

claimed most of the Marine victims. A platoon from Company F, 2d Battalion, joined Company C, as did a provisional unit assembled from the 1st Battalion's Headquarters and Service Company. Rather than taking part in an attempt to regain Vegas, these latest reinforcements helped evacuate those Marines wounded in the earlier fighting.

Marines wounded in the vicinity of Outpost Vegas followed one of two routes to a collection point behind the position held by Company H, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines. From here, casualties went either directly to the 3d Battalion aid station or to a camp of the Korean Service Corps enroute to the aid station of the 1st Battalion. The most severely wounded traveled by helicopter directly to a hospital ship, *Haven* (AH 12) or *Consolation* (AH 15), in Inchon Harbor. The others received further treatment from the division's medical battalion before being transferred to better-equipped facilities in the rear.

### Chinese Diversionary Attacks

On the night of 26 March, the Chinese diverted attention from Carson, Reno, and Vegas by jabbing at Berlin and East Berlin in the sector of Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. Oddy's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines. Berlin occupied a rounded hilltop roughly the same height as the main line of resistance; a 400-yard ridge linked the two. Supplies or reinforcements bound for Berlin, unlike those destined for Vegas or Reno, were screened by the hill from direct enemy observation. Taking advantage of the concealment, carrying parties of the Korean Service Corps shuttled supplies to the entrance to the outpost. The porters were not allowed to enter the trenches,

however, to avoid confusion that might prove advantageous to the enemy.

One reinforced squad from Company G held Berlin, and another East Berlin. Both garrisons beat back the Chinese with the help of barrages that boxed-in the outposts and variable-time fire that rained fragments on the enemy's routes of approach. By midnight, a second squad had reinforced each of the outposts.

The Chinese also probed the outposts held by the 1st Marines on the left of Colonel Walt's regiment. The enemy bombarded four outposts—Hedy, Bunker Hill, Esther, and Dagmar—and tested the defenses of all of them. Only at Combat Outpost Dagmar did the attackers break through the wire. The 27 Marines defending the outpost held their own against an approximately equal number of Chinese. Some 300 rounds of mortar and artillery fire helped the defenders, commanded by Second

Lieutenant Benjamin H. Murray of Company I, 3d Battalion, to contain the penetration until help arrived. Before midnight on 26 March, Second Lieutenant John J. Peeler, the executive officer of Company I, led a counterattack from the main line of resistance that regained control over all of Outpost Dagmar. The clashes at Dagmar and the other outposts—Hedy, Bunker Hill, and Esther—killed perhaps 10 Chinese and wounded 17 at the cost of four Marines killed and 16 wounded. A feeble jab at Outpost Kate proved an annoyance rather than a threat, and Chinese troops massing in front of the Korean Marines did not attack at this time. Marine artillery again demonstrated its importance during the outpost actions on the night of 26-27 March. The 11th Marines fired more than 10,000 105mm and 155mm rounds at targets from East Berlin and Berlin westward to Outpost Hedy. The bombardment of Vegas and Reno, the outposts

*A Marine mans the main trenchline on the forward sloop of Outpost Dagmar. The outpost was the site of a two-squad Chinese diversionary assault with automatic weapons and satchel charges that was beaten back with help from Marines on the main line of resistance.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A169923





National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A317670  
*A graduate of Stanford University and veteran of the British Commando Program, LtCol Alexander D. Cereghino spent most of World War II in command of the 1st Provisional Battalion stationed in Northern Ireland. Following a three-year stint at Headquarters Marine Corps, he was given command of 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, in Korea.*

the Chinese had seized, continued into the morning of the 27th in preparation for a more powerful counterattack.

### Marine Counterattack of 27 March

Preparations for a major counterattack went ahead on the ground and in the air. At 0345 on the 27th, Lieutenant Colonel Cereghino's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, an element of the division reserve, came under the operational control of Colonel Walt's 5th Marines. Cereghino's unit had already moved into an assembly area behind the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, and Company F had taken part in an unsuccessful attempt to break through to Outpost Vegas.

By the time the Marines abandoned the early attempts to fight their way through to Vegas and

Reno, observation planes from Marine Observation Squadron 6 (VMO-6) began flying missions to direct friendly artillery fire against Chinese batteries. Aerial observers called down some 60 fire missions against targets that included mortars, artillery, and self-propelled guns. During the morning darkness, Douglas F3D-2 Skyknight night fighters conducted radar bombing against Chinese gunners and troop concentrations. As dawn approached, the time chosen for an attempt to recapture Vegas and Reno, air strikes intensified. Grumman F9F Panther jets of Marine Fighter Squadron 115 (VMF-115) arrived overhead at 0650 to help neutralize the Chinese defenders of the two captured outposts. A breakdown of communications forced a postponement, however; H-Hour for the assault on Reno and Vegas slipped until 0900, but persistent problems of coordination caused further delay. Airmen took advantage of the additional time; with two-dozen Marine fighter-bombers joining Air Force jets in delivering strikes.

Marine tanks—which the division commander, Major General Edwin A. Pollock, had ordered to join the rocket battery, mortars, and artillery regiment in supporting the counterattack—made their contribution to the preliminary fires. Company A of the division's tank battalion spotted two groups of Chinese carrying logs for the construction of bunkers on the site of Outpost Reno. The tank company wiped out one group with 90mm fire, but the other presumably reached its destination.

Before the attack finally began, Major General Pollock agreed to a change of plan. Vegas would be the sole objective; while attacking there the Marines would neutralize Reno with fire. Smoke shells burst-

ing on Hills 57A and 90 blinded the Chinese observers there and marked the launching of the attack, which got under way shortly after 1100. Artillery, mortars, tanks, and aircraft hammered Vegas, Reno, and the enemy's firing batteries, including some located by Marine airmen earlier in the day.

As bombs, shells, and rockets exploded on Vegas and the other targets, Company D, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines—an element of Colonel Walt's regimental reserve—advanced from the main line of resistance. The assault company, commanded by Captain John B. Melvin, launched its attack at 1120 but immediately came under fire from Chinese mortars and artillery. Within an hour, the company's first platoon had been reduced to just nine able-bodied Marines, but Melvin's survivors slogged forward through flooded rice paddies and up a rain-soaked slope. Marine casualties and enemy reinforcements slowed Company D, as the men worked their way from one depression or rocky outcropping to another until the counterattack stalled some 200 yards short of the objective. Chinese fire raked the slope where the assault had bogged down, but Marine jet fighters and piston-powered attack planes joined the 11th Marines and the 1st Tank Battalion in trying to silence the hostile weapons.

Shells from Chinese 122mm artillery and 120mm mortars churned the slopes of Vegas; making the detonations from 60mm mortar rounds seem like mere firecrackers. Captain Melvin recalled that the enemy fire "was so intense at times that you couldn't move forward or backward.... You could only hope that the next round wouldn't be on target." Despite the deadly barrage, a handful of

Marines succeeded in entering the outer trench and making a brief lodgment there.

To sustain the counterattack, two forces set out shortly after 1200 from the lines of Company H, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines. Captain Floyd G. Hudson led the way with a provisional unit made up from the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. Captain Herbert M. Lorence commanded the second, Company F of the same battalion. These reinforcements reached the slope where Melvin's Marines were undergoing their ordeal but could advance no farther. As a result, Company F, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines—available from what had been the division reserve—set out at 1530 under Captain Ralph F. Estey to lend its weight to the counterattack on Outpost Vegas.

Captain Estey's company reached the fire-swept slope lead-

ing to the enemy-held outpost and relieved the surviving elements of Melvin's Company D, 5th Marines, which returned to the main line of resistance. While 90mm guns from Captain Clyde W. Hunter's Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, fired from the main line of resistance against a Chinese strongpoint on the crest of Vegas, Marine aircraft maintained a smoke screen that blinded enemy observers. Estey combined his men with those of Company E of the 5th Marines, and formed the equivalent of three platoons. After a savage fight lasting about an hour and a half, the counterattack succeeded by 2000 in overrunning the trenches nearest the Marine main line of resistance. The Chinese who held the rest of Vegas contained the breakthrough short of the summit and forced the Marines to fall back to the base of the hill and dig in. Fire

from supporting weapons in the rear, and also from the site of Outpost Reno, helped the enemy prevail.

Pressure on the Marine foothold continued throughout the night. By midnight, Captain Estey's men had beaten off three attacks and clung firmly to the position at the base of Vegas. Marine night fighters and attack planes made nine radar-controlled strikes between darkness on the 27th and 0115 the next morning, dropping some 24 tons of bombs on enemy positions and supply lines. The bombardment of Estey's perimeter gradually abated, as Chinese gunners shifted their fire from the base of Vegas to the main line of resistance.

During the counterattack on Chinese-held Outpost Vegas, Hospitalman Third Class William R. Charette—attached to Company F, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines—repeat-

*Grumman F9F Panther jets taxi into position for takeoff against enemy concentrations. During the Marine counter-attack on Outpost Vegas, Panther jets from Marine Fighter*

*Squadrons 115 and 311 not only attacked Chinese trenches, bunkers, and mortar emplacements, but also bombed enemy resupply points.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A346720



ly risked his life to care for the wounded. While Charette was giving first aid to a Marine, a Chinese grenade landed next to them. Charette pounced on the grenade; his armored vest saved him from serious injury, but the force of the explosion tore away his helmet and his medical kit. Since he could not waste time searching for the kit, he used his clothing to improvise bandages. When he was tending to another wounded Marine, whose armored vest had been blown off by the concussion from an explosion, Charette removed his own vest and placed it over the wounded man. Without either a helmet or an armored vest, he stayed with his platoon throughout the fighting. According to one of the Marines who fought there, the corpsman "was everywhere seemingly at the same time, performing inexhaustibly." In recognition of his bravery and devotion to duty, Charette received the Medal of Honor. Of the corpsmen whose service in Korea earned them the nation's highest award for valor, he alone survived to wear it.

The Marines counterattacking Vegas had seized a strong foothold at the base of the hill where the outpost stood, but the summit and the shell-battered complex of trenches and bunkers remained in Chinese hands. Preparations for another assault up the hill began at 0335 on 28 March when the 105mm and 155mm howitzers of the 11th Marines fired the first of more than 2,300 rounds directed at Chinese weapons positions and assembly areas, as well as the defenses of the summit itself.

After half an hour's bombardment, the men of Captain Estey's Company F, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, who had entered the fight at mid-afternoon the previous day, worked their way to

within grenade range of the Chinese before being driven back by fire from small arms and mortars. While the company regrouped, Marine aircraft joined in battering the enemy. After sunrise, Marine fliers laid a smoke screen to conceal air strikes from Chinese antiaircraft gunners on Hill 67, north of Outpost Carson. During the early morning, Marine aircraft conducted four powerful strikes, the first of a series that lasted throughout the day.

The second infantry assault of the morning, launched at 0600, failed to recapture Vegas, ending when Captain Estey's Marines took cover from enemy fire about 375 yards south of the crest. After further air strikes, Estey's Company F attacked once again and by 1015 penetrated to within 15 yards of the trenches, where it engaged in a firefight that lasted 22 minutes and deprived the assault of its momentum.

When this latest counterattack stalled in front of a machine gun firing from the base of a rock formation, Sergeant Daniel P. Matthews, a squad leader in Company F, saw that the weapon had pinned down a wounded Marine and the corpsman trying to bring him to safety. The sergeant crawled to the formation, scrambled onto the rocks, opened fire with his rifle, and charged the gun. Although wounded almost immediately, Matthews killed two members of the gun crew and silenced the weapon. His bold action enabled the corpsman to save the wounded Marine, but Matthews died of his wounds before members of his squad could reach him. His heroism earned a posthumous Medal of Honor.

Shortly after the one-man assault by Sergeant Matthews, Captain Lorence's Company E, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, passed

through Company F, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines. Captain Estey's company, reduced to just 43 able-bodied men after a half-dozen attempts to recapture Vegas, fell back to regroup at the base of the hill.

While the relief of Estey's company was taking place, aircraft, mortars, and artillery continued to scourge not only outpost Vegas, but also Chinese supply routes, enemy-held Outpost Reno, nearby Hill 25A, and other high ground from which hostile gunners could fire in support of their comrades dug in on Vegas. Taking advantage of the savage bombardment—during a 23-minute period, aerial bombs fell at the rate of more than a ton per minute—the 1st Platoon of Captain Lorence's company launched its assault at 1301. Led by Staff Sergeant John J. Williams, who had taken over when Second Lieutenant Edgar R. Franz was wounded, the platoon killed or drove off the Chinese defending the former site of Outpost Vegas. The platoon took only one prisoner, the second the Marines had captured during the day.

As soon as Captain Lorence's Marines regained the ruins of Outpost Vegas, the Chinese counterattacked, but fire from tanks dug in on the main line of resistance and artillery helped break up the assault. Although the Marines controlled Vegas itself, a few Chinese stubbornly held out at the very summit of the hill. The work of preparing to meet the next counterattack went ahead under the command of Major Benjamin G. Lee, who had earned the Silver Star and Purple Heart as a noncommissioned officer at Guadalcanal during World War II. Although Lee, operations officer of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, took command, the resupply of Vegas became the responsibility of the





1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Mar53

*Although Vegas was retaken, Marines still had to keep low when moving around the ruined outpost. Daylight hours were relatively quiet with only an occasional burst of machine gun or sniper fire, while night witnessed renewed Chinese attempts to overrun the outpost.*

regiment's 3d Battalion. To defend the newly recaptured outpost, Lee at first could muster only 66 Marines, eight of them members of Company F, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, who had not fallen back to the base of the hill with the unit's other survivors, and the rest from Captain Lorence's Company E, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. Fortunately, Captain Thomas P. Connolly's Company E, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, reached the hill with an additional 150 men and prepared to take over from Lorence's Marines and spearhead a final attack.

### Further Action on Outpost Vegas

The Chinese held the initiative, however, and at 1955 on 28 March, as darkness enveloped Vegas, they counterattacked. The preparatory fires included the usual artillery and mortar barrages supplemented by 3.5-inch rockets fired from the

Chinese equivalent of the American Bazooka antitank weapon. An enemy battalion advanced from captured Outpost Reno, but fell back after coming under deadly fire from Army and Marine artillery and the 1st Marine Division's 4.5-inch rocket battery.

Outpost Carson came under fire at about the same time from mortars and automatic weapons. Chinese patrols probed the approaches to the outpost, but the garrison, supported by weapons on the main line of resistance, drove off the enemy. The attack, if one was planned, did not take place.

At 2130, Major Lee radioed from Vegas to report that a second Chinese assault was imminent, and within an hour the enemy struck. Box-me-in fires helped Lee's Marines cling to their position, but the Chinese struck again, launching the night's third attack about an hour before midnight. At least

200 Chinese soldiers tried to overwhelm Lee's perimeter but succeeded only in forcing the Marines to yield some non-critical ground. While aircraft dropped flares, howitzer batteries of the 11th Marines dueled with Chinese gunners, firing more than 6,000 rounds by midnight. The attack continued until 0130 on the morning of 29 March, when another savage bombardment by the division's artillery and the fire of Captain Connolly's Company E, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, forced the enemy to relax his pressure. The bulk of the Chinese assault force, totaling two battalions during the fight, withdrew behind a curtain of fire from weapons emplaced on Reno.

As Connolly's Company E, 7th Marines, and Lorence's Company E, 5th Marines, prepared to eliminate the Chinese die-hards still clinging to the crest of the hill, artillery and 4.5-inch rockets kept on pounding the enemy. More than 4,000 rounds neutralized Reno while others tore into the Chinese-held portion of Vegas. A final Marine assault secured the summit of Vegas at 0450.

Chinese mortar and artillery fire directed at the Marines continued after the recapture of Vegas. Shortly after 0500 a 120mm mortar shell killed both Major Lee and Captain Walz, the commander of Company F, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, who had led the charge at Reno Block. Also killed in this flurry of shelling was First Lieutenant John S. Gray, a forward observer from the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines.

Major Joseph S. Buntin, the executive officer of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, which was responsible for rebuilding the outpost, now took command. Replacements, including corpsmen, arrived that morning, along with weapons, tools, construction

supplies, and laborers from the Korean Service Corps. By noon, work was underway on trenches, fighting holes, and bunkers, screened as necessary by smoke missions fired by the 11th Marines, but the muddy, shell-churned earth complicated the efforts of the Marines and the Korean labor troops helping them. As daylight faded, rain and light snow added to the discomfort of the men on the ground and forced the aerial observers, who had been directing the maintenance of smoke screens and other artillery missions, to return to their airstrips.

The Chinese had not yet abandoned their designs on Vegas. At 1805 on 29 March, they advanced from assembly areas in the vicinity of Reno and Hill 153 and hit Vegas on both flanks. This attack triggered the most violent single barrage of the battle for Vegas, as more than 6,400 shells from five artillery battalions, plus two rounds from each launching tube

*By daybreak on 31 March, the men on Vegas could relax in the partially reconstructed trench works. The five-day siege involving more than 4,000 ground and air Marines was the bloodiest action Marines on the Western Front had yet engaged in.*



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A170454

in the division's 4.5-inch rocket battery, exploded among the attacking troops. Army 8-inch howitzers and 4.2-inch mortars also helped break up the assault.

After a brief flurry of activity at about 2045, perhaps an attempt to retrieve men wounded in the earlier attack, the Chinese mounted another major effort early in the morning of 30 March, again striking from Reno and Hill 153. This latest attempt to isolate Outpost Vegas and destroy it also collapsed under an avalanche of artillery and mortar shells.

Sunrise brought clearing skies, enabling Marine AU Corsairs to disrupt Chinese attempts to regroup for further assaults. Throughout the day, Marine airmen attacked troops, fortifications, and firing batteries on Reno and other hills that menaced Vegas. On Vegas, the Marines "were like rabbits digging in," said Corporal George Demars of Company F, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, who added



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A365894  
For "outstanding services performed in the line of his professional services," Maj Joseph S. Buntin would later receive the Bronze Star Medal from MajGen Randolph McC. Pate. The award was presented in December 1953.

that the replacements "jumped right in," as members of hastily organized squads worked together, even though "they didn't know half the people on the fire teams." In the afternoon, Company G, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, relieved Captain Connolly's Company E, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, and Major George E. Kelly, operations officer of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, replaced Major Buntin.

At about 1100 on the morning of 30 March, five Chinese soldiers approached Outpost Vegas, giving the impression they intended to surrender. Instead they threw grenades and cut loose with sub-machine guns in a suicidal gesture of defiance. Marine infantrymen returned the fire, killing three of the intruders outright. Another died of his wounds, and the survivor was taken prisoner.

During the night, Army searchlights provided illumination for Marine artillery, including the half-track-mounted .50-caliber machine guns of the 1st Provisional



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A170436

*Members of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, take time out after returning from the fierce five-day battle for Outpost Vegas to eat chow and take a well-deserve breather. With a touch of sarcasm, they called the disputed crest of Vegas "the highest damn beachhead in Korea."*

Antiaircraft Artillery Battery (Automatic Weapons), which took a hand in the fighting on the ground. Marine aircrews directed by Marine Corps radar made seven

strikes against Chinese positions on the night of the 31st, and aircraft, mortars, and artillery continued to harass the enemy on the following day, as the 5th Marines and 1st

*Standing together at I Corps headquarters in early April are, from left, BGen John K. Waters, Chief of Staff, I Corps, MajGen Bak Lim Hang, Commanding General, 1st Republic of Korea Division, MajGen M. A. R. West, Commanding General, 1st Commonwealth Division, MajGen Edwin A. Pollock, Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, LtGen Paul W. Kendall, departing commanding general, I Corps,*

*MajGen Bruce C. Clarke, newly appointed commanding general, I Corps, MajGen James C. Fry, Commanding General, 2d Infantry Division, MajGen Arthur G. Trudeau, Commanding General, 7th U.S. Infantry Division, and Col Pak Ki Sung, Commander, 101st Korean Service Corps.*

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC429583



Marines continued to relieve the garrisons at their combat outposts.

To prevent the enemy from exploiting his conquest of Outpost Reno, the Marines strengthened Vegas after its recapture, manning it with a company rather than a platoon. The 1st Marine Division also established a new outpost, Elko (named like Reno, Vegas, and Carson for a city in Nevada). Elko stood on Hill 47, southeast of Carson and 765 yards north of the main line of resistance. During the unsuccessful attempt to break through to the Reno garrison, Chinese troops had used Hill 47 to ambush the rescue forces. Marine possession of the hill improved the security of Carson, Vegas, and the main line of resistance.

### Outpost Vegas: Summing Up

The five-day battle that ended with the recapture and successful defense of Outpost Vegas cost the



1st Marine Division 1,015 casualties or some 63 percent of those suffered by the division, including the Korean Marine regiment, during the entire month of March 1953. Chinese losses were estimated to be 2,221, of whom 536 had been actually counted. Whatever the exact toll, the Marines had crippled the *358th Regiment* of the Chinese army, which faced the task of rebuilding before it could again take the offensive.

During the loss and recapture of Vegas, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew 218 missions in support of the combat outpost line, most of them to help hold positions manned by the 5th Marines. This total represented some 63 percent of the 346 close air support missions flown by the wing during March. Despite rain and snow that sometimes restricted visibility, Marine aircraft dropped some 426 tons of bombs in support of Marines on the ground, provided battlefield illumination, and laid smoke screens. In addition, helicopters evacuated the critically wounded.

Although Marine tanks not only fired some 9,000 rounds from the main line of resistance but also illuminated some targets using their shuttered searchlights, artillery proved the deadliest weapon in support of the infantry. Between 27 and 31 March, the 11th Marines, the 1st Marine Division's rocket battery, and the Army artillery and heavy mortar units reinforcing their fires, delivered almost 105,000 rounds against targets in the vicinity of Vegas, Carson, and Reno. The heaviest artillery action took place during the 24 hours ending at 1600, 29 March, when four Marine howitzer battalions fired 33,041 rounds and two Army battalions another 2,768.

The recapture of Outpost Vegas and the related fighting earned congratulations from the Com-

mandant of the Marine Corps, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., who praised the "stubborn and heroic defense of Vegas, Reno, and Carson Hills coupled with the superb offensive spirit which characterized the several counterattacks." The sustained and deadly action earned a respite for the 5th Marines, which on 4 and 5 April moved into division reserve, replaced by the 7th Marines after 68 days on line. Meanwhile, on 28 March the Chinese high command, perhaps motivated to some extent by the failure to hold Vegas and crack the Jamestown Line, advised Army General Mark W. Clark, the United Nations commander, of its willingness to discuss an exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war.

### Shuffling Marine Regiments

After the battles for Reno, Carson, and Vegas, the 5th Marines went into division reserve. Shortly afterward, on 14 April, Colonel Harvey C. Tschirgi took command of the regiment, replacing Colonel Lewis Walt, who was reassigned to the division staff. The 7th Marines, under Colonel Glenn C. Funk after he took over from Colonel Loren E. Haffner on 27 March, replaced the 5th Marines on 4-5 April, moving from division reserve to man the portion of the Jamestown Line formerly held by Colonel Walt's regiment. The 1st Marines, commanded by Colonel Hewitt D. Adams from 1 November 1952 until Colonel Wallace M. Nelson took over on May 1, remained in place, holding the segment of the line between the 7th Marines and the Korean Marine regiment. After truce talks resumed at Panmunjom, the 1st Marines under Colonel Adams provided a force of 245 men and five armored vehicles that stood by to rescue the United

Nations negotiators if the other side should spring a trap.

As the division reserve, the 5th Marines assumed responsibility for maintaining the fallback positions behind the main line of resistance. One of these, the Kansas Line, had suffered severe structural damage from torrential rains and the spring thaw. Its restoration required the full-time efforts of the regiment's 3d Battalion, which had to cancel its scheduled training. The 2d Battalion, however, participated in a landing exercise at Tokchok-to, an island southwest of Inchon, but high winds and rolling seas cut short the training. While the 5th Marines was in reserve, its staff participated—together with staff officers of the 1st Marines, the Commonwealth Division, and U.S. Army and South Korean forces—in a command post exercise staged by I Corps.

Meanwhile, the Chinese tested the 7th Marines. On 9 April, after mortars and artillery battered the regiment with some 2,000 rounds, the Chinese launched an attack on Carson, followed by a series of probes of that outpost and nearby Elko. At 0345 on the morning of the 9th, some 300 Chinese, advancing in two waves, hit Outpost Carson. After an hour, some of the assault troops reached the trenchline and for another hour exchanged fire at point-blank range with the defenders. A platoon set out at 0530 to reinforce Carson but got no farther than Elko, the newly established outpost some 400 yards southeast of Carson, before fire from mortars and small arms stopped the unit until 90mm tank guns and Marine mortars broke up the ambush. Howitzers and rocket launchers joined in, battering the approaches to Carson until the Chinese fell back.

To strengthen Carson's defenses,



## Little Switch

During December 1952, when the truce talks at Panmunjom seemed to have reached a dead end, General Mark W. Clark—who in May of that year had replaced another Army officer, General Matthew B. Ridgway, in command of the United Nations forces—took note of a suggestion by the International League of Red Cross Societies that the combatants in Korea exchange sick and wounded prisoners of war. On 22 February 1953, Clark formally proposed an immediate exchange, but, as he expected, the Chinese and North Koreans did not respond. On 5 March, however, the death of Joseph Stalin deprived the Soviet Union of a forceful dictator and the People's Republic of China of a strong ally.

In this time of transition, as Georgei Malenkov emerged from the shadows to become Stalin's successor, at least temporarily, the Chinese leadership began thinking of Clark's proposal as an anchor to windward in a

gale of uncertainty. Indeed, if Malenkov or some other ruler proved less supportive than Stalin, the limited exchange of prisoners might enable China to revive the truce talks and perhaps bring to an end a long and thus far inconclusive war. On 28 March, while the fight for Vegas and the other outposts still raged, General Clark received not only a formal Chinese acceptance of the proposal to exchange prisoners, but also an offer to resume serious armistice negotiations at Panmunjom.

On 6 April, representatives of the two sides began talks at Panmunjom that resulted in an agreement for the exchange, Operation Little Switch, scheduled to begin on the 20th. To prepare for the transfer, 100 Marines from the 1st Engineer Battalion and the 1st Shore Party Battalion built the so-called Freedom Village at Munsan-ni, a tent city complete with roads, a helicopter pad, and facilities for emergency medical treatment, administration, and press coverage.

*Frontline Marines watch a U.S. Army ambulance convoy bringing the first freed United Nations prisoners from Panmunjom to Freedom Village. Following the long one-*

*and-a-half hour trip, each Marine prisoner received a medical check and a new utility cap with its Marine Corps emblem.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A170964





National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-480686

*Marine Pvt Alberto Pizzaro-Baez talks with MajGen Edwin A. Pollock at Freedom Village following his release. Pvt Pizzaro-Baez was among the 15 Marines and three Navy Corpsmen who had been captured from the 1st Marine Division.*

When the exchange began on 20 April, Major General Edwin A. Pollack, the division commander, stood by to greet the Marines among the 149 Americans released

through 26 April when Little Switch ended. The first Marine welcomed by Major General Pollack, and by the other dignitaries that included General Clark, was Private Alberto Pizzaro-Baez of Company H, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, wounded in the leg and captured at Outpost Frisco in October 1952. During his imprisonment, the leg became gangrenous and had to be amputated. The men of the 1st Marine Division returned in Operation Little Switch totaled 15 Marines and three Navy hospital corpsmen. Two of the Marines, Corporal Jimmie E. Lacy and Private First Class George F. Hart, and one of the corpsmen, Hospitalman Thomas "Doc" Waddill, had been wounded and captured when the Chinese overran Outpost Reno on the night of 26 March. The Communist forces released 684 sick and wounded captives from 11 nations, more than half of them South Koreans, in return for 6,670 North Koreans and Chinese. The disparity in numbers may have reflected the desire of the Americans to rid themselves of dedicated and disciplined Communists among the prisoners like those who had seized a prison compound at the island of Koje-do and briefly held the commander hostage. Little Switch did not address, let alone resolve, the question of the forced repatriation of prisoners unwilling to return when a truce finally went into effect.

Company E, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, moved there from regimental reserve, more than making good the day's losses of 14 killed and 64 wounded. The Marines counted 60 Chinese killed in the fighting on the early morning of 9 April. Another 160 may have been killed or wounded, which would have brought the morning's casualties to more than half the Chinese assault force that triggered the action.

During the first day's fighting on the ground, Marine aircraft appeared overhead after 0715, attacking visually or with the help of ground-based Marine radar. By mid-afternoon, fighter-bombers had dropped more than 67 tons of bombs on Chinese positions north of Carson. Radar-directed strikes took place after dark, and visual strikes resumed after daylight on 10 April.

As aerial action intensified, activity on the ground slowed. On

the night of the 9th, three Chinese platoons, possibly searching for the day's casualties, advanced as

far as the ruins of a bunker just 50 yards from Outpost Carson. The Chinese activity attracted fire that

*Not every veteran of the 1st Marine Division was a human being. The pack horse "Reckless," shown here with her handler, took her name from the recoilless (or rec-less) rifle, like the one next to her, for which she carried ammunition. The horse returned to Camp Pendleton, California, with the division in 1955.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A171729





National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A170606

*Marine Cpl Dennis W. Burkner, using a Browning automatic rifle, fires at enemy positions in front of Company I, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines' place on the main line of resistance. Cpl Burkner wears one of the 24,000 armored vests issued the division by 1953.*

definitely killed 15, may have killed 15 more, and wounded between seven and 27. Shortly before midnight, some 70 Chinese advanced from the Ungok hills and attacked Carson, only to lose perhaps 20 additional men to Marine mortars, tank guns, and machine guns. A couple of Chinese squads probed Outpost Elko on the night of the 11th, but for the most part, the enemy now contented himself with trying to exploit the renewal of truce talks by showering the Jamestown Line with propaganda leaflets warning the Marines against risking their lives because a ceasefire was at hand. The Chinese reinforced the printed message with loudspeaker broadcasts, and on one occasion they dropped leaflets from an airplane to supplement those scattered from special mortar shells.

### Into I Corps Reserve

On 5 May, the Army's 25th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Samuel T. Williams,

and its attached Turkish brigade replaced the 1st Marine Division on what had been called the Jamestown Line. The practice of naming each separate segment of the line, like Jamestown, ended on 28 April, after which the entire

*The first contingent of the 3d Turkish Battalion begins the relief of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines. On 5 May, the U. S. Army's 25th Infantry Division, to which the Turkish troops were attached, took over from the 1st Marine Division, which went into corps reserve.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A171351





## Women Marines

The role of women in the Marine Corps during the Korean War was the result of a checkered series of events in the preceding years. When World War II ended, there were 820 officers and 17,640 enlisted members of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. They had served to "free a Marine to fight," as the recruiting slogan proclaimed.

In one tumultuous year of peacetime demobilization, the number of women reservists plummeted to a total of 298 in August 1946. Simultaneously, there was skepticism at the highest levels in Headquarters Marine Corps as to whether there should be any women reservists on active duty, or, in fact, any women at all in a peacetime Marine Corps. With other branches of the Armed Services retaining women, the Marine Corps finally agreed to a minimum step, it would enlist former women reservists in its Reserve and authorize their formation into Volunteer Training Units (January 1947).

The decisive breakthrough occurred on 12 June 1948 with the passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act. This led to women in the Organized Reserve and, for the first time, in the Regular Marine Corps. They were now confirmed as a permanent part of a peacetime Corps, with authorization to seek 100 officers, 10 warrant officers, and 1,000 enlisted women during the next two years.

To take charge of this rebirth, a superb leader was essential. There would be endless problems and details in organizing this latest expansion, as well as a crucial need for a firm but diplomatic style at Headquarters Marine Corps. The right person emerged—Katherine A. Towle. She had been a captain in 1943 and had returned to a college campus in 1946. General Clifton B. Cates, Commandant of the Marine Corps, asked her to return to active duty and take charge. On 18 October 1948, she was sworn in as Director of Women Marines with the rank of colonel. It was she who would lead Women Marines throughout the Korean War. Progress came quickly after that—commissioning of women as regulars, with their title changed from women reservists to Women Marines.

The year 1949 saw a variety of activities, which, unknowingly, prepared women reservists and Women Marines for the wartime demands which would erupt the following year. Enlisted training began at Parris Island, South Carolina. Drawing on the Volunteer Training Units, Organized Women's Reserve platoons were activated, with 13 functioning by February 1950. At Quantico a Woman Officer Candidate Course and a Woman Officer Training Class were instituted, and 86, later reduced to 27, appropriate military occupational specialties were targeted as potential for women. By March 1950, there were 28 Regular Women Marine officers, 496 regular enlisted,



Marine Corps Historical Center Photo Collection

*The first post-World War II Women Marines arrived at Quantico, Virginia, in 1950 and were assigned to the Administrative Section of the Landing Force Development Center. Although limited to a minute number of occupational fields, Women Marines numbered more than 2,700 by mid-1953.*

18 women reserve officers, and 41 women reserve enlisted on active duty.

A bombshell exploded on 25 June 1950 when South Korea unexpectedly was invaded. Now the trials and tribulations that Marine women had experienced in the past years would bear fruit in a time of crisis. With the brutal strength reductions that had been forced upon it in the preceding years, the Marine Corps suddenly needed all the personnel—hopefully trained—that it could scrape together. And here were the women! Their potential went far beyond those on active duty and out into a reservoir of civilians who would soon be joining up.

The Marine Corps immediately called up its 13 women reserve platoons, with 287 enlisted veterans going straight to active duty and 298 non-veterans being sent to Parris Island. This mobilization was characterized by President Harry S. Truman's 19 July call up of all Reserves for active duty, including the Marine Corps' Organized Reserve and Volunteer Reserve.

For women, the Marine Corps had strict standards: an age limit of 18 to 31 (with 20 as the minimum for a regular); single with no dependents; and a high school diploma or its equivalent. Within a year, the eager response had brought the total number of women in the Corps to 2,065.

The flow of recruits led to a battalion of women at Parris Island and a similar company at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and the air base at El Toro, California, by October 1950. There they worked five days, spent a half-



day on instruction in military subjects, and finished off after their evening meal with close order drill. It was not surprising that the vast majority of their assignments were clerical and administrative, given the culture of the 1940s and 1950s, when many civilians, and not a few Marines, believed that a woman's place was in the home. This also was evidenced when family and friends would often try to dissuade young women from enlisting. And then there were some Marines who made life difficult for the women who did join up.

This narrow limitation of assignments for women resulted in their being untrained for billets that needed them, as well as strange anomalies such as a woman private first class filling a master sergeant's billet.

Colonel Towle, alert as always, wrote a pithy memorandum to the powers at Headquarters Marine Corps in January 1951. She stated unequivocally that Marine Corps policies for women were "unrealistic and short-sighted, as well as uneconomical." Thus, there was an urgent need, she continued for a "systematic, long-range training [plan]."

As the number of women grew, so did the range of their activities. At their assigned bases, they organized athletic teams and had a variety of off-duty interests. There was also a modest expansion of duties, with some women now in billets for motor transport, recruiting, photography, air traffic control, public affairs, and base newspapers. A few even made it to duty in Italy and Germany.

With the increase in active duty billets, women reservists with minor-age children were released while, at the same time, applications for active duty rose.

In January 1952, women reserve platoons were reestablished and by the end of the year totaled 14. In addition to basic military subjects, they received individualized training in one of five occupational specialties: administration, supply, classification, disbursing, and communications. Besides regular "drill nights" these women reservists had a two-week summer training period.

In spite of these expanded roles for women in the Corps, billets for officers were still limited to 10 occupational specialties in April 1952. Nevertheless, by May,

there were Women Marine companies at Cherry Point, Camp Pendleton, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Norfolk, San Diego, and Quantico, with Kaneohe Bay added in 1953.

The year 1953 saw the establishment at Camp Lejeune of a Staff Noncommissioned Officer Leadership School for women. Military occupational specialties available to officers were expanded in March. Three more women reserve platoons had been formed by April.

There was a change of command on 1 May 1953. Colonel Towle had reached the statutory age limit of 55 for colonels, and she had to retire. She had been a superb leader, and a Letter of Commendation from the Commandant and an award of a Legion of Merit medal recognized her achievements.

Her successor as Director of Women Marines was Lieutenant Colonel Julia E. Hamblet. She was a graduate of the first training class for women officers in 1943, and was only 37 years old when, after a wide variety of active duty, she was promoted to colonel in her new assignment.

When she took office, the Korean War was winding down. June 1953 saw a total of 160 women officers and 2,502 enlisted. Then, on 27 July, the war was over.

As one author summed up these years:

The Korean War era witnessed a brief, temporary surge of interest in WMs [Women Marines] on the Corps' part, but it did not result in major, long-term changes in either the women's standing within the Corps or in the duties they were assigned. In the wake of the war their numbers began to decrease, the sense of urgency that surrounded their redux subsided, and WM-related issues were shelved indefinitely. The ambivalence the Corps felt about women in the ranks never really disappeared, even when the war was on the WMs were sorely needed.

Besides these institutional evaluations, there was another vital factor to record, the impact that duty in the Corps had on these women. Their later comments were nearly unanimous: "The best years of my life."

—Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR (Ret)

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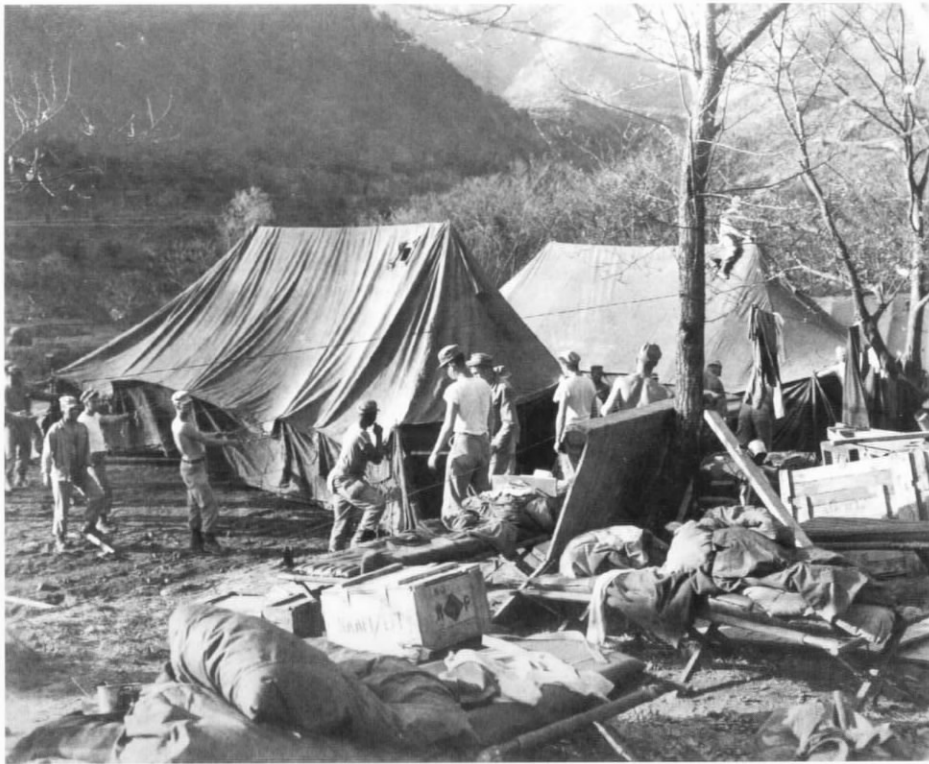
remained in its former sector, although now under control of I Corps.

The tanks on the main line of resistance occupied fixed positions, functioning mostly as artillery; they shifted as necessary to alternate sites to prevent Chinese gunners from zeroing in on them. The Army division provided armored personnel carriers

to haul food, water, fuel, and ammunition to the tanks. The presence of Marine armor at the front provided a bonus in addition to firepower, for when Chinese artillery ripped up telephone wires leading to the rear, the tank radios ensured reliable communications.

While in reserve, the 1st Marine Division added depth to the I Corps positions by standing ready

to counterattack after occupying any of the back-up lines—like the former Wyoming and Kansas—behind the four divisions manning the main line of resistance: the 25th Infantry Division; the Commonwealth Division; the 1st Republic of Korea Division; and the 7th Infantry Division. In addition, the Marines made improvements to Camp Casey, repaired the



Department of Defense (USMC) A171330

*Marines of Company H, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, set up their tents after moving from the frontlines into corps reserve in the central area of the Casey complex. Although the division had been on line for more than 20 months, there was a reluctance to turn over positions.*

back-up positions, especially the former Kansas Line which had been severely damaged by rains and the spring thaw, and embarked on a program of instruction that emphasized night combat and began with the individual and small unit. The larger-unit exercises included the use of helicopters in conjunction with a rifle company, proceeded to regimental landing exercises, and culminated in a field exercise. All of this training, which had to be somewhat curtailed, was to take place before the division returned to the main line of resistance in early July.

Although the spring weather that had damaged the old Kansas Line also turned roads to rivers of mud, the division completed its move to Camp Casey and launched the programs of training and rebuilding. The 5th Marines, the reserve regiment when the division moved off line, under-

went a week of training for an amphibious exercise held at Yongjong-ni, on the west coast near Kunsan. Dense fog forced cancellation of a planned rehearsal that might have highlighted the impact of a shallow beach gradient that grounded landing craft far from shore and complicated the landing of vehicles.

While Colonel Tschirgi's regiment was carrying out this exercise, other elements of the division took part in a combined command post exercise and firing exercise designed to help the division prepare for an Eighth Army exercise, then scheduled for the end of May but later canceled. The 7th Marines landed at the Yongjong-ni training area on 5 June, employing a 144-foot pontoon bridge, supplied by the Army, to speed the movement of vehicles over the shallow-sloping beach. However, the possible need for amphibious

*Members of the 81mm mortar platoon, Weapons Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, receive refresher instruction on the parts and nomenclature of the 81mm mortar during the eight-week reserve period. Lectures such as this were kept to a minimum with at least 50 percent of the tactical training conducted at night.*

Department of Defense (USMC) A171518



## A New Commanding General

On 15 June 1953, Major General Randolph McCall Pate took command of the 1st Marine Division, replacing Major General Edwin A. Pollack, who became director of the Marine Corps Educational Center, Quantico, Virginia. A native of South Carolina who spent his boyhood in Virginia, General Pate's military career began in 1918, the final year of World War I, when he enlisted in the Army, serving long enough to qualify for the Victory Medal though he did not fight in France. After graduating from the Virginia Military Institute in June 1921, he accepted in September of that year a commission as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve. He received a regular commission in May 1922, afterward carrying out a variety of assignments in the Dominican Republic and China, as well as at posts in the continental United States and Hawaii.

During World War II, General Pate served as supply officer on the staff of the 1st Marine Division at Guadalcanal, where he was wounded, and held other wartime staff positions. After Japan's surrender, he became Director of Reserve at Marine Corps headquarters, served on the Navy's General Board, and held the assignment of Chief of Staff, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia. While at Marine Corps Schools, he achieved promotion to brigadier general in 1949 and during the following year took over as Director, Marine Corps Educational Center at Quantico.

After an assignment with the Office of Joint Chiefs of Staff as the Joint Staff's Director for Logistics, General Pate returned to Marine Corps headquarters and in August 1952 was promoted to major general, while serving his second tour directing the Marine Corps Reserve. In September of that year, he assumed command of the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. After taking over the 1st Marine Division in June 1953, he commanded the unit for the remainder of the Korean fighting, finally turning the division over to Major General Robert H. Pepper in May 1954.

Upon leaving Korea, General Pate became Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps and Chief of Staff, advancing to the rank of lieutenant general. On 1 January 1956, he received a fourth star and became Commandant of the Marine Corps, succeeding General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. General Pate served as Commandant for four years, during which the Marine



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A172239

*MajGen Randolph McC. Pate, left, relieves MajGen Edwin A. Pollock in command of the 1st Marine Division. The departing Pollock was presented the Distinguished Service Medal for his "outstanding success in the defense of Carson, Vegas, and Elko."*

Corps moved away from the trenches and bunkers and reestablished itself as a highly mobile amphibious force in readiness. Following four years as Commandant, he retired in December 1959 with the rank of general.

Following a brief illness, General Pate died in 1961 and was interred with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery. Pate's military colleagues described him as: "A man of deep sincerity and untiring integrity, who is thoughtful and considerate of others—a true gentleman of the old school."

shipping to repatriate prisoners of war in the event of a truce caused the cancellation of a landing exercise scheduled for the 1st Marines between 14 and 23 June.

Marine aircraft participated in the training program conducted

while the division formed the I Corps reserve. Fighter-bombers covered the landing exercises, for example, and helicopters of HMR-161 landed at Camp Casey for a practice redeployment of two sections of 4.5-inch rocket launchers

from the division's rocket battery, along with infantry from the 5th Marines.

The principal mission of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, although it took part in the training program, remained the support of United





Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A169791

*While the division was in corps reserve in May and June, the main line of resistance, as it had in March when the 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery supported units manning the Marines were fighting to hold Reno, Vegas, and Carson.*

Nations ground forces by day and by night. The crews of Marine night fighters, Grumman F7F Tigercats and Douglas F3D Skyknights, learned to take deadly advantage of beams from searchlights along the main line of resistance that illuminated terrain features held by the Chinese, bathing in light those on the near slope and creating an artificial horizon for air strikes against those on the shadowed slope farther from United Nations lines. Artillery, firing time-on-target or variable-time concentrations, blanketed known Chinese antiaircraft batteries within 2,500 yards of a target. At first, this kind of bombardment, usually lasting about three minutes,

effectively silenced the hostile gunners, but with repetition the technique declined in effectiveness, serving to alert the Chinese that an air strike was imminent. Besides providing close air support for the ground forces, Marine night fighters escorted Air Force B-29s on missions against North Korea and flew long-range interdiction.

### **On the Main Line of Resistance**

While infantry, service, and some support elements of the 1st Marine Division repaired the positions that added depth to the I Corps front and underwent training to the rear, the Chinese exert-

ed renewed pressure on the portion of the main line of resistance that the Marines had formerly held. The enemy struck first at the outposts now held by the Turkish brigade—Berlin and East Berlin, Carson, Elko, and Vegas. Shortly before 0200 on 15 May, advancing behind deadly mortar and artillery fire, one Chinese battalion attacked Berlin and East Berlin, while another hit the Carson-Elko-Vegas complex. The Turks held their ground, thanks in part to accurate fire from Marine tanks on the main line of resistance, which may have inflicted 300 casualties, and from the 11th Marines and the rocket battery, which fired some 5,500 105mm and 155mm how-



## Events at Panmunjom

The fighting along the combat outpost line, which caused the commanding general of I Corps to shift the 1st Marines into position for a possible counterattack, coincided with resolution of the lingering issue of forced repatriation. By the end of May 1953, the United States was insisting that there be no forced repatriation, as had happened in Europe after World War II when American troops handed over refugees and prisoners of war to Soviet authorities, the representatives of a wartime ally. The alliance that defeated Hitler's Germany soon collapsed, and the Soviet Union emerged as America's principal antagonist in a Cold War that burst into flame in Korea. China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, at first indifferent to the issue, had come to insist on forced repatriation upon realizing how many of their captured soldiers might prefer to remain in South Korea.

In short, both sides faced possible embarrassment. American acceptance of involuntary repatriation would seem a repetition of the transfers of both captives and civilians to Soviet control in the aftermath of World War

II. Widespread refusals to return to China or North Korea would shatter the image of a Communist paradise and lend substance to Western propaganda.

On 25 May, Lieutenant General William K. Harrison of the Army, the senior American delegate at the Panmunjom negotiations, persuaded the Communist side to agree to a closed session. The absence of press coverage, Harrison believed, would prevent posturing designed to influence world opinion and instead focus the attention of the delegates on progress toward a settlement. At this meeting, Harrison declared that there could be no forced repatriation and then offered compromises to make this principle palatable to the Chinese and North Koreans.

The United Nations forces would neither force captured Communist troops to return to their homeland nor simply release them. Harrison proposed instead that soldiers who refused repatriation be turned over, as the Communist delegates desired, to a Neutral Nations Repatriation Committee with representatives of five so-called neutral states—Switzerland and Sweden, with ide-

*After a high wind blew down the tents in August 1952, the Communist built a more substantial wooden structure for the armistice meetings at Panmunjom. The white*

*tent on the left is the Communist delegates' tent, while the two dark ones on the right are the United Nations delegates' tent and press tent.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-482368



ological ties to the West; Poland and Czechoslovakia, Soviet satellites at the time; and India, which followed an often erratic political course determined largely by its own self-interest. To minimize friction among the neutral nations—Poland and Czechoslovakia against Sweden and Switzerland—Indian troops would assume custody of all newly released prisoners seeking asylum.

The Communist side, troubled by the prospect of mass defections, insisted on an opportunity to persuade its soldiers who refused repatriation to change their minds and return. The United Nations, however, feared that persuasion would give way to coercion, and, as a result, Harrison's compromise specifically forbade the threat or use of force and limited the time allotted for reindoctrination to 90 days. Those prisoners who persisted

in refusing repatriation would then be turned over to the control of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Communist negotiators demanded certain changes. They called for an additional 30 days for re-education and the elimination of the United Nations General Assembly from the repatriation process, since the international organization, as a belligerent, could not serve as a disinterested guardian of the rights of Chinese or North Korean prisoners. On 4 June, however, the Communist parties accepted the principle of voluntary repatriation, although without formally endorsing it, in return for the additional 30 days of persuasion and the substitution of India's Red Cross organization for the General Assembly as custodian of those prisoners who refused to return to their homelands.

witzer shells and 4.5-inch rockets during four hours of fighting. In addition, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew 21 strikes against Chinese positions threatening the Turkish troops.

Neither the successful Turkish resistance nor the continuing talks at Panmunjom—where negotiators were addressing both the issue of repatriation and South Korean concerns that a truce could place their country at a fatal disadvantage—dissuaded the Chinese from intensifying their offensive. On 25 May, despite signs of real progress in the truce talks, Chinese gunners resumed pounding the Turkish brigade, and three days later, the enemy launched a series of attacks along much of the combat outpost line held by I Corps. At 1800 on 28 May, the enemy's *120th Division* launched simultaneous attacks against Combat Outpost 2, to the east of the Panmunjom Corridor, on Carson, Elko, and Reno, Berlin and East Berlin, and against the Hook and its two outposts, Ronson and Warsaw, these last three held by the British 1st Commonwealth Division.

The major thrusts by the Chinese division sent a battalion, advancing behind a mortar and artillery barrage, against Outposts Carson and Elko, while another battalion took

advantage of a smoke screen to storm Vegas, and a third menaced Berlin and East Berlin. At the same time, still other Chinese troops attacked Combat Outpost 2, on the left of the 25th Infantry Division's sector, and the Hook, along with Outposts Ronson and Warsaw, on the right of the I Corps line.

The 11th Marines, commanded by Colonel James E. Mills—who had taken over from Colonel Harry N. Shea on 22 February 1953—fired some 9,500 rounds during the night of 28 May, and Marine aircraft flew eight strikes against Chinese artillery positions. The Marine division's 4.5-inch rocket battery, now firing from the vicinity of the Hook, supported the Commonwealth Division. Marine tanks, dug-in along the main line of resistance, provided deadly fire from prepared positions, especially in the sector of the Turkish brigade.

The deluge of shells and rockets from Marine weapons helped the 35th Infantry Regiment hold Combat Outpost 2 and the Commonwealth Division to maintain its grip on the Hook, Warsaw, and Ronson. The Chinese, however, succeeded in capturing Carson, although Turkish troops clung stubbornly to Elko and Vegas. The threat to Berlin and East Berlin

abated swiftly, suggesting that the enemy launched the probe to divert attention from the adjacent Carson-Elko-Vegas complex.

Marine air, artillery, and armor continued to support I Corps as the fighting entered a second day. Attack planes and fighter-bombers hit Chinese troops, artillery positions, and supply points by day and night. Additional tanks moved into prepared positions on the main line of resistance until 33 of them supported the Turkish brigade. After Chinese counterbattery fire silenced six Turkish howitzers, the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, took over the direct-fire mission. By dusk on 29 May, the total rounds fired by Marine howitzers and rocket launchers in defense of the outposts exceeded 40,000.

This intense fire, and the tenacity of the Turkish soldiers who suffered 150 killed and 245 wounded, could not save the Carson-Elko-Vegas complex. By mid-day, Lieutenant General Bruce C. Clarke, the corps commander, and General Williams, in command of the 25th Infantry Division, decided to withdraw from these outposts at least temporarily. Carson had fallen to the Chinese on the previous day, and fewer than 40 survivors continued to resist on Vegas. Since



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A172204

*On 29 May, Col Wallace M. Nelson's 1st Marines move up on foot in full gear to set up a hasty blocking position on the Kansas Line in case of a breakthrough by Communist forces during their attack on 25th Infantry Division outposts.*

Elko could not survive if the enemy held both Vegas and Carson, the Turkish troops withdrew to the main line of resistance. By the time the withdrawal took place, the attacking Chinese had lost perhaps 3,000 men but showed no signs of breaking off the action.

In the meantime, General Clarke had ordered the 1st Marines to prepare for a possible counterattack. The regiment's infantry battalions and antitank and heavy mortar companies moved into position just south of the refurbished defenses of the old Kansas Line. In addition, the 1st Marine Division's reconnaissance company came under control of the 25th Infantry Division, replacing a company of that division's 14th Infantry in reserve along the east bank of the Imjin River.

The projected counterattack never occurred. Torrential rains on 30 May frustrated any ambitions the enemy may have had for trying to crack the main line of resistance.

Moreover, a truce agreement that seemed on the verge of acceptance dissuaded the United Nations Command from making the obviously costly effort to recapture Carson, Vegas, and Elko.

### The Truce in Jeopardy

After the bitter fighting on the outpost line at the end of May, a lull ensued on the I Corps front. The Chinese, however, did not abandon their attempt to improve their military position before a truce should go into effect and lunged instead at the South Korean II Corps, opposite the enemy-held town of Kumsong, attacking on 10 June and in six days of fighting forcing the defenders to pull back some 4,000 yards. A second blow drove the South Korean 20th Division back from the northern rim of the Punchbowl. By the time the fighting died down after 18 June, the South Koreans had suffered some 7,300 casualties, perhaps 600 more than the Chinese

attackers. The enemy, moreover, had pushed the South Koreans back as far as 4,000 yards on segments of the frontlines totaling about 15,000 yards in width. The offensive of mid-June proved the most successful Chinese thrust since April and May 1951 when the enemy penetrated as deeply as 30 miles at some points along the United Nations line.

Even as the negotiators at Panmunjom were resolving the outstanding issues concerning the repatriation of prisoners, Syngman Rhee, the president of the Republic of Korea, became increasingly concerned about the impact of a ceasefire on the survival of his nation. His dream of one Korea unified under the government at Seoul was rapidly vanishing. He had little direct leverage on the Chinese government; his only hope—a slim one, indeed—was somehow to prod his war-weary American ally into turning its back on the Panmunjom negotiations and exerting renewed pressure on the battlefield. To achieve this unlikely end, President Rhee threatened to pull South Korean forces out of the United Nations Command. The threat, however unrealistic, brought a formal American offer to build up the South Korean armed forces and restore the nation's shattered economy, provided that the Seoul government accepted the settlement that was taking shape. Despite his weak bargaining position, the South Korean president ignored the offer and demanded the removal of Chinese forces from the Korean peninsula, along with a formal military alliance with the United States, the recently offered program of military and economic aid, and the stationing of American air and naval forces in South Korea.

When progress continued

## The Offshore Islands

American Marines continued to provide essential help in defending the islands off the east and west coasts of the Korean peninsula that were garrisoned by their South Korean counterparts. The two defensive organizations, formerly the East Coast and West Coast Island Defense Commands, were redesignated task units effective 1 January 1953. The 2d Korean Marine Corps Regiment furnished the troops that manned these outposts under the direction of U.S. Marines.

Two battalions of South Korean Marines manned the West Coast Island Defense Task Unit, while the U.S. Marine Corps contributed some 17 officers and 100 enlisted men. The western task unit manned outposts on six islands in close proximity to the 38th Parallel, which had separated prewar South Korea from the Communist North. These islands, from north to south, were Sok-to, Cho-do, Paengyong-do, Taechong-do, Yongpyong-do, and Tokchok-to. An earlier attempt to occupy tiny Ho-do had ended in failure when the Chinese overwhelmed the garrison. The six surviving outposts served as bases for artillery, intelligence collection, the direction of guerrilla operations in North Korea, and training. At some of the



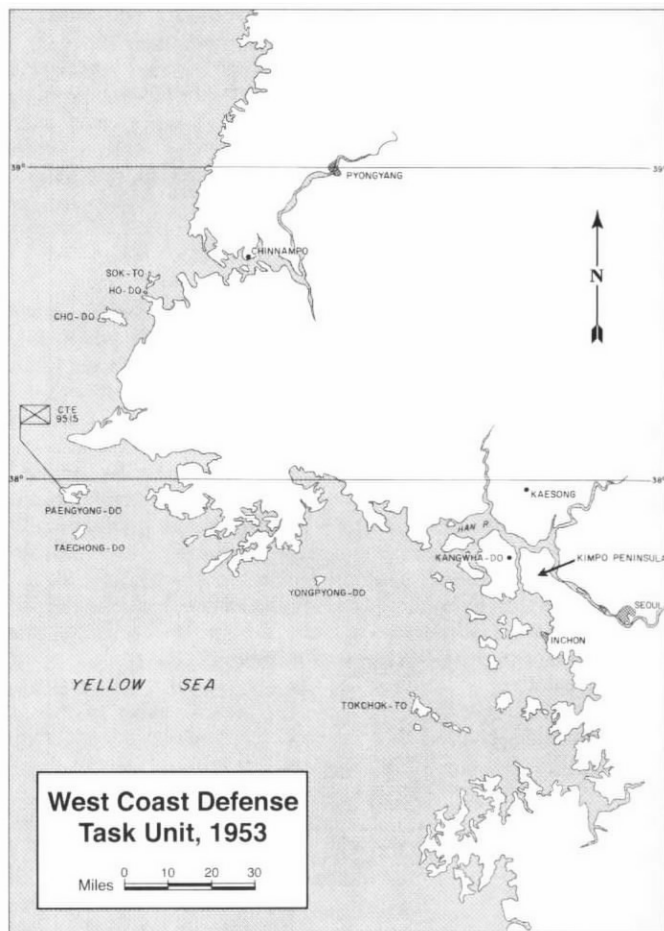
National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-480993

*Two members of the 1st Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company spot and correct gunfire laid down against Communist troops by the Dutch frigate Johann Maurits van Nassau.*

outposts, the South Koreans used their old-model radios to call down fire from artillery or naval guns against hostile batteries on the mainland. American Marines directed all this activity, although the language barrier hampered their role in training.

Late in 1952, Communist artillery batteries on the peninsula opened fire more frequently against United Nations warships as well as the western island outposts. For counterbattery missions from Cho-do, two 90mm guns supporting a force of South Korean guerrillas were shifted there from the island of Kanghwa-do at the mouth of the Han River. Enemy light aircraft contributed to the increased pressure on the islands, conducting nuisance raids against Cho-do, bombed as recently as October 1952, Sok-to, and Paengyong-do.

Besides using the two artillery pieces available at Cho-do, the guerrillas provided valuable information on enemy activity. The South Koreans reported an increasing number of Chinese junks offshore and identified major military units on the peninsula itself. As the threat of an assault against one or more of the western islands intensified, counterbattery fire from the outposts kept pace, only diminishing when the threat ebbed.



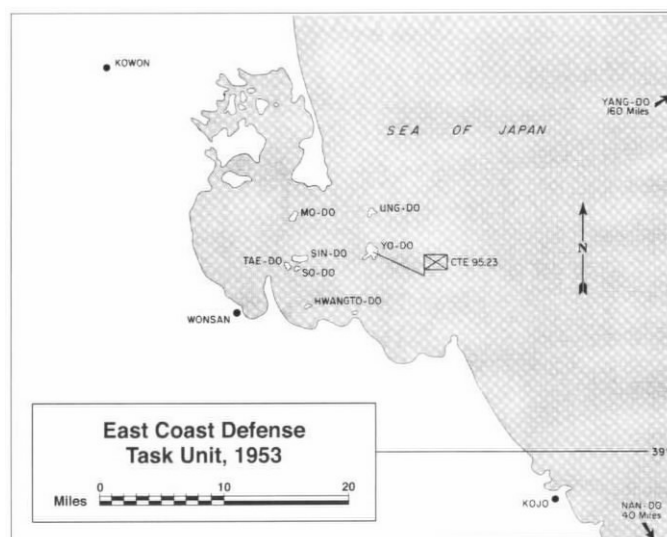


From time to time, American or British pilots, low on fuel or flying damaged aircraft, landed on the beach at Paengyong-do. Unfortunately, obtaining the needed fuel or aircraft parts proved difficult because of tangled and unresponsive lines of supply. Logistics difficulties also posed a threat to the large number of refugees that had found asylum during 1952 on the islands protected by the western task unit. As winter approached, concern mounted that they could not be fed by air or sea and would not survive the cold, but two supply-laden tank landing ships arrived before the seasonal storms began and eased the crisis.

By the spring of 1953, improving prospects for a ceasefire generally along the 38th Parallel raised doubts about the future control of two west-coast islands, Cho-do and Sok-to, which lay north of the demarcation line. Colonel Harry N. Shea, the task unit commander and his successor, Colonel Alexander B. Swenceski, carried out Operation Pandora, a plan for the evacuation of both islands. Artillery on Sok-to and Cho-do—each of which now had its own pair of 90mm guns—pounded enemy batteries along the coast, and warships joined in, including the battleship *New Jersey* (BB 62) with its 16-inch guns. Despite the avalanche of American firepower, the enemy stuck to his guns, firing some 1,800 rounds in June alone. By the end of June, Operation Pandora began the successful withdrawal first of the guerrillas and their families and then of the two island garrisons.

Whereas only two of the islands manned by the western task unit were located north of the 38th Parallel, the most important of those garrisoned by the East Coast Island Defense Unit—Tae-do, So-do, Sin-do, Mod-do, Ung-do, Hwangto-do, and Yo-do—lay just off the North Korean port of Wonsan, more than 100 miles north of the demarcation between the two Koreas. The unit also bore responsibility for two other potentially vulnerable outposts: Yang-do, off the town of Songjin, 150 miles northeast of Wonsan; and Nan-do, near the North Korean town of Kojo, some 40 miles south of Wonsan. A total of 1,270 South Korean Marines, 35 U.S. Marines, and 15 American sailors manned the defense unit. The individual garrisons varied from 300 at Yo-do, the largest of the island outposts and the site of unit headquarters and an airstrip, to the compact naval-gunfire spotting teams on the smallest of the islets off Wonsan.

Like the western islands, those off the east coast—especially the ones nearest Wonsan—endured frequent shelling from batteries on the peninsula. Because Wonsan had been a major port, the ability of the United Nations forces to blockade it served as an affront to the Chinese and North Koreans, as well as a disruption of their coastal supply line. Besides hammering the offshore outposts, hostile gunners fired upon United Nations warships, as they had off the opposite coast. At Wonsan, however, the enemy employed a more efficient fire-con-



trol technique than in the west. When United Nations gun crews on the eastern islands, or warships nearby, fired counterbattery missions against an enemy weapon, it fell silent and other artillery pieces took over the fire mission.

When winter gripped the east coast islands, temperatures dropped to 10 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit, and high winds disrupted the movement of supply ships. The Yo-do garrison, for example, survived on canned rations for a week, and for several days the defenders of Hwangto-do drank water from melted snow. When the weather improved, so did the determination of Chinese artillerymen, who fired more than 1,050 rounds against the island outposts in April 1953 and twice that number against blockading warships. In addition, United Nations sailors sighted 37 floating magnetic mines that month, although the devices caused no damage. This was the greatest number of sightings in any month since the previous summer, when mines sank the tug *Sarsi* (AT 111) off Hungnam and damaged the destroyer *Barton* (DD 722) off Wonsan.

As pressure mounted against the islands near Wonsan, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, increased the size of its contingents at these outposts by some 40 percent, adding nine Marine officers and 44 enlisted Marines and sailors. A new unit commander arrived in the spring of 1953. After a year in charge, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr., entrusted the organization to Lieutenant Colonel Hoyt U. Bookhart, Jr.

Scarcely had this change of command taken place, when preparations began for a withdrawal from the eastern islands after the signing of an armistice. On 11 June, the unit began retrenching by removing South Korean villagers, along with guerrillas and their families, from Yang-do, the farthest north and least defensible of the outposts, and withdrawing noncombatants from Yo-do, the site of the unit headquarters. Withdrawal of the other east coast outposts awaited the signing of the armistice.

toward a truce that he considered disastrous, President Rhee sought to disrupt the negotiations. On 18 June, he ordered the release of some 27,000 Communist prisoners who had refused repatriation, hoping to undo what the negotiators had accomplished in resolving the issue of repatriation. His gambit failed. The People's Republic of China launched additional limited attacks, perhaps in retaliation, but the government in Peiping had grown too weary of the long and bloody war to mount an all-out offensive. Similarly, the United States remained determined to end the Korean fighting, regardless of Rhee's objections. As an American special diplomatic mission made clear, South Korea could expect no more than a security treaty with the United States and a combination of military and economic aid that would include the presence of American troops.

On 24 June, six days after President Rhee tried to sabotage the truce negotiations, Chinese troops attacked the sector held by the South Korean II Corps, focusing on the South Korean 9th Division, which blunted the thrust after the loss of an outpost. On the following day, the enemy hit the South Korean 1st Division, to the right of the Commonwealth Division dug in at the eastern boundary of the sector held by General Clarke's I Corps. Despite fierce resistance, the Chinese overwhelmed three outposts manned by the South Korean 1st Division. Efforts to regain the lost ground halted on the 29th when General Clarke ended a series of gallant but unsuccessful counterattacks, repeating the decision made a month earlier during the fighting for Outposts Carson and Vegas elsewhere on the I Corps front that the cost in lives would be prohibitive.

As it had during the battles of late May, 1st Marine Division's the 4.5-inch rocket battery deployed eastward at the end of June to support the hard-pressed South Koreans dug in to the right of the I Corps line. The battery shifted about 20 miles closer to the action and fired some 25 missions that helped prevent a Chinese breakthrough. So grave was the threat on the right that General Clarke alerted the 7th Marines to stand by to reinforce the South Korean 1st Division, even though Eighth Army policy forbade American units from serving under South Korean command. The crisis abated, however, and the alert of the Marine regiment was canceled within 24 hours. The 1st Regimental Combat Team (less one battalion) of the Korean Marine Corps took over from the 7th Marines and relieved bloodied elements of the South Korean 1st Division.

Marine aviation took part in the fighting during June. Between the

14th and the 17th, when the Chinese made their greatest gains since 1951, American aircraft flew 8,359 sorties, 1,156 of them by Marines. The air war again intensified when the Chinese renewed their attacks. On the last day of June, for example, Marine airmen flew 301 sorties, which included 28 percent of the day's close air support and 24 percent of the interdiction missions.

### Marines Return to the Bunkers

The abandonment of the least defensible of the offshore outposts took place as President Rhee was attempting to wrest stronger guarantees of future aid from his American ally, and time was approaching for the return of the 1st Marine Division to the front-line. The release of some 27,000 captured North Korean or Chinese prisoners of war, who sought to remain in the Republic of Korea, and escape attempts by still others,

*A .50-caliber machine gun covers the field of fire across the Han River on the Kimpo Peninsula. Marines firing the weapon were members of the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, which manned bunkers overlooking the river, and in mid-June had to deploy Company A to Ascom City to maintain order among the Chinese and North Korean prisoners.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A170806



had an impact on the Marines in I Corps reserve. The 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, for example, had to deploy one company to a prisoner of war compound at Ascom City to maintain order after escape attempts there.

By releasing the prisoners of war, the South Korean president caused a temporary suspension of the truce negotiations and persuaded the United States to agree formally to a mutual defense arrangement that maintained American forces in South Korea and provided economic and military aid. Since both the People's Republic of China and the United States were ready to end the fighting, the talks resumed at Panmunjom, where the delegations tried to obtain whatever advantage they could, although without sabotaging prospects for a ceasefire.

During the latter part of June, the 1st Marine Division completed its training and prepared to resume bunker warfare. The major elements that had been in reserve returned to the segment of the main line of resistance that the division formerly held, relieving the Army's 25th Infantry Division. By dawn 7 July, the 7th Marines took over on the right of the division's line and the 5th Marines on the left, while the 1st Marines formed the division reserve, protecting the bridges across the Imjin River and the Marine radar used to direct air strikes.

The tactical situation had changed for the worse since the Marines last occupied this sector. Chinese troops now controlled the three outposts—Carson, Vegas, and Elko—that blocked the best approach to Combat Outposts Berlin and East Berlin, now being taken over by the 7th Marines. As General Pate, the division's commander, immediately realized:

"The loss of Outpost Vegas...placed Berlin and East Berlin in very precarious positions and negated their being supported by ground fire except from the MLR."

The Chinese tried to take advantage of any confusion resulting from the relief of the Army division by General Pate's Marines. On the evening of 7 July, Chinese mortars opened fire upon Outposts Berlin and East Berlin and the nearby portion of the main line of resistance, the area that Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Cereghino's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, was taking over from Turkish soldiers attached to the 25th Infantry Division. By midnight, assault troops from the Chinese *407th Regiment, 136th Division*, advanced from the vicinity of Hill 190, a frequently used staging area, then moved along the ridgeline broken by Carson, Reno, and Vegas—all of them now in enemy hands—and pounced on Berlin and East Berlin.

At Berlin, Turkish soldiers stayed in place for a time after the Marines arrived, and a patrol dispatched from Lieutenant Colonel Cereghino's battalion to set up an ambush got no farther than the outpost when the enemy struck. The remaining Turks and the newly arrived patrol reinforced the Marines manning Berlin. Higher headquarters soon lost contact with both Berlin and the other embattled outpost.

Because Berlin and East Berlin lay no more than 325 yards from the main line of resistance, their capture could provide the enemy with a springboard for an attack designed to shatter the main defenses. As a result, Cereghino organized a provisional platoon from members of his battalion headquarters and sent the unit to reinforce the main line of resistance. Elements of Companies H

and I, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, came under Cereghino's operational control and prepared to counterattack if the enemy should break through.

Meanwhile, the mixed force of Marines and Turkish soldiers succeeded in clinging to Outpost Berlin. The Marines at East Berlin succumbed, however, to an overwhelming force that surged up a steep slope and seized the main trench despite stubborn resistance from the outpost itself and accurate fire from the main line of resistance and beyond. Supporting machine guns, mortars, and artillery—deadly though they were—could not save East Berlin.

A squad from Company F, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, unsuccessfully counterattacked Outpost East Berlin at 0415 on 8 July, dispensing with the usual artillery barrage in the hope of achieving surprise. A second force of Marines from Company F moved out at about 0440 to reinforce the squad already committed to attacking East Berlin. Chinese artillery caught the reinforcements in the open and wounded 15 Marines, but the attempted counterattack continued for another hour until the men of Company F received orders to fall back so the 11th Marines could fire a time-on-target concentration against the enemy-held outpost.

The Chinese who overran East Berlin had advanced by way of Reno and Vegas, where additional forces were now gathering to exploit this early success. The 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battery hammered the assembly areas and also the Chinese attacking Berlin and consolidating their hold on East Berlin. Artillerymen of the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, fired a time-on-target concentration that shattered an enemy company as it was organizing on captured

Outpost Vegas to continue the attack. During the early morning's fighting, all four battalions of the 11th Marines took part in the firing, along with the seven U.S. Army and Turkish artillery battalions still in the area until the relief of the 25th Infantry Division was completed. These weapons matched their Chinese counterparts almost round for round, and Army and Marine Corps tanks joined the rocket battery and artillery battalions in battering the Chinese.

Despite the savage fighting that erupted at Outposts Berlin and East Berlin on the night of 7-8 July, the Marines succeeded in taking over from the 25th Infantry Division and its Turkish component. The 5th Marines and 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, effected a smooth transition, but Lieutenant

Colonel Cereghino's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, had to fight at Berlin and East Berlin. Not until 0630 did Cereghino obtain confirmation that East Berlin had fallen, and shortly afterward he learned that Berlin, some 300 yards west of the captured outpost, still survived. He promptly reinforced Berlin insofar as its compact size permitted, dispatching 18 additional Marines and roughly doubling the number of the outpost's American and Turkish defenders.

To recapture East Berlin would require a strong force of infantry supported by intense fire from mortars, tanks, and artillery. At 1000, taking advantage of an artillery and mortar barrage totaling perhaps 1,600 rounds, a reinforced platoon from Company G, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, and another

from that battalion's Company H—both companies now under Cereghino's operational control—launched the counterattack. The platoon from Company H led the way but encountered an accurate Chinese mortar barrage that pinned the Marines against the barbed wire protecting the main line of resistance and in 15 minutes reduced the force to about 20 men able to fight.

The platoon from Company G advanced through the battered unit and pressed home the counterattack. Shells fired by tanks and artillery exploded immediately in front of the infantrymen, enabling the assault force to reach the main trench on East Berlin and use grenades and small arms fire to kill, capture, or drive off the Chinese. At 1233, the platoon from

*Pilots of Marine Fighter Squadron 311, from left, Capt John A. Ritchie, Capt Lenbrew E. Lovette, 1stLt Marvin E. Day, go over their upcoming combat mission step by step. Each must know exactly what to do.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A346707

