Division units were in X Corps reserve during the last two weeks of July 1951. The 5th Marines, however, remained in "ready reserve" near Inje under the operational control of X Corps. Toward the end of the month, the 3d Battalion of the 11th Marines passed to the operational control of the 2d Infantry Division. Meanwhile, the 7th Marines and Division Reconnaissance Company displaced to the Yanggu area to aid in the construction of defensive positions and undergo special training.

1st Marine Division Training Order 2-51, covering the period from 23 July to 20 August 1951, provided for a stiff daily schedule of general and specialist military subjects. The objectives were "to maintain each individual and unit of the command at a very high state of proficiency, while emphasizing rest and rehabilitation of personnel and repair and maintenance of equipment . . . . A minimum of 33 % of all technical training was to be conducted at night, stressing individual and unit night discipline. Formal unit schools and on-the-job training were utilized extensively."[17]

Most thoroughly covered among general military subjects were mechanical training, capabilities, tactical employment, and firing of individual and infantry crew-served weapons. Lectures and demonstrations were combined to good effect with instruction in basic infantry tactics.

"The prescribed periods of physical conditioning," the Division report continued, "were supplemented by extensive organized athletic programs outside of training hours, resulting in the maintenance of a high degree of battle conditioning of all hands. Special military subjects encompassed the whole range of activities necessary to the accomplishment of any mission assigned the Division. Building from the duties of the individual Marine, infantry, artillery, engineer, and tank personnel progressed through small unit employment and tactics as it applied to their respective specialities. Meanwhile such diverse training as tank repair and watch repair was conducted in various units."[18]

Fortification came in for study after a tour of the KANSAS Line by Major General Clovis E. Byers, who had relieved General Almond as X Corps commander. He listed the weaknesses he found and directed that "special attention [be] given to the thickness, strength and support of bunker overheads, and to the proper revetting and draining of excavations."[19]

The KMC Regiment received the most thorough training it had ever known, considering that it had been in combat continually since its organization. Each of the Division's three other regiments sent four training teams consisting of a lieutenant, an NCO, and an interpreter to the KMCs on 22 July. The 12 teams had orders to remain until 20 August. Attached to various KMC companies, they acted as advisers for the entire training period.

Another organization of Koreans that had won its way to favorable recognition was the newly formed Civil Transport Corps (CTC). The use of indigenous labor for logistical purposes dated back to March 1951, when the Eighth Army's advance was slowed up by supply problems caused by muddy roads. Plans were made to equip and train a special corps to assist in the logistical support of combat troops in areas inaccessible to normal motor transportation.[20]

The project began on 29 March with 720 South Koreans—all from the Korean National Guard—being assigned to I Corps. Plans were developed for a Civil Transport Corps of 82 companies, each containing 240 men. The CTC was to be supervised by a staff of eight U.S. Army officers and four enlisted men under the operational control of the Transportation Section, EUSAK.

The ROK Army had the added responsibility for logistical support, of hospitalization and medical

services other than emergency treatment in forward areas. Support for the CTC from UN units was to be provided in a manner similar to that in effect for the ROK forces.[21] No difficulty was found in filling the CTC ranks, for the pay meant food and clothing to a Korean and his family.

The Marines were always astonished at the heavy loads the Korean cargadores could carry uphill on their "A-frames," which looked like sturdy easels with a pair of arm-and-shoulder carrying straps. Humble and patient, these burden bearers were the only means of supply in remote combat areas.

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Marine Helicopters Take the Lead

The truce talks continued to be front-page news in August. Some of the more impulsive newspaper and radio commentators hinted at the possibility of a cease fire before the end of summer. As for the Marine command and staff, they were not so optimistic, judging from this sentence in a report:

"All Division units were notified on 14 August that requisitions had been sent to EUSAK for cold weather clothing and equipment."

The training period afforded an opportunity to glance back over the first year of fighting in Korea and evaluate the results. There could be no doubt that the war's foremost tactical innovation so far was the combat helicopter. The Marine Corps had taken the lead in its development when VMO–6, made up of OYs and Sikorsky HO3S–1 helicopters in roughly equal numbers, got into action with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in the Pusan Perimeter. Brigadier General Edward A. Craig had the historical distinction, insofar as is known, of being the first commanding general to see the advantages of a "chopper" as a command vehicle.

Evacuation of casualties was the principal job of the rotary-wing aircraft, and 1,926 wounded Marines were flown out during the first year. No less than 701 of these mercy flights took place during the three months from 1 April to 30 June 1951, covering the period of the two CCF 5th Phase offensives and the UN counterstroke. By that time the Bell HTL-4, with its built-in litters on both sides sheltered by plexiglas hoods, had taken over most of the evacuation missions from the HO3S–1.

The zeal of the pilots contributed substantially to the successful results. Captain Dwain L. Redalen gave a demonstration of the VMO–6 spirit at the height of the first CCF offensive in the spring of 1951. During the 13 ½ hours from 0600 to 1930 on 23 April, he was in the air constantly except for intervals of loading or unloading casualties. Logging a total of 9.6 flight hours, he evacuated 18 wounded men under enemy fire that left bullet holes in the plexiglas of his HTL–4.[22]

Practically all the helicopter techniques put into effect by VMO–6 had originally been developed by the Marine experimental squadron, HMX–1, organized late in 1947 at Quantico. Despite the enthusiasm for rotary-wing aircraft then prevailing, HMX–1 decided that an observation squadron should combine OYs with helicopters. The wisdom of this conclusion was proved in Korea, where the test of combat showed that both types were needed. The OYs were the superiors at reconnaissance and artillery spot missions, while the helicopters excelled at transportation and liaison and evacuation flights.

VMO–6 as a whole was the only Marine organization linking the ground and air commands. An administrative unit of the 1st MAW, the squadron was under the operational control of the 1st Marine Division. [23]

Thanks to the ability of the helicopter to land "on a dime," staff liaison missions and command visits were greatly facilitated. The helicopter had become the modern general's steed, and the gap between staff and line was narrowed by rotary wings.

The importance of wound evacuation missions can hardly be overestimated. Surgeons stressed the value of time in treating the shock resulting from severe wounds. The sooner a patient could be made ready for surgery, the better were his chances of survival. Definitive care had waited in the past until a casualty was borne on a jolting stretcher from the firing line to the nearest road to begin a long ambulance ride. Such a journey might take most of a day, but there were instances of a helicopter evacuee reaching the operation table only an hour after being wounded at the front, 15 or 20 miles away.

Captain J. W. McElroy, USNR, commanding the famous hospital ship *Consolation*, asserted that his experience had "proved conclusively the superiority of the helicopter method of embarking and evacuating casualties to and from the ship."[24] A helicopter loading platform was installed on the *Consolation* in July 1951, during an overhaul at the Long Beach Naval Shipyard in California. Marine helicopter pilots advised as to landing requirements, and eventually all the hospital ships had similar platforms.

At a conservative estimate, the 1,926 wounded men flown out by VMO–6 helicopters during the squadron's first year in Korea included several hundred who might not have survived former methods of evacuation.

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Marine Body Armor Tested in Korea

Another far-reaching tactical innovation was being launched at this time as Lieutenant Commander Frederick J. Lewis (MSC) USN, supervised a joint Army-Navy three-month field test of Marine armored vests made of lightweight plastics.

A glance at the past reveals that body armor had never quite vanished from modern warfare. European cavalry lancers wore steel cuirasses throughout the 19th century. During the American Civil War two commercial firms in Connecticut manufactured steel breastplates purchased by thousands of Union soldiers. So irksome were the weight and rigidity of this protection, however, that infantrymen soon discarded it.

World War I dated the first widespread adoption of armor in the 20th century. The idea was suggested when a French general noted that one of his men had survived a lethal shell fragment by virtue of wearing an iron mess bowl under his beret. France led the way, and before the end of 1915 steel helmets were being issued to all armies on the Western Front.

When the United States entered the war, General John J. Pershing put in a request for body armor. Some 30 prototypes using steel or aluminum plates were submitted but rejected. In every instance the weight and rigidity were such that too high a price in mobility would be paid for protection.[25]

During the 1930's new possibilities were opened up by developments in lightweight plastics. The Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor interrupted experiments that were not resumed until 1943. Then a new start was made with the formation of a joint Army-Navy committee headed by Rear Admiral Alexander H. Van Kueren and Colonel George F. Doriot.

Wound statistics indicated that the great majority of fatal wounds were received in a comparatively small area of the body. The following table shows the regional frequency:

Click here to view table

Shell, mortar, or grenade fragments caused 60 percent of the fatal wounds, the statistics revealed, with the remainder being charged to rifle or machine gun fire. It was futile to hope for lightweight protection against high-velocity bullets. But researchers hoped that plastic body armor could stop enough shell or mortar fragments to reduce serious wounds to light wounds while preventing light wounds altogether.

Doron and nylon were the materials approved by the joint Army-Navy committee. The first, named in honor of Colonel Doriot, consisted of laminated layers of glass cloth filaments, bonded under heavy pressure to form a thin, rigid slab. That a 1/8-inch thickness could stop and partially flatten a submachine gun bullet with a muzzle velocity of 1,150 feet per second was demonstrated by ballistic tests at a range of eight yards.

The committee recommended 12-ply, laminated, basket-weave nylon for use where flexibility was required. Both the doron and nylon protected the wearer by offering enough resistance to absorb the energy of the missile, which spent itself at the impact. Thus the shock was spread out over too large a surface for a penetration, although the wearer could receive a bad bruise. If a penetration did result from a missile of higher velocity, its effects would be much reduced in severity.

Aircraft pilots and crewmen, who could tolerate more weight than foot-sloggers, were first to benefit. Flak suits and curtains were being manufactured in quantity for airmen by 1944, and the Eighth Air Force claimed a 50 percent reduction in casualties as a result.

The infantry stood most in need of protection. Statistics from 57 U.S. divisions in the European theater of operations during World War II indicated that foot soldiers, comprising 68.5 percent of the total strength, suffered

94.5 percent of the casualties. It was further established that shell or mortar fragments caused from 61.3 to 80.4 percent of the wounds.

Unfortunately, progress lagged for the ground forces, owing to conflicting requirements. Several prototype armored vests were submitted and rejected. The Marine Corps planned to conduct combat tests in the spring of 1945 by providing the ordinary utility jacket with sheaths to hold slabs of doron. A battalion of the 2d Marine Division had been selected to wear the garment on Okinawa, but the experiment was interrupted by the end of the campaign.

The Navy and Marine Corps renewed their research in 1947 at Camp Lejeune. There a new ballistics center, established for the development and evaluation of body armor, was set up by the Naval Medical Field Research Laboratory (NMFRL). Lieutenant Commander Lewis was placed in charge of experiments.

Scientific precision seemed more important than haste in time of peace, and the NMFRL was not ready with an armored vest when Communism challenged the free world to a showdown in Korea. Five hundred of the armored utility jackets of the proposed Okinawa test were available, however, and were air-shipped to the 1st Marine Division during the Inchon-Seoul operation.

Many of them went astray during the sea lift to Wonsan and subsequent Chosin Reservoir operation. Only the 50 garments issued to the Division Reconnaissance Company were worn in combat. And though this unit kept no records, the doron slabs were credited by Major Walter Gall, the commanding officer, with saving several lives.

By the summer of 1951, Lieutenant Commander Lewis and his researchers had designed a new Marine armored vest, weighing about 8 1/2 pounds, combining curved, overlapping doron plates with flexible pads of basket-weave nylon. This garment, according to the official description, was capable of “stopping a .45 caliber USA pistol or Thompson submachine gun bullet; all the fragments of the U.S. hand grenade at three feet; 75 percent of the U.S. 81mm mortar at 10 feet; and full thrust of the American bayonet.”

Only 40 vests were available for field tests in the summer of 1951. Lewis rotated them among as many wearers as possible in the three regiments selected for the test, the 5th Marines and the 23d and 38th regiments of the U.S. 2d Infantry Division. There was, as he saw it, a psychological question to be answered—would body armor win the acceptance of troops in combat? The hackneyed phrase “bullet-proof vest,” for instance, put the wearer in a class with the buyer of a gold brick. Nylon was associated in the minds of the men with alluring feminine attire rather than protection from shell fragments. Finally, there could be no denying that undesired weight had been added, that doron plates hampered movement to some extent, and that nylon pads were uncomfortably warm for summer wear.

Despite these drawbacks, Lewis found that troop acceptance was all that could be asked. The locale of the tests was the Inje area and the approaches to the KANSAS Line in June and early July. “By keeping these few vests almost constantly in use,” the Medical Service Corps officer commented, “the maximum amount of troop wear was obtained. Included in the wide sampling were company aid men, riflemen, BAR men, mortar (60mm) men, radio (backpack type) men—each carrying his basic weapon, ammunition load and a one-meal ration.”

When Lewis returned to Camp Lejeune, he reported “that body armor, protection of some type for the vital anatomic areas, is almost unanimously *desired by all combat troops,* particularly the combat veteran of several actual fire fights with the enemy.”[26]

Infantry body armor had at last made the transition from a dream to a reality. The M–1951 was put into production by a Philadelphia sportswear firm. And it was estimated that by the spring of 1952 nearly all Marines would be protected by the vest in combat.

Saving of American lives, of course, was a primary consideration. But there was a tactical as well as humanitarian advantage to be gained. For if body armor could reduce fatal and serious wounds by as much as 50 percent, as NMFRL researchers hoped, it would mean that a large percentage of the enemy’s best antipersonnel

weapons had in effect been silenced.

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MAG-12 Moves to K-18

There was no respite for 1st MAW while the 1st Marine Division remained in reserve. Operation Strangle was at its height, and interdiction flights called for nearly all the resources of Marine aviation during the summer of 1951.

Close air support missions were made secondary. This principle was upheld by Air Force Major General Otto P. Weyland:

"I might suggest that all of us should keep in mind the limitations of air forces as well as their capabilities. Continuous CAS along a static front requires dispersed and sustained fire power against pinpoint targets. With conventional weapons there is no opportunity to exploit the characteristic mobility and fire power of air forces against worthwhile concentrations. In a static situation close support is an expensive substitute for artillery fire. It pays its greatest dividends when the enemy's sustaining capability has been crippled and his logistics cut to a minimum while his forces are immobilized by interdiction and armed reconnaissance. Then decisive results can be obtained as the close-support effort is massed in coordination with determined ground action."[27]

Marine aviation officers, of course, would have challenged some of these opinions. But General Weyland insisted that in the summer and fall of 1951 "it would have been sheer folly not to have concentrated the bulk of our air effort against interdiction targets in the enemy rear areas. Otherwise, the available firepower would have been expended inefficiently against relatively invulnerable targets along the front, while the enemy was left to build up his resources to launch and sustain a general offensive."[28]

The UN interdiction program was costly to the Communists. Yet it remained a stubborn fact that the enemy had not only maintained but actually increased his flow of supplies in spite of bombings that might have knocked a Western army out of the war. That was because CCF and NKPA troops could operate with a minimum of 50 short tons per day per division—an average of about 10 pounds per man. It was about one-fifth of the supply requirements for an equal number of U.S. troops.

Try as they might, the UN air forces could not prevent the arrival of the 2,900 tons of rations, fuel, ammunition, and other supplies needed every day by the 58 Communist divisions at the front.

The enemy during this period was increasing his own air potential. On 17 June the Fifth Air Force warned that the Communists had stepped up their number of planes from an estimated 900 in mid-May to 1,050 in mid-June. Their Korean airfields were being kept under repair in spite of persistent UN air attacks.

In June enemy light planes made night raids along the UN front lines and even into the Seoul area. VMF (N)–513 pilots, flying the nightly combat patrol over Seoul, had several fleeting contacts with these black-painted raiders. The Marines were unable to close in for the kill, since the opposing planes were nonmetal and difficult to track by radar. Soon, however, the VMF(N)–513 pilots had better hunting. On 30 June Captain Edwin B. Long and his radar operator, CWO Robert C. Buckingham, shot down a black, two-place PO-2 biplane. And on 13 July Captain Donald L. Fenton destroyed another.[29]

Despite the Air Force emphasis on interdiction, better close air support remained a major objective of the 1st MAW. One of the requirements was a shorter flying distance from air base to combat area. K-46, the MAG-12 field near Hoengsong, had qualified with respect to reduced flying time. Maintenance problems caused by the dusty, rocky runway of this primitive strip led to its abandonment. On 14 July the squadrons pulled back temporarily to K–1, and on the 26th MAG–12 withdrew its maintenance crews.

The Group's new field was K–18, a 4,400-foot strip on the east coast near Kangnung and just south of the 38th Parallel. Situated only 40 miles behind the 1st Marine Division and on the seacoast, the new field seemed to be ideally located. The runway, reinforced with pierced steel planking, extended inland from a beach where water-borne supplies could be delivered, as at K–3.[30]

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Chapter 8. The Truce Talks at Kaesong
The Division Back in Action Again

Political causes had a good deal to do with the renewal of activity for the 1st Marine Division late in August 1951. Apparently the Communist armed forces had been given enough time to recuperate from their hard knocks in May and June. At any rate, the Red delegates walked out on the truce talks after falsely charging on 22 August that UN planes had violated the neutrality of the Kaesong area by dropping napalm bombs. Although the Reds were unable to show any credible evidence, the negotiations came to an abrupt end for the time being.[31]

On the 26th all Marine units received a Division warning that offensive operations were to be initiated in the immediate future. The effective strength, of the Division (including the KMCs) had been reported as 1,386 officers and 24,044 enlisted men on 1 August 1951. Attached to the Division at that time were 165 interpreters and 4,184 Korean CTC cargadores.

On the 26th the regiments were disposed as follows: the 1st Marines near Chogutan; the 5th Marines near Inje; the 7th Marines near Yanggu; and the 1st KMC Regiment at Hangye. Service units and the Division CP were located along the Hongchon-Hangye road in the vicinity of Tundong-ni.

The 11th Marines (–), with the 196th FA Battalion, USA, attached, constituted the 11th Marine Regiment Group, an element of X Corps artillery. Throughout the training period 2/11 remained under the control of the 1st Marine Division and 3/11 was attached to the 2d Infantry Division.

The 5th Marines, 7th Marines, and KMCs were alerted to be prepared to move up to the combat areas south and west of the Punchbowl on 27 August. The 1st Marines was to remain in Division reserve, and the 11th Marines reverted to parent control.[32]

It was only about a five hour motor march from Tundong-ni to the forward assembly area under normal road and weather conditions. But recent rains had turned roads into bogs and fordable streams into torrents. Bridges were weakened by the raging current in the Soyang, and landslides blocked the road in many places.

The 1st Marine Division was back in action again. But it would have to fight its first battles against the rain and the mud.

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack

IT WAS to a large extent a new 1st Marine Division on 27 August 1951. Very few veterans of the Reservoir campaign were left, and even the Marines of the hard fighting in April and May had been thinned by casualties and rotation. Whatever the new arrivals lacked in experience, however, they had made up as far as possible by intensive and realistic training while the Division was in reserve.

The new Marine zone of action, in the Punchbowl area, was as bleak and forbidding as any expanse of terrain in Korea. Dominating the Punchbowl from the north and blocking any movement out of it was YOKE Ridge, looking somewhat like an alligator on the map (See Map 17). Hill 930 represented the snout. Hill 1000 was the head, and the body extended eastward through Hills 1026 and 924.

Click here to view map

Two smaller hills, 702 and 602, spread off southeast and northeast respectively to the Soyang River and its unnamed tributary from the west. On either side of YOKE Ridge were numerous sharp and narrow ridges. Some of the hills were wooded with enough scrub pine to afford concealment for outposts and bunkers. Altogether, it was an area eminently suited to defense.

The defenders were identified by Division G-2 as troops of the 6th Regiment, 2d Division, II NKPA Corps. Apparently they did not lack supporting weapons, for 3/7 positions on Hill 680 were hit by an estimated 200 mortar and artillery rounds during daylight hours of the 30th.

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack
Crossing the Soyang in Flood

The 7th Marines and KMC Regiment, ordered to relieve U.S. and ROK Army units on the KANSAS Line, started their march in a downpour on 27 August. The 5th Marines (less 1st Battalion) at Inje had orders to follow the 7th up the narrow Soyang valley.

Typical of the wet weather difficulties were those experienced by 3/7. Scheduled to depart early for the forward positions, the companies struck tents. Trucks failed to arrive and they remained to eat the noon meal, a gustatorial bonus of all food the galley crew could not carry with them. Unfortunately, the trucks were delayed further and the men shivered in the rain as they ate an evening meal of "C" rations.

When the vehicles finally arrived at 2100 the rain had reached torrential proportions. Progress was so slow over muddy roads that it took until 0330 on the 28th to reach the CP of the 7th Marines at Sohwari (Map 18), just southeast of the junction of the Soyang and a tributary from the east.

Click here to view map

The bivouac area assigned to 3/7 for the night proved to be a foot deep in water, and Lieutenant Colonel Kelly directed his men to catch what sleep they could in the trucks while he and his staff attempted to straighten out the snarled traffic situation.[1]

It took the rest of the night for the 3/7 officers to walk the length of the convoy, cutting out trucks with less essential cargo. With only a small space available for a turn-around, the 3/7 vehicles were ordered to back into it, unload their troops and equipment, and return along a narrow road, which had been churned into a quagmire.

The battalion assembly area was on the other side of the rain-swollen Soyang. How Company and the command group managed to cross over a waist-deep ford, but the crossing was so perilous that DUKWs were requested for the other two rifle companies. Lieutenant Colonel Louis C. Griffin's 2/7 also found the river crossing an operation requiring DUKWs. By the afternoon of the 29th all elements of the two 7th Marine battalions were on the west bank, occupying their assigned assembly areas.

The relief proceeded slowly. Two KMC battalions on the left of the 7th Marines took over the zone formerly held by elements of the 2d Infantry Division and the 8th ROK Division. The cosmopolitan character of the Eighth Army was revealed when 2/KMC relieved the French Battalion of the 2d Infantry Division. Linguistic chaos was averted only by the best efforts of the exhausted interpreters.

By the 30th, the 1st and 3d KMC Battalions were behind the line of departure on Hill 755, ready to attack in the morning. The 2d Battalion assumed responsibility for the regimental zone on the KANSAS Line.

The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 7th Marines had meanwhile completed the relief of elements of the 8th ROK Division. On the other side of the river Lieutenant Colonel James G. Kelly's 1/7 had relieved units of the ROK division on the hill mass a mile and a half north of Tonpyong (Map 17). These Marines were first to come under fire as the enemy sent over a few mortar rounds after dark on the 29th.

Division OpnO 22-51 directed the two assault regiments, the 7th Marines and KMCs, to attack at 0600 the following morning and seize their assigned positions on Corps Objective YOKE, the ridgeline running from Hill 930 on the west through Hills 1026 and 924 on the east (Map 17). Objective 1, the hill mass 1 1/2 miles northeast of Tonpyong, was already occupied by 1/7.

The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, was ordered to seize Objective 2, generally that part of YOKE Ridge east of Hill 924. The KMC Regiment was assigned Objective 3, consisting of Hills 924 and 1026.

Other 1st Marine Division units had the following missions on 31 August:

5th Marines—to patrol the Division zone along the KANSAS Line and protect defensive installations;

1st Marines—to remain in the rear in the Hongchon area in X Corps reserve;

1st Tank Battalion—to move up in readiness to support the assault regiments;

Division Reconnaissance Company—to continue to patrol the Punchbowl and mop up bypassed enemy.

Land mines were a constant menace to troop movements as the assault regiments adjusted positions in preparation for the attack. As usual, neglected "friendly" mines were encountered as well as those planted by the enemy.[2]

POW information and air reports indicated a southward movement of two to three enemy regiments with artillery and supplies. Prisoners stated that an attack was due on 1 September, leading to the G-2 conjecture that the enemy's Sixth Phase Offensive might be about to start.

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack
Supply Problems Cause Delay

Logistical shortages made it necessary for the 1st Marine Division to call a six-day halt and build up a new reserve of artillery and mortar ammunition.

During the first phase of the Division attack, the main burden of transport and supply had fallen upon three Marine units—the 1st Ordnance Battalion (Major Harold C. Borth), the 1st Motor Transport Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Howard E. Wertman), and the 7th Motor Transport Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Carl J. Cagle). The extraordinary expenditure of artillery shells for these four days posed a resupply problem that was aggravated by an almost impassable supply route. The three Marine battalions had to strain every resource to meet minimal requirements.

Ammunition Supply Point (ASP) 60-B, a U.S. Army installation manned by elements of the Marine 1st Ordnance Battalion, was located about five miles behind the gun positions. From this dump it was 48 miles to Hongchon, the source of supplies for ASP 60-B. A well maintained, two-lane dirt road led from that base to Inje, but northward it deteriorated into a narrow, twisting trail following the Soyang valley. Recent rains, resulting in earth slides and mudholes, had reduced the road to such a condition that the round trip between ASP 60-B and Hongchon took 25 hours.[3]

As an added complication, it was necessary to build up a 10-day reserve of ammunition at ASP 60–B so that Division transport would be available for lifting 2,000 rotated troops to Chunchon some time between 3 and 15 September. This meant that 50 to 60 Marine trucks must be employed daily to haul ammunition, with the result of a drastic shortage of motor transport for other purposes.

Only human transport was available for supplying Marines on the firing line. X Corps started the month of September with 20,070 Korean Service Corps, the successor to CTC, and civilian contract laborers—the equivalent in numbers of a U.S. Army infantry division. Even so, 14 air drops were necessary during the month, only one of which went to a Marine unit. This took place on 1 September, when 20 Air Force cargo planes from Japan dropped ammunition and rations to the KMCs. A 90 percent recovery was reported.[4]

It generally took a full day in the 1st Marine Division zone during the first week of September for a cargador to complete the trip from a battalion supply point to the front lines and return. This made it necessary to assign from 150 to 250 Korean laborers to each infantry battalion. And as the Marines advanced farther into the rugged Korean highlands, the logistic problem was increased.

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack
Resumption of Division Attack

Enemy groups moving southward into the zone of the 1st Marine Division during the six-day lull were sighted by air observation. POW interrogations and other G–2 sources established that the 2d NKPA Division, II Corps, had been relieved by the 1st NKPA Division, III Corps. Accurate 76mm fire from well-hidden guns was received by the Marines throughout the interlude, and patrols ran into brisk mortar fire when they approached too near to enemy bunkers on Hill 673.

For the second time, during the night of 4–5 September, 5th Marines units were assailed on the KANSAS Line, 5 miles to the rear of the 7th Marines troops similarly deployed along the HAYS Line. Yet a large 7th Marines patrol ranged forward some 2,000 yards the next day without enemy contacts. A like result was reported by a patrol representing almost the entire strength of the Division Reconnaissance Company (Major Robert L. Autry) after it scoured the area north of the Punchbowl.[5]

1st Marine Division OpnO 23–51, issued on the morning of 9 September, called for the 7th Marines to jump off at 0300 on the 11th and attack Objectives ABLE and BAKER—Hills 673 and 749 respectively—while maintaining contact with the 8th ROK Division on the right. Other Division units were given these missions:

1st Marines—to be released from X Corps reserve near Hongchon to Division control; to be prepared to pass through the 7th Marines, when that regiment secured its objectives, and continue the attack to seize Objective CHARLIE, the ridgeline leading northwest from Hill 1052.

5th Marines—to maintain one company on KANSAS Line while occupying positions in Division reserve along HAYS Line in rear of 7th Marines.

KMC Regiment—to patrol aggressively on Division left to exert pressure on enemy defenses south and southeast of Objective CHARLIE.

11th Marines—to displace forward to support attack of the 7th Marines.

Division Reconnaissance Company—to patrol northward in the Soyang valley as far as Hwanggi to deny the enemy this area.

The area ahead of the 7th Marines was ideal for defense. From YOKE Ridge the assault troops had to descend into a narrow valley formed by a small tributary of the Soyang-gang, cross the stream, and climb Kanmubong Ridge on the other side. This formidable piece of terrain was dominated by three enemy positions, Hills 812, 980, and 1052 (Map 17). Thus the attack of the 7th Marines had as its primary purpose the securing of initial objectives on Kanmubong Ridge that would give access to the main NKPA defense line, some 4,000 yards to the north.

The 7th Marines was to seize the eastern tip (Objective ABLE) of this commanding terrain feature and "run the ridge" to Hill 749, Objective BAKER. While Lieutenant Colonel Louis G. Griffin's 2/7 maintained its patrolling activities on the left, tied in with the KMCs, Lieutenant Colonel B. T. Kelly's 3/7 in the center and Lieutenant Colonel J. G. Kelly's 1/7 on the right were to attack.

As an intermediate regimental objective on the way to Kanmubong Ridge, the 680-meter hill directly north of B. T. Kelly's position on Hill 602 was assigned to his battalion. He ordered How Company to move forward under cover of darkness and be prepared to attack at dawn. Rain and poor visibility delayed the attempt until surprise was lost, and after a fierce fire fight How Company was stopped halfway up the southeast spur.

In order to relieve the pressure, the battalion commander directed Item Company to attack on the left up the southwest spur. This maneuver enabled How Company to inch forward under heavy mortar and machine gun

fire to a point with 50 yards of the topographical crest. Item Company became confused in the “fog of war” and finally wound up on How’s spur at 1245.

Twice the two companies made a combined assault after artillery and mortar preparation and air strikes with napalm, rocket, and strafing fire. Both times the North Koreans swarmed out of their bunkers to drive the Marines halfway back to the original jump off line. It was anybody’s fight when the two battered companies dug in at dusk.

Across the valley to the east, J. G. Kelly’s 1/7 had no better fortune in its attack on Hill 673. Heavy enemy mortar and machine gun fire kept the assault troops pinned down until they consolidated for the night.

With both attacking battalions in trouble, Colonel Nickerson ordered 2/7 to advance up the narrow valley separating them. His plan called for the reserve battalion to move under cover of darkness around the left flank of 1/7 and into a position behind the enemy before wheeling to the northeast to trap the North Koreans defending Hill 673.

The maneuver succeeded brilliantly. Griffin’s troops were undetected as they filed northward during the night, making every effort to maintain silence. By daybreak on 12 September 2/7 had two platoons in position behind the enemy to lead the attack.[6]

The assault exploded with complete surprise as 2/7 swept to the crest of Hill 673 against confused and ineffectual opposition. Griffin’s battalion and 1/7 had the enemy between them, but the jaws of the trap could not close in time because of NKPA mine fields. Thus 1/7 continued to be held up on the forward approaches to Hill 673 by NKPA mortar and small-arms fire. Grenades were the most effective weapons as J. G. Kelly’s men slugged their way to the summit at 1415 while 2/7 was attacking Objective BAKER, Hill 749.

On the other side of the valley, 3/7 had seized its initial objective. While How and Item Companies attacked up the southeast spur, where they had been stopped the day before, George Company launched a surprise assault up the southwest spur. This was the blow that broke the enemy’s will to resist. George Company knocked out seven active enemy bunkers, one by one, thus taking the pressure off the troops on the other spur. At 1028 all three companies met on the summit.

The 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, radioed that Objective BAKER had been secured at 1710 after a hard fight, but this report proved to be premature. Enough NKPA troops to give the Marines a good deal of trouble were still holding the wooded slopes of Hill 749, and it would take the attack of a fresh battalion to dislodge them. Along the ridgeline from Hill 673 to Hill 749, an undetermined number of enemy soldiers had been caught between 2/7 and 1/7, and events were to prove that they would resist as long as a man remained alive.

Casualties of the 1st Marine Division on 11 and 12 September were 22 KIA and 245 WIA, nearly all of them being suffered by the assault regiment. Enemy losses included 30 counted KIA and 22 prisoners.

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack
The Mounting Problem of CAS

With the Division in reserve from 15 July until the latter part of August, close air support (CAS) was not a vital problem; however, upon return to the Punchbowl area the situation became serious. The difficulties arose from the time lag between the request for air support to the time the planes arrived over target. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing operating under the control of the Fifth Air Force was busily employed on interdiction missions. On 30 August, a tactical air observer, spotting what appeared to be a division of NKPA troops moving toward the Marines, hurriedly flashed back a request for a multi-plane strike. The enemy troops were beyond artillery range, but they were bunched up—a good target for a concentrated air strike. It was more than three hours later that four fighter bombers arrived on the scene; by that time, the enemy formation had dispersed and the desired number of casualties could not be inflicted.[7]

The reason for this lack of timely air support was apparent. Most of the UN air power was being funneled into Operation STRANGLE, the interdiction operation designed to cut off the enemy's vehicular and rail traffic in the narrow waist of North Korea. With the emphasis on air interdiction, close air support sorties were limited to only 96 per day for the entire Eighth Army.[8] The 1st Marine Division received only a proportionate share.

Marine close air support was needed because of the enemy's determined resistance to the Division's attack. The Reds hurled frequent night counterattacks and pounded the Marine positions with artillery and mortars hidden in the precipitous Punchbowl area. At one time it was estimated that the enemy was using 92 pieces of artillery. The Marines had only 72 field pieces, but in one 24-hour period they expended more than 11,000 rounds of artillery ammunition on a 6,000-yard frontage. The enemy emplacements, hewn out of solid rock, were hard to knock out.

To support the hard-working infantrymen, Marine Aircraft Group 12 (MAG–12) had moved VMF–214 and VMF–312 from the Pusan area to K–18, an airfield on the east coast at Kangnung. By moving closer to the Division area, planes were able to extend their time over the target area and render more effective support to the infantry. Also, Marine Air Support Radar Team One (MASRT-1) was sent to Korea and established positions to support the Division. Using its support radar the team began to evaluate its capability of guiding unseen fighter-bombers at night or under conditions of poor visibility.[9]

Even though the Corsairs at K-18 were less than 50 miles from the 1st Marine Division, very few were available to the Marines. Operation STRANGLE, in full swing, was not achieving the desired results. Since sightings of enemy vehicles were increasing, more and more Marine and Navy air sorties were channeled into interdiction. During 18 days of rugged fighting from 3 to 21 September, forward air controllers made 182 tactical air requests. Fighter-bombers were provided on 127 of these requests; however, in only 24 instances did the planes arrive when needed. The average delay time in getting CAS in response to requests during September was slightly less than two hours, but in 49 cases the planes were more than two hours late.[10] As a consequence, General Thomas reported, many of the 1,621 casualties suffered by the 1st Marine Division during the hard fighting in September were due to inadequate close air support. Furthermore, he said, the tactical capabilities of his battalions were strongly restricted.

During the planning of attacks, infantry commanders almost always desired and requested close air support. It was also desirable to have planes on station overhead should an immediate CAS need arise, for the lack of an air strike when needed could jeopardize success. However, with restricted availability of CAS planes due to participation in STRANGLE, many times desired air cover was not to be had. Attacks under those circumstances

were often costly.

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack
First Helicopter Supply Operation of History

The relief of the three battalions of the 7th Marines by their corresponding numbers of Colonel Thomas A. Wornham's 1st Marines took place during the night of 12-13 September. By daybreak 3/1 and 1/1 had assumed responsibility for the zones of 3/7 and 1/7, which were on their way to Division reserve at Wontong-ni at the junction of the Inje and Kansong roads. In the center, however, 2/1 could not complete the relief of 2/7. Not only was that battalion engaged most of the day with the enemy, but the units were separated—one company south of Hill 749 being unable to join the other two companies on separate spurs northwest of that height. All three were under persistent NKPA mortar and 76mm fire.[11]

The attack of the 1st Marines, originally scheduled for 0500 on 13 September, had been changed to 0900 by Division orders. One reason for the postponement was the serious shortage of ammunition and other supplies after the urgent demands of the last two days. Another reason was the inability of VMO–6 helicopters, lifting two wounded men at most, to cope with the mounting casualty lists. Enemy interdiction of roads added in several instances to the complications of a major logistical problem, particularly in the zone of Lieutenant Colonel Franklin B. Nihart's 2d Battalion, 1st Marines.

The hour had struck for HMR-161, and the world's first large-scale helicopter supply operation in a combat zone would soon be under way. It was not the development of a day. On the contrary, its roots went all the way back to 1945, when the atomic bomb of Hiroshima rendered obsolescent in 10 seconds a system of amphibious assault tactics that had been 10 years in the making. Obviously, the concentrations of transports, warships, and aircraft carriers that had made possible the Saipan and Iwo Jima landings would be sitting ducks for an enemy armed with atomic weapons.

The problem was left on the doorstep of the Marine Corps Schools, which had reared the Fleet Marine Force from infancy to maturity during the 1930's. A Special Board and Secretariat were appointed for studies. They assigned two general missions to Marine Helicopter Experimental Squadron 1 (HMX–1), organized late in 1947 before the first rotary-wing aircraft had been delivered. These missions were:

(1) Develop techniques and tactics in connection with the movement of assault troops by helicopter in amphibious operations;

(2) Evaluate a small helicopter as a replacement for the present OY type aircraft to be used for gunfire spotting, observation, and liaison missions in connection with amphibious operation.[12]

The second mission resulted in the small Sikorsky and Bell helicopters of VMO–6 which landed in Korea with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in August 1950. Although it was originally believed that rotary wing aircraft might replace the OYs, combat experience soon demonstrated that the best results were obtained by retaining both types in fairly equal numbers.

Landing exercises under simulated combat conditions were conducted by HMX–1 in fulfillment of the first mission. At first the squadron had only three-place helicopters. Later, when the usefulness of the helicopter was fully realized, even the new 10-place "choppers" were never available in sufficient numbers. The capacity designations of these machines, however, were more ideal than real, for the helicopters could lift only four to six men in addition to the pilot, copilot, and crewman. Despite such drawbacks, HMX–1 developed tactical and logistical techniques for helicopter landings to be made from widely dispersed carriers against an enemy using atomic weapons.

Belated deliveries of aircraft delayed the commissioning of the world's first transport helicopter

squadron, HMR–161, until 15 January 1951 at El Toro. Lieutenant Colonel George W. Herring was designated the commanding officer and Lieutenant Colonel William P. Mitchell the executive officer.

Nearly three months passed before the first three transport helicopters arrived. The squadron was gradually built up to a strength of 43 officers and 244 enlisted men with a full complement of 15 HRS–1 helicopters. These Sikorsky aircraft, designed to Marine specifications, were simply an enlarged three-place HO3S in configuration, with a similar main rotor and vertical tail rotor. About 62 feet long with maximum extention of rotor blades, the HRS–1 was 11 1/2 feet wide with the blades folded. Following are some of the other statistics:

Gross weight at sea level, 7,000 pounds; cruising speed, 60 knots; payload at sea level, 1,420 pounds; troop-lifting capacity, four to six men with full combat equipment or three to five casualties in litters.[13] Capabilities varied, of course, according to such factors as altitude, temperature, and pilot experience.

Marine Transport Helicopter Squadron 161 arrived in Korea on the last day of August, and by the 10th of September it had moved up to the front, sharing Airfield X–83 (see Map 18) with VMO–6.[14] The 11th was devoted to reconnaissance flights in search of landing sites, and on the 12th the transport squadron was ready for its first combat mission. A new means of logistical and tactical support that was to revolutionize operations and create front page headlines had arrived in Korea.

Prior to the squadron's arrival, the Division chief of staff, Colonel Victor H. Krulak, had held numerous planning conferences with Division staff officers, and preparations for the employment of HMR-161 had made noteworthy progress. Then General Thomas ordered executed the first operation of the squadron under combat conditions, and the major logistical problem of moving supplies and evacuating casualties was well on the way to being solved. At 1600 on 13 September 1951—a date that would have historical significance—Operation WINDMILL I was set in motion.

Lieutenant Colonel Herring had attended the final planning conference at Division headquarters at 0830 on the 13th, and he was told that the operation would involve a lift of one day's supplies to 2/1 over a distance of seven miles. The commanding officer of 2/1 was to select suitable landing points and the commanding officer of 1st Shore Party Battalion had the responsibility of providing support teams to operate at the embarkation and landing points.[15]

Only two days had been available for training and rehearsals, but not a minute was wasted. All morning on the 13th the embarkation point section separated the supplies into balanced loads of about 800 pounds per helicopter. Loading commenced at 1520. Half an hour later, seven aircraft were ready to depart while four others went ahead to carry the landing point section to the previously reconnoitered site.

The route followed the valleys as much as possible, so that the helicopters were in defilade most of the way. Smoke was laid down by the 11th Marines for concealment.

The landing point section managed in 20 minutes to clear an area of 20 x 40 feet (later enlarged to 100 x 100 feet) and mark it with fluorescent panels. At 1610 the first HRS-1 hovered with cargo nets suspended from a hook released by manual control. A few minutes later it took off with five walking wounded and two litter cases.

Each helicopter carried out as many casualties as possible, depending on the amount of gasoline in the fuel tanks. Only 30 minutes passed from the time one Marine was wounded and the time of his arrival at a hospital clearing station 17 miles behind the firing line.

Radio provided communications between helicopters in flight, HMR–161 headquarters, 2/1 CP, and the Shore Party team at the landing site.

Fifteen aircraft were employed for one hour, three for two hours, and one for two hours and 45 minutes—a total of 28 flights in over-all time of 2 ½ hours. The helicopters landed at intervals of two minutes and took off as soon as the landing point section could put the casualties aboard. And though an altitude of 2,100 feet restricted loads, 18,848 pounds of cargo had been lifted into the area and 74 casualties evacuated when the last

“chopper” returned to X–83 at 1840.

To even the most pessimistic observer Operation WINDMILL I was a complete success, so successful that a similar operation, WINDMILL II was conducted on the 19th. Two days later the first helicopter lift of combat troops was completed. A new era of military transport had dawned.

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack
The Fight for Hill 749

Although 2/1 alone had 240 Korean cargadores attached, the 7 1/2 tons of helicopter-borne supplies, largely ammunition, were vitally needed by the two assault battalions of the 1st Marines. After relieving Fox Company of 2/7 south of Hill 749 at 1100 on the 13th, Lieutenant Colonel Nihart's 2/1 jumped off to the attack an hour later. Stiff opposition was encountered from the beginning. The relief of the remaining two companies of 2/7 was complicated by the fact that they were some 400 yards from the position reported, on the reverse slope of Hill 749. Throughout the day these Marines were heavily engaged with the enemy.[16]

On the left of 2/1, the 3d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Foster C. La Hue) could not make much progress toward its regimental objective, Hill 751, while the enemy was active on Hill 749. A second attack of 2/1 at 1500 drove to the summit of that height after fierce fighting with small arms, automatic weapons, and hand grenades. There was still much fighting to be done before the entire objective would be secured since many enemy bunkers hidden among the trees remained to be neutralized.

At 1600 a gap of about 300 yards separated 2/1 from the two 2/7 companies. So fierce was enemy resistance in this area that it took until 2025 for Nihart's men to complete the relief after fighting for every foot of ground.

Air and artillery support had been excellent on the 13th despite the fact that neither could be called by 2/1 in some instances because of the danger of hitting elements of 2/7. Even so, 2/11 (Lieutenant Colonel Dale H. Heely) and other artillery units fired 2,133 rounds and Company C of the 1st Tank Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Holly H. Evans) contributed 720 rounds of 90mm fire which knocked out six enemy bunkers. The 4.2" mortars had a busy day firing 261 HE and 28 WP rounds, and Company C of the 1st Engineer Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel John V. Kelsey) supported the attack by clearing mine fields.

Mortar fire was received by the 1st Marines throughout the night, and 3/1 repulsed a series of counterattacks by an estimated 300 enemy. Colonel Wornham's regiment continued the attack at 0800 on 14 September. Both the 2d and 3d Battalions inched their way forward against a heavy volume of well-aimed enemy mortar, artillery, and automatic weapons fire.

NKPA resistance persisted on the wooded northern slope of Hill 749, where hidden bunkers had to be knocked out, one by one. It took constant slugging for 2/1 to advance 300 meters before dusk, enabling 3/1 to fight its way to the summit of Hill 751. Again the flat trajectory fire of Company C tanks had been helpful as 400 rounds were directed against NKPA bunkers, while the 11th Marines fired 3,029 rounds.

The 15th was a relatively quiet day as compared to the previous 48 hours. In preparation for an expected passage of lines, the action took a slower tempo as units consolidated their positions. The principal fight of the day was a continuation of the attack by 2/1 north of Hill 749. Although the battalion commander had arranged for a heavy artillery preparation, the attack, which jumped off at 1710, was stopped at 1800 by a terrific pounding from NKPA mortars and artillery coupled with a crossfire of machine guns from concealed bunkers. The assault troops withdrew under effective covering fire by the 11th Marines to positions occupied the previous night. Objective Baker yet remained to be secured.

The Marines could not help paying reluctant tribute to the skill as well as obstinacy of the NKPA defense. Enemy bunkers were so stoutly constructed that the North Koreans did not hesitate to direct well aimed mortar fire on their own positions when the Marines closed in for the final attack.

NKPA fields of fire were laid out for the utmost effect. Marines with recent memories of college football

referred to the enemy's effective use of terrain as the "North Korean T Formation." On Hill 749, for example, the main ridgeline leading to the summit was crossed by another wooded ridgeline at right angles. Attackers fighting their way up the leg of the "T" came under deadly crossfire from the head of the imaginary letter—a transverse ridgeline bristling with mortars and machine guns positioned in bunkers.

In accordance with Division OpnO 25–51, the 5th Marines (Colonel Richard C. Weede) moved up to assembly areas on 15 September in preparation for passing through 3/1 on the 16th to continue the attack. The 3d Battalion, 1st Marines in turn would relieve 1/1 (Major Edgar F. Carney, Jr.), so that it could pass through 2/1 and carry on the assault to complete the securing of Hill 749.

The KMCs and Division Recon Company were to relieve the 5th Marines of responsibility for the Hays Line, while the 7th Marines remained in reserve at Wontong-ni.

The comparative quiet of the 15th was shattered a minute after midnight when the enemy launched a savage four-hour attack to drive 2/1 off Hill 749. The NKPA hurricane barrage that preceded the attempt, according to the Division report, "reached an intensity that was estimated to surpass that of any barrage yet encountered by the 1st Marine Division in Korea."[17]

The thinned companies of 2/1 took a frightful pounding from 76mm, 105mm, and 122mm artillery supplemented by 82mm and 120mm mortars. Bugles and whistles were the signal for the onslaught. It was stopped by weary Marines who demonstrated at NKPA expense that they, too, could put up a resolute defensive fight.

Wave after wave of attackers dashed itself at the thinned Marine platoons, only to shatter against a resistance that could be bent but not broken. The fight was noteworthy for examples of individual valor. When one of the forward Marine platoons was compelled to give ground slowly, Corporal Joseph Vittori of Fox Company rushed through the withdrawing troops to lead a successful local counterattack. As the all-night fight continued, "he leaped from one foxhole to another, covering each foxhole in turn as casualties continued to mount, manning a machine gun when the gunner was struck down and making repeated trips through the heaviest shell fire to replenish ammunition."[18]

Vittori was mortally wounded during the last few minutes of the fight, thus becoming the second Marine of 2/1 within a 48-hour period to win the Medal of Honor. His predecessor was Pfc Edward Gomez of Easy Company. When an enemy grenade landed in the midst of his squad on 14 September, he "unhesitatingly chose to sacrifice himself and, diving into the ditch with the deadly missile, absorbed the shattering violence of the explosion in his own body."[19]

Not until 0400 on the 16th did the enemy waves of attack subside on Hill 749. NKPA strength was estimated at a regiment. A combined assault by an estimated 150 enemy on 3/1 positions to the west in the vicinity of Hill 751 was repulsed shortly after midnight, as were three lesser efforts during the early morning hours of the 16th.

When the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines moved out at 0830 to pass through 2/1 and continue the fight, it was the first day of command for Lieutenant Colonel John E. Gorman.[20] The passage of lines was slowed by enemy mortar fire, and NKPA resistance stiffened as 1/1 attacked along the ridgeline leading toward Hill 749. At 1800, after a hard day's fighting, Objective Baker was occupied and defensive positions were organized for the night.

Thus was the attack of the 1st Marines terminated. Around Hill 751, 3/1 remained in control. The regiment's other two battalions, 1/1 and 2/1, held a defensive line about 1,500 yards long on both sides of Hill 749.

Hill 749 had finally been secured. A number of mutually supporting hidden enemy bunkers had been knocked out in a ruthless battle of extermination, and veterans of the World War II Pacific conflict were reminded of occasions when Japanese resistance flared up in similar fashion after ground was thought to be secure.

Casualties of the 1st Marine Division during the four-day fight for Hill 749, most of them suffered by the

attacking regiment, were 90 KIA, 714 WIA, and 1 MIA. Enemy losses for the same period were 771 counted KIA (although more than twice that number were estimated KIA) and 81 prisoners.

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack
5th Marines Attack Hill 812

Division OpnO 25–51 assigned the 5th Marines the mission of passing through 3/1 in the vicinity of Hill 751 and attacking to secure Objective Dog, the bare, brown hill mass which loomed approximately 1,000 yards ahead. The last few hundred yards were certain to be long ones, for the main east-west ridgeline leading to Hill 812 was crossed by a north-south ridgeline—the leg and head of another "T" formation. Again, as on Hill 749, the attackers had to fight their way through a vicious crossfire.

Lieutenant Colonel Houston Stiff's 2/5 on the right had the main effort. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Donald R. Kennedy) was to advance on Stiff's left with the mission of supporting his attack on Objective dog, prepared to seize Hill 980 on order. Lieutenant Colonel William P. Alston's 1/5 remained in regimental reserve.[21]

Fox Company spearheaded the 2/5 attack by moving initially up the low ground between Hill 673 on the right hand and 680 on the left. Owing to delays in completing the relief of 1st Marines elements, it was early afternoon on 16 September before the assault got underway. Progress was slow against heavy mortar and machine gun fire, and a halt came at 1700 for regrouping and evacuation of casualties.

Dog Company, in support on the ridge to the left, sighted troops approaching the objective and requested that the positions of the assault company be identified. In order to pinpoint the locations, a white phosphorous grenade was used as a mark. It attracted the attention of aircraft summoned by 3/5 against Hill 980 (Map 17), from which fire had been received. The planes, assuming that another target had been designated, attacked the forward platoons of Fox Company with napalm and machine guns. By a miracle, recognition panels were put out before a single casualty resulted, but the men found it a harrowing experience.

Darkness fell before the attack could be resumed, and Fox Company pulled back along the ridgeline to set up a perimeter defense and evacuate the wounded. The night passed without enemy action. Bright moonlight made for unusual visibility which discouraged enemy attacks and permitted the Marine assault platoons more sleep than might otherwise have been expected.

Regimental orders called for 2/5 to resume the attack at 0400 on the 17th, supported by the fires of 3/5, while 1/5 continued in reserve. Fox Company of 2/5 had some difficulty in orienting itself after the confusion of the night before and was delayed until 0700 in jumping off. This proved to be a stroke of luck, for dawn gave the Marines a good view of unsuspecting enemy troops eating breakfast and making ready for the day's fighting. Fox Company called artillery on them with good effect.

Surprise gave the attack an opening advantage and rapid progress was made at first along the main ridgeline leading west to Hill 812. Then Fox Company was stopped by the cross-fire from the head of the "T." Easy Company passed through at 0830 to continue the assault, reinforced by a platoon of Fox Company that had become separated from its parent unit, although it kept in touch by radio.

An air strike was called but did not materialize. After waiting for it in vain, Easy Company drove toward the summit with the support of artillery and mortars.

Two hours after passing through Fox Company, the attackers had advanced only about a hundred yards against the NKPA cross-fire. At 1100, Lieutenant Colonel Stiff ordered an all-out drive for the objective, following a preliminary barrage of everything that could be thrown at the enemy—artillery, 75mm recoilless, rockets, and 81mm and 4.2" mortars. As soon as the bombardment lifted, Easy Company was to drive straight ahead along the ridgeline while the 2d Platoon of Fox Company made a flank attack.

This maneuver turned the trick. The blow on the flank took the enemy by surprise, and in just 36 minutes the assault troops were on the summit after a hard fight at close quarters with automatic weapons and grenades. Since regimental orders had specified “before nightfall,” Objective DOG had been seized ahead of schedule.

With scarcely a pause, Easy Company continued along the ridgeline leading west from Hill 812 toward Hill 980. Remarkably fast progress was made against an enemy who appeared to be thrown off balance. Permission was asked to seize Hill 980. The regimental commander refused because of instructions from Division to the effect that this position could not be defended while the enemy remained in possession of Hill 1052, the key terrain feature. Easy Company was directed to withdraw 600 yards toward Hill 812.

Late in the evening of 17 September, Colonel Weede directed his two assault battalions to consolidate on the best ground in their present locations and prepare to hold a defensive line.

When the brakes were put on the attack, 3/5 was strung out over a wide area to the north of Hill 751. This battalion was not tied in with 2/5, which occupied positions coordinated for the defense of Hill 812—Easy Company to the west, on the ridgeline leading to 980; Dog and Weapons Company to the south, protecting the left flank; and Fox Company to the east.

Both Easy and Fox Companies were under fire from Hills 980 and 1052, and daytime movement on 812 was restricted to the northern slope. Even so, sniping shots from well aimed North Korean 76mm mountain guns inflicted a number of casualties.

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Chapter 9. Renewal of the Attack
The Struggle for the “Rock”

An abrupt change in the enemy’s strategy became evident throughout these September operations. Where he had previously contented himself with an elastic defense, every position was now bitterly fought for and held to the last man. When it was lost, counterattacks were launched in efforts to regain it.

One of these attempts hit the western outpost of 2/5’s Easy Company at 0430 on 18 September, compelling the Marines to give ground. A second counterattack at 0840 was repulsed. Enemy fire from Hills 980 and 1042 continued all day long, and Colonel Stiff’s battalion suffered most of the 16 KIA and 98 WIA casualties reported by the Division for 18 September.

The night of 18–19 September passed in comparative quiet, but at daylight the enemy on Hills 980 and 1052 was still looking down the throats of the 2/5 Marines. None of the participants will ever forget a landmark known simply as “the Rock”— a huge granite knob athwart the ridgeline approximately 700 yards west of Hill 812. Only 12 feet high, its location made it visible from afar. The Marines outposted the top and eastern side, while the enemy held tenaciously to the western side. Along the northern slope of the ridge leading west to the Rock were the only positions affording protection to the dug-in forward elements of the battalion.

The need for fortification materials such as sand bags, barbed wire, and mines aggravated the already serious supply problems of 2/5. A request for helicopter support was sent at 1100 on the 19th and approved immediately by General Thomas. Loading commenced early the same afternoon, and Operation WINDMILL II was launched. A total of 12,180 pounds were lifted by 10 HRS–1 aircraft in 16 flights during the overall time of one hour.[22]

Again, on 19 September, 2/5 incurred most of the casualties reported by the Division. During the day 1/5, after relieving the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 1st Marines, moved up on the right of 2/5 to occupy a defensive line stretching two miles east along the ridge almost to the Soyang-gang.

NKPA action was confined to incessant long-range fire during the daylight hours of the 19th, but at 0315 the following morning the enemy made a desperate effort to retake Hill 812. After a brief but intense mortar and artillery barrage, North Koreans in at least company strength came pouring around the northern side of the Rock to attack with grenades and burp guns at close range. The left platoon of Easy Company counterattacked but was pushed back by superior numbers to positions on the left flank of the hill.

The enemy immediately took possession of evacuated ground which enabled him to fire into the front lines of Easy Company. At 0500 another Marine counterattack began, with Easy Company making a frontal assault and the 2d Platoon of Fox Company striking the enemy flank. It was the same platoon that had delivered the flank attack resulting in the capture of Hill 812. Again 2/Fox struck the decisive blow with grenades and automatic weapons. The surprise was too much for enemy troops who hastened back to their own side of the Rock, leaving 60 counted dead behind.[23]

This was the last action of a battle that had occupied all three Marine regiments from 11 to 20 September inclusive while the KMC Regiment patrolled aggressively on the Division left flank. Three of the four Division objectives had been secured after savage fights, but Objective CHARLIE (the ridgeline northwest of Hill 1052 in the KMC zone) had yet to be attacked when Division OpnO 26–51 put an abrupt stop to offensive movement.

Not only was the fight west of Hill 812 the last action of the 1st Marine Division’s nine-day battle; it was the last action of mobility for Marines in Korea. As time went on, it would become more and more apparent that 20 September 1951 dated a turning point in the Korean conflict. On that day the warfare of movement came to an

end, and the warfare of position began.

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Chapter 10. The New Warfare of Position

TWO AND A HALF weeks of hard fighting had taken place along the X Corps front when General James A. Van Fleet paid a visit on 16 September 1951. The commanding general of EUSAK wished to inspect the operations and determine the morale of the 1st Marine Division and 2d Infantry Division, both of which had suffered heavy casualties. He found the morale of these X Corps units good and had no adverse criticisms of their operations. While on this tour of inspection, however, he issued the following three directives to X Corps:

"(1) That replacements would be integrated into units only when the battalion or larger-sized unit to which they were assigned was in reserve;

"(2) that certain 'choke points' [General Van Fleet pointed out the locations on the map] be interdicted to prevent enemy reinforcements or withdrawals through these points;

"(3) *that the Corps Commander firm up his line by 20 September and to plan no further offensives after that date,* as it was unprofitable to continue the bitter operation."[1]

Italics have been added to emphasize the importance of 20 September 1951 as the turning point when a warfare of position replaced a warfare of movement throughout the remaining 22 months of the conflict in Korea. There are few dates as important in the entire history of the war.

General Van Fleet reiterated his instructions on the 18th in a confirming directive to the effect that X Corps continue making limited attacks "until 20 September, after which . . . units were to firm up the existing line and to patrol vigorously forward of it."[2]

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Chapter 10. The New Warfare of Position
Sectors of Major EUSAK Units

Click here to view map

At this turning point the Eighth Army had 14 divisions from four corps committed along a 125-mile front across the peninsula. These units were distributed (Map 19) as follows:

U.S. I CORPS

ROK 1st Division holding the left anchor in the Munsan-ni area and controlling the 5th KMC Battalion on the Kimpo Peninsula;

British 1st Commonwealth Division across the river Imjin to the northeast;

U.S. 1st Cavalry Division (Greek and Thai Battalions attached) still farther to the northeast in the Yonchon area;

U.S. 3rd Infantry Division (Belgian Battalion and Philippine 20th BCT attached) having the responsibility for the vital Chorwon area;

U.S. IX CORPS

U.S. 25th Infantry Division (Turkish Brigade attached) defending the area west of Kumhwa;

ROK 2d Division holding a sector east of Kumhwa;

U.S. 7th Infantry Division (Ethiopian Battalion attached) on the right;

ROK 6th Division with a narrow sector as far east as the Pukhan River, the Corps boundary;

U.S. 24th Infantry Division (Colombian Battalion attached) in Corps reserve south of Hwachon;

U.S. X CORPS

ROK 8th Division on the left flank;

U.S. 2d Infantry Division (French and Netherlands Battalions attached) in left-central portion of Corps front;

ROK 5th Division occupying a narrow sector to the east;

U.S. 1st Marine Division holding eastern portion of the Corps sector;

ROK I CORPS

ROK 11th Division responsible for left of the Corps front;

ROK Capitol Division holding the line eastward to the Sea of Japan;

ROK 3d Division in reserve at Yangyang for a period of training.[3]

Some rather complicated juggling of units took place on the X Corps front, giving the effect of a game of musical chairs in the tactical sphere. From 18 to 21 September the 1st Marine Division extended its line eastward to relieve the 8th ROK Division on the extreme right of the Corps area. That Division in turn relieved the 5th ROK Division on the extreme left, whereupon the latter leapfrogged the 2d Infantry Division to occupy a new sector on the left of the Marines.

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Chapter 10. The New Warfare of Position
Statement by General Van Fleet

"Theirs not to reason why" could never have been written about American fighting men. From 1775 to the present day, they have always taken a keen interest in the high-level strategic and tactical decisions governing their operations. This applies with particular force to the Marines, who have seldom had a voice in the shaping of operations above the division level.

As if in direct reply to unspoken questions, the commanding general of the Eighth Army made a statement on 30 September explaining the purpose of his strategy. "My basic mission during the past four months," he said, "has been to destroy the enemy, so that the men of Eighth Army will not be destroyed. . . . Each loaded enemy weapon was a definite threat to the Eighth Army. It was imperative that we knock out as many of those weapons as we could find. . . ."

"In prodding the enemy in the deep belly of the peninsula," continued General Van Fleet, "we have taken many casualties. . . . It was mandatory that we control the high ground features, so that we could look down the throat of the enemy and thereby better perform our task of destruction. . . . In seizing these hills we lost men, but in losing a comparative few we saved other thousands."

Estimated casualties, inflicted on the enemy by UN ground forces alone from 25 May to 25 September, were announced as 188,237 by the EUSAK commander. "As we open our autumn campaign," he added, "the enemy potential along the front line has been sharply reduced by our hill-hopping tactics. The Communist forces in Korea are not liquidated but they are badly crippled."[4]

Even so, EUSAK G–2 summaries credited the enemy on 1 October 1951 with more than 600,000 troops at the front, or in reserve and available as immediate reinforcements. Six CCF armies and one NKPA corps were capable of reinforcing the units on the MLR or participating in an offensive. The enemy also had an estimated 7,000 men in guerrilla forces behind the UN lines.[5]

The maximum strength of UN forces in Korea during October was 607,300. This total included 236,871 U.S. Army troops, 21,020 Fifth Air Force personnel, 30,913 U.S. Marines (including 5,386 officers and men of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing), 286,000 men in ROK units, and 32,172 Allied troops.[6]

Although it might appear that the opposing forces were about equal, it must be remembered that well over one-fourth of the UN troops were engaged in administrative or maintenance duties behind the front. Thus the Communists had a numerical advantage of at least four to three on the firing line. This was not at all unusual, since they had enjoyed a preponderance in manpower from the beginning.

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Chapter 10. The New Warfare of Position
Hill 854 Secured by 3/1

In accordance with EUSAK instructions, X Corps OI–235 directed the 1st Marine Division to organize and construct defensive positions after relieving the 8th ROK Division on the right and taking over its sector. On the Corps boundary, elements of the 11th ROK Division, I ROK Corps, were to be relieved on Hill 884 (Map 20). This meant the addition of some 9,000 yards to the Marine front, making a total of about 22,800 yards or more than 13 miles.

Click here to view map

First Marine Division OpnO 27–51, issued on 18 September, relayed the X Corps directions. It also called for such offensive action as might be necessary to complete the securing of Hill 854, in the sector of the 8th ROK Division, if not in friendly hands at the time of the relief.[7]

That the enemy had put up a desperate fight to hold this position is indicated by the EUSAK report for 15–16 September: “The ROK 8th Division, employing all three regiments, attacked against heavy and stubborn resistance to wrest Hill 854 from the three battalions of North Koreans who held the position. The ROK 21st Regiment forced one of these battalions to withdraw and occupied a part of the hill, but at the close of the day were engaged in heavy hand-to-hand fighting to retain the position.”[8]

On 20 September, after three weeks of continual combat, the major units of the 1st Marine Division were disposed from left to right (Map 20) as follows:

1st KMC Regiment (Colonel Kim Dae Shik, commanding; Colonel Walter N. Flournoy, senior adviser) occupying the HAYS line on the left flank and patrolling vigorously to the north;

5th Marines (Colonel Richard G. Weede) holding a wide sector in the center, with Hill 812 as the principal terrain feature;

1st Marines (Colonel Thomas A. Wornham) in process of extending eastward to the Corps boundary just beyond Hill 884;

7th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel John J. Wermuth) in Division reserve at Wontong-ni.[9]

Division OpnO 27–51 designated the 1st Marines to relieve the ROKs on Hill 854 and complete the seizure of that terrain feature, if necessary. As a preliminary, the 1st Battalion of the 5th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel William P. Alston) took over the front of the 1st Marines on the HAYS line. This enabled 1/l and 3/1 to enlarge the Division sector by side-slipping to the east while Lieutenant Colonel Franklin B. Nihart’s 2/1 went into immediate reserve just behind the main line of resistance.[10]

The 1st Battalion of the 1st Marines (Lieutenant Colonel John E. Gorman) relieved two battalions of the 10th ROK Regiment in the Hill 854 area. No opposition from the enemy was encountered, but the Marines suffered 11 casualties from mines as a consequence of incorrect charts supplied by the ROKs.

By this time it had become an open question whether “friendly” mines did more harm to friend or foe. Certain it was, at any rate, that the prevailing system—or lack of system—resulted in Marine casualties during nearly every offensive operation in zones where the action shifted back and forth.

Lieutenant Colonel Foster C. La Hue’s 3/1 relieved two battalions of the 21st ROK Regiment. Although the ROKs had fought their way to the summit of Hill 854, the ridgeline to the southwest remained in the enemy’s hands. An attack by 3/1 was planned for 1530 on 20 September, supported by artillery and an air strike. Delays in the arrival of the planes caused a postponement until 1720. How Company jumped off and had advanced 50 yards when a man was killed and another wounded by mines. The attack was called off at dusk so that the ROKs could remove the explosives they had planted.

Air support was requested for 0700 on the morning of the 21st, but it was 1040 before four Air Force F–51s arrived for a strike directed by an observation plane of VMO–6 and a forward air controller. At 1220, following a 10-minute artillery preparation, How Company spearpointed a battalion attack which met stiff resistance. Another air strike was requested but did not materialize. The assault continued with mortar and artillery support until 1745, when How Company reported the ridge line secured.

Casualties of 3/1 for the two days were nine KIA and 55 WIA. Enemy losses totaled 159 counted and 150 estimated KIA, 225 estimated WIA, and 29 prisoners.[11]

"A large number of mines and booby traps were discovered within the battalion sector," the 3/1 report for the 23d concluded, "most of these being U.S. types which were placed by ROK troops, with only a few enemy mines scattered in the central portion of the sector."[12]

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Chapter 10. The New Warfare of Position
Helicopter Troop Lift to Hill 884

Division OpnO 27–51, it may be recalled, had directed the Marines to extend the X Corps boundary eastward by taking over the sector of the 11th Regiment, I ROK Corps. Even under ordinary circumstances this would have meant an exhausting 15-hour march for the relieving troops merely to climb Hill 884 (Map 20). The position was accessible only on foot, and supplies had to be brought on the backs of cargadores.

Because of the isolation of this wildly mountainous area, a reconnaissance was deemed essential. Major General Gerald C. Thomas, commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, assigned that mission to the Division Reconnaissance Company after deciding on a troop lift by helicopter.

He was aware, of course, that no such operation had ever been undertaken during the brief history of rotary-wing aircraft. Large-scale helicopter troop lifts were still at the theoretical stage.

Lieutenant Colonel George W. Herring, commanding officer of HMR–161, had but 48 hours for preparation. He and his executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel William P. Mitchell, worked out a tactical and loading plan with the commanding officer of Recon Company, Major Ephraim Kirby-Smith, and the acting Division Embarkation Officer, First Lieutenant Richard C. Higgs.[13]

An air reconnaissance of Hill 884 disclosed only two acceptable locations for landing sites, both approximately 50 feet square with a sheer drop on two sides. About 100 yards apart and some 300 feet below the topographical crest, each could be cleared sufficiently for the landing of a single aircraft.

Major Kirby-Smith decided on the order in which troops of his company and attached units would be landed. The assignment and loading tables were completed on 20 September in time for a rehearsal. All participants were instructed as to their team numbers and embarkation points.

H-Hour of Operation SUMMIT (Map 21) was set for 1000 on 21 September. The plan called for a preliminary landing of a Recon Company rifle squad to provide security. Next, a landing point team from the 1st Shore Party Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Harry W. Edwards) had the mission of clearing the two sites. These two groups were to disembark from hovering helicopters by means of knotted 30-foot ropes. Strong winds at the 2,900-foot altitude made landing quite hazardous.

Click here to view map

The execution was delayed half an hour by the ground fog so prevalent at this time of year. As soon as the two landing sites were cleared (about 40 minutes), word was transmitted by radio for the loading to begin at Field X–83 (Map 21), about 14 miles southwest of Hill 884 by the defiladed route of flight.

Control over the landings and takeoffs on the two Hill 884 sites was exercised by a hovering helicopter. Aircraft landed at 30-second intervals, each carrying five fully equipped men who disembarked in average time of 20 seconds. Two radio nets maintained communications between the landing sites and orbiting aircraft. Voice contact could not be established between the landing point team and X–83, however, and it became necessary for a helicopter to return within sight of the field to restore communications for incoming aircraft.

A total of 224 men, including a heavy machine gun platoon from 2/7, was lifted in flight time of 31.2 hours and over-all time of four hours. In addition, 17,772 pounds of cargo were landed.

Operation SUMMIT ended with the laying of two telephone lines between Recon Company on Hill 884 and the CP of the 1st Marines, about eight miles to the rear. Fifteen minutes were required for dropping each line. The ROKs, following their relief, proceeded on foot to their own Corps area.

From a tactical viewpoint, the importance of Hill 884 lay in its domination of enemy-held terrain. The difficulty of reaching the remote position had been overcome by the helicopter, and Operation SUMMIT was

recorded in front page headlines by Stateside newspapers.

Congratulations poured in from all sides. Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., commanding general of FMFPac, complimented HMR–161 on “a bright new chapter in the employment of helicopters by Marines.” Major General Clovis E. Byers, commanding X Corps, praised the “organic and attached units of the 1st Marine Division that participated in the first relief of units on the battle position. Your imaginative experiment with this kind of transport is certain to be of lasting value to all the services.”[14]

Nobody was more enthusiastic than General Thomas. “Operation SUMMIT, the first helicopter-borne landing of a combat unit in history, was an outstanding success,” said his message. “To all who took part, well done!”

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Chapter 10. The New Warfare of Position
Helicopter Operation BLACKBIRD

It is not surprising, considering their training, that the Marines found it a difficult transition from offensive to defensive operations after 20 September. As evidence that patrols were conducted with customary aggressiveness, Marine casualties (including the 1st KMC Regiment) for the last 10 days of the month were 59 KIA, 1 MIA, and 331 WIA. Enemy losses for the same period were 505 counted KIA, and 237 prisoners.

1st Marine Division casualties of 2,416 (including 594 reported by the KMCs) for September as a whole were the most severe suffered during any month of the war so far with the exception of December 1950 and June 1951. NKPA losses of the month were 2,799 counted KIA and 557 prisoners.[15]

On the 23d the 1st Marines extended to the eastern boundary of X Corps and relieved the Division Reconnaissance Company on Hill 884. That same day the enemy was treated to a novelty when 100 well aimed 16-inch projectiles, fired from a range of 40,000 yards, roared in like meteors on his positions in the area of Hill 951 (Map 20). Naval gunfire from the USS *New Jersey* was being conducted by Marine spotters in forward OPs, who reported good coverage for the 2,000-pound rounds. Ammunition dumps and artillery pieces were destroyed while NKPA troops in the open suffered heavy personnel casualties, according to observers.

Several more bombardments were contributed by the *New Jersey* at the request of 1/1 and 3/1 during the balance of the month. Marine and attached Army artillery also gave excellent support with fire so accurate as to break up enemy counterattacks before they could be launched. Ammunition restrictions hampered the efforts of the 11th Marines (Colonel Custis Burton, Jr.) but the cannoneers never failed to respond to an emergency. The 90mm rifles of the 1st Tank Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Holly H. Evans) continued to show good results with direct observed fire on enemy bunkers. Air support in September, concluded the Division report, was “generally inadequate and unsatisfactory.”[16]

By the last week of September the Division right (east) flank was well protected, considering the rugged terrain. Not as much could be said for the other flank, northwest of the Punchbowl, where the sector of the Marines joined that of the 5th ROK Division. Since the Division sector was divided by high, roadless mountains, there was no rapid way of moving reserves other than by helicopter. In short, the 1st Marine Division was hard pressed to man a 22,800-yard MLR while keeping in reserve enough troops to help defend this sensitive area in an emergency.

Plans were completed by General Thomas and the Division staff for the rapid displacement of a company from 2/1, the reserve battalion of the 1st Marines, to meet any such threat. Since a surprise attack was most likely to occur at night, it was decided that a helicopter lift of an element of the Division reserve should be made in the darkness of 27 September after a detailed daytime rehearsal.[17]

In contrast to former Marine helicopters, which had no night-flying aids, the HRS–1 was equipped with few attitude of flight instruments. They were primitive compared to the sophisticated instrumentation of fixed-wing planes, and Lieutenant Colonel Herring sent his pilots on preliminary night indoctrination flights to memorize terrain features.

The route, five air miles in length, amounted to a round trip of 13 miles because of the detours necessary for purposes of concealment. The aircraft were to take off from a dry river bed southeast of Hill 702 (Map 21) and land near the northwestern rim of the Punchbowl, where the troops would march a mile to their final assembly area.

The infantry unit selected for Operation BLACKBIRD was Easy Company of 2/1, commanded by

Second Lieutenant William K. Rockey. Lieutenant Colonel Nihart and Major Carl E. Walker, the battalion commander and his executive officer, supervised the daylight rehearsal on the morning of the 27th. Six helicopters lifted 200 men in the overall time of two hours and 10 minutes to a landing site of 50 by 100 feet cleared by a team of the 1st Shore Party Battalion. The troops were proceeding on foot to their assembly area when an antipersonnel mine wounded a man. Nihart called a halt immediately and investigation revealed that the area was filled with mines. Plans were changed to abandon the march, although the landing site remained the same.

Operation BLACKBIRD got under way at 1930 on 27 September. The night was dark when the first HRS–1 took off with five combat-equipped men. Three-minute intervals were required between aircraft operating on a shuttle system, so as to avoid the danger of collisions. Different altitudes were assigned to outgoing and incoming helicopters which used running lights only two minutes before entering or leaving the debarkation zone.

A total of 223 troops were landed in over-all time of two hours and 20 minutes instead of the nine hours a movement by foot would have required. Nevertheless, some of the results were not reassuring. Rotor wash blew out many of the flare pots lighting the embarkation area, and the battery-powered beach lanterns on the landing site proved inadequate. Pilots were temporarily blinded by the glare on windshields; and artillery flashes bothered them while making their way through three mountain passes. Fortunately, good radio communications aided pilots who had trouble in locating the landing site in spite of night rehearsals.

Operation BLACKBIRD remained the only night helicopter troop lift during the war in Korea. “Present equipment,” said the Marine report, “indicates that under present conditions in Korea these night lifts should be limited to movements within friendly territory.”[18]

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Chapter 10. The New Warfare of Position
"To Organize, Construct and Defend"

"The Division continued to organize, construct and defend positions along a 13½-mile front; patrol forward of the MLR and screen rear areas; and maintain one U.S. Marine regiment which could not be committed without authority from X Corps in a reserve area 17 miles behind the lines."

The above quotation, from the opening paragraph of the report of the 1st Marine Division for October 1951, sums up in a nutshell the new trend of operations since 20 September. It is significant that for the first time in 1951 the Division Historical Diary departs from a daily account of events and divides the month into two equal parts for a chronicle of operations. Not enough had happened to justify a day-by-day summary.

This does not mean that the Marines neglected any opportunity to do the enemy hurt. It means only that the opportunities of defensive warfare were limited as compared to the preceding six months of offensive operations. That the Marines made the best of such opportunities is shown by the fact that the ratio of enemy to friendly casualties increased from the 4-to-1 of September to the 20-to-1 of October, even though the totals of the former month were larger.[19]

As a result of his new defensive policies, the enemy often avoided a fight. Day after day passed during the first two weeks of October without far-ranging Marine patrols being able to make contact.

Line MINNESOTA, the new MLR (Map 20), ran roughly parallel to the HAYS line but included advanced positions taken in the September offensive. During the first 10 days of October the 2d Battalion of the 1st Marines continued to be the Division forward reserve in readiness for a quick shift to any threatened point in the MLR, and the Division Reconnaissance Company had the mission of maintaining daily contact with the 11th ROK Division on the Marines' right flank.

It might seem that the 7th Marines, 17 miles to the rear at Wontong-ni, would be entirely becalmed. Yet this regiment saw as much action on some days as any of the three regiments ranging forward of the MLR. The explanation was that the rear area was infested with elusive North Korean guerrillas who kept the 7th Marines patrols busy.

Early in October the question arose as to how quickly a reserve battalion could be shifted from one point to another. By this time a company-size helicopter lift had become commonplace, having been successfully completed twice by HMR–161 since Operation SUMMIT. It remained to be seen whether a battalion could be transported with comparable celerity, and, on 9 October, Division issued an order warning of 3/7's move.

The 7th Marines was due to exchange places with the 5th Marines on the 11th after relieving that regiment in the center of the Division front. While 1/7 and 2/7 completed a conventional relief of their opposite numbers, 3/7 was selected for a helicopter lift. Lieutenant Colonel Edwards, the new commanding officer, had recently commanded the Shore Party Battalion and helped to train its landing site and loading point teams. He took part in the planning along with Colonel Krulak, Lieutenant Colonels Herring and Mitchell, and the new commanding officer of the Shore Party Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel George G. Pafford.

Planning went on as if for an amphibious operation. Assignment and loading tables were worked out, and each Marine of the six-man embarkation teams had his designated place in the helicopter. On 10 October all officers and men of 3/7 attended a familiarization class at which trial teams were loaded.

Operation BUMBLEBEE began at 1000 on the 11th. Field X–77 (Map 21) had been selected as the loading zone because of its proximity to the assembly area of the 7th Marines. The landing site was just behind the 5th Marines MLR, northeast of Hill 702. A flight path of 15 miles took advantage of the concealment afforded by valleys and defiladed areas.

The two dispatchers in the loading zone were provided with a checkoff flight list containing the names of every team of 3/7. In order to avoid delays, replacements could be summoned from a casual pool to fill understrength teams to plane capacity. Average time for loading was 20 seconds.

Ten to 12 minutes were required for the flight. As the helicopters landed at intervals of a minute, a team could exit and allow the craft to be airborne in an average time of 17 seconds. “Time was saved,” according to one Marine report, “when the Shore Party personnel, after opening the door, vigorously assisted the passengers by grasping their arms and starting them away from the craft. The last man out checked to see if any gear had been forgotten. Guides furnished by the battalion directed the passengers toward their respective company assembly areas, thus keeping the landing areas clear at all times.”[20]

Twelve helicopters were employed in 156 flights. The flight time was 65.9 hours and over-all time five hours and 50 minutes. A total weight of 229,920 pounds included 958 combat-equipped troops averaging 240 pounds.

These statistics of Operation BUMBLEBEE made it certain that Stateside headlines would proclaim another Marine “first.” Only four days later HMR-161 demonstrated its ability to carry out on short notice an emergency resupply and evacuation operation in a combat zone. Help was requested in the IX Corps sector to the west for a completely surrounded ROK unit in need of ammunition and of casualty evacuation. Lieutenant Colonel Mitchell led six HRS-1 aircraft which flew in 19,000 pounds of ammunition. Lieutenant Donald L. Hilian (MC), USN, surgeon of HMR–161, landed to supervise the evacuation of 24 wounded ROKs, several of whom would otherwise have died. Captains James T. Cotton and Albert A. Black made four flights each into the beleaguered area, and all Marine pilots of Operation WEDGE were congratulated in person by Major General Claude F. Ferenbaugh, commanding general of IX Corps.[21]

Seven infantry battalions, with 2/1 in immediate reserve, manned the MLR from 1 to 13 October—three KMC battalions on the left of the Division sector; two 5th Marines battalions (relieved by the 7th Marines on the 11th) in the center; and two 1st Marines battalions on the right. Scout and sniper teams were employed throughout the period, with contacts few and far between. More destruction was inflicted on the enemy by observed artillery, tank, and mortar fire.[22]

A new emphasis was placed on psychological warfare during these defensive operations. Eighty-seven NKPA soldiers surrendered from 1 to 13 October, but whether they responded to leaflets fired by the 11th Marines could not be determined.

Early in October the 1st Marine Division was granted permission by EUSAK to use Sokcho-ri (Map 19) as a port of embarkation and debarkation instead of Pusan. The change proved satisfactory even though troops had to be lightered from ship to shore. A 68-mile truck movement through the I ROK Corps zone replaced the airlift of 200 miles from Pusan to Chunchon, followed by a motor march of 70 miles. It was estimated that the new routing would add from 8,000 to 10,000 man-days a month to the combat potential of the Division.

An improvement in logistics resulted when the Division asked and received permission from EUSAK to use field K–50 near Sokcho-ri for an airhead instead of K–51 at Inje. Although the Marines were limited to five or six sorties a day while sharing K–50 with I ROK Corps, they were able to transfer many airhead activities to the new field.

The mission of the Division remained essentially unchanged from 14 to 31 October. Foot patrols ranged farther into enemy territory, and tank-infantry raids in company strength, supported by air and artillery, were launched at every opportunity.

Typical of these operations was the raid staged on 16 October by elements of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, (Lieutenant Colonel James G. Kelly) supported by tanks, air, artillery, and engineers. Captain John R. McMahon’s Charlie Company was the principal unit involved. The Marine column had as its objective an NKPA strong point overlooking the village of Changhang (Map 2) on the east and the flats on both sides of the Soyang-

gang to the south and southwest. Captain McMahon's mission was "to reduce all fortifications and installations . . ." [and] ". . . to seize, occupy and hold ground until the area was thoroughly mined, booby-trapped and infested with trip flares."[23]

A small-scale battle flared up for a few minutes as the enemy put up a stiff resistance with artillery, mortar, and automatic weapons fire. Superior Marine firepower soon prevailed, and at 1540 the attackers reached their objective. During the next hour and 20 minutes enemy installations were destroyed and the strong point rendered untenable by mines and booby traps. The Marines withdrew at 1700 after sustaining casualties of 3 KIA and 18 WIA. Enemy losses were 35 counted KIA.

The next day a reinforced KMC company, supported by tanks, air, artillery, and engineers made a similar raid on enemy positions about 875 yards northwest of Hill 751 and 1,500 yards south of Hill 1052 (Map 20). Twenty-five NKPA bunkers were destroyed with losses to the enemy of 15 counted KIA, 3 prisoners, and 5 captured machine guns.[24]

On 21 October the front of the 1st Marine Division was reduced a mile when elements of the 3d ROK Division relieved the 2d KMC Battalion on the Marine left flank in accordance with instructions of X Corps. Six infantry battalions now manned an MLR of 12¼ miles.

A strong enemy position, menacing the forward elements, had developed to the north of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines' sector. Three days of reconnaissance and detailed preparation preceded the destructive raid carried out on 30 October. Captain George E. Lawrence's Charlie Company, reinforced with heavy machine guns, was held up by NKPA resistance in estimated company strength. The Marines fought their way up a ridgeline, throwing white phosphorus grenades into enemy bunkers. Pinned down momentarily by NKPA mortar and small-arms fire, they reached a defiladed position and withdrew under cover of Marine artillery, air, mortars, and heavy machine guns. At a cost of only one WIA, the raiders inflicted 65 counted KIA casualties on the enemy and destroyed an estimated 40 NKPA bunkers.[25]

All three Marine regiments on Line MINNESOTA were directed by General Thomas to fight the enemy whenever possible with his own weapons in the form of ruses and night ambushes. On 31 October the 3d Battalion of the 1st Marines feigned preparations for an attack even to the extent of a brief artillery barrage. When the firing let up, the Marines sounded an NKPA bugle call as a signal for enemy troops to rush out of bunkers and man open trenches. Thus exposed, they became the victims of intense Marine mortar and artillery fire which inflicted an estimated 47 KIA and 48 WIA casualties.

During the last 2 weeks of October, 11 missions were fired by the battleship USS *New Jersey* and 41 missions by the heavy cruiser USS *Toledo*. Appreciation was expressed in a message to the *Toledo* by General Thomas: "Your accurate and effective fire during period 24–29 October made an important contribution to operations of this division. Many thanks and come again."[26]

Antiguerrilla raids behind the MLR were carried out by Marine ground forces relying upon HMR–161 helicopters for transportation. In Operation BUSHBEATER teams from 1/1 were landed on the Division's east flank to sweep westward toward the Soyang-gang on 22 October while teams from Recon Company patrolled from the opposite direction.

Operations HOUSEBURNER I and II were planned to deprive guerrillas of shelter during the coming winter. As the name implies, helicopter-borne teams set Korean huts afire with flame throwers and incendiary grenades.[27]

Enemy forces facing the Marines at various times in October were believed to comprise the 2d Division, II NKPA Corps, the 1st and 15th Divisions of III Corps, and the 19th Division of VI Corps. NKPA casualties during the month were announced by the 1st Marine Division as 709 counted and 2,377 estimated KIA, 4,927 estimated WIA, and 571 prisoners. The Marines (including the 1st KMC Regiment) suffered losses of 50 KIA, 2 MIA, and 323 WIA.[28]

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Chapter 10. The New Warfare of Position
Marine Operations of November 1951

On 1 November 1951 the front line strength of the opposing forces was nearly equal—195,000 for the UN, and 208,000 for the enemy. In reserves the Communists held their usual numerical advantage with nine CCF armies totaling 235,000 men plus 138,600 in four NKPA corps. All were readily available either as reinforcements or as assault troops for a great offensive.[29]

Even though the Eighth Army was committed to a warfare of position, General Van Fleet meant to keep the initiative. “If we had stagnated on any one of our many positions since the tide turned in April,” he said in a recorded statement of 3 November, “the hydra-headed Communists—who seem to grow two soldiers for each one cut down—would soon have been at our throats. With the enemy’s prolific capacity posing an ever-present threat, we had no choice but to destroy the menace before it matured.”[30]

Throughout November the 1st Marine Division continued to occupy the eastern portion of the X Corps defense sector in east-central Korea. From left to right the 1st KMC Regiment, 7th Marines, and 1st Marines held the 12 1/4-mile MLR with two battalions each. The 5th Marines remained in reserve until the 11th, when it relieved the 1st Marines. That regiment went into the new reserve area at Mago-ri (Map 19).[31]

Elements of the 1st, 15th, and 19th Divisions, III NKPA Corps, manned the opposing lines. The Marines continued to organize artillery- and air-supported tank-infantry-engineer task forces in company strength for raids. Squad-size patrols were sent out nightly to ambush the enemy, employing ruses whenever possible.

The howitzers of the 11th Marines and the 90mm rifles of the 1st Tank Battalion were kept busy throughout the month. On 7–8 November, for instance, Marine artillery fired 257 observed missions in 24 hours—including 34 on enemy artillery positions, 32 on mortar positions, 25 on bunkers, 22 on machine gun positions, 4 in support of friendly patrols, 3 on supply dumps, 2 on trucks, and 1 each on a bridge, a CP, and a 57mm recoilless rifle position.

In spite of such daily pounding, aerial photographs proved that NKPA defenses in depth had become more intricate and formidable in November 1951 than during any previous month.

On the 7th the 14th Replacement Draft added 2,756 officers and men to the 1st Marine Division. Within a few hours 2,066 officers and men of the 10th Rotation Draft were detached. And on the 27th the 11th Rotation Draft represented a further loss of 2,468 Marines whose departure was hastened so that they could be home by Christmas.

A note of grim humor crept into proceedings on 9 November. Division OpnO 50–51 directed that all supporting arms and weapons commemorate the Marine Corps Birthday the next day by firing a TOT on Hill 1052, the key enemy observation point overlooking the friendly sector.[32] While the cruiser USS *Los Angeles* contributed naval gunfire, the Commanding General of 1st MAW, Major General Christian F. Schilt, led an air strike of 83 Marine planes to blast this enemy strong point.

The performance was embellished on the 10th when Marine tanks, mortars, and machine guns added their fire to the grand crescendo of exploding shells and bombs. The Communists were also bombarded with 50,000 leaflets inviting them to the Marine birthday dinner that evening. Twenty Korean Reds actually did surrender, though some doubt remained whether they had responded to the invitation or the TOT. General Van Fleet sent a message to all Marines in his command, congratulating them on “a job well done” in Korea.[33]

On 11 November the 5th Marines carried out its relief of the 1st Marines on Line MINNESOTA. This was the occasion for the largest helicopter troop lift so far, involving the transportation of nearly 2,000 combat-equipped men.

Operation SWITCH began at 0635 on D-Day when three helicopters took off from Field X-83 with Shore Party specialists to signal aircraft into landing sites and supervise the unloading and reloading of troops. Twelve helicopters were employed, each carrying five men and supplies from the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Kirt W. Norton), and returning to Field X–83 with a like load from Lieutenant Colonel Clifford E. Quilici's 2d Battalion, 1st Marines.[34]

Naval gunfire from the USS *New Jersey* helped to keep the enemy quiet during the relief. All told, 950 men were flown to Hill 884—soon to be known unofficially as "Mount Helicopter"—and 952 lifted to Field X–83 in return flights. Total flight time was 95.6 hours and over-all time 10 hours. Once again the Marine Corps had made tactical history.

Ground forces operations throughout November seldom varied from the familiar pattern of squad-size patrols nightly and an occasional daytime raid by a company-size task force with the support of artillery and air. Supporting arms kept enemy strongholds under almost constant fire, and North Korean activity in the construction or improvement of bunkers provided frequent targets of opportunity.

Contacts seemed to be avoided by enemy troops. On the night of 29 November, for instance, 11 Marine ambush patrols ranged from 1,500 to 2,500 yards ahead of the MLR with only a single contact before returning at daybreak. One enemy KIA was inflicted and one prisoner taken at a cost of four Marine WIA casualties.

Total Marine casualties (including the KMCs) during November were 34 KIA and 250 WIA. Enemy losses amounted to 408 counted and 1,728 estimated KIA, 2,235 estimated WIA, and 104 prisoners.

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Chapter 10. The New Warfare of Position
The Second Marine Christmas in Korea

Marine operations in December were shaped in advance by the resumption of armistice negotiations. This time Panmunjom was agreed upon as a conference site instead of Kaesong. Literally a wide place in the road, the tiny hamlet was located just north of the 38th Parallel between Munsan and Kaesong (Map 19). In the lack of houses, tents provided shelter for the UN and Communist delegates who renewed their meetings on 25 October 1951 for the first time since the Reds walked out at Kaesong on 23 August.

Discussions during November were largely devoted to the question of a cease fire based upon a line of demarcation. On the 23d it was agreed to accept a line linking up the farthest points of repeated contacts up to 2,000 yards forward of the United Nations MLR. Three days later, representatives of both sides initialed maps to indicate acceptance.[35]

The effect of the so-called cease fire on EUSAK operations was immediate. General Van Fleet sent his corps commanders a letter of instructions warning that active defensive operations were to continue until a full armistice had been concluded. If such an event took place within 30 days after 27 November 1951, the demarcation line would not be altered. But if an agreement had not been reached by that time, the line would be revised in accordance with actual changes.[36]

EUSAK instructions to corps commanders were relayed in a X Corps message of 27 November to the 1st Marine Division:

"*Part I.* The conference at Panmunjom has fixed a military demarcation line as a preliminary step to ending hostilities within a 30-day period.

"*Part II.* Every US, UN, and ROK soldier will be informed that hostilities will continue until armistice agreement is signed.

"*Part III.* While negotiations continue, X Corps will: (1) Demonstrate its willingness to reach an agreement by reducing operations to those which are essential to insure maintenance of present positions. Counterattacks to regain key terrain lost to enemy assault are authorized, but other clearly offensive actions will be taken only by direction of this Headquarters; patrolling only to that line beyond which contact has been repeatedly established; limiting supporting fires, including air strikes, to destruction of those targets which appear to constitute a major threat, or to improve the enemy's offensive capability. (2) Prepare for offensive action by: Conserving ammunition; maintaining combat effectiveness through intensified training; preparation for and rehearsal of limited-objective attacks, to be launched near the end of the 30-day period in order to improve the MLR.

"*Part IV.* Every effort will be made to prevent unnecessary casualties."[37]

In view of these instructions, it is understandable that a lull set in along the X Corps front in December 1951. Most of the cold weather clothing had been issued during the preceding month, and work was largely completed for the "winterizing" of bunkers. It remained only to improve defensive installations as front line elements continued to send out patrols to maintain pressure against the enemy. And since the Communists were putting similar military policies into effect, both sides kept in contact with relatively small units.[38]

The enemy also busied himself with extending already formidable defenses in depth. And though he did not seek a fight, he showed no hesitation about accepting one.

From 5 to 20 Marine patrols went out nightly during December, some of them manning night outposts called "duck blinds;"[39] occasional raids continued with relatively few contacts. In the rear of the Division area, helicopter patrols continued against guerrillas.

The 13 aircraft of HMR–161 had a busy month with 390 missions and 621 flights. Six thousand pounds of rations, 9,000 pounds of fuel oil in drums, 15,000 pounds of fortification material, and 15,000 pounds of cold weather clothing were among the supplies flown to the front. Personnel to the number of 2,022 were lifted, and cargo to the amount of 149,477 pounds.

The first breakthrough in truce negotiations, at Kaesong, occurred on 18 December, when lists of prisoners held by both sides were exchanged. Prior to this exchange of lists the UN Command could only speculate on the number carried as missing in action who were in reality held as prisoners of war. The Communists had previously reported only a few dozen names, and then only if it suited their propaganda purposes. Radio Peking, in releasing names piecemeal, had broadcast recordings made by UN prisoners under duress. Far Eastern monitors reported these broadcasts were slanted to give the Communist viewpoint.

The 18 December list of 3,198 American POWs revealed only 61 Marines including 2 Navy hospital corpsmen. (Information received from 18 Marines who gained their freedom in May 1951 was sketchy concerning others held at the time and was never accredited as official or authoritative.)[40] Interestingly enough when the Communist negotiators saw the list given them by the UN representative they became irate and tried to withdraw their list. The names of the Chinese and Korean prisoners had been Anglicized and caused considerable difficulty in retranslating the names into oriental characters.

Negotiations hit a snag at this point, and no other list was offered by the Red officials until the first prisoner exchange (Operation LITTLE SWITCH in April 1953). Notwithstanding the protracted and exasperating tactics of the Reds at the truce table, the exchange of prisoner of war lists presaged infinitely better treatment to the UN prisoners than had been accorded them prior to that time. The so-called lenient treatment policy by the Chinese, promulgated in July 1951, was initiated after the exchange of lists."[41]

The lists given by the Communists did not include several Marines captured during the months of October, November, or December of 1951. The families of these men were to sit in anguish waiting for these names until April of 1953. These and other instances of perfidy and treachery at the truce table by the Communist negotiators were to become legion.[42]

On 19 December the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines (Major William E. Baugh) was relieved just behind the MLR by Lieutenant Colonel Norton's 1/5 in helicopter Operation FAREWELL. It was the last flight in Korea for Lieutenant Colonel Herring, who returned to Quantico as commanding officer of Marine Helicopter Experimental Squadron (HMX)–1. His relief as commander of HMR-1 was Colonel Keith B. McCutcheon, and Lieutenant Colonel Mitchell remained as executive officer.[43]

The Marine helicopters of VMO–6 had also been setting records during the last half of 1951 under four commanding officers, Major David W. McFarland (5 April–5 October), Major Allan H. Ringblom (6 October–31 October), Major Edward R. Polgrean (1 November–25 November), and Major Kenneth C. Smedley (26 November–31 January 1952). A total of 1,096 Marine wounded had been flown out during this period, many of whom would otherwise have lost their lives.[44]

The supposed vulnerability of the helicopter was whittled down to a myth by VMO–6 experience. Returning from a front line mission with bullet holes was too commonplace for mention, yet the year 1951 passed without a single helicopter pilot being lost to enemy action, even though several aircraft were shot down. The experience of these 12 months also proved anew the wisdom of combining rotary-wing and fixed-wing aircraft in an observation squadron in fairly equal numbers. When it came to reconnaissance and artillery spotting, the nimble little OYs and OEs (both types are light observation planes) were much better suited than the "choppers."

As for close air support, increased Air Force emphasis on an interdiction campaign beyond artillery ranges added to the limitations imposed on Marine requests. Of the 22 strikes requested in December 1951, only five were approved.

From the 1st to the 10th, units of the Division along the MLR consisted from left to right of the 1st KMC

Regiment, 7th Marines, and 5th Marines. The only major change took place on the 11th, when the 1st Marines relieved the 7th and the latter went into Division reserve. Enemy units were believed to be the 1st, 15th, and 19th (soon relieved by the 47th) NKPA Divisions with an estimated strength of 25,750.

Permission was rarely granted by X Corps for Marine raids to cross the EUSAK military limiting line known as Line DUCK, which generally coincided with the line of demarcation. Christmas passed like any other day except for the holiday feast. Nineteen patrols went out on Christmas Eve, two of which had brief fire fights with enemy patrols before returning at dawn. During the day 40 rounds of naval gunfire from the heavy cruiser USS *St. Paul* were credited with destroying seven enemy bunkers.

More than a third of the Marines partaking of Christmas turkey were comparative newcomers who had reached Korea since the warfare of movement ended on 20 September. The 15th Replacement Draft brought 38 officers and 2,278 men early in December, and 127 officers and 1,805 men departed with the 12th Rotation Draft. No Marines who had arrived prior to 1 January 1951 were left among the 1,495 officers and 23,040 men in Korea at the close of the year.

Heavy snow on 26 December impeded foot-patrol activity and increased the danger of mines. Next day, when the 30-day cease-fire agreement ended, it was announced at Panmunjom that the terms had been renewed and that operational restrictions would be extended indefinitely.

Thus December came to an end on a note of troubled uncertainty. Not a single large-scale combat had been reported, yet 24 Marines were killed (including KMCs) and 139 wounded in patrol actions. That the enemy had sometimes succeeded in the grim quest of both sides for prisoners is shown by the unwonted entry of eight Marines missing in action. NKPA losses for the month consisted of 246 counted KIA, and 56 prisoners.

The year 1951 passed into history at 2400 on 31 December as the 11th Marines saluted 1952 by firing a “toast” at enemy strongholds. The thud of the snow-muffled howitzers was also a fitting farewell to the past year of a war that was not officially a war. Indications were that it would doubtless be concluded by a peace that was not a peace, judging from the attitude of the Communist delegates at Panmunjom. And meanwhile the Marines and other Eighth Army troops would keep on fighting in accordance with the terms of a cease fire that was not a cease fire.

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Chapter 11. Winter Operations in East Korea

AS THE NEW YEAR began, the 1st Marine Division occupied practically the same front it had held along Line MINNESOTA for the last three months (Map 20) and would continue to hold for the next two and a half. The major units were disposed from left to right on 1 January 1952 as follows:

1st KMC Regiment (Colonel Kim Dong Ha commanding, LtCol Alfred H. Marks, senior advisor);

1st Marines (Colonel Sidney S. Wade);

5th Marines (Colonel Frank P. Hager, Jr.);

11th Marines (Colonel Bruce T. Hemphill) in artillery support.

The 7th Marines (Colonel John J. Wermuth) was in reserve until 10 January, when it relieved the 5th Marines on line. That regiment then went into reserve and could not be committed to action without the approval of X Corps.[1]

Tactical units not organic to the 1st Marine Division but attached at this time were, in addition to the 1st KMC Regiment, the 1st Korean Artillery Battalion, the 1st Platoon, 92d U.S. Army Searchlight Company, and Battery C, 1st 4.5” Rocket Battalion.

The new Korean artillery battalion consisted of two medium (155mm) and two light (105mm) howitzer batteries. Major General Gerald C. Thomas, commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, approved a plan for placing this unit in the Punchbowl on 9 January to reinforce Lieutenant Colonel Sherman W. Parry’s 1st Battalion, 11th Marines.

Enemy units opposing the 1st Marine Division up to 23 January 1952 were the 1st, 15th, and 47th NKPA Divisions with an estimated combined strength of 25,750 men. On the 23d the 15th Division was relieved by the 45th.

The enemy, according to the Division report, showed “greater caution than he had in previous months, and friendly outposts and ambuscades noted fewer contacts. His harassing mortar and artillery fires increased in volume through the month. Meanwhile, extensive efforts to improve his defenses continued with particular attention being given to reverse slope installations.”[2]

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Chapter 11. Winter Operations in East Korea
Ambush Patrol on New Year's Eve

The new year was but a few minutes old when the first Marine action took place. Captain Charles W. McDonald's Baker Company had been directed by Lieutenant Colonel Kirt W. Norton, commanding the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, to send out an ambush patrol on New Year's Eve.

A rifle squad, a light machine gun squad, an interpreter, and a corpsman composed the little column wearing white camouflage clothing which made the men all but invisible against a background of snow. After getting into position, the patrol settled down for the usual long wait. Darkness was the enemy's element, and Marine ambushers ran the risk of being ambushed themselves. This time, however, a six-man North Korean patrol came within five yards before the Marines let the enemy have it with machine gun and rifle fire which inflicted one KIA and four estimated WIA casualties. Efforts to take a prisoner were frustrated as the NKPA survivors melted away into the darkness. The Baker Company patrol returned without casualties at 0400.[3]

Marine operations were still limited by the EUSAK "cease fire" directive which went into effect for a month on 27 November 1951 in accordance with a decision reached during the armistice negotiations at Panmunjom. UN and Communist delegates agreed on a line of demarcation, known to the Eighth Army as Line DUCK. It linked up points of repeated EUSAK patrol contacts, not to exceed 2,000 yards beyond the MLR. Operations past this line, running generally parallel with Line MINNESOTA, could not be launched without permission from corps commanders.

When the agreement expired on 27 December, it was renewed indefinitely. Actually, it brought about few changes in the warfare of position which had replaced a warfare of movement on 20 September 1951. Each Marine infantry regiment on the MLR continued to send out several squad-size patrols nightly for such purposes as ambush, reconnaissance, and taking prisoners. Raids were employed for special missions where formidable enemy resistance might be expected. These forces usually ranged from a platoon to a company in strength, reinforced by supporting weapons. Operations of this sort were planned with meticulous thoroughness and carried out with minimal risks.

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Chapter 11. Winter Operations in East Korea
Marine Raid in Company Strength

The first company-size raid of the new year was conducted by units of the 3d Battalion of the 1st Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Spencer H. Pratt) in the darkness of 1–2 January 1952. Captain James B. Ord, Jr.'s How Company was alerted on 30 December to prepare for a night raid with a mission of reconnaissance and capturing or destroying any enemy that might be encountered. On the afternoon of the 30th, Ord made a preliminary reconnaissance with Second Lieutenants Milo J. See and John E. Watson, commanding the 2d and 3d Platoons respectively. That evening the company commander held a briefing at his OP (observation post) which was attended by the sergeants and squad leaders of the two platoons selected for the raid.[4]

This command group carried out a second reconnaissance forward of the MLR on 31 December, proceeding until they ran into enemy sniper fire. Captain Ord requested aerial reconnaissance and three missions were flown by observation planes of Major Kenneth C. Smedley's VMO–6.

Line DUCK and the assigned battalion sector limited the objective area. On a basis of these restrictions as well as reconnaissance reports, Ord recommended an operational area containing three objectives, each of which represented a point where the enemy was not likely to be encountered. These objectives were approved by Lieutenant Colonel Pratt and formed the basis of the battalion order.

The task organization for the raid included two attached How Company units, the machine gun platoon (–), and 60mm mortar section, commanded by Second Lieutenants John D. Koutsandreas and James J. Hughes respectively. Another infantry unit, the 1st Platoon of Item Company, 3/1 (Second Lieutenant William E. Harper), was also attached.

First Lieutenant Francis E. White, How Company executive officer, remained at the OP with the tactical air-control party, which had an observation plane on strip alert in case the raiders ran into artillery or mortar fire. A forward air controller with radioman accompanied the raiding party as well as artillery, 4.2", and 81mm mortar forward observers. An interpreter, the assistant battalion surgeon, and a corpsman were included, and wiremen had the assignment of laying a line.

Hill 812 (Map 20) was the jumping-off place for the column of files in ghostly white snow suits with hoods. Boots were dark in contrast but the snow was deep enough to hide them. The drifts slowed up the wiremen and an infantry fire team protected them at their work.

The first objective consisted of bunkers and suspected mortar positions which had been reported by tactical air observers as recently occupied by the enemy. They were empty when the raiding party reached them, and the Marine column proceeded toward Objective 2, an ambush site overlooking and commanding a crossing of the Soyang-gang.

The selected area for the support group was located nearby, and there the machine gun section and riflemen took positions on a nose with the wiremen, radiomen, and corpsman in the center. While these elements peeled off, the raiding party continued toward the ambush site, where it was planned to lie in wait two hours for the enemy. A suspected mine field had to be crossed and Captain Ord directed his men to advance in single file, stepping carefully in the footprints ahead. Twelve Marines had passed safely when the 13th became the victim of a mine explosion. The corpsman found broken bones but none of the usual torn flesh and hemorrhaging, thanks to the new thermal boots issued during the winter of 1951–1952.[5]

The temperature was zero with a sharp wind blowing. Some of the Marines had to shed clothing to keep the casualty warm during the forced immobility, and the raiding party commander broke radio silence by requesting permission of Captain Ord, in the support group area, to pull back to that position and set up the

ambush.

Permission was granted by Ord after radio consultation with the battalion commander on the How Company OP. The raiding party remained in ambush formation on Objective 2 for two hours without seeing or hearing an enemy. By that time the condition of the mine casualty had deteriorated to such an extent that Lieutenant Colonel Pratt gave permission for a return to the MLR without proceeding to Objective 3.

He directed that the raiders split and take two routes in the hope of capturing a prisoner, since a light enemy probing attack on the MLR had just been reported by Item Company of 3/1. This proved to be a fortunate decision, for two NKPA soldiers were seized. The main object of the raid had thus been fulfilled, even though little action was seen during the five-hour operation.

Raids of this sort may seem anticlimactic when compared to the fights in the same area during the first three weeks of September. But the Marines were showing adaptability in conforming to a warfare of position that was contrary to all their offensive training. Careful reconnaissance, detailed planning, and minimal risks—these were the elements of defensive tactics in which large forces had to content themselves with small gains.

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Major General John T. Selden Assumes Command

On 11 January 1952 the 1st Marine Division had its second change of command in Korea when Major General John T. Selden relieved General Thomas. The new commanding general was born at Richmond, Virginia, and educated there at McGuire's University School. Before the United States entered World War I, he tried to join the Canadian Army but was warned that he would lose his American citizenship. In January 1915, at the age of 21, he enlisted as a private in the Marine Corps and saw two years of active duty on jungle patrols in Haiti. Commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1918, he served in ocean convoys during World War I.

Sea duty, China duty, and more Haiti duty occupied him during the postwar years. The outbreak of World War II found him a Scouting Force Marine Officer aboard the *Indianapolis.* After that he had three main assignments: personnel and intelligence officer of I Marine Amphibious Corps; commanding officer of the 5th Marines in the New Britain operation; and chief of staff of the 1st Marine Division at Peleliu.

Brigadier General William J. Whaling remained on duty as Assistant Division Commander. The new staff officers were Colonel Richard G. Weede, Chief of Staff; Colonel Walter N. Flournoy, G–1; Lieutenant Colonel James H. Tinsley, G–2; Lieutenant Colonel Gordon D. Gayle, G–3; and Colonel Custis Burton, Jr., G–4.

A change of FMFPac command had taken place on 1 January. Lieutenant General Franklin H. Hart relieved General Shepherd, who became Commandant of the Marine Corps as General Cates finished his four-year term. General Hart paid his first visit to the 1st Marine Division late in January.

The new FMFPac commander found the Marines occupying essentially the same positions they had defended since late September. About two-thirds of the 12¼-mile MLR on Line MINNESOTA (Map 20) was good defensive ground. It had been strengthened by an elaborate system of trenches and bunkers behind miles of barbed wire.[6]

In the left-central portion of the Marine sector, the enemy held the dominating terrain. This was particularly true of the rugged area just west of Hill 812, where the opposing trenches were only 50 to 150 yards apart. There a fire-raked landmark, known to the Marines as Luke the Gook's Castle, had been made into a strong point by the enemy. Its base was a maze of trenches and bunkers, and the 20-foot granite knob could have been taken only at an excessive cost in casualties. Although this bastion was hit repeatedly by almost every type of supporting ordnance, it was never completely destroyed nor denied to the enemy.

Operations of trench warfare had inevitably shaken down into a daily routine of sniping by day and patrols or raids by night. Marine artillery, mortars, and stationary tank fire, occasionally reinforced by naval guns, played an increasingly important part in the coordinated destruction of NKPA defenses. As a result the enemy was limited for the most part to well camouflaged reverse slope positions.

Because of the 1st Marine Division's defensive mission and the constant rotation of the more experienced personnel back to the United States, it was considered that men assigned to infantry elements, in particular, needed additional training in small unit leadership and offensive tactics. Consequently the regiments were rotated at monthly intervals to the reserve area near Wontong-ni, where Camp Tripoli had been established for training. An average of 84 NCOs a week completed a 168-hour special course of instruction over a four-week period. The program for the rank and file was so intensive, according to one report, that "it was considered a relief by some Marines to cease training and return to the relatively quiet life on the front lines."[7]

The truce talks at Panmunjom continued to influence operations at the front. A demilitarized zone having been proposed in anticipation of an armistice, preparations were begun by the 1st Marine Division to develop the defenses along Line ICELAND, generally conforming to the Line KANSAS of Marine fights early in September.

It was to be used as a new line of defense if the UN and Communist delegates reached an agreement.

Perhaps because other offensive tactics were so curtailed, psychological warfare had its heyday in the winter months of 1952. Propaganda leaflets were dropped from planes or fired by 105mm howitzers. At vantage points along the front, loud speakers bombarded the Communists with surrender appeals in their own language. The effects could not be evaluated with any degree of certainty, but it was hoped that the enemy did not respond with the amused indifference shown by the Marines toward Red propaganda.

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Chapter 11. Winter Operations in East Korea
Boot, Combat, Rubber, Insulated

The average low temperature for January 1952, was 11 degrees Fahrenheit. This was mild weather as compared to the subzero readings of the previous winter. Only 10 slight frostbite cases were reported for the month in contrast to the 3,083 nonbattle casualties, nearly all frostbite cases, incurred during the two weeks (27 November to 10 December 1950) of the Chosin Reservoir breakout.

The improvement in January 1952 could not be credited entirely to more clement weather. It was due in greater measure to one of the most noteworthy innovations of the Korean war—the insulated rubber combat boot, which proved much superior to the shoe pac of the past winter.

U.S. Army experiments dated back to 1944. They were dropped three years later after efforts to perfect a boot with sealed insulation failed to meet the test of long marches. The Navy had more promising results with the boot during the winter of 1948–1949 when Arctic clothing tests were conducted at Point Barrow, Alaska. Army and Navy tests at Mt. Washington, New Hampshire, the following winter were inconclusive. Marine Corps tests were held during the first four months of 1951 at the following places: MCEB, Quantico; Fort Churchill, Manitoba; Big Delta, Alaska; Pickel Meadows, California; and the Naval Medical Field Research Laboratory (NMFRL), Camp Lejeune.

"In addition to engineering tests," states the Marine report, "the insulated rubber boots have been worn by test subjects selected from a variety of backgrounds; under conditions of activity varying from strenuous marching for 20 miles to complete immobility; in ambient temperatures from 58° to–42° F.; over terrain ranging from soft snow [to] hard snow, ice, sand, rocky ground, mud, gravel, water, and iced river banks; for periods of time corresponding to a normal working day and more than 72 hours. As now constructed, the insulated rubber boot, employing the vapor barrier principle, meets the requirements outlined previously and is satisfactory for use by Marine Corps ground troops in cold climate areas, supplanting the shoe-pac combination. . . ."[8]

The distinguishing feature of the "thermal boot," as it came to be popularly known, is an air space between the inner and outer layers of wool pile insulation, both of which are completely sealed off by latex from any contact with moisture. This air space, under pressure, produces a vapor barrier such that heat cannot readily escape when it is emitted from the foot. Thus the wearer of the boot supplies his own warmth, which is retained as long as he is active, regardless of prevailing temperatures. If, however, the walls of the air space are punctured and the insulation becomes wet, the moisture collected within the boot freezes at low temperatures if the wearer remains inactive. In such cases, severe frostbite may result.

Some of the tests were spectacular. One subject poured water containing pieces of ice into his boots and donned frozen socks before putting on the footgear. After 10 minutes of walking, the ice in the boots had turned to warm water, and there was no harmful effect on the man.

Another subject waded across a knee-deep creek at a temperature of zero. Before he had marched a mile in the snow, his feet had warmed the water in the boots, although his pants were frozen so stiff that he could scarcely walk.

Seldom has a military innovation been tested so thoroughly and scientifically in such a short time. Colonels Ion M. Bethel and John F. Stamm of Marine Corps Headquarters took a leading part in the development and procurement phases along with Lieutenant Colonel Gordon A. Hardwick. Major Vernon D. Boyd and Captain David R. McGrew, Jr. were active in the troop acceptance tests.

A good many "bugs" had to be eliminated before the boot met with complete Marine approval. The

manufacturer's modifications were effected with minimal delay.

It is perhaps needless to add that the thermal boot was not fool-proof. Protection continued in subzero weather for at least an hour after the termination of activity, but it was inviting frostbite to remain motionless much longer. Socks had to be changed every 12 hours, and foot cleanliness and hygiene could not be neglected.

If a few such simple rules were observed, a man had virtually perfect frostbite protection in the coldest weather. In fact, it was seriously proposed that a Marine casualty of this sort should be charged with misconduct if he acquired his frostbite while provided with thermal boots and a change of socks.

In view of the tests and negotiations with the manufacturers, it was a marvel of promptness when the first shipment of boots reached the 1st Marine Division in August 1951, long before the advent of cold weather.

Distribution to the Division was completed by 15 November. Throughout the winter the experience of all units concerned was reported to Division headquarters. And in a memorandum of 26 August 1952 to the Commandant, General Selden expressed his approval: "The boot, rubber, insulated, is considered an excellent item of cold weather equipment. It is far superior to the shoe pac."

The acceptance by the rank and file went so far that the "Mickey Mouse boot," as it was sometimes dubbed, acquired a reputation for protecting the wearer against antipersonnel mines. Some wounds apparently were reduced in severity by this protection, but it could not be claimed that the boot qualified as armor.

Production by the manufacturer kept pace with Division and Air Wing requirements in Korea. By 14 December 1951 about 90,000 pairs of boots and 2,000 patching kits had been received at San Francisco—more than enough to take care of the 6,500 pairs needed monthly for resupply under combat conditions.

The thermal boot was here to stay.

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Chapter 11. Winter Operations in East Korea
500 Armored Vests Flown to Korea

Marine body armor was just then about to meet its first large-scale test in the field. It had cleared its preliminary hurdle during the tests from 14 June to 13 October 1951 (see Chapter VIII) when a joint Army-Navy Medical Commission endorsed 40 vests worn in action by troops of the 5th Marines and two Army infantry regiments.

On 9 November, at Marine Corps Headquarters, Marine officers were briefed on the successful results in Korea by the two Navy officers who helped supervise the tests, Commander John S. Cowan (MC) USN, and Lieutenant Commander Frederick J. Lewis (MSC) USN.

That same day the commanding general of FMFPac stated an operational requirement for 500 armored vests to be sent to the 1st Marine Division. And on 16 November the Commandant approved the standardization and procurement of vests to be designed by the Naval Medical Field Research Laboratory at Camp Lejeune and air-shipped to Korea not later than 31 January 1952.[9]

So many problems remained to be solved that it was nip and tuck whether Lieutenant Commander Lewis and his NMFRL colleagues would make the deadline. On 11 December 1951 another body armor meeting was held at Marine Corps Headquarters, attended by Marine representatives. Lieutenant Commander Lewis and Mr. John F. Quinlan, reporting for the NMFRL, explained that as a consequence of changes in design to speed up manufacture, samples submitted to them weighed as much as 10 pounds.

Under no circumstances, said Lewis, would he approve a vest weighing more than eight pounds, since its success depended so much on troop acceptance. Despite the fact that only a few weeks remained before the deadline, Lewis exhibited a vest that he and Quinlan had redesigned by working around the clock until the armor came within the weight limit without any sacrifice in protection. This vest was immediately put into production as the M–1951.

A plastic fibre manufacturer agreed to supply 70,000 Doron plates, and a Philadelphia sportswear company contracted to manufacture the first 500 vests, plus an additional 2,500 to be delivered by 30 March 1952. The M–1951 was described in Marine reports as “a zippered, vest-type, sleeveless jacket constructed of water-resistant nylon incorporating two types of armor. One, a flexible pad of basket-weave nylon, covers the upper chest and shoulder girdle; the other, overlapping curved Doron plates, covers the lower chest, back and abdomen. These Doron plates consist of several layers of fibre glass cloth, bonded or laminated together with a resin. . . . Although the ballistic properties of the flexible pads of basket-weave nylon and the Doron plates are virtually the same, by using the rigid plates where flexibility is not mandatory the problem of protrusion and the resultant wounds under the armor is reduced.”[10]

Marine wearers of the M–1951 were warned that it would not stop rifle or machine gun bullets unless they had lost much of their velocity at long ranges. The vest was protection against most grenade, mortar, and artillery fragments, as well as .45 caliber pistol and burp gun slugs of less than 1,000 feet per second initial muzzle velocity. Wearers did not escape entirely unscathed, for the impact of the fragment or slug left painful bruises.

It was a close squeak but the first 500 vests reached Korea with only a few days to spare. Captain David R. McGrew, Jr. accompanied the shipment as project officer with a mission of supervising and observing the use made of the M–1951 in action. His first letter to Headquarters Marine Corps, dated 4 February 1952, commented that “up to tonight we have had nine men hit while wearing the vest. One was killed outright as a 120mm mortar

round landed right in his lap. However, the other eight showed excellent results. All of the eight were wounded in other places not covered by the vest—but they are all WIA instead of KIA."[11]

Captain McGrew cited the instance of a Pfc of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, wounded by the explosion of an 82mm mortar shell only 15 feet in front of him. He received several fragments in the face and his leg was fractured. But there were some 45 holes in his vest, without any penetrations. Fifteen of the fragments had been large enough to inflict mortal chest or abdomen wounds.

The 500 vests were issued only to troops in particularly hazardous situations, such as patrols to the enemy lines. Upon returning from a patrol or raid, the wearers turned in their armor to be worn by other Marines under fire.

"The reaction of the user to the vest," reported McGrew, "is closely related to the amount of enemy activity. In sectors of the OPLR and MLR [outpost and main lines of resistance] where heavy incoming mortar and artillery fire was received, there were no complaints regarding the weight or restrictive features of the vest. In other sectors where there was little or no enemy activity, approximately 15 percent of the personnel complained that the vest was heavy and restricted movement to some degree. Approximately 2 percent of the wearers in these sectors thought the vest was not worth the trouble and would wear it only when ordered to do so."[12]

The project officer believed that a "significant reduction" in KIA casualties could be credited to the M–1951, but that WIA figures were only slightly lessened. That was because so many wearers were wounded who would have been killed save for the armor. Captain McGrew listed the following case histories, confirmed by medical officers:

Men who would have been killed instead of wounded if they had lacked armor protection—23:

Men who had potentially severe wounds reduced to superficial wounds—29;

Men who had superficial wounds prevented altogether—31.

The project officer had no opportunity to compare the casualties of vest wearers with those of an equal number of unprotected Marines taking part in the same action. It was his conclusion, based on observation, that "use of the vest by all personnel who are habitually forward of battalion command posts may result in as much as a 30 percent reduction in battle casualties. Because many WIA cases are the result of wounds of the extremities and/or multiple wounds, there probably will not be a large reduction of casualties in this category. It is believed that the largest reduction will occur in the KIA category and that this reduction will be substantial."[13]

The introduction of body armor was not heralded in the press by page one headlines such as had announced the first transport helicopter operations in Korea. Occasionally a photograph on page eight showed a Marine grinning triumphantly while pointing to a hole in his armored vest and holding aloft the jagged mortar fragment that might otherwise have killed him. But it is safe to say that a majority of Stateside newspaper readers and radio listeners in 1951 were unaware of the Marine revival of armor adapted to 20th-century warfare.

Press correspondents in Korea did not appear to grasp the tactical significance of an innovation which they regarded entirely as a humanitarian achievement. From a strictly military viewpoint, however, it was apparent that if the M–1951 could reduce casualties by 30 percent, as Captain McGrew estimated (and his estimate was later regarded as conservative), it would mean that a like reduction had been effected in the destructive potential of the enemy's best anti-personnel weapons. It was as if the Marines were able to slip behind the enemy's lines and silence 3 out of 10 of his howitzers, mortars, burp guns, and grenades.

This was of particular importance in overcoming the numerical superiority of the Communists. Not only did each American wound casualty reduce the effectiveness of a unit, but four or more comrades were often neutralized as stretcher bearers in Korean mountain terrain. If body armor could prevent 3 casualties out of 10, therefore, it would be a significant addition to a unit's numerical strength as well as combat morale.

Any doubts about Marine troop acceptance of the M–1951 were laid to rest by the approval of the 500 vests issued early in February 1952. An additional 2,500 arrived early in March and on the 13th of that month the

Division ordered 25,000 more. The armored vest, like the thermal boot, had needed only a thorough trial to become standard equipment.

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Helicopter Operations MULETRAIN and CHANGIE-CHANGIE

The combat helicopter, oldest of the three Marine tactical innovations in Korea, had already managed to make routine performances out of operations that once claimed headlines. Battalion troop lifts were no longer a novelty, and supplying a front-line company by air was taken for granted. But nothing quite as ambitious as Operation MULETRAIN had ever been attempted—the mission of completely supplying a battalion on the MLR for a week with a daily average of four helicopters.

Hill 884 was again the objective. Colonel Keith B. McCutcheon's HMR-161 was given the task of flying tentage, stoves, rations, and ammunition from supply dumps to the 1st Battalion of the 1st Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John E. Gorman.

It was the first opportunity for HMR–161 to try out improvements in helicopter "flying crane" techniques credited to Major Charles E. Cornwell. He had adapted the underslung nets, controlled manually from the cabin, which did a better job than the pallet, or portable platform, for many types of cargo.

An average altitude of 2,300 feet for the five landing places made it necessary to reduce the payload to 850 pounds. Yet HMR–161 handled the assignment during the first week of 1952 with about one-third of its aircraft while the remainder went about routine chores. So well did four helicopters keep ahead of schedule that sometimes they flew in more cargo than could be immediately unloaded at the objectives. Following are the statistics of the seven days:

Pounds lifted, 150,730; Hours of flight time, 91.7; Loads lifted, 219; Average of miles flown, 9.6

Three days later, Operation CHANGIE-CHANGIE began on 10 January 1952. Like Operation BUMBLEBEE three months earlier, this was a battalion relief lift. Yet it differed from its predecessors in that troops were to be flown from Field X–83 to sites on the company instead of battalion level, the former being only 200 yards behind the front line.[14]

In December the loading zone and landing site duties formerly assigned to a platoon of the 1st Shore Party Battalion, were taken over by the 1st Air Delivery Platoon, Service Command, FMFPac. First Lieutenant William A. Reavis and 35 enlisted men had a mission "to prepare and deliver supplies by air, whether by parachute, air freight, or helicopter." These specialists were in charge during Operation CHANGIE-CHANGIE when the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Edward G. Kurdziel) relieved Lieutenant Colonel Norton's 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. The operation was conducted smoothly by helicopters flying in defilade throughout the approach, landing, and return phases.

Operation MOUSETRAP, from 14 to 17 January, was planned primarily as a test of the ability of HMR–161 to launch an antiguerrilla attack on short notice. Colonel McCutcheon and Lieutenant Colonel Mitchell were alerted at 0100 in regard to a two-company lift scheduled for 1000 that same morning. With "only minor difficulties" they transported 500 Marines to a landing site cleared by the Air Delivery Platoon. Three similar troop movements were completed by HMR–161 during the next three days.

If ever a bronze plaque is awarded in commemoration of the first history-making helicopter troop and supply lifts, it would be fitting to install it on Hill 884. That bleak and roadless height had its fifth large-scale operation on 24 February when Lieutenant Colonel Harold C. Howard's 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, relieved the 2d Battalion, of that same regiment on "Mount Helicopter." Operation ROTATE was completed without incident as further evidence that battalion reliefs by helicopter were now routine.

In spite of the demands made upon HMR–161 helicopters in cold weather and mountainous terrain, it is

noteworthy that no serious mechanical defects had developed. This six-month record came to an end on 24 February 1952 when Captain John R. Irwin was returning from Seoul to X–83. Warned by alarming vibrations, he landed to discover that the broken remnants of the tail assembly had dropped behind him in the snow.

Four days later, while flying a load of logs for bunkers, Captain Calvin G. Alston's aircraft was so shaken by vibrations that he suspected damage from enemy artillery fragments. He made a forced landing in the snow only to discover another instance of a tail assembly breakdown.

Colonel McCutcheon grounded all HMR-161 aircraft until the trouble could be corrected. Not until 14 March, after 16 modified tail assemblies had been flown to Korea did the Marine transport helicopter squadron take to the air again.

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Chapter 11. Winter Operations in East Korea
The Five Days of Operation CLAM-UP

Ground operations continued with little change during February and the first two weeks of March. The only departure from the well-worn tactical norm came on 10 February, when EUSAK put Operation CLAM-UP into effect across the entire UN front.

The purpose was to feign a withdrawal and lure the enemy into sending out patrols which would yield prisoners to Eighth Army units. A EUSAK letter of instruction, dated 4 February 1952, asserted that "a policy of aggressive patrolling has led the enemy to rely upon our patrols for the maintenance of contact. This situation enables him to maintain contact without subjecting his troops to the hazard of capture or casualty."[15]

All corps were directed to ". . . attempt to decoy the enemy into dispatching patrols against our lines and ambush and capture such patrols."

First Marine Division orders called for an elaborate series of deceptions. Immediately prior to CLAM-UP, on 9–10 February, the 11th Marines fired 471 harrassing and interdiction missions, as if to cover a large-scale withdrawal. Over 12,000 artillery rounds were expended.[16] Then CLAM-UP commenced, and the three regiments on the MLR—from left to right, the KMCs, 1st Marines, and 7th Marines—did their part to hoodwink the enemy. Reserve battalions executed daylight marches on foot to the rear and returned after dark by means of motor lifts. The 5th Marines, in Division reserve at Camp Tripoli, executed similar feigned withdrawals.

After the Marine cannoneers completed their supposed covering fires, the front was plunged into an eerie silence. It did not take long, of course, for the enemy's curiosity to be aroused. NKPA patrols reconnoitred the Marine lines on the night of 10-11 February without being fired upon. The following night a patrol attempted to draw Marine fire in the Hill 812 area by advertising its presence with loud talk. The enemy's fire was not returned until the patrol attacked a Marine position with white phosphorous grenades. In sheer self-defense the Marines retaliated, and the North Koreans made a hurried exit, leaving behind 10 dead and 2 wounded men who became prisoners.

At first light on the 12th another enemy patrol tried to penetrate the wire in front of a 1st Marines position and paid the penalty with nine men killed and three wounded in a 15-minute fire fight.

On 13 February the Marines were pounded with the month's heaviest concentration of NKPA fire—344 artillery and 1,469 mortar rounds. Thus did the enemy serve notice of his realization that Marine positions on the MLR were being held in strength. NKPA patrol actions on the nights of the 13th and 14th were launched at Marine trenches on Hills 812 and 854 at the estimated cost of heavy casualties.

When Operation CLAM-UP came to an end on 15 February, it had admittedly fallen short of EUSAK expectations. Although NKPA patrol losses had been considerable, they were offset by fewer casualties in rear areas enjoying a five-day immunity from UN artillery fire. Worse yet, the enemy was enabled during this period of grace to bring up ammunition and other supplies without interference. As a final disillusionment, it was reckoned that across the whole Eighth Army front the Communists had lost fewer prisoners than during the preceding five-day period.

In the Marine combat zone a gain was recorded in enemy casualties. General Selden congratulated the Division on "the fire discipline practiced by MLR troops and by platoon and company commanders. As a consequence of the fire discipline, the line companies were able to kill 56 enemy and wound 54." These totals, it was pointed out, were larger than the losses normally inflicted on the enemy in a five-day period.[17]

On the other hand, five deserters from the mortar company of the 1st Battalion, 91st Regiment, 45th

NKPA Division revealed that advantage had been taken of Operation CLAM-UP by detailing mortar personnel and men from the rifle companies to carry ammunition. During the five-day lull, according to the prisoners, 2,600 rounds were brought up for the company's nine mortars.[18]

After the brief flurry of Operation CLAM-UP the front quickly settled down to its old routine of patrols. An average of eight Marine night ambush patrols and five daylight reconnaissance patrols forward of the MLR was maintained. The results left much to be desired. Of the last 110 ambuscades and 75 reconnaissance patrols reported in February, only 1 of the former and 6 of the latter claimed contacts. All but one of the contacts had negligible results.

The Marine fire attack did the enemy more damage. Artillery fired 679 observed missions during the month—211 on troops, 175 on bunkers, 121 on mortars, 96 on artillery, and 75 on such miscellaneous targets as OPs, vehicles, machine guns, and supply points. This total was recorded in spite of an ammunition shortage which would ultimately become the subject of debate in Congress.

Even with supplies of ammunition limited by X Corps orders, Marine artillery drove the enemy from untenable forward-slope positions to underground fortifications on the reverse slope.

Naval gunfire was limited by the extreme range to the Division zone of action.[19] Only large targets forward and to the right of center could be taken under fire. Even so, the *Wisconsin* and the *St. Paul* scored some devastating hits in February on enemy reverse slope positions.

On one occasion, the *Wisconsin* erroneously calculated its deflection. Two 16-inch rounds landed between the front line and the 3/7 mortar positions before the fire could be stopped. Fortunately, no one was injured. The *Wisconsin* Marine officer happened to be visiting the Division CP that day, and on hearing the news he came up to 3/7 and collected a large shell fragment. He stated that he intended to mount the jagged piece of steel in the ship's CIC room as a reminder to future gunners to make no errors in plot.

Observed direct fire by the 90mm rifles of the 1st Tank Battalion (Major Walter E. Reynolds, Jr.) continued to be effective against NKPA bunkers and gun emplacements. Utilizing the high ground along the MLR, particularly on Hills 812 and 854, tanks sniped at the enemy both by day and night.

This was made possible by the powerful lights of a platoon from the 92d U.S. Army Searchlight Company, attached to the 11th Marines. The mountainous terrain in East Korea was not particularly suited to "artificial moonlight"—the indirect illumination of a large area which results from "bouncing" the rays of searchlights off low-lying clouds. But direct illumination permitted aimed 90mm fire in the darkness and had the further advantage of blinding the enemy to the tanks themselves as well as to troop movements behind them. Not a single light was shot out during the winter in spite of persistent NKPA attempts.

The lessons taught by battlefield illumination in Korea were to be incorporated into two instructive bulletins after the war. "The enemy does *not* have any better night vision than we do," asserted USMC Landing Force Bulletin No. 6. "No racial or national group of people has any inherent physical advantage over another as to capability for seeing in darkness. . . .[20] The apparent advantage which the enemy sometimes displays in night operations is due only to a difference in training. In the case of the Oriental soldier, or the Eskimo, for example, training usually begins early in life, where he does not have the convenience of artificial light to the degree we have, and has been forced to make maximum use of his natural night vision in many of his normal activities.

"U.S. Forces have conducted many successful night operations after adequate training. Some units have reported that after intensive night training, personnel have become so proficient that they sometimes prefer night operations to daylight operations."

In support of this conclusion, records for the winter of 1951–1952 reveal that the Marines held their own very well in the night combats of no man's land, where the outcome depended upon immediate decisions based upon seeing in the dark.

Marine casualties for February, the last full month in East Korea, were 23 KIA, 102 WIA, and 1 MIA,

including the KMC Regiment. Enemy losses were reported as 174 counted and 381 estimated KIA, 606 estimated WIA, and 63 prisoners.[21]

After a winter of positional warfare, the Marines could recall with better understanding the tales their fathers had told them about France in World War I. For history was staging one of its repetitions; and, allowing for improvements in weapons, the trenches of Korea in 1951-1952 differed but slightly from the trenches of the Western Front in 1917-1918.

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Chapter 12. The Move to West Korea

NO CHRONICLE of activities in Korea would be complete without a discussion of the truce talks which began in the summer of 1951. When the Communists proposed these meetings early in June, their motives were transparent; they were hurt, staggering, and badly in need of a breathing spell. Pretending a sudden interest in peace, the hard-pressed enemy requested talks at Kaesong for the purposes of recuperation.

The enemy would never admit the real damage he suffered. A typical excuse for the smashing CCF defeat was given in a book by Wilford G. Burchett, an Australian Communist who was a press correspondent behind the Chinese lines.

"Immediately prior to the beginning of the talks," he explained, "the Korean-Chinese troops had withdrawn extensively along the East Coast, hoping to entice the Americans as deep as possible into a trap which would be sprung and would cut them off by an encircling move. The Americans were seriously nibbling at the bait when the proposal for cease-fire talks was made. The line was immediately frozen and Korean-Chinese troops started to dig in."[1]

This beginning of static warfare was unquestionably the great turning point of a war whose course from that time on was to be decided at the conference table of Kaesong and later Panmunjom. Any doubts as to the actual motives of the Communists might have been dispelled upon reading in Burchett's book this naive boast of the advantage taken of the truce talks by the Reds:

"Digging in is an understatement of the way the Korean-Chinese troops literally burrowed into the mountains, constructed two and three story dwellings underground, linked mountains and hills by underground tunnels and carved deep communication trenches linking flank with flank and front with rear. They raked the insides out of mountains as you would rake ashes out of a furnace. Each hill, mountain or ridge was connected with its neighbors by deep, zig-zagged inter-communication trenches, at least two yards below ground level and with yard-high antiblast walls. In emergency, troops could be switched from hill-top to hill-top with the enemy never knowing. Similar trenches extended well to the rear, so that supplies could be brought up and withdrawals if necessary made in comparative safety. . . . Everything was deep underground with many yards of rock and earth between them and shells and bombs, atomic or otherwise. Back of the front line positions, similar scooped-out mountain ridges stretched all the way back to Pyongyang and further. It was against these positions that Van Fleet began hurling his troops in August, 1951."[2]

The breathing spell provided by preliminary truce talk discussions gave the Communists an opportunity they had not previously enjoyed. Not only did they have time to prepare sturdy and effective entrenchments, but they were able to bring up additional mortars and artillery to equal those of the Allied forces. As a further advantage, while "free from the compulsion of impending military disaster,"[3] they made use of the interlude to reorganize and train NKPA divisions to a new and increased level of effectiveness.

Communists are never embarrassed in the least to deny an agreement already reached, and once having accomplished their intermediate goal, the Red delegates broke off the Kaesong talks for a while. Once the pressure on them was reduced, the enemy was in a position to try to obtain the most favorable terms for armistice talks, even if it meant prolonging the fighting.

The change in tactics soon became apparent. "Since the opening of the Kaesong conference," commented a FECom G–2 report, "the enemy has deviated from his usual tactics of 'flexible defense' which he so skilfully employed during the buildup period prior to all his past offensives—to that of a more orthodox 'fixed defense.' Where the enemy in the past has defended key terrain features with relatively small groups to delay friendly

forces, he has now changed over to tactics of a fixed line of defense to be defended at all costs."[4]

"The most extended delay imposed upon the Korean Armistice Conference by the Communists was in connection with the exchange of prisoners of war,"[5] which subject will be discussed in Volume V of this series. The United Nations contended that all prisoners should be "screened" to determine whether they wished to return to their side of origin. No prisoner was to be returned against his wishes. The Communists claimed this treatment consisted of a reign of terror in which CCF prisoners were held at gunpoint.

Some prisoners held in UN camps rioted and injuries and deaths resulted. This provided the Communists with excellent propaganda on which to denounce our principles of no forced repatriation.[6] In the end, after a delay of more than 14 months of war, the Communists finally did accept this principle, and an armistice was achieved.

The Communist delaying tactics were not entirely without benefits to the Allied forces, for the major part of the 1st Marine Division had the opportunity to go into reserve and engage in several weeks' intensive training. While the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was busily participating in the interdiction activities of Operation STRANGLE, General Van Fleet and his ground commanders felt frustrated over their orders to "sit tight" rather than attack and prevent further enemy buildup.

An agreement to resume cease-fire talks, this time at Panmunjom, led to a EUSAK order which committed the 1st Marine Division and other major units to a defensive stand behind a fixed line of demarcation on 20 September 1951 (Map 19). Further negotiations resulted in a month's lull which was brought about by the fact that the delegates could not agree on where the lines would remain if the fighting stopped. The United States delegates pressed for a settlement within a 30-day period. The Communists continued to stall. The United States then consented to accept the present (then current) demarcation line if the Communists agreed within the 30-day period.[7]

The significance of these dates was to become more and more plain as the conflict dragged on into 1952 with both sides on the defensive, limiting themselves to the raids and patrols of positional warfare while the appointed representatives haggled for a truce. Although the Marines did not realize it, the war had already turned into a contest of watchful waiting and fierce local fights.

This line of demarcation left the Eighth Army holding a MLR across one of the narrowest parts of the peninsula (Map 22). Just behind the Communist MLR the peninsula bulged to the west. This meant that the enemy had to devote much of his effort to mining the waters and defense of many beaches against a surprise amphibious attack, and it necessitated keeping in operation long and vulnerable supply lines.

It is probable that a UN breakthrough or successful amphibious operation could have been mounted at this time,[8] for several high ranking officers expressed such opinions. All the necessary ingredients were available, yet the high level decision for such an operation was not made.

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Chapter 12. The Move to West Korea
Tactical Innovations

Until World War II, it had been a deserved reproach throughout the brief history of our country that Americans were never prepared at the outset of a war. A welcome departure from this tenet came in 1942 when the Marine Corps and Navy introduced the new amphibious tactics they had developed during the 1930s. Victory in the Pacific War was due in large measure to the techniques, landing craft, and vehicles of the Navy-Marine Corps ship-to-shore attack.

As a result, North Africa, Europe, and the Japanese-occupied islands of the Pacific were opened to invasion without a single major reverse. In contrast, Hitler's *Wehrmacht* lacked both the techniques and equipment to launch a cross-channel attack on England in 1940, and Operation SEA LION was of necessity abandoned by an army that dominated the rest of Europe as a result of victories in land warfare.

Again, in Korea, the Marines demonstrated their foresightedness by taking a prominent part in the development of such important innovations as combat helicopters, body armor, and thermal footwear.[9] By the first month in 1952 the combat helicopter had proved to be of immeasurable assistance in modern warfare. In the beginning of the Korean War the "chopper" was initially used for command and liaison flights and reconnaissance missions. Evacuation of casualties and rescue missions also became routine duties, and within a short time the helicopter became the favorite "workhorse" for a variety of tasks. In September of 1951 tactical troop movements began. These operations made newspaper headlines everywhere.

Of greater tactical importance, at least in the opinion of the frontline rifleman, was the physical protection provided him. The armored vest and the new thermal boots were first tested by Marines late in 1951 and soon came to be highly desired items of equipment.

The fighting men in Korea would not disagree with Benjamin Franklin's statement that "there never was a good war," but modern inventions certainly improved conditions by providing for the safety and comfort of the fighting men. Marine transport helicopters and body armor were of particular importance because they added to the human resources of UN forces opposed by an enemy with a contempt for life, based on seemingly endless reserves of manpower. UN commanders in their fight against the Communist forces could not recklessly expend lives as did the enemy; therefore, the Allies had need of tactical innovations and life-saving devices in order to compensate for a lack of numbers.

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Chapter 12. The Move to West Korea
The Marines in Operation MIXMASTER

In the spring of 1952, when the UN and Communist forces were facing each other from static positions and fighting local engagements, Operation MIXMASTER took place. MIXMASTER was a complicated rearrangement of UN divisions across the entire Korean front during March, and involved the shuffling of about 200,000 men and their equipment over distances from 25 to 180 miles. It was a severe test of Eighth Army mobility.[10]

General Van Fleet visited the 1st Marine Division CP on 12 March 1952, and announced an important command decision. After six months of defensive warfare in the same sector along Line MINNESOTA (20 September 1951 to 16 March 1952) the Division was to move across the peninsula to West Korea.
Click here to view map

The Marines had orders to relieve the 1st ROK Division and take over a sector at the extreme left of the Eighth Army line under the operational control of I Corps (Map 22). There they would have the responsibility for blocking Korea's historic invasion route to Seoul. The reasons behind this EUSAK decision were summarized in the 1st Marine Division report as follows:

"(1) The abandonment of plans to carry out an amphibious envelopment somewhere on the east coast;

"(2) Concern over weaknesses in the Kimpo area defenses;

"(3) The overall situation would not permit loss of ground on the EUSAK left (South Korea) as this would endanger the capital at Seoul; that if retraction of lines was necessary, territory could better be sacrificed on the right (North Korea) where the country was mountainous and had little economic or strategic value."[11]

Up to this time the four corps of the Eighth Army had defended a 125-mile front across the peninsula (Map 22) with the following units in line from left to right on 15 March 1952.

I CORPS—ROK 1st Division; British Commonwealth Division; U.S. 3d Infantry Division (–); U.S. 45th Infantry Division (Oklahoma National Guard); ROK 9th Division. In reserve were the ROK 8th Division and RCT–65 of the U.S. 3d Infantry Division.

IX CORPS—U.S. 2d Infantry Division; ROK 2d Division; U.S. 40th Infantry Division (California National Guard); ROK 3d Division. In reserve were the U.S. 7th Infantry Division (–), RCT–17 of that Division, and the ROK Capitol Division.

X CORPS—ROK 7th Division; U.S. 25th Infantry Division; U.S. 1st Marine Division (including 1st KMC Regiment). In reserve was the ROK 6th Division (–).

I ROK CORPS—ROK 5th Division (–). In reserve was the ROK 11th Division (–).[12]

Allowing for a few changes, these were the positions held by major EUSAK units through the winter of 1951–1952.

The Marine move was launched by Division Operation Plan 2–52 and provided that the 1st Marine Division would be relieved by the 8th ROK Division as a preliminary to movement overland and by sea to the relief of the 1st ROK Division and defense of Line JAMESTOWN in the I Corps sector in the west. According to verbal orders later confirmed by EUSAK OI 272, transportation by truck and ship was specified, and the move was to be completed prior to 1 April.[13]

Obviously such a transplacement—moving entire divisions great distances from one sector of the MLR to another—necessitated careful timing and close coordination, but the planners involved were equal to the task. In referring to detailed plans by the Division G–3 Section (Lieutenant Colonel Gordon D. Gayle) and the G–4

Section (Colonel Robert A. McGill), several unit commanders expressed the opinion that "the move from east to west was a masterpiece of logistical efficiency with no unnecessary paper work and no undue harrassment."[14]

In addition to transporting the Division, the arrival of replacements and departure of personnel to be rotated to the United States were smoothly coordinated into the over-all plan. The transport *General W. H. Gordon* anchored at Sokcho-ri on 16 March with 174 officers and 1,135 enlisted men of the 18th Replacement Draft. The newly arrived Marines scarcely had time to drop their seabags before they joined the motor march to West Korea. The *Gordon* departed with 103 officers and 1,135 Marines homeward bound, and the 2d Logistical Command (Army) received a 1st Marine Division request to route the 19th Replacement Draft, due in April, to Inchon instead of Sokcho-ri.

At K-50, near Sokcho-ri on the east coast, air freight and passenger service was discontinued and diverted to the new Division airhead, K-16, at Seoul. The Division railhead was changed to Munsan-ni (Map 22).

The first Marine unit to depart for West Korea was the KMC Regiment with its organic battalion of artillery. Since the artillery had to be moved and repositioned all across the front with as little interruption as possible in overall support available at any one time, the 11th Marines CO planned to move his battalions directly into their new firing positions. This was preceded by an initial detailed reconnaissance.

Elements of the U.S. 25th Infantry sideslipped to the right and assumed responsibility for the Marine sector on the 17th (Map 22), and the KMCs and the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines moved into their new positions on 18 March. The other artillery battalions followed at two-day intervals, all battalions firing from their new positions by 24 March.

The movement of the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion (less Company A), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John T. O'Neill, was an unforgettable experience. Embarking on LSTs manned by a skeleton Japanese crew, the vessels headed for the Kimpo Peninsula. The weather was squally and foggy throughout, and the ships were completely blacked out at night with no facilities for emergency transmission of messages. There were many navigational hazards, but in spite of this, and the lack of adequate navigational equipment, the LSTs arrived at their destination without incident.

Two days later, on 20 September, the 1st Tank Battalion and the antitank companies of the three infantry regiments also took the sea route to the new Division area in the west.

Division Operation Order 8–52, dated 18 March, directed the 1st Marines to proceed by motor march from the Division reserve area at Camp TRIPOLI to the new Division area east of Munsan-ni, and there to move into front line positions. The 7th Marines, after being relieved on the 20th by elements of the 8th ROK Division, assembled at Camp TRIPOLI and moved by truck to West Korea. Colonel Austin R. Brunelli, who had replaced Colonel Custis Burton, Jr., as chief of staff, moved the forward CP personnel and prepared the new Division command post.

After being relieved by the ROKs on the 23d, the 5th Marines departed their east coast area. Two days later the regiment arrived in the Munsan-ni area behind the 7th Marines and the remaining elements of the artillery regiment.

The 5th Marines had originally been scheduled to occupy reserve positions on the Kimpo Peninsula, but plans were changed en route. The commanding general and his G–3 were appalled at the Division sector's width, and after General Selden had a chance to inspect the areas to be defended and talk over the situation with the commanders of the 1st and 7th Marines (Col Sidney S. Wade and Col Russell E. Honsowetz), he decided that the 5th Marines should go into the line.[15]

A few hours after the 5th Marines convoy left the east coast on their 140-mile trans-Korea move, helicopters picked up the regimental and battalion commanders from their respective vehicles in the convoy and took them to the new Division CP. There they were assigned new defensive sectors and immediately reconnoitered the ground while awaiting the arrival of their units. By the time the regiment arrived, all

preparations were made for them to move into positions and relieve a portion of the thinly stretched line of the 1st Marines.

It had been a busy week for the 1st and 7th Motor Transport Battalions, commanded respectively by Lieutenant Colonel Howard E. Wertman and Major Herbert E. Pierce. Two hundred Division trucks and a like number of U.S. Army vehicles made up the long columns that shuttled back and forth across the peninsula. The plan provided for moving an infantry regiment every third day. For the drivers this meant a 140-mile trip, a return trip the following day, and a one-day layover for maintenance before commencing the new cycle. The artillery battalions, by order of X Corps, were retained until the latest possible date.

The statistics of Operation MIXMASTER are impressive. It took 5,716 truck loads and 80 DUKW loads to move most of the Division personnel, gear, and supplies. Sixty-three lowboys (flat-bed trailers) and 83 railroad cars were also utilized in addition to hundreds of jeeps and jeep trailers. Three LSDs and 11 LSTs sailed from Sokcho-ri to Inchon with the heaviest equipment.

During the previous winter a sizable number of prefabricated shelters had been set up for supporting and headquarters units. Since timber, logs, and salvage materials were in short supply, the 1st Marine Division moved large quantites of these materials to the west coast in order to live as comfortably as possible under static warfare conditions.

The operations of the 1st Marine Division in defense of the western sector of Line JAMESTOWN do not come within the scope of Volume IV. The account of Marine activities in the new sector, under the operational control of I Corps, will be discussed in the fifth and final volume of this series.

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Chapter 12. The Move to West Korea
Operations of Fifteen Months in Retrospect

During 1951 the Korean War became a most unpopular military venture among Americans. As a consequence, letters and newspapers from home caused a certain amount of anxiety among citizen-soldiers in Korea. To counter any spirit of doubt which may have arisen, military leaders issued frank and honest replies to inquiring politicians.

The *esprit de corps* of Marines was high, and they were well aware of their purpose in Korea. One noted author, on spending a couple of days among front-line Marines during January of 1952, told a group of officers at the Division CP that he "was impressed with the morale of the Marines on the MLR." He stated that he "had been prepared to find that they didn't know what they were fighting for or why they were there." However, he was encouraged to find that they knew exactly their purpose in the Korean fighting.[16]

The period of nearly 15 months covered by Volume IV was at that time the longest stretch of land warfare ever experienced by a major Marine unit. Even during the numerous island-hopping campaigns of World War II, the periods of combat were relatively brief for each.

Glancing back over the year 1951 with the benefit of hindsight, it is evident that Marine "uncommon valor" during this period was supplemented by such outstanding innovations as helicopter-borne assaults and lightweight body armor, concepts brought to fruition by the pressure of combat.

It is also apparent that Marine training, both for officers and enlisted men, paid off handsomely under the demands of practically every type of land warfare. The Division chalked up a commendable record of service fighting on the east-central front. Since the UN commander desired to have EUSAK'S only amphibious trained and equipped division near a coast offering a suitable selection of landing beaches, the Division was originally positioned in the east. Not since the Inchon landing, however, had the Marines been employed in their specialty, amphibious assault.

Subsequent to the unprecedented Chosin Reservoir campaign of late 1950 the Division reorganized and refitted in South Korea near Masan. Then in January and February of 1951 came the prolonged guerrilla-hunting campaign (Map 5) some 60 air miles north of Masan. Division operations in this area covered more than 1,000 square miles.[17]

The mountainous terrain offered cover and concealment for the clandestine operations of far too many enemy groups. A solution to this problem was found in "rice paddy patrols"—groups ranging from a fire team to a squad in size which penetrated the mountain areas on foot to flush out small enemy bands. In retrospect, had one squadron of helicopters been available at that time, and its quick lift capabilities utilized, the increased mobility and surveillance would have made quite a difference in the conduct of the action.

Although land-based Marine air power had been under operational control of the Fifth Air Force during the Chosin Reservoir fighting, a verbal agreement allowed the 1st MAW commander to provide directly necessary support to the 1st Marine Division. At the same time, carrier-based Marine planes were flying on the west coast along with other Allied planes harrassing enemy traffic.

During the guerrilla hunt VMO–6 planes provided air support to the 1st Marine Division while Marine attack aircraft were busy elsewhere along the Eighth Army front. Marine pilots, operating under JOC control, felt frustrated because they were unable to provide the timely close air support desired by the infantry. The Marine viewpoint held that too many links in the Air Force system of control caused an excessive delay in bringing air power over the target. This system continued for the remainder of the year.

As an operation, the guerrilla hunt was merely a series of minor engagements, but it accomplished its purpose of clearing out most of the North Korean irregulars who had been a constant threat in the Eighth Army's rear. In addition, the numerous small patrols provided excellent training for the newly arrived replacements.

The Eighth Army seemed to gain new vitality under General Ridgway. On the 18th of February, when the general learned that the enemy was withdrawing, he ordered a limited offensive. Operation KILLER began three days later, and was followed by Operation RIPPER on 7 March. The purpose of these operations was twofold: (1) General Ridgway wanted to restore his army's fighting spirit after its two defeats during the 1950–1951 winter; and (2) he wished to keep the Chinese Reds off balance while they prepared for another Communist offensive.

For the Marines these two operations were an experience with a strictly limited offensive. The advance was "buttoned up" as major units paid close attention to lateral contact. As the advance continued in March and April, mud proved to be an adversary second only to a formidable enemy using delaying tactics, and the Division as a whole had a thorough workout in the logistics of the offensive under adverse conditions.

In early April the Division, as part of the Eighth Army, crossed the 38th parallel and continued the attack to the north, the purpose being to threaten the suspected enemy buildup for an offensive. EUSAK forces rolled onward while the enemy, using his roving defensive tactics, fought vigorously and withdrew.

The long-expected enemy counterblow fell on the night of 22 April and resulted in the 1st Marine Division bearing the brunt of a 48-hour attack (Map 10). This opening CCF assault in the IX Corps area of east-central Korea was intended to throw the Eighth Army off balance as a preliminary to aiming the main blow at I Corps in west Korea.

The CCF attack opened a hole in the MLR large enough for a major breakthrough, and the Communists apparently expected to exploit this success to the fullest. However, the Allied line pulled back, consolidated, and held, as the Division's reserve regiment was thrown in to stem the tide. As the Marine flank was refused, the units on the left found themselves facing to the west while stopping the enemy thrust. Slowly, trading space for time, the Marines contained the enemy attack while the entire Eighth Army line organized new positions.

The enemy effort ground to a halt in the east-central sector, and the Chinese Reds were contravened in their attempt to take Seoul by May Day. Surprise and impetus were lost on the western front when they struck several days later, only to be stopped with frightful losses after a few gains on regimental fronts. The Allied line now held firm.

The Division's war of maneuver had worked well in halting this round of the CCF offensive, but the Communists were far from finished. As 17 enemy divisions were still available to attack, the Marine division was shifted to the east on 1 May in preparation for an expected battle.

On the 16th of May the Chinese offensive again opened, with the enemy hitting more to the east than had been expected, and making a deep but narrow penetration near the coast. The Marines moved eastward, established blocking positions, and engaged fringe units of the drive. This allowed the right flank Army division to move farther east and brake the enemy's rush.

The enemy was dangerously overextended when the UN counter-stroke hit him late in May. For a month the Eighth Army attacked and advanced, the Marines slugging ahead day after day in the X Corps zone of action. CCF casualties mounted high, and Marine veterans of only a few months of Korean service saw scores of enemy corpses left behind on the battlefield as the enemy withdrew northward.

This great UN counteroffensive netted prisoners all along the EUSAK front as remnants of CCF platoons and even companies threw down their arms. Marines captured their share. Upwards of 10,000 Chinese surrendered to the Allies in a 10-day period—more prisoners than had been taken up to this time.

As the Chinese withdrew northward they left determined NKPA troops behind. The 1st Marine Division moved slowly forward, fighting for every inch of ground. So fierce was the enemy's resistance that at times

during June the division commander was forced to commit all four regiments (the KMCs included) in the attack at the same time in order to seize designated objectives. This was a modification of accepted tactical doctrine, necessitated by the situation.

Throughout March, April, and part of May, Marine pilots continued to provide close air support not only for the 1st Marine Division, but also for other Allied units as directed by JOC. From the beginning of Operation STRANGLE on 20 May this interdiction effort had first priority, and close air support to all infantry units was secondary. Difficulties in air-ground communication continued as radio frequencies were heavily burdened with traffic. Although the 1st Marine Division received a proportionate share of the few air support missions flown, the frustrating time lag between requests for air support and the arrival of planes on target continued into the next year.

Some planes were always available for front line support, although rarely ever enough according to infantrymen's opinion. When they had the chance, 1st MAW pilots viciously attacked the fleeing enemy to ease the way for advancing ground troops. During June the unrelenting pressure of combined air-ground attacks sometimes caused large groups of enemy to surrender. Marines also captured thousands of rounds of enemy ammunition and other equipment.

By the last week in June the Marines had entrenched themselves along the Division's assigned portion of the MLR and "caught their breath" after two months of hard fighting. In driving from the Hwachon Reservoir area to the Punchbowl, they had employed practically every weapon and tactic that could be used in an all-out offensive. The Division then settled down to stable positions for a while, and some units had the opportunity to go into reserve and train.

It was a recharged 1st Marine Division (the 5th and 11th Marines did not go into reserve during this period) which moved back into the lines at the end of August. The offensive which opened northeast of the Punchbowl on the 30th and lasted with few and brief interludes until 20 September was the equal of the June fighting in sustained ferocity. All four infantry regiments (including the KMCs) went up against seemingly impregnable opposition.

The enemy's "stubborn defense of strong positions and many well-placed log and earth bunkers was similar to the tenacious tactics of the Japanese in World War II," according to a Navy report. "His artillery and mortar fires were effective, his minefields continued to be hazardous for many weeks, and his ability to dig in and fortify his positions [was] always impressive."[18]

After the 20th of September the EUSAK commander ordered that no further offensives be launched and that the MLR be stabilized. This was a period of aggressive patrolling, local attacks for more advantageous pieces of terrain, and watchful waiting to determine the outcome of truce negotiations. In spite of Operation STRANGLE, enemy vehicular movements increased at the end of the year, but 1st MAW pilots continually attempted to provide more support for all the infantry divisions.

The mission of the 1st Marine Division at this time was to organize, construct, and defend its sector of the MLR, a front of more than 13 miles. Although there were heavy local skirmishes, during the latter months of 1951 and the first 3 months of 1952, no great offensive drives were launched. Essentially, the Marines were engaged in an aggressive defense of their positions until they moved to West Korea.

While all Marines were hoping that the conflict would soon end, there was no slackening of the customary vigilance. All hands remembered General Ridgway's words of the previous year, that it was ". . . a fight for our own freedom, our own survival . . . ,"[19] and this was their creed.

These lines would have made a fitting epitaph for Marines who gave their lives in Korea. They had as worthy a cause as any fighting men of our history, for it had become increasingly plain since World War II that a stand must eventually be made against Communist encroachments. By going halfway around the world to fight the enemy on his own doorstep, Americans may well have spared themselves a more bloody and costly future

struggle nearer to their own homeland if not actually on their own soil. The designs of Red China and Soviet Russia were unmasked in Korea, and the people of the United States awakened to their peril after neglecting the Nation's defenses since 1945. To that extent, therefore, the operations in Korea were a defeat for Communism.

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Appendix A. Glossary of Technical Terms and Abbreviations

ADC—Assistant Division Commander
AdmO—Administrative Order
AD—Douglas “Skyraider” single engine attack plane
AF—Air Force
AH—Hospital Ship
AirDelPlat—Air Delivery Platoon
AirO—Air Officer
AirSptSec—Air Support Section
AmphTracBn—Amphibian Tractor Battalion
AmphTrkBn—Amphibian Truck Battalion
ANGLICO—Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company
ArmdAmphBn—Armored Amphibian Battalion
AT—Antitank
AutoMaintCo—Automotive Maintenance Company
AutoSupCo—Automotive Supply Company
BB—Battleship
BLT—Battalion Landing Team
Bn—Battalion
Btry—Battery
BuMed—Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
C-47—Douglas Transport used by Air Force (same as R4D)
CA—Heavy Cruiser
CCF—Chinese Communist Forces
CG—Commanding General
CIC—Counter Intelligence Corps, USA
CinCFE—Commander in Chief, Far East
CinCPacFlt—Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet
CinCUNC—Commander in Chief, United Nations Command
CL—Light Cruiser
CO—Commanding Officer
Co—Company
ComFltAirWing—Commander Fleet Air Wing
ComNavFe—Commander Naval Forces Far East

ComPacFlt—Commander Pacific Fleet

ComPhibGruOne—Commander Amphibious Group One

ComSeventhFlt—Commander Seventh Fleet

ComUNBlockandCortFor—Commander United Nations Blockade and Escort Force

CP—Command Post

CR—Command Report

C/S—Chief of Staff

CSG—Combat Service Group

CSUSA—Chief of Staff, U. S. Army

CTF—Commander Task Force

CTG—Commander Task Group

CVE—Escort Aircraft Carrier

CVL—Light Aircraft Carrier

DD—Destroyer

DE—Destroyer Escort

Det—Detachment

DOW—Died of Wounds

EmbO—Embarkation Order/Officer

EngrBn—Engineer Battalion

EUSAK—Eighth U.S. Army in Korea

FABn—Field Artillery Battalion (USA)

FAC—Forward Air Controller

FAF—Fifth Air Force

FEAF—Far East Air Force

FECOM—Far East Command

F4U—Chance-Vought “Corsair” Single-Engine Fighter-Bomber

F4U-5N—Chance-Vought “Corsair” Single-Engine Night Fighter

F7F-3N—Grumman “Tigercat” Twin-Engine Night Fighter

FMFPac—Fleet Marine Force, Pacific

FO—Forward Observer

FragOrder—Fragmentary Order

Fum&BathPlat—Fumigation and Bath Platoon

GHQ—General Headquarters

Gru—Group

H&SCo—Headquarters and Service Company

HD—Historical Diary

Hedron—Headquarters Squadron

HO3S—Sikorsky Helicopter

HqBn—Headquarters Battalion

HQMC—Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps

InfDiv—Infantry Division (USA)

Interv—Interview

ISUM—Intelligence Summary

JANIS—Joint Army-Navy Intelligence Studies

JCS—Joint Chiefs of Staff

JMS—Japanese Minesweeper

JSPOG—Joint Strategic Planning and Operations Group

JTF—Joint Task Force

KIA—Killed in Action

KMC—Korean Marine Corps

Ln—Liaison

LSD—Landing Ship, Dock

LSM—Landing Ship, Medium

LSMR—Landing Ship, Medium-Rocket

LST—Landing Ship, Tank

LSTH—Landing Ship, Tank-Casualty Evacuation

LSU—Landing Ship, Utility

Ltr—Letter

LVT—Landing Vehicle, Tracked

MAG—Marine Aircraft Group

MAW—Marine Aircraft Wing

MS—Manuscript

MedBn—Medical Battalion

MedAmbCo—Medical Ambulance Company (USA)

MIA—Missing in Action

MISD—Military Intelligence Service Detachment (USA)

MLR—Main Line of Resistance, the main front line

Mosquito—North American AT-6 “Texan” Trainer; Single Engine Plane used as Airborne FAC and Target Spotting

MP—Military Police

MRO—Movement Report Office

Msg—Message

MSR—Main Supply Route

MSTS—Military Sea Transport Service

MTACS—Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron

MTBn—Motor Transport Battalion

NavBchGru—Naval Beach Group

NavFE—Naval Forces Far East

NCO—Noncommissioned Officer

NK—North Korea(n)

NKPA—North Korean People's Army

N.d.—Date not given

N.t.—Time not given

O—Officer; Order

OCMH—Office of the Chief of Military History (USA)

OI—Operation Instruction

OpnO—Operation Order

OpnPlan—Operation Plan

OrdBn—Ordnance Battalion

OY—Consolidated-Vultee Single-Engine Light Observation Plane

PhibGru—Amphibious Group

PIR—Periodic Intelligence Report

PLA—People's Liberation Army

Plat—Platoon

POL—Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants

POR—Periodic Operation Report

POW—Prisoner of War

QMSubsistSupCo—Quartermaster Subsistence Supply Company (USA)

R4D—Douglas Twin-Engine Transport (Navy and Marine designation of C-47)

R5D—Douglas Four-Engine Transport

RCT—Regimental Combat Team

Recon—Reconnaissance

Reinf—Reinforced

RktBn—Rocket Battalion

RM—Royal Marines

ROK—Republic of Korea

R&O File—Records and Orders File

ROKA—Republic of Korea Army

ROKN—Republic of Korea Navy

Rpt—Report

SAC—Supporting Arms Coordinator

SAR—Special Action Report

Sec—Section

SecDef—Secretary of Defense

ServBn—Service Battalion

SigBn—Signal Battalion

SigRepCo—Signal Repair Company

SitRpt—Situation Report

SP—Shore Party

SMC—Marine Supply Squadron

TAC—Tactical Air Coordinator; Tactical Air Commander

TACP—Tactical Air Control Party

Tacron—Tactical Air Control Squadron

TADC—Tactical Air Direction Center

T-AP—Transport operated by MSTS

TBM—General Motors “Avenger” Single-Engine Torpedo Bomber. Also used for Utility Purposes.

TE—Task Element

T/E—Table of Equipment

Tel—Telephone Message

TF—Task Force

TG—Task Group

TkBn—Tank Battalion

Trk—Truck

T/O—Table of Organization

TU—Task Unit

UDT—Underwater Demolition Team

U/F—Unit of Fire

UN—United Nations

UNC—United Nations Command

URpt—Unit Report

USA—United States Army

USAR—United States Army Reserve

USAF—United States Air Force

USMC—United States Marine Corps

USMCR—United States Marine Corps Reserve

USN—United States Navy

USNR—United States Navy Reserve

VMF—Marine Fighter Squadron

VMF (N)—Marine All-Weather Fighter Squadron

VMO—Marine Observation Squadron

VMR—Marine Transport Squadron

WD—War Diary

WD Sum—War Diary Summary

WIA—Wounded in Action

The East-Central Front
Lynn Montross, Hubard D. Kuokka and Norman W. Hicks

Appendix C. Command and Staff List, December 1950-March 1952

1st Marine Division

Commanding General

- MajGen Oliver P. Smith (to 23 Feb 1951)
- BrigGen Lewis B. Puller (from 24 Feb)
- MajGen Oliver P. Smith (from 5 Mar)
- MajGen Gerald C. Thomas (from 25 Apr)
- MajGen John T. Selden (from 11 Jan 1952)

Asst Division Commander

- BrigGen Edward A. Craig (to 20 Jan 1951)
- MajGen Edward A. Craig (from 21 Jan)
- BrigGen Lewis B. Puller (from 2 Feb)
- BrigGen William J. Whaling (from 20 May)

Chief of Staff

- Col Gregon A. Williams (to 22 Jan 1951)
- BrigGen Gregon A. Williams (from 23 Jan)
- Col Edward W. Snedeker (from 27 Jan)
- Col Francis M. McAlister (from 23 May)
- Col Richard G. Weede (from 10 Jun)
- Col Victor H. Krulak (from 29 Jun)
- Col Richard G. Weede (from 26 Nov)
- Col Custis Burton, Jr. (from 15 Feb 1952)
- Col Austin R. Brunelli (from 23 Mar)

G-1

- LtCol Bryghte D. Godbold (to 13 Feb 1951)
- Col Bryghte D. Godbold (from 14 Feb)
- Col Wesley M. Platt (from 31 May)
- Col Gould P. Groves (from 27 Sep)
- Col Walter N. Flournoy (from 20 Nov)

G-2

- Col Bankson T. Holcomb, Jr. (to 5 Feb 1951)
- LtCol Ellsworth G. Van Orman (from 6 Feb)
- LtCol Joseph P. Sayers (from 8 Mar)
- LtCol James H. Tinsley (from 13 Aug)

G-3

Col Alpha L. Bowser, Jr. (to 7 May 1951)
Col Richard G. Weede (from 8 May)
Col Bruce T. Hemphill (from 30 Jul)
LtCol Gordon D. Gayle (from 14 Nov)

G-4

Col Francis M. McAlister (to 25 Jan 1951)
LtCol Charles L. Banks (from 26 Jan)
Col Charles L. Banks (from 14 Feb)
Col Frank P. Hager (from 24 May)
Col Custis Burton, Jr. (from 19 Nov)
Col Robert A. McGill (from 9 Feb 1952)

Special Staff

Adjutant

Maj Philip J. Costello (to 18 Feb 1951)
LtCol Foster C. LaHue (from 19 Feb)
LtCol Homer E. Hire (from 19 Jun)
Maj James K. Young (from 15 Oct)

Air Officer

Maj James N. Cupp (to 20 Apr 1951)
LtCol Edward V. Finn (from 21 Apr)

Amphibian Tractor Officer

LtCol Erwin F. Wann, Jr. (to 26 Sep 1951)
LtCol Michiel Dobervich (from 27 Sep)

Anti-Tank Officer

Maj John H. Blue (to 27 Apr 1951)
Maj William L. Bates (from 28 Apr)
Maj Robert E. Baldwin (from 3 Sep)
Maj Franklin J. Harte (from 9 Nov)
Maj John P. Lanigan (from 31 Dec)
Maj Harold C. Howard (from 2 Mar 1952)

Armored Amphibian Officer

LtCol Francis H. Cooper (to 15 Jun 1951)
Maj George M. Warnke (from 16 Jun)
LtCol John T. O'Neill (from 2 Oct)

Artillery Officer

LtCol Carl A. Youngdale (to 5 Mar 1951)

Col Joseph L. Winecoff (from 6 Mar)
LtCol Custis Burton, Jr. (from 5 Aug)
LtCol George B. Thomas (from 8 Nov)
LtCol Dale H. Heely (from 1 Jan 1952)
Col Bruce T. Hemphill (from 11 Jan)
Col Frederick P. Henderson (from 27 Mar)

Chaplain
Cmdr Robert M. Schwyhart, USN (to 17 Feb 1951)
Cmdr Francis W. Kelly, USN (from 18 Feb)
Cmdr Walter S. Peck, Jr., USN (from 8 Oct)

Chemical Warfare and Radiological Defense Officer
Maj John H. Blue (to 15 Jul 1951)
Maj Robert E. Baldwin (from 3 Sep)
Maj Luther H. Hake (from 21 Nov)
Maj John P. Lanigan (from 31 Dec)
Maj Harold C. Howard (from 29 Feb 1952)

Dental Officer
Capt Mack Meradith, USN (to 20 May 1951)
Cmdr James L. Bradley, USN (from 21 May)
Capt Francis C. Snyder, USN (from 15 Jul)

Embarkation Officer
Maj Jules M. Rouse (to 9 Mar 1951)
LtCol Louis C. Griffin (from 10 Mar)
LtCol Clifford E. Quilici (from 11 Aug)
LtCol Corbin L. West (from 26 Oct)
LtCol John H. Papurca (from 6 Dec)

Engineer Officer
LtCol John H. Partridge (to 10 Jun 1951)
LtCol John V. Kelsey (from 11 Jun)
LtCol August L. Vogt (from 19 Sep)

Exchange Officer
Capt Wilbur C. Conley (to 16 May 1951)
1stLt Frank C. Trumble (from 17 May)
1stLt George W. Krahn (from 29 Aug)
Capt Robert W. Schmidt (from 26 Oct)
Capt Robert J. McKay (from 6 Mar 1952)
Capt Benjamin Reed (from 26 Mar)

Food Director

LtCol Norman R. Nickerson (to 6 May 1951)
LtCol George G. Pafford (from 7 May)
1stLt Herbert E. McNabb (from 16 Aug)

Historical Officer
1stLt John M. Patrick (to 26 Jun 1951)
1stLt Theodore L. Richardson (from 27 Jun)
2dLt Francis X. Goss (from 8 Jan 1952)

Inspector
Col John A. White (to 26 Apr 1951)
Col Gould P. Groves (from 27 Apr)
LtCol Charles W. Harrison (from 21 Jun)
Col Russell N. Jordahl (from 30 Jun)
LtCol Alfred H. Marks (from 1 Oct)
Col William K. Davenport, Jr. (from 19 Nov)

Legal Officer
LtCol Albert H. Schierman (to 8 May 1951)
LtCol Randolph S. D. Lockwood (from 9 May)
Cmdr Geoffrey E. Carlisle, USN (from 28 Oct)
LtCdr Arnold W. Eggen, USN (from 6 Mar 1952)

Motor Transport Officer
LtCol Henry W. Seeley, Jr. (to 26 Jun 1951)
LtCol Howard E. Wertman (from 27 Jun)
Maj Herbert E. Pierce (from 17 Aug)
Maj Walter R. O'Quinn (from 3 Jan 1952)

Naval Gunfire Officer
LtCol Loren S. Fraser (to 12 Aug 1951)
Maj Charles A. Lipot (from 13 Aug)
Maj John V. Downes (from 23 Mar 1952)

Ordnance Officer
Capt Donald L. Shenaut (to 9 Jul 1951)
Maj Frank W. Keith (from 10 Jul)
Maj James M. Rogers (from 1 Nov)
Maj Harold G. Borth (from 11 Jan 1952)

Postal Officer
Maj Frederick Bove (to 13 May 1951)
1stLt Robert P. Sanders (from 14 May)
1stLt Robert W. Blum (from 26 Jul)
1stLt Edward D. Gelzer, Jr. (from 10 Aug)

CWO George C. Hunter (from 9 Feb 1952)

Provost Marshall

Capt John H. Griffin (to 20 Apr 1951)

Capt Donald D. Pomerleau (from 21 Apr)

Maj Raymond L. Luckel (from 6 Aug)

LtCol William F. Pulver (from 18 Oct)

Public Information Officer

Capt Michael C. Capraro (to 14 Apr 1951)

1stLt Jeremiah A. O'Leary, Jr. (from 15 Apr)

1stLt Robert S. Gray (from 27 Dec)

Shore Party Officer

LtCol Henry P. Crowe (to 10 May 1951)

LtCol Horace S. Figuers (from 11 May)

LtCol Harry W. Edwards (from 7 Jul)

LtCol George G. Pafford (from 29 Sep)

LtCol Franklin B. Nihart (from 20 Dec)

LtCol Warren S. Sivertsen (from 9 Mar 1952)

Signal Officer

LtCol Robert L. Schreier (to 7 Jun 1951)

LtCol Jino J. D'Alessandro (from 8 Jun)

Special Services Officer

LtCol John M. Bathum (to 10 Sep 1951)

Maj Paul H. Bratten, Jr. (from 11 Sep)

LtCol Franklin B. Nihart (from 28 Oct)

1stLt Joseph H. McDannold (from 20 Dec)

Capt John W. Algeo (from 16 Feb 1952)

LtCol John E. Gorman (from 9 Mar)

Supply Officer

Col Gordon E. Hendricks (to 29 Jun 1951)

Col Chester R. Allen (from 30 Jun)

Surgeon

Capt Eugene R. Hering, USN (to 24 Jan 1951)

Cmdr Howard A. Johnson, USN (from 25 Jan 1951)

Capt Louis R. Kirkpatrick, USN (from 10 Jul 1951)

Tank Officer

LtCol Harry T. Milne (to 22 Apr 1951)

LtCol Holly H. Evans (from 23 Apr)

Maj Walter E. Reynolds (from 9 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Division Rear Echelon Headquarters

Col Harvey S. Walseth (to 23 Jul 1951)

Col Wilburt S. Brown (from 24 Jul to 19 Nov)

Headquarters Battalion

Commanding Officer

LtCol Marvin T. Starr (to 23 Apr 1951)

LtCol William P. Alston (from 24 Apr)

Col Gould P. Groves (from 11 May)

LtCol Charles W. Harrison (from 29 Jun)

LtCol Alfred H. Marks (from 29 Aug)

Col William K. Davenport, Jr. (from 19 Nov)

Maj Corbin L. West (from 15 Jan 1952)

Col Robert T. Stivers (from 18 Feb)

Executive Officer

Maj Frederick Simpson (to 15 Aug 1951)

Maj William O. Cain, Jr. (from 16 Aug)

Maj Corbin L. West (from 10 Dec)

Capt “J” E. Hancey (from 22 Jan 1952)

Maj Corbin L. West (from 18 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company

Maj Frederick Simpson (to 15 Aug 1951)

Maj William O. Cain, Jr. (from 16 Aug)

Maj Corbin L. West (from 10 Dec)

Capt “J” E. Hancey (from 21 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Military Police Company

Capt John H. Griffin (to 20 Apr 1951)

Capt Donald D. Pomerleau (from 21 Apr)

Maj Raymond L. Luckel (from 19 Sep)

LtCol William F. Pulver (from 18 October)

Commanding Officer, Reconnaissance Company

Maj Walter Gall (to 26 Mar 1951)

Capt Robert L. Autry (from 27 Mar)

Maj Ephraim Kirby-Smith (from 10 Sep)

1st Marines

Commanding Officer

Col Lewis B. Puller (to 24 Jan 1951)

Col Francis M. McAlister (from 25 Jan)
Col Wilburt S. Brown (from 19 May)
Col Thomas A. Wornham (from 18 Jul)
Col Sidney S. Wade (from 13 Oct)

Executive Officer

LtCol Robert W. Rickert (to 7 Jan 1951)
LtCol Alan Sutter (from 8 Jan)
LtCol Robert W. Rickert (from 16 Jan)
LtCol Alan Sutter (from 12 Feb)
LtCol Donald M. Schmuck (from 31 May)
LtCol John A. McAlister (from 3 Sep)
LtCol Clifford F. Quilici (from 7 Jan 1952)

S-1

Capt William G. Reeves (to 8 Jan 1951)
Capt David M. Cox (from 9 Jan)
Capt John S. Court (from 5 Sep)
Maj Elizia M. Cable (from 21 Oct)
Capt Thomas C. Palmer (from 12 Feb 1952)
Capt Leroy V. Corbett (from 28 Feb)

S-2

Capt Stone W. Quillian (to 10 May 1951)
Capt Glenn F. Miller (from 11 May)
Capt Robert G. Cadwallader (from 2 Oct)
Capt Fred K. Cottrell (from 15 Dec)
Capt Edwin H. Heim (from 4 Mar 1952)

S-3

Maj Robert E. Lorigan (to 20 Jul 1951)
Maj Ralph “C” Rosacker (from 21 Jul)
Maj John P. Lanigan (from 4 Mar 1952)

S-4

Maj Thomas T. Grady (to 27 Apr 1951)
Capt Augustine B. Reynolds, Jr. (from 28 Apr)
Maj Thomas A. Burns (from 5 Jul)
Maj John L. Kelly (from 5 Oct)
Maj Fletcher R. Wycoff (from 27 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company

Maj Robert K. McClelland (to 11 Mar 1951)
Maj Carl E. Walker (from 12 Mar)

Capt George E. Petro (from 11 May)
1stLt Roscoe L. Barrett, Jr. (from 15 Aug)
1stLt James L. Burnett (from 3 Oct)
Capt James P. Egan (from 23 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Anti-Tank Company
Capt George E. Petro (to 10 May 1951)
1stLt John A. Dudrey (from 11 May)
1stLt Magness W. Marshall (from 2 Oct)
Capt Frederick A. Hale (from 27 Nov)

Commanding Officer, 4.2 Inch Mortar Company
Capt Frank J. Faureck (to 8 Feb 1951)
1stLt Edward E. Kauffer (from 9 Feb)
Capt Otis R. Waldrop (from 5 Mar)
Capt Edward E. Kauffer (from 4 Jun)
1stLt Robert W. Jorn (from 9 Aug)
1stLt Thomas J. Holt (from 2 Oct)
Capt Robert G. Cadwallader (from 23 Dec)
Capt George E. Lawrence (from 18 Mar 1952)

1st Battalion, 1st Marines

Commanding Officer
LtCol Donald M. Schmuck (to 27 Feb 1951)
LtCol Robley E. West (from 28 Feb)
Maj Thomas T. Grady (from 15 Jun)
LtCol Horace E. Knapp, Jr. (from 7 Jul)
Maj Edgar F. Carney, Jr. (from 14 Sep)
LtCol John E. Gorman (from 16 Sep)
LtCol John H. Papurca (from 7 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer
Maj Robley E. West (to 27 Feb 1951)
Maj David W. Bridges (from 28 Feb)
Maj Thomas T. Grady (from 10 Jun)
Maj Wesley C. Noren (from 15 Jun)
Maj Edgar F. Carney, Jr. (from 20 Jul)
Maj Leo V. Gross (from 18 Dec)
Maj Ralph “C” Rosacker (from 4 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company
Capt William B. Hopkins (to 30 Jan 1951)

1stLt Bruce E. Geisert (from 31 Jan)
1stLt Norman W. Hicks (from 1 Jul)
1stLt John B. Franklin (from 18 Aug)
1stLt Stuart P. Barr, Jr. (from 22 Oct)
1stLt Nicholas J. Sheppard (from 28 Nov)
1stLt Harry A. Spaight (from 26 Dec)
Capt Edwin H. Heim (from 20 Feb 1952)
2ndLt Vinton L. Spencer (from 4 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company A
Capt Robert H. Barrow (to 30 Jan 1951)
Capt Thomas J. Bohannon (from 31 Jan)
1stLt Calvin R. Baker (from 1 Jul)
Capt Edwin H. Heim (from 20 Oct)
1stLt Clifton M. Grubbs (from 20 Feb 1952)
Capt Anthony Novak (from 17 Mar)
1stLt Morace M. Dritley (from 26 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company B
Capt Wesley C. Noren (to 12 Mar 1951)
Capt John F. Coffey (from 13 Mar)
1stLt James H. Cowan, Jr. (from 8 Jun)
1stLt Robert G. Work (from 1 Aug)
1stLt Richard S. Kitchen (from 18 Aug)
Capt Roy J. Wride (from 16 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Company C
Capt Robert P. Wray (to 9 May 1951)
1stLt William A. Craven (from 10 May)
1stLt William F. Koehnlein (from 12 Jun)
Capt Michael D. Harvath (from 21 Jul)
Capt George E. Lawrence (from 10 Oct)
Capt Kenneth F. Swiger (from 7 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Weapons Company
Maj William L. Bates (to 28 Feb 1951)
1stLt William F. Koehnlein (from 1 Mar)
Capt Wesley C. Noren (from 13 Mar)
Maj John F. Coffey (from 8 Jun)
Capt Benjamin W. Muntz (from 5 Jul)
Maj William O. Cain, Jr. (from 14 Jul)
Maj John F. Morris (from 14 Aug)

Maj Fletcher B. Wycoff (from 9 Sep)
Capt James P. Egan (from 27 Dec)
Capt George E. Lawrence (from 21 Feb 1952)
1stLt Joseph E. Lee (from 18 Mar)
Maj Stanley N. McLeod (from 27 Mar)

2d Battalion, 1st Marines
Commanding Officer
LtCol Allan Sutter (to 7 Jan 1951)
Maj Clarence J. Mabry (from 8 Jan)
LtCol Allan Sutter (from 15 Jan)
Maj Clarence J. Mabry (from 13 Feb)
LtCol Robert K. McClelland (from 15 Mar)
Maj Clarence J. Mabry (from 5 Jun)
LtCol Robert K. McClelland (from 20 Jun)
LtCol Franklin B. Nihart (from 14 Aug)
LtCol Clifford F. Quilici (from 28 Oct)
LtCol Theil H. Fisher (from 3 Jan 1952)
Executive Officer
Maj Clarence J. Mabry (to 7 Jan 1951)
Maj Whitman S. Bartley (from 8 Jan)
Maj Clarence J. Mabry (from 15 Jan)
Maj Whitman S. Bartley (from 13 Feb)
Maj Clarence J. Mabry (from 15 Mar)
Maj Jules M. Rouse (from 10 Jun)
Maj John P. Lanigan (from 6 Aug)
Maj Franklin J. Harte (from 26 Dec)
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company
Capt Raymond DeWees, Jr. (to 9 Sep 1951)
2dLt Robert A. Arning (from 10 Sep)
1stLt George H. Benskin, Jr. (from 30 Oct)
1stLt Frank E. Guthrie (from 3 Dec)
Commanding Officer, Company D
Capt Welby W. Cronk (to 4 Mar 1951)
1stLt Theodore Culpepper (from 5 Mar)
1stLt Alexander L. Michaux, Jr. (from 19 Apr)
1stLt Jay “J” Thomas (from 11 Jun)
1stLt George H. Benskin, Jr. (from 9 Aug)

1stLt Robert E. Lundberg (from 15 Sep)
2dLt Arthur H. Woodruff (from 25 Sep)
1stLt Richard A. Bonifas (from 5 Oct)
1stLt George H. Benskin, Jr. (from 16 Oct)
Capt Richard A. Bonifas (from 30 Oct)
1stLt Robert J. Lahr (from 3 Nov)
Capt Robert N. Kreider (from 13 Nov)
Capt John H. Lauck (from 26 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company E

Capt Jack A. Smith (to 9 Mar 1951)
1stLt Johnny L. Carter (from 10 Mar)
1stLt Donald L. Evans, Jr. (from 9 Aug)
Capt Ralph V. Harper (from 14 Aug)
1stLt Robert J. Lahr (from 14 Sep)
2dLt William K. Rockey (from 25 Sep)
1stLt Kenneth E. Will (from 5 Oct)
Capt James H. Reeder (from 16 Oct)
Capt Charles J. Irwin, Jr. (from 21 Feb 1952)
Capt Jack H. Hagler (from 17 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company F

Capt Goodwin C. Groff (to 9 Jun 1951)
1stLt Patrick McGrotty (from 10 Jun)
Capt Frederick A. Hale, Jr. (from 4 Sep)
Capt Neville G. Hall, Jr. (from 21 Nov)
1stLt John A. Barry (from 29 Dec)
1stLt Robert J. Lahr (from 11 Mar 1952)
Capt Victor A. Kleber, Jr. (from 18 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Weapons Company

Capt William A. Kerr (to 28 Feb 1951)
1stLt Russell A. Davidson (from 1 Mar)
Maj Carl E. Walker (from 12 May)
Capt Russell A. Davidson (from 2 Jul)
Maj John I. Kelly (from 22 Jul)
Maj William S. Witt (from 5 Oct)
Capt John W. Algeo (from 20 Nov)
Maj William S. Witt (from 20 Jan 1952)
Capt John W. Algeo (from 3 Feb)
1stLt Clarence G. Moody, Jr. (from 17 Feb)

Capt Charles J. Irwin, Jr. (from 18 Mar)

3d Battalion, 1st Marines

Commanding Officer

LtCol Thomas L. Ridge (to 15 Feb 1951)
LtCot Virgil W. Banning (from 16 Feb)
Maj Joseph D. Trompeter (from 25 Apr)
Maj Edwin H. Simmons (from 8 May)
LtCol Homer E. Hire (from 15 May)
LtCol Foster C. LaHue (from 19 Jul)
LtCol Spencer H. Pratt (from 13 Nov)

Executive Officer

Maj Reginald R. Myers (to 25 Apr)
Maj Edwin H. Simmons (from 26 Apr)
Maj Joseph D. Trompeter (from 15 May)
Maj Ralph “C” Rosacker (from 7 Jun)
Maj Rodney V. Reighard (from 22 July)
Maj Thell H. Fisher (from 3 Oct)
Maj Robert V. Perkins (from 4 Jan 52)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company

Capt Roy N. Courington (to 16 Feb 1951)
1stLt Edgar A. Crum (from 17 Feb)
1stLt Daniel R. Evans (from 3 Mar)
Capt Clarence E. Corley, Jr. (from 20 Mar)
1stLt Thomas J. Holt (from 9 Aug)
Capt Earle E. Carr (from 1 Sep)
2dLt Joseph D. Reed (from 3 Oct)
2dLt Robert C. Morton (from 4 Jan 1952)
Capt Harold R. Connolly (from 22 Feb)
Capt Donald C. Mack (from 15 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company G

Capt Carl L. Sitter (to 13 Feb 1951)
1stLt Horace L. Johnson (from 14 Feb)
1stLt Thomas J. Holt (from 26 May)
1stLt Fred G. Redmon (from 1 Jun)
Capt Varge G. Frisbie (from 5 Jun)
1stLt Harold R. Connolly (from 20 Jul)
Capt Fred A. Kraus (from 8 Nov)

1stLt Richard A. Krajnyak (from 19 Feb 1952)
Capt Wilford L. Stone (from 17 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company H
Capt Clarence E. Corley, Jr. (to 19 Mar 1951)
1stLt William J. Allert (from 20 Mar)
1stLt Daniel R. Evans (from 8 May)
1stLt James L. Burnett (from 8 Jun)
1stLt Herbert M. Anderson (from 15 Jun)
1stLt James L. Burnett (from 21 Sep)
Capt Earle E. Carr (from 3 Oct)
Capt James B. Ord, Jr. (from 17 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Company I
1stLt Joseph R. Fisher (to 7 Apr 1951)
1stLt William Swanson (from 8 Apr)
Capt Stone W. Quillian (from 15 May)
1stLt Norbert D. Carlson (from 5 Aug)
Capt Leroy V. Corbett (from 7 Sep)
Capt Donald C. Mack (from 19 Jan 1952)
Capt Richard B. Smith (from 22 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Weapons Company
Maj Edwin H. Simmons (to 25 Apr 1951)
1stLt James F. Williams (from 26 Apr)
Capt Otis R. Waldrop (from 6 Jun)
Maj Henry Brzezinski (from 19 Jun)
Capt Varge G. Frisbie (from 6 Aug)
Maj Thell H. Fisher (from 31 Aug)
1stLt Thomas C. Holleman (from 2 Oct)
Maj Robert V. Perkins (from 15 Nov)
Capt Earle E. Carr (from 4 Jan 1952)
1stLt Hugh P. Murphy (from 25 Jan)

5th Marines

Commanding Officer
LtCol Raymond L. Murray (to 23 Jan 1951)
Col Raymond L. Murray (from 24 Jan)
Col Richard W. Hayward (from 14 Mar)
Col Richard G. Weede (from 7 Aug)
Col Frank P. Hager, Jr. (from 19 Nov)

Col Thomas A. Culhane, Jr. (from 23 Feb 1952)

Executive Officer

LtCol Joseph L. Stewart (to 13 Feb 1951)
LtCol John W. Stevens, II (from 14 Feb)
LtCol Joseph L. Stewart (from 14 Mar)
LtCol Donald R. Kennedy (from 4 Apr)
LtCol Francis H. Cooper (from 17 Jun)
LtCol Virgil W. Banning (from 22 Sep)
LtCol John T. Rooney (from 13 Dec)
LtCol John A. Saxten (from 19 Mar 1952)

S-1

Capt Alton C. Weed (to 1 Mar 1951)
Capt Jack E. Hawthorn (from 2 Mar)
Capt George A. Rheman, Jr. (from 17 Mar)
Capt Harley L. Grant (from 25 Aug)

S-2

1stLt Richard M. Woodard (to 3 Feb 1951)
Capt Eugene F. Langan (from 4 Feb)
Maj Nicholas G. W. Thorne (from 9 Aug)
Maj Paul H. Bratten, Jr. (from 17 Nov)
Maj John C. Lundrigan (from 31 Jan 1952)

S-3

Maj Lawrence W. Smith, Jr. (to 8 Mar 1951)
Maj Robert E. Baldwin (from 9 Mar)
LtCol Glen E. Martin (from 24 Jun)
Maj Merwin H. Silverthorn, Jr. (from 11 Jul)
Maj Gerald P. Averill (from 10 Oct)
Maj David A. Brewster, Sr. (from 15 Dec)

S-4

Maj Harold Wallace (to 9 Mar 1951)
Maj William E. Baugh (from 10 Mar)
Maj Robert S. Hudson (from 11 Aug)
Maj Warren F. Lloyd (from 22 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company

Capt Jack E. Hanthorn (to 1 Mar 1951)
1stLt Richard M. Woodard (from 2 Mar)
1stLt Lee J. Cary (from 22 Jun)
Capt Howard H. Dismeier (from 12 Sep)

1stLt George “T” Capatanos (from 1 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Antitank Company

1stLt Almarion S. Bailey (to 8 Apr 1951)

1stLt Jo M. Van Meter (from 9 Apr)

1stLt William E. Kerrigan (from 23 Jul)

Capt Edgar F. Moore, Jr. (from 15 Aug)

Commanding Officer, 4.2 Inch Mortar Company

1stLt Robert M. Lucy (to 25 Feb 1951)

1stLt Robert H. Uskurait (from 26 Feb)

1stLt John A. Buchanan (from 11 Sep)

Capt Yale B. Davis (from 29 Dec)

1st Battalion, 5th Marines

Commanding Officer

LtCol John W. Stevens, II (to 20 Feb 1951)

LtCol John W. Hopkins (from 21 Feb)

LtCol William P. Alston (from 21 Jun)

Maj Kirt W. Norton (from 9 Nov)

Maj Lowell T. Keagy (from 25 Nov)

LtCol Kirt W. Norton (from 2 Dec)

LtCol Louis N. King (from 13 Jan 1952)

LtCol Franklin B. Nihart (from 12 Feb)

Executive Officer

Maj Merlin R. Olson (to 8 Apr 1951)

Maj Donald J. Kendall, Jr. (from 9 Apr)

Maj Kirt W. Norton (from 9 Aug)

Maj Robert L. Autry (from 9 Nov)

Maj Lowell T. Keagy (from 2 Dec)

Maj Hildeburn R. Martin (from 3l Dec)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company

Capt George A. Rheman, Jr. (to 11 Mar 1951)

2dLt Robert H. Corbet (from 12 Mar)

1stLt Andrew V. Marusak (from 29 Mar)

1stLt Frank J. Meers (from 12 Jul)

2dLt Vincent B. Murphy, Jr. (from 3 Oct)

1stLt Parks H. Simpson (from 25 Oct)

1stLt Thomas J. Hermes (from 13 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Weapons Company

Capt Almond H. Sollom (to 5 Mar 1951)
1stLt Poul F. Pedersen (from 6 Mar)
Capt Donald D. Pomerleau (from 6 Apr)
Maj Albert Hartman (from 13 Apr)
Capt Raymond H. Spuhler (from 8 May)
1stLt Frank J. Meers (from 4 Jun)
Capt Lucian F. May (from 12 Jul)
Maj David A. Brewster, Sr. (from 1 Sep)
Capt Harry A. Mathew (from 9 Nov)
Capt Nicholas G. W. Thorne (from 17 Nov)
Maj Lowell T. Keagy (from 31 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Company A

1stLt Loren R. Smith (to 16 Feb 1951)
Capt Walter E. G. Godenius (from 17 Feb)
Capt John L. Kelly (from 9 Apr)
Capt Richard M. Woodard (from 1 Jul)
Capt Eugene F. Langan (from 12 Aug)
Capt Frederick B. Clunie (from 5 Nov)
1stLt Merrill Waide, Jr. (from 24 Jan 1952)
1stLt Ernest S. Lee (from 18 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Company B

1stLt John R. Hancock (to 7 Feb 1951)
1stLt Michael V. Palatas (from 8 Feb)
1stLt James T. Cronin (from 17 Feb)
1stLt William E. Kerrigan (from 8 Jun)
1stLt Stuart H. Wright (from 30 Jun)
1stLt John A. Hayes (from 12 Jul)
Capt Louis R. Daze (from 21 Jul)
Capt Charles M. MacDonald, Jr. (from 21 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Company C

Capt Jack R. Jones (to 8 May 1951)
1stLt Richard J. Schening (from 9 May)
1stLt Robert E. Warner (from 29 May)
Capt Lucian F. May (from 4 Sep)
Capt Harry A. Mathew (from 22 Jan 1952)

2d Battalion, 5th Marines

Commanding Officer

LtCol Harold S. Roise (to 19 Feb 1951)
LtCol Glen E. Martin (from 20 Feb)
Maj Merwin H. Silverthorn, Jr. (from 24 Jun)
LtCol Houston Stiff (from 8 Jul)
Maj William E. Baugh (from 3 Dec)
LtCol George G. Pafford (from 27 Dec)
LtCol William P. Cushing (from 14 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj John L. Hopkins (to 20 Feb 1951)
Maj Theodore F. Spiker (from 21 Feb)
Maj Merwin H. Silverthorn, Jr. (from 9 Apr)
Maj Robert E. Baldwin (from 25 Jun)
Maj Gerald P. Averill (from 3 Sep)
Maj Robert W. Rynerson (from 9 Sep)
Maj Warren F. Lloyd (from 26 Sep)
Maj William L. Sims (from 9 Dec)
Maj Robert S. Hudson (from 27 Dec)
Maj William P. Cushing (from 21 Feb 1952)
Maj Robert S. Hudson (from 14 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company

Capt Franklin B. Mayer (to 9 Jan 1951)
1stLt Charles “H” Dalton (from 10 Jan)
Capt William O. Cain, Jr. (from 21 Feb)
1stLt John R. Hinds (from 2 Jul)
1stLt Richard T. Hauar (from 12 Jul)
1stLt Harold L. Michael (from 8 Aug)
1stLt Dexter H. Kimball (from 25 Sep)
1stLt Otis “Z” McConnell, Jr. (from 23 Dec)
1stLt Emmett T. Hill, Jr. (from 15 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company D

Capt Samuel S. Smith (to 11 Jun 1951)
1stLt John P. Cooney (from 12 Jun)
Capt Ray N. Joens (from 28 Jun)
Capt Victor Sawina (from 26 Sep)
1stLt Tom G. Fagles (from 7 Oct)
Capt Philip A. Davis (from 23 Dec)
1stLt Emmitt T. Hill (from 13 Feb 1952)
Capt William A. Harper (from 25 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Company E

1stLt James F. Roberts (to 9 Jan 1951)
Capt Franklin B. Mayer (from 10 Jan)
Capt William E. Melby (from 9 Apr)
1stLt Bernard W. Christofferson (from 20 Apr)
1stLt Warren H. Allen (from 12 Jun)
Capt William E. Melby (from 18 Jun)
1stLt Warren H. Allen (from 9 Jul)
Capt William L. Wallace (from 3 Aug)
Capt Warren H. Allen (from 3 Oct)
1stLt Jo M. Van Meter (from 18 Oct)
Capt Charles C. Matthews (from 4 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company F

1stLt Charles “H” Dalton (to 8 Jan 1951)
1stLt George Janiszewski (from 9 Jan)
Capt William O. Cain, Jr. (from 20 Jan)
1stLt George Janiszewski (from 20 Feb)
1stLt James H. Honeycutt, Jr. (from 9 Apr)
1stLt Harold L. Michael (from 23 Jul)
Capt William E. Melby (from 11 Aug)
Capt Arvil B. Hendrickson (from 4 Nov)
Capt Harold C. Fuson (from 14 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Weapons Company

Maj Glen E. Martin (to 19 Feb 1951)
Capt John Stepanovich (from 20 Feb)
Capt Elliot B. Lima (from 6 Apr)
1stLt Arvil B. Hendrickson (from 17 Aug)
Maj Warren F. Lloyd (from 15 Sep)
Capt Arvil B. Hendrickson (from 25 Sep)
Maj William L. Sims (from 4 Nov)
Capt William A. Harper (from 23 Dec)
Capt Harold C. Fuson (from 25 Feb 1952)
Capt Russell L. Silverthorn (from 16 Mar)

3d Battalion, 5th Marines

Commanding Officer

LtCol Robert D. Taplett (to 13 Feb 1951)
LtCol Joseph L. Stewart (from 14 Feb)

LtCol Donald R. Kennedy (from 14 Mar)
Maj Morse “L” Holladay (from 4 Apr)
LtCol Donald R. Kennedy (from 16 Jun)
Maj William E. Baugh (from 23 Sep)
LCol Bernard W. McLean (from 13 Oct)
LtCol William S. McLaughlin (from 25 Feb 1952)

Executive Officer
Maj Harold E. Swain (to 7 May 1951)
Maj Albert Hartman (from 8 May)
Maj William E. Baugh (from 11 Aug)
Maj Donald D. Pomerleau (from 27 Sep)
Maj William E. Baugh (from 13 Oct)
Maj Donald D. Pomerleau (from 30 Nov)
Maj Paul H. Bratten (from 4 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company
1stLt Harold D. Fredericks (to 13 Feb 1951)
1stLt Duncan McRae (from 14 Feb)
1stLt Carlisle G. Kohl, Jr. (from 25 Mar)
1stLt Herbert Preston (from 27 Jun)
Capt Robert J. McKay (from 25 Aug)
Capt Charles W. Marker, Jr. (from 23 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Company G
1stLt Charles D. Mize (to 5 Mar 1951)
1stLt August L. Camarata (from 6 Mar)
1stLt William G. Robinson (from 18 Jul)
Capt John M. Fallon (from 10 Sep)
Capt James Irving, Jr. (from 5 Nov)
1stLt Wilson L. Cook (from 28 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company H
Capt Harold I. Williamson (to 1 Apr 1951)
1stLt Herbert Preston, Jr. (from 2 Apr)
Capt Clarence H. Pritchett (from 1 May)
1stLt Bruce F. Meyers (from 5 Aug)
Capt Raymond J. McGlynn (from 4 Nov)
Capt Matthew A. Clary, Jr. (from 21 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company I
1stLt Donald E. Watterson (to 5 Mar 1951)
Capt Raymond H. Spuhler (from 6 Mar)

Capt John A. Pearson (from 1 Apr)
1stLt Raymond J. McGlynn (from 10 Aug)
1stLt Lawrence W. Payne (from 29 Aug)
Capt Neil Dimond (from 5 Oct)

Commanding Officer, Weapons Company
Capt Raymond H. Spuhler (to 31 Jan 1951)
Maj Thomas A. Durham (from 1 Feb)
Maj Ilo J. Scatena (from 26 Jul)
Maj Donald D. Pomerleau (from 20 Sep)
Maj Ilo J. Scatena (from 27 Sep)
Maj James H. Pope (from 13 Oct)
Capt Charles W. Marker, Jr. (from 3 Dec)
Capt Robert J. McKay (from 23 Dec)
1stLt Anthony R. Kurowski (from 6 Mar 1952)
Capt Robert W. Lowe (from 17 Mar)

7th Marines

Commanding Officer
Col Homer L. Litzenberg (to 15 Apr 1951)
Col Herman Nickerson, Jr. (from 16 Apr)
LtCol John J. Wermuth (from 20 Sep)
Col John J. Wermuth (from 13 Dec)
Col Russell E. Honsowetz (from 11 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer
LtCol Raymond G. Davis (to 3 Jun 1951)
LtCol Woodrow M. Kessler (from 4 Jun)
LtCol John J. Wermuth (from 30 Jun)
LtCol Gordon D. Gayle (from 20 Sep)
LtCol James G. Kelly (from 3 Nov)
LtCol Noel C. Gregory (from 2 Dec)
LtCol John D. Wiggins (from 23 Feb 1952)

S-1
Capt John R. Grove (to 15 Apr 1951)
Capt Hugh E. McNeely (from 16 Apr)
Maj Robert R. Sedgwick (from 5 Sep)
Capt William K. Dormady (from 5 Jan 1952)

S-2
Capt John D. Bradbeer (to 4 Jul 1951)

Capt Walter E. Lange (from 5 Jul)
Capt Clifford E. McCollam (from 29 Jul)
Maj Henry V. Joslin (from 25 Aug)
1stLt George W. Barnes (from 8 Nov)
Capt Donald E. Euchert (from 19 Dec)
Capt Harry E. Leland, Jr. (from 17 Mar 1952)

S-3

Maj Henry J. Woessner, II (to 8 Jan 1951)
Maj Joseph L. Abel (from 9 Jun)
Maj George Codrea (from 22 Sep)

S-4

Maj Maurice E. Roach (to 8 Jan 1951)
Maj William E. Voorhies (from 9 Jan)
Maj John D. Bradbeer (from 5 Jul)
Maj Franklin C. Bacon (from 5 Oct)
Maj Robert B. Prescott (from 3 Jan 1952)
Maj James K. Linnan (from 19 Jan)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company

2dLt Arthur R. Mooney (to 17 Feb 1951)
1stLt Harrol Kiser (from 18 Feb)
1stLt John C. Beauparlant (from 6 Mar)
1stLt Welton R. Abell (from 14 Mar)
Capt James J. Bott (from 19 Mar)
Capt Thomas A. Robesky (from 9 May)
Capt Walter R. Anderson (from 18 Jun)
Capt Hugh E. McNeely (from 5 Sep)
Capt Donald S. McClellan (from 20 Sep)
Capt David A. McKay (from 28 Nov)
Capt Robert C. Hendrickson (from 17 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Antitank Company

1stLt Earl R. DeLong (to 5 May 1951)
1stLt Raymond J. Eldridge (from 6 Mar)
Capt Thomas Santamaria (from 19 Apr)
1stLt Francis W. Tief (from 13 May)
1stLt William F. Dyroff (from 10 Aug)

Commanding Officer, 4.2 Inch Mortar Company

Maj Rodney V. Reighard (to 1 July 1951)
1stLt Samuel E. Piercy (from 2 Jul)

Capt Alvin F. Mackin (from 24 Sep)
Capt Dean F. Johnson (from 28 Nov)
Capt John F. McMahon, Jr. (from 28 Dec)

1st Battalion, 7th Marines
Commanding Officer
Maj Webb D. Sawyer (to 25 Apr 1951)
LtCol John T. Rooney (from 26 Apr)
LtCol James G. Kelly (from 23 Aug)
Maj Harold C. Howard (from 8 Nov)
LtCol George W. E. Daughtry (from 28 Feb 1952)
Executive Officer
Maj Raymond V. Fridrich (to 20 Feb 1951)
Maj Thomas B. Tighe (from 21 Feb)
Maj Raymond V. Fridrich (from 24 Mar)
Maj Thomas B. Tighe (from 26 May)
Maj Robert J. Polson (from 5 Jul)
Maj George Codrea (from 4 Aug)
Maj Harold C. Howard (from 15 Sep)
Maj Henry V. Joslin (from 8 Nov)
Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company
1stLt Wilbert R. Gaul (to 19 Jan 1951)
Capt John C. Johnson (from 20 Jan)
Capt Nathan R. Smith (from 18 Mar)
1stLt Eugenous M. Hovatter (from 28 Mar)
Capt Donald F. J. Field (from 11 May)
Capt Wilburt R. Gaul (from 7 Jun)
1stLt Robert C. Taylor (from 9 Aug)
Capt Orville E. Brauss (from 24 Nov)
1stLt Guy R. Cassell (from 14 Dec)
1stLt Edward L. Nadeau (from 1 Jan 1952)
Capt Seneker Woll (from 18 Jan)
2dLt Henry D. Bruns (from 10 Feb)
2d Lt Lawrence P. Flynn (from 9 Mar)
Commanding Officer, Company A
1stLt Eugenous M. Hovatter (to 27 Mar 1951)
Capt Nathan R. Smith (from 28 Mar)
1stLt Van D. Bell (from 3 Jun)

Capt Everett Hampton (from 2 Sep)
2dLt Carl F. Ullrich (from 2 Jan 1952)
Capt Earl W. Thompson (from 27 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company B

Capt James J. Bott (to 5 Mar 1951)
Capt John C. Johnston (from 6 Mar)
1stLt Orville W. Brauss (from 22 Jul)
1stLt Dean F. Johnson (from 23 Aug)
1stLt James W. Sweeney (from 14 Sep)
Capt Henry A. Glockner (from 29 Sep)
1stLt Donald L. Smith (from 14 Dec)
1stLt "J" Alan Myers (from 1 Jan 1952)
1stLt Donald M. Russ (from 14 Feb)
Capt Lyle S. Whitmore, Jr. (from 28 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Company C

Capt John F. Morris (to 17 Jan 195l)
Capt Eugene H. Haffey (from 18 Jan)
Capt Daniel F. J. Field (from 8 Jun)
1stLt Donald E. Euckert (from 23 Jul)
Capt John F. McMahon (from 10 Aug)
Capt Robert W. Hughes, Jr. (from 21 Nov)
Capt Seneker Woll (from 7 Jan 1952)
Capt Robert W. Hughes, Jr. (from 18 Jan)
Capt Roger L. Johnson (from 3 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Weapons Company

Maj William E. Voorhies (to 5 Jan 1951)
Capt Robert J. Polson (from 6 Jan)
Maj Joseph L. Abel (from 12 Jan)
Maj Robert J. Polson (from 15 May)
Capt Alonzo C. Thorson (from 5 Jul)
Capt John C. Johnston (from 5 Aug)
Capt Dean F. Johnson (from 5 Nov)
Capt John R. McMahon (from 22 Nov)
1stLt Guy R. Cassell (from 31 Dec)
Capt Robert W. Hughes, Jr. (from 4 Jan 1952)
1stLt Frank P. Shannon (from 18 Jan)
1stLt Carlton R. Appleby (from 16 Feb)

2d Battalion, 7th Marines

Commanding Officer

LtCol Robert L. Bayer (to 15 Feb 1951)
Maj James I. Glendinning (from 16 Feb)
LtCol Wilbur F. Meyerhoff (from 21 Mar)
LtCol Louis C. Griffin (from 21 Jul)
LtCol Noel C. Gregory (from 11 Nov)
Maj Edward G. Kurdziel (from 1 Dec)
LtCol Noel C. Gregory (from 27 Feb 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj James F. Lawrence, Jr. (to 2 Jan 1951)
Maj James I. Glendinning, Jr. (from 3 Jan)
Maj James F. Lawrence, Jr. (from 20 May)
Maj Edward G. Kurdziel (from 4 Jul)
Maj Edwin Madsen (from 2 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company

1stLt Kent D. Thorup (to 19 Jan 1951)
Capt Jerome D. Gordon (from 20 Jan)
1stLt Kent D. Thorup (from 6 Feb)
Capt Thomas “A” Robesky (from 15 Mar)
1stLt Joseph R. Walsh (from 8 May)
1stLt George G. Flood (from 8 Jun)
1st Lt John J. Robinson, Jr (from 1 Sep)
Capt Charles P. Logan, Jr. (from 5 Nov)
1stLt Donald D. MacLachlan (from 16 Dec)
1stLt Edward R. Hannon (from 27 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company D

1stLt James D. Hammond, Jr. (to 1 Jan 1951)
Capt Patsy Algieri (from 2 Jan)
Capt Jerome D. Gordon (from 8 Feb)
Capt Alvin F. Mackin (from 7 Apr)
1stLt Thomas W. Burke (from 21 Jul)
Capt John H. Chafee (from 15 Sep)
Capt Charles P. Logan, Jr. (from 15 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Company E

1stLt David H. Vanderwart (to 21 Jan 1951)
1stLt Robert T. Bey (from 22 Jan)
Capt Walter R. Anderson, Jr. (from 8 Feb)

Capt Merlin T. Matthews (from 17 Feb)
1stLt Robert W. Schmidt (from 14 Jun)
1stLt Charles P. Logan, Jr. (from 18 Sep)
Capt Embree W. Maxson (from 5 Oct)
Capt Donald McGuire (from 21 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company F
1stLt Ronald J. Rice (to 1 Mar 1951)
1stLt Ross R. Minor (from 2 Mar)
Capt Raymond N. Bowman (from 6 Mar)
1stLt Ross R. Minor (from 1 May)
Capt Donald S. McClellan (from 23 Jun)
1stLt Don G. Phelan (from 24 Aug)
Capt Harry E. Leland, Jr. (from 14 Oct)
1stLt Rex C. Wells (from 17 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Weapons Company
Maj Joseph L. Abel (to 7 Jan 1951)
Maj James P. Metzler (from 8 Jan)
Capt John R. Grove (from 19 Apr)
Capt Harry L. Givens (from 20 May)
Capt Alvin F. Mackin (from 8 Aug)
Capt David A. McKay (from 24 Sep)
Capt Walter Oberg (from 26 Nov)
1stLt Elmer R. Phillips (from 17 Feb 1952)
Maj Dennis D. Nicholson (from 16 Mar)
Capt Owen G. Jackson, Jr. (from 30 Mar)

3d Battalion, 7th Marines

Commanding Officer
Maj Maurice E. Roach, Jr. (to 13 Jan 1951)
LtCol Wilbur F. Meyerhoff (from 14 Jan)
Maj Maurice E. Roach, Jr. (from 16 Feb)
LtCol Bernard T. Kelly (from 8 May)
LtCol Harry W. Edwards (from 4 Oct)
LtCol Houston Stiff (from 12 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer
Maj Warren Morris (to 8 Jan 1951)
Maj Maurice E. Roach, Jr. (from 9 Jan)
Maj Warren Morris (from 16 Feb)

Maj James J. Bott (from 4 Jul)
Capt Howard L. Mabie (from 4 Aug)
Maj Robert B. Prescott (from 6 Aug)
Maj Franklin G. Bacon (from 3 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company
1stLt Samuel B. Abston (to 7 Jan 1951)
Capt John DeCloud (from 8 Jan)
1stLt Samuel D. Miller (from 5 Mar)
1stLt Frank N. Winfrey (from 15 May)
1stLt Robert H. Starek (from 25 May)
1stLt William R. Bennett (from 21 Jul)
1stLt Dennis E. Youngblood (from 6 Oct)
1stLt Raymond B. McGill (from 28 Nov)
Capt Clayton A. Lodoen (from 2 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company G
1stLt George R. Earnest (to 31 Dec 1950)
Capt Walter E. Lange (from 1 Jan 1951)
1stLt George R. Earnest (from 11 Mar)
1stLt Frank N. Winfrey (from 22 Mar)
Capt William C. Airheart (from 28 Mar)
1stLt Edward J. Sullivan (from 22 Jul)
Capt Robert C. Hendrickson (from 12 Aug)
Capt Thomas D. Smith, Jr. (from 14 Dec)
1stLt Harry H. Saltzman (from 11 Feb 1952)
Capt Thomas P. O'Callaghan (from 23 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Company H
1stLt William C. Airheart (to 19 Jan 1951)
Capt James A. Hoey, Jr. (from 20 Jan)
Capt Reed T. King (from 5 Jun)
1stLt Dwight A. Young (from 4 Aug)
Capt Clayton A. Lodoen (from 9 Nov)
1stLt William B. Stengle (from 22 Feb 1952)
Capt William B. Cosgrove (from 17 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company I
Capt Howard L. Mabie (to 15 Feb 1951)
1stLt Alfred I. Thomas (from 16 Feb)
1stLt Victor Stoyanow (from 29 Mar)
1stLt Frank N. Winfrey (from 5 Jun)

1stLt Thomas N. Preston (from 20 Jun)
1stLt Richard L. Shell (from 23 Jul)
Maj Hildeburn R. Martin (from 5 Sep)
Capt Clifford G. Moore (from 14 Sep)
1stLt Charles H. Hammett (from 27 Dec)
1stLt Hubert McEntyre (from 2 Mar 1952)
Capt Gifford S. Horton (from 9 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Weapons Company

Maj Jefferson D. Smith, Jr. (to 16 Feb 1951)
Capt Howard L. Mabie (from 17 Feb)
1stLt Frederick Van Brunt (from 8 Apr)
Capt Howard L. Mabie (from 19 Apr)
Maj James J. Bott (from 4 Jun)
1stLt Alfred I. Thomas (from 4 Jul)
Capt Claudie “M” Hollingsworth (from 8 Jul)
Capt William C. Airheart (from 12 Aug)
Capt Theodore E. Metzger (from 4 Nov)
Capt Thomas P. O’Callaghan (from 27 Dec)
1stLt Louis A. Mann (from 22 Feb 1952)

11th Marines

Commanding Officer

LtCol Carl A. Youngdale (to 5 Mar 1951)
Col Joseph L. Winecoff (from 6 Mar)
Col Custis Burton, Jr. (from 5 Aug)
Col Bruce T. Hemphill (from 17 Nov)
Col Frederick P. Henderson (from 27 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer

LtCol Douglas A. Reeve (to 5 Mar 1951)
LtCol Carl A. Youngdale (from 6 Mar)
LtCol Douglas A. Reeve (from 7 May)
LtCol Merritt Adelman (from 13 Jun)
LtCol Albert H. Potter (from 15 Aug)
LtCol Lewis A. Jones (from 23 Nov)

S-1

Maj Floyd M. McCorkle (to 10 Jun 1951.)
Capt Arthur L. Jackson (from 11 Jun)
1stLt Jessie R. Collins (from 2 Oct)

S-2

Capt William T. Phillips (to 26 Aug 1951)
Capt Vernon K. Ausherman (from 27 Aug)
Capt Phillip A. Schloss, Jr. (from 17 Dec)
Capt Marshall R. Hunter, Jr. (from 20 Feb 1952)

S-3

LtCol James O. Appleyard (to 19 Jul 1951)
LtCol William H. Gilliam (from 20 Jul)
LtCol William F. Pala (from 18 Nov)

S-4

Maj Donald V. Anderson (to 5 Feb 1951)
Maj Thomas M. Coggins (from 6 Feb)
Maj Benjamin W. Muntz (from 23 Jul)
Capt Robert B. Carney (from 14 Sep)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery

Capt Clarence E. Hixon (to 7 Apr 1951)
1stLt Thomas C. Thompson (from 8 Apr)
Capt Richard L. McDaniel (from 22 Aug)
Maj Claudie “M” Hollingsworth (from 24 Sep)
2dLt Chester E. Reese (from 17 Nov)
1stLt Samuel S. Rockwood (from 9 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Service Battery

Maj Thomas M. Coggins (to 5 Feb 195l)
1stLt Fred Rea (from 6 Feb)
1stLt John F. Gresham (from 21 May)
2dLt Chester E. Reese (from 7 Nov)
Capt Warren G. Hopkins (from 17 Nov)
Capt William B. Tom (from 16 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Battery C, 1st 4.5 Inch Rocket Battalion

1stLt Eugene A. Busche (to 11 Jul 1951)
1stLt Edward A. Bailey (from 12 Jul)
1stLt Stephen R. Mihalic (from 2 Nov)
1stLt Edward J. Pierson (from 30 Mar 1952)

1st Battalion, 11th Marines

Commanding Officer

LtCol Harvey A. Feehan (to 30 Mar 1951)
Maj Thomas F. Cave, Jr. (from 31 Mar)

Maj Gordon R. Worthington (from 8 Aug)
LtCol Sherman W. Parry (from 13 Sep)
LtCol James R. Haynes (from 30 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer
Maj Thomas F. Cave (to 30 Mar 1951)
Maj Gordon R. Worthington (from 31 Mar)
Maj George J. Kovich, Jr. (from 8 Aug)
Maj Harold E. Nelson (from 17 Sep)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery
Capt Haskell C. Baker (to 2 Jan 1951)
Capt Arnold C. Hofstetter (from 3 Jan)
Capt Alonzo C. Thorson (from 3 May)
Capt John McCaffrey (from 2 Jul)
Capt Rodman E. Street (from 17 Oct)
1stLt Charles D. Branson (from 26 Dec)
1stLt Harley “B” Riley (from 1 Feb 1952)
1stLt Joseph P. McDermott, Jr. (from 26 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Service Battery
Capt Arnold C. Hofstetter (to 1 Jan 1951)
1stLt Kenneth H. Quelch (from 2 Jan)
Capt Philip D. Higby (from 1 Mar)
Capt Mont G. Kenney (from 9 Jul)
Capt Mansfield L. Clinnick (from 9 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Battery A
Capt James D. Jordan (to 1 Apr 1951)
Capt Mont G. Kenney (from 2 Apr)
Capt Philip D. Higby (from 10 Jul)
Capt Joseph A. Goeke (from 22 Jul)
1stLt Richard J. Randolph, Jr. (from 11 Sep)
1stLt Robert O. Martin, Jr. (from 3 Oct)
Capt Duane W. Skow (from 9 Nov)
Capt Rodman E. Street (from 24 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Battery B
Capt Gilbert N. Powell (to 12 Jun 1951)
Capt Charles D. Corpening (from 13 Jun)
Capt Leslie C. Procter, Jr. (from 27 Aug)
1stLt Donald T. Clark (from 13 Dec)
1stLt Jefferson S. Smith (from 1 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Battery C

Capt William J. Nichols, Jr. (to 14 Feb 1951)
Capt Haskell C. Baker (from 15 Feb)
Capt Glenn L. Tole (from 14 Jul)
Capt Mansfield L. Clinnick (from 12 Sep)
1stLt Harold H. Ramsour (from 5 Jan 1952)
Capt James C. Gasser (from 26 Mar 1952)

2d Battalion, 11th Marines

Commanding Officer

Maj Francis R. Schlesinger (to 4 Mar 1951)
Maj Jack C. Newell (from 5 Mar)
LtCol Merritt Adelman (from 14 Mar)
LtCol Dale H. Heely (from 13 Jun)
LtCol George B. Thomas (from 1 Jan 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj Neal C. Newell (to 15 Mar 1951)
Maj Bruce E. Keith (from 16 Mar)
Maj Horace W. Card, Jr. (from 12 May)
Maj Peter J. Mulroney (from 4 Aug)
Maj Claudie “M” Hollingsworth (from 14 Aug)
Maj Frank W. Keith (from 11 Sep)
Maj James R. Haynes (from 1 Nov)
Maj Peter J. Mulroney (from 29 Nov)
Maj James R. Haynes (from 15 Dec)
Maj Morris R. Snead (from 29 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery

Capt George J. Batson, Jr. (to 27 Jun 1951)
1stLt Howard A. Blancheri (from 28 Jun)
Capt Raymond D. Spicer (from 3 Oct)
1stLt John J. Scollay (from 29 Oct)
2dLt Arthur H. Westing (from 15 Jan 1952)
2dLt John E. Buynak (from 16 Feb)
1stLt Ivan B. Clevinger (from 13 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Service Battery

Capt Herbert R. Merrick, Jr. (to 24 Feb 1951)
Capt William D. Gibson (from 25 Feb)
1stLt Walter L. Blocker (from 30 Jun)

Capt Robert N. Kreider (from 20 Jul)
1stLt Robert E. Santee (from 6 Oct)
1stLt Donald F. Schaller (from 3 Feb 1952)
1stLt James W. Bell (from 16 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Battery D
Capt Richard E. Roach (to 18 Mar 1951)
Capt William D. Stubbs, Jr. (from 19 Mar)
Capt Walter L. Blocker, Jr. (from 4 Aug)
1stLt John M. Hoben (from 4 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Battery E
Capt Richard N. Aufmann (to 25 Feb 1951)
Capt Herbert R. Merrick, Jr. (from 26 Feb)
Capt Robt. E. Dawson (from 2 Apr)
Capt Herbert R. Merrick, Jr. (from 27 Apr)
Capt George J. Batson, Jr. (from 28 Jun)
1stLt Albert “G” Harris, III (from 7 Aug)
Capt Raymond D. Spicer (from 11 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Battery F
1st Lt Howard A. Blancheri (to 20 Jan 1951)
Capt George J. Kovich, Jr. (from 21 Jan)
Capt Robert E. Dawson (from 3 May)
Capt William D. Gibson (from 30 Jun)
1stLt James F. Shea (from 13 Aug)
1stLt James W. Bell (from 8 Nov)
Capt Robert E. Dawson (from 24 Nov)
Capt John S. Adamson (from 24 Dec)
1stLt Frederick A. Koch, Jr. (from 31 Dec)

3d Battalion, 11th Marines

Commanding Officer
LtCol Francis F. Parry (to 6 Feb 1951)
LtCol William McReynolds (from 7 Feb)
Maj James R. Haynes (from 6 Sep)
LtCol James F. Coady (from 23 Oct)
LtCol Henry E. Barnes (from 2 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer
Maj Norman A. Miller, Jr. (to 14 Jul 1951)
Maj Stephen K. Pawloski (from 15 Jul)

Maj James R. Haynes (from 16 Aug)
Maj Carl A. Neilson (from 6 Sep)
Maj Richard H. Jeschke, Jr. (from 1 Dec)
Maj Charles A. Lipot (from 4 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery
1stLt John J. Brackett (to 20 Jan 1951)
1stLt Eugene H. Brown (from 21 Jan)
1stLt Robert C. Cameron (from 6 Apr)
Capt Donald H. Campbell (from 21 May)
1stLt Robert H. Maurer (from 2 Aug)
1stLt Thomas E. Driscoll (from 18 Aug)
1stLt Hugh W. Manning (from 6 Sep)
2dLt John B. Buynak (from 7 Oct)
Capt Thomas L. Sullivan (from 20 Nov)
2dLt Thomas P. McGeeney, Jr. (from 3 Jan 1952)
2dLt Albert E. Shaw, Jr. (from 19 Feb)
1stLt William A. Barton, Jr. (from 14 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Service Battery
Capt Samuel A. Hannah (to 25 Feb 1951)
1stLt Lawrence T. Kane (from 26 Feb)
1stLt David D. Metcalf (from 4 Apr)
Capt Arthur S. Tarkington (from 10 Sep)
Capt Charles J. Small (from 27 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Battery G
Capt Ernest W. Payne (to 14 Jul 1951)
Capt Arthur S. Tarkington (from 15 Jul)
1stLt Arthur H. Fugalsoe (from 6 Sep)
1stLt Mervyn E. Kerstner (from 11 Sep)
1stLt Arthur H. Fugalsoe (from 15 Sep)
1stLt Edward S. McCabe (from 1 Nov)
1stLt Joseph M. Vosmik (from 13 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Battery H
Capt Mason D. McQuiston (to 24 Aug 1951)
Capt David D. Metcalf (from 25 Aug)
1stLt William A. Barton, Jr. (from 1 Nov)
1stLt George E. Chambers, Jr. (from 21 Jan 1952)
1stLt Russell E. Blagg (from 17 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Battery I

Capt Robert T. Patterson, Jr. (to 13 Jun 1951)
Capt Floyd R. Jaggears (from 14 Jun)
Capt Donald H. Campbell (from 2 Aug)
1stLt Homer C. Wright (from 12 Aug)
Capt Donald H. Campbell (from 25 Aug)
1stLt Homer C. Wright (from 9 Sep)
1stLt Charles R. Davidson, Jr. (from 19 Feb 1952)

4th Battalion, 11th Marines
Commanding Officer
Maj William McReynolds (to 6 Feb 1951)
Maj Maurice J. Coffey (from 7 Feb)
Maj Norman A. Miller, Jr. (from 16 Jul)
LtCol Louis A. Jones (from 6 Sep)
LtCol William M. Gilliam (from 24 Nov)
Executive Officer
Maj Maurice J. Coffey (to 6 Feb 1951)
Maj Donald V. Anderson (from 7 Feb)
Maj Bernard W. Giebler (from 17 Aug)
LtCol Bruce F. Hillan (from 24 Feb 1952)
Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battery
1stLt Michael B. Wier (to 10 Jun 1951)
1stLt Frank P. Zarzeka (from 11 Jun)
1stLt Arthur Coburn (from 21 Aug)
1stLt Paul R. Joyce (from 28 Aug)
1stLt Thomas C. Thompson, Jr. (from 25 Nov)
1stLt Earl C. Senter (from 10 Feb 1952)
Commanding Officer, Service Battery
Capt Aldor B. Elmquist (to 9 Jun 1951)
1stLt Matthew J. Dennin (from 10 Jun)
1stLt William A. Mazzarella (from 1 Jul)
Capt Matthew J. Dennin (from 2 Sep)
Capt Eugene A. Frank (from 8 Sep)
Capt Matthew J. Dennin (from 16 Oct)
1stLt Leland B. Elton (from 19 Nov)
Commanding Officer, Battery K
Capt Arthur D. Challacombe, Jr. (to 4 Aug 1951)
1stLt Albert E. Coffeen (from 5 Aug)

1stLt Paul M. Rice (from 23 Dec)
1stLt William L. Jesse (from 17 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Battery L
Capt Armond G. Daddazio (to 15 Apr 1951)
Capt Eugene A. Frank (from 16 Apr)
Capt William M. Sigler, Jr. (from 7 Sep)
1stLt Dennis Manko (from 28 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Battery M
Capt Vernon W. Shapiro (to 3 Feb 1951)
Capt Charles E. Walker (from 14 Feb)
Capt Walter E. Magon (from 18 Jun)
1stLt George C. Briggs, Jr. (from 28 Nov)
1stLt Louis M. Dunklin (from 10 Feb 1952)
1stLt Billy J. White (from 18 Mar)

1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion

Commanding Officer
LtCol Erwin F. Wann, Jr. (to 26 Sep 1951)
LtCol Michiel Dobervich (from 27 Sep)

Executive Officer
Maj Arthur J. Barrett (to 14 Sep 1951)
Maj William L. Eubank (from 15 Sep)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company
Capt Frank E. Granucci (to 12 Jun 1951)
Capt Lawrence H. Woods (from 13 Jun)
Capt Thomas J. Melcher (from 15 Sep)
1stLt Richard R. Myers (from 9 Jan 1952)
1stLt William H. Gatlin (from 10 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company A
Maj James P. Treadwell (to 6 Apr 1951)
Maj Thomas H. Boler (from 7 Apr)
Capt Harry A. Steinmeyer (from 1 May)
Capt Dudley F. McGeehan (from 17 May)
Capt Robert L. Stuford (from 10 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company B
Capt Russell Hamlet (to 11 Apr 1951)
Capt Dudley F. McGeehan (from 12 Apr)
Capt John C. Crawley (from 17 May)

Capt Carl L. Hill (from 10 Jun)
Capt Harold W. Stroschein (from 1 Jan 1952)
Capt Samuel L. Eddy (from 10 Jan)

Commanding Officer, Company C
Maj Arthur J. Noonan (to 8 Aug 1951)
Maj William L. Eubank (from 9 Aug)
Maj Edward C. Nelson (from 10 Sep)
Capt Samuel L. Eddy (from 19 Dec)
Capt Robert T. Johnson (from 9 Jan 1952)

1st Armored Amphibian Battalion

Commanding Officer
LtCol Francis H. Cooper (to 15 Jun 1951)
Maj George M. Warnke (from 16 Jun)
LtCol John T. O'Neill (from 2 Oct)

Executive Officer
Maj Richard G. Warga (to 7 Apr 1951)
Maj George M. Warnke (from 8 Apr)
Maj Bernard G. Thobe (from 16 Jun)
Maj Robert J. Murphy (from 1 Oct)
Maj David Young (from 6 Jan 1952)
LtCol James L. Jones (from 29 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company
Capt Roger B. Thompson (to 10 May 1951)
1stLt Jean T. Fox (from 11 May)
Capt Richard P. Greene (from 18 Jun)
1stLt Edward J. Sullivan (from 12 Oct)
2dLt Newton C. Tullis (from 2 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Company A
Capt Bernard G. Thobe (to 25 Apr 1951)
1stLt Clyde P. Guy (from 26 Apr)
Maj Rex Z. Michael, Jr. (from 5 Sep)
Maj David Foos (from 3 Oct)

Commanding Officer, Company B
Capt Lewis E. Bolts (to 26 Jun 1951)
Maj Ralph H. Platt (from 27 Jun)
Maj John M. Scarborough (from 3 Oct)
Capt John B. Harney (from 10 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Service Company

Capt Rex Z. Michael, Jr. (to 4 Sep 1951)

1stLt Presley K. Saine (from 5 Sep)

2dLt John A. Boone (from 5 Nov)

Capt William H. Chandler (from 16 Mar 1952)

1st Combat Service Group

Commanding Officer

Col John N. Cook, Jr. (to 10 Jun 1951)

LtCol John M. Brickley (from 10 Jun)

Col Joseph P. Sayers (from 9 Aug)

Col Russell N. Jordahl (from 30 Sep)

Executive Officer

LtCol Edward A. Clark (to 17 Jan 1951)

LtCol Randolph S. D. Lockwood (from 18 Jan)

LtCol John H. Brickley (from 9 May)

Maj Murray F. Rose (from 11 Jun)

LtCol Robert K. McClelland (from 17 Aug)

Maj John R. Blackett (from 1 Sep)

LtCol Robert T. Stivers (from 22 Oct)

LtCol James G. Kelly (from 6 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company

Capt Francis L. Miller (to 11 Apr 1951)

Capt Raymond E. Wase (from 12 Apr)

Capt Billie G. Hagan (from 19 Apr)

Capt George M. Zellick (from 22 Jul)

1stLt William P. Lacy (from 21 Sep)

Capt James H. Shaw (from 15 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Maintenance Company

Maj Edward H. Voorhees (to 19 May 1951)

1stLt Donald M. Dackins (from 20 May)

Maj Berny L. Thurman (from 3 Sep)

Capt Warren H. Allen (from 25 Nov)

Maj John R. Blackett (from 31 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Supply Company

Maj Robert W. Hengesbach (to 17 Apr 1951)

Capt Bernard L. Keiter (from 18 Apr)

1stLt John Spiropoulas (from 24 Nov)

Maj William D. Porter (from 29 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Support Company

Maj Donald B. Cooley, Jr. (to 22 Jan 1951)

Maj James T. Breen (from 23 Jan)

Maj Mason H. Morse (from 10 Oct)

Maj Howard T. Pittman (from 4 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Truck Company

Capt Jack W. Temple (to 10 Jun 1951)

1stLt Cecil C. Spencer (from 11 Jun)

1stLt Frank W. Dickel (from 7 Jul)

1stLt James H. Shaw (from 8 Sep)

Capt Jacob Stocker (from 24 Sep)

Commanding Officer, 1st Fumigation and Bath Platoon

1stLt James L. Dumas (to 14 Aug 1951)

1stLt Raymond S. Eason (from 15 Aug)

1stLt Roger B. Meade (from 6 Sep)

Commanding Officer, 1st Air Delivery Platoon

Capt Hersel D. C. Blasingame (to 10 Jun 1951)

2dLt Robert C. Morton (from 11 Jun)

CWO John T. Eakes (from 26 Jun)

1stLt William A. Reavis (from 30 Dec)

2dLt William S. Daniels (from 7 Feb 1952)

1st Engineer Battalion

Commanding Officer

LtCol John H. Partridge (to 10 Jun 1951)

LtCol John V. Kelsey (from 11 Jun)

Executive Officer

Maj Richard M. Elliott (to 1 Feb 1951)

Maj Emile P. Moses, Jr. (from 2 Feb)

Maj Grover C. Williams (from 4 Aug)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company

Capt Edward D. Newton (to 24 Mar 1951)

1stLt Gerald W. Wade (from 25 Mar)

1stLt Lee A. Kirstein (from 16 Jun)

Capt Leonard L. Schultz (from 22 Aug)

Capt Donald F. Draeger (from 24 Nov)

Capt Robert W. Hurley (from 20 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Service Company

Capt Phillip A. Terrell, Jr. (to 25 Mar 1951)

Maj Richard M. Elliott (from 26 Mar)

Maj Louis L. Ball (from 6 Sep)

Capt Thirl D. Johnson (from 10 Jan 1952)

1stLt Arthur L. Rourke (from 9 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company A

Capt William B. Gould (to 20 Apr 1951)

Capt Harold R. Gingher (from 21 Apr)

1stLt George L. Bowman (from 15 Jun)

1stLt Floyd L. Vuillemot (from 1 Oct)

Capt Walter L. Hill (from 5 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Company B

Capt Orville L. Bibb (to 25 Mar 1951)

Capt Phillip A. Terrill, Jr. (from 26 Mar 1951)

1stLt Gerald W. Wade (from 17 Oct)

1stLt Clyde R. Kolahan (from 1 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company C

Capt Lester G. Harmon (to 15 Aug 1951)

1stLt Robert L. Brown (from 16 Aug)

1stLt Robert J. Hickson (from 4 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Company D

Capt Byron C. Turner (to 30 May 1951)

Capt Edward D. Newton (from 31 May)

Capt Thirl D. Johnson (from 29 Jun)

1stLt Lee A. Kirstein (from 23 Sep)

1stLt John J. Killelea (from 23 Dec)

1st Medical Battalion

Commanding Officer

Cdr Howard A. Johnson, USN (to 22 Jan 1951)

Cdr Clifford A. Stevenson, USN (from 23 Jan)

Cdr Richard Lawrence, Jr., USN (from 23 Sep)

Executive Officer

Cdr William S. Francis, USN (to 8 Jan 1951)

LtCdr Gustave T. Anderson, USN (from 9 Jan)

Cdr George A. Schlesinger, USN (from 4 Jul)

Cdr Lewis E. Rector, USN (from 9 Aug)

LtCdr Merrill W. Rusher, USN (from 28 Oct)
Cdr James C. Luce, USN (from 28 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company
Cdr William S. Francis, USN (to 8 Jan 1951)
LtCdr Gustav T. Anderson, USN (from 9 Jan)
Cdr Lewis E. Rector, USN (from 7 Jun)
Cdr George C. Schlesinger, USN (from 4 Jul)
Cdr Lewis E. Rector, USN (from 9 Aug)
LtCdr Merrill W. Rusher, USN (from 28 Oct)
Lt Edgar F. Bechtel, USN (from 16 Dec)
Lt(jg) Charles P. Richardson, USN (from 21 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company A
Cdr Byron E. Bassham, USN (to 3 Mar 1951)
Cdr Philip L. Nova, USN (from 4 Mar)
Cdr James A. Addison, USN (from 18 Apr)
LtCdr Arvin T. Henderson, USN (from 22 Sep)

Commanding Officer, Company B
LtCdr James A. Kaufman, USN (to 12 Jun 1951)
LtCdr Francis M. Morgan, USN (from 13 Jun)
Lt James F. Mumma, USN (from 11 Aug)
Lt Robert Fahrner, USN (from 17 Sep)
Lt John T. St. Mary, USN (from 20 Sep)
Lt(jg) Leroy F. Von Lackum, USN (from 15 Oct)
LtCdr Merrill W. Rusher, USN (from 8 Nov)
CWO William R. Lipscomb, USN (from 27 Nov)
WO Clarence B. Mohler, USN (from 7 Dec)
WO William R. Stanberry, USN (from 22 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company C
Cdr Harold A. Streit, USN (to 8 Jan 1951)
Cdr Lewis E. Rector, USN (from 9 Jan)
LtCdr Merrill W. Rusher, USN (from 6 Jun)
Lt John P. McDonald, USN (from 28 Oct)
LtCdr Merrill W. Rusher, USN (from 27 Nov)
Lt(jg) Thaddeus H. Doggett, USN (from 26 Dec)
LtCdr James A. McLaughlin, USN (from 11 Jan 1952)
Lt(jg) Thaddeus H. Doggett, USN (from 7 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Company D
LtCdr Gustave J. Anderson, USN (to 7 Jan 1951)

LtCdr Daniel M. Pino, USN (from 8 Jan)
Lt(jg) Hermes C. Grillo, USN (from 10 Aug)
Lt (jg) Powell H. Perkins, USN (from 8 Dec)
LtCdr James A. McLaughlin, USN (from 6 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company E
LtCdr Charles K. Holloway, USN (to 8 Jan 1951)
LtCdr John H. Cheffey, USN (from 9 Jan)
LtCdr Robert G. Allen, USN (from 13 Jun)
Lt Robert J. Fahrner, USN (from 9 Sep)
LtCdr Clifford R. Hall, USN (from 17 Oct)

1st Motor Transport Battalion

Commanding Officer
LtCol Olin L. Beall (to 15 Mar 1951)
LtCol John R. Barreiro, Jr. (from 16 Mar)
LtCol Howard E. Wertman (from 18 Aug)

Executive Officer
Maj John R. Barreiro, Jr. (to 15 Mar 1951)
Maj Edward L. Roberts (from 16 Mar)
Maj Eero Nori (from 6 Aug)
Capt Howard Dismeier (from 3 Feb 1952)
Maj Raymond L. Luckel (from 7 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company
Capt George B. Loveday (to 4 May 1951)
1stLt John C. O'Connell (from 5 May)
2dLt Walter R. Gustafson (from 21 Jul)
1stLt John C. O'Connell (from 17 Aug)
Capt Seneker Woll (from 1 Sep)
1stLt Eldon F. Kennedy (from 9 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company A
Capt Arthur W. Ecklund (to 3 May 1951)
1stLt Mildridge E. Mangum (from 4 May)
Capt Arnold T. Reed (from 4 Sep)
1stLt Walter A. Knopp (from 30 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company B
Capt James C. Camp, Jr. (to 9 Aug 1951)
1stLt Marshall "A" Webb, Jr. (from 10 Aug)
1stLt Gerald W. Gruber (from 13 Sep)

Commanding Officer, Company C

1stLt Norman E. Stow (to 15 Aug 1951)

Capt Joe P. England (from 16 Aug)

Commanding Officer, Company D

1stLt William D. Pothoff (to 8 Oct 1951)

1stLt Eldon F. Kennedy (from 9 Oct)

Capt Leroy P. Oetter (from 17 Oct)

Commanding Officer, Automotive Support Company

1stLt Mildridge E. Mangum (to 16 Feb 1951)

Capt Walter J. Desel, Jr. (from 17 Feb)

1stLt Marshall "A" Webb, Jr. (from 14 May)

Capt Leon Serkin (from 1 Aug)

Capt Charles R. Godwin (from 4 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Automotive Maintenance Company

Maj Edward L. Roberts (to 15 Mar 1951)

Capt Victor E. Sellers (from 16 Mar)

Capt Ira N. Hayes (from 10 Apr)

Capt Harold L. Mayfield (from 3 Aug)

Maj Marion D. Grush (from 5 Nov)

7th Motor Transport Battalion

Commanding Officer

LtCol Carl J. Cagle (to 1 Oct 1951)

Maj Walter R. O'Quinn (from 2 Oct)

Maj Herbert E. Pierce (from 3 Jan 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj Vernon A. Tuson (to 26 Jul 1951)

Capt Joseph L. Bunker (from 27 Jul)

Maj Walter R. O'Quinn (from 19 Sep)

Maj Ben Sutts (from 2 Oct)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company

2dLt Henry F. Finney (to 13 Jan 1951)

2dLt Palmer B. Fordham (from 14 Jan)

1stLt Richard J. Keeling (from 10 Feb)

1stLt Earl H. Johnson (from 10 Apr)

1stLt Louis C. Tauber (from 13 Aug)

1stLt Kenneth F. Smith (from 1 Sep)

Capt John J. Wilkinson (from 1 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company A

Capt Ira N. Hayes (to 8 Apr 1951)

1stLt Landon E. Christian (from 9 Apr)

Capt Robert B. Stone (from 8 Aug)

Capt John J. Wilkinson (from 1 Sep)

Capt Kenneth F. Smith (from 1 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company B

Capt Clovis M. Jones (to 11 Mar 1951)

1stLt Lawrence C. Norton (from 12 Mar)

1stLt John B. Wilson (from 1 Sep)

1stLt Clyde H. Loveday, Jr. (from 15 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company C

Capt Fred B. Rogers (to 16 Apr 1951)

1stLt Oscar A. Bosma (from 17 Apr)

1stLt Richard C. O'Dowd (from 6 Jun)

Capt Roscoe C. Hibbard (from 23 Nov)

Capt Clifton G. Moore (from 28 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Company D

Capt Joseph L. Bunker (to 26 Jul 1951)

1stLt Hubert J. Thomas (from 27 Jul)

1stLt Clyde H, Stratton (from 1 Sep)

Capt Clyde H. Stratton (from 1 Jan 1952)

1st Ordnance Battalion

Commanding Officer

Maj Lloyd O. Williams (to 31 Aug 1951)

Maj Harold C. Borth (from 1 Sep)

Executive Officer

Maj Samuel A. Johnstone, Jr. (to 5 Jul 1951)

Capt Theodore Tunis (from 6 Jul)

Capt Gordon H. Moore (from 1 Aug)

Maj Harold C. Borth (from 13 Aug)

Maj Eugene Anderson (from 1 Sep)

Capt Thomas J. Belt, Jr. (from 1 Jan 1952)

Capt Frederick V. Osborn (from 6 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company

Capt Gordon H. Moore (to 9 Sep 1951)

2dLt Willie B. Hayter, Jr. (from 10 Sep)

1stLt Henry “H” Best, Jr. (from 7 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Ordnance Supply Company

1stLt Victor F. Brown (to 10 Aug 1951)

Capt Simon W. Vevurka (from 11 Aug)

Capt Thomas J. Belt (from 1 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Ammunition Company

Capt Richard W. Sinclair (to 6 Apr 1951)

Capt Robert C. Holder (from 7 Apr)

Capt David A. Malinsky (from 12 Sep)

Capt Chester D. Brown, Jr. (from 4 Jan 1952)

Capt Cecil B. Smith (from 21 Feb)

Commanding Officer, Ordnance Maintenance Company

Capt George L. Williams (to 15 Aug 1951)

Maj James H. Pierce (from 16 Aug)

1stLt Charles B. Haslam (from 10 Dec)

Capt William E. L. Donner (from 20 Jan 1952)

Capt Dwight H. Sawin, Jr. (from 17 Mar)

1st Service Battalion

Commanding Officer

LtCol Charles L. Banks (to 11 Jan 1951)

Col Gould P. Groves (from 12 Jan)

LtCol Horace E. Knapp (from 27 Mar)

LtCol Woodrow M. Kessler (from 6 Jul)

LtCol Bernard W. McLean (from 3 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj John R. Stone (to 18 Jun 1951)

Capt Victor E. Johnson, Jr. (from 19 Jun)

Maj Louis G. Monville (from 3 Jul)

Maj George E. Allison (from 18 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company

Capt Morse “L” Holladay (to 20 Jan 1951)

1stLt Robert E. Follendorf (from 21 Jan)

1stLt James B. Lichtenberger (from 3 Sep)

1stLt Peter N. Pappas (from 10 Oct)

Capt John E. Welch (from 31 Dec)

1stLt Joseph D. Walker (from 10 Jan 1952)

1stLt Harry H. Saltzman (from 10 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Supply Company

Capt Robert A. Morehead (to 13 Apr 1951)
Capt George K. Reid (from 14 Apr)
Capt Hayward M. Friedrich (from 27 May)
Capt Milton W. Magee (from 6 Jun)
Maj James R. Fury (from 13 Aug)
Capt Warren G. Hopkins (from 26 Dec)
Capt John H. Tomlinson (from 11 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Support Company

Capt Thomas M. Sagar (to 22 Jan 1951)
Capt Morse "L" Holladay (from 23 Jan)
1stLt Victor E. Johnson (from 30 Mar)
Capt Hayward M. Friedrich (from 7 Jun)
1stLt Glenn P. Gasaway (from 2 Jul)
1stLt Robert W. Blum (from 3 Sep)
Capt Robert E. Moyer (from 1 Oct)
1stLt Jack A. Mackenzie (from 13 Nov)
1stLt Carlton R. Appleby (from 21 Dec)
1stLt Barry D. Diamond (from 8 Jan 1952)
Capt Seneker Woll (from 10 Mar)

1st Shore Party Battalion

Commanding Officer

LtCol Henry P. Crowe (to 10 May 1951)
LtCol Horace H. Figuers (from 11 May)
LtCol Harry W. Edwards (from 17 Jul)
LtCol George G. Pafford (from 29 Sep)
LtCol Franklin B. Nihart (from 20 Dec)
LtCol Warren S. Sivertsen (from 9 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer

LtCol Horace H. Figuers (to 10 May 1951)
Maj John G. Dibble (from 11 May)
Maj Frederick F. Draper (from 7 Aug)
Maj Joseph T. Smith, Jr. (from 6 Sep)
Maj Frederick F. Draper (from 7 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Company

Maj James I. Glendinning, Jr. (to 2 Jan 1951)
Maj George A. Smith (from 3 Jan)

Maj Burt A. Lewis (from 19 May)
Maj William T. Miller (from 20 Jun)
1stLt Robert H. During (from 20 Aug)
Maj Edson W. Card (from 29 Aug)
Maj Paul R. Nugent (from 12 Sep)
Capt Quentin H. Kravig (from 19 Jan 1952)

Commanding Officer, Company A
Maj Charles E. Ingram (to 1 Jul 1951)
Maj Orville L. Bibb (from 2 Jul)
Capt Calvin Wall (from 10 Aug)

Commanding Officer, Company B
Maj Henry Brezinski (to 17 Jun 1951)
Capt William A. Reno (from 18 Jun)
Maj Charles E. Ingram (from 3 Jul)
Maj George W. Ellis, Jr. (from 29 Jul)
Capt Francis V. Clifford (from 8 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Company C
Maj Murray F. Rose (to 9 Jun 1951)
Capt Henry J. Jadrich (from 10 Jun)
Maj Burt A. Lewis, Jr. (from 21 Jun)
Maj Edson W. Card (from 4 Aug)
Capt William A. Reno (from 29 Aug)
Maj Edson W. Card (from 8 Sep)
Capt Robert T. Weis (from 12 Dec)

1st Signal Battalion

Commanding Officer
LtCol Robert L. Schreier (to 6 Apr 1951)
Maj Richard A. Glaeser (from 7 Apr)
Maj Alton L. Hicks (from 31 Aug)
LtCol John E. Morris (from 20 Oct)

Executive Officer
Maj Elwyn M. Stimson (to 9 Mar 1951)
Maj Richard A. Glaeser (from 10 Mar)
Capt Marion J. Griffin (from 7 Apr)
Maj Robert W. Nelson (from 20 Apr)
Maj Alton L. Hicks (from 20 Oct)
Maj Ernest C. Bennett (from 12 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company

2dLt Merle W. Allen (to 1 Mar 1951)

1stLt Raymond B. Spicer (from 2 Mar)

2dLt Richard D. Alexander (from 18 Jun)

1stLt Frank J. Cerny (from 16 Aug)

Commanding Officer, Signal Company

Maj Richard A. Glaeser (to 8 Mar 1951)

Capt John H. McGuire (from 9 Mar)

Maj Harold S. Hill (from 17 Aug)

Maj Bolish J. Kozak (from 1 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, ANGLICO

Maj Frederick N. Steinhauser (to 24 Oct 1951)

Maj Walter R. Miller (from 25 Oct)

LtCol Alton L. Hicks (from 13 Feb 1952)

1st Tank Battalion

Commanding Officer

LtCol Harry T. Milne (to 21 Apr 1951)

LtCol Holly H. Evans (from 22 Apr)

Maj Walter E. Reynolds, Jr. (from 9 Feb 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj Philip C. Morell (to 2 Sep 1951)

Maj Walter E. Reynolds, Jr. (from 3 Sep)

Maj Edward C. Nelson, Jr. (from 9 Feb 1952)

Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company

1stLt John B. Lund (to 21 Sep 1951)

Capt Robert S. Grether (from 22 Sep)

1stLt Jack D. Sheldon (from 10 Mar 1952)

Commanding Officer, Service Company

Maj Douglas E. Haberlie (to 3 Jul 1951)

Maj George W. Bubb (from 4 Jul)

Maj Edward C. Nelson (from 27 Dec)

Capt Robt. H. Vogel (from 9 Feb 1952)

Commanding, Officer, Company A

1stLt Robert J. Craig (to 20 Jan 1951)

Maj Arthur M. Hale (from 21 Jan)

Capt Robert M. Krippner (from 31 Mar)

Capt John E. Scanlon (from 17 Apr)

Capt Joseph W. Luker (from 14 Jun)
Capt Robert S. Grether (from 3 Sep)
Capt Albert W. Snell (from 21 Sep)
1stLt William E. Young (from 19 Feb 1952)
Capt Milton L. Raphael (from 10 Mar)

Commanding Officer, Company B
Capt Bruce F. Williams (to 1 Jul 1951)
Capt Paul F. Curtis (from 2 Jul)
Capt John E. Lund (from 2 Oct)
1stLt Paul A. Wood (from 5 Nov)
Capt Jack J. Jackson (from 29 Dec)

Commanding Officer, Company C
Capt Richard M. Taylor (to 5 Aug 1951)
Maj Walter Moore (from 6 Aug)
Capt Thomas W. Clark (From 21 Nov)

Commanding Officer, Company D
Capt Joseph W. Malcolm, Jr. (to 2 Sep 1951)
Capt James L. Carey (from 3 Sep)
Capt Charles A. Sooter (from 28 Nov)

Marine Observation Squadron 6

Commanding Officer
Maj Vincent J. Gottschalk (to 31 Mar 1951)
Capt Clarence W. Parkins (from 1 Apr)
Maj David W. McFarland (from 5 Apr)
Maj Allan H. Ringblom (from 6 Oct)
Maj Edward R. Polgrean (from 1 Nov)
Maj Kenneth G. Smedley (from 1 Feb 1952)
Maj William G. MacLean, Jr. (from 11 Feb)
LtCol William T. Herring (from 27 Feb)

Executive Officer
Capt Andrew L. McVicars (to 13 Jan 1951)
Capt Clarence W. Parkins (from 14 Jan)
Capt Kenneth C. Smedley (from 21 Jul)
Maj William G. MacLean, Jr. (from 21 Nov)

Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron 161

Commanding Officer

LtCol George W. Herring (to 17 Dec 1951)

Col Keith B. McCutcheon (from 18 Dec)

Executive Officer

Maj William P. Mitchell (to 19 Mar 1952)

Maj James R. Dyer (from 20 Mar)

First Marine Aircraft Wing (1st MAW), 1 January 1951-31 March 1952

Commanding General

MajGen Field Harris (to 28 May 1951)

BrigGen Thomas J. Cushman (from 29 May)

MajGen Christian F. Schilt (from 27 Jul)

Asst Commanding General

BrigGen Thomas J. Cushman (to 28 May 1951)

BrigGen William O. Brice (from 29 May)

BrigGen Frank H. Lamson-Scribner (from 29 Sep)

Chief of Staff

Col Caleb T. Bailey (to 18 Aug 1951)

Col Arthur F. Binney (from 19 Aug)

Col Carson A. Roberts (from 2 Jan 1952)

Col Arthur F. Binney (from 26 Mar)

Asst Chief of Staff, G-1

Col Raymond E. Hopper (to 10 Feb 1951)

Col Alexander G. Bunker (from 11 Feb)

LtCol Owen M. Hines (from 1 Nov)

Col Robert O. Bisson (from 27 Feb 1952)

Asst Chief of Staff, G-2

Col Roger T. Carleson (to 18 Feb 1951)

LtCol Winson V. Crockett (from 19 Feb)

Capt John E. Buckle (from 21 Jun)

Capt William G. Redel (from 1 Aug)

LtCol Chester A. Henry, Jr. (from 1 Sep)

LtCol John W. Stage (from 12 Jan 1952)

Asst Chief of Staff, G-3

Col Edward C. Dyer (to 28 Feb 1951)

LtCol Howard A. York (from 1 Mar)

LtCol Neil R. MacIntyre (from 12 Mar)

Col Rivers J. Morrell, Jr. (from 26 Jun)

Col Stanley W. Trachta (from 19 Aug)

Col Rivers J. Morrell, Jr. (from 7 Sep)
Col Guy M. Morrows (from 14 Sep)
Col Stanley W. Trachta (from 21 Jan 1952)

Asst Chief of Staff, G-4

Col Thomas J. Noon (to 14 May 1951)
Col Wallace T. Breakey (from 15 May)
LtCol Carl M. Longley (from 21 Jul)
Col Luther S. Moore (from 5 Sep)
Col Elmer T. Dorsey (from 7 Jan 1952)
Col Robert E. Galer (from 12 Mar)

Marine Aircraft Group 33 (MAG-33)

Commanding Officer

Col Frank G. Dailey (to 29 Dec 1950)
LtCol Radford C. West (from 30 Dec)
LtCol Paul J. Fontana (from 15 Jan 1951)
LtCol Richard A. Beard, Jr. (acting) (from 2 Apr)
Col Guy M. Morrow (from 9 Apr)
Col Carson A. Roberts (from 31 Jul)
Col Arthur F. Binney (from 2 Jan 1952)
Col Martin A. Severson (from 27 Mar)

Executive Officer

LtCol Richard A. Beard, Jr. (to 18 May 1951)
LtCol James B. Moore (from 19 May)
LtCol Nathan T. Post, Jr. (from 14 Jul)
LtCol John W. Stage (from 2 Sep)
LtCol Nathan T. Post, Jr. (from 12 Jan 1952)
LtCol Vernon O. Ullman (from 6 Feb)

Marine Air Base Squadron 33 (MABS-33)

Commanding Officer

LtCol Nathan T. Post (to 10 Jan 1952)
LtCol Finley T. Clarke, Jr. (from 11 Jan)
Maj Frank P. Barker, Jr. (from 27 Mar)

Executive Officer

Maj George K. Harshbarger (to 24 Apr 1952)

Marine Aircraft Maintenance Squadron 33 (MAMS-33)

Commanding Officer

LtCol Joseph W. Kean, Jr. (2 Dec 1951 to 21 Jan 1952)

Maj Zadik Collier (from 22 Jan)

Executive Officer

Maj Alton C. Bennett (to 4 Dec 1951)

Maj Zadik Collier (from 5 Dec)

Maj Alton C. Bennett (from 22 Jan 1952)

Headquarters Squadron 33 (HQSQ, MAG-33)

Commanding Officer

Capt Grover C. McClure, Jr. (to 14 Apr 1951)

Maj William D. Armstrong (from 15 Apr)

Maj Raymond F. Scherer (from 28 Jul)

Maj Morgan C. Webb, III (from 27 Aug)

Capt Allen R. Schutter (from 27 Mar 1952)

Marine Service Squadron 33 (SMS-33)

(SMS disestablished 1 Dec 1951--concurrently, MABS-33 and MAMS-33 formed.)

Commanding Officer

LtCol James C. Lindsay (to 23 Jan 1951)

Maj Edward J. Montagne (from 24 Jan)

Maj William M. Lundin (from 26 Jan)

Maj Elmer P. Thompson, Jr. (from 1 Apr)

LtCol Allen T. Barnum (from 2 Jul)

LtCol Joseph W. Kean, Jr. (from 12 Nov)

Executive Officer

Maj Edward J. Montagne, Jr. (To 13 Mar 1951. No Exec listed after Montagne was detached sometime in March 1951 until July 1951. Thompson came aboard 13 Mar 1951, which may well be date that Montagne was detached as Exec--however, nothing is recorded to this effect.)

Maj Elmer P. Thompson, Jr. (From 2 Jul. It is quite possible and logical that Thompson was Exec from 13 Mar to 2 Apr 1951--when he became CO.)

Maj George K. Harshbarger (from 7 Aug)

Marine Aircraft Group 12 (MAG-12)

Commanding Officer

Col Boeker C. Batterton (to 28 May 1951)

Col Stanley W. Trachta (from 29 May)

Col Richard C. Mangrum (from 1 Aug)

Col Luther S. Moore (from 2 Jan 1952)
Col Elmer T. Dorsey (from 1 Apr)

Executive Officer

LtCol Donald K. Yost (to 24 Feb 1951)
LtCol Rivers J. Morrell, Jr. (from 25 Feb)
LtCol Richard W. Wyczawski (from 26 Jun)
LtCol William G. Thrash (from 18 Jul)
LtCol Hugh M. Elwood (from 8 Aug)
LtCol Jens C. Aggerbeck, Jr. (from 17 Nov)
LtCol Robert J. Hoey (from 27 Feb 1952)

Headquarters Squadron, (HQSQ, MAG–12)

Commanding Officer

Maj John E. Hays (to 31 Dec 1950)
Capt William E. Lesage (from 1 Jan 1951)
Maj Bradley K. Schwarz (from 4 Apr)
Maj David P. John (from 2 Sep)
Capt Joseph E. Givens (from 9 Oct)
Capt George Byers, Jr. (from 1 Feb 1952)

Marine Service Squadron 12 (SMS-12)

(SMS disestablished 1 Dec 1951--concurrently, MABS-12 and MAMS-12 formed and commissioned.)

Commanding Officer

LtCol Charles E. McLean, Jr. (to 28 Jul 1951)
Maj Perry L. Shuman (from 29 Jul)

Executive Officer

Maj Joseph W. Mackin (to 2 Apr 1951)
Maj Howard W. Bollmann (from 3 Apr)
Maj Raphael Ahern (from 8 Aug)
Maj Robert E. Wall (from 3 Oct)

Marine Air Base Squadron 12 (MABS–12)

(Commissioned 1 Dec 1951.)

Commanding Officer

Maj Perry L. Shuman (To 5 Jan 1952. Narrative of Jan 1952 CD MABS-12 states Shuman det 4 Jan 1952 and Bryson on same date took over as CO. Assumption of command order states that 6 Jan 1952 was date Bryson became CO.)

Maj Robert L. Bryson (from 6 Jan)

LtCol Carl M. Longley (from 1 Mar)

Executive Officer

Maj Floyd C. Kirkpatrick (to 18 Dec 1951)

Maj Robert L. Bryson (from 19 Dec)

Maj Floyd C. Kirkpatrick (from 6 Jan 1952)

Maj Robert A. Collett (from 1 Mar)

Marine Aircraft Maintenance Squadron 12 (MAMS–12)

(Commissioned 1 Dec 1951.)

Commanding Officer

Maj Robert E. Wall (to 10 Feb 1952)

LtCol Carl M. Longley (from 11 Feb)

LtCol Joseph A. Gray (from 1 Mar)

Executive Officer

Capt Kenneth A. Anderson (to 26 Dec 1951)

Maj "S" "D" G. Peterson (from 27 Dec)

Maj Robert E. Wall (From Feb/Mar 1952. The dates for Peterson and Wall are from the Station Lists. The diary records nothing--except in the case of Beatty [20 Feb 1952]--that would either prove or disprove these dates as being correct.)

Marine Wing Service Squadron 1 (MWSS–1; decommissioned 1 Jul 1953) and

Marine Wing Service Group 17 (MWSG-17; commissioned 1 Jul 1953)

Commanding Officer

CWO Aubrey D. Taylor (to 23 Jan 1951)

LtCol James C. Lindsay (from 24 Jan)

Col Roger T. Carleson (from 19 Feb)

Col Elmer T. Dorsey (from 9 Sep)

Col John Wehle (from 7 Jan 1952)

Executive Officer

None shown prior to 19 Feb 1951.

LtCol James C. Lindsay (to 16 Jul 1951)

LtCol Alton D. Gould (from 17 Jul)

Maj Edward J. McGee (from 13 Nov)

LtCol Robert M. Haynes (from 2 Dec)

LtCol Birney B. Truitt (from 15 Mar 1952)

Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron 1 (MGCIS-1)

Commanding Officer

Maj Harold E. Allen (to 10 Jun 1951)
LtCol Manual Brilliant (from 11 Jun)
Maj Edward R. Polgrean (from 18 Aug)
LtCol William T. Herring (from 18 Sep)
Maj Milton M. Cook (from 1 Feb 1952)
LtCol Herbert D. Raymond, Jr. (from 16 Feb)
Maj Fred A, Steele (from 28 Mar)

Executive Officer

Maj Richard Hey, Jr. (to 3 Apr 1951)
Maj Casper F. Hegner (from 4 Apr)
Maj Edward R. Polgrean (from 31 Jul)
Maj William T. Porter (from 21 Nov)
Maj Milton M. Cook, Jr. (from 11 Dec)
Maj Marvin R. Bridges, Jr. (from 2 Feb 1952)
Maj Fred A. Steele (from 16 Feb)
Maj Marvin R. Bridges, Jr. (from 28 Mar)

Marine Transport Squadron 152 (VMR-152)

Commanding Officer

Col Deane C. Roberts (to 15 Jul 1951)
LtCol John S. Carter (from 16 Jul)
Col William B. Steiner (from 27 Jul)

Marine Fighter Squadron 212 (VMF-212)

(Redesignated Marine Attack Squadron 212 [VMA-212] on 10 Jun 1952.)

Commanding Officer

LtCol Richard W. Wyczawski (to 9 Mar 1951)
LtCol Claude H. Welch (from 10 Mar)
LtCol Manual Brilliant (from 21 Aug)
LtCol Joseph A. Gray (from 11 Dec)
LtCol Robert L. Bryson (from 1 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj Elmer P. Thompson, Jr. (to 18 Mar 1951)
Maj Edward J. Montagne, Jr. (from 19 Mar)
Maj Joseph W. Mackin (from 13 Apr)
Maj Floyd C. Kirkpatrick (from 16 Jul)
Maj William H. Rankin (from 20 Sep)
Maj Robert A. Collett (from 11 Dec)

Maj Richard B. Elliott (from 23 Feb 1952)

1st 90mm AAA Gun Battalion
(Arrived Pusan, Korea, on 29 Aug 1951.)
Battalion Commander

LtCol Charles W. May (KIA) (to 21 Dec 1951)
LtCol Kenneth P. Dunkle (from 22 Dec)
Col John F. Dunlap (from 30 Jan 1952)
Col Max C. Chapman (from 23 Mar)

Executive Officer

Maj Kenneth P. Dunkle (to 21 Dec 1951)
None shown 22-25 Dec 1951.
Maj David H. Simmons (from 26 Dec)
LtCol Kenneth P. Dunkle (from 30 Jan 1952)

Marine Fighter Squadron 311 (VMF-311)
Commanding Officer

LtCol Neil R. MacIntyre (to 10 Mar 1951)
LtCol John F. Kinney (from 11 Mar)
Maj Frank S. Hoffecker (from 28 Jul)
LtCol James B. Moore (from 1 Aug)
LtCol John S. Payne (from 1 Dec)
LtCol Darrell D. Irwin (from 27 Feb 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj John R. Stack (to 20 Feb 1951)
Maj Samuel Richards, Jr. (from 21 Feb)
Maj Samuel B. Folsom, Jr. (From Apr. The absence of a specific date indicates that no specific date of assignment is shown in unit records.)
Maj Frank S. Hoffecker, Jr. (from 1 Jun) (KIA)
Maj Frank C. Drury (from 25 Aug)
Maj Carroll E. McCullah (from 1 Jan 1952)
Maj Jay E. McDonald (from 16 Feb)

Marine Night-Fighter Squadron 513 (VMF(N)-513)
Commanding Officer

LtCol David C. Wolfe (to 22 Feb 1951)
LtCol James R. Anderson (from 23 Feb)
LtCol Robert R. Davis (from 1 Jul)

LtCol Allen T. Barnum (from 22 Nov)

Maj Frank H. Simonds (from 1 Feb 1952)

LtCol John R. Burnett (from 1 Mar)

Executive Officer

Maj Albert L. Clark (to 18 Dec 1950)

Maj George B. Herlihy (from 19 Dec)

Maj William G. Johnson (From Feb 1951. The absence of specific dates indicates that no specific assignment dates can be found in existing records.)

Maj Evans C. Carlson (from 23 Apr)

Maj John E. Reynolds (from 7 May)

Maj Leo F. Tatro, Jr. (from 25 Aug)

Maj Judson C. Richardson, Jr. (MIA) (from 4 Oct)

Maj Frank H. Simonds (from 14 Dec)

Maj Leroy T. Frey (from 1 Feb 1952)

Maj Frank H. Simonds (from 1 Mar)

Marine Night-Fighter Squadron 542 (VMF(N)-542)

Commanding Officer

LtCol Max J. Volcansek, Jr. (to 5 Feb 1951)

LtCol James R. Anderson (from 6 Feb)

Maj Albert L. Clark (From 23 Feb. VMF(N)-542: At sea bound for United States 12-21 Mar 1951--arrived El Toro on 24 Mar 1951.)

LtCol Peter D. Lambrecht (from 24 Mar)

Executive Officer

Maj Robert T. Whitten (to 23 Jan 1951)

LtCol James R. Anderson (from 24 Jan)

Marine Fighter Squadron 323 (VMF-323)

(Redesignated Marine Attack Squadron 323 [VMA-323] on 30 Jun 1952.)

Commanding Officer

Maj Arnold A. Lund (to 24 Jan 1951)

Maj Stanley S. Nicolay (from 25 Jan)

Maj Donald L. Clark (from 1 Mar)

Maj Charles M. Kunz (from 3 May)

LtCol George F. Vaughan (from 25 Sep)

Maj John L. Dexter (from 26 Oct)

LtCol Richard L. Blume (from 16 Jan 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj Robert E. Johnson (to 31 Jan 1951)
Maj Donald L. Clark (from 1 Feb)
Maj Wilbur F. Evans, Jr. (from 1 Mar)
Maj John L. Dexter (from 7 Jul)
Maj Floyd C. Kirkpatrick (from 25 Oct)
Maj Andrew J. Voyles (from 22 Nov)
Maj Howard E. Cook (from 18 Dec)
Maj Herbert D. Raymond, Jr. (from 13 Jan 1952)
Maj Howard E. Cook (from 14 Feb)
Maj William A. Weir (from 16 Mar)

Marine Air Control Group 2 (MACG-2)
(Arrived in Korea 11 Apr 1951.)
Commanding Officer
LtCol Manual Brilliant (from 10 Apr 1951)
Col Edwin P. Pennebaker, Jr. (from 30 Apr)
Col Martin A. Severson (from 1 Jan 1952)
Col Frederick R. Payne, Jr. (from 1 Mar)
Executive Officer
None shown during period LtCol Brilliant was CO.
LtCol Manual Brilliant (from 30 Apr 1951)
LtCol Joseph W. Kean (from 10 Jun)
LtCol Robert R. Davis (from 4 Dec)
LtCol Russell D. Rupp (from 6 Feb 1952)

Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 2 (MTACS-2)
Commanding Officer
Maj Christian C. Lee (to 30 Apr 1951)
Maj James A. Etheridge (from 1 May)
Maj Milton M. Cook, Jr. (from 6 May)
Maj Wade W. Larkin (from 28 May)
LtCol Henry W. Bransom (from 25 Jun)
LtCol Hensley Williams (from 1 Dec 1951)
Executive Officer
Maj Harlen E. Hood (to Mar/Apr 1951)
Maj James A. Etheridge (From 26 Apr. His date of attachment is vague.)
Maj Wade W. Larkin (from 1 May)
Maj Milton M. Cook, Jr. (from 28 May)

Maj Clinton E. Jones (from 23 Sep)

Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron 3 (MGCIS-3)
Commanding Officer
Maj Raymond H. George (to 15 Feb 1951)
Maj Jack R. Moore (from 16 Feb)
LtCol Hoyle R. Barr (from 1 Nov)
LtCol Owen W. Hines (from 2 Mar 1952)
Executive Officer
Maj David M. Hudson (to 15 Aug 1951)
Maj Daniel L. Cummings (from 16 Aug)
Maj James H. Foster (from 17 Feb 1952)

Marine Attack Squadron 121 (VMA-121)
(Departed El Toro-2 Oct 1951 for Korea; 21 Oct 1951 reported to CG, 1stMAW, for duty; 22 Oct 1951 CO arrived Pohang [K-3], Korea.)
Commanding Officer
LtCol Alfred N. Gordon (KIA) (to 17 Nov 1951)
Maj Frank P. Barker, Jr. (from 18 Nov)
LtCol Phillip B. May (from 1 Dec)
LtCol William A. Houston, Jr. (from 15 Mar 1952)
Executive Officer
Maj Frank P. Barker, Jr. (to 17 Nov 1951)
Maj Edward B. Harrison (from 18 Nov)
Maj Frank P. Barker, Jr. (from 1 Dec)
Maj Edward B. Harrison (from 1 Jan 1952)
Maj Richard J. Flynn, Jr. (from 15 Feb)
Maj Henry W. Horst (from 26 Mar)

Marine Fighter Squadron 214 (VMF-214)
Commanding Officer
Maj William M. Lundin (to 25 Jan 1951)
Maj James A. Feeley, Jr. (from 26 Jan)
Maj Edward Ochoa (from 5 May)
LtCol James W. Poindexter (from 16 May)
Maj Charles M. Kunz (From 4 Nov. VMF-214 departed Korea for Itami on 4 Nov 1951--en route to United States (El Toro) aboard the *Lenawee*, 8-27 Nov 1951.)
Executive Officer

Maj Edward Ochoa (to 31 Jan 1951)
Maj Hugh B. Calahan (from 1 Feb)
Maj Herbert C. Langenfeld (From 1 Jun. Records do not indicate specific date.)

Marine Fighter Squadron 115 (VMF-115)
(Arrived Pohang [K-3], Korea, on 25 Feb 1952.)
Commanding Officer
LtCol Thomas M. Coles (25 Feb-20 May 1952)
Executive Officer
Maj Conrad G. Winter (25 Feb-26 Apr 1952)

Marine Fighter Squadron (VMF-312)
(Redesignated Marine Attack Squadron [VMA-312] on 1 Mar 1952.)
Commanding Officer
LtCol "J" Frank Cole (to 28 Jan 1951)
Maj Donald P. Frame (KIA) (from 29 Jan)
Maj Frank H. Presley (from 4 Apr)
Maj Edward J. McGee (from 20 Jun)
LtCol Harry W. Reed (KIA) (from 22 Jul)
Maj Edward J. McGee (from 31 Jul)
LtCol Russell D. Rupp (from 15 Aug)
LtCol Joe H. McGlothlin, Jr. (from 8 Jan 1952)
Executive Officer
Maj Frank H. Presley (to 3 Apr 1951)
Capt Phillip C. DeLong (from 4 Apr)
Maj Robert J. Shelley, Jr. (from 22 Jun)
Maj Edward J. McGee (from 22 Jul)
Maj Robert J. Shelley, Jr. (from 31 Jul)
Maj Edward J. McGee (from 4 Aug)
Maj James H. Crutchfield (KIA) (from 25 Oct)
Maj Jay W. Hubbard (from 4 Nov)
Maj Richard J. Webster (From 19 Dec. Records do not indicate specific date.)
Maj Fred A. Steele (From Jan 1952. Records do not indicate specific date.)
Maj Alexander S. Walker, Jr. (from 28 Jan)
Maj Edmond P. Hartsock (from 30 Mar)

Photographic Unit
(Commissioned Marine Photographic Squadron 1 [VMJ-1] on 25 Feb 1952.)

Commanding Officer

Maj Donald S. Bush (to 14 Jun 1951)
Maj Edgar L. Smith (from 15 Jun)
Maj James W. Dougherty (from 27 Jul)
Capt Edward A. Fitzgerald (from 29 Oct)
LtCol Alton D. Gould (from 12 Nov)
Maj Robert R. Read (from 26 Mar 1952)

Executive Officer

Maj Robert R. Read (to 25 Mar 1952)
Maj Albert E. James (from 26 Mar)

HQSQ, 1st MAW

Commanding Officer

Capt Earl B. Sumerlin, Jr. (to 12 Jan 1951)
Maj John A. Reeder (from 13 Jan)
Capt Edwin H. McCaleb, III (from 17 Jun)
Maj Herbert C. Langenfeld (from 11 Oct)
Maj Earl C. Miles (from 2 Dec)

The East-Central Front
Lynn Montross, Hubard D. Kuokka and Norman W. Hicks

Appendix D. Unit Citations

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

FIRST MARINE DIVISION, REINFORCED

for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy aggressor forces in Korea during the periods 21 to 26 April, 16 May to 30 June, and 11 to 25 September 1951. Spearheading the first counteroffensive in the spring of 1951, the First Marine Division, Reinforced, engaged the enemy in the mountainous center of Korea in a brilliant series of actions unparalleled in the history of the Marine Corps, destroying and routing hostile forces with an unrelenting drive of seventy miles north from Wonju. During the period 21 to 26 April, the full force of the enemy counteroffensive was met by the Division, north of the Hwachon Reservoir. Although major units flanking the Marine Division were destroyed or driven back by the force of this attack, the Division held firm against the attackers, repelling the onslaught from three directions and preventing the encirclement of the key center of the lines. Following a rapid regrouping of friendly forces in close contact with the enemy, the First Marine Division, Reinforced, was committed into the flanks of the massive enemy penetiation and, from 16 May to 30 June, was locked in violent and crucial battle which resulted in the enemy being driven back to the north with disastrous losses to his forces in the number of killed, wounded and captured. Carrying out a series of devastating assaults, the Division succeeded in reducing the enemy's main fortified complex dominating the 38th Parallel. In the final significant offensive of the action in Korea, from 11 to 25 September 1951, the First Marine Division, Reinforced, completed the destruction of the enemy forces in Eastern Korea by advancing the front against a final desperate enemy defense in the 'Punch Bowl' area in heavy action which completed the liberation of South Korea in this locality. With the enemy's major defenses reduced, his forces on the central front decimated, and the advantage of terrain and the tactical initiative passing to friendly forces, he never again recovered sufficiently to resume the offensive in Korea. The outstanding courage, resourcefulness and aggressive fighting spirit of the officers and men of the First Marine Division, Reinforced, reflect the highest credit upon themselves and the United States Naval Service."

The following reinforcing units of the First Marine Division participated in operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea during the cited periods:

FLEET MARINE FORCE UNITS AND DETACHMENTS: "C" Battery, 1st 4.5 Rocket Battalion; 1st Combat Service Group; 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion; 7th Motor Transport Battalion; 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion; "A" Company, 1st Amphibian Truck Battalion (Redesignated 1st Amphibian Truck Company 18 July 1951); Team #1, 1st Provisional Historical Platoon; 1st Fumigation and Bath Platoon; 1st Air Delivery Platoon; Radio Relay Team, 1st Signal Operations Company; Detachment, 1st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company; 2nd Platoon, Auto Field Maintenance Company; 1st Provisional Truck Company; Detachment, 1st Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company.

UNITED STATES ARMY UNITS: (For such periods not included in Army Unit Awards) 1st Bn, 32d Regt, 7th Inf Div; 7th Inf Div; 74th Truck Co; 513th Truck Co; 1st Ord Medium Maint Co, USA; 3d Plt, 86th Engr Searchlight Co (passed to operational control of 11th Marines); 558th Trans Truck Co (Amphibious, was attached to 7th MT Bn, FMF); 196th Field Arty Bn; 92d Army Engr Searchlight Plt; 181st CIC Det USA; 163d MIS Det

USA; TLO Det USA; UNMACK Civil Affairs Team USA; 61st Engr Co; 159th Field Arty Bn (155 Howitzer); 623d Field Arty Bn; 17th Field Arty Bn “C” Btry; 204th Field Arty Bn “B” Btry; 84th Engr Construction Bn; 1st Bn, 15th US Inf Regt; 1st Bn, 65th US Inf Regt; 1st Bn, 9th Regt, 2d US Div (attached to KPR); Recon Co, 7th US Inf Div; 461st Inf Bn; Heavy Mortars, 7th Inf Div; 204th Field Arty Bn “A” Btry; 69th Field Arty Bn; 64th Field Arty Bn; 8th Field Arty Bn; 90th Field Arty Bn; 21st AAA-AW Bn; 89th Tank Bn; 441st CIC Det, USA; Prov Bn, USA (Dets 31st and 32d RCTS); Co D, 10th Engr (C) Bn, USA; Tank Co, 31st Inf, USA; Hqr Co, 31st Inf, USA; Co B, 1st Bn, 31st Inf, USA; 2d Bn, 31st Inf, USA (less Co E).

For the President,
CHARLES S. THOMAS
Secretary of the Navy

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

FIRST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING, REINFORCED

for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

“For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from 8 March to 30 April, 18 May to 30 June, and 3 August to 29 September 1951. Carrying out ‘round-the-clock’ combat flights during these periods, often under hazardous conditions of weather and terrain, the First Marine Aircraft Wing, Reinforced, provided unparalleled close air support for friendly ground forces, effectively reducing the enemy’s power to resist and contributing materially to the sweeping victories achieved by our ground forces. Operating continuously in the most advanced areas under fire, the Wing consistently maintained a high degree of combat readiness and struck savage blows to inflict tremendous damage and heavy casualties upon the enemy. Individually capable and determined, the gallant officers and men of this indomitable team achieved a distinctive combat record during a period of vital operations against a stubborn foe. This record is a lasting tribute to the courage and fighting spirit of all members of the First Marine Aircraft Wing, Reinforced, and reflects the highest credit upon the United States Naval Service.”

All organic units (excepting Marine Fighting Squadrons 214 and 323 for the periods 8 March to 30 April 1951 and 18 May to 30 June 1951, and Marine Observation Squadron 6 for the entire three periods) and the following reinforcing units of the First Marine Aircraft Wing participated in operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea during one or more of the above cited periods: 1st 90mm Anti-Aircraft Artillery Gun Battalion and Ground Control Approach Unit 41M.

For the President,
CHARLES S. THOMAS

Secretary of the Navy

The East-Central Front
Lynn Montross, Hubard D. Kuokka and Norman W. Hicks

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Operations in West Korea
Pat Meid and James M. Yingling

Foreword

MENTION THE KOREAN WAR and almost immediately it evokes the memory of Marines at Pusan, Inchon, Chosin Reservoir, or the Punchbowl. Americans everywhere remember the Marine Corps' combat readiness, courage, and military skills that were largely responsible for the success of these early operations in 1950-1951. Not as dramatic or well-known are the important accomplishments of the Marines during the latter part of the Korean War.

In March 1952 the 1st Marine Division redeployed from the East-Central front to West Korea. This new sector, nearly 35 miles in length, anchored the far western end of I Corps and was one of the most critical of the entire Eighth Army line. Here the Marines blocked the enemy's goal of penetrating to Seoul, the South Korean capital. Northwest of the Marine Main Line of Resistance, less than five miles distant, lay Panmunjom, site of the sporadic truce negotiations.

Defense of their strategic area exposed the Marines to continuous and deadly Communist probes and limited objective attacks. These bitter and costly contests for key outposts bore such names as Bunker Hill, the Hook, the Nevadas (Carson-Reno-Vegas), and Boulder City. For the ground Marines, supported by 1st Marine Aircraft Wing squadrons, the fighting continued until the last day of the war, 27 July 1953.

The Korean War marked the first real test of Free World solidarity in the face of Communist force. In repulsing this attempted Communist aggression, the United Nations, led by the United States, served notice that it would not hesitate to aid those nations whose freedom and independence were under attack.

As events have subsequently proven, holding the line against Communist encroachment is a battle whose end is not yet in sight. Enemy aggression may explode brazenly upon the world scene, with an overt act of invasion, as it did in Korea in June 1950, or it may take the form of a murderous guerrilla war as it has more recently, for over a decade, in Vietnam.

Whatever guise the enemy of the United States chooses or wherever he draws his battleline, he will find the Marines with their age-old answer. Today, as in the Korean era, Marine Corps readiness and professionalism are prepared to apply the cutting edge against any threat to American security.

--Gen. L. F. Chapman, Jr., USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps

Operations in West Korea
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Preface

THIS IS THE CONCLUDING VOLUME of a five-part series dealing with operations of United States Marines in Korea between 2 August 1950 and 27 July 1953. Volume V provides a definitive account of operations of the 1st Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing during 1952-1953, the final phase of the Korean War. At this time the division operated under Eighth U.S. Army in Korea (EUSAK) control in the far western sector of I Corps, while Marine aviators and squadrons functioned as a component of the Fifth Air Force (FAF).

The period covered by this history begins in March 1952, when the Marine division moved west to occupy positions defending the approaches to Seoul, the South Korean capital. As it had for most of the war the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, operating under FAF, flew close support missions not only for the Marines but for as many as 19 other Allied frontline divisions. Included in the narrative is a detailed account of Marine POWs, a discussion of the new defense mission of Marine units in the immediate postwar period, and an evaluation of Marine Corps contributions to the Korean War.

Marines, both ground and aviation, comprised an integral part of the United Nations Command in Korea. Since this is primarily a Marine Corps history, actions of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force are presented only in sufficient detail to place Marine operations in their proper perspective.

Official Marine Corps combat records form the basis for the book. This primary source material has been further supplemented by comments and interviews from key participants in the action described. More than 180 persons reviewed the draft chapters. Their technical knowledge and advice have been invaluable. Although the full details of these comments could not be used in the text, this material has been placed in Marine Corps archives for possible use by future historians.

The manuscript of this volume was prepared during the tenure of Colonel Frank C. Caldwell, Director of Marine Corps History, Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps. Production was accomplished under the direction of Mr. Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Deputy Director and Chief Historian, who also outlined the volume. Preliminary drafts were written by the late Lynn Montross, prime author of this series, and Major Hubard D. Kuokka. Major James M. Yingling researched and wrote chapters 1-6 and compiled the Command and Staff List. Lieutenant Colonel Pat Meid researched and wrote chapters 7-12, prepared appendices, processed photographs and maps, and did the final editing of the book.

Historical Division staff members, past or present, who freely lent suggestions or provided information include Lieutenant Colonel John J. Cahill, Captain Charles B. Collins, Mr. Ralph W. Donnelly, Mr. Benis M. Frank, Mr. George W. Garand, Mr. Rowland P. Gill, Captain Robert J. Kane, Major Jack K. Ringler, and Major Lloyd E. Tatem. Warrant Officer Dennis Egan was Administrative Officer during the final stages of preparation and production of this book.

The many exacting administrative duties involved in processing the volume from first draft manuscripts through the final printed form, including the formidable task of indexing the book, were handled expertly and cheerfully by Miss Kay P. Sue. Mrs. Frances J. Rubright also furnished gracious and speedy assistance in obtaining the tomes of official Marine Corps records. The maps were prepared by Sergeants Kenneth W. White and Ernest L. Wilson. Official Department of Defense photographs illustrate the book.

A major contribution to the history was made by the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army; the Naval History Division, Department of the Navy; and the Office of Air Force History,

Department of the Air Force. Military history offices of England, Canada, and South Korea provided additional details that add to the accuracy and interest of this concluding volume of the Korean series.

--Col. F. C. Caldwell, USMC (Ret.), Director of Marine Corps History

Operations in West Korea

Pat Meid and James M. Yingling

Chapter 1. Operations in West Korea Begin

From Cairo to JAMESTOWN[1]

DURING THE LATTER PART of March 1952, the 1st Marine Division, a component of the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea (EUSAK), pulled out of its positions astride the Soyang River in east-central Korea and moved to the far western part of the country in the I Corps sector. There the Marines took over the EUSAK left flank, guarding the most likely enemy approaches to the South Korean capital city, Seoul, and improving the ground defense in their sector to comply with the strict requirements which the division commander, Major General John T. Selden, had set down. Except for a brief period in reserve, the Marine division would remain in the Korean front lines until a cease-fire agreement in July 1953 ended active hostilities.

The division CG, Major General Selden,[2] had assumed command of the 25,000-man 1st Marine Division two months earlier, on 11 January, from Major General Gerald C. Thomas while the Marines were still in the eastern X Corps sector. The new Marine commander was a 37-year veteran of Marine Corps service, having enlisted as a private in 1915, serving shortly thereafter in Haiti. During World War I he was commissioned a second lieutenant, in 1918, while on convoy duty. Between the two world wars, his overseas service had included a second assignment to Haiti, two China tours, and sea duty. When the United States entered World War II, Lieutenant Colonel Selden was an intelligence officer aboard the carrier *Lexington.* Later in the war Colonel Selden led the 5th Marines in the New Britain fighting and was Chief of Staff of the 1st Marine Division in the Peleliu campaign. He was promoted to brigadier general in 1948 and received his second star in 1951, prior to his combat assignment in Korea.

American concern in the 1950s for South Korea’s struggle to preserve its independence stemmed from a World War II agreement between the United States, the United Kingdom, and China. In December 1943, the three powers had signed the Cairo Declaration and bound themselves to ensure the freedom of the Korean people, then under the yoke of the Japanese Empire. At the Potsdam Conference, held on the outskirts of Berlin, Germany in July 1945, the United States, China,[3] and Britain renewed their Cairo promise.

When the Soviet Union agreed to join forces against Japan, on 8 August, the USSR also became a party to the Cairo Declaration. According to terms of the Japanese capitulation on 11 August, the Soviets were to accept surrender of the defeated forces north of the 38th Parallel in Korea. South of that line, the commander of the American occupation forces would receive the surrender. The Russians wasted no time and on 12 August had their troops in northern Korea. American combat units, deployed throughout the Pacific, did not enter Korea until 8 September. Then they found the Soviet soldiers so firmly established they even refused to permit U.S. occupation officials from the south to cross over into the Russian sector. A December conference in Moscow led to a Russo–American commission to work out the postwar problems of Korean independence.

Meeting for the first time in March 1946, the commission was short-lived. Its failure, due to lack of Russian cooperation, paved the way for politico-military factions within the country that set up two separate Koreas. In the north the Communists, under Kim Il Sung, and in the south the Korean nationalists, led by Dr. Syngman Rhee, organized independent governments early in 1947. In May of that year, a second joint commission failed to unify the country. As a result the Korean problem was presented to the United Nations (UN). This postwar international agency was no more successful in resolving the differences between the disputing factions. It did, however, recognize the Rhee government in December 1948 as the representative one of the two dissident groups.

In June 1950, the North Koreans attempted to force unification of Korea under Communist control by

crossing the 38th Parallel with seven infantry divisions heavily supported by artillery and tanks. Acting on a resolution presented by the United States, the United Nations responded by declaring the North Korean action a "breach of the peace" and called upon its members to assist the South Koreans in ousting the invaders. Many free countries around the globe offered their aid. In the United States, President Harry S. Truman authorized the use of U.S. air and naval units and, shortly thereafter, ground forces to evict the aggressors and restore the status quo. Under the command of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, then Far East Commander, U.S. Eighth Army occupation troops in Japan embarked to South Korea.

The first combat unit sent from America to Korea was a Marine air-ground team, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, formed at Camp Pendleton, California on 7 July 1950, under Brigadier General Edward A. Craig. The same day the UN Security Council passed a resolution creating the United Nations Command (UNC) which was to exercise operational control over the international military forces rallying to the defense of South Korea. The Council asked the United States to appoint a commander of the UN forces; on the 8th, President Truman named his Far East Commander, General MacArthur, as Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (CinCUNC).

In Korea the Marines soon became known as the firemen of the Pusan Perimeter, for they were shifted from one trouble spot to the next all along the defensive ring around Pusan, the last United Nations stronghold in southeastern Korea during the early days of the fighting. A bold tactical stroke planned for mid-September was designed to relieve enemy pressure on Pusan and weaken the strength of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA). As envisioned by General MacArthur, an amphibious landing at Inchon on the west coast, far to the enemy rear, would threaten the entire North Korean position south of the 38th Parallel. To help effect this coup, the UN Commander directed that the Marine brigade be pulled out of the Pusan area to take part in the landing at Inchon.

MacArthur's assault force consisted of the 1st Marine Division, less one of its three regiments,[4] but including the 1st Korean Marine Corps (KMC) Regiment. Marine ground and aviation units were to assist in retaking Seoul, the South Korean capital, and to cut the supply line sustaining the NKPA divisions.

On 15 September, Marines stormed ashore on three Inchon beaches. Despite difficulties inherent in effecting a landing there,[5] it was an outstandingly successful amphibious assault. The 1st and 5th Marines, with 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (1st MAW) assault squadrons providing close air support, quickly captured the port city of Inchon, Ascom City[6] to the east, and Kimpo Airfield. Advancing eastward the Marines approached the Han River that separates Kimpo Peninsula from the Korean mainland. Crossing this obstacle in amphibian vehicles, 1st Division Marines converged on Seoul from three directions. By 27 September, the Marines had captured the South Korean government complex and, together with the U.S. Army 7th Infantry Division, had severed the enemy's main supply route (MSR) to Pusan. In heavy, close fighting near the city, other United Nations troops pursued and cut off major units of the NKPA.

Ordered back to East Korea, the Marine division re-embarked at Inchon in October and made an administrative landing at Wonsan on the North Korean coast 75 miles above the 38th Parallel. As part of the U.S. X Corps, the 1st Marine Division was to move the 5th and 7th Marines (Reinforced) to the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, from where they were to continue the advance northward toward the North Korean-Manchurian border. The 1st Marines and support troops were to remain in the Wonsan area.

While the bulk of the division moved northward, an unforeseen development was in the making that was to change materially the military situation in Korea overnight. Aware that the North Koreans were on the brink of military disaster, Communist China had decided to enter the fighting. Nine Chinese divisions had been dispatched into the area with the specific mission of destroying the 1st Marine Division.[7] Without prior warning, on the night of 27 November, hordes of Chinese Communist Forces (CCF, or "Chinese People's Volunteers" as they called themselves) assaulted the unsuspecting Marines and nearly succeeding in trapping the two Marine

regiments. The enemy's failure to do so was due to the military discipline and courage displayed by able-bodied and wounded Marines alike, as well as effective support furnished by Marine aviation. Under conditions of great hardship, the division fought its way out over 78 miles of frozen ground from Chosin to the port of Hungnam, where transports stood by to evacuate the weary men and the equipment they had salvaged.

This Chinese offensive had wrested victory from the grasp of General MacArthur just as the successful completion of the campaign seemed assured. In the west, the bulk of the Eighth Army paced its withdrawal with that of the X Corps. The UNC established a major line of defense across the country generally following the 38th Parallel. On Christmas Day, massed Chinese forces crossed the parallel, and within a week the UN positions were bearing the full brunt of the enemy assault. Driving southward, the Communists recaptured Seoul, but by mid-February 1951 the advance had been slowed down, the result of determined Eighth Army stands from a series of successive defensive lines.[8]

Following its evacuation from Hungnam, the 1st Marine Division early in 1951 underwent a brief period of rehabilitation and training in the vicinity of Masan, west of Pusan. From there, the division moved northeast to an area beyond Pohang on the east coast. Under operational control of Eighth Army, the Marines, with the 1st Korean Marine Corps Regiment attached for most of the period, protected 75 miles of a vital supply route from attack by bands of guerrillas. In addition, the Marines conducted patrols to locate, trap, and destroy the enemy. The Pohang guerrilla hunt also provided valuable training for several thousand recently arrived Marine division replacements.

In mid-February the 1st Marine Division was assigned to the U.S. IX Corps, then operating in east-central Korea near Wonju. Initially without the KMCs,[9] the Marine division helped push the corps line across the 38th Parallel into North Korea. On 22 April, the Chinese unleashed a gigantic offensive, which again forced UN troops back into South Korea. By the end of the month, however, the Allies had halted the 40-mile-wide enemy spring offensive.

Once again, in May, the Marine division was assigned to the U.S. X Corps, east of the IX Corps sector. Shortly thereafter the Communists launched another major offensive. Heavy casualties inflicted by UNC forces slowed this new enemy drive. Marine, Army, and Korean troops not only repelled the Chinese onslaught but immediately launched a counteroffensive, routing the enemy back into North Korea until the rough, mountainous terrain and stiffening resistance conspired to slow the Allied advance.

In addition to these combat difficulties, the Marine division began to encounter increasing trouble in obtaining what it considered sufficient and timely close air support (CAS). Most attack and fighter aircraft of the 1st MAW, commanded by Major General Field Harris[10] and operating since the Chosin Reservoir days under Fifth Air Force (FAF), had been employed primarily in a program of interdicting North Korean supply routes. Due to this diversion of Marine air from its primary CAS mission, both the division and wing suffered—the latter by its pilots' limited experience in performing precision CAS sorties. Despite the difficulties, the Marine division drove northward reaching, by 20 June, a grotesque scooped-out terrain feature on the east-central front appropriately dubbed the Punchbowl.

Eighth Army advances into North Korea had caused the enemy to reappraise his military situation. On 23 June, the Russian delegate to the United Nations, Jacob Malik, hinted that the Korean differences might be settled at the conference table. Subsequently, United Nations Command and Communist leaders agreed that truce negotiations would begin on 7 July at Kaesong, located in West Korea immediately south of the 38th Parallel, but under Communist control. The Communists broke off the talks on 22 August. Without offering any credible evidence, they declared that UNC aircraft had violated the neutrality zone surrounding the conference area.[11] Military and political observers then realized that the enemy's overture to peace negotiations had served its intended purpose of permitting him to slow his retreat, regroup his forces, and prepare his ground defenses for a new determined stand.

The lull in military offensive activity during the mid-1951 truce talks presaged the kind of warfare that would soon typify the final phase of the Korean conflict. Before the fighting settled into positional trench warfare reminiscent of World War I, the Marines participated in the final UN offensive. In a bitter struggle, the division hacked its way northward through, over, and around the Punchbowl, and in September 1951 occupied a series of commanding terrain positions that became part of the MINNESOTA Line, the Eighth Army main defensive line. Beginning on the 20th of that month, it became the primary mission of frontline units to organize, construct, and defend positions they held on MINNESOTA. To show good faith at the peace table, the UNC outlawed large-scale attacks against the enemy. Intent upon not appearing the aggressor and determined to keep the door open for future truce negotiations, the United Nations Command in late 1951 decreed a new military policy of limited offensives and an aggressive defense of its line. This change in Allied strategy, due to politico-military considerations, from a moving battle situation to stabilized warfare would affect both the tactics and future of the Korean War.

Even as Allied major tactical offensive operations and the era of fire and maneuver in Korea was passing into oblivion, several innovations were coming into use. One was the Marine Corps employment of helicopters. First used for evacuation of casualties from Pusan in August 1950, the versatile aircraft had also been adopted by the Marine brigade commander, General Craig, as an airborne jeep. On 13 September 1951, Marines made a significant contribution to the military profession when they introduced helicopters for large-scale resupply combat operations. This mission was followed one week later by the first use of helicopters for a combat zone troop lift. These revolutionary air tactics were contemporary with two new Marine Corps developments in ground equipment—body armor and insulated combat boots, which underwent extensive combat testing that summer and fall. The latter were to be especially welcomed for field use during the 1951-1952 winter.

Along the MINNESOTA Line, neither the freezing cold of a Korean winter nor blazing summer heat altered the daily routine. Ground defense operations consisted of dispatching patrols and raiding parties, laying ambushes, and improving the physical defenses. The enemy seemed reluctant to engage UN forces, and on one occasion to draw him into the open, EUSAK ordered Operation CLAM-UP across the entire UN front, beginning 10 February. Under cover of darkness, reserve battalions moved forward; then, during daylight, they pulled back, simulating a withdrawal of the main defenses. At the same time, frontline troops had explicit orders not to fire or even show themselves.[12]

It was hoped that the rearward movement of units from the front line and the subsequent inactivity there would cause the enemy to come out of his trenches to investigate the apparent large-scale withdrawal of UNC troops. Then Marine and other EUSAK troops could open fire and inflict maximum casualties from covered positions. On the fifth day of the operation, CLAM-UP was ended. The North Koreans were lured out of their defenses, but not in the numbers expected. CLAM-UP was the last action in the X Corps sector for the 1st Marine Division, which would begin its cross-country relocation the following month. (See Map 1.)
Click here to view map

Code-named Operation MIXMASTER, the transfer of the 1st Marine Division began on 17 March when major infantry units began to move out of their eastern X Corps positions, after their relief on line by the 8th Republic of Korea (ROK) Division. Regiments of the Marine division relocated in the following order: the 1st KMCs, 1st, 7th, and 5th Marines. The division's artillery regiment, the 11th Marines, made the shift by battalions at two-day intervals. In the motor march to West Korea, Marine units traveled approximately 140 miles over narrow, mountainous, and frequently mud-clogged primitive roads. Day and night, division transport augmented by a motor transport battalion attached from Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (FMFPac) and one company from the 1st Combat Service Group (CSG) rolled through rain, snow, sleet, and occasional good weather.

Marines employed 5,800 truck and DUKW (amphibious truck) loads to move most of the division personnel, gear, and supplies. Sixty-three flatbed trailers, 83 railroad cars, 14 landing ships, 2 transport aircraft,

the vehicles of 4 Army truck companies, as well as hundreds of smaller jeep trailers and jeeps were utilized. The division estimated that these carriers moved about 50,000 tons of equipment and vehicles,[13] with some of the support units making as many as a dozen round trips. The MIXMASTER move was made primarily by truck and by ship[14] or rail for units with heavy vehicles.

Impressive as these figures are, they almost pall in significance compared with the meticulous planning and precision logistics required by the week-long move. It was made, without mishap, over main routes that supplied nearly a dozen other divisions on the EUSAK line and thus had to be executed so as not to interfere with combat support. Although the transfer of the 1st Marine Division from the eastern to western front was the longest transplacement of any EUSAK division, MIXMASTER was a complicated tactical maneuver that involved realignment of UNC divisions across the entire Korean front. Some 200,000 men and their combat equipment had to be relocated as part of a master plan to strengthen the Allied front and deploy more troops on line.

Upon its arrival in West Korea, the 1st Marine Division was under orders to relieve the 1st ROK Division and take over a sector at the extreme left of the Eighth Army line, under I Corps control, where the weaknesses of Kimpo Peninsula defenses had been of considerable concern to EUSAK and its commander, General James A. Van Fleet. As division units reached their new sector, they moved to locations pre-selected in accordance with their assigned mission. The first Marine unit into the I Corps main defensive position, the JAMESTOWN Line, was the 1st KMC Regiment attached to the division, with its organic artillery battalion. The KMCs, as well as 1/11, began to move into their new positions on 18 March. At 1400 on 20 March, the Korean Marines completed the relief of the 15th Republic of Korea Regiment in the left sector of the MLR (main line of resistance). Next into the division line, occupying the right regimental sector adjacent to the 1st Commonwealth Division, was Colonel Sidney S. Wade's 1st Marines with three battalions forward and 2/5 attached as the regimental reserve. Relief of the 1st ROK Division was completed on the night of 24-25 March. At 0400 on 25 March the Commanding General, 1st Marine Division assumed responsibility for the defense of 32 miles of the JAMESTOWN Line. That same date the remainder of the Marine artillery battalions also relocated in their new positions.

As the division took over its new I Corps mission on 25 March, the Marine commander had one regiment of the 1st ROK Division attached as division reserve while his 5th Marines was still in the east. Operational plans originally had called for the 5th Marines, less a battalion, to locate in the Kimpo Peninsula area where it was anticipated Marine reserve units would be able to conduct extensive amphibious training. So overextended was the assigned battlefront position that General Selden realized this regiment would also be needed to man the line. He quickly alerted the 5th Marines commanding officer, Colonel Thomas A. Culhane, Jr., to deploy his regiment, then en route to western Korea, to take over a section of the JAMESTOWN front line instead of assuming reserve positions at Kimpo as originally assigned. General Selden believed that putting another regiment on the main line was essential to carrying out the division's mission, to aggressively *defend* JAMESTOWN Line, not merely to *delay* a Communist advance.

Only a few hours after the 5th Marines had begun its trans-Korea move, helicopters picked up Colonel Culhane, his battalion commanders, and key regimental staff officers and flew them to the relocated division command post (CP) in the west. Here, on 26 March, the regimental commander officially received the change in the 5th Marines mission. Following this briefing, 5th Marines officers reconnoitered the newly assigned area[15] while awaiting the arrival of their units. When the regiment arrived on the 28th, plans had been completed for it to relieve a part of the thinly-held 1st Marines line. On 29 March, the 5th Marines took over the center regimental sector while the 1st Marines, on the right regimental flank, compressed its ranks for a more solid defense.

Frontline units, from the west, were the 1st KMCs, the 5th, and 1st Marines. To the rear, the 7th Marines, designated as division reserve, together with organic and attached units of the division, had established an extensive support and supply area. As a temporary measure, a battalion of the division reserve, 2/7, was detached

for defense of the Kimpo Peninsula pending a reorganization of forces in this area. Major logistical facilities were the division airhead, located at K-16 airfield, just southwest of Seoul, and the railhead at Munsan-ni, 25 miles northwest of the capital city and about five miles to the rear of the division sector at its nearest point. Forward of the 1st Marine Division line, outposts were established to enhance the division's security. In the rear area the support facilities, secondary defense lines, and unit command posts kept pace with development of defensive installations on the MLR. Throughout the 1st Marine Division sector outpost security, field fortifications, and the ground defense net were thorough and intended to deny the enemy access to Seoul.

Operations in West Korea
Pat Meid and James M. Yingling

Chapter 1. Operations in West Korea Begin
The Marines' Home in Western Korea[16]

In western Korea, the home of the 1st Marine Division lay in a particularly significant area. (See Map 2.) Within the Marine boundaries ran the route that invaders through the ages had used in their drive south to Seoul. It was the 1st Marine Division's mission to block any such future attempts. One of the reasons for moving the Marines to the west[17] was that the terrain there had to be held at all costs; land in the east, mountainous and less valuable, could better be sacrificed if a partial withdrawal in Korea became necessary. At the end of March 1952, the division main line of resistance stretched across difficult terrain for more than 30 miles, from Kimpo to the British Commonwealth sector on the east, a frontage far in excess of the textbook concept.
Click here to view map

Although Seoul was not actually within the area of Marine Corps responsibility, the capital city was only 33 air miles south of the right limiting point of the division MLR and 26 miles southeast of the left. The port of Inchon lay but 19 air miles south of the western end of the division sector. Kaesong, the original site of the truce negotiations, was 13 miles northwest of the nearest part of the 1st Marine Division frontline while Panmunjom was less than 5 miles away and within the area of Marine forward outpost security. From the far northeastern end of the JAMESTOWN Line, which roughly paralleled the Imjin River, distances were correspondingly lengthened: Inchon, thus being 39 miles southwest and Kaesong, about 17 miles west.

The area to which the Marines had moved was situated in the western coastal lowlands and highlands area of northwestern South Korea. On the left flank, the division MLR hooked around the northwest tip of the Kimpo Peninsula, moved east across the high ground overlooking the Han River, and bent around the northeast cap of the peninsula. At a point opposite the mouth of the Kongnung River, the MLR traversed the Han to the mainland, proceeding north alongside that river to its confluence with the Imjin. Crossing north over the Imjin, JAMESTOWN followed the high ground on the east bank of the Sachon River for nearly two miles to where the river valley widened. There the MLR turned abruptly to the northeast and generally pursued that direction to the end of the Marine sector, meandering frequently, however, to take advantage of key terrain. Approximately 2½ miles west of the 1st Commonwealth Division boundary, the JAMESTOWN Line intersected the 38th Parallel near the tiny village of Madam-ni.

Within the Marine division sector to the north of Seoul lay the junction of two major rivers, the Imjin and the Han, and a portion of the broad fertile valley fed by the latter. Flowing into the division area from the east, the Imjin River snaked its way southwestward to the rear of JAMESTOWN. At the northeastern tip of the Kimpo Peninsula, the Imjin joined the Han. The latter there changed its course from south to west, flowed past Kimpo and neighboring Kanghwa-do Island, and emptied eventually into the Yellow Sea. At the far western end of the division sector the Yom River formed a natural boundary, separating Kanghwa and Kimpo, as it ran into the Han River and south to the Yellow Sea. To the east, the Sachon River streamed into the Imjin, while the Kongnung emptied into the Han where the MLR crossed from the mainland to Kimpo.

In addition, two north-south oriented rivers flanked enemy positions opposite the Marines and emptied into major rivers in the Marine sector. Northwest of Kimpo, the Yesong River ran south to the Han; far to the northeast, just beyond the March 1952 division right boundary, the Samichon River flowed into the Imjin.

Although the rivers in the Marine division were navigable, they were little used for supply or transportation. The railroads, too, were considered secondary ways, for there was but one line, which ran north out of Seoul to Munsan-ni and then continued towards Kaesong. Below the division railhead, located at Munsan-

ni, a spur cut off to Ascom City. Roads, the chief means of surface transport, were numerous but lacked sufficient width and durability for supporting heavy military traffic. Within the sector occupied by the Marines, the main route generally paralleled the railroad. Most of the existing roads south of JAMESTOWN eventually found their way to the logistic center at Munsan-ni. Immediately across the Imjin, the road net was more dense but not of any better construction.

From the logistical point of view, the Imjin River was a critical factor. Spanning it and connecting the division forward and rear support areas in March 1952 were only three bridges, which were vulnerable to river flooding conditions and possible enemy attack. Besides intersecting the Marine sector, the Imjin formed a barrier to the rear of much of the division MLR, thereby increasing the difficulty of normal defense and resupply operations.

When the Marines moved to the west, the winter was just ending. It had begun in November and was characterized by frequent light snowfalls but otherwise generally clear skies. Snow and wind storms seldom occurred in western Korea. From November to March the mean daily minimum Fahrenheit readings ranged from 15° to 30° above zero. The mean daily maximums during the summer were between the upper 70s and mid-80s. Extensive cloud cover, fog, and heavy rains were frequent during the summer season. Hot weather periods were also characterized by occasional severe winds. Spring and fall were moderate transitional seasons.

Steep-sided hills and mountains, which sloped abruptly into narrow valleys pierced by many of the rivers and larger streams, predominated the terrain in the I Corps sector where the Marines located. The most rugged terrain was to the rear of the JAMESTOWN Line; six miles northeast of the Munsan-ni railhead was a 1,948-foot mountain, far higher than any other elevation on the Marine or Chinese MLR but lower than the rear area peaks supporting the Communist defenses. Ground cover in the division sector consisted of grass, scrub brush, and, occasionally, small trees. Rice fields crowded the valley floors. Mud flats were prevalent in many areas immediately adjacent to the larger rivers which intersected the division territory or virtually paralleled the east and western boundaries of the Marine sector.

The transfer from the Punchbowl in the east to western Korea thus resulted in a distinct change of scene for the Marines, who went from a rugged mountainous area to comparatively level terrain. Instead of facing a line held by predominantly North Korean forces the division was now confronted by the Chinese Communists. The Marines also went from a front that had been characterized by lively patrol action to one that in March 1952 was relatively dormant. With the arrival of the 1st Marine Division, this critical I Corps sector would witness sharply renewed activity and become a focal point of action in the UNC line.

Operations in West Korea
Pat Meid and James M. Yingling

Chapter 1. Operations in West Korea Begin
Organization of the 1st Marine Division Area[18]

"To defend" were the key words in the 1st Marine Division mission —"to organize, occupy, and actively defend its sector of Line JAMESTOWN"—in West Korea. General Selden's force to prevent enemy penetration of JAMESTOWN numbered 1,364 Marine officers, 24,846 enlisted Marines, 1,100 naval personnel, and 4,400 Koreans of the attached 1st KMC Regiment. The division also had operational control of several I Corps reinforcing artillery units in its sector. On 31 March, another major infantry unit, the Kimpo Provisional Regiment (KPR) was organized. The division then assumed responsibility for the Kimpo Peninsula defense on the west flank with this Marine-Korean force.

A major reason for transfer of the 1st Marine Division to the west, it will be remembered, had been the weakness of the Kimpo defense. Several units, the 5th KMC Battalion, the Marine 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion, and the 13th ROK Security Battalion (less one company), had been charged with the protection of the peninsula. Their operations, although coordinated by I Corps, were conducted independently. The fixed nature of the Kimpo defenses provided for neither a reserve maneuver element to help repel any enemy action that might develop nor a single commander to coordinate the operations of the defending units.

These weaknesses become more critical in consideration of the type of facilities at Kimpo and their proximity to the South Korean Capital. Seoul lay just east of the base of Kimpo Peninsula, separated from it only by the Han River. Located on Kimpo was the key port of Inchon and two other vital installations, the logistical complex at Ascom City and the Kimpo Airfield (K-14). All of these facilities were indispensable to the United Nations Command.

To improve the security of Kimpo and provide a cohesive, integrated defense line, CG, 1st Marine Division formed the independent commands into the Kimpo Provisional Regiment. Colonel Edward M. Staab, Jr., was named the first KPR commander. His small headquarters functioned in a tactical capacity only without major administrative duties. The detachments that comprised the KPR upon its formation were:

Headquarters and Service Company, with regimental and company headquarters and a communication platoon;

1st Armored Amphibian Battalion, as supporting artillery;

5th KMC Battalion;

13th ROK Security Battalion (–);

One battalion from the reserve regiment of the 1st Marine Division (2/7), as the maneuver element;

Company A, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion;

Company B, 1st Shore Party Battalion, as engineers;

Company D, 1st Medical Battalion;

Reconnaissance Company (–), 1st Marine Division;

Detachment, Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO), 1st Signal Battalion;

Detachment, 181st Counterintelligence Corps Unit, USA;

Detachment, 61st Engineer Searchlight Company, USA; and the

163rd Military Intelligence Service Detachment, USA.

The Kimpo Regiment, in addition to maintaining security of the division left flank, was assigned the mission to protect supporting and communication installations in that sector against airborne or ground attack."[19] Within the division, both the artillery regiment and the motor transport battalion were to be prepared

to support tactical operations of Colonel Staab's organization.

For defense purposes, the KPR commander divided the peninsula into three sectors. The northern one was manned by the KMC battalion, which occupied commanding terrain and organized the area for defense. The southern part was defended by the ROK Army battalion, charged specifically with protection of the Kimpo Airfield and containment of any attempted enemy attack from the north. Both forces provided for the security of supply and communication installations within their areas. The western sector, held by the amphibian tractor company, less two platoons, had the mission of screening traffic along the east bank of the Yom River, that flanked the western part of the peninsula. Providing flexibility to the defense plan was the maneuver unit, the battalion assigned from the 1st Marine Division reserve.

The unit adjacent to the KPR[20] in the division line in late March was the 1st Korean Marine Corps Regiment, which had been the first division unit to deploy along JAMESTOWN. The KMC Regiment, command by Colonel Kim Dong Ha,[21] had assumed responsibility for its portion of JAMESTOWN at 0400 on 20 March with orders to organize and defend its sector. The regiment placed two battalions, the 3d and 1st, on the MLR and the 2d in the rear. Holding down the regimental right of the sector was the 1st Battalion, which had shared its eastern boundary with that of Colonel Wade's 1st Marines until 29 March when the 5th Marines was emplaced on the MLR between the 1st KMC and 1st Marines.

The 1st Marines regimental right boundary, which on the MLR was 1,100 yards north of the 38th Parallel, separated the 1st Marine Division area from the western end of the 1st Commonwealth Division, then held by the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade. In late March, Colonel Wade's 2/1 (Lieutenant Colonel Thell H. Fisher) and 3/1 (Lieutenant Colonel Spencer H. Pratt) manned the frontline positions while 1/1 (Lieutenant Colonel John H. Papurca), less Company A, was in reserve. The regiment was committed to the defense of its part of the division area and improvement of its ground positions. In the division center sector Colonel Culhane's 1/5 (Lieutenant Colonel Franklin B. Nihart) and 3/5 (Lieutenant Colonel William S. McLaughlin) manned the left and right battalion MLR positions, with 2/5 (Lieutenant Colonel William H. Cushing) in reserve. The latter unit was to be prepared either to relieve the MLR battalions or for use as a counterattack force.

It did not take the Marines long to discover the existence of serious flaws in the area defense which made it questionable whether the Allied line here could have successfully withstood an enemy attack. While his Marine units were effecting their relief of JAMESTOWN, Colonel Wade noted that "field fortifications were practically nonexistent in some sections."[22] General Selden later pointed out that "populated villages existed between opposing lines. Farmers were cultivating their fields in full view of both forces. Traffic across the river was brisk."[23] A member of the division staff reported that there was "even a school operating in one area ahead of the Marine lines."[24] In addition to these indications of sector weakness, there was still another. Although the ROK division had placed three regiments in the line, when the two Marine regiments relieved them there were then more men on JAMESTOWN due to the greater personnel strength of a Marine regiment. Nevertheless, the division commander was still appalled at the width of the defense sector assigned to so few Marines.

At division level, the reserve mission was filled by Colonel Russell E. Honsowetz', 7th Marines, minus 2/7 (Lieutenant Colonel Noel C. Gregory), which on 30 March became the maneuver force for the Kimpo Regiment. As the division reserve, the regiment was to be prepared to assume at any time either a defensive or offensive mission of any of the frontline regiments. In addition, the reserve regiment was to draw up counterattack plans, protect the division rear, improve secondary line defenses, and conduct training, including tank-infantry coordination, for units in reserve. The 7th Marines, with 3/7 (Lieutenant Colonel Houston Stiff) on the left and 1/7 (Lieutenant Colonel George W. E. Daughtry) on the right, was emplaced in the vicinity of the secondary defense lines, WYOMING and KANSAS, to the rear of the 5th and 1st Marines.

Another regiment located in the rear area was the 11th Marines. Its artillery battalions had begun displacement on 17 March and completed their move by 25 March. Early on the 26th, the 11th Marines resumed

support of the 1st Marine Division. While the Marine artillery had been en route, U.S. Army artillery from I Corps supported the division. With the arrival on the 29th of the administrative rear echelon, the Marine artillery regiment was fully positioned in the west.

For Colonel Frederick P. Henderson, who became the division artillery commander on 27 March, operational problems in western Korea differed somewhat from those experienced in the east by his predecessor, Colonel Bruce T. Hemphill. The most critical difficulty, however, was the same situation that confronted General Selden—the vast amount of ground to be covered and defended, and the insufficient number of units to accomplish this mission. To the artillery, the wide division front resulted in spreading the available fire support dangerously thin. Placement of 11th Marines units to best support the MLR regiments created wide gaps between each artillery battalion, caused communication and resupply difficulties, prevented a maximum massing of fires, and made redeployment difficult.[25]

In making use of all available fire support, the artillery regiment had to guard not only against the duplication of effort in planning or delivery of fires, but also against firing in the Panmunjom peace corridor restricted areas, located near the sector held by the Marine division's center regiment. Moreover, the artillerymen had to maintain a flexibility sufficient to place the weight of available fire support on call into any zone of action.

Other difficulties were more directly associated with the nature of the sector rather than with its broad expanse. The positioning of the division in the west, although close to the coast, put the Marines beyond the range of protective naval gunfire. The sparse and inadequate road net further aggravated the tactical and logistical problems caused by wide separation of units. Finally, the cannoneers had exceptionally heavy demands placed on them due to the restricted amount of close air support allocated to frontline troops under operational procedures employed by Fifth Air Force. This command had jurisdiction over the entire Korean air defense system, including Marine squadrons.

Manning the main line of resistance also frequently presented perplexing situations to the infantry. There had been little time for a thorough reconnaissance and selection of positions by any of the frontline regiments. When the 1st Marines moved into its assigned position on the MLR, the troops soon discovered many minefields, "some marked, some poorly marked, and some not marked at all."[26] Uncharted mines caused the regiment to suffer "some casualties the first night of our move and more the second and third days."[27] As it was to turn out, during the first weeks in the I Corps sector, mines of all types caused 50 percent of total Marine casualties.

A heavy drain on the limited manpower of Marine infantry regiments defending JAMESTOWN was caused by the need to occupy an additional position, an outpost line of resistance (OPLR). This defensive line to the front of the Marine MLR provided additional security against the enemy, but decreased the strength of the regimental reserve battalion, which furnished the OPLR troops. The outposts manned by the Marines consisted of a series of strongpoints built largely around commanding terrain features that screened the 1st Marine Division area. The OPLR across the division front was, on the average, about 2,500 yards forward of the MLR. (See Map 3.)

Click here to view map

To the rear of the main line were two secondary defensive lines, WYOMING and KANSAS. Both had been established before the Marines arrived and both required considerable work, primarily construction of bunkers and weapons emplacements, to meet General Selden's strict requirement for a strong defensive sector. Work in improving the lines, exercises in rapid battalion tactical deployment by helicopter, and actual manning of the lines were among the many tasks assigned to the division reserve regiment.

Rear and frontline units alike found that new regulations affected combat operations with the enemy in West Korea. These restrictions were a result of the truce talks that had taken place first at Kaesong and, later, at Panmunjom. In line with agreements reached in October 1951:

"Panmunjom was designated as the center of a circular neutral zone of a 1,000 yard radius, and a three

mile radius around Munsan and Kaesong was also neutralized, as well as two hundred meters on either side of the Kaesong-Munsan road."[28]

To prevent the occurrence of any hostile act within this sanctuary, Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel, I Corps commander, ordered that an additional area, forward of the OPLR, be set aside. This megaphone-shaped zone "could not be fired into, out of, or over."[29] It was adjacent to the OPLR in the division center regimental sector, near its left boundary, and took a generally northwest course. Marines reported that the Communists knew of this restricted zone and frequently used it for assembly areas and artillery emplacements.

Operations in West Korea
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Chapter 1. Operations in West Korea Begin
The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing[30]

When the 1st Marine Division moved to western Korea in March 1952, the two 1st Marine Aircraft Wing units that had been in direct support of the ground Marines also relocated. Marine Observation Squadron 6 (VMO–6) and Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron 161 (HMR–161) completed their displacements by 24 March from their eastern airfield (X–83) to sites in the vicinity of the new division CP. HMR–161, headed by Colonel Keith B. McCutcheon, set up headquarters at A–17,[31] on a hillside 3 ½ miles southeast of Munsan-ni, the division railhead, "using a couple of rice paddies as our L. Z. (Landing Zone)."[32] The squadron rear echelon, including the machine shops, was maintained at A–33, near Ascom City. About 2 ½ miles south of the helicopter forward site was an old landing strip, A–9, which Lieutenant Colonel William T. Herring's observation squadron used as home field for its fixed and rotary wing aircraft. (For location of 1st MAW units see Map 4.) In West Korea, VMO–6 and HMR–161 continued to provide air transport for tactical and logistical missions. Both squadrons were under operational control of the division, but administered by the wing.
Click here to view map

Commanding General of the 1st MAW, since 27 July 1951, was Major General Christian F. Schilt,[33] a Marine airman who had brought to Korea a vast amount of experience as a flying officer. Entering the Marine Corps in June 1917, he had served as an enlisted man with the 1st Marine Aeronautical Company in the Azores during World War I. Commissioned in 1919, he served in a variety of training and overseas naval air assignments. As a first lieutenant in Nicaragua, he had been awarded the Medal of Honor in 1928 for his bravery and "almost superhuman skill" in flying out Marines wounded at Quilali.[34] During World War II, General Schilt had served as 1st MAW Assistant Chief of Staff, at Guadalcanal, was later CO of Marine Aircraft Group 11, and participated in the consolidation of the Southern Solomons and air defense of Peleliu and Okinawa.

As in past months, the majority of General Schilt's Marine aircraft in Korea during March 1952 continued to be under operational control of Fifth Air Force. In turn, FAF was the largest subordinate command of Far East Air Forces (FEAF), headquartered at Tokyo. The latter was the U.S. Air Force component of the Far East Command and encompassed all USAF installations in the Far East. The FAF–EUSAK Joint Operations Center (JOC) at Seoul coordinated and controlled all Allied air operations in Korea. Marine fighter and attack squadrons were employed by FAF to:

"Maintain air superiority.

"Furnish close support for ground units.

"Provide escort [for attack aircraft].

"Conduct day and night reconnaissance and fulfill requests.

"Effect the complete interdiction of North Korean and Chinese Communist forces and other military targets that have an immediate effect upon the current tactical situation."[35]

Squadrons carrying out these assignments were attached to Marine Aircraft Groups (MAGs) 12 and 33. Commanded by Colonel Luther S. Moore, MAG–12 and its two day attack squadrons (VMF–212 and VMF–323) in March 1952 was still located in eastern Korea (K–18, Kangnung). The Marine night-fighters of VMF(N) –513 were also here as part of the MAG–12 group. Farther removed from the immediate battlefront was Colonel Martin A. Severson's MAG–33, located at K–3 (Pohang), with its two powerful jet fighter squadrons (VMFs–115 and –311) and an attack squadron (VMA–121). A new MAG–33 unit was Marine Photographic Squadron 1 (VMJ–1), just formed in February 1952 and commanded by Major Robert R. Read.

In addition to its land-based squadrons, one 1st MAW unit was assigned to Commander, West Coast Blockading and Patrol Group, designated Commander, Task Group 95.1 (CTG 95.1). He in turn assigned this Marine unit to Commander, Task Element 95.11 (CTE 95.11), whose ships comprised the West Coast Carrier Element. Marine Attack Squadron 312 (VMA–312) was at this time assigned to CTE 95.11. In late March squadron aircraft were based on the escort carrier USS *Bairoko* but transferred on 21 April to the light carrier *Bataan.*[36] Operating normally with a complement of 21 F4U–4 propeller-driven Corsair aircraft, VMA–312 had the following missions:

"To conduct armed air reconnaissance of the West Coast of Korea from the United Nations front lines northward to latitude 39°/15' N.

"Attack enemy shipping and destroy mines.

"Maintain surveillance of enemy airfields in the Haeju-Chinnampo region.[37]

"Provide air spot services to naval units on request.

"Provide close air support and armed air reconnaissance services as requested by Joint Operations Center, Korea (JOC KOREA).

"Conduct air strikes against coastal and inland targets of opportunity at discretion.

"Be prepared to provide combat air patrol to friendly naval forces operating off the West Coast of Korea.

"Render SAR [search and rescue] assistance."

Because they were under operational control of Fifth Air Force, 1st MAW flying squadrons, except those assigned to CTG 95.1 and 1st Marine Division control, did not change their dispositions in March. Plans were under way at this time, however, to relocate one of the aircraft groups, MAG–12, to the west.

On 30 March the ground element of the night-fighters redeployed from its east coast home field to K–8 (Kunsan), on the west coast, 105 miles south of Seoul. Lieutenant Colonel John R. Burnett's VMF (N)–513 completed this relocation by 11 April without loss of a single day of flight operations. On 20 April the rest of MAG-12,[38] newly commanded since the first of the month by Colonel Elmer T. Dorsey, moved to K-6 (Pyongtaek), located 30 miles directly south of the South Korean capital.

Marine aircraft support units were also located at K–3 and at Itami Air Force Base, on Honshu, Japan. Under direct 1st MAW control were four ground-type logistical support units with MAG–33, a Provisional Automatic Weapons Battery from Marine Air Control Group 2 (MACG–2), and most of wing headquarters. This last unit, commanded by Colonel Frederick R. Payne, Jr., included the 1st 90mm AAA Gun Battalion (based at Pusan and led by Colonel Max C. Chapman), and a detachment of Marine Transport Squadron 152 (VMR–152), which had seven Douglas four-engine R5D transports. This element and the wing service squadron were based at Itami.

Marines, and others flying in western Korea, found themselves restricted much as Marines on the ground were. One limitation resulted from a FAF–EUSAK agreement in November 1951 limiting the number of daily close air support sorties across the entire Eighth Army line. This policy had restricted air activity along the 155-mile Korean front to 96 sorties per day. The curtailment seriously interfered with the Marine type of close air support teamwork evolved during World War II, and its execution had an adverse effect on Marine ground operations as well. A second restriction, also detrimental to Marine division and wing efficiency, was the prohibitive cushion Fifth Air Force had placed around the United Nations peace corridor area north of the Marine MLR. This buffer no-fly, no-fire zone which had been added to prevent violation of the UN sanctuary by stray hits did not apply, of course, to the Communists.

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The Enemy[39]

Directly beyond the 1st Marine Division sector, to the west and north, were two first-rate units of the Chinese Communist Forces, the 65th and 63d CCF Armies. Together, they totaled approximately 49,800 troops in late March 1952. Opposite the west and center of the Marine division front was the 65th CCF Army, with elements of the 193d Division across from the KPR and the 194th Division holding positions opposing the KMC regiment. Across from the Marine line in the center was the 195th Division of the 65th CCF Army, which had placed two regiments forward. North of the division right sector lay the 188th Division, 63d CCF Army, also with two regiments forward. The estimated 15 infantry battalions facing the Marine division were supported by 10 organic artillery battalions, numbering 106 guns, and varying in caliber from 75 to 155mm.[40] In addition, intelligence reported that the 1st CCF Armored Division and an unidentified airborne brigade were located near enough to aid enemy operations.

Chinese infantry units were not only solidly entrenched across their front line opposite the Marine division but were also in depth. Their successive defensive lines, protected by minefields, wire, and other obstacles, were supported by artillery and had been, as a result of activities in recent months, supplied sufficiently to conduct continuous operations. Not only were enemy ground units well-supplied, but their CCF soldiers were well disciplined and well led. Their morale was officially evaluated as ranging from good to excellent. In all, the CCF was a determined adversary of considerable ability, with their greatest strength being in plentiful combat manpower.

Air opposition to Marine pilots in Korea was of unknown quantity and only on occasion did the caliber of enemy pilots approach that of the Americans. Pilots reported that their Chinese counterparts generally lacked overall combat proficiency, but that at times their “aggressiveness, sheer weight of numbers, and utter disregard for losses have counterbalanced any apparent deficiencies.”[41] The Communists had built their offensive potential around the Russian MIG–15 jet fighter-interceptor. Use of this aircraft for ground support or ground attack was believed to be in the training stage only. The Chinese had also based their air defense on the same MIG plus various types of ground antiaircraft (AA) weapons, particularly the mobile 37mm automatic weapons and machine guns that protected their main supply routes. In use of these ground AA weapons, enemy forces north of the 38th Parallel had become most proficient. Their defense system against UNC planes had been steadily built up and improved since stabilization of the battle lines in 1951, and by March 1952 was reaching a formidable state.

As the more favorable weather for ground combat approached toward the end of March, the CCF was well prepared to continue and expand its operations. Enemy soldiers were considered able to defend their sector easily with infantry and support units. Division intelligence also reported that Chinese ground troops had the capability for launching limited objective attacks to improve their observation of Marine MLR rear areas.

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Initial CCF Attack[42]

Whether by intent or default, the Chinese infantry occupying the enemy forward positions did not interfere with the Marine relief. With assumption of sector responsibility by the division early on 25 March, the initial enemy contact came from Chinese supporting weapons. Later that day the two division frontline regiments, the 1st and 5th Marines, received 189 mortar and artillery shells in their sectors which wounded 10 Marines. One man in the 1st Marines was killed by sniper fire on 25 March; in the same regiment, another Marine was fatally wounded the following day. Forward of the lines, the day after the division took over, there was no ground action by either side.

During the rest of the month, the tempo of activities on both sides increased. Marines began regular patrol actions to probe and ambush the enemy. Division artillery increased its number of observed missions by the end of the month. By this time the CCF had also begun to probe the lines of the Marine regimental sectors. In these ground actions to reconnoiter and test division defenses, the Chinese became increasingly bold, with the most activity on 28 March. Between 25-31 March, the first week on JAMESTOWN, some 100 Chinese engaged in 5 different probing actions. Most of these were against the 1st KMC Regiment on the left flank of the division MLR.

It was no wonder that the Chinese concentrated their effort against the Korean Marines, for they held the area containing Freedom Gate, the best of the three bridges spanning the Imjin. Both of the other two, X-Ray and Widgeon, were further east in the division sector. If the enemy could exploit a weak point in the KMC lines, he could attack in strength, capture the bridge, and turn the division left flank, after which he would have a direct route to Seoul.[43] Without the bridge in the KMC sector, the division would be hard pressed, even with helicopter lift, to maneuver or maintain the regiments north of the Imjin.

On 1 April, at about 2130, the CCF began pounding the front-line companies in the KMC area with an artillery preparation. A half hour later, the enemy attacked an outpost and the main line. First to engage the Chinese were the OPLR troops of the KMC 1st Company, 1st Battalion, on the regimental right. There, a Chinese company forced an opening between friendly outposts and reached a point about 200 yards short of the MLR and just north of a road leading to the main bridge over the Imjin. While this attack was in progress, another CCF company hit the outpost line further south. This attack, less successful, ended far short of the MLR and about a half-mile south of the bridge road. Both enemy companies withdrew at about 2345.

To the left of the 1st Battalion, the 3d was receiving the brunt of this initial CCF attack. The 9th, 11th, and 10th Companies (deployed in that order from west to east, in the left battalion sector), had been engaged by the same preliminary 30-minute shelling. At 2200, when four CCF squads attacked the two companies on the left, an enemy company hit the left end of the 10th Company, occupied by the 2d Platoon. About midnight the South Koreans, under fire from both flanks and under heavy frontal assault, were forced to withdraw. In the rear, the company commander pulled the 1st Platoon from the line, ordered the 3d to extend left to cover both sectors, and led a counterattack with the 1st Platoon and elements of the 2d. Positions were quickly restored by the KMC action.

Soon after it had hurled the Chinese back across the OPLR, the 1st Battalion was subjected to a second attack. An enemy unit, estimated to be a company, engaged a 1st Company platoon briefly. When the KMCs returned heavy defensive fires, the Communists pulled back but struck again at 0300. After a 20-minute fire fight, the Chinese company retreated.

This action on 1–2 April cost the attackers 2 killed, 34 estimated killed, and 10 estimated wounded. For the KMC, casualties were 2 killed, 10 wounded. To all 1st Division Marines, the successful defense by the 1st KMC regimental Marines was heartening. It had preserved not only the division western flank but also the vital link over the Imjin.

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Subsequent CCF Attacks[44]

Following his attempted assault against the KMC regiment, the enemy opposite the 1st Marine Division reverted to a passive defense. Except for a probe late on 2 April of the far eastern line held by Lieutenant Colonel Pratt's 3/1 and two patrols that scouted MLR positions in the western Korean Marine area that same date, Communist offensive measures consisted largely of artillery and mortar fire. Chinese line units appeared to concentrate on improving their dugouts and trench systems. Marines reported frequent sightings of enemy groups working in and around their forward trenches.

Marine division troops, too, were busy fortifying their defensive positions. On the Kimpo Peninsula they dug gun emplacements and erected camp facilities for the newly activated Kimpo Provisional Regiment. North of the Han, mine clearance and construction of trenchworks and fortifications was the order of the day for most Marines. Other Marines patrolled forward of the lines as a major aspect of the division's continuous active defense. During daylight hours, MLR regiments dispatched reconnaissance and combat patrols and sent out snipers, armed with telescope-equipped M–1 rifles. Division tanks firing from temporary gun slots on the main line and artillery batteries emplaced in rear area dugouts hammered away at enemy positions and disposed of his patrols. At night, harassing and interdicting (H&I) artillery fires and infantry raids continued to keep the Communists off-balance.

A combat raid on 5 April typified the extensive Marine division night activities forward of the line. Conducted by three platoons, less a squad, of the KMC 10th Company, the raiding party had the mission of capturing prisoners. Departing the MLR at 2300, the Korean Marines worked their way over the low ground and then crossed the Sachon River. Immediately thereafter the raid leader, who was the 10th Company commander (First Lieutenant No Won Keun) dispatched two squad-sized ambushes along the patrol route. The raiders then continued northwest toward their objective, an area near the village of Tonggang-ni, a half mile beyond the river. When about 50 yards from its objective, the patrol ran into tactical wire and an enemy sentry, who alerted his unit by rifle fire. The KMC raiders opened up and called in pre-planned mortar and artillery support. The CCF defenders replied immediately with rifles and machine gun fire.

To complete the maneuver, the patrol leader positioned his machine guns to fire on the Communist flanks and directed one platoon to prepare for a frontal assault on the defenders. At 0148, the 1st Platoon attacked from the right. A minute later the 2d Platoon charged headlong at the defenders. Hand-to-hand fighting followed until the Chinese broke contact and disappeared into bunkers within the trenchline. From inside, the CCF soldiers continued the battle, firing through gun revetments and wounding several KMC pursuers in the legs. After 30 minutes had passed, the South Korean assault troops observed enemy reinforcements moving in from the northwest. At 0230, the Marine patrol withdrew under the cover of artillery, reaching its battalion MLR at 0400. The raiders brought back seven civilians found in the area and several Russian-made carbines. At the cost of 2 killed and 18 wounded, the KMCs inflicted casualties totaling 12 counted killed and 25 estimated wounded.

Other division patrols similarly took into custody civilians living between the MLR and OPLR. It was also the job of these patrols to destroy buildings that the enemy had used. On the night of 5 April, 5th Marines patrols apprehended 34 civilians, and a wounded enemy soldier. The day before, a patrol from 2/1 had also captured a Chinese soldier.

On 12 and 13 April, the enemy stepped up his ground actions. He launched two probes against the 5th Marines occupying the center regimental sector. Both attempts were beaten back. The 1st Marines on the extreme

right flank encountered little hostile activity, but in the western KMC sector, Chinese shelling increased noticeably. The following day the artillery picked up again, accompanied by several infantry probes directed against the two KMC frontline battalions. To the right, the Chinese also tested 5th Marines lines again. On the far right, in the area held by the 1st Marines, an air alert was sounded from 0410 to 0726, but no enemy aircraft appeared. By mid-month, the Chinese were dispatching fewer infantry probes but firing a greater number of artillery and mortar shells toward the division line. The enemy even sent 25 rounds to Kimpo, where a total of only 4 had fallen during the first two weeks in April.

Ushering in the second half of April was another Communist attack, this one on 15–16 April and to be the last that month against the central part of the Marine Division sector. This attempt to breach the Marine lines was directed against Company E of 2/5, manning an outpost position on the OPLR. The rest of the battalion was now holding the left sector of the center regimental front, having assumed its new mission on line three days earlier in relief of 1/5, which reverted to the role of regimental reserve. Northwest of the 5th Marines MLR, the Company E commander, Captain Charles C. Matthews, had placed a reinforced rifle platoon. His Marines had occupied several dug-in positions near the top of a 400-foot hill, known as Outpost 3 (OP 3). (See Map 5.) The platoon had been improving this outpost area and fortifications so that the bunkers could be employed for living and fighting.[45] During the afternoon and again at dusk on 15 April the Communists had shelled this location. One Marine was wounded in the second firing.

Click here to view map

At 2330 on 15 April, Company E reported that a green flare cluster had just burst over Hill 67, approximately 1,900 yards southwest of OP 3 and just beyond the OPLR. This signal triggered a 20-minute heavy enemy preparation of 76mm artillery and 120mm mortars on the friendly outpost and its supporting mortar position. Ten minutes before midnight, another green flare exploded over the same height, and the shelling stopped. After five minutes the signal reappeared. Immediately thereafter, the Chinese shifted their artillery and mortar fire to an area west of the OP 3 mortar site and north of a Company F observation post. At the same time, the enemy attacked Outpost 3.

Initially, the Chinese struck the Marine defenses in a frontal assault, but as the fighting progressed enemy forces quickly enveloped the outpost and charged it simultaneously from three sides. The vastly outnumbered Marine defenders withdrew into a tight perimeter at the southeastern corner of the outpost where their defending firepower prevented the enemy from seizing the position. Within 15 minutes the enemy had surrounded the Marines and severed the outpost communications, but could not take the outpost. The CCF soldiers then pulled back and let their artillery soften OP 3 while they regrouped for another assault. The Chinese soon stormed the outpost a second time, but were again unsuccessful. Moreover, they lost three of their men who were captured by the tenacious 2/5 defenders.

The fighting continued until 0315, reaching a hand-to-hand clash at one stage. In addition to mortar and artillery fire, the enemy employed small arms, automatic weapons, hand and stick-type grenades, bangalore torpedoes, and 57mm recoilless rifles. During the attack, patrols were sent out from the MLR and OP 2, to the west, to reestablish contact and help with casualty evacuation.

Well to the rear of the outpost and unknown to its occupants, intelligence personnel intercepted a Chinese message ordering the Communists to withdraw. Immediately, friendly artillery fired on all known escape routes available to the attackers. Despite this interdicting fire, the enemy soldiers managed to withdraw without further loss. Their unsuccessful thrust against the 2/5 OPLR cost the Chinese 25 known killed, 25 estimated killed, 45 known wounded, and 3 prisoners. Marine casualties were 6 killed, 5 missing, and 25 wounded and evacuated.[46]

Why the Chinese had selected OP 3 for their mid-April attack is not known. Several theories, however, have been advanced by those involved in the action. Colonel Culhane, the regimental commander, believed that the enemy incursion “was the direct result of the aggressive patrols that frequently used the outpost as a point of

departure. . . .” [47] Brigadier General Merrill B. Twining, the assistant division commander since 22 March, declared that the position was too large for a reinforced platoon to hold.[48] Perhaps the Chinese had harbored the same thoughts before the night of 15–16 April.

Just before its OPLR was withdrawn in favor of an observation line, the 1st Korean Regiment was struck by the Chinese in the area immediately north of the 1–2 April clash. Beginning at 0100 on 17 April, the enemy placed a 15-minute preparatory fire on the left flank of the 3d Battalion, occupying the regimental right sector. The CCF then probed friendly lines in and around the area pounded during the preliminary fires. Three separate attacks took place before 0400, when the Communists withdrew. In these probes, the Chinese made free use of automatic weapons; the enemy’s well-coordinated action attested to their training and discipline. Confirmed casualties were 36 CCF and 2 Koreans killed. The KMCs suffered 5 wounded and estimated that 70 Chinese had been wounded. Although the South Koreans frequently called down artillery support during the attack, most of the casualties inflicted on the enemy were from rifle and machine gun fire. The 17 April probe was to mark the last major infantry action for the 1st Marine Division during its second month on JAMESTOWN.

Throughout the month a total of 5,000 rounds of artillery fire and 3,786 rounds of mortar fire fell in the division sector. On 2 April the greatest volume for any single day was received: 3,000 artillery and 118 mortar rounds. An average day’s incoming, during April, was approximately 167 artillery and 125 mortar rounds.

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Strengthening the Line[49]

Even before the Communists had launched their mid-April attacks against JAMESTOWN, the 1st Marine Division had implemented plans to strengthen its line in western Korea. Besides the digging, timbering, and sandbagging to accomplish a major improvement of the physical defenses, General Selden required Marine infantry regiments to conduct an aggressive defense of their sector of responsibility. He ordered MLR units to employ snipers all along JAMESTOWN and to dispatch daily patrols forward of the line to ambush, raid, kill, or capture Chinese and their positions. The division commander further directed that supporting arms such as artillery, tank, and air, when available, be used to destroy hostile defenses, harass the enemy, and break up his assemblies as well as to protect Marine positions.

As a result of an I Corps directive, the 1st Marine Division assumed responsibility for an additional 6,800 yards of front on 14 April from the 1st Commonwealth Division sector to the right of the division. In preparation, the 5th Marines had taken over the western end of the 1st Marines sector, held by 2/1, two days earlier. On the 14th the 1st Marines, newly commanded by Colonel Walter N. Flournoy,[50] extended its line eastward to assume new limiting points and part of the MLR in the western part of the Canadian Brigade sector. Relief of the Commonwealth unit was completed without any difficulty or enemy interference. This additional yardage, plus the Kimpo Peninsula front, now stretched the Marine division MLR to 35 ½ miles.

As a result, General Selden found it necessary to withdraw the division general outpost line in order to build up his main line of resistance. On 17 April, the 1st KMC Regiment reduced its OPLR to an OPLO (outpost line of observation) and the left battalion pulled its MLR back to more defensible ground. The Marine division center and right regiments withdrew their outpost lines on 23 and 24 April. Both regiments then established forward outposts and listening posts which, in many cases, utilized former OPLR positions. Many of these posts were manned during daylight hours only.

Abandonment of the forward OPLR added strength to the main line, but it also meant that frontline battalions had to commit all their companies on line, thus losing their reserve. To prevent Chinese occupation of desirable terrain features on the former OPLR, the division dispatched combat and reconnaissance patrols forward of its line. In the KMC sector, the only Marine area favorable for tank operations forward of JAMESTOWN, tank-infantry patrols were periodically employed.

To the west of the KMC sector, the Marine 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Michiel Dobervich) was assigned a section of the KANSAS Line to defend, beginning 16 April. Reinforced by attachment of the Division Reconnaissance Company (Major Ephraim Kirby-Smith) that same day, Lieutenant Colonel Dobervich employed Company C (two platoons), the headquarters LVT platoon, and the reconnaissance unit to man 30 defensive positions from the Han River eastward to the KMC western boundary.[51]

Two other measures to strengthen his sector of JAMESTOWN were utilized by the Marine division commander. On 18 April, he asked General O'Daniel to reconsider the no-fire zone recently established by the corps commander. General Selden, who had received reports of Chinese use of the sanctuary located within Marine Corps territory—for firing positions and assembly areas primarily—recommended, after I Corps had refused him permission to fire into the haven, a redrawing of the O'Daniel line to coincide more closely with the boundaries established by the UN. Approval along the lines submitted by the division was given by I Corps that same day. The second measure employed by General Selden was use of an additional defensive line, WYOMING FORWARD. This position, closely paralleling JAMESTOWN in the KMC and 5th Marines sectors, added depth

to the sector defenses.

A unique rescue and recovery operation also came into existence about this time. On 19 April the division ordered the 5th Marines, occupying the center regimental sector, to organize a tank-infantry force for rescue of the United Nations Truce Team, should such action become necessary. The regimental plan, published on 22 April, utilized a reinforced rifle company-tank company organization directly supported by organic 5th Marines 4.2-inch mortars and 1/11. The Everready Rescue Force, from the regimental reserve, occupied the high ground (OP 2) east of and dominating Panmunjom.

In addition to setting forth organizational details of the task unit, the 5th Marines Operational Plan 6–52 specified the method of operation for the rescue force. Taking advantage of the peace corridor in the western end of the center sector, a Forward Covering Force would speed tank-riding infantry to the high ground one-half mile beyond the objective, Panmunjon. Following would be the Pick Up Force, from the 1st Tank Battalion Headquarters Platoon, which would retrieve the principal UN delegates and take them quickly to the assembly area two miles to the rear of the MLR. A Rear Covering Force, composed of a tank-infantry element, would follow the Pick-Up force both on its way towards the objective and on the return trip. Withdrawal of both covering forces was regulated by a series of phase lines.

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Marine Air Operations[52]

Even though the Marine air-ground team had been shorn of much of its tactical aviation, what remained was well utilized. Helicopter troop operations had become commonplace by the end of April 1952. That month there were three exercises to further evaluate tactical concepts of helicopter employment. Operation PRONTO, conducted on 5 April, was the first major troop lift in the new I Corps sector. In this maneuver approximately 670 troops of 2/7 and 10,000 pounds of rations were transported by helicopter and truck from the Munsan-ni vicinity across the Han River to the Kimpo Peninsula. Here the reserve battalion served as a counterattack force in a hypothetical enemy landing. Due to the necessity for avoiding the neutrality zone in the Munsan area, round-trip flights averaged about 57 miles.

The exercise combined the shortest notice and longest distance of any large-scale helicopter troop movement conducted by HMR–161. It pointed to the fact that a helicopter unit could successfully lift a troop organization virtually as an “on call” tactical tool and without the benefit of previous liaison.

Operation LEAPFROG, on 18–19 April, transported one KMC battalion across the Han to the peninsula and lifted out another the following day. The purpose of this test was to determine the feasibility of a replacement movement conducted over water, with “consideration given to the language barrier existing between the troops and the transporting facility.”[53] The six-mile round trip was the shortest troop haul yet made by the transport chopper squadron. Consequently, it took the 12 HRS–1 single-engine Sikorsky aircraft only 3 hours and 26 minutes to complete the exchange of the 1,702 KMC troops.

Colonel McCutcheon’s HMR–161 pilots found that their helicopters could carry six combat-equipped Korean Marines instead of five American Marines, due to the smaller size and weight of the average Korean. Since the U.S. and KMC Marine battalions were the same size, the larger load factor for the Korean Marines enabled their unit to be moved faster. In LEAPFROG the language difference proved to be no handicap, since there were sufficient interpreters on hand and the troops were cooperative. Helicopter pilots could use landing sites close together because the terrain was open and the area of operations beyond the reach of Chinese artillery.

Close on the heels of LEAPFROG came a third airlift. Operation CIRCUS, conducted on 23 April, provided for the air deployment of the 7th Marines reserve regiment, minus two battalions, across the Imjin to landing sites just to the rear of the secondary defensive line, WYOMING FORWARD. Ten helicopters carried 1,185 Marines over the river barrier to blocking positions in 90 minutes. The CIRCUS exercise illustrated that a minimum distance should be maintained between loading and unloading sites for a safe and efficient transport operation. It also pointed up that “consideration must be given to the number of aircraft assigned to each traffic pattern during short hops over a river.”[54] This successful maneuver came three days before all HRS-1 aircraft were grounded due to a defect in the tail rotors. By mid-May the problem had been corrected and the aircraft returned to flying status.

During April, Lieutenant Colonel Herring’s VMO–6 employed its 11 single-engine OE–1 observation planes for a total of 508 fixed-wing combat flights. More than half of these, 275, were for artillery spotting; of the remainder, 166 were flown for reconnaissance and 67 represented photo, weather, liaison, and area check-out maneuvers. Combat flights by the squadron helicopters[55] during the month were 110 liaison, 45 reconnaissance, and 93 evacuations. Of the total 756 combat flights performed by both fixed-wing and rotary craft, 511 were over enemy territory.

During that same month, Marine squadrons operating under the Fifth Air Force put a total of 2,708

planes into the air despite restrictive or prohibitive weather on 20 days. Continuing its emphasis on attacking the North Korean transportation system, the Air Force command dispatched 1,397 Marine planes on interdiction missions. Marine-piloted close air support sorties flown to assist the 1st Marine Division numbered only 56 throughout April; those piloted by Marines for 16 other UN divisions totaled 547.

Not all the air sortie records were made by land-based Marine squadrons. On 18 April, VMA–312, the CTE 95.11 squadron provided by the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, flew 80 sorties, a Korean record for a carrier-based squadron to that date and twice the daily average for the initial six months of 1952.

By 20 April the three tactical squadrons of MAG–12—VMF(N)–513, VMF–212, and VMF–323—had completed their relocations on the Korean west coast. Two days later, combined MAG–12 attack and -33 jet aircraft participated in what was a Fifth Air Force one-day combat record: 1,049 sorties.

One MAG–33 unit, the newly-formed Marine Photographic Squadron 1, was already flying a large number of aerial reconnaissance missions directed by Fifth Air Force. It provided almost one-third of the daylight photo effort required by FAF with but one-quarter of the aircraft.[56] VMJ-I's complement of a dozen 550 mph McDonnell twin-jet Banshee F2H-2P aircraft mounted three cameras and were capable both of high altitude work and good speed. Introduction of this single-seat jet was considered the "first important development in aerial photography in the Korean War"[57] since the Banshee could outproduce any photo plane in Korea.

The month of April also marked change of command ceremonies for the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. On 11 April at K–3, General Schilt turned over wing responsibility to Brigadier General Clayton C. Jerome. Among the numerous civilian and military dignitaries attending the ceremony at the Pohang 1st MAW headquarters were the Honorable John J. Muccio, U.S. Ambassador to Korea; Air Force Lieutenant Generals Otto P. Weyland and Frank F. Everest, commanders of FEAF and FAF respectively; and the Marine division CG, Major General Selden.

The new wing commander, General Jerome, like his predecessor, had a distinguished flight career. A 1922 graduate of the Naval Academy, he had served in various foreign and U.S. aviation billets and was a veteran of five World War II campaigns. In 1943 Colonel Jerome was operations officer for Commander, Aircraft, Solomon Islands. Later he was named Chief of Staff, Commander, Aircraft, Northern Solomons and Commander, Aircraft and Island Commander, Emirau, in the northern Solomons. Before returning to the States, Colonel Jerome had participated in the recapture of the Philippines, commanding MAG–32 and directing all Marine air support in the Luzon fighting. Brigadier General Jerome became Director of Aviation and Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps for Air in September 1950 and served in this capacity until taking command of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in Korea.[58]

During the command ceremonies the outgoing 1st MAW commander, General Schilt, was presented the Distinguished Service Medal for his outstanding leadership of the wing. The award was made by Lieutenant General Weyland. Shortly before his Korean tour ended, General Schilt had also received from ROK President Syngman Rhee the Order of Military Merit Taiguk, for his contribution to the military defense of South Korea.

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Supporting the Division and the Wing[59]

Because of the command relationships existing in Korea, with all ground units under operational control of CG, EUSAK, the majority of the logistical support to the Marines was handled by the Army. Eighth Army, 2d Logistical Command (2d LogCom) provided for resupply of items used commonly by both Marine and Army personnel; the Marine Corps (Commanding General, FMFPac) furnished those supplies and equipment used by Marine units only.

When the division moved to the west, the 1st Shore Party Battalion opened a rear service area at Ascom City. Here the division established and maintained Class II (organizational equipment) and IV (special equipment) dumps for its units, as well as Class I (rations) and III (petroleum products) facilities for both the Kimpo regiment and the service units stationed at Ascom. Class I shipments were forwarded to the Munsan-ni railhead and stored there. Fuels and lubricants and Class V items (ordnance) were received from the U.S. Army. A forward ammunition supply point (ASP) was located north of the Imjin to assure a steady flow of ammunition to frontline combat units in the event that either an enemy attack or emergency flooding conditions of the river prevented use of the bridges. For the same reason a truck company was positioned near this supply point each night.

Reinforcing the division logistic effort was the 1st Combat Service Group. Commanded by Colonel Russell N. Jordahl, the 1st CSG in late April had nearly 1,400 Marines and Navy medical personnel stationed at various points between Japan and Korea. At Kobe, Japan, the Support Company processed Marine drafts arriving and departing Korea. At Masan, the Supply Company, 1st CSG, requisitioned for the division those Class II and IV items peculiar to the Marine Corps needs and forwarded them upon request. Heavy maintenance of all technical equipment was performed by the Maintenance Company. Supporting the 1st Motor Transport Battalion operation was the Motor Transport Company, 1st CSG. Most of the group, including Headquarters Company, was based at Masan.[60] Splinter detachments from the group also operated transport facilities at other locations in Korea.

In western Korea, good rail transport into Munsan-ni and an adequate but not all-weather road system improved the division's logistical situation. Greater storage facilities also existed in the JAMESTOWN rear supply areas than in the X Corps sector just vacated by the Marines. Division motor equipment did not suffer any appreciable damage due to the rigors of the MIXMASTER transplacement. Vehicle maintenance also presented a favorable outlook, due to the expected decreased use during the period of positional warfare. On the other hand, an unduly large number of tanks developed engine troubles in March, which were traced back to defective oil cooling fans. This condition was corrected in April and May by installation of new fan assemblies.

Guns of the 1st Tank Battalion immediately began to render valuable support to Marine frontline regiments with the division's new assignment in the west. Companies A, B, and C were placed in direct support of the three forward infantry regiments. Company D drew the reserve mission, which included tank-infantry training with the 7th Marines and preparation for reinforcing division artillery fires. Tank companies were used almost daily in the forward sectors for destruction by direct fire of the Chinese MLR fortifications. For such missions the M–46 tanks, equipped with high-velocity 90mm guns, lumbered forward from secure assembly areas to the rear of JAMESTOWN to temporary firing positions on the line.

After pouring direct fire on preselected targets and completion of the fire mission, the armored vehicles then returned to the rear. Less frequently, a five-vehicle tank platoon accompanied a reinforced rifle platoon and conducted daylight reconnaissance missions of forward areas to engage the Chinese and to gain intelligence about

enemy positions and terrain. During April six such tank-infantry patrols, all in the KMC regimental area, failed to establish direct contact with the enemy but did draw mortar and artillery fire.

Marine artillery, which had been receiving its share of attention from Communist field guns,[61] was faced by problems in two other respects. Although the enemy held only four more artillery weapons than did the Marines, General Selden still lacked the ability to mass artillery fires to the same degree as did the Chinese.[62] This limitation stemmed directly from the wide physical separation of 11th Marines batteries and the frontline infantry regiments being supported. A second problem, the loss of qualified forward observers—reserve officers due to return to the States for release from active service—forced the 11th Marines to begin a school to train infantry officers for this function. To make the course realistic, all firing was done at live targets.[63]

In April 1952, the 11th Marines organization had three light 105mm howitzer battalions (54 guns), one medium 155mm howitzer battalion (12 guns), the KMC 105mm howitzer battalion (18 pieces), and a 4.5-inch rocket battery (6 launchers). Attached to the 1st Marine Division and located in its sector were one battalion and one battery of the I Corps field artillery. The mission of the Marine artillery regiment was to provide accurate and timely fires in support of both the MLR and OPLR defenses, until withdrawal of the latter late in April. Batteries of the 11th Marines also fired on known and suspected Chinese gun emplacements and on targets of opportunity. The regiment also provided intelligence on enemy artillery.

Throughout April, Colonel Henderson's units continued to improve their tactical and administrative areas, concentrating on field fortifications, wire communications, and road trafficability. In the last category, the artillery dozers and dump trucks not only did nearly all of this work for the 11th Marines but also provided "a fair amount of 'direct support' bulldozing to the infantry regiments and occasionally loaned dozers and operators to the engineers." [64]

Within a Marine aircraft wing, personnel and equipment for logistic support are purposely limited to carrying out the wing primary mission—providing air support during an amphibious operation. The wing T/O (Table of Organization) provides a streamlined organization with light, transportable organic equipment. Additional logistical support personnel and equipment are not included since this would result in (1) a duplication of support effort between the wing and landing force and (2) a great increase in wing transport shipping requirements. When the wing moves ashore, organic units render support necessary for operations on the airfield only. Responsibility for activities beyond this basic mission—airfield construction, maintenance of runways, and movement of supplies to the airfield—must come from more senior commands. Usually such assistance is obtained by attaching elements of a naval construction battalion and other logistical support units.

In April 1952, Naval Construction Battalion Unit 1804 assisted in the construction and maintenance received by MAG–33 at K–3. Here at the port of Pohang, a detachment from the 1st Combat Service Group controlled the movement of fuels, oils, lubricants, and ordnance to wing dumps. Amphibian tractors (LVTs) of Company B, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, provided most of the transportation required for these supplies excepting ordnance. Assistance in the form of amphibious trucks (DUKWs) was furnished by a platoon from the 1st Amphibian Truck Company. When required, Marines of these two companies manhandled the supplies.

Logistical support for the Marine wing was governed by the same general procedures that applied to the division; 1st MAW supply requirements beyond its augmented capability became the responsibility of Eighth Army (2d LogCom) which furnished items common to both Marine and Army units. If this EUSAK agency did not stock the requisitioned item, it provided a substitute. Responsibility for resupply of aviation items rested with the U.S. Navy. Commander, Naval Forces, Far East (ComNavFE) replaced unserviceable aviation technical equipment such as aircraft parts and special maintenance tools. Commander, Service Force, Pacific (ComServPac) replenished aviation ordnance. Responsibility for supplying items peculiar to the Marine Corps rested with CG, FMFPac.

The repair and maintenance of 1st MAW equipment posed far less of a problem than the construction and

upkeep of airfields. Major repair work on aircraft was satisfactorily performed in Japan by the wing support squadron at Itami, and by the U.S. Navy Fleet Air Service Squadron 11 (FASRon–11), located at the Naval Air Station, Atsugi. The establishment in Japan of the wing heavy maintenance facility depended, in part, upon its proximity to the wing flying squadrons. Other considerations were the availability to the wing commander of adequate air transport for continuous resupply of both routine and emergency items and reliable communications between the users and the maintenance unit. Because these conditions favoring removal of the heavy maintenance facility from the immediate combat area existed throughout Korean hostilities, it was possible for the maintenance units to operate successfully in Japan away from the combat zone.

Air base construction and maintenance of airfield runways and taxiways had plagued wing operations since the early days of the Korean War. During the first winter these problems had appeared repeatedly at those installations where Marine air was either not properly supported or insufficiently augmented by the operational commander. Shortly after MAG–33 had moved to K–3 in early 1951, the wing commander requested emergency repairs for the runway and a permanent solution to the airfield maintenance difficulties. Assistance was made available, but it was insufficient. The repair force had to be augmented by Marines pulled away from their own vital jobs and by native laborers. Later, in the spring of 1952, when the Air Force assigned some of its engineers to assist, the maintenance problem almost disappeared.

Motor transport within the wing was a continuing source of logistical problems. Vehicles for handling the heavier aviation ordnance were unsatisfactory because their configuration, of World War II vintage, did not permit them to service the newer aircraft. Other trucks lacked engine power or rigidity to withstand sustained use under primitive airfield conditions. World War II vehicles that had been preserved and placed in open storage required reconditioning before their use in Korea. Mechanics' general and special tools had a high replacement rate throughout the entire period of wing operations in Korea.

Aircraft fuel handling in April 1952 followed outmoded World War II methods. For K–3, amphibian vehicles received drummed fuel from ships and landed it at the beach. There MAG–33 personnel transferred the gasoline to 1,200-gallon fuel trucks, which then moved it to the airfield servicing area, where other Marines transferred it again, this time to 3,200-gallon stationary refuelers for dispensing into the aircraft. Although this method became highly developed, it was extremely slow and wasteful of manpower and vehicles in comparison to the tank farm system, which was soon to reach K–3.

Two areas of logistics continued to remain almost trouble free for division and wing Marines. Medical problems existed but were not extensive. During a five-day period in late March, Marine Air Control Group 2 experienced 13 cases of scarlet fever but no fatalities. That same month, the Pacific Fleet Medical Officer noted that MAG–12 sick bays were in excellent condition and that medical "personnel have shown great ingenuity in fabricating various items of medical equipment from scrap metal and lumber."[65]

Evacuation of casualties and the utilization of air vehicles for transport of passengers and cargo proved to be the second asset in logistical operations. The Itami-based detachment of VMR–152 moved 7,757 personnel from the division and wing and 738.7 tons of cargo during April 1952. In addition, the R5D craft hauled a total of 325.2 tons of U.S. mail that month for the two Marine organizations. Speedy removal of patients to better equipped facilities in the rear by VMO–6 and HMR–161 helicopters was a giant step forward in life-saving techniques. VMO–6 usually provided this service, but early in April, Colonel McCutcheon's squadron was assigned emergency medical evacuation duties to augment the observation squadron.[66] Pilots flew these evacuation missions with almost total disregard for adverse weather or darkness, and without radar control or adequate instrumentation for all-weather operations.[67]

Operations in West Korea
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Chapter 1. Operations in West Korea Begin
Different Area, Different Problem[68]

An additional responsibility the 1st Marine Division inherited when it moved to western Korea was control of civilians within the division boundary. In eastern Korea, all nonmilitary personnel had been evacuated from the vicinity of the MINNESOTA Line in the division sector; they had not been removed from the JAMESTOWN area. Prior to the arrival of the division in the west, the STAYBACK Line, averaging seven miles to the rear of the Imjin River and running in a generally northeast-southwest direction, had been established to limit the movement of civilian personnel in the forward areas. The Marines soon found that their predecessors must have been lax, however, in requiring that Korean civilians remain behind STAYBACK. What seemed equally unsuitable to the division was the poor military-civilian relationship that had apparently existed for some time.

To correct the situation, General Selden cautioned his units to avoid unnecessary damage or destruction to the civilian economy. He directed his commanding officers to keep unauthorized Koreans away from Marine installations. Military police set up check points and instituted roving patrols to enforce division controls. Civil violators were turned over to Korean authorities or held for investigation before release. Civilians who lived in the forward areas were removed to the rear. They were prevented from going beyond STAYBACK until August 1952, when a controlled passage system was instituted.

Operations in West Korea

Pat Meid and James M. Yingling

Chapter 2. Defending the Line

UN Command Activities[1]

MOVEMENT OF the 1st Marine Division to the west was part of an Eighth Army master plan to strengthen UN defenses and at the same time to enable South Korean forces to assume increased responsibility in the defense of their homeland. The tactical realignment in the spring of 1952 put more South Korean infantry units on the main line of resistance and buttressed the fighting front with five corps sectors instead of four. In the far west, the I Corps positions were newly manned (left to right) by the 1st Marine, 1st Commonwealth, 1st ROK, and the U.S. 45th Infantry Divisions. Next in line was IX Corps, whose left boundary General Van Fleet[2] had shifted further west, which now had a divisional line up of the ROK 9th on the left, the U.S. 7th in the center, and the U.S. 40th on the right.

To fill in the central part of the EUSAK front where the change of IX Corps boundary had created a gap in the line, the UN commander inserted the ROK II Corps with three divisions (ROK 6th, ROK Capital, and ROK 3d) forward. Immediately to the right of this new ROK corps sector, the X Corps continued in approximately its same position on the east-central front. Its ROK 7th and U.S. 25th Divisions remained on line, while the ROK 8th had advanced to the former sector of the Marine division in the wild Punchbowl country. At the far right of the UN line, the ROK I Corps front was held by the ROK 11th Division at the X Corps boundary and the ROK 5th along the Sea of Japan. By 1 May 1952, nine Republic of Korea divisions had been emplaced on the UNC main defense line, three more than had been there in mid-March.

Throughout Korea in March and April there had been a general stagnation of offensive action on both sides because of fog, rain, and mud. In May, however, the Chinese launched no less than 30 probing attacks against the ROK 1st Division in the I Corps sector, without gaining any significant advantage. To the right, the enemy and the U.S. 45th Division traded blows in several patrol actions. In June, major EUSAK combat action was still centered in the 45th's sector, but the following month was marked by sharp battlefront clashes in nearly all Eighth Army division areas. For a two-week period in July and August, heavy seasonal rains limited both ground and air action. With the return of normal weather, heavy fighting again broke out, this time concentrated in the I Corps sector. This action did not abate until late August, when the onset of the heaviest rains of the season again drastically reduced military operations.

Communist ground activity in the spring of 1952 was marked by increased artillery support which resulted in telling damage to UN infantry and artillery positions. Thus, during May, the enemy expended approximately 102,000 artillery and mortar rounds against the Allied front, roughly 12 times the number fired the previous July, just prior to the period of stabilized battlelines in Korea. The artillery buildup was accompanied by a sharp decrease in hostile air support activities. While the Chinese had flown 3,700 jet sorties during the first month of 1952, by June the monthly total had dropped to 308.

As part of the balanced military forces, Allied air and sea units continued their active defense in support of UN ground units. Beginning in late May, Fifth Air Force shifted the emphasis of its destructive effort from interdiction of communication routes to the bombing of selected industrial targets. Naval air was committed to support the FAF programs. At sea, ships steamed almost at will to sustain the U.S. lifeline. Underscoring the complete UN control of Korean waters, large naval vessels offshore fired their big guns in support of ground troops. Off both the west and east coasts, Task Force (TF) 95 maintained its blockade of North Korean ports and reduced the extent of water travel that enemy craft could safely undertake. This same naval force was responsible for the Allied defense of islands located off the east and west coasts of Korea.

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