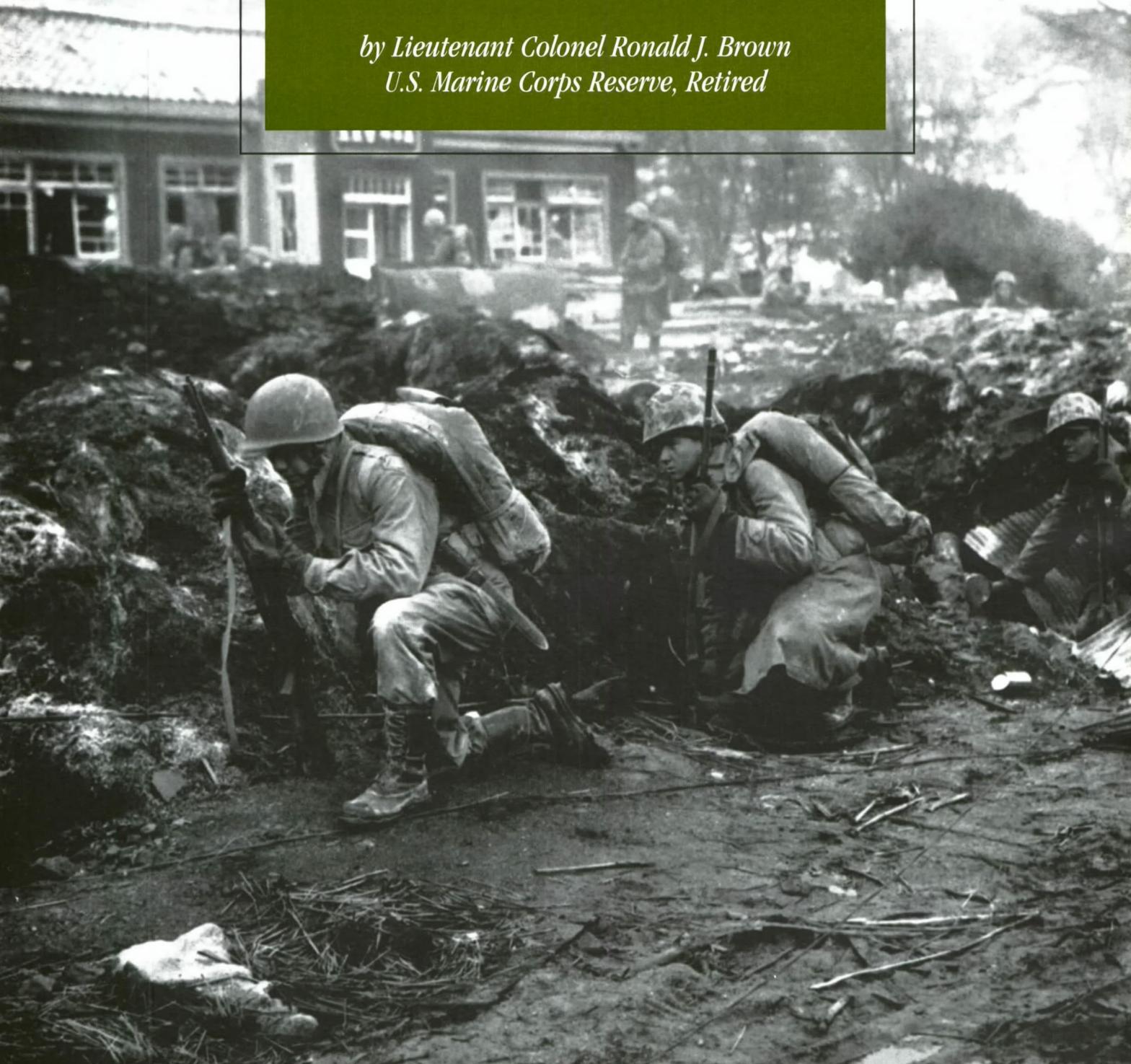


# COUNTEROFFENSIVE

## U.S. Marines from Pohang to No Name Line

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



Marines in the Korean War Commemorative Series



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



At Hungnam, the 1st Marine Division, following the withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir, embarked all of its equipment and personnel in record time and sailed for Pusan. The trip south for the half-starved, half-frozen Marines was uneventful except for the never-closed chow lines, salt-water showers, a complete change of clothes, and a widespread outbreak of colds or mild cases of pneumonia. "For the first time in weeks we felt clean," wrote one Marine, "and our lice were gone forever—washed down a drain-hole into the cold Sea of Japan." In addition to a scrub down and new dungarees, there was a good deal of conjecture and discussion on the possible employment of the division; many hoped that instead of landing at Pusan, the convoy would proceed directly to Japan or the United States and relief by the 2d Marine Division. Both officers and enlisted men alike held that it was impossible to visualize the employment of the division in the near future and that rest, reorganization, and rehabilitation was an absolute necessity. Then, too, there were those who had fought

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

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

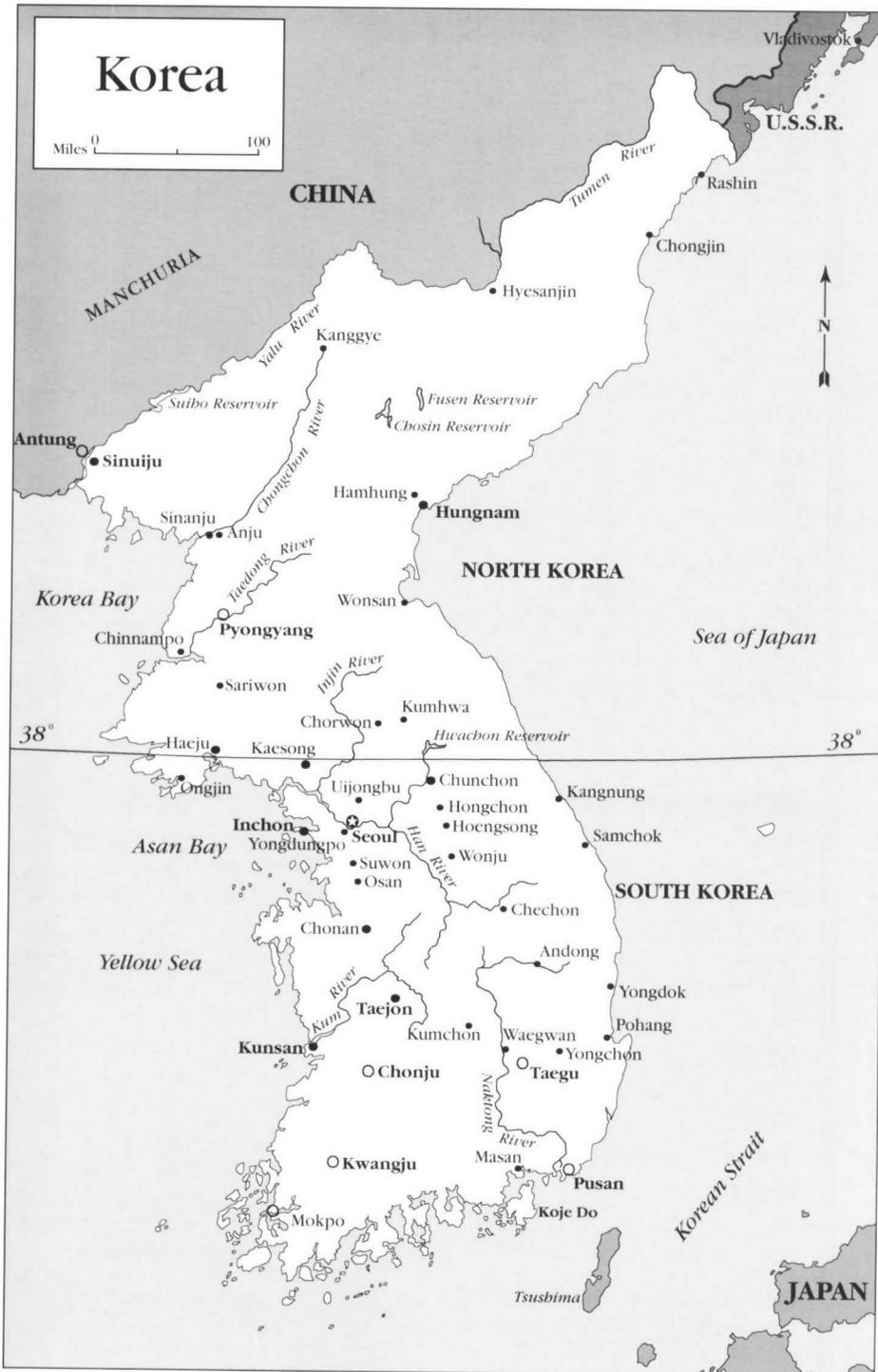
around the Pusan Perimeter and were "not too happy or not too eager to see the dreadful country they had fought over." Regardless of the speculation, the convoy steamed on, and on 16 December arrived at Pusan. Although several tank landing ships sailed past Pusan and put in at Masan, a majority of the division's Marines traveled by rail and road from Pusan 40 miles west to their new area outside the small seaport untouched by war.

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

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

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





Matthew B. Ridgway, USA, to rally his troops just as the outlook was darkest. This fortuitous event began a dramatic reversal of fortunes, a turnaround so startling that within six months it was the Communists who were on the ropes.

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

Several important new com-

first one side and then the other alternately holding the upper hand. With 1951 only a few days away the Communist forces—consisting of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) reinforced by "volunteers" from the People's Republic of China, known as the Communist Chinese Forces (CCF)—appeared on the verge of victory. In a series of stunning

blows that began the previous November, the United States-led United Nations Command had been pushed back from the Yalu River at the North Korean-Chinese border all the way south of the 38th Parallel, which divided North and South Korea. A momentary lull in the action, however, allowed the energetic new United Nations field commander, Lieutenant General



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A6087

*The general staff of the 1st Marine Division assembled for an informal photograph shortly after the New Year. Pictured from left are: Capt Eugene R. Hering, USN, Division Surgeon; Col Alpha L. Bowser, Jr., G-3; Col Bankston T. Holcomb, Jr., G-2; MajGen Oliver P. Smith, Commanding*

*General; Maj Donald W. Sherman, Assistant G-1; BGen Edward A. Craig, Assistant Division Commander; Col Edward W. Snedeker, Chief of Staff; and Col Francis M. McAlister, G-4.*

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

week before the tough and energetic Army paratrooper, General Ridgway, was named Eighth Army commander after his predecessor, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, USA, was killed in a traffic accident.

### The Masan Bean Patch

After the ordeal at the Chosin Reservoir, the 1st Marine Division moved to Masan in southern Korea where it became part of Eighth Army reserve. Concurrently, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was flying from aircraft carriers and airfields in Korea but was about to tem-

porarily deploy to Japan. On the home front, three replacement drafts (the 3d, 4th, and 5th) were either already enroute or were preparing to ship out. Hopefully, their arrival would bring the depleted Marine ranks in Korea back up to strength before the next round of combat began.

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



National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-424655

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

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

The 1st Marine Division was also blessed with four of the finest regimental commanders in Korea. The 1st Marines was led by leg-

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

Lieutenant Colonel Carl A. Youngdale led the division's artillery regiment. Youngdale served with the 14th Marines of the 4th Marine Division throughout World War II. In 1950, he came to Korea as the 11th Marines' executive officer and then took over the unit when its commander, Colonel

James H. Brower, was evacuated from the Chosin Reservoir in November. Almost two decades later Major General Youngdale would command the 1st Marine Division in Vietnam.

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

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

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

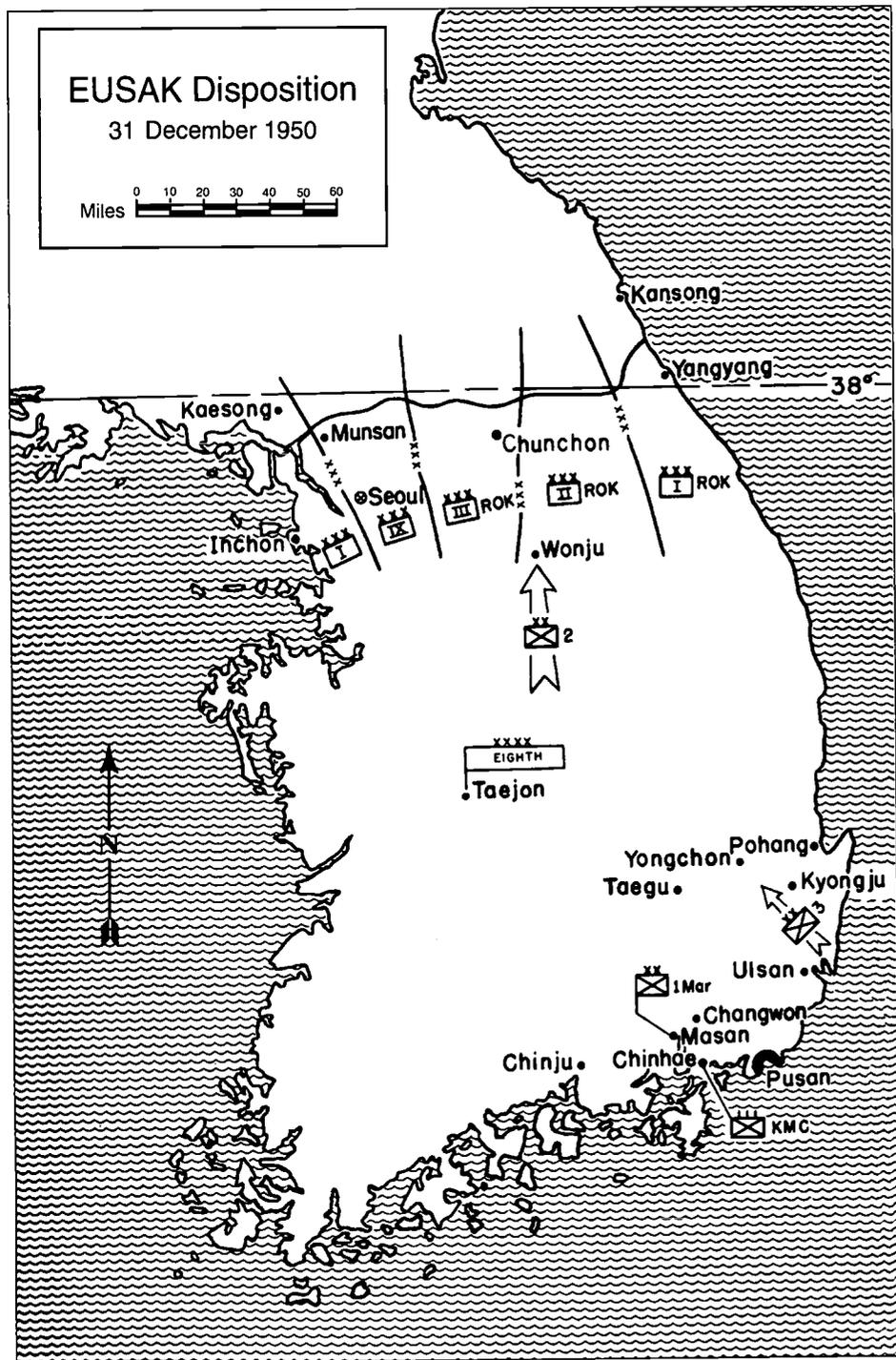
There were many high-level visitors at Masan during the division's brief stay. General Ridgway dropped in to inspect the Marines and observe field training. "He fully expected to find a division which was so weary and so beaten

up, and perhaps even with a defeatist attitude after all he'd read and heard about the Chosin Reservoir," as Colonel Alpha L. Bowser, the division's assistant chief of staff for operations, later noted. But "much to his surprise the thing that impressed him most, everywhere he went in the division, and everybody he talked to, [was] their attitude about what they

were doing to get themselves back in shape to get back into the battle." Very satisfied with what he saw, he complimented General Smith for the division's quick recovery. Although it was short of men and equipment, Ridgway still deemed the 1st Marine Division his most effective combat unit. He was, in fact, holding the Marines in reserve in case the pending crisis in the north worsened. Should the U.N. lines break, Ridgway wanted the 1st Marine Division to hold open a corridor to the port of Pusan and then act as a rear guard to cover the U.N. evacuation. Ridgway "gave the impression to us that he was a commander, with plenty on the ball, who had combat experience and the will to fight," recalled Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, the assistant division commander.

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

Sleep, sports, and good chow





National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A5640

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

were the watchwords at Masan. As Lieutenant Colonel Francis F. Parry, 3d Battalion, 11th Marines' commanding officer, remarked: "We had so much turkey it was coming out of our ears." Impromptu softball, basketball, touch football, and volleyball games became daily rituals, and these were occasionally followed by a well appreciated, albeit limited, beer ration. Weapons familiarization and small unit tactics dominated the training schedule. And as was done prior to the trek down from Hagaru-ri, the division's medical staff examined all personnel, surveying the men for those who, noted Lieutenant Colonel Parry, might have "hidden the fact that they were frostbitten or didn't consider it was worthy of note till we got down to Masan." The serious cases were evacuated. Although the men eventually were allowed go into town, visit the stores, and purchase a lot of useless things, such as artificial flowers and non-regulation fur hats, "there was no liberty," Parry recalled. "A few troops got drunk on native brew and went blind and a few of them caught a venereal disease, but there was no liberty to amount to anything, no recreation

that could properly let the troops relax and enjoy themselves for a while, such as could have been obtained in Japan." Despite a fortnight's respite and frantic efforts to bring the 1st Marine Division back up to full strength, General Smith was still short of men, tanks, and

communications equipment when the call to return to action finally came.

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

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

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

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A5628



## Lieutenant General Matthew Bunker Ridgway, USA

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

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

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

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

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

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

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC360069



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

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

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

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

Although Marines admired General Ridgway's offensive spirit and his professionalism, they were disappointed with two of his high-level decisions. First, he pulled the 1st Marine Division away from the sea and began to use that highly trained amphibious unit as just another infantry divi-

sion; second, he acquiesced to the breakup of the Marine air-ground team by allowing Marine aircraft squadrons to be directly controlled by the Fifth Air Force. Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, commander, viewed both of these actions as tactical mistakes. Previously, General MacArthur—who had commanded Marine units in the Southwest Pacific during the World War II and fully appreciated their unique capabilities—always kept the very successful Marine air-ground team intact, and he usually tried to keep the Marines near the sea as well. For a variety of reasons, Ridgway did not.

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

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

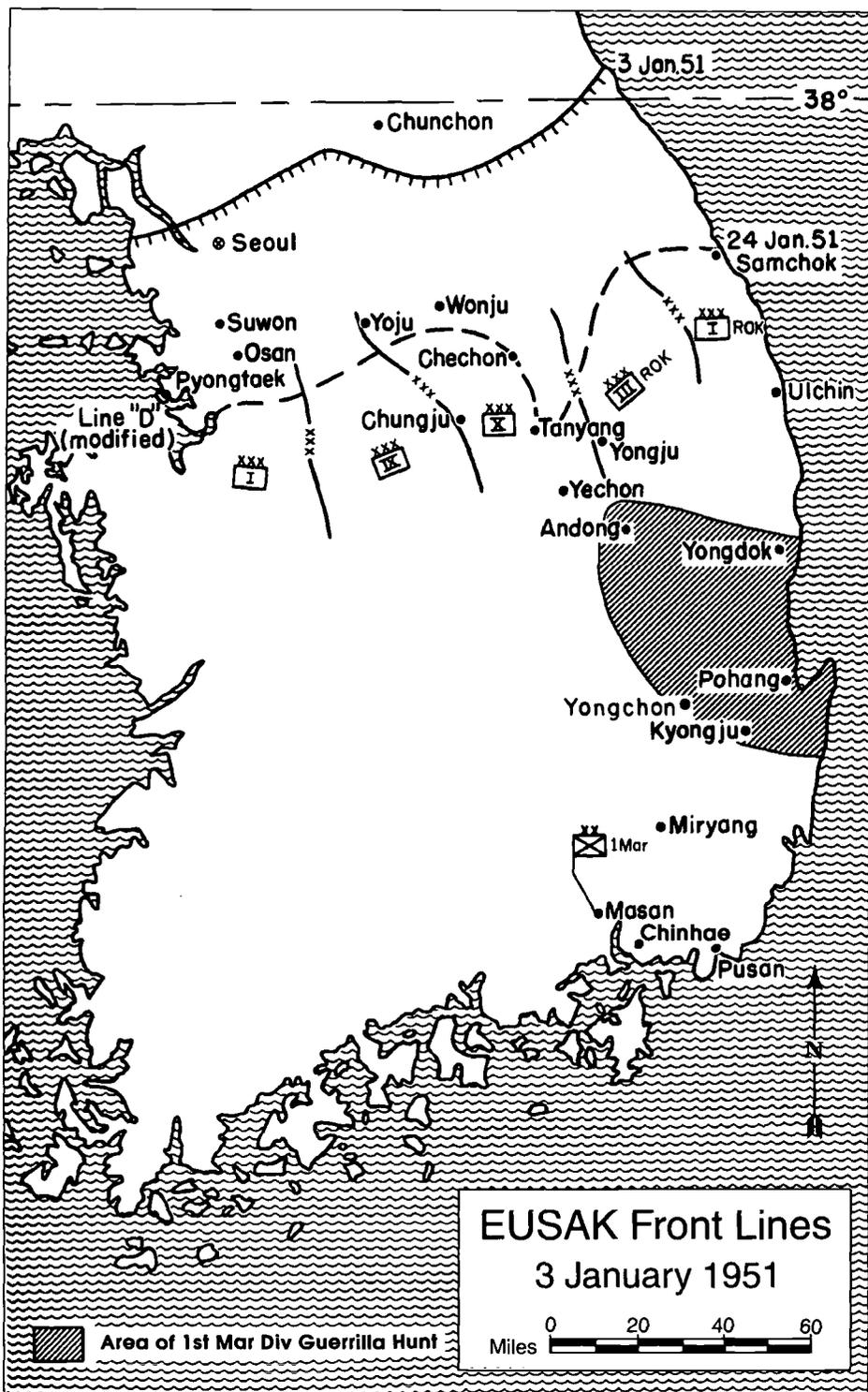
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divide Korea in half, to separate the U.S. and South Korean forces. The Chinese first carried the main attack aimed at Seoul and Inchon. The NKPA attacked Korean-held Line D from Hoengsong in central Korea not long after the CCF mounted its western offensive. Farther east, North Korean commander General Kim Chaek wanted to drive straight down the center of the peninsula to capture the U.N. staging area at Taegu. His plan was to take Wonju with a

frontal attack by Major General Pang Ho San's *V Corps* while outflanking the U.N. lines from the east using Lieutenant General Choe Hyon's *II Corps*; the *III Corps* was his reserve. All went well at first. *II Corps* cracked through the South Korean lines and proceeded down Route 29 peeling off divisions to cut the U.N. line of retreat. The *27th Division* invested Chechon; the *31st Division* attacked Tanyang; the *2d Division* cut Route 29 north of Yongju; and

the *10th Division* headed for Andong. If all went according to plan, the United Nations Command would lose control of its main supply route and be denied passage to the port at Pusan. This, combined with the loss of Seoul and Inchon, would effectively end the war.

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



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

### The Pohang Guerrilla Hunt

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

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

stage for all Marine combat operations in the spring of 1951.

While the Marines were resting in the Bean Patch, the struggle shifted from Seoul to central Korea. Fighting in knee-deep snow and bitter cold, outnumbered U.N. defenders grudgingly fell back as the enemy poured through a gap in Republic of Korea (ROK) Army

started with the departure of the 1st Marine Division vanguard, "Chesty" Puller's 1st Marines organized as a regimental combat team, on 10 January. A motor convoy carried elements of the 1st Marines; the division Reconnaissance Company; the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines; Company C, 1st Engineers; and Company D, 1st Medical Battalion, on a tedious 10-hour journey from Masan to Yongchon. Upon arrival at Uisong the next day, the regimental combat team, later dubbed "Task Force Puller" by General Smith, began patrolling a 30-mile section of road. Two days later, the reinforced 1st Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Donald M. Schmuck, a Colorado native and Peleliu veteran, moved 15 miles north to occupy Andong. A key crossroads about 40 miles inland from the sea, it was the site of X Corps rear headquarters as well as two dirt airstrips (one of which was long enough to handle cargo planes, but the other able only to service light observation aircraft and helicopters). As the 1st



1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Jan-Feb51

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

Marines edged closer to Andong, Puller was convinced, despite General Ridgway's promise to keep the division intact, that the next step would be to attach his unit to X Corps and he would be "off to the races again." Puller, as General Smith later noted, "was apprehensive about being put out on a limb. The basic difficulty was that he had no confidence in the staying power of the Army units deployed north of Andong. Puller

felt they might 'bug out' and leave him 'holding the bag.' As far as the Division was concerned, "RCT-1 was strong enough to protect its own withdrawal if it came to that." With the arrival of the division's two other regimental combat teams, soon-to-be colonel, Raymond Murray's 5th Marines patrolled the coast from Pohang to Yongdok and defended the main airfield, while Colonel Homer Litzenberg's 7th Marines occupied

*An aerial photograph of Pohang shows the rugged, irregular hill masses where North Korean guerrillas sought refuge. This village on Korea's east coast was the 1st Marine*

*Division's base of operations in January and February 1951.*

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC346705



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

Although there was some limited discussion about small-scale amphibious operations by General Ridgway when he visited the 1st Marine Division command post at Pohang, these never came to fruition. Instead, he ordered the Marines to defend an east-west line just north of the Andong-Yongdok Road and to simultaneously protect the north-south-running Eighth Army main supply route. General O. P. Smith faced a dilemma because he was at first uncertain about which of these assignments should receive the highest priority. Should he deploy to guard against an all-out attack on the main line of resistance by Communist regular forces from the north or be prepared for counter-guerrilla operations against small groups of infiltrators? Intelligence reports indicated that the latter was the most likely course of action. Small enemy bands had already proved extremely troublesome by intermit-

tently cutting supply lines and occasionally attacking outposts between Wonju and Taegu so continued guerrilla actions were considered probable. General Smith was well aware that the Marines would not be manning an exposed position. Several South Korean divisions screened the Marine northern flank, the Sea of Japan protected his eastern flank, and hilly terrain made the western approaches inaccessible to armor. Smith, therefore, decided to emphasize mobile security operations and made linear defense a secondary mission.

The enemy threatening Pohang was believed to consist of about 6,000 light infantry troops from Major General Lee Ban Nam's widely respected *10th NKPA Division*. (Post-war analysis revealed that before its destruction by the 1st Marine Division, the *10th Division* inflicted more casualties and captured more equipment than any other North Korean unit.) Although a division in name, the *10th* was short of personnel and lacked artillery, armor, and

motor transport. Its only support weapons were a few heavy mortars and some heavy machine guns. These shortfalls limited General Lee's tactical options to hit-and-run raids, roadblocks, and ambushes. The *10th Division* was, therefore, expected to conduct low-intensity operations remaining under cover during the day and attacking only in darkness. General Lee's troops seeped south through a hole in the fluid South Korean lines east of the Hwachon Reservoir in central Korea during the U.N. retreat in late-December 1950, and the division's lead elements were thought to be just arriving in the Pohang area in mid-January.

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

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

1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Jan-Feb51





National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6145

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

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

On 16 January, General Smith opened a forward command post at Sinhung, about five miles southeast of Pohang. Division Operations Order 3-51 assigned the Marines three missions. One was to protect the Kyongju-Pohang-Andong portion of the main supply route. A second was to secure the village of Andong and the two nearby airstrips. The third mission was to prevent penetration in force of the Andong-Yongdok defense line. Widely known throughout the Marine Corps as a "by-the-book" man, Smith kept this image intact by mounting a textbook anti-guerrilla campaign. The long-service veterans of the 1st Marine Division were well aware of the travails of guerrilla warfare. A few senior officers and veteran sergeants had fought local insurgents during the so-

called "Banana Wars" between the World Wars, some others had fought Chinese guerrillas in North China after World War II, and most field grade officers had closely studied the *Small Wars Manual* at Quantico. These veteran campaigners knew that counter-guerrilla operations were primarily small unit actions that tested individual stamina and required strong leadership at the fire team, squad, and platoon levels. Accordingly, General Smith decentralized operations. He created five defensive areas, formed mechanized task forces to patrol the roads, and saturated the hilly terrain with infantry patrols to keep the enemy constantly on the move. The 1st Marines, at Andong, was assigned Zone A in the northwest; the 5th Marines manned Zone B from Yongchon in the southwest quadrant; the 7th Marines operated out of Topyong-dong in Zone C, a centrally located 20-by-25 mile corridor running north from Pohang;

the 11th Marines held a narrow coastal strip north of Pohang known as Zone D; and Lieutenant Colonel Harry T. Milne's 1st Tank Battalion operated in Zone E southeast of Pohang. The light utility aircraft of VMO-6 were in general support.

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

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

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

January and February of 1951."

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

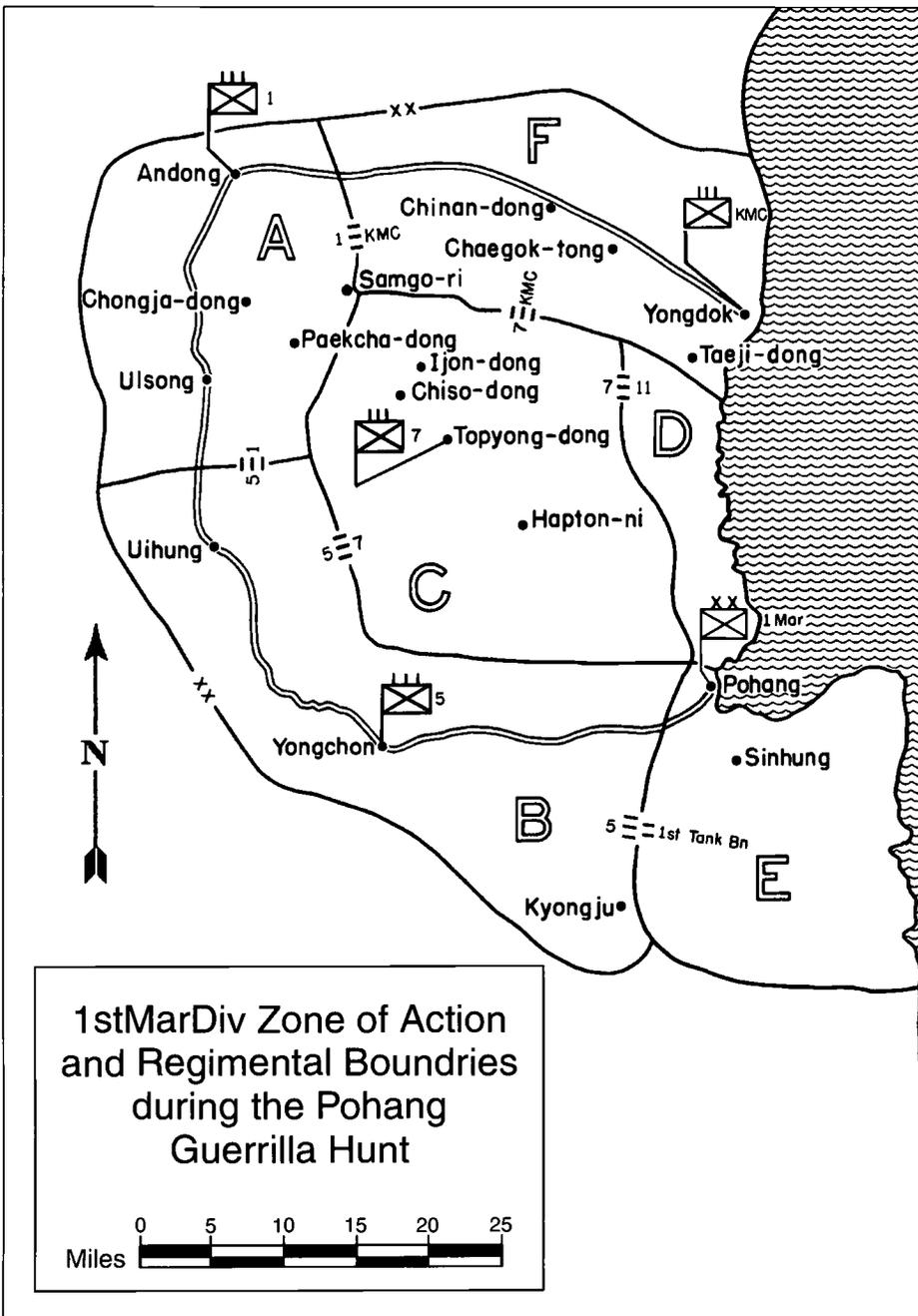
Each day was much like the one before: we would board trucks in the morning following chow and in full gear minus packs, roll out five miles or more to some predetermined spot, dismount, and undertake a sweep of the

nearby hills and valleys, clearing all the villages in our path. And then we would return to camp in late afternoon, wash ourselves in the battalion shower tent (a real luxury), have chow, clean our gear, write letters and engage in bull sessions until it was time to stand watch.

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

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

On 24 January, Colonel





National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6080

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

Litzenberg's 7th Marines began a three-day raking operation to clear the enemy from its zone of action. The *In Min Gun* retaliated by hit-

ting the regimental command post at Topyong-dong and the 1st Battalion three miles to the northwest, but both attacks by the 25th

*NKPA Regiment* failed. On the 26th, Major Webb D. Sawyer's 1st Battalion isolated an enemy company atop Hill 466 that held the attackers at bay with mortars, small arms, and hand grenades. The Marines answered with their own artillery, mortars, and automatic weapons. The outgunned enemy quickly abandoned the position after suffering an estimated 50 dead and about twice that many wounded. That same afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel Robert L. Bayer's 2d Battalion repulsed a NKPA counterattack and counted 44 enemy dead in the aftermath. During the entire operation, Colonel Litzenberg reported enemy losses at about 250 killed and 500 wounded with a dozen prisoners taken. These one-sided fights left little doubt about who held the upper hand. Consequently, General Lee ordered his troops to cease offensive operations until

*A tank-led column from Company C, 1st Tank Battalion, stands by as a patrol from the 5th Marines searches a nearby village for guerrillas. The 90mm gun of the M-26*

*Pershing tank in the foreground and the 75mm gun of the following M-4 Sherman tank provided the requisite fire-power.*

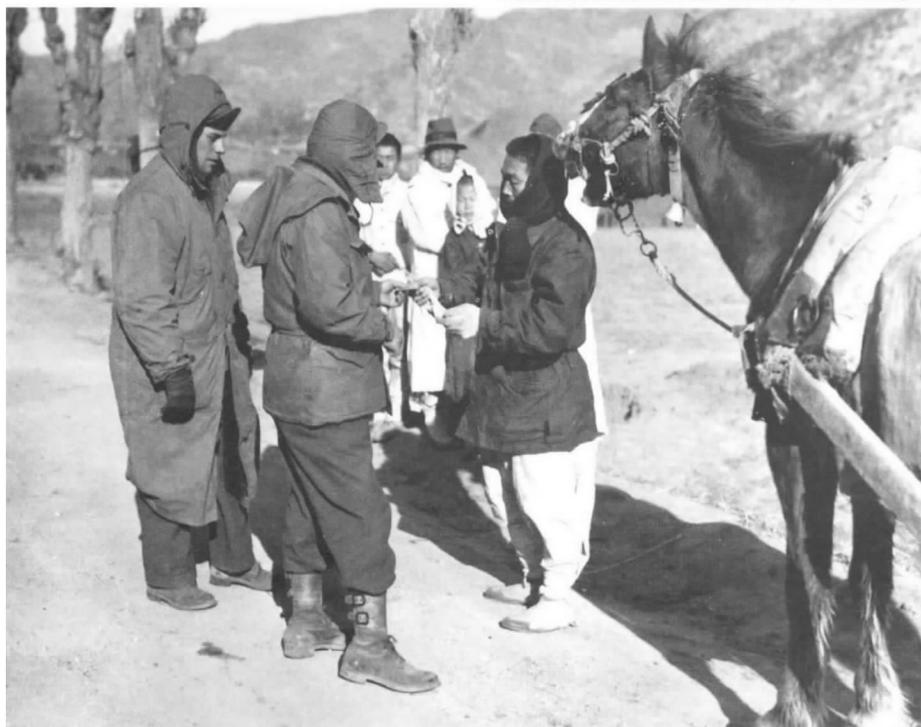
National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6076



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

The actions at Pohang thus far typified the frustrations of anti-guerrilla warfare. On every occasion the Marines hammered their opponents but were unable to pin down the elusive enemy so decisive action could be affected. "It became a game," Colonel Litzenberg reported. "We would find them about 1400 in the afternoon, get our artillery on them, air on them, and then they would disappear. The next day we would have to find them again." This disconcerting pattern continued throughout January and February 1951, much as it had in the Philippines at the turn of the century and would again in Vietnam little more than a decade later. But as Litzenberg noted, "the operations in this area constituted a very, very successful field exercise from

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



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6298



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6142

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

which we derived great benefit." "It was excellent training for the new replacements," echoed General Smith's aide de camp, Major Martin J. Sexton. "It gave them the opportunity of getting a conditioning, and an experience of the hardest type of warfare, mountainous warfare, and fast moving

situations. They also had the opportunity to utilize supporting fire of all types, including naval gunfire."

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



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6645

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

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

It soon became obvious that the NKPA had bitten off more than it could handle. Enemy prisoners confirmed signal intercepts and

agent reports that the 10th NKPA Division had been ordered to leave Pohang to rejoin the NKPA II Corps. Concurrently, aerial observers noted a general movement to the west out of the 7th Marines' Zone C into Zones A and B (1st and 5th Marines, respectively). The resulting attempts to slip out of the Marine noose resulted in several very one-sided clashes during the first week of February. On the night of 31 January-1 February, a company-sized patrol from the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, engaged an estimated enemy battalion near Sanghwa-dong. The enemy suffered about 50 casualties and three North Koreans were captured along with several mortars and small arms. A few days later Lieutenant Colonel Allan Sutter's 2d Battalion and Lieutenant Colonel Virgil W. Banning's 3d Battalion pushed fleeing NKPA troops into blocking positions

manned by the Korean Marines' 22d Company during a successful "hammer-and-anvil" combined operation. In the 7th Marines zone of action, Lieutenant Colonel Wilbur F. Meyerhoff's 3d Battalion killed about 45 NKPA in a sharp action northwest of Wolmae-dong, and Lieutenant Colonel Bayer's 2d Battalion overcame fierce resistance to take Hill 1123. To the southwest, a trap set by Lieutenant Colonel John W. Stevens II's 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, turned out to be a bust, but Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Tapplett's 3d Battalion destroyed four roadblocks, killed 30 enemy, and captured three more in the vicinity of Yongchon. Lieutenant Colonel Harold S. Roise's 2d Battalion occupied Hill 930 after ejecting some stubborn defenders. Along the northern coast, Colonel Kim's Korean Marines took Paekcha-dong and forced its defenders to scatter. A unique approach was tried on 4 February when a loudspeaker-equipped Marine Douglas

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

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6175





Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A6198

*Marines and South Korean laborers bring a Marine casualty down from the scene of a skirmish with North Korean guerrillas. During the month at Pohang, Marine nonbattle casualties outnumbered battle casualties by a ratio of nine to one.*

R4D Skytrain transport plane broadcast appeals to surrender. About 150 individuals answered the call, but most of them turned out to be South Korean laborers who had been forced into service by the NKPA. Chance-Vought F4U Corsairs from Marine Fighter Squadron 323 then dropped bombs, rockets, and napalm upon the remaining NKPA. The last major action of the "guerrilla hunt" occurred when two battalions of

the 1st Marines, commanded by the division's former logistics officer, Colonel Francis M. "Frank" McAlister, who replaced newly promoted "Chesty" Puller on 25 January, routed an estimated battalion of the *27th NKPA Regiment*, south of Samgo-ri. More than 75 enemy were killed and an unknown number were seriously wounded by the time the North Koreans fled the field of battle on 5 February. Only scattered resis-

tance by diehard individuals or small groups was reported to headquarters from then until the Marines departed Pohang.

Enemy deserters told interrogators that disease and low morale took a heavy toll. They reported an NKPA battalion commander had been shot for desertion and that General Lee was immobilized by severe depression. Other measures of enemy desperation were that women were increasingly being

drafted to serve as porters and combat troops were donning captured American clothing to cover their escape. Although the *10th Division* still could muster about 1,000 men, captured dispatches indicated CCF headquarters ordered the remaining NKPA to break out of the Marine encirclement. General Smith's situation report to Eighth Army headquarters on 11 February stated that the enemy had been appreciably reduced and declared "the situation in the Division area is sufficiently in hand to permit the withdrawal of the Division and the assignment of another mission." Armed with this knowledge, intelligence officers at Eighth Army rated the *10th Division* as combat ineffective, and General Ridgway decided the 1st Marine Division could be put to better use elsewhere.

There were several important administrative changes in the 1st Marine Division at Pohang. On 2 February, Brigadier General Puller became the assistant division commander when Major General Edward A. Craig departed for the United States. This was the first in a series of command changes wrought by new rotation policies. In the next three weeks, 12 of 16 maneuver battalions would change hands. Thirty officers and 595 enlisted men, all former members of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, were sent back to Pusan to await conveyance to the United States. That much-longed-for transportation arrived when the troop ship *USS General J.C. Breckinridge* (AP 176) delivered 71 officers and 1,717 enlisted men of the 5th Replacement Draft to Pohang on 16 February. These new arrivals were rather hurriedly assimilated and they brought the 1st Marine Division back up to fighting strength just as it shipped out for

central Korea. Unfortunately, the combined U.S.-Korean Marine team was broken up again. On 2 February, the independent 5th KMC Battalion was transferred to X Corps Headquarters, and General Smith learned the 1st KMC Regiment would stay behind when the 1st Marine Division moved out.

There were no pitched battles or epic engagements at Pohang, but the Marines had rendered an enemy division ineffective. Marine battle losses during the period 12 January to 15 February numbered 26 dead, 148 wounded, and 10 missing in action. There were also a large number of nonbattle casualties, primarily the result of frostbite or minor injuries, most returned to their units. Enemy casualties and non-combat losses were estimated at more than 3,000 men. The "guerrilla hunt" was also

particularly useful for training and physical conditioning. Constant movement over rough terrain ensured all hands were in good shape, rifle squads and mortar sections developed into coherent and tactically proficient units, and most of the 3,387 Marine replacements got at least a brief taste of combat conditions. With respect to operations, the Marines functioned as a truly integrated air-ground team. Although there were few opportunities to use Marine close air support, VMO-6's Consolidated OY "Sentinel" light observation aircraft and Sikorsky HO3S-1 "Dragonfly" helicopters served as airborne scouts and rescue craft while bubble-top Bell HTL helicopters were most often used as aerial ambulances. Indeed, the 1st Marine Division was so well honed after Pohang that five decades later

*MajGen Smith distributes clothing donated by the Marine Corps League to Korean children in one of the nearby villages. "No attempt is made to obtain an exact fit," Smith said, "as there is not time."*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6437



## The Enemy

In the spring of 1951, the forces opposing the United Nations Command consisted of more than a half million men of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) and the Communist Chinese Forces (CCF) under the leadership of Chinese General Peng Teh-Huai. The CCF played no role during the initial stages of the Korean Conflict, but the Chinese *Fourth Field Army* serving under the questionable rubric "Chinese People's Volunteers" began secretly infiltrating North Korea in the fall of 1950. Such cooperation was nothing new; the Communists in China and North Korea had often worked together in the recent past. North Korea had been a Communist sanctuary during the Chinese Civil War, and North Korean volunteers fought side-by-side with the Chinese Communists since the mid-1930s.

### The NKPA

The North Korean People's Army, more formally the *In Min Gun*, entered the Korean Conflict as a well-armed and well-trained military organization. The NKPA was modeled after the Soviet Red Army and was primarily armed with Soviet-made weapons. Specially selected veteran officers attended Soviet military schools in 1948 then became the cadre around which the NKPA was built. A few senior leaders and many enlisted men were veterans of the Korean Volunteer Army (KVA), which fought side-by-side with Mao Tse Tung's Communist guerrillas who successively defeated the Japanese during World War II and Chang Kai Shek's Nationalists during the Chinese Civil War. The Korean volunteers returned to North Korea in 1949 and were promptly integrated into the NKPA.

In the summer of 1950, the *In Min Gun* rolled over the surprised and outnumbered South Koreans. But, just as the victorious NKPA prepared for its final thrust to oust the United Nations from the Pusan Perimeter, General Douglas MacArthur conducted one of the most successful amphibious operations in military history when X Corps, spearheaded by the 1st Marine Division, landed at Inchon and then quickly recaptured Seoul. Outflanked and cut off from its supply bases, the NKPA was quickly routed and its remnants fled to the dubious safety of North Korea with the U.N. in hot pursuit. The sudden intervention of the CCF around Thanksgiving stopped MacArthur's northern advance, and by Christmas the United Nations Command was in full retreat. At that time the disorganized and demoralized NKPA underwent a complete make over. The NKPA was placed under Chinese command and was reorganized into light infantry units similar to those of the CCF.

During the spring of 1951, the Marines faced the NKPA *V and II Corps*. These units were armed with heavy mortars and machine guns, but only occasionally received adequate artillery support. The *10th NKPA*



DIVIC (USMC) HDSN9903152

*Division* was the guerrilla force the Marines encountered at Pohang. The NKPA *V Corps* screened CCF movements and acted as the rear guard battling the Marines on the Central Front.

### Communist Chinese Forces

The Communist Chinese *Peoples Liberation Army* (PLA) was a massive, mostly illiterate, peasant army that had been fighting for almost two decades without a break in 1951. Its sheer size and vast combat experience made it a formidable opponent. The PLA was, however, basically a light infantry force that possessed few tanks and its artillery arm was vastly undergunned by western standards. In November 1950, Mao Tse Tung sent more than 500,000 men into Manchuria and North Korea. The men entering Korea called themselves "Volunteers," but were labeled "Communist Chinese Forces" by the United Nations.

Initially, the CCF was actually the Chinese *Fourth Field Army* in Korea. This organization was divided into group armies, armies, and divisions. The 10,000-man Chinese divisions included only about two-thirds as many troops as an American infantry division but, ironically, mustered a much larger number of "trigger pullers" because the spartan CCF had so few support personnel. A CCF division was lucky if it had more than a single artillery battalion armed with 120mm mortars or 76mm antitank guns. The lack of fire support, motor transport, and modern communications dictated CCF tactics, which primarily consisted of night infiltration or massive frontal or "human wave" assaults conducted under cover of darkness. The Marines encountered the CCF *39th, 40th, and 66th Armies* during the fighting around Hwachon in the spring of 1951.

Marine historian Edwin H. Simmons reminisced about that time, stating: "The 1st Marine Division in Korea was the finest fighting outfit I ever served with"; no small praise from a combat veteran of three wars.

### Back to the Attack

While the 1st Marine Division was busy rebuilding at Masan and chasing guerrillas at Pohang, the vastly outnumbered Eighth Army continued to fall back in what eventually became the longest retreat in American military history. But, as soon as the CCF Third Phase Offensive ran out of gas, General Ridgway resumed offensive operations. In mid-January, he initiated the first in a series of drumbeat attacks that eventually carried U.N. forces back above the 38th Parallel. Unlike the reckless rush to the Yalu the previous year, however, this time Eighth Army relied upon cautious advances, which were both limited in scope and closely controlled by higher headquarters, carefully coordinated actions intended to punish the enemy as well as to gain ground. In general, Ridgway eschewed flanking movements and objectives deep in the enemy rear. Instead, numerous phase lines strictly controlled U.N. activities and attacking units kept pace with those on each flank. The Marines—except for pilots flying close air support missions—missed the first three offensive operations (Wolfhound, Roundup, and Thunderbolt), but the 1st Marine Division was destined to play key roles in Operations Killer, Ripper, Rugged, and Dauntless.

Each of Ridgway's successive operations was more ambitious than the previous one. By mid-February, the Eighth Army had gathered momentum and was on

the move all across Korea. At that time the U.N. front was held from left to right by the U.S. I Corps, IX Corps, X Corps, and units of the South Korean army. The United Nations Command was in the process of rolling back the Communists in western Korea when General Ridgway met with General Smith at Suwon in late January to discuss the 1st Marine Division's next mission. Ridgway wanted to send the Marines to central Korea, but Smith lobbied hard to have the 1st Marine Division placed on the far right flank in order to stay near the coast. Smith noted that his division was the only Eighth Army unit trained for amphibious operations and added that a position near the sea would allow the Marines to make maximum use of naval gunfire and carrier-based air, supporting arms with which they were intimately familiar and well-practiced in using. Such a disposition would also allow the Marines to use Pohang as the principal port of entry, a factor that would ease the logistical burden by shortening supply lines. Amplifying, Smith pointed out that "the 1st Marine Division with a strength of approximately 24,000 was larger than any of the Army infantry divisions or ROK divisions at this time and in that there were single . . . supply routes, for the corps and the divisions and it would be less of a strain upon transportation and less of a logistical problem to supply a smaller army division or ROK division inboard, well inland in Korea, than it would be in the case of the Marine division." This was a critical consideration because it would reduce overland transportation problems. Marine trucks were both few in number and in poor shape after hard use at the Chosin Reservoir. Smith's logic won over the Eighth Army commander, and

after that meeting Ridgway directed his staff to prepare plans for the Marines to remain on the east coast.

Unfortunately, these plans were overcome by events before they could be put into effect. The catalyst for the movement of the 1st Marine Division into central Korea was the third battle for Wonju, a vital communications and road link whose loss might well force the evacuation of Korea by U.N. forces. Wonju was put at great risk when Hoengsong, located about 10 miles north on Route 29, was lost. This near disaster occurred when the Communists launched their Fourth Phase Offensive in which the CCF *40th* and *66th Armies* and the NKPA *V Corps* initiated a series of devastating attacks out of the swirling snow beginning on the night of 11-12 February. The U.S. X Corps suffered a serious setback when three Republic of Korea Army divisions disintegrated and combat support elements of the U.S. 2d Division were cut off and then annihilated in "Massacre Valley" just north of Hoengsong. The 23d Infantry was cut up, the artillery overrun, and "only 800 had come in so far and only one in twenty had weapons," General Puller told Smith. With the key city of Wonju threatened and X Corps reeling back, General Ridgway had no choice but to commit what he called "the most powerful division in Korea" to "where a great threat existed to that portion of the Eighth Army's lines." On 12 February 1951, General Smith received a warning order to prepare the 1st Marine Division to move to Chungju in south-central Korea "on 24 hours' notice at any time after 0700, 14 February." As Major Martin Sexton later commented: "The 1st Marine Division was deployed right in the center of Korea and its amphibious



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A7274

*A Marine light machine gun team boards a train for the trip from Pohang to Chungju in central Korea. The 1st Marine Division was to be positioned astride what LtGen Matthew Ridgway considered to be the logical route for the expected enemy counterthrust.*

capabilities destroyed at the same time.”

The Korean peninsula can be roughly described as a 600-by-150 mile parallelogram that descends ever downward from the Manchurian border and also slants down from the hilly eastern one-third that abuts the Sea of Japan until it gradually levels off along Yellow Sea to the west. The peninsula can be easily divided into several unique geographic areas: two horizontal sections, one in the north and one in the south, comprise the basic economic sectors; three vertical sections—the east, central, and west corridors—each comprise about one-third the width of the peninsula. Most of North Korea is rugged mountain territory whose fast-flowing rivers provide the water and electric power necessary for industrial development. South Korea, on the other hand, includes most of the

agricultural land. Trans-peninsular communications, particularly roads and railways, are hampered by geography. The craggy Taebaek

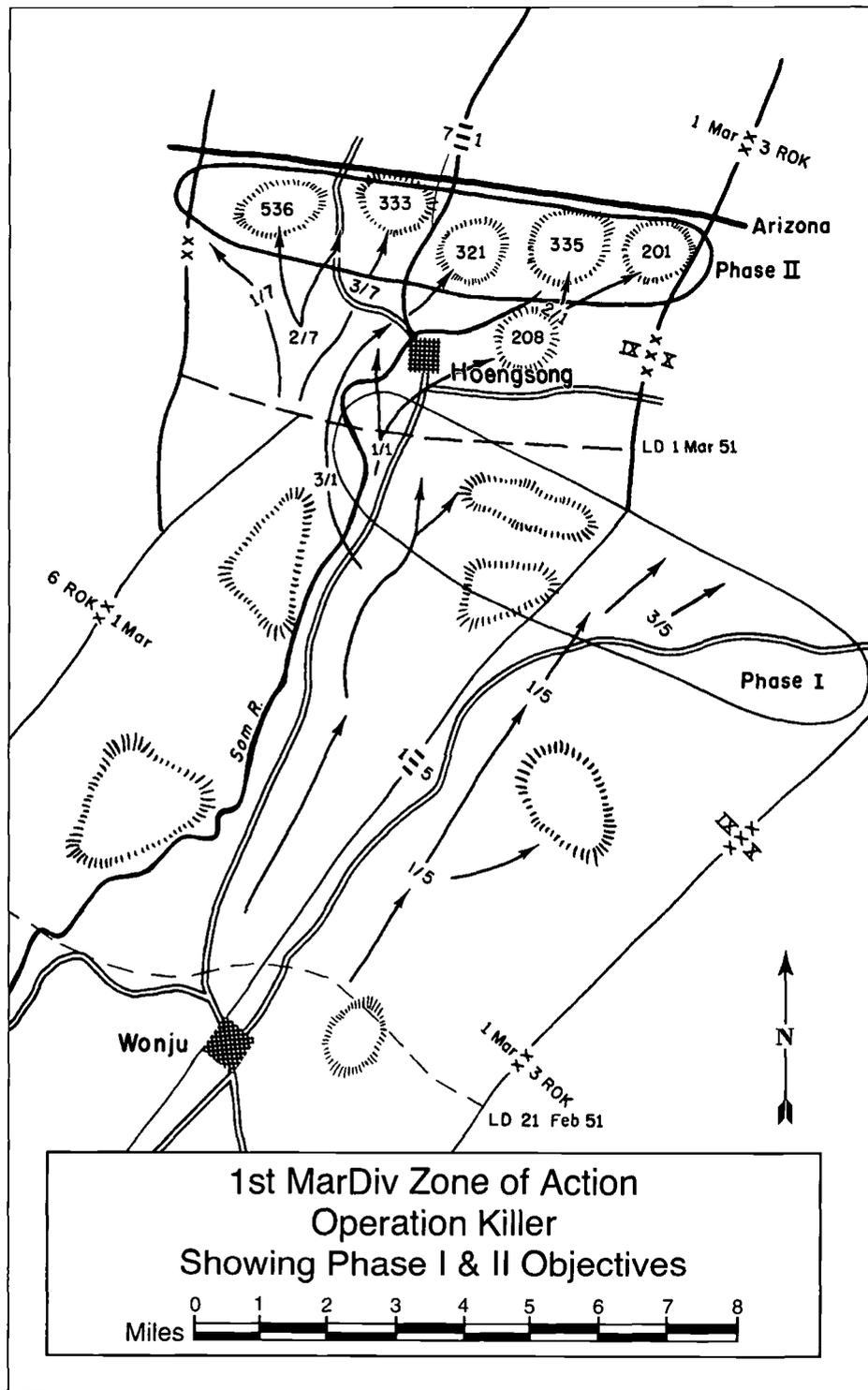
*Marines move up to the front during Operation Killer, the fourth of the so-called Ridgway Offensives. During that action, the Marines advanced up the Som River Valley from Wonju to Hoengsong against light to moderate resistance.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6851



Mountain range roughly parallels the east coast where its irregular cliffs severely limit the number of suitable landing areas and provide no spacious flat lands to support agricultural or urban development. There are few east-west overland links, and the only north-south route in the east runs tenuously along the narrow coast. Numerous fingers of the Taebaek intermittently reach west across the central corridor creating a washboard of alternating river valleys and spiny ridgelines. The flattest expanses are located along the west coast, an area that includes both Korea's major port Inchon and its largest city, Seoul.

General Smith's new orders focused Marine attention upon the central corridor, and all major combat actions during the spring of 1951 would take place in that zone. The dominating terrain feature was the Hwachon Reservoir, a 12-mile basin that blocked the southern flowing Pukhan River using a sizable dam. The reservoir was located just about at the peninsula's dead center. It provid-



ed pre-war Seoul with most of its water and electricity, but that was no longer true. The Hwachon Reservoir did, however, have significant tactical value. Just north of the 38th Parallel and at the southern edge of a mountainous shelf, it marked both the political and geographic divisions of North and South Korea. This barrier effective-

ly channeled all movement to either the east (Yanggu) or west (Hwachon), and the side holding the dam could threaten to flood the low-lying Chunchon and Soyang Valleys at will.

Korea's central corridor also included all of the major communications links between both the east and the west and the north

and south. A string of road junctions spiraled south along Routes 17 and 29 from Hwachon at roughly 15-mile intervals. These included Chunchon, Hongchon, Hoengsong, and Wonju—each of which would become a major objective during the Ridgway offensives on the Central Front.

### Operation Killer

Beginning on 16 February, the Marines mounted out from Pohang by regimental combat teams for Chungju. Fortunately, by that time the CCF and NKPA were being pounded by air and artillery until their attacks ran out of steam north of Wonju. Thus, when the Marines finally arrived at Chungju, they could be used to spearhead a U.N. counteroffensive, a closely coordinated pincer attack by the U.S. IX and X Corps intended to trap the NKPA *III* and *V Corps* called Operation Killer. Eighth Army released the 1st Marine Division from direct control when it joined Major General Bryant E. Moore's IX Corps for Operation Killer, a two-phase drive up the Wonju basin to retake and secure Hoengsong. An Army officer, General Moore had served side-by-side with the Marines at Guadalcanal in 1942. He ordered General Smith to seize the high ground south of Hoengsong hoping to cut off enemy forces to the south by denying them use of their main egress routes. Although Smith lost tactical control of the 1st KMC Regiment when the Marines departed Pohang, U.S. Army artillery and transportation units reinforced the division. Particularly welcome additions were the much-needed vehicles of the U.S. Army's 74th Truck Company, and the "Red Legs" of the 92d Armored Field Artillery, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Leon F. Levoie, Jr.,

USA. This was a first-rate Army self-propelled howitzer unit that had rendered outstanding support at the Chosin Reservoir. The artillerymen of the 92d were, as Major Martin J. Sexton noted, "trained basically as Marines are in that they were essentially riflemen too, if not first."

On 19 February, Smith and Puller attended a commander's conference. There, they learned the 1st Marine Division was to be the focus of the main effort for Operation Killer and would advance with the 6th ROK Division on the left and X Corps to the right. General Ridgway's orders were to "seek out the enemy and inflict the greatest possible damage." In Marine terms, Operation Killer was going to be "buttoned up"; all U.N. forces were to keep close lateral contact, to maintain tactical integrity at all times, and to strictly adhere to the timetable.

Units would not bypass enemy positions and had to stop at each phase line even if there was no enemy resistance. Regrettably, the conference closed on a less than happy note for the Marines. Generals Smith and Puller were taken back to learn Operation Killer was to kick off in less than 48 hours, too short a time to move the entire division to the line of departure. The Marines were further dismayed when they were denied the use of a dedicated Marine fighter squadron. Their arguments to hold up the attack until the entire division could be assembled were dismissed by Ridgway who also refused to intervene to assure the Marines adequate close air support. In spite of Marine objections, H-hour was set for 1000 on 21 February.

General Smith elected to use two regiments (the 1st and 5th Marines) in the attack and keep

one, the 7th Marines, in reserve. The line of departure was located just north of Wonju. The area in the Marine zone was uninviting, to say the least. In the words of official Marine Corps historian Lynn Montross: "There were too many crags [and] too few roads." Rocky, barren, snow-covered ridges boxed in the narrow Som Valley whose lowlands were awash with runoff from melting snow and flooded by overflowing streams. The weather was terrible, "a mixture of thawing snow, rain, mud, and slush," according to 3d Battalion, 5th Marines' commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Joseph L. Stewart. The axis of advance was generally northwest along Route 29, which was sarcastically known as the "Hoengsong-Wonju Highway" (it was actually a primitive one-lane packed-dirt trail totally unsuited to support vehicular traffic) that generally paralleled

*LtGen Ridgway ordered Eighth Army troops to "get off the roads and seize the high ground." Here a Marine patrol makes its way up a difficult trail during Operation Killer.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6952





1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Jan-Feb51

*A Marine Corsair circles after delivering napalm upon a suspected enemy position near Wonju in central Korea. The controversial breakup of the Marine air-ground team by Fifth Air Force in 1951 remained a touchy and unresolved issue throughout the rest of the Korean Conflict.*

the Som River. The final objective was an east-west running ridgeline south of the ruins that had once been Hoengsong. The enemy defending this area was identified as the 196th Division from Chinese General Show Shiu Kwai's 66th Army.

Unfortunately, a series of events beyond General Smith's control hampered the start of operations. Transportation shortfalls meant that the 7th Marines would not be immediately available, so the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Glen E. Martin, a reserve officer who had been awarded a Navy Cross and served as a platoon and company commander during World War II, was designated the 1st Marine Division reserve for the first phase of Operation Killer. Snarled traffic, sticky mud, General MacArthur's visit to the 187th Airborne's zone, and the lack of trucks conspired to postpone the planned jump-off time. But, even with the logistical problems, the assault units of the

5th Marines—just like their World War I predecessors at Soissons—had to double time to get to the line of departure in time. Luckily, there was little enemy resistance. Under the watchful eyes of

Generals MacArthur, Ridgway, and Moore, the Marines advanced rapidly in a torrential rain opposed only by some ineffectual long distance small arms fire. Colonel Francis McAlister's 1st Marines moved up the muddy road in a column of battalions (Lieutenant Colonel Donald M. Schmuck's 1st Battalion, Major Clarence J. Mabry's 2d Battalion, and Lieutenant Colonel Virgil W. Banning's 3d Battalion, respectively). Colonel Raymond Murray's 5th Marines had a harder row to hoe advancing north (actually climbing up and sliding down the snow-covered terrain) across a series of steep ridges and narrow valleys. Lieutenant Colonel John L. Hopkins' 1st Battalion, with Lieutenant Colonel Joseph L. Stewart's 3d Battalion in trail, maintained the high ground by hugging the regimental left boundary. The Marines made it almost four miles the first day and then covered half as much ground the following day. "Unlike the Inchon-Seoul Campaign," recalled Private

*Marines advance across a fog-filled valley in the Wonju-Hoengsong sector supported by machine gun fire. Elaborate weapons positions, common in the latter stages of the war, were unusual during the seesaw fighting in the spring of 1951.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6843



First Class Morgan Brainard, “we were not moving out with what we infantrymen could recognize as a set goal, other than to kill gooks, and to move the lines steadily back north.”

The first real resistance occurred when the 1st Marines, moving with the 1st and 2d Battalions abreast, and the 5th Marines in column, neared Objectives A (Hill 537 and Ridge 400) and B (Hill 533), overlooking Hoengsong. The 1st Marines was stopped by small arms and heavy automatic weapons fire from Hill 166 on the left and dug in for the night. Supported by air and artillery, the 1st Marines secured the heights at 1015 on 23 February. That afternoon, the 1st and 2d Battalions conducted a successful flanking attack to take the final hill line and were overlooking Hoengsong as darkness fell. The 5th Marines waited in vain that same morning for an air strike before mounting a two-battalion assault to clear a pair of hills on the left. The next morning, a mechanized patrol from the 1st Marines passed through

Hoeng-song on its way to rescue several survivors still holding out in Massacre Valley where U.S. Army artillery units had been overrun almost two weeks earlier. The Marines found a gruesome sight. Burned out vehicles, abandoned howitzers, and more than 200 unburied dead lay strewn across the valley floor. This movement also stirred up a hornet’s nest. Enemy mortars and artillery ranged the ridgeline held by the 1st Marines. The major combat action of the day then occurred when Marine cannoners of Major Francis R. Schlesinger’s 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, bested their CCF counterparts in the ensuing late afternoon artillery duel. By dusk on 24 February, all Marine objectives for the first phase of Operation Killer had been secured. The Marines had suffered 23 killed in action and 182 wounded thus far.

The follow-on advance had to wait almost a week. Operations were placed on temporary hold for several reasons. One major reason was that General Moore, the IX

Corps commander, died following a helicopter crash. Additionally, the low ground around Hoeng-song had become a rain-soaked, muddy, impassible bog. Bad roads and poor weather stopped the Marines in their tracks because the assault units needed ammunition and food before they could renew the attack. Additionally, the Marine division was still fragmented because the 7th Marines was stranded at Wonju where a severe gasoline shortage idled most trucks. This shortfall was compounded by the poor trafficability of the road net, which had become a gooey morass due to the incessant rain. Army and Marine engineers labored night and day to shore up the deteriorating roads and bridges, but the supply situation became so critical that airdrops—an inefficient method heretofore used for emergencies only—had to become a logistics mainstay. Thirty-five airdrops were required to resupply the assault elements of the 1st Marine Division. Marine transport planes augmented the U.S. Air Force Combat Cargo Command participated in such drops all across the U.N. front. Also used in the resupply effort were 1,200 cargo handlers of the South Korean Civil Transport Corps. These hard-working indigenous laborers toiled under the direction of division Civil Affairs Officer First Lieutenant Oliver E. Dial. These hardy individuals each carried up to 50 pounds of supplies on A-frame backpacks to the forward most Marine units.

On 24 February, Major General Smith became the third Marine to assume command of a major U.S. Army formation (Brigadier General John A. Lejeune had commanded the U.S. 2d Division in France in 1918 and Major General Roy S. Geiger commanded the U.S. Tenth

*Marine riflemen move across a frozen rice paddy during the drive back to the 38th Parallel. Although there were a few sharp actions, Operations Killer and later Ripper were remembered as “a long walk” by Capt Gerald P. Averill in his memoir Mustang.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6869





Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A6946

*An automatic rifleman supported by another Marine with a carbine fires into a Communist-held position. Because of its great firepower, the Browning Automatic Rifle was the most vital weapon of a Marine fire team.*

Army at Okinawa in 1945) when he took over IX Corps after General Moore's fatal heart attack. Smith's reception at Yoju was subdued, according to his aide, Major Sexton:

It was a very modest and unassuming entrance that was made when General Smith stepped out of the helicopter and was met by General [George B.] Peplow, who was the chief of staff of IX Corps. A brief introduction to the staff—the corps staff officers—followed, and I would say that it was approximately an hour, possibly an hour and a half after General Smith's arrival, that the first decision which he was required to make arose. It involved a seemingly complicated scheme of maneuver wherein IX Corps would execute a flanking maneuver to envelop

a sizable North Korean force which lay in front of the left portion of X Corps' zone of action. After deliberation with the G-3 and the chief of staff, the decision was forthcoming. It was simply "No, thank you." At which time, the G-3 excitedly called his . . . G-3 of X Corps, repeated these words and happily hung up the phone. As there were at this time smiles all around the staff, it was my impression that the general had been accepted rapidly.

The following day, Smith conferred with General Ridgway regarding future operations. Although Ridgway warmed Smith with glowing words of encouragement, he concluded by saying "he didn't know what the War Department would do." Smith knew. Despite the recommendations of U.S. Army Major General

Frank E. Lowe, sent to Korea by President Harry S. Truman to evaluate American units, that Smith be elevated to corps command, it was obvious no Marine general was going to be allowed to do so on a permanent basis; accordingly, Smith's tenure lasted only until a more senior U.S. Army general arrived in Korea. He also asked for recommendations as to the future employment of the 1st Marine Division, to which General Smith replied that he knew "of no better use for the Division than to continue north on the Hoensong-Hongchon axis" as the main threat would come from that direction. In addition, Ridgway announced that Operation Killer would not resume until 1 March and that he wanted a change in zones to reorient the division more to the north. The IX and X Corps boundary was shifted west in accord with the Eighth Army commander's wishes. To do this Brigadier General Puller, who was filling in as the 1st Marine Division commander, rearranged the Marine dispositions. He pulled the 5th Marines out of the line to become the division reserve and moved the 7th Marines up into the line on the left to replace a South Korean unit that had been holding that position.

Arguably, the 1st Marine Division had the most difficult assignment of any unit in the Eighth Army. It had to cross a muddy triangular open area and then eject a dug-in enemy from a ridgeline located about a mile-and-a-half north of Hoengsong. Phase Line Arizona, as the final objective was known, consisted of five distinct hill masses (Hills 536, 333, 321, 335, and 201). The 1st Marines' commander, Colonel McAlister, assigned two intermediate objectives (Hills 303 and 208) as well. The nature of the terrain, which required a river crossing



1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Mar51

*A Marine tank pushes through the wreckage from ambushed U.S. Army units, which clogged the road to Hoengsong. Bad weather, poor roads, and supply difficulties held up the Marines more than enemy resistance during the spring of 1951.*

and prohibited extensive vehicle movement, dictated a complex scheme of maneuver. The 7th Marines on the left would have to seize the hills in its zone to eliminate flanking fires before a battalion of the 1st Marines advancing through the 7th Marines' zone could assault its assigned objectives on the right. The CCF rear-guard, consisting of elements of the 196th and 197th Divisions, was situated inside a sophisticated reverse-slope defense system anchored by log bunkers and zigzag trenches immune to direct fire. Where possible, the Marines would use fire by tanks and self-propelled guns to reduce point targets, but emplacements on reverse slopes would have to be hit by unobserved close air support or high angle artillery and mortar fires. This meant if the Chinese defended in place the Marines would have to reduce the reverse slope defenses using close combat. The most important terrain obstacle was the chilly, chest-deep, fast-flowing Som River. During the plenary conference Colonel McAlister was informed that no engineer

support would be available and was further told the river was not fordable. Major Edwin H. Simmons, commanding 3d Battalion's Weapons Company, offered a solution. He recommended building a "Swiss bent bridge" composed of "A" shaped timber platforms with planking held in place by communications wire. This field expedient did the trick, and the 3d Battalion safely crossed the Som the night before the attack began.

*The shattered remains of Hoengsong as they appeared after the four-day battle. During the battle, the 11th Marines fired more than 50 artillery missions while 1st Marine Aircraft Wing Corsairs and Panther jets flew 30 sorties in support.*

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The battle for Hoengsong was a classic four-day slugging match in which the Marines slowly advanced against dug-in enemy troops under the cover of a wide array of supporting arms. On the first day (1 March), the 11th Marines fired 54 artillery missions, Marine Grumman F9F Panther jets and Corsairs flew 30 sorties, and Marine tanks lined up like a row of battleships using their 90mm guns to clear the way. Colonel Litzenberg's 7th Marines moved out with Major James I. Glendinning's 2d Battalion on the left and Major Maurice E. Roach, Jr.'s 3d Battalion on the right headed north toward Hills 536 and 385 respectively. Lieutenant Colonel Banning's 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, which was in the 7th Marines' zone, moved in echelon with Hill 303 in the 1st Marines' zone on the right as its final goal; concurrently, the other two battalions of the 1st Marines held fast and furnished fire support. Three artillery battalions (3d and 4th Battalions, 11th Marines, and the U.S. Army's 92d Armored Field Artillery Battalion) were on call to support the 7th Marines. Major Webb D. Sawyer's 1st Battalion patrolled the left flank and main-



National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC361108  
*MajGen William M. Hoge, USA, seated in front, was sent out to relieve MajGen Oliver P. Smith, who had been given temporary command of IX Corps.*

tained contact with the 6th ROK Division. The assault battalions advanced about a half-mile before they came under heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire, then were completely halted by a minefield. With the main attack stalled and darkness closing in, it was decided to wait until the following day to finish the job.

At 0800 on 2 March, both regiments jumped off. In the 1st Marines' zone, Banning's 1st Battalion went after Hill 303 on the left using a flanking attack while the 2d Battalion—well supported by rockets, artillery, and tanks—passed through the debris of Hoengsong, then took Hill 208 on the right with a frontal assault. Both attacks went smoothly, and the 1st Marines secured its intermediate objectives by midday. The 7th Marines, assisted by air strikes and 1,600 rounds of artillery, gained about a half-mile on the left. The toughest fighting occurred in the 2d Battalion's zone where the Marines had to crawl forward over rocky terrain. Unfortunately, Phase Line Arizona remained out

of reach when darkness fell.

The attacks on 3 March to secure the heights north of "Massacre Valley" featured the bloodiest single day of the operation. The 1st Marines secured Hills 321, 335, and 201 after some very tough hand-to-hand fighting which required the intervention of Captain Thomas J. Bohannon's Company A. The 7th Marines also continued the attack against a determined foe. Major Sawyer's 1st Battalion was called up from reserve to take and secure Hill 536 on the extreme left. The 3d Battalion then attacked Hill 333 with fire support from the stationary 2d Battalion. It was slow going for both assault units, and neither was able to secure its objectives before nightfall despite suffering 14 killed and 104 wounded since daybreak. These same two assault battalions determinedly "went over the top" amid snow flurries the next morning (4 March) only to discover most of the enemy had quietly slipped away during the night. Combat clearing duties ended at dark with the Marines firmly in possession of Phase Line Arizona.

The Marines had suffered almost 400 casualties (48 dead, 345 wounded, and 2 missing), while eliminating an estimated 2,000 enemy in two weeks of combat near Hoengsong. The bottom line, however, was that Operation Killer closed on an anticlimactic note. The Marines drove the enemy out of Hoengsong, but General Ridgway was dissatisfied with the punishment meted out. Although all terrain objectives had been taken, the enemy had deftly avoided a costly set piece battle and slipped out of the United Nations Command's trap. As a result, the Eighth Army commander ordered a new attack, Operation Ripper, to begin immediately.

There were several administrative changes during the brief respite between the end of Operation Killer and the onset of Operation Ripper. On 4 March, the 6th Replacement Draft (29 officers and 1,785 enlisted men) arrived, bringing with them 63 postal pouches—the first mail the Marines received since leaving Pohang. Concurrently, Lieutenant Colonel Erwin F. Wann, Jr.'s 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion and Lieutenant Colonel Francis H. Cooper's 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion were detached to support the U.S. Army crossing of the Han River and were thereafter sent to Inchon to conduct amphibious training. The amphibian tractors would not rejoin the 1st Marine Division until it moved to western Korea the following year. On the plus side, a 250-man South Korean National Police company joined the Marines. These "Wharrangs" primarily served as scouts and interpreters, but were occasionally used as auxiliary combat troops as well. On 5 March, the day after Operation Killer ended, General Smith returned to the 1st Marine Division upon the arrival at IX Corps headquarters of his replacement, Major General William H. Hoge, USA, who had quickly flown out from Trieste, Italy. An engineer by training, Hoge supervised the Alaska-Canadian Highway effort and commanded Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, during World War II, the lead elements of which seized the only major bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen.

## Operation Ripper

Operation Ripper was the fifth consecutive limited U.N. offensive. It would follow the same basic design as the previous attacks. As before, the real goals were to

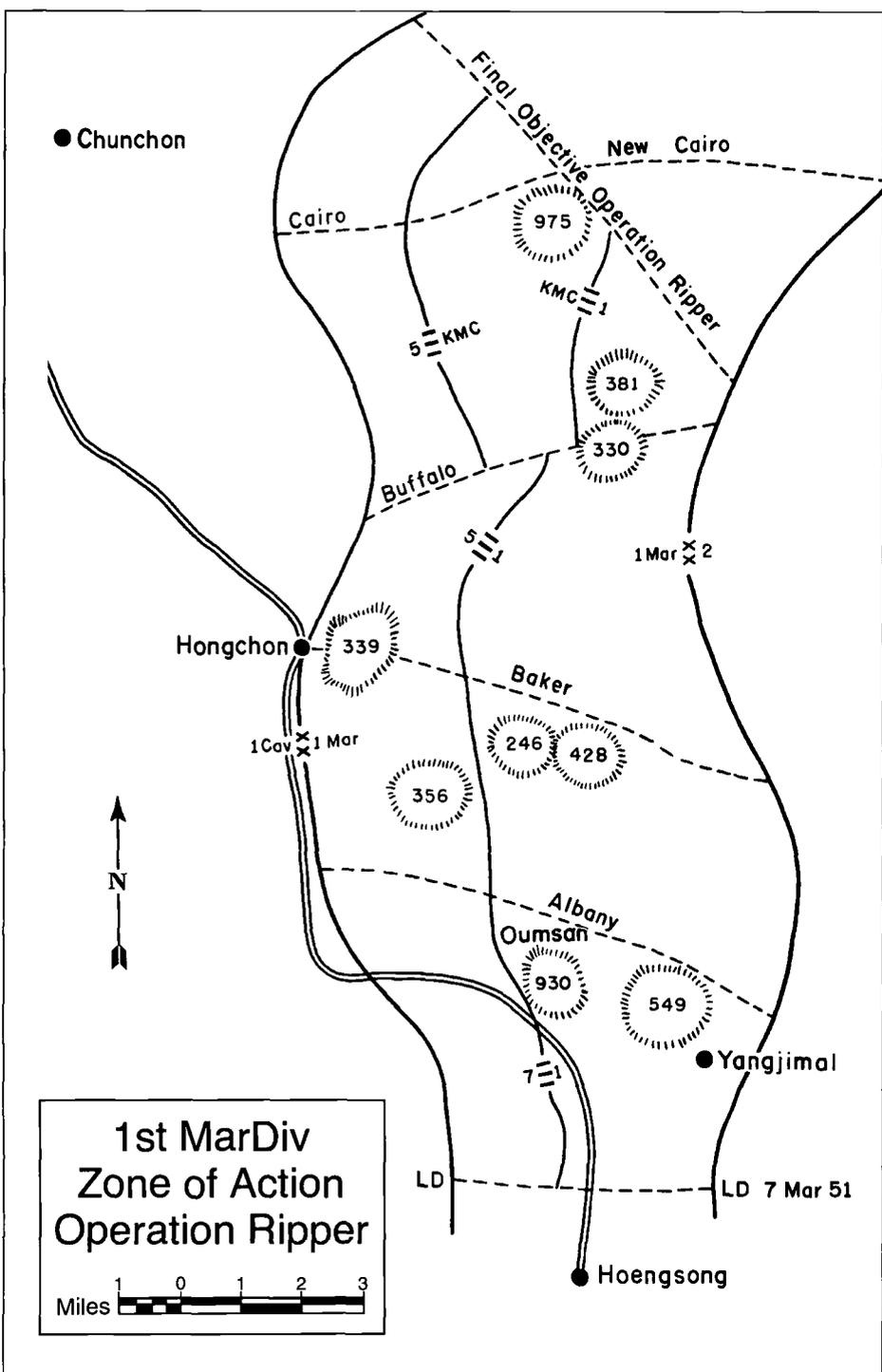
inflict maximum punishment and keep the Communists off balance, but this time General Ridgway added a major territorial goal as well. He wanted to outflank the enemy near Seoul and force them to withdraw north of the Imjin River, a movement that would carry the United Nations Command almost back to the 38th Parallel. The plan was for IX and X Corps

to drive north with I Corps holding in the west and the South Korean Army maintaining its positions along the east flank. The Central Front would be Eighth Army's primary arena. Hoge's plan was to drive north with the towns of Hongchong and Chunchon as major objectives in the IX Corps zone. Intermediate objectives included Phase Lines Albany, Buffalo, and

Cairo; the final objective was Line Idaho. General Hoge inserted an intermediate phase line, Baker, between Eighth Army-designated Lines Albany and Buffalo. The enemy in zone continued to be the CCF 66th Army, but intelligence officers were uncertain as to whether the enemy would continue to retreat or would finally stand and fight. Operation Ripper would, therefore, once again be a cautious advance, another limited, strictly controlled, "buttoned up" operation.

As in just-ended Operation Killer, the Marines would again be the focus of the IX Corps' main effort. A pair of U.S. Army units, the 1st Cavalry Division on the left and the 2d Infantry Division on the right, would guard the Marine flanks. Hongchong, an important communications hub located in the shadow of towering Oum Mountain, about five miles north of the line of departure, was the initial Marine objective. The coarse terrain included formidable Hill 930 and consisted of thickly wooded hills and swift-flowing streams. There were so few roads and trails that gravel-bottom streambeds were often pressed into use as roadways. The only thoroughfare (single-lane National Route 29) passed through Kunsamma Pass as it wound its way north to Hongchong from Hoengsong, and it initially served as the regimental boundary line inside the Marine zone. Intermittent snow, cold nights, and rainy days meant that the weather would continue to be a factor with which to be reckoned. The Marines in Korea, just as had Napoleon's army in Russia a century-and-a-half before, would have to deal with "General Mud" as well as enemy soldiers.

The 1st Marine Division mission was to seize all objectives and destroy all enemy south of Line





1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Mar51

*Tank and infantry teams move to the flanks of the advancing Marine column north of Hoengsong. The cold weather and sticky mud were as difficult to overcome as was the enemy during Operation Killer.*

Albany, then seize Hongchon and destroy all enemy south of Line Buffalo and be prepared to continue the attack to Lines Cairo and Idaho on order, with operations commencing at 0800 on 7 March. One regiment would constitute the corps reserve and would be under the operational control of the IX Corps commander during the latter portion of the operation. The 1st Marine Division would advance up the Hoengsong-Hongchon axis with "two up and one back." General Smith initially placed 1st and 7th Marines in the assault and earmarked the 5th Marines as the reserve. The two assault regiments (7th on the left and 1st on the right) were to advance astride Route 29 with all three battalions on line whenever possible. The difficult supply situation left Colonel Joseph L. Winecoff's 11th Marines short of artillery ammunition, so an emergency agreement between Major General Field Harris, Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and Major General Earl E. Partridge, Commanding General, Fifth Air Force, temporarily placed a Marine fighter squadron in direct support of the 1st Marine Division.

The operation started as

ordered. The Marines advanced in the afternoon snow against only light resistance, primarily small arms and mortar fires. The enemy once again relied upon delaying tactics, opening fire at long range to slow the attackers then withdrawing before close combat could be initiated. Additionally, Marine tankers noted increased use of road mines. During the first three days awful weather and difficult terrain were the main obstacles. The Marine attack was finally stopped in place by orders from above which halted the advance on 9 March until flanking units could catch up. The next two days were devoted to reconnaissance and security patrols as the division marked time. On 11 March, the Marines resumed the advance. This time the enemy put up a stiff fight in the 1st Marines zone, and the 1st Battalion had to use artillery and tank guns to reduce log bunkers atop Hill 549 before that position fell. This single battle cost the Marines more casualties (one killed and nine wounded) than had been inflicted in the previous five days (seven wounded). The first phase of Operation Ripper ended on 13 March when the 1st Marine Division successfully occupied all

of its objectives on Line Albany.

General Ridgway decided to change tactics for the next phase of Ripper. This time he opted to maneuver instead of slugging forward on a single line. His plan was a complex one. He decided to try an airborne drop north of Hongchon to be coordinated with a double envelopment by the 1st Marine Division and the 1st Cavalry Division, but this bold strike never came about because the Chinese *39th Army* slipped away before Ridgway's trap could be slammed shut. The reasons for this were divulged in a later intelligence find. A captured CCF directive indicated the enemy had adopted a "roving defensive" whereby units were no longer to hold at all costs, but should defend using movement to entice the United Nations Command to overextend itself as it had the previous November so the CCF could launch a "backhand" counteroffensive to isolate and annihilate the U.N. vanguard. It was a good scheme, but the wily Ridgway did not take the bait. Instead of mounting a headlong rush, his offensives continued to be strictly

*Maj Vincent J. Gottschalk, commanding Marine Observation Squadron 6, discusses the tactical situation with Col Richard W. Hayward, commanding officer of the 5th Marines. The high-wing, single-engine OY-1 Sentinel in the background was used primarily as an artillery spotter.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A131207





IstMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Mar51

*North of Hoengsong, Marines move up into the hills. Stamina and physical conditioning were important during the unending series of hill fights that led back to the 38th Parallel.*

“buttoned up” affairs.

In the 1st Marine Division zone, General Smith retained the same basic plan of attack. The 1st and 7th Marines would mount the assault, and the 5th Marines, now commanded by Nicaragua-veteran and World War II Marine parachutist Colonel Richard W. Hayward, would be the reserve. As before, the Marine advance on 14 March moved forward against almost no resistance. The 7th Marines did not need to call for artillery or close air support, and the 1st Marines encountered only scattered fire as it moved forward. General Ridgway’s hopes of cutting off the enemy at Hongchon were dashed when an intercepted message from the enemy commander reported, “We must move back . . . . Enemy troops approaching fast,” before the planned airdrop could be made. True to his word, General Liu Chen’s troops were long gone by the time a motorized patrol from Major Sawyer’s 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, entered the devastated town of Hongchon. Although the patrol located no enemy, it did discover a large number of “butterfly” bomblets

dropped by U.S. Air Force aircraft. These deadly missiles so inundated the area that it took Captain Byron C. Turner’s Company D, 1st Engineers, and all available division personnel three days to locate and disarm most of the explosive devices before they could produce casualties. The 7th Marines also found a treasure trove: three

ammunition dumps that yielded more than two thousand small arms; a dozen heavy machine guns; a dozen mortars; a dozen recoilless rifles; numerous captured U.S. weapons; assorted demolitions; and four dozen cases of ammunition. This was one of the biggest finds of the war.

When the 7th Marines attacked the high ground north of Hongchon on the 15th, the 2d and 3d Battalions ran into a buzz saw. 120mm mortars and 76mm anti-tank guns pinned them down as they approached Hill 356. This Chinese fire was unusually accurate and intense, so much so that three 81mm mortars were knocked out. Likewise, the enemy was holding firm at Hills 246 and 248 in the 1st Marines zone. Lieutenant Colonel Robert K. McClelland’s 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, performed an extremely complicated maneuver when it moved from the right flank on the east across the entire zone behind the front lines, trucked up to the village of Yangjimal in the 7th Marines zone

*A 81mm mortar crew fires in support of an attack. Under the leadership of a sergeant, a mortar squad was composed of seven Marines and was known as the infantry commander’s “hip pocket” artillery.*

IstMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Mar51



on the west, then dismounted for a difficult overland march to join the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, for the assault on Hill 248. Unfortunately, the ensuing joint attack—including an air strike by Corsairs of Marine Fighter Squadron 214 and plentiful mortar and artillery fire—was not successful. After suffering about 100 casualties, the Marines pulled back to Hill 246 as darkness closed in. Another rifle battalion joined the assault force when Lieutenant Colonel Donald R. Kennedy's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, was attached to the 1st Marines that night. Fortunately, a morning assault by the 1st Marines the next day found Hill 248 undefended. Back in the 7th Marines' zone the 1st Battalion had to clear Hill 399 with hand grenades and bayonets on its way to Line Baker.

Despite the progress, IX Corps complained of the lack of speed in the advance. General Smith pointed out that the division was "making a conscientious effort to comply with the Army's directive to keep buttoned up and comb the

terrain." "This takes time," he said. Smith asked if there was any relaxation of the Army directive. General Hoge's answer was "'No,' but he still wanted more speed." On 17 March, Hoge ordered the 1st Marine Division to continue the attack to Line Buffalo and beyond. To comply, Smith moved the 5th Marines up on the left and pulled the 7th Marines out of the line. The 5th Marines advanced against scattered resistance and reached Line Buffalo without a major fight. In fact, no Marine in that zone was killed or wounded in action for three straight days. The CCF had pulled back, but left elements of the *12th NKPA Division* behind to delay the Marines. The biggest engagement occurred on 19 March in the 1st Marines' zone. There, the enemy was well dug in on a series of north-south ridges joining Hills 330 and 381. Fortunately, the terrain allowed the tanks of Captain Bruce F. Williams' Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, to support the 2d Battalion attack. After F4U Corsairs from Marine Fighter Squadrons 214

and 323 delivered napalm and high explosive bombs on suspected enemy entrenchments, artillery pounded the objective, then tanks moved up on each side of the ridge keeping pace with the advancing infantry. The powerful 90mm tank guns eliminated enemy bunkers with very accurate direct fire as their machine guns kept enemy heads down. This coordinated direct fire allowed the rifle companies to successfully leapfrog each other over the next couple of days. This formula was so successful that the NKPA finally panicked on 20 March. At that time the enemy fleeing Hill 381 were hammered by supporting arms and infantry fires until they were virtually wiped out. With the end of that action the 1st Marine Division was ready to renew the attack.

The advance to Line Cairo was made with Colonel Kim's 1st KMC Regiment, once again attached to the 1st Marine Division. This allowed General Smith to use three regiments (5th Marines, 1st Korean, and 1st Marines) on line. The 7th Marines was placed in corps reserve. The 5th Marines made it to Line Cairo without serious opposition, but this was not true for the 1st Marines or the Korean Marines. The Koreans relied upon aerial resupply as they moved forward in the undulating and trackless central sector. The biggest fight took place when the Korean regiment, supported by Major Jack C. Newell's 2d Battalion and Lieutenant Colonel William McReynolds' 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, fought a three-day battle to capture Hill 975. The position finally fell to a flanking maneuver. On 22 March, the 1st Marines encountered some fire from Hills 505, 691, and 627 before reaching the Idaho Line where it made contact with the U.S. Army's 38th Infantry Regiment. Elements of the

*A Marine searches an enemy bunker. The Chinese often used small squad-sized bunkers as a limited defense to cover the withdrawal of larger units.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-7410



1st Marines encountered some stiff resistance at Wongo-ri in the Tuchon-Myon hills while patrolling on the 27th. Two days later, the 1st Marines and the Korean Marine regiment extended their lines north to the New Cairo Line without a fight and brought Operation Ripper to a close.

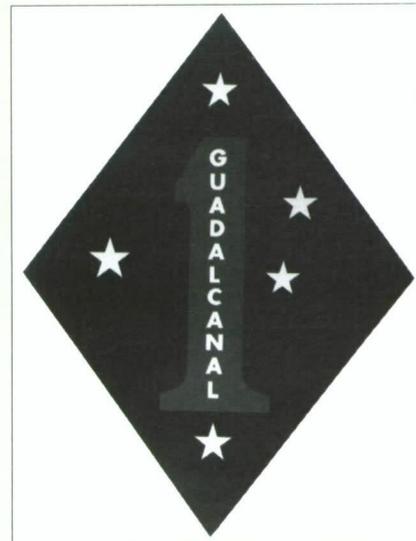
On 31 March, the 1st Marine Division mustered 21,798 men in addition to 3,069 Korean Marines and 234 attached U.S. Army soldiers. Most Marines were at Hongchon, but some service support detachments were located farther back at Masan, Pohang, and Wonju. Unfortunately, when the artillery ammunition crisis abated Marine air once again reverted to Fifth Air Force control, and Marine aviators were no longer in direct support of their comrades on the ground. In two major operations (Killer and Ripper), the 1st Marine Division suffered 958 combat casualties (110 killed and 848 wounded), while inflicting an estimated 7,000 enemy casualties and capturing 150 enemy prisoners. For five weeks the Marines spearheaded each of IX Corps' advances from Wonju to Chunchon and lead the Eighth Army in ground gained during that time.

Although the men at the forward edge of the battlefield did not yet realize it, the nature of the Korean War had changed radically. In fact, strategic discussions now centered on whether to once again invade North Korea or not and, if so, how far that penetration should be. The military situation was so favorable that U.N. diplomats actually began to entertain the notion that the other side might be ready to ask for an armistice if the pressure was kept up. The most controversial element of strategy thus became what to do when U.N. forces reached the 38th Parallel. After much high-level discussion,

## 1st Marine Division

The 1st Marine Division was the senior Marine Corps ground combat unit in Korea. By Table of Organization and Equipment it rated 22,343 men divided into combat, combat support, and service support units. The teeth of the division were its three 3,902-man rifle regiments which were subdivided into a headquarters and service company, an anti-tank company, a 4.2-inch mortar company, and three rifle battalions (1,123 men), each composed of a headquarters and service company, three rifle companies, and a weapons company. The firing batteries of an artillery regiment, a tank battalion, and a combat engineer battalion furnished combat support. Service support came from assorted organic battalions and an attached combat service group. A unique attachment in Korea was a composite aircraft squadron that included helicopters and observation aircraft.

For the most part, the Marines were equipped with weapons of World War II vintage: small arms



included .45-caliber automatic pistols, .30-caliber Garand semiautomatic rifles, carbines, Thompson submachine guns, and Browning automatic rifles; crew-served weapons included 4.2-inch, 81mm, and 60mm mortars, 155mm medium and 105mm light howitzers, 4.5-inch multiple rocket launchers, and .30- and .50-caliber machine guns. Two notable new weapons were the 3.5-inch rocket launcher and the M-26 Pershing tank.

### *1st Marine Division (Reinforced)*

Headquarters Battalion  
 Headquarters Company  
 Military Police Company  
 Reconnaissance Company  
 1st Marines  
 5th Marines  
 7th Marines  
 11th Marines  
 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion  
 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion  
 1st Amphibian Truck Company  
 1st Combat Service Group  
 1st Engineer Battalion  
 1st Medical Battalion  
 1st Motor Transport Battalion

7th Motor Transport Battalion  
 1st Ordnance Battalion  
 1st Service Battalion  
 1st Shore Party Battalion  
 1st Signal Battalion  
 1st Tank Battalion  
 Battery C, 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battalion

### *Attachments*

1st Joint Assault Signal Company  
 1st Provisional Truck Company  
 Det, 1st Signals Operations Battalion  
 Marine Observation Squadron 6  
 1st Korean Marine Corps Regiment

American national command authorities agreed to go ahead and cross, but they warned General Douglas MacArthur that the con-

clusion of the next offensive would probably mark the limit of advance. Concurrently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the U.N.

commander that, since these actions would terminate maneuver warfare, a diplomatic settlement to end the conflict after all pre-war South Korean territory had been liberated would be pursued. Unfortunately, these high hopes for an early end to the fighting were dashed by General MacArthur's imprudent public ultimatum demanding that the enemy either stop fighting or face annihilation. This presumptuous announcement on 24 March had several far-reaching effects. First, it so offended the Communists that it torpedoed some promising secret negotiations and actually triggered an aggressive battlefield response. Second, this action also sowed the seed that later sprouted into one of the most famous controversies in American military history.

### Operations Rugged and Dauntless

All of Operation Ripper's terrain objectives had been taken, but General Ridgway felt not enough punishment had been meted out and this, coupled with a desire to secure a more defensible line, led him to continue offensive opera-

tions without a break. This time he envisioned a "double whammy" in the form of Operations Rugged and Dauntless. The goal of Rugged was to carry the Eighth Army back above the 38th Parallel to occupy a trans-peninsular defense line anchored upon the centrally located Hwachon Reservoir. Dauntless, on the other hand, was to be a spoiling attack to threaten the enemy's major staging area located northwest of Hwachon. This was the so-called "Iron Triangle" that included the terminus of several railway lines running down from Manchuria and incorporated the intersection of all major roads in north-central Korea. Its forested flat lands were bounded by protective ridges and included the towns of Chorwan, Pyonggang (not to be confused with the North Korean capital of Pyongyang), and Kumhwa. The geographic shape of the road net connecting these towns gave the Iron Triangle its name.

The battlefield situation was very complicated. Eighth Army intelligence officers were not sure if the enemy was going to defend in place along the former interna-

tional dividing line or continue to give ground. Large troop movements into the Iron Triangle had been noted, but it was a point of contention as to whether these were part of a Communist "rotation" policy or if they constituted an offensive build up. (Actually, both events were occurring simultaneously; worn out elements of the CCF *Fourth Field Army* were moving back to Manchuria while the fresh CCF *Third Field Army* was entering Korea.) Unsure of enemy intentions, General Ridgway ordered a cautious advance, but warned his corps commanders to be ready to fall back to prepared defensive lines if ordered to do so. Ridgway's primary intent was to seize Line Kansas, a phase line purposely drawn so that it included the best defensive terrain in the vicinity of the 38th Parallel. In IX Corps' zone this line carried eastward from the Imjin River to the western tip of the Hwachon Reservoir and included that body of water's southern shoreline. IX Corps' axis of advance was to be about a dozen miles almost due north from Chunchon astride the Pukhan River using National Route 17 as the main supply route. The terrain in this zone was uneven. It was mostly flat west of the Pukhan River, but high hills on the right dominated the approaches to the Hwachon Reservoir. The enemy was believed to be stay-behind elements of the CCF *39th Army*, but it was uncertain if those forces would flee or fight.

On 29 March, Ridgway issued orders to initiate Operation Rugged. This time the hard-working Marines did not spearhead the attack as they had during Killer and Ripper. The U.S. 1st Cavalry and 6th ROK Divisions would carry that load, while the 1st Marine Division was IX Corps

*Tank and infantry teams search out possible enemy positions on either side of the road to Chunchon. Unfortunately, the mountainous terrain of central Korea hampered effective tank support.*

1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Apr51



reserve. General Smith hoped his men could get some well-deserved rest after replacing elements of X Corps at Line Ready near Chunchon. An unusual exception was the 7th Marines, which was actually slated to participate in the drive north.

There was a small modification to the plan almost immediately. Instead of going into reserve, the 1st Marine Division (less the 7th Marines) was ordered to continue the attack. "This arrangement," noted General Smith, "gives me responsibility for 28,000 meters of front and I have for the time being no reserve." The 1st Marines became IX Corps reserve and moved back to Hongchon. The 5th Marines and the Korean Marines continued to move forward toward Line Ready. To do this the 5th Marines had to force a crossing of the Soyang River and seize Hills 734, 578, and 392 against moderate to heavy resistance. Once this was accomplished, elements of the U.S. Army's 7th Infantry Division took over, and the Marines began making their way back to the assembly area near Chunchon on the afternoon of 4 April for what promised to be five days off the firing line, the first real rest for the division since moving up from Pohang in mid-February.

On 1 April, the 7th Marines was placed under the operational control of Major General Charles D. Palmer's 1st Cavalry Division. The plan was for the division to advance about three miles from Line Dover to secure Line Kansas just north of the 38th Parallel. Colonel Litzenberg's regimental combat team, composed of the 7th Marines; 3d Battalion, 11th Marines; Company D, 1st Tanks; Company D, 1st Engineers; and various service detachments, was assigned the left (western) sector for the advance with specific



National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-442505

## Hospital Corpsman Richard De Wert, USNR

**B**orn in 1931 in Taunton, Massachusetts, Richard De Wert enlisted in the Navy in 1948. Following "boot camp" and Hospital Corps training at Great Lakes, Illinois, he was assigned to the Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Virginia. Attached to the 1st Medical Battalion, 1st Marine Division, in July 1950, he participated in the Inchon, Seoul, and Chosin operations. On 5 April 1951, while serving with the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, on Hill 439 near Hongchon and the 38th Parallel, he gave his life while administering first aid to an injured Marine. His Medal of Honor award said, in part:

When a fire team from the point platoon of his company was pinned down by a deadly barrage of hostile automatic weapons fire and suffered many casualties, De Wert rushed to the assistance of one of the more seriously wounded and, despite a painful leg wound sustained while dragging the stricken Marine to safety, steadfastly refused medical treatment for himself and immediately dashed back through the fire-swept area to carry a second wounded man out of the line of fire.

Undaunted by the mounting hail of devastating enemy fire, he bravely moved forward a third time and received another serious wound in the shoulder, after discovering that a wounded Marine had already died. Still persistent in his refusal to submit to first aid, he resolutely answered the call of a fourth stricken comrade and, while rendering medical assistance, was himself mortally wounded by a burst of enemy fire.

The Secretary of the Navy on 27 May 1952 presented Corpsman De Wert's Medal of Honor to his mother, Mrs. Evelyn H. De Wert. The guided missile frigate, USS *De Wert* (FFG 45), bears his name.

— Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR (Ret)

instructions to keep the main supply route clear, protect the ferry site, and maintain liaison with the 6th ROK Division.

Colonel Litzenberg closed his command post at Hongchon and moved it to the assembly area near Chunchon. By 1000 on 2 April, the lead element of the 7th Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Wilbur F. Meyerhoff's 2d Battalion, had crossed the line of departure and was moving up Route 17 with the other two battalions in trail. The attack proceeded against very light opposition, and no Marine casual-

ties were reported. The major holdup was the time it took to ferry the Marines across the Pukhan River. Army amphibian trucks took the men across. Most large vehicles were able to ford the river, and smaller ones used rafts operated by an Army assault boat detachment. By the end of the day all objectives had been secured. The next day's mission was to take an intermediate objective, Phase Line Troy. Again, all assigned objectives were reached, without enemy interference, by darkness on 3 April. The main stumbling blocks were tortur-

ous terrain, craters and debris blocking the road, and land mines.

The 6th ROK Division on the left moved up against virtually no opposition until it reached Line Kansas. Unfortunately, things did not go so smoothly in the 1st Cavalry zone of action where the enemy increased the pressure near the 38th Parallel and stubbornly held out in the hills south of Hwachon. While the 7th Marines had thus far encountered few enemy, the 7th and 8th Cavalry Regiments became entangled in a fierce slugging match and fell far

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## Truman Fires MacArthur

Fighting men in Korea, as were people all across the United States, were shocked to learn American President Harry S. Truman had relieved General of the Army Douglas MacArthur of his commands (Commander in Chief, Far East; United Nations Command; and Supreme Commander, Allied Powers) on 11 April 1951. This removal of America's longest-serving warrior turned out to be one of the most controversial military decisions in American history. The President was well within his constitutional authority to depose a field commander, but Truman's action initiated an acrimonious debate about both U.S. political leadership and America's proper role in world affairs that deeply divided the country.

This incident was the result of long-standing policy disagreements about grand strategy and the ultimate purpose of military action. General MacArthur sought an absolute commitment to victory and felt anything less than surrender by the Communists was an unacceptable outcome of the conflict. President Truman, on the other hand, believed that Korea was only one theater in the Cold War and insisted the Communists would be deterred in other arenas if the viability of South Korea could be maintained. In short, the general wanted a military victory akin to those that ended the two World Wars, but the leader of the free world viewed Korea as a limited military action intended to achieve very specific diplomatic aims without embroiling the world in global warfare. President Truman framed the essence of this dispute when he wrote about Korea: "General MacArthur was willing to risk general war; I was not."

The roots of the dispute began almost as soon as the United States became enmeshed in Korea. MacArthur bristled over what he considered political meddling in military affairs in August 1950, and then more frequent-



National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC353136

*Gen Douglas MacArthur greets President Harry S. Truman on his arrival at Wake Island for their October 1950 conference. Within five months the President would be forced to relieve his Far East commander.*

ly and more vociferously aired his views in public as time wore on. The U.N. commander felt he was being saddled by unrealistic restrictions and chafed at not being given the resources he needed to successfully fight the war. Controversial statements about these issues caused Truman to personally confront MacArthur at Wake Island in October 1950 and then led the President to issue several "gag" orders over the next few months.

One problem was that MacArthur's track record with respect to Korea was enigmatic, one marked by brilliant successes offset by seriously flawed diplomatic and mil-

itary judgements. The general predicted, despite intelligence reports to the contrary, that China would not intervene in Korea; then, after his U.N. forces were roughly pushed out of North Korea, demanded measures well outside of the U.N. mandate (i.e. bombing Red China, blockading the Chinese coast, and intervention by Nationalist Chinese forces). His recommendations were immediately rejected by all allied nations even though MacArthur proclaimed failure to adopt his plan would mean the annihilation of the United Nations Command. MacArthur suffered a loss of face when his dismal forecast did not come true, but instead United Nations forces rolled back the enemy and regained the 38th Parallel without drastic measures in the spring of 1951.

The most egregious of MacArthur's forays into the diplomatic arena came when he purposely torpedoed secret peace feelers in late March 1951 by publicly taunting the enemy commander and threatening to widen the war. The near simultaneous publication of an earlier letter to Republican House Leader Joseph Martin, which many viewed as a thinly veiled attack on the Truman Administration that closed with the inflammatory statement, "There is no substitute for victory," finally brought the Truman-MacArthur controversy to a head. Thus, at

half-past midnight on 11 April 1951, President Truman issued orders to recall General MacArthur.

This unexpected and seemingly rash act, spurred by the insensitive manner in which the relief was handled, created a firestorm on the home front. MacArthur returned from Korea a hero. He was welcomed across the country by an adoring public before he culminated his 52-year military career with a moving and an eloquent speech to Congress. MacArthur's popularity was at an all-time high as he enjoyed his final triumph—a gala ticker tape parade through New York City—before, like the old soldier in his speech, he "faded away" by dropping out of the public eye. On the other hand, Truman's action was so controversial that his popularity dropped to an all-time low. The President's opponents flamed the fires of public dissatisfaction with the war when they demanded public hearings. These were held, but did not turn out as expected. In the end, the Senate reaffirmed the President's right to dismiss a subordinate and surprisingly vindicated Truman's decision after equally venerated General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, asserted MacArthur's plan would have resulted in "the wrong war, at the wrong time, at the wrong place, and with the wrong enemy."

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behind schedule as they battled their way north. Still, a milestone was achieved on 4 April when a Marine patrol from First Lieutenant Orville W. Brauss' Company B became one of the first Eighth Army units to recross the 38th Parallel. The 11th Marines fired 17 missions hitting some enemy troops in the open and peppering suspected emplacements with excellent results, and a four-plane flight scattered an enemy column.

The next day, the Marines became heavily engaged and had to fight their way forward for the next 48 hours. On 5 April, the 1st Battalion met very stiff resistance. Automatic weapons and mortar fire pinned down two companies. The 2d Battalion likewise met stubborn resistance and had to call for tank support to overrun its objectives. Navy Corpsman Richard D. De Wert, serving with Company D, was mortally wounded after fearlessly exposing himself to enemy fire four times and being hit twice

as he dragged injured men to safety at Mapyong-ni. De Wert was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor for his actions. Ten very accurate close air strikes coordinated with artillery fire enabled the Marines to push forward late in the day. Good coordination between the assault and support companies (Captain Jerome D. Gordon's Company D, Captain Merlin T. Matthews' Company E, Captain Raymond N. Bowman's Company F, and Captain William C. Airheart's Company G) provided textbook examples of infantry fire and maneuver. The next day enemy opposition was less formidable, but First Lieutenant Victor Stoyanow's Company I took a beating when it became pinned by automatic weapons fire in some low ground which was also zeroed in on by enemy mortars. There was no air support available because of weather (low-lying cloud cover, high winds, and heavy rain), but artillery counter-

battery fire, as well as American tank and mortar fires, eventually silenced the enemy guns. The enemy suffered about 150 casualties trying to hold out. The Marines lost five killed and 22 wounded.

On the afternoon of 6 April, the 7th Marines finally reached the Kansas Line after some tough fighting. Twenty Marines were wounded during the day, most by enemy 76mm fire but some to small arms and mortars. With the Kansas Line reached, the men of Colonel Litzenberg's regiment patiently waited for the 1st Marine Division to relieve the 1st Cavalry. General Smith received orders to do so on 8 April, and the relief was tentatively slated for the 10th. General Ridgway also told General Smith that the 1st Marine Division (less the 1st Marines in corps reserve) would then attack north to seize the northwest end of the Hwachon Reservoir. The situation did not look promising. The 1st Cavalry Division had been stopped by



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A131342

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A7862

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

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

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

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

### CCF Spring Offensive

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Private First Class Herbert A. Littleton

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

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

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

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



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A46967

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

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

— *Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR (Ret)*

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

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

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

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

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



1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Apr51

*Near the Quantico Line, a Marine 75mm recoilless rifle crew opposes the Chinese Communist attack on 23 April. Recoilless rifles provided long-range pinpoint accuracy, but*

*were light enough to be carried up and down Korea's mountainous terrain.*

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

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

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

Marine tanks successfully guarded the lowland approaches.

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





National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-429642

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

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

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

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

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

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

That day also marked the first mass helicopter medical evacua-

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

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

## Technical Sergeant Harold E. Wilson

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

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

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

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



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A46634

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

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

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

— *Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR (Ret)*

the history of the Marine Corps.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Apr51



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

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



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A8030

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

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

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

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

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



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A8362

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

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

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

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

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

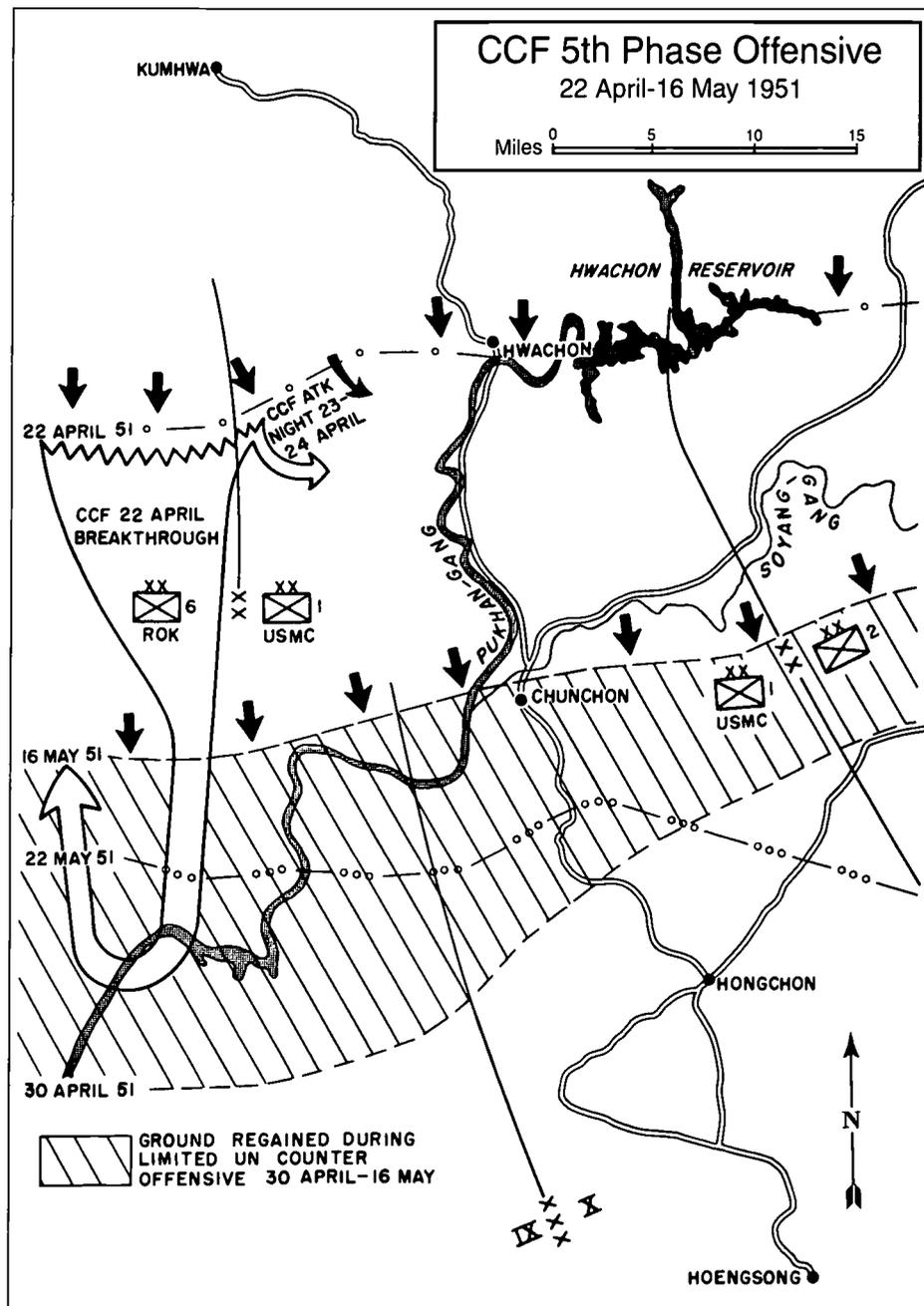
marked a radical change in U.N. tactics. As will be recalled, upon taking charge of Eighth Army General Ridgway adopted mobile defensive tactics to deal with enemy attacks. Instead of "hold your ground at all cost," he instituted a "roll-with-the-punches" scheme whereby U.N. units traded ground to inflict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

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

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

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

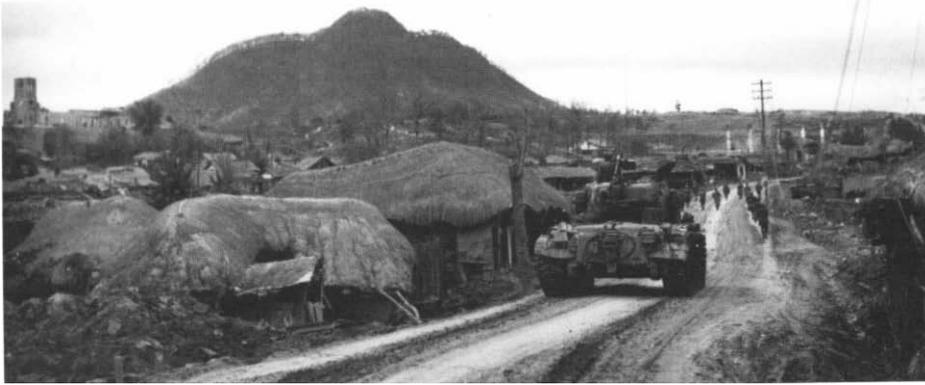
The month of April cost the Marines 933 casualties (93 killed, 830 wounded, and 10 missing), most lost during the First Impulse of the Chinese Fifth Phase Offensive. The enemy enjoyed some local successes, but overall their attacks fell far short of expectations. The U.N. counteroffensive had been stopped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



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

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

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



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A155669

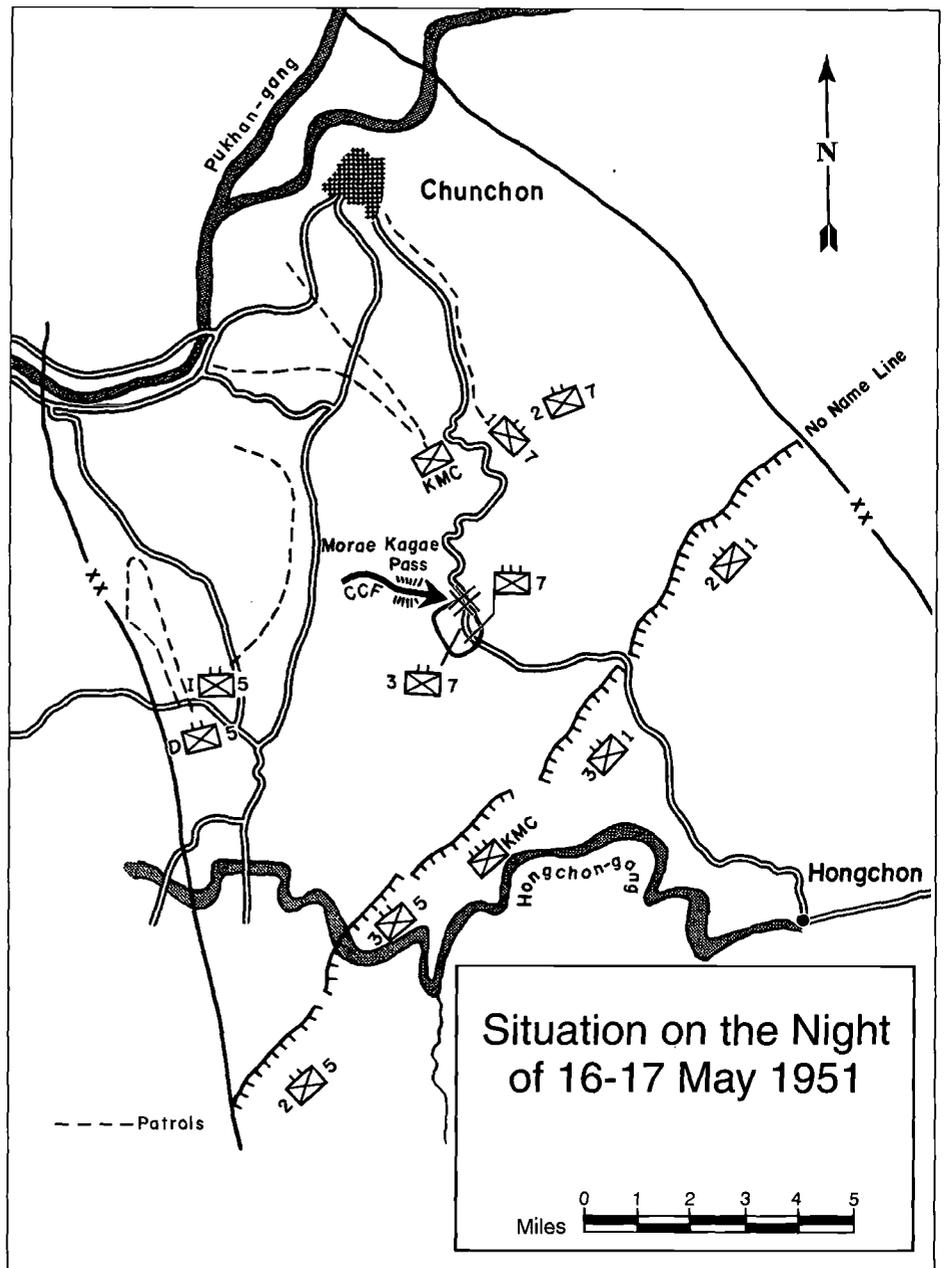
*A tank-infantry patrol from 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, moves through the deserted city of Chuncheon. The ebb and flow of Korean fighting ended when the U.N. lines stabilized after the Marines reached the Punchbowl in June 1951.*

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A8654





National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A15555/

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

II—became the assistant division commander on 20 May.

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

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

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

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

Photo Courtesy of LtCol Leo J. Ihli, USMC



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

## Marine Air Support

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

## 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, 1951

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



### *1st Marine Aircraft Wing*

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

### *Supporting Naval Air Transport Service*

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

### *Attached to 1st Marine Division*

Marine Observation Squadron 6

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A9458



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A132120

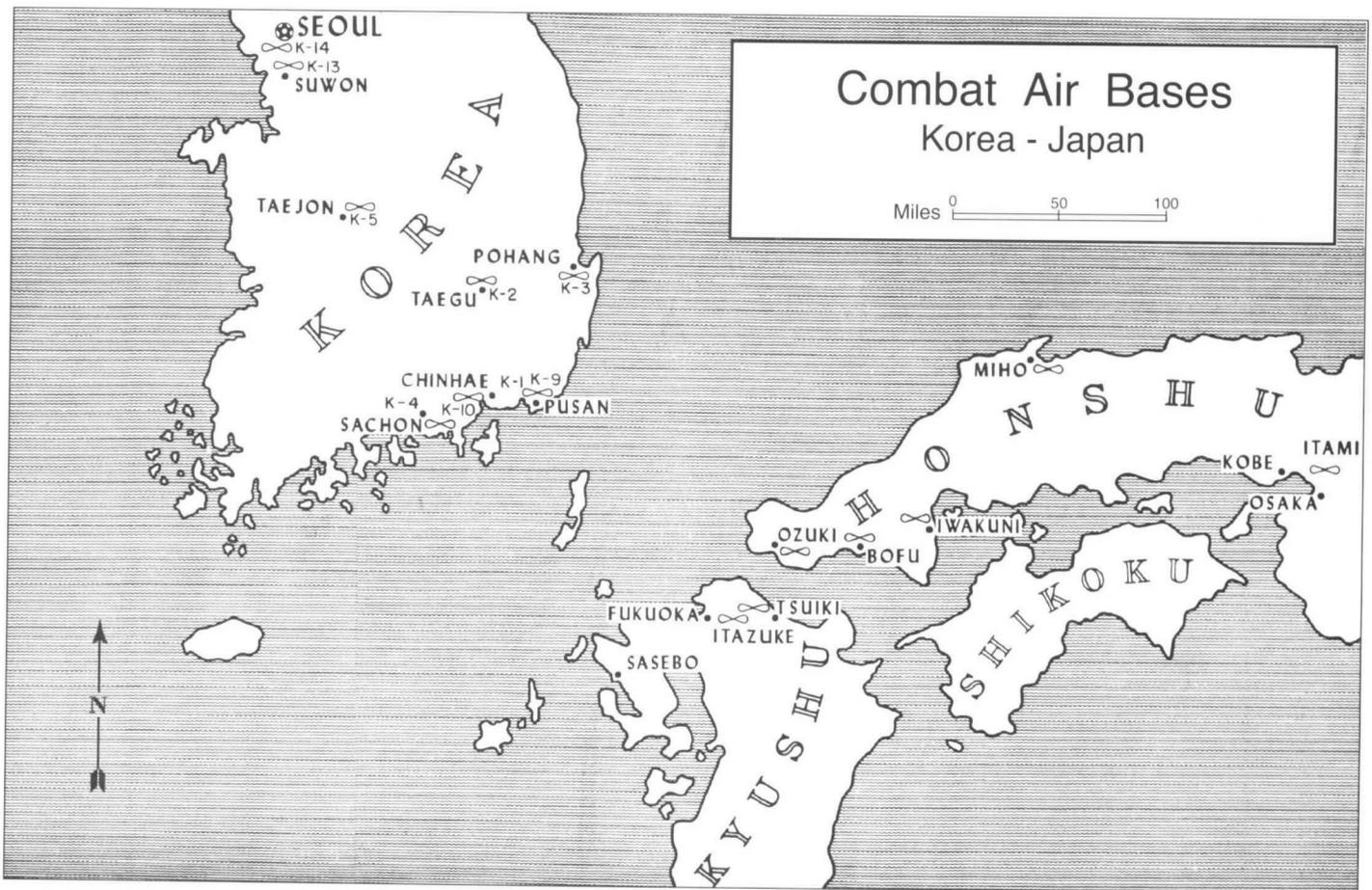
*A Vought F4U Corsair from VMF-214 is guided into position for take-off on its way to a close air support mission. The bent-wing, single-seat, propeller-driven "Dash Fours" featured six .50-caliber machine guns.*

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-439571



Marines about the breakup of the combat-proven Marine air-ground team. These concerns were acknowledged, but General Partridge insisted that a vastly increased enemy air threat and plans to initiate a deep air interdiction campaign demanded new air control measures. Unfortunately, Marine reservations about this system were soon justified by events on the battlefield. After the joint operations center took over, Marine air and ground commanders chafed at what they considered inordinate delays and inappropriate use of aircraft. The problems were so serious that every commander of the 1st Marine Division (Generals Smith, Puller, and Thomas) filed formal complaints about the quality, quantity, and timeliness of close air support.

Late January and early February 1951 were devoted to maintenance, training, and movement back to Korea. General Harris opened his command post at Itami and MAG-33 completed its temporary move to Bofu during the third week of January. The only Marine combat sorties during the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing stand-down from 16 to 23 January were conducted by VMF-212 on board the *Bataan*. When the land-based Corsair squadrons returned to action, most sorties were flown in

support of Eighth Army units conducting Operations Thunderbolt and Roundup in western Korea. This was because the 1st Marine Division needed few air strikes during the “guerrilla hunt” at Pohang, but on 26 January MAG-12 aircraft flying from K-9 (Pusan East) did manage to conduct close air support strikes for the division for the first time since the Chosin campaign.

The next month saw the return of the wing to Korea. In mid-February, K-1 at Pusan became the new home of MAG-12, and MAG-33 moved from Japan to K-3 at Pohang. The night fighters of VMF(N)-513 and -542 moved to K-1 and K-3 respectively. Major Donald S. Bush’s task-organized “Marine Photographic Unit” operated its reconnaissance planes from K-1 under the auspices of the Air Force’s 543d Tactical Support Group. Thus, all Marine tactical squadrons were back in Korea in time for the upcoming U.N. spring offensives.

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew most of its sorties in support of Eighth Army units during Operation Killer, but Operation Ripper found the Marine air-ground team once more in action as wing aircraft cleared the way for the 1st Marine Division’s rapid advance from Hoengsong to

Hongchon. Responding to intense criticism from ground commanders, General Partridge reluctantly granted General Harris at least 40 sorties per day in support of the gravel-crunching Marine infantry. In the way of organizational changes, VMF-312 became the carrier squadron when it replaced VMF-212 on board the *Bataan*, VMR-152 established a five-plane forward echelon at Itami, and an additional Marine Air Control Squadron (MACG-2) was sent to Korea. The efficient performance of Lieutenant Colonel John F. Kinney’s refurbished Panther jets of VMF-311 for armed reconnaissance and close air support was a pleasant surprise after their inauspicious introduction to combat.

There were several important command changes in April and May. Lieutenant Colonel Fontana departed MAG-33 on 31 March and Lieutenant Colonel Richard A. Beard, Jr., became acting commander until Colonel Guy M. Morrow arrived on 9 April. When Major Donald P. Frame was killed in action on 3 April, the “Checkerboard” executive officer, Major Frank H. Presley, assumed command of VMF-312. Major David W. McFarland took over VMO-6 on 5 April. On 3 May, Major Charles M. Kunz replaced Major Donald L. Clark who had commanded VMF-323 since 1 March. On 16 May, Lieutenant Colonel James W. Poindexter took the reins of VMF-214 from Major Edward Ochoa and Colonel Stanley W. Trachta assumed command of MAG-12. On the 28th, Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman became commanding general of the wing when General Harris rotated back to the United States. Cushman was a veteran aviator who had commanded the 4th Marine Base Defense Wing in the Central Pacific during World War II

*Panther jets of VMF-311 are gassed up at K-3 (Pohang). Refueling operations were a slow and laborious process. Fuel had to be transferred ashore in landing ships, hand pumped into fuel trucks, and then hauled out to the airfield.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A130478



and brought MAG-33 to Korea in August 1950.

Marine air was used all along the U.N. front during the CCF Spring Offensive, and close air support played an important, if not decisive, role during that hectic time. Fifth Air Force regularly used Marine planes not earmarked to support the Marine division for armed reconnaissance and battlefield interdiction beginning in late April. On 20 April, a pair of VMF-312 pilots flying off the *Bataan*, Captain Phillip C. Delong and First Lieutenant Harold D. Daigh, encountered four North Korean Yakovlev YAK-9 fighters over central Korea. Delong, a double ace with 11 kills during World War II, shot down two of them. Daigh knocked one YAK out of the sky and left the other one trailing smoke as it fled north. These were the first Marine aerial victories in Korea, and they were among the very few kills scored by Marines not on exchange duty with the U.S. Air Force or flying a night intercept mission. Seventy-five Marine aircraft, Panthers and Corsairs, participated in the largest air raid to date as part of a 300-plane sweep that hit Communist airfields at Sinuiju just south of the Yalu River on 9 May.

One reason for pulling the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing away from the 1st Marine Division was that the Fifth Air Force instituted an all-out effort to halt enemy traffic south with a deep interdiction campaign codenamed Operation Strangle. The goals of the campaign were to cut enemy supply routes, which were channelized by the mountainous terrain, and to destroy supply columns halted by swollen streams. Bomb damage assessments credited the wing with the destruction of more than 300 enemy troops, more than 200 trucks, about 80 boxcars, and 6



1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Jan-Feb51

*A Marine 105mm howitzer sets up for a fire mission in the Andong area. The trusty "105" was the backbone of the 11th Marines in Korea, just as it had been during much of World War II.*

locomotives. The price of this success was, however, high; the Marines lost a plane a day during the first week. Much to the dismay of ground and aviation Marines alike, close air support became a secondary mission. This change in priority abruptly cut the number of sorties allocated to ground units almost in half. In addition, cumbersome joint operations center request procedures often delayed air strikes for excessively long periods of time. Generals Puller and Thomas successively complained directly to the Fifth Air Force commander, and Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, took the issue up with the theater commander, all to no avail. The controversial joint operations center control and allocation procedures remained in force. The official Marine Corps history describes the questionable success of the Operation Strangle deep interdiction campaign: "There can be little doubt [Operation Strangle] added enormously to the Communists' logistical problem. It is equally certain that . . . their combat units were never at a decisive handicap for

lack of ammunition and other supplies [so] air interdiction alone was not enough to knock a determined adversary out of the war."

Despite these problems, many innovations were instituted in Korea. In addition to well-practiced daylight air-ground combat procedures, new techniques improved nighttime close air support. Marine R4D transport planes were put to use dropping flares that illuminated the battlefield and allowed VMF(N)-513 to deliver accurate night close air support. This experiment was so successful that the U.S. Navy provided the wing with four-engine, long-range PB4Y Privateer bombers, nicknamed "Lamplighters," whose bigger payloads and longer linger time were put to good use.

In characterizing Marine air support from January to May 1951, Marine aviators provided crucial support to their ground brethren throughout. Venerable performers—both aircraft and personnel—from World War II once again proved their mettle, and new types of aircraft and pilots were introduced to combat. The ground Marines were well served by the attached observation squadron,



1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Jan-Feb51

*A tank commander carefully scans the hills near Pohang for signs of the enemy. Pershing tanks like the one shown were the forerunners of the "Patton" tanks that served as the Marines' main battle tanks in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf.*

which directed artillery fire and close air support, evacuated wounded, and brought in emergency supplies. Transports delivered badly needed replacements and carried returning veterans safely home as well as dropping vital supplies by parachute to forward units. Aerial reconnaissance kept ground commanders informed of enemy movements and locations. The pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing relentlessly attacked the enemy at every possible opportunity, and Marine close air support was the envy of every United Nations Command commander. The appearance of Marine air on the scene almost always forced the enemy to rush for cover, and occasionally caused him to surrender or abandon key positions. It was with great reluctance that Marine fliers were diverted from their close air support mission, and all Marines became extremely frustrated when that vital support was gradually diminished due to circumstances beyond their control.

### Combat and Service Support

The 11th Marines was the 1st Marine Division artillery regiment.

Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Carl A. Youngdale and then Colonel Joseph L. Winecoff, the regiment mustered 54 M2A1 105mm towed howitzers (18 each in the 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions) while the 4th Battalion had 18 M2 155mm towed howitzers. The 105mm units were most often used for direct support with one artillery battalion assigned to fire exclusively for a particular rifle regiment, and the 155mm were most often in general support so they could use their longer range and heavier firepower to the best advantage. This

*Marine engineers construct a bridge near the Kansas Line. Road construction and bridge building took the lion's share of the 1st Engineer Battalion effort in the spring of 1951.*

1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Apr51



was not always true, because the U.S. Marines provided artillery support for the 1st KMC Regiment as well as its organic units, and when all four rifle regiments were on the main line of resistance every artillery battalion had to be used for direct support. The nature of the fighting in Korea dictated that additional firepower was needed so the 11th Marines had Battery C, 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battalion, permanently attached. Marine units were often supported by U.S. Army artillery as well. It was common for the corps commander to furnish at least one self-propelled howitzer battalion and a battery of 8-inch heavy guns to the 1st Marine Division for additional firepower. Army artillery units working with the 11th Marines at various times included the 17th Field Artillery, the 92d Armored Field Artillery Battalion, the 96th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and the 987th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. Offensive artillery missions included supporting maneuver units, neutralizing enemy fire, and isolating the battlefield. On defense, artillery fire was used effectively against CCF mass infantry assaults. Forward



1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Apr51

*Marine combat engineers remove a land mine on a road near Hongchon. Trained to install and maintain friendly minefields, the engineers were the first called to remove enemy mines.*

observation teams at the leading edge of the battlefield controlled most artillery fires, but airborne spotters flying in light observation planes also sometimes directed them. The main problems encountered by the cannoneers of the 11th Marines were transporting heavy guns over poor roads and intermittent ammunition shortages. Generals Ridgway and Van Fleet preferred to “use steel instead of men” and artillery was the favored combat arm under both men. Ammunition expenditure was much heavier in Korea than during World War II, and shooting several units of fire on a single mission was referred to as a “Van Fleet load” by Marine artillerymen. Unfortunately, this practice sometimes drained carefully hoarded ammunition caches that were not easy to replenish, so orders to deliver specific amounts of unobserved (“harassment and interdic-

tion”) fire became a bone of contention between the Eighth Army and the Marines.

The 1st Tank Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Harry T. Milne, also provided excellent combat support. The battalion was divided into four companies (A, B, C, and D) each with 17 medium tanks. These companies were usually placed in direct support of a specific rifle regiment. It was not uncommon for five-vehicle tank platoons to accompany combat patrols. When the regiment they supported was in reserve, the tankers tried to use that time for maintenance and rest. The super-accurate 90mm guns of the M-26 Pershing tanks were particularly well suited for long range “bunker busting” and were occasionally used to supplement artillery fires (much to the chagrin of the tankers who felt this practice was a deplorable misuse of their

point target guns). Tanks were also sometimes pressed into service as armored ambulances. In addition to the modern M-26 Pershing main battle tanks, there were also a dozen or so World War II-vintage M-4A3 Sherman bulldozer tanks with 105mm short-barrel guns and front-mounted plows used for mine clearing, hasty engineering, and tank recovery as well as fire support. Although Korea’s mountainous terrain was generally unsuited for armor operations, frequent use was made of separate axis attacks whereby the road-bound tanks in the valleys supported infantry units as they worked their way along ridgelines. During the CCF Spring Offensive tanks were used to protect lines of communication and river crossings or cover nearby flatlands with their machine guns and main guns.

The 1st Engineer Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John H. Partridge, provided services including rebuilding airstrips, constructing and repairing roads and bridges, emplacing and clearing mines, demolitions, manning water points, and preparing field fortifications. Although the 1st Engineers did all of these things, Lieutenant Colonel Partridge’s number one priority throughout the spring of 1951 was keeping the main supply route open. The 1st Engineer Battalion spent most of its time and energy constructing, improving, and maintaining the supply route. Korea’s primitive roadways were neither designed nor built to meet the demands of a major modern military force. There were few hard-surface roads, and there was no true road network. Most roads were little more than narrow dirt pathways that simply ran between local villages by the most direct route. Almost all roadways were poorly drained, inadequately bridged, and unpaved.

Snow and ice hampered movement in cold weather, the dry season choked the roads with dust, and spring thaws and summer rains often turned them into impassable bogs. Unfortunately, the need for constant road maintenance sometimes required foregoing other vital engineer functions, which were then left to the combat units.

Logistics—the acquisition and distribution of the means to wage war—encompassed the supply, maintenance, medical, transportation, and administrative services necessary to support combat operations. Although the efforts of the men who furnish the beans, bullets, and bandages are often overlooked, logistics are no less important than tactics in determining the outcome of a battle because—according to an old military adage—“logistics set operational limits.” This was particularly true in Korea where Marine logisticians faced a wide array of challenges. Most short-term problems were the result of Korea’s poorly developed infrastructure, rugged terrain, inhospitable weather, the rapidly changing tactical situation (which saw the entire 1st Marine Division go from offense to defense within a matter of hours on several occasions), and the wide physical separation of Marine air and ground elements. Unfortunately, some nagging problems also stemmed from doctrinal shortcomings. In 1951, U.S. joint operations did not feature the smooth multi-Service integration common among today’s branches of the Armed Forces. The Marine air-ground task force concept was not developed, hence, there was no single Marine component commander in Korea so the Marine air and ground combat elements had no common superior below the theater commander. For the most part Marine

ground and aviation units remained separate logistical entities operating without central direction because no equivalent of Vietnam’s Force Logistics Command or modern force service support groups emerged in Korea. Luckily, Lieutenant General Lemuel Shepherd, the commanding general of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, was an energetic leader who took an active role. His forceful suggestions and direct intervention unclogged many bottlenecks and kept the personnel and supply pipelines flowing smoothly.

Difficult terrain, bad weather, and the inadequate road and rail networks were physical obstacles not easily overcome, but doctrinal issues and equipment shortages also created logistics problems. The 1st Marine Division, specifically structured for amphibious warfare, was neither organized nor equipped for sustained inland operations like those on Korea’s Central Front. Unfortunately, this simple fact was either misunderstood or ignored by the high command. Repeated requests to keep the Marines close to the coast in order to minimize logistical concerns fell upon deaf ears at Eighth Army and United Nations Command headquarters. Service support challenges were further complicated by the physical separation of the 1st Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. Additionally, during the spring of 1951 the 1st Marine Division provided much of the logistical support for the Korean Marines.

Logistical support in Korea was a massive multi-Service operation; it was a complicated logistical maze, one not easily traversed by the uninitiated, that existed because Marine units had to draw upon the resources of all four Services as well as indigenous labor. At the lowest level the

Marines relied upon their own robust organic service and support units. The 1st Combat Service Group functioned as an intermediate clearing house and established liaison with the other Services. The Marines drew upon Eighth Army for theater-level support and further relied upon Navy and Marine service support from Pacific Command. The Marines also obtained support from the Republic of Korea.

The first option when answering logistics challenges, of course, was to make the most effective possible use of organic assets. 1st Marine Division logistics units included Commander Howard A. Johnson’s, and after 23 January, Commander Clifford A. Stevenson’s 1st Medical Battalion; Lieutenant Colonel Olin L. Beall’s (Lieutenant Colonel John R. Barreiro, Jr., commanded after 16 March) 1st Motor Transport Battalion; Lieutenant Colonel Carl J. Cagle’s 7th Motor Transport Battalion; Major Lloyd O. Williams’ 1st Ordnance Battalion; the 1st Service Battalion (commanded successively by Lieutenant Colonel Charles L. Banks, Colonel Gould P. Groves, Lieutenant Colonel Horace E. Knapp, and Lieutenant Colonel Woodrow M. Kessler); and 1st Shore Party Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Henry P. “Jim” Crowe until 10 May and thereafter commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Horace H. Figuers). The 1st Marine Division was specifically tailored for amphibious operations, but in Korea the specific needs of the moment very often superseded doctrine. Amphibious combat support units, such as the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion and the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion, could not be fully utilized by the 1st Marine Division when it operated far from the coast, so one amphibian tractor company provided ship-to-shore

## Saving Lives

No cry for help on the battlefields of Korea carried more urgency than the plea "Corpsman up!" This chilling entreaty invariably meant that a Marine was seriously wounded. Within moments, a medical corpsman would come scurrying forward through a hail of fire to lend life-saving assistance, often conducted in full view of the enemy and done at great peril to the caregiver.

The U.S. Navy provided medical (doctors, nurses, and corpsmen) and morale (chaplains) personnel to the United States Marine Corps. The chaplains were known by a variety of names that indicated their particular status or religious affiliation; "Father," Rabbi, "Reverend," and "Padre" were among the most common nicknames. On the other hand, Navy medical personnel—from the lowest ranking hospital apprentice all the way up to the chief surgeon of the Medical Corps—were simply known as "Doc" to the Marines they served.

Most medical personnel assigned to the 1st Marine Division in Korea came from the 1st Medical Battalion, which was successively commanded by Navy Commanders Howard A. Johnson and Clifford A. Stevenson. That parent unit was divided into a Headquarters and Service Company and five medical

companies—two hospital companies and three collecting and clearing companies. Headquarters and Service Company (Commander William S. Francis and Lieutenant Commander Gustare T. Anderson, successively) provided administrative and support personnel and functions. Hospital Companies A (Commanders Buron E. Bassham, Philip L. Nova, and James A. Addison, respectively) and B (Lieutenant Commanders James A. Kaufman) were staffed and equipped to operate one 200-bed hospital each. The three collecting and clearing companies were: Company C (Commanders Harold A. Streit and Lewis E. Rector), Company D (Lieutenant Commanders Gustare T. Anderson and Daniel M. Pino), and Company E (Lieutenant Commanders Charles K. Holloway and John H. Cheffey). Generally speaking, Company C worked in direct support of the 5th Marines, Company D in support of the 1st Marines, and Company E in support of the 7th Marines during the spring of 1951.

The lowest rung on the medical evacuation chain was the individual hospital corpsman. Generally, two junior ratings of the 40 corpsmen assigned to each infantry battalion accompanied each rifle platoon into action. The primary jobs of these men, most of whom had only six

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weeks of advanced medical training under their belts, were to stabilize wounded men and to supervise the initial evacuation process. Under fire on the battlefield they would conduct a hasty exam and apply necessary first aid measures (start the breathing, stop the bleeding, stabilize or bandage the crucial area, and treat for shock). Once this was done, the corpsman would arrange for evacuation. Usually, this meant four Marines or Korean litter bearers would carry the wounded man to the nearest collection point (usually the company command post) for transportation to the battalion aid station. The 28 chaplains assigned to the 1st Marine Division often played a critical role in this stage as well. They frequently lent a hand as stretcher-bearers or administered first aid in addition to performing last rites or building up the sagging spirits of the wounded.

Two Navy doctors, usually lieutenants, manned the battalion aid station (called the BAS), along with 10 or so enlisted corpsmen headed by a chief pharmacist's mate. Incoming casualties were quickly inspected by an experienced corpsman so they could be categorized for treatment precedence ("triage"). The BAS facility was simple: usually an open air or tent operating arena, where rudimentary "meatball" surgery was performed while the patient's stretcher was placed upon a pair of sawhorses. This procedure saved time and minimized the amount of uncomfortable shifting. The battalion medics applied either life-saving surgery or gave just enough treatment to get the casualty ready for further evacuation.

The collecting and clearing companies then evacuated patients from the BAS to one of the 60-bed mobile field hospitals (in Army parlance, a MASH; to the naval services, depending upon which letter company was used, the nomenclature was something like "Charlie Med"). Here the facilities and care were more advanced. Surgical teams treated non-evacuables requiring resuscitation or immediate surgery then sent them on their way to semi-permanent division hospitals, which provided definitive care and short stay hospitalization. Extreme cases that were stable but could not return to duty in the near future were sent on to theater-level hospitals from whence they usually were returned to the United States.

Two intermediate steps in the evacuation process came into their own during the Korean War, use of hospital ships and aerial evacuation. Prior to the Second World War, hospital ships were used only to transport badly wounded men home. During World War II, however, hospital ships could often be found waiting off the landing beaches to provide a safe haven for treating casualties incurred during the opening rounds of amphibious operations. In Korea it was common practice to keep at least one hospital ship nearby at all times. These Haven- and Comfort-class vessels mustered about



National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC358063

150 officers and more than 1,000 enlisted men to man the operating rooms and healing wards which could accommodate several hundred critical short-term patients at one time. This practice, combined with the increasing use of helicopters for medical evacuations, ensured rapid advanced medical treatment was available. Several Haven- and Comfort-class hospital ships rotated station watches during the spring of 1951, and the USS *Consolation* (AH 15) was fitted with a helicopter landing pad—an adaptation that soon thereafter became standard practice.

Many view the advent of rotary-wing aircraft as the most important aviation innovation during the Korean Conflict. Inevitably, the nimble helicopters soon became an important means of medical evacuation because they could fly directly to the forward areas, pick up wounded men from previously inaccessible locations, then deliver them to an advanced care facility within a matter of minutes rather than hours or days. Helicopters could land atop the mountains and ridges that dotted Korea eliminating the rough handling and long movements necessary for overland evacuation. Unfortunately, the Sikorsky HO3S-1 could carry only one stretcher case at a time (and the patient's lower extremities would have to extend out the rear hatch), limiting their utility as an evacuation machine. By the spring of 1951, the bubble-topped Bell HTL, which mounted a pair of stretchers on each side and could carry a sitting evacuee as well, augmented these older machines. Eventually, even more capable evacuation helicopters (Sikorsky HO5S and HRS) made their way to Korea. Fixed-wing observation aircraft were sometimes pressed into service for emergency evacuations as well. Twin- and four-engine fixed-wing transport planes were used to deliver men to in-country theater-level facilities, hospitals in Japan, or to take the badly wounded back to the States.

transportation at Pohang while the remaining tracked landing vehicles were used by Eighth Army for non-Marine support. The 1st Engineer Battalion often used Shore Party motor transport and engineer assets. In addition, U.S. Army transportation units or trucks on temporary loan from other Marine units often reinforced the motor transport battalions. Navy Seabee Construction Battalions regularly furnished construction engineer support, Army engineer assets were often temporarily attached to Marine units, the U.S. Air Force provided equipment and materials for air base construction and maintenance, and the Korean Service Corps furnished laborers.

Colonel John N. Cook, Jr.'s 1st Combat Service Group at Masan furnished Marine general logistics support. The 1,400-man group was composed of headquarters, maintenance, supply, support, and truck companies. It furnished most service support functions: advanced maintenance and repair, central storage, general administration, and laundry services. Colonel Cook coordinated inter-Service logistics efforts, requisitioned supplies and equipment from higher echelons, controlled and maintained rear area depots, stored spare parts and high demand items, and distributed these to the division and the wing. The group also mustered special support units including a bath and fumigation platoon and an air delivery platoon. Although it provided support to the wing, the 1st Combat Service Group was actually attached to the 1st Marine Division. Group detachments were located in Japan, Pusan, Pohang, and operated forward area supply terminals at Wonju, Hoengson, and Chunchon.

The Military Sea Transportation Service, Military Air Transportation Service, and Naval Air Transport



1stMarDiv Historical Diary Photo Supplement, Apr51

*A column of Korean Civil Transport Corps bearers brings supplies from a rear area to the main battle line. Rugged terrain and lack of roads often dictated that man-packing supplies was the only way they would reach the front lines.*

Service furnished inter-theater lift of supplies, personnel, and equipment. Army Brigadier General Crump Garvin's 2d Logistical Command replenished common use items for all Services in Korea. Fleet Marine Force, Pacific's Service Command furnished unique Marine equipment and supplies. The situation was more complex with regard to aviation. The 2d Logistical Command provided a few aviation-related items but for the most part did not stock technical equipment such as aircraft parts, special maintenance tools, or aircraft ordnance. The U.S. Navy Pacific Service Command handled most of these, although Marine-specific items came from Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. Emergency resupply procedures allowed critical items to be flown to Korea from the United States.

Marine logistics problems mirrored the tactical situation. In January 1951, the major challenge was filling critical personnel and equipment shortfalls in the wake of the costly Chosin Reservoir campaign. After that the major logistics challenge became sustaining units almost constantly on the move.

Major equipment shortages occurred in communications and transportation. The Marines had only half their authorized radios and only 58 (of 1,162) EE8 telephones. The division was also short 58 jeeps and 33 two-and-a-half ton trucks. Not revealed in these statistics is the poor condition of the trucks that survived the Chosin campaign. Most were in terrible shape and badly needed advanced maintenance and new tires. The only significant combat arms shortfall was tanks; the 1st Tank Battalion had only 78 of its 97 authorized M-26 and M-4 tanks.

After the Marines left Masan in mid-January, resupply became the overriding logistics concern. The supply pipeline ran from the United States to Japan then on to Korea. Cargo and transport ships and long-range airplanes carried men, supplies, and equipment from the United States to depots and processing centers in Japan. The 1st Combat Service Group maintained an administrative processing center and a supply receiving area at Kobe, Japan. Unfortunately, there was a poor supply flow from Japan to Korea, partially due to labor and trans-

portation shortages and partially due to red tape. The Marines in Korea had few rear area storage facilities and inadequate transportation assets. There was only one true deep-water seaport in all of Korea, Pusan, and it was located at the peninsula's southernmost tip, which was serviced by a very limited road and rail network. This created a tremendous supply bottleneck. The Marines were able to make some use of Pohang as a port of entry, but unloading there was a cumbersome and time-consuming process. The U.S. Army 55th Quartermaster Depot which handled joint-Service requests did not back-order most types of supplies, hence, requests were routinely denied if a particular item was not on hand. Eventually, 1st Service Battalion assigned a Marine liaison team to smooth out this problem. Regardless, there was a constant shortage of expendable items, such as steel wool or stationery supplies, and individual requests sometimes required a four-week lead-time before issue. The 1st Combat Service Group ran railheads at Masan and Dalchon, the 1st Shore Party Battalion handled incoming supplies at Pohang and ran the railhead at Yodo-nae, and the division established truckheads as far forward as possible.

The poor roads, inadequate railroad system, and fluid nature of the fighting made resupply of forward units a never-ending headache. Trains, trucks, and airplanes carried in-country supplies from rear areas to forward supply points. From there, however, it was the division's job to get those supplies to its troops in the field. Unfortunately, there was no rail line north of Wonju, and there were often too few trucks to move the supplies that did arrive in a timely manner. The closing of forward supply points and ammuni-

tion storage areas during the CCF Spring Offensive also created problems. The closures created temporary ammunition shortages and stopped the flow of "A" and "B" rations so the troops had to rely upon less tasty and less filling "C" and "K" field rations. The only solution to this problem was to air-drop supplies and ammunition. Poor flying weather and limited airfield facilities made air transportation an iffy proposition, and airdrops were inefficient in terms of equipment, manpower, and loss rates, but there was simply no other choice. The multi-Service Combat Cargo Command accomplished airdrops. Marine transport planes joined those of the Air Force and the Navy to deliver supplies all across the front. The most unique air delivery was a single size 16 EEE combat shoe dropped over the 1st Marines headquarters from an OY light observation aircraft. This jocular package was addressed to Colonel Wilburt S. "Big Foot" Brown and included a

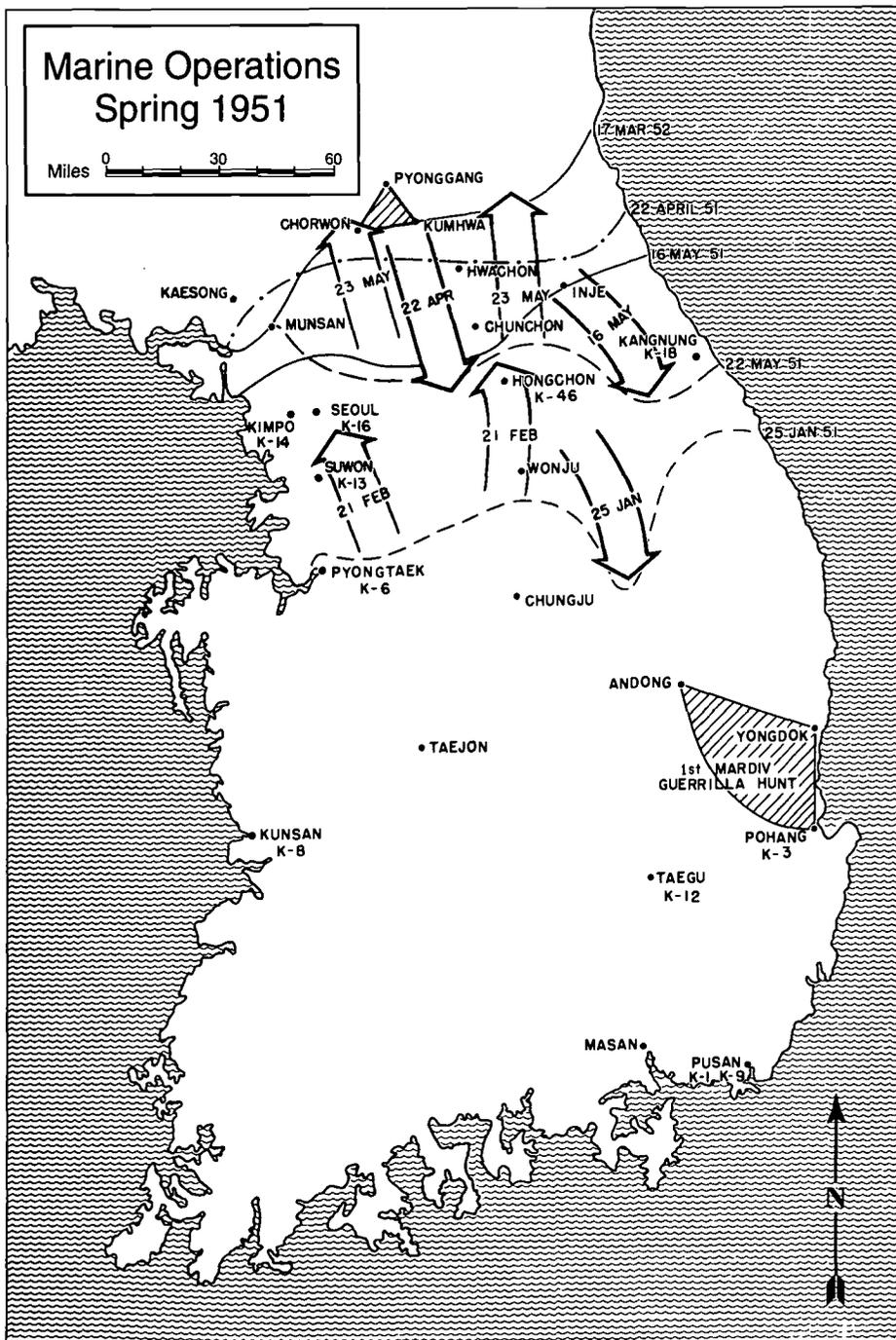
note that the pilot did not have sufficient space in his small plane to carry two such gigantic "Boondockers" at the same time. This joke, however, must have tried Brown's patience because pilots in Nicaragua had first used it three decades earlier.

One of the most difficult logistics challenges was overland transportation. Gasoline and tire shortages often idled much-needed trucks, jeeps, and weapons carriers. The Marines were also constantly hampered by lack of vehicles; for example, in April the division was short 1 tracked landing vehicle, 13 tanks, 18 jeeps, and 59 trucks. Although the 1st Marine Division had been augmented with an extra motor transport battalion, there were still insufficient trucks to move men and supplies in a timely manner. Heavy demands, combat losses, accidents, and hard use all contributed to the problem. Pooling Marine resources and borrowing U.S. Army trucks sometimes addressed this concern, but

*Marines line the rail as the attack transport General J. C. Breckinridge (AP 176) docks in San Francisco. These veterans, some with more than six months of combat, were among the first Marines to return from Korea.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-428299





Transportation Corps comprised “cargodore” companies consisting of about 200 “Chiggy Bear” porters. The Korean government provided almost 300 laborers to the 1st Marine Division. Yoboers were used for roadwork and manual labor by combat and service support units. The Chiggy Bears were parceled out to each rifle regiment where they labored under the supervision of a senior Marine noncommissioned officer or junior lieutenant. Organized as a unit under a headman and a straw boss, these never-ending columns of porters, called “Mule Trains” after a popular song of the day, kept frontline Marines supplied under the most trying circumstances. There are no specific figures as to how many of these loyal workers were killed or wounded in action, but those numbers were undoubtedly high. Although sacrifices of the Chiggy Bears may have gone unrecorded, their tireless efforts were certainly not unappreciated by the cold, thirsty, hungry Marines at the front.

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing’s major engineering headaches were airfield renovation and upkeep. This was particularly difficult because the wing was almost constantly on the move. The wide dispersal of Marine air units located at air bases in Japan (Itami, Itazuke, and Bofu) and Korea—Pohang (K-3), Pusan (K-1 and K-9), Hoegsong (K-46), and Seoul (K-16). Marine Wing Service Squadron 1 (successively commanded by Chief Warrant Officer Aubrey D. Taylor, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Linsay, and Colonel Roger T. Carleson) was the unit charged to provide such support, but the overworked Marines often had to ask for help from Navy Seabee construction units as well as Army and Air Force engineers. When such support was not immediately

even additional vehicles could do nothing to alleviate the major transportation obstacle, the inadequate Korean transportation infrastructure.

Food, clothing, ammunition, and other necessities slowly made their way forward to regimental and battalion supply dumps in trucks, jeeps, and weapons carriers, but then most often had to be hand carried to the front lines. This was a labor-intensive process that

few combat units could spare men for. The South Korean government, at the request of Eighth Army, organized a pair of quasi-military organizations—the Korean Service Corps and the Korean Transportation Corps—to fill this need. Members of the Korean National Guard and volunteers from refugee camps manned these organizations. The Korean Service Corps included “Yoboer” construction gangs, and the

forthcoming, as it often was not, Marine technicians had to be pulled away from other jobs to pick up shovels. Fuel handling was also a problem. For example, Marine Aircraft Group 33 at K-3 (Pohang) had to rely upon tracked landing vehicles to haul fuel drums ashore, which then had to be hand pumped into 1,200-gallon fuel trucks. This slow, inefficient, labor-intensive process siphoned off men whose skills could have been put to better use. Additionally, vehicles designed to handle World War II ordnance were ill-suited to service modern aircraft. The primitive conditions in Korea also took a toll on wing motor transport. These problems required constant attention throughout the spring of 1951.

That operations only intermittently suffered for lack of service support is a tribute to Marine service and support personnel. The Marines faced seemingly insurmountable logistics challenges between January and May 1951, yet—despite a few hiccups—the only serious long-term supply shortfall was the lack of artillery ammunition caused by Eighth Army policies dictated from above over the strenuous objections of Marine commanders. That this was the case is a testament to the hard working, but too often unsung, Marines of the combat service support units.

The 1st Marine Division received two replacement drafts in December 1950, but was still short almost 3,000 men on New Year's Day. The initial personnel deficit was partially alleviated by the return to duty of 945 men, most of whom had been frostbite evacuations, and the arrival of 700 veteran Marines pulled from posts and stations in the Far East. Two replacement drafts were also formed at Camp Pendleton. The



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A157778

*Marine replacements come ashore from a Navy landing ship. Three replacement drafts were rushed to Korea after the Chosin campaign, and about one replacement draft with about 100 officers and more than 1,000 enlisted men arrived each month thereafter.*

largest part of these drafts consisted of recalled reservists, but there were also some veteran regular Marines included. Freshly minted Marines from the recruit depots and “shiny-bar” second lieutenants just arrived from officer training filled out replacement rosters. Two hundred and thirty men with critical military occupational specialties were flown directly to the combat zone. The 4th Replacement Draft sailed for Korea on board the fast transport USNS *General William O. Darby* (AP 127) and was due in mid-January. The just-forming 5th Replacement Draft was assigned to the USS *General J. C. Breckinridge* (AP 176) and was slated to arrive in mid-February. Replacement drafts containing about 1,700 men each continued arriving on a monthly basis from then on. This personnel replacement system was adequate, but it was not perfect. The adoption of a combat rotation system primarily

based upon time served meant that the most experienced Marines were constantly leaving Korea and their places taken by inexperienced replacements. The introduction of new men, as individuals rather than units, created cohesion problems in small units. Personnel shortages after major engagements remained a nagging problem throughout the spring of 1951.

### Extraordinary Heroism

The period from January to May 1951 encompassed three designated U.N. campaigns: Chinese Intervention from 3 November 1950 to 24 January 1951; the First U.N. Counteroffensive from 25 January to 21 April; and the CCF Spring Offensive from 22 April to 8 July 1951. It is ironic that the spring of 1951 is one of the most overlooked periods in American military history because that period featured some of the most intense

and hard-fought Marine actions of the Korean Conflict. The anonymous battles of that time were as desperate and bloody as those at the Pusan Perimeter, the Inchon landing, and the liberation of Seoul, yet they remain almost unknown except to those who fought there. Too often relegated to the dustbin of history is the fact that some Marine units suffered more casualties during the drive to the Punchbowl than they had during the legendary fighting at the Chosin Reservoir. Indeed, the events of that time might well be called the "Forgotten Campaigns" of what is now often termed the "Forgotten War." What should be remembered is the key role played by the Marines, both on the ground and in the air. The 1st Marine Division rendered ineffective one NKPA division at Pohang, spearheaded the United Nations' recapture of the Hwachon Reservoir during Operations Killer and Ripper, and stabilized the center of the U.N. line in the midst of the CCF Spring Offensive. The versatile 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew a wide variety of missions; helicopters proved their utility in combat and Marine close air support was unsurpassed in efficiency. These accomplishments did not go unrecognized at the time; both the 1st Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing were awarded Presidential Unit Citations for their actions in the spring of 1951.

Luckily, the military lessons of the day were not forgotten. The Marines in Korea fought well, but they were not employed in accord with their envisioned inter-Service role. They, even more than their antecedents in World War I, became an integral part of a United States field army fighting far from the sea for an extended period. Instead of acting as a semi-independent combined arms team, as

had been the case in 1950, in the spring of 1951 the 1st Marine Division was stripped of its direct air support and became just one more Eighth Army ground maneuver unit. Thus, contrary to the wishes of Marine commanders, the 1st Marine Division was used as a "second land army." The forced separation of the 1st Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and the lack of an in-theater Marine commander prompted the later creation of permanent Marine air-ground task forces.

Another factor that affected the future of the Marine Corps was the performance of the Marine Corps Reserve. Without the Reserve, it is doubtful that the Marines would have been able to deploy an entire division and aircraft wing to Korea. The character of the 1st Marine Division underwent a drastic change in the spring of 1951. When the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade arrived in Korea in August 1950 it was virtually an all-regular formation, by the time of the Chosin Reservoir campaign in November about one-third of the Marines were reservists, but by the end of May 1951 almost two-thirds of the U.S. Marines in Korea were reservists. There were very few regular officers below the rank of captain and almost no regular enlisted men other than staff non-commissioned officers by the time the 1st Marine Division reached the No Name Line. Similar figures also apply to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. This proved that the Marine Corps could count on its Reserve when the chips were down. This lesson was validated in the Persian Gulf some 40 years later when Marine reservists once again answered the call to the colors during the Gulf War and acquitted themselves well.

The period January to May 1951 was one of transition and tumult

during which United Nations forces traveled from the brink of defeat to the edge of victory several times as fierce fighting ebbed and flowed across Korea's midlands. The enemy still remained a potent and dangerous foe after the spring of 1951, but the United Nations Command had become a seasoned force that was not about to be ejected from the peninsula. All talk of evacuating Korea due to enemy pressure was silenced by the recent stellar performance on the battlefield. This favorable reversal of fortunes in Korea between January and May has been characterized by the eminent military historian Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., USA, as "the single greatest feat of arms in American military history," and the Marines played a key role in that amazing reversal of fortune.

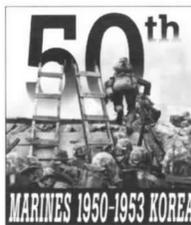
The impact of that stunning turnaround was, however, not realized on the home front. By mid-1951 many Americans were dissatisfied with "Truman's Police Action," and there was deeply felt sentiment across the country for an end to the fighting. The resulting political pressure led to a fundamental change in American foreign policy. A Joint Chiefs of Staff directive stated that the military objective was no longer to unify Korea, but "to repel aggression against South Korea." In fact, both sides unofficially accepted a mutual cessation of major offensive actions after the U.N. regained the modified Kansas Line in June. The Korean War then passed its first anniversary without fanfare or celebration, and not long after peace talks began. The United Nations Command briefly mounted a limited offensive after the talks broke down, but the Korean Conflict thereafter became a bloody stalemate marked by two more years of contentious negotiations and inconclusive fighting.

## About the Author

Lieutenant Colonel Ronald J. Brown, USMCR (Ret), is a freelance writer and scoring director for Measurement Incorporated, an educational testing firm. The author of two monographs in the Persian Gulf series and two official unit histories, he was also a contributing author for the best-selling book *The Marines*, and has been a frequent contributor to



professional journals. He is working on a second Korean commemorative pamphlet on Marine helicopter operations. Lieutenant Colonel Brown served as an active duty infantry officer from 1968 to 1971 and saw combat in Vietnam. He joined MTU DC-7 at its inception in 1976 and served continuously with that unit until his retirement. He went to Korea during Exercise Team Spirit-84. Six years later he was activated during the Persian Gulf War and was assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force. After Operation Desert Storm, he became the Marine component historian for Combined Task Force Provide Comfort in northern Iraq. Lieutenant Colonel Brown, then commanding MTU DC-7, retired in 1996. In civilian life, Ronald Brown was a high school history teacher for three decades and is a nominee for the Michigan High School Football Coaches Hall of Fame.



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