



**A CASE STUDY**  
**BRIGADIER GENERAL EDWARD A. CRAIG, USMC**  
**AND**  
**THE FIRE BRIGADE AT THE PUSAN PERIMETER –**  
**AUGUST -1950**



**BGen Edward A. Craig    LtCol Raymond L. Murray    Capt Francis "Ike" Fenton**

**April 2019**



## A CASE STUDY

### **BRIGADIER GENERAL EDWARD A. CRAIG, USMC**

**AND**

### **THE FIRE BRIGADE AT THE PUSAN<sup>1</sup> PERIMETER – AUGUST -1950**

The purpose of this case study is to explore the art and science of the mutually reinforcing concepts of professional excellence and competence of Marine leadership. Eight chapters describe the Strategic, Operational and Tactical Levels of command and combat actions using historical documentation and taped interviews of Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, the Commanding General of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade; Brigadier General Thomas Cushman, Deputy Commander of the Brigade; LtCol Raymond L. Murray, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine's Regimental Commanding Officer; Captain Francis I. "Ike" Fenton, the acting B/1/5 Commanding Officer and then, Private Warren Weidhahn, a combat infantryman who served with the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines at the Pusan Perimeter, at Inchon and at the Chosin Reservoir.

The intent of selecting this iconic period of Marine Corps history, *to study the subject of leadership at the strategic, operational and tactical level*, is to encourage current and future small unit leaders by describing the actions of those Marines who came before them, and closely *examining the types of challenges they faced and the innovative mechanisms they used to address these challenges*, and *to better understand the assuredness that subordinates had in their professionally competent and disciplined leaders*.

Every Marine, at one time or another, credits their success to not wanting to let down their fellow Marines, ever. It is this kind of *esprit de Corps* that transforms defeat into victory and possible failure into success. This is the real lesson of the Fire Brigade and the actions taken by Brigadier General Craig's Marines in the early days and weeks of combat at the Pusan Perimeter, late in the summer of 1950.

At a time in our Corp's history that continues to present new and complex challenges, the people of the United States expect the United States Marine Corps to accomplish any and every assigned mission. When dealing with similar challenges in the past, we have demanded a strict adherence to and the maintaining of our Nation's highest expectations of teamwork and discipline. Whether operating under the unrelenting demands of combat, or in garrison, commanders at all levels must keep this in mind. When looking for great examples of leadership, courage and discipline, there are few better than the leadership of officers and men of the Fire Brigade at the Pusan Perimeter.

Prepared by the staff at Lejeune Leadership Institute  
Marine Corps University  
April 2019

**For the discussion group leader and the student: Why do we study past events such as the Marine Corps' involvement at the Pusan Perimeter?**

A decision-forcing case study is an exercise which asks students to solve a problem faced by an actual person(s) at some point in the past. Because the problem is drawn from real life, a decision-making case is a specific type of a case study. Because students are asked to provide specific solutions to a concrete problem, a decision-forcing case is both a case study that asks students to make a decision and a decision based-game based upon facts.

This case study, a chronological history of what happened in the summer of 1950 in South Korea, introduces the principal players: Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, Brigadier General Thomas Cushman, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray, Captain Francis "Ike" Fenton and Pfc. Warren Weidhahn, who played significant roles at the strategic, operational and tactical levels, respectively, in the battle for the Pusan Perimeter.

Utilizing personal taped interviews of General Craig, General Cushman, LtCol Murray, Captain Fenton and Pfc. Weidhahn, and relying on historical documentation from *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea 1950-1953*, by authors Lynn Montross and Captain Nicholas A. Canzona, USMC and *Fire Brigade; Marines in the Pusan Perimeter*, by Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR, a comprehensive history of political, social and cultural events, leading up to activation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade, is the foundation of the "who, what, when, why, and where;" questions that make this case study interesting and relevant.

At the end of the case study are ten (10) thought-provoking questions presented to encourage group discussion and participation. Each question contains specific references to MCDP's and other sources.

*"An ability to furnish skilled forces to meet emergency situations on short notice has long been a hallmark of the Marine Corps. When the call came for such a force to be dispatched to Korea on 2 July, 1950, the Corps was handicapped by the strictures of a peacetime economy. Nevertheless, a composite brigade consisting of a regiment and an air group was made available within a week's time.*

*With a reputation built largely on amphibious warfare, Marines of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade were called upon to prove their versatility in sustained ground action. On three separate occasions within the embattled Perimeter-south toward Sachon, and twice along the Naktong River- these Marine units hurled the weight of their assault force at the enemy. All three attacks were successful, and at no point did Marines give ground except as ordered. The quality of their performance in the difficult days of the Pusan Perimeter fighting made them a valuable member of the United Nations team and earned new laurels for their Corps"*

Lemuel C. Shepherd, General U. S. Marine Corps,

Commandant of the Marine Corps



Map # 1  
Korea - 1950

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### At the Strategic Level

#### **Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, USMC**



Brigadier General Edward A. Craig was born on 22 November 1896 in Danbury, Connecticut, and attended St. Johns Military Academy in Wisconsin. After being commissioned in the Marine Corps in August 1917, he served in a wide range of posts: in Washington as aide to Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune in 1926, and in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, China, Nicaragua, and the Philippines, combined with tours on board the aircraft carriers USS Yorktown and USS Enterprise.

By May of 1942 he had been promoted to colonel, and this brought him command of the 9th Marines. He led his regiment in combat on Guadalcanal in July 1943, then that November on Bougainville where he was awarded the Bronze Star. In December 1943, he was given a temporary promotion to brigadier general. In July-August 1944 his regiment led the attack on Guam. Craig's valiant conduct there brought him a Navy Cross.

Moving to a staff assignment, he served as operations officer, V Amphibious Corps, in the assault on Iwo Jima in February 1945. A Legion of Merit was presented to him for that service.

Duty, as assistant division commander, 1st Marine Division, in China in 1947, came with his promotion to permanent brigadier general. Craig then assumed command of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in June of that year. This brought him back to Guam, almost three years after he had participated in its recapture. In 1949, he was transferred to Camp Pendleton as assistant division commander, 1st Marine Division. Very soon thereafter came the attack on South Korea, which led to his designation, for a second time, as Commanding General, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. This time, however, it moved quickly to combat. When the brigade, after its victories in the Pusan Perimeter, was deactivated in September 1950, its troops were merged into a reformed 1st Marine Division. Craig reverted to his former billet as assistant division commander.

For his noteworthy performance of duty during 1950 operations in Korea, he received an Air Medal with gold star, a Silver Star, and a Distinguished Service Medal.

January 1951 brought his promotion to lieutenant general, and a few months later, in June, he retired with 33 years of distinguished service. He died in December 1994.<sup>ii</sup>

**Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman, USMC**  
**Deputy Commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade**



Born on 27 June 1895 in Saint Louis, Cushman graduated from the University of Washington in Seattle and subsequently enlisted in the Marine Corps in July 1917. Commissioned in October 1918, he received his naval aviator wings the following year. Duty in Guam, Nicaragua, and Haiti followed the diverse Marine aviation pattern of the 1920s.

Next, in June 1933, came a tour in the Bureau of Aeronautics of the Navy Department, and then, broadening his interservice experience, he attended the Army Air Corps Tactical School in 1935. With the commitment of Marine aviation in World War II, Cushman was appointed Chief of Staff, Marine Aircraft Wings, Pacific. With a temporary rank of brigadier general in January 1944, he was next assigned as Air Defense Commander, Marianas Islands. For these services he was awarded a Bronze Star and the Legion of Merit with Combat “V.”

When his rank was made permanent in 1947, he became Commanding General, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, the following year. With the outbreak of the Korean War, he was assigned as Assistant Wing Commander, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, in June 1950. With the forward echelon of the wing, he provided the air support for the Marine Brigade when it went to Korea. In 1951 he took command of the wing. His leadership there brought him his second Legion of Merit and a Distinguished Service Medal.

His final billet was Deputy Commander, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, as a major general in 1953, and, after promotion to lieutenant general in 1954, he retired. He died in July 1972.<sup>iii</sup>

### **At the Operational Level**

**Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray, USMC**

**Commanding Officer of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment – 1950**



Born 30 January 1913 in Los Angeles, California, Murray grew up to attend Texas A&M College. While there he was enrolled in the Reserve Officer Training Course. Graduating in 1935 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, he did a short stint in the Texas National Guard and then was commissioned in the Marine Corps on 1 July. After Basic School, he was ordered to duty in China, 1937-1940. A radical change of scenery led to an assignment as a captain with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in Iceland, 1941-1942.

Moving overseas in November 1942 with the 2nd Division, he was awarded the Silver Star in January 1943 for his service as Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines, on Guadalcanal. Now a lieutenant colonel, he took his battalion on to Tarawa in November 1943, where he received a second Silver Star. This was followed by exploits on Saipan that brought him a Navy Cross and a Purple Heart in June 1944.

The years after World War II saw Murray in a variety of peacetime Marine Corps duties, leading to his taking over in July 1950 as Commanding Officer, 5th Marines (a billet normally reserved for a full colonel). When his regiment became the core of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in Korea, and then was a key unit in the Inchon-Seoul battles, he again distinguished himself in combat and was awarded his third Silver Star, a fourth one from the Army, and a Legion of Merit with Combat “V” in August and September 1950.

Further combat at the Naktong River, Inchon, Seoul, and the Chosin Reservoir brought a second Navy Cross and an Army Distinguished Service Cross.

In January 1951, after nearly eight years as a lieutenant colonel, he was promoted to full colonel, and then, after a sequence of duties in Washington, Quantico, and Camp Pendleton, to the rank of brigadier general in June 1959. This led to his assignment as Assistant Division



Commander, 3rd Marine Division, on Okinawa. Promoted to major general in February 1963, he saw duty as Deputy Commander, III Marine Amphibious Force, in Vietnam in October 1967.

After 33 years of highly decorated active duty, Murray retired in August 1968 as a Major General. He passed away in 2004 as is buried at the Mission San Luis Rey Cemetery, in Oceanside, California.

“Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Murray was 37 years old and was the most junior of the three regimental commanders. General Graves Erskine had given Murray command of the regiment before Smith arrived and Smith could have assigned a more senior Colonel to take the regiment to Korea, but decided to give Murray a fair shot. Smith thought “Colonel Murray was a fine figure of a man, tall, robust, and iron-jawed. His looks alone stamped him as a leader. He did not have the staff background of Colonel Litzenberg or the flair of Colonel Puller, but he was an inspiring leader. He never spared himself. He used imagination in the handling of his regiment, but was not reckless. Administration was not Colonel Murray’s strong suit, but fortunately he was blessed with able executive officers. Colonel Murray was not a fair weather Marine; it was reassuring to have him in there when the going was tough.”

#### **At the Tactical Level**

#### **Captain Francis I. “Ike” Fenton, USMC Commanding Officer B/1/5**



“When daylight arrived, I discovered that I was the only officer left the in company. The previous afternoon the company counted 190 men and 5 officers. In the morning 88 men were

left on the line. The 2nd Platoon, which had borne the brunt of the night attack, but had 11 men left.

First Lieutenant Nick Schryver from the 1st Platoon was reported to have been killed. My gunnery sergeant, Ed Wright, said he'd had been hit by a grenade burst. I thought it would be demoralizing to the men to have a dead lieutenant lying around, so even though we were only evacuating the wounded, I told Ed, "Put Schryver on the first available stretcher and take him off the ridge". A short time later I looked up and, gee whiz, I thought I was looking at a ghost! There stood Nick. With all the bandages wrapped around his head he looked like a mummy. "My God," I said, "what are you doing here? They told me you were dead." He told me, "Skipper, back in the aid station I got to thinking. The last couple of days we've seen a lot of action. I thought your number would be up. You know, Skipper, very seldom does a young lieutenant get to command a company. Since you're long overdue, I just figured if I could get back here, I'd get myself a company".<sup>iv</sup>

### **The Fenton Family**

US Marine Colonel Francis Fenton conducting the funeral of his son Private First Class Mike Fenton, near Shuri, Okinawa, May 1945.



This picture depicts one of the most heart wrenching moments to occur on Okinawa involved a family with a proud Marine heritage. Colonel (later Brigadier General) Francis I. Fenton enlisted in the Marine Corps in August 1917. He gradually rose through the ranks until he became

division engineer officer of the 1st Marine Division in July 1944. With this unit, Fenton won a Bronze Star for duty at Peleliu before landing on Okinawa.

While Colonel Fenton advanced to higher command, his younger son, Michael, enlisted in the Marine Corps on August 17, 1943, and joined B Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division – the same division in which his father commanded the engineers. Reportedly turning down a commission so he could fight at the front, Michael served as a scout-sniper (on) Okinawa.

Father and son met once during the fighting when their paths crossed at a partially destroyed Okinawan farmhouse. After exchanging news from home, including information on Michael's older brother, Francis, Jr., who had been commissioned a Marine officer in 1941, the two family members returned to their work.

They would never talk again. On May 7, 1945, while beating back a Japanese counterattack not far from Sugar Loaf, 19-year-old Pfc. Michael Fenton was killed. When his father received the bitter news, he traveled to the site of his son's death and knelt down to pray over the flag draped body, a scene that produced one of the Pacific war's most touching photographs. Upon arising, Colonel Fenton stared at the bodies of other Marine dead and said: *'Those poor souls. They didn't have their fathers here'*.

After the burial, Colonel Fenton returned to his headquarters and wrote a brief note to his wife, Mary, in San Diego. The soldier then resurfaced. Fenton fixed his attention on a large map hanging in his headquarters, studied it closely for a time, then said to his subordinate, "We'd better double the guard around No. 5 bridge. The Nips may try to blow it". The war was back on.

Mary Fenton learned of her son's death before receiving her husband's letter. In fact, she experienced a bittersweet two days when, on Wednesday, a telegram arrived from the Marine Corps Commandant informing her of Michael's death. The very next day came news that her husband had been awarded a second Bronze Star.

Mrs. Fenton told reporters she was proud that Michael had done his duty as a Marine. She quoted a recent letter from him in which the youth wrote that he 'dedicated my life to my country' and that he was 'prepared to die'. Both Colonel Fenton and his older son, Francis "Ike" Fenton, survived the war. Mike's body was later exhumed from his temporary grave and is now resting in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii.

**Colonel Warren Wiedhahn, Jr., USMC (Ret)**  
**Infantryman with 5<sup>th</sup> Marines at Pusan**



Born on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1929, in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. He enlisted in the Marine Corps on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, 1948, motivated by his brother-in-law, Robert Jones, who was a Marine veteran.

An honor graduate from Parris Island boot camp, his first duty assignment was with “Charlie” Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines, in China. He remained in Tsingtao, China until 1949, where his primary duty was protecting an airfield with a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). He returned to Camp Pendleton, after duty in China, and remained in the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Regiment.

On the 25 of June, 1950, he was a Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class on board the *USS Henrico*, when it docked at Pusan. Assigned as a clerk to the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines regimental headquarters, he soon found himself on perimeter security duty. Wounded by an enemy mortar round, he was treated and released back to his unit after three days of hospitalization. Assigned to a 4.2 mortar section, he remained with the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines at the Pusan Perimeter; made the amphibious landing at Inchon, and participated in combat operations at the “Frozen” Chosin Reservoir.

After being evacuated from Korea with pneumonia and frostbite, he was assigned to the Naval Supply Depot, in Scotia, New York, where he progressed from PFC, to corporal to sergeant and the staff sergeant in a little more than a year.

Selected for the Temporary Commission Program, Warren went to Quantico and attended the Basic School in 1952, and was ordered to Marine Barracks, Kodiak, Alaska. One year in Alaska was followed by a tour at Marine Barracks, Treasure Island, California, and then an assignment to 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, as a company commander from 1954 until 1959.

Future assignments were duty in Vietnam, a student at Command & Staff College, Regimental Commander of the 9<sup>th</sup> Marines; and Aide to Lieutenant General James M. Masters, Sr., and Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Louis H. Wilson.

Upon his retirement in 1982, he created the Military Historical Tour Company, which offers tours to Guam, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Vietnam,

**Commanders and staff of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines – Pusan, August 1950**



Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are: LtCol George R. Newton, LtCol Howard S. Roise, and LtCol Robert D. Taplett. Second Row, LtCol Raymond L. Murray, LtCol Lawrence C. Hays, Jr. Third Row, Maj R. M. Colland, LtCol George F. Walters, Jr., Captain John V. Huff, Maj Kenneth Boyd, Maj Harold Wallace, Maj William C. Esterline. Fourth Row Ralph M. Sudnick, Lt Robert M. Lucy, Lt Almarion S. Bailey, Lt Leo R. Jillisky, Lt Alton C Weed, Capt Gearl English, WO Harold J. Michael, and CWO Bill E. Parrish

**Battalion & Company Officer Leadership 1/5 - August, 1950**



Left to right: LtCol George Newton, Battalion Commander, 1/5, 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade Major John Russell, CO Weapons Company, Captain John Stevens, Able Company Captain “Ike” Fenton, Baker Company, Captain Walter Godenius H&S Company

## Chapter One

### The Historical Background...

#### The Partition of Korea - 1945

It meant little to most Americans on 25 June, 1950 to read in their Sunday newspapers that civil strife had broken out in Korea. They could hardly have suspected that this remote Asiatic peninsula was to become, at the time, the scene of the fourth most costly military effort of American history, both in blood and money, before the end of the year. Yet the danger of an explosion had been ever present ever since the end of World War II, when the United States and the Soviet Union rushed into the political vacuum created in Korea by the defeat of Japan.<sup>v</sup>

The importance of Korea in the Soviet scheme of things was indicated by the haste with which Russian troops crossed the frontier on 12 August 1945, three days after the declaration of war [against Japan, by the Soviet Union]. They were the vanguard of an army numbering a quarter of a million men led by General Ivan Chistyakov, a hero of the battle of Stalingrad.

The surrender terms called for a joint American and Soviet occupation, with the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel serving as a temporary line of demarcation. Not until 8 September, however, did Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, USA, reach southern Korea with the first American troops.

The Russians had a tremendous advantage over United States occupation forces. Since World War I more than a million Koreans had found a refuge from Japanese bondage on Russian or Chinese soil. Thousands of men had been indoctrinated with Communist principles and given military training to aid the Chinese Reds fighting Japanese invaders of China. In 1945, the Russians could count on the efforts of Korean revolutionists to establish Communist rule in their homeland behind a façade of democracy.

The United States forces, on the contrary, did not even have enough interpreters. They impressed the Koreans, at first, as being alien occupation troops setting up a military government. Meanwhile, the Russians had installed an interim government at Pyongyang. Korean Reds filled in key positions, and Stalin's portraits and the hammer and sickle emblem were seen at political rallies.

Koreans of all persuasions opposed the division of their country into two zones on either side of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The Reds at Pyongyang contrived to lay the blame on the Americans. They made a further appeal to Koreans on both sides of the boundary by announcing a land reform in the northern zone. Ever since 1905 a Japanese landlord had been the hated symbol of oppression. Pyongyang won a great propaganda victory, therefore, by announcing the confiscation of all large estates, Korean as well as Japanese, and the division of the land among the peasantry.

The bait was so tempting that the hook did not become apparent until it was too late. Then the beneficiaries of the Agrarian Reform discovered that they could neither sell nor rent the land, nor could they use it as security for loans. If anyone ceased to work his holding, it reverted to the People's Committee, which allocated it to some other family. The State retained possession, in short, and the peasant remained as much of a serf as ever. Worse yet, the taxes disguised as "production quotas" eventually amounted to 60% of the total crop, which was more than the Japanese had ever extorted.<sup>vi</sup>

This a sample of the methods used to reduce North Korea to a police state, just as similar states were being organized in occupied lands of Europe by local Communists doing the bidding of Moscow. In the Soviet zone of Korea all banks, factories and industries of any consequence were nationalized by the so-called People's Committee.<sup>vii</sup> Military training for offensive warfare was given to men armed with captured Japanese weapons. Pressure was put upon these recruits to "volunteer" for combat service with the Chinese Communists waging a civil war against the Nationalists.<sup>viii</sup>

### **Civil Strife in Korea**

Not only had the Russians made the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel a political boundary in Korea; they had also resisted all American attempts at unification. This meant that economic recovery was badly handicapped. For the mines, heavy industries and hydroelectric plants were located in the north, while the south had most of the agriculture. Products once exchanged with mutual benefit now had to be imported from abroad.

Trusteeship was hotly resented by all Koreans, even though few of them had gained administrative or technical experience under the Japanese. This prejudice was exploited by Soviet propagandists who denounced the "undemocratic" American policy of bringing in administrators, technicians and educators. As a consequence, the United States military government made a poor showing at first in comparison to the puppet government of Communist-trained Koreans installed at Pyongyang by Russians pulling the strings behind the scenes. Anti-American propaganda won converts to the south as north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, with General Hodge being accused of maintaining a harsh military rule.

At the Moscow Conference of 1945, the Soviet Union had agreed with the United States that the whole of Korea was to be given a democratic government after passing through the trusteeship phase. A Soviet-American Joint Commission was to meet and make recommendations for this purpose; but as early as 1946 it became obvious that the Soviet representative had been instructed to sabotage any attempts to create a united Korea with its own government.

After the failure of the first year's efforts, General Hodge ordered the establishment of an Interim Legislature at Seoul as the counterpart of the People's Assembly at Pyongyang. Of the 90 seats, half were to be filled by popular vote and the remaining 45 by Korean appointees of the Military Government. The elections were a triumph for the American-educated Dr. Syngman Rhee and the rightists. Hodge tried to give the other South Korean factions a voice by appointing

moderates and liberals, but the Interim Legislature had no solution for the discontent in Korea as the economic situation went from bad to worse in spite of American aid.

Although the Americans on the Joint Commission did their best, they were blocked by all manner of Soviet-contrived delays and obstacles. Finally, in 1947, the United States submitted the question to the United Nations. After long discussion, the General Assembly resolved that all the people of Korea be given an opportunity in the spring of 1948 to elect a national assembly for the entire country.

A commission representing nine-member nations was appointed to visit Korea and supervise the voting. But the Russians not only refused to participate in the election; they went so far as to bar the commissioners from entering North Korea.

The new National Assembly elected in May 1948 by South Korea had the task of forming a government. On 17 July the first constitution in 40 years of Korean history was approved by the deputies, who elected Syngman Rhee to a 4-year term as president.

It was an eventful summer south of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. The Republic of Korea came into being on 15 August, and on that day the American military government ended. John J. Muccio was appointed by President Harry Truman to represent the United States in Korea with the rank of Ambassador. Plans were made to withdraw the 50,000 United States occupation troops during the next 8 months, leaving only 500 officers and men as military instructors for the training of a Republic of Korea security force. In the northern zone the Communists organized demonstrations against the United Nations Commission. Strikes and disorders were fomented south of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, and 200,000 North Koreans marched in protest at Pyongyang.

There was an air of urgency about such attempts to prevent the election in South Korea. The exposure of the Agrarian Reform as a fraud had hurt the Communists, and the disinterested spirit of the United States occupation was gaining recognition throughout Korea in spite of initial blunders. Pyongyang could not afford to let South Korea take the lead in forming a government, and July 1948 dated the creation of a Communist state known as the People's Democratic Republic of Korea.

After adopting a constitution modeled after that of Communist Bulgaria, the Supreme People's Council claimed to represent all Korea. In justification it was charged that "American imperialists carried out a ruinous separate election and organized a so-called National Assembly with the support of a traitor minority and with the savage oppression of the majority of the Korean people."<sup>ix</sup>

The Russians announced in December 1948 that they were withdrawing all occupation troops. It was no secret, however, that they would leave behind them an NK army that far surpassed the ROK military establishment.<sup>x</sup> Kim IL Sung, the Communist Korean prime minister, referred to it pointedly as a "superior army" in an address at Pyongyang.

"We must strengthen and improve it," he declared. "Officers and men must establish iron discipline and must be proficient in the military and in combat techniques."<sup>xi</sup>



Numbers at the end of 1948 were estimated at 60,000 regulars in addition to constabulary, railroad guards, and trainees. These troops were equipped by the Russians with captured Japanese weapons, and Russian arms shipped into northern Korea to meet the needs of an expanding army.

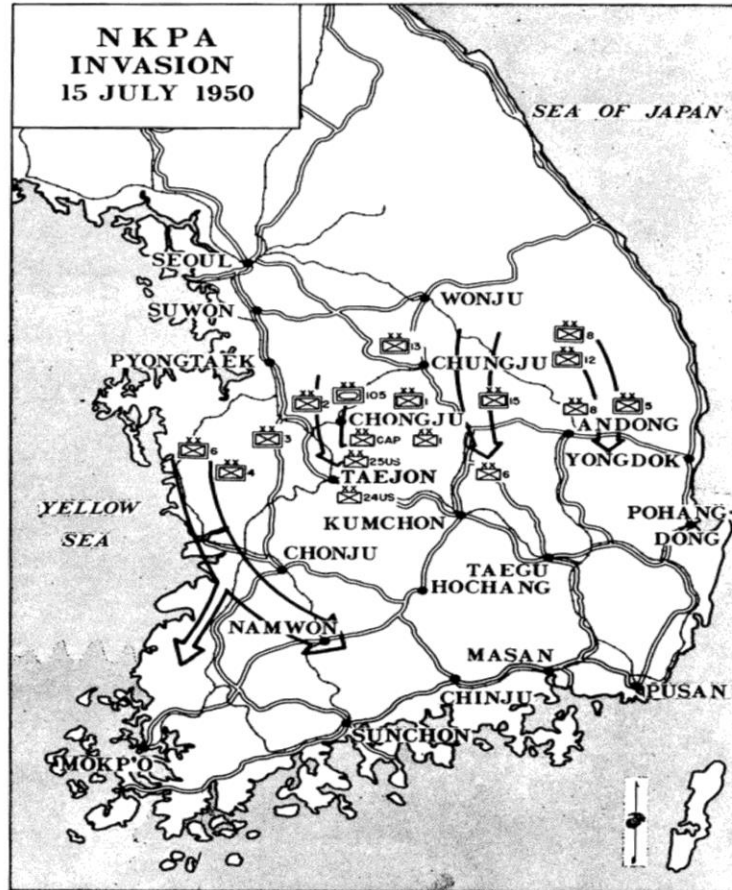
It was a military force of an entirely different character that American officers organized on the other side of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. The new ROK army was strictly a defensive force, trained and equipped to maintain internal security and guard the border and seacoast. Neither tanks nor military aircraft were provided by the Americans, who leaned backward to avoid any suspicion of creating an instrument for offensive internecine warfare.

Raids by Communist Korean troops across the border became a frequent occurrence throughout 1949. One of these forays, supported by artillery, was a large-scale NK thrust into the Ongjin Peninsula. Heavy fighting resulted before the invaders were driven back into their own territory.

Having failed to prevent the formation of a democratic Korean government – the only government formation in Korea recognized by the United Nations- the Communists at Pyongyang were making every effort to wreck it. Since 80 percent of the ROK electric power originated north of the frontier, they were able to retard economic recovery by cutting off the current at intervals. There was no other unfriendly act in the Communist bagful of tricks that Pyongyang neglected to employ while its radio stations blared forth a propaganda of hatred.

Early in 1950 the situation grew tenser daily as thousands of veterans returned to North Korea after serving in the Communist armies which overran China. When radio Pyongyang began making appeals for peace that spring, it should have become obvious to practiced observers of Communist techniques that preparations were afoot for war.

On 10 June 1950, the Pyongyang government announced a new plan for unification and peace after branding the top ROK officials as “traitors.” The motive behind this proposal was apparently the usual Communist attempt to divide an enemy of the eve of an aggression. For the long-planned blow fell at 0400 (Korean time) on Sunday morning, 25 June 1950. Russian -made tanks (T-34s), spearheaded the advance of the NK ground forces across the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, and Russian-made aircraft strafed Seoul and other strategic centers.



Captured NK documents offered proof that the invaders had already set the machinery of aggression in motion while making their pleas for peace. This evidence included the written report of instructions given by one Lieutenant Han to a group of picked men on an intelligence mission. On 1 June 1950, they were to proceed by power boat to an island off of the mainland. “Our mission,” explained Han, “is to gather intelligence information concerning South Korean forces and routes of advance ahead of our troops. We will perform this task by contacting our comrades who are scattered throughout the length and breadth of South Korea.”<sup>xii</sup>

The lieutenant explained that the forthcoming attack on South Korea was to be the first step toward the “liberation” of the people of Asia. And his concluding remarks leave no doubt as to the complete confidence with which the Korean Communists began the venture: “Within 2 months from the date of attack, Pusan should have fallen, and South Korea will again be united with the North. The timetable for this operation of 2 month’s duration was determined by the possibility of United States forces intervening in the conflict. If this were not so, it would take our forces only 10 days to overrun South Korea.”<sup>xiii</sup>

### Requests for the United States Marines

Upholding the long tradition as America’s force-in-readiness, the Marines have usually been among the first troops to see action on a foreign shore. It might have been asked what was holding them back at a time when U.S. Army troops in Korea were hard-pressed.

The answer is that the Marines actually were the first United States ground forces to get into the fight after completing the long voyage from the American mainland. There were no Marine units of any size in the Far East at the outset of the invasion. But not an hour was lost at the task of assembling an air-ground team at Camp Pendleton, California, and collecting the shipping. The spirit of impatience animating the Marine Corps is shown by an entry on the desk calendar of General Clifton B. Cates under the date of 26 June 1950. This was the day after the news of the invasion reached Washington, and the Commandant commented: SecNav's policy meeting called off. Nuts."<sup>xiv</sup>

On the 28<sup>th</sup> General Cates had his first conference with Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations. He noted on his calendar the next day: "Recommended to CNO and SecNav that FMF be employed." Two days later General Cates "attended SecNav's conference." And, on 3 July his calendar recorded more history: "Attended JCS meeting. Orders for employment of FMF approved."<sup>xv</sup> World War II, so that total numbers were 74,279 men on active duty – 97% of authorized strength. The Fleet Marine Force had a strength of 27,656 – 11,853 in FMFPac (1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, Reinf. and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing) and 15,803 in FMFLant (2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, Reinf. and 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing).<sup>xvi</sup>

Neither of these understrength divisions, General Cates pointed out, could raise much more than a Regimental Combat Team (RCT), of combat-ready troops with supporting air.

Admiral Sherman asked CinCPacFlt on 1 July, how long would it take to move (a) a Marine Battalion Landing Team (BLT) and (b) a Marine RCT from the Pacific Coast. Admiral Radford replied the next day that he could load the BLT in 4 days and sail in 6; and that he could load the RCT in 6 days and sail in 10.

Next, a dispatch from CNO to Admiral C. Turner Joy announced that a Marine RCT could be made available if General MacArthur desired it. COMNAVFE called personally on the general, who had just returned from a depressing inspection of the invasion front. Not only did CINCFE accept immediately, but he showed unusual enthusiasm in expressing his appreciation.<sup>xvii</sup>

Sunday 2 July was the date of the message from General MacArthur requesting the immediate dispatch of a Marine RCT with supporting air to the Far East. CNO acted that same day. With the concurrence of JCS and the President, he ordered Admiral Radford to move a Marine RCT with appropriate air to the Far East for employment by General MacArthur. Later, when General Cates asked CNO how the historical decision had been accomplished, Admiral Sherman replied cryptically in baseball language, From Cates, to Sherman, to Joy, to MacArthur, to JCS."

## Chapter Two

### Activation of the Brigade

Even at this early date there was talk both on Washington and Tokyo of forming an entire Marine division after mobilizing the Reserve. For the present, however, it sufficed to organize the RCT requested by General MacArthur. There could be little doubt that the assignment would be given to an air-ground team built around the two main West Coast units, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines and Marine Aircraft Group 33. They were activated along with supporting units on 7 July as the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, senior officer at Camp Pendleton. The air component, consisting of three squadrons of MAG-33, was placed under the command of Brigadier General Thomas H. Cushman, who was named deputy commander of the Brigade.

General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., commanding general of FMFPac, and a G-3 staff officer, Colonel Victor H. Krulak, had been ordered on 4 July to proceed immediately to Tokyo and confer with General MacArthur. Before leaving, Shepard found time to recommend the formation of three platoons for each rifle company in the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, and CNO gave his approval the following day.<sup>xviii</sup>

Unfortunately, there was not enough time to add third rifle companies to the battalions of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines which had been training with two companies on a peacetime basis. Camp Pendleton and its neighboring Marine Air Station, El Toro, hummed with day and night activity as the Brigade prepared to sail in a week. Weapons and clothing had to be issued, immunization shots given, and insurance and pay allotments made out. Meanwhile, telegrams were sent to summon Marines from posts and stations all over the United States.

Among these Marines were the first helicopter pilots of the United States Armed Forces to be formed into a unit for overseas combat service. Large scale production of rotary wing aircraft had come too late to have any effect on the tactics of World War II, though a few Sikorsky machines had been used experimentally both in the European and Pacific theaters toward the end of the conflict. But it remained for the United States Marine Corps to take the lead in working out combat techniques and procedures after organizing an experimental squadron, HMX-1, at Quantico in 1947.

Seven pilots, 30 enlisted men and 4 HO3S-1 Sikorsky 2-place helicopters were detached from HMX-1 on 8 July 1950 for service with the Brigade. Upon arrival at El Toro, these elements were combined with 8 fixed-wing aircraft pilots, 33 enlisted men and 8 OY aircraft to form the Brigade's air observation squadron, VMO-6.

This is an example of how Marine units were assembled at Camp Pendleton and El Toro. Major Vincent J. Gottschalk, appointed commanding officer of VMO-6 on 3 July, had orders to ready his squadron for shipment overseas by the 11<sup>th</sup>. He had just 48 hours, after the arrival of the Quantico contingent, in which to weld the elements of his outfit together. Among his other problems, Gottschalk had to grapple with is the fact that there were not enough OY's in good

condition at El Toro. He found a solution by taking eight of these light observation aircraft overseas with a view to cannibalizing four of them for parts when the need arose.<sup>xix</sup>

There was not enough time in most instances for weapons familiarization training. Company A of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion had been accustomed to the M4A3 Medium tank with either the 75-mm gun or the 105-mm howitzer. Activated on 7 July for service with the Brigade, the unit was equipped with M-26 “Pershing” tanks and 90-mm guns. Captain Gearl M. English, the commanding officer, managed to snatch 1 day in which to take his men to the range with two of the new tanks. Each gunner and loader were limited to two rounds, and the 90-mm guns never fired again until they were taken into combat in Korea.

Support battalions were cut down to company size, generally speaking, for service with the Brigade. Company A of the 1<sup>st</sup> Motor Transport Battalion numbered 6 officers and 107 men; and Company A of the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion (Reinf.) totaled 8 officers and 209 men. The largest unit of ground forces was the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines with 113 officers and 2,068 men commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray. Next came the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Reinf.) of the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, numbering 37 officers and 455 men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ransom H. Wood.

Altogether, according to a report of 9 July 1950, the Brigade ground forces reached a total of 266 officers and 4,503 men. On this same date, the Brigade’s air component amounted to 193 officers and 1,358 men. The principal units were as follows:

VMF-214	29 officers, 157 men, 24 F4U4B aircraft
VMF-323	29 officers, 157 men, 24 F4U4B aircraft
VMF (N)-51	15 officers, 98 men, 12 F4U5N aircraft
VMO-6	15 officers, 63 men, 8 OY and 4 HOS-1 aircraft

Adding the ground force and air figures gives a grand total of 6,319 – 458 officers and 5,861 men – on 9 July 1950. Before sailing, however, the activation of third rifle platoons and the last-minute attachment of supporting troops brought the strength of the Brigade and its air components up to 6,534 Marines.

Most of the equipment came from the great Marine supply depot at Barstow in the California desert. Here were acres of “mothballed” trucks, jeeps, and DUKW’s and amphibian tractors dating back to World War II. It has been aptly remarked, in fact, that “there were more veterans of Iwo and Okinawa among the vehicles than there were among the men who would drive them.”<sup>xx</sup>

Rail and highway facilities were taxed to the limit by the endless caravan of equipment moving from Barstow to Camp Pendleton and El Toro after hastily being reconditioned and tested. Not all the arms were of World War II vintage, however, and the Marines of the Brigade were among the first American troops to be issued the new 3.5” rocket launcher.

## **Brigade Leadership**

It appeared to be a scene of mad confusion at Camp Pendleton as Marines arrived hourly by train, bus, and plane. But the situation was kept well in hand by General Craig, who had seen many other departures for battle during his 33 years in the Corps.

Born in Connecticut and educated at the St. Johns Military Academy in Delafield, Wisconsin, he was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant in 1917 at the age of 21. Throughout the next three decades he served with distinction both as a line and staff officer, and as a student and instructor at the Marine Corps Schools.

During World War II he was executive and later commanding officer of the 9<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, which he led in the landing at Empress Augusta Bay on Bougainville and the recapture of Guam in the Marianas. Awarded the Bronze Star and the Navy Cross for gallantry in these operations, Craig became operations officer of the V Amphibious Corps in time to help plan the Iwo Jima operation. After the war he returned to Guam for 2 years in 1947 to command the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade, Fleet Marine Force, before becoming ADC to Major General Graves B. Erskine, CG 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, in 1949.

The white hair and slender, erect figure of the dynamic Brigade commander would soon become a familiar sight to every platoon leader at the front. His assistant, General Cushman, was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1895 and attended the University of Washington. Enlisting in the Marine Corps shortly after the outbreak of World War 1, he completed flight training and was designated a naval aviator. Subsequent tours of aviation duty in Haiti, Nicaragua, and Guam were varied with assignments as an instructor at Pensacola and administrative officer with BuAer in Washington. Cushman was a wing commander in World War II and was awarded a Bronze Star and Legion of Merit while serving in that capacity and later as chief of staff to the CG of Marine Aircraft Wings, Pacific. After the war he became commander of the Marine Corps Air Bases and CG of Aircraft, FMFPac.

Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray, CO of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, was born in Los Angeles in 1913. He graduated from Texas A&M College in 1935 and was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant. After prewar service in China and Iceland, he became a troop leader in three of the hardest fought operations of World War II – Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan. Awarded the Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, and the Purple Heart medal. Murray made a name for heroism that was noteworthy even in Marine circles. This was no light achievement, for both CMC, and CG FMFPac – General Cates and General Shepherd – had distinguished themselves as Marine combat leaders. Both were wounded in Marine operations of World War 1, and both won later honors during Caribbean actions of the Marine Corps.

On 11 July, as Brigade preparations for sailing neared a climax, General Shepherd sent the first report of his visit to Korea. He and Colonel Krulak had held conferences with General MacArthur, Admiral Joy and Rear Admiral James H. Doyle, commanding Amphibious Planning Group 1. The commander in chief, said Shepherd, already envisioned a great amphibious operation with a complete Marine division and air components as his landing force. Not only was

he “enthusiastic” about the employment of Marines, but he believed in the necessity for employing them as an air-ground team.<sup>xxi</sup>

General MacArthur was “not sanguine” about the situation in Korea. He felt that the nature of enemy resistance, combined with the rugged terrain, and the possibility of Soviet or Red Chinese intervention, threatened to protract operations. He favored a Marine amphibious landing far in the enemy’s rear to cut off and destroy the North Korean columns of invasion.

General Shepherd’s report made it seem likely, just before the Brigade sailed, that its units would probably be absorbed soon into a Marine division with an amphibious mission. For the present, however, it was enough to start the movement from Camp Pendleton and El Toro to San Diego, where the convoy awaited. MAG-33 had orders to embark in the transports *Anderson* and *Achernar* and the carrier (CVE-116) *Badoeng Strait*. The ground forces would make the voyage in the LSD’s *Fort Marion* and *Gunston Hall*, the AKA’s *Alshain* and *Whiteside*, and the APA’s *Pickaway*, *Clymer* and *Henrico*.

General Cates was on hand at the docks from 12 to 14 July when the Brigade sailed. His long cigarette holders were famous, and no second lieutenant in the Corps could throw a more military salute. As he eyed the ground forces filing past, the Commandant could only have felt that Marine traditions would be upheld. A good many of the PFC’s it is true, were too young to have seen action during World War II, though nearly all had been well grounded in fundamentals. Perhaps at the front they might become victims at first of their own over-anxiety. But they would doubtless grin sheepishly about it afterwards and become combat-hardened in a short time.

A glance at the NCO’s, the platoon leaders and company commanders of the Brigade could only have brought a gleam of pride to the Commandant’s battlewise eyes. With few exceptions, they were veterans of World War II who could be relied upon to get the best out of their men and it may be that the Commandant was reminded of the remark attributed to General William T. Sherman during the Civil War:

*“We have good corporals and sergeants and some good lieutenants and captains, and those are far more important than good generals.”*

Nobody could give a more smooth and eloquent talk than General Cates before a Washington audience. But when it came to saying farewell to the Brigade troops, he addressed them in the language of Marines.

“You boys clean this up in a couple of months, “said the Commandant, “or I’ll be over to see you!”<sup>xxii</sup>

### **The Advance Party**

As the ships of the Brigade vanished over the horizon, Generals Craig and Cushman rushed to complete final administrative details at their respective Wet Coast bases. Then, in the early morning of 16 July, the advance party, consisting of the two commanders and parts of their

staffs, boarded a transport plane at the Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, and began the journey westward.

The first stop was Pearl Harbor, and on arrival Craig and Cushman immediately reported to General Shepherd. In company with him, the two visitors called briefly on Admiral Radford. Later, Shepherd, his staff, and the advance party met at Fleet Marine Force Headquarters for a conference on the problem's incident to the Marine commitment in combat.

The Brigade commander painted a vivid picture of his provisional fighting force, stressing both its potential and its handicaps. He repeatedly emphasized the necessity for the addition of a third rifle company to each infantry battalion. With equal fervor he spoke of the need for two more 105-mm howitzers in each battery of his artillery battalion. He told how the Brigade had been forced to leave behind much of its motor transport because of limited shipping space, and he requested that replacement vehicles be provided as soon as possible.

His presentation was not falling on deaf ears; for combat-wise officers knew only too well how such shortages would restrict the maneuverability, firepower, and mobility of the Brigade. Finally, General Craig repeated his earlier request that steps be taken immediately to provide for monthly replacement drafts of 800 men. If the peace-strength Marine unit were committed to combat in the near future, he said, it could ill afford to watch its already thin ranks dwindle indefinitely.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Leaving behind a maze of support and reinforcement problems for FMFPac Headquarters, the Brigade advance party boarded its plane and set out for Japan. On 19 July the big aircraft discharged its passengers at the Haneda Airport, near Tokyo. General Craig immediately reported to his naval superior, Admiral Joy. Later, the Brigade commander, General Cushman, and the other officers of the advance party, assembled at General Headquarters, Far East, where they would get their first glimpse of war through the eyes of the United States Army.

They conferred first with Major General Edward A. Almond, USA, and Brigadier General Edwin K. Wright, USA. The former was Chief of Staff to General MacArthur, while the later served as G-3 on the staff. After Almond and Wright had received a report on the organization and capabilities of the Brigade air-ground team, they ushered the two Marine generals into the office of General MacArthur.

### **Conference with General Douglas MacArthur**

The commander in chief greeted his visitors cordially and expressed his pleasure at having Marines in his command again. He commented briefly on the excellence of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and certain Marine air units which had served under him during World War II. The general smiled as he mentioned a rumor to the effect that he had been prejudiced against Marines during the Pacific War. Sweeping aside this tale as being unfounded, he said that he had always held the greatest admiration for the Corps and would welcome its units to his command any time.

Following this reception, General MacArthur meticulously briefed General Craig and Cushman on the critical situation in Korea, where the war was already entering its fourth week. The commander in chief disclosed his tentative plans for commitment of Marines: he would hold the



Brigade in Japan as a force in readiness until an entire Marine division could be assembled. If he could have his division by September, he intended to launch an amphibious assault against the Port of Inchon on the west coast. Striking deep in the Communist rear, he would sever the long lines of communications and logistics, linking North Korean bases to the Communist invaders at the front. Once isolated, the latter would quickly wither, and Walker's Eighth Army could smash out of the Pusan Perimeter.

When General MacArthur concluded, he and Craig discussed the organization of the Brigade. The Marine general emphasized that his command was an air-ground team: and though few in numbers, the Brigade had a powerful potential if its air arm remained integral. General MacArthur assured him that the Marine combination would remain intact, unless some emergency dictated otherwise.

General Craig next mentioned that the infantry and artillery units of the Brigade were at peace strength. General MacArthur was surprised to learn that each battalion had just two rifle companies, and each battery had only 4 guns instead of 6. He was even more surprised to find that each of the 6 infantry companies had 50 men less than the number called for in Marine war tables. The Army leader had been aware of certain shortages when he sent a message to the Pentagon on 10 July, requesting the Joint Chiefs of Staff to authorize expansion of the Brigade to a full war-strength division. He believed at the time, however, that the Brigade itself would be formed on a wartime basis. Now, confronted with reality, he ordered his chief of staff to prepare another dispatch to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, asking that the Brigade be expanded to full war strength and reiterating his request for an entire Marine division.

General MacArthur concluded the conference by informing General Craig that the Marine fighting team would remain in Japan under operational control of Joy's headquarters. This was good news to the Brigade commander. Being attached to the naval command meant that his Marines would be free to train and otherwise prepare for their future amphibious mission; whereas an assignment to the Eighth Army's rear echelon might have entailed time-consuming occupational and administrative duties.<sup>xxiv</sup>

When the Joint Chiefs of Staff received the message which General MacArthur had dictated in General Craig's presence, they requested an estimate from the Marine Corps on how long it would take to form a war-strength division. General Cates summed up his case: the Marine Corps, numbering only 74,279 officers and men, was committed on a global basis. There was a brigade on its way to Korea, a peace-strength division on the Atlantic coast, and a battalion landing team permanently assigned to the Mediterranean Fleet. There were detachments of Marines assigned for domestic security, shipboard duty, and overseas security. Moreover, in order to carry out any expansion program on a sound basis, it would be necessary to maintain cadres of experienced personnel in various training centers. The Commandant's presentation made it clear that any immediate expansion would, as proved to simple arithmetic, be dependent upon mobilization of the Reserve.

Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to President Truman that the Organized Marine Corps Reserve be called to active duty. That same morning, 19 July, Admiral Sherman

notified General Cates of this decision. The Commandant lost no time at ordering his staff to alert all Reserve units. His grounds for haste were well founded; for in the afternoon a presidential proclamation announced that the “citizen-Marines” would be mobilized. The following day Cates called CNO and submitted Plans Able and Baker, the proposed procedures for building both the Brigade and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division to war strength.

In the meantime, JCS had notified General MacArthur that his request could not be granted until late fall “without unacceptable weakening [of] the Fleet Marine Force Atlantic.”<sup>xxv</sup> When the United Nations commander received this message, he countered immediately with the reply:

“...Most urgently request reconsideration of decision with reference to First Marine Division. It is an absolute vital development to accomplish a decisive stroke and if not made available will necessitate a much more costly and longer operational effort both in blood and expense. It is essential the Marine Division arrive by 10 September 1950 as requested. While it would be unwise for me to attempt in this message to give in detail the planned use of this unit, I cannot emphasize too strongly my belief of the complete urgency of my request. There can be no demand for its potential use elsewhere that can equal the urgency of the immediate battle mission contemplated for it.”  
“Signed MacArthur <sup>xxvi</sup>”

On 22 July the gears of mobilization were already enmeshed. Taking this into account along with the urgency of General MacArthur’s last communication, the Joint Chiefs showed the first signs of relenting in their reply to Tokyo. This time they informed the Army general that they were reconsidering the problem but added that he must advise them of the proposed employment of the Brigade up to 10 September and the possibility of adjusting that deadline. The same message carried the encouraging news that a directive had already been issued to bring both the Brigade and its air group to full war strength.

In answer, General MacArthur stated his intention to retain the Brigade in Japan, unless a more critical situation developed in Korea prior to 10 September. He described his operation planned for mid-September as an amphibious landing in the rear of the enemy’s lines. This seaborne attack, he added, would be designed to envelop and destroy the Communist invaders in conjunction with an offensive from the south by the Eight Army. The General concluded his message on notes of conditional optimism and grave warning:

“Although exact date of D-day is partially dependent upon enemy reaction during the month of August, I am convinced that an early and strong effort behind his front will sever his main lines of communications and enable us to deliver a decisive and crushing blow. Any material delay in such an operation may lose this opportunity. The alternative is a frontal attack which can only result in a protracted and expensive campaign to slowly drive the enemy north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.”

On 25 July these exchanges came to a climax when the Pentagon directed the Marine Corps to build its 1<sup>st</sup> Division to full war strength. At this point the change of heart among the Joint Chiefs of Staff is pertinent because direct effects on the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade. As previously noted, the Pentagon on 22 July approved the Marine Corps’ plan Able which provided for the

expansion of the Brigade to war strength. General Cates immediately set machinery in motion to bolster the ranks of that unit. With the approval of Admiral Sherman, he cut into the rosters of Marine security detachments throughout the United States and arranged for the personnel released to be channeled into General Craig's command. It was also possible now to implement an earlier plan relating to casualty replacements for the Brigade. As far back as 14 July, the Commandant had ordered activation of the First Replacement Draft, fixing its departure for Korea at 10 August. General Craig could be assured of early reinforcements by more than 800 officers and men if the course of the war necessitated commitment of his Brigade.

### **The Voyage of the Brigade**

While at sea, the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade was unaware of the decisions and difficulties developing on higher (strategic) levels. Nevertheless, that tactical organization was having enough troubles of its own. On 12 July, Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Amphibious Tractor Company departed San Diego on board the LSD's *Fort Marion* and *Gunston Hall*. Designated Task Unit 53.7.3, the twin amphibious ships sailed 2 days before the rest of the Brigade and were scheduled to join the main convoy, Task Group 53.7, before crossing 160 degrees, east longitude.

At noon on 13 July, the well deck of the *Fort Marion* accidentally flooded, the water rising to a height of 5 feet among the Brigade's M-26 tanks. An hour passed before the ship's pumps could drain the compartment, and briny water damaged 14 of the new armored vehicles, 300 90-mm projectiles (then in critical supply), and 5,000 rounds of .30-caliber ammunition.

When news of the flood damage reached Brigade headquarters, then still in San Diego, the message was rushed to General Craig. He immediately sent a dispatch to Captain English, the commanding officer of Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Tanks, to jettison the ruined ammunition. He added that replacement armor would be requisitioned from the Barstow depot without delay. General Craig then contacted the supply base and was promised that 14 M-26 tanks would be commissioned and on their way to San Diego within 24 hours. The Brigade commander was preparing to request additional shipping for the vehicles when messages from the *Fort Marion* reported 12 tanks could be restored to operating condition at sea. The remaining two would require new parts and 72 hours of repair work upon debarkation.

As already noted, the Marines were placing heavy reliance on their armor, confident that it was a match for the enemy's Russian-built T-34 tank in Korea. Consequently, General Craig's staff reacted to the flood reports with concern. Headquarters FMFPac was asked to include four M-26's in its first resupply shipment to the Brigade; arrangements were made for new parts to be flown to the port of debarkation, and ammunition to replace that damaged in the flood was loaded on board the larger convoy.

Misfortune struck again in a few hours after Task Group 53.7 steamed from San Diego on 14 July. The transport *Henrico* developed a serious mechanical failure and was declared temporarily unseaworthy. This ship was carrying Lieutenant Colonel Murray, his regimental staff, and the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Landing Team. After Murray and his headquarters transferred to the APA *Pickaway* off of San Clemente Island, the *Henrico* limped back toward California with about

one-third of the Brigade's fighting force. The vessel docked at the United States Naval Supply Depot, Oakland, on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Repairs were started in urgent haste, since there was no other ship available. For security reasons, the Marines were forbidden to leave the ship except for training on the dock. On the nights of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, they sat on deck and gazed longingly at the beckoning lights of San Francisco. Twice during this time, the *Henrico* weighed anchor and passed westward under the Golden Gate bridge; twice it was forced to return for additional repairs. Finally, on the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup>, the vessel steamed under the great bridge for its third attempt. This time it kept going, but it would not overtake the convoy until the morning of the very day the ships reached their destination.

During the voyage, strict wartime security measures, including radio silence, were enforced on all ships. While the North Koreans were believed to have no warships left afloat, their naval capabilities remained hidden from the outside world by a blur of question marks. No one realized more than the commander of Task Group 53.7 that it was much too early to take Soviet Russia for granted.

The *Henrico*, now travelling independently, had a spine-chilling experience during her second night out of Oakland. The ship's radar picked up two "unidentified submarines" which appeared to be converging on the stern of the lone vessel. General Quarters were sounded. While sailors peered into the darkness from their battle stations, several hundred Marines joked weakly in the troop compartments below the water-line. After an anxious hour, the persistent spots of the electronic screen vanished.

Shipboard life for the Brigade was otherwise uneventful. The troops took part in physical drills as vigorously as the limited confines of vessels would allow. Daily classes and conferences emphasized those subjects most relevant to the news reports trickling back from the front. Success of North Korean armor stimulated keen interest in land mines and the environment made even field sanitation a serious matter. Since there was no military intelligence available on the North Korean forces, officers and NCO's turned to publications on Russian tactics and weapons.

As previously noted, Sasebo, Japan, was the original destination of the ships transporting the Brigades ground elements. The *Achernar*, *Anderson*, and *Badoeng Strait* were bound for Kobe with MAG-33. When General Craig's proposal for consolidation was approved by General Headquarters, the entire convoy was order to Kobe. Then, on 25 July, Colonel Edward W. Snedeker, Chief of Staff, received the dispatch sending the ground force directly to Pusan.

This announcement came as no surprise to the majority of officers and men. Day by day, news reports had been outlining the course of the war. The shrinking perimeter of General Walker's army was traced on maps and sketches throughout every ship. After the Communist "end run" in southwest Korea, Marines began to wonder if there would be any front at all by the time they arrived. In the captain's mess of the *Pickaway*, senior Marine and naval officers were giving odds that the Brigade would reach the South Korean port only in time to cover a general evacuation of the peninsula.<sup>xxvii</sup>

## Chapter Three

### The Advance Party in Korea

With the Brigade well beyond the halfway point in its Pacific voyage, General Craig and his staff could not afford to waste a minute. At 1700 on 25 July, they left Tokyo by plane for Korea. En route, they landed at Itami, where the Brigade commander and General Cushman made hurried adjustments to meet the new situation.

Leaving Itami on the 26<sup>th</sup>, they flew to Fukuoka, Japan, and transferred from their 4-engine Marine aircraft to a smaller Air Force plane which could be accommodated on the primitive landing fields of Korea. On the last lap of their journey, they reached Taegu at 1400.

Taegu was a dismal place during this crucial phase of the UN delaying action. Hastily chosen as a headquarters by General Walker, the ancient town gave the appearance of a remote outpost. Its airstrip was crude, at best. The fewness of the airmen and soldiers among the handful of transport and fighter aircraft served only to emphasize the critical situation of the UN forces.

General Craig reported to General Walker immediately, while the Brigade G-3, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph L. Stewart, met with his Eighth Army opposite, Colonel William E. Bartlett. Later, Walker's chief of staff, Colonel Eugene M. Landrum, assembled all of the Marine officers for an official briefing. He explained that the Brigade had not been earmarked for any specific mission. The battle situation was too fluid for firm plans. Information from the field was "sketchy and unreliable," as outnumbered Army forces slowly retreated. From the time of first contact by American units, the front had been more of a blur than a distinct line. Landrum concluded by saying that the Brigade must be prepared to move anywhere after debarkation – and on a moment's notice.<sup>xxviii</sup>

General Craig and his ground officers remained at Taegu 4 days. Attending daily briefings of the Eighth Army staff, they acquired a sound knowledge of the tactical situation. At a conference with Major General Earle E. Partridge and his Fifth Air Force staff, the Marines were brought up to date on the disposition of aviation and its policy for supporting UN ground forces.<sup>xxix</sup>

In the fight for time, ground force units in line were frequently withdrawn and shuttled to plug gaps in the sagging front lines. Reports from the battlefield more often food for the imagination rather than fact for the planning room. All of this created confusion among Eighth Army staff officers.

In the Taejon area the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had lost 770 officers and men during the single week of 15-22 July. Of these casualties, 61 were known dead, 203 wounded, and 506 were missing in action.<sup>xxx</sup> Among the missing was Major General William F. Dean, USA, and the wounded included a regimental commanding officer, a regimental executive officer, and a battalion commander.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Following this ordeal, the 24 Infantry Division had been relieved by the recently arrived 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, which went into line alongside the 25<sup>th</sup> Division in the Kumchon area. The ROK divisions held to the north and east, where NKPA forces were driving toward Pohang-

dong. The shape of strategic things to come was indicated late in July when two NKPA divisions completed a much publicized “end run” past the open UN left flank to the southwest tip of the Pusan peninsula, then wheeled eastward for a drive on Pusan.

General Walker reacted promptly to the danger by recalling the 24<sup>th</sup> Division from the Eight Army reserve and moving it southward from Kumchon to block the enemy near Hadong. With the recently landed 29 Infantry attached, the division totaled only 13,351 officers and men. Its front extended from the southern coast near Hadong to the town of Kochang, 40 miles north. In addition to manning this mountainous line, the 24<sup>th</sup> had troops in action at Pohang-dong, more than 100 miles away on the east coast. There some of its units fought as Task Force Perry, under direct control of Eight Army headquarters.

The 24<sup>th</sup> Division and the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry had no more than deployed when they found themselves plunged into a confused 5-day fight. Although they sold ground as dearly as possible, the Army units were compelled to give up Hadong and fall back toward Chinju. As the threat to Pusan grew more serious, the Eight Army commander shifted units. In order to protect the approaches from Chinju to Pusan, he pulled the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Back across the river Naktong near Waegwan and moved it from the northern to the southern front in less than 48 hours. The next day saw the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry withdrawing across the Naktong in the Waegwan area and blowing the bridges.

After being relieved in the south by the 25<sup>th</sup> Division, the 24<sup>th</sup> joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry withdrawal to hastily organized defensive positions east of the Naktong. ROK divisions continued to defend the northeast approaches, while the 25 Division stood guard to block any enemy move toward Chinju.

At this juncture General Craig became increasingly concerned about prospects of maintaining the Brigade’s integrity as a Marine air-ground team. He and his staff were aware that elements of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry had been rushed from their ships directly into combat in the Chinju area, and some units were badly mauled. Craig took occasion, therefore, to remind Army leaders once more of the Marine tactical concept of the indivisible air-ground team. MAG-33 said, General Craig, would have to unload its aircraft and prepare them for action; and the control squadron would need an interval to set up coordinated tactical air support.

### **A Crisis in the Eight Army**

As July drew to an end, the situation both on the northern and south-western fronts was developing into a crisis. Hourly it grew apparent that the Eighth Army’s perimeter would have to shrink even more so, so that defenses could assume some depth in sensitive areas. Col Landrum indicated for the first time that the Brigade was being considered primarily for a mission on the left flank. Guided by this possibility, General Craig and his staff officers devoted a day to drawing up a flexible operation plan. The purpose of this directive was to advise the Brigade’s subordinate commanders of possible commitment in the Chinju, Kochang, or Kumchon areas, in that order of probability. Also included were detailed instructions for movement to forward assembly areas, broad missions for supporting units, security measure to be taken, and a general outline of the situation ashore.<sup>xxxii</sup>

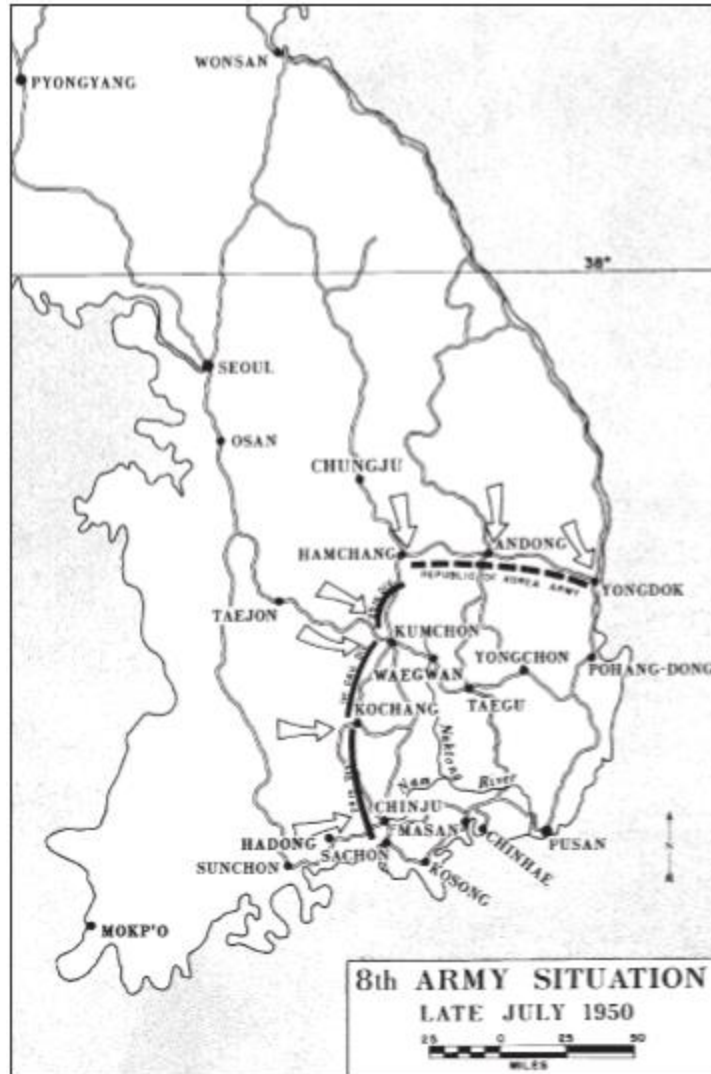
The advance party extracted from the plan a fragmentary warning order for radio transmission. ***This message was delivered to Eighth Army headquarters with a request that it be sent immediately to the Brigade at sea.***<sup>xxxiii</sup> Now, General Craig assumed that Snedeker and Murray would have a reasonable impression of the situation awaiting them.

At the Army briefing on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, the Marines learned that the UN left flank was collapsing. An air of uneasiness pervaded Taegu, and Eight Army headquarters began preparations for displacement to Pusan. General Craig was told that the Brigade definitely would be committed in the southwest, unless a more critical situation suddenly sprang up elsewhere. Again, the Army officers added that the Marine unit actually must be prepared to move in any direction on short notice.

With the approval of the Eighth Army, the Brigade commander immediately sent a message to COMNAVFE requesting that the Marine air group be made available to support the ground force by 2 August, and that VMO-6 be transported to Korea as quickly as possible. Time was drawing short.

On 30 July, General Craig had a final conference with Generals Walker and Partridge. This time, Walker himself told the Marine leader that the Brigade would be sent to the southwest; and that the unit, once committed, would be free to push forward without interference from the Eight Army. General Partridge interjected that his aircraft would be available to support General Craig's ground troops if Marine air did not arrive in time.

Immediately after the conference, the Marine officers set out for Pusan by jeep. While their vehicles bounced southward on the ancient road, army headquarters in Taegu was sinking to new depths of dejection. Chinju had just fallen, and the Communist column was pounding on toward Masan.



**Map # 2**

**Reconnaissance by Jeep**

On 31 July, General Craig and Colonel Stewart set out by jeep to reconnoiter the rear areas of the crumbling southwestern sector. Kean's 25<sup>th</sup> Division, having just replaced the 24<sup>th</sup> in line, was now blocking the threatened western approaches to Pusan. Since all indications pointed to the Brigade's commitment to this area, General Craig wanted to walk and ride over the terrain he had previously scouted from the air.

He returned to Pusan just in time to receive a telephone call from Colonel Landrum of Eighth Army Headquarters. The chief of staff told him of General Walker's intention to attach the Army's 5<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team, newly arrived from Hawaii, to the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade. With two regiments under his command, General Craig would be assigned a vital area of responsibility along the Nam River, near its confluence with the Naktong River north of



Masan. Unfortunately, the Brigade reached Korea 1 day too late. When the 5<sup>th</sup> RCT debarked at Pusan on 1 August, it was earmarked for the 25<sup>th</sup> Division and placed in Eighth Army reserve.

Also debarking on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August was the Army's skeletonized 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. This unit cleared Pusan and hurried to the hard-pressed Taegu area where it also passed into Eighth Army reserve.

During the last hours before the Brigade's arrival Lieutenant Colonel Chidester was diligently engaged in the task, or art, of procurement. It has already been explained why the Marine ground force would debark for combat with little more than what its troops could carry on their backs. In order to offset partially the deficiencies, the G-4 successfully negotiated with Army authorities for 50 cargo trucks, several jeeps, some radio vans, and various other items of equipment. Officers of the Pusan Base Command reacted to all of Chidester's requests with as much generosity as their meager stocks of material would allow.

Not until the morning of 2 August did General Craig learn that Task Group 53.7 was scheduled to dock at Pusan that very evening. The last-minute disclosure relieved him of considerable anxiety, but he was still disturbed for want of specific orders concerning departure of the Brigade from Pusan. His instructions from General Walker were to debark the ground force immediately and have it prepared to move forward by 0600 the following morning. The same orders advised him that a specific destination "would be given later."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

"Later" did not come soon enough for the Marine commander. As the long column of ships steamed into Pusan Harbor in the early evening, he still did not know where he would lead his Brigade the next morning.<sup>xxxv</sup>

### **Landing the Ground Force**

The hapless *Henrico* finally overtook Task Group 53.7 in the Tsushima Straits on the morning of 2 August, 1950. A few hours later the Marines of the Brigade got their first glimpse of Korea's skyline. Seen more from a distance, the wall of forbidding, gray peaks were hardly a welcomed sight to men who had been broiled and toughened on the heights of Camp Pendleton.

***For reasons unknown, neither Colonel Snedeker nor anyone else had received the operations plan which General Craig had sent via Eighth Army at Taegu.*** Although every Marine in the convoy realized the gravity of the situation ashore, there could be no specific preparations by troop leaders whose only source of information was an occasional news broadcast.

Having heard nothing from his superiors, Lieutenant Colonel Murray was thinking in terms of a purely administrative landing. Had he known what awaited his 5<sup>th</sup> Marines ashore, he would have had his troops draw ammunition and rations while still at sea. Throughout the sleepless night that followed, he had ample time to reflect sourly on the fortunes of war.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Shortly after 1700 on 2 August, the first ship steamed into Pusan Harbor. As it edged toward the dock, Leathernecks crowding the rail were greeted by a tinny and slightly tone-deaf rendition of the Marine Corps Hymn, blared out by a South Korean band. Army troops scatted along the

waterfront exchanged the usual barbed courtesies with their web-footed brethren aboard ship, and old salts smiled while noting the tradition remained intact.

When the *Clymer* approached its berth, General Craig waved a greeting to Snedeker and shouted, “What battalion is the advance guard?”

The chief of staff registered an expression of astonishment.

“Did you get my orders?” Craig called to Murray when the *Pickaway* slid against the dock.

“No, sir!”<sup>xxxvii</sup> replied the CO of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines.

For whatever reason, US Army Headquarters had never forwarded General Craig’s message on to Colonel Snedeker aboard the *USS Pickaway*.

General Craig ordered a conference at 2100 for the Brigade staff, Murray, battalion commanders, and the leaders of supporting units. When the officers entered the wardroom of the *Clymer* at the specified time, the last ship of Task Group 53.7 was being moored in its berth.

After introductory remarks by the general, his G-2 Lieutenant Colonel Ellsworth G. Van Orman, launched the briefing with a grim narrative of the enemy situation. Next came Stewart, who outlined tentative operations plans. The Brigade would definitely begin moving forward at 0600 the next morning, although a specific destination had yet to be assigned by the Army. Travel would be by road and rail. The necessary trains were already awaiting in the Pusan terminal, and 50 trucks procured by Chidester were standing by, complete with Army drivers.

General Craig then summed up his earlier discussions with Walker. The Army leader had voiced a strong desire to use the Marines in an attack, for he felt that it was high time to strike back at the Communist invader. Employment of the Brigade as an offensive force was a natural conclusion to its commander, and he told his subordinates how he had won assurances for the integrity of the air-ground team. This was an encouraging note on which to close one of the strangest combat briefings in the history of the Corps. The leaders of over 4,000 Marines rushed from ship to alert their units for movement into a critical tactical situation. They would leave in a few hours but didn’t know where they were going.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### **Bedlam on the Pusan Waterfront**

It is not surprising that the Pusan waterfront turned into bedlam. As darkness settled, thousands of Marines poured onto the docks. Cranes and working parties unloaded vehicles, supplies and equipment, while a chorus of commands and comments were added to the roar of machinery. Supply points were set up under searchlights, and long lines of Marines formed on the docks, in buildings and along the streets. Armfuls of C-rations, machine gun belts, grenades, and bandoleers gave men the appearance of harried Christmas shoppers caught in a last-minute rush.

The activity and din continued all night. Few men could sleep through the noise, crowding, and shuffling. Before dawn, new lines began to form in reverse as groggy Marines filed back aboard ships to get the last hot meal for many a day.

After the conference aboard the *Clymer*, Brigade headquarters resumed its efforts to obtain specific information from Taegu. Finally, at 2345, Landrum telephoned General Craig and

announced General Walker's decision – the Brigade would move westward to the vicinity of Changwon, where it would remain for the time being in Eighth Army reserve. Only Walker himself could order any further move. If some extreme emergency arose and communications with the Eighth Army were lost, the Brigade would then come under the control of the CG, 25 Infantry Division.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The long-awaited message gave added impetus to the unloading operations. Major William L. Batchelor's shore party company devoted one of its principal efforts to the big howitzers and vehicles of 1/11, while English and his tankers struggled to get their steel monsters ashore from the LSD's. Engineer heavy equipment, mobile maintenance shops of the Ordnance Detachment, fuel, ammunition, and medical supplies swung from decks to docks, where waiting Marines rushed them off to staging areas around the waterfront.

Altogether, 9,400 tons of supplies were unloaded, and the vast majority were turned over to the Army quartermaster authorities in Pusan. Four officers and 100 Marines of Major Thomas J. O'Mahoney's Combat Service Detachment were designated as the Brigade rear echelon. This group would remain in the port city to handle logistical and administrative matters. Supplies were moved into Army warehouses, where they became part of the common pool shared by all units at the front. This led to confusion later, when the Brigade requested its own Class II and IV items, only to discover that they had already been issued to their outfits. But the Army divisions had already been fighting for a month in a war which caught the nation unprepared, so the Pusan Base Commander had no alternative but to issue supplies on the basis of immediate need, not ownership,

The Brigade was prepared to travel light. Not only the bulk of supplies but also all personal baggage was left behind in Pusan, to be stored and safeguarded by the rear echelon. When dawn broke on 3 August, 1950, each Marine in the Brigade carried only his pack, weapon, ammunition, and rations.<sup>xl</sup>

## Chapter Four

### The Fire Brigade Goes to War: Crisis Number one

It was an early start; at 0600 on 3 August the “fire brigade” moved out to meet head-on the most urgent enemy threat. It went with a ringing message from Cates: “The proud battle streamers of our Corps go with you in combat. The pride and honor of many generations of Marines is entrusted to you today. You are the old breed. With you moves the heart and the soul and the spirit of all whoever bore the title United States Marine. Good luck and Godspeed.” Part of the men (1st Battalion) went by truck to the staging area of Changwon. Since the Marines had been forced by a shortage of shipping to leave their heavy equipment back in the United States, the transportation was made possible by borrowing two Army truck companies, with an additional bonus in the form of a loan of communication jeeps and reconnaissance company jeeps with .50caliber machine guns. Going by train were the precious tanks and some of the men. Duncan, the reporter, described what those kinds of trips were like: The first stage of moving up to the front was no problem, but it was slow. The troop trains were sturdy, wooden-bodied old coaches, leftovers from the days when the Japanese had run the country. . . . The Marines inside showed almost no interest in the slowly passing scenery. They ate their rations, oiled their weapons, slept in the vestibules between the cars with their rifles held close. They were professional men riding to work.

The aircraft of MAG-33 had a busy time that same day of 3 August. Under the command of General Cushman were the fighter squadrons VMF-323 (“Death Rattlers”) under Major Arnold A. Lund and VMF-214 (“Black Sheep”) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Walter E. Lischeid. They were equipped with 60 of the gull winged Corsair F4Us. One of their partners was Marine Night Fighter Squadron 513 (VMF[N]-513) (“Flying Nightmares”) under Major Joseph H. Reinburg. This was a squadron specially trained for night fighting with its F4U-5N Corsairs and new twin-engine F7F Tigercats. The other partner was VMO-6, commanded by Major Vincent J. Gottschalk, with its four usable OY-2 light observation aircraft and, for the first time in real combat for any U.S. Service, four Sikorsky HO3S-1 helicopters.

When the ground elements of the brigade were unloading in Pusan, MAG-33 had been in Kobe, Japan. From there, VMF-323 had gone on board the Badoeng Strait, while VMF-214 was based on the Sicily (CVE-118). VMF(N)-513 was based at Itazuke Airfield on Kyushu Island. Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 2 (MTACS-2) traveled by ship to Pusan. VMO-6 amazed the Japanese citizens when it simply took off in its light observation aircraft and helicopters from the streets of Kobe. Four of its helicopters and four of its OY aircraft made the short hop to Pusan on 2 August, so they were there, ready to go with the brigade, even though they had not been visible in that memorable scene on the waterfront.

VMF-214 launched an eight-plane flight from the Sicily on 3 August and pummeled Chinju with incendiary bombs, rockets, and strafing, a small preview of what the Marines had in store for the NKPA 6th Division. This attack took place less than a month after the receipt of official orders sending the aircraft to the Far East. (An even earlier mission—the first for Marine

aircraft—had been on 4 July when two F4U Corsair photographic aircraft from MAG-12 on the carrier Valley Forge (CV-45) had joined in a Navy air strike against the North Korean capital of Pyongyang.)

On a succession of those early August days, all three of the Marine fighter squadrons kept up a steady pattern of bombing, strafing, and rocketing attacks on NKPA targets. On 5 August, for instance, Major Kenneth L. Reusser led a four-plane division of Corsairs to Inchon, the port of the South Korean capital of Seoul. There he was responsible for the discovery and the destruction of an enemy tank assembly plant, an oil refinery, and an oil tanker ship. The two Corsairs which Reusser flew on two successive strikes during his attacks of that day were severely damaged by enemy fire. He was awarded a gold star in lieu of a second Navy Cross for his heroism on this mission.

VMO-6 was also busy. The squadron had moved west from Pusan to Chinhae, a base close to the threatened city of Masan and the brigade's forthcoming zone of action. This location had been a South Korean naval base and ammunition depot, but it had a 2,600-foot airstrip with two completed hangars and Quonset huts for housing. So VMO-6 set up quickly for business.

General Craig took off early on 3 August in one of its helicopters and put in a remarkable day that demonstrated the amazing versatility and usefulness of the new aircraft. He stopped to give instructions to the lead battalion on the march; he then selected a site for his forward command post (CP); and he then flew to Masan to confer with Walker and Major General William B. Kean, USA, commander of the 25th Infantry Division, to which the brigade would be attached. Finally, on his return trip, Craig landed three more times to meet with his unit commanders.

General Craig's own later evaluation of this mobility was very specific. After noting that fast travel by jeep was often impossible due to traffic clogged roads, considerable distances to his objectives, and frequent tactical moves, he contrasted these impediments with his obligations. These included conferences with Army generals, the need to return to his CP to issue orders, then to observe his Marines in the field, as well as the requirement that he reconnoiter the terrain before operations began. He then commented: "My staff faced the same problems. Time was always pressing. Fortunately, Marine helicopters attached to VMO-6 were always available for observation, communications, and control. These aircraft made my day! Without them I do not believe we would have had the success we did."

The squadron's OY-2 light aircraft were equally useful on that day as they flew convoy for the brigade and made reconnaissance flights over the staging area, looking for any signs of enemy infiltration. This proved so successful that VMO-6 set up a regular procedure to have an OY over the brigade area at all times during daylight hours. To provide this non-stop support, there were shifts with a new plane, new pilot, and new observer coming in relays every two hours. Similarly, two helicopters went every morning to the brigade CP, to be relieved at noon by two others.

This new element of air mobility proved to be a vital asset to the ground troops. Craig pointed out that "maps were poor, and no one in the brigade had personal knowledge of the terrain over which we were to fight. Helicopters were a life saver in this connection, as they provided the

means for even commanders of small units to get into the air quickly from almost any point and identify roads, villages and key points prior to moving their troops.” The helicopters soon were employed for a wide variety of additional missions: evacuating the wounded; transporting supplies to inaccessible hill peaks; scouting enemy locations; and rescuing downed fighter pilots.

Of course, the NKPA was quick to open fire whenever it spotted one of the helicopters on the ground. Duncan, the reporter, was again on the spot for one typical episode. He was cutting across one of the rice paddies to where an aircraft sat with rotor blades kept spinning for a fast take-off. General Craig emerged from that helicopter, checking the disposition of his troops. As the reporter looked closely at him, a conviction grew: “I knew that [he] could take anything that Korea could hand out.”

Duncan’s account continues: “Suddenly that old familiar bucket swinging swoosh cut out all other sounds and two mortar bombs dropped into the riverbed. Great geysers of mud and gravel mixed with red-hot fragments shot into the sky. So did the helicopter. Before another bracket of bombs could fall the aircraft was halfway down the valley, General Craig was in his jeep headed for his CP on the mountainside.”

With the full brigade concentrated at Changwon by the late afternoon of 3 August, Craig faced a very uncertain situation. Although he had been ordered into a “bivouac” status as Eighth Army reserve, he was wary, for his Changwon location was very close to a vital road junction at Chindong-ni where heavy fighting was taking place. With the perimeter shrinking at an alarming rate and an NKPA envelopment from the west headed straight for Pusan, Craig decided:

We felt that going into bivouac would leave us wide open for surprise. To ensure our security and be prepared for any eventuality, I deployed the brigade tactically. Although a little trigger-happy, we were ready for combat, even though situated behind the so-called frontlines. During the few days we were at Changwon, we knew we were observed by enemy observation posts and patrols off on the flank. They did not bother us. A major penetration of the U.S. Army lines at Chindong-ni could have been fatal to us if we had been caught in bivouac.

The general’s reference to “a little trigger-happy” was an understatement made some time later, for the first night they were anything but professional. In pitch darkness, with thoughts of enemy infiltration making some of the men tense, nervous firing broke out among the Marines.

Although there were varying opinions of how widespread the firing was, one private first class named Fred F. Davidson, later recalled: I raised my carbine and squeezed the trigger. The muzzle flash blinded me. For the next few seconds I saw lights and stars. Andy shouted, “Hey, you almost hit me!” Oh, God, I didn’t know I was aiming in that direction. It was so dark I couldn’t see my front sight. I said to myself, “You better take it easy, ol’ buddy, before you kill some Marine.” Over to my rear someone else pulled off a round. Next it was someone to my front. Then the firing pinballed from place to place all over the hill and back down toward the railroad track . . . . Finally, all firing ceased . . . . The rest of the night I lay awake, scared, my finger on the trigger.

The brigade's stay at Changwon was brief but useful. The rifle units got a pithy lecture about fire discipline and conducted patrols to the high ground beside them—a foretaste of the endless hill climbs ahead. The tank and artillery units had an opportunity at last to do some training in firing their weapons, and the Reconnaissance Company started its probing operations. Firm communications were set up with the fighter squadrons afloat.

General Craig made two trips to Masan for planning meetings with Walker and Kean, and late on 5 August the brigade got the word to be prepared to move out by truck the next day to Chindong-ni with action to come immediately thereafter. The town was eight miles southwest of Masan on the road to Chinju. It was the point now subject to imminent NKPA attack. Walker had assigned three units to this first offensive: the Marine brigade, two regiments of the 25th Infantry Division, and the Army's 5th RCT. They would be called Task Force Kean.

For the brigade, the 3rd Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Taplett, was designated to move first on 6 August. Arriving at Chindong-ni, Taplett had to scout out the situation, since his battalion was due to be temporarily under the operational control of an Army colonel commanding the Army's 27th RCT there. When he got to the Army regimental command post (CP), the colonel was not there, and his operations officer did not know where he could be found, and neither could Taplett contact the commanding officer of the battalion in Chindong-ni. Its CP was there, right in the middle of the road, so Taplett quickly chose a very different location for his CP—on the reverse slope of a ridgeline.

As 7 August began, Task Force Kean was ready to jump off on the first real American offensive of the Korean War. Looking back on this day, Craig later felt that the fundamental requirement was for combat readiness. He had seen this in a brigade which was activated at Camp Pendleton on 7 July and was in combat by 7 August—only one month later.

It was in truth a memorable date for the brigade: exactly eight years earlier, to the day, Marines had opened the first American ground offensive of World War II at Guadalcanal. The plan now called for a three-pronged attack, with the brigade on the left following the south (roundabout) fork of the main road, the 5th RCT moving straight ahead on the road in the center (the direct line west to Chinju), and a regiment of the 25th Infantry Division swinging around in an arc on the right to join up with the 5th RCT halfway to Chinju.

It looked good on paper, but the NKPA refused to cooperate. The 6th Division fully expected to continue its unbroken string of victories. Its commander, under orders to roll into Pusan forthwith, had issued this stirring proclamation to his men:

Comrades, the enemy is demoralized. The task given to us is the liberation of Masan and Chinju and the annihilation of the remnants of the enemy. We have . . . accelerated the liberation of all Korea. However, the liberation of Chinju and Masan means the final battle to cut off the windpipe of the enemy. Comrades, this glorious task has fallen to our division! Men of the 6th Division, let us annihilate the enemy and distinguish ourselves!

Just as Task Force Kean launched its attack, so did the 6th Division. The Army's 5th RCT led off on the 7th with its 1st Battalion. When it got to the road junction west of Chindong-ni, for

some unknown reason it took the left (south) fork that was assigned to the Marines instead of going straight ahead (west) on the road that led to Chinju. Advancing three miles on the wrong road, it left open to enemy control Hill 342 which overlooked and commanded the main supply route that the task force would need. Kean had ordered that this was to be held “at all costs.”

A company of the 2nd Battalion, 5th RCT, had earlier been on the hill, but it was now quickly surrounded and cut off. To help break the siege, a midnight order came from the 25th Division, via the commanding officer of the Army’s 27th Infantry Regiment, to send a Marine platoon to help the beleaguered Army company on Hill 342. It would be the first infantry action for the brigade.

Second Lieutenant John J. H. “Blackie” Cahill from Company G got the job that night of 6-7 August. Reinforced with a machine gun squad and a radio operator, he set out for the CP of the Army’s 27th Infantry and then the CP of the 2nd Battalion, 5th RCT. There he received the astonishing order that his one platoon was to relieve the Army’s besieged company and hold the hill by itself. Moving out through the night of 6 August, the Marines suffered two wounded from fire that proved to be from the 2nd Battalion, 5th RCT. There followed the next morning (7 August), the beginning of a hot day, an agonizing series of hill climbs in untampered sun which led to heat prostration and empty canteens, and then enemy fire on the platoon as it staggered upwards to the hilltop, urged on by Cahill and his noncommissioned officers. Only 37 of the original 52 men reached the top. Once there, Cahill used his radio to call his own 3rd Battalion for badly needed supporting artillery fire and air drops of water and ammunition.

When the severity of the problems on Hill 342 became clearer Company D from Lieutenant Colonel Harold S. Roise’s 2nd Battalion was sent into action on 7 August. As the NKPA continued to reinforce its troops, the rest of the 2nd Battalion became heavily engaged nearby. In air temperature of 112 degrees men continually collapsed from nausea and heat exhaustion. Water was scarce and the slopes of the hill seemed to go on straight up forever. Finally, at the end of the day (7 August), Company D had nearly reached the crest, but, exhausted, dug in where it was for the night.

Meanwhile, the Army company and Cahill’s platoon on the crest had had a brutal day. Parched for water and completely surrounded by enemy fire, they managed to hang on with reinforcements now near at hand. And so, the day for the 2nd Battalion ended in a stalemate with the enemy on and around Hill 342.

There were problems everywhere else. The 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel George R. Newton, was backed up in Chindong-ni because the Army battalion had taken the wrong road. Taplett’s 3rd Battalion had relieved a battalion of the Army’s 27th RCT the day before, but now the latter found itself attacked as it tried to move into reserve in the rear. The 5th RCT was stalled.

The official Army history describes this day of 7 August perfectly when it refers to “a general melee” amid “confusion.” The problems were compounded when the NKPA slipped around Chindong-ni and occupied a commanding height, Hill 255, which dominated the task force’s supply road to Masan in the rear.



Hearing of the stalled attack of his 5th RCT, Kean was exasperated and took prompt action. He contacted Craig, who never forgot the day. His men were relieving the Army's 27th RCT, with Chindong-ni to be the jump-off point for the Marines' attack once the Army's 5th RCT had cleared the road intersection just ahead. Craig remembered: "At Chindong-ni I found the most confused situation that I've encountered in the Marine Corps . . . . Finally, due to the inability of the Army to clear the road junction and the hold-up of our offensive, General Kean put all troops in that area under the Marine brigade commander, and I was given the brigade plus the [Army's] 24th Regiment and the 5th RCT."

This took place on 7 August, and now Craig would have to sort things out and get the task force moving forward. To do this, he acted in a typical way: he went straight to the front lines to observe the situation first-hand. This kind of on-the-spot leadership immediately struck Second Lieutenant Patrick G. Sivert, an observer overhead in an OY. He was "amazed" on that very first day at how close the brigade CP was to the front lines. In contrast, he noted that "with the other outfits in the surrounding area, it was just the converse. Consequently, our communications, for the most part, with the Marine units on the ground were almost always very good, and with the other units almost always very bad."

When General Craig went forward, he found that the 5th RCT, under Colonel Godwin L. Ordway, USA, was still held up, even though "enemy resistance was light." It was clear to Craig that, to break the deadlock, he would need to launch a series of aggressive attacks by all his ground units, with heavy artillery and air support.

Early the next morning, 8 August, Company D pushed to the crest of Hill 342. Cahill and the battered survivors greeted them with enormous relief. It remained, however, a touch-and-go situation. Enemy fire was sweeping the encircled position, Marine officers were going down, and NKPA riflemen were slowly and steadily worming their way up the approaches. A private in Company D, Douglas Koch, felt the pressure: "I felt pretty bad. This was a very hectic time. There'd been a lot of climbing, we were under fire . . . . Someone hollered that the lieutenant was dead . . . . Firing was hot and heavy. Guys fell around me." It grew worse. NKPA soldiers came right up to the Marine lines. The firefight continued to grow in intensity. When word was shouted that there was a new commanding officer, First Lieutenant Robert T. Hanifin, Jr., it was soon followed by the depressing news that he had collapsed in the heat. This passed command of the company to a veteran gunnery sergeant. Koch knew that there was only one thing for him and the surrounded men to do: hang on.

One of the reasons that they could "hang on" was that the Marines called on a weapon that the enemy had not previously experienced: air strikes that were not only immediate but also gave truly close air support. Panels were laid out to mark the ground positions, a radio call went to the forward air controller at battalion headquarters (who personally knew the pilots) and then to the control plane in the Corsairs already orbiting overhead. Down they screeched, strafing and rocketing. They came close in—very close in—to the defender's lines. Empty shell casings from their machine guns fell into the laps of the men below. This was more than the previously all-victorious NKPA troops had bargained for. Their firing slacked off, and the crucial hilltop held. Some 600 enemy attackers had failed in their attempt to cut the task force's main supply route.

These strikes were part of Craig's plan to push his men ahead with continuous close air support. In the first three days of combat, the two Marine fighter squadrons flew well over 100 sorties. The squadrons had tailored their flight schedules so that one or the other was always overhead, ready instantly to respond to calls for strikes during the daylight hours. The other aircraft of MAG-33 were also daily demonstrating their worth. The OYs had bomb racks attached to their wing struts, enabling them to carry rations or cans of water to the ground troops panting in the heat and struggling up the ever-present hill slopes. This was supplemented by "daisy chains" of South Korean laborers who would pass up five-gallon cans of water, along with ammunition, to the men on the hilltops. The observation aircraft also became expert at spotting artillery fire for the 11th Marines. The OYs slow speed proved to be a big advantage. Sivert explained:

In this type of terrain, the enemy was so adept at camouflage that most of the time high-performance aircraft were just too fast to get down and search out a target. We in the slower moving aircraft were able to get down much lower, take our time in spotting a target, and then to stand off to one side or the other of the [bombing] runs, and make sure the aircraft were hitting the correct targets. Too, we were using the same maps that the ground commanders were using. They were able to give us targets and pinpoint the targets with exact coordinates.

Another advantage of the OYs was the ability to look down on hills (particularly reverse slopes) where the forward air controller (FAC) with the infantry on the ground was blocked from seeing the enemy target. Sivert found that a pattern of effective teamwork developed: the FAC would call on an OY to spot a target and give him the direction in which the bombing runs should be made. Sometimes the OY would even give the type of ammunition to be used on the target. Then, when the bombing runs had been completed, the OY would furnish damage estimates to the FAC. Teamwork was essential, since the OY could only communicate with the aircraft by relaying all directions through the FAC.

Helicopters also carried precious supply cargoes to isolated areas. In addition, they became invaluable in evacuating wounded riflemen. The fighter pilots developed an enthusiastic appreciation of these new "birds" when they similarly proved adept at rescuing pilots who had been shot down.

The full 2nd Battalion was consolidating its control of Hill 342 on 8 August, much to the relief of Cahill (who received a Silver Star for his leadership). Meanwhile, the other rifle units of Murray's 5th Marines were also very busy. Taplett's 3rd Battalion drew the assignment on 7 August of driving the enemy off the strategic Hill 255, which overlooked and blocked the main supply route (MSR) to the rear. The first small-scale attack on 8 August was directed at a lower hill that would give access to 255. It was repulsed. The commander of Company H, Captain Joseph C. Fegan, Jr., was later awarded a gold star in lieu of a second Silver Star for his bold actions when he personally led the next assault, after a platoon leader refused to move (Fegan relieved him for that). It came down to the messy business of cleaning out each enemy foxhole, one at a time, for the NKPA troops fought to the death. Fegan was ably assisted by the heroics of such men as Corporal Melvin James (Army Distinguished Service Cross and Silver Star), and Technical Sergeant Ray Morgan and Private First-Class Donald Terrio (Silver Stars).

When Company H hastily dug in for the night, Staff Sergeant James C. Davis had his platoon in a forward position only 75 yards from the enemy. While repairing a defective hand grenade, it slipped out of his grasp and dropped in the midst of his men. A posthumous award of a Navy Cross described his immediate reaction: “Without a moment’s hesitation, he chose to sacrifice himself, rather than endanger his companions, and threw himself upon the live grenade.”

In parallel action by Company G that day, Sergeant Jack E. Macy would later be awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for his perilous rescue trips to bring wounded men into safety. By the end of the day, the Marines were securely in possession of the first hill, with 255 looming ahead. The company had advanced more than 1,400 yards in the teeth of a fiercely resisting enemy. It had taken nine grueling hours with great suffering from lack of water, heat exhaustion, and overexertion in the stifling weather. One man in the battalion later admitted: “Guys almost went mad for water. I never felt the kind of heat I felt in Korea. I just burned up. My hands went numb. I couldn’t help myself; I began crying like a baby. I was ashamed. I felt I could crawl into a mouse hole and die, but I couldn’t help what was happening to me.”

This kind of water-deprivation and dehydration in the midst of blinding heat seriously affected the combat strength of all of the battalions. Murray, the regimental commander, admitted: “One time I figured I had about at least a third of my regiment lying at the side of the road with heat prostration.”

In spite of the grueling physical problems—and the fanatical resistance by the enemy—the battalion had now successfully positioned itself for the final lunge at Hill 255. As Craig jockeyed his forces to meet the NKPA thrusts and launch his own attacks, Newton’s 1st Battalion was finally able to move out of Chindong-ni early on 8 August. Its orders were to proceed to the now-famous road fork and take the left (south) route, while the Army’s 5th RCT was to take the straight-ahead (west) route. Trying to approach the junction, Newton found that the 5th RCT was still stalled there. The road to the fork was jammed with soldiers and Army vehicles; it was a scene of “congestion and confusion.” With the advance of the Marine battalion blocked, the solution for progress came in an order from Kean to Murray: send your 1st Battalion on a night march to Hill 308 to relieve the Army battalion that took your south road in error. It was expected to be a dangerous maneuver. The commander of the Army battalion felt that his companies were “cut off” by the NKPA; the Marines were to veer off the main road short of the clogged junction and file in column along narrow dikes in a wide rice paddy, totally exposed if fired upon; two South Korean civilians of unknown trustworthiness were to guide them through the pitch black night (since the assigned Army guide never appeared). Newton was deeply upset when the Army battalion prematurely withdrew from its position without waiting for the Marine relief force. As Andrew Geer described this unfortunate development in *The New Breed*, “there was a display of temper” between the two battalion commanders.

By midnight the Army troops had cleared the rice paddy paths, and the Marines quickly moved out. To the gratified surprise of the men, they encountered no enemy, and by dawn on 9 August they were safely assembled at the base of Hill 308. The battalion had been on the move, afoot, for 22 consecutive hours; the men were thirsty and dog-tired, but they had carried out the relief as ordered.

Kean, meanwhile, had not limited himself to his orders to Murray. He had come up to the deadlock at the junction, and his next orders were short and to the point. Indicating the hill that controlled the junction to one of his battalion commanders (who had earlier failed to capture the hill), Kean barked, “I want that hill tonight!” It was finally done.

The events of 8 August were not decisive in themselves and did not appear to represent any real progress for the task force. Nevertheless, the groundwork had been laid, and Craig now had his troops where they were in position not only to crush the enemy’s offensive, but also finally to make real progress of their own toward the ultimate objective of Chinju. Two of the opposing forces, NKPA and Marine, had learned something about each other in these first clashes. Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr., in *Soldiers of the Sea* summed it up:

The Marines got their first taste of the enemy. They found him spirited, tenacious, well trained, and generously equipped with Russian gear. Used to having the campaign their own way, the North Koreans fought confidently, but reacted with considerable surprise when they found themselves facing troops who gave no ground, hung on to their weapons, and brought in their wounded and dead.

A subsequent article in the *Marine Corps Gazette* by historian Lynn Montross analyzed the battle skills of the NKPA this way:

*The Marines learned to respect a hardy enemy for his skill at camouflage, ambush, infiltration, and use of cover. They learned that supporting air and artillery fires often had limited effect on a foe making clever use of reverse slope defenses to offset Marine concentrations. A ridge might protect and conceal an enemy strong point until attackers were too close for supporting fires. When this situation developed, with the heavy firepower of the Marines neutralized, their attack was reduced to the familiar basic essential of small arms fire fights. In these circumstances, the NKPA was able to meet them on even terms, man-to-man.*

Just as the Marines had sized up the enemy, so, too, they had formed their own opinion of the Army units with whom they were in contact. Other judgements were also being made at this time. An Army colonel had been sent by General Mark Clark’s Army Field Forces Headquarters to evaluate the units of the Eighth Army in late July and early August. On 9 August he made his report to Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway, whose aide prepared a detailed 12point memorandum on the findings.

The report was very harsh. It is quoted at length in a recent book by Brigadier General Uzal W. Ent, USA (Ret), entitled *Fighting on the Brink: Defense of the Pusan Perimeter*. The book has Ent’s summary, saying that the report “verbally ripped the officers and enlisted men of Eighth Army apart.” It underscored three “principal deficiencies”: lack of knowledge of infantry fundamentals; lack of leadership in combat echelons; and the absence of an aggressive fighting spirit. Regardless of Army problems and wary of a tough enemy, but confident it could smash ahead, the 5th Marines made real progress on 9 August. Murray was a driver who knew that aggressive attacks would, in the end, reduce his casualties. Even though his 1st Battalion had barely arrived at the base of Hill 308, Murray radioed an order to attack immediately. Once again it was the familiar story of over-tired, thirsty men staggering up one more hill—this time after 27

hours of continuous, tense exertion. Fortunately, there was only sniper fire and the crest was secured, as the men collapsed on the broiling ground.

There was to be no let-up, however, for the beat-up 1st Battalion. Murray kept pushing. He ordered Newton to take his men back down from the hill they had just climbed so laboriously and to move along the south road towards the next objective, a village called Paedun-ni. It was a pathetic remnant that was able to come down that hill. There were only 30 men and two officers out of the whole company who were able to make it down without collapsing. Captain John L. Tobin, in bad shape himself, stayed with the rest of the men on the hilltop. Fenton painfully recalled the scene:

The troops that had passed out had to be left where they had fallen, since no one had the strength to move them. The men who had heat prostration, but weren't out, tried to place themselves along the ridge where they could cover their fallen buddies in case of an enemy attack. The heat reached 114 degrees, and I personally don't believe that our men on the hill could have repulsed 10 enemy troops.

Once Newton finally was able to get his survivors down to the Paedun-ni road, they were joined by his Headquarters Company, his Weapons Company, and a platoon of tanks. But Newton's troubles continued. He was stuck with obsolete Japanese maps which frequently used different names for towns, had no contour lines for the hills, and were undependable as to roads. This resulted in his taking the wrong fork in the road shortly after starting. Not one to be out of touch with his troops, Murray appeared shortly to correct the problem. It developed that the maps Newton and Murray had were each different. The upshot was that Murray decided that the whole column had to turn around on the primitive narrow road, retrace its steps, and take the other fork. Amidst the milling in this reversal, Newton was probably dismayed to see Craig appear on the confused scene. The general was not pleased, and without knowing the background, he expressed his thoughts in vivid language. When the battalion finally got restarted on the proper fork, Craig—another officer who kept in close touch with his troops—went with them to supervise the further attack he was planning. As evening fell, the 1st Battalion had come two miles from its jump-off and was ordered to dig in for the night.

Back in the zone of the 3rd Battalion, the payoff came on 9 August for the hard fight the day before. The day began with a thorough saturation of Hill 255 by the artillery of the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel Ransom M. Wood. The artillery batteries had to improvise their tactics during these early days in Korea. Ironically, they had suffered more casualties than the riflemen when the task force had begun its attack. Then, to counter the skillful infiltration of the NKPA, the three batteries would try to set up with one aiming to the north, one to the east, and one to the west, with protective foxholes around them. (Because the brigade was moving so fast, and with the penchant of the enemy for lightning hit-and-run tactics, the 11th Marines often would be able to set up only one battery for action.)

After the artillery had plastered the enemy positions on Hill 255, the battalion's forward air controller, First Lieutenant Daniel Greene, got on his radio, and the Corsairs then came wheeling in, this time with napalm's first scourge of the NKPA. It was a near classic demonstration of the

Marine concept of an air-ground team. When the riflemen scaled the final crest of the hill, there was little opposition. Nevertheless, the battles that led to the conquest of Hill 255 had cost Company H the loss of 25 percent of its men. When the 3rd Battalion then joined up with part of the Army's 24th Infantry, the threat to the rear supply route (Masan to Pusan) had been eliminated.

With these hill captures by the three Marine battalions, the errant Army battalion of the 5th RCT, which had earlier taken the wrong fork at the junction, could now retrace its steps and rejoin its regiment. At last the 5th RCT moved out west towards a new objective on the road to Chinju.

This breakup of the log jam enabled Kean to relieve Craig of overall command of the task force and allowed the general to return to his own men on the afternoon of 9 August.

With his brigade now moving along its designated south road, Craig planned to exert maximum pressure on the NKPA by having the Marine battalions leap-frog each other, pushing forward hard. The same procedures would be used by the companies and platoons. Whether it was advance guard, flankers out on the sides, or in the main column of the brigade, all the units would rotate. This enabled General Craig to keep driving.

He had Murray pull Roise's 2nd Battalion off Hill 342 and put it on trucks which brought it to an assembly point near Hill 308, a spot familiar to the 1st Battalion. Arriving there nearly at midnight on 9 August, Roise contemplated his situation. He had had 9 killed, 44 wounded, and a shocking 94 cases of heat prostration, the loss of key officers, and now his tired men were due to lead the attack in two hours—after the past 69 hours of climbing, fighting, and marching. Despite all this, he was relieved to see that the morale of his men appeared high. Furthermore, his riflemen had been reinforced by the attachment of a battery of artillery, a platoon of the powerful Pershing tanks, and a 75mm recoilless rifle platoon.

The attack on Paedun-ni was only the first objective enroute to the towns of Kosong and Sachon, the keys to the final goal of Chinju. Craig later described his reasoning:

This night attack was in addition to an attack during the day, and, although the men were very tired and I hesitated to carry out the night movement, I considered that, if we could surprise the North Koreans and keep moving when the other American troops had already stopped for the night, that we might gain some added advantage—and this proved to be the case. We marched throughout the night and gained quite a bit of distance with only occasional shots being fired.

Moving through the 1st Battalion, the 2nd Battalion had pressed forward through the night of 9-10 August, grateful that there was no opposition. There was an episode with a couple of tanks that got stuck, bringing both Craig and Murray to the spot with some strong words to move the rest of the column forward. By 0800 on 10 August, Roise and his men were in Paedun-ni.

And so, 9 August ended with the Marine brigade finally all together as a unit and really starting to roll in high gear down the south road. The next day (10 August) brought some brisk action when the retreating enemy forces picked strategic places to delay the rapid advance of the Marine column. As usual, Craig had arrived at Paedunni by helicopter, and his refrain to the

troops was to move ahead with “all speed.” Accordingly, the 2nd Battalion, even though it had just arrived, got ready to move out quickly for Kosong. The 3rd Battalion followed.

With only a few trucks available, part of Company D was put on board, with the rest of the troops marching behind. As the trucks rolled down the road, they were preceded by a four-jeep reconnaissance team. Some 2 1/2 miles from Paedun-ni there was a section of the road where it made a sharp turn and narrowed along a defile 1,000 yards long underneath a large hill. It was called the Taedabok Pass, and 300 of the NKPA were dug in and carefully camouflaged waiting there in ambush. Their mortars, antitank guns, and artillery were ready to inflict heavy casualties on any troops who moved blindly into the pass.

However, the advance guard of the Marines was not moving blindly. Craig was well aware of the skill of the NKPA in ambushes and envelopments. He therefore had a policy of using his helicopters and OY aircraft to the maximum for reconnaissance of his front and flanks. In addition, he deployed a reconnaissance platoon in jeeps to scout ahead of the lead battalion. These men, Craig commented, “on two occasions uncovered very strong ambushes and suffered some casualties in getting out, but they did protect the main column.” One of those riding in a reconnaissance jeep was a young private first class. They were rolling happily down the road, thinking how quiet it was, when suddenly:

The North Koreans opened up. [They] cut up the first couple of jeeps pretty bad. My group tumbled and ran for the ditch. I landed calf-deep in warm water. I heard machine guns chattering around me. Dirt kicked up along the road that was now lined with abandoned jeeps. Sergeant Dickerson shouted over the noise, “Those hills, the little low ones, over to the right, we gotta get over there. Gotta return fire from there.” I picked up my BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle], and, crouched over, ran down the ditch.

At the same time an OY observation plane, flying less than 50 feet off the ground, spotted the ambush. With all hope of trapping the main column of Marines now gone, the NKPA poured on the fire. An antitank gun smashed a jeep. Now, coming up fast and deploying in counterattack on both sides of the road, the men of Company D went after the high ground at 1500 that afternoon. Their 60mm mortar fire silenced the antitank gun, and, when two Marine Pershing tanks arrived at 1630, their 90mm guns, combined with Corsair attacks, beat down the enemy fire.

The fact that there had been any surprise was on Murrays mind. He said later: “We moved pretty well along this road for a day, I guess, when we ran into an ambush. Shouldn’t have been ambushed, we should have discovered it, but didn’t. The advance guard failed to spot these people and got hit. Fortunately, though, the bulk of the regiment didn’t get involved initially.”

The ambush had delayed the brigade, but not for long and at a cost to the NKPA of hundreds of dead, wrecked vehicles, and large losses in weapons. Now the Marines were poised to sweep into Kosong.

Reinforcements arrived: the rest of the 2nd Battalion on foot and the 3rd Battalion by truck. Murray, of course, was there waiting for them. He took Taplett up to the top of one of the hills and they could see Kosong five miles away. The regimental commander, in his usual style, told

Taplett to move his 3rd Battalion through Roise's men at 1715 and attack immediately to clean out the pass and clear the way to Kosong. It was an unusual "pass through," since neither Murray nor Taplett could locate Roise or his command post.

This order came as music to the ears of 2nd Battalion Marines. Roise had had them moving and fighting for 88 hours over a distance of almost 50 miles. In spite of the never-ending hills and oppressive heat, the battalion had won each of its battles and inflicted more than 600 casualties on the enemy. Now it could actually relax for the moment. For the first time since going into action, there was enough water to drink and the men could eat their field rations in peace. Perspiration-soaked socks had brought on ulcer sores on their feet and ankles, so it was a blessed relief to be issued clean, dry socks.

As the 3rd Battalion moved into position for its attack, the men were naturally concerned about enemy fire, but the first thing to hit them was friendly fire. One enlisted man later recounted his reaction:

We passed through one of the other battalions. About 5:00 in the afternoon two American fighters [U.S. Air Force F-51s] zoomed down the road around 150 feet above our heads . . . . No matter where I ran, I couldn't seem to find an escape. Their .50-caliber bullets hit that hard, dry road and it sounded as if each was exploding. There was just nowhere to go to get out of the line of fire. Someone screamed, "Break out the air panels! Get the air panels!" The fighters left as suddenly as they had arrived.

By 1830 on 10 August, the lead platoons had jumped off in the attack, but they soon received heavy fire from two NKPA machine guns hidden at the far end of the pass. During this encounter, some Marines at the point were wounded, and platoon leader First Lieutenant Jack "Big Jack" Westerman made a daring rescue for which he was later presented a Navy Cross. Neutralizing those guns took the last of daylight, and so Murray had the battalion dig in for the night, sending men up the dominating hills for security. First Lieutenant Robert D. Bohn, the commander of Company G, was not very happy about that order: "It was just contrary to everything you're taught, to go up into enemy-held territory at night, no reconnaissance, nothing like that, and hold it."

Things got worse at dawn. The NKPA hit Bohn's company. Because he had had to feel his way up there in darkness, he really did not know exactly where he and his men were, but the enemy attack revealed:

I was on the front line. I was on the forward slope of this hill, and my command group got hit. I got wounded, my mortar section chief got killed, and I had a couple of other casualties. But we were a well-trained outfit, so we immediately returned fire—I think there were maybe eight or ten of them, probably a delaying party—and we killed them all. It was very close. It was hand-grenade range and hand-to-hand in a couple of instances. I took hand grenade fragments in the neck and shoulder, but they weren't too serious. It was the same hand grenade that killed a Marine right next to me. I killed the guy that threw it.

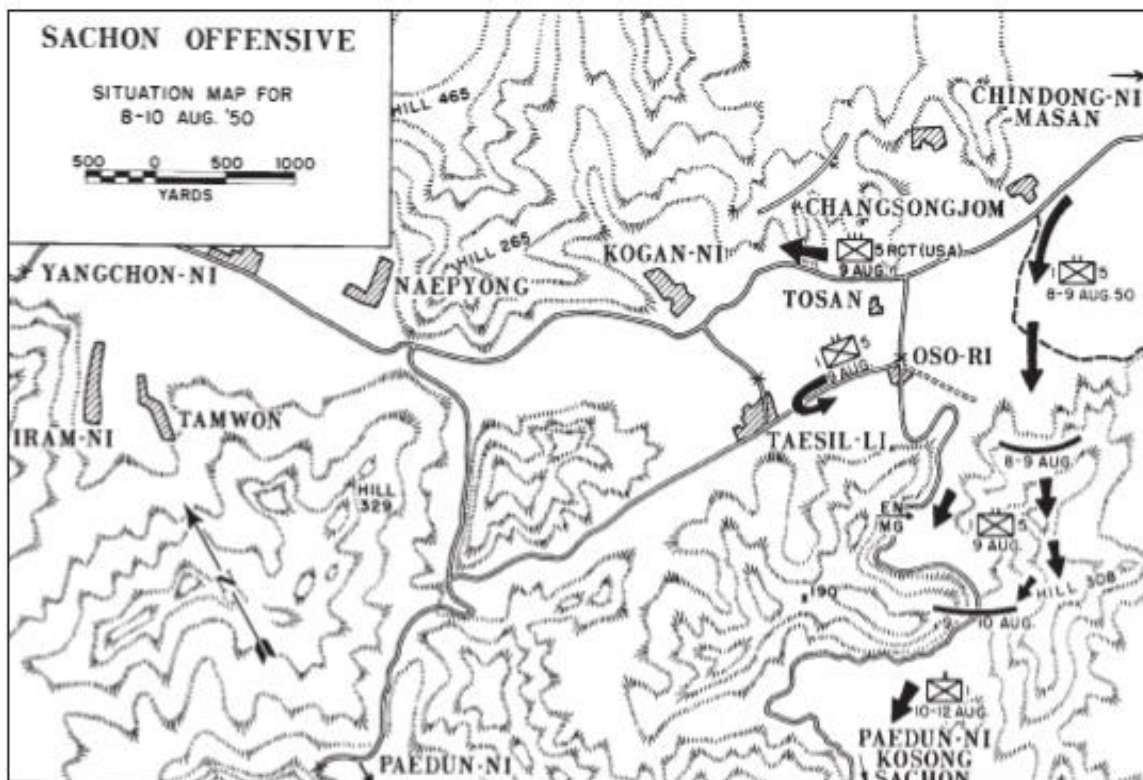


By the time the attack was finally beaten off, Bohn's cool and decisive handling of his men would result in the award of a Silver Star. However, Company G, which was due to lead the brigade's advance the morning of 11 August, was a half hour late getting to the appointed line of departure. John Toland's history, *In Mortal Combat*, records a remark to Bohn: "Murray was furious, 'When I say 0800, I don't mean 0801!'"

Company G then moved out at a fast clip. It would be the pace of the point platoon which would govern the speed of the entire brigade. Accordingly, the advance flankers moved at a run to keep up with their platoon leader on the road. He, in turn, relieved them with fresh men as often as possible. The fast pace they set proved invaluable when they came upon any of the enemy. The Marines came to the first machine gun emplacement lurking on the route, and they hit it so hard and so unexpectedly that the five NKPA gunners were killed before they could fire a shot. Three more enemy positions fell to the same aggressive tactics of the point platoon.

With this kind of speed and skill up front, and with two Corsairs and an OY cruising overhead looking for any trouble, the brigade came wheeling down the road to reach the outskirts of Kosong by 1000. Softening up any potential defenders, the 105mm howitzers of the 11th Marines began raining high explosives on Kosong. This barrage and the onrushing brigade forced the opposing 83rd Motorcycle Regiment to pack up and seek safety in a hasty departure.

With the flight of the main body of the enemy, only a few snipers remained in Kosong. Company H passed through G and pushed rapidly into the town. On its heels came Taplett and Craig, with their hands on the helm, always close to the action. Meanwhile, Company G raced to seize control of Hill 88 southwest of the town and dominating the road to Sachon. The enemy was waiting there, but not for long. The Corsairs swooped in low with napalm, tank fire poured in, the howitzers of the 11th Marines blanketed the position, and the crest was quickly taken.



3It was at Kosong that there was a clear example of the payoff from the long years of Navy-Marine cooperation: support of the brigade by Landing Ship Tanks. Craig fully realized their great value, for they proved a ready solution to the problem of getting supplies by truck on primitive, congested roads. Accordingly, he had had his helicopters make a reconnaissance of usable harbors on the nearby coast. Then the LSTs would move into a harbor that matched the brigade's advance. General Craig described the pay-off:

*When we reached Kosong, we had an LST within six miles of that place on a covered road where we could unload and push forward supplies and build up a brigade dump at Kosong. Wounded could be evacuated immediately to the LST . . . We always felt that we had a mobile base of supplies which we could bring in as necessary and that, even though we were separated by long distance or cut off from our rear base, we could always depend on these LSTs for supplies.*

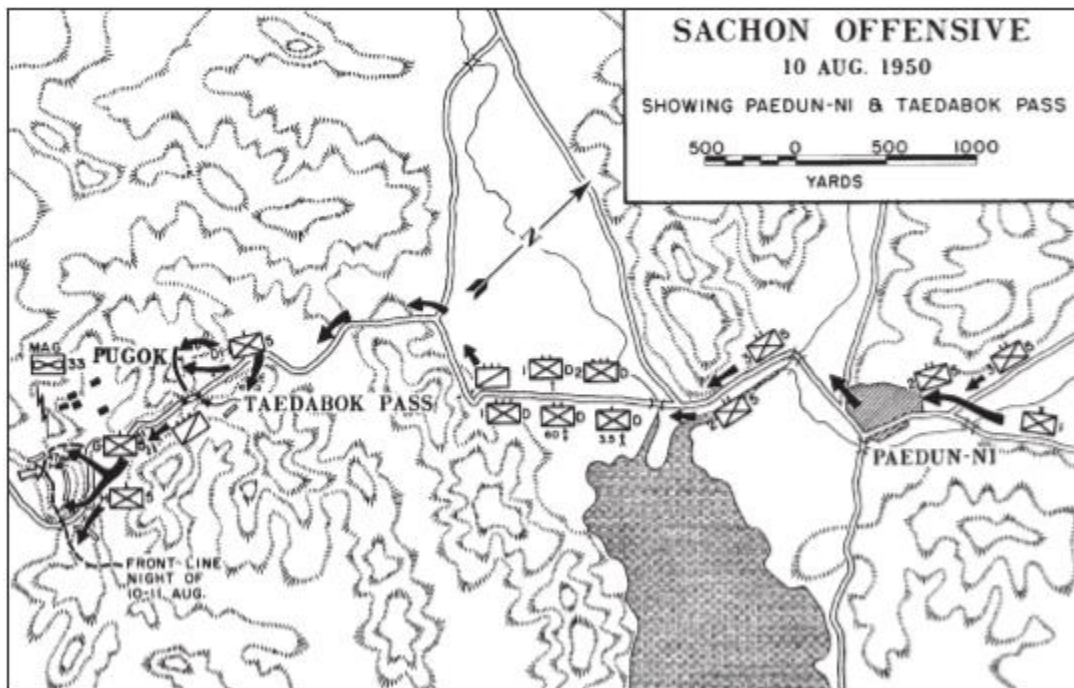
With Hill 88 secured, Craig had Taplett pull the men of Company G back, disregard other hills, and concentrate for an immediate drive by the brigade to Sachon. A pair of NKPA antitank guns were waiting on the route but were discovered when an ambulance jeep was hit (killing a Navy corpsman). With its location disclosed the pair was quickly knocked out and the column surged forward, led by Company H with the forward air controller right up with the point men.

A few hours later the marching men came upon an astonishing sight. When the 83rd Motorcycle Regiment hurriedly decamped from Kosong, its timing proved disastrous, for, just at

that juncture, a flight of Corsairs from VMF-323 appeared on the scene. The pilots could hardly believe the tempting targets arrayed before their eyes, and the slaughter began; it came to be known as the “Kosong Turkey Shoot.” The Corsairs swung low up and down the frantic NKPA column, raining death and destruction in a hail of fire from rockets and 20mm cannon. With the vehicles at the front and rear ends of its column destroyed, the enemy regiment was trapped. It was a scene of wild chaos: vehicles crashing into each other, overturned in ditches, afire, and exploding; troops fleeing for safety in every direction. Another flight from VMF323 arrived, and, joined by U.S. Air Force F-51s, finished off the destruction of the trucks, jeeps, and motorcycles. Accounts of this NKPA debacle vary widely in their tallies of the number of vehicles destroyed: 100-200.

One thing was certain: when the ground troops reached the scene, the usable vehicles were quickly appropriated for the transportation-starved brigade. There was, in fact, a momentary slowdown in the fast advance of the Marines to stare. Joseph C. Goulden’s *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* pictures the scene: “Black Soviet Army jeeps and motorcycles with sidecars, most of which had gone into battle in mint condition. Looking under the hoods, the Marines found the jeeps powered by familiar Ford Motor Company engines—apparent relics of American lend-lease aid to the Soviet Union during the Second World War.”

The Marines found other things, too. Included in the wreckage were American jeeps the NKPA had captured earlier from U.S. Army troops, and Toland asserts that there were duffel bags containing Russian officers’ uniforms.



There was another colorful episode which happened on the road that led back to Sachon in the rear of the motorcycle regiment. Andrew Geer’s *The New Breed: The Story of the U.S. Marines in Korea* describes how Master Sergeant Herbert Valentine and Second Lieutenant Patrick G.

Sivert were in an OY skimming the route when they observed a jeep making a high-speed getaway from the battle site. Sitting rigidly erect, arms folded, eyes never wavering from straight ahead, a high-ranking NKPA officer sat unmoving in the rear seat. The Marines in the OY came down close to the jeep and began firing their revolvers (the plane's only armament) at the fleeing target. Rifle fire came back from the jeep's front seat, but the officer remained rigid. This continued for a 20-mile stretch with no results. Finally, the terrified driver took one too many looks at the plane so close overhead, and the jeep hurtled over a cliff. The officer never budged from his fixed position as he plunged to his death. Cruising the rest of the day in advance of the brigade, Marine air found other targets of opportunity. Geer totaled up the results:

*Score for the day to Marine Air: vehicles (all types) destroyed, 118; supply dumps destroyed, 2; ammunition dumps left burning, 2; buildings housing troops destroyed, 8; southeast section of Sachon set on fire; concentrations of troops south of Sachon, north of Kogan-ni and along route of withdrawal neutralized and dispersed with heavy casualties; one jeep presumed to be carrying a Very Important Person, destroyed.*

There was, as always, a price the Marine aviators had to pay for these dramatic achievements. One pilot, Captain Vivian M. Moses, had his Corsair shot down by ground fire. When a helicopter from VMO6 arrived to rescue him behind enemy lines, he was dead, the first death for MAG-33.

Another pilot, Lieutenant Doyle H. Cole, was luckier. Hit, his plane made a forced landing in the nearby ocean. He climbed out onto his emergency raft, and almost immediately a rescue helicopter appeared overhead and dropped to a position close above him. A rope was lowered, and he was pulled up to safety. Glancing at the white hair of his rescuer, Cole slapped the old timer on the shoulder and said, "Thanks for the lift, buddy!" A second glance gave Cole a start. He saw the star on the dungarees and realized that it was Craig. An embarrassed, "Thank you, sir," blurted out, followed by a relaxed reply, "Glad to be of service, Lieutenant."

Down on the road, the brigade sped forward. Taplett and his air controller were up front with the lead platoon, and any time enemy resistance developed, in came the Corsairs. This immediacy of support was due to three factors. First, the Marines had been able to keep control of their own aviation, as General MacArthur had promised Craig. Secondly, there were no upper echelons of command to delay strike requests. Each battalion and the regiment had its own tactical air control party. These control parties each consisted of an officer and six enlisted men; they each used a radio jeep and portable radios for direct orders to the aircraft. They worked with pilots who had had infantry training and had been carefully briefed on the ground situation. In addition, the brigade staff had an air section using four different radio networks for overall coordination, plus an observation section which used the OYs and helicopters of VMO-6 to pinpoint enemy targets for the Corsairs and control parties. Thirdly, the Marine fighter squadrons were very close by, based on the jeep carriers just offshore. They could be overhead in minutes, rather than finally arriving from bases in Japan with only enough fuel for 15 minutes' support, which was the predicament of the U.S. Air Force.

As 11 August drew to a close, Taplett, after nearly being shot by an enemy soldier “playing possum,” deployed his 3rd Battalion on two hills by the road and had them dig in for the night. Sachon lay ahead, only a day’s march away. The men felt good. They were making rapid progress. As the official Marine history noted: “the enemy seemed to be disorganized if not actually demoralized. For the first time since the invasion began, a sustained Eighth Army counterattack had not only stopped the Red Korean steamroller but sent it into reverse.”

In this happy frame of mind, the brigade got moving again early on the morning of 12 August. Enemy opposition was light, and the 1st Battalion in the lead quickly leaped forward 11 miles. Fenton noted that “the boys took quite a bit of pride in the fact that we had done all this moving on foot, while Army units moved mostly by motor. Morale was very high . . .

There was evidence of considerable enemy disorganization . . . . We had them on the run and wanted to finish them off.” By noon the brigade was only four miles from Sachon, and Chinju lay just eight miles beyond that. According to Geer, when a NKPA major was captured, he confessed, “Panic sweeps my men when they see the Marines with the yellow leggings coming at them.”

Things looked good—too good. The old hands knew that something unpleasant always followed the good times. And so it did. With men from the Reconnaissance Company on the alert out front, Company B of the 1st Battalion poked its nose into a valley with a small village called Changchon. The Marines took a few shots at a pair of disappearing enemy soldiers, the first they had seen all day. The reply was thunderous. From the hills ahead and on either side of the road all hell broke loose, as 500 of the NKPA poured in fire from carefully camouflaged positions above the Marines. The enemy had brought up reinforcements from Sachon during the preceding night and set up an ambush here with the surviving members of the 83rd Motorcycle Regiment and part of the 2nd Battalion, 15th Regiment. The reconnaissance men had caused the trap to be sprung prematurely, before the whole Marine column could be caught in the heavy crossfire. Company B immediately rushed to help its reconnaissance men, but it was quickly pinned down by the avalanche of fire. An article by Fenton in the November 1951 Marine Corps Gazette told how its commander, Captain John L. Tobin, took his runners and headed forward, but halfway there:

*An enemy machine gun took them under fire, pinning them down in the rice paddy. Things were pretty hot, and Tobin noticed one of the runners shaking like an old Model-T Ford. He asked the Marine what was wrong, and the boy replied that he was scared. Tobin put a big scowl on his face and replied, “Lad, Marines are never scared.” Just then the enemy machine gunner got the range and was really kicking up the water and mud around them. Tobin turned to the runner and quickly added, “I see your point now. Let’s get the hell out of here!”*

The Corsairs and their napalm were called in, and, with their support, then fire from the tanks’ 90mm guns, 4.2-inch mortars, and battalion artillery, the rest of the battalion cleaned the enemy off one hill after another in a hard four-hour battle. There was aggressive action by the rest of the Marine column, and a squad leader in the 3rd Battalion, Corporal Donald D. Sowl, was later awarded the Army’s Distinguished Service Cross by order of General MacArthur.

There was a final flourish at the end of the day. A number of the enemy was spotted sneaking up the reverse slope of one of the hills. A veteran noncommissioned officer took a squad, deployed them along the ridgeline, and told them to wait silently. When the NKPA soldiers got within 75 feet, the sergeant gave his men the signal, and they poured out a sheet of fire. All 39 of the attackers were killed instantly, except for the officer leading them who was wounded and captured. Turned over to South Korean police to take back to the battalion CP for interrogation, the enemy officer did not survive the trip. As Geer wryly observed: “In the future they [the Marines] would conduct their own prisoners to the rear.”

With all units dug in for the night, a rice paddy area of 1,000 yards between the two companies of the 1st Battalion was covered by the preregistered fire of mortars and artillery in case the enemy had any thoughts of a night attack. The brigade had now covered 29 miles of road (and much more counting the interminable distances up and down hills) in four short days. It had defeated the NKPA in every encounter, and here it was poised for the short step into Sachon. Next stop after that was the final objective, Chinju, now within easy reach of the hard-hitting brigade. Again, things looked good—too good.

This time the surprise came not from the NKPA in front but from the U.S. Army in the rear. Craig had received orders from Kean late in the morning of the day just ended, 12 August, to send without delay a reinforced battalion all the way back to the original starting point of the task force’s drive, Chindong-ni. The Army’s 5th RCT was in trouble again; its “push” towards Chinju had totally bogged down in what one account called “an epic disaster.” With only two battalions left, Craig noted in his understated way that “the consequence was that our right flank . . . was exposed. There were many North Korean troops in that area, and we were, more or less, out on a limb at Sachon.” Now the NKPA was cutting the main supply route behind the 5th RCT, and three batteries of the 555th and 90th Field Artillery Battalions had been completely overrun by the enemy. The Marine battalion was urgently needed to rescue the survivors from the shambles and restore the tactical situation.

The call from Kean began a hectic afternoon for Craig. Lynn Montross in his book, *Cavalry of the Sky*, stressed the crucial mobility Craig enjoyed by repeated use of the helicopter. In a single afternoon, he took off from his CP at Kosong, then made two landings to give orders to his regimental commander, Murray, and to Taplett for the road lift of the 3rd Battalion to the crisis spot. Montross continued the story:

*Next, he spotted two columns of Marine trucks from the air and landed twice more to direct them to dump their loads and provide transportation for the troops. His G-3 [operations officer] and the battalion commander had meanwhile been sent ahead by helicopter to reconnoiter the objective area and plan for the Marines to deploy and attack upon arrival. Owing to these preparations, the assault troops seized part of the enemy position before darkness.*

This fluid movement of Craig’s enabled him, as a finale, to observe the start of the sunset attack enroute to a conference with Kean at Masan. While there he got the disheartening news that Walker wanted him to withdraw the brigade at daybreak. It was a gloomy ride for Craig back to his CP where he landed in early darkness.

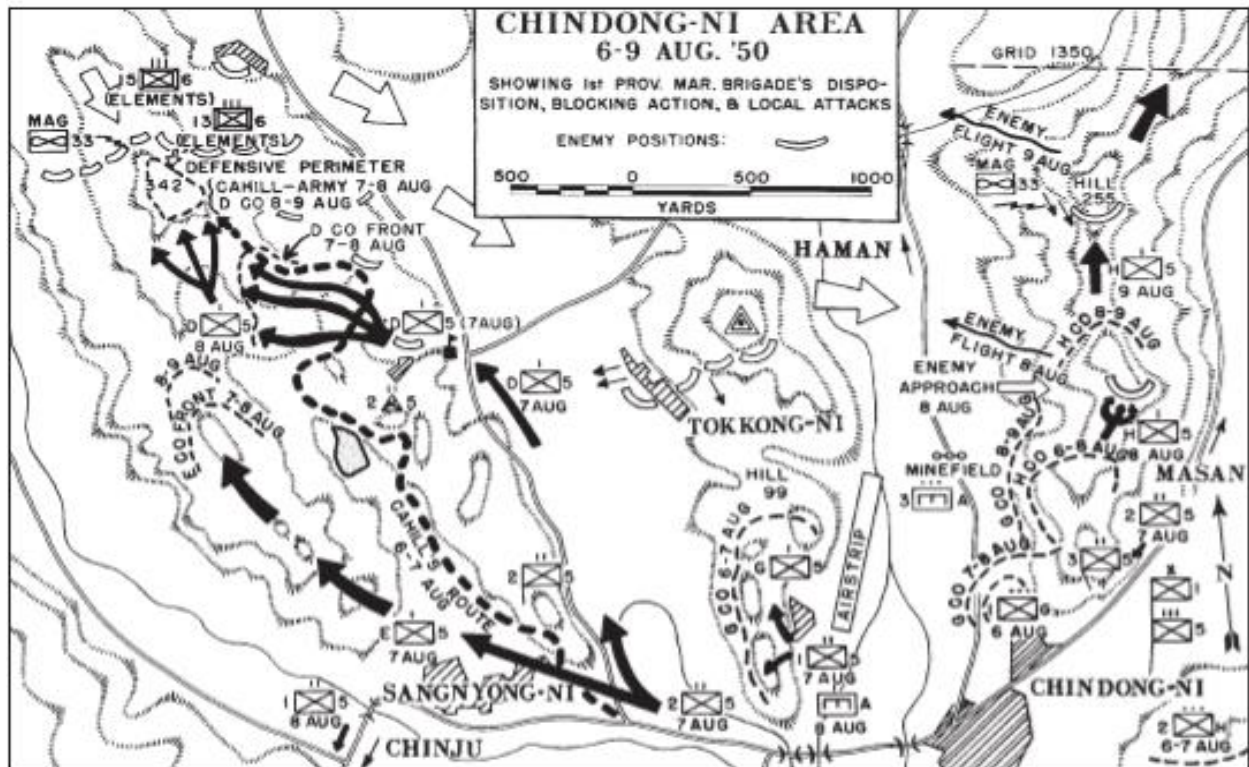
The meeting with Kean not only confirmed the overwhelming problems of the 5th RCT, but also brought still more ominous news. The operations of Task Force Kean had been in the far southwestern sector of the Pusan Perimeter. Now the NKPA had crossed the Naktong River in the west center of the perimeter, broken the Army's lines, and were threatening to unhinge the entire defense of the peninsula. It was a time of real crisis, and Walker was calling on his battle proven "fire brigade" to save the situation. This presented Craig with an even bleaker picture: he had to pull the rest of his brigade out of its successful drive toward Sachon and rush it north to stem the enemy breakthrough.

Withdrawal in the face of an aggressive enemy is one of the more difficult military operations. Newton, commander of the 1st Battalion, had gotten the word from Murray at midnight on 12 August to withdraw his men from their hilltop positions and form up on the road below at 0630 the following morning. There trucks would move them to their next combat assignment—unknown, as usual, to the men who would do the fighting.

Before it could get to the road, as the 1st Battalion was preparing to evacuate its positions on Hill 202, it was hit by a heavy assault. The veteran soldiers of the 6th Infantry Division were experts at night attacks, and at 0450 they struck. It was close-in work. For a while, the outcome was in doubt. Separated from Company A, Company B was on its own. Its entire left flank was overrun, the communications wire was cut, and two Marine machine guns were captured and turned on the company. Fighting back face-to-face, the Marines called in fire from their 81mm and 4.2-inch mortars, together with artillery and 3.5-inch rocket rounds that pinpointed the enemy with fire barely in front of the defenders. Finally, at dawn, the situation was stabilized.

There now occurred "one of the most demoralizing incidents in Company B's experience for the entire campaign," as Fenton later commented. Tobin was ready at first light to move back and recover the wounded and missing men, just as Marine tradition (and Craig) had promised. It was not to be. Iron-clad orders from Walker to Craig to Murray to Newton forced an immediate withdrawal, in spite of Tobin's pleadings. Fenton summarized the unanimous feeling:

*Twenty-nine bloody, sweating miles down the drain . . . The men couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. It didn't seem possible, with all the lives we'd lost taking this ground that we'd now just walk off and leave it. Baker Company's casualties for the morning's counterattack alone were 12 dead, 16 wounded, and 9 missing in action. And I'm certain those last nine were dead, too. I found it difficult to see men, veterans of the last war, older guys, sitting by the side of the road crying. They just didn't give a hoot. They were tired, disgusted. People just couldn't understand this part of the war.*





## Chapter Five

### A Relief Force

Leaving the 1st and 2nd Battalions temporarily in the positions they had won in the Changchon area, Craig moved quickly on 12 August to organize the deployment of his 3rd Battalion as a relief force for the overrun Army field artillery battalions. The orders from Kean had come at 1130 and by 1300 the riflemen and an artillery battery were in the trucks, on their way. A half hour later Taplett and the brigade operations officer, Lieutenant Colonel Stewart, were airborne to scout the disaster area by helicopter. They saw plenty of trouble: artillery pieces in disarray; jeeps on fire; American bodies lying in a stream bed; and, incongruously, one white table set in the midst of it all. The Army had “estimated” that 2,000 to 2,500 NKPA troops had infiltrated the area, smashed the Army artillery units, and were threatening the main supply route, so Taplett had originally presumed that there would be heavy combat for his battalion when it arrived. At the scene he saw no evidence of any such quantity of NKPA, and he strongly doubted the estimate.

The chaotic situation the Marines now saw had its roots in the events of the preceding day, 11 August. Without opposition, the 5th RCT had advanced just five miles from where it had started at the infamous road junction to a small village called Pongamni. The 555th “Triple Nickel” and 90th Field Artillery Battalions were in support but were not protected or prepared for an enemy attack.

Marine procedures were much different. Craig later commented on this:

*The artillery had been trained in Pendleton in the methods of security. They were armed with bazookas, .50 calibers, and everything that the infantrymen would need to defend a position, and they were well trained in defense of their artillery positions. And they from that [first] day on took up defensive positions wherever they moved. As a result, we never had a gun overrun. There were attempts at sniping and so forth, but we never had a gun taken or overrun; whereas I notice that the Army on a number of occasions in the perimeter lost whole batteries. It was simply, I think, because the artillerymen were not trained along the same lines as the Marines.*

At this time, Kean was under heavy pressure from Walker to get the 5th RCT to leap ahead. So, the division commander ordered his regimental commander (Colonel Godwin L. Ordway) to move part of his units quickly forward through the pass near Pongam-ni. Then there was indecision, delay, conflicting orders, and repeated failures in radio communications. As a result, part of the regiment went through the pass that night, and part stopped at Pongam-ni. With his command split up, and with enemy fire falling on the supply route to his rear, Ordway was in a difficult situation. It got worse after midnight on 11 August when telephone and radio communications with the artillery battalions was lost and the sounds of battle came from their direction. With the NKPA now on the high ground above him, Ordway decided at 0400 on 12 August to try to move the rest of his troops through the pass. A massive traffic jam ensued. As the official Army history noted: “During the hour or more before daylight, no vehicle in Ordway’s range of vision moved more than 10 or 20 feet at a time.”

As the infantry slowly moved out, the enemy quickly moved into the valley. Now the Army artillery, stalled behind the traffic jam, was a sitting duck. NKPA tanks and self-propelled guns were able to “approach undetected and unopposed, almost to point-blank range, and with completely disastrous effects.” Enemy infantry from the 13th Regiment of the 6th Division closed in and added its firepower. It was a slaughter, and the artillery was completely overrun. A traumatic phone call from Brigadier General George B. Barth, USA, the 25th Division artillery commander, to Kean revealed the scope of the disaster and led Kean to order the rescue mission by the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines.

Kean also ordered a battalion of the 24th Infantry to bring relief by an attack towards Pongamni. This effort went nowhere on 12 August, and by the next day it was still two and a half miles from the artillery positions. The 555th had lost six of its 105mm howitzers, and the 90th had lost all six of the 155mm howitzers in one of its batteries. Along with some 300 men, probably 100 vehicles had been captured or destroyed (although the NKPA claimed an inflated 157 vehicles and 13 tanks). The Army had given the site the name “Bloody Gulch.” This was the grim situation that Taplett faced when his helicopter arrived on 12 August. He immediately had the aircraft land and he looked for the liaison officer who was supposed to meet him, now that he was coming under the operational control of the Army’s 25th Infantry Division. No sign of any such person.

To try to get some information, Taplett was finally able to tap into a telephone line to the division headquarters in the rear and ask for orders. The reply was to “do what he thought was proper.” That vague verbal order was all the leeway Taplett needed for immediate action. A helicopter reconnaissance was followed by a juncture with his troops. Then he led them by air to the valley from where he planned to attack the commanding ridges.

Less than three hours after boarding their trucks, the men of the 3rd Battalion were at their assembly area, ready to jump off in an attack on a cold, rainy, miserable day. Taplett aggressively delayed only 15 minutes for an artillery preparation and some napalm runs by Marine Corsairs, and then moved out the riflemen. Without a single casualty, they soon reached the top of the first ridge. There they found signs that a substantial body of enemy troops had made a hasty departure, but this was a far cry from the resistance they had expected from the “2,000” or so enemy troops that Ordway had estimated had wreaked such havoc.

At 1900 Barth arrived to take command. Not knowing Taplett’s style, he asked when the Marines would be ready to attack. Taplett presumably enjoyed a response one can easily imagine, “Sir, we’ve already done that, and my men are now digging in on top of the ridge.” Barth graciously congratulated him.

The next morning, 13 August, the 3rd Battalion attacked to secure the final ridges overlooking the pitiful remnants of the lost artillery. Again, there was no opposition, and by 1000 they were on top of their objectives. Craig later commented: “We found quite a number of Army artillerymen scattered through the area, hiding in various places.” Besides those rescued by the Marines, some had fled and struggled back to safety with the 25th Division.

Taplett's men were now ready to go down, clean out any enemy, and retrieve the artillery pieces in the valley, but the Marines once more got orders that they could not take the objective they were poised to seize, but must, instead, move to the rear to meet the new enemy threat along the Naktong.

That marked the final episode in the Marine mission to aid the Army's 5th RCT. With all troops, Marine and Army, now pulled back to their starting point at Chindong-ni, it was the end of the offensive to occupy Chinju and, on 16 August, Task Force Kean was dissolved.

### **First Week's Results**

Things had gone badly for the 5th RCT and its artillery, and the commanding officers of the regiment and the "Triple Nickel" battalion were both relieved of duty. Higher Army echelons were not pleased with their leadership or the morale and combat effectiveness of their men. Craig, on the other hand, was pleased. He had seen his brigade drive forward with vigor and professional skill. His officers were constantly aggressive, and the riflemen had done very well under fire. He noted that his men were "well trained and well led" by outstanding noncommissioned officers and "professional" officers who "knew their stuff." The reason for the brigade's achievements were clear to Craig:

*We were a generation of officers who grew up with the Marine Corps' standing operating procedures (SOPs) for amphibious operations. These were my "Bible" when I organized and trained an earlier Marine brigade on Guam during the period 1947-1949. During World War II we had repeatedly tested and refined our organization and techniques in landings all over the Pacific. These same SOPs enabled us to deploy to Korea quickly and fight effectively when we got there.*

Equally important, the supporting arms had coordinated well with the infantrymen, with the close air support of MAG-33 demonstrating a wholly new element in the Korean War, flying more than 400 sorties in support of the brigade and other units of the Eighth Army. The Marines had twice been on the verge of seizing their objectives—first at Sachon-Chinju and then the recovery of the Army artillery—only to be pulled back by the strategic needs of the Eighth Army. Geer in his account concluded:

*The brigade came out of Changallon [Changchon] physically tough and psychologically hard . . . They knew the enemy to be a vicious, skillfully led and well-equipped foe that could inflict heavy casualties in any action. They were prepared to meet with heavy losses and to carry on the attack and were openly scornful of units unable to face these hard facts of war.*

There had been a price, however. The brigade had had a total of 315 casualties, with 66 killed or died of wounds, 240 wounded, and 9 missing in action (when the 1st Battalion had not been allowed to recover them).

The action of that week had brought results on a wider, strategic scale. While there had been a failure to occupy Chinju, Task Force Kean had nevertheless been the first real American offensive of the Korean War. In a report to the United Nations, General MacArthur stated that

“this attack not only secured the southern approaches to the beachhead, but also showed that the North Korean forces will not hold under attack.”

The official Army history acknowledged in summary that “the task force had not accomplished what Eighth Army had believed to be easily possible—the winning and holding of the Chinju pass line,” and, omitting any reference to the dramatic advance of the Marine brigade, admitted that the rest of the task force, “after a week of fighting, . . . was back approximately in the positions from which it had started its attack.” That history, however, went on to note “certain beneficial results . . . . It chanced to meet head-on the North Korean 6th Division attack against the Masan position, and first stopped it and then hurled it back . . . . Task Force Kean also gained the time needed to organize and wire in the defenses that were to hold the enemy out of Masan during the critical period ahead.”

The official Marine history could afford to be positive about the brigade’s achievements:

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

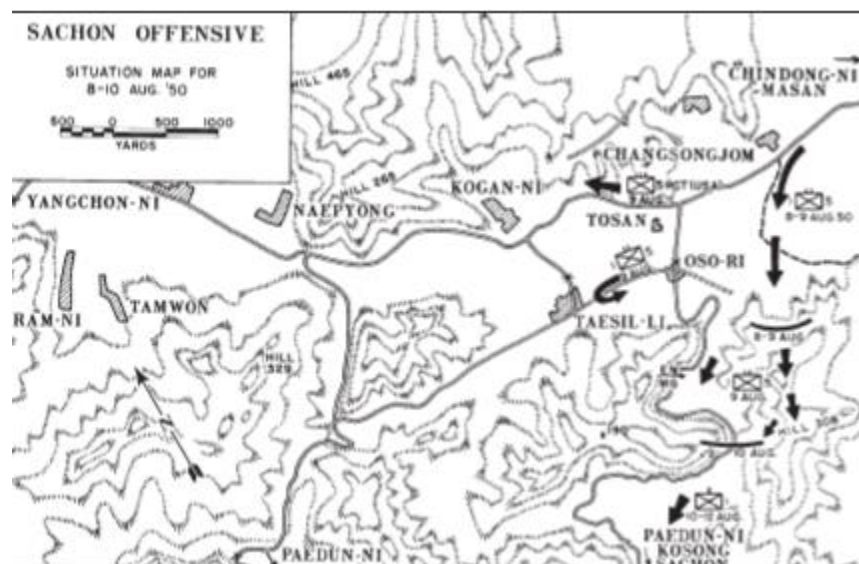
It was estimated that the Marine air-ground team killed and wounded 1,900 of the enemy while destroying nearly all the vehicles of an NKPA motorized battalion in addition to infantry armament and equipment. The enemy threat in this critical area was nullified for the time being, and never again became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

### **Interlude**

With the conclusion of the drive towards Sachon, the Marines hoped for a respite before the next call to combat, which they knew was sure to come. Craig, however, had received orders at 0130, 14 August, to move his brigade as soon as possible to a place called Miryang. Using rail, trucks, and even an LST, his battalions made the trip of 75 miles in 26 hours. When the “Fire Brigade” arrived there, it was desperately needed in a new crisis. Before the men moved out for combat, there was one blessed— though brief—interlude of relaxation: Marines from the rear, from staff positions, even tankers and artillerymen, were fed into the depleted rifle companies. (Another of the many times when there was a vital payoff for the Marine maxim, roughly: “No matter what your ultimate assignment may be, you will be trained first as a rifleman!”) There was a pleasant grove of trees at Miryang, and the men could rest in the shade, get their first-ever bath in the river there, eat their first hot food, and exchange filthy, rotted uniforms for a fresh issue. Fegan commented: “Not only did I smell to high heaven, I also had dried blood all over my jacket.”

That rest period was soon over. Upon arrival at Miryang, the brigade was placed under the operational control of the Army's 24th Infantry Division to meet a new threat. The situation was indeed critical. Ten days before, author Russell Spurr asserts, General Kim Chaek, front commander of the NKPA, had addressed his staff. Moving from the past (Sachon) battle to the forthcoming (Naktong) attack, he reputedly acknowledged that losses had been heavy, with the 6th Division "reduced by half in the past week." He then went on to issue a clarion call for victory:

*The situation is not irretrievable. We have committed only a portion of our strength. I am therefore ordering the 4th Guards Division to cross the Naktong River north of the present battlefield, capture Yongsan, and drive on to Miryang. This as you can see from the map, will sever the main supply route between Pusan and U.S. headquarters in Taegu; if we succeed, and I trust we shall, the northern part of the perimeter will collapse. It is defended largely by puppet troops and we know how they react when outflanked.*



**Map # 3**

### **Enemy Breakthrough**

The commander of the 4th Division was Major General Lee Kwon Mu, a hardened professional who had fought with the Communists in China and served as a lieutenant in the Russian Army. Awarded North Korea's highest military decorations, the Order of Hero of the Korean Democratic People's Republic, and the National Flag, First Class, for his earlier triumphs in South Korea, Mu had moved his 7,000 men into position on 4 August for a crucial attack across the Naktong River. The 4th Division was a crack unit, given the honorary title of the "Seoul" Division for its triumphant earlier capture of the capital of South Korea. Leading the way were the 4th, 16th, and 18th Infantry Regiments. They had moved stealthily into action the night of 5 August, wading across the Naktong under cover of darkness, while machine guns were

pulled along on crude rafts. By the morning of 6 August, 1,000 of them had established a position on the east side, soon beefed up by artillery brought across the Naktong on a hidden, underwater bridge the NKPA had secretly constructed. This assault had meant the breaching of the last natural barrier which was counted on to protect the vital lifeline from Taegu to Pusan. It was at Taegu that General Walker had his headquarters for direction of the defense of the Pusan Perimeter.

This attack had come as a surprise to Brigadier General John H. Church, commander of the 24th Infantry Division. The subsequent threat was obvious. From the hills the NKPA had seized it dominated the road to Yongsan, five miles away. Twenty-five miles beyond that lay Miryang, and then the vital Pusan-Taegu main supply route (MSR). As Toland recorded: "Panic reached the government offices in Taegu." Walker, however, had remained cool, and the Army had entered a period of continuous battle. Some units were overrun, and some soldiers had fled as NKPA soldiers appeared on flanks and rear. In a confusing period of separate confrontations, Army troops had been unable to push the NKPA here, and at another point in the north, back across the Naktong.

### **'Fire Brigade': Crisis Number Two**

That was when Walker called in the Marines. On 15 August, Craig met with Church. Walker had earlier told Church, "I am going to give you the Marine Brigade. I want this situation cleaned up—and quick!" Craig made his plans following his meeting with Church. The brigade would move out of Miryang on 16 August to go on the attack. Geer records a British military observer who saw them getting started and sent a dispatch to Tokyo. He emphasized a "critical" situation in which Miryang could well be lost, then Taegu would become untenable, and "we will be faced with a withdrawal from Korea." In spite of these grim prospects, he got a premonition about the brigade. In spite of the "impossible odds" that he felt it faced, he described his gut feeling that it would check the NKPA advance:

*I realize my expression of hope is unsound, but these Marines have the swagger, confidence and hardness that must have been in Stonewall Jackson's Army of the Shenandoah. They remind me of the Coldstream's at Dunkerque. Upon this thin line of reasoning, I cling to the hope of victory.*

That night, the tone of the attack was set when Murray told Newton: "You must take that ground tomorrow! You have to get on that ridge and take it! Understood?" Newton replied: "Understood! Understood! This battalion goes only one way—straight ahead!"

The brigade was to jump off at 0800 on 17 August as part of a planned full-scale effort by the Army's 24th Division, reinforced by the 9th Infantry Regiment. There was a happy history of linkage between the Marines and the 9th Infantry. They had served together in the battle for Tientsin during the Boxer Rebellion in China at the turn of the century, and again in the 2nd Infantry Division in France during World War I. Now the 9th would operate on the brigade's right, with the Marines as the left wing of the attack. Three objective lines were assigned to the brigade, with the first being Obong-ni Ridge. Craig and Murray made an on-the-spot reconnaissance of the terrain which was a jumbled mass of hills and gullies. Because of the type

of terrain to the left and the presence of the Army's 9th Regiment to the right, the only, reluctant choice was a frontal attack.

The shift to the new crisis area was a pressure-laden one for the Marines. Stewart, Craig's operations officer (G-3), remembered in later years that he was advised that the Naktong River line had been broken through, threatening the Pusan-Taegu MSR, and the brigade had to move there immediately to restore the front. He recalled:

*Things were so hectic that Roise, who was commanding the 2nd Battalion, which was going on the line below Masan in a defensive position, received minimum orders to move. In fact, our radio contact was out, and I wrote on a little piece of brown paper, "These are your trucks, move to Naktong at once."*

Those were the only orders Roise ever got to move to the Naktong front. But they were all he needed in the hectic situation in which the Marines found themselves, for, when only a portion of the promised trucks showed up, many men in the battalion had to march until 0130 the next morning to reach the jump-off point for their attack a few hours later.

Waiting for the Marines, well dug-in and confident of victory, were the 18th Regiment and a battalion of the 16th Regiment of the NKPA 4th Division. Geer quotes a speech by Colonel Chang Ky Dok, the regiment's veteran commanding officer:

*Intelligence says we are to expect an attack by American Marines. To us comes the honor of being the first to defeat these Marines soldiers. We will win where others have failed. I consider our positions impregnable. We occupy the high ground and they must attack up a steep slope. Go to your men and tell them there will be no retreat. I will take instant action against anyone who shows weakness.*

Preparation by supporting units for the Marine riflemen's attack was inadequate. Artillery fire was ineffective. When the enemy positions were later examined, the foxholes were found to be very deep, sited along the length of the ridge slightly on the reverse slope. Shellfire on the forward slopes caused few casualties, nor could artillery get a trajectory to reach the enemy on the reverse slopes. Adding to the problem, there was only one air strike. Moreover, there would be little or no natural cover for the men who had to climb toward the six hills of Obong-ni, called by the news correspondents "No Name Ridge."

### **The 2nd Battalion Attacks**

Murray had an agreement with the Army's 9th Infantry on the right flank that the Marines would attack first, supported by fire from the 9th. He picked Roise's 2nd Battalion to lead off. It was a very thin front line for such a crucial moment: four understrength platoons totaling only 130 men from Companies D and E to lead the assault (with two platoons as reserves). "Red Slash Hill" was to be their dividing line.

One platoon of Company E, led by Second Lieutenant Nickolas D. Arkadis, hit the village of Obong-ni at the foot of two of the company objectives: Hills 143 and 147. Driving ahead through

heavy fire, the platoon fought its way to the slopes beyond. Arkadis' leadership was later recognized by the award of a Silver Star.

Now both companies were out in the open, sometimes forced to crawl upwards, met with a continuous hail of enemy machine gun and mortar fire with barrages of grenades. Casualties mounted rapidly. Joseph C. Goulden tells of a correspondent who was watching and described the bloody scene: "Hell burst around the Leathernecks as they moved up the barren face of the ridge. Everywhere along the assault line, men dropped. To continue looked impossible. But, all glory forever to the bravest men I ever saw, the line did not break. The casualties were unthinkable, but the assault force never turned back. It moved, fell down, got up and moved again." One platoon of Company D, with only 15 men remaining, did claw its way to the top of Hill 109 on Obong-ni Ridge, but it was too weak and too isolated when reinforcements simply could not reach it, so it had to pull back off the crest. Second Lieutenant Michael J. Shinka, the platoon leader, later gave the details of that perilous struggle:

*Running short of ammo and taking casualties, with the shallow enemy slit trenches for cover, I decided to fall back until some of the fire on my left flank could be silenced. I gave the word to withdraw and take all wounded and weapons. About three-quarters of the way down, I had the men set up where cover was available. I had six men who were able to fight. I decided to go forward to find out if we had left any of our wounded. As I crawled along our former position (on the crest of Hill 109), I came across a wounded Marine between two dead. As I grabbed him under the arms and pulled him from the foxhole, a bullet shattered my chin. Blood ran into my throat and I couldn't breathe.*

Shinka, after being hit again, did manage to survive, and was later awarded a Bronze Star Medal. Another Company D Marine, Staff Sergeant T. Albert Crowson, singlehandedly silenced two deadly machine gun emplacements and was awarded the Army's Distinguished Service Cross by order of General MacArthur.

By now, it had become clear that many of the casualties were caused by heavy enemy fire coming from the zone in front of the Army's 9th Regiment to hit the flank and rear of the Marines, and there had been no supporting fire from the 9th. Other problems arose when some men of Company E were nearing the crest which was their objective and they were hit by white phosphorus shells from "friendly" artillery fire. Then, later, some Marines were hit in a strafing attack by their own Corsairs.

By mid-day the men of the 2nd Battalion, halfway up the hills, could do no more, having suffered 142 casualties, 60 percent of their original 240 riflemen. Murray ordered it to pull back, undoubtedly lamenting the fact that he did not have a third rifle company in the battalion, for it might well have seized the top of the ridge and held it. Craig stressed this point in a later interview, noting that "without a third company, or maneuver element, the battalion commanders were at a tactical disadvantage in every engagement. They lacked flexibility in the attack. On defense they had to scrape up whatever they could in order to have a reserve."

Pinpointing an example, General Craig recalled:



*This condition became critical in the First Battle of the Naktong. 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines' assault companies took heavy losses in the initial attack against Obong-ni Ridge, the strongpoint of the enemy's bridgehead over the Naktong. Since Roise had nothing left to use, the attack stalled. Murray then had to commit 1/5 [the 1st Battalion] prematurely to continue the attack. This took time, giving the enemy a breather right at the height of the battle. That night, when the enemy hit our positions on the ridge with a heavy counterattack, Newton certainly could have used another company on line or in reserve. We were spread pretty thin, and it was nip and tuck on that ridge for several more hours.*

The original battle plan had called for an attack in a column of battalions, with each battalion taking successively one of the series

of three ridge lines (objectives 1, 2, and 3) that shielded the NKPA river crossing. It was now painfully obvious that a sharp change must be made. Accordingly, Newton's 1st Battalion relieved the battered 2nd on the hillsides at 1600 (17 August), with Company A replacing E, and B replacing D.

While the 18th Regiment had hit the 2nd Battalion hard, the bravery, skill, and determination of those Marines had caused serious losses in the enemy's ranks: 600 casualties and severe reductions in serviceable weapons. With his ammunition running low and no medical supplies so that most of his wounded men were dying, the NKPA commander's situation was critical, as described by Fehrenbach:

*He knew he could not withstand another day of American air and artillery pounding and a fresh Marine assault up the ridge. Because he had a captured American SCR-300 radio, tuned in on Marine frequencies, he knew that the 1st Battalion had relieved 2/5 along the front of Obong-ni, and he knew approximately where the companies of 1/5 were located, for the Marines talked a great deal over the air.*

### **The 1st Battalion Attacks**

The relief movement of the two battalions was covered by what the official Marine history described as "devastating fires" from the aircraft of MAG-33, the artillery of the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, and the brigade's tank battalion. Then Companies A and B attacked up the daunting slopes. Simultaneously, after Murray had gone to see Church to request a change in the previously agreed-upon plan, the 9th Infantry jumped off in an attack. This eliminated the previous flanking fire on the Marines.

Helped by the advance bombardment, the two Marine companies were able to make slow (and costly) progress towards the crests. Company A attacked repeatedly, trying to reach the battalion's objective on the left: the tops of Hills 117 and 143. It proved impossible, in spite of very aggressive leadership by the officers (and gunnery sergeants who replaced them as they fell). The company could get only part way up the slopes when it was "pinned down by a solid sheet of Communist fire . . . casualties bled [the] skirmish line white and finally brought it to a stop."

Herbert R. Luster, a private first class in Company A, remembered his own searing experience in this brutal battle:

*It was evident no one saw the enemy but me . . . . I pulled back the bolt to cock the action of the BAR, pushed off the safety, settled back on my right foot, and opened fire. The flying dirt and tracers told me where my rounds were going. I emptied the rifle . . . . So, I pushed the release with my right thumb and pulled the empty magazine out, stuck it in my jacket pocket, loaded and raised my BAR to my shoulder. Before I got it all the way up, red dirt kicked up in my face. A big jerk at my right arm told me I was hit. I looked down and saw blood squirting onto my broken BAR stock.*

As always, there were gory episodes. Second Lieutenant Francis W. Muetzel in Company A was in an abandoned machine gun emplacement with his company executive officer and a rifleman from the 3rd Platoon. He later recalled:

*The use of the abandoned machine gun emplacement proved to be a mistake. Enemy mortars and artillery had already registered on it . . . . Without registration of any kind, four rounds of enemy 82mm mortar fire landed around it. The blast lifted me off the ground, my helmet flew off. A human body to my left disintegrated. Being rather shook up and unable to hear, I crawled back to the CP . . . . About the time my hearing and stability returned . . . I thought of the 3rd Platoon rifleman . . . . I returned to look for him. One of the mortar rounds must have landed in the small of his back. Only a pelvis and legs were left. The stretcher-bearers gathered up the remains with a shovel.*

On the other side of “Red Slash Hill” that was the dividing line, Company B made some progress until it was pinned down by heavy fire from a nearby village on its flank. Captain John L. Tobin was wounded, so Fenton took over as company commander. Calling in an 81mm mortar barrage from the battalion’s weapons company, the riflemen were then able to lunge forward and seize the crests of Hills 102 and 109 by late afternoon (17 August).

The two battered companies settled down where they were and tied into each other to dig in night defensive positions. With the flood of casualties, the resulting manpower shortage caused the far-left flank to dangle dangerously in the air. Newton threw together an improvised unit of men from his headquarters and service company personnel to cover that flank. The mortars and artillery were registered on probable enemy approach routes, including the crossing point on the Naktong River. Then their harassing fire missions went on all night to try to disrupt the enemy.

### **Smashing Enemy Tanks**

At 2000 that night (17 August) the Marines had their first confrontation with the T-34 tanks of the NKPA. These were the tanks that had had such a fearsome reputation earlier in the war. The men of Company B from their hilltop perch saw four of them coming with a column of infantry, aimed to bypass the Marine riflemen, and, in a typical enemy tactic, probe to sow confusion amongst rear elements.

The Corsairs of MAG-33 were called in. They came roaring down, knocked out one tank, and scattered the accompanying enemy infantry. With a determination typical of the hardy NKPA, the other three tanks came on.

When the news was flashed to Newton in his CP, he told Fenton to “let them go and they’d be dealt with in the rear.” Back at Craig’s brigade CP, there were two opposite reactions when the news arrived. A correspondent witnessed the scene: “Naval Captain Eugene Hering, brigade surgeon, jumped to his feet. “God Almighty!” he said. “The aid station’s just a quarter of a mile from there! [Lieutenant (junior grade) Bentley] Nelson [one of the battalion’s medical officers] won’t leave his wounded! If those tanks break through . . .” “They won’t,” the general said. “Newton will know what to do.”

And he did. Summoning the Marine M-26 tanks and antitank weapons, Newton left the NKPA armor up to them. Fenton and the men of Company B had a ringside seat for the clash that followed. He later wrote:

*As the first tank rounded the corner down toward the 1st Battalion CP, it was met by 3.5” rocket fire from the antitank assault section, and fire from our 75mm recoilless weapons in position on the high ground on either side of the road. The tank was knocked out, and the second tank immediately came up and tried to go around it. The second, too, was hit in the track and skidded off the road. Our M-26 tanks finished him off [after a 2.36” white phosphorus rocket had ricocheted inside it, creating a fiery cauldron]. The third tank made the same mistake that the second tank made. He, too, tried to go around the other two tanks. One of our M-26 tanks hit this third tank with a direct hit. All three of these tanks were finished off by our M-26 tank platoon.*

Back on the hills, the men of the 1st Battalion spent the midnight hours on the alert. The attacks that day had cost the brigade 205 casualties, and, to avoid the punishing Marine air strikes in daylight, the enemy was sure to counterattack during the darkness.

## Chapter Six

### The Enemy Reaction

At 0230 a green signal flare soared into the sky, and the enemy hit—and hit hard. With their captured U.S. Army radio tuned to the Marines' frequency, the attackers knew the exact place where the two Marine companies were tenuously tied together, and they sought to drive a wedge in there and then envelop each company separately. With Company A only part way up Hill 117, machine gun fire from the crest and grenades rolling downhill covered the assault troops of the NKPA, as they ran down throwing more grenades and spraying submachine gun fire. A rifle platoon was in deep trouble, the mortar platoon was decimated, the Marine defense line was penetrated, the company was split in half, the battalion was assaulted, and the enemy forced Company A to make a partial withdrawal back to a spot near Hill 109.

Things were not much better in the Company B zone. With the two Marine companies split by the NKPA, the enemy assault smashed hard into Fenton's men. A platoon was overrun under the eerie light of mortar illuminating shells. The attackers charged into the CP, where hastily assembled stray Marines met them in bitter hand-to-hand combat. Possession of the two hard-won hills and, in fact, the outcome of the whole brigade attack hung in a delicate, trembling balance.

Just at that precarious moment, the phone rang in the CP of Company B. It was Newton, calling to say that the position must be held "at all costs," and that he was pouring in all the supporting mortar and artillery fire he could muster. (This apparently prevented the NKPA from feeding in reinforcements to exploit the breakthroughs.) Newton's main message was a brutally frank reminder that, if the Marines retreated, they would simply have to grind their way back to the lost positions in the forthcoming days. Then Newton asked if they could hold on until daylight could bring relief. Fenton's reply has been variously reported: "We have gooks all around us"; "They've turned my left flank"; "Don't worry, Colonel. The only Marines that will be leaving this ridge tonight will be dead ones."

The supporting fire from the 4.2inch mortar company proved to be an invaluable asset. With its high angle of fire, it was able to search out and wreak havoc on NKPA units shielded in gullies which Marine artillery fire could not reach. The company's commanding officer, First Lieutenant Robert M. Lucy, later recalled:

*The 1st Battalion was receiving a terrifically heavy counterattack. Our company was zeroed in on the hill and the valley in front of the battalion. When notified of this attack, we began firing our prearranged barrages. Later, where only one of these barrages had fallen, they counted 120 dead North Koreans with 12 cart-mounted machine guns, who had been massed in this little gully behind the hill, a ridge in front of the battalion that would have caused them considerable trouble.*

With many officers down and aided by the supporting fire, the noncommissioned officers took the lead in regrouping their units, and so the men of the depleted Companies A and B stood, and fought, and died, and finally held their ground. Typical of the unyielding defense were the

examples of two platoon leaders, Second Lieutenant Hugh C. Schryver, Jr., in Company B, and Second Lieutenant Francis W. Muetzel in Company A. Both officers, although severely wounded, continued to lead their men with the “fierce determination” described in their citations for awards of the Silver Star. Slowly, toward dawn on 18 August, the enemy attacks weakened. But the Marines had paid a fearful price. Company B had begun the night with 190 enlisted men and five officers; the next morning there were only 110 left, with one officer still standing. Company A was in worse shape with just 90 men remaining from the 185 at the start of the night.

But the enemy had also paid a heavy price. The sequential attacks of the 2nd and then the 1st Battalions and the dogged nighttime defense had caused hundreds of NKPA casualties so that, in Fehrenbach’s words, “the 18th Regiment was shattered beyond repair.”

General Craig ordered a resumption of the attack at 0700 the next morning, 18 August. None of the men on Obong-ni had had any sleep during the night past, but the Corsairs were back on station overhead, the enemy was weakening, and both Companies A and B moved once more into the assault. Company B worked men to its left to coordinate with Company A’s effort to seize Hill 117. Four determined NKPA machine gunners there held up the advance, so the company commander, Captain John R. Stevens, got in touch with Newton to call in an air strike. There was legitimate concern about the fact that his Marines were too close, only 100 yards from the target, but a smoke rocket was fired into the emplacements from the control Corsair, and the next Corsair put a 500-pound bomb right onto the center of the target. The Marines lost one man killed, but the enemy was totally wiped out, and Company A’s follow-up rush quickly took control of the crest. Time: 0734, request air strike; 0743, bomb delivered; 0748, on the crest.

There was a brief pause—well remembered by Muetzel:

*In an effort to calm the men after all they’d been through, I told them to break out rations and eat while they had a chance. I sat on the side of a hole and dangled my feet. On the other side of the hole lay a dead North Korean. He had caught one through the top of the head and looked pretty ugly. I was 23 years old and to reassure the men I tried to pull off a John Wayne stunt. When I was halfway through my can of meat and beans, decomposing gases caused the cadaver to belch. Black blood foamed out of its mouth and nose. I promptly lost my entire lunch. By the time the platoon got through laughing, the tension was broken, and they were ready to go back to work.*

And back to work the company went, moving aggressively to take the remaining hilltops. Resistance was minimal now, and soon all the heights of bloody Obong-ni Ridge were in Marine hands. As the men looked down the reverse slope of one of the hills, an unusual sight greeted their eyes. A clump of scrub pines lay below them, and, as they watched, astonished, the “clump” turned out to be a group of camouflaged enemy soldiers who arose and rushed downward in headlong flight.

The 1st Battalion now counted up the enemy weapons destroyed or abandoned: 18 heavy machine guns, 25 light machine guns, 63 submachine guns, 8 antitank rifles, 1 rocket launcher, and large stocks of ammunition and grenades. The seizure of Obong-ni Ridge was crucial to the

elimination of the threatening salient which had been driven into the Army's lines. As Geer summed it up, "it was evident the enemy had staked the defense of the Naktong Bulge on their ability to hold that key ridge."

### **Next: Objective 2**

With Objective 1 now secured and the enemy in bad shape, Murray kept the pressure on. Taplett's 3rd Battalion moved out that same morning of 18 August, bound for Objective 2, Hill 207 (the next rise west of Obong-ni). It was preceded by an intensive barrage from air, artillery, tanks, and mortars, including now supporting fire from the 9th Infantry on the right flank.

A correspondent in the rear was awed:

*The 155s began to roar and the snub-nosed 105s, and to one side the mortars were barking, and in front the squat tanks were slamming away with the 90mm guns whose muzzle blast can knock a man down at thirty feet, and above the hill, swooping low, the aircraft were diving in. You would see the smoke and fire flash of the rockets leaving the wings, and then would come the great tearing sound the rocket made in flight, and then the roar of its bursting against the hill. And after the rockets had gone, you would see the little round dots of smoke in the sky as the wing guns fired, and all the crest of the hill in front of How Company was a roaring, jumping hell of smoke and flame and dust and noise.*

With this kind of preparation, "Objective 2 was not much of a fight," as an officer in Company G said. There was a grenade flurry near the crest of Hill 207, but a platoon of Company H was then able to rush the enemy positions, and it was all over by 1237.

There had been a tide of NKPA troops running for safety. Now it became a flood, increased by men driven from Hill 207. Everywhere the soldiers of the NKPA's "crack" 4th Division on Obong-ni had themselves cracked and were fleeing westward in a disorganized, panic-stricken rout. It became a field day for the Marine artillery and aircraft—a thunderous hammering that caused massive waves of enemy deaths. There were "all kinds of bodies floating in the Naktong."

### **Final Victory: Objective 3**

Taplett kept driving. Next target: "Objective 3," Hill 311, the last barrier before the Naktong River. There was another round of preparatory fire, this one featuring a dose of napalm, and one more time the riflemen moved out.

Things went fairly smoothly for Company G which, "brushing aside light resistance," was on the crest by 1730. Not so for Company H. It was badly hindered by difficult terrain and an obdurate enemy, and by 1825 was pinned down and unable to advance. Supporting fire from Company G and an attempted flanking maneuver by its Cahill platoon (which, 10 days earlier, had had that relief mission on Hill 342) were not enough help for H to be able to advance.

It was the last gasp of the NKPA, however. A heavy round of battalion mortar fire early the next morning, 19 August, was followed by a triumphant sweep of the hilltop by Company H, and the Marine battle to seize the three key ridges in the Naktong Bulge was over. One battalion

stood on each of the three objectives, and the men of the brigade met the Army troops at the river's edge. Marine aviators reported, "The enemy was killed in such numbers that the river was definitely discolored with blood."

During the attack on Objective 3, the 3rd Battalion surgeon came across a horrendous sight, demonstrating the savage brutality of the NKPA. A U.S. Army aid station had been overrun a week earlier, the wounded and bed-ridden men shot and bayoneted, their bodies then mutilated. Medics who bravely had stayed there to tend their men had had the hands wired behind their backs and then were murdered.

An incident occurred on one of these final nights that is very revealing of how personnel problems could be expeditiously dealt with in the "Old Corps"—particularly in a combat environment. Bohn had told his machine gun platoon lieutenant to check carefully on the positioning and coordination of the weapons' sites. When the company commander decided to inspect personally, he found wholly unsatisfactory results and crews who had not even seen their lieutenant. Steaming, he returned to his CP and hauled the lieutenant in for a very brief conversation:

I said, "Have you put in the machine gun sections? Did you get around to check each section?" He said, "Yes, sir." So, I relieved him. I called Taplett and said, "I don't even want this guy here tonight." I made him go back on his own, back to the battalion, and wrote an unsat report, un-officer-like conduct. It went up to Craig, and the guy was out of country in two or three days. It was so easy to do things like that then. And he was out of the Marine Corps. You can't do that today. You have to have a General Court-martial and everything else. There wasn't even a Court of Inquiry. Everyone agreed that he was a coward, and he was gone.

The brigade was now relieved by Army units—not always smoothly, but at least the tired Marines would get some rest.

The victory price for the Naktong Marines was clear: 66 dead, 278 wounded, but only 1 man missing in action. That last figure was the clearest indication of the value of Marine training and morale; there had been other units with distressingly high percentages of missing-in-action, but, as Edwin P. Hoyt summarizes in his history, *The Pusan Perimeter—Korea 1950*: "The Marines stood and fought, and they took care of their own."

The final results for the NKPA *4th Division* were shattering. Fewer than 3,000 men were able to get back across the Naktong, leaving more than 1,200 dead behind. The Marine brigade recovered a large amount of enemy equipment, including 34 artillery pieces (with five of them being captured Army 105mm howitzers), hundreds of automatic weapons, and thousands of rifles. The Army's official history sums it up: "The destruction . . . of the NKPA *4th Division* . . . was the greatest setback suffered so far by the North Korean Army. The 4th Division never recovered from this battle."

After the brigade was pulled back off the hills it had won, Fenton described what he felt was the key reason for the Marine victory: "the finest batch of noncommissioned officers ever assembled in any Marine regiment. Not only were 75 percent of them combat veterans, he

believed, but they had often stepped in as platoon leaders and were “outstanding.” Fenton expanded on that:

*Squad leaders knew their job to the last detail. Many times, I ended up with sergeants as platoon leaders after a big fire fight, and they did an excellent job. I just can't be too high in my praise. In some cases, it wasn't just noncoms. It was the PFCs and privates holding the job of a fire team leader or squad leader. It was their fine leadership, outstanding initiative, and control of the men that turned a possible defeat into a sweet victory.*

On 20 August Craig learned from Church that the brigade had been detached from the 24th Division and was now part of Walker's Eighth Army reserve. There were letters of praise from both Walker and Church. The former wrote that the brigade's “excellence in leadership and grit and determination . . . upheld the fine tradition of the Marines in a glorious manner.” Church graciously commented to the Marines that their “decisive and valiant offensive actions . . . predominantly contributed to the total destruction of the Naktong pocket.” Perhaps the recognition the men of the brigade appreciated most came from their own Commandant General Cates' message said: “I am very proud of the performance of your air-ground team. Keep hitting them front, flanks, rear, and topside. Well done.”

#### **Another Brief Interlude**

The men of the brigade moved back into bivouac in an area near Masan known forever after as “The Bean Patch.” Craig set up his CP there on 21 August and reported back again to Kean of the Army's 25th Division. The news was discouraging: all the land won in the brigade's drive to Sachon was now lost or under heavy enemy pressure, and the 11th Marines was needed to go back immediately to the original starting point two weeks earlier, ChinDong-ni, to fire missions in support of the 25th Division.

But for the other Marines it was a wonderful, restorative change. Some 800 replacements arrived to fill in the painful gaps in the ranks; VMO-6 helicopters flew in hot food; letters from home and beer miraculously appeared; and new equipment was issued. But not enough of it. Fenton frankly noted that the equipment they had arrived with in the Bean Patch was in “terrible condition.” It had deteriorated badly from exposure to heat, rain, and frequent immersion in rice paddies. In addition, he commented:

*We were having a hard time getting Browning automatic rifles. Many of our BAR men had been casualties, and we were down to about three or four per platoon. You just couldn't get a BAR belt in Korea. Shoes were another big problem . . . . We reached the point where we had men running around in tennis shoes. Dungarees were in bad shape . . . . Our packs, which had been dropped at Pusan and were supposed to have been brought to us by the rear echelon, never arrived. The only way we could get a clean suit of dungarees was to wash them or survey the supply at the laundry unit when we took a shower.*

There were no shelter halves either, so the men slept out in the open. A memorable event was a ceremony for the award of 87 Purple Heart medals, with South Korean President Syngman Rhee in attendance. The attrition rate among the officers had been fearful: five of the six company



commanders were wounded, and nine of the 18 rifle platoon leaders were wounded and four of the killed in action.

One platoon leader, Second Lieutenant Muetzel, received two Purple Hearts (with a Silver Star Medal to come later for his heroic actions on Obong-ni), while the gunnery sergeant of the Reconnaissance Company, a veteran of World War II wounds, received his fifth Purple Heart. It was a strain to try to look presentable for the ceremony, as Muetzel later remarked:

*My leggings had been thrown away, my trousers were out at both knees, my right boot had two bullet holes in it, and my dungaree jacket had corporal's stripes stenciled on the sleeves. I grabbed a fast shave with cold water, hard soap, and a dull blade. Gene Davis loaned me a clean set of dungarees, Tom Gibson loaned me his second lieutenant's bars, and off I went with my troops.*

### **Future Plans**

While the troops were enjoying this temporary lull, some of Craig's senior staff officers were sent to Tokyo to confer on plans for the future use of the Marines. MacArthur had made bold—very bold—plans for a daring end-run around the NKPA besieging the Pusan Perimeter by making a surprise amphibious landing far to the rear, at Inchon. For this purpose, he had urgently requested the full 1st Marine Division. Elements of it began arriving in Japan on 28 August, but there were massive problems to be overcome. The 1st Marines was on hand, but the 7<sup>th</sup> Marines would not arrive at Inchon until a week after D-day, with one battalion coming halfway around the world from the Mediterranean. The crucial unit for the forthcoming assault was supposed to be the battle-tested 5th Marines. It had already begun shipping its heavy equipment back down to Pusan, as plans were drawn to have it join the 1st Marine Division, even though it was now fully committed in combat. Morale soared in the brigade as the men looked forward to fighting side-by-side with fellow Marines.

Meanwhile, in Tokyo there were very tense moments. Time was critically short to mount an operation as complex as an amphibious assault. There were vigorous differences of opinion in Army-Navy Marine meetings as to when or even whether the brigade should join the 1st Marine Division. On one hand, the Eighth Army staff felt, as the official Marine history bluntly put it, "Army morale would be hurt by taking the brigade away at a critical moment." And Walker placed an "extremely excited" telephone call to MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo, saying in effect, "If I lose the 5th Marine Regiment, I will not be responsible for the safety of the front!" There was strong Army pressure to substitute an Army regiment for the 5th Marines at the Inchon landing. On the other hand, Major General Oliver P. Smith, Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, supported by the three Navy admirals most closely involved, was equally adamant that, for a tricky amphibious landing, he had to have the 5th Marines which was trained for just such an operation. There was a deadlock.

### **The NKPA Attacks Again**

Then, amidst these planning meetings, harsh reality came crashing down to complicate further decisions on the use of the brigade. The NKPA, realizing that time was running out for it,

launched a final, convulsive attack to eradicate the Pusan Perimeter. Some 98,000 men in 13 divisions hit five separate points on the perimeter. Walker faced a brutal series of simultaneous problems. Where should he commit his limited reserves—in particular his proven Marine brigade? The two thrusts closest to Pusan were one against the Army's 25th Division in the same area of the far southwest, and another against the Army's 2nd Division in the west central (Naktong) area. A breakthrough to capture Pusan would mean total disaster. (Military analysts in later years would speculate that that might well have happened if General Kim Chaek had ordered only diversionary attacks at four of the points, massed overwhelming strength at one point, and crashed through there.)

The NKPA assigned the *2nd, 4th, 9th, and 10th Divisions* to destroy the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division before Miryang and drive through to the vital Pusan-Taegu MSR by way of Yongsan. Smashing into that division on 1 September, the North Korean assault quickly made a 4,000-yard penetration. The commanding general of the 2nd Division, Major General Lawrence B. Keiser, USA, saw his division sliced in half, with his companies cut off or totally overrun, his defensive lines hustled back almost to Yongsan, and enemy infiltration in his rear. Neither Keiser nor his three regimental commanders had ever led troops in battle, and now the NKPA had punched a hole six miles wide and eight miles deep into their division. Obong-ni Ridge, so dearly bought, was back in enemy hands. Now Walker made up his mind: the new Naktong Bulge had returned as his priority threat. Blair's book pointed out the logical, but painful, next step: "Walker came to a difficult and drastic decision: Once again he would have to call on Eddie Craig's Marines for help. The decision was drastic both because of the humiliation it would again cause the Army, and because Craig's Marines were a vital element in the Inchon invasion plan."

## Chapter Seven

### 'Fire Brigade': Crisis Number Three

In the morning of 1 September, the orders came for the brigade, including the 11th Marines, to move by train and truck back once more to the Miryang assembly area. The reaction of the men was predictable: going back to regain what they had already won once.

When General Craig had set up his CP in Miryang, his brigade came under the operational control of the Army's 2nd Division. To old timers in the Marine Corps it surely brought back vivid and ironic memories of another time and place, when a Marine brigade had been teamed once before with the 9th and 23rd Infantry as a proud part of the Army's superb 2nd Division, 32 years earlier in France. On 2 September, Craig had a conference with Keiser and the Eighth Army's Chief of Staff. General Shepherd later made a comment on this meeting which revealed the inherently gracious nature of Craig: "The Army division commander . . . went to Eddie, who was a brigadier, and said, 'General Craig, I'm horribly embarrassed that you have to do this. My men lost the ground that you took in a severe fight.' And Eddie, in his very gallant manner, said, 'General, it might have happened to me.' "

The Army officers at the meeting felt the situation was so desperate that the brigade should immediately be dribbled piecemeal into action, even though one of its battalions and its air control section had not yet arrived. Craig, who also knew when to make a stand, later remembered, "This was the only heated discussion I had in Korea with the Army." His stubborn view that the whole brigade should go into action as a unified air-ground team was finally accepted. Its attack would be down the Yongsan-Naktong road toward an all-too-familiar objective, Obong-ni Ridge. The 9th Infantry Regiment would be on its right, and other Army units on its left. Now the brigade, for the first time, appeared to have flanks that were secure enough to allow it to attack with two battalions abreast, Roise's 2nd on the right and Newton's 1<sup>st</sup> on the left. Taplett's 3rd Battalion would block any enemy push along the southwest approaches to Yongsan.

Meanwhile, between 0300 and 0430, 3 September, the 2nd Battalion moved into its forward assembly area north of Yongsan, with the 1st Battalion south of the town.

Opposite them, driving hard for Yongsan, were the NKPA divisions which had successfully advanced this far in the new Naktong Bulge. Immediately in front of the brigade was the 9th Division. This was not a seasoned, professional outfit, such as the one the brigade had previously broken; rather, it had up to now been doing guard duty at Seoul. Behind it, in reserve, came a reconstituted 4th Division, filled with new recruits after the massive casualties the brigade had inflicted on it in the first battle of the Naktong.

### The Marines Attack

The Marine attack was to be launched early on the morning of 3 September. There were problems getting things started. Moving through Yongsan, the Marines were hit by small arms fire from snipers, but by 0630 they had worked their way to the western end of the town, and thought they were then headed forward to the agreed-upon line of departure for their main attack.

Not so! During the night the Army troops on the ridgeline had “collapsed” and had been pushed back 1,000 yards. At 0645 Roise called Second Lieutenant Robert M. Winter to bring his tanks forward and lay down fire to cover the withdrawal of the Army troops. The original planned line of departure then became the first objective when the Marines attacked.

The 2nd Battalion jumped off at 0715, securing the right flank of the brigade’s attack. To soften up his main objective, Roise called down a massive sheet of fire from tanks, air, mortars, artillery, and machine guns. The Marines pushed doggedly toward it wading through a rice paddy. Now the enemy’s 9th Division quickly found its previous pattern of steady advances had ground to a screeching halt.

General Craig, as was his wont, came up to check on the action. His observation post (OP) was between the tanks and Roise’s OP. Enemy fire pounded the area, and Winter was wounded and had to be evacuated—but not before he offered Craig a bottle of whiskey from his tank. Winter was later awarded a Silver Star Medal for his leadership of his tank platoon that day.

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion also moved out. Its attack route forced the men knee-deep into their own huge rice paddy. There they came under fire, but their supporting arms searched out the enemy positions. In particular, the Corsairs were able to engulf the NKPA with balls of napalm fire. A typical time of response was seven minutes from a strike request to execution.

This kind of seamless coordination in the Marine air-ground team was a source of great envy by the Army commanders who saw its decisive results. As Colonel Paul L. Freeman, USA, and commander of the 23rd Infantry (well off to the right of the brigade), wrote to General Matthew Ridgway in Washington:

*The Marines on our left were a sight to behold. Not only was their equipment superior or equal to ours, but they had squadrons of air in direct support. They used it like artillery. It was, “Hey, Joe, this is Smitty, knock off the left of that ridge in front of Item Company.” They had it day and night . . . General, we just have to have air support like that, or we might as well disband the Infantry and join the Marines.*

By 1100 the 1st Battalion was at the base of its ridgeline objective. Working its way upwards under the protection of supporting 81mm mortar fire, Company A poised for a final charge. As soon as the fire lifted, the men sprang forward, screaming, shouting, and firing every available weapon. To their amazement, a whole company of NKPA soldiers in front of them, shaken by the noise and the sight of charging Marines, leaped in a panic out of their concealed foxholes on the forward slope and fled back towards the crest of the hill. Then the long hours of practice on the rifle range really paid off: Marine marksmen coolly picked off most of the enemy as they ran. Company A immediately rushed to the crest. It was noon. In Company B, Fenton later observed:

*The 1st Battalion was able to move and seize the ridge line without encountering heavy opposition. I don’t believe the enemy realized that we had a battalion to the left of the road, because he was prepared to take that high ground himself. We beat him there by a good 10 or 20 minutes and caught him coming across another rice paddy field. We really had a “turkey shoot.”*

Firing now from the heights, the Marine riflemen put on another display of precise marksmanship that must have stunned the simple peasant soldiers of the NKPA: the “yellow leggings” could kill with aimed fire at 400-500 yards. (Just as the Marines in that earlier brigade in France had stunned the Germans at Belleau Wood with trained rifle fire that killed at long range.)

What the 1st Battalion did not finish off, the 105s of the 11th Marines did. Those of the enemy who were left withdrew to Hill 117 in front of the 2nd Battalion, but an artillery barrage was called down on them in transit and wreaked more havoc.

In the 2nd Battalion zone of attack there were some hard moments. When Company D was getting started in its assault, a tragic episode occurred. (Today, it is called “friendly fire” and results in great publicity. Fifty years ago, in the early days of the Korean War, it was regarded as just one of those unfortunate things that happened because close combat is always unpredictable.) The official Marine history did not even mention it, but it was seared into the memory of Private First-Class Douglas Koch in Company D:

*Down the road from the north rolled four or five American tanks . . . All of a sudden, a machine gun stitched a stream of fire across the company’s rear. I rolled over on one elbow and looked behind me. Someone yelled, “God, they’re shooting at us.” Instead of firing on the top of the hill, the tanks chose to fire at the bottom of the hill. I saw a puff of smoke. Just that quick a shell landed near me. It rolled me over into a little gully. I lay dazed. God, I thought, we’re gonna get done in by our own goddamn outfit. While I lay with my head down, three or four more shells hit nearby . . . A lot of men had been hit.*

Naturally, this kind of ghastly mistake was temporarily shattering to the company, until the officers finally got their men moving again. But Koch and the others went back to their attack “still in shock.”

This occurrence was, fortunately, a rarity. Elsewhere that morning of 3 September, Marine tanks were doing yeoman’s work. They took on NKPA antitank weapons, surprised three T-34 tanks and wiped them out, then eliminated two more in the afternoon. This cleanup enabled the M-26s to concentrate their fire to good effect on enemy weapons and troop positions confronting the riflemen.

Marine air was also very active. With the squadrons shuttling so that one was always on hand to help, seven close air support missions were flown for the two assault battalions. Other Marine aircraft, guided by OYs, strafed and bombed, knocking out, among other things, 16 enemy gun and mortar positions.

Back on the ground, Company D’s first objective was Hill 116, to try to cut off the enemy reinforcements coming over from the 1st Battalion’s zone. Facing two NKPA battalions, the company found itself in a bloody battle. It was finally able to gain the crest of the northern spur of Hill 117, and there it dug in, isolated, some 500 yards from the rest of the 2nd Battalion.

As the enemy troops filtered into the zone of the 2nd Battalion, the men of the 1st Battalion were able to make good progress in the afternoon, with Company B reaching its part of

Objective 2, a peak across the MSR from Hill 117. Company A, using a fancy triple envelopment seized its part, Hill 91, by 1630, and so all hands prepared for the usual night counterattack. Well they might. The 1st Battalion's right flank was dangling in air; it was trying to cover a front of nearly a mile; and its two rifle companies were 200 yards apart. The 2nd Battalion was in an equally dangerous position, stretched over a 2,000-yard front, bent in a right angle, with Company D completely isolated.

Three things saved the Marines' precarious position. First, a bevy of their engineers moved in to sow a belt of antipersonnel mines, wired hand grenades, and blocks of TNT along the flanks. Secondly, VMF(N)-513 came on station with its F4U-5N Corsair and F7F Tigercat night fighters. Equipped with sophisticated radar, it was the only squadron to fly single-engine aircraft over Korea at night. Flying more than 2,000 hours of night missions in one month, it delivered this particular night six close air support strikes controlled from the two infantry battalions. Thirdly, a deluge of rain, accompanied by icy winds, further hindered any plans the battered NKPA troops might have contemplated for a counterattack.

As the Marines waited though the miserable, rainy night, even though they had driven two victorious miles west of Yongsan, their thoughts must have turned to the casualties of the past day: 34 killed and 157 wounded. Muetzel in the 1st Battalion later voiced what must have been a common sentiment after almost a month of grinding combat:

*[Men] came, were killed, and were carried away . . . . I knew this couldn't keep up . . . . We, me, all of us were eventually going to get it; it was just a matter of when and how bad . . . . It was just a god-awful mess—inadequate replacements, insufficient ammo, worn-out clothes and boots. No one much gave a rap about anything. Outside discipline was no longer a threat. What could the brass do to us that was worse than what we were doing? Each of us withdrew into our family—the squad, the platoon, the company, the regiment, the brigade, the Corps. Everyone else, bug off!*

This same day, 3 September, witnessed a final showdown in the Tokyo planning meetings. A compromise solution to the deadlock emerged. Walker would get Army reinforcements and could temporarily use the Marine Brigade to meet his Naktong crisis. But it would have to be withdrawn by midnight 5 September to join the 1st Marine Division for the Inchon landing.

### **Continuing the Assault**

Back with troops, in order to keep the pressure on the next morning (4 September), Murray had ordered Taplett's 3rd Battalion to pass through the depleted 2nd Battalion and resume the attack at 0800 with the 1st Battalion on its left. In 20 minutes, Taplett's men reached their first objective, then quickly took Hill 116 with almost no enemy resistance. Next, the battalion's main objective, Hill 117, was overrun by a pincer movement of Companies G and H. Incredibly, it was all over by 0840. No real enemy resistance had turned into a withdrawal, and now there were signs that was turning into a disorderly rout—a weird contrast to the bruising encounters the Marines had had the day before.

The 1st Battalion was simultaneously moving with equal rapidity. Shortly after starting, it occupied what appeared to have been a CP of the NKPA 9th Division. Tents were still up, equipment was strewn around, and two abandoned T-34 tanks in perfect operating condition were captured (the first such to be taken and turned over to U.S. Army Ordnance for examination). The men in the battalion's steady advance saw the bodies of many dead NKPA soldiers and piles of abandoned or destroyed equipment, souvenirs of low-flying Corsair strike and accurate fire from the 11th Marines poured on the retreating enemy. Among the litter were captured American guns, tanks, mortars, and vehicles which were returned to the 2nd Division. The official Marine history described "a picture of devastation unequalled even by the earlier defeat of the NKPA *4th Division*." This time it was the *9th Division's* turn to be hammered by the brigade.

By 1515 Newton's companies stood atop their first objectives, now less than 2,000 yards from the old killing ground on Obong-ni Ridge. Moving in coordinated tandem with them were Taplett's companies, which had pivoted to the west after seizing Hill 117.

Learning of the Marines' progress, Keiser gave Craig the go-ahead to have his brigade push on further toward Objective Two. Moving aggressively, using air strikes when held up, the 1st Battalion worked its way to the designated area (between Hill 125 and Observation Hill), and securing Cloverleaf Hill by 1800.

The brigade had advanced 3,000 yards and gained its objectives. Hoyt summarized the strategic importance of this: "The Marines had stopped the enemy's advance, saved Yongsan and the [MSR] road beyond [it], and put the North Korean *9th Division* into retreat."

As the Marine battalions dug in for the night, they were in exposed positions similar to the preceding evening. Newton's men were 1,000 yards in front on the left, stretched paper-thin along a line almost a mile long. Taplett's men were no better off. Out of contact with the 1st Battalion on their left and the Army's 9th Infantry on their right, they curled up in a perimeter defense.

Expecting the usual NKPA night counterattack, the Marines again had their engineers put out a protective shell of mines, booby traps, and trip flares. There was heavy incoming shelling during the night, but that slacked off after a visit from the night fighter aircraft of VMF(N)-513. The rain poured down, but the enemy infantry apparently had been hit too hard during the day, and there was no assault.

When men are under heavy pressure in close combat little things can loom large in their minds. Fenton gave an example: "It had been raining all night, and the battalion had managed to get some hot coffee up to us, but just when the coffee arrived, we got the word to move out. We weren't able to distribute any of the coffee. This turn of events didn't do the morale any good. The men were soaking wet."

A more fundamental event took place that same night. Reluctantly following instructions from MacArthur, Walker issued an order that the Eighth Army would have to release all of its Marines at the end of the following day.

## The Final Day

To finish off what the brigade had so successfully begun, Craig ordered both battalions to move out in a final attack the morning of 5 September. Before the 1st Battalion could get started, there was an unpleasant moment. Two U.S. Air Force F-51 fighters came screaming in over the Marines, strafing them. Miraculously, only one man was wounded.

The 3rd Battalion started the day by showering a rain of fire from its high ground down on an NKPA attack on the 9th Infantry off to its right flank and rear. The 105s from the 11th Marines joined in, and the attack was shattered.

Now both battalions were ready to charge. And they did. The 1st Battalion jumped off at 0820 with the objective of capturing Hill 125 and Observation Hill, the brigade's segment of Phase Line Two. Obong-ni Ridge was then to be a special objective. Moving fast against light resistance, Newton had his men on his two target hills by 1100, and there Murray halted them until the 9th Infantry could come up to tie in on their right.

Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion was also moving ahead. Bohn had suggested that Company H, now commanded by Captain Patrick E. Wildman, serve as a base of fire to pin down the enemy, while he took Company G around the extreme left flank in an enveloping maneuver. "It worked beautifully," as he later reported, but then:

*As we were coming up, getting assembled . . . the North Koreans picked up on what we were doing. They had one of those old Russian [Maxim] wheeled machine guns, and I could see their officer. He was wheeling it up with his people. Jones saw him at the same time, and he blew it up with the first round of 75 recoilless . . . It was sheer luck. As soon as that happened, of course, we went smoking up, got over the top, and once we got to the top . . . we just rolled them up. It was outstanding.*

So, it was, that Company G was in good shape on Hill 91, expecting to race ahead. Not so. Orders from Taplett at 1230 directed it to withdraw to Observation Hill and hold up there. The convergence of the 1st Battalion and the 9th Infantry had pinched out the 3rd Battalion's area, so Company H joined in a sideslip behind the 1st Battalion to put the 3rd Battalion on the left flank of the 1st, preparatory to a combined attack on Obongni Ridge. It, too, was told to stay in place; there would be a delay before any assault on Obong-ni.

With the heavy rain and ensuing fog Marine close air support was grounded, and this gave the NKPA an opportunity to launch a vicious daylight counterattack on the 1st Battalion. Company B, after an advance of 3,000 yards, was now located on a ridge line of Hill 125, parallel to and only 400 yards from Obong-ni.

At 1420 an avalanche of enemy fire hit it. It was enfilade fire, mortars and machine guns, smothering both the reverse slope and the forward slope of the company's position. Fenton's comment was curt: "We were pinned down, and we couldn't move."

At 1430 the enemy infantry came on, some 300 strong. Fenton needed help, supporting fire and lots of it, but at this precise moment of peril all five of his radios, as well as the battalion's



tactical radio, went dead in the downpour of rain. An enlisted runner, 22-year-old Private First-Class William A. Wilson, was rushed off to the 9th Infantry, which had now come abreast on Company B's right flank. His message was urgent: "We need maximum supporting fire from your artillery, and we need it right now!" Meeting up with the adjacent Army company commander, Wilson was pointing out the target areas when the Army officer was struck down by machine gun fire and had to be evacuated. So, the Marine coolly picked up his radio and directed the Army artillery fire to plaster Obong-ni and the adjoining enemy targets.

A runner had also been sent down to the MSR to warn the Marine tanks there that three NKPA T-34 tanks supporting the attack were coming towards them around the same bend that had been the scene of the previous tank battle two weeks earlier. The message was not in time. The lead enemy tank surprised the first Marine tank with its gun aimed left at Obongni. Several 85mm rounds knocked out the Marine tank. Its mate, trying to edge around the first tank, was also knocked out.

Then, out of the blue, a 3.5-inch rocket team, dispatched by Fenton, arrived at the carnage, soon joined by the battalion rocket team. In short order, they destroyed the first two enemy tanks, and then the third attacker, which turned out to be an armored personnel carrier. This made a total of eight steel hulks littering "The Bend." While this dramatic tank confrontation was taking place, Fenton's infantry confrontation was also reaching a climax. He later described the tense situation:

*I found it necessary to place every man I had in the company on line. Rocket men, corpsmen, mortar men, every available man went on line to stop this counterattack. To make matters worse, I began running low on ammunition. I was practically out of hand grenades, and things didn't look too rosy for us. Just at this time LtCol George Newton, my battalion commander, who had probably guessed my situation, sent a much-welcome platoon from A Company with five boxes of hand grenades. The enemy had closed so rapidly that we just took the hand grenades out of the case and tossed them to the men on the line. They would pull the pins and throw them. The enemy closed to less than 100 yards.*

Adding to the intense pressure, the radios had not been functioning. Finally, at this crucial juncture, one radio was coaxed into service. Fenton quickly gave it to his forward observer for the 81mm mortars who called for immediate "fire for effect." When the mortars had finished deluging the NKPA attackers, there were only 18 rounds of ammunition left.

Duncan was with Company B during its wild battle and saw Master Sergeant Leonard R. Young positioning the men along the crest. (The later citation for a Silver Star described Young as "exposed to withering fire, [he] walked upright back and forth . . . placing men.") Then, Duncan wrote:

*He was shot. A machine gun bullet went right through his chest, knocking him into the mud. But not before he had given Ike Fenton the best that an old sergeant could give his company commander. He was still alive when they dragged him in across the slope. When they placed him upon a rough poncho-litter he looked up at Fenton, who stood with his hand touching the dripping canvas, and whispered, "God, I'm sorry Captain! I'm really sorry! But don't let them*

*fall back! Please don't let them fall back." Fenton still had not said a word when the litter bearers disappeared into the rain, and out of sight down the hill.*

A crucial factor in the final, successful outcome of this struggle were reinforcements which came over from Company A: two platoons of riflemen, plus machine gunners, and mortarmen. Together with the combination of Army artillery fire and Marine 81mm mortar fire (which finally came within 50 yards of Company B), this broke the back of the NKPA attack, and secured the Marine positions.

Now, from their vantage point, the Marines could see the NKPA withdrawing from Obong-ni. It was an obvious signal that the enemy was thoroughly defeated, and the door was open for a quick and easy push all the way through to the Naktong River.

But the withdrawal deadline dictated by MacArthur had nearly arrived. All units were held up in position. The brigade counted up its casualties for that final day of battle, 5 September: 35 killed, 91 wounded, and, proudly, none missing in action.

At 1600 the battalion commanders all met with Murray to get the official word. Craig's directive was concise: "Commencing at 2400 5 September Brig moves by rail and motor to staging area Pusan for further operations against the enemy."

Relief and withdrawal at night from enemy contact is not as easy in practice as it is on paper. Hours after they were due, two Army lieutenants finally showed up to relieve the two companies of the 1st Battalion. Each had only a handful of men and very few weapons. As Muetzel recalled:

*An Army first lieutenant appeared with about 30 men who'd been scraped together from a headquarters unit . . . I took the lieutenant to the very crest of the hill and had him dig in in a circle. He asked me to leave him our ammo for a 57mm recoilless rifle he had. Marines didn't have 57s, so he had a weapon and no ammo. He asked his sergeant to bring up their one machine gun. The sergeant told him it had been left back at the CP. I left behind about four cases of hand grenades.*

So, the battle-worn Marines slogged wearily through the mud and driving rain for three and a half miles to the rear. West of Yongsan, they finally boarded trucks, and by dawn 6 September they were on their way to Pusan, bone-tired but glad finally to leave those cruel hills of the Perimeter behind them.

## Chapter Eight

### Operational Results

As the truck riders' thoughts turned to their fellow Marines, they mourned the loss of good men and close friends. Those hills had cost the brigade 148 killed in action, 15 died of wounds, 9 missing in action (7 of these were later found to have been killed in action), and 730 wounded in action, for a casualty total of 902. Included in this total was a special category of men who had moved side by side with the Marines in combat, earning their undying admiration: The Navy corpsmen who had 22 casualties.

Looking back at what they had achieved in one short month, however, the men of the brigade could legitimately feel a sense of pride. They had traveled some 380 miles and mounted three difficult operations, each time facing and overwhelming heretofore successful enemy forces who had numerical superiority.

The initial brigade drive to Sachon had represented the first crisis in which a unit of the Eighth Army had been able to stop cold and then push back an enemy offensive: 26 miles in four days. Enemy casualties: 1,900.

The second crisis was a call for the "Fire Brigade" to stem the NKPA's dangerous breakthrough in the Naktong Bulge. There it literally destroyed the enemy's 4th Division, with the Marine air and artillery arms contributing greatly to the slaughter. In addition, large quantities of captured U.S. Army weapons were seized and returned. MacArthur spoke of the enemy division as "decisively defeated . . . suffering very heavy losses in both personnel and equipment."

In the third crisis, the Second Battle of the Naktong, the brigade had again been rushed in to meet the swift advance of the NKPA 9th and (a reconstituted) 4th Divisions. When its counterattack smashed the enemy units in a mere three days, in conjunction with important U.S. Army attacks, the official Army history quoted prisoners as saying that this was "one of the bloodiest and most terrifying debacles of the war for a North Korean division." As a result, "the 9th and 4th enemy divisions were not able to resume the offensive."

Over the period of that single month, the enemy had paid a devastating price, an estimated 9,900 total casualties, and massive losses of equipment at the hands of the Marines.

The achievements of the brigade went far beyond dramatic tactical victories in the Pusan Perimeter. It had demonstrated in its mobilization a remarkable ability to pull together and ship out a large Marine combat unit in a pressure laden, short time frame (six days). It had also demonstrated a variety of other lessons in Korea: the crucial efforts of previous combat training on noncommissioned officers and officers; the value of the intangible, psychological factor of Marine esprit de corps; and the dazzling effectiveness of a tightly integrated aviation component. Called "the best close air support in the history of the Marine Corps," the operational statistics of MAG-33 showed a total of 1,511 sorties flown by the three squadrons, with 995 missions being close air support not only for the brigade, but also for U.S. Army and South Korean units. In addition, the OY light aircraft and the Sikorsky HO3S helicopters of VMO-6 had tallied 318 and

580 flights respectively in just the month of August. Moreover, the helicopters' successful first combat role had proven the certainty of their large-scale use in the years to come.

An evaluation of all these factors led the official Marine history to summarize the overall, operational results of the brigade: "A careful examination of any of these operations in which Marines engaged discloses that a single failure would have a profound effect upon the entire UN effort." The individual unit commanders who had led the brigade in its battles had a more forceful conviction. They felt that they had "saved the beachhead."

### **From Pusan to Inchon**

The final chapter in the story of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade is one that is less dramatic than its battles, but one which illustrates its organizational flexibility and skill. Again, as at Camp Pendleton previously, it had too much to do in too little time. Arriving in Pusan on 7 September with over-tired men, worn-out equipment, and understrength from casualties, the brigade had to cope with a thousand details to get ready to move out in a very few days for its next demanding combat assignment.

Sleeping in the open on the docks, the men ate on board the transports upon which they soon would sail. (Although Craig and his officers later recalled the troops sleeping in the adjoining warehouses.) Bohn remembered the human side of this return to "civilization." The ship that had brought him and his men to Pusan was once again there at dockside.

The Navy officers came ashore and invited Bohn and all his officers and men to come on board, and then welcomed them with "steaks, hot food" and "all the PX stuff" the Marines had not seen in a long time and badly needed now.

1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Bohn went on to describe another way that their deficiencies were remedied:

*I'm probably not being sufficiently critical of the Marine Corps supply system because, if it hadn't been for the Army, we'd have been in trouble. We stole everything, including jeeps . . . . We saw some rail cars on the siding. My Marines just went in there and looked. Whatever the hell they wanted, they took. The Army didn't seem to mind that. Stole beer, too. And it worked.*

It worked to such a degree that all the jeep trailers in another battalion were emptied, then stacked full of beer on ice—perfect for the hot, humid, summer weather. First, a big party for its own men, then for the sailors on the ship upon which they would embark, the *Henrico*. Then, however, things sort of got out of hand. Muetzel saw a jeep driven by two Marines race by, closely pursued by two MPs. The jeep went off the end of the dock into the water.

Then two other Marines, who had climbed over the fence around the dock area, returned in impressive style. They were driving a huge Brockway bridge transporter which they had "acquired." They quickly abandoned it at the MP checkpoint—leaving it nicely plugging the entrance to the dock until a qualified driver was later found. Muetzel went on to say:

*While we were waiting to board the *Henrico*, we were required to turn in all the captured vehicles we were driving . . . . This left us unacceptably short of motor transportation. Consequently, vehicles were purloined from the Army. The worst offense I saw was the theft of*

*the MP company commander's jeep. After a fast coat of green paint and phony numbers were slapped on, it was presented to Lieutenant Colonel George Newton, our battalion CO.*

These shenanigans were, of course, only a counterpoint to the serious business at hand. To fill the gaps in the rifle unit, a large batch of replacements was on hand. These 1,135 officers and men would provide the manpower to give each battalion the third company which had been so sorely missed in the past battles. Now, for the first time in Korea, the 5th Marines reached full strength: 3,611 men. Although the fresh replacements' shiny new utility uniforms contrasted sharply with the bedraggled veterans, they soon fit in. Craig later commented that the new men "were integrated into the battalions without difficulty." Some of them were regular Marines and some were trained reservists, and Craig went on to say:

*Their [future] performance of duty was comparable in many ways, outside of, perhaps, their weapons training and their tactical training in the field . . . . It speaks very well for the type of training and the adaptability of the Marines, both as individuals and as units, that such companies could be formed in the United States, join an active battalion just before landing, take part in that landing, and operate efficiently throughout the following campaigns.*

In addition, a complete fourth regiment was attached to the brigade at this time. This was the 1st Korean Marine Regiment, 3,000 strong. The manpower was welcome, but there was just one problem. Craig explained: "These Korean Marines had never been issued arms, although they had been trained in their nomenclature and upkeep. They were, however, well drilled and had good discipline and spirit . . . arms were immediately issued."

For the brigade's well-used supporting arms, there was an intensive drive to clean up and service all the heavy equipment—tanks, trucks, and artillery pieces. For the infantry battalions, one critical need was new weapons. Many rifles, BARs, and particularly machine guns had been fired so much that the barrels were burned out, so replacements had to be issued.

Clothing was a disaster. Dungarees were rotted all the way through from rain and sweat, with the camouflage design faded out. Boots were "falling apart."

This kind of urgent need led Muetzel to strong measures. He badly wanted a new pair of boots, for the ones he wore had two bullet holes in the uppers and soles completely worn through. With none available from Marine supplies, he headed for the Eighth Army quartermaster. There he found a group of "scruffy" Marines being sharply told off for begging by an immaculate (rear echelon) Army major. The Marine group gave up and left, but Muetzel, looking like a "refugee" he admitted, persisted.

When the neatly-dressed major turned to go back to his office, Muetzel pushed into the building wearing his steel helmet, a dungaree jacket and pants with gaping holes, and tattered boots, and carrying a submachine gun and a .45 pistol on his hip. Now standing face to face, the major saw the lieutenant's bars on Muetzel's collar, glanced at his disreputable uniform, and started to say that he could not issue any boots. That did it! Muetzel burst out:

*I told him, simply, that I was just off the line, I was going right back onto the line, I was an infantry platoon leader, I didn't have a hell of a lot to lose, and I wanted a pair of boots right*

*then and there! When he looked at my boots and noticed the bullet holes, he went right back into his stock and brought out a new pair of Army parachute jump boots . . . I was ready to fight for those boots and that major knew it.*

All during this time, the senior officers were involved in a different type of activity. They were closeted, preparing the after-action reports, organizing the issue of supplies for re-equipment, thrashing out an embarkation plan, and familiarizing themselves with every planned detail that pertained to their unit's role in the forthcoming landing. Craig pushed them hard and soon—all too soon—the few days allotted had rushed by, and it was time to ship out. Starting the afternoon of 11 September, the troops began filing on board ship. The next day, the convoy sailed. Then, at 0001, 13 September, the brigade was deactivated and became part of the 1st Marine Division, bound for the historic amphibious assault at Inchon.

The brigade was now gone, but not forgotten. There was formal recognition of its achievements by two governments. The first was a Korean Presidential Unit Citation which recorded “outstanding and heroic performance of duty on the field of battle.” Referring to the Naktong victories, the citation said: “The brigade attacked with such determination and skill as to earn the admiration of all . . . The gallant Marine forces were instrumental in preventing the enemy from capturing their objective and cutting the north-south lines of communication. . . .”

The second award was a U.S. Presidential Unit Citation. This was a lengthy paean of praise for both the ground forces and the aviation units. It commended “extraordinary heroism in action . . . relentless determination . . . sheer resolution and esprit de corps . . . the brilliant record achieved. . . .” The award covered not only the brigade's ground units, but also MAG-33 and its squadrons.

They were fitting tributes to a special group of men who had truly earned a remarkable series of triumphs.

It would be a long war for the Marines in Korea, and there would be other much more famous battles to come, but the die was cast in those crucial first weeks of combat in August and September 1950. The Marine Corps had again decisively demonstrated that it was truly a “force in readiness,” and that its rugged training and traditional esprit de corps could lead it to victory in “every clime and place.”

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

It was nothing less than humiliating to read on the front page that only 5 years after reaching our greatest military strength of history, United States troops were being pushed around by Asiatic peasants of a Soviet-trained organization calling itself the North Korean People's Army. Perhaps these Americans did not remember that the decline in our Armed Forces was due to overwhelming popular demands for the disbanding of our victorious armies of 1945. At any rate, the United States paid the penalty of unpreparedness in 1950 when its first ground-force units

were beaten by better trained and better equipped NKPA troops. Worse yet, correspondence at the front intimated that these defeats were due to the softness of our youth. It was charged that United States troops had been so pampered by motor transportation that they could no longer march, let alone fight.

The Marines of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade helped to change all of that. The Marines and the better Army units proved that they were more than a match for the enemy when it came to marching as well as fighting. The Marines did their very best to restore the pride of Americans who read about the advance to Kosong or the fight on Obong-ni Ridge. The Marines, in short, deserved the pat on the back conveyed in a dispatch to the Brigade on 23 August 1950, from their Commandant, General Clifton B. Cates:

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

## Case Study Questions for Group Discussions

1. Describe and discuss the political events leading up to the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade as it approached the campaign at the Pusan Perimeter.  
(MCDP-1 *Warfighting*; Strategic Level of War, pages 28-31)
2. How important was it for Brigadier Generals Craig and Cushman to understand the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural (PESC) environment in which the Brigade would be operating?  
(MCDP-1.0; *Operations*, pages 1.5-1.15)
3. How did General Craig prepare himself to lead the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade?  
(MCRP 3-30.7; *Commander's Tactical Handbook*, 2 May 2016; CJCS White Letter – March 2015; *A Profession of Arms*)
4. Do you believe that a clear commander's intent is important? Why?  
(MCDP-1 *Warfighting*, Chapter 4; page 89)
5. What challenges did Captain Fenton face and how did he address them as the B/1/5 Executive Officer?  
(MCDP-1.3 *Tactics*, Chapter 8; MCDP-1, Chapter 4, page 71)
6. Is it possible for a small unit commander to “set the conditions” for the projection of combat power and physical courage on the battlefield, or is courage an intensely personal characteristic?  
(MCDP-1.3 *Tactics*; MCDP-1 *Warfighting*, Chapter 1, page 15)
7. Does the Marine Corps' current culture support effective, ethical decision making? How does it do this?  
(MCDP-1 *Warfighting*, Chapter 3, Professionalism; pages 56-58; MCDP-1, *Warfighting*, Chapter 4, pages 85-87; Lejeune Leadership Institute; *Ethical Leaders* – Dr. Paolo Tripodi))
8. Do you believe that the formation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade was the beginning of today's MAGTF concept?  
(MCDP-1.0 *Operations*, Chapter 2)
9. What do you see as the “common parallels” between Marine Corps operations in 1950 and today?  
(MCDP-1 *Warfighting*, Chapter 3, Conducting Expeditionary Operations)
10. Do you believe that the Marine Corps is sufficiently prepared for the next war?  
(A guided discussion question)



## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>i</sup> The McCune-Reischauer form of romanization has changed the spelling from Pusan to Busan, introduced in 2000.
- <sup>ii</sup> *FIRE BRIGADE: U.S. Marines in the Pusan Perimeter*, Marine Corps History and Museums, by Captain John C. Chapin, 2000.
- <sup>iii</sup> Ibid (P.13)
- <sup>iv</sup> *The Korean War*, Donald Knox, Harvest Books; 1st Harvest Ed edition; April 10, 1987.
- <sup>v</sup> *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea 1905-1953*, Vol.1., by Mr. Lynn Montross and Captain Nicholas A. Canzona, USMC
- <sup>vi</sup> *Why War Came to Korea*, Robert T. Oliver, New York: Fordham University Press, 1950. (page 149)
- <sup>vii</sup> Ibid, *op cit.*, 219.
- <sup>viii</sup> Oliver, *op cit* 5.
- <sup>ix</sup> *New York Times*, 12 Jul 48, quoted in Redvers Opie et al., *The Search for Peace Settlements* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1951).
- <sup>x</sup> ROK denotes the Republic of Korea, and NK (North Korea) is the abbreviation usually applied to the self-styled People's Democratic Republic of Korea at Pyongyang.
- <sup>xi</sup> FECOM, ATIS, *History of the North Korean Army*, 23.
- <sup>xii</sup> FECOM, ATIS, *Documentary Evidence of North Korean Aggression* (InterRpt, Sup No. 2). 65.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Gen Clifton B. Cates, letter to authors, 7 Apr 54 (Cates, 7 Apr 54).
- <sup>xv</sup> Ibid
- <sup>xvi</sup> Ernest H. Giusti, *The Mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve in the Korean Conflict* (Washington, HQMC, G-3, HistSec, 1951), 1-2.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Marine Corps Board, *An Evaluation of the Influence of Marine Corps Forces on the Course of the Korean War* (4 Aug-15 Dec, 1950)
- <sup>xviii</sup> CNO disp to CinCPacFlt, 5 Jul 1950
- <sup>xix</sup> Lynn Montross, *Cavalry of the Sky*, (New York; Harper. 1954), Chapter VII.
- <sup>xx</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion Special Action Report (SAR) 7-29 Aug 50, 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade
- <sup>xxi</sup> CG, FMFPac memo for the record. Visit to Far East Command, 11 Jul 50.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Quoted in Lynn Montross, *War Through the Ages* (New York, Harper, 1946.)
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Col. J. L. Stewart interv with authors, 15 Jan, 1954.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> CINCFE, disp to JCS Jul 1950.
- <sup>xxv</sup> JCS disp to CINCFE, 20 Jul 50.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> JCS msg 86778 CINFE 22 Jul 50
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Col. R. L. Murray interv with author, 15 Feb 54.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Col. J. L. Stewart interv with authors, 15 Jan, 1954.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Craig, 15 Apr 1954
- <sup>xxx</sup> 24 InfDiv Ops Instr. 24-28 Jul 50.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> ibid
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Brig Op Plan 3-50; Craig, 25 Jan 54.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Stewart, 15 Jan 1954
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Craig, 25 Jan 54
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Ibid
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Murray, 15 Feb 1954
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> ibid
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Ibid
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Craig, 25 Jan 54.
- <sup>xl</sup> Ibid, 25 Jan 54.
- <sup>xli</sup> *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea 1905-1953*, Vol.1., by Mr. Lynn Montross and Captain Nicholas A. Canzona, USMC

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