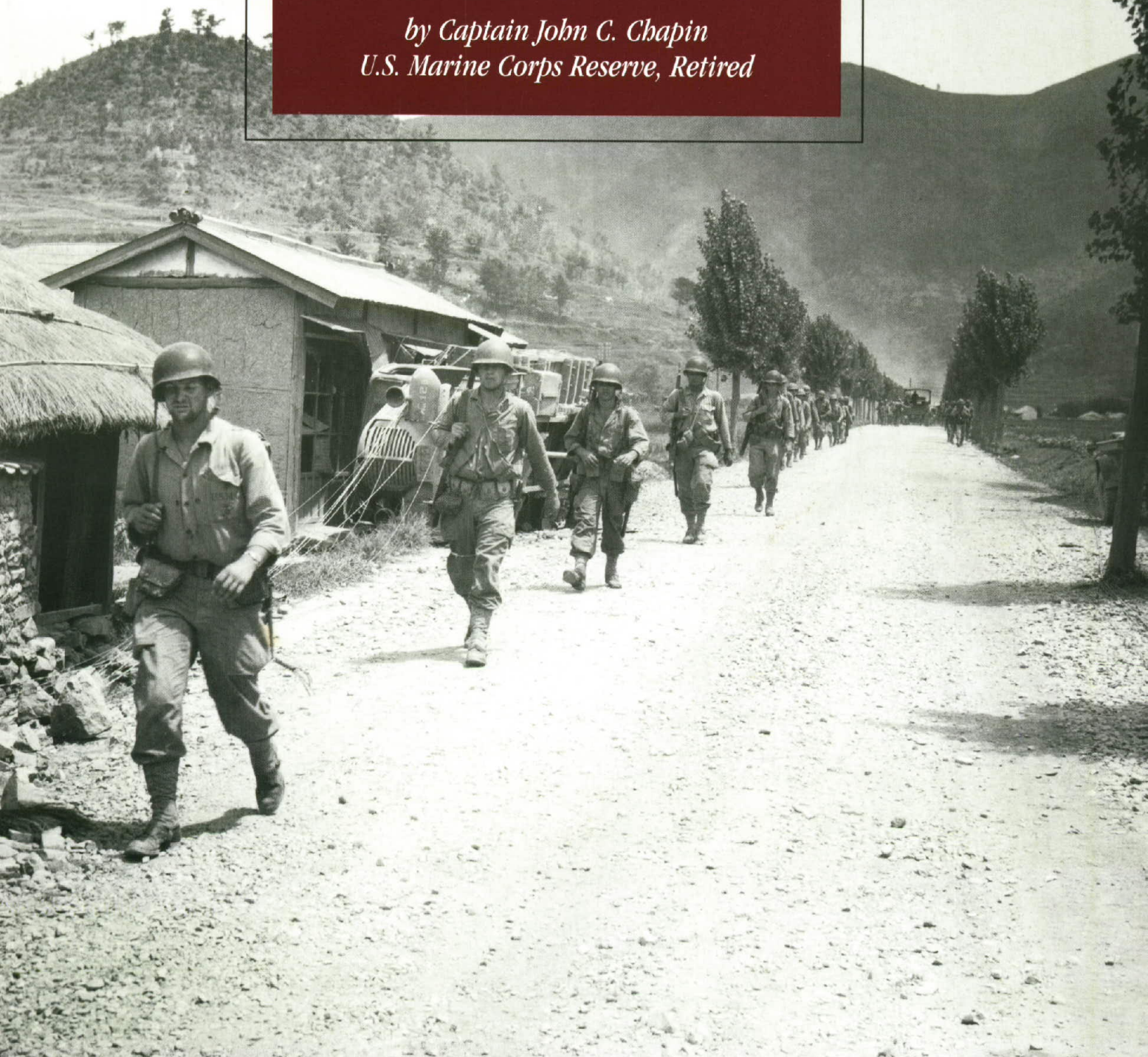


FIRE BRIGADE

U.S. Marines in the Pusan Perimeter

*by Captain John C. Chapin
U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Retired*



Marines in the Korean War Commemorative Series



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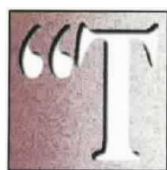
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FIRE BRIGADE

U.S. Marines in the Pusan Perimeter

by Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR (Ret)



The Marines have landed." How familiar the phrase, how extraordinary the circumstances on 2 August 1950. Instead of a beach saturated with enemy fire, the scene was a dock in the port of Pusan in the far southeast corner of Korea. The landing force was the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade; the situation it would soon face was one of desperate crisis.

The men arriving on board the transport ships that day knew they were going into battle, and their brigade commander, Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, had made his combat standards very clear in a meeting with his officers before the ships had sailed from San Diego: "It has been necessary for troops now fighting in Korea to pull back at times, but I am stating now that no unit of this brigade will retreat except on orders from an authority higher than the 1st Marine Brigade. You will never receive an order to retreat from me. All I ask is that you fight as Marines have always fought."

At sea, no one knew where the brigade would be committed to action, and the men knew nothing

ON THE COVER: *Moving up to meet the North Korean forces, Marines pass through one of the many small, battered South Korean villages.* National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A1148

AT LEFT: *Moving to attack: A corporal leads his automatic-rifle man through a rice paddy, oblivious to the dead enemy soldier underfoot.* Photo by David Douglas Duncan

about the forthcoming enemy except it was called the North Korean People's Army (NKPA). On board their ships they had seen the situation maps which daily showed the steadily retreating line of defense, as the enemy drove irresistibly farther and farther into South Korea. The regular physical fitness drills and weapons target practice took on an urgent new sense of purpose for the Marines.

Captain Francis I. "Ike" Fenton, Jr., then executive officer of Company B, later recalled:

While on board ship our training area was limited. It was an impossibility to get the whole company together at one location. Consequently, we used passageways, boat decks, holds—any space we could find to lecture to the men and give them the little information that we had as to what was happening in Korea.

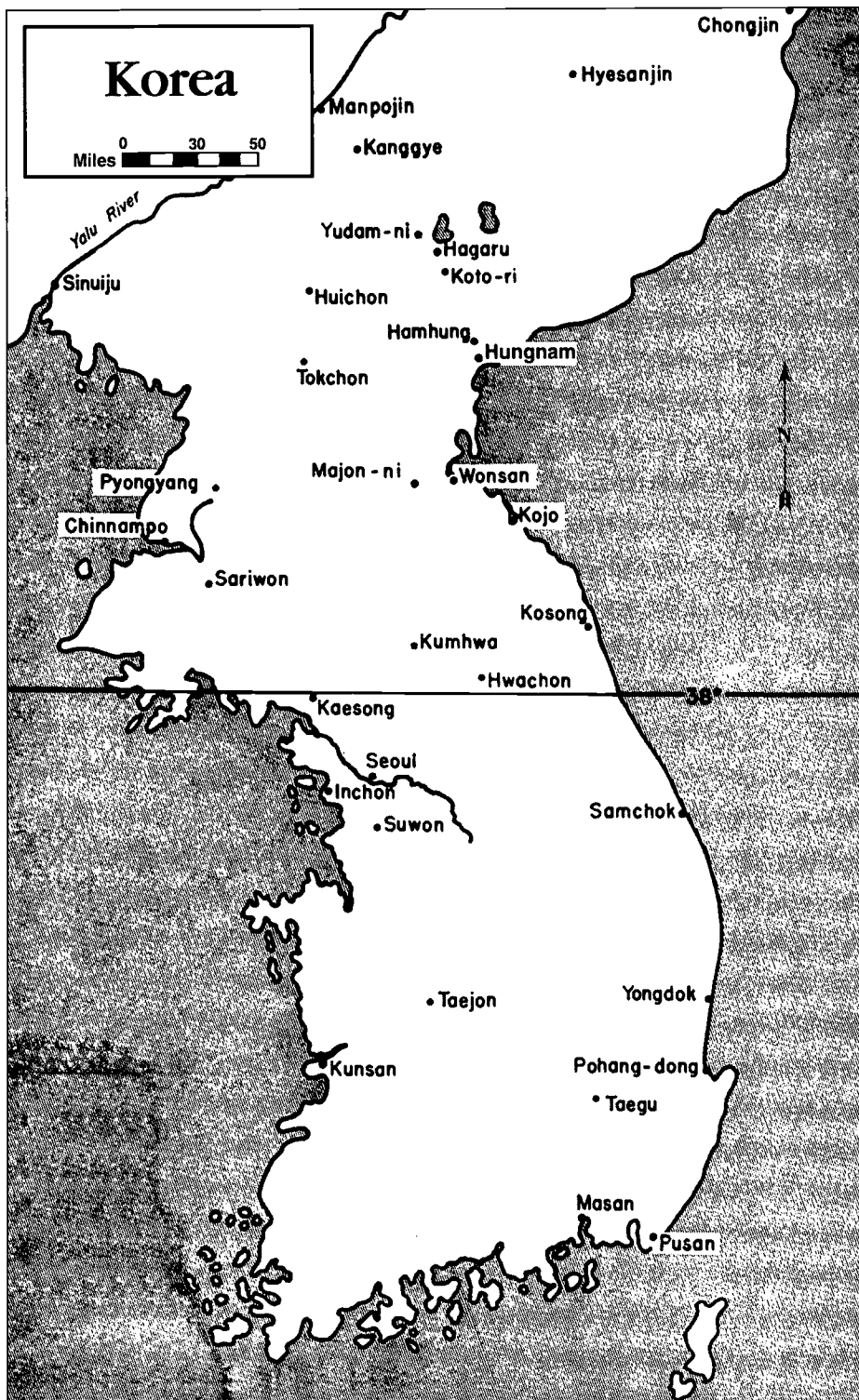
We lectured on the characteristics of the T-34 tank and told the men about the kind of land mines we might expect. A lot of time was spent on blackboard tactics for the fire team, platoon, and company. We had the 3.5 rocket launcher, but no one present had ever fired one.

A variety of old World War II ships had brought the brigade. Task Force 53.7 had 10 ships. Two transports and a light carrier, the *Badoeng Strait* (CVE-116), trans-

ported the air arm, Marine Aircraft Group 33 (MAG-33). Two LSDs (landing ships, dock), two AKAs (cargo ships, attack), and three APAs (transports, attack) provided for the ground units. Pulling up alongside the dock at Pusan, the men of the brigade were split into three main units: the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, on the *George Clymer* (APA-27), known to its passengers as the "Greasy George"; the 3d Battalion on the *Pickaway* (APA-222), with the regimental commander of the 5th Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray, on board; and the 1st Battalion on the *Henrico* (APA-45), which came limping into port last after a series of mechanical problems (even though it was known as the "Happy Hank").

Standing on the pier to meet the men was a disparate group of people: General Craig; Marines who had guarded the U.S. Embassy staff in its perilous journey all the way from the South Korean capital of Seoul to refuge in Pusan; some U.S. Army soldiers; a local band giving an earnest but painfully amateurish rendition of *The Marine Corps Hymn*; crowds of curious South Korean on-lookers; and undoubtedly some North Korean spies.

Craig was shocked to see the Marines watching the docking, as they casually leaned over the rails of their ships. He had previously sent an order through Army channels for the brigade to be prepared to march off the ships, combat ready, with weapons loaded. His



Craig concluded: "The Pusan perimeter is like a weakened dike and we will be used to plug holes in it as they open. We're a brigade, a fire brigade. It will be costly fighting against a numerically superior enemy. Marines have never yet lost a battle; this brigade will not be the first to establish such a precedent."

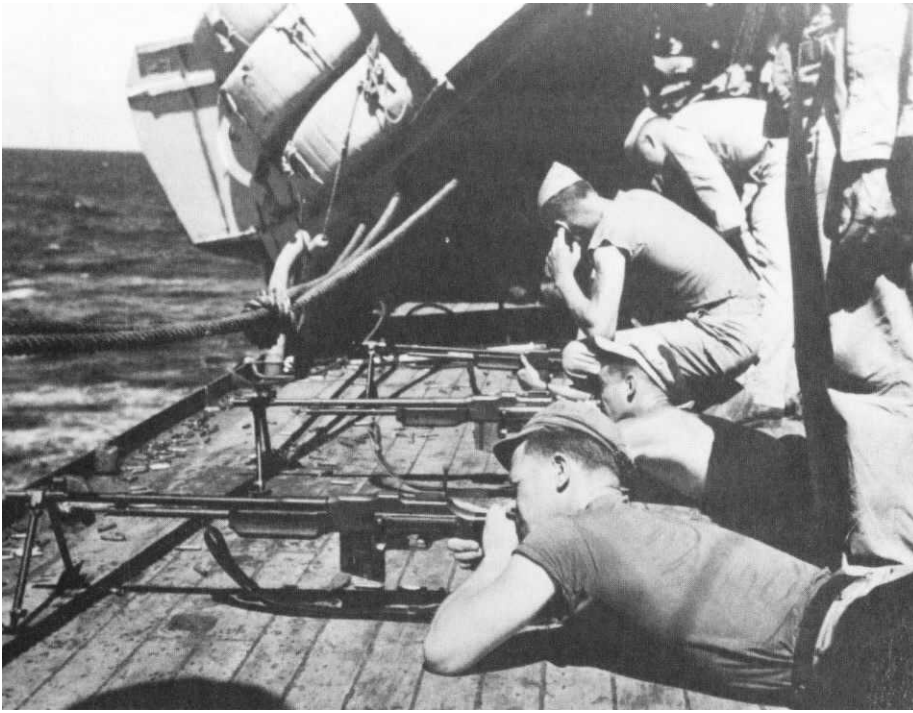
After a night of bedlam on the waterfront, 9,400 tons of supplies had been unloaded, but the brigade was to travel light, so most of these supplies and all personal baggage had to be left behind. Thus it was that the brigade was ready to move out on the morning of 3 August.

There was still uncertainty as to exactly where the men would enter combat. Walker's headquarters had telephoned Craig at midnight and told him to move the brigade to a town called Changwon, where Walker would temporarily hold the Marines in Eighth Army reserve. This would position the brigade strategically if Walker decided that his most pressing danger was an enemy breakthrough threat by the NKPA 6th Infantry Division and the 83d Motorcycle Regiment. The division was a highly professional, well-trained unit of Chinese Civil War veterans, and it had won a series of smashing victories since the invasion of South Korea a month earlier. Now these units had seized the town of Chinju and were poised to strike at the far southwestern corner of Walker's defense lines. Masan was their next probable target, and that was only 35 miles from Pusan.

The scene on the waterfront that morning was a study in contrasts. On one hand was the panicky atmosphere of the city of Pusan. A Marine officer felt it immediately: "A tension and excitement that was palpable . . . you could sense—

immediate, sharp inquiry to an officer on board revealed that his orders had never been received at sea. Accordingly, Craig immediately convened an officers' conference on the *Clymer*. His G-3, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph L. Stewart, announced that the brigade would move out at 0600 the following morning. This meant

the men would spend the whole night unloading the ships and issuing full supplies of ammunition and rations, so that the brigade could move out on time. After making clear that he did not yet know where the brigade would be sent by Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, the commanding officer of the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea,



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A1229

Life on board ship was busy as the Marines prepared for battle. Here three of them are test-firing their Browning Automatic Rifles.

almost feel—fear. The people were scared to death. The North Koreans were very close.”

On the other hand, there stood the solid, poised brigade which, with its aviation components, totaled 6,534 men. The three rifle battalions each had only two rifle companies, but, taken from the skeleton 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, was a wide range of auxiliary units: a company each from the division’s Signal, Motor Transport, Medical, Shore Party, Engineer, Ordnance, and Tank Battalions; detachments from the Service Battalion, Combat Service Group, Reconnaissance, and Military Police Companies; the 1st Amphibian Tractor Company; and Amphibian Truck Platoon. The 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, with three firing batteries, was also attached to provide the vital artillery support.

These units were permeated with an *esprit de corps* that was unique to the Marines. Author T. R. Fehrenbach had this analysis in his

book, *This Kind of War*.

In 1950 a Marine Corps officer was still an officer, and a sergeant behaved the way good sergeants had behaved since the time of Caesar,

Other Marines, in this case members of Company E, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, buddled intently over instructions in the use of their light machine guns.

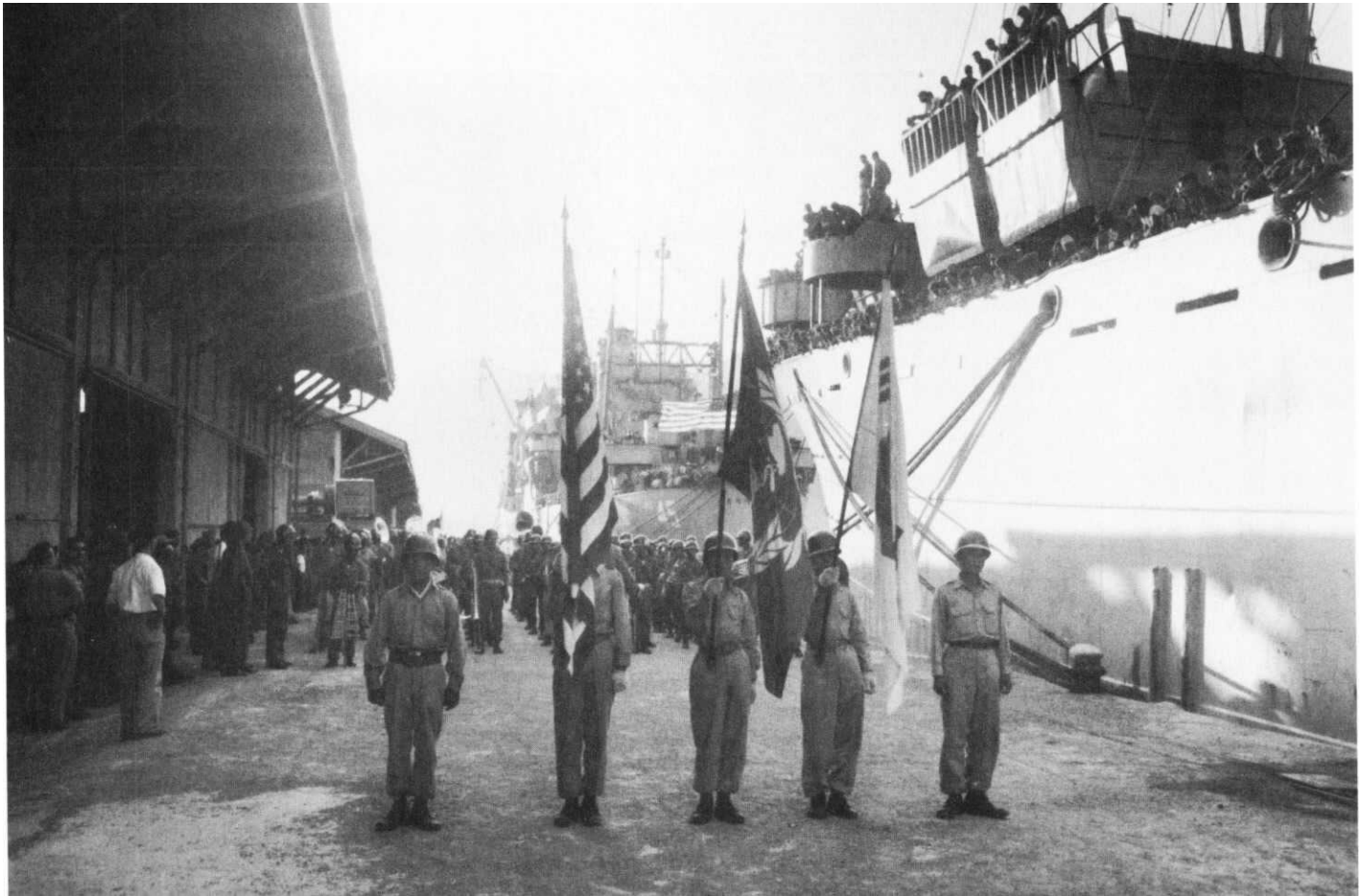
National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A1291



expecting no nonsense, allowing none. And Marine leaders had never lost sight of their primary—their only—mission, which was to fight. The Marine Corps was not made pleasant for men who served in it. It remained the same hard, brutal way of life it had always been.

In 1950 . . . these men walked with a certain confidence and swagger. They were only young men like those about them in Korea, but they were conscious of a standard to live up to, because they had had good training, and it had been impressed upon them that they were United States Marines.

Those young men of 1950 undoubtedly did not know that their predecessors had been to Korea before—four times, in fact. There had been a brief skirmish in 1871 (where the Marines were fired upon by a cannon dated 1313!). Subsequent landings took



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A1257

A color guard from the South Korean Army, carrying the colors of the United States, the United Nations, and South Korea, joins with a Korean band to greet 1st Provisional Brigade Marines on the dock at Pusan.

place in 1888 and 1894, and in 1905 Marines served as the Legation Guard in Seoul—little dreaming of the ordeal their successors there would undergo 45 years later.

Two things that were prominently visible on the pier were the 3.5-inch rocket launchers (“ba-zookas”) and the M-26 Pershing tanks which equipped the Marines—new weapons that the battered Army divisions lacked.

Invisible, but fundamental to the action that lay ahead, were the qualities that had been ingrained into the Marines themselves. Joseph C. Goulden in *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* described the men this way: “They had been in combat training in the United States; they arrived in cohesive units in

which officers and men had served together for months They insisted on controlling their own air support in coordinated actions based upon years of experience.” Another writer, Clay Blair, in *The Forgotten War*, pointed out that “the ranks were filled with physically tough young men who had joined the corps to fight, not to sightsee. The Marines had superior firepower in squads, platoons, and companies.”

However, amongst all the units in the Pusan Perimeter there was one point of similarity. Except for senior generals, no one—soldier or Marine—had more than a vague idea of how or why they came to be there in a life-or-death situation in a country of which they had never heard five weeks before.

High-Level Decisions

The actual events that had led up to the brigade being poised on that dock were a tangled skein of high-level meetings, flurries of orders, and long-distance airplane trips that spanned half the globe from New York to Washington, D.C., to California, to Honolulu, and to Tokyo.

It all began when alarm bells went off in the pre-dawn of 25 June 1950 at the United Nations in New York and the U.S. State Department in Washington. There had been a violent, surprise attack across the 38th Parallel, an invasion of South Korea by some 90,000 well-trained, heavily armed soldiers of the North Korean Peoples Army (NKPA). As the star-



Brigadier General Edward A. Craig

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.

ting news continued to pour in, it quickly became apparent that the half-trained, lightly armed Republic of Korea (ROK) troops defending South Korea were being smashed and overrun.

At an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council that same afternoon, followed by another two days later (27 June), there was a decision to call for armed force to repel the invaders. That was all that was needed for General Clifton B. Cates, Commandant of the Marine Corps, to seize the initiative. The next day, 28 June, he arranged a meeting with Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations, and Francis P. Matthews, Secretary of the Navy, and he recommended that the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) "be employed." Their reaction was noncommittal, since U.S. ground forces were not yet involved in South Korea. Cates, however, had learned over a long career a few things about combat—whether it was called by a euphemism such as "police action," as in this case, or was realistically a "war," in several of which he had distinguished himself. Acting upon instinct, when he returned from the indecisive meeting, he sent a warning order to the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, California, to get ready to go to war. (Due to peacetime cuts, the strength of the entire Marine Corps at that time was only 74,279, with 11,853 in the division and its accompanying aircraft wing. Thus, in reality, the "division" was little more than a reinforced regimental combat team in fighting strength, and the "wing" little more than a Marine air group.

Cates' gut reaction was confirmed the following day, on 29 June, when President Harry S. Truman authorized General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief, Far East, in

Tokyo, to use the U.S. naval, ground, and air units he had available to support the desperate Republic of Korea forces.

Now there ensued examples of the arcane complexities of high-level decision-making at a time of great stress. At Cates' urging, Admiral Sherman asked Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, how long it would take to ship out a Marine regimental combat team (RCT). Radford replied on 2 July: "load in six days, sail in ten." Then, in a time-honored communications procedure for top-ranking officers, Sherman sent a private message for the eyes of MacArthur via his naval commander in the Far East, Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, asking if the general would like a Marine RCT. Swamped with bad news from South Korea, MacArthur accepted immediately with "unusual enthusiasm."

Accordingly, he fired off to Sherman in Washington, D.C., that same day (2 July) an urgent radio request for a Marine RCT and a supporting Marine aircraft group (MAG).

A Brigade is Born

Sherman took the request to a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) for their decision. Although the Commandant of the Marine Corps was not, at that time, a member of the JCS, Cates felt that, since the decision directly affected "his Marines," he should be involved in it. Showing up uninvited at the meeting, he was allowed to join it in view of the disastrous news from the Korean front.

The JCS voted to commit the Marine RCT and MAG, and with Truman's concurrence, gave MacArthur the good news on 3 July. (Cates later asked Sherman how it had all come about, and the



M-26 Pershing Medium Tank and Its North Korean Counterpart

The M-26 Pershing, shown above, was the backbone of Marine armor during the first half of the Korean War. The 1st Tank Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, at Camp Pendleton, replaced its M-4A3 Sherman tanks with Pershings during the summer of 1950, shortly after the invasion of South Korea.

Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, sailed for Korea with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade after having been able to test drive and fire only two of its new tanks. While enroute, 14 tanks were damaged when the cargo hold of a ship flooded. Landing at Pusan in August 1950, the tank crews had a brief familiarization period before going into action. In concert with the close-air support of Corsairs, 75mm recoilless rifles, and 3.5-inch rocket launchers, the tanks gave the brigade a level of firepower that proved very effective against the North Korean enemy.

Technical Data

Engine:	Ford V-8 gasoline, liquid-cooled, 500HP
Dimensions:	Length: 20 feet 8 inches Width: 11 feet 4 inches Height: 9 feet 1 inches
Weight:	46 tons
Maximum Speed:	On roads: 30mph Cross country: 18mph
Radius of Action:	On roads: 92 miles Cross country: 62 miles
Crew:	5
Armament:	One 90mm M3 gun Two .30-caliber machine guns M1919A4 (bow & coaxial) One .50-caliber M2 machine gun on turret

T-34 North Korean Medium Tank

After great success early in the war and acquiring a fearsome reputation, the T-34, not shown, met its nemesis in the Marines' anti-tank weapons. Supplied from Russian stocks, it weighed 32,000 kilograms and carried a crew of five men. A V-12 diesel engine gave it an off-road speed of 30 kilometers per hour. Armament was an 85mm gun, supplemented by two 7.62mm machine guns.

admiral replied in a baseball metaphor: “From Cates to Sherman, to Joy, to MacArthur, to JCS!”)

Now Cates (and the Marine Corps) had to deliver. On 7 July he had the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade activated, but then a monumental effort, carried out at a frantic pace, was needed to assemble the essential manpower, equipment, and weapons—and to do all that in one week flat!

The initial building blocks were there, the 5th Marines at Camp Pendleton and MAG-33 at the nearby El Toro Marine Air Station. The critical manpower problem was to flesh out these units from their peacetime reductions so that they could fight with maximum effectiveness. By telegraph and telephone orders went out to regular Marines all over the country: “get to Pendleton NOW!” And so they came pouring in day and



The 3.5-Inch Rocket Launcher

The 3.5-inch rocket launcher (also known as the “Super Bazooka”) offered the infantryman a portable rocket weapon, designed to be used as an anti-tank defense. Introduced in early 1950, the 3.5-inch launcher gave the Marine Corps the means to pierce any armored vehicle from a greater distance than previous launchers, and with improved accuracy.

The M20 3.5-inch launcher appeared after its predecessor, the 2.36-inch launcher (developed in World War II), proved ineffective against the Russian tanks in Korea. The M20 was a two-piece, smooth-bore weapon formed by connecting the front and rear barrels together. Weighing only 12 pounds with an assembled length of 60 inches, the 3.5-inch launcher was easily transportable and could be fired from a standing, sitting, or prone position. The M20 rocket had a “shaped charge” that concentrated the force of the explosion on a very small area, thus allowing the projectile to penetrate armor plate as thick as 11 inches. In addition to the weapon’s deadly force, a unique gunsight that allowed for various ranges and speeds provided the 3.5 an accuracy up to 900 yards.



Marine Corps Historical Center Photo
General Clifton B. Cates

night by bus and plane and train, a flood of men from 105 posts and stations.

Captain “Ike” Fenton long remembered the ensuing problems:

These men were shipped from the posts and stations by air, most of them arriving with just a handbag. Their seabags were to be forwarded at a later date. They didn’t have dog tags and had no health records to tell us how many shots they needed. Their clothing generally consisted of khaki only, although a few had greens.

They had no weapons and their 782 equipment was incomplete. We had a problem of trying to organize these men into a platoon and getting them all squared away before our departure date.

Other officers recalled odd aspects of those hectic days: no one got any sleep; some men were detailed to help in the filming of

Hollywood's "Halls of Montezuma"; other men were detailed to fight fires in the Santa Margarita Mountains. The supply crisis was overcome by a precipitous change from an attitude of "counting shoelaces" to "take whatever you need." Acquisition of the new 3.5-inch rocket launcher was made possible by shipments from all over the country. There was an influx of senior staff noncommissioned officers, some of whom were physically unfit, and this led to some sergeants major being assigned to ride shotgun on ambulance jeeps. A number of World War II officers with no infantry experience also arrived.

The 5th Marines was beefed up by an emergency authorization to add a third platoon to each of the two rifle companies, but it proved impossible to get a third rifle company for each of the three battalions. This was a serious shortage. It meant that the battalions would have to go into battle without a company they could use for maneuver or have in reserve. And that would cause extra casualties in the weeks ahead. There were, however, two compensating factors for the shortages. First, the regiment was a well-trained, cohesive unit. Murray put it this way: "We had been extremely lucky, in the previous year we had virtually no turnover . . . so that we had a regiment which, for all intents and purposes, had been together for a full year, training."

Second, 90 percent of the brigade's officers had seen combat before on the bloody beaches and in the jungles of the Pacific. This was also the case for two-thirds of the staff noncommissioned officers. Here was a group of leaders well prepared for the rigors of combat.

With the addition of supporting units hastily assembled, a rein-



Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray

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 2d Division, he was awarded the Silver Star in January 1943 for his service as Commanding Officer, 2d 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 Medal.

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, 3d 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.

forced RCT came into being. Such a unit normally would be commanded by a full colonel, but this case was different. As then-Lieutenant Colonel Murray later recalled:

I was sure that a colonel would be brought in. It wasn't until sometime later when I was talking to [Major] General [Graves B.] Erskine [commanding the 1st Marine Division] . . . and he told me that when this broke, General Cates told him, "I'll get you a colonel as soon as I can to get out and take the regiment," and General Erskine said he told General Cates, "Don't need one. I've got somebody who can take the regiment."

Along with the manpower problem came materiel problems. The peacetime economies forced on all the military Services by political decisions in Washington had hit hard the resources of equipment,

supplies, and weapons. The Marine Corps, however, had an ace up its sleeve for just such a high pressure, short-deadline situation as this.

Tucked away in the California desert was the huge Marine Supply Depot at Barstow. It had been filled five years earlier by following a prudent, far-seeing policy that countless past emergencies had taught the Marine Corps: "When you get a chance to stock up, do it, because you'll never know when you'll really need it!"

Thus, at the end of World War II, Marine salvage teams had looked around the Pacific islands for abandoned equipment. Then they brought it back to Barstow, repainted it "Marine green," stenciled "USMC" on it, and "mothballed" it for future use. From this treasure trove came the old jeeps, the old trucks, and the old amphibian tractors that would be so vital to the brigade's operations. Brand new, however, were the M-26 tanks with their 90mm guns. The Marines in

the 1st Tank Battalion had trained in a different, older tank with different armament, and their race to switch over, train, and prepare for embarkation was typical of the pressure to which all hands were subjected. (Each tanker got to fire exactly two rounds before departure.)

It was the same frantic scene at El Toro as MAG-33 struggled to get its aviators and planes up to combat readiness. As with the ground troops, the organizational units were mere peacetime skeletons. Thus the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (1st MAW) was a wing in name only, and had to be stripped bare just to give MAG-33 what it needed.

Adding a wholly new resource were "the first helicopter pilots of the United States Armed Forces to be formed into a unit for overseas combat service." They came from Quantico, Virginia, where, since 1947, the Marine Corps had pioneered helicopter combat techniques. On their arrival, there were just 48 hours to join up the four HO3S-1 helicopters with the four usable OY-2 observation planes, and have Marine Observation Squadron 6 (VMO-6) ready to ship out.

Somehow, it was done under the unbelievable pressure of time, and the brigade air-ground team was ready to sail on schedule. There was one final vignette that exemplified the morale of the men. A reporter-photographer, David Douglas Duncan, in his book, *This is War!*, described a scene where General Craig had spoken to a mass meeting of his men just before they went on board ship. When they heard they were headed for Korea and Craig referred to the traditional Marine role, "the men were dead-panned . . . expressionless." But Duncan continued:

When a brigade goes to war, it needs a lot of supplies and equipment. Here Marines labor on the dock at San Diego to load up the ships that will take them to war.

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A1063



Then Craig, with his Brigade Surgeon standing at his side, told his men that as long as there were any Marines alive in Korea who could still fire a rifle, or toss a grenade, no other Marines would be left behind upon the battlefield, either wounded or dead. Over four thousand men shouted in unison as his Leathernecks gleefully slugged each other in the ribs, grinned happily and wanted to know when the hell they were going aboard ship.

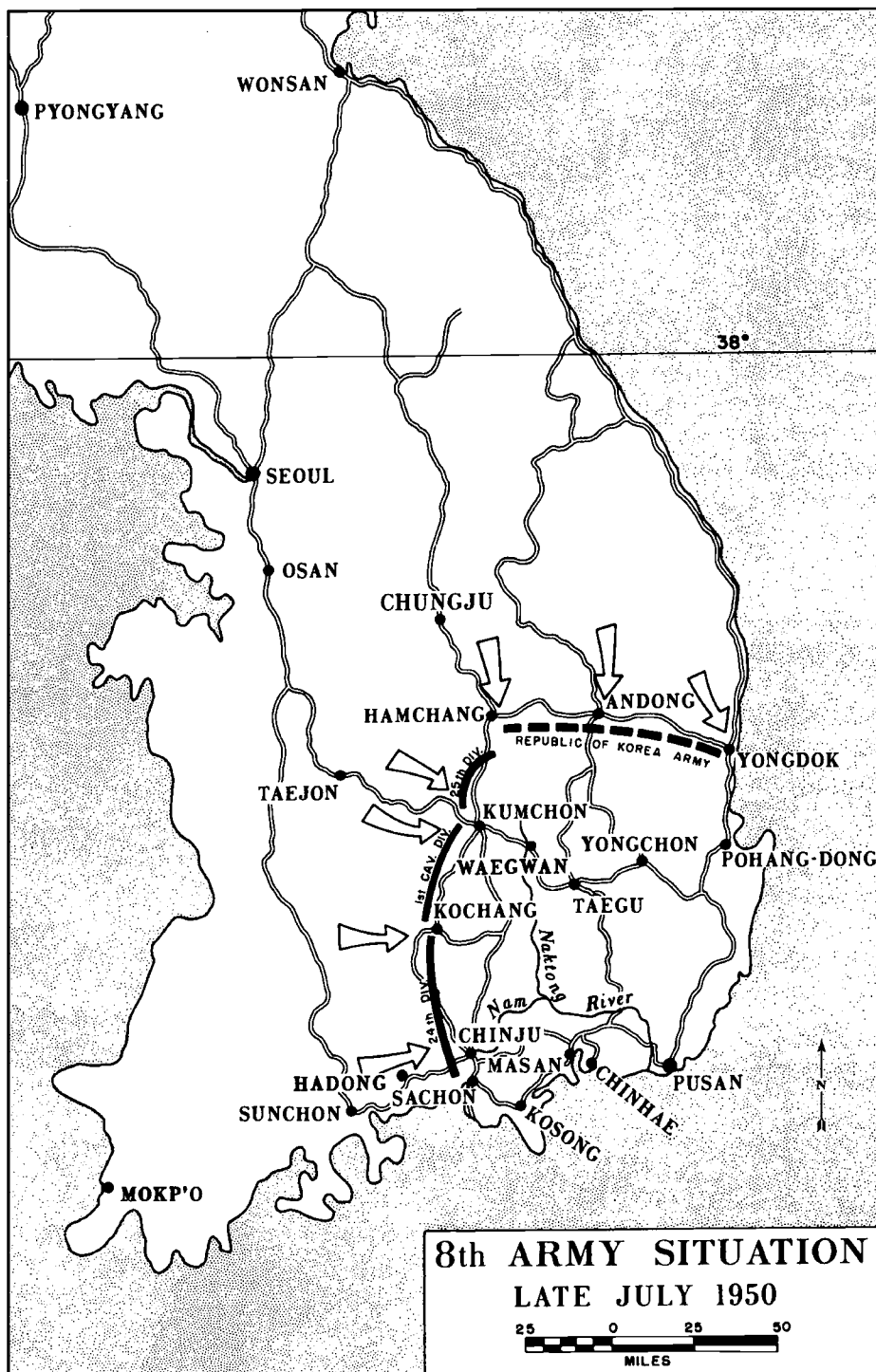
On 14 July the ships left San Diego, taking Marines to combat once more.

Preparing the Way

With the troops enroute at sea, General Craig and Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman had boarded an airplane and flown to Hawaii. There they met with Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (FMFPac). Craig underscored the painful shortage of rifle companies; the missing 105mm howitzers in his artillery, the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines; and his lack of motor transport.

Flying on to Tokyo on 19 July, the two Marine generals went quickly to meet General MacArthur. Craig made his feelings very clear:

While talking to General MacArthur, I informed him that we were on a peace-strength basis, that we were an air-ground team and had trained as such at Pendleton and would be very effective if left intact. However, I told him that if they took our air force away from us, our fighting



potential would be cut about 99 percent as far as I was concerned.

MacArthur went on to assure Craig that the Marines could retain their planes, and he so informed Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, commander of the U.S. Far East Air Forces. This was a great relief to Craig, who later stated that "Stratemeyer was very anxious to

get Marine air under his command as soon as they arrived in that area."

The discussion continued on a harmonious note, with MacArthur saying, "I'm very glad to have you here with the 1st Brigade." When he learned of Craig's manpower shortages, he directed that a dispatch go to the JCS requesting full war strength for the brigade. (During this time, messages continued to fly back and forth regarding



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A1185

The men of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade have landed in Pusan, Korea, and are marched off to combat.

the mobilization of the full 1st Marine Division for a future campaign that MacArthur was already planning. This led to the call-up of Marine Reserves on 19 July.)

The meeting ended with a directive from MacArthur to set up billets for the brigade in Japan. It was not to be. The situation in Korea had degenerated to a near-collapse. U.S. Army troops had been rushed from comfortable occupation duty in Japan to bolster the reeling ROK divisions. Things had gone badly—very badly. The official Army history recounts a continuous series of problems: tanks ambushed, sentries asleep, soldiers killed while riding in trucks instead of marching, repeated retreats, communication breakdowns, etc. The history characterizes the situation at the time the Marine brigade arrived by stating: “Walker was concerned about the failure of his troops to carry out orders to maintain contact with the enemy.” Overall, it summarized the crisis in stark language: “Never afterwards were conditions as critical . . .

Never again did the North Koreans come as close to victory.”

Faced with this situation, Walker, as ground commander, had withdrawn all the troops into a last-stand enclave called the Pusan Perimeter.

This was a 60-by-90-mile rectangle with the Sea of Japan on the east, the Korean Strait on the south, the Nakdong River on the west, and a line of mountains on the north. It did have one advantage crucial to Walker. This was his ability, in this constricted area, to use his interior lines of movement to set up a final defensive perimeter with the capacity to rush emergency reinforcements to quell any serious enemy threat where a breakthrough seemed imminent.

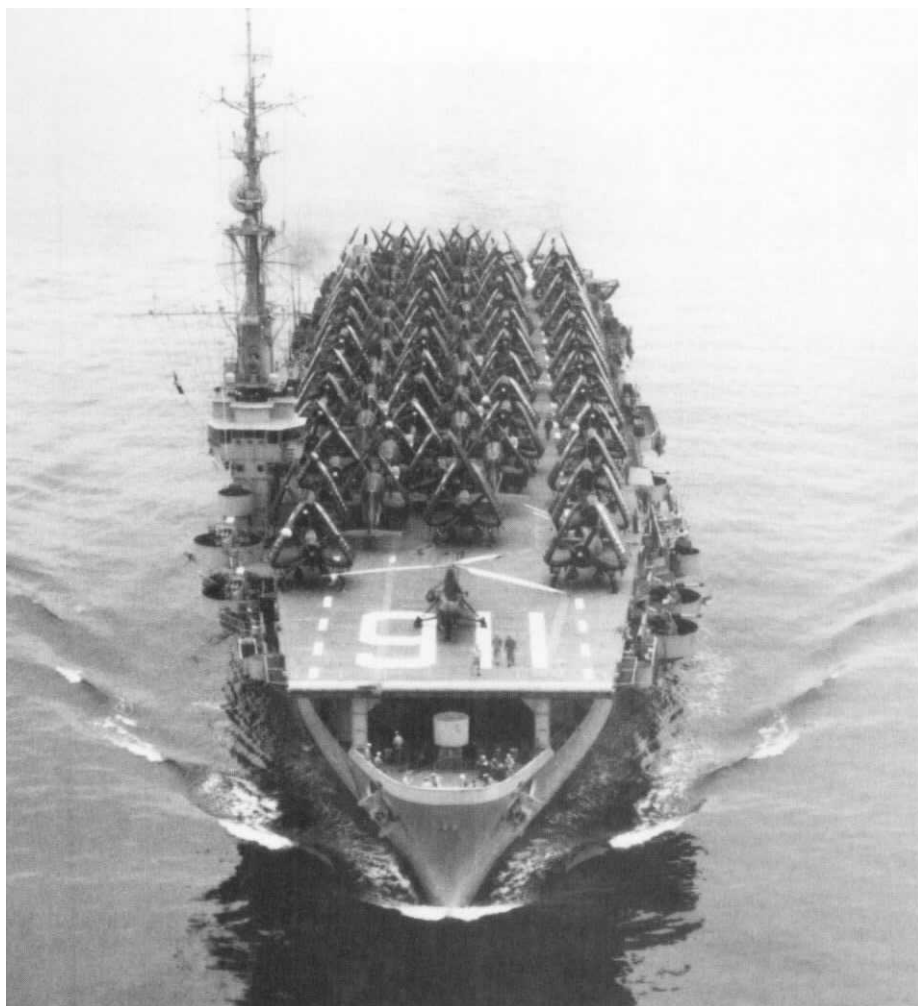
With the whole beachhead on the Korean Peninsula now in such peril, Craig received new, urgent orders on 25 July: the brigade would go straight to Korea to serve as Walker’s “fire brigade” where most needed. The next day Craig was in Taegu, Walker’s headquarters in South Korea. He used his

stay there to absorb all possible information on the fluid situation on the front lines—including a careful aerial survey he made of sites where his brigade might be thrown into action.

On 30 July, Craig headed for Pusan, set up a temporary command post, and wrote out a preliminary operations order for the brigade as the NKPA tide rolled over Chinju and headed for nearby Masan. Arrangements were made with MAG-33 in Japan to be ready for action the moment the brigade arrived on board its transports.

The next day, still without a decision by Walker on the deployment of the brigade, Craig sensed the threat to Masan, looming such a short distance from Pusan, as a probable priority. Accordingly, he decided to supplement his previous aerial view with a ground reconnaissance by jeep. Then he waited tensely for his brigade to arrive.

It came 2 August; it moved out 3 August. One historian, Donald Knox, crystallized that moment in



National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-416920

The F4U Corsairs of VMF-214, VMF-323, and VMF(N)-513, with a helicopter of VMO-6, jam-pack the deck of the USS Badoeng Strait enroute to Pusan.

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 .50-caliber machine guns. Going by train were the precious tanks and some of the men. Duncan, the reporter, described what those kind of trips were like:

his book, *The Korean War*:

The fluid situation the brigade would encounter in the Pusan Perimeter would demand the very elements the Marines had in abundance—courage, initiative, élan . . . morale in the rifle companies was extremely high. In spite of what they'd heard, the Marines knew the North Koreans could be beaten. The Marine Corps was sending to Korea the best it had.

The Fire Brigade Goes to War: Crisis Number One

It was an early start; at 0600 on 3 August the "fire brigade" moved

The first stage of moving up to the front was no prob-

Loading up the old Korean railroad cars, the men have their packs full, and carry entrenching tools, as they head for their Changwon staging area.

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A1181





Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman

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.

lem, 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 planes 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 planes 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 planes and helicopters from the streets of Kobe. Four of its helicopters and four of its OY planes 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 planes to the Far East. (An even earlier mission—the first for Marine planes—had been on 4 July when two F4U Corsair photographic planes 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



Vought F4U-4B Corsair

The familiar Vought F4U Corsair emerged out of World War II synonymous with American victory in the Pacific and became the aircraft most closely associated with Marine Corps aviation. The Corsair was a versatile, tough, and heavy fighter-bomber and night-fighter, and was easily recognized by its distinctive inverted gull wings. At the conclusion of the war, Vought's concentration was in the limited production of the F4U-4 models, producing 2,356 up to 1947.

The 4B model was equipped with a 2,100 horsepower engine of the Pratt and Whitney R-2800-18W type. The aircraft had a top speed of almost 450 mph, a climb rate of 3,870 feet per minute, and a range of more than 1,000 miles. Operational altitudes could be reached as high as 41,500 feet. Standard armament for the 4B were the awesome six .50-caliber machine guns, and a payload capability of eight 5-inch rockets and up to 4,000 pounds of ordnance.

When the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade made its entry into the Korean War, supporting the Marines on the ground were both Navy squadrons and, in particular, the Marine units from the carriers *Badoeng Strait* and *Sicily*, VMF-214, better known as the Black Sheep Squadron, and VMF-323, the Death Rattlers Squadron.

Starting on 7 August 1950, VMF-214 and -323, both of which had effectively absorbed the lessons of close air support during WWII, provided the brigade support by having four to 10 Corsairs continuously overhead. Flying a total of 6,575 combat support missions, the favorite ordnance carried for close air support missions was napalm, deadly jellied gasoline that was most effective against NKPA armor. The Corsairs usually carried two 150-gallon napalm bombs that weighed approximately 1,400 pounds apiece.

During the month of August, the close air support missions from *Badoeng Strait* and *Sicily* gave everyone a lasting impression. Observing from the ground, said an Army soldier of the Marine aviators: "The effectiveness of Marine close air support astonished Army troops fighting alongside the Leathernecks." On 18 August, several hundred NKPA fell under the Death Rattler's Corsairs' merciless air assault that pounded their retreat across the Naktong River.



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A130913

The eyes of the brigade: the OY light observation plane was invaluable in the rugged terrain and endless hills.

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.

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.

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 obliga-

tions. 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 planes 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.

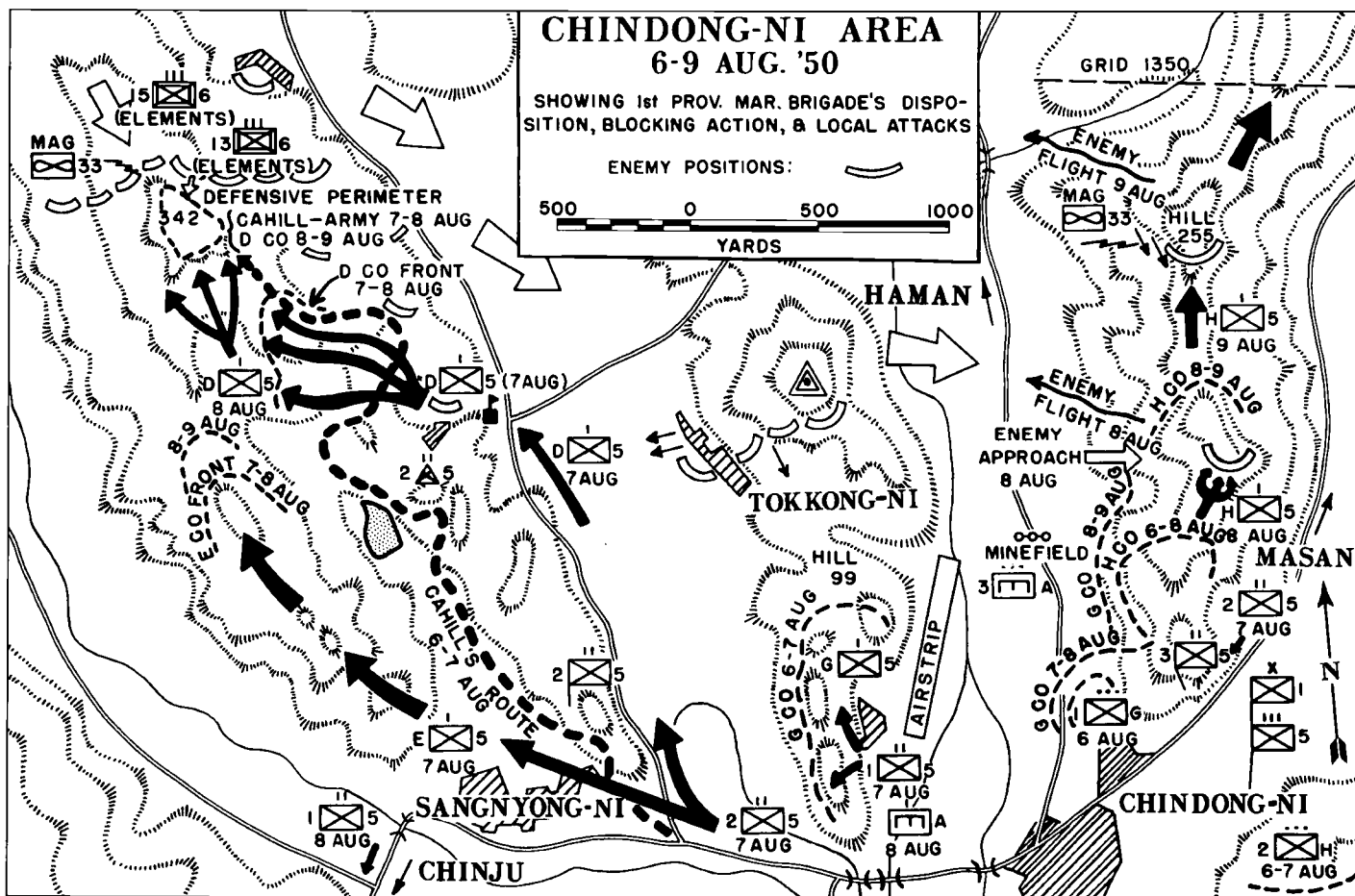
Although a little trigger-happy, we were ready for combat, even though situated behind the so-called front-lines. During the few days we were at Changwon, we knew we were observed by enemy observation posts and patrols off on the flank. They did not

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



Weapons

A Marine in a rifle company had a wide variety of weapons that he could use himself, or that were available in other units to support him. As always, his basic weapon was his rifle.

U.S. Rifle, .30-Caliber, M1

The .30-caliber M1 rifle was a gas-operated, clip-fed, air-cooled, semi-automatic weapon. It weighed 9.5 pounds, had an average rate of aimed fire of 30 rounds per minute, a muzzle velocity of 2,600-2,800 feet per second, and a bullet clip capacity of eight rounds. Inherited from World War II, the M1 provided strong and accurate firepower for the rifleman.

U.S. Carbine, .30-Caliber, M1

The .30-caliber M1 carbine was a gas-operated, magazine-fed, air-cooled, semi-automatic shoulder weapon. The weight was only 5.75 pounds. Eight inches shorter than the M1 rifle, it had a muzzle velocity of just 2,000 feet per second, and a magazine capacity of 15 rounds. This size and weight led to its issuance to officers, although it lacked the hitting power of the M1.

Automatic Pistol, .45-Caliber, M1911A1

Regardless of what was officially prescribed, a number of Marines carried a .45-caliber automatic pistol in Korea. This was a time-honored weapon featured in the lore of the Corps. Described as a recoil-operated, magazine-fed, self-loading hand weapon, the .45-caliber weighed 2.76 pounds when fully loaded, was 8.59 inches in length, and had a capacity of seven rounds. The muzzle velocity was 802 feet per second, while the maximum effective range for the troops using it was only 25 yards. In close combat, it often proved invaluable.

To furnish a high volume of direct fire in support of the rifle platoons, there were three types of automatic weapons.

Browning, .30-Caliber, M1919A4

The .30-caliber "Browning" light machine gun was a recoil-operated, belt-fed, air-cooled weapon. It weighed 31 pounds, but with its tripod mount that rose to 49.75 pounds. While the "cyclical" rate of fire was 400-550 rounds per minute, the "usable" rate was really 150 rounds per minute. Muzzle velocity varied between 2,600 to 2,800 feet per second, depending on the cartridge used.

Browning, .30-Caliber, M1917A1

The "Browning" .30-caliber water-cooled "heavy" machine gun was extensively used in the battle for Seoul and in the trenches at the end of the war. Its effective rate of fire was 350-450 rounds per minute. With a muzzle velocity of 2,800 feet per minute, in direct fire its maximum effective range was 3,000 yards. This dropped to 300 yards for indirect fire. Its length was 38.5 inches. "Heavy" was an accurate term, since the gun alone

weighed 41 pounds, and its tripod added another 53 pounds. Each ammunition belt contained 250 rounds.

Browning Automatic-Rifle, .30-Caliber, M1918A2

As a mainstay of the rifle squad, the "B-A-R" (as it was always called) was an air-cooled, gas-operated, magazine-fed, shoulder weapon. Weighing 20 pounds, it had a magazine capacity of 20 rounds. The man using it carried still more weight in the magazine pouches on his web belt. Although maximum range could be 5,500 yards, its effective range was 500 yards. There were two cyclical rates of fire for the BAR-man to choose: slow, 350, and normal, 550.

Two other specialized weapons were invaluable for the Marines during Pusan and the subsequent street fighting in Seoul. Against North Korean tanks, strong points, and snipers in buildings, they were deadly.

3.5-Inch Rocket Launcher

Familiarly call the "bazooka," the rocket launcher fired an 8.5-pound rocket with a hollow-shaped charge in its head. It weighed 15 pounds and was usually handled by a two-man team.

75mm Recoilless Rifle

The 75mm recoilless rifle fired conventional shells in a flat trajectory, weighed 105 pounds, and required a tripod in use. Its effective range was 1,000 to 2,000 yards.

Mortars

The 60mm mortar was a smooth-bore, muzzle-loading, high-angle-fire weapon used by a rifle company. With its base plate and bipod support, it weighed 42 pounds. Normal rate of fire was 18 rounds per minute, using either high explosive, white phosphorous, or illuminating shells. These had ranges varying from 1,075 to 1,985 yards.

The 81mm mortar could fire a 6.8 pound high explosive shell up to 3,290 yards. Its weight, combining barrel, base plate, and tripod totaled 136 pounds. Elevation could be varied from 40 to 85 degrees.

The 4.2-inch mortar, affectionately referred to as the "four-deuce," fired a round with more explosive power than a 105mm howitzer. Equivalent to 107mm in caliber, it could fire a 25.5-pound shell up to 4,400 yards. Total weight was 330 pounds.

105mm Howitzer M101A1

As a light, towed field artillery weapon, this was used in direct support of infantry units. A battalion had three batteries with six howitzers each. Weighing 4,950 pounds, the cannon fired a 33-pound shell to a maximum range of 11,000 meters. While usually moved by a truck, a heavy helicopter could also carry it. The 105 needed only three minutes to emplace and could sustain a rate of fire of three rounds per minute.

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 a 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.

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 3d 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 com-

bat 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 victo-

A Marine guides a work detail of South Korean carriers, bringing ammunition and water to the front lines.

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A1303



ries. 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!

Thus, 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 2d 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.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A413601

The pin-point attacks of their Corsairs gave the Marines invaluable close air support. Here the F4Us of VMF-323 are being loaded with rockets on board the USS Badoeng Strait before a mission.

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 2d 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 2d Battalion, 5th RCT. There followed the next morning (7 August), the beginning of a hot day, an agonizing series of hill climbs in untempered 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 3d 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 2d Battalion was sent into action on 7 August. As the NKPA continued to reinforce its troops, the rest of the 2d 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 2d 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 3d 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, that 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 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.

Thus, 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

Exhausted due to the strenuous climb and scorching heat, Marines establish a hasty perimeter on a hillcrest west of Chindong-ni. Chindong-ni would be where they got their

“first taste of the enemy,” whom they found to be “spirited, tenacious, and well trained.”

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A12036



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 planes of MAG-33 were also daily demonstrating their worth. The OYs had bomb racks attached to their wing struts, thus 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 planes 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 2d 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 3d 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



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A2262

Supporting fire from the howitzers of the 11th Marines was a crucial prelude to every attack of the riflemen.

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 gruelling 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 gruelling 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 thus 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. Heintz, Jr., in *Soldiers of the Sea* summed it up:

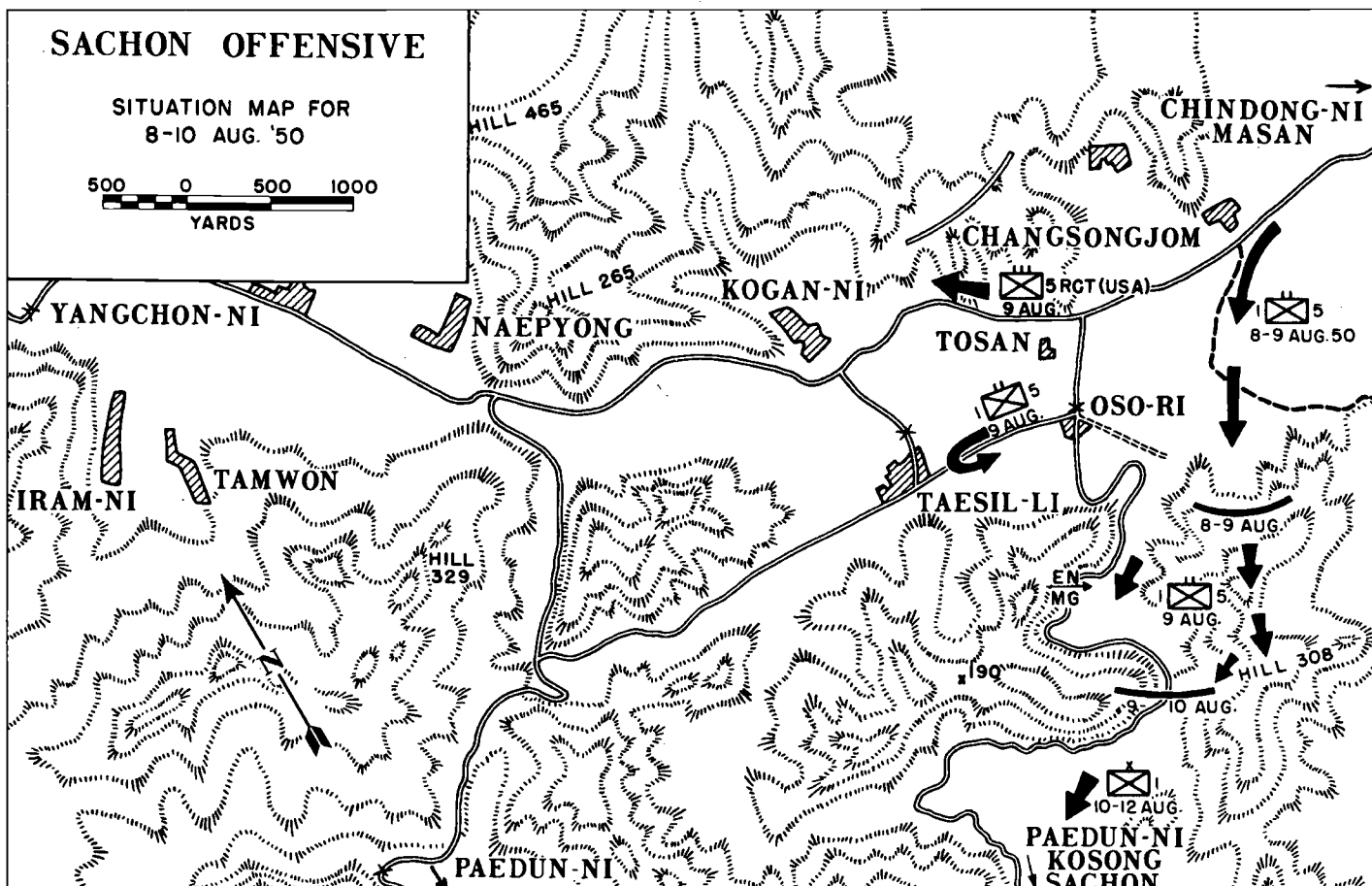
The Marines got their first taste of the enemy. They found him spirited, tenacious, well trained, and generously equipped with Russian gear. Used to having the campaign their own way, the North Koreans fought confidently, but reacted with considerable surprise when they found themselves facing troops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

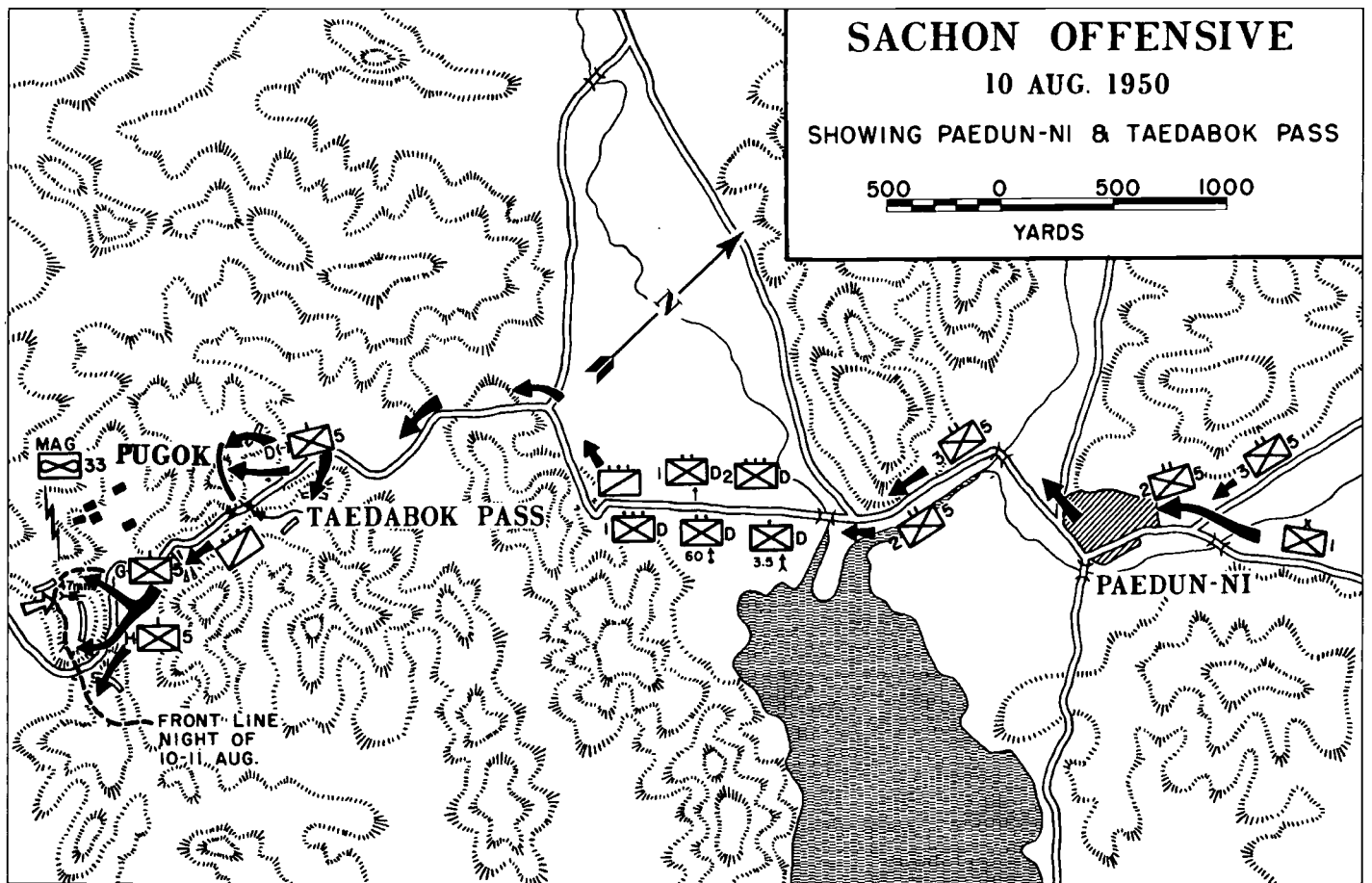
A subsequent article in the *Marine Corps Gazette* by historian Lynn Montross analyzed the battle skills of the NKPA this way:

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. Thus 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 12-point 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 3d 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 Ranson 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

Marines carefully check individual huts to successfully drive North Korean defenders out of this village.

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 3d 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

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A15986



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 Craig to keep driving.

He had Murray pull Roise's 2d 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 2d 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 Paedun-ni by helicopter, and his refrain to the troops was to move ahead with "all speed." Accordingly, the 2d Battalion, even though it had just arrived, got ready to move out quickly for Kosong. The 3d 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 planes 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 Murray's 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 2d Battalion on foot and the 3d 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 3d 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 or Taplett could locate Roise or his command post.

This order came as music to the ears of 2d 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 3d 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



Sikorsky HO3S-1 Helicopter

Rotary-wing aircraft had come too late to have any effect on the tactics of World War II, although a few Sikorsky aircraft were used experimentally in the European and Pacific theaters near the end of the conflict. Following the war, it was the Marine Corps that took the lead in developing techniques and procedures for this new combat aircraft.

In February 1948, the first Sikorsky HO3S-1 helicopter was delivered to the first Marine helicopter squadron, experimental Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 (HMX-1), at Quantico, Virginia. Three months later, the squadron made the first helicopter troop lift in history.

Shortly after the Korean War broke out on 25 June 1950, 7 pilots, 30 enlisted men, and 4 HO3S-1 helicopters were detached from HMX-1 for service with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. Upon arrival at Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, California, these elements were combined with 8 fixed-wing pilots, 33 enlisted men, and 4 "usable" OY-2 light observation planes to form the brigade's air observation squadron, Marine Observation Squadron 6 (VMO-6). The squadron's commanding officer, Major Vincent J. Gottschalk, was given just 48 hours to weld these two elements together before being shipped overseas.

Upon arrival in the Pusan Perimeter, VMO-6 set up its base at Chinhae on 2 August, ready for business. There was not long to wait. The next day, the brigade commander, Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, took off in one of the helicopters and gave a vivid demonstration of its versatility. In one day, he stopped to instruct a battalion, picked out the location for his forward command post, held a conference with U.S. Army commanders,

and held three more meetings with his ground commanders.

Besides this role in command, the squadron's helicopters were "always available for observation, communications, and control." In addition, there were a wide variety of other missions: evacuating the wounded, rescuing downed fixed-wing pilots, transporting supplies, artillery spotting, and, scouting enemy dispositions. During the month of August 1950, VMO-6 helicopters amassed a total of 580 flights and the HO3S-1s chalked up the first successful combat missions. These missions were a harbinger of the large-scale deployments that would come.

Aircraft Data

Manufacturer: Sikorsky Aircraft Division of United Aircraft Corporation
Power Plant: Pratt and Whitney R 985 AN-7 Wasp Jr. Engine 9 Cylinder; Radial; Fan-Cooled; 450 Horsepower
Rotor Diameter: 48'; 3 Blade Composite Construction
Tail Rotor Diameter: 8'5"; All Wood; 3 Blades
Length: 41' 13/4" Without Rotor Blades
Overall Length: 57' 1/2"
Height Overall: 12' 11"
Weight Empty: 3,795 Pounds
Maximum Gross Weight: 5,300 Pounds
Cruising Speed: 85 Miles Per Hour
Maximum Speed: 103 Miles Per Hour at Sea Level
Range: 260 Miles
Service Ceiling: 13,000'
Fuel Capacity: 108 U.S. Gallons
Seating: Four including Pilot

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 *83d 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.

It 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. 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 *83d 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 VMF-323 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.



Photo by David Douglas Duncan

Across the rice paddies and up the endless hills, it was always on foot

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 totalled 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 VMO-6 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 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 planes. 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. Thus 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 pos-

sum," deployed his 3d 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 *83d Motorcycle Regiment* and part of the *2d 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